

Indigenous games

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Indigenous games are part of our heritage, and we encourage you to find people in your communities who can teach children how to play indigenous games.

The Department of Sport and Recreation is actively promoting indigenous games as options for play and even formal games in South Africa. So far (2009) ten games have been identified as part of an indigenous games national project. These are: dibeke (a running ball game); diketo (a coordination game); kgati (a rope jumping game); ncuva (a board game); morabaraba (a board game); jukskei (a throwing and target game); kho-kho (a running game); lintonga (a stick fighting game); arigogo (similar to rounders) and drie stokkies (running and jumping game).

You can also download the Indigenous Games Rules Book from the Department of Sport and Recreation website: www.srsa.gov.za.

We have not included all these games or game rules in this chapter as there are so many variations of play in different regions of our country. We encourage you to attend local indigenous games events as these games are best learnt in practise. For more information contact the indigenous games association in your region.

Three Tins

This game is played by two teams. Three tins are placed on top of each other. A player from one of the teams tries to knock the tins over with a ball. After three unsuccessful throws, a player from the opposing team has a turn.

If the ball hits the tins, the player who threw the ball must run to the tins, reposition them again, draw “brackets” around the tins and shout “square”, then hop over the tins three times. If the ball is thrown too far, the players shout “thayma” and everyone waits for the ball to be found.



Diketo

(magave, upuca, jacks)

Aim of the game

To be the first to scoop out all the stones and then return them to the hole.

Equipment needed

Two players can play this game. They each need a ghoen or “taw” or big round stone. Each player also needs at least ten small marbles or stones.

Play space set up

Dig a small hole in the ground (or draw a square on the ground) and place the small stones in the hole.

Play instructions

These play instructions are for a ten-stone game, while the photograph shows a variation of the game played with at least 20 stones and a square drawn on the ground.

The first player throws the ghoen into the air and tries to scoop or push all the small stones out of the hole before catching it again. If the ghoen is not caught, the next player takes their turn.

If the ghoen is caught, it is thrown in the air again. One of the stones is kept back and the others pushed back into the hole. The ghoen is thrown again. While in the air the nine stones are pushed out of the hole before the ghoen is caught again. Next throw, another stone is kept back and eight stones are pushed back. Continue in this way until ten stones are in possession. At this point, another round begins.

All ten stones are put into the hole but this time two stones are retained after the second throw. In round three, three stones are retained, and so on. If at any time the ghoen is not caught, the other player has a turn.

The winner is the player who has advanced the furthest in the game without making a mistake.



Moruba

(tsoro, ntjiwa, ncuva, instuva)

Aim of the game

To play the game until one player has lost all their “cows” (or pebbles).

Equipment needed

- A space to dig small holes into the ground.
- At least two pebbles (“cows”) for each hole.

Play space set up

The size of the play space and the number of holes often depends on the number of players. Most common are boards that have four rows of 12 holes (mekoti) each, although the number of holes can vary from 4 to 36 per row. Place two small pebbles or morula pips (“cows”) into each hole.

Play instructions

Each player (or team) only uses their side of the play area or “play board”. On a turn a player takes the contents of one of their holes, which must contain at least two stones, and distributes them, one by one, counterclockwise into consecutive holes on their own side. If the last stone falls into a non-empty hole, its contents are distributed in another lap in the same direction. The move ends (kulala, literally “to sleep”) when the last stone is dropped into an empty hole.

If the last stone falls into an empty hole of the inner row, and the opponent’s opposite hole contains stones, these enemy stones are “killed” (tlaaba) or “hit”. Additionally, the stones in the hole of the same file in the outer row are “captured” (tlola). The killed or captured stones are removed from the board. The player is then entitled to capture the contents of any other two enemy holes.

When a player has only singletons, they are permitted to move them, but only in empty holes. The player who still has stones at the end of the game is declared the winner. It is a draw when the board position repeats without anything being captured.

Peter Nchabeleng Sport Ground in Skoonoord, Limpopo, is alive with activity since A Chance To Play came to Sekhukhune. Indigenous games feature as an activity at A Chance to Play events where an older woman teaches moruba to local children. She trains “apprentices” who then pass their knowledge and skills on to other children.



Morabaraba

(umlabalaba)

Aim of the game

For one player to remove (eliminate) their opponent's tokens.

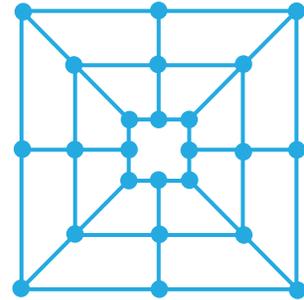
Equipment needed

This game, played by two players, can be played on a board or on a "board" drawn with a stick in the sand. Each player needs 12 tokens ("izinkomo" cows). These could be stones, marbles or even bottle tops of the same or similar colour.



Play instructions

Play can happen in a period of minutes or hours. Tokens are placed, one at a time, alternately, on a point of intersection with the aim of making the tokens form a line, three in a row. The opposing player can place their tokens anywhere to block the other player from getting three in row. When a player gets three tokens in a row they have won that row and must remove one of the other player's tokens from the board. When all tokens are used, the game continues. Players can move their tokens to new intersections and keep trying to get each other's tokens. The game ends when one player has removed all of their opponent's tokens.



Board designs vary – here is the "official" design.

Jukskei

This game is played in a sandpit. A wooden or rubber "skeet" (something like a heavy rounded bat with a handle) is thrown underhand at two "stakes" or a pin pegged in the sandpit. Players score points for hitting the stake or for being nearest the stake. For play instructions and game rules, see the Indigenous Games Rules Book available for download from www.srsa.gov.za.



At a Play Day in Phokwane, Limpopo, a local teacher brought along a Jukskei set. Some of the women had played the game as children. Remembering the rules, they shared their knowledge and skills with others.