

2023 Traditional Games Championships

Sport Technical Package

Northern & Dene Games



ABORIGINAL
SPORTS CIRCLE NWT

2023 Edition

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Overview

The Traditional Games Championships were established to increase participation and awareness of Northern and Dene Games at a territorial level. The Championships build on the programs that the Aboriginal Sport Circle of the Northwest Territories (ASCNWT) has been running in schools and communities across the North.

The objectives of the NWT Traditional Games Championships are to:

1. Increase the number of NWT residents participating in traditional games.
2. Support athletes with an interest in traditional games and who wish to pursue these games at a higher level.
3. Involve all NWT communities in traditional games events.
4. Develop and maintain traditional aboriginal culture as well as social components of the traditional games.
5. Showcase the talents of NWT residents in traditional activities.

The Traditional Games Championships currently include 8 Events that can be broken down into 4 Northern Games and 4 Dene Games Events. The following document will outline the procedures, eligibility, rules, and regulations regarding participation in the Traditional Games Championships.

Teams & Age Categories

All Schools Across the NWT will be invited to send participants to the TGC as follows:

- a) Each School will include four male and four female plus a male and female coaches/chaperones regardless of community size. Chaperones must be 19 years of age or older.
- b) Participants must be between the ages of 10 and 12 years as of December 31st 2022
- c) Schools are encouraged to select alternates (one boy and one girl) for their team. In case of a situation where an athlete cannot participate, the alternate will be used. Alternates travel will not be paid for by ASCNWT. If the community chooses to bring an extra team, they must cover the cost.
- d) School coaches/chaperones will be responsible for the direct supervision of their participants. Coaches/Chaperones must occupy the same accommodation as the athletes.
- e) School teams must participate equally in all sports offered at the host site.
- f) Each school will determine which participants will represent their school.

- a. Athletes may choose not to participate in certain events due to their own indigenous cultural laws (ie: women playing Handgames)
- g) In the event that the school chooses not to send a team to TGC, the community is encouraged to send a team.
- h) If the school/community does not have enough athletes to make a team, they can pair up with another community to complete their team.

Host Community/School

The 2023 TGC will be held in Yellowknife at Sir John Franklin High School

- a) The TGC host school will provide all meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) for all athletes, coaches/chaperones, and officials.
 - a. Dinner will be optional as teams shall choose to stay at the school or not. ASCNWT will not pay for dinners outside the school
- b) Athletes and coaches/chaperones accommodations will be in classrooms within the host school. Please note your school may be sharing a classroom with other schools. 2-3 teams will be sharing a classroom. Classrooms will be split up between male and female.
- c) On Thursday, February 9th and Sunday, February 13th, all teams staying at the school will have to stay in the gymnasium.
- d) All participants are required to bring their own sleeping requirements (i.e. pillow, sleeping bag, foamy, etc.)
- e) Showers will be available at the host school at all times.
- f) Rooms must be kept clean and tidy. Regular room checks will be conducted. Excessive damage will be billed to the school at fault.

Eligibility

Athlete Eligibility

To be eligible to compete in the Traditional Games Championships

- a) Must be between 10 and 12 years of age as of December 31st the year before the Traditional Games Championships are held.
- b) Must follow the Traditional Games Championships Code of Conduct.
- c) Must be in good standing with your school prior to competition.

Coach/Chaperone Eligibility

To be eligible to be a coach/Chaperone in the TGC, Coaches/Chaperones:

- a) Must follow the NWT TGC Code of Conduct.
- b) Have completed all registration forms.
- c) Must be 19 years of age.

Discipline

Discipline situations will be handled as follows:

- a) Any situation where an athlete has broken the TGC Code of Conduct must be brought forward to a representative of The Aboriginal Sport Circle of the Northwest Territories.
- b) A disciplinary committee will then be brought together of ASCNWT employees to discuss the incident.
- c) The representative bringing forward the incident may not sit on the disciplinary committee.
- d) ASCNWT staff will be responsible for dealing with any consequences that are dealt.

Consequences are outlined in the Code of Conduct.

Events

2023 Northern Games

- Wrist Hang
- Arm Pull
- One Foot High Kick
- Two Foot High Kick

2023 Dene Games

- Hand Games
- Snow Snake
- Pole Push
- Stick Pull

Rules & Regulations

****PLEASE NOTE THAT RULES AND REGULATIONS MAY CHANGE WITHOUT ANY NOTICE IF ANY UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES ARISE****

If this occurs, the Officials and ASCNWT staff will meet and discuss the rule/regulation change(s), come to a consensus, and an ASCNWT staff member will be responsible for communicating the change to ALL coaches and participants.

Wrist Hang

History

The Wrist Hang is an Inuit game of resistance to pain. The Inuit elders introduced resistance to pain games to teach young hunters to deal with cold weather conditions. In these extreme Arctic conditions, freezing your face, ears, hands and feet were common while hunting on the land or on the ocean.



General Rules

Wrist Hang will be measured in **total distance in meters** that an athlete is able hold on to a wooden dowel using the one hand grip before their lower body touches the ground, or they lose their grip/form.

Officials will demonstrate and review the proper form and explain the rules to the group prior to commencing the competition. Once the competition begins, it is up to the athletes and coaches to remember the rules and expectations for this event.

One Hand Grip

Both Male and Female athletes will be expected to demonstrate the proper form and etiquette associated with the one hand grip for the Wrist Hang.



- a. Athletes sit straight up, cross-legged on the ground.
- b. Athletes must identify to the Officials which hand will be their grip hand.
- c. Athletes will then grip the dowel, at the instructions of the officials, and place their non-gripping hand around the wrist of their gripping hand.
- d. On the signal from the officials, the athlete will be lifted with the dowel and carried as far as they can maintain proper form.

Officials will measure from the starting line to where the athlete:

- first makes contact with the ground (no feet dragging); or,
- loses proper form in the upper body (chin resting on dowel, arms relax, head begins to fall beneath the height of the dowel)

Arm Pull

History

The Arm Pull is an Inuit game of strength and endurance. Hunters needed to have strong upper body strength for carrying the animals they had harvested. Animals like the seal and caribou could weigh up to 1000lbs! They also needed the strength to pull seals out of the seal hole and pull a whale on the edge of the ice flow or on to the beach. Harvesting caribou in the fall meant carrying the meat carcass for long distances back to their camps.



General Rules

Setup

In pairs, athletes face each other sitting on the floor. Short sleeves must be worn and all watches, bands and other objects must be removed.

- For the right arm pull, the left leg is straight and the right leg is bent over the opponent's straightened leg.
- Competitors lock right arms at the bent elbow, with the left hand holding the opponent's right ankle. Positions are reversed for the left arm pull.
- A competitor may not grab the other competitor's arm to get their arm in place.

- d. Competitor's shoulders are parallel and square to each other.
- e. The left arm setup is the reverse of the above.

Competition

Athletes pull with their right arms first.

- a. On signal from the official, competitors pull slowly and steadily at the elbow while bracing the opposite hand on the opponent's ankle.
- b. Contact between the knee and elbow is not allowed.
- c. The pulling motion must be inside the elbows, not in an outward direction.
- d. The objective is to pull the opponent as long as you can without breaking your hold.

The competition consists of the best of three (3) "pulls".. The second "pull" is with the other arm and the third "pull", if necessary, shall be determined by a flip of a coin. The winner of the first game will call heads or tails for the tie-break coin flip.

Competition Format

At the Traditional Games Championships, participants will compete in a randomized bracket system against other members in their group (Group 1 & Group 2). The bracket system used will be a double elimination format. The top 4 athletes from each group (8 total) will move onto the Arm Pull Finals round on Sunday, February 12th. The athletes will be placed into seeded matches based on their ranking in the group competition. For example. 1st place in group 1 will play 1st place in group 2 for 1st & 2nd place. 2nd in group 1 will place 2nd in group 2 for 2nd & 3rd place, and so on and so forth. Top 7 will earn points towards their team overall standings.

One Foot High Kick

History

The One-Foot High Kick is an Inuit game of agility that develops an individual's strength, quickness and body control.

Hunters had to be quiet, fast, and agile to have successful hunts to provide for their families. For example, sneaking up on animals required the hunters to be quick on their feet making as little noise as possible.

These Northern Games were also played by all to develop skills to deal with the different types of land conditions the Inuit people had to endure on their travels. The One-Foot High Kick is one of the most exciting Northern Games events. During competition, participants would challenge each other to see who could land the quietest while landing on their kicking foot to showcase their technical skills.



General Rules

The competitor may start with a walk, running or standing approach. On the take-off both feet must be no more than shoulder width apart. The target must be clearly struck by one foot. The landing must be on the same foot with which the target was kicked. The competitor must maintain balance and control on the landing. This may be shown by hopping 3 times or holding your balance for 3 or more seconds.

- Each competitor has three (3) attempts at each height.
- Height of kick will be measured in feet (ft.)
- A competitor is charged with one attempt when:
 - The knee of the kicking foot is “broken” in the course of the jump, or they do not clearly strike the target with one foot.
 - When they fail to land properly and maintain balance, even if they strike the target.
- The Head Official shall rule on any disputed attempts.
- At the completion of attempts at each height:
 - The target shall be raised 4 inches (10cm) for all groups.
 - When there are 4 competitors (or at the discretion of the Head Official) left in each group, group 1 and 2 will combine to decide the overall winner. The height shall be raised 2 inches (5 cm) until a winner has been declared.
- Tie Break:
 - If no one successfully kicks the last remaining height, the height will be lowered 1 inch. If 2 or more athletes kick that set height, then it will be raised 1 inch until a winner is determined.

Starting height will be determined by the Officials during warm-up for each group.

Two-Foot-High Kick

History

The Two-Foot High Kick is an Inuit game of agility. It is a game that develops an individual's strength, quickness and body control.

Hunters had to be quiet, fast, and agile to have successful hunts to provide for their families. For example, sneaking up on animals required the hunters to be quick on their feet, making as little noise as possible.

This game helped young hunters deal with the different types of land conditions during the different hunting seasons throughout the year. The Two-Foot High Kick is considered one of the most difficult of the kicking games; an individual needed a lot of leg strength. It is also one of the most exciting Northern Games events. Participants would challenge each other to see who could kick the highest or land the quietest to showcase their technical skills.



General Rules

The competitor may start with a walk, running or standing approach. On takeoff, both feet must be no more than shoulder width apart. The target must be clearly struck by either foot provided heels of each foot are in contact with one another.

Upon landing both feet must hit the floor at the same time. The competitor must complete a natural landing (maintain balance and control). This may be shown by hopping 3 times or holding your balance for 3 or more seconds.

- Each competitor has three (3) attempts at each height.
- Height of kick will be measured in feet (ft.)
- A competitor is charged with one attempt when:
 - They do not clearly strike the target with both feet together.
 - When they fail to land properly and maintain balance, even if they strike the target.
- The Head Official shall rule on any disputed attempts.
- At the completion of attempts at each height:
 - The target shall be raised 4 inches (10cm) for all groups.
 - When there are 4 competitors (or at the discretion of the Head Official) left in each group, group 1 and 2 will combine to decide the overall winner. The height shall be raised 2 inches (5 cm) until a winner has been declared.
- Tie Break:
 - If no one successfully kicks the last remaining height, the height will be lowered 1 inch. If 2 or more athletes kick that set height, then it will be raised 1 inch until a winner is determined

Starting height will be determined by the Officials during warm-up for each group.

Hand Games

History

Handgames were played mostly for pleasure and celebration when families came together on the trail or met at annual meeting sites. Handgames were often played at the conclusion of successful hunts following the sharing of the kill and feasting. After the work was done, it was time to play. Other times, Handgames were played as a way to win resources, such as camping supplies, dog teams, and even wives.

Today it is typically played for a money prize. The various hand signals in Handgames are very complex and each of these signals have more variations, depending on the region you are playing in, requiring participants to pay careful attention to detail.

Handgames is a game of reading and understanding body language, knowing how well you can read your opponents. Back in a time where medicine power was strong, people had to have a strong mind to protect themselves, but to also throw off the concentration of their opponents. Dancing and mocking the opposing team while playing is a big part of the game today. Another way to give strength is to have your drummers surround you when you are the only player left from your team. One single person can bring their entire team back from being defeated, or one person can beat an entire team with one call.



General Rules

Teams take turns to hide and guess. Each player on the hiding team will take the token and with both hands hidden, place the token in one hand or the other. Presenting the hands, without revealing the token for the other team to see, the

player attempts to deceive the player from the opposite team (known as the “shooter”) with elaborate gestures of the hands, arms, head and upper body. This movement takes place with all players on one team at the same time. The opposite player (shooter), by a (hand) signal, guesses the hand containing the token. The second team then repeats the motions of hiding a token for the first team to guess. Teams may switch their players (shooter) opposite others during the course of the game is they choose.

Officials must be able to see all competitors’ hands clearly. Participants with long hair should have it tied back when playing hand games so the officials view is not obstructed

At the Traditional Games Championships, teams will be placed into a randomized double elimination bracket system. The competition will begin on Day 1, and continue until the top 4 teams are identified. Teams will only compete using 8 sticks until the semi-finals. On Day , when the top 4 teams compete in the finals, 10 sticks will be used.

Four hand signals will be encouraged during the hand games competition to simplify it for the beginners; right, left, inside and outside hand signals. The officials will teach the athletes these signals before they begin their match.



Right
Point finger. Call pointing in the right direction.



Left
Point finger. Call pointing in the left direction.



Inside
Hand flat. This call splits the line. This call is for all hands closest to the captain’s call.



Outside
Index finger and thumb pointing in opposite directions like an 'L' shape. This call is for all hands farthest away from the captain’s call.

*When one game ends, the next game will commence **within 5 minutes** to ensure that the competition runs at an efficient pace. If a team fails to show up in time for the start of their game, they will be forced to forfeit. Teams are responsible for keeping an eye on the competition and schedule, and are responsible for ensuring that all team members are present for the start of their next game.*

Snow Snake

History

The Snow Snake game originates from throwing a spear along the surface of the snow while caribou hunting. This game was used as a tool for harvesting caribou during a time when there were no guns.

The snow snake skill was used to hunt caribou on frozen lakes. The hunters would slide the snow snake on the ice from afar to plunge it into the body of a sleeping caribou lying down on the ice or snow. Dene hunters would practice their throwing techniques with the spear - or as it is called today – the snow snake.

Traditionally, the spear had a hook at the tip, located on the top side of the spear while the bottom part of the spear was shaved and flattened out. This allowed the sharp piece to stay on the top end and prevent the stick from rotating. The sharp piece would puncture the caribou and leave a blood trail for the hunters.



General Rules

The competitor may be standing or may choose to run to the throw line. Using one hand, the team player utilizes an underhand delivery (below the hip) and throws the

spear along the surface of the snow snake track. The object is to make the spear slide over the snow as far as possible.

Each player has three (3) attempts. One practice throw per player is allowed before the competition begins. All three (3) attempts will occur one after the other (i.e. player 1 throws three times in a row, player 2 throws three times in a row, etc.)

Distance of the Snow Snake will be measured in meters.

The distance the spear travels from the throwing line to the tip of the spear, with the longest distance being the winner or at the point that the spear exits the snow snake track. If spear exits the track, then that is where the distance is measured. The spear may leave and re-enter the track during its slide; if the snake should reenter the track then the snake will be measured where ever it lands.

Pole Push

History

Camp life placed great demands on people, everyone needing to be strong and able to work for long periods of time without tiring. During the summer, Dene people were often on the move carrying with them camp equipment and supplies. Canoes needed to be loaded and unloaded and camps set up and taken down. Traveling by canoe involved many portages, from very short to very long, all requiring the strength and endurance to get the canoes, equipment and supplies over to the next body of water. There was no time of year that people could let their strength and endurance diminish.

A winter game that can be played in all seasons, Pole Push was played to increase and maintain strength and endurance. While it was primarily a game played by men, women were welcome to play as well, showing recognition that the strength of all people are important to the whole group.



General Rules

Each team of four (4) players* grasps opposite ends of the pole, with the center mark of the pole positioned over the center point of the marked circle.

Player Selection*Pole push only requires 4 out of the 8 players from each team. Teams must select two male and two female athletes from their team. The team can switch out players for each 'push' but there must always be two male and two female athletes.

On the signal, each team pushes forward on the pole attempting to push the other team out of the marked ring. The pole is to be held no higher than the shoulder and no lower than the hip. Both teams are not allowed to cross the centre line during the competition. If a player is getting close to the centre line, they may let go of the pole and repositioned themselves in a more adequate position.

Competition Format

The competition consists of a best of three (3) "pushes".

At the Traditional Games Championships, teams will be placed into a randomized double elimination bracket system. The top 4 teams from each group (8 total) will move onto the Pole Push Finals round on Sunday, February 12th. The teams will be placed into seeded matches based on their ranking in the group competition. For example. 1st place in group 1 will play 1st place in group 2 for 1st & 2nd place. 2nd in group 1 will compete against 2nd in group 2 for 2nd & 3rd place, and so on and so forth. Top 7 will earn points towards their team overall standings.

Stick Pull

History

In the spring, with rivers re-opening and water beginning to flow, Dene families would use gaps carved in the ice by the current to fish with their bare hands. The greatest challenge was grasping the fish and throwing them onto the ice and snow. Stick Pull was created to practice that technique. It also helped to pull fish from nets more proficiently. Throughout the winter, either inside or outside, playing Stick Pull helped with the individual's overall strength, grip strength, and pulling technique. The pulling technique is important because it is used for gripping slippery fish and pulling them out of the water.

The technique must be hard enough to hold the fish, but not so hard as to squeeze it out of one's grip. The action also has to be quick and smooth to bring success. Stick pull provided a challenging and fun way to develop and maintain a skill that contributed to family survival.



General Rules

Two players stand beside each other facing opposite directions. Players must have their head up looking straight ahead with their knees straight. The official places the greased stick in their hands.

On the signal to start:

- Players pull straight backwards with a hard steady motion
- The non-pulling hand must stay on the player's hip or behind their back
- The elbow of the pulling hand must stay in a locked position
- Shoulders cannot be dropped
- Players must maintain a strong stance without moving their feet. Feet cannot be raised off of the floor
- There must be no twisting, jerking and pushing of the stick pull

The competition consists of a best of three (3) "pulls". The first "pull" is the right hands, the second "pull" with the left hands and the third "pull", if necessary, is determined by the flip of a coin. The winner of the first pull calls the coin toss.

The winner of a "pull" is declared when the stick is pulled from the hand of the opponent or if one of the players pulls the stick to the side of their body, behind their hip, and holds in for 8 seconds while their opponent is still gripping on to it, they are declared the winner.

At the Traditional Games Championships, participants will compete in a randomized bracket system against other members in their group. The bracket system used will be a double elimination format. Once the top 4 athletes from each group are identified, they will be randomly placed into a seeded match against the opposing group to determine the overall position.

Scoring

The TGC is scored collectively, meaning that points earned are done so as a team, not individually. Team points are calculated by combining all individual scores to represent a cumulative team total, which are then ranked from 1st to 7th place.

The team who places 1st in an event will receive **7 points**, the team who places 2nd will receive **6 points**, the team that places 3rd will receive **5 points**, and so on.

Teams that do not place in the top 7 will not receive any points for that event.

Cumulative/Collective scores are tallied in the following events:

- Hand Games
- Pole Push
- One Foot High Kick
- Two Foot High Kick
- Wrist Hang
- Snow Snake

Individual Scores are tallied in the following events:

- Stick Pull
- Arm Pull

The leaderboard will be continuously updated over the course of the tournament to represent the current point leaders.

Record Breakers and the Top 5 Individual Scores in every event will still be displayed so that athletes are recognized for their efforts. Please keep in mind that an athlete who scores the highest in an event may not indicate that their team has won or received any points for that event. **Leaderboard scores are a team effort, not an individual one.**

Please refer to an ASCNWT Staff Member for further questions or clarification on the TGC scoring system.

Awards

Medals will be awarded to the teams with the highest overall cumulative scores for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. The winning team will also receive a TGC hide banner to hang in their school/community, sewn by local Indigenous artist Marlene Tutcho from Deline, Northwest Territories.

Records

Any athlete who breaks a record will receive a RECORD BREAKER clothing item and have their name added to the current record standings.

Current records

ONE FOOT HIGH KICK

Male 2015 **Jason Nguyen** (Mildred Hall) 6'4"
Female 2016 **Taylor Sorensen** (William Mac) 5'6"

TWO FOOT HIGH KICK

Male 2017 **Maverick Elias** (Mangilaluk School) 5'4"
Female 2017 **Danika Taylor** (William Mac) 4'10"

WRIST HANG

Modified Grips

Male 2015 **Brendan McAllister** (Weledah) 227.6
Female 2017 **Gillian Furniss** (William Mac) 401.1

SNOW SNAKE

Male 2016 **Evan Nadli** (Deh Gah) 172
Female 2016 **Teylene Tsatchia** (Alexis Arrowmaker) 97.05