

The Four Intentions of Council

From *The Way of Council* by Jack Zimmerman

Speaking from the Heart

- Take this literally. Imagine your words emerging from a mid-chest region, rather than from the mouth.
- This creates a tangible feeling of expansion and a sense of greater connectedness to others in the circle
- You are more likely to feel non-attached to personal positions, non-defensive, and committed to recognizing the truth of the circle as a whole.
- Be as honest as your feeling of safety in the circle permits.
- Saying something that really matters: you have the circle's undivided attention. Use it wisely.
- Simplicity and passion are two attributes that support heartfelt expression.

Listening from the Heart

- The success of council is largely determined by the quality of listening in the circle.
- Listening from the heart invariably helps the listener feel more connected to the speaker, even if there is strong disagreement.
- Train the whole body to listen more consciously through persistent self-witnessing.
- Imagine that the speaker's words are entering your mid-chest area rather than your ears, and take a few deep breaths while holding the image.
- Listening from the heart is energizing. If you find yourself growing restless or bored, you're probably not listening devoutly.
- One of the few acceptable interruptions is "Can you please speak up?"

Being of Lean Expression

- Be brief.
- Council is an excellent arena to improve one's ability to be concise and to find words and images that enliven our stories and statements.
- The underlying challenge is to find a means of expression that serves both the teller and the circle.
- Leader must make the theme of the council "crystal clear" from the beginning. Restate the theme as a question with people adjacent to you before beginning.
- Is there a willingness to give honest reflection to those who ramble?
- Sometimes long stories will induce a shared surrender that may produce a new understanding of the story's meaning or bring about a new ending for the teller.

Spontaneity

- Set the intention to not rehearse what is to be said.
- Preparing an agenda while others are speaking limits the ability to listen attentively and to speak from the heart.
- Spontaneity allows one's more intuitive voice to speak.
- Hold the stick silently for a short while and let the presence of the circle and the moment evoke what needs to be said.
- This dissolves habitual reactions and attachment to long-held positions.
- Trust that you will say exactly and uniquely what the circle needs to hear from you in that moment.
- Perseverance leads to the realization that everything that feels important at the time does not have to be spoken.
- Question to ask self: Will speaking this serve me, serve the circle, or serve the greater good?