Circle Process
Use of circles and facilitators as circle keeper

- **Use of circles based on the premise that:**
  - each of us wants to be connected to others in a good way
  - we all share core values that indicate what connecting in a good way means
  - understanding that being connected in a good way and acting from our values are not always easy to do, especially during times of difficult conversations or conflict

- **Circle keepers**
  - don’t control the circle but help participants uphold its integrity
  - help to hold a space that clear, open, respectful and free - this means knowing when/how to interrupt, when to open and close the circle; when to take a break; how to remind people to adhere to the agreed-upon guidelines
  - are participants in the circle - not observers
  - don’t need to be a mediator or group facilitator - it is not a position of power - it is a responsibility to others to keep to the values of the circle

- **Talking piece**
  - an object of focus accepted and used by the group
  - provides greater opportunity for listening and reflection since a person has to wait for the talking piece to come around before speaking - more focus on what people are saying than on preparing an immediate response
  - Prevents one-on-one debates since people cannot respond out of turn.
  - Shared responsibility for discussion. Reinforces equality in the circle since it provides equal opportunity for all to participate.
  - Provides more opportunity for those who are often silent to be heard since they don’t have to compete with those who are often more verbal

- **Guidelines for the talking piece**
  - moves in one direction for each round – doesn’t have to start with the same person
  - Be respectful (even though you may not always agree)
  - Speak only when you have the talking piece
  - Be honest and speak only for yourself
  - Speak briefly so everyone who wants to has an opportunity to speak
  - You can pass the talking piece without speaking if you choose