

Drum Circle Protocol



We are inviting our Ancestors into the circle

When we gather in the circle, we are inviting our Ancestors to be present. Being mindful of this, we must open respectfully. Begin the circle with an acknowledgement of the local traditional territory on which the circle is being held, and the protocol for the circle should be given or explained prior to starting:



Basic Expectations/Protocol

- All electronic devices are to be turned completely off. No headphones.
- Show respect through our body language by sitting up, not slouching and being present.
- Arrive early as the door may be closed afterwards, being on time demonstrates respect for others.
- Only “I” statements are to be used in the circle. No one in the circle or outside of the circle should be singled out.
- If at all possible, remain in the circle until it is completed.



The Use of the Eagle Feather

The Eagle Feather is used in the Circle for many reasons. Whoever has the Eagle feather is the only person speaking at that time. It is their time to speak their truth. All others are listening with intention. We must speak and listen with honesty, integrity, authenticity and love. Without the listeners, the speaker is alone. Both play a vital role. The Eagle feather is sacred and must be treated as such. It should be held upright, and the speaker can use it to give them the strength and courage to tell their story wholeheartedly. If an Eagle feather is not available, a special or sacred object of your choosing can be used, and should be treated in the same way.



Circle

- At the beginning of the circle introductions are made by all participants. **Respected** Lkwungen elder Skip Dick gave the following teaching - *when you are in circle stand up, and take a small step forward because who you are and what you say matters. You have been given a voice and you need to use that voice.*
- In the west, circles flow counter clockwise to follow the path of the moon. In the East circles flow clockwise following the path of the sun. Therefore, on Coast Salish territory, you pass the feather to the person on your right when you finish speaking.

Traditional Introduction

- Stand up, take a step forward and **state your name**, your **heritage/where your ancestors are from**, and or where you are from. If you are Aboriginal, you can give your **name(s), and the nation(s) you belong to**. When we introduce ourselves in this way, we give context to who we are and where our worldviews come from.
- Next, state **how you are feeling that day using a scale from 1-10**. This allows all in the circle to be mindful of those who may not be feeling so great, and draw on those who are feeling stronger that day.
 - Ex. - My name is John Smith. I am from the Mohawk Nation through my mother and I have settler ancestry from France through my father and today I feel like an 8.
 - Ex. - My name is John Smith and have Italian settler ancestry and have been on this territory for 16 years and today I feel like an 8.
- If there is a guest present in the circle, go and shake their hands and welcome them.

Note* If a participant is feeling as though they are truly not able to speak, they may pass by saying “all my relations”, thereby acknowledging those in the circle, the ancestors, and our connection to all that is.

When your circle has been opened with territory acknowledgement, and all have introduced themselves, you are now ready to teach the songs. It is important that all sitting in the circle are aware of and respect the teachings of the drum prior to drumming.

Gratitude Round

Because you have opened the circle in a good way it is important to do the same in closing.

To close the circle each person takes a turn standing up with the feather and shares one thing they are grateful for. When this is done your circle is closed.

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