GRADE 9-12: PHYSICAL EDUCATION

INUIT GAMES

Purpose: Students will develop cross-cultural awareness and an appreciation for the challenges of living in northern Canada by examining games played by the Inuit who live in the north. Proficiency in different sports and activities is often a reflection of environmental conditions, economic means and cultural values. Students will also build leadership and communication skills as they teach their peers a new game and provide the historical context and purpose of each game.

Estimated time: Three 50-minute sessions

Activity 1: Background Information
1. Have students brainstorm a list of their favourite sports. Write them on the board. Ask students the following:
   a. Which of these do you play? Why do you play these sports? Why not others?
   b. Are they team sports or individual competitions?
   c. Are the sports you play dependent on the season?
   d. What sports might you play if you lived in Brazil, Norway or Qatar?
   e. What factors might influence why some people excel at certain sports and games while others do not? (climate, environment, money, accessibility to materials, genetics, general health, etc).
   f. How do we see this reflected in international competitions like world championships and the summer or winter Olympics?
   g. Have students recall what they know about life in the Arctic and the Inuit people in terms of the following: geography, culture, food, activities, etc. Ask students what they think the challenges to everyday life are in the Arctic.

2. Inform students they will be learning about—and trying—some of the games Inuit people have traditionally played.
   a. Explain how these pastimes have helped the Inuit develop the survival skills particular to the arctic environment (physical strength, agility, flexibility, endurance and the tolerance of pain).
   b. Show a video of an Inuit competition as an example (choose one from beyondpenguins.ehe.osu.edu/issue/peoples-of-the-arctic/arctic-survival-skills-traditional-inuit-games. The “Ear Pull” is dramatic but may not be a game to encourage students to try).

Activity 2: The Airplane
1. Assemble the class outside. Inform them of the current temperature and remind them that in the Arctic, temperatures can drop to as low as -50°C.

2. Present “The Airplane” in the same way students should present their own presentations in activity 3, using the following points as a guide:
   a. Name the game
   b. Explain the objectives and rules
   c. Discuss safety concerns
   d. Demonstrate the game
   e. Explain the role of student participation
   f. Discuss the human performance skills developed, the physical and psychological factors that affect performance in the game and the transferability of those skills to survival in the Arctic.

3. Ask four students to participate in the demonstration.
   a. Have one person lay on the ground, feet together and arms outstretched—they are the “airplane.”
   b. The other three students should then lift the airplane up: one person holding the ankles while the other two hold the wrists or forearms of the player in the airplane position.
   c. The airplane must keep his/her body completely straight and rigid for as long as possible as the team slowly moves forward.
   d. The object of the game is to “fly” the airplane as far as possible before losing form. The airplane that “flies” the furthest wins.
   e. At first glance, this game appears to be easy, but it requires tremendous upper body strength.

4. Divide the class into groups of four. Have each student take a turn as the airplane and compete to see who can fly the furthest.

5. After playing, reassemble the class in a large group. Lead the students in a discussion on why they think this game was important in the lives of the Inuit. Have students consider the following:
   a. Consider the muscular systems used in the game and the effects the natural environment of the Arctic would have on the body.
   b. What is the relationship between the skills learned and honed in “The Airplane” and the traditional way of life of the Inuit? (Teamwork, endurance, concentration, motivation, upper body strength, etc.)
Activity 3: Group Assignment
1. Divide students into six groups. Assign each group an Inuit game from the list below.
   a. One and two foot high kicks
   b. The Alaskan high kick
   c. Knuckle Hop
   d. Leg Wrestle
   e. The Back Push
   f. The Sitting Knuckle Pull

2. Tell students they will be responsible for teaching their classmates about their assigned game using the same presentation format that was used for “The Airplane.”

3. To facilitate learning each game, provide students with the links in the resource section of this lesson plan.

4. Allow 15 minutes for each presentation.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to the lesson plan, share these resources with your students:

- Traditional Inuit Games:
  - www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/sports/more-sports/arctic-winter-games/topic-arctic-winter-games.html
  - http://gamesmuseum.uwaterloo.ca/VirtualExhibits/Inuit/english/