

ARCTIC WINTER GAMES
WHITEHORSE 2012

UWU news

Wednesday, March 7, 2012

An athlete for Team Alaska
competes in the biathlon-
snowshoe at Grey Mountain
Photo credit: DAVID MUSSELWHITE



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WHITEHORSE
DAILY

STAR
Established 1900 - Yukon Territory



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THE DAILY HYPE

AWG NEWS AND UP & COMINGS



BY THE NUMBERS

239 SNOWSHOE

Ten different events are packed into three days of snowshoe action at the 2012 Arctic Winter Games. Let's have a look at some more numbers that make up this sport.

6,000 – years ago peoples in central Asia already used snowshoes.

1843 – year the Montreal Snow Shoe Club was formed. The first of its kind in the world.

1974 – year snowshoeing debuted as an Arctic Winter Games Sport.

813 – minimum length in millimetres a snowshoe has to have to be considered legal.

220 – minimum width in millimetres a snowshoe has to have.

100 – shortest snowshoeing event distance in metres at the 2012 Arctic Winter Games.

10 – longest snowshoeing event distance in kilometres at the 2012 AWG.

4 – regular number of athletes in a snowshoe relay team. However, it is possible for a contingent to enter a three person team with one athlete completing the course twice.

2 – maximum of false starts allowed for any snowshoeing event. The competitor who commits a third or subsequent false start will be disqualified.

1.1 – minimum weight in kilograms for a pair of snowshoes complete with bindings.

SOCCER BOYS ALLOW THEMSELVES TO DREAM BIG

At the Arctic Winter Games it's an indoor sport, but for some players the glory of outdoor football might just be within reach.

by **THOMAS SCHOENEICH**

They call it the world game. Soccer's governing body, FIFA, is one of the largest sport associations on the globe. The game is played across all the world's continents – with the circumpolar world being no exception.

Each of the nine participating contingents has sent at least one indoor soccer team to the 2012 Arctic Winter Games. And, even in a hockey-crazy nation like Canada, the love for the game with the ball occasionally overtakes the love for the game with the puck.

"It (indoor soccer) is the number one most participated sport," Chris Spaidal said, who coaches Alberta North's Juvenile Male soccer team.

"In the community where I am from, Grande Prairie, hockey has, I believe, 850 enrolled. Indoor soccer in our community has between

a thousand and twelve hundred each year in the minor program."

The Alberta North boys Spaidal took to Whitehorse have shown some strong performances so far. They won their first three matches on Monday and Tuesday, including two dominant 10-goal-margin victories against Nunavut and Alaska.

"We are equal; everybody (on our team) is strong. I think we play well together," 14-year old Jared Larson said.

Jared, whose role model is Brazilian star midfielder Kaka, started the sport at the age of 5. He is currently playing for the Grande Prairie Wolves and would love to show his skills on a higher level one day. He already represented Alberta North as part of the region's U-13 team.

Chris Spaidal thinks that these opportunities are continuously improving for young kids in Canada.

"It's actually starting to get a lot better. I've coached with the Alberta provincial outdoor teams and we've had six players last year going to the (Vancouver) Whitecaps Residency. And we have a bunch of players in Jared's age who are our future prospects for the Whitecaps residency program," he said.

"So it's definitely gotten better, especially with the implementation of MLS (Major League Soccer) and now having professional franchises in Canada."

Jared Larson is not the only young boy taking the field at the Canada Games Centre who allows himself to dream big every now and then.

“ Soccer is right up there with hockey. Hockey is big, but we have a lot of players in every community. It's a sport that's easy to pick up on.



Alberta North's Ibrahim Sadiq eyeing the ball.
Photo credit: **OMAAAR REYNA**

"Toronto," 14-year-old Dolye Alagona, captain of Nunavut's Juvenile Male team, said when asked where he would love to play soccer one day.

Even in a region like Nunavut, where cold temperatures dominate for most of the year, soccer rivals hockey.

"Soccer is right up there with hockey. Hockey is big, but we have a lot of players in every community.

It's a sport that's easy to pick up on." Nunavut's Juvenile Male coach Paul Stroeder said.

"It doesn't cost a lot of money, it gets the kids out. They show up. They don't have to worry about trying to find someone to afford the gear for them and the registration fees. It's basically: We play at 7 o'clock; show up, we'll get you on a team or a club and we'll have some fun."

Don't miss the action!



Watch the AWG Daily show on **channel 9** or **269** and in Yellowknife on **channel 20** to get daily coverage of the 2012 Arctic Winter Games action. New shows airing daily until March 11th!

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For many young competitors, this is their Olympics.

Yukon Cross-Country Ski Team Coach Alain Masson, seen here with son Sasha, and friend Ava Blue.



YUKON'S FIRST FAMILY OF CROSS COUNTRY SKIING

by JOEL WHITTEN

If Alain Masson looks little a bit tired, you can forgive him. Masson has just returned from another one of his whirlwind tours of the globe. In 48 continuous hours, he traveled from Whitehorse to Vancouver, Vancouver to London, London to Istanbul, and finally from Istanbul to Erzurum in Eastern Turkey.

Once in Erzurum, he helped coach three young Yukoners to personal bests at the 2012 Under-23 World Junior Cross Country Skiing Championships. Then, with skis and wax kit in tow, he boarded another series of red-eye flights, rushing back to Whitehorse just in time to guide the Yukon Cross Country Ski Team into the 2012 Arctic Winter Games.

Sitting across from him at his kitchen table, Masson tells me of the importance of the Arctic Winter Games in the development of elite athletes, noting that, “for many young competitors, this is their Olympics.”

He would know. Modest and un-faillingly polite, Masson would be the last to tell you that he is a three time Olympian, who competed in both summer and winter Olympic Games.

He started his career competing at regional events like the Quebec Games and has seen many successful athletes, like recent Yukon Olympians Zach Bell and Jeane Lassen, get their start at events like the Arctic Winter Games.

As we discussed recent Olympians, Masson’s wife Lucy Steele-Masson stopped preparing dinner long enough to ask, tongue firmly in cheek, “Do I count as a recent?”

Steele-Masson represented Canada in cross country skiing at the 1992 Winter Olympics, and also has fond memories of her experiences at the 1982 Arctic Winter Games, neither of which could truly be referred to as recent.

Truth be told, the member of this

family who is closest to competing in this year’s Games is nine year old Sasha, who piped up that he prefers the Arctic Winter Games Ulu medals to the medals handed out at the Olympics. With his pedigree, one gets the feeling he’ll have at least one of those to call his own soon enough.

The whole family likened the Arctic Winter Games to a mini-Olympics, recognizing that both are international events, where athletes gather not only to compete, but to learn about other cultures, and to broaden personal experiences.

As young Sasha joined the conversation, our attention returned to those with their athletic careers ahead of them, and the Yukon Cross Country Ski Team’s coach and wax technician extraordinaire, appropriately noted, “an event like the Arctic Winter Games gives young people a true taste of what international competition is all about.”

WATCH YOURSELF IN ACTION!

AWG Daily on TV (Whitehorse cable channel 9) and a YouTube gadget near you. New episodes at 9 pm daily during the Games.

Day 3: Tuesday, March 6 edition:

- Volleyball
- Arctic Sports
- Figure Skating
- Table Tennis
- Pin Trading
- Circumpolar Soundscape show at the Yukon Arts Centre

AWG Daily captures the flavour and pizzazz of the Games. Yukoner Chris McNutt gives us a small sampling of the energy and excitement happening around town. Catch the faces of the kids, spot someone you know, see the action and feel the electrifying energy in the air.

TOP TWEETS

@YukonSylvie
Thanks @jianghomeshi for the mention of the #awg2012 in Whitehorse, almost everyone is a volunteer!

@awg2012
If you're up at the CGC, check out the live performances at the ATCO stage. They are free! #awg2012
http://awg2012.org/en/Culture/cgc_performances.aspx

@accidentalpics
Let the pinsanity begin. Some #CBC folks have pins for trade at #AWG2012. In bronze, silver and of course, GOLD!!!
<http://pic.twitter.com/1XFE71ka>

@Makaylafarrell
Shout out to #awg2012 volunteers! Your all awesome

@bnmeister
A new line of #awg condoms is hittin' the town today...what do you think athletes say? #athletessay
<http://www.hss.gov.yk.ca/awg.php>

@chiconeige
Games mascot Borealis gets dog tag from Whitehorse #cbcnorth #awg2012
<http://yfrog.com/kfu3tdrj>

“

"People would say, 'Girls don't play hockey. Girls don't skate.' I would say, 'Watch this.'"

Hayley Wickenheiser

”

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THE PLAYERS

THE WHO'S WHO OF THE GAMES



KNEE INJURY DOESN'T STOP RIVARD FROM KICKING HIGH

by THOMAS SCHOENEICH

Punching above her weight is not Anna Rivard's business, what she loves is kicking above her height.

The 1.65 metre-tall girl is one of Team Yukon's stand-out athletes. With 1.78 metres in the Alaskan High Kick and 8.31 metres in the Triple Jump she holds two Arctic Sports records – the only Yukon athlete among record holders from otherwise mainly Alaska and the NWT.

She set both records at the 2010 AWG in Grande Prairie, Alberta. Back then, she dominated the competition, winning two gold and five silver medals in the Junior category plus another all-around gold for her

combined results.

And even though Rivard has moved into the Open Women category, she is set to leave her mark at the 2012 Games.

"It's a little more nerve-wracking because it's a hometown event and you get this 'everyone you know will watch me' – kind of feeling," Rivard admits. "At the same time, it's all of the Yukon cheering for you, so you get this boost when you compete."

Coach Teena Dickson, herself a multiple AWG-participant who competed in five different sports, believes that Rivard can handle the pressure. "We know that she's an amazing ath-

lete. I want her to come back into the senior's category knowing that she belongs there," Dickson says. "And I want us to have fun – that's number one."

Rivard's journey to this year's competition is remarkable as she spent a good part of the past twelve months on crutches.

Also being a professional gymnast, she injured herself last year and had to undergo a complicated knee surgery – and since she tore muscles in her right knee, Rivard had to learn to kick with her opposite foot.

"I used to kick with my right foot but now I'm kicking with my left

foot," she says.

Dickson deems this an "absolutely amazing" development – for Rivard it's also a great relief.

"Being able to do Arctic Sports is a big achievement for me this year, because since my surgery I haven't been able to do any sport."

"Since I'm an athletic person, it's so depressing not being able to do anything you want to do. So being able to do this definitely brings my mood up and keeps me in a good mood all the time."

To ease pressure from the injured knee, Rivard will bow out of the kneel jump and compete in just six of the seven Arctic Sports events. But topping the competition once again is still on her mind.

"I definitely enjoy getting medals," Rivard says. "I'm hoping to get a gold in maybe the arm pull and the triple jump but other than that, we'll just see who I compete against."

BE SMART, BE SAFE AND LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER

by BRIGITTE PARKER

Safety and security for large sporting and cultural events can range from the obscure - violation of noise restrictions - to the serious - illness or injury of participants.

Anything can happen during a major event: an outbreak of flu in the athletes' residence or frozen water lines that disrupt services to a sports facility to crowd and traffic control.

The Arctic Winter Games Security Planning Team is striving to strike a balance between ensuring a safe and enjoyable atmosphere for participants, spectators and guests, while not interfering with the goodwill of the Games.

RCMP Constable Kelly Plamondon is the Security Planner for the AWGs. She spent the last year planning to identify the potential risks and concerns and implementing solutions on how to handle these risks. She also established and implemented emergency and security plans for the venues and coordinated with other agencies such as the Hospital, Ambulance and Fire Department to ensure a quick response should any worst-case scenarios occur.

"The bottom line is to ensure the athletes are happy, healthy and return home safe and sound," said Cst.

Plamondon.

A team of AWG security volunteers is working closely with law enforcement and other security and emergency response teams to keep areas such as the athletes' villages, athletic venues and social/ cultural events safe to ensure participants and guests are happy, healthy and secure.

Wearing yellow arm bands, these volunteers obtained their security clearances and received training on how to deal with minor annoyances such as loud, inappropriate spectators to following protocols in an emergency.

There are up to 700 volunteers assisting with security at the 15 AWG facilities and venues. And these volunteers will be kept busy: over 200 shifts were assigned at one venue alone! The dormitories are fully staffed 24 hours a day with a minimum of two security personnel available at all times.

In the end, Cst. Plamondon offers this advice for AWG athletes and participants: "Be smart, be safe, have fun and look out for one another."



You can easily identify the AWG security volunteers who are wearing yellow arm bands and are available to help at any time.



Xerox Canada Ltd.
salutes the athletes of
The Arctic Winter Games



MEET THE GREEN TEAM

The Green Team doesn't give 100%. In fact, it's only aiming to give 30% at the 2012 Games.

by **GLENDA KOH**

In the sport of waste reduction, this means that the Green Team is hoping that 70% of the waste generated by the Games is diverted into either compost or recycling.

This goal is on the high side of reasonable. Green Team coordinator Sabine Schweiger, explains, "A municipality that offers curbside pickup can aim for a diversion rate of 70%." Many municipalities aim more in the neighbourhood of 50%.

Perhaps you've seen the trios of bins and wondered about the brief pause everyone takes before throwing something into one of them. At every waste station, there is one bin for each of compostables, recyclables and garbage respectively.

That brief pause is the time that it takes your brain to figure out which bin the trash goes in. If you're a highly skilled waste sorter who has trained for years, as many Yukon athletes are, it takes but a nano-second to determine which bin to use.

If you're new to the sport, don't

worry, just keep practicing. Once it becomes second nature, you'll be on your way to elite levels of competence.

For those not familiar with the sport, compostables are all the food waste and paper wrappers that will break down into a soggy mess and eventually dirt if you leave them outside in a big heap.

Keep your eyes out for the unexpected participants in the composting game, though. Paper plates, certain brands of disposable cups, and special compostable cutlery can also go in the compost.

Refundables include all pre-packaged drink containers, such as water bottles, juice boxes and aluminum cans.

Garbage includes everything else, such as packaging containing any plastic or foil. Sadly, the coffee cups provided by a couple of very popular national coffee retailers are also not compostable or recyclable.

The Green Team has been train-



ing hard for the Games. A few key decisions were made early on. The Host Society decided not to offer non-compostable or non-reusable plates and utensils, such as Styrofoam, as well as limit the number of meals that would be available outside of the athletes' cafeteria. Other measures included encouraging the food vending contractor to provide low waste services.

Finding volunteers to cart waste from thousands of teenagers and spectators is no small task. As Sch-

weiger says, "Our volunteers are rare, but dedicated."

Danny Lewis, a first time Green Team volunteer, says "It feels great to be a part of a team that is working towards keeping the Games clean and presentable, but also helping demonstrate good habits towards waste reduction and separation."

Finally, a sport that everyone at the Games can participate in regardless of age, physical ability, or coordination! A sport where the more you eat, the better you get.

Q?A

ULU GETS TO KNOW YOU
by **Indra Kley**



Sara Birkely (14), Cross Country Skiing, Team Sápmi

Is it your first time at the Arctic Winter Games?

Yes. It is my first Games. It's amazing! I like it a lot. I like it the most that there are so many people here together. The Arctic Winter Games are really big games.

You are from Kautokeino, Norway. How is the weather back home at the moment?

It's a little bit different. Where I live in Norway it's around 20 below. In Whitehorse it's warmer.

What is your goal for the Games?

I want to do the best I can do. I want to play my part! To win would be fun – but it's not so important to me.

What do you do in your down time here?

I rest. I make new friends. I met people from all over Canada already, from the Yukon, from Alberta and all the other territories. I listen to the music on my iPod (Rock & Pop, no artist or band in particular). And I go shopping!

Do you have any rituals before a race?

The team stands together and we just say: "Come on, we can do this!"

Groundwork Sessions performs for the crowd from the ATCO Stage in the Canada Games Centre

Photo by **BRUCE BARRETT**



yukon energy keeping tradition in play



ARCTIC AND DENE SPORTS
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ARCTIC WINTER GAMES
WHITEHORSE 2012

THE VIEW FROM UP HERE

NEWS FROM THE PODIUM



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I already busted my clapping noisemaker and it's only Tuesday morning!"

NWT volleyball fan



Photo credit: DAVID MUSSELWHITE

PREVIEW: SMELLS LIKE HOCKEY

by JOEL WHITTEN

"Smells like hockey players in here," said one spectator as he entered the rink. He was right. That mixture of sweat, chilled air, and pre-game excitement was in the air.

On the first full day of 2012 Arctic Winter Games, eight hockey games were played. Female and Male teams from Alaska, Alberta North, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon all took to the ice.

Takhini Arena and the Canada Winter Games Centre saw their ice surfaces cleaned, scraped, hacked, gouged and then resurfaced again, and again, and again.

Hundreds of players, fans, officials, and volunteers trooped in and out of these rinks. From the hats, jerseys, jackets and smiles on their faces you could tell that they were all here for just one thing: hockey.

Takhini Arena was nearly full as Midget Male teams from Yukon and Northwest Territories faced off for the last game of the day. This early in the tournament, it isn't about the medals yet. It's about teams learning

who the opposition's best players are, and seeing how one squad matches up against the other.

From the bleachers, it's about seeing some of the best hockey the host city has seen in years and trying to predict which players will rise to occasion, stand out, and lead their teams to the medal round.

Looking for the players with the right stuff is a talent unto itself. Fortunately, I ran into a number of seasoned hockey minds during the course of the game, among them Bob Unger, who spent over a decade as a scout for the Western Hockey League's Kamloops Blazers.

From Bob and the other hockey watching and playing veterans I met in the crowd, I learned what to look for when trying to spot the best players. So, if you want to see or be the best as you head out to the good old hockey game, keep these things in mind:

Skating Ability:

The best skaters are usually the best players.

Size:

Lots of players have proven this wrong, but size sure helps. Strength is handy too.

Puck Handling:

If you can keep the puck on your stick, the other team can't get it.

Shot:

Accuracy, speed of release, and power all make for a great shot.

Hockey IQ:

Be in the right position, see the ice well, and use your teammates.

Drive:

Work ethic always separates great players from good ones.

On this night, the 4-2 final score showed that Team Northwest Territories Midget Males had more of the qualities that make up good hockey players.

But, this was only one game and there is plenty of great Arctic Winter Games hockey left for the players and their teams to show that they have what it takes to stand out from the crowd.

AWG ULU COUNT

As of 7:00pm Tuesday, March 6

CONTINGENT	G	S	B	TOTAL
Alaska	13	17	16	46
Yukon	11	13	8	32
NWT	8	8	11	27
Yamal	10	9	6	25
Alberta North	8	4	5	17
* Nunavut	2	3	4	9
Greenland	4	0	2	6
Nunavik Québec	2	1	3	6
Sàpmi	1	1	0	2



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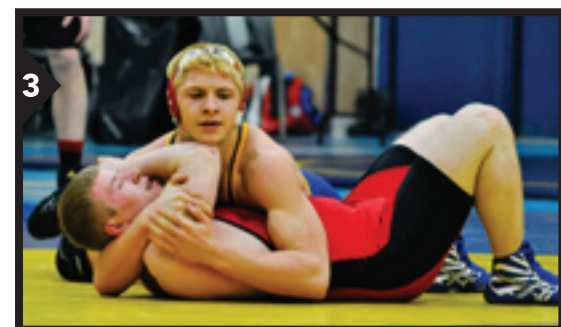
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More photos available on the AWG Flickr website: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/awg2012/>



1 Hockey midget males (NWT vs Yukon) battle for the puck at Takhini Arena (Photo by **Tim Hogan**) **2** Cultural presentation at the CGC (Photo by **Ruth Borgfjord**) **3** Wrestlers from Team Alaska and Team Nunavut (Photo by **Ruth Borgfjord**) **4** Team Nunavut spikes the ball (Photo by **Cozmo Ace Malzarby**) **5** A figure skater waves the Yukon flag (Photo by **Cozmo Ace Malzarby**) **6** Curlers at the Mt McIntyre Rec Centre (Photo by **Cozmo Ace Malzarby**) **7** Speed skaters take the corner (Photo by **Tim Hogan**) **8** Sacred fire at the KDFN Cultural Centre (Photo by **Bruce Barrett**)



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NEIGHBOURS SHARE DREAM OF AWG GOLD

by SARA BERGQUIST

When the Yukon Amateur Hockey Association released the rosters for Yukon's three Arctic Winter Games teams, two of the names on the Bantam team list were Levi Johnson and Jack Blisner. I visited these athletes and their families so I could find out more about their thoughts on the Arctic Winter Games. Here's what I learned...

Levi and Jack are next-door neighbours. They have been friends for nine years. They have been teammates for six years and currently play on the Whitehorse Bantam A Mustangs during the regular season. They are among the youngest players on the team and this is their first time playing in the Arctic Winter Games.

It took quite a bit of work and dedi-

cation to make it on the team and now most of their spare time has been spent preparing for the Games. Between games and practices, they are spending six days a week on the ice. Like many Arctic Winter Games athletes, they enjoy staying active and participating in other sports. Some of their favourites include fastball, basketball, biking, snowboarding and playing golf.

It's not only the athletes who exhibit this dedication to their sport. Levi's dad, Rob, said he drives his son to practices and games and they have travelled to play in tournaments. He is very excited about his son getting a chance to experience the Games. Jack's dad is Barry Blisner. He is one of the team's coaches and has been busy running practices

and whipping them into shape.

This Arctic Winter Games team might have an edge as many of them play together in the regular season. Some of their lines will be the same and they have had time to gel as a team and have gotten used to playing with each other. They are pumped to meet new people and play against this field of skilled teams, especially in front of the home crowd.

Coach Blisner is also looking forward to seeing his team come face-to-face with these teams and anticipates Alaska and Alberta North will be two teams to keep an eye on. No matter the sport, the competition at the Games is guaranteed to be fierce, and Jack and Levi are focused on excellence. When all is said and done, they want to be standing on the podium with Ulu medals around their necks.

Levi and Jack can be seen on the awg2012 YouTube channel where you can watch them debate the importance of offense vs. defense.

GUINEA PIG: ON THE FLOOR

by INDRA KLEY

In less than half a year the newly founded Yukon Wrestling Team got ready for competing at the Arctic Winter Games. Will someone be able to keep up with them in less than a day? For the Ulu News guinea-pig series, it's worth to try.

It takes two minutes until Mary Jane Allison, Team Yukon's wrestling coach, is pinned to the floor. 117 seconds longer than it should. Still, she and the three team members that join us that day are excited. "That's a half nelson, you have just done the pin! Congratulations," Mary Jane shouts.

I did it. My first wrestling move ever. And although it was in slow-motion, I am exhausted. One half nelson and I feel half dead already – and it's only the beginning of our training session.

Wrestling requires strength and balance. Two assets I am obviously lacking as the training reveals. And I

thought it would be enough to have big thighs... Instead, I'm feeling even if I had muscles and a strong inner core, I still wouldn't be able to stay on top. It's just too difficult to understand the moves. "It looks simple but it's not," Mary Jane admits. "It's a lot of subtle steps."

The crossface for example, that Mary Jane and wrestler Kieran Charon-Ohagan demonstrate. It looks pretty logical – until it's my turn. I am supposed to pin Kieran who is kneeling on the floor. I have to turn him, who is a head taller than I am, around so that his back touches the ground. Mary Jane gives instructions. "Cross his face with this arm, put the other arm under the stomach, pull it up to your hip, now push that way, walk around the head, push the ear in the stomach, don't let go of his arm," she shouts. I lose track – and end up with my ear on Kieran's belly, twirling his

arm. Thank God he is laughing. I really didn't want to injure one of Team Yukon's athletes just before the AWG start.

"Wrestling has rules and limitations so that you don't get hurt," explains team member Antoine Broeckx later on, "but you are still able to use your strength and weight." To gain strength, the team does three two-hour work-out sessions per week. Another three two-hour training sessions are spent on the mat.

For me, it's also time to get back on the mat. 14-year-old Kim Cleveland shows a double-leg takedown on Mary Jane. The featherweight lifts her up, turns and drops her off her shoulder. I am impressed by her strength. "Don't let them fool you," says Mary Jane. "It's all about physics and balance." Now it's my go. And this last move is a success: I lift Kim and throw her on the mat. The



team is cheering.

With those three moves I've learned I could enter a wrestling match, says Mary Jane. Antoine, Kieran and Kim know about 75 moves.

So I am just 72 moves away from Team Yukon.

Wrestling matches take place at Yukon College on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday.

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CULTURAL BEAT

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GET PINNED PIN OF THE DAY

Team Yukon pin. Predicted to be a favourite, Team Yukon's pin, featuring a Husky with a bobbling head is proving to elicit excitement on day 2 of official pin trading. Demand for this pin has soared because of its unique features and difficulty to obtain – this pin cannot be bought; it can only be traded with a Yukon athlete.



Check out this pin on a Team Yukon athlete or a lucky trader around town!

KDFN CULTURAL CENTRE: WHERE DENE GAMES MEET FIRE & WATER

by HEATHER LEDUC

There's a new landmark on the Whitehorse waterfront, and it's about to come alive with two First Nation traditions. One is about sportsmanship, the other is about spirituality, but both build relationships and strengthen community.

During the Arctic Winter Games, Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN) is opening the doors of its spectacular new cultural centre to host the Dene Games. Introduced in 1990, the five events that comprise the Dene Games reflect the cultural values of camaraderie, friendly competition and, in the case of Dene Hand Games, friendly deception.

For the first time ever, as part of the Dene Games, a ceremonial Sacred Fire will be lit on the cultural centre grounds. The fire will offer athletes with a place to rejuvenate spiritually. It will also foster greater understanding of First Nations culture for all who visit the fire and its keepers.

Once lit, the Sacred Fire requires constant care. Phil Gatensby is the Lead Fire Keeper, responsible for ensuring the Sacred Fire remains lit and providing guidance.

"Traditional teachings and ceremonies are as relevant today as they were in the times of our ancestors," Gatensby remarked. "They are the blueprints that guide us. It is what connects us to nature and the world above us. As well, it helps us realize and respect the gift of air, land, water and fire."

For KDFN, hosting of the Games and the lighting of the Sacred Fire mark a turning point in the First Nation's historic connection to the Yukon River.

"It is the first major event at the

cultural site and it signifies our return to the area that was once occupied by many of our people," Dene Games chair Shirley Dawson said.

The Sacred Fire was lit during a ceremony on Sunday, March 4 at 10:00 am. Another ceremony will be held Saturday, March 10, at noon to allow the Sacred Fire to burn out. All are welcome to attend the ceremonies and to visit the Sacred Fire throughout the week. Fire Keepers Phil Gatensby, Johnny Brass and their apprentices will be on hand to provide guidance to visitors.

On Wednesday, March 7 the ir-repressible Sharon Shorty and Duane Aucoin will host an evening of music, dance, drumming and visual arts at the cultural centre.

The show opens with a song from the Rising Sun trio of Patti Boss, Viola Papequash and Lacey Scarff. These women and their powerful performances live up to their warrior inspiration, and Scarff's vocals are a force to be reckoned with.

The event is also the official opening of Sewing Our Traditions: the Dolls of Canada's North exhibition with an introduction from the show's curator, Jennifer Allen. The show will also feature dolls from the circumpolar north.

Fire Keeper Phil Gatensby will also be part of the celebration, as well dancers Victoria and Sabrina Fred and Sean Smith. The evening will wrap up with a final song from Lacey Scarff, followed by a public round dance.

The show begins at 7:00 pm and is free of charge. Refreshments will be available, and guests may also purchase items from visual and craft artists who will be at the show.

GAMES GEAR



Quinn's shoes show the element of surprise. Top is the Teflon coated shoe for sliding and bottom is the rubber gripper for balance. These are definitely not street shoes!

CURLING – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE SHOES

by KAREN KEELEY

Tina Persinger and Quinn Evanson from Fairbanks, Alaska have their own particular brand of style for their particular sport. The two of them have been curling since childhood. Now in their teens, they wear special curling shoes that may look like your typical running shoe but they have a grip on the bottom of one shoe to stop from sliding.

"If you just wear normal sport shoes out there, you can't grip the ice at all," said Quinn. "Teflon or steel coats the other shoe so it's slippery and then you can slide out along the ice." A protective rubber gripper covers that shoe when a curler doesn't want to slide. It's all very aerodynamic.

Curlers wear their team jackets during competition along with extra insulation because it can get cold on the ice, especially if standing around. "It's not said that we have to, but most of us just wear black pants," said Tina. "Usually stretchy pants because they're more comfortable."

Tina doesn't have any superstitions but she did admit that if she had a certain scrunchy in her hair, and they won, then yes – she could keep wearing that scrunchy as a good luck charm.

Quinn tells us with a good deal of laughter, "Sometimes we have different team shirts. Whatever we're wearing – if we win, then we wear that same shirt again until we lose. Once the tournament is over, then we wash them."

Travel is expensive so they don't get outside much, but they have travelled to the Junior Nationals in Wisconsin and Minnesota. To make Team Alaska, Tina Persinger and Quinn Evanson successfully navigated individual tryouts and a skills competition along with a written portion pertaining to their knowledge about curling. There are four members each on the women's and men's Alaskan teams.

As veterans of previous Arctic Winter Games, Tina and Quinn dress with style, speak with style and represent their sport with style. We wish them the best of luck as they continue with their individual competitions in Curling at the 2012 Arctic Winter Games.

WELCOME

On behalf of the Yukon Liberal Caucus, we'd like to welcome all athletes, officials, coaches, dignitaries, volunteers, and visitors to the 2012 Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse. The Arctic Winter Games is a proud tradition, uniting representatives from the circumpolar world through the passion, endurance and teamwork of sport, and allowing us to showcase our vibrant living cultures throughout

the Arctic. The Games bring out the best in everyone, providing all of our solid citizens and future leaders with a sense of camaraderie and allowing them to forge lasting friendships.

It is an honour to have the 2012 Arctic Winter Games hosted in the Yukon this year. Good luck to all participants, and to those visiting, welcome to our beautiful territory!

YUKON Liberal CAUCUS

Sandy Silver

MLA Klondike
sandy.silver@yla.gov.yk.ca
(867)393-7007

Darius Elias

MLA Vuntut Gwitchin
Interim Leader Yukon Liberal Party
darius.elias@yla.gov.yk.ca
(867)456-6710



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“The Arctic Winter Games are especially important to the Gwich'in. We recognize individual and team merit. World Champions like Kevin Koe are a good example of success and teamwork.”

– Richard Nerysoo, President, Gwich'in Tribal Council

