

## That's My Vision

And if a moment of doubt created any unease within the federal government about what they had done, they could find reassurance in the words of James Arvaluk, who in January 1976, as President of ITC, addressed a Rotary Club meeting in Ottawa, the Canadian capital, as follows:

We are not extremists. We are not separatists. We have no history of hostility and confrontation...but one of cooperation. And we are optimistic that the Government of Canada and the people of Canada will accept our proposed land-sharing settlement in a spirit of co-operation. We are willing to share our land and its resources.

No confrontations, no hostilities, no protests but patient and peaceful negotiations allied to a clear sense of purpose and direction characterized the Inuit approach when dealing with the federal government. And the federal government, at times reluctant, tardy, and devious, was inevitably forced to act in the temper of the times and recognize that there are many ways to understand the meaning of freedom, which they eventually embraced.

Nunavut and the Global Village

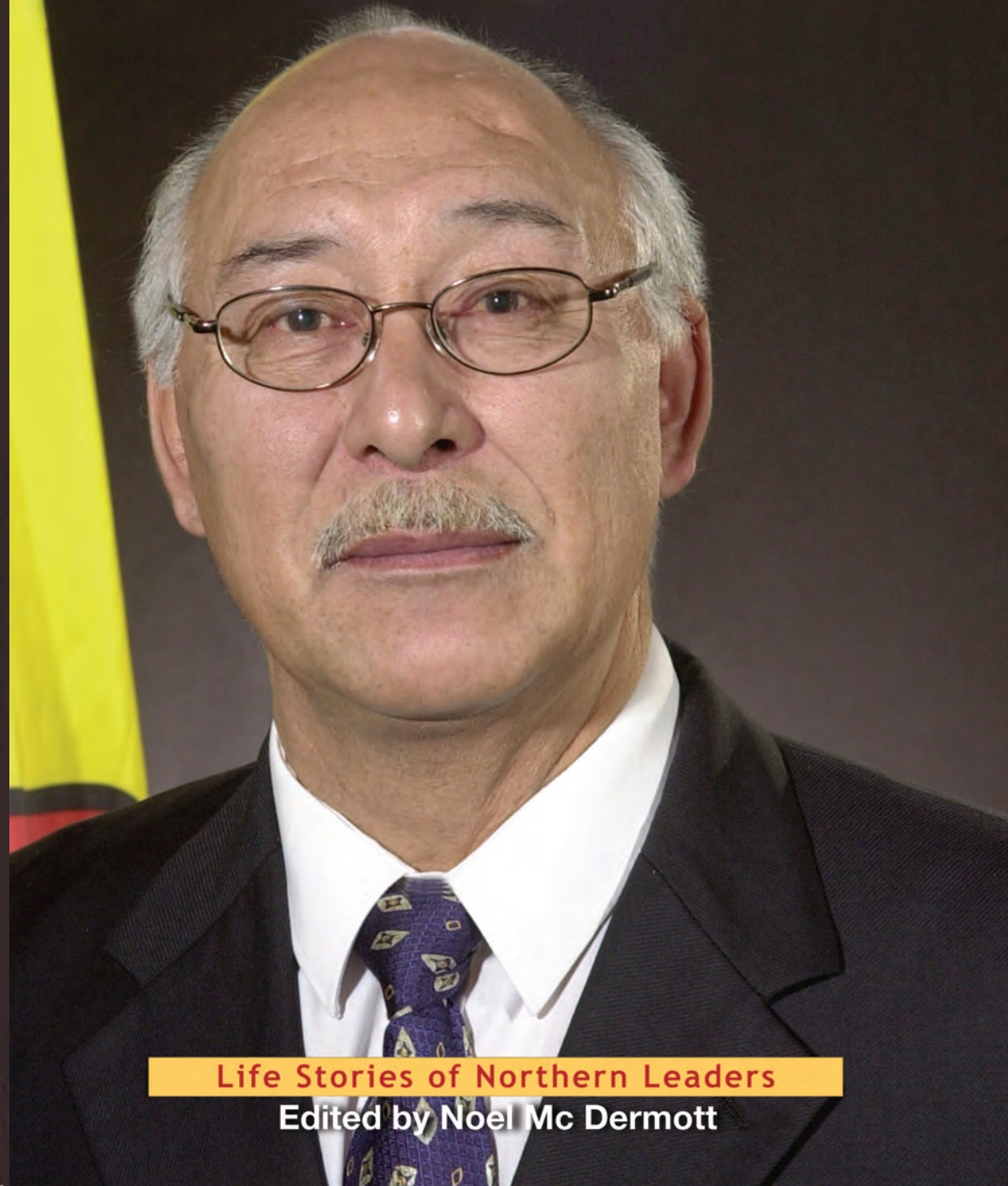


James Arvaluk

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THE LIFE STORY OF JAMES ARVALUK



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James Arvaluk

Edited by Noel M<sup>c</sup>Dermott



Life Stories of Northern Leaders  
Volume Five

## Life Stories of Northern Leaders Series Volume 5

That's My Vision  
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James Arvaluk

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Noel McDermott  
Editor

## Introduction

James Arvaluk was born on April 11, 1948, into a family with leadership qualities. His great grandfather, the shaman Awa, was a valued informant of Knud Rasmussen when they met in the Igloodik area in the 1920s. From their recorded conversations we get some insight into the formidable mind and character that so captivated Rasmussen. Awa is clear in expressing his thoughts and is philosophical and pragmatic about the vicissitudes of life and these are some of the same qualities that James Arvaluk shows in the conversations here recorded. Rasmussen met Awa at a crucial time in Inuit history, when the traditional beliefs were being put to the test, and the hunting life was giving way to one dependent on barter and trade. These two forces, religion and trade, were to alter Inuit life-styles unimaginably, so much so, that in the space of about fifty years traditional Inuit life and religion were often little more than stories to be told by the old to uncomprehending young people. But it is precisely at this time, in 1971, that a movement to counter the loss of independence and identity, which Inuit were feeling but were unable to express in any meaningful way, was begun. James Arvaluk was part of this movement from the beginning, but the seeds of his involvement and commitment were sewn long before in his father's camp.

Like most men of his generation, Mathiesie Awa, James's father, was a resourceful, independent and self-confident person. There are glimpses of his character in James's account and they show him to have been a loving,

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indulgent and non-judgmental parent, a patient teacher and a captivating storyteller. His father gave to James a clear sense of pride in being Inuit and a belief in the equality of all people, and these characteristics are clearly guiding principles for James in his public life. James learned to hunt and to travel on the land with his father and shows as a child a doggedness and determination not to give up, qualities which he has retained into his adulthood. The freedom to explore and to express himself helped to form James's unceasing appetite for new knowledge and his ability to articulate his ideas with clarity and conviction. The ability to communicate well is a strong trait in the Awa family and is shared by a number of James's siblings. One of his brothers, Solomonie, is a gifted storyteller and *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (traditional knowledge) coordinator for the Nunavut Government while another, Simon, is a Deputy Minister in the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs. Two of James's sisters, Joanna and Salomie, are well known as reporters and newsreaders on CBC radio. James's mother, Appiah Awa, eloquently recounts her life story in *Saqiyuq: Stories from the Lives of Three Inuit Women*, edited by Nancy Wachowich, and published by McGill-Queens Press in 2001.

James learned from his father the importance of independence, clear thinking and belief in oneself. He also understood that in order to get things done one often has to take the initiative, and James showed from a young age that he was more than willing to take risks, even at great personal cost. As a small boy he was so eager to go hunting with his father, who wished to go alone, that James literally walked into the sea and out of his depth, forcing his father, who was in a *qajaq*, to haul him aboard and take James with him. When taken to the residential school in Igloolik by his father, James entered fully into the life of the school and the new learning environment, reading all he could and almost electrocuting himself in his curiosity about how the vacuum in the teacher's house

worked. Unlike the devastating experiences we have come to know that were suffered by many Inuit boys and girls in other residential schools, James was happy at school. “Life was very good. It was warm and cozy there,” he remarks, emphasizing the contrast between living in a *qarmaq* and living in the hostel. He enjoyed living in a warm and comfortable place, and the routines and discipline were congenial to his temperament. It was only later on that James came to realize how being away from his parents for extended periods had affected him, to the point where he felt he did not know how to be a parent. This feeling of parental inadequacy, expressed by a large number of Inuit who attended residential school, has had far-reaching consequences for Inuit society today in Nunavut.

It was while he was at school that James formed the idea that he would dedicate his life to achieving social justice for Inuit. He describes how a particular incident galvanized his resolve; although at the time he had no idea what form this determination would take. James recounts how he one day observed a Hudson’s Bay Company manager cheat a young man who had travelled on foot to the settlement from his father’s camp to get some cigarettes. The trader emptied the ends of his used cigarettes into an envelope and gave it to the young man. The sense of injustice and anger James felt then stayed with him all his life and could clearly be felt as he recounted the incident, reflecting, “That was a turning point in my life.” What strikes us about this story is the arrogance and abuse of power, as well as the sense of social superiority and indifference to the feelings of the young man and his father, exhibited by the trader. This small event contains all the elements which were to lead other Inuit, as well as James, to question and challenge the prevailing social order in which Inuit felt as if they were pawns in a game to be manipulated and moved about without regard to their own wishes, opinions or needs. The success James experienced in school in Igloodik prepared him for the next stage of his

formal education when he went to the Churchill Vocational Centre in Churchill, Manitoba. It is here that his desire to do something to make life better for Inuit was to take shape and eventually bear the fruit that would change the course of Inuit history and lead to the signing of the land claim and the establishment of Nunavut. It was also in Churchill that James met Tagak Curley.

The coincidence of James and Tagak being at Churchill at the same time had far reaching consequences for both of them but even more so for the future of Inuit generally. James tells us that he and Tagak talked about what could be done to end the colonial situation of Inuit and to create an environment in which Inuit culture, language, ideas and beliefs would be paramount. That they were young and idealistic did not deter them; indeed, as James says, it did not occur to them at the time. Here, James also met a young John Amagoalik and learned first hand of the relocations that were to consume so much of Amagoalik's energies and political directions. The story of the relocations proved to be a focus for Inuit feelings generally by providing a concrete example of government bungling, interference and seeming indifference to the welfare of Inuit. These stories and his many conversations with Tagak Curley only made James more determined to change a system that seemed to have forgotten the very people it was dedicated to serve.

But there was also the business of learning and schooling, and James enjoyed the intellectual freedom and challenge at Churchill. There, as James recalls, the teachers treated all pupils with respect, and James felt empowered and alive. James gives an insight into the social life of the school, which suggests that there were many happy times for him and for other students, too. Apparent throughout the interviews, is James's broad sense of humour, a quality that surely helped to bring him through difficult times. He recounts a story about food, which must have been a recurring topic. James asked Ben Kovic how he 'found' his

steak. Ben replied, "I just moved a couple of pieces of food over, and there it was." The verbal pun and the dichotomy between the relative size of the steak and the rest of the food on the plate are pleasant and amusing but the story also makes the larger point that the students are far from home and living in a different culture and lifestyle. All of this stiffened James's resolve to change the status quo, but still there were moments of doubt before the seemingly omnipotent southern machine. When James voiced his misgivings to Tagak about their inability to take on such an adversary, Tagak would hear none of it and told James to remove the word "but" from his vocabulary. Tagak's admonition was clearly efficacious.

James and Tagak went their separate ways for a while. James went to Swan River, Manitoba and from there to school at Algonquin College in Ottawa, while Tagak went to work for the territorial government. James enjoyed his studies and felt at this time the importance of learning English to prepare for the work ahead. He studied hard, skipping through the grades with prodigious speed, but he paid the price for long hours of concentrated study by developing an ulcer. James then returned to the North and worked at a number of different jobs.

James shows his decisiveness and a certain flair for the dramatic in an incident that happened when he was working at the community garage in Pond Inlet. While James was maneuvering a heavy and expensive piece of machinery, the non-Inuit foreman told him to be careful because the engine was 'worth more than your life.' At which point James promptly and deliberately dropped the machine on to the floor, declared that a machine could never be worth more than a human life and walked off the job. Allowing that a first language speaker would have understood the nuance of meaning in the offending phrase, what emerges in James's response is a clear indication that whatever the value of the present regime it would sooner

or later have to change and operate on terms known to and accepted by Inuit.

James was later recruited by CBC to work in radio, where his inherited talents for communication were able to flourish in a more congenial environment. This took him to Frobisher Bay (Iqaluit) for a month's training and then back to Churchill where he was stationed. It was here James met Peter Mansbridge and helped fill the Keewatin airways with music by the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Credence Clearwater Revival, albeit introduced in Inuktitut! He remembers with enthusiasm the launching of the first Anik satellite in November 1972 that linked Canada's north to the rest of the world and the sense of pride and accomplishment he felt as the voice of Elijah Menirak came across the airwaves, announcing in Inuktitut, "This is Elijah Menirak for CBC reporting [from] Cocoa Beach, Florida." And just as the outside world was beginning to learn more about the North, James was learning, through his on-going discussions with Tagak, more about what needed to be done to alleviate the sense of hopelessness and oppression felt by Inuit throughout the Arctic.

James worked at a number of different jobs; special assistant to the Baffin regional director teaching Inuit about hamlet status, and later as a trainer for potential ticket agents for Nordair, the forerunner to Canadian North airline. This restlessness and desire for change, which was a sign that James had not yet found his vocation, didn't last very long. On February 18, 1971 in Toronto, Tagak Curley (and others) had just founded Inuit Tapirisat of Canada and Tagak invited James to join them at a meeting in Pangnirtung. James replied without hesitation as follows, "Yes. That's my goal. That's my vision." Right away James's language and communication skills were put to good use as he tells us that he interpreted during the ten days of meetings, a tiring and prodigious task. However, this was the work James had been preparing himself for, and it didn't matter that he, "...didn't get paid for six months",

because he had found the forum by which his dream of social justice for Inuit could be fulfilled.

The meeting in Pangnirtung in August, 1971, was an eye-opener for James who says they “...heard things [we] never heard before”, about how Inuit were being treated. Above all, there was no mechanism by which Inuit concerns at the local or national level could be heard and dealt with in a meaningful way. The plight of Labrador Inuit was particularly noticeable as they were under provincial jurisdiction and lived in substandard housing. James tells us that the ideas of Pierre Trudeau about creating a ‘just society’ for all Canadians spoke to the Inuit desire to be part of that ideal. For the first time ever, Inuit from all over Canada gathered as one to share their stories and give expression to their desire for change. As James describes it, the Inuit were appalled to realize they were part of a colonial system, ‘an apartheid regime,’ even though, “Canada was by then part of the Commonwealth.” Reflecting on the importance of that founding meeting, James sums up the sense of marginalization and frustration felt by Inuit when he says, the government “...had no respect for aboriginal people...for their intelligence and capabilities. They thought of us as nomadic, savage people with a carefree attitude towards the future and towards government.” If that was indeed the attitude of government then it would very soon have to change, as Tagak Curley was elected the first President of ITC with a mandate to change the status quo and to return decision making about Inuit back into the hands of Inuit. James’s destiny was set.

James joined ITC in 1972, as Director of Communications and Coordinator of Land Claims. At the beginning funding was a big issue for ITC, but by the time James was elected President in Baker Lake in 1974, the process of staking out the land claim was well under way. James explains that, “We hired Milton Freeman to do a land use occupancy study”, to establish Inuit rights to the land. Field staff travelled to communities interviewing

hunters and filling in local details. At the same time as the essential work was being done at home, the Inuit realized they needed the support of the Canadian people at large, and so an information campaign was launched to put the Inuit case to, in James's words, 'ordinary Canadians.' James stresses two points; unlike First Nations people, Inuit had never signed any treaties with the United Kingdom or Canadian governments, and most importantly, Inuit had no quarrel with their southern fellow citizens. James describes how he travelled across Canada carrying the Inuit message. In one nine day period he went from "Halifax, to Montreal, to Thunder Bay, to Winnipeg, to Calgary," giving public speeches in Rotary Clubs, confident that when Canadians heard their story they would support the Inuit cause. The Inuit were aware that public opinion was an important tool in their negotiations with the federal government, and James points out that in their appeal the Inuit stressed that they, "...wanted to be treated equally, like other Canadians."

The endless meetings and discussions and travelling took their toll on many of the Inuit leadership. Travel was difficult, communication was poor, and the many absences from home were damaging to relationships when spouses were left alone for long periods of time. Alcohol was a 'potent' outlet, which in a telling phrase James says the Inuit leaders 'tried not to get into.' James points out that Tagak Curley resigned after serving one term because he was 'burned out.' James was forced into making a decision that ruined his marriage when his wife gave him an ultimatum over the telephone, "It's either ITC or me." But James knew that this was only the beginning and he had, "lots of work still to do for Inuit." And while the work was often exhausting and emotionally and personally damaging, the Inuit leaders knew they had to maintain a positive front for the media. James recalls how he felt angered by questions such as, "Why do you want land claims, anyway?" but he was acutely aware of the need to

“think positively” and “to respond accordingly.” The time James spent in working for CBC had obviously taught him something about the power of the media in shaping public opinion.

Apart from the brainstorming and endless discussion by the Inuit leadership to clarify and define their claim for themselves, they were also having to learn how to negotiate with a formidable adversary. As James succinctly puts it, “There were lots of government representatives, and we were few in number.” And the government representatives had every possible resource at their disposal, which James lists as, “advisors, ministers, deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, expert geologists, archeologists.” James describes something of the Inuit approach in negotiations that indicates a growing awareness and understanding of how to handle their more experienced opposites. He says, “We tried hard not to change our tactics”, and continued to use reports of public support as a bargaining tool. We feel the sense of growing Inuit confidence as James describes how he could tell whenever a government official “was telling the truth or lying.” There is a strong feeling of an elaborate guessing game in James’s description of negotiations with the Inuit in no way overawed or outplayed. Over time, both sets of negotiators came to know and understand each other.

One of the most pressing and important tasks for ITC under James’s leadership was to get the support of Inuit so that they could present a united front to the federal government. But James saw the good sense in sanctioning the split by the Inuvialuit when they decided to pursue their own land claim, because he felt the Inuit desire to create a new political entity might slow them down. Not all Inuit were in agreement with the ITC approach, and as James remembers it, they said, “You are going to lose too much.” Questions to be resolved concerned land ownership, mineral and mining rights, territorial and provisional status, wildlife and water management, and in

the background lurked the unresolved claims by various countries, including the United States, of sovereignty over the waters in the Arctic islands and specifically over the Northwest Passage. James argues that provincial status for Nunavut would help to strengthen Canada's claim in international law for jurisdiction over Arctic waters. The ITC proposal was rejected by the Inuit delegates at a meeting in Pond Inlet in 1974 because "...it was too rigid. There was no room for negotiation." The biggest stumbling block for most Inuit was the extinguishing of aboriginal rights, which James refers to as "a very touchy issue." After ten days of discussion, chaired by James, a new proposal was accepted and drafted for presentation to the Inuit population before being presented to the federal government. Exhausted and in need of a break, James decided to stay in Pond Inlet and visit with his father, thereby avoiding a close brush with near disaster when the plane carrying delegates to Frobisher Bay (Iqaluit) crashed in a snow storm a few miles short of the runway. Thankfully and miraculously no one was hurt, including John Amagoalik who was on the flight.

Although the whole business of defining, preparing and presenting a land claim was daunting and entirely new to the Inuit, there were some examples from which they could learn, and James indicates that they took advantage of them when appropriate. Among the agreements consulted, James mentions the Indian Act, the Home Rule Government in Greenland, the Northern Quebec (James Bay) Agreement and the Alaska Settlement Agreement. Inuit delegates also travelled to different parts of the world and attended conferences to meet with other aboriginals and to increase their knowledge and understanding of such agreements. James went to Point Barrow, Fairbanks and Anchorage, Alaska to find out how the Eskimos "included their traditional practices in their land claim," particularly bowhead whale harvesting and hunting rights. While in Alaska, James met some Australian Aborigines

who were likewise learning from the Alaskans. James sent two delegates, Tagak Curley and Jose Kusugak, to an international conference dedicated to aboriginal issues in La Havre, France. As James became more familiar with the struggles and successes of other peoples, the sense of isolation gave way to an understanding that Inuit were not alone, "...this was also happening in other countries." This increase in knowledge and understanding also provided access to another possible route for Inuit if the federal government refused to negotiate, the International Court in the Hague. However, such a step proved to be unnecessary, as the federal government became a willing, if tardy partner in the process.

When James stepped down in January, 1977, after two terms as President of ITC, his career as a public servant, though perhaps less frenetic, was certainly not over as he became involved in local and then regional politics. He worked as secretary-treasurer for the Pond Inlet Education Council in 1981, where his interest in the formal education system was fostered. The chairperson of the Pond Inlet Education Council was also chair of the Baffin Regional Education Council, which was then working towards divisional board status. James notes how, "...we started trying to develop some policies, to get some direction in the school." But James's background, experience and communication skills marked him as too valuable a resource to be confined to one community, and he was asked to help out the Baffin Inuit Regional Association (BRIA), the forerunner of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), which was, as James recalls, experiencing some leadership difficulties. James relocated to Iqaluit and worked for BRIA for two terms in the role of president. However, neither the education council in Pond Inlet, nor the president's position with BRIA, offered sufficient challenge to James and he decided to try his hand at territorial politics. Returning to Pond Inlet in 1984, James contested the seat for the riding of North Baffin, but lost to Titus Allooloo

because, “I didn’t promote myself enough.” Shortly after, James and his family moved to Coral Harbour where he worked in the adult education centre teaching Inuktitut. James enjoyed living in Coral Harbour, the hunting, the people and the polar bears. He says, “I moved to Coral Harbour for two weeks, and I ended up being there for thirteen years.”

James was soon involved in the work he likes best when he successfully contested the seat in the riding of Aivilik, representing the communities of Coral Harbour and Repulse Bay, in the 1991 territorial election. James set himself the task of working to get direct benefits for his home community, first turning down an offer to serve as a minister because he “wanted to serve the people of Coral Harbour.” James became involved in improving community facilities such as an arena with a curling rink, a dock and deepened harbour and a bridge across the river near the community. Public housing was also on James’s agenda and he says that the committee on which he served “...worked really hard to provide public housing for unemployed elders.” He was particularly concerned that elders were obliged to pay rent out of their small pension. James shows his skills in negotiating his way around the ‘backroom’ politics of the Legislative Assembly in Yellowknife. When John Todd, Minister of Finance representing the riding of Keewatin Central, wanted support for his idea to build a road between Whale Cove and Rankin Inlet, James tells us that he asked Todd, “What’s in it for me, for Coral Harbour?” James knew how to solicit votes from other assembly members for projects dear to him by pointing out the possible mutual benefits if they supported each other. He argued that if Coral Harbour got its dock and improved harbour facility then this would set a precedent for the other communities, which the territorial government could hardly ignore. Coral Harbour got its dock and deepened harbour as well as its bridge using local labour and contractors.

It was during his time as a member of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly that the vote to split the territory was taken and while this was a potentially tense and difficult time for all members, James remembers certain aspects with fondness. He recalls, "It was fun when Titus Allooloo lived there." Titus came from Pond Inlet, James's hometown and had beaten James in the territorial election of 1987. Together James and Titus went hunting for caribou and wolves on the weekends, a welcome break doing familiar things, which lessened the sense of dislocation both James and Titus felt. There weren't too many Inuit from the Eastern Arctic living in Yellowknife at that time and James was happy to have "a supply of country food" whenever other Inuit would visit. James recounts an occasion on which he "was so proud." Titus and James, together with Deputy Premier Goo Arlooktoo from Kimmirut, who represented the riding of South Baffin, travelled to Hay River where they killed a bull moose. James describes how the three Inuit skinned and butchered the moose without assistance or advice from anyone else. "We were able to do it," he says. The phrase James uses is significant in this particular context and in a more general way, too. The work of James and the other Inuit leaders in the inexorable march to the creation of Nunavut was predicated on the belief that Inuit were able; able to decide for themselves, able to take care of themselves, and able to use their skills in new ways to provide for the future.

James was also learning something about the Dene and their concerns. He notes that when not in session, members were obliged to visit the communities outside Yellowknife and he recalls visiting Fort Smith, Hay River, Fort Liard, Fort Simpson, Fort Norman and Deline. James had not been aware that there was a reservation in the Northwest Territories, neither did he know about the various treaties between the federal government and the Dene people. As he says, "This was all new to me."

James remembers how the Inuit and the Dene members in the assembly found common cause against their non-native colleagues. “Our attitude was that we were all aboriginals,” James notes, although they did not always see eye to eye on the land claim. The Dene took exception to the proposed boundary of the new territory, which they claimed encroached on traditional Dene land. But the prevailing tone of the relationship between Inuit and Dene leaders, as James remembers it, was one of mutual respect and support, “They were always supporting us, and we supported them.”

The various debates concerning division of the territory revolved around practical issues such as, what to do about “...the museum...the license plate, the territorial flag amongst others.” But there was much more at stake than symbols for both the Northwest Territories and for the new Nunavut as James remarks, “...there were government buildings in Yellowknife...worth millions of dollars [and] many jobs.” There was also the tricky question of how to divide the budget, which James comments “...couldn’t really be split in half.” The territorial government was neither willing nor able to finance the construction of new buildings for the Nunavut territory and reluctant to lose any of their existing assets. James shows his ability to recognize the validity of the other point of view when he notes that the NWT government was correct and should not have had to bear any financial burden because of the creation of Nunavut. He explains it like this, “It was our responsibility and the federal government’s... since we negotiated for the new territory.” However, before division could happen a decision on “all the liabilities, assets and deficits” had to be agreed on. At the same time, James points out that the Inuit did not feel that they had created debt for the NWT and, therefore, they were not willing to take on half of it and neither did they.

James was Minister of Education in both the NWT and the Nunavut governments and education is one topic

he is deeply interested in and concerned about. Often in these interviews one senses reluctance on James's part to describe his role in many of the important events in the story of Nunavut but whenever the subject of education is broached he gives full vent to his feelings and ideas. On the topic of preserving Inuit cultural knowledge, James feels both frustration and anger because so much has already been lost that he feels could have been gathered. He recalls discussions in the early 1970s with Inuit and others about establishing an Inuit university. James was a delegate, representing ITC, at a conference exploring the idea of setting up a University of Northern Canada (UNC), in 1972, which came to nothing. Listening to his father tell traditional stories gave James a sense of pride in his Inuit heritage but he bemoans the loss of such knowledge every time an elder passes away. If such an institution had been established at that time, James feels that much Inuit language and cultural knowledge might have been recorded and preserved for posterity.

James expresses real concern for the future of the children of Nunavut and he stresses that parents must be involved with their education. He remarks, "It is very important that parents and communities start making plans on how to involve our children...they cannot grow up all by themselves." And James adds, "That responsibility that was given to teachers by parents has to be taken back." Discipline, so important to the survival of Inuit in the past, is a quality that is still important today, and James urges parents to be proactive in teaching their children, for if they don't, the children will be like the polar bear cub left by its mother to fend for itself before it is mature. A bear such as this James explains, "...doesn't know how to be a polar bear." Over protective parents can also ruin children by not allowing teachers to discipline them even when they are behaving inappropriately. James feels that parents need to spend more time with their children actively doing things together rather than "...just leaving them to watch

television.” He particularly wants to see children being enabled in the “Inuktitut way to be ready to help, without having to be told to do something.” The involvement of parents with their children, both at home and at school has one overriding aim, which James states very clearly, “We are preparing them to be leaders, to be independent determined people...involved in molding Nunavut.”

Although he grew up in an environment which grounded him in Inuit culture, James is not sentimental about this and does not romanticize the life-style of his parents and grandparents. About growing up in a traditional camp, James says, “I wouldn’t recommend it. It’s too hard!” Inuit were subject to the vagaries of the weather and the animals and were constantly exposed to “physical suffering, psychological suffering and starvation.” This state of constant dependence on forces outside of their control placed Inuit in a position of subservience and deference to the elements. James says, “We were ruled by the weather, the land and the water. We begged for its kindness.” But this does not mean Inuit should forget about the past and look only to the present and the future; rather, by knowing how difficult life was, they could gain strength. It is this knowledge of the struggles of their ancestors, which will allow Inuit to thrive. James bluntly states it like this, “When we forget about that, we kill ourselves.” The appalling rates of suicide and family violence that are characteristic of society in Nunavut today bear chilling testimony to the truth of James’s words and point to the need for younger Inuit to become knowledgeable, confident and strong.

James has much to say on the role of the Nunavut government in giving Inuit the opportunities they need, not only to develop managerial skills but also to reflect the Inuit point of view in government. James points out some of the difficulties a deputy or assistant deputy minister from the south has in making decisions or recommendations when she or he has no local knowledge, nor the means to get it.

They are unfamiliar with the language and therefore cannot communicate on even the most minor matters. They do not know how small communities operate and so may only respond to questions and requests after unnecessary delay. James cites as an example the position in his hometown of Pond Inlet where the community has requested a new airstrip in anticipation of the mining development at a site southwest of Pond Inlet. The immediate government response was that if they gave Pond Inlet a new airstrip they would have to do the same for other communities. James feels the situation in Pond Inlet is particular to that community and "...if you talked about this with Inuit, they would understand right away where the problem is."

James is also critical of southerners coming to Nunavut and getting employment even before a position is advertised, a situation he says is "extremely common." To a question about the numbers of Newfoundlanders employed in Nunavut, James shows that his concerns about lack of employment for Inuit is not based on opposition to any particular group, but to the fact that Inuit need training. James admires the way Newfoundlanders integrate into the community and accept others as they are, "they don't discriminate." For James, "...the number one responsibility of the government [is] to qualify us through intensive training to work for the government."

In spite of all the difficulties faced by the new territory, James is optimistic about the future. He says, "I have no doubt things are going to get better." Evaluating past experiences in order to learn from them and to avoid mistakes in the future, as well as being able to make decisions for the kind of government they want and who will represent them, are the keys for Inuit success. James urges everyone to play their part and insists that individuals can and do make a difference, "It starts with one person." He encourages Inuit not to complicate things but to set their sights on helping out someone else to make things better. Waiting for the right moment or opportunity will

not bring success for James says, “If you wait for a perfect solution you won’t do anything.” At the heart of this need to be proactive in shaping the future of Nunavut, James articulates a commitment to community that reflects his upbringing in his father’s camp where everyone lived in mutual interdependence. He says, “If you do it for yourself, that is the first mistake...because everyone else will be left behind.” As always in these interviews, James returns to the question of education and his vision of the future is one with “good education” where Inuit language and culture is the basis of the curriculum.

The environment and future development are areas of concern for James and as ever, he is balanced and pragmatic in his views. As he says, “...there will be royalties for Inuit, but at what social and environmental cost?” The question for James is “...how do you shape that?” Particularly worrying to him are the effects of marine traffic on the sea mammals and he recounts a story of how while monitoring the calls of whales under the water with sound sensors, west of Pond Inlet, he could hear the noise of bullets from Inuit hunters hitting the water sixty miles away. James stresses that he is not against development, but it must be done in such a way “...so the damage to the environment is kept at a minimum, while still benefiting the community.” And in order to ensure that this happens James feels that Inuit, as in the case of mining development in the Pond Inlet area, must be prepared to “...totally participate in preparing for the Impact Review Board.” This idea of community participation and reassuming responsibility for one’s affairs is one James reiterates throughout these interviews and is the basis on which the idea of Nunavut is founded. It is also, the key to ensuring the future is good and positive for all Nunavummiut.

When asked, “How did you feel when the land claim was signed,” James replied, “...happiness and sadness mixed together.” This mingling of emotions that James felt combined a sense of accomplishment and an accompanying

feeling of loss, "...you wondered what you were going to do next." There was also sadness in the knowledge that many Inuit who had joined the arduous and drawn out struggle had died before seeing the land claim concluded. James understandably feels proud of the part he played, yet he shies away from claiming personal glory. He states, "I cannot say, "Look, I did this," and he readily and willingly acknowledges many of the other Inuit leaders. However, James reminds the reader that the making of Nunavut, which "...was just a dream when we first started talking about it," and culminated in the ecstatic celebrations of April 1, 1999, was really just the beginning: "We created more work rather than finishing the land claim."

Controversy has dogged James Arvaluk in his private life. But it is his public life of service to the cause of social justice for Inuit and the creation of Nunavut, which is the focus of the discussions in these pages and may hopefully be the main reason why he is remembered by the future generations of Inuit, who owe James and his fellow leaders a depth of gratitude that can only be repaid if they take up the call to build a better life for all Inuit in the new territory of Nunavut.

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## A Note on the Text

The text for this book derives from a series of interviews with James Arvaluk conducted at Nunavut Arctic College, Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada, in January, 2006, by students from the Language and Culture Program, together with their instructor Louis McComber. The format for the layout is therefore one of question and answer and I have tried to preserve the sense of spontaneity and immediacy one might expect from such an arrangement. This is in keeping with the underlying intent of the series as a whole, which seeks to capture the voices of Inuit as they recount the making of Nunavut without the intervention or mediation of others.

While I have edited out obvious repetitions and redundancies, I have allowed certain items to remain that another may have removed. For example, there is often discussion of dates about particular events that could have been silently edited out. I have chosen to include these for two reasons: they recall and reinforce the conversational nature of the original text and they express a particular characteristic of James, a certain impatience with details and a tendency to see things as a whole. Also, the original text has clear indicators where people laughed during the interviews and these I have removed. The attentive reader will have no difficulty seeing the broad humour that James so frequently brought to the sessions without the prompts and may also find humour in other places.

The notes to each chapter are intended to complement not contend with the text and therefore they offer succinct

and precise clarification and information on people mentioned and points of interest. I have been particularly careful to acknowledge Inuit referred to in the book, for a number of reasons. I wish to emphasize their individuality and avoid the too frequent practice of the past when Inuit were often anonymous or at best “an Inuk.” But more especially, I want Inuit who read this book to feel they are in a familiar and comfortable place, that this is their story, peopled by friends and relatives whom they know and for whom they care.



John Amagoalik, Tagak Curley, James Arvaluk and Sam Raddi.



Pierre Trudeau and James Arvaluk.



Members of Inuit Tapiriisat of Canada during the Atlantic Richfield meeting in Ausuittuq (Grise Fiord) Nunavut in August 1973. James Arvaluk is the one smoking a pipe.



From left, John Amagoalik, Tagak Curley and James Arvaluk.



**John Amagoalik and James Arvaluk.**



**James Arvaluk (far right), Eric Tagoona (centre) and Louis Pilakapsi (far left).**



**James Arvaluk in the Nunavut Legislature 2007.**

## Chapter 1

# A Turning Point in My Life

*Could you tell us where you were born?*

I was born at a place called Aukkannirjuaq, around Fury and Hecla Strait on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1948. It's around forty or fifty miles from Igloolik. It was in the early spring, when people were going hungry. The seal pups were too mature then, and there were no seals on the ice. People were short of seal fat and I was cranky most of the time. I was named Arvaarluk who was my mother's father. I was named after him. Apparently, he was a very fast runner. Of course, I was too young to remember when we lived there. I started remembering when we were in a spring camp close to that area. In the winter we were in Naujaat.

I remember when my brother Simon Awa was born in 1953. At that time I would follow my father when he went hunting. I was five years old. We would sleep over when we were out hunting. I remember when I was eight years old I learned how to make an *iglu*, and I also learned how to use a dogteam consisting of puppies. After I went out on a trip with them, they would come back and suckle from their mothers. I guess they were that young. Around that time, Hall Beach was being established.<sup>1</sup> They would throw out wood and we would take it and make cabins and boats. Boats were hand-made then. I recall when I was older, around nine years old, I was able to use a rifle and shoot. I couldn't lift the rifle because it was too heavy and

too long, so my father cut it to size for me, and I was able to go out seal hunting.

*So were you basically living in a qarmaq?*

Yes. I just recently went to see our old *qarmaq*. It was made out of stone. My father, Lucassie Ivalu and I made that *qarmaq*. Lucassie and I were seven at the time. I was a little bigger than him. We also used to go out hunting caribou before I went away to school. I think I was ten years old then. Around that time my father got chicken pox. We were out hunting. My father wanted Simon and I to walk back home. Our sister Martha was in between Simon and I. I think she was around seven at the time. After having slept outside for two days, while we were hunting caribou, we started walking back. It was really raining. When Simon and I were walking home alone, sometimes we would get lost. I was ten years old, not very big at the time. We got some ptarmigan and ate them. We planned to take the rest home. After a while Simon was crying because he said his load of ptarmigan was too heavy. We stopped to rest and eat. That was in the evening. We were going to sleep outside. It was no longer raining. We ate, and tried to find out where we were. When we got to the shoreline we spotted my mother's tent, although it was still very far away. It looked like an iceberg. We started walking towards it and had to go around a lake. We arrived at our destination after it had gotten dark. My father finally arrived a week later, and he was no longer ill.

That's when we left to go back to Igloolik. We would be there all summer and all fall. We travelled on a boat that was called the *Ikiuq*, going from Kapuiviit to Igloolik to Qikiqtaarjuk. While we were crossing, it became very windy and the water became very rough. My father had a motorboat. My father transferred my mother to Noah Piugaattuk's boat from Igloolik. Kopak's boat was taking in water from the waves. I think there were only three adults

bailing the water out. Ammaq, or someone whose name I can't recall, and I were alone in my father's home-made boat. The other people were in the other boats bailing water. We were also bailing water. Every time a wave came, all the water we were throwing out would come back in. We were using a pail. I fell asleep while doing that.

I was very cold and I couldn't get up when we landed on shore. They carried me in Ataguarjugusik's blanket, which was bedding made from caribou skins. I was put in that for three days. I almost got hypothermia. After three days, we got back to Igloodik. My father wanted me to attend school, so I did. That was in 1960, when I was eleven years old. I found out at that time about birthdays. When I turned eleven they sang 'Happy Birthday' to me. They built the school in 1960. The rest of my family went back home, and I went to residential school. The rest is history.<sup>2</sup>

The lifestyle I followed as a child was mostly going out hunting. We would hunt seals through seal holes. We also went walrus hunting. We would travel on very thin ice, moving ice, by dogteam. That's where the walruses would come up for air. One time when I was seven years old, there were three dogteams tied together. There were about thirty dogs. The dogs were all together and the ropes got tangled up. I was following my father on the dogteam. He was running ahead of me. When he jumped to the side, all these walruses came up at the spot where he had just been standing. When he harpooned a walrus he tied it to the sled, and grabbed a rifle, and shot it. At the time, we weren't thinking of the danger we might be in. I was too young then, I suppose.

We would go out caribou hunting for a whole month. We would be out walking. We would go way up, in winter time sleeping outside with dogteams. We would sleep at Iglurjuaq also. We would travel to the Nattilik Lake area from Igloodik by dogteam. Our families would get

concerned about us being gone for so long. We would be out for two weeks to a month at a time.

When I was attending school and learning English in Igloodik, I wasn't thinking about what I wanted to be when I grew up. Apparently, I was a fast learner. My teacher was originally from England. I learned how to speak English with an English accent. Bill Calder, Uitakallaq, was the Hudson's Bay Company manager. My teacher asked me to go to the store at four, after school. I would listen to him speak English. He could also speak Inuktitut.

Nutarariaq came in. Uitakallak could speak in Inuktitut. Nutarariaq said his father couldn't trap foxes anymore. He could no longer walk because he had polio. Because of that, Nutarariaq became the man of the house, and had to hunt for his family. I think he was only eleven or twelve at the time. His father had requested he buy tea, tobacco and sugar. He wanted to charge his purchases. The manager Bill Calder took an envelope. He emptied his ashtray and put his cigarette butts in the envelope and taped it. He put some loose tea in another envelope. Nutarariaq then left for home. He had to travel all day to get back to where they were living, with the envelopes he received. I was hurt inside.

I wanted to get more education. I thought once I had more education, I could back him up. I wanted to get the skills *qallunaat* had, or even more. At the time, I didn't think about land claims or trying to get our own government or anything like that. What I was striving for was to be able to help people like Nutarariaq charge things. That was a turning point in my life. I had a vision to correct some of the injustices done to us by the authorities, especially the Hudson's Bay Company.

I collected stories about how they used to trade. Muskets are very long. I was told, by the manager in Arctic Bay, that they would pile the fox pelts on top of each other until they reached the top of the rifle, and only then would the hunter be given the rifle.<sup>3</sup> I did some research later, and I found out that the rifles cost seven dollars and fifty

cents each. If you piled fox pelts to the top of a rifle there would be between fifty and a hundred pelts. They were sold at a very high price in England. I was glad I was able to recognize the injustice being done to Thomas Nutarariaq, the one who wanted to charge at the post, who was given only cigarette butts and a little tea. I still get choked up whenever I think about it.

I never dreamed I would start working on land claims or that we would get our own government and our own education system. At that time I just wanted to be better, to be in a position of authority, so I could charge some institution on behalf of Nutarariaq. I started reading a lot, whatever materials the school had, *Cowboy John* and everything else. I only went home in the summer. I stayed in the hostel. I would help my father in spring and summer, on school breaks.

*Was the hostel in Igloolik?*

Yes. The hostel was built in 1960, at the same time the school was built.

*Was this because most of the people were still living in camps?*

Yes, they were. There were two hostels; one for eight girls and one for eight boys. They were very close to each other. Life was very good. It was warm and cozy there. You got used to it. Going to school was a much easier lifestyle. I was able to do several grades a year, because of my maturity and my desire to learn. From there, I continued to learn more about the anthropological behaviors of the *qallunaat* and about their warring tribes. They always went to war; there was World War I and World War II. We had very small feuds, mostly out of revenge, but nothing over the land or due to politics. I did not really trust *qallunaat* because I knew they were capable of killing other human beings, like shooting them when they were at war. I tried

to be very careful about what I said and things like that. But I was still very interested in learning about them, and their technology.

I was using a vacuum cleaner in my teacher's house one time. She had gone to the school to do prep work. I wondered how the vacuum worked. Every time I plugged it in, it would turn on again, sucking the dirt from the rug and cleaning it. I couldn't figure that out. The plug-in had two holes in it. I took finishing nails and put them slowly in the holes. There were no breakers at the time, just fuses in the house. The sparks were flying everywhere! The lights went out all over my teacher's house. I was crying for a while. My teacher told me I could be curious and learn about things, but not to be too curious because it might hurt me!

I learned a few things about how the radio worked, about radio waves. I stayed four years in the hostel. I missed my parents a lot, but I had such a desire to learn, so I could be better than Bill Calder some day. That equalized my desire to be home with my parents and family. I still had a vision. I started asking questions of my teacher. I knew about the grade system. Every time I finished a course, I would go to the next grade. I wanted to know what grade I would end at. She said she didn't know, but she said, "At least grade ten." I learned later that the federal government had a policy not to teach Indians and Inuit beyond grade nine. Every time students at Chesterfield Inlet reached grade nine they were sent home. They weren't taught beyond grade nine. I never knew why. I read later that, "Eskimos would make good clerks if they stayed in school."<sup>4</sup> That's about it, nothing beyond being clerks or typists: of course, not in management.

*The only education we used to get was so we could do labour?*

Yes, it was aimed for labour. In fact, schools in the communities did not go beyond grade six. Only Chesterfield

Inlet and Churchill, and later on Iqaluit, went beyond grade six. Before I forget, we were talking about NTI (Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated) and ITK (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami) suing the government on behalf of students who went to residential school.<sup>5</sup> It so happens, when I was Minister of Education in the Northwest Territories, in my earlier days, I was the one who shut down all the residential schools. It was just coincidental. I thought it was a good move, but I didn't know the residential schools had had such a devastating effect on students at the time.

Right now, with the overcrowded housing, it is extremely difficult for high school students to study at home, because of the noise, and kids coming in and out. But I still would not recommend the residential schools, not today. Not in a free world, anyway. For some students it has had too many bad psychological effects. When you grew up you felt betrayed when you saw other young people who were with their parents being loved and hugged, fed and clothed. You learned to deal with it, but at the same time you felt you missed something in your childhood.

Some of us had to use books and other intellectual material to raise our children because we didn't know how to do it. We had to resort to our parents' stories about how to raise children; for example, how to discipline them, and make them go through what we went through. I guess that was proper parenting, but at the time I didn't buy it.

I know today that that builds strong character in a person. Since I adopted two children, I made them go through what I went through, being cold, being hungry, being wet. The hardships that I went through made them very appreciative of the natural environment. They want to go out hunting. They enjoy country food compared to other kids who don't do the same thing. They are learning math and language development in school. They are perfectly bilingual already.

You cannot just leave your children alone and hope they will grow up properly. You have to nurture them.

That is one thing I resent about being sent to residential school. It can lead to having legal problems, like I had several times, not because I wanted to. I myself have been angry about some missing links that I didn't have as a child, because I was in residential school. Damage was being done. The way to correct this is not to leave our children alone but to try to nurture them so they don't go through this process of alienation, of taking their Inuitness, to ensure that this will not be repeated. You can put an Inuk into a different environment, but you cannot take away his Inuitness. There were ups and downs.

My father's grandfather was George Cleveland.<sup>6</sup> We email our relatives down south, now that we know the history. My father had a lot of pride in being an Inuk. He didn't look exactly like other Inuit who weren't proud of being Inuit, who tried to lead a *qallunaat* life. People realized then that being an Inuk is also beautiful. That's what we are trying to get back through Inuit organizations, and the hamlets, and the education system. We were just about lost. We had lost our roots as Inuit. We also observed the Western Arctic and some of the Indian reservations. They had to actually research their own culture in order to get it back. We are not there yet. I hope we never will be.

What I learned as a child is that the missionaries tried their best, and in fact succeeded in Northern Quebec and South Baffin, to erase traditional music and religion, making their own religion our reality. We must not forget there is a difference between reality and belief. They are totally different. We need to differentiate in our daily life between what is real and what is thought of as real. The Christian leaders at that time made the Inuit believe that Christianity was real. Then people started abandoning everything. Today, we are trying to get back what was lost. We realized that belief is like any other religion in the world. It's not bad, but it is still a religion. Don't take away ours and make us adapt to yours. When you do that, you start losing your grip on other cultural values. You have

to hang on to those. You cannot chip away at the Inuit way of life until there is hardly anything left.

In my early life, I was angry at the system, and the disintegration of Inuit values, Inuit beliefs, of our Inuitness. Inuit didn't realize that these things were being eaten alive to be replaced by something that we didn't know. We cannot blame Inuit for not knowing where to go, because in 1960 we started creating a semi-artificial society. I was told by my father and mother, and I think that other parents said the same thing too, that you had to go to church so you could go to heaven when you die. We don't even know what heaven is. We don't know anybody who's been there, who has come back to tell us if it is real or not. You just believe. You make that belief turn into a real thing. I struggled with that until I was older and then, I realized I was wasting my time. I had more interesting things to do. I'll stick to earth.

*When you were a young child were there still legends and stories? Were there traditional practices that you witnessed?*

Yes. My father never stopped telling stories about myths and legends. Some are true and some aren't. They all have roots in actual events. Over several hundreds, several thousands of years of repeating these oral legends, people exaggerated and added to them and changed them. It's very surprising. The more you travel to Greenland and Alaska and other places, you realize the Kaugjagjuk story is the same right across the Arctic. I've never been to Russia. I had several opportunities, but I never went. Kiviuq is another old story. Apparently, it is supposed to originate from Back River, in the Gjoa Haven area, but it is known everywhere. There are slightly different versions, but it is still the same story. It would be a very good research project, to find out how old that story is.

My father told a whole lot of stories during my childhood. We used to make a deal with him. If we could find a grey hair on his head, he would tell us a story. He didn't have any at the time. We would pretend to find some so he would continue to tell stories. We pulled out regular hair and said they were grey.

The legends themselves are not interesting. You have to read between the lines. If you study them from an anthropological, an ethnic, an Eskimological point of view, then they become very interesting, extraordinarily interesting, because you start to feel the life they lived at the time, rather than now. It was awesome. Imagine four hundred years ago, at that time, how primitive things would have looked. Legends are like that. They must have been awesome at the time, but today they seem silly, mythical and unreal. If you study all the details around them, then they become interesting. Storytellers have a way of doing that to you as a child. If you don't hear a story until you grow up, then it is boring, because you don't have the whole meaning of it.

*The full understanding of it.*

Yes. The full understanding to appreciate it. It must have been really eerie. You could almost feel Takannaaluk's fingers being chopped off and dropping down to the bottom of the ocean where she started living among the sea mammals.<sup>7</sup> We would ask, "Who was that?" My father would say, "I told you that a month ago. You have to remember." It would be mind-building. All of that was part of the educational process of a child!

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**NOTES**

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1. Hall Beach was established as part of the Distant Early Warning (DEW Line) system in 1957. The DEW Line was intended to maintain and protect Canadian and American air space from attacks by enemy states, in particular the Soviet Union. Financed and built by the United States, their legacy is a string of polluted and unsightly dumps across the north.
2. A federal-run school was opened in Igloolik in 1962 with a hostel for twenty-four students. The school operated until 1970 when jurisdiction was transferred to the Government of the Northwest Territories. See, “*A Brief Report of the Federal Government of Canada’s Residential School System for Inuit*,” prepared by David King for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, Ottawa.
3. I have not been able to find any written record of the practice James describes here being used in the Eastern Arctic, although other Inuit have also mentioned it. Perhaps it metaphorically describes the strained relationship that sometimes existed between the traders and the Inuit.
4. I have not been able to find a source for this statement. What is certain is that it was virtually impossible for Inuit to pursue education beyond a very basic level in the 1950s and 1960s when schools were established across the North. High school education was not available in smaller communities until the late 1980s.
5. Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) is the legal representative of the Inuit of Nunavut. NTI is responsible for ensuring that the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* is implemented by the Government of Canada and the Government of Nunavut. Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) was founded in 1971 by a group of Inuit meeting in Toronto. Tagak Curley was the first Director. ITC became the Inuit voice for national and regional issues, focusing on land claims. From here the idea of Nunavut was born. The first land claim was presented to the federal government in February 1976 with little movement until 1980. The Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN) replaced ITC as the negotiating body for the land claim in 1982.
6. Captain George Grover Washington Cleveland (1871-1925) left Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, United States, around 1900 and lived among the Inuit of the Eastern Arctic for some twenty-five years. Cleveland was known to Inuit as Sakkuaqtirurniq, the harpooner, and is remembered by older Inuit from Cape Dorset, Coral Harbour and Igloolik. Peter Freuchen, who met Cleveland in 1922, called him ‘a great character.’ Cleveland is the biological grandfather to a number of Inuit in the Eastern Arctic.
7. The story of the girl who became the keeper of the sea creatures is a seminal one in Inuit mythology. She goes by different names,

Takannaaluk, Sedna, Nuliajuk etc. and is the nearest thing to a presiding deity in the Inuit spirit world.

## Chapter 2

### A Child Couldn't Be Left behind

I was told I was curious when I was a child. I remember wondering what it was like underneath a fingernail, because you can't see it. So, one day, I wanted to find out. I filed my younger brother Jake Awa's nail to see what was underneath. I filed his nail for a while, and then he started saying, "Ouch". When he touched his nail it was very soft, just as soft as his skin. But I still couldn't see underneath. Jake started crying so I called Simon over, and while he was holding Jake's wrist, I was filing his nail. He started bleeding a bit where I was filing it, and he was crying. My mother heard him crying, so she came over to scold us. She wanted to know what was happening, so Simon said I was filing Jake's nail to find out what was underneath. She said, "My! What a curious child." As she walked away further, we started to laugh.

People used to let their dogs run loose. My uncle Peter Awa's dogs had short tails. When we young boys were out playing, I asked Peter why his dogs didn't have long tails. He said, "So they will run faster." I had a dog that was so slow that the rope that was on him wouldn't even stretch. I tried cutting its tail so it would be faster. I couldn't find where the joints in the tail were, so I called Peter Awa over. He came. He was holding the dog by the neck while I was trying to cut off its tail. I was trying to find the joints, but it seemed impossible! I went back inside our *qarmaq*, and I

asked my mother, "How do you cut off a dog's tail?" She said, "You tie them. When the pups are just born you tie their tails with a rope, and then they drop off." So, I went out and I tied the tail of that dog with a whip. I waited all day for it to drop off, but when it finally got dark I gave up. I untied the dog's tail and forgot about it.

My father used to leave very early, around four o'clock in the morning, to go out hunting. The next morning he left while I was still sleeping. When he came back he had gotten a seal. While we were having cooked seal meat, he said that that dog had never wagged its tail all day. I must have cut off some of the nerves. In the springtime it finally fell off.

I remember something else as a child. Our tent was opened up because they were airing it out. When I woke up, I saw my father taking things out to his *qajaq*. He was going to go out seal hunting and he was trying not to let me know, because every time I moved, he had difficulty shooting the seal. I had been trying to follow my father for a while when he went out. I quickly tried to catch up with him, but he was already too far away from the shore. I only had a few toes touching the bottom, and the water was up to my neck as I tried to follow him. I guess he thought I was going to drown, so he came back for me. He grabbed me by my hair and put me on the *qajaq*, and I then went with him. We continued, but I wasn't wearing any parka and didn't notice that I was getting cold.

Whenever my father went to Igloolik, he would just go for the day. He would leave early in the morning and come back late at night. One time I asked my mother where my father was. She said he had already left. As soon as I put my clothes on I started to follow him, but my mother grabbed me. Of course, I was crying. When I found out I couldn't follow him, I started thinking of ways I could go. I stopped crying. We had a wood-burning stove. I told my mother I was going to go out and look for firewood. As I was behaving, she allowed me to go out and do this. I saw my father's tracks, and when nobody was watching,

I started following them. This was in the winter time. I followed his tracks all day and sometimes I would cry as I was running. When the sun was very high, I saw something dark. I caught up to him while he was making tea. He had been walking all day and had stopped for a break. Weird things happen, funny things: a young boy couldn't be left behind. That was something like a rule. If your father tried to leave you behind, you followed.

One time my father went to my grandfather's camp on foot because it was still fall. There was no ice yet. The only way to get to my grandfather's camp at that time was by walking. My grandfather and some other relatives had gone to Igloodik by sailboat. They stayed too long, and the ice formed in that area. They couldn't get back, so my father was looking after two camps, feeding their dogs and hunting for them. He spent hours at my grandfather's camp. Peter Awa was too small to do this at the time, I guess. My father would walk there, and the next day he would come back. I wanted to follow.

*Were you the oldest?*

Yes. My sister was the oldest, but I was the oldest boy.

*Where were you living?*

At Nuvuarjuruluk. It was in the summer. I followed, even though my mother had told me not to. I waited until my father was behind the hills and my mother was doing something else, and then I took off after him. He was on foot, so I knew I could catch him.

*Did your father find it funny? He hadn't wanted you to follow.*

He didn't mind, really. He didn't want me to follow because it would be extra work for him. He had to carry

me when I got tired, on top of the load he was carrying. He adored me, too, because I was named after his *saki*, my mother's father, his father-in-law, Arvaarluk. I waited until he had gone behind a hill so I could follow him. When I would see him, I would stop until he was behind another hill again. When he stopped to have a rest, I caught up to him. I was tired, too. He carried me for a little while, but because the snow was just forming, it was pretty slippery on the rocks. This was in the fall. He took the meat out of the dog's pouches, they have carrying pouches, and he put me there. I was going along okay on that dog until some ptarmigan came by and the dog took off. I eventually fell off. I think I was the first Eskimo cowboy at that time!

I remember my first seal and my first caribou. I had this rifle I told you about. I was already older, maybe seven. I had been going out hunting with my father for several years already. It was spring time, and we were seal hunting. He told me that if I shot a seal I had to hook it right away before it sank. I said, "Okay. Good instructions." Finally, a seal came and I shot it, and I threw my rifle down. I grabbed the hook, and I hooked it. I was supposed to go all the way down and hook it, and I did. It was still alive. I was trying to pull it in for a long, long time. He sent the dogteam over because he thought I was going to lose it. He was still at his seal hole. The dogs came, and they bit the seal on its flippers and pulled it out right away! I had been holding onto it for a long, long time. When he was cutting the seal up, we made tea and were going to cook some. I had shot it in the lip a little bit. It was so fat. I was able to hook it before it sank.

There were no caribou around Igloodik at the time. It was that same afternoon. We were going to camp for the night. My father took out his telescope. He used to have a long brass telescope. He went up on the hill and looked through it. He came back and said, "There are tracks in the snow on the other side of the fiord." There was a snow bank there, and there were tracks, but he didn't know what

had made them. He made me look through the telescope. They looked like polar bear tracks, two of them. So, we went over. They were big and I couldn't tell what they were. My father said they were caribou tracks. When the sun is shining it melts the snow, and it makes the tracks look really big. We decided to walk up. We walked and walked all night. We'd look through the scope and walk, and look through the scope and walk. We only had one ptarmigan to eat. I fell asleep a couple of times. He carried me for a little while. Then I'd awaken rested and we'd keep going.

My father saw the caribou. He told me to look through the big scope on the rifle. I couldn't find the caribou. He even made a pile of small rocks to make the gun steady. I looked through the scope again, and I said, "I can't see the caribou." My father said, "It looks like a little stick that moves a bit once in a while." Then I saw it. It looked like a little stick behind the hill. The caribou moved a little bit. It was lying down. We had another five hours of walking. So we walked and walked again. Eventually my father said, "It was around here." We were going up a hill, and my father suddenly pushed me down by my head. Instead of him going down, he pushed me down instead. Then he got down. The caribou were right behind the hill. There were two of them. We crawled up, and one of them stood up and my father shot it. He shot it purposely in the kidneys. When you shoot a caribou in the kidneys it doesn't move. It doesn't move at all. It looks like it hasn't even been shot. After a while, it just lies down and dies.

The other caribou didn't even notice what had happened. My father asked me to shoot it. It was the first time I was going to shoot with a 30.30 long rifle. It was a high-powered rifle. I aimed. The gun was very long. The butt is like this, but at that time, it seemed very long. I shot and I missed the caribou. My father said, "You missed it. You shot high." He told me to shoot again. I said, "I don't want to shoot again. It really hurts!" My

father asked, "Are you a girl?" At that time men were male chauvinistic pigs, not towards women, but towards men who were not manly, even at that age. He said, "Are you a girl?" And I said, "Of course not." I had no choice then if I didn't want to be called that. I grabbed his mitten and used it for a cushion. I really learned about the recoil that time. It really goes up. I nicked the caribou on the back of the neck, near the shoulder. When you nick a caribou on the back near the shoulder it goes down really fast, but then, after a few seconds, it gets back up and takes off. My father said, "You hit it! You hit it!" and he took off running, without his rifle. When he got there, the caribou got up. My father jumped on it, grabbed the antlers and twisted the head. By the time I got there, the caribou was dead. My first caribou was a bull. We went back to get the dogteam. We brought the dogs in order to load up the meat, and then we travelled back down. It turned out to be almost two days without us really having a proper sleep. When we got back to the camp, we pitched the tent. My father said that I could eat as much marrow as I wanted. It was in the spring. The spring is when the marrow is the biggest and richest. I ate almost all the marrow in one caribou leg. After about half an hour, I started getting sick. My father told me, "Don't drink water!" I was thirsty. He said, "Don't drink water because the fat is going to set in your stomach." Caribou fat is not like seal fat. It gets hard when it is frozen. I wasn't supposed to drink tea or water or anything. I was suffering. I just rolled around, and I guess I eventually fell asleep.

When we got home my mother said, "Gee, why are you singing so much?" My father said, "We got two caribou." She started dancing and jumping in the air. Ever since then, I remember my mother doing that. Since then, every time we would get caribou, right up to her death a few years ago, she would do that. I don't remember any other major events. When I shot with the 30.30, I was already going to school.

One time I shot a bearded seal in the head. It was on a pan of ice. Apparently, you are not supposed to shoot them in the head, because it makes them roll around like crazy. I shot the bearded seal in the head and it started rolling around, so I jumped from the boat and grabbed it by the flippers. That was a mistake! I started rolling around with it. It was squeezing my face right into the ice. I wouldn't let go, because I thought the seal was going to fall off the ice into the water and sink, so I had to hang on to it. Of course, when you shoot them in the head they *anaaq*, they defecate. That was not a pretty sight! You wanted to hear about the boss system.

*Yes, very much so. You could start with Awa.*

My father Awa was named after his father Ujarak. His biological father was George Cleveland. My father's mother was Inukpaujaq from Coral Harbour. My grandfather's father was named Awa. He was a shaman. He was also the camp leader for that Igloodik area. My grandfather Ujarak taught one of Knud Rasmussen's companions.<sup>1</sup> He was a young man then. Before, when they had camp leaders over large areas of land, they had feuds and fought over them. Nowadays, we have elections. The person who gets a majority of votes in the election wins. At that time, they didn't have elections like we have today. They had meetings and they would choose people. They would decide who was a good thinker: they wanted someone who thought deeply. The people would listen to whoever was the best hunter. Then the person chosen would accept. Ittuksarjuat was able to tell people what should be done. Noah Piugaattuk was also a leader in Igloodik. That's how it was. People would listen to the camp leaders, even the elders, whether they were elderly women or elderly men.

Elisapee Ootoova told me that Gemaili Kilukishak went to an elders' meeting once, and said you were only seen as an elder when other elders recognized you as one.<sup>2</sup> It was

when you were around age forty. It was based on a person's wisdom and their knowledge. That was an interesting lesson I learned: being an elder didn't relate to a person's age. It had nothing to do with it. Elisapee Ootoova told me you had to earn your title as an elder. It wasn't because you reached a certain age. Some old people would never have been elders. Some people became elders at a younger age, at around forty, when they earned the title through the respect of their peers, from the community. That was a good lesson for me. Becoming an elder at that time was based on the consent of the people. A person couldn't demand to be a camp boss or an area boss; they were chosen. When they recognized they were holding that position, they in turn accepted it, and started ordering people around. As I said before, it was like a dictatorship, not really a dictatorship, but actually understanding the needs of the people, and what needed to be done in the area.

Counselling was also important at the time. Counselling then was really, really different than counselling today. We had a problem in Pond Inlet. I'm going to use that as an example. There was a problem in this marriage. The husband was accusing his wife of adultery. A family member got scared and told an elder in town about it. The elder said, "Bring all your family, including the ones who are having the problem here for lunch tomorrow." I was there. We got into a big, big circle and there was caribou meat in the middle. Of course, we were pretty serious. The minister made a blessing over the food. The elder who was supposed to be counselling broke out laughing. He was laughing hysterically, really loud and for a long time. We started laughing, too, even though we didn't know what was funny. He finally stopped laughing and turned around to the husband and said, "Do you think your wife's genitals are going to disappear?" The husband said, "No." The elder then said, "So what is the problem?"

Counselling is done differently in English. In Inuktitut, it is very short and very blunt, and very effective. Really,

what the elder was asking the husband was, what was the big deal? It's her life. He had his life, too. He said not to make a big deal out of it, otherwise other things would become a problem. That type of counselling was effective for people who wanted to accept what was being presented. Sometimes we can talk for hours about how sorry we are, to the other person. That's why we have two ears; it goes in one ear and out the other. I used to say I had two ears; one for English and one for Inuktitut, but it doesn't work that way.

The elders have gained so much experience in a short period of time. I'm fifty-seven now. It took me a long, long time learning about what has taken place in my life. Those elders at the time, they chose people out of respect and recognition to be leaders in the community. This was in a very short time, in the span of twenty or twenty-five years.

Awa said, "There are no guarantees in life." In Knud Rasmussen's writings Awa asks, "Why are children crying? Why are women sad? Why are people angry? Why are people hungry? Why are the dogs hungry?" To make this three or four page thing very short, then Awa says, "Because of fear."<sup>3</sup> Fear is what stops you from achieving what you need to achieve. You are afraid of blizzards. You are afraid of polar bears. You are afraid the ice floe might take you to Greenland. You are scared. That is why you are failing. Fear causes failure. What does that mean to me, to you, to individual people? You cannot say to everybody, but individually what does that mean to me? It means to me, if I fear too much, if I don't venture out, that I will be poor. I will be poor spiritually, I will be poor emotionally, I will be poor in everything that would have been otherwise had I ventured out and tried.

Why should you be afraid of polar bears? They are slow. Awa said things like that. I mean, being able to run at thirty miles an hour is not slow. I couldn't do it. But the bears must have been slow, because human beings

were catching them on foot while they were running away. The hunters were running ahead of the dogteam when the dogteam was galloping after the polar bear. If a storm came and I was fearful, then I would panic. That is not good emotionally, and in turn, it is not good for me physically. I might succumb to it because of fear. That in itself is worthy of study, what fear means when it is in context.

*Did you have an E number?*

Yes. E5-635. We didn't like them. We started talking about them as being similar to an RCMP dog tag. Not long after 'Project Surname' was completed by Abe Okpik, we began to challenge the government.<sup>4</sup> Abe Okpik was working for the federal government, I think, at the time. My certificate came back with James Awa on it. I thought, "Gee, what about my real name, the one my mother gave me, Arvaarluk?" So, I sent in my fifty bucks and got my name back. Now, I have a fifty dollar name!

*Why did you want to keep that name?*

Because I didn't want the name Arvaarluk to die when I died. I didn't know there was also an Arvaarluk in Hall Beach. Other people have Arvaarluk as a middle name; Michael Kusugak is one of them, and Naglingniq from Repulse Bay. I wanted to keep it as a last name so it could continue with my son etc, etc. I know Awa will continue through my brothers. Otherwise, I was E5-635.

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**NOTES**

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1. Knud Johan Victor Rasmussen (1879-1933), was born in Jakobshavn, Greenland to a Danish father and Inuit mother. From their base in Thule, northern Greenland, established in 1910, Rasmussen and his companions completed nine expeditions mapping the coasts and describing the culture of the Inuit. The most famous expedition, known as 'The Fifth Thule Expedition' (1921-24) took four years to complete. Rasmussen and a team of scientists crossed the Arctic from Greenland to Alaska describing the language, customs, beliefs and life styles of the various Inuit groups. It was during this epic journey that Rasmussen met the shaman Awa.
2. Elisapee Ootoova was awarded the Order of Canada in 2005 for her services to Inuit culture and language. Elisapee is the author of two books on Inuit cultural practices, with John Torngak and other elders from Pond Inlet, as well as much curriculum material for the Department of Education, of the Nunavut government. She was also one of the authors in the *Interviewing Elders Series* Volume 1 *Introduction*, and Volume 5, *Traditional Health Practices*, published by Nunavut Arctic College. She is best known to Inuit for her Inuktitut dictionary in the North Baffin dialect. Elisapee lives in Pond Inlet.
3. See Appendix A for the full text of the conversation between Awa and Rasmussen.
4. Before 1968, individual Inuit at birth were given an identification number, which was printed on a disc and could be worn around the neck. Inuit born East of Gjoa Haven were given a number beginning with E. Those born west of Gjoa Haven had a number beginning with W. At the request of Stuart Hodgson, Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, Abraham (Abe) Okpik travelled throughout the North from 1968 to 1970 asking Inuit how they wished their names to be recorded. For a first-hand account of 'Project Surname,' see Volume One in this series, by Abe Okpik. *We Call it Survival: The Life Story of Abraham Okpik*: or Alia, 1994.



## Chapter 3

### **Ben, How Did You Find Your Steak?**

*Was your great grandfather a leader?*

Yes he was a leader, a camp boss, a boss in the region, and a shaman at the same time. It was part of the religious beliefs that the shamans had super powers. He was a healer. Some other shamans were killers or sorcerers. There were different kinds of shamans. Shamans didn't have shamanistic powers for everything because they weren't God, but they had special powers. His area of expertise was that he was a healer. I think it was more a psychological approach to illness. That was his specialty. He was able to read human beings' minds very well, and their feelings.

*Did you learn more about him through Rasmussen or through your family?*

I read about him in Rasmussen first, and then started talking to my grandfather when he was still alive. Okay, this is the problem. It is not new and it is not old. After Christianity was introduced my grandfather especially, I'm still mad at him about it, he stopped telling us anything about history that had any cultural significance. He mostly talked about his experiences when Knud Rasmussen was around. He was one of the young guides when they went out caribou hunting. He didn't speak too much about his own father. He would say he was a powerful shaman, but he

didn't really want to talk about it, because of this Christian taboo. My grandmother, who is still alive today, did not want him to talk about that, about Knud Rasmussen and Awa and all that stuff. Because of this, we have very little information.

*Does she still live in Igloolik?*

Yes.

*What is her name?*

Hannah Ujarak, Panipakoocho. You know that Indian guy in that commercial for 'Lakota,' my grandmother looks just like him. I didn't really realize it until she told me about it. She said, "That person looks like me!"

*Your great grandfather himself converted to Christianity after 1920.*

Yes.

*Did he stop practising?*

Yes. He completely stopped practising shamanism altogether. They had a new-found religion.

*Earlier, you said that Ataguttaaluk and Ittuksarjuat were also related to you.<sup>1</sup>*

Yes, Lucie Ukaliannuk and Serapio Ittuksarjuat used to talk to me about them, but that was way too long ago for me to remember what the relationships were. People were all inter-related. We had a culturally rich population in the Igloolik and Naujaat area. It was very rich. There was never really much space between Igloolik and Repulse Bay. When you travel between these two places there are old houses all along the way like a big city! Every couple of miles you'll see one. It was all connected, all along that

coast, all the way up Lyon Inlet, all the way to Aggu, to Arctic Bay, around to Pond Inlet. You can actually go on day trips in between them. You can almost circumnavigate the Baffin area. That's where the camps were, even in my time, and also in the Inngniqtuurmiut area.

*In your childhood you said that your family was Anglican. When did this happen? Your grandfather, when he converted, did he become an Anglican?*

I don't know. He couldn't have been Anglican, because the Anglican Church arrived very late, except in Pond Inlet. The only stores were in Arctic Bay and Repulse Bay. There were no stores in Pond Inlet or Igloolik.

*When you were a child were there any RCMP officers around Igloolik?*

No. The RCMP came in very late, too. They were stationed in Pond Inlet. All the RCMP stayed in Pond Inlet. They were very busy in the High Arctic.

*Were you aware of when the Anglicans came up, or was this before your time?*

I was aware of that. There was no Anglican missionary until around 1958, I think. No, it was 1956.<sup>2</sup> I have no idea how we became Anglican. I have no clue. I think it had to do with where you were when the conversion took place. We might have been in Pond Inlet or Arctic Bay. Most people are Anglican in Pond Inlet and Arctic Bay. I think my great grandfather was a Roman Catholic. He had to have been, because he was in the Maluksiqtaq area, the Lyon Inlet area, around Naujaat. Naujaat is traditionally Roman Catholic. I didn't pay attention to religion very much. I didn't like it, because it separated us from our friends and relatives. In Igloolik, most of my relatives were Roman Catholic.

*When you were a child, was there an Anglican church then?*

Yes. The Anglicans came and the school came a year after.

*A federal school?*

Yes, a federal school. That's where we went to school.

*Did your family go to Igloolik to attend services, to go to church?*

No. They didn't bother with that. They had their own service, with my grandfather Ujarak.

*They held their own services?*

Yes, in their own camp. All the camps did that.

*With a lay person?*

Yes. With a lay person. The Roman Catholics did that, too, in their own camps, with a lay person.

*Were you aware of the High Arctic exiles from Inukjuak?*

At that time, no.<sup>3</sup>

*You were saying in the Amitturmiut region there weren't many RCMP members, and that they were concentrated in the High Arctic area.*

Yes. They were trying to establish sovereignty on the Arctic islands. That's why you have Kayaks and Panipakoochos there. A whole lot of people from Pond Inlet went up to the High Arctic to guide the RCMP, and to help them pee when their hands got too cold. Grown ups! It must have been gross. But anyway, the Inuit did

that. They babysat the RCMP and helped them survive. I only learned about the exiles when I went to school in Churchill, when I met John Amagoalik.<sup>4</sup>

*Did he mention it first?*

Yes. He mentioned it first. His parents and grandparents were homesick for Northern Quebec. They had to eat big animals in the High Arctic, like seals and walrus and that type of thing, when they were used to eating smaller game like ptarmigan. They missed ptarmigan and rabbits and fish. Why they were in Resolute Bay, I don't know. There are only seals there. No caribou, no ptarmigan. There is just gravel, nothing but gravel. Grise Fiord was a better place; at least there were some Perry Caribou there. They were placed there because the RCMP wanted them to establish Canadian sovereignty on the islands, in this dispute between Denmark, the United States and Canada.

*When did your family move to Igloolik? Were you with them?*

No. That was after I moved to Churchill. They moved to Igloolik for a little while, and then they moved to Pond Inlet. We were never really raised in Igloolik. I think the longest time I ever lived in Igloolik was for four years, at the time I was going to school. But I am from the Igloolik region, my background is from the Igloolik area, Igloolik, Arctic Bay, and Naujaat.

*I wanted to also ask you about the dog slaughter. Were you aware of it?*

It didn't happen in Igloolik. I only heard about it for the first time in Chesterfield Inlet, quite a few years ago. One of the RCMP officer's children was attacked, and they reported it to Ottawa. Ottawa ordered the killing of the dogs. But that was not written. They did that mostly

in Northern Quebec, South Baffin and Repulse Bay. It didn't happen in Igloolik, maybe because there was no RCMP presence. When I was growing up a lot of dogs were loose in town, but the dogs all slept near their own houses. If you lived there, that's where they would sleep, outside your house. Other dogs wouldn't go near there, or they would get killed.

*Before you left for Igloolik, were snowmobiles starting to be introduced in your camp?*

Yes. When we had our camp, they were being sold through the Hudson's Bay Company. Bombardier started that.

*At the beginning of the sixties?*

Maybe in 1962. They had fuel tanks right at the front. In the metal part of the body there was a fuel tank. The condensation would build up and the gas wouldn't be able to go through to the carburetor. That happened to my father one time. He lit the stove underneath the fuel tank to thaw it. I guess he thawed it a little too much! It caught on fire.

*Were they the ones with the motor in the back?*

No. They weren't selling those up there, but they were down here. I think Father Fournier may have had one.<sup>5</sup>

*Paul talked about that.<sup>6</sup> He called Father Fournier's machine a Husky. He said the engine was pulling the qamutiik.*

Oh yes. I remember that. Father Fournier had that one. He wanted to demonstrate it for potential Co-op customers. It had a little ski seat. I even drove that one. It looked like a snowplow. You had a seat in the skis. You were actually on the skis. You could turn the whole thing.

Pacome Qulaut used to drive it. It was Father Fournier's, but he used to drive it around. He and Iyerak built that stone church in Igloodik. They only used dogteams then.

*Could you tell us about the building of the Co-op, and the building of the church?*

I think Father Fournier was instrumental in helping Inuit to have their own store, their own economic development, their own economy. The Co-op was owned by the Inuit themselves. I think there was also rivalry at the same time, because the Hudson's Bay Company was owned by England, which had the Anglican Church. I think Prince Rupert was a major shareholder of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670.<sup>7</sup> Father Fournier's idea was to challenge that, not just from the Roman Catholic side, but also from the people's side, so they could have their own economic development, or at least their own economic base. Inuit could get a better deal for their fox pelts and sealskins and keep the money in town. At the same time, rather than importing materials to build the church, Father Fournier and his helpers had a vision to use local materials so that the church belonged to the people in town, and people wouldn't be alienated by the use of foreign materials. It was quite a vision. Of course, the Inuit adapted to it right away, because they were used to sharing things amongst themselves as a social group. This cooperative system just fit perfectly right in, as a sharing organization. Everyone just had to chip in ten bucks.

*Did everyone have to chip in ten dollars to become a member?*

Yes, to become a member, a shareholder. I am the president of the local Co-op in Pond Inlet. It is the biggest Co-op in Nunavut. Last year, we gave out almost half a million dollars to our members. It has a hundred and eight

employees. It has grown from humble beginnings to a big business now.

*I think there are close to nine hundred members now.*

Yes. Almost every person in town is a member of the Co-op today.

*You should build a new hotel in Pond Inlet.*

We are going to. We are renovating the hotel now, putting on a new addition with twenty beds. After that, we are in the planning stages to build a brand-new hotel with our own money.

*I won't go back to Pond Inlet until there is a new hotel.*

I know. It's an old hotel now. Holy smokes! It's a really old hotel now.

*Was Churchill an interesting period in your life?*

Churchill was very interesting for me. We started going to school in Churchill after they converted the old army base into a residential school. We cleaned up the old buildings and the old garage. There were people working in metal, carpentry and drafting. Mechanics was also being taught, half-days. The other half of the day academics were taught. We would be woken up at six-thirty or seven in the morning. We'd clean up and then go for breakfast. Then we'd do more clean up, and go to classes at nine. We'd be there until three-thirty. We would have a little free time, and then we'd go for supper. We'd have homework after supper until eight. We'd have an hour and a half to two hours of homework. It was okay, but we got sick of the food. We didn't like to eat it because it wasn't country food, and it was over-cooked at times. We had a cook who used to work at an army camp. Today, there are still some

people who can't eat fish, especially white fish because of that. There were big pork hocks, too!

We used to have a newspaper. As a student council we tried to come up with jokes. On Sundays we used to get minute steaks, the ones that are hammered down and are paper-thin. I said, "Ben, how did you find your steak?" He said, "I just moved a couple of pieces of food over and there it was!" He said his steak was really small, rather than delicious or good.

We couldn't call home because there were no telephones. There were no scheduled flights to our communities, so we never got letters from our parents all year round when we were there. We used to get an allowance, two dollars every two weeks. We would get twenty-five cents deducted off for haircuts, so we would have a dollar and seventy-five cents left over, which had to last us for the next two weeks. We all had to dress the same. We weren't allowed to use our own clothes. We used to call our shoes elephant shoes because they were huge. They were rounded. We had to wear school uniforms, but we would wear coveralls in the shops.

The teachers treated us very well, as did the supervisors. They were monitored by the Canadian government. We had to attend that vocational school for three years. The ones who were there in 1964, '65 and '66 were the first ones to graduate. Those that wanted to go to high school started coming in from Chesterfield Inlet, Pond Inlet and Iqaluit. They were put directly into high school. Those who were not as ready, who came from communities with no schools, were put into the trade school where they took shop half a day and academics the other half. Because I was able to write, when we put the newspaper together, they taught me how to type using a typewriter. All my other classmates were female. They often teased me. I noticed my little finger had no strength at all on the typewriter.

At the end of the school year, instead of going home, Ben Kovic and I were chosen to go to a farm in Swan River,

Manitoba. We made one dollar a day, or thirty-one dollars a month, working on the farm. We got back before we graduated. It was good. At the time we were allowed to have girlfriends. This was just before we were sent back home. We were scared to go for late walks with our girlfriends, because they were not allowed to go out after a certain time. They lived in the dormitory upstairs. They would tie up sheets and with our help they would climb down and sneak out. On one occasion, after two of the students had sneaked out, and the third one was on her way down, the supervisor caught us. The third one was trying to climb down and the rest of us ran away. I can still picture that girl on the sheets trying to climb out. At that time we were allowed to go for walks, as long as it wasn't late.

Once, while we were out walking, a really good friend, Paul Meeko, had also gone out for a walk with two younger guys. They were attacked by a polar bear. Paul was trying to keep the bear from the two younger ones when it attacked, so he ended up being killed, cut in half. It was a very unhappy time. We didn't know how to tell the parents, or even if anyone had told them anything at all; we were confused. I don't remember anything about the funeral or if he was sent back to Sanikiluaq.

The first time we went to school from Igloodik we went on a Canso. The plane landed in Igloodik on the water. Then we flew to Chesterfield Inlet. After we got off the plane, we went to the residential school. There was a big lake close by, and we went ptarmigan hunting. If we got any, the nuns would clean them and cook them. After leaving there, we went to Churchill.

I remember the second time we went to Pond Inlet. My parents had moved there then. I was one of the people working in the garage there. There was a generator for electricity. We couldn't move that generator. There was this old *qallunaaq* mechanic who said to me, "Don't drop that engine. It's worth more than your life." That kind of upset me, so I told Maktar to move over a little bit. I was at the

top. He moved away. The mechanic was watching. I said, "Nothing is worth more than my life." I kicked it over and it fell upside down. I told the mechanic, "Don't say that a stupid engine is worth more than my life." Then I quit.

When we took off again to go back to Churchill, we flew from Pond Inlet to Hall Beach. At that time they were doing exploration work at Mary River. The plane was a twin-otter and there was only one pilot, so I was sitting in the co-pilot's seat. There was Maaki Aooloo and Jayko Aooloo in the back. On our way to Hall Beach I had fallen asleep. The pilot woke me up and pointed to my feet. So I sat upright. Jonas Aooloo later told me that we had been flying around Hall Beach for a long time. While I was sleeping, I stepped on a pedal or something, and the pilot was wondering why we couldn't land. He didn't know I had my foot on that pedal until later.

When I lived in Churchill I started to play hockey and basketball. I played more in the second year. There were high school students from Edinburgh who were a lot taller than us. The saddest thing about being there was not being able to hear from your parents or from home. After being there for some time, I went back to Igloolik. I worked there for a while, and then I heard there was a job opening at CBC in Churchill. Whit Fraser and Jonah Kelly were my instructors here in this building. That's where they had the CBC station at that time. They taught me for a whole month. When it was quitting time, I would go downtown to visit Henry Evaluardjuk with Jacopie Ikipiriar, and then we would run back up here. It was quite a distance, but we used to run back and forth.

When I got to Churchill, I started work. You could hear that radio station in the Keewatin region, in Rankin Inlet, Arviat and Whale Cove. I would speak Inuktitut. I remember I played the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, and Creedence Clearwater Revival. I was there for about two months. Sheldon O'Connor had come as the instructor. After he left, when he got to Ottawa, he was asked who the

guy was with the very good voice. Apparently, it was Peter Mansbridge.<sup>8</sup> He had been the Transair ticket agent prior to that time. I worked with him for about a year at CBC in Churchill. When Peter left to go to Toronto, I quit to further my education in Ottawa. We were only able to stay in Churchill for three years, so I went down to Algonquin College, in Ottawa for upgrading. There was Sheila Watt, me, and her late sister Bridget Watt. I believe Annie Watt was there, too.<sup>9</sup> We were the only Inuit at Algonquin College out of about six hundred students.

I was able to read English at the time. I had been reading a lot, so they put me in grade eight. I did grade eight, nine, ten, and eleven in eight months. I would read the materials that were given to me, and then I'd complete them. Then I would be transferred to another grade. I think at the time I said that Inuit would be graduating from university when schools were established in all the communities, because I thought English was so easy then. Apparently, that was not going to happen.

I recall being taught by my father. It was so difficult. When I started taking courses and was schooled in English it seemed so easy, and you were always in a warm place. Apparently, we weren't supposed to get too educated, or take too much all at once. I was going to do my grade twelve test and I started getting pains in my stomach area and was asked to go see a doctor. I had ulcers. If you study too much that's what can happen. I would wake up at six in the morning and study in my room until we would go to school. I would go until four and then study until suppertime. After supper I would study until around midnight or one in the morning, until I got tired, and then I went to sleep. You can't keep doing that. I ended up with a stomach ulcer. I was burnt out. They told me to stop, so I did. I came back to Iqaluit, and I stayed here.

Once I was okay, I started working again. I was special assistant to the regional director. At the time they wanted me to teach people about hamlet status. There were area

administrators before hamlet councils were established. This was in 1970. After a year, I worked for an airline called Nordair on a contract for nine months. I would go to Qikiqtarjuaq, Clyde River, Pond Inlet, and Igloolik, and teach potential ticket agents. Before I completed that, I asked Tagak Curley where he was working, and he told me he had just started Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.<sup>10</sup> He said he wanted me to go to a meeting about that in Pangnirtung, and I accepted. I said, "Yes. That's my goal. That's my vision." I didn't get paid for six months after I started working for ITC. When we finally got money from the government, we were given forty thousand dollars for office space, utilities and salaries. We had a staff of four. That money was supposed to last us for a whole year.

When we first started at ITC we didn't get paid at first. We were living at the YMCA in Ottawa at the time, and my wife was pregnant, too. Before that, I had worked for the government. I had saved some money, and I used it to live on. We could not call home because there were no telephones then. When ITC started, we had a meeting in Pangnirtung, where we received some money. I was the interpreter. I really developed feelings for interpreters because I was an interpreter for ten days in Pangnirtung. I was the only Inuk interpreter and it was tiring. Sometimes I was speaking English when someone spoke that and Inuktitut when they spoke in Inuktitut! After Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau established Heritage Canada, and appointed Hugh Faulkner as the Minister of the Secretary of State, we were able to get funding. Judd Buchanan had been the minister previously. I'm skipping quite a few details because we are getting into a new area.

*Maybe we could go back to Churchill. You were working for CBC then, but there was no satellite. Where was this broadcast from?*

It was a regular AM strength broadcast to Rankin Inlet, Whale Cove and Arviat. Most of it was shipped to Elijah

Menarik<sup>11</sup> in Montreal to broadcast it through shortwave elsewhere as a pre-taped program.

*Then it could be received in all communities?*

By those with shortwave radios.

*That was just a piece of their Montreal broadcast?*

Yes.

*With Annie Padlo?*

With Elijah Menarik.

*Was it in Churchill you met Tagak Curley?*

I met him when I was going to school there.

*When did this political vision form?*

Shortly afterwards, when I was a broadcaster, we started talking about the need to develop our own identity. We needed to get our lives back. We needed to get our land back. We needed to get our destiny back from the government. I told Tagak, "Yes, but first we need to get an education equal to those we will be fighting against." Tagak said, "If we are going to get somewhere, we cannot use the word 'but'." I haven't used that word since. If there is a 'but', there is an excuse. A long time ago I remember my father asked me something. He said, "How are we going to fix this?" and I replied, "Aamai." He said, "Aamai means I don't know. That means you have given up already." Apparently, 'aamai' and 'but' have the same meaning internally.

*When you say you were starting to discuss things, did you mean you and Tagak?*

Tagak and I, mostly.

*Did the students in Churchill talk about this?*

Not really. They were given a dream to be well-educated and to work with the government.

NOTES

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1. Ataguttaaluk is famous for having eaten human flesh in a time of starvation. Father Guy-Mary Rousselière acknowledged Ataguttaaluk as his teacher. Ittuksarjuat was a respected camp leader among the Iglulingmiut.
2. The first Anglican mission opened in Igloodik in 1959.
3. In 1953 Inuit were relocated by the federal government from Inukjuak, Quebec to Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord in the High Arctic. These Inuit became known as the 'High Arctic Exiles' and their plight caught the attention of the Canadian public when a royal commission was set up to examine the circumstances of their removal from Quebec. Many other Inuit groups were relocated during the 1940s, 50s and 60s. A comprehensive account of such relocations can be found in *Tammarniit (Mistakes)*: Tester and Kulchyski, 1994.
4. John Amagoalik, affectionately known as the 'Father of Nunavut,' is one of the most influential and outstanding Inuit leaders of his generation. Born near Inukjuak in Northern Quebec, Amagoalik was relocated with his family to Resolute Bay in the High Arctic in 1953. Amagoalik went to the local federal day school in Resolute and then to Churchill and Frobisher Bay. He worked for the territorial government for three years from 1971 to 1974 but he soon became involved in the movement to create an Inuit homeland. Amagoalik served on many boards and commissions throughout his long career; the Nunavut Land Claims Commission, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, the Inuit Committee on National Issues, the Nunavut Constitutional Forum, Tungavik Federation of Nunavut. Amagoalik was appointed chief commissioner of the Nunavut Implementation Commission in 1993, overseeing the setting up of the new Nunavut Territory on April 1, 1999. John Amagoalik lives in Iqaluit, Nunavut. Readers wishing to know more about John Amagoalik's life and his part in the making of Nunavut should consult Volume 2 in this series, *Life Stories of Northern Leaders*.
5. An Oblate missionary, Father Louis Fournier worked and ministered at Igloodik from 1953 to 1978. In 1973 he set up a camp at Ikpik, two hundred and fifty kilometres east of Igloodik where he lived, sometimes alone, on and off for five years.
6. The Paul referred to is Paul Aarulaaq Quassa who served two terms as President of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI). Quassa was born at Maniituaq, north of Igloodik, Nunavut. He has had a varied career as a journalist on television and radio and as chief Land Claims Negotiator from 1985 to 1993. Paul Quassa, who presently lives in Igloodik, Nunavut, is the subject of volume 4 in this series, *Life Stories of Northern Leaders*.
7. King Charles II of England (1660-1685) granted a monopoly to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670 to trade in furs. Charles appointed

his cousin Prince Rupert as governor of the company, which had jurisdiction over an area of land encompassing most of western and northern Canada.

8. Peter Mansbridge went on to become a reporter with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), a news-reader and finally chief correspondent and news anchor. Mansbridge's face and voice are well known across Canada and in the North.
9. Sheila Watt-Cloutier is well known internationally for her work on social and environmental issues affecting Inuit. Born in Kuujjuaq, Nunavik in 1953, Sheila learned traditional ways before attending formal schooling in Nova Scotia, Churchill, Manitoba and Montreal. Sheila was involved in health and education work in Nunavik before becoming active in regional and then international politics. She was Corporate Secretary for Makivik Corporation (1995 to 1998) and elected President of Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), where she served two terms. In 2002 Sheila was elected International Chair of ICC, which she held until 2006. In December 2005, Sheila launched the world's first international legal action on climate change against the United States alleging pollution from the U.S.A. is destroying Inuit livelihoods and therefore their culture. Sheila is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Order of Canada. In February 2007, the Canadian national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, reported that Sheila had been nominated for the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. Sheila Watt-Cloutier presently lives in Iqaluit, Nunavut.
10. Inuit Tapirisat of Canada changed its name to Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami in 2001.
11. Eliyah Menarik was the popular host of CBC's *Isumavut* program, and was a pioneer in broadcasting in Inuktitut.



## Chapter 4

### **They Were Completely an Inuit Invention**

*Could you tell us how many siblings there were in your family?*

I don't know how to count that high! I think there are ten of us; five brothers and five sisters.

*Who are they?*

The oldest one is Oopah Qaunaq, in Grise Fiord. I'm the second oldest. The next one is Martha Awa, who lives in Ottawa. The next one is Simon Awa, who lives here. The next one is Jake Awa, who lives in Pond Inlet. Then there is Rhoda Katsak from Pond Inlet and Joanna Awa who lives in Iqaluit, and Salomie who is also here. And then there is Phillip who goes to school here. He is taking the Environmental Technology Program. We adopted one, Nery, who lives in Pond Inlet.

*What about Ida Awa?*

Ida! I knew I was going to forget somebody. Ida is the youngest in the family.

*Were there other people living in that camp? How many people were there all together?*

Yes. Not that many, because many of my siblings were not born yet. I think there were around forty; my

grandparents, their children and three of their in-laws. There were about five families.

*All relatives?*

Yes, relatives and in-laws. There were around five families. My grandfather's name was Johanasie Ujarak. He was Awa's son, my great grandfather's son, the one that Isuma Productions is making a film about. My grandmother is Hannah Panipakoocho. She is still alive. She had a whole lot of daughters. Four of them have passed away. There were Peter Awa, my uncle, and Lucassie Ivalu, my father's brother. There were also Kiksigaq, Kalirraq and his wife Regalee, and Mablick. Mablick was my grandfather's brother-in-law. They were married to sisters. My grandfather's wife and Mablick's wife were sisters. Mablick was Josiah Inooya's uncle. He is also the half-brother of Charlie Panigoniak. They have an inland Padlei connection. In fact, their grandmother spoke the Paallirmiut dialect.<sup>1</sup> She was very good at making rabbit stew. I remember that. She was very good at making fire outside in the summer time out of almost anything, heather and twigs and everything else. I think those were the people who were there consistently.

*Can you try and speak Inuktitut more?*

Yes. If somebody asks me a question in English, I tend to answer in English. If somebody asks me in Inuktitut, I tend to answer in Inuktitut.

*Do you have a picture of the camp?*

I don't know. Maybe the Inummariit Society might have some.<sup>2</sup> I myself don't have any. We didn't have any cameras at that time.

*So, there were a lot of qajait at the time, and some motorboats?*

No. We had whaling boats, *umiat* with sails.

*Made from walrus skin?*

No. We had a whaling boat. They were selling them in Arctic Bay, and my father bought one. My father was very good at making things. I remember he got a short wave radio for a Christmas present. It was broken, but he took it apart. He found out there was something wrong with the tuning button. There was a metal piece inside, and it needed to touch something else when you were tuning the radio. He made the part that was broken out of a metal baking powder can, and I think it was my sister's hair band that he put underneath. We were able to listen to radio stations from Greenland and the United States of America. My mother even picked up the Greenlandic dialect and was able to understand it. Around that time we also got a record player, the kind you cranked, a gramophone. It was second-hand. It was seventy-eight speed. Ike Haulli and I had it. It needed a needle to play the music. In 1953, he found an old chimney at a dump. He made it into a funnel and made a speaker. My mother and his wife were sisters. She had a record. We listened to it; it contained some informational items from the government. Apparently, a patient had to stay inside all the time if they had tuberculosis.

Isidore Ijituuq gave my father a small three-horse power motor in exchange for a .22 rifle. The engine didn't work. He worked on it all spring. He smeared the cylinder with lard, and he found out the piston needed pressure in order to work. Coleman stoves have something in them that is brass. He took that apart and filed it down. He made a ring out of it, and he put it on the piston. We used that engine on our boat for the next three years, but if we wanted to go backwards he had to turn it around! It was

strong. My father got lots of whales right after he finished working on the engine. He had a rifle in one hand, and in the other he was holding the engine by the shaft and running down to the boat! He used to repair all kinds of things that we didn't know about at the time, but that we learned about later on.

*You said you were a curious person. Were you able to make small things, too, like your father?*

Yes. I used to watch my father all the time when he was making something. Inuit used to make *nikpaqtit*, which were contraptions made from the combination of a crossbow and a rifle.<sup>3</sup> A long metal rod, would activate the trigger of the gun, releasing a bullet which would kill a seal when it came up to the blow hole. The seal would then be pierced by a harpoon. A piece of wood holding the shelter up would then collapse, and the seal would be there when a person arrived to check it. I watched my father make one.

They were completely an Inuit invention. They modified rifles for use at the seal holes. When the seal pushed on a rod, it would knock on the trigger and the rifle would fire. Narwhals were harpooned with something made out of brass and parts of a fox trap.

*It was made from a gun?*

It was made from a gun, but the other parts were made out of ivory. Parts of a fox trap were placed on the top for a spring to pull the trigger.

*I've seen that being used at a seal hole. They built a little iglu around, and it had a rod going down.*

When the rifle was knocked over, it meant they got a seal. That used to be fun.

*I'm curious about what you know about Cleveland.*

He was the ugliest man I've ever seen!

*You saw him?*

No, I've seen him in a picture; we've been emailing, the Vincent family and our family. He was from somewhere in the Boston or the New England area. The whaling crew got him drunk and shanghaied him onto the ship. By the time he woke up, he was already sailing to Repulse Bay. He became a member of the whaling crew. That's why they called him Sakkuaqtirurniq, the one who became a harpooner. When they were returning with their catch in the fall, he stayed behind, and the Inuit adopted him. When the Hudson's Bay Company post opened, he became the manager there.

*Was it close to Chesterfield Inlet?*

I think it was between Lyon Inlet, Naujaat and Wager Bay. He travelled everywhere after that. He has children here, a daughter here in Iqaluit, maybe not from here, from Kimmirut.

*He had many Inuit children. So are you related then, to Armand Tagoona.*

Yes. He's a blood relative. My father and Armand Tagoona grew up together in Lyon Inlet.<sup>4</sup> They grew up at the same time there.

*What kinds of games did you play as a child?*

We played with seal bones and pretended they were a dogteam. We would use a shoulder blade for the *qamutiik*. If our fathers made toy *qamutiit*, we would play with them, and the dogs were made out of seal bones. We would have play dog fighting when the ropes were tangled. We used

some ptarmigan bones as caribou. The breastbones are shaped like caribou that look like they are trying to eat. We also had bows and arrows, and crossbows if our fathers or somebody else made them for us. We would have little contests; Lucassie Ivalu and I did, anyway. We also had toy whips. When we were around six or seven years old, we also pretended to make *igluit*. That's how we played. We also played *amaruujaq* and also *anauligaaq*. I was too little then. We also practised how to make harnesses for our puppies. When you were teaching dogs to pull, some of them were already capable of doing that. Because we had toy sleds, *qamutinnguat*, we would go sliding. We also used our *qamutinnguat* to get ice blocks. We never used to sit idle; we had lots to do. Sometimes, if we were allowed, we would use one or two of our father's dogs and go for dogteam rides, or we would go pick up ice. It used to be fun.

*Did you have any pets other than dogs?*

No, we never adopted animals, especially in Repulse Bay and Naujaat. Inuit sometimes adopted Arctic terns as chicks, but a lot of times they were stepped on while they were sleeping. Eider ducks and geese were not very good pets because they didn't live long. People had *kiggaviarjuit*, *naujait*, gyrfalcons and owls as pets. Whenever my father went for a walk, it was easy to tell if he was coming back. If you spotted his pet owl, it meant our father was coming back, too. Sometimes in the winter the owl would get as dark as a raven, even though it was supposed to be white. Maybe it was from the soot of the *qulliq*. But, early in the morning, it would bite you, maybe because it wanted you to feed it. That used to be bothersome when you were sleeping. Even though you pushed it away, it would come back and do the same thing.

We weren't allowed to adopt any wildlife that we ate, such as seals or fish. We couldn't have those as pets. Only animals that we didn't eat could be pets, like lemmings. Any

bird we had as a pet would get used to the dogs. Some dogs ended up biting them, because they landed on the dogs while they were sleeping, and the dogs, after being surprised like that, would automatically try to bite them. We were able to eat young seagulls because they ate fat and caught fish. The way we caught them was by putting fat under a piece of wood and tying it to a string. If a seagull swallowed the fat, it would get stuck in their throat. Then we pulled it in. We would hunt ptarmigan and rabbits by throwing stones or rocks at them. There was not enough ammunition to use on them. In the spring, when we were able to go seal hunting at the *agluit*, we only used harpoons, instead of rifles. That's how Inuit used to catch seals. They had to wait a long time, and keep the dogs quiet, and sometimes they fell asleep while waiting for the seals.

*Can you tell us about the first time you killed a walrus?*

I don't remember. We weren't taught how to catch bigger animals. It was only after I had already attended school that I caught my first walrus. Bearded seals and ring seals were the ones we were taught to harvest. It was only when we got bigger, around ten or eleven years old, that we were allowed to shoot walruses. They were not like other marine mammals, as they would roll down into the water. I recall being able to shoot at walruses.

*You aren't supposed to knock them out like bearded seals?*

No. If you shoot them in the neck it doesn't usually kill them, because there is a lot of fat around the neck area. Sometimes, if you shoot them in the head they might take off, and not die right away.

*Have you ever shot a walrus that was the leader of the pack?*

I don't know. I can't recall. I was allowed to shoot them only when I was older. I used to follow most of the

time as a young boy and take care of the dogteams. It was only when I got bigger I participated in walrus hunts. I don't recall killing the leader of a pack. I forget the word walrus are called when they are on their own and they are darker in colour. When you are trying to harvest them, you know they are very dangerous. Inuit didn't go after those. Our ancestors would only go after them if there weren't enough walrus around. Later, Inuit only went after those lone walrus when they had outboard motors. Hunters usually do not go after walrus that are on their own unless they are in a boat. The walrus tend to try and go on top of the boat or puncture it. They float with only their rear showing. Those ones are scary; they are dangerous.

Also, the ones that are called *avinnaarjuut*, polar bears that have prematurely left their mothers, are dangerous. They don't seem to know what is going on. Once that type of bear attacked me, and I was touching its nose with the point of my rifle. It was still approaching. I wanted to shoot it but my dog came around and started barking at it. I sort of hit it on the nose. That's what finally stopped it coming towards me.

There were some noises at our camp, just outside our tent one time. Something was making noise. It was annoying me, so I grabbed a rock inside our tent and opened our window flap. There was a polar bear outside, so I didn't bother throwing the rock at it. The bigger ones will usually run away. It is only the ones that are hungry that are dangerous. They are confused because they are hungry. Smaller polar bears are usually hungry. They tend to approach you because they are not sure what to do. When they are hungry, also, they are not scared of anything. The person who adopted a child, Moses Aliyak, was mauled by polar bears twice, by an *avinnaarjuk* and another one with cubs. You have to be cautious about what kind of bear you are dealing with; you have to observe how it acts and what kinds of movements it makes. If you see them alone and observe them, you will see the differences.

If they aren't hungry and you aren't teasing them, they won't do anything to you.

*In the winter time when you were going to go fishing, how did you make holes in the ice?*

I grew up after Inuit already had ice picks. There were hardly any fish in the fall. There were no ice holes but we made ice holes when the ice was still thin in an area where the fish were spawning, in October or November. They called it Iqqaq. When the fish dropped the eggs into the sac we would make ice holes underneath. My father would fish using a spear. The land-locked fish that were looking for females, fish that were really red, would be speared. A lot of the fish we caught, we got through a hole in the ice. We would build an *iglu* around the fishing hole and we would be able to fish inside.

We also didn't take along a lot of food supplies when we went out hunting. It was only when we caught animals and fish that we would eat. If we didn't kill caribou or seals, we didn't go back to camp. It was only after we caught something we would finally go back home. We would overnight in areas until we caught something. That's when we would go hungry. I stated earlier that my father could do a lot of things. He would make a hole in the ice, and then we would fish and drink tea at the same time inside our *iglu*. Usually, we would be able to eat, and feed our dogs fish the following morning. You tended to have a lot of water splashing around when you had a fishing hole inside your *iglu*.

*Did you use stars as guides?*

Yes. Stars were helpful as guides. You can't depend on the moon to find out where you are because it moves. You couldn't use it as a marker if you were trying to get to a certain destination. But different stars, I forget their names, can be used to help you navigate. The three stars

set in a group of three and the star that is known because it never moves in spring, the North Star, can be used. People depended on it during the spring, but not in mid winter. You can't get lost unless it's cloudy.

In Pond Inlet and in the Amitturmiut and the Keewatin areas the snowdrifts tend to face one direction. Whether it was foggy or stormy, Inuit would use the snowdrifts as navigational aids to know in what direction to go. If you were on a dogteam you could use your foot to feel the snowdrifts to know what direction you should travel in, even if you couldn't see in front of you. I used the stars to get home one time.

*Were you taught about anything you could use as medications?*

As children we were not taught about that very much. One time I fell when Timut Qamukkaq and I were trying to go after a bird. Later on, I went back to where I had fallen. There was a crack at that place I had tried to jump across. I remember falling down. I hit headfirst. There was a scar here when I was younger, but it has apparently moved up. That was where I got it, when I knocked myself out. They carried me back to the tent. Later on, they told me I was unconscious for three days. They were able to see my brain, and my skull had fractured. It didn't really break, but it had fractured. There is a part between your brain and your skull. My grandmother chewed on bearded seal fat until all the fat was gone, and she was left with only the fibres. She put it where the fracture was. My father sewed it, and put a band-aid over it. When it stopped bleeding, I remember I had a bad headache. That's what she used to help heal me.

*Did you have a marriage arranged for you?*

No. I did not have an arranged marriage. They were no longer practising that. When I grew up only a very few were being promised to someone, without their knowledge.

*Were you also advised not to do certain things?*

Yes. There were certain things we weren't allowed to do. We weren't allowed to talk back to or argue with anyone older than we were. When we were told to do something, we weren't allowed to hesitate or refuse. We weren't allowed to use any utensils like knives or *ulu*it when we were eating cooked meat. We had to use our teeth. We weren't allowed to hurt females or make trouble for them, but we could do that with boys. Especially our sisters; we were supposed to be good to them all the time. Sometimes when they teased you, you retaliated or hit them if no one was watching. In those days, our father was okay with this. Our grandparents were the ones telling us what not to do. One thing I really didn't enjoy was being woken up, and, even if I didn't feel hungry, I had no choice but to eat. One day I said to myself, "I'll never eat in the morning when I grow up."

*Did you also have to travel by dogteam to the Hudson's Bay Company store?*

Yes. That's what they called *qallunajjiaqtuq*, going to buy supplies. Children weren't usually allowed to go along, because they would just make the load heavier. They were not going out hunting; they were just picking up supplies. It was one of those trips I had followed my father on, when he had left without my knowledge. He was going to pick up supplies from Igloolik; he wasn't going out hunting. I had followed him, and I wasn't properly dressed. We used to stay at George Cleveland's daughter's place. She was my father's aunt. My father bought my aunt material to make me a parka. I wore the parka on our way back home. When they were going out hunting in the early spring and in the springtime, they only allowed us to come along if we were going to be useful. Young boys could be useful carrying meat when they went to a meat cache. The smaller pieces were the ones us young boys would carry to the boat. The

bigger pieces were carried by adults. They even made us hunting bags so we were able to carry caribou meat. When you carried a heavy load, you tended to fall if the thing you were using to carry the meat was not put on properly. A lot of times you had to carry heavy loads. Because they were heavy, we used to rest. Then we would eat part of what we were carrying. That was good, because it meant your load would be lighter afterwards.

*You said there were things that you were told. What was the thing you recall most?*

I remember being told, if I was going to travel alone, to make sure I had proper clothing to take along. I was told not to start sweating. If you sweat, when it gets colder in the evening, you can get hypothermia. If the weather turned bad, and the dogs knew they were on their way home, I was told not to do too much to them, because they would know how to get home. I think I was around seven when I first started travelling by dogteam. My lead dog was the mother of the rest of my team. I travelled to my grandparents, from where we were living in Nuvuarjuruluk to my grandfather's camp in Kingulik. You had to travel two or three hours in order to get there. I started going home after Christmas one time. It started snowing and it was becoming stormy. I couldn't see anything. I knew the Qikiqtaarjuk area was way down there. I knew there was a floe edge. I noticed that my dogs started to turn in that direction, and I was getting scared. I tried to get them to turn towards my destination. I got very hot. I took my coat off and tied it to the *qamutiik*. I thought that once the dogs got tired, they would be easier to handle. I lay down on my *qamutiik* and rested. I just let the dogs go, even though I knew they were going in the wrong direction. I thought that once they were less tired, I would try to turn them towards our camp. Before I knew it, we were climbing up a hill. They were going in the right direction on their own,

to our land, and I tried to get the dogs to go the opposite direction! Later on, I was told not to interfere with them too much, because they knew their way home.

*So you would travel alone?*

Yes. I was able to travel on my own at the age of seven. We would go behind Iglurjuat for around a month, hunting caribou. I would travel with my father when we went that far, but I was allowed to travel on my own to places that were closer. I also found out then that it is very difficult to kill a fox. I had traps not too far away. I don't know exactly what my father said, but he told me to give my dogs a rest, because I had been going out with them every day. So, I went out on foot to check my traps. I had caught a fox that was still alive and very active. I put my foot on it and stood on it. When I thought it was dead, I let go, and then the fox opened its mouth and started breathing again. I think I was too light. I put my foot on it again, and before it started breathing I buried it under some rocks. Then I sat on top of the rocks for a while. It was only after the fox stopped moving that I removed the rocks. I used to take along a stick so I would be able to open the trap. I used the stick to keep the trap door open, after I had opened the trap. I removed the rocks I had put on the fox, and, as it wasn't moving anymore, I threw it over my shoulder and took it home. My father told me later that once a fox stops breathing, you have to twist its neck to ensure it is dead. Even if you step on them they don't die.

*Were there still any taboos around that you had to observe, things you couldn't do? You mentioned not playing with animals you eat.*

That's right. You could not have animals you used for food as pets. You could not place Arctic char in a non-spawning lake, for example, a lake that had no river.

Another taboo was not to shoot a caribou in the head. I don't know why. It looks ugly if you shoot it in the head. We were never to torture an animal. We were told to kill an animal as quickly as possible whenever we could. Even if you harpooned an animal, as soon as you harpooned it, you had to kill it as quickly as possible. With caribou, if you missed your shot and you injured it, you had to go after it until you killed it. You couldn't go after any other caribou until you got that one. Rules like that, at the time, were common sense. Traditional taboos had already been abandoned.

*In the Netsilik series, you see people giving water to the seal.*

That was no longer being practised.

*Were there certain areas of the land you were not allowed to go to?*

I don't remember that. I've only heard not to go to places where there are spirits. There is this area called Avvajja. It was an old camp. They had a little church there, too, before Igloolik was established. Avvajja and Igloolik Point were the main camps. In Igloolik they called it Ikpiarjuk. There were no people there. I only knew of that land where they weren't allowed to go. I don't know why. When people became Christians, they didn't talk about Inuit traditions very much anymore. Unfortunately, that was the case. That is the reason why we don't know a lot of things like why a woman, when she started menstruating, had to stay in an *iglu* without going out.

NOTES

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1. The Paallirmiut are originally from the area in the Keewatin between Arviat and Whale Cove. They hunted and lived along the coast and inland around the trading post at Padlei.
2. The Inummariit Society was founded in 1972 by the Catholic priest and a group of Igloolik elders with the purpose of preserving Inuit traditions. They constructed a building to house a museum, published a magazine and began recording oral histories and stories. In 1980 another organization called the Inullariit group was formed to maintain and foster Inuit cultural traditions. Both groups support the Annual Language Week festival in January, which coincides with Qaggiq, the celebration of the return of the sun.
3. *Nikpaqtit* described here by James is the subject of an article by Fr. Guy Mary-Rousseliere and Atagutsiaq that was published in the Oblate magazine *Eskimo*, in 1988-89.
4. Armand Tagoona was ordained as a priest in the Anglican Church in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, in 1959. He was the first Inuit to be ordained. Tagoona died in Rankin Inlet in 1999.



## Chapter 5

# At That Time I Was Nineteen Years of Age

*Maybe we could get back to the beginning of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada and about how you met Tagak Curley.*

Well, Tagak and I started having discussions in Churchill. He had been thinking about things for a long while; I personally had not. I know down south the Indians started talking, I think it was mostly the Metis, who wanted more involvement. For example, if an Indian woman married a *qallunaaq*, she and her children lost their Indian status. Tagak started thinking that it might be the same for Inuit. According to what Tagak had to say, Inuit had to start planning for what they wanted in their future. By that time the RCMP, the missionaries and the priests had already arrived, and after that, the government came. I think what they did was plan the future for Inuit, rather than letting them do it on their own. The Inuit students had to attend school, and in doing that they lost their culture. I think they call it assimilation, where the *qallunaaq* culture takes over the Inuit culture. That's what they've done in some areas. When they did this, over a period of years, the aboriginal people lost their culture.

We started thinking about that and discussing it. It became very interesting when we were young. At that time I was nineteen years of age. I think Tagak was twenty-two years old then. He was working for the Department

of Indian and Northern Affairs. He was putting together a curriculum that was going to be used in the Keewatin region. When we were discussing things, I said that we weren't educated to the same level as *qallunaat*, and because of that we wouldn't be able to confront the government. He said, as long as I felt like that, it would continue to seem impossible. He said I had to stop thinking that way. I went to Ottawa from Churchill for upgrading. I'm not sure whether it was in Edmonton or Winnipeg, but the Indian and Eskimo Association was established, and Tagak became secretary-treasurer. Josiah Kadlutsiak, Mary Panigusiq Cousins, Elijah Menarik, Noah Qumak from Northern Quebec, and Wallace Goose from Holman Island were all there.<sup>1</sup>

*Was George Koneak there?*

Yes. George Koneak was there from Kuujjuaq and Ed Berthe. They first met at Carlton University in Ottawa as a steering committee. They were planning to have a meeting, and they were trying to fundraise for that. I don't know where they got the funding from. Tagak probably talked about it, but I don't remember. They wanted to hold a meeting. When we talked again, I wanted to know if I could go there to help, if there was enough funding. We planned the meeting up to the summer. We were going to have that first Inuit Tapirisat of Canada meeting in Pangnirtung.<sup>2</sup> I assisted as the interpreter. Tagak and I were there, together with Barry Gunn and Sarah Silou from Baker Lake. We held the first meeting. At that time we really felt for the Inuit of Labrador, because they had to provide housing for themselves. The government was not providing housing for them because they were a provincial responsibility, not a federal one.

The Indian Act states that Inuit are eligible for housing and health care. If they were in dire need it also states there would be federal help available, but they didn't provide

those services to Labrador Inuit at all. They were still using 'honey buckets.' They didn't have garbage trucks. They couldn't even deliver water in communities in Labrador.

The government used to send children to residential school in Chesterfield Inlet when they were six years old. Children were also sent to school in Aklavik and Inuvik. When people started talking about this at the meeting, it gave them more of an incentive to continue. We wanted to let the world know that Canada was not as good a country as it pretended to be, and that the government was not treating aboriginal people equally. I think it was in the 1960s that Inuit were given the right to vote.<sup>3</sup> They were not eligible to vote before that. The policy that Inuit and Indians were not allowed to go further than grade nine was also changed. The government wanted Inuit to assimilate with other Canadians. In 1968, Pierre Elliot Trudeau was the prime minister. He was talking about having a 'just society' where all people in Canada would be treated equally. We really heard that. It was good to hear. Even though we knew that some Canadians were talking like that, they were still not treating Inuit equally. Our language and our culture were not protected under the Constitution.

When we had that ten day meeting in Pangnirtung, we heard things we had never heard before. Inuit had no way of complaining or getting their concerns heard. There were no radios, no phones, no newspapers. People just accepted what was being done to them. Even if the administrator in the community was told about our concerns or problems and wanted to contact more senior administrators in Ottawa, there was no way he could. Neither Gene Rheame nor Bud Orange knew how to speak Inuktitut.<sup>4</sup> We worked with them in the 1970s when ITC started.

*Was Bud Orange the Liberal Member of Parliament?*

Yes. I thought they were both Liberal Members of Parliament.

*I think Gene Rheaume was a Conservative member in the Diefenbaker years, and then Bud Orange took over.*

Have you seen a picture of Diefenbaker or seen him on television? His head used to move like this! We used to say, while he was prime minister, he never nodded his head up and down, only left to right.

At the meeting, when people talked, it gave us more of an incentive to go on. At that time Tagak was elected as president, and they formed a board of directors. Josiah Kadlutsiak was elected as vice-president and Meeka Kilabuk Wilson was elected as secretary-treasurer. We were quite young at the time.

*Was this a steering committee meeting?*

No. It was an actual ITC conference. It was the first ITC conference. It was held in Pangnirtung in 1971.

*Was it in the fall?*

I think it was in the summer or early fall.

*Was Peter Cummings there?<sup>5</sup>*

No. The only *qallunaat* staff member was Barry Gunn.<sup>6</sup> Barry Gunn was like our dictionary, I guess you would say in English, because he spoke both languages, Inuktitut and English. Tagak was elected and became our president. When he got burned out, I think it was in 1974 or 75, I was elected president in Baker Lake.

*You were elected to more than one term?*

Two terms.

*Was the first term five years?*

No. Two years.

*So first there was Tagak, and then there was you. Were you made president at that conference in Baker Lake?*

Yes. The first land claims conference was in 1975, so I must have been elected president in 1974.<sup>7</sup>

*An article dated in 1977, in Nunatsiaq News, says you took over in 1972.*

No, it was much later. Michael Amarook took over right after me.

*So the first steering committee meeting was...*

It was in Ottawa, at Carlton University.

*Why Carlton? What was the connection?*

There was no connection. The university had given us a place to meet for free.

*Was this steering committee still a part of the Indian and Eskimo Association?*

No. People wanted to work independently. If we had to deal with the Indian Act, it would have been an even slower process. There were a few weapons that we had. We had never surrendered the land, and we had never lost the land through war. We had never signed a treaty. We had never renounced the rights to our land. It was a question of Canada asserting sovereignty without any deals being made with Inuit. The Indians couldn't say that, because they had signed treaties giving up parcels of land and giving up their rights in exchange.

*So you knew your case was different?*

Yes. And it became more convenient for us to have separate organizations.

*You mentioned the people who were there at that first steering committee. What about in Pangnirtung, were there delegates from different places?*

Yes. There were delegates from everywhere; Labrador, the Western Arctic, Kitikmeot, Baffin, Kivalliq. There were delegates from everywhere.

*You said there were things you heard at the Pangnirtung conference that really surprised everybody.*

There were things we had never heard about before, about the mistreatment and injustice that was taking place in some communities, especially in Labrador and the Western Arctic and Chesterfield Inlet. We thought, "How can the Canadian government and the free world actually treat some of their own people with no consideration for their emotional or psychological health?" For example, taking children from Igloodik to Chesterfield Inlet at the age of six! Someone just took your six year old child, and shipped him off to another community with no communication for a whole year! At the time we kind of accepted it as history. We thought the Canadian government didn't know any better, or that they didn't care. We didn't know things like that were happening in other parts of the world, like Africa. *Qallunaat* had already done this there, and in India, under the colonial system. But Canada was by then semi-independent, and part of the Commonwealth. It was not a colonial country. Yet, they continued these colonial practices.

*In Canada, with an apartheid regime?*

Yes, an apartheid regime. We were not able to vote, etc., etc.

*It was like having part of the population with no rights at all. They had no representation.*

Inuit had no representation and no rights, because of the remoteness and everything else. The federal government had no respect for aboriginal people, or for their intelligence or capabilities. They thought of us as nomadic, savage people with a carefree attitude towards the future and even towards the government.

*Did you ever hear of a report entitled, White Man's Passion?*<sup>8</sup>

No. I think I've seen the interview, but not in a book.

After attending the meeting in Pangnirtung, we had lots of work to do when we got back to Ottawa, regarding what people had said. In order to represent them, we had to try to obtain funding for lawyers and we had no money for that. I stated earlier, that my wife and I lived at the YMCA, because we didn't have enough money to live in an apartment or a house on our own. Once we started having meetings with the federal government, especially with Pierre Trudeau, we got money from the department of the Secretary of State. That's where we got our core funding. A couple of years later, when we had enough money to hold a meeting again, we had another conference in Baker Lake. That's when I was elected president, as Tagak was resigning. I was twenty-six years old when I was first elected president of ITC. I think Tagak had even been younger when he was elected, but we didn't think that we were young at the time.

After I got elected, we started working on land claims. At that time we were able to negotiate with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs for funding for the land claim. Peter Cummings was hired as our lawyer. We also hired Milton Freeman to do a land use occupancy study throughout Nunavut. I think he was called Amaruq.<sup>9</sup> We wanted to show where people went caribou hunting, when they travelled by foot from Arviat to Padlei and to Back

River up to Gjoa Haven. We didn't know that we were related to these people. We also found out then, that the language changed very quickly, especially around Baker Lake and Padlei. Because these people didn't have contact with other groups for so many years, their language hadn't changed in one hundred years. When I was first here in Iqaluit in 1970, or '71, the language that was spoken was very different than it is now. People from Pond Inlet, Arctic Bay, and Igloodik have very similar dialects now. Before they were quite distinct.

When I was elected, we had five staff members and not all of them were getting paid. Later, however, in 1974, we had lots of money. I was making the highest salary. It was around thirty thousand dollars a year, so I was able to live off it. At the time, I didn't know that government officials were making salaries in the eighty thousand dollar range. After five years, our staff increased from five people to sixty-eight. They were travelling to communities to do field work related to the land claim, and to set up an Inuit Broadcasting Corporation.<sup>10</sup> The ITC magazine, *Inuktitut*, only had two pages at the start. Inuit at the time were getting telephones. When Tagak was president he talked to David Alagalak in Coral Harbour, using a HF radio telephone. You had to say 'over' every time you said anything.

At that time we were also informing other Canadians about Inuit. We let them know that we hadn't signed treaties like the Indians had, and that we were not against *qallunaat*. We wanted ordinary Canadians to support what Inuit wanted, whether it was about education, operating stores, owning land, or wildlife management. I remember once there were thirteen cities I had to go to in nine days; from Halifax to Montreal, to Thunder Bay, to Winnipeg, to Vancouver. I had to go to all those cities. We went to Rotary Clubs and City Halls and made public speeches. Even before we finished that exercise, we were shown polls that showed that Canadians supported us, so the

Canadian government really had no choice but to go along. If they refused what we were asking for, they would not be re-elected. They would have had to explain why they weren't concerned for our people.

Canadians were really touched when they learned that the government, through the RCMP, had killed our dogs. I read a story about that not too long ago in Northern Quebec. This hunter had gone in to buy supplies at the Hudson's Bay Company, and when he came out all his dogs had been killed. He had to walk all the way back to his camp. The other thing that touched Canadians was that their government sent children out to residential schools in Chesterfield Inlet and Aklavik. Inuit parents also had had to listen to what the priests and the government said. It was scary not to listen to government officials in those days. We told the Canadian people all these things, and they were touched by them. We didn't want to be controlled by the government. We wanted to be treated equally, like other Canadians. We wanted the right to have our own government and follow our own ways. Our concerns needed to be recognized. The first signing of the Agreement-in-Principle was in Coppermine, in 1990. After 1990, we still had to work on the contents. We had to work on over twenty provisions. It was tiring, even the wording was difficult.

*Was it signed on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1990, in Coppermine?*

Yes. Monday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1990, in Kugluktuk. After they ratified the Agreement-in-Principle, I was in Kugluktuk again on July 9<sup>th</sup>. It was not tiring just for the people involved; it was also tiring for the spouses. I was married at the time. My wife had told me that she wanted to go out for holidays. She was originally from Calgary. When I came back after the election, she told me over the telephone, "It's either ITC or me." She gave me an ultimatum. I had lots of work still to do for Inuit. My

father used to be scared of *qallunaat*. I told her, “If you cannot put up with me, or work with me while I’m doing this, while I’m trying to represent Inuit, it won’t work.” I’m not the only one who went through this. Tagak also went through it.

It was very difficult when you had to be away from home for a long time. Transportation was bad back then. It was difficult to make long distance connections. I think it was very boring to be the spouse of someone who was travelling all the time. You really had to be strong, especially when your mind was tired. You started to look for other means of relaxing. Everybody knows on Friday, when you are tired, people go out for beer. In those days, we tried not to get into that, because we knew when you were really tired, alcohol was too potent. The hamlet councils and hunters and trappers associations were really striving to achieve their goals. They didn’t mind hard work because they wanted to be able to operate on their own. For example, if I do something on my own, and I make a mistake, it’s okay. It’s not like when the government does something for you, and they are the ones who make the mistake. You felt for the people who were put through that. That was my incentive, to try to correct things that the government had made mistakes about.

Some people quit because they got burned out, but the majority of the people forged ahead; such as Tagak Curley, John Amagoalik, and others like Paul Quassa. At the time we had to do a lot of brainstorming. There were lots of government representatives. There were negotiators, advisors, ministers, deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, expert geologists, and archaeologists. Those of us representing Inuit and ITC were few in number. We had to negotiate with the government representatives and let them know our point of view.

After the negotiating sessions were over, we were questioned by members of the media. You’d feel angry when you were asked questions like, “Why do you want

land claims, anyway?" You would try to think positively when that question was asked, and you would have to try to respond accordingly, even though it hurt your feelings, because you knew people would hear about it or see it on television.

We tried hard not to change our tactics. After a while, we knew the government officials started to understand us. They also knew ordinary Canadians were supporting us. We were able to use that as ammunition. I knew they knew what I knew. When I was talking or asking a government official a question, if he answered in a certain way, I would know whether he was telling the truth or lying. And he would know that I would know this. You had to really know and understand the government negotiators. It became easier once you knew what they expected of you, and you knew how to respond to them.

The land use occupancy study around the Baker Lake and Padlei area was very useful. The Indians also used that area, so there was an overlap in Indian and Inuit land use. Because of the land use study, we were able to come to an agreement as to where the boundary would be. I was most proud of this because it was hard for Inuit to negotiate.

*That was an interesting period. There was a very quick shift in policy inside the Canadian government. I've talked to people in town who said they went to the residential school here (Iqaluit) as late as 1973. They said they were slapped in the face if they were speaking Inuktitut. Do you believe that?*

Yes.

*In 1973, there were government plans to develop community radio. The federal government and the territorial government were funding community radio to support native land claims. There was a big change, from one year to the next. It's hard to understand. Around the same time, in 1971, the Anik*

*satellite was launched. Then all the North was connected by telephone.*<sup>11</sup>

I went to Cocoa Beach, Florida for the launching of the Anik satellite with Elijah Menarik and Lloyd Robertson. He's with CTV now, but he was with CBC then. It was funny because Elijah was a reporter from Montreal with the CBC. I went down on behalf of ITC. When the satellite was being launched, Elijah Menarik and Lloyd Robertson were reporting live. Elijah was reporting live by telephone to Montreal in Inuktitut. He said, "This is Elijah Menarik for CBC reporting in Cocoa Beach, Florida." I don't know if he had hung up the telephone before we broke out laughing. He did it completely in Inuktitut. Lloyd Robertson was there, and there were quite a few students from Ottawa. They were flown down with us.

*So it was really an important event?*

Yes. It was an important event because we had the hope of satellite communications, telephone communications, to our communities. That made things a lot easier.

Something I was really proud of, really happy about, was that Inuit wanted to do something to help their people. They didn't mind if people got angry at them. I remember when the NQIA (Northern Quebec Inuit Association) in Puvirnituk and Salluit wanted to go their own way instead of being under Makivik Corporation, because they didn't want to go along with the extinguishment of their rights. I was attending a meeting in Northern Quebec as an ITC delegate. One person was a bystander at first, and then he got angry and got on top of the table to make his point. It was kind of scary and exciting at the same time. They were doing their best to put their land claim together, and they didn't want to make any mistakes. Maybe I'll jump a bit further forward in my experience with ITC.

We also went to Labrador to attend meetings. I recall one time when we were going to Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

We were on a single-otter plane. We were pretty close to Goose Bay. It was late, and we were looking down when one of the windows popped out. It became very windy in the little plane. The passengers were scared. Al Gamble was my executive director. He was sitting right in front of me. I shouted at him, "Give me your sleeping bag!" I used it to plug up the window. We continued flying. I asked him, because I wanted to look down at the land and I couldn't see out of my window anymore, if he wanted to exchange seats with me, but he didn't want to sit in my seat thinking he would get sucked out.

There was another person with us, Joanasie Salamonie.<sup>12</sup> I think you've heard of him. He used to entertain us. After I got elected in Tuktoyaktuk, we travelled to Inuvik, and overnighted there. Most of us went to the bar and then went back to our hotels. We had to catch the plane in the morning. Elijah Menarik was checking in at the airport. Joanasie Salamonie went to a payphone and made a call. He stated that he wanted to speak to Elijah Menarik. They paged Elijah Menarik, to see if he was there. Joanasie was disguising his voice as a female. He was talking to Elijah and saying, "I don't want you to leave," and saying that she had fallen in love with him. Elijah said, "Who are you?" Joanasie pretended his name was Mary. Elijah didn't recognize the voice. He told Joanasie (Mary) that he was confused now, and that he didn't know whether he should go, or stay for a while. While Elijah was in that confused state, Joanasie waved and said, "Hi Elijah," to him. Instead of checking in, Elijah was chasing Joanasie around the airport. We used to do all kinds of things!

*The big difference between the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and the James Bay Agreement, and even the COPE (Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement) Agreement is this provision for creating a new territory. It included political development in the negotiations.*

We were told we were crazy. The government officials said it was impossible, that we couldn't change the makeup of Canada, the territories and provinces. We said, "Well, okay. When did Saskatchewan become a province?" They said it was in 1905. Then we asked, "What was it, then, before?" They said, "The Northwest Territories." We said, "What about Alberta? What was it before?" They said, "The Northwest Territories." So we said, "What is the difference between then and now, legally and politically speaking?" They couldn't argue with us.

*Did you have the support of the people at the time?*

Inuit said, "You are going to lose too much." If you read the land claims agreement we gained very little. The little red dots on the map are Inuit-owned lands. There are different categories, outright ownership, joint-management and so on. Very little seemed like it was going to be achieved other than having some sort of provision which would allow Nunavummiut to govern themselves. For example, some day we hoped to have mineral royalties to all the lands in Nunavut for the Nunavut government. Outright ownership would be for the Inuit birthright corporations, like NTI (Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated). In order to satisfy Inuit that this was a fairly good deal, we had to have this provision to create a new territory in the future. Right now it is a little bit rough, but we hope to have provincial status in the Constitution in the future, allowing taxation and royalties, control over wildlife management, and transportation systems. This also would give the Canadian government more assurance over the sovereignty question of the Arctic islands. If the territory became a province, then surely it would be under Canadian jurisdiction. Under the territorial system, internationally, it is not fully recognized. It can be disputed, if it is only claimed as a territory by a country. You can argue more strongly that a province is a part of a country.

*I guess it is something like Puerto Rico in the United States.*

Or Panama, until it was transferred to the Panamanians. Hong Kong is another example.

*That is interesting, the international idea of territories.*

The international idea of territories is always disputed. Even now, the waters in the Arctic islands are disputed by the United States as international waters.

*And the European Union?*

And the European Union. That's right, especially Denmark and Norway.

*So, from the beginning, Tagak and you and Mary Cousins, for example, had a clear understanding that negotiating land claims was negotiating Nunavut?*

Not exactly, but we had very strong references concerning what the deal had been for Indians. We knew how poor the deal had been for the Indians.

*You didn't want a reserve.*

That's right. We didn't want a reserve. We also knew that moving the exiles from Northern Quebec, to Coral Harbour, and also to Resolute Bay and to Grise Fjord<sup>13</sup> was an attempt to show the international community that Inuit lived there. But that didn't matter, because Inuit live in Alaska, Inuit live in Russia, Inuit live in Greenland. It doesn't make this territory belong to Canada. It doesn't. That was a weapon we thought we could use, but we didn't have to. There was enough pressure by the Canadian people, of course, with the compassion of Trudeau, that our lack of population wasn't an obstacle in creating the new territory, just as a certain amount of land mass wasn't

required to create Prince Edward Island. It is a very small island. At the time we had to really brainstorm what were our strengths in the negotiations and what were our fall-back positions if something failed. There had to be a trade-off plan in case we didn't get the whole twenty-five percent of the land we wanted. It turned out we got around eighteen percent. But we were creating a new territory. We'd say, "Okay, we will not be rigid on the twenty-five percent if we can co-manage it through the creation of the new government." Nothing was clear.

*Everything was new.*

Everything was new. Everything was revised. Everything was referenced to other places, like Alaska and Northern Quebec. We didn't want to copy the bad parts. We wanted to create unclear benefits. The Nunavut government is a very unclear benefit to the Inuit. It depends on the national and international economy. It will rise and fall. But, at least it is our government, which we can mold into different shapes.

*What year did you start your negotiations?*

In 1976, I think, we created a new organization, TFN (Tungavik Federation of Nunavut). It was independent from ITC. It had its own board of directors. In 1974, when I became president, John Amagoalik became my executive director. He had been supervising interpreter-translators in a government department, when I hired him as my executive director. In those days, we just started brainstorming about how to do things. ITC had charitable status, but we couldn't keep that status and deal with real estate and legal documents, so we had to create TFN as an Inuit corporation. That's why it was incorporated.

*Wasn't this much later, the creation of TFN?*

No. TFN was created in 1975 or 76; I was still president then. TFN didn't have a president; they had a chairman.

*It was also in '76 when COPE separated from the negotiations.*

Yes. I was president at the time, too. I met with Nellie Cournoyea in Toronto during our regular board meeting. She said, "I have to request that we be separate from ITC through land claims." I said, "I understand that." The reason I accepted that was because I already envisioned that the Nunavut land claim process was going to take years, because we wanted a provision to create the Nunavut government. We didn't know how long that was going to take to negotiate. We were looking for a new territory. COPE was looking for a regional government, not a new territory, so they could speed things up. They had a much more simplified land claim than ITC.

*And they had a good deal on that.*

Yes. They had a good deal. They worked very closely with the Gwich'in. They also included Holman Island, which was not traditionally part of the Western Arctic. It was part of Kitikmeot.

*The first proposal to be put together and presented to the membership was in 1974.*

Yes. In Pond Inlet.

*Were you there?*

Yes. I was president at the time. As a matter of fact, I chaired that meeting. But the proposal was later rejected, because it was too rigid. There was no room for negotiation. We all agreed that it was too lawyer-oriented a proposal. We wanted to have a little more flexibility in case we didn't get everything we wanted. It was not completely scrapped. Instead of writing a new proposal, we started negotiating with the government on the basis of creating material together. Sometimes we negotiated until four in

the morning. Then we'd have a few hours sleep, and be back at the table.

*At the Pond Inlet conference, were there people there who were really opposed? You mentioned that in Nunavik the people in some communities on the east coast of Hudson's Bay were really against the signing of the James Bay Agreement. In Pond Inlet, were people supportive?*

They were supportive. There was a lot of pressure to get the land claim going. We had a scary experience in Baker Lake over this caveat.<sup>14</sup> There was an injunction on a uranium mine proposal by a mining company. We went to court over that. If we had lost the court case, Inuit rights would have been hanging by a thread. But in the meantime, we started negotiations. The government at least recognized there was a question of Inuit rights. If we could get our foot in the door, even though there was a caveat in Baker Lake, at least we would have already been recognized as having started the process. So, the support grew more and more in the communities. But there was always the question of people not liking the extinguishment clause. That was a very touchy issue. And we didn't like it. Because we didn't like it, it took a lot longer to negotiate it. We were placing all the provisions that we felt would be considered in the future by our own great grandchildren in the agreement. There is a provision in the agreement that we can always improve the terms of the land claim.

*With our mineral resources, do you think Nunavut has the potential to become a province one day?*

Yes. It depends on the political will of the Canadian people. Right now, don't even think about it, because we don't have a large enough taxation base. We don't have enough economic development to fund the government, and housing, and education etc., like they do in Alberta. But at Mary River, near Pond Inlet, this is the second

year they have been doing exploratory drilling on Inuit-owned lands. They think there is a fifty year minimum life expectancy for that mine.

*Is it iron ore?*

Yes. Iron ore.

*I heard it is really pure.*

Yes. It is eighty percent pure and sometimes more. In fact there are rocks the size of a tape recorder you can hardly lift. That's how pure it is. It's all rusty, too. The whole land is rusty.

*Were you on that plane that crashed?*

No. She was. [Alice Ningeongan, the interpreter] We met for ten days in Pond Inlet about land claims and the land claim proposal. I chaired that meeting and at the end I was very tired. I was just exhausted. I put my foot on the steps of the plane, and I said to myself, "No, I am going to take a couple of days off and be with my father."

*That was your home?*

That was my home. So, I decided to spend some time there before I headed back down.

*You were going to leave, but you changed your mind.*

Yes. I stepped down from the plane and a couple of hours later they crashed. Joanasie Salamonie told me a few stories about that, because he was in that crash. He was a board member. He said he was the first one to get off the plane. He knew the height of the wing, so he jumped as far as he could and landed right away. They had belly-landed and the wing was only around that far from the ground.

*So when you heard about the crash did you think, "What if I had gotten on?"*

I was so worried. I felt like it was my fault. It was my charter. I wanted to be there, but now I'm glad I wasn't! Otherwise I would have been telling everybody my sins and everything else! They were very, very lucky, because nobody was hurt. I was told that they landed in the only area that didn't have boulders, completely in the dark, on a cloudy night, and it was snowing. Of course, the airline company carries survival gear including rifles and bullets. They had those things, but they had the wrong bullets. Apparently a caribou passed by.

*That was what John said, the next morning.*

Yes. Some survival kit!

*I think after the Pond Inlet meeting, ITC decided to organize a big consultation with the communities.*

It was more like having public hearings, but we used field workers in each area. They used the flight paths of regional airlines to do their fieldwork.

*Who did they report to?*

The field workers reported to the regional staff and then to the staff in Ottawa. Everything was being done at the same time. The people would elaborate on their needs and aspirations with the staff in Ottawa, and they would put these together in a legal and political form so that they could present them to the government. We did everything at the same time, rather than doing academic research and trying to convince the government, as we had done before. What we had done before was too rigid, and we had to go back to the communities for semi-ratification. Otherwise, it was going to take too long. It kind of molded itself into a shape where we could work with it on a continuous basis.

Our proposal was in two parts the first time. It became obvious in Pond Inlet that the majority of the group agreed with it, but it became obvious later that there was not enough flexibility. If a certain provision wasn't agreed to, there would be no other way to get it. The staff was trying to get more information from their field workers about what Inuit wants and aspirations could be included in the negotiations. At the time we were working on it, we knew there were things we could not forget, even though we were trying to be wise. But we had things we could look at or compare it to.

For example, I said we looked at the Indian Act and figured out which parts were of no use to us. In Alaska, they had put their land together like a checkerboard. In Greenland they had their Home Rule government. Northern Quebec had their agreement. We looked at all those and tried to come up with what we thought was best for us. We also looked at what people had missed or didn't include that they should have, things that they regretted not seeing in their agreements. We would look at those, especially when we were working on having our own government, because the government would be responsible for education, housing, health issues, and everything else. We thought we would leave it up to the people who would be in control at the time to do the things they envisioned. Inuit also stated that the land could not be owned by individuals but by the collective instead. We wanted to be able to participate in protecting our land, either through the Hunters and Trappers Associations or through regional government. There are no trees, there are no resources up here really, where we could have economic development. We had to look at all these things and brainstorm.

*We also wanted to have people working on off-shore rights.*

Yes. That was a most difficult task. If there were to be a war, Canada has off-shore rights, before it becomes

international waters. Provinces down south have off-shore rights. If you look at Hawaii for example in the United States, they have control over the waters around the state. Even though Alaska is very far from the mainland of the United States they have off-shore rights as well. We finally agreed on the coastline and the national parks. In national parks, we Inuit can do what we want; we can go hunting in them. In Nunavut, even if we go as far as Ellesmere Island, we Inuit can hunt, whether on water or land. Other people don't have the right to do this.

*Would that be impacted by things such as ships?*

That's a responsibility of the Department of Environment under the federal government.

*The bargaining position of the federal negotiators was basically to define indigenous rights as living a traditional lifestyle.*

Yes, the sovereignty issue was not included.

*ITC had a different understanding of Inuit rights.*

Oh, yes. Big time. Off-shore rights were a big, big issue. The federal government kept using the words 'defence requirements from hostile attacks.' That was very hard to argue against because the Canadian population would not support any infringement of its defence. It was very difficult. That's why we settled on the floe edge. We had the right to hunt anywhere in Nunavut. We had a say in environmental protection up to the floe edge. That was the only way we had some say over the salt water.

*I was just thinking that it was under the Trudeau government that Inuit waters were expanded to two hundred miles.*

Yes, from twelve to two hundred miles.

*This was in the seventies.*

Yes. It was very late when he did that. He did that because of the Grand Banks. International fishing companies were over-fishing the area.

*I thought it also had to do with the Manhattan tanker crossing the Arctic. If Canadian waters include two hundred miles, they include the Northwest Passage.<sup>15</sup>*

Yes. That, too. The *Manhattan* crossing was not very popular with Canadians. It was under the Reagan administration when the *Manhattan* went through. This was shortly after the two hundred mile limit was established under the Trudeau government.

*Yes. That was the Reagan administration.*

Also, international fisherman were coming in and taking all the stocks from the Grand Banks.

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 NOTES
 

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1. James seems to be confusing two different events here. In 1970 Tagak Curley was hired by the Indian Eskimo Association (IEA) "... as a field worker to undertake liaisons with Inuit communities." See, MacPherson, 2003. The Indian Eskimo Association had its origins in the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) when the CAAE appointed a committee to study the problems of off-reserve natives. This committee became known as the National Commission on the Canadian Indian and it functioned as a standing committee of the CAAE. In 1960 the commission withdrew from the CAAE and was incorporated as the Indian Eskimo Association. On February 18, 1971 a group of Inuit met in Toronto and decided to set up an independent organization to represent solely Inuit concerns to the federal government. The minutes of that meeting record those present as: Noah Qumak, Sugluk, Quebec; Jacob Oweetaluktuk, Port Harrison, Quebec; Celistino Makpah, Whale Cove; Josiah Kadlusiak, Igloodik; Tagak Curley, Edmonton, Alberta; and Mary Panigusiq Cousins. Six months later in July 1971, twenty-seven Inuit delegates from all over the Arctic met in Ottawa at Carleton University to found the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, now Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.
2. The first annual meeting of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, now Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami took place in Pangnirtung, NWT in August, 1971 with Tagak Curley as the first president.
3. Inuit were given the right to vote and to run as candidates in federal elections in 1950. They received these rights territorially in 1966.
4. Eugene (Gene) Rheaume was elected to the House of Commons as the Conservative member for the Northwest Territories from November 1963 to September 1965.  
Robert (Bud) Orange served as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in the Liberal government from August 1968 to September 1970.
5. Peter Cummings was legal council for ITC during the 1970s.
6. Barry Gunn was a former employee of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. He worked for Nunavik's cultural institute from 1981 to 1997. He died in 2002.
7. James was first elected as president of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada in 1975.
8. See Corelli, 1986.
9. In 1976, ITC asked the anthropologist Milton Freeman to conduct the *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project* across the Canadian North to determine the areas traditionally used by Inuit.
10. The Inuit Broadcasting Corporation was actually created in July 1980, when ITC obtained a broadcasting licence from the Canadian Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)

and accessed funding from the federal government. IBC started broadcasting from Frobisher Bay in 1982 (Roth, Valaskakis, 1989, p 227).

11. In 1973, CBC started broadcasting across the Canadian North through the Anik-1 satellite, and, in 1975, implemented the *Accelerated Coverage Plan* to provide reception and transmission equipment to any community in Canada with over five hundred people. In the Northwest Territories, the territorial government provided the same equipment to all communities with less than five hundred individuals.
12. Joanasie Salamonie was one of the twenty-three Inuit who created the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada at its founding meeting in Ottawa. He also worked as a land claims field worker for ITC and the Baffin Regional Inuit Association. He worked as an artist in his early life and later as an actor in films such as *The White Dawn* and *Nanook Taxi*. Salamonie was for several years the Baffin's regional drug and alcohol counsellor. He was well known for his sense of humour and as a practical joker. He died at the age of sixty in March 1997.
13. At the beginning of the 1950s, the Canadian government was concerned about its sovereignty over the High Arctic archipelago. The solution found by government officials in Ottawa was to establish several RCMP posts and Inuit settlements in Craig Harbour and Cape Hershel on Ellesmere Island, as well as in Resolute Bay on Cornwallis Island. Inuit from Inukjuak and Pond Inlet were chosen to be relocated.  
Although an RCMP post was established in Craig Harbour, it was decided that the Inuit should be moved to a site on Lindstrom Peninsula, seventy-two kilometers to the west. The RCMP thought it was a good idea to have the Inuit at least a day's travel away from the post. Although the Inuit lived at Lindstrom Peninsula and not in Craig Harbour, "Historical documents refer to the Inuit camp established at the time of the relocation as Craig Harbour" (Tester and Kulchyski, 1994, p. 147). In 1956, the RCMP post was transferred from Craig Harbour to Grise Fiord, on the eastern side of the Lindstrom Peninsula. Only in 1962 did all the Inuit from the original camp on the Lindstrom Peninsula move near the post to what is now called Grise Fiord. (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: 1994a, p. 100, Amagoalik, 2007).
14. Concerned about the effects of mining on the caribou, which had begun in the 1970s, the Inuit of Baker Lake went to court in 1978 and won an injunction against mining exploration in their area. The following year the Federal High Court of Canada overruled this decision but said that Inuit had the aboriginal right to occupy and harvest game. This recognition of Inuit land rights helped give a legal basis to the Nunavut land claim.

15. In 1969, the *SS Manhattan*, a reinforced oil tanker, successfully completed the journey through the Northwest Passage from east to west, accompanied by a Canadian icebreaker the *John A. Mac Donald*. This route was considered too expensive for transporting oil, and the Alaska Pipeline was built instead.

Canada considers the Northwest Passage as part of its internal territory. The United States and other nations refuse to recognize Canada's claim. On April 9, 2006, Canada's *Task Force North* declared that the Canadian military will in future refer to the passage as Canadian internal waters. In June 1976, Canada declared its jurisdiction over its coastal waters up to the internationally accepted limit of 200 miles. Richard Nixon was President of the United States from 1969-1973 and Ronald Reagan was President from 1981-1989. Pierre Trudeau was Prime Minister of Canada from April 1968-June 1979, and from March 1980 to June 1984.

## Chapter 6

# We Weren't the Only Ones Going Through This

*Did the ICC (Inuit Circumpolar Conference) start at that big conference in Alaska? Were you involved in that?*

I was not at the conference itself.

*When was the first one?*

In 1982.<sup>1</sup> It was during a time I had taken a break, shortly after I had stepped down from ITC. I think they had their first conference while I was still in Pond Inlet.

*Did you talk with anyone who attended the meeting, such as John Amagoalik?*

No. I didn't talk to anyone. There were various people who attended, such as Mary Simon. But I had been to Point Barrow and Fairbanks and Anchorage in Alaska prior to that conference.

*What did you go there for? What did you go there to do?*

We were there to find out how they did their land claim, and to find out how they maintained their hunting rights, such as keeping their bowhead whale harvesting privileges. We looked at how they dealt with those, and how they dealt with housing issues and other things within

their communities. We especially wanted to know how they included their traditional drum dancing practices in their land claim. We wanted to know how we could carry our land claim to the future.

*Did you decide on anything while you were there?*

We were there more to get information, such as finding out what kind of problems they ran into, what things they were happy about getting, and what things they weren't happy about. They made their agreement with the American government, not the Alaskan government. When they were negotiating, they divided up the land like a checkerboard. We didn't like that. They were happy they would be involved in things like mineral exploration.

*So you went there to see how they negotiated with their government?*

Yes. We were always aware of their negotiations, but we wanted to find out what problems we might expect with our own. There were also Aborigines from Australia there trying to figure out what they could do. In Australia they were already recognized as Aborigines, and they were going to make changes in the law. They were also talking about the fact that they weren't eligible to vote, even while they were trying to negotiate their land claim.

*So, how do you think the Aborigines in Australia are now?*

I don't know. They had a conference in Le Havre, France, but I was too busy to attend, so I sent Tagak Curley and Jose Kusugak over there as delegates to the World Indigenous Peoples Conference.<sup>2</sup> The aboriginal peoples were being impacted by *qallunaat*. There are even aboriginals in places like Taiwan. They are not Chinese. They didn't have to deal with *qallunaat* coming in, so I don't know if they were at that conference.

*So we Inuit were not the only ones going through that?*

Absolutely not. Once we started working on our land claim we became more aware of other aboriginals. There are islands that are controlled by the Philippines, even though aboriginal people own that land. I think that's why there are conflicts, because people don't have control over their land. We weren't the only ones going through this. While we were working at settling this issue in Canada, so we could be recognized and not have to give up our rights as Inuit, this was also happening in other countries.

*Was all this activity at the international level from other aboriginal groups important to you?*

Yes. It was important. The International Court in the Hague recognizes human rights, and if there is a dispute, they settle it. Even if the crime takes place elsewhere, this particular court can oversee and conduct hearings on international legal issues. That was very important to us, because if the government had outright refused to negotiate with us, we were thinking of going to that particular court to put pressure on the government to force them to deal with us. As Inuit, we had never signed a treaty with the government, and we were never forced to surrender in a war. The government never dealt with the Inuit. The treaty system is customary in Canada. They had an obligation to do something. During the negotiations that became clear. That was the bottom line. They had to recognize that there was an issue. How we dealt with it was through negotiations. That's where we started.

*Once we had our land claim in place, I think you were Minister of Education for a time. I wonder how difficult it would be to get a school that was oriented towards Inuit culture.*

It would not be difficult. It's just a matter of money. We have different schools for different things, for people to

become teachers, or lawyers or other things. If they decided they wanted a school to teach Inuit culture, it would not be impossible if it was funded. The government spends seven hundred million dollars a year. There is never enough for housing, education and health. Those are the main things they use the money on. The government wants to give us better health services and housing. I don't know if they could spend less money on schools, because people are having more and more children all the time. In the other two areas, housing and health, if they spent less money, there would be some left over.

We used to talk about an Inuit university. It would not replace Nunavut Arctic College. Getting a university would be very costly. Inuit studies could be part of that. Inuit could learn about Inuit culture. They could learn about *tuniit*. They could learn about geography; who lives in which areas. For instance, the Back River people, why did they live there? Where were they from? Inuit are a coastal people. So, why were there people in Baker Lake who chose to live inland? Things like that could be taught. The government has a priority list. If that were to be put on the priority list, I don't think there would be any problems putting a school in place.

There is a French school here. They were lucky to get their school before we did. We had requested this a long time ago. We would like to see a school that would teach Inuit culture. It is very interesting to learn about this. The reason we don't have a school ourselves, is because the government has not put this on its priority list. There is no other reason.

*Some of us are taking Inuit Studies and some of us are taking the Interpreter Translator program. I told our instructor more than once that we wanted more Inuit instructors, rather than having courses run by qallunaat. It would be better with Inuit instructors. That could be arranged by Nunavut*

*Arctic College. That's what I am looking for, but I haven't really seen it yet.*

In the Canadian education system, certificate and diploma programs have to be offered through recognized institutions, like trade schools, or an established university. That's why the Teacher Education program has a partnership between McGill University and Nunavut Arctic College. It is the same thing with the Akitsiraq Law School. The instructors don't have to come from universities, but the program has to be certified by an institution as a certificate or diploma program.

*I think one of Susan Sammons' greatest dreams, as well as Dave Wilman's and myself was to see Inuit get Master's degrees and Ph.D.s. You are starting to see that in Greenland. In Alaska there are Inuit with Ph.D.s teaching in the social sciences. For me, too, this is the way this should be. But the recruitment of teachers, even at the high school level, is still a problem. There needs to be more training of teachers, and more Inuit teaching subjects like mathematics at the high school level. For Inuit who have a university degree there are so many opportunities out there.*

University education is paid for by the government, as it is if you attend Nunavut Arctic College. If I were to get a Ph.D. to teach those subjects, there would have to be a course for potential teachers. After grade nine, in grade ten, you have to have a specialization in a subject, whether you are a mathematics teacher or a physics teacher.

*Our parents wanted to see Inuktitut courses in the school. This was in 1972, over thirty years ago. Their choice was to have us taught in Inuktitut. The Canadian government has a curriculum for students. After having gone through the school system, I think it is getting better.*

They are still arguing about that. Was I wrong when I wanted students up to grade six to have Inuktitut as the

language of instruction? This was set up by the regional education councils. For example, in Baffin they wanted students to take Inuktitut up to grade six, even though it was up to grade three at first. I was Minister of Education at the time when we were still part of the Northwest Territories. We had to brainstorm. We wondered what it would be like when those students went to high school. Would they have to take courses that were diluted? That's what we wondered. At that time the members of the council didn't have high school or college or university education. They weren't aware of how difficult it can be when a child is at the high school level. There was also the fact that the students had to train for future jobs, whether in finance or other things. They weren't really thinking about that. All they were thinking of was the fact that our children were losing their language and culture.

That's what they were feeling. They were pressuring to have classes in Inuktitut and we believed in that, but at that time I think they should have looked at how other students were treated. For example, in Greenland and Quebec children are not taught English first.

*When were they going to teach their children English?*

They could make videos on how to teach their children whatever subject. But here, we Inuit have to teach in English because there are no Inuktitut materials available. We wondered if students were taught in Inuktitut until grade six, would it make it difficult for those students when they went into English classes. Those types of questions still haven't been answered to date. A lot of us are getting our children to understand both languages on purpose. My sons are in grade three. They will be taking Inuktitut until grade six, but I teach them how to use computer games at home. I also let them watch cartoons on television, because they learn how to count. I also let them see different rules regarding wildlife without telling anyone. I do this

because I don't want them to run into barriers when they have to switch over to English subjects. If students can't speak English, after grade six they have difficulty. From grade one to grade six students have difficulty speaking and writing.

*Those of us who have been taught in English first, want English put back in the curriculum. The reason why I am saying that is because I have children. I have an eleven year old daughter and a fourteen year old son. They are in junior high school. They have more difficulty speaking English. I would like to teach them, but I have never taken any courses. I am most concerned about my children's education at this time. I just heard on local radio that children are able to speak Inuktitut up to grade six, but when they go into junior high school, they don't understand English. That's where I'm lost.*

It's a big question. It is a political question. It is not an academic question. It is not a scientific question. I will probably get email from all over the place now. First of all, let's make it clear. In the smaller communities like Pond Inlet, where I come from, where there are fourteen hundred people, there is no streaming system. In Iqaluit there is. There is an English stream and an Inuktitut stream. They don't have this in the smaller communities. It is Inuktitut only, until grade six. There have been no academic or scientific conferences or discussions with the parents on this, with the principals or the teachers. There are always principals' conferences and teachers' conferences on an annual basis, but there has been nothing for parents. This needs to be debated. Not just looking at today, but also looking at where we want to go from here. We tried to protect Inuit heritage through the land claim negotiations. We wanted to protect our language and culture, but if we are not using these at home, which we can now, how are we going to protect them while not hindering our children's

progression into higher education at the same time? Is it blending? Are our children getting a watered-down version of education, which is what people are saying today? There are interesting examples from other international communities.

English is the international language, but it is also very important to retain your heritage and language. How does Greenland do it, or France, or Germany, or other non-English speaking countries? This topic has never been discussed intelligently by the parents and those who don't have jobs on the line. Because teachers and principals have jobs on the line, they can't really critically and intelligently expose the potential failure in this area to the Department of Education or the Government of Nunavut.

*You said the community could decide to go up to grade six, but our community goes up to grade twelve. Is it up to the community to decide what they want?*

No. You do subjects for forty minutes. You do English, and mathematics, and Inuktitut and social studies. It is like that at the high school level. What we are talking about is whether mathematics, learning how to read, and taking social studies, should be in Inuktitut up to grade six. That's what we are talking about now.

*Maybe the solution is to have different streams in the schools.*

That's what Iqaluit and Rankin Inlet are doing.

*We have a choice here as to what stream we want our children to follow, Inuktitut or English.*

But if I put my two sons in the English stream, they would forget about their own language and heritage. The question is how can we teach them another language without them losing their own? We need to look outside

Canada, to other countries, to see what they are doing. We need to find ways to do this without copying what they did, so our children will not lose their language and culture. They need to maintain this knowledge, and also be able to continue with their studies in high school. It's like oil and water.

*It seems to be at the heart of what is happening in Nunavut, how to solve this, because it is not just a matter of language. Inuktitut is an oral tradition. It is spoken in the family. It is community-centered. When you bring this into the context of higher education, you need to develop new words, and people have to develop new attitudes. It's like what we are doing here. We start at nine. Then we have coffee at ten. This way of organizing time has nothing to do with the traditional Inuit way of life. A very smart Inuk who went to university told me if you go to university, you lose your culture. You see less of your children. You go back to your community once a year. You lose your taste for country food. You become a southerner. How do you put these together? It is not easy.*

Even though you are very aware of Inuit culture, you haven't learned to speak the language. The Inuktitut language is very specific. I think we all know that. In English all you have to say is 'snow', and we know what you mean. It doesn't matter what kind it is. From grade six forward, they start catching on to the simplicity of the English language, in grade eight or nine. If you go to the Co-op store, in the mall or the coffee shop, you hear children speaking English. Why is that?

*In Pond Inlet?*

In Pond Inlet. It is because the English language that they are studying in high school is a very general language. You don't need to say, "Go get some 'snow for water'." If I said that in English, you'd be wondering, "What is *pukajaaq* 'snow for water'?" There is a term for 'insulating snow,'

*aqilluqaaq*. You can't understand that in English. Because of the language structure, English words are used more on a daily basis for general conversation. It makes us more literate in the language. Whereas, if you go to academic programs in English you have a very hard time, because you don't use specialized English words on a daily basis, only in academic institutions, or with the government. In Inuktitut you use these specialized words on a daily basis. It is a heck of a thing to remember, all this terminology in Inuktitut. Thus children don't speak it as much in the high school, because there are too many words to remember. One of the students already stated that children are not fully literate in English in the early stages of high school, even up to grade ten. It is not because they are not using the Inuktitut language, but because they haven't learned the terminology that is important so they can properly identify what they are talking about.

*It's their use of vocabulary?*

Yes, exactly.

*So, you mean that some of the students are not that proficient in English or Inuktitut?*

Yes. I think the students are victims of our educational administration. We have dreams of having Inuktitut up to grade six, but from there the students have to jump right into junior high. It's as if the student is expected to be a robot or a superman. They are only human beings like the rest of us, and they need a gradual transition into the English stream in junior high, from the Inuktitut only stream in elementary school. Nobody asks the question as to how the child's brain works in that transitional period. It is mind-boggling that the authorities at the time came to a conclusion without scientifically trying to find out what would be the end result in the education system. Right now the schools are having a very hard time keeping the

students interested, because whether young or old, if the subject you are discussing is too hard for you, sooner or later you are going to give up studying it. When I was young, my father didn't take me out in blizzards only. He also picked nice days to encourage me to want to go out. After a while, he couldn't stop me. From a scientific perspective, that's how a child learns to appreciate the environment. That question which was posed is an extremely important question, but it has never been answered. I don't know if it can be answered in a short period of time.

We know how to go to the moon, but we don't know how to deal with our own children to ensure they have a proper educational program. What's the government's priority? Are we going to continue having the status quo, and hope that people are so blind that they can't see their children's failures in high school? Look at the dropout rate. Why is that? There has to be a reason for it.

*How come for years the only Inuktitut teacher at the high school was the janitor? I talked to some of the teachers who taught at the high school, and they had to see four hundred students a day, which was just too many. And this is the high school in the capital! It's a complex problem, but to me it doesn't seem to be a priority for the people who write the cheques.*

Exactly. It is also very hard to include it in the high school credit system. You have mathematics and other subjects, but Inuktitut is not recognized for credit.

*One of the students was asking why there aren't more instructors at the College who speak Inuktitut, but in most of the programs at the College there is no Inuktitut at all. I appreciate her question, but what's done here in this program is the biggest effort at Nunavut Arctic College, and the program was almost slashed from the budget three years ago.*

You see, that's the tip of the iceberg.

*Yes, in other programs, such as Environmental Studies there is no Inuktitut being taught.*

Don't forget. Every one of you, I'd advise you not to get into politics because you'll get caged in. The attitude of administrators and managers will become more apparent as time goes by. If you are an ambitious person with a fairly good knowledge about where you want to go with this program, they will have to agree that what you decide is in their interest. Most of you will be advocates of Inuit Studies, for the Inuit need for a good education. Just be aware that you have to walk a very thin line. I'll give you an example. When I was living in Coral Harbour I applied for a job.

I taught in the adult education centre there. I taught about the great migration to Greenland, you know that particular book, and about life skills from my personal experience.<sup>3</sup> I wanted to become an adult educator because I enjoyed working with adults in the classroom. I saw the advertisement for the adult educator position in Repulse Bay. It said if the person chosen was not qualified, they would be paid seventy-five percent salary while they were achieving the credits that were required. I was disqualified, because I didn't have a certificate in adult education. I said, "Okay, then I'll take seventy-five percent of the salary, and you can teach me how to be an adult educator." They said, "We can't." I said, "Why not?" And they said, "Because you already know it." How do you qualify? They always have a way to keep you at bay if you took a leadership role in Inuit movements and in advocacy areas. I realized that later on.

John Amagoalik and Tagak Curley and many other people had a very hard time getting regular jobs, because the managers in the civil service were afraid that they might know more than they did, and that they might ruffle feathers in the department. They thought they would go against the grain. They might have better ideas. I have no proof.

But there are too many former leaders, Meeka Kilabuk is another, who had difficulty getting employment. I'm just warning you that this might happen to you. The more you learn about life and the system, the more interested you become in participating in the shaping of Nunavut. When you get into that, there becomes a question as to whether or not you are trustworthy, or whether you would be a good civil servant. With companies, there is no problem. Companies will hire you. In fact, I worked for companies and consultants more than I did with the government. I have only been allowed to work with the government on very short contracts, like for three months, to make sure I didn't become permanent, probably. I threw in that example to show that government machinery is very hard to change. It has been like that for years and years and years.

*You touch a very sensitive issue, and I would like to go back to your history here. You were talking about the Inuit leadership and about political organization. I think that's mostly what we are discussing here, representation of Inuit on the political front. Something happened in the government of the Northwest Territories around that time. The civil servants, especially at the decision making level, were never Dene or Inuit. There was always this push and pull between the political will of the legislature, and the administration of the civil service.*

Even when I was a minister in the Northwest Territories, trying to get rid of the residential school system was extremely hard. I was asked, "What are we going to replace these schools with." I said, "Well, couldn't we just invest a little bit more than we are spending on the residential schools, and transfer it to the communities, and get high school text books and teachers at the same time." People wanted to know if the schools would be recognized as part of an accredited system if their children wanted to

go to university. There were all kinds of questions like that that came up. Once it was done, it was no problem again. If you question having up to grade six in Inuktitut and then students having a hard time transferring into English in junior high, you will have a very hard time changing that. Once you find a better solution and you get it done, then it's no problem again. Getting people to make the initial change in a system is always the most difficult.

*Maybe we could get back to when you were still the ITC president in Ottawa. You saw the transformation of the Northwest Territories Council into the Legislative Assembly in the early seventies. At one time you and Tagak were attracted to territorial politics. Maybe you could talk about that.*

Perhaps. I'll talk about something first, that I had forgotten. Our fathers taught us how to hunt and how to survive. Later on, when I started watching television, I saw my ancient ancestors in China teaching karate. Have you seen the movie *Karate Kid*? It would wax on and wax off. It didn't seem relevant to anything to do with me, but every morning if I hadn't been left behind, I had to wake up, put on my clothes, go out right away and start putting harnesses on the dogs, without even having a bite to eat first. Was it my hunger or my tiredness I had to put aside in order to do my chores first? After my chores, I would pay attention to my body's needs. If there was time, for example, if my father was finishing getting ready, I would quickly have something to eat, but only after I had harnessed the dogs.

There were many other things we were taught without realizing them. It was only after we grew up that we realized what our parents were trying to do. Even though you didn't see your father as planning things for you, he taught you a lot of things you would need to know later on in life. Of course, we would learn and play at the same

time. We would pretend to harpoon something, or use a bow and arrows. We would pretend to make *igluit*. We would be learning at the same time.

I realized when we were still attending school in Churchill that there was a government, the government of the Northwest Territories. Someone was appointed to be the Commissioner, and that person worked with people appointed by Indian and Northern Affairs. I found out that Simonie Michael and Abe Okpik were appointed to be members on the Council from the communities. That's the time when they first started getting representatives from the North, not elected officials, but appointed representatives on the Northwest Territories Council. Whenever they made decisions at meetings, they would submit them to the Commissioner who would in turn decide if they would be approved or not. I think it was in 1967, that they got rid of the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, before Inuit were able to vote.<sup>4</sup>

In 1968, I was in Churchill working for CBC. The Commissioner's plane landed in Churchill, and they wanted me to get on it. I went to Arviat, to Rankin Inlet, and to Chesterfield Inlet with them. In Arviat, the people had built their own airstrip without being provided with funding. They removed all the boulders and rocks and they made their own airstrip. When we arrived, the landing strip was very rough because it was hand-made. They were given six thousand dollars so they could put gravel on the runway. The Commissioner was able to sign a cheque and give it to them right there and then. When we arrived in Chesterfield Inlet the people requested funds to make an airstrip, and again the Commissioner approved and wrote a cheque right there. He had a non-elected government. He signed the cheques right there and then so they could use the money to make an airstrip.

We hear people saying that since the land claim agreement has been put in place they feel poorer, and that they are not getting as much as they used to get. In

those days when the Commissioner had so much authority, they could be given what they had requested right away. Nowadays, they have to go through the hamlet council to get an arena or a community hall or anything pertaining to community services. They say it is a lot more difficult now than it used to be.

After that trip they went back to Yellowknife. I think there were four or five elected officials. Half of them were still not elected. My uncle, Paul Hauli, was one of the elected officials. I'm not sure who the others were, from the larger communities.<sup>5</sup> Half of them were appointed by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The Commissioner still had the authority to accept the recommendations of Council or not. He also had to put the annual budget together. If the Commissioner wanted to refuse the Council, he had that option.

I think it was in 1975 that all the members of Council became elected members. We had a premier whose name, I think, was Nick Sibbeston.<sup>6</sup> The council was able to make legislation, but it had to be approved first by Indian and Northern Affairs, to make sure it wasn't in violation of the Canadian Constitution. Education, health, and housing were still controlled by Indian and Northern Affairs. I'm not sure exactly what all they controlled. When they started electing their officials, Inuit wanted to get involved.

I was also travelling to communities to teach people about this with the Department of Local Government. There was Bill Grant, John Argue and myself. We went to the communities to teach people about how the Council would be elected. I'm not sure if they were writing down everything they heard from Inuit, but their report was sent to the regional offices. There were regional offices in Iqaluit, Churchill and Yellowknife. For the Western Arctic, I think the regional office was in Inuvik, but I'm not sure.

*It must have been after you worked for CBC, that you worked for the Northwest Territories government.*

Yes, after CBC, and after I had come back from school in Ottawa. When I came back I started working for the government, after my ulcer had healed. I think I was twenty-one when I started working for the government. That's what I remember about going into the communities. This is when Inuit leaders started getting elected. The Hunters and Trappers Associations, Education Councils, the Northwest Territories Council and Inuit Tapirisat of Canada were pretty well all established at the same time. There were people who had skills and abilities, which we were lacking. Whoever was able was included; people who wanted to get involved, and people who wanted to see changes in the way they were treated. Those were the ones who were involved.

**NOTES**

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1. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) had its first meeting in Barrow, Alaska in 1977. Fifty four delegates from three countries attended; Russian Inuit were not allowed to attend. ICC represents the interests of Inuit living in the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions of Canada, Alaska, Greenland and Chukota, Russia. The Board of Directors of ICC in Canada comprises the elected leaders of the four land-claim regions, Inuvialuit, Labrador, Nunavik and Nunavut.
2. James is referring to the Fifth International Congress of the *Fondation Francais d' Etudes Nordiques* on oil and gas, Le Havre, France in May 1973.
3. James is referring to the epic journey taken by the shaman Qitdlarssuaq and his followers from North Baffin to northern Greenland in the 1840s. Qitdlarssuaq introduced the use of the bow and arrow, the *qajaaq* and the fish spear to the Greenlanders. He died in 1875 while attempting to return to Baffin. See, Fr. Guy Mary-Rousseliere (1991) for a full account. The book is unfortunately out of print and hard to come by.
4. The Commissioner was appointed by the Prime Minister of Canada and exercised almost complete control over the appointed members. In 1970 there were fourteen members, four appointed and ten elected. By 1975, fifteen members representing fifteen districts in the NWT were all elected. Stuart Hodgson (1967-79) was the last Commissioner of the NWT who exercised any real power. John Parker (1979-89) who succeeded Hodgson was simply the federal government figurehead, as the members of the Legislative Assembly chose their own Government Leader or Premier beginning in 1980. The first elected Government Leader (Premier) of the NWT was Richard Braden (1980-84). Abe Okpik was the first aboriginal to serve in the Legislative Assembly of the NWT, being appointed in 1965. Simonie Michael of Iqaluit was the first Inuit to be elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1966.
5. Paul Hauli's name does not appear on the official list of members appointed or elected to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Hauli has been involved in local politics for a number of years and James may be confusing territorial with local office.
6. Nick Sibbeston (1985-87) was the third elected Premier of the Northwest Territories.

## Chapter 7

### I Came Shortly After Tagak, Again

*When you were at ITC did you have contacts with territorial politicians already? Was that important for the organization?*

Not too much at the beginning. They had no authority in the issues we were talking about.

*They were not at the table?*

Not until the latter part. At the end they were.

*You were at ITC. How did the transition happen?*

I think I should clarify that. At the beginning the territorial governments were not involved because aboriginal issues, including the Indian Act, which we have referred to from time to time, were solely under the jurisdiction of the federal government. In 1977, we started looking at some examples of how the Government of the Northwest Territories evolved from appointed members to fully elected members of the Council, and what programs they carried out. We looked at what programs were strictly political jurisdictional issues, and what other issues were aboriginal-oriented, that were under federal jurisdiction, and the responsibility of Indian and Northern Affairs. That had to be defined very clearly from the outset, so we were not negotiating with the wrong party or a biased party.

*Because of the devolution of powers from Ottawa to Yellowknife, the Inuit organizations now had two institutions they had to talk with.*

Yes. In fact, we had aspirations to develop a new social policy in our negotiations. Even if Yellowknife was responsible for health and education etc, it really didn't develop any social policy that was different from Indian and Northern Affairs. Most of the policies and legislation were imposed by Indian and Northern Affairs. In order to get something new through the land claim, it had to go through Indian and Northern Affairs. Whenever the federal government adopted a policy or legislation, the territorial government had to follow suit. This is true even today; for example, the Human Rights Act that we had to adopt, as early as three years ago.

*Was this because federal legislation superseded any territorial legislation?*

Exactly, and the Canadian Constitution.

*What happened when you resigned in 1977?*

I took a break and went home to Pond Inlet. I worked on a film, I forget the name of the company that made it, but it was on the creation of *qamutiit*, Inuit sled transportation, for Expo in Vancouver. I was an actor with another person, Qamaniq, from Pond Inlet. He has since died. What we did was start fishing. Has anybody seen the old *Netsilik* series about how they built *qamutiik* and things like that?<sup>1</sup>

*With fish.*

Yes. With fish skins and antlers and that sort of thing. We did that. Every time we completed something, like freezing codfish and cutting them in half for runners,

the *qallunaat* created something like a horse and a buggy. Then we put in cross bars on the sled, and the *qallunaat* developed a road system with automobiles and things like that. That went on for several weeks. It was supposed to be a half-hour presentation in the Vancouver Auditorium. It was wide screen. The film was shot with a three hundred feet per minute camera. It was a very wide film for lighting purposes. By the time we took off, a rocket was going to be fired to the moon. What the film was trying to say was, from the beginning of time, Inuit used dogteams. Even today, it is the best transportation. Even if people can go to the moon, dogteams are still the best transportation here. That was the story with clips in between. It turned out okay in the end, but when we took out the dogteam they had a humongous camera. It had to be carried by two people. The camera took pictures of the incoming dogteam we were on. One of the boss dogs went over to the camera and peed on it! I don't think they showed that part.

After that I got involved with a local organization, the education council. I became the secretary-treasurer. We started trying to develop some policies, at least some direction in the school.

*Was this for the Baffin region?*

For Pond Inlet only. We had a member who was also chairman of the Baffin Regional Education Council. That was interesting. They had poor leadership in the Baffin Regional Inuit Association (BRIA). They asked me to clean that up. I worked for them for several years. Then I went home again. I stayed there for a little while, and then I ran in the territorial election.

*When you were with BRIA, your job was in Iqaluit. Were you the executive director?*

No. I was the president. I had two terms there. I think it was two terms; I'm not sure anymore.<sup>2</sup> I had done work

like that already, this was on a smaller scale. Mostly, I was concentrating on how to get funding for them. They had very little core funding. At that time BRIA needed help, and so I went to help them. Shortly after that I was elected to Territorial Council. I was trying to find funding sources for them. The first time they got funding from the Government of the Northwest Territories, they received twelve thousand dollars to support the Hunters and Trappers Associations. This was before the land claim. Before that, funding was very difficult to obtain. After I left, NTI (Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated) was able to borrow money from the federal government. They borrowed money until they received the land claim agreement funding.

When I went back to Pond Inlet in the mid eighties, I became a candidate for the Northwest Territories government. I thought perhaps I could help NTI from that perspective. Policies usually change as time goes on, and Cabinet comes up with new ones. Because I didn't promote myself enough, I was beaten by Titus Allooloo for the riding of Hall Beach, Igloodik and Pond Inlet. After that, I moved to Coral Harbour, mostly to rest and get away from Pond Inlet. I went to Coral Harbour for two weeks, and I ended up being there for thirteen years, because I enjoyed Coral Harbour, and I enjoyed the people. I went hunting with them. There were lots of polar bears there.

While I was there, I started helping out at the adult education centre. At the time the students were really happy. Computers had just started coming out. They wanted to learn about them. Some of the students had forgotten parts of their language. There are people living in Coral Harbour who were originally from Northern Quebec, some from the Keewatin mainland, and some from South Baffin. People who were originally from Wager Bay and South Baffin went there a long time ago. I don't know if these people were the *tuniit*, but there were people there who had come from Wager Bay and South Baffin.

There is a site with the walls of *qarmait* and whale and polar bear bones. That area had been the shoreline when the glaciers were melting. It is presently ten miles away from the coast. I really enjoyed it when I heard about these previous people. I was the assistant at the adult education centre then. Inuit had not made their own *qajait* for a long time. We were learning how to make *qajait*. We gathered information from the people about how to make them.

While I was there, there was a territorial election called, and I was one of the candidates. I became the member of the Legislative Assembly from there, and I represented the people in Yellowknife.<sup>3</sup> I didn't accept right away when I was asked to become a minister, because I wanted to represent the people of Coral Harbour and Chesterfield Inlet. They had very poor community halls and airports. I was wondering if they could build roads out to the Qurluqtuuq river so people could go out on the land and relax. There were places that people couldn't get to because of the rivers and other obstacles. While I was in Coral Harbour, we got an arena with a curling rink inside. We also built docks and made the harbour deeper, with money from the land claim. I think it cost one million, two hundred thousand dollars.

The people in Coral Harbour had brainstormed about getting a bridge to cross the river. It was about a hundred feet across. Looking down from the top, it was around ninety feet down to the river. We made the bridge by working together with Sudliq Developments Ltd, which is owned by Louie Bruce and Patterk Netser. They have a company that owns heavy equipment. We hauled gravel to the site and built and nailed together eight-foot beams. Once the river had frozen over, we were able to go across and complete the work. Once the bridge was finished, we were to get sixty thousand dollars annually for its upkeep. Now, they tell me, the road is forty miles long. They were able to develop it more.

Around that time, I became Minister of Education when somebody else resigned the position. I told you earlier, that when I became the Minister of Education I got rid of the hostels, except for ones for the older students. I was trying to encourage the Department of Education to offer higher grades in the communities, so more students would be able to complete them. While I was just an ordinary member of the assembly, we worked really hard to provide public housing for unemployed elders so they wouldn't have to pay rent. We had a housing committee meeting in Gjoa Haven. This was when Dennis Patterson was no longer Government Leader. He was a member of the committee at that time. Even though they were unemployed, and their old age pension was very small, they had to pay sixty-four dollars a month in rent. The government subsidized their rent. That was able to go ahead. Elders living in public housing no longer needed to pay rent.

*You mentioned Dennis Patterson.*

Yes. He was our leader.

*He was the government leader.*

Yes, and later on it was Nellie Cournoyea.<sup>4</sup>

*Was Tagak Curley there then?*

No. I came shortly after Tagak, again. Tagak Curley came first, and then Peter Irniq came after. I defeated Peter Irniq.<sup>5</sup> This was when the Electoral Boundaries Commission established new ridings. Coral Harbour was joined with Chesterfield Inlet and Repulse Bay. I was going through a lot of turmoil in my personal life at the time. I had to resign because I broke the law.

I am a defender of children. I feel very strongly that children need to be psychologically and physically

protected. Sometimes you go overboard, and you over-defend them at the wrong time and the wrong place. I had to resign.<sup>6</sup>

*Were you there for the referendum on the creation of Nunavut in 1992?*

Yes. I was a supporter of the 'yes' vote.

*Were there any members of the assembly from the Eastern Arctic who were not supportive of the creation of Nunavut?*

I don't think so. I think everyone was. There were some people, I don't remember who, who were against it because of the extinguishment of aboriginal rights. Our argument was that that wasn't clear. What was clear was that we were getting our own land and our own government. What did we have before? Even the question of Inuit rights was not clear. We asked the people if they wanted that. We asked them what direction they would be going if they didn't have a clear vision to determine their destiny. The 'yes' vote was overwhelming.

*The people who were objecting because of the extinguishment clause, were they from the communities?*

Well, a fairly heavy campaign was going on, on both sides. People couldn't understand the legalities or the political side of where we wanted to go. Even today, there are some objections to that. As far as we can remember, in colonial times, people were told how they should live their lives. In fact, some camps used to go hungry, because the Hudson's Bay Company demanded that they go out trapping for fox, rather than hunt for food. The government coerced people to live in the settlements. Otherwise, they would not receive Family Allowance. This was after John Diefenbaker or Lester Pearson, I'm not sure which, introduced the Family Allowance for Canadians.<sup>7</sup> Inuit

were included, too. They got two dollars a month. That was a lot of money, then, for the Inuit. I think that fox was only worth around fifty cents a pelt. It was very difficult to convince Inuit to vote 'yes'. We said, "Our forefathers were independent. Don't you want that independence back, after a hundred years of colonial rule?" They had forgotten the need for independence for their future. They had become so used to being helped and looked after by the government and the missionaries, and the RCMP. They told the Inuit how they should live, and where they should live. Eventually people realized that in order to shape our own future, we had to take a gamble.

*You had to obtain this minimum. But as you were saying, it was a government on Inuit territory, where Inuit would be the majority. You reminded me of something Zebedee Nungak, said, "A bad land claim is better than no land claim."*<sup>8</sup>

When you are looking at it today, when you review it, it is something to be proud of. It could have been worse. We all know that nothing is perfect on earth. Every one of us and every thing has a flaw. Nothing is perfect, if you look it on a scale from one to one hundred. We see some of the claim being enforced today, but not all of it.

You students are taking this course now. To date, I think the land claim is okay. I think the only thing wrong with it is that if the federal government makes a policy, then Nunavut has to follow it. For example, when same-sex marriage legislation was being introduced, Inuit were really against it. Even though we didn't want to go along with that new policy, we had to follow it, even if we didn't like it. If the federal government enacts legislation, even if we don't like it, all the provinces and territories have to follow it. Unfortunately, it's like that. Because of federalism, even though there is a lot of legislation we don't like, we still have to follow it.

Also, the people in the communities wanted healing programs for males. It is well known that a lot of men had

problems because of what happened in Chesterfield Inlet. A lot of males have a lot of anger inside them. This is really beginning to be more out in the open, because people are starting to talk about it. At the time it was something that was really embarrassing, and nobody talked about it. It is now, when our parents finally started supporting us that they are starting to talk about this, out in the open. Because of what they went through, I think this is why some young people tend to beat their wives; even adults tend to do that. I often wonder how we can better help these people, so they can have a happier life. We know there is a reason they do this. The so-called counsellors I know seem to be difficult to talk to. I think it is like the tip of an iceberg. If someone is abusive to other human beings, their environment is no excuse for it.

There is something inside that the person is keeping to himself. They tried so hard to forget about something that happened when they were young. As adults, they put it at the back of their minds, but it's still there, so they get really angry. It is only after we start having healing sessions that we will see a difference. We will have to depend on these so-called experts in southern Canada, for a while, professional counsellors, psychiatrists, and psychologists. Even if we use them, we cannot get help, unless we ourselves decide to change. The Nunavut government, working along with Inuit, will have to come up with something to help these people.

There are some other laws in the federal system that are not suited to Inuit society, culturally or otherwise. Counselling by elders is not nationally recognized, because they don't have Ph.D.s or doctorates in the field. But, they are recognized by their own peers. I think the elders need to be used more, so people can make peace with the past. A lot of time the wife beaters are not really angry with their wives or their children. It is something dark in the past that they have selected to forget, which is still subconsciously present that is making them angry. Medicating themselves

with spirits sometimes makes this come out, and they get angry with the wrong person, or for the wrong reason. We could introduce the Inuktitut method of consoling and counselling, just like we did kindergarten to grade six, or the creation of the housing authorities, etc, etc. This could be introduced in a similar way.

*There is something I think we should discuss, especially as you were Minister of Education. We know that young Inuit males have a harder time going through the education system. The role of being the provider of country food, and the seal ban have contributed to this. It seems like males in Nunavut don't do as well as they should.*

It is a combination of everything. Women had more of an important role that they were practising as they were growing up, because they stayed at home. They were more successful at going to school and building careers, because they felt wanted and desired by the family. For a boy, if the father does not chose to take him, the father goes out hunting while the boy is in school. When he comes back, the boy is playing hockey while the father is unloading his *qamutiik*. So the father sees his son as being useless. When the son becomes older, he has completely forgotten his responsibilities. He only knows about what is in school and what is in the community. That is the gap that has been created, not by choice.

A whole lot of men are working, too, in my age group. We looked at ex-Churchill students and did a short survey by phone. We found out that there was only three percent unemployment of the ex-Churchill students. What is the territorial unemployment rate? There were a whole lot of unilingual Inuit, such as Josiah Kadlutsiak, Daniel Komangapik, and Macpa, who went to Chilliwack in British Columbia to become heavy equipment operators and mechanics. Unilinguals, with *qallunaat* instructors from the army! They have been working ever since. Now they

are qualified, certified mechanics and heavy equipment operators with Class Two licences.

What happened was, because they were working, they really couldn't look after their boys, other than to send them to school. Timing stinks, because when you are out hunting, you just follow the amount of daylight that you have, or you are dependent on the weather. You cannot say, "Okay, I'll come back from hunting at three-thirty. He'll be finishing school then, so we can unload the *qamutik* at that time." You can't do that. You can't say, "I'm not going hunting until after you go to school, so you can help me prepare my *qamutik*," because this guy is going to go hunting at six in the morning. His boy is not going to go to school until a couple of hours later.

I have twin *tiguak*, adopted children. They are eight years old now. Every opportunity I had, before they even went to pre-school, I would go camping with them. I travelled with them when they were three from Rankin Inlet to Iqaluit by boat. Last year, when they were seven, I travelled with them from Pond Inlet to Igloolik and back again by skidoo. I would take them camping everywhere. At least now, they watch the time when I go, when would be a good time. They know how many days they can be absent from school, so they can go hunting with me. They know there are allowances. They know they will be considered as being in school when they go out with me, as long as their academics do not suffer. But where are the other boys who are not taken out by their fathers, because the fathers are working all the time? They have lost that sense of connection.

*There is a loss of connection between fathers and sons because of circumstances.*

Yes. There is a disconnection. It is very similar to the subjects you would take from kindergarten to grade six, but all that consideration was given only to the school. It

did not include the parental guidance that they need about the environment. It is a missing link.

I mentioned at the beginning that I don't know how to be a parent. I don't know how to be a father. I was eleven years old when I went to attend school. Ever since then, I never really spent time with my parents, only to visit them. They are both gone now. From what I have seen and from what I have read, I wonder how I can make these two boys feel like they are males. What was taught to me by my father was too difficult, so I wonder how I can teach these things to my sons. Sure they get cold. They get wet. They get tired and they have to keep awake. They can live off country food and nothing else when they are out. I try not to just take them out on stormy days, because if they don't enjoy going out, then they won't want to continue going out as they are growing up. You have more love towards your adopted children than your own children, because you feel they are a special gift to you, maybe a gift from God. You have to be aware of that when you are rearing them.

*When you were in Coral Harbour, after you were elected, you must have had to move to Yellowknife?*

Yes.

*Did your family move, too?*

No. My family stayed behind.

*Maybe you could tell us about the life of a member of the Legislative Assembly.*

Okay. After I was elected I started living in Yellowknife when I became a minister.

It was fun when Titus Allooosoo lived there. He was also a minister. He was already living there, because he had been elected before. I was able to go out with him on

weekends to Baker Point and McKay Lake to hunt caribou and wolves. We would stay there on weekends. I was so proud. There was Goo Arlooktook, Titus, and myself. We went to Baker Point, and then towards Hay River. We killed a moose. There were no Indians at all with us. It was a bull moose. We tied the legs to the tree first. It took the three of us to take the hide off. It took us a whole hour. We would carry one leg at a time, one piece at a time. Because the head and the neck were too heavy to carry at the same time, we cut the neck off. When we carried the hide we had to help each other. Moose are very big. One thing I was very proud of was that even though we didn't have anyone showing us how to skin it, we were able to do it.

We would go all over on the weekends, just to sleep out. During the summer time we would travel on Titus's boat. Once the other members came to town, we would travel out with them, too. We would participate in hockey games when we lived in Yellowknife. There weren't many people from the Eastern Arctic living there; they were mostly from Kitikmeot. People from the Eastern Arctic didn't go there very often, so you would want to see other Inuit. Because I like country food, we usually had a supply of food over there. We were in Yellowknife mostly when the Legislative Assembly was sitting. At other times we had to visit communities. When we still had the government of the Northwest Territories there were a lot of communities; I think there were around fifty communities we had to visit.<sup>9</sup> The Dene communities we visited most were Fort Smith, Hay River, Fort Liard, Fort Simpson, Fort Good Hope, Fort Norman, and Deline. We were out of Yellowknife a lot when we were making community visits. That was one thing that was difficult, before we got our Nunavut government. They left it up to our own initiative how we would divide up, and that was difficult at the time.

John Todd was the finance minister then. Because we didn't want to owe money, we made a law that stated that

on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1999, things would not continue. A lot of things were stopped from happening, like new buildings being built. We were seventy-seven million or eighty million dollars in the hole, and we were trying to get rid of the deficit. There were decisions we had to make, such as who would keep the polar bear licence plate, Nunavut or the Northwest Territories. While we were arguing about that, we even started laughing. We would tell the Western Arctic people they should have something like a muskrat rather than a polar bear.

There were a lot of discussions about assets. We couldn't come to a decision over the WCB, (Workers Compensation Board) before division and the Prince of Wales Heritage Centre, which houses a lot of Inuit artifacts. There were a lot of things we wanted to leave the way they were, even after separation. I was involved in how the assets would be divided between Nunavut and the Northwest Territories as of April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999. We had to decide what we were going to do with bills that hadn't been enacted by that date. We decided we would come up with the Nunavut Act, Bill C.28 s.4. It stated that we would adopt legislation from the Northwest Territories, but after that we would come up with our own. I don't know how many Nunavut acts have been passed since 1999. There are quite a few.

The government is currently consulting people about the Education Act. Our act is from the Northwest Territories. There are even parts in it that pertain to Dene. So, they are trying to amend the Education Act. That's what they are working on now. In the Nunavut Act, it said they would take out the things that pertained only to the Western Arctic. It used to be fun planning for change in the new territory. One time John Ningark from Pelly Bay stated that we would be separating from the Northwest Territories, and he advised our counterparts not to clear cut the trees, because they wouldn't grow again!

*When you arrived in Yellowknife and into Northwest Territories politics, the Dene side of the story was new to you, Dene culture and Dene communities.*

Yes, and also Treaty 8 and 11; these were very new to me. In fact, I didn't know there was an Indian reservation in the Northwest Territories, but the Hay River reservation was in existence. I didn't know peace treaties were in existence, like Treaties 8 and 11. Apparently, they were more than just peace treaties, according to the government of the day. This was all new to me.

*They lived in Northern Canada, but they were from a different cultural background. They were under treaty. You were Inuit. They were Dene. How did that go?*

It depended. The Gwich'in live in the northern part. The reason why they wanted to settle land claims was very similar to the Inuvialuit and us, because they, too, didn't have treaties. The differences became more apparent the further south you went from there. We also learned later that, other than the Gwich'in, they spoke mostly the Athabaskan language, although they said they spoke Dogrib and South Slave and Chipewyan. They have different languages. The North Slave and South Slave people can understand each other, although they have different languages.

*So it is like a dialect difference.*

Yes. A dialect difference. It would be like us in Canada and Inuit in Greenland. You have to be extremely careful how you perceive what they say. I asked this person from Greenland, "Qanuippit? How are you?" and he said, "Ajunngilaq," which means, "I'm the best," in Inuktitut. I thought he was boasting. How little I knew. He was simply saying, "I'm fine." There were differences in the presentation, but they understood each other.

*How were you perceived by the Dene?*

Well, they already knew before my time, that Inuit were very friendly people. They were our buddies. We would gang up on the *qallunaat* in debates and things like that.

*That was the attitude?*

The attitude was that we were all aboriginals. They already knew that there were different groups like the Chipewyan, the Dogrib and the Gwich'in. They were already aware of that, more than we were. They just adopted us as part of the aboriginal group. We got along just fine. There were some differences when it came to land claims. The land claim boundary negotiations were difficult, because of their historic presence south-west of Arviat, and the continued use of that area by the Ahiammiut until 1957. Other than that, there were no contentious issues.

*Did you make friends with Dene leaders?*

Oh, yes. We were the best of buddies. We argued a lot better than they did, too. They were always supporting us, and we supported them, especially regarding educational materials that would be used in schools. We helped each other a lot. Because they hadn't had twenty or thirty years of land claim negotiations, though, our thoughts were different from theirs at times. We tried to let them know that the things the federal government might agree to were not agreed upon yet. Even though First Nations were recognized under federal government policy at the time, it would only be if there was new legislation that their aspirations and the operation of aboriginal bodies would be recognized.

*I don't think you talked to us yet about the opposition in Yellowknife and in the Assembly towards the division process.*

*Most of the opposition was in the West. Was there strong opposition?*

We Nunavummiut were requesting to have what we felt were Inuit birthrights. Because the government of the Northwest Territories was located in Yellowknife in the Western Arctic, they didn't feel like letting these things go. The museum was one, and the licence plate and the territorial flag were others.

*And jobs.*

Yes. Many jobs, very many jobs. The territorial flag had a white fox, which doesn't really exist below the tree line. We said, "No, it's all right. Keep it. We'll make our own flag. But we're going to keep the polar bear. It's useless to you." It was the assets that were most heavily debated. There were a whole lot of government buildings in Yellowknife owned by the territorial government that were worth millions of dollars. How could we get a share of those? We talked about real property until the federal government agreed to build our legislature and some other infrastructure that was required for Nunavut. Otherwise, we would have had to have the Northwest Territories government finance some of these projects, especially real properties, to build our offices and buildings here.

*So they were reluctant to let go?*

Rightly so. It was our responsibility and the federal government's responsibility since we negotiated for the new territory. They shouldn't have had to be burdened financially. It was a good argument on their part. So, we had to resort to the federal government under the Nunavut Act to help us out. In the land claim agreement, if I remember correctly, it only stated that the Nunavut Territory would be created. It didn't say that the federal government would also finance the initial building of

the Nunavut government. There was also the one point two billion dollar budget of the Northwest Territories government. We couldn't really split it in half, because they had a larger population than we did in Nunavut. We had a bigger territory in area, but if we had split that according to our population, I don't think we would have gotten more than around three hundred million dollars. It was a scary thought for a while.

*Did you have the impression, when you arrived in Yellowknife, that they had better services, better infrastructure, that there was much more money, government money, flowing in to the western part of the territory?*

In Yellowknife, job opportunities were much greater than they were in Nunavut. The economic opportunities were a lot greater. But when I started listening to Dene members of the assembly and other Dene leaders, our smaller communities were doing better in terms of arenas and community halls and things like that. It sort of balanced itself out. People in the Western Arctic owned a lot more of their own homes than we did at the time, before the Home Ownership Program (HAP) began. They inherited housing from their parents and grandparents. They started complaining that our services in the smaller communities were better in the Eastern Arctic than in the Dene communities. You cannot really compare apples and oranges. Their problems were in the small communities, not so much in the capital area. There was a very high rate of economic development in Yellowknife and Hay River and Inuvik, but they kind of forgot about their smaller communities.

*You were talking about the lack of Inuktitut materials in the education system in Nunavut. You were then the Minister of Education. Did you see that as a problem at the time?*

Oh, yes. When the Baffin Regional Education Council demanded that there be Inuktitut education from

kindergarten to grade six, they neglected to recognize that there was a need for instructional materials. The NTEP (Nunavut Teacher Education Program) students at the time, some of them were twenty-five years old. They were a product of the hostel here. How would they know, without any resource material at all, how to teach Inuktitut in the elementary school? A whole lot of teachers had to rely on what they had learned from their parents, until we created the curriculum development program. Some teachers like Martha Kayak<sup>10</sup> and others, started writing materials and producing those very small, elementary school reading books. If we had decided that, “Ten years from now we’ll have Inuktitut from kindergarten to grade six, but right now we’ll start developing materials,” instead of the other way around, it would have been less difficult. It was very difficult for me. Before my time, municipal councils and regional education councils were created. Because they were closer to home, we had to listen to them. We listened, fine, but we had nothing to offer in schools, other than local knowledge.

Some teachers taught in the communities where they came from. Others didn’t; they used their own dialect, not the local dialect, to teach their students. One of the parents joked and said, “My *irniq* says *kautaujaq*, a hammer and I say *ujarattiaq*. How are we going to solve that?” I got very loud that time and I said, “Don’t worry about dialects. Some day our system of dialects will vanish, because we will intermingle more and more. We are going to learn other dialects.” I told him, “I have no problems going to Northern Quebec or Baker Lake or Kitikmeot or Baffin. I understand all those dialects. Only recently people have become fussy about this. You don’t want your child to explore other cultures or other languages or other dialects. I think that’s a very poor attitude. You need to learn other dialects. You have to appreciate other dialects. They are all beautiful. If you are going to be ignorant, your child will probably not progress very quickly, because you will be laughing at his new-found dialect and new words.”

I will use an example from when my parents moved to Pond Inlet. My father wanted us children to learn the local dialect. They moved from Igloolik to Pond Inlet. He told Joanna Awa, “Joanna, *ujarattiarmik isiqsigit. Ujarattiaq qaniittuq isiruk.* Joanna, bring me the hammer. Bring me the hammer, right outside the door there.” It took her quite a while, but finally the door opened and she was rolling a big rock. My father said, “*Qanuitaaluinuna?* What are you doing with that?” She said, “*Ujarattiavaulaanguquujingmat.* It looked like the best rock.” In Pond Inlet a good hammer is a good rock.

Dialects should be appreciated. It shouldn't matter how you say something, or who says something. After a while, attitudes started to change and people started to accept different dialects more and more. In fact, I have become very comfortable and whatever dialect someone is speaking, I appreciate it. I love it. Don't try to hide your dialect.

*Was this a stumbling block in creating materials and resources for the schools, the dialect they were in?*

At first it was. But we encouraged the local education authorities to adapt the materials. We said, “Take this material. You're an adult. You understand it. You can adapt it for your children. It's only a few pages long.” Sometimes the materials were only around twenty pages long. We told them they could adapt the materials to their own dialects if they wanted to. We said, “At least you have the content for materials.” We said if we got materials from each community we would share it. Pretty soon, we had about forty books edited by the Department of Education.

*Was 1984 the year the College here was created?<sup>11</sup>*

Yes.

*Was this just when you arrived?*

No, it was before my time. I had just arrived when it opened. Dennis Patterson was the Minister of Education

just before I was. That was in his constituency then. At the same time, it was very cost effective, because before we were shipping students to Fort Smith. It was very hard on them. They were very far away. After school, they still weren't really free, because they weren't among Inuit. It is better having it here, because when you have a break, then you become a normal person and can be with your neighbours. You can return home and speak the way you want to.

*What do you think about Arctic College being transferred over to Nunavut? Is it better here or would it have been better in Fort Smith?*

In Fort Smith it was called Thebacha College.

*I would choose to be closer to my community. When you go out, you see people with the same background. And you have your relatives around you.*

What I would like to see, which I haven't seen yet, are campuses in Rankin Inlet, Cambridge Bay, and Kugluktuk, not necessarily with the same programs, but under the umbrella of the College. Maybe they could have heavy equipment operator courses, or some other courses there. There would be more places where you could meet new people, but they would speak the same language. That's what I'd like to see, campuses outside of Iqaluit. I'd like to see other campuses be more active. Sometimes there are courses in Rankin Inlet, but I would like to see something more, on a continuing basis.

*So, they could build their own programs.*

They could make their own programs. They also wouldn't have to be at the headquarters. Igloolik would be a very good place to learn Inuit Studies. They have a real variety of things there, that other regions have, but they

are concentrated there. They have different songs there, and marine mammal hunting, and everything else. Some other program could be in Kugluktuk; for example, mining technology could be developed there at Arctic College. What I would like is, not to have everything concentrated in one place. The Greenlanders made a mistake by building their college in Sisimiut. If you want to go to college you have to go to Sisimiut. Now it is considered a college town, and it has engulfed the rest of the community.

*You mentioned having an Inuit university.*

We talked about that in 1970; Jonah Kelly, Ann Hanson, Marcel Fortier, Mary Cousins, Abe Okpik, and I.<sup>12</sup> We talked about creating a university. Not only was it difficult, it was not acceptable at the time. I think, if we had had more cooperation from the federal government we could have worked with McGill or the University of Ottawa to start something; to have a campus, or at least a course on Inuit Studies. If we had done that, we would have had a lot of materials today. Piugaattuk<sup>13</sup> and a lot of other elders were still alive then. We would have had our own raw materials, rather than having to rely on the CBC archives like we do now.

Now these elders are dead, and we are trying to create an Inuit Studies program. I think back then, it was early enough, that even if it had been rough and not a fully functioning institution, we would have collected a whole lot of tapes for future use. You would be turning these tapes into computer disks now. I am still angry about that now, because it was an opportunity missed. We could have done that before these elders died off.

*There are tons of tapes at CBC and the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation and the Inuit Cultural Institute.*

Yes, but there is a difference between tapes that were produced for entertainment and tapes that were produced

for research. Some research tapes can be very boring. We've been doing them now for four days! Nevertheless, these tapes would have been extremely useful today. I interviewed Piugaattuk and my grandfather Ujarak for two hours one time when video cameras first came out. I don't know what IBC did with the tape, but it was about customary laws and taboos. It was fascinating. Religion also played a very large role, so it was extremely difficult to do an interview with someone and get a candid opinion, to get a person to talk about their beliefs, and talk about what they knew. It was very difficult because Christianity was very strong. There was heaven and hell, and Jesus would be coming again. The world would come to an end. If I died a sinner, I would not go to heaven.

Our ancestors had taboos, and they had lots of them. They also had customary laws. They really believed in those. I even got a shaman drunk once and I wanted him to kill me, but it never happened! Before people converted to Christianity they believed in taboos. When Christianity came around, they believed in it even more. In school, we would like to learn more about Inuit customs and taboos. A lot of times it was very difficult for elders to talk about that. When my grandfather and Piugaattuk were talking about what Inuit had to follow, and what they weren't allowed to do, it was very interesting. There were things that were very indirect that were very important in their lives.

You were not allowed to have sexual relations with non-humans. Right now people are looking at same-sex marriage as that kind of thing. In the past, Inuit frowned upon people who had sexual relations with non-human beings. There was a person who caught an eider duck that was nesting, and he was plucking it while it was still alive. He left the feathers on the head and the wing tips only, and then let it fly away. Later on, his daughter had a sore in her nose, and before long her whole face was full of open sores, and she finally died. Inuit used to talk about things

like that, about the consequences of doing something you weren't supposed to do, of breaking a taboo.

When we were trying to start an Inuit University, if there had been funding available, we would have had a lot more material now. The elders then were able to talk about a lot of things that we, ourselves, cannot talk about today. There are still some people out there who know about these things. I'm sure if you interviewed Moses Aliyak<sup>14</sup> and other elders that are still living, they are still aware of what their fathers used to tell them. You should collect stories from them. It would be great to do research on their stories.

For example, my father told me about what his father was like, and about his grandfather. If my grandfather had told stories to my father, my father in turn would have told me those stories, but, apparently, he didn't. Awa, my great grandfather, had been a shaman, but because Anglican missionaries and Catholic priests wanted our ancestors to leave their traditional ways behind, a lot of times we were not told about the lives of our ancestors.

In 1974, or 1975, when we went out hunting we would look for white hair on my father's head so he could tell us stories. Later on, when people knew the difference between religion and reality, a lot of them would go out with us, because they knew he would be talking about legends or telling stories.

The legends have different meanings. In English you have different categories of stories; fiction, novels, drama, true stories, etc. Legends were like that, too. Some of them were just made up. Some of them had roots, like Kaugjagjuk.<sup>15</sup> I wonder why this story is known from Alaska to Greenland, as well as the Kiviuq story.<sup>16</sup> I wonder why it is known all over? Other stories are like that as well.

Hall Beach, Igloolik, Arctic Bay, Repulse Bay, and Pond Inlet, in that region, I think it was more or less one community back then. Some stories are only known in that area. Some of them are true stories. Do you know

where Inukturvik is? The story about Ittuksarjuat's late wife Ataguttaaluk is a true story.<sup>17</sup> They were starving, so they ate parts of the other people they were with. I saw a picture of her. The area around her lips had become darkened. We know about that story because she was able to survive. If she had also starved, we wouldn't have known what they went through. Half way to Igloolik, in that area where we go caribou hunting from Pond Inlet, is where that event took place.

Some stories are just fiction. If we research a story and try to understand it, we wonder if it was a true story, or fiction or part-fiction or partly true. Sometimes we wonder about this. We ourselves will not be able to tell those stories, we who went to residential schools or hostels. We will only be able to tell parts of them. It would have been great if these stories had been collected as raw material.

Knud Rasmussen, from Greenland, collected some stories from around Igloolik. A lot of the things he wrote down are there as raw material. They can be used as research material. There are people from Igloolik to Qarmalik to Qurluqtuq who are still alive who knows these stories. The Qainirmiut, Paallirmiut, and Utkusiksalangmiut and Nattingmiut have a lot of material that could be used for research.<sup>18</sup> I'm sure we can do the same. Once I become an elder, those *unikkaaqtuat* will die because I will not have anything to pass on. That's a very dangerous dead end. We have minimal materials now. There are some research materials in the universities and at CBC and at some other archives, but there is still a lot of research to be done before our elders all die out. This is an urgent situation.

*I think a question like this is very interesting, because storytelling was a very important medium to pass on knowledge.*

People developed very, very good memories, because they had no materials they could read for reference. They

had to remember every detail. There are still a few gifted people. If I tell them my telephone number they remember it. If you told me your telephone number, I would forget it in five seconds. But if you told me a story for half an hour, I could almost recite everything in it a year from now. I have a selective memory. Those Inuit who tell stories, they know every detail.

*I realized that when I was interviewing Abe Okpik. His memory was so sharp compared to mine. I want to ask you about the role of media, and about artists. Storytelling now is taking other directions, through music, through film.*

The Government of Nunavut, through CLEY (the Department of Culture Language Elders and Youth) has to start putting those CBC materials on to computer disks, without discriminating as to whether some materials are better than others. Just put them on disks and collect them, because tapes disintegrate. That should be the responsibility of the government today, right now. They should get the materials from Montreal, or from wherever there are raw materials. They should be putting them on disk and storing them. This is urgent, because when they are gone, they're gone. You cannot wake up the dead.

*Perhaps now we could move to the creation of Nunavut, because that's where we are going; and I'd like you to talk about how you see the future and what you think is going to happen.*

I think the future will be beautiful if we do something right now. These are the future elders. There you are; there's nobody else. I'll be dead one day. I'm not looking forward to it, 'but!' It will be completely up to you to decide how you want to shape your future. Because we have the Nunavut Territory, and because we have the Nunavut government, it is up to you now. It's not up to Ottawa anymore, or the RCMP, or the missionaries. It's

up to you. I think that part is beautiful. At least if you make a mistake, it's your mistake. It's not somebody else's mistake that you have to live with. That's the beautiful part, but it will require very strong leadership, sometimes very unpopular leadership too, in order to better shape the future. Don't do popular things like the politicians do. That's where the mistakes are made. You also have to know your past. If people forget the past, it is very difficult to see the future. The whole place becomes a blizzard, your past and your future. It becomes hard to see. Don't think that anybody else is going to look after you, not your next-door neighbors or the people you go hunting with.

**NOTES**

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1. The *Netsilik Eskimo Series* filmed in the Kugaaruk (Pelly Bay) area of Nunavut from 1963-5 sought to recreate the reality of traditional Inuit life before sustained contact with outsiders. Asen Balikci and Guy Mary-Rousseliere, known to the Inuit of North Baffin as Ataata Mari, provided ethnographic guidance and assistance. The *Netsilik Series* is an invaluable resource for anyone who wishes to understand the ingenuity, resourcefulness and zest for life of the Netsilik people.
2. James was president of Baffin Regional Inuit Association in 1979.
3. James served as a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories from 1991 to 1995, and as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut from 1999 to 2003. In both assemblies James served as Minister of Education for a time. In October 2006, James was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut representing the Tunnuniq electoral district following the death of Jobie Nutarak, the Speaker of the Assembly.
4. Nellie Cournoyea from Aklavik, served as Premier of the Northwest Territories from 1991-1995. Dennis Patterson from Iqaluit, was Premier of the Northwest Territories from 1987 to 1991.
5. Peter Irniq was elected to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories in 1975, representing the riding of Keewatin until 1979. Re-elected in 1987, Irniq lost his seat in 1991 to James Arvaluk. Irniq later became Deputy Minister of the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth (CLEY) in the Nunavut government. He served as Commissioner from 2000 to 2005. He now lives and works in Ottawa as a private consultant.
6. James Arvaluk was convicted of two sexual assaults related to incidents that occurred after a hot tub party at his residence in Yellowknife. After an appeal one of those convictions was overturned but the other was upheld and he served out a two-and-a-half year prison term.
7. The Family Allowance Act of 1944, under the Liberal Government of Mackenzie King, provided monthly payments to families with children regardless of income. The scheme began on July 1, 1945 with the following rates per child: \$5.00 up to five years; \$6.00 six to nine years; \$7.00 ten to twelve years; and \$8.00 thirteen to fifteen years. Children of school age had to be in attendance to qualify for payment.
8. Zebedee Nungak was born near Puvirnituk, Nunavik, on the east coast of Hudson Bay, in April 1951. He has been active in local, regional and national politics all his life. Zebedee helped negotiate and is a signatory to the James Bay Agreement (1975). He was Co-Chairperson of the Inuit Committee on National Issues (1984-87) and has been President (1995-98) and Vice-President (1988-95) of

Makivik Corporation. Zebedee is an accomplished writer, and has contributed many articles and commentaries to newspapers and magazines. Zebedee's *Qallunology* commentaries illustrate his great wit, his sharp eye for detail and his ability to deal with uncomfortable topics in a humorous yet incisive way. Zebedee lives in Kangirsuk, Nunavik, with his wife and seven children.

9. Before 1999 there were fifty-nine communities in the Northwest Territories, twenty-six of which were in Nunavut.
10. Martha Kayak is a graduate of the Nunavut Teacher Education program. She has written numerous children's book and curriculum materials for the schools in Nunavut.
11. In 1981 the Adult Vocational Training Centre (AVTC) in Fort Smith was declared a college and renamed Thebacha College. In 1984 Arctic College was created with campuses in Fort Smith and Iqaluit. On January 1, 1995 Arctic College was divided into two colleges, Aurora College in the west and Nunavut Arctic College in the east.
12. Jonah Kelly worked on-air for more than thirty-five years for CBC North and was instrumental in the developing of Inuktitut broadcasting in the North. He was awarded a National Aboriginal Achievement Award in 2002 for his contributions to media and communications. [http://www.naaf.ca/html/j\\_kelly\\_e.html](http://www.naaf.ca/html/j_kelly_e.html)

Ann Hanson was born in 1946 near Kimmirut. She worked as an interpreter for the federal government in the 1960s, and later joined CBC and became an announcer and producer. She was the first editor of the community newspaper in Frobisher Bay, *Inukshuk* which later became *Nunatsiaq News*. She served as Deputy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories before division, and is currently the Commissioner of Nunavut.

Marcel Fortier was a senior government bureaucrat with the Department of Indian and Northern Development, and with the Nunavut Secretariat.

Mary Cousins was born in the Pond Inlet area in 1938. She worked for several summers as an interpreter on the *C.D.Howe*. She was the first editor of *Inuktitut Magazine*. Mary was one of the founding members of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. She received a Bachelor of Education degree through the Eastern Arctic Teacher Education Program, and taught for over thirty years in Iqaluit. She died in April, 2007.

In 1965, Abe Okpik became the first Canadian aboriginal appointed to the Northwest Territories Council. He became a field worker and president of the Indian and Eskimo Association, the predecessor of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, in Yellowknife from 1965 to 1967. He was probably most well known for his work with *Project Surname*, from 1968-1971 in which Canadian Inuit chose surnames to replace

- the disc numbers they were given to identify them by the Canadian government. He died in 1997. See also note 4 chapter 2.
13. Noah Piugaattuk was a well known Igloolik elder who contributed over seventy hours to the Igloolik Oral History Project, and was heavily involved with the Inummariit Society in Igloolik.
  14. Aliyak is a well-known elder from Kangiq&iniq who survived two separate polar bear attacks. He is known for his knowledge of the land and his concern for social issues in the community.
  15. Kaugjagjuk is a revenge story, which teaches a strong lesson about the likely dire consequences of mistreating orphans. To read the story of Kaugjagjuk, see Aupilaarjuk et al. 1999 (pp 186-187).
  16. The story of Kiviuq has an epic quality as the hero encounters many obstacles on his long journey home. To read the story of Kiviuq see Aupilaarjuk et al. 1999 (pp 192-195).
  17. To read the story of Ataguttaalik, see Aupilaarjuk et al. 1999 (pp 116-119).
  18. The Qainirmiut, Paallirmiut, Utkusiksalingmiut and Nattilingmiut are groups of Inuit from the areas around Baker Lake, Arviat, Uqsuqtuuq and Kugaaruk respectively.

## Chapter 8

# Everything Was About Yellowknife

*We have talked about your role in the Northwest Territories government as Minister of Education. Did you take part in any discussions with the Nunavut Implementation Commission on issues, such as the division of the College in 1995?*

Yes, that was included in the discussions we had on splitting assets and liabilities. This included Arctic College and other departments.

*So you were involved.*

Yes. I was involved at the beginning. Then we started involving other parties like NTI and other aboriginal organizations to find out where they stood on this.

*One thing that you mentioned was the division of archival assets. I am always struck when I go to Yellowknife, how big the Prince of Wales Museum operation is. Just the Inuit room is bigger than our museum here in Iqaluit. What did you discuss about this?*

Well, it is an asset. It is as important as our own heritage is. The problem is that you need a special building in Nunavut in order to preserve and protect these artifacts. But we don't have one. We don't have any money. We are too busy trying to build houses and schools and

trying to keep people healthy, and sending them to hospital. That's where most of the money is being spent right now. Where are our priorities with this money? Should we start considering taxation, which is a dirty word in Nunavut and Alberta? Is this needed? These artifacts from the museum have to be transferred here some day, but when can we afford to do that? That is a different question. What are the priorities of the government of the day? Maybe it's not a priority because these things are safe over there.

*Why didn't the Government of the Northwest Territories at that time, build a facility like that in the Eastern Arctic. Why was it all in Yellowknife?*

Everything was in Yellowknife. The promotion of Yellowknife was huge. It's a hangover from the days when Stuart Hodgson was the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. He wanted to show that Yellowknife was the capital of the Northwest Territories. He felt it should be developed with these facilities. The Eastern Arctic was forgotten for a long, long time, including Iqaluit, until we started the regional associations such as the Baffin Regional Council. That was when we started having a voice. What happened was the Commissioner had a veto, like the President of the United States, over legislation that the members of the assembly, even though they were elected, wanted to have passed. I don't know about the actual numbers. There was no party system there. As long as there was no consensus among the members of the assembly to have a museum in the Eastern Arctic, then there was no possibility. I think a whole lot of issues arose because of the desire to create our own territory. I think it really hindered us having Yellowknife as the headquarters. Even though we had infrastructure like schools, anything that had to do with art and culture was not to be. Anything like that belonged to Yellowknife.

*It's truly striking. I don't know how many of you students have been to Yellowknife, but the first time you go there, you see that there are paved roads, sidewalks, streetlights and huge public buildings. And a highway to Edmonton!*

Yes, and a highway to Edmonton.

*Even now we don't have asphalt, we don't have sidewalks here in Iqaluit. So, you're saying that a lot of the public money was drained by the capital?*

Yes, as far as the arts and culture were concerned. Their legislative assembly was just as expensive as our more modern one, if not more. Everything that was to be used as a showcase for the rest of the world was placed in Yellowknife; not just from the Eastern Arctic, from the communities in the Western Arctic, too. There was a very, very high concentration of things there, because Yellowknife was recognized as the headquarters. They would never think of placing departmental sections or divisions in other communities like we do here. For example, part of the Department of Education is in Pond Inlet. Community Government and Transportation is in Cape Dorset. The Department of Education headquarters is in Arviat. They would never have thought about that. Everything was about Yellowknife.<sup>1</sup>

*Was there a debate about that type of issue in the Assembly from the members from Eastern Arctic?*

Yes. There was a debate, but what debate did you present if you wanted to show that the Government of the Northwest Territories was a legitimate government? They wanted to show the world that, especially for tourism purposes. You had to show what you had in the capital. It was the transit point. It was very hard to argue against, extremely difficult. Dennis Patterson<sup>2</sup> was very good at promoting Iqaluit. You know those old, Hudson's Bay

Company type buildings, with red roofs? He supported those buildings being made into a *takujaqturvik*, a museum. He got that built. He got the Nunatta campus of Nunavut Arctic College built. He was clawing away at least, very slowly, to bring what was in Fort Smith and Yellowknife here. Fort Smith had been the regional headquarters of the Government of the Northwest Territories. They didn't want to take everything away at the same time, so they put Arctic College there instead of Yellowknife. Everything else was in Yellowknife.

*You weren't there when this decision was made, but a decision was made to sell all the government housing in Iqaluit. When the new government was formed, there was no housing for employees.*

Exactly.

*They wanted to have their money, I guess.*

Yes. Well, there was pressure to balance the budget. They didn't want a deficit once Nunavut was created. If the Government of the Northwest Territories had had a deficit, then half of it would have been Nunavut's responsibility. For that reason, government staff housing was being sold, first to their staff, and then the option to buy was opened to the general public, if there was housing still unsold.

*Why would Nunavut have been responsible for half the deficit?*

Before division could occur, they had to divide up all the liabilities and assets and deficits. They looked at everything that had to be divided. For example, when John Amagoalik was chairperson, and Simon Awa was the executive director of the Nunavut Implementation Commission<sup>3</sup>, they tried to set up how the government would be structured, and how the assets and debts would

be divided. Those of us from the Eastern Arctic, from the Nunavut area, didn't feel we had actually created debt for Yellowknife, so therefore we didn't want to take on half of the deficit. For that reason, they had to try to sell a lot of things, such as staff housing. A lot of programs were also stopped before Nunavut was established.

*So some things were left where they were?*

No. Not all of them. For example the Teacher Education Program was here, but the Akitsiraq Law School and the Nursing Program were created after the Nunavut government was in place. We had worked on access housing, but the problem with that was with the blueprints. The houses were impossible to build from the blueprints, and they were not fuel efficient. We hoped that the government, through the Housing Corporation, would come up with better plans for public housing, especially for younger people. Here in Iqaluit, housing is very expensive. Houses cost four times their original price. We wanted to get public housing to suit the wants and needs of the people here. If the government had had blueprints made, access housing could still be put in place. We also know the government loses money rather than makes money on public housing. This doesn't help your argument when you try to obtain more housing. For example, I have a house here in Iqaluit. I had to let go of all my liabilities to the bank. There are services on top of the mortgage payments. They haven't come up with a program where they would take on one hundred percent of the costs. That still hasn't happened.

*The federal government used to tell Inuit that their rent would not be increased, from the time they were first provided housing.*

That policy used to be talked about. Policy changes all the time. It can change at any time, if the government no

longer likes it. For example, the government had a policy that Indians and Inuit couldn't be educated past grade nine. Later on, this became a world embarrassment, so they got rid of that policy. There was a policy put in place where Inuit would not pay more than two dollars rent per month. Of course, they also decided because they couldn't remember our names, to give us E numbers. People from the Eastern Arctic were given numbers like E-4, E-3 etc. and in the Western Arctic people were given W numbers. When they wanted to get rid of the E numbers, Abe Okpik was hired to work on Project Surname. After that, Inuit were to be Canadians. They also had to pay taxes<sup>4</sup> and everything else. Regulations and policies can be changed by the will of the government.

*I think the first time we met, you said that Nunavut is kind of an artificial society. You said it was too subsidized, but now you are talking about the housing problems. As a member of the Cabinet of the Northwest Territories, you probably had discussions and tried to figure out how to change this situation. Could you tell us more about how we can change these conditions?*

Having lost so much is kind of unreal. Every time *qallunaat* came, the missionaries, the priests, the Hudson's Bay Company, the RCMP and social workers, they always did everything for Inuit, until they were colonized into communities. Inuit children were educated, the parents were provided with social assistance, and their dogs were killed. Then Inuit started working for government, or for *qallunaat*, up to 1999.

It was in the seventies that we started working on this, and putting things in place. Before there were councils, everything was done for Inuit, even for adults and elders. Before the government was around, our ancestors went through very difficult times. I even experienced some of this.

Every time they saw caribou they would hunt them. The caribou were very wild then. If they even heard a footstep they would run away, as soon as they heard a noise. Nowadays, if I go out caribou hunting and I see a group of caribou, if I don't really like their condition, I look for another herd to hunt from. That's how we are nowadays. Today the caribou will just stand there, even if you drive by. For example, bull caribou are not really harvested as much, and you can drive by them and they don't really move. In the early spring and during the spring they get scared easily. I was around six or seven when I really started following my father out hunting. He showed me how to make a slit, right side up. If the caribou is upside down and the dogs start running away, the caribou can only pull itself over so far. He told me once he started waving his arms to put the slits up. I will explain first how you would put the slits right side up.

As a young boy it was very difficult. I tied the ropes on the dogs to the middle of the front crosspiece of the *qamutiik*. I was thinking when I am bigger; I will definitely shoot a caribou. It wasn't too long ago, that I could still go out hunting with my father, around twenty years ago. My father was not as far-sighted as before, because he was older. He was trying to shoot a caribou after I had shot one and he was having difficulty. I followed him from behind. He was shooting at a caribou, but didn't have a chance to shoot because the caribou ran away.

I remember the time he lost a caribou he was trying to get. The caribou heard his footsteps, and ran away before he could get close enough to shoot it. Without carrying my rifle I followed the caribou. As soon as I caught up with it, I started hitting it, and its legs broke and I killed it with a pocketknife. Later on, I was sorry for what I had done. It is not fun killing a caribou like that. I don't think my father was very happy when I told him what I had done. He told me, "You shouldn't get mad at wildlife because it doesn't feel very good inside after."

You tend to feel for your parents. I felt like that for my father because I spent a lot of time with him. But you shouldn't have anger towards wildlife. You shouldn't think, this is what I'm going to do when I get big, type of thing. You are not supposed to think like that, where you get angry to back up a person.

*I think you are describing how things were, and how they have changed now.*

People back then didn't lead the lifestyle they would have wanted. It is the same way today, because things are not the way we would like to see them. As I asked earlier, is it good for children to take only Inuktitut up to grade six? And in junior high isn't that the reason why a lot of them give up, because they finally go into a grade where they can't understand English? That's a good question, looking at education. Are we where we wanted to be?

As soon as you are old enough to go to school, when you are six years old, your parents give you to the school. They are no longer responsible for you, and it is up to you to do what you want when you get back home from school. In our younger days, even when we went to school, we had chores to do after school until we had to go to bed. There was no way we could refuse. There were some cases where children wrinkled their noses indicating 'no', but they got good slaps from their parents for refusing to do what they were told.

The question is; how can we get involved in preparing our children for their future? At this time, education is controlled by the government. We wanted to see things otherwise, but this still has not come around. The only thing the government has come up with is human rights legislation, and all these other acts we don't know much about. So, we just let go of our children.

We can't read English well, and it is impossible for ordinary Inuit to find the acts and regulations and policies

of the government. As we know, we heard that some children were hurt. Some of these children are adults now and are still hurting, especially those who went to school in Chesterfield Inlet.<sup>5</sup> In Alaska, the children were sexually abused in the past as well. Now, because of what happened problems are surfacing. If the parents had found out about this right away, if they had not let go of their children, they would have dealt with those situations. But because the children kept this inside of them until they became adults, it isn't easy to solve. Sometimes when you are a teenager, you are embarrassed about a lot of things. If you are just walking down the street, it seems that everybody knows if something has happened to you. When something has happened to a child, they put it in the back of their mind somewhere, but because it cannot just go away, it tends to come back when they are adults. They keep going back to it. That's what I've heard, anyway.

We have created an artificial society or a semi-artificial society. If we want to live our own lives, aren't we supposed to be doing something to solve these things? It's a big question mark. How do we align the Inuit wish for bringing up their children the way they want to, with the behavioral system used in the school, especially in the elementary school? We want to do this, but at the same time we cannot violate federal legislation. How do we align these, so that Inuit will finally have a leadership role in the kind of society we want? The elders are now saying, "My grandchildren are used to doing whatever they want to. When they come home they don't listen." That's true. The child says to the grandfather, "Bring me that. I want that grub box." What kind of respect is that towards a grandparent? The grandfather indicates his refusal by wrinkling his nose and then he doesn't do anything. Is that the sign of a bad person? No. They usually talk about 'the terrible twos', when they are 'smart alecs.' When the child is getting smarter, because they love the child so much, they leave it up to the child to do whatever they want.

For example, a grandparent will say, "I love that child so much." Then they let them eat junk food. The child ruins his teeth because he doesn't brush them.

If Inuit truly want the society they say they want, they should be teaching their children what was taught to them while they were growing up. For example, if I loved a child, I would teach the child how to live life. If I loved a child, I would teach him or her right from wrong. I would want him or her to have the skills and the abilities to do things. It is only when they finish grade twelve that young people decide what they are going to be, or what kind of training they are going to get into. Some of them want to be firemen or policemen. One of my sons wants to be a hunter when he grows up. It is only when they are finishing high school that they will really decide on what they want to do. For us, because we love them, we have to find out how to help them. When they finish grade twelve, they can take further education. Getting grade twelve is only just a prep school. Once you complete the prep school, it will be up to the child to take the kind of training he or she wants. The parents support the child during basic schooling up to grade twelve, to help them find out if they can do it. It's up to the student, then, to take the kind of training they want at that level.

As I stated, you have lots of things to do, because we are not living in the society we wanted. It is a government-made society. The only way we will be able to change it is if the policies are changed. If you only just talk about it, nobody will hear. Perhaps our parents' generation got used to being controlled by the government. That's what I meant by making an artificial society: it was not made by Inuit themselves. It was a pattern set by the government, by their policies and programs and directives, including the killing of the dogs, including sending the children away to residential schools at a very young age. Maybe they did this with good intentions, but these decisions were not made by Inuit for their own society.

It is only through legislation that we can start changing the way we want to live, and leading the lifestyles we want to live. If we want one hundred percent of Inuit to be McGill graduates, so be it, but at least let Inuit decide that, not people south of sixty. We may not want to change anything now, but let people decide that for themselves.

**NOTES**

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1. “One of the main priorities of the new Nunavut Government (GN) upon its creation in 1999 was the decentralization (delocalization of jobs would be a more accurate expression as decentralization in Nunavut never implied any substantial decentralization of power) of government jobs amongst ten of its larger communities contrary to the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, the Government of Nunavut did not want to have a highly centralized administration. To achieve decentralization, the Decentralization Secretariat was established in 1999 with the objective of supporting the various departments in decentralizing operations in the most cost effective and efficient manner. By December 2001, 340 positions had been decentralized. However, only 209 had been filled, and 131 remained vacant. The cost of decentralization was fairly high (around \$2 million) (See: Evaluation and Statistics Division, Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs: 2002, p. 2)” Amagoalik, 2007, p. 141.
2. Dennis Patterson was one of the first lawyers to practice law in the Eastern Arctic. He was first elected as the MLA for Iqaluit and later became the fifth Premier of the Northwest Territories from 1987 to 1991. He also acted as Chairperson of the Nunavut Constitutional Forum which emerged after the 1982 plebiscite on division, and served on many other boards and agencies. He currently lives in and works as a private consultant in British Columbia.
3. “The Nunavut Implementation Commission (NIC) wanted to make sure that the future Government of Nunavut (GN) would be flexible enough to adapt to Inuit needs and culture. Among the recommendations made by the NIC, one was to “secure greater control of programs and services at the local level” (NIC, 1995: p. A-21.5 , recommendation #6-8).
4. Project Surname was initiated by the Council of the Northwest Territories to give surnames to the Inuit who up to that point were only identified by disc numbers.
5. Although other aboriginal groups in Canada living on-reserve do not pay taxes, Inuit pay federal and provincial/territorial income taxes and the Goods and Services Tax (GST).
6. Although a day school had been operational since the First Grey Nuns arrived to teach in 1953, it wasn't until 1955 that the student residence in Chesterfield Inlet, called Turquetil Hall was opened. The last year of operation of the residence was in 1969. [http://www.chesterfieldnet.histroy\\_timeline.html](http://www.chesterfieldnet.histroy_timeline.html)

## Chapter 9

### **My Strength Was in the Backroom Deals**

*We are not yet at the creation of Nunavut. You were a part of this very exciting exercise. Maybe you could start by telling us how you decided to run again?*

You don't actually decide these things. You are asked to run, nominated, backed-up, campaigned for, and then you accept the responsibilities. The Legislative Assembly building had not yet been completed. The first time we met as an elected body was at the high school in Iqaluit. That's where we had our first meeting and the swearing-in ceremony. When we opened the first session of the Nunavut Legislative Assembly, it was at the Cadet Hall, here in Iqaluit in March, 1999.

*Were you still living in Coral Harbour?*

Yes.

*And the people from Coral Harbour asked you to run?*

Yes. The people from Coral Harbour and Chesterfield Inlet asked me to run. I think most candidates are in that position.

*But then you had opponents in Coral Harbour?*

Yes, I had opponents. They had been asked, too. I am a great supporter of democracy.

*Of the electoral system?*

Of Canadian democracy. For many, many years, we were a colony and dictated to. Then when democracy came about, I supported it one hundred percent, I supported it through community councils in the '70's. Yes. That's a trade-off from having natural leaders. The traditional Inuit leaders we are talking about were not respected historically by the government, the RCMP the mission etc. They were not respected. Instead of trying to make that work, the trade-off was to have democratically elected councils. I support democracy. At least people have a chance to choose their representative in the Legislative Assembly. Some people may take it personally. I've lost elections before: in fact I lost two of them; one was territorial, the other was federal. I lost to Peter Ittinuar.<sup>1</sup>

*You ran as a Liberal?*

I ran for the Liberals. After Ittinuar got elected, he crossed over to the Liberals. I was using their words, anyway, off the record. I support democracy very much.

*Did you run as a Liberal the second time Peter Ittinuar ran?*

No, the first time. He was the New Democratic Party (NDP) candidate when he beat me. He was the Liberal candidate when Tom Suluk beat him.<sup>2</sup>

*So he ran just one time for the NDP?*

Yes. It's disappointing, but you still support democracy. You are proud of who the people elect. Even if they don't elect you, you are proud of who they elect. I'll tell you right now, if you want to try to run for leadership through the democratic process, if you don't win right away, don't be disappointed: it's a part of life. You can be proud of being

in a democratic society, because if you have ever been, or at least seen on the television, where dictatorship is the common law in some countries, you'd feel very sorry for those who are not privileged because they are very poor. Only the friends of the dictator are okay, but the common people are not. No matter how bad the housing shortage we have is, or the lack of proper education, etc., democracy is still better for me. At least I can see in my children's future that they will have options as to what kind of lifestyle they will want in a democratic society.

*As we are discussing political systems, why don't we take five minutes to hear your comments about consensus government? If you continue speaking in English, my students will kick me out.*

You are aware that people have different choices. They have different parties to choose from. The Liberals are open. They don't hold back anything. The Conservatives, for example, if they had something in this cup they would try not to finish it right away. The New Democratic Party should rightfully be called the socialist party. It's for ordinary people controlling government instead of corporations. Daycare, income support and public housing are the things they support. The New Democratic Party is just a name. It doesn't really mean anything. They just came up with that name because it is a nice name to hear. It's a social-oriented party. These are the parties.

The Nunavut Government is seen as a consensus government. Whatever the majority votes for is enacted. Cabinet ministers can also vote yes or no. If any one of the MLAs or ministers is to be kicked out of office, they vote on it, and the minister is replaced. All the other MLAs, other than the premier, can be put into a minister's position. It is the premier who settles the portfolios. Even if a person is appointed as a minister, sometimes people decide to oust him from cabinet.

I think the assembly will be sitting again on February 21st, 2006 to discuss the budget. You all know that Peter Kilabuk has stepped down and will need to be replaced.<sup>3</sup> The assembly will examine the performance of the other ministers, and they could easily remove one of them. Then they would have to replace two ministers. They will look amongst themselves to decide who will be chosen, whether Tagak Curley would agree now to become a minister or not, or maybe Patterk Netser. That's what they are going to be doing, starting February 21st. I'm not too sure about the exact date, but it is the third week of February, anyway. You always have to be on top of your job as a minister. The cabinet has their own meetings, sometimes every second day, sometimes every week. They work on policy and regulations. When something is put in place, the minister is told to make sure it is enforced. You have to decide things so the people are happy and the government is happy, but this is not always the case. Not everyone will be happy about everything. What you have to decide is what is good for the future. For example, we were working on the Education Act four years ago. Because what we came up with was not satisfactory to the people, they didn't go forward with the act. Manitok Thompson asked if I could take on half of her workload so that she could consult with the communities. She had to be finished by March 31st. That act has not been passed because people are still not satisfied with it. Sometimes acts can be passed very quickly, sometimes they take a long time. If a session of the assembly is prorogued before an act has been passed then it 'dies' and they have to start over at the beginning of the next session. If the public doesn't like it, the process has to start over again.

You don't need to speak English to be a member of the assembly. For example, if you don't want to think in English when you are brainstorming about something, you can do it in Inuktitut. There is always political evolution. If something comes up that people don't like, the government can hold public hearings. After the public hearings the

government will discuss it again in the legislative assembly, including the input from the public.

*Do you think that the political clout of the MLAs balances the cabinet?*

Yes, they out-number cabinet.

*Yes. This I know, but in your political life, did you witness the MLAs forcing a minister to resign?*

Yes. If you behave contrary to parliamentary rule and you are caught, you can be asked to resign. If you don't resign, then there could be a vote of non-confidence. That means other MLAs will carry a motion to remove the minister.

*Did this happen?*

I'm not sure, but ministers usually volunteer to resign, because it's too embarrassing to be voted out of office.

*One of the arguments against consensus government, I got this from ministers in the Yukon government at the time, is that the MLA has no power. He is isolated. He wants a good deal for his community, so he needs to have friends in the cabinet. Otherwise, he'll be marginalized. There's no party or organization to assist the member if he disagrees with the cabinet.*

Yes. Exactly, but then that person doesn't deserve to be an MLA. To be an MLA, you have to know the ropes. You can choose completely to speak Inuktitut only to make allies, or you can be quiet in the Legislative Assembly but when you get into your office, you start arguing away. My strength was in the backroom deals. John Todd<sup>4</sup> wanted to build a winter road from Rankin Inlet to Whale Cove. He said, "I need one more vote, I need your support." I said,

“I’m not going to support you. That’s a really stupid idea. We already have a winter road in the Western Arctic. You don’t need a test. Why don’t you plan to build a real road, an actual road on the land. Plan that instead, all the way to Churchill, or a railway or something.” He insisted that he would introduce the motion. I said, “What’s in it for me, for Coral Harbour?” That’s when we got the harbour and bridge. It was a backroom deal like that. You have to be involved with the government and other regular MLAs with every finger that you have. You have to show that what you are talking about reflects others, not just your own constituency. For example, when I wanted a port or at least a fixed wharf, it was a one million dollar deal, deepening the harbour in Coral Harbour, using local contractors. I wondered what kind of support I would get from other communities and other MLAs? I said to them, “When we get that done, we’ll be setting a precedent, to build docks in other communities. At least there’s something in it for you, there will be a lever setting a precedent, because Coral Harbour has a dock. Pond Inlet should have one, a year later, in the next budget session.”

*You were a minister when John Todd was Minister of Finance?*

No, I wasn’t. I was a regular member then. That’s why I couldn’t automatically support him, unless I got something for Coral Harbour. You get to know how to go about it. Not only that. Look at this. The bill has to be read three times: read for the first time, then read for the second time, and then you can have a debate or public hearing. If the MLAs, who out number the cabinet say ‘no’, on the third reading, the bill is dead. That’s how powerful consensus government can be.

*In fact, that’s what happened with the Education Act?*

Yes. It was not good enough yet.

*It's very tempting to ask you questions about John Todd in the Northwest Territories government and his business affiliates. I don't know if you feel comfortable to talk about that.*

It's none of my business. There are individuals in the Legislative Assembly who have more influence than others, because they know how to do trade-offs. That's how they influence the members, especially the members of the cabinet. He was one of the most influential members of the Legislative Assembly. But you have to know how to use your influence. You can have support through the cabinet or other members, but you have to know how to pat them on the back at the same time. It's an art, it's a cleverness.

*There is the public and there are politicians. You talked a few minutes ago about democracy and the electors, and then you mentioned that you had better be smart in the backroom deals. Why in the backroom? They cannot be shown to the public?*

No, they cannot be shown to the public. It has to appear as a genuine intent on the part of that particular minister.

*That's the art of politics. I'm going to run for office now! It's so interesting.*

Yes, it's a lot of fun, and it's scary, too. Anything that comes out of your mouth is recorded. Even if you yawn, it's recorded, and the laughs are recorded. You should look in the Hansard, some members laugh, some of them clap. It's a lot of work, a lot of thinking. Most of us members, our brains are not big enough to absorb the information that is fed to us. We receive a lot of mail. Every organization in Canada, and internationally wants to send you a message, whether it's about blizzards, trees, environmental protection, the Amazon; you get it all. You really learn

how to check out what is useful and what is not. You get a lot of information that is useless. Some of it can be used for examples. If I ask a question of the government, they would answer me back in a certain way. I could use that material for references. What I have to do first is table it as a document before I ask any questions. I could then use it as a reference for a tabled document. Then the member will have to answer me. When Peter Kilabuk resigned I wondered whether he was disappointed or angry. So, I wrote a letter to him and asked him, "Aren't you happy? You'll be able to ask the ministers questions. If they are not wearing black pants you'll be able to notice the crotch area getting wet because they'll be nervous. They will get shaky and hardly look at you." It's like a civilized form of torture!

*All of the questions on the Education Act are important. In his interviews John Amagoalik said "Well, we who negotiated this land claim and the Nunavut Act, we thought the first thing to go through the Legislative Assembly would have been the Education Act."*

There was a lot of opposition to it. No one liked it. The members of the legislative assembly didn't like it. The government bureaucracy, the managers, whatever you call them, they wanted certain things kept in. This was something we were not happy about. First the communities wanted this and the government wanted that. The community education committees wanted direct contact with the minister, with control in the communities. The people who didn't like it were the elected officials of education in the communities who had to go through the executive directors, who were government of Nunavut staff members. The executive director of education would decide if he or she wanted to take up any matter with the minister, or not. The elected community education council would have to go through someone who wasn't

elected to get to the elected minister. With regard to those parents who weren't sending their children to school, people didn't like the fact that the parents could be fined up to five hundred dollars. People didn't want to be held responsible for their child not attending school. Instead of a fine, it was suggested that alternative methods could be used so that the parents could understand their child's needs to go to school, and their child's need to eat, and sleep well. Instead of being fined, how could the parents be persuaded to take on this responsibility? There were other minor things, but those were the main concerns. They wanted the fine off the record. They didn't like it, and other little things, too.

*Was the creation of an Inuktitut curriculum from kindergarten to grade twelve an important issue?*

It was important, but it could be in the regulations and in the policies. It didn't necessarily have to be in the bill itself. I think what they wanted to do was to have insurance in the bill that the provision be open to have the Inuktitut curriculum developed up to grade twelve.

*So this would have been left to the local councils?*

No. That would have been a gradual development, rather than becoming absolute law immediately, so that you didn't have to start teaching high school students tomorrow without any resources. There's not much right now that was specifically developed as a credit program in Inuktitut, like in math or other subjects.

*The newspaper claims that the proposed Education Act is a copy of the last one?*

Well, that's freedom of the press. The Education Act hearings are not even over yet, not until March 31st. 2006. The proposed Education Act is probably very close to the

first one right now. The changes will not be made until after the public hearings. I decided quite a while ago that I would make up my own mind on what was believable in the public press and what was not. Now, I make my own judgment on that. I cannot simply read the *Nunatsiaq News* and say, "Oh yeah." I can't do that because some stories are exaggerations. They have to sell their paper. How do they sell their paper? They have to make it interesting, by stretching the truth sometimes, and by talking about the Education Act proposal.

I can tell you right now, that it's very similar to the first one without actually telling you what's in the second draft. However, the Education Act is still in process. We will see what the final draft will be. They never tell you that part. They start talking about it as if it was the final draft. I reserve my judgments about whatever I read in the public press.

*Still around the Education Act, could we step back to the process of introducing the Education Act at the Assembly? Dennis Patterson made a report on education in 1983, or '84, as part of a territorial commission.<sup>5</sup> In this report it was recommended to create Inuktitut material for the Eastern Arctic Teacher Education Program and for the schools. To this day, in 2006, teachers in the Inuktitut stream are saying that they have nothing to teach with. In the high schools, it seems hardly anything has changed over twenty-five years. What would be your answer?*

Okay. Right now, I have to recognize that most of the Inuit teachers have B.A.s and none have masters or Ph.D.s. It's very, very difficult for someone with a Bachelor of Education to actually know the necessary psychological effects a book will have on a child when they are writing it. Right now, most of our materials are kind of raw. People with B.A.s are reluctant to write something that might not be proven helpful, and don't know what level the book

should be used for. There are quite a few materials, but only one or two materials for grade one, and maybe one or two materials for grade two, up to grade six, so you may have eighty books altogether, but very few for each grade. You could finish them in a month. That's why we have an acute shortage of materials on a daily basis, for one hundred and eighty to one hundred and ninety days of the school year. What needs to happen immediately is to create institutions like this one for developing curriculum materials only. Then you would have to dig in the CBC archives, the Department of Culture Language Elders and Youth (CLEY), museums, oral histories, Inuktitut studies, all that, and afterwards categorize the materials into what grade they should be used for. You cannot use this particular content material and then format it to grade seven, and format it differently for grade eight. It would be a repeat of the material, even though it may be a little harder. Whatever teaching material you have in Inuktitut has to be different every single step. It's a huge task, but it has to be recognized by the government as a necessary endeavour.

*For this specific project, we have support from the Department of Education; I think for the first time.*

We'll have to come up with school materials. Even if you are not a teacher, if someone is being interviewed, then that interview you did could be given to the schools, and they could decide what grade level it could be used at. Even if it's only one or two pages, it is wanted and needed. CLEY has a number of contests. If you are aware of an elder who is really good at telling stories, work with them, even if you are young.

*I visited Greenland and they have tons of educational materials.*

And don't forget they have over two hundred years of educational history; we barely have forty years.

*During the negotiations, you worked with an Inuit organization first. As you said earlier, this was all new, this concept of self-government for indigenous people. There was nothing in writing yet. You participated in the first Nunavut legislature, implementing this dream. What parts of your dream have been fulfilled and which parts have been abandoned?*

Well, everyone knows in Canada you cannot have ethnic government.

*Unless under the Indian Act.*

Even under the Indian Act. They do not have legislative authority. People can only make recommendations to the federal government concerning what kind of legislation they want. Communities have by-laws. It would be similar to that. They wouldn't have the authority to hold public hearings or to make legislation. But we had the numbers on our side, eighty-five percent of the population was Inuit: but what about the future? You have two responsibilities immediately there. One is to ensure that the democratic system in Nunavut is practised fairly and squarely, and two is to ensure you have a good education system so that Inuit will have a competitive edge regarding employment with the government, and creating their own economy through small business. If you don't have that, you are going to have thousands of southerners working for the government and squeezing Inuit out, because the Inuit don't have a strong enough educational background to be competitive. That is an immediate, immediate responsibility for the government. They have to ensure that Inuit can qualify for any position in the government in order to maintain the eighty-five percent representation of the population. We also have to have pride in ourselves, and continue to elect Inuit who have qualifications. How many *qallunaat* are there in Cambridge Bay? Forty?

*Maybe sixty-five.*

There are not even a hundred. The population there I think is around twelve or thirteen hundred and they have a *qallunaaq* member of the assembly. Something is wrong here! Why is that? Because they don't have an outstanding Inuk they would prefer at present, they think. They still have this old belief that *qallunaat* are so much more able to work within the government or with the political development of the government. It is really sad, because we haven't really convinced the elders that younger Inuit are here, that they are able, and they are willing to be managers or politicians or lawyers or nurses. It is too much for them, for those who go every four years to put their x's in the ballot box. But, I see that the number of Inuit in the assembly is greater than their percentage of the population, which is eighty-five percent. The legislative assembly could very easily be a hundred percent Inuit. That's not legislated into the Nunavut Act. It shouldn't be, but in theory, it could be a hundred percent.

*How many qallunaat are there now?*

Two.

*It changes the rules of the game if the majority of civil servants are not Inuit.*

Big time. In the departments the deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers direct the policies. If they were Inuit, it is obvious that whatever people were saying would be understood, because these people would come from the communities, and they would know what people were talking about right away. If you have *qallunaat* deputy ministers or assistant deputy ministers, they have to research things first before they finally respond to you, because being *qallunaat* they have never experienced life up here. For myself, there are some things from down south

I don't understand right away. You can't eat raw steak, but you can eat raw oysters. If a department has an Inuit deputy minister and assistant deputy minister, they are able to respond to you right away.

*So there are misunderstandings?*

There is a lack of northern experience, a lack of information.

*Is it vice versa? If they were all Inuit, would they have enough knowledge of qallunaat?*

Inuit deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers are usually able to speak English, but if *qallunaat* are put in those positions, they usually don't know about Inuit culture or language.

*Does that create problems?*

Yes. It is really obvious in community government. For example, in Pond Inlet we wanted a new airstrip. The response we had right away was, if the government put a new airstrip in Pond Inlet then they would have to do the same to the Pangnirtung airstrip, and they would have to make the Kimmirut airstrip longer, too. Mary River<sup>6</sup>, south of Pond Inlet, is going to be developed. There is enough iron ore there to keep it operational for more than fifty years. We need to build a new airstrip in Pond Inlet. Instead of building an airstrip in Arctic Bay, they built it at Nanisivik<sup>7</sup> because of the mining development. It's not really understood by government why we want to see a new airstrip in Pond Inlet. The money will be used instead for an airstrip in Mary River, because the company will have airplanes going there every day. The mining company would like to have Pond Inlet as a base, because they would be able to go from Pond Inlet to Mary River. If you talked about this with Inuit, they would understand right

away where the problem is. The deputy minister doesn't understand the reasons why the Inuit want to see a new airstrip in Pond Inlet rather than Mary River, because it's not in his heart, it's just in his brain.

*This is quite a touchy issue. Sometimes, looking at the Nunavut government, I have the impression that there are more and more people from Newfoundland working here. I think there is a flight there from here.*

I think they cancelled that. We welcome them.

*It's all right to welcome them, but sometimes I wonder, if there is a lobby forming, where the government starts to be kidnapped by a group? This is terrible to say, but sometimes when you are walking around, you notice there are more and more Newfoundlanders here.*

It is more like an invasion.

*I'm thinking about some organizations where people pass on contracts and things like that.*

Oh yes. Big time. People pop up here, let's say in Pond Inlet, and start working the next day. How does that happen? Somebody made a phone call before they advertised the job as a casual position locally. That's very common, extremely common.

*There is more than one family from there.*

There is very high unemployment in Newfoundland, too.

*They have become the nomads of the North now, not us.*

There is no way to control that, other than demanding that every position, casual or otherwise must be advertised locally, and publicly.

*The ironic thing is that Newfoundland probably has the worst record in Canada in relation to their aboriginal people. They never wanted to make any treaties or recognize any indigenous rights up until recently, since Voisey's Bay.<sup>8</sup>*

Newfoundlanders do not see other people as special. They think, "They are just like us." They don't discriminate; they don't care less if you are black, yellow, Inuit or otherwise. You are just another human being. So, they have a hard time accepting that Labradorians may require special treatment for now, until they have their own economic development and social justice. That is why they have that history. If Newfoundlanders come to my community, they'll eat raw seal meat with me. They have no problem with that. It is a very good attitude that is invading the government right now.

*But on the other hand, you were saying it is creating problems; their views, their experiences and perspectives are different.*

You cannot change what is in place already. For example, if we all become qualified to work for the government tomorrow, you can't just kick those guys out and replace them. That is a problem. People shouldn't practise things like that, anyway. But that's a reality; there are people working for the Government of Nunavut who come from outside of Nunavut. Once we become qualified we want to replace them, but we can't, because there aren't any open positions. That is the number one responsibility of the government, to qualify us through intensive training to work for the government.

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**NOTES**

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1. Peter Ittinuar was the first Inuk to be elected to the House of Commons, representing the district of Nunatsiak from 1979 to 1984. Elected as a New Democrat, Ittinuar crossed the floor to join the Liberals in November 1982. He lost the Liberal nomination to Robert Kuptana in 1984. In the 1979 election Ittinuar got 2,608 votes and Arvaluk, running for the Liberals, got 2,377.
2. Thomas Suluk was chief negotiator for ITC when the agreement-in-principle on wildlife was signed with the federal government in October, 1981. Suluk was elected to the riding of Nunatsiak as a Progressive Conservative in 1984. Peter Ittinuar ran as an independent in the same election. Thomas Suluk lives in Arviat, Nunavut.
3. Peter Kilabuk, the member for Pangnirtung, was re-elected for a second term in February 2004. He stepped down as a minister in February 2006, and was chosen Speaker of the House in June 2006.
4. John Todd was born in Scotland in 1947 and moved to the Northwest Territories to work with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1965. He later worked in Yellowknife at one of the local gold mines, and later pursued his interests in the private sector. He was first elected as a Member of the Northwest Territories Assembly for Keewatin Central in 1991 and was re-elected in 1995. He held many portfolios, most notably as Minister of Finance in the years leading up to the creation of Nunavut. After leaving the North he moved to British Columbia where he has been living for several years.
5. Between 1981 and 1982 the Special Committee on Education held forty-three public hearings across the Northwest Territories gathering information on every aspect of education. The final report entitled *Learning Tradition and Change*, made a number of recommendations to reform the education system including, extra support for teacher education, curriculum development and the establishment of a college system. Tagak Curley was a member of that committee.
6. The Mary River development, owned by Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation, is located about one hundred and sixty kilometres south of Pond Inlet.
7. The Nanisivik mine was located about twenty kilometres east of Arctic Bay. It operated as a zinc mine for twenty- six years before closing in 2002. Heavy lead-zinc contamination prevented Arctic Bay residents from relocating several of the buildings to Arctic Bay to ease the housing shortage and the buildings had to be demolished after the mine was closed.
8. The Labrador land claim was filed in 1977 and negotiations began in 1988. An Agreement-in-Principle was signed between the federal

and provincial governments and Labrador Inuit in June 2001. In May 2004, Labrador Inuit voted in support of the agreement to establish Inuit self- government for Labrador, called Nunatsiavut. On December 6, 2004, the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly passed the *Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act*.

In 1996 Inco acquired the rights to operate a nickel-copper-cobalt mine on a site about three hundred kilometres north of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador. Impacts and benefits agreements (IBAs) signed by Inco and the Innu Nation and the Labrador Inuit Association provide for specific industrial and employment opportunities for both aboriginal groups.

## Chapter 10

# Keep in Mind That As Inuit We Are Very Capable

*How would you like to see Nunavut in twenty or thirty years?  
It's not the same question as how Nunavut will be.*

There's a big difference.

*Maybe you can deal with both.*

How it will be is for the followers. How we would like to see it is for the leaders. It doesn't matter whether you are in a classroom or your home, you can still take a leadership role by giving suggestions for direction. You don't have to be a member of the legislative assembly, you don't have to be a hamlet council mayor; you could be at home with your children and still take a leadership role through local radio, by writing to the newspaper, by talking to other people. That's how we all started, nothing less and nothing more. We didn't start in a meeting like this. We started with buddies and friends, and evolved from there.

*By voicing your opinions?*

Our opinions, dreams, and aspirations. We wanted to make a change, hopefully for the better. Everything has a stumbling block, a down side, with down times. Don't

pretend that Murphy's Law doesn't exist, because it does. What can go wrong will go wrong. You just have to stand up again. I am really encouraged with the new leaders here, the ones who have as a reference what we have done already, through the land claim, through the government, through the education system. With that reference the new leaders can go forward and make better, more experienced decisions and directions. When we started the land claim we had no reference. There had never been such a thing. There was no such thing as justice in the past for Inuit. There was no such thing as formal education for Inuit or self-government. We had to think about the way people lived a long time ago in the communal system. How did they decide where they were going to go hunting? I think this could be used as a reference for the future.

I have no doubt that things are going to get better for two reasons. The first is you now have the independence to decide what kind of government you want, and who you want in the government and on hamlet councils; you have that. That's already done.

The second part is you know what experiences you had in your life that you don't want your children and grandchildren to live through. Mine was the hostel system. I didn't like the idea of six year old children being sent away, so I was determined that some day I would change that. I didn't want *qallunaat* to be the captains of my land, of my boat. That's why I decided when I grew up I was going to help Thomas Nutarariaq, who I mentioned earlier. I didn't like the way the Hudson's Bay Company manager treated him, how he had no respect for him as a human being. His son had gone through hardship to get to Igloodik, and he had to turn around and go all the way back to his camp again with the cigarette butts given to him by the manager.

You have all this experience with today's system. Maybe you don't like the housing system right now. Maybe you don't like the way the education system has

developed up to now. Maybe you want to make some changes. What I'd do is take this personally. I'd think, "What are the things that are happening to me that I don't want other people to experience in the future". With that as a reference point, I'm very encouraged that things will always get better. You have the independence, and you have the experience to decide where you want to go, but if you sit back and wait for others to do it, it won't happen. It will just evolve into something different than what you are dreaming of.

*So it starts with one person?*

Yes. It starts with one person. It will come to you sooner or later. Imagine there is a poor person who is hungry, and there are restaurants all over town, trying to sell their food to people who have enough money to buy it. The poor person who is hungry can't do the same thing. What would you like to see done differently for that person? You can start with something like that.

You don't need to think about the whole territory, the whole government. Start with one person; maybe your brother, or maybe your sister, maybe your friend or someone you are acquainted with. People make things very complicated. The government bureaucracy loves to make things complicated, but you can look at almost anything very simply. To make the right decision, though, is hard, even though the picture itself could be quite simple. Whether to have Inuktitut as the language of instruction from kindergarten to grade six, seems like a very simple problem. But in the junior high transitional period and into high school, it is very difficult to determine what the best solution is for that. Maybe there is no sole solution.

I read a book that was fascinating, but very frustrating once. It said, if you come to a conclusion then you are not yet thinking. When can I come to a conclusion so I can decide? What it was saying is, there is no perfect solution.

If you wait for a perfect solution you won't do anything. You can think about something for the rest of your life. Sometimes you have to decide, even though you know it's not a perfect solution. It's better than not doing anything at all.

I had a poster one time in my office. It was a picture of three monkeys, not seeing, not hearing, and not talking. Education is expensive. When I was the minister I had to try to convince Cabinet I needed more money for my department. I said, "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance." Ignorance is very expensive for the government. With ignorance, people cannot find jobs. They have to go on welfare. They have to be housed. They have to be looked after by the government. That could become very expensive. But if you are educated in Inuktitut, German, *qallunaatitut*, it doesn't matter, it's cheaper for the government because you are self-sufficient.

I look at things quite simply, but when I try to come up with solutions, I have to think about everybody. I have to start balancing things, then. There is no such thing as a perfect person or a perfect thing. This is not the same as an ideal. We could say, "Today there are ideal conditions to go hunting," or you could say, "She's an ideal person to be a pilot on that airplane," because of her background, because of her knowledge, because she has a knack for operating machinery. But you can't say that she is a perfect pilot because there is no such thing. We have to accept who we are now, even if we aren't perfect. How then, do I improve the government policies for my children's future? You try to plan for the future, keeping in mind what is most dear to you. It could be your children. It could be your little niece. Who do you want to shape the future for? If you do it for yourself, that's the first mistake you are going to make, because everybody else will be left behind.

We have all taken many courses and workshops. I was a CARS (Community Aerodrome Radio Station) operator. When the government was shutting down the Ministry of

Transportation in Coral Harbour, I went to a course in Fort Smith. I also took a senior management program in Banff, Alberta, on management skills and the art of negotiation etc. So, what do you do with your courses? You gain the experience of knowing what others do, what other people's instructions are. You don't have to use them all. What you do is take the good ideas and create your own way of doing things.

If you are a member of the Assembly, you have to yell and holler across the floor to the ministers every day during the sessions. But if you don't write to the ministers, and have lunch with them, and give them good ideas, then all your hollering is wasted. That's just a public address system on the airwaves. You have to be able to move something in order to make it work. There is an old saying in *qallunaatitut*, "You can bang your head against a wall" but if you can't make it budge, you're not achieving anything. You're also doing your head no good!

It's the same thing at the legislative assembly. You can yell and holler all day, but if you are not making any difference for your community or for Nunavut, you are worthless. You are just wasting taxpayers' money and the government's time.

So, how do I see the future? I see a future with good education, our own Inuit university, with texts on the environment all in Inuktitut, and the Teacher Education Program all in Inuktitut. I see a future with high school all in Inuktitut, with language arts development, so students would actually be studying English as a subject. It would not be the language of instruction in the classroom, but students would study the language itself. Some Greenlanders speak five languages, Danish, German, English, French and *Kalaallisut* (Greenlandic). Why is that? because they take these subjects at school. They are not the language of instruction. *Kalaallisut* is the language of instruction. Other languages are taken as a subject.

I talked about having a reference point. That's my reference point. I learned from visiting Greenland that learning several languages might be a good idea. I thought maybe we should try it in Canada. What about their curriculum materials? Maybe we could learn from those. Maybe we could make guidelines from those. How do they learn about fishing? Do they do it in the classroom? These are just simple things. I also see having nursing professionals in the nursing stations, and doctors and lawyers in the future. I see an Inuktitut counselling program for students and for people in the community, without social workers.

*Using a different approach?*

Using a very different approach. A social worker from India doesn't have the feeling or compassion needed. They only look at the legal implications of social work. There is a whole lot of work to be done by all of you. We are going to retire soon, or we'll be too senile even to help! I see a very bright future for those who want to do something with their lives.

*Which part of looking to the future would be the climax?*

I don't know. The government wouldn't be the way it is, in English. The federal government and Inuit would be in agreement with the land claim. What's important to me, what people want to see in the future, what is being heard by the members of the Assembly, is that the Nunavut government is very important to us. What we tried to say to the federal government before was impossible, because the government didn't want to change their policies. We live in a democratic system, which is accepting of a multi-cultural society. When we first started the land claim, there was nothing like it that had been documented. To me, the climax was when Inuit adults started being heard and were expressing their needs.

*Do you think the present format of Nunavut will stay the way it is? The small communities will obviously grow quickly. Pond Inlet will probably have three thousand people in ten years. Do you see any economic base in the communities? Is there another way to go? The communities are an artificial creation.*

I think we first have to look at decentralized government. We haven't proven that it's a good idea. We haven't proven that yet. It creates jobs locally, but not very many. It's not the fault of the community. It's more our education system. I criticize my old department.

*You are saying that decentralization doesn't create jobs for local people.*

It creates jobs, but minimally. Once you transplant a worker into a community, he or she is not going to leave until he or she retires. If you fill those jobs today with minimal input from the community, then there is no more room. There might be twenty, or eighty jobs in a community, but they won't open up unless somebody retires or gets fired. The turnover is very slow. Government jobs are good jobs; some of the highest paid jobs there are. I am president of the local Co-op. It is the biggest Co-op in Nunavut. It has over a hundred employees. It is very, very difficult to compete with government wages. Every time we get someone who is not trained, we train him. When he gets good, then he's offered a job with the government. I'm proud of that, but they are only offered positions at the low end.

In order to make a difference for the people in Nunavut, Inuit need to be at the management level. It's not a discriminatory thing. It's important. It's like me asking you to go get some caribou for me, if you have never gone caribou hunting before. A *qallunaaq* manager, in turn, in the community, really knows what is in the books, but he doesn't really know the language and the culture of

the community, or the relationships between people. He doesn't know who is part of this or that clan. How do you integrate people into a workable community? How do you get the people to lead, so that the society is theirs, not molded from somewhere in the South? That's why I say that the management team has to be Inuit in order to have a good decentralized government.

*So education is essential.*

We can shape and form education. The rest is what society shapes and forms. We'll stay out of that. When we are raising our children today, we are not thinking of the future for the child. We only follow the trends of school behavior and the atmosphere there. Sometimes you see children fighting inside and outside the school. Children! Ten year olds, fighting away! It's not the children's fault. We create that atmosphere for them, because we as parents are not taking a leadership role in the school. We just throw them to the teachers, and the children grow up not really caring how other people might feel; that they might be hurt emotionally or psychologically, or that they are making people angry. The way you shape the behavior and attitude of the school is what makes the students successful. I could have grade ten, or grade twelve, and yet I could be completely useless to society. It would depend on how I was brought up.

It is very important that parents and communities start making plans on how to involve our children. We are not training them for anything. We just give them to the teachers. Because the teachers are afraid of the policies, they have to treat students in a certain way. You have to be good to children; we all are. But we also know they are human beings. We need to hold their hands. They need to be shown things by their parents. They cannot grow up all by themselves without knowing what to do.

I told you about Aliyak. He was mauled by polar bears twice. Do you know what an *avinnaarjuk* is? It is a polar

bear cub that was left by the mother before it matured, so it doesn't know how to hunt, and it doesn't know it should be scared of people. It doesn't know that walrus can be dangerous. I have killed a polar bear like that before, just outside my tent. When I was skinning it, I noticed that it had puncture wounds all over it. Maybe they were made by a walrus. That kind of bear doesn't know how to be a polar bear. It approaches people, because it doesn't know any better. Children can grow up the same way as those bears, if we just leave them alone when they are growing up, without teaching them, just leaving them to watch television. A lot of us adults don't know what to do to be a parent. That responsibility that was given to teachers by parents has to be taken back.

For example, if my son was misbehaving, and I had come to an agreement with the teacher prior to this, that she could slap him on the bum if he misbehaved, then the teacher could do that, so my son would know it was wrong to misbehave. As I said earlier, if children are not doing what they are supposed to, you need to discipline them. As long as you feed them, they will be okay.

Also, when they are trying to do something, try not to be over-protective. For example, when my son was eight years old he wanted to start setting traps. I couldn't let him go alone. He was too young. As soon as he got behind a hill on his skidoo, I got worried. What was I doing? I was slowing his progress down by doing that. If I am over-protective, if I tell the teacher not to slap him even if he does something wrong, I would just be ruining him. I tell my children if they get hit not to retaliate, just to walk away, not to hit back. I talked to them about this. I said that mentally they were stronger, even than someone who was bigger. I told them not to use their strength in cases like that. That's what I'm trying to do on my part.

In Pond Inlet there is an education council. Perhaps what I said could be handled better if they had a parent teacher association, where we would decide how we wanted

the school run. If we agreed that after school hours we would try to be with our children more, let them help us, fold something or cut something up, it would be better. A lot of times we take young people out hunting, and we teach them at the same time. It's part of the culture program. When you are tying the supplies on the *qamutiik* with a rope, there could be children standing there observing. They don't have any idea whatsoever of what to do to help out. All they know how to do is paper work. They don't do anything. They are just stand there watching. If they want to learn the Inuktitut way they have to be ready to help, without having to be told to do something.

Boys need to know they are not to hit girls, even if the girls are very mischievous. At school when they have recess, that's what happens. As parents, that's what we have to take back. If we can do that, then we are preparing them to be leaders, to be independent determined people, determined to be involved in molding Nunavut, in our schools and in education.

Also, keep in mind that as Inuit we are very capable. We already know that. If we try to become something, we can do it. For example, Michael Kusugak<sup>1</sup> became a helicopter pilot. There are people taking bar exams because they want to become lawyers. There are nurses now in my community because of the nursing program that started four years ago. We are very capable, once we make up our minds to become something. A lot of times we have doubts. We say, "I don't know how to speak English, or I don't know how to do this well enough." Those thoughts shouldn't block our way.

Because not everyone can speak Inuktitut, that's why we had to learn everything in English. If *qallunaat* would learn Inuktitut, we wouldn't have to study everything in English. Sometimes when you are speaking Inuktitut, it goes well with *qallunaat* thoughts. I think we would be able to teach technology if we knew the names of the little bits and pieces of the tape recorder, for example. We don't have

names for those, different parts of a skidoo. As a leader, you can't let a lack of English bring you down, or become depressed about it, because there are a lot of people who like you. The people who tend to have the biggest voices are the people who don't like you. There was a person with a dogteam in Pond Inlet. One of his dogs was very hard working, so he named it Arvaluk!

You also have to get used to everything you say or do being scrutinized twenty-four hours a day by the media. If I slipped and broke my leg, they would talk about it in the media. If you, as an ordinary person, slipped and broke your leg, nobody would talk about it. If you choose to become a leader, you cannot let yourself be affected by what everybody else is saying, especially media comments.

*The media breathes down your neck?*

Oh, yes. Big time. There are three things you have to be aware of, your wife, your children and the electorate, the ones who voted you in. You already know, when you start working, you will be working for what is dearest to you. That's the part you have to remember, not to do something to please the voters, but to do something for their future.

*Then everything becomes effective.*

Did I mention Ijituuq? I just want to say something very quickly, and then I'll get back on track. I mentioned Ijituuq a while ago. Sometimes when you hear someone talking, it is difficult to understand what they are saying unless you are familiar with the particular topic. When I was around six years old, my father was out hunting bearded seal at a seal hole. I went along with my father and Ijituuq. Angutimmarik was also with us. Once we got there, they went out looking for bearded seal, and I stayed on the *qamutiik*. I don't know what happened, but the dogteam took off. The team was galloping along, and I was on the

*qamutiik*. We were travelling alongside a crack on the ice. Because the ice was rough, I was even being bounced into the air. Ijituuq was behind me, running after the *qamutiik*, but he could not catch up. As the dogs were running, I could hear Ijituuq yelling, "Try to get off!" but it didn't register with me. He could have grabbed me right away, but if I got too far, I might have fallen into the water, and he wouldn't have been able to get to me in time. So, I stayed on and let him run behind. It was only when he caught up to the dogs, that he was able to stop them.

When you are talking, whether as adults or elders, and trying to say something that is on your mind, there will sometimes be people on the receiving end that don't understand what you are saying. There are a lot of blockages, many of them. You have to have strong determination. Even though there are many things around to distract you, you have to stay focused.

*What is good about a book is that it lasts. It's not like a film or a television show. It stays there. James you were part of that last generation who were brought up on the land, far from a trading post. It was probably one of the more traditional camps that still existed then. What would you say about this to future generations?*

I wouldn't recommend it. It's too hard! I think it is good enough just knowing about your roots, knowing how your great grandfather and your great grandmother lived. I think just knowing about how they lived, gives you strength. When we forget about that, we kill ourselves; then our problems become too much to handle; then the hurt becomes too painful. We need to remember how extremely difficult it was for our ancestors just to survive so we could be here today. That's why I'm here today. This gives you strength to want to continue improving yourself.

There always will be ups and downs, always. That's part of life. But now we live in warm houses. We are earning

money, just sitting and talking and pretending we know what we are talking about! It is a big, big improvement. A lot of people, especially elders, have perished, and many survivors have no feet; some of them have no legs because they were frozen. Simon Nattaq, I don't know if you know him, had to have his legs amputated here in Iqaluit a few years ago. That used to be a common thing among Inuit. They would fall through the ice while walrus hunting in the wintertime. Walrus hunting in the wintertime is very, very dangerous, not because of the animals the hunters are pursuing, but because the ice is fresh. When you walk on it, it is like a sponge, and sometimes you fall through. Sometimes, when they harpooned a walrus and the ice was thin, the walrus would start pulling. It was a very hard life for people, but they had to do these things in order to survive. They had to eat. There were no stores. Nothing was provided for you. If you weren't successful you would perish.

Also, sometimes migratory animals such as caribou would move off into unexpected places. That was a common occurrence in Back River. The Inuit there totally relied on the caribou they hunted, and fish. The coastal people relied on marine mammals so hunting was more reliable. Seals don't migrate, not very much, anyway. There are always some there.

On top of that, sometimes it rained. The weather would change from cold temperatures to warmer temperatures. We used to get a Chinook in mid-winter. It would thaw the snow, and then the temperature would fall the next day, forming a crust of ice. We would live on rabbits and ptarmigans and other small animals if we couldn't catch a seal. They would perish, too. A combination of Murphy's Law comes in to play then.

*So you are very happy that future generations won't have to go through all this suffering?*

Yes, physical suffering, psychological suffering and starvation. We are not going to name any more lakes

Inukturvik. That was the name of one lake, because people had starved there. It is now completely up to us. We have the complete authority to shape our future. It is in our hands, not in the hands of the weather anymore. It's in our hands to shape our future. Back then we were ruled by the weather, the land, and the water. We begged for its kindness. Now, things are up to us, and I'm happy about that.

*In the future, what do you think will be the main revenue for Nunavut? Do you think it will be non-renewable resources? How do you see sustainability?*

I think it will be both. The international community is running out of natural space. Our land will become very, very important for tourists, just to be in an environment with clear air. What's so romantic about Nunavut is that it is so different from the rest of the world. It is not a desert, but it has no trees. It's a type of land you can't see anywhere else, short of going into outer space. We think it is very natural, but for foreigners it is just awesome.

If we could promote tourism with proper facilities it would be a money-maker, too. In a lot of places, like Hawaii and other exotic islands, their governments have completely steered their economy towards tourism. Of course, there is mining, and oil and gas exploitation, if we want it; mining for diamonds, gold, iron etc. What would have to happen then, is that our reliance on federal government revenue would have to decrease, unless we wanted to give the whole thing back again, and I don't think anyone wants to do that. I think people want to shape their own future.

*Are you talking about giving power back to Ottawa?*

Yes, and having a Commissioner; letting Ottawa look after health, housing, and education and stopping the Inuktitut programs. I don't think people want that. I

don't think they want to go back. We will have to become quite articulate when we negotiate shared royalties for the development of Nunavut.

*With the election of the Conservative government, do you see any big changes happening here?*

No. I don't think so. Did the new prime minister come up and visit? I thought I heard he had. The prime minister is not stupid. He already knows that Canadian society wants the best for Inuit and other aboriginal people, because they learned through television and other media that there were injustices done to us. They don't want the federal government to ever again mistreat Inuit through ignorance etc. I don't think the Conservatives can afford, especially now in a minority government, to make any drastic changes that would be a step backwards for us. We would be very vocal and let the rest of Canada know that things had gone backwards. But I don't think that will happen. I don't worry much about that.

*Harper talks a lot about Canadian sovereignty in the North. He wants to bring troops and ships up here.*

That's good. Canada is one of the best countries in the world. We are a little bit spoiled, but it is a heck of a good country. I think, assuring the people in Nunavut that the arctic islands belong to Canada is a positive step. At least we would know that we are secure in Canada. Our sovereignty would not be disputed. That's what we want to see. We don't want to see the Nunavut Territory disputed by other countries, especially by the United States, a power-hungry country.

*Yes. Today, they still don't recognize the sovereignty of Canada in certain regions, for example, in Lancaster Sound.*

*How much did they pay for Alaska when they bought it from Russia?*

I think it was for one dollar.<sup>2</sup>

Well, what does that tell us? Those countries can do whatever they like with complete disregard for the people living there. That's why we have a sovereignty issue here, because other countries are interested. They consider Lancaster Sound as an international waterway. It is very important to Inuit that it belongs to Canada. The federal government needs to show symbolically that it belongs to Canada, by bringing the military to the Arctic. The claim has never been clear. So many countries have explored the North Pole through the Arctic islands, even more so than Canada.

*England, France, the United States, Norway.*

Yes. Most of them were successful before. When you go to Ellesmere Island there are a lot of foreign names, Amundsen, Gjoa, and names like that. This question is not clear in international law. That's why the federal government has to get involved and say, "This belongs to Canada".

*Would you favour the use of the Northwest Passage by international shipping?*

No. I'm a little bit scared. I'm an environmentalist. I want to protect my environment. If that happens you are talking about ships going through almost on a daily basis. They have complete freedom today. Even if the ice is ten feet thick, they can build ships now, big enough, and thick enough, and with enough horse power, to travel through on a daily basis. It doesn't matter to them anymore. It used to be a hindrance because the ships were too fragile. Even the Canadian icebreakers were too fragile. Now they have

the technology to build these new ships. The company developing the Mary River mine is now designing a new ship that can go all winter through the sound between Pond Inlet and Bylot Island.

*All year round? That's pack ice?*

Oh, yes. But that doesn't matter anymore, because they have new technology.

*Do you think this is going to create a problem on our hunting grounds?*

Oh, yes. But that doesn't really matter: fourteen hundred people versus how many millions of dollars!

*That's huge money compared to the local economy. I once calculated Voisey's Bay<sup>3</sup> would be worth a hundred billion dollars over a twenty year period. It is huge, just like this development.*

This development will last fifty to a hundred years. There are two mountains where the ore is. They are exploring Inuit-owned lands right now. There will be royalties for Inuit, but at what social and environmental cost? I'm not against it. Pond Inlet supports it. But how do you shape that? I was talking before about shaping your own future and shaping your own government. That also will have to be shaped, so the damage to the environment is kept at a minimum, while still benefiting the community. Pond Inlet, Igloodik and Arctic Bay have to participate fully in preparing for the Impact Review Board.

*Will we have a share of the development?*

We will have a share of the development and a say in the protection of the environment. We don't worry about the land mammals too much. Caribou are so adaptable; they could even start living beside the airstrip here. But

the marine mammals, that's what we are worried about. A strong sound in the water travels so much faster and louder than on land. It could disturb and annoy the marine mammals. We were at Qurluqtuq Bay, west of Pond Inlet one time, and people were hunting in Pond Inlet, sixty miles away. We had these sensors, and were listening to whales under the water. We could hear hunters in Pond Inlet sixty miles away. When the bullets hit the water we could hear them.

### *That far!*

Yes. That's how sound travels through the water. So, we worry about those big, humongous ships coming in. There's not one built yet. We thought the *Manhattan* was big. We used to think that the Boeing 737 was big, until that Airbus A380 arrived in town. The ships will be like that, hundreds of feet long. The hulls will be thick enough to crush right through the ice. The diesel engines are probably going to be as big as the Power Corporation's generators. It's a big, big project. We worry that the marine mammals will start moving away to other areas. They will not be killed, but what are we going to hunt in Pond Inlet? Those concerns will have to be examined very carefully in the environmental assessment. What was it like at the Nanisivik mine, with the ships coming in the early spring, in March or April until freeze-up in November? Those were small ships. They tell us that area still hasn't fully recovered yet, as far as the marine mammals are concerned.

### *From the traffic?*

Not so much from the traffic, it's from the noise the ships create when they go through the ice.

### *Noise pollution?*

Yes. It's sound pollution.

*We have not talked about global warming and climate change in the Arctic. There is some damage occurring. Some lands and houses are subsiding.*

There is a hole in the ozone layer. Here is an example of how true this is. I'm just suspicious; I have no facts. It got harder to get reception on our HF radios. It was extremely difficult. It was only at certain hours that we could talk to each other at the time. HF radio waves bounce up and down, whereas VHF waves are straight. When they bounce up and down like that, I wonder if they hit the ozone layer? If they hit a hole, do they keep on going, so we don't receive them? Why has so much changed in such a short period of forty years?

*The reception was better?*

Oh, yes. The women would talk on the radios in the springtime, especially when they were camping. Now, we hardly hear them. We used to hear the hunters in the wintertime. Now, we have very, very poor reception.

The polar bears are coming in to shore in the summer time. Maybe there is not enough loose ice, old multi-year ice. Even Igloodik is experiencing the late or early arrival of the multi-year ice. And the multi-year ice, at the floe edge north of Banks Island and Bathurst Island is moving further and further up. A person told me, "The edges of the glaciers in Pond Inlet used to be right on the shoreline. We used to stop and get ice water from it. Now it is several miles up". It is receding in his lifetime. He's just a year older than me. It's scary. Maybe it's natural but it's going to be a very hard change for us when the polar bears are gone, and not because of over-hunting, but because of loss of habitat.

*Just like the Chinese are afraid of losing their tigers.*

Yes. But that's mostly because of people encroaching on their habitat. This is due more to weather. If we, as

people, are contributing to creating the hole in the ozone layer, then we are doing something very bad, very wrong, something not very intelligent. We forgot to test sprays and gas emissions for vehicles and power plants, or sulfur in the coal furnaces to melt iron in Hamilton. The *qallunaat* didn't know these things would cause problems. But what can we do now to reverse this? What will be the cost? The ice age was what, ten thousand years ago, but it has been melting ever since. Is it at the same speed, or is it faster?

*It seems it's much faster. People here in Iqaluit tell me that twenty years ago there was snow over the telephone posts. You don't see that anymore.*

It's a big, big change. As a matter of fact, people in Pond Inlet tell me that just before I got there in '68, the dogteams were sometimes unable to travel because soft snow covered so much of the area. Now you get snowdrifts instead, hard snow, in that short a period of time. That's how the weather patterns have changed. The winds in the summer time are so powerful now. You have to really watch when you are going on a boat trip.

*It wasn't like that before.*

No. The weather was more predictable. Here's a very interesting thing for all of us. The elders don't know what the weather is going to be like tomorrow. They used to be able to predict weather patterns, but unexpectedly the weather has changed overnight.

Somebody made up this joke. There was a wise old man giving advice to a *qallunaaq* fisherman about what the weather would be like every day, and he was always right. One day he came down to the shore and the wise man didn't say anything. The *qallunaaq* asked, "What's the weather going to be like today?" The wise man said, "I don't know." The *qallunaaq* said, "You always know."

Why don't you know today?" The wise man said, "Oh, my radio is broken."

The elders' radios are broken today. The weather is so unpredictable now; they don't know what the patterns mean anymore. When I was a youngster looking at the clouds, I used to see a horse-tail, cumulous and other types of clouds. People could tell. Piugaattuk said, "When I was young a leader saw a small cigar-shaped black cloud over the horizon very far away on a very calm day. I was very excited to go hunting, but the leader told us to pull the boats up and to anchor the tents down." When I was studying weather at the weather office, I learned that that was a sign of low-pressure building up. They didn't know there was low-pressure building up. They just knew from experience that a cigar-shaped cloud was not good. Piugaattuk said a few hours later, the wind came up, and tried to tear the whole camp apart. But people knew enough about clouds, that they were prepared if they saw that type of cloud early in the day. They would anchor everything down and pull the boats up on a perfectly nice day. Now, even forecasts from Environment Canada are wrong a lot of the time. The weather patterns are no longer reliable.

*So climate change could have a big impact on life in the communities.*

I told my brother the other day, "If your sons or daughters are not going to be hunters, don't encourage them to eat country food too much." I said this for a simple reason. If they are not going to hunt, and they are being fed this beautiful country food, when they grow up they will want it, but they won't have a way to get it, if they weren't taught how to be hunters. If you marry a hunter, you are okay. In our own communities that happens a lot now. People were brought up with county food, but there are men and women who have no way of getting it, so we

have to share a lot more. I catch a lot more now than I need for my immediate family, and it's gone. Someone will say, "I thought you just came back with a caribou two hours ago." I'll say, "Yes, and it's gone." It's a good feeling, but sometimes it becomes unmanageable after a while.

*Everybody wants a part of it because it tastes really good.*

Yes. Everybody wants a part because it tastes really good. I know I am probably leaving out a lot, but once we review the interviews, I'll be able to insert some things I might have forgotten, about my childhood experiences, and a lot of other information that we skimmed through a few days ago. I find it boring, but I guess my life might be interesting to some people. I was eager to talk about the development of the Inuit movement. That part I'm still excited about, about how our land claim became a reality. It was just a dream when we first started talking about it.

*How did you feel when the land claim was signed?*

It was very exciting. You felt happiness and sadness mixed together. You knew it was finally done, and you wondered what you were going to do next. You felt for the people you had worked together with, people with whom you shared presidencies and leadership roles. You wanted to brag about it, even with people who had already passed away, like your grandparents and say, "Look at what I participated in." I cannot say, "Look, I did this." We cannot name one person, whether it is Paul Quassa, John Amagoalik, Jose Kusugak, or Peter Itinnuar, every one of them was part of it. Some people like Louis Pilakapsi worked very hard. He is no longer with us. Elijah Menarik, and Wallace Goose are also no longer with us. You tended to think of those who had passed on who were really involved, too.

*Is there anything else you would like to add?*

I think the biggest message is that there is now more work to do. We created more work rather than finishing the land claim. There is lots of work to be done now for people who are qualified and want to work. Don't think there are no job opportunities. You can come up with something you can work on. For example, we could come up with new things that were not given to us. If you want to do something, before you know it, you'll be making money on the idea you came up with. People who are just waiting to be handed jobs, or those who decide to wait for a bit, will not do as well as those who create things, and make things happen for themselves. There is a lot of work. With a little bit of creativeness and help from your friends and your teachers and instructors, the opportunities are limitless.

*Thank you very much for your perseverance in the creation of Nunavut.*

Believe me, it was not pleasant all the time. I wish you success, all of you. Just don't give up. There are lots of opportunities. Thank you!

**NOTES**

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1. Michael Kusugak is a well-known writer of children's stories both in Inuktitut and English. He lives in Rankin Inlet on the west coast of Hudson Bay.
2. The United States bought Alaska from Russia in 1867 for \$7.2 million or 2 cents an acre.
3. The Voisey's Bay Nickel Company is owned by Inco Limited. Inco estimates that a total investment of approximately three billion dollars will be made in mining and processing in the province over the thirty year life of the Voisey's Bay project. The mine is located thirty-five kilometres southwest of Nain, Labrador. <http://www.vbnc.com>

## Appendix A

Rasmussen, Knud, *The Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos*, Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition, 1921-24 Vol.VII, No. 1. pp 54-56, Copenhagen, 1929

**“We do not believe, we fear.”**

I once went out to Aua’s hunting quarters on the ice outside Lyon Inlet to spend some time with the men I have referred to in the foregoing. For several evenings we had discussed rules of life and taboo customs without getting beyond a long and circumstantial statement of all that was permitted and all that was forbidden. Everyone knew precisely what had to be done in any given situation, but whenever I put in my query: “Why?” they could give no answer. They regarded it, and very rightly, as unreasonable that I should require not only an account, but also a justification, of their religious principles. They had of course no idea that all my questions, now that I had obtained the information I wished for, were only intended to make them react in such a manner that they should, excited by my inquisitiveness, be able to give an inspired explanation. Aua had as usual been the spokesman, and as he was still unable to answer my questions, he rose to his feet, and as if seized by a sudden impulse, invited me to go outside with him.

It had been an unusually rough day, and as we had plenty of meat after the successful hunting of the past few days, I had asked my host to stay at home so that we

could get some work done together. The brief daylight had given place to the half-light of the afternoon, but as the moon was up, one could still see some distance. Ragged white clouds raced across the sky, and when a gust of wind came tearing over the ground, our eyes and mouths were filled with snow. Aua looked me full in the face, and pointed out over the ice, where the snow was being lashed about in waves by the wind. He said; "In order to hunt well and live happily, man must have calm weather. Why this constant succession of blizzards and all this needless hardship for men seeking food for themselves and those they care for? Why? Why?"

We had come out just at the time when the men were returning from their watching at the blowholes on the ice; they came in little groups, bowed forward, toiling along against the wind, which actually forced them now and again to stop, so fierce were the gusts. Not one of them had a seal in tow; their whole day of painful effort and endurance had been in vain.

I could give no answer to Aua's "Why?", but shook my head in silence. He then led me into Kublo's house, which was close beside our own. The small blubber lamp burned with but the faintest flame, giving out no heat whatever; a couple of children crouched, shivering, under a skin rug on the bench.

Aua looked at me again, and said: "Why should it be cold and comfortless in here? Kublo has been out hunting all day, and if he had got a seal, as he deserved, his wife would now be sitting laughing beside her lamp, letting it burn full, without fear of having no blubber left for tomorrow. The place would be warm and bright and cheerful. The children would come out from under their rugs and enjoy life. Why should it not be so? Why?"

I made no answer, and he led me out of the house, into a little snow hut where his sister Natseq lived all by herself because she was ill. She looked thin and worn, and was not even interested in our coming. For several days

she had suffered from a malignant cough that seemed to come from far down in the lungs, and it looked as if she had not long to live.

A third time Aua looked at me and said, "Why must people be ill and suffer pain? We are all afraid of illness. Here is this old sister of mine; as far as anyone can see, she has done no evil; she has lived through a long life and given birth to healthy children, and now she must suffer before her days end. Why? Why?"

This ended his demonstration, and we returned to our house, to resume, with the others, the interrupted discussion.

"You see," said Aua, "You are equally unable to give any reason when we ask you why life is as it is. And so it must be. All our customs come from life and turn towards life; we explain nothing, we believe nothing, but in what I have just shown you lies our answer to all you ask.

"We fear the weather spirit of earth, that we must fight against to wrest our food from land and sea. We fear Sila."

"We fear the death and hunger in the cold snow huts."

"We fear Takanakpasaluk, the great woman down at the bottom of the sea, that rules over all the beasts of the sea."

"We fear the sickness that we meet with daily all around us; not death, but the suffering. We fear the evil spirits of life, those of the air, of the sea and the earth, that can help wicked shamans to harm their fellow men."

"We fear the souls of dead human beings and of the animals we have killed."

"Therefore it is that our fathers have inherited from their fathers all the old rules of life which are based on the experience and wisdom of generations. We do not know how, we cannot say why, but we keep those rules in order that we may live untroubled. And so ignorant are we in spite of all our shamans, that we fear everything unfamiliar.

We fear what we see about us, and we fear all the invisible things that are likewise about us, all that we have heard of in our forefathers' stories and myths. Therefore we have our customs, which are not the same as those of the white men, the white men who live in another land and have need of other ways."

That was Aua's explanation; he was, as always, clear in his line of thought, and with a remarkable power of expressing what he meant. He was silent then, and I did not at once resume the conversation.

# Appendix B

## A Time Line of Nunavut

Prepared by Louis Mc Comber and Francis Lévesque

**1870:** The creation of the Northwest Territories, as Canada has accepted dominion over Rupert's Land. The HBC keeps 120 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 MacPherson, Fullerton, and Herschel Island. The first voyage of the Canadian ship *Neptune* to assert sovereignty in the Arctic.

**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.

**1950:** The Canadian government charts the *C.D. Howe*. Onboard there are RCMP officers, dentists, doctors, nurses, as well as a six bed dispensary. The *C.D. Howe* will make annual patrols until 1968.

**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.

**1959:** The federal government initiates the development of Northern Co-operatives in the Northwest Territories.

**1962:** Eastern Arctic Inuit vote for the first time.

**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.

**1971:** Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) is created.

**1973:** 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.

**1976:** Inuit Tapirisat of Canada presents its first proposition 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 its third proposal to the Government of Canada in a document entitled *Political Development in Nunavut*. ITC acknowledges that Nunavut would be governed by a public government.

**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. Division is supported by 56% of the voters. Only 52% of all electors turn in their vote.

**1982:** The Constitution Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights, and the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution. The Liberal government of P.E. Trudeau brushes away a clear definition of 'existing' native rights from the constitution, promising native leaders a series of First Ministers Conferences on aboriginal constitutional matters.

**1983-1987:** The First Ministers Conferences on Aboriginal Constitutional Matters. The discussions stall but the concept of native self-government emerges.

**1984:** The Inuvialuit reach a land claims agreement (The Inuvialuit Final Agreement) with the federal government.

**1986:** Coolican publishes his report entitled *Living Treaties: Lasting Agreements*.

**1990:** Signing of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement-in-Principle.

**1992:** In May, a majority of voters in the Northwest Territories approved the boundary that will divide the territory into two distinct territories: 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 official the creation of Nunavut.

**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.

**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, the Interim Commissioner of Nunavut, Jack Anawak, is formally appointed by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Jane Stewart. He becomes the first 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.



# Appendix C

## Nunavut and the Global Village

Noel McDermott

For James Arvaluk and the other Inuit leaders who dreamed about creating an Inuit homeland the process from conception to completion was both long and arduous. In political terms, however, the making of Nunavut took a very short time to accomplish and was achieved by means of discussion, debate, and negotiation, quite unlike the history of so many native people around the world who have endured decades, even centuries of oppression and colonization where armed and violent struggle was and is the norm. Indeed, the relative ease with which Inuit accomplished so much suggests that factors other than their particular struggle were at play. The more one considers the case of Nunavut it is difficult not to see its realization as the inevitable outcome of forces at work not only in the territory of Nunavut itself but also in Canada and around the world. Inuit leaders were able to capitalize and build on these forces, even when they themselves were perhaps not aware of the broader political developments and contests being worked out in countries as far removed from Nunavut as it is possible to be.

The first part of the twentieth century marked the beginning of the end of the old European empires that had governed so much of the world until then.

The British Empire, on which 'the sun never set,' was dissolving as countries around the world shook off the yoke of, sometimes hundreds of years of oppressive colonial rule; Ireland (1922), India (1947), and a host of African countries including Ghana (1957), Nigeria (1960), Zambia (1962) and Kenya (1963), all gaining their independence. France, after a bloody and ignominious war, was obliged to relinquish its hold on Algeria in 1962, while Senegal, Cameroon, Madagascar and others gained their independence, too, at this time. The USSR held on grimly and brutally to the countries it had annexed at the end of the Second World War. But in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968) the spirit of freedom, though subdued by tanks, was shown not to be crushed, spreading eventually to Poland and leading to the creation of the Solidarity movement (1980). The fall of the infamous Berlin Wall (1989) and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union were all inevitable outcomes of the desire of people to be free of oppressive regimes, to be free to make decisions for themselves, to be free of foreign and alien masters.

The creation of the League of Nations as a result of the Paris Peace Conference (1919-20) after the end of the First World War furthered the causes of less powerful states. The sheer scale of the monstrous horrors of the war, the waste of people and resources, the devastation of cities and the exhausting economic consequences together contributed to the growth of a different way of thinking about how to solve conflicts based on diplomacy and negotiation. The failure of the League of Nations to achieve its aims with the outbreak of the Second War served to emphasize the need for an organization with the authority, power and influence to promote peace and this led in 1945 to the founding of the United Nations (UN). A Canadian was influential in setting up the UN and in spreading the ideas of cooperation, negotiation and peacekeeping as a way to solving conflicts. Lester B. (Mike)

Pearson, Liberal Prime Minister of Canada (1963-68), was the Canadian Ambassador to the United States at the time and he attended the founding conference of the UN. Pearson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 for his efforts in preventing a full-scale war during the Suez Crisis in 1954 when the UN adopted Pearson's proposal to assemble a multinational peacekeeping force to separate the opposing factions, the British and the Egyptians. Canadian soldiers were part of that peacekeeping force. Pearson was elected to the presidency of the Seventh Session of the General Assembly of the UN from 1952-53. Peacekeeping, negotiation, and respect for human rights were cornerstones of Pearson's personal and political philosophy. A young Jean Chretien, who would later become Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs and go on to become Prime Minister of Canada, was a member of Pearson's party and government.

The spirit of revolution, freedom and self-determination that was in the air found expression in many different countries and in many different ways. Pop art and protest, peace movements, music, civil rights marches, attitudes to sexuality, gay rights activism, the growth of feminism, challenges to authority and hegemony, the questioning of traditional religious beliefs and practices are all characteristic of the 'swinging sixties.' As John Lennon famously noted, "The Beatles are more popular than Jesus." This new spirit found expression in North America in the work of Andy Warhol, the music of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, and the plight of women described by Betty Friedan in the *Feminine Mystique*. When James Arvaluk played the music of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones on the Keewatin airwaves in the late sixties he was helping to disseminate as well as taking part in a world wide movement of popular culture that was changing attitudes and modes of thinking irrevocably. Canada did not miss out on this worldwide phenomenon. Margaret

Atwood, a young writer and academic inspired by her mentor Northrop Frye, led the charge in literature by almost single-handedly demonstrating that Canada had a distinct literary history, which defined its unique culture and traditions in her *Survival*, published in 1972. The 'quiet revolution' in Quebec, together with the more overtly violent and politically motivated actions of the FLQ, the Front de libération du Québec, brought the forces of change right into the living rooms of Canadians. Many Americans, dodging the draft, took refuge in Canada and carried the anti-war and peace message with them. In the following years, questions about identity, sovereignty, distinct societies, rights of self-determination, which had smoldered beneath the surface came to the fore to become the common currency of many Canadians who heretofore had not given them a second thought.

The sixties were also a time of change for the Northwest Territories (NWT) and long before Inuit felt the need to lay claim to what had been theirs for hundreds if not thousands of years, moves were afoot to divide the huge territory. The impetus for division came mainly from the non-native residents of the western part of the NWT. Between 1959 and 1963 the territorial council contemplated the idea of creating a new Mackenzie Territory. The reasons had everything to do with economic development with little or no consideration for the broader social and political implications of such a move, especially for the residents of the eastern part of the Northwest Territories. The larger population, the development of oil (Norman Wells began producing oil in the 1920s) and mining (the Yellowknife gold rush began in the 1930s) and the mighty Mackenzie River corridor suggested a natural combination of factors for such a proposal. However, the territorial council had not sought or considered the aspirations or ideas of anyone from the east, which was populated almost exclusively by Inuit. This did not deter the council and in 1963 federal legislation was introduced to create two territories,

Mackenzie in the west and Nunassiatq in the east. The proposal did not materialize, in part because it was seen that little or no consultation had taken place with the residents of either east or west, but mainly because the legislation died with the dissolution of Parliament in 1963 over the proposed deployment of American missiles in Canada. In the ensuing election Lester Pearson's Liberals defeated Deifenbaker's Conservative party to form a minority government.

In 1966, the federal government gave the Carrothers Commission the task of examining the issue of division of the territory and government in the North. The three-man commission concluded that division was both desirable and likely inevitable but it should be delayed to allow for meaningful political development to take place, otherwise participation, especially by the Inuit who had no representation on the mainly appointed council, would be impossible. The Commission recognized the need to bring government closer to the people, rather than having the territory administered from Ottawa. During the 1960s and 1970s federal programmes and administration of the territory was gradually transferred from Ottawa to Yellowknife and electoral constituencies were created. Abe Okpik, originally from the Western Arctic and living in Frobisher Bay (Iqaluit) was appointed to the Council of the Northwest Territories in 1965 and in 1968 Simonie Michael from Frobisher Bay (Iqaluit) became the first Inuit elected to the Council of the Northwest Territories. There, for the first time, the interests of Inuit from east to west were represented by Inuit.

When Tagak Curley was invited to represent the interests of Eskimos (Inuit) on the Indian Eskimo Association (IEA) in 1970 no one could have predicted that Tagak's drive, purpose and vision would lead to the signing of the final *Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada* in Iqaluit on May 25, 1993. Tagak soon realized that

the IEA could not serve the Inuit cause and he lost no time in mobilizing like-minded Inuit supporters. In 1971 Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) was formed with Tagak as the first president. The inaugural conference of ITC, held at Carleton University in Ottawa in July 1971, was attended by some thirty Inuit delegates from all parts of the NWT as well as from Quebec and Labrador. Such a gathering of Inuit had never taken place before and the momentum created at this conference crystallized into the idea of a land claim for Inuit. ITC initiated a land use and occupancy study to demonstrate Inuit title to traditional lands in the Baffin, Keewatin and Kitikmeot regions, the results being published in Milton Freeman's *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project* in 1974. This study forms the basis on which the boundaries of the Nunavut territory were set. The first Inuit land claim was presented to the federal government in 1976 and included the Inuvialuit region in the west, represented by the Committee for the Original Peoples Entitlement (COPE). The proposal was not simply about defining a piece of land but promoted the creation of a new territory, with its own government and infrastructure and with Inuktitut as the official language. In other words, political settlement and land claims went hand-in-hand. The proposal was later withdrawn because it was too much the work of professionals and was written without sufficient consultation with the Inuit in the communities. The Inuvialuit, in that same year 1976, withdrew from the ITC claim and pursued their own, signing an agreement-in-principle with the federal government in October 1978. Eastern representation in the federal parliament was guaranteed when an electoral boundaries commission recommended the creation of two electoral districts for the NWT, Nunatsiaq and the Western Arctic. Both seats were contested in the 1979 election with Peter Ittinuar being the first Inuit elected to the House of Commons in Ottawa. Also in 1979, the new Assembly of the Northwest Territories was elected

with a majority of aboriginal members, including eight Inuit from the east-one of whom was Tagak Curley. The one non-Inuit was Dennis Patterson.

Although land claims negotiations between ITC and the federal government were stalled, the idea of dividing the territory was now too much in the public domain to be ignored. The Drury Committee (1980) appointed by the federal government to explore the constitutional needs of the Northwest Territories recommended greater participation in government by northerners, in particular the Inuit in the east, but did not recommend division. This was directly contrary to the ITC position in its discussion paper developed at the general assembly in Igloodik in September 1979, *Political Development in Nunavut*, which set up a ten-year time frame for division and the creation of Nunavut, with provincial status following five years after that. The next year, 1980, delegates to the ITC annual conference unanimously supported the proposal to create the new territory of Nunavut. In May 1981 the Legislative Assembly of the NWT voted in favour of holding a plebiscite in order to settle the division question. April 14, 1982 was set as the date to hold the vote and the question was, "Do you think the Northwest Territories should be divided? Yes or NO." The results were 56% for and 44% against, with many in the west voting no. Coppermine and Cambridge Bay voted against division and in the west those communities with predominantly non-aboriginal residents also voted no while the smaller communities with mostly aboriginal voters almost all said yes. However, the significant number was from the Eastern Arctic where voter turnout was much higher than in the west, and almost 80% of voters said yes. This included the two communities with the highest proportion of non-Inuit, Rankin Inlet (28%) and Frobisher Bay (Iqaluit) (42%) where the vote was 84 % and 82% respectively, for division. With this clear and unequivocal mandate from Inuit the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN)

was formed in 1982 to taken over responsibilities for land claims negotiations with the federal government.

But while most Inuit were sure of what they wanted others had difficulty, especially with the proposed boundaries of the new territory. There were areas in which Inuit and Dene claims overlapped and a tentative agreement negotiated between the Nunavut Constitutional Forum (NCF) and the Western Constitutional Forum (WCF) appeared to be reached in 1986 when the Inuit and Dene/Metis negotiators came to an agreement that established a boundary in the disputed areas in the Kitikmeot and the Keewatin. In March of the following year, the Legislative Assembly of the NWT recommended that a plebiscite be held on the agreed boundary, which failed to go ahead because at the last minute the Dene/Metis refused to ratify it. The Dene/Metis were not the only ones unhappy with the proposed boundary. The *Iqaluit Agreement* signed on January 15, 1987 was the cause of bitter feeling between some prominent Inuit leaders. Tagak Curley, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Kivalliq South, felt that the new boundary, which excluded the Beaufort Sea area undermined the premise of 'strength in unity' which characterized the original proposal of 1976. Peter Irniq, President of the Keewatin Inuit Association, said he supported the new boundary. Nerves were frayed and tensions ran high in the east as squabbles over the location of the capital became open and acrimonious, and the future of the land claim itself seemed in doubt. John Parker, the last Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, was asked by the Legislative Assembly to try to resolve the boundary dispute between the Inuit and the Dene/Metis, and in 1991 the 'Parker Line' was accepted as the boundary defining the new territory of Nunavut.

In January 1992, TFN and federal government negotiators agreed on the main sections of the land claim, contingent on settlement of the boundary question, and the Board of Directors of TFN recommended that Inuit ratify

the agreement. May 14, 1992 was set as the date for the plebiscite to decide on the boundary, which was approved by a small majority of voters in both the east and the west. In November of the same year, 85% of Inuit beneficiaries voted to accept the Nunavut land claims agreement and on May 25, 1993 in Iqaluit, the final agreement-in-principle between TFN and the federal government was signed.

Although the boundary issue was resolved to the satisfaction of Inuit generally, the other area of the negotiations, which caused-and still causes-greatest difficulty was that of aboriginal rights. Essentially, the federal government did not want to recognize aboriginal rights without their being clearly defined, and Inuit felt that any such definition would limit and restrict those rights. For the federal politicians the position was not only an ethical one involving the rights of people to decide their own destiny but also revolved around the troublesome question of Quebec and the idea of a distinct society, which threatened the very foundations of the Confederation. The White Paper issued by the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Jean Chrétien in 1969 sought to grant aboriginal people the same rights and privileges guaranteed to any other Canadian. Aboriginal and treaty rights were seen as things belonging to a different era, embodying all the wrong aspects of the colonial past. This approach, which seemed to be congruent with the spirit of the times galvanized the aboriginal population in opposition and accelerated the land claims movement. The Calder case highlighted the changing perspectives when in 1974, having been rejected in the British Columbia courts, six out of seven judges in the Supreme Court of Canada agreed that aboriginal people had legal entitlement to their land before the coming of Europeans.<sup>1</sup> The judges were split on whether these rights still existed today. The 'just society' that Pierre Trudeau, another protégé of Lester Pearson's, was determined to establish for all Canadians was, therefore, seen to imply a much broader sense of what justice might signify to the

main stream and certainly more than Trudeau himself had heretofore believed.

The compromises that Inuit made, to have particular rights guaranteed under the land claim, were painful to many but seen as necessary by others. For James Eetoolook, then President of the Kitikmeot Inuit Association and now First Vice-President of Nunavut Tungavik Incorporated (NTI), any opposition by Inuit to the land claim was due to their misunderstanding the terms. "We haven't given up anything...We gain in some ways. Rights through land claims. We are gaining a public government," he maintained. Jack Anawak, who was the Liberal Member of Parliament representing the Nunatisaq riding, could not have agreed less. Anawak resolutely defended the position that aboriginal rights cannot be defined and that the land was being given up too cheaply. "We are giving up far too much land for far too little," he said. Today, many Inuit may feel as Anawak does, but the realization of so much in so short a time has perhaps lightened any sense of loss they may have felt.

For the federal government the outcome could hardly have been better. The political convulsions and seemingly interminable constitutional wrangling of the 1980s, prompted by the desire of many in Quebec to assert their particular place outside the Canadian federation, found a comfortable resting place in the Eastern Arctic, which became a showpiece for Canada to the rest of the world. For here, in Nunavut, it was demonstrated that it was possible, through peaceful and patient negotiations, to not only strengthen the country but also to recognize the uniqueness of a distinct people within its borders. And if a moment of doubt created any unease within the federal government about what they had done, they could find reassurance in the words of James Arvaluk, who in January 1976, as President of ITC, addressed a Rotary Club meeting in Ottawa, the Canadian capital, as follows:

We are not extremists. We are not separatists. We have no history of hostility and confrontation...but one of

cooperation. And we are optimistic that the Government of Canada and the people of Canada will accept our proposed land-sharing settlement in a spirit of co-operation. We are willing to share our land and its resources.

No confrontations, no hostilities, no protests but patient and peaceful negotiations allied to a clear sense of purpose and direction characterized the Inuit approach when dealing with the federal government. And the federal government, at times reluctant, tardy, and devious, was inevitably forced to act in the temper of the times and recognize that there are many ways to understand the meaning of freedom, which they eventually embraced.

**NOTE**

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1. Frank Calder (1915-2006) was a Nisgaa politician in British Columbia and the first Status Indian to be elected to any Canadian parliament. The court case titled “Calder versus Attorney General of British Columbia,” argued by Thomas Berger established that Aboriginal title exists in Canadian law.

## Glossary

### **Aamai**

An expression which means, I don't know.

### **Aglu**

A seal breathing hole in the ice.

### **Ajunngilaq**

In Greenlandic, the response to being asked 'How are you?' In Inuktitut however, it means, I am most capable, or I'm the best.

### **Amaruujaq**

A game of chase called "being like wolves" [similar to British Bulldog] played by people of all ages. Young men liked it because it gave them an excuse to chase the girl they were interested in. Young women liked it because they got to see who was interested in them. Old women liked it because it gave them a chance to run around. Young children liked it because they got to see who they could outrun.

### **Anaq**

Feces.

### **Anauligaaq**

Inuit baseball.

### **Aqilluqaaq**

Snow that can be used for insulating purposes.

**Avinnaarjuk [Pl. Avinnaarjuit]**

A polar bear cub that has been prematurely separated from its mother. These bears are dangerous, because they cannot hunt well, and they have no fear of human beings.

**Iglu [Pl. Igluit]**

Snow house.

**Irniq**

A male child; a son.

**Kautaujaq**

The term for a hammer in the Kivalliq region and in Igloolik. [Pond Inlet] *ujarattiaq*.

**Kalaallisut**

The term used for the Greenlandic language in Greenland.

**Kiggaviarjuk**

A peregrine falcon. [Dialectal variant; *kiggavik*]

**Nauja [Pl. Naujait]**

A sea gull.

**Nikpakti**

A modified rifle for use at a seal hole. When the seal pushed against a rod, it would set off the trigger, and the gun would fire.

**Pukajaaq**

Snow that looked like powdered sugar. Snow that can be used for water.

**Qajaq [Pl. Qajait]**

A man's hunting boat.

**Qallunaaq [Pl. Qallunaat]**

A white person.

**Qallunajjiaqtuq**

[North Baffin] To travel to where there are *qallunaat* for trading. [South Baffin] *qallunniiaqtuq*; *qangmalliqtuq*.

**Qamutiik [Pl. Qamutiit]**

A sled.

**Qamutinnguaq**

A toy sled. Also, the pretend sled in the children's game *qimminnguaq* made from the bone in the pelvis with the hole in it.

**Qanuippit**

How are you?

**Qarmaq [Pl. Qarmait]**

A sod house; also a domeless snow house whose top is covered with hides or a tent; can also refer to an ice-walled circular house, a *tugaliagaq*. If this is covered with hides or a tent it is also called a *qarmaq*. [South Baffin] *Qammaq*.

**Qulliq [Pl. Qulliit]**

A seal oil lamp.

**Saki**

Mother or father-in-law, as well as your spouse's aunts and uncles. In dialects that have *ningauvak* the reciprocal term is *sakivak*.

**Takujaqturvik**

A museum.

**Tiguaq [Dual, Tigvak]**

An adopted child.

**Tuniq [Pl. Tuniit]**

People who inhabited the land before Inuit. Often associated with the Dorset people.

**Ujarattiaq**

The term for a hammer in Pond Inlet [Kivalliq, Igloodik] *Kautaujaq*.

**Ulu**

A woman's crescent-shaped knife.

**Umiaq [Pl. Umiat]**

A long traditional sealskin boat used to move camps or hunt whales. An umiaq could reach thirty to fifty feet in length.

**Unikkaaqtuaq [Pl. Unikkaaqtuat]**

Very old traditional stories passed from one generation to the next.

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