



The Talking Stick

A talking stick has its origins amongst the tribes of the indigenous peoples of North West America. It is an instrument which is used to facilitate democratic discussions. The talking stick gets passed around the circle allowing only the person who is holding the stick to speak. Other members must remain silent while he speaks. This enables all present to be heard.

The talking stick contains powerful symbolism. It represents respect for free speech and allows the speaker to say whatever he thinks or feels without risk of judgment. In families it powerfully reinforces the idea that each member of the family is valued and their thoughts and opinions respected.

Some families have made their own talking sticks from sticks or wooden spoons. There are some lovely ideas that you might like to borrow from native American tradition if you're making your own. Some tribes would have an eagle feather tied to the end of the stick to represent wisdom and courage to allow the speaker to speak truthfully and wisely. There might be rabbit fur attached to remind the speaker that his words should be soft and warm and that he should speak from the heart. Something symbolising the changing of the seasons like a flower represents the idea of change in people and situations.

If you're making your own you might like to incorporate local versions of these symbols. Below is a photograph of a wooden spoon painted with an Australian Aboriginal design used as a talking stick by a family in Sydney. The motif of the turtle had particular significance for this family and is painted in Aboriginal style.

