

Written Summary

Name of student: Joey Flanagan

Grade: Seven

Project name: Eleven Day Blizzard in Iqaluit

School: Aqsarniit Ilinniarnvik

Describe your project: My project is about the eleven day blizzard in 1979.

Resources: How did you find your information?

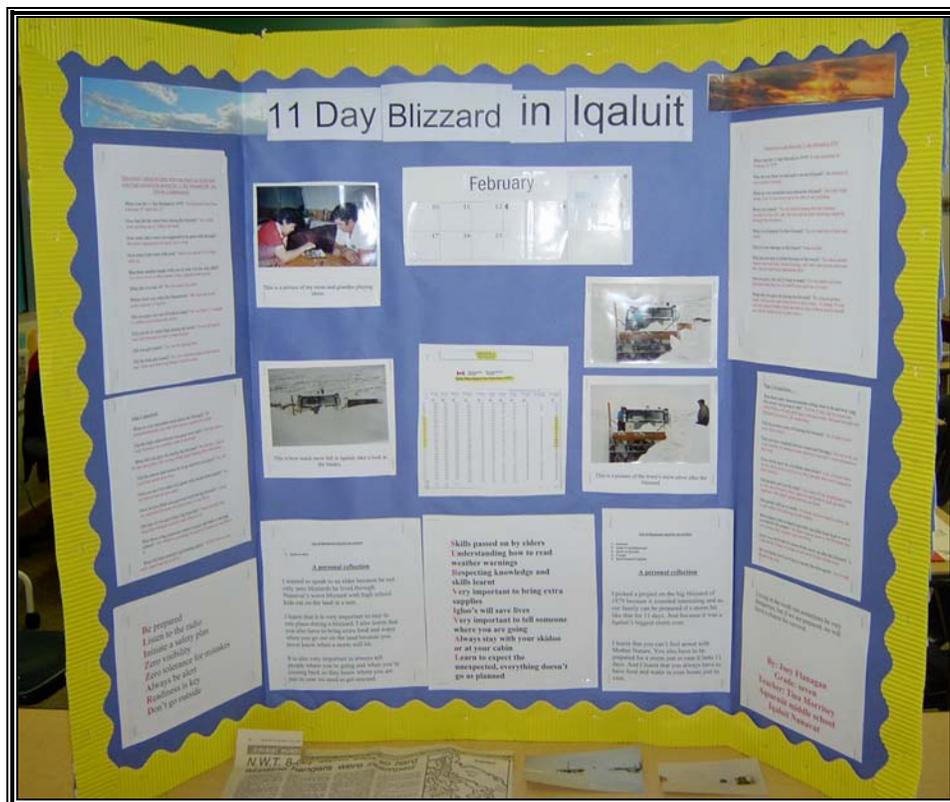
I went on the internet, on Environment Canada, and I talked to elders that were in the blizzard.

What did you find out as a result of your research?

I learnt that you can't fool around with Mother Nature and you have to stay in one spot during a big blizzard.

Describe your personal interest in the project and why you chose it?

I chose the 11 day blizzard because I thought that it would be interesting to learn about it.



Questions I asked an elder who was stuck out on the land with high school kids during the 11-day blizzard.

Mr. Joe Tikivik, Land Program

Q: When was the 11 day Blizzard in 1979?

A: The blizzard was from February 8th until the 21st.

Q: How fast did the wind blow during the blizzard?

A: The winds were gusting up to 120 km per hour.

Q: How many days were you supposed to be gone with the kids?

A: We were supposed to be gone for a week.

Q: How many kids were with you?

A: There were about 8 or 9 kids with us.

Q: Was there another leader with you or were you the only adult?

A: Yes. There were 2 other leaders: Aku, Adamie and myself.

Q: What did you stay in?

A: We all stayed in a tent.

Q: Where were you when the blizzard hit?

A: We were about 46 miles outside of Iqaluit.

Q: Did you run out of food or water?

A: No, because I caught 3 caribou before the storm.

Q: Did you try to come back during the storm?

A: No, we had to stay put. It was too bad outside.

Q: Did you get scared?

A: No, we all had to stay calm.

Q: Did the kids get scared?

A: No, we told them we all had to stay calm and everything would be fine.

Q: What do you remember most about the storm?

A: There was this guy who always peed in his pants.

Q: Did the high school know you were safe?

A: Nobody knew because we couldn't talk to anybody.

Q: What did you do during the blizzard?

A: We always had to go out and fix the tent because of the high winds.

Q: Did the search and rescue try to go out and save you guys?

A: No, not until the storm was over.

Q: Did you use a two way radio to speak to people in Iqaluit?

A: No, we never had radio.

Q: How do you think you survived the big blizzard?

A: Probably because we stayed in one spot.

Q: Did any of you get frost bit?

A: No, no one was allowed out of the tent.

Q: Was there a big ceremony when you got back to the school?

A: No, when we got back the parents thanked us and that was it.

Q: Were the kids scared to go hunting again?

A: No, but all the hunting trips from the high school where cancelled for a bit.

58 The GAZETTE, Montreal, Thurs., Mar. 1, 1979

CRISIS! HUNTING PARTY RAN OUT OF CIGARETTES AND HAD TO SMOKE TEA

N.W.T. 8-day storm blew so hard airplane hangars were swamped

By Gazette News Services

FROBISHER BAY, N.W.T. — It was so cold even the Inuit stayed home. Cut off from the rest of the world — and even from each other — this tiny settlement is still digging itself out from what one resident called the worst storm ever suffered by humans in North America.

The Inuit said they could not remember their elders talking about a worse storm.

For eight solid days, beginning with little warning, this isolated, sub-Arctic Baffin Island community of 2,500 was battered by winds of up to 70 miles per hour and cold reaching 50 degrees below zero Celsius.

Snowdrifts up to 40 feet high swamped homes, stores and even airplane hangars.

As many as 20 families were frozen out of their homes as the severe cold and wind overwhelmed heating systems, froze pipes and burst plumbing, putting many homes awash in what soon became frozen chunks of waste.

Frozen rock

Mayor Bryan Pearson, reviewing the storm's effect, said:

"There is no question. It is the worst storm in living memory. Frobisher Bay is almost 1,500 miles north of Montreal on Baffin Island, a 200,000-square-mile chunk of treeless, frozen rock.

The largest town in the eastern Canadian Arctic, Frobisher sits at the end of a long, narrow inlet that proved to be a dead end for British explorer Sir Martin Frobisher as he tried to find a Northwest Passage to the Orient, 401 years ago.

The inlet which ensnared Sir Martin's party and gave Frobisher Bay its life and its name almost proved its undoing.

Early last month, only a few hundred miles west of Frobisher Bay and as far south as Toronto, a high pressure system had locked in clear skies and bitter cold. This system acted as a backdrop to a storm that brewed in the Davis Straits off Greenland.

The storm whipped up high winds that picked up previously fallen snow

and ice from the rugged land and froze the strait which trapped Frobisher's party of explorers also trapped this storm, funneling the winds and snow on to the community at the north end of the bay.

On Feb. 8, the first day of the storm, some residents of Frobisher Bay ran out of water. Their homes have self-contained water and sewage systems serviced regularly by truck. These home owners did not worry. The storm couldn't be too bad or the radio would have warned about it.

"It sort of came up really fast," said Royal Canadian Mounted Police Sgt. Patrick Power, head of the Frobisher Bay post. "All of a sudden, bingo!"

On the second day of the storm, townfolk began to wonder why they hadn't been warned. Some were concerned about two groups of hunters who had left to go "out on the land" to seek caribou the morning before the storm broke.

But others didn't worry. The hunters were Inuit (Eskimo) adults. They would know how to survive for several nights.

Survival lesson

Three students from the high school who were with one of the hunting parties would have a good survival lesson.

Joe Tikvik, 43, an instructor at that school, was 60 miles away from Frobisher Bay when the six-man hunting party he was leading first saw the storm.

"I remembered later that he wasn't worried, despite the high winds and only an eight-by-10 tent for shelter.

"I thought it was only going to be overnight. Most storms in Frobisher only last one day."

On Day 3, the first homes began to freeze.

"Our house was built in 1950," said Des Miklos Jr. who manages the local hotel. In a storm such as this, Miklos said, "It's like a sieve." Three of the radiators froze.

"We had no water, no heat, we couldn't go outside," said his wife, Susan.

Then the town's power supply began cutting out. The high winds slipped feeder cables together on the hill near the Northern Canada Power Commission generating station, and large switches — like giant circuit breakers — began automatically switching off power to stop short circuits and overheating in the entire system.

Intermittently, but for a total of 40 minutes in sub-zero temperatures, the power was off in Frobisher Bay that Sunday.

If the power had failed altogether, it is unlikely Frobisher Bay could have survived what was in store in the week ahead. The town is not tied into any larger electrical grid. There is no other supply of energy. Evacuation would have been impossible with the airport shut, runways clogged, visibility zero and winds raging.

On Day 4, Mounties helped evacuate some of the families and took them to the hotel.

On Day 5, Des Miklos celebrated his 34th birthday while trying to manage a hotel with 73 emergency guests. There were eight people in several of the rooms.

Joe presided over a diminishing supply of food and water. One straggling guest from the south spent a small fortune on the phone calling his influential friends in Ottawa in an attempt to get armed forces help for the town.

'We became Chinese'

The hotel ran out of milk, then potatoes, then bread.

"We all became Chinese, said Susan Miklos. "Rice, rice and more rice."

Out on the land, Joe Tikvik, two other adults and three high school students spent Day 5 shoveling in their tent. Tikvik thought to himself, he said later, that he had never heard old Inuit talk of a storm of more than three days.

That morning the group ran out of gas for the small Coleman stove. By morning the stove, Tikvik was able to burn fuel from one of the party's useless snowmobiles. "The smell, the oil mixed with the gas, was terrible."

They ate pieces of frozen, raw meat cut from one of the five caribou they had killed before the storm. They melted snow to make tea. It was not unlike the meals eaten by Inuit people 12,000 years ago.

"There was nothing like bread, biscuits or sardines," said Tikvik. He made up games to occupy the students. Later on Day 5, a major crisis loomed in the tent — the group had run out of cigarettes.

"We tried smoking some of the tea we had," Tikvik said. "It was bad, very bad."

That night, for the first time, the stove stayed on all night, and the men took turns staying awake to watch the fire.

Day 6 began the same. But that evening, Joe Tikvik saw the moon and the stars for the first time in almost a week.

In Montreal, Lorne Sinclair, manager of the only bank in Frobisher Bay, was wondering if he would ever get back to his branch. Like hundreds of other northerners who live and work in the eastern Arctic, Sinclair had been trapped in the south by the storm.

For Sinclair and his wife, Judy, the storm meant the end of their commitment to Frobisher Bay. After 18 months of life in the north working for the Royal Bank of Canada, Sinclair negotiated himself a transfer while he was in Montreal.

On Day 7 Joe Tikvik and his group made a few miles toward Frobisher Bay but were forced to stop. The visibility was "about eight feet."

"We had to stop and follow the trail of their snowmobile to find them," he said. The men came upon a place where the snow was of the right consistency to build an igloo. Inside the snowhouse they altered another Coleman stove to burn snowmobile fuel. The first had broken.

They had run out of tea and abandoned their tent in the snow. They had only hot water to drink as they waited on Day 8.

On Saturday, Feb. 17, after eight days of non-stop storm, the day dawned clear and quiet.

"It was a beautiful day," said Des Miklos. The hunters returned home. The town breathed a huge sigh of relief.

Sinclair issued a radio announcement that he would cash checks and accept deposits operating out of his satchel.

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had operated without a bank for nearly two weeks, and in the bank itself the lubricants in the vault mechanism had frozen solid.

When Lorne Sinclair made it back to Frobisher Bay, he carried with him a satchel containing 150,000. The town

Saskatchewan Tory leader attacked over innuendo

REGINA — (CP) — Premier Allan Blakeney said yesterday a charge that a member of the Saskatchewan cabinet is a homosexual is false and the levelling of it by Opposition Leader Dick Collier is "contemptable."

Blakeney said the Progressive Conservatives have a history of making unsubstantiated allegations and the latest adumbrated by Collier follows the same pattern.

Blakeney was commenting at a news conference after the Progressive Conservative leader raising the issue in the legislature Tuesday.

Collier quoted from a Saskatchewan news report and called on Blakeney to either refute the story, investigate it, or have any homosexual cabinet minister admit to his sexual orientation.

Newspaper article about the 11 day blizzard in Nunavut's capital



Pictures of a city snow plow after the big blizzard

Acrostic Poem about Blizzards

Be prepared
Listen to the radio
Initiate a safety plan
Zero visibility
Zero tolerance for mistakes
Always be alert
Readiness is key
Don't go outside



Two pictures of the roads in Iqaluit after the big blizzard.

List of resources I used for my project

1. Spoke to elder Joe Tikivik

A personal reflection

I wanted to speak to an elder because he had not only seen blizzards, he lived through Nunavut's worst blizzard with the high school kids out on the land with a tent.

I learnt that it is very important to stay in one place during a blizzard. I also learnt that you also have to bring extra food and water when you go out on the land because you never know when a storm will hit.

It is also very important to always tell people where you're going and when you're coming back so they know where you are just in case we need to get rescued.



A picture of snow plows by the airport after the blizzard.



A picture of a city snow plow cleaning my grandparents' driveway.

Questions I asked my grandmother, Ann Hanson, about the 11-day blizzard.

Q: When was the 11 day blizzard in 1979?

A: It was some time in February.

Q: Why do you think we had such a severe blizzard?

A: I believe it was a course of nature.

Q: What do you remember most about the blizzard?

A: The really high winds and how it was scary not to see out of your window.

Q: Where you scared?

A: Yes, I was scared that the chimney would come off, and she was scared that things would go flying through the window.

Q: Were you prepared for the blizzard?

A: Yes, we had lots of food and water.

Q: Did it do any damage to your house?

A: Nope luckily.

Q: Was any one hurt or killed during the blizzard?

A: Yes three people were lost while they were hunting, and only one person survived. Mr. Duvall and Epa Ishuluktak died.

Q: Did you run out of food or water?

A: No, we didn't. We were prepared and had lots of sealift food and water.

Q: What did you do during the blizzard?

A: We played games, read, did puzzles and learnt how to play chess. A young 10 year old boy named Bobby Barrieau had to stay with us and he taught our whole family how to play chess.

Q: Were there radio announcements telling what to do and how long this storm was going to last?

A: Yes, but it was the same every day: blizzard today, blizzard tonight blizzard tomorrow, all week long.

Q: Did the power come off during the blizzard?

A: No, it didn't but I don't know how.

Q: Did you have trucked service (water and sewage)?

A: No, not at all. No trucks were on the road. The roads where filled with snow.

Q: How much snow do you think came down?

A: Lots of snow came down. There where some people even trapped in their houses

Q: Did people call for help?

A: Yes some of our neighbors started to run out of food and water so they came to our house. We didn't mind sharing our food.

Q: Did people still go to work?

A: No, the roads where too bad to go anywhere.

Q: Were planes able to land with fresh food or was it too bad for planes to land?

A: No, there was no plane. It was too bad we couldn't see anything.

Q: How long did it take for the whole town to clean up the snow?

A: It took about 10 days to clear the whole town.

Q: Do you think we will ever have a blizzard like that again?

A: Yes, it may happen again.

Acrostic Poem about what I learned from my interview with my grandmother.

Skills passed on by the elders

Understanding how to read the weather

Respecting knowledge and skills learnt
Very important to bring extra supplies out on the land
Igloos will save lives
Very important to tell people where you going
Always stay with your ski-doo or boat
Learn to expect the unexpected, everything doesn't go as planned

List of resources I used for my project

1. Spoke to my grandmother (Ann Hanson)
2. Spoke to my mother (Koovian Flanagan)
3. Environment Canada

http://www.climate.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/climateData/dailydata_e.html?timeframe=2&Prov=CA&StationID=1758&Year=1979&Month=2&Day=28

A personal reflection

I picked a project on the big blizzard of 1979 because it sounded interesting and so our family can be prepared if a storm hits again for 11 days. I also picked it because it was the biggest blizzard in Iqaluit.

I learnt that you can't fool around with Mother Nature. You also have to be prepared for a storm just in case it lasts 11 days. I learnt that you also have to have food and water in your house just in case. Living in the North can sometimes be dangerous, but if you are prepared, you will have a chance of survival.



A picture of a neighbor's house that was full with snow.