

26th June 2020

Contributions

“Every citizen will make his own contribution to the activities of the community according to his strength, his talent and his age: it is on this basis that his duties will be determined, conforming with the distributive laws.”

Morelly, Code de la Nature, 1755

On a recent visit to Canada, I bought a ‘Talking Stick’ from a Craft Shop and learned about its use among the indigenous cultures. When a Tribal Council was deliberating on an important issue, the Talking Stick was passed around the circle, and the person holding the Talking Stick was the only one who was permitted to speak. No interruption was allowed. So, after a while, everyone's viewpoint was heard. In the Great Councils, the Elders only made decisions after listening to all the contributions made.

A teacher told me she used it with her students. “In groups or with two people,” she said, “it creates a climate for good communication and teaches genuine listening skills. Five minutes in total is usually enough for two people; longer if it’s a group. It’s a great follow-up to a talk, or video, or lesson too – or even a bust-up. Everyone has the chance to be heard.”

A Talking Stick – a tool for healing relationships, facilitating discussion, helping with decision-making, speaking your truth and being listened to with respect. What a terrific idea! Even the quietest and most diffident voice can be heard. No one need be afraid they won’t be listened to. No one dominates a discussion. Everyone’s contribution matters.

As I recall some of the committees and groups I’ve attended over the years which descended into chaos as people talked over each other and tried to shout one another down to ensure their point of view prevailed, I wondered ... Might a Talking Stick be used to help people connect more effectively with each other, begin proper dialogue and come to a shared understanding by listening to everyone’s contribution? It’s amazing what blessings can come from listening to one another and giving a voice to those who don’t speak!

A prayer for today

*Loving God, help me to speak with humility and listen with respect.
Bless me in the contributions I make to the welfare of others.
Bless them in their duties, that we might find blessings together. Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon
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