

Our Families, Our Way: The Peacemaking Circle

2017 \$500,000 Winner



OUR FAMILIES,
OUR WAY: THE
PEACEMAKING
CIRCLE WON
THE 2017 AIP
\$500,000
PRIZE

The Arctic Inspiration Prize is the largest annual prize in Canada. It inspires, enables, and celebrates the achievements of the people of the North, recognizing diverse teams with innovative projects in the fields of education; health and wellbeing; culture, arts and language; science and traditional knowledge; climate change; food security; and the economy.

Nominator: Sherry Campbell *President and CEO, The Gordon Foundation*

Team: Lori Duncan (Team Leader), Mike Birkett, Ashley Carvill, Corinne Carvill, Dina Delaronde, Ann Maje Raider, Susannah Robertson, Beverly M. Sembsmoen, Thomas Shepherd, Judge Barry D. Stuart

This report was compiled and created by the **Qatalyst Research Group**, with the help of Bobbi Rose Koe, the project team, and AIP.



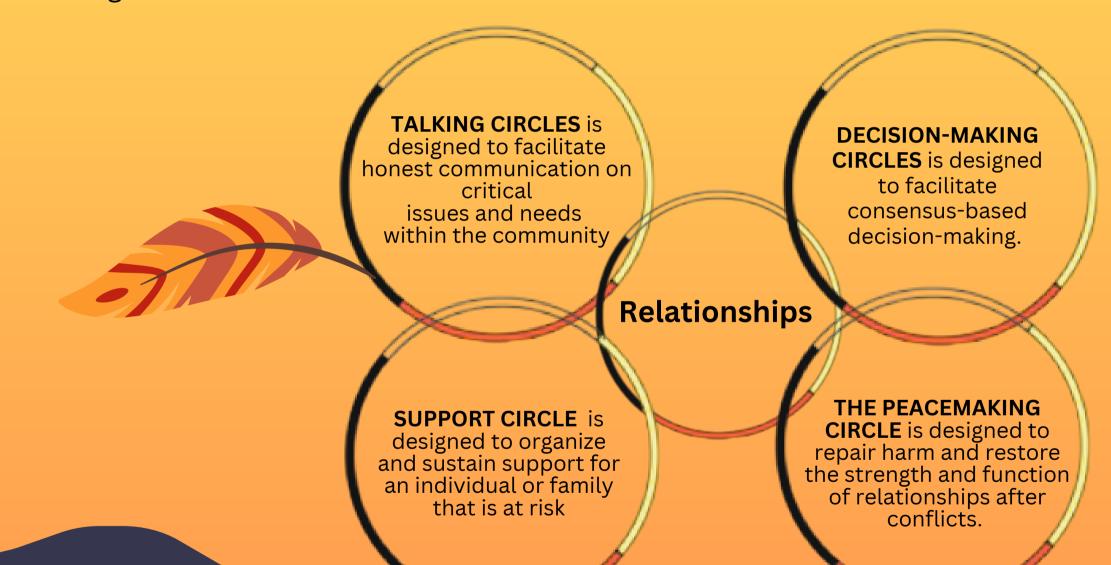
The Peacemaking Circle project is reclaiming a practice historically used by Carcross/Tagish First Nation to address conflict and trauma caused by colonization and residential schools.

This project was designed to help the community reclaim a practice historically used by the community to address conflict and trauma caused by colonization and the legacy of residential schools.

Peacemaking circles play a crucial role in First Nations communities, serving as a powerful tool for healing, conflict resolution, and community empowerment. These circles are deeply rooted in traditional values and practices, offering a culturally relevant approach to addressing various issues within communities.

TYPE OF CIRCLES

The project designed and delivered an innovative, community-based peacemaking circle tailored to the needs of the North and the strengths of Northerners.





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PEACEMAKING CIRCLE TRAINING

Foundation of Peacemaking Circle

- 13 days of in-person class instructions and 3 days of selfguided learning
- Covers understanding of core traditional values, intergenerational trauma, and guidelines to establish emotional and cultural safety in the Circle

Facilitating Talking Circle

- 16 days of classroom instruction
- Focuses on applying what was learned (each participant convene and facilitate talking circle), deciding if a circle process is appropriate, and preparing and facilitating talking circles

To date, 8 rounds of courses have been completed, involving 176 community members.



GRADUATION CEREMONY

The whole community was invited to the graduation ceremony. Those participating spoke about what the training process had done for them personally helping them be vulnerable, and comfortable with that vulnerability. They also shared healing experience for them personability Being comfortable with that vulnerability

Circle of Practice was created to provide opportunities for trained facilitators to meet regularly, and ensure that they retain the skills gained and are using them in practice.

Two Ministers of the Yukon
Government attended the
graduation ceremony to personally
congradulate graduates and
encourage them to continue this
work.



Quotes from Peacemaking Circle Training Participants

"I was shocked at how open I was emotionally. I was able to release pain and tears that I was unaware of. I was still carrying residue from past healing efforts."

"Hearing and telling our personal stories are powerful teaching tools, and many in the group shared painful and happy memories that reinforced the teachings."

"These teachings make a person reflect on self, family and community as well as the world on how to help create healthier environments."

"Spiritually this course assisted me to get back on track with my spirit through ceremony, smudge, and prayers."

This course reinforced my belief in peacemaking circles, that Spirit is with us and guiding us."

"Being in Circle is training in mindfulness." "The training provided stability amongst a chaotic, emotional workplace. It also deepened my emotional connection with other participants."

HEALING AND RESTORATION

Peacemaking circles provide a space for healing relationships and addressing trauma. They allow participants to talk about conflicts and their feelings focusing on healing rather than punishment.

The process is not just trauma-informed but focuses on trauma reformation by moving beyond understanding how trauma affects individual behaviour to actively reforming the behaviour and addressing the root causes of trauma.



"The way we laughed and cried and teased each other. Everybody is so helpful to each other. For me it was about connecting with my people. Holding each other up, being in a sacred space of learning and helping each other move forward in a trusting, loving relationship."

- Darla-Jean Lindstrom

- Darla-Jean LindstromC/TFN Community Member



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

This was the longest-running project in the community, designed, initiated, and run by the First Nation community. There was significant community buy-in to using peacemaking circle as a key vehicle for peace making that was authentic and culturally grounded.

Inclusivity is very important to ensure that many people are involved in conversations and that decisions are taken collectively. Many peacemaking circles included mediation with families or among community members dealing with unresolved past issues.



"It brings people together from across the community to work together in teams. It's about peacemaking and dealing with difficult situations but turning that into an opportunity for the community. When people see what they can do when they resolve conflicts and come together, the possibilities for the community are endless."

Thomas Shepherd Project Facilitator

NATION BUILDING

The circles offer an alternative to conventional adversarial processes, providing a more holistic and culturally appropriate approach to conflict resolution. They emphasize healing and restitution rather than the punishment typically used in the Western system.

The communities take pride in the process, built on respect, understanding of diverse values, and deep connections with one another.

The peacemaking circle has helped heal damaged relationships and restore harmony to the community.



PEACEMAKING CIRCLE IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

There is a desire to increase the use of the peacemaking circle in the restorative justice processes within the Justice System. The Government of Canada has released a new strategy intended to support the revitalization of Indigenous laws and legal orders, including application of restorative justice.

This requires ongoing training and sustainability practices, community buy-in and demonstration of positive impact of peacemaking circles for restoration of justice and healing of the community.

The Peacemaking Circle project has demonstrated that community-led and community-driven training and engagement grounded in community cultures and traditions are best strategies to successful implementation of the peacemaking circles.



OTHER PARTNERS AND FUNDERS





