

ENJOYING THE DOG DAYS IN THE FAR NORTH

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It was almost 4 a.m. and the northern lights were dancing in the sky. Connor McMahon could see the lights of Dawson City in the distance as he traveled along the frozen river.

With a comfortable lead, he stopped his dog sled team and soaked in the moment. He went up and down the line, thanking his dogs.

"They weren't too happy to stop," he said.

So he took his place on the sled and carried on. When he crossed the finish line, he and his eight-dog team had traveled 177 kilometres (110 miles) in 11 hours and 47 minutes over two days to win the Percy DeWolfe Memorial Mail Race. The Georgetown native never intended on becoming a musher. He was

working as a guide on Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories when he adopted an Alaskan Malamute named Chumie.

As McMahon trained Chumie, he looked for ways to burn off the abundant energy of a dog that came from a working breed. Planning to go ice finishing, McMahon built a sled. Chumie was more than happy to pull him across the ice.

"The first 10 feet, I thought, 'This is funnest thing I've ever done,'" McMahon said.

He began working with another musher, Aaron Peck, training dogs. Peck eventually gave McMahon an opportunity to race a secondary team of dogs.

It didn't take long before McMahon was looking into assembling and training his own team of dogs. And when the COVID-19 pan-

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- Connor McMahon

demic all but shut down his guide work, McMahon took advantage of the time to work with his team.

"I loved traveling on snow, whether it was a snowboard, a snow machine or skating," he said. "And I loved working with dogs. It was all these things combined."

Depending on the length, most races have four or five-hour periods of racing followed by an equal length of recovery time. There are vets available at the checkpoints to check on

the dogs, who wear jackets and protective boots.

McMahon said he enjoys spending time with the dogs during races and training runs, where they will sometimes camp together.

"You'll go out on a trail and be out there for two or three days. You're spending every minute with them," he said. "You see how they interact with the other dogs, you get to see their different personalities."

McMahon said the supportive, tight-knit commu-



John Hopkins-Hill photo

Connor McMahon races with his dog-sled team.

nity of mushers was one of the things that really enhanced his love of racing. He has even got involved with organizing races, discovering there is so much more than just setting a course and taking entries.

Maintaining a team is not an inexpensive venture. Dogs burn about 10,000 calories per day during a race or training, and as a result McMahon said they eat a really good diet to keep them healthy and strong.

McMahon said he's received tremendous support

from home in Georgetown with companies like Bush-e Contracting helping support his team.

McMahon hopes to continue training dogs, participating in some longer races, eventually building up to racing in the world's most famous event, the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race — which runs annually between Anchorage and Nome, Alaska.

"I think it's only now, after a few years, that I'm realizing how deep I am into it," he said.



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We are currently staying open to serve our contractors and commercial customers who need to keep their business operating. We are asking that all orders be called or emailed in for curbside pick-up or curbside delivery.

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Leathertown Lumber continues to monitor and follow provincial and federal guidelines for our operation. Our top priority is the health and well-being of our employee's, their families and our customers. We thank you for your consideration, patience and cooperation during this difficult time we are all facing. Please help work with us to keep you and our team safe!

This policy may change without notice.

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