

Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox

By Danielle Daniel

Twelve young speakers explain why they sometimes identify with creatures (fox, deer, moose, butterfly and others). Danielle Daniel, a Metis writer and artist from Northern Ontario, uses poetry and stunning portraits of masks to introduce the Anishinaabe tradition of totem animals and the unique contribution each makes to the clan.



WITS LEADS Connection: Seek help! Tolerance, Social & Emotional Learning

Questions and Activities

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Have each children pick a favorite animal, bird, reptile or insect – ONE that they might even like to be.
 2. Ask them to make their bodies look like that animal (curled up like a cat), friendly like a dog, jumping up like a goat, flying like squirrel) and freeze in that position.
 3. Ask each child to think about how the creature might be feeling in that position (powerful, light as a feather, soft and quiet, excited).
 4. What can you learn from the animal you have chosen? What are the animals qualities that can show you how to be better person (patience, loyalty, how to be a friend, how to show you care or really like someone).
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POST-READING QUESTIONS

1. What is an animal totem? Read the authors note on the last page of the book. Animal totems are guides that can teach us or show us how to be (kind, generous, quick, brave...)
 2. Webster's Dictionary defines a totem as "*A natural object, usually an animal that serves as a distinctive, often venerated emblem or symbol, a means of personal or spiritual identity.*"
 3. Talk about "identity" (how we can recognize you not only physically and by what you do) and "spiritual identity" (what you feel connected to, e. g. Family traditions, teams or groups that work together towards a goal bigger than themselves?). How do these connections HELP us to know who we can trust to be there for us.
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POST-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Go back to the animal identified in pre-reading question #1. Ask each child to think about how **he or she might contribute positively to the class** if they were that animal. How could being like that animal help the class? Make your own individual animal totem mask or *create your own animal drawing or symbol to represent your totem animal*. Tell your class about your totem and why you think it is meaningful to you.
2. First Nations of the Northwest Coast believe that the Kingfisher is the promise of abundance, of new warmth, prosperity and love that is about to unfold within your life! See the Kingfisher Totem [here](#). Did these coastal peoples learn from the kingfisher?



Look for first Nations symbols from YOUR province or territory. How do the animal totems reflect the place where the First Nation group resides?

3. What sports teams have a bird or animal in their logos? Why do they use these logos? (to show what their teams talents might be fast, mighty, strong, scary)



GEOGRAPHY/SCIENCE Many teams pick logos that are related to animals in their environments. Look up other team logos. Locate each place on a map of North America. Which logos show animals that live in the place where the team comes from?

Denver Broncos	Chicago Bears,	Hamilton Tiger Cats
Indianapolis Colts	Pittsburgh Penguins	Atlanta Falcons
Jacksonville Jaguars	BC Lions	Manitoba Moose
Miami Dolphins	Detroit Lions	Chicago Cubs
Philadelphia Eagles	Miami Marlins	Baltimore Orioles
Los Angelis Rams	Arizona Coyotes	Florida Panthers

4. What would be a good totem animal for YOUR class? Why? Create a CLASS logo.

Connections to Aboriginal Teachings

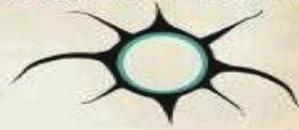
- The First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB), the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), and Indigenous mental health leaders from various Canadian First Nations non-government organizations jointly developed the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework ([here](#)). In this framework “mental wellness” is defined as a balance of the **mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional**. The framework also says that we can help to create balance through **purpose, hope, belonging and meaning!** Read the paragraph below and ask your students what these words mean to them.

“This (life) balance is enriched as individuals have: purpose in their daily lives whether it is through education, employment, care giving activities, or cultural ways of being and doing; hope for their future and those of their families that is grounded in a sense of identity, unique indigenous values, and having a belief in spirit; a sense of belonging and connectedness within their families, to community, and to culture; and finally a sense of meaning and an understanding of how their lives and those of their families and communities are part of creation and a rich history.”

2. THE SEVEN SACRED (GRANDFATHER) TEACHINGS
Respect and sharing are at the foundation of the Aboriginal ways of life. Teachings about respect and sharing are captured in “seven natural laws” or “seven sacred teachings”. An animal can represent each law (respect, love, honesty, truth, courage, wisdom, and humility). The animal world teaches us about our close connections to nature and the animal world. **Activities** Talk about one new teaching each day and post one of the posters below in your class. Hear these values in the Anishinaabe language and see more about these teachings in the Anishinaabe world [here](#). Make your own posters for each of these values – what animals would you use to represent them?
3. Follow up activity: see the book COURAGE and the WITS Lesson plan at <https://witsprogram.ca/schools/books/courage.php?source=book-lists>
<https://ojibwe.net/projects/prayers-teachings/the-gifts-of-the-seven-grandfathers/>

OGITCHI TIBAKONIGAYWIN

The Great Binding Law
of Kizhay Manito - The Great Spirit



THE SEVEN TEACHINGS

TRUTH



TURTLE

RESPECT



BUFFALO

HUMILITY



WOLF

WISDOM



BEAVER

LOVE



EAGLE

HONESTY



OPUS
PORCUPINE

COURAGE



BEAR

http://thesharingcircle.com/sacred_teachings.html