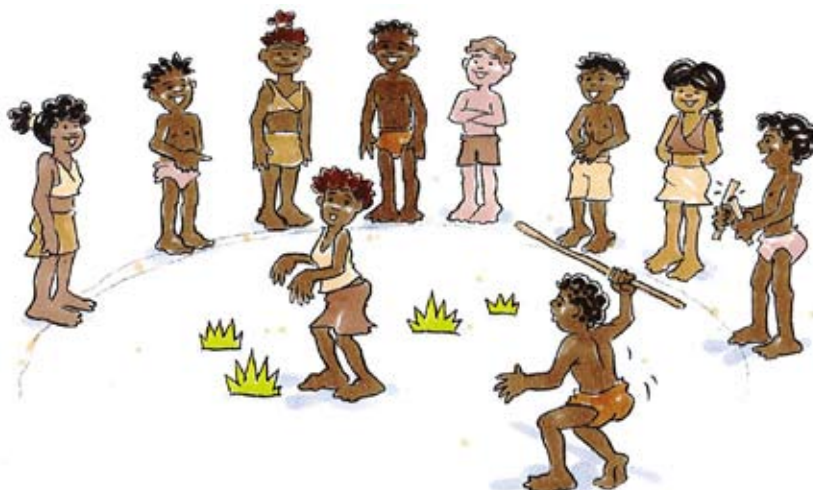




Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

yongar ngardongin

'yon-gar nar-don-gin'



SCHOOL
YEARS
4-6

SCHOOL
YEARS
7-9

SCHOOL
YEARS
10-12

Post-school age

Background

The emu and kangaroo dance (play) games among the *Bibbuluk kening* (Bibbulum people's dances) were performed in Western Australia in the Vasse, Augusta, Bunbury, Murray and Swan districts and probably further north and east. The game was called *yongar ngardongin* by the Vasse district people.

Almost all large animal and bird dances deal with the chasing and killing of the animal represented, as well as with their habits and actions. In the kangaroo dance game the performers stood in a semi-circle while two of the performers, representing the kangaroo and the hunter, began the game.

Moonlit nights were chosen for this type of pastime, but the central fire also cast its light on the players. There may or may not be musicians and singers for these displays and the music was merely played for the rhythm and measure of the movements.

Short description

The game is an acting dance contest whereby players undertake the roles of a hunter and a kangaroo.

Players

- A group of performers who perform two at a time — one player is the hunter and the other player represents a kangaroo.

Playing area

- A designated indoor or outdoor area suitable for the activity

Equipment

- Costumes and props such as spears

Game play and basic rules

- One performer assumes the stance of a kangaroo when feeding, raising at intervals to look about for possible enemies, standing absolutely motionless in the exact posture the kangaroo adopts and then stooping down to graze again.
- The other performer — the hunter — creeps cautiously towards the quarry, against the wind and changing his or her position as the animal turns and changes position while feeding.
- The hunter moves backward and forward, throws him or herself on the ground and acts in every detail as though chasing a real kangaroo. Eventually the hunter closes in on the kangaroo, lifts his or her spear and pretends to send it hurtling close beside the kangaroo, which immediately falls to the ground.
- During the performance the remaining members stand perfectly still and watch the dance (play) game intently. When the display is ended two more performers take the place of the kangaroo and hunter and the game proceeds.
- As no two hunters track alike, the methods of each are noted by spectators and other performers, in order that some fresh hint may be taken in the mode of kangaroo 'stalking'.

Variations

- Instead of the hunter killing the kangaroo he or she could simply catch it.
- A player (or group of players) imitates various movements and the other players guess the animal.
- Emu-hunting play. Emus are full of curiosity and are attracted to waving objects. Two players lie on their backs and wave their feet slowly in the air. A player acting as the emu simulates a slowly approaching emu. When the emu is close enough the players on the ground jump to their feet and spear (or capture) it.

Suggestion

Players could watch a video on kangaroos and/or hunting as part of their preparation.

Comment

Closely associated with the type of contest outlined were certain dance plays. *Yallor* was the name of a dance play in another area of the south-west of Western Australia. It was also the chant, or tune, to which the dance was performed. The dance play was generally performed by young men. Women seldom took any part in it.

The dance play frequently represented activities such as:

- the chase
- the actions of a kangaroo and/or emu
- the pursuit of a wounded cockatoo
- the movement of a snake
- the transformations or feats of a magician
- the measured step and concerted movement of a dance of ten or 12 persons

Dance plays were usually performed on a clear night, by the bright blaze of a fire, surrounded by groups of admiring spectators.

Teaching points

- Players work as individuals and/or small groups to rehearse their performances.