



FOUR DIGNITIES OFFERING CEREMONY

Activity Type:	Ceremony
Theme:	Four Dignities
Aim / Objective:	To honour and celebrate the children of our community. To give families an event where their children are an integral part of the ceremony rather than just observers. To introduce or deepen understanding of the Four Dignities.
Age Range:	2-16
Description:	In this Children's Day pageant, in the presence of the King and Queen of Shambhala, children and teens give offerings to the dignities of Tiger, Lion, Garuda and Dragon. The event is followed by a child-friendly pot-luck dinner.
Preparation:	<p>Find people ahead of time to fill the following roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2 coordinators ● King and Queen ● 4 "Youthful Lha Warriors" (teens) - each performs a short (1-2 min.) dance for one of the dignities ● 3-4 Youthful Lha Warriors to help light candles, support young children, play processional music ● Reader(s) (could be teens or adults) to read TLGD poems ● Sound person (to play tape player) ● Servers for the King and Queen <p>Assemble Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Puja tables ● Tray for offerings ● Tiger, Lion, Garuda and Dragon (TLGD) poems printed (see below) ● TLGD silks or cloths for puja table ● TLGD icons – beautiful representations of the animals – could be ceramic, painted wood, photo, small banner, nice stuffed animal ● Tiger offering: 1 chrysanthemum for each child to offer, Gagaku music ● Lion: Water-proof Lion icon sitting on a small bowl upside down in a larger bowl filled with turquoise water (a drop of food dye works). Also small ladle for dipping and pouring. ● Garuda: Incense, bowl with sand, arrow with white scarf tied to it. ● Dragon: table on side with candles and lit candle. Votive candles. ● Music and costumes for 4 dignity dances ● Tape player ● Drum, gongs, clacker



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Children's Day Shrine● Decorated thrones (chairs) for King and Queen in shrine room● Pot luck food offering <p>Set-Up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Hold rehearsals for 4 dignity dancers● Decorate the shrine room a day ahead of time – have parents and children join in the transformation – order pizza!● Have snacks / appetizers before the ceremony
Method:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The ceremony begins when children and parents are gathered in the shrine room. Parents on the outer areas, children in the center. A Master of Ceremonies (one of the coordinators) welcomes everyone and gives rudimentary instructions on how to make the offerings.2. The procession begins with Youthful Lha Warriors (age 13+) performing the ritual (drum, large gong, clack, small ding) processional music. The King and Queen (K and Q) enter, followed by the Four Dignity Dancers (4DD) who are carrying their icon (TLGD). The K and Q sit on their chairs and preside over the ceremony; the 4DD enter and place their icon on the puja tables for the offerings. They then sit down in the four corners of the room as protectors of the space.3. A sum dum is performed on the drum. Then the Tiger reader stands in front of the shrine, facing the children and reads the Tiger poem. Following that, the Tiger does his/her dance. Following that, the Gagaku music is played and the children line up. They receive a flower, approach the puja table, bow to the Tiger icon, and place the flower on the tray. As soon as the last child places his/her flower on the tray, the music is turned off and a sum dum is performed on the drum.4. The Lion reader takes his/her place and reads the Lion poem. Following that, the Lion does his/her dance. Following that, the Gagaku music is played and the children line up. They approach the puja table, bow to the Lion and then pick up the small ladle and pour water over the Snow Lion. As soon as the last child makes the Lion offering, the music is turned off and a sum dum is performed on the drum.5. The Garuda reader takes his/her place and reads the Garuda poem. Following that, the Garuda does his/her dance. Then, the Gagaku music is played and the children line up. They approach the puja table, bow to the Garuda and pick up the arrow and wave the scarf through the smoke (incense) or juniper (warning: juniper is labour intensive, and may be too smoky). As soon as the last child makes the Garuda offering, the music is turned off and a sum dum is performed on the drum.6. The Dragon reader takes his/her place and reads the Dragon poem. Following that, the Dragon does his/her dance. The Gagaku music is played and the children line up. One at a time, they go to the side puja table, receive a votive candle, light it and then go over to the front puja table where they bow to the Dragon and make the candle offering.



	<p>As soon as the last child makes the Dragon offering, the music is turned off and an ending sum dum (OoO), is performed on the drum.</p> <p>7. After the ceremony, the children are dismissed and the parents set up puja tables in the shrine room. They set the tables and then the children are invited back into the shrine room. At this point, the parents enter bearing delicious pot luck offerings (lots of platters of turkey, ham, mashed potatoes, carrots, salads). The children including the teens, enjoy being served by their parents. We ask people to only bring main dishes and salads or bread. The center buys the chocolate that is given by the K and Q and for dessert we buy a few tins of assorted holiday cookies.</p> <p>8. Sometime during the evening, we have the K and Q do a blessing with a mirror and a juniper branch splash. (dip branch in water, and gently splash child's head/face as they are looking in the mirror) Sometimes the K and Q engage each child in a short conversation about their aspirations to help others or other pertinent topics.</p>
<p>Poems:</p>	<p>Tiger</p> <p>A tiger wears his stripes with a satisfied grin.</p> <p>He pays attention to where his feet are walking -- what his nose is sniffing -- what his ears are hearing -- what his tongue is licking.</p> <p>A tiger likes his bouncy feet -- they like to slowly walk, to run and dance, they like to squish in the soft green grass.</p> <p>This tiger likes to be a tiger - not an elephant, that makes a very special smile.</p> <p>So sweet to be a tiger, and love the jungle wild.</p> <p>The children of Shambhala are like young tiger cubs, with bouncy feet eager to meet the ground.</p> <p>They are happy to be children walking, talking, sniffing, listening, making growling sounds.</p> <p>A flower is meek and friendly and kind, and so is a child who pays attention to his mind. We offer our flowers to the tiger who is meek, children and tigers and flowers so sweet.</p>



	<p>[flower offering]</p>
	<p>Lion</p> <p>A snow lion ? is a very unusual lion.</p> <p>He likes to race to the top of a mountain, and stop -- and sniff the air, the cold fresh mountain air.</p> <p>It fluffs his fur. The snow tickles his feet into a graceful prancing leap.</p> <p>He's white like snow; his mane is turquoise like mountain lakes.</p> <p>His prancing feet fling snow fluttering into the air. The wind blows his mane into cloud like curls. The perky snow lion enjoys his world.</p> <p>The children of Shambhala are like snow lion cubs.</p> <p>They learn to dress, to clean their mess, to pour their tea so gracefully.</p> <p>Each day they wake and lift their heads to the sky, to greet the sun with a lion's cry.</p> <p>The water of the turquoise mountain lake is cold and perky and excruciatingly awake.</p> <p>We splash the mountain lion's roar, Children and snow lions offer their joy.</p> <p>[turquoise water offering over lion's head]</p>
	<p>Garuda</p> <p>Garuda is the king of birds Outrageously red, with a beak as sharp as a sword. Garudas don't just flap their wings and fly Garuda spreads his wings, leaps into space, and soars as high as the sun, just for fun.</p> <p>Garuda is outrageously red because he has no fear. He's not afraid of being too high in the sky.</p>



	<p>He's not afraid of bumps and thumps and spooky wooky flying Hefalumps. He's not afraid of being all alone in the giant sky without a phone. He's not afraid of anything, so he's kind to all living things.</p> <p>The children of Shambhala are like garuda birds. They love to fly, higher than sky, relaxing in the wind. And when their fears bring shakes and lots of tears, Sometimes, they open eyes and ears, and with their nose they pierce those fears like bubbles pricked by pins.</p> <p>The wind cannot be caught, cannot be fought. It's wild and free. Wind blows through every child and every tree. We offer the smoke, and let it rise. Garuda catches a ride to the sky.</p> <p>[Juniper smoke offering or wave arrow/scarf through incense smoke]</p>
	<p>Dragon</p> <p>When mist rises from earth and lakes, the sleeping dragon wakes.</p> <p>He leaves his cave, and floats to the sky, watching the earth like a mischievous spy.</p> <p>Dragon plays in the wind and clouds; he makes the lightening and thunder sound.</p> <p>Rain begins to fall By his lightening fire, he gently waters all.</p> <p>The dragon's magic is his brave and gentle heart and that, he's as playful as a kite, and takes tremendous delight, in melting into a cloud, then surprising the sun with a roar so loud.</p> <p>The children of Shambhala are like the inscrutable dragon.</p> <p>When the dragon children begin to find, they whine, they change their mind,</p>



	and leap into floating playful dragon time. (candle offering)
	<i>All poems are by Jeani Mustain</i>