

Traditional Games

Aboriginal Sport Lesson 1 | Suggested Grades: 4-7

Lesson Plan

Objectives:

Students will....

- Understand the importance of games and how many evolve over time
- Play traditional Aboriginal games that involve social, mental and physical components
- Discover skills learned in one game, will be important for other future games
- Complete their daily physical activity requirement

Curricula Links:

- Physical Education
- Social Studies

Materials:

- Appendix 2.1
- Appendix 2.2
- Bandanas (for ½ of the class)
- Baseball bat
- Tennis ball
- Materials will vary depending on the traditional game

The Big Idea

Participation in sport and recreation improves physical development and increases awareness of fitness, nutrition and healthy living. When a young person plans and implements a physical fitness program, a momentum starts to build, tapping into their energy and creativity. They can develop leadership, communication and organization skills that can be applied to personal and community endeavours in other areas of their life.

Opening Motivator (15 min)

Origins of the Game

According to Aboriginal tradition, there are four equal parts of the human being: mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical. In order to have a happy life all four parts of the being must be in balance. Sport and recreational activity enrich the physical aspect of life.

First Nations' cultures flourished for thousands of years before the arrival of the Europeans to British Columbia in the 1770's. Sport was an integral part of social activity and played an important role in the community. Aboriginal people engaged in competitions such as target shooting with bow and arrows, swimming, canoe races, long-distance running, wrestling, and rock lifting. Various dice, stick, and hand (lehal) games were played and lehal enjoys popularity even today.

Traditionally sport was also used as a tool for trading, solving disputes, and entertainment. Throughout North America, Aboriginal communities participated in various traditional sports, games of chance and other activities that can enhance motor skill development.

Games were and are an important part of Aboriginal society, passed from generation to generation. They are important for the emotional, physical, and mental development of the community members. Games teach teamwork, social skills and develop other essential skills such as target practice, hand-eye coordination, agility and dexterity. Games also provide a good form of exercise.

Aboriginal peoples have considered the opportunity for celebration and gathering socially as one of the most important aspects of sport, leisure and recreation.

Read appendix 2.2 (1936 North Shore Indians Lacrosse Team)

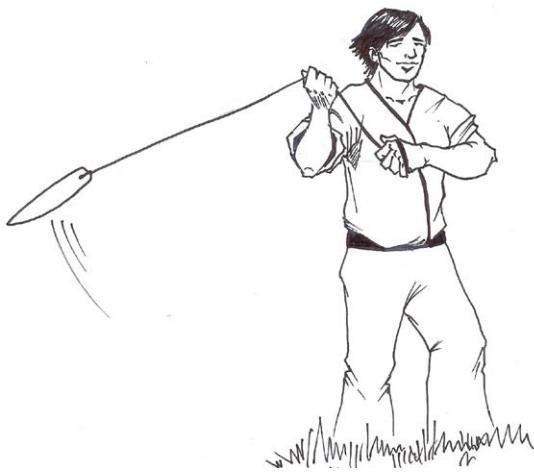
Ask students to share the games they liked to play when they were younger. Ask students to share the games they like to play now. Why do they enjoy these games? Are they physical games, emotional games? What kind of skills are they learning when they play these games?

Classroom Activities

In the Class / Lab / Gym / Outdoors

Length: varied

Below is a list of traditional Aboriginal games that have origins in North America. A brief explanation is provided with each game. Some games require little or no preparation and others require more. More information can be found about these and other games in the “web links” section. Or you can “google” many of the games to learn more information.

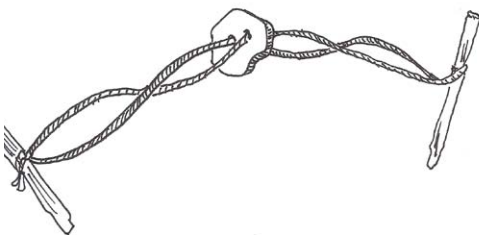


Bullroarers - Almost all of the Aboriginal tribes of North America used bullroarers in religious and healing ceremonies and as toys. There are many styles. To sound a bullroarer it is swung lasso style which causes it to spin and make a humming sound.

Buzzers (whirligig) - An ancient mechanical device found in the early beginnings of most cultures around the world. The earliest finding of this toy in North America was from the Caddo tribes of Oklahoma. A buzzer is constructed by running string through two holes on a large button.

The object is whirled by pulling and releasing the tension on the string.

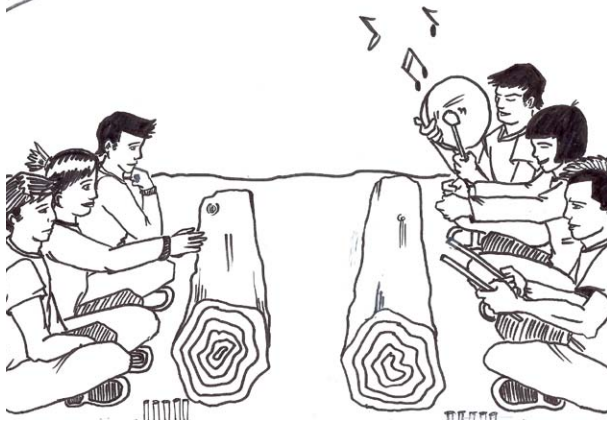
Cat's Cradle - One of civilization's oldest games and is spread among a variety of cultures. String is wound back and forth over fingers of both hands creating a pattern. Then transferred to a second child making a new pattern in the process. A good game for working with a partner.



Dox-en-eye (Haida) - Similar to the game of Red Rover. Students take a stick from the other team while trying not to laugh/smile. Meanwhile the other team does what it can to make the stick-taker smile. The ultimate social game.

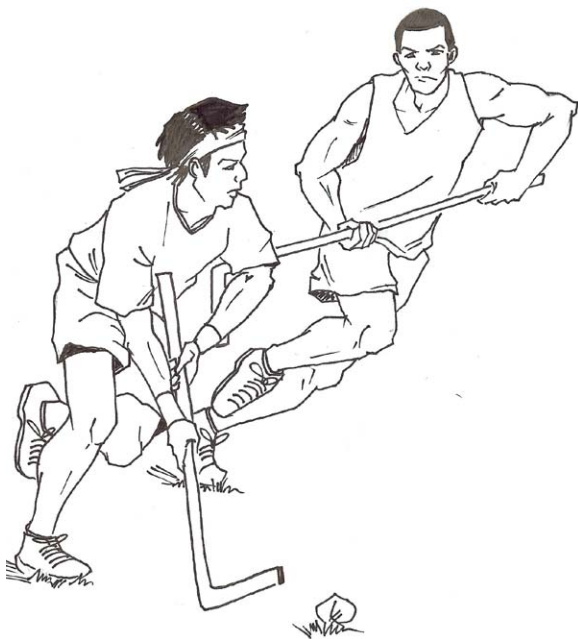
Hoop and Pole - Originates in the southwestern United States and northern Mexico and is recognized as being played throughout North America. A popular pastime that has deep cultural and religious meaning. The game involves rolling a hoop and then throwing spears or long poles at it. The game develops the skill of throwing objects through a moving target.

Inuit Games - Many of these games are traditional and require no equipment. These games concern physical strength, agility and endurance. They are based on survival in the harsh environment of the Arctic. Many of these games have a place in the modern PE class. Students enjoy the physical and mental challenges they provide.



Jackstraws (Haida) - Pick-up stick games are ancient and prevalent in most cultures of the world, with the origins in China. The Haida people of the north coast of British Columbia were the first North Americans to play this game. It is not clear how or when these Asian games were introduced to North America, though it had to be very early, via the land bridge across the Bering Strait or by ship across the Pacific Ocean. This game takes on a new flair when students are able to collect (twigs) and decorate them into their own set of pick-up sticks.

Lehal or Slehal (West Coast nations) - One of the many hand games found throughout North America. Traditionally a gambling game where teams guess the pattern of two "bones" in each hand by an opposing team member. Was usually played with singing and beating of sticks and/or drums.



Ring & Pin (Woodland Nations - eastern Canada) - There are many variations of the ring and pin set up. Students will have fun making this device which consists of three main parts. The first is a small needle shaped stick which acts as the "pin." Attached to the pin is a 20-40 cm. strip of leather/string. Attached at the other end of the leather/string is the ring, which consists of a small object with holes. Usually made of wood, twigs or leather. Students throw the ring up and try to get the pin through the hole(s) on the ring. Good for hand and eye coordination.

Ring-on-a-string (Nuxalk - west coast) - A traditional game usually played around a campfire. A small ring is suspended from a long circle of string held in the closed hands of all players. The circle of players secretly passes the ring from hand to hand, while one individual tries to observe the movements while standing inside the circle. All circle players move their hands along the string all the time,

so guessing the rings locations can be very tricky. Sleight of hand and fake passes are the order of the day. The person caught with the ring enters the centre circle.

Shinny (Woodland Nations - eastern Canada) - The sport considered to be the forerunner to hockey. Played on the field with curved wooden playing sticks using a buckskin ball. Large playing field is used with marked posts about 3 feet apart. Modern day equipment such as plastic hockey sticks and small plastic balls can be used. This is a good running game.

Snow Snake (Iroquois tribes) - The object of the game is to throw a decorated stick (bones of an animal), down a slippery path or snow covered trail. It is a competition to see whose stick would go the farthest. There are number of different forms of this game.

In the Outdoors

Game for Physical Fitness - Counting Coup & Sneak Up
(From Rediscovery: Ancient Pathways by Thom Henley)

Length: 30 minutes

One of the most popular and noble pursuits of many Plains native tribes was to “count coup,” (i.e., to approach an enemy close enough to touch them, but not kill them). Counting coup demonstrated a warrior’s best skills, stealth and courage. By awarding the enemy the gift of life, which could have easily been taken, the warrior gained esteem both within and outside the tribe. The greatest warriors in fact, were not always those who engaged in the most combat, but those who counted the most coup.

The Assiniboin and Gros Ventre tribes of northern Montana have brought counting coup traditions back to life in a fast-paced game of pursuit. A large play area is established, with boundaries that enclose a variety of terrain for coup counters to hide, stalk and pursue one another. A meeting place is established in the centre where all players will disperse and to which they will ultimately return.

Because only men and boys traditionally engaged in “counting coup,” this game is combined with another game called “Sneak Up.” This is a traditional game in which girls, hiding in groups of two or three, tried to capture boys.

In the combined game of Counting Coup/Sneak Up, all players begin at the centre point. Each boy wears a bandana tied around his head, with the tied ends to the back. With eyes closed, all the boys count out loud to twenty (or more), while the girls disperse in their teams of two/three players to hide in the surrounding play area. When the boys reach the end of their count, they let out a large hoot and quickly disperse.

The object of the game for the boys to take each other by surprise, snatch the bandana from an opponent, and escape before the opponent can take theirs in return. (Be sure to caution the boys beforehand that bandanas must only be snatched from the tied ends at the back of the head to avoid any possibility of face or eye injury.) Any boy who gains bandanas always keeps one tied atop his head while others are tied around his upper arm to show his coup-taking prowess. Any boy who loses his kerchief can continue playing, trying to regain his lost honour by counting coup on others. Any boy captured by the girls playing Sneak Up loses all of his bandanas he has acquired to those girls. They cannot be regained.

Counting Coup and Sneak Up are played for a set period of time. At the pre-arranged signal, halt the action and acknowledge the boys most successful coup counters and the girls most successful sneak up team. You can easily identify them by the number of bandanas they hold.

Teaching tip

Thirty minutes time period is good for beginners, but let it run longer if the group is intensely into it.

In the Outdoors:

Game for Physical Fitness - Long Ball

Length: 30 minutes

Long ball a traditional form of Aboriginal baseball. Players are divided into two teams, but instead of a diamond and bases, two end zones are set up about fifty metres apart at opposite ends of the playing field. The first team will stand behind one end zone while the other team positions themselves between both end zone lines. A pitcher will pitch to the designated batter who will get three strikes to hit the ball. Once the ball is hit, instead of the batter running, the batter stays put. The rest of the batters team must run to the opposite end zone line and back to their end zone line.

The outfield team must get the hit ball (can catch it for an out) and can throw it at the runners from the opposing team. It is considered an out once a runner is hit with the ball. More than one out can be gained on each hit. Teams change sides at three outs. A point is awarded each time the batting team returns to their line after a hit. A soft ball (tennis ball) and a bat is all that is required for this game.

Teaching Tip

The ball is always pitched so it can easily be hit." Another variation of this game is to count each runner who safely makes it back. A scorer is needed as the score can get well into the hundreds.

Conclusions and Reflections

- If students have made toys when playing the traditional games have them share and demonstrate them with the class.
- When playing different traditional games or toys, what skills are being learned that might assist with modern day sports?
- Students can discover many more games and sports that have significant history in North America.
- Have students make up their own game that uses some of the toys or ideas from some of the traditional games. Students can use the web links page or do their own searching to find more Aboriginal traditional games and sports.

Web Links

Virtual Museum - Living Traditions

Excellent website for many traditional games. (Inuit, Metis, Woodland) www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Traditions/English/index.html

Modified American Indian Games

Many traditional games that have been modified for the modern P.E. class https://www.ihs.gov/sites/hpdp/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/pak/PAKBook3.pdf

Native American Facts for Kids

Resources for children and teachers on Native American nations

-Includes some Canadian native nations

www.native-languages.org/kids.htm

Inuit and Eskimo games

www.athropolis.com/news-upload/11-data/

https://www.isuma.tv/sites/default/files/attachments/SILA_InuitGamesLesson.pdf

https://phecanada.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/Conference2019/PowerPoints/Inuit%20Games%20Resource_PHEMontreal2019.pdf

1936 North Shore Indians Lacrosse Team Statistics

<http://bcla.centraldesktop.com/spirit2/IndiansNorthShore1936>

Games of the Plains Cree

<http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/games/index.html>

Cougar and Deer - an outdoor game with stealth and good listening skills

<https://wyp.org/resource-portal/activities/cougar-stalks-deer-game/>

#:~:text=The%20object%20of%20the%20game,deer%20without%20being%20%E2%80%9Cseen%E2%80%9D.&text=How%20does%20it%20end%3F,how%20your%20game%20will%20end.

Traditional Games

Story of Canada’s National Sport: Lacrosse

Many of the games and sports we play today are derived from Aboriginal games. North American Native peoples are credited with inventing the game of lacrosse and activities like snowshoeing and tobogganing. Some claim that the Micmaq Native people of Nova Scotia are partly responsible for modern day ice hockey as they were the makers of the first modern day wooden hockey sticks.

The game of lacrosse originated among the Algonquin tribes of the St. Lawrence Valley in eastern Canada. It is often described as the oldest organized sport in North America. The game called “baggataway,” which the Aborigines played was a form of tribal warfare. The Iroquois native people called lacrosse “Tewaarathon,” or “the little brother of war.” Preparations for the game were the same as those undertaken by warriors as they prepared to go to war. Warfare was one of the most important ways in which young men were readied for their roles in their community.

Some games were preceded by a big pow-wow, a feast and wild dancing. Others involved only religious ceremonies before the game, with the feast and ceremonies of dancing after the game. The game might have 250 players on each side but usually the figure was between 75 to 150 players. The field was a tract of land, sometimes partly wooded, with goals which had one or two poles which would be anywhere from 400-metres to 10-kilometres apart. Usually the distance of the playing field was about one kilometre. The women, who cheered the men on, would run up and down the side lines beating the men of their tribe with stout switches to urge them on to more furious and inspired action.

A goal was scored by either hitting the single post or if it were two posts, by driving the ball through the posts. There was no skilled strategy in winning games, winning required doing whatever it took to get the ball to the post. Players did get injured in the rough play and if he was smashed over the head with a stick, this was simply ruled an accident. The game would usually start in the morning and could last two or three days.

The name “Lacrosse” came from pioneering French Canadians who felt that the end of the stick that the Aborigines used to play the game, resembled a bishops’ crozier. They thus named this Aboriginal sport, “La Crosse.” It was in 1834 that the first recorded match took place between teams of Iroquois and Algonquin nations at the Pierre race course in Montreal. New rules were implemented and the game was played in an enclosure in order to avoid the roving type of game the native players were used to playing.

Traditional Games

In 1839, the first European team was formed as the Montreal Lacrosse Club. In those early years, the native players were far superior to the Europeans playing the game. In fact often the European team would have several more players than the native teams, but they would still lose the game.

At that time lacrosse was Canada’s national game and is spread the sport throughout the country. For the next hundred years, the sport gained popularity from coast to coast. Rivalries were built between different cities and different regions. The sport was so popular in eastern Canada that it was not surprising to see several thousand spectators every Saturday watching a game.

In the 1930’s, there were several powerful Aboriginal teams in Ontario. The 1936 North Shore Indians team from North Vancouver, British Columbia were considered by many lacrosse experts as being the best lacrosse team in Canada.

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Appendix 2.2



1936 North Shore Indians Lacrosse Team

With the introduction of box lacrosse to B.C. in the early 1930's, the North Shore Indians were the most exciting team of the decade. Many of the old timers stated that when the North Shore Indians were at their best, they were practically unbeatable.

This team was to lacrosse what the Montreal Canadiens were to hockey. Whenever the team played at the old Denman Arena in Vancouver, it would be filled with over ten thousand people. The leader of the team was their coach Andy Paull, who was also a lacrosse reporter for the Vancouver Sun. His goal was to create the best all Native lacrosse team to ever play the game.

The Baker boys were the backbone of the team during this time. Two of the relatives, Henry "Hawkeye" Baker and Ray Baker are members of the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame. Other outstanding athletes who wore the North Shore lacrosse shirt were; Harry and Earle Newman, Louis Lewis, and eastern, imports such as Joe Johnston and the great Ross Powless, who is the father of 1960's lacrosse star Gaylord Powless.

Another North Shore player would become a household name in North America, when he traded his lacrosse stick for an acting career in Hollywood. His job in Hollywood was to help his partner, "The Lone Ranger" stop the devious plots of hardened outlaws. His name was "Jay Silverheels", alias Tonto. When he played for the North Shore Indians in the 1930s he was know by his real name, Harry Smith.

Traditional Games

The best North Shore team was the 1936 edition, which crushed New Westminster in three straight games to win the B.C. Championship.

The strength of Andy Paull’s 1936 team began in goal. Henry Baker was only 168 lbs (76 kilos), but he was a miracle worker when it came to blocking shots. He had several brothers on the team. Most notable was Ray Baker, the 37 year old; who had been with New Westminster during their Mann Cup loss in 1933. Stan Joseph also had national final experience. The hard hitting defenseman had come east in 1934 with the Salmonbellies. The other Joseph was Chief Moses, a furious checker who played rover. The club also had two Smiths. Heavyweight Russell ‘Beef’ Smith was well over 200 lbs (91kilos). Brother Hubie was a 155 lb (70.5 kilos) speedster.

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Appendix 2.2

1936 North Shore Indians Lacrosse Team statistics

1936 INDIVIDUAL PAYER STATISTICS					
Player	Games Played (GP)	Goals (G)	Assists (A)	Total Points (PTS)	PIM
Russell Smith	22	60	13	73	53
Oscar Bomberry	24	43	18	61	50
Jack Squires	23	45	13	58	16
Cece VanEvery	24	26	28	54	70
Stu Bomberry	23	31	18	49	32
Hubie Smith	22	33	15	48	83
Ray Baker	20	24	11	35	45
Louis Lewis	20	25	9	34	42
Dom Baker	22	20	12	32	31
Harry Newman	20	14	10	24	8
Joe Johnston	21	17	4	21	6
Moses Joseph	19	16	3	19	24
Stan Joseph	21	5	4	9	38
Gilbert Thomas	15	4	2	6	0
Henry Baker	18	0	0	0	0
Simon Baker	1	0	0	0	0
Ralph Band	1	0	0	0	2
Gord James	2	0	0	0	4
Fred Johnston	1	0	0	0	0