

AMERICAN INDIAN GAMES

Games were played in all tribes to practice sports, music, dance, and other art forms by both grown-ups and children. A lot of time was spent in making the game pieces, learning the rules, and practicing the skills of the game so they would be good at it when played. Girls and boys imitated adults as they learned the skills and behavior they would need when they grew up.

Little girls played with dolls made of squash or corn stalks or deerskin dolls stuffed with antelope hair with bead eyes and horsehair braids to imitate the women in taking care of babies. Their grandmothers would make clothes and cradles for the dolls. Girls played several ball games by using a big, soft leather ball stuffed with antelope hair. A game much the same as Hacky-sack played today, they tried to see who could kick the ball in the air the most times before it hit the ground. It was said that some could keep the ball in the air for more than 100 times! Older women played this game using fancier balls decorated with porcupine quills. Women and girls also played another ball game where they used long, hooked sticks to move the ball past their opponents to a goal, which was usually two stakes in the ground.

Little boys imitated the men in the tribe by pretending they were on a real hunt. Some were hunters and some were the animals to be hunted. They had small bows and blunt-tipped arrows made by their fathers to use to shoot at targets or small animals and birds. They also liked to get together and pretend they were raiding their own village taking off with some meat or other food. Older boys played a game called "Follow the Bad Road." In this game, the boys followed each other and if one of them stumbled or fell, he would have to go to the end of the line. This game helped the boys develop, strength, agility, and surefootedness.

Both boys and girls around the ages of 8-10 played a game called "Follow the Leader" where the children formed a line and took hold of the shirt or dress of the child in front of them. They would march through the village singing and following the leader everywhere. Sometimes they would stop in front of other lodges to sing to the adults. This game would allow these children to get to know other places in the village that they may not have been familiar with. It also kept them in groups, thereby making it easier for the adults to watch them.

<http://www.nativetech.org/games/index.php> - Several online interactive games such as Interactive Bead Graph, Keep it in the Air, Traditional Gambling, Guess

the Plant Name, Match the Design, etc. plus a large assortment of Native American games for children to play. Excellent site!

<http://hsc.unm.edu/pathways/assets/download/aigames.pdf> A large selection of modified American Indian games. In PDF format.

<http://www.uwlax.edu/MVAC/Knowledge/NAGames.htm> Several selections of American Indian games from many tribes.

<http://www.manataka.org/page184.html> A large selection of Native American games.

This packet includes a few games that can be played in the classroom or on the playground. Our challenge to each student is to research and play more American Indian games, particularly ones played by the American Indians of North Dakota! Ideas include:

1. Have students research additional games Plains Indians played.
2. Have students teach a game to the entire class.
3. Have students create the game pieces for an Indian game, explain the game to a partner or a small group, and then play the game with them. Change groups and play it again with a new partner or small group.
4. Have students use a two-circle Venn Diagram (Assessments) to compare and contrast games played today by many children with those played by American Indians of North Dakota in the 1800s.

Stick Passing Game

(Powwow Celebration Box)

1. Arrange the children in a circle. Give one child a bone, and give each of the other children a stick (e.g., popsicle stick, twig, etc.)
2. Keep a beat with a drum. Players pass the sticks and bone in time with the beat in the following fashion: Tap the stick (or bone) on the ground (first beat), tap it again (second beat), pass it to the player on your right while receiving from the player on the left (third beat), change the new stick (or bone) from the left hand to the right hand (fourth beat).
3. When the music stops, the player holding the bone gives the bone to the player on his right, then leaves the circle, joining the rhythm makers and keeping beat with drums, bells, or hand clapping. The winner of the game is the last child to remain in the circle.

Hubbub

(More Than Moccasins)

Materials Needed:

- 5 plastic water bottle tops or something similar
- Small basket or plastic container
- 50 counting sticks (popsicle sticks)
- Permanent marker

- 1) Use the marker to draw designs on the tops. Be creative with your designs.
- 2) Make two of the tops the same (e.g., x's) on one side only
- 3) Make the other three tops the same but different from the first two (e.g., stars *) on one side only.
- 4) To play, place the tops in the container and toss into the air.
- 5) Let them fall to the ground before counting up the points.
- 6) To score:

▪ 1 of either kind	0
▪ 2 X's	3
▪ 3 stars and 2 blanks	3
▪ 2 X's and 3 blanks	3
▪ 4 marked sides up	1
▪ 5 blank sides up	1
▪ 5 marked sides up	8
- 7) Take as many counting sticks as you earned points.
- 8) When all 50 counting sticks are gone, count up your points to see who has the most points. That person wins the game.

STICK GAME

(More Than Moccasins)

Materials Needed:

- 4 popsicle sticks or tongue depressors
- 12 counting sticks (toothpicks)
- Permanent marker

- 1) Mark one side of one popsicle stick with a design. Leave the other side blank. Be creative with your designs.
- 2) Mark another popsicle stick with another design, leaving the other side blank.
- 3) Mark the remaining two popsicle sticks the same, leaving the opposite side blank.
- 4) Either two players can play or two teams can play. Each player plays against the person sitting across from him or her.
- 5) Use the 12 toothpicks for keeping score. Place them in a pile between the two players.
- 6) To play, hold the four stick dice (popsicle sticks) in your hand and then drop them to the ground.
- 7) Count up your score according to the number of points for each stick combination. Take that many counting sticks.
- 8) To score:
 - 3 blank + 1 design = 6
 - 2 the same design + 1 of each design = 4
 - 2 blank + 2 different designs = 2
 - 2 blank + 1 of each design = 0
 - 1 blank + 1 of each design = 0
- 9) When the counting sticks are all taken from the pile on the ground, the players should begin taking them from each other's pile. The first player (or team) to earn all 12 sticks wins the game.

HIDDEN STICK GAME

(<http://www.uwlax.edu/MVAC/Knowledge/NAGames.htm>)

Materials Needed:

- Several popsicle sticks or toothpicks
- Permanent marker

- 1) Mark a dot on one stick.
- 2) To play, one person mixes up the sticks, closes his or her eyes, then divides the sticks into two piles.
- 3) The first player puts his or her hands over both piles so that the marked stick cannot be seen.
- 4) The other player then selects one of the piles.
- 5) Both players look over their sticks, and the one with the marked stick wins.

KEEPER OF THE FIRE

(Would You Have Gone With Lewis and Clark?)

Materials Needed:

- 3 small twigs
- Blindfold for each group of 4-6 students

- 1) Select someone to be blindfolded. This person kneels in front of a small pile of twigs representing a fire. His or her job is to protect the fire and to keep anyone who comes near it away.
- 2) One other person from a team of four to five students quietly sneak up behind the keeper to try and steal one or more of the twigs.
- 3) The object is to try and get all 3 of the twigs. When all three twigs are taken or if the attackers were touched each time they attempted to steal a twig, a new keeper is chosen and the game resumes.

BOWL GAME

(<http://www.nativetech.org/games/dicegame/>) – This site lets you play this game interactively with the computer.

Materials Needed:

- 6 plastic water bottle caps (all the same color)
- Large flat bowl or pie pan
- 48 counting sticks (toothpicks or popsicle sticks)
- Permanent marker

- 1) Draw a different design on one side of each water bottle cap, leaving the opposite side blank.
- 2) To play, toss the bowl full of caps in the air and catch them in the bowl.
- 3) To score, count one point for a cap with a design and zero points for the blank side.
- 4) When the 48 sticks are gone, count them up to see who has the most.

To make the game more complicated, devise your own scoring system of points for various combinations of designs and blanks. Make sure all players agree with the new point system.

HAND GAME

(<http://library.thinkquest.org/4289/indiangames.html>)

Materials Needed:

- Button, bead, shell, stone, or small piece of bone
- 6 counting sticks (toothpicks)

- 1) The two players sit on the ground facing each other.
- 2) The first player holds the object and switches it back and forth between his or her hands to try and confuse the other player.
- 3) The first player makes two fists and the other player guesses which hand holds the hidden button.
- 4) If the second player guesses correctly, he or she takes a counting stick and takes the next turn.
- 5) The winner is the one who holds all 6 sticks.

FEATHERED DARTS

(<http://www.nativetech.org/games/wheel&dart.html>)

The Mandan and Hidatsa children of North Dakota made darts from deer antlers and feathers and slid them along the frozen ground or ice to see who could make theirs go farthest.

Materials Needed:

- Cereal box
- Colored paper
- Scissors
- Stapler or Tape

- 1) Cut a large triangle shape from the side of the box. Roll it into a cone and either staple or tape it to hold it securely.
- 2) Cut out two paper feathers or attach feathers to the wide end of the cone.
- 3) Toss the darts on the ground with the narrow end in front to see how far it slides.

HOOP and LANCE/POLE

(<http://www.manataka.org/page185.html>)

Materials Needed:

- Wire coat hanger (simulates a willow branch)
- Duct tape
- Heavy cardboard from cardboard boxes

- 1) Make a hoop by taping a wire coat hanger into a circle.
- 2) Prop the hoop in a doorway.
- 3) Cut lances from the cardboard.
- 4) Take turns, stand back, and try to toss them into the hoop.

There are many variations and modifications to playing this game.

RING and PIN

(<http://www.nativetech.org/games/ring&pin.html>)

Many tribes played this type of game to improve their agility. Animal bones, pumpkin rinds, or moose hair in the shape of a hoop all were used to make the target. Choose whatever you have to make your own target or create your own by following the directions below.

Materials Needed:

- Pencil
- Yarn or string 24 inches or 2 feet long
- Cardboard circle 3 inches in diameter
- Use a hole punch to make holes in the cardboard. Make a larger hole in the center of the circle and decorate it if you want.

- 1) Tie one end of the yarn or string to the end of the pencil with a tight knot.
- 2) Tie the other end of the yarn or string to the target.
- 3) To play, hold the stick, toss the target into the air, and catch it on the pencil.
- 4) Make up your own point system.

RING TOSS

(More Than Moccasins)

Materials Needed:

- 2 plastic lids, one larger than the other
- Green, blue, and white yarn
- Scissors

- 1) Cut out the center of each lid leaving a plastic ring.
- 2) Wrap and knot white yarn around the smaller ring.
- 3) Wrap and knot the green and blue yard in 4 sections around the larger ring.
- 4) To play, toss the larger hoop on the ground. Then aim carefully and toss the smaller hoop so it lands inside the larger hoop.
- 5) If the ring lands inside, the player gets two points. If it lands on a green section, it counts one point and landing on blue gets zero points.

TCHUNG-KEE (CHUN-KEE)

(<http://www.nps.gov/knri/teach/games.htm>)

(http://www.inquiry.net/outdoor/native/games/mandan_ring.htm)

This may have been the most popular sport among the Hidatsa and Mandan boys and men, as well as other tribes. A special field was constructed outside of the village where the ground was smoothed and packed hard for a distance around 50 yards, and bushes were planted around the sides as a windbreak. Logs were placed on each side of the field to keep the playing sticks and balls from going off the field.

- 1) The game was played in teams, with two opposing men competing in each turn.
- 2) Each player carried two poles about 7 or 8 feet long, with bunches of feathers or leather tied onto them at regular intervals.
- 3) Starting at the same end of the playing area, the men ran together, side by side, each carrying a pole in a horizontal position.
- 4) One of them rolled a round, polished stone with a hole in the center in front of them, and each threw his stick, trying to spear the tchung-kee stone.
- 5) Points were counted for the “deepest” catch, as measured by the feathers or leather straps.
- 6) If neither player had caught the stone on his pole, the one who came closest was considered the winner and got to throw the stone the next time.

DOUBLE BALL

(<http://www.nps.gov/knri/teach/games.htm>)

This was the most popular women's game of the Mandan and Hidatsa, largely played by young, unmarried women.

- 1) The game consisted of three teams using two deerskin balls tied together by a leather strap and then tossed around from sticks 5 to 6 feet long.
- 2) Two of the teams were on defense and the other on offense at any given time.
- 3) Goal posts were often low-hanging tree branches about a quarter of a mile apart.
- 4) To begin the game, the "double-ball" was laid on the ground between the teams.
- 5) At a signal, the players rushed forward, the object being to catch the ball with their sticks, throw it into the air and then, by passing it to one another, throw it over the goal post.

FOOT RACES

(<http://www.nps.gov/knri/teach/games.htm>)

Indians enjoyed running, and it kept them fast for hunting. They competed against other villages.

- 1) On the day of the race, half of the runners went to each end of the track. They ran in relays, handing off a willow stick to waiting runners.
- 2) The two sides raced back and forth until a team was so far ahead the other team could not catch up or until a team admitted they were too tired to run anymore.
- 3) NOTE: A Mandan race track was three miles long, which they ran over three times!