

D R A F T

COUNCIL CIRCLE

Participating in a campfire activity is a tradition of many camping programs. In the West Virginia 4-H program the evening campfire activity is called "Council Circle." The purposes of Council Circle are to help bring closure to the day, and to set the tone for the next day's activities. Council Circle brings 4-H members and volunteers together around a campfire to participate with their respective tribe: Cherokee, Delaware, Mingo, Seneca, or Big Feet.

The principle of Council Circle is borrowed from the Native Americans and is based on their customs. Native Americans took this opportunity to come together, reflect on the day, and set aside their differences. This time also provided a chance for inter-tribal discussions, as well as an opportunity to talk about upcoming issues or activities.

The Council Circle program is an integral educational component of the West Virginia 4-H camping program. The campfire brings a focus to the end of a busy day. The glow of the campfire, surrounded by darkness, helps to create a gradual quietness over almost any gathering of 4-H members. It is the perfect setting for meditation and imagination in songs, stunts, and stories. Council Circle provides a democratic way of arranging a group. Allowing for equalization of responsibility and opportunity, it is an ideal place to teach group spirit and cooperation.

Council Circle offers an opportunity for vast participation for all present, gives members the feeling of belong to an established group, imposes self-discipline through the "Laws of the Council," provides opportunity for group cooperation, and teaches loyalty to one's tribe. The traditions of the Council Circle program are those in which the campers understand, help to plan, and execute. This assists in their enjoyment, satisfaction, teamwork, and sense of accomplishment.

A successful Council Circle is one that has a well-planned program. Examples of traditional Council Circle activities include: lighting of the fire, claiming honors, scouting reports, challenges, funny stunts, songs and yells, inspirational stories, and the closing with the Omaha Tribal Benediction.

Council Circle is a place of energy and enthusiasm for 4-H members. It provides youths with a feeling of spirit, togetherness, and group cohesion. It also offers a chance for youths to excel by sharing hidden talent with fellow campers. Council Circle grants an opportunity for participation by all, ranging from the youngest to the oldest, and the newest to the most experienced camper.

Moore, H. J., (1984). A History of Indian Lore of Jackson's Mill, Morgantown, West Virginia: West Virginia University Extension Service.

United States Department of Agriculture, (1959). Step Into 4-H Camping.

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