

Article by Afia Zahin

"The authorities had taken my daughter away as if she were a mere statistic, not understanding that my love and tradition were more important than any test score," says Keira Alexandra Kronvold in an article by The Guardian. Kronvold, an Inuit mother, was a victim of the Danish "parenting competency" test, a controversial tool used to assess parental Fitness that disproportionately targets Greenlandic families due to cultural and linguistic biases.

A video taken last November shows an Inuit woman whose 2-hour-old baby was forcefully separated from her. "The tests fail to account for potential language barriers or cultural differences. This puts Greenlandic parents at risk of being wrongly assessed in child placement cases," said Louise Holck, the director of the Danish Institute for Human Rights. Inuit women are told that the 'parenting competency test' is to see if they are "civilized enough". Kronvold was permanently separated from her eight-month-old son and nine-year-old daughter after psychological assessments administered by a Danish-speaking psychologist. Though Kronvold is not fluent in Danish, she can now only spend one hour a week with her baby, monitored closely by a social worker. The Danish government has historically oppressed Inuit women; this treatment is nowhere near new.

"No government should decide over our uterus and it is our human right to have the right to have children and start a family," says 61-year-old Naja Lyberth. Naja was a victim of the 'spiral-case', a policy created to put an end to Inuit birth rates. In the 1970s, following a routine medical examination at school, Naja, who was aged about 13, was told to go to her local hospital and get a contraceptive procedure. Thousands of Greenlandic Inuit girls and women in the '60s & '90s were forced to get IUDs without their consent under the direction of the Danish government. Naja says her parents were never notified or asked for consent, and that her classmates were also sent to the hospital but did not talk about it because "it was too shocking." Arnannnguaq Poulsen also says she suffered pain as a result of having a coil procedure as a teenager. "They didn't ask me before the procedure, and I had no idea what it was all about, or what the coil was," she says. According to the 'Coil Campaign' 'podcast, from 1966 to the 1970s, 4,500 IUDs were placed on almost half of the childbearing Inuit girls and women in Denmark.

"The pain, physically and emotionally, that they have experienced is still there today," says Danish Health Minister Magnus Heunicke. She had the coil for almost two decades and suffered pain and a string of complications. In her late 30s, her uterus was removed. "I feel that I didn't get a choice back then, and I cannot accept that," A 64-year-old Inuit woman says, tearfully. "How would people react if it was Danish women instead of Greenlandic?"

The Danish government used the guise of 'caring' for the Inuit children, but the lasting impact of the procedures is horrifying. Ms. Heinesenaan, an Inuit woman aged 76, is a victim of the "Little Danes" project and was taken from her family at the age of 5. "We were not allowed to play with Greenlandic children and we were not allowed to speak Greenlandic," Ms Heinesen says. "We

were supposed to be the elite.” A year and a half later, 16 of the Inuit children were returned to Greenland, while six were adopted.

But back in Greenland's capital, Nuuk, children were not reunited with their families. Instead, they were placed in an orphanage and attended a Danish-language school. They were kept completely outside of their culture, heritage, and language. I'm one of the kids that was stolen from Greenland to Denmark back in the 1970s. I grew up in a Danish family, with Danish traditions, and we never spoke about Greenland. Not a word. I lost my language, my mother tongue. In my school, we never learned about Greenland, our history, culture, or tradition. I grew up in Denmark and I thought I was white. I thought I was Danish. But somewhere inside me I always felt wrong, different, and shameful.”

Many questioned the adoption process and the cultural biases of the psychological capability test for single mothers. They also criticized the Danish foster care system, which does not include any protocols that allow Inuit children to preserve links with their homeland, culture, and language. Thus, the foster system separates Inuit children from their community and culture. As a result, many of these separated children are no longer able to communicate with their parents and relatives without the aid of an interpreter.

Research presented in 2022 states that Inuit children in Denmark are seven times more likely than Danish children to be placed in out-of-home care. This was further cited by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Mr. Francisco Calí Tzay, during his official visit to Denmark and Greenland in February 2023. This statistic was presented as part of his findings on the systemic issues faced by Inuit families in Denmark, particularly regarding child welfare practices and cultural biases in psychological evaluations of single mothers.

The research highlights the disproportionate impact of Denmark's child welfare system on Inuit families, which has been criticized for its lack of cultural sensitivity and failure to account for language barriers and traditional Inuit parenting practices. This issue is part of a broader historical context of colonial policies and systemic discrimination against Greenlandic Inuit, as seen in cases like the **“Little Danes experiment”** and the **“parenting competency tests (FKU)”**, which have been widely criticized for their discriminatory outcomes.

A full report by the UN Special Rapporteur revealed that Inuit children in Denmark are seven times more likely than Danish children to be placed in out-of-home care away from their parents. Inuit people face serious numbers of suicides and violence, particularly against women and girls; sexual violence is one of the largest issues they face.

The Inuit women are ordinary people with feelings but have no autonomy over their bodies. Take a minute and ask yourself how you would feel, as an Inuit woman, if your child were forcefully taken away from you just because of your ethnicity. Your love for your child is measured by a test that you don't even understand, and you know that if you fail, your child will be treated miserably, far from their culture, language, and traditions. They might be unable to communicate with you, to speak their own mothertongue. You will feel the pain inside but can

never stop it. This historical violence must come to an end - but it is up to citizens around the world to do so.