

Talking Circles

Talking circles can be an effective facilitation tool in family literacy programs. Talking circles are based on the sacred tradition of sharing circles. The circle symbolizes completeness, interconnectedness, and equality. The purpose is to create a safe environment where participants can feel comfortable sharing their ideas and experiences with others. In a talking circle, each person is equal and everyone's contribution is equally important. Participants in a talking circle learn to listen and respect the views of others.

A talking circle usually follows a general format.

1. Participants sit in a circle.
2. Ground rules are reviewed with participants. For example
 - introduce oneself
 - the person who is speaking should 'speak from the heart'
 - a person may pass if they do not wish to speak
 - shared communications are to be kept in confidence
3. A talking stick, sometimes a rock, is used as a talking object and passed in a clockwise direction.
4. Whoever is holding the object has the right to speak and others have the responsibility to listen in a respectful way.
5. Speakers should feel free to express themselves in any way that is comfortable, such as sharing a story, or a personal experience, or by using examples or metaphors.

Facilitators need to consider the individual needs of participants, respect different comfort levels, ensure participants feel safe, and be mindful of regional protocols in the design of the circle.



References:

Alberta Education.(2005). Our Words, Our Ways: Teaching First Nations, Metis and Inuit Learners. p.163

Talking Circle. First Nations Pedagogy Online. <https://firstnationspedagogy.ca/>



Saskatchewan Literacy Network

Toll-free: 1-888-511-2111 • www.saskliteracy.ca