

Kananginak Pootoogook, Cape Dorset, NU

Born at Ikirasak, January 1, 1935

Question: When did you hear of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement?

Kananginak: I have attended two public meetings on it and I have known about it from the start.

Q: What did you think of it at the time?

K: I, like others thought from the start, thought that we already owned the land as we were born here in the Arctic, as were our fathers (parents). When the process started, I realized that we were just borrowing the land and I have never been happy with that.

Q: What did other people in your community think?

K: When ITC (Inuit Tapirisat of Canada) started holding meetings on the necessity of claiming our land and controlling it ourselves, I was not directly involved, but I have supported land claims. We needed to re-claim it and control it ourselves.

Q: Do you remember who worked on the agreement?

K: It was what they called Nunasi, with Tommy Suluk as chair. I attended two public meetings when they called themselves Nunasi.

Q: What were they saying about the NLCA?

K: They were discussing different issues, but I heard from them that we did not have (own) any land.

Q: What did you believe would happen?

K: Thinking about how hard the leaders of the time were working on it, I wanted them to have the authority to deal with it, especially at the time when they were talking about dropping Section 34 (of the British North American Act). I understood at the time that Nunasi was holding meetings and if the leaders of the time did not work hard, we would not get our land back. That was what I was expecting.

Q: Why did you think that way? The section 34 you're talking about, is that in the constitution?

K: Yes, I was there (Ottawa) at the time when that was happening. It was talking about the rights of Inuit. If that was dropped, we would have been without rights

(as Inuit). As I understand it, it was when they kept it on that I knew we could reclaim the land.

Q: What do you think about the land claims agreement now?

K: The original Canadian laws meant that we were not able to control land and it was owned by the Qallunaat. I have come to understand in working with Inuit qaujumajatuqangit (IQ) that it needs to be incorporated into the government. Some traditions will not be incorporated, but there are some that are essential and will be used. Inuit qaujimajatuqangat laws are not considered as they are not written, but they are real laws for Inuit in use all the time. This is not going to be easy, but the ones that are desirable will have to be incorporated into the constitution of our land. I am expecting them to be used at that time. That is why I work hard with others while I'm involved in it. Judges (courts) are not geared towards Inuit and that is why I try hard to include IQ.

Q: What do you believe is the most important Inuit qaujimajatuqangit value contained in the NLCA?

K: Using the hamlet operations as an example, some are still not a part of our government, things such as social services and education, are not part of our constitution, but will eventually be part of our future constitution and set up in a better way based on Inuit traditions. Inuit traditions or culture is used today by long time Inuit councilors even though it is oral and not written, therefore not recognized. These are considered useful and will not be abandoned. And to my understanding these will be incorporated into our Nunavut governments' constitution.

Q: Do you think any Inuit values are left out? What ones?

K: Once these things are incorporated into the constitution, it will be possible to combine traditional and modern values. I know that I am impatient like all the others who want to see things implemented and those who were expecting good things when we got Nunavut. But as long as these things are put into law and properly implemented by our descendants, even though I will probably not be around, I expect good things to come out of it.

Q: What is your vision of Nunavut?

K: Until these things are put into law and practiced, we will keep living the Qallunaat way.

Q: What would you say to the future generations of Nunavut?

K: I am occasionally asked that question and I can't really say, but I can talk about the ones who will be controlling things after us. Before that, there are those who

were working when we first started using the co-op system and there were hardly any jobs available. We rely heavily on those people today and I am always grateful to them and respect them. And also those people who have not been involved with the co-op but who are working hard in their jobs today are mostly Inuit now, even though there are Qallunaat here and there who are still working. With exception, there are some who are in school today and learning true Qallunaat customs and will eventually come to understand things. It would be better if some of the people coming out of the schools start studying how things operate in Nunavut, even though there will be some who slow things down by not completing school. But those who do will be the ones in charge and will have to be made to understand about the good future that we want so it will happen properly. That is only what I think. I would like to tell those people who are in school to properly complete their education because there will be a lot of jobs available. Also, countries in the world have different governments of their own based on their own culture. We will also be able to do that if the people who are around today properly run things.