

Exploring Transitional Justice Processes in the Danish-Inuit/Greenlandic Context

Reflections and Recommendations

October 2025

Introduction

During a roundtable held in Haslev, Denmark, in September 2025 on transitional justice¹ in the Danish-Inuit/Greenlandic context, participants explored what is needed in order for the people concerned to feel that justice has been done, that truth has been uncovered, and that dignity has been restored. Also, participants explored what transitional justice processes that address the needs for justice, truth, and dignity might look like. These are not exhaustive or final, but they represent recurring themes and concrete proposals voiced among those who took part in the relevant sessions and group work. Across the discussions, participants emphasised the need for safe spaces for dialogue, deprogramming of colonial structures, indigenous sovereignty in research, and recognition of both structural and internalised racism.

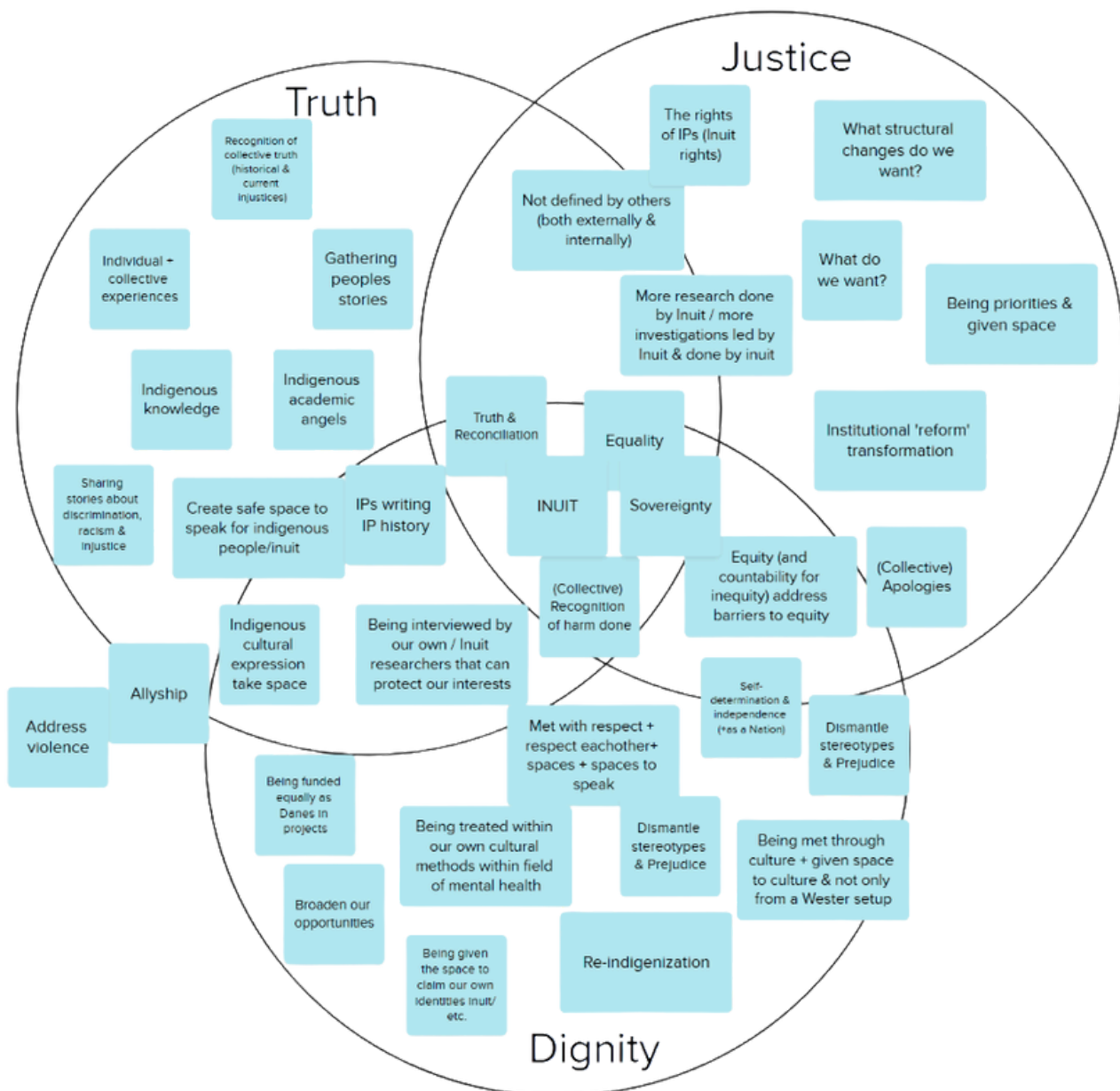
1 Restoring justice, truth, and dignity

As part of the roundtable, four of the participants (the four authors of this note)² went through a reflection exercise where we explored the concepts of justice, truth, and dignity and why each of these are necessary for addressing the historical injustices and moving towards a different future. We did not specifically talk about 'reconciliation' as a concept and as an expressed goal, because only based on processes that recognize the importance of justice, truth, and dignity, may Inuit/Greenlandic people choose to reconcile; with their past, with Danes and Denmark, and/or among Inuit/Greenlandic people themselves. The process of exploration of the three concepts was inspired by similar processes in other contexts where transitional justice processes have been pursued.

In pairs and while walking in the park of the meeting venue, we reflected on the meaning of each of the concepts; first individually, then sharing and listening, and finally exchanging perspectives. After three rounds of walks with changing constellation of pairs, we returned to the meeting room at Emmaus in Haslev. Without talking, we filled out the below 'Venn-diagram' that depicts the key words emerging from the dialogues and which all adds to an exploration and description of the three concepts and their interlinkages. The total diagram/image can be understood as principles and processes that are important to pursue in order to promote justice, truth, and dignity in the Inuit/Greenlandic context.

¹ Transitional justice refers to how societies respond to the legacies of widespread and serious human rights violations. It is about truth-telling, accountability, reparations, and prevention of future harm done including through institutional reform.

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2 Recommendations for relevant transitional justice initiatives

The question that we then grappled with was how to pursue each of the elements identified in the Venn-diagram, and thus promote justice, truth, and dignity. Again in pairs, we identified key words that seemed particularly important to us and then discussed what it would take to address these dimensions. Although not exhaustive, the below lists some of the suggestions or recommendations that the participants in these discussions felt most important to take forward. Some may inspire new initiatives to be developed, funded, and implemented, while others may serve as advice and inspiration for how existing initiatives such as the historical inquiry is implemented.

➡ Truth, history, and sharing in safe spaces

- Convene conversations on history and colonisation in relation to the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) events and other relevant convenings, with the explicit purpose of de-tabooisation.
- Create safe spaces in Inuit context for talking and listening to people telling their stories, thus uncovering the truth.
- Share lived and living experiences safely → develop alternative and authoritative history from shared experiences.
- Mobilise Indigenous experts (Inuit, possibly shamans, possibly psychologists) to set the scene and facilitate discussions.
- Listening processes: there is a need to hear everybody's stories (e.g. inquiry calls, TRC-like processes, alongside archives).
- For a more extensive process of hearing and gathering peoples stories, it is essential to have qualified and trained Inuit Greenlandic personnel and team for gathering people's stories, in Kalaallit Nunaat/Inuit Nunaat/Greenland as well as in Denmark. Perhaps in a collaboration with an experienced Indigenous Research Centre. We therefore recommend forming a team of Inuit Greenlandic personnel with expertise in Inuit culture, history, social sciences, culturally grounded approaches, as well as training in in-depth conversations (psychologists trained in cultural attunement, qualitative methods and Interpretative phenomenological analysis). As Inuit narrative styles are characterized by oral tradition, non-linear structures, and holistic storytelling that engages multiple senses. These serve to foster community, transmit cultural knowledge and values, and maintain spiritual obligations across generations.

➡ Addressing Structural Racism

- Educate DK in structural racism and white fragility.
- Integrate education on structural racism into systems and institutions, not only schools, both in Denmark and in Kalaallit Nunaat/Inuit Nunaat/Greenland.
- Identify and track barriers to equal treatment – extent, origin, and effects – and inter-connectivity between different systemic factors that make up these barriers; and identify and implement ways to address them.
- Recognise that institutional change must tackle behaviours of people inside institutions, not only laws, policies, and procedures.

➡ Deprogramming and System Transformation

- Participants called for deprogramming DK and transforming systems, not mere reform.
- Dismantle colonial structures → build a system made *for us and with us as a people*.
- Use arts in Diversity Equity, and Inclusion models to understand what racism and inequality *feels like*; as stepping stone to addressing these problems.
- The Greenlandic system is still an extension of the Danish one; deprogramming is necessary.
- Psychoeducation: support understanding of how internalised racism arises from structural and interpersonal racism, through workshops, listening stations, podcasts.

➔ Internalised Racism and Language

- “We oppress our own” – internalised racism present in applications and education.
- Increase opportunities for own-language education.
- Jobs should be accessible without mandatory DK/EN language requirements.
- Draw on Sami academia: establish knowledge and language centres in academia.
- Provide support to recognise and understand internalised racism and its sources.

➔ Research and Sovereignty

- Emphasise sovereignty in research: Inuit research teams define what safe spaces mean and create culturally appropriate approaches.
- Adopt the principle: “Nothing about Inuit without Inuit.”
- Establish an Inuit Research Ethical Council with Inuit leadership, not dominated by Danish researchers.
- Research must be co-created, bottom-up, locally rooted, participatory, and led by Inuit for Inuit. Through these processes, it centers Inuit Greenlandic aspirations and self-determination by ensuring that Inuit Greenlandic interests and wellbeing are served and protected.

➔ Justice and Accountability

- Current legal system is not equal → need for stronger Inuit/Greenlandic-led legal aid and advisory institutions.
- Address shortage of Inuit/Greenlandic-speaking lawyers and judges.
- Clarify accountability: who holds DK responsible for systemic discrimination? Consider international mechanisms (UN, human rights bodies).
- Explore transitional justice: TRC models adapted to Inuit/Greenlandic needs.
- Recognise historical and inter-generational trauma, colonial and ongoing, and provide space for anger, grief, and healing.

3 Conclusion

Overall, the recommendations highlight the need for safe, Inuit-defined and facilitated spaces; education and psycho-education to dismantle structural and internalised racism; system transformation rather than superficial reform that decolonise and de/reprogramme structures, practices, and attitudes, and strengthening of indigenous sovereignty in research and justice processes. The recommendations underline that transitional justice must be led by Inuit, for Inuit, co-created from the ground up, and supported by systemic change in Denmark.