**BASIC GUIDELINES OF CIRCLE**

Circles are an egalitarian format based on indigenous practices that is used to build community and address harms as they arise. In circles, there is a facilitator who is called a *keeper*. Talking circles are used to discuss a topic and build community. Healing circles are used to address a harm that has occurred. The number one rule of circles is that you can only speak if you are holding the talking piece – this piece can be anything of significance to the keeper, such as a shell found on a beach, or a necklace. The piece can also be something as mundane as a pen or a ball. All circles are embedded with rituals based on indigenous Native American practices. Circles can begin with an opening quote to mark the space. The quote can be peaceful in setting a tone of respectful listening, or can directly relate to the topic of the circle. The talking piece is always passed in one direction; if someone wants to jump in and say something they have to wait until it is passed back to them.

***Things the keeper should be ready for:***

*\**In a healing circle, make sure to place people in the circle appropriately; a person who was harmed should not be seated next to the person who harmed him or her.

\*Sometimes people do not want to participate-that is their choice, and they should not be pressured to participate with laughter or looks or comments. The hope is that in time everyone will feel comfortable and interested enough to offer their perspectives.

\*Sometimes people have a hard time listening and want to jump in and respond when someone is speaking. The keeper must remind participants to hold their comments until they receive the piece again.

\*The format is flexible – if someone brings up a new point in response to a particular prompt, the circle topic may evolve into something different. That is okay, but if the topic is completely unrelated, the keeper may interject after someone is finished speaking to remind participants of the original question.

\*Some people tend to hold onto the talking piece for a long time. The keeper may step in to remind the circle members to watch their airtime, but it is better to just clarify from the beginning that everyone should be aware of how long they are talking.