

ISSUE 4 - MARCH 14, 2024



# ARCTIC WINTER GAMES ULU NEWS

Matanuska Valley, Alaska • March 10-16, 2024

AWG 2024 | Photo Submitted on Kululu

## SHARE YOUR GAMES PICS

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



## THINGS TO KNOW FOR TODAY

### TRANSPORTATION

The public Skeetawk shuttle has been cancelled. Accredited AWG-goers may still use the bus to Skeetawk

### MUSK OX FARM

Musk ox farm tours for participants have been extended through Friday. Use code **AWG** on muskoxfarm.org to book your tour and get an exclusive pin! You must bring your **AWG** credentials.

### CULTURAL POP UP

Cultural performers will stop by the Alaska Airlines Arctic Winter Games Headquarters located inside the Palmer Train Depot today.

Other contingents will visit the Wasilla Museum.

Times may vary with transportation differences, but contingents are expected to arrive around 11.

### ULU NEWS COMES IN MANY FORMS!

BLOG

FLIP BOOK

RADIO

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Today's Rotating Editors Include:  
Kaje Rockwell, Kendra Zamzow,  
Ida Edwards, Julie Spackman



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RESULTS



# WEATHER FORECAST



Thursday | March 14

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



## BED SALE

**BUNK BEDS (\$200) & SINGLE BEDS (\$100)**

**VISIT [AWG2024.ORG/BEDSALES](http://AWG2024.ORG/BEDSALES)**



# MAT-SU ARCTIC WINTER GAMES WATCH PARTY A TOTAL HIT IN PORTLAND, OREGON

## FROM TRACY RESSLER:

Hello, Ulu News!

I wanted to share this with you, as it demonstrates the extensive reach and appeal of the Arctic Winter Games from those who live in warmer climates! Our daughter, born and raised in the Mat-Su Valley, went to Portland, Oregon (USA) for college. She, her boyfriend, and their friends in Portland held a watch party yesterday to view the livestream of events, as well as past footage of the Games. Here's a photo of them, in their studio with the stream on the big screen!

**Keep up the good work! We love reading the Ulu News!**





# KNIK TRIBE DRONE PILOTS TAKING THE 2024 WINTER GAMES EVEN HIGHER



BY ANNA CHABUKINA

The Mat-Su 2024 Arctic Winter Games is proud to partner with various video teams this week to assist in making the Games accessible to everyone -whether sold out, unable to travel, or even just if you prefer to Games & chill at home - our video team is making it happen. It is their expertise and dedication that allows the livestream view and record our outdoor sports such as snowboarding, alpine ski, and more. Today we have Bre Wong (Caddo of the Oklahoma Nation) and Kevin Lytlehere to share their expertise and allow us to get to know them.

**Q: Tell us a little bit about yourselves.**

**BW:** My name is Bre Wong, and I'm an instructor for the Horizons grant at the Benteh STEAM Academy which is through Knik Tribe. We teach drone piloting, drone careers and engineering to our students in middle and high school.

**KL:** I do the same thing, I'm with Knik Tribe. It's a federal ANE - Alaska Native Education- grant, specifically focusing on teaching drones and aviation with culturally connective lessons.

**Q:Did you always want to do drone work or did it kind of lead you in that direction and blossomed?**

**BW:** I have been working with ANE grants for the last – I want to say 9 years. Specifically teaching different STEAM formats and the most recent one, I was able to get was through Horizons, working aviation style, working in the aviation field. I always wanted to be a pilot. I was really interested in flying. I wanted to do it as a career, but it never panned out the way I hoped it would. I started on my private pilot's license, so I hope to finish that soon. When the opportunity arose for me to take on the lead of this grant, the manager of the program was like, 'Yo, you'd be perfect, we think you'd fit in very well.' I said, 'Sure!' And I jumped on board. Since then, I'm been having a lot of fun and our students are really engaged. I think it's a great way to reach them and give them opportunities that they wouldn't otherwise have.

**KL:** I am a retired police officer out of Waukegan, IL, just halfway between Chicago and Milwaukee. In about 2018, I helped start our drone unit for that police department that did things like search and rescue and processing. I got my pilot's license through there and again in this previous year, I had to medically retire due to a duty injury. I've known Bre for about 8 years. I moved here with my partner. When we arrived, Bre reached out and said 'Hey, we have this position open that would be perfect for you. You've been flying drones for years, you have a huge background in this'. I onboarded with Knik Tribe because the federal grant was specifically drone focused. I have about four to five years experience. I helped to start and run our drone unit. I also have a pilot license. My experience with drone use includes the integration of the public and law enforcement side. Even with what we do at AWG, there's still a lot of contact that we have to have with the FAA and local law enforcement in order to make sure we are flying legally and safely.

## *KNIK TRIBE DRONE PILOTS, CONT.*

**Q: Did you have a mentor growing up that helped shape your interest in this field?**

**BW:** When I was really young, my parents were very active in Alaska. They wanted to get us out to do as much outdoor stuff we possibly could. One of the things that we did every single year is, there is this cabin on the Resurrection Trail at Swan Lake. It's a specific spot. At the far end of that lake, which is the largest one on the trail system, you would have to fly in on a float plane. Ever since I was a kid, we're talking three years old and up, I was a toddler the first time we went out there, my parents would make a week-long trip and we would always go out there, every year. I got to know the pilots really well. I was always in the front with the little headset on. Some of my favorite photos as a child are me in a bush plane with a headset on talking to the pilots, just flying. When I was growing up, as I got a little older, a lot of our family friends also had aircrafts, so being able to jump in those planes and get some hands on experience, learning about flying, all of that really boiled down to; I don't have one mentor, I had a community around me of pilots that were encouraging and awesome. I know it's really common for girls to feel like 'oh, I can't get my hands dirty. The pilots were like, "Nah, you got this. Here help me put this back together. Or, let's take apart this plane and fix it'. I learned fabricing, riveting, and the engine process. All of that from these awesome pilots and awesome people who had these planes. That's where I got my interest and experience from.

**KL:** For me, growing up, it was actually my interest in robotics that led to my interest in drones. It was Battle Bots on Comedy Central. Me and my older brother would watch that every Wednesday. As he got older, he ended up, in his free time, building and competing in micro battle boy competitions. He loves it. I've always really enjoyed watching what he does so when the opportunity came up with drones and to develop the drone unit and get my pilot's license, I jumped on that right away. I didn't have the time and opportunity to build robots and battle bots but if they were going to pay for me to go through and get my license to be able to fly drones and get paid for it, I was really excited about that. We were able to put them to good use where we were working. For me, that kind of where it stems from, watching my brother do all these really cool and fun things with robots and finally having the opportunity myself..



## *KNIK TRIBE DRONE PILOTS, CONT.*

**Q: What is the hardest challenge you have overcome, whether personal or in the field?**

**BW:** I think the challenge I am constantly facing and fighting against is just the idea that; I work in the STEM field. The STEM field is primarily male-dominated and being able to stand up for myself, constantly be that light for the students who are also doing that, has been the biggest challenge and will continue to be the biggest challenge at least for a little while longer. Until people realize that women are just as capable, if not more awesome at times in this field. I think that has always been the biggest challenge. But I think it has inspired me to keep going constantly.

**KL:** For me, I think it was that I had to medically retire because of a physical duty injury that is now a permanent disability for me. For me that's one of the hardest things I struggle to move forward with. Learning how to live with this disability, how it affects my life and my work and how I can go forward through that, but on a deeper level, how can I use that to move forward and teach people. What can I do to foster some disability representation in those different fields? That is something I don't know how to do super well. I'm still trying to figure it out because it is so new for me.

**BW:** I would also like to add that queer representation in STEM fields is also under represented and undervalued. That's another thing that we really need to step up and show. It's not just being a female, it's being a queer woman standing up for myself and being able to do all that. I think that is also one of the biggest issues that we currently face out here in the valley.

**The Knik Tribe Drone Team** is assisting Home Team Live in providing video coverage across outdoor venues this week.

**Their footage will be viewable in the on-demand section of [awg2024.org/livestream](http://awg2024.org/livestream)**

# EVER SOARING

WRITTEN BY BEV KIRK

EDITED BY ANDREA POND

Think of strong, graceful, migratory birds: Canada geese, aptly-named trumpeter swans, all kinds of ducks. During migration, the lead bird very responsibly assesses wind speed and direction, thermals, and environmental changes that may alter landmarks, such as forest fires, floods, or deforestation preparatory to construction. The leader must monitor his own energy level as well so that he can signal a rotation in position to the next leader.

The leader signals the birds behind him: head upward, dip down, turn to the east coming up, prepare to head west, we're landing on that large island up ahead to stop and eat. All the while, the leader signals vocally or by body signals.

As in dancing, many figure skating routines mimic nature. I was overwhelmed with these parallels earlier today as I watched the figure skaters drill through some of their practice routines.

The leader would circle around the rink, followed by successive skaters who fell in rhythmically behind, changing positions at prescribed intervals, all in perfect time with the provocative background music.

Some of the routines suggested ballet on ice. The changes of order were performed with impressive skill and artistry; the undulating circles were carried out with a rare dedication and beauty.

All this seeming perfection was a total joy to behold, and it was just a first practice for this rink and event. It's hard to believe that it can possibly become any better, but it can and it will! We still have three more days for the privilege of enjoying these magnificent routines! Skate on, athletes!



© AWG 2024 Anita Shepperd



© AWG 2024 Anita Shepperd





# GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

BY KENDRA ZAMZOW

As the morning's rays broke over the cloudy gray horizon, eager spectators seated on yellow concrete bleachers primed to be awestruck in one of the most highly anticipated events of the Games, were not disappointed. Figure skating, a dazzling and elegant performance of skill and grace was appreciated by a crowd left in awe, when female figure skaters competed against each other in the Level 1 Short Program.

In the opening ceremony, teams from Alaska, Alberta North, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon skated out onto the ice, proudly displaying their colorful regional flags. Each participant has less than three minutes to impress the scorekeepers. Before competing, girls warmed up on the ice, overcoming slips and spills as they practiced stunning jumps, spins, and glides.

The costumes, an array of imaginative design and color: gold sparkling lame', bright pink with a pink fringe skirt, a simile of gold or red flames on a black bodysuit, or white with a lime green ruffle.

Natalie Stark of Team Yukon was the first out, sweeping her arms over her head then drawing them up and down to the music as she launched into her performance. Following was Aidyn Lewis of Eagle River, skating on her home rink, snapping her fingers in time with the jaunty "Puttin' on the Ritz". Skaters choreographed their moves meticulously, artfully moving to music like pop, classical, and instrumental music. By now the stands were full of people rallying and cheering with each axel and sit-spin.

Team Nunavut competed for the first time since 2018. While other teams had five to eight girls, Team Nunavut was represented by 2, Tia Awa Kilabuk and Kimberly Gissing, both 14 years old. This was the first event that either girl had ever competed in.





## GRACE UNDER PRESSURE, CONT.

Although they didn't know it until later, the Nunavut Minister of Community and Government Services, was applauding in the stands with friends, who took video of much of their performance.

"I'm so proud of them," said coach Janna Lynn Maclachlan, "It's enormous pressure to be in a small outfit in the cold in an event. They have to have the physical skills and the artistry and be comfortable in front of a crowd. To feel confident enough to perform is amazing. And they are just such nice girls."

Tia started her program with an arm drawn across her face, stock still until the music began. Then she leapt into a spin. "I landed my first axel!" she said when asked about the best part of her program. That is impressive, to be confident enough to try such a hard move in front of an audience! Kimberly's forte was embodying the music, an instrumental, which she did exceptionally well, making full use of the entire rink. Asked if she had chosen the tune, Janna said the music was chosen by the National Coach, but the girls had time to work with the music and practice.

Team Nunavut skaters are based in Iqaluit, a town of 8,000 residents where the sport is small yet growing. "We have four or five good coaches now," said Janna. "And this event has been great for networking." She is learning about more events in Yellowknife and the Yukon. But she also hopes to be back in Alaska someday.

"The views are amazing, and the people are all so friendly.



Photo by Anita Shepherd





# NEW NAME: MANY NEW ATHLETES- TEAM KALAALLIT NUNAAT MAY BE A NEW ACE

BY KYLA KHARS

Team Kalaallit Nunaat, situated within the Arctic Circle and representing Greenland, holds the distinction of being the northernmost team participating in the Arctic Game. Making the current weather conditions appear rather balmy for them. Recently renamed from Team Greenland to Kalaallit Nunaat, which is the indigenous Greenlandic name for the country, this change reflects a significant step by the Sport Confederation of Greenland towards embracing its country's native culture. Despite the international recognition of the name Greenland, the acceptance of the indigenous title by both the Sport Confederation of Greenland and the Arctic Winter Games marks a pivotal moment.

Comprising athletes competing in Arctic Sports, Dene Games, Badminton, Snowboarding, and Cross-Country Skiing, Team Kalaallit Nunaat boasts a total of 65 members including participants, coaches and support staff. With a notable presence of returning athletes, particularly in Badminton and Dene Games, the team demonstrates continuity and expertise in these disciplines.

The popularity of Arctic Sports and Dene Games is on the rise in Kalaallit Nunaat, with plans for the inaugural international tournament scheduled to take place in Greenland next year.

The anticipation surrounding the event underscores the country's eagerness to showcase its athletic ability on the global stage.

As we reach the midweek mark, the performance of Team Kalaallit Nunaat becomes increasingly noteworthy. The female Badminton players remain undefeated, while their male counterparts also have had a commendable showing. Some participants have already secured placements in their respective sports, hinting at a promising Ulu haul for Greenland by the end of the week. It is remarkable to witness the dedication of these athletes across different age groups, as they passionately pursue their sporting endeavors. Above all, their joyous demeanor and proud representation of their country and culture leave a lasting impression.

Make sure to keep an eye on Team Kalaallit Nunaat progress. For those unable to attend, **check out Hometeam's live stream of competition or check out the team's facebook page for updates and athlete interviews.**



[www.facebook.com/gif.grl](https://www.facebook.com/gif.grl)



# THREE CHEERS FOR YOUR FAVORITE TEAM!

BY EMMA KEECHLE

Chants are a way for supporters in the stands to both interact with the game and the players playing. Most chants start either with one person starting them or a small group which then spreads to a whole crowd.

Here are some common chants from each team:

## YUKON

- Yukon [clap clap/stomp stomp]
- Lets go Yukon [clap clap clap clap clap/stomp]
- Hey yo, oh hey, oh hey, oh hey, Yukon, Yukon!

## ALASKA

- Let's go, Alaska, Alaska, let's go!
- (one person) A who (crowd respond) AK
- Let's go, Alaska, let's go [clap clap/stomp]
- Oh ley, oh ley, oh ley, oh ley, AK all day

## NUNAVUT

- Nunavut [clap clap clap]
- (one person) N what (crowd respond) NU
- (one person) Nunavut (crowd respond) Nunavut
- Lets go nunavut lets go [clap clap/stomp stomp]

## SÁPMI

- Sapmi [clap clap clap/stomp]
- (one person) Give me a S (crowd respond) S  
(one person) give me a A (crowd respond) A  
(one person) give me a P (crowd respond ) P  
(one person) give me a M (crowd respond) M  
(one person) Give me a I (crowd respond) I  
(one person) What does that spell (Crowd respond) SAPMI!!!!



All these chants may be used with other teams and not just the ones mentioned just change out the letters and or names.

Most chants are repeated more than once and have a certain rhythm, you can just follow along with the crowd to join the chant.

One thing to remember though is to always be respectful to other fans in the stands, don't start booing other people or players.



# FLASHING SPEED, ELEGANT GRACE

WRITTEN BY BEV KIRK  
EDITED BY ANDREA POND

**Flashing speed.**  
**Elegant grace.**  
**Unfathomable energy!**

It's almost exhausting to watch these amazing athletes! How do they do it? Blue uniforms with strips of bright accents. Red ones topped with white shirts with blue and yellow left sleeves. Black with red and white. Blue with gold stars on the outsides of their legs.

Our ancient ancestors who conquered and ruled this land, to whom we remember to pay honor and respect, could not have imagined this bright, noisy, efficient Zamboni any more than those of us observing and encouraging can envision the athletic competitions of a thousand years hence.

The athletes cheer one another on with heart-warming sportsmanship. We slightly more relaxed observers, energized by their enthusiastic sharing and their care for one another and their sport, smile with enlightened joy.

Practice is nearly over and competition begins. This is a perfect start to our Arctic Winter Games!



Photo by John Rusyniak





# GYMNASTICS

BY JULIE SPACKMAN

Like the Arctic tundra in the summertime, the padded gymnastics floor cushioned each step, hop, and tumble of the gymnasts for the final round of competition on Wednesday morning.

Gazing around the event center, a novice viewer might not know where to focus their attention.

Rings dangle from the ceiling. Open foam pits reveal safety practices for aerial moves. Four heights of balance beams are parallel from shortest to tallest. The final gymnastics competition on Wednesday included four events: vault, floor, balance beam, and uneven bars.

Two of the four competition events took place simultaneously, with events alternating back and forth. The Master of Ceremonies read off the names of the athletes prior to their event. Vaulting unfolds at the same time as uneven bars, and the floor routines go on at the same time as the balance beam routines.

Artistry and athleticism become one in gymnastics. The same athlete who grimaces and sprints as fast as she can toward the vault, aiming for ultimate speed and height off the table, is also required to exhibit an artistic flair with grace and poise on the floor or balance beam. Straight legs, pointed toes, strength, balance, and personal grit are demonstrated in each event.

Something as mundane as teetering on the balance beam was reborn. The girls on the Northwest Territories team added grace with a press-up at the mid-beam, with their legs extended in midair splits, and then raised above their torso and balance beam in a handstand. Every dismount from an event was clear. Whenever athletes achieved a strong performance, their teammates raced to them with hugs and congratulations. Competitors must also learn to navigate the bumbles, like taking a step after trying to make a perfect landing – a goal for every event. Athletes on all four teams demonstrated remarkable poise and focus, powering past small mistakes to achieve a powerful finish.



Photo by Lisa Phillips





## GYMNASTICS, CONT.

Goodwill and good sportsmanship in the event center. Each athlete received hoots and personal shouts of encouragement by name from athletes from each of the four competing teams. Ainslie Coburn from the Alberta North team said, “Hearing the cheers from the other athletes really makes you feel supported!”. Coburn’s favorite event to do is the uneven bars, which must be adjusted for each athlete according to their height. “Bars can be scary, but it’s very fun and I like to learn new skills.”, she said.

The Alberta North team took gold on Wednesday. Most of the team members are veterans to gymnastics, with some starting the sport as young as five years old. Lola Martin and Maeva Layag-Turbide’s favorite event is the floor. Both girls love to show off their dance moves and learn new skills. When asked how the Arctic Winter Games might be different than other competitions in which she has participated, Katelyn Siebert said what stands out to her: “Representing our province and competing against other top athletes who are selected for the games.” Ainslie Coburn stuck the landing with her final comment, “All the other teams did super good and should be proud of their performance!”



# ACCURACY AND SKILL | ARCHERY

BY PATRICIA PARKER

The Arctic Winter Games Archery competition is being held at Screaming Eagle Archery, located close to the heart of the town of Wasilla AK.

The Arctic Winter Games events consisted of Compound Bow, Barebow, as well as mixed team competition. These events have been long awaited, as these young archers have been putting many hours into training to prepare for the Games.

Watching as the competing archers carefully draw arrows from their quivers, line up their shot, and send them to their mark downrange with such accuracy and skill is mesmerizing. Such a delicate process but ultimately delivering a mighty blow to their desired target. The teammates show so much encouragement and support for one another, whether the archer hit their target precisely or not at all. Such incredible sportsmanship was seen amongst the archers and their teammates.

I had a chance to talk to Barebow competitors **Blake Parker** and **Breea Holman** from Team Alaska after their team event about their AWG experience. Blake said the whole experience from participating in the games has just been a lot of fun. From the pomp and circumstance of the opening ceremony, to life at the village, hanging out and making friends with competitors from around the world—Plus engaging with some of the other events have all been a big part of the whole experience of Arctic Winter Games.

Teammate Breea told the Ulu News that she has been competing in archery for approximately five years, but that Barebow was a new and challenging adventure for her. She has been really enjoying meeting so many new people from different countries, and that was part of this opportunity she looked forward to experiencing.

She smiled when she said that life in the village, which for the Team Alaska Archers has been at Wasilla High School. Has been like a fun, relaxed and well fed summer camp. I asked Breea what she would say, if she could sum up some words about what the Arctic Winter Games and her Barebow event have meant to her. She said “It has been some of the best and hardest fun you could ever have.” Following the event that day was the awards ceremony. From Team Alaska, the podium had Blake Parker and Breea Holman standing up, as they had won the bronze ulu, alongside their other teammates from Team Alaska Kate Connelly and Colter Gose who had earned the silver ulu. There’s more archery to come this week. For those who want to watch our amazing athletes compete. Just head over to Screaming Eagle Archery in Wasilla to cheer these skilled participants on!





# BEHIND THE SCENES *at the athlete villages,* competitors are enjoying cozy beds, a variety of tasty snacks, and making friends with other teens from around the globe.







# MUSK OX FARM SURPRISES AND DELIGHTS SKEPTICAL TEENAGERS

BY KRYSTA VOSKOWSKY, ULU NEWS CHAIR

For the bright young athletes of Northwest Territories, an up-close interaction with an ornery Musk Ox didn't seem like the most fun thing to do today, but at the insistence of Coach Chuck, the team shuffled onto the big tour bus headed for Palmer's Musk Ox Farm for a tour on Wednesday morning.

Now, if you've ever been a teenager, parented one, or otherwise been on the receiving end of a dubious eye-roll when suggesting, well, anything, it turns out modern teenagers—even the ones who hail from icy remote villages above the 55th parallel—still bear healthy skepticism when it comes to educational field trips that their adult handlers insist will be “fun.” Between the promise of a super special Musk Ox Farm trading pin and the persistent encouragement of their coaches, the teen athletes of Northwest Territories reluctantly agreed to suspend the deep sighs and eye-rolls to learn more about these giant Arctic creatures, and in record time, all signs pointed to the entire team genuinely enjoying themselves.

Dani Biersteker, Education Director and wildlife biology expert, led the tour with positive energy and approachable humor from the start, and the momentarily reticent teens quickly revealed excited curiosity. How do you comb their hair? Do their horns change color? What do they eat? How old is that one? Did they do that to the fences!? Peppered with earnest and thoughtful questions, Biersteker launched into her zone of genius and answered every single one, encouraging everyone to get close, but not too close. Certain members of the herd are more socially inquisitive than others, like playful Fenugreek (m) and herd sweetheart Acadia (f), but they're not exactly looking to snuggle.

Don't let their soft hair and adorable fuzzy noses fool you— these animals are still strong, wild creatures who prefer to make their own independent life choices sans unsolicited input or interference from humans. The musk oxen on this non-profit farm in Palmer, Alaska may hang out on pastures surrounded by secure enclosures, but they're hardly domesticated, as the deep dents in the side of the white feed truck will attest to.







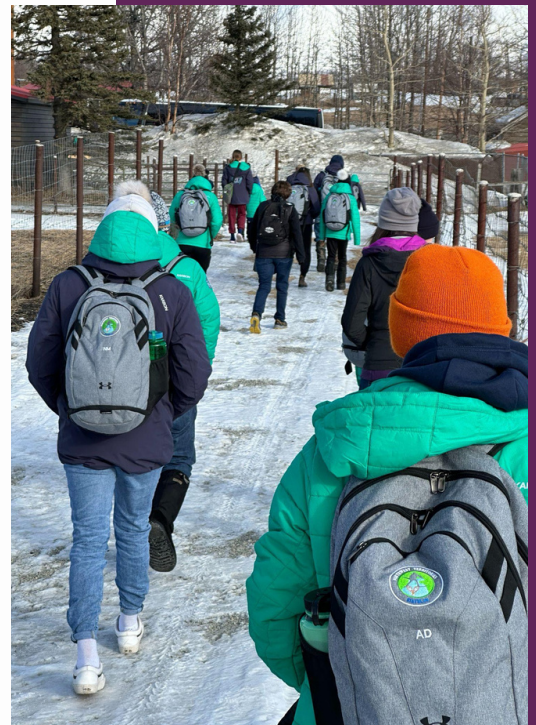
## MUSK OX FARM SURPRISES AND DELIGHTS SKEPTICAL TEENAGERS, CONT.

Musk oxen are native to the tundra, and both males and females aren't afraid to knock noggins and bluff charge to assert dominance. According to the Smithsonian Institution, researchers have fossil evidence proving that Musk Oxen have inhabited the circumpolar north for roughly 90,000 years, but not long ago, these majestic animals were almost wiped off the face of the earth.

In the 1940s, wild musk oxen were on the brink of extinction, leading founder John Teal to spend the next decade immersed in research that would result in the birth of Alaska's official Musk Ox Project. With support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the University of Alaska, and countless volunteers, Teal's Musk Ox Project established Alaska's first domestic musk ox farm in Fairbanks in 1964. Due to the continuously rising cost of transporting hay and other crucial supplies to rural Alaska, the farm was eventually relocated to its current, more convenient location only 45 miles from Anchorage.

For over 60 years, this non-profit farm has worked 365 days a year to "bring geographically appropriate agriculture to rural communities in the far north." Thanks to the 501(c)3 Musk Ox Development Corporation who runs the farm in Palmer, herd numbers have grown steadily over the years and modern musk oxen are now living longer than ever. Focused on promoting gentle musk ox husbandry, qiviut production, and education to the general public, the Musk Ox Farm in Palmer has transformed a humble easement of land in the Mat-Su Valley into a fascinating place where curious humans of all ages get the chance to experience a personal interaction with these majestic animals.

Despite their initial resistance to an educational field trip, it was clear by the end of the farm tour that the teen athletes of Northwest Territories ultimately loved the experience. "Only two of our athletes have ever seen a Musk Ox in real life," noted Coach Chuck, "so this was a really cool experience for them. Dani, our tour guide, was so knowledgeable, I think we learned a lot," he said. "They're smelly!" One teen girl piped up from the back of the group with a wide smile across her face. "Yeah! This is really fun!" another teammate exclaimed, kicking a frozen musk ox turd in his friend's direction. In true kid-fashion, his friend giggled and kicked it back, which started a rather hilarious multiplayer round of turd futsal that had all of us – even the adults and stoic older teenagers– laughing out loud as we made our way back to the gift shop, because none of us are too cool for poop jokes.





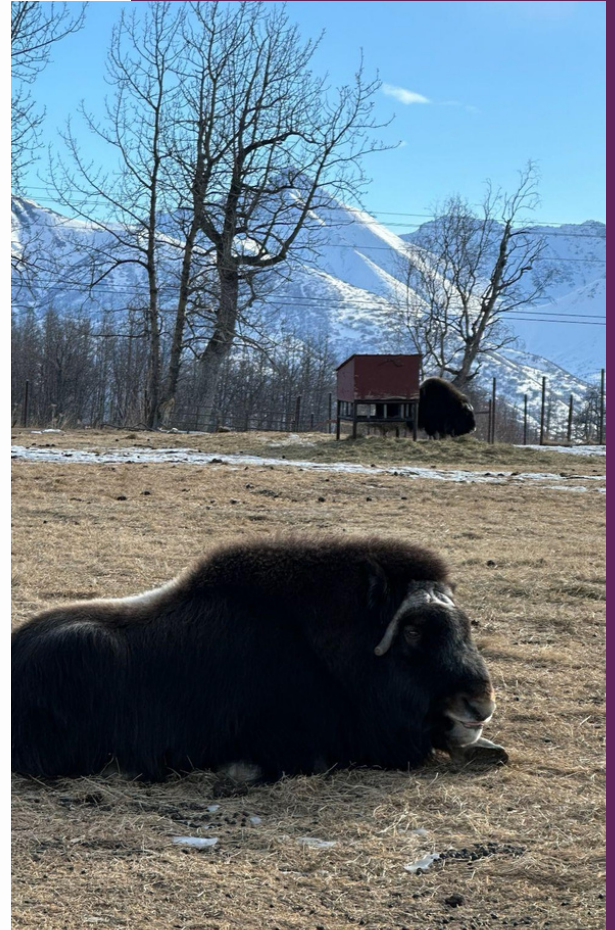
## MUSK OX FARM SURPRISES AND DELIGHTS SKEPTICAL TEENAGERS, CONT.

As Team Northwest Territories thanked Dani for their super special Musk Ox pin and gifted her pins of their own, the whole team chatted excitedly as they climbed back onto the bus. Team Alaska arrived then and filed in to join the next tour, and a few stragglers stopped to browse the selection of hand-spun qiviut yarn (eight times warmer than wool and softer than goose down), colorful Musk Ox stickers, handmade musk ox horn jewelry, and gorgeously illustrated children's books featuring friendly musk oxen inspired by the real ones we just met outside.

Bummed you missed your chance to meet the Musk Ox herd? We've got good news! In response to high demand, the Palmer Musk Ox Farm has extended their complimentary tours for 2024 Arctic Winter Games athletes, cultural participants, media, and credentialed adults through Thursday and Friday of this week.

"It has been such a joy to meet so many incredible athletes from around the world, their coaches and keepers," said Mark Austin, Executive Director of the Musk Ox Farm. "We packed the farm over the past three days but there were definitely some spots left unfilled. If there are any athletes who would still like to visit the farm (and pick up a Musk Ox pin!) go to our website: [muskoxfarm.org](http://muskoxfarm.org) and book a tour using the discount code: AWG. Athletes must bring their AWG Badge for free tours, and credentialed adults may join tours based upon availability."

Grab your friends and head over to the Musk Ox Farm—just 2.5 miles away from the Palmer Train Depot—anytime Thursday or Friday between noon and 5pm, and experience the scenic walking tour (and these unique arctic mammals) for yourself.





# TEAM ALASKA DOMINATES IN U18 SEMI-FINALS HOCKEY AT THE 2024 ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

BY SAM QUELETTE

With the sun gleaming off Pioneer Peak the Talkeetna mountains, the U18 Semi-Final Matchup between Team Alaska and Team Nunavut was ready to kick off. As the song Legend by The Scored blasted through the arena, players took to the ice to the greeting of flying flags, clanging cow bells, and rowdy cheers from fans all showing their team spirit. Talking with one Nunavut fan, she shared, "I'm very nervous but excited. It is a big game— I hope they play well and win." As we wrapped up our conversation, she added "Go Team Nunavut!"

Nunavut dominated early from the drop of the puck with six shots on goal to no shots for Alaska in the first four minutes of action. With 10:23 left in the first period Nunavut scored the first goal of the game on a powerplay goal from Kam Kaludjak. Not to be outdone, Team Alaska scored less than a minute later to tie the game 1-1 with a shorthanded goal by Logan Mese. Alaska grabbed the lead with 7:31 left in the first period off a breakaway that found the back of the net. As the scoreboard buzzed to mark the end of the first period, Alaska led Nunavut 2-1, but Nunavut led the shots on goal 12 to 8.

As the second period began AC/DC's TNT blared over the speakers as fans gathered to cheer their teams on. Team Alaska was on the powerplay to start the second period, but were unable to capitalize.

Alaska started gaining momentum halfway through the second, firing shot after shot on the Nunavut goalie who did everything but stand on his head to keep the puck out of the net. At 11:56 of the second period, Team Alaska scored on a beautiful breakaway from Logan Mese. Elijah Von Guten scored the final goal of the second with 4:46 left on the clock, off a rebound and Alaska started to pull away 4-1. Alaska led 4-1 when the buzzer sounded to mark the end of the 2nd.

Guns N' Roses Sweet Child of Mine ushered in the third period and the skaters hit the ice. Nunavut was determined to erase the three-goal deficit. With 10:12 seconds left in the third Jeremy Madrowski scored bringing the lead to two goals for Alaska 4-2. Nunavut fans jumped to their feet with cow bells ringing out, giving hope for a comeback. Alaska scored moments later, widening the gap to 5-2 on a hat trick goal for Logan Mese goal. Team Nunavut skated hard and threw pucks at the net, but Alaska scored with 7:50 left in the third off a two-on-one opportunity from Daniel Matveev for the final goal of the game. The final score was 6-2 in favor of Alaska. Team Alaska will face the winner of this evening's game in the gold medal faceoff at 6:30pm tomorrow evening at the Curtis Menard Ice Arena.





# ALBERTA NORTH'S SECRET TO GOLD? A GOOD NAP

BY LIZ GOBESKI

It was a thrilling afternoon and evening of curling at the MTA for the female and male bronze, silver, and gold medal games! First, the female and male teams for Alaska and Northwest Territories faced each other to determine which team would advance to play #1 seed Alberta North for the gold ulu medal.

The male teams traded leads throughout the first half, with Northwest Territories leading Alaska by one with a score of 4-3 at the break. Momentum shifted in Alaska's favor in the second half. There, a series of skillful "takeouts" (removing the opposing team's rock with your own) by both teams left Northwest Territories with exceedingly difficult final shots in the sixth and seventh ends, ultimately giving way to an Alaska win of 7-3.

The female team matchup between Alaska and Northwest Territories was a nailbiter all the way to the final rock of the final end. With that final rock, Northwest Territories faced an Alaska rock in the scoring position. They had a decision to make: Try for a "takeout" or a "draw"? With poise and precision, Northwest Territories skip Reese Wainman went for the "draw," which her teammates skillfully swept into the scoring position for a final score of NWT 5 – AK 4, earning them a spot in the female team gold ulu matchup against Alberta North.

With evening came the gold ulu games. For the male team, it was Alberta North v. Alaska. This was the second Arctic Winter Games in a row where Alaska and Alberta North faced each other for the gold ulu. Heading into the game, Alaska male team coach Jon Johnson reflected on the history between Alaska and Alberta North, and especially the camaraderie that they've formed.



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## ALBERTA NORTH'S SECRET TO GOLD? A GOOD NAP, CONT.

“Our games have been exceptionally close this year,” said Johnson. “They’re best of friends with the boys on the other team. They just have done a lot of bonding this week, so they’re excited to play each other, they’re all really happy to be doing it together and that’s what they wanted to see happen. So now they’re going to go out there and play with these kids that they’ve really made friends but it’s gonna be competitive. It’ll be fun.”

And competitive and fun it was! The first end was chock full of high skill draws, freezes and utilizing guards (all real curling terms, we promise!). Both teams made incredible shots and ended the half with an anyone’s-game score of Alberta North 3, Alaska 1. Alberta North pulled away in the second half, combining smart strategy with precision hits to win the game, and the gold ulu, with a final score of 8-1. Alberta North’s secret to success? Coach Les Sonnenberg gives the nap his team took before the game a lot of credit for their mental focus and execution today!

The female gold ulu game featured Northwest Territories and Alberta North – again, the same two teams who faced off in the last Arctic Winter games! This year it was the Alberta North ladies’ turn to take home the gold. Northwest Territories started the game strong, but when Alberta North scored five points in the fourth end, it simply proved too much to overcome. After six ends, Northwest Territories conceded with handshakes and hugs.

While the Alberta North male team was napping pre-game, it sounds like the Alberta North female team was rocking. Teammates Lola Rasi and Hayden Young said that the team prepared by listening to music like Eminem and Queen to take their minds off the stress. Whatever the method, everything the Alberta North curlers touched turned to gold at this Arctic Winter Games.

**Congratulations to all!**

## MALE RESULTS

**Gold:** Alberta North

**Silver:** Alaska

**Bronze:** Northwest Territories

## FEMALE RESULTS

**Gold:** Alberta North

**Silver:** Northwest Territories

**Bronze:** Alaska



# BALLET IN MOTION: ALASKAN HIGH KICK

BY SEAN REILLY

The stage was set at the Colony Middle School Gym for the athletes to compete in the Alaskan High Kick. There were five different areas set up around the gymnasium, where athletes would turn their world upside down in an attempt to bring their foot in perfect contact with the ball. Each athlete has three chances to reach great heights and connect with that point in space where the tip of their foot meets and moves the dangling sphere.

As each competitor approached the playing field, they would walk up to the hanging ball, reach their hand upward to plot the trajectory. They would then sit on the wooden gym floor and poise themselves mentally, as they prepared for this magical dance. They went from a sitting position on the wooden floor to turning their body upside down with their foot fully extended, above their head.

This is truly a ballet of body and spirit thrust into the ether. Each athlete orchestrated their own original ballet of motion as they stretched their bodies beyond what they could do. It was sheer will power combined with careful choreography that propelled them to their point of contact.

If one of the athletes wasn't successful in making contact or sticking their landing correctly, one of their teammates or a member from another team would make a suggestion of how they could tweak their approach for a successful connection.

Everyone: athletes, coaches, the competition, family, and friends wanted each and every athlete to be successful and achieve their lofty goal of orchestrating the perfect moves to pull off their personal ballet. This competition really is just against themselves, not to beat their competitors but rather to improve their own game.



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## BALLET IN MOTION: ALASKAN HIGH KICK, CONT.

Here on this stage of sports, the Arctic Winter Games, there is a camaraderie that is seldom seen in other sport arenas. There is a burning desire in each of these athletes to help each other to be the very best that they can be. Over and over, you could see encouragement and support being hand delivered, in the trenches, by their fellow athletes. It is uplifting to witness the spirit in these Winter Games.

At the end of this day some athletes excelled more than others, in the Alaskan High Kick. Athletes born 2007 or later had these results. Lars Jeremiassen, from Team Greenland, took home the gold ulu for first place, with a high kick of 88 inches. In second place, Daniel Rodgers, from Team Alaska had a high kick of 82 inches which gave him a silver ulu and second place. Leif Richards, of Team Alaska, took third place with a kick of 80 inches.

In the "Open" category for Alaska High Kick, Parker Kenick, of Team Alaska, took home the gold ulu and first place, with a kick of 90 inches. Second place and a silver ulu, went to Colton Paul, of Team Alaska, with a high kick of 90 inches. Filling out the podium, Matthew Quinto, of Team Alaska, took home the bronze ulu and third place. It was a clean sweep by Team Alaska!

**It truly was a grand day of a ballet of motion...**



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