

# Shishibe

## Activity Introduction

Boozhoo penoje'k! (“**bo** so”, the “s” as in leisure, “pen o **je** ek”)

That is how you say “Hello children” in the Potawatomi Indian language. When white explorers first came to this part of Michigan they found Potawatomi people speaking this language.

Besides sounding very different from English, there is one difference between English and the Potawatomi language that I think you’ll be interested in.

(Show posterboard sign) Here is **hello** in English. Here is how to write **hello** in Potawatomi (sign says *Boozhoo or Bozho*). What do you notice about the way hello is written in these two languages?

Yes, there is more than one way to spell hello in Potawatomi. That is because Potawatomi is an *oral*, meaning *spoken*, rather than a *written* language. Potawatomi was never written down until very recently. The language was taught to children by speaking and remembering, not by writing. But one good result of this is that a child couldn’t ever get in trouble for spelling Potawatomi words wrong!!!

A disadvantage of Potawatomi’s being an oral language is that it cannot be easily taught to people today because there are very few people left who speak it. Like many other Native American languages, Potawatomi is in danger of becoming **extinct**.

Fortunately, many cherish the Potawatomi language and are trying to save it. They have written down the words and how to pronounce them. They are trying to teach more people the language by offering summer language camps and classes.

Today, you will play a game that was invented to teach the Potawatomi language. It is called “Shishibe,” which means “little duck” in Potawatomi.

Describe how to play game:

- Look at playing cards
- At top of each column are pictures of animals
- English and Potawatomi names for each animal are below
- Under the animal pictures are five boxes, each with a number
- In center is a picture of “shishibe”
- Adult will draw an animal name and number and call it out, such as “mko thirteen” or “seksi seven”
- Students look in the correct animal column. If you have that number, make an “X” in that box.

## Shishibe Activity Introduction, continued, page 2

- If you do not have that number, make no mark and wait for the next.
- The “shishibe” square is a free square, mark it off with an “X” now.
- When you get a row of “X’s” that go across, down or diagonally, call out “Shishibe!” Adult will check your card. You may be a winner!

Pronunciation of words (syllables in bold face are emphasized):

shishibe = shi shi **beh**

seksi = **suc** see

waboose = wah **bohse**

mko = ma **ko**

panache = pan **ah** shee

m’shiki = ma **she** ke