



Date: _____

The Circle

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Please read this Acknowledgement before the start of this lesson to respect the knowledge that is being shared and the Land of the People where the knowledge originates.:

We respectfully acknowledge the original lands of the Indigenous Peoples of Treaty 4: Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota, Dakota, Lakota who are the Knowledge Keepers and Elders that inform our understanding of sharing circles. As well, we acknowledge the homeland to many winged, four-legged, crawling, and water creatures.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this lesson plan, students will be able to:

1. Use a talking circle as a way of communicating that comes from traditional practice and understanding.
2. Regularly share in a circle in order to develop their circle practice within their classroom.

LIST OF ACTIVITIES

1. Introducing the Talking Circle
2. Participating in a Circle

MATERIALS

- Saskatchewan Curriculum - Talking Circle Guidelines
- The Circle
- Supplies: A talking item, such as a feather, rock, or stick
- Supplies: A Journal and pencil



Indigenous Ways of Knowing & Being

Origin

Treaty 4 Territory
Regina
Saskatchewan

Learning Level / Grade

6

Also: 1, 4, 7, 8, 5, 3, 2, 9, 10, 11,
12, Families / Parents



60 mins

DESCRIPTION

The lesson involves learning the process and participating in a talking circle in a good way.

"Elementary talking circle teachings use the circle for communicating the importance of our differences and to look at each other's strengths as an indicator of equality.

Sharing or talking circles provide an opportunity for each and every person to be heard - whether they choose to speak or not. Sometimes not speaking speaks volumes." ([Talking Feathers for Sharing and Restorative Justice Circles](#)).

HOLISM AND ALL OUR RELATIONS

This lesson plan has been developed with an Indigenous lens that is holistic in nature, a way of being and knowing that acknowledges our relationships with 'all our relations', including plants and animals, other human beings, the water, land, wind, sun, moon, stars, and more - everything seen and unseen. With 'all our relations' in mind, this lesson plan has been developed with a focus on:

- Language and Culture
- Participatory and experiential learning activities
- Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders
- Relationship with family, ancestors
- Ethics in the classroom: care, truthfulness and trust, respect, integrity
- Personal reflection time (connecting with thoughts and feelings)
- Different learning styles; attention given to mind, body, and spirit
- Healthy relationship with self and identity
- Nurturing healthy relationships in school and community

TEACHERS' GUIDE

Background/Foundational Information

• GUIDELINES FOR TALKING CIRCLES

Talking circles are useful when the topic under consideration has no right or wrong answer or when people need to share feelings. Moral or ethical issues can often be dealt with in this way without offending anyone. The purpose of talking circles is to create a safe environment for people to share their point of view with others. This process helps students gain a sense of trust in their classmates. They come to believe in what they say will be listened to and accepted without criticism. They also gain an empathetic appreciation for points of view other than their own.

Talking circles may initially need a facilitator to ensure that the guidelines are being followed. People are free to react to the situation, which has sparked the need to express feelings in any manner within the following guidelines. (i.e. they can express opinions, make analytical statements, describe a personal experience or the emotions they are experiencing, etc.)

1. All comments should address the question or issue, and should not be responding to a comment another participant has made. Both negative and positive comments about any other contribution should be avoided.
2. Only one person speaks at a time. Everyone else is listening in a non-judgmental way to what the speaker is saying. Some groups find it useful to signify who has the floor. Going around the circle systematically is one way to achieve this. Another is to use some object (such as a feather) that the person who is speaking holds and then passes to the next person who has indicated a desire to speak.
3. Silence is an acceptable response. No one should be pressured at any time to contribute if they feel reluctant to do so. There must be no negative consequences, however subtle, for saying, "I pass."
4. At the same time everyone must feel invited to participate. Some mechanism for ensuring that a few vocal people don't dominate the discussion should be built in. An atmosphere of patient and non-judgmental listening usually helps the shy students to speak out and the louder ones to moderate their participation. Going around the circle in a systematic way, inviting each student to participate by simply mentioning each name in turn can be an effective way to even out participation. It is often better to hold talking circles in small groups.

5. Comments that put down others or oneself (e.g., "I don't think anyone will agree with me, but..." or "I'm not very good at...") or are in any way judgmental (e.g., "far out" or "good", which can be seen as making comparisons) should not be allowed.

From *"Sacred Tree" Curriculum Guide*, (p. 21-22) Four Worlds Development Project, University of Lethbridge, AB. T1K 3M4. Adapted with permission.

ACTIVITIES

1 - Introducing the Talking Circle

Purpose

Students will learn about the Circle as a way of communicating that comes from traditional practice and understanding.

Time: 15 mins

Activity Instructions

Elders, Knowledge Keepers, or respected community members may be invited to participate in the delivery of this lesson in order to assist with the process of learning a circle. Alternatively, if the teacher is pairing a talking circle strategy with a lesson on a specific topic, the guest speaker may participate in the talking circle in order to debrief the lesson, for example.

The teacher, Elder, or Knowledge Keeper will share about the meaning of the circle to Indigenous groups. They will introduce the use of a stone, talking stick, or feather to pass around and hold when it is their turn to talk.

This activity is designed to connect with learners with these learning styles...

- Intellectual (e.g., Rational, Logical) Learners

... in the following ways:

Intellectual: respectful listening to the protocols and process of the circle is required in this activity.

Materials

Click the 'Link' to open and view videos.

To open and print files, please go to the 'files' folder accompanying this downloaded lesson plan.

| Resource Title | Type |
|---|---|
| Saskatchewan Curriculum - Talking Circle Guidelines | File (Saskatchewan Curriculum - Talking Circles Guidelines.pdf) 📄 |
| "Talking circles foster respect, enhance self-concept, nurture a sense of belonging and affirm identity." | |

TEACHING NOTES

2 - Participating in a Circle

Purpose

The students will have a sharing circle to instill the practice in their classroom.

Time: 30 mins

Activity Instructions

In a circle, the students can take turns introducing something about themselves to become familiar with the way of the circle. They will have time for discussion about what knowledge was shared, and what they think about the circle. They will also be invited to ask questions.

A stone or stick is passed around in a circle and it identifies the holder of the stick or rock of whose turn it is to speak. If an Elder or Knowledge Keeper is invited to the circle they may provide an eagle feather to have passed around.

**Note: This activity may require additional time and teachers should prepare for the talking circle to go beyond the 30 minute time allotment indicated above.*

This activity is designed to connect with learners with these learning styles...

- Spiritual (e.g., Relational) Learners
- Physical (e.g., Tactile, Experiential, Visual) Learners
- Intellectual (e.g., Rational, Logical) Learners
- Emotional (e.g., Feeling, Intuitive) Learners

... in the following ways:

The following activities reflect the four principal learning styles:

1. **Physical:** the students are physically engaged in the activity by forming a class circle and respecting the protocol for the circle. They are also physically engaged by listening as every student takes their turn to speak.
2. **Emotional:** sharing experiences is a gift that can teach or inform students relative to their own experiences.
3. **Spiritual:** the spirit and emotion are connected. In the circle, emotions can easily come to the surface and when they do it is important to treat those emotions with respect.
4. **Intellectual:** respectful listening during the circle is necessary.

Materials

Click the 'Link' to open and view videos.

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| Resource Title | Type |
|---|--|
| The Circle | Link  |
| This one page document provides background information about the circle in Indigenous ways of knowing and being. | |
| Supplies: A talking item, such as a feather, rock, or stick | Supplies  |
| Have an item to pass around to indicate who has the floor. Items such as a feather, a rock, a stick, etc. | |
| Supplies: A Journal and pencil | Supplies  |
| For assessment purposes, students can write in their journals about what they thought about the 'talking circle.' | |

TEACHING NOTES

ASSESSMENT

This section contains information for assessing progress in students' learning. While Indigenous approaches to assessment may be highlighted, conventional assessment methods may also be discussed.

Students' discussion circle and their reflective journals will show their learning. Using an *assessment for learning strategy*, it is recommended that instructors make notes of student participation and work completed through Anecdotal Notes.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Click the 'Link' to open and view videos.

To open and print files, please go to the 'files' folder accompanying this downloaded lesson plan.

| Resource Title | Type |
|--|---|
| Office of the Treaty Commissioner | Link  |
| The Office of the Treaty Commissioner has resources for groups or individuals in school or in workplaces who want to be educated. | |
| Inspiring Success: First Nation's and Métis, Pre K – 12 Education Policy Framework | Link  |
| The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's <i>Inspiring Success: First Nation's and Métis, Pre K – 12 Education Policy Framework</i> is being followed. It contains guidelines and protocols for Indigenous content, as well as the content itself. | |
| Saskatchewan Curriculum - Talking Circle Guidelines | File (Saskatchewan Curriculum - Talking Circles Guidelines.pdf)  |
| "Talking circles foster respect, enhance self-concept, nurture a sense of belonging and affirm identity. Talking circles are most useful: - when the topic has no right or wrong answer; - when moral or ethical issues need to be addressed; - when consensus is not required. Talking circles may also be useful: - to introduce new ideas/concepts; teach the significance of the circle for various Aboriginal cultures; promote respect for the opinions and ideas of others; develop a trusting environment where students feel free to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings; develop listening and speaking skills in a safe, affirming environment; respond to literature, other media, or important issues." | |
| Full Circle: First Nations, Métis, Inuit Ways of Knowing - A Common Threads Resource | Link  |
| Health - Emotional, Lesson 2 (pp. 146 - 152) How Circles Are Used "In this unit, students will review the importance of circles to the emotional health of Aboriginal people. Students will also review how one community used the healing circle to turn its community focus around. Mentorship is important for the success of Aboriginal students and this aspect is examined." | |
| Walking Together – First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum | Link  |
| Well-being Cycles of Life "The circle is a universal symbol of connection, unity, harmony, wholeness, and eternity. In a circle, all parts are equal." | |
| Our Words Our Ways: Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learners – Guidelines for Talking Circles | Link  |
| Alberta Education - p. 163 | |

HOLISM AND ALL OUR RELATIONS

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| |
|--|
| Participatory and experiential learning activities |
| Language and Culture |
| <p>The circle is an important concept from the culture and language of many Indigenous groups. More in-depth study can be done with the guidance of Elders.</p> <p>Respecting the protocol of the circle is to listen to and share experiences. A follow-up activity would be to reflect on the experience in your writing journal.</p> |
| Relationship with family, ancestors |
| <p>Students are encouraged to share what they learn and study in school with their parent(s)/guardian(s) at home. Their parent(s)/guardian(s) may even choose to use a family talking circle to work out problems and discuss matters that arise at home. Families may choose to use talking circles in their homes to regularly meet with family members and discuss matters in a respectful way.</p> |
| Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders |
| <p>Were Elders or Knowledge Holders involved in the development of this Lesson Plan? No Can Elders or Knowledge Holders be invited to help teach part of this lesson plan? Yes</p> |
| Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders |
| Ethics in the classroom: care, truthfulness and trust, respect, integrity |
| <p>Care, respect, truthfulness, trust, and integrity are included in the talking circle as a teaching and learning process. It requires respecting protocols of the circle, attentive listening, learning and sharing experiences. The teacher creates the respectful way of the circle and sharing by reminding the students "everyone has the right to a respectful audience as you would want for yourself."</p> <p>The students in the circle are respectful to each other by actively listening and endeavoring to share in the circle.</p> |
| Different learning styles; attention given to mind, body, and spirit |
| Healthy relationship with self and identity |
| <p>Talking circles are considered to be safe spaces for people engaged to express their individual identity and to share which creates a communal connection with others in the group through what is expressed.</p> |
| Personal reflection time (connecting with thoughts and feelings) |
| <p>Students can reflect on their experience in their writing journal. Potential questions to explore in students' journals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn from being in a circle? • What was your experience? What did you think about it? • How did it make you feel? |

OTHER DETAILS

There are no specific outcomes or indicators that reflect the talking circle since it is an approach to instruction; a strategy that may accompany many lessons when appropriate.

Stream: General

Meets curriculum expectations or outcomes for:
Saskatchewan

There are no specific outcomes or indicators that reflect the talking circle since it is an approach to instruction; a strategy that may accompany many lessons when appropriate.

CONTRIBUTORS

| Name | Role/Job Title | Place |
|------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
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QUESTIONS/MORE DETAILS

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