

Case 8

During the 1950's the government of Canada moved seventeen Inuit Eskimo families in Northern Quebec to a remote region in the high arctic as part of a policy of encouraging settlement in the area. They were abandoned in dreadful conditions, and, although promised the option of returning home if they desired, were not allowed to do so when they indicated a wish to return to their former home. It is unclear how many Canadians knew about any of this at the time, but it was not widely publicized. In the 1990's representatives of the Inuit people called upon the Canadian government to apologize for its actions in the 1950's, but the government rejected these calls. One administrator in Canada's Indian Affairs Ministry was reported to have said the following: "An apology implies we're apologizing for something we did. Now there's nobody in the government who had anything to do with the relocation at the original time; so I think it might be more appropriate to say there'd be an expression of regret on behalf of the Canadian people." Against this viewpoint, a Canadian Human Rights Commission Report recommended that the government apologize for the hardship that the removal policy caused the Inuit.