

Minto Resorts Ltd.

Minto

Started: 1987

Contact: Geraldine Van Bibber

The main focus of Minto Resorts is its bus tour lunch facility, a six-sided gazebo that seats 100 people. The resort also has a 30 site campground, an RV dumping station and a small office building. Numerous RV caravans make Minto one of their stopovers. The business is now wholly owned by the Selkirk First Nation.



Getting started: Geraldine and Pat Van Bibber, the first owners of Minto Resorts, started out by doing research on potential markets. They developed a business plan but the banks refused financing, saying Minto's distance from Whitehorse made it too much of a risk to support. Fortunately, Dana Naye Ventures came through with a loan.

Key to success: Minto Resorts found a niche by providing quality food and quick service to big groups. It was something bus lines were looking for but could not find on that highway. Targeting one primary market—the bus lines—has allowed Minto to focus on delivering one type of service (however, having one main target also leaves the business vulnerable). Recognizing the importance of word of mouth, Geraldine became involved with all aspects of tourism to build a network of contacts.

Lessons learned: It was difficult to secure financing; however, the doubts expressed by the bank made the owners more determined to succeed. Learning about all the red tape—the licenses, building codes, inspection requirements—was also a challenge. Asking more people about cooking for large groups would have also helped Minto save both effort and food in the first season or two.

Future of business: The Van Bibbers sold the business to Selkirk First Nation in 1996. They have agreed to stay on as managers for one more year to help train someone to take over its management.