

Kiowa Hand Game

[dòâugyà (Tipi Game)



◇ History of the Hand Game:

Every Indian tribe has its winter games. It has been so “since the time animals could talk.” So say the old people, according to Bill Koomsa, Sr., a Kiowa from Carnegie. In the early days when the game was played in tipis and tents, people liked to gamble with horses, guns, bows and arrows, and blankets. Today, the games are played in community buildings and are sponsored by organized teams and money is used for gambling. “The old style game could be played all night with no winner. People would just get tired and quit,” Koomsa said.

- ◆ Bill Koomsa Sr. is known as “**Mr. Hand Game**” because of the history he knows and because he created the modernized system of the game that is widely used in Oklahoma now. “I made it a game where one side must win; there is no tie. One game lasts about 45 minutes and we play seven to eight games a night,” he said.
- ◆ Other tribes around the nation have inquired about the “**Oklahoma system.**” One tribe in particular is the Crow tribe of Montana which has ancient ties to the Kiowas. Members of the tribe from Montana come for hand games and to visit old friends. The games begin at the sundown.
- ◆ Koomsa said the original game “used to use elk teeth instead of bones” and the guesser had to find both teeth.
- ◆ “A long time ago, some hiders who move their hands so fast they could switch the elk teeth between hands with no one seeing. Some said magic was used. But if you were caught cheating it would cause your team to lose the whole game,” Koomsa said.
- ◆ “Back then the guesser was identified by wearing buffalo horns on his head. Today, we still say “**you take the horns**” when we change guessers,” he said.

Hamilton, Angie 1984, Nov.11 Indian Hand-games Survive Test of Times as Popular Winter Recreation <http://newsok.com/2087926>

◇ How to play:

The game is played with two teams facing each other. The front row on each team is composed of men who drum the rythm for each hand game song.

According to Kommsa, the songs tease and confuse the other team.

- ◆ Each tribe has their own songs.

While the song is sung, two individuals conceal a couple of four-inch-long bones in their hands. The Opposite side selects a principal guesser who tries to guess which hand holds the marked bone.

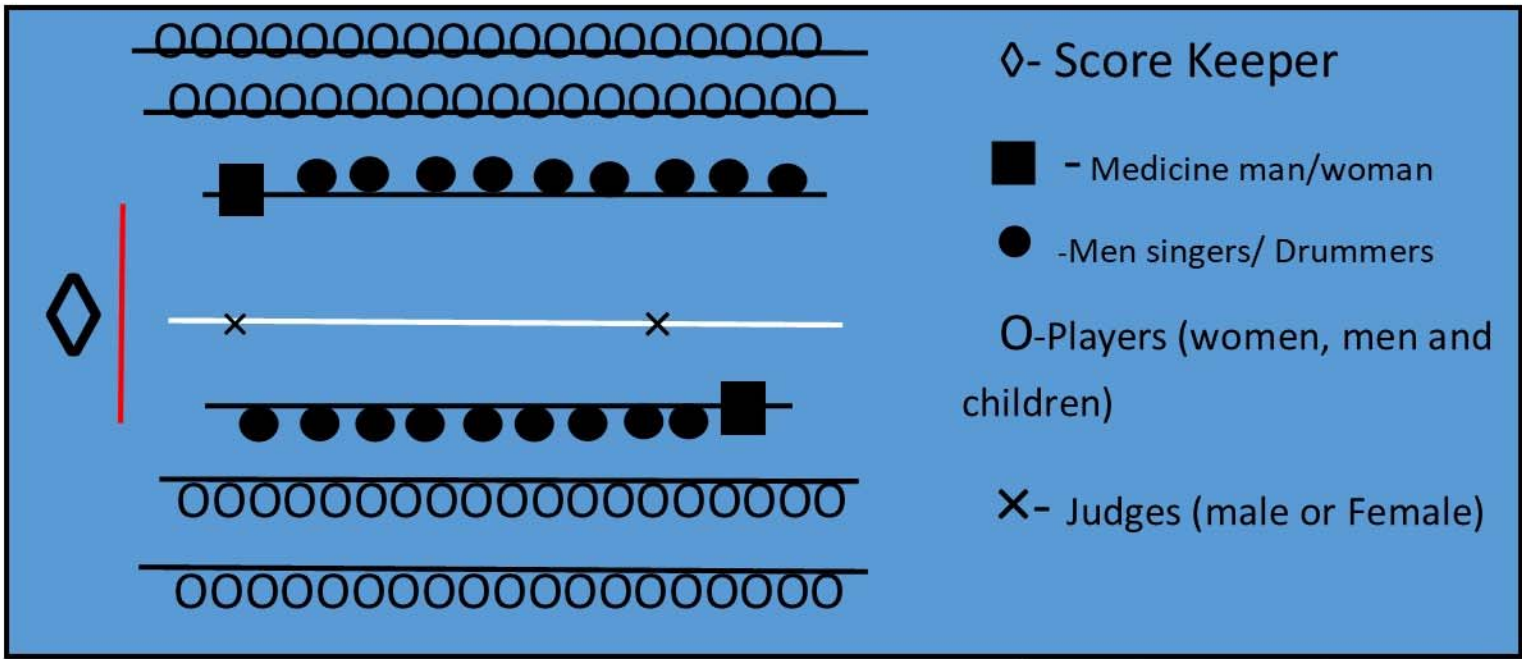
Scoring is achieved by the team that successfully “gets away with hiding the marked bones.”

The score is kept on a set of colored sticks. The scorekeeper removes the sticks from their base as the points are won.

Usually, there are 16 per team, 18 per team in tournament play, with an odd stick in the middle. The team that takes the old middle stick wins the game, Koomsa said.

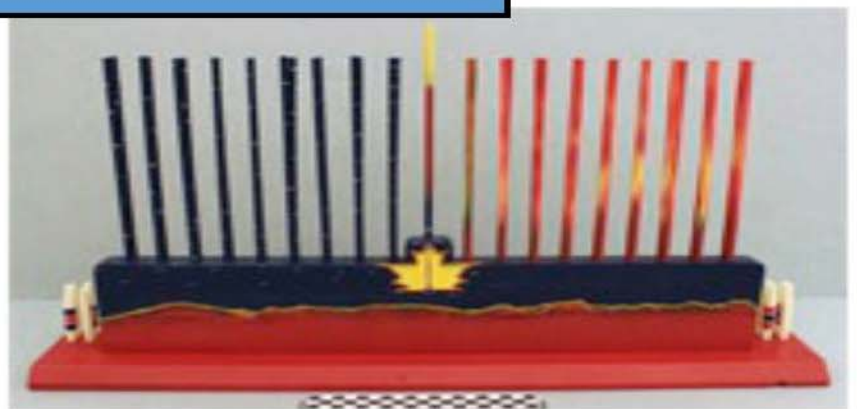


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◇ Score Board:

The set consists of a rectangular painted wooden base, 37 painted wooden rods that fit into holes along the top of the base, and 8 bones or pegs made of white plastic that fit into holes along the sides of the base. Eighteen of the rods are on the left side and are painted dark blue. Another 18 rods are placed on the right side and are painted. There is a single central rod, painted blue and red and yellow. Half of the bones/pegs are decorated with 3 bands of color while the other half of the pegs are plain. Two decorated and two undecorated bones/pegs are on each side of the base. The base is painted red outlined in yellow the rest of the base is painted. There is a yellow, red and blue maple leaf emblem in the center of the base.

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