

SHIRLEY FIRTH-LARSSON

Nation: Gwich'in First Nation
Birth: December 31, 1953
Birthplace: Aklavik, Northwest Territories

Sports: Cross-country skiing
Competitions: 1970 World Nordic Juniors Championships, Gosau, Austria
1970 FIS World Nordic Ski Championships, Vysoke Tatry, Czechoslovakia
1972 Olympic Winter Games, Sapporo, Japan
1974 FIS World Nordic Ski Championships, Falun, Sweden
1976 Olympic Winter Games, Innsbruck, Austria
1978 FIS World Nordic Ski Championships, Lahti, Finland
1980 Olympic Winter Games, Lake Placid, USA
1982 FIS World Nordic Ski Championships, Oslo-Holmenkollen, Norway
1984 Olympic Winter Games, Sarajevo, Yugoslavia

Career Highlights

- Four-time Olympian; competed at the 1972, 1976, 1980 and 1984 Olympic Winter Games
- 1984, Olympic Winter Games, 22nd in 10 km, the Canadian best until 2002
- 1982, Ten Race World Cup Circuit, 11th overall among 66 skiers, 65 points - best Canadian women's total
- 1969, Senior Canadian Championships, gold medals sweep; gold medalist in the 5 km, 10 km and 3 x 5 km relay, Camrose, Alberta
- 1968, debut at the Jr. Cross-country Championship, silver medal win, Port Arthur, Ontario
- A total of 42 medals won at Canadian National, University and Nordic championships — 29 gold, 10 silver and 3 bronze
- 1971-72, recipient, John Semmelink Memorial Award
- 1981, recipient, Commissioner's Award of the Northwest Territories
- 1987, member, Order of Canada
- 1990, inducted into the Canadian Ski Hall of Fame
- 2002, recipient, Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal
- 2006, recipient, National Aboriginal Achievement Award in Sports
- 1978-1983, voted Canadian Women's Nordic Skier of the Year six years in a row by *Ski Racing* magazine

Biography

Shirley Firth-Larsson beat her twin sister Sharon out of the womb by 10 minutes, but their competition continued for decades. The Firth sisters eventually became the first Aboriginal women to form a national ski team for Women, representing the Northwest Territories; between them, they won 79 medals at the Canadian National Ski Championships.

It was Shirley who first got interested in cross-country skiing, but her mother wouldn't let her go unless she let her sister Sharon tag along. Enticed by the Territorial Experimental Ski Training Program (TEST), both were soon hooked - they showed a natural gift for the sport that took them all the way to the Olympic Winter Games, four times in a row. At 13, Shirley won her first major race, in Anchorage, Alaska, in 1967; she came second in her next big competition, the Canadian Junior Championships in Port Arthur, Ontario. In 1968, she scooped up the North American Championship in Montana.

Over the course of her career, Firth-Larsson competed in four World Ski Championships, four Winter Olympic Games and numerous Canadian and North American championships. She was a member of Canada's national cross-country team for 17 years.

Firth-Larsson retired from sport in 1984. For many years, she lived in France, and in 2002, she received her diploma in teaching from the University of Paris. In 2005, she moved back to the Northwest Territories.

Links:

2006 Sports - National Aboriginal Achievement Award

http://www.naaf.ca/html/s_firthlarsson_e.html

Canadian Ski Museum Hall of Fame

<http://www.skimuseum.ca/biodata.php?lang=en&id=64>

Government of Canada 2010 Winter Games

<http://www.canada2010.gc.ca/101/athletes/010504-eng.cfm>

'Humble Olympian Prefers Quiet Life' - Windspeaker

<http://www.ammsa.com/achieve/AA06-ShirleyFirth.html>