

She came, she saw, she conquered

Iqalummiit climbs Mount Kilimanjaro to raise funds for Canadian Lung Association

by Myles Dolphin
Northern News Services
Iqaluit

There was a scary moment for Robbin Sinclair early last month when she was hiking back down from the summit of Africa's highest mountain, Mount Kilimanjaro.

Her hands trembling uncontrollably, she was clearly suffering from serious pulmonary issues, the remnants of embolisms she had suffered only two years prior.

Forced to stop at the first camp she encountered, she was able to recover with the help of oxygen from tanks.

The perseverance she exemplified is at the heart of the message she wants to share with Nunavummiut.

"Don't think you can't improve your health, even if you have pulmonary issues," she said. "My mother was a smoker and my father smoked cigars. My message is, if you're a smoker, you could be impacting the health of the people around you."

Sinclair lost both her grandfather and her mother to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a long-term lung disease that is often caused by smoking.

Although she never started smoking herself, Sinclair believes her own pulmonary issues may have been caused by the environment in which she was raised, and now she wants to raise awareness in the hopes of raising more than \$10,000 for the Canadian Lung Association (CLA).

"Smoking has always been a huge issue up here in Nunavut," she said. "The money I've been raising for the CLA will hopefully impact Nunavut as well as sufferers of tuberculosis, which is made worse through smoking."

Sinclair paid for the trip to Kilimanjaro out of her own pocket, and has raised more than \$5,690 for the cause so far.

She trained intensely, on her own and with a personal trainer, for the

better part of a year to be able to trek up the mountain.

She said she was really well-prepared before heading to Tanzania and was told there are three keys to a successful climb – being in the right physiological, physical and mental states.

"In my case, I had the physical and mental aspects, but my physiology was a bit compromised," she said. "I spent a few days at base camp in order to get acclimatized. I haven't felt this healthy in maybe my entire life."

Part of an eight-member team, Sinclair summited on Jan. 6 and proudly waved the Nunavut flag from the peak.

Now that she's back at sea level, she hopes to spread the word by speaking at schools and updating her personal blog, which details her experience in Africa.

"The idea is that your lungs are precious," she said. "I felt helpless watching my mother because there was nothing we could do for her. It's critically important for people to lead

productive lives when they have lung diseases."



photo courtesy of Robbin Sinclair

Longtime Iqalummiut Robbin Sinclair, on the right, proudly displays the Nunavut flag at the top of Mount Kilimanjaro with one of her guides on Jan. 6.

People who are interested in

donating can get in touch with Robbin through her blog at kiliclimbforlife.com

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