

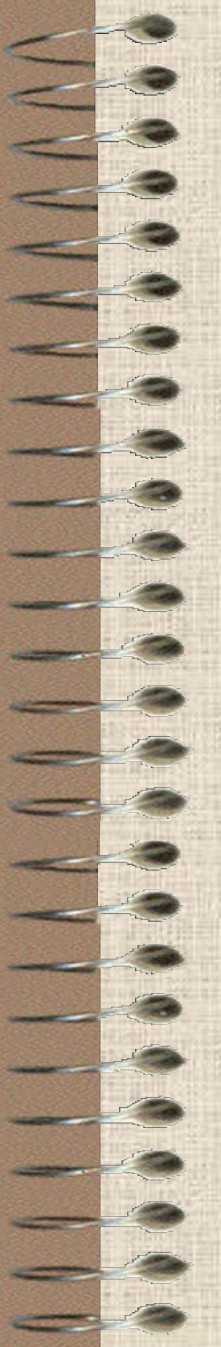
The image shows the cover of a spiral-bound notebook. The cover is a light beige or tan color with a fine, woven texture. A silver metal spiral binding is visible along the left edge. The title and author information are printed in a black, serif font in the center of the cover.

# A Beginner's Guide to Learning Circles

by Tracey Mollins

with notes from

Janice Brant, Arthur Bull,  
Guy Ewing and Tracy Westell

A silver metal spiral binding is visible on the left side of the page, looping through a series of holes in the paper. The paper has a light beige, textured appearance.

# Chapter 1

## Why not learning squares?

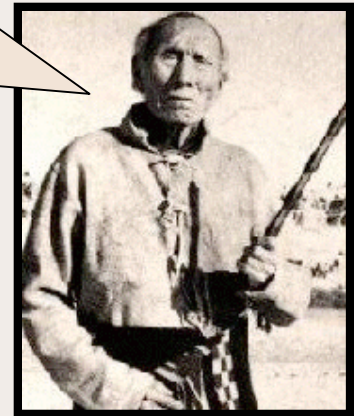
available at [www.nald.ca/learningcircles/bg.htm](http://www.nald.ca/learningcircles/bg.htm)

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## Why circles?

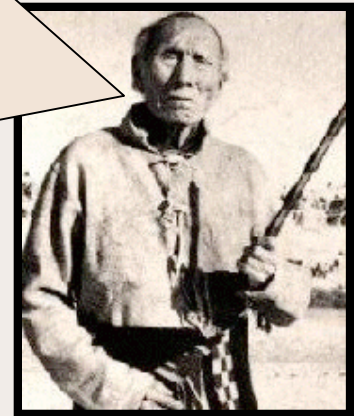
Here is one perspective:

Everything that an Indian does is in a circle,  
because the power of the world  
always works in a circle,  
and everything tries to be round.



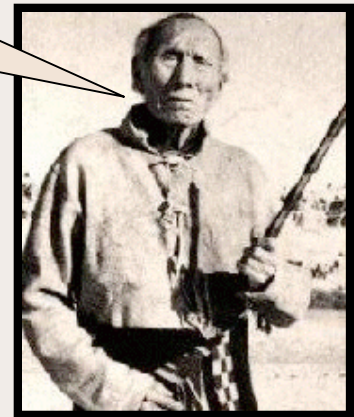
Black Elk

The sky is round, and the earth is round  
like a ball,  
and so are all the stars.  
The wind, in its greatest power, whirls.  
Birds make their nests in circles,  
for their religion is the same as ours.  
The sun comes forth  
and goes down again in a circle.  
The moon does the same,  
and both are round.  
Even the seasons form a great circle  
in their changing,  
and always come back again  
to where they were.



**Black Elk**

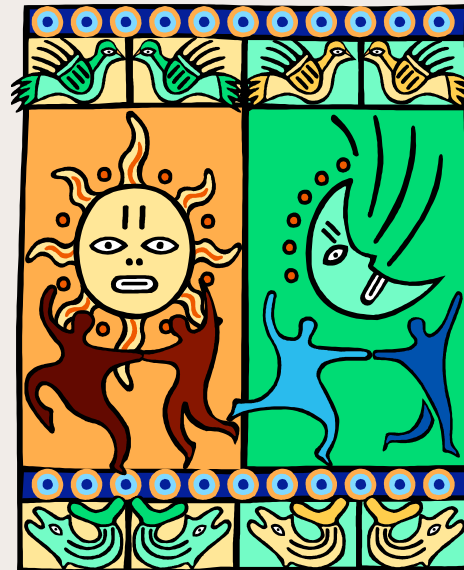
The life of a man is a circle  
from childhood to childhood,  
and so it is in everything  
where power moves.



**Black Elk**

From Indigenous learning groups,  
we learned that in Indigenous communities  
“circle” has a particular meaning.

A circle is a place that  
supports and enhances  
a harmonious state of  
co-existence, peace,  
good mind, and strength.



The circle itself is understood to create a sacred space of equality and unity that can be applied to a variety of situations from learning circles to justice circles.



Many traditional teachings around circles focus on helping individuals to understand and develop qualities such as respect, kindness, honesty, sharing, strength, courage, wisdom, and humility within them.





There is no beginning or end in a circle, and therefore no one individual is ahead or behind another. Circles foster and build community, inclusion, sharing, and listening.



Every participant has something to contribute, whether it is their words, listening ears, or a reassuring smile.



Using a circle in supports our most basic human needs to be seen and heard, to feel safe, to belong, and experience acceptance for who we are and the gifts we bring.

