e’pegnege’wen

lacrosse

Lacrosse is likely the oldest ball game in North America. A form of the game has been played by nearly every tribe from east to west, and down into Mexico and South America as well. Traditionally, this game had very different meanings than why we gather and play today. E’pegnege’wen is considered a gift from the Creator. This ball game was given to Native people to respect and love. The game embodied life itself. It would be played with great care, and the ball was seen as very fragile, to be taken care of during the game, much like humans must take care of themselves to live a long, good life. At other times, the game would be used to settle disputes between tribes who were on the brink of war. The game was not played as we play today, with girls and boys together. The men have their game, and the women have their own game, e’peskewe’yen (women’s ball game).

In modern times, lacrosse is played by schools, colleges, and professional teams all over, and it is gaining in popularity. Today we gather to have fun, to spend time with our fellow Tribal members. Below is a short vocabulary list of Potawatomi words associated with this game.

E’pegnege’wen	lacrosse
E’pegnege’wat	they are playing lacrosse
E’peskewe’yen	women’s ball game
E’peskewe’yen	they are playing ball
Pegnegenatek	lacrosse stick
Pegnege’wen	another lacrosse stick
Bkwakwet	ball
Kwenejbkwakwet	ladies handball(an old game for women)

Lacrosse stick, ca. 1880s