



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 5, 2024

Mille Porsild wins Alaska Air Transit Spirit of Iditarod Award

Nikolai, Alaska – Veteran musher Mille Porsild (bib #12), of Denmark was the first musher to reach the Nikolai checkpoint at 9:09 a.m. today with 14 dogs in harness, winning the Alaska Air Transit Spirit of Iditarod Award.

First presented in 2019 and given to the first musher to reach the McGrath checkpoint, this award will now be given to the first musher to reach the Nikolai checkpoint starting this year. The Nikolai community has strong ties to Iditarod and special gifts of Beaver fur musher's mitts with beadwork on moose hide (handmade by Loretta Maillelle), a beaver fur hat (handmade by Oline Petruska) as well as a Pendleton wool blanket from Alaska Air Transit will be presented to the first musher who reaches the Nikolai checkpoint. The award was presented to Porsild by Brandon Esai, Alaska Air Transit's Lead Ramp Agent, in his hometown of Nikolai. Brandon is accompanied by his two sons, Blaze and Junior Esai.

“Since AAT first flew to Nikolai at the invitation of the community nearly 20-years ago, it is an honor to present the award in Nikolai, the first village checkpoint after the mushers' journeys across the rugged Alaska Range and the Farewell Burn. The Nikolai community has strong ties to Iditarod, and these gifts for the first musher are hand-stitched by Oline Petruska of Nikolai and Loretta Maillelle of McGrath” says Josie Owen, owner of Alaska Air Transit.

This is Alaska Air Transit's sixth year sponsoring the Iditarod and sixth year presenting the Spirit of Iditarod Award. Alaska Air Transit offers crucial flight support statewide via air charter and provides scheduled service to the Upper Kuskokwim communities of Nikolai, McGrath, Takotna and Tatalina as well as the Prince William Sound communities of Tatitlek and Chenega.

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