

PRESS RELEASE



KICK OFF OF THE 8TH EDITION OF IVAKKAK Nunavik's Dog Team Race

***In a land where « only ice and time are the masters »
(Inuit saying), men and dogs will test themselves.***

INUKJUAK – *Wednesday, March 25, 2009* – Thirteen teams launched themselves this noontime on a difficult, yet remarkable, journey that has become the North's most popular event: Ivakkak, Nunavik's dog team race. Now in its eight edition, Ivakkak is moving from an annual to a biennial format to allow the pure-breed Inuit husky dog population to grow and also provide more time for the teams to better prepare for this event. The team to beat is that of four-time champion Peter Kiatainaq, of Kangiqsujaq, who will again this year put his title on the line.

The Makivik Corporation is proud to host this race, which provides Inuit elders with an opportunity to share their ancestral knowledge with the new generation whose way of life has changed significantly during this modern era.

Each team composed of 8 to 12 sled dogs, for a total of more than 150 Inuit husky dogs lead by their masters and racing partners, who are between 16 and 65 years of age and come from 6 Inuit communities of Nunavik will travel for roughly ten days over more than 500 kilometres on the eastern coast of the Hudson Bay. In addition to the challenges posed by weather conditions, each team must be self-sufficient: mushers and dogs will themselves transport all the supplies needed to complete their journey. At the end of each day, the teams will camp out together at pre-determined checkpoints.

Ivakkak 2009 was kicked off earlier today in Inukjuak. Participating teams are expected to reach the finish line in Ivujivik on April 2, depending on the whims of Mother Nature.

Nunavik's annual dog team race was first hosted by the Makivik Corporation in 2001 to encourage Nunavimmiut to carry on with the practice of dogsledding, a tradition that was almost wiped out with the methodical slaughter of Inuit husky dogs that took place in Canada's north in the 1950s and 1960s. To this end, only Inuit are eligible to participate in the race, which represents a difficult yet fabulous journey in the footsteps of their ancestors, in harmony with that ancient way of life.

Again this year, the Makivik Corporation has received the support of several long-standing partners: Air Inuit is responsible for transporting the participating dog teams from their respective villages to the race's starting line and for shuttling them home again at the conclusion

of the race. Also, in addition to sponsoring one of Ivakkak's top prizes, the Federation of Co-operatives of Northern Québec (FCNQ) will be supplying the dog food as well as making provisions available to participants through its local stores. For its part, the Kativik Regional Government has made available not only funding for the race but will offer logistical support, through the municipal offices of each village visited by the dog teams.

Nunavik's annual dogsled race would not be possible without the generous sponsorship of a number of other organizations, including the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services through its Brighter Futures Program, First Air, XStrata Nickel (Raglan mine) and Hydro-Québec, to name just a few.

At the finish line, not only will the 2009 Ivakkak champion be presented with the Ivakkak Cup, he will also receive: a \$12,000 gift certificate from the FCNQ, a \$7,000 cash prize from the Makivik Corporation, and finally a pair of return tickets to Montreal from First Air and Air Inuit, as well as gift certificates for double occupancy at the Travelodge in Dorval. Various other prizes will be presented to the second and third place teams, as well as participation awards to all participants.

The progress of Ivakkak 2009 may be followed daily on the race's official website at www.ivakkak.com, and on the air of the regional radio broadcasters TNI and CBC North.

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