

INNOVATION



8 TRAITS OF IDITAROD - INNOVATION

To Innovate - Make changes in something established by introducing new methods, ideas of products.

"I" stands for innovation. In the book [Iditarod Classics](#), Lew Freedman shares stories about Libby Riddles and Martin Buser that demonstrate innovation as they faced fierce weather conditions during the race. In 1985 Libby was in Shaktoolik in the midst of a raging ground blizzard. She was in first place and wanted to stay there so she left Shaktoolik heading to Koyuk. In her words, Libby describes the conditions as grim. Unable to see from one trail marker to the next, she let her dogs go just so far so that she could barely see the trail marker behind her. She then set her snow hook and walked ahead of the dogs until she could see the next marker then walked back to the dogs and repeated the process. Her progress was very slow but she never lost the trail. In 1991 Martin Buser found himself in similar conditions between White Mountain and Safety. Other mushers who had left White Mountain were turning around because of the storm. Visibility was just the length of the dog team - no more than 80 feet and it was impossible to see down the trail. Martin decided that he would never let himself go a hundred yards without being sure he was on the trail. In fierce wind, the dogs want to go with the wind rather than follow the trail so it became clear to Martin the HE needed to lead. Martin went to the front of the team and

put Eleanor in single lead then he took the other tug line. Next to Eleanor, Martin pulled on the tug line. Together they found and followed the trail. It was slow progress - perhaps just 2 or 3 miles an hour but he knew he was on the trail.

In these examples Martin and Libby always

knew they were on the trail heading in the right direction through innovative actions. Freedman's book, [Iditarod Classics](#), published by Epicenter Press contains many great stories as told by the mushers themselves. It's full of great stories and I hope you can find a copy to read and share. It's available at the [Iditarod online store](#).

