

Native American Games

Grades: K - 3

Time: 50 minutes

Rationale and Context:

Playing games, engaging in contests and storytelling are a natural form of human engagement. In this lesson, students will come to understand the value of these Native American activities as physical and mental skill builders, opportunities for sharing beliefs, and a way of guiding character development in youth. Storytelling, in particular, holds significance as a way to reinforce beliefs, pass knowledge, share important events, and explain the natural world. Participants will listen to a story and play group, partner and individual games that will engage their bodies and minds as well as their spirit of fair play. The message will be clear that many present day games, sports and pastimes are rooted in Native American's ingenuity for reinforcing learning through fun!

Teacher Background:

The Paleo-Indian culture of Vermont is believed to have established itself some 11,000 years ago when the glaciers of the last ice age had finally receded from the area. These were the early ancestors of the Abenaki tribe that lives on the VT shores of Lake Champlain and across most of the northern and central regions of the state as well as areas in New Hampshire and Maine. The Abenaki probably numbered more than 20,000 people before first contact. After European contact many Abenaki fled to Canada. Today Abenaki live in two reservations in Quebec and scattered throughout New England.

Vermont Standard(s):

Grade Clusters	Grade Expectations	Inquiry Skills and Content
1-2, 3-4	H & SS.1	Students initiate inquiry by asking relevant questions based on what they have seen
	H & SS.2	Students develop a hypothesis, thesis, or research statement by using prior knowledge to predict results or proposing a choice about a possible action
	H & SS.8	Students connect the past with the present
	H & SS.9	Students show understanding of how humans interpret history
	H & SS.13	Students analyze how and why cultures continue and change over time

Next Generation Science Standards:

Disciplinary Core Idea	K-2	3
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ESS3.A	Living Things need water, air, and resources from the land, and they live in places that have the things they need. Humans use natural resources for everything they do.	
ESS3.C	Things people do can affect the environment but they can make choices that reduce their impact.	Societal activities have had major effects on the land, ocean, and atmosphere, and even outer space. Societal activities can also help protect Earth's resources and environments
Cross Cutting Concepts	Patterns Structure and Function	Patterns Structure and Function

Learning/Behavioral Objective(s):

1. Students will think about the cultural importance of games and the role they play in their own lives and in the lives of past generations.
2. Students will play and connect the survival skills learned through game playing with those lessons that were an integral part of education and survival for Native American children.
3. Students will gain an appreciation for the ingenuity in the design and practice of Native American games.
4. Students will compare and contrast the games of the past and those of present day including the cultural philosophies and motivation of play.

Vocabulary:

Abenaki	prediction
Samuel de Champlain	observation
Lake Champlain	sinew
artifact	horn
antler	atlatl
reproduction	
hide	

Focusing Question(s):

1. Who were the first people to settle on the Vermont shores of Lake Champlain?
2. How do we learn about the cultures of people who lived before us?
3. What is the difference between an artifact and a reproduction?
4. What can the materials used to construct and the structure of historic objects tell you about their intended function?
5. What are the games you play and why are they important to you?
6. How can skills learned and practiced in a game help build life skills?