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New Brunswick SPCA  
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To Whom it May Concern:

On September 7<sup>th</sup> of 2005 our Alaskan Malamute passed away. Words couldn't possibly explain the loss and the grief that my husband Jeff and I felt. We had the best 11 years of our lives with our four legged child. In our eyes Bear was our child.

Jeff and I realized that our lives would not be the same without another furry Malamute. With tears rolling down my cheeks I surfed the internet hoping to find that "exceptional" Alaskan Malamute breeder.

I asked myself what I knew about breeders and decided not a whole lot. Good luck finding the exceptional one! I didn't know what to think. With a quick prayer I went to the breeders listing on the Alaskan Malamute Club of Canada site. I was immediately drawn to one listing. Len and Gayle Stakenas owners of Sanekats Kennel. They were somewhat close to us, and it just felt right. As I found out after our first visit my prayers would be answered!

I contacted Len and Gayle by e-mail with my sad story about our loss. I certainly wasn't expecting an immediate response, but that was exactly what I got. Within no time at all Jeff and I were on our way to meet the Stakenas's and their Malamutes.

We arrived at Len and Gayle's house and came through the front door, to be greeted by Akela at the top of the stairs. One look at this beautiful, happy old dog and I thought oh no! I'm going to cry! Sure enough, one Malamute hug and my tears began. I didn't know what Len and Gayle would think of me. I just couldn't help crying remembering how much their dogs reminded me of our Bear. Akela is like the centurion, if she likes you perhaps you might be consider worthy of a puppy. I guess we passed the test and she didn't mind me getting tears all over her.

We were then introduced to the rest of the family Lily, Nuska, Tommy, Tunic, Eric, Echo, Isis, and Yukon. I wanted to take them all home, but truly their dog Illa was the object of my affections.

Len and Gayle told us how the SPCA had stepped in to rescue her from a bad home. From way down east off she flew to Len and Gayle. Illa was still relatively new to Len and Gayle's home when we were first introduced, but you could feel how bonded she was with them in just a short time. She was somewhat shy and nervous at first. She greeted us with respect and I believe she could feel my sorrow. I remembered thinking, how could someone treat such a wonderful creature so badly. Her coat was in need of luster, not shiny and soft, and her eyes were dull. The hair around her feet were turned red obviously from exposure to a dirty environment, probably due to walking in urine. She was not able to walk on the pads of her feet properly and her nails had not been taken care of until arrival at Len and Gayles.

Len and Gayle told me how they had rescued her and were trying to rehabilitate her with love and attention. Love and attention given to all the dogs is something that was quite obvious. Illa hadn't been in her new home for long, but you could be sure she liked her new home. Illa is most content when she sitting, standing or lying beside Len or Gayle. The couch and the bed are not off limits. It was a treat to see that. Jeff and I thought we were probably the only ones who would let our Malamute up on the couch or for a snuggle in bed. I don't think Illa ever had this pleasure before Len and Gayle.

It was shortly determined that Illa was in deed going to be a mom for the first time. If not for the love and attention she was constantly given I would have been worried. Yes, we wanted a puppy, but only if Illa was well enough. Len and Gayle reassured us that she was doing great.

We are witnesses to how well Illa has prospered and thrived under Len and Gayle's loving care. We visited with Illa every week before she had her puppies. Each week we would take her out for walks and spend time with her. We have watched her change before our very eyes. Every week she looked better and better. She was becoming more relaxed and happy, and boy was her belly growing!

We have learned so much from Len and Gayle. There Malamutes eat better than I do! From vitamins and daily grooming, to hugs and kisses. I was wishing I was a dog so I could live with them.

Illa went into labor and never missed a beat. When it was all said and done she had an amazing nine pups. Illa, Len and Gayle let us share this special experience with them. I can't tell you in words how much Illa has changed in just a few weeks. I can never thank Len and Gayle enough for welcoming us into their home and allowing us to view this once in a life time experience.

Well! Now the puppies are five weeks old and they are unbelievable. Illa is an awesome devoted mom. She is positively glowing. Instead of being shy upon greetings she runs to say "Hello". Her coat is getting it's shine back and is so soft. Her feet aren't red anymore and soon Len says she will be walking on the pads of her feet properly.

Illia is beautiful and happy because of great people like Len and Gayle, and Sanekats Kennel. I wish there were more people in the world like them. We are extremely proud to know Len and Gayle Stakenas. They take pride, and love every dog they have. All pet owners should take a page out of their book. Jeff and I wanted to share our story with you at the SPCA and the Alaskan Malamute Club of Canada. EVERY DOG would want to have Len and Gayle as parents.

Thank you SPCA for sending Illia home to Len and Gayle!

Sincerely,

Lawna and Jeff Mackie

*cc.: Alaskan Malamute Club of Canada  
Sanekats Kennel*