**Graduation Ceremony**

**Longhouse-The Removal of the Headband**

**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 ceremony uses the removal of the headband as the symbolic ritual to signify the end of time in the Native Sons & Daughters Programs together as father and child. Done in front of the rest of the Longhouse, it is a most special ritual. This ceremony is generally written to be used in a group setting. Father and children “graduates” are required to wear their headbands, and any other regalia they desire. Remaining Longhouse members should also be dressed in full regalia.

The Longhouse may choose to honor the graduates with some special gift or symbolic remembrance of their special years together in the program

**Participants:**

* Chief: Ceremonial Leader
* Medicine Man (or Assistant Chief): Co-leader of ceremony

**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
* Sacred Fire Lighting
* Officer Awards
* End of Year Awards for rest of Longhouse
* Special Awards
* Ceremonial Closing

**CEREMONY**

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| SCENE: Council fire is not yet lit. Longhouse members and officers are gathered just outside the council fire area. | |
| **GATHERING** | |
| Chief: | Members of the (**Longhouse Name**) Longhouse, there are those gathered with us tonight who will witness their final Longhouse council fire as Native Sons & Daughters. I ask that they proceed into the council fire circle and form an inner circle. Big Braves, please stand to the right of your son or daughter as you face the council fire. *(PAUSE until this this happens)*  Let the rest of the (**Longhouse Name**) Longhouse now proceed into the council fire circle, forming an outer circle around those already there.  (**Longhouse salutation)** |
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| **INSERT FIRELIGHTING PORTION** | |
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| **“REMOVAL OF HEADBANDS” PORTION OF CEREMONY** | |
| Chief | Tonight, we honor these Big Braves, Sons & Daughters that are with us for their last council fire. They have traveled many paths to get here and are completing this portion of their journey together as Native Sons and Daughters. I ask especially you Big Braves, to listen to these words of wisdom from (**Medicine Man Indian Name**), our Medicine Man. |
| Medicine Man | A careful big Brave, I want to be, for a son or daughter follows me.  I dare not go astray, for fear they’ll go the self-same way.  I cannot escape once their eyes, whatever they see me do, they’ll try.  Like me they’ll say they’re going to be, the son or daughter that follows me.  They’ll think that I am good and fine, and believe in every word of mine.  The base in me they must not see, the son or daughter who follows me.  I must remember as I go, through summers sun and winters snow.  I am building for years to be, this son or daughter who follows me. |
| Chief | This has been your purpose in the Native Sons & Daughters Program. You have participated with your son or daughter in your tribe. Each has tried to be observant, helpful and giving. Now it is time to look to the future and accept new goals and ideas. |
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| Chief | All, please take one quarter turn to your right. The fathers back should be in front of their son or daughter. *(PAUSE*) You are now in position to show yourselves as separate persons with the father as the leader. Sons and Daughters, accept his experience and guidance for the Great Spirit has prepared your father for this role.  All, please take one quarter turn to your right, now facing your fellow tribal and Longhouse members. *(PAUSE)* Again, you are side by side, as you will find yourselves so many times during your lives. People who walk side by side respectfully, love one another and listen to one another. As you face your fellow Longhouse members, remember that you have been an example to the younger ones.  All, please take one quarter turn to your right, father should now be standing behind your son or daughter. *(PAUSE)* You are now in a position of learning and supporting. Sons and Daughters are able to look ahead, ready to accept new ways and ideas with confidence of the backing and support of the home.  Big Braves, please your right hand on your son or daughters shoulder. *(PAUSE)* Big Braves, your hand is in a position of communication. It conveys love, concern, joy, respect and confidence.  Big Braves, Sons & Daughters, please turn in order that you may face one another *(PAUSE)*. You are now both facing truth. As you look in to each other’s faces, you see each other as persons. The child will guide their father into creative paths through their quest for knowledge, their physical well-being and their need to explore the spiritual part of life. In these areas, the father can offer his background of experiences and is quest for his vision of life itself.  Sons & Daughters, be willing to share with your fathers, your inner feelings. Listen to them for they too were young once and have ability to remember and help you through unhappy moments.  Big Braves, please kneel before your Sons & Daughters *(PAUSE)*. Sons & Daughters, please remove the Native Sons & Daughters headband of your Big Brave father’s head.  Sons & Daughters, please kneel before your fathers *(PAUSE)*. Big Braves, please remove the Native Sons & Daughters headband from your Son or Daughters head. |
| Medicine Man | Will all please rise. Let us pray to the Great Spirit  Great Spirit, Father of parents & children everywhere, listen to our prayer. Teach us to appreciate each other and the differences among us. Let us never be so fearful that a path chosen cannot be allowed to have side paths. Help us to really learn to express love through trust and confidence. Hear us O Great Spirit. |

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| Chief | Let the Longhouse congratulate these Big Braves, Sons and Daughters who tonight have removed their headbands, reaching the end of their memorable journey on the trail as Native Sons & Daughters. |
|  | *(Leads in applause for the graduate families)* |
| Chief / ALL | *(Chief shouts the Longhouse salutation, then all repeat/shout in approval)* |
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|  | *(It may be desired to present the graduating families with some symbolic gift or token of remembrance of their time in the NSD program)* |
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|  | INSERT ADDITIONAL CEREMONY COMPONENTS |
|  | INSERT CLOSING CEREMONY |
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Contributed by: Unknown