

# HOW TO ESTABLISH A UNITY YOUTH COUNCIL



*Inspiring Hope. Changing Lives.*

*Since 1976*

United National Indian Tribal Youth, Inc.  
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(480)-718-9793 [www.unityinc.org](http://www.unityinc.org)

# WHAT IS A YOUTH COUNCIL?

Native American youth can make a difference, but first they must be organized and prepared for action. An effective way to accomplish this is through a youth council.

A youth council represents a practical way of enabling youth to have a meaningful role in helping solve community problems. Types of youth councils include:

- Tribal Youth Councils
- Alaska Native Village Youth Councils
- Urban Youth Councils
- High School Indian Clubs
- College or University Native American Associations
- A Church-sponsored Youth Group
- An Independent Youth Group

Keep in mind that youth councils are just as diverse as Native America itself. Each youth council maintains its own identity and is built upon the needs and values of that community.

By being involved with a youth council, young Native Americans can use their combined talents and energy to address major concerns facing them today. Youth design and promote their own programs to fit their needs.

Young people who are involved with youth councils learn to accept responsibility. They grow through achievement and in the knowledge that they are making a real contribution to their community and to Native America



## **BENEFITS OF JOINING A YOUTH COUNCIL**

What young people gain from participating in a youth council depends on their level of commitment and involvement. Youth council members who make the most of their opportunities will:

- + learn how to work with other young people on a local level as well as on a national level
- + build strong and lasting friendships
- + learn how to be supportive of others
- + develop greater self-esteem and self-confidence
- + develop communication and leadership skills
- + gain self-worth and inner-strength
- + develop winning attitudes
- + receive encouragement and support from other members
- + take responsibility for their lives and actions
- + enhance their public speaking skills
- + be better prepared to make the most of their lives and
- + learn how to work with tribal, village and community leaders
- + participate in UNITY-sponsored trainings
- + attend the annual National UNITY Conference
- + meet Native youth from different areas and cultures

## WHAT DOES A YOUTH COUNCIL DO?

Each youth council determines its activities and programs based on its own needs. Needs can be identified through discussions with members, interviews, surveys and other types of research. Once needs are determined, a youth council develops a plan of action to implement its activities.

As affiliates of the UNITY Network, youth councils are expected to conduct activities in community service, cultural heritage, environment, and healthy lifestyles.

For example, UNITY Network affiliated youth councils have:

- + volunteered to help community elders
- + Established college scholarships
- + to raise money to start a business
- + sponsored youth camps and conferences
- + started a teen pregnancy prevention program at school
- + sponsored food, clothing, coat and snow suit drives
- + conducted bone marrow tissue typing drives
- + helped renovate mobile homes for needy families
- + participated in a governor's page program
- + organized alcohol-and drug-free community dances
- + started an after-school tutoring program
- + organized traditional food and language classes
- + teach traditional games

These are just a sample of the activities conducted by youth councils. Your youth council can plan and conduct one of these activities or one that is more suited to your needs. Youth councils affiliated with the UNITY Network are expected to conduct projects in the areas of environment, heritage, community service and healthy lifestyles.

## STEPS FOR ORGANIZING A YOUTH COUNCIL

1. Youth decide to organize and start a youth council. They sign a petition or letter indicating their interest in and support for a youth council. They find a local sponsoring organization, which can be a tribe, village, urban center, high school, college or university. Petition or letter is presented to tribe or sponsoring organization such as a school.
2. A steering committee of youth and adults is formed to help the youth council get established.
3. Sponsoring organization designates a youth coordinator or advisor. This may be a paid or volunteer position. This individual could be a tribal employee, teacher, parent, or community member.
4. A Resolution is presented to tribal government or sponsoring organization for consideration. The resolution is designed to ensure that the youth council is part of the permanent structure of the sponsoring organization. Schools or other groups may not need a resolution. All that is needed much of the time is an approval letter signed by an appropriate individual of the sponsoring organization.
5. Steering committee develops youth council bylaws. When developing bylaws, keep in mind that the council bylaws should be tailored to meet the needs of the youth and the values and traditions of the tribe, village or sponsoring organization.
6. Youth council bylaws are approved by youth members and presented to tribal officials or sponsoring organization.
7. An advisory council is formed. Parents, elders, concerned adults, and representatives of youth-serving organizations may be invited to serve. One or two advisors are selected to serve as primary advisors.
8. Elections are conducted for Youth Council officers.
9. Youth conduct meetings and develop their course of direction.
10. After a youth council is organized, members vote to join the UNITY Network. Copies of your bylaws, resolution or approval letter, affiliation form and \$100 are submitted to UNITY.

*\*A sample resolution and bylaws can be found in this pamphlet. A resolution isn't always necessary. Usually this would be done by a tribe or village since most conduct their business via the resolution process.*

*\*\* UNITY Network information and affiliation forms are also available from the UNITY office or online at [www.unityinc.org](http://www.unityinc.org)*

# **SAMPLE CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS**

*Constitution - a written instrument embodying the rules of a political or social organization, or in this case, a youth council. Bylaws - rules adopted by an organization for the governance of its members and regulation of its affairs. The following constitution and bylaws can be adapted to fit the needs of your youth council. It is highly recommended that the youth discuss and understand the importance of the articles and provisions of their governing documents before they vote to ratify.*

## **CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF**

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(name of youth council)

### **ARTICLE ONE**

Name

The name of this group shall be the \_\_\_\_\_ Youth Council.

### **ARTICLE TWO**

Objectives

The objectives of this group shall be to provide a collective voice and represent the tribal youth in all matters that concern them; to serve as a means of mobilizing and coordinating the actions of youth, other community members and organizations toward positive goals to promote the development of future tribal leaders; to help solve the problems facing Native youth; to coordinate community service projects and provide opportunities for the youth to interact for fun and fellowship.

## **ARTICLE THREE**

### **Members**

**Section 1.** The group shall have one class of youth members consisting of Native American youth between the ages of 14 to 24 years of age, inclusive.

**Section 2.** Each member shall have a right to cast one (1) vote on any matter submitted to a vote of the membership

## **ARTICLE FOUR**

### **Officers**

**Section 1.** The officers of this group shall be a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Two or more principal offices may not be held by the same person.

**Section 2.** The president shall be the principal officer of the group and shall supervise and control the affairs of the group. The president will preside at all membership meetings.

**Section 3.** In the absence of the President, the Vice President shall perform the duties of the President.

**Section 4.** The Secretary shall keep minutes of the membership meetings and see that all notices are given in accordance with the bylaws, keep a current membership list and, in general, perform all duties related to the office of Secretary.

**Section 5.** The Treasurer shall have custody and be responsible for the collection and disbursements of all funds of the group. The Treasurer will prepare and present a financial report at each meeting. (An advisor shall co-sign all deposits, checks, and financial statements.)

**Section 6.** The officers shall be elected by ballot at a time and in a manner prescribed by the membership to serve for one year or until removed from office for just cause or until their successors are elected and assume office. The officer's terms shall commence at the close of the meeting at which they are elected.

## **ARTICLE FIVE**

### **Advisors**

**Section 1.** An Advisory Council will consist of parents, elders, other concerned adults, and representatives of various youth-serving agencies.

**Section 2.** The role of the members of the Advisory Council is to help facilitate meetings, offer guidance to youth, chaperone functions and activities of the youth council, and assist youth council members in fulfilling their responsibilities. One or two members of the Advisory Council will be selected to serve as primary advisors of the youth council.

**Section 3.** At least one member of the Advisory Council must be present at all youth council meetings and functions.



## **ARTICLE SIX**

### **Meetings**

**Section 1.** The group, as a whole, shall meet a minimum of three times a year. A notice of time, place and agenda will be provided to all voting members at least fifteen days prior to the meeting. These meetings will consist of a business meeting followed by a social or recreational function. The business meeting will include reports from officers and/or special committees. Planning and duties for future business and social functions will be delegated during the business meetings.

**Section 2.** The presence of eight (8) voting members of the council shall be required in order to constitute a quorum necessary for the conduct of the Youth Council's business.

**Section 3.** All regular and special meetings of the Youth Council shall be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order and consist of an agenda to include:

1. Roll Call
2. Determination of quorum
3. Reading of minutes of previous meeting
4. Reports of officers
5. Reports of special committees
6. Old business
7. New business
8. Announcements
9. Adjournment

## **ARTICLE SEVEN**

### Committees

Committees shall be established by the President from time to time as deemed necessary to carry out the work of the group. The Committee Chairperson will be appointed by the President. The Committee Chair person will be responsible for appointing others to serve on the Committee. The President shall be a member of all committees.

## **ARTICLE EIGHT**

### Affiliation

The \_\_\_\_\_ youth council will affiliate with the United National Indian Tribal Youth Network, also known as the UNITY Network.

## **ARTICLE NINE**

### Amendment of Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting of the group by a two-thirds vote, provided that the amendment has been submitted in writing at the previous regular meeting.

**Sample bylaws and notes are provided for you to use in drafting your bylaws. While drafting your bylaws, be guided by your needs. You can adopt the sample bylaws or change them to fit your needs. Remember, bylaws are there to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and equally. They should not be written to give anyone an unfair advantage.**

**Call or write the UNITY office if you have questions concerning circumstances and needs not covered by these samples. A good reference book you will need is *Robert's Rules of Order*. It will help you answer many of the questions you may have. You should be able to find a copy at your local library or bookstore.**

## SAMPLE RESOLUTION

**WHEREAS**, the youth of the \_\_\_\_\_ (reservation/village/  
organization name) represent a great natural resource, and

**WHEREAS**, today's youth of the \_\_\_\_\_ (reservation/village/  
organization name) will one day become leaders, and

**WHEREAS**, the youth need leadership training and experiences to better prepare them for  
these important roles, and

**WHEREAS**, the youth should be given the opportunity to bring about positive changes in  
the existing conditions (on the reservation/village or within the community), and

**WHEREAS**, the young people between the ages of fifteen to twenty-four should have a  
greater voice in matters concerning them, and

**WHEREAS**, the youth, through their collective action, can serve as a  
catalyst to bring about more unity and harmony (on the reservation/village or in the  
community), and

**WHEREAS**, there is a need for a mechanism which will allow for the distribution of  
information, coordination of activities, and sharing of resources, and

**WHEREAS**, there is a need for interaction and communication among the youth representing  
the various schools and communities.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE (GOVERING BODY)** that we declare that  
the spiritual, mental, physical and social well-being of our youth is the highest priority.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that in order to provide a greater voice for our youth and to  
give them greater opportunities to develop as leaders, the (GOVERNING BODY) authorizes  
the formation of the (youth council name). This organization will operate under the  
supervision and with the support and encouragement of the (tribe, village or community  
name).

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the youth council is approved to join the UNITY  
Network, sponsored by United National Indian Tribal Youth, Inc. in an effort to bring about  
positive change in Native America.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by Appropriate Official(s) \_\_\_\_\_

## **DUTIES OF MEMBERS**

- Show respect for other members by being on time and bringing necessary materials to meetings.
- Accept responsibility of sharing in the business at hand when a meeting convenes. Understand that participation is essential.
- Try to get other members to express their ideas for the benefit of all, even if it means less time for presenting personal ideas.
- Give constant, active attention to the group's activity during the meeting.
- Know the purpose of the meeting and help keep the ideas on track to get things done.
- Earn the right to give constructive criticism freely by accepting it.
- Check on assigned responsibilities and receive guidance and authority to carry them out.
- Accept the responsibility of youth council membership by actively participating in all organized meetings, committees and activities.

# DUTIES OF OFFICERS

## President:

### 1. Before the meeting:

1. Plans the meeting and prepares the agenda with the help of other officers, committee chairs, and the advisor. He or she includes what is to be accomplished and what is to be achieved. Together they determine the type of meeting and procedure to be used.
2. Delegate's responsibilities.
3. Check notifications, reports, and business items.
4. Organizes meeting place, equipment, etc.
5. Arrives in the proper frame of mind, knows that planning and preparation are complete.

### 2. During the meeting:

1. Calls the meeting to order.
2. Follows the agenda and addresses items in logical order.
3. Has a working knowledge of parliamentary procedure and other group techniques.
4. Organizes and directs the work of committees through a chairperson.
5. Keeps a favorable climate in the meeting.
6. Encourages and sets an example in leadership, citizenship, and courtesy.
7. Listens attentively.
8. Praises and thanks individuals and groups.
9. Summarizes and evaluates often.
10. Makes the meeting the group's meeting.

### 3. After the meeting:

1. Evaluates the meeting and the achievements.
2. Checks reports and minutes.
3. Sets the machinery in motion for the next meeting.
4. Reports to and consults with youth council officers and sponsoring organization.
5. Lists items to be researched.
6. Checks work of committees.
7. Follows through on recommendations and actions taken.
8. Prepares for future activities.
9. Helps see that the meeting room is put back in order.

## **DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

### **Vice-President:**

1. Has the same requirements and knowledge as the president.
2. Is able and willing to take over for the president
3. Has an important, specific committee activity assignment.
4. Can serve as the most significant leader within the committee structure.

### **Secretary:**

1. Before the meeting:
  1. Notifies members of the meeting.
  2. Assists with the preparation of the agenda.
  3. Has neatly typed minutes of the last meeting.
  4. Assists various committees in drafting and distributing any correspondence.
2. During the meeting:
  1. Takes attendance and keeps permanent records.
  2. Takes complete minutes including name of organization, date, and place of meeting, who presided, old and new business, committee reports, motions, and results.
  3. Reads minutes from previous meeting.
  4. Assists the president.

### **Treasurer:**

1. Keeps accurate, complete records of all money collected and spent.
2. Prepares a budget for youth council approval, usually with assistance of a committee and advisor.
3. Presents reports regularly to council and sponsoring organization.
4. Prepares an annual fiscal report.

### **All Positions:**

Duties will be accepted and executed as stated in the bylaws of the youth council.

# DUTIES OF COMMITTEES

A committee may be appointed, chosen from volunteers, or elected by the members of the entire group. The size of committees may vary according to the project and the scope of work to be accomplished. Smaller groups work more effectively. Five to seven members constitute a workable number. Committees should be large enough to represent a variety of opinions, yet small enough to make meeting schedules possible.

## Types of Committees

1. Standing: Usually elected or appointed for the entire year. Some examples are programs, elections and membership, and social committees. As a Network Affiliate, possible standing committees would be environment, heritage, community service, and healthy lifestyles.
2. Special: Appointed for a specific purpose. When the specific purpose is accomplished, the committees may be appointed to investigate or to act for the entire group.
3. Executive: Usually composed of officers, chairpersons of committees or an elected board. This group assists in planning meetings and initiating and organizing activities. Reports from this group are compiled by the secretary from the minutes of their meetings.

## Committee members should:

1. Understand the purposes of the committee and the methods for achieving and evaluating activities.
2. Share the responsibility with the leader in making the meeting successful.
3. Understand their responsibility in the group and to their constituents.
4. Understand parliamentary procedure and other leadership techniques.
5. Be interested, enthusiastic, and able to honestly follow through with assigned duties.
6. Be willing to place group objectives above personal objectives and can accept the majority position and support it

## Committee reports should include the following information:

1. Name of the committee, name of chairperson, and names of the members.
2. Date that work began, number of meetings held, and list of supplies with the amount, cost, and where obtained.
3. Committee activities.
4. Evaluation.
5. Committee suggestions.
6. Signature of chairperson or committee spokesperson or secretary.

## DUTIES OF COMMITTEES

Advisors are key to having effective youth councils. The type of advisor will determine to a great extent the success of the youth council.

To be successful, an advisor must have the respect, trust, and confidence of youth council members as well as of their parents and officials of the sponsoring organization.

An effective advisor is:

Trustworthy	Dedicated and determined
Sensitive	Sociable
Honest	Responsible
Courteous	Persistent and consistent
Patient	Understanding
Respectful	Reliable
A good listener	Open-minded

Advisors assume a variety of roles and responsibilities. They may be a guide, a counselor, a motivator, a promoter, or a coach. However, the advisor's primary role is that of a facilitator.

An advisor must be sure that youth council officers understand their roles and insist that they know how to conduct an effective meeting. Although the primary responsibility for bringing youth council projects and activities to successful completion rests with the youth involved, the advisor will be called upon to supply a great deal of information and guidance.

An advisor takes steps to keep partisan politics out of youth council meetings and activities. They set a positive example by not speaking against elected leaders or officials of the sponsoring organization and insisting youth council leaders do likewise.

Advisors perform other duties including:

1. monitoring funds,
2. filing annual reports to the UNITY office,
3. obtaining medical release forms when youth take trips,
4. serving as liaison between youth and youth council's sponsoring organization, encouraging active participating of each youth council member,
5. encouraging the goals of UNITY,
6. creating opportunities for youth councils, and
7. assuming the responsibilities and duties of a chaperon.

At youth council meetings, advisors should help develop effective relationships among youth. An advisor should promote communication techniques that make youth council members feel better about themselves, help them express their feelings, and encourage them to talk in a setting which is free from threats or fear, such as a talking circle.



The advisor monitors meetings and activities to ensure that the youth council does not become a clique or an elitist group and to ensure that a few of the members don't dominate every meeting or get all the media attention.

An advisor demonstrates trust. As trust develops among youth council members and the advisor, it is much easier for individual members to learn how their behavior affects the rest of the group and to modify this behavior if necessary or appropriate.

Advisors should always keep in mind that the youth council belongs to the youth. The advisor assists members in every way possible, but the meetings and projects are planned by members. The advisor must not misuse the youth council by pushing their personal agenda upon the members.

The personal conduct of an advisor is extremely important - not only in youth council meetings - but at all times. The advisor is a friend who relates well with youth, but does not try to be a youth. They must know where to "draw the line." The advisor is a role model and one who is entrusted by parents to work with their sons and daughters. The quickest way to destroy a youth council is for an advisor to do something that might violate this trust relationship.

The advisor holds a very challenging position because youth council members will model the leadership they demonstrate. Ultimately, a youth council's success depends greatly on the attitude, commitment, and overall effectiveness of an advisor.

In short, a good advisor serves as:

- Facilitator
- Consultant
- Teacher
- Observer
- Promoter
- Positive

*When possible, an advisory council should be formed from representatives of various youth-serving organizations to assist with youth council programs and development.*



# UNITY CREED

As a member of the UNITY Network,

I accept spirituality as an important foundation for a healthy,  
balanced lifestyle;

...recognize that pride in my culture and preservation of my  
heritage give me strength and dignity;

...will be honest, understanding and respectful of the diversity and  
uniqueness of self, others and our environment;

...know the importance of refraining from the abuse of alcohol,  
tobacco and drugs to maintain physical and mental well-being in  
order to be a positive role model for present and future generations,  
and finally

...make a personal commitment to strive toward reaching my full  
potential.



## **UNITY Network**

### **National UNITY Council Membership-Youth Council Application**

- This form is for youth groups that want to become affiliated with the UNITY Network
- The annual Youth Council membership fee is \$100.00. Online application, visit the UNITY Website or Click [Here](#)
- You must develop a set of bylaws for your group and submit them along with this form
- If applicable, please send a copy of the resolution by your tribe, Alaska Native Village, or sponsoring organization
- You are encouraged to use UNITY in your youth council's name
- Once approved, you may use the term "UNITY network Affiliate" and the UNITY Network logo in promoting your activities and events.
- As an affiliate, your group, is expected to conduct at least one project per year in each of the following areas: community service, cultural preservation, environmental awareness, and a healthy lifestyle.

**Name of American Indian /Alaska Native youth organization:**

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#### **Type of organization:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Tribal Youth Council	<input type="checkbox"/> Alaska Native Village Youth Council
<input type="checkbox"/> High School Youth Council	<input type="checkbox"/> College Native American Association
<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Youth Group	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Group (Please Specify)

Contact Person's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*By submitting this application, we support and agree to uphold the UNITY Network Creed. We pledge that all of our organization's activities will be alcohol and drug free. We agree that United National Indian Tribal Youth, Inc. will not be responsible or liable for any financial transactions or actions of our organization's members or advisors.*

*We verify that the majority of our youth members have voted to affiliate with the UNITY Network. Enclosed is a check or money order to cover the organization's \$100.00 affiliation fee.*

Organization President: \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

Organization Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

Other approving official (if needed): \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature and title)

Date of application: \_\_\_\_\_

ONLINE APPLICATION AVAILABLE: Documents can be uploaded. There is a payment selection of credit card, check, purchase order or Pre-Paid. [Here](#)

*Mail form and check or money order, along with a copy of your resolution and bylaws to:*  
**UNITY • 953 E Juanita Ave, Suite C, Mesa, AZ 85204**