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his wooden-boat-building business. “I wanted something to keep me busy when boat building was slow,” he says. “I made a crude version entirely out of wood, then looked at other designs to try and make it lighter, faster and easier to steer.” Racing kicksleds in Scandinavia are made with carbon fibre. The kicksleds Lera builds are just as sporty and collapsible, but more affordable than the Scandinavian models. The frame is made with Alaskan birch milled in Haines, Alaska, and the snowfloats—strips of plastic that run the length of the two metal runners—are made by a manufacturer in Edmonton using a die Lera designed. “I do all the wood and metal work,” he adds.

Though he does sell the kicksleds from his home, he also sells them through Duffy’s Pets & Tanzilla Harness Supply, Icycle Sports and Second Time Around Sports, all of which are in Whitehorse. He sold 30 kicksleds in his first year. “I’m happy with the response,” he says. Word of kicksled

fun is spreading and Lera has had inquiries from outside the territory, “Alaska, mostly.” Not wanting to miss an opportunity, he uploaded a basic website in March 2007 to promote his product and to increase sales.

“The kicksleds appeal to people who like skiing—it’s actually a gentler way to skijor.” The version Lera designed can be pulled by up to two dogs and can support one driver (or sledder) and has a seat that’s meant for a child or a small backpack. “But I’ve had a 260-pound man on there—it just depends on how much you want to push.”

For now, Lera is preparing for another busy season of kicksled building and further marketing and promotional activities. He’s going to continue to target the local market by expanding to Yukon communities and into Alaska. After that, he thinks that Canmore and Banff in Alberta might be good places to look at—“anywhere people like cross-country skiing”.

For more information on Solitude Designs, go to [www.solitudedesigns.ca](http://www.solitudedesigns.ca).

**Andy Lera’s sporty kicksleds can be pulled by up to two dogs, which makes the kicking part of the sport that much easier.**

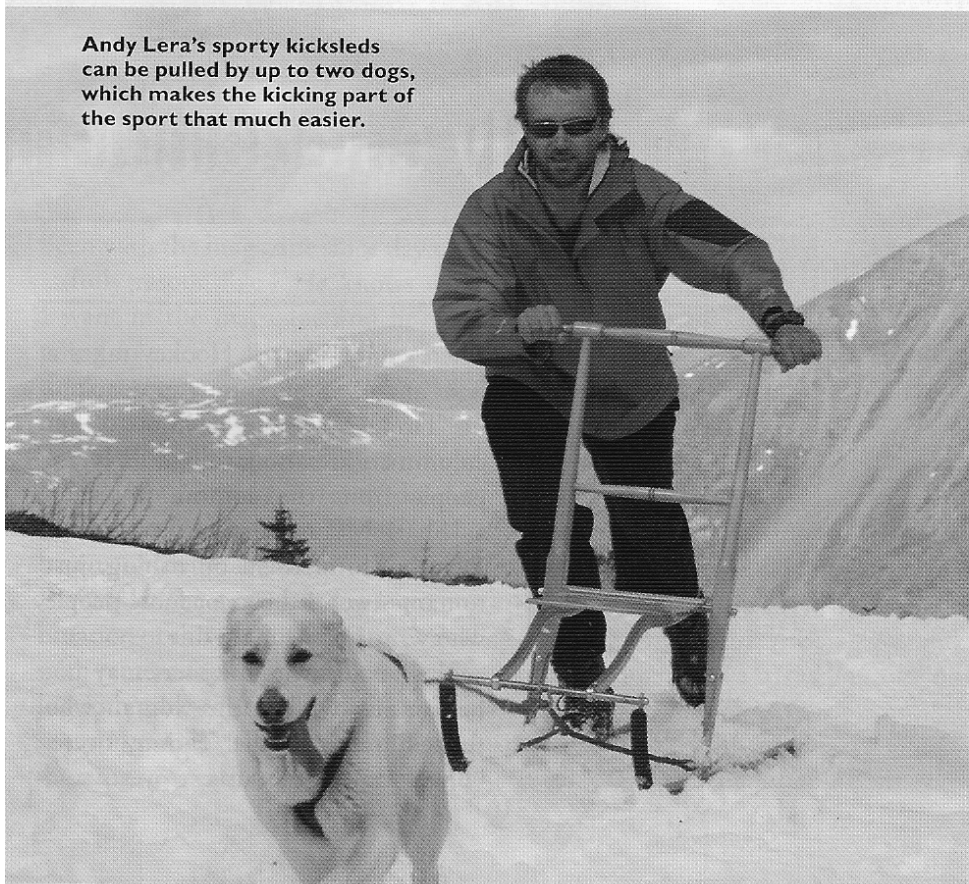


Photo: Cathie Archibald