

Background:

During the winter months of heavy snow and cold weather, Indians had several ways to keep themselves amused. One way involved contests with snow snakes. 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 the wood.

How We Do It:

The wood is typically cut by saw (some hardware stores will cut it for you); the curve at the bottom can be carved, but is often done with a router.

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.

Materials:

Piece of wood (make sure the wood is softwood if you plan on carving); 1¾" wide, 1½" high, and 4½' to 5½' long (extra length is for the head); glue (to attach the head to the body); pocketknife (it is easier with a router); sandpaper (for shaping); paint (spray paint works well for a base coat), paint brush; 2 round-head upholstery tacks, polyurethane to seal the snake after decorating.

Regulations:

- The snow snake must be made of wood.
- Regulation size is 4 ½' maximum length, 3 ½ ' minimum length; 1 ¾" maximum width; 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 carried by a child.
- 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 Senior Council Member present, with the counsel of other Council Members, has the sole right to determine if a snake meets the regulations. Snakes from previous years that otherwise meet the rules are allowed to enter but should be repainted or reworked for the season, in the spirit of parent-child activity time.

