

The indigenous origins of the circle process establish the circle's foundation in key teachings. These teachings are often drawn from the circle image as a metaphor for how the universe operates. For many indigenous people, the circle as a symbol conveys a worldview—a way of understanding how the world works. The following teachings are an integral part both of that worldview and of the space that circles create:

- everything is interconnected;
- though everything is connected, there are distinct parts, and it is important for them to be in balance;
- every part of the universe contributes to the whole and is equally valuable.

These indigenous teachings, which form the circle's foundation, are the same concepts that we identified as our Core Assumptions.

What Is the Circle Practice?

What, then, does the circle look like? Visually you will see:

- participants seated in a circle, preferably with no furniture in the middle;
- a centerpiece, which creates a central focus for participants;
- an opening ceremony that marks the beginning of the special space of the circle;
- an object, called a talking piece, that is passed from person to person to regulate the flow of dialogue (who speaks and when);
- a closing ceremony that marks the end of the special space of the circle.

Essential Elements of Constructing the Circle

The circle keeper uses the following elements to design the circle. Together, these elements create the space for all participants to speak their truth respectfully to one another on an equal basis and to seek a deeper understanding of themselves and others.

- Seating of all participants in a circle (preferably without any tables)
- Opening ceremony
- Centerpiece
- Discussing values and guidelines
- Talking piece
- Guiding questions
- Closing ceremony