21st Century Talking Stick & Tertiary Education for Sustainability

The task at the centre of this Action Research Project (assessment 3/EDU703) is a formative 5 minute oral presentation involving case studies/real world examples of environmental disasters, offering the opportunity to learn key concepts of sustainability & scientific principles within USC course COR111.

- A problem exists if this formative activity doesn’t succeed in promoting students’ generic skills development & therefore does not contribute towards desired graduate qualities.
- Problems with formative & oral exercises have been identified in my own practice & in the literature as:
  - Not inspired/general apathy
  - Absence
  - Lack of confidence
  - Lack of understanding of ‘science based’ information & how to find it
- Lack of understanding of the nature of the formative task
- Equity issues: Students not knowing how they feel Uncomfortable with oral presenting

- My project aims to promote success of these formative activities through the use of the Indigenous/Traditional Talking Stick and Talking Circle with the intention to:
  - Develop confidence & empathy
  - Inspire students towards sufficient & successful research
  - Promote critical & creative thinking

- Literature surrounding implementation of a Talking Stick and Talking Circle states:
  - Gives holder authority
  - Levels out playing field (time/space)
  - Can promote deeper understanding through tactile sensation & discovery
  - Shock of the new Stimulating Activity
  - Passivity

Q1. In general how do you normally feel about oral presenting?
- General...
  - Nervous
  - Humorous...
  - Feeling up... not a big worry... don’t care...
  - Fumble
  - Making mistakes
  - Messing up
  - Sensation
  - Focus and formality out of it...
  - Good visual aid...

Q2. Did using the talking stick add to the quality of this presentation for you? If so, how?
- Practical...
  - If I was standing up... better
  - If some people may have interrupted you they didn’t...

Q3. Do you feel the traditional usage of the talking stick has any connection to our course?
- General...
  - Lack of understanding of the nature of the formative task
  - Absence
  - Lack of confidence

Q4. Identify one feature of your research that had an impact on you.

You have noticed that everything… is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round… The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours… Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves.

Black Elk (1863-1950) Oglala Sioux holy man (Aaron, 1994)

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