

# 4-H Cultural Awareness



## Skit Discussion Questions

- What was the purpose of this skit?
- How did the head otter make you feel?
- How did it feel to not know the song, the gestures, or the “lingo”? Did you feel like you belonged, or did you feel like an outsider?
- Was this a group that you would like to be involved with? Why or why not?
- How does this skit relate to the way we might conduct 4-H Club meetings?



Allow time for the responses to the above questions

# Objectives

1. Define aspects of a culture.
2. Characterize the 4-H culture.
3. Suggest techniques to break down cultural barriers of 4-H and help new members feel more comfortable and welcome at 4-H club meetings and activities.



*4-H has a unique culture! Those who have grown up in 4-H understand this culture well. However, for adults and youth who are new to the program, the 4-H culture can be quite confusing, perhaps even overwhelming! This skit has illustrated the importance we must place on helping those who are new to our program better understand the procedures and guidelines associated with 4-H. We want to be an open, inclusive organization which is one of the eight Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development. To do so, we need to help everyone have a better awareness of the 4-H culture.*

We will discuss these three objectives in this lesson plan.

# Objective #1

Define aspects of a culture.



*What defines a culture?*

*Culture is important as it helps to define who we are and to generate a sense of belonging among the group. But this can also create a barrier to expanding our program and reaching out to other youth, which is essential in order for our culture to survive.*

# Culture Definition

- Concepts, habits, skills, arts, instruments, and institutions of a given people in a given place.
- Includes "what everybody knows that everybody else knows"
  - Expectations for members' behavior (spoken or unspoken)
  - Rules, rituals, and language
  - Set of commonly held beliefs and attitudes



Culture definition: the concepts, habits, skills, arts, instruments, and institutions of a given people in a given place.

Culture includes "what everybody knows that everybody else knows."

Expectations for members' behavior (spoken or unspoken)

Rules, rituals, and language

Set of commonly held beliefs and attitudes

## Culture Pros & Cons

- Culture helps define who we are and creates a sense of belonging for those who understand and are familiar with it.
- However, culture can also be a barrier to expanding the program.
- People unfamiliar with the rules and rituals of the group appear as outsiders ... and feel like outsiders.



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## 4-H Volunteer Quote

"You know, I have a hard time seeing the kids I now work with fitting into that (4-H) structure. It seems as though things are so rigidly structured in 4-H that I don't know how well they'll adapt ... or fit in."



*Comment on the following statement made by a new 4-H Volunteer (and 4-H Alum).*

Allow time for responses.

## Objective #2

Characterize the 4-H culture.



*How is 4-H like its own culture? The following slides include some of the characteristics that form the 4-H culture.*

## 4-H Culture Concepts

- A positive relationship with an adult who cares about the young person
- A warm, friendly environment where youth feel welcomed as part of the group
- An environment where young people are safe from physical or psychological harm
- Appropriate rules and limits that are consistently enforced



*These concepts look much like the Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development on which we've based the VolunteerIN training series.*

## 4-H Culture Concepts

- Opportunities to build and master skills in areas of the young person's choosing
- Opportunities for youth to be heard, make important decisions, and participate fully
- Opportunities for young people to serve others and their community
- Opportunities for youth to see themselves as active participants in their future



## Components of the 4-H Culture

- 4-H Fair
- 4-H Projects
- Competition
- 4-H Officers
- Parliamentary Procedure



*Each of these aspects of the 4-H Program is very important. However, if we are not careful, they may become a barrier to those unfamiliar with the 4-H culture.*

## Components of the 4-H Culture

- Meeting Rituals
  - Pledges
  - Roll call
  - Officer reports
  - Demonstrations
  - Recreation
  - Songs



*Do any of the following parts of a 4-H meeting remind you of the “Wacky Otter Bunch” skit?*

## Objective #3

Suggest techniques to break down cultural barriers of 4-H and help new members feel more comfortable and welcome at 4-H club meetings and activities.



*What are some techniques we can use at the local or county club level to break down cultural barriers of 4-H and help new members feel more comfortable, welcome and part of the group so that they want to stay involved?*

*How can we help people to feel welcome in our organization? How do we instill a sense of belonging in new members?*

*What do we do to help visitors and new members navigate the ins and outs at our club meetings?*

*How can we make our program accessible to those who don't understand its workings?*

*What are some of the customs and traditions that we have in 4-H that might be construed as a barrier to others?*

*On the following slides are some suggestions.*

## Techniques to Overcome Cultural Barriers

- During meetings:
  - Post the words to the 4-H Pledge in the front of the room.
  - Give members copies of the meeting agenda.
  - Cover basic 4-H information at an early meeting.
  - Ask new members for their input regarding future club meeting activities and use some of their suggestions.



*Some of these suggestions may be basic for those familiar with the program, but again, we're concerned about helping those new to our program to feel included and welcomed!*

During meetings:

Post the words to the 4-H Pledge in the front of the room.

Provide copies of the meeting agenda for members to follow.

Spend time covering basic 4-H information at an early meeting; include this information in printed material that the members and parents can take home.

Ask new members for their input regarding future club meeting activities and use some of their suggestions.

## Techniques to Overcome Cultural Barriers

- Share information:
  - Maintain an updated 4-H Web site.
  - Distribute a schedule of the year's activities and important deadlines.
  - Direct members to where they can find 4-H policies and guidelines.
  - Provide contact information of 4-H Volunteers and Club Officers.



*Providing information is one way to help the members and their parents to stay informed about 4-H events and policies.*

Share information:

Direct members to a Web site that contains important information about 4-H.

Prepare a schedule of the year's activities to distribute early in the year; be sure to include important deadlines.

Review 4-H policies and guidelines during a meeting and direct members to where they can find this information on their own.

Provide contact information to the 4-H Volunteers and Club Officers so that the new families can make contact with them in between meetings.

## Techniques to Overcome Cultural Barriers

- Utilize experienced 4-H participants:
  - Members mentoring new 4-H members.
  - Parents guiding new 4-H parents.
  - Members displaying samples of their completed projects.
  - All participants interacting with the new families during 4-H activities.



*Those members and families in your clubs who are familiar with the 4-H operating procedures can be a great asset to volunteers in helping new members and their families to understand what 4-H is all about.*

Utilize experienced 4-H members.

Invite experienced 4-H members to serve as mentors to new 4-H members.

Invite experienced 4-H families to serve as mentors to new 4-H families.

Encourage experienced 4-H members to display samples of their projects and to interact with the new families during 4-H activities.

# Techniques to Overcome Cultural Barriers

- Welcome new 4-H members:
  - Hold a “Welcome to 4-H” night for members and their families.
  - Hold a new 4-H parent orientation program.
  - Distribute a resource such as the “Welcome to 4-H Family Resource Guide.”



*A special meeting just for new members and/or their parents can be a very effective tool to help them feel included. They are not likely to be as intimidated to ask questions if they are all new to 4-H; they will all be in a similar situation.*

*The VolunteerIN training series contains two sets of resources that can be helpful to organize these events:*

*Lesson 4, “Working Effectively with 4-H Parents,” includes information that can help to organize an orientation meeting just for new parents.*

*Included in this lesson plan is another very helpful resource: “Welcome to 4-H - Family Resource Guide.” Counties may adapt this resource to include information relevant to their situation. This resource guide can then be distributed to all new 4-H families.*

Welcome new members

Hold a “Welcome to 4-H” night for all new 4-H members and their families.

Hold a new 4-H parent orientation program.

Distribute a resource such as the “Welcome to 4-H Family Resource Guide” to all new families.

*What other suggestions do you have to help overcome cultural barriers to 4-H?*

*What are things we do well and what can we do better?*

*(Allow time for responses.)*

## Conclusion and Quiz



*4-H can be a very traditional program and has been described as having its own culture. As 4-H veterans, we need to be sensitive to the new members who join our organization and help to acclimate them to 4-H, especially if the members or their parents have never been exposed to 4-H in the past.*

*Many times we assume that new members know certain things about our organization, or that they will just learn it as they go along. The 4-H culture allows us a unique bond. We need to remember that the unity we feel may keep others from feeling welcome.*

*Teaching new members the simple things, like the 4-H pledge or the order of business at the club meeting, or how judging is conducted at the fair, can help new members and their parents feel more welcomed and may get them more involved right from the beginning.*

*And bringing new members to our shared experience should always be a goal.*

Briefly review the lesson and allow time for any questions from the volunteers related to the lesson. Then distribute the "4-H Cultural Awareness" quiz questions. Allow volunteers time to answer the questions. Provide the correct answers from the key provided in this packet. You may choose to collect the quizzes or allow the volunteers to keep them as a review of the lesson.

Distribute the "4-H Cultural Awareness" fact sheet for volunteers to use for future reference. Thank the volunteers for their participation.

# Sources

- Bird, M. (July 2004). A Look At 4-H Culture. 4-H News and Communication: California Connection, excerpt from the Sacramento County 4-H Newsletter. Retrieved November 29, 2006, from <http://ca4h.org/4hresource/connection/index.asp>
- Illinois 4-H Foundation (n.d.) About 4-H Youth Development. Retrieved November 29, 2006, from [http://www.4-h.uiuc.edu/foundation/youth\\_development.html](http://www.4-h.uiuc.edu/foundation/youth_development.html)
- Norman, M. N. and Jordan, J.C. (April 2006) Understanding the Culture of 4-H. University of Florida Extension Fact Sheet 4H 101.1. Retrieved November 29, 2006, from <http://4h.ifas.ufl.edu/FacultyStaffOnly/4HProgramHandbook2001/4-H%20Club%20Mgt/4H%20factsheets/101.1,Understanding%20the%20Culture%20of%204-H.pdf>



Thank you for your  
participation!

