



Top L-R: Inuksuk (Inuit) Stone Man Symbol of the Vancouver 2010 Olympics. Mariah Cooper (Ojibwe-Oneida-FN Metis) as White Buffalo Calf woman skier, Ross Anderson (Cheyenne) 2<sup>nd</sup> in World Mondial Speed Skiing Championships, Arctic Bears sliding, 6 yr old Delaney Tyon (Oglala Sioux) winning Nastar National Championships, Shirley & Sharon Firth, 4X Canadian Olympic XC Teams, Bottom L-R, Mariah as XC Olympic Hopeful blessing trail, Derek Howell (Pawnee) eagledancer, Naomi Lang (Karuk) 2002 US Olympic Ice dancer, Joe Tompkins (Alaskan Tlingit) 3X Paralympian enjoying 2010 Downhill World Cup victory with son Donald.

## ENDANGERED ANIMALS AND NATIVE YOUTH SHOWCASED AT VANCOUVER OLYMPICS!

By U.S. Olympic skier Suzy "Chapstick" Chaffee

A deer admires U.S. Olympian Naomi Lang (Karuk) ice dancing a soulful "Salute to Nature" at Vancouver's Grouse Mt pond... as an eagle morphs into eagle dancer, Derek Howell (Pawnee) soaring on a snowboard... an endangered arctic bear slides into a bear dancer on skis and Alaskan Tlingit, Joe Tompkins, winning the 2010 World Cup Paralympic Downhill ... a wolf bounds down pristine powder like 8 yr old Lakota wolf dancer, Delaney Tyon, racing to victory in the U.S. Nastar Championships... and a buffalo near Whistler ambles through a cloud, fading into a buffalo dancer and Cheyenne speed skier Ross Anderson, charging down the slopes at 154 mph/247.93 kph, to become the "Fastest Skier in North American History." All to the strains of John Tesh and Robert Mirabal's (Taos Pueblo snowboarder) "Valley of Dreams," and double flutes of Gene Tagaban (Tlingit) a founding member of the Native American Snowboard Team.

That is a taste of the wild surprising talent in the "Whistler Mt Spirit Celebration" short video, produced by our Native American Olympic Team Foundation (NAOTF), to air worldwide at the end of the 2010 Vancouver Paralympics, showcasing the most amazing Native American and First Nations (FN) skiers, snowboarders and skaters. While only two have had opportunities to make U.S. or Canadian Olympic Teams in this Millennium, their 'golds' are to inspire us to feel our Oneness with Nature on the tails of *Avatar* during the "Greatest Show on Earth," to further create a timely love affair with our animal and plant kingdoms that give us life.

"Animals feed, clothe and teach us. Watching their movements inspired the first North Americans to help invent the roots of 11 Olympic sports, including skiing and ice hockey," said Ronnie Lester, Lilwat Elder. ([http://www.naotf.org/articles/tribal\\_gifts.htm](http://www.naotf.org/articles/tribal_gifts.htm)). He and wife Normaline graciously hosted and guided me and 16 yr old Mariah Cooper (Ojibwe-Oneida), who was mobbed by fans at Whistler's *Lost Valley XC Center*, when filming in buckskins.

In the video Mariah morphs into a XC Native American Olympic Hopeful, and then 4X Canadian Olympic XC stars, Shirley and Sharon Firth (Gwich'in FN) from 1972 to 84. Together they won 79 National Championships after a priest in the Northwest Territories taught them to ski.

The First Nations won an Olympic Gold for their contributions to the "Best Winter Olympic Opening Ceremonies ever." What few know is that following the "doom and gloom" start of the regular Games, Lester, once a rock star, led a ceremony along with Shirley Toman and Squamish Elders, "for the safety and joy of the Olympians and Visitors," which resulted in "bluebird days"! South of the border, Native American Tribal Elders, in appreciation for ski resorts sharing the joy of skiing and boarding with their kids, have been helping end droughts starting with Vail in desperation asking the Eddy Box Family (S. Utes) to please perform a snowdance in 1963. *Ski Utah* also asked the Utah's Tribal Elders for a snowdance, which resulted in their glorious 2002 Games. (<http://snow-riders.org/mir.html>).

Because this awareness strengthens the future of snowsports - why my Olympic teammates voted our foundation a grant- these Native champs hope this video inspires even more visionary North American resorts and supporters to share priceless opportunities with underserved Natives, like Delaney from Pine Ridge, SD, the poorest reservation in America, as part of our national healing. In 1996, after Telluride Ski Co was saved by Rollingbears (Lakota), they pioneered our program with Ute youth as a way "to start a new beginning." With local General Schwarkopf behind it, Native programs snowballed across America thanks also to the Snowsports Industries of America donating gear, which has been helping end diabetes and create Olympic dreams. Especially with Olympic skier Billy Kidd (Abenaki), a NAOTF board member, helping Native talent like Delaney and Mariah get Olympic coaching at Steamboat.

American Indians are totally dependent on donations and sponsors, whereas the Canadian Government supports FN sports, including brilliantly hiring the Firth sister to bring XC and Olympic dreams to Arctic youth, as a key part of healing following their government/church apology. With our added inspiration, 13 Canadian Ski Resorts now have FN snowboard programs, thanks to director Aaron Marchant (Squamish).

Since heroic moms like mine usually create Olympians, that is why the moms of Mariah, Delaney and Naomi - Nancy, Misty and Leslie respectively - called me to bring their youth to Whistler to expose them to the Olympic experience, and make this video to help inspire global villagers to give kids like theirs, a chance...

Since mountains are often remote from reservations, Naomi's dream now is to spread the joys of skating across Indian Country with her Native Blades Foundation. While filming NBC's sizzling "Latin on Ice" with her Russian ice dance partner, Peter Tchernyshev, at the Seminole Hard Rock Café, Native youngsters even in Florida loved her clinic. ([http://www.naotf.org/articles/naomi\\_lang\\_tv.htm](http://www.naotf.org/articles/naomi_lang_tv.htm)).

"Our FN reserve school had a skating rink next door and I stayed out of trouble by getting respect learning cool hockey skills," said Duane Kercher, a Cree buffalo skier and host. Native skiers and boarders tell similar tales. Now Kercher, a Whistler real estate mogul and hockey ref, wants to help Lil'wat kids get hockey ops since government support just scratches the surface, yet is already saving the First Nations billions in healthcare.

"Given that Native youth have twice the diabetes, substance abuse, and suicide challenges of any other U.S. race, for lack of opportunities and hope," studies say, we believe that this is the most fun cost-effective way to help Native youth and therefore animals get off the endangered species list. While the stunning Beijing Olympics Opening inspired our Earth Family "to live in more harmony with Nature," this handful of Native Olympians and Olympic Hopefuls valiantly hope this video enhances our love affair with Nature that naturally steps up guardianship. And that is good karma insurance approaching the "purification" prophesied by Mayans and Hopi in 2012.

Coincidentally, the 2009 World Ski Congress at Mammoth (Ca) honoured Nils Larson for his documentary, "Skiing in the Shadows of Genghis Kahn," which reveals that the Chinese-Mongolians actually invented skiing 8-10,000 years ago, to chase down big game for survival in the mountains of Asia's Four Corners. Since they share DNA markers, linguistics and ceremonies with the Apache and Navajo/Dine of North America who came over the Bering Strait, Native Americans, along with fellow freestyle ski pioneer Wayne Wong, were celebrated at the 2009 U.S. Ski Shows for being "Pioneers of Skiing."

Could this video also bring back the sacredness of Mt Olympus to the Modern Games? Given re-emerging Nature consciousness and collective intelligence, the Native gifts to sports and weather, and the tragic loss of the Georgian Luge

Olympian, the next London and Russian Hosts of the summer and winter Games may welcome this blessing of the Mountains and Olympians by their Native Elders as a Modern Olympic tradition.

The Native American Olympic Team Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit partnership of Olympians and U.S. Tribal Elders and leaders, whose mission is to “create joyful unity through sports and education to help heal Mother Earth for all our children, including through the Olympics.”

Our websites, ([www.NAOTF.org](http://www.NAOTF.org) and [www.Snow-riders.org](http://www.Snow-riders.org)), get over a million hits a year. With a tax-free donation of only \$1 to \$10, you could help us generate millions more in grassroots opportunities to develop Native American Olympic Teams for the 2012 London Summer and 2014 Russian Winter Olympics, or have a chance to make U.S. Olympic Teams. <http://snow-riders.org/donations.html>

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