

# Every day is different at the Northern



Dee Oppenheimer stands in front of the construction site for the new Northern store in Norman Wells last week. Oppenheimer has been the manager of the Northern store for the past decade.

*Dee Oppenheimer, manager of Norman Wells' grocery store, loves the variety in her work*

by Jeanne Gagnon  
Northern News Services  
Lili Golino/Norman Wells

What Dee Oppenheimer enjoys most about managing a grocery store for a small community is not being in the office all day and doing a bit of everything, from the weekly orders to the cash register.

A self-described people person, Oppenheimer has been managing the Northern store in Norman Wells for 10-and-a-half years.

In that role, she opens the office, checks the money from the night before, opens all the tills, readies the store for opening at 9 a.m., receives, prices and places stock, and cleans and fills shelves. She also does the weekly orders, which are typically flown in from Yellowknife.

"We do everything, every-thing that needs to be done

in the store. If we have to run the cash, we run the cash. We work in the office," she said. "I like working with people. I am a people person. I like being on the till and I like being in the office, because then I am doing one-on-one with my customers."

The grocery store for the approximately 700 people living in Norman Wells sells food, general merchandise, snow machines and furniture.

"I actually really enjoy my job because you never do the same thing every day," said Oppenheimer. "The customers change. The freight you receive changes. One day, you might be doing fresh freight and the next day, you are doing warehouse freight and the next day, you are doing retail freight."

Business owners from Killarney, Man., located

about three hours southwest of Winnipeg, Oppenheimer and her husband wanted to go north, so they decided to work for the North West Company. Twenty-two years later, she has worked at the Northern store in Cape Dorset, Nunavut, and now, Norman Wells.

"Different communities have different personalities. Like now, I am in a Sahtu Dene community. I was with the Inuit in Baffin Island. I lived in Arctic Quebec.

"I've had exposure to a lot of different areas and a lot of different people over the period of my job," she said. "Where I live right now, because of the difference in population, we sell a lot more fresh fruit, and the shipping is more direct."

The company is building a new 8,300-square-foot store with a plan to open next year.

Oppenheimer has some advice for anyone considering working in a small community in the North. "Don't just live in a community; become a part of it ... You have to really take part in the community. You can't be a visitor."

## ON THE Job

*"I like working with people."*

Dee Oppenheimer

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### MOVING DAY

Joy Dragon and Dave Hehn of Sand Environmental Excavation relocate a chokecherry tree in a Fort Smith garden on Sept. 30. They moved it away from a house so some work could be done on the residence.