

What can I expect to happen at a Native Justice Circle session?

- There will be two circle keepers, one male and one female, leading the circle session to guide participants in restoring relationships.
- Circle keepers are not judges; they do not decide the outcome. Those involved in the dispute will determine their solution. They will each set standards and be expected to adhere to those, and they will also design the consequences if they do not.
- Circle sessions are voluntary.
- There is zero tolerance for alcohol or drug use before or during the circle session.
- Each participant will get a chance to speak without interruption by other participants.
- Listen with respect means, not having side conversations, paying attention to nonverbal behavior, and not using mobile phones.
- It is OK to disagree.
- There will be no name-calling or personal attacks, shouting or use of curse words during sessions.
- Speak for yourself and not as the representative of any group.
- What is discussed during the session is confidential and shall not be shared with people not involved in the session.

Do you find that people always come to you for help with their problems? Are you the person that helps resolve issues within your family or circle of friends? You may be interested in becoming a circle keeper.

For more information and additional resources about Native Justice ,please visit our webpage at www.pokagonband-nsn.gov/government/tribal-court/native-justice

If you have any questions about the Pokagon Band Native Justice Initiative, please feel free to contact us at anytime.

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Native Justice Community Conflict & Dispute Resolution



What is Native Justice?

Native Justice, commonly referred to as peacemaking, is an alternative way to resolve disputes between citizens that does not involve the Tribal Court. It utilizes ceremonial traditions, talking circles, and peacemakers to bring people involved in disputes to common ground. This is something we already do in our community. We are formalizing the process to expand the utilization by those who may not otherwise have access.

American court systems focus on determining a winner and a loser, potentially destroying relationships. But peacemaking strives to preserve the tribal community and the relationships within.

Peacemaking exists worldwide in many native communities because it is the most community appropriate way to resolve disputes and conflicts. Since it is so effective with better outcomes, it has attracted the interest of legal scholars worldwide within the past couple of decades. Many other Indian tribes across the United States have revitalized it to complement the adversarial process courts which have been superimposed upon their communities. Additionally, many other court systems across the United States now require or involve some sort of alternative conflict resolution.

How do I request a Native Justice Circle Session?

Participation in a Native Justice Circle session is voluntary regardless of the referral source.

- Referrals may be self-initiated by participants involved in a matter, such as citizens, parents, self-referrals by youth or adults;
- Referrals may be submitted by a tribal program;
- The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Tribal Court may submit referrals.

Native Justice Circle sessions may be requested through the Native Justice support staff or by directly contacting the designated Native Justice point of contact.

The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Circle Keepers reserve the final decision to determine the ineligibility of matters that will be not handled by the forum on a case-by-case basis. Denials must be in writing and provided to the requesting participant or referral source by an authorized circle keeper.

What kind of issues are eligible for the Native Justice Forum?

Eligible Issues

- Neighborhood disputes
- Domestic disputes (non-criminal)
- Family disagreements
- Alcohol and/or substance abuse (ASA)(non-criminal)
- Interventions related to ASA, behavioral/mental health, gambling or bullying problems
- Estate disputes
- Minor juvenile matters, such as underage drinking or status offenses, e.g., truancy, curfew
- Other general disputes or conflicts as deemed appropriate for this forum

Non-Eligible Issues

- Violent cases, e.g., domestic violence/intimate partner violence (DV/IPV)
- Severe behavioral/mental health matters
- Matters involving vulnerable persons not capable of making their own decisions, e.g., children age 12 or younger or vulnerable adults
- Human resource matters
- Criminal matters, unless the Pokagon Tribal Court refers the case to the forum to address particular issues identified by the Court.