

A Handy Format for a Tribal Meeting

Ritual is an important part of our lives. Ritual is everywhere from our daily morning cup of coffee to high mass at Christmas. Repetitive patterns of meaningful activity are comforting. It's easy to add this familiar comfort into Tribal Meetings. Our children will look forward to tribal ritual. Here's a simple meeting format that has worked in my Guides and Princess Tribes.

- **Gathering**
- **The Scared Circle**
- **Drum Beats**
- **Chief's Chat**
- **Song**
- **Scouting Report**
- **Group Reading**
- **Wampum**
- **Craft**
- **Story**
- **Snack & Dad's Meeting**
- **Closing**

Simple, huh? This is 60 to 90 minutes of father and child fun. Here's some explanation:

Gathering

From 7:00 until 7:15, dads and children float in for a meeting. This is a great time to have a simple activity that will engage kids. In Guides we met in a church youth room that provided pool and ping-pong. At a recent outdoor Princess meeting, the girls had a game of tag as tribal members gathered. At one meeting in Guides, a member's relative, a Civil War Re-enactor, displayed his antique guns and period gear and talked about the Civil War. With some imagination, gathering can be fun and not just waiting for folks to show up.

Scared Circle

Form the tribal meeting circle within a circle. Children form the inner circle, with their fathers behind them in the outer circle. That was easy. Now call the meeting to order with the tribal drum.

Drum Beats

To officially open the meeting, a child beats the Tribal Drum once for each child and parent pair who are present. That's it! The meeting has begun.

Chief's Chat

The Tribal Chief provides a few moments of leadership promoting upcoming events, or reviewing the fun of the last campout, maybe passing out some patches, acknowledging the hosts of the meeting, maybe welcoming new members or just providing some Chiefly enthusiasm.

Song

Indian Guides and Indian Princesses each have their own theme song sung to the easy tune of "Clementine." Yea, it's corny. But sing it enough and the kids look forward to it. Then one day when tucking your child into bed, they say, "Dad, I've memorized the song." You'll reply, "That's just great sweetheart ...eh, what song is that?" And then your child will burst into a chorus of "Friendship Always" and your wife will yell to quiet down. (See the yigp.org website for this song.)

Scouting Report

It's time to pass the talking stick around. This is a confidence builder for our sons and daughters. The little Princesses and Braves get a chance to introduce themselves and their dads using both their given names and their Indian names. You can add to the Scouting reports as well. Ask kids to share something they did with their family, tell about their favorite subject at school, or talk about what they liked on the campout. As children share with their tribe, they get to know each, and they grow from being bashful kindergartners to confident fourth and fifth graders.

Group Reading

This is the liturgy. As a tribe, you should read the following things together and out loud: the Program Purpose, the Slogan, the Six Aims and our Pledge. This is a short, but meaningful bit of ritual. Over time the words sink in, the kids get it, and reading these things together is anticipated and welcomed. (Check out our yigp.org website for this program information compiled on one handy sheet.) Also, in my tribe, we award a Six Aims patch when a child has memorized the Six Aims. This patch is available to any tribe. Contact our wonderful Sandpainter (Patch Man) Scott Denton.

Wampum

Pass the talking stick around again and every child should put wampum in the wampum bag. The donation is usually one dollar. As the talking stick circulates, each child shares how he earned his wampum. The point of this is the child has ownership, earns his contribution and has another chance to speak in their tribe.

Craft

Take it easy, dads. This is not difficult. Although this is the longest part of the meeting, the craft does not have to be complex. Make it fun. Maybe something that can worn by the kids, or a decoration for their room at home. Improving upon tribal property is always a good craft. [See Keokuk's tip from March 2004.]

Story

Tell an Indian story. Kids love a good story. Dads will too. There is a wealth of Native American stories available to you about creation, origin of species, moral tales, comical legends, relationships, magic, and you name it. Native American stories are rich and entertaining. If you have the basic gist of the story, you can easily share it from memory. It's fun to get your own son or daughter involved in the presentation. The Snake Guides are great story tellers. Mike Mohler and tribe have raised story telling into an organized art form complete with their own notebook of stories. How! How! Snake Guides!

Snack & Dad's Meeting

Cookies and milk is always a hit. Keep it simple. While the kids are snacking, dads can meet very briefly. This is the time for dads' paperwork: submit checks for the campout, program registration, outing registration, or pass out your tribal schedules, tribal directories, assign the next meeting, confirm Secret Santa, and plan the life of your tribe. While the children are occupied, get your business done.

Closing

Every tribe should develop a ritual to close the meeting. Some tribes form a circle and shake hands with their arms crossed while saying a little blessing. I've seen other tribes conclude with the singing of "Taps." The Mighty Arapaho Guides has a tradition called "The Flight of the Eagle" which is part story, part visualization and partly a big hug between father and child. Tom Lakars, the Arapaho Guides' founding father, invented this tradition in 1988. Be inventive, hunt around and you will have your own tribal closing that will be used for years.

Peace,
John C. Lorenzen, Federation Chief Keokuk