**Graduation Ceremony**

**Longhouse-Broken Arrow**

**Overview:** Graduation ceremonies are typically held in the spring/early summer moons of the program year and are specifically to honor members that are ending their time in the program. This special honor, to “Break Arrow” as father and child, in front of the Longhouse is a most special ritual. This ceremony is generally written to be used in a group setting. The “arrow” is either prepared by father and child in advance of the ceremony OR the Longhouse can provide a generic arrow for each family. There are special kits available through NSD vendors (Craftkits, etc.). All fathers and children are encouraged to wear their full regalia, i.e. headbands, vests, etc.

The Arrow Kit: If the arrow kit is to be prepared by father & child, it is meant to be an activity that both contribute to. The arrow can be assembled from the kit parts and then decorated in any way to symbolize each of them, their Indian names and any other symbols that may depict their years and memories of the program. The Longhouse may provide the kits and even make a special activity and provide supplies for these parents and children to create/decorate their arrow.

**Participants:** *(Customize to each)*

* Chief: Ceremonial Leader
* Medicine Man (or Assistant Chief): Co-leader of ceremony
* Fire Keeper (starts the ceremonial fire)

**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
* Sacred Fire Lighting (partially detailed in this script)
* Officer Awards
* End of Year Awards for rest of Longhouse
* Special Awards
* Ceremonial Closing

**CEREMONY**

|  |
| --- |
| SCENE: Council fire in not yet lit. Longhouse members and officers are gathered just outside the council fire area.  |
| **GATHERING AND FIRE LIGHTING** |
| Chief  | *(holding a container of burning/smoking sage grass)* |
| Chief | O Creator, Great Spirit, many seasons have passed since these Tribes of the (**Longhouse Name**) Longhouse were last here to celebrate a Spring Longhouse. As this sage burns, and the smoke rises above us we ask you to enter our circle, and to bless these Big Braves, Sons & Daughters gathered here tonight. For some this will be their last Sacred Circle. They are coming to the end of a journey. But for others they are only growing and changing and moving down a new path together. We ask you to strengthen the bond between these Fathers and their Daughters and to instill in all of us the importance of friendship and of family so that everything we do will be pleasing to your eyes |
| Officers | *(Guide tribes into the council fire circle area.)* |
| Medicine Man | Many, many moons ago when there were real Tribes, and Nations and Federations of Native Americans all over our country, there was always one man in each tribe whose job it was to protect what may have been one of the most important tools the Indians had…FIRE. The Fire Keeper had to keep the campfire burning at all times. This made it much easier to light other fires. Fires for cooking, for heat, for light and for tribal ceremonies. The campfire of the Fire Keeper was a meeting place where everyone in the tribe was welcome to gather and share the fire. |
| Chief | Tonight, the Elders and Chiefs of the (**Longhouse Name**) Longhouse welcome you to this Sacred Circle and are honored to share this fire with you. We hope that each of you will carry a spark of friendship and of wisdom from our fire with you for many moons to come. Now O Great Spirit, if you are pleased by these Big Braves, Sons & Daughters gathered before you tonight, we ask you to show your approval by lighting our Sacred Fire. *(Shouts the Longhouse salutation)* |
| Fire Keeper | *(The fire is called to life. The Fire Keeper may or may not say any words here.)* |
| Chief | (**Longhouse Name**) Longhouse, the Great Spirit is pleased!!*(Shouts the Longhouse salutation)* |
|  |  |
|  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| **“BROKEN ARROW” PORTION OF CEREMONY** |
|  |
| Chief | This ceremony represents symbolic stages of your lives. I ask that those breaking Arrow tonight to please step inside the circle and come forward. Please enter the Sacred Circle, Big Braves in front, Sons/Daughters behind. *(Allow time, guide as necessary)*If you look around the fire you will see separate people, fathers leading their sons or daughters. Here the daughter accepts the father’s experience and guidance. This is a role the Great Spirit has prepared him for. Now turn side-by-side facing away from the fire. *(Pause)* Side by side is how you will find yourselves many times from this point on. Fathers and children who walk side by side do so respectfully, they love each other and listen to each other. Fathers please stand behind your son or daughter. *(Pause)* The fathers now find themselves in a position of support and learning. The son or daughter can look ahead, ready to accept new challenges and ideas with confidence. They know that they have the backing and support of a loving and understanding father. Fathers place your right hand on your son or daughters shoulder. *(Pause)* Your hand is in a position of communication. It conveys love, concern, joy, respect and confidence. Sons & Daughters, please turn and face your fathers. *(Pause*) You are now both facing truth. You see each other as individuals. The son or daughter may now guide their father down new, creative paths toward their quest for knowledge and for the spiritual side of life. Fathers, you can offer your insight and experience. Sons & Daughters, be willing to share your inner feelings with your father. Listen to him; believe it or not he was your age once. Now Big Braves, Sons & Daughters, please turn and face the Sacred Fire. |
| Medicine Man | *(Bring forward and pass out arrow, one per father-child pair, OR, if the parent-child pair has brought their arrow, ask them to present it now)* |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| Chief | Fathers please hold the feathered end of the arrow and daughters hold the tip. The feathered portion of the arrow represents the guidance it provides. This end can only guide. Your child must choose the direction. The tip of the arrow represents the direction you will take in life. Remember, the feathers will be there to guide you down that path. Fathers kneel next to your son or daughter and each of you whisper to the other the best memory you have of your time together in this program. *(Pause)*Big Braves, Sons & Daughters, please remember that for this next part I need the father to hold the feathered end of the arrow and the son or daughter to hold the tip. *(Pause)*Now, Big Braves, Sons & Daughters, break your arrows. *(Pause)*Fathers exchange your feathered piece for the tip piece your daughter has. These pieces should always remind you of the new roles you are taking on. Fathers, remember your daughters will begin to choose their own paths. Daughters, remember you father will now try to guide rather than always lead…seek that guidance whenever possible.  |
| Medicine Man | As your Medicine Man I now ask the Great Spirit to open our hearts and minds. Help us to be aware of, to appreciate and respect the differences in each of us. We thank you for showing us your grace and mercy every day. Please allow us to exhibit those traits in our lives. Bless these Big Braves, Sons & Daughters, keep them safe and guide them as they embark on a new journey together. |
| Chief | Let the Longhouse congratulate these Big Braves, Sons and Daughters who tonight have “broken arrow” with us, reaching the end of their memorable journey on the trail as Native Sons & Daughters. |
|  | *(Leads in applause for the “Broken Arrow” families)* |
| Chief / ALL | *(Chief shouts the Longhouse salutation, then all repeat/shout in approval)* |
|  |  |
|  | INSERT ADDITIONAL CEREMONY COMPONENTS |
|  | INSERT CLOSING CEREMONY |
|  |  |

Contributed by: The Timucuan Longhouse, Jacksonville, Florida