

The elditarod Project

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The elditarod Project



Archive of student work from past projects:

2001	2002	2003	2004
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Registration will open December 1, 2004 right here on the project web site!

Overview



MI Connections



<http://surfaquarium.com/elditarod/>

Walter McKenzie
The One and Only Surfaquarium
<http://surfaquarium.com>
walter@surfaquarium.com

Why the Iditarod?

The anticipation of the annual running of the Iditarod captures imaginations around the world. Teachers who are veteran followers of the race swear by its instructional value and motivational qualities. New educators are attracted by the word-of-mouth press the race gets from enthusiasts everywhere. With all the modern forms of sport and entertainment we have at our disposal - why the Iditarod?

I submit to you that the Iditarod thrives because of the modern world we live in. Life has become so standardized by all of our technologies and infrastructures. Our lives can seem sanitized and predictable in the many ways society provides for us and ensures for our needs. The romance in standing alone against a formidable challenge seems to be lost in the metaphor of a global village. Where can we look today and find the thrill of the unknown, the challenge of a frontier, the honor of men and women facing uncertainty? In the Iditarod we have found such an experience, linked to the past and free of the trappings of the modern day world we have created.

Consider the explosion of Winter "extreme" sports which have gained world-wide attention in recent Olympics. Snowmobiles, snowboards and ski gear are all part of the Winter sport landscape. Of course, there's lots to be said in favor of these events. But there is a true distinction between these pastimes and dog sledding. Somehow, modern sports can get carried away with the concept of the individual as champion, winning at all costs. There was a simpler time when people relied on one another and life seemed more precious. Rugged individualism did not mean "nice guys finish last."

The whole concept of a musher and a dog team fighting the elements of the bitter Klondike recalls that simpler time. Yes, there are winners and runners-up in the Iditarod. But how many other sporting events can you think of that have a tradition like the Red Lantern - celebrating the completion of the trail by the final team to officially end the race? The Iditarod isn't about winning; it's about surviving. The integrity of men, women and their animals braving the frozen north to complete the race is a lesson all our children should experience and internalize as they prepare for the frontier of the 21st century.

I believe the Iditarod awakens in us a yearning for a world where man is not pitted against man at every turn. In its own simplistic way, the Iditarod exemplifies the kind of world we all are striving for: everyone doing their part towards a common purpose and a common good. When the serum reached Nome in 1924, lives were saved and legends were made. Planes, trains nor trucks made the journey 1,000 miles north; it was a small band of anti-heroes who defied the weather and the odds to make a difference we still celebrate today. And therein perhaps is the ultimate allure of the Iditarod. Perhaps in our overly-complicated world there is something inspiring in the knowledge that there are still people who, through no celebrity of their own, can dare to make a difference in spite of awesome, overpowering odds. Perhaps our spirits ride along with these mushers in the hopes that we too can make a difference by facing adversity and seeing our own dreams through to their conclusion. For all of these reasons, following the Iditarod is an incredible learning opportunity in which all of us can partake.

-Walter McKenzie

Overview

As classes prepare to follow the Iditarod Sled Dog Race this year, why not consider joining the elditarod (electronic Iditarod) project? We would love to have you join us!

Participating classes will

- study the trail and musher biographies
- create a wall-sized map of the trail
- select a musher to follow in this year's race
- track the selected musher's progress as the race occurs
- email the project as the selected musher reaches each stop on the trail
- receive a response from us here at the project each time you write
- complete the problem solving tasks we send you via email
- arrive in Nome vicariously with your selected musher
- receive an official 2003 elditarod class certificate for completion of the trail!

Timeline

The project follows this timeline:

December - January	Open registration period
January - February	Create a wall map of the trail
February	Select a musher to follow in the race
February - March	Prepare your class for the big event
March - end of the race	Follow your musher and email us at each checkpoint as he or she progresses!
End of March	Receive an official 2005 elditarod class certificate for completion of the trail!

Registration

Begins online December 1, 2004 at <http://surfaquarium.com/elditarod/>



Musher Endorsements



At first one might be a bit confused by the name "elditarod" but only a few glimpses into the very professional web site will enlighten the viewer and bring the incredible nature and prowess of the Alaskan Huskies to light. This great site is putting out facts and information that is often tainted by uninformed parties. I greatly endorse your program and wish all the followers great success and hope to be chosen again by some of the classes as "the musher to follow."

Continued success and as always

Happy Trails,

Martin Buser

Walter,

I think as a musher who has dedicated the last ten years of my life to the dogs I have to thank you for the energy you put towards our sport. The more people that learn about our sport the better. I think animals and kids are a must and kids seem to really get excited about the dogs and the mushers. I was involved with a few class rooms last year and had a lot of fun with it. I would be happy to help with your program this year just let me know what I can do.



Thanks again,

Dexter Kancer and Dogs

Dear Walter,

Your website is a neat exchange of ideas. Over the years we have responded to hundreds and hundreds of kids letters and if you would so kindly share a few things with the teachers that plan on sending student letter for me it would be appreciated:

Dear Teachers, It is neat to receive the variety of letters and pictures from the students and we love that they are learning about what we do. However it does take a lot of hours to respond to the hundreds of letters and there are a few things that can be done to help us at our end:

- 1) Please include a self-addressed envelope - it really helps if it is the business size so when we fold our letter I only have to tri-fold the letter;
- 2) Include a postage stamp (some years we have literally spend a few hundred dollars on postage);

3) Please make sure the return addresses are legible - especially young students, some years I have been unable to send a letter because the student forgot to include their address or zip code or it is so unreadable that I can't make it out to send a reply;

4) Please explain to the students that it is not always possible for the musher to send a picture or bootie - we try but sometimes we get so many letters that we run out of cards or booties, etc but we do try.

We appreciate your time and effort to share the information with the students. We have heard several testimonies of the Iditarod sparking an interest for students that otherwise have become bored with school. We hope that Iditarod 2004 is an adventure for you and your students.



Lamy & Cathy Brooks

Hi Mr McKenzie,

Your website is Wonderful! Dog Mushing is a dying sport something that once was the way of life for many Alaskans has now given way to snowmachines. Those of us who still travel Alaska by dog team want to share our adventures with everyone we can, just so the sport or pasttime for some us never dies. We truly love what we experience with our teams and our dogs always teach us more than we could ever imagine possible. I as a musher have been truly blessed to have such a wonderful group of animals that love unconditionally all the time as I am not the worlds best sled driver. Please let me know what we can assist you and your classes with as the 2004 Iditarod gets underway here in less than 2 months.

Happy Trails with Puppy dog tails

Judy Merritt
2004 Iditarod Musher



Hello Walter,

Just took a look at your web site. Very Awesome! I am in full support of students learning about Iditarod. The sport definitely needs the attention and interests. I would be glad to endorse the site and the project. Training is extensive and time consuming so I will do my best to return e-mails. Thanks so much!

Sincerely,

~Ellie Claus



What About the Dogs?

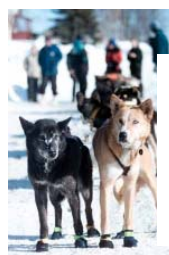
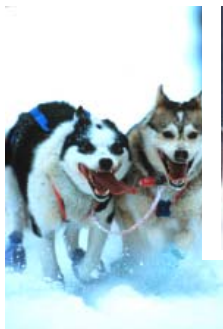
The Iditarod has become a focal point of concern for well-meaning animal rights activists who do not want to see the dogs abused in an inhumane practice. This is understandable, in that there are those situations world over where people have misused and abused animals for personal gain. Being an animal lover myself, I could never support any cause which subjected animals to cruelty or neglect. I have been very watchful and wary as I have learned about dog sledding over the years.

First and foremost, understand that the mushers involved in dog sledding and the Iditarod in particular are veterinarians, ranchers and farmers who devote their lives to the care and keep of animals. These dogs are their livelihood. They would not want anything to happen to their animals. If you take the time to sift through the numerous musher sites available online, you quickly get the sense that these people are animal lovers through and through. From the time the dogs are raised as pups, mushers work with them. These dogs are family. Ask a musher about his/her team and s/he will tell you about each distinct personality. Dogs are watched to determine who among them are innately qualified to pull a sled, and who is a natural team leader.

As for the Iditarod itself, there are strict rules about the care and upkeep of the dogs. Any musher even remotely suspected of improperly treating an animal is immediately pulled from the race. Veterinarians are present at the race checkpoints to examine the teams as they pull in and alert the mushers of any concerns. This is an objective way of double-checking on the dogs and keeping the mushers accountable. At any point that a dog has to be removed from the team, it is flown back to Anchorage where it can be cared for and kenneled until the end of the race.

A group of local pilots known as "The Iditarod Air Force" lend their services to the race to pick up dogs from various checkpoints and return them to Anchorage. These pilots also fly in food and hay for the dogs so they will be warm, nourished and rested as they continue on their trek across the Klondike. Between the pilots, the vets, the race officials, the animal rights activists and the media, these dogs are well watched.

Finally, always remember that beginning centuries ago the Inuit bred these dogs expressly for the purpose of dog sledding. These dogs are not bred for show or for domesticity. These animals are instinctively driven to pull with an inexhaustible energy. Read some of the descriptions of observers who have watched a team begin to pull a sled and you will be told of the joy these dogs display as they begin their work. These dogs live and breathe to run, and they are most happy when they are pulling along as a team. They are part of the majesty and beauty of the sport. Together with their master, they stand as a symbol of what man and animal can accomplish together in the face of nature's awesome power. I encourage you to take part in following a truly unique event - now even more accessible with the World Wide Web - the Iditarod Sled Dog Race.



-Walter McKenzie



MI Connections

Bring your classroom alive in the gray days of Winter through this exciting real-time project! Consider these tasks by intelligence:

Verbal	Share quality children's literature about dogs, dog sledding and survival Learn musher vocabulary Correspond with mushers
Logical	Develop a strategy for your dog team that includes the number of dogs and provisions you will need and when you will take layovers Conduct experiments which teach concepts of climate, temperature and insulation Measure trail distances and figure elapsed time between checkpoints
Visual	Create a wall-sized map of the Iditarod trail View images of the aurora borealis Survey Inuit arts and crafts
Kinesthetic	Carve animal figures out of soap Build igloos out of sugar cubes Craft dogsleds out of popsicle sticks
Musical	Find patterns in musher data Identify trends in how each team is moving along the trail Sing and dance to Iditarod songs, poems and cheers
Intrapersonal	Research how animals are cared for during the race Select a musher to follow during the race Follow your musher's dog team throughout the race
Interpersonal	Work cooperatively in following your class's musher selection Share interests and ideas with other classes following the race online Send an email to your class musher at each project checkpoint as he or she progresses in the race
Naturalist	Sort musher data in order to determine which musher to follow in the race Categorize mushers by home state Track your musher's progress on the class wall map of the trail
Existential	Study the Great Serum Run of 1925; the tradition behind this race Share stories of heroes who survive on their own in the wilderness Research the totems of the native peoples of the northwest

Teacher Testimonials

Hello Walter,

I want to take this opportunity to thank you very much for all of your hard work in making my first Iditarod experience a terrific one! I had no idea exactly what I was getting into when I signed up last November. I knew it was going to be a huge learning curve for me. My students and I grew tremendously. I was able to connect this project into every part of my curriculum.

The exciting part was to observe my students who were so motivated about it all. They really were able to "feel" like they were there through the emails. Checking the status of our mushers was always a thrill. We did it at least 3 times during the day and I had students self tracking on the weekends too. Seeing themselves along with their map on line was super as well. Thank you for posting their projects too. They felt so proud.

This whole experience has made a difference for myself as well as my students. They will remember it for a lifetime! I am looking forward to next year already.

Michelle Askew, Participating Grade 2/3 Teacher

Hi, Walter! I just wanted to thank you for providing us with such a great project. We couldn't wait to track our mushers everyday. A parent of one of my children bought each child in the classroom their own stuffed husky dog - which they named - and had with them everyday. The technology director stopped in my classroom one day to check out what the children were doing with the Iditarod project and site, and thought it was great! When I asked the children what they thought of this project they said it was, "Awesome"!

Thanks again!

Linda Smith, Participating Second Grade Teacher



Dear Walter,

Another year and another exciting race! Thank you so much for all you do to help us to provide a wonderful learning experience using technology. My students loved the unit! We hope to have some follow-up after our Spring Break as Karen Ramstead often comes to Calgary to visit family and may be able to drop by our school. We also have a contact with a veterinarian who works on the Yukon Quest - so the learning continues! My teaching partner and I look forward again to following the race with you next year.

Thanks again!

Joan Sveen, Participating Sixth Grade Teacher

Hi Walter;

Just writing to let you know how much fun my class is having with this project! We have "pumped" it up for the last month, and now they are reaping the rewards. I involved the families, too. I have passed on websites and all the information to them so they can follow the race at home. A few children were late for school this morning because they were getting the latest update off iditarod.com!!!! How can I be upset with that kind of learning?



We have taken the entire project and integrated it through everything. Today was the first day of school since the race began, so we just started tying it all together. The kids had more fun in math because they charted the weather and daylight from Zuma's Paw Prints. They are keeping a daily journal along with this information. It leads into all kinds of topics of science, etc...

We check our email and the websites three times a day. The kids screamed aloud when they saw that their musher, Martin Buser, was in the lead coming out of Finger Lake. They can't wait to see what will happen tomorrow. Thank you for this wonderful project. I am having more fun than I thought I would! The possibilities for learning are endless!

Karen Edge, Participating First Grade Teacher

Dear Walter,

Our lower school has Iditarod Fever. I have also passed it to many in the outside world. Daily, and often more than once, we moved the sleds of the mushers we were following. During recess my lower school lab has been packed with students checking on their musher's whereabouts. I was successful in snagging 2 teachers into the WEB!

Thank you.

Heidi York, Participating Technology Resource Teacher



Walter,



My Kids are so excited! Over February break we had a Musher and dog team come to a vacation camp and the kids really got into it! They asked a lot of questions! 30 of my kids participated and 30 from another school not following the Iditarod were there. Go Dee Dee!!

Kim Bolduc, Participating Elementary Teacher

Walter,

What a great adventure for my students and me. Having spent 16 summers in Alaska, it was fun for me to share some of my Alaska stories with my students including a bulletin board located in the hallway with many of my photos.

Each morning my students eagerly logged onto computers to check the race progress of their chosen mushers. They then moved a push pin with the musher's name along the Iditarod map on a class bulletin board. Each table group had chosen a musher as well as a class pick, Doug Swingley.

We were impressed with the internet coverage of the race, had fun watching the rookies as well as the veterans. There was a big cheer from the class as the final musher made it to Nome. There is so much more that could be done with this project, but I'm glad we put as much effort in as we could this first year. We'll be back in 2003!

Sally Wells, Participating Middle School Teacher



Hi Walter,

We're in the process of writing our letter to Ramy Brooks. This has been such a super experience for us!! It combined language arts, reading, math and art -- talk about teaching across the curriculum!! We're just finishing up the booklets that the kids made in which they all did some type of research. We're now looking forward to playing "Iditarod Millionaire" -- the kids are reading and studying up on all their Iditarod facts.

Thanks for giving us this wonderful opportunity to combine so many facets of research and learning in so many different subject areas! We're already talking about what we're going to do for the Iditarod next year. Thanks again!

Joyce Wells, Participating Elementary Teacher

Walter,

After the great experience with the elditarod, I tried another one this Spring. Yuck. I also did the Jason project for the first time this year and got so much out of that. I learned a lot about using Internet through the three projects with the class. The support through the elditarod teacher listserv and your quick email responses plus the activities at the site made your project very enjoyable and educational for the kids.

Sincerely,

Julie Fryman, Participating Elementary Teacher

Dear Walter,



The end of school has arrived.....and we are STILL talking about the elditarod! This was our 2nd year of following the race, and we thoroughly enjoyed every day of it. A LOT of parents learned about it for the very first time. Thank you so much for all of your work. Our only wish is that the media in the lower states would pick up on it, and tell us more about what is going on at the time. We feel it is as important as car races, and we sure hear plenty about that!

Rochelle Imboden, Participating Elementary Teacher

Hey Walter! My culminating activity was for my class to send Zuma pizzas (her favorite food) in the shape of dog bones which I accomplished last week. I also plan to have my students write Rick Swenson (their musher) congratulation letters for finishing in the top 10. In addition, I have a pen pal exchange with a class in Anchorage. One the student's is the nephew of the winner. He's going to the class to speak next week so the teacher will send us photos.

So we're doing lots of unit end activities. But as one of my student's said last Fri., "I sure wish it wasn't over" Thanks for another fun & educational race!

Bev Resh, Participating Second Grade Teacher



Resources

2004 Official Iditarod Site - <http://www.iditarod.com/>

About Alaska - <http://www.dced.state.ak.us/trade/tou/student.htm>

AKC Alaskan Malamute Page - <http://www.akc.org/breeds/recbreeds/alasmal.cfm>

Alaska - http://www.education-world.com/a_sites/sites071.shtml

Alaska History Toolbox - <http://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/akhistory/aktools.htm>

Alaska Science Explained - <http://www.alaskascience.com/>

Alaska Wildlife Notebook - <http://www.adfg.state.ak.us/pubs/notebook/notehome.php>

Alaskan Iditarod Sled Dog Race, An Interactive Unit Study -
<http://www.oregontrail.net/~thesmiths/iditarod/ident.html>

Anchorage Daily News - <http://www.adn.com/iditarod/>

Balto Statue -
<http://www.heritagepreservation.org/PROGRAMS/SOS/4KIDS/arthist/balto.htm>

Cabela's Iditarod Race Coverage - <http://www.cabelasiditarod.com/>

Dog Mushing and Iditarod Coverage - <http://dogsled.com/>

Dream A Dream - Reach a Goal - <http://home.insightbb.com/~dbuccola/IDWbquest.htm>

English Musher Max Hall - <http://www.maxhall.com/>

Fascinating Facts - <http://www.bena.com/lucidcafe/library/iditarod2.html>

Gary Paulsen - <http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/special/kay/paulsen.html>

Goose Lake Kennel - <http://www.huskyhomestead.com/>

Iditarod Air Force - <http://www.iditarodairforce.com/>

Iditarod: Fact not Fiction - <http://sunhusky.com/Facts/>

Iditarod Jigsaw Puzzle - <http://www.surfnetkids.com/games/iditarod-js.htm>

Iditarod: The Last Great Race - http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson103.shtml

Iditarod 2000 Unit - <http://www.alexandriacentral.org/cove/itarod.html>

Iditarod: Race Across Alaska - <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/itarod/>

Libby Riddles - <http://quest.arc.nasa.gov/space/frontiers/riddles.html>

Mathline: Iditarod - <http://www.pbs.org/teachersource/mathline/concepts/itarod.shtm>

Mrs. Morgan's Great Iditarod Adventure -
<http://www.gis.net/~kmorgan/itarod/Iditarod/>

Mrs. O-VD's Iditarod Adventure -
<http://home.centurytel.net/vanopst/Iditarod/index.htm>

Mushing - <http://www.mushing.com/>

Peterson's Iditarod 2004 - <http://dpeterson1.homestead.com/itarod.html>

Ramy Brooks - <http://www.ramybrooks.com/>

Slide Show of the Iditarod - <http://www.iditarodtours.com/slideshow.htm>

Stephen R. Lee's Mushing Home Page - <http://www.ooowoo.com/>

Support Your Musher - <http://www.madison.k12.wi.us/jefferson/science/itit.htm>

Ten Math Work Sheets Teach About the Iditarod -
http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson302.shtml

Thousand Mile Dog Race - <http://www.niti.org/users/tushka/itarod/itarod.html>

Tilford on the Trail - <http://www.vinton-shellsburg.k12.ia.us/tms/seventh/rdg7/itarod/itit.html>

Ultimate Iditarod - <http://www.ultimateiditarod.com/>

Veterinary Educational Team - <http://www.drsonny.com/Default.htm>

Who Wants to be a Millionaire? -
<http://webhome.crk.umn.edu/~dlim/Flash/itarod.html>

Wild-Eyed Alaska - <http://www.hhmi.org/Alaska/>

Women of the Iditarod -
<http://library.thinkquest.org/11313/Iditarod/?tqskip1=1&tqtime=1206>

Working Dog Web - T<http://www.workingdogweb.com/Iditarod.htm>