

Circles of Healing and Justice



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“Circle peacemaking is probably the most powerful process that I’ve ever gone through for healing, for my own healing.....Circle peacemaking has come to our village as an answer to our prayers.”



Mike Jackson
State Magistrate
Tribal Peacemaker
Kake, Alaska

- ◆ **Circles used for sentencing recommendations in State Court Cases**
- ◆ **Circles used for tribal court cases**
- ◆ **Circles used for tribal youth courts**
- ◆ **Circles used for political disputes**
- ◆ **Circles used for prevention**



Circle Sentencing Offers Opportunities for:

- ◆ **Hold offenders accountable to peers in the village, highlighting issues with other people who have influence over offenders**
- ◆ **Repair harm done to victims and communities**
- ◆ **Create positive behavior change in offenders**
 - **Why? Opportunity for community to share how much they care about victims, and offenders, what their concerns are, sentencing always include subsistence/cultural activities**

Circle Sentencing Process

◆ Opening the circle

- A prayer, words from an Elder, or any other meaningful way to signal the opening
- The Circle facilitator describes what the situation is, generally describes the process, outlines the guidelines for speaking
- Going around the Circle for introductions



◆ Phase one: Passing an object around several times

- Talking about the situation and persons involved
- Giving information about the situation and persons involved
- Describing feelings about the situation and persons involved
- Giving advise or counseling to the offender and victim if the victim is participating in the circle



◆ **Phase two: Passing an object around several times**

- Talking about the solution.....writing ideas on paper chart
- Coming to consensus on the sentence



◆ **Closing the Circle**

- May be a prayer, words from an Elder, the Circle leader may offer closing words, or any other meaningful way to signal the closing



Circle Guidelines

- ◆ Each community may set their own guidelines, but the most basic ones may include:
 - Be respectful of each other in the way you speak
 - Speak from the heart
 - Listen from the heart
 - Everyone is equal
 - Traditional values



Traditional Alaska Native Values - Generalized

- ◆ Respect for Elders and of one another
- ◆ Stewardship and respect of land, sea, and all nature
- ◆ Practice culture and traditions
- ◆ Subsistence
- ◆ Listen with heart and mind
- ◆ Speak with care
- ◆ Live by honesty, sharing, caring, fairness, unity
- ◆ Never give up
- ◆ Spirituality, reverence for Creator
- ◆ Maintain a balance in life, moderation
- ◆ Respect for knowledge
- ◆ Avoid conflict
- ◆ Practice sharing and cooperation
- ◆ Give service to others
- ◆ Don't be greedy, boastful, lazy, steal or lie
- ◆ Be happy, humor



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Scenario for an elder abuse case:

- ◆ Mishal is a single parent has two children ages 9 and 12. Mishal works weekdays from 8 to 5 at the Itsa Tribe tribal office as a Reality Specialist. Mishal and her children live with her father Dave, who is in his mid 80s. Mishal manages Dave's finances.
- ◆ A complaint was filed by Mishal's sister with the Itsa Tribal Court that Mishal is financial abusing their father Dave and also he is suffering from some verbal abuse. The complaint states that Mishal uses Dave's social security checks for gambling and Dave generally does not have money for necessities such as clothes and for transportation to visit friends and other relatives. The complaint also states that Mishal is verbally abusive to Dave when she drinks.