

ARCTIC ATMOSPHERE

Kugaaruk, Nunavut

April 9, 2012, Issue 36



“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” ~ Luke 24:5

Easter in an Igloo

Today — Easter Monday — marks the sixth anniversary since John and I first met on April 17, 2006. We prefer to observe it on the holiday rather than the calendar day.

I'd come up to Canada from the U.S. to visit my brother Paul, who worked in Toronto at the time. John was one of Paul's roommates. Needless to say, that trip changed the direction of our lives dramatically; we are so glad it did.

Aine's Journal ~ April 1, 2012, Sunday ~

I went to bed at 1:30 a.m. this morning after posting *Arctic Atmosphere* and decorating the cake to celebrate Nora's baptism. It's nearly impossible to work on such things during the girls' waking hours.

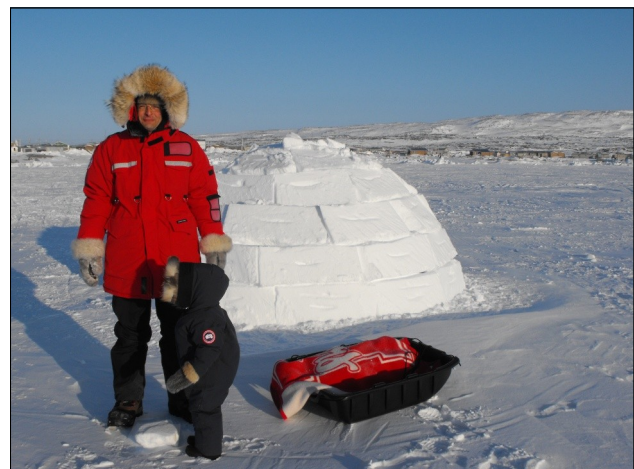
Bishop Reynauld Rouleau, OMI, is here this weekend. He arrived Thursday and will leave tomorrow — as a side note, all commercial flights to Kugaaruk arrive and depart in the afternoon or evening because the planes leave from Yellowknife and return the same day, unless they are grounded for some unforeseen reason, be it bad weather or some other problem.

The bishop is also visiting Taloyoak and Gjoa Haven this week. All three hamlets are without a priest so his visit is especially meaningful. Fr. Bogdan Osiecki, the pastor here for the past decade, is on sabbatical until June.

The bishop came at Christmas, but no other priest has visited since we arrived on July 28. This is truly a remote place on so many counts; it reminds me not to take anything for granted.

The Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay spans an enormous area, stretching all the way from northern Manitoba to the top of Nunavut. The northernmost Catholic community is in Pond Inlet on the top of Baffin Island.

The bishop baptized Nora and two other infants at 3 p.m. today. What a beautiful way to begin Holy Week.



TOP: John, Aine, Mari and Nora (sheltered inside her carrier) explore the results of Kugaaruk's Easter weekend igloo-building contest during a Sunday evening stroll on the bay. **BOTTOM:** John, Mari and Nora (under the red blanket) stand beside the igloo shown in the previous photo. The igloo appears smaller from the outside — John, who is 6 feet tall, couldn't quite stand upright inside — because the blocks that form the igloo are cut from the snow within the circle, creating a recessed floor.

EASTER IN AN IGLOO CON'T.

An elder told us Nora was the first kabloonak (non-Inuit) baby baptized in Kugaaruk.

Aine's Journal ~ April 5, 2012, Thursday ~

The Co-op's shelves reserved for fresh and frozen foods were nearly bare this week because the usual grocery shipment that arrives on Sundays didn't come April 1.

I trotted across the street Monday to buy potatoes, onions and sour cream but came home empty handed. I've been watching for sour cream to make an appearance for about three weeks, but even when groceries arrive, we're either too late to scoop it or it wasn't included in the order. It's hard to determine which.

Anyway, we made a preemptive egg purchase a couple of weeks ago, just in case supplies ran low at Easter time and I'm so glad we did!

A plane finally brought the big food shipment yesterday. The delivery filled all shelves, except those for eggs. Maybe there was a run on eggs right at the airport. Just kidding, but I did hear the Co-op was hopping yesterday afternoon. I'm sure everyone was anxious to cement their Easter dinner plans.

I didn't manage to get to the store until after lunch today. Nora made her first trip to the Co-op in my *amauti*, which I am still wearing backwards.

I'm now the proud owner of some potatoes, onions and sour cream — our Easter dinner can now include scalloped potatoes.

~ Later in the day ~

It's 10 p.m. and the children have come out to play.

I can hear them screaming and shouting in the street outside. It sounds like a summer camp operating without counselors.

The kids love to climb on the sea cans lining the front of our house (someone told us the children will eventually jump from the sea cans onto the roof of our house. I hope they are wrong.).

As daylight hours stretch into a 24-hour span in the Land of the Midnight Sun, the kids stay up later and longer. I nearly jumped out of my skin last Sunday at 1 a.m. when a huge thump sounded on the living room's already broken window, followed by a similar bang on the front door. I don't know why I jumped. I should be used to such occurrences by now.

Sheer boredom seems to be the motivator behind the broken windows and other hooliganism that occurs at night. Opportunity for such behavior is plentiful since the parenting style here is far different than that of European origin. Children are generally loosely supervised or not at all.

For example, when we first went to Kugaaruk's skating arena, I noticed it was full of children without an adult (other than John and I and a couple of arena



TOP: Nora's proxy godparents Margaret and Stephen Inaksajak (standing in for Uncle Peter and Aunt Theresa Misesk), hold her while Bishop Reynauld Rouleau, OMI, baptizes Nora on Palm Sunday in St. Peter's Catholic Church. **BOTTOM:** Aine, John and Mari celebrate the occasion by wearing the only dress clothes (footwear not included) they brought to Kugaaruk. A sealskin and artificial plants decorate the sanctuary.



Ups & Downs March 31 – April 6, 2012
Maximum = °C/°F Minimum = °C/°F
Source: Environment Canada, Station Kugaaruk A, Nunavut [DATA UNAVAILABLE]
 Mostly clear and cold; one snowy overcast day
Wind chill -30/-22 [April 9 at 3 p.m., -18°C/-0.4°F]
 April 9 **Sunrise = 4:30 a.m. Sunset = 7:31 p.m. MDT**

EASTER IN AN IGLOO CON'T. — employees inside an office) in sight. Another example is school attendance. Many parents leave their children are free to choose whether or not they want to go to school.

It seems this laissez-faire parenting style has always existed in the Inuit culture.

I've read that historically the Inuit named their children after deceased ancestors, believing the ancestors' spirits then lived on in the children. Therefore, if a mother rebuked her daughter, she might be speaking disrespectfully her own mother.

A comment made by one of John's students indicates this belief may still be held and I could certainly imagine it affecting parenting behavior.

The funny thing is that the kids and teenagers are always friendly when I meet them, far more so than down south. I've never felt threatened or scared, even when someone pounds on the window unexpectedly.

Aine's Journal ~ April 6, 2012, Friday ~

I've caught a cold so last night John went to the Holy Thursday church service at St. Peter's alone while I tucked the girls into bed. This afternoon we did manage to attend the Good Friday service as a family. Good Friday is the only day of the year on which Catholics do not celebrate the Mass.

All the liturgies are in Inuktitut, but with the aid of a missal we can follow along fairly well. Without a priest, Mass is not possible. Basically, the Sunday liturgies are just like that of Good Friday: the Liturgy of the Word (when we read and reflect on the scriptures) followed by distribution of the Eucharist, which was consecrated by the bishop, enough to last until the next priest comes.

Aine's Journal ~ April 7, 2012, Saturday ~

Operation Easter Egg consumed our morning. John gave Mari her first egg dying lesson, passing on the technique he learned from his dad's mother.

Using a bit of shortening and a double-dunk method, the two-toned eggs are an Easter tradition we always enjoy.

I found the colours particularly delightful this year. Kugaaruk is beautiful, but the blue, grey and white landscape is void of variants and the sight of the cheerful eggs pleased us all.

This evening five of our friends came over and brought a turkey and fixings with them for an Easter feast. We concluded the evening with Wizard, our favourite card game.

Aine's Journal ~ April 8, 2012, Sunday ~

Easter Sunday officially dawned at 4:34 a.m. in Kugaaruk, according to the sunrise time listed on Environment Canada's website, but the sky actually starts to lighten much earlier than that.

Nora usually wakes around 3 a.m. for a feed and if I make a trip to the washroom, I have to keep my eyes

half closed against faint gleam creeping through the windows.

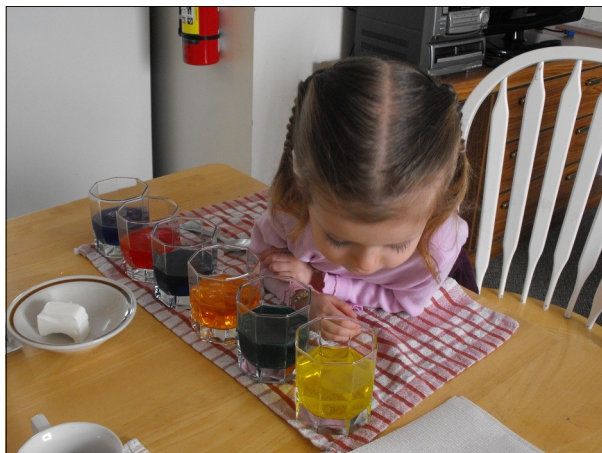
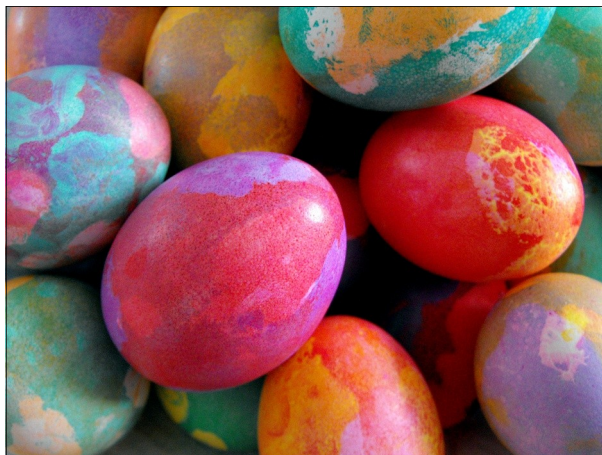
We awoke at 6 a.m. when Mari called our names. We now cover her window with cardboard to darken the room. John and I don't have to take such measures in



TOP: A toddler stands beside empty freezer shelves April 2 in Kooimut Co-op; fresh and frozen groceries, including eggs, vanished in Kugaaruk the week before Easter because of supply chain problems. **BOTTOM:** A Buffalo Airways WWII-era Douglas C-54 Skymaster, a military variant of the DC-4 airliner, delivers groceries to Kugaaruk April 8. A Canadian North 737 delivered the Sunday grocery shipment each week — weather permitting — since the Misesks first arrived, but they've heard the job is now Buffalo's.

EASTER IN AN IGLOO CON'T. — our bedroom. Its broken window was permanently covered with plywood long ago, as are so many windows in this town ... sigh.

A leisurely breakfast of boiled eggs, toast and



John gives Mari her first Easter egg colouring lesson, passing on the technique he learned from his Polish grandmother. "Sometimes bunnies leave little treats all over the house," Mari said after an indoor hunt Monday. "Especially when it's this cold outside," Aine replied.

canned fruit was followed by more of that abundant Kugaaruk commodity: couch time.

We took the girls to church at 10 a.m. in the sled, our only mode of transportation these days. Afterward, we invited three friends over to the house for an impromptu cup of tea and some sweets.

The day flew by as we snoozed the afternoon away. We heard a Buffalo Airways plane come into town and knew more groceries had arrived. John took a walk out toward the airport to create some of our own *Ice Pilots NWT* footage (see Issue 25).

It took more than an hour for the plane to unload, but I saw it soar over the bay around 4 p.m. I get a kick out of hearing and seeing those vintage planes take to the sky from this frozen expanse.

When Mari woke up from her nap, we bundled into our snow gear, placed the girls into the sled with an extra blanket and headed out onto the sea ice.

Residents of Kugaaruk participate in a variety of holiday activities during the Easter weekend: a seal hunt, igloo and inuksuk building contests, a square dance and games indoor at "The Hamlet" (a.k.a, the community center/municipal offices under one roof).

I wanted to see the igloo contest results. On the bay near the river's mouth and the stone church, we found two completed igloos and an unfinished one.

How bright and white the little domes appeared compared to the first igloo I ever saw, tinged blue on Dec. 30 by winter's brief midday twilight (see Issue 23).

Mari was thrilled to scramble out of the wind into the shelter of the best-built igloo.

Kugaaruk airport reported a temperature of -19° C/-2°F at 6 p.m. when we got home from our walk, but it felt like -30/-22 with the wind.

John pushed the sled (still containing Nora) through the low door and crawled inside. As I slipped through the tiny opening, I couldn't help but think of how seal-like I felt the last time I entered an igloo — two months postpartum is a better fit for an igloo doorway than eight months pregnant.

We took our mittens off inside and our hands were comfortable. Without the wind, the weather felt decent. It was so quiet on the bay away from the hamlet's constant hum of snowmobiles. The three of us stopped talking and listened to the silence, which was broken only by a raven cawing in the distance.

Eventually a snowmobile pulled up outside and we climbed out to greet the visitors. A grin split my chin when I glanced upward and discovered a small machine with four passengers sitting in a row like peas in a pod.

They were all children; the driver was a ten-year-old. John inquired, just to be sure.

They smiled, asked what Mari and Nora's names were, and sped away over the glittering surface with their faces completely exposed to the wind.