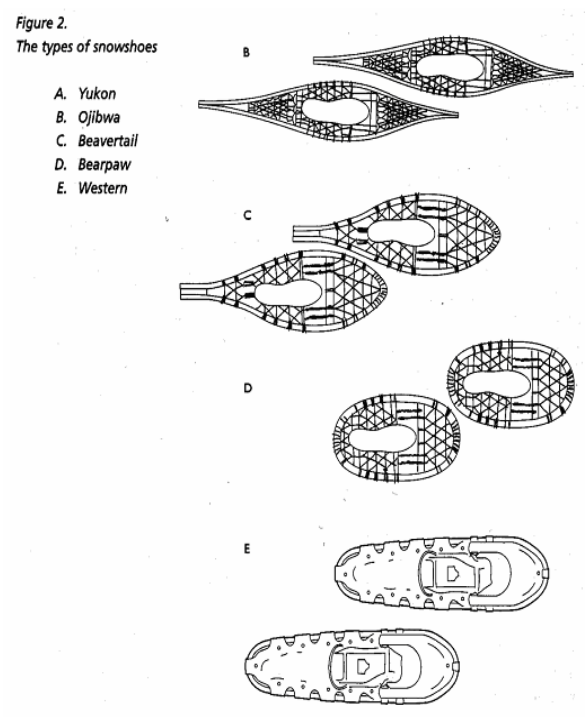
Program Name: Snowshoeing

History

The North American Indigenous Peoples used the snowshoe to help them travel easily in the winter. They saw the foot of the lynx, rabbit or some other similar creature that could travel easily over the snow. Very specifically, the purpose of the snowshoe is to allow person to walk over deep snow without sinking. The different styles evolved because of different needs in different areas and the availability of different types of wood to construct the frames. Snowshoes were very useful in the fur trade as much of the fur trapping was conducted in the winter.

Types of Snowshoes



A. **Yukon**
- Long & narrow. Most stable type.
- Front edge sharply upturned & prevents tip from sinking under the snow.

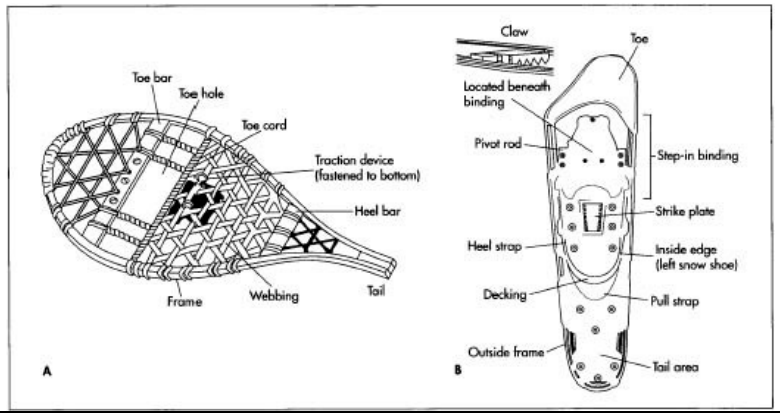
B. **Ojibwa/Cree**
- Shoe tapered at front & back.
- Advantage: points knife through deep snow.
- Built for speed in open areas.

C. **Michigan/beavertail**
- Like a large tennis racket.
- Excellent for open forest trails & deep snow

D. **Bearpaw**
- Rounded/oval shape.
- Multipurpose for varying terrain.
- Good for moving in thick bush.
- Noted for ease of turning.

E. **Western**
-Lightweight
-Low maintenance
-Allow for a more natural stride

Parts of the Snowshoe



Putting on the gear

- With both shoes flat on the ground and the binding side up.
- The user can place their toe into the "cup" of the binding; the "strap will need to be under their foot.
- Sometimes it is best to kneel as you pull the strap over the heel of the boot.
- If the strap is too high above the ankle, it will be uncomfortable; usually the strap sits less than an inch from the sole of the boot.
- Small users will need help. It is best if they kneel so you can pull the strap.
- It is great if you have a spare pair of mittens, as putting on and taking off of the snowshoes will wear out a pair of gloves before you know it.

WALKING ON SNOWSHOES

- A long stride helps prevent having to walk with your legs spread unnaturally wide, and helps to prevent stepping on one snowshoe with the other, which is a common problem with beginners.
- Try to lead with the knee, and point the knee where you would like to go.
- Snowshoes are designed to fit together when walking, so it is easy to illustrate how a long stride is needed.
- Plant the snowshoe into soft snow heel first.
- When going over obstacles avoid putting weight on tips and tails with no support under the foot.
- This style of snowshoe will slide on slopes.
- **Never wear the snowshoes on ice.**

FALLING

- If you feel yourself falling try to sit down & lean back slightly.
- To get back up, get the snowshoes right under you. Get one knee under you and one foot under you and bring yourself up.
- If all else fails you can take the snowshoes off and get up from there.
- If you have fallen on a slope, place the snowshoes in position horizontally across the grade of the slope.

TURNING

- Most importantly, the tails will move the least while the tips cover most of the distance.
- The Bear Paw style is the easiest for turning.
- **STEP TURN** is a simple, broad turn is made by moving the right snowshoe to the right slightly, followed by the left. Repeat these short movements until you are pointed where you want to go.
- **180' KICK TURN** can be done with a little practice and without poles. Simply lift the right leg up and turn it 180' to the rear; try leaving the tail down, then match with the left leg.

CLIMBING

The method used in climbing depends on the slope of the hill. Easy hills can be walked up straight.

Traverse Method:

- Zig Zag / switching back style. Diagonal tracks will be left across the face of the slope.
- While traversing you must master the technique of edging the snowshoes so they rest horizontally when planted.

Edging:

- When crossing a slope, the person should swing heel over to the inside edge of each snowshoe & tramp down firmly at each step.

Herring Bone:

- Use the inside edge of the snowshoes for ascending.
- Plant the snowshoe in the snow on the inside edge of each snowshoe.
- This method is best used on short climbs on slopes of moderate degree. Herring Bone and Side Step are used for extremely steep hills and require some skill in edging.

Side Step:

- Use the upper or top edge when ascending or descending.
- Step firmly down on each step & trust your legs to carry your weight.
- Step up with the top leg first and then bring your lower shoe up to the top one; step down with lower leg, and bring the upper shoe down to the lower shoe.
- Weight bearing is an excellent skill, try to actually bear all your weight on each snowshoe one at a time.

DESCENDING

The method of descending depends on the slope of the hill. On moderate hills you can walk straight down.

- **TRAVERSE METHOD:** Herringbone/Side Step for very steep hills.
- A cord on the tips to prevent digging into deep snow is very helpful; as well, it helps in walking on the flats in very deep, deep snow.
- The **BUTT SLIDE** is always an option if necessary

ACTIVITIES TO USE WHILE SNOWSHOEING!

When leading groups of children on snowshoes in the winter, it is usually best to plan some activities to do, as snowshoeing itself is just a mode of transport that doesn't require a lot of skill. Go on a nature walk looking for trees, animals and tracks, play some games, do environmental / winter activities. Many games and activities that we already use on a regular basis can be adapted to include the snow shoes, be creative! Here are some ideas to get you going...

1. SNOWSHOE HOCKEY/BROOMBALL

You can use a large softball. Beware! This can be a rough one; use only with older students.

2. RELAY RACES / POTATOES ANYONE?

Establish boundaries and place a bucket in the Centre. Potatoes or other similar objects (bean bags) are laid out at equal intervals in straight lines extending away from the basket (think spokes of a wheel). Each snowshoer is assigned a line of potatoes. Facing away from the bucket the leaders calls out "GO!" and they run to the first potato, pick it up and return it to the bucket. They repeat this until all their potatoes are in the bucket.

3. OBSTACLE COURSES

Through the forest paths, look for obstacles to test the participants skills.

4. BLINDFOLD SNOWSHOE WALK / FOLLOW THE LEADER

This helps the snowshoers learn not look at their feet. You can use a rope with knots spaced widely and evenly apart.

5. WINTER PREDATOR / PREY GAME

- Bring pylons to mark boundaries and rabbit burrows, paper for stats.
- Divide the group into foxes, rabbits and leaves. Give each sub-group an identifying characteristic.
- The game begins with the **leaves** spread around playing area and the **rabbits** it their safe area "the burrow" and **foxes** around the boundary.
- Object is for the rabbits to leave their burrow and tag a leaf, and for the foxes to try and tag a rabbit. (No cannibalism allowed)
- If a rabbit is tagged by a fox, then the rabbit automatically becomes a fox. If a leaf is tagged by a rabbit, then the leaf becomes a rabbit.
- After a short period of play, the leader shouts "freeze" & sees how many players are now in which roles at the end of a "season"... however, anyone who is a fox or rabbit at the time and

has not eaten anyone “dies” and becomes a leaf for the next “season”. Run through 5 or 6 seasons and record how many foxes and rabbits are alive each time.

- You should be able to notice the cycles of life as the three populations interact.
- For added educational effect, you can introduce a pesticide marker (a sponge) that is passed from player to player as they are tagged. At the end of a season anyone who has touched it dies.

Snowshoeing Hike – 10-15 Minutes (if time permits)

- Take the participants on a hike in the area. Ensure you have proper ratios and have one leader in the front and one in the back of the group.
- Have any parents with bikes come along to help out.