

Sometimes it is hard for me to be in college because no one in my family encourages me to continue my education.

When I arrived in Montreal, I didn't expect life to be very different from my community back home. The weather is a lot warmer and streets and buildings are everywhere. Traffic lights were new to me. At first I didn't know which lights represent what. Fortunately, I soon became adapted to this new environment.

When I haven't been home for a while, I crave a nice frozen arctic char and caribou meat. I sometimes feel as if I haven't eaten properly if I haven't eaten Inuit food. Imagine you're stranded on a small island somewhere on Hudson Bay. You would crave a hot meal of steak, and baked potatoes, and a nice hot bath. It's like that for me, except I'm in a big crowded city where I can't fish or hunt.

My daily life is totally different down south, too. First thing in the morning, I take my son, Andrew, who is two years old, to the day-care, and from the day-care I commute to the college by bus. When my day ends at school, I do my assignments before I pick up Andrew from the day-care. In the evening, I finish my remaining home work when my son is asleep, trying to finish what I have to do before another big assignment is due.

My great-great grandmother lived in seal skin tents and struggled to survive. My grandmother saw the changes when the Europeans came to the Arctic. Now, I'm facing different challenges—challenges that didn't exist during my great grandmother's time. I struggle to make good grades and raise my child at the same time. Using my ancestors' will to survive, I think I can get my degree.

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Patti Flather and family

PATTI FLATHER

Winter Solstice for Housewife/Woman/ Mother/Other

After eight and
still dark when
Erin climbs in
asks, is Sophie finished eating?
yes, you can cuddle then
fall back to sleep because
nowhere to be by
eight-thirty or
nine those
times when
others
wage-earners are
commanded to appear
for duty
after nine and
dawn light trickles in
ahhh
after ten and
finally up for
pink clouds blue sky sunrise at
ten after ten to
be exact like it says
in today's Whitehorse Star
so just five hours and
twenty-seven minutes of
daylight before
dusk
dark
night
the kind of day to
cut some branches of
wild rose hips and
northern sage then
light a candle to
celebrate the
return of
light

Patti Flather is a writer who has lived in Whitehorse since 1988. She currently runs a freelance journalism business and writes plays, poetry and short fiction.