

NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION FOR ALL RESOURCES

Partnership of IllumiNative and the National Indian Education Association



ILLUMINATIVE



Grade Level

PK-2

Subject

**English
Art**

Lesson Title

**Making a Talking Stick: The Legend
Behind the Talking Feather**

Activity Description: In this activity, students will read "The Legend of the Talking Feather", that involves a sacred Eagle Feather, used as a "talking stick" to teach and build skills of listening and empathy. Students will then have the opportunity to build their own talking sticks, and learn the significance of listening and understanding other people's perspectives.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- ["The Legend of the Talking Feather", as retold by Bobbie Jo Sheren](#)
- Sticks
- Glue
- Tape
- Scissors
- Various Art Supplies, such as:
 - Beads
 - Feathers
 - String
 - Pipecleaners
 - Glitter
 - Paint
 - Tissue Paper

STEPS

This activity is for children to do with various members of the family or community.

1. Read ["The Legend of the Talking Feather"](#) as retold by Bobbie Jo Sheren with you child.

Creating Your Talking Stick

1. Using your stick or "talking stick" base, encourage your child to decorate their talking stick with the various art supplies that you provided to them.
 - a. Consider making one alongside your child.

Talking Stick Circle

1. Tell you child that you and/or members from your family or community are going to sit together, and practice taking turns sharing feelings, stories, and thoughts.
2. Emphasize that only the person holding the "talking stick" should be the person sharing at that moment, and that everyone else will be listening.

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HELPFUL TIPS

Parents and caregivers: This activity not only gives your child the opportunity to understand the significance of talking sticks to many Native American tribes and cultures, but it is also a great opportunity to talk to your child about the power of listening when others are talking.

- When reading the story with your child, ask them prompting questions.
 - What happened when Crow and Magpie didn't listen to the Eagle?
 - What did they do when they realized what they had done?
 - What was the talking stick in this story? What did they do with the talking stick?
- When you are gathered together to demonstrate the use and importance of the talking stick, share with your child the importance of listening.
 - Emphasize to your child that if they listen when others are talking, they will also be listened to and heard in return when it is their turn to talk.
 - Demonstrate this by allowing your child to talk first, and model listening skills to your child. Then allow your child to put their listening skills to action by passing the talking stick to someone else.
 - If your child starts to talk when it is not their turn, consider demonstrating the power of listening to them by talking while they are trying to talk, and then ask them how they felt when people weren't listening to them .

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Families and Educators: Because the Eagle is such a central character in the story, and a sacred symbol of courage, wisdom, and strength in many Native American cultures, your child may ask additional questions about its significance. You may want to share additional stories about the Eagle in Native culture. Here are some suggestions:

- For more Native American legends and stories that involve the Eagle, [read through some of these recommendations](#) with your child.
- Share more about the Significance of the Eagle with your child.
 - [The National Eagle Repository](#)
 - [Birds of a Feather: The Afterlives of America's Eagles](#)

Activity Resource Links:

- Adapted by: "The Legend of the Talking Feather", as retold by Bobbie Jo Sheren: <https://multiculturalkidblogs.com/2017/01/13/talking-feather-powerful-tool-listen/>
- Native American Legends & Stories of the Eagle: <http://www.native-languages.org/legends-eagle.htm>
- The National Eagle Repository: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/national-eagle-repository-eagles-go-to-native-american-tribes-and-science-180960306/>
- "Birds of a Feather: The Afterlives of American's Eagles": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ps2fJBakUzg>