

## **GoNorth! Nunavut 2009**

Module 01: Arctic Exploration – Chat #1

Thursday, March 5, 2009

### **Welcome:**

Welcome to the FIRST CHAT on the topic of Arctic Exploration!

**Background:** Could you carry your house, food, cooking utensils, clothing, and everything else that you might need to live and survive?

Keeping the eye and mind on the goal is a must to the success of GoNorth! An enormous amount of energy, effort, resources, planning, and preparation goes into a GoNorth! expedition—in the expedition basecamp as well as the education basecamp, and even across the borders of many countries. The cumulative efforts of a team greatly outweigh those of an individual. Group cohesion and positive interaction often inspire a team to achieve far greater goals than what would be possible for just one person.

The more time teammates spend together, the better they will be able to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses. Each one of us perceives the world from our own unique perspective. Interests, opinions, and thoughts are usually very different from one individual to the next. Therefore, when working within a group, it is important to consider each person when thinking about the whole, and to recognize the goals of others.

Whether we realize it or not, most of us have goals. Goals come in many different shapes and sizes. Some may be big, others small; some may be long-term and others short-term. Webster's dictionary defines a goal as "an aim or purpose." Goals can more easily be defined, however, as something that we wish to achieve. To set a goal means to begin a process in which all efforts are evaluated as to their relative importance in our lives.

The GoNorth! adventure learning expedition has several goals in its mission statement. One of them is to work with scientists around the world in the study of climate change. Have you checked out the Cool Scientist section in Logistics at Polar Husky.com? Scientists are explorers investigating the natural world! They explore, do field research, probe, and experiment to find answers to their questions, always searching for new, unexplored areas in our collective knowledge—just like the early explorers set out on ships in the fifteenth century to find new lands, map the world, and look for treasure!

Some questions to possibly open the chat with or discuss prior to the LIVE chat!

- 1) Name one place or one question that you would like to explore. Why?
- 2) Have you learned about any unusual observations on the land that have to do with climate change?
- 3) What advice would you give to an astronaut visiting a planet in a distant galaxy for the first time?
- 4) What mistakes of past explorers or scientists would you not want to repeat?

**Speaker Bio:** GoNorth! Team Member: Mille Porsild

Where in the world is Mille now? That is not an unusual question... She is most likely either in the dog yard with the Polar Huskies, on a dogsled, in a classroom or sitting at a table talking to the locals somewhere in the Circumpolar Arctic. That is, if she is not in front of the computer cramming on another adventure learning program, or out talking the GoNorth! adventure learning series up a storm!

Mille is a strong voice for Arctic education. For 16 years she has been traveling in the circumpolar Arctic from Arctic Scandinavia to Alaska, Canada and Russia, every year on extensive 2-3, even 6 months dogsled expeditions -- while committing herself to education as an instructional designer, writer, photographer and lecturer. As such, in 2005 Mille was the first climate witness appointed by WWF when she presented to the House of Lords in London kicking of the tremendously successful "Climate Switch" campaign for WWF.

A forerunner in her field, she was in the trenches to develop and carry it out into reality from the get-go, and is today a leader in the development and implementation of adventure learning programs. As the Program Director of GoNorth! she manages the GoNorth! framework in its entirety, from the design and curricula of the adventure learning environment to the execution of the program live from the field.

Born in Denmark, Porsild has Arctic exploration in her genes. Her great grandfather, Morten Porsild, was the founder of the first Arctic research station in the world which he placed on Disko Island in Greenland. His sons Erling and Thorbjorn Porsild later moved to Canada where they traveled throughout the Northwest and Yukon Territories by dog teams, managing, amongst others, the renowned Reindeer Expedition and building the Reindeer Station in the Mackenzie River Delta.

Porsild first carried on the tradition in 1992 when she at just 18 years-old joined Polar Explorer, Will Steger, at his Homestead in northern Minnesota to participate in the development of the International Arctic Project 1992-1995 (IAP) -- and on her then first expedition Mille and her team mates were the first to send out text from a tent in the field which was done via a 50-lbs computer and a narrow 10-minute-a-day satellite hook-up.

In 1996 Porsild founded NOMADS Adventure & Education, Inc., committing to combine the motivation of real-world learning and adventure with classroom education. A frequent speaker at schools around the world, Porsild has shared her enthusiasm with more than 70,000 students of all ages throughout the United States alone. In person or via the Internet she is a dynamic advocate of the use of education to instill proactive behavior and inspire adventurous spirits.

**GoNorth! Education Basecamp:** Good Morning Everyone! We are so glad that you could join us today. This is our first chat on the topic of Arctic Exploration. Mille is here and ready for your questions!

**Education Basecamp:** question submitted by Isabella in Ms Finlay's Class at Lourdes Hill College: Brisbane, Australia: What is the most enjoyable thing you do in your job?

**GoNorth! Expert:** First of all, hi I am sitting at Expedition Basecamp with the Polar Huskies outside and I am so excited to be here today! So what is my favorite part of my job.. Well, this is one of them. I get to communicate and work with students all over the world, both online and in the classroom in my job as program director of GoNorth! That really energizes me and inspires me.. But of course I also love to be on the trail and working with the Polar Huskies. Quite frankly I am on lucky camper - I actually really really love my job - as tough as it can be!

**Education Basecamp:** question submitted by Mrs Mottinger: 1st Grade: Neil Elem: MN: How do you get all the dogs ready? How do they know they are going on an expedition?

**GoNorth! Expert:** Oh, the dogs know :) They know us very very well. Actually, I would dare to say that the Polar Husky veterans out there know me better than any human. So - they watch us! They are training every day running with the 4-wheeler. They can feel the intensity and they can see us running around with gear. When we start loading the trailer - they know its getting close - and they get really worked up. And though we pretty much start the dog truck every day around here (what the dogs are transported in) I can guarantee you they know the difference the morning we actually start it up to leave.

**ms stock:webster city middle school:iowa:** How do you communicate with the villagers who speak a different language?

**GoNorth! Expert:** It depends a lot where we are traveling! Like last yer we were in Scandinavia - and since I am Danish (from Denmark) that means I speak a little bit of Swedish and Norwegian.. But that said most people there all speak English so we make it work. In Russia we had to speak through a guide and when we are in Nunavut like this year - when we are talking to Elders who only speak Inuktitut (the Native Inuit language) well then we ask families and friend in the community for help. I have to say though -- it is also possible to do a lot of talking and understanding without the use of any words! And you can get very far with a smile and laughter!

**Education Basecamp:** question submitted by Samantha in Ms Finlay's Class at Lourdes Hill College: Brisbane, Australia: Do you like the cold weather?

**GoNorth! Expert:** I love cold weather and I do not like to be cold!!! So that means that I enjoy the fact that I am pretty good at figuring out how to stay warm. I love food - and getting a lot of calories into your body is the first step to stay warm in Arctic conditions. When your body burns the calories in the food - that is how your body produces heat. I have a high metabolism so I kick out a lot of heat so to speak. I have very excellent clothing and equipment, I know how to layer and I know when it is time to sprint around to get my blood flowing.. So, yes I love cold probably not least because it allows me to do what I do -- and I know how to work with it...

**Education Basecamp:** question submitted by Jacqueline in Ms Finlay's Class at Lourdes Hill College: Brisbane, Australia: Mille, how do you use technology in remote locations?

**GoNorth! Expert:** Well, it can be tricky and it is based on many years of testing and figuring out what really works and what does not. So, the biggest issue is power and ensuring that the equipment is able to handle the cold (and is traveling safe). One trick to thaw it out and get warm before you attempt to start it up. While you thaw it out it is important that you limit any ice crystal (water from air) to build up in the electronic parts) so to make it able to work in the cold all technologies are carried in sealed plastic bags that they are not taken out of until they reach a "about room" temperature. As for "electricity" we carry four different energy sources: solar panels which are basically hooked into a "car battery" that then gets charged by the sun.. We carry a small Honda generator (and fuel for it) in case we do not get enough juice on our solar panel we can start that up.. Then we carry special batteries called 'expedition batteries' -- they work at 40 below for up to 8 hours. The not good part of them is one that they are heavy, they are not re-usable so when they are gone they are gone.. on that note the good news is that they now are made without mercury!

cres-6: Have you ever got injured, Like broken bones during an expedition?

**GoNorth! Expert:** I have been more than fortunate in that all the expeditions I have been on we have only have minor injuries. I couple of years ago on the expedition in Alaska, I did break a finger but that is about the extent of it -- and in that scenario I could just keep going! Some of what we are very scared of is burns.. both burns from hot and frost bite burns. I have been unfortunate to have hot water on me and that is something we take very seriously because your skin is then 'damaged' and prone to frost bites...

**guest: Mrs. Simmonds: CRES, MN:** Have you ever had problems with your tent on the trail?

**GoNorth! Expert:** Yes. The problems we have though are all related to the extreme stress we put on these tents. It is quite amazing what they can take. 70 mile an hour windstorms (really!) and they are still standing - as long as we have them aligned with the way the wind is blowing. Otherwise they collapse on us -- and that is indeed scary. That is when stuff starts breaking. And that is why, if we sit in a storm and the wind is hitting us so that it stresses the tent, if at all possible we must "turn the tent" to face with the wind. This is dangerous because we can damage the tent in that situation or even loose it, blowing away in high winds....

**cres-6:** What all does it take to be in a polar husky expedition, besides effort?

**GoNorth! Expert:** PASSION. Love for what you do. Desire to explore. The ability to look for and find the positive in even tough hard situations. Stamina... to make the expeditions happen. You have to be sort of a stubborn person in many ways - but most important: you have to be a really good team player - a good team mate - willing to work your guts out for the team. Trust me, none of this would happen without incredible team work from all involved, which for example includes Tiffany who sits at Education Basecamp and moderates the chat today! There is a lot going on behind the scenes :)

**ms stock:webster city middle school:lowa:** What happens if a dog gets injured or hurt so that they can't continue?

**GoNorth! Expert:** If a Polar Husky gets so injured that resting on the sled as we travel or rest days with no travel will not make the difference - Well, then we "ship them home" -- Just like we would call for a rescue if I was in such bad shape. We will do the same for a Polar Husky. They are full blown team members just like the rest of us - and to me they are family.

**guest: Mrs. Simmonds: CRES, MN:** What kind of special clothing do you wear and are they comfortable?

**GoNorth! Expert:** Our clothing is very comfortable. Very. Most important we wear layers. So that we can adjust depending on how hard we are working -- the last thing we want is to sweat! One thing most people do not think about - but that is crucial to us is the fur ruff around our faces when the wind is really howling. This is the only way we can avoid to get frost-or wind bites. This is just like the Native Inuit would protect their face. We also use boots that are made on the design of the Inuit boot - they are called kamik or mukluks. Its like wearing slippers! Extremely comfortable. And very very warm

**Education Basecamp:** question submitted by Mrs Mottinger: 1st Grade: Neil Elem: MN: How do you make the sleds?

**GoNorth! Expert:** The type of sled we will be using on this expedition is what is called a Komatek sled. This is a design we have from the Inuit - it is the traditional Native way of making a sled. The only bolts or nuts on the sled are those that attach the plastic to the bottom of the sled's runner (kind of like ski). In the traditional design this would not have been plastic. Instead Inuit would cover the bottom of the runner with moss and then daily "ice it" - putting water on and letting it freeze. Now imagine just how slick and a fast surface that would be! We do not do that because it requires "more time" and we can still get a pretty good result using this plastic. The rest of the sled is tied together using rope -- all of it. So, to answer your question :) We work with Mike Falls who builds us the runners using the Inuit template we have from Greenland. He makes the cross slaps and handle bars and we then get the different components to put all together. The last part - putting the handle bars on the sled we do not actually do until we are the location where we start the expedition - because it is easier to transport the sleds "flat"...

**CRES 5:** We have been reading about iditarod mushers who have had hallucinations. Have you had a experienced such as this?

**GoNorth! Expert:** Well, I am not proud to answer yes to that we at times are so tired or exhausted that it can be tough-going -- But actual hallucinations, no. I would have to say that it would be irresponsible and not "safety first" if I traveled or my team mates let me travel if I am in that bad shape. We are out there for the long haul. And we have a responsibility towards you the students and teachers to be able to deliver our program from the field in the long run. We have a responsibility to keep the Polar Huskies safe at all cost. Thus we must make wise and smart decisions. Our motto is: safety first. And we never bend from that.

**CRES-4:** What got you interested in exploring by dog sled?

**GoNorth! Expert:** I was lucky -- I grew up in a family with a long history of traveling and exploring in the Arctic. My great grandfather was a scientist on the Arctic island of Greenland. He did some reeeeeeeally cool expedition out on the land observing plants, animals, geology and so on.. My grand father was born on Greenland and he grew up almost knowing how to hitch a sled dog at the time he could run. So, he had his own team at 9 years old ... When I was a kid - he lived in Denmark and he would tell me about his "explorations" and running dog teams.. and I was fascinated - that is what I wanted to do! And I am very curious. I love teaching and learning -- I think there are really cool way we can learn that really excites us -- like this way of learning. So: I combined it all and here we are!

**CRES-3:** What is the best thing that has happened to you while dog sledding or on an expedition?

**GoNorth! Expert:** Yes, Polar Huskies can swim but most of them prefer to avoid water much above their belly level -- we do not encourage them to love water for the simple reason that we actually want them to avoid it if at all possible. Should the sled fall in with the dogs and the dogs can not get on safe ice to pull the sleds out - we have to cut the rope, or the main line that attaches the sled to the dogs and let the sled float or sink separate from dogs in order that the dogs can rescue onto the ice. Just writing about this give me the chills. Not to many other scenarios are as frightening to me.

**ms stock:webster city middle school:lowa:** What is the total number of miles for all your expeditions?

**GoNorth! Expert:** Ooooo, I don't know! I guess that would be a good math exercise. I started on my first expedition -- about 1800 miles -- back in 1992.. and then I have gone every year, but a few.. Some years have been much less.. maybe 6-700 miles - and then I have done some 2 and 3000 miles long expeditions as well. But you know what -- What matters to me is that I have been so fortunate to see and experience so much of the circumpolar Arctic, seeing the most amazing places traveling with the Polar Huskies.. Meeting fantastic and wonderful people everywhere -- and all while having a blast working with kids and students onlien!

**guest: Mrs. Simmonds: CRES, MN:** When will you determine what dogs will travel with you and will Yoik be one of them?

**GoNorth! Expert:** Hee hee. I have a pretty good idea... But, it can change the day we depart simply because we have to keep the dogs health and safety first at all times. So, I will have to wait answering that completely :)

**CRES-4:** Did you ever get to go on an expedition with your grandfather?

**GoNorth! Expert:** No, unfortunately my grandfather passed away when I was not that old and we did not get to do that.. But He taught me, and on my first expedition which I did when I had just turned 19 years old - I thought about him every day I think

**GoNorth! Education Basecamp:** These are fabulous questions! We have about 10 minutes left....enough time for a few more questions.

**CRES-1:** How do you do it all?

**GoNorth! Expert:** :) Well, that is a thought-full. I think the best answer may be through team work. And by believing that if there is a will there is away. So.. when your will to-do fades .. for whatever reason.. well then things usually are no longer possible. That said, sometimes you deal with things you just can't overcome right. So. yes, team work. And smiling . I mean that. Smile and laugh as much as you can even when the going gets tough!

**CRES-3:** How much food do you bring on a expedition on a normal bases and where do you pack it and store it?

**GoNorth! Expert:** We calculate about 2 1/2 food per team member - be it human or Polar Husky - we carry about 4 weeks supplies on the sled + one extra week that we do not consider in our calculations .. that's for safety. So we have to plan the route and travel as need be to make it between supplies in 4 weeks. Sometimes we carry less with us so we can travel faster because we calculate we should be able to do it faster. The food is carried in bags on the sled --- the dog food too. So most if the load on the sled is actually food. As for resupplies we ship it ahead in boxes and like to store it with people that help us out in the communities till we get there!

**Education Basecamp:** question submitted by Mrs Mottinger: 1st Grade: Neil Elem: MN: What would you do if the ice breaks and all the dogs fell in the water? Can PH swim?

**GoNorth! Expert:** Yes, Polar Huskies can swim but most of them prefer to avoid water much above their belly level -- we do not encourage them to love water for the simple reason that we actually want them to avoid it if at all possible. Should the sled fall in with the dogs and the dogs can not get on safe ice to pull the sleds out - we have to cut the rope, or the main line that attaches the sled to the dogs and let the sled float or sink separate from dogs in order that the dogs can rescue onto the ice. Just writing about this give me the chills. Not to many other scenarios are as frightening to me.

**Education Basecamp:** question submitted by Brittany in Ms Finlay's Class at Lourdes Hill College: Brisbane, Australia: Hi, I was wondering how you wash your hair? Doesn't it freeze because of the temperature?

**GoNorth! Expert:** Yes, if I did wash my hair it would freeze if I went outside. I pretty much only wash my hair when we are in communities! It is too much water to make to wash it on the trail --- you have to remember we only have the water we make from melting ice and snow -- and just to make enough water for what we need for drinking and cooking takes each tent unit (two people per tent) 3-4 hours every day. On the 7th day of the week when we do not travel .. Well, I am really really busy that day. It is our "Education Day " and we have to deliver all the media, the Trail report and so on from the trail. I get up at five in the morning

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and it is often in the middle of the night the next day before I am able to get back to bed (in the sleeping bag) - so no time for washing hair then :) So... in the beginning of a trip my hair is a mess!!! I put it back, braid it, and it still gets all messed up from being underneath the hat day in and day out. One big hair ball. But after about 2-3-4 weeks it is like my hair gets used to be on the trail again, an, yes, its maybe not so pretty (looks like I could have a hair wash) but it is no longer messed up. Basically the levels of oil in my hair settles in to the rhythm. That all said ---- there is NOTHING like a shower in the communities and washing my hair!

**CRES 2:** Standing on the sled, how many feet is it from you to the lead dogs?

**GoNorth! Expert:** Mm, you guys are getting me on the math today! So, after this I am going to go out and make a little movie with Tony on this that I will put in next week's report! OK :)

**CRES 6:** How much bigger is Yoik than Baffin, What is the tallest dog you have?

**GoNorth! Expert:** Baffin is MUCH bigger than Yoik. Yoik looks like Baffin -- but he does not have Baffin's very large frame!

**CRES –team2:** Do you think Nunavut will be intense do to climate change?

**GoNorth! Expert:** Well, think the expedition is bound to be intense - because most expeditions are (they all are). But whether it is "due to climate change" .. that is a tricky question. We are having to look very closely at ice conditions.. But ice conditions in the area for example where we start the expedition, well, they are always historically difficult because of the strong currents in the area south of Baffin Island.. However, what might be difficult is one that we hear that the glacier we have to pass really melted out last year and that may make for some difficult conditions -- and two that some of the advise and knowledge of the Native Elders and hunters may be that they no longer feel sure about the conditions!

**GoNorth! Education Basecamp:** While Mille is answering her last question, we want to thank you for joining us today. We had so much fun and we hope that you not only enjoyed yourself, but learned a lot too. Lets thank her for taking the time to answer all your questions!

**CRES-5:** thanks for your time from cres 5

**CRES-3:** Thanks for your time!!!!!!!!!!!!!! from CRES-3

**CRES-4:** THANKS FOR ANSWERING OUR Q'S.... CRES-4 :) (:

**CRES team-2:** Thanks for your time!!!! :-) CRES team-2

**CRES-1:** Thanks, for answering our questions, it really brought our spirits up!

BYE!

**CRES 6:** Thank`s from cres 6.

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**CRES -1:** Why do you explore the Arctic?

**GoNorth! Expert:** I love the Arctic. It might just be the love of my life ;) I love traveling there - I love the people. I love going out to observe on the land and learn with the Polar Huskies - it is very powerful. So that is some very self-centered reasons why " I explore" but most importantly by exploring the Arctic we learn. The Arctic is an incredible black board. Both for teaching -- in the classroom -- and for making observations about our global environment. I feel honored that I have the skills and knowledge to take and be part of this research and to utilize my experiences in the classroom around the world. My greatest desire is probably to explore and observe how we best learn. And I am happen to believe that the way we are doing it here at PolarHusky.com is a very powerful way and a way of the future --- so much of my passion is in developing that, observing on the land as well as in the classroom and bring it together.. That was a long winded answer - but also a pretty heavy question :)

**GoNorth! Expert:** Ok, I guess that is all for today -- Time is up! It sure flew by. I have had the most wonderful time with you all today. And I can not wait to hear from you and see your work online and in the Zones over the next months. Keep up the great questions -- and keep exploring!

**Thank You!**

From all of us at Team GoNorth!, Thank You for joining us today! Join us again next week on Wednesday, March 11th at 1 PM CST for our second chat on the topic of Arctic Exploration.