



Maq, Spirit of the Woods

1. In a Talking Circle everyone's right to speak is respected. In a circle, the speaker holds an object such as a talking stick. For the next person to speak, that person must be given the talking stick. Brainstorm a list of behaviours for participating in a Talking Circle, e.g., listen respectfully, share stories, don't interrupt. Create a Talking Circle in the classroom or outside in a green space. Decide what the talking stick will be. Have the students tell a story where each speaker adds to the narrative, introducing a character or commenting on where the story is moving. Afterwards ask the students to reflect, either orally or in a journal entry, on their emotions and sense of community during the experience. In what other situations can the "you may speak now and I'll listen" notion be followed?
2. First Nations people traditionally honour their elders. Their life experiences, combined with the knowledge passed on from previous generations, make them experts and teachers. This information was not written down but passed down orally to each generation. Maq and his grandfather have a close relationship where they can speak honestly, respectfully and with empathy. How did Maq's grandfather use his knowledge to help the boy see and understand his inner strength and abilities? What made the relationship between Maq and his grandfather so special?
3. Many sculptors approach their medium (a chunk of clay, piece of stone or marble) by listening to it "speak." The sculptors believe that there is a creation inside that must be released. The artist and the medium work together to create a piece of art rather than the artist imposing a creative idea onto the medium.

ACTIVITY: Take the class outside on a day where there are many clouds. Everyone should have a pencil and sketch pad. Have students lie on the ground and look up in the sky, looking for shapes, figures or images in the clouds. Then invite them to sketch several on paper. Once back in the classroom talk about the diversity of what they have seen. Give each student some sculpting material (e.g. modelling clay, play dough) and ask them to recreate something inspired by what they saw in the clouds and the medium.

4. How has Maq changed from the person who left to visit his grandfather to the person who arrived at his grandfather's? How did Maq develop self-confidence during his trip?

5. As Maq travels through the woods, we see a background of the sky with what looks like falling stars. This is the animator's rendition of the aurora borealis or northern lights. Have students do some research about this phenomenon. Using different media (paint, crayon, markers, tissue paper and white glue, black magic etc.), have them create a picture of the aurora borealis to accompany the scientific information.
6. As Maq walks through the forest, he knows where he is going and how to get there. Signposts or markers tell him he's on the right path. Have the students plan a walking trip to a local playground or park. They can plan a route, map it and note markers or signposts. The students can draw their own maps to scale or freehand and time their walking trip. The students should also note places or people on the route they can turn to should they encounter any hazard, trouble or difficulty.

