

ABORIGINAL TRANSPORTATION

THE TOBOGGAN

The origin of the word “*toboggan*” is not exactly known. Some believe it comes from a Micmac word originating in Eastern Canada. Others believe it to be an Anishinabe word ‘*Nobugidaba,*’ or an Algonquin word ‘*Obagaggan*’. Either way, we know it to be Canadian.

It is probable that native hunters first built toboggans to carry game over the snow with it becoming a part of tribal life used in moving all manner of goods in winter. In combination with snowshoes, the toboggan was an efficient and fast method of carrying game, household belongings as well as the young and elderly travellers

Toboggans were made with two or more birch slats. These were curved up at the front by bending them when they were still green, allowing for easy mobility over the snow. The toboggan’s crafters sometimes used paint to add symbolic designs meant to attract the sanction of spirits when hunting or traveling.

Very similar to the toboggan is the sled which is simply a light wooden frame mounted on runners. The design of the toboggan and the sled led to the creation of three modern Olympic sports, the bobsled, luge and skeleton races. Bobsleds have teams of two or four racers who steer a curved-front sleigh down a track. In the luge competition, one or two racers recline in a seated position while racing down a luge run. In the skeleton competition, a racer rides a small sled on an iced track face-first and head down.



"The Toboggan Party", Rideau Hall. This illuminated composite photograph is from Lady Dufferin's personal album. c 1872-1875.

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An example of a Luge sled. Luges can reach speeds of 140 km per hour (87 mph).



Typical modern wooden toboggan produced for the consumer.

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