
Great Lakes Regional Advisory Lodge



Help Papers Series
Support Materials for Parent/Child Programs

TOPIC:

Officers Help

Great Lakes Region – Help Papers Series – Officers Help

Officers Help For Native Son's And Daughter's™ Programs

THE PURPOSE of this paper is to help give some insight into having a strong body of officers to run your program. Not all programs will be structured exactly as the next although many may be similar. The number of officers and the levels of officers will depend on the overall size of your program. The tips and suggestions contained herein are meant to apply to all in some form or fashion. This paper is also written with the assumption that the sponsoring entity (if one exists) does not have much if any involvement in the running of the program.

BASIC AND STRUCTURE:

Each program should have a minimum size council to be effective. Even a small program would need to have most of these officers to run properly.

A minimum Local Longhouse Council of Officers (with example descriptions) should include:

- Longhouse Chief: Overall leader of the program(s)
- Assistant Chief: Right hand man of the chief, and Chief in training.
- Wampum Bearer: Handles all money for the program.
- Talley Keeper: Recorder, archivist and general secretary for the Longhouse.

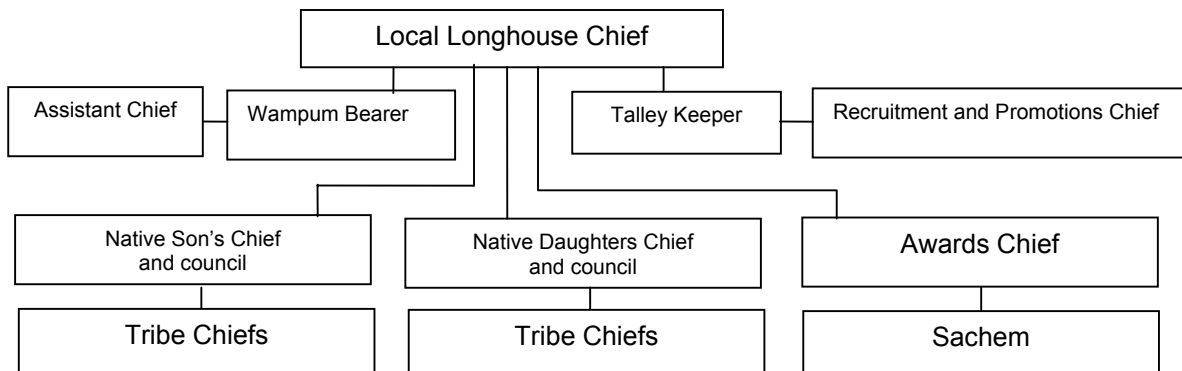
BEYOND THE MINIMUM, THESE OFFICER WILL ADD STRENGTH TO YOUR PROGRAM

- Newsletter Chief: Responsible for the production of a newsletter.
- Recruitment and Promotions Chief: Responsible to lead the membership drive and promote the program to the community throughout the year.
- Awards Chief: Oversees and procures all patches, feathers and any other awards that are presented throughout the year. Overall leader of the awards program.
- Sachem (Elder): Retired Nation Chief will mentor, support and advise the new Chief. Possibly serve as the representative to the Regional Advisory Lodge (RAL reps. should be appointed).

ALL OFFICERS WORK TOGETHER AS A TEAM!

The reason to say “minimum” as related to the size of the council is one, the minimum size required by the NLL Local Longhouse bylaws and two, so that the officers are not overburdened with work. Each job needs to be performed effectively for the program to run well. This is also necessary so that each officer can still enjoy the primary reason they belong to the program, which is to spend time with their children.

More officers (and more levels of officers) become necessary as the program grows in size. A typical officer's council structure might look like the example below. Levels of officers are added or taken away as necessary



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Other Officer positions (to name a few) might include:

- Events Chief: Other than the council chiefs, responsible for planing calendar of events and taking care of event arrangements.
- Ceremonial Chief: Some programs have a Chief who primarily takes care of planning rituals and ceremonies.
- Property Chief: Maintains inventories and supplies owned by the program. Responsible for upkeep of the physical property.
- Legendmaker: Maintains and records a running history of the program through print, pictures, video's, etc.
- Storyteller: Teller of stories and legends at gatherings such as campouts, overnigheters, bonfires, etc. This person should actually have a special gift for this. A tryout may be in order.
- Regional Advisory Lodge Representative: Per your local minimum bylaws, your local program must send representation to the semi-annual RAL meeting. These can be separate appointees/volunteers. One suggestion is to have elders of the program serve in this capacity. Don not overburden the main program officers with this additional duty.

DESCRIPTION AND EXPECTATION:

The description and expectation of each officer position, including tribal chiefs, should be contained in some type of running document that is part of the operating procedure for the program. Your NLL Local Longhouse Minimum Bylaws will describe each of these minimum officer positions. Your bylaws may be amended to fit all of the additional officers. This document should be reviewed and updated annually so that the description of each job stays relevant with the current framework of the program. An expected or typical term of office is also be part of these standards. Typical is 1-2 years per position.

FILLING OFFICER POSITIONS:

The NLL minimum Local Longhouse bylaws govern the standard way in which the minimum officer positions are filled. Additional officer's positions may be purely by appointment or volunteer. There is a benefit to having the top 3 Council Chiefs advance to each position so that they can "learn on the job" so to speak what is expected or necessary when they advance to the next level. An example is that the Assistant Longhouse Chief moves on to become next years Longhouse Chief, then moves on the position of Sachem in the third year. This would require a minimum 3-year commitment from each of these people. Advertise in your newsletter for (volunteer) officer nominee's well in advance.

TRAINING:

The training of officers, from the Longhouse Chief, to the Tribal Chief, and all those in-between is critical for the success of the program. Training workshop sessions should be held annually, typically led by senior program members and advisors, and possibly RAL members, to introduce officers to the responsibilities of their new positions. These workshops may be separated between the Longhouse Council and the Tribal Chiefs since there is a large amount information that differs between the groups. Annual training workshops may also be a part of the National Longhouse program. Your RAL will supply information when these workshops are coming.

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TRAINING cont.

New officers should not assume that they know all the responsibilities and expectations of their new position merely by observation. That is the reason for having job descriptions and training workshops. Materials and suggestions concerning officers and tribal chief training can be found in the Great Lakes Region Library. A Leadership Manual publication is also available.

OFFICERS / COUNCIL MEETINGS:

A program will typically have a “Longhouse” Council meeting once a month for all officers and representatives of the program to discuss business and any other subject important to the program. A planned agenda for each meeting is recommended. This agenda should be on paper and be handed to all persons attending the meeting. Minutes of the prior meeting should also be printed and distributed to all attendees for review and approval.

An agenda could include; opening and closing prayers or reflections, roll call, reports from each of the council chiefs on their respective positions and areas of responsibility, reports on past events, reports on planning and details of upcoming events, open agenda period, special guests, special action items, etc.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN AGENDA

- Offers a mutually agreed upon path for all to follow.
- Insures the leaders ability to control the direction of the meeting.
- Gives the leader the ability to keep people focused on the current topic.

A OFFICER / CHIEF

(Applies to any Officer or Chief)

- *Is someone who strongly believes in the program.*
- Should encourage the traditions and rituals of the program.
- Does not “talk down” to other officers or members of the program, parent or child.
- Should not act like or assume they “know it all”. A humbling experience is usually just around the corner.
- Actively participates in the activities and business of the program.
- Attends all meetings necessary and is prepared for their responsibilities.
- Keeps the lines of communication open.
- Builds everyone’s self-esteem.
- Is an example so that others will be excited and proud to step forward and volunteer to be an officer.
- Is an OPTIMIST! No grumps allowed!