



## History

The Order of the Arrow is a recognized official program activity of the Boy Scouts of America, intended to recognize those scouts who best exemplify the scout virtues of cheerful service, camping and leadership.

The OA is the Honor Society of Scouting. It was founded in 1915; just seven years after Robert Baden-Powell started scouting in Great Britain. It is a uniquely American "honor society of scouting".

E. Urner Goodman, was a scoutmaster who worked as Director of the Philadelphia scout council's camp. Goodman wanted a way to teach scouts that there was more to scouting than skill proficiency. He wanted to see that the principles embodied in the Scout Oath and Law should become realities in the lives of scouts.

Goodman and the Assistant Camp Director Carroll A. Edson researched the lore and language of the Delaware Indians who had lived in the area of the camp. They also combine characters from James Fenimore Cooper's "Last of the Mohicans", to develop dramatic induction ceremonies for the "Order of the Arrow", as the new honor society was named. Today, these rites still make a lasting impression on scouts who have been elected to the "Order of the Arrow".

By 1921, the idea had spread to a score of scout councils in the northeast and the first national meeting of the Order of the Arrow was held. Initially, the OA was viewed with suspicion by some scouters as a secret society, if not an affront to the egalitarian ideas of scouting. Chief Scout Executive James E. West permitted those councils desiring Order of the Arrow lodges to establish them as an "experimental" program under a "National Lodge". OA was not fully incorporated into the scouting program until 1948.

The Order of the Arrow celebrated its Diamond Anniversary in 1990. Membership has grown to 160,000 of the one million Boy Scouts who are eligible in the U.S. There are almost 400 lodges throughout the United States. It is unusual for a council not to have an OA lodge with its own Indian name and totem or emblem.

OA helps older boys retain interest in scouting once they have reached high school age. OA guidelines place great importance on preserving Lodge leadership in the hands of its youth members, headed by a Chief, Vice Chief(s), and an Executive Committee. All must be under age 21. The youth plan and implement Lodge activities, service projects, ceremonies, publications, budgets, and conduct troop elections as arranged with Scoutmasters. Many adults find participation in the OA to be rewarding. They are an important part of the OA's success as advisors and resources, such as transportation and service project skills. They help to keep the spirit of brotherhood in scouting's honor society.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the Order of the Arrow is:

- To recognize those Scouts 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

## MEMBERSHIP

To be inducted into the Order of the Arrow, a Scout must:

- Be a registered member of a Boy Scout troop or Varsity Scout team
- Be at least First Class rank
- Have at least 15 nights of camping, including a 6-day long-term camp during the two-year period prior to his election
- Participate in the "Ordeal" and induction ceremony, after election by his Boy Scout or Varsity unit

Each Scout troop may schedule an Order of the Arrow election once annually. All registered active youth troop members have a vote, both current Arrowmen and non-Arrowmen. Membership selection is thus predominantly by nonmembers.

Explorer Posts cannot have OA election. However, a boy who holds dual registration with a troop (or Varsity unit) and a post, is eligible for election by his troop or unit.

Adult scouters may be [proposed for membership](#) in the Order of the Arrow by unit or district committees or the Lodge. Once selected, they, too, undergo the "Ordeal" and participate in the induction ceremonies.

## INDUCTION

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

To alleviate lingering concerns in some quarters regarding the ceremonial aspects of the order of the Arrow, the BSA has officially stated:

*"The induction is not a hazing or an initiation ceremony. The order is not a secret scout organization, and its ceremonies are open to any parent, Scout leader, or religious leader. There is an element of mystery in the ceremony for the sake of its effect on the candidates. For this reason, ceremonies are not put on in public. The ceremonies are not objectionable to any religious group."*



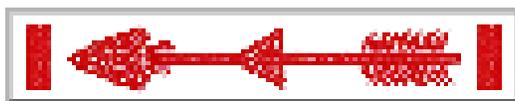
## **BROTHERHOOD MEMBERSHIP**

Following 10 months as an "Ordeal" member, the Arrowmen may participate in the "Brotherhood" ceremony, which signifies the sealing of his membership and an additional emphasis on OA ideals and purposes. Completion of this ceremony signifies full membership in the OA.



## **VIGIL HONOR**

After an additional 2 years as a Brotherhood member have passed, exceptional OA leaders may be recognized by conferring of the "Vigil Honor". Approval of the national Order of the Arrow Committee is required. Generally speaking, only two percent of the Lodge membership may be selected each year for this highest of Lodge honors. A special ceremony celebrates this experience.



**All Order of the Arrow members are reminded that their primary duty always remains to their own troop, which elected them in the first place as a result of their cheerful service to their fellow unit members. OA Lodge activities are intended to SUPPLEMENT, and not REPLACE, troop activities. Probably the single most often-heard complaint directed towards the OA program is that of Arrowmen who have forgotten this cardinal principle.**

## **LODGES**

Each Order of the Arrow lodge is granted a charter from the National BSA Council. The OA lodge helps the local council provide a quality Scouting program through recognition

of the Scouting spirit and performance, youth leadership development, service, and enhanced membership tenure. [The Aina Topa Hutsi Lodge](#) is located in the Alamo Area Council

## **CHAPTERS**

In larger councils, lodges are often subdivided into "chapters", with youth chapter officers and committeemen running chapter events.

## **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. All of the elected section chiefs form the conference committee for a national OA event, which is held under the guidance of the national OA Committee. At the Section, Regional, and National levels, Chiefs and Vice-Chiefs are typically young men of college age, since Arrowmen are considered youth members until age 21.

OA Lodges meet with other lodges in their sections each year and attend a nationwide gathering held on the campus of a major university every 2 years. These National Conferences, as they are called, feature individual and Lodge competitions in ceremonies, Indian dancing and costumes, and sports, along with seminars and gala arena shows. More than 6,000 Arrowmen attend, which for many is an exciting highlight of the scouting experience on a par with a National Jamboree.