

## Size of settlement and local manners

I am visiting Uummannaq. A small, lovely town far north of Greenland.

On this quiet Sunday in Uummannaq the summer weather is enjoyed. Young people are hanging out in front of the grill bar down by the harbour. The icy, smooth fiord shows that there is no wind. Many go for a quiet walk without any real goal. The lovely summer weather enjoyed to perfectly.

I am a stranger in town. With my camera available I go for a walk to maintain the atmosphere of this beautiful town beneath the characteristic heart-shaped Uummannaq Mountain. At one point I pass an older man. My big city manners do I friendly nod my head. But the older man stops in front of me and asks: "Who are you?"

This made me think about the correlation between size of towns and the way in which we pay attention to and greet each other. When a town reaches a certain size, the personal greetings like "good morning", "hello" and "good evening" disappears. Either we pay no attention to each other, or it turns into a small nod. It seems a little poor - but many like to hide themselves in the big city.

In the small towns on the coast in Greenland, the people greet each other naturally. In Qaqortoq where I now live, I know not many yet, but everyone I meet in the morning on the way to work, greets friendly "good morning". Every time I think the person in the dark must be someone I

know. Why else greet kindly on me? But no, so they do in this small town in South Greenland.

I shall really make my effort to say "good morning" when I am lost in thoughts, be as quick as I can down to my workplace. It starts to work, but the other day it went wrong. I have been practicing so much to say "good morning", so when I met a person an evening, who murmured a greeting as he passed me, I came automatically to say "good morning" - the time was probably eight in the evening.

In the very small settlements in North Greenland, the population is not so used to see Europeans. They live in isolated settlements that may have less than fifty inhabitants. Here are strangers something that really should be received. Many years ago I drove by dog sled to a settlement here in the former Uummannaq Municipality.

The children had seen the sledges come from afar, and they had run out on the ice to welcome the strangers. As we drove the last hundred meters to the settlement, they hung onto the sledges, while they inter-gestured and discussed in Greenlandic. I did not understand, what they said, but it was obviously me they were discussing. I felt like an important guest who came to visit until the sledge driver told me that they were commenting that I as a European had this big nose.



*Uummannaq, June 2007*