

CESO/SACO Blog

October 28, 2018

(Estimated reading time: 5 minutes)

CESO partnered with a small business in Kugluktuk, Nunavut called Nunavut Qiviut to help the owner develop a sustainable industry for the hamlet of approximately 1,500 Inuit and other Canadians.



Geoff Clark (left) and CESO VA Grant Lee work on marketing tactics and communications technology applicable to a challenging environment

The core business of Nunavut Qiviut is producing and selling qiviut yarn and knitted apparel from harvested muskox hides, supplemented by fibre from the Arctic fox and hare. By tapping into the muskox harvest, the business can thrive modelled on the three pillars of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental (SEE).

Although Nunavut Qiviut is grounded on SEE principles, its success is dependant upon guidance and support from local community groups, elders, community leaders, and independent hunters and trappers. Nunavut Qiviut is a product of 21st century entrepreneurship and commitment by the Inuit north of the Arctic Circle.

SPINNING A CANADIAN ARCTIC YARN

NUNAVUT QIVIUT MARKETING BOILS DOWN TO “PLACE AND PROMOTION” TO INCREASE SALES

Location north of the tree line and inside the Arctic Circle within an arctic desert presents a most challenging barrier for a small business dependant upon sales for growth below latitude 66.6° N. Shipping goods from Kugluktuk and receiving supplies is very expensive by air and water. There are no roads connecting the closest settlements.



Geography is a major factor in any Canadian enterprise north of the Arctic Circle

Fibre is collected and prepared by women and men in Kugluktuk for shipment by air to mills in the south where it is processed, dyed and returned to Kugluktuk as pure and blended yarn. In Kugluktuk, the yarn is packaged and distributed to retailers in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Alaska, Nunavik, and Nunavut for sale to tourists and local knitters. Nunavut Qiviut is developing the use of hand powered knitting machines from the Victorian era to knit lace shawls, scarves and a variety of other apparel for sale in retail outlets and online. These can create a new opportunity for local knitters.

Nunavut Qiviut has a website for selling yarn and apparel directly to customers, but like any business in the Arctic selling goods and services to customers in the south, sales are often limited by price points. Price is especially challenging for producing qiviut yarn because pure muskox qiviut is rare and available in limited quantities.

The muskox harvest is regulated by government of Nunavut and federal laws to supply food to the villages for communal consumption and fibre for sale. Markets are being developed for hides, bone and horns.

Promoting Arctic Fibre

Qiviut and the company are promoted offline and online. Because of geography, there is a greater need for online promotion than offline that would include exhibits at trade shows and demonstrations of qiviut knitting at special events. It is rarer than the product itself to see a sales representative of the company visiting a retail outlet to work with the owner in solving sales issues.

To compensate for few sales calls, the company has fostered strong relationships with associations and business owners who become advocates of pure DNA-tested qiviut and the business ethics of Nunavut Qiviut.

Strategically-placed display advertising in magazines read by travellers and tourists to the Northwest Territories, Yukon, Alaska, and Canadian Arctic, and hosting local social activities go a long way in promoting the company and its products. The company's online presence is designed to use social media to push customers to the company website at nunavutqiviut.com, and the website itself to pull customers into its pages to close a sale.

C21 Marketing Communications Technology for Arctic Businesses

The owners of Nunavut Qiviut have taken the decision to embrace whatever 21st century technology that can work in a business environment characterized by interruptions to logistics caused by unexpected weather conditions; high costs of electricity for carrying out routine business practices when the region is in permanent twilight and darkness; a supply chain that is dependent upon a healthy and sustainable muskox population; available supplies of a variety of yarn blends and pure qiviut; and availability of basic banking services.

The company is making use of the Internet, software, apps, and hand powered equipment and production techniques to provide the necessities of managing a business from north of the Arctic Circle. Readily-available marketing communications technology includes email marketing campaign accounts; efficiencies in setting up and using a variety of social media networks; management of databases; content management systems for websites; online customer experience management techniques; and knowledge of

implementing guerrilla marketing tactics. No longer is Nunavut Qiviut isolated in its communications with distributors throughout North America and abroad.

CESO resources have contributed significantly to helping Nunavut Qiviut improve its marketing tactics and product sales potential through mentoring and training in marketing communications technology. Nunavut Qiviut and its strategic partners and stakeholders are positioned to develop a local industry based on the three pillars of sustainable development.

