

# Tuktuk

## Tundra Tale



by Robin Currie



illustrated by Phyllis Saroff





# Tuktuk

Tundra Tale

As the sun begins to set, arctic animals scurry to prepare for the dark, cold winter. Tuktuk the collared lemming is almost ready for the long winter night—all he needs is warm fur to line his nest. When one furry kamik (boot) slips off an Inuit driver's sled, Tuktuk is in luck! But as he drags it home, Putak the polar bear, Aput the arctic fox, and Masak the caribou eye this little lemming's prize and want it for their own. Tuktuk thinks fast, but can he outwit the other animals and convince them that one furry kamik is no good for anyone bigger than a lemming?



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Thanks to Julie Buehler, wildlife educator in Alaska, for verifying the accuracy of the information in this book.

The For Creative Minds following the story includes

- Polar Seasons
- Arctic Skies
- Arctic Vocabulary
- Life in the Cold: Animal Fun Facts

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Former librarian **Robin Currie** grew up in an age when librarians still had card catalogs. Her own struggles with spelling (from dyslexia) stifled her early attempts at writing. Since working first on an electric typewriter with autocorrect and later on computers with spell-check, Robin has authored more than two dozen books, including *Rainbows and Ice Cream: Storytimes About Things Kids Like* (ILA Quality Time Award), *The Baby Bible Storybook*, and *Baby Bible Stories about Jesus*. Robin and her husband enjoy five grandchildren and their cat, Hairy Potter. Visit her website at [robincurrie.net](http://robincurrie.net).

Since childhood, **Phyllis Saroff** has brought together her loves of science and art. In addition to *Tuktuk: Tundra Tale* and *Sounds of the Savanna* for Arbordale, Phyllis has illustrated nonfiction books about the natural world such as *Teeth* and *Mary Anning: Fossil Hunter*. She also illustrates for children's magazines, wayside signs, and other educational material. Phyllis works digitally and with oil paint. Phyllis lives in Maryland with her husband, two sons, and two dogs. Visit her website at [saroffillustration.com](http://saroffillustration.com).



Robin Currie



Phyllis Saroff

# Tuktuk

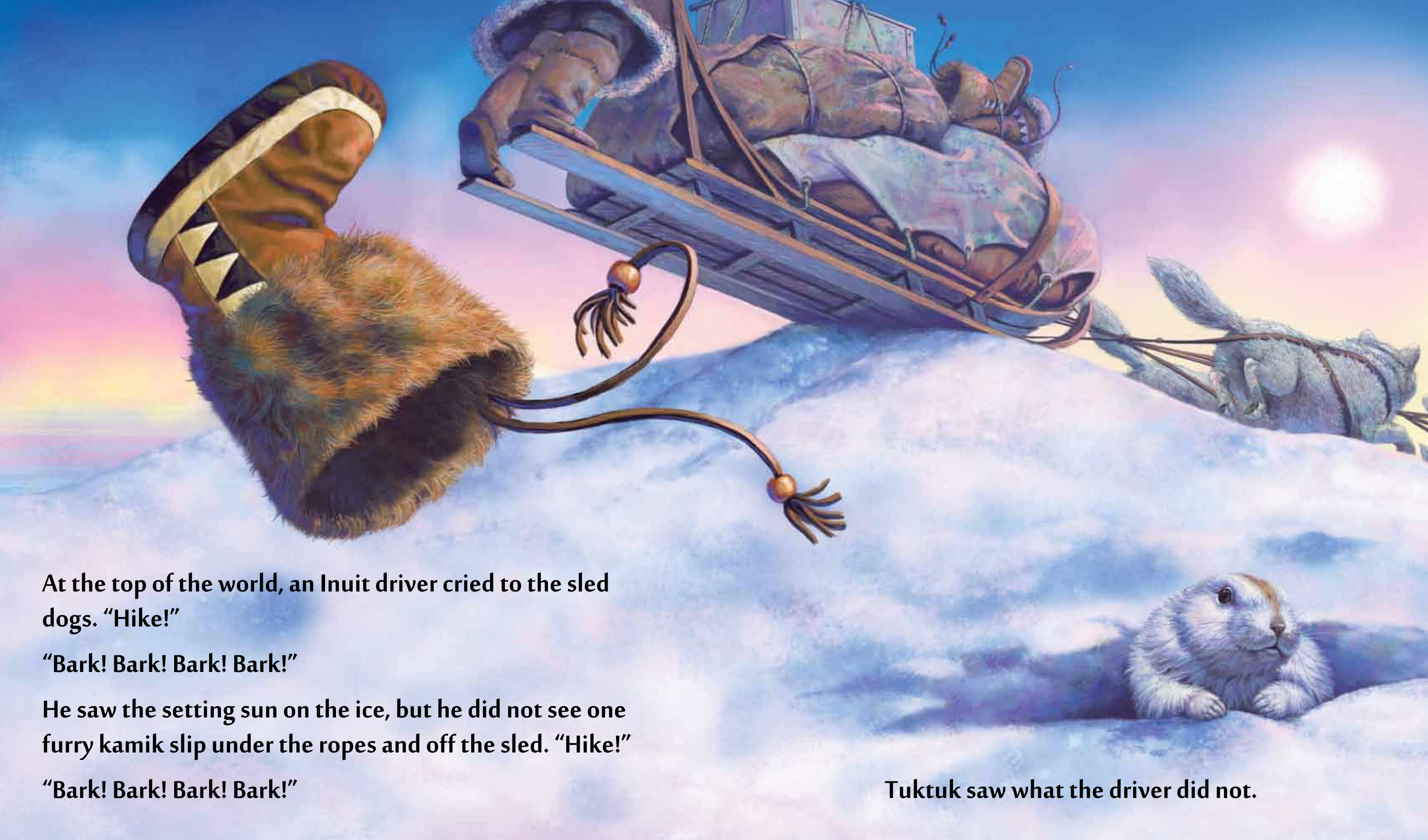
Tundra Tale



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At the top of the world, an Inuit driver cried to the sled dogs. "Hike!"

"Bark! Bark! Bark! Bark!"

He saw the setting sun on the ice, but he did not see one furry kamik slip under the ropes and off the sled. "Hike!"

"Bark! Bark! Bark! Bark!"

Tuktuk saw what the driver did not.



**Tuktuk hid until the dogs were out of sight.**

**The collard lemming was almost ready for the Arctic winter. His fur had changed from summer brown to snowy white. Then Tuktuk had used his long front claws to dig a deep hole in the hummock. Now Tuktuk searched the tundra for musk ox hair to line his winter nest.**



**“Perfect,” he said. “One furry kamik is just right for a collard lemming!”**



As Tuktuk dragged it to his hummock, Putak the polar bear plodded out from a nearby pingo.

“Tuktuk,” Putak called. “Winter is coming. Soon we will not see the sun at all. I need something to keep warm.”



Putak looked at Tuktuk and said, “Ah-ha! One furry kamik!”



Tuktuk wanted that furry kamik. As the last rays of the setting arctic sun glittered in his little lemming eyes, he said, "Putak, you are right. You need this furry kamik. I think you should wear it on your . . . nose."

"Really?" said Putak. He pressed his face into the kamik until it stuck.



"Perfect," he said. "One furry kamik is just right for a polar bear!"





# For Creative Minds

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## Polar Seasons

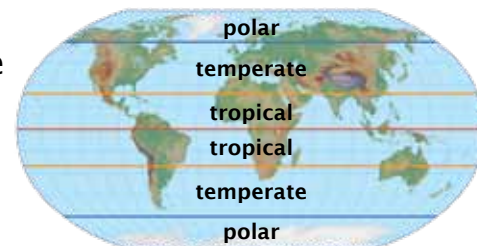
In the arctic winter, animals don't see the sun for six months. For almost three of those months, there is no sunlight at all. The rest of the time, the sun stays just below the horizon, giving them short, twilight days and long, dark nights.

In the summer, arctic animals have six months of sunlight with no darkness.

When winter comes, the animals have to be prepared for the months of darkness and cold. Some animals grow a thick winter coat, prepare a warm den, or even hibernate for the whole winter. But why doesn't the sun rise in the winter?

The Earth rotates on an axis that has a 23.4° tilt. When one hemisphere is tilted toward the Sun, it has longer days and more sunlight. At the same time, the other hemisphere has shorter days and less sunlight. The season in the northern half of the world is always the opposite of the season in the southern half.

The polar region in the northern hemisphere is called the Arctic. The polar region in the southern hemisphere is called the Antarctic. At the earth's poles, the sun stays low in the sky, even in the middle of summer. In the winter, the sun doesn't come up at all for months at a time.



## Arctic Skies

Match the following descriptions to the images.

In temperate and tropical regions, twilight happens every night when the sun goes down. But in polar regions, twilight can last for months. **Arctic twilight** happens in places north of the Arctic Circle. In the winter, the sun is just below the horizon. During the daytime, the sun never appears above the horizon, but there is dim light.

The **northern lights**, or Aurora borealis, are colorful patterns of lights in the sky. They are usually green or pink, but can sometimes be red, yellow, blue, or violet as well. The lights are caused by tiny gas particles (molecules) in the earth's atmosphere. When charged particles from the sun reach the atmosphere, they collide with the gas molecules and create colorful patterns.

**Polaris**, or the North Star, is visible from most of the northern hemisphere. The farther you are from the North Pole, the lower Polaris is in the sky. If you can find the constellation "The Big Dipper," follow an imaginary line from the two outermost stars in the dipper's bowl. That will point to the North Star.

**Sun dogs** are a type of halo. Tiny ice crystals in the atmosphere bend the sun's light. This makes two bright lights, or sun dogs, appear on either side of the real sun. They can be seen from anywhere in the world, not just in polar regions.

1.



2.



3.



4.



Answers: 1-Polaris. 2-sun dogs. 3-arctic twilight. 4-northern lights.

## Arctic Vocabulary

### Inuit Vocabulary

The Inuit are native peoples of Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. There are many different groups of Inuit people. The Inuit have lived in the Arctic for more than 4,000 years.

**Aput:** snow ground covering

**Inuit:** a native person in the Arctic region

**Kamik:** waterproof boot

**Masak:** wet, falling snow

**Putak:** crystalline snow that breaks into grains



### Weather Vocabulary

**Arctic twilight:** the sun is not visible, but it is not completely dark

**Arctic winter:** no sunlight at the North Pole, from late September to mid-March

**Northern lights:** colored and moving reflections of the sun

**Polaris:** the North Star, directly overhead at the North Pole

**Sun dogs:** bright points on each side of the sun

**Whiteout:** sky and snow are the same color of white



### Geologic Vocabulary

**Frost boils:** pools of partially-melted water over ice

**Hummock:** snow-covered ice mound

**Pingo:** mound of dirt and rocks

**Tundra:** ice desert with no trees



## Life in the Cold: Animal Fun Facts

Collared lemmings are small rodents that live on the tundra of North America. They weigh only 4 ounces (112g), about the same as a smartphone. Collared lemmings grow up to 6.3 inches (16cm) long.



Collared lemmings have reddish-brown fur for most of the year, but they grow a white coat in the winter. This camouflage helps them hide from predators.

In the winter, collared lemmings dig burrows in the snow. Their burrows have tunnels that connect different rooms. Nests are lined with grass, feathers, and musk-ox wool to keep the baby lemmings cozy and warm.

Caribou, also called reindeer, live in groups called herds. They have large hooves that allow them to walk on top of the snow without breaking the icy surface. Caribou weigh up to 700 pounds (317kg). On average, they are 4 feet (1.2m) tall at the shoulder.



Both the females and the males have large antlers. Each year, the caribou drop their antlers and grow new ones in the spring.

Caribou eat lichen. Lichen might look like a plant, but it is not. Lichen is made of a fungus and an algae living together. In the northern hemisphere, lichen often grows on the north side of trees or rocks.

Polar bears are the largest land carnivore (meat-eater) in the world. Polar bears grow up to 9 feet (2.7m) tall and 1300 pounds (560kg).



Polar bears spend most of their lives on the ice that floats on the Arctic Ocean. They have a layer of fat (blubber) and thick fur all over their bodies to help them stay warm. Polar bears have black skin underneath their white fur.

Polar bears eat seals and other animals for food. They look for holes in the ice where seals come up to breathe. Polar bears travel thousands of miles every year to find food.

Arctic foxes have short, round bodies and thick, furry tails that are almost half as long as the fox's body. Their bodies grow to 26 inches (66cm) long, about the same size as a German shepherd. But they are very light; at less than 10 pounds (4.5kg), arctic foxes weigh the same as a small terrier.



Arctic foxes curl up to sleep so that their tails cover their noses. This helps keep them warm in their cold, snowy habitat.

Arctic foxes use their sense of sound to hunt prey. They listen for small animals scurrying in burrows underneath the snow. They leap into the air and break through the icy snow as they land on top of their prey.



For Bob, partner in the greatest adventure—RC  
For my special reading friend, Justice—PS  
The author donates a portion of her royalties to the Chicago Zoological Society's Brookfield Zoo ([www.brookfieldzoo.org](http://www.brookfieldzoo.org)).  
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