

ITI FABVSSA

Early Choctaw Games

In the past, Iti Fabvssa explored activities Choctaw people used to pass the time, whether for entertainment or for competitive sport, including stickball (July 2010) and chunky (November 2013).

However, there are other games that Choctaws have played. Below are just a few examples of games that were played, and still can be played today!

Hidden Bullet

One Choctaw pastime was Hidden Bullet, Naki Loma in Choctaw.

Naki Loma is a game of guessing and wits, where a small object is hidden and individuals compete in rounds to find it. A cover such as a hat, moccasin, handkerchief, or sock is used to hide an object like a bullet, stone, or nut. The game is played with two or more players who are divided equally into two teams. Each team sits in a row and faces a member of the opposing team. The hider, chosen before the game begins, would lay out the covers (the amount chosen beforehand by the teams, typically four to seven covers were used) and then proceeds to hide the object under one of them. Hiding the object requires immense skill in order to conceal which cover it is under.

The opposing team is allowed to watch as the hider goes from cover to cover in an attempt to conceal the object under one. After the object is hidden the player opposite the hider is allowed to guess where the object may be hidden. The guesser is given three chances to find the object.

If they believe they know where the object is, then they can remove the cover. If they are correct the guesser's team gets four points. If they are wrong, the hider's team gets four points.

There is also the option of lifting the cover in order to eliminate it. Up to two covers can be eliminated before the guesser must remove a cover (or make an official guess), but this yields fewer points. If correct on this attempt, removing the cover will score two points for the guesser's team. If the guesser lifted the cover with the object or removed the incorrect cover, then the hider's team would get two points. This ends the round.

If the guesser deduces correctly, they become the hider in the new round. If the guesser deduces incorrectly, then the teammate next to them in line becomes the new guesser for the new round. This means one individual on one team could be the hider for the entire game.

This continues until the players on one team are eliminated. The team with the most points wins the match.

Corn Game

Another game played by Choctaw People was the Corn Game, or Tvuchi Bvska in Choctaw. This game is played when two or more players attempt to score the most points by throwing corn kernels, similar to the game of dice. Corn kernels are either charred or painted black on one side, and the number of kernels varies. Older accounts of the game report seven or eight kernels were used.

To score points, the players toss the kernels with their hand onto the ground, like throwing dice. The players receive points based on the number of nonblack kernels shown face up.

The only exception to this rule is when all the kernels cast face up are black then players receive points for all of the kernels when this occurs. In the past, accounts report the game was also played with pieces of river cane, instead of corn kernels.

Sources:

Culin, Stewart. Games of the North American Indians. Courier Corporation, 1975.

Swanton, John. Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial life of the Choctaw Indians. University of Alabama Press., 2001.