**Council Fire Opening Ceremony Pieces & Parts**

**A Collection of Ceremonial Opening Parts**

**Overview:** Council Fire Openings set the stage for a great and memorable council fire for your program. This a collection of random ceremonial parts that may be included in the beginning of a Longhouse council fire gathering. Many of these “parts” are included in the larger Induction and Opening Ceremony script files. The Longhouse officer(s) conducting these parts can simply be determined by the Longhouse council that is organizing the ceremony. Use of a drumbeater during the gathering and between parts of a ceremony adds to the authenticity overall.

Also, there are a number of Native American prayers that can be easily incorporated into an opening portion of a ceremony. These can be found in the Devotionals section of Rituals & Ceremonies for NSD Programs.

**Participants:**

* Officers as desired
* Drumbeater

**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

**spreading THE ashes of past council fires**

*(The Officer presenting this will carry a pouch of fire ashes collected from previous Longhouse Council fires.)*

Before we call upon the Great Spirit to bring fire to our council, we must purify this ground, and make it sacred, worthy of this great council fire.

In this container are ashes gathered from many great council fires over many, many years.

These ashes will be spread on this ground as a symbolic offering to the Great Spirit, asking him to purify these grounds for this council fire and provide connection from the past to the present, linking the memories of council fires of long ago, to those parents and children standing here now.

*(spread ashes)*

These ashes give us a symbolic connection, from Mother Earth, rising through the flames to meet Grandfather Sky.

Ashes from this fire today will also be gathered, and brought to future council fire gatherings as Native Sons & Daughters. Great Spirit, we thank you for touching this ground with your hand, making it sacred.

*(SHOUT LONGHOUSE SALUTATION)*

Possible additions:

* Call forward the youngest child (as a sign of purity) to assist in spreading the ashes.
* Call forward the oldest child (as a sign of maturity) to assist in spreading the ashes.

**FIRE LIGHTING STORY**

In the beginning, there were no fires, except for those erupted by volcano’s, the lightning bolts from the sky, or those flaming across the prairies or woodlands. Death, instead of life mingled with these inferno’s.

But some wise man of those earl beginnings found that fire-spark also lived in the dead wood and in lifeless stone. And so, by rubbing wood together or striking one stone against another, he brought sacred fire to his people, even as we now light our Council Fire.

Fire Maker (**Fire Maker Indian Name**) come forward! Bring forth the fire from the wood of the forest [(or) the stone of the streams] so that we may have light, so that we may have warmth, so that we may gather in council this night. Light now, our Council Fire!

(Fire Maker comes forward to perform his magic of lighting the fire by bow and drill or flint and steel to create the fire. Of course, a secret electronic assist for the fire the magically spring to life is always a good plan.)

**CALL TO COUNCIL**

MEE-tah KOLA! Nah-OON-po OHM-nee CHEE-yay NEE CHOE-pi

Greetings, friends!! We now call our Council to order.

Sioux

**FIRE LIGHTING PRAYER**

Great Spirit above, send us fire. Fire for life, fire for life, fire for peace and friendship.

*(After fire lights)*

We give thanks for this precious flame and, as our smoke rises to Thy teepee,

May it serve as a trail between us.

See! To the flames I sacrifice this eagle feather. It is offered humbly as a sign of our thanks.

*(Tosses a loaded eagle feather into the fire which momentarily gives off a puff smoke as the flash powder ignites)*

*Regarding the “loaded Eagle Feather” mentioned within, this is a large Eagle feather with a tiny bag of flash powder taped onto the base of the stem. When the Chief goes to throw the feather into the fire, the bag is concealed in hand, is not visible in the dark and adds ballast to help it fly into the fire. The bag melts almost instantly when it hits the fire, setting of the flash powder.*

**ODE TO THE COUNCIL FIRE**

Oh Fire! Long ago when our fathers fought the great animals, you were the protection.

From the cruel cold winter, you saved them. When they needed food, you changed the flesh of the beast into savory meat for them.

During all ages, your mysterious flame has been a symbol to them for spirit.

So tonight, we light our Council Fire in remembrance and honor of the Great Spirit who gave you to us.

**FIRE LIGHTING REFLECTION**

Here we are in our council circle. Each having their place where they are equal to each other.

They can hear and see what happens here. They can join in the action.

They can share in the warmth and light of the fire.

There is no one set above them except the one who performs at the moment, and is thus rightfully at the center of at the head, as you will be in your turn.

I declare our council open

LaRue A. Thurston

**POETIC FIRE LIGHTING**

I kneel when I light a fire (kneel and light fire). I kneel reverently and thankfully. For now will light and warmth come to me through sacrifice. The wood holds good things and gives them all for you and me.

This wood grew for many years. Fed by water and by sun, protecting as it grew, giving as it now dies. It will give light through flames. It will give warmth through red coals. It will leave behind only gray ashes. But this sacrifice will not be in vain.

For we shall take with us, the memory of this moment, this fellowship and fun, the song and challenge, the story and ritual, all to ours forever.

So as our tiny spark grows, to a dancing, lively flame, our council ring will become… A court of honors, a ritual for inspiration, a stage for dramatics, an area for contest, and a story time for remembrance.

I kneel when I light a fire, when fire comes, I arise (stand). Thankfully accepting its sacrifice, for its flame calls for worthy action.

LaRue A. Thurston

**FIRE LIGHTING ODE TO THE NATIVE AMERICAN**

The Native American Indian was here long before us. That spirit now lights our fire as his fathers did before him. He lights our fire where once was his council place. We honor him by our actions here. We sit in council as he did, we dance his dance and sing our songs.

We give our coups to honor and good deeds. We hear great tales and meet worthy challenges. In the Spirit of the Native American, who was here before any other man came. As our fire brightens, lest we not forget, the ways of the Native American Indian. Let us be worthy to sit in this place, as was he who sat in council here before us.

LaRue A. Thurston

**ODE TO THE COUNCIL FIRE #2**

Thy flames will be bright, may they burn in our hearts. In our hearts, may the flames of friendship burn bright.

May this fire burn in beauty, in beauty may it burn. In our hearts, may this fire shine in beauty. In beauty, may this fire shine in our hearts. May good medicine thoughts come with this fire.

When the dawn star looks over the edge of the world, when the ashes of this council fire are cold, the friendship in our hearts will still be warm.