Read Aloud Plan:
Totem Tale: A Tall Story from Alaska
By Deb Vanasse, Illustrated by Eric Brooks

Theme: Communities flourish when people depend on and help one another.

Lesson Content Objective
Students will gain a deeper understanding of the importance each person has in a community by engaging with the tale of a totem pole whose totems come to life showing their unique characteristics and begin to fight for the place of honor at the top of the totem. The raven reminds the other animals of how they depend on one another to build their totem pole story (community). We will show how students themselves are representations, like totems, in their community and how each student represents a part of their community.

Assessment:
We will know if we met our objective of helping students gain a deeper understanding of community based on the following:

- Teachers will observe and listen to student responses to both the individual questions and the turn and talk questions. If students have an understanding of community we should hear discussions of students making connections between their lives and their community.
- We also will evaluate their drawings and sentences to see if they convey their understanding of the moral of the story which is “we all have certain responsibilities and when we work together we contribute to our communities story.” Student reflections and drawings should consist of explanations of working with others and drawings of themselves within their community context.

We will document this learning based on notes taken during observation of the read aloud and reflection/drawing activity at the end. Both of these documentation methods will showcase the children's ability to relate to the story and apply it to their own lives, as well as critically engage with the way in which they fit into the larger community.

Rationale:
We chose “Totem Tale” because it will lead to meaningful discussions on what happens when we don’t work together as part of a community to accomplish our goals, and how that can change if we do work together. This theme helps convey Roxhill’s “Me and My Community” theme.

**Materials Needed:**
- Book “Totem Tale”
- Blank paper with totem outline for coloring activity and writing prompt
- Display board to write vocabulary words

**Instructional Plan:**
**BEFORE READING:**
- Introduce ourselves
- Set norms for what a good listener looks like
- Model good listening skills
- Remind students of central theme ‘community’.
- Question: “Can someone share with me what community means?” (explicit)

Teacher defines ‘community’: A community is a place where people can share things they like or a place they share together. But sometimes in our communities, we don’t work together and we can’t accomplish what the community needs to do. For example, in the classroom everyone has a job. We each help clean up, turn off the lights, take out the trash, hold the door. Each of these are ways we help one another in our classroom community, if we stopped doing these jobs we would all be very frustrated and have a hard time learning! In this book you will see our characters having a hard time working together. And you will see what happens when the animals stop helping eachother and forget how much they really need each other to survive.”

- Teacher introduces book title, author and illustrator
- Prior knowledge: “Does anyone know what this is? (Point to totem pole).
- Do any of you know what a Totem Pole is?” (explicit)

Teacher explains: A totem pole is a traditional Native American way of telling family stories. Each totem is like a symbol that tells a specific story about a family member or big event that happened in a tribe. In Native American culture, animals are an important symbol that tells the story of people in their community. The place of honor is a really important position on the totem pole, can anyone guess why? (Implicit) It is the position that is given to the most respected and wise elder in the family.

So when we look at the totem pole, I want you to think of this as a community. Each totem represents a person in communities and as we read I want you to think about why these animals can’t work together and how they end up eventually building the totem pole.
**Rationale:** Teacher helps students connect the notion of totem pole as community, while also helping make the connections of the main theme.

**During Reading**

**STOP**  *What animals do these totems represent?” (explicit)*

Rationale: We want to see if students make the connection between totems (the symbols) and the animals the totems represent.

**STOP  What do you see these beavers doing here? (explicit), “How do you know?” (implicit)*

Rationale: By identifying the role of the beaver in the story, it is the first stop in making a connection between the utility of the beaver as a builder, and its job to help the other animals later in the story.

**STOP  Introduce the vocabulary term - SWOOP**

“My can show me with their hands what a swoop looks like? Why are they swooping? Eagles are hunters. Do you think he is catching the fish from the dam? Do you see how the dam the beaver built, helped feed the eagle?

Rationale: We want the students to engage with the action in the book through a gesture while continuing to build a connection between totem representation and the first connection of dependence between the animals.

**STOP  stopping on the page where the book talks about a wolf howling to the skies.**

*Does anyone know what howling sounds like? Would anyone like to share their story? Let's all make the sound together! (implicit).*

Rationale: This question is to keep students engaged and access their prior knowledge about animals.

**STOP  Has anyone heard the word TEETERING before? How about the word teeter-totter on a playground? It is the swaying back and forth motion. (explicit)***

Rationale: Like many action words in the text, this word is bolded. We wanted to acknowledge these interactive words while introducing a new vocabulary word.
Let’s notice what the raven is saying in this picture. He retells the story of the frog mudding the water, the beavers making a dam so the eagle could fish, and the grizzly sharing a den with the wolf.

- Why is this important to help the animals remember? (implicit)
- Do you remember when the animals were flying away and the story talked about the place of honor? (explicit)
- How does the raven fit into the place of honor? What is he doing that helps the others? (explicit, implicit)

When we are in communities together, we all do different things that help one another. Just like the beaver built the dam for the eagle to fish, we help each other in our own communities. Sometimes it isn’t the fiercest or the strongest that is at the top, but sometimes it’s the person that can see past all the meanness and remind us to help one another.

Think for a moment of one way in which you help someone in this classroom? Teacher gives personal example here. Ask students to turn and talk.

Rationale: We want them to realize that unless we work together, nothing can get done. This is the setup for the next question, which brings home the importance of working together as a community.

After Reading Discussion & Activity

Questions:
- How do you think the animals felt once they started working together?
- Think of some ways we can help each other in the classroom? TURN AND TALK

ACTIVITY
We are going to do an exciting activity today! Using this paper, we’d like you to draw your own totem poles! First I want you to think about what kind symbols or totems you want to use to represent those in your community? Just like the native americans use animals to represent important people in their community, such as the beaver as the builder, or the eagle as the hunter, think about how you will represent your community to create your totem pole. You may show a soccer ball to represent your soccer team you play on, or R to represent the Roxhill community you are part of.

At the bottom of the page, we’d like you to fill in:
What is my community? ____________________
and I help my community by ________________.

Rationale: Each of these are ways in which we want students to start thinking about putting yourself in these communities and how they help the communities they are a part of.

Group share at the end of the activity.
Rationale: Students will gather together after they have completed their activity and share with each other which community they chose and explain their reasoning. Teacher will facilitate discussion and conversation.