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Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 1: Return to the Ice

Gerty Ward
July 17, 2008

Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. Our Latitude is 69° 03’ N; our Longitude is 105° 05’ W.

The WHOI BGEP team is now above the Arctic Circle. The Arctic Circle circles the earth at 66° 33? 39? (or 66.56083°) north of the equator. It is define by the southern-most point of a "polar day" and "polar night" meaning that here the sun stays above the horizon for 24 hours, and stays below the horizon for 24 hours, at least once per year.

Because the earth's tilt and rotation wobble, the location of the Arctic Circle will change ever so slightly over time.

Making excellent use of the local terrain, we landed on a permafrost runway in Cambridge Bay.

Important words on a poster in the Cambridge Bay cultural center. Both Inuinnaqtun and Inuktitut, indigenous Canadian languages, are recognized in the Nunavut territory.

The ship was not ready for all of us so a group of 9 decamped to The Green Row in Cambridge Bay. We toured the town, stopping in at the Visitors Center. Thank you to Carla Schwindt for opening up the high school and cultural center so we could see the exhibits.

Dolls in the cultural center in Cambridge Bay.*Their sweet, delicate faces are in stark contrast to life on the tundra.*

Wildlife on the tundra: Dave, Ness, Kelly, Kristina, Melissa, Gerty & Alice fend off mosquitoes. (not pictured: Brian & Willie). Photo taken by Dawn Wilson.

After supper, a retired schoolteacher, Dawn Wilson, treated us to a drive out on the tundra in an old Ford truck "just back from the dump". Alice, a veteran of Arctic cruises, met her while checking into our flight. A short conversation later, Dawn was offering to drive us out to see wildlife. Her immediate hospitality is indicative of the generous, helpful spirit that pervades Arctic communities. While we did not see much wildlife, we all appreciated the barren beauty of the tundra, and the mosquitoes.

At 8AM tomorrow, we will meet the helicopter that takes us to the ship.

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