

# LEANNE HUVENAARS



T2 DENTAL AND TISDALE DENTAL HYGIENE CLINIC - TISDALE, SK

**T**he waiting room is bright and inviting as Leanne Huvenaars proudly explains the business model for the T2 Dental and Tisdale Dental Hygiene Clinic Ltd. They are full-service dental clinics with two owners: a dentist and a hygienist. "It's not usually composed like that, but we're changing the way dentistry works and how the business model is constructed."

When Leanne was studying dental hygiene, she discovered independent practice. At the time, no hygienists were operating their own storefronts in Saskatchewan; hygienists must have a contract with a dentist to operate, and generally, the dentist already owns the business. "I wanted a storefront, so back in 2003, I said, 'I will be the first storefront hygiene clinic in Saskatchewan.'" To achieve this goal, twelve years ago, Leanne partnered with another hygienist, and they rented space to a dentist who supported her business model. In 2021, Leanne bought out her hygienist business partner and is now an equal partner with a dentist.

Along the way, Leanne has learned a lot about operating a business. Notably, she learned how to understand and work with strengths and weaknesses. "There are many areas that I am good at, and there are some that I'm not. If you surround yourself with people who know those things better than you do, and their common goals are the same as yours, such as helping others and being a change maker, things fall into place." Another key lesson has been to take

advantage of the challenges. "Without those challenges, we wouldn't have had the opportunity to educate ourselves in so many areas. If everything comes easy in life, do we really realize how hard we have worked to get where we are?"

The clinics are unique in other ways. They focus on providing care to First Nations and Inuit people and have contracts with four First Nations within Saskatchewan, both on and off reserve. In addition to dental services, they have created a three-month non-accredited dental receptionist course to help create career opportunities and develop new staff. After completing the course, graduates will find employment within the dental industry, either in T2/Tisdale offices or in another office. "It's a quicker way for First Nations and Inuit people to dip their toe into dental, but it also gives them the ability to have a career after three months."

Another unique feature of the clinics is a Special Needs room. This room holds special significance for Leanne and has been named the Pascal Erickson Room in honour of Leanne's younger sister, who was the inspiration for the room. It is equipped with portable equipment that allows people to be served in their wheelchairs, eliminating the need to transfer a person from their wheelchair to a dental chair and back again.

When Leanne talks about the rewards of operating her business, she focuses on how she can help others: providing employment or providing care in the manner that she feels is appropriate. "There have been so many rewards. The rewards start with being able to

help someone, whether it is through employment where they have the opportunity to provide for their family that they didn't otherwise have. It's also to provide the care in a safe practice, in a setting, and be able to set your own timelines as to how much time you need per client."

Her outlook for the future is positive. "I think it all just starts with a dream. And when you have that dream, it may not be something you can do at that time, but it starts with that. If we can dream it and reach out to people to see what resources are out there, we are going to be successful. I am so excited because we can sit at tables we've never sat at before. We can be our own employers. We can employ other people and help them along the way. I really believe that this is a great time to be a woman, and this is a great time to be a woman in business."



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