



31ST ANNUAL KITSAP COUNTY CONFERENCE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

LAYING THE FOUNDATION
CALLING THE CIRCLE

Presented by

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Why Do We Circle?

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Path to authentic, meaningful conversations in restorative work.

Build relationships.

Restorative justice and circles have a spirit and culture of care.

Self-reflection is in restorative practice.

Circle symbolizes shared
leadership, equality,
connection, and inclusion.

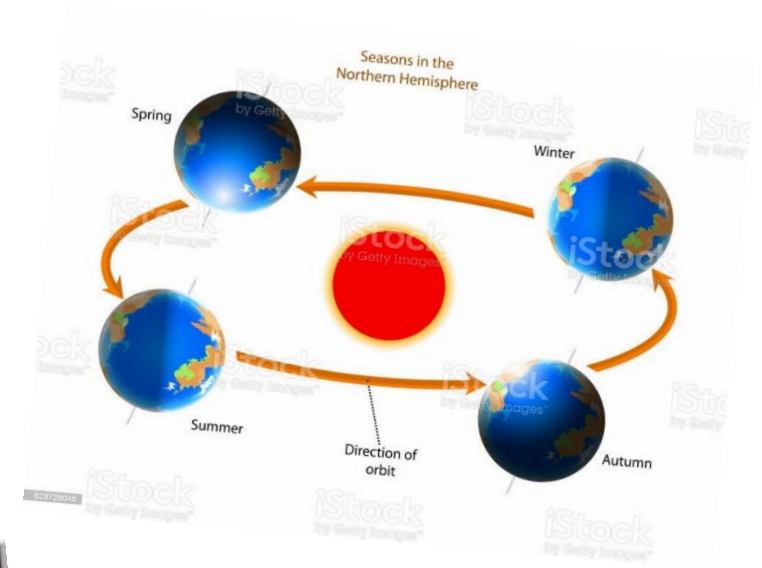


I have created an altar at my desk with a candle, my eagle wing, my drum, water, and smudge



Many things in Nature and naturally occurring earth phenomenon of Creation are circular

- Earth turns in a circular motion
- Seasons are cyclic
- Solar system and the galaxy are wheels
- The earth, the moon, the Sun are round
- Many ceremonies are done in the round
- Many of our drums are round



The Circle

- The circle is a universal symbol representing totality, wholeness, original perfection, the Self, the infinite, eternity, timelessness, all cyclic movement
- The energy of the circle ripples out and affects everything



Traditional Talking Circle

- Rooted in ancient, Native teachings.
- A very old way of bringing people of all ages, backgrounds and ethnicities together in a quiet, respectful manner for the purposes of teaching, listening, learning and sharing.
- A traditional way for Native American people to communicate and to solve problems and deliver teachings.



Adaptable to many different settings

- When approached in the proper way, the circle can be a very powerful means of touching or bringing some degree of healing to the mind, heart, body and spirit.
- Perhaps the beginning of group therapy.



Talking circles in any environment

- There is great healing that takes place when sitting in the Sacred Circle.
- By allowing people free expression in the Sacred Space of the Circle, those in circle are empowered to find their voice—and to feel heard and supported.
- The circle subscribes to confidentiality



- The circle might begin with a prayer or a blessing that will focus the intention of the circle
- A song might be sung
- The facilitator may begin the circle, focusing on the intention or purpose



- The circle leader, teacher or facilitator begins by passing around sweetgrass, cedar, or sage so that the participants may “smudge” themselves.
- We have been taught by our ancestors that these sacred herbs have a purifying effect upon our total being.
- As the smoke from the herbs surround us, we are better able to connect on many levels with the others within the circle, with ourselves, and with what we are about to experience.



The timing is usually perfect and supports spiritual growth.

- Participants often reveal that they do not know what they are going to say once it is their time to speak.
- If by chance, a person does not feel moved to speak, they may pass the Feather to the next person.
- Once the object returns to them, they may be ready to speak what's in their mind and heart.



Circle Protocols

- Speak honestly and truthfully from the heart
- Be brief
- Others should listen attentively with respect
- Group members may speak only when they are holding the talking stick
- Advice is not given, only support



- Once the Feather has gone around once, perhaps twice—even more if it is needed, then the Circle will be finished.
- A cleansing and letting go ritual will follow.
- The Spirits, Ancestors, elements and directions are thanked and released.



The Web of Life

- The Talking Circle reminds us of the tribal teaching of the Web—the web of life.
- It is the interconnectedness of the Sacred web that binds us together.



Interconnectedness

- That's what the Old Indian teachings are about.
- In Indian tradition, we are all considered part of the whole—of the Creator.
- You are my relative and I acknowledge that you are family and we are all relation; we are the web.



Interconnectedness

- If we respect, celebrate and love our Relations—and that means all beings in our lives, it will come back to us—tenfold.
- The hurt of one, is the hurt of all. The Joy of one, is the joy of ALL.. That's what the Old Indian teachings are about.



- In the old days all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation; and so long as the hoop was unbroken, the people flourished.

Heháka Sápa (Black Elk)

- *“Love settles within the circle, embracing it and thereby lasting forever, turning within itself.” —*

Luther Standing Bear, Oglala Sioux



The Talking Circle is an exercise in equality and egalitarianism

- The circle itself is considered sacred and all who are within its parameters are honored as equal in importance and all are embraced as Spiritual beings with inherent wisdom.
- The circle experience often alters one's consciousness and creates a unity and fellowship that is always greater than the sum of its parts.
- It is, in its way, uplifting and magical.



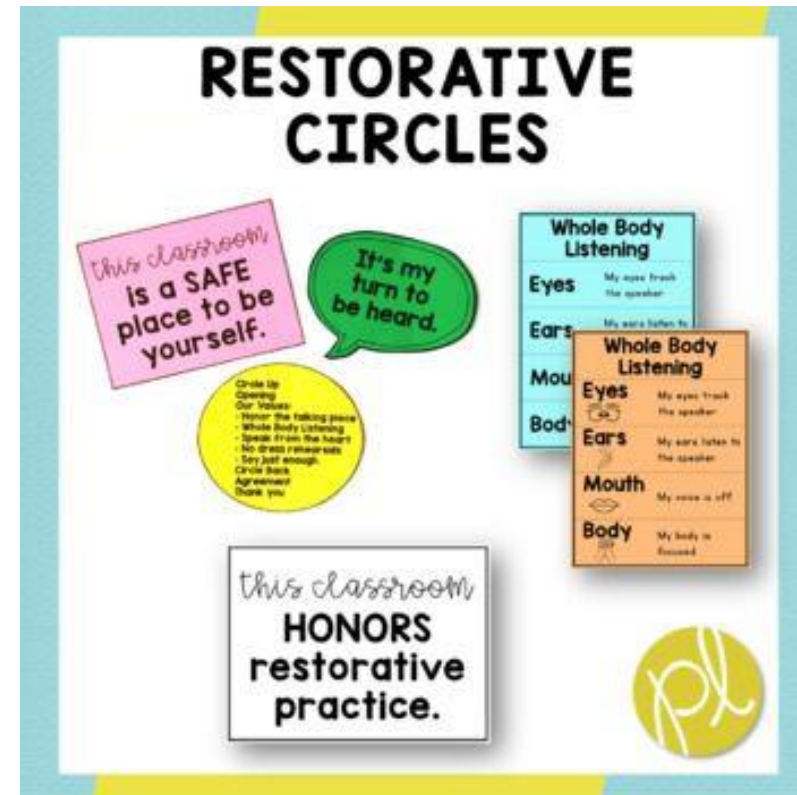
Empathy and Multicultural Awareness Talking circles

- Explore points of difference or difficulty.
- The inherent tension of the meeting is balanced by protocols of listening and respect for varied viewpoints.
- Space is provided for productive possibilities rather than criticism and confrontation.



Native American Circles

- Our program differs from a more traditional Western model of reentry services through its use of Native American circles.
- When a client is released from incarceration, we hold a restorative justice circle.



The Restorative Circle

- The restorative justice circle is an opportunity for the person who has committed a crime to make amends to the people they have harmed.
- Participants may include the victim of the crime, the person's family members, law enforcement, a mental health counselor, a success coach, and/or community members.
- The idea behind restorative work is that we heal with compassion and support instead of the traditional punishment and put-downs.



Listening Circles

- The Welcome Home Program also facilitates community listening circles to tackle difficult conversations about race, equity, and the role of law enforcement in the community.
- We also host traditional Native American talking circles—also known as a spirit circle, sacred circle, or healing circle— where each participant is given time to express themselves honestly and ask for support in their recovery process.



Power of Conversation

- “The other thing is, there’s a lot of conversation in the work that’s done,” Barone says. “Just sitting down and having a conversation with somebody can be so enlightening and, for the individual, it’s an opportunity to be heard.”

The Human Element

- Ultimately, it's the human element that has led to the program's success, according to McFeat.
- "We are successful because we have this relationship-first policy, and everything else is secondary," she says.
- "We see a lot of dehumanizing in the corrections system, and we wanted to start something that was completely different than that.
- We want to understand that person and who they are, their story, and their family, treating them as human beings and filling them with hope," she concludes.

All relationships are sacred and all things are related.

- We are bound to each other through need and responsibility to support each other in order to maintain balance and to survive in a healthy environment, including mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally.

“It’s important that none of us gets too comfortable”

- “Challenging conversations simply won’t take place when people are looking for what’s easy.”
- “I know it’s a natural human desire to find a place of comfort and seek what is easy.”
- “But I believe it’s also a natural human desire to grow and to learn.”
- “That demands a different kind of seeking—one that is less comfortable, but allows us to be more present and authentic in our connections with others, and more effective in the work we do.”

Michael E. Bird (Kewa Pueblo/Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo) is National Consultant on Native American/ Alaskan Native Communities for AARP as well as being an independent consultant on public health issues.

Healing Circles

- Circles diminish a lot of the discomfort that can arise when addressing issues that need resolution and healing.
- There are many different types of Circles, such as healing, conflict resolution, community building, and celebration.
- The use of the circle to help individuals in need has grown in recent years and is now being used in many settings, including neighborhoods, schools, prisons, workplaces, families, and marriages.
- Healing Circles in particular provide a safe space in which people who have suffered similar trauma can come together and speak openly about their trauma and leave feeling healed or on the road to recovery.