

What's Happening

I N T H E W O R L D ?

BY LAWRENCE GABLE

VOL 10, NO 6 FEBRUARY 2010

Vancouver Hosts the Olympic Winter Games

Every four years athletes from around the world gather for the Winter Olympic Games. They compete in 86 events in fifteen sports. This year they will be in Canada, where the beautiful city of Vancouver in British Columbia will host more than 2,500 athletes. The XXI Winter Olympic Games will take place there February 12–28.

The modern Olympic Games began in the summer of 1896. Then in 1908 they added four figure skating events. In 1920 they expanded again to include ice hockey. Gradually it became clear that competitions on ice and snow should be in the winter, so the first Olympic Winter Games took place in 1924 in Chamonix, France.

Those first Winter Games were far smaller competitions than the current ones. Only 16 nations sent a total of 258 male athletes. They competed in nine sports and only 16 events. As recently as 1980 there were still only 37 nations, but four years ago 80 nations participated. This year there may be athletes from 97 nations in Vancouver.

The Winter Games were supposed to take place every four years, just like the Summer Games. That happened until 1936, but World War II caused their cancellation in 1940 and 1944. They resumed in 1948 and continued through 1992. At that point they switched to even years when there were no Summer Games. There were Winter Games in 1994, and every four years since then.

Only twelve nations have competed in every Winter Olympics. They are Austria, Canada, Finland, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, Sweden and the U.S. Athletes from Norway have won the most medals (280) and the most gold medals (98). After them come the Russians (217), Americans (216), Austrians (185) and Germans (179).

The Olympic torch relay through Canada will cover 28,000 miles. The flame arrived from Greece, the ancient home of the Olympics, and began its trip on October 30. Vancouver's torch is a three-foot-long sleek, white, stainless steel and chrome staff. There are

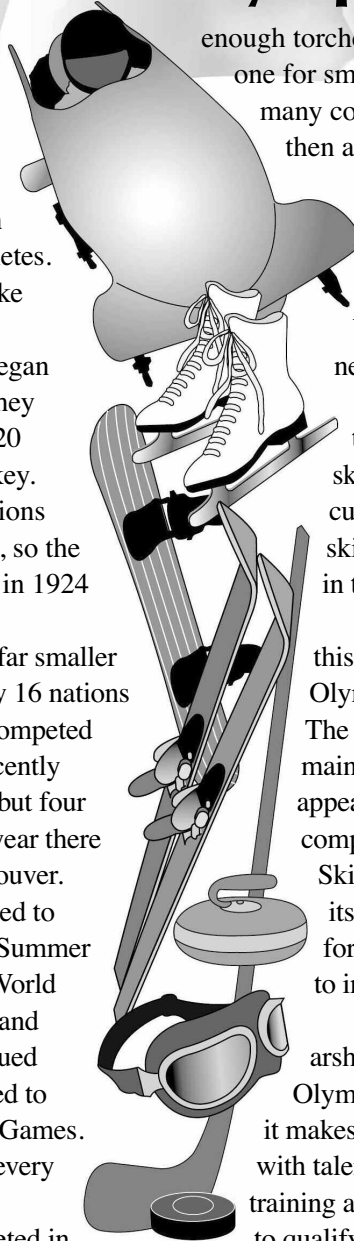
enough torches for all of the 12,000 torchbearers to carry one for small stretches. The flame will pass through many communities in all ten of Canada's provinces, then arrive back in Vancouver in time for the opening ceremony.

The city lies in southwestern Canada, just across the border with the U.S. It is the largest city ever to host the Winter Games. Because it lies at sea level near the Pacific Ocean, it enjoys a temperate climate. The events indoors on ice rinks will take place in the city. Those sports are speed skating, short track speed skating, ice hockey, curling and figure skating. Those that involve skiing, sliding or snowboarding will take place in the mountains north of the city.

A dispute has surrounded ski jumping this year. It is the only sport in the Winter Olympics that prohibits women from competing. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) maintains that the sport does not have worldwide appeal, but women from 16 nations have been competing since 1998. In 2009 the International Ski Federation added women's ski jumping to its world championships and recommended it for the Olympics. Already there is a movement to include it in the 2014 Games in Russia.

The IOC has a program that gives scholarships to athletes who need help getting to the Olympics. Its name is Olympic Solidarity, and it makes sure that money does not prevent athletes with talent from competing. It helps them with travel, training and coaching costs as they prepare and try to qualify for the Olympics. For this year's Winter Games the program gave scholarships to 325 athletes from around the world. It also gives "Team Support Grants" for the Winter Olympics' only two team sports, ice hockey and curling.

Vancouver expects more than 400,000 people to go there for the Winter Games. Undoubtedly some of them will cheer hardest for athletes from their home countries. However, many will cheer all fine performances by the world's best athletes, who will strive to meet the goals stated in the Olympic motto: "Swifter, Higher, Stronger".



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The modern Olympic Games began in the summer of 1896. In 1908 they added four figure skating events and later included ice hockey. Soon it became clear that competitions on ice and snow should be in the winter. In 1924 the first Olympic Winter Games took place in France.

Those first Winter Games were small. Only 16 nations sent a total of 258 male athletes. They competed in nine sports and only 16 events. By 1980 there were still only 37 nations, but four years ago 80 nations participated. This year there may be athletes from 97 nations in Vancouver.

The Winter Games were supposed to take place every four years, just like the Summer Games. That happened until 1936. There were no Games in 1940 and 1944 because of World War II. The Games started again in 1948 and ran through 1992. In 1994 they switched to even years when there were no Summer Games.

Only twelve nations have competed in every Winter Olympics. They are Austria, Canada, Finland, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, Sweden and the U.S. Norwegian athletes have won more medals, and more gold medals, than any others.

The Olympic torch relay through Canada will cover 28,000 miles. In October the flame arrived from Greece, the ancient home of the Olympics. The relay with Vancouver's stainless

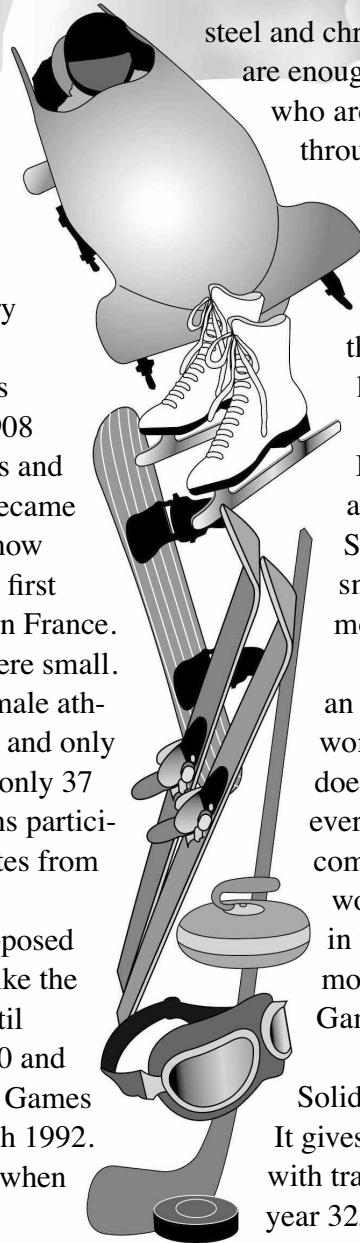
steel and chrome torch began on October 30. There are enough torches for each of the 12,000 people who are carrying one for short distances through all ten of Canada's provinces. The flame will arrive back in Vancouver in time for the opening ceremony.

The city lies in southwestern Canada, just across the border with the U.S. It is the largest city ever to host the Winter Games. It is on the sea coast, so its climate is temperate. Indoor sports like skating, ice hockey and curling will take place in the city. Sports that involve skiing, sliding or snowboarding will take place in the mountains nearby.

Women's ski jumping became an issue this year. The Olympics prohibit women from competing because the sport does not have worldwide appeal. However, women from 16 nations have been competing since 1998. They jump in the world championships, and want to jump in the Olympics too. Already there is a movement to include them in the 2014 Games in Russia.

A program called Olympic Solidarity gives scholarships to athletes. It gives money to athletes who need help with travel, training and coaching costs. This year 325 athletes from around the world have received scholarships. The program also supports whole teams in ice hockey and curling, the Winter Olympics' only team sports.

Vancouver expects more than 400,000 people to go there for the Winter Games. Undoubtedly some of them will cheer hardest for athletes from their home countries. However, many will cheer all fine performances by the world's best athletes, who will try to meet the goals in the Olympic motto: "Swifter, Higher, Stronger".



Background Information

The original Olympics took place in Greece in 776 B.C.

The Olympic motto is in Latin: “*Citius, Altius, Fortius*”.

The population of greater metropolitan Vancouver is 2.5 million.

Vancouver’s average temperature in February is 40°F. Skiing and sliding events will be held in Whistler and at Cypress Mountain.

These will be the first Olympic Games, Winter or Summer, where the opening and closing ceremonies will be held indoors.

The 15 sports include eight ice sports (bobsleigh, curling, figure skating, ice hockey, luge, skeleton, short track speed skating and speed skating), three Alpine skiing and snowboarding (Alpine skiing, freestyle skiing and snowboarding) and four Nordic events (biathlon, cross-country skiing, Nordic combined and ski jumping).

For the first time ever the gold, silver and bronze medals at the Vancouver Olympics will be wavy, not flat. The inspiration for that design comes from the rolling shapes in the ocean, snowdrifts and mountains.

Cross-country skiing and speed skating each award medals in twelve events, the most of any sports.

Great Britain and Switzerland are the only two countries that have competed in every Winter and Summer Olympics. This year Cayman Islands, Colombia, Ghana, Montenegro, Peru and Serbia will be represented in the Winter Games for the first time.

Organizers are concerned about the spread of the H1N1 “swine flu” virus at the Games. Health officials in Vancouver are making sure that volunteers have been vaccinated. The IOC recommends that every nation should vaccinate its athletes and staff.

The Canadian women’s ski jumping team filed a lawsuit against the IOC that claimed gender discrimination. However, the Supreme Court of British Columbia upheld the IOC’s decision.

The logo for the Vancouver Olympics is the inukshuk, a human form of stacked rocks that the Inuit people used as guideposts in the open northern lands. Now it is a symbol of hope and friendship.

The 2014 Winter Games will be held in Sochi, Russia.

Topics for Discussion and Writing

Pre-reading:

- Tell what you know about the Olympic Games, and explain why you think they are so popular.

Comprehension:

- Explain how the Winter Olympic Games originated, and tell about some of their sports.

Beyond the Text:

- Why are the Winter Olympics smaller than the Summer Olympics?
- The Olympics will use a sports arena in Vancouver called General Motors Place. However, it must change its name temporarily because the Olympics do not allow events in arenas that corporations sponsor. Why not?
- If you participated in one of the Winter Olympic sports, which one do you think you would enjoy most?

Vocabulary (*advanced article only)

Article-specific: to host; medal; torch; relay; sleek*; stainless steel; chrome; torchbearer*; province; temperate; ice rink*; scholarship; motto

High-use: to expand*; gradually*; current*; to participate; cancellation*; to resume*; dispute*; to prohibit; to strive*; goal

Sources

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Houston Chronicle July 19, 2009

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February 26, 2008

www.vancouver2010.com

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CA Curricular Standards (4–12)

English-Language Arts

Reading 1.0 Vocabulary Development

2.0 Comprehension (Informational Materials)

Writing 1.0 Writing Strategies

2.0 Writing Applications

ELD—Intermediate and Advanced

Reading Vocabulary Development/Comprehension

Writing Strategies and Applications

Listening and Speaking