**Council Fire Opening Ceremony #1**

**The Four Winds-version 1**

**Overview:** Council Fire Openings set the stage for a great and memorable council fire for your program. It is written to be used at the beginning of a Longhouse council fire gathering. Featured here is an ode to the 4 Winds. Although the physical setup is somewhat complex, it is especially striking when performed at Longhouse ceremonies.

There are a number of props required (mentioned within) as follows:

* 4 unlit large torches (torch cans) on tall stake poles. They are placed around the main fire at the 4 points of the compass, inside of where the Longhouse membership will stand.
* 4 handheld torches, long enough to reach the openings/top of the torch poles. On the handle of each torch are 3 long strands (about 12”) of gold cord.
* The ashes of past council fires will be carried by the Sachem or Elder of the Longhouse. These ashes are carried in a ceremonial pouch or vessel.

**Participants:**

* Chief: Ceremonial Leader
* Great Elder (or Sachem)
* 4 Torchbearers have been pre-selected to come forward at the council fire gathering.

**Relevant Ceremonial Pieces:** You may wish to incorporate this ceremony with other ceremonial components to form your full ceremony. The following are basic suggestions. Your creativity is your limit.

* Parade to Ceremonial Location
* Inductions
* Officer Inductions
* Special Awards
* Ceremonial Closing

**OPENING CEREMONY**

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| Chief | *(Standing before the unlit council fire)* Oh great fire, long go when our forefathers fought the animals, you were our protection. From the cruel winds of winter, you were our warmth. From the darkness of night, you kept us safe. During all the ages, your mysterious flame has been a symbol from the Great Spirit to his children. So tonight, we light our fire in remembrance of the Great Spirit’s gift to us.(**Sachem Indian Name**), our Sachem, I summon you to bring forth the spirit of our forefathers out of the ashes of council fires past, and have them join us for this Longhouse council. |
| Sachem | *(Comes forward and slowly walks around the edge of the unlit council fire, spreading ashes to the ground.)* |
| Sachem | Nee-Ko, Gah-Gis-Dah Yen Duk… which means “other council fires were here before ours” |
| Chief | (**Sachem Indian Name**), we ask you to light our council fire.  |
| Sachem | *(Has prearranged how he will light the fire. Fire is lit.)* |
| Chief / ALL | *(Chief shouts the Longhouse salutation, then all repeat/shout in approval)* |
| Chief | Torchbearers of the Four Winds, come forward! |
| Torchbearers | *(Step forward holding their unlit torches.)* |
| Chief | Go to the edge of the fire and light your torches, then stand next to the Great Wind you will represent. *(PAUSE FOR TORCHBEARERS TO COMPLETE THIS)* These torches stand for our symbol fires and from these are twelve golden strands that are known as the law of the woods. |
| Chief | *(As he calls each wind, he will stand by that wind, facing the torch and the torchbearer. Once finished, he will walk clockwise to the next wind and continue)*From the **NORTH**, I summon **Wazi-Yata**, whose symbol is white and from whence comes the cold. *(Torchbearer lights Wind torch)*From the **EAST**, I summon **Wiyo Hinyanpata**, whose symbol is yellow and who dwells where the sun continuously returns. *(Torchbearer lights Wind torch)*From the **SOUTH**, I summon **Ito Kagata**, whose symbol is green and who dwells in the direction we face with outstretched arms. *(Torchbearer lights Wind torch)*From the **WEST**, I summon **Wiyo Peyata**, whose symbol is red and who dwells where the sun falls. *(Torchbearer lights Wind torch)* |
| Torchbearers | *(As they light each wind, they will then extinguish their small torch)* |
| Chief | Our gathering for this Council is now complete. We have gathered our ancestors who came before us and we have summoned the Four Winds. The Great Spirit has blessed us with a strong and mighty Longhouse that has gathered here, our lamps have lit the way. Let us now begin this council. |

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