



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **GAMES ARE TRADITIONAL**

The summer of 2008 marks the 10th anniversary of the opening of Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute. Tamástslíkt's 10th birthday will be celebrated on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, the same day as Salmon Walk. The public is invited to come help celebrate by taking advantage of free admission to the museum exhibits all day Saturday.

The day kicks off with traditional games in the living cultural village from 9:00am-5:00 pm. This event is free and open to the public.

The Kinship Café will offer a lunch special of Indian tacos. From 1:00-4:00 pm there will be free birthday cake for one and all.

The International Traditional Games Society of Montana will send teachers to share the traditional games it has been collecting since 1991. Since 1991, a dedicated group of tribal teachers from Alberta, Montana, Idaho, and North Dakota have been rediscovering an almost lost heritage; skills of sensing, observing, and intuition and skills of endurance, strength, and dexterity. (Photos are available at <http://www.traditionalnativegames.org/3.html>)

“Why games?” asked DeeAnna Leader, Executive Director of the society. She said the society believes that two hundred years ago, American Indian families, bands, clans, and tribes coached and guided the youth in important skills needed for survival. Thousands of old Indian games of intuition and chance created situations to learn body language, observation of the environment, and ways to connect with spirit and power. The old time Native American games of strength, skill, stamina and intuition were played by all ages of tribal members. Physical and mental skills needed for survival were dependent upon early childhood development that occurs in playing and socializing. The acumen and ability for adult tasks were set before twelve years old. Competitions taught social responsibility for others and gave personal strength to spiritual values of their way of life.

However, in the past century, Ms. Leader stated, the traditional games of many cultures have faded from the experience of new generations. When Indian children were removed from their homes, they came back to their tribes without the culture knowledge but also without the natural skills for protecting and providing for their families.

“Why are these ancient skills important to modern youth?” Ms. Leader asked. She explained that just like storytelling, the values of the culture can be infused into the games' skill development. Honor, respect, and responsibility to others have been lost in the thirst of modern society to be "the individual best." American Indian health issues are critical. Modern education needs the assistance of the older ways of spiritual, mental, and physical survival.

The CTUIR contributed the “Slowest Horse” race to the society, according to DeeAnna Leader. She phoned the tribe some years ago and spoke with someone who told her about the racing of the slowest horses in which the riders were assigned to horses other than the very slow horse they had brought. Wanting their own horse to win as the slowest horse, they tried their best to get their assigned horse to go as fast as it could. Ms. Leader said unfortunately she didn’t know who she was speaking to about this game, but it has become one of the most popular horse games in the society’s roster.

Richard Horn, Blackfeet, who will be heading up the Tamástslikt games, is a cultural expert of old crafting techniques, deep cultural knowledge of the past, and stories that add depth to the rules of the games. He has taught people of all ages who always comment on the unusually ancient oral history he shares with the teaching of traditional games. Mr. Horn is well respected by people of all tribes. Assisting will be his wife, Helen, and their two children, who are all experts in teaching the games to all age ranges.

Some of the games that the public will be able to try out will be the hoop and dart game. The object is to toss the dart into a hoop as it rolls past. The game teaches basic survival skills like accuracy. Other games may include lacrosse, arrow throwing and double ball, in which two balls attached by cord are thrown by teams with sticks over a goal.

A game for children is “Run and Scream.” During the days of intertribal warfare, games were an important part of the upbringing of an Indian child. The run and scream game was crucial, yet simple. You run and scream as long as you are able. During battle when warriors would attack, they would run up to their enemy and scream at the top of their

lungs. The element of surprise was key. Other games for kids are “bullroarer”, “Make the Stick Jump”, “Guessing Sticks”, and “Ring the Stick.”

The level of competitiveness ranges up the athletic scale to some serious team sports. Shinney is played with willow sticks and is played using field hockey rules. A rectangular goal with a 5 foot span and 5 foot height is at the end of the playing field. Teams consist of eight players. The playing ball is deer hair stuffed in a tanned deer hide.

In Kickball racing, runners race, kicking a hackey-sack type ball with an attached 3-inch braided tail down a course 100 yards and back. The ball and runner must cross the finish line to be counted as a finish. At the turnaround, both runner and ball must cross the turnaround marker to be considered qualified.

Hoop & Long Arrow: Ten athletes line up along the alleyway and attempt to throw their long arrow through a beaded hoop that is thrown to roll down the alley. The contestant to stop the hoop's roll with the long arrow is awarded points. The hoop is alternated with a throw from one end and then the next throw is from the opposite end of the alley. Contestants must bump two positions down after each throw to equalize the play. The long arrows are 3-5 feet long.

Arrow Throw. This game is competed with teams of two. One team competes against another team in a single elimination round. The playing field is 35 yards long for 18 year olds and younger. The playing field is 40 yards long for the older competitors. Both team players cast long arrows (about 5 feet in length) at a target on the ground. Then the second team tosses. Points are awarded for closest to the center of the target.

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