

VERBATIM

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Question 1: What do you know regarding the relocation?

From the stories I have learned over the years it happened in 1953 and 55. I was just a baby at that time but my parents were involved because the family that went up is family. They are family, the uncles, the cousins, the aunts and so. There is a lot of history in our family about that. When I was growing up I didn't really know about this but one thing I remember noticing most is my mother missing her family and questioning: « Are they ever coming back? » So this is the memory I have of when I was a child and it stuck very hard because I saw my mother unhappy with feeling of maybe helplessness looking at her that way. This is very significant in my childhood as I was growing up.

As I was growing up and over the years, I understand that some of our family came back. For them I guess it was a change. I didn't notice very, very much but for me it also was a feeling of being apart even though they were next door. There is a lot going on. Many years ago I remember when I was just young and I was at the Avataq office doing some work, secretarial work and translating some stories, transcribing them to English, one of the stories was from the relocatees from Grise Fjord and he was telling the stories and he had lines and pages of the stories. So I was very touched by that because it was stories about how hard it was to live up there, how they landed up there.

How disappointed they were not to come back. What happened to their letters, they were never mailed? There were no stores; there was hardly no school when they went up. The story touched me a lot because my family was up there who were in Resolute Bay so. We didn't hear from them a lot we didn't have telephone to communicate. They would send tape-recorded cassettes of their stories. But by that time they were stories about their own success up there. In my mind I was thinking: « My God, they are doing okay ». And so that was the idea for a long time until they came back and it was very different. I think the hardest part is tried to connect with the family for us for many years. Even when they came back, some of them.

We have uncles that were left behind. So that's my story, that's today. My story is that we have a project since last year that we take the elders up to the land where the families landed in

Resolute Bay and Grise Fjord. We made a project and decided that they will go up there and visit the families. A lot of them are not alive anymore but went to the graves and they visit the place and it was a very successful project for us, because we were able to understand better where our families are coming from. Why families don't connect anymore. There is a lot of stories about that, a lot of experience. When we came back, we decided that us the younger generation with elders we will go to their home, campsites and we visited all the campsites. That was really powerful for us. For the knowledge and what happened. If you go there you will find the toys and they are not toys that we see today.

It's rocks and they are on the cliffs. They left them there. They are still there. I was like: « Oh my goodness, the respect my elders have for their place », and for me to see that, it was very powerful. It's been a very good journey for us. Maybe different experiences for each person. For me it's, I'm very touched by that because my mother felt very left behind. I was adopted; my real mother was also the sister of my mother so it was always something going on about that. There was a few visits but not a lot. This year it's now the younger generation who will go up to see. We don't stop the story there. We continue to know the story and continue to try to heal from it.

So there is something positive going on about that. And it's not us who decided that, it's our elder in our community who had requested that so we continue to do that.

There were monuments being erected in Grise Fjord and Resolute Bay last year and it was in memory of people who were relocated up there and this year we decided that we would have it here because we were giving a little bit of funding from Makivik to do something because the people, after all, that were relocated were from Inukjuak. We decided that we would have a monument erected here as well. I think it needs to be told, that it happened and there was a lot of people affected by that.

Question 2: How many of your relatives were relocated?

There was Johnnie Echalook. There was Thomasie Amagoalik. All the cousins: Simeonie Amagoalik, Jaybeddie Amagoalik, their friends, their uncles, Allie Patsauq... So they were very close and then suddenly they were not there anymore. I was able to understand better when we went to the campsites last years as they talk about it, who was not there anymore, that kind of stuff.

Question 3: Were the relocatees able to stay in touch with their families in Inukjuak?

When they finally had news, they had, I remember the cassette tapes, the round one. They started to play them. Nobody had the machines here. There was that one guys who had the machine. We would go to the house and listen to them and this is how they started to communicate because of the recorded reels of cassette, cassette like tapes. I don't remember what they were called anymore. That's how they started to communicate and they write letter.

Question 4: How long did it take before they heard back from them?

Maybe 15 years, something like that, maybe more for some of them. Because I remember my stepmother, my aunt she had uncles, they didn't hear from him for a long time. I remember that. She had another uncle from my grandmother side they heard first from him rather than the other one. So it was a long time.

I never really got to sit down from my stepmother to talk about it but I saw her, a lot with the sadness, the sadness that was how she talks about her cousins, her uncle you know. Only more of that I remember. But from my mother, my biological mother was able to tell more stories how long it was before they were able to see each other again. The uncle was the father figure for them. So it was very hard for them. They grew up in the house, the uncle's house, my biological mother anyway. It was like losing a father. So there was always that father figure conversation when they talk about him or the wife, the father, the mother figure. So there were always stories about that, how they grew up and who did what rather than just staying. They're not talking. Just a little bit of talking about that, every now and then.

Question 4: Must have been hard to see your mother hurting?

I didn't really understand a lot how much it had affected her until much later. So it was hard. Our parents when we were kid, they didn't cry a lot. They didn't fight, they didn't cry. When that happens, there is something wrong, you know. There is something not right.

Question 5: What did you think of the government's apology?

It was late. I think it was good for the people. I think this is what they wanted for a long time. They have their own stories. To see that for them to have that relief of finally, it was good. I think that was a good gesture from the government to have the people hear about: « We are

sorry we did this. Should never happen again », that kind of stuff. I was happy that they were able to hear that even though some of them, a lot of them have passed on. It was a good thing...they can now step another step. It's important.