

ALEX IBBOTSON



BACKCOUNTRY SAFETY EDUCATOR - LEADERSHIP COACH - CANADIAN RANGER - PARAMEDIC
Kimberley, British Columbia

No stranger to the untamed lifestyle, Alex Ibbotson is happiest on her snowmobile, or her dirt bike, if it's summertime.

"I am, right now today, living my dream," she says. "I get to go out into the wilderness, and help spread the wisdom of how to be safe in the backcountry, with colleagues, with friends, and with youth. It doesn't really get better than that."

Alex is the owner of Canada Backcountry Services. The company provides training in avalanche safety instruction, first aid, leadership coaching and snowmobile mobility, including female specific mountain riding skills courses. In addition to her company, Alex is also Officer of the Hunt - Region 4 for the Métis Nation of British Columbia, a board member for the Rocky Mountain Métis Association, a certified Emergency Medical Responder and a Canadian Ranger at 4th Canadian Ranger Patrol Group.

"I have a natural inclination towards challenging the norm," she laughs. "So that way of thinking definitely brings hurdles and roadblocks". Alex values failures as an opportunity for growth. "We all experience despair or self-doubt, but don't be afraid of the lows," she says. "They contribute to the success of the journey, and also change the course."

Changing the course has contributed to Alex's many successes. Due to the diversity of her career choices - a one-time beer-cart girl, and for a while

a commissioned sales person, she mentions that, back then, she was completely unaware of gender inequality in the workforce. But then she states, "I have had many opportunities because I am a Métis woman. There is growing recognition for the value of diversity, which has increased opportunities for Indigenous women. Focusing on the opportunities rather than inequities help me maintain a resilient headspace to overcome adversity."

She talks about how the Canadian Rangers were huge in helping her obtain success, with opportunities to showcase her backcountry talents and access to real-time training exercises in the field. "The training I experience with the Rangers is unparalleled. It is an honour to be a member of the Rangers and work alongside my colleagues." Then she mentions working in a male-dominated field, and how challenging it is to progress through the snowmobile industry as a female, when often men do not want to be instructed by a female.

Beyond her day-to-day of backcountry guiding and training, coaching values-based leadership to other women, and hands-on education for youth in the backcountry, nature therapy and

education, Alex is currently working on her research for a Master of Arts in Leadership at Royal Roads University. She has an interest in cultural integration, transformational behavioural change and social field theory.

With an appreciation for subcultures, having worked as a woman in male-dominated fields, as well as progressing as a snowmobile-based avalanche practitioner in a predominantly ski-based industry, Alex talks about her research as being themed as "cultural integration through relationship building and knowledge sharing to promote diversity".

"Resilience is essential for success," Alex shares as a part of her story. "I don't think, 'oh, I made a mistake,' I think, 'what can I learn?'"

The Métis Financial Corporation of BC helped Alex achieve her dream. The MFCBC offers financial options and business planning services for Métis businesses in British Columbia.

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