

ORAL HISTORY OF THE NUNAVUT NEGOTIATIONS,
A PROJECT FOR NUNAVUT TUNNGAVIK INC.

FINAL REPORT
December 1, 2004
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I. INTRODUCTION

MANDATE

In January of 2004, NTI's Board of Directors passed Resolution #B04-01-12 directing that an oral history of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement is undertaken. Having been informed that I had already been working on gathering a holistic history of the Nunavut negotiations and Inuit leadership since September of 2001, and had already conducted over 40 interviews, representatives familiar with my work approached me concerning the new mandate. I decided to pursue the possibility of collaboration. For the next three months I worked with John Bainbridge and (primarily) Alistair Campbell to find a way to facilitate a cooperative agreement whereby both my research could be advanced and NTI's project could be given a sound beginning. By mid-April we had finally reached an agreement whereby NTI would fund my travel in return for the transcripts of the interviews conducted during the travel.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

I began my research in 2001 by gleaning all of the names that I could from written materials concerning the Nunavut negotiations, of which there were very few at the time. Thanks to funding from my university, and an invitation and offer of support from the Government of Nunavut, specifically the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs, I was able to come to Iqaluit in the summer of 2002 and begin making personal contact with negotiators and participants. It is from those initial interviews that I began to develop a comprehensive list of people who were involved in the process of the creation of Nunavut. Participants generally fell into three categories: a) Inuit and their advisors who participated directly through negotiation, research, administration or organizational development, b) Representatives of the Federal and Territorial governments who participated directly in the negotiations, and c) people who were not directly involved in the negotiations but who followed them closely as Era Witnesses because of their relationship to the participants or the media. I returned in March of the following year to conduct further interviews and gain further experience in Nunavut, and finally returned again in January of 2004 to live in Nunavut for several months.

The question of which participants to attempt to see in person was decided through gaining an understanding of the length of their involvement in the process, the degree of impact that their participation had upon either organizational development or the negotiations, and their accessibility.

SELECTION OF SITES

Sites were selected according to which locations had the highest concentrations of people who fit the above list of criteria. The list was narrowed to: Yellowknife, Cambridge Bay, Arviat, Rankin Inlet and Igloolik. Because of the constraints placed upon me by the funding I received through the granting institution that is supporting my research, travel had to be completed by mid-May. Because the cooperative agreement was not reached between NTI and myself until mid-April, this necessarily limited time I was able to spend in each location. It was further limited by the schedules of commercially available flights, which only fly on certain days of the week. This should be taken into consideration by those continuing this project when making scheduling arrangements.

METHODS

My research methods are qualitative, based upon interviews and personal narratives. I then triangulate people's personal stories and memories with published documents of the day in order to better pinpoint when events actually occurred. When I conduct interviews, I use an open-ended conversational style. Rather than asking direct questions, often I will bring up specific subjects, people or events that I know about through having been involved in this research for so long. Sometimes, in order to make it more comfortable for people to share various aspects of their lives to me, I find it only fair to share similar stories of my life with them. For purposes of the NTI project, I may omit or include my own statements made during these interviews in the transcript, including them only when I feel it may be helpful to NTI. I have also sent a copy of the transcript of their interview to each of the participants interviewed for this project.

II. FIELD EXPERIENCE

GENERAL NOTE: Before my departure, NTI notified the regional offices of who I was, what project I was working on, when I would be there, and asked that they help support me by giving me access to a computer and use of the phone. This greatly assisted my travel. Without the tremendous support and care of the people at NTI Cambridge Bay and Rankin Inlet, much of this work would not have been possible. It should also be noted that in each location, a far greater number of people were contacted than were interviewed. Some people were out of town or had scheduled conflicts. Contacting a greater number of people than could be interviewed allowed me to be able to interview as many people as possible each day. It should also be understood that a great deal of time is spent waiting for people.

YELLOWKNIFE

Regrettably, I only had two full days in Yellowknife. Knowing this the week before, I made every effort to arrange both the archival work and some interviews in advance.

I spent my first full day in Yellowknife, Tuesday, April 27th, at the NWT Archives. Because of my ability to coordinate with the NWT Archives staff, I was able to locate almost every collection that relates to the history of the Land Claims Negotiations and Agreement. While I did not get to explore every collection, I was able to obtain for NTI copies of every reference summary, which will be included with this report. The Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut archive index will be submitted in hard copy, as that is the only format in which I was able to obtain it. The other index, which includes 'fonds' summaries on every issue pertaining to Nunavut, were submitted both electronically as well as in hard copy. Both indices were included with the preliminary report that was submitted May 31, 2004. It should also be noted that in order to obtain this information, I needed to get permission directly from NTI to copy TFN materials. Luckily, I was able to facilitate this the same day through email.

[In addition to the copies of archival indices, I was also able to obtain copies of voice recordings of interviews conducted of TFN and Federal negotiators in English, specifically from the North by Northwest broadcasts, from the airing of the first show to the signing of the agreement. I was also required to get permission from CBC to gain access to these materials, and also managed to facilitate that in the same day. Nunavut Sivuniksavut now have copies of these recordings in their library in Ottawa.]

My second full day in Yellowknife, Wednesday, April 28th, I spent conducting interviews and making contact with people.

I recorded interviews with:

Bob Gamble, James Wah-Shee, and Bobby Kadlun.

I made arrangements to attempt to meet with one or two people when I returned the evening of May 3rd before flying on to Arviat the next day. During that time I was able to interview: **Stephen Kakfwi**

CAMBRIDGE BAY

I spent all of the afternoon of April 29th, to mid-morning May 3rd in Cambridge Bay. Travel was smooth and on time. Immediately upon arrival I went to NTI's offices, was warmly greeted and given access to resources. The first thing I did was to make an appointment to interview NTI and KIA people. Again, I had contacted each of the people that I interviewed in advance, so they were expecting me.

I conducted interviews with: **James Eetoolook, Jack Kupeuna, Helen Magsagak and Charlie Evalik.**

ARVIAT

I spent the entirety of May 4th, traveling from Yellowknife to Arviat. In Arviat I had arranged to stay with friends of mine, but that took some coordination as they were out of town. During the three hour layover in Rankin Inlet, I went to NTI's offices to introduce myself, made appointments to interview a couple of people that next week, and worked on my arrangements for Arviat.

The flight was delayed, so I arrived late. I had to wait even longer for the housing authority to bring me the key. I stayed in Arviat from May 5th to the morning of May 8th. Unfortunately, I was not able to leave the residence until late on May 9th, when they brought me the duplicate key to the house. I spent the morning working on this report and transcriptions, and the afternoon arranging interviews for the next days. While in Arviat I recorded interviews with: **Joe Karetak, Rhoda Karetak & Charlotte St. John, and Thomas Suluk.**

Rankin Inlet

I arrived in Rankin late on the evening of May 8th. Sunday, May 9th was Mother's Day, so it was inappropriate to contact most people, save for briefly meeting the women from the Literacy Council (a meeting which had been pre-arranged with Sandy Kusugak). In the following days I was able to meet with: **Bernadette Dean, Emily Angulalik (of Cambridge Bay), Raymond Ningeocheak, Michael Shouldice, Catherine Pilakapsi, Olli Ittinuar (Catherine and Olli were interviewed with the aid of a paid Interpreter, Mary Rose Angoshadluk), Michael Kusugak, Louis Taparti, and Elizabeth Kusugak.**

III. THE PRELIMINARY REPORT

On May 31st, I submitted a preliminary report to Alistair Campbell that included the following:

- I. List of interviews, including names, dates and locations
- II. NWT ARCHIVE MATERIALS: TFN Archive index
(HARD COPY ONLY)
- III. NWT ARCHIVE MATERIALS: NUNAVUT Fonds Index
(Hard Copy and Email)
- IV. CD containing audio recordings of all interviews, in Olympus DSS format.
- V. Transcripts of interviews with **Bobby Kadlun & James Wah-Shee.**

IV. THE FINAL REPORT CONTENTS

This report, mailed on December 20, 2004 from Syracuse, New York, includes typed transcripts of the twenty-two interviews obtained through the project, along with copies of the permission and release forms signed by each participant. The transcripts alone took several months to complete. These documents have been submitted on CD-R and are in Word 2000 format. The permission forms are scanned documents, and are also included on the CD-R as Quicktime format photos. All of the interviews have also been converted to Quicktime WAV format, and are included on three DVD+R discs.¹

V. TO FURTHER THE PROJECT

These transcripts and interviews should be but the first step in creating an oral history of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement. Many more interviews need to be conducted before memory fades or even more people are lost to us. In addition to funding the gathering of more interviews, NTI should consider finding someone to conduct archival research to gather a definitive copy of all Nunavut and NTI related documents in one place. As things stand now, no single archive has even a complete copy of the TFN Newsletters from the era. In working on this project, I have begun some of this work, but a great deal more needs to be done. Deeply disturbing are the many reports that I have come across related how such materials and documents have been thrown out of regional and local archives because they were considered “dated”.

In addition, funding additional grants to create a definitive timeline of historical events is crucial. In compiling such a timeline for my dissertation, I have come across over twenty different and conflicting ones. I would also recommend that such a timeline extend back beyond the founding of the ITC, and begin with the organizations founded in the late 1950's, such as the first Arctic co-ops. I understand that **Pauloosie Akkeeagok**, at the time of this writing, has applied for such a grant. I would highly recommend funding his initiatives. He has the background, interest, and research skills to undertake this project.

One other project, along the same line of research, that I know to currently be underway is one proposed by Marianne Demmer and Katherine Clarida-Fry, the Project Managers of EnTheos films. Their project, entitled **Staking Our Claim: The Story of Nunavut**, is also supported by Morley Hanson and Angus Murray of Nunavut Sivuniksavut and will create a curriculum for the Canadian school systems that will tell the Nunavut story through film and accompanying supplemental materials.

¹ These documents are for use by those directly employed by NTI or by the persons themselves who were interviewed. These materials cannot be released to any third parties until the terms of our agreement have expired.

Finally, I would also suggest hiring someone to work on compiling a volume of the personal narratives ultimately collected for publication. It should be someone who understands both the history of Nunavut as well as who has the gift of storytelling and can provide background to each of the narratives. I would personally be very interested in continuing this work next year.

IV. THE AUTHOR'S PLANS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank NTI for their support and having made this wonderful journey possible.

Over the next year I will be writing a dissertation, **Nunavut: A Creation Story**. In my dissertation I will focus on the development of Inuit leadership in Nunavut, how that leadership created an Inuit movement that led to the peaceful transformation of the geography of a nation, and what other indigenous peoples can learn for the Inuit experience. I hope to complete this work by the end of the summer of 2005.

Following the completion of the dissertation, I will then turn the larger project of writing a book that will include all the voices of Nunavut that I have heard that would not fit into the dissertation. At this point, I have gathered over 120 conversations on Nunavut's history over the course of four years, including the twenty-two collected in this project. Before I conclude my research, I hope to have spoken to an overwhelming majority of the people who participated in this process, many of whom made significant sacrifices to bringing about this tremendous achievement.

When I am ready to begin this second work, I will submit proposals to granting institutions asking for funding to support me while I write it. NTI will most certainly be one of those institutions to which I will turn. At that time, I would be most happy to be able to return to this project as well. Contributing to the preservation of this history and the stories of these people's lives and experiences is one of the most rewarding things I have done, and would welcome the opportunity to do more.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

This report has provided an overview of the projects currently underway with regard to telling the story of the Nunavut Negotiations and the history of Nunavut's Creation. I would encourage NTI to continue to maintain an open line of communication with all those individuals and institutions working in these areas. NTI has the opportunity through this Oral History Project initiative to play a vital role in supporting and creating a central repository for all of our endeavors. These stories represent a legacy that Nunavummiut can be proud of and from which we can all learn. So much of this legacy is not known by younger generation; it is my hope that in the future these stories will be known by all and I commend NTI for their foresight in addressing these needs, before it is lost.