



## HOOP OF LIFE

with Ty Defoe

*Recommended for Ages 5 to 16*  
*Kindergarten and up*

### **A Reproducible Learning Guide for Educators**

This guide is designed to help educators prepare for, enjoy, and discuss HOOP OF LIFE.

It contains background, discussion questions and activities appropriate for Ages 5 to 16.

### **Programs Are Made Possible, In Part, By Generous Gifts From:**

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## About Ty Defoe



Ty Defoe belongs to the **Oneida/Ojibwe nations** of Wisconsin. A champion hoop dancer, TV & film actor, playwright, book and lyric writer, and cultural leader, he is a mentor at the **Alaskan Cultural Heritage Center Playwright Initiative** and East Coast Two-Spirit Society and a Dramatist Guild member. A TCG Leading the Charge: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Fellow, Ty holds a **Grammy Award for *Come to Me Great Mystery: Native American Healing Songs*** and other notable awards from the Indigenous Heritage Festival, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, and Johnny Mercer Foundation.

He also co-wrote a new show for the National Museum of the American Indian called *Hear Me Say My Name* (see page 5 for more details).

For more information on Ty Defoe, visit: [www.tydefoe.com](http://www.tydefoe.com)

## About the Show

The **Sacred Hoop Dance** is a metaphor that gives a message of people creating **unity**. The four colors of the hoops are symbols of interdependence and unity - the four human races, the four seasons, the four directions of the compass. As the hoops move they speak of renewed creation for all living things.

Interactive Haudenosaunee **Iroquois songs, Native American flute, sacred hoop dance, eagle dance, performance poetry, and Ty's cultural and spiritual journey** connect in a heartfelt show for all ages. This unique program explores Native American stories within a framework of traditional and contemporary culture, history, and values.

Ty draws on his vast repertoire gifted to him as child and weaves urban anecdotes and teachings that can be applied to our everyday lives. From inspiring hoop dance to tribal songs, he showcases this as a beautiful engaging story in motion. Ty works with communities across the country and engages participants with **insightful activities that are both educational and entertaining**. The beauty of dance and song within storytelling is often discovered in a universal message.

### **November is American Indian Heritage Month!**

*Join us at Smithsonian for vibrant performances, lectures, and family activities that celebrate our nation's rich cultural heritage and history.*

[www.si.edu/events/heritagemonth](http://www.si.edu/events/heritagemonth)

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## Hoops and Circles in Tribal Life

### Why the Circle?

The **circle** or the **hoop** is of critical importance to Native American life. This symbol “represents wholeness, health, and harmony with one’s self, family, community, nation, and universe.”



### The Medicine Wheel:

The medicine wheel, otherwise known as the **sacred hoop**, has been a symbol of **harmony, balance, and peace on Earth** for Native American tribes for generations. Each tribe interprets the medicine wheel differently, but it is often thought that the four directions represent the stages of life, the four seasons, emotional realms, elements of nature, animals, or plants. Each direction is traditionally represented by a different color, which some people say stands for the human races.

The medicine wheel, while it represents many different things, also is used in various ways. It can be used **as a sacred space, an aid to meditation, an altar, a centering device, a protector, or as tool to aid in honoring Nature**. Regardless of the exact way that it is used, the medicine wheel holds upmost importance in the lives of Native Americans.

### The Hoop Dance:



The Hoop Dance is a storytelling dance that **incorporates between 1 to 40 hoops** to create different shapes and formations. In the beginning, this dance was thought to be part of a healing ceremony which was designed **to restore balance and harmony in the world**. The hoop represents the never-ending circle of life.

The Hoop Dance is performed by a solo dancer, who begins with a single hoop which represents the circle of life. As the dancer continues, he or she continues to add additional hoops which represent other elements such as **humans, animals, wind, water, and seasons**. The hoop dance is practiced many tribes today and has evolved over the years to incorporate more modern elements.

*For more information about hoops in the Native American life, please visit:*

[www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/exhibition/healing-ways/medicine-ways/medicine-wheel.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/exhibition/healing-ways/medicine-ways/medicine-wheel.html)  
[www.legendsofamerica.com/na-dances/2/](http://www.legendsofamerica.com/na-dances/2/)

## About Ty's Heritage

### Oneida Nation

The Oneida nation is one of the **original five nations of the Iroquois League**, originating in New York. Named after the geography of the region, Oneida (oh-nee-duh) means **"people of the boulder" or "stone people."** In the Revolutionary War, the Oneidas fought with the colonies. During that time, most moved westward, and now reside in **Wisconsin and Ontario, Canada.**

### Objwe Nation

The Ojibwe nation is **the largest Indian group north of Mexico.** The (oh-geeb-weh) means **"puckered up,"** which is likely in reference to their moccasins with a puckered seam on the top. The Ojibwe tribe originated from the western Great Lake region and Canada, however, they migrated to Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri, Iowa, and Illinois, and were later relocated to areas further south as well as the Great Plain region. Today, the Ojibwe reside all along the region of **Ontario, Canada, to Montana.**

## Try It at Home or at School!

### The "Hand Game" – A Native American Guessing Game

#### Materials

Button, Bead, Shell or stone, and six counting sticks (like straws, twigs or toothpicks)

#### Directions:

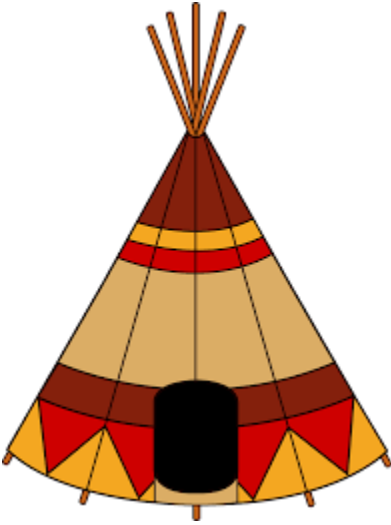
1. Two players sit on the ground facing each other. Teams can play too.
2. The first player holds the object and switches it back and forth between his or her hands to try and confuse the other player.
3. The first player makes two fists, and the other player guesses which hand holds the hidden object.
4. If the second player guesses correctly, he or she takes a counting stick and takes the next turn.
5. The winner is the one who holds all 6 sticks.



## Discussion Questions

Here are some discussion questions for older audiences. Do some research and discuss in groups.

1. Why are the native people of North America called "First Nations?"
  - a. Why were they first?
2. Why do we call the First Nations "Nations," instead of tribes?
3. Where do scientists think these people came from?



## Learn About It: The Tipi

The tipi—sometimes spelled teepee—was a temporary home used by tribes of Native Americans who moved around to hunt their food. They were used by many Plains and Canadian Prairie tribes who followed the herds of wildlife that roamed in those areas.

Despite the stereotype, tipis were not used by all tribes of Native Americans, as most tribes were stationary and had permanent homes!

## Smithsonian Connection

**Want to learn more about Native American history and culture?** Head to the National Museum of the American Indian on the National Mall and visit the [imagineNATIONS Activity Center](#), an interactive exhibit for kids! Sit inside a Tipi, weave a basket, learn about Native American modes of transportation, or make crafts to take home! If going with a large group, be sure to register at least 48 hours in advance (202-633-6644).

*For more information please visit: [www.americanindian.si.edu/visit/washington/student](http://www.americanindian.si.edu/visit/washington/student)*

## Here Me Say My Name

*Hear Me Say My Name* is co-written by Discovery Theater's Roberta Gasbarre and Ty Defoe, in collaboration with a cohort of those integral to the National Museum of the American Indian. This original multimedia play for and about teens tackles America's assumptions about its first citizens, the First Nations peoples, and shares their rich heritage, history, hopes, dreams and challenges. Recommended for students in Grades 6 and above. Playing select weekdays/weekends in November and December, 2019 at the American Indian Museum in Washington, DC. There is no charge but registration is required through the museum, 202-633-6644.





# Smithsonian Institution

## OUR MISSION: "THE INCREASE AND DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE"

Smithsonian Associates advances the Institution's mission through life-enriching educational and cultural experiences inspired by the Smithsonian's research and collections for DC-region students, families, and adults, and for learning communities nationwide.

Discovery Theater has been presenting DC-area children with live educational performances for almost 40 years. With programs that enrich the Smithsonian experience for nearly 50,000 children annually, Discovery Theater is a gateway to the exhibits, collections, and themes contained in the museums and galleries on the National Mall and beyond. We explore American history and cultures, folk tales from around the world, and exciting, accessible science and math programs in the company of puppeteers, storytellers, dancers, actors, and musicians. Discovery Theater performances unite ideologies, enact themes that reflect the diversity of its audiences, open avenues of self-reflection, and offer an enjoyable means for parents and teachers to demonstrate life's lessons. There's so much to do and explore at the Smithsonian—and Discovery Theater is the ideal place to begin!



### Our Location

The S. Dillon Ripley Center, 3rd Sublevel  
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