

THE TALKING PIECE

In order to facilitate and share speaking time in the circle, a talking piece is introduced. It can be almost any item—a smooth rock, a stick, a figurine, or an item of the keeper. In many circles, a feather is the favored talking piece. There are guidelines that govern its use, however.

- The feather always moves clockwise around the circle
- You do not talk when you do not have the talking piece
- When you are passed the feather, you do not have to speak; you can pass to the next person
- When you hold the feather, you must:
 - Speak honestly and openly from the heart;
 - Speak with respect for others
 - Try not to speak at length
 - Speak to the issues of the circle

THE FEATHER AS A METAPHOR

A feather is made of hundreds of interlocking units called splines. When the splines come together and work as one, a feather can do amazing things, such as fly a bird to the Gulf of Mexico. Similarly, a class that works and plays together can propel itself to the end of the school year in wonder. Sometimes the feather is ruffled; the bird cannot fly and the class cannot function. When this happens, a bird must preen its feather, just as a class must circle up and “fix its fights.”

Whenever a classroom circles up in this way, the keeper can stroke the feather against the grain, cause it to be ruffled, and say “as you can see, the feather is ruffled. As the feather travels around the room, I would like you to stroke it with the grain and offer kind words and thoughts that will make it whole.