

Terms....

Peacemaking or sentencing circles: is a community directed process, in partnership with the criminal justice system, for developing consensus on an appropriate sentencing plan which addresses the concerns of all interested parties. Peacemaking circles use traditional circle ritual and structure to create a respectful space in which all interested community members, victim, victim supporters, offender, offender supporters, judge, prosecutor, defense counsel, police and court workers can speak from the heart in a shared search for understanding of the event and to identify the steps necessary to assist in healing all affected parties and prevent future occurrences.

Circle of understanding: is a family and family and community directed process for understanding the issue or conflict with the hope that a clearer picture can be seen from all parties and a resolution can be made to address the issue or conflict. It can also provide information and clarity about a particular interest. Circles of understanding use the traditional circle ritual and structure to create a respectful space in which all interested members can speak from the heart in a shared search for understanding.

Circle of support or supportive circle: is a family, community, and agency directed process to assist youth and his/her family to achieve specific goals through support from the individuals in the circle. Supportive circles use the traditional circle ritual and structure to create a respectful space in which all can speak from the heart in an effort to support the youth and his/her family.

Circle of healing: is group directed process where all are offered an opportunity to share their stories around an issue, interest, goal etc. to bring a sense of consolation and comfort. A traditional ritual and structure is used to create a respectful space in which all can speak from the heart in an effort to bring closure, strength and /or peace to the individual.

Circle: is an ancient way of gathering where all sit in a circle and a talking piece (a feather, stone, etc.) is passed clockwise around the circle. Each person holding the talking piece shares their story, insight on the issue etc. All in the circle listen respectfully as each person speaks. Everyone's opinions, comments etc. are equal and together issues, conflicts etc. are discussed and consensus reached in terms of ways to resolve the issues.

Restorative Justice: is a philosophical framework which has been proposed as an alternative to the current way of thinking about crime and criminal justice. Restorative justice provides for active participation by the victim, the offender and the community in the process of repairing the fabric of community peace. It emphasizes the ways in which crime harms relationships in the context of community. Crime is viewed as a violation of the victim and the community, not a violation of the state. As a result, the offender becomes accountable to the victim and the community, not the state.