

MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

NEWS & FEATURES

Teaching Ideas &
Photo of the Month
PAGE 2

Updates from the
Teacher on the Trail
PAGE 3

K9 Reporter: Sanka
PAGE 4

Husky Talk &
If You "Mush Know"
PAGE 6

Teaching With Insider
PAGE 7

Primary Source of the Month
PAGE 8

Visit Flat
PAGE 9

Iditarod Sleds
PAGE 10

Dates
PAGE 11



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Jim Lanier passes a derelict cabin on the trail into the Iditarod checkpoint on Friday, March 9th during the 2018 Iditarod Sled Dog Race

The Countdown is On!

BY JEN REITER

When the calendar turns the page to February, the countdown to the race start really gets going! Usually each year at this time my "to do" list is a mile long as I try to prepare for Iditarod Winter Conference presentations, prep my sub plans, and gather all of the materials and lessons my boys will need to be immersed in the race!

Obviously this year, things are quite different! I will truly miss seeing everyone in Anchorage this year, but there is something magical about actually being in a classroom during the excitement of the week leading up to the race start.

And, it will probably be no surprise to hear that my to do list is no shorter than normal. There are so many things to be thinking about:

- How to pick mushers to follow with some kids in person and some virtual?
- How to track the race with the new loop trail?
- What do we know about Flat, Alaska?
- How can I do my normal sled design challenge with all the protocols in place?

I encourage everyone to keep a close eye on the Iditarod EDU website. As the EDU team finds ways to answer these (and many other) challenges, we'll be posting lessons on the EDU Site.

I know that every teacher has their favorite way to have students pick mushers to follow. Heidi has listed some in her February Teaching Ideas article, and Jim posted how his class is doing it virtually this year. I've decided to go with a fantasy team/NFL Draft style pick for this year. If you are curious, you can check it out [HERE!](#)



"Their tails are high and tongues away - the twin banners of sled dog contentment."

~Cara Germani

February Teaching Ideas

HEIDI SLOAN

Math: [Rounding Numbers](#)

Though the trail to the finish will not be the same in 2021, this Iditarod rounding game is worth playing with students to review rounding numbers strategies. It works well as a small group center and could be adapted to virtual learning!

Language Arts: [Create Memes with the Iditarod](#)

Still teaching virtually or back in school? This meme writing activity could be just the thing to squeeze the Iditarod into your language arts writing curriculum and motivate reluctant writers or closet comedians to be creative with words!

STEM: [Forces of Flight](#)

In this lesson plan, students learn the forces of flight and can discover which apply to dog sleds!

Have Your Students Follow a Musher! Various Lesson Ideas

Students choosing mushers to root for on the trail is always a highlight! Here are some different ways some teachers have built connections with the students and mushers.

[Choose a Musher](#)

[Idita-Picks](#)

[Musher Playlists](#)

Tell the Story

The caption for this photo is: *Out of Business Iditarod Store*. Have the students write about what they think this building was like in its heyday. What did it sell? Who shopped here? What stories could this building tell? Click [HERE](#) for a larger photo.



Photo: Kim Slade

Updates from the EDU Trail

Checking in with our EDU Team to see what you can expect this month:

A Sneak Peek at the Upcoming January Teacher on the Trail Posts

Jim Deprez,
2021 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail

As you might have read already, I have deferred my Teacher on the Trail™ trail experience until the 2022 race, when this pandemic will be less of a threat to everyone's health and well-being. Because of this, I am very excited that I will have the opportunity to extend my posting for another year! I am looking forward to this as I have truly enjoyed sharing with all of you some of the things that I do in my classroom and have learned about the race itself. For the remainder of this year, I will be posting 2 times each month, so that I can continue with more posts in the following year. You can now expect my posts to come out on the 15th and 30th of each month through June. I plan to continue my "Moments with Musher" and "Classroom Connections" postings as those are the things that I feel us teachers find most interesting and useful in our classrooms.

Due to these changes, my reporting DURING the race itself will also look a little different this year. For the first time ever, and to make it more authentic for educational purposes, students will be active participants in my daily posts. They will be reporting what we are doing in class to follow the race and some of the things we are working on. In addition to my postings, recent Teacher on the Trail™ alumni have agreed to participate and share lessons they are doing with their students as well.

I am very excited about the prospects of everything and hope you will enjoy this different take on reporting from the trail this year. Here is what you can look forward to this month!

Moments With Musher: Training the Team

As we are now just one month away from the start of the race, teams are in full training mode. This got me thinking about how the training differs from team to team and if the training techniques have changed at all over time. With the advancement of technology, feeding regimens, and gear (to name a few), I imagined that they had, so I posed that very question to some of the mushers I spoke with. Check back on the 15th to see some of their responses.



Photo: Terrie Hanke

Classroom Connections: Virtual Field Trips

As teachers, we know there are plenty of things that have been difficult to deal with during this pandemic. However, there have been some upsides! ONE of the things that I have been doing more of this year is interactive, virtual field trips. There are so many things available out there that catch the interest of students to help teach about the Iditarod, history of mushing and even the dogs themselves! This month I will share some of these great resources and hope that you get to try these out with your students.



2019-2020 Virtual Trips:
Hanging with Matthew Failor
and Meeting Balto!
Photo: Jim Deprezha



Junior Iditarod History

by: Sanka



This February will mark the 44th running of the Jr. Iditarod. The Junior, just like the Iditarod, began as a dream. It was Joe Redington who dreamed of a long distance race across Alaska to commemorate the place of the sled dog in the history of Alaska and bring recognition to the Historic Iditarod Trail. It was Eric Beeman who dreamed of a distance race for young mushers to help prepare them for the “Big Iditarod.” Beeman shared his dream with his young mushing friends while on winter camping trips with their dogs. As the young mushers sat around the campfire listening to Eric’s idea of a junior sized Iditarod, the concept grew in their minds and took on energy.

The Iditarod was only a few years old and was taking enormous time and energy to stay alive. The folks working hard on the “big one,” had little if any time to lend to a junior race or to help the kids learn about distance racing. When the kids themselves brought Beeman’s dream to Joe Redington, he, like others, was intrigued and supportive of the idea and offered encouragement. The kids carried Joe’s words, “Go for it,” in their hearts as a blessing to continue the pursuit of their dream. With the help of parents and other mushing enthusiasts, Eric’s dream has developed into a first class junior mushing event. Seems to me that Joe Redington and Eric Beeman, both dreamers, must have been cut from the same cloth.

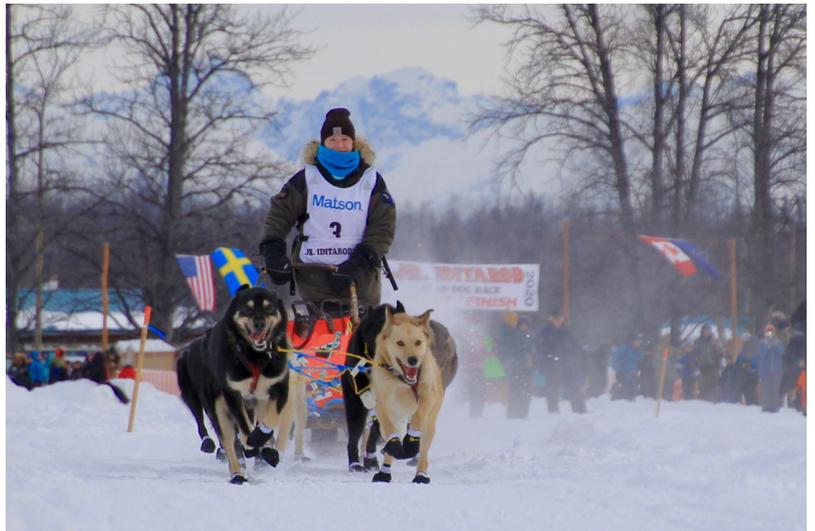
Five years after the inaugural Iditarod, the juniors had their own Iditarod. It looked quite different than the Jr. Iditarod known today. In 1978, the first year of the junior race, there were two divisions of mushers. The senior division contestants, ages 15 to 17, ran 10 dogs for a distance of 40 miles including an overnight camping layover at Nine Mile Hill. Incidentally, that was where Eric and friends were camped with their dog teams when he shared his dream of a distance race for young aspiring Iditarod mushers. The junior division, ages 11 to 14, ran 6 dogs for a distance of 18 miles in a one day event.

The next year the race was changed to only one division of ages 14 to 17 and ran 90 miles with a maximum of 10-dogs. For the past 35 years, the juniors have run a distance of about 150 miles. Generally the route now runs from Knik Lake out to Yentna Station where the teams take a required ten-hour rest plus the starting differential before heading to the finish line at Willow Lake.

Of the past Jr. Iditarod races, seven mushers have won in consecutive years. Winning three Jr. Iditarod races in a row was Tim Osmar – 82, 83 & 84. Back to back winners include Lance Barve in 85 & 86; Jared Jones in 89 & 90; Ramey Smyth in 92 & 93; Dusty Whittemore in 95 & 96, Ryan Redington in 99 & 2000 and Kevin Harper in 15 & 16. Books about the Jr. Iditarod are few and far between. Ted Wood tells Dusty Whittemore’s story in *Iditarod Dream*.

In the big picture, the boys have dominated the winner’s circle of the Jr. Iditarod with thirty-five championships while the girls have claimed nine victories. Comparing that to Iditarod’s list of female Champions, females (Christine Delia, Cali King, Ellie Claus, Nicole Osmar, Melissa Owens, Jessica Klejka, Merissa Osmar, Bailey Schaeffer and Anna Stephen) have won 20% of the Jr. Iditarod races while females (Libby Riddles with one win and Susan Butcher with 4 wins) have won only 10% of the “Big Ones.”

Of the forty plus Jr. Iditarod finishes, there have been a handful of close ones. In 1993 brothers, Ramey and Cim Smyth raced to the finish line with Ramey claiming the victory by just thirty-four seconds to defend his championship of the previous year. In 2001, thirty-four seconds was again the margin of victory as Tyrell Seavey sprinted beside his team to the finish line just ahead of Cali King.



Anna Coke Will Compete in the 2021 Junior Iditarod
photo: Terrie Hanke



Photo Finish
Photo: Terrie Hanke

Jr. Iditarod stories abound but one of my favorites is the finish of 2011. When 17 year old Jeremiah Klejka crossed the finish line; nobody was more surprised than he to realize that he'd just won the Jr. Iditarod. As Klejka dropped down onto Willow Lake and progressed to the finish banner on the other side of the lake, he was confused about the enthusiastic praise and shouts of congratulations people showered upon him – CONGRATULATIONS – WAY TO GO – YOU ROCK – GREAT JOB! Klejka thought the enthusiastic praise to be a bit much for a team finishing in third. What he didn't realize was that the two leaders out of Yentna, Conway Seavey and Merissa Osmar, took a wrong turn adding a few extra miles to their race.

Klejka ran a nice steady race thinking he was still behind them. It wasn't until he set his snow hook under the finish banner that he learned of their detour and his victory.



Jeremiah Klejka, Champ
Photo: Terrie Hanke

ACTIVITY: The Jr. Iditarod, with its smaller number, is an excellent tool to help students understand the concept of time differential. Students are forever asking how the winner can be the first musher to reach the finish line when they start at two-minute intervals. The answer applies to both the Jr. Iditarod and Iditarod. Time is added to the long required rest to compensate for the starting positions. There are twelve mushers participating in the Jr. Iditarod. The length of the required rest for the Jr. Iditarod is 10 hours. The twelfth musher will stay 10 hours at Yentna. The eleventh musher will be allowed to depart after serving 10 hours and 2 minutes. Calculate the length of the rest with differential for each musher. It's a bigger task but lay over time plus differential can be calculated for the fifty-four mushers in Iditarod.

ACTIVITY: The Jr. Iditarod offers an opportunity to practice converting military time to standard time and vice-versa. The Jr. Iditarod webpage can be accessed at jriditarod.com. The RACE STANDINGS tab provides checkpoint times of the current race. The RACE ARCHIVES tab provides checkpoint times for past races. Selecting Yentna Station will provide late afternoon and evening times to convert.

A volunteer for the Jr. Iditarod since before the very first race has this to say about the teenagers who compete in the Jr. Iditarod, "The kids have astonished me year after year by their abilities, and dedication to the race, their dogs, good judgment, maturity, resourcefulness, sportsmanship, and preparedness, to name but a few of their attributes."

Follow the Jr. Iditarod, meet the mushers, learn about the history, check the archives, enjoy photos, follow the race using live tracking and read Jr. Iditarod news at www.jriditarod.com.

Well there you have it, the background of the Jr. Iditarod and some stories about the race kids beg their parents to participate in. Remember, do your best everyday and always have a plan.

Born to Run, Sanka

The closest finish was in 2008. Jessica Klejka dropped down onto Willow Lake just a yard or two ahead of Cain Carter.

With both teams on the lake and within a quarter mile of the finish banner, Cain urged his dogs to pass, "ON BY, ON BY!" Jessica urged her team to give it their all, "HIKE! HIKE! HIKE!" Cain and team closed the gap as they overtook Jessica's sled and her wheel dogs. Jessica's dogs were not to be denied, they added a little more steam and maintained their lead of half a dog team to claim victory by just TWO seconds! I looked into the eyes of the canine athletes as they crossed the frozen lake, they knew what was at stake and they were every bit as competitive as their young drivers. It was a photo finish equally as exciting as the year Dick Mackey bested Rick Swenson by one second in Nome. Yes, it is the nose of the lead dog that determines the finish.

Husky Talk

by: Erin Montgomery

Upcoming episodes: Iditarod Rookie Special, Will Troshynski, Hal Hanson, Gabe Dunham, Dakota Schlosser



Do you know who is considered a rookie in the Iditarod? This month's Husky Talk episodes will explain to you just that. We will have guests explain to you what a rookie is as well as what qualifications rookies must meet in order to compete in the Iditarod.

Episodes this month will be special one-on-one interviews with some of the 2021 Iditarod rookies. We will be talking with Will Troshynski of Fairbanks, Alaska. Will is certain to have some great stories as he was mentored by Martin Buser. Another rookie we will be interviewing is Dakota Schlosser. Dakota is a rookie, but has been running dogs for 17 years. Hal Hanson, who has trained under Mitch Seavey will be another guest. Gabe Dunham, who raced last year, will be another rookie we will be talking with.

Earlier this year we talked with rookie **Sean Underwood** (Season 4 Episode 2). Head over to the Iditarod website to listen to his incredible story of getting into the Iditarod.

If your class wants to be featured on Husky Talk, follow our Iditarod EDU Facebook page to see who future podcasts will be with. Your students can email us at huskytalk1@gmail.com and ask a question they would like us to ask our guest. We will ask their question and say their name. You can also email us if you would like to hear a certain guest on our show.



Will Troshynski



Hal Hanson



Gabe Dunham



Dakota Schlosser



Sean Underwood

If You "Mush" Know...

by: Lynne Witte

This month's question comes from.....

Every kid in America:

What happens if the dogs have to go to the bathroom? Do you have to stop and scoop it up?

Chocolate Kisses and Goggles

Excitement echoes in the kennel as the dogs, supreme canine athletes, are getting ready to do what they love - RUN! The dogs, like any competitors, are fed the best diets and receive the best care. Yes, dog poop is important to good health.

A musher knows the characteristics of each dog in their team. They know if a dog has the ability to poop on the fly or has to stop and drop their chocolate kisses. Some dogs will naturally just give a slight look back, loosen up on their tug, shuffle a bit, but keep going. Some just need their teammates to help pull them along while they do a dance poop shuffle. Musher's know some dogs feel the need to stop. Those dogs, particularly if leaders, need encouragement to keep going or the mushers will need to slow or stop the team to avoid tangles in the gangline.

Clean up on a run differs from kennel clean up. A dog team normally running wooded trails would not clean up poop. But back at the kennel or if skijoring/ canicross public trails, the poop is cleaned up and discarded for composting.

Enjoy a great run with a dog team but be cautious not to eat chocolate kisses and be sure to wear goggles.

Teaching with the Insider

by: Jane Holmes

It's the time of year when teachers really get ramped up teaching with the Iditarod as a theme in their classrooms. We are getting many emails from teachers all over the world asking for ideas and resources. Well, this month, you will get free access to these Insider clips to help you teach about the Iditarod.

Here is a list of topics and the Insider clips that you will have free access to in February.

This group of videos show how mushers train in the summer using different types of activities.

[Aliy Zirkle and her Dogs - August 20, 2020 10:03am](#)

[Matt Hall and his Pups - August 20, 2020 10:02am](#)

Here mushers explain the characteristics of sled dogs and how they care of them.

[The Beringtons and Their Dogs - August 20, 2020 9:58am](#)

[Joar Leifseth Ulsom and His Dogs at Home - August 19, 2020 3:43pm](#)

These clips have great footage of kennels so you can see how they are set up, how the dogs live and run, and there are usually puppies too!

[Matt Failor and Dealing with Covid - August 20, 2020 10:05am](#)

[Linwood Fiedler Talks About Happiness - November 13, 2020 10:42am](#)

Here is one that shows cultural connection/community connection. The people of the village tell of the families that had mushers in the Serum Run.

[Buser Wins an Award in Tanana March 10 4:25 pm](#)

These videos are excellent examples of some sled bag checks in Tanana.

[Aaron Burmeister is Next Into Tanana March 10 5:19 pm](#)

[Sass is 5th Into Tanana March 10 5:56 pm](#)

Check out this video clip for a thorough and accurate example of checkpoint procedures.

[Nicholas Petit First to Arrive at Manley March 10, 3:01 am](#)

Finish the Iditarod Breakout Room

by: Erin Montgomery

Digital breakout rooms, or escape rooms, are becoming more and more popular in classrooms, especially as more classrooms are going one-to-one. Digital breakout rooms are a great way to incorporate games and problem solving into a lesson. This month get ready for the new *Finish the Iditarod Breakout Room*.

This breakout room will take students from the starting line in Willow, down the Iditarod Trail to several different checkpoints of the race, and then to the Burlled Arch in Nome. Along the way, students will complete tasks to find clues to help them unlock the next checkpoint. There are a series of 8 locks along the way that will help your students get to the Burlled Arch. Some checkpoints have multiple clues to help you unlock the checkpoint. I will give teachers a hint, Willow has 2 clues to find and White Mountain has 3 clues to find.

To play the game, students will begin by opening the link that will take them to a checkpoint. Students have to find a clickable link in the checkpoint that will take them to an activity to help them figure out the clue. Some activities include a memory game, snowman (like hangman), word search, and many more. After the students have figured out the clue (or clues), they will type it in the box. If they are correct, they will be moved on to the next checkpoint. If they are incorrect, they may be given a hint to help them.

Click [HERE](#) to get the Finish the Iditarod Breakout Room for your class!

Primary Source of the Month

Jen Reiter

Primary sources are not just for Social Studies class! Here's one that you could use as a math warmup that ties in to the ghost town of Iditarod which will play such an important role in this year's Iditarod Race.

Using the Source With Students

1. Display the object for your students and have them share what they See, Think, and Wonder about the artifact.
2. If possible, compare to a modern day bank deposit slip. Identify some similarities and differences.
3. The date is missing from this slip, but it came from a collection of slips dated to 1918.
4. Use this [site](#) to look at historic gold prices. Can they approximate today's value of the gold deposited?
5. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average household earned \$1,518 a year in 1918 ([source](#)). Does that change their opinion of this deposit slip? Who do they think deposited this money? Was it an individual or a business?
6. As an extension, students could do a writing piece with this primary source as inspiration. What is the story behind this deposit?

3-17 10m D.

DEPOSITED FOR CREDIT OF

WITH

MINERS & MERCHANTS BANK
OF IDITAROD

IDITAROD, ALASKA, 191

Gold	1260
Silver	2
Currency	1000
Checks	
2262	

In receiving on deposit checks, drafts, notes, etc., payable elsewhere, this bank assumes no responsibility for the failure of any of its direct or indirect collecting agents, whether the collecting agent be the person or concern on which the item deposited is drawn or not, and shall only be held liable when proceeds in actual funds or solvent credits shall have come into its possession. Checks on these conditions items previously credited may be charged back to the depositor's account. Checks on this bank and on other banks will be credited conditionally. If not found good at close of business, they will be charged back to depositors and the latter notified of the fact. Deposits of gold dust are credited subject to payment in Seattle drafts or gold dust at the option of this Bank. In making this deposit the depositor hereby assents to the foregoing conditions.

Associated Resources:

- Photo of the bank as a tent business in Iditarod (1910): [Click Here](#)
- Photo of the bank as a wooden structure (1913-1939): [Click Here](#)
- Looking for some more ways to integrate Iditarod into your math curriculum? Be sure to check out our math page: [Click Here](#)

Get Ready to Visit Flat!

By: Jen Reiter



Public Domain Photo, attributed to: Lomen Bros., commercial photographers, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, accessed from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flat_AK_1911.jpg

For the first time in Iditarod history, the teams will be traveling seven miles southeast from Iditarod to the town of Flat, Alaska.

Flat came into existence after the Christmas Day, 1908 Gold Rush on Otter Creek by John Beaton and W. A. Dickeman. Although word of that strike got out slowly, in 1909 more miners arrived in the area and set up a small camp they called Flat City.

Over time it became the largest mining camp in the Iditarod Mining District and was connected to Iditarod via railroad. By 1914, the town had grown to 6,000 residents and included an elementary school, telephone service, a restaurant, a laundry, two stores, a hotel, a pool hall, and a jail. By 1920, Flat had become the main supply center and the largest town in the district, even larger than Iditarod itself. Despite all of this, there has been some question about whether Flat was actually ever a formally recognized town as no official survey was done! However, most people seem to be of the mindset that since it had postal service, it must be a town! By 1930 the town's population began to decrease. Records from that year show only 124 residents. Between 1986-2000, the primary year round residents were a family of five, with the 2000 census showing four residents living in one household in the town. The post office was closed in 2004 and the 2010 Census showed a population of zero.

Ideas for students:

- Use the information in this article to create a timeline for the town of Flat
- Have the students write a ghost story that takes place in Flat
- Have the students read about Wiley Post, who was the first aviator to fly solo around the world. On that flight he crashed while trying to land in Flat. Have the students explore point of view by telling that story through the eyes of Wiley and then a resident of Flat: [Source 1](#) [Source 2](#)
- Read about a childhood in Flat, Alaska and then have the students write their own story: [Click Here](#)
- Create a Venn Diagram comparing Flat and Iditarod using [this article](#)

Sources:

<http://no1984.org/2017/08/31/the-deserted-ghost-town-of-flat-alaska/>

<http://www.blm.gov/documents/national-office/blm-library/report/historic-building-survey-report-flat-alaska>

Iditarod Sleds

by: Annie Kelley McGuire

Sleds are an essential piece of equipment in the Iditarod. Typically, 50-80 sleds start the race and even more are shipped down the trail for use later in the race. Sleds have evolved since the first race in 1973, and mushers often build their sleds themselves.

The sleds first used in Iditarod were long freight sleds. These sleds were heavy and very sturdy, often made from ash, hickory, or birch wood. The checkpoints weren't what they are today when the race first started, so mushers had to bring a lot more equipment with them in order to make it to Nome. The larger sleds in the 1970s were a necessity.

Today sleds are often handcrafted by the musher using aluminum or carbon fiber, while a few still opt to use wood. Some mushers even use hockey sticks to create their sleds! There are only two main rules when it comes to sled requirements: The sled or toboggan must be capable of hauling any injured or fatigued dogs under cover, plus equipment and food AND braking devices must be constructed to fit between the runners and not to extend beyond the tails of the runners (Iditarod Rule #15). It is also fun to note that mushers are not allowed to use sails or wheels on their sleds!

Besides the style of the sled, one of the more important parts is the runners. Runners are the two long pieces that touch the ground on either side of the sled. Today mushers used different types of plastic, called runner plastic, while out on the trail. It is interesting to note that there are different running plastics for different temperatures. You'll often hear mushers chat at checkpoints and ask "Which runners are you using?"

Mushers may send up to two sleds down the trail to different checkpoints. A musher may begin the race with a heavier sled that will help them get over the Alaskan Range, and then switch to a lighter sled towards the end of the race for the finish push to Nome. If a musher's sled is broken, they are allowed to borrow a sled from a fellow competitor. However, no musher is allowed to use more than three sleds during the duration of the race.

If you are interested in learning more about sled creation, [check out this video](#) about Cody Strathe of Squid Acres Kennel. Cody builds sleds for many mushers and takes you through the different parts of a modern sled.

No matter what sled style or material a musher chooses, they all have one rule they all follow- never let go of the sled!



Traditional Sleds

Right: Jon Van Zyle with his sled, photo: Terrie Hanke
Above: Traditional sled, photo: Annie McGuire



Dallas Seavey's Sled
Photo: Annie McGuire

Unless otherwise noted, photos by: Terrie Hanke



Sleds of the Iditarod

Mark Your Calendar



March 6, 2021, 10am: Iditarod Start

March 7, 2021, 2pm: Iditarod ReStart

Iditarod[®] EDU

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