

MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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Iditarod Air Force

By Linda Fenton

Besides the dogs and mushers, the Iditarod has many moving parts that need to be coordinated. The Iditarod Air Force (IAF) is one of the pieces of the puzzle that make the race great. Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) recently released an 18 minute mini documentary highlighting the pilots and staff of the Iditarod Air Force.

Take 18 minutes of your time to view the video and see if you can use it in your classroom. Upper elementary, middle school, and high school students will learn facts about aviation and how it is interwoven into the Iditarod.

What's the IAF All About? [Watch to find out!](#)





Even with all the fanfare and celebration as the winner of the Red Lantern "Last Musher In" award that year, Red couldn't shake the nagging feeling that there needed to be more than a line in the snow for a finish marker.

October Teaching Ideas

by Heidi Sloan

Lessons on the Burled Arch in Nome

This reading includes the history of the finish line to the Iditarod in Nome, the famed Burled Arch. You could use these articles with your students for comparing and contrasting the look and creation of the arches so far in Iditarod history.

[Lesson on the Burled Arch](#)

STEAM Project with the Burled Arch

This lesson can give your students a great lesson in solving a problem, creativity, and collaboration as they continue their learning about the burled arch in Nome, then build it out of rolled newspapers!

[Primary Source](#)



Red Fox Olson and Howard Farley watch as the burled arch is finally placed at the finish line in Nome, 1975.

Photo and Quote from:
Iditarod, The First Ten Years



If You Mush Know

by Lynne Witte

How do dogs train if there is no snow?

What no snow? Time to get out the wheeled bikes, scooter, 3 or 4 wheeled carts, ATV, and side by sides. These are options depending on the number of dogs in the team to train. Training with no snow but possibly mud and water are options with wheeled rigs/equipment. This is called dryland mushing.

Dryland is a way to get the dogs in physical shape at the beginning of the season or to maintain exercise year around when temperatures are cool enough. The dogs and mushers work together on their sled running routines. It is way for mushers without snow to have the dogs running in teams, building strength, and ready to go when it snows. The mushers often run the same trails as they will when the trails turn white.

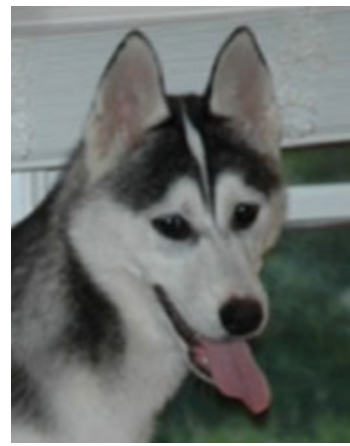
It is becoming popular to host training events and races together using these dryland rigs. What an exciting way to run with the dogs when snow is not yet here.

Dryland mushing is a safe fun way to train dogs and strengthen the bond between the dogs and the musher.



Artwork by Jon VanZyle

**K9 Journalist Corne
by Gypsy**



Dear Friends,

Did you know that the finish line of the Iditarod in Nome, the famed Burlled Arch, cracked and broke after the 2024 Iditarod? People who love the race have been donating money so that a new arch can be crafted and finished to be ready the first week of March, 2025! What is burlled wood, anyway? It is where the tree's grain got distorted in its growth over time, resulting in a large, round growth on the side. When the tree is sliced, or cut, the burl makes beautiful patterns. Will the craftsmen be able to find another burlled tree to use for the new arch? Stay tuned.

Our Iditarod race follows much of the same trail to Nome that another, more desperate race followed in 1925. This time, dog teams were racing, not to reach the burlled arch and prize money, but to carry life-saving serum, or medicine, to very sick children in Nome, dying of the disease diphtheria. Brave men and dogs carried the serum bottles, wrapped in skins and blankets to protect it from freezing, on sleds. The men ran a relay, passing the serum to the next man along the trail. The serum would often be warmed inside before they took off again. Severely cold temperatures, blizzards, and poor communication affected the mushers as they frantically tried to save the sick children in Nome. Once, in a wicked wind and snowstorm, final musher Gunnar Kaasen's sled tipped over. When he got his dogs ready to go again and righted the sled, he discovered that the serum had fallen off!! He reached and blindly dug through the snow to find the important medicine!

When the dog team of Gunnar Kaasen ran into Nome at 5:30 am, there were no cheering crowds like today to greet the arriving mushers. No one in Nome, the mayor, doctor, nurses, families, expected the serum to arrive that quickly, 127.5 hours over 674 miles! The most important "win" was that lives were saved with the medicine.

This same trail run by these brave mushers and dogs is where our teams run the Iditarod today, preserving the trail and celebrating the Alaskan sled dogs!

Until next time,
Gypsy



Paws and Get Ready!

Check out some of the exciting plans for the month of October from Maggie Hamilton, 2025 Teacher on the Trail™.



Maggie Hamilton, the 2025 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™

Paws and Get Ready!



A Classroom Without Walls: The lesson this month introduces a way to use the Iditarod race when covering maps and directions. This social studies lesson focuses on cardinal directions and relative location. While it is targeted toward the lower grade levels, it could be a great review for upper elementary students.

More to Discover: Find out more about the early days of the race, one of the most important volunteer positions - veterinarians, and how mushers are training in October. Plus you can learn more about how I am using the race in my school and classroom!

CLICK [HERE](#) TO FIND ALL OF MAGGIE'S LESSONS!



Serum Expired!

Dr. Curtis Welch had arrived in Alaska in 1907. The last thing the 50 year old physician wanted to deal with was an epidemic. So during the summer of 1924 when he realized that his supply of diphtheria anti-toxin was not only running short, it was expired, he placed an order for more units with the public health commission in Juneau.

The Alameda, the final ship of the season, dropped anchor in a sheltered stretch of water a mile and a half from shore. She was loaded from stem to stern with supplies to sustain residents of the Seward peninsula through the winter of 1924-25.

As Welch and his nurses unpacked and inventoried the newly arrived supplies, one item was never located. The anti-toxin had been ordered but it didn't arrive. This didn't worry Dr. Welch. In his 18 years of practice on the Seward Peninsula, he'd never seen or diagnosed a case of diphtheria. Severe sore throats that he had seen had always turned out to be something less serious.

With the supplies unloaded and the last passengers boarded, the Alameda departed. All of Nome settled in for the long winter ahead. Somewhere in the Nome hospital were a few units of expired diphtheria anti-toxin.

Cousins, Gay Salisbury and Laney Salisbury, have created an astounding in-depth account of the diphtheria outbreak and all the events that transpired to save the children in Nome. Facts in this story come from a number of sources including *The Cruellest Miles* by the Salisbury cousins.

The full Eye on the Trail: Serum Expired story can be found at this link: [Serum Expired!](#)

Create! Send! Be an important part of the Iditarod!

- Provide your students with an opportunity to be involved in a service learning project. You can't always be somewhere 'physically', but what you can do is help to create an environment for this exciting event. Be with us through your students' art and creative endeavors.
- Remember, keep your design SIMPLE for inexpensive mailing and ease of set up at the banquet. Easy, ready to go, freestanding designs will be best. Designs that are complicated or will require multiple steps in setting up on the tables, or extra volunteer time to help set up, won't meet the criteria for this project.
- Centerpieces should not exceed 8" high by 10" wide and should be free standing. They should be ONE piece and should not require additional set up or building from banquet volunteers.

Submission Guidelines:

- Develop a concept and create an example in the form of a sketch, written explanation, model or digital image of your classroom's idea.
- Keep in mind shipping, ease of set up, size and theme.
- Email an example of your planned design and the information listed below to Linda Fenton at linda.fenton@iditarod.com

School Name

Educator Contact(s) name

Email Address

Grade level(s) participating

Phone Number

Number of centerpieces your students are able to make

- Participating classrooms will be asked to create up to 20 table decorations. However, a smaller or larger number will work, too.
- Participating classrooms will be responsible for providing all materials, packing and shipping costs.

Your classroom will enjoy the thrill of being a part of the Last Great Race on Earth® along with recognition at the musher banquet by having their creations on the tables.

Timeline:

November 8, 2024 – Idea and entry form email due

December 2, 2024 – Classrooms will have been contacted with the address of where to send

February 18, 2025 – Table decorations due in Alaska



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Dec. 2, 2024: [2026 TEACHER ON THE TRAIL™ APPLICATIONS](#) Due
- Nov. 8, 2024: Centerpiece Ideas
- Nov. 1, 2024: Trail Mail Art Contest Submissions
- Feb 18, 2025: Centerpieces Due in Anchorage
- Feb. 25-28, 2025: Iditarod™ EDU Winter Conference
- March 1, 2025: Ceremonial Start
- March 2, 2025: Start of 2025 Iditarod™
- June 24-26, 2025: Iditarod™ EDU Summer Conference in McCall, ID

Annual Iditarod Education Department Trail Mail Design Contest

Attention 5th – 12th Grade Artists, Teachers, & Parents:
It's time again for our student art contest
to create the 2025 Iditarod Trail Mail envelope design.

Get more information here:

[Trail Mail Design Contest](#)



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