



How to Make a Talking Stick

Things You Will Need – (Quantities will depend on the number of people making a stick)

- An attractive wood stick 6 inches to 15 inches in length
- Feathers (natural bird feathers are best)
- Beads
- Leather
- Soft fur or hair
- Acrylic Paints & brushes
- Soft cloth – (tea towel)
- Sandpaper – cut into 3” squares
- Tacky craft glue, hot glue or basic white school glue

Planning & Discussion

Get the students to look at examples of talking sticks online to see what talking sticks look like. You may want to create one of your own in advance for demonstration. Traditional talking sticks include feathers, string, beads, and other various nature items. Ask the students what they would like to include on the classroom talking stick. If each student is making their own talking stick you may want to invite them to bring meaningful things from home that they would like to add to their stick. i.e. a favourite ribbon, charm or feather.

Collecting Materials

Take the students on a nature walk in an area where it is acceptable to collect natural items. It might be fun to make this a field trip to a neighbourhood farm or perhaps there is natural woodland or beach close to your school. Look for natural items that can be used in creating the talking stick. Dead wood that has fallen from trees or driftwood make interesting sticks. Pretty seeds, milkweed pods, and feathers that have been dropped by birds make good decorations.

Once everyone has successfully selected their items, have the students lay out their items in a circular formation on the land. Explain how Aboriginal peoples honour Mother Earth in giving thanks for everything she offers and that it is customary to offer our thanks to the land once something is taken. Have each student give thanks for what they have taken before picking up their items and packing them up for the trip back to the classroom. A sturdy shoe box or plastic tub makes good travel containers.

Assembling the Talking Stick

Have the students brainstorm character attributes they would like their talking stick to have, such as honesty, clarity, understanding and patience. Ask them to pick out decorations to symbolize those traits. Before assembling their talking sticks, encourage them to take their time while working and to think of the power of the natural elements they are incorporating into their talking stick. Traditionally, First Nations people decorate their talking sticks with symbolic items that are meaningful to them. For example, a feather is a symbol of spirit and flight. Ask the students to think about the meaning behind their chosen items.

Clean the stick with a soft cloth. Peel away any rough bark. Gently sand the stick till it is smooth and satiny when touched. Begin decorating the stick with the various decorations collected. Customarily a talking stick would have leather wrappings, but ribbon or cord will do. Attach some of the decorations to the ends of the wrappings, attach some of them directly to the stick or perhaps paint words that contain meaning. Tacky craft glue, hot glue or basic white school glue can be used to secure the items. Leave a smooth space on the stick to act as a handle.

Once the students have finished creating their talking sticks, gather in circle formation for a Sharing Circle. (See instructions on Sharing Circles)



For more information on Traditional Native Practices, Workshops, Day Retreats and In-School Visitations please go to:

www.ravenspeaks.ca