

Cherokee Heritage

Lesson 6: Cherokee Games

Games have always been important to the Cherokee people. More than simply a sport, games often were used as a way to solve conflicts.

One of the most ancient games known, Cherokee marbles, or digadayosdi, dates back to at least 800 A.D. and is still played today. Marbles were the size of billiard balls and, until the early part of the 20th century, made from chipped and rounded stone. Today, billiard balls are used, with the cue ball being favored.

The game is played on a field approximately 100 feet long and contains five holes about 2 inches in diameter, 10 to 12 yards apart, forming an L-shape.

Each player uses one marble and must keep track of its location, as well as the opposing players' marbles. The players begin by tossing their marbles at the holes. Their goal is to land each hole in sequence and then return to the starting point.

Players must toss their marbles and knock the opposing players' marbles out of the way. The first team to complete the course wins.

The game begins with each player throwing his

marble while standing at the second hole then throwing toward the first hole. Players take turns throwing until the marble lands in the hole.

Any number can play, but the teams must have an equal number of players. While the game is historically played by adult men, children may play on their own teams against another children's team. Two- and three-man teams are preferred today, and tournament play is common.

Continued learning:

The Cherokee people have many games that are similar to ones played today. Which modern game resembles stickball? At what Cherokee game do you think you would excel? Did you know you can visit the Cherokee Heritage Center's Ancient Village and participate in stickball?

