

## VERBATIM

### **Philip Nungaq**

My name is Philip Levi Nungaq, 891986 and I was born in Inukjuak, it was called Port Harisson back in 1951. And in 1955, when I was going on 4 years old, my family and I were moved up to Resolute by the ship called C.D Howe. I only remember the ship ride which was very long. I kept telling my mom every time we came to a settlement: « Oh mum we are finally here, we're finally here! » But no, we just kept on sailing up to Resolute Bay. And we got there on the fall 1955.

#### ***Question 1: What was your first impression when you arrived in Resolute Bay?***

I do remember staying at my oncle's house for a while. He had moved up there in 1953 and we were moved up there two years later in 1955. They had a wooden house then and we stayed in that house for a while, until my dad could build a house and we moved to that house. We were at the west end of the village at Resolute.

#### ***Question 2: How many people were living in that house?***

I don't exactly remember but Mom and Dad, two sisters, and myself and then brothers and sisters came along about nine or ten or so. I suppose we were about nine people in that house. It was one of the bigger houses, not the biggest one, but one of the bigger houses. There was two bedrooms: mom and dad and the little babies and us sisters and us in one bedroom. That is the first house...

In summertime, everybody moved into a tent to clean up their houses and to freshen it up and it was a bit more lighter and brighter inside the tent, so everybody stayed in a the tent in summertime. And in the fall we moved back into the houses, the wooden houses.

#### ***Question 3: Do you know what the RCMP officers told your parents to convince them to go to Resolute Bay?***

I only understand that they were told that was a better hunting and more animals up there. And that they would be provided with all the things they need to live up there. And that is why they agreed to move up there. And they were told that they could go back to Inukjuak when they want to. Perhaps in two years time.

But myself, I was pretty young at that time. I didn't go through the terror and the hardship like the adult people. But I know about their hardship, their suffering, their isolation.

***Question 4: When did you learn about the relocation?***

It was only years and years later that I learned about that because I was too busy growing up in Resolute to take up history. I was just trying to keep warm, 'cause I was cold up there for about 40 years. Yeah, I was cold for 40 years up there and to me the phrase, the sentence « It's nice to be cool »... I didn't understand that for forty years until I was really really warm down south in Yellowknife! It took me forty years to understand: « nice to be cool »! 'Cause I grew up cold. Yeah, I grew up cold.

I don't remember my parents telling me the hard times they had or the suffering they went through. I only find out about that years and years later when I grew up a little bit older and a little bit wiser. I guess I can say that I didn't really grow up with the Eskimos, I kind of grew up with the white people, 'cause it's with the white people that I worked with; People from Montreal, people from Calgary, Edmonton that who I grew up with. The white folks from down south. Although I had some few intimate friends, few Eskimo friends at Resolute. Oh yes, I had some friends too.

I went to school in 1964 and we went home in summertime and in my last year in Fort Churchill at school in 1968. So I grew up kind of away from my parents. But those years in Fort Churchill looking back they were the worst years of my life, but also the best years of my life.

They were good parts and bad parts. We get educated at Fort Churchill; Yeah, I learned about Dick and Jane and stuff like that. I went back home in 1968, started working in 1970 on the tower foundation and got married in 1971.

***Question 5: Why did you decide to go back to Inukjuak?***

I never decided to come back to Inukjuak. I had no plan to come back to Inukjuak. Back in 1999, my father Levi, he passed away in Inukjuak on September 20<sup>th</sup> 1999. At that time we were living in Yellowknife and my dad passed away so I had to come here to bury him. And Inukjuak, I liked the land, the rivers, the lakes, blueberries, blackberries, cloudberries, the warm weather, the green grass. I had no plan to come here, but I just loved the land. So I had to come back here to do a bit of fishing, camping, and see the people and meet the people, the kind of people we left behind. I'm glad I came back and got to meet my distant cousins and relatives and aunts and uncles, nieces and second cousins and all that. We've been in Inukjuak for about eleven years now and Inukjuak, in my calculation they were about fifteen years behind the rest of the Eskimos in Northern

Canada, they still spoke a lot of Eskimo and they still were living almost the old way and they were very short on housing. People were living fifteen to twenty people in one house and I couldn't really believe that for a while because they are close to the trees, they are close to the white people, I thought they would have enough houses, be educated and stuff like that. But it took a little while to get adjusted to Inukjuak.

So coming back to Inukjuak, I hope I can contribute to the community and show them that they can build their own house, 'cause my wife and I we built our own house, cause nobody else got their own house. And they can have jobs. They can be on time for jobs and stuff like that. And work instead of collecting unemployment. We sure like to teach what we can.

Another thing I found out is one can survive without Hydro Québec. We don't have electricity in this house yet and we've been living here for four years now! And I'm very slow carpenter; take me a long time to finish the house. But hopefully this year, we'll get electricity and flushing toilet because now we're using honey bucket and stuff like that. And we get our own water from the river, but we like it. It also taught me what it's like to keep the house warm, 'cause in winter time, we have to keep the wood stove and the oil burning heater on. We get two stoves in the house. And if we run out of firewood, it would get very cold and it get a little bit scary, 'cause everything might freeze in here.

And that's the same kind of a scary thing my parents went through in Resolute Bay, back in 1956, because they had to keep warm and they had to collect firewood even along the beach, and my mom used to collect the firewood along the beach and my wife and I, we still remember my mom piling pieces of wood together along the shore so she can take it home after for firewood. She taught us how to survive. Being at Resolute... living at Resolute taught us how to survive 'cause if I had never been up to Resolute, I would have never build my own house. The experience that I had at Resolute, I love it. I liked the experience because it got me to travel, got me to do jobs, learn how to be a heavy operator, truck driver, and how to work, how to be on time. And I've gone to many places, during my work even way up to Alert, it's a military base way up on top of Canada. It's a great country and I believe the people who were moved to Resolute and Grise Fiord, they did a good good service for Canada in proclaiming the land. Because far North, northern part of Canada, belongs to Canada, it belongs to Canadians, cause people still live up there.

Well myself I'm grateful for being moved up to Resolute. I'm also grateful for seeing all the different places 'cause I used to go to meetings to a lot of different places; Iqaluit and Pang, Clyde River, Pond Inlet, Winnipeg and stuff like that. And I'm grateful for living in Yellowknife, it's a great little city and I'm grateful for moving back to Inukjuak, Port Harrison. And I like it here. I'm grateful. I'm glad I came to Inukjuak.

**Question 6: How difficult was it to deal with the dark season?**

We managed to survive through that, three months of darkness: November, December, January and we don't see the sun. It can get people down and that's why they drank a lot of beer in the dark season. And I miss the « muktuk» not too many in Inukjuak. We got a boat and we go boating almost every week-end. We have travelled quite a few hours and we still haven't seen any beluga whale.

At Resolute Bay, about forty five years ago, fifty years ago, we would see beluga whales about five hundred feet wide, maybe two miles long, probably five hundred in a herd. And they were just passing along the shore.

Down here in Inukjuak, it's almost like the white man's land. It's a lot warmer. My wife and I were just speaking the other day; way up at Resolute, they talk about white polar bears. In Inukjuak, they talk about black bears. A lot of black bears coming up to Inukjuak. Must be the climate warming. The Arctic is warming up, but my wife and I, we just love the warming up 'cause we can go swimming and take a bath in the little lake, the pond. We have to sometime 'cause we have no running water, so we go camping, find a little creek, little lake and wash, shampoo. It is refreshing. It's beautiful in the morning. Come back home all cleaned up. We like to camp in places we haven't been before. Oh yes!

And about three years ago, about thirty miles south of here, where I was born, I finally went back there. I finally went back to the place where I was born. It's about thirty miles south east of here and somebody told us where it was, where we use to have a camp. And my wife and I, we finally found it and we went there. We got on the land, walk, start walking and I don't know why but I cried. Some people say that when they go back to the land where they were born, they cry. Me, I was not going to cry, no, no! Why cry over a piece of land? But I cried when I... I was happy, I was sad, I cried a bit and enjoyed that place, it's a beautiful little place, beautiful little spot.

Last summer my wife and I, we put up our tent there and look at the places where my dad used to be. My wife always says: « Maybe your dad touched this rock, maybe your dad fished here, maybe your dad walked up that hill ». I like that.

**Question 7: How many children do you have?**

Children? Seven. One adopted, all grown up. We had them all at Resolute Bay. Two boys at Arctic Bay, one son and one daughter at Edmonton, one was adopted and we lost one daughter in Yellowknife and we buried her there and that was very painful... Oh God, it was painful. Oh it was painful! But we just thank God that he went through with us. She was about fifteen years old.

It was a suicide. She committed suicide. It's a problem in the north so much... But she was a very special daughter, we just thank God that we had her for fifteen years. She was very special. And I understand when people lose their sons or daughter, oh yeah I do understand. I do understand people when they lose a part of their family, their relatives. Just like when people were moved up to Resolute Bay in 1953 and 1955. Oh yeah, they lost part of... they did lose part of themselves... Oh yeah, it was very painful. And today, it is still painful for some of them.

But my wife and I we manage through the terrible time and...we are still alive. That why we love that song by Charlie Adams. He sings: « *I'm glad I'm alive* ». That is one of my favorite song : *Quviasupunga*.

Yeah, that's one of the great song that we have heard. I never got to make a speech at the last year government apologies in Inukjuak or in Resolute, but if I had, the last part of my speech would have been: « *We are just glad that we are alive* » just like our friend Charlie Adams wrote in that song. He was happy because he was still alive, and so are a lot of people today.

It's been an awesome, incredible journey for people who were move up to Resolute and Grise Fiord and some came back. Some managed to come back to Inukjuak. Yeah, incredible journey. And a lot of Eskimos grew up of that experience, some didn't make it back. A lot of them didn't make it back.

**Question 8: What would young like to say to the younger generation?**

Obey your parents, honor your parents, remember where you came from, get education, get a job... there's a lot of things. Enjoy that you are a Canadian. That you are part of Canada. 'Cause Canada is one of the great nations in the world today.

Keep Canada together, and just do your part, do your part, yeah. And make sure you get to heaven, that's about it, yeah. Because it is very important that they do good and obey God and keep God in mind. Because we have been taught evolution. One thing that I've been meaning to write about is: when I was up at Resolute there were big airplanes coming to Resolute Bay and I was about five or six years old and I didn't even think that people could make an airplane like that, 'cause they had no tools. They had no tools to make big airplanes like that. Who can make a big airplane with a hammer, saw and a chisel? Because they were the only tools I knew of.

So it had to be by evolution. Those big airplanes, they had to be empty Coke cans and they probably watched it and let it grow by itself, just like evolution and became a big airplane, 'cause those folks, they were just too dumb to make an airplane like that. Because they didn't even know how to make snow igloo. They didn't know how to travel

by dog team. They didn't know how to catch a seal... How could they build an airplane?  
Got to be by evolution!

When I was a kid, I didn't think about other cities. I didn't think about where they came from. But thank goodness we went to school. We started a little school back in about 1958. We went to this little old school. Morning, we had this plasticine. It was all frozen. We had to thaw it out in our hand so that we could work on it!

And sometimes we couldn't go home 'cause they were polar bears around. Oh yeah! Yeah! I got this shirt as a gift from my cousin who went back up to Resolute. After school we had to wait until the polar bears were taken care of. Then we could go home.

I still have two sisters and one brother up at Resolute and I sometime wonder why are they still living up there. Why didn't they move out? Well one of my sister told me:« *I'm stuck up there. I'll probably die and be buried up there*». People get use to it. Oh yeah, people get use to bad places...