



RECONCILIATION



NATURE GAMES: Traditional indigenous games and environmental stewardship

Tom Fabian, University of Queensland
Gary Osmond, University of Queensland
Murray G. Phillips, University of Queensland

WHAT WE DID

- Indigenous traditional games, played outdoors with natural materials and linked to spiritual beliefs about nature, are great for showing how young people learn about their environment through play.
- My postdoctoral research looked at how playing games can help people in Indigenous communities learn and develop a sense of responsibility for the environment.
- To do this research, I interviewed Indigenous games experts, visited a traditional games archive, and observed Indigenous games in Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Use **nature games** to explain the benefits of outdoor recreation, from improving health to helping the environment, in policy, programming, and practice.
- Connect nature games to the **local culture**, be it Indigenous, settler, or immigrant worldviews on nature, to help educate youth about environmental responsibility.
- Consider how sport programs can leverage local cultural knowledge, environmental care, and outdoor games to teach **environmental responsibility and enhance sustainability**.

WHAT WE FOUND

- Traditional games are nature games: Playing in, with and through nature was connected to learning from nature. Positioning activities as games (as opposed to sports) can help to convey the benefits of outdoor recreation for health, reconciliation, and the environment.
- Environmental responsibility involves play, nature, and culture: It's not enough to simply design outdoor game play in the environmental education of Canadian youth. The key to longstanding stewardship is connection to local culture, be it Indigenous, settler, or immigrant worldviews on nature.
- Traditional games are crucial in sport ecology: Nature games offer a "sustainable" recreational outlet and an opportunity to imprint crucial environmental ethics in youth from the start.



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