



<i>Creek</i>	<i>Onondaga</i>	<i>Seminole</i>	<i>Sault</i>	<i>Passamaquoddy</i>	<i>Yuchi</i>	<i>Minnesota</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Choctaw</i>	<i>Iroquois</i>	<i>Cherokee</i>	<i>Cayuga</i>	<i>Menominee</i>	<i>Mohawk</i>
1881	1910	1900's	8'	pre-1872	1900's	<u>Cyberc</u>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Split-Handled</i>	1860	1911	pre-1843	1916	pre-1875
	<i>Seneca</i>		<i>Fox</i>			oldest surviving	<i>Lacrosse</i>	<i>Stick</i>					
	1920		1901			sticks	<i>Stick</i>						
						1821							

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Justin Giles wearing a Tulsa Lacrosse jersey while playing the “attack” position. (Courtesy photo)

Memorial Day weekend is a hallowed holiday in which we remember and honor our military personnel who died or were wounded in battle. It is a great tradition that many in Indian Country know well as we often have a relative who served or is serving in the armed forces. We recognize our warriors sacrifice as we are reminded that Native Americans have served in the U.S. military in greater numbers per capita than any other ethnic group and have done so since the American Revolution.

Surely we also remember and honor the warriors who fought against the U.S. and European nations to maintain our culture and life ways today. Native American history is United States history full of warrior struggles, defeats, and victories. So it seems befitting that another hallowed warrior tradition, rooted in centuries of Native American culture, takes place this month as well. On Memorial Day weekend, the NCAA Lacrosse Finals will be played at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts, home of the New England Patriots. The NCAA Lacrosse Finals are always fun to watch and we have our Native American culture to thank for providing this sporting spectacle.

While many people today are familiar with the contemporary game of lacrosse, which looks like hockey on turf, many people don't know the roots of the game begin with tribal nations from multiple regions of North America. The modern one stick version of lacrosse played during the NCAA Lacrosse Finals is modeled after the Iroquois or the Haudenosaunee, the People of the Long House. A two stick version of lacrosse stems from the southeastern tribes of the Seminole, Muscogee (Creek), Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw. Lastly, there is another one stick version of lacrosse found among the Great Lakes tribes such as the Menominee, Ojibwe, and Sac and Fox. With all these Natives playing a similar form of lacrosse, one might ask, who invented the game?

The modern game of lacrosse has a vast and rich history reaching back centuries. In fact, many oral histories from differing tribal nations say the first game was played in the heavens and the first game on earth was played by the animals. All tribal nations which play a version of this “stick and ball” game have a common creation story that often refers to the game as the “Creator’s Game,”

“Little Brother of War” or the “Medicine Game.” The varying indigenous stories say the game is a gift from the Creator and has the ability to heal or drive away sickness. Lacrosse or stickball requires focus and intensity and the energy from the game has been used as medicine to cleanse players and their communities. Players need to be healthy and in shape to play well, adding to the “medicinal” properties of the game.

Stickball and lacrosse were often used as a means to settle disputes between neighboring towns, clans and tribes. The winner of “Little Brother of War” decided how the dispute would be resolved and



“Stickmaker” by Brian Larney Yahvlane (Seminole Nation/Choctaw). (Courtesy photo)

had bragging rights to boot. Lacrosse was also played just for fun and recreation. To this day, the southeastern version of stickball includes a social game played between men and women which is more about community fellowship than an intensive ceremonial “Little Brother of War” game. The commonality of the varying versions of stickball and lacrosse provide further evidence that our ancestors traveled far and wide sharing culture and spreading the game. After all, we love to visit while sharing stories, songs and food.

Do you have any stories about lacrosse or stickball you would like recorded? The Museum’s Oral History Program’s mission is to serve the Seminole community in preserving your story. Please contact me if you have any story to tell and have it archived to be heard for generations to come. I can be reached at 863-902-1113 extension 12213 or by email at justingiles@semtribe.com. Hope to see and hear you soon!

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