SIMPLE PLEASURES

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By Kevin McGill, Nunavut, 13 April 2009

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Last week, I managed to get the bedroom window open. Yesterday I managed to get all four windows in our unit open.

They have been frozen shut since about last November!

The fresh air was glorious!!!

Two weeks ago, I walked from our unit to the main campus, about 5 minutes, without my hood up. Towards the end, my ears were getting a bit tingly. However, it was worth it for the sense of freedom that it gave.

In order to keep from getting frostbitten on one's face, the hoods on our parkas stick out about two inches past our noses. That means walking around like those racehorses with blinders on. You have to turn your whole head in order to see around you. So when I don't have to put my hood on it feels like … well, it feels like I'm not walking around in a box.

I also got out snowshoeing and for some long walks in the past couple of weeks. Since we got back from the Kelowna resort after Christmas, we haven't been getting out much at all. It has been quite cold again this year. Temperatures stayed below minus 30 for much of the winter.

I must be getting more used to the weather. I wandered around the hamlet with just my hiking boots most of the winter and even dispensed with the wind pants that I have previously worn over my snow pants.

Not much really happened this winter. It was too cold and dark to take a lot of pictures. I went out with Mena's literacy class on an igloo building excursion and between our two cameras, we got some good pictures of the event before the cold leached the power out of the batteries.

Thank the Higher Power for Curling. Going out a couple of evenings a week and to some weekend bonspiels keeps me sane. It has been a fun year that way, although we are now on about our fourth incarnation of the team. It has been hard to keep the interest and commitment level up this year.

The big news is that I am gearing up to take my students to Norway in May!

There is a collection of northern Universities and Colleges that have banded together under the name of University of the Arctic. They encourage knowledge exchanges across the Circumpolar world, across northern Europe, Asia and North America.

So we put our name forth for funding to do some workshops in northern Norway where the Inuit ancestral cousins, the Sami people, live.

We call our project "Me - My People: Keeping Culture in Counselling". It is based on our ongoing commitment to blending traditional and non-traditional methods and values. This provides more options to people wanting to make changes in their lives.

We were granted $20,000 from the Nunavut Academic Mobility Initiative for airfare for the trip and have been busy trying to fund raise the other $30,000.

And you know what? It looks like we are going to raise the 30 grand!

Really, there is no shortage of money up here. The College is putting on a Camp Cook program. They put on luncheons for the local people as part of their training. They let us sell tickets and keep all the proceeds. We made $2500 over four lunch hours.

We have done two bingos and raised another ten grand. And these weren't even on the big government paydays!

We have received $5000 here, $1000 there, etc. and still have proposals out for thousands more. And I can even access my own program budget.

If we get approved from the department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth for their basic $15000 we are over the top.

Our plan is to wear "team wear" on the trip. So if you happen to be in airports in Edmonton, Calgary, Ottawa, Frankfurt or Oslo on May 7-10 and May 22 -24, look for the Nunavut Arctic College Norway trip team. Give us a wave and we may even wave back!

It looks like Mena may go into semi-retirement next year. Spending 10 months a year up here really is a bit hard on one after awhile. On the other hand, there is plenty of contract work. You can make as much with part-time contract work in the north as you can with full-time work in the south. So it's really in her best interest to get this started. Once she gets settled in, this will become her pension plan!

Me, I plan to stay at this job awhile longer. I can fully retire in a couple of years. So unless they change their plans or something else better comes along, I'd like to continue my work of helping them create a "made in the north" counseling approach. We have made some pretty good strides. We now have about 5 traditional/non-traditional options developed, which we are going to present in Norway.

Well, that's about it for now. It's rapidly turning into the Light Season. Dawn breaks before 4 AM flooding the bedroom with light and it doesn't get dark until about 10 PM. This is a much harder adjustment for me than the Dark Season. I will look forward to the summer back home.

I will attach some pictures of the igloo building, smaller format, with this post. I should have tons of Norway pictures upon my return.

Enjoy the spring wherever you are and support the Armenians in their struggle for justice.