Traditional Games Model Lesson Plan
Rock in the Fist – Grade One

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals

The health education content standards for first grade are that each student will:

2. give examples of physical, mental, emotional, family, and social health, including those of traditional and contemporary American Indian cultures and practices.

The physical education content standards for first grade are that each student will:

10. accept personal responsibility by using equipment and space appropriately.
11. follow the rules or parameters of the learning environment.

***Essential Understanding 1*:** There is great diversity among the twelve sovereign tribes of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories, and governments. Each tribe has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.

***Essential Understanding 3*:** The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories predate the "discovery" of North America.

Understandings

- Montana Indian cultures have values for winning or losing.

Essential Questions

- How is winning or losing shown in traditional Indian games?

Students will be able to…

- play "Rock in the Fist" with correct rules.
- participate in a giveaway with a generous attitude.

Students will know…

- how to play the "Rock in the Fist" game with correct rules.
- how to behave with care for opponents' feelings (compassion).
- how to take part in a giveaway.

Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks

1. Playing “Rock in the Fist” with correct rules.
2. Participating in a giveaway.

Stage 3 Learning Plan

Teaching Area

Empty space approximately 20’ x 30’ (indoors or outdoors or in a gym)

Equipment Needed

One small rock to fit in a hand comfortably “without showing” for each student and three counting sticks per student.

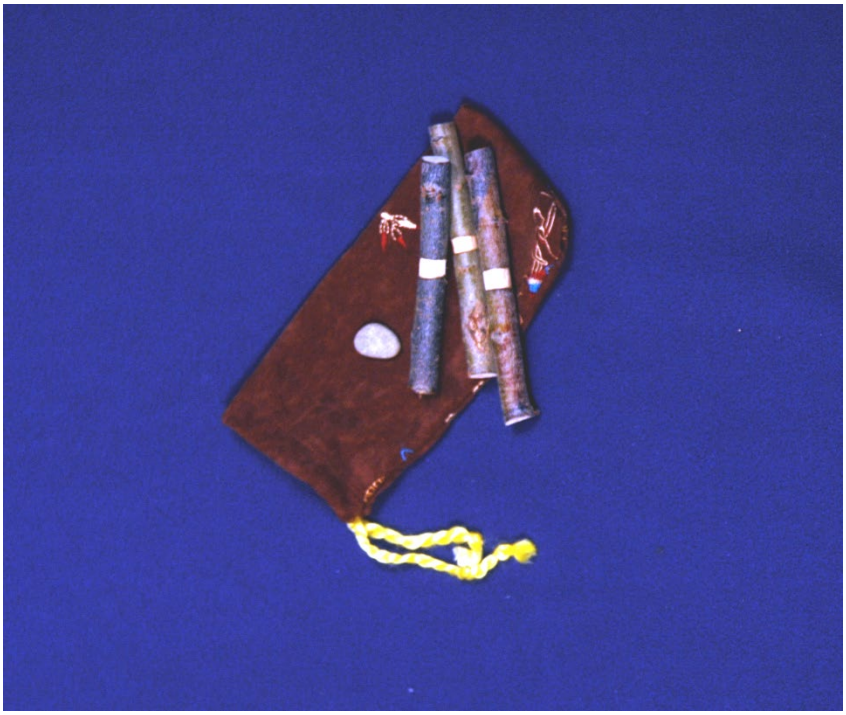


Photo courtesy of DeeAnna Brady-Leader

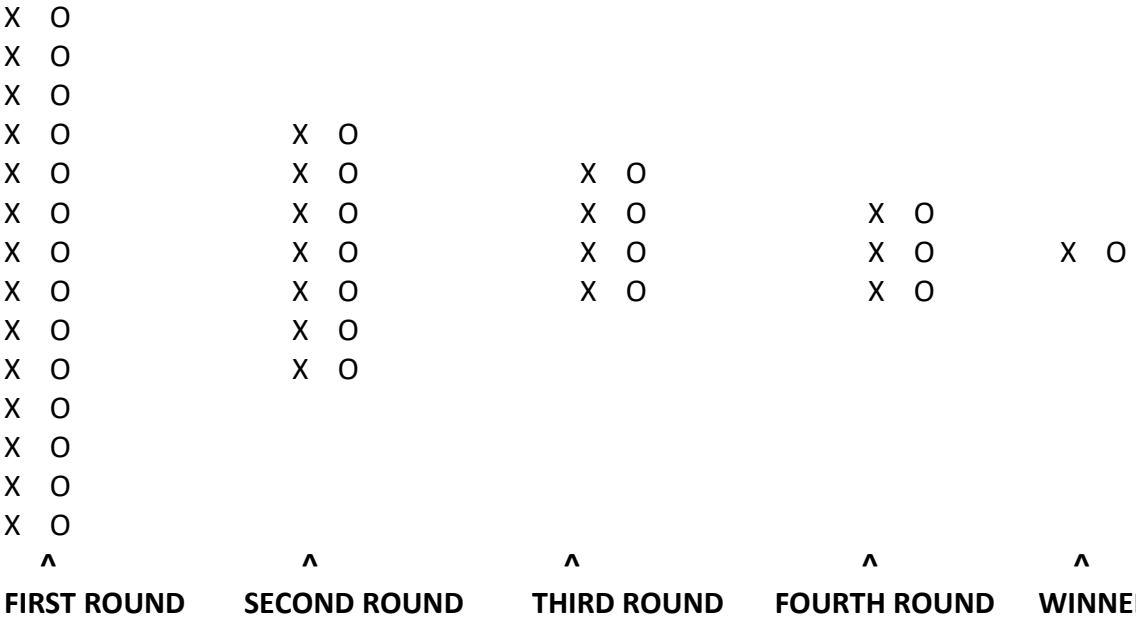
Game Rules

Rock in the Fist. This is considered a hiding game or an Indian youth game that leads up to the hand or stick games played by adults. Players sit across from each other. On the floor between them is one small rock and three sticks on a piece of tanned hide or trade cloth. The rock should be small enough to fit in a hand without “showing” (by larger grasp) the rock. The sticks can be 6” to 12” long and decorated or just simple-cut sticks. The person hiding the rock exchanges the rock, from hand to hand, in front or back of his/her body, or under a shirt or cloth. When ready to “show,” both hands must be put forward to the other player with fists closed in up, down, or any position to show “ready for guess.” The player who is guessing may take as much time as needed to decide by observing and

sensing, then deciding by *pointing* to the hand the player thinks holds the rock (it is considered bad manners to touch the hand). If the player guesses wrong, the hider gains a stick, which is placed in front of him/her. If the player guesses right, no stick is awarded, but the "guesser" now gets the rock and he/she will be the “hider.”

When all three sticks are gone from the middle, the game is not over until one player has won all three sticks. Students play, gaining sticks from each other, until all sticks are on one side. After everyone has learned to play the game, a tournament can be held.

Tournament Play: Divide into groups of players so each has a partner to play against in the first round. All players are facing each other in two straight lines. If a player wins the first round that person will move up to the next row and play the next player who advances to the second row. Players who lose the first round stay in their row but must play another person who has lost the first round. Players will advance out of the first row as they get a win, thereby moving to the second row where they play until they get a win in the second row, thereby moving up to the third row. If there are 26 players, each player should have a set of sticks and a rock. Place them in the tournament space as shown below: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players with the winner giving each person a gift and each person generously giving care and "thank you" or "congratulations" to the winner. The last item in the blanket is for the winner. He/she takes it and thanks all the players for "good games" and for "trying their best." Some like to honor the last person in the back row who never won but kept playing because that person played with "great heart," never quitting.

Vocabulary

Observation - The act or power of noticing, seeing with intention of learning.

Values - actions of "worth" or "not of worth" to others.

Giveaway **-** Presenting gifts to persons who are being honored for their values or actions.

Intuition - The immediate knowing or learning of something without the conscious use of reasoning.

Concepts

Game: Participants play to learn the rules of the game, to improve observation skills, and gain skills in understanding winning and losing. Respecting the feelings of winner or loser is important {learning care, compassion, cleansing, through a "give-away"}.

The games of Montana Indians that were called "games of chance and intuition" were used to develop keen observations of people and the environment. This game of "Rock in the Fist" was a way *to develop observations about others and about self.* American Indian culture valued humble behavior and keen observation.

American Indians placed less value on "winning" by:

a. *valuing a humble behavioral nature (not bragging and by sharing winnings);*
b. *giving away any prizes won, to those who were the hardest competitors (those who made the winner try harder, thus do his/her best).*

Safety

If games are set-up on gym floor, make students aware to look for game-sets as they move up one row after winning.

Resources

Cajete, Gregory, *Spirit of the Game: An Indigenous Wellspring.* Skyand, NC: Kivaki Press, 2005.

Culin, Stewart*, Games of the North American Indians*. New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1975.

Holmes, W.H., *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution 1902-1903,* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1907.

Blackfeet Children's Games. East Glacier Park, MT: International Traditional Games Society, 2013.

Note: Blackfeet Handgame is on page 269 of both the Culin and Holmes books.

Traditional Games Video – see the games being played!