

## *Play (Stick)Ball!*

### **Introduction**

One of the oldest team games played in North America is not football or baseball, but stickball. Known in the modern sports world as lacrosse, Native Americans have been playing the sport for hundreds of years. Played universally across North America, each region though had a slightly different version of the same sport. In the Northeastern region, the players had a single stick with a large net that was used to pass the ball up and down the field to score goals. In the southeastern region the game morphs into using two sticks to pinch the ball between them and run down field towards the goal. Due to the design, passes are rarely completed. Individuals relay on physical abilities and teamwork to score points.

Played with few rules, physical play and a goal on each end, this game was a critical part of native society. During the game, teams would try to advance the ball downfield using only sticks, never touching the ball with their hands, to hit the opposing team's goal posts with the ball. Dimensions of the field and length of play were fairly ambiguous allowing the games to last for days if need to settle the dispute. The game could be played with only a handful of players or over 300 individuals.

### **Standards from Alabama Social Studies Course of Study**

3rd Grade: 11, 13

4th Grade: 2

5th Grade: 3

8th Grade: 1, 14

### **Objectives**

- Students will learn the importance of stickball in southeastern Native American Nations.
- Understand the rules of stickball.
- Learn how to pick up a ball with a lacrosse stick.
- Participate in a game.

### **Materials**

- Traditional Choctaw Stickball sticks and ball
- Modern "mini" lacrosse sticks and soft balls
- George Catlin 1844 Paintings (2)

## Activity

1. Go over the origination of stickball/lacrosse in Native American society. Describe the game to the class then compare it to the modern version played in Alabama today. Allow students to handle traditional Choctaw sticks (kabocca) and woven ball (towa).
2. Provide each student a modern “mini” stick and soft ball.
  - a. Mini sticks available for rental from museum education staff. Email [bmast@uwa.edu](mailto:bmast@uwa.edu) for more information.
3. Teach students how to pick up a ground ball & to throw a pass.
4. Dive individuals into 2-4 teams and go over modified lacrosse rules.
  - a. No pushing or shoving.
  - b. No swinging of sticks at people.
  - c. Two hands on stick at all times.
5. Play a game to 3 then rotate or end session.

### \*Modification\*

If students are unable to use sticks a modified version of the game will be played.

1. Game is played similar to basketball. A goal on each end. Players carry the ball and pass to each other. If a ball touches the ground it is a turnover to the other team. If someone is “tagged” they must drop the ball and back up to allow other team to pick up and restart play. Goals are scored via touching the ball to the goal. First to three points wins.

## Evaluation

### Discussion Question:

*Why was Stickball important in Native American culture?*

Action: Participate in a Game

### **Resources:**

<http://www.choctawnationculture.com/choctaw-culture/iti-fabvssa/201007-stickball-the-choctaw-national-sport.aspx>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyvTjTWK9\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyvTjTWK9_g)

Bruchac, Joseph. *The Great Ballgame: A Muskogee Story*. New York: Dial, 1994.