



## Canada Goose Spreads the Warmth

Author: Steve Ladurantaye

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When Dani Reiss invited some of his Arctic customers down last year for a corporate anniversary party, he didn't expect they'd be harsh critics of his industrial practices.

As chief executive of Canada Goose – an iconic down-filled coat maker that traces its roots back more than 50 years – he decided to invite the Inuit customers to Toronto to demonstrate how much he appreciated their business (when you sell coats intended for sub-zero conditions, the Arctic is actually an important market).

But what the women found on the factory floors astonished them – scraps of coats littered the facility, and zippers and fabric were tossed in boxes bound for landfills. Knowing that many Inuit communities had women who made coats, they suggested he send the fabric north to remote locales desperate for material. The direct costs are negligible, since he's sending jackets north anyway. The reputation boost is more measurable.

"We were wondering how to solve our waste problem," Mr. Reiss says. "It's on their back that we built our reputation, and we have to stay important to these communities. So we're doing the right thing for our business, and they are very appreciative. They aren't going to forget that – not many companies engage them."

Perceptions are very important to Mr. Reiss, who is acutely aware of the image the coat company has built. The Inuit are vital customers, he says, and a box of scraps being utilized in a remote community can hardly be considered competition. But he sees the scraps as an example of how companies can have it both ways – sustainability and profitability don't need to be exclusive. He also uses traditional hunters to gather the coyote fur used in his coats, stressing that the animals are not endangered and that hunters have been culling the animals for generations.

His involvement with Polar Bears International is another example of his commitment to sustainability – as chairman of the board, he's setting policy that guides the California-based charity's polar-bear-saving initiatives.

"With a charity like that we can take a leadership role and not just jump on the bandwagon," he says. "We don't just want to do token things that are easy to do."

Equally as important, he's picking up policy-making skills he may not be able to get in the warehouse. At the charity he's not "the boss," he's one voice on a board and must exercise more patience and diplomacy than he might otherwise be inclined to at his day job. "It's a different structure with a lot of governance and high-level issues," he said.

The charitable effort hasn't been wasted on his business, either. He has used the partnership to develop a line of coats used in cold-weather research, outfitting the organization's researchers in his specially developed gear and then spinning it into a marketing strategy.

"We took the parka that they had been using for 20 years, just a workhorse classic coat," he says. "We made some modifications, and [made them] a special shade of blue. It turns out to be a great commercial colour, so we sell that jacket for a little bit more ... we don't call it being responsible, it is just the way we run our business."

Prices range from about \$250 for a basic model to closer to \$800 for a serious sub-Arctic coat.

Mr. Reiss took over the company from his father, who focused on European markets during his tenure. Despite taking a more global approach – Asian markets are becoming increasingly important – all of the company's coats are still made in Canada (many by employees who have been with the company for more than 40 years).

That's because sustainability means more than watching your carbon output, he said; by keeping positions in Canada, the company helps to build vibrant communities through good-paying jobs.

"It's also about authenticity, and how we believe in being real," he said. "So much stuff is made offshore, but part of corporate responsibility is about making sure everyone has a good place to work that adds to the quality of their life. That's very much part of our core values."