

American Indian and Multicultural Connection

Games and toys were also used by American Indians. Two that were common in the Eastern Woodlands area were the Ring Pin Game and Begging Sticks.

Ring Pin Game

The ring pin game was one of the most popular and common games played by the indigenous people of North America. Both adults and young adults played the game and even the women of the tribe often played it.

In its simplest form, a small hoop is attached to a stick with a cord. Holding the stick in one hand, the ring is then swung in the air and the player continues to play until he or she does not catch the ring. In the simple form, each catch is worth one point.

More than 200 different varieties of this game have been recorded. In all their forms, this game involves the use of a ring and a pin. Both the ring and the pin were traditionally made from a variety of natural materials gathered from the environment including wood, animal bone, rawhide, leather and rope made from natural plant fibers. During the 1700s and 1800s, the materials used in this game were principally the same with perhaps the addition of trade items such as iron bugle beads or trade cloth being incorporated into the manufacturing process of the game pieces.

Begging Sticks Game

Begging Sticks was a game often played by Indians here in the East. It was played in idle time and as a gambling game.

To play Begging Sticks you'll need an even number of wood or antler disks painted red on one side and left white on the other; several sticks painted red, an equal number of sticks unpainted (left white), and a wooden bowl that will hold all the disks (in one layer).

Begging Sticks was usually played by two people, but you can play with two teams. Place all the disks in the bowl with equal numbers of each color showing. The red and white teams should both have an equal number of sticks before the game starts. Either team may start the game by picking up the bowl and tapping it on the ground hard enough to make most of the disks flip over and jump around. After the bowl is flipped, each team counts the number of disks of their color. The team who has the least disks of their color must give one of their sticks to the other team. Then the other team taps the bowl on the ground. The teams alternate tapping the bowl and winning/losing sticks until one team has all the sticks. The team with all the sticks wins.