

# Living Close to the Land

## *Pokean*

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Post-visit activity, all grades

### Objective

Students will create a simple Native American game with natural materials.

### Materials

- Dried corn husks-three or four per student
- Yarn
- Glue
- Store-bought feathers (remember, it is illegal to collect most natural feathers)
- Pony beads-three or four per student
- Very small rocks-one per student

### Background

Zuni people played a game like modern day hacky sack or badminton called Pokean or Jackrabbits Hit. Other Native American cultures made similar game pieces out of corn cobs or wood pieces. Hands or wooden paddles were used to hit the pokean back and forth. One historical account says that the sound of the corn husk pokean smacking into the players' hands sounded like jackrabbits jumping on snow.

## Procedure

1. Separate corn husks from the cob if necessary and soak in water at least 15 minutes.
2. Lay two corn husks of roughly equal width one across the other to form an "x".
3. Roll a small rock up into a third corn husk to create a soft ball. Add a fourth corn husk if necessary to make the ball about the size of a pecan. Set the ball into the center of the "x".
4. Pull the corn husks up over the ball and pinch together tightly as you wrap with yarn just above the ball. Leave enough yarn to begin with so you can tie off tightly when you finish wrapping.
5. Put a small amount of glue on the quills of a few feathers and ease them deeply into the center of the wrapped corn husks. Securely tie three or four beads onto the remaining end of the yarn.
6. When the glue is dry, make up games such as seeing how many times one or two people can keep the pokean in the air before dropping it.
7. (see diagrams below)

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