

## Inuit Games Circuit

**Pillar: Active Living**

**Division: II**

**Grade Level: 5**

**Core Curriculum Connections: Social Studies**

### I. Rationale:

During the long, dark winter days in northern Canada, it was difficult for the Inuit to remain fit and active, a necessity for surviving the harsh environment of the arctic. Therefore, traditional games were not only a form of entertainment, but also helped to develop skills that were essential to their survival: strength, agility, flexibility, and endurance. Students will learn about traditional Inuit games and understand how they contributed to the identity, culture, and history of this unique aboriginal group. Working cooperatively in small groups or pairs, students will learn one game and then teach it to the rest of the class through demonstration.

**NOTE:** For safety reasons, students should practice events in pairs, so that there is always a spotter to ensure there are no awkward falls that could lead to injury.

### II. Active Living Focus:

*Students will be able to:*

- understand how the roles and culture of the Inuit people were embedded in their leisure activities and pass times.
- demonstrate and participate in physical games that focus on developing agility, strength, flexibility, and endurance.
- explain the connection between the physical skills involved in the traditional games and how these skills benefited the Inuit in their daily lives.

### III. Curriculum Outcomes: Grade 5 Social Studies

#### 5.2 Histories and Stories of Ways of Life in Canada

##### General Outcome:

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the people and the stories of Canada and their ways of life over time, and appreciate the diversity of Canada's heritage.

##### Specific Outcomes:

##### Values and Attitudes

*Students will:*

##### 5.2.1 appreciate the complexity of identity in the Canadian context:

- recognize how an understanding of Canadian history and the stories of its peoples contributes to their sense of identity (I, TCC)
- acknowledge oral traditions, narratives and stories as valid sources of knowledge about the land and diverse Aboriginal cultures and history (CC, I, TCC)
- acknowledge the contributions made by diverse cultural groups to the evolution of Canada (CC, I, TCC)

##### Knowledge and Understanding

*Students will:*

**5.2.2 examine, critically, the ways of life of Aboriginal peoples in Canada by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:**

- What do the stories of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples tell us about their beliefs regarding the relationship between people and the land? (I, CC, TCC, LPP)
- How are the Aboriginal cultures and ways of life unique in each of the western, northern, central and eastern regions of Canada? (I, CC, TCC)
- How were the natural environment and geography of each region of Canada determining factors of the diversity among Aboriginal groups (e.g., languages, symbolism)? (LPP, TCC)

#### **IV. Materials:**

##### **Required:**

- Inuit Game Cards (attached)
- “Believe it or Not” (handout)
- “Map of the Canadian North” (handout)
- “Uniqueness of the Inuit”
- Materials and equipment (See game instructions for materials and equipment needed for each game)

##### **Supplementary:**

- [Ear Pull Video Clip](#) Women compete in the ear pull at the 2007 World Eskimo Indian Olympics in Anchorage, Alaska
- [Virtual Museum of Canada](#) (descriptions of traditional Inuit games)
- [Living Traditions](#) (more information on aboriginal and Inuit games)
- [CBC Archive, “Arctic Winter Games”](#)
- [Arctic Winter Games Website](#)
- [SILA](#) - An Educational Website about Inuit culture

#### **V. Procedure:**

1. **Introductory Activity** - Distribute copies of the of the “**Believe it or Not**” handout to introduce students to six traditional practices of the Inuit. Read aloud each practice listed and ask students to record their thoughts about each one in the middle column. Encourage students to respond respectfully to these diverse customs even though they may not be familiar with any of these practices. Have them ignore the right-hand column for the time-being. After all practices have been read, invite students to share their overall impressions of these people. Tell them they are going to leave the last column blank until they have learned more about these people.
2. Ask students to name some of their favorite sports and games. Discuss and list them on the board. Ask if anyone surfs? skis? What factors influence why some people excel at certain sports and games while others do not? (climate, environment, money, accessibility to materials, genetics, general health, commitment etc).
3. Ask students to think about what they know about life in the Arctic and the Inuit culture. What sports/games would they expect are not too popular in Nunavut? Why? Refer back to the handout and ask the students to infer why the Inuit play soccer at midnight?
4. Remind students that life in the Arctic is very challenging. Harsh conditions include three months of winter darkness coupled with brutally cold temperatures that average  $-30^{\circ}$  Celsius ( $-22^{\circ}$ F). The games played by the Inuit are very important in helping them adapt and survive in this severe environment. Most games are highly

competitive with a focus on developing physical strength, agility, flexibility, and endurance. Some games also serve as a means of helping people gain respect and status in the community.

5. To generate interest, show students a video clip as an example of one of these traditional games (linked above) demonstrating the women's "Ear Pull" competition at the 2007 World Eskimo Indian Olympics in Anchorage, Alaska. Discuss the clip and make reference to the pain tolerance.

6. Most games focused on developing strong hands and agile legs and physical endurance. These skills were necessary to harpoon, jump over, hold onto, outrun, and catch wild animals such as walruses, whales, polar bears, wolves, and caribou.

7. Introduce "The Arctic Games", established in 1970. Originally, only three northern territories competed, however in 2000 the games included Alaska, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Northern Alberta, Greenland, Magadan (Russia), Nunavik (Quebec), Nunavut and Chukotka. Show the students the attached map and point out the location of the territories.

8. The Arctic Games include many of the same games as in the Winter Olympics (hockey, speed skating, and curling). However they also feature sports that are specific to the northern region such as dog mushing and snowshoeing along with traditional Inuit games like the One Foot High Kick, Kneel Jump, Airplane, and Knuckle Hop.

9. Show students the attached activity cards and wow them with a personal demonstration of a few of the games using an eager student volunteer. Discuss the types of skills involved and how they would benefit the Inuit people in their unique environment.

10. Break students into pairs/small groups and have them choose one of the activity cards. Explain that each pair or small groups will learn how to play the game by reading the instructions carefully and viewing the accompanying illustrations. After they have practiced the game a few times, they will explain and demonstrate it for the rest of the class.

12. After all games have been demonstrated, students will have the opportunity to try each game. As students progress through the circuit, they will use the handout provided: "Uniqueness of the Inuit" to capture their reflections and learning. Students will record the game, the physical skill(s) developed, and the reasons/benefits of this game for the Inuit people.

## **VI. Extensions and Variations:**

- **Language Arts** - There are many stories that have turned into Inuit legends about someone capable of incredible athletic feats, kept hidden until it became necessary to use them, as in "Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner". There is also a movie based on this Inuit legend.
- **Math** - Students could calculate, measure, record, interpret, graph their results, and track their progress at the different events.

## **VII. Assessment Ideas:**

- Paragraph - Write a paragraph explaining the significance of traditional games to the Inuit way of life, identity, and culture. Specifically, the paragraph should explain the relationship between the people and the land as well as the natural environment and geography of the northern aboriginal people.

## Believe it or not

| Their behaviour  | Your reaction | Possible reasons or benefits |
|--|---------------|------------------------------|
| They lived in snowhouses during the winter.  |               |                              |
| They play soccer at midnight.  |               |                              |
| At one time, their babies wore moss as diapers.  |               |                              |
| In the past they softened animal skin by chewing it.   |               |                              |
| They sometimes made sleds out of frozen fish.  |               |                              |
| They made sails for their boats from animal intestines (a tube where food passes after leaving the stomach). |               |                              |

What is your first impression of how these people lived?

After hearing more, has your overall impression changed?

# Map of Canadian North



## Uniqueness of the Inuit

| Traditional Game | Physical Skill(s) | Possible Reasons or Benefits |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
|                  |                   |                              |



# Airplane



**Equipment:** none

**Stance and Start:** Competitor lies on stomach with arms straight out at sides and feet firmly together.

**Movement:** Competitor is lifted by three people, one holding his feet, and the other two on each of his arms. The competitor must remain rigid so that the body is raised 2-3 feet above the floor. As a good measure of height, the stomach should not touch the floor when the body sags. Competitor should keep the body as stiff as possible while being carried in this position for as far as possible.

**Judging and Scoring:** Body must not sag. Shoulders should not drop below arms or bend at the elbow. The event is timed and measured since some carriers may walk faster than others. Carriers should try to keep a steady pace. This event may be modified for females, by having them bend at their arms and get lifted by their elbows.

Figure 1



Figure 2





## Back Push

**Equipment:** none

**Stance and Start:** Both opponents sit on the floor with backs together. Place right hand on floor between legs and the left hand on the outside of left leg. Knees are bent with feet flat on the floor.

**Movement:** Opponents may be in circle or have two lines at either end. Using leg, arm, and body strength, try to push opponent out of circle or over the line.

**Judging and Scoring:** The losers foot has to go out of circle or over line. Three tries are given with the best out of three. One try with right hand between legs, one with left hand between legs and the third try, if a tie, will be Eastern style with both hands outside legs.







## Musk-Ox Fight

**Equipment:** none

**Stance and Start:** Competitors get on all fours and in the middle of a set circle. Place heads under collar bone of opponent so the opponents press shoulder to shoulder. Head is tucked under.

**Movement:** Using body weight and strength, opponents try to push each other out of the circle or until the other person gives up.

**Judging and Scoring:** Best out of three attempts. The circle measures about 8 feet in diameter.





# Kneel Jump



**Equipment:** none

**Stance and Start:** Kneel on floor with feet tucked under and flat on floor. Measure knees to be right on the line by pressing fingertips to line knees up with marked line on floor.

**Movement:** Using upper body momentum, thrust body forward to land on feet, keep balance.

**Judging and Scoring:** The best out of three tries. Measurement is taken from the heel closest to the line, or any part of your body that falls backwards.

**Figure 1**



Kneel on floor with toes straight.

**Figure 2**



Swing arms back

**Figure 3**



Launch body up and forward

**Figure 4**



Land on both feet in squat position



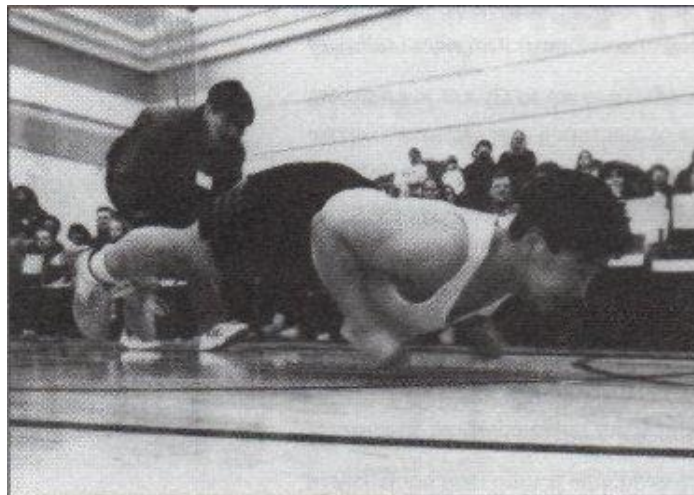


# Knuckle Hop

**Equipment:** None

**Stance and Start:** From a push-up position place knuckles on floor, elbows at side.

**Movement:** Using the height from the knuckles to elbows, hop on toes and knuckles for as far as possible. Farthest continuous hop wins.





## Stick Jump

**Equipment: Broom handle**

**Stance and Start: With feet together, grab broom handle in overhand grip about the distance of shoulders apart.**

**Judging and Scoring: Each jump is measured by the distance of grip on broom handle. If the jump is completed, move hands in together two inches on each hand. This make the jump harder. Hands keep moving together until hands join up and jump must go through the loop in arms. Three tries per jump.**





## Back Bend

**Equipment:** Broom handle

**Stance and Start:** Standing, spread feet as far apart as you can. Feet must be in a straight line. Measure the distance from the armpit to the tip of the middle finger on the broom handle. Grip the broom handle on this spot with both hands on top of each other

**Movement:** Bend backwards and touch the handle to the floor behind you. Return to starting position. Feet should remain on the floor in the same position. If successful, measure in decreasing distance from the thumb to the nose, wrist to the nose, elbow to top of head, then decrease every two inches.

**Judging and Scoring:** The competitor who can do the back bend the shortest distance to the broom handle winds. If the competitor reaches the floor with no more length of broom handle left, then competitor places a quarter on the ground behind him and has to bend back and pick it up and then place it back in.





## Alaskan High Kick

**Equipment:** high kick stand (such as basketball backboard)

**Stance and Start:** Sit on the floor with one hand placed on the floor behind the rump. Grab the opposite foot with free hand. This opposite foot is the non-kicking foot.

**Movement:** Lift the body off the floor and kick the target with the front foot. The kicking foot must return to the floor before the rump does.

**Judging and Scoring:** Three tries for each height. Target is raised two inches at a time and one inch when it gets higher.







## Neck Pull

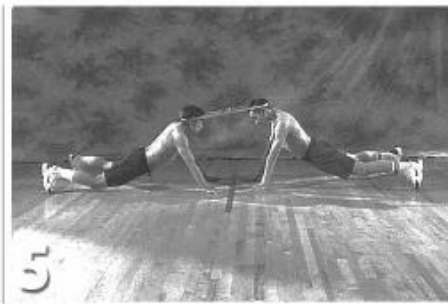
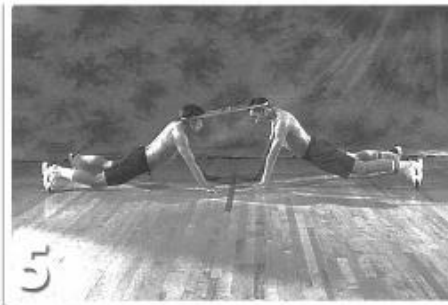


**Equipment:** Leather thong or belt.

**Stance and Start:** Two competitors lie floor on stomach facing each other. A line is drawn between two competitors equal distance and competitor's heads are about two feet apart. A leather thong or belt is placed around their heads.

**Movement:** On a signal, opponents pull with the head bracing their hands out in front and using whole body strength to pull steadily. The object is to pull the opponent over the line.

**Judging and Scoring:** Best out of three attempts. When the thong or belt slips off head, it counts as a point for opponent. When any part of the body goes over the line, opponent wins. The thong must be above the ears at all times.





## Chair Pass



**Equipment:** 3 chairs the same size.

**Objective:** with shoulders on one chair, feet on another, and bum on the third, pass the middle chair over the body to the other side and back again.

**Scoring:** number of passes back and forth without stopping.

**Modify:** if it is too easy, move outside chairs further apart – too difficult, move closer together.

**Safety:** ensure that spotter holds head chair in place.





## Foot Pull



**This game requires a leather thong or belt. Competitors sit on the floor with a line between them equally. One leg is thrust straight out and the other leg is bent at the knee. Either leg may be used. A belt or thong is placed around the upturned feet about 2-3 feet apart. On the signal, opponents pull back with the foot using full body strength and arms. The opponent who pulls the competitor over the line or causes the thong to come off the foot wins. The best two out of three attempt wins.**



## Two Foot High Kick

**Equipment:** High Kick Stand (basketball backboard could be used)

**Stance and Start:** Start from a standing position under the target or up to 10 feet from the target.

**Movement:** Walk or run toward target. Jump from both feet and keeping feet together, kick target. Land on two and maintain balance.

**Judging and Scoring:** The starting height is established by the competitors and the judge based on the skill levels. Three tries are given each competitor at each height. The target is raised two inches at a time. When it begins to get difficult the competitors may decide to only have the target raised on inch. The target must be clearly hit with two feet. If there is a tie, the number of failed kicks at all attempted heights is counted. The person with the least number of failed kicks wins.





## Arm Pull



**Equipment:** None

**Stance and Start:** In pairs, competitors face each other sitting on the floor. One leg is bent and the other is straight. Competitors lock legs and hook right arms at the elbow. The other hand is holding the ankle of the opponent's bent leg.

**Movement:** On signal opponents pull slowly and steadily at the elbow. The object is to try to pull other opponents over or until opponent's hand touches the chest of the winner.

**Judging and Scoring:** If hand touches the floor, slips off opponent's ankle, or if opponent turns sideways to touch the floor, start over. Best of three attempts wins.

