Children


Provides a geographical account of games played by different tribes, gives a short synopsis of rules, and explains why games are socially or culturally significant. This is a great resource, especially when read with an adult.


This Abenaki author has written a great number of books for kids and teens, as well as adults. This is a story from the Muskogee about an epic ballgame played between the birds and the animals. It explains how a bat came to be accepted as an animal and why the birds fly south in winter. An author’s note at the beginning of the book explains how stickball, a form of lacrosse, has its origin with Native Americans.


This book, though slim, is full of information on how to play authentic Native American games. It offers instructions for making the necessary equipment and includes some related stories. There is also description of the history and skill development inherent in each game. The games are relatively simple and can easily be worked, along with the stories, into a curriculum. The illustrations of equipment and games are both decorative and useful.


This is a great source for Native American games and toys. It ranges from ancient times to modern. Games of skill as well as games of chance are all described, with lively detail and appreciation for their inherent drama and playfulness. There are a number of photos, illustrations, personal accounts, stories, and myths.


This is a general book, with listings for each of the California missions. The first part introduces readers to the traditional life of Native groups as they were when Europeans arrived. A section on games and recreation discusses age and gender-based distinctions.
and also compares pre and post-Contact games, including tug-of-war, foot races, and swimming in the ocean. It says that even though missionaries disliked games of chance, Native groups continued to play dice and guessing games.


This is a collection of Native American games that was first published in 1958. It remains a great source for game ideas, as well as insights into Native American cultures. These topics go well together since many of the games are based on either tribal legends, or on skills children would need as adults. Most of the games utilized objects found in the natural environment. Some games were running, relay, kicking, throwing and rolling, tossing and catching, guessing, and group challenges. These develop dexterity, endurance, good sportsmanship, and other skills.


This children's version of *The Way We Lived* (also by Margolin) details the role of children within Native California societies. It begins by explaining how children learned from all members of their family, then goes on to explain childhood games, such as a story by Marie Potts (Maidu) about playing various sports, including races and relays. Peter Sconchin (Modoc) describes his childhood shooting at fish and swimming. There are diagrams of acorn tops, salmon bone catching games, and buzzers.


In 1850, at the age of 6, the author was adopted by the Choinumne Yokuts of the San Joaquin Valley. For 12 years he lived with them. This book tells how they built their houses, hunted, and prepared their foods. There is a section on games told in the first person, wherein the author describes some of the games he would play.


This book briefly describes some of the games and toys used by different North American Indian groups to both amuse their children, as well as to teach them lessons about life. This educational book is an easy-to-read text rich with illustrations and photographs. It describes games from the past and present. It also discusses Native American participation in games and sports introduced by the Europeans.


Maidu elder Marie Potts (1895-1978) recounts the story of her childhood and adult life, and describes the traditional world of the Northern—or Mountain—Maidu. Included are
discussions of children’s toys and games, and adult hand games. Potts also covers basketweaving, doctoring, food preparation, and spiritual beliefs. As a young child, Potts played with cedar bark dolls (like the one included in the Games outreach trunk). In the last decades of her life, she made several such dolls for museums in Northern California.


This is a great resource when teaching about Native Americans. The book introduces children to different Native American groups. There are stories about a child in each of the tribes described. There is much to be learned/taught from this book aside from the many projects, games and activities it has to offer.


This local story includes puzzles and activities for children, in addition to a narrative about a Nisenan Maidu girl and her family. The book explains how to make and use tule duck decoys, explores the variety of games played by the Nisenan, and discusses grass games—using the mountain lion femur for game pieces (see Frank Day painting included with the historical documents for this eGuide), hand games, and songs used during gaming.


This study focuses on slahal, a gambling game found among the Coast Salish peoples in British Columbia and Washington State. Although not focused on California Native peoples, this source discusses gambling songs as an integral part of Coast Salish culture and the means by which they have been orally preserved.

NOTE: “Since the realities of Native lifeways are almost completely unknown to outsiders, it is often very difficult for them to evaluate children’s books about American Indians. For this reason, we have compiled criteria in the hope that they will make it easier for a teacher, parent, librarian or student to choose non-racist and undistorted books about the lives and histories of indigenous peoples.” These criteria include: look at picture books; look for: stereotypes, loaded words, tokenism, distortion of history, lifestyles, dialogue, standards of success, role of women, role of elders, effects on a child’s self-image, and the author’s or illustrator’s background.*

*(From Slapin, Seale, and Gonzales’ How to Tell the Difference: A Guide to Evaluating Children’s Books for Anti-Indian Bias.)
Adults


An early ethnologist who worked with the Achumawi of Northern California, de Angulo wrote about the everyday life of this Native group. Six pages are devoted to describing a hand game that he witnessed during a Big Time where Paiute and Modoc gamers joined the Achumawi for gaming during a one week gathering.


Barrett and Gifford wrote this book for the Yosemite National Park to describe the Miwok people who traditionally lived in that area. There are 14 pages of descriptions of games and toys of the Miwok and some photographs of staves and walnut dice. The Miwok played dice (walnut or wood), stick games, guessing games (hand games and grass games), staves, and shinney. There were no divisions between the sexes. Children participated in versions of the guessing games.


Written by an author who focuses more on the biological diversity and ethnobotany of the Pomo, one section discusses the games of the Pomo. While the Pomo had guessing and skill games like many of their neighbors, they also played a game similar to jacks (using a stone instead of a rubber ball) and kickball in a circle. The girls had dolls made of wood or skins, and some had miniature cradleboards for these dolls.


This comprehensive book covering Native groups from all over the continent includes many pages with descriptions of museum collections that include pieces and pictures from a wide variety of California games. These include: bone dice (Kumeyaay, Maidu, Mono, Ohlone, Pomo, Washo, Wintun), shell dice (Hupa), wooden staves (Hupa, Klamath, Pomo, Shasta), stick dice (Achumawi, Gabrieliño, Pomo, Yokut, Yurok), woodchuck tooth dice (Klamath), walnut shell dice (Yokuts), basket trays (Miwok, Mono, Tulare, Washo), hoop and dart (Achomawi, Maidu, Mono, Pomo, Yokut), salmon vertebrae game (Pomo, Shasta), ball and racket (Maidu, Miwok, Pomo, Yokut), leather ball (Maidu, Mono, Paiute), a stone board incised (post-Contact Mono and Yokut) and a picture of Chumash gamers at one of the Missions.

This book discusses the legal and cultural implications of Indian casino gaming, with several specific examples of California tribes and one chapter devoted entirely to California casinos and the Chumash of the Santa Barbara area.


Nearly 11 pages of this ethnography detail games and amusements. Grass games or guessing games were very popular for both men and women and there are very complicated rules as to the number of points relating to the combination of marked sticks. Visitors to a village would be invited to play, and bets would be placed before every hand.


This book is the exhibition catalog that accompanied the Oakland Museum’s exhibit about Frank Day. Readers can learn more about Day’s life, about Concow Maidu culture, and about Day’s artistic legacy.


This is an ethnographic case study of the Washo of the Great Basin culture area, who used gambling for special occasions like the gumsaba, or Big Time, where people gathered to harvest piñon nuts.


The story of Ishi, including newspaper clippings, stories from Alfred Kroeber and maps.


Hinton is a linguistic anthropologist who specializes in the revitalization of California Indian and other indigenous languages. Chapter 14 of this text is dedicated to songs that accompany Wintu gambling games. Also included are photographs of Digueño men playing a stick game and Northwest California men gambling.


Don Jewell taught anthropology at American River College for many years. He spent a number of years during the 1960s with the Concow Maidu of the Feather River and compiled his notes and research into this publication. He details the history and experiences of the Maidu, as well as folklore and legends. In the latter half of the book, he discusses Maidu artist Frank Day, with whom he developed a lasting friendship.


Malcolm Margolin, of Heyday Press, introduces and annotates the journals of a French captain of trade ships that brought Europeans to California. The journals describe two types of games played by the Indians who inhabited the Monterey area. *Takersia* involved throwing a hoop and then attempting to aim a long shaft through the moving hoop. *Toussi* was a guessing game based on marked sticks. The prize for *toussi* was beads, including glass trade beads.


The Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, located in Indio, California, live in a desert area in Southern California with little economic future. This book recounts the history of the Cabazon and their move towards economic independence through the establishment of the Fantasy Springs Casino (and more recently the Family Bowling Center and Fantasy Springs Casino Resort Hotel). The title of the book refers to the traditional reliance of the Plains Native groups on the buffalo for survival, and makes symbolic reference to the new economic engine that tribal casinos now represent for some Native groups.


A collection of stories and songs from across California, each introduced by anthropologists, with photographs and story explanations.

Focuses on the daily life of the Ohlone cultural group, including their daily lives. Games helped to reduce stress and competition within groups, especially over long winter months. Discussion of gambling songs for special occasions. Women play for prizes, such as jewelry. All ages can participate, from the youngest to the elders, and usually the women play on teams.


This compilation of Native stories includes a Konkow (also spelled Concow) gambling song from Northern California, and two gambling stories from the Pomo of the Central Coast. Includes a photograph of “stick dice.”


Specializing in Southern California groups, Miller writes about the Gabrielino, who lived in the Los Angeles area, in close proximity to the Chumash. The Gabrielino enjoyed gambling, and the women would play for shell beads. Gambling trays were made of coiled basketry materials.


Like the Gabrielino, the Chumash enjoyed gambling, especially the women. Walnut dice used asphaltum, with shell bead inlays and were also sometimes decorated with red ochre. The Chumash believed in skill and supernatural help rather than luck for winning the games. Their special gambling songs were recorded by anthropologist JP Harrington.

As the Padres Saw Them: California Indian Life and Customs as Reported by the Franciscan Missionaries 1813-1815, edited by Doyce B. Nunis, Jr. The Santa Barbara Bicentennial Historical Series, Number One. Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library (1976).

This book offers detailed lists of historical information from each of the California Missions. The so-called “vices” for each Mission group are listed, and gambling is listed as problematic at both San Gabriel and Santa Clara. This would be the same type of traditional gaming as practiced in pre-Contact times.

This series of Maidu myths was compiled and translated by Shipley, a California linguist. The introduction incorporates a discussion of grass games, including a story of Dan Williams’ childhood, where he found a gaming charmstone and his father said this would be a sign of good luck for life. Williams later became a healer. Maidu cultures traditionally used the hand bones of the mountain lion for extra luck. Mountain lion or deer bone or wooden sticks were used for gaming. There is a description of gaming between the Maidu and the Paiute (and between Paiute teams) during Bear Dance celebrations in the 1960s. The book also includes a myth about mountain lion and his children—how they ran from their home when it was on fire and he looked for them until he was very old. At the end of the myth, the elderly mountain lion dies and is brought back to life by a spring of water.


Chapter Twenty is titled “The Two Famous Athletes” and discusses oh-welth-per, which is the stick game. This is a team sport similar to football (but using a stick) and is traditionally played by the Yurok. The Tolowa, Klamath and Hupa would also take part in these games. Descriptions of the game field, as well as teams and individual players of great renown are highlighted.


From the Achumawe and Atsugewi tribes of Northern California, Wilson discusses his childhood. When he and his siblings were not in school, they played a variety of games including: hide and seek, making soap bubbles, playing Stagecoach (where some of the children were passengers and others were “Indians”), running in the woods and swimming in the creeks. The boys tried to tame rattlesnakes as their grandfather had.