



ORIENTATION GUIDE

Meeting Dates: Upcoming Quarter (Fall 2023):

Tuesdays, biweekly

6:30pm - 8:30pm (staff will be available on site from 6:15-8:45pm)

September 12, 26

October 10, 24

November 7, 21

December 5, 19

Location:

**Northwestern Ontario Innovation Centre Board Room,
(Confederation College campus)
2400 Nipigon Rd, Thunder Bay, ON P7C 4W1
+1 866-768-6682**

Group facilitator:

**Louise McKissick, BFA, MFA, MSW, RSW
(office) 622-3884 or (cell) 807-620-8549**

Cost of Group

Group participants are required to pay a fee of \$160 and preregister for the quarter (\$20 per group session). No one will be denied services because they are unable to pay; please let the office know if you require financial aid to attend. Group members who are Indigenous and are status card holders are eligible to have their counselling paid for **through NIHB** (Non-Insured Health Benefits). NIHB is a program which provides mental health services to Indigenous clients who have status. If you would like your group counselling paid for through NIHB, please contact our office and provide us with your status card number.

How to Join the Group

New group members are required to attend an initial group orientation meeting with the facilitator either online through our booking system, or by calling (807) 622-3884 or emailing admin@wellspringnorth.com. This meeting will take approximately 30 minutes and is designed to answer any questions the prospective new group member might have, as well as to determine if the group is suitable for the needs of the client.

Principles

Confidentiality is key. By knowing that the information shared will stay private, group attendees are encouraged to open up and be vulnerable. To that end, anything shared and/or discussed in the group cannot leave the group. This includes disclosing who attends, when they attend, and what they may have said in the group. This rule is of the utmost importance.

The Circle of Extraordinary Men is a diverse group of human beings who identify as men. This group varies all across the spectrum in terms of racial and/or cultural identity, age, sexuality, (dis)ability, physical and mental health, socioeconomic status, educational levels, religious and/or spiritual beliefs, political beliefs, etc. It is important that the group provide a welcoming and nonjudgemental home for all those who identify as men who have survived sexual trauma. This is not a group for perpetrators of sexual abuse, it is for survivors.

Continuity is important for individual development. The regular attendance of the same people at group meetings provides a sense of continuity, and thus safety for participants. Please be aware that your participation is not simply for your own growth, but very much impacts the growth of others. Everyone is in some way an integral part of the whole. Participation is showing up, and being present, and taking personal responsibility to

the group to communicate needs. If you cannot come for whatever reason, please let the group facilitators know in advance.

Speaking from personal experience, by saying “I feel”, or “in my experience” is an important way for group members to signal to others that they are speaking from their personal experience. The bedrock of personal experience is real and personal, allowing people to really connect to the unique experience of “you”. Please avoid being opinionated, judgemental, or political. We all have our own unique perspectives to bring to the group, coloured by our own unique experiences. All feelings, thoughts behaviours, and experiences are valid and/or understandable on some level. Adopt a nonjudgemental stance in your listening.

Sometimes trauma survivors get triggered, and that is ok. It is part of the healing process. If you do need to leave the group to manage your feelings, please check in with us to reassure us that you are ok as soon as possible. We will also reach out to you to ensure that you are ok. It helps to talk it out and process these triggers in the group whenever possible.

Action is important. One of the benefits of the group is to support the action of the individuals. It is important that members help one another focus and if necessary make commitments to each other to specific actions which will further their development.

The Meeting Process

The group is structured as follows:

- **Greetings**
- **Announcements**
- **Housekeeping and Administrative Matters**
- **Talk Time (10 - 15 mins maximum for each man)**

An alarm is set at the 10-15 minute mark. Men can speak for a couple additional minutes afterwards to wrap up. If the group is smaller, the group participants can agree that the time can be increased. If the group is larger, the time can be decreased. Afterwards, if there is additional time available, group participants can volunteer to speak again. When it is their turn to participate, men may ask for help, guidance, encouragement, feedback, or simply validation and the opportunity “to get something off their chest.” Please feel free to ask for whatever it is you need from the group. Some men may choose not to share at a given meeting – this is fine as

long as it is not their usual mode – men are in attendance to share as well as support others.

When a man shares what he has brought to the group, the other men should listen carefully until his is finished. Interruptions can be politely and gently made in order to clarify the understanding of what is being said or meant. If a man is not really speaking about his own feelings but merely relaying events impartially, he can be prompted by others – e.g. “But how did that make you feel?” or “What were you feeling at the moment?”

The man with ‘time’ can request what he want from the other men. This may take the form of reactions, impressions, and possibly even advice, though this should not be done as “I think you should do . . .” but rather as “What has worked for me is . . .” or “When I am in that situation I . . .”

If you have any questions, concerns, or feedback concerning the group, please contact the group facilitators via email or cell phone to discuss. They value your feedback, and want to hear from you how to better facilitate the group so that it is an excellent experience for all!

Thank you / Meegwitch