
Great Lakes Regional Advisory Lodge



Help Papers Series
Support Materials for Parent/Child Programs

TOPIC:

Tribal Games & Crafts

TRIBAL GAMES AND CRAFTS

Tribal Games: The obvious thing about this topic is the size and age of the group. We are not talking large team sports here. Realizing the Native Culture of the many territorial tribes, you can research your own tribe and find many unique games. But, you will find them similar in many ways. The fathers were in charge of the boy's games, as they were designed to teach skills of the hunt or battle with enemies. Survival was their theme. Look for these as you read the many books in your local libraries.

A few examples follow: Testing and developing the critical senses, like sound and sight were necessary. Take your children and put one on the floor with a piece of candy in front of him so he can reach it. Blind fold him and ask for complete silence. Each of the other children take turns trying to get in close enough to get the candy before the blind one can strike out at them. Oh yes, the blind one has a long stick or wrapping paper tube, or something they can safely swing at the intruder.

Another is to stake out a square about 10 feet on a side and run rope around the corners. Two children are blindfolded and placed on their hands and knees at opposite corners. They must follow the rope and touch one another to win. Avoiding the touch requires just as much skill as being the seeker.

Another is to sit one child down in an open yard or field. Have children they do not know come into view and stand at one spot. Each has a feather or feathers for their numbers. All must be different heights. Have the child decide the order of height by identifying the number of feathers.

Of course making toss games using household items, even small skills help with muscle development. The older children need better challenges.

The game of chance is important to teach children that winning isn't always everything. Being a good sport is important too. Moccasin is a game where two children place their moccasins (your shoes) side by side with the toes facing one of the children so the openings face the other. The one facing the toes closes his or her eyes while the other places a rock or something into one of the shoes and pushes it down to the toe. A stack of equal sticks is placed in front of each child. One guesses which has the object. If he guesses on the first try he gets 4 sticks, second try yields 3, third gets 2 and finally you get at least one for trying. Do that till they get bored or for some specified number.

Games should be fun for all ages and involve everyone equally. Alligator is a game where there is an open area where objects are placed quite close together on ground. They are alligators to everyone, and bite to kill. Place a rope at one end and at other. One child is blindfolded and attempts to cross the creek without touching the alligators. Of course the other members must shout instructions to avoid the hazards. Teamwork is the lesson.

Great Lakes Region – Help Paper Series – Tribal Games & Crafts

Tribal Games and Crafts Continued

Between Mother Nature and fun books you surely can come up with many great games that not only teach modern values, but also touch on the historical significance of your own tribe or nation.

Two books recommended are;

1. "More New Games"--New Games Foundation, Andrew Fluegelman
2. "Teaching Children to Love the Earth"--Sharing a Sense of Wonder, 186 Outdoor Activities for Parents and Other Teachers, Marina Lachecki Herman, Joseph F. Passineau, Ann L. Schimpf, Paul Treuer

Making up games like this are just as much fun too. Challenge the Parents and Children to do just that. You might be surprised how it comes out.

Tribal Crafts: For those parents that think that crafting is too challenging for them, just think of the fun the children will have. To see the light in their eyes when they have something to take home, makes it all worth while. Many resources of crafts are available. Your Longhouse should have these lists available or know of these sources. If cost becomes an issue with a craft project, find less expensive replacement materials. Many of the craft vendors will give discounts for volume purchases.

Go to the library and find books of your tribe, and look closely at the clothing, jewelry, toys, tools, and the instruments of their trade. They will give you authentic ideas for making crafts. Remember, art works are crafts too. A lot can be done with paints and paper and some pictures from magazines or books. Native people realized bright colors attracted the attention of the Great Spirit.

The Great Lakes Region Advisory Lodge has a resource library of program materials gathered over the years. The home of the library floats around the Region every two or three years, as the officers change positions. Please contact a GLRAL officer to inquire about the library contents. If the GLRAL website is active, there also may be a listing there. The library sometimes travels around the region each Spring and Fall when we have our semi-annual meetings. Some materials may be available on CD. If you find us, there won't be any reprint or shipping charges.

Have fun, be respectful of the cultural back ground of your tribe's heritage, and look to the eyes of your child for guidance.