

VERBATIM

Minnie Echalook

My name is Minnie Echalook and I live in Inukjuak. I was born in North. I have heard about the exiles and my mother had told me that she has older sister. I have thoughts about if she was still alive. Wondering where she would be living. She had told me these and shared them wondering about her older sister. I wasn't born in 1953 but in 1954.

My mother had received a hat that belonged to Mary. I had used that hat because my mom told me about it. My mother hadn't seen her older sister for twenty-one years. When she was leaving to Montreal, she needed money for her ticket. She used the money that I have collected through child tax and I have given it to her so she could go see her older sister.

She was happy when she first saw her sister. In year 1968 and 1969, I went to school in Churchill for three years and I realized I had a family and it was Mary, which it was your sister. I met her and my mother met her older sister's daughter and she was very happy about it. When my mom got ill she tried asking for her older sister. Her sister never came to see her.

Her sister never arrived on time. That really had touched me deeply. I have experiences with my mother about not having to see her older sister and that had impacted me a lot. I remember my mom was really proud of me about meeting her older sister's daughter.

Question 1 : What do you think of the government's apology?

I am happy that the government apologized to the exiles. Here in Inukjuak we are touched by the history of exile, students leaving their community to go to school, people being left behind. Here in Inukjuak they have been silent about these histories because they have been deeply hurt about the past. When they have opened the wounds of the past what had happened we are happy about it.

I have took part in healing with the students that went to school before that started in Inukjuak and at that time I followed my husband when the healing started. Resolute Bay does not have any plants at all. It's all rocks.

When I found out about them surviving in harsh land I was very proud of them and that they did not give up. I didn't go up there because none of my family is there anymore.

Question 2 : What would like to say to young people of your community?

For young people I want to tell them life has different cycles. Life goes through different cycles, through hard times and they have to pass that hardship. I want them to talk about the issues and resolve them. Some of them cannot let out their problems when they should talk about them.