Life Stories of Northern Leaders

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TEACH AN ESKIMO HOW TO READ…
CONVERSATIONS WITH PETER FREUCHEN ITTINUAR

Teach an Eskimo How to Read… recounts the incredible journey of Peter Freuchen Ittinuar, Canada's first Inuk Member of Parliament. Ittinuar was born in 1950 in Chesterfield Inlet, an Inuit community on the west coast of Hudson Bay. The grandchild of Peter Freuchen, a Danish explorer in the Rasmussen expedition, he was raised in part by Anaqqaaq, a famous shaman.

Ittinuar had a very traditional upbringing like other children in his community, but stood apart because of his love of reading, especially stories about his famous grandfather. Because of his passion for reading, he was picked amongst his peers to take part in the 'Eskimo experiment', as it was officially called. Along with two other Inuit children, he was sent off to live with a family in Ottawa in order to see if Eskimo kids could perform as well as 'white' children in the 'real' school system… and perform they did!

Those three years in Ottawa changed his life and made him part of two worlds: the Inuit world and the qallunaat world. Ittinuar rose through the qallunaat world, becoming in 1979 the first Inuk Member of Parliament during the crucial period of the patriation of the Canadian Constitution. He was instrumental in securing the inclusion of Section 35 on aboriginal rights. More than a simple account of these negotiations, the book offers a glimpse into the daily life of an Inuk MP and the difficult choices Ittinuar had to make.

Ittinuar has also kept in touch with the Inuit world. He participated in the Nunavut Constitutional Forum, and has been the Executive Director of the Inuit Cultural Center and Assistant Deputy Minister in the new Nunavut government. These experiences allow him to make some astute observations on the social and political evolution of Inuit society. He now works for the Ontario government as a negotiator.

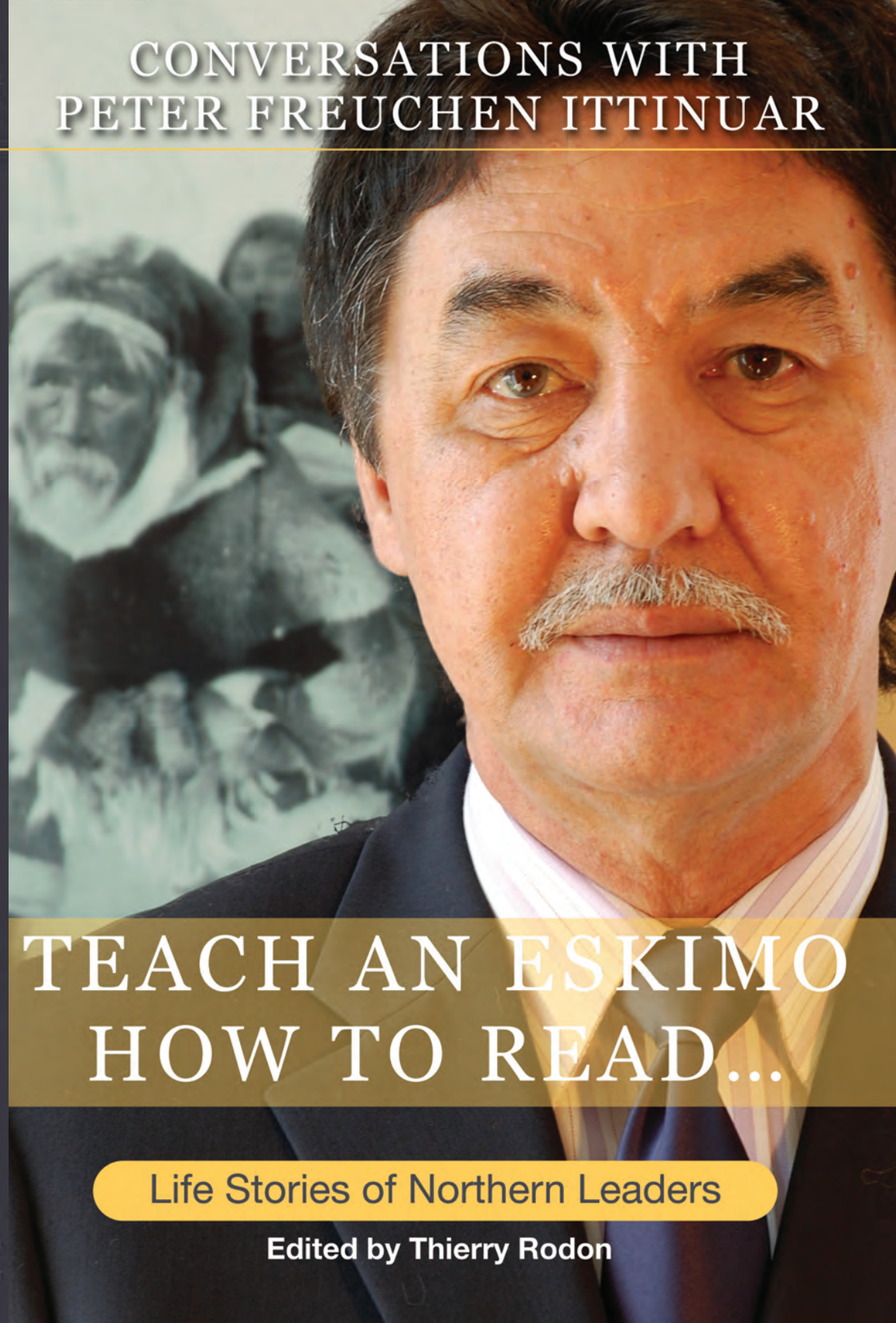
The title of this book is drawn from a spirited exchange between Pierre Elliot Trudeau and Peter Freuchen Ittinuar during a trip to the tundra.

CONVERSATIONS WITH PETER ITTINUAR

TEACH AN ESKIMO HOW TO READ...

Nunavut Arctic College

CONVERSATIONS WITH PETER FREUCHEN ITTINUAR



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Life Stories of Northern Leaders

Edited by Thierry Rodon

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Life Stories of Northern Leaders
Volume Four

Life Stories of Northern Leaders Series Volume 4

Teach an Eskimo How to Read…

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Acknowledgements

When I was given the opportunity to produce the life story of an Inuit leader, I naturally thought of Peter Ittinuar, the first Inuk elected to the Canadian Parliament. In fact, I didn't know much about him but as a political scientist, I knew he had played a role during the patriation of the Canadian constitution and that he had been an Assistant Deputy Minister for the Government of Nunavut. However, during the interview process, I discovered a whole new aspect of what had happened during the patriation process: the role of an Inuk in making sure that a clause on aboriginal rights would be included in the new Constitution Act and that a forgotten people, the Métis would be recognized. I want to thank Peter for his generosity in sharing with us this largely untold story and more generally his incredible journey through time and cultures.

I also need to mention the contribution of Pauloosie Akeeagok, one of my former students at Nunavut Sivuniksavut, who has greatly contributed to the quality of this book by asking astute questions that allowed Peter to express his feeling and enter into a dialogue with the younger generation. Murray Angus, the founder of Nunavut Sivuniksavut and former executive assistant to Peter also participated in the interview session on the patriation of the Constitution and helped Peter reminisce about a most interesting time.

I also want to acknowledge the many people who have contributed to the production of this book. First, Louis McComber, who initiated this project and contributed greatly to its realization, and who developed the standard

for this collection. Dr. Susan Sammons of the Language and Culture Program who transcribed the interviews, oversaw the translation in Inuktitut, proofread the English version and more generally ensured that this book would follow the highest standard of publishing. Noel McDermott and François Trudel looked at the last version of this text to unearth its remaining inconsistencies.

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Thierry Rodon
Editor

In addition to the acknowledgements of all the people Thierry Rodon has mentioned, I would be remiss if I personally did not mention Thierry himself, Susan Sammons of Nunavut Arctic College, and Rachel Qitsualik, also of Nunavut Arctic College, and peer reviewer of this attempt, as people I must thank for all the work and thinking they have put into this project. The project would simply have not been possible without their efforts. Additionally, the front cover photo by Adam Stevens of Brantford Ontario, for once makes me a little less ugly than usual. In case you are wondering, the old Shaman in the background is my great-great grandfather Qakuqtinniq, from a picture assumed taken by Roald Amundsen or one of his crew, when they wintered in Gjoa Haven in 1903.

Peter Ittinuar
Eskimo

PREFACE

Every Inuk born in the years immediately after WWII has a profound and often poignant story to tell – a story that embodies the radical transition that all Inuit went through in the span of a single generation. This transition – from nomadic life to living in government-built communities, from being taught by parents and elders to sitting in classrooms under the tutelage of teachers who spoke a foreign language, from assuming that Nunavut – 'our land' – was indeed just that, to having to prove to outsiders that they even lived there at all, and that their occupation over 4000 years provided a legitimate basis for having some say in its future.

Peter Ittinuar's life story is, at once, the same as every other Inuk of his generation, and at the same time different.

Much different.

In many respects, his story can be called remarkable. Not because he is superior in any way to his peers. Like everyone, he has his strengths, and his weaknesses, his successes and his failures.

No, his story was remarkable because of a unique combination of circumstances – some chosen by him, others for him – that pushed him into the forefront of events that would forever shape the future of Inuit and their relationship with the rest of Canada.

Peter was born in 1950. His life narrative involved all the changes that were characteristic of his generation.

But he was singled out early in life for a path that set him apart from his peers. He was part of 'the experiment' in the 1960s, which saw three hand-picked young Inuit come south to attend junior-high in Ottawa in order to see if they could 'compete' with southern kids in that world. It marked the beginning of a lifetime spent moving back and forth between the Inuit and the *qallunaat* worlds. While many of his peers felt caught in that transition and suffered a lifetime of social and psychological dislocation as a result, Peter's raw intelligence – coupled with his early acclimatization to the south – enabled him to feel adept in both worlds. His memory of, and reflections on, that life-long experience of going back and forth between two worlds form the central theme of this book.

So much of what that youthful cadre of leaders did during the 1970s and 1980s was in response to events initiated by others. But the story was also about how they played the cards they were dealt. They had to learn quickly how the political system worked, and how to make use of any opportunities that arose to assert Inuit rights. In the end, the story of what they accomplished – the settlement of four regional land claims, the recognition of aboriginal rights in the new Canadian constitution, and the creation of a Nunavut territory – remains one of the most remarkable political stories in Canadian history.

Peter's story provides a window into those times like few others could provide. He was present at the formative stages of all of these processes, and central to the realization of several. His intelligence and communication skills, coupled with the depth of his experience in southern society, made him a natural choice to participate in – and on occasion, to lead – the Inuit drive to achieve a recognized place in Canadian society. The apex of his career came during his years as the first Inuk Member of Parliament, when he played a decisive role in securing the recognition of aboriginal rights in the constitution, and in persuading the government of the day to support

the division of the NWT. In both cases, Peter played his cards with historic deftness, although in the case of division, he did so knowing that it could mean sacrificing his own political career for the sake of the larger Inuit objective. In the end, such fears proved to be well-founded.

Peter's recollections are a fascinating read: we see the world as he saw it growing up, both in the north and the south. His observations of the social and racial dynamics of the time are acute. His assessments of people – including his political opponents – are, at times generous, and at other times blunt. The story of his first election campaign for MP, and unexpected victory, is both hilarious and unforgettable. His reflections on the staffing dynamics of the newly-formed government of Nunavut point to the heart of that government's continuing challenge.

Peter's recollections, combined with those of the other figures in this series, will leave behind an invaluable resource for generations to come who will yearn to know what it was like for those few individuals who were involved in that brief historical period when so many parts of the Inuit political reality were set in stone. Peter's contribution is an indispensable part of that story.

Peter's career path over thirty five years include stints as a broadcaster, pilot, editor, university lecturer, Member of Parliament, hunter, senior bureaucrat, consultant, government land claims negotiator and organic farmer. His story, as told herein, suggests a man who has come to be at home, not only in the north, or in the south, but within himself as well.

Murray Angus

Murray Angus was Peter Ittinuar's executive assistant on Parliament Hill from 1981 until 1983. In 1985, he founded the Nunavut Sivuniksavut training program in which he remains an instructor.

A note on the interview process and the editorial choices

This book is the result of a series of interviews with Peter Ittinuar conducted in English at Nunavut Sivuniksavut, Ottawa, Canada, in April, 2006. The interviews were conducted by Pauloosie Akeeagok, Thierry Rodon, and Murray Angus (who was present when Peter discussed the Constitutional patriation negotiation).

I have decided to include most of the interview questions because the content of this book is a dialogue between Peter Ittinuar and Pauloosie Akeeagok on the one side and Peter and Murray Angus on the other. However, the tone of these conversations is fairly different. Pauloosie is a young Inuk student from Grise Fiord, and when Peter talks of his astonishing experience of moving from a traditional Inuit environment to Parliament Hill, he is conveying his story to a member of the younger generation. It is very much an inter-generational dialogue where an elder is passing on a part of Inuit history to a young Inuk. The interview with Murray, Peter's former political adviser at the time he was an MP, is more like a conversation between old friends reminiscing about key events. These conversations are both very enlightening. They allow us to present a version of events that has never been previously told: the role of an Inuk MP in the adoption of Section 35.1 of the Constitutional Law of 1982 and how he managed to convince Pierre Trudeau, Prime Minister at the time, to recognize the Métis people alongside the First Nations and the Inuit in the new constitution. This last achievement is in itself a tribute to the openness of Peter Ittinuar and more generally of most Inuit.

Thierry Rodon, Editor

CHAPTER ONE

Memories of Kivalliq

Chesterfield Inlet

My first memory is that of looking up from the crib at my mother and a nun at a hospital in Chesterfield Inlet, Ste Therese Hospital. It was built in the thirties. Chesterfield Inlet was where I was born, and it left a very strong impression on me. I spent my first seven years there. Chesterfield Inlet was a very interesting place. I'm going to talk a bit about my first seven years as an Inuk. A man of my age realizes that these years left a very long-lasting impression, the kind that affects you for the rest of your life. I'm going to begin with that, because if you spend the first seven years of your life in a place like Chesterfield Inlet in the 1950s, you are in transition for the rest of your life. It is not until much later in your life that you finally reach a plateau where you are comfortable being both an Inuk and a *qallunaaq*.[1]

I think if you are going to try and tell your life story, it is probably important to bring forth your first sights and smells; what you first heard, and how you first felt about experiences you had. So, as I said, my first memory is that of looking up from a crib. My mother had brought me there. I was still being carried on my mother's back. I guess

1. This term was used by the Inuit to describe Europeans. Nowadays it is sometimes used for all non-Inuit.

The Canadian Eastern Arctic
& Greenland
Eureka
Thule
Thule
Air Base
Melville
Island
Grise Ford
Litttle Cornwallis
Island
Resolute Bay
Pond Inlet
Nanisivik
Arctic Bay
Boothia
Peninsula
Fury and
Hecla Straits
Thom
Bay
Igloolik
Committee
Bay
Cambridge
Bay
Kugluktuk
King William
Island
Taloyoak
Hall
Beach
Kugaaruk
Queen Maud
Gulf
Gjoa Haven
Bathurst Inlet
Umingmaktok
Perry River
Repulse Bay
Contwoyto
Lake
Coral Harbour
Baker Lake
Chesterfield Inlet
Rankin Inlet
Whale Cove
Arviat
Churchill
Lynn Lake

Ammassálik
Arctic Circle
Clyde River
Sisimiut
Baffin Island
Qikiqtarjuaq
Padloping Island
Nuuk
Pangnirtung
Iqaluit
Cape Dorset
Markham Bay
Kimmirut
Killiniq Island
Kangiqsujjuaq
Ivujivik
Salluit
Ungava Bay
Kangiqsualujjuaq
Kangirsuk
Puvirnituq
Kuujjuaq
Inukjuak
Goose Bay
Sanikiluaq
Kujjuarapik

Chesterfield Inlet Hospital (1952)
Credit : Indian Affairs and North Canada, Archives Canada.

Chesterfield Inlet (1950)
Credit : Indian Affairs and North Canada, Archives Canada.

I would have been around one year old; maybe a little less, maybe a little more. I was looking up at my mother and a very kindly looking Grey nun who had been bandaging me for some cut I'd received or something like that. There had been an incident at spring camp. My father,[2] my uncle Tommy Samok, my mother and I were there. I had fallen on a primus stove. I still have the scar. I burned my arm pretty good. I think that was the memory I have of being bandaged by the nuns.

After that, memories come in gaps. My father worked for the RCMP. He was a special constable.[3] He travelled all around the Keewatin by dogteam, by boat, by airplane; from Churchill, right up to Repulse Bay, to Baker Lake, to Coral Harbour, and all points in between. In those days men were men long before they are in today's generation. A young man of twenty-one or twenty-three could travel around the whole Keewatin by dogteam and survive by building *igluit* and hunting, as a matter of course. My father was one of those people.

When I was three years old, my mother left for the Clearwater Lake sanatorium just north of Winnipeg in 1953, because she had tuberculosis. She took my sister with her because she was only a year old. I still remember them getting on the single engine Norseman airplane in the wintertime. I think it was in January or February or something like that. I was holding my aunt Masali's hand. She raised my other sister and myself during the nine years my mother was in the hospital for tuberculosis.

2. Peter's father, Ollie Ittinuar is a well known and respected elder who lives in Rankin Inlet. He recently participated in a workshop designed to preserve Inuit cultural heritage. The contents of the workshop were edited by Jarich Oosten and Frederic Laugrand under the title: *Surviving in Different Worlds: Transferring Inuit Traditions form Elders to Youth* (Oosten and Laugrand 2007).
3. A special constable is a temporary member of a police force. In the Canadian Arctic, many Inuit were hired as special constables in the 1950s and 1960s. Most of them served as guides and as mushers for the RCMP dogteams.

Peter and his mother, Lizzie Ittinuar (Chesterfield Inlet, 1950-51)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Peter and his mother (Chesterfield Inlet, 1952)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Peter and his father, Ollie Ittinuar (RCMP Compound, Chesterfield Inlet, circa 1953)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Lizzie and Ollie Ittinuar with Peter (Chesterfield Inlet, 1950)
Credit : Vivian Wilkinson
Northwest Territories Archives: N-1979-051: 0023.

So, I remember my mother in the time before she left. I remember the colour of the shawl she was wearing. In those days women wore a beret, an *amauti*,[4] and a plaid tartan shawl. I remember her being put on the plane. I don't remember crying, but I have a distinct image of her getting on that plane and going away. In the intervening years I saw pictures of her, but I didn't see her again until I was nine years old. She came back home briefly, and then went back again to the sanatorium.

So, Chesterfield Inlet was a rather paradoxical place. You can now go to a website and look up Chesterfield Inlet. They have a historical slide show which is fascinating. They have sixty-eight pictures, from the twenties.[5] There were Inuit there who worked either for the Roman Catholic mission or for the RCMP. The Oblats had been there since Turquetil[6] in 1912, I believe, and the RCMP was there in force. They were based there for the whole Keewatin. Right after the war, the Department of Transport was there. It was a DEW Line site,[7] and they had a fairly

4. The *amauti* is the woman's upper garment. It is distinguished from the man's parka by the *amaut*, the large pouch where children are carried in their early years.
5. http://www.chesterfieldinlet.net/albums/main_slideshow.htm
6. Arsène Turquetil, O.M.I. (1876-1955) was a missionary in Northern Manitoba when he first visited the Caribou Inuit in 1906. In 1912, he founded the first Catholic mission in Chesterfield Inlet. Turquetil was an Oblat de Marie-Immaculée (O.M.I.) as were all the first missionaries.
7. Following the first conclusive attempt by the former USSR to explode an atomic bomb in 1949, and following the victory of the communist forces in China (1949) and in Korea (1950-1953), the United States worried about a nuclear attack from the USSR. They asked the Canadian government to build three radar lines to be used to detect Soviet bombers before they reached American territory. The Distant Early Warning Line (or DEW Line) was the most northern radar line (the other two, the Pinetree and Mid-Canada Lines, were located further south). The DEW Line was in fact north of Chesterfield Inlet but the community was used as a outpost to ship equipment and workers to the radar stations. All in all, the construction of the DEW

Lizzie Ittinuar (1980's)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

massive operation there. The Inuit who worked for these institutions had small houses and material goods. Some had an income and were generally better off than Inuit who did not work for anybody.

When I was growing up, until I was seven years old, I remember visiting families who had houses, and families who lived either in *igluit* in the winter or tents in the summer. I distinctly remember the one time that I visited a sod house. It is the only sod house I recall in my life. This belonged to the Ayaruaq family. In fact, I used to visit there because my cousin Johnny Ayaruaq was my friend. I grew up with him.

Chesterfield Inlet basically moved down from Cape Fullerton, which is just to the north.[8] It was a former whaling station. The Chesterfield Inlet people have had a long history of interaction with Europeans, first with whalers. That was a mutually beneficial economic arrangement. I think there were a fair number of children born out of that relationship.

The RCMP moved into Cape Fullerton. I can tell many stories about Cape Fullerton. It's haunted, by the way. I went back to see it, but the buildings were no longer there. There are many stories about how haunted that place is. The people moved from there to Chesterfield Inlet. There were two places in the North where there was a lot of contact, usually through whalers or trading posts; Pangnirtung was one, Pond Inlet was another.

Pauloosie: You said that your father was a special constable. When your mother left, did your father still have to travel around? What was that like for you?

Line radar stations required 25,000 men and more than 500,000 tons of material (see Bégin 2004 and Gagnon 2002).

8. Cape Fullerton is about 150 kilometres northeast of Chesterfield Inlet, on the western shore of Hudson Bay. The first RCMP post in the Eastern Arctic –built in 1903 – was in Cape Fullerton. The Cape Fullerton post was moved to Chesterfield Inlet in the late 1920s (Jenness 1964).

Well, my dad raised us. My aunt and my uncle basically took care of my sister and I. It was difficult, but that was life in those days. If you were a hunter you were away for long periods of time, too. You didn't see members of your family for three weeks, four weeks, six weeks. It was not something uncommon. Nowadays life is so immediate. You can talk to someone far away. You don't write letters anymore. It was our way of life and we accepted it. I was always happy to see my father come back. I grew up relatively wealthy, comparatively speaking, to other Inuit in the area. My father always had dogteams, good sleds, and good boats. We always had food. My sister and I were always dressed very well. We had a little house that was warm.

Ironically, my father had been raised as a Natsilingmiut,[9] out on the land. But interestingly enough, his history goes back to the early 1920s when the Fifth Thule Expedition came.[10] I started becoming aware of my history at a very early age because I learned how to read and write as soon as I went to school, and English came pretty easily to me for some reason. I had only spoken Inuktitut up until the time I went to school. As a matter of fact, it is interesting you asked me that question about my father travelling around. My first year of school was at the Federal Day School in Chesterfield Inlet, but the nickel mine opened

9. The Natsilingmiut, or Netsilik Inuit, inhabit a vast territory between Committee Bay to the east and Victoria Strait to the west, and from Bellot Strait in the north to Garry Lake in the south. Between 1860 and 1921, many Netsilik migrated to Repulse Bay and even a little further south of Chesterfield Inlet to work for whalers and to trade at the various Hudson's Bay Company posts in the region (Balikci 1984).
10. The Fifth Thule Expedition was an expedition lead by the Danish-Greenlandic ethnographer Knud Rasmussen. This expedition (1921-1924) led Rasmussen and his colleagues (Peter Freuchen, Therkel Mathiassen and Kaj Birket-Smith, among others) to explore most of the territories inhabited by Canadian Inuit west of Hudson Bay. For a narrative of the expedition, see Rasmussen 1999.

Grey Nun, Chesterfield Inlet (Early 1950's))
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Kangirjuaq, Niviaqsiarjuk and Tannujaq
(Near Chesterfield, possibly north around Cape Fullerton, late 1940's – early 1950's)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

in Rankin Inlet, and my aunt and uncle moved to go work there. My father was still in the RCMP, so I was put into residence at Turquetil Hall. We all went to the day school. The residence was run by the Grey nuns. The Federal Day School was also run by the Grey nuns, but they worked on contract with the federal government to teach us. So, my first year of school was at the federal school, as a matter of fact, because of my father's travel.

I don't remember being mistreated in the residence like many of my peers do. I just remember that the Iglulingmiut[11] were real boys! They made us younger guys work. Most of those kids did not receive much from home. But, my father was in the RCMP, so whenever he was in town he would bring me cookies or gum or a chocolate bar. The Iglulingmiut kids would contrive to take it all away from me once my father had gone out of town. My father's father was Peter Freuchen,[12] which is my name actually; Peter Freuchen Ittinuar. I was named after him.

My father's mother was a Natsilingmiut woman from King William Island. She had travelled to Chesterfield Inlet because her brother had moved there and she missed him, so she moved there as well. My grandmother was Peter Freuchen's girlfriend for a while. Neither of them knew that she was pregnant when he left the area. Peter Freuchen had recently lost Navaranna, his first Inuk wife

11. The Iglulingmiut are from the Iglulik Island area. Along with the Aivilingmiut and the Tununirmiut, they are considered part of the Iglulik group. The Iglulik Inuit inhabit a vast territory that extends from Devon Island in the north to Chesterfield Inlet in the south. Their diet consists mainly of sea mammals (seal and walrus) but they also hunt polar bears and caribou (Mary-Rousselière 1984).
12. Member of the Fifth Thule Expedition and long-time friend of Knud Rasmussen, Peter Freuchen took part in most of Rasmussen's expeditions. Freuchen was married in 1911 to an Inuk woman named Navaranna. Together they had two children. She died of the Spanish flu in 1921, just before Freuchen left for the Fifth Thule Expedition. Freuchen wrote many books about the Inuit including the well-known *Book of the Eskimos* (Freuchen 1961).

from Thule, a year prior to the Fifth Thule expedition, but my grandmother did not want to go back with him.

Peter Freuchen (1931)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Anaqqaaq (1921)
Picture taken during the Rasmussen expedition
Fonds Bernard Saladin d'Anglure

Qakuqtinniq, Peter's great great grand-father (1903)
Picture taken by Roald Amundsen in Gjoa Haven
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

After Peter Freuchen left, she married Anaqqaaq[13] who then raised my father as his own son. I thought Anaqqaaq was my natural grandfather until I was eight or nine years old, when I started reading Peter Freuchen's books and started hearing the story. The fact that I had a known non-Inuit history had an early effect on me. I didn't notice until later, that the same was true on my mother's side; I had a non-Inuit history there as well.

I was brought up doing all the things that Inuit kids do; you learn how to deal with fish nets at an early age and how to hunt. I got my first seal, I think, when I was six years old. I got my first caribou when I was seven years old. I did all that because if my father was not working, he was hunting. That's all he would do; work, hunt, work, hunt.

I went to school in the winter, but in the spring and summer I was with my grandfather out on the land. We lived by a river. We walked inland and that sort of thing. I developed a knowledge of the language pretty early. I did all that, but at the same time I was a voracious reader. I started reading books at a very young age. For some reason it came very easily to me.

I started reading about Peter Freuchen at a very early age. I was about eight years old. I was learning my history. It affected me positively. My father now openly acknowledges his father as Peter Freuchen, but I think this was kept from him for a long time by Anaqqaaq, so my own father had issues about who his father was. Now he is easy about who his father was. My children and my

13. Anaqqaaq (Anarqaaq, Anarqaoq) was a young man when the Fifth Thule Expedition reached the Repulse Bay area. In his account of the Fifth Thule Expedition, Rasmussen refers to him as a young "wizard" (angakkuq) who was not a skilled hunter but who had the ability to see spirits on the land, especially when he was out alone hunting caribou (Rasmussen 1999: 121-122). Rasmussen hired Anaqqaaq to guide him to the Netsilik traditional territories in 1923 (Harper 2006).

sisters and brothers are all proud of that history now. Peter Freuchen was a world-renowned author and explorer.

Living in Chesterfield Inlet, I knew other families who were like us; they worked for the RCMP, the Department of Transport, the hospital, the Roman Catholic mission, or for the Hudson's Bay Company. Many people were trappers. That's how they made their money. In fact, everybody was a trapper. The fur trade was in full bloom, although it was starting to die down in the later fifties. All Inuit families were trappers. That's how they got their money for rifles, tea and sugar, flour and lard, sewing machines, and all those things, so they could support their hunting lifestyle. Everybody hunted and fished, including my father.

I remember when my mother went down to Brandon, or somewhere in southern Manitoba to the tuberculosis hospital. There were many people there, as there were in Hamilton and Toronto.[14] There were many Inuit down there. Many people died down there. My mother had severe tuberculosis. She had major operations, and it took her a long time to heal. I remember my dad's first trip. Because he was in the RCMP, he was one of the few Inuit spouses who was able to take trips down to see his wife while she was in the hospital. On his first trip back, my

14. Between the 1940s and 1960s, tuberculosis (TB) struck hard in the North. It is estimated that as many as one third of the Inuit in the Eastern Arctic were diagnosed with TB. Concerned about the effects of the sickness, the Canadian government chartered a ship (the *C.D. Howe*) and sent it to all the settlements in the Eastern Arctic. Every summer, the ship would arrive at a settlement or to a camp, doctors would screen the Inuit, and those who were diagnosed with tuberculosis were sent South for treatment. In Nunavik (Northern Quebec) alone, Duhaime estimates that 2,214 Inuit were treated in the South in 1955, 3,316 in 1956, and 3,330 in 1957 (Duhaime 1983: 36-37). Those who survived often stayed one to three years in the South before returning to the North. Thousands of Inuit were taken South. Many never came back and were buried without their family's knowledge.

mother sent me two things. I was three years old then. She sent me a pair of skates and a cat. There was a little pond, which is still there, by the way. I checked it out when I was there last December.

Pauloosie: Did that bring back memories for you?

Oh yes. That's where our dogs were. That's where my aunt would put my skates on, and I would crawl down to the pond and try to skate. I think my cat was the only cat in Chesterfield Inlet.

Pauloosie: Did you even know what it was at that time?

Just that it was awesome! What happened to the cat was we were going out as usual in the spring. I guess that's when my dad would take his holidays, in the spring time. He would go out to an island by dogteam. The canoe was on the sled; that's how we travelled, with a big dogteam. I was in the canoe, and I was holding my cat. We were going to an island. I guess the cat wanted to go or something, and it got out of my arms. I wasn't strong enough to hold it when it really wanted to go. So, it got off the sled and immediately the dogteam went after it. By the time my father and my uncle had beaten off the dogs there were only a few grey hairs left. I cried for a while.

Rankin Inlet Mine

After that first year of residential school, my father, along with many families from Chesterfield Inlet, decided to move to Rankin Inlet because the money to be made in the mine was unheard of. In those days making five hundred dollars a month meant you were rich! The mine had a very forward-looking manager; Andy Easton was his name. His name is still revered by people in Rankin Inlet. He hired any Inuk who would come in as often as

he could, mostly for labour jobs, but also he hired them as carpenters, heavy equipment operators, elevator operators in the shaft, and as mucking machine operators. He hired them to work in the mill. There was a lot of employment for Inuit at the time.

Rankin Inlet Mine, Hudson's Bay compound and "white" houses, bunkhouse, hospital, school et al in foreground (circa 1961)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Ollie Ittinuar in the mine with another worker (Underground, Rankin Inlet Nickel Mine, circa 1959-60)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Ollie Ittinuar with his two children: Nicole and Peter in mine provided housing (just before Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, circa 1959)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

There wasn't much of a housing program for the first year. We all lived in tar-paper shacks. Then the mine did build houses. Then the government came in and started building little houses, mostly one-room houses. I think I have a garden shed at home that's bigger than those

houses were. Those houses housed two or three families at the time. But still, life was good. It was different for us in Rankin Inlet. We moved there early. I moved there when I was seven years old. Many other children did as well. There were also *qallunaat*, white families there with children, so we had white children in our classes.

Pauloosie: Were they there because of the mine?

They were there for the mine or for one reason or another. Rankin Inlet was very quickly becoming a thriving modern town, with streets and electricity. There was a big Hudson's Bay store, more like a department store than a trading post, with a clothing section, a grocery section, and a hardwood section. This was in the late fifties. The Roman Catholic mission was very strong as well. Then a man named Armand Tagoona came from Baker Lake. He built a church there. He was the first Inuk ordained Anglican minister in Canada. So both the Anglican and Roman Catholic missions had very strong congregations. Inuit life centered around three areas, the church, their own community and the mine, and the mine had its own social agenda.

Then there was, of course, the school. They built a fair-sized school and it had a number of classrooms. From age seven to probably age twelve, that school had a very large effect on me. I distinctly remember that, after we had been in school for one or two years, Inuit kids would come in from places like Coral Harbour, Repulse Bay, and Arviat. They would be brought into our classroom. In those days we has grades one, two, three, four, five and six in the same classroom. I remember those kids. We were already speaking English by that time as well as Inuktitut, and these kids couldn't even count in English let alone read or know the alphabet or anything like that. The mine had a great deal of effect on the kids who were growing up there, compared to kids growing up in the

other communities like Coral Harbour, even though they had schools. They were very traditional. I don't really like the word traditional but let's use it for our purposes. The other communities were very traditional in that way. I just recall that we kids from Rankin Inlet, Eric Tagoona, Jose Kusugak, Michael Kusugak, Susan Tagoona, Madeline Anawak, Luke Isaluk, David Aglukark[15], those of us who were in the school there, were quite a bit ahead in English compared to the kids from other communities.

Rankin Inlet also offered a social life for the adults that was different from the other communities, too. People started wearing *qallunaat* clothing. They had money. They didn't have money to burn, but they had money to buy luxuries, commodities like washing machines, extra clothing, a clean shirt. You didn't want to wear the same shirt if you were going to a dance. People had two or three rifles instead of just one. People had rods and reels for fun. People had boats and motors. Life was good.

The mine also had a social life for the Inuit. There would be regular dances where there was no booze involved. Kids went to them. There was an accordion, square dances and things like that. There were also drum dances in those days, but they would always be held in somebody's house. The mine also had beer nights where they would turn the mess hall into a beer hall. You still hear stories about those. Inuit would go to them and have two beers and be completely drunk, and then go home after having a happy old time. In those days there never seemed to be violence, just giggling people, but now it's different. I remember those years.

15. Eric Tagoona, Jose Kusugak and David Aglukark became very active in Inuit politics. Both Eric and Jose served as president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) the Canadian Inuit association. David became president of the Kivalliq Inuit Association and they were all involved in the Nunavut land claims negotiations. Michael Kusugak is an Inuk writer and storyteller.

I also remember the Paallirmiut,[16] the inland people. They were starving. They were brought to Rankin Inlet. They were relocated to a place called Itivia near our community because they were starving inland at that time. Itivia was covered with old houses. It was almost a satellite community to Rankin Inlet. They started working at the mine. I do recall how skinny and poorly they looked. They had a very, very different dialect.

Pauloosie: How did you cope with that, with people coming from all these different communities to Rankin Inlet?

Over time, Rankin Inlet developed its own dialect, I think. It was more or less like the Chesterfield Inlet dialect. It was one of the first cosmopolitan places for Inuit. In those first years everyone used their own dialect, but it very quickly evolved into one. We started using each other's expressions and idiomatic words and it all meshed together, so nowadays there is a Rankin Inlet dialect. You still hear traces, most particularly of the Paallirmiut dialect. There are traces of how they spoke, but it is nothing like the way they spoke back then. Rankin Inlet was a melting pot and it was an industrial spot. People went there to work. Not that they didn't work elsewhere, but there was a wage economy. They didn't go there to be given welfare; they went there to work. It was a very, very different reason to go somewhere than to be relocated by government to a settlement, to be given welfare so your kids could go to

16. The Paallirmiut (Padlermiut) are a group of Caribou Inuit along with the Ahiarmiut and the Hauniqtuurmiut. The Paallirmiut lived in the Barren Lands on the western shore of Hudson Bay. They lived inland all year long and their subsistence was mainly based on caribou. In the 1950s, following several years of starvation, they were encouraged to move into several settlements, all of them on the coast with the exception of Baker Lake. These settlements included Arviat, Rankin Inlet, Whale Cove and Chesterfield Inlet (Arima 1984).

school, and to have your dogs shot.[17] That was a very, very different reason.

I'm not bragging about Rankin. It had its problems. When the mine shut down, problems started to settle in.

17. In the 1950s, the Canadian government began to relocate some Inuit. For example, in 1953, Inuit families from Inuitjuak and Pond Inlet were relocated to the High Arctic in the then newly created settlements of Grise Fiord (on Ellesmere Island) and Resolute Bay (on Cornwallis Island). Four years earlier, the Ahiarmiut (a group of inland Inuit) from the Ennadai Lake region in central Keewatin were moved to Nueltin Lake. However, after less then a year at Nueltin Lake, they drifted back to Ennadai Lake. In 1957, the same Ahiarmiut who had been moved to Nueltin Lake were moved again to Henik Lake. The Canadian government decided to move them since the caribou had not followed their customary migration paths, leaving the Inuit to starve. From then on, the situation got worse. The caribou herds failed to appear once more causing starvation. During the winter of 1957-1958, six Ahiarmiut died of starvation and two were murdered. On February 14 to 16, the remaining Ahiarmiut were relocated to Eskimo Point (now Arviat). That same winter, nineteen Inuit died at Garry Lake, and six more at Chantrey Lake, two central Keewatin lakes. Following these disasters, the Canadian government decided to relocate all of the inland Inuit to the coastal settlements of Rankin Inlet and Whale Cove in the winter of 1958.

    In many settlements in the eastern and central Arctic, the Canadian government had still to face another important issue: the culling of Inuit dogs. As they came to live in new Arctic settlements (mostly between 1955 and 1965) – whether voluntarily or forcibly – most Inuit brought their dogs with them. This resulted in packs of dogs roaming freely in the communities. Although most Inuit did not see this situation as problematic, many Canadian administrators were worried that loose dogs would attack people. It indeed happened on several occasions. At the same time, epidemics of canine diseases spread throughout the Arctic, killing hundred of dogs. Worried about loose dogs causing accidents and about the spread of dog sickness, the Canadian government and Territorial authorities decided to enforce the Dog Ordinance. This Ordinance, first adopted in the 1920s, required all dogs to be tied. Unfortunately, many Inuit refused to tie their dogs. Also a great many of them were not aware they were legally obliged to do so, so many left them untied. Thus, it is estimated that hundreds of loose or sick dogs were destroyed by the RCMP or by other governmental officials in many Arctic settlements in the 1950s and 1960s. Today, many Inuit still resent those killings.

Still, Rankin Inlet has produced the first Inuk senator,[18] the first Inuk Member of Parliament,[19] the first Inuk National Hockey League player,[20] and the first popular singer, Susan Aglukark.[21] I don't know if it's due to its history, but it was an industrious town. The relationship between the *qallunaat* and the Inuit was quite good in the beginning. It deteriorated in the sixties when work for the Inuit fell off. Then there was like a second-class type of hierarchy. That's when the class system came in, but I left in 1962.

We had our school in Rankin Inlet. There was also a school in Chesterfield Inlet. There were very, very small schools here and there; not very big ones. Not all the kids went to school in places like Baker Lake or Eskimo Point (Arviat) or Coral Harbour or Repulse Bay. Sovereignty was an issue. The Canadian government was thinking about the sovereignty of the Arctic,[22] and policy development around the Arctic. Diefenbaker was the first one to come up with the idea of division of the Northwest Territories. In fact, it was Diefenbaker who gave Inuit the right to vote by repealing the Dominion Act of Canada. I was ten years

18. Willie Adams is the first Inuk senator. He was born in Kuujjuaq (then called Fort Chimo) in 1934. He later moved to Rankin Inlet where he started several businesses. After one term as a member of the Northwest Territories Council (now the N.W.T. Legislative Assembly) between 1970 and 1974, he became a senator in 1977, a position he still holds today.
19. Peter Ittinuar himself.
20. Jordin Tootoo. Born in 1983, he was drafted by the Nashville Predators of the National Hockey League in 2001.
21. Susan Aglukark is an Inuk singer-songwriter born in Churchill, Manitoba, and raised in Arviat, Nunavut. She has won several JUNO awards for her recordings. She was named an officer of the Order of Canada in 2005.
22. In the beginning of the 1950s, at the onset of the Cold War, the Canadian government was concerned about its sovereignty over the Arctic and it spurred a renewed interest in Inuit communities. This led to the relocation of families and communities in the High Arctic.

old before my parents had the right to vote in Canada, in 1960.[23]

Explorer and Shaman

I talked a little bit about my grandfather being Peter Freuchen and how this affected my life. My father's biological father was Peter Freuchen. His biological mother and his adopted father were both Natsilingmiut from the King William Island area around Pelly Bay, Spence Bay, Taloyoak, and the Gjoa Haven area. In Cape Fullerton and Chesterfield Inlet there were many people from that area. They were related. My father grew up speaking the Natsilingmiut dialect, as did many people in Chesterfield Inlet and the surrounding area at that time. They didn't actually live in Chesterfield Inlet; my father lived out on the land with my grandfather. My father grew up very much in touch with a total Inuit way of life. I don't know much about how my father transitioned from that life to being a special constable in the RCMP.

They lived in *igluit* in the wintertime and tents in the summertime. They lived a totally nomadic hunting way of life. I caught a fair chunk of that lifestyle in Chesterfield Inlet, and a little bit in Rankin Inlet. It is a much deeper Inuit culture than the one I experienced in my formative years. My father told me that he regrets that I didn't catch a lot of it, particularly the shamanism side of things. Anaqqaaq, my adopted grandfather, was a shaman.

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23. In fact, Inuit Canadians had the right to vote without qualification in 1950. However, until the early 1960s Inuit were rarely enumerated for federal elections. Most were geographically isolated well into the twentieth century, so in the absence of special efforts to enable them to vote, they had no means to exercise this right. Finally, at the request of Diefenbaker, in the 1962 federal election ballot boxes were placed in all Inuit communities in the eastern Arctic, thus permitting Inuit to fully exercise their right to vote. See Robert A. Milen 1994 for more details.

Shamanism is an interesting thing. There is a common denomination throughout the world, whether it's wizardry, sorcery, or shamanism. It's all the same. Well, it's all the same, and it isn't all the same. Having familiars is the same. All sorcerers, wizards, and medicine men have to have familiars. It's the same type of thing you think about when you think of pyramids. Why did they arise in South America as well as in Egypt and in Asia? Why do we have the same concept in different places in the world? Why, in an eight hundred year period, the axial period, was there Zoroaster and others knowledgeable about self-awareness? Religion was becoming strong. Why is it that shamanism and other practices like that have the same kind of aspects to them in different parts of the world?

Some things about shamanism are well documented and well studied and are known about. Shamans would recognize other shamans from other parts of the world if they would sit down and actually talk. That would be an interesting scenario; shamans from Africa and Mongolia and the Arctic sitting down and talking about shamanism.[24] Shamanism could include the practice of medicine to a degree, the practice of fortune telling, of foretelling events, and the practice of compelling animals to do this or that.

It could be much lighter. It could be sleight of hand, tricks like shoving a knife into your belly and pulling it out. Things like that. My grandfather did that just for fun. He explained that material things and corporeal things can be turned into something akin to smoke. It's a tough explanation. One of the reasons shamans existed in traditional life, at least in my culture, was that sometimes malevolent spirits or demons were around. Often they

24. For more details see the study conducted by Bernard Saladin d'Anglure which shows the many similarities between shamanism in Siberia and North and South America (Bernard Saladin d'Anglure 1996).

were people who had died. They were their *tarniit*,[25] their souls. A lot of shamanism centers around souls. In many of their practices such as travelling through the earth, or underwater, it was actually their souls that were travelling elsewhere.

My grandfather's specialty, his real work, and he retired early because it was a very tough life, was to fight off demons other people couldn't see. He retired before I was able to really see him practice, although I saw a little bit. Sometimes people thought when there was illness, or sickness or bad luck or those types of things, that it was caused by a demon, or the spirit-soul of a dead person hanging around, either for revenge, or enemies would do that. His ability was to see these things that other people couldn't see and fight them off. I'm told that his hands would become bloody while he was fighting these things. It was always a very tough battle. That was his specialty.

They also did other things, too. They could make a soul appear to a group of people. My father claims he has seen this. When the soul appeared and it was all bright, they knew that the spirit that was there was benevolent and good, and it was not there to harm them. If it had a white ring around it, but it was black in the inside, then they knew that that spirit was out to harm them in one way or the other. That could be through influencing animals. Life centered around animals. Animals were everything, day in and day out.

25. The *tarniq* (pl. *tarniit*) is the soul of all living things. It has a miniature shape of the person or animal it is the soul of and resides in an air bubble in the groin. When a person dies, the air bubble blows up. Then, the air returns to the atmosphere and the miniature, in the shape of the person, goes to the Great Beyond. However, sometimes, the *tarniq* is unable to get to the Great Beyond and wanders on the land, turning itself into a *tupilaq*, an evil spirit that can cause hardship to human beings and that can only be seen by an *angakkuq* (shaman) (Saladin d'Anglure 1997, Saladin d'Anglure 2001 and Thalbitzer 1930).

Pauloosie: For survival?

They didn't think about anything else. By the way, Anaqqaaq and Freuchen travelled together, as did Anaqqaaq and Knud Rasmussen. In fact, Kenn Harper wrote something recently about this.[26] Anaqqaaq was a shaman, but I didn't catch that part of him. I spent a lot of time with him, especially from seven to twelve years of age. I didn't see him practice. When I was sick, and I was a sickly kid, he would do some things to help me heal.

There is a story I'll tell you about that happened when we were still in Chesterfield Inlet. After my mother left, when my father went hunting, usually we would go down to the floe edge. There was a lot of seal hunting in those days. Now it is more caribou, because of skidoos. In those days we ate a lot of seals. That was the staple of our diet. We ate caribou, too, but seal was the real staple.

My father would go hunting and he would take me. My father started taking me at a very, very early age. He taught me about dogs and a lot of things. The first time you had to walk for a seal. *Qaksimajut* means there are seals on the ice by a seal hole. That's how you hunted seals in the springtime. I would be in the canoe, and after one shot, one dog would get up and go up to my father. He would go after a seal and get it, go after another one and get it, and go after another one and get it. There would be three shots. Then we would go after him and pick up the seals.

I guess this one time I was bored. I climbed down. I was in front of the dogs. I was playing around with the lead dog who was my buddy. He was my good buddy. I came around to the front, and there were shots. The dogs got up and took off, and I was bowled over by the very heavy sled. I was nearly killed. I had bones broken and all that stuff. Of course my father came back to pick me up.

26. Harper 2006. See note 13 for more information.

The story as it was told to me, was that he said, "I thought my father loved me. I thought my father loved me", as he picked me up. Our dogteam never galloped. It was a steady dogteam. It was a working dogteam. He made them gallop all the way back to Chesterfield Inlet. I was laid on the bed. My grandfather was called. He was told what had happened. He kind of laughed and said something and I was alive again. This is how the story goes.

Beyond that, I know my father knows a lot about shamanism. He saw a lot of it being practiced. I think he practiced a little bit himself. I have witnessed him talking shaman's language. The walls were vibrating and there was an eerie atmosphere. But beyond that, I haven't seen much shamanistic practice myself. But, to this day I'm still afraid of the dark. My grandfather raised me and Roger, his adopted son who died when I was eleven in a drowning accident. Every night we would listen to my grandfather telling Kiviuq stories[27] and folklore.

The Paallirmiut

In those days, in the fifties, government intervention was really starting to take place. Some people were really not well-off, especially the Paallirmiut, the inland people. There was a lot of attention on them at that time. In fact there was a woman, a film was made about her not long ago, who out of necessity had to kill someone. Farley Mowat wrote about her.[28]

27. Kiviuq is a heroic figure in Inuit mythology. He is an *angakkuq* (shaman) and his adventures take the form of an epic tale. See Oosten 2002 for more details.
28. Kikkik is the name of the woman. In 1958, Ahiarmiut living in the area of the Ennadai Lake were relocated to Henik Lake. There, they suffered famine and death. Unfortunately, in order to survive the famine, Kikkik killed her brother-in-law in self-defence and also had to abandon two of her five children on the tundra. She was later tried in Rankin Inlet for murder and criminal negligence but was subsequently acquitted. Farley Mowat wrote an article about her entitled 'The two

Paallirmiut women receiving a medal from the RCMP. I am sure she would have preferred more tangible and useful things, like food. (West of Arviat, Padlei?, 1950s)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Pauloosie: Was this Kikkik?

Yes. The trial was in Rankin Inlet. I recall that trial. The trial was sensational, even back then. White man's law really couldn't deal with what actually happened. Kikkik's family, as I understand it, has kind of revisited this story. I think I was around eight years old, but I remember the trial in Rankin Inlet. Of course, we were not allowed to go into the court or anything. But it was around that time, or because of that, that the government realized that these

ordeals of Kikkik' in 1959 in *Maclean's* magazine. Kikkik's daughter, Elisapee Karetak, made a movie about this episode called *Kikkik, E1-472*. The movie presents the accounts of elders who survived relocation and famine including several of Karetak's siblings.

people were literally starving to death. They were brought to Rankin Inlet. Houses were provided for them and they took work in the mine.

There were the Coral Harbour people, the Repulse Bay people, the Chesterfield Inlet people, a few Iglulingmiut[29] and a few people from Pond Inlet. While they were different from each other, they were not that different. They spoke the same dialect as each other with a little variation. They were related to each other. They knew of each other from before. Of course there was also the Northern Quebec contingent who came as well. Nobody bothered them, and they didn't bother anybody. They were friends with everybody, and they were respected.

The Paallirmiut were a little bit different. There was a lot of interaction especially at the traditional drum dance level. They got together with the already established Rankin Inlet people for drum dancing. These were very, very traditional people. They had shamans amongst them. They were different from the Arviarmiut, the Eskimo Point people[30] who came up, the Aggarks[31] and others.

As a matter of fact, when they came to town and they were living over there, as I recall, Roger and I went over to where they were housed. We were little kids. We went to see them. And these big guys, these Paallirmiut, came out of their houses and picked up rocks and came after us. They were primitive people, but they assimilated very quickly.

I don't think they had ever lived in a town before, especially a town like Rankin Inlet. Some of them might have seen Churchill, the odd one, maybe because of medical problems, you know. They interacted with inland traders. They interacted with the trappers in the forties

29. See note 11.
30. Arviarmiut means people from Arviat or Eskimo Point as it was called earlier.
31. Family from Arviat.

and fifties, white trappers from Churchill and The Pas, in that area. They trapped with them, but beyond that, their interactions with Inuit and others were rare. They were a different crowd.

But they live in Rankin Inlet now. They are totally assimilated. They are also probably here at Nunavut Sivuniksavut[32]. I don't know that there was a lot of tension there. I know that down Arviat way, there was a lot of tension when they moved there, between them and the people who were already living there[33]. I don't know a lot about it, so I'm not going to comment. It's interesting. Here we were in the 1950s, with a long history of interaction from the 1880s, 1890s onwards. Even though we were in Rankin Inlet as established townspeople, we were still like Inuit, but very modern at the time. Here there were these people who were utterly primitive, very poor, very skinny, very hungry. That's all I can say about them. I was a little kid; what did I know.

32. Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) is a college program based in Ottawa for Inuit youth from Nunavut. It prepares them for the educational, training, and career opportunities that are being created by the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) and the new Government of Nunavut (For more information go to http://www.nstraining.ca/).
33. Arviat is an Inuit community on the western shore of Hudson Bay. The community took shape in the 1950s when Aivilingmiut (coastal Inuit from the Repulse Bay and Igloolik area), Paallirmiut (inland Inuit) and later Ahiarmiut (another group of inland Inuit) came together. In 1955, Geert van den Steenhoven, while conducting fieldwork in the community, noted that there was hostility between the different groups. According to him, although this hostility was not open, members from the different groups lived in different campsites, never intermarried and never went hunting together. Another sign of this hostility was noted by the Catholic priest who realized that the Aivilingmiut always stopped going to church during the summer period when the Paallirmiut were in town. When most of the Paallirrmiut returned inland during the fall period, the Aivilingmiut resumed going to church (van den Steenhoven 1963: 9).

Pauloosie: You have mentioned that your father was a little upset because you weren't living a traditional lifestyle.

No. He wasn't upset. He contradicted himself throughout his life. He wanted me to have an education so I didn't have to work as hard as he did as a hunter or in the mine, and so on. But I've learned you have to work pretty hard even if you are educated. At other times he regretted I had not learned the Inuit way, but he never said that in a mean-spirited way. He regretted that I had not caught my grandfather's shamanism practices; to witness them, not to practice. I do, too.

Whenever I went back North, it was right back to hunting. He also always tried to protect me from my peers. He took me hunting himself for years, before he allowed me to go hunting with other people.

Pauloosie: Was this to train you?

To train me, and to teach me how to survive. He was known as a particularly good hunter. I don't think he trusted other people very much. You know when you are out there, there are all kinds of dangers. I don't think he trusted other people, in the sense that he wondered how they would treat me when I was out there with them because I was different. Inuit can be very mean, as you know.

Death and Survival

Before I left for Ottawa there were two events that had a big bearing on my life. In fact, I think there was even a third one, really. The first one was that I grew up with a man named Roger Qikiqtaq who was my grandfather's youngest son. He was adopted. Roger was a little bit older than me. He and I lived with my grandfather out at a place

called Iqaluit,[34] at the Diane River, near Rankin Inlet, from spring until fall. We fished there; we walked on the land. We were alone out there except for the occasional odd visitor. Diane River is now completely inhabited by Rankin Inlet people and very reachable by ATVs and snowmobiles.

Roger was one of my closest friends. The world of Inuit being what it was, I was the favourite one and the boss in the household. Roger was the worker. When people got older they never had elders' homes to go to. In Inuit households in that day people didn't have anywhere to go to, other than to live with their sons or relatives. So, my grandfather lived with us; and Roger lived with him. Roger and I listened many a night to my grandfather telling us about the oral history of Inuit, about folklore, and beliefs, and so on.

One day, in Rankin Inlet where we were spending the summer, I was playing at a pond with my little sailboat and trying to sail it around. Roger came around with Albert Nauja and a guy named Joseph. The three of them said they had found a tin tub at a pond. They said they were going to go boating and off they went. I didn't pay much attention to them. I said I wasn't going along.

The next morning when I woke up, my father told me that I wouldn't see Roger anymore. Apparently, what had happened was the three of them had drowned in this tub. It had overturned. Being Inuit boys they couldn't swim. For anyone who could swim, even at that age at nine, ten, eleven, or twelve, it would have been an easy swim to shore, less than twenty-five feet, but this was drowning distance for Inuit in those days. When Roger died, that affected me really strongly, because he was kind of like my brother. It was after that that I befriended Eric Tagoona. He was like my surrogate brother.

34. Iqaluit means 'fishing place' in Inuktitut, and is a very common place name in Inuit regions.

The other thing that happened in Rankin Inlet that affected me, was one day in the midst of winter, Mark Innakatsiq, Aggark, and I were walking home from church, passing the main street in Rankin Inlet. I saw my father's bombardier snowmobile. My dad was one of two Inuit in Rankin who had a bombardier. It was stopped by the hospital. My father had been on a hunting trip for two or three days. I ran down there and my father was slumped over the wheel. He said, "Son you won't see your uncle anymore." So, I knew my uncle who he had gone hunting with had died. He was with Armand Kolit who now lives in Coral Harbour. The two of them were immobile, they couldn't move.

I ran into Bob Williamson's house. It was right by where the bombardier had stopped. I yelled at Bob Williamson who was an anthropologist studying Inuit[35]. He later became a professor at the University of Saskatoon. He came out and helped my father walk into the hospital, and I helped Armand Kolit. The nurse laid them down and took off their boots. My father and Armand's toes were completely black. They were frostbitten. Armand's hands were frostbitten. They both had frostbitten lips.

What had happened was while they were out hunting they had camped at a lake. They had built a sort of *iglu* shelter over the bombardier. They had started it up and they all got carbon monoxide poisoning. My father and Armand Kolit managed to get out, but my uncle didn't. His

35. Robert Gordon Williamson was born in England in 1931. He immigrated to Canada in 1952. Between July 1953 and October 1954 while based at Pangnirtung, Baffin Island, he learned Inuktitut and extended his ethnological experience by travelling throughout Cumberland Sound. In 1958 he joined the Department of Northern Affairs on a full-time basis. He resigned in 1963, remaining in Rankin Inlet to conduct research. By 1964 he had joined the Department of Anthropology at the University of Saskatchewan. In 1966 he was elected by acclamation in the first of his two terms as the member for Keewatin to the Legislative Council of the NWT. He was invested into the Order of Canada in 1983.

heel caught on the high side door, and he fell out upside down, and he froze to death. My father spent sixteen hours out on the ice. He melted the snow through to the ice. His lip was stuck to the ice. He had no gloves on, but amazingly his hands weren't frozen. When he woke up he was delirious. By screaming and yelling he managed to free his lip from the ice. He managed to free his clothes which had frozen to the ice, and he crawled over to my uncle. He felt his stomach which was frozen solid.

Armand Kolit was wandering around in a daze. The bombardier had been running all night, so it had run out of gas. It had just run out of gas, luckily. Somehow my father managed to pick up a ten-gallon drum and fuel it up. The stupid thing had a fuel tank up on top so it was almost impossible to fill. He started a Coleman stove and tried to warm up Armand's feet, but it was too painful, so he put Armand's boots on. Armand had been walking around without any boots. He then managed to drive back to Rankin, sometimes driving around in circles because he would go unconscious. He made it back, and I was the first person to see him.

I'm not sure how that affected me. It was the one period my dad went away, and the first time in my life that I knew what it was like to be hungry and poor. The mine had no benefits plan for its employees in those days. I doubt very many mines in the world did. My father had to go down south and have his toes amputated, and so on. He was the main provider of the house. Little did I know how much, until he was gone. We ran out of groceries. Basically we didn't eat much for three or four months. We weren't allowed credit at the store. The neighbours were not sharing food with us. There was a man named Kablalik who helped us out every once in a while, but nobody else did. Basically it was a very, very hungry period for my grandfather, my aunt and I.

I tried to provide a little bit by trying to trap fox, but I couldn't do much. I was only ten years old. I did catch

a fox or two. I remember feeding my grandfather a can of tomatoes over the course of a week. He was sick quite a bit. I continued going to school. That is when I found out I didn't want to be poor, and I didn't want to be hungry. I didn't like it and I resolved that I, on my own, would never be in that situation. Life is not fair, and you do get into those situations. I'll talk about this later on.

Another period was when my father was underground and there was a rock slide and he was buried under the rocks. His leg was seriously hurt, and he had to be medivaced again. And, again we went hungry. When he came back, all he had to do was go to the store, and he got groceries. They gave them to him because he had credit. It was a period when I realized that hunger was something that no one in the world should have to go through. In my resolve to deal with that, this idea personally stayed with me forever. I didn't want to be hungry, and I didn't want anyone else to be hungry, or poor, or second-class. I saw that quite a lot later on when I was trying to help Inuit, in my own little way.

When I did become involved with the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada[36], and later on when I almost inadvertently

36. The Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), which is now called Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), has its origins in the Indian and Eskimo Association (IEA). The IEA was created in 1957 by Canadian aboriginals. Its two main objectives were to conduct research on the aboriginal peoples in Canada and to assist newly created aboriginal associations across Canada. In 1969, Tagak Curley – who later became one of the founders of ITC – was asked to represent Inuit as a member of IEA. Soon however, Inuit felt they needed their own organization to reflect their particular cultural, historic and geographic peculiarities within Canada. In 1970, IEA sponsored a conference to discuss this idea, which Inuit delegates identified as critical. This conference was followed by a meeting held in Toronto in February 1971. The seven Inuit who attended the Toronto meeting stressed the need to have an independent Inuit organization working alongside Indian organizations. Six months later, twenty-eight Inuit representing the various regions gathered in Ottawa as delegates at the founding conference for ITC. The goal was to create an organization that would

got involved with politics, my main thought was to make sure that Inuit did not live in poverty. To live in poverty means being a second-class citizen, being less than equal and living in a depression all the time. It's not a happy place to be. I wanted to mention those instances because they formed part of the make-up of who I was and who I am. They were unhappy periods of my life in the North.

Teach an Eskimo How to Read…

I want to expound on that in much more detail, and recount experiences and incidents in my life. I started reading in Rankin Inlet. I started learning the alphabet in Chesterfield Inlet during my first year in school. That was my first real experience with learning English, at the Federal Day School in Chesterfield Inlet. My dad who was a special constable in the RCMP had taught me things like, "How are you?" "I am fine," and that sort of thing. The basics. Other than that he knew how to swear.

In Rankin Inlet I took to books like a duck to water. It was natural for me. The school in Rankin Inlet had a pretty good library, and very good teachers. We had very good teachers in those days; Mr. Bob Swim, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Button and others. And also, unlike the other kids, I was allowed to read at home. Eric Tagoona was allowed to read at home, too. That family read at home. There were a few other families that read at home, but no more than that. My father was pretty careful with his money, but he would indulge his two children. There were just my sister and me at the time.

When I said he indulged us, he dressed us well, he fed us well, and we got what we wanted out of the Eaton's catalogue, meaning toys, and for me, also reading materials.

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unite Canadian Inuit across the Arctic into a common movement with the strength and mandate to act on what the first ITC president Tagak Curley, referred to as: "*…the life and death issues that we can only overcome if we are a united people."*

The Freuchen family from Denmark: Aunt Pipaluk Freuchen (Peter Freuchen's daughter with his first wife Navarana and Peter father's half sister), Inaluk on the right (Navarana's daughter), Peter Freuchen III (Navarana's son), Navarana (Pipaluk's daughter), and Peter in Copenhagen on a trip to Denmark with John Munro (1981)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Eaton's used to have a comic book section, so I got all the comic books. To this day, I still advocate that reading comic books is the best way to learn how to read. They are nothing but a movie script with dialogue in them.

Do you remember Classic comics? The more sophisticated ones. There were the classics, like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Frankenstein*, and classic cowboy stories with people being wrongly hanged. I can't remember the name of that one. There were classic Roman stories and so on. They had the text underneath as well as the balloons with the dialogue. It wasn't simple dialogue. It was from the classic books. It was a wonderful way to learn to read. You saw as well as read.

I read *The Great Gatsby* at eight or nine, which was pretty early for reading a Fitzgerald novel. Somehow I picked up the fact that Peter Freuchen was my grandfather, and that interested me very, very much. I started to pick up books and my teachers helped me. My grandfather wrote about forty books. Just before that, he had been widely known. In fact, there is a book called *The Fifty Great Authors of the First Half of the Twentieth Century*. I started to read his books, because I was reading my own history. It was a pretty cool spot to be in. It was a natural inclination.

When I was in Rankin Inlet, teachers promoted reading time, not just for reading textbooks, but for reading for pleasure. In fact, I remember one of the awards every month for the whole school was for the person who took out the most books from the library and read them. You would get a free book to take home if you won. I won that a couple of times. We had pretty good teachers.

Like everyone else I find textbooks boring beyond belief. What I read at work is sometimes boring beyond belief, but they pay me for it! On the other hand, I read documents from 1764 and 1820 that are relevant to my work today. It's fascinating.

It was a natural inclination to read. Both my parents could read. My mother could read and write English because of her stay in the tuberculosis hospital. My father was literate in syllabics. He wasn't against my sister Nicole and me reading in the house. That was a little bit unusual in those days, because most Inuit families did not have books other than the Bible and reading materials from the church.

That was another thing. The Roman Catholic Church also produced comic books. The church in Rankin Inlet had them. In fact, that's how I learned about communism and Khrushchev and oppression. They wrote comic book stories about Mexico and about Russia and other places of oppression, usually tied to priests who had been martyred

Peter Ittinuar (house provided by the mine, Rankin Inlet circa 1959)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Peter, Nicole and Helen Niviatjuk (Nuvak's daughter, George Tanuyak's sister) taking care of them (Chesterfield Inlet, circa 1955-56)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

in those countries. But still, it was interesting reading material if you were a kid. They did it to get kids to read, which was a pretty good idea. They also had other modern stories in the comics. I forget what they were called.

I could read at home at leisure. I think this had a lot to do with me being selected to go to Ottawa in 1960 along with Eric Tagoona and Zebedee Nungak.[37] The intelligence tests of the day were culturally biased. They were about Dick and Jane and not about Kangirjuaq and Napajuq, if you know what I mean. Eric Tagoona's father was the Anglican minister, and bilingual, orally and in writing. So, Eric was surrounded with documents and letters and books. He was reading all the time, too. I think this led us to do well on those intelligence tests that had a cultural bias to them. They were about the world outside. We had a much better chance to do well on those than the other kids whose parents did not have books in the house, which was natural. That's just the way things were.

37. Zebedee Nungak was born in a camp between Puvirnituq and Inukjuak in Nunavik. He started his career as a negotiator for the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. He was co-chairperson of the Inuit Committee on National Issues during the Aboriginal Conference of 1984-87. He then became president of Makivik Corporation from 1995-98. He is now a translator and an avid speaker and writer specializing in Qallunology: the study of white people.

CHAPTER TWO

What's Wrong With this Picture?

The Eskimo Experiment

The Inuit are very recent Canadian citizens. As such the Canadian government, although their presence was felt up North in minimal administrative roles and so on, had to start developing policies on housing, their military presence, infrastructure, or transportation, and on what to do with the Inuit. One of the things they had to consider with respect to the Inuit, was how they were going to educate the kids. One of the questions they apparently asked themselves was, "Should we build schools up there, or should we bring them down?" The question of what the Inuit wanted never entered into the equation in those days. That's why you have so many land claims nowadays with the Indians, for example. In those days nobody ever asked, "What would the Inuit like?" It was, "What are we going to do with them?"

They wanted to know if Inuit kids could compete in the southern education system, so they were considering things like, "Should we devise a whole new curriculum," or, "Do we import a curriculum?" They wanted to know if Inuit kids were smart enough, intelligent enough, or were they too close to the animals to cope with a southern curriculum. So, they decided on a little experiment. In 1959 or 1960, they sent a guy named Gordon Devitt[1], to

1. Between 1961 and 1970, hand-picked Inuit children were sent to study in Ottawa. They lived in foster families and, according to David

Inuvik, to Rankin Inlet and other places to test Inuit kids, basically with an IQ test. They narrowed it down to two guys who they wanted to go; actually there were four guys, Michael and Jose Kusugak, Eric Tagoona and myself. There was Susan Tagoona, I believe, as well. Then they narrowed that down to Eric and myself. The two of us happened to be the best of friends, as well. When we left, Rankin Inlet was still thriving. They brought us to Ottawa in 1962. We lived with a middle class family.

Our parents were not really asked about this. They were just told. Besides which, Eric and I were happy about it. So, Eric and I went to Ottawa. We were twelve years old. Neither of us was apprehensive about it. We had looked forward to it. I guess we were bored with life in Rankin Inlet. In Rankin Inlet we saw movies at home and also in the schools. Our school had a lot of resources like in the South. There was a library, and we saw a lot of films about the southern way of life.

Pauloosie: How did you feel about being taken down South away from your parents?

I had no initial sense of dislocation, actually. I was twelve at the time, and I was looking forward to seeing the world. We first lived in Rankin Inlet. Then we went to Churchill and that was a revelation! Churchill was a big, big town and different from Rankin Inlet, but in fact not that different. I had been there when I was seven because I

King, were provided with the best in order to be assimilated (King 1998: 11). In 1964, R.L. Kennedy (who was then the Administrator of the Arctic) wrote that: "We [at the Department of Northern Affairs] have been gratified by the results of the experiment involving Zebedee Nunga (*sic*), Eric Tagoona and Peter Konginjuak (*sic*), who are attending school in Ottawa and in grades six, seven and seven respectively" (in King 1998: 12). Zebedee Nungak also talks about his own experience as a young Inuk studying in Ottawa in an article published in 2000 (Experimental Eskimos. *Inuktitut* #87, 2000: http://www.itk.ca/inuk-mag/magazines/InukMagazine87.pdf).

had had an eye infection. I was brought there on a military Otter. The army guys on the plane kept trying to feed me oranges, and bananas, and apples, and sandwiches, and I never said a word. I wouldn't eat.

From there, we went from Churchill to Ottawa. In those days they didn't have jets. It was a Viscount, if I recall the airplane. It was a four-engine plane which made me sick as a dog. I had vomited all over myself by the time we reached Ottawa. We were picked up at the airport on August 22nd. I believe it was Eric's birthday. He was born in 1952. Eric and I were wearing little suits. Our families were such that we were some of the very few kids in Rankin Inlet that actually had suits at twelve years of age. We were picked up right at the airport. There was a big crowd.

In those days there was a fence where people waited for passengers to get off the airplane outside, not inside the terminal. There was no security, even at Ottawa Airport. The first thing we heard was, "Hi boys!" That was my first greeting in Ottawa. After getting off, we went to this man's car which was a big beautiful '59 Buick. It wasn't my first car ride, but it was my first ride in a beautiful car. The first song I heard on the radio was Rosemary Clooney singing, "I love him. I love him. I will follow him." That's always been my favourite song ever since.

We were put in the shower the next morning. It was the first shower in my life. We had a hot shower, and all of a sudden they turned on the cold water which was a bit of a shock. They believed that hot, and then cold, got you ready for the day. Right after that, they had shorts and tee shirts ready for us. Their yard had a field with a stream running through it. We had never been barefoot in our lives, being kids from up North. One of his activities was to run in the morning, barefoot through this field which was full of brambles and things like that. We had to run with them, and of course by the time we got back, our feet were bleeding. That was another little shock.

Then all these little shocks started piling up, like eating with a knife and fork. We experienced that at breakfast, and all the other little things. We were taught 'please' and 'thank you', etiquette and all these things. We didn't speak much in our own language, though we wrote to our parents in syllabics because we knew how to read and write syllabics by that time. We didn't hear from our parents much, except for the odd letter now and then. We certainly didn't eat any of our own food. Then there were all the extra-curricular activities; piano lessons, judo lessons and all those things.

Pauloosie: Did you have to take part in those things as part of the experiment?

I don't know. It is mentioned in an official document that the Eskimo Experiment was going well. It said, "Zebedee Nungak is at the top of his class in all subjects, and Peter and Eric are at the top of their class in most subjects. Also, they are very successful in their extra-curricular activities. They take piano and judo lessons and swimming and skiing lessons."[2] We were living a jolly old middle class life, you know. That was the experiment. It is kind of an antecedent to the residential school story. In fact the Eskimo Experiment is a chapter in a book by David King. He just did his Ph.D. dissertation on residential schools in Canada.[3]

This has come to light in recent years. As you know, there is now a documentary film being made about this Eskimo Experiment. This is because David King uncovered all these documents when he was doing archival research on residential schools in Canada. He came up with documents on Eric and Zebedee Nungak and myself. Zebedee Nungak joined us a year later from Northern Quebec. Our stories

2. Quoted in 'Inuktitut' see note 38 for reference.
3. See King 1996.

Peter Ittinuar (Ottawa, 1963)
Credit : Zebedee Nungak
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Zebedee Nungak and Peter (Ottawa, 1964)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Peter Ittinuar (Ottawa, 1964)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Peter and Eric Tagoona (Ottawa, 1964)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

will be told. In fact, one of the things that Zebedee has always said about those years in Ottawa, was that he has never regretted the experience, but he has also never recovered from it.

Pauloosie: It was a time of transition?

It was a time of transition. Well, life is a transition. Whether that experiment actually affected policy on education for Inuit, I'm not positive, but I'm sure it had some type of bearing. I do know that after us, they brought quite a number of kids down to Ottawa and Winnipeg because we had succeeded at school. They put quite a lot of kids into high school. No one as young as us ever came down again. People were sixteen to around twenty later on. So, I guess it had some spin-off effects that way. There will be more on the Eskimo Experiment later on, because it does have a bearing on my life. I went back to Rankin Inlet.

Pauloosie: How long did you stay down south for the Eskimo Experiment?

Zebedee stayed for about six years. The government had put in the Churchill Vocational Centre. The army had moved out of Churchill, basically, and left all these barracks and residences. In 1964 or 1965, they brought Inuit from Northern Quebec and Baffin Island and the Kivalliq to Churchill. Some were in regular school like Eric and Michael and Jose Kusugak and Charlie Watt. Actually, Charlie Watt was a supervisor. Others went to the vocational centre where they learned trades like welding and carpentry, heavy equipment, mechanics and so on. That's what they did.

Because the mine had closed down in Rankin Inlet, my family moved to a place called Lynn Lake, Manitoba. The mine had found my father work there. The government

had brought several families from Rankin Inlet who had experience working in the mine, to work in the Yellowknife mine or the Lynn Lake mine. My parents had opted to go to Lynn Lake. I was tired of living away from my parents at the time, so I choose to join them in Lynn Lake, and I went to high school there for a couple of years. Zebedee stayed on in Ottawa, and completed his high school there. So, that's how we dispersed.

Pauloosie: So how long were you there? Were you in Ottawa for two, or three years?

Well Eric and myself were there for two years the first time. I was there from the time I was twelve to fourteen. Zebedee was there from the time he was twelve until he was eighteen, I think. We went home for the summer, but we didn't go home for Christmas.

Thierry: What do you think you gained from the whole experiment?

Well, Zebedee had a Friday morning series of commentaries on CBC and he did a series on the Eskimo Experiment outlining both the positive and negative. He described this, and I suggest you refer to those to see what it was like. Obviously, Zebedee, Eric and I gained a lot in our knowledge of English. By the time we left, it was the same as the white kids English. As good as it was in Rankin Inlet, it wasn't nearly as good as what could be learned in an urban environment. Our English increased multi-fold. Our competitiveness increased in school. Again, it was competitive in Rankin Inlet, but not anything like what it was like in a standard public school in urban Ottawa or elsewhere. It was very competitive. You had to do your homework. You had to pay attention to detail. You had to be specific when you were doing grammar and mathematics.

We also learned other things. We learned to swim. We learned musicianship. We learned martial arts. We went to museums. We went to the YMCA. We ingested a lot of information. In a way it was assimilation. We were assimilated. We tried not to forget our language, but it was very, very difficult. I'd say that the positive side was very brief.

On the negative side, there was our loss of language, our loss of cultural upbringing. I mentioned earlier that up until I was twelve, I got the upbringing that a traditional Inuk boy would be getting; hunting fishing, trapping and all these things. But it doesn't stop at twelve. You keep on learning. You learn navigation. You learn meteorology, Inuit lore and songs. You learn many, many more things about animals. You learn about animal anatomy. You learn about the seasons, and all these things. All these things that we would have learned as Inuit we lost, because we were down there.

Going to Lynn Lake further increased that loss, but at least I was with my parents. There were other Inuit in Lynn Lake and they spoke Inuktitut socially, so I was able to keep up my language. We hunted in Lynn Lake, and we trapped as well, but it was very different. There were all these losses. Then the alienation comes to the fore. You are not really aware of it when you are twelve or thirteen.

When we went back to Rankin Inlet there was some teasing from the other kids, but mostly there was some envy and some jealousy. When you reached fourteen, fifteen or sixteen and you went back up North, that's when the real marginalization and alienation started. You were not really white, and you were not really Inuit. You were either in between or you were both. We felt both, but neither side accepted us as both. Then at the same time you didn't feel both, so it was a dichotomous, paradoxical, ironical situation to be in. I think it affected Eric and Zebedee and myself a great deal for quite a while.

The Sixties in Lynn Lake

When we moved up North it was catch-up time. When we went down South we were still seen as inferior. We are talking about the sixties now. The civil rights movement down South was just starting to happen. When you went into the schools in the sixties in Ottawa, or anywhere else, you were the only non-white kid in the school. There might be a Japanese or a Chinese person. You didn't see any Blacks.

Pauloosie: How did that make you feel?

Well, you made friends. Of course you made friends because you spoke the same language. In some ways kids don't see colour. They see other things. They have their own hierarchical class system anyway. You know jocks, the with-it guys, the with-it girls, and the more ordinary boys and girls. We generally fitted in with the regular guys. You'd fit in that way, but at the same time you were still different. There was no getting around that. You were not the same as the other kids.

It was the same at Lynn Lake. I was the only non-white kid in the high school. It was a mining town. It was a tough town. That wasn't an easy situation either. But then again, even in those situations, you make life-long friends. I have life-long friends from both my Ottawa days and my Lynn Lake days. How I grew up is part of my make-up, in addition to my early years in the far North. Those were formative years in Chesterfield Inlet, Rankin Inlet, Ottawa, and Lynn Lake, and I moved on from there.

Lynn Lake[4] was a place many Inuit went to, especially Inuit from Rankin Inlet, men who had worked in the mine there, who had had some experience in the mining

4. Lynn Lake is a small town situated 1,100 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg in Manitoba. The town was founded in 1950, after a deposit of nickel ore was discovered. The nickel mine was developed,

Harmonies, Peter is in the middle (Lynn Lake, 1968)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Harmonies, Peter is on the left (Lynn Lake, 1968)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

business, either as heavy equipment operators, or drillers, diamond drillers, or what have you. A number of those who went there surprisingly could not speak English. Phillip Nukapiak was one; my father, Ollie Ittinuar, was another. Mike Tulugak, Tony Amaruq, Louis Pilakapsi, Joachim Kavik, and Taparti; none of these men could speak any English, and if they could it was minute. And yet, all these men got along in the mine. As a matter of fact, my father became a shift boss without speaking a word of English, which was quite unusual. It was just that they were very good miners. They were very good workers. They were from another age of Inuit who worked hard.

Pauloosie: They adapted fast, too!

Well they knew how to work. The work ethic was very strong in them as hunters. They weren't lazy. They were strong men physically. They grew up on the land. They grew up on seals and animals. They could hold their own physically against anyone else. In terms of figuring out what to drill, what to blast, what to muck up, what to haul up, what to do in situations in a mine shaft, they had all that figured out as well as anyone, just through their own intelligence, in Inuktitut. They were just as good as the regular men who worked in the mine. They adapted very well. They were, by and large, welcomed by the mining community.

Lynn Lake was in some ways a very friendly town. In other ways it wasn't so friendly. Mining towns are like that. There is a rough edge to them, because there are a lot of single men who come from small rural communities throughout Canada. They were not professional in the sense that they had a professional level of education in the trades. A few had, but by and large there was a rough sector that was part of the demographic, if you will.

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and soon after, gold was also discovered. The mine was shut down in the late 1990s.

Of course, the mine also had very professional people such as geologists and engineers, chemical engineers. The mine also had people to take care of the administration. The town itself was very closely tied to the mine. That was its lifeline, as all mining towns of that size. I think there were about two thousand five hundred or so people when we arrived, which was a fair-sized town. Small, but fair-sized. All was as it should be. Ethnically, the people had mostly Ukrainian and Scottish backgrounds with a mixture of everything else, German and what have you.

Thierry: How many Inuit were there?

Well, I mentioned the names of the families. I guess at the time we would have numbered fifteen to twenty, counting everybody, the wives and children. This increased over time. Inuit came and went. Some just came to work for the summer. Some came to work for a short period, and went back up North. Everybody bought a house. Everybody bought a car. These unilingual Inuit had transitioned into Rankin Inlet from the land, and they transitioned again to an even more modern town with a high school and an elementary school, with a town hall and a legion, and a Lion's Club. There were quite a number of stores, a private pharmacy, and those sorts of things. There was a hockey arena and a curling rink. There were annual turkey shoots, annual fairs, and an annual water sports day. All the things that small towns do they became part and parcel of, and we all joined in pretty heartily.

I had just spent two years in Ottawa as an upper middle class kid in a suburb in the west end of Ottawa. It was a fairly new part of Ottawa. Having done that for two years in the most formative years of my life, between twelve and fourteen, some things got really ingrained into you. They became permanent aspects in your life. There again, having been an Inuk kid from out on the land and living in Ottawa was one transition. Lynn Lake was a regression

in a way. You were going into a distinctly non-middle class town. There were a few families, the owners, the managers and so forth, but they were over and apart from the rest of the town. The town itself was distinctly working class, blue collar. People lived in small houses. They drove four or five year old vehicles, and they worked very hard in the mine. Everybody knew everybody else.

The second day I was there, I went to the community hall. Having come from Ottawa, I wasn't shy. I was a little apprehensive, but I wasn't shy of white kids. I walked into the community hall, and the stares I got! There were Chipewyan and Cree in the area, but they were sixty miles away. They didn't come into town very much, and if they did they didn't stay in the town. They camped on the outskirts when they went into town to pick up whatever they needed. They either rode the rails, or somehow made it back to the reservation.

When I walked into the community hall, every head in the place turned as if an Indian had walked in. A very clean looking Indian though, wearing Beatles-type clothing. They hadn't heard of them in that part of the world yet. The girls were still wearing 1958 clothing in 1964. The boys were still sporting 1958 hairstyles. The Beatles had yet to hit that part of the world. That was a whole different set of thinking.

I was fourteen and I walked into the community hall. There was a pick-up basketball game going on. I joined in, and promptly got into a fight. I went outside and got surrounded. I had a fight with this big guy. I thought, "Well maybe I should let myself get beaten here, because this crowd looks like they are going to jump me if I start winning." After having just won the Ottawa junior basketball championship, this guy was not hard to handle, but I let him win. After that, the crowd dispersed and a couple of guys came up to me. They are still my life-long friends in Lynn Lake.

Lynn Lake was uneventful. I went to high school, and I trapped like the other guys. If there was a forest fire we

went out to fight it with the Junior Rangers. We worked in the mine in the summers.

Sanatorium

From there, I decided to go back to Ottawa in 1967. I had kept in touch with Eric and other friends in the Inuit world. I had gone to Rankin Inlet a couple of times while I was in Lynn Lake. I knew they were still sending students out to school, so I decided to finish off my high school in Ottawa. I travelled to Churchill for this purpose, and went to the Indian and Northern Affairs office there. I arranged to go back to Ottawa under the program they had at that time. They were still sending Inuit kids to Ottawa then. There were quite a number of kids there by that time, in 1967 and '68. Zebedee Nungak, Alootook Ipellie, Peter Irniq, Jack Anawak, Betty Lyall, Bernie Putulik, Paul Quassa, Abraham Turngaluk, and Jackie Koneak were here. They were from Northern Quebec and all over.

Pauloosie: It sounds like you were quite independent at a young age. In terms of being willing to move on your own, and deciding you wanted to go back there.

Well, I was tired of Lynn Lake at that time. I also knew if I stayed there I could end up working in the mine for the rest of my life, marry a nice Ukrainian girl, and that would have been the end of it. My life would have taken a totally different turn. It was a turning point, and I knew that. I wanted to get back into the Inuit world. I'd been encapsulated and very insularly white for quite some time, from the time I was twelve until I was seventeen. From the time I was fourteen until seventeen I didn't hang out with Inuit at all, except for the ones who had come to work, and they were older than I was, like Evo Airut and those guys. I mostly hung out with white kids my age. It wasn't bad, but by the time I was seventeen, I knew I wanted to

get back into the Inuit world on a more full-time basis. I wanted to hang out with Inuit kids my age.

Pauloosie: Why did you choose Ottawa and not Rankin Inlet?

Because school was in Ottawa. There was no high school in Rankin Inlet. Ottawa was where Inuit kids went to school, Ottawa and Winnipeg. I had to either stay up there in Lynn Lake and finish high school there, or move to Ottawa. I was also playing hockey pretty steadily, and in 1967 the Ottawa Sixty Sevens Junior A team was started. This was also the time of the National Hockey League expansion. I also came down to try out for the Ottawa Sixty Sevens.

But, something happened. I came back and joined up with Zebedee and Eric, and Peter Irniq and all these other people and started hanging out, and what happened was I got tuberculosis. I ended up in the Royal Ottawa Sanatorium for a month or so, and then I got shipped to the Western Sanatorium in Toronto. I had no idea at the time that there were so many Inuit in tuberculosis sanatoriums in 1968. That meant I didn't quite finish high school.

When I went to that sanatorium in Toronto, I met people like David Poasey and Jayko Akpaliapik and a whole bunch of others. I ended up being the interpreter and spokesperson because many of them did not speak English. Most of them were from Baffin Island; from Pond Inlet, Pangnirtung, Cape Dorset, and Iqaluit. Except for a couple of guys in Ottawa, this was my first real contact with Baffin Island people. Even the young guys didn't speak English all that well, either.

Pauloosie: Did you make any friendships while you were at the sanatorium in Toronto?

Oh, yes. There was Jako Akpaliapik from Pond Inlet who is still a good friend. David Poasey from Pangnirtung is still a good friend. As a matter of fact, David and I are going to be working on a couple of projects together, one

of which is on the Hamilton tuberculosis sanatorium. He actually worked as a cameraman. I worked with him, too. He's a nice guy and he worked as a producer. There are a lot of Inuit buried there with no names on their graves. Their relatives never found out where they were buried. The film will be about that whole story in the forties, the fifties and sixties, when people were taken away and were basically lost.[5]

Pauloosie: People were taken away one day, and weren't really told how long they would be gone for.

They weren't told anything. My mother was gone for six years. Tuberculosis was very serious, and they didn't have drugs that worked very well in those days. Rest was the main thing, years and years of rest.

Working in Lynn Lake and Churchill

I spent some months at the sanatorium, and when I got out, not knowing what I wanted to do, I went back to Lynn Lake and worked in the mine there for a while.

Pauloosie: What did you do in the mine?

Well, if you didn't have a trade you were basically a labourer, but the personnel manager had a soft spot for me; and there was a job to insulate pipes in the new mine that was being built called Fox Lake mine. The job was insulating the pipes that went through all the buildings underground. That's what I did for a while.

So, I went back to Lynn Lake. Then I got the itch again. I didn't know what to do at this point in my life. I think I was nineteen. So, with a buddy, I saved up enough money to go to Toronto, not really knowing what to do. He

5. See note 14 chapter 1.

worked as a security guard, and I made money by playing pool. I was a hustler. I think it lasted about four months, and that was it. After around four months, some buddies of mine from Ottawa came down and picked me up, and we went back to Ottawa.

Then I went to Lynn Lake and worked for an airline company for a while and thought about becoming a pilot. Then the new Northwest Territories government came into being,[6] and it was based in Churchill, for the Keewatin. I thought, well that's a good opportunity. My parents were still in Lynn Lake, but I wanted to go and work for Inuit. I got a job with the new territorial government in social development. There were three of us for the whole Keewatin. That was the whole social development department. There were no social workers in the communities. We had to go into the communities and give out welfare cheques, and deal with adoptions. The personnel increased quite quickly in the two years I was there.

Then I left the government to go and work for Dr. Jack Hildes, who worked for the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Medicine. He had created the Northern Medical Unit to create a health plan for Inuit, which was a very good thing. He was largely responsible for the health care we have nowadays. I worked in Churchill and in Winnipeg for him. He was a mentor. I worked in the medical field as an interpreter and social worker. I worked as a liaison

6. The Northwest Territories was run by a Commissioner appointed by the Canadian government who resided in Ottawa. In 1921 an appointed four-member advisory council, made up of Ottawa-based civil servants, joined the Commissioner. It was only in 1941 that a Northerner was finally appointed to the council. In 1951, it was decided that three elected members from the North would join five appointed members. Only in 1966 did the elected members from the North outnumber the appointed Southerners. Finally, in 1975, all the Members of the Northwest Territories Council were elected. Shortly after, in 1976, the Northwest Territories Council became the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. See Cameron and White (1995) for more details.

Ollie Ittinuar and Peter (Churchill, 1972)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

between the North and the South with the doctors. That was an education in itself.

Well, I'm going to go back a little bit to Churchill. When I went to work in Churchill, I said to myself as Tagak Curley[7] did, "What's wrong with this picture? There

7. In 1972, Tagak Curley was one of the founders of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada in (See note 36 for details). He has since been very active

is something wrong here. Ottawa is the Lord and Master governing us and we are just little nobodies." Life was pretty good, but I hate to say it, the white man was still God. When I was a kid in Chesterfield Inlet any white man could tell any Eskimo to do something like shovel their porch for no pay. There was a slave class and an upper class. Rankin Inlet also became like that during the sixties. The white man stood heads and shoulders above the Eskimo man in terms of social standing.

There were many reasons for that, such as history. Inuit were going through a very fast transition. I had grown up travelling by dogteam, and all of a sudden everything changed in just a few years. When I went to Churchill, I thought the new Northwest Territories government would change that.

This was after the Carrothers Commission in 1966 and '67.[8] The commission was appointed and went to Yellowknife, and things went on from there. But I noticed when I was in Churchill, and travelling around the Keewatin, that Inuit were not in charge. Other people were in charge. It was a given that Inuit would not have authority. It was a given that the social worker from Manitoba would be the person in authority. It was a given that in any judgments

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in the Nunavut Land Claims negotiations and now as a MLA in the Nunavut Legislative Assembly.

8. The Carrothers Commission (officially The Advisory Commission on the Development of Government in the Northwest Territories) was appointed by the federal government in 1965. Its main task was to study the future development of the Government of the Northwest Territories. In 1966, it recommended that the territorial government be located in the Northwest Territories and suggested that many responsibilities (education, small business, public works, social assistance) be transferred from the federal government to the territorial government. The commission also reported that while division of the NWT was not advisable at that time, it was in the long term probably desirable and inevitable. See Cameron and White (1995) for more details.

or decisions about wildlife, or education, or housing that Inuit would not be involved.

Pauloosie: They didn't have any decision-making powers?

The Inuit were not involved in the decision-making process. They had no say in what went on, even in social settings. We lived in a place called Akudlik, also known as Camp 20 in Churchill. The town of Churchill was in fact made up of four towns. There was the port. There was what was called Fort Churchill, where the American and Canadian military had established a base after the Second World War. There was Camp 20 where the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and the Government of the Northwest Territories were located. All the Inuit lived there. Then there was Camp 10, the Dene village, where the Indians lived in abject poverty, total poverty. It was horrible the way people treated them. That was Churchill. I was twenty or twenty-one.

Pauloosie: Why were you in Churchill?

I went there to work for the Northwest Territories government. The government was new, and I thought it would be a good place to have a career. When you are twenty or twenty-one years old, disillusionment sets in pretty quickly. I went there, but it wasn't what I thought it would be. I thought this would be the new way for Inuit. And yes, people's lives were improved somewhat. There was more housing. There was more administration to run their lives. There were better schools in the communities, and things like that, but there was still something really wrong with the picture.

Then, in 1971, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada[9] was born. The pull there was very, very strong. When the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada came along, I was in Churchill and

9. See note 36 chapter 1.

they had a big conference there on the pipeline corridor running north to south. It was a massive conference. It was the first one I ever attended. James Arvaluk[10] was there to give a speech on behalf of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. I had never really heard of this before. I knew Tagak had left the government in Churchill under a cloud. He had gone to join the Indian and Eskimo Association of Canada[11] in Edmonton. From there he had broken off the Eskimo part and moved to Ottawa to form the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada with people like Mary Cousins, Jacob Oweetaluktuk from Northern Quebec, and others.[12]

This association was starting to make a name for itself. When I attended the pipeline conference in Churchill, I heard James Arvaluk speak. I'm sure his speech was written by someone else, maybe Desmond Brice-Bennett, Barry Gunn, or somebody like that. I thought, "That's what I want to hear. The Inuit have to be consulted. They have to be part of things. They have to be consulted about wildlife. This is their land. That's what I want to hear."

This was the first time in my life I had heard that. I knew it was inside of me somewhere, but I had never articulated it. All I had ever found was something wrong. When James finished speaking, I went to see him and I asked him if he had any jobs in Ottawa for somebody like me. I hadn't yet gone to university. He told me he was

10. James Arvaluk was a pioneer in Inuit politics. He was president of ITK from 1974 to 1977. He went on to found the Baffin Region Inuit Association (now called the Qikiqtani Inuit Association). He was elected to the Northwest Territories Assembly for the Aivilik riding from 1991-1995 and to the Nunavut Legislative Assembly from 1999-2003. He was re-elected in 2006. Arvaluk served as Minister of Education for both the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. For more information refer to volume 5: *That's My Vision*, the life story of James Arvaluk, edited by Noel McDermott in the same series.
11. See note 36.
12. The other people present at the founding meeting of the ITC were Josiah Kadlusiak from Igloolik, Noah Qumak from Salluit, Ipeelie Kilabuk from Pangnirtung and Celestino Makpah from Whale Cove.

Working at CBC Frobisher Bay (1974)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

looking for an editor for the magazine. I said, "I'll take it." I had never done anything like that before, but I wanted to join, so I came to Ottawa and started working with Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.

Pauloosie: How did you feel when you were asked to work for this national Inuit organization?

James Arvaluk hired me to work on a new magazine. I believe it was called *Inuit Monthly*. When I went there it was a fledgling little magazine and I changed the name to *Inuit Today* and redesigned it. Actually, I redesigned it using *Playboy* because I liked the format of *Playboy*. I liked the pictures, too! I liked the way the articles were written, and the interviews section. They had very good writers and editors and designers at *Playboy*. I also liked *Atlantic Monthly*. So, we took those and worked with them. I remember our first edition. We didn't have a typewriter

with syllabics on it, so I had to write the Inuktitut part out by hand.

Pauloosie: Do you think that's when your passion to change things began?

That was a decisive moment in my life. That was when I knew what I wanted to do. That was a catharsis. Whatever way I did it, I wanted Inuit to attain a level of autonomy. In those days we had no clear concept of what Nunavut would be. Nunavut was a word already by then, but we didn't know if Nunavut was going to be a part of Canada, or not part of Canada. We had no idea, many of us, anyway. People like Tagak had some idea of what he wanted, but for the next few years it was all being worked out.

It wasn't until 1993 that we had a fairly clear concept of what the Inuit were going to have. In those days, the first thing was to try to establish that Inuit were here first, and that there was such a thing as a land claim process in Canada, undefined as it was. The Quebec government and the Cree and Inuit were already coming to an agreement, the Northern Quebec and James Bay Agreement. They had already been in negotiations for a long time. The Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement[13] was already negotiating, so they were ahead of the game. Alaska had been in negotiations for some time and things were coming along with their native claims.

Although the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada was a national organization, it helped regional associations. Tagak Curley and I travelled to Labrador and helped the Labrador Inuit Association at their founding conference in Nain, where we had a little airplane problem. I helped out at the Inuit

13. The Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement (COPE) was established in 1970 to represent the Inuvialuit, the Inuit located in the Mackenzie Delta. This was the first Inuit organization in Canada. COPE was initially part of the Nunavut land claims negotiations but in 1979

Tapirisat of Canada for a while, and then I went to work at CBC in Churchill and Iqaluit. I was still kind of finding my way as to how I would help, whether to do it as a journalist, or in some other way. Then I went to Rankin Inlet for close to a year. I decided to get an education, and I ended up at Carleton University. I went to school there, and I went to flying school in the summers. I was there for three years, I guess.

Did you get your commercial licence?

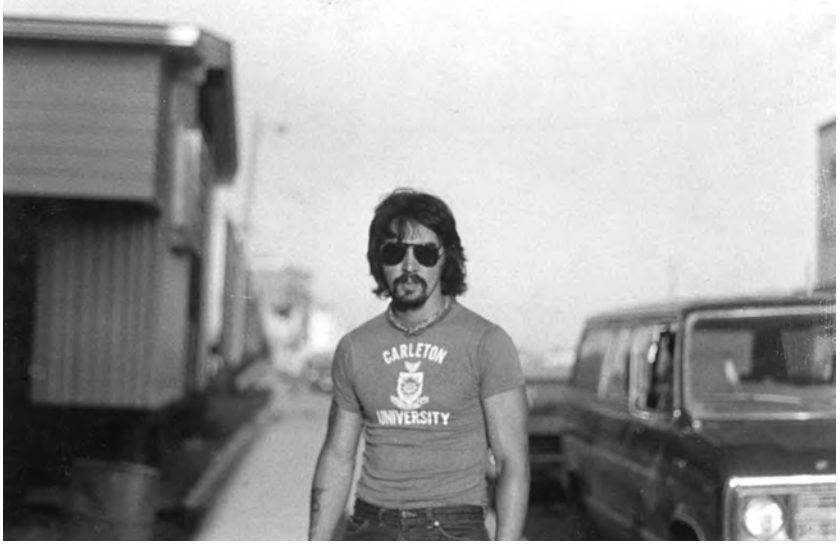
I got, it but I don't have it now. I had a private licence and then I got a commercial licence, but I don't have either now because they have expired.

Studying at Carleton University

Before I got into working life again with Inuit Tapirisat of Canada and the election, I went to Carleton University. I have always thought that education is important for Inuit to achieve what they need to achieve. Like the Chinese for example, they keep their language, culture, and customs, but they also learn Western language and science very, very well. I thought that the Inuit should be like that. When I was growing up, I was very surprised that amongst older Inuit there was quite a disdain for Western education.

I think there were several reasons for this. Many of them had been relocated so their kids could go to school. I think there was some lingering anger and resentment over this. Education for them meant maybe finishing high school, and usually not. That was their world. They did not know anything about universities. There were adult education centres in most places in the North, but Arctic College was not around yet. Post-secondary institutions of any kind were not evident up North. How can you strive for or appreciate something which you don't have any experience of?

Inuit Student Council (Ottawa, 1968)
Eric Tagoona, Peter Ittinuar, other students, Mr. Gordon Devitt, counselor in background. Others at the meeting would have included Zebedee Nungak, Bobby Suluk, Betty Lyall, Alootook Ipellie and Peter Irniq.
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar



Peter at Carleton University (1978)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

People came to the North as doctors, lawyers, government administrators, as pilots and nurses. But nobody ever thought about or learned about how they became lawyers. In the life processes they went through, these people just came here, they just appeared. That's all they knew.

At Lynn Lake for instance, a small little town in Northern Manitoba, our only thought was, "How do we get out of here. How do we stop our life from becoming drudgery in the mine and live the good life elsewhere?" Through education you could go to college or university. That was our way out, unless you happened to marry someone who would take you away.

I had grown up thinking that at some point I would go to school again. I went to the Government of the Northwest Territories thinking I could get an educational leave. Then Inuit Tapirisat of Canada called. It was a calling, and I joined that. Then I went to CBC. That was enjoyable, but I didn't want to be a radio person for the rest of my life, so I killed time by working with the hamlet of Rankin Inlet for a while. I started the local radio station, and the hockey program there. The radio station is still there, and the hockey program has now produced one National Hockey League player. The things you do when you are young! I coached Jordin Tootoo[14] by the way, when he was in peewee.

I started thinking, "I'm not really doing anything, so I'll go to university." I applied at different places. As I told you, my high school had been cut short by tuberculosis. So, I went to an adult education centre for two weeks, and in two weeks I finished off my General Education Degree[15] and got my high school diploma. It was quite easy. I applied to different universities. I was accepted at a

14. See note 20.
15. A General Education Degree (GED) is an high school equivalency test that allows people who have dropped out of school to obtain their high school diploma.

Susan Aglukark, Jordin Tootoo and Peter (Air Canada Centre, Toronto 2003)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

couple of places, and not at some others. I chose Carleton because I knew Ottawa quite well. I had lived there before. There were Inuit around.

Surprisingly though, the Northwest Territories government refused to sponsor me. They were sending all kinds of kids from Yellowknife down, but they were white kids. They were the sons and daughters of white bureaucrats in Yellowknife, and the sons and daughters of white bureaucrats and teachers in smaller communities. Here was the one Eskimo kid that applied and was accepted at a university, and they refused to give me financial assistance!

So, I paid my own way to Yellowknife, walked into the deputy minister's office, and got approval right then and there. I yelled and screamed at him. I accused them of prejudice. I said, "I know Mick Mallon's daughter is being sent. She's white. She's not an Inuk. They are from

Ireland. Why is she being sent, when I'm not being sent?" I said things like that.

So, they paid my tuition and living expenses. Carleton was another eye-opener. It was a tough place. There had been Inuit before me who had gone to university. There was a lawyer in Edmonton. Also, Noah Carpenter, who became a medical doctor. I think there were one or two others, but at the time I was the only Inuk university student in Canada. Another lonely place! For me, throughout my life, school was a very lonely place.

You know how chaotic university is. You have to find your own way; all the buildings, and registration. But then I found that the other students were just as confused as I was. I met a guy, a Danish guy. He was carrying a briefcase with a polar bear on it. I don't know how he got it, but he was interested in the North. He had a Danish background. He and I became friends. You know how at university you very quickly form a group of friends. Finally, we went to our first class. I took general arts; philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and political science. In another class we met a couple of guys and a couple of girls. That group stayed together for two or three years. We drank ourselves silly every Thursday afternoon after classes. We studied together and worried together, and read together.

We shared our food. We didn't have a lot of money. We were hungry sometimes, and we shared our food. One of them had two daughters. She had been married, but she was divorced and going to school, supporting two little girls. She eventually became my executive assistant when I was a Member of Parliament. We learned a lot. We learned new ways of thinking that really opened our minds. I sure learned how to read! It was a little scary at first, because you found out that you were not the smartest person in the room, but I struggled through it.

For me, flying was important, but university was important for a liberal arts education. It makes you

understand the structure and history of your world a little bit more. I would never have run as a Member of Parliament if I hadn't had that university experience. I don't think I would have been asked to, anyway, if I had not gone to Carleton and majored in sociology and political science. Wally Firth distinctly told me I was the only Inuk in the North who had done that, and that was why he thought I was a prime candidate.

So, that was university. I didn't go very far. I never thought about doing a Master's degree or a Ph.D. or a dissertation, because it would take up too much of my life. Sometimes you can go to school just for the sake of going to school, just to get a Ph.D. or whatever. I had too much to do. When I went to flying school, I had a lot of conflicted feelings going on.

At one point at university, I started to teach. There was a second year linguistics course at Ottawa University in Inuktitut language. I took over that course. I had taken Mick Mallon's course, and I knew it quite intimately, so I just applied that knowledge to the course. I became an associate professor. I added on to the course. Because I had taken sociology, I put a lot of sociological studies into it. I had guest speakers like Hugh Brody, Graham Rowley, Kenn Harper, and people like that. My exams were not just about linguistics, but also about life in the North, the context where the language was spoken. It was quite well developed by the second year. I am proud to say that three of my students learned to speak Inuktitut quite well. One is now Doctor Alana Johns, a professor at the University of Toronto specializing in Inuktitut. The other one is Edward Atkinson who lives in Igloolik. He speaks pretty good Inuktitut. The third one is Robert Eno. Others went on to work in the North.

Talking about university, I'm glad to see people like you [Pauloosie] going. I've had fights with my father about education over the years. On the one hand he would say that he wanted me to get an education so I didn't have to

work as hard as he did in his life. The Oblat priests tried to give him an education, but he resisted quite strongly. He never wanted to learn English, but he would say, "Boy, if I could only speak English!" I would say, "Why didn't you learn?" He understands a lot more than he lets on. On the other hand he was always preaching about what he had done without an education. He was so conflicted.

All my siblings received a very good post-secondary education. One of my brothers is the director of Nunavut airports. He went to school to do that. He went to school for almost five years. He almost became an architect to do that. In our family we have a pretty good rate of higher education for an Inuit family. The Kusugaks are another family who have a lot of education. Jose Kusugak[16] was just telling me last night that his son just got a Bachelor of Education. He was quite proud of that. We are still too far behind southern Canadians.

The reason why I went to university was, firstly, I thought generally Inuit needed to do that, and secondly when you talked to white people who had an education, they would always look down on you. Always, even if you knew more than they did about something. That was a stepping-stone as to how you compared with them in their eyes, and I hated that. I absolutely could not stand that, so I wanted to have some education to be able to look them in the eye and challenge them. You always felt a little bit inferior. There was always a question mark. I'd feel, "What am I missing here." They always made you feel inferior and I absolutely hated that.

Pauloosie: Do you think that's what drove you to finish your university and become a professor? That was a long time to be down South. From my own experience, school gets really tough. You have all these assignments you have to do, you have to read all these chapters, and so many things are going on.

16. See note 15.

I don't know. Partly, I guess. You also have a great social life at university, too! I was leading quite a frivolous life at the time. I was also thinking a lot. I just thought it was important to be able to say I had gone to university. Surprisingly, I learned a lot of things while I was at university, tools I carried with me for the rest of my life. I would never be a negotiator with the Ontario government today if I didn't have some sort of university background. I just thought it was really important.

Perhaps I was also thinking that if I could do it, other Inuit kids could see that they could do it, too. You know, when I was your age I was thinking, "I can't do that. I can't go to university. It's just a dream. I can't do that. I don't have the background to go. I don't have the financial means to go." You know, the educated people live in that environment. Going to university is natural for them. It's not natural for us. It is an alien environment. I'm not trying to make myself a hero, but I just wanted to prove that we could do it, too.

Pauloosie: I never realized you worked for the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. What roles did you have there?

Well, when I first worked there I was the editor and designer of the magazine. Then, after I finished that and the magazine was going, and was staffed, I went to work at CBC. I wanted to try out different mediums of journalism. I got that experience. Then I went to school, and right out of school I went to the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada again, as the executive director, when Eric Tagoona was the president. There were a lot of politics going on at that time at the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. It was a very unpleasant place to work in some ways. Tagak Curley[17] was looking for a job, and wanted my job, so his friends on the board of directors pushed me out, so I went to Yellowknife to fly.

17. See note 36.

CHAPTER THREE

An Inuk in the Canadian Parliament

Running for the NDP

I was flying out of Yellowknife working as a pilot when I got a call from Wally Firth,[1] who was the New Democratic Party Member of Parliament for the Northwest Territories. The Northwest Territories was one riding at the time. Wally Firth was the first aboriginal Member of Parliament. He is from the Inuvik, Aklavik area. He is Métis or Gwitch'in or something like that. He called me and said, "We have a federal election coming up." I said, "That's good, but I don't know anything about it." He said, "But you took political science at school." I said, "But that doesn't mean I know anything about it. I've never voted in my life."

I was twenty-eight at the time, and I was fully headed into a flying career. I was flying small planes out of Yellowknife and I loved it. You know you have two callings in life. One is the one you enjoy, and the other one is for the cause. When I went to work for the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada as the executive director and I got kind of pushed out so Tagak Curley could take over, I said, "Well, I might as well enjoy life."

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1. Wally Firth is a Métis. He was the first native from the North to be elected to the House of Commons. He was an NDP MP from 1972 to 1979.

Anyway, Wally Firth called me up. In 1976, the Electoral Boundaries Commission, which was created by an act of Parliament, had split the Northwest Territories into two ridings for the next election which would be in 1979. There was the Western Arctic riding and the Nunatsiaq riding. Wally was, at the time, the member representing all of it. He was trying to find someone to run in Nunatsiaq. I guess he looked around and then called me up. I said I had never voted and wouldn't know what to do. I was flying. My girlfriend was white, and she spoke Inuktitut, and I was happy. I was actually going out with Janet McGrath[2] at the time. He said, "Well, take off three months, campaign, and then you can go back to flying." Wally himself was a pilot, too, so he understood my love of flying. He said, "Take three months off. You can go back to flying. You have the rest of your life to fly."

Thierry: How did you two meet?

He called me up. I'd never met him. I didn't know him. I was with Eric Tagoona having a beer in a pub. A waiter came and said, "There is a call for you." It was Wally Firth, the Member of Parliament. He said, "You know, there is a federal election coming up and we'd like you to be our candidate." I said, "Come on. I have no experience, I'm twenty-eight years old." He said, "For this reason and that reason we think you'd be a good candidate." I said, "No." He called me up a few days later somewhere, and said they would fly me to Frobisher Bay. Iqaluit was called Frobisher Bay then. Well it was called Iqaluit, too, but officially it was called Frobisher Bay.

The upshot of it was I agreed, and I said I'd take three months off, and that I would lose. I knew Tagak

2. Janet McGrath is now an Inuit language and culture specialist.

Curley was going to run for the Liberals, and Abe Okpik[3] was going to run for the Conservatives. Abe was a good friend, but I was mad at Tagak over the business at the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. One of the reasons I said yes to Wally was because I was kind of mad at Tagak, and even though I knew I would lose I wanted to egg him a bit during the campaign. I thought though, "Who am I? How can I compete with Tagak and Abe? Tagak created the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, for heaven's sake. Abe is a long time politician in Yellowknife. He knows the ropes." But, I finally said yes and went to Frobisher Bay and gave the worst speech of my life. I was so shy. I was wondering what I had gotten myself into. Anyway, the campaign started. We didn't have much money. I spent a total of eight thousand dollars during the whole campaign. It was the least amount of money that any candidate in Canada had ever spent.

Nunatsiaq is the biggest riding in Canada. What I did was hitch rides on airplanes. I would walk into a community and go to the hamlet or the settlement office and ask, "Where can I stay? Who can I stay with? Can I meet with your council? Can I go on your community radio? Who can I meet with? Who can introduce me around to people?" Then I'd go to the airport and hitch another ride.

One time I hitched a ride from Resolute Bay to Pond Inlet. It was on an old DC-3, and it was full of lumber. The pilot put me in the back. There was all this lumber in front of me, and I couldn't see anything. We took off

3. Abraham Okpik was an Inuvialuit born in 1929 in the Mackenzie Delta near Aklavik. He started as a trapper but was struck by tuberculosis and was sent to Edmonton. He went to work for the federal government and was in charge of Project Surname initiated by the Council of the Northwest Territories to give surnames to the Inuit who were only identified by disc number. He was the first Inuk appointed to the Northwest Territories Council in 1965. For more details on Abe Okpik see volume 1: *We Call It Survival*, the life story of Abe Okpik, edited by Louis McComber in the same series.

and there was this electrical fuse panel by the door and it started sparking. I was all alone in the back and I couldn't communicate with the pilot. It was a long two hours, believe me! When we got off I told him his panel had been sparking and he said, "Oh it does that all the time!" So, I campaigned like that.

The three of us did meet up in Igloolik. Abe Okpik and I stayed in the transient centre. They called them transient centres even though they were small hotels. That was one of the few times that the NDP actually paid for a place for me to stay. There was no cook, so I cooked for Abe and myself. Abe thought that was quite funny. He had quite a good sense of humour. He thought it was pretty funny that I was his opponent and cooking for him. Tagak didn't have the time of day for me. He was quite an arrogant guy in those days.

The result of it was we got through the campaign. I wrote a journal. I thought I would be going back to Yellowknife quite soon. I ended up in Rankin Inlet on election night. My parents had moved back there in 1971. My cousin John invited me to his place. He lived in one of those townhouses where the living room and kitchen was upstairs and the bedrooms were downstairs. We had a bottle of whiskey and the radio was on. We were going to listen to the election results and just have fun. I knew I was going to lose. I thought I'd just have a good laugh and then go back to my regular life.

This guy John, I won't say his last name, had what you call a really green thumb. He had all kinds of plants in his house, most of which were marijuana plants. They were all over the place. We were hippies before. I didn't have any of that, but we were drinking whiskey. So, the first poll came in and it was something like a hundred and two for Tagak, seventy-six for Abe, and two for me. I don't know where that result was from. In those days the polls came in over a long period of time, like three or four hours, or what have you. We were way up North.

By golly, half way through I started to catch up. I said to John, "There's no chance, right?" And he said, "Nah, don't worry about it." By the time all the communities were in, I was ahead of Abe, and I was quite close to Tagak. Then the DEW Line sites started coming in. By golly, the second last poll had just come in, and I was just ahead of Tagak! By this time, I was half drunk and very scared! Then the last polling station came in. It was a DEW Line site, I think it was either Eureka or Cambridge Bay or one of those sites, and I beat Tagak by seventy-six votes. It was just awesome.

John and I looked at each other, and I said, "What do I do now?" Almost immediately the phone rang. John answered it and said, "Yeah, he's here." He handed the phone to me. It was a woman who had been hired by CBC to interview me if I won. How she knew where I was, I have no idea. The media always have a way of knowing where people are. She said she was on her way over, and I said, "No. I'll talk to you tomorrow." She said they wanted a statement from me then because I had won the election.

I said, "What do we do now?" John said, "Take all the plants you can carry and run them down to the basement bedrooms. So we both grabbed a bunch of plants, ran down, threw them in the bedrooms and went up and grabbed more plants. Just as we finished, there was a knock on the door, and John answered and said, "Yes. He's upstairs." I had sobered up, and had drunk a lot of cola. I got interviewed right then and there. That was my first interview as a politician!

As soon as that woman left, I ran over to my parents place. I said I didn't want anybody to interview me. My mom and dad handled the phone all night because people kept calling. I was half-cut, because I hadn't expected to win. I didn't want to talk to anybody. Then the next morning there were many phone calls and many people coming over to congratulate me. One visitor I particularly

remember was Jordin Tootoo's[4] grandfather. He came over with an *ulu* he had made as a present for me for winning.

Pauloosie: What were you talking about while campaigning? What were the issues?

I knew nothing about the NDP, I shouldn't say I knew nothing. In a very broad, general sense I knew about the ideological differences between the parties in Canada. I knew a little bit about the parliamentary system, where it came from, and how it evolved over time as compared with the American system. For some reason, I had studied that sort of thing. I knew the NDP was more left-leaning, and that they had been a perpetual third party.

I had watched David Lewis and Ed Broadbent on television making speeches and asking questions. The powerhouse Pierre Trudeau was there at the time. Joe Clark was an up-and-coming young leader. He was thirty-six years old when he became Prime Minister; very young. I had a general idea about things, but I did not know NDP policies. I tried to read up on them as quickly as I could. The NDP always has a campaign platform that they want each of their candidates to take to their potential constituents, to their voters. I took that. People like Ian Creery, Bill Barnie, Mary Cousins and her husband Roger, and Terry Pearce had worked out some northern issues to talk about, like housing needs.

They were my campaign team. Dennis Patterson[5] was my official agent. I had real thinkers on my team. We had worked out the national NDP campaign as well as particular northern issues like housing, education, dental

4. Jordin Tootoo grandfather was Pierre Tootoo.
5. Dennis Patterson is a politician and lawyer. He served as a Northwest Territories MLA for Frobisher Bay and Iqaluit from 1978 to 1995, as NWT Minister of Education, Justice, and Municipal Affairs and was Premier of the Northwest Territories from 1987 to 1991.

and health plans, and those types of things. As well, I took it upon myself to talk about the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada and the concept of Nunavut and how I wanted to bring that forward in the House of Commons. I also talked about being in the opposition, as the NDP would undoubtedly be. I talked about why it was desirable to be in the opposition at that point of time, because you could raise issues in question period, and through speeches, and you had more time than backbenchers on the government side. As a small party, you are given more time to speak in the house. Those were the sorts of things I brought up with people, and on question-and-answer shows on local radio.

Pauloosie: What were people's perceptions of your campaign like?

I had a pretty full platform. I was received very well by everyone except for those die-hard Liberals. I was surprised to learn that the Liberals had acquired such partisanship amongst people. Tagak was one. Abe was not a die-hard Conservative. He was sort of in-between, but he believed in their policies. He had met Diefenbaker. There is a picture of him with Diefenbaker[6]. Diefenbaker had received him with open arms way back when. I think that's partly why Abe went Conservative.

There were no die-hard NDPers, but people identified with 'Mr. Small Guy,' the small guy from Shawinigan concept[7]. They could relate to being the small guy in Canada. Inuit can be very, very kind if they want to be. Because I was young, many people were very, very kind to me and helped me along. My Inuktitut was pretty good, but it was not always the best. Many people would help

6. A copy of this picture can be found in the Abraham Okpik biography: *We Call it Survival*, page 162.
7. A reference to a nickname given to former Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, who grew up in Shawinigan, Québec.

me with that. Some people actually said they thought I was too young, but they trusted me more than Tagak. I guess it means when you win that people actually believed part of what you said. I tried to make that true. I was with the NDP through two elections, for four years.

Pauloosie: Where did you get your support from?

I didn't know anybody and nobody knew me. In some of the communities I went to they might have heard of my father Ollie Ittinuar, or they might have seen my name in *Inuit Today* magazine[8], or they might have heard my voice on CBC. I think my time with CBC did not hurt. It probably helped a lot, because CBC broadcast throughout the North. There was a bit of a recognition factor, but not much. I went into some communities and a lot of people didn't know who I was. I would have to explain that I was born in Chesterfield Inlet, grew up in Rankin Inlet, went to school in Ottawa; much the same story I am giving you.

I would tell them what I stood for. I said, "I'm not here asking for your vote. I'm here telling you what I think the situation is, and I'm asking you to make an informed decision." I never said, "I want your vote." I said, "Here is the situation. If you believe that your Member of Parliament will do more good for you in the government, then vote for the candidate from the winning party, but if you believe right now that we are not represented well enough, and you need issues raised, and need someone to ask the government questions, then vote for the opposition." Other than that, I didn't really use the NDP much. I told them that was the party I was with because

8. *Inuit Today* magazine was created by Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC). It has been replaced by *Inuktitut*, a magazine written in Inuktitut roman orthography, syllabics and English that is still published by ITK. A special issue of *Inuit Today* was produced to commemorate ITC's 30th anniversary. A copy of this special issue can be found at: http://www.itk.ca/Inuk-mag/magazines/InukMagazine90.pdf

they were in opposition. I didn't say I was with them because I was partial to their policies or anything like that. In fact, I said that I didn't think Inuit had enough of a history to be associated with any party in Canada in a partisan way. I said, "I don't think you understand this well, and I don't think you have the historical background to say that you are a Liberal or an NDPer, or Rhinoceros[9] or Conservative or whatever."

Some people believe themselves to be Liberals, but I don't know why. If they went to a Liberal Party convention, they probably wouldn't be very welcome, even though they believe themselves to be Liberals. Fine. It's a free country. I tried to present a very objective impartial position. I tried to present a picture so people could make an informed decision, rather than present a campaign where I said they would be better off with the NDP. I told them I knew Tagak would do a great job for them, and Abe would do a great job, and that I would do my best to do a great job for them, too. I would tell them what the situation was, and I think I got through to them a little bit.

Pauloosie: It wasn't until 1960 that Inuit got the right to vote federally. When you told them, "You have the right to be informed, and you have the right to vote," did they believe you? They had only had the vote for a few years when you said this.

People now had their own riding, Nunatsiaq, although it also included Tuktoyaktuk and Sachs Harbour and that area. In 1979, I think it was the first time that Inuit had run federally, and here there were three Inuit running. That was a first, so Inuit eyes were wide open. All of a sudden they thought, "We have our own riding. Holy smokes! We can send our own representative to the House of Commons." As much as they liked Wally Firth, and people

9. The Rhinoceros Party of Canada was a satirical political party that existed between 1964 and 1988.

liked him, he was still a distant person. He wasn't an Inuk, and he represented a much larger population south of the treeline than he did north of the treeline.

Pauloosie: How did that make you feel?

I was proud to be part of the first contingent of candidates. I was very, very proud. I had not expected it. In fact the night it first hit me was at the nomination meeting in Frobisher Bay, when I realized that these people were serious. I wondered what I had gotten myself into. I thought I had better get serious myself, and give it the old college try, as they say. I knew I would lose, but I had to give it a try. And there was that tiny little personal bit with Tagak and my Inuit Tapirisat of Canada experience. I wanted to bug him a little bit.

Pauloosie: Did that keep you going?

Well it didn't keep me going, but I had a chance to get back at him. I didn't know I would get back at him big time! I just wanted to bug him a little bit.

First Mandate in Parliament

I was elected in 1979 for the first time. Joe Clark had a minority government. I was in a caucus, part of which was called the 'kiddy corner' because some of us were less than thirty years old, Svend Robinson, myself, Fonse Faour, Ian Waddell, Bob Rae, and Terry Sergeant.[10] We were in the NDP. Many years later there was a group called the 'rat

10. Svend Robinson, Fonse Faour, Ian Waddell, Bob Rae, and Terry Sergeant were all newly elected Members of the NDP. Svend Robinson was very active in the federal NDP, defending gay rights and assisted-suicide. Bob Rae switched to the Ontario NDP in 1982 and was the Ontario Premier from 1990 to 1995. He is now a member of the Liberal Party of Canada.

pack' with Brian Tobin and Sheila Copps,[11] and so on. In fact there was a *McLean's* magazine article called the 'kiddy corner'. We screamed and yelled. We were loud. We were raucous. We were quite happy to be Members of Parliament. We were all kind of in a perpetual state of amazement as to where we were and what we were doing.

Not everyone in Canada can be a Member of Parliament. I think at the time there were only two hundred and eighty-one members, and now there are three hundred and ten or eleven. Out of thirty million plus people, you know how many Members of Parliament there are; not very many. So, you feel quite lucky in some ways, that life's circumstances have allowed you to be in that situation. It seemed to me that I was there all of a sudden, and life took a very strange turn.

Some unfortunate things happened. One of the first was when I came to Ottawa to be sworn in. I think it was during my first couple of weeks as a Member of Parliament. I got an office. I hired a couple of people. I had been a teacher at Ottawa University; and one of my former students and I had gone out with another person. We were sitting in the car and a plain-clothes police detective came by and found a small amount of cocaine on us. I was charged with simple possession, and consequently I was given a two hundred dollar fine. That was it.

But, the media found out and went crazy over it! I don't know how they found out, but they marked me. That made me a marked man. It had already been an uphill battle to be a Member of Parliament, to be where I was. If I had no troubles it would have been difficult enough, to fit in and be effective, and all that. Those first couple

11. Brian Tobin and Sheila Copps were newly elected Liberal Members of Parliament when the Conservatives formed the government in 1984. They were known as the 'rat pack' because of their unrelenting attacks on the Mulroney government in the House of Commons and the media.

of months were pure hell. The media made much of it. I armed myself as well as I could. I could have resigned, but nobody asked me to resign. Some people in Rankin Inlet wrote very unflattering letters to Ed Broadbent, Liberals of course, asking him to fire me. They made allegations that I was a heroin addict, which was a lie. But, when the House opened I was able to ask a lot of questions in question period, and I was able to make a lot of statements and generally compose myself strongly.

Then there was a non-confidence motion made by Bob Rae. It was all contrived, of course. I didn't want the government to fall. I was starting to feel good about myself again. I was starting to feel comfortable in the House of Commons. I was starting to feel my way around Parliament Hill. Parliament Hill has a culture all its own. It's like Vatican City. It's a little city on its own. It's like a *voir-dire*,[12] a case within a case; it's a city within a city. It has a life of its own. It has its own administration, its own government, its own way of running itself. Other than through politics, it's largely unanswerable to the world at large. I was learning the ropes.

I stood up to vote with the party. In those days, more than now, voting on your own was almost unheard of. You had to vote with the party, or else. I also learned something during those first nine months that was quite unpleasant for me, which was that with the party, the party came first. I was different, not only because I was an Inuk, but I'd also had that unfortunate incident over the cocaine matter in the car. The other people weren't charged; they were told to take off. I've often wondered about that.

I asked some direct questions sometimes. One question I asked within the party was, "If I have to make a choice between my people and the party, what choice do I make?" Without hesitation the party's answer was, "The party. You vote for the party, not for the people."

12. "Voir dire" is a legal term referring to a trial within a trial.

Old Stanley Knowles, that eminent parliamentarian who grew up with Tommy Douglas and the CCF (Cooperative Commonwealth Federation)[13] and then the NDP, was the only one who told the party, "He's not here for the party. He's here for his people."

The rest of them were party fanatics. They were zealots. They were fanatical about the NDP. They were fanatical about its policies, to the point of being ideologues about socialism and what it could do. The party's policies and principles bothered me in the sense that they seemed to veer towards not recognizing the distinction of all the different peoples in Canada. Socialism, or leaning towards socialism on the ideological graph, veered towards making everybody the same, and that is the axis towards assimilationist policies.

At the age of twenty-nine I was already beginning to feel quite uncomfortable with that, even though the party didn't articulate this as such. The party did not articulate that, but it was there, even if they were not conscious of it, and I don't think many of them were. But the feeling was there. The party was supportive of me and my people coming into Canada though, and I could say what I wanted to about Nunavut, and I did. In my first speech, my maiden speech, I used the word Nunavut for the first time in the House of Commons. That was the first time someone had uttered the word Nunavut in the House of Commons.

In my maiden speech, I talked about the aspirations of the Inuit to become a territory, and eventually a province, and to have a degree of autonomy, much like the federated jurisdictions of Canada. And of course I talked about the bread-and-butter issues of the day, the high cost of groceries, the high cost of housing, the shortcomings of the

13. The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation was a political coalition founded in 1932 by progressive, socialist and labour forces. Following the Second World War, it became the New Democratic Party (NDP).

education system, and how removed people were from any sort of control of government, those types of things.

At the same time I was living with this, it started to dissipate a bit, partly because of my performance in the House. I rose many times during that nine-month period in the House, in fact, more than any other time after that, when I was re-elected. I guess people were happy enough. I had redeemed myself.

The NDP, the Social Credit and the Liberals had a non-confidence motion one night and Joe Clark's government fell, and we had to go back into an election. Of course this time I ran for really personal reasons, as well as for the NDP riding association in Nunatsiaq; Roger Cousins, Bill Barnie, Terry Pearce, Dennis Patterson, Mary Cousins, David Poasey and others. They felt I should certainly run again. Basically, they said for the first time, on a weekly basis, they were hearing somebody raising issues on the North in the House of Commons on CBC radio. All of a sudden, I was fairly famous in the North; if not in Canada, then the North. I wasn't wildly popular, but I was famous.

The media had much to do with that. There were microphones in my face on a daily basis which meant I had to say something about something almost every day, even if I didn't know what I was talking about, which was most of the time. Most politicians are like that. They know how to say something out of nothing. The best are amazing! The very best are the ones that know substance and know how to say something. I can name three, Pierre Trudeau, Ed Broadbent and Joe Clark. I witnessed that. They had substance in what they said. There were others; Warren Allmand, and Bob Rae and a few others, but not many. They really cared about what they said.

If you weren't in Cabinet in the House, you struggled to reconcile representing your constituency and the direction your party was taking. Often, they were not reconcilable, even for *qallunaat*, white people, if their riding was in a rural area of Alberta, Saskatchewan, New

Brunswick or British Columbia. Most of us were struggling with a personal dichotomy, trying to represent our people and getting things for them; money, infrastructure, or a social program, with the needs of your party. You were a small cog in a big wheel. That first time out was a learning experience. During those first nine months there wasn't much happening in terms of where the country was going. I can't even recall what vision Joe Clark had. It was a minority government, and in a minority government there really isn't any overall vision. What happens in a minority government situation is that the opposition parties try to get deals, short term deals, money for this or that so the party can take credit for making a deal with the minority government in the budget. There was really no talk about the Constitution at that time, because the Constitution is a massive vision; it is the backbone of the country, any country, Canada included.

In short order the government was made to fall by the Liberals and the NDP, simply because they felt they could increase their number of seats in the House by having the government fall and calling an election. It was also due, in part, because the media had made such a joke out of Joe Clark, who was a very decent, intelligent man. I thought he was fit to lead the country. He was not a liar. The media had made him into a joke.

An airline lost his luggage when he went abroad to visit some country, and the media made much of it for days and days. I mean, it wasn't his fault an airline lost his luggage, but this made 'bumbling Joe' a bumbler. The media is amazing. Because the media, the fourth estate, is so powerful on a daily and weekly basis, the country largely makes its decisions based on what they read or hear or see in the media. Again, it was a learning experience for me about just how powerful the media was and just how much it influenced decision-making and policy development and how the general population thought and voted. This is largely based on what the media tells them. In some ways

the media is manipulative. You can't tell me that the media is objective to the point that they only report what they see or hear. They report it in a certain way. They may only report what they see and hear, but they report it in a way that influences what the reader is reading or what the person listening is hearing.

For a little while, despite the cocaine matter, I was a bit of a media darling. The CBC, Nunatsiaq News, News North, these media outlets in the North did not really have a national figure, a figure from national politics, so I became it. I was young, reasonably presentable, not eloquent, but I spoke my mind, so I was in the news quite a lot for one reason or another, whether it had to deal with gas and oil exploration, or whatever.

Second campaign and the creation of Nunavut

Then the second election was called and I ran against James Arvaluk, who ran for the Liberals. Tagak Curley didn't run this time. Maybe he saw the writing on the wall. I certainly didn't take anything for granted, largely because of the cocaine matter, but I was also fairly confident. This time around the campaign was not as gruelling. It was easy. I went to a lot of places. James and I had a television debate in Yellowknife. We went to many places.

James, to his credit, did not try to discredit me. He campaigned much the same way as I did, trying to educate the Inuit about political processes. Wherever I went, I told people that James had been the president of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, and that he had come forth with a plan for Nunavut in 1976, but I said, "Make your choice. You've seen what I've done in the last nine months. I've raised your issues. I've made government and the House aware of how different the North is, or at least I tried to." I guess people believed me, because I got in with a fairly comfortable margin this time, not seventy-six votes. It was a bigger margin this time.

James did well, but it wasn't meant to be for him at that time. The third person who ran was a Conservative. I can't remember his name. He was a white man who really didn't have a chance. I think there was a Rhinoceros candidate as well. I can't remember his name either. He proposed they put a big outdoor motor on Baffin Island and move it to the Caribbean.

The issues of the day that James and I talked about were bread-and-butter issues, of course, but the dialogue had changed a little bit. In the first election we were talking about having a representative in the House of Commons for the first time and what a big step this was, whether it was Tagak, or Abe, or myself. Inuit were really moving along in Canada. This time this was a given. The people had already experienced a representative for nine months. It was either going to be James or myself. But we also started to talk about big-picture things.

We started to talk about Nunavut and the creation of a territory. I had raised this during the first nine months. I had raised it with Ed Broadbent, but during that first nine months Quebec's separation from Canada was eminently on people's minds. The creation of a territory was seen as secession of some kind, and not really assimilation or joining fully in Confederation. I recall Ed Broadbent actually saying to me, "We are dealing with Quebec. Now you want us to deal with the territory you want to create?" Quebec's secessionist tendencies under Rene Levesque, or whoever was running that show, were very strong, and very much on the Canadian political scene.

Besides mentioning Nunavut in my maiden speech, and a couple of times later on, those first nine months had been taken up with exploration companies in the North, bread-and-butter issues, and taking care of constituents. My office was inundated daily with people with personal tax matters, or welfare matters. People had not been taken care of before. They had no one to go to before. They had had no broker, no ombudsman, no one to appeal to. There

was even one case where this guy wanted to become an Inuk. His ancestors had been Inuit, but he had some white ancestry as well. His family helped him become an Inuk.

In the next campaign, I think both James and I raised a much broader, bigger picture. A much larger element came into the political dialogue, and that was the division of the territories, and eventually, sometime in the future, the creation of a new territory or province called Nunavut. We didn't really know what shape it would take, but it would be part of Canada. It would ensure that Inuit were in control because of their numbers. In a vague way that was the idea.

I think in that campaign it was the first time that federal candidates and politicians were talking about the creation of Nunavut, at least in our riding. I am sure they were not doing so anywhere else in Canada. Everywhere else it was vote Liberal, vote Conservative or vote NDP. But in Nunavut, and partly in the Western Arctic, too, they were talking about the creation of Nunavut. Yellowknife was the media centre for the Nunatsiaq and Western Arctic ridings. We got media coverage from Yellowknife, so the idea of the division of the Northwest Territories was very much part of the dialogue whether they liked it or not.

Generally speaking the Western part of the Northwest Territory didn't like the idea. In the Eastern part, north of the treeline and further east, the people liked the idea more. In places like Tuktoyaktuk, and Paulatuk and Sachs Harbour, at the very west of the Nunatsiaq riding, they didn't much like the idea because they were aligned with the western portion of the Northwest Territories.

In the Kitikmeot it was iffy, at least in the Inuinnaqtun[14] portion of the Kitikmeot area, around Cambridge Bay and Coppermine. They were a bit iffy about the idea. The

14. The Inuit in the Inuinnaqtun speaking areas used to be called the Copper Eskimo. Inuinnaqtun is one of the official languages of Nunavut. It is a closely related dialect to Inuktitut, the dialect used in the east.

Natsilingmiut[15] communities, Pelly Bay, Taloyoak, and Gjoa Haven, identified with the East, with the Keewatin, far more than they did with the West. So, there was a for or against reaction to us talking about dividing up the territory and creating Nunavut.

I already talked about this, but I want to talk about it a little bit more. Those first nine months on the Hill, in some ways were very, very difficult. Believe it or not, I had a psychological problem speaking in public. My neck would stiffen up. I would start shaking. I had no confidence at all. It was very difficult. I think in some ways this went back to my upbringing. When you were a kid in my time period you were constantly reprimanded by adults. If you said something amongst adults you were told, "Who said you could speak?" You were made to feel very small by an adult, whether it was your father or somebody else. I think it was partly because of that.

I gave my maiden speech, and I guess I did an okay job. Looking back at the video of it, I looked okay, but boy! I remember it was a forty-minute speech. I reached for a glass of water and my hand was shaking so much I had to put the glass down. I couldn't bend my head. I had to put it back down. I couldn't take a drink. Otherwise I would have spilled it all over. That didn't show publicly, but that's the way it was. I'm not sure why that was.

That persisted throughout my political career to the point where my staff got me to stop drinking caffeinated beverages like coffee, because it affected my performance. These are very personal things. There were periods where I did not feel unconfident, when I spoke confidently. Particularly, I remember speeches I gave in Yellowknife and in Europe, at the European Parliament. I felt quite confident there. But there were other periods where psychologically I could hardly keep myself together when I was giving a public speech.

15. See note 9.

I found the House of Commons difficult to speak in. It is a very scary place. I've noticed since then that Jack Anawak, Thomas Suluk, and particularly Nancy Karetak-Lindell never spoke much in the House of Commons. Nancy barely ever says anything in the House of Commons. Tommy was fairly outspoken, but got into trouble a couple of times because of things he said. It was really nothing, but the media made a lot out of that. Jack was just a good Liberal. To his credit though, Jack survived many years as an MP, which can be considered an achievement in itself. Jack never rocked the boat, and never fought hard for legislative changes that his people wanted, for instance, in the gun registry legislation; instead toeing the party line because he believed in his party's stance on gun registry. This is a tough stance to take, because sometimes, as an MP, you are in a better position to know more about something than your constituents, and Jack stood by his beliefs.

I was talking earlier about being uncomfortable with the NDP because I saw their ideological leanings almost inherently assimilationist without specifically saying so. It was only in later years, much later, that they started developing policies recognizing aboriginals and Inuit as distinct people. There was also the language of the day, the two founding peoples, the French and the English. Well, excuse me, we were here, too! This was said in my face, in the House. It was written down in documents all the time.

Pauloosie: How did this make you feel, knowing you were an Inuk and were already here?

Well, you were in a constant uphill battle trying to correct what was being said because it was technically, historically and politically incorrect. The French and the English might be the most powerful linguistic groups in the country, the anglos and the francos, and all the English

speaking people and the French speaking people who would join them, whether they were Ukrainian or from whatever background. Still, the aboriginals, the Inuit and the First Nations, whether status or non-status, or Métis, were not about to lie down and take it. They had already taken a lot up to that point.

In the sixties, and more so in the seventies, the idea that aboriginals were going to remain aboriginals and govern themselves within a geographical enclave somewhere had taken root, and was not about to go away, even if the white man was going to try to deny it. Trudeau made an attempt at this in 1969, with the so-called 'White Paper'[16]. It was an attempt to thwart or deflect the movement around aboriginals having some type of autonomy for themselves and to remain distinct, linguistically, socially as a culture, and also politically as a society.

Trudeau had mixed feelings about that, I think, and questions arose in his reasoning of this. With the help of Jean Chrétien, his underling, they developed the 'White Paper' which was an assimilationist document. Essentially it proposed to assimilate aboriginals in the country into white society. I think it was an attempt to pave the way towards doing away with reservations. It certainly did not address the idea of Nunavut or anything like that. It was far before that. But all it did was anger aboriginals across the country, including the Inuit, at least the Inuit who were cognizant of it.

There weren't many who knew about it, just Tagak Curley and James Arvaluk and their board of directors, whoever they were, and a few others. It really angered

16. the Minister of Indian Affairs, the future Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien to repeal the Indian Act and therefore make Canadian aboriginals full Canadian citizens without any special status, accelerating their assimilation into mainstream Canadian society. This proposal was fiercely opposed by aboriginal leaders who wanted to maintain their distinctiveness in the Canadian Confederation. The White Paper was never adopted.

the First Nations of Canada. Out of this, the National Indian Brotherhood became quite prevalent as did the Métis National Council, I believe, with people like Tony Belcourt[17] and Harry Daniels,[18] and so on. The 'White Paper' of 1969 had the opposite effect from what it was trying to do.

The reaction of aboriginals was to entrench themselves as a political force, even though they were just associations. In the public administrative processes of this country, you are a legal entity in one of several categories, one of which is a non-profit association. Many of them established themselves in this way, like the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, the National Indian Brotherhood, the Dene Nation et cetera, et cetera. It was long before I became a politician that all of this was brewing in the country throughout the seventies.

I had joined the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada because I believed in what it stood for, even though I had very little understanding of it. I tried to understand. I went to university and understood a little bit more. And then my first nine months on Parliament Hill really opened my eyes as to how ignorant the country was, first of all to aboriginals, but particularly to Inuit.

On a per capita basis, on a percentage basis, very few Canadians had been to the North. Out of thirty million people, or whatever the population was, less than a half a million had been in the North. They didn't know anything about the North. They knew it was there, and they had a vague notion of polar bears and jolly little Eskimos, but they didn't think about it in terms of how much groceries cost in the store, or the lack of transportation

17. Tony Belcourt is a prominent Métis leader. He was the first president of the Native Council of Canada, a non-status Indian and Métis organization.
18. Harry Daniels was a Métis activist, political leader, writer and actor. He died in September 2004.

infrastructure. I tried to raise these things in the House of Commons during the first nine months.

The biggest thing for me was learning how Parliament Hill operated, and learning about parties. I had never voted before. I was not much interested in partisan politics. I certainly knew about Trudeau. Everyone in the country did, with Trudeau mania and all that. I knew a little bit about partisan politics but until you go there, you don't have an appreciation for what partisanship in this country really means.

It runs the country, and parties are run by corporations. They are run by money. They are run by constituencies. Their policies are partly shaped by their conventions, but at their conventions the people who bring forward ideas about policy development are influenced by corporations. I'm thinking out loud here. We have inadequate laws on insurance, and on farming because the pharmaceuticals and other companies put so much money into the parties. Doctors have become chemical dispensing people. They are not so much doctors anymore as much as they are agents for the pharmaceuticals. This is how law making, in some ways, has progressed in this country and in the world at large.

Advanced as we are technologically, we are not that advanced in terms of environmentally safe products, simply because the oil companies have circumvented and prevented inventions and research and development in things that would ensure safer energy, for instance. This is true. This is not conspiracy theory talking; this is the way it is. Party politics is the process through which they make sure that laws are developed to make sure the status quo is maintained. That's why we have polluting vehicles. That's why doctors give you chemicals rather than treating you in other ways. Of course, there are environmentalists out there who are trying to come up with sustainable clean technology and that sort of thing, but it is a hard fight.

The reason I said this, is because it was becoming apparent to me during my first nine months on the Hill. It surprised me. At one point I asked Ed Broadbent, and I remember we were in the opposition lobby by the House of Commons, a rhetorical question. I said, "I'm coming to grips with things. I'm learning. You asked me to vote on this, and that, and with the party, but what do I do if it is something that is not good for my people? What choice do I make?" And one of his people, not Ed, one of his staff members immediately said, "You vote for the party." I didn't say anything, but inwardly I was thinking, "No. That's not correct. It's wrong. It's not in my power to do that." Sure, it was in my power to do that, but it was not in me to do that. I couldn't live a lie like that.

I spent some time trying to establish the fact that yes I was with the NDP, but in fact, I was not really with the NDP. I don't think Tommy Suluk gave in, but I think Jack Anawak and Nancy Karetak-Lindell have given in to the party. That's why they don't say anything. That's why they don't get themselves in trouble. The establishment doesn't let them get in trouble. They are good messenger people. You can live like that in this country. Most politicians are like that. They are messengers.

But, if your people are very different, and you are from such a different part of the country, you have to speak up. You have to fight. The white man and his political system will only protect you in things they can agree with and if they do, it is usually a lie. They came around the North and said, "We are going to provide housing, and you will never have to pay rent or a mortgage or anything like that." Was it the truth? No. It was a total lie. There are people who remember when this what said in 1962 or 1963. In 1970, Lucien Ukaliannuk[19] said this while we

19. Lucien Ukaliannuk was from Igloolik. He was a highly respected Inuk elder and master linguist in both spoken and written Inuktitut. He was recognized for his sustained effort to preserve Inuit traditional knowledge, culture and language and his work on judicial, cultural and

were in a public meeting in Igloolik. Commissioner John Parker was there.[20]

The Commissioner of the Northwest Territories in those days had a lot of power. This was after Stuart Hodgson.[21] I think John Munro,[22] or somebody else, a big, big federal politician was there. Lucien stood up and he said, "I remember when government people came and asked us to have a meeting. They said they would provide us with housing and we would never have to pay rent or a mortgage or a lease or anything like that, but we are paying rent big time." Lucien talked about that.

This was not the only case. I only gave you one example. This was not the only community where I heard this. Everybody in the North heard this. The government came and told people that they would get housing and they would never have to pay rent. Is that the truth? No! It was an out-and-out lie. So, if the white man provided you with something, whether it was a wildlife act or a housing scheme or an educational scheme, and you liked it, it was probably a lie. If you didn't like it, they sure didn't ask your opinion on it. That's the way it was, and to some extent, I think it still is.

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language issues with the Igloolik Research Centre and the Nunavut Department of Justice. He was awarded an honourary doctorate in Law by the University of Victoria in 2005. He died in 2007.

20. John Parker was Commissioner of the Northwest Territories from 1979 to 1989. He presided over the transfer of responsibility from the Commissioner to the elected Members of the Legislative Assembly, thus creating a responsible form of government. In January 1991, Parker was appointed mediator in a dispute between Inuit and Dene over the Nunavut boundary. The 'Parker Line' was finally established as the western boundary of Nunavut.
21. Stuart (Stu) Milton Hodgson was Commissioner of the Northwest Territories (NWT) from 1967 until 1979. He was the first Commissioner to actually reside in the Northwest Territories.
22. John Munro was a Liberal MP. He held various ministerial portfolios in the Trudeau government. He was the Minister for Indian Affairs and Northern Development from 1980 to 1984.

Murray: Just to clarify, who made this promise, the territorial government or the federal government?

The federal government did it through the territorial government. The territorial government was just an arm of the federal government. The territorial government was really the federal government providing administration to the North. That's all it was, and by golly that's how they wanted it to remain. If Inuit Tapirisat of Canada had not acted, and if the Legislative Council of the Northwest Territories had not made some movement in making themselves a little more authoritative, things would have remained pretty much the same almost to this day.

The Northwest Territories was very much a colonial government. It was designed as such. The Commissioner had veto powers over the elected and appointed members of the Council of the Northwest Territories. Autocratic powers like a dictator; in essence that's what it was. The Commissioner dictated what was on the table.

Simonie Michael[23] was the first elected Inuk politician in any government in Canada. I believe he was elected in 1966. He was from Iqaluit. Abe Okpik was the first Inuk appointed to the Council in 1965, but he was not elected. In 1970, Willie Adams was acclaimed in Rankin Inlet to the Council. Later on, he was appointed by Pierre Trudeau to the Senate. In the seventies, Peter Irniq[24] and Bill Lyall[25] were elected to the Council, as were others, but Simonie Michael was the first.

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23. Simonie Michael is an Inuk from Iqaluit. He became the first elected Inuk at the Northwest Territories Council in 1966 which has since become the NWT Legislative Assembly.
24. Peter Irniq was the executive assistant to the NWT Commissioner from 1974 to 1974. He was elected to the NWT Legislative Assembly from 1975 to 1979 and then again from 1987 to 1991. He served as Commissioner of Nunavut from 2000 to 2005.
25. Bill Lyall is an Inuk from Taloyoak now living in Cambridge Bay. He was elected to the NWT Legislative Assembly from 1975-79.

Territorial Council (1965). Stuart Hodgson is second from the right in the back row
Northwest Territories Archives: G-1979-014-0015.

In those days, Simonie Michael and Abe Okpik were not allowed to speak Inuktitut in the Council. They were also not allowed to have interpreters. In the early seventies, when Willie Adams was elected, he had trouble speaking English. My friend Peter Irniq remembers poor old Willie giving his first speech in his very broken English. He was so scared he was shaking and sweating. I know how that feels. It was amazing you know, all this imposition!

I am saying all of this because I'm trying to create the background to which I and others entered the picture. The white man was law. He was the power. Can you even imagine now Simonie Michael giving a speech in English? Abe Okpik certainly could. In some aspects Abe Okpik was a bit of an opportunist. He kind of rolled with the punches. In the early seventies when the interpreter

corps was created for the Northwest Territories Council, there was a big fight between the Inuit and the western *qallunaat* who were serving on the Council. David Searle[26] and Commissioner Hodgson and people like that fought it tooth and nail. They said it would waste the time of the Council, and used all kinds of arguments.

By saying so, and this is on record, they did not for one moment recognize the identity, the linguistic integrity, the culture, or the society for which they were responsible as legislators and authority figures. They were essentially assimilationist. That's what they wanted. That was the unspoken rule and policy of the day. They said, "We are going to assimilate and educate these little people, so they become little white people. Then we won't have to pay for any ideas they have about becoming a distinct kind of society."

Later on, Quebec francophones were recognized as a distinct society[27], but not anybody else; not Ukrainians, not Chinese, not Japanese, and certainly not aboriginals or Inuit. Because of the assimilationists, shall we say propensity historically, many aboriginals had already lost their language. Right now I work for the Ontario government. I'm not so surprised now, but I was surprised to learn that in many, many aboriginal communities where they look aboriginal, they act aboriginal, they still hold to their ceremonies and their spiritual beliefs and all that, they don't speak their language. They've lost it, many of them, in communities that are way out there, in the middle of nowhere.

26. David Searle was a Northwest Territories MLA from 1967 to 1979 and was speaker of the Northwest Territories Assembly from 1975 to 1979.
27. Quebec was recognized, after a very long debate, as a 'distinct society' in 2006 by a Parliamentary motion tabled by Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Murray: You would assume they would speak it, because they aren't in the middle of things.

You would assume they would speak it, and they don't. In one of the Six Nations there are less than a hundred speakers of their original language. It is very sad. That was due to many forces, some independent variables, and some inadvertent circumstances, but it was also due to the assimilationist propensity of the majority, and people encroaching on the land. Residential schools had a lot to do with it. Residential schools[28] weren't anything but assimilationist. It's true that you were not allowed to speak Inuktitut in school. That was told to us from time to time. It was not always enforced in the school in Rankin Inlet. If you spoke Inuktitut, the teacher gave you a rap on the head. That's the way it was.

That carried on into the Northwest Territories Council. The only way to counter any of that and not be assimilated, and to stop being a colonial figure administered from afar, a colonial subservient semi-oppressed type of person, where the only way to get ahead in life individually was to become white, was through politics. In the seventies Inuit

28. Residential schools were established by the federal government. Their official mandate was to provide education to aboriginal peoples but in fact their mission was to 'civilize' them, and aboriginal children were forced to attend these schools. Most of the residential schools were run by religious congregations and the quality of education and the treatment of students varied greatly. In most cases, children were taken away from their families for extended periods of time. The learning of English or French was compulsory and, most of the time the schools strongly repressed the use of the students' native language. In some schools, physical and sexual abuse also occurred. In 1998, the Government of Canada created a healing foundation to finance local strategies to overcome the trauma created by the residential schools. In 2007, the government announced the implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement which provides financial compensation to aboriginal people who went through the residential school systems.

started participating in politics. It was a very, very recent phenomenon.

Murray: You mentioned earlier that party politics is very, very strong in Parliament, and you had to vote for your party, regardless of what you wanted. What issues did you support when you were with the NDP that were beneficial to the Inuit? Were there particular policies or laws that were being passed that you supported?

Frankly, I didn't pay a lot of attention to the NDP. I paid attention to the fact that they were an opposition party. I tried to make sure that we didn't clash on certain things. Sometimes I was accused of saying things without getting party consent in caucus, and so forth. I always felt that it wasn't the party's place to edit what I was going to say in the House or any other public forum on behalf on my people. I felt very strongly about this. Probably you would be better off sitting as an independent if you are going to be like that.

However, I went to party conventions and supported this policy or that policy, if it dealt with healthcare or whatever. Generally speaking, the general tone of NDP party policies was agreeable with the welfare of everybody in Canada, and certainly for Inuit, too. While the policies were agreeable, they were far too general for me. Ideologically, the socialist leanings of the NDP didn't leave the best taste in my mouth. Socialism is on the axis of communism and a classless society. Unfortunately, in order to be distinct and different, you have to somehow put yourself in a category, and sometimes that means putting yourself in a certain class.

Some people would argue that class means that you are economically better off or worse off than someone else. That's one definition of class. I think class can also mean that you are distinct by virtue of language, or culture, or your ethnicity or your geographic location, whatever the

Peter's Staff : Murray Angus, Peter, Melanie Legault and Tommy Patterk (East Block, Parliament Hill, Ottawa, 1982)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Peter and Murray (East Block, Parliament Hill, Ottawa, 1981)
Photo courtesy of Murray Angus

case may be. I talked quite a bit about the assimilationist propensity of this country as it pertains to aboriginal peoples, including Inuit. We saw that for real in the Northwest Territories Council, when Inuit members were not allowed to speak Inuktitut. What is that? It changed later on, but not without a fight. That fight has come a long way. The phenomenon of Inuit participation in Canadian politics was very recent when I joined in 1979. We were a bit of a novelty.

Nobody really believed that Nunavut could happen. The land claims process in this country was still fairly new, although some big things had been settled. Some court decisions had been made that had a big bearing on aboriginality,[29] but people were still fighting the establishment. Trudeau, later, in a few short years, made some decisions, which were really a catalyst for the creation of Nunavut. In previous years he had tried to ban the use of the word aboriginal because of its legal context. The word aboriginal legally meant that aboriginals had some rights.

Including Aboriginal Rights in the Constitution

The second time I was in the House, the Members of Parliament were consumed, as I recall, not only with representing their constituents with their day-to-day problems, but with the two big issues of the day, the Constitution and the sealing industry. Trudeau's fascination with the Constitution, and his decision-making and his intellectual stick handling of the so-called patriation of the Constitution and writing the Charter of Rights and

29. The Calder case (1973) was the first court decision that clearly established the ancestral rights of aboriginal peoples. This decision provoked a complete reversal of federal policies on aboriginal land claims from denial (see note 70 on the 1969 White Paper) to recognition and establishment of a formal process to settle these claims.

Freedoms was all consuming. It touched everybody in the country. You now have this famous picture of Trudeau and the Queen signing the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and whatever other documents they signed.[30] I was in the audience three rows back on the grounds of Parliament Hill when they did that.

Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, as it was known then, was created largely due to the efforts of Tagak Curley, with the support of Charlie Watt and the support of the general assembly in Igloolik, I believe, in late 1979. Then in early 1980, an Inuit Committee on National Issues was formed solely to deal with the Constitution and for constitutional recognition of Inuit.

The Constitution, as everyone knows, is the backbone of the country. It states what your rights are, linguistically as a people, and it states what your freedoms are, the right to move around the country, the right as an individual to have a good life, all these things. Whatever the courts may interpret afterwards, your rights as an individual in this country are based on what the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms says.

Aboriginals across the country and no less the Inuit, recognized immediately that Trudeau's proclamation and working on the Constitution was a golden opportunity. It wasn't absolutely necessary, but it was a golden opportunity to gain a foothold to allow ourselves the right to negotiate for whatever we were going to get, whether it was for Nunavut, for a land claim, for linguistic retention or whatever it was. To be recognized in the Constitution

30. The patriation of the Constitution was the process that allowed transfer of authority for the Canadian Constitution from the British Parliament to the Canadian Parliament. The patriation process involved the addition of a Charter of Rights and an amending formula. The process started in 1960 and led to numerous negotiations and conflicts between the provinces and the federal government. The Constitution was finally patriated in 1982 with the support of all provinces with the exception of Quebec.

was paramount, and to me this was very important. Every interest group in the country made an intervention, and witnesses contributed to the dialogue on the Constitution, myself included.

Front Row: Jean Chrétien, Metis leader Harry Daniels, Peter Ittinuar. Seated: Gary Yabsley of the Inuit Committee on National Issues, members of the Indian First Nations (constitutional negotiations, Ottawa, 1981)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

During the second term I was consumed with trying to get Inuit recognition in the Constitution. When I was still with the NDP and Chrétien was the Solicitor General, Trudeau formed the joint House of Commons and Senate Committee on the Constitution[31]. I'm not sure if that is

31. It was a Senate-House special joint committee on the Constitution also known as the Hays-Joyal committee, named after its two chairmen. It was composed of twenty-five members drawn from the Senate, the House of Commons and the three parties. See McWhinney 1982, 48-49, for more details.

what it was formally called, but I was a member of it. I joined it. The NDP membership was very small. The committee was largely made up of Liberal Members of Parliament and Senators, but there were Conservatives as well. Svend Robinson and I sat on it. Serge Joyal[32] was the chair, as I recall. It was the first time that all parties, including the Liberals, the Conservatives and the NDP, in the House of Commons and the Senate, recognized Inuit, Indian and Métis in the Constitution by a vote. It was a motion, the contents of which had been painstakingly argued over, between Jean Chrétien, Harry Daniels, members and staff on the Inuit Committee on National Issues, the Assembly of First Nations et cetera. This motion went all the way back to Trudeau's office.

I had meetings with Michael Kirby[33] who is now a senator. I had meetings with Jean Chrétien. Trudeau was always kind of removed. This was when my relationship with the NDP started to become a little bit shaky, because I was meeting on my own with Cabinet ministers and people from the Prime Minister's Office. I don't know why they gave me the time of day, but they did. I guess they were thinking, "What harm will it do us." That's where they were coming from.

I was looking for recognition for Inuit under the Constitution, so we had a foundation to build whatever society we were going to create, within Confederation. One night Harry Daniels[34], a little Métis, bless his soul, he's dead now, Svend Robinson, Jean Chrétien and I had a meeting. It was more of an argument really. Jean Chrétien said he was going to make the motion. Because he was a politician, he liked to be recognized for being magnanimous

32. In fact, it was co-chaired by Senator Harry Hays and MP Serge Joyal. They were both members of the Liberal Party.
33. At the time, Michael Kirby was Secretary to the Canadian Cabinet for Federal-Provincial Relations and Deputy Clerk of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada.
34. See note 72.

and benevolent and good. We had argued over the contents of the motion. I argued that I was the only native in the crowd. I wanted everyone to be magnanimous and let me do it, but Chrétien said no. The second thing we argued over was that we had agreed that the words Inuit and Indian would be in the motion, but Chrétien did not want the word Métis, because of all the legal implications and land claim implications in the future. I said I would argue thoroughly against the motion if the word Métis wasn't in there. This was partly because I felt that the Métis were an accident of history.

Those two things we argued about. I had not received permission from my party to make a motion like that, but Svend Robinson who was a bit of a maverick, too, was with me on that. Bless his gay soul! So, Chrétien made a quick call, presumably to Trudeau. Chrétien finally agreed that he would look opportunistic if he made the motion and I spoke against it. In addition, the committee liked me more than they liked Chrétien. Everyone was my friend. I said I would amend my remarks, my preamble to making the motion, recognizing he was the prime mover, so it was on record, and he was happy with that.

On the Métis inclusion, Chrétien made a quick call to Trudeau. In order for the motion to be made I had said, "Include it or I'll speak against it." My reason for that was I felt the Métis had a right to be recognized as a distinct society in the history of this country. They were an accident, and the sole recognizable identifiable people who were an accident of the history of this country. To ignore them was a crime. When someone asked Harry Daniels, "How do you identify yourself? Who are you?" Harry said, "Are you Ukrainian? Can you identify yourself? Are you Chinese? We can identify ourselves, we have no problem identifying ourselves. We can do a population check. We know where we are. We know where we live. We know our history. We've been to war with you, with Louis Riel. You recognized us. You went to war with us.

Isn't that recognition?" It was a great answer. How do you fight that!

Of course, unless we raised the status of the Métis, the government was going to ignore it. So, we raised it, and Chrétien made a call and then he said, "Okay, the Métis are included". So, I did my preamble and then I said I had the honour to move the motion, and I read out the contents of the motion. It was part of the agreement. I think *Nunatsiaq News* said that that made me a national figure. I was on Canada AM[35] the next morning with Harry Daniels. I was on CBC News. It was big news that the government of the day was going to recognize Indians, Inuit and Métis in the Constitution. That motion was struck down by the premiers some ten months later, or something like that. It was taken out of the draft. I'll get into that later on.

In 1979, Inuit hadn't been involved in politics for very long in Canada. In 1979 and 1980 when we opened our office we were treading on new ground. I had reached the point that night of making the motion for the joint House of Commons and Senate Committee chaired by Serge Joyal for recognizing Inuit, Indians and Métis.

Murray: You had said when you first went there, people didn't know much about Inuit or much about the North. When you got there did you feel you had to educate a lot of people about who you were, and where you came from?

Very much so. That's all I did. If you read my maiden speech[36] or the subsequent Hansard records you'll see that a lot of the time I was in a mold where I had to explain the context in which I was speaking. People simply had no idea.

35. Canada AM is a CBC morning television show aired across the country.
36. See the complete speech in Appendix I.

I was telling you earlier that Simonie Michael was the first elected Inuk in Canada to anything other than a municipal office. He was elected I think in 1966 to the Territorial Council. Then there were people who followed like Willie Adams, Peter Irniq, Bill Lyall, and others. They weren't allowed to speak Inuktitut in the Council. They had to stumble along in English. Therefore, they had very little influence on what the Council did. It was a major battle to get an interpreter corps established. There were many recorded arguments against it.

Murray: Was that when the Council was in Yellowknife or when it was in Ottawa? They moved it in 1967.

No. It was in Yellowknife. The interpreter corps was only established in '71 or '72. It was pretty late. You can see for yourself arguments that were made by David Searle and Stuart Hodgson[37] and others from the West against having interpreters, because it would be a waste of time and it would cost too much money. They said it would impede the business of the house. Amazing! It was an absolute colonial attitude without even thinking that it was wrong. It was totally assimilationist.

I talked about my first nine months after being elected. The learning curve was pretty steep, particularly concerning partisan politics. I was quite disillusioned with partisan politics. You can disagree with me, but while most of the policies the NDP had were generally good for anybody, their socialist leanings were implicitly assimilationist because they advocated for a classless society; no real rich and no real poor. In some ways this was assimilationist. Not inherently, not consciously, but implicitly. This went against the grain of me trying to get recognition for my people and making a place for them in Canada that was unique. You can't be assimilationist and do that. The NDP

37. See note 75.

as a party was for itself. It was trying to promote itself to the people of Canada. It had always been the third party. I didn't enter it on my own initiative. I was drawn into it when Wally Firth called and asked me to run for the NDP. It could well have been the Conservatives or the Liberals. I just had a notion that the Conservatives were more transparently white than the other parties were.

I'm not trying to be racist here, but given the background of people like David Searle arguing against the creation of an interpreter corps in the Territorial Council, the difference between whites and us was quite large. There was quite a gap. At lunch I was walking around and saw some of the Nunavut Sivuniksavut students[38]. Thirty years ago, you could have seen us walking down the street and spotted us a mile away. We were that different. But the Nunavut Sivuniksavut students today are so mixed in now; they dress the same, they walk the same, they have the same looks on their faces. They know the same things as their peers do. The only difference is that they know the Inuktitut language, and they know a little bit about their culture and their history. They know more about Nunavut than other people do. Thank goodness for this program. That's really the only difference about them. Is that assimilation? I guess. We talked quite a bit about that this morning.

The 1969 'White Paper' was an attempt at assimilation. In some ways it was a blessing in disguise, simply because the Inuit and the First Nations, the aboriginals reacted so strongly to it. I think it woke up Trudeau and his Cabinet a little bit. It woke them up to the fact that aboriginal people were not going to be herded into mainstream society without a fight. Before, they had just made these assumptions.

38. The interviews were conducted at Nunavut Sivuniksavut.

After the Carrothers Commission[39] put Stu Hodgson into Yellowknife and created the whole territorial government, there was an assumption that they were going to assimilate people up North into mainstream society. They had taken Inuit on the Council; first Simonie Michael and Abe Okpik and later on whoever. It was mere tokenism. Once in a while Stu Hodgson would ask Abe Okpik something like, "What do you think about this policy?" and Abe would say, "Well, I think it's okay." That was it. That was the extent of the consultation with the Inuit on whatever they were producing in the Council.

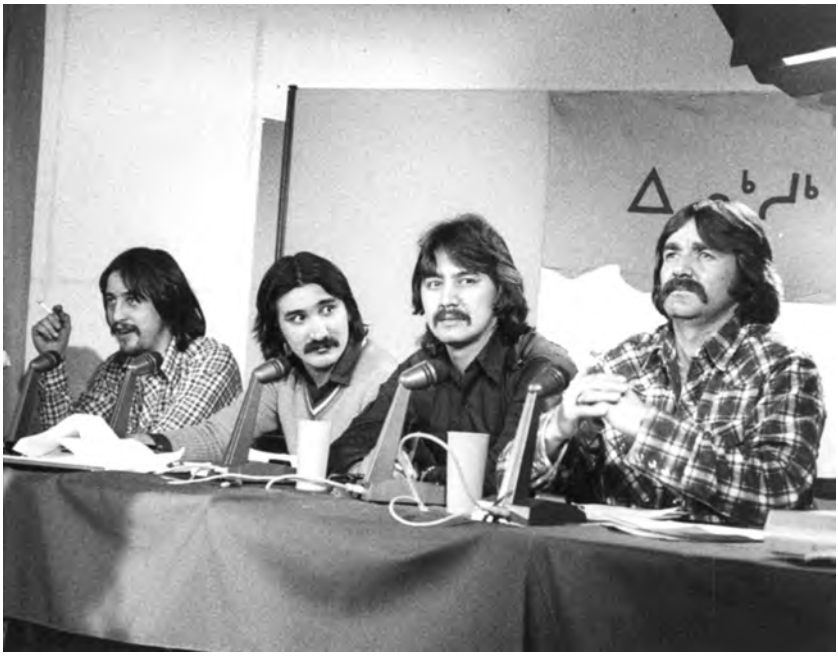
Inuit Strategy in the Patriation of the Constitution

Murray: Could you talk about the process of getting that clause supported. I am interested in knowing what the politics were like between you and the Métis and the First Nations at the time.

We didn't really work with them, the Indians and the Métis. We met them on occasion, sometimes on the Hill. There was a lot of lobbying going on during that period. Every day you saw someone from the National Indian Brotherhood or the Métis on the Hill somewhere, meeting with someone, or coming into my office. I had people from the Six Nations and well-to-do reservations calling me up and wanting to meet. We never really knew why. It was to lobby on their behalf.

The Inuit had set up the Inuit Committee on National Issues during that period, specifically to have Inuit recognized somewhere in the Constitution. The players on that committee were people like Mark R. Gordon[40], who committed suicide sadly, Charlie Watt, Tagak Curley to some degree, and Eric Tagoona.

39. See note 45.
40. Mark R. Gordon was an influential Inuk leader from Nunavik. He was one of the negotiators of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.



IBC 1981
Mark R. Gordon, Eric Tagoona, Peter Ittinuar and Charlie Watt during a television phone-in show at the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (1981)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Zebedee Nungak came down at one point to chair an ad hoc group. Makivik was very, very involved, on its own initiative. They were very involved on the national scene for a while, mainly on the Constitution. They had their own resources. Inuit Tapirisat of Canada had their own committee. This was pre-Nunavut Federation days, pre-Tungavik days. The parameters of negotiations were still being played out between the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada and the federal government, and later on its offshoot the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut[41]. It was all encompassing,

41. The Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN) was the organization created in 1982 to negotiate the land claims settlement for the Inuit of Nunavut. When the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement was signed

Enoch Obed, Peter Ittinuar, Johnny Peters, Pierre Trudeau, Josepi Padlayat, John Amagoalik, Peter Irniq, during the constitutional wars when the ITC-ICNI selected these Inuit to meet Prime Minister Trudeau with Peter. Trudeau had a broken wrist from a skiing accident and advised them to shake his left hand. He also told them that if he had only the Inuit to deal in constitutional recognition, it would be simple, but he had all the other aboriginals to recognize as well. (March 20, 1983)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Pierre Trudeau, John Amagoalik, Peter Irniq, Ruby Arnanaaq, Enoch Obed (March 20, 1983)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

aside from the staff doing daily things for constituents, like helping people filling tax forms or finding housing. Other than that, the Constitution issue was all consuming. The Inuit Committee on National Issues sent Eric Tagoona and I to Westminster, in London.

I never really knew what that meant, the repatriation of the Constitution. I still don't. I guess because the British North America Act, made in Britain was our Constitution. I guess what they meant by repatriation was, "Let's amend it and make it our own." Eventually they came up with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I was the go-between on the Hill for the Inuit Committee on National Issues, which was very heavily influenced by Makivik because of Charlie Watt, who was quite an influential guy in those days. He was very energetic, along with Mark R. Gordon. Eric was with Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. I think he was president at the time[42]. I was their contact on the Hill.

We'd have meetings in Montreal and Ottawa constantly, weekly. People would say, "Let's try this. Why don't you go and meet with Jean Chrétien?" So I'd set up a meeting. They said, "Why don't you go meet with Michael Kirby," so I'd set up a meeting with him. Sometimes people from the Liberal Party would say, "You're with the NDP. Why should we deal with your party?" The Inuit Committee on National Issues would say, "He's no more NDP than you are. He's an Inuk. He's with the NDP, but he's not doing this on behalf of the party. He's doing this on behalf of Inuit." Sometimes we had to clarify that.

Some of the players, especially among Liberals, tried to play it that way as a negotiation tactic to stall us. In negotiations they used any tactic to stop movement, you know. They didn't look for a win-win deal; we were looking for a win-win deal. In negotiations the best place

in 1993, TFN was transformed into Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), the corporation in charge of representing the interests of the Inuit of Nunavut and managing settlement monies.

42. Eric Tagoona was the president of ITC from 1978 to 1979.

to go towards is a win-win situation. They were about they win, we lose. It was tough. When you have two sides like that, it's tough to reach common ground, but that night in January we did.

I remember, with clarity I suppose, that little meeting. I never met with Trudeau, but I did meet with Chrétien, Lalonde, Michael Kirby, Keith Davies, and Munro, and of course Serge Joyal. The Inuit Committee on National Issues would meet with Serge Joyal. I mentioned the First Nations and the Métis. We would meet with them on occasion, but usually in a large group. We would apprise each other on where we were at with particular items. Generally the consensus was that there had to be constitutional recognition of the Indians, the Inuit and the Métis.

Some of the Indian groups did not want the Métis in there, but I wanted them. I didn't want them in so bad that it would supersede Inuit being in there. I would never compromise to that degree, but I pretended I would to Jean Chrétien. First of all, he wanted to make the motion. I made the argument, with some backing from Svend Robinson and Harry Daniels that I should make the motion because I was the aboriginal. He wasn't. You know, Jean Chrétien, the constant politician. He wanted to look benevolent and magnanimous and kingly, but he was also smart enough to realize he was taking advantage of being the Solicitor General. So, he was fairly magnanimous and he let me do it.

The other argument was over the Métis. That was the very last point. He made a call and came back and said, "Okay. You've got the Métis." I said, "Okay. I'll make the motion."

Murray: Were you guys negotiating just with the Liberals on that, or did you need the support of the other parties? Were you alone in it or with the NDP?

No. Just with the Liberals. It was their resolution. I made the motion, but it was their resolution. We didn't

need the Conservatives, but they voted with us anyway. Some abstained, but there was general consent for the motion.

Murray: One of the lasting impressions I had when I came on the scene was that there was real debate about strategy, and whether the simple clause about recognition, without definition was enough. I remember, Joe Mathias an Indian leader from British Columbia, just pounding the table saying, "We can't trust them to fill in the blanks later. It's never worked for us. There is no precedent for trusting that the government will do something for us later. We have to have it all now." Were you guys comfortable with that clause?

It was adequate for the Inuit Committee on National Issues, and that's really all that mattered. The danger was with the First Nations, not so much the Métis. The Métis, like us, were just trying to get the word Métis in there somewhere, because this was unprecedented for them. I agreed with them because they are an accident of Canadian history. They are a people created from aboriginal and European contact in Canada. I thought it was important for them to be included on that historical principle.

Our advantage was that the Inuit had a Member of Parliament, and a Liberal Senator. Although he didn't do a lot, he was there. The Indian groups had no one. There was no real champion on the Hill working on their behalf. In effect, they were riding on our backs a little bit because they knew I had contacts. I was an NDPer, but kind of a maverick NDPer.

Up to that point in January, it was the Inuit Committee on National Issues, strategizing, planning and lobbying. We had to attend a lot of meetings with many people to get to the point where Trudeau gave Chrétien orders to make a resolution to the joint House of Commons and Senate Committee.

Murray: When did that happen in relation to the night you actually proposed it?

The Inuit Committee on National Issues had been going at it for months, but I think that decision for that motion was within a day, or within a couple of days. Trudeau decided to go with it. The last point was over the word Métis, and Trudeau gave us his consent, obviously.

It was significant. It was unprecedented. Even though it was not law, or anything like that. It was a bicameral decision, the Senate and the House of Commons and all three major parties voted for it. I don't think the Social Credit were involved. I think they may have had one member on the joint committee. It was a very sweet moment. It made headlines. Harry Daniels and I were on Canada AM the next day. I think I still have the cup they gave me! It was a very sweet moment. Somehow, over the next few months we kind of disbanded. Later, the premiers were meeting at the convention centre over here. Charlie Watt and I were waiting for John Munro[43] to come out and give us an update, because it was an in camera session between Trudeau and the premiers.

The Night of the Long Knives

Murray: The night of the long knives, was this later in the year on November 5th?

Charlie Watt and I were alone for some reason and we were waiting for John Munro to come out. We were getting back some intelligence that the premiers were going to cut that clause completely and not have a reference to Indians, Inuit or Métis anywhere in the Constitution. And sure enough, out came John Munro. We could tell by his face

43. At the time, John Munro was the Minister of Indian Affairs.

that the clause had been cut completely. He came to tell us. He looked very abject and he said, "Sorry guys."[44]

The media picked it up right away, and I made a comment to the media that I would like to go and shoot eleven caribou. They asked me what I meant by that, and I said, "Well, there are eleven premiers, aren't there." They cut that comment. After that it was a long fight to get the clause reinserted. Afterwards, I think in the new year, after that November 5th, Trudeau started convening those constitutional conferences. In fact, it was the following year. The actual resolution did get approved with the clause reinserted and was voted in the House of Commons December 6th or 7th, 1981. The Queen signed it on April 17th 1982, and within a year of that they had the first conference.[45]

Murray: How did you manage to get the aboriginal clause reinserted? A month passed before it got reinserted. That was an intense month, I'm sure!

It was. It got reinserted into the draft. John Amagoalik, Charlie Watt, and I went over to have lunch with Trudeau. One thing I said to Trudeau was, "You are a wolf amongst

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44. The removal of aboriginal rights from the Constitutional proposal was requested by the four western premiers. Trudeau agreed to this in exchange for their support in the patriation process (McWhinney, 1982: 99).

45. In fact, the clause on aboriginal rights was reinserted a few weeks later. It is located in Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution and reads as follows:
35. (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.
(2) In this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" include the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.
(3) For greater certainty, in subsection (1) "treaty rights" include rights that now exist through a land claims agreement or may be so acquired.
(4) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally to male and female persons.
(Canada. Constitution Act. 1982)

the caribou." He scoffed. He had a good sense of humour about Inuit. When we were having a drink before lunch his three little boys came in and he said, "Those guys over there. They are Eskimos." I thought, this guy is not as smart as I thought he was. There were others in the room. Michael Kirby, Munro and Lalonde were in the room, too.

We discussed that somewhere there had to be a reference to aboriginals in the Constitution. Trudeau, in his mind, had separated Indians from Inuit. He was very troubled that Indians lived on reservations spread around the country. He had trouble understanding what a reference to them in the Constitution would mean to the government, what the costs of that would be, what the implications were legally, all the hundreds of claims that could be made. He was very troubled by that. I remember him talking about that.

He had no trouble North of Sixty. He said, "The Inuit are simple. They don't live on treaty land. They don't have treaties. They are north of the tree line. They are geographically recognizable. They want to join Canada. They have no qualms about being Canadians. No problem." We came out of there feeling pretty good, but feeling sorry for the Indians. Trudeau himself had mulled this over in his mind, obviously. He told me, at one time, directly, that he didn't have problems with North of Sixty. North of Sixty was easy.

Murray: Was that a big victory for you?

Oh yes, absolutely. But the Indians were no less aboriginals than us. Their history was different, though. They had treaties and they lived on little pockets of land, subject to the Indian Act. It was questionable as to what degree of Canadianness[46] there was on those reserves.

46. Some First Nations members don't consider themselves as Canadians. For example, the Mohawk have their own passport, recognized only in Switzerland.

Trudeau was quite troubled by that. Eventually, I think due largely to the constitutional conferences that he chaired, they gave in there.

I remember we had a huge fight over the word 'existing'[47]. Nobody really knew what it meant, or what implications it had. I think to this day, this debate still goes on. Lawyers talk about the meaning of Section 35. It is reflected in some judgments today, like the Marshall case. The Métis are now starting to benefit. They are in court right now with Berger as their lawyer[48]. It's a massive case. Imagine that, if Winnipeg belonged to them. I don't know all the details.

So that was our bit on the Constitution. Our office did its bit on the first motion. Even though it was deleted, the precedent had been set. It had been done. Now, they were in a position to renege, which was not a good thing. You could use that in the media. You could use that as lobbyists. You could use that to appeal to people generally. You could use that in interviews to standing committees, or special committees to ministers, or whoever.

That's essentially what the Indians, the Inuit and the Métis did. We said, "You already recognized us, and now you are reneging." That's essentially what the argument was, along with the substance of what they were doing, and why they were fighting for this. Many eloquent speeches were made by Indians and Inuit, and Trudeau and others. I remember Bill Davis, the Premier of Ontario, was pretty much on side. In fact there is a picture of the three of us Davis, Trudeau and myself taken during a break at the constitutional conference.

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47. See note 99. The word 'existing' is in section 35. (1).
48. The Métis launched a land claim in the Manitoba Court on April 8, 2006. They argue that Canada didn't fulfill the land grant set out in the Manitoba Act of 1870. Justice Berger is acting as main counsel for the Métis. Their land claim includes all of Winnipeg, strips of land on both sides of the Assiniboine River from Winnipeg to Portage la Prairie, and both sides of the Red River from Selkirk to Emerson.

I remember distinctly that Davis was very attentive and very sympathetic. He had his own issues about reserves around Ontario, but he was quite sympathetic, as I recall. Some premiers were not. I don't think Manitoba was very sympathetic.

Memory fails me as to who the players were, but on the Inuit side were people like John Amagoalik[49], Charlie Watt[50], Mary Simon[51], Zebedee Nungak, and Mark R. Gordon. I remember Trudeau being totally impressed when Zebedee made a point of order comment during the conference. It was a beautifully done technical bit on a point of procedure. Trudeau said to me, I was sitting on one side of him and John Munro was sitting on the other, "Who is that?" I said, "That is Zebedee Nungak. He negotiated the Northern Quebec agreement when he was seventeen." He and Mark R. Gordon were seventeen when they started negotiating in Northern Quebec. Anyway, that was our bit on the Constitution.

49. John Amagoalik is often called the father of Nunavut. He actively participated in the negotiation and the implementation of the Nunavut government. His biography has been published in the same series, volume 2: *Changing the Face of Canada*, the life story of John Amagoalik, edited by Louis McComber.
50. Charlie Watt is an Inuk leader from Kuujjuaq in Nunavik. He is one of the founders of the Northern Quebec Inuit Association and actively participated in the negotiation of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. He acted as president of Makivik, the Nunavik land claim organization, and since 1984, has been a Liberal senator in the Parliament of Canada.
51. Mary Simon is from Kangirsualuujuaq in Nunavik. She began her career as a reporter with the CBC Northern Service. She became vice-president, then president of Makivik Corporation and later she moved to Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. She then spent fourteen years with the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and finally became its president. She was the ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs for the Government of Canada from 1999 to 2003 and she is presently the president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (formerly Inuit Tapirisat of Canada).

Zebedee Nungak, First Ministers' Conference on Aboriginal Constitutional Matters (Ottawa, 1987)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Murray: You were quite young. You were in the middle of the highest level of politics this country had, and playing a really central role in certain parts of it. How did you feel about this as a person?

Well, we were pretty busy, day in and day out, so we really never had time to reflect on where we were at, or that we were in the middle of things. On any given day, we could be meeting Michael Kirby or Jean Chrétien or Lalonde or Ed Broadbent.

Murray: At any time were you feeling pressure?

I was too young, and too stupid to feel the pressure (laughter), but too young to not have the energy. We were all quite young then.

Murray: It was an enormous responsibility at that point in history. Not by yourself, but as a team; you guys did a lot.

I think if we had reflected on it at the time, we would have gotten scared. But we had good people around us. The Inuit Committee on National Issues had a very good staff. Makivik provided a couple of lawyers. Inuit Tapirisat of Canada had John Merritt[52] and there was Sam Silverstone for Makivik.

Murray: When you were having lunch with the Prime Minister and his buddies, were they all Cabinet ministers?

They were either from the Prime Minister's Office, or they were Cabinet ministers.

Murray: When he said, "Look at the Eskimos," to his kids, how did you feel as a person?

I know that some of the people there were a little embarrassed. It was kind of like, "Look, look. See, see. Look at the Eskimos at work and play," kind of a comment. Aren't they a novelty.

It almost threw me for a loop, and I had thoughts about walking out, or making a statement of some kind. I'm sure John Amagoalik and Charlie Watt did, too, but we said nothing. We stood there being observed by those three kids. It was an awkward moment. It was not what I had expected from Trudeau. Frankly, I think in retrospect, he was being quite innocent. His kids hadn't seen Inuit before. Maybe he wanted them to recognize us as Inuit. It wasn't done well. I may be defending him wrongly. I wasn't expecting this from Trudeau.

At the lunch table he became quite serious. Nobody else spoke; John Munro, or Lalonde, or Michael Kirby or

52. John Merritt is a lawyer for Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (formerly Tungavik Federation of Nunavut). He was very involved in the Nunavut Land Claims negotiations.

Michael Pitfield, Clerk of the Privy Council. They were all there. They didn't say a word at the lunch. I was an NDP member which was awkward in itself. I kept fairly quiet. Mostly John Amagoalik and Charlie Watt did the talking, mostly Charlie. We had gone there with a definite agenda.

Murray: Not very many of your NDP caucus members got invitations to lunch at 24 Sussex, I imagine.

Did any of them? Maybe Ed Broadbent or Stanley Knowles did, because of his dignity and so on.

We were on the same page all the time. There were never any arguments. The only time there was tension in the air was when Mary Sillett[53] was around. Her personality did not lend itself to consensus debate. She had issues that she projected at the table. People were fully aware of this, so they let her rant, and they carried on with things. With the Inuit Committee on National Issues, everybody was on the same page all the time with strategies and plans. I was surprised when they asked me to go to London, because I was a Member of Parliament, but they sent me to London with Eric Tagoona.

They were on the same page all the time. It was probably for the last time. The Quebec and the Nunavut people worked together pretty hard. Up to a point, they used my office quite successfully, quite strategically. We were able to help there. One other thing, there was a book that came out, *Quest for Justice*[54]. It was about aboriginal people and the Constitution. Our office wrote a chapter for that.

53. Mary Sillett is a former president of Pauktuutit, the national Inuit Women's Association. She is also the former vice-president of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.
54. Boldt, Menno and J. Anthony Long in association with Leroy Little Bear, 1985, *The Quest for Justice: Aboriginal Peoples and Aboriginal Rights*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

Eric Tagoona and Peter Ittinuar in London (1980)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Murray: I found it in a book store a few years later. I noticed it was a new book I hadn't seen before. I was flipping through it and reading this article and I thought to myself, "This sounds like something that I would have written!" And it was! (laughter) I was published.

It's in our library. I work in the Attorney General's building. For some reason Aboriginal Affairs used to be an adjunct of the Ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario, so that's why we are in that building. It's in the legal library. One day a law student from the University of Toronto came to my office and said, "I've come to interview you because you are required reading in one of our courses."

Thierry: Can you elaborate on your trip to London?

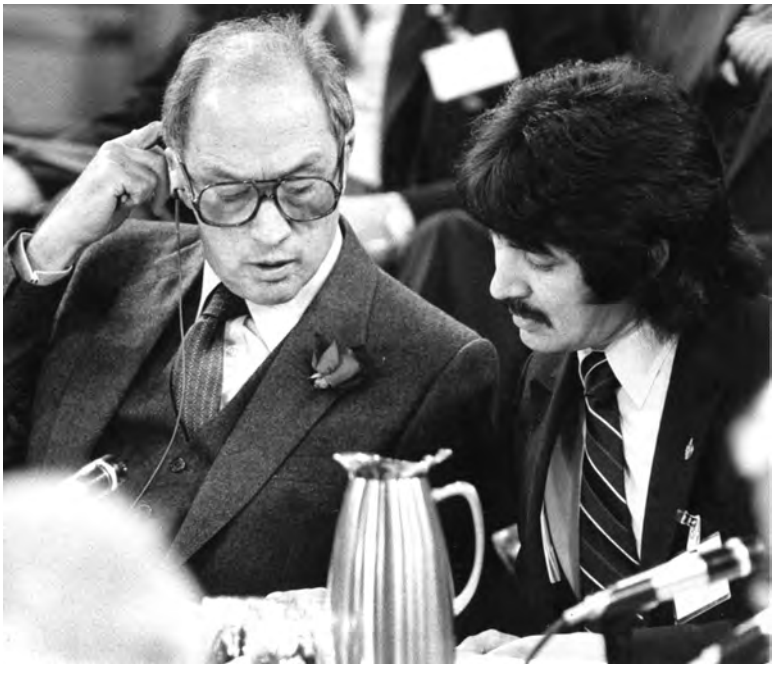
I think that was prior to coming on board. I'm not sure why we went to London, but we did entice one of the Members of Parliament; I think he was with the Labour

party, to come to Canada, and make an appeal to Canada to include aboriginals in the Constitution. He did some media interviews and that sort of stuff.

Other than that, I don't think we had much effect. The Métis were there at the same time as well, and a guy who later became a newspaper journalist. He was in Mulroney's Prime Minister's Office and he was there as well. Anyway, he called me up at my hotel. There was a picture of Eric and me on the front page of the *London Times*, or something like that. We were also on a BBC radio show. There was quite a bit of media attention around our visit to London, and the reason why we were appealing to Britain concerning the patriation of the Constitution. We wanted Britain to help us on that. I don't know if it had much effect or not.

Crossing the floor

The other thing we did related to me crossing the floor. The matter of crossing the floor was partly related to the division of the Northwest Territories. I crossed the floor on November 26, 1982, and that same day Trudeau announced a process for the division of the Northwest Territories if four conditions could be met; one was an agreement on a boundary, one was a plebiscite to be held to see if people in the Northwest Territories wanted division, one was the establishment of the Nunavut Constitutional Forum and of the Western Constitutional Forum, and that it would be a public government, on the Nunavut side. These were very major concessions for me crossing the floor. I think this announcement was linked to my decision to cross the floor. Prior to crossing the floor I had a meeting with Senator Keith Davey who was a player in the Trudeau sphere of influence, and with Charlie Watt. I was upstairs in the East Block where our offices were. I had many meetings with John Munro, and made many trips with him to the North, to Denmark and to Greenland. A lot of those trips included talks about me going over to the Liberals.



Pierre Trudeau and Peter Ittinuar (1982)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Pierre Trudeau, Peter Ittinuar and John Munro just after Peter crossed the floor (1982)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Murray: So they were almost buying you out?

Buying me out? Well, they were trying. I remember taking a walk with Marc Lalonde. Trudeau himself was removed from the whole thing. He knew what was going on, but he certainly wasn't going to be implicated in any type of a deal. People from Trudeau's office, staff people, were taking me out to their clubs. These were the days of men having clubs. They would say, "We'll have dinner at my club," with the leather chairs and cognac, and the cigars. I kept this pretty secret from the NDP caucus. Those were pretty quiet days. The constitutional fight was basically over. The sealing thing was very much there. We were dealing a lot with constituency issues. I wasn't doing much in the House of Commons.

During my first term I spoke more than I did in the following term. Finally, I made the decision. A rumour started going around that I was crossing the floor. A short guy from British Columbia in the NDP caucus came into my office and started scolding me. I remember Ian Waddell was quite curt with me when he came to my office. We had a fairly heated little discussion. I didn't let on I was going to cross the floor. I didn't say I wasn't, but word was getting around. Do you recall those days?

Murray: I do very much. I remember when you hired me in September 1981. In our first conversation you were quite up front with me about that issue. You told me, just so I would know, that the Liberals had been working on you from the time you landed on Parliament Hill, trying to get you to cross the floor. I thought, "Okay, I can work with this guy. He's going to be honest with me." That was a pretty big piece of information to be sharing with staff. I respected that. I didn't talk to anybody about it. I just watched you play your cards.

Well I played them. The media, of course, wanted to know whether I wanted a cabinet post, but I didn't. I would have accepted something like parliamentary secretary, but I

didn't ask for that, and they didn't offer. I remember when John Munro held a press conference that day in Ottawa, he was asked that question, "Is Peter Ittinuar going to get a cabinet post?" I remember being asked that, also, when I gave a radio press conference.

After that there was the Nunavut Constitutional Forum and the Western Constitutional Forum.

Interview Peter gave after crossing the floor to Paul Quassa and Janet Paterson working for CBC (1982)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Murray: Was that a condition for you crossing the floor?

It was the result of that. To divide the territory there had to be some sort of process. The Nunavut Constitutional Forum and the Western Constitutional Forum had to be formed because there had to be some consultation with the people.

Murray: At what point did you actually have some kind of session with Lalonde or Munro or whoever, when you actually made the deal?

It was just a few days before actually doing it. I didn't actually really make the decision. I almost backed out that night. I almost reneged.

Murray: But they were doing what they were going to do under the assumption that you were going to do what you were going to do. That was a deal. It wasn't a coincidence; it was a deal.

They wouldn't have announced the creation of the Nunavut Constitutional Forum if I hadn't crossed the floor. There would have been a media hubbub. They would have denied everything and I would have denied everything. It wouldn't have been done. Eventually, maybe the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut would have been able to pull something off. Whether political development would have been part of the deal, who knows?

Murray: You were in such a strategic position though, weren't you? And you had the Liberal caucus, to boot, or on the cusp.

It had to be done. Personally, it was a killer.

Murray: Did you know that when you made that choice? Did you know that it might mean you wouldn't get re-elected if you ran again?

Well, there was a problem with John Todd[55] and his crowd. John Todd controlled the Liberal Association of Nunatsiaq, and they hated my guts, personally and

55. Todd is a businessman from Rankin Inlet. He was first elected to the Northwest Territories Assembly in 1991 in the Keewatin riding. In his second term, Todd served as Minister of Finance for the NWT. He retired from legislative politics in 1999, declining an offer to run for the new Legislative Assembly of Nunavut.

professionally, for whatever reason. They did not like me. As you recall, after I crossed the floor, I had one meeting with them, and it wasn't very good. I never had their endorsement, or any other dealings with them after that. I was essentially an independent Liberal on the Hill. I was not associated with the Liberal Association of Nunatsiaq. I knew that. I considered it a little bit. I knew there would be problems there before I crossed the floor. It was something else that killed me, and we'll talk about that. But that didn't help, my disassociation from the Liberal Association. As time went on, John Todd and I became reasonably amicable.

Murray: Did you assume things would get better after you crossed the floor, or did you already know the consequences?

I knew the consequences. I had considered them somewhat. But I knew the over-riding strategic position I was in was almost like destiny. It just had to be that way. It was much bigger than me. I was in the unhappy position of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. I didn't really discuss it with staff a whole lot.

Murray: We got two days notice, as I recall.

It was a pretty lonely fight, a pretty lonely deal in some ways. There were a lot of talks with Munro and Lalonde[56]. Marc Lalonde was more persuasive than Keith Davey[57] or John Munro or Michael Kirby[58]. Michael Kirby was another player in the talks. I think it was Michael Kirby

56. Marc Lalonde was at that time Minister of Finance in the Trudeau government.
57. Keith Davey was a Liberal senator. He was appointed by Lester B. Pearson in 1966.
58. At that time, Michael Kirby was Secretary to the Canadian Cabinet for Federal-Provincial Relations and Deputy Clerk of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada.

who designed the whole thing, the conditions and the formation of the Nunavut Constitutional Forum and the Western Constitutional Forum. I think he did the design for Trudeau on this.

Murray: Any regrets?

Well, I don't have my pension. I was short by nine months[59]. Thank you, John Turner! I had two terms, but they weren't full. Joe Clark's government fell very quickly, and then John Turner called an election before the term was up because he thought he could win, but he lost to Mulroney.

Murray: When you crossed the floor, I'm wondering if you could talk about the reaction from the NDP?

The reaction from the NDP was extreme. I called Ed Broadbent[60] that morning. He was having breakfast with his wife Lucille. I talked with her as well. He said, "Look. I understand why you are doing this. I don't agree with you, but I understand why you think it is the right thing to do. I know it is for your people, but when I go public I have to denounce it and say that it was the wrong thing to do and say you are being naïve." I said, "Well, look. I am going to be very fair. I'm going to commend you as a leader and everything else, but I am also going to say why I'm doing it. It's not going to be a reflection of the NDP itself. It will reflect a little on the party, but there is nothing that can be done about that, because I am leaving you to go to another party. You leave for one reason, and you go somewhere else for another reason."

Of course, members of the party who made public statements were not very kind. The NDP Association in

59. In order to have a full pension an MP needs to serve two complete terms.
60. Ed Broadbent was then the leader of the New Democratic Party.

the North was really quite hurt. I was pretty close to them. I hadn't consulted with them. As you heard, this was a discussion I had to make on my own. If I had talked with anyone else it would have blown up. People in the association were hurt and I felt sorry for them because all of them were good friends of mine, but most of them understood. The NDP Association in Iqaluit with Roger Cousins and Bill Barnie and the others basically understood. I still saw them socially after I crossed the floor. We remained friends. But as that association evolved, and there were other people involved, the reaction was extreme.

Protecting the Seal Hunt

The other issue of the day was seals. As I recall, I made two trips to Europe about that. One was with Peter Irniq. We went to London, Strasbourg and to Brussels. In London we were on a BBC show. It was purely a media trip. In London we were on a BBC radio show with callers calling in. It was about seals. We tried to distance ourselves from the Newfoundland hunt, but at the same time we were trying to impress upon Europeans not to be so hard on the Newfoundland hunt. They killed cows. We used that type of argument. Then we went to Brussels, which is the administrative centre for the European Parliament. We met people there, but I don't remember who they were. Then we went to Strasbourg. We went into the Parliament itself and met with people there. We held a press conference there. It was a pretty big one.

What kind of feedback did you get?

Not very good. They were politicians. They were feeding on, 'Love the little baby seal voters.' Politics over there had completely to do with voters, and nothing else. And by and large voters were against the Newfoundland seal hunt. Brigitte Bardot was very prominent at the time. We had a

Seal Hunting, Ollie Ittinuar (Rankin Inlet floe edge, sinaani circa 1980)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

stop-over in Paris. We did meet some people there on our way to Strasbourg. Peter Irniq and I went into a shop, and a woman said, "So you kill the little *phoques*. I hope you don't kill the baby seals. I don't mind you killing the larger seals." She recognized us. I guess there had been a picture of us or something in the newspaper. So I said, "No, we don't."

In Strasbourg we had a pretty big press conference. John Dewey called. Do you remember him? He timed my statement. I think I gave a sixteen-minute spiel to the press corps, but Greenpeace had plants among the crowd posing as journalists. It was kind of interesting. I said, "You have ten million unemployed in the representative countries in the European Parliament. Why don't you look at your own flanks? Why don't you look after that? Why do you spend so much time on the Canadian seal hunt? You have your own problems." What they were doing was deflecting public thoughts about their own problems. The emotional appeal of the Newfoundland hunt was so strong, politicians

were using it to appeal to their voters. They were using it to their advantage.

We did another trip to Europe, this time with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. He was very sophisticated. He spoke Parisian French, rather than Quebecois French. Pierre de Bané was his name. He organized the trip. The Newfoundland premier came along, and a bunch of Members of Parliament, and some ministers from the Northwest Territories government, Arnold McCallum, and Peter Irniq and so on. It was a large group.

We went to Brussels and Paris. We were going to go to Italy but we didn't. We went back to Brussels. At some embassy along the way, there was a big black tie dinner. I got into a massive argument with Brian Peckford, the Newfoundland premier. We almost had a shouting match at the embassy dinner because I had said the Newfoundlanders were riding on our backs because they were appealing to European sympathy for the Inuit. Peckford got totally angry, although it was the truth. They were riding with us because they wanted to cash in on European sympathy for Inuit sealers.

Murray: So they were using Inuit as an image so they could keep on sealing?

Exactly, and who could blame them. It was a tactic. It wasn't wrong or right, but it was wrong of Peckford to deny it. We had quite a good little heated argument in front of everybody, until the ambassador, I forget his name, intervened in a very diplomatic way and turned the subject to other matters. The upshot of that, well there was no upshot, because we did lose, although the price of seal pelts is now rising again.

I was on a trip to 24 Sussex in the limousine. I had crossed the floor by this time, so I was not a pet. I was a little favoured novel token. Trudeau said, "Look we have supported you on your seal thing. I had my minister go

over with you to Europe on this. What else can we do? Are you going to concede?" I said, "Well why don't you do one more thing. Why don't you establish a royal commission on sealing?" He said, "That's a good idea," and they did it[61]. That came up out of the blue. It was one of those moments. I hadn't really thought about it before. It came up in the limousine. I wanted to establish a royal commission. I was tired of the fight, too. At least you seemed to be doing something if you helped come up with something like a royal commission on seals. So, Trudeau did that. I can't remember who was on the commission, but it was done. What happened after that, I don't know.

Life as a Member of Parliament

When you are a Member of Parliament you are solicited in one way or another, by telephone, and in those days, by mail, tons every day. And most of it had to be answered. I'd go into the House, and I would spend two hours just signing letters. A lot of them contained real issues. For example, a family being cheated out of something and they were appealing to you, so you would act as an ombudsman. A Member of Parliament is many things, a mediator, a broker, a negotiator, an ombudsman. A member can influence agencies, or institutions, or government, or corporations or companies to do something.

Thierry: Maybe you could talk in a little more detail about what life as a Member of Parliament was like.

A Member of Parliament has a number of jobs. I want to talk about this because not to do it would discredit my staff. I want to give credit to my staff. We helped a lot of people individually, doing things that the media didn't pick up.

61. Royal Commission on Seals and the Sealing Industry in Canada. The final report was published in December 1985.

Sometimes the people you helped didn't vote for you the next time. I remember we had a public meeting in Pond Inlet and this guy came up to me and said, "Peter. I want you to help me get a boat. If you help me, I won't tell a soul, but if you don't help me I'm going to tell everyone that you didn't want to help me." I said, "Thanks a lot." That was life as a Member of Parliament.

There were some very, very enjoyable moments. I want to talk about a couple of other side rewards for crossing the floor. As soon as I became a Member of Parliament, Zebedee Nungak and I discussed federal representation for Northern Quebec. The Northern Quebec Inuit argued that in their riding there was a large non-Inuit population at the southern tip so the urban areas in the south chose whoever they wanted, totally ignoring the needs of the Inuit. Zebedee had run once or twice, I believe, just to prove there could be a federal candidate, although it was very unrealistic to think that an Inuk could ever win in any of those very francophone ridings. I have nothing against francophones; that's just what they are.

Zebedee came down and met with Stanley Knowles, Ed Broadbent and myself at one time to appeal to them for help on realignment, or possibly supporting a new riding. I think actually there should be one. I think Nunavik is large enough and has issues of its own and ought to have its own Member of Parliament, really. It's amazing that there isn't one. But that was a difficult thing to achieve. And to prove it, this is still the case. There is no Nunavik specific constituency to this day[62].

When I crossed the floor they asked me what I would like, and I said to Trudeau, "Listen, a side issue is the matter of Northern Quebec. The Inuit of Quebec have neither federal representation, nor a Member of Parliament or a Senator. If you could appoint a senator from

62. Jean Charest, the Premier of Quebec, announced in December 2007 that he would push for the creation of a Nunavik riding at the provincial level.

Parliamentary hockey team, Ottawa 1980. Warren Allmand, former Minister of INAC, Maurice "Rocket" Richard, Madame Speaker Sauvé and others. I'll never forget the moment during the game against the National Heart Fund Team when the Rocket kicked the puck out to me from the corner, even though he was a referee… the most intense eyes I've ever seen.
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Northern Quebec, at least they would have some federal representation." He said, "Okay. Give me some names and we'll discuss this." I think John Munro nominated Mary Simon. Zebedee Nungak was considered, Charlie Watt was considered. Even Mark R. Gordon was considered for a while. We also looked around for other people. I promoted Charlie Watt strongly. One day I heard on the radio here in Ottawa, while I was visiting a friend, that Trudeau had appointed Charlie Watt to the Senate.

I went to visit Charlie Watt in Kuujjuaq. In some ways he was the wrong choice. He was big-headed, he had lots of pride and he was in it for himself. He was a friend of mine. He was a very charismatic figure. He had worked very hard on constitutional matters, and worked very hard

on the Northern Quebec Inuit Agreement and on Makivik, but he was also in it for himself. When I was no longer a Member of Parliament, and my wife and I were living on residual funds, I was looking for a job and I asked Charlie to help me out. He said, "I'm only a senator now. I only make seventy-six thousand dollars a year. It's nothing. There is nothing I can do." He was very disappointed that he was only a senator, as he was no longer the president of Makivik. That's my comment on that. But at least Nunavik got federal representation. I still think it ought to have an elected Member of Parliament.

Another little reward on the lighter side was that Trudeau decided to do a Northern tour. We went to Inuvik. We stopped in Rankin Inlet and in Kuujjuaq. I persuaded the tour to go to Kangirsuk as I had a little daughter there from earlier days. There was an incident there that was very, very interesting and it showed Trudeau, the man. Zebedee Nungak was introducing us through the crowd at the community hall. It was packed to the gills. The whole town was there, of course. When does the Prime Minister visit Kangirsuk!

My daughter was standing in front of her mother Lizzie, and Trudeau came up to her. She was looking down. Trudeau liked children. He had no idea I had a daughter there. Nobody had told him. He told her, "Look up. Let me see your eyes," so my daughter looked up. Then he turned to me and he said, "Yours eh, Peter." And I said, "Yes!"

Before we got to Rankin Inlet we stopped at a place called Wilberforce Falls near Bathurst Inlet just to go camping. The three boys were with him. We got into an army helicopter. Dr. Peter Poole and I were setting up camp. Trudeau was wandering around, and he brought out this bag of little sticks. He took out his pocketknife and he started whittling these sticks. I was kind of curious so I went over and said, "What are you doing, sir?" He said, "Well, we need firewood, don't we?" I said, "Well that

Lizzie and Maggie (Payne Bay, Kangirsuk circa 1976)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

would be nice but that bag of sticks won't last very long. If you look around, there is nothing else to burn unless we burn the blanket, or whatever."

He said, "Well then give me something to do. I want to do something." "Well," I said, "You could fuel up those Coleman stoves." For some reason the army had these containers that were difficult to open. One of the helicopter guys had given him a container. He tried to open one, and he couldn't. I said, "Here, sir." I read the directions on it, and I opened it and handed it back. This offended him and he said, "Teach a fucking Eskimo how to read and he thinks he's smart." I said, "Take a fucking white man out on the tundra and he can't read his own writing." He laughed.

The next day we dropped into Bay Chimo, a tiny little community. Trudeau went to visit the fishing lodge there. He said, "Why don't you have a meeting with the community?" There were maybe four houses in the community of Bay Chimo, Umingmaktok I think it's called

Peter and his daughter Maggie (Dorval Airport, now Pierre Elliot Trudeau Airport, 1988)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

in Inuktitut. So, I had a meeting with them and they said, "Well, we need a couple more houses, and we'd like to have radio." So I told Trudeau that, and lo and behold, a couple of months later, I got a letter from the head of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in which he said they were sending up three units to Bay Chimo.

Then, we stopped at Echo Bay Mine which is now Lupin Mine. I think Lupin is just on the Nunavut side[63]. It is very close to the boundary. We were given a tour and we went underground. Trudeau pointed to a mucking machine. You know when you are in a tunnel like this, the operator sits on the side and there is a shovel. They drill, and then they blast, and the rocks come down. Then an operator shovels it out and puts it into an ore car. That's called a mucking machine.

He said, "See that Peter. I operated one of those years ago." I said, "Really!" He said, "When I was young, I had to work in the summer between school, so I worked underground in Quebec, operating a mucking machine." I had never known about that.

Then, when we were back on the plane he told me he used to trap. He used to be a trapper. These were things I never knew. It wasn't general public knowledge, either. He was a trapper when he was young. So there were good moments when I was still a Member of Parliament, even though there were problems with the RCMP, the media, the public in general and the Liberal Association.

I was still a Member of Parliament for a while after Trudeau, but then John Turner became leader of the Liberal Party. Trudeau had stepped down. Charlie Watt and I supported Jean Chrétien at the time, kind of lightly, not totally formally. Turner was not happy with me for that. When he became leader he refused to speak to me or go to bat for me. I had no support at the Liberal leadership level, and I had no support at the Liberal Association level

63. Lupin Mine is effectively in Nunavut. It closed in February 2005.

Peter, Pierre Trudeau, his sons Justin, Sacha and Michel, and Lizzie Ittinuar, Peter's mother (Rankin Inlet, 1983)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Pierre Trudeau, John Todd and Peter (Rankin Inlet, 1983)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Charlie Watt, Pierre Trudeau, the Mayor of Kuujjuaq/Fort Chimo and Peter (Kuujjuaq, 1983)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

in Nunatsiaq. In fact, they just wanted to see me leave. They wanted to see me go down in flames. So did the RCMP and the media.

I've often thought about this. William Tagoona once told me during this time period, "Peter you can't fight the media. They are out to crucify you, and they will do it any way they can." William was a long-time CBC journalist. I said, "Well, they are killing me. I'm not fighting them."

I'll give you an example. When the price of bullets goes up it has an effect on all the hunters up North. It's a direct increase in their cost of living index and their mode of living. Dennis Patterson and I took a trip to Winnipeg to see the head honcho of the Hudson's Bay Company. I arranged the trip and the meeting. Dennis and I met with the big-wigs of the company, which historically had grown on the backs of the aboriginal people in this country. Anyway, we went to see them and they lowered their prices,

Peter and John Turner and his wife at Peter's office on Parliament Hill. John Turner is campaigning for leadership of Liberal Party against Jean Chrétien and John Munro (Ottawa, 1984)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Peter, John Amagoalik, Eric Tagoona with John Turner and his wife (Ottawa, 1984)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

but of course, CBC North and the media credited Dennis Patterson and didn't mention my name. I had arranged this and asked Dennis to come with me. If I did anything good, the CBC never mentioned it.

Another example was when the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation came in, a Nunatsiaq film group still existed and it was starting to lose its funding. I arranged a meeting with the head of CBC. Dennis Patterson, John Amagoalik, Terry Pearce and a bunch of others were at this meeting. My office had coordinated everything. Consequently, the funding was renewed so they could continue their work. The CBC and the media mentioned everyone else but me.

I had two good friends that worked at CBC in Iqaluit, Janet Patterson and Margo McDermott. One day, when I was in Iqaluit, they came into my constituency office and they were both crying. I said, "What in the world is the matter?" They said that their manager had told them they couldn't be friends with me. They were told they were not allowed to do good stories, and they had to write in such a way that I was discredited. It was biased reporting at its best. They were out to get me and bring me down. This is not conspiracy theory making on my part. This was real.

On Parliament Hill, each Member of Parliament had a travel budget. The problem with that was they tried to make one size fit all. The guy with a two square mile urban constituency had the same budget as I did for travel. They made a five thousand dollar allowance available to each Member of Parliament to try and address travel differences in different areas. You could use it to go by boat, airplane, dogsled; whatever means you wanted to. I thought, "Well I've been here for three years. I have travelled to different communities from Rankin Inlet by boat, and have gone hunting at my own cost during the summer". I was going to pay someone to take me on a trip to Baker Lake, Chesterfield Inlet, Whale Cove and Arviat. I got accused of misusing the funds. People in Rankin Inlet went to the RCMP, and the RCMP, happily, gladly, started an

investigation. When this came out I thought, "What is the big deal?" But, meanwhile I had just crossed the floor. It was just before Trudeau and I went on a trip up North. The RCMP brought a specialist from Paris, France, from Interpol, to lead the investigation on me. The media had a frenzy over it.

Of course, they worked like mad dogs. They were in my office going through records for a lousy five thousand dollars. I said, "Here. Here's five thousand dollars," but the RCMP were determined. They expended tens of thousands of dollars on this investigation. When the election came around, I had just been newly married to my wife Susan Munro, the daughter of John Munro, the Cabinet minister.

I had no choice. I didn't want to run again. I really didn't want to run again, but John Amagoalik persuaded me to run as an independent and hope that people could see through all of this. But of course, they could not, because the media made sure they saw everything with black-coloured glasses. This thing with the police was hanging over my head. That went into overtime. The RCMP was still investigating. They laid a charge and it went to trial. I had to hire a lawyer. It went to trial and the jury acquitted me. It was all for nothing! It was just to destroy my life, and the lives of people around me. And boy, did they ever do that!

My demise as a politician can be attributed to a number of factors. One, I had supported the wrong candidate for leadership of the Liberal Party. I did not patch things up with the Liberal Association in Rankin Inlet, and the RCMP thing with the travel budget and the criminal charge hanging over my head which the media really played for all it was worth, all factored in. I really had no chance.

It was a mistake to run as an independent. I did not want to do it. It cost me money that I really needed for my family. When I stopped being a Member of Parliament it

was nearly impossible to get a job. This is a common story in Canada, by the way. Members of Parliament that stop being members find it very difficult, even if they are good people without a past like mine, to find a job. I meet them here or there. I'm a member of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, and the story is so common. For me, it was impossible.

I spent around ten years languishing around, not doing a whole lot, except for a stint with the Nunavut Constitutional Forum. Then I taught for a little while in the adult education centre in Rankin Inlet, but to get a real job was next to impossible. It took years before that black cloud lifted. I have to thank my family for the support they gave me. While it lasted, as a Member of Parliament I learned a lot of things. I learned about the hierarchy on the Hill, and about the social life that went with it. It was pretty frivolous, really.

I wasn't married when I was an MP. I was living with a girl and having an affair. It was pretty silly. If you were in the position that I was, and I'm sure people like Paul Okalik also feel this, you are not exactly inundated, but people throw themselves at you. You could take advantage of it or not.

Socially, I think I made some mistakes. I kept some of the wrong people around. I was making money. Inuit in those days generally weren't making money. If you made money, you shared. I had hangers on. I can understand people like boxers making millions and millions and then ending up with nothing because they don't know they are being milked by the people around them. There was a little bit of that.

It was also a lot of fun. You got to meet people like Princess Anne, or Prince Charles, or the Governor General's regiment, at parties on a regular basis. You got invited to everything and anything. The downside to that was after about two years I got very tired of public life, because the public owned me. They absolutely owned me wherever I

was. Even if I was sleeping on an airplane, they woke me up. They felt offended if I hesitated while waking up.

I remember Saturday mornings. My brother David was a teenager and going to school in Ottawa. He was living with me. We would look forward to the weekends so I could take him to this or that. I'd get a call at nine in the morning on Saturday, and they would talk my ear off for two hours. Never mind that it was a Saturday, and you had things to do! When you are a public figure, people don't ask if you are busy, never!

One Saturday morning I got a call from the local education committee in Cape Dorset. The first thing the person said was, "Peter our committee is sitting here, and we are going to meet with you this morning." I said, "Oh really. Did you contact my office?" They said, "No. We are going to meet with you this morning. Grab a pen and some paper and we will talk about what we would like." So, from nine o'clock till twelve there I was. They own you. If you try to get away they say, "He's not playing along."

One thing I regret as a Member of Parliament was not taking advantage of this wonderful program where you went to Saint-Pierre and Miquelon and lived with a family to learn intensive French for three or four weeks. Somehow the public got a hold of that. People started calling and saying, "What are you doing wasting your time? You are supposed to be working for us, and here you are going on a holiday." They hang things like that over you. I didn't do it. In hindsight I should have anyway. There was that ugly side of being a public figure. People just absolutely owned you, and they always had that axe over your head. If you didn't do what they wanted you to do, they would tell everybody.

Pauloosie: Was this particular to Nunavut?

Well, it is more particular to Nunavummiut, because they were the ones who I represented. It happens elsewhere,

but it is stronger in Nunavut. You were a public figure and people owned you.

Running again for the NDP?

Years later I was nominated to run as the NDP candidate. Of all the card carrying members who voted, I think I got ninety-six votes and the next guy got twenty-one or something like that. But the riding association in Iqaluit phoned up Audrey McLaughlin, and told her that they didn't want me as their candidate, so she wouldn't accept my nomination, even though democratically I had won.

I met her years later in Whitehorse, and she was pretty scared. She knew she had done something wrong. I said, "How is it that somebody like you did that?" But they ran Mike Illnik instead. That severed my ties with the NDP. That was the end of it. I had been nominated and won fair and square in the riding. More people voted for me than anybody else, but the party apparatus would not accept me back, even though they had accepted other people back. Pauline Jewett was someone who had gone from the NDP to the Liberals and back again. I think the reaction was pretty extreme.

I thought if any candidate had a chance to win against Jack Anawak, and match him pound for pound in debates, and so on, it was me. I was ready for a fight, but I wasn't accepted. I was ready to run again after some years. I can't remember when that was. It was while Jack Anawak was a member. I think it was going to be his second term.

I speak to Bob Rae[64] now and again. He crossed the floor, too. He's a Liberal now. You know Melanie was just telling you that she was glad there was an article in

64. See note 64.

Nunatsiaq News when Belinda Stronach[65] crossed the floor. There was an article in *Nunatsiaq News* about Nunavut having its own floor crosser, Peter Ittinuar. It basically said why I did that. This David Emerson guy who crossed the floor a week after the election was totally unprincipled, unethical and opportunistic. I thought I crossed the floor for noble reasons, reasons bigger than myself. There is a difference I think between that, and what that guy did.

Harper did not like Belinda Stronach and forced her out. Bob Rae talked about why he crossed the floor. He had outgrown and modified his socialist leanings. He thought through his early ideological, idealistic ideas on how he thought people ought to be governed, I guess. Actually, I told Bob Rae not long ago that I supported him. He might not have wanted my support. I talk with him. We both live in Toronto. I don't think he'll win. He's going to give it a try. He's only a year older than I am; he's not that old.

Thierry: Do you think you might go back to political life eventually, in the future?

I doubt it. I mentioned earlier today that I am now in a situation where I don't have to ask anyone for anything. I have a good job. I have a good life that I enjoy. I haven't severed my ties with Nunavut. I have my family there. My parents are still alive. I still own a house, a cabin and a boat there. So, my family life and my life up there with my friends is not severed. The fact that I still do contractual work regarding Nunavut is not severed. But it's severed in the sense that I don't have to ask Nunavut for anything anymore.

Unless the Liberal Association or the NDP made me an offer I couldn't refuse, or if people wanted me to run

65. Belinda Stronach started her political career as a Progressive Conservative MP, but like Peter Ittinuar she eventually chose to cross the floor and became a member of the Liberal Party.

for Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated or whatever, I'd say no. I was asked last night if I wanted to run for Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. Mary Simon has been nominated by Pita Aatami, which means Makivik, I guess. I don't need to go hat in hand and go back to politics, but if an offer was right, I'd consider it. I can now name my terms, I think. I still have nine or ten years of fairly energetic working life left. If they don't, I'm fine with that, too. I like playing golf too much!

CHAPTER FOUR

The Nunavut Project

Nunavut Constitutional Forum

The government of the time asked me to join the Nunavut Constitutional Forum[1]. There was Dennis Patterson, John Amagoalik, Desmond Brice-Bennet and people like that who were running the show. John Amagoalik was paid by the Inuit Committee on National Issues, or Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, or the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut. Jens Dahl and Peter Jull[2] were also on that trip. We travelled around the North. I think we travelled to almost every community in the North and held public meetings. What a travelling show we had! We had a Hawker Siddeley 748. I met the pilot not too long ago, last

1. The Nunavut Constitutional Forum was established in 1982 to represent the Inuit in the Constitutional Alliance. It was one of two subcommittees formed, the other being the Western Constitutional Forum. These forums were responsible for developing constitutions for the two proposed new territories to be created from the Northwest Territories. In 1987, a boundary and constitutional agreement was reached between the two organizations. The boundary was dependent on the resolution of a land claims dispute between the Inuit and Dene/Métis. When this issue was still unresolved in July 1990, federal funding, as well as the work of the two forums ceased.
2. Jens Dahl is the director of the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IGWIA), a lobby group for aboriginal peoples based in Copenhagen. Peter Jull was working with the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut at the time. He is now an associate professor at the University of Queensland in Australia.

year at the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation Awards. He still remembers that whole trip fondly.

My role with the Nunavut Constitutional Forum was to recite those four conditions. I'd tell people what needed to be done. John Amagoalik's role was to appeal to people to say yes to the plebiscite and the boundary, and so on. Dennis Patterson was supportive, and detached as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. He talked about what effects it might have, possibly on the territorial government. Somehow Charlie Panigoniak[3] was along with us. There were fifty of us.

The Nunavut Constitutional Forum road show: Dennis Patterson, Peter, John Amagoalik, unknown, and Bob Kadlun (Pond Inlet, 1983)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

3. Charlie Panigoniak is a popular singer, songwriter, guitarist, from Chesterfield Inlet. He has been a carver and hunter, based first in Arviat, and, after 1985, in nearby Rankin Inlet.

It was absolutely like a travelling road show. There was a party every night and meetings two or three times a day, sometimes in two different communities, and little love affairs going on. Little side stories and sidebars. Lots of fun.

I remember a public meeting we had in Sanikiluaq. I was very popular in Sanikiluaq for a reason from the distant past. When I was working in Churchill, Manitoba, in the Social Development Department in 1971, I had found a girl who had gone to Winisk at age nine as a polio victim. Her legs were very weak. A young doctor had taken her to Montreal from Winisk without contacting the parents. I found her when she was sixteen, in 1971.

From Montreal, this doctor had taken her to his mother in Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia. As far as I know, if that girl is not dead, she's still there. We found her there in Tatamagouche. She had been missing all those years. She had been adopted by this doctor's family, informally, without consent. As a doctor, he had the authority to pick her up out of the hospital and take her home, and give her to his mother. Nice people, mind you.

I travelled to Sanikiluaq, and took the real mother who was in her late fifties, and who had never been out of the Belcher Islands, down to Halifax. What a trip! This was in August. She came to Montreal with me. We had to stay in Great Whale River. I knew I was in for quite a trip. She was wearing sealskin boots and she had a parka on. She had a babushka, a scarf on, and a skirt. There she was and she was utterly overwhelmed.

There were escalators. We got on a moving sidewalk in the airport in Montreal and she fell down, she was so scared. I felt like I was taking a real Inuk out of her natural element into this modern world which she knew nothing about. I remember when we got to Halifax airport. Nobody met us. A social worker from Truro, Nova Scotia was supposed to meet us, but she was a no-show. I hired a taxi to take us to Tatamagouche. I didn't have another

option. In those days there were no credit cards, only cash. This was Nova Scotia. I was twenty-one, with hair down to here. I was wearing Edwardian-style Beatle clothing. I didn't feel out of place; well, actually I did. I was pretty out of place in Nova Scotia, too. They were just hicks down there.

I remember this woman collapsing at the Halifax airport. She was so emotionally drained. We got into the airport. I was supporting her. She just swooned. I thought, "I'm not getting paid enough for this!" We were to stay at the lady's house. I knew another night at the hotel could have killed her. She would have had an emotional breakdown and wouldn't have been able to continue. I had a hell of a job at the other end, too. I had to mediate between the two mothers and see how the girl reacted to her natural mother. I had to write a report on the whole situation afterwards for my bosses. It was already quite a trip.

Anyway, things worked out very well in the end. Tatamagouche was a small town. I do remember all these girls coming to the door to ask for me, and the old lady of the house would shoo them away, but I didn't want her to. I remember that was quite a disappointment! But things worked out in the end, and I took the mother back to Sanikiluaq.

Sanikiluaq is a small settlement, and everyone knows what is going on. For years after that I would get letters and small presents in the mail. Her family would send me little carvings and things like that as a thank you. For that reason, years later, the Nunavut Constitutional Forum was well welcomed into the community. We had a great public meeting. It wasn't really for that reason, but people were very receptive. They still remembered 1971 very fondly. The family was certainly happy to see me.

There was this one woman who went up to the microphone. People who wanted to make comments would go up. This woman went up and went rambling on about

Nunavut and that Sanikiluaq was down there and would be forgotten[4]. The issue in Sanikiluaq was whether or not they were really Quebeckers, Quebec Inuit, and that type of thing. Then all of a sudden she piped up and said, "Peter Ittinuar, would you go to bed with me." And everyone broke out laughing.

Pauloosie: What was your answer?

I think it was a very polite no. It was quite successful. It was funny. I got the feeling that the Nunavut Constitutional Forum was the pro division forum, and the Western Constitutional Forum was the anti division forum. That's the way I saw it. Nick Sibbeston[5] was on the Western Constitutional Forum, and along with his cronies, was much more skeptical. They tried to take the high road approach. I think they tried to bring out the against side in their own public forums when they had public meetings in the Western Arctic. I got the very strong sense that the people on the Western Constitutional Forum were trying to influence people to say no, notwithstanding that there were people in the Eastern Arctic. There were also resources; there was gold and diamonds and oil and gas and fish and tourism, and they would lose all that if division was achieved. The problem was also that the Western side had the numbers. They outnumbered the Eastern side.

In some ways, I think some parts in the West – and ironically I think they were aboriginal communities, whether Gwitch'in, Dene, or Chipewyan[6]— wanted division. They had mixed feelings about it. One thing

4. Sanikiluaq is located at the southeast end of Hudson Bay and it is closer to Nunavik communities than to Nunavut.
5. Nick Sibbeston is now a senator for the NWT in the Parliament of Canada. At the time, he was an MLA in the NWT Assembly.
6. In linguistic terms, Gwich'in, Dene and Chipewyan are from the Athapascan language group and they were all part of the Dene Nation in the seventies.

I learned on the Hill, especially while dealing with the Constitutional negotiations, was that if you said yes to an Indian demand they would scratch their heads and think, "There must be something wrong with that. I'm going to renege on that." They were always suspicious. You can quote me on that.

They and we had long ago established a difference between us. The Dene and the Gwitch'in and all those other groups wanted to do their own land claims. Also, the Inuvialuit had had a much longer history of European contact. They had more cohesion culturally with the lower Mackenzie River tribes, like the Gwitch'in. Aklavik is a total mix up. Inuvik is a total mix up. Inuvik influences Tuktoyaktuk and Sachs Harbour all the time. The Committee for Aboriginal Peoples Entitlement[7] decided to go with the West because the Inuvialuit ties were with Yellowknife, not with Iqaluit or wherever the capital would be in the East. We had no problems with that.

The problems with the Committee for Aboriginal Peoples Entitlement had begun many, many years before while they were still part of the Nunavut project.

I remember in 1978, at an Inuit Tapirisat of Canada annual general meeting, Sam Raddi[8] argued against the creation of Nunavut and said the Committee for Aboriginal Peoples Entitlement would not go along with it. Nellie Cournoyea,[9] Peter Green and other players echoed what Sam Raddi was saying. The end result of that was that they joined the Western side.

After the Nunavut Constitutional Forum there was a very, very short but intense period. James Arvaluk and I,

7. See note 50.
8. Sam Raddi was an Inuvialuit from Inuvik. He had been chairman of the Committee of Original Peoples Entitlement (COPE) and one of the negotiators of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (see note 50).
9. Nellie Cournoyea has since been chairperson of the Inuvialuit Corporation and Premier of the Northwest Territories from 1991 to 1995.

(I don't remember what position James was in), travelled around the Western Arctic to promote division and the plebiscite. We weren't travelling so much in the East, but went into the Western communities and advocated a yes vote. I think that trip was partly responsible for tipping the scales.

Pauloosie: Didn't you guys get eighty-four point seven percent of the vote?

Over all? The East voted overwhelmingly in favour; the West not so much. In fact, I think the West voted against[10].

One of the agreements made about the plebiscite was that the overall result would count. We had debated and discussed beforehand what would happen if the West voted against, and whether we would respect that. That was the discussion. But in the end, democracy won. This was a vote for the whole jurisdiction and not for one side or the other.

Pauloosie: Didn't Kugluktuk vote against it?

I think some communities voted no. I think Yellowknife and Fort Smith voted no.[11]

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10. The plebiscite on the creation of a new territory in the eastern part of the Northwest Territories was held in 1982 and the overall result favoured division with 56.5% in favour and 44% against. However, there was a big difference between the Inuit community where participation was high and which generally voted strongly in favour and the non-native community of the West, where participation was low and which voted against it. Furthermore, there was a wide variation in voting in non-Inuit native communities. For a detailed analysis of the results of the plebiscite see Abele and Dickerson 1985.
11. Only two Nunavut communities voted against division, Kugluktuk at 61% and Cambridge Bay at 59%. It should be noted that these two communities have a direct air connection with Yellowknife, the

Pauloosie: How did it make you feel, going to the communities and trying to persuade people to vote?

You talked as well as you could. You tried to give your side of the story. You tried to inform people well enough so they could make an informed decision, not an ill-informed one.

Pauloosie: I'm sure you tried to persuade them.

Of course, I tried to persuade them. More than anything, I tried to educate people. I was a big 'yes' fan. I've moderated my views a little bit since then. I'm still a 'yes' man, but in hindsight, a lot of things could have been better.

Pauloosie: Fifty-six percent voted for division and forty-four percent voted against.

It was pretty close! We wanted the Inuvialuit in Nunavut, but we knew they didn't want to be with us. We respected their decision because we knew about it beforehand. They were going to vote against it, because they didn't want to be part of Nunavut, but we persuaded them to vote for it, so they would not be part of Nunavut. Do you see the strategy? That's what we did.

Pauloosie: Strategy played a big role. Who were you with when you planned this strategy?

I worked with Carmel Whelton, who is now in Iraq as a lawyer and was at the time a strategist. There was also Dan Donovan who is now the publisher of *Ottawa Life* magazine and Melanie Legault. She had been working for

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capital of the NWT, but need to go through either Yellowknife or southern Canada and take a number of connecting flights to reach Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut.

Inuit Tapirisat of Canada for years and years and years. I did things a lot on my own. The staff handled a lot of the day-to-day constituency matters. They wrote letters on my behalf that I signed. Sometimes I didn't even read what I was signing. We had to answer so many letters!

Peter Irniq was a bureaucrat. He was one of Stu Hodgson's assistants and main interpreters. He responded to a question about Inuit wanting their own territory, and said, " [Nunavut would] really be quitting Canada because the principles of Canadian Confederation are against racial division."[12]. This shows the level of attempts made by the Yellowknife based NWT government to indoctrinate young Inuit, in sharp contrast to the movement that Inuit were mobilizing. Since then, Peter Irniq has made a complete reversal of his statement and has become an active advocate of Nunavut and Inuit rights in wildlife management and governance. In recent years, Peter Irniq has become the most vocal advocate of Inuit language and cultural retention.

I was talking about constitutional development and the Nunavut Constitutional Forum. It did its work. It went around to every community and held public meetings. It was very persuasive. I think there were eighty-four percent or so of people in the East who voted for division. There were less on the Western side.[13] To keep to chronological order, I worked for the Nunavut Constitutional Forum. When that phase of the work was done, there was other work to do, so I had an office in Ottawa. They still had to work on a boundary along with Nunavut Tunngavik.

Later on, I continued working for the Nunavut Constitutional Forum as a private individual, mostly on the boundary matter. This was kind of difficult because some

12. Quoted in "Nunavut: Inuit Tapirisat's proposal to split the NWT", *The Inuit North*, January 1980, p. 4.
13. In fact, it was 80% in the East and 50.1% in the West. See note 129 for more details.

of the more radical Dene in the West, from Fort Smith and so on, were claiming Churchill, Manitoba, and five miles west of Arviat and ten miles west of Baker Lake as their territory. Truly ridiculous claims! People eventually agreed to a more reasonable boundary.[14]

There were those matters to deal with for a while. Eventually, the boundary was cleared up and another plebiscite was held on the boundary and it was agreed to. I can't even remember what the process was, but it was agreed to. That paved the way for the land claim, and the political development of Nunavut.

I didn't have a lot to do with the land claim itself. While I was a Member of Parliament I did meet with the federal negotiators and the negotiators on the Inuit side, Thomas Suluk,[15] John Merritt, Tagak Curley, and others. Basically, I had no role there other than being a watchdog to make sure that the process and the negotiations kept moving on. I said, "As long as I'm here, I have some influence." That's really all I did.

In terms of influencing the outcome, when I crossed the floor, I was directly involved in the process of division. I was also directly involved with the constitutional recognition of aboriginal rights in Canada, and consequently, Section 35. I can lay claim to that. My demise was factored on a lot of things. For some reason the media in the North turned against me, and they did everything in their power to discredit me and paint a bad picture of me to the public. They still do that to this day.

It is now twenty-six years later. Susan Munro and I have a beautiful daughter. I met her when I was travelling around with John Munro on an airplane going to Frobisher Bay.[16] He took her with him on his trip. When I met her,

14. See note 120.
15. Thomas Suluk was chief negotiator for ITC in the eighties. He ran against Peter Ittinuar in the 1984 federal election and was elected to the riding of Nunatsiaq as a Progressive Conservative.
16. Former name of Iqaluit.

the first thing I said to her was, "I'm going to marry you." She looked at me and said, "Okay, but you'll have to wait four years until I finish university." I said, "Okay". We didn't see each other for four years, and four years later we were married. I mean, we saw a little bit of each other. Those were my first words to her and that was her response to me. We had a bitter divorce later on, but now we are very good friends and we still love each other.

Susan Munro with Bronwyn (Rankin Inlet, 1985)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

After Political Life

That was pretty much the end of my political life. Subsequently, as a lark, I would run for something, either for Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, or whatever, but no one wanted me.

Eventually, I started getting jobs. I worked at CBC in Rankin Inlet with Jose Kusugak for around three years. I worked as the executive director of the Inuit Cultural Institute for a while. It was while I was there that we developed the transliteration coding with syllabics and Roman orthography, the Unicode. That's where that came from. We developed a lot of other wonderful things such as language learning games for the computer, but we had a government in Yellowknife that was unwilling to administer funds to us. The underlings in Yellowknife weren't able to see past their noses in their offices. Of course we could develop materials, but we didn't have the money to mass produce them.

The schools really wanted these materials. We would demonstrate them at schools from kindergarten to grade six, and the schools really wanted them for their kids. Computers as a tool for working and learning were really just coming out in those days, but people couldn't see the bigger picture.

Then, for a year or so I worked as the executive director of the Nunavut Implementation and Training Committee.[17] Here's a difference. When I was with the Inuit Cultural Institute, the board of directors were a bunch of unilingual elders. What a wonderful group to work with! They understood, and they were kind and gentle. They worked hard. They read the materials we gave them. They studiously studied at night.

At the Nunavut Implementation and Training Committee the board of directors were all bilingual, except for one case where someone was unilingual in English. He came from Cambridge Bay. What a bunch of idiots! They didn't understand anything. They never read their materials. They were opinionated. They were emotional.

17. The Nunavut Implementation and Training Committee was created in 1993 and stems from the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement. Its mission is to promote training and enhance Inuit participation in the workforce. It is still in operation.

Peter Ittinuar with brother Harry
(Rankin Inlet hunting seal spring, 1977)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Andre Tautu and son Pierre on the right, his brother David on the left (somewhere between Arviat and Rankin Inlet after a caribou hunt, 1981)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

They were extremely hierarchical. They were impossible to work with. We did produce a learning strategy plan for all the land claims organizations which they have never taken advantage of. This was to develop an educated trained workforce in the land claims organizations. But they really did not understand this.

Reflecting on Nunavut

After 1993 when Mulroney and Quassa[18] and others signed the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement, several things happened.[19] First, the Nunavut Implementation Commission was born, with offices in Iqaluit to develop a model for the government of Nunavut. The whole intent and purpose of that was to try to come up with a model that was made in and for Nunavut and Nunavummiut. It didn't happen, but they tried.

I have nothing against socialists, by the way, but they had a couple of socialists there who basically wrote those books, *Footprints 1* and *Footprints 2*. The commission had people like John Amagoalik, Peter Irniq and others on it. Because it was a not-for-profit organization you had to have a board of directors. *Footprints 1* and *Footprints 2* were basically developed by Jack Hicks and Bert Rose, and people like John Merritt and whoever else. They did try some innovative things, I think.[20]

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18. Paul Quassa is currently the Mayor of Igloolik. He was a former chief negotiator for the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut and was elected president of that organization, which represented all Nunavut Inuit in 1989. He signed the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement in June 1993. For more information refer to volume 3: *We Need to Know Who We Are*, the life story of Paul Quassa, edited by Louis McComber in the same series.
19. The Nunavut Land Claims Final Agreement was signed on May 25, 1993 in Iqaluit.
20. One of the most innovative suggestions was the proposal of a gender equal legislature but it was defeated in a referendum. See Young 1997.

Signing of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement in Iqaluit, May 25, 1993. Standing, left to right: John Amagoalik; Titus Alooloo; Tom Siddon, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; Paul Quassa, President of the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut; The Right Honorable Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada.
Credit: Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

One innovation was the dispersal of the bureaucracy into different communities so that the injection of personnel into the community would help the economy. People would have a first-hand look at jobs, and maybe even develop into them.[21] Some of their intentions were interesting. They came up with the idea of a department of sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development was new at that time; the idea is to mix people, the economy and the environment, and you develop a sustainable strategy or plan. That department was formed early in '97 or '98, without power. It was developed in Iqaluit. Of course there was also the Office of the Interim Commissioner to which Jack Anawak was assigned as a reward for being a good

21. Peter is referring to the decentralization policy where the government of Nunavut has relocated several departments to small communities. For an evaluation of this policy, see Hicks and White 2006.

Liberal. That office was established to try to implement what the Nunavut Implementation Committee had come up with. There was also Marie Antoinette Flumian, a mandarin from Ottawa.

Many things happened in the years between 1993 and 1999. I mentioned that the Nunavut government had to be public, and by virtue of the fact that eighty-five percent of the people in Nunavut were Inuit, by their sheer majority, they would take over the government. With the help of the models developed by the Nunavut Implementation Commission, and with the help of the Office of the Interim Commissioner implementing those models and making them Inuit ready, and staffed with Inuit, and with the help of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and all the organizations under that umbrella, it was almost a sure thing that the Nunavut government would be run by and for Inuit. That was generally the plan. I don't know if it's written down somewhere, but that was the plan.

Sustainable Development Department

The Nunavut Implementation Commission came up with their models. Then the Office of the Interim Commissioner came along. Jack Anawak hired a couple of his friends like Marius Tungalik and Peter Irniq as deputy ministers for the government to be. Katherine Trumper was selected to be the deputy minister for the Department of Sustainable Development. This was a new concept, basically, in the world. This was the first department of sustainable development in the world. It was not a bad idea really, but kind of unworkable. Jack Hicks persuaded me to come and work there in the policy area. I was hired to work there as a 'policy analyst', a title that applies to anything and everything. I quickly climbed the ranks and I became assistant deputy minister for a few years.

That department had ten divisions. It included wildlife, oil and gas, minerals, sealing and fishing, parks,

tourism, environmental protection, policy and research. As well, it had its own financial department and an executive. They had already hired a lot of people. There were already ten directors in the different departments. In the wildlife section alone, there were over a hundred people; wildlife officers, administrative staff and so on. I don't know if there were that many, but there were quite a few. Some departments were very small and had two or three people, sealing for instance.

The idea was to call it the Department of Sustainable Development, but everybody was saying, "What does that mean?" If you are called the Department of Wildlife Management people know what that means. If you are called the Department of Economic Development people know what that is, sort of. If you are called the Department of Parks and Recreation you know what that is, but what is the Department of Sustainable Development? It includes all those things.

The Brundtland Commission's[22] definition of sustainable development was that you mix the economy, the people and the environment in three circles. In the centre, where they all meet, you have sustainability, and people living happily in a clean environment with a means to make a living. It was a grand concept.

My first job was to coordinate a workshop for all the directors and try to come up with a working definition on paper, on what the department was supposed to be doing. We did that at Carleton University. We brought somebody in from the Institute of Sustainable Development in

22. The Brundtland Commission, formally the World Commission on Environment and Development, known by the name of its chair Gro Harlem Brundtland, was convened by the United Nations in 1983. The commission was created to address growing concern «about the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources and the consequences of that deterioration for economic and social development.»

Winnipeg. We had a couple of professors at Carleton facilitating the sessions. We had Dr. Peter Usher as the chair and we worked on it for a while. Eventually, I became assistant deputy minister of that department.

Because it had formed before other departments, and because Katherine Trumper, a brilliant lady, was quite the taskmaster we produced literature in colour. When April 1st, 1999 came around we were the only ones with pretty well developed books on what we were about, including our plans and strategies and our budget. It was all there. Other departments were still producing materials on black and white paper.

Paul Okalik did not like Katherine Trumper or myself. He had his own reasons. I don't know why. He fired Katherine and she eventually settled with the Nunavut government. She sued them for wrongful dismissal. I eventually left because a senior government official nicknamed Nujappiq was making my life miserable.

He brought an Aboriginal from Saskatchewan, Alex Campbell, to take over Katherine Trumper's job, and to divide it into two departments; the Department of Economic Development and Transportation, and the Department of the Environment which included the territorial parks, which was probably a good idea. The Department of Sustainable Development was not really given much of a chance to progress. It was not even given two years. It was a model from the Nunavut Implementation Commission days, and they did try to carry it through.

Because of the plan to put people into different communities, they built new buildings in Baker Lake and Pond Inlet and Pangnirtung. People who had worked in Iqaluit for years and years, who were now working for the Nunavut government, did not want to move. Their kids had grown up in Iqaluit and gone to school there. They liked what Iqaluit had to offer, like restaurants and plenty of activities. The Nunavut government immediately ran into problems there, right from the outset.

Also, it became immediately evident when I first started working with the Department of Sustainable Development that I had never really worked in a government bureaucracy before. Although I'd been a Member of Parliament, and I'd influenced the bureaucracy, I'd never really been there as a common worker. There were a few Inuit in the department, but there were a lot of non-Inuit. There was Joe Tigullaraq, Jaypeetee Arnakak, Irene Tagoona and myself. I can't remember who else was there.

It was a department of fifty people, you know, and growing. We said, "What's wrong with this picture? This is supposed to be our Nunavut government. It's as white as white can be. There is not a single piece of literature written in Inuktitut. Nothing originates in Inuktitut. Nothing is translated into Inuktitut. They certainly don't ask us our opinions on what they are deciding when the directors meet." Not a single director was Inuk so we said, "What's wrong with this picture. We are going to have to do something."

The social development arm of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated had had a couple of meetings. One was in Igloolik, as I recall. They came up with this notion of *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit*,[23] traditional knowledge, but

23. *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit*, or IQ, is usually translated in English as 'Inuit traditional knowledge'. Since 1998, it has been seen as the very foundation of the government of Nunavut. Indeed, in March of that same year, the Nunavut Social Development Council (NSDC) organized a conference in Igloolik aimed at finding "processes designed to ensure that Inuit culture, language, and values are democratically reflected in the policies, programs, and day-to-day workings of the new Nunavut government" (NSDC 1998: 5). Although the NSDC put a lot of effort into conceptualizing IQ and into finding ways to introduce it into the workings of the Nunavut government, they were not able to do much else. In February 2002, the NSDC was disbanded. The Department of Sustainable Development then sponsored the creation of the Sustainable Development IQ Working Group (SDWG) which Peter Ittinuar, Jaypeetee Arnakak and Joe Tigullaraq were part of. They came out with the notion of *Inuit qaujimanituqangit* which they defined as "The Past, Present and Future Experience, Knowledge and Values of Nunavut society" (Sustainable Development IQ Working

they didn't do much else. Well, Joe and Jaypeetee and I decided to develop it a little further, and called it *Inuit qaujimanituqangit*, a definition that even today nobody understands. It means knowledge then and now. It is the development of knowledge that can be passed down in literature and put in the curriculum and research and everything. It's inclusive.

We also decided to infuse it with a philosophy as its foundation, so we came up with guiding principles. We did all sorts of work, and we spent hours developing this material. We included the other Inuit staff, but they were more into their jobs. They were supportive, but it was Jaypeetee, Joe and myself who tried to conceptualize it and put it on paper.

Eventually, we started an interdepartmental IQ committee, which officials from the Premier's Office tried to disband immediately. They fought it tooth and nail all the way. We had problems right then and there. There were other interdepartmental committees which were developing processes on how to write things, and official processes for interdepartmental relationships. Bureaucrats

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Group 2001: 3). In 1999, the Government of Nunavut also organized a workshop on *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. The participants of the workshop came to the conclusion that IQ should "restore Inuit pride and increase individual self-esteem" (Nunavut Government 1999a: 15) and that it was the key to making "the new government […] a more productive and harmonious working environment, beneficial to all residents of the new territory" (*Ibid.*:17). In 2001, the Nunavut government created the IQ Task Force which would find ways to introduce Inuktitut into government offices, find ways to convince the GN to meet with elders before making an important political and economical decision, and finally try to convince the GN, Inuit organizations and private businesses to accommodate the Inuit workers with a schedule reflective of the Inuit way of life (IQ Task Force 2002). Ever since then, there has been a lot of talk as to how it would be possible to include IQ into the workings of the Nunavut government, but as of 2007, nothing much has been done. English is still the *lingua franca* of the government and Inuit culture is still not present in any of the government structures.

all over the world have to do that. It was all in English. They hired Inuit here and there. Most of them were called 'policy analysts' for want of another name. Basically, they just sat in their offices and didn't do a whole lot. They weren't really asked for their input in the processes. I was there. I know.

Katherine Trumper, on the other hand, was instantly supportive of our efforts. She had been up North for twenty-four or twenty-five years. She knew a little bit of the language. That's another thing that happened. The first year that the government was in place was the first year that government bureaucrats were not required to take Inuktitut courses at the College. That dropped attendance at Mick Mallon's[24] Inuktitut courses at the College as this was no longer a requirement. With the Northwest Territories government it was required. As soon as the Nunavut government was created, it stopped. It should have been the other way around.

I wasn't that popular because I wouldn't hesitate to say in meetings, "Why don't any of you speak Inuktitut. You don't even know who your clients are. You can't speak their language. You don't know how they think. You don't know how they will respond to this program, or what their understanding of it will be. Nothing!" So I wasn't very popular there, either.

24. Mick Mallon is a long time resident of the Canadian Arctic. He first came to the North in 1959 as a teacher in Puvirnituq, Nunavik. This is where he first learned Inuktitut. He then went to work at the Eskimo Language School in Rankin Inlet, the Language Bureau of the Northwest Territories, the Kativik School Board in Quebec, and finally for the Nunatta Campus of Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit. He developed a two-week crash course in Inuktitut which was mandatory for *qallunaat* workers moving to the North… until the creation of Nunavut in 1999. Over the last few years, however, it has once again become mandatory for Southern new-hires to take an Inuktitut course.

But, I did become an assistant deputy minister. Anne Crawford[25] delayed it for at least six months, but processes sometimes outweigh people's opinions. Mine is not the only story like that. There are variations on the same theme. It happened to Joe Tigullaraq.[26] He went over to the Nunavut Water Management Board because of the bungling of his assistant deputy ministership. If anyone was eminently qualified in that wildlife department to be an assistant deputy minister, Joe was.

I just met another former assistant deputy minister, Bobby Gunn, who quit because he didn't want to work under his deputy minister. He's a good man. We hear about the Nunavut government not having very many Inuit men working there, but it's because they drive them out, for whatever reason. It's partly because they drive them out, and partly because they don't hire them. People are becoming apathetic about it.

When I became an assistant deputy minister a friend of mine became an assistant deputy minister at the same time. Tom Thompson (husband of Manitok Thompson, who was a Member of the Legislative Assembly and minister) and I are good friends. We go way back. When we became assistant deputy ministers we asked if there was an interdepartmental assistant deputy minister committee, and there wasn't one. Tom Thompson and I called up all the other assistant deputy ministers and had an informal meeting. We said, "We are assistant deputy ministers. Every other government in the land has an interdepartmental assistant deputy minister committee of one sort or another, because different departments deal

25. Ann Crawford is a senior civil servant in the Nunavut Government. She has held various positions with the Nunavut Executive and Intergovernmental Department. She is currently the president and CEO of Qulliq Energy Corporation.
26. Joe Tigullaraq is now the chairman of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, a co-management board set up under the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement.

with the same matters, whether it is forestry or fisheries or parks or roads or highways. Different ministries have different legal responsibilities and rules for the same thing, so we have to work together."

Operationally it's always the assistant deputy ministers who deal with these sorts of questions. The deputy ministers report to their ministers, and the assistant deputy ministers deal with the operations side in whatever department or ministry they are in. That's the traditional role of the assistant deputy minister, but there was no assistant deputy minister interdepartmental committee. Many of the assistant deputy ministers were token Inuit. They weren't really active in the capacities that assistant deputy ministers ought to act in. In fact, they weren't given the capacity to act as they would in other jurisdictions.

Tom and I recognized this immediately and we went ahead without approval to form this interdepartmental committee, so we could get ourselves training courses and discuss issues on a monthly basis in each department. This way the right hand would know what the left hand was doing operationally. There was a deputy ministers committee, because all of them except for one or two were acting in the capacity of assistant deputy ministers. They were operational deputy ministers. Anne Crawford chaired that committee. whether on orders or not, some deputy ministers tried to stop the assistant deputy ministers from having their own committee. They didn't want an uprising on their hands, I guess. We started that.

The upshot of the *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* material was that it gathered speed. The ball started rolling. We had a big conference in Apex. Jaypeetee and Joe and I gave a presentation on what we thought IQ could do administratively and operationally, in the development of materials for government processes. We spoke about how IQ could be used for wildlife, for example. That was a given. You could immediately see its application in wildlife management. That was a no-brainer. But how

do you apply it in, say, education? Even though that's a no-brainer conceptually, to put it on paper and put it into practice takes work.

In fact, Jeffrey Simpson from the *Globe and Mail* actually wrote about the concept of IQ. Joe and Jay and I have left the Nunavut government, and where this is now, I don't know. The Department of Culture Language Elders and Youth has to deal with all this. It is the smallest department. As far as I know, it doesn't do a hell of a lot. I'm not sure whether they are writing materials, or whether they are unifying the writing system for Inuktitut in Nunavut, or promoting Inuit writers.

Oh yes. What are we into; the seventh year of the Nunavut government? By now they should have really worked hard on the issue and the matter of the writing system, but they hire really weak Language Commissioners. I've seen the previous and the current Language Commissioners writing Roman orthography. They are illiterate in Roman orthography and hence in syllabics. You send them email in Roman orthography, and when they answer back there is bad spelling and bad grammar. These are Language Commissioners! They are not qualified. It is their assistants who write their annual reports. Apparently a few weeks ago when the current Language Commissioner got up before the Assembly to give his annual report, he read a statement, but all the questions were fielded by his assistant who wrote the annual report, because he didn't know the substance. I'm sorry, but this is true.

The Department of Culture Language Elders and Youth should work with the Department of Human Resources on the Inuit Employment Plan, which was developed by the Nunavut government. We had some input into that. I think it is a band-aid solution when you try to shape interview questions, and so forth, to accommodate someone who may or may not really be qualified to do a specific job.[27]

27. The Inuit Employment plan is required by the NLCA through Article 23. The objective of this article is to increase the employment of Inuit

It is a bit of a band-aid solution. The upshot of it is that the Nunavut government is an English language government. If you are going to be a pipe fitter or a plumber in the Nunavut government, you have to have gone to a trade school somewhere to have the certificate. There is nothing really wrong with that, but let's face it, that's the way it is. For thirty years the idea that people would be able to work in Inuktitut and learn things in Inuktitut like carpentry or plumbing didn't come to pass. People are disappointed by this.

And then I moved South and became a farmer. My partner Marion and I farmed for a while, and I did some translation work.

Then, this job came up with the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat. I applied, and I was accepted. This was in the business and economic development unit of Native Affairs, but that was disbanded, and I got reassigned as a negotiator. I believe I am the only Eskimo government negotiator on Indian land claims in Canada!

Reviewing the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement

Just recently, I was a member of the team doing the second five-year review of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.[28] I held focus groups in communities in the Kitikmeot and the Kivalliq. People are resigned to the fact that the claim did not do much for them individually. As a group, collectively, they think that they will have to try and do things for themselves. At all of the focus groups,

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in government job functions in the Nunavut settlement area to a representative level and all governments departments were asked to prepare an Inuit employment plan within three years of the date of ratification of the NLCA.

28. Price Waterhouse Coopers. 2006. Second Independent Five Year Review of Implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. May 11, 2006. Available at http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/agr/nu/sif/index_e.html

Peter on his partner Marion Rahn's family organic farm (Dumbro, 2003)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Peter and Marion Rahn (1996)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

every single one, someone said, and there was general agreement, that they thought they would now be making laws in Inuktitut, and making decisions in Inuktitut. They thought that we would be working and applying for jobs in Inuktitut. They thought we would be hired in Inuktitut and we would be trained in Inuktitut. They thought we would have developed training programs at the College that were partly in Inuktitut, whether in carpentry or hunting or plumbing. Everyone said that none of that has happened. We now know that none of that is going to happen. We are resigned to it. We live under the poverty line, and that's the way it is.

People are resigned to the fact that they are constituents of two entities. At the land claims entity level, people are not very well represented. In every single community I went to, people said that the people who worked in the land claims organizations had no effect on their lives whatsoever. They have jobs, but what exactly they did, they didn't know.

The only thing that they had something of an understanding of is the Hunter Support Program. That was something they understood, but it is so tainted by nepotism and mismanagement that most people don't have much faith in it, anyway, although they think the intent of it is very, very good. That's the one thing, for all its flaws, that people said, "That is a good idea. It's a good program," although it has been totally mismanaged and there is a lot of nepotism in the granting of snowmobiles and boats. Other than that, Nunavummiut said they didn't know what they did. They said they would hear about the land claims organizations on the radio. They hear that these organizations go to court against the federal government for this or that. People said, "Why are they spending our money in court cases?"

The other entity that they are underrepresented in is the Nunavut government. They said, "We expected an Inuit government, even though it's a public government

and we welcome others to join. We voted for it, but in some ways we had it better under the Northwest Territories government because we had regional councils, and people came to consult us. Our hunters and trappers organizations ran better. They were effective. They were more efficient." People were saying in some ways, they had it better under the old system.

Do you think people had it better under the Northwest Territories government?

Well, if you hear people at the community level saying that the hunters and trappers organizations ran better under the Northwest Territories government and they had more input into local hunting and fishing practices, then I have to believe them. I think the Nunavut government still has the potential to become, or at least partly become what people dreamed it would be. I don't know if people had it better under the Northwest Territories government, but I do know that people's lives haven't changed very much as a result of separation, and dividing into two.

I am reminded of Dr. Colin Irwin's report on the ghettoization of the Arctic. He was a professor at a university in Halifax. He was from Ireland. He married an Inuit woman from Chesterfield Inlet and had kids. He wrote a paper called, *Lords of the Arctic, Wards of the State*.[29] He envisioned the Arctic in 2025, and we are getting close to there. He said that if certain things weren't done, the Arctic was going to become one large ghetto.

When you look at demographics, for instance the community of Arviat. What are you going to do with all

29. Colin Irwin. 1989. "Lords of the Arctic: Ward of the State. The Growing Inuit Population, Arctic Resettlement, and their Effects on Social and Economic Change – a Summary Report", *in Northern Perspective*, 17(1): 1-20. http://www.carc.org/pubs/v17no1/2.htm

those kids in ten years?[30] Nobody has the answer. When I was in the Department of Sustainable Development we would look at the demographic tree of Nunavut, and try to envision what we were going to do in ten years or fifteen years. Nobody has the answer. It's scary! If you look at the children as a resource to develop upon, then you can come up with a plan or a strategy.

Nunavut Sivuniksavut[31] could be part of that plan. Children could become educated, trained citizens who would come back and contribute to the economy and society of Nunavut. You can plan that way, but nobody's planning that way. I haven't seen a plan from the Nunavut government other than the efforts we made in the early days. The Department of Education hasn't been able to come up with an Education Act. The concept of sustainable development has been disbanded. Any kind of planning like that would have to be in a department like Sustainable Development. Looking at community plans and what to do with the population, you have to look forward at least ten years. Then we'd have a vision for twenty years from now.

I think that the Bathurst Mandate[32] document was a good idea, but you have to take out sections, and draw out a long ten year plan, and then increment that into five year plans, and then into one year plans and then operationalize

30. Nunavut has a very young population. 55% of Nunavummiut are under 25 years of age and 37% are under 15. (Census Canada, 2001).
31. See note 32.
32. In 1999, The Government of Nunavut (GN) published a document entitled *Pinasuaqtavut: That Which We've Set out to Do. Our Hopes and Plans for Nunavut*. The document is also known as the *Bathurst Mandate* for it was finalized during a cabinet retreat in Bathurst Inlet in August 1999 (Nunavut Government 1999b). The document highlighted the priorities of the Government of Nunavut for the future and established goals to be attained by 2020. In 2004, the Nunavut government published a second version of the mandate (Nunavut Government 2004).

it into a monthly plan. Nobody has done that. They have been fighting crisis after crisis and they are bungling their way through, building processes in the bureaucracy, putting some of the bureaucracy into the communities. They are bungling their way through the Inuit Employment Plan,[33] and having problems with the behaviour of some of the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

It is very, very top heavy. I give kudos and credit to the way Paul Okalik has conducted his personal life. I think he had a bit of a helping hand to become a lawyer and so on, but still, he did become a lawyer, and a bit of a role model. At the same time, I think he favours his own region. I've seen a bit of that with him sometimes. He is not terribly accessible to people. At the same time, I think he listens to a lot of people like Anne Crawford and others around him. I think that is a little bit sad and unfortunate, but that's the way it is.

There were papers written by people like Dennis Patterson and Jack Hicks in response to Colin Irwin's paper,[34] but they were hopeful papers. We are talking about ten or fifteen years ago, but these things still ring true today, to me anyway. I'm afraid to say this, but we need to have a major conference on what to do with Nunavut's youth. Let's leave aside for now the fact that the Nunavut government did not become what people had envisioned it to be ten, twenty or thirty years ago. Let's leave aside the fact that in the nineties people came to the slow realization that it wasn't going to be what they thought it would be. Let's leave aside the fact that we have a basically ineffectual claims organization that's there to ensure that the claim is being implemented by the two levels of government.

Putting aside all that, if you look at Nunavut demographically, there has to be a focus on what Nunavut is going to be like, ten or fifteen years from now. Envision

33. See note 146.
34. See note 148.

that. Where are people going to live? Housing is at a critical mass point. Employment is in a shambles, at least for Inuit.

Pauloosie, you are going to be okay, but not everyone will be. You are one out of ten. I don't know what the ratio here is. You are probably one out of twenty. Not everyone has the initiative or the family background to be successful. Families up North don't put away money for their children's post secondary education. That's never been the case. Years ago, post secondary financial assistance was quite easy to get, before people knew how to take advantage of it. Now that families have graduated their children from high school and are getting to the point of accessing higher education, those programs are diminishing and are becoming less accessible. They are harder to get at. That has to be addressed.

Children being made to marry needs to be addressed. I'm focusing now on the youth, because that's where it's at. We older people, and the people I spoke to, are resigned to the fact that we are going to live out our lives the way things are. There is not much hope for us, but at least you can hope for your children and try to develop something. But I don't hear Paul Okalik or Paul Kaludjak or Jose Kusugak or Peter Irniq or other public figures talking about what it will be like ten years from now. I think that's a big problem. It's absolutely critical, but nothing is being done.

Pauloosie: Didn't the government have a plan in the Bathurst Mandate?

It's fuzzy. They did take a little bit from the IQ materials we developed at Sustainable Development. A few years ago, before I took this job on, while I was farming, I took on other jobs. I was asked to translate the Nunavut Wildlife Management Act as it was being drafted. I started translating after draft four. It was obvious that that draft

had had a lot of input from the Nunavut government drafters as well as from the Nunavut Water Management Board. They had taken all our principles on IQ and made them enforceable in the sections in various ways. It was very well thought out. I had subcontracted two other translators from Yellowknife.

By the time it got to draft twenty-one or draft twenty-two, they had made radical changes. The IQ sections were not enforceable or required. They were relegated to just guiding principles. As well, in the co-management regime, the chairman on the government side had power, by the time draft twenty-four came around, which superseded even that of a court. I was amazed at this, but we were bound by our contracts not to say anything. We couldn't tell anybody. We couldn't influence anything. As a translator you had to go along with your code of ethics. That was a couple of years ago. I don't think they have even introduced that act yet.

The Future of Nunavut

One last comment about what I think the future holds for Nunavut. I want to reiterate that I am very, very afraid that what Colin Irwin wrote might be true. I think that the powers that be, the decision-makers, should reread that paper. At least in the short term, a conference needs to be held and it has to include politicians, researchers, and scientists and Inuit on what Nunavut will be like ten or fifteen years from now. That could act as a catalyst for an agenda for the decision-makers for planning for Nunavut.

It is just common sense, but nobody seems to be doing it. There are conferences on terminology and this and that, but we are not conferencing or meeting about our twelve year olds or our fifteen year olds and where they will be ten years from now. They will be young adults, and basically they will have nowhere to go.

They will be in overcrowded houses. They will be in communities that don't have all the amenities they see on television and on the internet or that they read about. They don't really have much of a plan after high school. The Inuit family economy has not allowed for the development of a post secondary plan. We are new to the scene. There are a few families that have planned for this. Thank God for schools like Nunavut Sivuniksavut. It's been a godsend. One way to do this would be to hold a conference, which would help set an agenda for decision-makers.

It's been a long journey from Chesterfield Inlet, losing my cat to the dogteam, killing my first seal at age six and my first caribou at age seven. For many of us in my age group, we all experienced camp life in one way or another, more for some than others. We experienced how Inuit adults were in those days when we were children and alcohol was not present. They had a definite agenda in their lives. We could see how they behaved and worked on a daily basis. They were very serious, hard working people. They were very proud.

So, when the journey began for those of us who went to school, and then went on to more education in the South, to become acculturated, bicultural and bilingual, it was difficult because of the biases that were inherent in that whole process, biases on both the Inuit side and the side we were visiting and learning from. There was prejudice and discrimination. Some of us went through periods of ridicule from both sides that were difficult to take. You kind of lose a little of your identity for a while. I'm not just speaking for myself. I am speaking for many others, James Arvaluk, Zebedee Nungak, and others. Each phase was a learning experience.

At the same time, the creation of Nunavut was part of our journey. In 1973, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada started the Land Use and Occupancy Study as the legal basis for our occupancy and ownership of the land. In 1976, the first proposal for the creation of the Nunavut territory

Peter's mother, Lizzie, drumming (Igloolik, Early 1990's)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Sivaniqtuq, Ollie Ittinuar, Levi Illuituq, Lizzie Ittinuar performing a ritual for a film on shamanism (Film location Rankin Inlet 1993-4, Inuit Cultural Institute)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

came in. In 1979, the first Inuit Member of Parliament was elected to the House of Commons. In 1980, at the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada annual general meeting, by a unanimous vote, people decided they were going to strive for a Nunavut territory. Then there was 1993 and the signing of the Nunavut Final Agreement and the creation of Nunavut in 1999. And here we are in 2006 after having taken a very long journey.

I burned out at a very young age. It was a massive learning experience and a massive transition, concurrent with, and concomitant to the whole process of the regions Labrador, Quebec, Nunavut and the Western Arctic developing politically, coming into their own, dealing with poverty and with being second class citizens, and increasing problems with alcohol and other addictions. Tobacco, for instance, had a massive effect on health in the North. All these things were happening at the same time.

Basically we were trying to give ourselves a tool to deal with all this. That's what Nunavut was supposed to be, a tool for dealing with all these issues and building better lives for ourselves. Did we help? I don't know. Hindsight is everything. I mean, I am surprised to find myself having doubted division at one point in my life. I suppose it had to do with the fact that I was seeing the ugly side of things for the first time and this was kind of a reality check. I was starting to question my own work.

As this book mentions, I spent my whole political career fighting for division, primarily and foremost above anything else. I think even more so than the Constitution, section 35. Afterwards, I cast doubt upon myself. I had blindly gone forth to get this thing done from the lofty place of political life, with these lofty ideals and goals. You start to kind of reach them and then you go back up North and enter into a hyper-social situation. You start to realize there are some pretty serious problems at the root level here.

I was living in a nice house in Ottawa for a long time. Up North, if I went to a meeting, I had an agenda. Basically

I was learning about a community, and not really living the life at the community level. It was the same when I went back home in 1966 when I was sixteen years old. I saw the drastic change my people had gone through, the change in them, in their attitudes and the way they behaved. It was shocking! Then after I left political life and went back to live in the community, the change was apparent again.

Also, there was a lack of change in some areas. There was change in not so good ways, related to alcohol and drugs and other things. For instance, I truly believed that people had changed, to the point that they would be determined to send their eighteen year olds to school, to get training and education to get a job. But, no. People were marrying their kids off at eighteen. That was the traditional answer to kids growing up, and it was wrong. I thought it was wrong.

Because of the paucity of resources for making a living, the lack of employment, and the proliferation of bureaucracy in the North to run communities and education, nepotism was becoming rampant. There was a reason for that. You had to make a living any way you could. You watched out for your family. It was a very natural thing to do. But, it didn't gel with the laws and regulations of this country, and normal practices elsewhere. We are more aware of it now, and people try to put a check on it. I think this was becoming a problem in the North. We were living in a regime where you had to know somebody to get a job. This happens elsewhere, too.

I heard of a situation in the Six Nations where there was an aboriginal financial comptroller with a Master's of Business Administration degree, totally qualified for his job. A new administration came in, and he was removed from his position. A cousin who didn't even have a high school education was put in as the town comptroller.

At that point I questioned my own support for division. Maybe I had read Colin Irwin at that point. I questioned a number of things I had worked on in my life. But people

wanted division, so I qualified my thoughts and said, "If this is what the people want, we have to give it to them. If the majority wants it, we have to give it to them. That's democracy." I was questioning where it would lead, and whether people would be ready to run their own affairs. I truly was questioning that.

Unfortunately, I think I was right in some respects. Nunavut has not done very well for Inuit. I think it could be much better. I have removed myself from Nunavut. I get involved here and there. In some ways, they gave me the golden opportunity of a lifetime. Nunavummiut gave me a great life for a while, but when I needed it, they didn't support me. I have mixed feelings about that.

Eventually I removed myself. I live elsewhere. I am self-sufficient. I don't need to go back to Nunavut. I don't need to be supported by Nunavut any more. I've severed those ties, so that I don't have to ask them for anything. When I did ask, they said no, which was kind of a put down. I hope the best for them.

I have young adopted sisters and brothers in the North. My brothers and I, we all have kids. Our plans for their kids is that I have a place down South where they can live and go to school. It is necessary. We have to look outside of Nunavut for their future. If they return as teachers, nurses, plumbers, or doctors, that's good; they are contributing to Nunavut, but they have to look elsewhere, too.

There is going to be no room in Nunavut. The population has already exploded. Demographically, it is going to change, and there are no plans for that change, as far as I know. It is just barely trying to keep pace with itself right now.

I mentioned change. You know when you are watching a child grow, your perception is different than when you see a child, and then come back a year and a half later. You can see how much that child has grown. If you are watching the child grow, you perceive things in a different way. You

The Ittinuar family at the 50th wedding anniversary of Lizzie and Ollie Ittinuar (Rankin Inlet, 1999)
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Susan Monro, Ollie Ittinuar and Peter's son, Shawn Edwards-Ittinuar
Photo courtesy of Peter Ittinuar

Peter's two daughters: Maggie Kiggavik and Bronwyn Aanaguniaq with their great-great-great grandfather Qakuqtinniq in the background (Brantford, 2004)

are not really aware of how much they are growing when you are there. I draw that analogy to growing up in the North, then going South for long periods, and going back and seeing the change. It may be more hyper-apparent to me than to the people who are living there themselves. Being there and then going back South and working, and then going North again you see more change.

For example, you could witness the appearance of a class system. Sure, there were differences amongst Inuit. Some people were more capable than others in this or that, hunting or whatever the case may be. Some people were natural leaders and some were not. There was that sort of thing, but there was no real class system. Now, we emulate whoever is influencing us. In some ways we are emulating the western society that was introduced to us in the fifties. They started to administer us, to educate us, and to employ us. We emulated their society.

Nowadays we definitely have an Inuit elite, the ones who make money and who are bilingual. They are the ones with the good jobs. We have a class strata under that. We have developed that. The interactions between those classes have also changed. They emulate the kind of interactions you have in the South. Some 'suit' walking down the street is not going to interact with some panhandler standing there on the sidewalk on an equal basis. We are emulating that, too. Our society has changed drastically over the last thirty or forty years.

APPENDIX I

Peter Ittinuar Inaugural Address to the House of Commons (October 16, 1979)

Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a great pleasure and an honour to be speaking in the House of Commons for the first time, and I take this opportunity to convey the respectful sentiments of my constituents in Nunatsiaq. I congratulate the respective Members of the House on their election and you, Mr. Speaker, on your re-election to the chair.

I also congratulate the New Democratic Party on being receptive to having a member from the Eastern Arctic among their number. When my riding is included the NDP represents a good one third of the geographic extent of Canada.

I would also like to commend my predecessor, Mr. Wally Firth, for his hard work and dedicated service as Member for the Northwest Territories, including the Western Arctic, during the six years preceding the thirty-first Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories, and especially my riding of Nunatsiaq, traditionally and historically occupied by Inuit, has been *terra incognita* to the rest of the world. Unknown, menacing and certainly too cold for civilized habitation, it is only recently, in the last few decades, that something of national interest in the North has taken place. This is not because of the people

who live there but because the possibilities of economic development in the extractive industries promise to be profitable.

In this light, it was only in 1960 that the Inuit were given the right to vote in Canada and we have the great gentleman and parliamentarian, the late Right Hon. John G. Diefenbaker, to thank for that inestimable right. Perhaps I might put this attitude toward relations between my people and the Government of Canada in its true perspective by quoting two people. The first is the former commissioner of the Northwest Territories, Stuart M. Hodgson, who said:

The emergence of the Northwest Territories as a political and economic force promises to be the twentieth century's greatest saga. It will include industrial development on a scale suited to the size of the land, giving employment to thousands of modern pioneers. It will be a modern re-enactment of old frontier days, accelerated and magnified by world pressures of population, increased commercial demands and heightened by competition for mineral resources. It will be rocketed ahead by computer-oriented technology.

These immortal words were uttered in an atmosphere of prophetic elation in 1970. I would like now to quote one of my own people on the same subject and please understand, Mr. Speaker, that the use of the word "white" is not meant in a derogatory sense. Please do not feel slighted.

We very much dislike white people taking our land for granted. It seems they feel they can destroy our land any time they feel like it without even asking for permission. We want to have freedom of conservation with the animals. They steal the raw materials without even consulting us or giving the Inuit a percentage of what they are taking. We need to get power to control the land.

These were the words of Elijah Takkiapik spoken in 1974. The desire for control is very real today among the Inuit of Canada.

My riding of Nunatsiaq in the largest in Canada and also one of the most distinctive. It is one of only three ridings – perhaps soon there will be only two-in which the people who were born there, and who make it their home, have virtually no democratic voice in the management of their affairs.

While it is true that we have a Territorial Council situated in the Western Arctic in Yellowknife, this Council is subject to the authority of the territorial Commissioner who is not elected and is himself under the authority of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Epp), and I see him across the way. How do you do?

To give some ideas of the costs in the North, I am going to quote a couple of prices given to me yesterday from Frobisher Bay. Frobisher Bay, by the way, is the first port of call for air and sea transport in the Northwest Territories, so these would be the least costly consumer items in all the Northwest Territories communities, aside from the Western Arctic. Bread costs up to $2 a loaf. Reconstituted milk in Frobisher Bay costs $3.40 for two quarts and the bargain price is $6.98 for four litres. I dare not mention the price of home heating oil or gasoline because that is a joke.

Concurrent with the high cost of living is the fact that native employment is disproportionately low. The administration, which attracts many outsiders to high-paying bureaucratic jobs, has been inadequate in the area of job-training programs for local residents. Poor education and lack of adequate job-training leads naturally to low employment rates. At the same time our traditional livelihood – hunting, fishing and trapping – has been jeopardized by haphazard development and such regulatory controls as the Migratory Birds Convention Act, the Northwest Territories government game ordinance, and so forth.

One point I would like to emphasize is that the Inuit are not generally opposed to development per se. What we

are opposed to is the rapid, untimely development which has been imposed on us; development which endangers our land, our people, our way of life; development which benefits even the country of West Germany in the case of uranium mining – or at least they propose such development with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development – and finally, development which leaves the residents of the Arctic to deal with the social and environmental consequences on their own.

I would like now to quote a former prime minister of Canada, Mr. Louis St. Laurent, who stated:

It has been said that Great Britain acquired her empire in the state of absence of mind. Apparently, we have administered these vast territories of the North in an almost continuing absence of mind,

This absence of mind has been demonstrated in the past by an attitude which sees the North as a boundless storehouse of resources just waiting to be exploited. This attitude has resulted in political and economic development which has ignored the cultural, social and political rights of native people and has denied them the opportunity to participate fully in the processes which are shaping their future.

This report ignores the broad implications of its mandate in favour of the narrow, vested interests of the mining industry. No discussions were held with members of any of the native organizations or any other special interest groups in the territories – and there are quite a few – and although participation of the Northern residents is given token consideration, the report states that, and I quote:

Its achievement must be coupled by an equally strong effort by the industry to adapt the particular characteristics and strengths of Northern people to the needs of industry.

I hesitate to say what the people up North would call that.

Furthermore, the report ignores the fact that a dispute over uranium mining in the Baker Lake area is now before the courts and that little information is available about the nature of industry-government negotiations concerning Cominco's proposed Arvik mine on Little Cornwallis Island. The uneasy conclusion is that policy is being formed by industry and government behind closed doors. Such approaches to development decision-making can only heighten suspicions and mistrust, and that is the process going on now.

I would like to draw the attention of the House to certain inconsistencies and inaccuracies which cast further doubt on the validity of this report as a basis for government policy. The report states, and I quote:

Mining can be a most effective vehicle for increased economic activity and opportunity for employment and training for all people now living in the North or wishing some day to settle there.

Unfortunately, the record of native employment at such mines in Pine Point, Cyprus Anvil and Nanisivik has been dismal. Also, mining in the territories has to date been an export-oriented activity and has generated little in the way of secondary economic activity. History, therefore, contradicts this report's claim that sustained, long-term benefits will accrue to Northerners.

The report also recommends, and I quote:

Economic development of the North must proceed with full recognition of the legitimate interests of Northern people and the protection of the environment.

Yet, in several places the report states that mineral rights should remain vested in the Crown regardless of future agreements with native people. This idea makes one wonder just what the committee considers to be 'legitimate interests'.

While saying on the one hand that industry wishes to protect the environment, the report questions the

continuing validity of the Thelon Game Sanctuary, a region which the uranium mining industry wishes to explore. The report also recommends that if economic development is to be prohibited in certain lands, the area of these lands should be kept to a minimum and that selection of lands take into account their potential minerals rather than where there are important wildfire populations or environmentally sensitive features to be protected.

If mining is to make a positive contribution to the long-term development of the North, I feel that is must be taken in its proper perspective as only one of several elements which can contribute to the benefit of Northerners. It must not, for example, be allowed to interfere with management of renewable resources which are essential to the continuing survival of Northern culture and economic well-being. Above all, the mining industry must not be permitted to supersede the legitimate rights and aspirations of the people of the North.

In the Speech from the Throne, reference was made to the diversity of Canada as the national asset, and yet the thrust of Northern policy seems to offer the native people only one alternative, that of assimilation. The throne speech made no reference to the Inuit or to the Constitution, it made no reference to political development in the Northwest Territories, and in fact if recent developments in the Yukon are any indication, the present government is not really interested in involving native people in political change, except in a token way after the fact.

During the election campaign the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) promised to let Yukoners decide through a referendum the question of provincial status. However, last week the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development took steps which bring the Yukon Territory government dangerously close in form to provincehood, and there was no referendum before that. I say dangerously for two reasons. First of all, the move was made without prior consultation with the Council of Yukon Indians

whose outstanding claims are susceptible to the whims of politicians and political moods, and perhaps I should include myself in that circle. Secondly, with the framework of a provincial government already in place, the question of a referendum becomes academic. Residents of the Northwest Territories and Yukoners alike may feel very strongly about being a part of the democratic planning process of such a government.

In the search for solutions to the question of political development in the North, the logical place to look is to the aspirations of the population itself. We believe this is the democratic way. The aspirations of the people in this case are embodied in the desire for a new province named Nunavut. This desire has been well thought out. It divides the Northwest Territories into manageable proportions, each of which has enough homogeneity to make public administration more efficient. The summary report of the advisory commission on the development of government in the Northwest Territories in 1966 recommended that Yellowknife be made the capital of the Northwest Territories. I wish to quote one of the reasons given. It reads as follows:

It would be an appropriate location for the present political unit of the Northwest Territories or for the western part of the divided territory.

The Government of Canada, in creating the constituency of Nunatsiaq, has already recognized the natural boundary separating the eastern and western halves. Nunatsiaq is a culturally and geographically distinct area north of the tree line.

I now call upon the Government of Canada to recognize the legitimate aspirations of the people of Nunavut to become equal participants in the Canadian confederation. These aspirations are not the least radical. It was only thirty years ago that Newfoundland joined Confederation. At a time when national unity is being tried

and tested, the people of Nunavut wish to be welcomed by their fellow Canadians into the fold of Confederation.

On principle, I should like to speak in Inuktitut and say:

[this part was not recorded]

What I have just said is that I have been welcomed in the most cordial manner by members of all parties, except perhaps the Social Credit members. I thank them and I hope we can come to understand each other.

House of Commons Debates, Official Report, First Session – Thirty-First Parliament. Volume 1, 1979. [October 16].

Appendix II

Time Line

1870: The creation of the Northwest Territories, as Canada has accepted dominion over Rupert's Land. The Hudson's Bay Company keeps one hundred and twenty trading posts across the ceded territory.

1880: Britain cedes the Queen Elizabeth Islands to the Dominion of Canada.

1903: The first three RCMP posts are built on the Arctic coast in Fort McPherson, Fullerton, and Herschel Island. The first voyage of the Canadian ship *Neptune* takes place mainly to assert sovereignty in the Arctic.

1921: A new Territorial Council made of appointed members is put in place for the Northwest Territories. The first northern office is set up at Fort Smith with field agents. However, the legislative capital of the territory remains in Ottawa. Most territorial administrative work is carried out by the RCMP.

1922: The first Eastern Arctic Patrol embarks on the ship *Arctic* commanded by Captain J.E. Bernier. The patrol is the new administrative arm of the Canadian government in the Eastern Canadian Arctic.

1925: The boundaries of the Northwest Territories are extended all the way to the North Pole.

1942: The United States Air Force builds an airfield near the Sylvia Grinnel River at the head of Frobisher Bay.

During the war 5,000 members of the American military arrive. Many Inuit move to the area as well to find work. Frobisher Bay (*Iqaluit*) is born.

1950: The Canadian government charters the *C.D. Howe*. Onboard there are RCMP policemen, dentists, doctors, nurses, as well as a six bed dispensary. The *C.D. Howe* will make annual patrols until 1968.

1953: The Rankin Inlet Mine opens near Kangiqliniq (Rankin Inlet), on the western shore of the Hudson Bay. It produces nickel and copper ores. Inuit from all over the Kivalliq move close to the mine to find work.

1953: Twelve Inuit families are relocated from Port Harrison (*Inukjuak*) and Pond Inlet (*Mittimatalik*) to Grise Fiord on Ellesmere Island and to Resolute Bay on Cornwallis Island.

1953: Some Inuit families are relocated from Fort Chimo (*Kuujjuaq*) to Churchill, Manitoba.

1954: Inuit are granted the right to vote in federal elections but polling stations were not available in most Inuit communities prior to 1960.

1955: Construction of the Distant Early Warning Line (DEW Line), a system of radar stations covering the Canadian North.

1959: The federal government initiates the development of Northern Co-operatives in the Northwest Territories.

1962: Eastern Arctic Inuit vote for the first time.

1962: The Rankin Inlet mine closes.

1963: A bill on the division of the Northwest Territories is tabled in the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa. This bill is supported by the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce, a non-indigenous association. The bill never makes it through Parliament because of a change of government

and the opposition of citizens in the Eastern Arctic who still want to remain part of the Northwest Territories.

1964: The newly elected Liberal government in Ottawa creates the Carrothers Commission to study political development in the Northwest Territories.

1966: The Inuit of the Eastern Canadian Arctic are granted the right to vote in territorial elections.

1967: Following the Carrothers Commission recommendations, Yellowknife becomes the administrative and legislative capital of the Northwest Territories.

1969: the Minister of Indian Affairs, the future Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien. The White Paper proposed to repeal the Indian Act and therefore make Canadian aboriginals full Canadian citizens without any special status, accelerating their integration into mainstream Canadian society. This proposal was fiercely opposed by aboriginal leaders who wanted to maintain their distinctiveness in the Canadian Confederation.

1970: An important discovery of oil and gas fields in the Beaufort Sea as well as in the Mackenzie Delta (potentially 36 billion barrels of oil and 339 trillion cubic feet of gas).

1971: Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) is created.

1973: The Supreme Court of Canada, established in the Calder Case that aboriginal people have ancestral rights on their land and that the Crown needs to negotiate with them to clarify these rights. Following this judgment, the Hon. Jean Chrétien, then Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, announces that the federal government will henceforward negotiate to settle aboriginal land claims.

1974: The Native Land Claims Commission is set up by the federal government.

1974: The Northwest Territories Act is amended. From now on, the Northwest Territories Council will be made up of a fully elected fifteen-member body.

1975: The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement is signed. This is the first modern land claim treaty. This treaty includes the James Bay Cree and the Inuit of Northern Quebec.

1976: Inuit Tapirisat of Canada presents its first proposal for the creation of Nunavut in a working paper entitled *Nunavut: A Proposal for the Settlement of Inuit Lands in the Northwest Territories*.

1976: The Inuvialuit split from ITC to negotiate a separate land claims agreement due to development pressure in the Beaufort Sea area. The Inuvialuit are represented by the Committee of Original Peoples Entitlement (COPE).

1977: Following a public consultation, ITC follows with a second proposal in a three-page document entitled *Speaking for the First Citizens of the Canadian North*. This proposal calls for the creation of a territory that would be governed by an all-Inuit government.

1979: ITC presents the Government of Canada with its third proposal in a document entitled *Political Development in Nunavut*. ITC acknowledges that Nunavut would be governed by a public government.

1979: Peter Ittinuar first elected as a Member of Parliament representing the Nunatsiaq riding for the New Democratic Party. He is the first elected Inuit in the Canadian Parliament.

1980: The Drury report (*Report of the Special Representative on Constitutional Development in the Northwest Territories*) recommends unity of the Northwest Territories.

1982: The Inuit of the Eastern Canadian Arctic create the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN) whose goal is to

negotiate a land claims and the creation of Nunavut with the federal government.

1982: A plebiscite on division in the Northwest Territories is held on April 14, 1982. Division is supported by 56% of the voters. Only 52% of all electors turn out to vote.

1982: Patriation of the Canadian Constitution. The new Constitution Act includes Article 35, which recognizes aboriginal rights and defines aboriginal peoples as being the Indians, the Métis and the Inuit (April 17).

1982: On November 26, Peter Ittinuar crosses the floor to sit with the Liberal Caucus.

1982: Establishment of the Nunavut Constitutional Forum and the Western Constitutional Forum. These forums were responsible for developing constitutions for the two proposed new territories to be created from the Northwest Territories. In July 1990, federal funding, as well as the work of the two forums ceased.

1984-1987: The First Ministers Conferences on Aboriginal Self-Government. The discussions stall because the First Ministers refuse to recognize self-government as an aboriginal right.

1984: The Inuvialuit reach a land claims agreement (The Inuvialuit Final Agreement) with the federal government.

1984: Peter Ittinuar loses the Liberal nomination to Robert Kuptana. He ran as an independent candidate but he was not re-elected.

1986: Release of report titled *Living Treaties: Lasting Agreements* (also known as the Coolican Report). Following the Coolican Report, the federal government sets up a new comprehensive claims policy which states that self-government and preservation of culture will not be affected by further agreements and that blanket extinguishment

of aboriginal rights will no longer be a precondition for settlements.

1987: A boundary and constitutional agreement was reached between the Nunavut and Western Constitutional Forums. The boundary was dependent on resolution of a land claims boundary dispute between the Inuit and Dene/ Métis.

1990: Signing of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement-in-Principle.

1992: In May, a majority of voters in the Northwest Territories approves the boundary that will divide the territory into two distinct areas: the Northwest Territories in the west and Nunavut in the east.

1992: In November, the Inuit of Nunavut ratify the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (Nunavut Agreement). On October 30, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut sign the political accord that makes the creation of Nunavut official.

1993: In May, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, Northwest Territories Government Leader Nellie Cournoyea, and Tungavik Federation of Nunavut President Paul Quassa sign the Nunavut Agreement in Iqaluit.

1993: The Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) replaces the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN). NTI becomes the incorporated organization that represents Inuit under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

1993: In June, the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act and the Nunavut Act are enacted by the House of Commons in Ottawa.

1993: The Nunavut Implementation Commission (NIC) is set up by the Nunavut Act.

1995: The NIC publishes its first report entitled *Footprints in New Snow*. This report is the first blueprint for the Government of Nunavut. It contains 104 recommendations as to how the Government of Nunavut should be set up.

1995: Nunavummiut vote to make Iqaluit their future capital.

1995: The Canadian government adopts an aboriginal self-government policy that recognizes self-government is an aboriginal right under Section 35.1 of the Constitution. This means that the federal government agrees to include self-government in land claim negotiations.

1996: The NIC publishes its second report entitled *Footprints 2*. It incorporates popular responses to *Footprints in New Snow*.

1997: On May 26, the people of Nunavut reject gender parity and the two-member constituencies in a non-binding plebiscite.

1997: On April 15, Jack Anawak is appointed as the Interim Commissioner of Nunavut.

1998: On March 4, Nunavut's deputy ministers meet for the first time.

1999: On April 1, Nunavut is officially created as a new Canadian territory.

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