

8th Grade Fly-Up Ceremony

Adapted from a ceremony created by Jane Harden of the Eastern Region Uniteens

Ceremony Purpose

Use this ceremony to honor where the 8th graders have been and where they are going. It can involve the whole Uniteen and YOU Groups.

Why a “Rite of Passage” in Unity?

In older indigenous tribal cultures, 12-14 year olds are revered for their wisdom like the elders in the tribe who have lived long lives. There is a window of time that opens in each person where the veils are lifted and true sight is granted to young people. Their life-vision is being gifted to them by Spirit, by God. It’s a time of both clarity and confusion for young people because they are given a vision that they usually may not be able act on in the moment – they are young and may not have access to the resources they need. It is the vision for their life that is important. This period in their lives is also a bridge where their child-self is left on one side, and they step into a new self on the other. A meaningful rite of passage which honors and respects the art of discovering the inner spirit is a powerful way to awaken and validate the “Christ” in our young people.”

Preparation Before the Ceremony

6th & 7th Graders

Set up 6th/7th graders with an 8th grader. Before the ceremony, the 6th & 7th graders make a gift for a specific 8th grader, by creating a framed collage that includes the 8th grader’s name and pictures and positive words and pictures that describe what is seen in the 8th grader or what they would want for the 8th grader. Have good words printed on computer paper that may be helpful.

8th Graders

During one of the Sunday lessons or during a special overnight event (*this activity takes at least 75 minutes*), before the scheduled ceremony invite the 8th graders to create a mask

Explain Mask Making Purpose, Process and Cleanup

Time: 10 min

Purpose: Create the understanding to create a spiritual mask

Mask making is an incredible unfolding and revealing of your deepest self. Through working with plaster and colorful designs as you paint, you are embarking on a vision quest, joining many other teens from the earliest days of this earth in this ancient adventure. In this very special time of clarity in your life, you will touch a deep and wise part of yourself during the drumming meditation, and bring your inner self out through the mask. The wisdom you share and the vision you touch is needed by all of us.

Mask Making Guided Drumming Meditation

Time: 15 min

Materials: Frame Drum

Purpose: Receive animal totem and guidance for the structure, shape of the mask

Have the group sit on the grass or somewhere in nature, apart from the rest of the Uniteen group and begin to lightly drum a heart-beat or slow even beat. Take on the persona of a storyteller, explain that an Animal Totem is an animal that you are drawn to for the qualities the animal has which you connect with or feel a deep affinity toward. Your Animal Totem is part of you and a guide for you at the same time. It is an aspect of you and mirrors to you something or qualities about you. Your animal guide may give you guidance, instruct and protect you in life. Be open to discovering your Animal Totem during the drumming meditation. . .

Continue the drumming and the storytelling style, as you invite the group to close their eyes, listen to nature around them. Create a visualization narrative that guides them to open to seeing or experiencing an animal presenting itself to each of them.

Continue with suggestions such as “the animal may give you guidance, or just silently stand with you.” Then invite them to ask the animal guide to give them information about their mask shape – should the mouth be covered? Should the eyes be covered or open? The nose? Is there any unique style or structure for the shape? How far down the face or neck? Is it flat or have any special distinct parts?

Allow time for this to be complete

Gradually return your awareness back into the space where we began, here in nature; take time to remember any instructions and to thank your animal guide. When you are ready, close your eyes and quietly return to the table and begin creating the mask as you were guided.”

Mask Making and Clean-up

Time: 50 min

Materials: Old T-Shirts, Vaseline, hair ties, bobby pins, shirts, paper towels, wipes, water, bowls, plaster strips, scissors, mirrors, Gallon Ziplock bags, Sharpie, trash bags,

Purpose: Create mask of their inner spirit

Uniteen leaders support the team in preparing the teen faces with Vaseline, cutting strips, setting the masks on paper towels labeled with the teen names, and teen clean-up.

When the entire group is done bring them together for a closing prayer.

The Ceremony

Procession

- 6th and 7th graders, with the gifts they made, lined up in reverse to the 8th graders. Work with them so they know what they are going to say in advance.
- Adults follow 6th and 7th graders then 8th graders in reverse so that the last one in line is the 1st one to present.
- YOUers form a circle on the other side of the room

YOUer: Leads an opening prayer

Litany of a Circle (Chief Seattle)

Leader: Every part of this earth is sacred

All: Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore.

Leader: Every mist in the dark woods,

All: Every clearing and humming insect is holy

Leader: The rocky crest, the juices of the meadow, the beasts and all the people.

All: All belong to the same family

Leader: Teach your children that the earth is our mother

All: Whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth

Leader: The waters murmur is the voice of our father's father

All: We are part of the earth, and the earth is part of us

Leader: The rivers are our brothers; they quench our thirst.

All: The perfumed flowers are our sisters.

Leader: The air is precious;

All: for all of us share the same breath

Leader: The wind that gave our grandparents breath also receives their last sign.

All: The wind gave the children the spirit of life.

Leader: This we know, the earth does not belong to us;

All: We belong to the earth

Leader: This we know, all things are connected,

All: like the blood that unites our family

Leader: All things are connected

All: Our God is the same god, whose compassion is equal for all

Leader: Whatever we do to the web

All: We do to ourselves

Leader: Let us give thanks for the web in the circle that connects us

All: Thanks be to God, the God of all

Presentation of the Masks:

Youth Director of Uniteen Leader / 8th Graders – read the quote:

“Everywhere man/woman is in disguise! Who is who is unknown! Try to enter the mask and find out who the man / woman inside really is!” — [Mehmet Murat ildan](#)

Youth Director: Uniteen Leaders, having worked with these teens, and having observed their transition from a child to a young adult, but more importantly, having witnessed their understanding of the Unity principles and self-discovery of their relationship with God, do you recommend that they are prepared to enter the Youth of Unity?

Uniteen Leaders: We do.

Blessing of the 8th Grade Graduates

8th graders, you come here as a Uniteen. Over the last few years, we have explored the spiritual principle that each of you has within you the Christ Light that will guide you through your high school and adult life. Coming into this circle we affirmed our oneness—Oneness with the earth—with one another—but most importantly with God. You have consciously made a pledge, and if you remember to live by it, no matter how difficult your journey, you will find solid ground to walk on or you will find your Spirit being lifted into a higher perspective—an awakened consciousness—that will assure your success in life. Each of you has come into this earth experience to give your life in Sacred Service. As you move through this ceremony today in silence—let each step take you into each moment and with an open heart your vision for your life becomes clearer.

Are you ready to take this step into YOU?

8th Graders: We Are!

Each 8th grader presents the Inner Self Mask, says something about it, then walks into the YOU circle and leaves their masks. They receive blessing from the YOUers and remain in the center.

When all 8th graders have been blessed, Youth Director calls them one at a time to receive their gift. The 8th grader walks to the opening of the circle. The 6th/7th graders share something about gift then walk off to the left and the 8th grader joins the YOU circle.

Closing

After all have received their gift then the Youth Director says:

“8th graders, I now officially declare that by your Rite of Passage, Unity of _____ now confirms that you are officially YOUers. Congratulations!

YOUer: “When you have come to the edge of all the light you know...and you are about to step off into the darkness of the unknown...Faith is knowing one of two things (or both) will happen; There will be something solid to stand on OR you will be taught to fly.”--Anonymous

YOUer: “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youth grow tired and weary, and young men and women stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” –**Isaiah 40:29-31**

Close with the Prayer for Protection