

Stories presented by Inuit on National Indigenous Peoples' Day

For Isaruit's *Nammipat Inuit?* Event

Sipporah Enuaraq's Story

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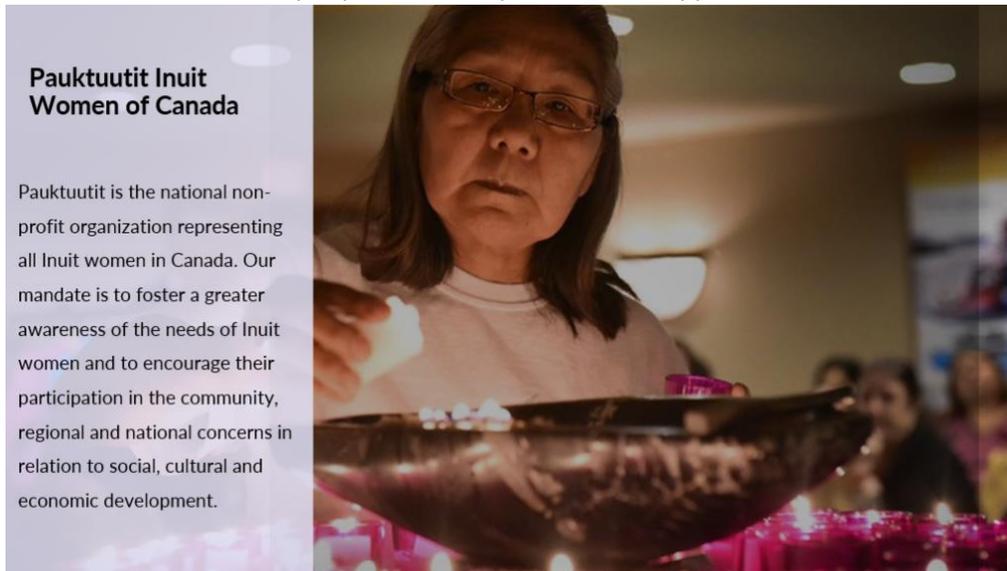
My Life as it Happened: A Personal Story

Sipporah Enuaraq

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My name is Sipporah Enuaraq, and my last name is Enuaraq which means 'little person' in English. When Inuit used to ask me 'what does Enuaraq mean?', I used to get very tired of having to explain, so right off the record, my last name is Enuaraq and it means 'little person' in English, but I don't think we need to explain anymore about our names. So, this morning I'm going to be telling you about my life

story, a personal story and how it happened.



So, just to tell you, I work for Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, it's a non-for-profit organization representing Inuit women of Canada for the greater awareness of Inuit women and to encourage participation in the community, regional and national concerns in relation to social, culture, and economic development.

So, just to give you a background, as Inuit, we have always been living in community, but in the settlements or hamlets for about only about the last seventy years. Prior to that, we were living in little family based communities in outpost camps, and about seventy years ago, upon the instructions of the Canadian government, the families were suddenly relocated from their camps on the land without prior consultation to permanent settlements. As far as I have been told, that is true.

Prior to our move into the communities, Inuit communities and families were guided mainly by spiritual traditions deeply rooted in Inuit cosmology. Organized religion was introduced and a lot of Inuit children went to residential schools. Today, we are living in a wage economy, and not a subsistence hunting economy.

I tell you that English is my second language and I tell people I'm not going to apologize for mispronunciations anymore because Inuktitut is my first language. So if I say mispronounced words, I will not apologize for it.

We are living in wage economy and there are changing roles, changing gender roles. Whereas in the past, men were the primary caregivers of Inuit families, in today's world, the Inuit women are the prominent force in the workplace, in addition to being the primary caregivers of their families, as they were when our people lived in camps on the land.

Recent Transitions

- Permanent settlements
- Religion
- Residential schools
- Wage economy
- Changing gender roles



Photo: Beverly Illauq

In this lovely picture is that woman I love dearly. I'm going to tell you more about her later on in the presentation. So I will tell you more about this lovely woman.



My Humble Beginnings

Clyde River, Nunavut

- Forced Relocation of my ancestors
- Typically, and historically nomadic way of life
- Central Baffin Island
- 400 Residents

Iqaluit, Nunavut

- Residential Schools
- Ukiivik Residence

Now, I would like to talk about my beginnings. I was born in Clyde River in Nunavut which was NWT at that time. And prior to my birth, my ancestors lived in small camps. They were made to go to permanent settlements; and the community that my family was relocated to was Clyde River.

Our families were moved to *Kanirtugaapik akiani*, the other side of Clyde River inlet, because of the restructuring of these communities. So it was about a half hour away from the bay where our community was eventually relocated to.

As for the schools in general, when our families were relocated to the community across the bay, little children that went to school, had to walk even during the winter at least half an hour to go to school, because that was prior to many people having *ski-doos*. We named them *Sikituuk*, 'skidoos' but technically they are snowmobiles. "Ski doo" was the Bombardier machine sold first at Hudson Bay Stores in our communities. During the fall, there had to be hunters on bear patrol to protect children from polar bear attacks in the fall.

Clyde River is in central Baffin, and when I was living there, there were only about 400 residents in that community after the relocation.

When I was sixteen years old, because our school only went up to grade 8, I had to leave my home community to move to Iqaluit. That is when I stayed at a student residence which was named “Ukkiivik Residence”. So that was a relocation, another relocation for myself personally.

And, two years later, my little sister moved to Iqaluit to go to the same student residence and further her education. Because she was my little sister, and because I felt I was so sophisticated, I did not even want to share a room with her because I wanted to explore. For me moving from Clyde River to Iqaluit was like moving to a big, big city at that time.

And so I’m going to tell you my personal story on how I grew up and how I was raised.

My personal story. How I grew up and how I was raised.



On the left, you will see a picture of some lovely woman, some lovely young woman. The picture on the far right is my mother, Nuvvija, and again on the right, you will see on the far left is again a picture of my mother Nuvvija.



When I was living in Clyde River, my mother went through a lot.... she had a first husband when she was growing up but her husband died and so I had other siblings. So in Inuktitut, the term “family” is a little bit complex. We have half-siblings... half-brothers; extended family members. I think you all know how complex families can be in Inuit communities.

My personal story. I had two mothers and two fathers. And the story continues.

- I had my biological parents
- I had my grandparents
- I had many uncles
- And namesakes
- So many stories – told and untold: Oral history



And so, with my personal story, I would like to tell you that I had two mothers and two fathers. I had my grandparents, and my biological parents. Because I was the firstborn of my father, it was tradition that the person who gave birth to their oldest child would then in turn give that child to the grandparents. But because I was my father’s first child, and I was a little girl, he changed the tradition of giving myself up. So in that sense, I had two parents...my grandparents and my biological parents.

When I was younger, I used to confuse people when I was talking about my *anaana*, which is my mom, my *ataata*, which is my father, and I had to explain which parents I was talking about. And I had many uncles.

My grandparents had many children, but during that time, we were much more aware of traditional spiritual connections and they played a big part in our lives. Stories have been told, that my grandfather was an *angakuq*. A story has been told that he had an argument with another *angakuq*, and that

angakuq was not a very good *angakuq*. That other *angakuq* told my grandfather this, 'In your future generation, you will have many children, and many sons die at sea and so it became a reality.

And that brings me to the part of namesakes. Because of my uncles, according to legend and stories, many of my uncles died in the sea including one of my uncles named *Palluq*. *Palluq* was my uncle, and because of the namesake custom, that is when someone passes away in your family amongst your loved ones, the next baby is named after that person who passed away. That is how one of my sisters is my uncle *Palluq*. Her name is Susan *Palluq* Enuaraq, and to this day, I call her my *Akkakuluk* which is 'my dear uncle'.

Gender is not play a factor when it comes to namesakes. This lovely lady on the right in this picture is Kananngaq. She was a member of my extended family and when we had relocations to the current settlement in Clyde River, we were put into a household where we had many, many extended family members within our household, and she was in our household.

Many, many times, because she was my elder, when she would lie down on her bed, she would call me '*Qaqqakuluk*' -For many non Indigenous people, our terms of endearment may sound strange to some people- but she used to call me *Qaqqakuluk* because she wanted to bite my little fingers; she wanted to bite my little hand because I was so dear to her. She called me her *Qaqqakuluk*.

But because I was a child, because I could not pronounce properly *qaqqakuluk*, I used to reply to her '*Qaqaakuluk*' which, In the English language, means a hill. So in hindsight, I used to call her 'my dear hill'; 'my dearest hill' in English.

So when speaking with the English language, and talking in Inuktitut, when there's a reversal of words, we have to be careful of using the right terminologies. Because I did not know, I was calling her my dear sweetest hill when I wanted to call her "my dear bite bite bite". When an elder calls you something, the namesake goes back to them, and so I was trying to do the same thing but I wasn't saying the same thing to her.

And so from our spoken word, we have so many stories; many that are told, and many that aren't told. We have very strong oral history and I think we have to work on this issue of making sure that our stories are captured because our history is based on oral history. Many of our issues, our many important life stories need to be recorded. We have to make sure that every story and perspective is recorded because only in that way can we share our history with our younger people. we have many, many younger people in our Inuit communities who need to hear our stories.



I thought it was very important to show you this picture. My father had four girls, and when he was growing up, he had mostly brothers, but when he had children, he had all girls. My mother had a previous marriage and she had had other males, but when it came to my father, he only bore four biological girls.

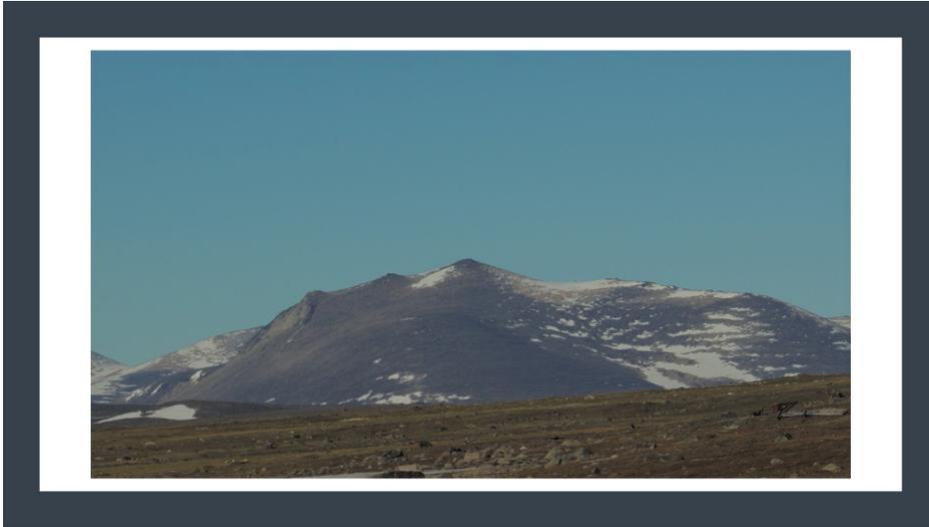
The first on the top is me with a big smile, and the one next to me is my sister *Palluq*, which is my uncle; the next one further below me is my sister Nellie, but due to namesakes, her name is Evie which was my grandmother's sister. So, namesakes always play a very big part in our lives, depending on how we are related to the namesake. Right next to Evie is my baby sister, Meeka, *esa*, my other uncle. So that can give you an understanding of my family's beginnings.



When it comes to presentations, you don't want to hear just words; you want visual images. Again, there's a picture of my mother who is on the right. This was when she had to go to a hospital; we didn't have hospitals in our small northern communities; she had to go to Pangnirtung when they had a hospital, a small hospital during that time.

When she got better, she started working at the hospital in *Panniqtuuq* so many, many people are named after my mother Nuvvija around Nunavut because they knew her from *Panniqtuuq*. So I have many *anaanas*, little ones, boys and girls, who were named after my mother, which is very common in our Inuit communities.

So, as I was saying, gender does not play a role when it comes to naming, I might have male members within our communities that I call my *anaana* even though they are men at this point in their lives.



Now I'm going to show you some landscape pictures. This is a picture of my hometown of Clyde River which I love, and I think pictures like that are having a very deep impact on me. When I was growing up, I couldn't wait to leave Clyde River because I had so many bad memories of Clyde River; but as we get older, things change and I am starting to get homesick at my older age so when I see images like this, I get really homesick.

Many, many people before my generation and many people after my generation, have climbed up to the top of that mountain. To get back to my funny story of *qaqqukuluk*, this is what I was calling my extended family member, my *Kanannaq*, my great Aunt, so this picture kind of goes back to my *Qaqqukuluk* and *Qaqqukuluk* so I thought I would show this picture to you.

And so, I would like to show you a little more of my personal story, when I was growing up. When I was a little girl, my mother had cancer so she was away a lot; and in turn, I did not learn the proper baking, cooking, or sewing skills; but when I participated in one of our land projects, I would like to proudly say, I learned to make *kamiks* for the very first time.



On the right is a picture of my first *kamiks*. I think as older people we have to tell youths, t's never too late to learn such things as sewing. Sewing is so much an important part of our lives. Working with skins, and eating our food is what I miss most and that is what I'm going to be talking further about.

Any part of the animals we harvest we do not waste. We use every part of the animals we harvest. This makes me feel some kind of pride. I know we're not supposed to be full of pride but when it comes to personal experiences, I think sometimes it's okay to be proud; and I think this kind of pride comes with humility. I think there's a fine balance between humility and pride. I don't know how exactly how you match the two together so you will have to meet us halfway through on this point of humble pride, or integrity that Inuit have regarding their relationship with the land and the animals, and the environment around us.

And so I told you when I was growing up, I was my father's first child and I was a female and he raised me to be a little female. So he did not allow me to things that would usually be done by someone in the normal male role. So I would be *arngaqriaq*, 'a cute little female' so I was pretty little girl and I used pretty dresses and my role was to be loved and very well cared for.

But when I was growing up, I started thinking, 'I want to be just like my sister, *Palluq*, my *akka*, 'my uncle' and so a few years ago, I went seal hunting for the first time. This picture is me waiting patiently for a seal to come up, and that was my first experience of *uttaqqriniq*, 'waiting for seal'. It takes a lot of patience, a patient way of approaching activity.

Our Country Food

- From the land
- The sea
- And the sky



Our country food is what I love, which many of us love, which many of us miss because we can't exactly go seal hunting in Ottawa. So when the food is shared with us, we really, really appreciate it. We get our food from the land, and we get our food from the sea, and we get our food from the sky depending on the season, the type of food that we get.



And so, these are just examples of the food we love and miss. Sometimes when some of my facebook friends were sharing pictures of food that we love, I was saying 'I want that!' . I think living down here in Ottawa, we miss our traditions and we miss our country food and things like that bring memories. And these are pictures that I love and pictures that are dear to my heart.



The food we love and miss



And so, talking about the food that we love, and the families that we love, and the traditions that are dear to our heart, I would like to emphasize at this presentation that even though there are many hardships within our communities, there are social determinants of health that we have to deal with and social imbalances within our communities that are challenging. But we still strive to be strong Inuit individuals, families and communities.

And that includes family support. Whatever happens in the community such as a sad event of suicide which is common in our communities, it impacts the whole community. But that sad event brings the whole community together, and I think that is one of the strong points that we have within our community.

As for our language, we are still very strong in our Inuktitut language in Nunavut. Having said that I have to admit, that I have two of my three children, that have lost their Inuktitut language. I feel to I am to blame that I have allowed them to lose their Inuktitut language. That is because Inuktitut language has a big impact on who we are as Inuit. I think as parents, we have responsibility to teach our children and our grandchildren the strength of using Inuktitut language. But we never can look down on those who have not had opportunity to recover their language. We can all still communicate, no matter what languages we speak.

The next thing to talk about is connectivity. We all connect with other Inuit community members; we all identify with our community members, and like I was saying, we all connect with our namesakes especially. When someone passes away within our family or extended family and community members, we have that responsibility of keeping their name and traditions alive.

And a lot of times when we name children after passed family members, they often take on the, I don't know how you call it in English, they take on the 'personal traits' of the person they are named after and I think that is part of keeping our ancestors alive.

Next I want to talk about being out on the land. Being out on the land, I think that is one of the best memories that I have as a child. I told you I had two sets of parents, but in spring, summer and fall, my biological grandparents used to take me out camping, and it would be just the three of us – my *ataata*, my *anaana*, and myself, which explaining again, is my biological grandfather, my biological grandmother, and myself; but in my heart, they were my *Anaana* and my *Ataata* so I enjoyed sharing this story with you.

Strong Inuit Communities

- Family Support
- Impacts the whole communities
- Our Inuktitut language
- Connectivity
- On the land



And so I am nearing the end of this presentation. I always like to keep my presentations strength based and not focus on negativity. It is good to look at the positives within our lives and I would like to talk about the adaptability within our Inuit communities, the resiliency within our Inuit communities; and the moving forward within our Inuit communities.

- Adaptability
- Resilience
- Forward Moving



In the picture on the right is me being held by a bunch of women changing a light bulb. When we went out on the land, we were staying at a cabin and the ceiling was so high, and as you know, Inuit women are often very short. We're typically 'height challenged', and we could not reach the light bulb high up in the ceiling.

Thinking about adaptability: we thought of what we needed to do and how we can go forward. And so what we did was, we took a ladder and the other women held up the ladder in place while I climbed up with a great deal of trust in the other women. And for safety we had the rope so I wouldn't fall. Inuit have always used a lot of rope – traditionally made out of seal or walrus skin.

But that picture I think is a very good image of the adaptability, the resiliency of moving forward. I think resiliency is a very important aspect of Inuit communities even though many of our communities have gone through hardships. We as Inuit have the strong ability of moving forward and learning from past mistakes to move forward from hard experiences.

One of the things I wanted to tell you about is what my grandfather always told me; what I have heard and what I have experienced are two different things. He told me, when a person speaks, you have to tell the truth and be straightforward and say 'I cannot tell you the truth, the whole truth, because I have not experienced it myself'; but to make it a very positive thing, we can say 'But this is what I have heard', so you can reassess any situation in a strength-based way and go forward with it. One of the things I'm going to be talking about is things you can't change.

I would like to tell you about the Inuit guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. They are Nunavut based but I think the other four regions of *Inuit Nunangat* also very much apply these to their lives. In the western world view, they might be seen as theories, they might sound like theories, but they are a reality within our Inuit communities.



Inuit Guiding Principles of Inuit Qaujimajangit

- Piliriqatigiiniq – Working together
- Avatikmik Kamattiarniq – Environmental wellness
- Pijjitsirarniq – Service to others and leadership
- Pilimmaksarniq – Empowerment
- Qanuqtuurunnarniq – Resourcefulness and adaptability
- Aajiiqatiginngniq – Cooperation and consensus

So I would like to take a few minutes to talk about the guiding principles: the first one is working together for common good and that can apply to having the parenting skills, a solid foundation, being available to others, and good leadership, the power of 'prayer', and being a strong, solid family. Within Inuit communities, that can apply to volunteer work, or anything that benefits your community.

The next one is environmental wellness, and it can be interpreted as balance and has an inter-connectiveness to mental, physical, and spiritual dimensions of the individual, the family, and the community and you can break them down to three aspects; one of them is wellness of the mind – being able to talk to each other positively, being able to get into an agreement with others, being self aware, with a positive awareness; and Wellness of the body, that can be interpreted as having good eating habits like eating the country food I was telling you about earlier, having plenty of rest for the body, and having good cleanliness and hygiene.

The third one is spirituality which can contribute to good self-esteem, being able to be thankful. It also applies to spirituality in all aspects of life; and when I say spirituality, it doesn't necessarily mean religion, but being aware of the spirit within our souls and how we are well connected to each other, to the land, to *Sanajit*, and to the world.

And the next one, service to others and leadership – it means the idea of being able to help others to have good intentions, being humble, showing respect, being trustworthy, and being able to listen to others to be helpful; and to be able to treat everyone the same; being strong in mind, and being non-judgemental.

I would next like to touch on environmental wellness; humans are not the center of our lives. Everything comes into connectivity, and I think that everything that we have around our lives we have to show respect because everything becomes part of our environmental wellness.

To give you an example, everything around our world is a living thing so we have to show respect to every aspect of our environment. Little plants, and us Inuit, sometimes we tend to be very scared of bugs and flies, but even those are spiritual living things and we have to respect them.

Also, the next principle, empowerment; to be able to accept things during hardship and ability to take risks, empathy for others but recognize the right to be stern and one of the is never give up and have positive self-indulgences, and Inuit can use all sources of appropriate information, gathering it, and using it to right spiritual wrongs, and to work towards a balance and strong Inuit society.

And resourcefulness and adaptability; Inuit have a great capacity to be creative, flexible, and solution oriented. And it can apply to the ability to ask for questions and guidance for endurance, and the ability to learn and try new things, and willingness to learn new things, and the willingness to be available for others when needed.

When I was young, I had a very hard time of asking for help, but it's okay to ask for help because life is a well-balanced; life is reciprocal, it goes both ways. It's okay to ask for help when you're feeling down, it's okay to ask for help when you're not feeling sure so that is a very important aspect our lives that we should never forget.

So, those are the principles that I was talking about; *ajjiqatigiinniq* - to be able to ask for consensus because one person cannot make a decision alone in their lives, we all have to come into agreement with each other to ensure that we have well-balanced and healthy communities.

So with all of these guiding principles, I think it makes for a stronger person, a stronger family, and stronger communities within our Inuit communities.

Questions?



And so, I would like to show you this little picture; this little *ukpikjuaq*, people call it 'ukpik' in English but we call it *ukpikjuaq*. This little *ukpikjuaq* was given to me by my late sister and she had visions of me living out in a bigger community, than our little community of four hundred people; she had this vision while she made this little *ukpik*; that she would one day see this little *ukpik* on the windshield of a

future car I would be driving; because in a small community such as Clyde River, we did not have very many cars but she had that insight and strength to look forward to seeing what my future would look like.

She made these little *ukpikjuaqs* for all us sisters, myself and my three other sisters. When she made this little *ukpikjuaq*, it was not white like this but it become grey over time, just like me. I think it became stronger as it became barer and greyer with me along the way; and these little *inuugait*, my father made them for me. There is father and mother *inuugaq*; but somewhere along the way, I have misplaced the two little children that he made along with the father and mother *inuugaak*.

And I think that was part of our learning as little girls. Part of learning was to make clothing for our future children; one of those aspects of learning to make clothing was to make little clothing for our *inuugait*; but I'm sad to say that I still haven't made clothing for these two little *inuugaak* but one of these days, I will.

And now, in today's world, we are very creative. On the top is a beaded bracelet that a friend of mine made for me, and that is an *ulu* bracelet which I very much treasure.

So, at this point, any questions?

Question: How was it to leave your community to come to Ottawa? Like, how did you feel when that happened?

Sipporah: Thank you very much for that question. For me, at that time when I was living in Clyde River, as I told you, we had only about four hundred people within that community so moving from Clyde River to Iqaluit which was the biggest center than Clyde River, it was very, very exciting for me. It was like moving to such a big city, but at that time, there were not that many people; but now there is about ten thousand people in Iqaluit, but at that time, it was less than that, and so it was very exciting for me.

Like I told you before, living in Inuit communities has always had very many overcrowding issue. Now it is even more significant than when I was growing up. We had many, many people within our house. I told you that I have three younger sisters – we all always slept on one bed. I had to sleep with my sisters because we lived with our extended family members, such as my dear *Kanannaq*, my *Qaqqulaakuluk*, 'my dear bite, and bite'.

And we Inuit, when we show our endearments, it might seem strange to non-Inuit but when we see someone that is so dear to us, we want to bite them, and we want to kick them, we want to punch them. That might seem strange but it really remindd me of my *Qaqqulaakuluk*. I think when I moved from Clyde River to Iqaluit, for the first time, I had my own bed; for the first time, I had my own room; and during that time, I felt very lucky, but at the same time, I did not realize that I was missing my family so much.

I think, it is a time of reflection with what's happening within our inuit communities today, where so many children were taken from their parents and their loved ones. But during that time, it was a very exciting thing for me; but at the same time, I did not take time to reflect on how much I missed my family because I had three younger sisters. Later in life, we, our family, adopted a little boy, his name was Meesakie, I did not get to know him.

I never moved back to Clyde River. I stayed on and lived in Iqaluit and during that time, my little brother committed suicide; my older sister committed suicide; my mother died, and I think during the time of transition from one community to another which I really welcomed, I still did not have the opportunity to grieve, and I think such grieving comes with time.

You cannot fast forward when it comes to healing, and I think so many communities are in need of healing. But like I was telling you, I like talking in a strength-based way and I think the adaptabilities, the forward-moving adaptations, and the resiliency is what keeps us Inuit strong.

Response from Questioner: It's very touching; it's horrible but like you said, the strength that your community has and things like that is powerful. I mean, I just can't imagine myself; I can't put myself in your situation, but thank you very much.

Sipporah: Thank you, and I think that the truth needs to be told. It's in today's world we have to tell our own truth. Some people say, "it's in the past", but it *is* in our past; and I think part of moving forward is to accept what happened in the past, and go forward with our way of life today in a strong way.

So thank you very much; I really appreciated that question. I didn't think that I would get emotional but I did.

Response from Questioner: *'Without knowing our past, we end up repeating it'* is what is said and I do believe that it is what we need to know - the atrocities as well as the good things - so that we don't repeat the atrocities. Anyway, thank you very much.

Thank you!

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Sipporah: And so, I would like to thank everyone; thank you Isaruit for this opportunity to do this presentation.

The little girl in the pink pants in this picture is my granddaughter, and I think it's very important to say that a namesake goes from one generation to another; so she is like a *Palluq*, 'my uncle *Palluq*' from my family.. So I would like to share this lovely picture of my granddaughter. She is part of the future of all of us.

Sipporak