

VERBATIM

Markoosie Patsauq

My name is Markoosie Patsauq, I was 12 years old when we were relocated from Inukjuak to Resolute bay in 1953. Along with four families, we were relocated. Other families went to another place. In our household there was father and mother and one sister and two brothers and myself.

Question 1: Do you remember what the RCMP officers told your parents to convince them to go up there?

I didn't hear any talk about this plan from the RCMP. I only heard it from my parents when they talk about what the RCMP told them. And the way they heard, that this plan sounds very very attractive like, almost like 2 years hunting expedition. That was my impression. We were being sent to high arctic to hunt and come back in 2 years. That was something that we did not wanna miss. Especially I when I heard about this you know. They're a lot of animals, a lot of foxes and me being 12 years old and becoming a hunter this sound very very exciting.

In later years, in the 1970's I became a very angry person the first time when we start finding out from the archive of the federal government what was the real reason for this relocation and it makes me angry very angry...

I was not the only one. It angers all of us. What I didn't like was that the federal government was saying this area could no longer support the population here. The animals were disappearing, not so, it wasn't so. And during one of the hearing in Ottawa I heard the question, one of the people ask: How did you find out? How did you know the animals were disappearing in the area? And one of the federal government said: we get the information from the RCMP. That's the wrong person. The RCMP had a house across the river and they sit there for years. Go up the coast about once a year on the patrol traveling from this place to one place and they return. That's not how to get information's about our resources here. Because the hunter has to travel from here, over there, to over there, over here and over here.

The hunter has to travel all over the country to find the games he's after. And here the federal government was saying we got the information from the RCMP that the animals were disappearing could no longer support the people of this area. It makes me angry, it was insulting the land itself. Because this area was occupied by our people for thousand and thousand of years to prove it.

So it makes me angry to find out that the federal government call this place could no longer support the population. That was not true. That really makes me angry.

The federal government seems to have seen an invisible wall around this area where animals could not get in. That's how I see it when the federal people talk about it. But there is no invisible wall. There's animal here, over there, everywhere. We have to hunt them. We just don't go to one place and expect to get animals we are after. We have to expect to go somewhere everywhere to find animals we are after. So that was one of things that makes me angry to find out that the federal government was saying that our resources could no longer support the people here. Not so.

And another thing that angers me was this relocation was an experiment, an experiment that really makes me angry. An experiment! Didn't the federal government know about something called Nuremburg Code, Nuremburg code? Were it was forbidden to experiment with the humans, like they did in Germany during world war two. When I found out that this relocation was an experiment, I said to myself: there is something wrong there somewhere: Experimenting with the people, without their consent was forbidden by international law and they said we had something, we have something to settle with the federal government. They need some explaining to do. Why they didn't tell us that this one was an experiment? And it was not for, it was not two years, it was more than that. They had a hidden motive. They didn't tell us that they were planning to make us stay up there for many many years. So that's another thing that angers me.

Because using us as experimental objects was not legal, I would say. It was illegal according to the international law. So I said to myself, I think we have something against the federal government that will stand in court. But the federal government they kind of say: You volunteered. And it wasn't so. We didn't volunteer. Federal government just came into this area and said they have to send us up to the high arctic for two years. Two years was not bad. We could survive that. We could be away from the family for two years, away from the homeland for two years, hunt and come back in two years. That was not a bad idea. Beside they tell us they gonna support us all the way. Which was not the truth.

Question 2: How long have live in the High Arctic?

From 1953 to 1975, I spend 21 years in the high arctic. I could have return sooner if I had my way and it was very bad for some of our people that could not return when they wanted to, when the were refused. I want to tell a little story about what makes me angry again. I was angry, angry, angry. I want to speak about Paddy Aqiatusuk a little.

He was a very respected man, He was a very respected leader and he was respected by everyone, everyone in this area. When we went up to the high arctic, he didn't live very long. He only lived about 8 years, 8 months. And this man Paddy, he was a natural leader and he supported many families in this area and he lived only five miles from this community in a place called "5 miles inlet" and that was his home all year round. Because his ancestor lived in that area five miles from this community. And the federal government begins to say that Paddy, he's living 5 miles away from the community so he could beg for food, from the community. That

was not true. This man was very respected. Beside he had a brother and a sister here in the community. He was only living 5 miles away from here. He could walk here daily to see his sister, to see his brother, to see his friends. What's wrong with that?

But the federal government said that Paddy was traveling from his home to the community everyday to beg for food, to beg for tea and that makes me angry again because Paddy was a respected man, very able leader.

Question 3: How was the trip on the C.D. Howe?

When we boarded the C.D. Howe here in the community, it was a very, very exciting time. We had never been on a big ship. We had many families on board and we're gonna be gone for two years. Boarding the ship it was exciting but about half a day after we left the community, we started to get sick, seasick. It took us three days to reach Churchill from here and everyone was just sick, vomiting all over. So that was the first bad trip that started. And the trip took us longtime, six weeks. I especially remember the food that we got on the board the ship. The same thing everyday, the same thing everyday. By the time we reach the high arctic, we were really... lost a lot of weight because we didn't eat the proper food that we're used to. There was no fish, no seal meat, just the same old food that they provided us. That was a real bad experience.

We were really hungry most of the time. Although they gave us three meals a day; breakfast, lunch and supper. Same food everyday. Doesn't matter what day like doesn't matter if it's the morning or at night, it's the same food.

We were traveling, we started traveling from here during the summer, like in July it was beautiful here, like today. And a couple a weeks later, we were experiencing a very cold, very cold air, a lot of icebergs, just 2 weeks out of this community. So we were actually traveling into the very early autumn and that was very strange because July and august are very good summer here and half way to the trip we were almost in the winter. The land was so different; there were so many high mountains. Here, it's flat. You can see the hills but when you get up to the Baffin Island area you don't look that way, you look up the mountains, it's frightening! To me that's frightening because I had never seen such high mountains that it actually frightens me to see so many high mountains. So that was another bad experience during the trip.

Question 4: Do you remember when you arrived at Resolute Bay?

Six weeks later, we arrived in Resolute. That was in early September. I remember early morning they took us off the ship to get to the shore and as soon as we get to the shore the snow started falling. This was early September. Very strange. It was cold. And by the afternoon, there was a blizzard, a blizzard. It was a bad experience. It was cold, blizzard. We had a hard time putting up

the tents. It took us many, many, many hours to set up the camp. Here it could take us an hour but at that time it took us almost all day just to set up the camp.

It was lifeless land. Like a death planet. No visible life anywhere. I did not even see the seagulls. If we are living here, the seagulls are all over. But when we arrived in Resolute there was no seagulls, not a thing. Like I said it was a dead planet. There was ice everywhere and the high ones, the snow, it make us miserable. The first day we arrived and the snow stayed. The first plotted of the year and it continues. There was no Indian summer like here, like we are used here.

So arriving in Resolute was the first bad experience that would last many, many years.

It took us many weeks before we were able to get our own food. We didn't know the land. We didn't know where to hunt. We didn't even know if we should hunt in the sea or in the land. Like in here, in Inukjuak, we travelled all over the sea and then the land we find animals. But in a new environment like Resolute, we didn't know where to hunt animals. Should we go up the land? Should we go to the sea? It took us a while, it took us I think a couple of weeks before the first seal was killed.

And during that time we were hungry for food, for country food, for seals, fish, the things that we used to get here. Even our animals like dogs, they were starving. The first few weeks it was very bad.

Question 5: Were people living in tents?

We had set up the tent as soon as we arrived and the snow kept coming but it did not stay. There was not enough hard snow to build igloo. So we had to stay in the tent during those cold days. Because the snow would come in, the snow would build up but it would be blown away. It took us many, many weeks before we were able to build a shelter out of snow. So that was very bad and lot of us suffered from that, really suffered, especially myself because I was suffering from the tuberculoses. I was sick and during those cold hungry days I was one of those that was really suffering. I couldn't go out. I had to stay in the tent. I didn't have the strength. I was vomiting blood and during those early days it was very, very bad for me. And that was another thing that makes me angry at the government because I think they chose the wrong people to relocate. They chose my family but one of the families like myself had the TB. I should not have been sent up to the high arctic. I should have been sent to the hospital. I had a grandmother; I think she was 82 years old. She should never be sent up the high arctic.

As soon as we arrived in Resolute, her health went down. She became an old woman, the first time I've seen her. Here, she was very active. She was old but very active, healthy, happy but when we got to Resolute she became an old woman who doesn't do anything, just in the tent. Another thing, the federal government chose the people who should have stayed here. They should have been more careful about who to send up to high arctic. And later on we found out

that the federal government was saying, high arctic is not really different from Inukjuak. But there is, there is a big difference.

Inukjuak is in the same latitude as Scotland. You can see the green, green like they have in Scotland. It's very similar to Scotland here. You go up to Resolute 74 degrees north; it's just the north of Siberia.

A real big difference. So the government was wrong about high arctic and Inukjuak being almost the same, the same thing. Not so. And they were saying there's a lot of animals. Again, not so. There were not a lot of animals. We had more animals here then they are in high arctic.

Question 6: Why do you think they really sent you up there?

I mentioned that federal government was saying this area could no longer support the people here. That's the reason. That's what they say. And they were saying that people here are depending on white man's food instead of depending on the animals like they use to.

All that was talked to us was about animals, the hunt and return in 2 years but in later years when we started looking at these archive in Ottawa we found out that one of the reason was sovereignty. The Canadian government was very, very worried about what is happening in the high arctic. I though we were up there to hunt. We didn't know this was an experiment, there was sovereignty reason, there were several things that the government was not saying the real reasons for sending us. So like I said I was angry for many years about those things.

Question 7: Were you able to get some news from your family left behind?

It took about a year before we received correspondence, letters from this community. Resolute was a military base and there is a weekly flight to Resolute from Churchill and the mail use to come on that flight. Almost about a year later we were able to receive some letters from here by plane.

It was hard because we had so many families out here in the community. And not giving any news about what the situations are. It was very, very hard for us too. Find out what's going on in our original home. Many times the bad news coming that one of the families has died, so many months ago or a year ago. So it was really hard for us to get news from home. It took many, many years before we were able to get the recent news and it was very, very hard for us to, to know what is going on in here. And I guess the people here, our families, wasn't aware of what was going on in the high arctic, with us. It was both ways, not only in high arctic but also here.

Question 8: Why did you decide to go back to Inukjuak?

Well my plan was always to back to my original homeland because homeland is something that you just don't forget about. The very hard the thing is to be away from home, away from families and twenty-one years was a long time. Many of the people I used to know as a child were gone. Some were living. I wanted to see those who are still living. So could not stay up in the high arctic forever. I had to return home with my families and the rest of the family will move later. So it was a family thing. The homeland is something that stays with you, in your heart. You don't forget about it and you want to return and you want to see your original homeland. And like I was telling you about Paddy. He lived five miles from here. He died because he had a broken heart finding out he could not return. I think he lost his will to live. That's how important the homeland is. Very, very important, it's stays with you. You never forget your homeland. No matter how long you are living in other places. That's how it is.

I had a job in the high arctic that I couldn't leave right away. But when my parents went back home, here, I decided that, ok I'm gonna follow them later. So I just left everything up in Resolute and return here.

Many people couldn't return right away because they didn't have the money to return. They had many families and many people want to return right away but couldn't. I was almost the lucky one because I had a good job up there and I was able to come here right away at my own expense.

The federal government was saying that they were not responsible for our returning home. They told us first they gonna take us for 2 years. After 2 years we are on our own. So it was not possible to return anytime we wanted to. That's why we end up staying up there for so long. I did not plan to stay for 21 years. I planned to stay up there for two years like the government says. That was all I expected. 2 years turn out to be 21. And it was the same thing with the other families.

It would have been nice if the federal government has kept their promises all this problem should never happened. Two years expedition and return in two years. That could have been it. But the problems build up. That's why we end up fighting the government for so many years. It took us many years to come to an agreement with the federal government. We did not want to get into this.

Question 9: Did you feel welcome when you came back to Inukjuak?

I find some people that I left so many years ago and they were very happy to see me too. Like an old friends, a boyhood friend. It was very easy for me to become a part of the community.

Question 10: What did you think of the government's official apology?

Finally! I took us so many years to get apologies from the government because they were not willing to apologize for any of the things that they did. They kept telling us that they did nothing. It was very very... Good to hear that the federal government was finally ready to listen to our demand and finally wanting to apologize for what they done. They should have done that many, many years ago. When we first time requested. But it took them many years to finally apologize for the things. And the only thing that we were asking the federal government is to acknowledge that when they move us up to the high arctic we had to suffer for that. And we suffered, suffered many, many years for that. And they should have acknowledged that.

They should apologize the very first time we request it and this problem could have been solved many, many years ago. But it dragged then because the federal government was not willing to acknowledge the things they have done in the past was wrong. They kept telling us they were doing this for our own good reasons, for our own good. They were only trying to help us. Maybe they did but somewhere along the line something went bad. The wrong people send up, wrong people end up in the high arctic and the suffering that we had was not intentional, but we suffered. And the way we suffered should have been solved, resolved. The federal government should have stepped in and help us the way we asked for like when we wanted to return home. They should have sent us home then. So it was bad the way we were treated. And we suffered many years for it was not necessary for us to suffer so much.

One of the hardest things is being away from the family and from the homeland. This homeland is something that you just don't forget about. Like Paddy's "5 mile inlet", that was his home. Not only his, but his ancestor. His ancestors were here for many, many centuries. Long before the Hudson Bay Company came to this place in 1920's. Also this river here used to be a calving ground for white whales. My ancestors, the people in this area did not live in this river itself because so many white whales spend their summer here, raising their young. The people lived just outside this area here but then Hudson's Bay Company people came in and just settled in this river driving the white whales away forever. This is one of the very bad, very sad histories of this place. Because this place was protected by our ancestors. They did not want to drive the white whales here when they come in the summer. They don't bother them and they stayed. But once the Hudson's bay company moved in the whales were gone. All these people who did not think about protecting the wild life. That was another hard one, which should never have happened. But it did.

Question 11: How do you see the future of this community?

Looks good. Very good. I can only say that this community is thriving. It's a very good community with very good people, lot of families. What else can I say about this homeland about this community that's all I can say. This is where I want to be. This is my homeland, this is my community. These people are my friends and my families. What else can I ask for? This is a very good community.

Question 12: Do you have any advice for the younger generation?

Everything comes naturally. Let's leave it like that. Let young people decide what kind of community they wanna have. What kind of homeland they wanna live in. And what kind of community we want to be in. that's up to the next generation. The older people have done what we need to do. Protect the area, this area but now it's up to the next generation to make sure that this community grows.

Young people are educated. They are taking over a lot of things the old people use to do. And in modern times, this community can only grow positively. And I'm very optimistic about the future of this community and these people.