

RJ Overview (Cordillera Anderson)

History: Indigenous people; native tribes – a way of life

Philosophy: When used for problem solving: Bring together those harmed, those who did the harm and the community

All voices are heard, valued and everyone is part of solutions.

Respect for all in the Circle;

A way to help all move forward in a positive way

Values: Includes but not limited to: equality; ability to listen as well as have a voice; value of the perspective of others, knowledge and life experience if each participant

The power of circle to strengthen community and to solve problems or move forward in a positive way (rather than the authority to dish out punishment or *the* answers)

Circles for Prevention

- There are many protective factors that are enhanced: caring connections, respectful communications, (listening, being heard), solution focused – a way for all to make a positive contribution, feel competent and connected.

Some keys to a successful use of a circle include:

Sit in circle (ideally with no barrier and a “centerpiece” that adds meaning)

Sit in a circle without a table so there is no barrier

Talk about the behavior or issue, not the individual

The problem or issue is in the middle of the circle, not a person

Common courtesies established and practiced (speak from the heart, listen with an open heart to others, say what you need to say but with enough brevity so all can be heard, etc.)

Use a talking piece – this is far more than a *gimmick* --(whoever has it talks; others listen -without side comments or interruptions); the TP has a meaning to the keeper or the circle and in some cases is a sacred object

The circle keeper “serves the circle” by setting the tone, asking the questions and passing the TP to the left. A person can pass but the TP goes in order around the circle rather than jumping around to whomever has something to say.

Participants are asked to say what needs to be said, but to be brief or succinct enough so everyone gets a chance to speak.

This helps quieter folks get an opportunity to speak and those who tend to dominate discussions to have an equal turn; it helps all learn to listen and to remember that everyone has something to add.

Questions are often open ended so circle participants can respond with whatever is on their mind at the moment when you have the talking piece.

Role (tenor, style) of the circle keeper is to make the Circle welcoming & safe for all participants, set the tone, help the circle establish “common courtesies”; ask each participant to identify themselves & share some element of who they are; Closing (may involve story/quote, summary or clarifications of agreements made.) The person who keeps the circle is not their as the circles’ therapist, authority, answer person, control center rather simply the asker of questions

- Planning, preparation and questions are done by the Circle keeper but reflect and change to meet the needs of the Circle.

Possible Questions:

Name & connector/understanding/personal tidbit

How you see the problem/issue?

How you’ve been affected by what has happened?

What do you think needs to be done to move things forward in a positive way?

What are you personally willing/able to do?