

Inuvialuit Piuyausiq

NORTHERN GAMES YOUTH COLLABORATION





Inuvialuit Piuyausiq won the 2022 AIP \$100,000 Youth Prize.

The Arctic Inspiration Prize is the largest annual prize in Canada. It inspires, enables, and celebrates the achievements of the people of the North, recognizing diverse teams with innovative projects in the fields of education; health and wellbeing; culture, arts and language; science and traditional knowledge; climate change; food security; and the economy.

Nominator: Erwin Elias
Mayor, Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk

Team: Tamara Voudrach (Team Lead), Donald Kuptana, Agnes Krengnektak, Nathan Kuptana, Gerry Kisoun

This report was compiled and created by the **Qatalyst Research Group**, with the help of Peggy Jay, the project team, and AIP.

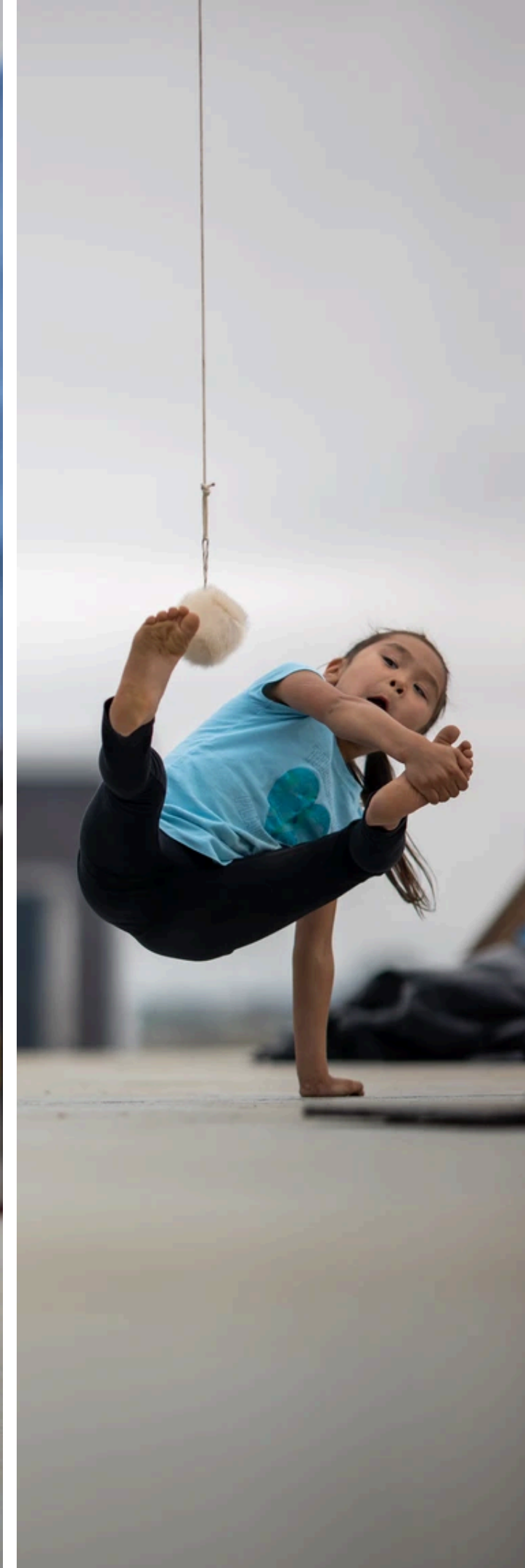


Inuvialuit Piuyausiq Northern Games Youth Collaboration

The Inuvialuit Piuyausiq Northern Games Youth Collaboration project was imagined and designed by Inuvialuit youth in Tuktoyaktuk to promote healthy activities and support mental health and cultural connectivity.

The AIP funding was secured to help the youth group ('collaborative') work as a team to plan, schedule and volunteer to host a Northern Games youth development event in Tuk. The development events were intended to prepare youth to participate in and support a larger Circumpolar Northern Games in Inuvik.

The Northern Games Society, a not-for-profit organization, supported the youth in organizing the event. The organization was created in 1970 and works to preserve, support, and teach the cultural practices of Inuit and Inuvialuit in the circumpolar region.



Inuvialuit Piuyausiat Youth Northern Games

The development camp was meant to prepare youth to support and participate in the larger Northern Games event in Inuvik in 2023. However, because the games were postponed that year, the project evolved into a full-fledged youth-focused Northern Games.

Before the preparations for the Youth Northern Games in Tuktoyaktuk, youth learned about the importance of the Northern Games in celebrating circumpolar excellence, and how to participate in each event.

The Northern Games began in 1970 as a way to bring Arctic residents together to celebrate connection, culture, sportsmanship, personal growth, and understand the historical context of what each event represents.

The documentary short Northern Games, from 1981, depicts the traditional games of the Inuit as they were practiced 800km north of the Arctic Circle by youth in competition from communities across the North. View the documentary [here](#).



**"In the spirit of the
Northern Games
and our Elders that
walked before us,
we promise to
compete with the
best of intentions
and sportsmanship
and to help others
that need the
support."**

Participants' Oath



Preparing for Inuvialuit Piuyaasiat

To prepare for the Youth Northern Games in Tuktoyaktuk, youth volunteered to:

- Recruit other youth from surrounding communities
- Spread the message
- Conduct interviews (for Ugavut TV)
- Officiate and run events
- Mentor younger youth
- Coach other athletes
- Build infrastructure for the events

Northern Games Society members helped build structures, direct youth, and organize food vendors.

“...We had a lot of volunteers. So some of the older youth would volunteer. They were mentoring the younger youth. They were jumping from different volunteer stations. It was a good experience to see what it takes to run the Games. The organizers who have been doing this for decades won't be able to do it forever, so the youth need to take on that mantle, take on the responsibility and feel ownership.”

Tamara Voudrach



Celebrating the Diversity of the Arctic

The most inclusive and diverse youth games, Inuvialuit Piuyauiat, took place in Tuktoyaktuk from July 19th to the 24th, 2023.

- About 140 youth from 10 communities registered for the event, including representatives from Paulatuk, Ulukhaktok, Sachs Harbour, Inuvik, Aklavik, Yukon Tagish, Fort Good Hope.
- 98 youth participated in competitions, including 53 female athletes and 1 non-binary person.
- There was at least one female woman, girl, or 2SLGBTQI+ person from each community, and up to 16 women, girls, or 2SLGBTQI+ athletes from a single community.

Youth all played together without being separated by sex, and they all celebrated each other's accomplishments and personal victories. The atmosphere was warm, welcoming, and exciting.



NORTHERN GAMES SOCIETY PRESENTS

Inuvialuit Piuyaustiat

A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT EVENT



OFFICIAL PROGRAM

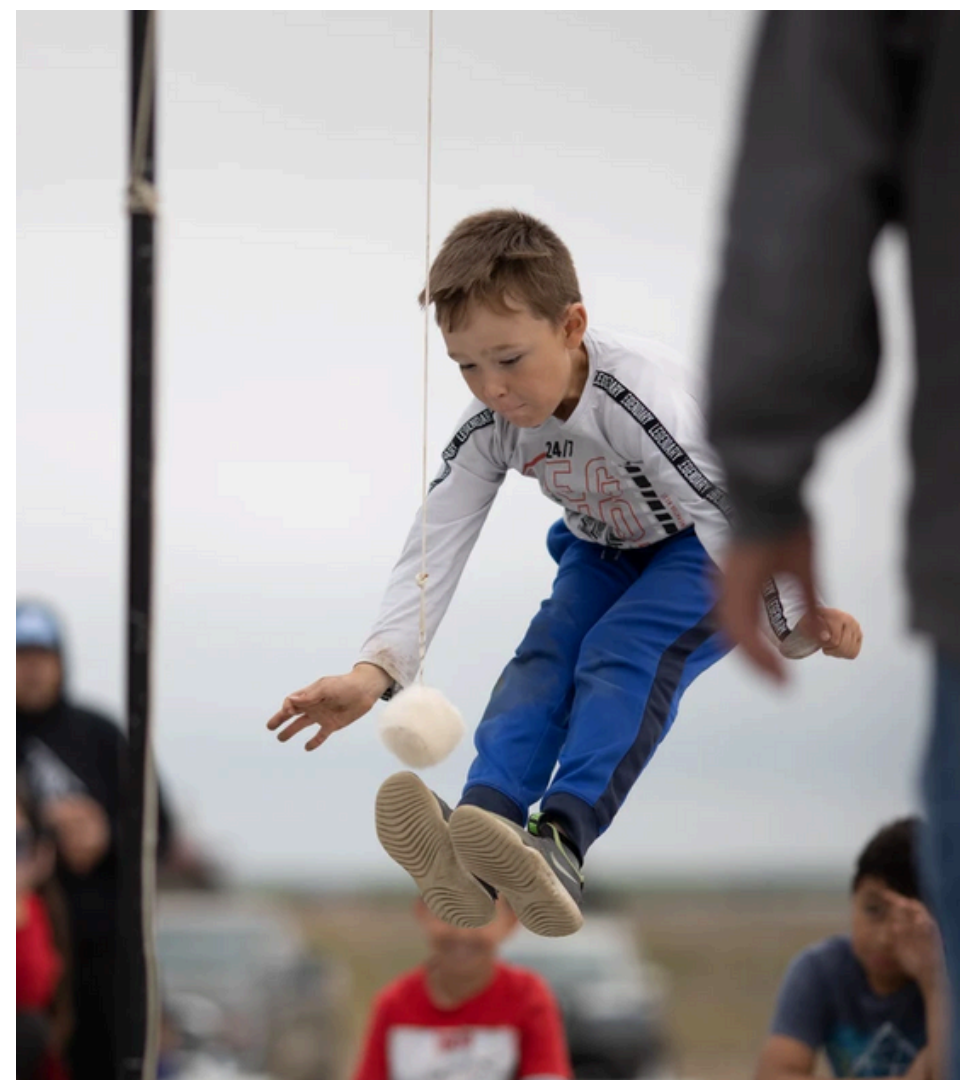
Tuktuuyaqtuuq July 19-24, 2023

The Games

Over 2,500 people were at the games in person, including parents, community members, local leadership, Senator Margaret Dawn Anderson, and many tourists. Another 10,000 spectators enjoyed the games through live streams, radio broadcasts, and other online media.

Each day was filled with good food, sporting events, traditional events, additional activities such as bingo, musical performances, and a talent show, traditional northern games demos, blanket toss, and lots of dancing.



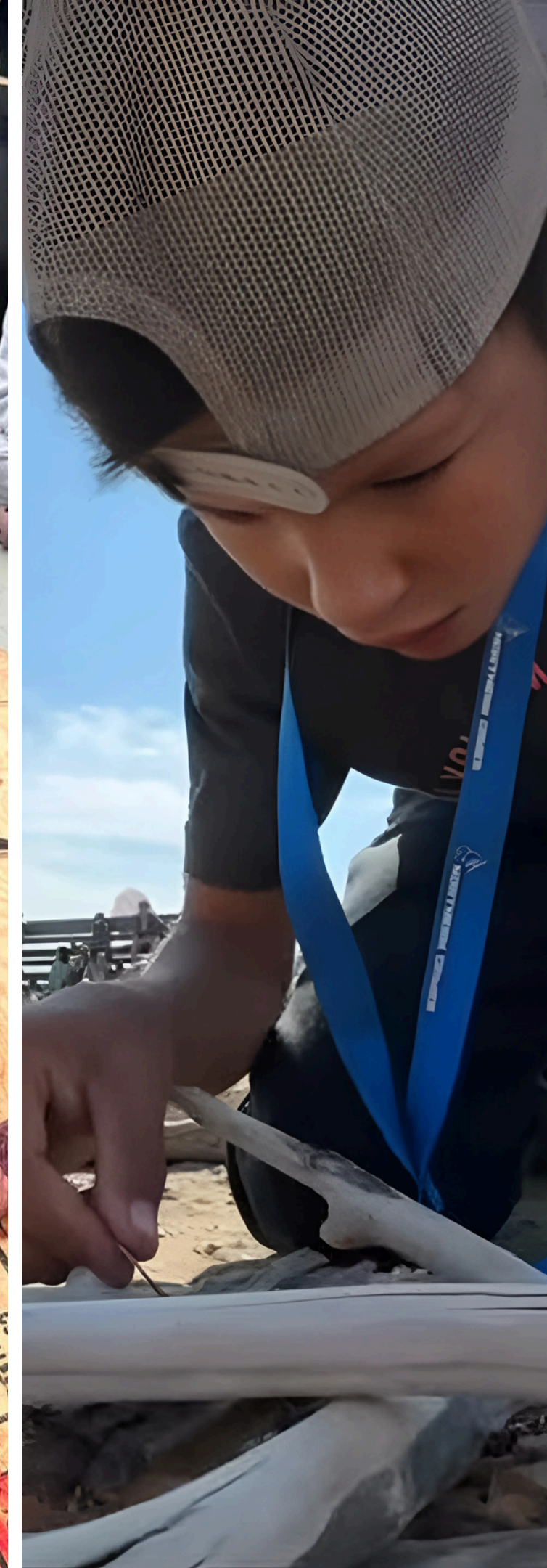
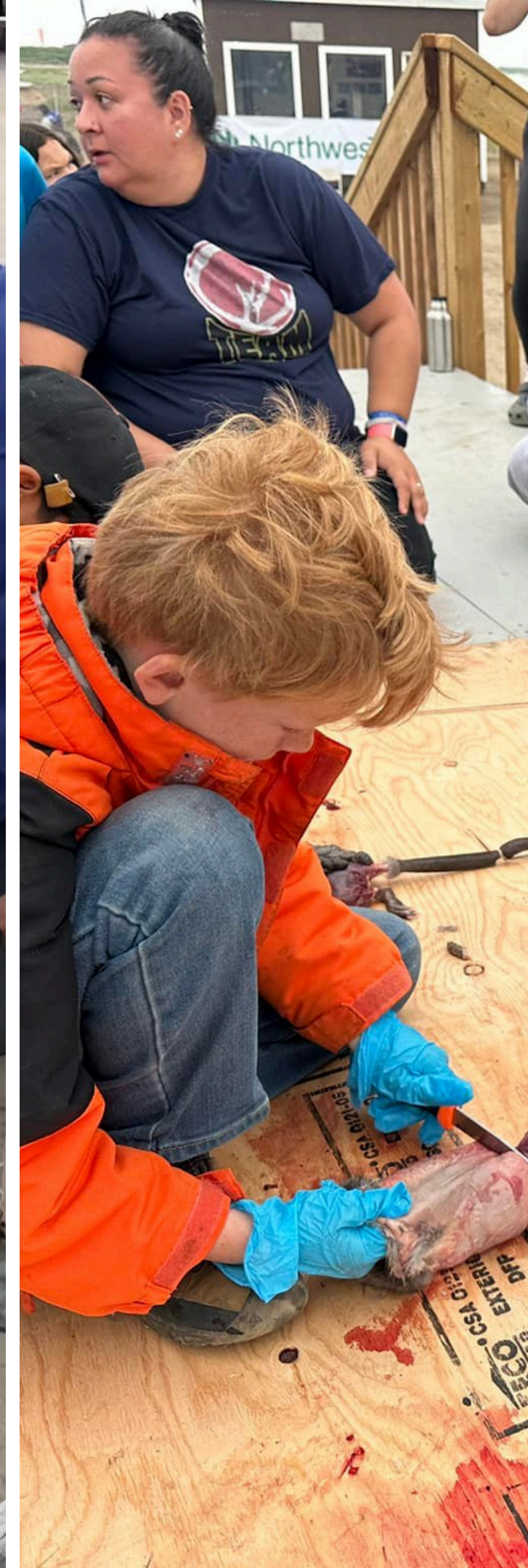


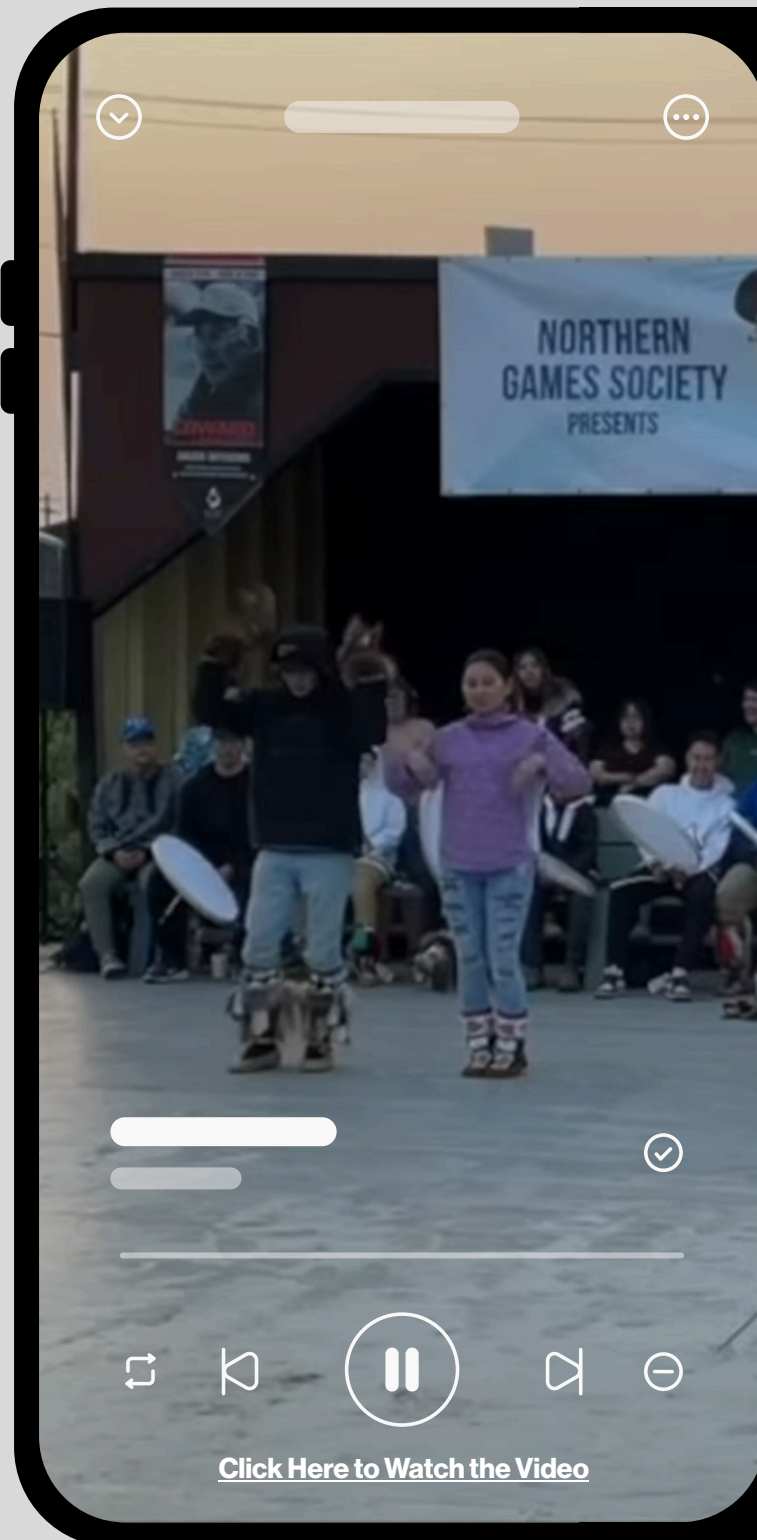
More Than Games - Intergenerational Connection

The Good Man and Good Woman events were one of the highlights of the Youth Northern Games.

The intergenerational competition pairs youth and Elders, preparing harvested animals as traditional food for fellow competitors. Youth worked together and fed their fellow athletes and community members by skinning muskrats, skinning seals, plucking geese, filleting fish, making tea, and cooking bannock.

Many youth took on leadership roles in these events, which made the Elders very proud. Some youth had never participated in these types of traditional activities before, and were able to embrace this aspect of their culture for the first time, with the help of knowledgeable Elders.





Winners of the Good Man and Good Woman competition, Colton and Tianna Gordon Ruben, embodied the spirit of the games by demonstrating their leadership skills as individuals, parents of young children, and by providing a model of a healthy relationship.

Northern Games Society “power couple” Donald and Lucy Kuptana also modelled healthy relationships to youth and demonstrated how the love they have for their community can grow from love and trust between two strong individuals.



Connection to Cultural Traditions

Everything about the Northern Games connects participants and spectators to the historical cultural traditions of circumpolar people.

The Inuvialuit Piuyausiat highlighted the cultural values of the Games and the processes used to hold the event. With traditional bands, music, dancing, and drum dancing on display, youth were able to ask questions and hear stories.

From the head pull to seal-skinning, each event showcased the ways that circumpolar peoples have been surviving and thriving in such a unique part of the world. Traditional shoes and clothing were worn by participants and spectators, traditional foods like muktuk, tea, and bannock were prepared, and attendees had the opportunity to listen to traditional drumming and participate or watch traditional dances like the drum dance, and old-time dance.

Youth Ambassadors

Youth took on leadership roles by speaking to and interviewing tourists, athletes, and community members.

IsumaTV hosts Miley and Kiara asked interviewees about the importance of the Arctic Games and what the games mean to those attending.

For the full IsumaTV episode, please click [here](#).

**"...Everyone getting together
learning events together.
Camaraderie, spending time with
each other, making new friends,
meeting new people."**

**Colton Gordon-Ruben, Athlete on
his favourite thing about the Games.**



Skill Building & Knowledge Transfer

Those who have been running the games for years were able to pass down their knowledge so that youth built a sense of ownership and responsibility. Older volunteers help mentor younger volunteers with cooking, harvesting, organizing, managing, and even officiating.

Inuvialuit Piuyauiq participants took the knowledge they gained back to their home communities, encouraging volunteerism, and helping at other events.

Youth from Paulatuk arrived at the 2024 Northern Games in Inuvik a few days early for events and volunteered their time with the organizers. They had made connections at the Youth Games and were familiar with the work that needed to be done. They had developed relationships at Inuvialuit Piuyauiq and had respect for and from Elders and other Northern Games Society members.





Youth Participants at the Inuvik Northern Games in 2024

Of the 140 youth who had participated in the Inuvialuit Piuyauiat games, approximately 85-90% arrived in Inuvik in 2024 to participate. Northern Games Society members who were at the Youth Northern Games commented on the growth youth had developed over the previous year. Youth honed their skills at home, practicing with friends, using the knowledge they gained at Inuvialuit Piuyauiat and showcased that talent in Inuvik.

“So one year later... when we had our Summer Games this summer [2024 in Inuvik], a lot of those youth came back and competed in the adult games, the Northern Games.”

Lucy Kuptana



“...Out of the 140 youth that took part in the Inuvialuit Piuyausiat games, about 85% to 90% of those youth came to the next Northern Games [in 2024 in Inuvik]. You could see the amount of growth these youth developed over the year. They were showcasing their natural individual talent to the games. They took these games home and practiced with their friends.”

Photo of Emerson Stefure, Quote from Donald Kuptana

2023 Youth Northern Games Event Sponsors

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