

ISSUE 3 - MARCH 13, 2024



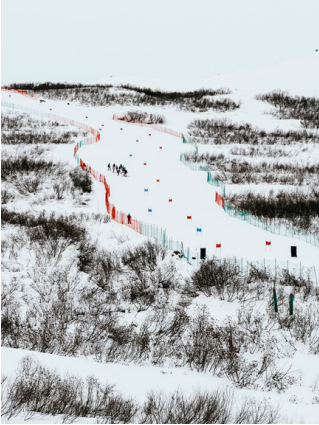
ARCTIC WINTER GAMES ULU NEWS

Matanuska Valley, Alaska • March 10-16, 2024

AWG 2024 | Photo by Forestal Photography

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

Tonight at the Wasilla Museum, join George Smith, for a presentation about pin trading as well as an Alumni meet & greet. 1600-1900; 391 N. Main St. Presentation begins at 1800

2

Keep an eye out for Erin, our Ulu News Radio Host. She will be coming around today to surprise various sports with a T-Shirt Cannon. Prepare for a classic game of catch :)

3

Free Pin Collector Starter Sets are expected to arrive at the Alaska Airlines Arctic Winter Games Headquarters today. Stop at the CBC North Table to see if the shipment has arrived. Supply is limited.

CORRECTIONS

On page 22 of the Tuesday edition of Ulu News, a quote was mistakenly credited to Team Yukon's Callum McGillvery. The quote was actually from Coach will Lucero of Team Alaska.

The Land Acknowledgement article credited to Kendra Zamzow was written by Emma Keechle and EDITED by Kendra Zamzow.



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RESULTS**

ULU NEWS COMES IN MANY FORMS!

BLOG

FLIP BOOK

RADIO

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MARKETING PROGRAM MANAGER
Emerald Kroeker

ULU NEWS CHAIR
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MARKETING ASSISTANT
Annie Alderman

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Tina Tipner

WEATHER FORECAST



Wednesday | March 13

Partly sunny with a high of 31°F (2°C) and a low of 18°F (-8°C) with 66% humidity and southwest winds at 5mph (8km/hr)

GEAR UP FOR THE GAMES



You can purchase merchandise during Games week at any of these locations. Can't wait to see you there!*

Location	Sun - 3/10	Mon - 3/11	Tues - 3/12	Weds - 3/13	Thur - 3/14	Fri - 3/15	Sat - 3/16
Alaska Airlines Games Headquarters		11:00-19:00	11:00-19:00	11:00-19:00	11:00-19:00	11:00-19:00	
Menard Center	14:00-19:00	11:00-19:00	11:00-19:00	11:00-19:00	11:00-19:00	11:00-19:00	14:00-18:00
Eklutna 1 (Colony HS)	16:00-20:00	11:00-20:00	11:00-20:00	11:00-20:00	11:00-20:00	11:00-20:00	
Beneth 1 (Wasilla HS)	16:00-20:00	11:00-20:00	11:00-20:00	11:00-20:00	11:00-20:00	11:00-20:00	
Nuutah 2 (Palmer Junior MS)		12:00-17:00	12:00-17:00	12:00-17:00	12:00-17:00	12:00-17:00	
Harry J. McDonald Memorial Center			12:00-17:00		12:00-17:00		
Glenn Massay Theater					17:00-21:00	14:00-21:00	
Alaska State Fairgrounds						15:00-21:00	11:00-16:00

HOW PINTERESTING!

BY EMMA KEECHLE

Curious about Pin Trading? Let's delve into its fascinating history.

Pin trading is believed to have originated during the 1896 Athens olympics. According to Custom Comet LLC, a pin fabricator, pins of that time consisted of "round cardboard with ribbons attached. They were a way for the athletes and officials to identify themselves."

Fast forward to the Mat-Su 2024 Arctic Winter Games, where pin trading has evolved into a cherished activity embraced by athletes, coaches and spectators alike so much so that it's affectionately dubbed the "21st sport" of the games, fostering connections that transcend language barriers.

Janet Pacey, is a seasoned pin trading enthusiast from YellowKnife, Northwest Territories, Canada. Despite not being a participant in the games, Janet has immersed herself in the art of pin trading since 2004. Reflecting on her journey, she recalls her initial exposure to pin trading at the Arctic Winter Games in Grand Rapids, where she was captivated by the activity.

"To send out pins and to talk to the public and, sort of just be their audience relations sort of capacity and, became wildly addicted to pin trading almost right away," Janet reminisces about her early days as a pin trader during her tenure with CBC North.

For Janet and many others, the thrill in the chase of attempting to collect a complete set of pins from a specific year is unmatched. Beyond the pursuit of pins, it's the camaraderie and sense of community forged through trading that enriches the experience. Want to embark on your own pin trading journey? Begin by visiting the Palmer Train Depot, also referred to during Arctic Winter Games as "Alaska Airlines Arctic Winter Games Headquarters" where professional collectors await, eager to trade. You can get starter pins at the merch store at the depot.

There's a couple of things to remember while trading though:

- Patience is key; don't be disheartened if you can't find a specific pin immediately.
- Respect ongoing trades and wait for them to conclude before initiating your own.
- Don't be too pushy, you can negotiate, it's part of the fun, but don't push until someone becomes uncomfortable.
- Do your research! Some pins are more rare than others.
- Be aware that puzzle pins have more than one part and can be challenging to collect.

With these tips in mind, dive into the world of pin trading and discover the joy of collecting, connecting, and creating lasting memories at the Arctic Winter Games.



ARCTIC BEATS: PAMYUA BRINGS INUIT SOUL MUSIC TO THE 2024 ARCTIC WINTER GAMES



BY NATALIE PIETRO

Get ready for a night of cultural immersion and musical brilliance as Pamyua (pronounced bum-yo-ah), Alaska's premier Inuit musical group, takes the stage at the Glenn Massey Theater on Thursday, March 14, after the Indigenous Fashion Show as part of the Arctic Winter Games 2024 festivities. Known for their dynamic fusion of traditional Inuit drum and dance melodies with contemporary R&B vocal stylings, Pamyua promises an unforgettable experience for all in attendance.

Formed in 1995 by brothers Phillip and Stephen Blanchett, Pamyua quickly rose to fame, captivating audiences with their unique sound and mesmerizing performances. With the addition of Ossie Kairaiuk and Karina Moeller, the quartet has evolved into a cultural phenomenon, spreading Indigenous knowledge and history through their music and dance.

Described as "Inuit Soul Music," Pamyua showcases a seamless blend of traditional melodies reinterpreted with modern vocalization and instrumentation. Their music serves as a powerful expression of Indigenous identity and pride, transcending geographical boundaries to resonate with audiences worldwide.

For Phillip Blanchett, the journey with Pamyua began with a moment of inspiration during his mother's traditional Yup'ik dance performance. From that moment onward, he was determined to create a group that would capture the spirit of the Yup'ik word "Pamyua," meaning "Encore" or "Do it Again." Today, Pamyua continues to honor Indigenous traditions, history, and storytelling through their captivating performances.

In recent years, Pamyua's influence has extended beyond the stage. They've scored music for the National Geographic reality show *Life Below Zero: First Alaskans*, composed original pieces for *Flying Wild Alaska* on the Discovery Channel, and even contributed to the theme song of the PBS Kids show *Molly of Denali*. Through these projects, they continue to amplify Indigenous voices and narratives on a global scale.

As Pamyua prepares to take stage at the Arctic Winter Games, audiences can expect an evening filled with energy, emotion, and cultural celebration. It's more than just a concert—it's a journey into the heart and soul of Inuit culture, brought to life through the universal language of music and dance.



BADMINTON COURTS COME TO LIFE

BY IDA EDWARDS

The gym was alive with the sounds of competition. The squeak of shoes pivoting on the floor, the twang of a hit to the shuttlecock, the swish of racquets. With the sound of spectators cheering and officials calling the serves, badminton got underway at Colony High School.

There were six courts in play at the singles event on Tuesday afternoon. I had a clear site line to three of the six courts from the upper level viewing area. My head swung from side to side to keep up with three games, like a kitty in the window watching a busy bird feeder. The badminton competition was exciting to take in. It was humbling to think of the months of training that was now being put to the test in a best of three sets. Enthusiasm and anticipation permeated the gym.

Players had warm up rallies to test each other out before the match, then officials explained the coin toss rules. Finally the games began. Players showcased their speed, agility, and coordination in fast paced sets. I admired the energy of the new players with their exciting rallies and the way more experienced players used a mix of shots to keep each other hopping. They tested each other with strategic forehands, backhands, slice touch, and smashes in some exciting rallies. Unique serving styles were on display, designed to catch the competition off-guard. And coaches, well, they were mostly wrapped around their chairs at the back of the courts watching the play unfold.

There was a high level of sportsmanship on and off the courts. The players were gracious with their wins and defeats.

There is going to be more Badminton action this week at the Eklutna 1/Colony High School.

Visit awg2024.org/attend or awg2024.gems.pro to find more schedule information.



TRADITIONAL FEAST A HUGE SUCCESS

BY EMERALD KROEKER

Last night, Cultural participants, Arctic Sports & Dene Athletes gathered with special guests, board members, and some staff to take part in a staple Arctic Winter Games celebration - the traditional feast.

Guests arrived to a warm and inviting space. The Arctic Winter Games cauldron sat just inside the door, it's glowing red flames a-flicker. Katie Basile's Alumni project display lined the wall along the walk way. Lighting and music set the mood for a relaxing evening.

In one corner, participants practiced two foot high kick and knuckle hop feats.

Food was prepared by Alaska's own Fish On Camp Grill. Each course included local ingredients, from Alaskan Grown carrots to Copper River Salmon. Perhaps the most special element to the meal though, was that the salad course featured a share of fresh moose steak, a harvest from a young man's first hunt,

After the soup and salad, some cultural performances took stage. Most of the room joined in to dance along with the performers. "We don't care about mistakes, we care about effort," said one team Alaska Cultural Participant as he called folks from their seats to join in.

Many performances took place, each showcasing unique traditions from our colorful array of Arctic regions.

After dinner, attendees stepped outside to participate in a blanket toss. A short instructional presentation was given and then - up they went, one by one participants flew through the air on cue.

Everyone shuffled back inside for a final delight - cloud berry ice cream and fry bread. This was undeniably fantastic.

One pleased young observer in attendance, said "I'm so glad I got to come to this. It was SO cool!" She then proceeded to practice her own throat-singing performance, emulating what she had seen earlier in the evening.



Photo by Emerald Kroeker



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TEAM NUNAVUT: THE NEWEST TEAM

BY KYLA KHARS

Team Nunavut hails from Canada and comprises the largest and newest territory of Canada. Nunavut, which means “our land,” was annexed from the Northwest Territories in 1999. This year, the 297 Nunavut participants in the 2024 Arctic Winter Games include athletes, coaches, managers, youth ambassadors, cultural performers, and mission staff. They will be representing Nunavut in 13 sports including hockey, table tennis, short track speed skating, figure skating, badminton, basketball, volleyball, arctic sports, dene games, futsal, wrestling, curling, and cross-country skiing.

During the opening ceremonies, badminton athlete Iris Sowdluapik was flag bearer for Team Nunavut. Iris comes from Pangnirtung and has competed several times in major games. She earned the bronze medal in doubles at the 2023 Arctic Winter Games and the 2023 North American Indigenous Games. She is a dedicated athlete, mentor, and coach to younger youth in her community. She believes in giving back to her community and the sport she loves so much.

The Youth Ambassadors joining Team Nunavut this year represent some of the best young leaders in the region. Youth Ambassadors hosting the Nunavut pop-up booth will offer giveaways and activities

such as trivia and syllabic writing, as well as present an Arctic Sports/Inuit Games demonstration. Make sure you stop by to see what they have in store - their booth time and locations will be released in Ulu News tomorrow, March 14. These youth participated in training sessions in person and online in preparation for volunteering with the Host Society, and have trained in several skills, such as Marketing, Event Services, and Volunteer Services. The expertise they gain as Ambassadors to the Games help them develop irreplaceable talents and abilities and gain confidence to represent Nunavut and their people.

The Team Nunavut Pin Set is made up of six pieces which fit together as a group of family and friends. These characters are gathered around the qulliq (oil lamp) listening to traditional stories; stories which always have a meaning and moral to take away. The set was created and is being supplied by The Pin People, Laurie Artiss Limited. Make sure you get the complete set!

We at the Ulu News look forward to seeing what these athletes and young people have to offer. We can't wait to see how they do. **Naghe nduniyu (Welcome) to the Mat-Su Valley, Team Nunavut!**



Photo by John Rusyniak

ALASKA HOSTS AN ESTEEMED GUEST

BY ANNE ALDERMAN

The 2024 Mat-Su Arctic Winter Games hosted several distinguished guests, but none as esteemed as Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon. Her excellency holds the notable distinction of being Canada's first Indigenous Governor General, assuming office in July of 2021. As an Inuk woman from Kangiqsualujjuaq in Nunavik, Quebec, the Governor General's political career has been defined by her unwavering dedication to Indigenous and Arctic issues. She was the first Inuk to hold an ambassadorial position and was pivotal in championing the establishment of the Arctic Council. This intergovernmental forum tackles pressing Arctic challenges, mirroring the Games' ethos of fostering collaboration among Arctic nations.

Her Excellency Mary Simon traveled to Alaska March ninth through the twelfth at the request of The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada. During her trip, the Governor General attended sporting events, met with Canadian athletes, and spoke at Opening Ceremonies. She delivered a moving speech that highlighted the unique and important nature of the Arctic Winter Games, saying the Games “bring people together to celebrate cooperation and cultural exchange. They give us an opportunity to learn from one another, understand each other, and work together to address common challenges that face the arctic region”.

M Simon has helped bring Arctic issues to an international stage throughout her career and she applauded the Arctic Winter Games' ability to “show the entire world how accomplished, diverse and united the Northern peoples are.” Her Excellency highlighted an Inuktitut word that embodies the tenacity of the games participants and was met with thunderous applause. Governor General defined the word, Ajuinata, sharing that “it means preserving in the face of obstacles, it means never to give up. You never gave up as you worked tirelessly honing your skills, and pushing the boundaries of what you thought possible to get here so we will never give up as a people in the circumpolar north”.

Her Excellency has dedicated her career to the betterment of the North and it was an honor to hear her speak. In Alaska our state motto is “North to the Future”. With advocates like Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Mary Simon and this year's hardworking participants, the future of the North is in great hands.



Photo by Kimberly Suggs

TEAM ALASKA SHOOTS TO THRILL

BY SAM QUELETTE



As AC/DC's Shoot to Thrill blared over the loudspeaker Team Nunavut and Team Alaska's U15 Men's teams took to the ice greeted by the shouts of excited fans, athletes, and families. Prior to the puck drop, I spoke with Robin Ouellette, a retired teacher from Machetanz Elementary who showed up at the game to cheer on her former student, #35 Torsten Decovich. "I am super excited to be here to support a former Bear Cub" Robin said. The first period set the stage for an intense showdown, with Team Alaska dominating from the first whistle, displaying exceptional skill and coordination on the ice. The defensive maneuvers and goaltending of both teams kept the score close. With 11:29 left in the first period, Asher Roy scored the first goal for Team Alaska, opening the scoring. After the first period, the score was Alaska 1 Nunavut 0, despite the shots on goal being 13-1 in favor of Alaska, the Nunavut goalie did everything –including standing on his head– to keep the puck out of his net.

As the second period began, the scoring started as soon as the puck hit the ice and with 16:50 left in the second period Ryaln McIlroy extended the lead to 2-0 for Team Alaska. Team Alaska struck just moments later with 15:31 left in the second period with a goal from Patrick Forestal scores, making the score 3-0 for Team Alaska.

Team Alaska further extended the score with 10:53 left in the second period on a goal from Isaiah Gonzalez scored, increasing Alaska's lead to 4-0 and moments later at 10:46 of the second period Roman Marcotte scored on an unassisted breakaway, making it 5-0 in favor of Team Alaska.

Cooper Circousta scored from an impossible angle from behind the net with 4:26 left in the second period, contributing Alaska's fifth goal of the high octane period. As the clock ran down to 10 seconds, Isaiah Gonzalez scored his second goal of the game, bringing the lead up to 7-0 for Team Alaska.

Despite a shot-on-goal differential now at 50 shots to 3 and Alaska dominating the game, Nunavut fans were not ruffled. They faithfully clapped noisemakers, waved flags, and stomped their feet trying to gain momentum for their squad. One fan shared "Go Nunavut"! The third period got chippy with plenty of penalties and some harsh warnings from the refs to both teams. With 7:23 left in the third period Nunavut finally broke through and shored off a rebound from the goalies' pads. As the final horn rang overhead the score read Team Alaska 7 Team Nunavut 1 and shots were 64 to 7 in favor of Alaska.



BIATHLON BRAVES THE ELEMENTS

BY ANNA CHABUKINA

At the Kincaid park winter recreation area in Anchorage, the biathlon snowshoe and ski event on Tuesday was a beautiful sight. Teams begin by stationing at their zones, zeroing in on their targets. Zeroing in is preparation for a biathlon by warming up and practicing shooting with a rifle at the target, in order to estimate wind direction and become mentally ready to compete. One of the biathlon coaches, Kate, explained "All the kids on snowshoes have to wear soft-sole mukluks, and most of these mukluks have been hand sown by family or passed down amongst athletes in the villages". She also commented that this year, all teams were using the same wax. "It's an international initiative from the International Biathlon Union to incorporate an environmental change". With this new information to help me grasp a better understanding of the sport, I set out to watch the first series of races.

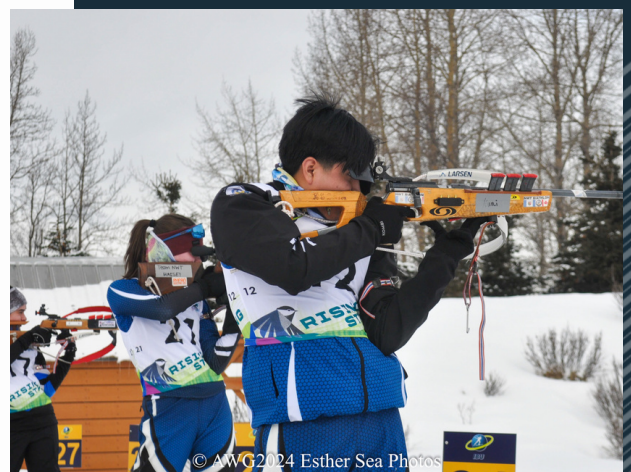
Despite the chill, the teams chattered excitedly amongst themselves. The announcer called out a 5 minute warning followed by a run down of how the event would go: 3 runs, 2 shots. Once all participants got their timing chip, (an anklet that times their finish time and penalty laps) it was time for the athletes to take their places at the starting line. With calculated steps and a steady pace the racers started off at 15 second intervals, making their way down the track and around, keeping a steady pace so as not to exhaust themselves. It wasn't long before the first runners approached the shooting range. Down they went on a pad, and fire their rifles, the sound of pellets hitting each target echoing over the crowd of spectators. When they finished their shots, they jumped back to action and made their way down the raceway yet again. After the first track, the racers have two more tracks to go, and only one more opportunity to shoot. Fifteen minutes in, each athlete dived in for their second shot. The drill began again: drop to the mat, set their mark, fire, jump back into action to sprint down the course for their last run. In the last stretch, the crowd cheered for the athletes as they made the last bend. "LETS GO!" was heard from every corner as one after the other, athletes made their way closer to the finish line. With a final push, they crossed over the finish line and dropped into the snow to cool off after their amazing race. Great job to all the snowshoers!



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BIATHLON BRAVES THE ELEMENTS, CONT.

After an intermission, the biathlon sprint skiers begin zeroing, which is a time for them to focus on their targets and get some last minute ski practice in. Sprint Ski has 2 courses: a purple/orange course for U16 that spans 4 km/2.4mi, and a red course for U18 that spans 6 km/3.7mi. Five minutes before line up, all participants in the biathlon ski were called to claim their chip. As chips were claimed, each racer made their way to the starting line. The closer the clock ticked toward the race start, the more determined each athlete looked. Then, at 15 second intervals athletes started their race of 3 laps and 2 shots, one by one, crossing the starting line with enthusiasm and speed. The race was underway! As the first group came down fast on the course, ski poles up, and arms to chest, they whipped by in a flurry of snow and cheers. Seven minutes into the race, the first skiers reached their rifles, got to their mat, and fired! Every point the competitors earn is vital. Any missed target earns them a penalty lap. Participants slung their seven to ten pound rifles to their backs and breezed into their second lap.

When the third and final lap started, racers were able to leave rifles on their hooks and speed off unencumbered. The crowd cheered and cowbells raised up a storm when the skiers were a few bends away from the finish line! U16 skiers zoomed across the finish line, sliding into the snow for sweet cool relief from a strenuous race across the course. As they caught their breath, the second place skier from Team Alaska playfully commented to Team Yukon who came in first, "slow down out there for the rest of us, eh?"

It didn't take long for the U18 skiers to start crossing the finish line, heaving sighs of relief as they were able to lie down in the snow to rest. Racer after racer crossed the finish line to the calls of encouragement from family, friends, and teammates. Although exhausted from their sprint, they chatted cheerfully and congratulated each other on a race well done.





IT'S A MENTAL GAME | TABLE TENNIS

BY KENDRA ZAMZOW

A small slip of a girl held the hollow, white ball as reverently as an egg in the palm of her hand. Then with a slice she spun it towards her opponent. In the semi-finals for the girls U15 age group, Kathleen Cai of Team Northwest Territories played Hanna Cho of Fairbanks. At the adjacent table, Trudy Quanaq and Lalita Atatahak, both of Team Nunavut played.

At Wasilla Middle School, four blue-surfaced tables were set up in the gym with cording around them to designate the playing areas. Spectators sat on purple bleacher benches, encouraging the players. Players conferred with coaches between sets, leaning over the cording like boxers in a ring. Games were fast-paced and focused. A player returned a ball that was well off the table, but in the next play, stepped aside to let the hollow white ball hit the ground. The official raised a hand indicating a score. At the next table, a player swiped hard, but met only air. Then a set of soft volleys turned to an exchange of hard shots until it ended in a net ball.

In table tennis, a player wins when they reach 11 points, if they are at least two points ahead. Up to five sets may need to be played before a winner is called.

“It’s a mental game”, quipped one spectator. “Look, he’s going for the downspin,” said another.

“You are analyzing your opponent,” said Bill Cotton, Mission Staff for Team Alaska and former table tennis coach. “But the mental part is really in keeping control – you miss a ball, you go on, don’t let it get to you, focus on the next move.”

Hannah Cho and Trudy Quanaq won their respective semi-finals and went on to compete for the gold, with Team Nunavut pulling ahead in three of five close matches. Kathleen Cai of Team Northwest Territories and Lalita Atatahak of Team Nunavut competed for the bronze, with Team Northwest Territories gaining the bronze ulu in three matches.

The boys and girls that played in the singles events will now be prepping for the doubles and team events taking place later in the week. We hope you’ll head out to root for them and ask them about their mental strategies!



© AWG 2024 Le Losier



© AWG 2024 Le Losier



CIRCLE OF FRIENDS IS IN THE HOUSE | CURLING

BY JULIE SPACKMAN

The rink's plexiglass muffled the sounds of action on the ice. The team of four were checking out the ice conditions on the sheet (playing field) in front of them. Skips (team captains) are calling the shots for the lead (the athlete who throws the first rock) and the two sweepers on how best to aim the rock as it heads toward the house (target). Fans in the grandstand watch quietly until the shot reaches the house to shout their cheers, horns, or bells break the silence on a great play. What is a shot? A shot is made by sliding a granite curling stone, aka rocks, down a sheet of ice to the house.

On the ice, players concentrate on the communication from the skip while the crowd buzzes behind them. Like baseball, each team has their hand signals to supplement calls from the house to the hack. The hack is the foot hold on the end of the ice surface from which the stone is delivered. The Nunavut girls team had just finished their match and were resting in the bleachers watching other teams in competition. Three of the four player team and their coach shared how they began playing curling.

Arianna Atienza and Sophia MacDonald started curling after attending bonspiels (curling competitions) when their sisters were playing. Atienza and MacDonald recruited their friend, Naja Ejesiak to join them. Atienza is the veteran who started curling in 2018. She has held positions of lead, second, and third positions. With her experience, she is now the skip. When asked how their impression of curling changed from before they played to now, Atienza says, "There's a lot more thinking now than when I was ten!". Coach Gustafson pointed out that there's also a different kind of pressure on the skip than on the players at the front end. "You also get to talk to your teammates more on the front end, than when you're on the back end", Atienza acknowledged.





CURLING CONT.

Before she started curling, Naja Ejesiak thought it would be easier than it is. “Sweeping is HARD!”, she said. Sophia MacDonald wholeheartedly agreed. “You have to push really hard on the ice. You have to learn the footwork. There’s a lot of multi-tasking!”, said MacDonald. Ejesiak said that even though it’s physically hard work to sweep, she really likes the challenge of it all.

Some of the subtleties of curling could be lost on the casual observer. Players must learn to read the “curl of the ice”. Watching how the rock moves down the sheet by the other team can provide some insights on how best to aim the rock, how "heavy" or "light" to throw the rock, how much sweeping to do, and where to position the rock in, or near, the house. Communication amongst team members is an essential part of the sport. According to the Nunavut girls team, reliance on the team’s skip and trust in the directions provided by the skip, helps to keep the team unified. MacDonald said, “You really have to trust each other. If the skip calls the shot and you don’t trust it, that could change the throw.” Atienza agreed and said that for their team, “We’re all friends. We have that trust for each other.” MacDonald and Ejesiak agreed. This circle of friends is IN THE HOUSE.



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© AWG 2024 | Santana



SPOTLIGHT ON TEAM KALAALLIT NUNAAAT

BY KENDRA ZAMZOW

Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) is the most northerly of jurisdictions involved in the Arctic Winter Games. They have been participating since 1990, and hosted the Games in 2002 and 2016.

“The best I ever coached was Vittus Olsen, who won gold in snowboarding in the last [2023] Arctic Winter Games,” said Svend Lynge Larson, who helps with the team. “But he is too old to participate this time.”

This year, they have a contingent of 65, including coaches and assistants. Of these, four boys are participating in the snowboard events, ages 12, 13, 14, and 15. “The kids are really enjoying it,” he said. “I don’t think any of them have been to the Arctic Winter Games before.”

Although Kalaallit Nunaat is Danish, most of the people have Inuit heritage. They are proud of their culture and language, which is different from Danish. Some words are similar to words that people here would know, such as Qujanaq, “Thank you”, which sounds very similar to the Yup’ik “Quyana”.

Alaskans would recognize some of their lived experience as well. There aren’t many roads, and you often have to get around by boat, plane, or Skidoo. And, said Larson, “There are some people that have to be exactly on time, but we operate around sila, the weather. We have clothes for the weather and carry a wind jacket because it can change suddenly.” If you’ve traveled much around Alaska, you’ll recognize this as a version of “The plane will fly. Weather dependent.”

Their weather, however, is changing. “We have rain when we used to have snow. We can only train for two months when we used to train for four. We can’t ski until mid-February.” So perhaps we’ll see more of our friends from Kalaallit Nunaat; maybe they will come here more often to train! Asked what they would like to see before leaving, “Moose,” said Larson. “We have caribou, but we’ve never seen a moose before. The kids would really like to see one.”

Next time you see Team Kalaallit Nunaat in their distinctive red jackets, **try out a happy “Ullaq nuanneq”** (“Good day”), and if they respond with qujanaq, you can smile and say “illilla” (“you’re welcome”).





SNOW SNAKE | DENÉ GAMES

BY ANDREA HACKBARTH + KRYSTA VOSKOWSKY

“You can think of it as underhand javelin.” Jasper Charlie, 15, of Team Yukon explained the basics of Snowsnake, a traditional Dené game, as he devoured a cracker heaped with smoked salmon dip at last night’s Traditional Feast. “I wanted to win so badly! I came in fifth today.” Enthusiastically diving into his bowl of Moose Steak Salad next, he blurted out between bites, “that’s okay, though. She won gold!” Charlie pointed to his teammate across the table. Myra Kendi, 16, held up her shining 2024 golden ulu that still hung around her neck, simply beaming.

Snow Snake, on its surface, seems like a simple game. Players try to throw a long stick as far as they can, sliding it across a flat sheet of snow and ice. However, after spending the day watching a wide variety of athletes compete in this event, it’s more accurate to say that winning the gold in Snow Snake is a much more complex challenge than it might seem.

Snowsnake is a traditional game that is rumored to derive from practicing the skills needed to effectively hunt small game animals in the circumpolar north. However, many of the coaches and officials at the event held outside of Palmer Junior Middle School today described Snowsnake as a demonstration of caribou hunting skills. One Yukon coach explained that traditionally hunters throw the first spear underhand, aiming low to injure a caribou’s legs, making it easier to follow up and complete the kill. These traditional origins were apparent at the Dené Games today as coaches, officials, and contestants joked with each other about how many caribou each one would have taken down with their throws if this were a real-life hunting scenario.

In modern Snowsnake competitions, the game is played not with a spear, but with a stick (usually carved from Ash) measuring about four feet long, one inch in diameter, and pointed at one end.



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SNOW SNAKE | DENÉ GAMES CONT.

For the Arctic Winter Games, the teams' coaches met together to choose sticks for the competition, one for male and one for female contestants. During today's competition, each athlete had three attempts to launch their stick down a flat, straight track of packed snow, about ten feet wide and 400 feet long. Banked sides keep the stick on track—well, most of the time, anyway. Spectators were reminded to keep their eyes on the track and be mindful of standing too close, so as not to wind up like an unfortunate caribou.

Snowsnake rules require that the stick be thrown underhand, starting from below the hip. Team Alaska coach, Kunaq Tahbone, explained some of the finer points of good snowsnake technique. According to Tahbone, it's important to find the right point of balance on the stick, with most athletes choosing to hold the stick at a spot near the center. The stick should be released at just the right moment, just above the snow and aimed just right, so it successfully glides straight down the track—no jumping or bouncing.

Athletes competed in four divisions today: Open Male, Open Female, U18 Male, and U18 Female. In addition to the competition track, another practice track was active today, where athletes could be seen practicing their throws, and helping teach the game to others, including spectators of all ages.

“Dené Games and Arctic Sports are the backbone of the Arctic Winter Games.” Coach Tahbone said Tuesday. Nowhere was this more evident than in the community spirit shown by the athletes encouraging one another and helping newcomers learn their game.



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STRATEGY & PROWESS PREVAIL

BY SAM QUELETTE

On a blustery Tuesday morning, fans and athletes funneled into the Brett Memorial Ice Arena for a match-up of female U19 hockey, Team Alaska versus Team Nunavut. All around the rink, fans of Team Alaska waved flags, rang cowbells, and shouted encouragement. Not to be outdone, the Nunavut contingent of athletes, fans, and family banged their feet on the bleachers, waved flags, and blew noisemakers.

The game unfolded with a showcase of strategy and hockey prowess. The first period set the stage for an intense showdown, with both Alaska and Nunavut displaying exceptional skill and coordination on the ice. The defensive maneuvers and goal-tending of both teams kept the score sheet clean, creating an air of anticipation for the forthcoming periods.

The excitement reached its peak in the second period, as Alaska's Aliana Burnside opened the scoring with a remarkable goal, finding the back of the net with 16:04 left in the second period.

Burnside's precise shot and deft maneuvering brought the crowd to its feet. Alaska's Kendall Ketchum added to the lead with a goal at the 9:01 making the score 2-0. As the period drew to a close, Ketchum struck again with an impressive goal, leaving only 24 seconds on the clock. The quick succession of goals by Alaska highlighted their offensive chops. The score at the end of the second period was 3-0 in favor of Alaska.

As the game went into the third period, Nunavut had a challenging deficit they were not able to overcome. Aliana Burnside netted her second goal with just 4:15 left on the clock, extending the lead for Alaska 4-0. Grace White sealed the victory for Alaska with a goal at the 3:26 mark, and a 5-0 win. As the final buzzer rang, celebrations from Alaska fans shook the rafters.



FUTSAL IS HELPING CIRCUMPOLAR TEENS MAKE FRIENDS DESPITE LANGUAGE BARRIERS

BY EMMA KEECHLE

With so many northern cultures from around the world attending the Arctic Winter Games, there are a unique array of languages that they have brought with them. While most teams do speak English, it isn't their only language.

Futsal has some basic terms that are commonly said while playing:

- **Ball** - This means you're asking for the ball to be passed to you. It's like signaling to your teammate that you're open.
- **Pass** - Similar to asking for the ball, it's a request to have the ball kicked to you. It's another way to let teammates know you're in a good strategic position.
- **Drop** - This term is used when you want to pass the ball back to a teammate, usually towards your own goal to regroup or plan a new attack..
- **Shot/Shoot** - You use this to encourage a teammate to take a chance and kick the ball towards the goal with the aim of scoring. Shoot and shot are used interchangeably

**Some of these terms are the same across languages. Words are typed in the English alphabet for easy reading for everybody. Some words are unknown and these may not be official translations of words.*

English	Norwegian	Sápmi	Inuktitut	German	French	Spanish	Arabic
Ball	Ball	Spabba	aqsaq	Ball	Balle	pelota	Koora
Pass	Sentring	Pass	Unknown	Pass	Passe	pase	Marrir
Drop	Drop	Drop	katai	Unknown	Lache	Unknown	Armi
Shot/ Shoot	Skyt	Báce	Unknown	Schuss	Shot/ Shoot	tiro	Youzaa

- Team Sápmi speaks mainly in Norwegian as well as the occasional native Sápmi language
- Team Nunavut mainly uses English while playing futsal but a coach was able to translate some words into Inuktitut
- One of Team Yukon's players speaks German
- Team NorthWest Territories has a player who speaks French
- Almost every member of Team Alberta North speaks a different language from Spanish to Arabic

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GOOD GAME, GOOD GAME

BY KAJE ROCKWELL



The players glided into view over a smooth field of ice as a gleeful audience buzzed in anticipation, cheering for all the players in the rink. The energy of the arena said it all— this was going to be an epic ice hockey game for Team Alaska and Team Yukon.

At the start, the teams exchanged slapshots like a call and response, answering shot for shot. Soon skaters' foreheads dripped with sweat and both teams gladly took a moment to breathe at the end of the first period, regrouping on the bench as each team planned their attack. Team Alaska quickly took the lead as Yukon players glared determined through frosted visors. Challenge accepted. It was GAME ON.

Fans in Alaskan blue and gold drank from steaming cups of afternoon coffee, alert as Team Yukon made their moves. Blades slicing across the ice with the grit and gusto of seasoned professionals, the battle continued into the next period. Yukon gave it their all! The numbers on the scoreboard barely budged for Team Alaska until the very end of the second period. Alaska kept the lead with Yukon doing all they could to execute a solid defensive tactic. Yukon's goalie moved with expert precision and timing, protecting the goal at all costs, stopping slapshots with both blades and catching flying pucks before they could find the back of the net.

The competition grew so intense at one point that the crowd fell silent, just staring in awe—both teams' fans hoping, some doubting, others cheering while Team Yukon and Team Alaska committed 100% of their energy to Tuesday night's game.

Team Yukon seemed to know what they were up against. Breathless by the end of the second period, they gathered into a huddle, their coaches joining the circle to quickly discuss strategy. In the stands, a single fan waved Alaska's flag with honor. As if in reply, Yukon rattled their blades against the side of their box, and with a single glance from their coach, poured off the benches and back onto the ice.

Blades cast a spray of ice across the glass. Players slammed into the boards, panting, hearts clearly racing, eyes darting to every corner through the fast-paced game. Each player fought hard for their team as the audience sat at the edge of their seats, intensely focused on the nonstop action. Yukon played hard, but ultimately Alaska won, 9-0.

The results displayed on the scoreboard, there was a touching moment of camaraderie after their struggle as the teams met and brotherly hugs replaced competitive shoves. Putting their blades to one side, hands extended willingly, they congratulated each other. "Good game, good game..." they chanted as they swapped handshakes. Despite the 9-0 score, it's worth noting that every player remained a leader, a fighter, and a winner throughout the game.

