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Kinds of Winter

Four Solo Journeys by Dogteam in Canada's Northwest Territories

Dave Olesen

\$19.99 Paperback • 268 pp., 12 b/w illus., 5 maps • 978-1-77112-131-6
Life Writing series • November 2014

Dave Olesen's four midwinter dogsled journeys project struck me as a wonderfully sane choice of place- and self-exploration, reminding me of how Thoreau walked many days across thickets and swamps exploring his homeplace. But what a vast landscape Dave lives in! And what mindful and sympathetic attention it took to pack and plan for not just himself but a whole team of tough and dedicated dogs. I understand why he did it, but the details of how is an education in itself. The book's back matter on winter camping, and on the care of dogs, alone is worth it. The relaxed but steady frame of mind in which he packed and travelled is the key. I salute this man and his passion, and his family for giving him space to explore it. An old Inupiaq Eskimo once said to me as I set out in a canoe on a September river, "Don't have any adventures!"

— **Gary Snyder**, poet; professor of English, UC Davis

Kinds of Winter is a chronicle of the beauty, the lore, the why, and the dog sled adventure of travelling across the Barren Lands. It is written by a master of winter travel by dogteam. To anyone who loves the north or who has a curiosity about living in the cold this is a must-read.

— **Will Steger**, polar explorer and educator; www.willstegerfoundation.org

This is a wonderful book, telling the story of four incredible journeys by a remarkable man. — **Kathleen Coskran**, author of *The High Price of Everything*

CONTENTS

List of Maps and Illustrations

Author's Note

Compass Points, Over the Boulders, Eager ...

South

East

North

West

Afterword

Appreciations and Acknowledgements

Appendix A: Food, Gear, and Some Notes on Winter
Camping

Appendix B: The Dogs and Their Care

Appendix C: Some Tricks for Dead-Reckoning
Navigation

Notes

Glossary

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After a fifteen-year career as a sled dog racer, musher Dave Olesen turned his focus away from competition and set out to fulfill a lifelong dream. Over the course of four successive winters he steered his dogs and sled on long trips away from his remote Northwest Territories homestead, setting out in turn to the four cardinal compass points—south, east, north, and west—and home again to Hoarfrost River.

His narrative ranges from the personal and poignant musings of a dogsled driver to loftier planes of introspection and contemplation. Olesen describes his journeys day by day, but this book is not merely an account of his travels. Neither is it yet another offering in the genre of "wide-eyed southerner meets the Arctic," because Olesen is a firmly rooted northerner, having lived and travelled in the boreal outback for over thirty years. Olesen's life story colours his writing: educated immigrant, husband and father, professional dog musher, working bush pilot, and denizen of log cabins far off the grid. He and his dogs feel at home in country lying miles back of beyond.

This book demolishes many of the clichés that imbue writings about bush life, the Far North, and dogsledding. It is a unique blend of armchair adventure, personal memoir, and thoughtful, down-to-earth reflection.

Dave Olesen grew up in small-town Illinois. He has a B.A. in Humanities and Northern Studies. A veteran dog musher, he finished the daunting Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race eight times. Olesen immigrated to Canada in 1987. He lives on Great Slave Lake with his wife, Kristen, their two daughters, forty-three huskies, and a ninety-year-old Danish sailboat. He works as a bush pilot and guide.



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