



Building Aboriginal and Northern Economies

Tittaq Office Products

Paper, Pens and Much More

by Hélène Katz

There's a lot more to Tittaq Office Products than paper and pens. That becomes obvious when you wander around their 7,000-square-foot store in Rankin Inlet. One section has home appliances and furnishings, another has a **Radio Shack** dealership, a third outfitting gear — and, yes, there's a whole other section devoted to office furniture and supplies.

"We're not just an office products store," manager **Sam Tutanuak** says. "We saw an opportunity where one company in town was raking in money from the community and we thought, 'why not get a piece of that pie?'"

Started in 1985, Tittaq is jointly owned by Evaz Group Ltd. and Tapiirit Developments Ltd., an Inuit development corporation. The company also has another store in Iqaluit, which sells only office and art supplies and equipment. It currently has seven employees in Rankin Inlet and another six in Iqaluit. Annual sales are \$3.5 million.

Tittaq's Rankin Inlet Radio Shack dealership started in 2000 and has grown from 700 square feet to its current 1,500 square feet. Tittaq expanded into home furnishings a short time later, competing with two other stores in town. "Once we got into it, prices went down — which is what we were

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Tittaq Office Products continues to adapt to suit its market.

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North of 60°

Throughout Canada's North, Aboriginal entrepreneurs are tackling the challenges posed by this unique environment and are building strong, dynamic businesses.

Visit our Aboriginal success stories database at www.ainc-inac.gc.ca (Click on "News Room").

Canada

Inuit Company Clicks In Market

by Cherie Dimaline

In a territory that spans almost two million square kilometres, linking the residents from 28 isolated communities can be a daunting task. With its increased prosperity, business opportunities and steady population growth, Nunavut needs an effective communications network. Today, this task falls to Nunanet Worldwide Communications.

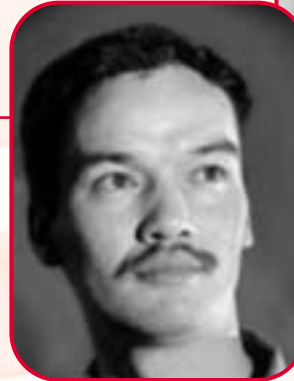
Owner **Adamee Itorcheak**, who is Inuit, spent years working for Bell in southern Canada before returning to Iqaluit to start Nunanet. At that time, there were no affordable options for residents wanting Internet access. There was only long distance dial-up — at \$30 an hour. Adamee began his search for creative ways to deliver affordable Internet service — no small feat when you have to use a costly satellite link.

"An Internet connection is becoming a commodity-type service, and trying to retain customers and profits is a creative balancing act," Adamee says.

Founded in 1995, Nunanet and its multi-tasking staff of five have faced many challenges to build the business. "A major hurdle, that we now call a success story, was surviving a fire in 1998," Adamee recalls. "The fire destroyed a large part of the building we were in at the time." But the company proved itself with its response to the setback. "We kept the modem pools running up until the last minute. And then within two days we were back online in a temporary space. Everyone in the community stopped by to pitch in and offer help."

Today, Nunanet provides Internet services to 25 percent of Iqaluit. By the end of 2002, the company projects that number will jump to 90 percent coverage. Their most popular services continue to be dial-up wireless and dedicated high-speed Internet for both the private and public

Nunanet's Adamee Itorcheak — pictured here with his mother, Kilabuk Itorcheak — is getting Nunavut connected through the Internet.



sectors. The growing business also accommodates web hosting and on-site technical support.

"The best advice I can think of is all pretty simple in hindsight, but usually takes a long time for a budding entrepreneur to figure out — or at least it did in my case," Adamee jokes while sharing his steps to success.

"You can hire the best managers in the world, but ultimately if it is your

business and dollars on the line you need to be involved and understand the decisions being made. If you do not, then it is either not the right business for you or has outgrown your own capabilities."

For more information, visit www.nunanet.com ★

Cherie Dimaline is a writer and editor from the Georgian Bay Métis/Ojibway community.

"Tittaq Office Products" continued from page 1

after," Sam says. "Home furniture became pretty competitive here when we jumped into the furniture business."

They've also recently begun working with a liquidation centre in Winnipeg. A shipment of scooters has turned out to be their biggest seller so far. "All the other stores [in town] were selling bicycles and we'd never seen scooters in Rankin," Sam says.

They amalgamated their two Rankin stores in May. "We had the furniture in one and stationery in another. It got too hectic so we put them into one building,"

Sam explains. The Government of Nunavut is Tittaq's biggest customer. Rankin Inlet is a hub for the Kivalliq region and has many offices based in the town, including health and social services. The company's private sector clients are increasing as a growing number of businesses are setting up shop in Nunavut. Tittaq also has technicians to service some makes of office equipment on-site.

For more information, call the Rankin Inlet office at 867-645-2421, or visit www.arctictravel.com/EVAZ/tittaq.html ★

Charter Company is Flying High

by Owen Roberts

It's just after 8 a.m. in Whitehorse, Yukon on a late-August Saturday morning. The temperature's stubbornly stuck at an unseasonably cool temperature, a sign that the all-too-brief summer is slipping away. And in Northern Canada's competitive charter helicopter market, that means the end of the busiest time of the year is in sight.

So on this morning — as he's carefully preparing one of his two Bell 206 Jet Ranger helicopters to leave for an aerial salmon survey — it's a wonder owner **Delmar Washington** has time to talk about his business, Capital Helicopters (1995). The fact that he is patient and friendly is even more amazing when you consider this morning's clients — federal fisheries biologists conducting an airborne salmon survey — are only moments from arriving. Service is a must.

But the 45-year-old entrepreneur isn't fazed. Capital Helicopters' Jet Rangers have a reputation for being among the cleanest, best maintained and most reliable

in the North. That's why Delmar, a member of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, has time to talk — the details for this trip have been well planned.

Delmar bought the Whitehorse arm of Capital Helicopters in 1995, after having flown for the company since 1988. Before starting his career as a pilot, he drove a truck for a living, and wanted a new challenge. "I don't really fancy myself a businessman," he says. "I just try to provide a service, satisfy my customers and pay off my machines."

That keeps him busy enough, considering his Jet Rangers are worth \$565,000 and \$485,000 respectively, and 80 percent of his business takes place between June and October. Each helicopter logs 500 to 800 hours of flying time annually, taking federal and territorial biologists, geologists, hydrologists, land surveyors, medical personnel and fire-fighters to remote areas that are inaccessible by road. Capital Helicopters' range is typically about 500 miles from



Whitehorse, a distance Delmar calls "close to home." The helicopters normally charter out for \$1,000 an hour.

A three-person team makes up the company: Delmar, operations manager **Jennifer Vasey**, and pilot **Doug Mitchell**.

"There's a lot of work in the summer, and it's not unusual to run 24-7," says Jennifer of the hectic schedule. "Delmar distinguishes himself through service, and that keeps customers coming back."

Indeed, at least half of Capital Helicopters' clients are regulars — and that bodes well for the future. Business is growing enough to make Delmar consider leasing a third helicopter.

For more information, call 867-668-6200. ✨

Owen Roberts is a journalist and communications instructor of Ojibway and European ancestry.

Capital Helicopters prides itself on keeping its clients happy.



Northern Transportation Company Ltd. Solving Northern Challenges

by Richard Landis

Northern Transportation Company Ltd. (NTCL) provides a life-line in the North — one that's essential to Arctic communities and businesses.

Headquartered in Hay River, NWT, NTCL owns and operates one of Canada's most impressive inland shipyards. It's a gateway to the natural resource-rich Mackenzie Valley.

Founded in 1934, NTCL began as a privately-owned barge operation. During the Second World War, the federal government saw an essential service and took ownership of the company under the *War Measures Act*. As a Crown Corporation, NTCL was the main means of transportation for the uranium mines of Great Bear Lake.

In 1985, as part of land claims negotiations, the Government sold the company to the Inuvialuit Development Corporation, which represents the Inuit of the Western Arctic and the Nunasi Corporation, which represents the Inuit of Nunavut. These two parent companies, in turn, formed NorTerra Inc., a 100-percent Aboriginally-owned holding company.

Today, NTCL is Canada's only pan-Arctic marine operator and is one of the largest transporters of cargo and fuel in the North.

Typically, cargo arrives by rail or truck at NTCL's largest terminal, at the port of Hay River, where the company's coastal tug and barge fleet reside. The cargo is then transported across Great Slave Lake, down the Mackenzie River to Tuktoyaktuk and along the Arctic coast eastward to Taloyoak and westward to Point Hope, Alaska. NTCL also maintains regional offices and terminals to serve its clients.

In addition to cargo, NTCL also supplies fuel to all the communities in the Baffin region. The company has contracts with



Northern Transportation owns and operates one of Canada's most impressive inland shipyards.

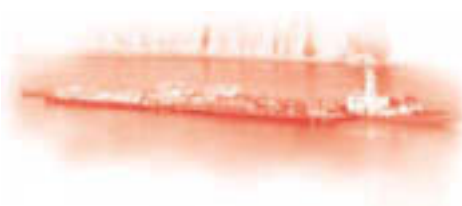
international fuel suppliers and tanker owners to obtain the fuel and charter the marine equipment required to deliver fuel to these Nunavut communities.

With a workforce of 380 in peak season (nearly half of whom are Aboriginal), a fleet that includes 11 river- and ocean-going tugs, 90 dual-purpose (dry and fuel) barges and two ice-class supply tugs, and revenues that topped \$100 million in 2001, NTCL is a success by any measure.

"We've experienced a roller-coaster of successes and are probably one of the most successful Aboriginal companies in the country. Our success rests on a philosophy of providing Northern solutions in challenging environments," says NTCL marketing director **Lynette Storoz**.

"And, over the next five to 10 years — with the prospect of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, as well as expanded mining across the entire North — there's a tremendous potential to utilize our current fleet and to expand our operations. It's a win-win situation for the North and for NTCL alike," she notes.

For more information, visit the website at www.ntcl.com ★



Business Built on Diversity

by *Raymond Lawrence*

Effective management, direction and vision have been key to Qikiqtaaluk Corporation's continued success.

"We've had very strong Inuit managers who have been able to take a company from \$300,000 per year to well over \$20 million per year," says **Peter Keenainak**, acting CEO and manager of marine development. "We're at the point where we're becoming stable so we will continue to look at other contract opportunities." The Corporation's staff is more than 75 percent Inuit.

"There are currently 12 corporations that Qikiqtaaluk Corporation actually deals with — either as wholly-owned companies or through joint ventures," he says. "In the past, the off-shore industry has been one of the most profitable ventures. Although recently, for generating employment, I would have to say the Resolution Island clean-up project is contributing the most to the Northern economy." The Corporation hopes the clean-up of this Cold War-era Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line site is the first of other similar opportunities. On this particular project, 95 percent of the people involved are Inuit.

Still, much of the company's efforts remain focussed on the lucrative offshore fisheries. "We would like to expand on our off-shore fisheries in terms of additional quotas and acquiring fishing vessels that would be 100-percent owned by Inuit companies," he says. "Most of the shrimp is exported outside of Canada — mainly to Scandinavia and some to Asia — and the turbot fishery also sees about 90 percent exported outside of Canada to Asia, mainly Taiwan," Peter explains. "We have joint ventures with fishing companies out of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia who handle the marketing."

Last year alone, almost 150 staffers were employed on the massive trawlers that catch, process, freeze, and store the shrimp and fish. More than 60 of those employees were Inuit. "So this venture not only creates employment for people from the Baffin Region, but also employment for people from Newfoundland and Nova Scotia," says Peter.

The Corporation, which is involved in everything from aviation to prospecting, is always on the lookout for new opportunities. It hopes to take on work in developing the Qikiqtani Regional Hospital through a 100 percent Inuit-owned business.

From offshore fishing, DEW Line cleanup operations, environmental management services, mineral development, heavy equipment sales and service, petroleum distribution, to construction management, the Corporation's interests seem endless. It owns gas bars, retail and commercial space, and jointly-owns a petroleum company, and a logistics company, to name a few of its ventures. In 2000, its payroll exceeded \$3.8 million.

For more information, visit www.qikiqtaalukcorp.nu.ca ★

Raymond Lawrence is a freelance writer of Ojibway and European ancestry.



The Resolution Island clean-up is a big project for Qikiqtaaluk Corporation, based in Iqaluit, Nunavut.

Pipeline Project Boom for Inuvik

by Edwinna von Baeyer

Thanks to a groundbreaking initiative, the city of Inuvik, NWT, now has access to cleaner, cheaper fuel to meet its energy needs.

After a significant reservoir of natural gas was found in the Mackenzie Valley, near Inuvik, the Aboriginally-owned Inuvialuit Petroleum Corporation (IPC) partnered with AltaGas Services Inc. and Enbridge Inc. in 1998. The goal was to develop a fuel company and build a pipeline to meet Inuvik's energy needs. Out of this partnership, Inuvik Gas Company was born.

Sounds simple and straightforward. However, weather, terrain and financing provided a few challenges. First of all, a 50-km pipeline had to be built to the natural gas reservoir. To make the task

more difficult, the pipeline had to be built through permafrost — something never done before in North America — and builders had to deal with weather conditions which threatened their deadline. Despite the unknowns associated with building and operating this underground pipeline, the partners built the project in 100 days.

The next challenge was to sign up enough customers to make the venture viable. It is expensive to convert an electric or fuel-oil heating system into one that uses natural gas. However, the company devised an innovative conversion incentive program that split the cost three ways: Northwest Territories Department of Resources Wildlife and Economic Development, Inuvik Gas

and the consumer each paid one third. By the first year, 50 percent of Inuvik residents and businesses converted to gas.

This success story has many impressive statistics. The program created jobs and generated \$1.4 million for local contractors. Customers are enjoying 15 percent savings on their bills. Fifty percent of the company's workforce is Aboriginal. The program also has many environmental benefits. Natural gas burns cleaner than diesel fuel oil and it's expected that the conversion will decrease the community's greenhouse gas emissions by 32 percent.

It's predicted that the natural gas reservoir will be able to meet Inuvik's energy needs for 20 years. With ongoing gas exploration in the Mackenzie Valley, a replacement gas field will likely be found before that time comes.

For more information, call Inuvik Gas at 867-777-7055. ✨



Hard work and ingenuity built the Inuvik Gas pipeline.

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Company Finds Success in Numbers

by Diane Koven

Akhaliak Consulting has built a thriving business by helping other companies improve their management practices.

Helen Kimnik Klengenberg, who is Inuit, is the president and majority shareholder of the Rankin Inlet, Nunavut company she developed with husband and partner **Paul Murphy**.

A University of Western Ontario graduate, Helen has 15 years' management experience — including various positions with the territorial and municipal governments and a land claims organization. She was also the first graduate of a special Masters of Business Administration program offered in Nunavut by Halifax's St. Mary's University. She later joined her husband in his bookkeeping and accounting business. They incorporated the business in 1999 and expanded the services they offered.

"We try to help each other out by not stepping on each other's toes," says Helen. "We have very specific responsibilities laid out for our company. I do the consulting aspects and he does the bookkeeping and accounting services."

Helen's extensive human resources background has allowed her to design



Helen Kimnik Klengenberg, with husband Paul Murphy, is the president of Akhaliak Consulting.

training programs and long-term planning for various organizations. "I think I am probably the only Inuk that does this full time and is qualified to do this consulting work," she says.

Akhaliak Consulting Ltd. — "Akhaliak" means Northern Lights — also does 10-day workshops in various locations on basic bookkeeping and *Simply*

Accounting software. Following completion of the workshops, participants receive a certificate and three months of online support. "We find that this works very well," says Helen. "The students sit in front of their computers and we walk them through the process." Paul teaches the workshops and Helen produces the manuals.

With several regular clients in Iqaluit, the couple travels often. Daughter Michelle "minds the shop" in their absence and has recently taken over management of the family's new business venture, Akhaliak Promotional Products. In partnership with a Winnipeg company, they have access to 650,000 promotional products, including customized corporate wear and calendars.

"Whenever possible, we try to use businesses in the North so that we can help other businesses," says Helen. Silk screening can be done in Baker Lake and embroidery in Rankin Inlet. Most of the company's products are Canadian made.

Contact Akhaliak Consulting by calling 867-645-3901 or visit Akhaliak Promotional Products' website at www.akhaliak.ca ★



AKHALIAK
PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS
"A 100% INUIT OWNED COMPANY"

Moving Forward Out On the Land

by Tara Lee Wittchen

"I think anybody who is doing this is very brave," says **Kristiina Alariaq**, co-owner of Huit Huit Tours in Cape Dorset, Nunavut.

She's talking about tourists who choose an unusual vacation destination like Cape Dorset, but the description also fits Kristiina and husband, co-owner **Timmun Alariaq**. It's a big enough challenge to make profits when the main tourism season is only six weeks long and the weather and wildlife are unpredictable, but Kristiina and Timmun keep tour group sizes small, though larger groups would almost certainly mean bigger profits for the company.

"I don't mind that it's developing slowly, it gives us a chance to learn things," Kristiina says. Huit Huit (which means "go forward," a sled dog command in Inuktitut) has been guiding visitors in the Cape Dorset area for about 10 years. "We're doing something we naturally like to do. It's very much an authentic experience."

Each trip follows a special theme. Guests can visit archaeological sites, observe plant and wildlife, talk with Inuit artists and Elders, listen to throat singers, taste traditional foods, fish, hike and camp. Most visitors arrive in July and August, but winter trips are also available.

"It's not just nature we're taking people out to see, it's also some of the ways that people here have learned to live their lives in nature," she says.

"People live in both worlds here today. Visitors are learning about their culture and lifestyle, both present and past. Today



Huit Huit Tours guides visitors through the breathtaking sights of Cape Dorset.

there is a choice. You don't have to live off the land anymore, you can buy your food at the store."

But Kristiina and Timmun keep their close, personal ties to the land. "It's a very rugged environment. From a glance, it just looks barren but it isn't. It's a great source of learning for us and it makes our lives more rich in the knowledge that we gain from it."

Timmun is Inuit and was born in an outpost camp. He was raised on the land before heading south for his formal education. Kristiina, born in Finland and raised in northern Ontario, arrived in Cape Dorset in 1976. Both are well-acquainted with traditional Inuit knowledge and skills. Trips are designed to share those traditions and their love for the natural Arctic environment.

Huit Huit Tours' large number of loyal, repeat customers is a good indication of the lasting impact of the experience.

"Many people continue to correspond with us after they leave," Kristiina adds.

For more information, call (867) 897-8806 or visit www.capedorsettours.com ★

Tara Lee Wittchen is a writer and editor of Ojibway and European heritage.