



NYO

NYO GAMES  
ALASKA

MEDIA KIT 2025



# Creating a **stronger, healthier** community built on **traditional values.**

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of Native Youth Olympics (NYO) Games Alaska is to promote:

- Healthy lifestyles, positive self-esteem, and leadership skills
- Appreciation of Alaska Native traditions
- Good sportsmanship through friendly athletic competition
- Cross-cultural understanding

## **INTRODUCTION**

For thousands of years and countless generations, survival for Alaska Native people depended not only on individual strength, skills, and knowledge, but on the ability of individuals to work together toward common goals.

Traditional athletic contests and games helped develop these and other skills critical to everyday life in the challenging Alaska environment. Today's NYO Games Alaska carries on in this spirit by encouraging young people to strive for their personal best while helping and supporting their teammates—and even other teams.

Today's world is very different than when these games originated, but the skills and values they instill are just as important now as they were then.

## **HOST**

Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc. (CITC) is proud to host NYO Games in cooperation with communities throughout the state, as has been our practice since 1986. CITC looks forward to continuing the tradition of celebrating the rich cultural history of Alaska through Native sports.

CITC provides the following services in production of the NYO Games: scheduling and renting site venues; fundraising; budget development and management; staff and volunteer services in the planning and production of the Games; partnership with the Junior NYO Games Alaska and Senior NYO Games Alaska and Games Advisory Committees; preparation and administration of team and participant registration; information dissemination to participating communities and the general public; production of the NYO Games Alaska Manuals; and maintenance of Games records.

# 2025 Sr. GAMES

ALASKA AIRLINES CENTER, UAA CAMPUS | ANCHORAGE | APRIL 24–26



NYO is a year-round program that has a quantifiable positive impact on more than 2,000 youth each year.

In a survey emphasizing NYO's impact, 316 NYO athletes in grades 7–12 who competed in the 2024 Sr. Games offered the following insight:

- **87%** credited NYO as an incentive to stay in school.
- **60%** improved or maintained good grades in order to continue participation in NYO games.
- **100%** improved an element of their health through participation.
- **85%** see themselves as a role-model for future NYO athletes
- **94%** learned more about Alaska Native culture and values
- **97%** developed new friendships with other athletes, coaches, and teachers
- **53%** indicated they practice 4 or more hours per week



NYO Games Alaska &  
Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc.



CITCAAlaska



CITCAAlaska &  
NYOGamesAK

## THURSDAY | APRIL 24

9 a.m.	Registration
10 a.m.	Coaches' meeting
11 a.m.	Cultural performance
11:30 a.m.	Opening Ceremonies
12:30 p.m.	Toe Kick & awards
2 p.m.	Wrist Carry & awards
4:30 p.m.	Alaskan High Kick & awards

## FRIDAY | APRIL 25

9 a.m.	Registration Coaches' meeting
9:30 a.m.	Scissor Broad Jump & awards
10 a.m.	Celebration of Graduates & Blanket Toss
11:30 a.m.	Eskimo Stick Pull & awards
12 p.m.	Academic Excellence awards & NYO
2:30 p.m.	Academic Scholarship award
2:45 p.m.	One-hand Reach & awards
4:30 p.m.	Two-foot High Kick & awards

## SATURDAY | APRIL 26

9 a.m.	Registration
9:30 a.m.	Coaches' meeting
10 a.m.	Kneel Jump & awards
11:30 a.m.	Indian Stick Pull & awards
1 p.m.	One-foot High Kick & awards
3:30 p.m.	Seal Hop & awards
5 p.m.	Closing Ceremonies & awards

FREE PARKING IN DESIGNATED LOTS

Dates and times are subject to change; timing of each event is estimated and dictated by length of individual contests  
For more information, visit [nyogames.com](https://nyogames.com)



# QUOTES

“I have learned that these are not just sport games, but truly an important aspect of our culture and the survival of our ancestors. I’m so grateful for this opportunity to share in even just a little bit of what they went through and experienced.”

**ATHLETE QUOTE FROM THE  
2024 NYO ATHLETE SURVEY**

Traditionally, these games were done at gatherings and celebrations, in the homes of family members. Providing NYO equipment kits to communities breaks down barriers and allows us to share our culture, traditions, and history, even with youth who aren’t Alaska Native.

**ADELE VILLA, NYO COORDINATOR**

NYO has been so different than my other experiences with sports. You’re competing on your own, but you’re also with your team. Your win is everyone’s win.

**MIA ANDERSON, 2022 SNYO ATHLETE &  
WINNER OF NYO SCHOLARSHIP**

# NEWSWORTHY NOTES

## HONORING INDIGENOUS CULTURE

To better reflect the cultural influences that brought us two NYO Games events, the “Eskimo Stick Pull” and “Indian Stick Pull” have been renamed. Traditionally used as practice for pulling seals from the ice, the Eskimo Stick Pull is now the **Inuit Stick Pull**. Meanwhile, the former Indian Stick Pull will be known as the **Dene Stick Pull**. This event represents grabbing a slippery salmon, and was used traditionally to develop hand and arm strength.

“The name changes align with the Indigenous groups from which these games originated: the Inuit and Dene peoples,” said NYO Head Official Nicole Johnson. “This reflects a broader movement toward recognizing and honoring Indigenous communities and ensuring their cultural traditions are properly represented.”



The Dene Stick Pull--formerly the “Indian Stick Pull”--is an event exclusively played at the Senior NYO Games.

# JNYO VS SNYO

Junior NYO (JNYO) is where it all starts! During this event, student athletes in grades 1 - 8 are introduced to the Games. At this time, young athletes are beginning to develop their character; including them in the Games provides them with exposure to the values of NYO Games, such as teamwork, cross-cultural understanding, and respect.

Through JNYO, young athletes learn the proper form and develop their abilities for each event, many of which use different muscles groups and disciplines than other, Western sports.

Once students are old enough to participate in Senior NYO (SNYO), previous participation in JNYO can be very beneficial; JNYO athletes have a connection and familiarity with the games that helps them easily transition to the Senior event.

## JNYO

Athletes: Students in grades 1-8

JNYO teams allow 2 boys and 2 girls per event, per team.

JNYO brings in an average of 650 athletes each year.

## SNYO

Athletes: Students in grades 7-12, or in a GED program. Max age 19.

SNYO teams are allowed 1 boy and 1 girl, per event, per team.

SNYO brings in an average of 420 athletes each year.

### JNYO Events

- Alaskan High Kick
- One-Foot High Kick
- Two-Foot High Kick
- Kneel Jump
- Arm Pull
- Scissor Broad Jump
- Inuit/Eskimo Stick Pull
- Wrist Carry
- Seal Hop

### SNYO Events

- Alaskan High Kick
- Dene/Indian Stick Pull
- Inuit/Eskimo Stick Pull
- Kneel Jump
- One-Foot High Kick
- One-Hand Reach
- Seal Hop
- Scissor Broad Jump
- Toe Kick
- Two-Foot High Kick
- Wrist Carry

# A LASTING IMPACT

## 2024 SENIOR NYO SURVEY RESULTS

NYO influences our young people to improve academic performance and strengthen overall health and well-being; the Games instill important values, including leadership and respect—values that make strong communities and build tomorrow's leaders.

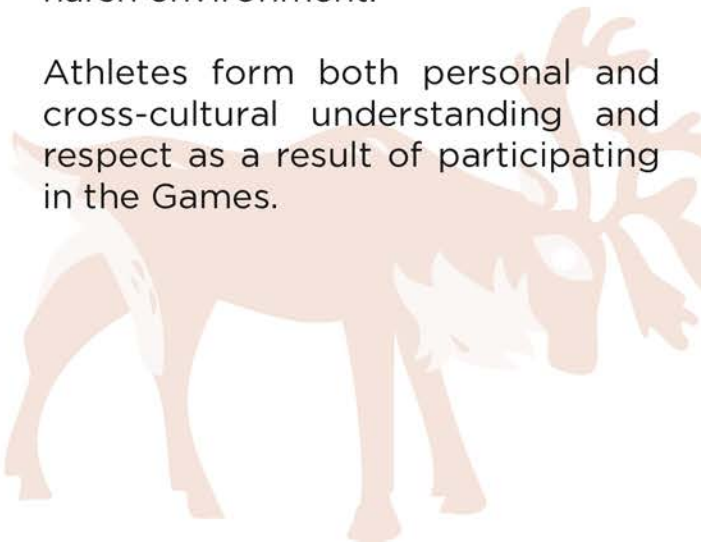
In 2024, 316 athletes completed the annual NYO Impact Survey, a tool that assessed the impact of the Games among student athletes in grades 7-12.

- 87% of students surveyed credited NYO as an incentive to stay in school
- 64% developed a greater appreciation of Alaska Native culture
- 85% see themselves as a role-model for future NYO athletes
- 97% developed new friendships among athletes, coaches, and teachers
- 100% improved an element of their health through NYO participation
- 60% credited NYO with helping them improve their grades

## CULTURAL TIES

NYO Games Alaska is a celebration of Alaska Native values and culture. Each event is based on a traditional subsistence skill that was crucial to survival in Alaska's harsh environment.

Athletes form both personal and cross-cultural understanding and respect as a result of participating in the Games.



## CONNECTION

NYO Games Alaska seeks to create stronger, healthier communities built on traditional values. The Games are open to students from all backgrounds and promotes cross-cultural understanding and respect, fostering statewide relationships and connections.

Athletes and coaches from around the state spend three days encouraging each other and competing together.

NYO Games Alaska hopes to connect young people with Alaska Native culture, with their community, and most importantly, with the belief that with hard work and consistency, they can achieve their endless potential.

## 20 YEARS OF NYO: HEAD OFFICIAL NICOLE JOHNSON

At last year's NYO Games closing ceremony, athletes, volunteers, and fellow officials honored Nicole Johnson for 20 years of NYO service.

A former NYO athlete herself, Nicole set the world record for the women's Two-Foot High Kick in 1989. Later, she became a dedicated volunteer, then become the head NYO official and an ambassador for the Games, traveling throughout the state to teach young people about Alaska Native traditional games.



In 2017, Nicole was inducted into the Alaska Sports Hall of Fame for her role as a champion—not just in competition, but as an ambassador and mentor to other athletes.

“NYO is one big family, and once you have become part of that family, it just grows,” she said. “Kids who participate in traditional Native games create that sense of family and community. That’s really special.”

# EVENTS & THEIR HISTORY

Origins for NYO's competitive events were collected by University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) students during an internship with CITC. We recognize there are a variety of origins for each game among Alaska's indigenous peoples. These histories reflect the traditional knowledge of the individuals interviewed.



## INUIT/ESKIMO STICK PULL

Glen Solomon of Anaktuvik Pass shares that this game is practice for pulling seals out of the ice.

## DENE/INDIAN STICK PULL

Brian Walker of Anvik, former Team Alaska Dene coach, shares that this game represents grabbing a slippery salmon. It develops hand and arm strength.

## ONE-FOOT HIGH KICK

Barbara Fratis of Barrow remembers stories of the One-Foot High Kick signaling a successful hunt.

## ALASKAN HIGH KICK

Nicole Johnson of Nome, NYO athlete, coach, and official, shares that the Alaskan High Kick was played inside during the winter to help develop coordination, upper body strength, and concentration.





## TWO-FOOT HIGH KICK

Elders report that the Two-Foot High Kick was done to communicate a successful or unsuccessful catch after hunting in the spring.



## SCISSOR BROAD JUMP

Paul J. Paul of Kipnuk shares that the Scissor Broad Jump is a game used to keep warm and to practice the balance needed when jumping on ice.



## ONE-HAND REACH

Nicole Johnson shares that the One-Hand Reach was a game played during the long cold winter months, inside to help keep you in shape, and worked on balance, agility, and coordination.



## SEAL HOP

Phillip Blanchett, originally of Bethel, has played, coached, and officiated NYO games; he explains that the Seal Hop is a variation of the Inuit Knuckle Hop. This is a game of endurance and stamina and represents sneaking up on a seal on the ice.



## WRIST CARRY

Donna Elliot of Bethel, a long-time NYO participant and official, says the Wrist Carry shows the significance of a successful hunt, traditionally tests the strength and endurance of hunters, and shows appreciation for the animal giving itself.

## KNEEL JUMP

Terenty Fratis of Barrow recalls the Kneel Jump was designed to strengthen the leg muscles for jumping from ice to ice and also for lifting dead animals when hunting.



## TOE KICK

Reintroduced in 2024, the Toe Kick is a game used to keep warm and strengthen balance when hopping over ice floes.

# ABOUT NYO GAMES ALASKA

## ORIGINS

The first NYO Games were held in the winter of 1971 and were conceived and organized by students attending the Boarding Home Program School in Anchorage. In the first year of competition, 12 schools participated, with student athletes traveling from Sitka and Nome. Since then, the number of athletes and enthusiasm surrounding the Games have increased as NYO Games Alaska received state and national recognition.

Alaska Native people developed traditional contests to hone abilities crucial to everyday life. The creators of the NYO Games wanted to demonstrate these skills and preserve the traditional contests and culture of their ancestors. This vision is now witnessed by people worldwide, thanks to the involvement of many dedicated student athletes, coaches, volunteers, and the support of generous corporate sponsors and individual donors.



## KEEPING TRADITIONS ALIVE

When our ancestors had successful hunting or fishing trips, they would return to their village to share how and where they succeeded. Survival depended on their willingness to help each other.

Today, athletes competing in NYO carry on the tradition of sharing their knowledge with teammates and others. In an event more about achieving a personal best more than beating the competition, the Native Games are the only sporting event in the world where competing athletes help each other to be successful in the Games and in life.

continued



Nicole Johnson competes in the One-Foot High Kick.  
Photo Courtesy of the Associated Press

## THE GAMES TODAY

Today, the Games ensure that Alaskan youth of all backgrounds learn essential skills for traditional Alaskan subsistence activities that still occur today. Both JNYO and SNYO bring together athletes to compete against their peers, but most importantly, to compete against who they were yesterday.



NYO celebrates Alaska Native culture through traditional games and other cultural activities.

# NYO Games Instructional Videos



Learn the step-by-step rules of each NYO Games event with our instructional videos, available on Youtube at [tinyurl.com/2m72vxt](https://tinyurl.com/2m72vxt).

# FAQ

## **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORLD ESKIMO-INDIAN OLYMPICS (WEIO) AND NYO GAMES ALASKA?**

WEIO participants must be at least 1/16th Alaska Native, American Indian, US Pacific Islander, Canadian First Nations, Indigenous Greenlandic, or Indigenous Siberian. WEIO participants can be 12 years old or older. While both WEIO and NYO host similar events, the participants, number, and type of events may differ.

## **WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?**

Students of all traditions and backgrounds may participate in the NYO Games Alaska; they do not need to be of Alaska Native descent.

JNYO Games: Students in grades 1-8 can compete in the statewide JNYO Games.

SNYO Games: students in grades 7-12, or who are currently enrolled in a GED program (max. age 19), can compete in the statewide SNYO Games.

## **HOW ARE EVENTS SCORED?**

An example of the NYO Scoresheets is available on page 23 of the NYO Handbook located at [nyogames.com/nyo-games/](https://nyogames.com/nyo-games/)

## **WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE?**

All athletes must be in good standing at their school/GED program. Teams that are not sponsored by their school or district must provide proof of enrollment in an accredited school or GED program.

## **IS THERE A LIST OF RECORD-HOLDERS FOR EACH EVENT?**

A list of the Statewide Records is available on page 24 of the NYO Handbook. [nyogames.com/nyo-games/](https://nyogames.com/nyo-games/)

## **ARE THERE INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN EACH EVENT?**

Yes. NYO Games Alaska provides both written and visual instructions for proper form and execution of each event. You can locate videos and written instructions at [nyogames.com/nyo-events](https://nyogames.com/nyo-events).

# CONTACTS & MEDIA ASSETS

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## WEBSITE

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## SOCIAL



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## OFFICIAL LOGO AND IMAGE USE

If you would like to obtain and use a copy of the NYO Games Alaska official logo, please reach out to [communications@citci.org](mailto:communications@citci.org).

Full-size images are available upon request. Photos are also provided on our social media pages. If you use images of the NYO Games provided by CITC/NYO Games Alaska, our preferred credit phrasing is "Photo courtesy of Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc."

For more information regarding NYO games played traditionally in your area, please contact the ANCSA regional corporation for your region.

For information regarding NYO Games Alaska, contact: NYO Games Alaska, Cook Inlet Tribal Council at (907) 793-3412 or email [nyo@citci.org](mailto:nyo@citci.org).

Last updated: April 2025