

***Tailoring OA Operations for Better Recruitment and Retention***

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**Piedmont-Appalachian College of Commissioner Science**

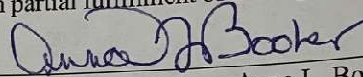
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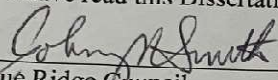
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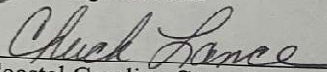
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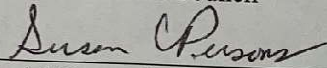


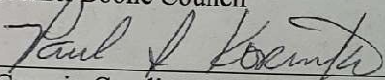
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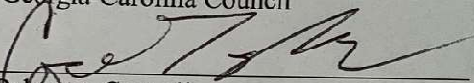
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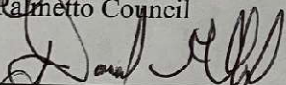
  
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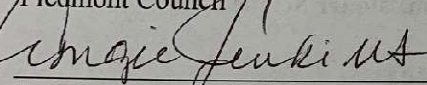
  
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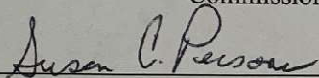
  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide insight on current trends in Order of the Arrow (OA) interactions and membership in Palmetto Council. Hopefully with this insight, I will provide valuable information to Skyuka Lodge's Lodge Executive Committee (LEC) to enable the committee to best tailor the way the lodge operates to improve recruitment, retention, and overall experience for members of the lodge.

Information was gathered through a Google Forms survey shared with the council through social media, the council newsletter, and in-person QR codes displayed at a lodge fellowship; in addition, lodge members to share the survey with their fellow scouts and scouters in their units and chapters, whether they were arrowmen or not. This survey provided information on OA membership and participation. Some of this information may come as a surprise to the LEC, while other information will confirm some of the theories already expressed by LEC members and advisers in the past. Overall, I found the results of the survey confirmed the value I believed the feedback would provide.

I analyzed the data and identified key takeaways and recommendations for the LEC to implement. These actions will provide a solid foundation for Skyuka Lodge to reverse the downward trajectory it has been on for the past few years. The purpose of this dissertation is not simply a short-term fix, but rather a map for long-term growth and stability. It will require a change in culture, rather than just a change in strategy.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

For the past several years, Skyuka Lodge has experienced significant membership and engagement decline. Although some of this decline can be attributed to factors outside of the lodge's control, such as the loss of its home, Camp Bob Hardin in 2018, the COVID-19 pandemic, the decades-long decline in membership in BSA generally, and significant negative publicity in recent years due to membership policy changes and staggering abuse claims, lawsuits, and BSA's bankruptcy, I believe that this decline is also the result of the lodge not operating in a manner that best attracts scouts and scouters to want to join and participate in the Order of the Arrow (OA). I conducted interviews with Cannon Herring, Taylor Thomas and several national officers in preparing for this paper.

To determine if lodge operations were contributing to this decline, I conducted a Google Forms survey that collected information from scouts and scouters in Palmetto Council to discover the "what", "when", and "why" of OA membership and participation. I believe that understanding this is vital to the lodge's future. I supplemented the survey's responses with hard data from Skyuka Lodge's Lodgemaster account to provide additional valuable information.

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze this data and provide insight on current trends in OA interactions and membership in Palmetto Council to the leadership of Skyuka Lodge. This paper will also touch on the commissioner's role in supporting the OA program as an important part of scouting.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The Order of the Arrow (OA) is the Boy Scouts of America's (BSA) national honor society; one based on cheerful service to scouting. Its purpose is to:

- “Recognize those who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives and through that recognition cause others to conduct themselves in a way that warrants similar recognition.
- Promote camping, responsible outdoor adventure, and environmental stewardship as essential components of every Scout's experience, in the unit, year-round, and in summer camp.
- Develop leaders with the willingness, character, spirit and ability to advance the activities of their units, our Brotherhood, Scouting, and ultimately our nation.
- Crystallize the Scout habit of helpfulness into a life purpose of leadership in cheerful service to others.” (Mission & Purpose 2022)

With a few exceptions, each BSA council has an OA lodge organized in their geographic region. The OA lodge supports scouting in their council through championing camping and service and providing additional opportunities for scouts to develop leadership skills. It also provides opportunities to make new friends and leads to scouts staying active in BSA longer - particularly

older scouts and those that have earned the Eagle Scout, Summit, and/or Quartermaster award, and are looking for more to do to keep their interest.

The OA has three honor levels of membership, each with its own requirements:

1. Ordeal – Youth must receive at least 50% “Yes” votes from scouts in their Scouts BSA troop/Venturing crew/Sea Scout ship during an annual OA election administered by their local OA chapter. To be eligible for election:

- “Be a registered member of the Boy Scouts of America.
- Have experienced 15 nights of Scout camping while registered with a troop, crew, or ship within the two years immediately prior to the election. The 15 nights must include one, but no more than one, long-term camp consisting of at least five consecutive nights of overnight camping, approved and under the auspices and standards of the Boy Scouts of America. Only five nights of the long-term camp may be credited toward the 15-night camping requirement; the balance of the camping (10 nights) must be overnight, weekend, or other short-term camps of, at most, three nights each. Ship nights may be counted as camping for Sea Scouts.
- At the time of their election, youth must be under the age of 21, and hold one of the following ranks corresponding to the type unit in which they are being considered for election: Scouts BSA First Class rank, the Venturing Discovery rank, or the Sea Scout Ordinary rank or higher, and following approval by the Scoutmaster, Crew Advisor or Sea Scout Skipper, be elected by the youth members of their unit.
- Adults (age 21 or older) who meet the camping requirements may be selected following nomination to and approval by the lodge adult selection committee.” (Membership 2022)
- Adults are nominated by their unit, no more than 1 adult for every 3 youths elected, rounding up. After being elected or nominated, candidates must complete the induction process with their local OA lodge, called The Ordeal.
- “The induction ceremony, called the Ordeal, is the first step toward full membership in the Order. During the experience, candidates maintain silence, receive small amounts of food, work on camp improvement projects, and sleep apart from other campers. The entire experience is

designed to teach significant values. All candidates for membership must complete the Ordeal.” (Membership 2022)

2. Brotherhood – After being inducted into the OA as an Ordeal member, arrowmen have the opportunity to seal their membership by completing requirements to advance to Brotherhood membership.
  - “After 6 months of service as an Ordeal member 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 Order.” (Membership 2022)
3. Vigil – The highest honor level in the OA, it is not attained through conscious endeavors, but is rather bestowed by the lodge through a nomination process, recognizing exceptional service.
  - “After two years of exceptional service as a Brotherhood member, and with the approval of the national Order of the Arrow committee, a Scout or Scouter may be recognized with the Vigil Honor for their distinguished contributions to their lodge, the Order of the Arrow, Scouting, or their Scout camp. This honor is bestowed by special selection and is limited to one person for every 50 members registered with the lodge each year.” (Membership 2022)

In recognition that the OA is primarily for the youth, at least half of the nominations for the Vigil honor must be youth. This is to prevent adults from dominating the nominations. In addition, the nomination process includes setting standards appropriate for the candidate’s age so that youth are nominated based on a standard for youth, and adults are nominated at a higher standard.

For the survey, I organized the OA program into the following categories:



- Service opportunities – As it is a society based on service, there are many opportunities for arrowmen to serve scouting, summer camp maintenance/improvements, hosting Cub Scout events, and serving on camp or other district/council event staff are examples of some types of service.
- Lodge events – Lodge-wide events, some of which are called “Ordeals” or “Fellowships”, as well as banquets and other activities, that happen throughout the year to bring the lodge together, have fun, and to continue the progress of the lodge through inducting and advancing members.
- Chapter events – Typically councils have 1 lodge encompassing the entire council. Lodges are then broken down geographically into chapters for the sake of logistical practicality. Chapters hold their own events and meetings and provide opportunities for arrowmen to become acquainted with the OA and the lodge. Chapters vary widely in membership size and density. Frequency of chapter events also varies widely based on each chapter’s circumstances.
- Conclave – A section is a geographic area encompassing multiple lodges, with each section having its own leadership. Conclave is an annual weekend event where all lodges in a section meet for fellowship, competition, and training. It’s an opportunity for arrowmen to make new friends, develop skills, and attend an event more focused on fun rather than arduous service.
- NOAC – National Order of the Arrow Conference, a jamboree-level event just for arrowmen held every 2 years in between national and world jamboree years. This pinnacle

event is a 6-day gathering of arrowmen from all lodges for fellowship, competition, and training.

- Leadership opportunities – The OA is youth-led. There are many opportunities for leadership, to supplement arrowmen’s unit leadership opportunities, at the chapter, lodge, section, and national levels. Opportunities range from serving on a lodge committee in charge of an aspect of lodge operations, to serving as a lodge officer, or more. Serving on the LEC as a lodge officer is an opportunity for youth to make the most significant contributions to the lodge. The LEC serves as the operations team of the lodge, much like a Patrol Leaders Council does in a troop, planning and executing lodge events and policies, and setting an example of what it means to be an arrowman. They are elected by the youth members of the lodge. There are also many opportunities for adults to serve as advisers to these youth leaders, and other roles behind the scenes to help the lodge operate.
- Games at lodge events – OA events are meant to be fun, which includes activities at lodge events. There is typically some down time between service projects, meals, and ceremonies, where the lodge can organize games for arrowmen to participate in, such as ultimate frisbee.
- Patch trading – By no means exclusive to the OA, there are opportunities to collect and trade patches at various OA events. It’s also a good way to make friends and tell stories.
- Ceremonies – Designed to inspire arrowmen at their induction into the OA, advancing to Brotherhood or Vigil membership, and other special events. Youth on ceremony teams

dedicate themselves to performing in a way that makes ceremonies meaningful for those in attendance.

- American Indian Affairs events/activities – Much of the OA is inspired by elements of Native American culture. The American Indian Affairs (AIA) program is where arrowmen learn about these elements and participate in pow-wow dancing, drum and sing, crafts, and OA ceremonies
- Trading post/event swag – As with other scouting programs, merchandise is made available by the lodge to commemorate arrowmen’s experiences in the OA. Items include patches, sashes, clothing, and pins, as well as snacks and drinks. It also serves as an opportunity for the lodge to make money to help fund itself beyond membership dues and event fees.

As arrowmen become aware of these program elements and experience them, they find things they want to participate in, and what they don’t care for. The lodge has a responsibility to implement and support these program elements for their members to have a good experience and find value in participating in the OA. Investing in these program elements can make the difference in whether an arrowman stays active or not, or if scouts/scouters want to join in the first place.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS**

A Google Forms survey was used to collect data from scouts and scouters in Palmetto Council. I wrote the questions and answer options, including text boxes for free-form answers where applicable. To accommodate the limitations of Google Forms' purely linear format, while also avoiding posing irrelevant questions to respondents, I designed the flow of questions to proceed based on the respondent's answers to prior questions. I proposed this survey to Skyuka Lodge's Lodge Executive Committee (LEC), with a request that the lodge provide raffle prizes for participants to have a chance to win, to incentivize participation. The LEC was given access to the survey and provided feedback on its content. Following the LEC's approval, and subsequent vote to approve items from the lodge's trading post for the raffle, I worked with the LEC and lodge staff adviser to distribute the survey to the council. This included posting the survey link on the council, district, and lodge Facebook pages, the lodge Instagram account, and in the council monthly newsletter. QR codes for the survey were also posted in key locations during the lodge's Summer Ordeal fellowship for people to use to complete the survey themselves, and they were encouraged to share the QR code with their units. The survey was anonymous to encourage honest feedback and was advertised from late May through August 2022. I received a total of 86 responses. Although I did not receive as many responses as I wanted (200), I received significantly more than the council typically receives for its surveys (50>).

Google Forms provides tools to analyze and review responses, including graphs and charts, and the ability export responses to CSV files. These tools allowed me to get a bird's-eye view of

the data, and to read the complete survey by responder. I also used Lodgemaster to collect statistical data about past and present Skyuka Lodge membership. With this information, and first-hand observations as an active member of the lodge and adviser on the LEC, I identified key takeaways and have developed action items to recommend to the LEC to implement.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Metrics from survey responses were mixed in how representative they were of actual council and lodge membership.

#### Age Distribution

According to Skyuka Lodge's Lodgemaster account, the lodge membership as of 9/5/22 consisted of 42.9% youth, 10.5% young adults, and 46.6% adults, whereas the survey respondents were largely dominated by adults (Appendix B Figure 1), suggesting that communication methods currently used by the lodge and council are not effective in reaching or motivating youth and young adults in the lodge.

#### Lodge Membership

When asked about OA membership, 69.8% of respondents indicated that they were arrowmen and were current on annual dues (Appendix B Figure 2), suggesting that communication methods employed were insufficiently effective in reaching inactive arrowmen and non-arrowmen, and/or the survey was largely ignored by those that were not active arrowmen; despite explicit and frequent communication that the survey was for everyone in the council except for Cub Scout youth and Explorers.

## Not Paying Dues

While there were a variety of reasons respondents had for not being current on dues, most of them are not currently participating in the OA (Appendix B Figure 3). These respondents were then asked why they aren't participating. 64.2% said that they were adults that participated as a youth but don't have time to participate as an adult.

## Enjoyed OA Events

When asked about what they enjoy(ed) about the OA/lodge, the winners were lodge events (79.7%), service opportunities and trading post/event swag (62.2% each), and Conclave (58.1%) (Appendix B Figure 4). When asked to explain in more detail, most respondents said that fellowshiping with other arrowmen was what they particularly enjoyed about participating.

## Disliked OA Events

In contrast, when asked about what they disliked, the clear loser was ceremonies (Appendix B Figure 5). The feedback from multiple respondents was that they felt that the ceremony teams were underprepared, which took away from the experience. I share this sentiment, as ceremonies are my favorite part of the OA, but my Brotherhood ceremony experience was one where the team was clearly not prepared, reading the script from a phone. Had I been on the fence about OA, this would have been a major turnoff. Another noted weakness was poor communication and lack of activity from chapters. In the Revitalizing Your Chapter course at the 2022 National Order of the Arrow Conference (NOAC), the presenter noted that chapters are the "backbone" of the OA. If

chapters are not operating as intended, this will have a significant contribution to poor retention, as strong chapters keep arrowmen engaged through meeting often between lodge and other OA events. Strengthening chapters is vital.

### Brotherhood Conversion

An encouraging result was that when asked whether they were planning to complete requirements for Brotherhood honor membership, none of the respondents said no, and only a few said they were undecided. This suggests that there is some enthusiasm among Ordeal honor members for continuing to participate in the OA. The lodge needs to find a way to help these arrowmen convert intention to reality. This is a long-standing challenge for lodges in general, but it's worth noting that there may not be as many arrowmen intentionally "sashing and dashing" as generally believed. Much of it may simply be a matter of "out of sight, out of mind".

### Leadership Participation

Shifting to questions about leadership positions in the OA, less than half (45.9%) of respondents said that they are serving in a leadership position in the OA or have in the past (Appendix B Figure 6). Of those that are serving or have served, there is a somewhat close spread among youth between serving as a chapter officer, lodge officer, or member of a lodge committee. Similarly, under half of adults (42%) have served as adult advisers (Appendix B Figure 7).



## Not Serving As Leaders

For those that hadn't served in a position, they were asked why. There was a close split among the reasons. One encouraging takeaway from this is that only 5% didn't know how to get a position (Appendix B Figure 8). On the other hand, 30% said they aren't interested or available currently, and 25% said they weren't before. There is a pool of 70% of these respondents that could potentially take on a leadership role soon, and the lodge needs to take steps to make this process more accessible.

## Not Joining the OA

Non-arrowmen were asked a different set of questions to get to the root of why they weren't OA members. This was a particularly discouraging area of feedback. Of these respondents, a third said that they aren't interested in joining the OA (Appendix B Figure 9). Another third can't meet eligibility OA requirements because their unit doesn't hold OA elections, or they aren't a member of a Scouts BSA troop, Venturing crew, or Sea Scout ship. The other third, however, could become arrowmen soon, as they are waiting to complete eligibility requirements, or have met the requirements and are waiting for their unit to elect or nominate them.

## Attracting Non-arrowmen

To understand what would entice non-arrowmen to join, they were given a list of different aspects of the OA and asked to select what they would be interested in doing or learning about if they were elected/nominated. The results were close, with service opportunities and ceremonies

receiving the most interest, and a 7-way tie for various types of OA events, patch trading, and the trading post/event swag (Appendix B Figure 10).

### Final Feedback

At the end of the survey, regardless of how participants answered questions, the last question was a general feedback text box for them to provide any feedback they hadn't in prior questions. A couple comments noted the lack of diversity in Skyuka Lodge. In a conversation I had with the Lodge Staff Adviser, he noted that diversity has significantly improved in the past few years in Cub Scouts, but it hasn't yet made its way to the programs for older scouts (Thomas 2022). I've also had conversations with the lodge chief (Herring 2022) and OA national officers while at NOAC (Officers 2022) about Skyuka Lodge's and our section's need to be more inclusive. This is not a straightforward process but a necessary one not only to help the lodge grow but also because it's the scout-like thing to do.

Some comments talked about not feeling safe being at the lodge's home for overnight lodge events and that it is an inadequate facility in general for lodge events. (The lodge's current home, in absence of a council summer camp, is a property that is small for a camp, in a neighborhood with known criminal activity issues and that is easily accessible, making the camp insecure and requiring 24-hour security at access points by adult volunteers.) While the LEC is certainly aware of this issue, it is apparent that lodge members are noticing this as well. Some action is already being taken by the LEC and council by pursuing moving future lodge fellowships to Camp Conley Clarke, a property that, up until recently, had not been developed but is now starting to receive

financial investments to make the camp more practical for large events. This should be continued, with Skyuka Lodge investing service into the camp, as it has the potential to become the lodge's new home. Having a home for the lodge that is safer and gives the lodge room to be more comfortable will only improve arrowmen's experience at lodge events and will make some of the logistics of running lodge events easier as a bonus.

What does Skyuka Lodge's membership look like? In compiling inductions information from their Lodgmaster account (Lodgmaster 2022), I found a few membership trends. This data is based on the latest year that arrowmen had dues paid, with the dues expiring at the end of that calendar year, compared to when they were inducted. This does not mean that they were dues-paying members during the entirety of the time between induction and the latest year of paying dues. Rather, it shows how many years after induction that arrowmen found a reason to continue to associate with the lodge in some capacity. Limitations in the available data prevented analysis of real tenure.

It comes as no surprise that Vigil honor members have associated with Skyuka Lodge longer after their induction than Brotherhood and Ordeal members, respectively. However, this is not the case in all age scenarios (Appendix B Table 1). Overall, it was the age at which they attained their current honor level that had the greatest influence on how long after induction that they were dues-paying members of Skyuka Lodge, with older arrowmen staying longer than those that were inducted or advanced at younger ages. The outliers in this trend were Vigil honor members that advanced to Vigil membership as youth, putting this group in the middle of the pack, and having

a substantial jump over the next highest group, with a difference of 5.8 years (69% longer). Other notable jumps were:

- Current Ordeal members – Inducted as young adults vs adults, a difference of 2.4 years (+109%)
- Current Brotherhood members
  - Advanced as adults vs youth, a difference of 2.1 years (+41%)
  - Completed Ordeal as youth vs young adults vs adults
    - Youth vs young adults, a difference of 10.7 years (+52%)
    - Youth vs adults, a difference of 24.1 years (+335%)
    - Young Adults vs adults, a difference of 13.4 years (+186%)
- Adult Vigil members that were inducted as Ordeal members as adults vs youth, a difference of 20.1 years (+55%)

The message is that the OA is getting through to older arrowmen better than younger arrowmen. This suggests that younger arrowmen are not being adequately prepared to receive and incorporate the OA's values into their lives. Preparation of youth candidates and new arrowmen is an area that appears to need strengthening.

There is no silver bullet to solve membership struggles, but there are a variety of steps the lodge can take to make improvements. The first is communication. In my experience, communication is mentioned in almost every lodge officer election speech, but only small and inconsistent improvements in communication take place, which don't necessarily continue with the officers' successors. The lodge needs to understand how it can best communicate with its

members, and with the council in general, and then make these changes and document them to make them official and permanent. This will require direct feedback from scouts and scouters from a variety of situations. It will also require a major revival of the OA Representative program, which utilizes OA Representatives elected by their units to act as a liaison between the unit and the OA, facilitating 2-way communication on OA business and providing the lodge/chapter with information that will allow it to adapt to serve that unit better. This is a program that has been long-neglected, and results in a disconnect that leads to arrowmen drifting into inactivity. An elected OA Representative should be in place in every Scouts BSA troop, Venturing crew, and Sea Scout ship to create a contact point for this relationship between the unit and the lodge/chapter. In turn, the lodge and chapters must also take new steps to engage OA Representatives, and in turn their respective units, keeping them apprised of all that is being offered in the OA program, and encouraging them to fully participate. Building this network can be facilitated through the unit election process, as the lodge and chapters communicate with units to schedule their annual OA elections. Recording in Lodgemaster who the designated contacts are and following up during the year to ensure that these contacts are continuously kept up to date with units' officer elections will accomplish most of the needed network building. The lodge must keep in mind that scoutmasters, and their counterparts, are often the gatekeepers when it comes to the OA. Building a good rapport to earn their support is important to the OA's relationship with the unit.

Improving transparency is another area that has been mentioned multiple times in lodge officer election speeches in the past few years, with little in the way of positive results. Lack of knowledge, and fear of the unknown, can be barriers to engagement in leadership and membership.

Creating a culture of transparency will make participation more accessible and build the pool of arrowmen willing to step up and lead; (an area with ups and downs in interest, with a noticeably scarce interest in running for office Skyuka Lodge's officer elections for 2023.) Improving transparency will require 2 parts: 1. Documenting lodge standard operating procedures (SOP) and leadership responsibilities, which will help arrowmen understand how their lodge operates and help them to find an area of interest in helping to run the lodge/chapter, as well as understanding how they can get involved in that area; 2. Engaging regularly in direct conversations with members and non-members about these procedures and responsibilities, as well as what is currently happening. As demonstrated by past experiences, and the survey conducted for this study, the "shotgun approach" to communication and soliciting feedback, while needed from a practicality standpoint for many situations involving large groups, is, on an individual basis, less effective than direct, more personal engagement. This more direct and personal engagement can look like designated discussion events/classes at lodge and chapter events, in addition to the annual Lodge Leadership Development (LLD), unit visits in addition to election visits, creating instructional and informational videos, etc., with a special focus on non-arrowmen and new arrowmen as the most important audiences. Public publishing of LEC meeting notes should be consistent and easily accessible, such as the lodge website. Skyuka Lodge is currently working on improving this.

Transparency, overall, can have a significant effect on impressions of the OA.

First impressions can make or break a potential new relationship between a scout or scouter and the OA. Often, the first impressions that scouts and scouters have with the OA happen at unit elections and at their Ordeal. Poorly prepared election and ceremony teams can repel an otherwise

promising future arrowman. High priority must be given to these aspects of lodge and chapter operations. Adequate training for election teams at the chapter and lodge level along with ample emphasis on strengthening the lodge's American Indian Affairs (AIA) program through strengthening leadership and increasing exposure, will put arrowmen in a better position to make good first/early impressions of the OA and may serve as the catalyst for a scout or scouter becoming a lifetime contributor in the lodge. Election training is a must for every LLD and should also be conducted in chapter meetings as needed. Adult advisers and the LEC should ensure that relevant leaders understand and are prepared to fulfill their responsibilities to operate an effective election season and put on polished, inspiring induction ceremonies. If the lodge is not already experiencing this, then the LEC and advisers need to raise these areas higher on the list of lodge priorities.

People from a wide variety of backgrounds can benefit and contribute to the scouting movement and the OA. We can, however, be a barrier to people in minority groups participating in the program, consciously or not. In late 2021, the national leadership of the OA introduced the Admonition Team – a group dedicated to focusing on diversity and inclusion. Work is currently being done to expand this program down to the lodge level, where all arrowmen are admonished to be a force of good in being welcoming to all that are willing to follow the Admonition of the OA. While lodges wait for this program to come to fruition, it can proceed with taking steps to become more inclusive. This can include having a lodge diversity (admonition team) committee, have meaningful discussions at lodge and chapter events around topics related to diversity and inclusion, as well as soliciting assistance from the national Admonition Team to be part of the

effort. On the other end, lodges must also be firm and consistent in discouraging any behavior or language that is discriminatory in nature or effect. In a broader sense, this is already covered in Youth Protection Training (YPT) for adults, but special emphasis should be placed on eliminating overt or covert discrimination within the scope of eliminating bullying in general. Lodges should also consider accessibility for people with disabilities when planning events.

As previously mentioned, chapters are the “backbone” of the OA. Having strong chapters is necessary to provide a quality OA program. Lodge resources should be dedicated to building strong youth and adult leadership, and chapter geography and population should be reviewed regularly to ensure that arrowmen have as many opportunities as is practical to begin contributing to the lodge at the chapter level, while also ensuring that chapters are not weakened to the point of being ineffective. While chapter merges are disappointing, they can be the catalyst for strengthening the chapter experience for all parties involved by creating a strong chapter out of multiple weak chapters. This is something that Skyuka Lodge is implementing, with 2 very small, struggling chapters being merged with other chapters to eliminate unnecessary and impractical divisions. With this change, Skyuka Lodge will enter 2023 with 3 strong chapters, rather than 2 strong chapters and 3 struggling chapters. In addition to being mindful of chapter organization, chapters should be providing frequent programming helping to build comradery, instilling the values of the OA, and helping arrowmen grow in the OA, including helping Ordeal members with Brotherhood Conversion.

Commissioners can help promote the OA program in a few ways. Unit Commissioners (UC) should be visiting assigned units often, and as such have an opportunity to work with the unit



to ensure that the OA program is being supported in that unit. For Scouts BSA troops, Venturing crews, and Sea Scout ships, this includes having an elected OA Representative (youth) and Representative Adviser (adult) to be the conduit for communication and engagement between the unit and the lodge/chapter. This includes ensuring that their local chapter holds OA elections every year in their unit and that worthy adults are nominated for candidacy. For Cub Scouts and Explorers, this can simply be having a point of contact for communication, as these programs cannot elect or nominate new OA members but can encourage current OA members in the unit to participate. Roundtable and District Commissioners can support the OA by assisting in promoting it at Roundtable, which can include letting the local chapter(s) make announcements or presentations in the opening general session or in breakout sessions or have a booth in the general session area. Some chapters use Roundtable for their chapter meetings, in which case Roundtable Commissioners should ensure that facilities are provided for chapter meetings the same as Roundtable breakout sessions. Commissioners can also support the OA by being good examples of active OA participation, if they are members.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

Looking at the feedback received in the survey, as well as data in Lodgemaster, it is apparent that there are steps that the lodge can take to improve its recruitment and retention (rather than it being completely out of the lodges control. This should be encouraging for any lodge with these struggles. Key takeaways: from this study are that first impressions and communication have a significant impact on the potential futures of current and prospective arrowmen; knowledge can be a catalyst for good and lack of transparency can be a barrier to engagement; inclusion requires active effort; and honest introspection by lodge and chapter leadership is needed to make necessary improvements. A lot can be learned and gained if lodges engage its current and prospective membership in more direct and personal ways.

While Skyuka Lodge has room for improvement in how it operates so that it will better recruit, retain, and engage their current and prospective membership, the needed improvements are achievable with the right attitudes and resources, as it is for other lodges with their membership struggles. Commissioners play an important support role for the OA, as with all scouting programs, and should be engaged in promoting this program to help provide diverse and quality scouting experiences for those they serve.

## REFERENCES

Herring, Cannon, interview by Matthew Cline. (August 6, 2022).

Lodgemaster. Member Export. Membership Data Export for Skyuka Lodge, Lodgemaster, 2022.

Membership. 10 30, 2022. <https://oa-bsa.org/about/membership>.

Mission & Purpose. 10 30, 2022. <https://oa-bsa.org/about/mission-purpose>.

Officers, National OA, interview by Matthew Cline. (July 28, 2022).

Thomas, Taylor, interview by Matthew Cline. Personal Conversation (August 23, 2022).

## APPENDIX A

### Skyuka Lodge Membership Survey Questions and Answer Options

1. Which district are you in?
  - a. Catawba
  - b. Daniel Morgan
  - c. York
  - d. Don't know
2. What is your unit's name (ex. Troop 123)?
  - a. Pack (Text Box) (Proceed to Q4)
  - b. Troop (Text Box)
  - c. Crew (Text Box)
  - d. Ship (Text Box)
  - e. District/Council Staff (Proceed to Q5)
3. Does your unit have an OA Representative (youth leader, that is an active member of the OA lodge, elected by the unit to act as a liaison between the lodge and the unit) and/or an OA Representative Adviser (adult leader, that is an active member of the OA lodge, assigned to serve as the adviser to the OA Representative)?
  - a. OA Representative
  - b. OA Representative Adviser
  - c. Both
  - d. Neither
  - e. Don't Know
4. Does someone in your unit communicate to members of the unit about OA events/information?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Are you a youth (under 18 years old), young adult (18-20 years old), or adult (21+ years old)
  - a. Youth
  - b. Young Adult
  - c. Adult
6. Are you a registered member of Skyuka Lodge? (Must be current on annual dues to be registered)
  - a. Yes, I am current on my annual dues (Proceed to Q10)
  - b. No, I am not current on my annual dues (Proceed to Q8)
  - c. I have never been a member of Skyuka Lodge
7. Have you ever been a member of the Order of the Arrow (OA)?
  - a. Yes (Proceed to Q9)
  - b. No (Proceed to Q24)

8. Why are you not current on your annual dues?
  - a. I didn't know I had to pay dues
  - b. I don't think I should have to pay dues on top of what I already pay for scouting
  - c. I can't afford to pay dues
  - d. I forgot to pay for this year
  - e. I don't know how/where to pay
  - f. I will get around to paying before the next OA event that I plan to attend
  - g. I am not currently participating in the OA
9. Why are you not currently participating in the OA? (Select all that apply) (Proceed to Q11)
  - a. I was in a different lodge and didn't transfer to Skyuka when I transferred to Palmetto Council
  - b. I was in a different lodge as a youth and didn't know I could join Skyuka Lodge as an adult
  - c. I didn't know I could be a member of the lodge because I am not a member of a Scouts BSA troop
  - d. I didn't participate after becoming a member of the OA, or I stopped after a while
  - e. I participated as a youth but don't have time to participate as an adult at this time
  - f. I participated as a youth, but am not interested in participating as an adult at this time
  - g. I did not find the OA interesting and/or I had a bad experience
  - h. I think the OA takes important time away from participation in my unit
  - i. Other: (Text Box)
10. Which chapter are you in?
  - a. Cherokee
  - b. Chester
  - c. Lancaster
  - d. Spartan
  - e. York
  - f. Don't Know
11. Select all that you enjoy(ed) about the OA/Skyuka Lodge and tell us why (please be specific)
  - a. Service opportunities (Text Box)
  - b. Lodge events (Text Box)
  - c. Chapter events (Text Box)
  - d. Conclave (formerly known as Dixie Fellowship in our Section) (Text Box)
  - e. NOAC (Text Box)
  - f. Leadership opportunities (Text Box)
  - g. Games at lodge events (Text Box)
  - h. Patch trading (Text Box)
  - i. Ceremonies (Text Box)

- j. American Indian Affairs events/activities (Text Box)
  - k. Trading Post/event swag (Text Box)
  - l. Other (Text Box)
12. Select all that you dislike(d) about the OA/Skyuka Lodge, tell us why, and how we can improve (please be specific)
- a. Service opportunities (Text Box)
  - b. Lodge events (Text Box)
  - c. Chapter events (Text Box)
  - d. Conclave (formerly known as Dixie Fellowship in our Section) (Text Box)
  - e. NOAC (Text Box)
  - f. Leadership opportunities (Text Box)
  - g. Games at lodge events (Text Box)
  - h. Patch trading (Text Box)
  - i. Ceremonies (Text Box)
  - j. American Indian Affairs events/activities (Text Box)
  - k. Trading Post/event swag (Text Box)
  - l. Other (Text Box)
13. At what age and year were you inducted into the OA (completed The Ordeal)?
- a. Age (Text box 1)
  - b. Year (Text box 2)
14. Were you inducted (completed The Ordeal) in Skyuka Lodge or another lodge?
- a. Skyuka
  - b. Other
15. What is your current honor level?
- a. Ordeal (Proceed to Q20)
  - b. Brotherhood (Proceed to Q18)
  - c. Vigil
16. Did you become a Vigil member in Skyuka Lodge or another lodge?
- a. Skyuka
  - b. Other
17. At what age and year did you become a Vigil member?
- a. Age (Text box 1)
  - b. Year (Text box 2)
18. Did you become a Brotherhood member in Skyuka Lodge or another lodge?
- a. Skyuka
  - b. Other
19. At what age and year did you become a Brotherhood member? (Proceed to Q22)
- a. Age (Text box 1)
  - b. Year (Text box 2)
20. Have you been a member of the OA for at least 6 months?
- a. Yes

- b. No
21. Do you plan to complete requirements for Brotherhood membership? Why or why not?
- a. Yes (Text box)
  - b. No (Text box)
22. Have you served, or are currently serving, in any of the following positions? In Skyuka or another lodge? Which year(s)?
- a. Chapter officer (chapter chief, vice chief, secretary, treasurer) (Text box)
  - b. Lodge committee member/chair (games, Vigil, Thunderbird, trading post, etc.) (Text box)
  - c. Lodge officer (lodge chief, vice chief, secretary, treasurer) (Text box)
  - d. Adult adviser (Text box)
  - e. I have not served in a position
23. Why have you not served in a position? If you have served before, but not recently, please also answer below.
- a. Don't know how to receive one
  - b. Haven't been elected/chosen for one
  - c. Haven't tried
  - d. Wasn't interested/available before
  - e. Not interested/available currently
  - f. N/A (recently served/currently serving)
24. Which situation best applies to you?
- a. I have not met the requirements for candidacy (15 nights of Scout camping with a Scouts BSA troop, Venturing Crew, or Sea Scouts Ship within 2 years prior to the election. Must include 1 long-term camp of 5 consecutive nights. The balance (10 nights) must be short-term camps, no more than 3 nights each. Ship nights may be counted as camping for Sea Scouts. Youth must be under 21 and hold one of the following ranks or higher, according to their unit type: Scouts BSA First Class, Venturing Discovery, or Sea Scout Ordinary. Adults (21+) must meet the same camping requirements.)
  - b. I have met the requirements for candidacy, but have not been elected (youth) or nominated (adult) by my unit
  - c. I am not able to meet the requirements for candidacy because I am not registered with a Scouts BSA troop, Venturing Crew, or Sea Scout Ship
  - d. I was elected (youth) or nominated (adult) but didn't complete The Ordeal in time and have not been re-elected/nominated since
  - e. My unit does not hold OA elections
  - f. I am not interested in joining the OA
25. If you were to be elected (youth) or nominated (adult), which of the following would you be interested in learning about/participating in as a member of the OA? (Select all that apply)

- a. Service opportunities (camp improvement projects, district/council event staff, OA election teams, etc.)
  - b. Attending lodge events (3 fellowship weekends per year in May, August, and around Halloween where service projects, games, ceremonies, patch trading, and socializing takes place; leadership training; etc.)
  - c. Attending chapter events (The lodge is divided into chapters, which meet to discuss lodge/chapter business, offer OA-related training, and play games; they also have activities outside of meetings)
  - d. Attending Conclave (Fellowship weekend in April where all 10 lodges in our Section gather for competitions, patch trading, and socializing)
  - e. Attending NOAC (National Order of the Arrow Conference – a weeklong nationwide gathering, like a jamboree but for OA members only; takes place July/August every 2 years)
  - f. Leadership opportunities (The OA is youth led with adult advisers)
  - g. Patch trading
  - h. Ceremonies (special events, using elements inspired by Native American culture, designed to inspire and instill the ideals and values of the OA)
  - i. American Indian Affairs events/activities (Participation and study of Native American pow wow dancing, drumming & singing, and crafts, taking special care to do so with respect toward Native American cultures)
  - j. Trading Post/event swag (clothing, patches, etc. specific to the OA)
26. Other Feedback (Text Box) (End of Survey)



## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. Induction and Advancement Ages and Membership Time Lapse.....

Years	Current Honor	Age Advanced	Previous Honor	Age Advanced	Ordeal Age (Vigil)
56.7	Vigil	Adult	Brotherhood	Adult	Adult
36.6	Vigil	Adult	Brotherhood	Youth	Youth
33.9	Vigil	Adult	Brotherhood	Young Adult	Young Adult
31.3	Brotherhood	Adult	Ordeal	Youth	
20.6	Brotherhood	Adult	Ordeal	Young Adult	
15.6	Vigil	Young Adult	Brotherhood	Youth	Youth
14.2	Vigil	Youth	Brotherhood	Youth	Youth
8.4	Vigil	Young Adult	Brotherhood	Young Adult	Young Adult
8.2	Brotherhood	Young Adult	Ordeal	Youth	
7.9	Brotherhood	Young Adult	Ordeal	Young Adult	
7.2	Brotherhood	Adult	Ordeal	Adult	
5.1	Brotherhood	Youth	Ordeal	Youth	
4.6	Ordeal	Young Adult			
2.2	Ordeal	Adult			
2.0	Ordeal	Youth			

Figure 1. Youth, Young Adult, or Adult.....

Are you a youth (under 18 years old), young adult (18-20 years old), or adult (21+ years old)?  
86 responses

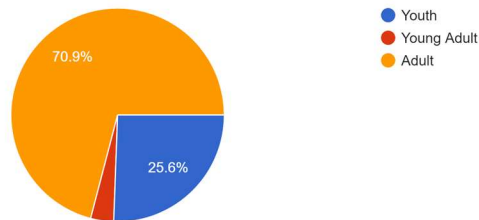


Figure 2. Registered Members.....

Are you a registered member of Skyuka Lodge? (Must be current on annual dues to be registered)  
86 responses

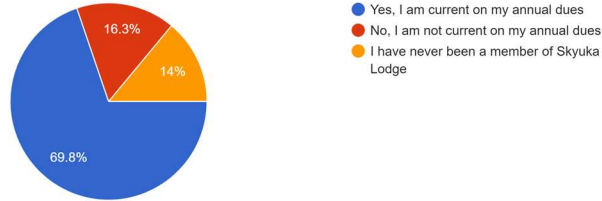


Figure 3. Why Not Current on Dues.....

Why are you not current on your annual dues?  
14 responses

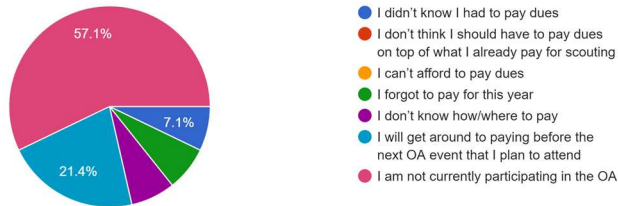


Figure 4. Enjoyed Events.....

Select all that you enjoy(ed) about the OA/Skyuka Lodge and tell us why (please be specific)  
74 responses

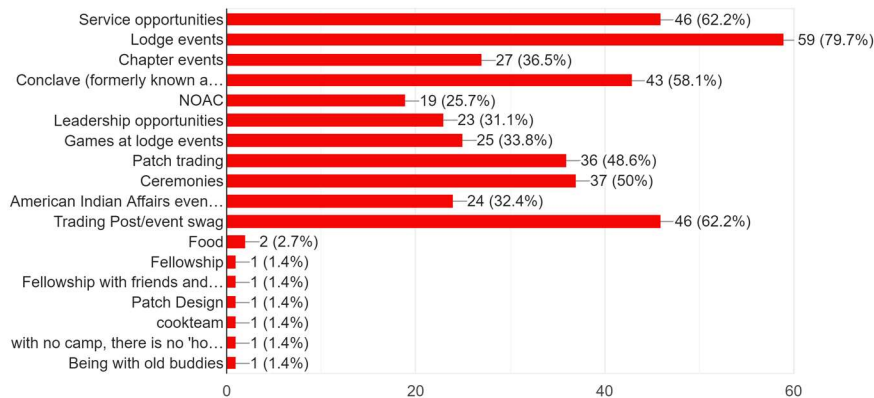


Figure 5. Disliked Events.....

Select all that you dislike(d) about the OA/Skyuka Lodge, tell us why, and how we can improve (please be specific)

74 responses

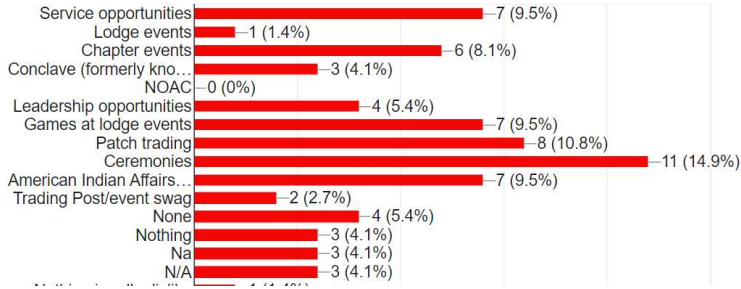


Figure 6. Lodge Position Service.....

Have you served, or are currently serving, in any of the following positions?

34 responses

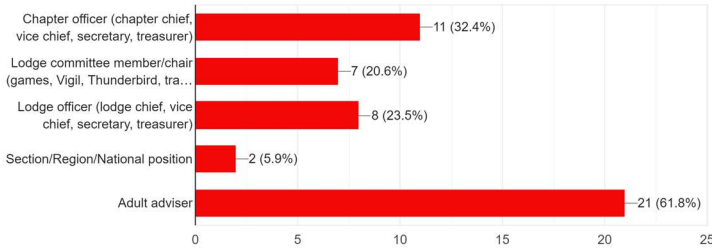


Figure 7. Adults Serving As Advisers.....

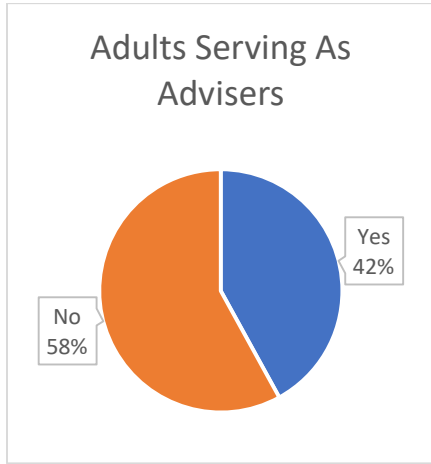


Figure 8. Why Haven't Served.....

Why have you not served in a position? If you have served before, but not recently, please also answer below.

40 responses

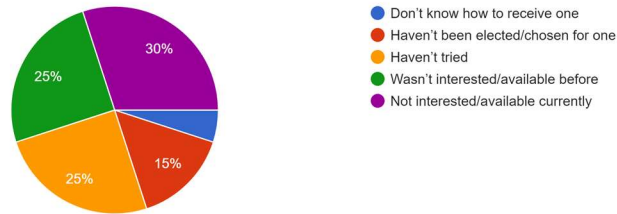


Figure 9. Why Not in OA.....

Which situation best applies to you?  
12 responses

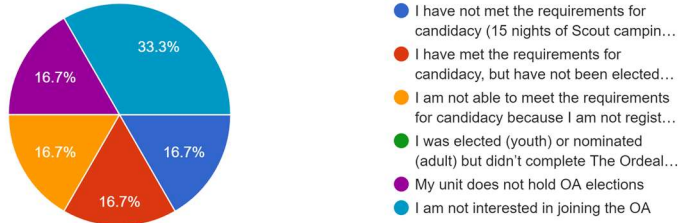


Figure 10. Non-arrowmen Interest in OA Activities.....

If you were to be elected (youth) or nominated (adult), which of the following would you be interested in learning about/participating in as a member of the OA? (Select all that apply)  
8 responses

