

VERBATIM

Elisapee Nutara

I am Elisapee Nutara. I was part of the first group of people who were relocated in 1953 when I was nine years old. Right now, since we returned to Inukjuak in 1988 where we are from, I have been living here until now. But back then, I was not able to memorize, although I was nine years old. I don't really remember anything. My father used to tell stories and I remember his words. They were asked to go to a place where there is food and where one can't go hungry. That's what they were originally told. They were told it was a place where one can't go poor. That's what my father told me.

Question 1: Do you remember the C.D. Howe?

I slightly remember this. We were leaving Inukjuak by C.D. Howe. Hum, I remember, I was a child, right? And children just enjoy whatever they are first experiencing. It was my first time on the C.D. Howe going on a ship. I was only a child and I didn't think about how we will survive. I only remember being excited when we got on the ship for the first time.

I remember when we were on the C.D. Howe, the waters were very rough. I think I was feeling sick because of the motion. I remember we were all brought to the lowest deck of the C.D. Howe. I remember watching the contents of the ship falling because the ship was moving so much. I was afraid that time.

I remember stopping through some villages on our way to our destination. I remember receiving whale meat and we ate it on the ship. I remember that our relatives sometimes went on land and we might have gotten food that way. They got food from the villages we stopped at on our way up there.

When we arrived in Grise... in Resolute Bay, because we first went to Resolute Bay, my parents were not informed: « you will be separated, these people are going to Qausuittuq and the rest of you are going to Grise Fiord ». When my father told me this story, I felt sorry for them because the groups were split up from Resolute. We were all split apart when we thought we would remain together.

As for us, I remember we were only 4 in our household. My brother still hadn't marry at that time. There was my brother, my father, my mother and myself living together.

My father is Pilipoosie (Philip) Novalinga and my mother is Annie Novalinga and Paulusie Novalinga Nungak.

Question 2: Who was in Grise Fiord at that time?

In Grise Fiord, there was my uncle, my father's older brother lived in the same location as us. Yes, Larry's father. Yes, Larry's mother too. And Elijah, Anna, Samwillie, Minnie. Those were the people who lived in the same place as us. I heard Elijah, who was my husband was twenty-two years old. Samwillie was younger so he must have been about twenty years old.

I remember we first landed in Craig Harbour where the police officers lived. We were brought to (Nunavialuk) this land on a very high place. I remember my mother was cold, hungry and crying. I don't remember what I ate in Craig Harbour or where we slept. It couldn't have been a week. Maybe we were brought to that deserted place the next day by a tall ship by the police.

Yes, it was scary no wonder because it wasn't the same as this land. We were so cold, I remember because it was very cold although it was in August. It was already snowing when we arrived. When we were relocated, we stayed in tents because we had tents. We must have stayed in tents for a year. Yes, in the very cold. Where the sun doesn't rise.

Question 3 : How was the communication with the RCMP officers?

Those officers would come every now and then to check up on us to see how we were doing. They thought they (my father) were capable when they were not because they have never been in Qausuittuq. In the harsh winter, my father and the rest didn't know how to hunt in such place but people like Arpaliapik from Mitsimatalik came and taught them how to hunt in the winter.

I, for myself don't remember if the police really helped but we tried having them as health care providers and as police. Maybe that's how they tried providing help.

Question 4 : Did you receive any news from your family left in Inukjuak?

People from Inukjuak? No. My parents didn't receive any news at all from relatives. Although my mother had an older sister in Inukjuak; she never heard from her again. My father had a younger brother here. They didn't know how they were because there was no source of communication.

I also remember living in a sod house (Qammaq) maybe after two years. It might have been the third year when we got a Qammaq because my parents were taught by Arpaliapik on how to build one. Yes, qammaq...

I remember when we left Inukjuak. I was a student at that time and I even remember by teacher. The teacher was a bit old but not that old and had white hair. I was learning to knit. I was learning what is taught to first learners. I regretted this when I became a young adult and I was angry because of it.

Yes (interviewer asks if she regretted) yes and I also married very young...at fifteen. This also was very uncomfortable, yes. I didn't bear my own children. I was given four human beings.

Hum, I also want to mention we came to a place where there was no nurses. So we tried having the police as nurses. I learnt that the police had no idea how to be health care providers. Louisa Eliyasialuk's mother lived where the police lived and she left by ship so I had to take her son. This was before I adopted, although I now had a husband, I still didn't have children. (interviewer asks "who?") The late Tommiapik. Tommiapik was his name. He became ill with scarlet fever, like children do where their whole skin is covered with red spots. When the police came he told me to put baby powder, you know the kind we use when we change diapers. He told me to put that all over his body. I was naïve because I was very young so I did as he told. He passed away. He died and it was very hard. I can talk about it now, today. This happened because there was no nurses where we were relocated to.

They didn't know what to do and it's no wonder, they have never been in darkness like that before. There were actually polar bears, walrus and seals. Here in Inukjuak, there are lakes nearby with fish and my parents used to fish. Then they went to a place with none, so they craved for fish for a long time.

I remember when their parents arrived and there was no housing there and snow was the only housing. I remember their parents struggling with knowing their children were cold.

My husband wanted to come back here. His mother passed away there in 1978. Mary, my late mother in-law. And my mother, my father and my older brother had died too and I felt like I was the only one left. My husband wanted to return here but me, I refused because I have been there since I was a child and grew up there. I refused.

Yes, it was very hard for me but I after the passing of my mother, my father and brother, I stopped refusing. I thought: « Many of my relatives are in Inukjuak» and I didn't mind anymore.

He wanted to leave but he didn't talk about the reasons why so I can't really answer that but Larry had a real hard time when both of his brothers left him. Larry had children there so he didn't want to move because his children grew up there. They are familiar with Ajuittuq (Grise Fiord). That was the reason why Larry's family didn't follow.

When we arrived here in 1988, I went through hardship. My children were having a hard time and that made it hard for me too. They were told: « you are from there so this is not your land» and they were not treated well because of it by other children. My youngest child Michael was only four when we moved here so he just enjoyed it here.

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

Because I went through so much hardship in life, I was relieved when the government apologized. Our relatives from here were very hurt also when we, their relatives left. They went through depression. They had expectations, I forgot to mention this earlier, my parents were told they would be returned after two years but they were deceived. This caused our relatives here much worry, hardship and longing.

I am hearing that the village here will start healing sessions about this. For those that we left behind. Those healing workers are coming back this fall. Maybe in September and I think Larry is coming for that and those from here are attending. I'm thinking about this.

The government, through financial contributions, is trying to provide support. For example, they provide funds every year. I am thankful for that but this life that I have seems hard all the time. My children too didn't get an education and don't have employment because of it. Although one did finish school. And myself, I am only receiving old age pension and I am not working anymore. So it's financially tough for me now.

To young people? I do have a message to young people. Young people here in Inukjuak don't seem to have jobs available to them, maybe because they are not educated. There are things to do but because of dropping out...it's not right to drop out. These young people should continue more with their education and would probably be able to attain jobs more. I just want to tell them that.

Question 6: What is the worst part of the relocation?

I felt the hard thing was going to a place where there wasn't a teacher and getting married there. Those were the two main hardships I experienced. Having no teacher, no nurse and becoming a wife, those were the heaviest things for me. Very much.

Nowadays, people marry the husband they want. It wasn't like that in the past. I was made to go through that when I didn't want to.