

**Do you  
understand  
restorative  
justice?  
Neither  
do we!**

**A survivor-centered Indigenous  
approach to conflict resolution.**



meztli projects (operating out of Tongva land)

# Moving Towards Harmony

In this guide, you will find a template for facilitating a process to reintroduce harmony after harm has been identified by an individual or group.

As a disclaimer, you will not find the word “justice” beyond this introduction as we find that ending conflicts for the sole purpose of achieving justice, does not bring harmony to relationships, friendships, communities, and families. In addition, the use of the word justice is usually set in the context of a crime.

This guide will assist you in moving a conflict towards a process that can spark healing, reconciliation and an adherence to a communal path forward.

This process should focus on harm reduction while centering on the survivor/s.



## **Components To Include (Basics).**

- **Elder/s** (identified by the organizers)  
Respected individuals by all parties who can provide lived experience and grounding.
- **Private Space**  
Any space free of interruptions that can provide some comfort and basic amenities.
- **Facilitator/Mediator**  
An experienced individual that can build trust and encourage open communication.
- **Community Members**  
Each party will want and need allies to be present, but it is important to have individuals attend who have a stake in the outcome.
- **Community Agreements / Goals / Values**  
It is extremely important that all parties agree to the outcomes of these gatherings.



## Structure

We suggest a minimum of 4 circles, each lasting between 2-3 hours. Each circle should focus on a different component and allow time in between for participants to process. It is important that everyone commit and attend each circle. Begin each circle with setting intentions and end with recalling a set of values that links everyone together.

## Circles

### - **Circle 1: Identifying the harm**

Understanding that each individual will view harm from a different perspective it is key to analyze this from a survivors' and their allies' point of view.

### - **Circle 2: Processing**

Participants' own experiences can be triggered by these circles. This circle should make space to process those experiences. This helps build empathy for everyone participating.



## Structure

### - **Circle 3: Purging**

By far the hardest circle but a necessary space to begin the healing process. This circle is facilitated to allow participants to release unwanted feelings and energy. We ask that everyone be gentle and forgiving with each other.

### - **Circle 4: Community Agreements**

It is highly recommended to end this process with concrete steps for making amends. The individuals harmed should play a role in developing a set of agreements, requirements, and protocols to follow. That can include how the community-at-large is informed of what took place.

After this initial process, it is encouraged to provide space to evaluate progress and adherence to all agreements.



## **For participants (elders, allies, etc.)**

- We encourage a focus on harm free and harm reduction as a means of preventing punitive outcomes, retraumatizing survivors/victims, and further fracturing a community.
- In a survivor/victim-centered approach, the survivor/victim's wishes, safety, and well-being take priority in all matters and procedures.
- What is your set of values? Personal and communal.
- Prior to meeting analyze what these elements mean to you individually:
  - Elders
  - Family (blood and self-selected)
  - Familial connections
  - Community connections
  - Cultural connections
  - Spiritual connections



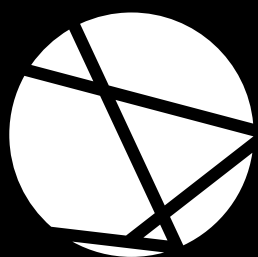
## For participants (elders, allies, etc.)

- Prior to participating prepare yourself:
  - Mentally
  - Physically
  - Emotionally
  - Spiritually
- Try and be well rested and sober in the days leading to the circles.
- Most importantly be kind, respectful and acknowledge the courage it takes to share and participate.
- Be an active listener.
- Practice confidentiality.
- Know your limits and when to ask for outside help such as an outside facilitator, interpretation, a larger circle of participants.



## Considerations

- Responsibility: How can one take responsibility for their actions?
- Healing: What does this look like and can healing be offered to the offender?
- Harm Free Space/s: At times, separation of the offender and the community is needed. What can this look like?
- Reintegration: A period for the offender to reflect, learn and heal before interacting with the community as a whole.
- Documentation: Collectively decide what is communicated to the community at large, and the varying degrees of who should be aware of the end results.
- Group Size: The size of the group impacts the end results. Be intentional with how many people participate.





## **Disclaimers**

This is a guide that can be used to address a variety of disputes, harm, and offenses but it is not a one size fits all process. The degree of harm caused can require longer or additional sessions.

Additionally, the best results come forth when everyone is a willing participant.

There exists other strategies out there to address harm without relying on the criminal justice system. Please consider what is best for your community.

