

INUUJAQ LESLIE FREDLUND



MAYBE SOMEWHERE - Rankin Inlet, Nunavut

Inuujaq Leslie Fredlund always struggled with labels, so it took her a long time to call her herself an artist and designer. "I've always been creative," she states, "I love all of it, sewing, carving, jewelry, writing, I love working with my hands."

Growing up in many communities in Nunavut, this gracious, soft-spoken mother of four children, has called Rankin Inlet her home for the past 26 years. Having attended school in Ottawa at Nunavut Sivuniksavut, a school for Inuit that provides both cultural and academic experiences, she then ventured to Victoria, British Columbia, to pursue an education in photography. After moving back to Nunavut, she says, "I spent a lot of time being a Mom and working for the family. But one thing always stayed the same," she recalls, "my love of art, crafts, and fashion."

She has done all kinds of different jobs, from working in education, to not-for-profit, as well as in the private sector, and with the Government of Nunavut. "I have been a part of workplaces that have been real gems," then quickly adds, "but I would have never been as happy as I am now."

Inuujaq's business, Maybe Somewhere, is a boutique store that features Inuit, Nunavummiut, and Indigenous products; everything from jewelry and apparel, to gifts, cosmetics,

skincare, and music. Or, as it states on her website, "Selling Cool Stuff & Doing Cool Things."

She also shares thoughts about being a woman and being an entrepreneur, and talks about when she worked in office jobs. "Men are taken more seriously in the workplace, and it's so obvious yet so normalized that no one seems to catch it when it's happening. I could offer up an idea, and it would go unnoticed. A male coworker could say the exact same idea and suddenly it's great. So, I just love being my own boss and being able to act on my own ideas."

"The arts community, it's a community I have always felt at home in," she emphasizes, and then she laughs, "It's such a good feeling, I feel loved and safe and happy and accepted. It is one of the few places I've seen where people help each other and lift each other up, and really want to see each other succeed - to be part of it is such a huge honour. If the whole world could do this, wouldn't that be something else? And I am now comfortable saying I am an artist."

With the high cost of living in her region, and wanting to provide quality of life for her children, she recounts, art was a very big risk. Creating an opportunity to do more art and design, but still have a comfortable income, was scary, she says. "I'm so grateful

to the Kivalliq Business Development Centre, for believing in me and supporting Maybe Somewhere. While the loan helped me reach my goals in growing my business, it was the unexpected positive feedback and excitement about Maybe Somewhere that really means a lot to me. It means a lot that the Centre is cheering me on and wants to see the business succeed."

"It has been quite a journey," she says. Then adds, "But I look at things a lot differently now. I have big dreams, but I am taking small steps."

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