

Intergalactic Games The Inter-Galactic Games

Linda Florence *The Leader*, January 1989

Learning to understand and appreciate others is a general theme that runs through Scouting. To do it, we first need to learn to understand and appreciate ourselves, with all our assets (abilities) and limitations (disabilities). An important part of this learning can be the realization that what we see as our limitations, others may see as assets!

The Inter-Galactic Games idea is a good way to help your members look more closely at characteristics that may or may not limit people. Before you launch the games, you might want to pave the way with a few activities that help your young people look at their own abilities and those of others in their section. We thank Scouting (U.K.) magazine and Sue Burton, who wrote the Be Aware articles from which we have borrowed.

Learning About Yourself

Pros & Cons: Try this idea to help members realize that people see each other in different ways. Give everyone a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask young Cubs to write down "What I like most about myself" and "What I dislike most about myself". Older members note what they consider their biggest drawback and their greatest advantage.

When they're finished, arrange them in pairs and ask them to do the same thing, this time for their partner. Then have them compare notes. The person who says his drawback is being too tall may find his partner lists his height as an advantage because his long legs help him run faster. Someone who feels his loud ready laugh is a disadvantage may find his partner listing it as an asset because "he's always happy and cheers people up".

Skill Swap: Gather together members and ask them to tell you what skills they have. Keep a list and add others they might not have mentioned (e.g. Kevin is a whiz at tying a certain knot; Jodie makes terrific things out of junk). Make a master list and, under each skill, put space for members to write their names in one of two columns: Can Do; Can't Do. For another meeting, schedule a "skills night" where those who have particular skill teach those who don't.

This is My Friend: Send members moving around the room at random. On signal, they must join up with the person closest to them. When you call upon pairs in turn, each member

must say, "This is my friend because..." and name something the two have in common. It's a great way to get people to learn something about each other.

The Games

The Inter-Galactic Games are held regularly to bring together beings from around the universe in some friendly rivalry. Depending on your section, you can take any number of approaches to the basic idea. The important thing is that your members become representatives of different worlds, each with its own characteristics.

Martians: Throughout history, this race has had such poor press they completely stopped communicating verbally. They need to develop some sort of non-verbal way to communicate at the games.

Venutians: Living as they do on the planet of peace and love, these beings have grown so interdependent that they now share bodies and move around in twos using three legs and two arms (tie inner legs together, link inner arms behind backs).

Lunars: Having never been able to draw a healthy breath, these beings must be careful not to overdo things. They spend the evening taking two steps forward and one step back.

Sonars: Because of the tremendous glare on their world, these beings no longer can see. They need guides during their visits to other planets.

Mercurians: Because of the long days on their planet, these beings have learned to pace themselves carefully. They move very, very slowly.

Jupitarians: Given their heavy atmosphere and dense clouds, these beings have a very poor sense of touch (their representatives wear mittens during the activities).

Neptutians: Coming from the planet of the water god where everything is reflective these beings use limbs opposite to everyone else. (Right handers use left hands and legs and vice versa.)

Uranians: Isolated in the most distant part of the solar system, these intelligent beings have difficulties hearing and making themselves understood (use ear plugs or cotton wool). People tend to speak very slowly to them, as if they were not very bright.

Intergalactic Games

Now that you know what characters are involved or have even dreamed up some new ones yourself, you can design many things to do with them.

1. Hold an Olympic-type event where participants compete in various physical contests (racing, jumping, throwing, etc.). Your members can decorate the meeting hall to make the space travellers feel at home. They might also like to create costumes to help them represent their various worlds.

2. Invite the inter-galactic guests to a routine meeting to take part in your regular activities. Have each six or patrol represent beings from a different part of the universe to learn how their particular characteristics limit or help them. Where their characteristics provide limitations, ask the pack or troop if they can think of adaptations that might make the activity easier or more fair.

With older members, consider interspersing activity and discussion of the various beings' emotional responses - their feelings of helplessness or frustration in some of the situations.

3. Ask Venturers to design an evening of challenges, without mentioning the inter-galactic games. After they arrive for the event, assign them their characters and proceed with the challenges. This can lead to a session where they consider how these beings might handle various day-to-day tasks (going shopping for groceries and clothing, driving a car, holding a part-time job, making meals, etc.). Could they manage? What adaptations would be necessary? What disadvantages would they face (would Venutians have to pay double fare on the bus, for example)?

4. Set up a series of fun bases where members become a different race for each activity. For example, they are Jupitarians at a base where they have to tie a knot or cut a piece of chocolate with a knife, Mercurians to run a relay, Uranians to sing a tune, and Sonars to complete an obstacle course.

5. Build a base activity around sense training games: taste (identify different flavours while blindfolded); touch (identify objects in a closely woven cloth bag); smell (identify different odours while blindfolded); sight (identify objects in photographs taken from unusual angles or when only a small part of the picture is shown); hearing (identify recorded everyday sounds).

First have small groups representing the various parts of the universe cycle through the bases. Some will find their characteristics limit them severely on some of the tests and not at all on others. Then, change the tests slightly, turn everyone into himself again, and have members cycle through the bases one more time. They will likely find they are better at some tests than others, and those they are best at may differ from those their friends do best.

6. Adopt a three or four meeting Inter-Galactic theme, designing each meeting night around a different part of the universe. On Martian Night, for example, look at non-verbal forms of communication such as Morse, braille, Bliss Symbols, signing, semaphore, trail signs, and the like. Sixes or patrols might try to create other communications systems of their own. On Sonar Night, explore sight impairments by doing activities blindfolded and in the dark, learning ways to help guide blind people, going for a walk in blind/sighted pairs, inviting in a guest with a guide dog, and the like.

A good follow up to any of these approaches is to invite guests who have some of the characteristics of your intergalactic visitors to tell you about themselves and their lives. By leading your young members to be aware, you will lead them to make a better life for themselves and the people around them.

If I Could, Would You?

If I could move, would you move with me?

If I could talk, would you talk with me?

If my wheelchair breaks, would you push me?

If I sneeze, will you bless me?

If I want to think, would you think with me?

If I could walk, would you walk with me?

If I felt "make believe", would you make me "real"?

If I try to communicate, would you be patient and listen?

If I took a long time to get there, would you wait?

If I want to learn, would you teach me?

If I had an idea, would you help me express it?

If I felt unwanted, would you want me?

If I felt unhappy, would you cheer me up?

The author, a disabled student, created these questions following the model set in a book called "If I Found a Wistful Unicorn, Would You Let Me Bring Him Home?" His work appeared in the newsletter of The Adlerian Centre for Counselling and Education.