

ARCTIC ATMOSPHERE

Kugaaruk, Nunavut

February 19, 2012, Issue 29



Nova Court (left) sits directly across from Stanton Territorial Hospital and Extra Foods, where City Cabs await calls in the parking lot.

Safely Delivered

As it turns out, the contractions Aine started experiencing Thursday Feb. 9 were the beginning of what turned out to be a long labour process.

Aine's Journal ~ Feb. 10, 2012, Friday ~

As John and I played rummy last night — his mom taught us how to play while she was here — I felt the first twinge of a contraction that was actually painful. I didn't want to be optimistic because I've had many Braxton Hicks during the past two months, yet it was hard not to hope. My dad called while I paced in our suite in hopes of encouraging more contractions and I didn't feel well enough to talk.

Turns out the contractions were something more than practice ones, spaced about 10 minutes apart and painful enough to prevent sleep.

On Feb. 7 at my routine prenatal appointment — this time at a medical centre (I've completed the Healthy Pregnancy Group routine) with Dr. Shireen Mansouri — the doctor scheduled an ultrasound for today at 9:15 a.m. to check on the baby's health and amount of amniotic fluid. I was thankful to be heading over because I hadn't slept since 2 a.m. Everything checked out ok and they sent me home with the advice to come back when I reached active labour with contractions in the five-to-three-minute-apart category (they were still 10 minutes apart) or I needed help managing the pain.

Aine's Journal ~ Feb. 11, 2012, Saturday ~

Pain drove me back to the hospital last night and thus began a series of roundtrips across the street to the hospital for morphine shots. Late tonight I was permitted to stay in the obstetrics ward so I could better rest and hopefully progress. Contractions are still only 10 to seven minutes apart...

Aine's Journal ~ Feb. 13, 2012, Monday ~

Nora Kateri Misek is here! She was born today at 2:40 a.m., weighing 3390 grams/8 pounds, 12 ounces and measuring 52 centimetres/20.5 inches.

I will be forever grateful to the doctors and nurses here at Stanton Territorial Hospital who were so supportive toward making my dream of having a natural


delivery after a Cesarean section possible.

I had an emergency C-section in 2009 when Mari was born because I came down with a fever at eight days overdue and during a stress test to assess Mari's condition her heart rate decelerated, indicating she was in distress.

The thought of having a second C-section when I'd be boarding a plane and flying into the Arctic shortly thereafter wasn't pleasant. Walking up the aircraft stairs



Mari, Aine, Nora and John pose for their first family portrait, taken around 3:10 a.m. Monday Feb. 13, approximately a half hour after Nora was born in Stanton Territorial Hospital, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.



Ups & Downs Feb. 11 – Feb. 17, 2012

Maximum = -14.0°C/6.8°F Minimum = -26.1°C/-15.0°F
Source: Environment Canada, Station Kugaaruk A, Nunavut [Feb.14,15]
Not observed

Wind chill -41 [Feb. 19 at 11 a.m., -30°C/-22°F]
Feb. 19 Sunrise = 7:07 a.m. Sunset = 3:20 p.m. MST

In Yellowknife...

Maximum = °C/°F Minimum = °C/°F
Source: Environment Canada, Yellowknife Airport, Northwest Territories [Feb. 11,12,13,17]
Moderate weather, mostly clear

Wind chill -27 [Feb. 19 at 11 a.m., -18°C/-0.4°F]
Feb. 19 Sunrise = 8:15 a.m. Sunset = 5:28 p.m. MST

SAFELY DELIVERED CON'T. — would be no small feat after abdominal surgery, let alone the six weeks of weight-restricted lifting.

I knew the whole thing was out of my hands, but I was praying for at least the chance to *try* for a natural birth and I received it in abundance. The philosophy of Stanton's obstetrics team is all about intervening as little as possible. They gave their time and that's certainly what I needed for this delivery.

We are praising God for the safe arrival of our second daughter. We've decided to name her Nora, which originates from the English name Eleanor associated with the Greek word for "light." She is our little Northern Light.

Nora's middle name is also associated with our life up here amidst the aboriginal people of the farthest reaches of North America.

Known as the Lily of the Mohawks, Kateri Tekakwitha, was born in 1656 to a Christian Algonquin mother and Mohawk chief in the area that is now the state of New York.

She became a Christian at the age of 20 and after suffering persecution for her faith, escaped northward to the Montreal area where she founded a Catholic community with about a dozen other Mohawk women. With health weakened from childhood by smallpox, she died at the age of 24.

She became the first Native American to be beatified when Pope John Paul II did so in 1980. Pope Benedict XVI announced Feb. 18 that that Kateri Tekakwitha will be canonized a saint on Oct. 21.

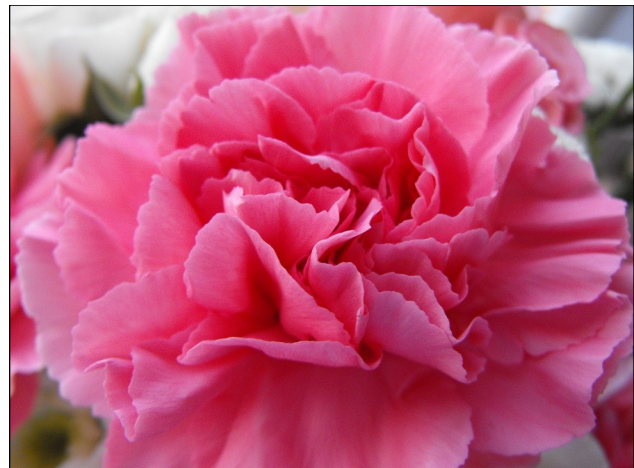
Aine's Journal ~ Feb. 17, 2012, Friday ~

Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks during the past week for John was the management of Mari's hair. Her mane reaches the middle of her back and is quite unruly unless braided. He made valiant attempts at brushing and pigtails, but those easily fall out by mid-morning.

On Tuesday, when John and Mari came to visit Nora and I, Mari had a cute single braid for which I promptly complimented him, only to learn that he'd enlisted the help of the hotel's receptionist.

Laughter is the best medicine and I got an even greater dose when I learned that he'd scheduled an appointment to have Mari's hair done the next day at the salon adjoining the hotel — he'd truly reached the point of desperation. For various reasons, he ended up taking Mari for the hairdo Friday, their last father/daughter outing of our Yellowknife stay.

Ever since John and I found out we were expecting, we'd pondered the challenges of keeping a baby



TOP: Nora dozes Monday Feb. 13 beside the bouquet Mari chose for Aine. **MIDDLE:** Mari holds her little sister Friday Feb. 17 in the Misesks' Nova Court suite. **BOTTOM:** Flowers from family brighten Stanton's Room #206 where Aine spent nearly four nights. The Misesks soaked in the sight of Nora's flowers, the last they will see until the end of May.



One of Mari's dreams comes true — she gets to ride in Kugaaruk School's new bus. The principal sent the bus to pick up the Misek family upon their arrival in Kugaaruk Feb. 18.



Collin, Kugaaruk School's bus driver, and John chat while waiting for the Misek luggage, which they hauled through the rear door and heaped on the seats.

SAFELY DELIVERED CON'T. — warm in the Arctic.

We found the solution to our problem serendipitously when we went to the hockey game on Feb. 4.

As we left the arena, we spotted a couple with a baby in a little carrier that looked like an soft-sided insulated cooler with a spot cut away where the baby could peer out at the world. On the miniscule chance that they'd purchased the item in Yellowknife, we inquired and were delighted to discover one was available in town.

Nora's maiden voyage in her carrier came

Wednesday afternoon when we were discharged from the hospital and walked over to Nova Court. Her second journey came today when we took her downtown in a City Cab for her first passport photograph.

That's right — infants now need a passport to travel to the U.S. and our one and only opportunity to get a regulation photograph came today. Good luck trying to accomplish such a task in Kugaaruk!

It took a professional photographer 40 minutes to get a picture of Nora with her eyes open, mouth closed (it's hard not to cry when you are a five-day-old lying on a concave piece of shiny white plastic with a lady flashing a bright light in your eyes every few seconds), looking straight ahead with both ears visible — all while mom and dad keep their hands out of the waist-up shot.

To celebrate a job well done, the four of us headed to Old Town to enjoy eatables at Mari's favourite Dancing Moose Café where you can watch Air Tindi ski-equipped planes take off from their icy lake surface runway.

We took a detour on the way, requesting our cabby take us out on a bit of the ice road that crosses Great Slave Lake from Yellowknife to the Dene community of Dettah. We drove by Yellowknife's 2012 Snow Castle, a castle built on Yellowknife Bay from snow and ice for Snowking XVII, the Annual Snowking Winter Festival held in March.

Tonight is our last night — the forty-first night for Mari (I was away for four nights in the hospital) — in Nova Court. Tomorrow we head home to Kugaaruk, weather permitting.

Aine's Journal ~ Feb. 18, 2012, Saturday ~

The morning dawned crisp and clear in Yellowknife. The only hitch came when the City Cab minivan we'd booked to haul us and our 204 kilograms/450 pounds of gear backed into a car in the hotel parking lot. Fortunately, we hadn't yet loaded. Another taxi arrived within minutes and we zipped over to the airport.

The boreal forest, encrusted with hoar frost, stretched as far as the eye could see as the Canadian North Dash 8 ascended, broken only by the thousands of pristine white patches made by the frozen lakes.

Nora cried in my arms as we took off, but soon fell asleep and remained so until we landed three hours later in Taloyoak, Nunavut, formerly known as Spence Bay.

Taloyoak's landscape is fairly flat and desolately barren, though perhaps the snow is hiding some of its features. Looking out the window, I was glad — yet again — that our home is in Kugaaruk with its beautiful mountains and waterways.

After a layover of about 25 minutes, we took to the air for the 35-minute flight to Kugaaruk. I think John, Mari and I all breathed a delighted sigh as the plane touched the snow-cruled runway and Kugaaruk's terminal came into view.

We're home.