

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CURATOR

December
2022



Happy Holidays!

Manitoba, 100 years ago. We picture a hardworking family on a farm with barely any time for pleasantries. Every member of the family, young and old, has chores to accomplish, milking the cows, gathering eggs from the coop, tending the crops, doing the laundry, canning and preserving the harvest, and so on. While this may be accurate, what we forget to picture is the leisure time: the games, toys, and holiday family gatherings.

For our December blog, we will be featuring a few artefacts that are currently on display. During the pandemic, the staff worked hard to build an exhibit to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the creation of Manitoba. The exhibit focuses on the daily lives of the people who made Manitoba into what it is today. From farmers, store owners, professionals, homemakers, and activists.

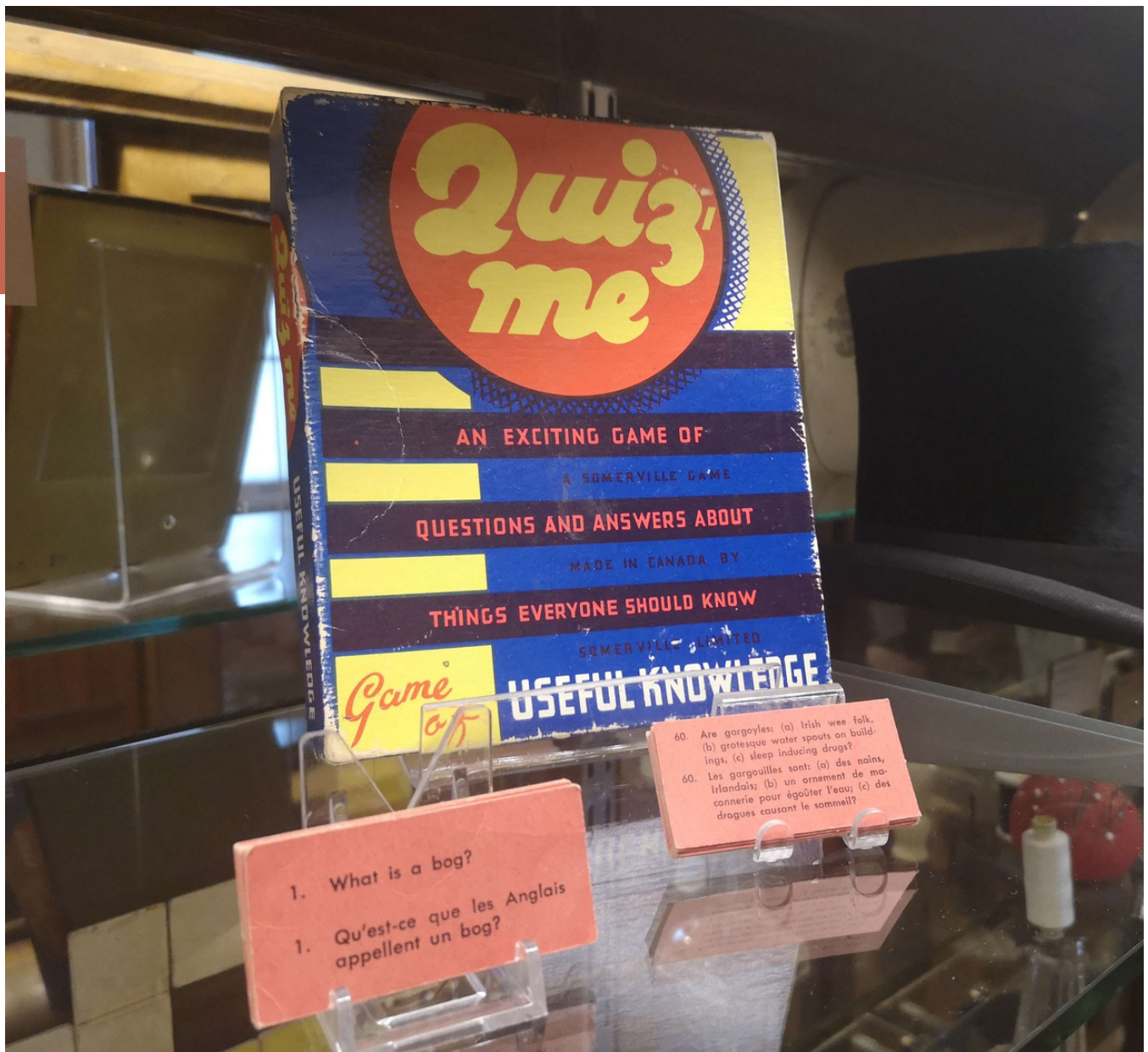
Let us start with table tennis or ping pong. According to some sources, it seems to have originated in the 1880s by British soldiers, who used cigar box lids for paddles, wine bottle cork as balls and books as a net. It became a popular parlour game among the upper class, before it spread to people of all classes around the world, eventually becoming an Olympic sport in 1988.

This set dates back to the early 1900s and was used by both adults and children alike. On particularly cold or rainy days, this was the perfect game to stay entertained when playing outside was not an option.



Well before the Canadian invention of the famous game of Trivial Pursuit, people everywhere were playing a variety of knowledge and quiz games. A friendly battle of wits among loved ones is a great way to learn and be entertained at the same time, with questions such as “What is the rarest and most costly mineral?”, “What is an iceberg?” or “What is the study of insects called?”

This Quiz Me: A Game of Useful Knowledge game was given to a local Franco-Manitoban woman for Christmas in 1946 from her grandmother.



Another knowledge-based game in our collection is the Game of Authors. First published in 1861, it is one of the earliest games in the family of Go Fish card games. The card deck contains sets of works by famous writers, such as Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, and Sir Walter Scott and the goal is for players to collect the most sets. Many other versions exist, most featuring themes of family and occupations.

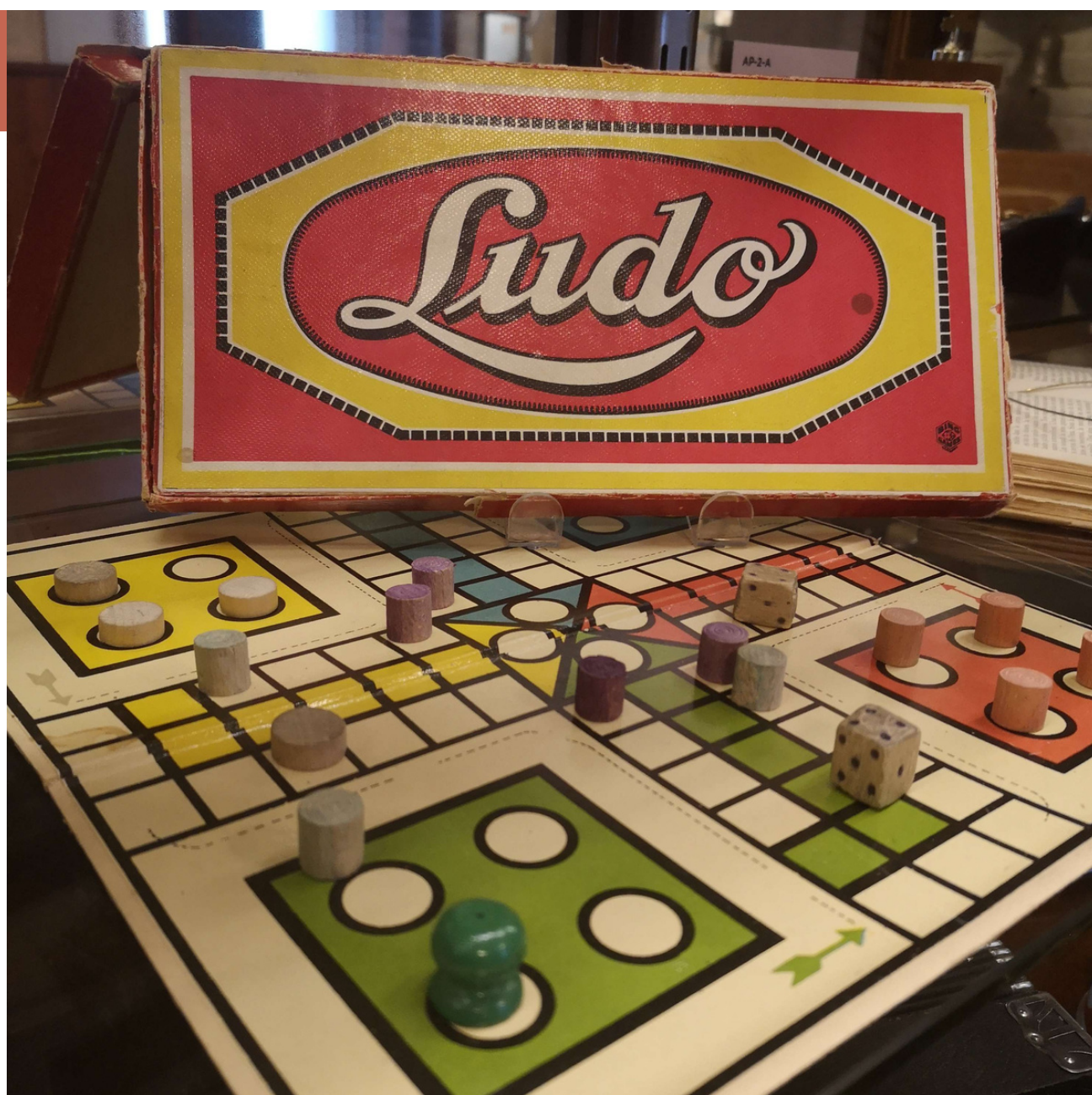


Cribbage has been and remains a very popular card game with its iconic score-keeping board. The earliest rules of the game were published in England in 1662 and continued to gain popularity as it was depicted in *The Old Curiosity Shop* by Charles Dickens in 1841. It became such a popular game in the United States, that a small town in Montana was named “Cribbage Capital of the World” and was a prescribed pastime for American submariners during World War II.

This game was so common, Louis Riel was even allowed to play it in jail as a distraction from his imminent execution in 1885!



Based on the ancient game Pachisi from India, Ludo is a strategy board game that has inspired many modern versions, such as Sorry!, Parcheesi, and Trouble. The game tokens would have originally been made of bone, and it was common for the board and pieces to be homemade in Manitoba.



We all need to take a bit of time to ourselves, to have fun and relax among family and friends. Whether it's making a snowman, playing with dolls and figurines, or playing games, there has always been a plethora of options for people of all ages and walks of life. We encourage you to take some time this holiday season to dust off your board games or deck of cards and spend some quality time with your loved ones.



Do you have a favourite game you play with family or friends? Or perhaps a traditional family tournament of a particular game? Now is the time to play! My family has a very intense and competitive tournament of Crokinole (or Pichenotte) every Christmas that often results in a lot of hooting and hollering, and perhaps a few curse words. It's a great way to digest dinner, isn't it?

