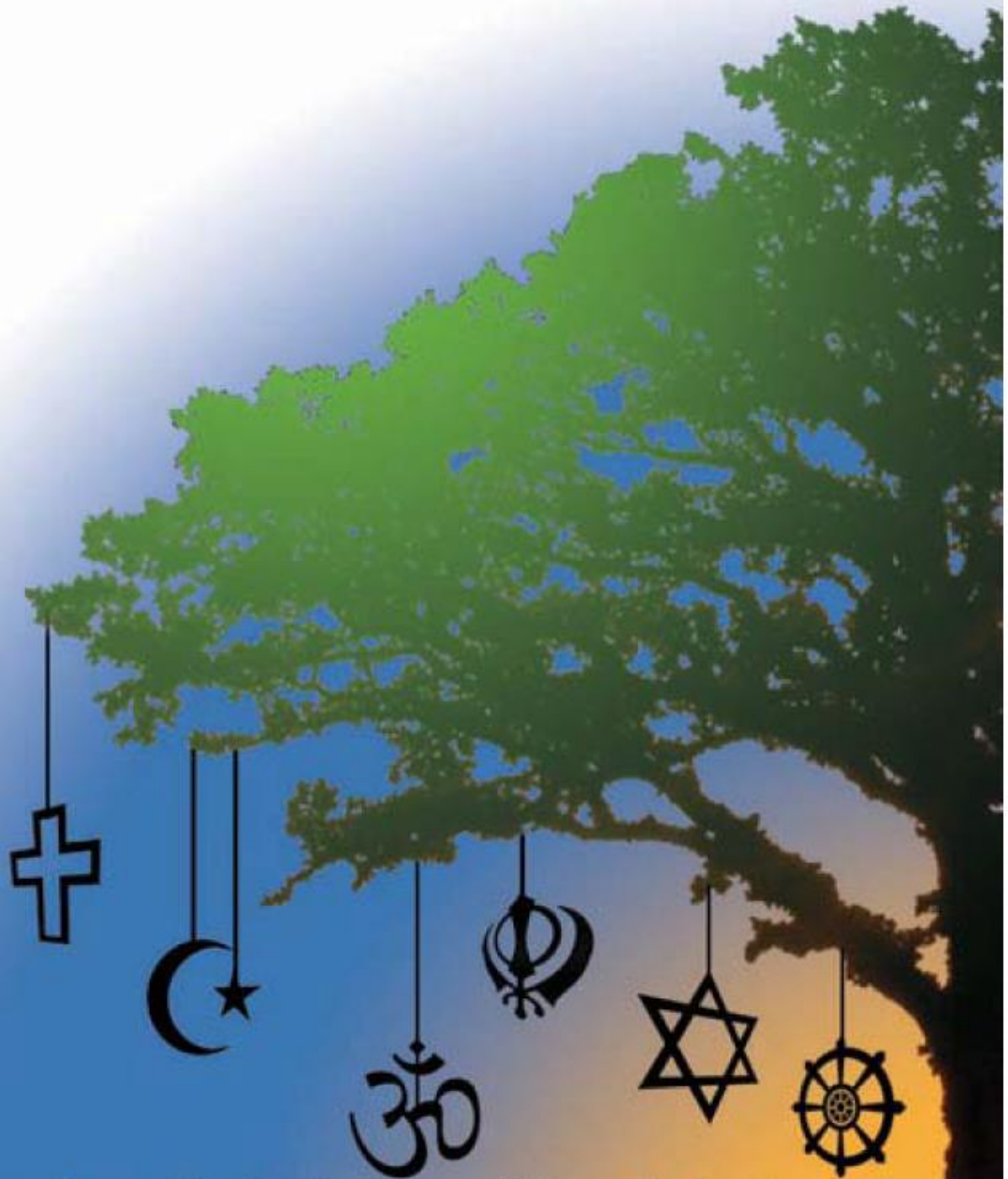


Interreligious Understanding Guidebook

Changing Seasons, Changing World



Lesson and Activity Excerpted from the Tanenbaum Curriculum *Interreligious Understanding Guidebook: Changing Seasons, Changing World*

The Talking Stick and the Tree of Gratefulness

AUTUMN – THANKFULNESS AT HARVEST TIME

Lesson Overview: For children to use nature as a means of expressing respect and gratitude.

Skills Addressed:

Art; Oral Communication; Brainstorming; Respect

Time Needed:

40 minutes

Materials: Talking Stick
Directions sheet, Construction Paper in different fall colors (orange, yellow, brown, etc), Scissors, Markers/Pencils/Pens, A Large Bowl, Tree drawing on poster board (see preparation), Tape, Leaves examples (included and optional)

Preparation: Teacher will need to make her own Native American talking stick to use for the activity; follow directions below.

The teacher will also draw a leafless tree, either on poster board or on a white/chalk board, low enough for the children to be able to tape leaves to it. Above the drawing, the words “Our Tree of Gratefulness” can be written.

Seven Principles for Inclusive Education explored:

Preventing Prejudice, Choosing Appropriate Materials, Teaching All Students, Teaching and Learning about Cultures and Religions

Other Suggested Books/Resources:

Children Just Like Me (Series); Celebrations! By Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley; *Festivals Together* by Sue Fitzjohn, Minda Weston, Judy Large; *Celebrating the Great Mother: A Handbook of Earth-Honoring Activities for Parents and Children* by Cait Johnson and Maura D. Shaw.

Related Activities: *Using and Making a Talking Stick Art Activity*

PROCEDURE

Anticipatory Set/Hook/Do-Now:

Begin by encouraging a discussion of what happens when autumn arrives. The direction of the discussion should be towards getting the children to understand that the weather changes and that because of this, we have to spend more time indoors. Because we are spending more time indoors, we will be around each other more, and one very important element of working in groups is to learn to respect each other and to listen to what everyone has to say.

Another thing that happens during this season is the celebration of many holidays, some of which have to do with the harvest. You may ask the children to see if they can name any of them. Because of this, many people count their blessings and the things they are grateful for in the past year as they prepare for the year to come to a close.

Explain that today they will take part in an activity based on a Native American tradition that emphasizes respect as well as gratefulness.

Mini-lesson

Explain to the children that several Native American groups had and continue to have a special way of showing respect and listening to each other. They use something called a “talking stick” to ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak. Talking sticks are made from natural objects either found outside or hunted and considered sacred. Each part of the talking stick has some significance.

Explain the rules of the talking stick:

1. The community sits around a circle and passes around the talking stick.
2. The person holding the talking stick has the power to talk, and everyone else has the power to listen attentively.
3. The talking stick was and is still used to share news, ideas or opinions. In this exercise, children will use it to express gratefulness.

Show the class the (sample) teacher talking stick, which will be the one used to pass around the class after each child has made their own. Explain that this will be the first part of what they will be doing today: making a talking stick (Directions found in the Talking Stick Activity).

Guided Practice

Break the children up into groups and distribute the Talking Stick Directions (photocopy for easier student access), as well as the materials for making the talking sticks and the leaves. Explain the talking stick directions aloud as a supplement to the written directions. Have the children follow the directions. Create an allotted time-frame for this, so that there will be enough time to enact the respect/gratefulness activity.

Independent Practice

After they finish making their sticks, each child will also be making (at least) two leaves by cutting them out of fall-colored construction paper. They are to cut out the shape of a leaf (the leaf shape examples included can be photocopied for easier use). They are to write one thing they are grateful for on one leaf and one thing they have respect for on another leaf (instruct the children not to write down their names on the leaves). Then, they are to place the leaves in a big bowl at the front of the class.

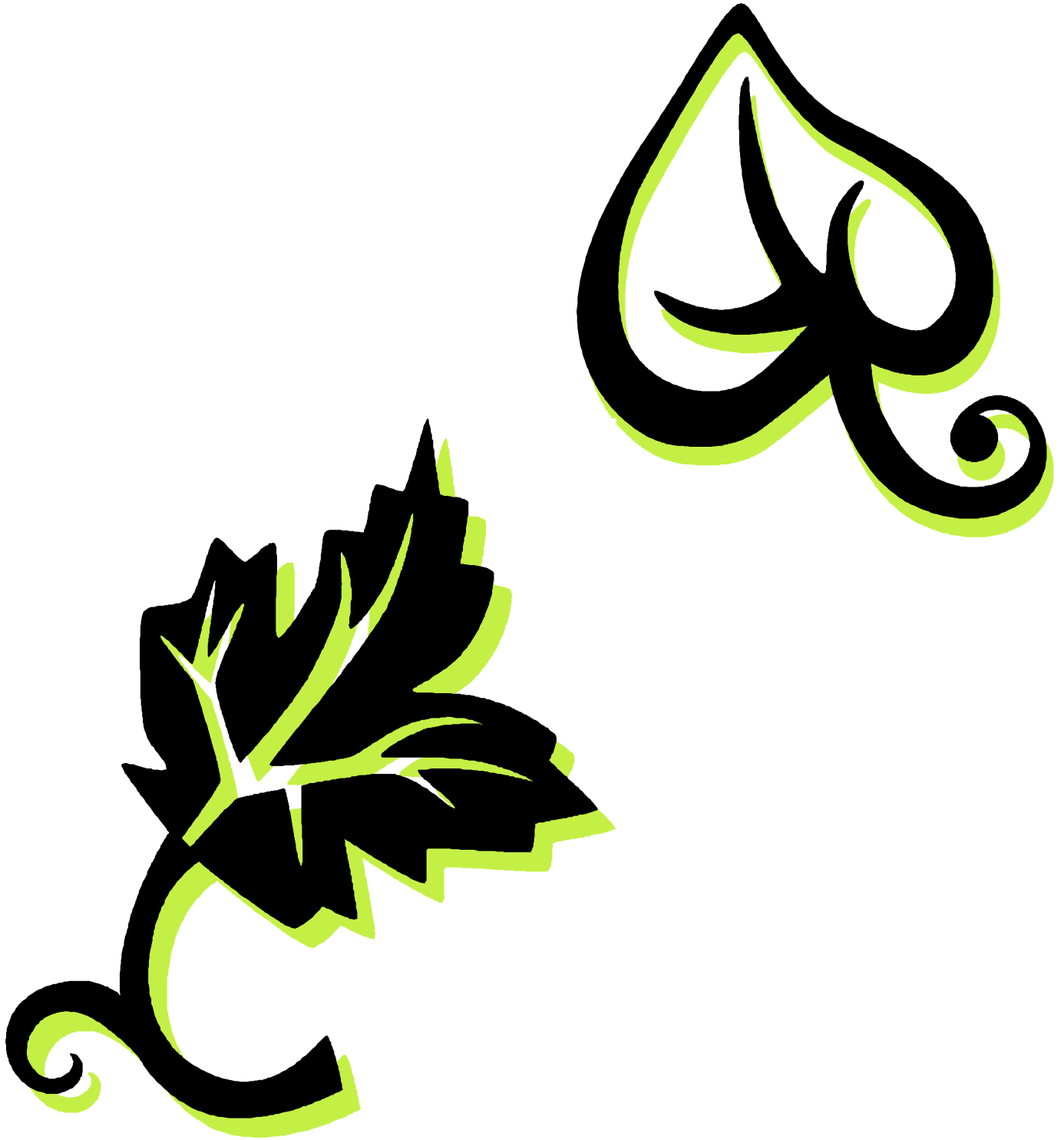
Wrap-Up

When the children are done, they are to sit in a circle in the middle of the room. The bowl will be filled with leaves of different colors. In this activity, the teacher's talking stick will go around and each child will share/show their own talking stick with the class and pick one leaf at random from the bowl. They will read what the leaf says out loud, and stand up and place it on the class "Tree of Gratefulness" at the front of the room. Then, each child will pass the main talking stick on until it makes its way around the circle.

Extension Ideas

You can have a discussion after the activity. Here are some possible questions:

- *How did it feel to listen without interrupting?*
- *How did it feel to speak knowing that you were not going to be interrupted?*
- *What was it like to hear someone else reading your object of gratefulness/respect?*



Making and Using a Talking Stick

Objectives:

- Create a talking stick

Time Needed:
20 minutes

Materials: A Small Stick from Outside, Sandpaper (optional), Yarn, Glue, Feather, Grass or Other Small Objects from Outside Markers or anything else useful for decorating.

Preparation: Have all materials prepared and laid out for students to use

PROCEDURE (MAKING THE TALKING STICK)

If you choose to make your stick smooth, you can use the sand paper to do so.

Decorate the stick any way you like. Use glue, tape or yarn to wrap objects on the stick. You can use feathers, and even small rocks, by tying knots around them.

Feel free to draw objects of nature that are important to you around the stick, or perhaps a design of your choice.

PROCEDURE (USING THE TALKING STICK)

The community sits around a circle and passes around the talking stick.

The person holding the talking stick has the power to talk, and everyone else has the power to listen attentively.

The talking stick is used to share news, ideas, opinions or things each student is grateful for.

