

Native American Games of Montana

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Games of Intuition & Chance

Stone People

Painted rocks are placed on a square or setting while a story is told about the rocks. Another player attempts to relocate the rocks a few yards away in the exact formation through use of the story.

- Native children practiced these pattern-games so that they would be able to find their way around a camp. Tribes would often move from summer to winter grounds and reset the entire village. By learning these patterns a young child could find their tepee even when a village was moved.



Black Dot

A group of sticks (@10-12) are held in a hand with the bottoms covered. A player chooses sticks until the stick marked with the black dot is chosen. The number of sticks taken before the black dot stick is drawn is the player's score.

The predecessor to our game of "Old Maid" this game provided people the chance to try to "read their opponent".

Estimation Sticks

Three people play this game. One is the stick holder and takes the bundle of sticks (20) behind his back. By separating the bundle he quickly reveals the sticks in two hands to the two guessers. Each has a second or two to quickly guess the number of sticks in the hand in front of him/her. The person who guesses right first or closest is the winner and scores a point.

- People often had to look at a group of things and know if something was missing or how many items were present. Were there any horses missing from the herd? Any children missing from the tribe? How many buffalo in a field? These games gave one opportunity to practice quick estimation.

Ring the Stick

A ring of willow is attached to a stick via a long cord of sinew. With the ring laying on the ground the player jerks the stick causing the ring to fly into the air and then the player attempts to spear the ring. The challenge is to complete three “speared” rings in a row. Practice dexterity and accuracy.



Rock-In-Fist



Two players face each other with three small sticks on the ground between them. One player has a rock that is placed in a fist behind the players back and then both closed fists are presented to the opponent. The opponent attempts to determine which fist has the rock and points to this fist. No touching of fists is allowed! If the guesser chooses correctly the guesser takes the rock and becomes the new hider. If the player hiding the rock is able to fool the guesser the hider scores and takes one of the three sticks. The game continues until a person wins all three sticks.

- This game is played at celebrations and ceremonies. People will bring gifts to put on a blanket. Players will progress through rounds until a winner and four runners-up are determined. The winner then distributes all the prizes in the blanket. The top award is given to the person who challenged the winner the most. The next prize is given to a person who played with great heart. Finally after all the prizes are awarded – the winner gets the blanket. The game provides for the distribution of wealth amongst the tribe.

Plum Stone



A basket contains 5 slices of antler (ore the stones from plums) with paint or pictures on each side. Two slices have crescent moons on one side and a star on the other. The other three slices are painted black on one side and white or natural on the other. Players toss the stones in the air and then catch them in the casket to see what colors & pictures are revealed. The following combinations count and are worth points.

Two moons and three whites (natural color) = 10 points.

Two stars and three blacks = 10 points.

One moon, one star and three whites (natural color) = 1 point.

One moon, one star and three blacks = 1 point.

This is a type of dice game played indoors during cold months. Players are divided into two teams that sit in long rows facing each other. Teams alternate at taking turns and the basket is passed down the row until all have played then the basket returns until all the sticks are taken or until the game is determined to be over. The team with the most sticks is the winner.

References:

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