

## VERBATIM

### **Terry Audla**

I'm Terry Audla and I grew up in Qausuittuq, Resolute Bay. I left home at 13 for school down to Iqaluit here. I've been here ever since on and off. I've been back to Resolute quite often. I'm currently the chief executive officer for Nunavut Tungavik Inc. And back then, small town boy coming down to what I thought was a big city, seeing the sun for the first time in December. I'd never seen the sun in December and just the whole world kind of opened up to me. It was quite eye opening to me.

#### ***Question 1: How was it growing up in Resolute?.***

Resolute was a highly transient community; meaning there were a lot of people from other town that came through. It was the staging point for high arctic exploration, oil and gas, North Pole expeditions. So it was quite busy in that sense. If you compare the two communities, Resolute and Grise Fjord, Grise Fjord was very strong in its tradition, its culture, more hunters, capable people that could go out on the land. Where in Resolute a lot of it was based on income working and actually dealing more with none Inuit as opposed to Grise Fjord.

So growing up around then, I had almost lost my language. I couldn't speak Inuktitut for a while. It took me the time to move down here to Iqaluit to actually regain my language back, and at the same time, the strong basics from my mom. She's originally from northern Quebec, she grew up in the Inukjuak area and she was one of the people relocated up to Resolute back in 1955 when she was a young girl. Just hearing her speak about some homeland that I've never seen. Hearing her talk about how she misses picking berries, how she misses going out into the bushes growing up in the area that she did. Mentioning that she would like to see the sun in winter once again. I had no clue what she was talking about. It took me to leave town to actually find out. It was in 1984-86 around then, that's when the families of the high arctic relocates ended up in town here, in Iqaluit.

And they were actually holding their meetings and discussions at the gym where the resident where I stayed for the student residence. When I started hearing about all of that. It was like an, how do you say, an epiphany, an eye-opener. Oh it's that what she was talking about! It's that what she was longing for. I understand now. In a certain way it explains to me why my mom, her generation, why they seemed so pained and hurt. It made me realize what it was that they had gone through and why they were coping the way they were.

Resolute in its first few years, from what I heard, from when they were relocated in 53 and 55, there was an army base. In the beginning both sides were restricted from any contact. I heard from my aunt Elizabeth, my mom and my other aunt Dora how they would sneak to the base

dump to look for food because they couldn't necessarily ask the people at the base. The base personnel I've heard, knowing that this was happening actually threw good food away just to make sure that when they do go looking for food that there was actually food at the dump.

I could remember one story my aunt Elizabeth told where they would come back, this is like a 5-6 miles walk there and back so that's 10 miles and they come back with frozen fruits and then wait patiently for it to thaw out. I couldn't imagine that and it explained a lot to me about the hurt that they had gone through. Eventually they opened up the base in the mid to late sixties. I was born in 1970 and at that point the bar; there was a bar at the base. I think it was called high arctic explorer's club or high arctic club. If you mix the longing of home, the pain and hurt of having been relocated. And it to have those groups of individual going to a new way of trying to cope with pain: the alcohol and the mixture of that. That's when I was born and then for the 7-8 years, I think, in my opinion I would never want a child to go through what I went through.

The amount of abuse, the amount of pain and suffering. I mean my mother; she has been medivac on maybe four or five occasions because of beatings from my father. For me the see that, in a sense, I thank god in lot of ways, because I've never repeated that cycle and this was up to the age of 12. In the spring and summer, before I came down for school, my parents were still abusing alcohol like everybody here, like every other adult in Resolute. And it was a lot of people going through that pain and suffering and there was a lot of lost children in my opinion because almost every home in that town had to go through that. The parents that was their way of coping in a sense. Eventually they closed the bar down. For all my friends, my cousins in Resolute, being a child we had to fend for ourselves and try and had to try and cope with the abuse in the home, the violence.

And it took one spring summer before I came down here for high school and I had a little brother at the time. He and I were in the home, in that violent home. And because I had to leave in the fall, I really started worrying about my little brother and leaving him with my parents who were struggling and trying to cope with the alcohol and everything else. It took one afternoon when I came home and they had bottles in front of them, they were again drinking and I knew that it was going to cause trouble. Every time they drink, there was trouble. So I grabbed those bottles and I poured them down like that and I said to them: "I'm going to be leaving this fall and I don't want to leave my little brother, not with you two, not the way you abuse the alcohol, not the way you abuse each other. My little brother does not deserve to be in a home like this." And I dropped the empty bottles and went to my room crying. Five, ten minutes later, both my parents came into my room crying and that's when it hit them.

They hadn't a drink ever since. Well my mom, she still loved her wine but rather than being extreme alcoholics they turned to God. They exercised more of their energy into following the bible and that. And that for me, I think, saved me because I actually intervened and made a difference. If I haven't done that, I don't know where I'd be today. I'd probably be repeating that cycle. But going back to growing up as a child, peer pressure, we'd break into buildings, we'd break into school, we'd break into the COOP, we'd break into everything. There'd be sniffing gas and that's basically what I mean by the "lost children" it's just to get away from

home. If you can imagine in the summer, in Resolute, 24 hour sunlight. So the sun is above the horizon for that time period and the kids are out, with the sun. And they are not at home, they are avoiding home because they don't want to be in that violent filled home.

My friends, my cousins, we'd be all together; we'd be doing what ever we could to entertain ourselves. The RCMP, we kept them busy. Not only the parents but the children as well. But it took one event where the RCMP came to my home and ask me about a certain event, a break in. The problem is I didn't know which one they were talking about. Being a rookie criminal I guess, I started confessing about the wrong incident. Now suddenly the RCMP's had more evidence on another. I didn't come to that realization until later and I thought that I'm dumb for doing that. And then they came back again for another event then I started to realize they are coming to me because they know I'm a little troublemaker so obviously if someone breaks into this place it must have been him. So they come to me to see and I got "no, I'm not like that, it's not me". At that point I just decided "no it's not the life I want to go down, it's not the path I want to choose. It's not something I want to be."

I've seen crime, I've seen abuse and it's one thing you need to tell yourself. You can't carry on that sad behavior. You have to cut yourself loose and do your own thing. Learn from them. Don't emulate them. Don't try and become as sad and depressed as they are. You need to move on. I mean they had their struggles and their issues. Why take them as your own? Last event of the break in, I lived in a home next door of what used to be a drop in center, a "youth drop in center" and they close that down because of lack of funding or at one point someone had turn the thermostat way to high and everything plastic melted. And that happened to be next door to my house. So I broke in, I was bored it was 4 o'clock maybe and the sun was still out and I went into the back storage. I found cases and cases, boxes full of National Geographic magazine.

So I took all those boxes to my home 'cause it was right next-door. And I spent the whole summer reading and it expanded my world. It told me that there is more to Resolute than, within what I'm going through. It really expended my horizons. To a certain degree I credit that event as something that helped me survive. It made me all the more excited about leaving town, going to school and doing well. This is chain of event that happened. I'm one of the lucky ones.

Sadly, the majority, they weren't that many that were that lucky. And it became obvious at one point because I was a correctional officer for 3 years and I had friends and cousins in there from Resolute. I try and imagine how is it that I'm on this side of the door and he's on the other side. I think it's a coping mechanism. You have to confront whatever it is that's not right and try to learn from that and move on. I mean once in a while, I always thought because I had friends in Grise fjord and they seemed very healthy, mentally and physically. Because they were not going through the same amount of alcohol abuses as in Resolute. They were very capable hunters. I always look up to them and envy them. That was the situation in Resolute. I mean there was so many occasions, Elizabeth was a huge help in my (up bringing). She was one of the sober one, the more responsible. But she, again because the town was going through the suffering, it put a lot on Elizabeth. My little brother and I we use to run away.

And stay with her or go to my grand-ma. My grandma Minnie Allakarialak. She was the backbone of the community. She was the one that, in my opinion, single-handedly kept that town of Resolute from going into full and complete chaos. She grounded everyone. In the sense that she reminded everyone: "listen there is more to life than this abusive alcohol". I heard one incident where, the city council, not the city, the hamlet council, the village council. My uncle Georges Echalook he was the mayor and the council were debating about whether or not to get a license restaurant. My grand mother was listening to this debate back and forth. Finally she said (Inuktitut) it means "what all this debate about a restaurant. If you are hungry you can come to my place." End of discussion right.

And that's how she grounded everyone and there is not doubt, I mean that generation they needed help but they didn't know how to ask for it. So they coped the way they could. That's the way I see it and understand it. It came full circle when they came to that student residence when I was a student there and that's when they had the meeting about the high arctic relocatee trust and the establishment. And it again brought back memories of my mom and her longing for a home that I've never seen or necessarily heard about and it was just the way it was in Resolute. I mean I thought that was how everything was. I didn't know anything else right?

When I was a little child I use to wake up screaming. And I recall the dream very vividly. And basically, those dreams involve me and a dark corner. And there was this machine or multiple machines eating away at my world and I had nowhere to turn and right before they reach me I would wake up screaming. I had that dream over and over. At a certain point it all stopped. And I think it was the point where I actually confronted my parents about the drinking and everything else. It almost like it freed a lot of my...I broke a lot of shackles, the things that were weighing me down but I didn't know that I was weighted down.

At a certain point in life, when you look back that's when you say ok these are the milestones, these are basically what help me to move on. I can imagine, I mean I feel very sad for those who never been able to unshackle themselves. To releases themselves from all that weigh. I know the recent apology and the events unveiling of the monuments. In a certain way, I saw some of the, my aunt, my mom that generation, actually look a lot more relieved. They were happy to have seen that finally come to fruition. They grew up through a lot of hardship and they had their own coping mechanism. In most cases it was the wrong coping method because of the accessibility to the alcohol.

I still think about my cousins that still need to go through that to actually free themselves from the hurt and pain. I wish to God that they would take that and move on, learn from it. There is a cliché, what doesn't kill you make you stronger. There are a few gems in the whole family of the people are descendant from the high arctic relocates who are very strong, who are very successful and who have moved on and who have done well. In my opinion based on any per capita bases, there are good numbers from the high arctic that they are very successful. That have involvement in today's Nunavut government, Nunavut Tungavik the other regionally organization, the development corporations. They've gone through adversity. Because they've

gone through that, it's made them in my opinion, stronger. That needs to be passed on to others.

An amazing experience I never wish on anyone but the same time it's who I am. At one point when I was a correctional officer, my father, he had come into town for a healing workshop and he was staying at my place. I came home after work and I was cooking supper. He came in from his workshop, day two or something like that. I could feel him, sense him coming closer and closer. He got right behind me and I could tell that something was bothering him and I looked at him and he was in tears. And he gave me a hug and he said: "I'm so sorry for the life I put you through." I hugged him back and I said: "Dad, if someone ever ask me would I change or exchange my life, would I do it. I'd tell them no because I am what I am today because of what I went through and I'd never ask for another life because I don't know what another life would bring me." When I told him that I could see that it was almost physical, the weight coming off his shoulder when he heard me say that.

When he heard me say that I could tell that it was a big healing process for him. But I told him: "Dad (Inuktitut)". In other words "I learned from you, I learned not what to do" and me saying that in my opinion really helped him out. It's unfortunate because I know my sisters, my brothers they haven't had the opportunity of that with mom and dad. Mom she moved on in February. All she ever had was love, forgiveness and some people would say maybe too forgiving for the amount of violence and the amount of hurt she gone through. But at the same time because of my grandmother's stone hard conviction with morals and she totally respected Christianity. If you are married, till death tear you apart, through good times and bad. She kept telling her daughters: "regardless of the hurt you are going through you need to protect that sanctity of marriage. You are committed to that man." Which was in a sense very traditionalistic but at the same time, a lot of people would argues maybe that was a bad advice, because, nowadays if a man in any ways touches a woman, for all the wrong reasons, the woman will act on it either with the law or whatever and they should.

Again, it's something that shouldn't be done. Our men need to know that. Never raise a hand to a woman regardless of what you are going through. That was one thing that I was taught but in a very different way. I think I came to a realization at a very young age. It happened to be a saturday night. I remember hockey night in Canada on CBC and it was in December, dark season and it was maybe half an hour before mom and dad were coming back from the bar. The bar was about 8 kilometers away from the village and they would all come back on their snowmobiles and you could hear your parents come home. My older sister, myself, and my younger brother Frank would hide under the bed.

I could hear my parents walking in and I could hear my dad beating my mom. I was lying under the bed wondering why are we like this? I mean I was seven, I was not necessarily supposed to think that way I don't think. I made the effort of crawling out from underneath the bed. And there my sister goes "no stay"! I go "no this is not right". So I went in the living room and there I saw my father beating my mom. I grabbed one of my younger brother's toys, a little horse on wheel with the handlebars sticking out of the ears and I started beating my dad with that. My

dad, he turn to me, grabs me by the ankles pulled my feet from underneath me and my mom jumped on him and yelled at me: “get out!”

And here I am, I’m adjusting my long johns, no shoes, no socks and I go out the door. This is in the middle of December, dark, it’s like twelve thirty, one o’clock in the morning and I’m running to my grand mother’s. It’s about two blocks away. I’m bare foot in the snow, running. I remember vividly the echoes of my footsteps on that snow. I ran to the back door of my grandma’s, because it was the closest door, and I was hoping against hope. I hope it’s open. Sure enough I turned the knob, I opened it. It’s open. I look in, there is my grandma knitting next to a lamp. She looks up and all she says is: (Inuktitut) go ahead into one of the rooms.

No question ask, she knew exactly what was going on. To this day when ever I see a woman knitting, I have this sense of comfort come over. Grandma and aunt Elizabeth were a huge part in the sanctity I guess and the safety of a lot of the children in Resolute. It’s something that, at the same time, even though hurtful and painful it’s also what I have it’s also who I am and what it made me today. It’s just something that I cherish but I don’t wish on anyone else. That’s how it was growing up in Resolute.

### ***Question 2: Was school a safe place?***

I used to be one of those kids that totally involve myself in all of that. I used to have classmate complaining “I don’t want to do this, this is hard, this is stupid!” and I would be the one saying: “Just do it!” One of my first teachers in kindergarten was Annie Padlaq. She since passed on, her drawings are right up there and I don’t know if you ever heard the song: “Stompin Thom Connor” saying there is another guy that wrote it (maqtaq Annie). To a certain degree that was based on her. She was a kindergarden teacher and just that sanctity. “Ok I get to go to school, I pretend like everything is normal”, but back then we use to have these crayon. They were about that long and that thick, really big crayons. We you took the wrapper off, they looked so good. And basically I remember a little girl my age we went under the table started eating the crayons. Because that’s the thing in Resolute, In a sense I could say I was malnourished.

I have an eighteen years old boy now he’s almost a foot taller then me. Big boy, because I fed him well. I grew up tea, bannock, toast and if I was lucky some caribou and polar bear meat, but those were few and far between in Resolute. That’s what I mean about seeing my cousins and that from Grise Fjord they were healthy. Where is me in Resolute I was what you call an (Inuktitut) a little thin wiping boy sort of thing. School was certainly an escape. It helped me and I think it helped a lot of students as well. They use to offer soup and pasta after recess. There is two part to Resolute, there is the original village, where the dump is now, close to where the monument was recently unveiled. Then in 1975, they moved everyone to where the village is now.

I didn’t get to go to school at the old village but I do remember my fist day of school in 1975. The school was in the new part of town and we were still living in the old village and there was a

bus. I missed the bus on the first day, I was devastated. I remember trying to run to catch up to the bus but didn't make it so I missed the first day of school. On the second day, I went. I didn't know what to expect, I'd never been to school. All my friends, my classmates they were all standing around waiting for the teachers to show up to open up the school.

I was kind of standing there, wondering "ok what are we doing? All of a sudden they all started cheering. They were two kabloonak, two white teachers Mr. and Mrs. Adams. All the kids cheering and running, surrounding them. That was my first experience going to school. That again is quite unique because the school is on the edge of town. Resolute is known for its polar bears. So you can imagine in the dark season, we went out for recess. We didn't go into the playground because there were no lights. They didn't have the floodlight on the edge of town. So all the kid would be waiting for the 15 minutes to be over standing at the door, waiting to get back in, They fed us there. That was one way of getting some nutrient into our body. After that, the bar close down.

Things really settle down but there were still you know people flying and alcohol and that. Then the mine opened up, Little Cornwallis Island Polaris. So there was a lot of men from town that manage to get jobs and my father was one of them. In a way it kind of contribute to the continuance of the abuse because he would do like a two week in two week out rotation. And in another sense the personnel at the base, originally was the army base, but it was the ministry of transport, federal employees, (????) the hotel Narwell, all of them. Once in a while mostly on weekend, they would come down to the village looking for women. My mom, she was very attractive and in my opinion I wouldn't be here today if those baseman didn't come down and do what they did. They had their way. But at the same time my mom and others, were willing. I have to try to look at it in that way. In some cases some were forced.

Some were exchanged and in lot of the cases that angered the husbands, the men. It was just something I knew it was a fact of life for me. I didn't know anything else. I know of a couple guys still in Resolute that are still angry about that.

I'm saying let's move on. We need to heal and we need to go forward. That's Resolute to me in a nutshell.

***Question 3: Why do you think your parents decided not to go back to Inukjuak when it finally became possible?***

Because my father was successful in being able to maintain a job. He was able to hold down a job. He was quite involved at the Hamlet council level, mayor maybe once or twice. He was also involved with the Inuit movement. There is a book called "*The oil and the amulets*" there is one section on Resolute and his picture right in there. He had his little home office I remember. So he was active in that sense. Then he moved on and started working at the mine and came back as a settlement maintainer for the housing, local housing authority.

In that sense, because he was active, he was able to sort of maintain some semblance of a life. Whereas they were other that was struggling that couldn't either find a job or maintain a job. They still had their memories of when they were younger of having a better life. That was definitely an option for them to go back. I believe the first families were moved down in the early 80's, mid 80's. Jaypilie Amagoalik, Lizzie my aunt, the Naqti's, Ally Naqti and family, Idlout some of them and the Echalook's, they moved back down back then because that was some options that was made available to them.

***Question 4: Was it difficult for the people who went back to Inukjuak?***

For the older generation it was probably a big relief but for the younger generation that has, like for me I've never lived in Inukjuak but I've gone there a few times. I've got cousins there and I see it as a very healthy community based on tradition. Whereas Resolute didn't have that history or that tradition. You can imagine, and I call, the generation I would call the lost children. We didn't know anything else. For us, for anyone to go into another town like that, it's only natural that it is going to be difficult. I've heard of cases where some people aren't very welcoming but that's you know every small town in Canada in my opinion. But the circumstances are quite unique as well.

***Question 5: Do you have any advice for the younger generation?***

Get your education. Become more worldly. Know about the earth that you live on, not just the town you live in. Know that there is a lot more out there. Whatever hurt you go through, it will pass, tomorrow, the next hour, it will pass. Never give up and move on!