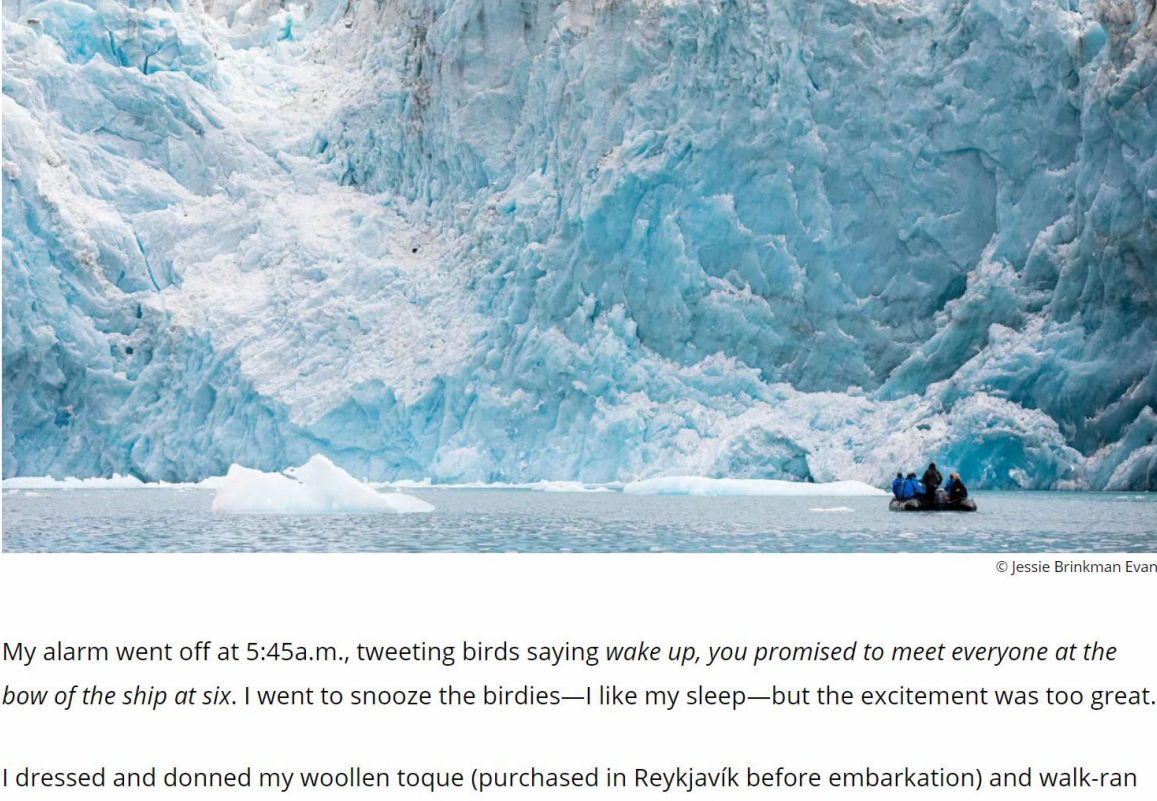


Connecting to People and Place in Iceland and Greenland

It not just the beauty of Greenland's majestic fjords and icebergs that will strike you—experiencing the history, wildlife, culture, and geology of these remarkable places firsthand will teach you more about yourself and our world than you can imagine.

By **Amy van den Berg** | June 22, 2020

Related expedition: [Iceland to Greenland: In the Wake of the Vikings](#)

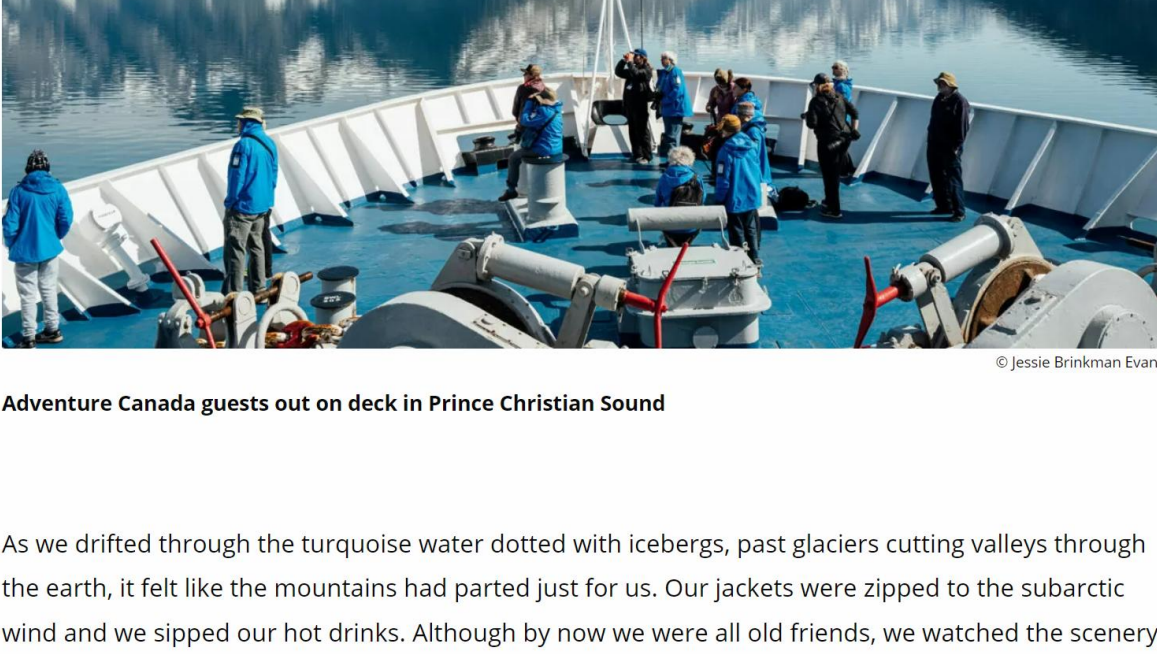


© Jessie Brinkman Evans

My alarm went off at 5:45a.m., tweeting birds saying *wake up, you promised to meet everyone at the bow of the ship at six*. I went to snooze the birdies—I like my sleep—but the excitement was too great.

I dressed and donned my woollen toque (purchased in Reykjavik before embarkation) and walk-ran to the fore deck, grabbing a coffee from the ship's Compass Club along the way.

I joined the small group that had gathered at the rail to watch the *Ocean Endeavour* pull into Prince Christian Sound, a narrow fjord system located on the southern tip of Greenland.



© Jessie Brinkman Evans

Adventure Canada guests out on deck in Prince Christian Sound

As we drifted through the turquoise water dotted with icebergs, past glaciers cutting valleys through the earth, it felt like the mountains had parted just for us. Our jackets were zipped to the subarctic wind and we sipped our hot drinks. Although by now we were all old friends, we watched the scenery unfold in silence.

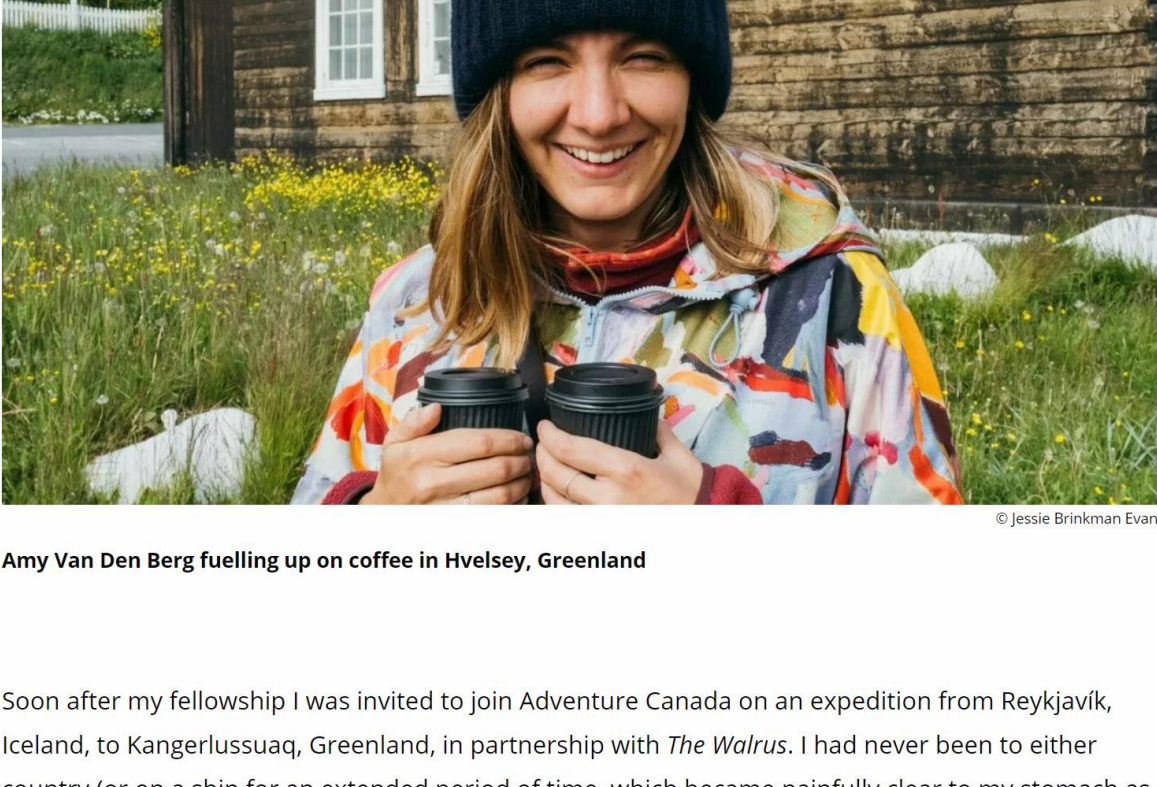
It was day five on Adventure Canada's Iceland to Greenland: In the Wake of the Vikings expedition, and each day had been filled to the brim with moments like this one. Exploring this remote corner of the world, especially by ship, each second was fleeting and precious, and I quickly learned to be mentally present.

As memories do, since returning to the city and falling into the old patterns of life, my days on the expedition have already begun to blend together, but clearly in my mind is a feeling of comfort, wonder, and a never-ending thirst for the profound.

Yet it was our excursions on the Zodiac boats to land and into the corners of various fjords, where we skirted the edges of our understanding of the world around us.

I was the Adventure Canada Fellow at *The Walrus* magazine this past year. From May to June I joined two other recent journalism graduates at the *Walrus* office in Toronto, and participated in editorial meetings, fact-checked print and web pieces, and became familiar with the intensive process of producing a national magazine.

The Walrus helped me grow more confident as a journalist. The foundation and magazine values education and aims to provoke new thinking, and by the time my fellowship came to an end I had learned what makes a good story: it is not only which stories are published, but the quality of the reporting, and what value they have to the reader and to conversations about issues that are important to Canadians.



© Jessie Brinkman Evans

Amy Van Den Berg fuelling up on coffee in Hvalsey, Greenland

Soon after my fellowship I was invited to join Adventure Canada on an expedition from Reykjavik, Iceland, to Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, in partnership with *The Walrus*. I had never been to either country (or on a ship for an extended period of time, which became painfully clear to my stomach as we hit rough seas), and I was swiftly thrown into another world.

The adventures on the 11-day voyage were unceasing. On board, as we travelled from one spot to the next, our days were filled with presentations, workshops, games, competitions, performances, and various social gatherings.

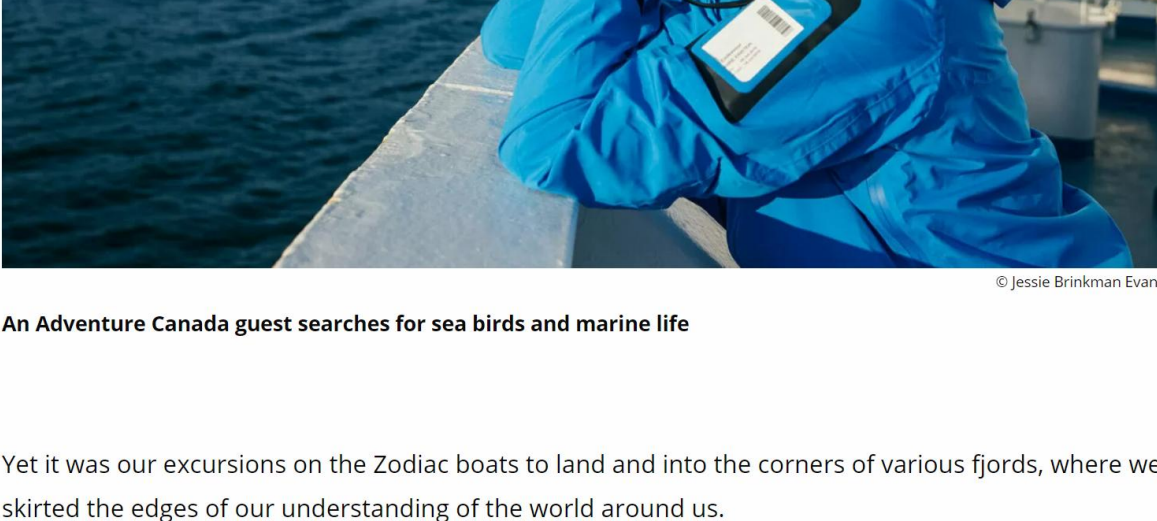


© Jessie Brinkman Evans

Onboard presentations by expert expedition staff are designed to deepen your knowledge and connect guests with the places we visit

We learned about Minke Whales from marine biologist Ursula Tschertter, archaeology and the history of Greenland from Callum Thomson, the basics of drawing with Rob Saley, and tasted seal blubber with our Cultural Ambassadors Nive Nielsen and Ashley Kilabuk-Savard.

We also spent much time on deck, eyes glued to binoculars as we identified sea birds and marine life, and enjoyed the view from the ship while getting to know one another.

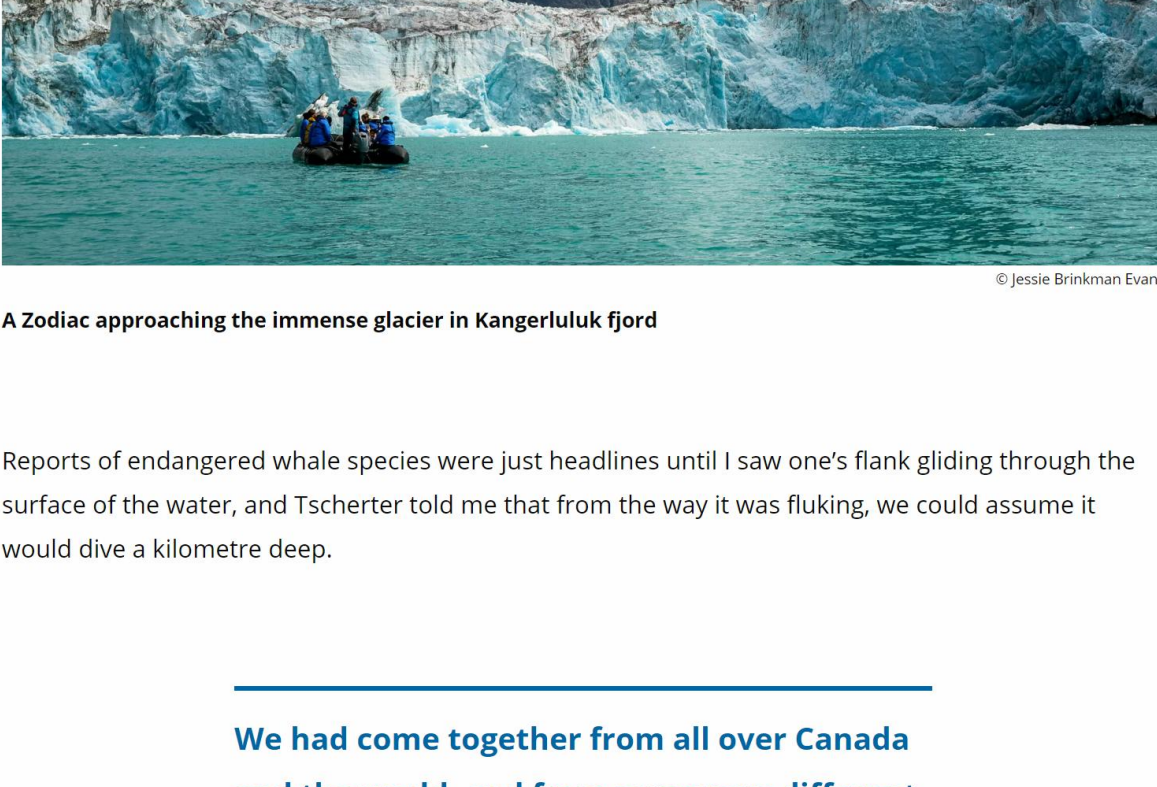


© Jessie Brinkman Evans

An Adventure Canada guest searches for sea birds and marine life

Yet it was our excursions on the Zodiac boats to land and into the corners of various fjords, where we skirted the edges of our understanding of the world around us.

I only conceived the true immensity of a glacier as we bobbed in a Zodiac at the base of the 500-foot icy wall in Kangerluluk Fjord. It was only when I saw a farmer's field hug the edges of a Norse ruin in Qassarsuk that I understood a community's connection to history and tourism.



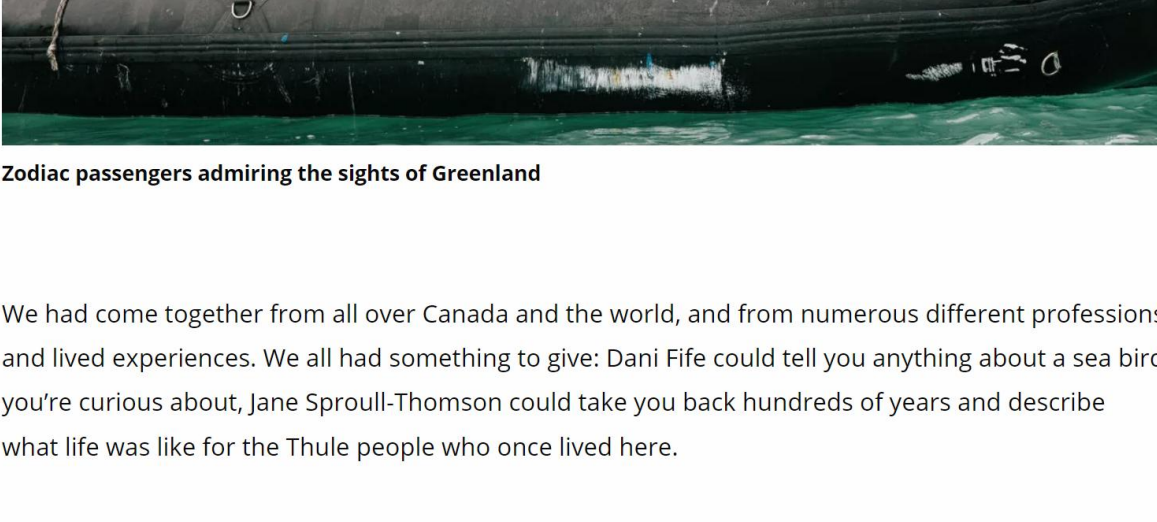
© Jessie Brinkman Evans

A Zodiac approaching the immense glacier in Kangerluluk fjord

Reports of endangered whale species were just headlines until I saw one's flank gliding through the surface of the water, and Tschertter told me that from the way it was fluking, we could assume it would dive a kilometre deep.

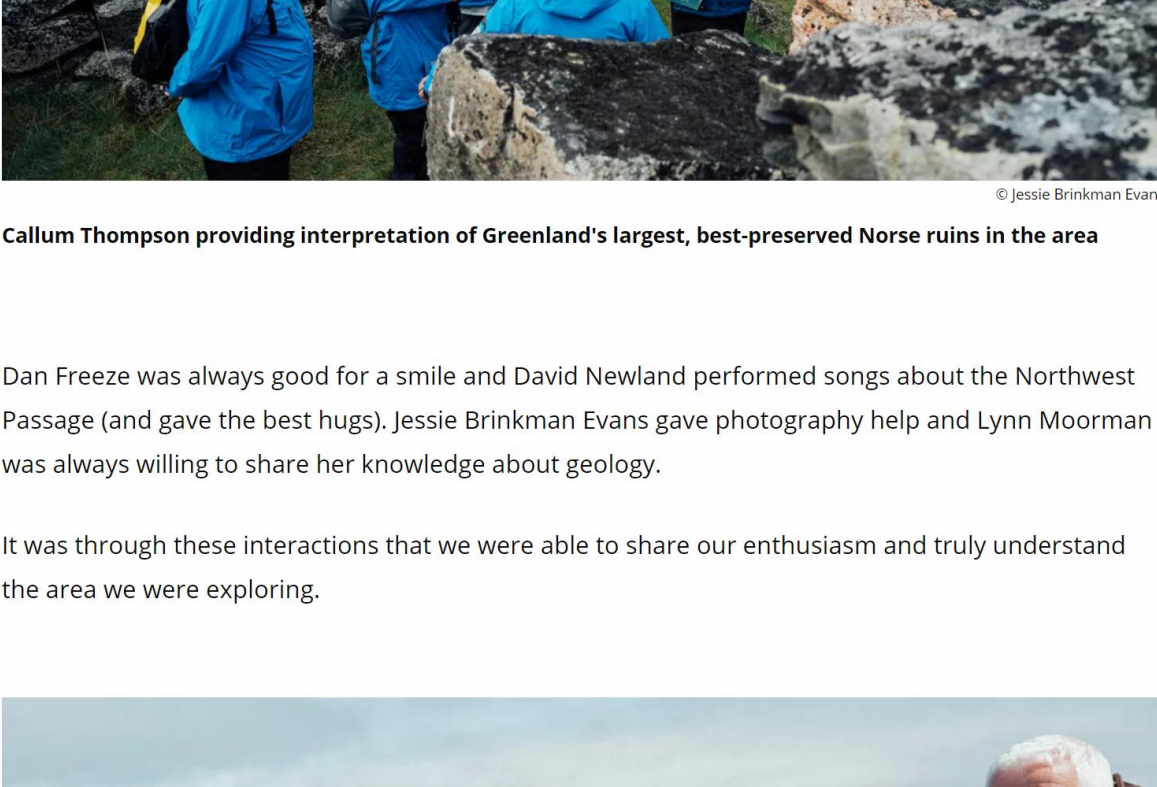
We had come together from all over Canada and the world, and from numerous different professions and lived experiences.

Most incredible were the conversations that were happening all around me. After only a couple of days, proximity to one another and our shared excitement about the ever-changing environments we were visiting created a beautiful space for connection.



Zodiac passengers admiring the sights of Greenland

We had come together from all over Canada and the world, and from numerous different professions and lived experiences. We all had something to give: Dani Fife could tell you anything about a sea bird you're curious about, Jane Spruill-Thomson could take you back hundreds of years and describe what life was like for the Thule people who once lived here.

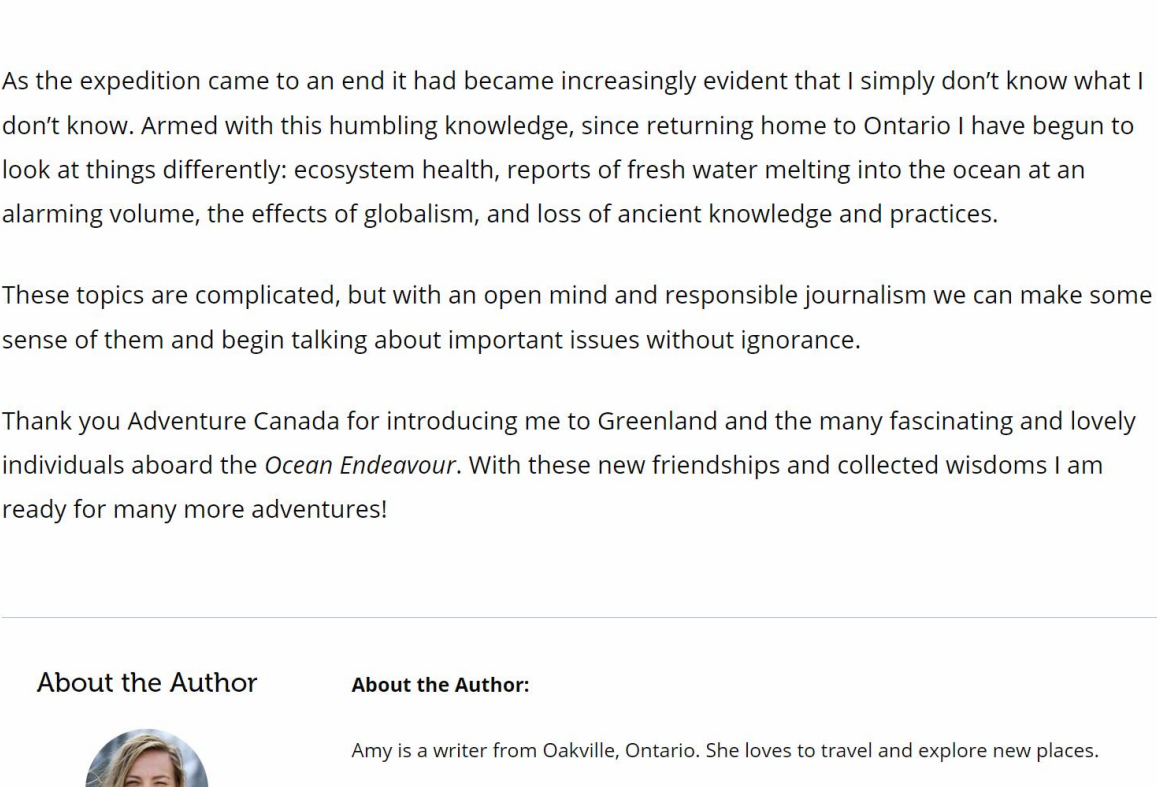


© Jessie Brinkman Evans

Callum Thomson providing interpretation of Greenland's largest, best-preserved Norse ruins in the area

Dan Freeze was always good for a smile and David Newland performed songs about the Northwest Passage (and gave the best hugs). Jessie Brinkman Evans gave photography help and Lynn Moorman was always willing to share her knowledge about geology.

It was through these interactions that we were able to share our enthusiasm and truly understand the area we were exploring.



© Jessie Brinkman Evans

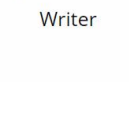
Naturalist Krista Gooderham and happy guests exploring by Zodiac

As the expedition came to an end it had become increasingly evident that I simply don't know what I don't know. Armed with this humbling knowledge, since returning home to Ontario I have begun to look at things differently: ecosystem health, reports of fresh water melting into the ocean at an alarming volume, the effects of globalism, and loss of ancient knowledge and practices.

These topics are complicated, but with an open mind and responsible journalism we can make some sense of them and begin talking about important issues without ignorance.

Thank you Adventure Canada for introducing me to Greenland and the many fascinating and lovely individuals aboard the *Ocean Endeavour*. With these new friendships and collected wisdoms I am ready for many more adventures!

About the Author



Amy van den Berg

Writer

About the Author:

Amy is a writer from Oakville, Ontario. She loves to travel and explore new places.

She has an undergrad in international development and a master's degree in journalism, and has lived in Banff, Alberta, and Newcastle, Australia (despite being an awful skier and surfer).

You can find her published work in *The Walrus*, *Broadview* magazine, and *This Magazine*.

[Visit her website to learn more.](#)