

Sharing Circles

A sharing circle is intended to be a safe space to speak one's heart and listen to others. The concept is based upon the Indigenous practices of open discussion and problem solving. It is a space that allows participants to speak openly about their thoughts and feelings. Those who join a sharing circle can hear about the impacts of topics or learnings on the lives of others, reflect on these messages, and process their own connections to the topics.

How does a Sharing Circle work?

Typically a group will convene in a circle form seated on the ground. The Circle Keeper will start the session by presenting a token, such as a feather or message stick, and only the person who is holding the token will speak. For these sharing circles at SER2025, we encourage that token be passed around the circle one time at the beginning, from person to person, for simple introductions. Being respectful to others and the time, a person holding the token can speak as long or as short as they wish and once they are finished, they will pass the token to another person who wants to speak. Sharing circles will follow Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed. Participants are welcome just to listen, or to speak if they are so inclined; there is no obligation to speak. The session can end once everyone decides the discussion can be closed. A Circle Keeper will open and close each circle; if a conversation isn't finished, members of the circle are welcome to reconvene later.

Guidelines

1. Follow the guidance of the Circle Keeper
2. Speak only when holding the token
3. Introduce yourself during the first round
4. Share openly and from your heart
5. Listen with attention and care to the words of others
6. Respect time by passing the token when you are ready
7. Indicate your interest to speak (to hold the token) and wait for your turn
8. You may join and leave the circle at any point, as long as you do so with respect, and, if needed, the acknowledgement of the Circle Keeper; silent acknowledgement (e.g. nodding to the Circle Keeper to indicate your departure) is welcome
9. There is no minimum number (other than 2) for a circle to happen. Ideally circles will not have more than 25-30 people; we will split into smaller circles if a large number of people attend any given session
10. There are designated themes for each session, but the conversations are organic and may shift outside of that scope
11. You are welcome to share your learnings with others who weren't there, but be conscientious that some comments shared in the circle may be best kept confidential; use your judgment wisely