

The Talking Stick

Talking Sticks have been used for centuries by many American Indian tribes as a means of just and impartial hearing. Talking Sticks are commonly used in council circles to designate who has the right to speak while others listen. Some tribes use a Talking Feather instead of a Talking Stick. Other tribes might have a Peace Pipe, Wampum Belt, Sacred Shell, a Totem Stick, or other objects by which they designate the right to speak. Whatever the object, it symbolizes the presence of the Great Spirit in the council circle and requires respect. It also assures free speech; the speaker has the freedom and power to say what is in his heart without fear of reprisal or humiliation.

The speaker should not forget that he carries within himself a sacred spark of the Great Spirit, and therefore he is also sacred. If he feels he cannot honor the Talking Stick with his words, he should refrain from speaking for a time. That way he will not dishonor himself or desecrate the symbol of the Talking stick by hurtful or angry words. If it should happen that someone does dishonor himself, that person is asked to leave the Council Circle until such time as he can soften his words with love and understanding.

This Talking Stick is a way to share with you the spirit of understanding with the heart as well as the mind. The Stick is made of musicwood, river cane from which traditional flutes are crafted. When you hold it, hear the song of the flute in your heart. Touching the soft rabbit skin on the Stick will remind you to keep your words soft. Under the rabbit skin on the end of the stick is hidden a bit of cedar, which is used for cleansing of the body, mind and spirit. Nestled inside the cedar is a kernel of blue corn, symbolic of spiritual growth and nourishment. Tied to the Stick are two objects; a blue stone, symbolizing the sky, home of the Great Spirit, and a bit of shell, iridescent an ever-changing, reminds you that life changes, too. Because we cannot pass on to you an eagle feather, we have tied the Talking Stick with a feather of the eagle messenger, the raven. The great raven, powerful and peaceful, shares the sky with the eagle. It carries to the eagle the message of the one who holds the Talking Stick.

Also tied to Talking Stick is a small feather from a dove, bird of peace, reminding you that peace within the heart is true harmony. A fluff from the great white heron symbolizes endurance and stamina of this bird's flight. It is given to you that you may accomplish your task in life without tiring. The four colors of beads, yellow for the sunrise (east), red for the sunset (west), white for the snow (north) and green for growing thing (south), are symbolic of the powers of the universe you have in your hands to help you speak. Strands of hair from the great buffalo are tied to the Talking Stick. Speakers may speak with the courage and the strength of this great animal.

May the Great Spirit sit with you in your council circles.

Carol Lament
Standing Wolf family

*for Standing Wolf
Family*

