

# EDUCATION DAY



## Canadian Aboriginal Festival

November 25, 2005 • Rogers Centre (Skydome) • Toronto

OTF/FEO



## Curriculum Connections

### Traditional Aboriginal Games

#### Grade 3

- Describe Aboriginal communities prior to European settlement

#### Grade 6

- Identify ways the environment molded Canadian Aboriginal cultures
- Describe the relationship between Aboriginal people and their environment
- Identify contributions of Aboriginal people to the social life of Canada

#### KEY CONCEPTS

- Games taught important skills and teachings, as well as entertained children and adults
- Games were taught and traded by/with other tribes
- Many of the games we have today derived from aboriginal games
- Toys were part of Aboriginal children's lives which taught them skills needed later in life

#### BACKGROUND

- Games are an important part of Aboriginal society, passed down from generation to generation. Games teach cooperation, team work and social skills. Some games also teach other essential skills such as target practice, hand/eye coordination, agility, and dexterity. They were important for the emotional, physical, and mental development of the community members. Games also provide a good form of exercise and leisure activity for the young and the old. Many games were played in the winter- time.

- Games were shared or traded with other tribes resulting in common games amongst Aboriginal people. Men and women usually played separately and children usually played scaled-down versions of the grown-up games. Many of the games we play today are derived from the traditional games of Aboriginal people.
- When the First Nations people joined in marriage with the European people during the fur trade, a distinct culture was formed. The Métis people were offspring of the First Nations people and the voyageurs. Work during the fur trade was very difficult and required great strength, determination, and agility to paddle and carry heavy loads. The Métis people came to be known for their competitiveness. Their games displayed the same competitiveness, determination, and strength shown in their work. Some games played by the Métis are: cream can carry, log carry, string games, tag, hide and seek, tug-of-war, sling-shot, hatchet throw, and wrestling.
- One particular game that was played was a map game where children had to follow directions given to find other players. This helped to improve their communication skills, encouraged cooperation and problem-solving. They also had competitions in which heavy sacks or cream cans were carried which measured distance and speed. These games are still enjoyed at Annual Assemblies and gatherings.

- Aboriginal people are very resourceful at getting the materials they need from the environment. Games are usually played with rocks, sticks, or claws. Many tribes have similar games. Some examples of games played by Aboriginal people are:
  - cat's cradle and other string games
  - team ball games (handball, stickball, shinny)
  - puzzles (Three-in-a-Row)
  - Games of Chance (Bone Dominoes, cribbage, darts. Bowl and Dice...)
  - juggling
  - archery
  - tug-of-war
- There were also competitive games such as footraces, hoop-and-pole and games of chance. Friendly wagers were sometimes placed on certain games. Some plains people were known to bet their horses or their shirts.

## Toys

- Aboriginal children had toys as we do today but toys usually had to get left behind as families traveled from campsite to campsite. Toys were used for amusement as well as for role-playing and learning tools as they are still used today. Play was work for children. For example: dolls and miniature weapons. They taught skills that would be needed later in life. Girls sewed doll clothes, decorated cradleboards, and constructed miniature wigwams.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Try these Aboriginal games:

### Ring on a String

- This game originated with the Bella Coola people of the west coast of Canada. A small ring is suspended on a long string held in the hands of a circle of players. While the circle of players secretly passes the ring from hand to hand, one individual in the centre tries to guess who has the ring in their hand. Players try to distract the centre person's attention by waving, singing, making faces or calling to them. Players may pass the ring in either direction and they do not

want the centre person to guess the location of the ring. The centre person gets 3 chances to guess correctly. The person who has the ring and gets caught goes in to the middle next.

### Dox-en-Eye

- This game originated with the Haida people from Queen Charlotte Islands area. It is similar to the European game called Red Rover. The activity begins with two equal sized teams facing each other in 2 lines about 5 metres apart. Team 1 begins with the Dox-en-Eye stick. A member of the team holds the stick and thumps it on the ground and calls Dox-en-Eye, Dox-en-Eye, we want Jasmine to come. Jasmine, from Team 2, then has to walk across to team 1, without smiling, and take the Dox-en-Eye stick then walk backwards back to her own team, still without smiling. If she doesn't smile, she gets to stay with her team. If she smiles, she must join the other team. Team 1 must stay standing in their line and they cannot touch Jasmine but they can do anything to try and make her smile. Funny faces, sounds, silly sayings are all fair. The object of the game is for everyone to end up on the same team.

### Stick Catch

- The origin of this Aboriginal game is not known. This game can be played individually or with a partner. Players collect some small straight sticks about 15 cm long and about the diameter of a pencil. Starting with one stick, participants balance the stick across the back of their hand. They must then drop their hand away and quickly try to catch the stick with that same hand before it falls to the ground. As each player successfully catches the stick, the number of sticks balanced on the back of the hand is increased. Players must catch all of the sticks successfully each time before increasing the number of sticks. Students have been successful at catching up to 26 sticks at once during this game.

## BACK TO SCHOOL: IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Research a traditional Aboriginal game

Discover:

- the original name of the game
- the Aboriginal people who played the game
- the equipment needed
- the object and purpose of the game
- how to play the game and teach it to the class during a Phys. Ed period

Compare and contrast games from different tribes.  
Learn the Aboriginal names of the traditional games.  
Read the story, The Youth Who Was Pakakus and play the game that follows.  
(<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/games>)

## RESOURCES

Forest Valley Outdoor Education Centre. [Aboriginal Games](#).  
Toronto District School Board

Aboriginal Festival Education Day 2004 Curriculum

Buller, Laura. [Native Americans: An Inside Look at the Tribes and Traditions](#). Dorling Kindersley Ltd; New York, 2001.

Henley, Thom. [Rediscovery](#). Lone Pine Publishing, 1989.

## WEBSITES

<http://www.civilization.ca/aborig/stones/toys/tymenu.htm>

[www.gamesmuseum.uwaterloo.ca/VirtualExhibits](http://www.gamesmuseum.uwaterloo.ca/VirtualExhibits)  
<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/games>

[www.kstrom.net](http://www.kstrom.net)

[http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Traditions/English/teachers\\_corner\\_02.htm](http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Traditions/English/teachers_corner_02.htm)

[http://www.avcnet.org/ne-do-ba/mc\\_gam01.html](http://www.avcnet.org/ne-do-ba/mc_gam01.html)

