ESSAY

On freedom

Jusie (Yoo-sie) had many stories to tell and I only had an hour before I had to catch my flight back to Montréal.

"I could tell you stories for two days," he said, gesturing from the chair beside my desk. Jusie was 82 years old and had been referred to me for quite another matter. A small compact man with a shock of white hair above his smooth brown face, he was clad in jeans and a plaid shirt, and moved slowly but confidently about the room. He had agreed to come back for a second appointment, this time as a favour to me. To tell me some stories.

I asked him to tell me about the trip he took south to be treated for tuberculosis back in the 1950s, a tale that he had hinted at during our first meeting. It seemed that Jusie was as happy to tell the story as I was to hear it. His speech took on the measured tempo of a practised storyteller as he circled deliberately around the beginning of the great journey. He spoke now in Inuktitut, now in English, leaning forward and back, and pausing from time to time to emphasize a point. Our young interpreter, Gaetan, was soon hooting with delight as Jusie laid down the initial words in the tale of his young self and how he had come into contact with absurdities of southern life for the first time.

Jusie had been born in Aculivik, Nunavik in 1933, when the village was called Cape Smith and was a trading post for the Hudson's Bay Company. At 21, he had been a strong hunter, travelling by kayak in the summer and dogsled in the winter. The village had been a tranquil place, he said, where families lived in harmony with each other, building tents or igloos with the change of the seasons.

"When I was a child, we were well taken care of by our parents, and no one was ever angry; always happy."

Fred Sebastian

That year, 1955, the *CD Howe* made its way around the Hudson Bay coast, and Jusie was taken aboard and x-rayed along with his fellow villagers. After the x-ray, he was loaded aboard a float plane filled with other Inuit, bound for Moosonee, Ontario on James Bay.

"I had no symptoms, and they never gave me a diagnosis."

From Moosonee, Jusie was transferred by canoe to neighbouring Moose Factory.

"I was terrified!" he said. "Imagine, I'd never been in an open boat before. I felt sure I was going to die!"

This appealed deeply to Gaetan's sense of humour, and he was now giggling steadily as the story unfolded.

Jusie then told us how he was brought from the canoe up to the hospi-

tal in Moose Factory, where he would spend the next four months, and how monstrous the brick hospital seemed after the tents and igloos that he had known back home. But the most striking thing for Jusie was all the smells. Strange food. Antiseptic. Smells of sickness. All tightly contained by that strange brick building with its locked windows and doors.

When his first meal was brought to him, Jusie thought it must be for someone else. Why was the food all mixed together? Why was it on a plate like that? He waited politely for his own meal to come: some frozen fish or fresh meat that he could cut slices from with his sharp hunter's knife.

(Gaetan was now doubled over in laughter.)

"I still don't understand why you *Qal-lunaat* [the Inuit word for white people] mix your food together. I still eat like I did back then: I cut pieces off my meat with a knife. And I don't mix my food."

After four months in Moose Factory, Jusie was transferred by train to the Mountain Sanatorium in Hamilton. He would spend the next year there without ever receiving a diagnosis. He received no antibiotics, no surgical intervention, never underwent another x-ray. And he was kept on strict bed rest.

"Weren't you angry?" I asked. "I can't imagine how frustrating that must have been!"

"No," he said. "We didn't know angry."

Jusie was placed in a ward with other Inuit men in the same situation. They spent all their time in bed, not even allowed to get up to use the toilet. If the men crossed their legs to sit in the Inuit way, a nurse would come and forcibly un-cross them. Day after day passed in the same regimented fashion. Meals in bed, rest after meals, carving to pass the time. They weren't even allowed to speak to friends passing in front of their open window.

Once a week, someone came to collect their carvings and gave them tokens in return. Mass was also said weekly by a visiting English-speaking priest, although none of the men understood a word he said.

Smoking was actively encouraged, Jusie said. Each man was provided with

six packets of cigarettes per week and coached by the doctor to "smoke as much as possible" to induce coughing. In fact, Jusie and his friends share a horror of quitting the habit to this day. When I suggested during our first meeting that

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he cut out smoking, Jusie had been quick to tell me of a friend whose retained mucus had organized into a tumour only a few months after he smoked his last cough-inducing cigarette.

"He didn't cough it, and that's what happened," he said, philosophically.

Eventually, Jusie was given permission to return home, and began the long and arduous trip back to Fort Smith. He travelled again by train from Hamilton to Moose Factory, by canoe to Moosonee and by float plane back to the tundra on the eastern shore of Hudson Bay. He finally arrived in Aculivik in 1957, only to find the former village site deserted. The Hudson's Bay Company had closed its post the year before, and the villagers had all relocated down the coast to Puvirnituq. Jusie eventually rejoined them, but he was a much different man than before. Over a year of bed rest along with the ravages of tuberculosis on his lungs had left him much weakened, and he

never again returned to his former hunting prowess. He began to learn English word-by-word, and still makes a point of learning a new one everyday.

"But that's my life," he said. "I can still make an igloo and live in a tent."

I knew that Jusie had been hospitalized in Montréal the previous month, and as our time came to an end, I couldn't resist one last question. How did the emergency department at the Montreal General Hospital in 2010 compare with his experience at the Mountain Sanatorium in 1955?

His answer was not what I expected.

"So different. I could walk anywhere: up, down, outside. I couldn't believe it. We were so free."

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This personal essay was written following a conversation with Jusie Tullaugak in Puvirnituq, Nunavik in August 2010. Jusie died in Puvirnituq on Dec. 8, 2010. His daughter consented to the publication of this essay.

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ART

Sight unseen

What does an expert in vision bring to the art of photography? The ability to "adjust people's visual perception," offers renowned photographer and optometrist, Larry Louie. Over the past two decades, Louie's work has garnered over 24 awards and honours including, most recently, Britain's Travel Photographer of the Year award. And while these travel images are stunning in composition and con-

tent, it is his work as a social documentary photographer that promises a meaningful adjustment.

Documentary photography as a powerful tool for social reform dates back to nearly the beginning of the technology and art. Thomas Annan's photographs raised awareness about the living conditions in the slums of Glasgow, Scotland (1868–1877), while American Lewis Hine's works in the early 1900s helped bring about reforms

in child labour laws. The US government recognized the power of the form when it hired Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange and others to bring a human face to the plight of impoverished Depression-era farmers. And the form flourished in the postwar era with Diane Arbus and Robert Frank among many others. Many readers will be familiar with W. Eugene Smith's images from the late 1960s of people suffering from mercury poisoning in the Japanese fish-