

# OA Basics

## **The Order of the Arrow is Scouting's National Honor Society.**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Order of the Arrow is fourfold:

- To recognize those Scout campers who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives
- To develop and maintain camping traditions and spirit
- To promote Scout camping
- To crystallize the Scout habit of helpfulness into a life purpose of leadership in cheerful service to others

### **History**

The Order of the Arrow (OA) was founded by Dr. E. Urner Goodman and Carroll A. Edson in 1915 at the Treasure Island Camp of the Philadelphia Council, Boy Scouts of America. It became an official program experiment in 1922 and was approved as part of the Scouting program in 1934.

In 1948 the OA, recognized as the BSA's national brotherhood of honor campers, became an official part of the national camping program of the Boy Scouts of America.

### **Membership**

The OA has more than 176,000 members located in lodges affiliated with approximately 327 BSA local councils.

### **Eligibility**

Scouts are elected to the Order by their fellow unit members, following approval by the Scoutmaster or Varsity team Coach. To become a member, a youth must be a registered member of a Boy Scout troop or Varsity Scout team and hold First Class rank. The youth must have experienced fifteen days and nights of Boy Scout camping during the two-year period prior to the election. The fifteen days and nights must include one, but no more than one, long-term camp consisting of six consecutive days and five nights of resident camping, approved and under the auspices and standards of the Boy Scouts of America. The balance of the camping must be overnight, weekend, or other short-term camps.

Adult selection is based on their ability to perform the necessary functions to help the Order fulfill its purpose, and is not for recognition. Selected adult Scouters must be an asset to the Order because of demonstrated abilities, and provide a positive role model for the youth members of the lodge.

## **Induction**

The induction ceremony, called the Ordeal, is the first step toward full membership. During the experience, candidates maintain silence, receive small amounts of food, work on camp improvement projects, and are required to sleep alone, apart from other campers. The entire experience is designed to teach significant values.

## **Brotherhood Membership**

After 10 months of service and fulfilling certain requirements, a member may take part in the Brotherhood ceremony, which places further emphasis on the ideals of Scouting and the Order. Completion of this ceremony signifies full membership in the OA.

## **Vigil Honor**

After two years of service as a Brotherhood member, and with the approval of the national Order of the Arrow Committee, a Scout may be recognized with the Vigil Honor for outstanding service to Scouting, his lodge, and the community. This honor is bestowed by special selection and is limited to one person for every 50 members registered with the lodge each year.

## **Lodges**

Each local Boy Scout council is encouraged to have an Order of the Arrow lodge. Each lodge is granted a charter from the National Council, BSA, upon annual application. The OA lodge helps the local council provide a quality Scouting program through recognition of Scouting spirit and performance, development of youth leadership and service, promotion of Scout camping and outdoor programs, and enhancement of membership tenure.

## **Sections**

An Order of the Arrow section consists of lodges within a geographic area of the region. Once every year, representatives of lodges in the section come together for a conclave to share in fellowship, skills, and training. A section is lead by three youth officers, the Section Chief, Section Vice-Chief, and Section Secretary, who are advised by an adult Section Adviser and professional Section Staff Adviser. All of the elected section chiefs are invited form the conference committee for a national Order of the Arrow event, which is held under the guidance of the national Order of the Arrow Committee.

## **Region Leadership**

The region chief is the youth leader of the region elected by the section chiefs in his region. This election is held in conjunction with called meetings of the section chiefs to elect the national chief and vice-chief, as well as to plan a national Order of the Arrow event.

The region Order of the Arrow chairman is an adult appointed by the region director. The professional adviser for the region is a staff member assigned to the position by the region director. All three of the OA region leaders serve as members of the national Order of the Arrow Committee.

## **National Leadership**

The national chief and vice-chief are Arrowmen elected by the section chiefs during the annual national planning meeting. They serve as members of the national Order of the Arrow Committee, providing the opinion of youth on national OA policy. They also serve as the presiding officers for the national OA event. Their term of office is specified by the national committee, and is currently one year. They are advised in their responsibilities by the national committee chairman and national director of the Order of the Arrow.

The national OA committee chairman is appointed by the chairman of the national Boy Scout Committee. The professional adviser is the director of the Order of the Arrow, a member of the national Boy Scout Division staff.

*This material was adapted from the "OA Factsheet" from the BSA national office, and the Guide for Officers and Advisers.*

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