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# ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

## ELEMENTARY LEVEL

### First Nations Talking Circle Activity

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#### Orientation Activity

- **Purpose:** the purpose of this activity is to introduce Canadian First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) populations by focusing on a First Nations cultural tradition.
- **Instructional method(s):** class discussion.
- **Differentiated instruction:**
  - Students are divided into small groups, creating smaller talking circles around the room.
- **Grade(s):** 1 - 8
- **Estimated time:** 30 minutes
- **Steps:**
  1. Ask students to sit in a circle.
  2. Ask students to identify circles they see around the classroom (e.g.: the shape of the clock).
  3. Then, go further and ask students to identify circles they have noticed in nature (e.g.: the sun).
  4. Explain to students that the circle is a symbol of high importance in First Nations culture. It represents many things from principles in the First Nations belief system, to patterns found in nature, to the construction of important structures such as the teepee or the dream catcher.
  5. Tell students that when a group of people sits in a circle, this is called a “talking circle” and it is said to represent inclusiveness and equality. Each member of a talking circle must be respected and listened to while all comments directly address the question or issue at hand, rather than the comments another person has made.
  6. Point out to students that they have formed their own “talking circle”. Explain that in this exercise they will carry out the principles of the talking circle and address some very important issues in Canadian culture.
  7. Introduce an object that will be used to facilitate the circle (e.g.: a pencil) this object is called the “talking stick”. Only the person holding this object has the right to speak. Explain that students can indicate their desire to speak by raising their hands, at which point the talking stick will be shared with them.
  8. Review appropriate behaviour in the talking circle by asking the following questions:
    - What does a talking circle look like?
    - Why is a talking circle important?
    - What behaviours are expected in a talking circle?
  9. After students have an understanding of the talking circle, use the following questions to facilitate discussion in the circle:
    - What do you know about First Nations peoples in Canada? What about Métis? Finally, what do you know about Inuit peoples?
    - What does the “talking circle” tell you about First Nations peoples? What is unique about this tradition?
    - What do you know about the FNMI population in your community?



- What cultural practices or traditions do you know about that are specific to First Nations, Métis or Inuit communities? Explain.
  - What were some issues FNMI peoples faced in the past? What issues do they face today?
  - Are there any steps being taking in your community by organizations or individuals to help solve the issues facing the FNMI population today? Are there any steps you can take individually?
10. This discussion is meant to introduce the topic of FNMI culture and provide a strong foundation of knowledge for moving forward. Before moving onto the next activity, identify any new knowledge gained during the course of the activity and answer any outstanding questions.