

# Native Americans

## Class Overview

1. Introduction
  - a. Have the students give their name and a favorite game they like to play.
  - b. What skills do you learn or achieve from these games?
  - c. Give the students a brief history of Native Americans that have lived or still live in this area. ( Attached at the end)
2. Progression of Activities
  - a. Knee Coup
  - b. Fox Walking
  - c. Atlatl
  - d. Throwing Sticks
  - e. Bow drill
3. Learning Standards Addressed
  - a. 4.A.2b , 4.A.2c , 4.A.3a , 4.A.3c 4.A.3d
  - b. 16.D.2b (US) , 16.D.3a (US), 16.E.2a (W)
  - c. 19.B.2 , 19.B.3 , 19.C.2a , 19.C.3a
4. Vocabulary
  - a. Atlatl: A rigid device for increasing the speed and distance of a spear when thrown, usually a flat wooden stick with a handhold and a peg or socket to accommodate the butt end of the spear.
  - b. Spear: A long, stabbing weapon for thrusting or throwing, consisting of a wooden shaft to which a sharp-pointed head, as of iron or steel, is attached.
  - c. Shaft: A long pole forming the body of various weapons, as lances, halberds, or arrows.
  - d. Dart: A small, slender missile that is pointed at one end and usually feathered at the other and is propelled by hand.
5. Wrap Up
  - a. How does your life compare to the life of a Native American child in the 1800's?
  - b. What did Native Americans learn through games? What do you learn?
  - c. What activity were you most successful at?

## Recent Native American History in Northern Illinois

There is a great deal of information that you may want to consult about Native Americans. It can be a sensitive subject to some, as Native American people and cultures are very much alive today. Therefore, it is important that we are accurate in our lessons, and teach with a great deal of respect for the subject matter. The resources listed at the end can be consulted for more information.

### 1. Black Hawk

You will probably find in several sources with references to “Chief Black Hawk.” This is a common mistake. While he was a great warrior and a leader in battle, he was not the chief of his tribe. One source referred to him as a “subordinate chief,” but it is misleading to refer to him as a chief. The chief during the Black Hawk War was a man named Keokuk. Black Hawk’s full name was Black Sparrow Hawk.

The Black Hawk War is an important chapter in Illinois history. Events leading to the war began in 1804, when the Sauk and Fox tribes surrendered all land east of the Mississippi to the United States, with the stipulation that they may continue to live on the land until it was to be opened to settlers. After the War of 1812, settlers began pouring in. Keokuk and the majority of his people saw the inevitable and moved across the river to the present Iowa. Black Hawk, however, felt he had been deceived regarding the terms of the treaty and refused to give in to the pressure from the whites.

By the spring of 1831, a great deal of friction was felt between the settlers and Indians, so Gov. Reynolds called in the militia. During this time, Black Hawk and his followers had been trying to win the support of other tribes in their opposition to the whites. On April 6, 1832, Black Hawk crossed to the east of the Mississippi as the head of a band of Indians, 500 of whom were warriors. Regiments of militia pursued him up the Rock River, but were poorly disciplined and unskilled in Indian warfare, so Black Hawk and his band were able to elude the soldiers. When 3 of Black Hawk’s men bearing a white flag approached the brigades under Isaiah Stillman, one of the bearers of the flag was shot down. This began the Battle of Stillman’s Run, which was won by Black Hawk. However, he and his warriors suffered losses in several following battles. Black Hawk was eventually captured and was taken east where he visited several booming eastern cities. Seeing the vastness of the resources of the United States, he gave up the fight, knowing he had done the best he could do. When he died he was honored by the United States.

### 2. The Sauk and Fox

The Sauk and Fox were the last Native American inhabitants of the Rock River Valley. They originally lived near present-day Montreal and Green Bay, but moved south as they were displaced by other tribes who were displaced by white settlers. The Sauk and Fox were two

distinct tribes. While they did not always get along, they had a strong kinship, and intertribal marriage was common.

Their names since creation are Sauki and Meskwaki. It was the French who erroneously called the Meskwaki, the “Renards”, which translates to Fox. The two tribes had very different political structures, partially based on their different living arrangements. The Sauk lived in large summer villages with highly organized political systems. The Fox lived in smaller scattered villages with a government based on consensus.

Both tribes were farmers, hunters, and gatherers. Women did most of the farming and gathering. They grew corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, and melons in the low lying areas of their summer villages. They gathered wild, edible plants from the surrounding forests. The men hunted and trapped game in the forest and on the prairies, and fished in the rivers and streams.

The Sauk and Fox did not stay in one place year-round. They stayed in the larger summer villages for their planting season. Saukenauk, a Sauk summer village, was located at the mouth of the Rock River, and was the largest in the region. After the harvest, they celebrated in the Green Corn Dance for 2-3 weeks, and then moved to their smaller winter dwellings. During the winter, they lived only with their extended families in structures called wikiups. (We do not have a wikiup at Taft. We have a longhouse and a wigwam.) In early spring, they would travel with their families back to the summer villages. Summer was the most active religious and ceremonial season.

Today, there are Sauk and Fox reservations in Iowa, Oklahoma, and Kansas. However, it is important to remember that these are not the only places that the Sauk and Fox people are found. Like any ethnic group in the United States, their members may be found all across the country.

This is a brief synopsis of the recent local Native American history. (There were other tribes here before the Sauk and Fox.)

**Resources:**

- ❖ *Native American Handbook*, this binder contains a collection of information
- ❖ *Native American Binder*, this, like all the other black binders, is a collection of lesson plans written by past Taft Staff
- ❖ *Handbook of American Indian Games*, by Allan and Paulette MacFarlan

# Knee Coup

**Objective:** Students will learn the skills of agility and movement.

**Location:** Anywhere (but outside works best)

**Time:** 15 to 20 minutes

**Materials:** 4 cones for boundaries (can also use trees)

**Background:** Many of the Plains Indian tribes engaged in a practice called “counting coup.” It was a great honor for a warrior to touch his enemy with the hand or a “coup stick” then leave unscathed. The one being touched was dishonored. This game likely came from that practice.

## Procedure:

1. Have all the students spread out within the boundaries.
2. In this game everyone is “it,” and they must look out for everyone else.
3. The object of the game is to tag someone behind the knee.
4. If a student is tagged behind the knee, they must cover that knee with a band-aid (their hand). Now they have only one hand to tag or defend with.
5. Once a student is tagged behind both of their knees they are out and must step outside of the playing area.
6. Once the game gets down to just a few students, it is a good idea to make the boundaries smaller to make the game more challenging.
7. The game will continue until there is just one student left

## Wrap Up:

1. What skills did they use to succeed?
2. What skills did this game teach the Native American children?

# Fox Walking

**Objective:** Students will learn how to walk quietly and carefully.

**Location:** Anywhere (outside works best)

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Materials:** Blindfold, a collection of sticks

**Background Info:** Prior to European settlement, many Native Americans were skilled hunters, hunting with patience and calmness. We can assume that fox walking is a skill they would teach their children at a very young age, so they could practice sneaking up to their prey very quietly. They would want to get as close to the animal as possible before attacking, and this skill allowed them to do that.

## Procedure:

1. The first part of this activity will be to teach the students how to properly fox walk. The basic intention of this type of walking is to put your foot on the ground before you put any weight on it. That way, if there is a branch or other object that might make a sound when you step on it, you can move your foot to another place before making any noise. You can keep your head up and look where you are going and don't need to look at the ground, because you will be feeling the terrain with your feet. This walk will also be much slower than your normal walk, as it is very deliberate. Your stance should be straight with the head, back, and hips all in line. Your feet should be next to each other and pointing in the direction that you want to go. You should put all of your weight on one foot while moving the other foot forward. The outside of this foot should be lowered to the ground, but no weight should be transferred to it yet. Then the foot should be slowly rolled inward with the ball, heel, and edge of the foot rolling slowly down. Once the foot is on the ground, you should be able to feel what you will be putting your weight on. If it feels good, then you can transfer your weight to that foot and start the whole process over with your other foot.
2. Have the students practice this multiple times until they feel comfortable.
3. Now that the students have practiced their new skill, the game can begin. Have each student find a stick that is about the size of an unsharpened pencil.
4. Pick one student to be in the center of the circle. This student should feel comfortable being blindfolded. Everyone else should make a larger circle around this person.
5. All the sticks should be placed in a circle around the blindfolded student.
6. It is the goal of the students to retrieve their stick without being caught or pointed at. They will need to do this by fox walking very slowly to their stick. Pick one student at a time to try and retrieve their stick. This student will try to get his/her stick without the blindfolded student hearing him/her. Everyone must be very quiet even if it is not their turn. Whenever the blindfolded student hears a noise, he/she will point in the direction the noise is coming from. If a student retrieving their stick is pointed at, he/she has lost and must slowly back out of the circle. If a student retrieves the stick, he/she must safely get out of the circle without getting caught as well.
7. The game will continue until everyone has had a chance to try and retrieve their stick.

## Wrap Up:

1. What skills did the Native Americans learn from this activity? How can you use it?
2. Why were these skills important?

# Atlatl

**Objective:** Students will learn the importance of traditional technologies.

**Location:** Open area outside

**Time:** 20 to 25 minutes

**Materials:** Atlatl, spears, targets, flags

**Vocabulary:** Atlatl, spear, shaft, dart

**Background Info:** An atlatl is a tool that uses leverage to achieve greater speed and accuracy than a regular spear or dart. This tool allowed the Native Americans to hunt from greater distances.

## Procedure:

1. Explain to the students that people have been using many ways to hunt for thousands of years. Ask the students to name some hunting implements. Explain to them that they will be using spears today and a device called an atlatl. Show them one of the spears. Spears would not have been made out of plastic like ours are here at Taft. Ask the students what they think people would have made spears out of?
2. Show them how to throw a spear, using a simple overhand throwing motion. Make sure the students understand that they should not throw the spear in the direction of anything living.
3. Designate a line that the students should throw from and tell them that they should not retrieve their spear until directed by you.
4. Divide the group into smaller groups, one group per spear. Have them line up behind the throwing line.
5. Tell your students that they are going to have a contest to see how far they can throw their spears. Give the students a chance to practice. When they've all had a practice turn, announce that the contest is starting. Use the flags to mark the spear that is thrown the farthest for each round. Keep the mark of the spear that was thrown furthest.
6. Now show the students the atlatls. This is the Aztec word, meaning spear thrower, for this instrument, but it was used by many other cultures throughout the world. This is a type of hand-held catapult that was a technological advancement to help in the throwing of spears. This invention increases the distance that a spear can be thrown, because it increases the length of the throwers arm and more effectively transfers energy from the thrower to the spear. The spear, when used with an atlatl, is called a dart. You hold the atlatl by the handle (the front of the atlatl) and place the dart on the pin (the protrusion at the back of the atlatl). Place the dart on the atlatl with the point of the dart towards the handle. Hold the dart on the atlatl with your thumb and first finger. You then pull your arm back and then bring it forward, just as you did when

you threw the spear. Make sure that you release your fingers as the atlatl moves forward so the dart will release.

7. Have the students practice with their atlatl. Remind them of the rules that you set before with the spears. Once they have had some time to practice, have them again throw to see who can throw the dart the farthest. Compare the distance the spears were thrown with the atlatl to ones that were thrown with just their arm.

### Wrap Up:

1. Did the atlatl improve the distance that the spears were thrown?
2. Did the atlatl improve accuracy?
3. Where would be the best area for the Native Americans to hunt with an atlatl?

Adapted from: [www.atlatl.com](http://www.atlatl.com), [http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat\\_amer/pre/htmls/a\\_weapons.html](http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat_amer/pre/htmls/a_weapons.html)

# Throwing Sticks

**Objective:** Students will understand one of the many ways people acquired food.

**Location:** Outside in a field or forest setting

**Time:** 15 to 20 minutes

**Materials:** Wooden stumps, small logs, milk jugs or objects that can represent small game animals, bag of throwing sticks.

**Background Info:** The throwing stick is one of the first weapons used to kill small game or prey.

## Procedure:

8. Scatter all the targets (stumps, Tide® bottles, etc.) out in an area.
9. Teach the students the proper way of throwing their sticks. Stand with your shoulders pointed diagonally at the target. Your feet should be spread shoulder width apart and lead with your left foot (the reverse is true if you are left handed). Hold the stick behind your body perpendicular to the ground. Pivot your body at the waist, having your arm follow along and letting go of the stick as you snap your arm forward. You want your stick to fly through the air with a helicopter like motion, parallel to the ground.
10. Have the students throw their sticks a few at a time, making sure they are far enough apart that they will not hit each other when they swing. Once each student has gotten a chance to practice, tell the students that they will need to hunt to feed their village.
11. Give each student two or three tries at throwing sticks. Count how many animals (targets) are hit by the group.

## Wrap Up:

3. How many animals were killed? Enough for the village?
4. What would you need to do differently if the targets were real animals?

Adapted from:

Brown, Tom, *Tom Brown's field guide to Nature and Survival for Children*, 1989

# Bow Drill

**Objective:** Students will learn the parts of a bow drill and how they work together to make a fire.

**Location:** Dry open area outside

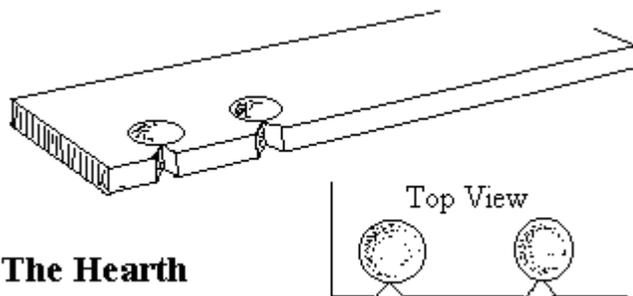
**Time:** 20 to 30 minutes

**Materials:** Bows, Spindles, Handholds, Fireboard (1 set for 3 children), Tinder

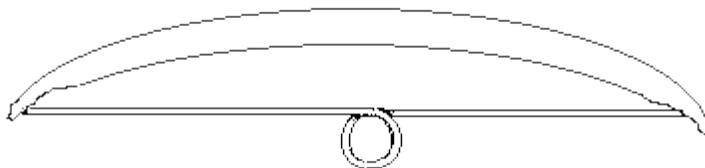
**Background Info:** A bow drill is used to make fire using friction. The heat generated during the friction from the spindle, bow, and fireboard will eventually produce an ember, which can later be turned into fire.

**Procedure:**

1. Describe the different parts of the bow drill.



**The Hearth**



**The Bow**

The drill has to be positioned as shown. It can't be on the inside between the cord and the bow. Let it be to the outside.

2. Explain to the students that they will be working in groups of three to make a fire.
3. First, have the students twist the spindle once around the bowstring.
4. Then, explain that one student will kneel on their right knee with his/her left foot on the fireboard, while holding one end of the bow.
5. A second student will be the mirror of the first student, holding onto the opposite end of the bow with his/her right foot on the fireboard.
6. The third student will kneel on both knees and place the spindle into the fireboard notch. He/she will then place the handhold on top of the spindle, while holding on

with both hands-and putting the right amount of pressure on the spindle. Too little pressure will allow the spindle to pop out, while too much will not allow the spindle to spin freely to create the friction needed to create fire. Finding this optimal pressure is done through trial-and-error.

7. The two students holding the bow can begin sawing the bow back and forth once the student in the middle is ready. The students should slowly pull the bow back and forth taking turns making sure each pull uses the entire length of the string. Once the students get into a nice rhythm, they should be able to produce a coal in less than 100 strokes. Have the students count their strokes and don't let them stop until they have a good coal.
8. Once they have a coal the students should transfer it to a large tinder bundle. Show the students how to hold the bundle like a nest and gently blow on the coal until it bursts into flame.
9. If there are more than three people in a group, have them rotate positions.

#### Wrap Up:

1. How difficult was this task?
2. How many groups were able to get a fire? Smoke?
3. How and when would the people who relied on this technology learn to do it? How difficult do you think it would have been for them?

Adapted from: Compilation of several ideas found in the old Lorado Taft Native American binder.

Moore, Robin, *Bow drill fire-making for young kids*, *Bulletin of Primitive Technology*,

Spring 1996, 27.

<http://www.onagocag.com/fire.html>, March 22, 2005.