



MEDIA RELEASE

2018 Finish & Awards Banquet

February 17, 2018 (Whitehorse, YT) – Hosted by Northern Vision Development’s Coast High Country Inn and Convention Centre, this year’s Finish & Awards Banquet began with the 1st Canadian Ranger Patrol Group leading a flag procession of this year’s mushers into the banquet hall. Barbara Chamberlin next sang the American and Canadian anthems, followed by a welcome and blessing from Michelle Telep, Deputy Chief of the Ta'an Kwäch'än First Nation, and Councillor Jesse Dawson of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

After the Honourable Jeanie Dendys, Minister of Tourism and Culture and His Worship Dan Curtis, Mayor of Whitehorse added their welcoming remarks, banquet attendees sampled from the buffet, including local Arctic char provided by Icy Waters Ltd., and were treated to a video comprising the very best of the footage shot on the 2018 Quest trail by the official Visual Content Team.

After dinner, Yukon Executive Director Natalie Haltrich gave recognition to the many generous sponsors of the race, officials, vets, checkpoint managers, volunteers, and competitors. Special acknowledgment was also given to members of the Quest family who recently passed away, as well as Race Manager Alex Olesen and his logistics team. Olesen received a commemorative banner featuring the logo of his father Leo’s old company.

Yukon Quest Board of Director Presidents Ryan Hughes (Alaska) and Jean-Marc Champeval (Yukon), along with Anne Taylor, next took the podium to celebrate the Kwanlin Dün Sewing Group’s ten dog blankets from the 2017 Quest being accepted into Yukon’s permanent art collection. Karen Lepine then unveiled the Northern Vision Development-sponsored partnership for this year’s race project taken on by the sewing group: handmade beaded patches for the finishers. Race Marshal Doug Harris, Head Vet Nina Hansen, and Race Manager Alex Olesen were each presented with one before the mushers took the stage.

After a salute to all the mushers who scratched or were withdrawn, Harris, Hansen, and Olesen introduced each musher in the reverse order in which they finished to give them an opportunity to share trail stories from this year’s race, as well as give thanks to their friends and supporters.

Thirteenth place Nathaniel Hamlyn thanked his team, sponsors, mentor, fellow competitors (especially Rob Cooke), vets, volunteers, and his family and friends. Hamlyn was then presented with a custom handmade quilt courtesy of Bear’s Paw Quilts.

Fellow Whitehorse musher Rob Cooke, who finished his fifth Yukon Quest in 12th place, thanked family and sponsors, commended Hamlyn for the race he ran, and paid tribute to Scroggie Creek volunteer Jessica Simon who passed away earlier this year. Cooke wore the memorial bib across the finish line in Whitehorse.

Eleventh place Riley Dyche, a Quest rookie from Fairbanks, AK, and former Quest handler, couldn't say enough about the hospitality stops that host a bunch of "dirty dog mushers," and vows to come back and race the Quest in 2020.

Dave Dalton, finishing his 22nd Quest in 10th, said the trail was perfect this year, acknowledging all the hard work of the trailbreakers on both sides of the border, and conveyed his esteem for Allen Moore for finishing with all 14 dogs.

Ninth place Luc Tweddell, who wore the memorial Joel Switzer bib said Joel "was with me on the trail." Tweddell said this was the hardest of his three Quests, and thanked the "sponsor" he picked up at Clinton Creek, when Tim Pappas leant him some gloves. Big thanks also went to Riley Dyche for help through the overflow, and to Alex Buetow for being a good travelling companion, "until he passed me three miles from the finish line," joked Tweddell.

Alex Buetow, the 29 year-old Fairbanks rookie who placed eighth, thanked mentor and dog provider Jeff King, and said he was blown away and eternally grateful for all he learned from everyone over the course of the race.

After thanking his son and daughters, who handled for him, decorated German musher Bernhard Schuchert, finishing seventh overall in his first Yukon Quest, said that of all the races he's done world-wide, the Quest is special, and it is because of the people. Schuchert joked that he was probably too old to do another.

Rookie Tim Pappas, this year's sixth place finisher, "felt completely at home everywhere he went, I loved it!" Pappas stated how honoured he felt to be running the team he had, and thanked his sponsors and family.

Ed Hopkins of Tagish, Yukon, who finished fifth overall in this, his ninth Quest, thanked his wife Michelle Phillips, Quest fans who follow the race, and the dedicated trailbreakers and volunteers. Despite doing battle with the cold, Hopkins characterized his 2018 run as "Just a real nice clean race."

Fourth place finisher and Rookie of the Year winner Vebjorn Aishana Reitan thanked the people of his hometown of Kaktovik, Alaska for their support, and fellow Quest mushers for their friendliness and advice.

Two-time Quest finisher Laura Neese, who finished in third place, said she had a beautiful race, thanked Matt Hall and Ed Hopkins for being "big, beautiful, happy faces out on the trail," and apologized to Hopkins for startling him along the trail with her singing.

Last year's winner Matt Hall, second place, described his race as "amazing but a little cold," thanked the "absolutely phenomenal" trailbreakers, and told the story of learning about his dog truck breaking down while in the bath during his Dawson layover.

And finally, taking the stage to a standing ovation was 2018 Yukon Quest champion Allen Moore. "Was that a good race or what?" he exclaimed. Moore said his team consistently did more than he thought they could do and only got stronger as the race went on. Moore also thanked his daughter Bridgett for trimming his eyebrows in Dawson to prevent them from frosting up on the trail.

In addition to their prize money and finisher's patches, the top three mushers all received handmade hatchets courtesy of sponsor Alaska Rod's.

After words of praise for her team from Head Veterinarian Nina Hansen, the winners of the inaugural Golden Shovel Award were announced. Sponsored by Avery & Eric Brohman in memory of Michael Morris, and voted on by the checkpoint managers and logistics team, the award goes to the three handler teams deemed to be the most thorough and considerate in their support duties. Matt Hall's Smokin' Aces Kennel handling team took top prize of \$400USD; Tim Pappas' 17th Dog handling crew walked away with \$250USD; and the handlers for Vebjorn Aishana Reitan's Hulahula Kennel earned third place, good for \$150USD.

As the first musher to reach Dawson City and finish the race, Allen Moore was the recipient of the Joe Fellers Dawson City Award, two ounces of Klondike placer gold. The award is sponsored (and pulled out of the ground by) Fellhawk Placers of Dawson City. "Can't beat gold," said Moore.

Rookie of the Year honours were bestowed upon Vebjorn Aishana Reitan of Kaktovik, Alaska, for being the first rookie musher to cross the finish line. Reitan was awarded a handmade hatchet courtesy of award sponsor Alaska Rod's of Haines, Alaska. "Thanks to my dogs," said Reitan, "they made my job real easy."

Selected by the Quest race officials, the Challenge of the North Award is given to the musher who best exemplifies the spirit of the Yukon Quest. This year's recipient was 23 year-old Whitehorse musher Nathaniel Hamlyn, who receives a hand-blown glass sculpture from Lumel Studios. The drawings of two Whitehorse children aged nine and seven depicting their summers spent at the Stepping Stone hospitality stop on the Quest trail were used as inspiration for the trophy design. Hamlyn thanked his dogs for keeping him going and getting him over all the hills.

Decided by the mushers themselves, and presented to the competitor who demonstrates outstanding sportsmanship along the trail, this year's Sportsmanship Award of a pair of handmade beaver mitts by Dawson City's Madmitter went to Riley Dyche, who said he "stayed so positive and happy on the trail because of his dogs." Dyche said that since he wore out his beaver mitts in this year's race the prize is much appreciated.

Running the entire 1,000 miles with the same 14 dogs he started with in Fairbanks, Allen Moore was the easy choice for the Veterinarian's Choice Award, sponsored by Alpine Veterinary

Medical Centre. Selected by the Quest veterinary team and given annually to the musher who best demonstrates outstanding canine care while remaining competitive during the entire race, the award is good for \$1,000USD toward veterinary services from a veterinary clinic of the musher's choosing. This year Moore also received a special beaded patch from the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre Sewing Group. Moore thanked his whole team at the kennel for their level of commitment to dog care. "A team like that makes it easy."

The White Pass & Yukon Route Red Lantern Award went to Nathaniel Hamlyn. Presented annually to the race's last official finisher, the Red Lantern commemorates the tradition of keeping a light on for all mushers still out on the trail. For his perseverance Hamlyn receives a decorative red lantern.

The evening closed with the presentation of the Golden Harness Award. In honour of their loyalty, endurance, and perseverance throughout the race, Allen Moore's two lead dogs, Commando and Dutch, received custom-made Tanzilla Harness Supply golden harnesses, and steaks prepared by the Head Chef of the Coast High Country Inn and Convention Centre.

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For more information or to arrange an interview, contact:

Pixie Ingram
867-335-1927
communications@pixieingram.ca

Cameron Webber
778-584-5330
communications@pixieingram.ca

<p>ALASKA 550 First Ave, Fairbanks, AK 99701 Phone: 907.452.7954 Fax: 907.452.7959 Email: questops@mosquionet.com</p>		<p>YUKON #2 – 1109 Front Street. Whitehorse, YT Y1A 5G4 Phone: 867.668.4711 Email: yukonoperations@yukonquest.com</p>
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