

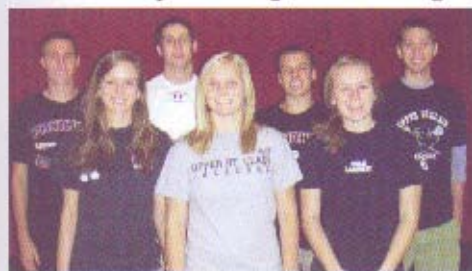
Sacred Origins of Lacrosse

Kathleen Himler

Ever wonder what the Native Americans did for fun? They played lacrosse! The students at Eisenhower Elementary were interested to learn this and many other facts during their Cultural Arts Day held on Friday, May 29. The focus was the rich history of Native Americans and their many lasting influences and contributions.

The Native Americans created the game of lacrosse, regarded as the oldest North American team sport. Lacrosse then was played with anywhere from five to 500 men spanning a tournament area as vast as five miles. The Eisenhower students found it fascinating to hear that this team game served to be more than just a social and fitness activity. To these indigenous tribes, lacrosse was a very important part of their life because it was considered to be a sacred game played to honor their creator in thanks for the gifts of strength and vitality. Relatedly, tribal disputes were often settled with a spirited lacrosse game that could last for days. Imagine if today society's problems could be resolved with a mere contest of gamesmanship!

Introducing this historical perspective to the students was Gary DeCock, USC parent and boys' lacrosse coach. To the delight of the students, with video clips and interactive discussion time, Coach DeCock was able to bring to life the folklore of the first lacrosse game ever played. Assisting in these sessions were high school lacrosse players who graciously conducted a mini clinic with all interested novice players. Some of the pointers shared had to do arm and stick positioning, follow through



USCHS lacrosse players and helpers at Eisenhower's 2009 Cultural Arts Day, left to right, front row: Meredith Cain, Rachel Engel, Jess Melby; back row: Spencer Scott, Sean Robinson, Theo Snieders, Brian Swaney



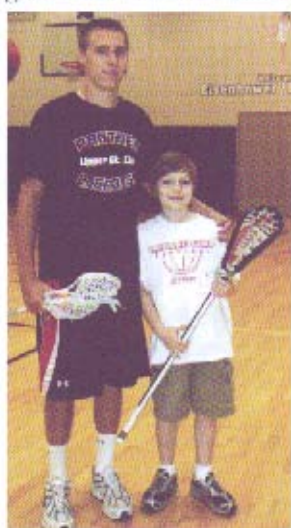
on the pass, and how best to absorb the impact of the catch. When

speaking of tips for young players, 2009 varsity lacrosse captain Brian Swaney suggested, "work on stick skills, especially the ability to go righty and lefty. Start early and stick with it." As noted by Coach DeCock, being able to catch and throw on both sides is similar to the dual hand dribbling skills required of basketball players.

While the game has evolved since its inception, current rules are very similar to hockey; there is a penalty box, line changes, and playing area behind the goals. Lacrosse is played with ten players per team on a 110-yard field with goals at each end that measure six feet by six feet.

The action hits the fields in the spring, while year round lacrosse league play is growing in popularity as well. Now, as a high school WPLAL sport, you can expect continued USC lacrosse program focus, expansion, and achievement.

The quality of the interaction between the high school players and the Eisenhower students was only outshined by the frenzied affirmative response to "so who wants to play lacrosse now?" Coach DeCock and the high school squad may have inadvertently discovered an effective recruiting ploy—just put a lacrosse stick in their hands and they're ready! ■



When asked about his one-on-one instruction with 2009 varsity captain Spencer Scott, Connor Welch enthusiastically stated that it was "really fun and better than he expected."

Registration opportunities will be this fall, or for more boys kindergarten through eighth grade club information, check out www.usclax.com. For competitive boys travel lacrosse league information, Pittsburgh Select Club can be found at www.pghlax.com