

Elder Teaching - Sharing Circle Teaching

Speaker: Elder Blu Waters

Before contact with Europeans, Indigenous people on Turtle Island were over 90 million strong, and there was a thriving way of life happening here. We had our ways of being and our own governance systems in place. We had our own ways of dealing with illness. We had engineers, scientists, star knowledge keepers, and mathematicians. We had our own way of life, and when the colonizers landed here, they brought different concepts to us. The problem was, they believed they were superior and that we needed to learn their ways of doing things and forget about our own. What was initially offered to us as a suggestion, soon became forced upon us. They made laws that prohibited our own practices and our own ways of being. We had no rights to vote, no rights to gather, no rights to do our ceremonies, to carry our sacred items, and to practice our culture. They did not understand our ways of doing things, and they did not want to understand them. They came with the intention of conquering us, remaining superior over us, and bringing in hierarchical ways of being. One of the first things they took from us was our circle form of governance, because they could see how powerful and inclusive that form of decision-making is. The circle is a continuum. There is no beginning and there is no end. There is nothing above the circle, nothing below it. There is no one behind the circle, there is no one inside it. There is no one above it, and there is no one below it. We are all equal as human beings when we come together in the circle. When decision-making is undertaken in this way, all perspectives can be received, talked about, and understood, then we can come to a mutual agreement on whatever it is that we are discussing, or trying to navigate. It is a continuum of

equality, and it is a way of coming together where we are not coming in with preconceived judgments or privileges. Rather we all come as human beings to sit down and share the beautiful gifts that each of us carries.