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American hunters Greg Braisen, left, and Norm DeLan delightedly pose with the three-metre-long polar bear they killed, just hours after DeLan almost lost his life in the frigid waters outside of Resolute on May 12.

Life and death struggle ends with heroic rescue

'In horror, I was screaming to him, 'Please don't let me go,' says American hunter who plunged through ice outside Resolute

ror. I was so afraid of dying. I 3 a.m. knew I was going to die.'

American hunter Norm DeLan knew every second counted as he frantically tried to keep his head above the icy water.

He now says he owes his life to Resolute's Samson Sim-

On May 12, the hunting party was in its sixth day of a quest for a polar bear.

DeLan and his hunting partner, Greg Braisen, both from Pennsylvania, were riding in a plywood-covered sled, resembling a small, mobile cabin. Up front, hunting guide David Idlout was taking his turn on the snowmobile while Simeonie, also serving as a guide, commanded a dog team and followed from the rear. They had been forging ahead for around nine hours,

by Derek Neary putting them about 160 km completely under the water," ing to him, 'Please don't let me Northern News Services south of Resolute. The tem-**Qausuittuq/Resolute** perature was hovering around "I couldn't control my ter- -20 C as the clock approached

> unknowingly encountered thin ice and the sled broke through, sinking about a metre, enough that it took effort to open the wooden door with the water rising against it, DeLan recalled.

"I screamed at my partner to get the hell out," he said.

Braisen scrambled and only went in waist deep. He was eventually able to get back on stable ice, as did Idlout, who had also fallen into the water but grabbed a portion of the sled that had not been submerged and hauled himself out.

'I went right under, completely under the water'

DeLan wasn't so lucky. "I jumped out as far as I could. With that, I went right under,

He bobbed in the frigid conditions for what he estimates was 90 seconds, hollering for help and breaking more ice in his futile attempts to climb out.

"I was done, at that point I was done," DeLan recalled. His boots and overalls filled with icy water, and hypothermia become a real risk. "Every time my head went under water I said, 'That's it.' I almost choked to death because I sucked up so much sea water."

Simeonie dismounted the dog sled, raced over and got down onto his stomach, distributing his weight on his toes and an elbow. He reached out to the struggling DeLan, a 59-year-old, 300-pound former powerlifter – a much larger man than Simeonie.

"This little guy literally grabbed my wrist," DeLan said. "In horror, I was scream-

go.' He said, 'I'm not going to let you go."

with Canadian Ranger experience, admitted that he felt fear but he didn't let it control him. He has taken two life-saving courses and he remembered the advice of his elders.

"My grandparents used to tell me if something happens and you go through an emergency, don't panic," Simeonie said. "So I didn't panic."

Braisen made his way over and gripped DeLan's suspenders. He and Simeonie were able to hoist DeLan up onto the ice on their third try.

The hunting party was then able to pull the sled fully back onto the ice and salvage most of their supplies, although almost everything in the sled was saturated. They changed into what dry clothes they had left and wrapped DeLan in a dry sleeping bag for warmth.

Two hours into their trek

back toward Resolute, they spotted a polar bear.

"They were able to put Simeonie, a 47-year-old me with the (dog team) and we went and killed the bear," DeLan recounted with a chuckle. "It's a little crazy and it is quite the story, it really

Before the American hunters departed Resolute, the emotions were still powerful.

'The next day everybody was happy we were doing OK," Simeonie said. "They were crying before they go home because they didn't die. They go home safe."

It's not the first time Simeonie has sent people home safe. He said he has rescued six individuals in his lifetime, winning two bravery awards for his heroism.

DeLan, a former marine, said he's been on hunting expeditions all over the world but it's this one in Nunavut that will forever stand out above the others.

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Samson Simeonie savs he has saved six people over his lifetime.

"This accident basically changed my life," said DeLan. "I'd have to say it was a total miracle ... This little guy (Samson Simeonie), I'll tell you what, I'd do anything in the world for him."

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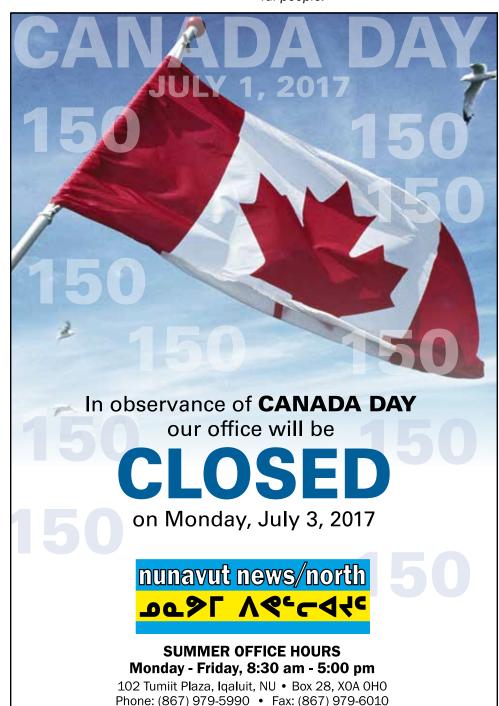
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Norm DeLan, a hunter from Pennsylvania, towers over Samson Simeonie, who saved DeLan's life following a plunge through the ice approximately 160 km from Resolute on May 12. "This little guy, I'll tell you what, I'd do anything in the world for him," DeLan said, adding that the Inuit are "beautiful people."



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