

# A Guide to Facilitating Indigenous Cancer Survivors and Caregivers Support Circle

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American Indian  
Cancer Foundation®



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## **Boozhoo, Hą́, Mihtohseenia (Hello) Relatives,**

**We are delighted you have come across this guide designed for community members through our Indigenous values of respect, patience, listening, generosity, harmony, trust, understanding, and community. Designed from a space of understanding what cancer survivors and caregivers have gone through during their journey, seeking to create a safe and supportive meeting space while developing a strong connection to one another and a knowing that survivors and caregivers do not have to explain themselves or their experience. Inside, you will find resources and advice on initiating cancer survivors' and caregivers' support circles within your community. We hope you will find them helpful.**



# SUPPORT CIRCLES

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A guide to successfully facilitating your own cancer support circle





### WHAT IS A SUPPORT CIRCLE?

Support circles provide a safe space for discussion on cancer related topics. It is also a place where people can share their lived experiences, learn from each other, share resources, and offer comfort and support.

### WHY PARTICIPATE IN A SUPPORT CIRCLE?

- Foster connections with family, community, and other cancer survivors and caregivers
- Encourage and foster cultural engagement
- Offer solutions for daily challenges
- Create a safe environment for emotional discussions
- Establish a sense of community with individuals facing similar experiences

## GUIDE 1

### WHERE CAN I HOLD A SUPPORT CIRCLE?

- Virtual
- In-person
- Hybrid (combo of virtual and in-person)

We encourage attendance to be in-person to create connections with attendees.

### WHO SHOULD JOIN THE CIRCLE?

- Cancer Survivors
- Caregivers
- Family

The recommended support circle size should not exceed 10 people.

# FACILITATORS & CO-HOSTS

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You may be wondering if you would be a good facilitator or co-host. Here is a quick list to help you decide if you would be a good fit for either of these support positions:

- ☒ Are you an Indigenous cancer survivor, caregiver, or community member?
- ☒ Would you feel comfortable leading sensitive conversations on cancer?
- ☒ Are you vested in providing a safe and supportive space for cancer survivors and caregivers?
- ☒ Can you commit to hosting at least one monthly cancer support circle for a year?

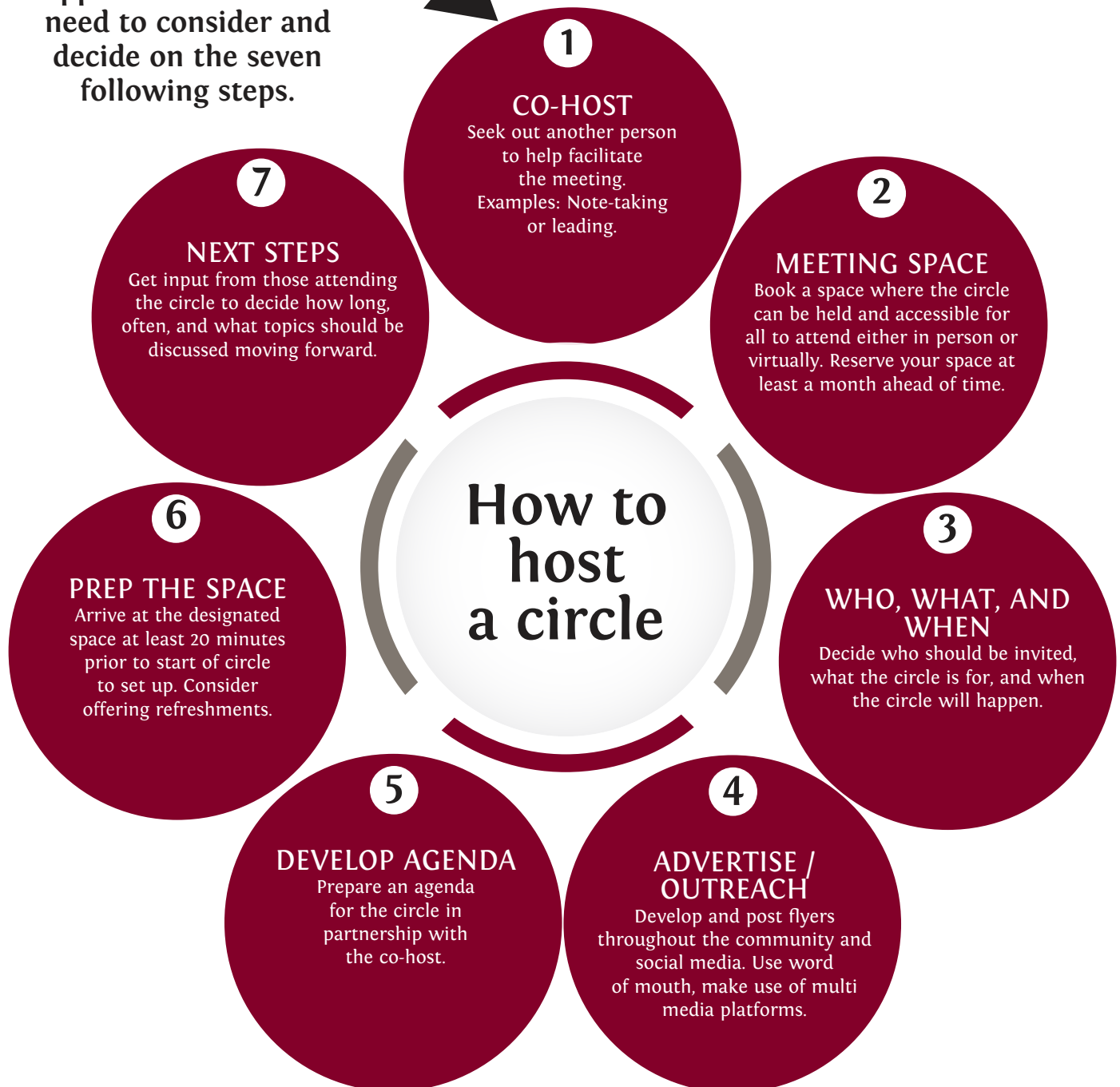
If you answered yes to these questions, you may be an excellent fit to facilitate or co-host a cancer survivor and caregivers support circle.

If you answered no to any of these questions, don't worry. Consider joining a cancer survivors and caregivers support circle to learn more, do research online, and talk to survivors and caregivers. It may take time to feel comfortable with the component of facilitating or co-hosting. Revisit these questions often to see if your answers may change.

## GUIDE 2

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Now, it's time to think about hosting a support circle. You will need to consider and decide on the seven following steps.



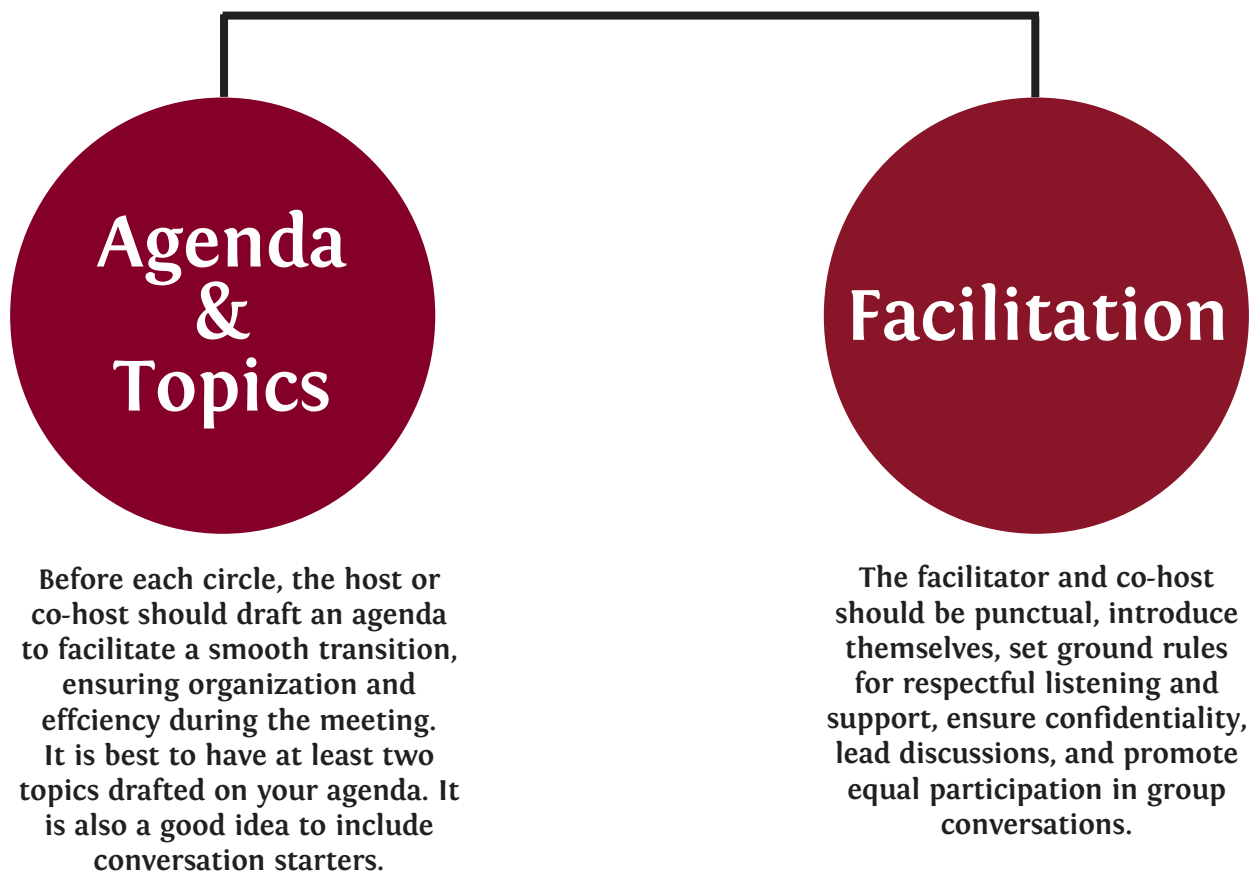


## GUIDE 3

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### What do I need to facilitate a cancer support circle!

Congratulations! You made it. You're almost ready to facilitate your support circle. You'll want to prepare your agenda and topics at least two days before your meeting to allow yourself time to edit and make necessary changes. During this time, you may also want to contact the site staff where your circle will be held to ensure you have all the room details, time, and date correct. This will allow for ease of mind and a smooth transition to the meeting.



# AGENDA TOPICS AND CONVERSATION STARTERS EXAMPLES

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## Agenda Topics:

- Nutrition (traditional foods)
- Traditional healing methods
- Physical Activity (traditional activities)
- Coordination of appointments
- Support systems
- Mental health

## Conversation Starters:

- How do you offer self-love, self-respect, and honoring yourself?
- What are some ways we can create a sense of community together?
- How has your culture/community played a role in your survivorship journey?



# CANCER SUPPORT CIRCLE

## MEETING AGENDA

Location ..... Ex. Admin Building

Date ..... Ex. 6/3/24

Time ..... Ex. 5p.m.

Opening: ..... Ex. Offering a smudge and prayer

### Topics to be Discussed

Topic 1 ..... Ex. Intentions and connections

- a. .... Ex. What brings you here today?
- b. .... Ex. Share what you hope to get out of our meeting today?
- c. .... Ex. What centers you? What does connection mean to you?

Topic 2 ..... Ex. Nutrition

- a. .... Ex. How has/hasn't traditional foods played a role in your health?
- b. .... Ex. What foods do you find help you to feel your best? Before/during/after treatment?
- c. .... Ex. Does food play a role in your overall wellness journey?

Topic 3 .....

- a. ....
- b. ....
- c. ....

Topic 4 .....

- a. ....
- b. ....
- c. ....



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# CANCER SUPPORT CIRCLE

## MEETING AGENDA

**Closing:** Ex. Recapping the meeting sharing what you heard, felt, and saw.  
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.....

**Next Meeting Date:** Ex. Provide the next date of the cancer support circle - it is a good idea to always have at least two meetings set up ahead of time.  
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**Discussion topics?** Ex. Ask folks about topics they want to discuss at the next meeting. If there aren't suggestions, throw some ideas out based on today's conversation.  
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**Notes:** Ex. You can use this space to jot down notes from the meeting. Creating a notes space can help guide you to creating the next agenda or help you remember things you might have forgotten happening during the meeting.  
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# CANCER SUPPORT CIRCLE MEETING AGENDA

Location .....

Date .....

Time .....

Opening: .....

Topics to be Discussed

Topic 1 .....

a. ....

b. ....

c. ....

Topic 2 .....

a. ....

b. ....

c. ....

Topic 3 .....

a. ....

b. ....

c. ....

Topic 4 .....

a. ....

b. ....

c. ....



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# CANCER SUPPORT CIRCLE MEETING AGENDA

Closing: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Next Meeting  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Discussion  
topics? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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## GUIDE 4

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### What are the next steps?

Amazing job! You did it. Give yourself a pat on the back. You held a successful support circle. Now, it's time to plan your next support circle.

#### **1** **Reflect**

Revisit the meeting and read the notes. Think about the discussions that were had during the meeting. What are some changes that would be beneficial for future support circles?

#### **2** **Plan**

It's time to plan your next support circle. This is when you look for additional people to facilitate the support circle. Do you want to modify your agenda? Maybe you want to implement a smudge, or offer traditional tobacco at the beginning of the meeting. Remember, these meetings can be tailored to your community.

#### **3** **Do**

Now that you have spent time planning, you can act. Change can be made to agendas, secure a new location if needed, distribute a flyer for your circle, etc.

#### **4** **Act**

Continue to host your support circle!

# Thank You

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Miigwech, Pilámayaye, Kepiihcihi (Thank you) for supporting our relatives. Additional resources and modules will be developed to enhance cancer survivors, caregivers, support circle facilitators, and co-hosts.



To learn more about AICAF and our resources, visit: [www.AICAF.org](http://www.AICAF.org)

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