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Inuit High Arctic Relocation

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Abstract

The Indigenous peoples of Canada's Sub and High Arctic are thought of as people stuck in time – “disappearing Eskimos” of the north. This ignorant belief system has imposed political, social, economic and health hardships onto Indigenous peoples of the Canadian Arctic. The too often forgotten peoples face some of the harshest living conditions of all Canadians, as well as some of the harshest histories.

How has High Arctic relocation affected Arctic Indigenous peoples and their identities?

This question will be explored through both the sub and High Arctic of Canada. This research argues that colonialism took, and continues to take, some of the harshest methods of action towards the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic. To prove this, this research looks at the political, social and economic, and health pitfalls that the peoples faced in the past and today.

VIOLENCE – ECONOMIC & SOCIAL



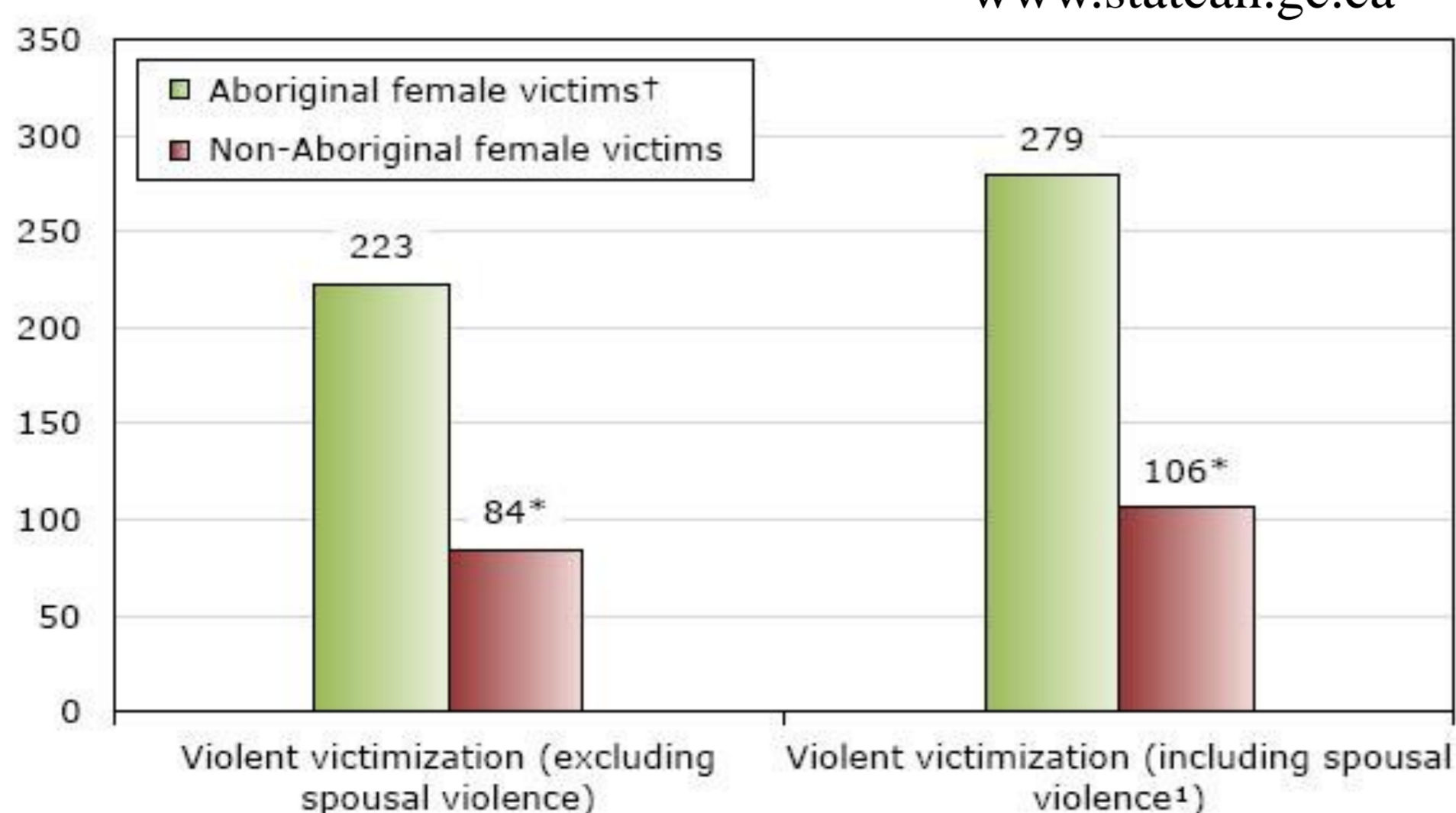
“In Port Harrison the department and the RCMP were determined to solve the ‘Eskimo problem’ and the issue of sovereignty at one stroke...Alcohol became a problem...Sexual exploitation of girls and women, including assault became common. Families, already stressed by the poor conditions... fell apart from drink” (Wright 2014).

http://pauktuutit.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/assets/WhatToDo_e.pdf

Throughout Canada, Indigenous women face higher rates of violence than white women do, and this horrific statistic runs even more true in the Arctic; Inuit women between 25 and 44 have a five-times higher death rate by violence than all women in Canada. Inuit women. This is amplified for those of families exposed to High Arctic relocation have an increase in violence, unemployment, low income, poor housing and poor health, poverty and exposure to substance abuse. Inuit peoples as a community, regardless of gender, have a lower life expectancy by 10 years.

rate per 1,000 female population age 15 or older

www.statcan.gc.ca



“The survival of the [Inuit] group is more important than an individual’s well-being or rights. An individual, whether Inuk or not, cannot survive in the Arctic without the support of a group or community” (Wright 2014, 109)



<http://lizardpoint.com/geography/canada>

RELOCATION - POLITICAL

The Canadian government began authorizing relocations of Inuit families beginning in 1934, with the small communities from Cape Dorset and Pangnirung of South Baffin Island, and Pond Inlet. They were shipped north to Dundas Harbour on Devon Island, high above the Arctic Circle. After a year in isolation, a ship came and relocated the families once more; this time dropping them off in Arctic Bay (Wright 2014, 153). The year after, the Cape Dorset people were relocated again to Fort Ross, and once more to Spence Bay (Wright 2014, 153). In 1953, Inukjuak families from Port Harrison and Pond Inlet were picked up and relocated to Craig Harbour on the southern side of Ellesmere Island, and even farther north to Alexandra Fiord and Resolute Bay of Cornwallis Island.

TUBERCULOSIS OUTBREAK – HEALTH

“Populations of Indigenous peoples in the North... plummeted by at least 50 per cent and as much as 90 per cent as a result of European colonization between 1500 and 1900. This mortality was often the result of introduced diseases, against which Indigenous peoples had no immunity. For the Inuit, these were primarily influenza and tuberculosis” (Wright 2014, 101).



<http://web-trc.ca/>

In the mid-1940s, the Canadian government issued a mass medical survey of Inuit peoples living in the Arctic. Anyone who was suspected of having tuberculosis was shipped to sanatoriums in the south. The stays lasted years at a time, with many never returning or even surviving. The tuberculosis epidemic and the continuing evacuation of patients to the south continued into the 1950s, when approximately 10% of the Inuit population was hospitalised with tuberculosis. Many patients had disabilities that were far too severe to return to their life on the land.