

BLOGS NOSEY PARKER

Archive for December 7th, 2009
The Canadian Arctic and Climate Change

alan.parker - December 7th, 2009



I love this photo by Jim Brandenburg of an Arctic wolf and her cubs. Photographer and environmentalist Brandenburg has covered the world for National Geographic magazine over the past three decades and has published probably a dozen best-selling books of his photographs, but he has a special love for the Arctic and for wolves. This photo, I believe, is from his book *White Wolf*. There's another terrific photo of the two cubs from this photo howling their wolf song to the sky, but I can't find a high-quality version of it. Below is a small image of the original photo copied from a poster. Check out Jim's website at jimbrandenburg.com and his blog at jimbrandenburg.blogspot.com



So we have Greenpeaceniks hanging from the Parliament Buildings like so many Christmas ornaments; leading scientists accused of cooking the books (so to speak) on climate-change stats; politicians blowing huge, sulphurous clouds of hot air in Copenhagen; and the Toronto Star marking the occasion by producing The World's Most Boring Front Page yesterday (well, did you read all 400,000 words in that lead story?).

Where do we turn for facts in all this? Who can we trust? Whose agenda is closest to the intersection of reality and sustainability?

I certainly don't have the answers, but I've found an obscure, homemade website that is jam-packed with easily digestible information, lots of Arctic personal-experience stories and a straight-forward approach to the environmental issues facing Canada and the world.

I can't say for 100% who has produced the website, but I think it is the work of scientist and explorer Jean van Berkel, who used to be (maybe still is, for all I know) a professor at University of Toronto.

While he was at U of T in the 1980s, van Berkel led five geological expeditions (1982, 1983, 1984, 1988, 1989) to the Arctic — specifically Axel Heiberg Island and Ellesmere Island.

Since then he's travelled the world, hiked through the Himalayas, worked for Shell International Exploration and Production (don't worry, he's not fronting for the oil companies), and returned to the Canadian North on private expeditions.

Van Berkel has a genuine love for the Arctic and real concerns about what's happening there (and what's happening here that affects there). He has the scientific background and resources to pull together relevant information and the natural ability of a storyteller-teacher to convey that information (some of which is very complex) in a way that even an uninformed dilettante like me can comprehend.

His web book of Arctic pieces is called *The Arctic: Remnants of a natural but dynamic world*.

And here's the link to it.

The site doesn't have a super-sexy address or anything: It's just there, part of a larger www.treks.org presence that explores the world closeup and at ground level.

Check it out and see if you find it as useful as I do. We need all the clarity we can get in this age of information — and disinformation — overload.

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Al Parker



Veteran journalist Alan Parker will be going behind the red velvet rope and yellow police tape to find out what's really going on from the people who make, shape, spin, report and transform the news.

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