

Starting 2026 the Northern way

Northern News Services

As we head into 2026 with Arctic Winter Games trials around the corner and gyms, rinks, and school hallways getting ready to fill up again, I keep thinking about how much that moment in the ditch says about physical literacy. You know the one.

It's -40 C. Someone has slid off the road. No flashing lights yet, no emergency plan, just a vehicle at a bad angle and a person standing there wondering what comes next. And without discussion, without a meeting, without a policy binder, people stop. Someone pulls over. Someone grabs a shovel. Someone says, "You good?" And before long, there is laughter, teamwork, cold hands, and a car back on the road.

You just stop. You help. Because that is what we do. That moment is physical literacy.

Not the textbook definition. The lived one.

Physical literacy is often explained through skills, running, jumping, throwing, balancing. And yes, those matter. They matter a lot. But in the North, physical literacy also looks like showing up when it is inconvenient. It looks like patience, care, resilience, and knowing that movement is rarely just about movement. It is about connection.

As we move into the new year, I also know that getting here hasn't been smooth. Setting up trials, aligning schedules, communicating clearly, and meeting expectations has felt heavier than it should. There has been frustration, confusion, and moments where things didn't come together the way any of us would have hoped. That part is real, and it is not something to ignore or pretend away.

But it is also where the North shows its strength. And this is the moment where we stop looking at what didn't work, and instead look at who is standing beside us: coaches, volunteers, parents, teachers, officials and youth. All still showing up, still caring, still trying to make it work because the kids matter more than the complications.

The Arctic Winter Games are a cornerstone for so many of our youth. For some, it is the first time leaving the territory. The first time wearing the Northwest Territories colours on their back with their communities in their hearts. The first time realiz-



Here's to another year of movement, connection, community, and yes, stopping for the car in the ditch, writes columnist Thorsten Gohl. Photo courtesy of Thorsten Gohl



GUEST COMMENT

Thorsten Gohl is the co-ordinator of Physical Literacy NWT

ing that someone from Fort Providence, Hay River, Inuvik, or Yellowknife can stand shoulder to shoulder with athletes from across the circumpolar world.

That moment changes people. It builds confidence that lasts far beyond sport. It teaches youth how to travel, how to adapt, how to meet new people, how to lose, how to win, how to represent something bigger than themselves. It is not just about medals or rankings. It is about identity, belonging, and pride.

And sometimes, it is simply about showing up when things are not perfect. Physical literacy lives in those moments too. In the practices that feel messy. In the schedules that change. In the extra phone calls. In the quiet reassurance to a nervous athlete. In the coach who keeps things light when stress is high. In the volunteer who stays late. In the youth who tries again after a tough match.

It is also why we keep dreaming a little bigger. Why conversations about things like a territorial snowball fighting organization somehow feel completely reasonable up

here. Yes, that dream is still alive. A territorial sport organization for snowball fighting might sound like a joke, until you realize how serious we are about fun, inclusion, and getting people outside. Movement does not always need a stopwatch.

Sometimes it just needs mittens.

Because movement does not need to be polished to be powerful. It just needs to be accessible, joyful, and rooted in who we are.

As we move into 2026, I hope we keep leaning into

what makes the North special. Helping hands. Open doors. Coaches who care. Volunteers who stay late. Youth who keep showing up, even when they are nervous, tired, or unsure.

Because showing up is a skill too and it might be one

of the most important ones we teach.

Here's to another year of movement, connection, community, and yes, stopping for the car in the ditch. See you all in the gym. Or on the road. Or behind a snowbank.

We Need a Loving Home
www.nwtspca.com • nwtspcayk@gmail.com

GUPPY

Guppy is a goofy 1.5 year old Shepherd/Husky mix full of energy, love, and personality. At about 60 lbs, Guppy is smart, food-motivated, and always ready for adventure. He's learning his manners and thrives with consistency, patience, and lots of playtime. Once his energy is out, he's the sweetest cuddle buddy who loves full body hugs.

TODD

Todd is a 3 year old Husky with a zest for life and a smile that could light up the darkest days! This playful boy came to us as a stray, and while his past remains a mystery, his bright personality shines through. Todd will thrive with structure and a more experienced dog owner. He would do best as the only pet and in a household without young kids.

PRIM

Prim is a 1-year-old Husky mix full of love, energy, and goofy charm! She's playful, snuggly, and thrives outdoors. Still learning her puppy manners and doggy social skills. Prim is smart, food-motivated, and eager to grow. She'd do best with an active, patient family ready for fun and adventure.

BUGABOO

Bugaboo is a 6-year-old Shepherd mix with a big voice, a big heart, and an even bigger personality. She's affectionate, quirky, and occasionally will give in for some belly rubs, but also values her space and independence. Bugaboo absolutely adores the outdoors, and would thrive as the only pet in a calm home. If you're looking for a loyal companion with a little sass, Bugaboo is your girl!

Have a great week ahead! • Shelter Public Hours: Wednesdays 6-8 pm • Saturdays and Sundays 1-3 pm

Come in to find a new friend Adoption saves lives

Want to be a Foster Parent? Contact us (867) 920-7722 for details!

For more information on these pets please call the SPCA **(867) 920-7722**

Happy Holidays

Closed December 24th to January 2nd, 2026.
Back to regular hours on January 5th, 2026.

Igloo Building Supplies
338 Old Airport Rd., Yellowknife, NT
Ph: 867-920-4005