

VERBATIM

Joadamee Amagoalik

I'm Joadamee Amagoalik, raised here in Resolute, born in Grise Fiord. I lived here all my adult life and my teenage years.

When they were first moved up here you guys know that the families were split up so my father's younger brother Simeonie and Jaybeddie were left here but my father was taken up to Craig Harbour or wherever they landed first. Then after a few years, my father wanted to be with his brothers so even though the RCMP didn't want them to, my uncle Simeonie came up by dog team, they packed up all my parents stuff and moved down here. My mom, me and my older brother came here by airplane. My father and my older brother came down by dog team.

Question 1: What have your parents told you about the relocation?

Oh they often used to talk about it. They talked about Inukjuak, what kind of different land it was, when it was certain part of the season like in the fall they would say "at this time we'd go berry picking" this kind of thing. In the beginning it seemed all real but not being able to see it, with no contact with them, it became almost like a fantasy, or a fairytale. We heard about this land way down there, but we never could see it and eventually it sort of faded in into the background.

Question 2: Did your parents move back to Inukjuak?

No. My father died in 1972 and my mom didn't want to move up. My brothers they were all raised here so if we moved down there it would be almost like us being relocated, down over there, where it's a different environment and even though a lot of people are our family, it would be a little different from here.

Question 3: How was life like for you in Resolute?

When I was growing up I was never really hungry. I think they just went with the situation that was already happening here where Resolute was restricted in hunting muskox that were just around this area you could see them. They were just finding out the pattern of the seals around here, where they go to a certain breathing hole at a certain time. When I was growing up, some part of the stable diet during the day was the food that they gathered at the dump up there. I grew up thinking that you know apples and oranges grew frozen because they were bringing them from the dump and we had this big stove that had this little overhang and my mom would put those apples and oranges up there and it would take forever to melt. I was so surprised when one day we were at the coop and found soft oranges, I said holy mac, find out they grow on trees. So those kinds of things.

In the old village it wasn't so bad. But when we got moved over here the village was split into two for maybe two years. We were on the first wave of coming over here, to this site and it was really hard that time getting job and stuff because my dad died and it was my mom, and about three of us. I remember when our next door family the Naqtie's. So that time my mom and Alacee were just next door neighbours and they had no more real husbands to try to get them meat for them and supply that, I remember them putting a little bit of money together and buying bags of flour and putting it in a pot, water, mix it a bit, put all the kids together and maybe eat it for a week. So it was pretty hard when we were growing up. But I think on the plus that I had was that my mom didn't drink, my dad hardly drinks, maybe once a year on Christmas. When I was growing up I remember the first village all the houses were right near the shore line and at that time when all the houses were sort of established, that's when they opened the bar up there to the community and all the men and some of the women would start going up to the base camp go get all drunken up.

At our house since my dad and mom didn't drink, I remember growing up with about ten to fifteen kids sleeping on our floor cause all their parents were all drunk. It used to be a wild town, there used to be cowboys and Indians, they'd be fighting all over the place, and there would be party here and another big party down there. It was the militaries, since there were lots of them here in the 50's, they were looking for women, they were bringing alcohol into the community to get all the men passed out and they just party with the women. At that time it affected a lot of kids. I remember growing up not being able to step on the floor because I might step on somebody. Used to happen almost nightly because the bar was open almost every night.

Yes that's the environment we sort of grew up in, there was about fourteen of us who were about the same age. So just to get out of town we used to explore this area big time, even in winter time we'd go sliding over here just get away from town but with me it's sort of a happy childhood because my mom never drank, my dad never drank, my dad was always hunting so...

Question 3: Was school a safe place for kids?

Yeah, sort of, because that time when I was growing up me and my cousin Peter Amagoalik , since Simeonie and my father were brothers, me and Peter we grew up together all the way and we would just go together we were sort of spoiled me and him and when we went to school all these restrictions started happening. I had to sit here from 9h00 until 11h00 and listen to this lady. For a while it didn't seem fun but eventually we got a good teacher that I think there was fourteen of us that were in his class, all got good jobs and are pretty well spoken in English, cause he was like 6'4", 250, 300 pounds, black guy, it was one of the first black guy that ever worked in Resolute. He took no crap from us but he made sure that we learned and if we wanted to learn he really tried to teach us and stuff. It was from grade six all the way to grade eight cause at that time teacher had to teach multiple classes because so few teachers. That was one of the plus in ...our grade school here we had nice enough teachers.

Question 4: What was it like for your friends when you were young?

With lots of my friends it was drunk parents, when the bar was opened up to the community, before that the men used to go out polar bear hunting for two weeks at the time and come back with ten to fifteen bear skins, that started happening less and less. And so the money that those guys were bringing you could tell that it started to have an effect on the families where all the money was starting to be spent at the bar.

I remember Joanie and Minnie Allakariallak they used to cook big pot of food just so their grandkids or their relative's kids, to made sure they were eating. Like Jaybedie's kids and all those... I think that Joanie and Minnie, my mom and dad, I think they were not recognized enough cause I think in those times I think they were the stable ones of the community cause everybody used to be drunk. When I was growing up all my buddies we see it so much I think me and my friends the first drink we got was at about 10 years old. I was wondering what it was they were drinking, we stole a forty once from Simeonie, we went to the lake started taking swipes out of it we thought it tasted awful but started to feel pretty good. Next morning I woke up...hung over.

Question 5: How are things today?

You see pattern of alcoholism that's for sure, all my friends and me were just waiting to become nineteen. That was the age we could go in. I know from their father to the oldest son, each generation just seem to always want to drink, drink, drink. And it's always like that here.

I don't see much of a problem, where it's a restricted community right? But me and my buddy the other night we were looking at it and even if it's a restricted community, forty orders are approved every bi weekly, where forty orders times three bottles per order and you say that one hundred and twenty bottles coming into a small community of two hundred and forty and this happens monthly. So it's a problem probably but you don't hear too much about murders or gun shootings here.

When I was a kid it was a big problem that time in the 70's when I was growing up, big oil and gas activity was happening here. We used to have jet service from Edmonton Pacific western airlines, we used to have jet service from Winnipeg and we used to have another jet service from Montreal called Nordair and those three companies jet were coming in seven days a week. At that time there was so much activity happening here and when the oil company boys started hitting town here and started building base here, more parties started happening. And we were able to order alcohol from Yellowknife and Montreal and that kind of elevated the problem when we were over here.

Question 6: What would you like to say to young people?

I don't know... Get educated! Because me and my buddies we were saying that we were born too early. Because that oil and gas is really going to start happening pretty soon and chance to make some good money now. So get educated and stay in school I guess. Because a lot of people sort of paid with their lives to get this up and happening so I think their legacy shouldn't be forgotten. Because when they put that monument up over there... not enough. We were thinking about naming some kind of island over here or there is a new national park that they want to open over there we're thinking of maybe calling it Simeonie Amagoalik national park or that island down here we want to sort of rename it. We want something permanent, that monument is all well and good but we want something up here if you look at a map, it's there and so it will always be remembered.

Question 7: Has the official apology made you feel better?

Sort of, you know it was a mix sort of thing where I'm glad my uncle Simeonie heard it because he always use to talk about it. (En Inuktitut) He always use to say that. So at least he got to hear it. But for our generation it was always like sort of a little bit hollow or too late. I think if they did it right at the...when they signed that agreement when a lot of the exiles were still alive, I think that would have been a lot better.

Question 8: Have you meet your relatives from Inukjuak?

I met a couple of them but I never been down there. It was sort of like, you hear about family way out there and never met them and so you just sort of...I know they're family but you have been sort of disconnected...you have no real... cause what about you, if you have a cousin way out there in Vancouver that you never really met before but you heard about... you know..so, maybe one day.

Question 9: Has the presence of so many white people affected your community?

With the Qallunaat influence here in the community, because we used to have a lot of the military guys up there when I was growing up. The most interesting part of our day was going up there, trying to steal some food or whatever. A lot of my friends speak English pretty good just by the fact that, you find out here in the community that English is more spoken then Inuktitut, we are losing it. Right now we got what we call the street Inuktitut where even some of the elders now are speaking Inuktitut they will put English words in there, Inuktitut, English little bit and like that. Even when I'm at meetings I'm so used of doing that here now, putting English and Inuktitut as one common language. Where if I'm in Iqaluit having meetings to translate, I always have to go wait wait wait.

You have to choose one language you know, English or Inuktitut or because always speaking the Resolute lingo* we call it. But yeah, the English or Qallunaat started to have a lot of influence here, you find a lot of kids if you talk to them in English they'll answer right back, just like that. If you go to other Inuit communities if you go to little kids they will look at you like, who's this lady, things like that.

Just by the fact that it wasn't a strong heritage like we couldn't use our parent's culture because there was nothing here they could use to show us, like they had fishing all the time, caribou, berry picking at a certain time and all that stuff. That was my parent's culture but when they came here it was like they had to sort of all of a sudden relearn how to survive because even in Northern Quebec that's what they were doing, surviving you know, hunting everyday and stuff like that. They knew where to go at a certain time, to go fishing at a certain time, to go caribou hunting, but when they came here it was like put on the moon you have no idea where the animals are here cause I'm born and raised here I know that at a certain time of year there is seals over there and at a certain time of year walrus go to a certain place, see that's my culture now up here so when you say that my parent's culture sort of, it took a drastic took a 360 in order to survive up here. Their hunting skills...they sort of knew how to hunt seals they had to re-learn how to redo everything. So it changed.

I still speak Inuktitut. If I'm with a northern Quebecer, I'll speak northern Quebec dialect but if I meet somebody like some friend from Pond Inlet, I'll switch to northern Baffin. It's like learning your mom's tongue or sort of re-speak it. Because couple of years ago when Northern Quebec people came up for a visit, there were some young people there and we went over to my cousin Paul's, there was about three of us, me, Paul and Joe. Joamie was sitting in front of us, then me and Paul started talking, I said [in Inuktitut] and those teenagers were shocked, they were saying [in Inuktitut] "you guys speak Inukjuak's Inuktitut!" I said "yeah". They were so shocked that one young lady said "can I use your phone?" so she called all the way to Inukjuak talk to her mom and said [in Inuktitut]. Just like the way they speak in Northern Quebec.

Because when we were growing up we were sort of separated from Northern Baffin and Northern Quebec were always sort of separated when we were growing up we were always like enemies with the kids who were... We were told sort of not to hang around with them too much, so in our own little area we learned only way to speak Inuktitut was the Northern Quebec way, so sort of grew up like that until we were intermingles in the school. We started to speak in a certain way.

It was good that you know that we got to learn English pretty good cause that helped a lot of my friends, because some of them got good jobs in Iqaluit and stuff like that.

In the future there is going to be a lot of stuff happening here, even right now it's like military just built a facility up there, Polar Shelf that has a three hundred twenty beds in there, where all the community here could go up there and there should be room in that building! So lots of stuff are going to be happening here in the future.

Afraid of it...it would be to lose the small town feeling and stuff like that, because couple of summers ago we were, two crew ships arrived at the same time because they changed their passengers here. The passengers come off the ship, they go on a 737 jet and they leave all from here and new ones come in. And operation Nanook was here too, so for a while there, for the first time in Resolute's history we went over the thousand person mark, there were like fourteen hundreds people here. So it started to change I guess.