



This month's circle tale is a report on the recent Circle Carriers Gathering. It is written by Sarah MacDougall, board member of the Calling the Circle Foundation, with the supportive energy and spirit of the 16 others on the rim of this circle.

Circle Tale #37, January 2003 The Circle Carriers Gathering

On January 3, 2003 seventeen circle carriers gathered at the Marsh House on Whidbey Island just north of Seattle. This circle grew out of a vision of the board of the Calling the Circle Foundation (CtCF), the non-profit arm of PeerSpirit work. Christina and Ann have always made an effort to be in dialogue with other people who are originating circle methodologies based on ancient circle tradition. In 2002, the CtCF board canvassed about thirty circle carriers in the US and suggested it was time for us to meet and talk about what we we're learning, how and where we are introducing circle, and explore interest in building ongoing conversation or community. In the fall, we held several council calls, formed a planning council from three different circle traditions, and put out the invitation.

If you close your eyes and envision this gathering, it may take you back to a time when tribes would gather under one tent with the intention of celebrating their shared connections. Tribes with different life styles, governance principles, social structures would gather and for the duration of their council would listen deeply to each other to search for collective wisdom and spirit so they could depart with renewed energy and commitment to carry on their work. In the foggy stillness of a winter weekend, women and men representing twelve circle-based organizations gathered for such listening.

We came from PeerSpirit, Ehama, the Millionth Circle Initiative, the Ojai Foundation, the Heartland Institute, ROCA, Circles of Restorative Justice, The Circle--A Gathering Place for Women, Resonance, The Grandmothers, Wilderness Rites, and From the Four Directions. We rotated leadership and flowed with the energy of the group. We took time to rest in the journey, walk the forest and beach, and collectively share our dreams. We negotiated a set of agreements, writing them on slips of paper that circled the center - reading them from time to time as a reminder of how we agreed to be together. For two days, we shared stories of circle in areas as diverse as restorative justice, community development, classrooms, boardrooms, wilderness quests, ceremonial celebrations, leadership expansion, eldering, and men's and women's groups. A rich cross-fertilization began that is now, like a sprout of winter wheat, waiting for spring weather to grow. On our third day we contemplated how to help each other sustain the energy required to do this intensive work in the world. We created ceremony that invited each of us into the fullness of our work, and extended that energy out to everyone being called into circle at this time.

Now, all of us on this rim are considering the next possibilities: how to meet the desire for more councils of this nature and size, and how to respond to ideas for some kind of larger circle-based gathering. We made a commitment to hold these questions without leaping to decision. We made a commitment to meet again. This was a council of beginning.

As the Ehama tradition taught us all to say: This ceremony is over. Let the next ceremony begin! We invite you into the dialogue.

In the rich imagery of our center there is a small empty chair: it is the place held for each of you.

If you have a tale to tell, contact the PeerSpirit office and we'll help you share it.

*For more information on many applications of circle, visit our web site at www.peerspirit.com and subscribe to our monthly Circle Tale newsletter using the subscription mechanism at the top right of the page. Your e-mail address will **not** be shared or used by anyone other than PeerSpirit, and you can unsubscribe yourself at any time.*