

ROSEANNE ALLEN

Nation: Gwich'in First Nation
Birth: March 7, 1954
Birthplace: Aklavik, Northwest Territories
Sport: Cross-Country Skiing
Competitions: 1970 World Juniors Nordic Ski Championships
1970 FIS World Nordic Ski Championships, Vysoke Tatry, Czechoslovakia
1972 Olympic Winter Games, Sapporo, Japan
1974 World Juniors Nordic Ski Championships, Autrans, France

Career Highlights

- 1972, Sapporo Olympic Winter Games, women's 3 x 5-km relay, ranked 10th
- 1972, Sapporo Olympic Winter Games, women's 5 km classic, ranked 40th
- With Shirley and Sharon Firth and Helen Sander, the first Canadian women ever to represent Canada in Nordic skiing at an Olympic Winter Games
- With Shirley and Sharon Firth, the first Aboriginal women to compete in an Olympic Games
- 1971, Top of the World Ski Championships, relay, with the Firth twins, gold medalist
- 1968, Canadian Junior Championships, Port Arthur, Ontario, 5 km, gold medalist, at the age of 13
- 1968, nominated to the National Junior Team
- 1967, Anchorage, Alaska, Junior Girls' 10 km, ranked 2nd

Biography

Born in Aklavik, 200 km above the Arctic Circle, Roseanne Allen had 17 siblings, two of whom were fellow competitive skiers, Roger and Anita. Roger and Anita grew up with their grandmother. At eight, Roseanne's mother took her to the residential school called Grollier Hall, asking the priest there to take in the child because she could no longer afford to keep her.

Roseanne started skiing when she was 10 and soon joined Father Jean-Marie Mouchet's Territorial Experimental Ski Training (TEST) program. When she learned her sister would get to travel to Quebec as a result of her talent at skiing, Roseanne began to take the sport more seriously. Anita's encouragement helped keep her at it, and by 13 Roseanne was the youngest ever winner at the Canadian Junior Championships in Port Arthur, Ontario. At 14, she was nominated to Canada's National Team.

In 1972, in Sapporo, Japan, Roseanne Allen competed in the Olympic Winter Games with Shirley and Sharon Firth, the first three Aboriginal women to compete in an Olympic Games. Allen skied the last leg of the women's relay and helped her team beat their longtime adversaries, the Americans. "We finished well out of the medals, but it felt like gold to me," she later told Sally Manning, the author of *Guts and Glory: The Arctic Skiers Who Challenged the World*.

After the Games, Allen trained with her sister Anita and coach Bjorger Petterson at a spot called Ranch of the Vikings, in British Columbia. In 1974, she decided to quit racing.

Eventually, she returned to Inuvik and turned to softball for an athletic pastime, pitching her team all the way to a Delta championship. She moved to Sault Ste. Marie in 1988 and still lives in Ontario, where she promotes healing and wellness at an Indian Friendship Centre.

In *Guts and Glory*, Allen said she should have realized when she was young that skiing was the perfect sport for young people in her community, one she wishes were always readily accessible to children there. "On a personal level, skiing was a gift beyond price," she continued. "It gave me the confidence, the strength and the courage to be who I am today."

Links:

Sports Reference website

<http://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/athletes/al/roseanne-allen-1.html>

Father Mouchet will be recognized for his contribution

<http://www.ccski.com/main.asp?cmd=doc&ID=4444&lan=0>