



2024 National Order of the Arrow Conference

Session: Inside the Ordeal Ceremony

Lead Trainer Name: [Name]

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Session Length: 110 minutes

Session Description

Analyze the Ordeal Ceremony and learn about the meaning, symbolism, and the symbolic progression to the Ordeal Ceremony.

Learning Outcomes

Outcome 1: Understand the importance in finding meaning in the ceremonies and how it benefits the ceremonialist.

Outcome 2: Practice expounding meaning through provided strategies and discussion.

Outcome 3: Explain how they reach their understanding of the Ordeal ceremony.

Outcome 4: Identify insights and techniques to share with ceremonial teams in their local areas.

Theme Connection: Seek New Heights

[The theme of the 2024 NOAC is Seek New Heights, emphasizing the drive for excellence that characterizes the OA and our daily lives. How will your session incorporate this theme?]

[Theme Connection Description]

Facility and Material Needs

Facility Needs

Is this session remote delegate-compatible? No

Does this session need audio/video (AV) capabilities? Yes

Are there any other specific facility needs for this session? N/A

Material Needs

Material	Quantity	Source
Computer/ Laptop		
Accompanying PowerPoint Presentation		
Projector and Screen		
Ceremony for the Ordeal packet		
Copies of the Legend in prose		
Appropriate Cables & Cords (Laptop charger, extension cord, projector adapter)		

Session Preparation Steps

The trainer should be well-versed and knowledgeable in the Ordeal (and pre-Ordeal) ceremony. Many of the questions posed in this syllabus, particularly toward the beginning, are accompanied by sample answers (which are by no means definitive!). However, as the questions become more complex, the answers become more abstract. The trainer needs to study the ceremony text to the point that he feels comfortable answering and leading discussions on such questions. He also must be able to answer or discuss other questions posed by the participants.

Step 1: Multiple copies of the Ceremony for the Ordeal booklet are REQUIRED for this training session.

Step 2: Be sure to read through the Ordeal ceremony, this syllabus and PowerPoint, and *The Drum* by Tischitanisohen several times over and understand their meanings.

Step 3: The PowerPoint is useless without this syllabus and a qualified trainer. It does not contain slides for every section of the session. In fact, its only purpose is to suggest questions and discussion points at parts of the session where some gentle prodding might be necessary.

Step 4: Be comfortable with the idea of not being the ultimate resource. Do not be surprised if a participant, especially a younger or less experienced Arrowman, develops an insight that exceeds all others, including your own. You might not always be the most correct, but the only incorrect answers are the ones you can't back up.

Step 5: Work with ceremony teams, either as a ceremonialist, coach, or adviser. Have experience leading discussions, guiding the group towards strong conclusions without forcing specific answers. Be prepared for the group to reach conclusions that you did not think of before, without allowing the group to arrive at answers that are not consistent with the ideals of Scouting and the Order of the Arrow.

Lesson Plan

Introduction

10 minutes

Slides [##]-[##]

Welcome to Inside the Ordeal Ceremony! We are here today so we can better understand the Ordeal ceremony. We can then take our new understanding back to our lodges and chapters to help ensure the strongest and most expressive ceremonies that we can achieve. Perhaps even more importantly, we will practice how to extract this meaning for ourselves. Each of us has those that we look to for their guidance and knowledge of the ceremonies. But there is no such thing as a “learned” ceremonialist. There are only “learning” ceremonialists, and what we bring back to our lodges from this session will allow them to gain their own sophisticated understanding of the ceremony.

Trainer Instructions: This is the opportunity for the trainer to grasp his audience. Depending on the size of the session, have each member stand up and introduce themselves, where they are from, why they are attending the session, and anything else they think is important. This allows the session to gain a better feel for the other brothers in the session and it should also let the trainer determine which aspects of the session they may want to place a little more emphasis on. In a large session, this may have to be done more by survey than by individual introduction.

After everyone has introduced themselves, the trainer may provide members their own background and goals for the session.

Many of you are ceremonialists, or maybe ceremonies advisers. Make sure you understand that while this session does not explore ceremony techniques in depth, our own understanding of what we mean helps for those techniques to naturally occur in the performance. At the 2011 American Indian Summer, a ceremonies performance trainer famously said the best ceremony performances come solely from intuition: when one does not need to stop and think about what or how they are speaking. This level of intuition can only come after reaching a strong personal understanding of the Ordeal and the ceremony, and that is what we are trying to do here.

This is not a compare and contrast discussion – this is not an ordeal management session.

This is to help us gain a universal understanding as a Brotherhood on the meaning and symbolism of the ceremony, and how we can continue to find it. The goal is to encourage critical thinking and original ideas as to the meaning of the ceremony. The process is discussion and argument. Will everyone agree on everything? Of course not. But being challenged is what causes us to better strengthen our own understanding or to change them as we are shown in a more preferable way.

The Drum by Tischitanissohen is an essential resource for any ceremonialist, and it will back us up on the importance of finding meaning. There are several passages to back us up, but one page has been selected that illustrates this point.

Trainer Instructions: Pull out *The Drum* and read *Inspiration* from page 9. Allow a few moments for digestion, and have the session acknowledge the point before continuing. Flip to the first slide, *The Meaning Game*.

Much of this training session will be trying to answer questions about why the ceremony is the way it is, or why was a certain word used instead of another one. Sometimes you will be challenged with sharing your own questions as well, and it is encouraged! Often you may be able to answer the question on a physical plane: it is easier to run the ceremony this way, or that principal hasn't talked in a half hour, and we almost forget they're even there. However, we hope that these questions can also be answered on a higher plane: where symbolism and purpose provide us with insight into why we do what we do.

Before we start doing this, we need to gather together the tools available to us in this game. There are so many different things in text form which we can infer meaning. What we will do is in your groups that are about to be created, try and come up with what kinds of things we can recognize in the text or the ceremony ring or its related diagrams from which we can draw meaning. Two examples are given. Let's see what more you can come up with for yourselves.

Trainer Instructions: Form groups and flip to the next slide, *Tools in our Box*. Give the groups 3-5 minutes to come up with their answers and share. Flip through the rest of the examples on the slide (ending with "anything else").

Topic I – Ceremonial Grounds

Slides [##]-[##]

15 minutes

We begin our exploration of the ceremony where all ceremonies begin: the grounds. This may seem obvious, and that's good! The ceremony ring is the fundamental base of the ceremony. Without it, there is no ceremony at all! But we also know that the real ceremony takes place inside the human spirit; why do we need physical grounds at all?

While the real ceremony is a thing of the spirit, we have to recognize that the human body is a bridge to get there. We can explain the purpose of the Order to an Ordeal candidate over a morning jog or a cup of coffee, like we are doing here, instead of showing them the ceremony, and what would that mean to them? There is no more powerful a place to really feel the spirit of the Order than the ceremony ring. The only reason we are even at a training session like this is to increase that power back at our own ceremonial grounds.

We turn to page 11 of the ceremony book and find the ceremony ring. It is fairly simple and most of us probably already understand the basic components of a ceremony ring. That makes this a good first practice at finding the meanings! Here are a few examples, your groups should get into a discussion on how to expound these meanings to everyone else. You don't all have to agree! You can share differing opinions of your group. By all means, the best discussions are where people disagree. Try to back your arguments however you can. If you wish, use logic, or if you wish, cite a verse. Ideally, we can do both. Feel free to draw other inferences if you have time, but for now only stick to the Ordeal ceremony ring (not the pre-Ordeal ring).

Trainer Instructions: Flip to the next slide, *The Grounds*. Give the groups 5 minutes of discussion before sharing their responses.

Here are some examples (with suggested answers italicized)

- Which way is the arrow moving and why (referring to the compass rose)? *As Nutiket says, "north is the emblem of the hunter, the trapper, and the scout. It means fixity of purpose." Kichkinet also fires the physical arrow Northward for this same reason. It also points in the direction of Allowat Sakima, the principle of service, to remind us all of our unifying purpose of service to others ("If you intend to continue your service... Brother Kichkinet, we all have the same purpose").*
- Why do the candidates enter the ring from the South and not any other direction? *"Let us try to find the Arrow!" It is only natural that the candidates move in this direction as they were moving in the direction the Arrow flew when they reached the ceremony. Alternatively, Because Nutiket, the guard, is stationed at the South and he must be the one to let them in. This would then require an explanation as to why Nutiket is at the South.*

- Why do they then travel clockwise? *They are really moving West to East. "Membership in our Order is given, not only for what you have done, but for what you are expected to do in the future, for your journey is just beginning." They are moving opposite the direction of the daytime sun (how the sun would move underground), as the Induction occurs throughout the Night. This allows them to be facing the East, where the sun will rise, as they pass the final principal after entering the circle.*

If these seemed somewhat trivial, that was partially by design (this is a warm-up exercise). However, bearing these sorts of things in mind while leading the candidates through the circle might help keep the ceremonialists in the proper spirit throughout the ceremony, particularly Kichkinet in this case, as he is physically moving through this path with the candidates.

In fact, much of the more interesting symbolism of the ceremony ring, in my opinion, is in relation to how it *changes* from the pre-Ordeal ceremony.

Trainer Instructions: Form groups and flip to the next slide, *Transitioning Ceremony Rings*. Allow 5 minutes for discussion. Some examples of what may likely be discussed are blow.

- Why is the fire lay not lit in the pre-Ordeal and lit in the Ordeal? *The fire lay IS lit during the pre-Ordeal. As Nutiket says, "the spark is there, already glowing, fan it now, forgetting hunger; feed it, till it is a fire." The spark is simply not visible to the candidate at this time (although it was visible to those who elected him). The principals acknowledge its presence; it is what motivates them to see these candidates through the Ordeal. The blazing Ordeal fire is the result of the candidate's efforts to grow the spark in their own heart.*
- Why do the 12 lights around the ring move from surrounding the sides to a more concentrated setup at the north? *The candidates are not yet brothers, and do not enter the ring in the pre-Ordeal ceremony. They are now allowed. The larger circle of firepots closes off the candidates from inadvertently entering the circle of which they have not yet earned entry. In the Ordeal, the circle is comprised of the brothers themselves, and the lights have retreated in order to let the new members become a part of that circle.*

- Why does the motion change from the counterclockwise movement of the principals to a clockwise motion of the candidates? *In the pre-Ordeal ceremony, candidates are asked to reflect upon their Scouting history. Counterclockwise movement rolls back the past. In the Ordeal ceremony, new members are told that membership is given not only for what you have done, but for what you are expected to do in the future. Clockwise movement rolls time forward. Alternatively, the principals collectively are a reflection of the individual candidate. If the principals are looking back from the other side of a mirror, their counterclockwise motion mirrors the candidate's clockwise motion in the Ordeal.*
- Why is there no investment before the Ordeal ceremony? *The entire Induction is one continuous event. The principals have already entered the ring and ceremonially do not need such an investment to prepare them.*

Topic 2 – The Prayers

10 minutes

Slides [##]-[##]

It's time for us to move into the narrative of the ceremony itself. This should be somewhat straightforward, comparatively, and also each of you has on average just read one fourth of the ceremony.

What's the first thing that happens after we open the lodge? We pray! An "A Scout is Reverent" reference would certainly be an appropriate explanation, but only to the point of praying one time, and we do so two times! Once to open the ceremony (before the candidates are even present), and once immediately before the Obligation. As any Meteu here can attest, all Meteu does is the legend and pray! What's the purpose of these prayers, who is the audience of each one, and why do we choose these moments in the ceremony to do so? Why is there no prayer in the pre-Ordeal ceremony?

Trainer Instructions: Meteu's first prayer focuses on a Cheerful intent as we conduct the business of bestowing membership. The second prayer, preceding the Obligation, is about the bonds of brotherhood that these new members are in the process of entering.

Topic 3 – The Legend

30 minutes

Slides [##]-[##]

Trainer Instructions: Flip to the next slide, *The Legend*. Build the first half of the slide as you go through the bullet points in the syllabus.

Finally, we come to the Legend, the part of the ceremony many consider to be the most important, or at least the most difficult to perform. What are some reasons for this?

- *Unusual poetic style*
- *Very long*
- *It feels like there's a piece missing*

The difficulty of the Legend is also its strength: its written style is very impactful, but it also makes grasping the intricate meanings more challenging. Luckily, we have two Legends to help us understand what is happening.

Trainer Instructions: This doesn't technically exist, but it needs to. Copies of the legend in prose MUST be provided for this session.

Many of you may have never even been aware of the Legend in Prose. Take the time to read it now and then compare and contrast it with the poetic Legend of the ceremony in your

Trainer Instructions: Give 5-8 minutes in groups. They will likely find the Prose easier to understand. They might then conclude that the second legend serves as a tool for the ceremonialist to learn what the poetic Legend is trying to get across. Briefly entertain group responses.

Build the second half of the slide as you summarize the story.

groups. Try and focus on the meanings and where one might be easier to understand than the other. Why do you think we have two legends?

Moving back to the Ceremonial Legend, we can now distinguish ten major events, each one separated by its own stanza: the peaceful beginning, the coming of conflict, Chingachgook's request for service, none respond, Uncas steps up, they find a few others willing to serve, Chingachgook promotes them after the conflict is resolved, the people want it perpetuated, he forms the Order, we perpetuate it today.

Your groups should go through each major event one at a time, and identify all the symbols, metaphors, and anything else you think conveys some meaning. Then convince each other what those meanings are.

Trainer Instructions: Flip to the next slide, *The Tools in our Box (Reference)*. Give the groups 15 minutes for identification and interpretation. Then, *shuffle the groups* to create a set of session-wide discussions for another few minutes if time allows.

For this exercise, get nominations for each event, someone who seemed to have good insight or questions. Come up and share your thoughts, and then try to convey them through telling that portion of the legend.

Trainer Instructions: Feel free to pick and choose sections as time allows. Give the session time to respond to each nominee's meanings and potentially try it themselves. The entire exercise should last 15 minutes.

We can clearly see from this that the Legend is full of meaning, shrouded in poetry, and requires careful thought and study. It often takes a couple years to reach the goal of telling the legend without paying any attention to what you're saying, but continuously searching for understanding like we have can help to cut that time down.

Topic 4 – The Explanation

15 minutes

Slides [###]-[###]

Now that we've heard the Legend expound our purpose, we find it appropriate to finally explain what it is the new members actually went through. Why do we do this? Why is Nutiket the one who reminds the new members of this?

Trainer Instructions: This discussion should last 5-8 minutes in groups followed by 8-10 minutes all together. The participants should focus on ceremonial lines relating to the principals' styles and the temporal position of when the transition from Nutiket to Allowat Sakima happens.

Let
us

now recap the explanation and discuss each topic and the order it goes in.

Topic 5 – Recognition

15minutes

Slides [###]-[###]

Allowat Sakima gives them and explains the handclasp, gives them the Admonition and its meaning, and then Kichkinet and the Elangomats place the sashes on the new members. Is there any significance to this order of events? What other questions or insights can we find here?

Topic 6 – The Journey Continues

5 minutes

Slides [###]-[###]

In the Lodge Closing Ceremony, we find two distinct segments of the ceremony we teach the new brothers how to exchange of the signs of membership and challenge them to continue on their journey. The signs of membership is for a pretty obvious reason: we need to teach the new Brothers how to use them! The challenge is less simple:

- *“Your journey is just beginning. Another time of testing is before you. Now you must preserve the tradition of cheerful service given us by Uncas. This will not be easy. Your fellow Scouts will thoroughly test your dedication. But you will discover that everything you have done and heard in this Ordeal will help you. Seek to understand the four tests you have completed, and resolve not to flinch when you encounter them in new ways as you strive to fulfill your Obligation.*
- *This is your Quest for the Arrow. It will lead you around this fire once again. As you complete that circle, you will find us waiting for you. Together, we will celebrate your fulfillment of the Quest by welcoming you into Brotherhood membership.”*

What is he alluding to where the candidates will “continue [their] journey in this circle, drawing closer to the fire”? What is he really challenging them to do? Why is it important to separate this from the rest of Allowat Sakima’s explanation?

Trainer Instructions: Even the Ordeal members present will (and should) understand that this is a reference to the Brotherhood ceremony, as it is commonly used to encourage new members to seal their membership. Be sure that you and the session participants avoid drawing specific parallels to the ceremony itself for the sake of any Ordeal members present.

Conclusion & Takeaway Challenge

5 minutes

Slides [###]-[###]

Thank you all for your time today. We have had some very interesting discussions and found some very good meanings that will make all of you better understanding Arrowmen and, subsequently, better ceremonialists or advisers. Not everything today was an answer for you. In fact, most things were probably questions. But all of us learned something today that we will use to make our ceremonies better.

Please take out your notebook and pen. For the final three minutes, I want you to think about the most important things you learned today. You should write down what you think you can implement back home in your lodge or chapter, and also write down your three most important things for unlocking the meaning of the ceremonies.

In closing, share one last round of the meaning game. This comes to symbolize everything that we have done here today.

Trainer Instructions: Display final slide showing page 26 of *The Drum*, “The Pattern on the Drumhead.” If anybody asks for page 41, be sure to show them if you have a copy (or, if no copy is available, simply explain that there is no page 41: it’s the inside cover).

Trainer Instructions: As a reminder, make sure to direct any questions to ice@oa-bsa.org and do not feel as if you must answer every question if you are not comfortable or 100% on the information. Thank the delegates for attending the session and mention that you will stick around for 5 to 10 minutes after the session if anyone has any questions or feedback.

Trainer Instructions: After the delegates have left your classroom, make sure you walk the room to make sure nothing was left behind and the room is clean. Remember to take your belongings with you and do not store your laptop and training material in the room overnight.

Appendix: Resources and Source Material

[Please add all referenced sources or handouts that would be useful to share with session attendees.]

Resource	Link
Order of the Arrow, Mission & Purpose	Available online at: https://oa-bsa.org/about/mission-purpose
Guide to Inductions, June 2022 Revision	Available online at:
Ceremony for the Ordeal, May 2022 Revision	Available online at:
The Drum: A Training Aid for Ceremonial Teams by Tischitanisohen	

Inside the Ordeal Ceremony | Training Syllabus

Inside the Ordeal Ceremony PowerPoint	Available online at:
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