

televëda

A Trauma-Aware, Culturally Grounded Redesign of the Virtual Talking Circle

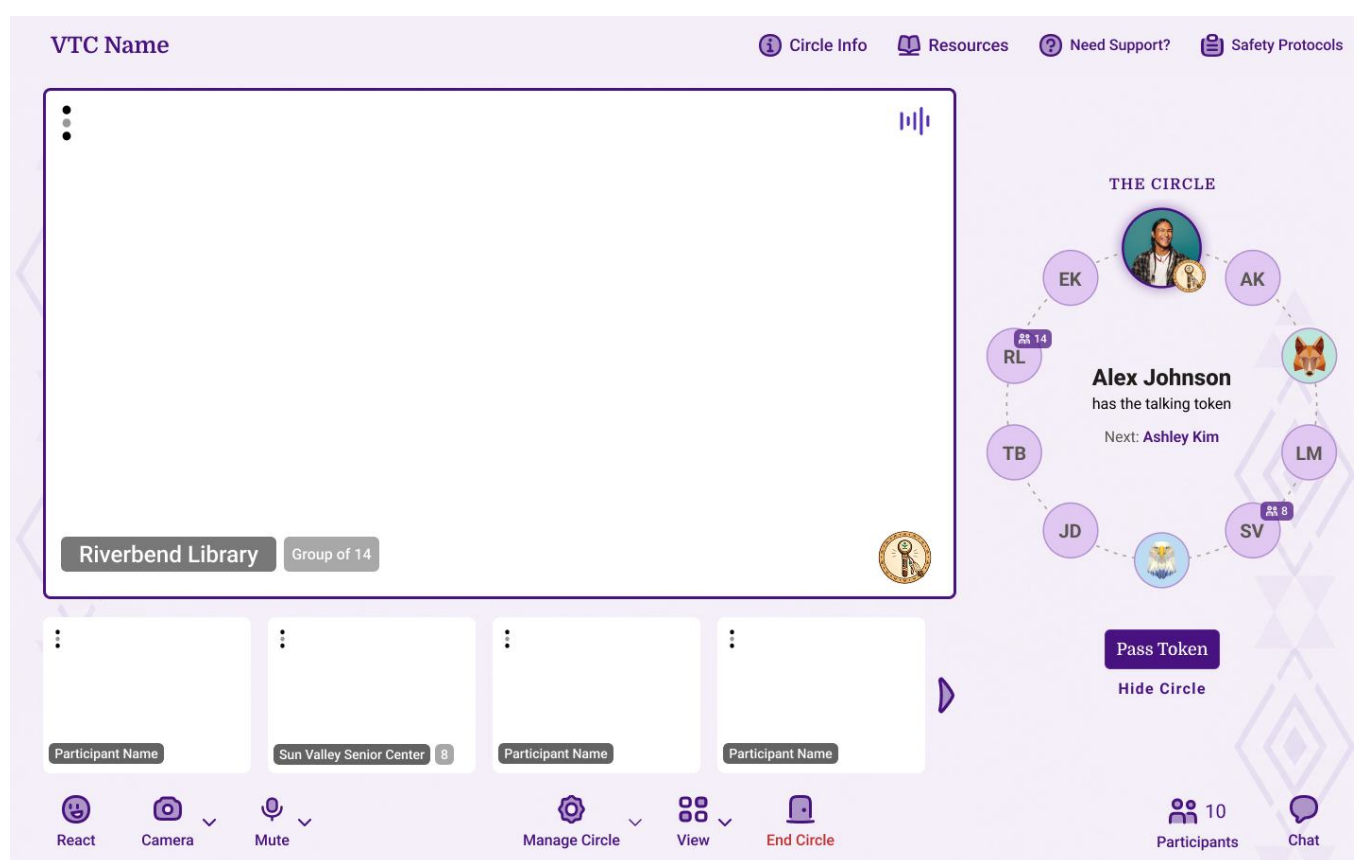
August 19, 2026

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Purpose

For any questions regarding this report, please email mayank@televeda.com

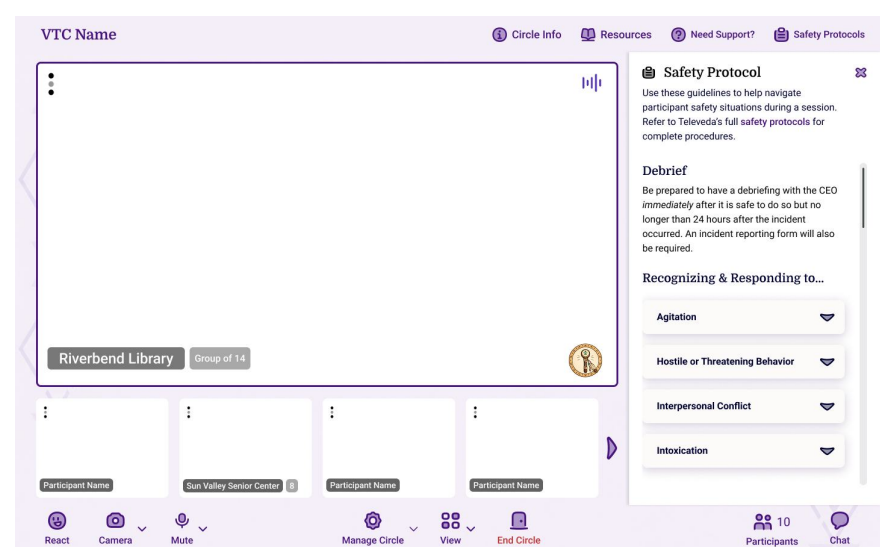
This document summarizes the rationale and design approach for the Virtual Talking Circle (VTC) redesign, grounded in awareness of historical and intergenerational trauma, respect for Tribal sovereignty, and cultural identity. Informed by facilitator and participant feedback, the redesign addresses usability, accessibility, and engagement needs across virtual and hybrid settings, with a focus on trauma awareness and safety, data collection and resource coordination, and culturally responsive participant experience. Together, these lenses support a more user-centered experience that fosters trust, connection, belonging, and the evolving needs of Veterans.



Trauma Awareness/Safety, Data Collection & Resource Coordination

1. Safety Protocols

Facilitators need clear, easily accessible guidance when navigating sensitive or critical situations during a session. The Safety Protocols feature brings established safety guidance directly into the VTC, providing facilitators quick access to key response steps and contact



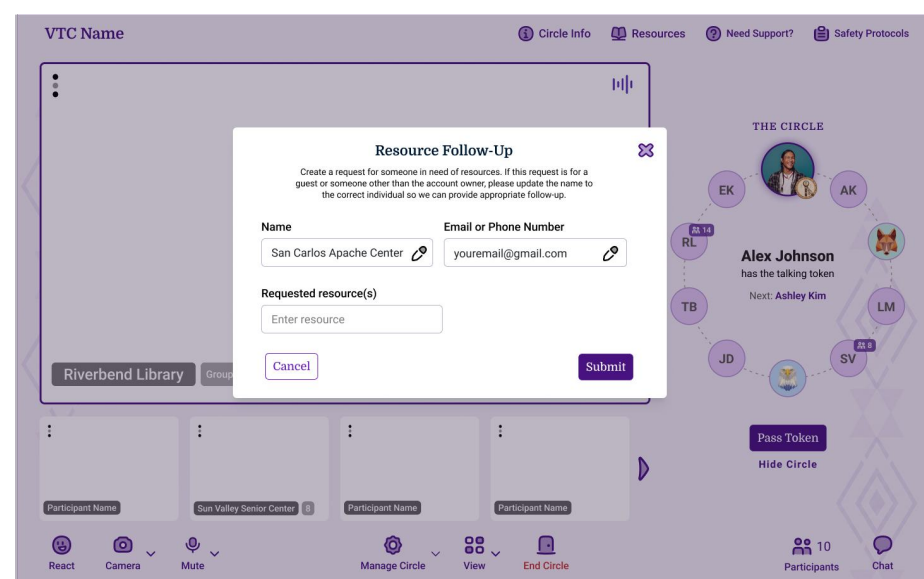
information when needed. This lightweight tool provides an additional layer of in-platform support for established safety practices, complementing ongoing facilitator training and supporting more consistent responses during crisis situations.

2. Need Support?

Creating a sense of safety and may foster opportunities to request support. Giving participants choice in how and when they seek support within a VTC session communicates their needs and timetable are central. In addition to existing support contact information, the Need Support? feature provides participants with a discreet, private way to message a facilitator or request a follow-up call after the session. This helps reduce barriers to seeking support and allows participants to access help in a way that feels comfortable and appropriate to their needs.

3. Follow Up / Resource Request

Supporting participant safety extends beyond the session itself. To better support facilitators in documenting participant needs, reduce ambiguity around next steps, and provide clearer guidance for appropriate follow-up, distinct Follow-Up Request and Resource Referral flows were created for use during and after a session. This separation aims to improve clarity and accuracy in capturing urgent versus resource-related needs.



Culturally Responsive Participant Experience

1. Profile/Kinship Cards

Profile/kinship cards were introduced to bring greater identity and personal representation into the VTC experience. Participants can choose how they represent themselves through customizable elements reflecting their Tribal and military identities, community connections, and personal preferences. This creates opportunities for participants to learn more about one another, build familiarity and trust, and strengthen belonging within the group. This addition also creates opportunities for individuality while increasing a sense of belonging within the community/group.

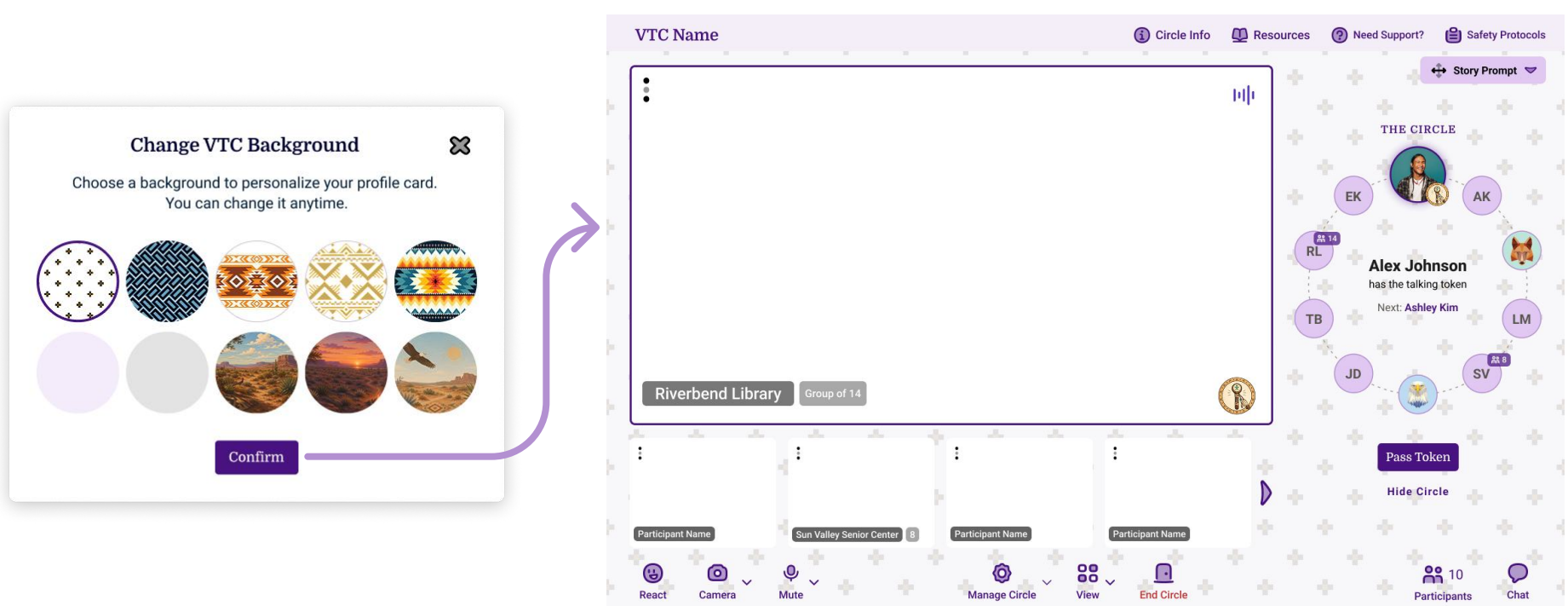


2. Talking Circle & Talking Token

Preserving the meaning and intentionality of the Talking Circle while adapting it to a virtual environment was a key consideration in the redesign. The updated experience gives the Talking Circle greater visual presence alongside participant video. Facilitator-led Token passing helps preserve the natural flow of conversation while reducing the burden on participants to manage the interaction themselves.

3. VTC Background

Extending cultural representation into the VTC environment creates additional opportunities to foster identity and belonging. Customizable backgrounds allow the visual setting of a session to better reflect the community and context of the group, while introducing greater personalization, warmth, and visual delight into the experience.



4. Visual Design

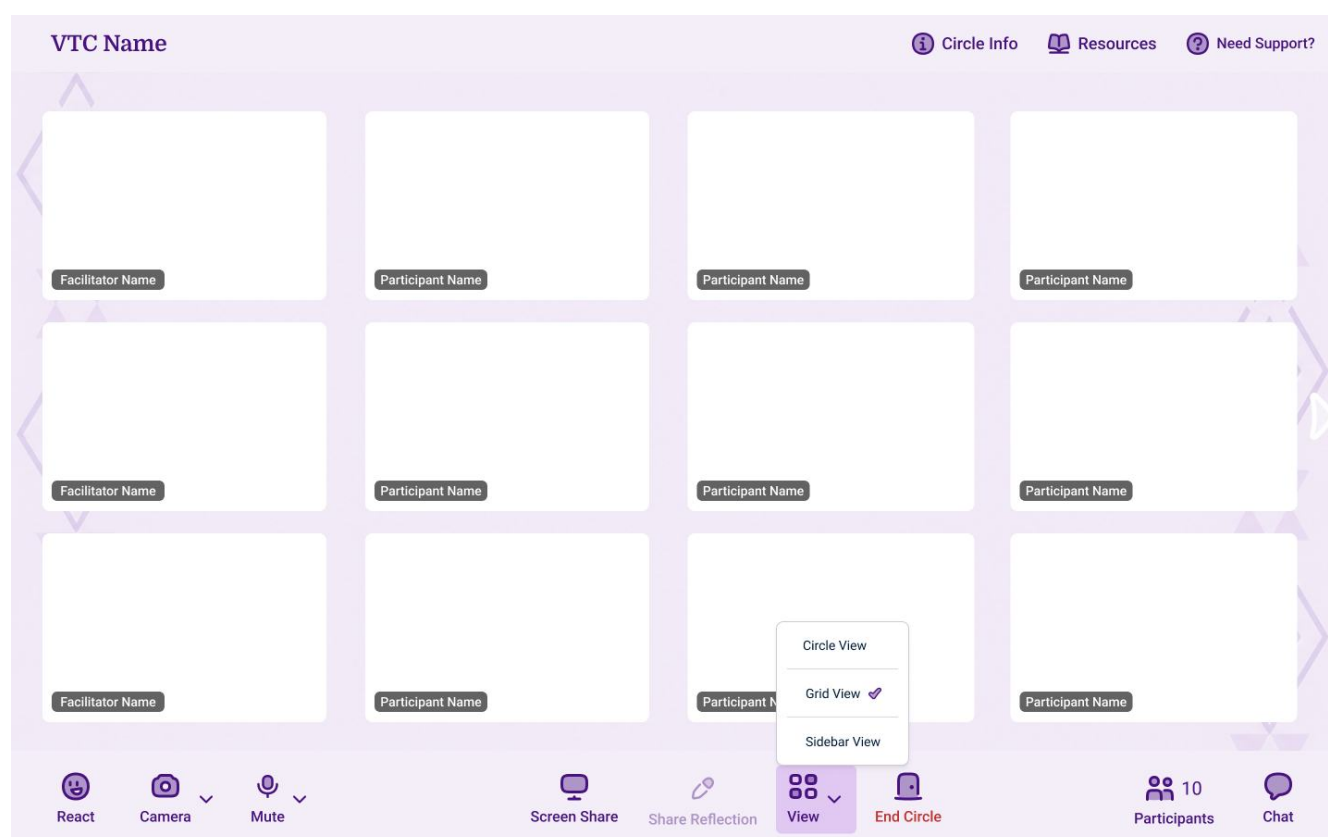
The visual design was refreshed to create a more welcoming, contemporary, and cohesive VTC experience. A softer color palette, culturally grounded visual elements, and lighter tones bring warmth and calm to the interface while creating greater consistency with the broader platform. The redesigned Talking Circle and animated Token movement add visual interest and a sense of movement to the experience, reinforcing the circle as a central element of the session.

5. Feedback Survey Launch

The redesigned Reflection feature balances system automation with facilitator control, allowing facilitators to introduce reflection at an appropriate point in the session while reducing the need to manually manage the process. Participants who do not complete a Reflection are reminded in the waiting room before their next session, creating another opportunity to respond and improve completion rates.

6. View Layout

Participant feedback and usability findings highlighted the need for larger video views and greater participant visibility to support connection within the group. The redesigned View Layout prioritizes the active speaker, Talking Token holder, or pinned participant while allowing users to choose between Talking Circle, Grid, and Sidebar views. Responsive layouts maximize available screen space across desktop and mobile, creating a clearer, more comfortable, and engaging viewing experience.



Value for Tribes, VA Offices, VA Sites

The VTC redesign provides Tribal Nations with a more **culturally grounded, trauma-aware, and accessible virtual environment** that supports Veteran trust, connection, and participation. It demonstrates a **research-informed and measurable approach to continuous improvement**, with opportunities to track engagement, retention, participant feedback, and program impact over time.