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Indigenous Games

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Introduction:

Traditional games are important in the lives of Indigenous people and have been shared and traded from tribe to tribe for centuries, resulting in many tribes playing the same or common games. These games help people stay healthy and strong, as well as keeping skills sharp. They can teach cooperation, team work and social skills, as well as agility, coordination, gross and fine motor skills, stamina, speed, dexterity, patience, confidence and target accuracy. Indigenous groups did, and still do, value and respect skills, strength, stamina and dexterity, which are displayed and practiced while playing these games.

People of all ages participated in traditional Indigenous games. Games can be modified according to the age, size, and skill level of participants. Time needed to play the games varies and it is up to the instructor to decide on a time limit. Traditional Indigenous games can be used not only in Physical Education classes, but also in Math classes, Social Studies classes, as well as other times during the day.

Social values displayed in playing traditional Indigenous games are significant in that the person who gave the most challenge was honored, although being a humble winner was important. Respecting rules and competitors was essential, as was having skill, intuition and courage. Playing traditional Indigenous games was and still is a good way to build relationships and enjoy recreational activities. Invite an Elder or Knowledge Keeper in to share any information they may have on Traditional Indigenous Games or other games they may have played as a child.

Indigenous games were traditionally made using natural materials found in the environment. Today we aim to use natural materials when possible, to promote sustainability. Games are easily handmade by using willow sticks, with the exception of the shinny stick, which is commonly made from a chokecherry branch. Artificial sinew is used to wrap the sticks for making assorted size rings, and for string needed for some games. Rocks and pebbles are gathered wherever they are available in your environment. Stick pieces can be decorated using ribbons, beads, tape, string, markers, etc. The double ball is made using tanned hide, sinew and sand. Some of the playing pieces can be made in a shop class by older students. For example, the sticks for cikahkwanak or the sticks for the Hand Pull game.

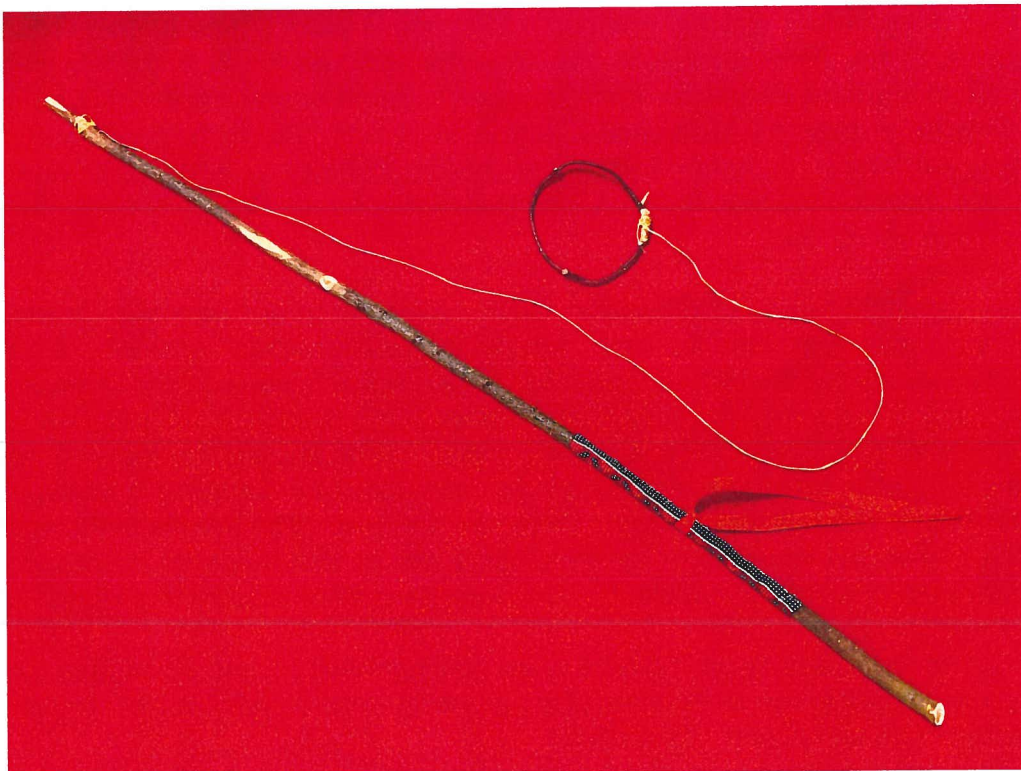
It is important to stress safety and respect when playing these games. Remind students to:

- Keep sticks below the waist when playing shinny, avoid physical contact, and be careful not to hit anyone with a stick.
- Be aware of the space around them and anyone in their space when playing double ball, ring the stick, and shinny and any other game that requires the swinging of a stick or object
- When throwing balls, aim at the targets or goals and not at other players
- When kicking in Kickball, use small controlled kicks

### **Ring the Stick**

This game is played to develop coordination and motor skills.

- Any number of players can play this game.
- Sticks are made using willow branches that can be decorated, carved, or left natural. The ring is made with a finer willow branch, bent into a circle, fastened with sinew and dried. The ring is attached to the end of the stick using a length of sinew. Sticks and rings can be decorated and made in various sizes to suit the ages and skill of the player.
- The player holds the end of the stick with the hoop laying flat on the ground, swings it upwards and as the ring comes down, the player tries to get the end of the stick into the ring.
- Players take turns trying to ring the stick and the player who gets the most rings out of an agreed number of turns wins the game.





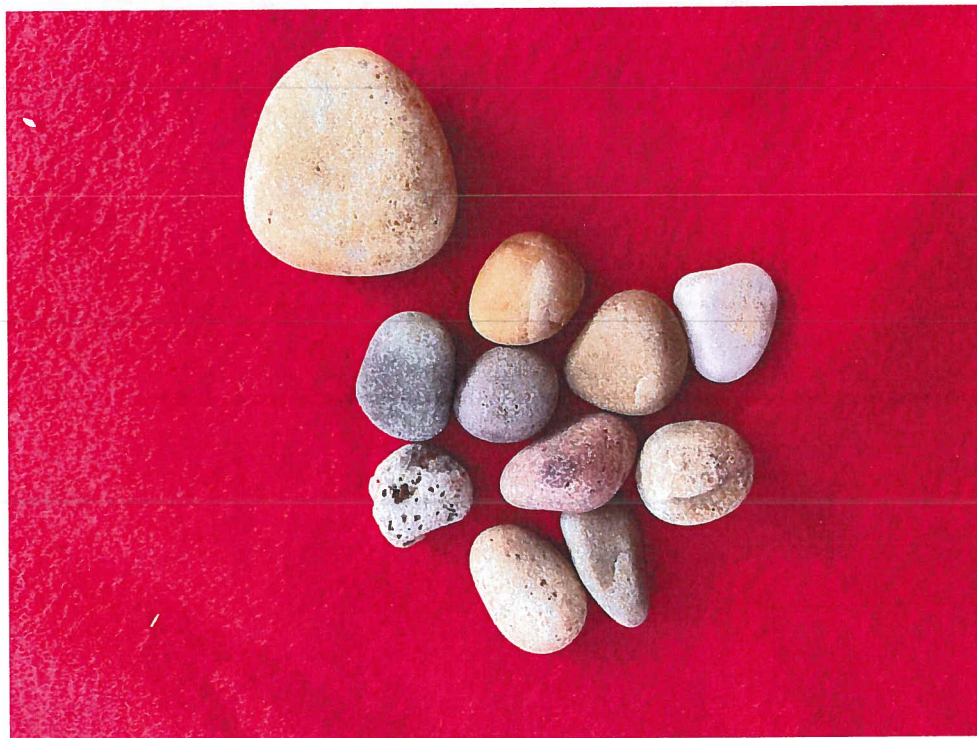




### **Gathering Stones**

This game promotes dexterity, fine motor skills and accuracy. It is an activity much like the game of Jacks.

- Any number of players may play.
- 8-10 pebbles (jacks) plus one slightly larger rock (tossing rock) are used to play this game.
- Scatter rocks loosely onto a play area by gently tossing them. The players take turns tossing the rock into the air, picking up one pebble and catching the tossing rock again before it hits the play area, all with the same hand. Repeat the process, increasing the number of pebbles picked up by one, with each turn. Each player continues the process until they drop the tossing rock or a pebble, then it is another player's turn.
- The object of the game is to pick up as many pebbles as possible before catching the tossed rock.
- If needed, more pebbles can be added to increase the challenge, or smaller/bigger pebbles can be used.





### **Guessing the Sticks**

This is a guessing game to test perception, intuition, observation, and estimating skills.

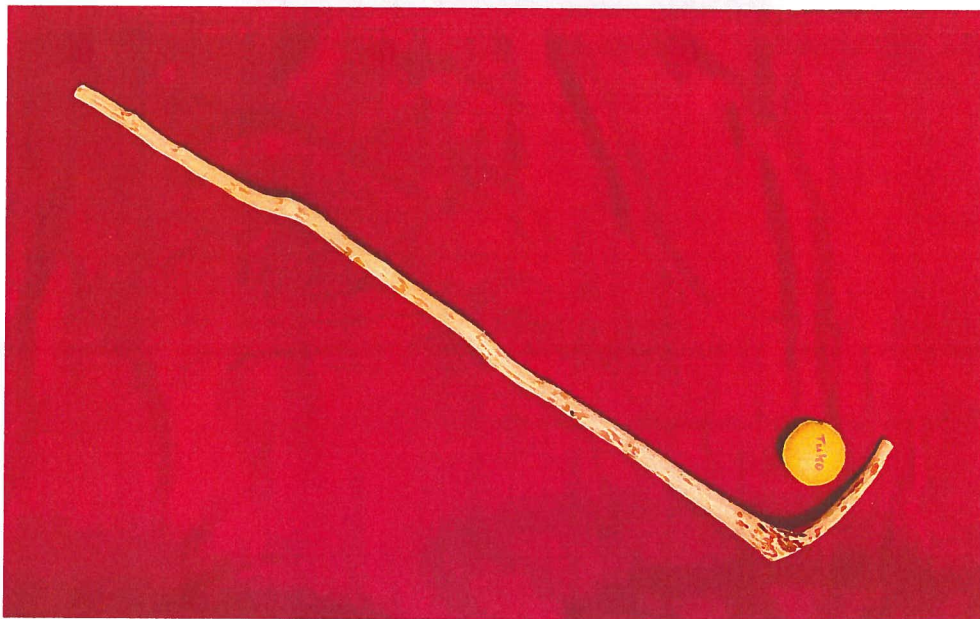
- This game is played in pairs.
- Using at least 20 small willow branches or sticks about 20 cm long, one player will hold the sticks in one hand. The player divides the bundle of sticks in two hands and quickly shows the other player the divided bundles. The remaining player will estimate the number of sticks held in each hand.
- The object of the game is to correctly estimate the number of sticks in each hand, with only one quick look.
- The winner of the guess is given one of the three counting pegs, which are decorated with ribbons, beads, feathers, markers, etc.. The winner of the game is the person who accumulates all or the most counting pegs after a set period of time.



### **Shinny**

This game promotes gross motor skills, accuracy, stamina, speed and dexterity.

- Played in two teams with 5-10 participants on each team, depending on the size of the playing field.
- The game is played using a stick which is about 3 feet long and is curved at one end. The ball used to be made of two circles of tanned hide, which was stuffed with hair and stitched together. (Contemporary games are played using a hockey stick and any small soft ball).
- Traditionally these games were played on ice. Today, they can be played on a soccer or football field with a goal at each end.
- Divide the players into two teams, one team on each side of the field. To start the game, a ball is then tossed into the middle of the field.
- Players move the ball up the field and shoot it into the opposing team's goal. The ball cannot touch any part of the body, only the sticks can be used to play.
- Play for a set amount of time and the team with the most goals wins. Traditionally, the game was played without any rest periods and the first team to score a goal was the winner.



### **Mini Hand Games**

This is a guessing game that utilizes intuition and the reading of body language.

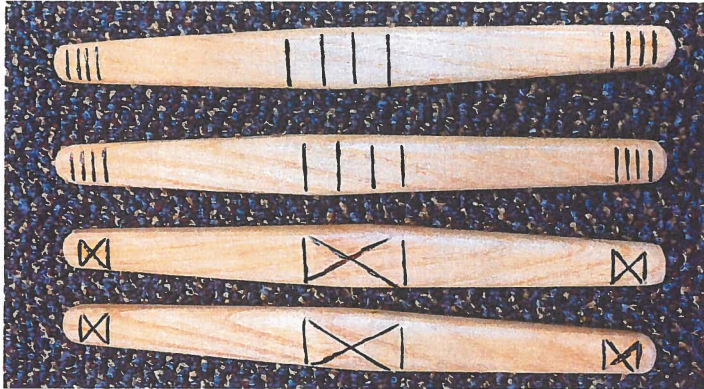
- This version of the game is played in pairs.
- In this smaller version of hand games you will need one rock and 3 willow sticks per pair of competitors.
- The object of the game is to guess which hand your opponent is hiding the rock in.
- The first player holds both hands behind their back and hides the rock in one hand. He/she then holds both hands straight in front of them for their opponent to guess which hand the rock is in. If the guesser fails to guess the hand with the rock, the player hiding the rock gets a stick.
- Continue this until the guesser guesses the correct hand with the rock in it.
- Once there is a correct guess, there is no stick won, but it is then the guessers turn to hide the rock.
- The game continues until one player wins all three sticks.



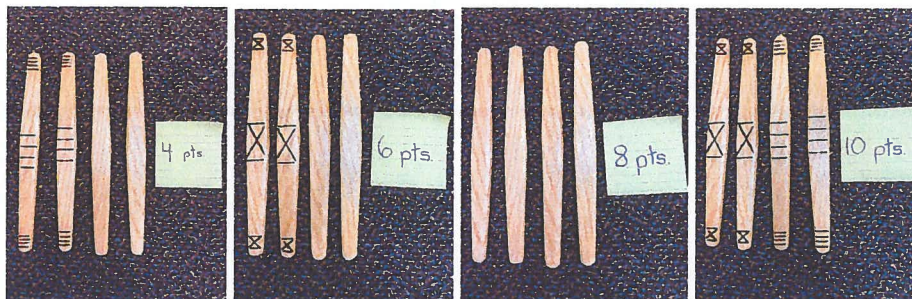
**Cikâkwanak**

This is a game of chance and historically was a gambling game where bets ranged from hides, moccasins, horses, or anything else that was valuable to participants.

- Groups of 2-10 people can play.
- The object of the game is to be the last player remaining with points left.
- Needed for the game are: 4 12" sticks - with markings on one side, as shown in the picture, and blank on the other side. 4 ten point sticks and 10 one point sticks or chips for each player.



- Each player is given 50 points in the form of 4 ten point sticks and 10 one point sticks/chips.
- Players take turns tossing the cikâkwanak and collecting the points from each of the other players. The value of each cikâkwanak toss ranges from 4 to 10, depending on the combination. See pictures below for point values. If a toss results in a different combination than what is shown, the player gets no points for that toss.



- As each player loses all their points, they are out of the game.

### **Basket Pattern Game**

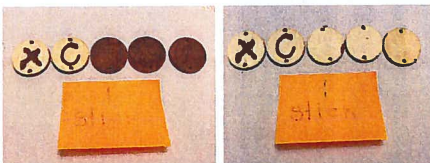
This is a game of chance and pattern recognition.

- The game is played in groups of 2, 3 or 4
- A basket, 5 antler slices with markings on them, and 7 points sticks for each player were used in the past. Today we can use a basket or bowl and wooden or plastic chips with markings on them. A score card showing the value/points is also needed.
- Each player takes turns flipping the chips in the basket and matching the patterns on the points card. The pattern that you match indicates how many point sticks the other players give you for your toss.
- Players will flip the chips over the rim of the basket and then catch them again in the basket. If chips fall on the floor, they can still be counted.
- Players continue taking turns until they have no more point sticks left.

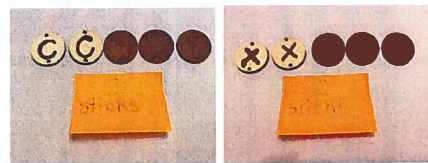


### **Basket Pattern Game Point System**

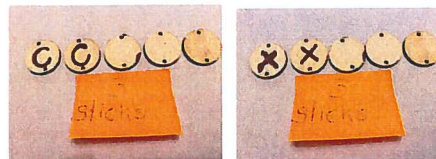
1 stick/point



2 sticks/points



3 sticks/points







### **Hand Games**

This game promotes the practice and improvement of intuition and the reading of body language. Elaborate hand signals, gestures and songs are used while hiding, and guessing the location of small playing pieces or “bones”.

- Any number of people can play, with each team having a leader.
- Teams sit across from each other in a row and take turns being the hiding team and the guessing team. The hiding team may use blankets, tarps or jackets in front of them to cover their hands while hiding the bones.
- Hand Games are typically played with two pairs of “bones”. One bone in each pair is plain while the other is striped.
- Each team has ten sticks which are used as counters.
- Teams take turns being the guessing team and the hiding team. Two members of the hiding team take a pair of bones each and hide them, one in each hand. The team sings, uses rattles, sticks, and drums, and tries to distract the guessing team while they hide the bones.
- Teams will decide ahead of time whether they will guess where the plain bones or the striped bones are. A member of the guessing team will guess the pattern of the four hidden bones. There are four possibilities - both to the left, both to the right, both inside or both outside.
- For each wrong guess, the guessers must give the hidiers one stick. If a hider is guessed, he must give up the guessed bones to the guessing side.
- They continue hiding and singing until both pairs of bones have been correctly guessed and given up.
- The game continues with teams switching from the guessing team to the hiding team until one team wins all the sticks.



### **Doubleball**

This game promotes endurance, speed, dexterity and large motor skills.

- This team sport consists of two teams with 5-10 players on each team.
- Historically this was a women's game but is now played by anyone. It was also historically played on a very large field, up to a mile in length, with many players on each team.
- Play occurs on an open field or gym with a goal at both ends of the playing area. If playing outdoors, the tripods should be about 12 feet in height with the cross pieces about 10 feet high. The cross piece should be about 10 feet long so that each goal is 10 feet wide. An indoor goal should be smaller - shorter and narrower, with the tripod being about 3 feet tall. Each goal was made of two - three stick tripods with a longer stick running from one tripod to the other. (smaller tripods can be used for younger children)
- One point is earned by tossing a ball under the horizontal pole. Two points are earned by tossing the ball over the horizontal pole. Three points are earned by wrapping the ball around, or hanging the ball on the pole.
- Each player uses a stick about three feet long to pick up and propel the ball.
- The double ball is made using two round pieces of leather, at either end of a length of leather. Leather circle pieces are sewn together and filled with sand, while the length of leather is sewn to the round pieces, holding both ends together.
- One player throws the ball toward the center of the field and players use their sticks to pick up the ball and throw it to another player. Travelling by carrying the ball on a stick is not allowed and the ball must be continuously passed from one player to another. The ball can only be touched with the stick, and not by the players hands or feet.
- Players can try to hook the ball by knocking it off the other player's stick (this must be done with safety in mind or not allowed) and pass it to another player or can score a goal by throwing the ball across the goal line, using their stick.
- The teams can play for a set amount of time and the team with the most points wins.
- For small children, this game can be practiced by having students stand in a circle and the adult passing the doubleball from the middle of the circle to each child. Each child then passes the ball back to the person in the middle of the circle.



