

RINDGE



PHOTO BY JASON LITTLE

Franklin Pierce University professor Jason Little spent the month of July in the Nunavut Territory in Canada, where he mentored Inuit entrepreneurs.

The intersection of life's passions leads to trip

FPU professor takes sabbatical to Native American village

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It was in the northernmost territory of Canada that Jason Little was able to merge all of his passions into one unforgettable experience.

The 59-year-old Franklin Pierce University marketing professor spent the month of July on sabbatical on Baffin Island in the Nunavut Territory to mentor young business entrepreneurs and research Native American business practices, merging his love of the wilderness, Native American culture, business, and mentoring.

"It's a compelling intersection of my life, where all of my interests have met," Little said. "I don't know how many



PHOTO CREDIT: JASON LITTLE

FPU professor Jason Little (second from the right) stands with three of his mentees, Chris Idlaut, Michael Milton, and Jamesie Itulu (left to right).

people have the opportunity to reach this intersection, but I'm blessed."

In many ways, the concept for the trip was routed in Lit-

tle's love of canoeing and paddling.

Little, who has been paddling "for many years," has done canoeing trips through-

out New England and Canada. In the summer of 2008, Little paddled the 600-mile long Kazan River in Nunavut, a trip that ended at a small, Inuit settlement.

"It was extremely powerful, it was a vast landscape... it's very easy to get lost if you aren't paying attention," Little said.

Much like his love of paddling, Little can trace his interest in Native American culture back to his youth.

"My parents recently stumbled upon an old research report I did in the first grade that had to deal with Eskimos. I pretty near fell apart when I saw that - I feel like things came full circle," Little said. "... I'm fascinated with a lot of things about the culture - their connection with the Earth, the creativity, and the artwork that comes out of the

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culture.”

After some encouragement from his wife and the FPU administration, Little decided to combine his love of exploring the wilderness, Native American culture, mentoring, and business into a sabbatical trip to northern Canada.

Little spent his time in two locations: Iqaluit, the capital of the Nunavut territory, and Pond Inlet, a remote settlement on the northern tip of Baffin Island.

Pond Inlet's largely Inuit population is just over 1,600 as of a 2016 Canadian Census report. Located approximately 1,200 miles from the North Pole, Little said the settlement can be a challenge to reach by many modes of travel.

“The roads don't go anywhere, they might go eight kilometers out of town and then end,” Little said. “The only way to get in an out is either by plane or, if you are

lucky and the ice is out, by boat. Most of the time, things are froze over, so the only way out is by plane.”

It took a while to pull his trip together, as he had no contacts in the area. Little said he emailed “a zillion” government officials before cold calling an office in Pond Inlet and finding someone to help out.

He would eventually be put in contact with a group of young entrepreneurs, who he began having monthly video conferences with in Feb. 2017.

During the video conferences, Little worked with five Pond Inlet entrepreneurs – though the sessions featured a core group of three – discussing business strategies and philosophies, writing a mission statement, website development, and more.

The trip allowed for Little to meet many of his mentees, although he spent most of his time with Jamesie Itulu, who is working with partner Michael Milton to grow their apparel business, High Arctic

Apparel Company.

“Over time, it was great. I felt I was able to develop personal relationships with the mentees I was with,” Little said.

Now that he has returned, Little is preparing a research study – the topic of which he believes may be the first of its kind.

The study focuses specifically on online marketing communication used by Inuit-owned organizations.

Little interviewed about a dozen business leaders during his week in Iqaluit in order to examine how Nunavut businesses use marketing and communications and how things could be improved.

“Any government publication has to be printed in three languages: English, French, and Inuktitut, which is the Inuit language. You can imagine how a marketing concept – if you are trying to communicate a slogan or a marketing message – you have to have it translated into three different languages,” Little said. “It's a

challenge in the territory, how to balance that cultural identity.”

Little has also been able to weave his experiences into his teaching at Franklin Pierce.

In the spring 2018 semester, Little worked with six undergraduate students – members of the university's small business advisory group – to research marketing communication utilized by Inuit-owned businesses.

“My love of mentoring, that's why I teach. I enjoy working with people who learn, I'm a true believer in lifelong learning,” Little said. “To be able to mentor not only my students at Franklin Pierce University but to be able to replicate that with another culture – it was great to be able to have that opportunity.”

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