

Dear Blog; 😊

3-6-12

Today I thought I would share the Circle with you since this is one of the two days in the week that we get together here - (the other being Friday).

The Circle is the Native American spiritual gathering here in the prison, it is open to anyone with Indian ancestral ties or anyone who is interested in learning about and practicing the teachings of our Native ancestors.

We have a good following here in Norfolk Prison and for the most part those who participate do so with a positive heart. But there is no sense in trying to sugar coat the scene, we do after all, have many personality types in this place and conflicts do arise, yet I believe it's about how we choose to resolve any issue that best reflects who we are as people.

When you enter the circle

you first "smudge" yourself clean. This cleansing is performed using an abalone shell filled with dried herbs such as desert sage, cedar or what ever is indigenous to your area. The herbs are lit and left to smoke, you draw the smoke to you washing yourself in it and allowing any negative feelings or thoughts to flow away with the smoke, then using a bit of smoking sweet grass you wash in the warmth and love of the creator asking for guidance as you enter the circle. You move into the circle and move in a clockwise direction, this is the natural way of energy flow.

We sit and play the drum, which is the heartbeat of the people until we are all in, then the eldest member is handed the talking stick.

The talking stick gives the holder the floor and we all open ourselves to what that person has to say - everyone's words are important and deserve respect.

The talking stick is also known as the truth stick, when you have it you speak from your heart and share what ever you are moved to share. There is no rule aside from respect. Do not interrupt the speaker or carry on side conversations - the holder of the stick has the floor and deserves your attention. Once that person has said his or her piece he passes the stick to the next person.

You learn a lot of patience and develop a sense of empathy listening to other men speak of their troubles and you begin to realize that your thoughts will quiet as you actively listen to others.

The Circle is powerful medicine, I have seen many amazing things in my twenty plus years being involved.

Circles are dominant shapes in our lives even if we are unaware of them all - but think

about everything that is a circle molecules, atoms, planets, every thing spinning, revolving it's absolutely amazing how much influence the circle has on who and what we are.

It's no different for us in here, we are men who made horrible decisions in our lives.

Some of us have reached a point in our lives where we realize the pain we've caused and we are seeking some cathartic release and growth. For many that begins with spirituality, be it Christian muslim or Native American, we are looking for a higher power for strength and guidance, and yes, even peace.

I am not a monster, I am the man who grew from the monster.

The monster who grew from the boy in pain. The boy who grew from the monsters that constricted me - my own circle.