Chapter 9

THEMES AND IDEAS

Elements to Themes  » Using Themes  » Developing Themes
ELEMENTS TO THEMES

The Beaver program has seven program elements: games, crafts, music, storytelling, playacting, spiritual fellowship and outdoors. Chapters 13 to 17 treat these elements in detail.

Use these elements to create specific theme programs.

Many leadership teams find programming is easier when they use theme ideas. For example, you might use Outer Space as the focus for a series of meetings which includes films, stories, crafts, special guests, a play, space puppets, outdoor games and songs.

In this way, you can give your Beavers new educational information while you help immerse their imaginations in a space environment. 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 program. It also makes a leader's job easier because members of the team can keep an eye open for ideas long before they present the theme to the Beavers.

USING THEMES

One way you can use themes is to set up a colony project in which different tail groups work separately. Each group contributes to the project by doing age-appropriate activities which, when pooled together, complete the total project.

A simple example might involve making posters promoting a western “round up” night. Leaders select or draw pictures; Brown Tails colour them; Blue Tails cut them out; and White Tails compose the posters by pasting the pictures onto bristol board.

You might organize a month’s activities around different themes: migration, hibernation, getting ready for winter, fitness (set up a fitness trail and have everyone do five to 10 minutes of exercise at each meeting), senses, or pets (include a visit to the local Humane Society).

Try to ensure that all theme programs are well balanced to include the seven elements. 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 program, and gives you some extra help.

DEVELOPING THEMES

One program planning method many colonies use involves developing an entire colony meeting or series of meetings around a central idea. This doesn’t necessarily mean a special festive theme such as Halloween, but almost any other idea you can develop with a little imagination.

Let’s look at how to develop a simple idea into a program – the theme idea of food, for example. Sit down with other colony leaders and list as many things related to food as you can think of. Brainstorm. Let the ideas flow without stopping to accept, reject or discuss their merits.

Here’s 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. That’s only a short list that one person thought up in a few minutes. You can do 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’s not necessary to consider all of the items on the list, so let’s explore a few possibilities.

**Candy**

How about putting a candy inside each of a number of balloons, blowing them up, tying them in a row on a string and running a relay? Each child runs up to the string, breaks a balloon and keeps the candy inside.

**Macaroni**

You can string macaroni on strings to make jewellery, and glue it to cardboard to make pictures. Macaroni comes in many shapes and sizes; some of it is even coloured. How about that old song, “On Top of Spaghetti”? What can you do with it in a program?

**Beans**

You can hide a bag of white beans all over the pond (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 to Beavers, or have them act out in a little play.

**Peanuts**

*Before involving peanuts or any nuts in your program, ensure your Beavers have no allergies.* You can organize hunts for peanuts, just like beans. In one region of Canada they’re known as “gooflebird eggs.” Of course, there’s that song that goes on forever: “Found a Peanut.”

Now that you have the programming idea, let’s pull some of the items together into a colony program. It might look something like this.

1. Gathering Activity: find all the beans
2. Opening Ceremony, Promise, Prayer, Motto, Feed the Beaver
3. Song: “On Top of Spaghetti”
4. Game: candy in balloon relay
5. Craft: create pictures with cardboard, glue and different shapes of macaroni
6. Game: potato on spoon relay
7. Story: Jack and the Beanstalk
8. Start growing beans on blotters and talk about how things grow.
9. Song: “Found a Peanut”
10. Closing Ceremony, Law, Prayer, Announcements, Dismissal
In this program example, you can see we used only a fraction of the list of ideas we developed, and many are left over for another time. In planning programs, it’s important to keep in mind Beaver’s seven principal elements. Check the sample program against the Beaver Program Standards (Chapter 3). Are the seven elements present in some way? Can we modify it so that they are? It’s not essential to have all elements in all programs, but it’s important to be aware if one is being forgotten more often than it should be.

As a leadership team, sit down and try putting together a few theme programs of your own. Then, share them with other colony leaders. Successful programming depends on leaders planning creatively in a variety of ways.

In varying stages of development, here are a few more sample programs built around central ideas.

**TRANSPORTATION**

1. Gathering Activities
2. Opening Ceremony, Promise, Prayer, Motto
3. Feed the Beaver
4. Story: The Little Engine that Could
5. Discuss the story
6. Finger Play: The Engineer

I ride in an engine *(point to self)*
The whistle I blow *(pull cord)*
I do all the things that will make the train go.
“Whoo, Whoo,” says the whistle,
“Chug, Chug,” says the wheels,
I’m the chief engineer *(point to self)*
Until I’m called for my meal. *(pat chest proudly)*

7. Creative Movement: form a long line; make sounds and movements like a train; zig-zag as if the train was going through the mountains.
8. Craft: make a train engine from milk cartons.
9. Game: Follow the Leader. Form lodges into trains, and have them follow the leader through a tricky maze of obstacles, such as right turns around chairs and under tables.
10. Closing Ceremony, Law, Prayer, Announcements, Dismissal.

**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’ll need: paper egg cartons; seeds of different shapes and sizes; soil; spoon; newspaper; and water.
Discussion

Talk about seeds, growth, nature, and why plants have seeds. Discuss rate of growth, differences in seeds, and perhaps relate this to differences in people. What animals eat seeds? What seeds do we humans eat?

Craft

Make pictures using sunflower seeds, beans and/or peas. Lima beans are good because they’re large enough for young Beavers to handle. Make abstract designs or outline simple pictures by gluing seeds on paper.

Fun

Make popcorn and eat it. 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, leaves, outdoor sounds, smells, colours, clouds, hikes, bike ride, etc.

Outdoor Safety

Do simple first aid, talk about trail behavior, and what to be careful of when you are outdoors (e.g. drinking water, sunburns).

Flowers

Plant a packet of flower seeds near the pond. Pick roadside wild flowers, and press them.

Trees

Look at buds coming into leaf. Explain the yearly cycle of trees. 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.

Birds

Hang a bird house near your pond. Identify a few species of birds. Talk about bird migration.

Outdoors

Go on a nature walk in lodges or in tail groups. Visit a beaver pond. Go on a hike or a bike ride.

COMMUNICATION

This theme involves talking, gestures, singing, signalling, flags, animals, birds, insects, smoke signals, radio, computers, television, satellites, e-mail, signs, pictures, drums, and a tail slap.

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).

OUR COMMUNITY

This might involve a three-dimensional project on wood. A leader could draw streets and parks on the board, while the Beavers paint them. Beavers then make their own house from corn-starch playdough (easy to colour when dry), (see page 14-2 for recipe) and place them on their own street on the map. The Beavers can construct cars and other buildings (like churches) from paper and bristol board, and make trees and flowers from odds and ends.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Visit a senior citizens’ home in your neighbourhood. Have Beavers bring along a game or deck of cards, and entertain the seniors with games, songs and, of course, make homemade cookies. Whether you plan visits just before the winter holidays or at other times of the year, you’ll find Beavers, leaders and seniors truly enjoy themselves. Invite a senior citizen to visit the colony to tell a story, show a hobby, or discuss some interesting experiences.

OTHER THEMES AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

Special Days

Do a survey at the beginning of the year of your Beavers’ cultural and ethnic backgrounds so you can reflect these in your programs. Some examples of special days you can consider: Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas, Hanukkah, Valentine’s Day, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, St. Patrick’s Day, Mardi Gras, Carnival, Leap Year Day, Earth Day, ’Id al-Fitr.
Animals

Animals of field and forest, pets, circus, zoo, farm animals, baby animals

Birds and Bugs

Birds in fall, winter birds, spring birds, bugs

Seasons & Weather

Fall, nature prepares for winter, winter fun, snow, signs of spring, weather, April showers, things that grow, a walk in the forest

“Me”

Parts of the body, the five senses, safety, water safety

Imagination

Nursery rhymes, fairy tales

Other

The universe, time, machines and building construction, transportation, food – grocery stores

Resource

Use the sample JUMPSTART planning sheets to build your own program. Your Scout Shop carries a variety of pre-packaged JUMPSTART themes that are ready to use in your colony.

Check the world wide web for ideas of special days and themes for your Beavers.
# Beaver Meeting Schedule: One Month

**Theme:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Date: Week One</th>
<th>Date: Week Two</th>
<th>Date: Week Three</th>
<th>Date: Week Four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gathering Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 mins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opening Ceremony</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 mins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 mins.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 mins.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Song/Story</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10 mins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lodge Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 mins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual Fellowship</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 mins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closing Ceremony</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 mins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader Discussion Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 mins.</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
# Beaver Meeting Schedule: One Week

**Theme:**

**Date:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Program Details</th>
<th>Leader Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 mins.</td>
<td>Gathering Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 mins.</td>
<td>Opening Ceremony</td>
<td>(Details can be found in the Beaver Leader’s Handbook)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 mins.</td>
<td>Game</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20 mins.</td>
<td>Theme Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 mins.</td>
<td>Song/Story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 mins.</td>
<td>Lodge Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 mins.</td>
<td>Spiritual Fellowship</td>
<td>- Recite Law/Promise</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Prayer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 mins.</td>
<td>Closing Ceremony</td>
<td>(Details can be found in the Beaver Leader’s Handbook)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 mins.</td>
<td>Leader Discussion Time</td>
<td>Review meeting &amp; discuss next week’s plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Meeting Notes:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>NOTES</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resource People</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gathering Activity Details</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Game Details</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity Details</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equipment Needed</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Song / Story Details</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remarks</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>