



be fit for life  
moving alberta

## Grade 4 & 5 Social Studies

# Traditional Indigenous Games Lesson Plan

Time: 1 to 1.5 hours | Space: Indoors or Outdoors

The Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association and the Be Fit For Life Network collaborated on this project to share traditional games with our partners in Alberta.

## Lesson Outline

- Introduction (5 minutes)
- Discovering Traditional Games (5-10 minutes)
- Discovering How To Create Traditional Games Equipment (5 minutes)
- Kick Ball & Sling Ball - Crafting the Materials & Playing the Games (20-30 minutes)
- Ring the Stick - Crafting the Materials & Playing the Games (20-30 minutes)

## Lesson Objectives

There are many opportunities for cross-curricular connections with the activities in this lesson. Links to the Move & Play Through Traditional Games physical education [lesson plans](#) and [activity cards](#) are found throughout the document. The crafting elements also create strong connections to Alberta's art curriculum.

## Grade 4 Social Studies

### 4.1 Alberta: A Sense of the Land

- 4.1.1 Students will value Alberta's physical geography and natural environment.

## 4.2 The Stories, Histories and Peoples of Alberta

- 4.2.1 Students will appreciate how an understanding of Alberta’s history, peoples and stories contributes to their own sense of belonging and identity.
- 4.2.2 Students will assess, critically, how the cultural and linguistic heritage and diversity of Alberta has evolved over time.

## 4.3 Alberta: Celebration and Challenges

- 4.3.1 Students will appreciate the factors contributing to quality of life in Alberta.
- 4.3.3 Students will examine, critically, Alberta’s changing cultural and social dynamics.
- 4.3.4 Students will examine recreation and tourism in Alberta.

## Grade 5 Social Studies

### 5.1 Physical Geography of Canada

- 5.1.1 Appreciate how land sustains communities and the diverse ways that people have of living off the land.

### 5.2 Histories and Stories of Ways of Life in Canada

- 5.2.1 Recognize how an understanding of Canadian history and the stories of its peoples contribute to their sense of identity.
- 5.2.2 - What do the stories of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples tell us about their beliefs regarding the relationship between people and the land?

(Alberta Education, 2005)

## Introduction (5 minutes)

Does anyone know what Treaty Territory we are on right now and some of the people who used to live in this area before it was a city or town?

- This acknowledgment would be customized to reflect the land the session is offered on.
- As an example, Edmonton is on Treaty Six Territory. This was a traditional meeting ground, gathering place and traveling route to the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, Dene and Nakota Sioux people.

When learning about traditional games in Alberta, it is important to understand that there are many Indigenous peoples of Alberta that may play games in different ways. In Alberta there are 48 First Nations among 140 reserves and 8 Métis Settlements as well as many other distinct nations and communities not formally recognized by the government. The games that will be shared today may have been played in this area, along with different versions of these games.

## Discovering Traditional Games (5-10 minutes)

**Guiding Questions:** Discuss the following questions as a class, in small groups, or in pairs:

- What are some of your favorite physical activities to participate in?
- What types of Traditional Games do you think children used to play in this area?
- How do you like to learn about new things? In school?
- How do you think First Nation children were taught?

Use the content from the [Move & Play Through Traditional Games resource](#) to support the discussion of the guiding questions for this portion of the session. Some important points to share include:

- Aboriginal life is rich in relationship, teamwork, art, music, dance and gaming. It is through these opportunities that education occurs.
- Many children and adults are losing their abilities of keen observation and natural intuition.

- All tribes participated in hundreds of physical activities that helped to keep them in excellent health and practice the skills needed to survive living off the land.
- Games were not only about physical health, they were also used to share cultural teachings and social and traditional values.

Some of the social values of traditional games were:

- Respecting the rules of the competition
- Respecting your competitors
- Having courage, intuition, and/or skill
- Being humble even when winning
- Challenging yourself to do better
- Honoring the person who gave you the most challenge
- Older Elders or Knowledge Keepers often would help the youth learn how to play the games or youth would learn from their peers. After equipment was made and games learned, the youth would play the games on their own.

**Discussion:** Do you share these social values when you play games? Which values are most important to you?

## Discovering How To Create Traditional Games Equipment (5 minutes)

**Guiding Questions:** Discuss the following questions as a class, in small groups, or in pairs:

- What types of equipment do you think that children living in this area used to play with 100 years ago? 200 years ago?
- Where do you buy equipment from to play games with?
- Where did they get equipment to play games with if there were no stores back then?
- What time of year is best to collect the equipment?

Use the content from the [Move & Play Through Traditional Games resource](#) to support the discussion of the guiding questions for this portion of the session. Some important points to share include:

- Materials to play the games would have been based on the types of natural materials that were available. The willow used to play the games would have been collected when it was growing and not frozen or dry.
- Gratitude for the gifts of the land is an important lesson that begins with following the proper protocol when harvesting natural materials.
- All life should be respected. When harvesting natural materials they need to be collected from Mother Earth in a good way. One suggested traditional protocol for collecting willow was shared from the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association Elders' Wisdom Circle. They suggest to offer tobacco to Mother Earth, give thanks for the use of the willow and only take what is needed. If you are unsure about the harvesting protocol in your area, you can connect with local Elders and ask them to share their knowledge about harvesting by offering the Elder a gift of tobacco.
- When making the games it is best to use as much natural material from Mother Earth as possible. This will teach respect for Mother Earth's gifts, for the traditional protocols, for the equipment, and for the games.

## **Kick Ball & Sling Ball - Crafting the Materials & Playing the Games (20-30 minutes)**

Most tribes in North America have used some type of kickballs for racing, hacky sack (footbag) types of games, and slingball types of games. Modern Native youth adopted the Zuni and Tewa style of kickbag because, when racing over the prairie, the ball often would go down a ground squirrel hole. The tail on these balls assures a safer way of getting it back out of the hole. Kickball races are won by the person whose ball and body cross the finish line first. The Northern Cheyenne used the sling ball to help to develop and maintain core strength.

## Equipment Needed

- A hacky sack
- Sand
- Funnel
- Balloon
- Yarn
- Yarn Needle
- Scissors

## Crafting Instructions:

1. Begin by emptying out the hacky sack by cutting a small hole in the top. Throw the rice-like material on the inside in the garbage.
2. Insert the balloon into the empty hacky sack.
3. Place the funnel inside the balloon and fill with sand. The balloon helps to ensure the contents stay sealed. Sand or dirt were traditionally used to craft the ball.
4. Tie the balloon closed inside the hacky sack.
5. Take 3 pieces of yarn to create the tail and tie evenly on the end of the balloon.
6. Use one of the strings of yarn and the yarn needle to close the hacky sack.
7. Once closed use all strings to braid a tail.

Activities: Kick Ball Race and Sling Ball Competition. See additional resources on page 7 for links to Traditional Games activity cards and lesson plans.



## Ring the Stick- Crafting the Materials & Playing the Games (20-30 minutes)

Ring the Stick is a universal game that many different people would have played. Traditionally, this game would have been played to practice hand-eye coordination indoors or outdoors. In addition, this game can be used as a way to resolve conflicts, such as when there is a tie in a game.

### Equipment Needed

- A ring – made out of willow or pipe cleaners
- A stick – harvested from willow or a wood dowel
- String, yarn, or sinew
- Tape
- Scissors

### Crafting Instructions:

1. Begin by getting a wood stick about 12 inches long
2. Create a ring about 2 inches in diameter using malleable willow or a pipe cleaner.
3. Using a string (about 18 inches long), attach the two pieces together

Activities: Ring the Stick Game. See Additional resources below.



## Additional Resources

Review the resources below for activity suggestions with the newly crafted game materials and for more information:

### Move & Play Through Traditional Games Activity Cards

<http://www.befitforlife.ca/resources/move-and-play-through-traditional-games-cards>

### Move & Play Through Traditional Games Lesson Plans

<http://www.befitforlife.ca/resources/move-and-play-through-traditional-games>

### International Traditional Games Society

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

For more information about hosting a workshop at your school or other resources to support physical literacy development, contact your local Be Fit For Life Centre.

[www.befitforlife.ca](http://www.befitforlife.ca) | Twitter: [@bfflnetwork](https://twitter.com/bfflnetwork) | Facebook: [@BeFitForLifeNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/BeFitForLifeNetwork)



The Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association supports active member Friendship Centres who, through program and service delivery, engage with and improve the quality of life for urban Indigenous people. Contact the Alberta Native Friendship Centre in your community to connect you to other cultural opportunities and teachings.

[www.anfca.com](http://www.anfca.com)

