Spirit Pole

Class Experience

When classes visit the pole, their experience will include:

- the stage manager will give the class an introduction to the pole; the different animals found on the pole, their significance, and how they relate to the children; the idea behind the project and the hope for what it will accomplish
- they will then be introduced to the artist, Carey Newman
- he will show them the tool he uses and also give them demonstration
- they will then have time to ask any questions
- at the end of the experience, all the students in the class will be asked to be one of the 10,000 British Columbians who have added their Spirit to the pole by laying their hands on it and taking a moment to send out their good wishes to the people of BC and the team that is travelling with the pole
- once they are done, each child in the class will get an envelope with a cedar chip in it that Carey and Victor carved from the pole that morning
- their teachers will be given a package with a page where all the students can sign their name, it will be explained that these pages will be added to the Spirit Pole Artist book and they can look up there name in the future if they chose to go see the Pole at its home in Duncan

Children’s Experience (if accompanied by a parent)

When a child visits the Spirit Pole with their parents their experience will include:

- a brief explanation of the poles figures
- a demonstration of how the tool is used
- they will then be allowed a chance to carve out a cedar chip to take home
- younger children will be assisted by either their parent or the artist, whatever they are more comfortable with
- they will be given an envelope to put the chip that they carved in and then they will be asked to sign their name in the book of artists
- the parents will be given the same opportunity to carve and sign the book
Speaking Notes for the Classes:

1. Before a class get onto the stage, meet them at the bottom of the steps and explain the following:
   - in a minute they will be invited onto the stage, they can gather around the pole, they are allowed to touch it
   - some rules while on stage:
     - please do not stand on or touch any part of the cradle or the bars that are holding the pole
     - there are tools in the back corner, please do not touch them, they are very sharp
     - there are cedar boughs found on the totem, please do not touch them, they are gathered every morning by one of the road crew, they are used to bless the pole and the artists, it is VERY DISRESPECTFUL to play with them, if they do, they will be asked to leave the stage
     - please do not pick up any of the chips on stage, they will each be given on in a very special envelope to keep as a souvenir
     - give the class list sign in sheet to the teacher at this time and explain that it will be added to the book, please complete it with their students and mail it back
2. Once on stage explain the different figures (you do not have to bring up every point below, get a feel for the class)
   **Eagle**
   - the eagle sits atop the pole
   - point out how the eagle’s wings are wrapped around his body, like a Cowichan blanket, as the pole was made for the Cowichan Valley
   - talk about the moon on the front of the eagle’s chest and the sun on his back (they won’t be able to see), Carey added the sun as a tribute to the Cowichan people, “A place to warm your back in the sun”
   - take the time to look at final drawings of the Spirit Pole, the eagle is looking upwards – Carey drew the eagle looking toward the future, it represents his hope for the future, point out that the future is the students standing around the pole, that they will take the lessons that they learn in school and from their families and pass it on to future generations
   **Wolf**
   - below the eagle sits the wolf, the wolf, point out the wolfs face (or giant forehead as I call it), his nose, his paws and his knees
   - at this time you can ask a student who can see the wolf to show the class how the wolf is sitting, or you can demonstrate yourself
   - the wolf signifies family and is the keeper of tradition
   **Salmon**
   - below the wolf is the salmon
   - point out to the students the waves of the stream and show them some of the salmon that are roughed in
   - there will be five salmon in total, though they can’t see them all
   - salmon represents perseverance (you can ask them why they think that, because salmon swim upstream to spawn)
   - ask the class “Why do salmon swim upstream?” (to spawn)
• ask the student if they were swimming would they prefer to swim upstream or downstream? (downstream because it is easier)
• talk about the significance of the salmon fighting their way upstream to ensure future generations (shown by the eggs that will be on the final totem, that they can’t see right now)
• parallel it to their parents, it is not always easy for their parents but they do it like the salmon do because they want to ensure their future generations
• again this is a representation of the artists and the Spirit Pole’s team’s hope for the future generations

Frog
• the last figure on the pole is the frog
• the frog is the story teller of the Pole, that is why is on the bottom
• the frog is also a symbol of the Cowichan Valley and people
• talk about the frogs tongue, you can get one of the student to look at the frog and ask him what he is doing with his tongue (it is sticking out), explain that it is traditional in Aboriginal art to see the frog with his tongue sticking out, ask the students why (that is how a frog eats)
• can mention how the frog is the only figure in Aboriginal art that smiles, point out his smile to the students, most figures in Aboriginal art are very serious

3. Turn the student over to Carey, I often introduce him as the designer and carver of the Spirit Pole (and my husband, but you don’t have to do that)
   • he will talk about the slick and demonstrate how to use it
   • he will ask for any questions
   • at this time you can help if there is not questions, you can talk about the age of the tree, where it came from, where it is going to be raised etc (if Carey does not do it)
   • the book of artists, how they can look up their name if they visit the pole in the future
   • talk about the Cowichan 2008 North American Indigenous Games and BC 150

4. Finally you are going to invite the students to be part of the journey and the experience by taking both their hands and placing them on the pole. Explain that the Spirit Pole is called that because it gathers the good wishes and good spirits of those who touch it. While they have their hands on the pole, ask them to send out good thoughts and wishes to the other British Columbians and also to the crew that is travelling with the pole. Please think about why this pole was created and carry that with you when you leave today.
   • for older classes be proactive and ask them to be respectful of the process
   • give them about 15-30 seconds of silence to send out their wishes
   • end the silence by thanking the students for participating in the Spirit Pole tour.
   • Raise your hands and say Hey Tsep Kuh and explain that this means thank you all.

5. Invite all the students off the stage (via the ramp) to get their cedar chips.

6. And the start all over again with the next class.