# **Chapter 6: Activities**

## **Infusing Indigenous Games and Perspectives Within HPE**

### **Mary Courchene, Blair Robillard, Amy Carpenter, and Joannie Halas**

# 1. Four Directions Circle

***Equipment:*** enoughchairs for all participants, less one

***Setup and formation:*** All but one of theparticipants sit on chairs in a circle; the remaining person is standing in the middle.

**How to play:** To begin, all students sit on chairs in a circle while you stand in the middle of the circle and reintroduce the four components of a person—that is, the physical, socioemotional, knowledge based, and spiritual, or physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. The wording and order can change, depending on different customs.

* Beginning in the east, where all things start, ask a question about the physical component (i.e., relating to the body or movement), such as the following: “If you went running in the past week, cross the room and sit in another chair.” This activity emphasizes interaction among participants and the four directions teachings. Players race to the open chairs (and not the ones beside them). Whoever is left standing once everyone changes seats must be in the middle of the circle and pose the next question.
* This is where the game teaching begins. Once participants realize that they may be left standing and have to ask a question, their efforts to find an empty chair become energetic and creative. The laughter increases and continues with each question, and students build relationships with each other. At the same time, understanding of the circle flows from east to south to west to north, and thus the four components are learned.
* For each question, move counterclockwise around the circle. Here are some sample questions:
  + *East (physical):* Anyone wearing socks in the circle today? Who exercises every day? Who ate a healthy breakfast? Who knows what their resting heart rate is (thus relating a question to content taught in class)? When you lift your left foot, does your right hand go up? Who likes to walk really fast?
  + *South (socioemotional):* Has anyone laughed in the past 10 minutes? Who loves to do things with friends? Who is happy being alone? Who plays with a dog or a cat? Who has a brother? A sister? Who loves school?
  + *West (mental):* Who knows how to multiply? Who read a book this past week? Who knows all the rules of (a certain game or sport)? Who gets right and left mixed up? Who can draw? Who recently wrote a poem?
  + *North (spiritual):* Who connects with nature (or, more specifically, looked up at the sky this morning, stopped to smell a flower, or likes feeling the wind)? Have you ever thought about climbing a mountain? Who meditates or prays? Who identifies with the colour blue? Who talks to their loved ones who have passed on?

***Variations and differentiation:*** Use various teachings and directions based on various interpretations of the Medicine Wheel. Here are some teachings used by Robillard:

* *East:* physicality, mastery, body, concreteness
* *South*: socialness, communication, family, community, belonging
* *West:* thoughts, wisdom, sharing, strategy, generosity
* *North:* intuition, spirit, emotion, independence, self, observation

**Specific teachings:** Remind everyone how the four directions are interconnected; our bodies, hearts, minds and spirits are inseparable. A healthy body contributes to feeling good, which makes learning easier and uplifts our spirits. If some aspect of our body, heart, mind, or spirit is out of balance, that imbalance affects our whole being. So, it is important to reflect on all four components of our human nature.

***Assessment look-fors:***

* Is everyone participating? How would you describe their participation (how are they moving, feeling, thinking, and being)?
* Which aspects of the four directions are more challenging to ask questions about (e.g., physical or spiritual)?

***Safety:*** Make sure that you establish fair-play rules: “Play hard, play fair” and, most important, “Nobody gets hurt.”

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# 2. Gentle Always Wins

***Equipment:*** rope

***Setup and formation:*** In twos, students hold opposite ends of a rope; each student is in a squat position with the feet together.

***How to play:*** The object is to pull the rope in a way that gets the opponent to let go of it or lose balance.

***Variation and differentiation:*** Participants can squat on a stable log outdoors (no more than 0.3 meter off the ground).

***Specific teachings:*** Many traditional Indigenous games challenged not only one’s physical strength, stamina, or vitality but also one’s observational skills. In this game, observation is the key component or direction.

***Assessment look-fors:*** Ask participants the following questions that emphasize the wholistic nature of play.

* What do you have to do in order to succeed? (Possible answers include using various levels of tension on the rope, thus involving both mind and body.)
* Think of your senses. What do you feel, hear, and see when you play this game? (Possible answers include anxiousness and concentration, thus involving both heartand mind).

***Safety:*** Students should not wrap the rope around their hands; for safety purposes they should simply hold it in their hand.

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# 3. Foxtail Toss

***Equipment:*** rice-filled balloons in stockings (as shown in the photo)

***Setup and formation:*** In pairs, students stand at least three to six meters away from each other.

***How to play:*** Participants pass and catch the foxtail by spinning it clockwise three or four times. With each successful catch, the students in each pair increase the distance between each other. If a person catches the foxtail near the top of the stocking, three points are scored; if in the middle, two points; if closer to the rice ball, one point; and if at the ball itself, zero points.

***Variations and differentiation:***

* Target foxtail—Students identify a target on the wall and create their own target game by determining how many points are earned for a successful throw at the target.
* Foxtail ultimate: In small-sided teams, students create their own rules for an adaptation of 2v2 or 3v3 ultimate.

***Specific teachings:*** Foxtail games are contemporary versions of more traditional games that used natural materials as equipment. Foxtails are easy to learn to play with but by increasing the complexities in their use they can be challenging to use. They also encourage students to extend themselves through concentration and physical dexterity, as well as creativity in designing their own games. Due to the challenge, participants may experience a short period of failure at the start. This is a good opportunity to share some Native American wisdom from the Circle of Courage,in which lack of competence is experienced not as a bad thing but as an opportunity to learn (see Brendtro & Brokenleg, 1993).

***Assessment look-fors:*** Ask participants the following questions that emphasize the holistic nature of play.

* What do you have to do or think about in order to succeed? (Possible answers include paying attention to where your partner is standing and using eye–hand coordination to catch the foxtail, thus involving mind and body.)
* Think of your senses. What do you feel, hear, and see when you play the game? (Possible answers include feeling successful when a catch is made and disappointed when it is missed; tracking a partner’s location in order to throw accurately; and learning to cooperate—thus involving spirit, heart, mind, and body.)

***Safety:*** Use a large, open space and create sufficient space between participants and groups.

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# 4. Screaming Eagle

***Equipment:*** ownership stick (or similar object) for each person in the group or per group

***Setup and formation:*** The game is best played outdoors or in a large gym space. Establish two or three parallel lines of players facing in the same direction.

***How to play:*** Holding the ownership stick, or screaming eagle, in the air, one participant from each team takes a large breath and runs as far as possible with that breath, all the while screaming and exhaling. When a player runs out of breath (i.e., stops screaming), he or she places the stick on the ground to mark the distance run.

***Variations and differentiation:*** Organize the activity as a relay race, in which each team member runs to an end line and back while taking as many breaths as needed while screaming and then hands off the stick to a teammate, who runs their portion of the relay.

***Specific teachings:*** Screaming Eagle is a delightful game enjoyed by many; it is also an endurance activity that promotes healthy hearts, lungs, and laughter.

***Assessment look-fors:*** Ask participants the following questions that emphasize the holistic nature of play.

* What do you have to do or think about in order to succeed? (Possible answers include screaming loudly and releasing one’s breath evenly while running, thus using body and mind.)
* Think of your senses. What do you feel, hear, and see when you play the game? (Possible answers include feeling funny while screaming and being out of breath when done, thus involving body, heart, and spirit.)
* What surprised you? (Possible answers include seeing someone run much farther than expected and hearing participants’ creativity in screaming.)

***Safety:*** This game is very loud, and the noise may cause anxiety in some students. Encourage students who are uncomfortable with the noise or who have asthma to sit out the game as needed.

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# 5. Métis Wheel Tag

***Equipment:*** flag or scarf, environmentally friendly spray paint (if outdoors) or masking tape (if indoors), snowshoes (optional)

***Setup and formation:*** Can be playedindoors or outdoors

***How to play:*** This game is played mostly in the winter. The numberof players will determine the size of your wheel; stomp a circle in the snow and then stomp eight spokes (as in a Red River cartwheel) extending from the centre.

* The person who is “it” stands in the middle with a flag or scarf; the other players stand wherever they please onthe wheel or spokes.
* The game starts with an agreed-upon word or expression, whereupon players are free to run in any way along the spokes and the wheel.
* If a player runs off the track, he or she is out.
* If the taggerruns off the track, the action starts over.

When the player who is “it”tags another player, the tagged player is given the flag or scarf, becomes “it,” counts to 10, and starts the game again.

***Variations and differentiation:***

* Add more taggers if the game is too slow between tags or the taggers become too tired.
* Count numbers in Michif, a language originating from Cree and French.

***Specific teachings:*** When using snowshoes, a new physical skill is learned. Historically, snowshoes provided a major means of winter transportation and were used as a bush tool (e.g., for shoveling snow). Therefore, creating them from scratch was an important craft.

***Assessment look-fors:*** Ask participants the following questions that emphasize the wholistic nature of play.

* What do you have to do in order to succeed? (Possible answers include creating space between you and the tagger, thus using body and mind.)
* Think of your senses. What do you feel, hear, and see when you play this game? (Possible answers include laughter, screams, and excitement, thus involving heart, spirit, and body.)

***Safety:*** Play should be cooperative and respectful. When snowshoes are used, expect students to struggle and fall.

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# 6. Balancing the Four Directions

***Equipment:*** chalk or whiteboard markers

***Setup and formation:*** The game can be played either in groups or individually (see the note about variations).

***How to assess:*** In groups or as a whole class, have students assess how well they contributed to the learning climate by placing an X between a 0 and a 10 in each quadrant of a Medicine Wheel drawn on a chalkboard or whiteboard. Ask students to respond to the following questions as a group and then mark their group score on the whiteboard.

* In the *east*, how actively has your group (or the class) engaged in the activities?
* In the *south*, how well has your group (or the class) supported each other in the activities? Has everyone been included in positive ways?
* In the *west*, how well has your group (or the class) learned the skills or knowledges shared in the activities?
* In the *north*, how uplifted are your spirits as a group (or class) after engaging in the activities? Has everyone been affirmed?

***Variations and differentiation:*** Have students assess where they are individually. To do so, they can place a mark on the whiteboard Medicine Wheel or on a sheet of paper that you collect.

***Specific teachings:*** This activity allows for immediate feedback and visually demonstrates both what we (collectively or individually) are doing well and what we need to improve on. Thus it emphasizes balance across all four directions while promoting sharing and respect in the community of learners in the class.

***Assessment look-fors:*** Based on students’ assessments, ask the following questions.

* What are your group’s strengths? What areas are in need of improvement?
* How balanced are you in terms of how your bodies, hearts, minds, and spirits are experiencing the activity or class? What happens when one area is out of balance (e.g., if some group members feel left out, struggle to learn a new skill, or don’t participate)?
* What can we do to support each other and achieve a healthy balance in the class so that we can each learn to the best of our ability?