

Arctic Winter Games

Background

The Arctic winter Games is a high profile circumpolar competition for northern and arctic athletes. This biannual international event began in Canada on January 18th, 1968 provides an opportunity for the developing athlete to compete in a friendly competition while sharing cultural values from northern regions round the world.

The long winters and the relatively small playing spaces, even in the large communal houses, explain why there are far fewer team and outdoor traditional games than indoor and self-testing ones.

In the pages that follow, five different self-testing Arctic Winter Games are provided with information on culture, where to play, equipment and how to play.

SIDE REACH

Cultural Information

This recreational activity is one of the many Inuit games that helped to develop physical skills such as flexibility and a sense of balance that was important in the land-based traditional way of life. The Side Reach is a self-testing game played in Inuit communities.


Where to play

This game can be played in any available space, in or outdoors.

Suggested equipment

- Rectangular woodblock, 10x6x4 cm. Smaller blocks can be used, which creates a more difficult challenge.
- Masking or painter's tape for boundary lines and distance markers

How to play

1. Create a boundary line on the floor with two lines forming a right angle. 
2. Place both feet close together at the marker line with the outside of the left foot up against the boundary line.
3. The left hand is placed behind the back, the right hand holds the wood block.
4. From this position, bend down and sideways, reach behind and around the legs, and place the wood block on the floor, as far across the boundary line as possible. Make sure that the block does not fall over when you place it! Keep your balance, do not move your feet, and move back into the starting position at the end of the attempt. You must place the woodblock; you cannot drop or toss it.
5. Every participant has three attempts; the best attempt is marked with a piece of masking tape.
6. After three attempts, the next competitor tries to place the block beyond that marker.
7. The competitor with the greatest distance from the second boundary line wins the competition.



Reference

<https://www.participaction.com>

KNEEL JUMP

Cultural Information

The Kneel Jump, as with many of the Inuit Games, was used to prepare people for the harsh living conditions of the far north. One Elder mentioned that this game helped prepare hunters for conditions they faced on both land and frozen water. In particular hunters often needed to jump up and quickly move when the ice started to break jumping a span of water to safety.

Where to play

This game can be played in any available space, in or outdoors.

Suggested equipment

- Masking or painter's tape for boundary lines and distance markers

How to play

Please note: This game has been modified to make it safer for children to compete.

1. The competitor starts in a squatting position with buttocks resting on his/her heels, both knees behind the starting line. The knees should be as close together as possible.
 - The jump involves thrusting the body and arms up and then forward, jumping as far as possible without losing balance.
 - The competitor may swing their arms to gain thrust but may not touch the ground with hands during the jump or landing.
 - The landing must be a natural landing. i.e. balanced, controlled and maintained until the official indicates that the feet can be moved.
 - If the competitor touches the ground, falls over, or slides forward during or after the landing the jump is disqualified. The competitor cannot slide forward after landing.
 - The person who jumps the farthest is the winner.

Reference

<http://www.yasc.ca/ArcticSports.aspx>

Snow Snake

Cultural Information

The Snow Snake is well-known in many Indigenous cultures across Canada. It was sometimes played between entire communities. The game helped to develop technical skills that were important for the hunt, therefore traditionally only played by men and older boys. At the competitions today, the game is played by all. Strong competitors can throw the snow snake long distances between 60 and 100 m. The distance competition described here is popular among Dene cultures such as the Dogrib, Chipewyan, and Slavey.

Where

This is an outdoor snow game. A sizeable, flat and snow-covered area is required.

Suggested equipment

- It's winter! Dress warmly — you are going outside!
- A snow snake
 - Straight stick (dowel) similar to a javelin
 - Between 60 and 120 cm in length and about 1.5 to 2 cm in diameter.
 - Pointed at one end, blunt at the other.
- Spray paint (or something similar) to mark the throwing line in the snow.
- Long tape measure for formal competitions

How to play

1. Create a game playing area by building a channel for the competition.
 - a. Used packed snow to build two parallel berms that are 20 cm high and 2 meters apart. The channel should be about 60 meters long. (For informal games – use a well-packed area of the schoolyard).
 - b. Mark a starting line in the snow
2. Participants waiting for their turn stay well behind the starting line and off to the side of the throwing line allowing the competitors plenty of room or a run up.

Snow Snake

3. The competitor grasps the snake with an underhand grip at about the middle of the snake.
4. Taking a short run up to the start line (3 or 5 steps) release the snake with an underhand throw.
5. The object of the game is to throw the snake along the packed snow the furthest distance.
6. Mark the distance each participant achieves (or measure it for formal competitions) along the side of the channel.
7. Throws where the competitor steps over the starting line are disqualified.
8. The greatest distance wins the competition.
9. For a modification – have participants release the snake from a stationary position without the run up.

Reference

<https://www.participaction.com>



One-Foot High Kick

Cultural Information

Today, the One-Foot High Kick is considered one of the most important Inuit games played at many games and sports gatherings. There are different styles of the One-Foot High Kick, with the best competitors reaching kick heights of almost three metres! The game was often played in the communal house during the long winter months, more as a popular form of entertainment when several family groups met.

Where

This is an indoor game that should be played in a gym or a large open space.

Suggested equipment

- A tennis ball or other kind of target
- A length of string attached to the target
- A tape measure

How to play

1. Prepare the playing area
 - a. The target needs to be suspended in the air by hanging it from a structure (the target should be able to move up or down to change difficulty). For beginners the target should be set between 20 or 30 cm.
 - b. Ensure the playing area is clear for safety. A large mat could be placed on the floor incase a jumper falls or loses their balance.
2. Practice the game prior to the competition by having students work in pairs. One participant holds up a target (a stick, meter stick, or any other material) about 30 cm from the floor. The other student attempts to kick it from a standing position.
3. Students jump off from both feet and attempt to kick or touch the target with the kicking foot only landing only on the kicking foot. To show your ability to balance and have control, you must bounce on the kicking foot several times before touching your other foot to the ground.
4. Each competitor has three attempts. Ensure that the competitor is not rushed between attempts as this is a difficult game.

One-Foot High Kick

5. Once everyone has either successfully kicked at that height or had their three attempts the target is raised 2 cm. and the game is continued.
6. The competitor who achieves the highest height without losing their balance wins the competition.
7. To make the game easier, have students jump without a run-up. Experienced competitors take a run-up of three to five steps however it might be more appropriate and safer for students to start kick without running up.

Reference

<https://www.participaction.com>



SLEDGE JUMP

Cultural Information

The Sledge Jump is relatively new to the Arctic Winter Games. This traditional game is one of the most physically challenging events. Rather than a test of power, Sledge Jump is a test of the athlete's endurance. For northern communities, good endurance could – and did – save lives in the harsh Arctic climate. Traditionally the game was played using sleds that were used during the arctic winters to move people and materials from one place to another.

Suggested equipment

- 10 modified sledges (wooden blocks, hurdles, skipping ropes, noodles, or hockey sticks)
- If possible the hurdles should have some height and width to them.

Where to play

This game can be played in any available space, in or outdoors.

How to play

1. Set up the playing area
 - a. Place 10 modified hurdles in a line with approximately 50 cm between them.
(Distances will need to be modified depending on the height and width of your modified sledges.) Higher hurdles can be introduced as students become stronger and more skilled.
2. Competitors jump with both legs together over a row of ten sledges. At the end of the row, they turn around with only one jump and immediately beginning back over the sledges to the beginning.
3. The competitor's turn has ended when:
 - a. A sledge is touched by any body part whether it moves or not.
 - b. He/she lands or takes off without both feet landing or leaving the ground at the same time.
 - c. He/she has lost their balance and falls.
 - d. Touches the floor with any body part other than their feet.
4. The athlete that jumps the most sledges is declared the winner.

Reference

<http://www.arcticwintergames.org/>