

Perry River Project

Taped at Gjoa Haven

September 2003

David Siksik

(English)

**Interviewer: David Pelly
Interpreter: David Qirqut
Transcribed by: Ben Kogvik**

Q He said that his name is David Pelly and today is September 9, 2003 here in Gjoa Haven. This is about the Perry River closing down and how the people lived there, about the people who lived over there. First he'd like to know your name and your birth place and how you were born. He wants to record them so he'll ask you to say them.

DS Yes, can I talk. Is it okay to talk now?

Q Yes.

DS I was told that I was born in 1942 but that was changed recently on those new revised identification cards. I was born in 1942 and was put down as January 1. It's not the correct date but it's close. I was born during Christmas, close to Christmas, towards the end of that month. It's hard to tell the exact date but the Government put it as 1st January, it's not the right one but it's close. At Kulgayuk (Simpson River), on the east side of Perry River, I was told [I was born] at Simpson River. There are names for places, so at Nihiktuqvik, part of Simpson River, I was born.

Q Your parents' names or your adoptive parents' names can be told here.

DS Yes, did I even say my own name?

Q I don't know? I don't think it was said. You can say your name.

DS Yes, I'm David Siksik, and I have adoptive parents who is Kupluguk. My adoptive parent's name is Kupluguk the man, also my natural parents are whom I was born from are Qamukkaq Martha Keanik, Keanik was my father. Those two are brothers, Kupluguk and Keanik, my late adoptive father and my father.

Q Do you know Kupluguk's English name?

DS Paul. Where is Simpson River? There.

Q What about this?

DS Kuunayuk (Ellice River).

Q I guess this is Ellice River?

He said that firstly you wanted to point out some of these places so you can start by saying the names of those places.

DS My adoptive parents Kupluguk's stayed there at Ellice River, they usually stayed there all the time because there was fish and it seemed that they would have always stayed there if the store didn't close down at Perry River. At that time after we went caribou hunting at Simpson River, we went for Easter and hunting caribou to Putulik (Hat Island).

While we were at Hat Island some people came to us from Perry River and said that the store was closed. They said that there was no more store. At that time we started back to where we lived, we started to go to Perry River. We got to Perry River where the store was. We left my adoptive parents there and went to Ellice River to pick up some of our belongings. They had a cabin so we just left the cabin. We also just left the [fox] traps along with some of our belongings that were too heavy, those we just left behind. We didn't want to just leave these things but there was no other choice as the store was closed, and it was too difficult to take all of them, traveling only by dog team. Then we went back to where the store was after only us men went to pick up some things. We were given only a few grocery items. It didn't seem that they would even last for a month. I wasn't given anything, but my adoptive parents were given something. I wasn't a child anymore at that time and should have been given something, but I didn't receive anything. At that time, from where the store was, we started traveling towards here, we reached Simpson River and waited for the ice to go, after we got to Simpson River. When we waited for the ice to go, at Simpson River, and when the ice left we started traveling towards Gjoa Haven by boat, along the shore. There were only three boats from there, there were two canoes, actually four – there were actually four: two wooden boats with in-board motors and both weren't very big. We had to take turns going back and forth as there were a lot of dogs. We went back and forth. One of us would travel and go back for the rest though we didn't get any assistance with gasoline at that time when the store was closed. We didn't get any help with ammunition or anything such as nets. They weren't even given any medical supplies. After staying a while at Simpson River, we started traveling towards Atanikittuq (mid-west coast of Klutschak Peninsula) when we got near Palliq and Atanikittuq our route started getting blocked from ice so we were stuck with the boats. There was no way for the boats to move. Just over past Palliq, the ice remained, past Atanikittuq (just us men, Magaknak and Apiana and me), the three of us went by one boat, and left for Cam-2. We reached some people, as there were people at Cam-2, so after we reached people we stayed with them for a while then we left for Gjoa Haven and before we got there our outboard motor broke at Niaquqnaqyuk (near James Ross Point) near there somewhere. A Peterhead ship came upon us in the fog there. It was a very stressful time at that point as our relatives that we left behind seemed extremely far, more so as we didn't have any means to get back. I don't know how many days we stayed in Gjoa Haven as we had nothing to get anything. After we stayed there we were brought by Peterhead ship to Cam-2, by the late Angutittauruq (Charlie), he brought us there. Apparently he was told to bring us back to where we came from, but he went back after arriving in Cam-2. We had a boat, an old canoe and were given an outboard motor to use at Cam-2, so we went home to just past Atanikittuq. Before reaching there it kept getting windy so we'd camp at the islands. Although we were traveling by boat it would storm so we started staying in iglus. We should have been using tents but since there was snow, we started staying in iglus. At that time near Atanikittuq, near the point, as it was getting dark, the winds died down ... although it was still quite wavy, I wanted to leave to get closer towards home. We left as there were now two boats. I was using my father-in-law's boat. We lost each other in the dark. Magaknak and I were together, and Apiana was using the canoe. We lost

each other in the dark, so we spent the night separately. Magaknak and myself didn't have a stove, we didn't have anything. There was also no tent, so we slept in the bow of the boat. When we got up, it was quite calm. The in-board motor had a very small gas tank, it was a 1 gallon tank. From Atanikittuq, using only what fuel was in the tank, we headed straight across even though it was a large body of water. We got close to an island and ran out of gas. We had only one oar and we paddled to the island. Hard... it was very hard. There was a bit of methol hydrate and when the motor just shut off, Magaknak poured a little bit of methol hydrate into the tank of that old motor, and I had started to paddle, but it started so we reached the island. It was just plain methol hydrate. The methol hydrate that they used for stoves. After we got to that island, Apiana passed by and we could see him. We tried to get as high as possible but he didn't see us. We had only a 22 rifle so we shot a few times with the 22, to try to get him to hear it. He was moving, so he didn't hear it. We put the boat up on shore, on the island where we were, but it was scary to get on the ice, as the mainland was far. At the foot of the bedrock, I placed the paddle on the ice to support my wait and I got on the ice, the edge of the ice wasn't too strong so I tested the ice a bit and found that I could stand on it, so I threw the paddle back to Magaknak as there was only one and he got on the ice using it to support himself. We went across to the land and got home, as it got dark, to where we were heading back to. We didn't have a rifle with us, actually we didn't have anything, all we carried was the paddle.

Q While you walked?

DS Yes, while we walked, leaving the boat behind. When we got home, after we slept, the next day we went to get the boat. We went back to get it with Apiana, the three of us using the canoe. When we reached it, we had tea and it became windy. We set out, but the boat we were using couldn't move, although the motor was running, as there was a lot of icy slush built up on the sea. We were left behind again by the person that was boating with us, when he went around behind the island. We couldn't get back to the land as there was so much icy slush for quite a ways out. The floor planks of the boat were removable on that boat. We placed them on the slushy ice and using an empty 10 gallon drum as a support I got onto the land over the slush. When I got close enough to the land using that 10 gallon drum, I had left the planks on the ice and had also placed a skin over them. I threw that 10 gallon drum back to Magaknak as I was quite sure that I would make it to the land. I threw it back towards him so that he could use it for a support. Using it as a support, he also got on the land. We left the boat again and went home.

Q To that island?

DS At that island [we left] the boat.

Q You left the boat?

DS Yes, yes we left it. The person that went with us apparently went back and got on another island and started waving his arms atop it, so we went back to him. When we went back I went across to him as he was on another island. When I got across

on the ice, he got on the ice. If he was alone, I don't think that he would have gotten on the ice. I went back because I went back to him, leaving Magaknak [who] was on another island, as it was close. I went across with him. We walked back home again, leaving both of the boats behind. Those are the places that I've already mentioned before on our route over there between Perry River and here. We didn't receive any kind of help from the government at that time.

They had started to receive social assistance at that time and we left from over there after they had started getting some welfare. Also the students that went to school, that usually went to Inuvik, were never picked up. These included my wife and her younger sisters, and Apiana's daughter and Ullikattaq's son, that all usually went to Inuvik for school. They never once were thought about. It seemed that they were never thought about when it was time for school, because they used to be picked up all the time while we were still at our home-land. I don't know why, when we started traveling here, the students we never thought about and were never picked up.

Q Someone brought you to Cam-2?

DS Yes.

Q Do you remember what year, 19-something, and some of year, that you went from there to Gjoa Haven, then headed back over there, when just you men left at that time.

DS From here close to Atanikittuq, I don't remember when it was. October or one of those. I never really thought about the month.

Q What about the year, do you remember what year it was?

DS Yes apparently we left from over there in 1966, when we started out Perry River.

Q Yes, is that when you moved?

DS Yes, when we started to move. When we actually moved, actually left the place for good, in 1966.

Q Looking at the year you were born and the year that you started to move from Perry River towards Gjoa Haven was 1966, so therefore if that's correct, you were probably 24 years old when you moved.

DS Yes, I think that was how it was, it's pretty close anyway.

Q When you started moving from over there, was it after you had a wife that you started to move from over there?

DS It was before I got a wife the we moved, when I was just going to start getting a wife.

Q Was it before you had any children?

DS Yes, it was long before we had a child.

Q When you got back over there, after you heard that there would be no more people and the store was going to close, from whom did you hear about this?

DS Apianas followed us to Putulik (Hat Island). They came from Perry River following us to Hat Island, so when they came, we heard. Also Ullikattaqs had gone to Gjoa Haven by dog team. They also got to us at Hat Island and apparently they had heard from over there that the store was closing, so we got word of it again.

Q Did you hear about this from Apiana while there were still some people there?

DS Yes, there were still people, just that the store was closed while there were still people.

Q So the store was just closed?

DS Yes.

Q Who was the store manager at Perry River, at that time when it was closing?

DS There were a lot of store managers, white people that came. Managing. Long after Angulalik stopped being the manager of the store, so I don't know his name because there were different store managers.

Q At the time that it was closing there was a white-man store manager?

DS Yes, there was a white-man store manager.

Q When you talked about getting a little bit of food given to you, you said that you were given them, you said that you received them – exactly what, of the white-man's food, were given to those people when they were going to start traveling here? Do you remember what they were?

DS Yes, there weren't very many things but there was flour, those 50 pound bags and the others were 25 pounds. My adoptive parents were given 50 pounds, plus tea... those loose tea leaves in a pouch they were not in separate bags, so they had to be scooped up. They had to be put into a tea pot. There were two bags of tea and 10 pounds of sugar. There was also jam, lard, perhaps two 1 pound lards. That was about all there was, not much else. Though there were some other things but I don't remember what they were.

Q Was there any baking powder?

- DS Yes, there was some baking powder. They were very big those things. For seven months we would not enter a store. They weren't even enough to last a month or even less by today's standards, when you look at them.
- Q Those things that were given to your adoptive parents, were the others given the same amount as well?
- DS Yes, they didn't seem to be exactly the same. I'm not sure about those others. Apiana could tell what they were given and we could find out more about them. I myself wasn't given anything. My adoptive father, though, was given something. They are my direct relatives so I shouldn't be afraid of them but I never thought anything of it at that time, but I've mentioned the items that I know.
- Q Before, you talked about only you men going to Gjoa Haven. Was it before you got those items or after you got them, the flour, sugar and tea?
- DS Those things, the tea and flour, after it [Perry River store] closed, when we got back from Hat Island were given out, when we were going to come this way, to try to go to Gjoa Haven we were given them in the spring time.
- Q At the time just you men, Apiana and Magaknak, when you went to Gjoa Haven, were you not given anything else?
- DS From here, [pointing to map] when we went to Gjoa Haven, we were not allowed to shop [trade] as we had no means to shop in Gjoa Haven.
- Q You left from here to go to Gjoa Haven? When you started to move from Perry River, and you reached here and from here you started going to Gjoa Haven?
- DS Yes.
- Q When you left from here, that time, only you men left from here to Gjoa Haven?
- DS Yes, when it was going to freeze up.
- Q During part of your story, you said that from Gjoa Haven, you started traveling to Cam 2. You said that you were brought there. Where is Cam 2 located?
- DS Cam 2 is there right here near the straight [pointing to map]. When we were brought there by Peterhead, the person who brought us there was directed to go pick up everyone (where they were waiting for it to freeze up) but he was lazy. So from Cam 2, he returned to Gjoa Haven. Due to the fact that he didn't want to and because he wasn't a child and seeing as how it was our first time dealing with him, we were afraid, so we just got dropped off and were left behind.
- Q When you were doing that trip, who acted as leader? Did you have a leader?

DS At that time we did really have a leader. As such, Apiana drove the outboard motor for us. Also we had never been to this part of the land so we didn't know the land – using only a map to try to navigate we went to Gjoa Haven. At that time we did really have a leader but helped each other. Perhaps we could call Apiana our designated leader, though at that time he wasn't our leader. But we just helped each other out, so that's how we were.

Q While you were still over at Perry River, before it closed, probably near the time it was about to close, did the people who were originally from Perry River, those living in Cambridge Bay and Gjoa Haven, receive welfare and family allowances? Those living at Perry River, were they told about them?

DS Yes, while there was still a store manager over there at Perry River, they started receiving some family allowances. Family allowances were a very small amount, also the welfare amount was very small. They received welfare and family allowances for quite some time.

Q At that time did you also receive family allowances?

DS Yes, they received family allowances.

Q Did they also receive welfare over there?

DS Yes, yes only some of them received welfare, only some of them. Those who were more in need. There were no jobs, there was no place to work a long time ago, only with fox traps did we try to survive. So those that caught a lot of foxes never got welfare.

Q When that store closed and the people started leaving, did the welfare and family allowances stop? Did it seem that they were stopped there as well?

DS Yes, at that time when we got back from Hat Island, when we heard that it was closed and the store couldn't be entered, we got back apparently when we would never go into the store again. After it could not be entered into again, those people were given a package each, which were placed in another building, so we couldn't go into the store right away after we got back from being away. We never went into the store at all.

Q Were you not even given a little bit of welfare or weren't you even given family allowances?

DS They weren't given any, just the flour and those tea that were already packed while they were out camping, that were supposed to be given to them.

Q At that time, when it was closed, when you were given some food, you didn't receive welfare and family allowances? How long was it after that time that you got welfare and family allowances, for those people that used to live over there, perhaps not all of them or just some of them?

DS Yes, it was quite a long time after we started staying here [in Gjoa Haven], after spending the winter here, during part of that year, my adoptive parents both had old age pensions. It was a long time before they got their old age pensions as well as the family allowances. The people that came from Perry River didn't get them for a long time. For those of us that came from over there it seemed like we had nothing to get anything with for a long time, for those family allowances and welfare payments and old age pensions. We waited a long time, for who knows how many months.

At that time, during the trip before we reached Gjoa Haven, it was seven months. On the seventh, some of them got to Gjoa Haven. I don't know how many months it was after we started staying here that we didn't get any help. That, I couldn't say for sure, but I never got any welfare, so my first was in Gjoa Haven, that I could finally receive it during that year.

Q Tulukkaq seems close to here. Tulukkaq is just outside of here? [pointing to map]

DS Here instead, at Palliq's river past Kiluumanajuk, just past there.

Q Yes, Kiluumanajuk. Your whole family moved there when you moved? Your trip from Perry River to here, how long was the trip and how it went.

DS After picking up the things, we went back to Ellice River to wait for the ice to go. When the ice went, we went by boat towards Palliq. It was near Palliq that our path was blocked by ice. Our route kept getting blocked by ice, because the sea kept blowing towards the shore, so the ice kept drifting in. That's why we took so long, from being stuck there.

Q You left from Perry River when, during the spring or was it in the summer?

DS During the spring, yes.

Q Did you start out from there by dog team?

DS Yes, we traveled to Simpson River by dog team. They stopped right away at Simpson River, well before the ice was gone. Only the top of the ice was covered with water. At that place our parents wanted to wait for the ice to go, at Simpson River.

Q Where is Simpson River?

DS I think it's here.

Q What month was it do you remember?

DS I think it was in June that we got there.

Q From Perry River did you start traveling before June?

DS Yes, we went from there, after we went to pick up things from Ellice River, then went back. That's what we did and got here, to Simpson River.

Q What month was it when you were here at Hat Island?

DS In April, it was probably in April that we were there.

Q Did you go there by dog team?

DS Yes.

Q When you got back to Perry River were you given a little bit of white-man's food?

DS Yes, when we went back from there.

Q At that time you went by boat... did you go here by boat? You started going there?

DS Yes.

Q What kind of boat did you use when you left from there?

DS There was one canoe and two wooden boats with in-board motors. They're across there, across the bay, [in Gjoa Haven, now].

Q These kinds?

DS Yes, two of them. There were only three boats, the fourth was a small one that was towed. It was the second boat with the canoe.

Q Are they still over there?

DS Yes they're over there.

Q A proper canoe that can be motorized?

DS Yes a proper canoe that can be motorized.

Q The other one was just towed?

DS Yes, it was towed as it had no outboard motor.

Q Those boats with in-board motors and the one with an outboard motor, where did you get the gas for them?

DS My adoptive parents had bought some things, during the winter, so that they would be able to use them over the summer. That's what some did by trapping, preparing,

by collecting ahead of time. That's how we had a bit of gasoline, because they bought it ahead of time.

Q When you started traveling from Perry River to Gjoa Haven, to move, when you started to move by dog team, did you carry the boats on the sleds? Did you bring them to where you would wait for it to freeze-up?

DS We brought them here to where we would wait for freeze-up, hauling them by dog team, along with some other things.

Q While you were on this trip, did you hunt wildlife for food? Did you do some hunting during that time?

DS Yes, we hunted and also had nets out, and tried to hunt caribou. That's what we did