

Learn about: Arctic Winter Games

Every 2 years, athletes gather from across the world's northern circumpolar regions to compete and share their cultures.

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About the Arctic Winter Games



One of the main goals of the Arctic Winter Games (the Olympics of the North) is to involve as many athletes as possible from northern regions and provide them with a venue to compete.

The first Arctic Winter Games took place for a week in 1970 in Yellowknife, the capital of the Northwest Territories. They were a great success with about 500 athletes, coaches and officials participating from the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Alaska.

Over the years, the games have not only grown in the number of arctic countries participating, but they have also increased in the number of sports, participants, and cultural experiences highlighted.

To compete, athletes must qualify through 2 competitions:

1. regional trials
2. territorial trials



While competing, athletes have an opportunity to learn about the cultures and values of other northern regions in the world. Northern artists and performers provide entertainment through cultural programs that are held each evening. There could be Inuit throat-singing, Dene drumming, fast-paced Métis fiddling and other exciting artistic performances.

The games include:

- athletic competition
- cultural exhibition
- social interactions

Each of these themes is represented in the three interlocking rings of the Arctic Winter Games International Committee's logo.



The Arctic Winter Games logo
(used with permission by the Arctic
Winter Games International Committee)

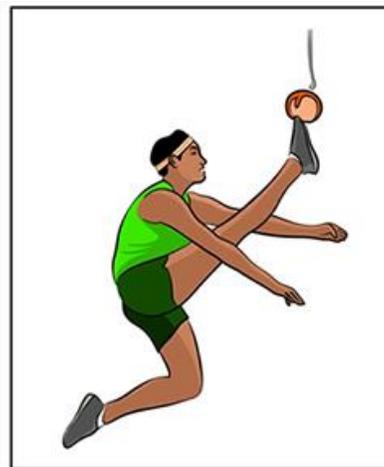
Sports including arctic sports and Dene games

The games include several sports played in the Canada Games and the Olympic Games, such as:

- skiing
- speed skating
- hockey
- snowboarding
- basketball
- wrestling
- gymnastics

What makes the Arctic Winter Games different from other multi-sport games are the many sporting events that are unique to northern cultures, such as dog mushing, arctic sports and Dene games. At the Arctic Winter Games, arctic sports include different events, such as:

- the kneel jump
- the one-foot high kick
- the two-foot high kick
- the airplane
- the knuckle hop
- the Alaskan high kick
- the one hand reach
- the head pull
- the arm pull
- the sledge jump
- the triple jump



The Dene games include 5 different events:

- the finger pull
- the hand games (a team game)
- the snow snake
- the stick pull
- the pole push (another team game)



Ceremonies and medals

Like any major sporting competition, the Arctic Winter Games start with an opening ceremony where the host city has the chance to showcase itself to the participating athletes and the world. At the end of the games, award ceremonies are held to present athletes with their winning medals.

The games have a unique medal called the "Ulu". It is modeled on the all-purpose knife traditionally used by Inuit women. Athletes are awarded gold, silver and bronze Ulu medals for winning first, second and third place in their sporting events.



At the end of the games, a trophy is also awarded to the team that best displays the spirit and values of the games.

The games are closed with an official ceremony that celebrates the achievements of athletes, volunteers, sponsors and the host community.

Activities: compete in the games

Here are the rules for 2 sports played in the Arctic Winter Games. Try them with friends and see how well you do!

The arm pull

Before you begin, remove any watches and bracelets.

To get in position

1. Sit on the floor with a friend, facing each other
2. Extend your left leg to the left of your opponent
3. Bend your right leg over the left leg of your opponent
4. Lock your right elbow with your opponent's right elbow
5. Hold your opponent's right leg or ankle with your left hand



To begin the game

- pull slowly and steadily by the elbow

Remember to keep your left hands on each other's legs or ankle and to only pull from inside the elbows.

To win a round

- pull the other player over your right leg
or
- straighten their right arm
or
- make their hand touch your chest

If either of you falls sideways or touches the floor with the right hand, the pull is started over.

There are 3 rounds in a competition. Flip a coin to determine which arm to use first. The second round is done with the opposite arm and the third round is with the original arm. The first person to win 2 rounds wins.

The snow snake

Before you begin, make a track for the snow snake to travel on

1. Pile snow into a long narrow line (about the length of a tennis court)
2. Carve a line (your track) into the pile of snow so that your snow snake fits comfortably
3. If you can, water your track to create an icy surface

Now you need a snow snake!

Here's how you can make a quick version of a snow snake

1. Ask an adult for help
2. Cut off the blade of an old hockey stick so that it curves upwards slightly and is able to slide easily along your snowy track

To play

- throw your snow snake (the stick) close to the ground so it glides as far as possible along your snowy track

To win

- you must be the one to throw your snow snake the farthest

If you play with a team

- whoever throws the snow snake the farthest in each round scores a point for his or her team
- an extra point goes to the team with the player who made the longest throw of the whole game

Athletes at the games can throw their snow snakes over 90 m. Do you think you can match their throws?

Find out more

- Arctic Winter Games: www.arcticwintergames.org
- Dene Games: www.denegames.ca
- North American Indigenous Games: www.naigcouncil.com/index.php



Traditionally, a "snake" is carved out of a straight stick of wood with the bark stripped. The snake would be about 1.5 m long and 5 to 10 cm wide at the large end, and curve up like a ski. The rest of the stick is about 3 cm wide.

In the past, the snakes were carved and highly decorated on the non-sliding surfaces of the snake. If you want, take some time to make carvings and painted decorations on your snake.

