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by **Carolyn Sloan**

Northern News Services

Published Tuesday, August 26, 2008

KIMMIRUT/LAKE HARBOUR - Jutai Padluq made a face somewhere between a grimace and an expression of sheer delight as he reached into a bag of lard meant to simulate animal blubber.

The Kimmirut youth was one of 25 kids, ages seven to 13, who experienced the wonders of the living world as participants of an Actua science camp held in Katannilik Park this summer.

Based on the charitable organization's vision of inspiring youth through hands-on learning, the camp brought together Inuit Qaujimjatuqangit (IQ) and modern science through a series of workshops with both community elders and science instructors.

For Tommy Akavak, co-ordinator for Katannilik Park, the annual camp is a treasured opportunity to be out on the land working with kids and to learn from the elders in his community.

Often the elders can apply traditional knowledge and observations to issues of modern science.

"They talk about global warming too and the elders talk about the differences," said Akavak. "They talked about how the old Inuit graves face North to where the sun sets, but the sun sets now further to the right... That was an excellent example."



Neevee Aningmiuq plays with her magnifying glass at a science camp in Kimmirut. The kids at the camp used the magnifiers to get a closer look at the living world around them. - photo courtesy of Actua, Analise Saely

In another exercise, the kids learned how to navigate with GPS units and were then given a lesson in traditional navigation using inuksuit.

"The batteries won't die on those!" said camp instructor Analise Saely of inuksuit. "There are lots of opportunities for these ideas to be played out in the traditional way. The need to have healthy soil, the way the seasons work (for example), ties back to the traditional knowledge that the elders were talking about."

Most of all, she loves seeing how the kids respond to such investigations of the world around them, whether it's looking at flowers through a field microscope or learning how women gave birth out on the land.


"I've worked with kids for years," said Saely. "The Nunavut kids are incredibly special and unique. There's just so much excitement and joy and vibrancy and thirst to learn."

The Kimmirut camp was just one of many Actua programs delivered throughout Nunavut this summer. It was run in partnership with Nunavut Parks with funding from GE Canada, Synapse-CIHR Youth Connection, Suncor Energy Foundation, NSERC, Honda Canada Foundation and Shell Canada.



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