

ISSUE 1 - MARCH 11, 2024



ARCTIC WINTER GAMES ULU NEWS

Matanuska Valley, Alaska • March 10-16, 2024

AWG 2024 | Photo by Kimberly Suggs

RESULTS

CURLING

u18 Female

Standings for Sunday, March 10

Game	Team	Points
Game 01	Team Alaska	16
	Team Nunavut	4
Game 02	Team Alberta North	13
	Team Northwest Territories	2

CURLING

u18 Male

Standings for Sunday, March 10

Game	Team	Points
Game 01	Team Northwest Territories	23
	Team Nunavut	1
Game 02	Team Alaska	10
	Team Yukon	5

FUTSAL

u16 Female

Standings for Sunday, March 10

Game	Team	Points
Game 01	Team Alaska	4
	Team Sápmi	10
Game 02	Team Northwest Territories	1
	Team Yukon	8

FUTSAL

u16 Male

Standings for Sunday, March 10

Game	Team	Points
Game 01	Team Alberta North	2
	Team Yukon	1
Game 02	Team Alaska	18
	Team Nunavut	0

HOCKEY

u18 Male

Standings for Sunday, March 10

Game	Team	Points
Game 01	Team Nunavut	1
	Team Yukon	1

HOCKEY

u15 Male

Standings for Sunday, March 10

Game	Team	Points
Game 01	Team Northwest Territories	2
	Team Yukon	4

TRY ONE OF OUR ARCTIC WINTER GAMES COFFEE SPECIALS AT PARTICIPATING LOCAL COFFEE SHOPS!

Perfect Start (Several Locations), Perk Up (Several Locations), Purple Moose, Elwoods

3 THINGS TO KNOW FOR TODAY

ONE -

Musk Ox Farm Tours are Open for Participants. Speak with your Chef to Sign up for Tour - Get an Exclusive Pin!

TWO -

Stop by the Menard Center to get a picture with our Selfie Station. You can take one photo or even make a GIF! The selfie booth is currently on the mezzanine upstairs, but will change venues throughout the week.

THREE -

Stop by the Alaska Airlines Arctic Winter Games Headquarters at the Palmer Train Depot around noon to see pop-up cultural performances from a few participating contingents!

ULU NEWS COMES IN MANY FORMS!

BLOG

FLIP BOOK

RADIO

VIDEO

Videos will begin being posted today!

AWG & SPECIALS



POLAR BEAR

16 oz White Chocolate Peppermint Mocha



BETTER TOGETHER

24 oz Blue Lotus with Raspberry & Passionfruit



RISING STRONG

20oz Iced Americano with two extra shots



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WEATHER FORECAST



Monday | March 11

Chance of snow before 1pm, then a chance of snow showers after 1pm.

Mostly cloudy, with a high near 30F (-1.11C).

Calm wind becoming south around 5 mph (8.05 kmph).

Chance of precipitation is 30%.



Monday Night

Chance of snow showers before 10pm, then a chance of snow after 10pm.

Cloudy, with a low around 17F (-8.33C).

South wind around 5 mph becoming calm (8.05 kmph).

Chance of precipitation is 30%.



THE MAT-SU 2024 ARCTIC
WINTER GAMES PRESENTS:

WINTER CARNIVAL & MAKERS MARKET

MARCH 15 + 16

Free entry!

Don't miss the fun!

**Alaska State
Fairgrounds in Palmer**

Friday March 15,
3 - 9pm

Saturday March 16,
11am - 4pm



LEARN MORE
AWG2024.ORG

A WARM WELCOME TO THE ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

BY PATRICIA PARKER

A letter to Participants from a proud Volunteer & Mat-Su Resident:

All of us here in Alaska, and throughout the Matanuska Susitna Valley, would like to warmly welcome you to the 2024 Arctic Winter Games! For months, we've been anticipating your arrival, and the enthusiasm for the Games can be felt throughout the valley and all across the state.

So many of us dedicated parents, coaches, sponsors, local volunteers, and countless young people throughout Alaska have come together to welcome you to our home—to make the 2024 Arctic Winter Games an experience unlike any other. The old saying rings true, it does literally take a village (ahem, or six) to successfully host an event such as this, and we genuinely hope you have the most spectacular time.

Watching all these buses drive into town, loaded up with so many young athletes ready to play, compete, dance, sing, feast, make friends, and create memories— it's all just so genuinely heartwarming, and it truly feels like there's magic in the air as we kickoff this year's Games. This experience will be the talk of Alaska for years to come and we are so grateful to have you as our honored guests.

So, as the 2024 Arctic Winter Games kick into full swing on Monday, I hope you take a moment to breathe in the crisp winter air and look around; discover a sporting event that excites you, an artist that inspires you, a song that moves you. May this experience bring you a refreshed sense of joy and adventure, and we hope that by the time the week concludes, you'll consider us not just friends, but family.

Here's to rising strong, together.

Sincerely,

Patricia Parker, Volunteer & Mat-Su Resident



© AWG 2024 William Ingram



© AWG 2024 BBrester



GUIDE TO ARCTIC WINTER GAMES VOLUNTEERS

RYAN SHELDON & EDITORIAL STAFF

Did you know that Arctic Winter Games volunteer jackets were specifically designed to fit the needs of living in the Arctic and Northern regions of the globe?

The volunteers serving at this year's games, much like any of us in the North, may face harsh conditions at any time. The 2024 Host Society, partnering with Karbon, have created a volunteer uniform that not only protects these great folks who have freely given their time to serve, but also helps them stand out when you need assistance.

There are many things to love about this year's volunteer uniform, but most importantly we love how easy it is to tell who is who!



Teal Uniforms: This is who you see when you need answers to the big questions! **Teal uniforms identify Host Society Board Members, Staff, and Committee Chairs.**



Blue Uniforms: These are **general volunteers** - they come to get things DONE.



Red Uniforms: Medical Volunteers are here to keep us healthy and safe and have gone through lots of training to be here for us!



Dark Blue Uniforms: These are **Sport Officials**. They help keep play fair, balanced and by the book!



Yellow Safety Vest: Here to keep out the riff raff and ensure secure operations at each venue, our **Security Volunteers** mean business.

FUN FACT

This year's Arctic Winter Games actually has more volunteers than participants. Be sure to thank those who assist you for their time! We could not put on the Arctic Winter Games without them!

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

2000 ATHLETES LANDED IN ANCHORAGE ON SATURDAY AND YOU WON'T BELIEVE THE AIRPORT SNACKS

BY SAM QUELLETTE

On a blue-bird clear day with temperatures that didn't rise above 10F(-12.22C) Ted Stevens International Airport's North Terminal was humming with energy on Saturday. Throughout the day athletes from across the circumpolar north arrived for the 2024 Arctic Winter Games held this year for the first time in the Mat-Su Valley, Alaska.

As jet-lagged athletes came off the escalators, they were greeted by a swarm of cheering volunteers, security personnel, and even Fur Rendezvous Royalty from the Iditarod Sled Dog Race that's taking place through Alaska's interior as the games began.

The arrivals terminal bustled with a diverse blend of faces, voices, and the shared enthusiasm for the upcoming games. Volunteers dressed in vibrant 2024 Arctic Winter Games gear scurried about, coordinating and warmly welcoming the athletes. As I walked through the crowd of athletes, coaches, parents, volunteers, and security the sounds of excitement, hunger, and anticipation of what was to come next hung over the terminal like an electric hum.

Hungry athletes made a beeline for the well-stocked snack tables eyeing rows of tasty sandwiches, chips, juices, and popcorn, while coaches tirelessly tried to wrangle their athletes onto the next bus for the hour-long trip to their winter games home base. While most athletes were elbow-deep in delicious snacks, others were busy texting and calling home to tell family they'd indeed landed safe and sound.

I got a chance to chat briefly with a few athletes from the Nunavut Volleyball Team who shared their excitement about the upcoming games, but all expressed that they were tired from the long trip and agreed they would be much more enthusiastic once they got to their athlete village. Justin Denis Douglas Hooey, a speed skater from the Nunavut Team, is excited and eager to see Alaska. Hooey shared "I am very excited, I almost missed the cutoff age-wise but I'm excited to be in Alaska."

As the convoy of buses stood ready to transport the contingents to their respective accommodations an hour away, the athletes boarded, the excitement reached a crescendo, echoing the promise of an unforgettable competition for the first time held in the Mat-Su Valley.



© AWG2024 Esther Sea Photos



© AWG2024 Esther Sea Photos



LET THE GAMES BEGIN

BY NATALIE PIETRO

We are the people of the North! The chants echoed in unison throughout the arena as the Mat-Su 2024 Arctic Winter Games officially commenced with an inspiring opening ceremony. The Menard Center arena, decked out in vibrant teal, purple, and silver, was packed with enthusiastic spectators.

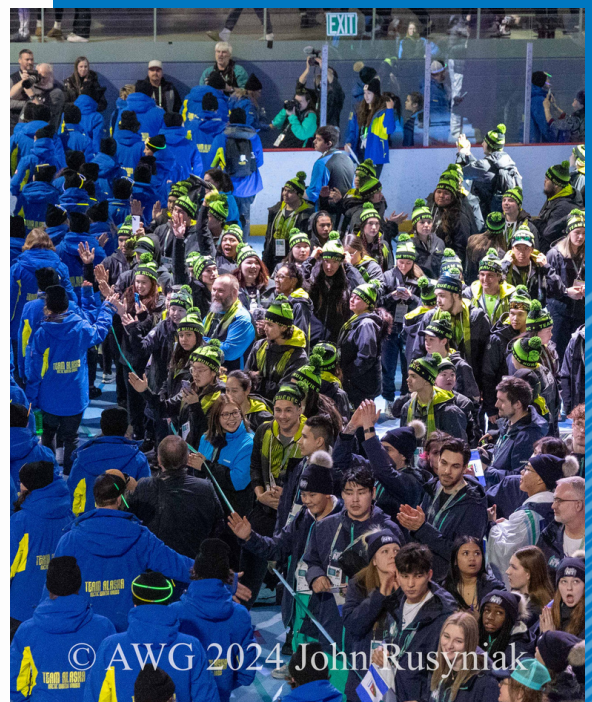
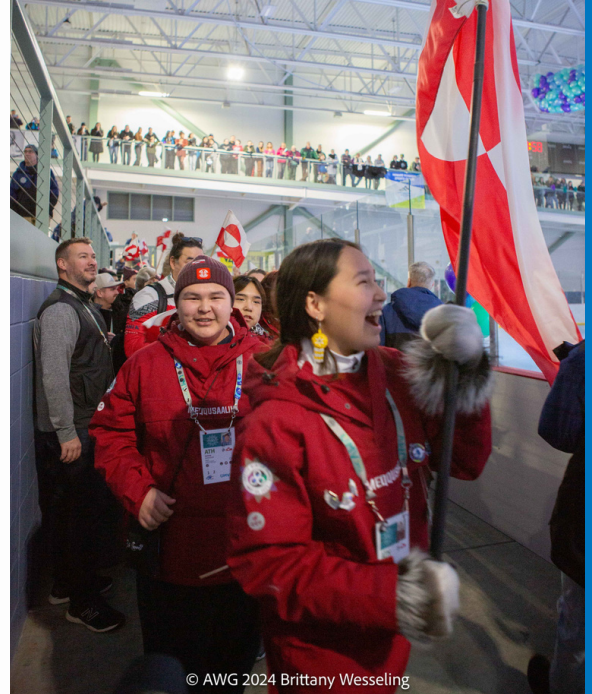
As the ceremony began, teams from across the Arctic, including the Northwest Territories, Yukon, Nunavut, Kalaallit Nunaat, Nunavik-Quebec, Northern Alberta, Sápmi, and the host contingent Alaska, paraded into the arena amidst waves of cheering fans, their spirits and determination high.

Following the teams' entrance, the ceremony continued with an opening prayer, invoking blessings for a successful and harmonious event, followed by the playing of the national anthems— each one symbolizing the pride and heritage of the participating countries.

This year's theme song was crafted by none other than the internationally acclaimed rock group, Portugal. The Man, hailing from Wasilla, Alaska. The custom-crafted theme song is called “Runners in the Snow” and totally captures the spirit of the circumpolar north and the overall positive vibes of the 2024 Arctic Winter Games.

Opening Ceremonies festivities continued with vibrant speeches from various leaders, underscoring the importance of friendship, cultural exchange, and fair play. Nancy Dahlstrom, Lt. Governor of Alaska, noted, “It’s not just about sports, it’s about the cultural exchanges, the friendships formed, and shared experiences that transcend borders. The Games are a testament to the spirit of the Arctic North, a spirit of resilience, camaraderie, and mutual respect.”

Musical performances also included a moving traditional dance by Yah Ne Dah Ah School from Chickaloon. Ashley Young, a Tlingit musician, also took to the stage, her soulful voice weaving a tapestry of melodies that clearly resonated with and moved the audience.



LET THE GAMES BEGIN CONT.

Two young tribal members from the Chickaloon village proceeded to ignite the ceremonial torch, symbolizing the eternal flame of hope and solidarity that burns bright throughout the duration of the Games.

With the torch ablaze and the spirit of competition ignited, the Mat-Su 2024 Arctic Winter Games officially began, promising days filled with thrilling athletic feats, cultural exchanges, and unforgettable memories for all. As the Opening Ceremony concluded, I had the privilege of speaking with the parents of an athlete preparing for her second Arctic Winter Games experience. Their pride and excitement was evident as they shared their daughter's journey and the significance of this momentous occasion. Esther Kim said, "we love that the kids get such a wonderful opportunity, it's great they get to come here and show off what they've been working so hard for. It's really cool for Alaska too so we're just looking forward to it!" Her daughter, Ruby Kim, age 11, will be competing in Figure Skating later this week.

As the world turns its gaze towards the Arctic, the stage is set for a celebration of sport, unity, and the enduring human spirit. As Amy Spargo, AWG Host Society Chair, stated, "If you are wondering what the future is for the North, look no further than this beautiful sight right before you. We are the people of the North."



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.

Scan QR Code to submit pin recipient
for recognition in Ulu News



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*We will acknowledge the various sponsor levels each day.

YUKON BEATS NORTHWEST TERRITORIES 8-1 IN SUNDAY'S FUTSAL MATCH

BY ANNA CHABUKINA

Futsal wasn't set to start for another hour, but the electricity in the air was palpable as fans awaited the continuation of competition following Opening Ceremonies. Volunteers worked to finish preparations as teams arrived for an exciting Futsal match between Northwest Territories and Yukon.

This match marked Northwest Territories' first sport competition of the 2024 Arctic Winter Games, and the team was eager to play. Athletes chatted amongst themselves excitedly as Yukon and Northwest Territories completed their warm-up drills on opposing ends of the court.

With six minutes until kickoff, family and friends gathered to the left of the court to cheer, their plastic clappers and flags waving in support of their team. In no time, the whistle blew for teams to line up and stand for the playing of Canada's National Anthem. As the final notes played, the teams met for the first time and shook hands at center court.

Four players and a goalie from each contingent entered the court, and with the sharp blow of a whistle, they were off! It didn't take long for Yukon to score the first goal, and the stakes rose. Northwest Territories and Yukon both doubled-down on their gameplay. Yukon's lead quickly grew to 5-0 as the buzzer rang out marking the end of the first half.

During halftime the teams gathered with their respective coaches to receive advice and words of encouragement. The athletes took the court with an air of renewed determination as they started the second half of the game.

Pushing for a win, both teams ran faster and pushed harder, but when one player fell, another player wasted no time helping them to their feet and resuming the competition. Yukon won the Sunday afternoon match with a final score of 8-1, but everyone in the crowd agreed that the players of both teams played with heart and determination.

MAT-SU 2024
ARCTIC WINTER GAMES



TICKETS ARE ON SALE NOW!



MARCH 10 - 16, 2024

A WEEK OF SPORTING
& CULTURAL EVENTS!

You don't want to miss the excitement of over **2,000 ATHLETES** from **8 CIRCUMPOLAR** North Regions competing in **20 SPORTS** from unique events like Arctic Sports, Dene Games, and Futsal to traditional winter sports like Alpine Skiing, Skating, Hockey, and more!

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TICKETS NOW!
AWG2024.ORG





FUTSAL: U16 MALES, FEMALES PLAY HARD AND SAPMI COHESIVE PLAYS PAY OFF

BY LOREE RAYBACK

Shoes squeaked on the polished hardwood gym floor and the crowd called out encouragement to blue- and red-clad U16 female Futsal players running back and forth across the court. A woman next to me spoke up, “It’s the first game of the day, and it’s a good one!”

Squeezing onto the packed bleachers, I found myself a seat just as the game was nearing its end. With a deep thud, the ball hit the goalpost and bounced into the net, causing the spectators to cheer, or groan loudly, depending on which team they were rooting for. Alberta North scored! The Alberta North and Yukon U16 females played hard for the final few minutes of the game, and Alberta North secured the win with a final score of 2-1.

Next up was Sápmi v Alaska, U16 male division. Sápmi scored four minutes into the game and continued to score regularly with machine-like precision throughout the game. Team Alaska kept up their high energy, covering all corners of the court, but saved most of their goal attempts for the second half. The Sápmi team members worked well together, synchronized, setting up plays, and executing them with a clear strategy.

“This is a really good team!” I overheard one impressed spectator say to a friend. At halftime, the scoreboard read 7-0. Despite Team Alaska playing

much closer to their opponents and making more bold goal attempts during the second period, Sápmi was the stronger team in the end, winning the game 10-4. After the game, Sápmi players Nipa Aasprong, Leon Nergård Boine, Vegjørn Torle, were elated with the win as they gathered their gear and stopped to chat with me. Sápmi is a cultural region that includes the countries of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia, and most players on the Sápmi team are bilingual, if not trilingual. “English is actually my third language.” Torle noted with a smile. And contrary to what their team coordination might imply, the U16 male division Sápmi team had very little practice playing with one another until today.

“No, no, we haven’t practiced at all,” the players laughed. Boine explained. “We haven’t practiced as a team except for once at the tryouts.” Torle confirmed that the tryouts were back in November 2023, and they hadn’t played together as a team since then. Aasprong chimed in. “Out of twenty [players] at tryouts, [coaches] choose only nine people to compete at the Arctic Winter Games. We are happy to be playing here.”

Before bidding the players farewell, I tossed out one more question: what would you like to say to our Ulu News readers? Aasprong immediately clapped his hands together and cheered “Sápmi!” then clarified, “it’s the indigenous people. Sápmi!”



©AWG 2024 Byron Corral Photography



©AWG 2024 Byron Corral Photography



THE ARCTIC WINTER GAMES EXHIBIT OPENS IN WASILLA

BY BETHANY BUCKINGHAM

Wasilla – Pins, Photos, Posters! Come celebrate over 50 years of history at the Arctic Winter Games exhibit on display at the Wasilla Museum and Visitor Center. Relive the sports and cultural exchanges forged at the Games since 1970.

One highlight of this exhibit is the pin collection. George V. Smith began collecting AWG pins in 1992. Through trading, donations, and support from other AWG enthusiasts, he has collected over 1,600 pins to incorporate into the exhibit which is organized by and on loan from the Alaska State Museum.

“While the pin collection may have been the impetus for building an AWG collection for the Alaska State Museum, it could never have happened without the generous donations of clothing, posters and other materials by many AWG enthusiasts from Alaska, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Northern Alberta,” Smith said.

Smith will be at the Wasilla Museum on Wednesday March 13, 2024, between 5:30 and 6:30 pm to answer questions about AWG pin trading, the history of the Games and the exhibit.

This updated exhibit features a framed photograph of the coveted Hodgson Trophy. The Hodgson Trophy is awarded each Games to the team that most exemplifies the ideals of fair play and team spirit. The Games celebrate cultural exchange and foster lifelong friendships. Athletes may come to the games as individuals and teams but leave as friends celebrating each other, the North, and its traditions.

View the colorful history of the Arctic Winter Games at the Wasilla Museum located at 391 N Main Street in Wasilla. Open Tuesday – Friday from 10 am – 3 pm, the Museum is offering free admission. The exhibit will be on display until the end of March! For more information or to schedule a tour, contact 907-373-9071 or email museum@cityofwasilla.gov

HAVE AN ARTICLE IDEA?

Here's what we want to know!

I caught someone being kind!

I recognize someone exhibiting one of the 2024 AWG Values:

- Resiliency
- Inclusion
- Strength
- Excellence

I am having an amazing time, and here are some photos that prove it!!

A Volunteer Went Above & Beyond

A Participant showed exemplary behavior

Fun stories, Silly Stories, Dramatic Triumphs, we want to hear, and we want to share!

Email ulunews@awg2024.org and you could be featured in tomorrow's edition!



YUKON DO IT!

BY SAM OUELLETTE

In an electric showdown that lit up the evening hockey game between the Yukon U15 and Northwest Territory teams, penalties and points were aplenty in a packed house with 12 penalties between the two squads. The stands were filled and this one was standing room only, with fans standing on benches, and packed like sardines around the outer glass. Yukon got off to a fast start with Colton Coates breaking through the defense to net an early goal with assists from Elliot Whalen and Thomas Nemeth in the first period.

Huntley Asquith found the back of the net with a second goal at 10:33 in the first period to give the Yukon a comfortable cushion. Both teams played a tough game as they launched into the second period. With 13:08 left in the second Northwest Territory scored to inch closer to the 2-1 with a stellar goal from Brock Lanz and strong assists from Cormac Stewart and Jackson Fuller.

Northwest Territory continued to push hard and evened the score at 2-2 with 3:37 left in the second with a goal from Jackson Fuller and assist from Cormac Stewart. As the third period began the chanting of the crowd and shaking of the bleachers came to a peak. Both teams skated hard but Yukon scored the go ahead goal with 14:34 of the third with a goal from Elliot Whaler and an assist from Rowan Newbury. With 6:45 Mannix Bingham scored to ensure the Yukon win 4-2.





TURNS OUT CURLING IS COMPLETELY WORTH THE DRIVE

BY LOREE RAYBACK

The curling matches on Sunday started late with the last game ending at 9:30pm, families and dedicated fans remaining in the bleachers until the very end.

Grandmother and dedicated Curling fan, Judy McLeod drove her family roughly 1400 miles (over 28 hours) to get to Palmer, Alaska from Inuvik, Northwest Territories—all to cheer on her granddaughter, Kimberly Wainmen, as she competed for a Golden Ulu with team NT.

“We’ve always been involved in Arctic Winter Games, we’ve done a lot of traveling with the youth,” Judy told the Ulu News, pointing to her family members accompanying her in the stands. “My daughter played badminton for three AWGs, and my son played hockey three times as well.”

Christine Mamer from Whitehorse also drove with her four younger children and her husband. They left Saturday morning and arrived Saturday night, pushing all the way through in one go. Despite a long haul and a hotel mixup upon arrival, the Mamer family says they’re comfortable. Mamer told the Ulu News that their trip was nearly canceled, as they only received their updated passports just a few days ago. Her son, Gabriel Mamer, is one of newest members on the team, only becoming an official curler in October of last year when he was approached by the curling coach to fill the fourth position on the Northern Territories team.

Melissa and Melanie Richards from Team Alaska were well represented in the bleachers by their family from Fairbanks and Palmer. Uncle Frank Gonzalez said their parents, Mary and Brad Richards dropped the girls off at the team bus and then drove to Palmer yesterday from Fairbanks. Mary said the girls have competed for 9 years in curling, last year in Wood Buffalo AWG, and in the Junior Nationals in Denver (CO) in January where their team came in fourth. “This is the first chance we’ve had to come and support them and this is the last year they will be able to compete because they’ll both age out after this competition. We as parents are both so proud of not only our daughters, but also the other two teammates because they’ve all come so far.”



AWG2024 Trevor Gronnvoll



AWG2024 Trevor Gronnvoll

CURLING VOCAB

BYE - When a player advances to the next round of play without competition.

Skip - Captain of a Curling Team

URNS OUT CURLING IS COMPLETELY WORTH THE DRIVE CONT.

Robert Nelson plays for the Alberta North U18m division, and his team had a BYE on Sunday. “We won gold last year, so we’re back to defend our title.” Alberta North Coach, Amanda Spark, said her daughter, Kaily has been playing for about four years, “not long” according to Spark.

“My skip has been playing since she was 6 years old– she’s 16 now. I’ve been coaching her for 2 years. We flew out this morning and took a bus to Palmer from Anchorage, it was a beautiful bus ride. We got here in good time and a chance to check out Palmer. We found Bigfoot! He was kind of scary.”

Nunavut Hockey Coach, Shauna Beaton, was in the stands to watch her son, Ciaran Robinson compete at the curling match. Because she is also a coach, she traveled with her team. She’s coached 3 AWG games, but Cieran just started curling in October. “Unfortunately, they didn’t have an ice surface to practice on, the ice rink was taken away in January for another event, so the curling team did manage to have a prep camp in February so they could get some practice prior to the Games. The 3rd and the skip are brand new to curling this year. We’re telling them this is a new experience and a new sport for them, they should see what they can put forth next year to keep growing as a team.

Another parent, Leander Slykhuls (coaching curling since 2020) coaches his son’s curling team, Team Yukon. When strict covid rules changed the scout curling competitions, Leander decided it was time to do something about it. He suggested he could start his own team, and told that he was on his own, that’s exactly what he did. Leander had never coached before, but he called his buddy Lee Malenchuk and they put together a team. His son Luke (a curler since he was 6) along with the skip and several others, formed a team and have been playing their hearts out ever since.

For more information about curling in Palmer, go to palmercurling.com, or contact President **Cynthia Rosenberg or Public Relations Officer **Kalie Owen**.**



AWG2024 Trevor Gronnvoll



AWG2024 Trevor Gronnvoll



AWG2024 Trevor Gronnvoll

HOME TEAM ADVANTAGE: ALL ABOUT TEAM ALASKA

The 2024 Arctic Winter Games holds a special place for Team Alaska as they bear the title of hometeam for this year's event, hosted in the heart of Alaska's most scenic Mat-Su Valley.

Team Alaska's roster is impressive, featuring 275 athletes competing in all 20 sporting events, backed by a dedicated group of 54 coaches and 16 mission staff members, including four participants in cultural arts. But it's not just the numbers that make them stand out.

The coaches, many of whom are former athletes, make up the driving force behind Team Alaska. Their transition from competitors to mentors reflects a time-honored tradition of giving back to the next generation. Through their guidance, young athletes practice the intricacies of their sport, but also learn the values of leadership, empathy, and camaraderie. This mentorship is crucial in preparing these developing athletes for both competition and life beyond the games.

Team Alaska operates largely through the efforts of volunteers. With just one paid staff member, the team exemplifies a community-driven approach to diverse sports development. This reliance on the community not only showcases Alaska's driven and competitive spirit, but also helps the Games remain accessible to everyone in the state, including those indigenous youth athletes from furthest remote areas.

This accessibility is vital in bringing diverse experiences to the games and in promoting a wider understanding and appreciation of Alaskan's unique way of life.



HOME TEAM ADVANTAGE: ALL ABOUT TEAM ALASKA CONT.

Sarah Frampton, a veteran board member of Team Alaska, now serving as Executive Director, emphasizes the importance of these games as a platform for young Alaskans to lead “parallel lives—excelling in sports while staying connected to their cultural heritage.” In an exclusive interview early last week, Frampton said that participating in the Arctic Winter Games is “wildly unique, filled with the excitement of international competition, cultural exchanges, and the formation of lasting friendships across language barriers.”

The Games themselves are an electrifying experience, as described by participants and volunteers alike. From trading pins to learning new game rules, and making friends from around the circumpolar north, the 2024 Games are a genuine celebration of indigenous youth, friendly competition, and cultural diversity.

For Alaskan athletes, this week’s events are an opportunity to compete on the international level, representing their home state and the array of diverse communities within it. The sense of community, the dedication of volunteers, and the passion of the athletes embody the spirit of Alaska.

The Arctic Winter Games leaves a lasting impact on its participants. Beyond the thrill of competition, athletes look forward to the fun of making friends, experiencing travel and adventure, and they take pride in representing their state. Dubbed by some as the "AWG hangover," the post-games period leaves many sad and longing to return, missing the unique blend of competition and community spirit that defines this uniquely Northern event.

Team Alaska's approach to the Arctic Winter Games highlights a broader mission to nurture well-rounded individuals who value their heritage and understand the importance of community. As athletes compete on this international stage, they do so not just for the shining Ulu medal and bragging rights, but also to showcase their home state’s unique spirit and the community-centered values that make Alaska the remarkable place so many of us call home.

