

Perry River Project
Taped at Gjoa Haven

September 2003

Peter Apiana
(English)

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

Q Today is September 10, 2003. His name is David Pelly, and he will be interviewing Peter Apiana, about moving from Perry River to Gjoa Haven. We'll be talking about the move to Gjoa Haven, Nunavut.

Before we start taping, before he asks you questions, he wants to ask you about the forms we signed, what we agreed to, do you understand them?

A Yes, I understand them.

Q He said that about this move that you made from Perry River to Gjoa Haven, before we start talking about them, anything that you don't want to mention, you don't have to answer. Also, it's up to you, what you talk about, when you want to stop you can stop. Also, it's up to you, what you will talk about, when you want to stop you can stop anytime. Also anything that you don't want to mention, you don't have to talk about. Anything that you don't quite understand, you can have clarified.

A Yes.

Q He said, first of all, before you start, he wants to find out about your birth date, month, and year if you know them, and also the place where you were born, if you've heard about it, also your parents' names.

A Yes, yes.

Where is it, right there? Is it recording now? Yes, this is Peter Apiana being interviewed. I became a resident of Gjoa Haven in 1967. I was born here [points to Ellice River on the map]. The government put any kind of birth dates for Inuit. My birth date wasn't during December. I was born in August according to my parents. Nuyaqiq was my father, his English name was Norman, my mother was Margaret Qanuvaq, those were my parents. About 1948-49 they were both deceased, at Ellice River. Here, exactly right here is where we lived, at Ellice River.

Q. Okay.

A. I was born here, Ellice River is the name as you just wrote it now. 1932 was when I was born. Yes, 1949 probably was when they passed away so I left it. We stayed around here, then I went to Perry River and left there [Ellice River]. Only when I got a wife I returned here [Ellice River]. I had four children with her. While we were still there, my late wife and I, went for Easter with our parents, we went back until trapping season was over and we tried to finish the fish, because they were cached for dog food. While we were still there we were told it [the post] was going to close down at Perry Island. Some already left for Cambridge Bay by dog team. We left from there when it didn't get dark anymore. I had to follow my in-laws. Both of us we came from there [Ellice River]. We came from there, with our parents my in-laws, we came from here following them there-over here, after we

came back, and exactly right here was where our store was. Perry Island is the name, here was the first store. A murder took place there at the store and it closed and another placed nearby, over here, near the mainland, a new building was built for a store. The name now is Perry Island.

Q. You said before that you and your wife trapped here around Ellice River?

A. For sure.

Q. Yes.

A. We had students at Inuvik. Our late daughter, our oldest, Uquqtutnuaq's late wife, Siksik's wife, her younger sister Hiitquqluk Molly Siutinnuaq, and Kahak Ullikattaq's late son Norman Nanooklok Ullikattaq – those all went to school, returning only in June. When they returned we finally left for good to come here, travelling. Here where there was water only is where we got to, us younger people weren't the bosses so we waited til it opened up there.

Q. Does it have a name?

A. Tulguqtitiivik is the name. We were trying to come closer to here [Gjoa Haven] but there were old ice packs there, so we spent days there as it couldn't be helped. We couldn't travel for long by boat. Only here somewhere, we only went up to here by boat.

Q. That area you boated to, do you remember the name?

A. Ulivyaqniqtuuq. Yes, it couldn't become ice free because it had a lot of old icepacks. Due to not having a way to go, Magaknak, Siksik and I started coming by boat alone. Our outboard motor was a 5½ HP. When we left there in the morning we reached Cam-2 because it didn't get dark. The next day we could have reached here [Gjoa Haven], but our motor broke and we were stuck. We were all alone. The late Ikey, he was Nulungiq's late husband, helped us, so with his motor we were able to get back.

Q. When your motor broke did you not get to Gjoa Haven at all?

A. We got to Gjoa Haven as we came across a Peterhead at Niaquqnaqyuk. I had no idea that it was called Niaquqnaqyut at that time, apparently it was Niaquqnaqyuk. At Cam-2, only because we were loaned the late Ikey's outboard motor, did we get back, as it was freezing up more. Using only a map as a guide, I traveled this area as it was the very first time. Though the three of us arrived into Gjoa Haven we didn't get any help at all. Over there at Perry River, when we left Perry Island, we had very little in the way of white man's food. Very small, and the store would not even provide much else to add to these, as even some of the items for sale were already shipped off. We weren't assisted with hunting supplies, ammunition, nets. Survival

equipment wasn't thought of for us, as the store had no more supplies to even ask for. Welfare from Cambridge Bay was starting to help us with social assistance, but no help at all from here, so it was extremely hard.

Q. Continue.

A. I've mentioned those things. We are human, but it seemed that no one cared about us, that that's how we were, or our students, us as a people – how many? Yeah nearly 62 of us that came here. There was no white man's food, nor was there any kind of help. We were given only one month's supply of white man's food. We ended up months without going into a store, seven months without entering a store. We weren't given any assistance for a very long time, as well [even after arrival in Gjoa Haven]. Only after a year passed, Ray Mercer helped us.

Q. How?

A. In the fall, we arrived here during that time with Siksik and Magaknak. It was only during that same month, a year later, that he asked me to come to the store. He told me to sign my name. When he asked me to sign, he asked me, "Are you a resident of Gjoa Haven now?" "Yes." I agreed. I guess that I was formally in now, only after a year had passed in Gjoa Haven. It seemed that I had finally opened a way only after a year. We were now able to be assisted by the government. We were finally able to get help now. That's how we were, only after a year had passed. We were always in need, all the time. Only our elders, with their old age pensions, were helping us. That's how we were able to get anything from our parents, my in-laws.

Q. Before, when we just started talking, you said that when you were still here, at Ellice River or Perry River, when the time came each month, you received assistance. Correct?

A. Yes, for sure, yes.

Q. When you moved to Gjoa Haven only after a year had passed you got assistance?

A. Yes, for sure.

Q. When you finally received assistance, those months that you traveled, were they included in your assistance?

A. It was never included. That's why we want to be heard for that. We want to be heard. After a year had passed fully, we were finally able to get help. It wasn't even included in that. That's what we want to be heard about, for those reasons. There were five of us, actual parents: Kupluguks, Siksiks, (Siksiks were living with them), and those of us that had our own houses were Ullikattaqs, Halluqtaliks [and us], that's it. It's like five different households. Yes, that's how it was, we had no

help whatsoever all summer and into the fall, and still more time was added all winter and the summer was gone as well. Even the students were discouraged, from getting behind. Even our students were not thought of. We seemed not have anyone think or care about us at all, that's how we were treated. I know this is going to finish but thinking about that month, one month's supply of food was all that was given to us. It was all gone even before the ice was gone. When we were trying to come here, we ran out of supplies. We remember that we had nothing. We had a lot of children, no wonder there were 62 people. Some of us were adults, but most importantly the children had no white man's food to eat. We were in dire poverty, as if it wasn't hard enough the ice blocked our path – that's how we were. That's why we want to be helped. Also it should be noted that while we were coming, our outboard motor broke and we had no mode of travel anymore. Some family members were still waiting back there [on the coast]. People were concerned about us, but we were okay, so we weren't worried. But the people waiting were worried. That's what we want to be heard about. When we got here, after a year, when we finally got assistance, did it include more? It was never increased, so we want to be heard, that for seven months we all never entered a store.

Q. Do you remember how much ammunition you had over there when the store closed, when you started traveling towards Gjoa Haven? Do you remember how much ammunition you had?

A. I don't really remember those bullets, but we had some for all of them, 30-30, twenty-two long rifle, shotgun, those were the ones. There was some for them but perhaps the twenty-two had the most and lasted the longest. While we were still [on our way], we ran out of ammunition – I ran out of ammunition though there was caribou, I was completely out of bullets. Though we had nothing, we waited for freeze-up. Only with seals and caribou only did we keep from starving. There didn't seem to be much caribou and we couldn't hunt seals on the sea, as well I was out of ammunition, and it was finally getting so that the ice was strong enough not to break through, that's how it was. Only when it was completely frozen over did we go here with Kupluguks.

Q. You went when it was safe to go?

A. I stated that I came here. I said I came here. We had been here before. We finally started coming here with Kupluguk's by dog team only. I did know the route so we went all the way around. perhaps we got to Cam-2, to some people. I really didn't know this place but we did go by here. We didn't stay there [Cam-2] long and finally reached here [Gjoa Haven]. We didn't have any game either. That's how we were. We did not even have a little bit of white man's food to eat, that's how we were. But our elders were allowed to shop because they had old age pensions. We were finally able to have some white man's food.

Q. In Gjoa Haven?

A. Yes. Also, I didn't think about it before but at that time, children received family allowance of 6 dollars, six dollars per month. We had three children when we arrived here [Gjoa Haven]. Over there [Perry River], every year, every month we received family allowances. Each child received six dollars. I wonder how much for seven months, is what I'm starting to think about. I wonder why we didn't receive family allowances for seven months. I also haven't heard about it. We had three children: 6-12-18. 18 dollars per month, and as there were seven months I wonder how much it was. I don't even know if they came or not. It was because we were administered out of Cambridge Bay.

Q. Continue.

A. Myself, I was probably not the only one. Also, those people that we went with us, also had children: Magaknak's, Ullikattaq's, Halluqtalik's and us. I wonder if they even got their family allowance. I'm thinking about them as well because I remember that our children's family allowances were probably not given to us at that time. Not only for seven months, rather a year for sure. All year we didn't receive any assistance here. It seems that the children's allowances were suspended. They seemed kept. It seems like they were kept away. I think that it was like we were trashed and didn't need to be helped. Even the children's family allowances were not sent here before we arrived. We couldn't get assistance any more from Cambridge Bay. Even the family allowances were not sent here prior to our arrival. It was extremely difficult and that's why we want to be heard for those times. We are requesting \$100,000 as a figure. I mentioned this a couple of days ago to these agencies, such as the Hamlet, Hunters and Trappers, anyone School Councils split up their funds that they receive. What they request comes in as a lump sum, and when it's divided here, here, here, here, I wonder how much it becomes after it's divided when received as a lump sum? How much does it become? That's how we thought about this request of ours, a couple of days ago when I mentioned this.

Q. Continue.

A. That's what we've tried for, so that we can divide it up so that it comes as a lump sum, as we had talked about. Only when it comes, we'll decide how it will be shared. That's how we envisioned it before we started all of this. This isn't like we're a huge store, an industry. \$100,000 is what we've asked for. Mostly because of this, I didn't want to be forcing my opinion. Even those that went to listen last spring, that Mimugana said that we should be heard. His comments I didn't agree with. How will he use \$100,000 dollars if he's approved. That's what we had between us, that we didn't want to impede so Magaknak and I didn't want to seem to force anything. Siksik didn't mind if he went along. He didn't mind listening to him, because he is an Inuk. Only because we didn't want anything to ruin this, we didn't want to be followed instead as Magaknak and I had discussed. This will eventually be heard later on by whites and local people anywhere. Once we've

accomplished this, while we are able to do something about it, we don't have to keep being interviewed. That's how we felt, so we don't want to be listened to for that. Those things that are only dealt with, and only after they are completed are usually finally heard about in many places, those that are forced to leave their home lands are that way, that's why we don't want to be listened to right now. Once they are done with, they will inevitably be heard and will be reported on.

Q. Continue.

A. This seven months that we endured was to be thought about today, or even a few months or even four or three as an example. For a trip, there would be a lot of grub just for that. We had only very little. Yes, even if we don't use our funds and ask for, or even ask for hunting supplies. If we are going to do it for that amount of three months we would ask for a lot, even just for three months or so traveling without going into any stores. We would not want to go through hardship. Even some Inuit would be like that now. For one year, some are earning over \$20,000. This \$100,000 when you talk about it, it seems like a lot, but it's very small, when you divide it amongst people it becomes very small. One can get supplies for a year or more or several months. This is a vast area as you can see. We started from here [Perry River] to Gjoa Haven. If that trip were going to be done by someone making money, they would have to use a lot of gasoline and grub. If it was long ago they would have to have a lot.

Q. If you would travel today for three or more months, you would need enough to take along, as you indicated, if you were going hunting.

A. Sure, how should I say this, how should I say this? Yes, as I mentioned before, 100 dollars per person for five homes, 20,000 each, divided, would be equal amounts. Magaknak, when we started to meet, said some small amount, to get something, is what we should ask for now, even though it will be divided, it will give each something to get a small item. With this little plastic bag at the Northern or Co-op full of goods, \$100 is all gone now just for that today. That's a large amount in someone else's eyes, other than ours, but it isn't big. We are thinking about each household, our children, when our children were kids. They are grown up and live outside our homes but it isn't directed to only one home. If we are approved and it is divided up, when we divide it up, our children will not go with nothing, even if they are living in our homes. That's how we are. Yes, if we get that, if we can get approved for that, we wouldn't make another claim again, every year. An annual compensation is not what we've requested for that. Even if it's just a one-time thing, if we can get approved, we'd like to not think so much about how we've gone through hardship.

Q. While you still lived over there, near Perry River, before the store closed down, those people that usually shopped there, did they seem to decline in numbers? Did

you notice whether the number of people that used to shop at that store became fewer?

- A. Yes, some had already moved to Cambridge Bay, for some time. The people that used to shop there became fewer. Even though the numbers decreased, they still ran out of goods there. Our only means of making money was trapping foxes, child family allowances, and old age pensions were in place for quite some time. Though these were in place, most of us depended on trapping as our only means to get things. Many of us trapped for a living. It was our only way to obtain anything. Those days, when there were no foxes, there was nothing. For that reason I think that they started issuing social assistance. There were also no white people where we lived.
- Q. Before that store closed down, when the closing date was probably getting close, were you informed that it was closing? Were you told that there would be no more people living there?
- A. Yes, it almost closed [a few years] before this. I didn't pay attention to exactly what year it was. I never thought about it when it was going to close the first time. Due to no food supplies, we were going to be moved near Bathurst Inlet by plane.
- Q. So the store didn't close?
- A. Yes, it didn't close. Apparently the pilot, who was going to bring us, felt that it was too mushy on the ground and did not bring us there for that reason. It almost closed, for sure, but they met again with those that went for the meeting. The boats were collected there to be shipped over by barge near Bathurst Inlet. We brought our boats together there, only waiting for the plane, that's how we were. Stating that it was too mushy on the ground, the pilot didn't want to bring anyone. That's what I heard anyway. During 1967, when I wasn't expecting it, all of a sudden the post was closing. I didn't even know that they came to close it down. Easter and Christmas were the events where Inuit gathered in those days. Not all of the people of the Perry area found out about the closing of the post at the same time. They were informed at different times that the store had closed, only when it was too late and nothing could be done about it. We were at Ellice River, not knowing that it had already closed down. The post manager at that time asked if we wanted to follow the group that wanted to go here [Gjoa Haven]. Definitely, us, Halluqtaliks and Magaknaks were not the leaders. Kupluguk and Ullikattaq were the leaders, as they are our uncles and our parents. Since they wanted to come here we just followed them. In Cambridge Bay I have a lot of my relatives, but I have no desire to go there. I became a resident of this place and have no intention of moving. That's how I am today. Much like this those people in the Kivalliq, Baffin and Auyuittuq have not on their own been brought somewhere. They have stated that they were moved by ship. At least they were helped out. We were never helped in our move here. When we started coming from there, I helped here with acquiring food, we helped out but that was the limit of our assistance. We even had very little

gasoline on the trip and that's another reason we are asking for compensation. We probably would not be given gas as a compensation other than the \$100,000. That's something else that I had not thought of before. We couldn't ask for anything more as even the storage housing was already dismantled when we started coming. We started coming, never to return there. When I started coming here, they had already taken the storage sheds apart. We could not buy anything more or ask for anything more.

Q. During last Easter there before the post was closed, if you had gathered together, were you informed that the post was going to close?

A. There was no word at all. We never heard about it. Therefore, only when there was nothing that we could do about it, were we informed. Only when there was nothing that could be done about it, did we hear. My older brother-in-law's family, Haungaks, came by dog team, apparently after it was closed, on their way to Cambridge Bay. They said that the store was closed down.

Q. Those people going to Cambridge Bay stopped by your camp?

A. Yes, they stopped by our camp on their way to Cambridge Bay.

Q. At Easter, was the post manager there as well?

A. Yes.

Q. Did he look odd or ill? Did he mention anything about possibly leaving?

A. He did not mention anything at all. When it almost closed down, earlier, probably in the 60's, when it almost closed down, they said that it would not close down right now. They said that the ground was too mushy for the plane to move anything. It was fine. No one said anything about it. We had already brought our boat together and had to bring them back to our camps where we lived. At that time they said that the ground was too soft for the plane to move anything now. They were going to see how things went for some number of years before deciding to close it. As it was closing now, perhaps they had decided that over there when they met about closing it down. Only after it was already closed did I finally hear about it.

Q. When the post almost closed the first time, the post manager that was there, was he the same one that was there when it finally closed, or was there another person there?

A. There was another post manager when the store almost closed the first time. That person was probably stationed there for a certain number of years. When the time came up for that person to move, the store closed after a replacement person got there.

Q. Yes.

A. It closed for good.

Q. Which names do you remember of any of those post managers?

A. I don't recall any of their names. I don't know. They hardly said their names for sure.

Q. If you have anything more relevant to add from your trip from Perry River to Gjoa Haven that you traveled, feel free to talk about it. You can add more to this if you have anything else from this trip.

A. I mentioned before, perhaps, the gasoline that we had would not have been enough to reach our destination. When we left by boat, there was a lot of ice, old ice packs.

Q. Do you know the name of this place?

A. Tulguqtitiivik.

Q. Tulguqtitiivik.

A. That's where we started out by boat. Only to here did we go by boat. From there we would have reached farther, somewhere around here, if our elder had not stop right away. We would not have traveled seven months to reach here. We would have spent the ice break-up somewhere. Our dogs were fine, and we all had good dogs. If we didn't stop here right away we probably would have reached here somewhere by dog team, or we could have gotten close by boat. Before the water opened up we went from here, but our leaders stopped right away. They were elders so we just listened to them. We also knew that there wasn't a lot of gasoline. Also we didn't know how far Gjoa Haven was. I was thinking that it was too far. I also didn't know if we would have enough gasoline. That's how I was when the post was closing on us. If I could see by the map, this place Tulguqtitiivik is where we spent time camping. Gjoa Haven was way over there. Perhaps if I was the leader, I would have kept on even by dog team. Yes, because of not knowing the area though we survived the whole summer on country foods while traveling here for how many months we waited until freeze-up because our route was blocked by packed ice. I also didn't know where to go hunting for wildlife. If I knew about this place I should have reached it in the fall, but due to not knowing where to hunt, we even were hard up for food, that's how we were.

Q. Was that when you were close to the place with a large inuksuk?

A. Yes, here right here. Yes, we didn't have enough food supplies for the winter and I almost lost all my dogs. If I had searched when we were right here, perhaps even when we were at Cam 2, if I had ammunition supplied to me, or even if I was given

fish nets at Perry River, I would have tried harder to do something. We had not much to go on, so due to that we hardly tried hunting. Yes, those are the hardships we went through that I've talked about. We had hardly any food and things to travel with. Before I mentioned that even besides that, there was no help from the government for hunting supplies and gasoline. Although we had hardly anything, we made do with the little we had during our trip, even if it is considered quite short. I'm not the only one that's going to be interviewed. Perhaps next time when we do a group recording session, if I have additional thoughts, I will say them at that time. For now I don't have too much more about our hardships that I can remember. I'll stop here for now.

Q. Okay, that's it?

A. Yes, thanks.

Q. Thank you, yes.