

# Traditional Iñupiat Games

**Sources:** Alaska Native Language Center  
Isa Sovalik  
Roxy Ekowana

**Developed by:** Martha Aiken  
Emma Bodfish

**Original Printing:** 1979 Iñupiat Materials Development Center NSBSD

**Revised:** 1994 NSBSD

**NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT  
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## TEACHER'S NOTE

This is a collection of games originally used by the Iñupiat for recreation and exercise. Directions are included with each game for you and your students to learn the games. Illustrations are provided for the younger students. For those games that have songs, the songs are available on cassette tape. Older students can read the directions for each game. For the primary students, the teacher should first read the directions, and then explain how to play the game by using your own words. We would recommend this as an opportunity to bring elders into the classroom to demonstrate some of the older games.

The teacher should not try to teach all of the games at once, or to teach them in the order they are presented in the book. As a teacher, you can determine which games are suitable for your own students. We feel that these original, ancient Iñupiat games will be a rich addition to the recreation of the students in the school. Be sure to make the students aware that these games have been used by the Iñupiaq for many years.

## Hide and Seek

Number of players: No limit

This game may be played by any number of people outdoors. The group of players choose two people to hide first. Then the rest of the group remains in a certain spot lying face down covering their heads with their parka hoods or standing right against a house facing the wall. The players must never peek while the two people are hiding.

As soon as the two people leave to go hide, the group starts singing the Hide and Seek song either once or repeating it several times.

### Imruuat Atuutaat

limmuqhimuu-u iimmuqhimuu,  
limmuqhimuu-u iimmu<sup>ł</sup>himuu,  
limmutayuunni haayuunni,  
limmutayuunni haayuunni,  
Qu l uqu l uuggusii qu l uqu l uuggusii.  
Kuuġuram igluanun taimmaqtuq taimmai.  
Tinayayayaa-a tinayayayaa-a  
Kuuġuram igluanun taimmaqtuq taimmai!

In the meantime the two people are running and looking for good place to hide. As the group finish singing their song, they get up to start looking for the two people that have hidden. Whenever they see the hidden persons they chase them until they tag them. The two people that first tag the hiding persons get to have a chance to hide. The ones that were tagged will no longer play, but will watch the rest of the game. This goes on until no one is left to hide and then they stop or start all over again.

The hide and seek song has no particular meaning, but mentions the group that is huddled so they wouldn't peek. It also says the two people have disappeared somewhere across the river.

### **Jump Rope for Three or More Persons**

This jump rope game is played by three or more people. Two people each hold the end of the rope and one person jumps in the center. The two people swing the rope in a circle over the person in the center. When the rope touches the person he stops. Each one tries to jump as long as they can.

Atausii-ii-iq  
aippaa-aa-ak  
piŋayua-aa-ak,  
sisamaa-aa-ak  
atausiiq aippaak piŋayuak sisamaak tallimaakkik

The meaning of the song while jumping is:

First  
Second  
Third  
Fourth  
and repeating faster:  
First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth

It is also sung with the other jumping rope game.

### Laughing Game

All the players form a circle of those who want to take part in the game. Then a person picks up a mitten. The rule is to laugh while the mitten is in the air, and as soon as it lands every player stops laughing and tries to prevent his/herself from laughing. The person that laughs first goes in the middle of the players, tosses the mitt, and tries to make more players laugh.

## Laughing Game

Number of Players: No limit

This game is played by any number of people. The group forms a circle and starts singing "Aaptaaniptaa" song.

Aaptaaniptaa-a  
pukuptaaniptaa-a,  
aaptaani,  
pukuptaani nipangiqsuaq,  
MAQ!

This song is sung each time a person laughs and goes in the center to try to make others laugh. The song has no particular meaning, but is a traditional Eskimo fun song. The song ends suddenly as everyone says "Maq!". Right then everyone must put on a sullen unsmiling face. The first person that breaks out laughing must get in the center and after the group sings again, tries in many funny ways to make the group laugh. Whenever another person laughs, the person in the center returns to his place in the circle.

## Juggling

The first thing people do in juggling is to look for nice smooth stones. After they find a good pair, they compete with each other to see who can juggle the longest time without dropping the stones. They usually sit down when they are practicing, and then when they're ready, sometimes they see who can walk the farthest while juggling. Sometimes they stop and try to juggle with three stones. They usually sing a song as they juggle:

Uŋalavalaa yaŋaġiyyaġi atausiġġi tuumatuu

Napaaqtullu qinjalugiuralu

Ayaniqtuułuu imma utkusigluimma qavaağanaluiimma

Naniġiaq naniġiaq iksuqqakin kañiqqakin uyagaayuulli kinnaayuulli

Napaaqtuġmiutchiat kuuvagmiutchiat nuluqtuġayağrukin taqtukin

Kiniqsigvium qaañani-i, kiniqsigvium qaañani-i, nanuunasugalugulu Aklaunasugalugulu.

Uumalu kipkautaiłlıu, uumalu kipkautaiłlıu

Kipkalukta, kipkalukta ɳai-i

Aanaalukpit quġvialuanun aluksraġiñ kuniuqsraġiñ

Naqtagħii-ii-i, naqtagħii, naqtagħii-ii-i, naqtagħiin

Kiakiaġ manna qimmia,

Kiakiaġ manna qimmia

Nuvuñmiun, nuvuñmiun imġitchułħii, nuvuñmiun nuvuñmiun imiġitchułħii, Taġiugniżlamik

imiqaqsiññaqtut, taġiugniżlamik imiqaqsiññaqtut,

akku, akku huich!

The song sung with this game has no particular meaning.

### Spinning Toy

This toy has been used by Eskimos for a long time. It can be made in different forms. The children hold the center stick in the palm of their hands, make it spin fast, and then set it on the floor to spin. Each child takes a turn to see who can make it spin the longest. Another type is also made similar to a top, which is started with a string. Holding the loop at the end of the string, the top is thrown, released, and then the string pulled. If the top lands in the right position, it will spin correctly.

## A Buzz Toy

A buzz toy is made from dried ugruk skin, or from baleen by putting two holes in the center. Braided sinew was used, about the same length as in a hand string game. The string is threaded through the holes and tied together. When the toy is finished, grasp the ends, holding it loose, then flip the round button in the middle until it is all wound up. Then pull the ends in a rhythmic motion. It makes a buzzing sound until it all unwinds.

### Materials:

1. Ugruk skin, baleen or cardboard, cut into a circle, about 2" to 2 1/2" in diameter. The two holes are about 1/2" apart in the center.
2. The string is about 28" long although the length varies.

### Vertebrae and Stick Game

This game is made from the top vertebrae of a seal or an ugruk by tying a 12" or 18" string the tiny hole in the center, and then tying a piece of stick or a bone at the end of stick for a handle. A person tries to put the stick or bone through the hole by throwing the bone up and trying to catch it through the center hole. Players take tu

### Wolf Scare

The "wolf scare" is made from baleen and bone. The baleen's thickness is usually just right, but is made a little smoother. The piece is cut about 4 or 5 inches long having a width of 2 or more inches. The ends are made pointed in the shape of an oar. On the side where a string is to be tied, it is made a little narrower. Put a little hole on one side for the string. The string should be about three feet long with a piece of bone for a handle at the end of the string. The edge of the baleen should have small, smooth, wavy edges all around it. The string is usually made from braided sinew. Sometimes it is made from caribou or seal skin.

These were used to scare wolves before guns were ever used. Children also played with the wolf scare. When it is swung round and round it makes a loud buzzing sound.

### Stick Toss Game

**Number of players:** four people, two on each team

**Materials:**

Two 12" sticks for markers.

Four tossing sticks or ugruk rib bones, two for each side of players.

Five small sticks for score markers.

The two markers are placed firmly on the ground approximately 10 to 12 feet apart. The two players each who are opponents place themselves alongside of each of the markers. Each team has a pair of sticks or ugruk rib bones for tossing. The players take turn tossing their sticks trying to get them right against the standing marker. The player that has the closest one gets a point. He then gets a

### Pick-Up Sticks

This game is played with narrow sticks that are the length of a hand. Players form a circle on the floor and take turns. The first player starts the game by holding all the sticks in one hand, throwing them up in the air, and attempts to catch them with the back of his hand. Then while holding them steady, he throws them up again to catch them with the palm of his hand this time. He then counts the sticks that fell on the floor by two's and when one is left by itself, he keeps it and tries again. When the sticks that fall on the floor turn out in even numbers -by two's- the next player plays. The player that has more sticks wins the game, and then chooses a different way to catch the sticks such as between the index finger and the middle finger. Then the game goes on the same way.

## Dart Toss Game

**Note:** This game should only be played by older students because the point of the dart is sharp and should be used with caution. It can be played by two or more players taking turns.

Following is the order of the points to do the dart toss game. Whenever the player misses, he has to start again where he left off for his next turn.

1. Palm of the hand - point of dart facing the fingertips.
2. Back of the hand.
3. Form a fist, with the end pointing.
4. Tip of each finger.
5. Bone on wrist.
6. Elbow.
7. Shoulder.
8. Holding dart by the point, flipping it six times.
9. Take hold one side of the ear with one hand, putting the other hand through the arm that is holding the ear, then flip the dart by holding it by the point.
10. The crown of the head is the last step.
11. Repeat the same round starting with No. 1.
12. After repeating the steps, other points can be added, such as the forehead, nose and chin.

## **Kiavsaaq**

Kiavsaaq taamna piuraagutigisuummiñigaat Iñupiat taimma qanaaglaan. Qanuqliqaa kiavsaq qinññiaqaguurut. Qiñigaatun ittuaq taimma utummaagnik aullaqtikugu.

Kiavalulgutilauraġuugaat ililgaat. Aasii suli qiruk sanavlugu argagmi tigummiłlasivlugu nuvuliqługu

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# Kisitchisa!

Atiga

Qulaaniittuat Ukkua	Inna uvva kisinnaqtut	Piuraaq #1	Piuraaq #2	Piuraaq #3	Piuraaq #4	Piuraaq #5	Piuraaq #6
Atausiq  =1	Kisitki atauchuit						
Malguk  =2	Kisitki malguit						
Piñasut  =3	Kisitki piñasuit						
Sisamat  =4	Kisitki sisamait						
Talimat  =5	Kisitki talimatt						
Itchasrat  =6	Kisitki itchasrat						
Kisinniat iluqaisa							
Akiñaksraq 63miñ aqilhaaqpan	Akiñaktaan 35						
Kisinniat qulliit							
Sapkuachiit							
Ukkua							
Piñasut atiruat	Kisitchigi iluqausa						
Sisamat atiruat	Kisitchigi iluqausa						
Iglu Silviñjaruq	Akiña 25						
Mikiruaq Sisamat maligiit	Akiña 30						
Aqiruaq Talimat maligiit	Akiña 40						
Kisitchisa! Talimat atiruat	Akiña 50						
Nalautchinisaq	Kisitchigi iluqaisa						
Kisitchisa!qtaat Akiñaktaat Talimakipialaat	Akillaanje 50						
	Akillaanje 100						
Qulaaniittuat Kisinniat	→						
Sapkuachiit Kisinniat	→						
Iluqaisa Kisinniñi	→						

# ATCHAGAURAQ

(SCRABBLE)

Iñupiaq Atchagat	Number of Tiles	Value
A	9	1
CH	3	5
G	4	2
Ĝ	4	4
H	2	10
I	9	1
K	5	2
L	4	2
Ľ	3	8
ꝑ	3	8
ꝑ	2	10
M	5	3
N	5	1
ᓘ	4	3
D	4	4
P	4	4
Q	9	1
S	6	1
SR	3	5
T	8	1
U	9	1
V	4	2
Y	3	8
Blank	3	0

Total 24 120 353