

## **Lahal Information and Rules**

*The outlined details of this game play have been created in consultation with Elder Brother Rick, Emma Paul and Reese Thomas. We would like to recognize their expertise in the game and honour each of them for their generous contribution of their knowledge.*

**\*\*PLEASE SEE UPDATED SCORING INFORMATION BELOW\*\***

**Slahal** (or **Lahal**) is a traditional guessing game of the Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific Coast, also known as stickgame, bonegame, handgame, or many names specific to our languages. It is played throughout the western United States and Canada by many Indigenous peoples. Traditionally, the game uses the shin bones from the foreleg of a deer or other animals. The name **slahal** is a Chinook Jargon word.

The game is played by two opposing teams sitting in lines facing each other. There are two pairs of "bones." Two bones that are marked and two bones that are unmarked (the marked bones are often referred to as the male and the unmarked bones are female). The game also uses a set of scoring sticks (ten in Coast Salish territories) as well as a "king" stick—an extra stick won by the team who gets to start the game. Adapted from <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slahal>>

### **HOW TO PLAY THE GAME**

#### **Determination of Possession of Bones and King Stick to Start the Game**

(\*\* Starting the game with the bones is an advantage as a team can only win sticks when they have possession of the bones)

'First Guesser' - is similar to the 'Captain' of the team

The game starts by the 'First Guessers' of each team facing off in a bone guessing duo. This involves the 'First Guesser' from each team hiding one of the marked and unmarked bones in each of their hands. One team's 'First Guesser' will start by guessing which hand the other 'First Guesser' is hiding the unmarked bone in. This is followed by the other 'First Guesser' repeating this same step. If both 'First Guessers' are successful in guessing both of the unmarked bones or unsuccessful in guessing the unmarked bones the process repeats itself - as there is no winner. After both 'First Guessers' guess and only one of them has successfully guessed the unmarked bone, that team wins possession of the bones to start the game as well as possession of the king stick. This winning 'First Guesser' then selects 5 of the same colored scoring sticks while the other team receives the remaining coloured set.

## The Role of the 'First Guesser' / Captain

'First Guessers' on each team direct the overall game play. They do this by making strategic selection and changes of bone holders and guessers (any players on the team) at any point in the game. Sometimes a strategic play includes the 'First Guesser' choosing the same guesser or bone holder(s) each round if they are on a run (aka a winning streak). The 'First Guessers' also manage the sticks for their team, politely handing sticks over that are lost and getting up and retrieving sticks from their 'First Guesser' opponent when sticks are won.

## Game Play

The 'First Guesser' on the team with the king stick selects two bone holders on the team to conceal the bones within their hands. These players swap the bones between their own hands discreetly, while their team sings and drums to distract their opponents. The 'First Guesser' on the opposing team selects a guesser which is announced with a hand signal pointing to the guesser or waving their hand above their head. **The bone holders have only 30s to 1 min maximum to swap the bones within their hands** and show their hands are separate so the guesser can make their guess. Once their hands are out front and in position for the guesser, they cannot re-hide them.

### *If the guesser...*

1) CORRECTLY identifies the location of both unmarked bones, they have 'caught' the bones and is referred to as a 'catch.' The 'First Guesser' of this team then takes both sets of the bones for their team and it is now their turn to hide the bones and try to win points. NO STICKS ARE GIVEN

2) INCORRECTLY identifies the location of both unmarked bones, they have 'missed' the bones. The 'First Guesser' on the team with the bones will then receive two of the other teams 'live sticks' and bring them over to their dead stick pile which is separate or perpendicular to their live stick pile.

3) CORRECTLY identifies one unmarked bone and INCORRECTLY identifies the other unmarked bone, they have 'caught' one bone and 'missed' the other bone. The bone holder gives the incorrectly identified bones to the 'First Guesser' of the other team (which they hold until they are in possession of both sets of bones) AND one 'live stick' from the guessing team is given to the 'First Guesser' of the bone holding team to bring over into their 'dead' stick pile.

**\*\*Now that one set of bones is in possession of the guessing team, the assigned guesser (assigned by the First Guesser) on this team has the opportunity to use this set of bones as a way of wagering their guess. The guesser can do this by 'mirroring' their guess to the bone holder in lieu of using the hand signals. The guesser always shows their bones first in these cases.**

This process repeats until the other team wins possession of both sets of bones.

## Stick/Points Scoring

Both teams start the game with 5 'live' sticks in their possession. Sticks are only won by the team who is hiding the bones. When a team wins a stick they start by taking a 'live' stick from their opponent and placing it in their own 'dead' pile (a separate or perpendicular pile formed away from their starting 'live' sticks). Once a stick becomes dead, it remains dead for the duration of the game. Once a team has successfully won all of its opponents sticks they begin to kill their own sticks by adding to the same 'dead' pile already formed. The winning team is determined when a team has possession of all 10 'dead' sticks AND the king stick. The king stick is the last stick to be transferred (the last point). If the king stick is accidentally transferred to the opposing team prematurely, the game is automatically lost by this team.

**Sticks are only won by the team that has possession of the bones. The guessing team is merely trying to win the bones back to put themselves in a position to win sticks**

### Scoring

We will be tracking team standings by tallying up WINS, LOSSES and CLEAN SWEEPS (game ends with the winning team having all 11 sticks before the time is up) in addition to number of sticks each team is in possession of at the end of the game. ALL TEAM CAPTAINS need to record the following on the provided slip and submit to the SCORE KEEP/TECH TABLE after each game:

Winning Team Name: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Stick: \_\_\_\_\_

Opposing Team Name: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Sticks: \_\_\_\_\_

The Score Keep/Tech Table will be tracking points during the round robin, they will issue the following points for:

**A clean sweep win (win all the sticks before time is up) = 3 points**

**A win based on sticks by the end of the 20 mins = 2 points**

**A loss = 0 points**

In addition to the above pointing system, **we will also track the total number of sticks each team has at the end of each game** (there is a space to note this down on your scoring sheets). This is to help us eliminate multiple ties at the end of the round robin.

**\*\*TOURNAMENT TIME RESTRICTIONS - FOR PURPOSES OF THIS TOURNAMENT, THE WINNER OF EACH GAME WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE TEAM WITH THE MOST STICKS WHEN TIME RUNS UP**

## Bone Hopping

Bone hopping is allowed in our tournament. This is when the guesser 'misses' the unmarked bone and the bone holder chooses to pass the bones off to another player on their team to become a new bone holder instead of re-hiding the bone himself.

## Blocking

A guesser can decide to focus their guess on one bone holder at a time by using the 'block' technique. The guesser must make a clear 'stop sign' like hand gesture to indicate to the bone holder not to reveal their bones. The guesser must then proceed to choose either left or right on the remaining bone holder. Once the first guess is made the guesser will remove the 'stop sign' and make their guess on the remaining bone holder.

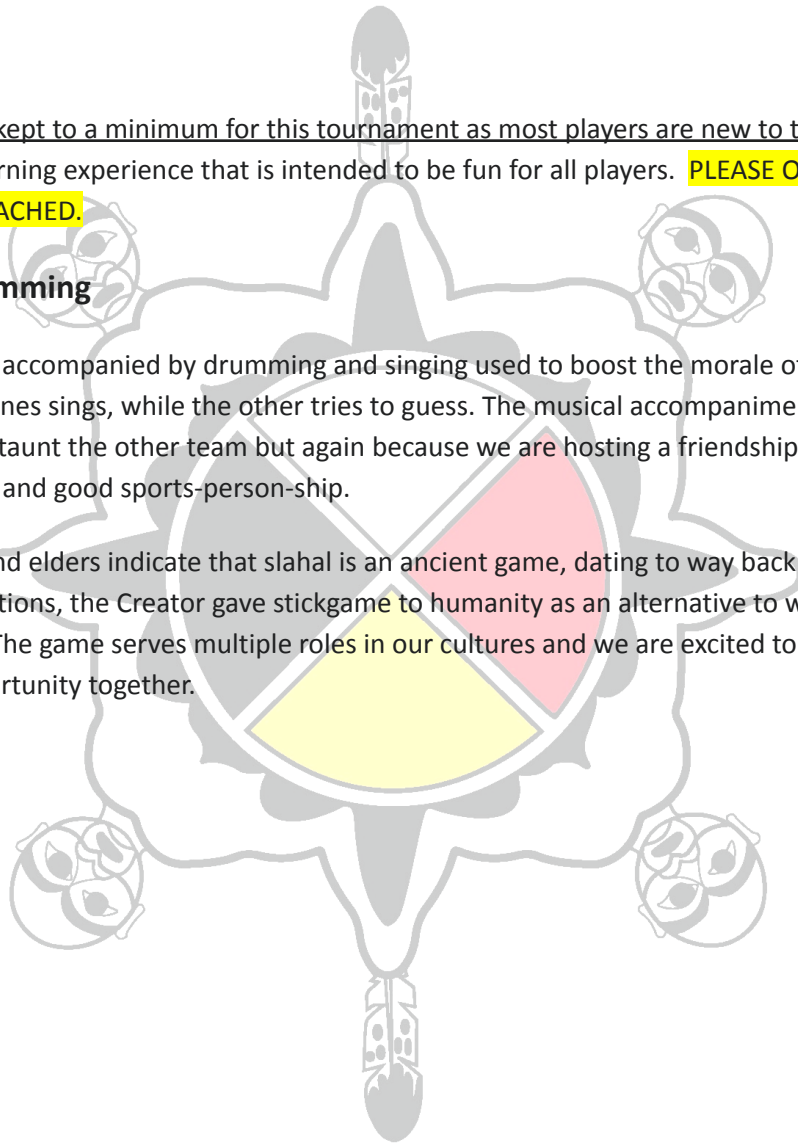
## Trickery

Trickery should be kept to a minimum for this tournament as most players are new to the game. This tournament is a learning experience that is intended to be fun for all players. **PLEASE ONLY USE THE HAND SIGNALS ATTACHED.**

## Singing and Drumming

The game is usually accompanied by drumming and singing used to boost the morale of the team. The side that has the bones sings, while the other tries to guess. The musical accompaniment is also sometimes used to taunt the other team but again because we are hosting a friendship tournament, let's all support learning and good sports-person-ship.

Our oral histories and elders indicate that slahal is an ancient game, dating to way back in our histories. In Coast Salish traditions, the Creator gave stickgame to humanity as an alternative to war at the beginning of time. The game serves multiple roles in our cultures and we are excited to be able to host this upcoming opportunity together.





## HAND SIGNAL



Guess is that the unmarked bones are in the LEFT hands



Guess is that the unmarked bones are in the RIGHT hands



Guess is that the unmarked bones are in the INSIDE hands



Guess is that the unmarked bones are in the OUTSIDE hands