

ARCTIC ATMOSPHERE

Kugaaruk, Nunavut

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Sept 12 — Coast Guard members from icebreakers CCGS Des Groseilliers and CCGS Terry Fox bring cargo to Kugaaruk's shore.

Ships Ahoy!

Aine's Journal ~ September 12-16, 2011 ~

A small thrill awaited us Monday morning when we looked out of our south facing window: *two* ships, not just one, were sitting offshore in the stillness of the cold grey morning. The long-awaited “flour boat,” as Mari nicknamed the icebreaker transporting our shipment of food, had a companion.

At 8 a.m. most of Kugaaruk is quite sleepy, but a small hum of activity filled the town's main boat launch area as Mari and I walked down to take a closer look. A temporary office was set up on shore and a couple of shiny Volvo loaders had joined Kugaaruk's dusty collection. From our home, the ships looked smaller than we'd expected but as we reached the rocky shore, I realized the distance across the water was deceptive. The two Canadian Coast Guard vessels were quite large.

The CCGS Terry Fox – a heavy icebreaker stationed in St. John's, Newfoundland, when it's not sailing the Arctic during the summer and fall – is 88 meters (289 feet) long, 18 meters (59 feet) wide and has a draft (the distance between the water line of a ship and the lowest part of its hull, which is the minimum depth of water it requires in order to float) of 8.3 meters (about 27 feet). While in the Arctic, the Terry Fox assists shipping by delivering cargo to isolated communities; it also performs sovereignty patrols, search and rescues and participates in other programs.

The Quebec-based medium/river icebreaker CCGS Des Groseilliers is 98 meters (322 feet) long, 19.5 meters (64 feet) wide, and has a draft of 7.4 meters (24 feet). “Every summer, the vessel travels to the Canadian Arctic to escort commercial ships and start up and maintain navigation aids,” according the Coast Guard website. “While in the Arctic, the Des Groseilliers also serves as a primary search and rescue unit and provides support to scientific missions when possible.” Both ships were built in the early 1980s.

Unloading had begun; a couple of metal shipping containers were pushed to one side of the boat launch area. Mari and I saw a small zodiac zipping back to the Terry Fox as we walked through town and shortly after we perched ourselves on a rock overlooking the unloading site, a barge pushed by the Baby Fox, a small tugboat looking craft, arrived with two new Ford vehicles aboard.

With binoculars, we could see the ships' cargo in better detail. Containers and plywood crates from large to small were stacked with plastic-wrapped snowmobiles on the front of the Des Groseilliers, topped by a new boat. The rear of the Terry Fox was full of containers; new vehicles, including a new RCMP pickup, were strapped on top of them.

The process of unloading the ships took more than two days. We kept checking to see if our food shipment was ashore, but it wasn't until Wednesday morning that it appeared, right in our yard. A loader from the



The Canadian Coast Guard's Baby Fox pushes a barge ashore as the CCGS Terry Fox begins the sealift unloading process in Kugaaruk Sept. 12.

SHIPS AHOY! CON'T. — Co-op dropped it off and made our day. I don't think I've ever been so delighted to see food and Mari was tickled to have a loader bring something right to our doorstep.

The Des Groseilliers weighed anchor Wednesday morning. We met three of its crew members in the Co-op earlier in the week. The women were from Quebec. One told us that after the Arctic tour she goes home and kisses the grass. The thrill of being home is irreplaceable, she said. "You couldn't take it away from me. It was like winning the lottery."

We'd hoped somehow there might be a chance of boarding one of the ships for a look-see, but that's up to the captains and we didn't run into either of them. A crew member said they sometimes have open houses, but they were extremely busy and I don't think anything like that occurred.

The Coast Guard transports Kugaaruk's cargo from locations along the Northwest Passage accessible to commercial ships and sometimes they make more than one trip. The school's new bus didn't arrive this week so we expect one or both of the ships to reappear with additional cargo sometime this month.

The Terry Fox, which sat alone in the bay Wednesday, was joined late that night or in the wee hours of Thursday by a tanker.

The Tuvaq of St. John's, Newfoundland, built in Germany in 1977 and now owned by Coastal Shipping Ltd. (the Woodward Group), delivered the hamlet's diesel, fuel oil, gasoline and jet fuel. This ship appeared much larger from our south-facing window! The Tuvaq is 164 meters (538 feet) long, 22 meters (73 feet) wide, and has a draft of 9.5 meters (31 feet).

Unlike the Coast Guard ships, which were anchored at one point from the prow and rotated with the wind, the Tuvaq was anchored at a few points and tied to the shore near the hamlet's fuel storage tanks. With the stern of the ship facing the tanks, a hose – of which I never learned the details as far as material or size – was used to transport the fuels ashore.

When Mari and I went down Thursday to a stony point near the boat launch to get a better look at the Tuvaq, the wind whipped sparse snowflakes across the gray water. My wind-numbed fingers could hardly control the camera. The next morning the first dusting of snow lightly frosted Kugaaruk.

The Terry Fox left Friday morning and the Tuvaq departed at dusk on the same day. I watched from our bedroom window as the Tuvaq disappeared behind an island. Airplanes come and go everyday in Kugaaruk, but after having the ships' lights in the bay all week, I felt a deep bite of isolation as the last vessel vanished from sight.

For more Ships Ahoy! photos see Page 3.



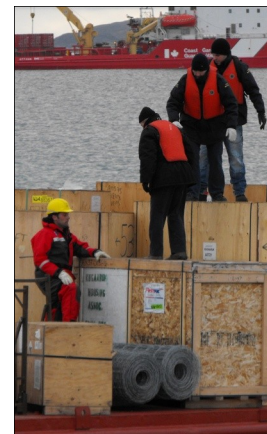
John examines the Marché Turenne food shipment delivered to the Miseks' yard Sept. 14. After hacking the box open, he spent the rest of his lunch break unpacking nearly 1.5 tons of food.



Mari hops inside with the diced tomatoes and peas as John begins unpacking two pallets of food, which were wrapped in plastic and encased in plywood for the journey north.



Except for one pierced can of peaches, the Miseks' food order arrived in great shape. The flour wasn't wet and the ultra heat treated milk wasn't crushed, unlike some teachers' prior sealift experiences.




TOP LEFT: The Canadian Coast Guard sets up a temporary office onshore, complete with heat, to oversee the unloading process. **TOP RIGHT:** Baby Fox pushes a load of two vehicles ashore from the CCGS Terry Fox. **MIDDLE:** Kugaaruk’s fuel delivery is pumped for two days from the tanker Tuvaq. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Coast Guard members direct a load of snowmobiles and crates. **BOTTOM MIDDLE:** A Volvo loader prepares to pull a shipping container from a barge pushed by Baby Fox. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Crew members from the CCGS Des Groseilliers climb off the barge for a trip to Koomiut Co-op. **FOR MORE INFO:** Visit the CCG ships’ web pages at <http://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/e0003711> and <http://www.marinfo.gc.ca/en/flotte/DesGroseilliers.asp>.

Kugaaruk’s Weather Data — Last week the maximum and minimum temperatures for Kugaaruk weren’t available so Aine emailed Environment Canada to inquire why and learned that weather station Kugaaruk A is operated on a volunteer basis.

“As a result occasionally values are not entered,” climate service specialist Shannon Allen said. “Also values usually need to be entered twice a day to be valid. If the values were only entered once, they do not pass quality control and they do not appear online.”

If only one observation is taken per day, the data is considered raw and is not published, though it is recorded. Therefore, sometimes the *Ups & Downs* published in *Arctic Atmosphere* may not account for every day in the given week.



Ups & Downs Sept. 10 – Sept. 16, 2011
Maximum = 6.8°C/44.2°F **Minimum** = -0.5°C/31.1°F
Sunrise = 5:24 a.m. **Sunset** = 6:23 p.m. MDT
Source: Environment Canada, Station Kugaaruk A, Nunavut [Sept. 10,11,14,15]
 Mostly cloudy with a few very light snow flurries