

Wisconsin Indians Today:
Contemporary Interactions
Between Natives and
Caucasians

Fun and Games

Wisconsin DPI Standards Alignment:

Social Studies B.4.10 – Explain the history, culture, tribal sovereignty, and current status of the American Indian tribes and bands in Wisconsin.

Social Studies E.4.8 -- Describe and distinguish among the values and beliefs of different groups and institutions.

Social Studies E.4.3 – Describe how families are alike and different, comparing characteristics such as size, hobbies, celebrations, where families live, and how they make a living.

English Language Arts A.8.1 – Establish purposeful reading and writing habits by using texts to find information, gain understanding of diverse viewpoints, make decisions, and enjoy the experience of reading.

Goal: Students will understand Woodland Indian games as a means of recreation and as a means of teaching skills used in warfare, hunting, and other everyday activities.

Objectives:

- 1) Students will play two Woodlands Indians games.
- 2) In a think-aloud discussion, students will brainstorm about the practical applications of skills learned in the games.
- 3) Students will each select a game with which they were already familiar. In a journal entry, they will describe the game and explain what life skills, if any, it is meant to teach.
- 4) In small groups, students will make up their own games that are meant to teach a skill as well as to be fun. They will then teach their game to the rest of the class.

In Woodland Indian culture people play games for several reasons. Like us, Woodland Indians play games to have fun, to relax, and to be active. However, in traditional Woodland culture, games also carried religious meaning – they were meant to honor the spirits and cure the sick. Games and sports also taught skills that would help the players with their everyday activities. For example, a pine cone tossing game would teach boys good aim, which would help them on the hunt. A game like Lacrosse, which might have goal posts a mile apart, could take several days to play. Such a game would build endurance on the part of the players.

Read the following descriptions of two Woodland Indian games and play them with a small group of your classmates. Many Woodland games, including these two, are still played today.

The Hand Game

The hand game was a guessing game. Several players passed around two small objects (like a pebble sewn into a piece of cloth or a horseshoe nail would with a piece of string.) One player would chose to hide one of the objects in his or her fist, but would pretend to pass it along to the next player. This also happened with the second object. The opponent then had to guess the correct hands in which the objects were hidden. The Woodland Indians stuck sharpened sticks into the ground to keep score. You can play this game using two pennies. Keep score on a piece of paper. Whenever the opponent guesses correctly, he or she gets a point. When the other players fool the opponent, they earn a point for each incorrect guess.

Dice

Dice was a game of chance, mostly played by women in the wintertime. A woman in the community would hold the game to honor her guardian spirit; she started the game and offered prizes to players, but would not play herself. Men watched the game, cheering on the players. When a player won a prize, she would offer it to one of the men in the audience, who would return the favor by giving her a gift in the future. Sometimes, players ate a feast before starting the game.

The women divided into two teams and sat on the floor facing each other. Each side sat in a semicircle. There was not a limit on the number of players, but there were only four prizes (usually brightly colored pieces of cloth). In order to play the game, the women needed a wooden bowl and eight dice. Six of the dice were shaped in thin circular discs, a seventh was carved in the form of a turtle, and an eighth represented a horse's head. Blue or red dye colored one side of each die. The other side remained white. The women placed the dice in the wooden bowl and, holding it with both hands, shook the dice to the far side of the bowl. They then flipped the bowl over, spilling out the dice. The score was counted as follows:

All dice of same color except two	1 point
All dice of same color except one	3 points
All dice of same color except the turtle	5 points
All dice of same color except the horse	10 points
All dice of the same color	8 points
All dice of the same color except the turtle and horse	10 points

Each woman kept her own score using beans placed in front of her. Each woman shook the bowl until she had two turns that did not earn any points. She then passed the bowl to the person on her left. The first woman to score 10 points won the game, and she gave her prize (the fabric) to one of the male spectators. He would later give her a gift of equal value.

After you have tried each game once, come back together as a class and discuss how each game taught life skills or honored the spirits. As you brainstorm, record your ideas on the blackboard or overhead projector.

After the discussion, each student will write a journal entry in which he or she focuses on a game with which he or she is already familiar. In their journals, the students will describe their game and tell what life skills it teaches or how it helps us to honor someone or something.

Next, in small groups, students will brainstorm what skills they believe a Woodland Indian would need on a daily basis one hundred or more years ago. (Example: keen eyesight when hunting, quiet movement in the forest, etc.) They will make up a game that could help to foster those skills. The group will write a description of their game and its rules and then teach it to the class.

Current Events: Indian Gaming in Wisconsin

Wisconsin DPI Standards Alignment:

Social Studies B.4.10 – Explain the history, culture, tribal sovereignty, and current status of the American Indian tribes and bands in Wisconsin.

Social Studies C.4.6 – Locate, organize, and use relevant information to understand an issue in the classroom or school, while taking into account the viewpoints and interests of different groups and individuals.

Social Studies E.4.8 -- Describe and distinguish among the values and beliefs of different groups and institutions.

English Language Arts A.8.1 – Select, summarize, paraphrase, analyze, and evaluate, orally and in writing, passages of texts chosen for specific purposes.

Goal: Students will come to see the controversy over gambling as an example of modern-day interactions and cultural differences between Caucasians and Natives.

Objectives:

- 1) Students will read the Chippewa Herald article silently.
- 2) Students will formulate an opinion on Indian gaming in Wisconsin.
- 3) Students will give voice to that opinion in a class discussion.
- 4) Students will consider various viewpoints on Indian gaming in Wisconsin as a result of reading the article and hearing the opinions of others.

Like the more distant past, the recent history of Wisconsin Indian nations is also fascinating. It too provides us with a look at how two cultural groups (Caucasian European or Yankee Americans and Wisconsin Indians) interact with one another. American Indian groups in the 20th century still struggle with some government policies and practices.

The Menominee, for example, struggled with the federal government's policy of "termination" in the 1950s. The Menominee Termination Act of 1954 was an attempt at dismantling the reservation system and integrating American Indians into "mainstream" society. In reality, it meant that the government no longer recognized the Menominee as a tribe and stopped giving the tribe financial assistance. Termination was a disaster for the Menominee. Some of the Menominee land was sold, the tribal hospital had to shut down for lack of funds, and many Menominee lost their jobs. Legislators finally restored tribal status in 1973 after much protest.

Another example of modern-day interactions between the tribes and the government is gaming. In 1988, the federal government passed the National Indian Gaming Act. This law says that in states which allow licensed gambling, tribes may own, operate, and regulate casinos. A portion of their revenues goes to the state. Much of the rest of the

revenue funds services on Wisconsin Indian reservations, such as hospitals, libraries, and schools. In addition, the casinos provide jobs for many enrolled tribal members.

However, some people are opposed to Indian gaming because they do not believe that the state of Wisconsin should allow gambling. They believe that gambling can lead people to go bankrupt, possibly turning to crime to get the money they owe or to get money to gamble more. Gambling can become an addiction as people return again and again to try to "beat the odds."

What is your opinion?

The debate recently heated up again in Wisconsin when Governor Doyle signed agreements with 11 Wisconsin tribes extending their contracts with the state to operate casinos. The State Supreme Court has ruled that Governor Doyle did not have the authority to renew the agreements, and that only the State Legislature has that power. Read the article below and discuss it as a class. Do you think that Wisconsin tribes should have the right to operate and regulate casinos? Or is gambling a business that the state should forbid?

From the Chippewa Herald, July 7, 2004

Study: Wisconsin fifth in the nation for Indian gaming revenue

By JULIET WILLIAMS -- Associated Press Writer

MILWAUKEE -- Wisconsin ranks fifth in the nation in the amount of revenue its American Indian tribes earn from their casinos, according to a new national study.

Wisconsin's 11 American Indian tribes collected nearly \$1.1 billion in revenue in 2003, according to the "Indian Gaming Industry Report" prepared for release Wednesday.

Indian gambling grew more than eight times faster than non-Indian casino gambling in 2003, bringing in about \$16.2 billion nationwide, according to the report compiled by Alan Meister, an economist with the Analysis Group in Los Angeles.

"In a day and time previously when our tribal leaders had trouble to even get a loan to buy some furniture, now investors are lining up to be a part of this market," said Ernie Stevens Jr., chairman of the National Indian Gaming Association.

The study found revenue increased 7.5 percent at Wisconsin Indian casinos from 2002 to 2003 as well as at their non-gambling facilities, which brought in another \$62 million in revenue.

California, Connecticut, Minnesota, Arizona and Wisconsin were the highest grossing states in Indian gaming revenue in 2003, together accounting for 61 percent of Indian gaming revenue, the report said.

California's tribes earned \$4.2 billion at their 56 gambling sites.

Meister attributed the increasing popularity of Indian gambling to more casinos, added attractions such as hotels, shopping and entertainment, more games and the social acceptability of casino gambling.

In Wisconsin, the 11 tribes that have compacts with the state were allowed to expand the number of games they offer to include Las Vegas-style games such as craps and roulette. The future of those deals is in limbo after the state Supreme Court ruled Gov. Jim Doyle exceeded his authority in signing them.

Tom Grey, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling, said people nationwide are turning against having casinos in their hometowns, despite more attempts by state officials to boost coffers with gambling revenue.

"States become addicted ... once you use gambling as a means to do something, it's very difficult to turn back," he said. "We have to ask who winds up paying for the bankruptcy, the crime and the addiction."

Meister's study did not consider the social impacts of gambling.

It found Indian gambling directly and indirectly provides 460,000 jobs, \$16.3 billion in wages and \$5.3 billion in taxes nationwide.

Stevens, of the gaming association, said surveys show many people support Indian gaming because they know the revenue goes toward tribal economic development.

"They have helped our people to have the kinds of things that many Americans have taken for granted: good roads, good schools, good health care, in some cases even running water and things like that," he said.

States cannot tax tribes because tribes are sovereign governments. But tribes that want to sign deals with states to establish casinos are increasingly offering to share their revenue in exchange for more games and longer deals.

"Most of these states already operate lotteries, so they're already involved in gaming," Meister said. "This is a way for them to benefit from this significant growth of Indian gaming."

Doyle granted Wisconsin tribes unending deals and the right to offer more games in exchange for more than \$1 billion over the next decade. He also is counting on \$206 million in casino payments by June 2005 to balance the state budget.

But the Ho-Chunk Nation last month declined to make its \$30 million payment to the state, citing the uncertainty in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling. And a planned

casino expansion at the Red Cliff reserve near Bayfield is on hold after investors backed out.

The report also found:

--The number of machines at the 22 facilities increased to 16,349 machines in 2003, compared with 15,215 in 2002.

--The number of tables at Wisconsin's Indian casinos grew 10.7 percent to 290, up from 262 in 2002. (Nationwide, the number was up 15.5 percent.)

The Place of Story in Native Culture

Wisconsin DPI Standards Alignment:

Social Studies B.4.10 -- Explain the history, culture, tribal sovereignty, and current status of the American Indian tribes and bands in Wisconsin.

Social Studies B.8.11 – Summarize major issues associated with the history, culture, tribal sovereignty, and current status of the American Indian tribes and bands in Wisconsin.

Social Studies E.4.8 -- Describe and distinguish among the values and beliefs of different groups and institutions.

Social Studies E.8.3 – Describe the ways in which local, regional, and ethnic cultures may influence the everyday lives of people.

English Language Arts F.4.1 – Conduct research by identifying, locating, exploring, and effectively using multiple sources of information appropriate to the inquiry, including print, non-print, and electronic sources.

English Language Arts F.4.1 – Present the results of inquiry, reporting and commenting on the substance and process of learning, orally and in writing, using appropriate visual aids.

Goal: Students will see storytelling as an important way of teaching cultural traditions, values, and history in Native culture.

Objectives:

- 1) Students will be able to name three purposes of storytelling in Native culture.
- 2) Students will read two Native stories that relate information about nature, animals, and culture.
- 3) Students will name at least one story with which they are familiar that accomplishes a similar goal to those of Native stories.

Storytelling is a very important part of Native cultures. Native stories are a mixture of “legends and history, maps and poems, the teachings of spirit mentors, instructions for ceremony and ritual, observations of worlds, and storehouses of . . . knowledge [about the people and the earth.]” (PBS “Circle of Stories” website:

www.pbs.org/circleofstories/voices/index.html) Many Native stories talk about nature and show how Native peoples honor and connect with the earth. These stories talk about the plants and animals within specific tribes’ homelands – for example, many Woodlands Indians’ stories focus on the beaver. Some stories explain how and why certain animals and plants came to exist.

Other stories honor human ancestors, while still others explain ceremonies or rituals. Some stories teach the people about traditional ways of life, child rearing, friendship and

love, hunting routes, bird migrations, family lineage, etc. Stories can also be expressed in prayers, songs, and dances. Sometimes several songs are strung together to tell a story.

Among the most important stories are the creation stories. Every Native culture has a creation story. These stories “explain how life began on Earth and how a particular tribal nation came to be.” (PBS “Circle of Stories” website: www.pbs.org/circleofstories/voices/index.html) Creation stories also taught the people how they fit into the circle of life and gave instruction about how to interact with other living things.

Read through the following list to learn more about the purposes of Native stories:

Native stories

- Describe how and why things are the way they are
- Explain how to conduct ceremonies
- Explain natural processes such as water cycles, inter-species relationships, life cycles of plants, earth movements, and soil types
- Give accounts of hunting, gathering, and farming to teach how to collect, prepare, and eat foods
- Describe historic and in-progress tribal migrations to find food or to make a holy journey
- Talk about the mystery and complexity of human life
- Tell of adventures in love, romance, and marriage

Read the following Menominee story (as told by the Menominee Culture Institute’s website.)

How the Porcupine Got His Quills

Long ago when the first porcupine was placed on the earth by the Great Spirit he had no quills. Porcupine was a gift to the Menominee Tribe and he was given a beautiful coat of fur.

Porcupine’s beauty made the other animals jealous. Every day the animals would come to Porcupine and tell him how much they wished their fur looked like his.

Now Porcupine knew he was beautiful but he didn’t pay any attention to the other animals. As time went by and every day he heard how wonderful he looked he decided to see for himself.

While Porcupine was taking his morning walk, he stopped by the stream to admire his fur.

Now the Great Spirit noticed Porcupine gazing at himself in the stream. The Great Spirit watched Porcupine for ten moons as he sat by the clear water admiring his own beauty.

The Great Spirit had a system of rewards and punishment for every creature. The Great Spirit knew that the time had come to punish Porcupine. The Great Spirit decided to take away Porcupine's beautiful fur and cover his body with ugly sharp quills.

Porcupine wears his coat of quills yet today. This is why he hides during the day and will only come out at night.

Students should answer the following questions individually or in pairs.

- 1) When the Great Spirit gave Porcupine to the Menominee people, what did he look like?
- 2) What led Porcupine to look at his reflection in the stream?
- 3) How did Porcupine react to seeing his reflection?
- 4) How long did Porcupine watch his reflection?
- 5) Why do you think the Great Spirit punished Porcupine?
- 6) How does this story teach about nature?
- 7) How does this story teach people how to behave?

Can you think about a story with which you are familiar that teaches: good behavior, why things in nature are the way they are, or how to interact with nature? Brainstorm as a class to come up with a list of stories that do this.

As a class, read *Old Meshikee and the Little Crabs* retold by Michael Spooner and Lolita Taylor (available in the OCHS Wisconsin Indians traveling trunk). The teacher should read the "source note" at the end of the story, which explains just what kind of information the story passes on to the reader. Have a think-aloud discussion in which the children suggest what the story was meant to teach. You may ask some guiding questions to help them through the process, since it is not as apparent as in the porcupine story.