

Tour company explores eco-tourism trips

EMILY RIDLINGTON

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GRISE FIORD/RESOLUTE - Oolateeteh Iqaluk was the last guide to lead an outfitting group by snowmobile on a trip between Resolute and Grise Fiord six years ago. In April he had the chance to re-do the trip with another outfitter, all thanks to what he describes as a “lucky” phone call.

“I was very surprised as I didn’t expect anyone from Toronto to call me,” said Iqaluk, a resident of Resolute who is originally from Grise Fiord.

Calling Iqaluk were Thomas Lennartz and Graham Dickson of Arctic Kingdom Marine Expeditions, based out of Toronto, ON.

Lennartz, an expedition leader, and Graham, who founded the company and is the chief expedition officer, asked Iqaluk if he would be interested in being a senior guide for their next big trip. The company offers eco-tourism trips for wildlife enthusiasts, avid photographers and those looking for adventure. Lennartz said the company was looking for a new location to visit and thought it would be good to plan a cross-community trip.

After much planning, a group including Lennartz and Iqaluk left Resolute for Grise Fiord on April 13. The team used satellite imagery to check the ice conditions in the Wellington Channel and Jones Sound. Lennartz and Iqaluk said it was a process of trial and error.

“The most challenging part of the trip was the weather,” said Iqaluk, who said the first three days of the trip were very windy with whiteouts.

For three days, the group was weathered in and covered little ground. Iqaluk said the weather did not clear until they reached the end of Ellesmere Island. The whiteouts made the animal tracks hard to see on the snow and Iqaluk said it was hard to tell where the animals were and they were lucky to see some polar bears and muskox. On April 20, they arrived in Grise Fiord after travelling 720 kilometres.

Following a few days rest, the group, along with Iqaluk’s 22-year-old nephew Harry Iqaluk and several of the company’s clients, left Grise Fiord for Resolute on April 24. For the five days Lennartz said they had beautiful weather. The group was fortunate enough to see many polar bears and muskox daily.

By using local knowledge from their guides and hunters in Grise Fiord, the group made it back to Resolute on April 28 after traveling 600 kilometres.

“This is not what most people in these communities would do; it is not like a trip between Iglulik and Arctic Bay,” said Lennartz.

With one round trip between the communities, Dickson said the next step for the company is to put a package together and offer the trip to their clients. He said by working closely with the communities this kind of eco-tourism has the potential to grow.

Oolateeteh Iqaluk said if more tours were offered such as the one he led, it would help generate business and tourism in both Grise Fiord and Resolute. He also said it was nice to have his nephew along for the ride. It was Harry Iqaluk’s first big outing and his uncle said he did well out on the land. Oolateeteh Iqaluk said he would be interested in leading more tours as would his nephew.



An exploratory snowmobile trip from Grise Fiord to Resolute from April 24-28 was the first between the two communities by an outfitter in six years. From left are Paul Jackson, Harry Iqaluk, Dr. Christian Haas and Oolateeteh Iqaluk. The photo was taken at Boat Point on Devon Island in Jones Sound.

—PHOTO COURTESY OF THOMAS LENNARTZ

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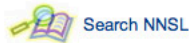
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Emily Ridlington

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