



# THE INSTITUTE *for* RESTORATIVE JUSTICE *and* RESTORATIVE DIALOGUE

## Circle Facilitation

### **“Circles are found in the Native American cultures of the United States and Canada”**

Circles and the circle process are a core vehicle for restorative justice and restorative dialogue. Circles can be implemented in all settings including justice, schools, community, faith-based groups, mental health, and business. This two-day, skill-based training centers on the principles of restorative justice, the role of the facilitator, circle preparation, designing and facilitating the circle, understanding the depth and power of the circle process and creating a climate that furthers safety and respectful dialogue.

The role of circle facilitator is vital to the Restorative Process. Participants will learn of the differences in directing circles and facilitating circles. Through roleplay and collaborative activities, participants will explore the various aspects of circle preparation and planning specific to the situations and issues to be addressed in the circle. They will experience the role of circle keeper as that of a guide and equal participant rather than a neutral leader. The facilitator sets the tone and atmosphere of the circle through voice tone, body language, attentive listening, depth of prompts for each round, and adherence to mutually agreed upon values and guidelines. Through prior preparation and conversations, the facilitator builds connections of trust and care with each participant. The facilitator attentively monitors the circle process and makes adjustments as needed to maintain the sanctity of the circle and the safety of the members. Participants will experience the importance of the facilitator in encouraging and empowering the participants in creating their action plan and strategies for monitoring its implementation and follow up. In roleplaying circle facilitator, participants will experience the contrast between “power and control” and “knowledge and experience.”

Restorative Justice is deeply rooted in indigenous tribal communities. First Nations peoples and Native Americans live by many principles that help guide them through the circle of life. Participants will recognize the contribution of life principles from ingenious communities and how they relate to the ‘Seven Core Beliefs’ of Restorative Justice. Participants will recognize and review the history of North American tribes and their belief in the importance of a respectful relationship with all living things. Participants will become knowledgeable of the relationship between circles in Restorative Justice and their indigenous roots.

Rituals are a significant part of creating the climate necessary to carry out the purpose of the circle. Native Americans hold many things sacred such as their prayers, life cycle ceremonies, and smudging. Smudging is a cleansing practice done before holding a circle. Participants will watch a video that explains this custom and then experience smudging directly (if desired).

A talking piece is an object of specific importance that is used by Native Americans to help regulate dialogue. It allows participants to listen and speak from the heart. Circles welcome reflections during dialogue and are aimed at appreciating our interdependency on each other as human beings. Participants will be provided the opportunity to construct their own talking pieces and describe and display (if desired) their uniqueness and meaning.

Participants will become knowledgeable of the role of the facilitator and the importance of self-care as the circle keeper. Participants will be taught the importance of and procedures for preparation and assessment of member suitability for restorative circles. Participants will create their own individual circles and apply what they have learned over two days by serving as a circle keeper over the circles they have designed.

The closing circle for the two-day training will focus on the participants’ processing their experience, what stood out for them during their time together and how the experience of restorative circles informs how they will practice.