

VERBATIM

Moses Idlout

My name is Moses Idlout and I come from Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet). I was born near Mittimatalik. Yes, when my wife's relatives were moving here, we moved here too and we've been here since.

When the relocation started in 1952, we were asked to go there. My father used to work for the Americans a lot. He had to work. So we were only relocated in 1955 because the Government ordered us to. People were being relocated from Quebec. That's why we went to Resolute in 1955. We were supposed to go there in 1952 but we only moved there in 1955. We lived in Aulatsivik. That's what it was called. It's about ninety miles from Mittimatalik.

Let me get back to where I started. At first, we were asked to move in 1952, but because my father had the duty of taking care of the Americans in 1955, the government ordered us to move, therefore we moved. We were the second group to be relocated.

Yes, there were already passengers from Quebec when we boarded the ship. Passengers from Inukjuak were in the process of relocation.

When we arrived there, Qausuittuq is different than all the other places. It's not the same as Mittimatalik. When we arrived in Resolute it was ice. Maybe this height here, seven feet, was about the thickness of the ice on the bay. When we arrived in the middle of August by ship, the ship broke the ice. It was snowing the next day. Fall season was starting. It's very different from Mittimatalik. It was a lot colder. It was very different when we arrived there.

Up there, it seems Resolute and Mittimatalik are close in distance. Our ancestors, my grandfathers went there to hunt polar bears. My mother knew of stories and they too noticed for the first time that winter came early when we arrived in Resolute. When it was still August it got cold and snow was forming on the ground. Although it was close to Mittimatalik, they saw that it got very cold early for the first time.

The information that my father was given was that there will be people who had never been to Resolute. They need to go teach these people what they know because these people are coming to a land that they don't know at all.

Yes, they have never been paid for the time they went up there for guiding. They have never been told anything about getting paid. My father used to work in many ways. He worked for the

police, for the trading post and for the priests. He had a big boat so he would deliver food stock. He thought he would just help the usual way he did but they were relocated instead.

Yes, that was the way he was. I knew this from what the trading posts workers said. The trading post workers, police officers, and the priests would get food for their dogs and for themselves from us, from where we lived. He did the same thing when we went there.

Yes, it's similar. But there are more walrus. It's a migration path for walrus. It's about the same animals hunted in Mittimatalik. Because there was no one living up there, the animals were less afraid. Those that know the area and grew up there know where the animals are. But to those who don't know the area, it's like there is nothing. Because my father knew this area and because he grew up there, he knew where to hunt. They knew where to successfully hunt many things.

He had a boat so he was always hunting. It wasn't only the officers that came for food. Other villages from around came because they were very hungry. He kept his ways when we went to Resolute. His boat arrived in the summer so he kept hunting like he did. A week after we relocated to Resolute in 1955, there was a small boat. We went walrus hunting and caught twelve walruses. I caught my first when I was eleven years old. Walrus are closer to the hunters that know the area. My father knew the area so we went hunting just after a week.

The police would check on us every now and then and so would the higher ranking military officers. My father was known there. One of the reasons we weren't relocated back in 1952 was because my father was given the Order of Canada when the Queen was crowned. Since the officers knew this, they would come and check up on us and ask how we are doing. We would also get visits from white people who want to try our food.

Yes, the animals are pretty much the same but in 1955, the narwhals were not that many. Although there were other animals, there were not that many fowls. For example, there were no white geese and there weren't that many birds. There weren't any edible fowls. The animals were similar but there were no fowls because it lacked vegetation. That's what was different about it.

There are plants. Many. Mittimatalik is a place of white geese and other fowls so there are plants. It's a lot warmer than Resolute too. It's a place where white geese populate.

Question 1: When did you get married?

I was twenty-four years old when I got married. Yes, my wife comes from Quebec. She's older than I. She was born in 1940 so my wife is four years older than me.

We have five biological children. We have taken in orphans so all together; they are eleven...I mean eight. Five of them are our own and three adopted ones.

My father was a real hunter there. He would make a cavity in the ice about 10 x 10 and build an igloo that would serve as food storage. He would bury the animals he hunted in the summer and when winter came, he would take those frozen seals from underground and place them in the food storage. It used to have many seals in there. There was another one for meats.

When ice formed, he would carve out big blocks of ice and built an igloo for storage of seal meat in winter and one for other meats like land mammals; caribou and fish.

Question 2: When did you become a hunter?

When the Canadian army was there, after three years they started offering jobs. My father and the others became employees. So his dogs became my dogs because my father was now working. I became a hunter and took on that duty because they became workers of the army. The men of Resolute were given a task. The people of Resolute were not allowed to go where there were Caucasians for maybe four to five years. When the Canadian army was there, after three years they started offering jobs. Afterwards, they were able to work without the restriction of being around Caucasians.

I was five years old when I started following the hunt and spend nights. These are the ways of the Inuit. That was the way it was. Children that age would start following their father as they are growing because that is the Inuit way. When my father started working, I applied all that I learned from him.

Question 3: Did you ever get use to the cold?

When I got used to it, I was okay with it. But the extreme cold, the early winters and staying dark longer than Mittimatalik, those were the things that took me a while to get used to. I used to walk a lot in the summer. Walking anywhere is also the way of the Inuit. The rocks were different. We had boots by then. When a person walks, the shards of rock that were planted in

the boot would fall off. That's what was different than Mittimatalik. The rocks. It's still like that until now but not all of it. The rocks that pierce the sole.

Because it's like that up there. There are no plants. The rocks are prickly and require boots, not Inuk made boots. Rocks used to be planted on the bottom of the shoe.

Question 4: What are the differences between northern Quebec and High Arctic?

I didn't live here in Quebec. Then when I lived here in Quebec, there is a vast difference between Mittimatalik and Quebec in the land and in the food. People who grow up in Quebec eat fish, fowls like ptarmigan and others. Little food if I may say. That's what one ate while growing up. Up there, in Resolute, their diet had to change to walrus, beluga and seal. Completely different than how what ate in Quebec. Since my wife is from here, it affects me a lot. She grew up here and ate the food she ate and then very suddenly, her food was changed. She had to eat what she wasn't accustomed to. Also, coming to a place that's always dark and a sudden winter without a warm place to stay. I see a vast difference.

One of the things I learned is that all my wife's close relatives from Quebec did not die from old age. They died of diseases that came from hardship from living up there. None of them died from old age.

From pain. Different things stemming from pain. From being made to endure so much change. In our term "Sujuttut" – worn out. They were failing. They couldn't go on anymore. All the older people died from this. Yes, we had to leave all of our relatives behind. My father, my mother, in total we were eleven in our family. We left the rest of our relatives behind when we moved.

We left many, many relatives in Mittimatalik. Now, they are scattered. When a family that grew together is broken, they scatter. That's what happened to our relatives. There's no doubt there was hardship. I was seven years old...ten, excuse me, when we moved. It was apparent to me although I was that young.

When one grows up in a place, that land becomes a part of that person. The land is a part of that person. When these people left their very own blood relatives and the land they're connected to, to never return, that had a big impact.

Question 5: Did you ever go back to Pond Inlet (Mittimatalik)?

Yes, I used to be brought to Mittimatalik. But I can't have that deep connection with my relatives there anymore. It's like we don't share the same blood anymore. We can't bond anymore.

I learned after we were in Resolute that when the ice formed, people went back there briefly by dog team and returned to Resolute. And when there were airplanes, there were sometimes people going there.

All that I see, all that I feel is that the Government wanted sovereignty so badly they didn't stop to consider Inuit as humans. I have even seen the documents about the government wanting to relocate and experiment with the Inuit. So, here I am today having been affected and been part of an experiment. There are still people who came from here still living up there getting worn out from this experience.

My wife's relatives learned they could return by paying their own way. So when my wife's brother wanted to, she of course wanted to follow. We agreed to return for a year.

In 1977, we moved here intending for one year. The elders that welcomed us are not alive anymore. They were so welcoming. We were so welcomed here and our children didn't need to constantly wear their parkas and outerwear anymore. That's why we decided to live here.

They were amazed. Soon after we arrived, people asked why we were out without a parka in the winter. It was the first time we didn't feel cold. We didn't even realize we were jacketless!

Question 6: Why was the bar such a big problem in Resolute Bay?

The Canadian Army had a bar. Their ways changed and since they changed, they started giving alcohol. Since alcohol was new to them and they were discovering drinking. They were not withholding from having it and it was even given for free. Their ways changed somehow to being able to give alcohol for free. They didn't realize they were consuming too much. Somehow they changed. Maybe they were trying to be destroyed, I don't know.

They had beer and wine before. When they changed, hard liquor was being received. No matter who the person is, if it's offered free of charge, a person can change, whether it'd be an Inuk or Caucasian.

Question 7: Is there something else you would like to talk about?

I wanted to mention how they are trying to see the differences now. Resolute is warmer now and we can say that it has plants growing as a result. We can still see that it's all rock but, you can see plants growing. Here, if we look at the way the landscape is, it's green. Up in Resolute, it's all rock. If one grew up where the land is part of the daily diet, and being relocated to a completely different land with different ways, and different climate, and not being accustomed to the people, this significantly changed the way things were. It's very apparent that it wasn't the ways of the Inuit. Then they we're told "Love them although they did that". That had tremendous affects that cannot be paid off.

So, in Resolute, school started around 1960. Forced by the teacher in the classroom, these first time students who absolutely can't speak English were forced not to speak Inuktitut. They were avoiding to speak Inuktitut and trying to speak English. Even young ones were forced to speak English. They were hit with a ruler stick if they spoke Inuktitut.

After being there, our relatives, my wife's brother, my wife who are now adults when they came here noticed a real difference. Trying to adjust to the ways. It was very warm so their bodies needed to adjust because they were used to the extreme cold. Their usual food changed. They had to try and reconnect with the people they haven't been around for a long time. The change was tremendous there as well.

Up there in Qausuittuq, the land was being sought after by the Americans and the by overseas countries. That's why the relocation was done. They gave the land to government of Quebec, Canada.

Canadians now be at home in peace because of the Inuit that were placed to claim the land. If I would say it in English.

Question 8: Would you like to say something to the young generation?

This harsh relocation that the government did will never be repeated because of the awareness of the story. They have to realize that it's not what's supposed to be done. That's obvious. Inuit or even non-Inuit know that it's not something they need to endure. Let this be a time of having peace with it and move towards healing and let it resurrect unity.

According to the government this has been going on in Canada for some time. Now the Inuit had learn that they will not be down like that again. Let us live peacefully. It should never

happen again. If it should happen again, it would not happen through Inuit. Let us live all peacefully together