

National Indigenous Physical Activity Awareness Week

Family Toolkit

Show us your active family!

Introduction

The Indigenous Physical Activity & Cultural Circle (IPACC) is a registered non-profit organization and a network for Indigenous people who are or want to be involved in Sports, Recreation, Fitness and Traditional Activities. IPACC's mission is to create a community of mentors, leaders, participants, and supporters who promote physical activity as a way to health and wellness.

IPACC is also the official host of National Indigenous Physical Activity Awareness Week (NIPAAW), held annually from June 21st to June 27th. The intent of the week is to promote physical activity within our urban and rural Indigenous communities through simple and fun initiatives.

This toolkit was designed in collaboration with community members and existing publications. It is a small collective of traditional Indigenous games from across the land which we now call Canada. Traditionally games were used for entertainment but also to develop the necessary skills for physical fitness and survival such as harvesting and hunting.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit has been developed to support friends, families, and communities to be physically active together through a variety of traditional Indigenous games.

This toolkit can be used alone, or alongside other NIPAAW resources. This toolkit has been designed to be inclusive, so that everyone can join in! If you see someone who might be feeling left out, ask them how they would like to be included.

Plan to get active! There are seven days in total during NIPAAW, so this toolkit includes seven different activities. The first day of NIPAAW is on National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21st. This is great time to bring together your friends and family and to celebrate your wellness together. Plan out the rest of your week: think about what time you will meet, where you will play the games (make sure you have enough space), and make sure you have any equipment you might need for your activity.

Talk to your Elders! Ask Elders which you are connected with about their experiences with traditional games. Are there any traditional games from your home community? If you are away-from-home, are there any games from the traditional territory which you are on? Are the games you want to play appropriate (they might be connected to ceremonies in some communities)?

And most importantly, *have fun!*

The importance of getting active together

Physical activity is beneficial across the lifespan, contributing to wellness of the body, mind, and spirit¹. Community-based physical activity programs have been shown to have positive results, including improvements in blood pressure and cholesterol, increased physical activity levels and fitness levels, and decreased waist circumference². Families who participate in physical activity together also see improvements in their physical activity levels with improvements in children's' movement skills, as well as reduced screen times³.

7 Days of Activities

During NIPAAW, we want to support friends, families, and communities to be physically active together. We also want to celebrate diversity, and let participants try something new through a variety of traditional Indigenous games.

These games originate from Indigenous Nations across this land now called Canada. To help you plan for NIPAAW, here are 7 games to try on each of the days. There is also some space provided at the end of this book to write down your own games or activities.

1. West Coast - Sto:lo Nation

Lahal, Slahal (Bone Game)

Age Group: 6+ years

Space: Indoor or outdoor space, large enough for participants to line up facing each other.

People and Groupings: 2+ participants, sitting facing each other

Equipment

10 sticks, 5 for each team

4 bones (2 sets)

Each team has 1 king stick

1 or 2 drums - optional

¹ Warburton, D. E. R., Nicol, C. W., & Bredin, S. S. D. (2006). Health benefits of physical activity: The evidence. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 174(6), 801-809. doi:10.1503/cmaj.051351

² Foulds, H. J. A., Bredin, S. S. D., & Warburton, D. E. R. (2011). The effectiveness of community based physical activity interventions with aboriginal peoples. *Preventive Medicine*, 53(6), 411-416. doi:10.1016/j.ypmed.2011.09.008

³ Morgan, P. J., Young, M. D., Barnes, A. T., Eather, N., Pollock, E. R., & Lubans, D. R. (2019). Engaging fathers to increase physical activity in girls: The "dads and daughters exercising and empowered" (DADEE) randomized controlled trial. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine: A Publication of the Society of Behavioral Medicine*, 53(1), 39-52. doi:10.1093/abm/kay015

How to play

The two teams sit face to face and a captain is chosen from each team.

Each team is given one set of bones and the captains select one person on their team to hold them.

In a friendly manner (e.g. flip a coin), choose which team will guess first. The captain guesses in which hand the opposing team's holder has hidden the plain bone.

The guessing team's holder then places his/her bones so they match the position of the other team's bones; they both then show their bones.

If they match, the guessing team wins the king stick and the possession of both sets of bones. If they do not match, the other team has an opportunity to guess to win the stick.

Whichever team wins possession of the king stick and the bones begins the game.

The object of the game is to win all of your opponent's sticks, plus the king stick. This is done by guessing the position of the bones hidden in different participant's hands.

(High Five, n.d.)

Fun Tip:

Paint or decorate your own sticks – just make sure the plain bone and the king bone are distinct

2. Prairies - Blackfoot

Make the Stick Jump

Age Group: 6 - 12 years

Space: Open outdoor area, like a field.

People and Groupings: 2+ participants.

Equipment:

Sticks 6 – 8 inches long

Rocks or bean bags or even a ball

String

How to play

Use a string to make a line across an open area.

Give each participant a 6 - 8" stick (you may choose to have each participant decorate their stick with feathers or other materials).

Participants place their sticks into the ground (one end sticking up), various distances from the line.

Standing behind the line, participants each receive a set number of rocks or bean bags to throw

at the sticks.

If a participant hits a stick and “makes it jump”, that participant is awarded the pre-determined amount of points.

Numbers of points are awarded to each stick, with closer sticks being less points and farther sticks being more points.

The participant with the most points wins the game.

(High Five, n.d.)

Did you know?

Make the Stick Jump was a favorite game of Blackfoot boys, this game was supposed to improve throwing accuracy of boys who went out to skills small birds or rabbits. They would carve a 6-8 inch stick and would decorate it with feathers. They would use multiple sticks and distance them from a variety of distances. The farther the sticks, the more points they are worth. The boys would then all be standing at a starting line, they would try and throw rocks at the sticks. If a rock hits a stick then the person that throws it will get that many points.

<https://fnmigamesforpe.weebly.com/blackfoot-gamesactivities.html>

Fun tip:

Use bigger balls to make it easier to hit the sticks

For families, allow younger children throw at closer sticks, and older children to throw at the further sticks

Possibly have more than 1 line so younger children can stand closer and older children stand further?

3. Red River – Metis

The Map Game

Space: Outdoor area, like a park or wooded area.

People and Groupings: 4+ participants.

Equipment:

Paper

Something to draw with like a marker

“A distinctly Métis game, the map game, helped develop children’s ability to give and follow directions and promoted interaction between boys and girls.

One of two teams hid while the captain drew a map for the opposing team, detailing the position of the hidden children. The map could be made very confusing, but had to be legible. The opposing team would have to find the hidden children using this map. Once all the children were found, the opposing team hid and the captain drew a map. At each turn, the captain changed to allow every child an opportunity to draw a map.”

<http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/db/00724>

Fun Tip:

Try hiding in positions that form a shape or object, and having the opposing team guess the shape/object in the end for bonus points!

4. Central – Ojibwa

Butterfly Hide and Seek

Space: Indoors or outdoors

People and Groupings: 2+ participants.

Equipment: none

How to play

One person covers their eyes and sings a song. "Butterfly, butterfly, show me where to go."

Everyone else quickly and quietly hides. The singer has to find them without saying another word.

Did you know:

Butterfly Hide and Seek was a quiet game. Children were taught never to hurt a butterfly. To the Ojibwa people, it was considered a gift of good luck if you stayed so quiet that a butterfly would trust you and land on you.

Little girls played the butterfly game. One girl covered her eyes and sang a song. "Butterfly, butterfly, show me where to go." All the other little girls would quickly and quietly hide. The singer had to find them without saying another word. It was a game of skill. If you were

observant, you could tell where people were hiding by the marks they left as they moved around

<https://nativeamericans.mrdonn.org/northeast/ojibwa/butterflygame.html>

5. The East– Mi'kmaq Friendship Dance

Age Group: 5 - 12 years

Space:

An indoor or outdoor space large enough for participants to form a circle.

People and Groupings:

8+ participants.

How to play

Participants hold hands in a circle.

Move in a clockwise direction, taking three steps forward and one step back in time with the rhythm of the drum.

Did you know?

The Mi'kmaq performed different dances, depending on the occasion. The most common was the friendship dance, a simple dance that everyone could do.

(High Five)

6. The North (1) – Inuit Monkey Dance

The most popular of these games is Monkey Dance. No interviewees had a traditional name for this game but John Igloliorte referred to the game as "learning how to run" as it was thought people good at this game would be able to run fast (1994:29). In this game a person crouches low to the ground maintaining their balance on their heels while alternating kicking their right and left leg straight in front of them. This requires a high amount of strength, balance, and endurance. Often times this was done in a large group to see who could continue for the longest amount of time (Figure 2). Other variations on this game included trying to maintain the dance while removing and putting on a parka. (Hutchings, 2014)

Age Group: 8+ years

Space:

Open hard surface area, like an open gym space.

People and Groupings:

Small or large group. One or more circles depending on numbers.

How to play

The participants start in a squatting position, facing each other in a circle.

The dance involves kicking one leg out while maintaining the squat position with the other, alternating legs back and forth.

The dance ends when the last participant hits the floor.

Another option would be for the first person to hit the floor to go to the centre and continue playing. In each subsequent round participants who hit the floor go to the centre enabling the one in the middle to rejoin the outer circle. This would ensure more playing time for everyone.

Another recommendation I have is organizing two circles to play simultaneously. If one participant falls they join the other circle instead of being eliminated and vice versa. This way, there would be no elimination for children.

Can add variations to this game like attempting to maintain the dance while removing and putting on a coat.

(High Five, n.d.)

7. The North (2) – Inuit

Animal Muk

This “laughing game” was played during social gatherings, especially during the long dark months when blizzards were common. It also gave an opportunity for the hunters to enhance their animal calling skills and become more successful on hunts.

Age Group: All ages

Space: Open area, outdoors preferably but could be played indoors.

People and Groupings: Circle of 10+ participants

How to play

Participants do six animal sounds or actions common in the Northwest Territories; a seal, a goose, an owl, a black bear, a moose and a crow.

The participants form a circle with one person standing in the middle. The person in the middle uses only animal sounds or actions to make someone in the outside circle smile or laugh. Eye contact between the person in the middle and the person they selected in the circle must be maintained at all times.

If the person in the circle smiles, laughs, or breaks eye contact, he or she will take their turn in the middle to make someone else in the circle try to smile or laugh. Participants are not allowed any physical contact with their opponents.

Add other animals from around the world.

(High Five, n.d.)

8. Add your own games!

[Template]

Age Group:

Space:

People and Groupings:

How to play

Acknowledgements/References

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