Kaialgumm Games Trail

Explore the Kaialgumm Games Trail to find out about traditional games that were played by indigenous children in many different parts of Australia.

Most of these games were played to help children learn skills they needed later in adult life, for hunting and fighting. The word kaialgumm comes from the local Yugambhe language of the Gold Coast. The kaialgumm was traditionally the chief in hunting.

Practice the games with your friends and find out who is the kaialgumm in your group!

Kai

Background

This game comes from the Torres Strait and traditionally uses the thick, red, oval fruit of the kai tree, which is light when dry.

How to play

**Number of players:** teams of 4 to 8.

**Equipment:** small beach ball or soft sponge ball.

Visit the Botanic Gardens Friends Centre if you would like to borrow the equipment to play this game.

- Teams stand in a circle one (1) metre apart.
- Start by throwing the ball in the air.
- Each player takes a turn to hit the ball upwards with the flat palm of their hand.
- Keep the ball in the air for as long as possible, counting through the letters of the alphabet with each hit.
- The team that is able to work their way furthest through the alphabet without dropping the ball wins.
- Start again if the ball hits the ground, if players don’t keep their hands flat, or if any player hits the ball twice in succession or passes it back to the previous player.
- Older players should hit the ball at least a metre above head height.

More Information

Individuals can practice by seeing who can hit the ball into the air with their hand the most times without the ball touching the ground.

**Variation:** Ask each player in the group to choose an Australian animal, and say that animal’s name each time they hit the ball. Once they’ve done this a few times, instead of saying their animal’s name each time they hit the ball, each player should make the noise that animal makes each time they hit the ball.

- Nature Play website
- Yugambhe Museum website
- Jabree website

Kolap

Background

This throwing game was played on Mer Island in the Torres Strait in the 1900s. The game is named after the beans of the kolap plant, which were used as throwing objects. The kolap plant is also known as the matchbox bean, or Entada phaseoloides. It is a large vine that grows in coastal rainforests in North East Queensland, and produces hard, 5-6 cm wide seeds. The distinctive, hard seeds have been used as beads, toys, and for making match boxes and snuff boxes.

How to play

**Number of players:** 2 to 4 players in two teams.

**Equipment:** Two small mats/towels, 4 to 8 small flattish objects suitable for throwing, e.g. beanbags, coins or small stones.

You may also find fallen fruits or seeds from nearby trees that you can use (but please don’t pick fruit from the trees).

Visit the Botanic Gardens Friends Centre if you would like to borrow the equipment to play this game.

- Two players stand 2 to 3 metres behind each mat.
- Each player has four (4) kolaps and teams take their turn to try and throw these onto the mat in front of them.
- Kolaps must land completely on the mat to count as one point.
- The team that reaches the combined score of 20 first wins.
Kee'anj

Background
This game comes from North Queensland and was used to practice throwing skills. Traditionally a large animal bone with twine attached to it was thrown over an emu catching net and into a pit. The skill was to get the bone into the pit without touching the net.

Kee'anj means to play in the Wik-Mungkan language of North Queensland.

How to play

Number of players: up to eight (6) players, singly or in teams of two (2.)

Equipment: foxtail or comet balls or a tennis ball in a long sock, a net, e.g. volleyball or badminton net and a plastic bin, bucket or plant pot for hole.

Visit the Botanic Gardens Friends Centre if you would like to borrow the equipment to play this game.

Variation: increase the throwing distance as players' skills improve.

Taktyerrain

Background
This is a team throwing and dodging game. Taktyerrain is the word to fight or to hit one another in the Wembawemba language of Victoria.

In most parts of Australia, children played mock combat games as a practice for adult life. Toy spears were made from grasses, reeds and rushes. Spears were held at their lighter ends and thrown either with the hand or with a toy woomera (throwing stick).

How to play

Number of players: two teams of 4 to 8 players.

Equipment: a soft ball for each player, e.g. sponge balls, paper balls and line markers.

Visit the Botanic Gardens Friends Centre if you would like to borrow the equipment to play this game.

Teams stand six (6) metres apart.

On the signal to start, players throw their balls to try and hit the players of the opposing team.

Balls that land in the opposing teams side can be used by that team. Any balls in the middle area are retrieved when there is a stoppage in play.

Variation: Have one or two players in the middle attempting to avoid being hit. If hit, the successful thrower swaps into the middle. Throw from both sides or from one side only.

Weme

Background
This is a stone bowling game played by the Walbiri people of Central Australia. One player threw a stone which was then used as a target by the second player. Players alternate turns with each aiming at the other's stone.

Weme means throwing something at something else and hitting it in the Eastern Arrernte language of Central Australia.

How to play

Number of players: 1 to 4 players, playing alone, one against the other or in teams of two (2).

Equipment: balls/bowls such as hooce balls and two (2) line markers.
Set the line markers 10 metres apart.

Players stand behind one line, and the first player rolls their ball underarm toward the second line. (If the ball passes beyond the second line, the second player scores a point).

The second player rolls their ball to try to hit the first ball. If the ball is hit the second player scores a point.

Both players collect their balls and restart the game from the other end. The second player now has the first turn.

The first player to reach 11 points is the winner.

More information

Hoop Weme - two (2) players stand 15 metres apart with a large hoop in the centre. Three (3) balls are placed in the hoop and the players alternate turns to knock the balls out of the circle. Replace balls before the next players turn.

- Nature Play website
- Yugambhir Museum website
- Jabree website

Woggaliri

Background

Children from the Bogan and Lachlan rivers area of NSW played a kind of football with a ball made from possum fur. The ball was spun by women and was about 5 centimetres wide. To play this game with skill required great agility.

Woggaliri is the word for play in the Wiradjuri language of Central and Southern NSW.

How to play

Number of players: 4 to 6 players.

Equipment: soccer ball, volley ball or beach ball.

Visit the Botanic Gardens Friends Centre if you would like to borrow the equipment to play this game.

- Players do not take sides - this is a cooperative game emphasising skill.
- The aim is to keep the ball from hitting the ground.
- One player kicks the ball up in the air and the other players try to kick it (one touch only) again before it hits the ground. Less experienced players may use two touches.
- All kicks must be made with feet or knees and players must have one foot on the ground when kicking the ball.
- Players must not push each other out of the way to reach the ball.

More information

For a team competition mark out an area of 10 metres by 20 metres with goals at each end. Play with two (2) teams of four (4) players. In this game the ball is always played in the air. Possession is lost to the opposing team when the ball contacts the ground. Tackling is not allowed, only pass interceptions. Goals may be scored from anywhere. Play for two (2) halves of ten minutes.

- Nature Play website
- Yugambhir Museum website
- Jabree website

Download the , where you can use the QR reader on your smart phone or tablet to find out more about traditional games and how to play them.

Acknowledgments

All traditional ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ games have been sourced from Yulunga - Traditional Indigenous Games (Australian Sports Commission, 2009) and used with the permission of the Australian Sports Commission.

The Australian Sport Commission and the Queensland Government acknowledges Ken Edwards for the extensive and thorough research undertaken to collate the Yulunga: Traditional Indigenous Games.

To create this resource, Ken Edwards with the assistance of Troy Meston reviewed almost every available account of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander games from all parts of Australia.

The Australian Sports Commission recognises the traditional owners of the games and activities that formed the basis of this resource. This resource is dedicated to all Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Key information

External links

- Nature Play website
- Yugambhir Museum website