

The Community Healing Circle is a credible reparative justice process for communities affected by crime.

A Circle is transformative. It transforms an adversarial approach to a communal process; the goal is not to blame and segregate but to hold accountable the offending behaviour and give a powerful voice to the ones who have been victimized.

Circles may be used in a variety of settings, including pre-charge and post-charge convictions (this circle was used in a post conviction, post custody setting)

Objectives

Viewers should be able to appreciate that;

- members of a community including victim(s) and offender(s) can come together in a meaningful way to address an event that has created harm.
- the person(s) who committed the offense can be held accountable in meaningful ways.
- a process guided by principles of compassion, creativity and community is a powerful way of achieving satisfying justice.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What is Justice as you see it?
- 2) How did the Circle compare to what transpires in a criminal court?
- 3) How do you feel about the intentions of the Circle?
- 4) What are the strengths of the Circle process?
- 5) What are the limitations of the Circle process?

Resources

The Centre for Justice Studies, Humber College
3199 Lakeshore Blvd. West, Etobicoke, Ontario M8V 1K8
Tel: 416-675-6622 ext. 3354

The Church Council on Justice and Corrections
507 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1Z5
Tel: 613-563-1688 Email: ccjc@web.net

Community Holistic Circle Healing
Hollow Water First Nation, Hollow Water, Manitoba R0E 2E0

Family Group Conferences, Perspectives on Policy and Practice,
editors; Joe Hudson, Alison Morris, Gabrielle Maxwell, Burt Gallaway,
Federation Press, 1996

Kevin Marron, Apprenticed in Crime, McClelland - Bantam, 1992
Rupert Ross, Returning to the Teachings, Penguin Books, 1996



Stages of a Circle

The facilitator/circle-keeper contacts the person(s) who has been victimized and the person(s) who has exhibited the offending behaviour to explain the process, offer support and determine their willingness to be part of the circle.

The facilitator/circle-keeper makes contact with members of the community who have specific relationships to the event and the person(s) who was victimized and the person(s) who committed the offense to explain the process and determine their willingness to be part of the circle.

Holding the Circle

- * everyone is brought together in a circle setting
- * the circle begins with a ritual (specific to the group) that bolsters community spirit and encourages sincerity and openness
- * each person introduces themselves with a statement of what brings them to the circle
- * the facilitator then begins by asking the person(s) who committed the offense what they felt when they did the offense and what they have felt since the offense took place.
- * the facilitator then asks the person(s) who was victimized what they felt when they were victimized and what they have felt since the victimization took place.
- * the facilitator then asks the other members of the circle to offer their experiences that came as a result of the offense.
- * the facilitator asks members to offer their comments and questions to the person(s) who was victimized and to the person(s) who committed the offense.
- * the facilitator asks how justice will best be satisfied in this circumstance; the person who was victimized along with the person(s) who committed the offense and other members of the circle arrive at agreements that ensure everybody's overall sense of trust, safety and well-being.
- * the circle ends with a closing ritual specific to the people involved in the circle.

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It is recommended that support plans are set up to monitor the agreements and to assist the participants, where necessary, in the post-circle phase.