

BERNICE CLARKE

UASAU SOAP - Iqaluit, Nunavut



“Dream.” she says, this force of nature. Bernice Clarke, owner and operator of Uasau Soap in Iqaluit, Nunavut, and proud mother of four, knows what she is talking about. From community to family, to building a business centred around taking an old way of healing and putting it into a new way of healing, Bernice starts by dreaming.

“It all just happened,” she says. Bernice, and her spouse Justin, provide organic and sustainable soaps, oils, and butters that are created with traditional ways, and standards.

As Bernice proudly talks about their partnership, she says, “He is the lung, the liver, the kidneys, of the business. He knew it was so important to me, for us to remain a 100 per cent Inuit business, and he left a big job, initially to help with the legal side of setting things up. Now, we just went up 30 per cent in sales, we are on Shopify, and we just did a power couple podcast, we work together in everything.” Then she laughs, “In fact, I am supposed to be helping him make butters right now.” Her dedication and sense of humour shine through, and a bit of mischief, as she says, “It’s like life, it’s supposed to be fun.”

“I want beauty,” she states, “and I can choose that now, as an adult. When I was growing up I went hungry sometimes, and what I have now in my life, is what I wished for as a little

girl.” And wished for her own children, as well. “As I got stronger in my business, I got my children into it too, and it became a family business,” she says with pride and excitement. “When I was growing up, I saw small businesses running and doing ok, and then as I grew, I looked with different eyes, and was inspired. I want to wake that up in others.”

Showcasing Inuit ways are at the heart of everything she does. “I took myself, and made it into a business,” she laughs. It shows, literally, with a tattoo of her company’s logo across her back. “As soon as you touch the land, it is so healing.”

She shares her belief that it is important to try this, to try that, to try anything and everything. “If I could, I would crawl all over the world, like, ‘what do you have here? and what do you have there?’,” then she giggles; anything really is possible.

She mentions spending time in the Yukon and how impressed she was with small businesses there, coming together, acting as a community. And thought, why not do it at home? So she started to plant those seeds, and said she was surprised when others started sharing their own ideas. “It just sort of happened,” she says. “We can be each other’s bridges, to create something that is not there yet. Our head gets stuck sometimes when we are dug in too deep in our daily work -

it is good to remember the bigger world.” Then she talks about the Kakivak Association, and the business grant she received from them. “Their support helped us build our stock, purchase products to make our soaps and butters. And especially as an Inuk woman, I want to learn even more, so I can help others interested in being an entrepreneur.”

“It’s all about dreams,” she says. “Dreams raise the vibrations of others, and when I help others heal, I heal too. It’s a beautiful way of infecting people.”

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