

Focus on Leadership

A SPECIAL SERIES ON CALGARY'S BUSINESS VISIONARIES

A special publication of the Calgary Herald in partnership with Calgary Economic Development

Film production company makes its mark

They co-produce tales about pet owners riled up over Rover's unruly behaviour in the Slice network hit *At the End of My Leash*, which airs in 41 countries. Under Stampede Entertainment Inc., White Iron, in partnership with the Calgary Stampede produces major concerts, brought the likes of Taylor Swift and Kenny Chesney to Calgary. And they work with Emmy-award winning documentarians and major television networks — including CBC, Rogers, Shaw, Sun Media, NBC, ABC and ESPN — as well as some of the most respected businesses in corporate Calgary.

White Iron Inc. produces, edits, writes, animates and creates, and its success has been tremendous over the last two decades.

"I really believe that our 21 years as an established company, combined with our years of experience as a creative team, has set the White Iron family apart," says Jean Merriman, executive vice-president and co-founder at White Iron. "We're very service-oriented and that has helped us build a really solid reputation both locally and internationally."

Being known for delivering a

high-quality product on time and on budget has helped bolster business, as well, says Carol Ryder, director of business development. The company, which is composed of White Iron Productions, White Iron Pictures and White Iron Digital, has evolved from a local commercial production company into one of the country's largest film, television and new media production companies, delivering content for distribution virtually anywhere from the Internet and television, to classrooms, boardrooms and trade shows around the world.

"The entire White Iron family is always careful to pay homage to its hometown," says Merriman. "We are very committed to our community, and Carol and I, who are both long-time Calgaryers, sit on a number of local boards and committees and believe in giving back."

In addition, the company works with nonprofits in the community to provide professional services at reduced or no cost.

White Iron also works with many local educational institutions, including the Alberta College of Art + Design, Mount Royal University and SAIT Poly-



Wil Andruschak photos

From left, White Iron Productions' executive vice-president and co-founder Jean Merriman and director of business development Carol Ryder check the workflow in one of the editing suites with editor Steve Katami.

technic, to help develop new local talent by being on advisory committees and participating in practicum programs for students.

Merriman says the company's partnership with Calgary Economic Development is absolutely

beneficial since the two organizations share common goals and beliefs in regards to the potential of the city.

"We want to be part of shouting out who we are to Canada and to the world, and Calgary

Economic Development does a great job of that," says Ryder. "Our partnership with CED allows us to be part of this effort and to showcase our abilities and to build valuable new relationships."

Company has the ticket to putting city on the map

Theatre Calgary is proving to be a fearless leader in both the scale and selection of its productions, and has become one of the largest and most successful theatre companies in the country.

"Theatre Calgary exists in a vibrant city that truly wants theatre and that wants us to succeed," says artistic director Dennis Garnhum, who was appointed to his position in 2005. "That makes a difference in terms of what we can do."

"When we premiere out a new production, people are excited and hopeful and that allows us to take risks on new and impressive productions with confidence."

For instance, in the 2009-2010 season, Theatre Calgary and the Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company made Canadian theatre history with the world premiere production of *Beyond Eden*.

"It was a huge show, all new, with a big band, and other theatre companies probably would have been terrified to take on new work like that, but we are not," says Garnhum. "And now we're going to be presenting

our own version of *Cats*, which is another bold move for us."

Garnhum says Theatre Calgary will be transformed into a gigantic back alley where the spectacle of singing and dancing cats will surround theatre-goers in one of the greatest musicals ever.

Theatre Calgary has also been participating in many exciting new collaborations, including its first international collaboration, a dance show with San Francisco's American Conservatory Theater, *Tosca Cafe*.

Great theatre does not happen without great talent though, and Theatre Calgary is committed to investing in the future of theatre artists as well. Theatre Calgary's FUEL program nurtures emerging theatre talent within the city to generate a renewable resource of artists with an interest in creating on a larger scale.

"A healthy arts community is a reflection of a healthy city, and Calgary has that," says Garnhum. "As an Action Calgary partner, we can show our appreciation for the great support we've received from the quiet believers in this city."

Employees propel airline carrier to new heights in industry

The western-Canadian based air carrier that changed how, when and even why people fly with exceptional customer service at great prices has been an innovative industry leader for 15 years.

WestJet is one of the most profitable airlines in North America and was named a J.D. Power 2011 Customer Service Champion.

"I think the primary distinguishing factor for WestJet is first and foremost, our WestJetters," says company spokesman Robert Palmer. "If you hear stories about how a guest had a great experience with us, it's usually because of something one of our WestJetters did."

"Our people are our greatest strength because they care, so much so that they're willing to go the extra mile for our guests. They care about delivering a great guest experience, and it shows."

WestJet was launched in 1996 with three planes, five destinations and 220 WestJetters on staff, and today employs more

than 8,000 people and flies aircraft to 71 destinations in Canada, the U.S., the Caribbean and Mexico.

WestJet currently has one of the youngest and most fuel-efficient fleets in North America, with most aircraft equipped with blended winglets, which significantly reduce fuel burn and emissions.

The airline is also the global leader and the first carrier in Canada to adopt Required Navigation Performance approach technology to land aircraft.

"RNP utilizes global positioning system satellites to allow aircraft to fly direct and precise approaches to airports," says Palmer. "This shortens flight time and miles flown, also reducing fuel burn and emissions."

WestJet management has never been afraid to take a leadership role in finding new ways to make flying more enjoyable and accessible to Canadians.

"In 2007, WestJet was the first airline in North America to introduce the electronic board-

ing pass," says Palmer. "We offer guests the ability to check in using their mobile device — as well as via the Internet at home, a kiosk at the airport or a check-in counter."

WestJet was also among the first airlines to introduce self-serve baggage tagging, which has greatly reduced line ups at major airports across the country.

"Our Campus office building is also very innovative using many different types of green technology to reduce our environmental footprint and save energy," he says.

Since 2001, WestJet has spent more than \$2 billion upgrading its fleet to the more fuel-efficient Boeing Next-Generation 737-series aircraft, says Palmer.

"Emissions from these aircraft are 30 per cent lower on a per-person basis than the fleet of 200-series aircraft WestJet replaced," he says.

WestJet's long-term vision is to make the air carrier one of the five most successful international airlines in the world by 2016.

Boosting tourism all in a day's work

Resorts of the Canadian Rockies provides recreational opportunities that are the envy of the world, and the company does it in Calgary's backyard as well as throughout the Rockies.

It is one of the largest ski resort owners and operators in North America and owns five ski resorts across Canada including Fernie Alpine Resort and Kimberley Alpine Resort in B.C., Nakiska in Alberta, and Mont-Sainte-Anne and Stoneham in Quebec. The company also owns and manages a number of golf courses and hotels.

"Resorts of the Canadian Rockies is making continued investments to boost the tourism industry in Calgary and Alberta," says Matt Mosteller, vice-president of marketing and sales for Resorts of the Canadian Rockies.

The company has made sub-

stantial investments in its properties including those at Nakiska Ski Resort. Major enhancements at Nakiska include a new, high speed gold chair express, which allows skiers to ride to the top in less than five minutes reduced from almost 10 minutes. Nakiska was one of the few resorts in North America to build a new lift last season. It moves more than 1,900 people per hour, which has increased capacity by more than 200 people per hour from the previous lift.

Nakiska has also made investments to ensure there are fantastic conditions early in the season and operates the largest snowmaking system in Alberta, and the runs are unparalleled says Mosteller.

"The new Monster Glades amp up the adventure aspect and appeal to both novice and advanced skiers and riders with

more access points, wider trails, and increased runs in the trees," says Mosteller. "In addition, enhancements on existing runs compliment the skiing experience for guests and create vital conditions for race training. These include the widening of three runs to 60 metres and the extension of the core training run 'Mapmaker' by 650 metres."

The improvements extend benefits not only to those who play, but for those who work as well.

Mosteller says the company's investments, including those in Nakiska, help Calgary businesses recruit and retain a workforce that is increasingly interested in living and working in a city that offers exceptional quality of life, since the resort provides world-class recreational opportunities very close to the city — less than 50 minutes away.

The resorts have also provided



Matt Mosteller is vice-president of marketing and sales for Resorts of the Canadian Rockies.

opportunities to support Calgary's film and movie industry, as many movie-makers have long enjoyed using the Canadian Rockies as a beautiful backdrop. Leonardo DiCaprio and co-stars and crew used Nakiska to learn to ski and to test movie equipment and snow scenes for the

filming of *Inception*.

As an Action Calgary partner, Resorts of the Canadian Rockies believes the region is in a great position to continue to build an international reputation as a hub for the creative industries, as well as for recruiting and retaining top talent for business.

SUCCESS IS DETERMINED BY

ACTION

Join Action Calgary at www.calgaryeconomicdevelopment.com
info@calgaryeconomicdevelopment.com

CALGARY
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT