

# LESSON IDEA – YR F

## Big idea

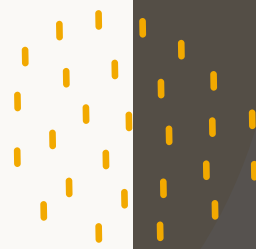
- First Nations Australian societies are diverse and have distinct cultural expressions such as language, customs and beliefs. As First Nations Peoples of Australia, they have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural expressions, while also maintaining the right to control, protect and develop culture as Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. (Culture A\_TSIC1)

## Application

connecting quantities to number names and numerals when reading and reciting stories and playing counting games or determining and reasoning about the size of sets of objects within First Nations Australians' instructive games; for example, Segur etug from Mer Island in the Torres Strait region



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name, represent and order numbers including zero to at least 20, using physical and virtual materials and numerals



## Connection

First Nations Australians have long used instructional games, devices and models as play-based learning objects. They are mostly designed for children to stimulate learning by promoting the development of a specific skill or providing play experiences to learn about a particular subject.

Segur etug is an instructional guessing and counting game. The game is named for the Meryam Mir language (Torres Strait Islands) word for 'play'.

## Lesson ideas

- Ask the students to find and collect a particular number of seeds, rocks, leaves or shells to use to play the game
- One player takes a quantity of small objects and places them in a closed hand or cup. The other players attempt to guess the number. The player who is correct has the next turn. If no player guesses correctly the player has another turn.
- See page 5 for examples of extension activities



# BACKGROUND

## Cultural significance

For millennia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have used instructive toys and games as educational devices and models to stimulate and achieve learning in young people. Children's games and activities have long provided a context for acquiring knowledge, understanding, and the development of skills required in later life. Australia's First Nations Peoples played many cooperative games to prepare their children for life within their society. Many of these games had specific individual skills as well as tasks the group had to achieve, which were directly related to improving their hunting and gathering skills to enhance survival of the clan.

For example, if there was a skilled spear thrower, it was his responsibility to the group to teach others to be just as good as he was. By teaching others to perform to the same level of proficiency, the group was not dependant on one person, who was the best spear thrower, for food, hence their chances of survival were increased. The survival of each First Nations clan was directly dependant on the ability of all members to be skilled food and resource gatherers. The ability to share their skills and help one another to improve was of crucial importance for the survival of the group, so the games they developed to improve their physical skills reflected communication, support and cooperation with one another, in order to achieve a collective goal.

Over the years, sport has played a major role in developing a socially cohesive environment within First Nations communities and many of the games you see today have evolved from traditional games of the past.

First Nations Australians' games and activities like Segur etug have a rich history as they have been passed down through generations. However, some traditional First Nations games were almost lost after colonisation and today extensive consultation with First Nations Elders is necessary to re-establish the traditional instructional games and their rules.

## Preserving the games

The information contained in this lesson plan about Segur Etug is sourced from a document called Yulunga: Traditional Indigenous Games prepared by the Australian Sport Commission. It contains a wide selection of games and activities from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies all around Australia and provides an opportunity to learn about, appreciate and experience aspects of First Nations culture by playing traditional instructive games. The Yulunga document explains the rules and rationale behind the games and provides information on the geographic region and Peoples who devised and played each game.

# BACKGROUND

The Yulunga: Traditional Indigenous Games resource helps provide all Australians with a greater understanding and appreciation of First Nations Australian culture — the way it was many thousands of years ago and still is today. The resource recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and cultural sharing and provides the opportunity for First Nations Australian Peoples to be seen as “peoples of knowledge”.

The Yulunga resources were created based on extensive research, including several hundred accounts collected over many years from all parts of Australia and the Torres Strait Islands. Many of the original accounts of games were recorded during the nineteenth century by explorers, government officials, settlers, scientists and missionaries. There are comparatively few descriptions of games and sports by First Nations Australian people, but efforts have been made to include a significant level of First Nations input.

The games and activities in Yulunga: Traditional Indigenous Games are:

- played in their traditional forms with modern equipment
- modified for safety, ease of use or to cater for all ages and abilities
- reconstructed from incomplete accounts

Approval was sought from the Traditional Owners of the games or from a representative Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisation. When the games are used as part of school or sporting program it is recommended that local Elders and First Nations Australian groups are informed of plans and invited to participate in some way.

## About Mer Island

Mer Island (also known as Murray Island), is a small island of volcanic origin, populated by the Melanesian Meriam people and situated in the eastern section of Torres Strait.

The people of Mer Island speak Torres Strait Creole and Meriam and the island has a population of around 450 people. The Mer (Meriam) Peoples are:

- Komet
- Meriam-Samsep
- Magaram
- Zagareb
- Piadram
- Geuram
- Meuram
- Dauer Meriam.
- Peibre

Mer Island is a basaltic island formed from an extinct volcano, which was last active over a million years ago when the Indo-Australian Plate slid over the East Australia hotspot. The island rises to a plateau 80m above sea level. The highest point of the island is the 230m Gelam Paser, the western end of the volcano crater. The island has red fertile soil and is covered in dense vegetation.



# BACKGROUND



Westerners began to settle on the island in 1872 when the London Missionary Society founded a missionary school there.

Mer Island's most famous resident was trade unionist, Eddie Mabo, whose decision to sue the Queensland government in order to secure ownership of his land, which had been removed from his ancestors by the British colonial powers using the terra nullius legal concept. This ultimately led to the High Court of Australia, on appeal from the Supreme Court of the State of Queensland, issue the "Mabo decision" to finally recognise Mabo's rights on his land on 3 June 1992. However, Mabo himself died a few months before the decision.

This decision was a landmark event in Australian history and continues to have ramifications for Australia today.



# BACKGROUND

## Extension activities

Segur etug can be extended to incorporate other counting skills as follows:

- Use numbered markers such as used in some eight-ball games (such as pool) or numbered counters. One player chooses a number and the others attempt to guess it. The player who guesses the number (or is the closest) has the next turn. The first player to ten wins the game if a competition is conducted.
- Players guess how many small sticks, fragments of bark or clods of earth are in a designated group.
- Conduct a team number-guessing contest in groups of four to six. Players take turns to guess. The first team to 20 is the winner.
- Partner guessing. Each player has a set number of pebbles or beads (such as 15). One player hides between one and five objects in his or her hand. The other player guesses. If the guess is correct he or she receives the objects. If the guess is incorrect the guesser gives one object to the hider. Change over roles and continue. End the game after a set time or if one player has all the objects. Cooperative play is encouraged.

## Artwork

Artworks have been created by:

- Cortney Glass, a contemporary digital artist, originally from Katherine, Northern Territory and a Dagoman, Wardaman, and Gurindji woman
- Sheri Skele, a proud Bidjara woman and a contemporary Aboriginal artist who calls her artworks Bigi Nagala, which means 'I am dreaming' in Bidjara

# BACKGROUND

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