

SNOW SNAKE CONSTRUCTION

History:

Snow snakes were a Seneca Indian sport of strength and skill. The game was simple: the goal was to slide a long smooth stick along a trough in the snow the farthest. Expertise required not just strength, but an accurate eye and great skill at placing the shot properly in the trough to enable it to travel the maximum distance.

Snow snakes were between 5 and 9 feet long and were made of hickory, maple or walnut wood. They were superbly designed for speed and, if skillfully handled, traveled with the velocity of a loosed arrow. To give the stick sufficient weight, its conical head was enlarged and beveled up in the shape of a snake's head.

The trough was made by dragging a smooth-barked log lengthwise through the snow several times until the trench was about 1500 feet long and at least 10 inches deep. Any number could play the game individually or as team members. In addition to active participants, each side had now snake "doctors" who cared for the sticks, rubbing them with "medicine" (beeswax or animal oils) to reduce their friction. Contests were judged by umpires who made certain the rules of the game were strictly observed.

Materials needed: $\frac{3}{4}$ " by $1\frac{1}{2}$ " wood stick between 5 and 6 feet long

Construction: Cut a piece off one end of the stick and attach to the top as shown. Shape the head of the snake with a wood rasp and sand paper. Be careful not to make it top heavy! Paint and decorate the "snake". Gloss alkyd paint works the best. Apply several coats of auto wax for a highly polished surface.

THE GAME: Practice throws are not allowed in the competition trough. You will have to go elsewhere to practice. Your best of TWO throws in the competition trough will count for your score. If you chose not to make a snow snake, you may still compete with a Scout stave, but do not expect much of a score for distance, as they tend to "dig-in".

