

FIRST NATIONS GAMES

(Part 1 of 3)

Yulunga means playing in the language of the Kamilaroi (Gamori) people of north-western New South Wales. Based on the activities offered on the AUS Sport site the following outlines 3 games that are all inclusive, can be played by students of all ability levels and backgrounds and build resilience, strength and cooperation. They also develop Fundamental Movement Skills which are the building blocks of all sports, encourage team spirit and can be used to develop an understanding of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use games to teach important skills such as hand eye coordination, speed and strength.

The first game is called Apwerte meaning 'stone' in the language of the Eastern Arrerente People of central Australia.

It is a simple game where pairs of students work together to score as many points as possible. A point is scored every time a heavy stone (replaced these days with a cricket ball) is rolled between 2 markers. These markers could be natural items such as sticks or trees, plastic cones or just marks on the ground. Students stand an equal distance from either side of the markers and score a point each time the ball is rolled successfully through the markers without touching them. By standing on each side of the markers players do not need to retrieve the ball but rather it is rolled back to them by their partner when they take their turn.



This game assists children to develop hand eye coordination skills, underarm bowling direction and, as the ball is weighted, strength. Students are also expected to work with a partner and offer encouragement rather than criticise if the ball hits or completely misses the markers. Children can also be responsible for recording and keeping track of their score if a score keeper is not assigned.

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The second game is known as Keentan which is 'play' in the Wik-Mungkan language from northern Queensland.

This is a keep-away game of catch-ball which allows students to work in teams of 4 to 8 to practice static jumping, sprint runs, passing and catching a ball. It is also known as 'kangaroo-play' by the Kalkadoon people as the action of players jumping up to catch the ball resembled the movements of a kangaroo. Historically the ball was made from possum, wallaby or kangaroo hide tied up with twine but today a basketball or soccer ball is used.

Like a number of other ballgames Keentan involves the ball being thrown from one player to another of the same team while players of the opposing team attempt to intercept it. The difference is the ball can only be intercepted if the player is off the ground - hence the name 'kangaroo-play'. The jump need only be small, but the ball can only pass to the opposing team if caught while the defender is in the air.



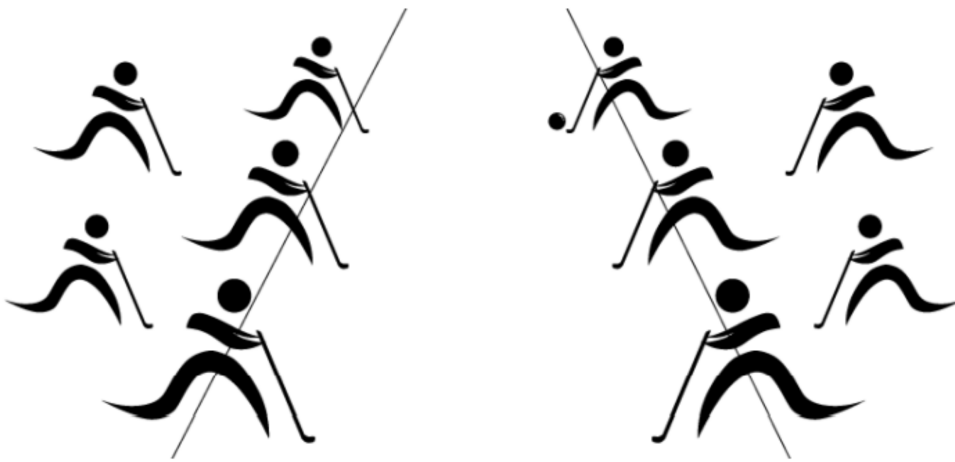
No physical contact or interference is allowed between players. If the ball is thrown and not caught, but lands on the ground untouched, it passes to the opposing team. If it is dropped or knocked to the ground by a player attempting to catch it, the defending team retains possession.

Ball passes must be a minimum of 3 metres and the player in possession of the ball may run around the playing area for up to 5 metres. This player cannot be guarded (marked) or obstructed while he or she is attempting to pass the ball — the defender must be at least 1 metre from the ball thrower.

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The third game, played in teams of 4 or 6 players, builds bat and ball skills and is known as Turlurlu in the Walmajarri language.



Similar to hockey this traditional ball-rolling and hitting game comes from the Great Sandy Desert of central Australia. Each player has a mukurru, or fighting stick, as a bat and a kamikami or rough ball cut from the thick root of the ngulyungu tree is used. These can be replaced with a hockey stick and cricket ball if preferred.

In teams, players line up 5 to 10 metres apart, behind their goal line, with a space of roughly half a meter between each team member. Players must hit or roll the ball over the dividing space and past the opposition's goal line. The kamikami must stay close to the ground at all times and the end of the makurru or hockey stick must remain below waist height.

The opposing team must try to stop the ball before it crossed their goal line. The ball can be stopped with their stick but players must not use their feet to intercept the ball. When stopped the ball is returned to the opposite end and the defenders become the offenders as they try to get the kamikami over the goal line at the other end of the playing field. A point or kuyi is scored each time the ball passes over the opponent's goal line. The team with the most points wins. By playing these three games children will have the opportunity to practice eight of the 12 fundamental movement skills. They get to practice balancing, running, jumping, jumping, catching, throwing, leaping and kicking. They also get to explore games of Australia's First Nations People, the reason these games are played and how these games relate to the games children play in school today. They can explore the mathematics involved in scoring, distance and angles. The language required to explain the game to others and the team tactics which can be developed by teams playing these games.

