

LeaderImpact Podcast - Ep. 32 - Tanya McReady - Building and Leading a Great Team in Challenging Times

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

dogs, hank, team, leader, started, trail, race, sled, life,, dog sled, people, mile, business, big, alaska, run, world, book, build

Lisa Peters 00:00

Welcome to the LeaderImpact Podcast. We are a community of leaders with a network of over 350 cities around the world dedicated to optimizing our personal, professional, and spiritual lives to have impact. This show is where we have a chance to listen and engage with leaders who are living this out. We love talking with leaders so if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions to make the show even better, please let us know. The best way to stay connected in Canada is through our newsletter at LeaderImpact.ca or on social media @LeaderImpact. If you're listening from outside of Canada, check out our website at LeaderImpact.com.

I'm your host Lisa Peters and our guest today is Tanya McCreedy. 23 years ago Hank and Tanya quit their jobs and moved to Ontario's wilderness to build their dream of starting a business, a family and creating a lifestyle around their beloved Siberian Huskies. Today we get to hear the story about Hank and Tanya, we will begin to understand the lessons and insights of teams working together, and how the same principles that apply to their Huskies can apply to your team. Hank and Tanya are the owners of Winterdance Dogsled Tours and also have a 2500-tree maple syrup farm and have co-written two books. They share their lives with four children, 150 huskies, and five cats. Today, Tanya McCreedy will share a leadership lesson focused on building and leading a great team through challenging times. Welcome to the podcast. Tanya.

Tanya McReady 01:34

Thank you so much, Lisa. It's my pleasure to be here.

Lisa Peters 01:38

So 150 Huskies?

Tanya McReady 01:41

Yeah, it sounds a lot when you read that number, but you know, they're all individuals. So when people ask us how many dogs you have, we can have to think because you know, it's Asin it's Joker. And that's Elvis. And it's Harry. Yeah. Yeah.

Lisa Peters 01:58

And you know what, though, because as it I just came out of my mouth, I'm like, Yeah, but

there's corporate teams that are larger. And, you know, you know all 150 dogs' names, you know. So, as it came out of my mouth, I went well, it's not really that large if you're thinking of a corporate team, but yeah, still a lot of mouths you have to feed.

Tanya McReady 02:16

It's a large family. Yeah.

Lisa Peters 01:58

Well, welcome to the show. And you know, we definitely want to start off just getting to know you a little bit more. So tell us a little bit more about your move. You know, 23 years ago, you went from corporate life, to a life of sled dogs. Tell us a little bit about that.

Tanya McReady 02:33

We get asked that question a lot. And you know, when I look back, it seems like a really big move. But it didn't seem like it at the time, because it was just a decision we made and it was just one step and the next step and the next step. But it all started, we got to Husky had no plans after we got married, but walked into a pet store fell in love with her, and three nights later brought her home.

And that one decision transformed the entire trajectory of our lives. Out of books and movies, we saw on this, like, Oh, we got to try dogsledding, and fell in love with that. And then you know, weren't loving our jobs. My passion has always been the environment and making a positive impact in nature and wildlife. And went to work for an environmental company that had a great plan they had a great project. But unfortunately, as we went to full scale, it had issues. And it turned out it wasn't doing the process that we thought it was. And so things were being swept under the carpet as they tried to fix it. And it just it got to the point I went to work feeling sick every day because we were making things worse. And that's the last thing I ever wanted to do.

So it really had me second-guessing my ultimate plan which had been to go to law school and become an environmental lawyer. And then I remember on the phone one night, a friend said to us, why don't you turn your love for your dogs into business? And Hank wasn't loving his job because he was traveling all over Ontario. And we were both going separate ways. And I remember he looked at me, he goes, that would be amazing. And I was like, Really? He's like, think about it? Well, the more we thought about it, the more excited we got. So, you know, we wrote a business plan and got turned down. You know, if you take a business plan and do a bank in southern Ontario with a picture of a dog sled team, I can tell you from experience it does not go well. So you know, I think we I should have tracked it easily 50 or 60 either rejections or no answers or laughter. And then finally, we got a call from a bank I never even approached. Somebody sent our business plan to Northern Ontario, and that bank invited us up and they gave us a business loan. And that's what started the whole thing. So we quit our jobs, rented out our house. And I remember the night we moved on September 1, 1999, about eight o'clock at night we handed the keys to our new tenants. And we started the four-hour

drive north to the wilderness where we bought 50 acres of bush and you know that drive that night driving across that last highway, it's in the highlands, so it's beautiful hilly country and there was a full moon rising that night, it seemed like the most incredible omen for this new life we were beginning.

But we knew it wasn't going to be all quite as we had planned, because we got to our new home, you know, nothing happens fast in this part of the world. So instead of our new house being done that we've designed, and the kennel for the dogs, all we got home to that night at like 1 am was a big driveway that went up into the hills. And two massive holes in the ground where a new house and the kennel should have been. No water, the well wasn't drilled. There was no hydro. We had a phone. Bell Canada had shown up on time so they nailed our phone to a tree. And that's how we started our new life in Halliburton.

And I was eight months pregnant with our first child to make things a bit more challenging. So it was a fall and everyone thought we were absolutely crazy, you know, to walk away from two careers, two great jobs, a beautiful home, a secure life. But it wasn't a life we loved. And that fall, you know, we kept going because the bad days and there were a lot of bad days, but we were like is our worst day here, worse than our best day there? And the answer was always no. And we both never questioned our sanity on the same day. I say that jokingly but also with all seriousness. So days that I would be like, what have we done? Hank would be my support and help me see what we were building. And days that he would be having those moments of what have we done, I would provide that support for him. Because sometimes you lose sight of what you're doing when things get tough and having somebody to help reinforce that dream and that goal. It makes all the difference in the world.

Lisa Peters 06:36

That's incredible. That is a great story. Yeah, leaving the corporate world, or, and it really I mean, you transition to something you were so passionate about, and you will make it work. And when you said you drove in and you know the full moon and you know, it's like, oh, this is gonna be great and then nothing.

Tanya McReady 06:57

And I mean, that first winter, we ended up living in the kennel with the dogs because you know, and I hear a lot of laughter when I say that. But Hank is from a huge Dutch family so they all came and helped us build that fall as fast as we could, as did my family. By November, when snow start to fall, we realized there was no way we were ever going to have the house done. Because we didn't even we hadn't even started the roof yet. And we're like, okay, like, we've got to focus on making money and starting our business. So the kennel was done. So we're like, you know, what, we're just we're gonna move in with the dogs. So the front, I mean, you know, I say that, but our dogs are pretty spoiled. So they have radiant heat through their floors, a full grooming room, kitchen, bathroom. So like it was from the old dilapidated motorhome, we were living in a definite step up. And it allowed us to focus on our business. And you know, then we got to welcome guests and start making money. And that just fueled

the belief that we really could do this. So it was actually a year after we moved here to the day that we finally moved into our new log home.

Lisa Peters 07:55

Living with the dogs for a year. Lessons Learned. (Laughing)

Tanya McReady 07:59

It wasn't that bad. (Laughing)

Lisa Peter 08:00

You had in-floor heating. (Laughing)

Tanya McReady 08:01

Exactly. (Laughing)

Lisa Peters 08:04

So over the years, and it's funny, because I mean, we watched those great stories you did, when you're like, we can do this, you know, prior to picking up your life, and you were inspired. And there's lots of movies, there's poems, there's stories of just dogs, and you know how they've made an impact on people's lives. You watched them. I'm wondering if you can share your biggest personal lesson that maybe you learn from working with your sled dogs?

Tanya McReady 08:29

Yeah, there's so many, you know, two books full. I think I'd have to say the biggest one is how they approach every single day. There's so much joy, so much excitement, so much passion every day. It doesn't matter if they're doing the same thing. It doesn't matter if their with the same dogs, the same people. They just bring so much joy to the moment. And I think that is the greatest lesson that they have given us is you can't be around them and be in a bad mood. I mean, it's just impossible because there's so much joy and positive energy, that it's just infectious. And to realize that, really, we're no different around people, right? If we bring the same joy and passion and energy, then we positively impact all those around us. And if we don't we also impact those around us. So I think you know, of the many, many lessons they've taught us that's the greatest gift.

Lisa Peters 09:27

Yeah, well, I think of why I've a rescue dog and when I walk in the door after work, it's like she is losing it. You know, it's like I just wagging. Man, I wish my husband did that. You know aged his tail. (Laughing) What do you say to people that's that this random question What do you say to people that just say like, it's just a dog?

Tanya McReady 09:50

They've never had a dog in their life. They couldn't have. Or, you know, they have challenges with understanding love and compassion and trust and empathy, because you can't have a dog in your life and not feel the love and the trust and the bond. And all of the...Gosh, I mean,

just the adoration and affection that they show towards everyone in their life. Yeah, I don't understand. And I mean, we do get customers sometimes who are afraid of dogs. And some, of course, have a great reason, you know, they've had a bad experience as a child or are just not grown up around dogs at all. So just don't know. And I always feel sorry for them that, you know, they're afraid of a creature that just brings so much love, and so much joy to everyone that they're around.

Lisa Peters 10:39

Yep. Shift more dogs in offices. Right. So switching a little bit to the professional side. And I know that we talk a lot at LeaderImpact about sort of, you learn more from your mistakes and failures. And I think I'm thinking I mean, right there I think you've had some. So I'm wondering if you can just share, maybe a great failure, a great mistake. And you know, what did you learn from it all?

Tanya McReady 11:04

Oh, yes there have been so many. Gosh, I think we'll talk about the Iditarod because that's, that's probably our most public one.

Lisa Peters 11:18

So and for anyone who doesn't know, what an Iditarod is.

Tanya McReady 11:22

Yeah, we had two goals when we started here. One was to build a dog sled business and a lifestyle, you know, around our dogs. And the second one was, my husband wanted to compete in the Iditarod, which is 1000 mile dog sled race in Alaska, biggest dog sled race in the world. And it took us 10 years, we knew it would take time to build the business to where we could afford, you know, to step away, for Hank to train with a team of dogs and go to Alaska, but 2010 found us at that starting line. And it was everything we could have dreamed.

Until 10 days later, when that dream ended 700 miles into that 1000-mile race. And Hank found themselves not finishing the race, being told he was done. And everything that brought it logistically, a lot of problems, because you know, getting Hank and the team out of remote Alaska. And then getting back to Halliburton, which is a six-day drive from Alaska with all the dogs. And when Hank got out, I remember when he called me, because I was, you know, needed or he can't follow, there's no road. So you follow like everyone else on on a computer screen watching GPS trackers of all the teams across Alaska. And I remember seeing the press release come out, Hank Debruin scratches from the Iditarod. And my brother had flown in to see him that day. And I called my brother and I'm like, Did you just see this? Because he was further in the interior of Alaska. And he goes, it has to be a mistake. He's like, I just saw him. He's like he was on top of the world, the team looked great, the dogs were happy. And it was a bit before we got confirmation that indeed it was true. And they said, you know, we're trying to fly Hank and the team further up the trail. And if we get them there before night, he'll be able to call it you.

Well, he called me. And I've rarely heard him so angry, because he felt so out of control of everything that was happening to him. But he had also at the start, the man who was the champion of the race at that time, he won four of them in a row, a wonderful man who recently passed. He had come up to Hank, as he was starting, and slapped him on the back because we're ahead at the starting line and said, I will see you in Nome. And Hank said yes you will which of course, is the finish line. Okay. And the first thing he said to me, he goes, I just let down Lance Mackey. He said I'm not going to reach Nome. I said, Hank, Lance will understand. And then from there, we went to anger. And when he we finally got him in the team out and they let us drive the truck into the runway to meet the team as they flew in. And I watched him get off that plane, I'll try to talk to him and he just beeline for our truck. And he looked at me said I just want to leave Alaska. We just got to go home. So our daughters and I flew home and Hank and the boys started to drive across Canada. And five days after we got home they did. But the man that got out of that truck was a very different man than the one I'd left in Alaska. Because on that five day drive, the anger had kind of faded. And now he was just in depression. And he was beating himself up everything he could have, should have maybe might have done that could have changed that outcome. And for the next month, he didn't leave our property. He wouldn't talk to anyone he got to the point he was hardly talking to us. And I remember being so scared for him because he has so much pride and I knew he would never ask for help.

So I remember one beautiful April day we were sitting on our porch and it's usually one of our favorite times a year is spring comes to Ontario and he was just not talking. Just staring down. And I didn't know what to do. So I said, Hank, what if what if we go back next year and you try again? And he looked at me and he said, There is no way in hell I'm ever going back to that race. I said, Okay, what about the lesser-known 1000-mile race, the Yukon Quest? What if we tried that to prove it wasn't you? It wasn't our dogs, because people had said such horrible things, of course. And for a second, I saw a spark in his eye then he said Pfff we can't afford it. He was right. We did not have money in the bank account for another 1000-mile race. But I also didn't know what else to do. So I said, I promise if you sign up for that race, we'll find a way. And I saw the second he made up his mind. Because it was just like that, I had my husband back. Because instead of being focused on the past, what everyone had said, what he couldn't change, what he'd done wrong. He had a new dream, a new goal, and a vision to chase. And he did finish that race.

So, you know, the biggest lesson that taught us is how to get through tough times, and there have been a lot others both on the trail and off. And those lessons of getting through tough times, setting new goals, getting out of everything, you can't change and being so stuck there. That's been our greatest lesson. Because every time we go through one of those, we get faster and faster at pivoting, to finding our way out. Because when you're stuck in that spot, you're just stuck in fear. And fear just makes you literally more stuck. You can't, you can't get out of a spot you're in if you're just in fear, and self doubt, and depression and beating yourself up. You got to set a new dream, get have a reason to be excited to get out of bed in the morning.

Lisa Peters 16:50

Hank is lucky to have you to have a partner like you.

Tanya McReady 16:53

And I'm lucky to have him too. I've had some tough times he's helped me get out of.

Lisa Peters 16:59

Because I think of many leaders and LeaderImpact is about bringing leaders together and integrating our personal, professional and spiritual, we have each other. And for those leaders that don't have someone and when they do fail, and when something happens, where are they going? You know? When people are listening to this and whoever's listening, I wonder what part of your story will resonate with someone? What part of it? Because I have emotion, I could feel it coming on. Oh, my my tears were coming. When you at the first point. I can't even talk we like you. Hank left that guy down. It's like, oh. Or is it the fear? Is it the depression, like what part of your story is going to grab someone to go, I need to talk to someone?

Tanya McReady 17:45

Yeah, and it's, you know, there has been times as we shared our stories, there's, there's parts that Hank hasn't wanted me to share. Because if you meet my husband, he's the epitome of what you would think of a man who lives in the wilderness and has a dog sled team.

Lisa Peters 17:57

I have seen the video. (Laughing)

Tanya McReady 17:59

He's got long hair, he looks as wild as our dogs as some journalists have wrote. But there was a part in our second book that, you know, I write the books, but he shares his stories and his memories, and then I put them together. And he had shared a story with me. We wrote the second book, 10 years after the first Yukon Quest, and I had never heard that story. And so I put it in the book. And the night before we published, he sat down with me and we read the book on the computer. And we got to that section. He's like, you put that in there? And it's like, well, you shared it, like I thought, I'm like, I can take it out, we can delay the launch and, and he sat for a minute because it was a very vulnerable story. And he's like, No, he said, you know, people have this image of mushers, male or female that we are tough, and you know, there's nothing we can't handle. And he's like, that's not true. So he said, if showing my vulnerability helps someone else to realize they can show their vulnerability, he goes, it's fine. Leave it in there. And I don't know if we have time to share that story. It's a quick one, Lisa, but I'm happy to if you would like to hear

Lisa Peters 19:03

Go ahead. Yes. There are good lessons here.

Tanya McReady 19:08

So, this was he was leaving Pelly Crossing in his first Yukon Quest. And you go from Pelly

Crossing to Dawson City, which is a 200-mile run. And he had never done a 200-mile run without support. So you have to pack everything that you and that team could possibly need for 200 miles because there's nothing out there to help you.

And so it took him so long to leave Pelly Crossing, because he was just second-guessing and we had so many supplies there and they wouldn't fit in his sled. So he tried to zip up his sled bag and it wouldn't close so he'd have to take something else out. And then he'd second guess and repack it. And we watched like three teams that got up after him leave and we're like Hank, like you've got to go like you can't keep second guessing yourself. You've got to go. And so finally he zipped up the sled bag and he pulled his hooks and he went. And when you leave Pelly you go down kind of a ramp, and then you go on to the Yukon River and away you go. And there's a big bridge as soon as you drop onto the river that connects both sides.

And what we didn't know is that he stopped at that bridge. And he set his snow hooks to stop the team. And he said, I stood and I waited to see the truck. And I'm like, but you know, when you leave a checkpoint, we still have like an hour or two hours where the work before we can leave. He's like, it didn't even dawn on me. He said, I didn't want to talk to you. He said, I didn't need to hug you. He said, I just wanted to wave. He said, I just wanted to see you one more time before I started on that stretch of trail, because he said I had so much fear. And he said, I got to the point, he said I don't know how long I stood there. But he said it was probably five or 10 minutes. And he said, then I got angry. So then I was like, they've just forgotten me. I'm just this guy on the sled that everybody's forgotten. I had this big pity party. And then he said, I felt so alone. He said I actually had tears rolling down my face. And he said, but the dogs had just rested for 10 hours. So he said, they're like, What is wrong with you? Like we need to be running. It's a beautiful day. And so they're jumping and howling and like looking at him, like what is wrong? And he's like, finally their energy, you know, came back to me and he's like, Okay, guys, we gotta go. So he pulled his hooks, and he took off. But he said, you know, like, you have your highest highs and your lowest lows out on that trail. And they're all self imposed in your mind. Yeah, so yeah, I'm gonna, none of those guys are indestructible. They all have feelings and fear and insecurities, too.

Lisa Peters 21:33

And how important it is to surround yourself with a team like that. His team may be dogs, but let's just put that back to your corporate team. Right to have that team's like, we can do this. And when because sometimes leaders fail or step back or, you know, haven't even got, yeah, yeah. Wow. That's great. Good story. Thank you for sharing that.

Tanya McReady 21:59

You're welcome. I mean, as they say, you know, a leader is only as good as their team. And a team is only as good as their leader. And that doesn't matter if it's dogs or people. It's totally true.

Lisa Peters 22:07

So you talked about, you know, the dogs are ready to go and Hank sitting there and he's like, What are you know, he's feeling mad, or. I heard that sled dogs, they like they love to be harnessed. They love to work and and they have more respect for you when you work so as a musher that so what does it mean number one for what is your job as a musher? Like, you know, in my mind, I don't know, they just they slide, they ride the sled. So you're gonna tell me more? But how do you build that trust with your dog? Like, and the dog is, you know, insert dogs, corporate team, whatever. But how do you build that trust that I'm with you? I'm gonna work just as hard as you are? Yeah, yeah.

Tanya McReady 22:46

There's a lot in that question, Lisa. Ok, I'll start with how we build a team. So we start every fall. And when we're building 1000 mile race team, we start no different than any team, you start with a big pool of perspectives, whether it's a sports team, or you're hiring for a position, right. And you kind of whittled down that team. So we start with fall trainings, slow, short runs, and we start watching everyone incredibly careful, we rotate them in different positions to find out who thrives where. And by, you know, November, mid-November, usually two months in we've pretty much nailed the majority of who that team is going to be. We know what positions they thrive in. We know who works best with who. Because, as I say, the deeper you know your team, and you know, replace dogs with people here because there's no difference. The better you know that team, the better you can build a team. Because then you can help them be successful. If you put a dog or person in lead, and they're not a leader, everything falls apart. I mean, with a dog sled team, they literally don't move, they just sit down and look at you like do I don't know what to do. This isn't what I do. And this isn't, I don't want to do this. Where if you put a leader further back on the team, and don't give them the responsibilities, and the opportunities that they crave, they get depressed, they get down, they can't be bothered to try because they're not being fulfilled. So it's so important to know your team, what they're afraid of, where they thrive, who they work best with, what they love about their job, what they hate about their job. And I'm talking about dogs, but obviously universal. Because when we build a team that way, that's the team that can literally climb mountains when you know that team so deeply. And of course Hanks team doesn't quote unquote, talk to him. But they totally do because he knows them so well. That he literally can read their body language, he can see the way they're carrying their head, their tail and he'll know what they're feeling if something's off, just because he watches them so closely so that he knows them so well.

So how we build that trust, it starts with that fall training as we're building that team. And well, some people will tell you that they want all their dogs to be evenly matched as far as colors or as far as stride or height or you know all these other criteria. We don't care about that at all. All we really care about is making sure that we have the dogs on that team that want to be on that team more than anything else in the world. Because if we have the desire and the passion to be part of that team, we can overcome anything else. I mean, obviously,

physically, they have to be able to do the job. But outside of that, if they have the heart and the passion, that's all we're looking for.

And then you find out who's who, right. You have your cheerleaders on the team, you have your leaders, you have your workhorses that just are always stable, solid dogs, you have your peacekeepers that you know, can run with anyone. So you learn all those individual strengths. And then you know how you can tweak your team when things aren't going right. Or you just it's an off day, and you know that you need to make some changes, just changing one thing up, can make all the difference in the world. But the trust is built as we go literally mile after mile after mile. We never asked more of them than we know they can give. So their trust builds in Hank that he's never going to ask more than they can deliver, that he's never going to put them in a situation that they don't know what to do.

And then we start modeling what we can anticipate they're going to have to deal with in that race. Of course, in Ontario, you can't quite model what's going to happen in Alaska and the Yukon mountain and weather-wise, but we try our best. So if it's storming here, they're out training. If it's windy, they're out training, if there's tough snow to go through, and breaking trail, they're out training. So slowly, we kind of build their confidence in what they're able to do. And then by the time they get to that race, not only do they have total trust in Hank, he also has total trust in their abilities as well. And they know that he will care for them no matter what. I mean, I often say people say Do you worry about the dogs when they're on the trail? And I honestly say I don't. Because I know Hank would literally sacrifice himself to care for those dogs, because he loves them so much. And I know love isn't a word we talk about a lot in the corporate world. But I believe to have a great team, you need to have love. You need to love your people. They need to love the organization and their mission with that organization. And even our own human team in all this when we run those races, our staff become our best friends because you become part of something that no individual no one of us not, Hank, not me, not our team can do on their own. Because together we can just, you know, no musher can do these races on their own. They need such a support team. And we get to be part of something we could never do without Hank and the dogs so. So trust is definitely built over time. And trust can't be broke. Because if it's broke, it takes so long to rebuild again. And if you push a dog team too far, ask them to do more. The only way that sled moves is the rope that attaches the dogs to the sled, there's no whip, there's no reigns, there's no nothing. It's just their desire to move. And if you ask too much, they won't move. They will literally sit and they will look at you and say you just screwed up. And we're done with you. And then you got to start rebuilding that trust again.

Now you can make mess up a little bit. You know, Hank's first race that he finished the first Yukon Quest he, he got in trouble 45 miles from the finish line. And he ended up going down numerous trails because all the trail markers were gone. He had no idea where they were going. And they'd have to turn around and come back and, and the dogs did it a few times. They were like, Okay, that's cool. He made a mistake. But after having to do it time and time and time again, he lost faith in himself. He lost faith in his ability to get them to the finish line.

And then they started to lose faith in him. And when that happened, everything started to break down because they were reading his mindset, his emotion. And then they start to fight amongst themselves and bicker and quarrel. And it's true of conflict in any team, you have to look at the leader first. Of course, there can be other conflict too. But in our experience, when a team that's doing really well starts having a lot of problems, it's generally the mindset of the leader that is the issue. Because that energy is going down into the whole team. Thankfully, they still got to the finish line, they had some outside intervention. You know, I believe it's spiritual, but it all came together and they got to finish but it was a tough time. And I often say I can be 1000 miles away from that team watching them on a tracker. And I know what Hank's mindset is. Because if that team is moving on fire, I know he's doing awesome. If that team is really struggling speed-wise, how far they're getting, I know it's Hank and his mindset is off and he is totally affecting his team with his mindset and his confidence and where he feels he is at the time. So it's all about the leader truly following the leader.

Lisa Peters 29:43

I never expected so many feels from this podcast Tanya. I'm like, Oh, that is so good. There's incredible leadership from dogs like Yeah, amazing. So you mentioned you know Hank got turned around. And you know, and you just mentioned just that spiritual. That's how you felt and that who have God intervened and got you to the finish line? You know, I want to, I want to ask you a little bit about we, you know, we obviously transition into our, our spiritual, and just can you give us a little glimpse into your own faith journey?

Tanya McReady 30:22

Yeah, I mean, Hank and I both grew up, you know, on farms and very traditional families and traditional everything right, you know, going to church on Sundays, and Protestant was my family and Christian reformed goes Hank's. And you know, when we got to our early 20s, and building our business and our careers and everything, and, and I feel like we kind of lost that side, everything was just such a hustle and grind for a while. And then we got to move here. And oh my I gosh, you know, if you live in a city, you have to get out of it is all I can say, for a while. I mean, I know so many people, their lives are in the city, and I get it. But taking breaks into the wilderness, or even just a park. And taking some peace and some time. The Spirit just connects everywhere, like it is in everything you see in every moment of the day. And so our move here took us back, and just got rid of the craziness and all that don't get me wrong, our business is still crazy, and for kids and everything else. But it is so much easier to connect to spirit when you live in the wilderness. And when there's nature and everything in the creation gave us all around us. But the best thing I can do is when I go to our property, we're so fortunate, well along, the bank owns most of it, we held a little bit of it have 2000 acres, where we run all of our tours, and we're off grid, there's no reception you can I think there's one spot, you get one bar, if you're lucky. When you get to that spot, you can be in such a rush, I can go up there, and I'll be like, Okay, I've got 10 minutes to get this done. And then I gotta get back to the office.

And as soon as you lose connection to the world, it's amazing what happens. Time slows down, the things that you never take time to notice you notice the sunrises, the sunsets, the wind, the birds, even a beaver swimming across the pond. And people ask Hank, all the time, why he runs these races. Why do you do it? You know, why would you put yourself into this position and go through these crazy things and minus 60s and all this stuff? And his first answer is always because I can. And his second answer is because there's very few times in my life, that I can truly let everything go. And for 10 days, 12 days, live in the moment and see all the magic that creation gave us. The Northern Lights, bond of running with a team of dogs through the wilderness. Because when everything fades away all the urgent demands of the day it's incredible the lives that we're blessed to have. And the more we do this, I feel the more than that's just an intrinsic part of our life. And also without talking about it, it's what we hope to give guests that come dogsledding with us. It's just the opportunity to see the intrinsic beauty of spirit all around us every minute of the day.

And of course, Hank's had some crazy stories on trails too. Crazy stories on trails. There was one time that was his first Yukon Quest as well, they left Dawson City in a blizzard. And it was at night. And it was so bad. I know the race organization, I think there was six or seven teams there and they could have gone out over the span of like seven or eight hours. And the race actually asked him to all please wait and go together. So they knew they were traveling together to make it safer. Not that it mattered because you couldn't see each other anyway. But I remember watching Hank dropped down on that river when it was his turn to start. And I maybe saw him for two minutes because they dropped onto the Yukon River and then hang a left and even his headlamp that normally I can see like five miles out was gone in seconds. The storm was that bad. And he had been so free to start that race because only 10 checkpoints and a huge distances between and of course what had happened to him in his first 1000-mile race.

And he got up one morning he said, everything's gonna be fine on the race. And I'm like, well, that's awesome. How did one night sleep give you such a change in mindset? And he goes, I can't explain it. But he said I had this dream. And he said Laser, who was one of our first great lead dogs, he was no longer with us, he said, I can't give you words for it. But he said Laser was in the dream, everything's gonna be fine. I said, Okay, so we get to the starting banquet and they had these two big screens and just slides of dogs and teams as the banquet went on. And all of a sudden Hank poked me goes look at that screen. And Laser was a very unique-looking dog. I've never met another dog that looked like him with his markings. And it was not our picture. And as far as I know, it was not Laser because I don't know who else would have sent them a picture but there was a dog that looked an absolute twin to him staring down at us. And I was like, well, that's interesting. Like I did not send them that picture. Well, the 40-mile run that Hank did out at Dawson City, at one point, the storm broke just for a second. And he could actually see the dogs because the storm was so bad, he couldn't even see his team, he'd have to stop and go up and check the dogs physically that they were all fine. And he's like, when there was a break for a second that storm, he said, I counted everyone. And he said, I had an extra dog and lead. And he said, I knew it was Laser.

So Hank doesn't talk about it too much, because he has a hard time explaining what he can't explain. But as you meet elders in our amazing First Nations communities on these race trails, because most of the communities would cross through our First Nations, and he's had the opportunities to speak to some of the elders in those towns as he's been on breaks. And, I know the one man said to me, he goes, Why do you question what you see? Because Hank was like, oh, you know, like, I don't when I saw this, but I'm sure I was just imagining it. And you know, he was coming up with all these excuses. And, and man was just like, why do you question what you see? And Hank's like, oh, that's, that's a really good question. So now he tends to accept the things that he sees out on trails. And, and again, some of them say, you know, mushers have huge sleep deprivation because they only sleep an hour or two, on average a day when they're on these trails. So, you know, is it similar to the sweat lodges and the vision runs? Hank's like, I have no answers, but he said, I know, I see things out on that trail. But I just now believe I meant to see. Yeah.

Lisa Peters 36:40

Oh, again, feels. Good story. Man, the great story, and thank you for sharing. Those are some God moments for me. Yeah. Good. Good. Thank you. So we usually end our podcast with those two final questions. One is about LeaderImpact. I mean, we're dedicated to leaders having a lasting impact. And as you continue through your own journey, in life, have you considered what you want your faith legacy to be when you leave this world?

Tanya McReady 37:17

Yeah, it's, it's a couple. I mean, you know, our, the 2000 acres in our mind is a legacy. It's a legacy to our family, but it's also a legacy to what we're so passionate about, which is the natural world around us, the wildlife, the animals, and so that we see as part of our spiritual legacy to leave that, you know, for years to come and a trust. The other part of our legacy is, is when we get to the get on stages, which is, you know, we just kind of COVID talking about challenges. COVID gave us that challenge and brought us that opportunity. When we get to share our stories on stages our greatest wish is that we impact people to follow their own dreams and their own passions. So if, if all people take away from either hearing our stories, or reading our books, or coming dogsledding with is is that if this crazy couple quit their jobs and started a dog sledding company in the middle of Canadian wilderness, maybe I can do that thing that I'm dreaming of that everybody's told me I can't that it doesn't make sense. And it doesn't make sense. It doesn't matter it doesn't make sense. Because it was placed in you for a reason. So if our legacy is that we help more people find their passion, their purpose and live it, then, then that's all I could ever ask for.

Lisa Peters 38:39

That was a great answer was really Yeah. I would love to see, I've seen some videos with you. And I would just love to see you speak. I just, it'd be an hour of crying for me I think. Great stories. So my final question for you. And I hope I get through this is what brings you the greatest joy.

Tanya McReady 39:04

So many things, it's hard to pick one. Our family you know, we have four children, they bring me so much joy. My husband brings me so much joy. Our dogs bring me so much joy. Seeing someone light up when they get on a dog sled. You know, I mean, we get we get to welcome people from all over the world which is so humbling, you know that they come to our little corner of Canada to experience something that they've dreamed of for their whole life. But sometimes we get people that it's always a joy to share our dogs in the wilderness, but sometimes we get people that it's, you know that critically, they're literally not critically, that's not the word I'm looking for. Anyway, they're, they're not going to live much longer. Chronically ill, there's what I'm looking for. Or they've had really, really tough challenges in their life. And when they come up to you after something that you've made possible for them to do that they never thought they could. And you can see that you have given them joy. There's no greater joy than giving, right? It's the greatest joy in the world. So that's those are some of my greatest joys and the wilderness and nature around me that just, there's their huge choice to me every moment every day too.

Lisa Peters 40:21

Oh yeah, another good answer. Tanya, thank you so much. It has been an absolute pleasure to spend these last 40 minutes with you. You make me smile. I have, I have felt tears coming on. I have felt joy. I think everyone listening can probably resonate with something you have said today. Your leadership lessons are incredible. Incredible. It's amazing. As I look at my dog over there sleeping, it's like, I'm gonna look at her differently now. We're gonna go have a chat, Sadie. Oh, thank you so much for this time. I just so appreciate you. So this ends our podcast, but if anyone wants to, you know, connect with you or find you, engage with you, how can they do that?

Tanya McReady 41:07

Yeah, probably the easiest way is winterdance.com, our main website. From there, you can learn more about our speaking or our social media, or books or our dogs. It's kind of that's the hub of where you can go from there. So that's the best place.

Lisa Peters 41:20

We hope people do. I have been to your website, and it's like, oh, man, I would love to come there. I don't know how I'm gonna get my flight pattern. But it's amazing. Thank you again, Tanya, for joining us.

Tanya McReady 41:30

My pleasure, Lisa. Thank you.

Lisa Peters 41:33

All right. Well, if you're part of LeaderImpact, you can always discuss or share this podcast with your group. And if you are not yet part of LeaderImpact and would like to find out more and grow your leadership, find our podcast page on our website at LeaderImpact.ca And

check out our free leadership assessment. You will also find on our web page chapter one of Braden Douglass's book, *Becoming a Leader of Impact*. It is an amazing leadership book. You can also check out groups available in Canada at LeaderImpact.ca or if you're listening from anywhere else in the world, check out LeaderImpact.com and get in touch with or get in touch with us by email info@LeaderImpact.com and we will connect you. And if you like this podcast, please leave us a comment. Give us a rating or review. This will help other global leaders find our podcast. Thank you for engaging with us. And remember impact starts with you.