

Native America Domestic Violence Awareness Month October 2013

“Illuminate the Night” Sky Lantern Lighting and Release Ceremony

Holding a lighting and release ceremony is a powerful way to make a statement in your community and beyond.

Tips on how to organize:

A lighting and release ceremony is quite simple to organize. You can make it as big or as small as you like. The main goal is to get the word out that the ceremony is taking place. However, there are several things to consider:

Step #1: Choosing the Location and Time

The first thing that needs to be decided is the location for the event. Most are held outdoors on public property. It is recommended to have by the water (lake or river) or where your community has their local fire works. Consider the following when choosing your location:

- *The place should be easy to find for participants from all over town.
- *Ideally, you should have an indoor option available in case of bad weather, Indoor candle light vigil can be held instead and have a rain date for the release later.
- *Please be sure to contact your parks and recreation department or your local city hall to see if you need a permit before holding your event.

Once you've selected a location, choose a date and a proper time for the occasion. The sky lanterns are purple for domestic violence awareness so will be visible day or night.

“OH NO! IT IS RAINING?” An alternate plan is always a good idea. Either a rain date or have an indoor area waiting. Have some candles ready and change the lighting ceremony to a Candle Light Vigil. Candle Light Vigils are a great back up plan and can also be done indoors or outdoors.

Step #2: Designate a Master of Ceremony for the event

To keep things running smoothly, someone should be designated the main speaker or master of ceremonies. This person addresses the crowd; introduces speakers (whoever is reading of the proclamation), reviews directions for lighting/safety precautions and start time of events (i.e. the start of your walk, round dance, drum ceremony, honor song, release count down).

Step #3: Event Logistics

Of course you will have your supply of sky lanterns (and matches or lighters) on hand for participants to light and release. Separate into teams of two or three for lighting the lanterns. It is recommended to have more than one person lighting the lanterns. (see lighting and safety instructions)

Designate responsible persons:

- *someone to be responsible for copies needed: i.e. programs, sign-in sheets, safety guidelines, releases, and any/all information sheets.
- *Someone to be responsible for lanterns and lighting supplies.
- *Someone to be responsible for clipboard, event agenda, and proclamation.

Step #4: Getting the Word Out

Once you've got everything in place for the event, you'll need to spread the word so that people will be able to attend. There are several ways to advertise a special event including:

- *Posting printed flyers in neighborhoods, stores, public bulletin boards.
- *Contacting local media with details of the event.
- *Contacting relevant groups. i.e. Survivors, other service providers, Tribal leadership, police, court, social services, etc.
- *Word of mouth is also important and valuable source of contact. Tell as many people as you can about your lighting/release event and ask them to tell anyone they know who might be interested in attending.
- *Brainstorm a list of ways that you will advertise and groups that can do outreach to make your event well attended.
- *Be sure to send all flyers to Uniting Three Fires to get on the statewide calendar and to put on their web/facebook page.

Sample agenda for your event

1. Welcome and Introduction
2. Host gives remarks about event, introduces speakers
3. Speaker (May be tribal leader, elder, survivor)
4. Host goes over safety precautions and lighting instructions
5. Lighting ceremony begins and Proclamation is read.
6. Release ceremony begins with honor song and drumming
7. Closing remarks

Few extra tips for a very successful event...

- *Make T-shirts and give to participants
 - *Provide a copy of program to attendees
 - *Be sure to have a volunteers working the welcome and sign in station
 - *Have release forms for all participants participating in the lighting ceremony before giving the lanterns to them.
 - *Relax and enjoy yourself
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