

Native American Games of Montana

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Missoula, Montana

Games of Skill

Run & Scream



Contestants hold a marker stick and take a deep breath. They proceed to run as fast and as far as possible while screaming until their air runs out. At this point – they drop the marked stick. Whoever runs the farthest is the winner.

This game was played to test one's cardiovascular endurance. Young children were taught to run and sound the alarm when danger or invading people entered their village.

Hoop & Arrow

A hoop made of willow and rawhide was rolled across the ground. Lines of children stood back several feet from the path of the traveling hoop. As the hoop rolled by the players attempted to throw an arrow through the hoop. An arrow was held in each hand so players had two chances. Young children who could develop accuracy in throwing

arrows could potentially spear a squirrel, grouse or rabbit and help bring food to their families.

Salish and Pend d' Orielle -- Small ring with colored beaded sections & 2 Long arrows

Blackfeet, Cree, Gros Ventre, Souix -- Larger rings with "dream catcher" pattern

Teams of 6 with 4 arrows or darts per person (18" - 24")



Shinny (Chippewa, Northern Cheyenne, White Clay, Crow)

This game was played on a field with goals at either end. These goals might be made of sticks, a blanket on the ground or two holes dug at either end. Players would use sticks with a curve at one end to direct a ball toward the goal at their end.





In some tribes this game was played to celebrate the planting season. The ball would be filled with seeds that dispersed as the game was played.

Doubleball - (Chippewa, Cree)



Two bags filled w/ buffalo hair connected by a leather thong is the “ball”. It is carried on a stick as competitors try to run down a field and hurl the ball toward a goal. Defenders give chase and try to knock or strip the ball from the carrying stick.

1 pt = over the crossbar, 2 pts. = into the goal, 3 pts. = wrapped on the crossbar.

The game starts with players from both teams gathered in the center with their sticks held high (in a tee pee formation). The ball is thrown on top of the sticks and the game commences.

Lacrosse



* Single Pole (Gros Ventre) Players play around a single pole with 3' sections marked in ribbon. Teams attempt to throw the ball and strike the pole with different sections being worth more points. Players must stay outside of a 10' circle to attempt a throw.

* Two Posts/Goals (Chippewa) Players from each team try to advance the ball to their opponent's end and strike their pole with the ball.

In such games there was hierarchy of play. Men could not bump women and women could not bump children. This was a reflection of each member's role in the tribe. Men were the protectors, women were the caregivers, and children were the youngest and vulnerable.

Foot Bag Games



Kick balls were often made out of leather, hair and sinew. A colored cord was sewn on to the ball. This cord helped to distinguish one player's ball from another. On a more practical note, if a ball went into a gopher hole the player could locate it by the colored cord and pull it out without reaching into the hole. Besides gophers -- snakes might also be in these holes.

Fling It (Tewa)

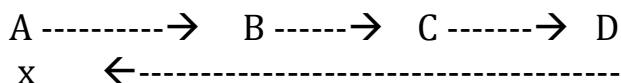
Players sat down with their backs to the playing field and held the long braided tail of the ball between their feet. When ready, a player would roll backwards and bring their feet overhead while releasing the tail of the ball. The player whose ball traveled the farthest was the winner.

Foot Bag Race (Northern Cheyenne)

Children lined up on a line, each with their own kickball. On a signal each would race down to a designated spot and back while kicking their specific ball. The one who returned first was the winner.

Foot Bag Relay

Children would play this game in teams of 4 or more. Team members would spread out along a designated line. The first kicker would kick their ball until he/she was able to bring it to the feet of the next player. Then this second player would take over – kicking it to the third and so on. The last player would kick it back to the starting spot until it would be stopped on the home spot.



References:

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