

Percy Pikuyak

Question: First of all, please state your name.

Percy: I am Percy Pikuyak of Hall Beach.

Q: Where were you born, Percy?

Percy: I was born here in the Baffin region in Siuraarjuk, which is on the other side of Igloolik. It is a part of Baffin Island.

Q: Can you state the date of your birth?

Percy: My parents said it was November 6, 1940.

Q: Where were you in the 1970s?

Percy: In 1968, I went to Resolute Bay. I stayed in Resolute Bay from 1968 until 1970 when we moved to Iqaluit.

Q: Do you understand English and Inuktitut?

Percy: I have never gone to school, but I can understand a little bit of English. I can't really speak it.

Q: When did you hear of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement and what did you think of it at that time?

Percy: At that time, I thought that was very distant because I wasn't involved in it. I'm not sure where it was, perhaps it was in Inuvik, but somewhere they signed the agreement for the creation of the Nunavut territory, at that time I didn't really believe it. I had not heard about how it was going to be structured. It was only afterwards that I found out about how it was going to be structured.

Q: What did you think of it?

Percy: I was always working at that time and would go on duty travel down south as well, particularly in Nanisivik. I would go to Montreal for training and Fort Smith for heavy equipment operator training and I completed that training. When Nunavut was going to become official, and it was in discussions, I knew that we were going to have more opportunities for jobs. That is what I thought, when in reality it was not to be.

Q: Did you contribute to it or did you know of other people who worked on the agreement?

Percy: I use to hear only the same usual people back then, such as Paul Quassa, and they worked so hard. I use to hear that when the agreement goes forward that Inuit culture would exist more and that it would be easier to get jobs and that's what I believed. I thought even if I do not have education in English, as long as I can do the job, I will have more potential. That is what I thought. And it turns out even if I have experience, because I can't speak English it was going to be impossible to work.

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

Percy: I really believed that Inuit culture would be revived. Youth issues, social issues, those things, I thought they would be revived through the use of Inuit culture. It turns out, even though there is a land claims agreement, even though it's here, we are still using a lot of Western culture. For example, if I did something to discipline my older child who isn't behaving well and I am reported to the police, I can even be put in jail. If we were to use Inuit ways, I wouldn't even have to go through that because I am disciplining in order to correct him/her.

Q: Do you feel any left out?

Percy: Yes, very much so. I really want a lot of things in regards to our culture. For example, we are not going to live in qammait (sod houses) or igloos anymore. It seems that we cannot fully recover our traditional way of life, our culture. Our way of life is what I would like to be restored through the use of culture, through our activities, not through the use of Qallunaat activities. That is what I have been yearning for.

Q: What is your vision of Nunavut?

Percy: This is how I would like to see Nunavut. For example, the Japanese use their culture richly and they are very self-sufficient with their money and their responsibilities. Similar to that, we can use our culture instead of using the Qallunaat ways so much. This is what I hope for, to be self-sufficient. I believe what keeps us from advancing is not having an English education. It's because I have not received education that I cannot work. I believe I know how to be self-sufficient.

Q: If you could say one thing that should be remembered by our future generations, what would you say to them?

Percy: Our ancestors had the ability to survive, although all they did was subsistence harvesting even in the harshest cold climate, always hunting in order to provide food and warmth. Even though our way of life is not solely based on subsistence harvesting, working efficiently, such as how they used to manage, can be used to live daily because money is what we use now. Teach our youth more about the

weather, the seasons of our land, use the issue of being lost on the land, and women teach them sewing skills, not just a little bit of it, teach them fully, instill in them the knowledge and know-how. Just learning the basics doesn't really teach you anything, but working hands on and learning makes you learn more. This is what I hope for. We can rear our children while they are still manageable when they are young, keep them in order instead of spoiling them. We spoil them with our lives. If I were an alcohol drinker, if I do negative things, or if I am always superior over my wife, those are things that destroy a life. If we are good role models to our children, our youth, they would be happier with their lives and not be in as much trouble. Disciplining seems to not work as much anymore because we are not listened to anymore. That is the way it is today.