



This month's Circle Tale comes to us from Deborah Wood, who attended a PeerSpirit Circle Practicum held at Hollyhock in 2006, as well as the recent Journal Conference 2008 in Denver. Deborah lives in Canada and is an Early Childhood Educator and Youth Care Worker.

## Circle Tale, July 2008 The Circle That Should Have Closed

*"A circle has a natural life span—four stages that occur as the circle moves through time. . . no matter how dynamic and successful a circle is at continuing to find purpose, and no matter how committed its members, there will come a time to acknowledge the closing of the circle."*

(From **A Guide to Peerspirit Circling** by Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea)

I had the privilege of being a part of a circle of beautiful women that started in 1996 and continued until 2007. It began as a healing circle designed to support five women who worked together in an inner city non-profit organization. The initial five of us used the tenets of **Calling the Circle** and met every Friday night for six months. The process helped us to survive a difficult situation at work and to be available to our families on the weekends. Once the issues were resolved, two of the women felt they no longer needed the group and left with our blessings. Another woman joined and we began a ten-year friendship as a circling group.

Initially, the group continued to meet once a week, but life circumstances changed and we began to meet once a month for a longer period of time, which often included meals and sleepovers. We would bring our individual spiritual learning and understandings to the group and we would share in giving and receiving information. We also brought our own individual trials and tribulations. The circle was a safe and nurturing place where we could be ourselves and know that we were loved and supported. Sometimes we were having so much fun that we forgot to circle. When we realized that we were doing that, we got back to circling with intent, because we all knew that circling is more powerful than "visiting".

One day, things started to change and none of us knew what was happening. One of the women started to back out at the last minute. Then we seemed to be having an increasing amount of difficulty picking a date that everyone could be there for. During the circles themselves, it became evident that some of us were holding back—i.e. not saying what was on our minds.

We had become so complacent with the process, that none of us looked at how we had evolved to a "counseling" circle where each gave her opinion of how the other person should be. It happened so subtly at first that none of us saw what was happening; yet we all became aware that something was not working. We stopped listening to each other and we stopped following circle guidelines. The circle ceased to be a safe and nurturing place, but we were too blind to see.

An "emergency circle" was called, but we could not hold the form nor figure out how to get out of the defensive process we were in. The circle simply ended without resolution.

Postscript: I continue to believe in the positive power of circle and have learned the importance of abiding by the guidelines of listening without trying to fix and knowing when a circle has run its course and should be closed with ceremony.

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

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