



## ***NI'NOXSOLA***

Elders in Residence Program  
Aboriginal Education Comox Valley Schools

### Talking Circles



The following are notes taken from a conversation with Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw, Dr. Evelyn Voyageur, from Kingcome Inlet on the subject of Talking Circles.

Talking Circles, Healing Circles or Sharing Circles are all based on the same principal of allowing each individual the space and time necessary to express their thoughts, views and feelings. "It is a strong tool to use when you are holding something inside."

These circles can be used in many circumstances and for most every situation. From families to community to a gathering of leaders, every voice is heard without interruption or time constraint. "Time is of no essence."

Participants in the Talking Circle are not required to speak. They may choose to pass their turn and listen to others. If one chooses to speak at their turn, they should begin with who they are such as 'I am..' followed by who their parents and grandparents are. In the Kwakwaka'wakw language Evelyn says "nugwa'am" for 'I am'. This is a very important detail. Knowing who you are and where you are from connects families and territories together. "In a village, everyone would know who you are."

As we are on the territory of Kwakwaka'wakw people, we should honor the ways that are deeply rooted in their culture, one of which is to follow the rotation of the moon. For this reason, a Talking Circle should flow counter clockwise or to the right.

Any object of the environment can be used to pass from person to person as long as it is given importance. A person should explain what the significance of the object is whether it be a rock, stick, feather, or a personal belonging. Sometimes these articles are decorated, carved or painted. A smaller talking stick, a replica of chief's stick can be used, but must be explained about the design, its' origin and who has the rights to the design.

The large talking sticks that Chiefs and Leaders use in Potlatch situations are embellished with their family crests and history. These large talking sticks are not passed around in a group but remain with the owner. Only the host of the Potlatch, or someone that is speaking in place for the host of the Potlatch would use this larger type of talking stick.