**End of Year Ceremony**

**Longhouse-Feather of Years**

**Overview:** This is a group setting end-of-year ceremony, typically held at the end of the program year at the last Longhouse campout or major gathering of the season. It is primarily to honor the membership for the number of completed years in the program. This ceremony uses 5 different feather colors (as detailed within) to signify (up to) 5 (or more) years in the program but that consist can easily be scaled back as desired. There are several props required as mentioned within. All fathers and children are expected to wear the Native Sons & Daughters headband to the ceremony. This should be announced and encouraged in advance.

**Participants:**

* Chief: Ceremonial Leader
* Medicine Man (or Assistant Chief): Co-leader of ceremony
* One Young Brave (son or daughter) from each tribe: Selected in advance to participate in the ceremonial fire lighting.

**Props:** Again, there are several props mentioned within. Regarding the “loaded Eagle Feather” used in the fire-lighting portion 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.

**Relevant Ceremonial Pieces:** *(Customize to each)* 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
* Officer Inductions
* Special Awards
* Ceremonial Closing

**CEREMONY**

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| SCENE: The membership of the Longhouse has gathered at the ceremonial fire site. If a torch parade to the site was held, all torches are extinguished as the members enter the area. The ceremonial fire is not yet lit. Chief is out of site. Drumbeaters are drumming while membership enters the area. Officers are assisting with guiding tribes into place. Once is ready, Chief emerges to be visible, then drumbeats stop. | |
| Chief | *(Shouts the Longhouse salutation)* |
| Chief | We have called the tribes of the (**Longhouse Name**) Longhouse together at this council, to recognize all Big Braves, Sons & Daughters present, and to symbolize the number of years in which each of them has heard the call of the Great Spirit as a member of the (**Longhouse Name**) Longhouse of Native Sons & Daughters Programs. The Great Spirit tells us to love one another, and to help guide each other on life's journey.  *(Picks up Peace Pipe)* Our peace pipe *(holding it out)* is the connection between ourselves, the Great Spirit above *(raises pipe)*, and Mother Earth below *(lowers pipe)*.  Before opening this council fire, we must once again recite our pledge as Native Sons & Daughters. I ask (**Medicine Man Indian nam**e), our Medicine Man to lead us in the recital of the Six Aims. |
|  | *(As an additional visual to the Six Aims being recited is to have 6 unlit stake-torches preset and located in the area. As the Aims are read one at a time, a representing torch is lit)* |
| Medicine Man | *(leads all in unison)*  The Six Aims of the Native Sons & Daughters Program are… repeat after me:   1. To be clean in body and pure in heart 2. To be Pals Forever-Friends Always, father and son 3. To love the sacred circle of the family 4. To listen while others speak 5. To love my neighbor as myself 6. To seek and preserve the beauty of the Great Spirit’s work in forest, field and stream |
| Chief | All Big Braves, Sons & Daughters, what is the slogan of the Native Sons & daughters Program? |
| Medicine Man | (leads all in unison): Pal's Forever, Friends Always !! |
| Chief | Torchbearers Come forward! Receive from our medicine man, the torch that represents your tribe's presence at this council, then take your position at the edge of the council fire near your tribe. |

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| Medicine Man | *(Will light and present the torches to the torchbearers one at a time. He will ask each bearer the following as he presents the torch)* |
| Medicine Man | Torchbearer, what is the name of your tribe? Please shout it loudly for all to hear. |
| Torchbearer | *(Responds with tribe name. Tribe then responds in spirit as well.)* |
| Chief | These torches are symbolic of the ideals that all Native Sons & Daughters believe in. Torchbearers, I ask you now to light our council fire, then throw your torches into the fire.  *[FIRE IS LIT]*  Great Spirit, we give thanks for this precious flame. Fire for life, fire for light, fire for peace and friendship. As our fire 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.  *(Chief tosses loaded Eagle Feather into the top of the fire and waits for puff of smoke).*  *(Shouts the Longhouse salutation)* |
| Chief | Now that all tribes have joined together as one in this fire, I declare this council of the (**Longhouse Name**) Longhouse open |
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| **FEATHER OF YEARS PORTION OF CEREMONY** | |
| Chief | Sons & Daughters, you have chosen to follow the call of the Great Spirit for another year. placing your trust in your Fathers, to grow from his wisdom and learn from his guidance. As you grow in spirit, you will add wisdom to your tribe. |
| Medicine Man | Big Braves, you have chosen to continue to teach and give example to your young brave Sons & Daughters in ways that the Great Spirit can be proud. You give them guidance and wisdom. Fulfillment in watching your children grow are your rewards |
| **START OF FEATHER AWARDS** | |
| Chief | I now ask all (number [ 1st through 5th or more]) year Big Braves, Sons & Daughters to step forward inside the circle. [WAIT]  To symbolize your (number [1st through 5th or more]) year in the Native Sons & Daughters Program, the (Longhouse Name) Longhouse awards you with this [ color ] feather.  As you receive your feather, please hold it in hand until all have received theirs. |

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| Med. Man | *(Holds up the coordinating feather color)* |
| Chief | *(Reads the coordinate feather color meaning)* |
| Medicine Man | *(Medicine Man (& assistant if nec.) walk around the circle and pass out the color feather being presented, and recite the following to each person)* |
| Medicine Man | Big Brave, Native Son (or Native Daughter), state your Indian name......[wait for response]  Receive your FEATHER OF YEARS, wear it with pride !!! |
| Chief | *(Once all feathers for this round have been handed out)* |
|  | I ask the council to applaud these Big braves, Sons & Daughters. Now that you have received your FEATHER OF YEARS, please return to the circle and your tribe. |
|  | RETURN TO "START OF FEATHER AWARDS" UNTIL ALL ROUNDS ARE COMPLETE. |
| **FEATHER COLORS – YEAR AND MEANING** | |
|  | **YELLOW - 1ST YEAR**:  This YELLOW feather represents the sun that lights our path and gives warmth as you further grow in body and spirit. These Big Braves, Sons & Daughters have learned to show respect and care for on another. A true pal and friend shows this respect and caring to their brothers and sisters.  **RED - 2nd YEAR:**  This RED feather represents the heart, the power from within, and that we are all blood brothers and sisters. As Native Sons & Daughters, we have learned how to give of ourselves to one another from the heart, just as the heart of our fire burns hot, spreading out, giving it warmth to all.  **GREEN - 3rd YEAR:**  This GREEN feather represents the trees, the mountains and fields, and the beauty of nature in the Great Spirit's creation. As Native Sons & Daughters, we have been given trust to care for these lands and preserve them. We have seen the wonder that nature holds and have learned to respect it.  **BLUE - 4th YEAR:**  This BLUE feather represents the sky which blankets the earth, and water which feeds life and cleanses us. It reminds us that many people live on this earth and to love our neighbor as ourselves. These Sons & Daughters have begun to understand that life holds much more meaning as they follow in the footsteps of their Big Brave Fathers.  **EAGLE - 5 OR MORE YEARS:**  This EAGLE feather is the symbol of courage and honor, the highest honor a Native Son or Daughter can receive. For Sons & Daughters, the white and black colors show that they have come full circle and are ready to accept more of the responsibilities that growing up brings. Theirs is the responsibility to serve as guides for the younger Sons & Daughters. The Big Braves have sacrificed much to help you on your journey. |

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|  | At this point, all feathers have been handed out |
| Med. Man | *(Holds up a splay of all the feather colors)* |
| Chief | These feathers all represent parts of the ties that bind father and child together as PALS FOREVER, FRIENDS ALWAYS.  Now all Big Braves, Sons & Daughters have received their Feather of Years.  Native Sons & Native Daughters, turn and face your fathers...[WAIT]  Big Braves, place your child's feather into their headband. [WAIT]  Big Braves, I ask you to kneel to your child. [WAIT]  Sons & Daughters, place your fathers feather into his headband. [WAIT]  This placing of feathers symbolizes the bonding of father and child. When you wear feathers, as our Native American brothers do, remember that you are showing honor and respect to the work of the Great Spirit and all his creation here on Mother Earth.  Great Spirit, we ask you to guide these Big Braves, to continue to give of their wisdom, knowledge and love to their children. |
| Medicine Man | Great Spirit, we ask you to continue to give patience, courage and humility to these Sons & Daughters, to follow their fathers down the path of life. Help them all to grow in body, mind and spirit as Pal's Forever, Friends Always. |
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|  | **INSERT ANY SPECIAL ADDITIONS TO THE CEREMONY** |
| **CLOSING** | |
| Chief | We have honored all Braves and Princesses here tonight. Remember these special times together. Because as fathers and children, we will only pass this way once. Great Spirit we ask your guidance, that we may always remain Pal's Forever, Friend's Always. |
| Medicine Man | (with all) Everyone…” Pals Forever, Friends Always”! |
| Chief | I now declare this council of the (**Longhouse Name**) Longhouse to be closed. |
| Chief / ALL | *(Chief shouts the Longhouse salutation, then all repeat/shout in approval)* |
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Contributed by: The Cheyenne Nation, Bedford, Ohio