

Art&Entertainment

On the road yet again

By Erin Riley
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Since CBC's *On The Road Again* began 15 years ago, it has visited the Yukon at least a dozen times.

"It's not hard to find characters in the Yukon," said host Wayne Rostad.

"Everybody has a story that deserves being told, and we just go the extra mile, if you will, to tell that story."

Rostad and his three-person crew left Whitehorse on Friday after spending five days in the Yukon. They were filming a segment for their national lifestyles television show.

Bev Gray and her business *Aroma Borealis* will be a featured segment that will air in the upcoming season.

"She was a wonderful interview," said Rostad.

"What she does just sings on her face and in her eyes. She and her partner Mike Bailie and her two daughters just stole our hearts."

Aroma Borealis is the most northern herb shop in Canada, said Gray.

It started as a home-based business about three and a half years ago. Gray started off making teas and salves for friends and family.

Gray has been growing her own herbs for nine years. Bailie's mom taught her how to garden, and now she has six gardens at her home on Rat Lake. She grows 30 per cent of the herbs that she sells in her store.

"When I was 12, I made my own lip balm," said Gray.

She used her mom's cooking oil and vanilla extract to make her first beauty product.

"That was one of my first big accomplishments, and I had no idea I would be doing this for my living in the future."

Gray started out as a journalist, but was always focused on health and environmental issues.

"It seems like all my skills that I had learned through life came together when I started this business," she said.

Gray, who has been a chartered herbalist for four years, is studying to be an official aromatherapy practitioner, although she has been working with essential oils since she was a teenager.

"Our customers are from all walks of life, all income brackets, all sexes, and all over Canada."

"We wholesale to 27 different stores across the country, plus we have a distributor in Vancouver."

"Our local market is incredible. We get such great support from local people. That's the



NEWS photo by Mike Thomas

SPOTLIGHT... CBC's *On The Road Again* videotapes a segment at Bev Gray's *Aroma Borealis*.

backbone of our business.

"If we didn't have a good local market, I wouldn't feel confident enough to bring it to the rest of Canada and the world."

Media attention isn't new to Gray. This past winter she was in Ottawa, where she was featured on a TV show called *Daytime*, as well as in the *Ottawa Citizen*, and on *CBC Radio*.

She also has her own *CBC Radio* program in Whitehorse called *Words on Herbs*, which airs on Wednesdays.

After the increased interest from Ottawa, the *Aroma Borealis* website received amplified attention and *On The Road Again* picked up on Gray's success story.

"Herbs are very timely right now," said Gray.

"They're really big in the market place, but how many people do what we do? We grow. We harvest. We manufacture. We do retail and wholesale. And we do education."

Gray enjoyed her experience with *On The Road Again*, and the crew left a good impression on her.

"They're just great people, really professional, and really good at their craft."

She was comfortable during

the process and said that Rostad put her at ease by calling the interview a conversation.

Gray has lived all over Canada because her father was in the *Armed Forces*. She has an appreciation for *On The Road Again* because it celebrates the Canadian identity.

"It unites us. It shows us our differences and similarities."

She hopes that the segment that features her business will inspire other people who have an interest in herbs.

"I can't believe this is happening to us," said Gray, "but then again, we've worked really hard, too."

On The Road Again gives Canadians their moment in the sun, said Rostad.

"We interview everyday Canadians who, in their own way, do something extraordinary that deserves celebration," he said.

"We tend to go to the smaller communities because we have always embraced rural Canada."

From a nationally well-travelled perspective, Rostad said that Whitehorse is a great community.

"There is an evident passion for the place Yukoners call home," he said, adding "this is a place that is treasured in the hearts of Canadians every-

where."

He explained that his crew is always eager to make a trip to the Yukon.

"The folklore, the history of this place and the people that have helped build it is sometimes larger than life."

"One of the biggest reasons anyone feels isolated in this country is a natural result of the geography," he continued.

"I think the show illustrates the similarities of Canadian spirits. It shows slices and snippets of life from different communities in all seasons of the year."

"It listens to and shares the stories and heartfelt sentiments of the places Canadians call home."

When a fan approached Rostad in Nova Scotia and said the show made her see that people in the Yukon were a lot like her, he said it was a moment that really expressed what *On The Road Again* was doing.

"It showed someone from Nova Scotia how someone from the Yukon felt about their own life."

"I have a genuine affection for fellow Canadians, for the country that I live in."

He explained that he has turned down two serious offers to work in the United States

over the years.

"This is my home," he said.

On The Road Again is modelled after an American show that ran on CBS for 25 years called *On The Road*.

Rostad was born in Ottawa. He grew up and lives in the Ottawa Valley, where he raises quarter horses.

He has been hosting *CBC's On The Road Again* for 15 years.

Before that, he hosted *Country Report* for seven years. "One was born of the other," he said of the two shows.

After spending nine days at home after leaving the Yukon on Friday, Rostad will head to Nova Scotia to film another segment of the show.

"I have four producers that work with two or three different crews," said Rostad, who travels with one producer, one camera and one audio person.

During this trip to the Yukon, he also interviewed John Obereier of *Burwash Landing* and John Kilmer of *Atlin*.

The Yukon segment will air sometime next season, between October and March.

"Every other week I go somewhere in Canada to sit and chat with neighbors," said Rostad. "We have such a beautiful place to call home."