

Iqaluit's warm, welcoming vibe is still alive, former resident learns

Granddaughter of Frobisher Inn founders discovers Nunavut's capital city is home

By Lyla Miklos

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Lyla Miklos poses at the Sylvia Grinnell Territorial Park lookout point as she captures a view of the waterfalls from what she called her "Mountain" when she was a child growing up in Iqaluit. Miklos, whose grandparents founded the Frobisher Inn hotel, returned in 2024 to the city where she grew up. (Photo courtesy of Lyla Miklos)

*When I think of Home
I think of a place
Where there's love overflowing
I wish I was home
I wish I was back there*

With the things I've been knowing

– Lyrics from the song *Home from the Broadway musical The Wiz*, by Charlie Smalls

In August 2024, I had the joy of visiting my hometown and my birthplace of Iqaluit for the first time in more than 30 years.

In the late 1960s, my grandparents Dezső and Katalin Miklós founded the Frobisher Inn.

Later, my mother Susan and my father Dez met, married and had four children, all born on Baffin Island: Lyla, Csaba, Erin and Mihaly.

We moved “down south” in 1982. My grandparents retired and sold the family business in the mid-1980s, which was when I last came up for a visit.



Lyla Miklos, whose grandparents founded the Frobisher Inn, arrives at the Iqaluit airport for the first time in more than 30 years on Aug. 1, 2024. When she shared this picture on her social media channels, she said, “Iqaluit I am in you.” (Photo courtesy of Lyla Miklos)

The moment that summed up the essence of my visit to Iqaluit was when I met with the Frobisher Inn's Ted Bailey for coffee. He gave me heck for not telling him sooner that I was in town, so he and his wife Emily could have me over for dinner.

“All the elders in town told me you were here, but you hadn't checked in to any hotels, so I didn't believe them.”

I was actually crashing at a friend's place. Even funnier, I kept running into people who remembered babysitting me and my siblings, including CBC North's Eva Michael. Yes, I was officially in a small town.

What was truly comforting was that despite the many changes to the city, the warm welcoming vibe I remember from my childhood was still very much alive.

Yes, there was a lot of new housing, schools, restaurants, businesses and infrastructure. But in the end, the bones of Iqaluit hadn't changed.

There was also sadness. All the abandoned and boarded-up homes in the centre of town. My dad took me trick-or-treating in my parka with my Wonder Woman mask on to these homes when I was a kid. It was heartbreaking to see, especially knowing Iqaluit's painful housing crisis.

Visiting my mother's grave at the Iqaluit cemetery was an adventure. I found her grave, eventually. Although I felt like Indiana Jones trying to uncover the secret hiding place of a holy relic, as her gravestone was completely covered over in wildflowers.

My mother converted from Catholic to Jehovah's Witness after meeting a missionary in Iqaluit. She would have been thrilled to see a Kingdom Hall in town. My mother took my brothers and I door to door with her, Watchtower magazines in hand, when we were kids.

Along with the iconic igloo-shaped Anglican church in the centre of town, Iqaluit is now also home to a mosque, along with many other places of worship.



The Frobisher Inn, as it appears in 2024, was founded by Dezső and Katalin Miklós in the 1960s. Their granddaughter returned to Iqaluit in the summer of 2024 to discover a lot has changed since she was last there in the 1980s, but the "vibe" is still the same. (Photo by Lyla Miklos)

Iqaluit has become a far more racially diverse community reflecting the broader diversity of our country.

Even nicer to see were all the rainbow flags all over the city, which welcomed Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ visitors and residents. I just missed out on Iqaluit's Pride picnic during my visit.

Iqaluit is a slice of heaven here on Earth, with stunning landscapes in every direction. Something I took for granted as a child. I told

my hosts that we had to go and visit my childhood “mountain” I used to climb to look at the waterfalls.

They thought I had misremembered something, but we found my “mountain.” It is now the lookout point at Sylvia Grinnell Park.

I can't wait to come back home again. Hopefully, it won't be another 30 years before my next visit.

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