

He'd been hit by the same winds and storms I'd experienced, but his schedule was much tighter than mine. The fact that an aerial search couldn't find the kayaker is a good example of why you shouldn't plan on relying on being rescued in this area if you get into trouble.

In my search for a campsite I saw a perfect, flat, cleared circle of just the right size for setting up my tent, but as I approached the quick pounce and bark of a sled-dog chained to the stake in the middle of the circle made me realize it wasn't the best of campsites. I found an almost level patch of gravel by an abandoned log church with an old beached wooden whale boat near the shore of a protected bay. The neighbors assured me it was a good spot to camp as long as there wasn't a high tide at the same time as a strong north wind. As I set up my tent a motor boat pulled up nearby and a family alighted and stopped by for a chat. Catherine and Clarence invited me in for tea and muktuk. They showed me how to prepare and cut the muktuk. I found it to be a bit chewy, but strangely addictive.

I spent two happy evenings with Catherine and Clarence. They borrowed a video tape of local drum dancing to show me. What was great was watching everyone, young, old, and even teenagers watch the tape with obvious enjoyment. They dressed up their youngest in her fur winter parka with its cotton over-parka for me. Once the baby had it on, she wouldn't take it off, and went outside to play. But she wasn't too overdressed since it did snow that night.

Catherine and Clarence don't have running water but offered to boil water and fill a tub for me to bath. Knowing that they fetch their own water from an inland lake, I couldn't accept their offer.

During my two days in Tuk I toured the town a bit. Since Tuk is built on permafrost, you can't lay pipes for water, sewage, and fuel. So each of the newer houses has external hookups, and the water truck and the sewage truck come by daily. The southerners in town live in the newer houses with full utilities. But the permafrost has its advantages too: a little white shed is

the entrance to the community freezer. Down a 10-metre shaft into the permafrost is a hallway with a number of cubicles off of it. Each of the Inuvait families in Tuk has a right to store their food in this natural freezer.

I hadn't made any arrangements for getting back to Inuvik, so I asked around to see if I could hitch a ride by boat. Everyone was very helpful and I was sent from one house to another as someone would think of someone else who might be going to Inuvik. I ended up at Fred's, who is Tuk's Inuvait multimillionaire. Unfortunately it wasn't until the next weekend that he would be going to Inuvik, but he spent half a day showing me the sights. He took me to his road camp and pointed out the equipment his crews use to make the winter ice road from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk and the huge snow crawlers they use to resupply the DEW line stations. He drove me past the abandoned oil camps. When the Inuvait settled their land claim, they gave the oil companies a list of regulations which must be followed to reduce their impact on the land. These demands, in combination with the drop in oil prices, caused the oil companies to leave. Many Inuvait lost their wage jobs, but most think the town is much better off without the oil companies. They now spend more time hunting caribou and whales and fish and geese and seals and muskox.

The Inuvait here prefer the traditional all-meat diet. When I had asked Catherine if she knew what a particular plant was, she told me about a botanist who had visited the area and had told her that this plant had edible roots and that plant had edible leaves and the other plant had edible stems. She said that her response to him was: "Why would anyone want to eat plants?"

Not being able to hitch a boat ride, I ended up flying back to Inuvik on a little commercial flight and got a last view of the pingos I'd paddled around and a last view of the Arctic Ocean, before heading back to Inuvik and the start of the Snake River trip.

