

TALKING CIRCLES

The Talking Circle has been going on among the Indian people for hundreds of years. It is the traditional way of communicating and sharing.

A Talking Circle is opened by the burning of sage, cedar or sweetgrass. Each individual in the circle is smudged with the smoke, which allows them to connect spiritually with a traditional experience.

A circle leader is in charge of opening the circle. Depending on how that person wants to begin the circle, they can do introductions, explain the circle, or just begin their own talk.

Sometimes an object can be used in the talking circle. For example, an eagle feather can be passed around to each person as they speak. This will give each person spiritual help and courage as they speak to help them share and express themselves.

After the talking circle has spoken, each person in the circle has an opportunity to talk and share with the circle. This is done in a clockwise direction, or depending on what Nation you are from - counter-clockwise. When people are sharing in a talking circle they are honestly sharing their inner most feelings, so therefore we should listen intently and with respect. No person should be interrupted, and each person is allowed to talk as long as they need to speak. In this way, each person is valued and respected within the Talking Circle.

When each person has had an opportunity to speak, the circle leader will ask if anyone desires that this be a closed circle, meaning that the things said by each individual and their identities not be acknowledged once the Talking Circle is closed. If anyone wishes the circle to be closed, the circle leader will ask all members of the circle to respect the needs of the other participants and to keep others' anonymity. If no one wishes it to be a closed circle, participants are told they may speak freely about their experiences and what they heard in the Talking Circle.

The Talking Circle is ended in a couple of ways. This may be done either by each member walking around in a circle giving hugs to other members or with all members holding hands while someone closes the circle with a prayer or a statement of closure.