

UNCLOS Continental Shelf Project – Arctic Ocean – Update #1



(March 2- 2009)

Monday, March 02, 2009:

AM:

We're in Resolute now, at the Polar Continental Shelf Project base, waiting in Limbo on our way to Eureka. We got here late on Saturday night, but without any delays enroute. However, once again, Jim Wheedon has lost some of his luggage in the Arctic.

Friday, we all left Burlington in a Dodge van and found out why it's called the "Sprinter" – because it only barely made it to Ottawa without running out of fuel.

We hadn't planed to spend two nights in Resolute, but we ended up spending all day yesterday going over some equipment that was here, mostly new stuff. There is a new Kubota Tractor with an ill-fitting snow blower, the same rental Honda generator we had problems with last year and despite asking the outfitter to service the generator it still has the same dead battery as when we returned it in May, two new Herman Nelson heaters that have summer wheel bearing grease which means wheels do not turn at 40 below, and three new Yanmar generators that all are running poorly and backfiring.



Arriving Resolute -

Photo by Mike Black

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PM:

We took off from Resolute at 9 and were back in less than an hour with the pilot's report of "electrical trouble". We were in the air again before noon and got to Eureka after an uneventful 2 hour flight in a De Havilland DHC-6 Twin Otter.



Dressed for the Flight.

Photo by Mike Black

Eureka is an Environment Canada weather station located on Ellesmere Island, Latitude 79° 59' North. There are modern accommodations and a cafeteria as well as heated workshops at the weather station which is located on the north shore of Slidre Fjord, about 1 mile from the air strip where our gear is stored.

We find Eureka with less snow than last year, and a shortage of duct tape to repair the leaking fresh water pipe at the weather station. Being unable to pump potable water is serious - so we borrowed a flashlight, propane torch, and bolt cutters, and were able to crack open our containers, burrow through the mass of boxes and gear, and, find duct tape - thereby, bringing relief to the tape situation. The Canadian Hydrographic Service and Red Green's favourite tool - duct tape - to the rescue. Being too dark for further heroics, we called it a night.



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A big part of the difficulty in preparing for a job like this is the fact that most “off the shelf” equipment isn’t made to be serviceable in the field. It often requires manuals, special tools, parts, and, often, specialized training or experience. Up here, we need things to just “work” out of the box. Also, the effects of the extreme environment can often make the simplest of tasks maddeningly difficult. All you want to do is pump a few



litres of fuel from one drum to another but the hose is frozen and twisted and might break off if you try to straighten it, the diaphragm of the pump is so stiff that it creaks and groans with each stroke, threatening to tear like last time, and it takes all your strength to hold the pump still, and then the plastic pick-up pipe snaps off and falls into the drum.

Frost on Containers

Photo by Mike Black