

ARCTIC ATMOSPHERE

Kugaaruk, Nunavut

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Intense sunlight and mounds of snow create a blindingly bright landscape in Kugaaruk, as seen from the school Feb. 25 at 2 p.m.

Brilliant Light by Aine Misek

Gone away are the dark days, the sun is here to stay — at least until next autumn.

When Mari and I left for Yellowknife on Jan. 8, I looked forward to more hours of daylight and a direct view of the sun. The hardest part of the Arctic winter, for me, was the lack of light. Frigid temperatures are easier to take than constant gloom.

I'd prepared myself to face more light-limited days and hours of blue twilight upon our return to Kugaaruk, but what a difference six weeks makes.

This week was the brightest since early November; we're all revelling in seven days of clear blue skies flooded with sunlight.

When we open our blinds in the morning, we squint against the crisp white reflection of a land unbroken by a single tree. Only a few dark ridges of uncovered rock provide a haven for eyes seeking respite.

Low temperatures obviously keep us inside most of the time these days, especially now that Nora is with us, but once the weather warms a bit we'll have to don sunglasses for outdoor ventures or risk snow blindness, though I am not sure how much exposure one must have to the glare before eye damage occurs.

~Return to the Quiet Life ~

Perhaps that subhead is a bit of a misnomer considering Nora spends a fair portion of her waking hours exercising her lungs, but life in Kugaaruk is generally peaceful.

Talk about a perfect place to be with a newborn. No places to go, no errands to run... Life is so different here than anywhere else I've lived. Sometimes I feel as if we've stepped back to an era before industrialization, though the snowmobiles zipping by tend to smash that



What do you bring to a birthday party when the one store in town doesn't carry much of a gift selection? You work with the materials on hand. Mari displays a gift of turtle bread, complete with raisin eyes.



Side Job

By John Misek

Thought over the ethical implications — it's not the healthiest thing to consume after all. The profit margin is out of this world; it's quick way to make some fast cash if ever there was one... After discussing this new venture with Aine, I located a supplier and we stashed the stuff in our suitcases. Aine helped out by purchasing several bags of icing sugar, which we packed in close proximity as perfect cover.



Ups & Downs Feb. 18 – Feb. 24, 2012

Maximum = -23.0°C/-9.4°F Minimum = -40.6°C/-41.1°F

Source: Environment Canada, Station Kugaaruk A, Nunavut [Feb. 18-22]

Clear and cold with some ice fog

Wind chill -52 [Feb. 25 at 10 p.m., -37°C/-35°F]

Feb. 25 Sunrise = 6:41 a.m. Sunset = 3:44 p.m. MST

SIDE JOB CON'T. — Yes, I'm a coke dealer now.

Canadian North, the airline for our return trip to Kugaaruk from Yellowknife, permitted us to check 420 pounds of luggage between our three tickets. Plus, we were each allotted two carry-on bags.

Travel to the Arctic from Yellowknife is dear — a roundtrip tickets runs anywhere from \$2,000 to \$2,500 — so I wasn't going to travel an ounce short if we could make a dollar by reselling needed or (in this case) wanted items in Kugaaruk, where goods are delivered year round by air, the only exception being the supplies delivered once a year by ship.

I purchased a luggage scale and we shoehorned every pound we could into our new 64-linear-inch plastic tubs, the airline's maximum checked luggage size.

My two carry-on items were a pair of 24-can cases of Coke complete with duct tape handles. I called the airline to ask if liquids were allowed in the plane's cabin and after I was told "Yes, there is no security on



those flights," I asked tongue-in-cheek if people ever brought cases of pop on board. Laughter greeted my question. "Oh yes, we see that often," the customer service rep replied.

When we arrived in Kugaaruk and the flight attendant announced, "It will take a little longer than usual to unload cargo today because we have a lot," I just turned to Aine and smiled. Aine thinks she can make money selling leftover icing sugar but Coke seems the way to go.

Demand is unbelievable. Whisper, "I have Coke for sale," and people come running, cash in fist. Besides, a 12-pack of Coca Cola in Yellowknife runs \$3.50 on sale and retails for more than \$30.00 in Kugaaruk. A 12-pack weighs 10 pounds. You do the math.



Nora and Mari soak up a sunny afternoon Feb. 24. The sun's rays managed to warm the Misesk's living room, despite the -35°C/-31°F temperatures outside.



John hauls 132 cans of pop back to the Misesk storage room in Kugaaruk after hitting Extra Foods sales in Yellowknife where a 24-pack of Coca Cola and Canada Dry ginger ale sold for \$7. A 12-pack of Coke — presently on super sale — at the Koomiut Co-op sells for \$30. Soda pop prices will increase as sealift supplies diminish and the store increasingly depends on air-delivered pop.

BRILLIANT LIGHT CON'T. — reverie. Remoteness brings blessings with its crosses.

Nora had her first Kugaaruk outings this week: a trip to the Ash Wednesday service at church and her first check-up at the health centre. She seems to like riding in her Chariot carrier. She dozes off each time she's bundled inside.

~ *Water Woes Return* ~

Was I imagining things or did the odour of sewage seem to waft through the house Thursday morning?

I examined the bathroom and laundry room, but to no avail. The side window revealed even less. I concluded the sewage truck, a.k.a. the "honey truck," must have sucked the tank dry, which often causes a nauseating odour to fill the house until water has run back through the drainage pipes, when I wasn't paying attention.

I found out otherwise when John came home from lunch and informed me that "water" was pooling near the front door. It seems our septic tank may have frozen and cracked (as it did last year, only then the sewage ran through the inside of the house) but the verdict is still out.