
Chapter 13

THEMES

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 - Using Themes
 - Developing Themes
- 

Elements to Themes

The Beaver Programme has seven programme elements: games, crafts, music, storytelling, playacting, spiritual fellowship and outdoors which we first encountered in Chapter 2 of this Beaver Leader's Manual. These are all incorporated into the four main challenges, namely the Discovery, Friendship, Outdoor and Personal Challenges. Using these elements, you create specific themes for your monthly programmes.

Programming your meetings and activities is easier when a Theme is used. For example, you might use Outer Space as the focus for a series of meetings/outings which can include films, stories, crafts, special guests, a play, space puppets, rocket/shuttle building, space-suit making, outdoor games and songs.

In this way, you can give your Beavers new educational information while you help immerse their imaginations on the topic at hand. Similarly, themes based on seasons, occupations, historical times, safety or the community can become vibrant and exciting, given careful programming.

Theme planning provides direction and a framework upon which you can build an exciting well rounded programme. It also makes a leader's job way much easier because members of the team can keep an eye open for ideas long before they present the theme to the Beaver Scouts.

Using Themes

One way you can use themes is to set up a Colony project in which different lodges work separately. Each lodge contributes to the project by doing activities which, when pooled together, complete the total project (Log Chew).

A simple example might involve making 3D posters promoting a scouting activity or commemorating a special milestone in your Scout Group's or Colony's life. Leaders select or draw pictures; a group of Beavers will colour/pain them in; another group will cut them out; and another builds a collage by pasting the pictures onto recycled cardboard. Hang the project for all to see.

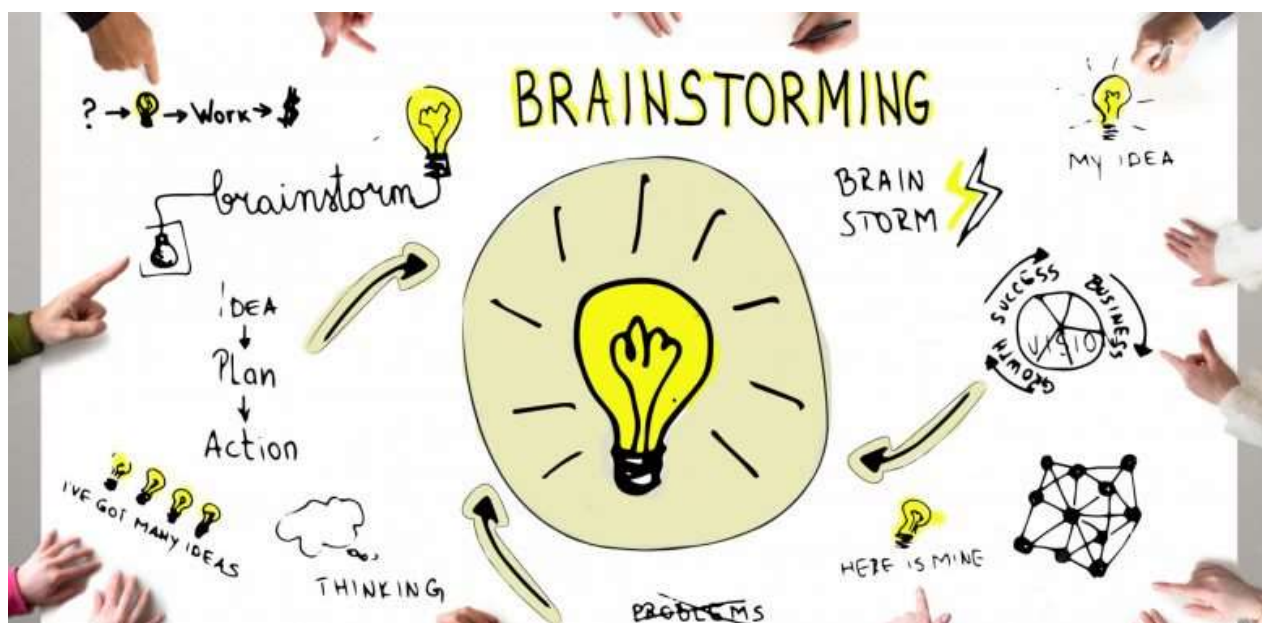
You might even organize a month's activities around different themes. Try to ensure that all theme programmes are well balanced to include the seven elements as much as possible.

One other idea could be to set up a parent roster that arranges to have one parent at each meeting. It means a great deal to the Beavers, develops parents' interest in the Beaver programme, and gives you some extra help. It could also be an excellent means of Leadership recruitment. However, it is advisable that prior to this roster be officially presented a meeting with your GSL should take place and the topic discussed at length.

Developing Themes

One programme planning method many colonies use, involves developing an entire Colony meeting or series of meetings around a central idea. This does not necessarily mean a special festive theme such as Christmas for example, but almost any other idea you can develop with a little imagination.

Use your secret weapon:



Let us look at how to develop a simple idea into a programme – the theme idea of FOOD. Sit down with other Colony leaders and list as many things related to food as you can think of. Brainstorm and let the ideas flow without stopping to accept, reject or discuss their merits.

Here is the kind of list you might end up with: candy, macaroni, crackers, nutrition, growing, cooking, beans, beanstalk, golden eggs (can you see a story idea emerging?), peanuts and so on and so forth. That is only a short list that comes to mind after few minutes of jotting down. You can do much much better when you share the experience with others.

The next step involves choosing some of the items from your list and trying to dream up ways to use them with a group of young Beavers. It is not necessary to consider all of the items on the list, keep the rest for another time. So, let us explore a few possibilities.

Theme: FOOD

THEME	FOOD
Candy	How about putting a sweet inside a number of balloons, blow them up, tie them in a row on a string and have a relay race? Each child runs up to the string, breaks a balloon and keeps the candy inside.
Macaroni	You can string macaroni to make jewellery or glue it to cardboard to make pictures. Macaroni comes in many shapes and sizes; some brands are even coloured. How about that old song, “On Top of Spaghetti”? What can you do with it in a programme?
Beans	You can hide a white beans all over the Head Quarters (inside and out) and ask your Beavers to hunt for them. You can even grow beans on blotters or bake them for a Colony outing.
Beanstalk, Golden Eggs	These bring to mind fairy tales you can tell the Beavers or have them act out in a little play – Jack and the Beanstalk.
Peanuts and Nuts in General	<p>Before involving peanuts or any sort of nuts in your programme, ensure your Beavers have no allergies. This goes for all food stuffs. Ask parents discreetly prior to the meeting/activity should they suffer from any other allergy to Gluten, are Lactose Intolerant, have G6PD, Celiac and so on and so forth.</p> <p>You can organize hunts for peanuts just like beans. Another safer option could be to use Marbles and called them ‘Magic Beans’.</p>

Now that you have an idea of how to start collecting programming ideas, let us pull some of the items together into a Colony Programme. It might look something like this.

Theme: FOOD

Time	Session	Activity	Equipment Needed
5 mins	Opening:	Prayer Beaver Scout Promise Short Briefing	
5 mins	Song:	“On Top of Spaghetti”	
30 mins	Craft:	Create pictures with recycled cardboard, glue and different shapes of macaroni. Tidying Up. Washing of Hands.	
15 mins	Game:	Potato on spoon relay	
5 mins	Closing:	Announcements Prayer Beaver Scout Promise Beaver Scout Motto Dismissal	

- Times for a Craft and a Game might vary depending on the item being done.
- It may as well be that the game at the end might have to be left out in order to finish the craft and do the tidying up.
- Setting up and Tidying up – It is especially important that children are involved in both setting up and tidying up the meeting hall for the meeting. These have to be taken into consideration in the timings as well.
- In this programme example, we used only a fraction of the list of ideas we developed, and many have been left out to use on another occasion. When planning programmes, it is important to keep in mind the Beaver’s seven principal elements. Are the seven elements present in some way? Can we modify it so that they are? It is not essential to have all elements in all programmes, but it is important to be aware if one is being forgotten more often than it should be.
- As members of the Colony Leadership Team, sit down and try putting together a few theme programmes of your own. Then, share them with other Colony leaders. Successful programming depends on leaders planning creatively in a variety of ways. In the following pages you will find more sample programmes built around central ideas.

Theme: TRANSPORTATION (1)

Time	Session	Activity	Equipment Needed
5 mins	Opening:	Prayer Beaver Scout Promise Short Briefing	
5 mins	Song:	“The Wheels on the Bus”	
20 mins	Story: Log Chew:	The little engine that could (by Watty Piper) Discuss this story	
5 mins		Water break	
20 mins	Games:	<p>Command Tasks - The Engineer</p> <p>I ride in an engine (point to yourself) The whistle I blow (pull the cord) I do all the things that will make the train go (wave your hand to right) “Whoo, Whoo,” says the whistle (Whistle twice) “Chug, Chug,” says the wheels (Roll your hands) I am the Chief Engineer (point to yourself) Until I am called for my meal (pat chest proudly)</p> <p>Here comes the train:</p> <p>Form a long line. make sounds and movements like a train. zig-zag as if the train was going through the mountains.</p>	
5 mins	Closing:	Announcements Prayer Beaver Scout Promise Beaver Scout Motto Dismissal	

Theme: TRANSPORTATION (2)

Time	Session	Activity	Equipment Needed
5 mins	Opening:	Prayer Beaver Scout Promise Short Briefing	
5 mins	Craft Preparation:	Cover tables and surfaces Remove your scarf Wear protective aprons.	
35 mins	Craft:	Make a train engine from milk cartons. Tidying Up Washing of Hands	
10 mins	Games:	Trains Beavers to stand into pairs with one Beaver 'left over'. Each pair forms a train, with the front one the engine and the second one the carriage. The carriage to clasp the engine from the shoulders or waist. The trains then set off chuff-chuffing around. The 'left over' Beaver tries to grab on to the back of one of the trains. If successful the engine of that train has to drop off and grab on to the back of another train.	
5 mins	Closing:	Announcements Prayer Beaver Scout Promise Beaver Scout Motto Dismissal	

Theme Brainstorming – Topic: SEEDS

Activity
Plant seeds in paper egg cartons. As the plants grow, Beavers can transplant them directly into the ground, egg carton planters and all.
Materials
You will need: paper egg cartons; seeds of different shapes and sizes; soil; spoon; newspaper; and water.
Discussion
Talk about seeds, growth, nature, the water cycle and why plants have seeds. Discuss rate of growth, differences in seeds, and perhaps relate this to differences in people. Which animals eat seeds? Which seeds do we humans eat? Are pips and seeds the same thing?
Craft
Make pictures using sunflower seeds, beans and/or peas. Lima beans are good because they are large enough for young Beavers to handle. Make abstract designs or outline simple pictures by gluing seeds on paper.
Fun
Organize a Movie Night. Make popcorn, grab your favourite cushion and eat it with the rest of the Colony. Do your Beavers know popcorn is a seed which comes from cobs of special corn?
Games
This game is called Nature Names. Sit your Beavers in a circle. Give each the name of a different seed (e.g. a bean, corn, parsley, etc.). Tell a ridiculous, funny story about each of these things. As each Beaver recognizes his or her name, the child jumps up, turns around and sits down again.
Nature
Nature involves all of these: trees, flowers, growing, birds, animals, insects, rain, wind, sunshine, spring, rivers, mountains, the beaver and his environment, leaves, outdoor sounds, smells, colours, clouds, hikes, visit to a nature reserve, etc.
Outdoor Safety
Do simple first aid. Discuss with the Beavers the importance of being aware of your surroundings and of taking care of one's safety. Talk about trail behaviour. Discuss the country and highway code. What do you need to watch out for when you are outdoors (for example: drinking plenty of water, avoid sunburns).
Flowers
Plant a packet of flower seeds in your Head Quarters garden. If this is not possible plant them just the same, the beavers will take the plants home and after a month everyone brings a few photos of his plant. He or she can tell the whole Colony how they are taking care of their plant regularly, where are they keeping it, does it have a lot of sunlight, etc
Trees

Look at buds coming into leaf. Explain the yearly cycle of trees.
What do rings in a tree trunk tell us?
Keep a chart showing leaf development from small bud through to fallen leaf in autumn.
Collect and press leaves in the fall.

Spring

Talk about what happens in nature during spring. Butterflies. Green grass. Flowers - Yellow, Red, Orange. Birds. Sounds. Smells. Trees. Pollen. Gets warm.

Birds

Hang a bird house/feeder near your headquarters or nearest public park/garden. Identify a few species of birds. Talk about bird migration. Birds effected by climate. What do birds eat? What do birds drink? Evolution of birds in all seasons: change of feathers, nests, hibernation.

Outdoors

Go on a nature walk.
Visit a frog pond.
Go on a short hike.
Go to a petting farm.
Visit a nature reserve.
Tend to a small patch of greenery.

More Theme Ideas

Animals

Field and wild animals, pets, zoo animals, sea animals, insects, farm animals, baby animals, fantastical animals, extinct animals, animals in different climates. Changing of fur and shells, hibernation, food, whiskers, nests, paws, burrows, hives, fly, crawl, gnaw. What animals live swamps? What animals can survive a snowy winter? Which animals have antlers? Which animal builds his house with twigs and mud? Build your own Beaver lodge. Make a colourful totem pole. Meet a Veterinarian. What does he do? Why is he vital for animals in need?

Communication

This theme involves talking, gestures, languages, singing, signalling, flags, animals, birds, insects, smoke signals, radio, computer, television, phonetic alphabet, secret messages, letters, cards, satellites, e-mail, signs, pictures, drums, and a beaver's tail slap.

Imagination

Nursery rhymes, fairy tales, stories - invented, spur of the moment, long short, with a morale, art, creativity with various mediums.

"Me"

Parts of the body, my height, my hair, the five senses, my safety, safety of others, water safety, my skills, my expectations, my heroes, my role model, my friends in the community, my friends in the Colony, my limits, my capabilities. My Colony, my Leaders, my scarf, my promise, my motto. Why am I called a Beaver Scout? Why do I wear a Uniform? What colour is my scarf? My scouting skills.

Our Community

This might involve a three-dimensional project of your own town. A leader could draw streets and parks on the board, while the Beavers paint them.

Beavers then make their own house from playdough, recycled cardboard or any other material in hand and place them on their own street on the map. The Beavers can construct cars and other buildings (like churches, shops, police station, etc) from paper and cardboard and make trees and flowers from odds and ends that one finds at home or in the Colony supplies cupboard. Parents/Guardians might be willing to donate any unwanted cardboard or other items.

Seasons & Weather

Spring - showers and sunshine, nature's awakening, bird's singing, buzzing of bees, scarves, colours, fields, gardens, outdoor exploration.

Summer - sun and heat - swimming, ice cream, water games, outdoors (with caution), t-shirts, greens turn browns, short sleeves.

Autumn - nature prepares for winter, falling leaves, browns, oranges, rain showers.

Winter - fun, rain and cold, hot chocolate, marshmallows, umbrellas, strong jackets, campfire, warm and cosy.

Senior Citizens

Visit a retirement home in your neighbourhood. Have Beavers take a game, home-made cookies, and entertain the senior citizens with games and songs. Whether you plan visits just before the winter holidays or at other times of the year, you will find Beavers, leaders and seniors citizens genuinely enjoy themselves. Invite a senior citizen to visit the Colony to tell a story, show a hobby, or discuss some interesting experiences.

Solar System

You might consider focusing one Colony project on a solar system theme.

Divide it into four sections:

- Space exploration (rockets, satellites, astronauts),
- The seasons (illustrate with four large Styrofoam balls decorated with typical themes of spring, fall, winter and summer),
- The planets (use Styrofoam balls of different sizes painted in different colours to make them as real-looking as possible),
- And the stars (especially the Big and Little Dippers).

Special Days

At the beginning of the year carry out a survey to discover your Beavers' cultural and ethnic backgrounds so that you can reflect these in your programmes.

Some examples of special days you may consider - Santa Maria, Halloween, Christmas, Easter, Hanukkah, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Republic Day, Independence Day, Carnival, Leap Year Day, Earth Day, World Maritime Day, World Children's Day.

Why not invent a special day of your own?

Scuba Diving

Get the Beavers to build their own scuba gear using recycled plastic bottles and strings.

Get a qualified scuba diver to give a talk to the beavers about this sport, to show them how real scuba diving gear looks like and how does it work.

Choose 4 areas in the Head Quarters. Each area will be a part of the 4 main parts of the ocean: Shallow, Deep, Deeper and Deepest. Do a small research and print out pictures of animals and other items found in each part of the ocean and dress up the areas chosen. Give a 'tour of the ocean' to the beavers explaining each ocean section in depth.

Other

The Universe

Time

Submarines

Aquariums

Machines and Construction

Keo's Garden Shop

Mountaineering

Professions - Meet a Photographer, a Chef, a Soldier, a Nurse, a Police Officer, a Dentist, an Artist, a Vet, a Pottery maker, a Glassblower, a Ship Captain

Travellers – Visit Iceland, Greece, New York, England, Mexico, South Africa, New Zealand, Hawaii, Bora Bora, Kenya, Jordan, Guatemala, North Pole, Vanuatu, Cuba

Travellers – Meet the Cowboys, Native Indians, Pirates, Aliens, Knights, Kings and Queens, Vikings, Romans, Samurai

Beaver Meeting Schedule

Month of _____

Theme: _____

Meeting Layout	Date: _____	Date: _____	Date: _____	Date: _____
Opening:	Promise Prayer Short Briefing	Promise Prayer Short Briefing	Promise Prayer Short Briefing	Promise Prayer Short Briefing
Craft				
Tidying Up				
Game/s				
Song/s				
Closing	Announcements Promise Prayer Motto Dismissal	Announcements Promise Prayer Motto Dismissal	Announcements Promise Prayer Motto Dismissal	Announcements Promise Prayer Motto Dismissal
Leader/s in Charge				

Planning Notes:

Resource People / Leader/s in Charge
Craft details
Equipment Needed
Game Details
Song / Story Details
Remarks

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