

VERBATIM

Susan Salluviniq

My name is Susan Salluviniq. We were relocated here in 1955 from Pond Inlet. I was a year old when we were relocated here. I've been living here pretty well all my life, other than the time when I went to school. My mother was packing me when we were relocated here and you know, when the families were relocated here we thought the only family that we had were the family that we had in the community, because our parents did not talk about their other relatives. I guess it was too painful. I knew I had older siblings that I didn't know about... well my mother and father would tell us that we had other siblings. I didn't get to meet my oldest sister until I was almost twenty. She went to a meeting at Iqaluit and I was there to have my baby, so I met her for the first time there.

My oldest sister had gotten married and moved out to Gjoa Haven and we were relocated here, after they had moved on to Gjoa Haven.

Question 1: Have your parents ever talk about the relocation?

No, they did not. I didn't find out until later, after I saw some pictures of what route my parents took when we were relocated here. They didn't talk very much about being relocated. But I remember some food, their native food that they were craving for, like there's small fish in Resolute's lake and that's what we would try and get. They were used to their native food and then one time, we were trying to catch some seagulls. They were craving for things that they were used to, like snow geese and other, ducks or whatever, because there was hardly anything around here. There was no vegetation, no char, big chars that they were used to. They were no geese around in the spring time, some native food that they were used to, or even things like berries, there was nothing here so...

I know that later on they were craving for that kind of food. One time my grandmother took me out fishing at the sea and I was wondering why are we fishing there? Because the fish around here are landlocked. So, I didn't know that the fish went to the sea and that was something that she was used to. So I was ashamed when we were fishing in the sea ice when I knew that there was no fish, but there was some people around and I didn't want to be seen but I was following

her around. You know just their usual diet, things that they were used to, later on I found out that they were craving for their native food, but there was none around here.

There is seal, there is plenty of seals and there are polar bears, but you know at that time narwhals weren't even coming around here and this is was something that my parents were used to. Today, we'll meet some people who won't eat beluga because they're used to narwhal, but there is abundance of narwhals in the summertime.

Question 2: How was it growing up in Resolute?

I had some good friends that I grew up with. A good friend of mine Ana Nungaq and I grew up together and Leah Eckalook too. But there was this other young girl who was a good friend of mine who moved back to Inukjuak who now lives at Puvirnituk. She was a good friend of mine too, but sometimes there would be a fight between Baffin islanders and Quebecers, but we learned to live with each other, we learned their language, their dialect, they learned ours. They were taught things that they didn't know about the Baffin region. They taught us about things that we did not know about their way of life.

Question 3: What kind of fights?

Throwing rock, young people...young children calling names, that's how it was sometimes, we would be fighting, throwing rocks, but still after the fights we became good friends again you know, we had to live with each other. And it wasn't until the hearing that, that relocation hearing that my husband and I found out that we were angry at the government, not at each other. My husband and I never used to like Resolute Bay and we had agreed that wherever his father moved, that we would follow along, but he passed on and my husband asked me if I wanted to go to Pond Inlet because my siblings, most of them were alive then. I said no, I didn't want to. And after the hearing, we found out, oh we live in a very beautiful community, this is a very nice place, we are so blessed.

I didn't want to move to a bigger community because of our children, I didn't want to lose the connection that we had. You know in the other communities we hear about all the mischief that goes on or whatever. It's not too bad here, it's a lot better here because being a small community we have closer connections with our children.

Question 4: When the bar on the military base opened up to Inuit, did it affect the community?

We were into drinking a lot. When my husband was allowed to go to the bar we drink a lot and then when the bar closed we were able to order alcohol from the east and the west and therefore there was a lot of drinking but then my husband and I quit drinking after that and seems like the community changed a lot.

Question 5: What do you know of your parents' hardships?

I think it was pretty hard, like, even though my family is from Pond Inlet, when I first went to Pond Inlet I was wondering: «wow, my family left this place?» and when my husband and I first went to Inukjuak we went for a walk and what a big difference! We would go out boating, there's food all over seems like compare to Resolute Bay. It's so different...

Question 6: Your husband is from Inukjuak?

He was born in Inukjuak, he was three going on to four, I think. We pass through Iqaluit just recently and my husband and John Amagoalik were talking about what they had to do like, before the ship came in. We would be given new clothes. Our parents would make beautiful clothes so that people will think that we are happy. My husband said that John Amagoalik's mother used to play the accordion and my husband used to dance. This was to show the world that they were happy. And we'd be taken up to what is called airbase at Christmas time and we would have to put on the best clothes and they'd give us presents you know, they'd take pictures of happy people even though deep in their hearts, they weren't happy.

My mother passed away at St Albert and my father passed away about three years later. I used to interpret for Sarah Amagoalik who was late Simeonie's wife. They would be people coming who would be writing books or they'd interview her, or newsletters or magazines and she would tell her story, reliving over and over and over again until one day she said: « Will anything be done this time? ». You know that really touched me when she said that because she thought something would finally be done, that somebody would finally hear of what had happened.

But yes the apology was something that they had wanted especially Simeonie who was living here. When I was the mayor somebody from the prime minister's office came to meet me and

said that the prime minister would like to meet with us...meet with me. I said, there are two other people that I would like to bring with me. He seemed upset and said: « Well, in that case we will have to bring two other people» and I said: « That's okay ».

So we met at Polar Shelf, quietly you know, privately and when I shook the hand with Prime Minister I said: « If it wasn't for these two people and the rest of the people who were with them in 53, we wouldn't be here. » And I told him not to take anything personally, that they will speak from their hearts. I told Simeonie that « Express whatever you want to, I will do all the translating ».

But you know he was a changed man, he said some kind words and then my husband spoke to him later on, and then my husband gave him letters that had been written to him, to the prime minister and asked him if he had received them. « No », he said. He said he had never received them. So he finally got the letters that had been written to him about the relocation. And it was not too long after that that the prime minister apologized to residential schools students and then he apologized to the relocatees later on. I'm so glad that he apologized, something that the older generation had wanted.

Question 7: What was Sarah saying about the relocation?

She would tell what they went through when they were being relocated from Inukjuak to here and about what the living conditions were and all that. She said they were in front of the ship and every time the ship would park where it was going to be they could hear the chains and it was impossible to sleep-

Simeonie got interviewed after Sarah had passed on and he said, when they were first relocated here, they would go to the dumps to go and look for food and he and Amagoalik would go to the dumps secretly to collect wood to build a house. And he said when they finished it, there was another family group that was saying: « I want that house» and because there was dispute, the RCMP said no, nobody is going to live in there, it's going to belong to us. I mean, that's one of the stories that I can't forget about...what Simeonie told.

Question 8: What other stories did he use to tell?

He said he would be out on the land, some scientists or police that he had to take out on the land, he said he would leave his family without anything to eat and they would catch a polar bear, or he would catch a polar bear, they would take the skin without paying him and when he

got back from these long trips, they never paid him. He said one time they got tired of seal meat or polar bear meat, they were longing for their native basic food that they were used to.

He used to say when they first landed here. This is the song that the minister wanted to sing before going to land, and it's about...I can't remember the words but the song goes, it's a hymn something that goes like « what a beautiful land we live in...» you know something like that. And he said that he could never forget that particular song, when they were relocated here. They were living in tents when they got here and he said that they got tired of seal meat and polar bear meat, that there wasn't much to hunt other than those two wildlife.

We used to go to the dump to look for food. We were used to that, we would look for other things too like even nice glasses anything that looks nice, that's what we did.

We didn't know that there were big fish until we started going to Somerset. In fact my sister in law went down to Somerset with us one time, we'd ask her to babysit our children and she said yes and she'd be gone until one day she decided to babysit, she said when she was fishing she saw a big fish for the first time and was afraid that she would get pulled by the big fish, you know we were used to the small little chars. Us younger people we didn't know that there were such things as big chars, we were so used to landlocked fish.

Question 9: What happened to your father?

We were relocated here in 1955 and Doug Wilkinson knew him pretty well from a film that I had seen. He's a different man. From what he told...because of the big difference that he was now living from being a leader in Pond Inlet and then coming here, he said he did have that role anymore. I don't believe that. He said to have committed suicide but somebody had told me that he had seen him spiritually, that he had fallen asleep on his way home you now driving his snow machine and by the time he woke up it was too late. And some people started saying that he committed suicide, but I knew all along that he didn't so I was very happy when it was reconfirmed that he did not commit suicide.

Question 10: Did the fact that you were from Pond Inlet and your husband was from Inukjuak create any tension in your relationship?

When people first got relocated there was a language difference and my husband was used to speaking his dialect at his home and I was used to speaking my dialect at my home even though

I was speaking northern Quebec with my good friend fluently. But when we were married, we would argue about certain words, but you know love conquers all. We were in love.

Of course we had differences, I guess just like any other couple. We even wanted to get separated a few times, but it's different today. Today we now know that God meant for us to be together.

It wasn't until later that he would start speaking about it and what he went through. Like when we were drinking sometimes he would take it out on me, but I also would, when I was angry, I would take it out on him too you know. From what we had gone through, his mother was away a lot, when she had TB and him being the oldest of the siblings, he was taking it out on his siblings. But he has apologized to his siblings about it.

When people were first relocated here, there was mainly, I think mainly one family that was into drinking so before then, there was a good foundation, people were happy and in the springtime people would be out playing ball and all that. And then it wasn't until later that the bar opened and... At the beginning it didn't really affect me and my husband. I guess from the hurt, the relocation and all, but later on there was quite a bit of drinking, there was a lot of drinking. There was this guy who is, who was here and he said when they pass through here they wouldn't see any children playing out, everybody was afraid and later on when he came here he said: « Oh there are children playing out». And I thought yeah, of course. He said when they were living here, none of the children were playing out.

You know it really surprised me too one time...When my husband and I were going through problems, we didn't know where the anger was from and all that. One time I heard my children singing, wow! I didn't know this was normal, but I could hear them singing. It wasn't until later on that we started going through healing. And it was painful, that relocation was painful. Seems like pretty well every family member that had been relocated is separated all over. Of course we miss our siblings, but I'm very happy to say that this is slowly starting to change in our community. People are now finding out about their relatives. Like every trip that we take to Inukjuak we are finding more of Allie's relatives that we didn't know or hear about. There finally healing going on and I'll hear about some stories about what young people went through, that I did not go through, but they talk about things that they had gone through like, like one of my friend, I would tell her: « You know that you're supposed to help you elders, do you know that you are supposed to visit them when you can, did you know that you're supposed to bring food to people when you get food? » She said: « Where did you hear that from? » I said: « Our parents taught us those things » and she said she had never heard about them. And she'd tell me stories that are very painful that I did not go through. I'm very grateful for the protection that we had.

Everybody is affected, that was relocated, every single part of the family is affected. I've seen that. It even goes to their grandchildren, like you'll see the anger that came from the grandfather. Like it affect everybody. There's been a lot of pain and it affects everyone you know. There have been marriages falling apart, there have been separations, a lot of that went through you know there are a lot of single parents in our community that is caused by the relocation. My husband and I turned to the Lord when we had nowhere else to go. And we went through healing and people started coming to us, there has been a lot of sexual abuse, a lot of sexual abuse.

I don't know if anybody is going to do anything about it but when it comes up, it is dealt with through the justice system, only through that. My husband and I have prayed for some people that had been sexually abused, so there's lot of sexual abuse for a small community.

Question 10: How did the healing week in Inukjuak go and did it help?

I think it helped quite a bit like there was healing workshop I think for a day or two, but the best part I liked was when everybody went to where the families were picked up. Apparently my husband's family was picked up from somewhere else along with another family. On our way back they asked my husband if he wanted to go there, he said no, it's alright; he doesn't like to be a bother. He said no it's alright. I said we should go there while your sister and them are here, so he finally agreed to go. We went there... It was awesome...the family that had been with them followed us and we prayed together and we did some crying and it was wonderful, it was great. Just the family members, my husband's family members, plus this other couple who knew about the relocation went there. We didn't know where the family was relocated from, so they told us this is where they were picked up from, so it was great, it was wonderful.

If possible my husband would like to look for some money to bring the rest of the family down there; our children, my husband's younger brother David didn't go, his family and their youngest sister, well from the mother's side, their youngest sister from Iqaluit and they have another sister down in Winnipeg, so Allie would like to, yes and I think some of the cousins, if possible.

You know with this sovereignty that the prime minister talks about, I think it has partly to do with that plus Alert and Eureka you know they are government's stations, everything is provided for them. They are there to work, but although people were relocated here, there's absolutely no financial assistance, food wise anyways although the prime minister promised us the federal government or Leona Aglukkaq promised that -they will assist our community in

rebuilding the utilidor system. Other than that there's the high cost of flying, there's high cost of living. You know we'll watch people on the news complaining about the fuel bill that they pay per year which is probably equivalent to our one month fuel bill. And we are wondering what are they complaining about? Right now we'll go to the coop store and there's hardly anything. There's too many passengers so there's not much freight that comes up and sometimes by the time the fruit is here, it's not fit to eat. You know it's all these little things that come together you know bring so much anger when they get together, when us human beings, when we get hit by so much anger by this and that you know it get big and it's the same thing.

The Queen Elizabeth Islands are very important there's richness that we don't know about right now but if we would move, it wouldn't be recognized as Inuit community.

Question 1: What are your hopes for the younger generation?

You know, it's only me and my husband that went to Inukjuak but when we got back we told them, you have so many relatives in Inukjuak. Young people here don't know much about their relatives and this is something that I would want to see because there's intermarriages today that are marrying their relatives because of lack of knowing other relatives like, I didn't know I had a cousin until much much later, you know all these relatives and all that we didn't know about. This really shuts you down when it comes to relatives so I sure wouldn't mind seeing like it was great for some people to come up here from Inukjuak to come and see their family members, but they're the only ones that they saw too. So it would be great if young people would somehow meet their family members even though they can do this over the phone or the internet, it's different when you meet them person to person.