

GoNorth! Nunavut 2009

Module 01: Arctic Exploration – Bonus Chat

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Welcome:

Welcome to Bonus Chat with GoNorth! Team Members 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?

About our Speaker: Aaron Doering

Education Director

Aaron is a professor at the University of Minnesota where he teaches courses related to how technology can be used to enhance learning within K-16 classrooms. He has extensive experience in the development and delivery of educational content via the Internet. With a Ph.D. in instructional systems and technology and a M.S. in geography, Aaron's latest research focuses on the impact of adventure learning within the K-12 classroom, how to design and develop education courses in technology successful, how students' envision the use and need for technology, and how geospatial technologies can be used to enhance learning within science and social studies curricula.

Prior to coming to the University of Minnesota, Aaron taught middle and high school social studies in Rochester, MN taking students to more than 17 countries in order to study the physical and cultural geography of the area. His love for geography stems from his roots farming roots, as he was raised on a farm in southern Minnesota. Currently a resident of St. Paul (a big city), Aaron misses the solitude and peacefulness of rural living.

Aaron did not ease into the ranks as an Arctic explorer - he busted it! His first expedition was the 6 month, 2000 + mile dogsled expedition Arctic Transect 2004.

Speaker Bio: GoNorth! Team Member: Mille Porsild
Program Director, Expedition Leader

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 off 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.

LIVE Chat:

GoNorth! Education Basecamp: Good Evening Everyone! We are so glad that you could join us today. This is a bonus chat on the topic of Arctic Exploration. Aaron is going to take your questions for the first half of the chat and then Mille is going to take your questions for the second half of the chat!

Aaron Doering: Hello everyone!

Education Basecamp: Lourdes Hill College: Brisbane, Australia: Claire: When you travel around the Arctic, do you always have to build an igloo or put up a tent, or do you sometimes have buildings/ houses to stay in?

Aaron Doering: Great question! We normally use our Hilleberg tents. However, we do get invited into the homes in many of the communities. I personally have never stayed in an igloo. Although we have seen igloos and they are incredibly cool!

GoNorth! Education Basecamp: If you are new to the chats, you may type your question in the long rectangular box at the bottom of this window that says: 'Question:' Then click the arrow button to submit the question.

Education Basecamp: Lourdes Hill College: Brisbane, Australia: Natalie: How long are the non-working periods between expeditions? (How long are your holidays?)

Aaron Doering: :-). Well, you made me laugh. It seems like there are no non-working times. The reason is that we are constantly getting ready as we are not only planning an expedition, but we are writing the curriculum and developing the online environment. Our holidays are normally only a few days.

Education Basecamp: Lourdes Hill College: Brisbane, Australia: Katelyn: What is your daily routine?

Aaron Doering: On the trail, our routine is very strict. We wake up and start the stove, eat breakfast, exit the tent at the same time, take down the tent, hitch the dogs and we are off. At night, we set up the tent, feed and stake out the dogs, melt snow for water, dry clothes, eat, and sleep!

Education Basecamp: Lourdes Hill College: Brisbane, Australia: Hayley: What animals do you encounter on the expedition?

Aaron Doering: Many animals and it is a lot of fun. We see musk ox, Arctic Hare, Reindeer, Caribou, Seals, Arctic Fox, Ptarmigan, Arctic Wolf, and many more!

Education Basecamp: Lourdes Hill College: Brisbane, Australia: Gabrielle:

Have you ever been in a really bad blizzard if so please tell me about it.

Aaron Doering: Oh Yes! Well, you make sure your tent doesn't get filled with snow, you stay in your sleeping bag to stay warm, eat, and make sure your partners are safe. Safety is always the most important part of an expedition.

Julie K Storck: Is there a point of coldness that you cannot differentiate? For example, can you notice a difference between -60 and -70 or is it just so incredibly cold that that doesn't matter?

Aaron Doering: The difference is in the wind. The wind is what really scares me and we never talk about it :-)...seriously. You can tell a difference, but it seems after -30F, it doesn't matter :-).

Lisa R Holton: How do you keep track of the dogs at night. Are they responsible enough to be left alone or are they 'supervised' in some way?

Aaron Doering: Good question. They all have their own spot on the stakeout. We dig them a nice hole so they can stay warm and feed them a great deal. They are always very happy!

Education Basecamp: Lourdes Hill College: Brisbane, Australia: Ellen: How long does the expedition go for and why did you choose to do it?

Aaron Doering: This expedition will be about 3.5 months. We do the expeditions so we can teach students around the world about culture, climate change, places throughout the world, and how we are all interrelated. We wanted to do a circumpolar project, and that is why we are now in Nunavut. It is also Nunavut's 10 year anniversary!

Woodbury, MN, USA: What tools do you use to navigate with?

Aaron Doering: We use a GPS, but many times it shuts off because of the cold. We use it quickly to get a "bearing." We then use a topographic map and compass.

Education Basecamp: Lourdes Hill College: Brisbane, Australia: Maria:

During your expeditions, do you take samples of snow?

Aaron Doering: Yes we do! We work with NASA as we take snow depth, snow water equivalency, and collect snowflakes. This data get sent to NASA where they are analyzed for possible impacts from climate change.

Jamie N: I heard that polar bears hunt humans. Is that true and how close have you come to a polar bear?

Aaron Doering: Yes, polar bears like humans :-). In 2004, we had a polar bear in camp...about 40 feet away. The dogs kept it at bay. This is also why the Inuit travel and hunt with their dogs.

Woodbury, MN, USA: You have now been to Russia, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Alaska with GoNorth! Do you think all these different regions of the circumpolar Arctic are very different or alike? Is it just all white! :)

Aaron Doering: They are very different! Fennoscandia was much more "developed" than for example, Chukotka in Russia. Fennoscandia also had more trees because of the moderating effect of the water. The regions are very different. And, they are also all white...at times.

Julie K Storck: What was your scariest moment on trail?

Aaron Doering: Good question. Well, there are a few. Probably my scariest is when we had a tent fire. Yes, the inside of the tent was on fire. That's all I want to say :-)

Lisa R Holton: What happens if you forgot to pack something? You can't just go to a local store, so how do you get a replacement of something you lost, forgot, or is broken?

Aaron Doering: Shoe Goo! Actually, you have to make sure you plan ahead and you usually have two of everything AND good teammates who might share :-)

Education Basecamp: What is your most favorite thing to eat on the Trail or when you are in Communities?

Aaron Doering: I love macaroni and cheese! I also like trying Native foods like muktuk, caribou, and seal.

Emily: Have you noticed a changed in snow samples since your started GoNorth?

Aaron Doering: I don't know the answer to this. However, I can ask the folks at NASA and they would be able to tell us!

Christine M Erickson: what is muktuk?

Aaron Doering: Muktuk is whale blubber. It is a delicacy and it is cut up in squares to be enjoyed.

Class E: What do you personally think is the greatest challenge on the trail?

Aaron Doering: The greatest challenge is making sure we get out the trail report on time. We always want to make sure it is available at 8 on Monday mornings no matter what the weather!

Lisa R Holton: Exploring in the north must be a dangerous experience. In case of emergency, do you have help if something serious happens?

Aaron Doering: We do have satellite phones. However, it still would be days before we may get help. Thus, safety always comes first! We work together as a team.

Linda Corwin: With all the cold weather and wind has anyone everyone gotten frost bite? What kinds of things do you do to protect your exposed areas (like areas on your face) when you outside?

Aaron Doering: Yes, I have received frost bite. However, that was my fault. I try to keep my face and other extremities covered with gear. It is constantly on my mind.

Julie K Storck: Do you melt snow for your water supply? Do you have to purify or is it safe? Do you try to do a lot at once and carry in drums or just for what you need that night/next day?

Aaron Doering: Yes, we do. The water is always very good. However, if we are on the ocean, we always look for "old ice" where the salt has leached out.

Jeni K Henrickson: Do the dogs ever get tired or bored? How do you keep them motivated on the trail?

Aaron Doering: Yes, they may get a bit bored, but there is usually something always new and exciting such as caribou, seal, ptarmigan, etc... to keep them going.

Woodbury, MN, USA: Have you seen Inuksuit? And if so where and do you use it for traveling?

Aaron Doering: Yes! I love Inukshuks! Yes, we have seen many and they are very beautiful. They are also very common for carvings in the North.

Suzan Koseoglu: how diverse were the small communities that you visited?

Aaron Doering: The communities are not very diverse in the since of people living in the communities from all over the world. Tourism and jobs do have some impact on this.

Class E: What is a frost bite?

Aaron Doering: Frost bit is when you freeze your skin. It literally turns white...

Woodbury, MN, USA: What do you mean by "safety first"?

Aaron Doering: This means we always want to make sure that our team does not get hurt. We work together to make it a success!

Lisa R Holton: When we met the dogs on their page, they all seem to have names that fit them so well! How old are they when they get their names?

Mille Porsild: Hi! This is Mille - I am very excited to be here - you guys are sending loads of great questions our way. And Aaron has done a great job leading the way here... Now I will try to take over:) So, thank you for the compliments on the dog names

Aaron Doering: Thanks everyone! I'm in class right now!

Mille Porsild: We do try very hard to find names that fit each dog - and we work very carefully on not picking names that make a dog something we don't think is desirable. Like "Boreal" is a name I really like (Boreal Forest) but Boreal is kind of an angry "god" so we have not used that name :)

GoNorth! Education Basecamp: We are going to adjust the screen a bit so that it displays properly for everybody. If anyone is having trouble, please don't hesitate to call Education Basecamp: 612-625-8550

Mille Porsild: We most often have a name by 10-12 weeks old.. but all puppies respond to PUUUUUPPIIIIESSSSS

Mille Porsild: It even works when they get old - They still know what that means and associate it with something good :)

Mille Porsild: So something is up and you are not getting all my answers :) Greg asked me how the night sky looks in the Arctic

Mille Porsild: And my answer was: gorgeous!!!!

Mille Porsild: There is very little light pollution - like Nunavut is three times the size of Texas - or 1/4 the size of Australia

Mille Porsild: there are 28 communities

Mille Porsild: and less than 850 miles (1200 km) of roads (and not connecting any two communities)

Mille Porsild: So very little light to disturb your view of the dark night sky

Mille Porsild: it is amazing to see northern lights - it can be like someone turned the lights on...

Mille Porsild: and then come May it is 24 hour sunlight....

Mille Porsild: so pretty spectacular

Education Basecamp: From Mr Joseph's Class in Australia: How will you get everything to Baffin Island- road, plane or ?

Mille Porsild: There are no roads going to Nunavut... Actually there are not even really any deep ports in Nunavut and not on Baffin Island

Mille Porsild: So, we will be flying everything up there

Mille Porsild: First we will drive to our departure city in Canada - load onboard a plane

Mille Porsild: fly to Iqaluit

Mille Porsild: unload - and reload on a smaller plane and fly to the community -- and load the sleds to go :)

Woodbury, MN, USA: It must be hard to navigate when there are no landmarks. Do you then use a compass more? IS it really easy to use the strasugi? It seems technical!

Mille Porsild: Yes, we do check more often with the compass then. If we are two sleds traveling the back sled will point to the front if the person is getting off course (if that makes sense - it is easier to see "from the back")

Mille Porsild: We do use strasugi (that is the snow drifts formed by prevailing winds)

Mille Porsild: the dogs - like veteran Disko are excellent at using them once he gets what angle i want him to run at them

Mille Porsild: We also use the sun... Even the wind .. though obviously have to watch for the wind changing on us in the middle of the day!

Education Basecamp: Lourdes Hill College: Brisbane, Australia: Isabella: How do the dogs cope with all of the work?

Mille Porsild: Luckily the dogs love what they do. Else they simple could not do it - because they would not be able to cope with the conditions and the stress if it was not so native to them - and they were not so adapted to the work and environment

Mille Porsild: But that said, the greatest challenge and ones real job as a musher is to keep the team spirited and happy at the challenge

Mille Porsild: all that takes really - is affection and that you yourself is in a good spirit

Mille Porsild: you can not ever fool the dogs

Class E: Are you scared during storms?

Mille Porsild: Yes, at times I am scared during storms

Mille Porsild: The trick is to not think too much about the "bigger picture"

Mille Porsild: Don't take yourself outside the tent in your mind... Don't think about that you are only separated from the elements with a thin tent wall.. or that outside there is possibly nothing for hundreds of miles - by nothing I mean people or building for protection

Mille Porsild: I found the few times I was really scared because our tent were barely withholding the weather - that I will start singing to myself :)

Mille Porsild: (I am not a good singer)

Mille Porsild: And it is childhood songs - I guess that is comforting

Mille Porsild: When you are running the team in a storm - which we only do to the point where we decide it is no longer safe because the visibility is too bad - it is very very very tense

Mille Porsild: We have to stay very close - at times the weather is so bad we can not even see the lead dog in front, but we can see the sled behind us.. then we can still travel to a certain extend

Mille Porsild: It is just tense, because we have to be careful, constantly accessing the situation and making smart decisions. Remember what Aaron said: Safety first!

Jason: What's the coldest temperature you've been in

Mille Porsild: Actual coldest tem was minus 69 here in northern Minnesota :)

Mille Porsild: Coldest temp with a wind-chill was probably minutes some 50 below with a good breeze in Nunavut in 2004. That was chilly!

Rowan from mooloolah: what happens when a dog becomes sick? do you have a vet?

Mille Porsild: We do have a vet!

Mille Porsild: Brad who was at Expedition Basecamp helping out a few weeks ago - he is our Head Vet

Mille Porsild: But he is not going in the field with us. We have been taught over the years the most basic care - and Brad is on call 24 hours a day

Mille Porsild: But should something substantial happen

Mille Porsild: where it is not enough to let the Polar Husky rest or take days off on the sled

Mille Porsild: well, then we have to ship them out - just like we would ship ourselves out!

Jason: ok how is lipton i heard he is retired

Mille Porsild: He is so great you will not believe it! He is looooooving it up :)

Stef: how you select between puppies which eventually become part of the pack? (i.e. personality traits, etc.?)

Mille Porsild: Yes, it all comes down to personality and very much desire. I say that because a good team - a good musher - will find a role and a place for almost any personality. We all have our strengths. So, really it only comes down to the desire - that is not something you can teach or coach in the kind of conditions we run in

Mille Porsild: That is at times why dogs retire - they loose the "fire" to go in any sort of weather or tough condition, and then it is time to let them off duty!

Marnie Wagner: Will there ever be a "Go South?"

Mille Porsild: I would love that! Now, for right now, Polar Huskies are not allowed (no Huskies are) in Antarctica... So we can not go there.. I am not sure what other options we have "south" .. Any ideas? Hint: we also like to go where there are interesting cultures that we can learn from!

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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-

Tori (Lourdes Hill): How do you stay in touch in remote areas?

Mille Porsild: We use satellite communication equipment: We have two sat phones - a Iridium and a globalstar, which means they use two different sets of satellite. These are handheld phone (big ones)

Mille Porsild: Then we have a full scale sat system: Thrane and Thrane, which is high-speed phone and Internet hook-up - Same as what is used to transmit TV feeds from remote locations –

Mille Porsild: And we have an emergency transmitter - with a switch - that will send a signal and our location should we flip the switch for help. We obviously would only do this in the most dire situation as it would mean a rescue crew would do everything in their power to reach us.

Mille Porsild: Ok, on that note... I guess that is all the communication for tonight

Mille Porsild: It has been absolutely terrific to watch and then chat with you all - Fantastic questions!

Mille Porsild: Thank you :) And keep exploring!

Thanks!!

From all of us at Team GoNorth!, Thank You for joining us today!

Join us again next week on Wednesday March 18th at 10 AM CST for our third chat on the topic of Arctic Exploration.