FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT TALKING CIRCLE

RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL: Grades 1 to 3

SUBJECT: Language

Suggested time: 45 minutes

Essential Question: How do talking circles create effective communicators?

LEARNING GOALS
Students will:
• Explore the purpose and significance of talking circles in First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture
• Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate listening behaviour by using active listening strategies
• Orally communicate ideas, opinions and information in a clear, coherent and organized manner

WORD BANK
Culture—beliefs, social forms and material traits of racial, religious or social groups

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
• Talking Stick
• Picture Book Options
• Sometimes I feel like a fox – Danielle Daniel (2015)
• Taan’s Moons: A Haida Moon Story – Allison Gear (2016)
• P’esk’a and the First Salmon Ceremony – Scot Ritchie (2015)

EDUCATOR’S NOTE: This lesson encourages students to engage with picture books from First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Title suggestions have been made in the materials and resources section, however, any other books can be used in the lesson. Check with your Teacher-Librarian for additional titles available in your school.

1. RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING: In small groups, ask students to find one object from the classroom that is a circle. Discuss: why is this object a circle? What does a circle represent in nature? What does a circle mean to you?

2. As students are sitting in the talking circle, read a picture book with the class. Using the procedure of a talking circle, ask students to reflect on the story in the picture book. Discuss the following questions about the text:
• Who were the main characters in the story?
• What happens in the story?
• What is the complication?
• How is it resolved?

3. Explain to students that a circle is a symbol of importance in First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture. Circle represent many things, from principles in the Indigenous belief systems, to patterns found in nature, to the construction of important structures such as the teepee and the dream catcher.

4. Ask students, why do you think we are sitting in a circle? Inform students they are sitting in a “talking circle.” This circle is said to represent inclusiveness and equality. Do students agree? Each member of a talking circle must be respected and listened; all comments made in the circle must directly address the question or issue at hand.

5. Introduce an object that will be used to facilitate the circle (e.g., pencil, stick). Explain to students that this object is called the “talking stick.” Only the person holding the talking stick can speak. Students can indicate their desire to speak by raising their hands, at which point that talking stick will be given to them.

6. RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING: In small groups, ask students to reflect on the story time activity in the talking circle. Ask students to discuss the following questions using the talking circle structure:
• What does a talking circle look like?
• Why is a talking circle important?
• What behaviours are expected in a talking circle?
• How will you act in order to be a member of this talking circle?

7. Ask students to individually select one object of significance to them from around the classroom (e.g., storybook, artwork, student work). Ask students to reflect and either draw or write the reason they chose this object. What does it mean to them? Why is it important?
8. **RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING:** Using the talking circle as a model, in the same groups as the previous activity, ask students to share their selected object and why they feel that this object is important. What does this object represent? Ask students to discuss why the talking circle is an effective method of communicating in a group? Ensure that students are adhering to the rules of the talking circle.