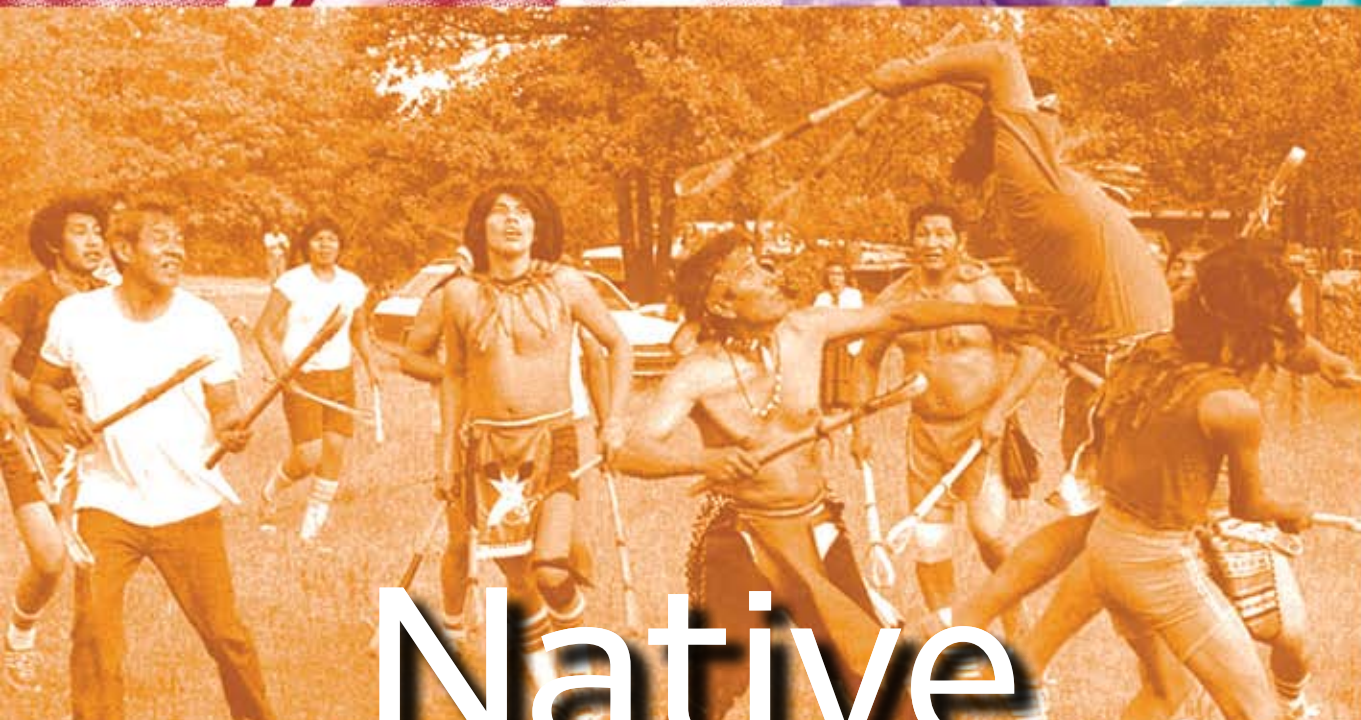
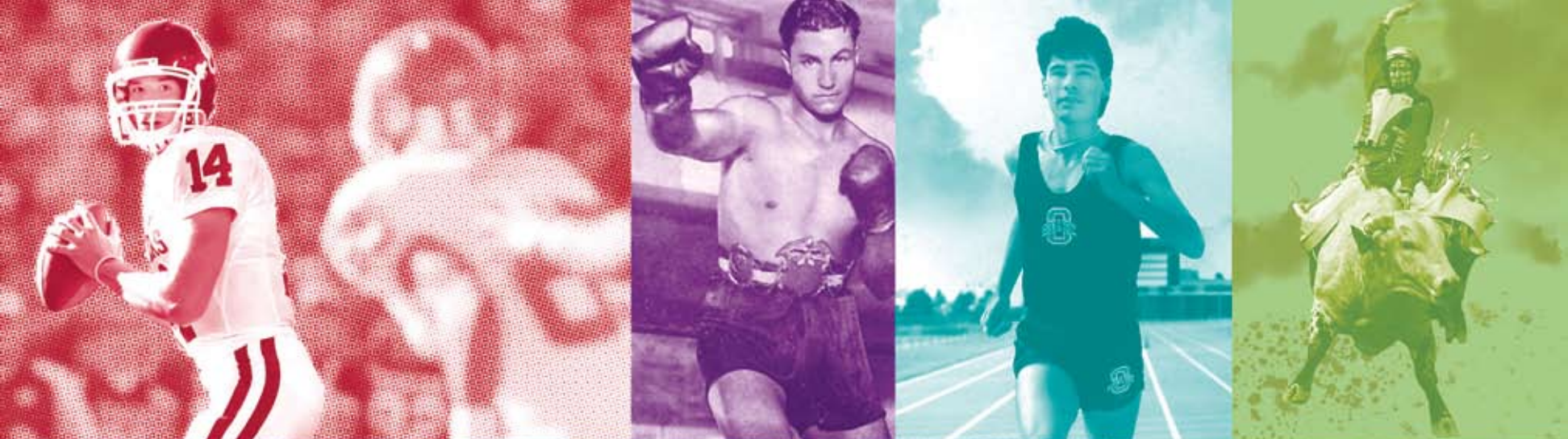


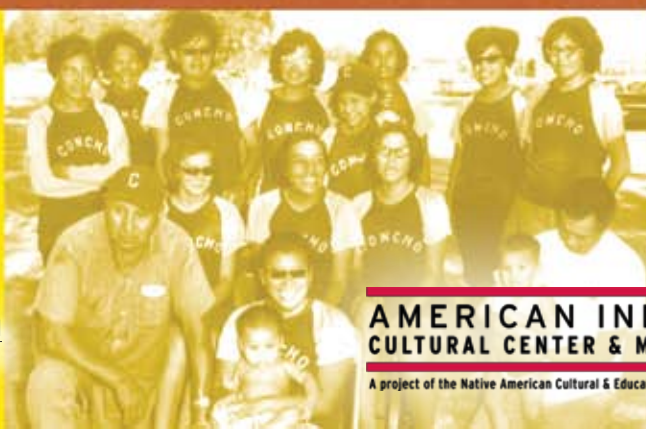


Native Sports

playing for tradition,
culture and life.



NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION
THE OKLAHOMAN



AMERICAN INDIAN
CULTURAL CENTER & MUSEUM

A project of the Native American Cultural & Educational Authority

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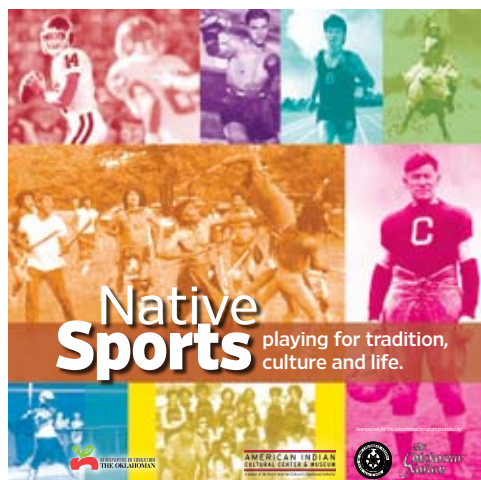
the
Chickasaw
Nation

The American Indian Cultural Center and Museum (AICCM) is honored to present, in partnership with Newspapers In Education at *The Oklahoman*, the Native American Heritage educational workbook. Workbooks focus on the cultures, histories and governments of the American Indian tribes of Oklahoma. The workbooks are published twice a year, around November and April. Each workbook is organized into four core thematic areas: Origins, Native Knowledge, Community and Governance. Because it is impossible to cover every aspect of the topics featured in each edition, we hope the workbooks will comprehensively introduce students to a variety of new subjects and ideas. We hope you will be inspired to research and find out more information with the help of your teachers and parents as well as through your own independent research.

Writers: Education Coordinator, Nancy Fields and Director of Community Outreach and Public Programs, Stacey Halfmoon at the American Indian Cultural Center and Museum.

On the cover:

from left to right: Sam Bradford (*Cherokee*), Rollie Munsell, Jr. (*Chickasaw*), Haskell Indian Nations University, Wilson Pipestem (*Osage/ Otoe*), Ryan Dirteater (*Cherokee*), Alabama Quassarte stickball players, photo by Tom Fields (*Creek/Cherokee*), Jim Thorpe (*Sac and Fox/ Potawatomi*), Peyton Watson (*Absentee Shawnee*), Concho Women's Softball Team – Wheeler Park 1965 Oklahoma Historical Society



“So Defensive” Bunky Echo-Hawk (Pawnee)

Halito! The American Indian Cultural Center and Museum (AICCM) will serve as a living center for cultural expression promoting awareness and understanding for all people regarding Oklahoma’s American Indian cultures and heritage. Native cultures have made significant contributions to the fabric of America today, including sports. American Indian tribal traditions were the inspiration for many of the team sports and athletics we enjoy today. From the past to the present, Native athletes serve as models of athletic achievement. In this supplement, we celebrate the vast impact that Native cultures and athletes continue to make in sports around the world. We hope you enjoy learning about traditional games, remarkable athletes and Native sportsmanship that continues to inspire us all today. – Gena Timberman, Esq.,



Gena Timberman, Esq. (Choctaw)

Executive Director of the Native American Cultural and Educational Authority.



American Indian Cultural Center and Museum Site

Contributors:

Jim Thorpe Museum	Cherokee Nation
Oklahoma Historical Society	Bunky Echo-Hawk (Pawnee)
Tom Fields (Muscogee Creek/ Cherokee)	
George Tiger (Muscogee Creek)	
Sallie Andrews (Wyandotte)	
Caitlin Baker (Muscogee Creek)	

Introduction

Chances are you have either played a sport or you can't wait to participate in a sports activity before the day is over. Sports can be a fun way to interact with friends, show off athletic skills and for some, allow us to dream of becoming a professional athlete.

It seems like sports have always been around – but, did you ever wonder where some of these games originate? Have popular sports always been played the same way they are today? Surprisingly, the answers to some of these questions are connected to many of the Native American cultures, peoples and histories that are found in Oklahoma today.

Oklahoma's rich Native American tribes have ancient sports traditions that have inspired many of the team sports and athletics that are played today. When the early Spanish explorers came up through Florida into the Southeast they met the Seminole, Creek, Chickasaw and Choctaw tribes. The explorers were intrigued by the large amount of times these tribes devoted to playing the very physical game of stickball. Early French fur traders in the Northeast marveled at the athletic skill that Wyandotte, Seneca Cayuga, and Pottawatomi tribes demonstrated while playing what is known today as lacrosse. Later, settlers admired the physical

dexterity of Cheyenne chunky players on the Plains. Through these and many other Native American sports, the concept of team sports was born. These traditional Native games influenced the American sports we all enjoy and play today.

Not only have Native cultures contributed to the foundations of many of today's popular sports, many of the greatest athletes to participate in American-born sports were Native American. From Olympic gold medalist, Jim Thorpe (Sac and Fox/Potawatomi) to Heisman Trophy winner, Sam Bradford (Cherokee), Native athletes have led the way to raising the athletic intensity of sports like baseball, football, track and field, around the world.

Throughout this *Native American Heritage Month* edition you will learn about the outstanding contributions Native American cultures have made to sports, the hurdles that were overcome to achieve some of the greatest victories in sports history, and the cultural importance that sports play in Native communities in Oklahoma today. So, gear up, put your game face on, and get ready to learn about the history and valor of Native sports.

Ready? - Set? - LEARN!!!



Ponca Shinny Players



Northern Cheyenne youth playing the game of double ball. –Bob Zeller, Billings Gazette

Origins

For many of us, sports are an important part of our daily lives. Today, student's schedules are packed with school sports and organized after-school sports activities. Parents want their children to participate in sports to strengthen character through learning good sportsmanship, problem-solving skills and to learn how to interact with teammates. Most kids want to play sports because it is fun. Native people have enjoyed playing sports for the same reasons. Team sports were especially popular among Native people and when European settlers both witnessed and participated in traditional games they were influenced by the sportsmanship and the respectful competition among the athletes and teams. This, in turn, inspired the principals of sportsmanship that are used in athletics today.

In many Native cultures, however; there exists a deeper significance to why sports are played. For many tribes, sports are an important part of tradition, ritual, and ceremony. The relationship between Native culture and games like stickball, lacrosse, and shinny (inspired hockey) are played-out through the course of the game. For many tribes, traditional games served as prayer, healing, ceremony, mortuary practices, fertility and can even control of the weather. The most universal reason that Native people played sports was to give thanks. The birth of child, the coming-of-age for a young girl, a hunter's first kill, or a bountiful harvest; were all reasons to celebrate and give thanks through games.

Games like Lacrosse were often played to heal the sick, to stop suffering and to end epidemics. The ceremony of the game held powerful medicines that were believed to cure health related issues. In both life and death, traditional sports were important. To honor the memory of a deceased person, the Huron (Wyandotte) and Delaware tribes would often play the deceased favorite game like Indian football, snowsnake, and stickball to honor their memory.

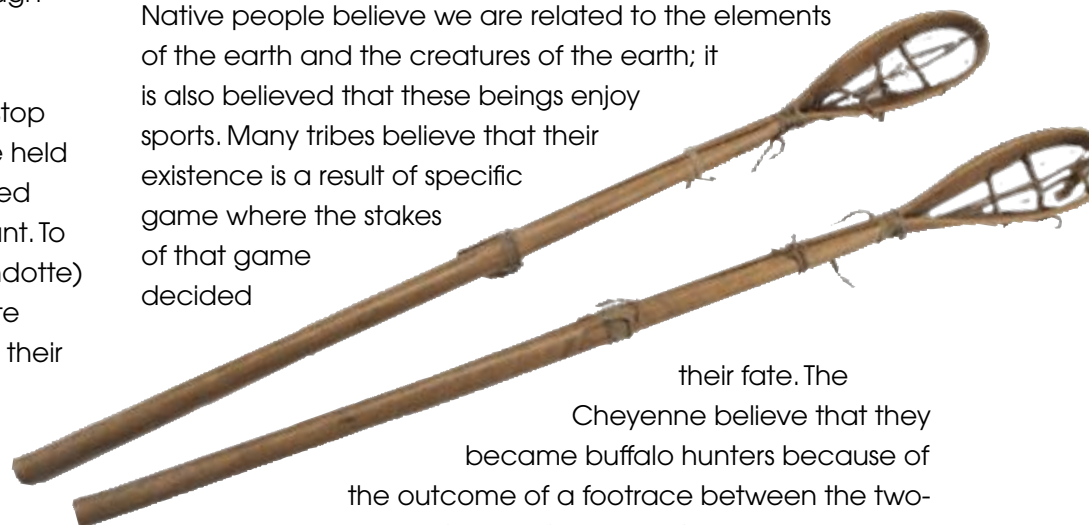
Traditional sports teams were generally larger than sports teams today and the playing fields were also much larger. Many traditional sports teams were made up of 100 to 1000 players at a time, all of whom could be on the field playing



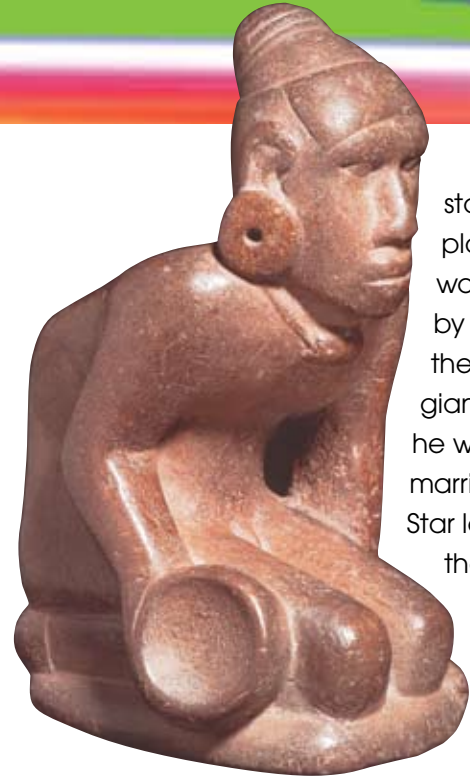
"The Stick Ballers" by Brent Greenwood (Ponca/Chickasaw)

on a course that could extend for miles. Playing games was an important part of everyday life for the whole community. Over hundreds or thousands of years, Native people learned that sports strengthened not only one's body, but also strengthened one's mind. Playing involved both physical abilities and mental agility. It was also a way to bring a community together and encourage leadership, democracy and intelligence. It didn't matter if you were male or female, young or old, everyone could take part in team sports in virtually every American Indian Tribal Nation.

In Native culture, sports activities were not limited to the humans but often included all beings in nature. Because many Native people believe we are related to the elements of the earth and the creatures of the earth; it is also believed that these beings enjoy sports. Many tribes believe that their existence is a result of specific game where the stakes of that game decided



their fate. The Cheyenne believe that they became buffalo hunters because of the outcome of a footrace between the two-legged animals (humans) and the four-legged animals (buffalo). Moundbuilder cultures of southeastern U.S. describe



Morning Star

stories of Morning Star, a great ball player. Morning Star desired a beautiful woman as his wife, but she was kept by giant female chiefs far away in the sky. Morning Star challenged the giants to a ball game and if he won, he would win the beautiful girls hand in marriage. After a hard game, Morning Star lost, and was made to marry one of the giants. Traditional stories can also offer answers to questions in nature. For example, why can some animals fly, and some only walk on the earth? Or why can fish live only in the water, but ducks can walk, swim and fly? There is usually a wonderful

story about how these things came to be. One such story is the Mohawk story "The ball game between the animals and the birds."

Long ago, the birds and the animals decide to play a game of lacrosse. All those who could fly would be on one team and all those who could crawl or run would be on the other team. When they came to the ball field, they divided up into their two sides.

When the sides were chosen, two little creatures remained in the middle of the field. They were so small that the animals had not chosen them. The small creatures asked if they could play on the team of the animals. They were told they were too small.

So the two small creatures went to the side of the birds. The small creatures explained that the animals would not have them and asked if they could play for the birds. But they were told they couldn't because they didn't have wings.

So they asked for wings and they Eagle told them that he would try to do that.

So Hawk, Owl, and Eagle took the skin from an old drum, cut it and fastened it to the legs of the small creatures. One little creature jumped up into the air, flapped his wings, and flew! That is how bat got his wings.

There was not enough leather left to make wings for the second little creature. So Hawk and Owl grabbed the loose skin on each side of the little creature and turned him into a flying squirrel.

It was a hard fought game. The score was tied and it seemed as if neither side would win. As soon as the sun set, the game would be over.

Just then, as the sun was about to set, the animals got the ball. Deer, the fastest runner of all, raced straight toward the goal of the birds.

Just as Deer threw the ball toward the net, a little shape came gliding down. It was Flying Squirrel.

Flying Squirrel caught the ball in his lacrosse stick. He threw it to Bat. Bat caught the ball and began to fly toward the animals' goal. Just as the sun went down, he scored the final goal!

So it was the two smallest ones, Bat and Flying Squirrel, who won the game for the birds. Ever since then, on summer nights, just when the sun starts to set, Bat and Flying Squirrel come out again to see if they can help win another game.



Flying Squirrel caught the ball in his lacrosse stick. He threw it to bat. "Native American Games and Stories" by James and Joseph Bruchac—Illustration by Kayeri Akweks



Chunkey Stone

Activity

Creative writing

Write a story about a sporting event that includes animals and humans.

Native Knowledge

Boarding Schools and Sports

When Zachary awoke, for a split second he thought that he was home safe in his bed. As his eyes adjusted to the dim light of the room he slowly remembered he was not at home. It was his fourth day at boarding school and he was already homesick. He missed the smell of his mom cooking breakfast, the sounds of his dad getting ready for work, and even the nagging of his little sister. All of that seemed so far away now but Zachary was required by law to be at boarding school. Even his parents agreed that if he was going to be successful in life, he had to get a better education than he could at home. Zachary's daydreaming broke as the other boys around him started getting ready for the day. He had met a couple of new friends, but many of the boys felt down like he did and the mood at the school was very blue. Everything Zachary was now doing on a daily basis was a new routine for him; he was learning a new language, wearing different clothes and shoes, his hair was cut shorter, and the food he was eating was different from his mom's. The rules were different too. There was less free time and more time spent in class, working, and cleaning; everything was scheduled to the second. The best part of his day was when he got to play ball with the other kids. This was the one time of the day when everything was the same here as it was at home because the rules of the game were the same at boarding school as they were at home. Even though many of the kids spoke different languages, it didn't matter because every teammate knew what they needed to do to play the game without saying a word. That was the one part of the day when they were just kids and their spirits were lifted for a little while.

From 1879 until the 1950s there were countless Native American children, just like Zachary, who attended Federal Indian boarding schools. These children were taken from their homes and families and sent to live at boarding schools located across the country including Oklahoma. At the time, the U.S. Government thought that this was the best way to teach Native children how to read and write in English and to learn a trade or profession. The goal of the policy was to assimilate Native American children into mainstream America and separate them from their Native roots.

Sadly, this process forbid children from speaking their Native languages, practicing their traditions and religions, and in some



Haskell Institute Indian Boarding School

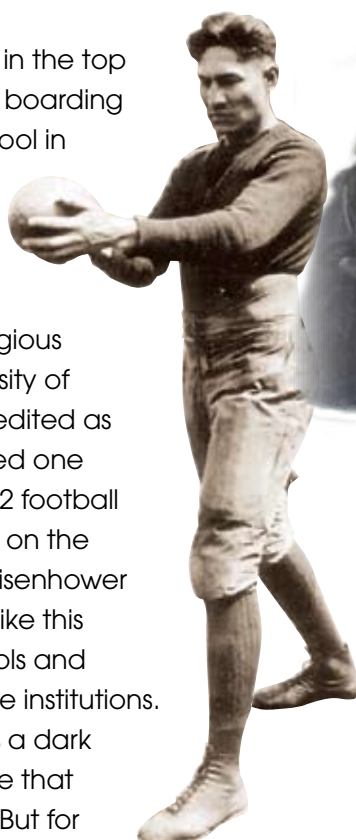
cases would not allow the children to return home until they graduated. It is hard to imagine what that would be like but we know it was an overwhelming experience for all of those who attended boarding school.

Throughout these experiences sports gave many Native students an outlet to feel accomplished and a sense of belonging, which allowed them to excel in their favorite game and ultimately, revolutionize the way popular sports are played today. Ultimately, sports proved to be one activity that was an equalizer throughout the boarding school experience. It didn't matter who or where you were from, the rules of the game were always the same. For the Native students at boarding schools, the freedom they felt from sports helped excel boxing, football, baseball and cross-country to new heights. When one school gained acclaim in a certain sport, other schools were quick to add the same game to their roster; igniting new trends throughout the boarding school system.

Applying the principals and strategies that had been used in traditional games like stickball, lacrosse and distance running gave these Native players a competitive edge that changed how popular sports were being played. Early in the history of boarding schools, previous sports records were being broken left and right. News spread like wildfire about the athletic ability of boarding school students and soon boarding school teams were receiving national attention for their stellar athleticism. Recruiters from professional teams would attend games to scout out the best

talent for their major league teams. Ranked in the top of the American leagues were a number of boarding schools such as Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, Chilocco Agricultural Indian School in northern Oklahoma, and Haskell Indian School in Kansas. Carlisle's football team was so good that they engaged in college-level sports and often played prestigious universities like Harvard, Yale, and the University of Pennsylvania. In fact, the team has been credited as "the team that invented football" and played one of the greatest football games ever. The 1912 football game, Carlisle vs. Army, featured Jim Thorpe on the Carlisle team and future President, Dwight Eisenhower on Army. Carlisle beat Army 27 - 6 and wins like this brought a lot of attention to boarding schools and helped improve the negative image of these institutions. Without question, the boarding school era is a dark time in our nation's history. It is an experience that former students have mixed feelings about. But for those who remember playing sports, attending the games, or for a kid like Zachary who had a chance to play ball and just be a kid, sports played a positive role that helped transform their experience while attending boarding school.

To learn more about Native American sports and the role sports played in boarding schools read: *"To Show What an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools"* by John Bloom



**Haskell Indian School
Football player, circa 1900**



Eufaula Boarding School for Girls Basketball Team. Oklahoma Historical Society

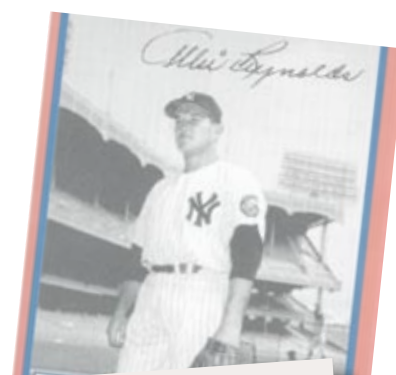


**John Levi, Arapaho
Haskell Indian School**

Activity

Select a Native American athlete listed below. Research the athlete's life and career including the boarding school he attended if any, the sport he played, the team he played with and where, and any social issues that affected the athlete's personal life and/or career. Examples can include racism, economic issues, segregation. Use an index card to create an athletic trading card. On the lined side of the card, write down interesting information you learned about the player, including how this person made a difference or help resolve an issue, for example by joining a pro-baseball team the athlete was one of the first to break the color barrier within the league. On the blank side draw a picture illustrating the athlete and the issue you address on the opposite side of the card. As a class share what you discovered about the athlete and your artwork.

Andy Payne:
Jim Thorpe:
Allie Reynolds
John Levi:
Rollie Munsell, Jr.



Name _____
Team _____
Stats _____
Years Played _____
What social issues are happening during the time this athlete played for this team? How was the player affected by the issues? How did the athlete help make positive change regarding the issues.



Carlisle Indian School Football Team-1907

Native Knowledge

The World's Greatest Athlete

"YOU, sir, are the greatest athlete in the world," said King Gustav of Swede. The King's voice trembled with emotion as he shook Jim Thorpe's hand. Jim grinned and replied, "Thanks King." Thorpe had just taken the 1912 Olympic games held in Sweden by storm, winning a gold medal in pentathlon. Not only did he win, he tripled the score of the second runner up. Despite pouring rain in the decathlon event, Jim scored an astounding 8,413 points winning another gold medal and setting a decathlon record that would not be broken for twenty years.



Childhood

Jacobus Franciscus Thorpe was born on May 28, 1887. Jim was the son of Charlotte and Hiram Phillip Thorpe. Both of Jim's parents came to Oklahoma, then known as Indian Territory, as children because of Indian removal. Jim's mother, Charlotte, belonged to the Citizen Pottawatomie Band but also had Kickapoo, Menominee, and French ancestry. Jim's father, Hiram, belonged to the Sac and Fox Nation and also had Irish ancestry. Jim's Sac and Fox grandmother was a member of the Thunder Clan which gave him the name Wa-tha-sko-huk which means The Light After the Lightening. When Thorpe was a little boy he enjoyed playing with his siblings and spending time with his parents, especially his father who taught him how to hunt and fish and passed on his love for wrestling, foot races, and horse racing. This innocent time soon changed when Jim and his twin brother, Charlie at the age of six were sent to the Sac and Fox Agency Boarding School twenty-three miles from their home. It was there that Jim began to participate in school sports and seemed to enjoy sports more than he did schoolwork; however, his brother Charlie excelled in academics. One day, at age nine, Jim's father picked him up from school to take him hunting and while Jim was gone a disease swept through the boarding school killing many young students, including Charlie. Jim was devastated and the loss of his brother changed him forever. Throughout life Jim believed that when Charlie died his brothers' strength came into him and

contributed to his athletic ability. After his brother's death, Jim lost interest in school and started running away, often running back home. At the age of 11, Jim's father decided to send him to Haskell Indian School in Kansas which was over 270 miles away. Haskell was much larger with over 1000 Native American students from across the U.S. It was at Haskell that Jim discovered his love of football. By the time he was 16, Jim was recommended to attend Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania because it was known as a great school for Native athletes. Once at Carlisle, Thorpe caught the attention of Glenn Scobey ("Pop") Warner, the athletic director and football coach. Pop invited Jim to join the track and football teams. It didn't take long for Thorpe to distinguish himself as a star athlete by leading both teams to become the top in United States. In 1911, Carlisle received national attention when their football team upset Harvard 18-15 and later went on to win the National Collegiate Championship in 1912. Jim enjoyed the fame that came with being a star athlete and was awarded first team All-American honors in both 1911 and 1912.

Pro's

Jim's new fame got him selected for the Olympic games of 1912 and seemingly overnight Jim went from being a national star to an international star. After his success at the Olympics Jim went back to the U.S. and was recruited to play for the New York Giants. To this day, Jim's contract is one of the most lucrative baseball contracts ever signed in the history of baseball. Jim's fame revived interest in baseball and attracted huge audiences who came out to see the world's greatest athlete play. While enjoying the acclaim from pro baseball, Jim received shocking news. The gold medals he had won at the Olympics were being taken away because he had played pro baseball in North Carolina, thus breaking the rules of the International Olympic Commission. Jim was devastated and along with this disappointment, other tensions were growing. Even though Jim was the world's greatest athlete, he was still an "Indian" living in the early 1900's. During his time in the major leagues he experienced prejudice from

non-Native team mates, hostile crowds from opposing teams, and racial media. The racism began to wear on Jim and when the Giants manager called him a "dumb Indian", Jim knew it was time to resign from the team. In 1919, he left the New York Giants to play for the Boston Braves.



Eventually, Jim moved from baseball to professional football and fully immersed himself in his team, the Canton Bulldogs in Canton, Ohio; here, his talent on field often drew 8,000 to 10,000 attendees per game. Even though there are many photos and news accounts of the amazing games, no statistics were kept at the time so in 1920 the American Professional Football league was formed. This later became the National Football League and Thorpe was selected as president of the league.

After Sports

By the mid-1920s, Thorpe was a legend, but his body was wearing out and he knew his whirlwind career as an athlete was coming to an end. In 1926, Thorpe

played his final pro-football game with the Chicago Cardinals at the age of 41. Jim's natural ability and talent never left him and throughout life he continued to show bursts of speed and power reminiscent of his prime. Sadly, Jim passed away on March 28, 1953 from a heart attack. Throughout his life he tried to have his Olympic medals returned to him, but it wasn't until 1982 that the International Olympic Committee restored his medals. From a Native American kid in Prague, Oklahoma to one of the greatest athletes of all-time, Jim Thorpe is the embodiment of Native American sports tradition.

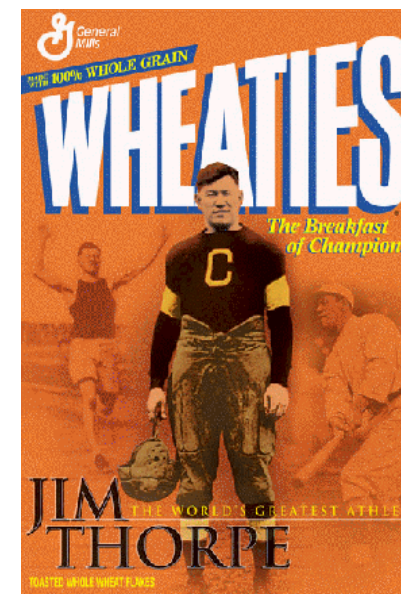
Legacy

Jim Thorpe's memory and his achievements are kept alive by countless books, movies, documentaries, websites, family, friends, and fans from around the world. Each year The Jim Thorpe Association presents an award to the top defensive back in the NCAA division 1-A football.

Activity

- Discuss the careers of some of the most popular professional athletes of today and compare them with Jim Thorpe. How are these athletes similar and how are they different?
- Do you think the Olympics today have the same importance and meaning as they did 100 years ago? Why or why not? How have the Olympics changed over the last 100 years?
- Consider the difficulties Jim Thorpe and other Native American athletes faced in professional sports from racism and stereotyping. How is this similar to racial problems other minority athletes face (d)?

To learn more about Jim Thorpe, visit the Jim Thorpe Museum located in Oklahoma City. The museum memorializes his memory and houses a collection of his personal and sports memorabilia.



Citizen Potawatomi Nation Cultural Heritage Center, Cindy Stewart photographer



Community

Oklahoma City – Home of the World's Largest All-Indian Softball Tournament –

Original Story By George Tiger

It's 1965, the second weekend in July, and Wheeler Park in Oklahoma City is bustling with excitement and anticipation. As you enter Wheeler Park, the smell of fresh pork and fry bread cooking on an open fire lingers in the air. The food is just one of the many exciting parts of this annual event. It could be the sights, sounds or aromas of any native community gathering in Oklahoma but it's the beginning of one of the most anticipated weekends in summer; the Oklahoma City All-Indian Men's State Softball Tournament. Billed as the "Largest Indian Sporting Event in the World", the tournament has been a hidden treasure since its inception in 1953. Native athletes from all over the U.S. and Canada converged upon these grounds to play in the most prestigious tournament around.

The tournament began when a group of men from Oklahoma City wanted to start an activity that would allow the larger Indian population to gather in fellowship. They decided to start a fast pitch softball tournament because it was becoming a popular sport among Indians. The initial tournament was held at Wiley Post Park on South Walker Street with eight teams from Oklahoma City. The second year, the field was expanded to include teams from outside the city and later, an All-Indian women's tournament was started. From humble beginnings, the tournament quickly grew in popularity.

During its height in the 1970s, the Indian tournament was the place to be. On Monday of tournament week, teams and families would send a scout to Wheeler Park to find the best camping spots. In addition to their teams, managers and coaches also brought tents, families and cooks. While some teams prepared meals in between games, others went to the local grocery store to get the famous "Indian steak," a good 'ole bologna sandwich.

In addition to softball, there were other games offered for the youth and elders who came to Wheeler Park such as a horseshoe and dominoes tournament for adults and a base-running contest for kids. "Wheeler One" was the main field during the early years and later Eggeling Stadium was added. The tournament was so popular that on Sunday mornings, area Indian church services were shortened so everyone could get to the park before the games started and even family and boarding school reunions were scheduled during the tournament.

The tournament became so large that making the brackets that took one full week and more than 15 fields were needed to accommodate the 100+ teams that participated. Native American teams came from as far away as Canada, California and Massachusetts to play in the tournament with the Oklahoma



Concho Women's Softball team, Wheeler Park, 1964, Oklahoma Historical Society

teams. Top teams included the Hatchetville Oilers, Concho 49ers, Caddo All Stars, Sequoyah Industries of Anadarko, Sapulpa Bucks, Ace's All Stars, Red Race of Clinton, Florida Seminoles, Oklahoma-Kansas All Stars, Cherokee Hose & Supply of Tulsa, Native Americans of Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Haskell Indians of Lawrence, Kansas to name a few.

The athletes competing in the tournament were so talented that recruiters often came to the tournament to recruit new players for all types of sports. The late Oklahoma City University basketball coach, Abe Lemons, stated that he only needed to go to the tournament to recruit outstanding basketball players. Some of the tournament players played Division 1 college football, baseball and, basketball. Others made names for themselves as outstanding high school and college coaches and others were inducted into sports Halls of Fame.

For more than fifty years the softball tournament at Wheeler Park served as the World Series, Super Bowl, and, the Final Four for Indian people in Oklahoma and other states. Even though the tournament has disbanded, former players from Wheeler Park continue to compete in contests across the state during the summer, but many agree that it's not the same as it once was at Wheeler Park and there is the shared hope among countless players that the tournament will return to its original place of glory.



Soloman Hancock's Camp 1958, Oklahoma Historical Society



Little Axe Women's Softball Team, 1957, Oklahoma Historical Society



Men's fast pitch Softball tournament July 10, 1982, Oklahoma Historical Society

Community

Caitlin Baker: Swimming for a purpose

It took a while for Caitlin Baker (Muscogee Creek) to find a sport that she was good at. She tried all the usual sports such as soccer, t-ball, and softball and didn't like any of them. She gave up on sports completely until her mom gave her an ultimatum, Caitlin had to choose between three lifetime sports: golf, tennis, or

“ I want to be an example to minority youth that no matter your age, you can change the world. Find a passion, set your goals high, and believe that you have within yourself what it will take to reach those goals. Be an advocate for yourself and your community. Every child needs to be told and believe that they can achieve greatness. This is the goal of my outreach program. To be the voice that sends that message to minority youth. ”



swimming. She tried tennis and didn't like it, she was totally against golf, and all that was left was swimming. On her first day at swim class the coach told the swimmers to do eight laps. After the fourth lap, eight-year-old Caitlin held on to the edge of the pool and called her mother over. She was crying and said that she quit. Her mother encouraged her to keep trying and finish the class. She did and she came back to the next class and the next and the more she swam the better she got. Caitlin not only found a sport she was good at, she found a sport she was passionate about. Within a short time she was on the fast track to elite competitive swimming. While many of the kids that started with her were still in the dolphin swim division, she had progressed to the high school swim team. Caitlin found herself traveling the country competing in swim meets where her talent in the backstroke and butterfly-stroke was creating lots of opportunities for her.

One such opportunity came in 2006, at the Native American Indigenous Games in Denver, Colorado. This was the first Native American cultural event she had participated in. Not knowing what to expect from other Native athletes, the one question she was surprised by was, "What rez are you from." "I didn't even know what a rez was. I am from Norman, Oklahoma, the Norman rez I guess." During the event she met Damon Eastman from the Crow reservation who not only shared with Caitlin what a rez was (reservation), but also what life was like for many Native youth living on reservations. She was shocked by the statistics regarding diabetes, teen suicide, and substance abuse. She was also disappointed by the lack of athletic resources on reservations like swimming pools, running tracks, and functional sports courts and ball fields.



Caitlin felt bad that there were kids out there, especially Native kids that didn't have the resources to enjoy sports. Swimming had such a positive effect on her life she felt other youth deserved to have the same opportunity. When she returned home she contacted the Oklahoma City Indian Clinic to organize a foundation that would help Native youth learn to swim as a way to get healthier. Caitlin started in her own community

and branched out. Using her own money, she began to travel to Native communities and give talks about the healthy benefits of swimming, taught swim clinics to reservation youth and along with her peers helped build soccer fields, jogging tracks and even swimming pools. Soon major organizations were catching wind of her amazing work. The Center for Disease Control and U.S.A. Swimming both endorsed Caitlin's outreach efforts.

In October of 2008, then fourteen-year-old Caitlin was invited to join other Native youth at an intensive week-long educational swimming program in San Francisco called PATHSTAR. Part of the program was a swim from Alcatraz Island to the bay shore which was a significant event for Caitlin because it connected her to a historic event called the Native American occupation of Alcatraz from 1969-1971. Here, Native American activist took over the island demanding fairness and respect for Indian peoples and thirty-seven years later, Caitlin was connecting with a similar cause. The morning she jumped into the water it was so cold it almost took her breath away. It was early, and the weather was cold and damp. The fog was rolling out and the water was calm. She admits she was a little afraid of the sea life and chose to backstroke the entire swim so that she wouldn't have to put her face in the water and see something staring back at her. "I could see the sky, the water, and the Golden Gate Bridge. As I was swimming I

realized what I was doing had much more meaning than I originally thought. It was beautiful and I will never forget that experience."

Today, Caitlin travels with her foundation,

CAITLINB

(Competitive American Indians Turning Lifestyles Into New Beginnings), promoting the benefits of swimming, exercise, a positive attitude, and smart decision making. Caitlin's swimming continues to develop and she is even receiving Olympic buzz. This past June, she was asked to testify before the U.S. Senate Committee about the diabetes crisis in Indian Country. October 12th, she was awarded with the Annika Sorenstam Award presented by the Women in Sports Foundation in New York City. Other athletes present included Billie Jean King, Venus and Serena Williams and Michelle Kwan.

For Caitlin, "Swimming is a gateway sport. Anybody can swim. Swimming is a sport that does not discriminate against age, physical ability, or anything else. Anyone can get in the water. Swimming is a lot of fun and you can get a lot of exercise in just by enjoying swimming." This inspiring young lady proves that having a passion you love can change the world.

To learn more about Caitlin Baker or request a speaking engagement at your school or community, visit her website at caitlinb.com



Activity

How can you use your talents to make a difference in your community? As a class share and discuss your ideas. Think of ways you can put your ideas into action.

Governance

Ruled by the Game

Throughout history and around the world, man has waged war against fellow man as a way to address conflict and disputes. This is also true for Native people. In prehistory however, there were instances when warriors laid down their weapons and picked up their stickball sticks to battle it out on the ball field instead of the battlefield. For thousands of years, Native people in North America played the game of stickball and what is known today as lacrosse, among other games, to settle conflict and dispute between rivaling communities. The winning team not only earned bragging rights, which was significant, but the victors also earned the right to determine the solution. Because the terms of the game were negotiated by leaders and the game itself was considered sacred, the outcome of the game was taken very seriously and all agreements were honored.

Ball players were not only known as athletes, they were also regarded as warriors. The competition was very physical. Warriors played hard and would get slapped, smacked, tackled and

tripped. After the game, players would leave the field battered and bruised. To acknowledge the victors, tribal communities would host meals and ceremonies to formalize the outcome of the match. In prehistoric moundbuilding cultures, especially the Mississippian era (see Fall 2009 Moundbuilder issue) towns were often built around a center ballcourt that represented the "courtroom" of the town; signifying the cultural importance of the sport. The ruler or *Micco's* temple mound would be situated prominently in front of the court. Atop the mound the micco would watch and cheer on ball games. At times, even new leaders would be determined by the outcome of a ball game.

During the historic era, the ball court continued to have prominent locations in towns. Today, as part of tribal holidays and annual ceremonies, ball games are played to honor tradition and to continue to show their importance in community. Although games are not played to settle conflict anymore, they are still played with the same fervor and vigor as in the distant past..

Activity

Think of ways governments can settle conflict and disputes rather than going to war? Discuss your ideas as a class.

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Traditional Native Games

As we discussed in the origins section, traditional games were not only played for amusement and recreation, they were and continue to be an important cultural activity that among many things, keeps balance and order within a Native community and society. Often, the equipment that is used is representative of elements like the sun and moon or a man and woman; often the games also play out the motions of battle and can balance the tension between light and dark.

Most of the traditional equipment was made of wood and organic material. Native people in South America invented rubber thousands of years ago which led to the invention of the rubber ball made famous in Aztec and Mayan ball games. North American balls however were usually made out of some sort of leather covering stuffed with animal fur or other organic material.

Sticks and racquets were usually carved from wood. There were also "uniforms" that were worn by players. Stickball players for example, often wore a long tale that arched upward, a cloth necklace, a breach cloth, and a sash.

Activity

Research one of the following games. Write a research paper about what region of the United States did the game originate, what regions of the United States was it played in; what tribes played the game; which of those tribes are located in Oklahoma; how did this game inspire a modern, mainstream popular game (sport); and is the game still played today? Organize a team and play the game!

Lacrosse: *Kahwe'da'e' (Wyandotte)*

Stickball: *tak'@sha (Euchee)*

Shinny: *tah-beh gah-she (Ponca)*

Blowgun shooting: *du-que-s-ti (Cherokee)*

Indian Football: *gendsitat (Delaware)*

Foot Racing: *tunehtsu narubuni (Comanche)*

Horse Racing: *kawa kipinah (Osage)*

Archery: *ci-wi-cyah-kah (Caddo)*

Snow Snake: *zhoshke'nayabo (Potawatomi)*

Hoop and Pole: *mushka (Apache)*

Chunkey: *This name is used by many different tribes*



Ball players - by George Catlin

a. Stick Ball Play Tail

b. Stick Ball

c. Stick Ball Play Cap

d. Lacrosse Stick and Ball

e. Hoop

f. Snow Shoe



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