

BEST BUSINESS COLUMN OR FEATURE

THOMAS ROHNER

Nunatsiaq News

Through colourful quotes and rich descriptions of what he heard, saw and experienced, reporter Thomas Rohner brings to life his feature about the owner of a dog sled business in Rankin Inlet.

DANIEL J. ROWE

The Eastern Door

Good local business stories are the meat and potatoes of a community newspaper business. This story by Daniel J. Rowe evokes the community's "deja-vu" as the daughter of the local butcher modernizes while maintaining much of the character of her father's local shop.

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Dog sledding

Hours love, time into his sled dogs



RANKIN INLET—John Makayak Hickes is in his happy place. Surrounded by 30-odd sled dogs in front of Nanuq Lodge in Rankin Inlet, Hickes smiles as he walks along the rows of doghouses. The dogs, straining at the chains that tether them to their individual homes, greet Hickes, who towers over them, with barks, yelps and frothy wet tongues. It's feeding time—a tense and chaotic scene for anyone not used to being surrounded by so many dogs. But the animals show no aggression as Hickes tows a big rubber bin filled with a stew only a dog would love: big hunks of ham and Arctic char bob up and down in a broth made thick with soggy dog food. "Some people do drugs or alcohol, probably cause all sorts of problems and spend all kinds of money. Me, I just do dogs, I train sled dogs," Hickes said Sept. 29. Hickes, who owns and runs Nanuq Lodge with his partner, Kaye Hurt, has been training sled dogs since he was a teenager. As a youth in Churchill, Hickes said he would deliver newspapers to customers four miles outside of town. "I bet they never had a paper boy by dog sled before, or did they?" Hickes laughed. Running Nanuq Lodge is more of a lifestyle choice, said Hickes, who also works as a political negotiator for the Kivalliq region. "Over the past 10 years, Hickes has passed down his dog sledding skills and love for dogs to local youth. Each winter starts up, the youth start their training for dog sled racing. Hickes said the youth he trains are really good at staying on the sled because he'll start them off on a sled pulled by a snow machine. "Kids stick to the sleds like shit on a blanket. Other kids only train on straight, flat stretches." The fenced-in area in front of the lodge where Hickes keeps his dogs is split into four areas: a main area for active sled dogs, a small area for dogs too young to start breeding, a back area for dogs unable to pull sleds because of age or injury and a small area for young puppies. Hickes fills up a food bowl for each dog, but takes more time with some dogs than others, especially the eight rescue dogs he owns. One dog, named Cola, a former national champion, was likely starved into obedience by his former owner, Hickes said. "But he's come a long way," said Hickes as he kneels down besides Cola and cups the dog's chin in his palm. Some of the rescue dogs refuse to eat out of their bowls—likely because they were beaten with their food dishes, Hickes said—so Hickes lays raw chicken wings on the roof of their doghouses. Hickes has a name and a story ready for almost every dog. There's Tiny Tim, who can smile on command but can't pull a sled any more because of a fractured leg bone he suffered. Toots, named after local hockey hero Jordan Tootoo, is small and scrappy. Spike acts tough and confident like a lead sled dog, but he's a pretend leader, Hickes said. And there's Silver, who survived a bear attack. "The kids come up with the names for all the dogs, but I don't know how they come up with some of these names," Hickes said, smiling and shaking his head. Hickes lets the dogs off their chains and the animals race around the fenced-in area, jump on top of the doghouses and compete for Hickes' attention and affection. "Dogs are great. Even if you're the biggest jerk, they'll still give you unconditional love."

Business

Lafleur's rises like the Phoenix in the Eagle's Nest

DANIEL J. ROWE
The Eastern Door



both come from the same background. When crews first moved in to tear down the old business, it created a bit of a shock. "When we first tore it down, everyone was like, 'what are you doing? Are you crazy?'" said Kiersten. "But we had a plan in our mind." The response when seeing the new store has been overwhelmingly positive. Lisa Phillips lives down the street from Eagle's Nest and is one of hundreds of households that will now be saved the trip to the village or Chateaugay for quick grocery purchases. "I'm ecstatic about it," said Phillips. "First of all because I was a long-time employee of Lafleur's, and I know Kiersten. I went in there and looked at the meat counter, and they pretty much have everything that Lafleur's had. In having it so close to my house, it's just down the road—it's awesome." Her father agrees that the new location is ideal. "You don't see too much coming down the 207, but the side roads, if you go in there, there are homes everywhere," said Skip, now 19 (which is owned by his sister Allison). "It was right next door." "I put a knife in my hand last Thursday and it was as though I had never let it go," said Skip. "It was just amazing."

Walk into the Eagle's Nest Convenience and Deli on Route 207, and you may think, "wait a second. Where am I? Didn't Lafleur's Meat Market close?" This is all his old counters, all his old staff from the old store," said owner Kiersten Lafleur-Diabo standing behind a meat counter that bears a striking similarity to the one her father Stephen "Skip" Lafleur stood behind for over half a century at Lafleur's Meat Market on the Old Mahone Highway. Kiersten and her husband Jay Diabo revamped the Eagle's Nest Convenience over the past half a year to include a fully functioning deli counter serving sandwiches, soups and, naturally, meat. The idea to expand and continue the long tradition of Lafleur's butchery at the location came fairly organically. "When my father closed his business, I was like, 'well let's buy some of his stuff and maybe put it in the store,'" said Kiersten. "One thing led to another, and we decided to go for a loan and just try the whole thing down and rebuild." The locale now has new floors and walls in addition to the meat counter.

The meat packages say "Lafleur's Meat Market," and the family tradition continues at Eagle's Nest Convenience and Deli run by Kiersten Lafleur-Diabo and Jay Diabo, a couple with convenience and meat in their blood. One of her most suppressed customers is Kiersten's father, who is a regular at the location. "Where she is there, she's got state-of-the-art equipment," said Skip. "The machinery she has for her refrigeration is unbelievable. It's all the latest and the best. Everything that she has here is super. She's poised for what I see as a very good opportunity to really make a go of it." The elder Lafleur has even been known to take a tour behind the counter it seems you can take the deli away from the deli man, but you can never take the deli out of the deli man. "I put a knife in my hand last Thursday and it was as though I had never let it go," said Skip. "It was just amazing."

Employment Opportunity

ICCS
POSITION: TWO (2) Case Workers, Home and Community Care Services
DURATION: FIFTY (50) WEEK CONTRACT (6 months probationary period)
RESPONSIBLE TO: MANAGER OF HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE
SUMMARY: Under the supervision of the Manager of ICSS, the Case Worker (ICSS) is responsible to provide overall counselling and follow up services which empower and enables individuals, families and community to take responsibility for problems and issues confronting the clients of ICSS.
QUALIFICATIONS:
• Minimum B.S.W.



opening the door

CreeCo and Board of Compensation hold their first-ever AGA in Chisasibi

by Will Nicholls
Photos by Will Nicholls & Gaston Cooper



Whether it's a grow-up, in this case, an Annual General Assembly—everyone remembers their first. That was certainly the case for CreeCo President and Board of Compensation Chair Jack Blacksmith, who had just presided over the first AGA for the two organizations July 13-14 in Chisasibi. "It's all about transparency and really letting our people know about the BOC and Cree companies. There's a lot of knowledge to be shared, issues to be addressed and it was time for it to happen. We needed this and the Cree people needed this," said Blacksmith. In fact, Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come is reporting other large Cree entities to hold their own annual general assemblies. The limited time at the Grand Council general assembly, the Cree Nation Government's yearly AGA doesn't allow the people to have a full understanding of the entities and the part they play in the Cree world. At this event, CreeCo announced the Cree Construction and Development Company (CCDC), which is celebrating 40 years of doing business. Since 1974, the 100% Cree-owned company has proven to be a valuable asset for CreeCo and the Board of Compensation. Company President Robert Buckles said the CCDC is now one of the largest Aboriginal construction firms in Canada. It's also the first Aboriginal entity to obtain ISO Certification in Canada, which ensures company services are safe, reliable and of good quality. The standards also help businesses increase productivity while minimizing errors and waste. CCDC's first contracts were from Hydro-Quebec, clearing the route for power lines that would deliver electricity to southern Quebec and the United States. Since then they have taken on more arena jobs involving the construction of arena and civil engineering work for

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the Nation

A great lead pulls you into a story about rather mundane annual general assemblies—another staple of community businesses reporting. The use of sidebars telling stories within the story, as well as effective use of graphics, really contribute to this report by Will Nicholls.