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***Stick-and-Ball Game: The Creator's Game,  
Lacrosse with Chad Chief Moon***

“Lacrosse is known as the Creator’s game, also known as the medicine game to the indigenous people. It is a gift from the Creator. That is the main purpose of playing lacrosse and why I became involved with it. My son has played for about 11 years ever since he was 6 or 7 years of age and I fell in love with it”.



*Chad Chief Moon*

“We play it because it’s the Creator’s game; we play it for the Creator, and we get blessed. I’ve been on a healing journey with it for about four years now. Ever since I began my journey after recovery, lacrosse was right there from day one as I was watching my son play. I believe in it. I’m not involved with lacrosse for the money, I’m just in it for the blessings. I truly believe I’ve been blessed from the game. It gives me inner peace and if you love sports and you have a lot of faith, I believe lacrosse is the best way.”

“Lacrosse is also a healing game. When you’re playing the game, you ask for prayers. Most of those prayers are for children, your community and for the elders and this is why it is also referred to as the Medicine Game [1,3]. Right now, we need a lot of healing not just where I come from and everywhere there are drugs alcohol and poverty that comes with this world today. This game brings a lot of healing to a person, to myself, the younger children and the elders. We need to look out for them. It is a healing game and that’s why I love it” [1].

In the past, the indigenous played ‘stick and ball’ to settle disputes and because they honor the medicine and the entertainment the games offer to all [2,3].

Once a person has agreed to playing the Creator’s Game, they must get their body and mind ready for competition. “It is important to understand how the mind has the power to control your movements and thoughts. Medicines provided by the medicine man were taken to clean your body and to prepare it for the rigors of the game. Emotional control is also critical, so we don’t let emotions take over our senses for the game. There are spiritual aspects to the game. We offer tobacco to inspire the medicinal, spiritual, and ancestral worlds to play in peace but at its highest level.” This is the way Creator wanted everyone to play the game [2,3].



*Traditional lacrosse sticks made by a Lakota native. Photo: compliments of Mary Ellen Little Mustache.*



In addition to the various names for the game now referred to as Lacrosse, there were also variations with the style of play and types of sticks used that were grounded in regional and cultural indigenous nations. All aspects of the Creator's Game were rooted in each nation's spiritual, medicinal, and social livelihood. Similarities of the game among nations have been found through the oral traditions. "Animals as star players have been noted to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries among Indigenous nations." [2].

"There are 2 types of lacrosse games: box lacrosse and field lacrosse. Here in Canada box lacrosse that is played in an indoor rink is more popular than field lacrosse, played outdoors. It runs from spring well into summertime. Teams are in the play-offs in July, so the minor lacrosse teams are pretty much done right now. Presently, I am preparing the kids for the Alberta Indigenous Games, and we are continuing training into the second week of August" [1].

"The basic rules are similar to hockey with respect to putting the ball in the net (goal). There are 2 lines in the middle where two players face off for the ball and there is a crease in the goal area. There are not many rules. It is a rough sport and is physically demanding. Players need to learn to play safely. Off-side rules are not very common in box lacrosse. It's a very fast game- probably one of the fastest" [1].

The rules and regulations vary based on the level it is played, from beginner level to professional level. Modern day players wear protective gear of helmets, shoulder and elbow pads, and gloves. The stick each player plays with is unique to their position in the game [4].

Prayers are given prior to each game match for the purpose of playing an honest and fulfilling game for the Creator. Prayers also ask the creator for the wellbeing of children, elders, and community members.



A face-off between Team Alberta North American Indigenous Games (select) and Standing Buffalo Fighting Sioux. The ball sits between two sticks of the opposing teams.



The game of box lacrosse begins with a face-off where two players attempt to gain control of the ball for a pass to a teammate. There are five players and one goalie on the floor during a play interval [4,5].

The player who obtains the ball must attempt a goal within 30 seconds. The object of the game is to propel the ball via team members to the opponent's net. Players attempting to make a goal by throwing the ball into the net using their stick cannot enter the goalie's crease [5].



Foul is called on players who enter the crease and the ball is passed to the opposing team [5].



Penalties can be minor or major and can result in loss of possession of the ball or timeouts lasting two to five minutes. Cross-checking and body checking are allowed in box lacrosse; however, fighting, high sticking, holding, and elbowing are usually considered improper conduct resulting in a penalty. "When players are in a penalty box for improper conduct, their team is considered 'man-down' from missing a player" [4].

Box lacrosse differs from field lacrosse such that it is more intense, played in a closer range, and generally more dangerous than field hockey requiring more protective equipment [5].

"Lacrosse is one of the fastest growing games and people don't really understand the game until they see it. Once you get the stick in your hand and the ball in your stick pocket and someone is chasing you it's really exciting. You can see the energy in the kids when they're getting chased and they take off with the ball to the goal. Players of the Creator's Game are also buried with their sticks when they pass away because they will be playing in the heavens" [1].



The game of lacrosse has evolved since its inception in the east of the North American continent. Rules have changed to accommodate women and to accommodate different styles of the game, whether it is field or box lacrosse [6]. The sticks used from traditional games were made of wood and are still available. The shaft of the sticks often used today are made of a tubular metal with a hard plastic forming the head that contains a stringed pocket. Balls are made of rubber, which has evolved from stuffed deerskin.



Preparation for games include good health habits as well as training and conditioning for good mental and physical performance. "Lacrosse is an intense sport that requires a combination of strength, power, speed, agility, and endurance." Training and conditioning consist of sprint running and mastering skills of interval training of sprint type exercises in addition to coordinating the handling of the stick and ball with other players [1,5].



Jeff Shattler is a two-time National Lacrosse Most Valuable Player (MVP) and league champion. He has visited Lethbridge sports council for three years bringing his expertise in the game of lacrosse.

Jeff loves how the game is bringing communities across the provinces together and believes doing something for children and youth is what lacrosse has given to him. He would like to give children and youth the opportunities that he has had.

Chad and Jeff brought the Creator's game to Standoff to show everyone how fast, rough, and entertaining the game is. Chad is currently working out how to get more children involved into such a fantastically fun and healing game of lacrosse.



Chad Chief Moon is a coach for lacrosse and on the board of directors with Lethbridge Sports Council.

#### References

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