

ISSUE 2 - MARCH 12, 2024



ARCTIC WINTER GAMES ULU NEWS

Matanuska Valley, Alaska • March 10-16, 2024

AWG 2024 | Photo by David Rose

SHARE YOUR GAMES PICS

Post your photos to our Kululu account and get them featured in Ulu News, or on screen at closing ceremony!



3 THINGS TO KNOW FOR TODAY

1

Our original sport schedule showed Tuesday's Dene competition happening at Sutton Elementary. We have changed the venue for this day's competition to Nuutah 2 - Palmer Junior Middle School. Please keep in mind that Friday's competition will still be held at Sutton Elementary.

2

Musk Ox Farm Tours are Open for Participants (Tuesday & Wednesday) Speak with your Chef to Sign up for Tour - Get an Exclusive Pin!

3

Stop by the Alaska Airlines Arctic Winter Games Headquarters today to try our automatic selfie station! The station will move around so keep an eye out for the next location!

The Ulu News team would like to send a huge thank you to all those who have submitted such amazing feedback on our first issue! We burnt the midnight oil - and the morning oil, too - making it beautiful for you. At last check in, our first issue has been viewed 20,000 times!!

RESULTS

Competition is now in full swing!
Find all results at awg2024.gems.pro

ULU NEWS COMES IN MANY FORMS!

BLOG

FLIP BOOK

RADIO

VIDEO

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WEATHER FORECAST



Tuesday | March 12

Partly sunny. Highs in the 30s (fahrenheit) / -1.11s (celsius).
North wind 10 to 20 mph with gusts to 30 mph.



Tuesday Night

Mostly cloudy with a chance of snow.
Lows 15F (-9.4C) to 20F (-6.7C) degrees.
Northeast wind 15 mph.

MAT-SU 2024 ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

TICKETS ARE ON SALE NOW!



*A WEEK OF SPORTING
& CULTURAL EVENTS!*

MARCH 10 - 16, 2024

**SCAN TO BUY
TICKETS NOW!**

AWG2024.ORG



MORE THAN A MASCOT

BY KENDRA ZAMZOW



A flock of green and teal jackets identifies the 2024 Mat-Su Arctic Winter Game volunteers, each adorned with a graphic-designed songbird on its back. Is it a Sparrow? A Junco? A Whiskey Jack?

None of the above. It's a Chickadee!

Angie, the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for Chickaloon Native Village, first nominated the Chickadee as the animal ambassador for 2024 Mat-Su Arctic Winter Game.

In favor of a new, more reverent representation of the spirit of the Games and our animal ambassador, the Mat-Su Chickadee, a culturally significant bird to the Mat-Su Valley, serves as the official animal ambassador of the 2024 games, rather than a caricatured mascot.

"Birds taught us how to speak, then we forgot how to listen," she said. "Each bird has its own role for us."

Rain Wade, a culture-bearer for Chickaloon Native Village, said the Chickadee works well for the Arctic Winter Games.

"They are non-threatening and non-competitive, having a good time and hanging out in groups. Everyone welcomes them," like the athletes in the Games. "And they're just so darned cute."

The Chickadee is Ne'inne in the Ahtna Dene language. The literal translation is "our thoughts." The Ahtna say that the call of a Chickadee, or being followed in the forest by a Chickadee, means that someone is thinking of you. It is one of the few birds that stays in the Mat-Su area of Alaska all winter.

Ne'iine brings a smile and makes everyone happy even in the dark mid-winter days. Katie Wade, clan grandmother for Chickaloon Native Village, loved to watch the black and white bird flitting in and out of a huge lilac bush in front of her house in Sutton.

The 2024 Mat-Su Arctic Winter Games Ne'inne pins and stickers help preserve memories of athletes, new friends, experiences, and the beauty of Alaska. Next time you see a Chickadee, on a pin, a jacket or in a tree, know that the green and teal volunteers, along with the rest of the Mat-Su community, are thinking of you.



EXPLORE THE THE LAST FUNTIER

BY EMMA KEECHLE



What to do in the Valley? From exploring local cafes, local history and the great outdoors, there is so much to experience. In downtown Palmer on Colony Way, you'll find the Palmer Museum of History and Art where you can learn about the establishment and development of Palmer. The museum offers local scavenger hunts, tours, and a gift shop perfect for souvenirs.

Continuing towards downtown, Colony Way becomes S. Alaska Street, where you'll find local cafes for your daily coffee fix. Vagabond Blue's has fresh brewed coffee from local vendors and daily fresh food options, including gluten-free choices. For a laid-back vibe and delicious acai bowls, smoothies, and teas, head to The Fern on Dahlia and Cobb.

Further up Alaska street, you'll come across the classic Valley Hotel coffee shop and Turkey Red, which serves Mediterranean-inspired food, and fresh baked goods.

Alaska has more coffee shops per-capita than any U.S state, so there are plenty of local coffee huts, to stop for coffee, red-bull Italian sodas and lotus drinks before morning games.

Stop by Perk Up, Perfect Start, Elwoods, or Purple Moose to try the AWG drink specials.

If you prefer a sit-down restaurant, visit the Noisy Goose across from the Alaska State Fair Grounds known for its friendly family-run atmosphere and comical wall signs.

After sampling the Valley's delicious food, get outside and enjoy some local outdoor activities. There are lots of different outdoor activities to engage in. Right near Palmer are trails in the Butte and on Lazy Mountain. Or drive north up the Parks Highway to Talkeetna and visit Denali National Park. If you are lucky you may get a glimpse of the elusive peak of Mount Denali.

East of Palmer, visit the Matanuska Glacier for hiking or helicopter tours. Nearby, Sheep Mountain Lodge offers skiing and hiking.

For more sport-oriented activities, and a scenic drive head south from Anchorage to Girdwood, where Alyeska Resort offers downhill skiing and snowboarding.

This is only a glimpse of some of the local stores and activities in the Valley. There's so more to explore during your stay for the Arctic Winter Games. Happy Exploring!



ALASKA AIRLINES

ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

OPEN 1100-1900, MONDAY - FRIDAY

Headquarters

Located at the Palmer Train Depot, 610 S. Valley Way, Palmer, AK

Pin Trading

Ice Cream by Divine Dips

Merchandise Sales

Ticket Sales

Alumni Lounge

Media Center

Cultural Pop Up Performances

Monday 1200-1500; Thursday 1100-1300

Alumni Photo Booth

Monday 1100-1900; Tuesday 1100-1600

Alumni Meet & Greets

Monday 1400-1600, & Tuesday, 1800-1900

Blitz, Seattle Seahawks Mascot Appearance

Thursday 1400-1530; Friday 1300-1500

Josh the Otter, Kids Don't Float Mascot Appearance

Monday 1200-1300; Tuesday 1300-1400 & 1500-1600; Wednesday 1200-1300& 1600-1700



FOOD TRUCK SCHEDULE

Food Truck Hours 11-7 or sell out Daily

Mon. 3/11	Tues. 3/12	Weds. 3/13	Thurs. 3/14	Fri. 3/15
Nonkie Be's Cajun Faves	Nonkie Be's Cajun Faves	Alaska Mac Shack	Hillbilly Kooking	Birdhouse Sandwich Co.
				
Divine Dips	Divine Dips	Divine Dips	Divine Dips	Divine Dips

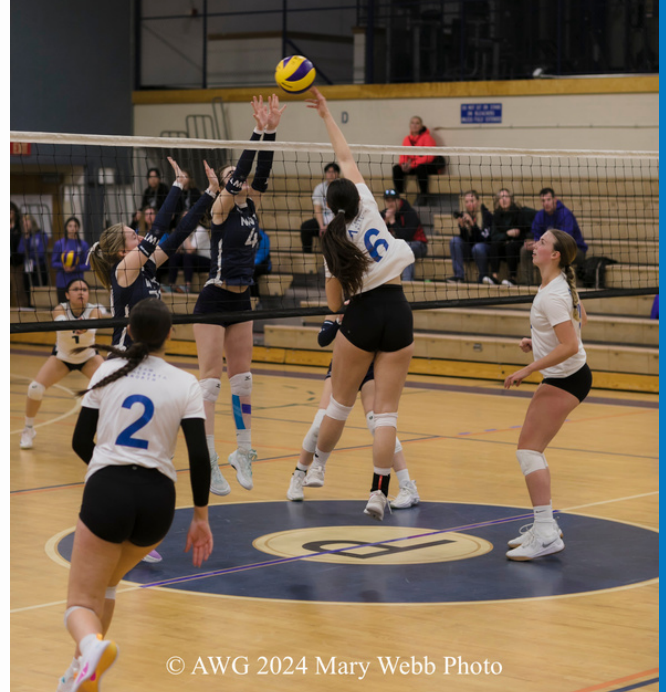
BRIDGING THE NET: VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS MAKE FRIENDS AMID COMPETITION

BY LOREE RAYBACK

U18F volleyball started the day off strong with an 8:00 a.m. game in the Nuutah 2 (Palmer Junior Middle School) volleyball court. After several long volleys, the Alberta North girls defeated the Northwest Territories girls 50 to 31. Players on both teams strategized in the first and second sets. They hustled, at times following the ball all the way into the sidelines on a skid. Some hard hitting, upbeat, and energetic ladies make up both of these fabulous teams.

Khaylle Sarte and her Team Nunavut teammates sat on the bleachers in the Nuutah 2 - PJMS gym. They were there to observe their competition after playing for Nunavut against Alaska. Khaylle Sarte reported, “We lost, but it was a good game. It was our first match so we were everywhere. But we built more confidence and got comfortable once we were on the court for a while. This is my second year and also my last year [playing for the Arctic Winter Games],” Khaylle emphasized. “Making friends is a big part of AWG”. She turned to teammate Kyana Idlout and asked her what she had learned. Kyana said “[it’s important] not to overthink a game, to have fun, and to play hard!” Khaylle added “This is a place to come together and learn new things about other cultures.”

The spectators of the 9:30 a.m. U18F game between Yukon and Alberta North were celebratory, erupting in cheers, clapping, and shaking loud wooden noisemakers in response to the game’s action. The scores were close as the game began, but after narrowly winning the first set, Alberta North changed tactics. They began gently tipping the ball into open spots on Yukon’s court. They did this more than once, after feigning a hard spike in the other direction. This strategy proved successful and won the game for Alberta North 40 to 20.



© AWG 2024 Mary Webb Photo



AWG 2024 Mary Webb Photo



MONDAY VOLLEYBALL CONT.

The U18M Team Nunavut arrived as a group. Dustin Martin relayed, “Our first game is at 1:30 versus Alaska. This is my first year playing volleyball and my first Arctic Winter Games. I’ve enjoyed bonding with my team, having fun, and playing against new players that I haven’t played before.” Nearby, teammate Tashinga Chakonza joined in: “I’ve been playing 5 years, this is my 2nd AWG. Last year I went out for basketball, this year for volleyball. I’ve learned from competing at the AWG that kids my age are the same, even when they’re from somewhere else.””

The first couple players for Team Alaska arrived early. Avei Turaifale has been playing volleyball for 5 years. “This is my freshman year,” said Avei, “and my first Arctic Winter Games.” He shared that it has been surprising to see that people from other teams care for him and show him the same respect he has back home. “I thought it would be awkward. We’re from all different parts of the world. But, I’ve learned we’re not much different. We’re all just kids trying to have fun and play the game.” His teammate, Pasala loane joined in: “I’ve been playing Volleyball since 6th grade, so 5 years. This is my first AWG. I’ve learned about teamwork and the support you get from your peers. I haven’t played yet, but I will soon. I’m pumped, excited, waiting!”

After a full day of volleyball, Team Alaska and Team Alberta North lead the female teams with 3 wins each; Team Yukon is in the lead for males with three wins, followed closely by Team Alaska and Alberta North. The competition continues through the week with final medal rounds Friday evening. Stay tuned!



CAN YOU SPRINT IN SNOWSHOES?

BY KENDRA ZAMZOW



Under high lenticular clouds* with interludes of bright blue over the mountains, ten boys lined up behind the orange starting line striped across the packed snow. All competitors were 15 years old or younger, and they all wore short, wooden-framed snowshoes with criss-crossed moose sinew webbing and traditional mukluks. Their competition snowshoes were reminiscent of the ones traditionally created in the Ahtna style, renowned for the ease with which people could run in them.

At the starting horn, they all broke as a pack. Each snowshoer launched into a smooth loping run, swinging legs in a shifting rhythm that would keep them going for the next 2.5 km (1.6 miles). Five minutes later, a group of eight girls leapt off the starting line and down the wide snow track. On the side lines, coaches jogged up and down with their teams, warming up for the 5km race.

“They use the same muscles as in speed-skating”, said Janet Morrill. It was the first time that Janet and her husband Cam – originally from Winnipeg – had attended the Arctic Winter Games. They, and relatives from Yellowknife and Fort Simpson, came to cheer on Lyndsey Stipdonk. Lyndsey is 12 years old, competing as part of Team Northwest Territories. Lyndsey’s father, Chris, holds the world championship in knuckle-hop.

Teams from Northwest Territories, Alaska, Alberta North, Nunavik, and Yukon Territories were competing in 2.5 km or 5 km races. Racers were in age groups of youth born in 2009 or later, or youth born in 2015 or later.

Racers came down the final stretch to spectators yelling encouragement and ringing cowbells. First-time runners Micah McConnell and Syllas Sanderson of Team Yukon crossed the line first and second, with Micah standing out in red and black flannel. Lung-pumping exhaustion slowed to deep breathing. Charlotte Adkins of Team Alberta North and Mikayla Saviadjuk-Paquet of Team Nunavik, both age 14, were the first in for the girls 2.5 km race, followed by Sigrid Eller and Kaia Rose Mangacat, both of Juneau Alaska. Young Lyndsey came jogging across the line in sixth place, a great finish for her first Arctic Winter Games event! We applaud all the young snow-runners for their balance and persistence in this sport!

*Did you know? Lenticular (/len'tikyələr/) clouds are shaped like a lens or an eye, and if you see them high in the sky, it's a sign that the wind is blowing over the mountains like a wave.. If you're standing on the ground, you might feel a very strong gusty wind in one spot, but a few hundred meters away, the air will feel completely still.



© AWG 2024 Ashley Wise



TEAM ALBERTA NORTH

BY EMMA KEECHLE

Team Alberta North from Canada has competed in the Arctic Winter Games since 1986. This year they are competing in 17 of the 20 sports in total. Team Alberta has 250 participants including 192 athletes, 43 coaches, two cultural participants, and 13 mission staff. Featuring 93 male athletes and 99 female athletes, and two female cultural participants, they represent 28 different communities north of the 55th parallel in Northern Alberta.

The youngest member of Team Alberta North, ten-year-old Kateyln Siebert from Sexsmith, is looking forward to competing in gymnastics which kicks off on Wednesday. The team's oldest participant, Michael Boudreau (21) from Fort Chipewyan, is competing in the Dené games. After the 2022 Games were postponed, Team Alberta North hosted the Games in Wood Buffalo where they collectively won 144 medals: 42 gold, 60 silver, and 42 bronze.

Théa Thompson of Peace River carried Alberta North's flag on Sunday's opening ceremonies representing women's hockey. Thompson competed internationally in the 2022 Lions Cup in Finland and won a golden ulu at last year's Games. Isabella Scheers from Fort McMurray and Nikita Tsyruk from Grand Prairie proudly carried the team's banner Sunday. Scheers is representing Figure skating, while Tsyruk is excited to represent wrestling. Discover more about the Alberta North's team website at TeamAlberta.org/arctic-winter-games/

Did you know? Dene Games allow adult participants in some events. This combination of age groups is a part of handing culture on to the next generation.



TEAM NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

BY EMMA K

From the second largest of three territories in Canada with a population of over 45,000 I introduce to you team NorthWest Territories. Team NorthWest Territories have been competing in the games since 1970 in Yellowknife, the capital of the NorthWest Territories. Last year they competed with 347 participants. The second most of all the teams right behind team Yukon with 355 participants. This year they will be competing with a team of 353: 14 mission staff, 2 cultural participants, 62 coach/managers/team staff and 289 athletes. 169 females, 182 males and 2 participants did not indicate their gender. Last year they won a total of 106 medals: 43 gold, 28 silver and 35 bronze. Team NorthWest Territories are navy, sky blue and white. They represent these colors in their team uniforms this year. The uniforms consist of 3 main pieces. Teal snow pants, a teal puffer inner layer and a navy blue outer shell. The bold colors represent their determination and the beauty of the NorthWest Territories.

The NorthWest territories are confident that their athletes and coaches will represent them with pride. Some of Team NorthWest Territories attended the Bell let's talk day on January 24th this year. An annual initiative hosted in the NorthWest Territories, by the Canadian telecommunications Bell Canada, to raise awareness for mental health, destroying stigmas surrounding it, making it easier for mental health care to be accessed by those struggling with mental health in Canada. Team NorthWest Territories are proud to see some of their athletes using their platforms to spread awareness about mental health. Team NorthWest Territories is also committed to creating a safe, inclusive and harassment free environment for members of the LGBTQ+ community. They see diversity as a strength and believe that everyone benefits when not just the LGBTQ+ communities but everyone's human rights are respected. Team NorthWest Territories is dedicated to supporting diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity, so everybody not just members of their team can be their true authentic selves.



TEAM ALASKA YOUTH SNOWBOARDERS PARTICIPATING IN 2024 ARCTIC WINTER GAMES



BY JACOB MANN | FRONTIERSMAN.COM

PALMER — Alaska youth snowboarders from across the state are competing in various sporting events being held during the Mat-Su 2024 Arctic Winter Games.

Team Alaska athletes have the unique opportunity to test their skills among teams from northern countries across the world: Nunavut, Nunavik, Northern Alberta, Yukon, Greenland and Sápmi.

13-year-old Girdwood snowboarder Jude Jeffers said that he's enjoyed seeing all the different people come together. "It's interesting. I like seeing how they snowboard and what all their different skill sets are," Jeffers said.

Jeffers competed in the youth Rail Jam competition held at the Skeetawk Ski Area Monday, March 10. He said that he plans to participate in all the snowboard events and he feels confident that he'll make the top three in the Snowboard Cross event. He said that he's glad to have the opportunity to compete in the 2024 Arctic Winter Games.

"I'm really happy that I get to be here," Jeffers said. Jeffers said that some of his favorite things about snowboarding is the sense of comradery and the process of improving his skills. "Just progressing is a ton of fun," Jeffers said.

According to Team Alaska snowboarding coach Tyson Fick, Rail Jam contestants were judged on several factors such as difficulty, amplitude, variety, and execution. He said it was great seeing the various Arctic communities show off their skills in his home state.

"We have so much in common," Fick said. Fick said the Games are a great opportunity for youth.

"This is really a cool experience for the kids and the public," Fick said that he was proud of the Alaskan youth's efforts and he's looking forward to seeing how they do as the rest of the snowboarding events unfold. He said Alaska has a lot of talent that he hopes will be further highlighted in future Games.

"It's a wonderful opportunity to show off everything we have," Fick said. "I would love it if we had more. Everybody that competed was awesome." Fick's 15-year-old son Riley also competed in the Rail Jam competition and plans to compete in other AWG snowboarding events. He said that he's been having fun.

"It's pretty dope," Riley said. One of Riley's favorite perks as an AWG athlete is the free food.

"I think I've had close to 50 Rice Krispies Treats in the last couple days," Riley said with a laugh.

Contact Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman reporter Jacob Mann at jacob.mann@frontiersman.com



IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD

BY ANNA CHEBUKINA

As I entered Teeland Middle School to cover today's wrestling match, I wasn't sure what to expect. This was my first time watching wrestling. After watching the first few periods, the concept seemed pretty easy to grasp. If you're not familiar with the intricacies of competitive wrestling, the goal is to force your opponent to land on their back on the mat, and hold them there for a minimum of three seconds to secure a win. Wrestlers score extra points by taking down their opponent throughout the match, flipping them onto their back. What I witnessed today was much more than just a competition – I saw athletes having fun in their element, playing a sport they clearly love.

Each wrestling match was organized by weight class, athletes paired up, shook hands, and began the competition. Being the first wrestling event of the 2024 Mat-Su Arctic Winter Games, this was the moment the competitors found out who their opponent would be for the rest of the week. With each introduction, I could tell by the wrestlers' body language that their determination kicked up a notch. (It was honestly fascinating to watch.)

As pair after pair met on the mat for two two-minute periods, the crowd grew more invested. Team

members sat close to the edge of their seats. The energy in the stands was electrifying! Seven pairs wrestled between Northwest Territories and Alaska and each competitor gave their all into today's matches. Northwest Territories walked away with two match wins and no forfeits. Alaska wrapped with five wins and two forfeits.

After the game, Shawn Flannagan of Team Alaska noted that of all the wrestling matches, the first match of an event is always the most nerve-racking. "Switching from collegiate to freestyle wrestling was fun. Exploring a new style was unique."

"Coach reminds us to wrestle our own match," noted Team Alaska's Infinity-Ann Asiaga-Higa. "Coach always says 'don't let them get in your head.'" As the team summoned their confidence for the next match against Team Alberta North, Corbin Lutz of Team Alaska chimed in. "They said Canadians are different...they're stronger than they look."

Want to check out the **next wrestling match** for yourself? Head over to **Teeland Middle School on Tuesday at 14:00 (2pm)** and see if those Canadian competitors really are as strong as rumors imply.



KEEP HOLDIN' ON: DENE STICK PULL COMPETITION

BY SEAN REILLY

The Menard Center in Wasilla was rocking today as athletes proudly marched in from all over the Arctic. They were there to represent their homes in the Indian Stick Pull competition. Each region cheered on their teammates' feet stomping on the bleachers, voices vibrating across the complex as the energy rose to a crescendo.

In the end, for the boys, Jasper Charlie from Yukon, Canada snatched the gold ulu. Canan Joe Olverra, representing North West Territories, took the silver ulu. Aqqalu Lukassen, from Kalaallit Nunaat, won the bronze ulu and third place.

The girls' teams were as energized and as fierce competitors as the boys were. At the end of the day, Maria Aitchison representing Nunavik took first place and received the gold ulu in the girls' competition. Followed by Myka Quist, snatching the silver ulu for second place. Alohna Johnson won the bronze ulu for third place. It was for Team Alaska.

The Indian Stick Pull competition has its roots in the Dene people. They wanted to keep their fish-grabbing skills sharp all year. To strengthen their hand and arm muscles, they grease a stick with bear fat, to mimic a slippery salmon. These days, practitioners use Crisco instead of bear fat. They use it to slather up those sticks. It's important to keep those muscle groups toned and ready for fish harvesting.

Competitors stand facing opposite directions, with their feet and shoulders touching each other. Then they both grasp the greasy stick. They hold on with sheer will. Their muscles tense. Their faces scrunch up. They look determined and pained. Many of the athletes look toward the heavens, for added strength. When the body gets weak, the mind gets strong! The determination to hold on a bit longer reaches its limit, enabling one to bring home the gold!



SPEED SKATING'S ELITE AT THE ARCTIC WINTER GAMES FUEL FAMILY DREAMS

BY CANDACE BOECHLER

First Assistant Referee Chris Stone, is no stranger to speed. This will be his 6th Arctic Winter Games experience. "It's the athletes and the atmosphere that keeps me coming back," he told the Ulu News. Chris represented Team Alberta North as an athlete in '04 at Ft McMurray, '08 at Yellowknife, and '10 at the Grand Prairie Games. Winning multiple ulus.

He also took part in the officials team in Hay River / Fort Smith in 2018. and Wood Buffalo 2023. And is currently mentoring under the experience of Chief Referee, Robin Greig of Yellowknife.

Chris's passion for speed skating has rubbed off on his family. As his children, Sarah (7) and Hunter (6) have followed in his footsteps by joining the Peace Wapiti Speed Skating Club. Their appreciation of their father's love for speed and the Games grew even more when they experienced his AWG memorabilia showcased during the Alberta Winter Games in Grande Prairie. This heartwarming family story shows the powerful bond that people can share with love for a sport.

Chris Stone's journey from a decorated athlete, to a mentor and first assistant referee, exemplifies the profound impact that the Games have in the lives of AWG participants.

Assistant Referees David Knight of Whitehorse and David Gilday of Yellowknife are also seasoned officials.

In fact, David Gilday's daughter, Jill holds three Arctic Winter Games records. One for the 500m, 1000m and 1500m all set in 2006. While his son, Michael holds two records in the 1000m and 1500m set in 2004.

From representing Team Northwest Territories, Michael went on to compete for Canada at the Sochi Olympics and was inducted into the NWT Sport Hall of Fame in 2017.

Through the experiences of figures like Chris Stone and the Gilday family, we can peer into the true essence of the Games—a celebration of community, culture, and a speedy pursuit of sporting excellence.



Photos by The Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman





YUKON DID IT, AGAIN!

BY KAJE ROCKWELL

We saw our youth excel tonight at the men's basketball game featuring Team Alaska and Team Yukon. It was a display of sportsmanship and leadership at its prime.. With eager anticipation, we felt the charged atmosphere swirling around us as the teams made their first entrance.

Team Alaska burst out of their locker rooms at a heroic stride. Yukon tiptoed at the growing cheers of their fans. Alaska started strong, scoring 4 points right away. Cheers for Yukon grew with every score, resulting in a 4-4 tie.

Despite some rough falls and hard slides both teams showed remarkable resilience, always swiftly getting back on their feet. After some encouragement from their coach, Yukon took the lead, prompting frantic cheers from the audience.

Throughout the game both teams displayed determination and drive. Despite Alaska's efforts to cut Yukon's lead, Yukon maintained their advantage, leading 42-25 by the end of the second quarter.

As the game progressed, Alaska fought hard to narrow the gap, eventually bringing the score to 53-47.

The tension in the room was palpable as both teams fought relentlessly.

The crowd erupted with joy and amazement as Team Alaska closed in on Yukon's lead, eventually taking a momentary lead themselves. With the score tied multiple times, the fourth period became a wild frenzy of excitement, with elated fans bouncing in the bleachers.

Blood rushing, the teams gathered again, Alaska still in the lead! A wild chant pealed out for Yukon. "Yukon do it!" echoed across the court. We saw the score rise again to yet another tie. Despite Alaska's efforts Yukon managed to score the win in the end. The final buzzer marking the end of an exhilarating and well-fought game.





SKEETAWK DELIVERS ALL THINGS SNOW

BY LOREE RAYBACK

The view from Skeetawk was breathtaking this morning as the sun lit up the Chugach Mountains across the Mat-Su Valley on one side, and illuminated the jagged ridges of the Talkeetnas on the other. The temperature hovered around 25F (-3.89C) degrees with minimal wind—perfect conditions for the opening day of the alpine competitions.

The single three-person chair lift was running and open to the public, and locals gathered to make the most of the great conditions and excellent views from the rotating lift. The mix of local skiers and boarders along with competitors is fitting for the community ski area. Skeetawk is derived from the Dena'ina word Shk'ituk't, which means "where we (all) slide down." Today, the lower terrain park was alive with snowboarders while giant slalom racers sped down the Cat-accessed mid-mountain runs.

On the top of the slope, the Rail Jam competition rallied over a 100 yard (92m) run. Four different rails challenged riders in each of two parallel runs. With the very last rail close to a steep embankment, practice runs were important to ensure that athletes knew to take the last one at a speed just fast enough to carve out one last turn- but not so fast so as to go off the edge.

The riders practiced on the rails, taking them one at a time and respecting each other's space. If an athlete fell off a rail, those waiting above to "drop in" to the course patiently waited while the area cleared. As athletes descended the course, a wiggle of the hips positioned the board crosswise to the mountain and allowed them to check their speed before taking a rail. Later in the afternoon, athletes were scheduled to compete over an hour and a half of snowboarding tricks and skills.



©AWG 2024 David Rose



2024 David Rose



ALPINE SPORTS CONT.

In snowboarding, each run is not scored, but the progression of difficulty of the athlete's tricks is noted over the collection of runs. An overall score for style is determined at the end of the group of runs.

Northwest Territories parents Cynthia White and Jennifer Lavers watched and cheered as team members warmed up on the course.

"Ideally they choose their moves and line at the top of the course," White said. "During the competition, they will need to advance their moves with each run, in order to earn a better score."

Four athletes came out on top after today's Rail Jam competitions: Miah Gillis (U14F) is bringing home the gold for Alberta North while Team Yukon's Aven Sutton (U16F), Leo Spiers Leung (U14M), and Stian Langbakk (U16M) secured the remaining three golden ulus!

AWG concerns itself with safety within all competitions, and safety in alpine sports is no different. Ski patrol plays a vital role with athletes reaching speeds of 70-95 miles per hour in the Giant Slalom and the potential of injury during a Rail Jam. Skeetawk's dedicated professional ski patrol and AWG volunteers are supported by a nine-person group from Minnesota. Over 70 athletes will be competing in alpine sports over the course of the AWG.

Bryanna Kollmann, a professional ski patroller in Minnesota just happened to know one of the alpine sport coordinators for AWG. He asked if she would come up for the Games and she said, "Sure! Can I bring some friends?"

Mary Helm is a registered nurse on the Minnesota ski patrol. She emphasized the efforts to keep the athletes safe. The ski patrollers work together with a "safety first" mantra. They approve everything from checked equipment before competition, to the groomed surfaces, to safety logistics regarding the athlete transport vehicles. The ski patrol is ready to respond to injuries and save lives.

"If they fall, we haul!," Mary said.



ALUMNI ATHLETES INVITED: SHARE YOUR STORIES



INTERVIEW W/ KATIE BASILE

Kyla Kahrs sat down for an interview with Alaskan photojournalist, documentary photographer, and filmmaker Katie Basile. Katie's work focuses on her home, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region. She has appeared on PBS NewsHour as well as in The Washington Post Magazine, NPR, and The New York Times.

Kyla: How did you get into photography?

Katie: I was introduced to photography in junior high. We were still shooting film and working in the dark room at that point, and I fell in love with it. I later went to school for photojournalism and have worked in media for the past 12 years.

Kyla: What has it meant for you to be involved in documenting different peoples throughout the world and showcasing the youth of your homeland?

Katie: Photography and filmmaking have allowed me to meet and connect with so many incredible people throughout Alaska and the world. I love sharing that passion with youth by teaching multimedia workshops and classes in Bethel where I grew up. When I was a kid, most of the films and photographs about Alaska were produced by people from outside the state. It's important for Alaskans to author our own stories, and I hope that by sharing my love for photography and filmmaking I can encourage youth to make storytelling a part of their lives.

Kyla: What has been your favorite project?

Katie: In 2022 I worked with a youth drone club in Napakiak, Alaska to document their eroding shoreline. We interviewed community members and they sketched out some of their memories of the land before it eroded away on drone images of the shoreline. The final piece was a five-minute digital story. I loved the way we all collaborated to tell the community's stories and learn more about their efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change.



Arctic Winter Games is the most awesome event! Athletes from across the circumpolar north come together for a week of sport, culture and fun!

Kristin Walatka Bartenstein



Being an Athlete with RWG is the one time I felt like a true Olympian.

Brian Walker





AALUMNI ATHLETES INVITED: SHARE YOUR STORIES CONT.

Kyla: How did you get involved in AWG? What has been your favorite event/experience?

Katie: I did another storytelling project in the Mat-Su Valley a few years ago. A colleague I worked with on that project is on the Arctic Winter Games planning team and she reached out to see if we could work on a storytelling project to celebrate Alumni Athletes. I was so excited when she reached out!

Kyla: What is your favorite piece at the Depot this week? Do you have a picture you could share to put in the newsletter?

Katie: I have so many favorites! I'll share a few.

Kyla: Any funny anecdotes for the kids reading?

Katie: This week we met two women who played basketball for Team Alaska in 1970. They came to our photobooth to share their memories of the Arctic Winter Games. One of them, Linda Chapman Cordle, said that during the 1970 Arctic Winter Games in Northwest Territories she met another teenager who brought her to a snowmachine race. Linda told him that she wished she could join the race so he found a snowmachine for her and brought her to the starting line. Before she knew it, she was racing down the course. As she was crossing the finish line she saw an official wave a checkered flag, and it turned out that she had won the race! She joked that she went to the Arctic Winter Games to play basketball and she ended up winning a snowmachine race!

Kyla: Is there anything else you would like readers to know?

Katie: We have a pop-up portrait studio at The Depot in Palmer for alumni athletes. It's only open on Tuesday, March 12. I hope more alumni athletes stop by for a quick photo and interview. I'd like to collect as many stories as we can!



Honestly, seeing the Arctic Winter Games in its 50th year has helped me appreciate the indigenous games coming out of you up with me in Alaska. Our games start at home. It was duty enough to share them on a world stage with people other than other countries. I learned from them and of hope they learned from me. Ouyana!
Philly Kitting, Blanchett



The Arctic Winter Games brings Indigenous Communities together to celebrate their culture, community, and friendships that last a lifetime
Nicole Johnson





BIRDIES ZIP IN BADMINTON

BY JULIE SPACKMAN

Birdies zipped. Players dove and smashed. A psych-out “dink” nearly made it past the player at the net. The gym was packed wall-to-wall on Monday with six active badminton courts. Volunteer sweepers attended one court to keep the surface clear of debris and sweat. For those not fluent in badminton, the sport is fast paced, played either as single’s game per side or as a doubles pair working together to keep the shuttlecock from touching the ground. Rallies between doubles pairs didn’t last very long today at Colony High School; players quickly sized up the location of their opponents on the court and aimed their shuttlecocks for the gaps where rackets couldn’t reach.

Badminton originated around 400 years ago, played primarily in Greece and Asia, and is now the second most played sport in the world. The highest quality shuttlecocks are made from sixteen goose feathers—specifically from the bird’s left wing— and are sewn onto a natural cork base which is covered by a thin layer of leather. The fastest speed of a shuttlecock ever clocked during a competition was 259 mph (approx. 417 kph) hit by Lee Chong Wei from Malaysia in Tokyo, Japan in 2017.

Methma De Silva of Team Alberta North was excited to compete at Colony High School in Palmer today. She started playing badminton in grade seven, just for fun. “It’s totally random that I’m playing badminton”, said De Silva. Her friend’s uncle was a coach and talked her into joining a team. As it turns out, De Silva was really good at Badminton! Ever since, she’s been competing in matches in Canada, but this year’s Arctic Winter Games is De Silva’s first international Badminton competition.

“We practice as a single, standing in the middle of the court so that we have to reach all areas of the court by ourselves.” This helps players get comfortable with their reach around the entire court, using both forehand and backhand swings. “Getting to the birdie is the hardest thing to master”, she said. “It’s easier to move your arms quickly, but getting the rest of your lower half to move quickly too, can be challenging.” Players try to take advantage of that slight delay between the incoming sight of a shuttlecock zooming across the net, and the time it takes to get one’s body positioned to return the birdie back to the other team.

Paningaya Kiatainaq (Nunavut) loves the thrill of the trick shot: using a backhand hit from the far left back line to smash the shuttlecock to the opposite far corner on the right. A power player who plays the backfield in her doubles team, she’s only been playing badminton for four months. Her sisters convinced her to play and compete with her team at the 2024 Arctic Winter Games because they’d previously competed, too, in years past. When asked “what is most fun about badminton?” Kiatainaq answered with a gleam in her eye and a huge smile. “Winning!”



FUTSAL

IS A FASTER PACED VERSION OF SOCCER

What is Futsal? Futsal is a faster paced version of soccer, with some slightly different rules and a more skill and technique-based game that only lasts 40 minutes. You learn to react faster and adapt in lots of different situations.



FUTSAL MEANS A LOT OF DIFFERENT THINGS TO THE DIFFERENT ATHLETES:

“It's a special community we have in the Yukon, especially in White Horse where we play. Most of our players are from White Horse.”

- Callum McGillvery (Team Yukon)

“Futsal is really important...It helps us play in tight spaces instead of like normally in eleven v eleven, we play with a lot of space we learn how to play in tighter places.”

- Endo (Team Alaska)

“Futsal to me is a really faced paced, indoor version of soccer that, like somewhat soccer and just almost something completely on its own”

- James Robertson (Head Referee)

FUTSAL LIKE MANY SPORTS AFFECTS ATHLETES AND COACHES MENTAL HEALTH ALIKE.

“When we have a bad day, like, we just play futsal at the end of the day with our friends. It's just the day gets so much better.”

- Cassia Emory (Team Yukon)

“It really just brings me community. When I have a team with me, I make new friends. And when you score or something, that definitely boosts my mental health to be happy and excited for others and myself.”

- Pius (Team Alaska)



“Well, I think just the ability to go out there, see the development of kids, it helps a lot. Help them a lot. I was saying one time, as a coach, you become so many things. A counselor, a mentor, a coach, of course and many other things. But I think it's been good for me also to just see the kids develop, lean on you, their frustrations and stuff like that. And it's a good opportunity for me to watch my kids grow.”

- Knox Makumbe (Coach Team NorthWest Territories)



“How’s it affect it? Actually, if anything it's promoted more ideas, it promoted more of team unity. So I don't think it's really affected my mental health in a negative way but in a positive way, because this game is really fast paced and it teaches you to really manage yourself in a very collective way. And for teams, it really helps them come closer because you really don't have time to think. You just got time to react. And if you react in a positive way, it becomes a very fluid game.”

- Will Lucero (Coach Team Alaska)

THROUGH FUTSAL AND THE ARCTIC WINTER GAMES ATHLETES MAKE LIFELONG FRIENDSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS.

“I've made plenty of friends from all over the world, Canada, from the US, from all around the world.”

- James Robertson (Head Referee)

“You meet lots of new people from different countries and stuff and it's really fun being around all of them.”

- Sonny (Team Alaska)

‘So these are my third games. Every coach I’ve come across, they remember me from the last games and the previous games. And so when we come here, we're always messaging each other and they're kind of like, “Hey”, and then we finally meet up. It's just a reunion of good friendship.’

- Callum McGillvery (Team Yukon)



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HERE'S A SIMPLE WAY NON-NATIVE FOLKS CAN SUPPORT INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

BY KENDRA ZAMZOW

*Dena'inaq etnen'aaq' gheshtnu ch'q'u yeshdu.
I live and work on the land of the Dena'ina.*

Translation: Shaginoff-Stuart, J. Isaac



What is a land acknowledgment?

A land acknowledgment is a formal statement recognizing and honoring the Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories on which an event, gathering, or activity takes place. It is a way to show respect to the land and the people who stewarded the land in the past and the many who continue to steward it today. It's important to recognize that much of the land we live and recreate on, not just in Alaska but throughout the world, was not historically inhabited by the people who live there today. Alaska was home to Alaska Natives for more than 10,000 years before colonization.

Individuals, groups, and businesses can recognize and acknowledge the ancestral homelands of Indigenous peoples by following a few simple steps.

1. Reflect on why you're creating this land acknowledgement. What's the end goal? How will your land acknowledgement impact the people in your community? Be respectful and sincere!
2. Do your homework. Who originally lived on the land? Are they still here? What is the history of the land and related treaties? Who are some of the Indigenous individuals who live in the community? Learn some of the language and the correct pronunciation of names. Consult with indigenous communities whenever possible. Even better—invite a tribal representative to do the land acknowledgement.
3. Use correct language and DON'T sugarcoat the past. DO use accurate terms such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, stolen land, and forced removal to reflect the historical actions taken by colonizers.
4. Use past, present and future tenses. Indigenous people are still here, don't treat them as relics of the past. Amplify Indigenous voices!
5. Acknowledge ongoing injustices, connect to the present, and use the opportunity to encourage others to learn and engage in meaningful actions.

Land acknowledgements should not be grim. They should celebrate the Indigenous people of the land. This shouldn't be the end, though. There are lots of ways for all of us to support Indigenous communities. We can support them through organizations and advocacy. While utilizing a land acknowledgment is a good starting point, there is much more to be done such as advocating for indigenous rights, supporting indigenous businesses, including indigenous perspectives, and supporting land back initiatives.

Helpful guides:

[A GUIDE TO INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT](#)

[HONORING ORIGINAL INDIGENOUS INHABITANTS: LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT](#)



LOOK OUT FOR WAYS TO EXEMPLIFY YOUR ARCTIC SPIRIT AND EARN A PLAY FAIR AWARD! BE FEATURED HERE!



The **Fair Play Pin**, produced by the Arctic Winter Games International Committee, is distributed to individuals who demonstrate an understanding of the philosophy and values of the Arctic Winter Games, on or off the playing field. Individuals may include participants, coaches, managers, officials, volunteers, parents, spectators or staff.

The **Arctic Winter Games International Committee** values are:

Respect, Accountability, Participant Centered, Integrity, Collaboration.

The philosophy of the Arctic Winter Games is symbolized by the three interlocking rings which promote athletic competition, cultural exhibition and social interaction among Northerners.

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