



Indigenous Games

In the past, Indigenous people practiced a balanced, or holistic way of living that maintained and respected the natural forces within the environment and cosmos (Bastein, 2004). Their cultural activities, beliefs, motivation, and education were spiritually based among inter-dependent relationships within the universe that were held in ceremonies and stories. Ceremonies taught ancestral knowledge for successive generations to learn the natural relationships that guided moral and ethical conduct of the people. These ways of knowing were embedded into the daily activities to guide future generations in a continually changing environment (Bastein, 2004). Their daily activities included mastering their natural survival skills beginning in youth as games that would continue into adulthood as the youth learned new skills. Some of the games were age range and gender specific, whereas others were played by all members (Brady-Leader, 2012).

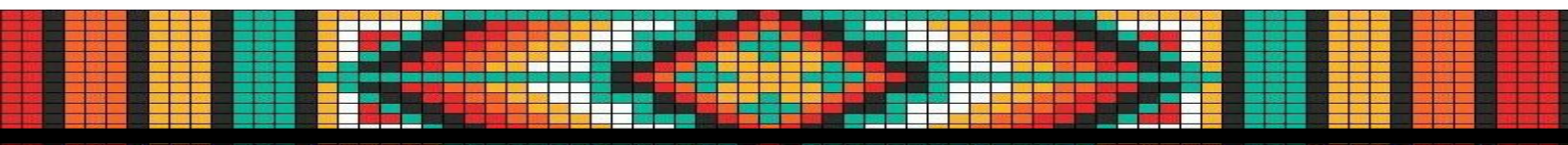
Kinesthetic, physical, mental, social and emotional development were enhanced naturally by participating in activities and games. “Creativity and art were woven into the way balls, arrows, game equipment and field goals were constructed” (Brady-Leader, 2012). Skills of intuition were played as games of intuition and chance that developed skills of “knowing” that connected with others, nature, animals and the universe. Development of the senses also became embedded into the games and activities that are designed to heighten observation, form strategies, and to improve strength and endurance for hunting, trapping and fishing (Brady-Leader, 2012; Pace, 2020).

“The ancient Blackfeet methods of learning and teaching has been validated by modern brain research” (Brady-Leader, 2012) that strongly promotes the importance of play for brain development. Play comes in many forms from free play that encourages creativity to structured play that trains the brain to develop stronger executive functions. Rough and tumble play is also encouraged by researchers as it has been found to build a more resilient brain that can better self-regulate and better adapt to life’s stressors (Pellis & Pellis, 2010; Flanders et al., 2009).

The International Traditional Games Society along with a group of tribal teachers from the State of Montana have been in the process of rediscovering their ancient education to include games and activities throughout the Americas with goals to restore their original ways of knowing and education (Brady-Leader, 2012). We have included some of these games in our website in video format with a document that includes some cultural information about each game or activity.

As all play is healthy for brain building in many ways, Building Brains Together would like to acknowledge some of the brain and behavioural aspects of the indigenous games while maintaining and appreciating their cultural origins.

Building Brains Together has worked with Mary Ellen Little Mustache who has graciously provided valuable information and viewing of some of the Traditional Indigenous Games. She is actively playing the games with all community members of Southern Alberta, indigenous and non-indigenous, to teach about the importance and relevance of the games for children and adults. Videos are available on our website at <https://www.buildingbrains.ca/blackfoot-games> We hope you enjoy our website.





References

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Indigenous Games for Children

<https://www.nscrd.com/uploads/document/files/indigenous-games-for-children-en.pdf>

The International Traditional Games Society

<https://www.traditionalnativegames.org/>

