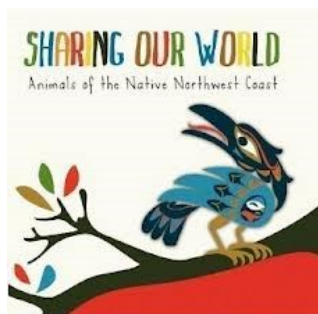


**Talking Circles: Helping to build Community in the Classroom and
Improve Oral Language and Communication Skills**
Lesson 2: Putting the Talking Stick into practice: Characteristics and Connections to Animals
Learning Intentions:

- I can practice using the talking stick
- I can identify with animal characteristics.

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Learning Outcome:

- actively participate in classroom language activities by asking questions, predicting, expressing feelings, sharing ideas, and making personal connections
- listen and respond appropriately to contextual questions

(Note that talking circles can be used for discussions in any subject area, or for working on connections, questions, inference, etc).

Materials

Class talking stick,
 Space to gather in a circle
 Sharing Our World: Animals of the Native Northwest Coast
 BLM: Pictures of the animals corresponding to the Sharing Our World Book.

Teacher Reference:

1. Stephen Covey Indian Talking Stick: www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUxi-Zc45tA (note that this video is American and the use of word Indian is used. In Canada, we use the term Aboriginal).
2. Talking Stick explanation - in this document as one example of the meaning of talking stick symbolism

Lesson

1. Introduce the learning intentions:
 I can practice using the talking stick; I can identify with animal characteristics.
1. Use stories to inspire talking circles before students feel safe enough to discuss their own needs: Trudy Ludwig stories provide excellent content. There are also a list of books related to the six pillars which fit nicely: <http://web.sd71.bc.ca/literacy/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/SixPillars3.pdf>
2. Read to the students, Sharing our World: Animals of the Native Northwest Coast. Have students listen to the story and think about an animal that they might connect to.
3. Turn and talk. Tell the person that you are sitting beside which animal you are like, and why.
4. Ask students to make connections to the animals in the story. Are there animals that they can identify with the characteristics of? Give an example. (I am like a wolf, because I am a provider and protector for my son. Or, I am a like a hummingbird, because I try to be a good friend).
5. Once students have chosen an animal that they have a connection with, hand out pictures to each students of the animal they chose. Have them colour the pictures. As they are colouring, have adults in the room listen and help the children to develop their ideas of connection.
6. Optional: Incorporate some movement and music into the morning. Have the children move like their animal around the room.
7. Facilitate a talking circle where students can share their connections to the animals in the story. Choose one, and tell why you are like that example.
8. Ask students to remember: Review Protocol of the talking circle– acknowledge territory, direction of circle, no talking unless it's your turn, may disagree but only when it's your turn and in a polite way.
9. Please note that in the first few talking circles it may be necessary to interrupt. One way of explaining this is that we are still “practicing” and normally the teacher’s voice is to be heard no more than the students’ voices.

An American Indian Legend - Nation Unknown

From First Peoples - The Legends website

<http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-Html-Legends/TraditionalTalkingStick-Unknown.html>

The Talking Stick is a tool used in many Native American Traditions when a council is called. It allows all council members to present their point of view. The Talking Stick is passed from person to person as they speak and only the person holding the stick is allowed to talk during that time period. The Answering Feather is also held by the person speaking unless the speaker addresses a question to another council member. At that time, the Answering Feather is passed to the person asked to answer the query. Every member of the meeting must listen closely to the words being spoken, so when their turn comes, they do not repeat unneeded information or ask impertinent questions. Indian children are taught to listen from age three forward; they are also taught to respect another's viewpoint. This is not to say that they may not disagree, but rather they are bound by their personal honor to allow everyone their sacred point of view.

People responsible for holding any type council meeting are required to make their own Talking Stick. The Talking Stick may be used when they teach children, hold council, make decisions regarding disputes, hold Pow-Wow gatherings, have storytelling circles, or conduct a ceremony where more than one person will speak.

Since each piece of material used in the Talking Stick speaks of the personal Medicine of the stick owner, each Talking Stick will be different. The Qualities of each type of Standing Person (Tree) brings specific Medicine. White Pine is the Peace Tree, Birch symbolizes truth, and Evergreens represent the continued growth of all things. Cedar symbolizes cleansing. Aspen is the symbol for seeing clearly since there are many eye shapes on the trunk. Maple represents gentleness. Elm is used for wisdom; Mountain Ash for protection; Oak for strength; Cherry for expression, high emotion, or love. Fruit woods are for abundance and walnut or pecan for gathering of energy or beginning new projects. Each person making a Talking Stick must decide which type of Standing Person (Tree) will assist their needs and add needed medicine to the Councils held.

The ornamentation of each stick all has meaning. In the Lakotah Tradition, red is for life, yellow is for knowledge, blue is for prayer and wisdom, white is for spirit, purple is for healing, orange is for feeling kinship with all living things, black is for clarity and focus.

The type of feathers and hide used on a Talking Stick are very important as well. The Answering Feather is usually an Eagle Feather, which represents high ideals, truth as viewed from the expansive eye of the eagle, and the freedom that comes from speaking total truth to the best of one's ability. The Answering Feather can also be the feather of a Turkey, the Peace Eagle of the south, which brings peaceful attitudes as well as the give and take necessary in successful completion of disputes. In the Tribe that sees Owl as good Medicine, the Owl feather may also be used to stop deception from entering the Sacred Space of the Council.

The skins, hair or hides used in making a Talking Stick brings the abilities, talents, gifts and medicine of those creatures-beings to council in a variety of ways. Buffalo brings abundance; Elk brings physical fitness and stamina; deer brings gentleness; rabbits bring the ability to listen with big ears; the hair from a horse's tail or mane brings perseverance and adds connection to the earth and to the spirits of the wind. The Talking Stick is the tool that teaches each of us to honor the sacred point of view of every living creature.

What is Important: Talking Sticks and Talking Circles

