

## **Background:**

During the winter months of heavy snow and cold weather, Native Americans (Iroquois, Sioux, Oneida) amused themselves with racing contests involving wooden snow snakes. This tradition dates back over 500 years.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snow\\_snake](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snow_snake)

A snow snake is a long straight piece of wood carved to resemble a snake. The Indians would throw this snow snake down a long trough made of snow and ice. The Indian who threw the snow snake the farthest was the winner. The game inspired great competitions among the tribes and gave the Indians some of the basic skills they needed to survive in the wilderness. It has been reported that some Indians could throw their snow snakes as far as a mile down the iced track.

Before you can play this old Indian game, you must make a snow snake. Carve your piece of wood into a shape similar to the one in the illustration below. Round the bottom corners. If the head is *too high* the snake will roll over when tossed. Make sure it is not top-heavy.

Use your imagination to make unique heads. Put upholstery tacks in for the eyes. Paint your snake with Indian designs and, last of all varnish or clear coat the wood.

## **How We Do It:**

Instead of a trough, we race down the sledding hill at Camp Storer. The snakes are not thrown, just allowed to slide down under gravity. We will do our best to create a starting trough in the snow – but it is dependent on weather and environment. Unlike the pinewood derby – there is a low degree of repeatability with this contest – luck and environment plays a big factor, so no whining. Each snake will race once for maximum distance. There will be medals for first, second and third place for distance and design. This year we will be experimenting with a custom built steam-punk-esque snow snake kicker. It is unproven (but looks awesome), so we'll just have to see how it goes.

## **Materials:**

The wood is typically cut by saw (some hardware stores will cut it for you); the curve at the bottom can be carved, sanded or routed. A standard 2x3 or 2x4 is ideal and easy to work with.

Build Details: (make sure the wood is softwood if you plan on carving); 1 ½" to 3 1/2" wide, 1 ½" high, and 3½' to 4½' long (extra length is for the head); glue (to attach the head to the body); Router/Sander/Sandpaper for shaping and smoothing; paint (spray paint works well for a base coat), paint brush; 2 round-head upholstery tacks or stickers, polyurethane clear coat to seal the snake after decorating. Be sure to clear coat the snake – it will get wet.

## **Regulations:**

- The snow snake must be made of wood.
- Regulation size is 4 ½' maximum length, 3 ½ ' minimum length; 3 1/2" maximum width; 1 to 1 ½" body height, and 1" head height. The minimum head radius is 6" so as not to present a point (about as pointed as child's mitten)
- The snow snake must be similar in shape to the one shown below. Spears, modified skis or pointed sticks are not allowed.
- The snow snake must be painted, waxed or sealed in some way.
- Any kind of wax, ice, snow may be added to the snow snake.
- There are no restrictions on weight, HOWEVER it should be in the range that can be easily carried by a child. Use of depleted Uranium slugs as weight is not recommended.

- Runners are not allowed on the snow snake – the bottom should be flat, or slightly tapered or rounded, without channels or runners.
- This is a **parent-child project** - both should be involved in making the snow snake. Remember, the fun is in the building and the running of the snakes, and the trophy is particularly unattractive for this event.

The Snow Snake Master and Senior Council Members present have the sole right to determine if a snake meets the regulations. Snakes from previous years that otherwise meet the rules are allowed to enter **if they have not won in a previous year**; but should be repainted or reworked for the season, in the spirit of parent-child activity time.

