

Talking Circle: Fact Sheet



Suitable for: Group Activity | Facilitator-led Activity

“Talking circles are based on the sacred tradition of sharing circles. People leading a traditional sharing circle will have a blessing from an Elder to do this, and will use special prayers and sacred objects in the ceremony.

“The purpose of the less formal talking circle, used as part of classroom instruction, is to create a safe environment in which students can share their point of view with others. In a Talking Circle, each one is equal and each one belongs. Participants in a Talking Circle learn to listen and respect the views of others. The intention is to open hearts to understand and connect with one another.

- Participants sit in a circle. The circle symbolizes completeness.
- Review ground rules with participants. For example:
 - Everyone’s contribution is equally important.
 - State what you feel or believe starting with “I-statements,” e.g., “I feel ...”
 - All comments are addressed directly to the question or the issue, not to comments another person has made. Both negative and positive comments about what anyone else has to say should be avoided.
- An everyday object such as a rock or pencil is sometimes used as a talking object.
- When the talking object is placed in someone’s hands; it is that person’s turn to share his or her thoughts, without interruption. The object is then passed to the next person in a clockwise direction.
- Whoever is holding the object has the right to speak and others have the responsibility to listen.
- Everyone else is listening in a nonjudgemental way to what the speaker is saying.
- Silence is an acceptable response. There must be no negative reactions to the phrase, “I pass.”
- Speakers should feel free to express themselves in any way that is comfortable; by sharing a story, a personal experience, by using examples or metaphors, and so on.”

This excerpt on talking circles ©Alberta Education; *Our Words, Our Ways: Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learners*, 2005, p. 163.

Cautions

- Consider the individual needs of the participants.
- Respect the differing comfort zones of the participants.
- Ensure that the participants feel safe.
- Be mindful of regional protocols in the design of the circle.

References

<http://firstnationspedagogy.ca/circletalks.html>