



This month's circle tale comes to us from Kit Wilson, longtime colleague and friend from Arizona. Kit first attended a Circle Practicum with us on Whidbey Island in 1996. She had helped to organize an Arizona Grandmother's Council and was looking for some structure for the emerging organization. In this piece she shares some of the history of this loose-knit organization, which offers insights into how circle has been brought into their gatherings. The October 2009 Gathering, which will be held at the Pocket Sanctuary near Tubac, Arizona, is full for this year, but interested women can contact B. Campbell at [bluechablis@comcast.net](mailto:bluechablis@comcast.net) to be put on the newsletter mailing list.

## **Circle Tale, September 2009 Who are the Grandmothers? (Or What Did I Get Myself Into?)**

We begin with a few Riddles:

We call ourselves THE GRANDMOTHERS, but some of us are Not biological Grandmothers.

We call ourselves a Council of Elder Women, but not all of us are old and some of us are still working on being "Elders".

We don't have rules, but we do have some fiercely held traditions.

We are Not a legal entity of any sort: not an organization, non profit or not-for-profit although we are NOT for Profit.

There are no dues or membership cards. So there's nothing to JOIN.

You get to be a GRANDMOTHER by sitting in a Circle with some of us.

Or coming to a GATHERING with a lot of us.

And you begin to feel you Belong. (We're good at making you feel you Belong.)

Our Gathering fees are based solely on the cost of lodging, food, and incidentals. Any extra contributions go toward scholarships. We don't like to turn women away because of money.

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In the beginning there were 16 of us. We had a leader whose name was MARY DIAMOND. Mary was a visionary and she had a Very Big Dream.

She heard the Native American saying: When the Grandmothers Speak the World Will Heal. And she said: "I'll bet I can help make that happen."

Mary sent out a call to all the elder women she could think of. She said, "Let's form a Council. Come to my place: Cielo En Tierra. In the desert in southern Arizona. Come in October for the week of the Full Moon."

16 of us showed up. We sat in a circle. We danced. We sang. We drummed. We wove a tapestry and made poetry. The full moon rose and we watched her come over the horizon and we created a ceremony for her coming. Grandmother Moon. We wrote a letter to the President of the United States. We said "We are a Council of Grandmothers. We are working on Speaking Out So the World Will Heal."

That was 1994. And that's how we began.



After that first year synergy took charge. We care a lot about the Earth, so when we say our growing has been Grass Roots we mean that quite literally. Even when we are in the cities we are deeply rooted in Mother Earth.

Here in Arizona we have come together in Council every October since 1994.

More and more women came to the Gatherings and then more Gatherings were birthed. First along the Gulf Coast. And then a Council in the Heartland. And a Gathering in England. And one in Texas. Small Circles started using Grandmother Circle principals.

Our Newsletter is part of the glue that holds us together.

We have modeled ourselves on the ancient ways of Elders all around the world. Sitting in a Circle, speaking our truth when we hold the Talking Piece. This is one of our Traditions.

Early on we decided to use Christina Baldwin's book **Calling the Circle** as the blueprint for our Circles. We use the principles taught by Christina and Ann Linnea.

For our workshops and ceremonies Grandmothers who sign up for a Gathering may propose to lead an event. We never pay presenters. You must attend the full Gathering to lead an event.

Small Circle facilitators are Grandmothers who have experienced our Circles many times and trained themselves more deeply in Circle practices and principles.

We rely on Spirit to guide us. (You'll see how that works.) Our leadership rotates and emerges organically. No elections. No Roberts Rules of Orders. Our Planning Circle volunteers come together for a year. For the rest we let Spirit and Chaos Theory (e.g. Confusion precedes integration) do the work.

If you don't understand something just ask. (We might not understand it either.)

If you were drawn to join us we already love you.

Welcome, Welcome, Welcome to the mystery and magic of a Grandmother Gathering. Because you have chosen to join us this year one more beautiful voice has been added to the healing of the world.

*If you have a tale to tell, contact the PeerSpirit office and we'll help you share it.*

*For more information on many applications of circle, visit our web site at [www.peerspirit.com](http://www.peerspirit.com) and subscribe to our monthly Circle Tale newsletter. Your e-mail address will **not** be shared or used by anyone other than PeerSpirit, and you can unsubscribe yourself at any time.*