

Meet Leia Cunningham of NunaVet



We had the pleasure of chatting with Leia Cunningham, proud owner of NunaVet, Nunavut's first veterinary clinic located in Iqaluit. NunaVet opened in November 2011 and provides full service veterinary services to all domestic animals in Nunavut.

As Nunavut's first licensed veterinarian, successful entrepreneur, wife and mother, we wanted to find out a little more about what inspired her to pursue her dreams and how she remained focused in the face of adversity.

Q: Hi Leia. Thank you for taking the time to sit down with us. You've just given birth to your second child so we know that time is very precious. Let's start with finding out a little more about your background. Where did you spend your childhood?

Leia: I was born and raised in Iqaluit, but I also spent some time in Pangnirtung and Pond Inlet.

Q: What impact did your childhood play on your career choice?

Leia: I knew that I was going to be a vet since I was a very young girl as our family always had animals. It was very obvious early on that there was a huge need for proper veterinary services (in Nunavut) and I somehow just always knew that was going to be a role that I wanted to play.

Q: We all dream many dreams – some come true and some don't. How did you turn your dream into a reality?

Leia: A lot of sacrifice and hard work. I left Iqaluit immediately after high school. It was tough being away from my home, friends and family for such extended periods of time. But keeping the big picture in mind and studying in a field that I am passionate about really helped keep me going.

Support from my family and community were a huge factor in keeping me motivated.

Q: Who have been your biggest cheerleaders and supporters throughout this journey?

Leia: My parents! It takes a lot of work for a parent to help their child achieve their dream, especially when that dream involves many years of school, many moves, and many calls home. They have been amazing in supporting me every step of the way and always helping me to keep moving forward. Additionally, I have been very well received in the community. Most people I work with are so grateful to have a vet in town, which definitely makes work enjoyable.

Q: As a parent yourself – a wife and a mother of two – how do you balance your time between work and family?

Leia: Well it's definitely not easy finding that balance, but for me there is a lot of overlap between the two. With the office portion of the clinic located on the other half of our private residence it's easy to "bring my work home".

I just have to make a concerted effort to devote as much time and energy to my family after the workday has ended.

Q: What do you see in the future for yourself and for NunaVet? How are you continuing to 'think big'?

Leia: We are currently mobile, but are in the process of transitioning into a permanent veterinary clinic in Apex. We also provide many of the services that are available in the south on a full-time basis (surgeries, blood work, x-rays, etc.). I look forward to being able to offer advanced diagnostics such as ultrasound, and to the start of our boarding services.

It is also very important to me to travel to other communities and offer veterinary services. Once there are two veterinarians at NunaVet, this goal is high on my priority list.

Q: As an entrepreneur and business owner, what words of wisdom would you provide to people who 'think big' and are looking to make their dreams come true?

Leia: Be flexible! Although you may put a lot of planning into your dreams and expect things to turn out a certain way, life tends to throw you curveballs. As long as you are willing to adapt and keep moving forward, things are bound to turn out.

I'd also like to say a big thanks to all my funding agencies for all their hard work and generous contributions that helped make NunaVet a reality. Thank you's go out to NCEDO, Kakivak Association, Atuqtuarvik Corporation, BBDC and the GN (ED&T)!

Q: Thanks again for taking the time to speak with us, Leia. We hope that your words of wisdom will inspire other budding entrepreneurs to take that first step and 'think big'!

Located in Iqaluit, Nunavut, NunaVet provides routine check-ups, vaccinations, sterilizations, dental, declawing and other emergency and non-emergency related services to domestic animals across the Territory. NunaVet also maintains a healthy stock of animal products and accessories. They are looking at expanding their services to include large animals as well, so stay tuned!

Congratulations
NunaVet!

Congratulations to Leia Cunningham, proud owner of NunaVet, Nunavut's first veterinary clinic located in Iqaluit.

We hope her words of wisdom will inspire other budding entrepreneurs to take that first step to achieving their dreams.

Think Big!

Toll Free: 1 888-645-5901 • 1 867-645-5900
thinkbig@atuqtuarvik.com
Atuqtuarvik Corporation
Rankin Inlet, Nunavut www.atuqtuarvik.com

