

# Build the foundation for your year!

by Julian Celms

**T**he beginning of the Scouting year is wonderful – everyone's full of anticipation for the year ahead. Perhaps some new leaders have joined your section, and you have lots of new, young, smiling faces looking forward to the year as well.

But with this comes some uncertainty – your new Beavers or Cubs don't know everyone, don't know you, are unsure about your section's routine and what activities the year will bring. Here are some must do's to start the year off right!

## Fresh Start

Even though many youth may return, there are sure to be some who may not know anyone. You might want to try some of the "icebreaker" games in this issue (see page 8).

The start of the year is the time to set the tone for your colony or pack. Was last year a little too rambunctious? Did you feel there was inadequate discipline, or was the leadership not 'fun' enough? Take some time to reflect on this as a leadership team and decide on areas you would like to improve.

Now it's time to talk to the kids. Try to avoid just sitting down with the youth and rattling out the rules. Try this instead – get them involved so they buy into the group's routine and expectations. Perhaps start off with a short tale or story that highlights being positive, friendly, helpful, etc. Then engage both leaders and youth in talking about expectations – and the consequences of not following them.

With Beavers you can build on the sharing theme. Encourage each Beaver to quickly say what is on their mind about how they want to be treated. You might try a circle game with Cubs – standing in a circle one Cub tosses a ball to another Cub. When they catch the ball they say the name

of the last person with the ball, their own name, and then something about what they expect from the leaders or their fellow Cubs (this can be anything from "I want to play more games, to start on time, to have lots of hot chocolate at camp."). Take a moment to wrap up the activity and recap some of the key expectations the group came up with. Then remind the group of the routine – regular starting time, how Riverbanks or the Grand Howl will begin. These rules, or practices essentially become the Code of Conduct for the group.

## Stamp of Approval

Do you remember the old adage - failing to plan is planning to fail? Have you, or are you, planning to do the following?

- ☐ Meet with your leadership team to think about some of the key elements for this upcoming year? Great!
- ☐ Invite your group commissioner to a meeting? Awesome!
- ☐ Review your section's program to ensure it achieves Scouts Canada's

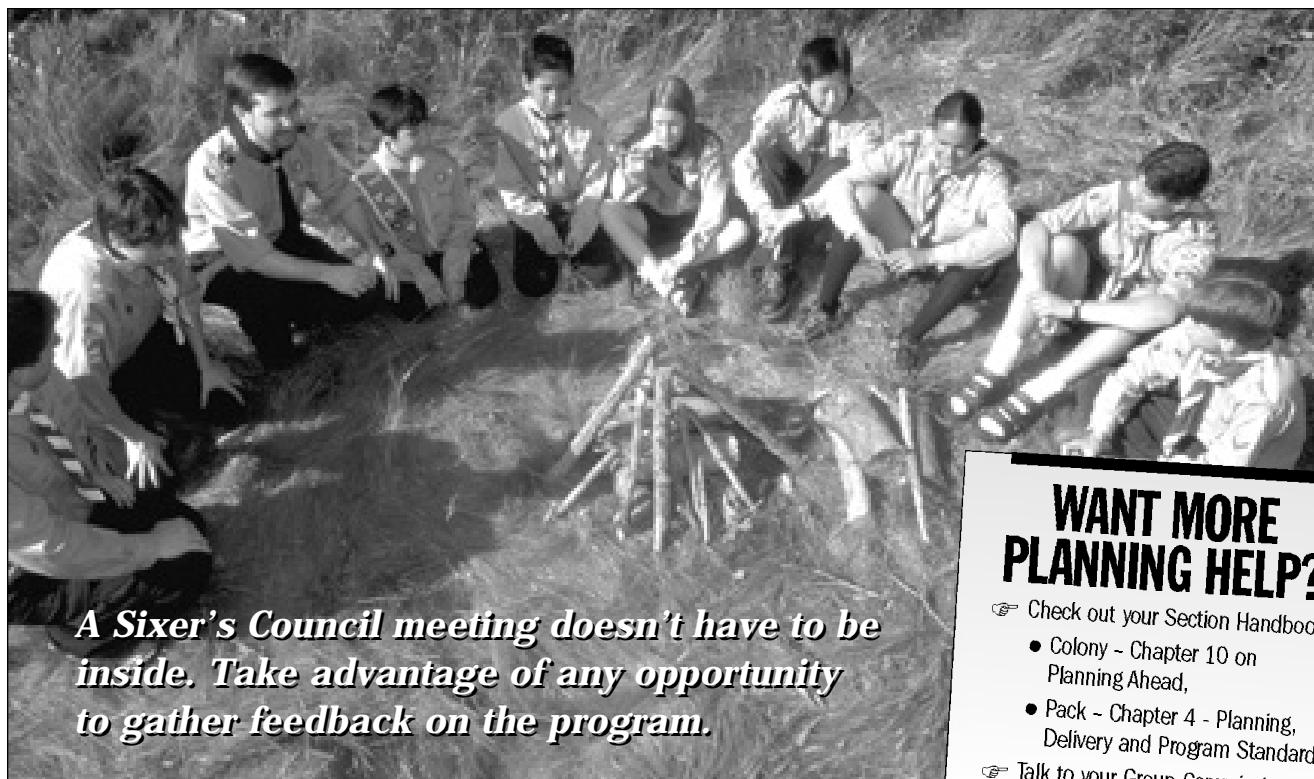


Photo: Peter Ng

*A Sixer's Council meeting doesn't have to be inside. Take advantage of any opportunity to gather feedback on the program.*

## WANT MORE PLANNING HELP?

- ☞ Check out your Section Handbook!
  - Colony - Chapter 10 on Planning Ahead,
  - Pack - Chapter 4 - Planning, Delivery and Program Standards
- ☞ Talk to your Group Commissioner!

Program Standards? Good work! (Never heard of the Program Standards? See the sidebar!)

You need another key ingredient for a great program – input from your customers! Once your section has had a chance to have a few meetings, it's time to get their feedback on the program, and get their input and stamp of approval – after all you are doing this for them.

Beavers and Cubs are not going to plan the whole program in complete detail. But they can provide valuable input with their likes and dislikes. Start by building on past successes. Ask those kids who were in your section last year what they really, really liked. You want to choose some activities from that list and bring them forward (however, you don't want to just repeat the previous year). Then ask everyone what cool ideas (themes) they want to work with (Harry Potter, Space, Pirates, Pets, etc.) or specific activities (a beach party in January, a dunk tank for Akela). This is the list to use to start filling in the rest of the plan. Keep this in mind as a great thing to do at the end of the year before your section stops meeting for the summer!

### Divide and Conquer

Effectively engaging youth in planning, contributes to their self-development and helps to achieve our Mission. Our programs use lodges, sixes, tail groups and sixers on purpose. One of the benefits of using these small groups is a more comfortable atmosphere to experience activities or challenges; increasing opportunities for youth to participate and get involved in a leadership role. Tail grouping allows you to tailor activities to the specific ages of your Beavers. They also help engage your white tails with more challenging activities. Sixers and seconders can contribute by assuming additional responsibilities (by leading a game, picking a song, gathering input from their six). Do you have a sixers' council? These are great for developing leadership skills and bridging the gap between leaders and youth. Scouts Canada's program provides these opportunities for youth development, which also acts as a resource to help run a great program.

### The first meetings...

Not sure what to do? Your section handbook has the first meetings supplied! These will help introduce your colony or pack to Scouting and then you can take off from there!

### Help! And where do I get it?

Here are a few places for you to explore for more help.

- Help Line – call Scouts Canada directly at 1-800-339-6643 and leave a message or e-mail us at [pgmhhelp@scouts.ca](mailto:pgmhhelp@scouts.ca). We're happy to answer all your questions!
- Handbooks! Yes, those section handbooks! They are full of interesting ideas, planning hints and tips and answers to most of the questions you have about the program.

I know you are excited and enthusiastic for this upcoming year. I look forward to writing useful, informative articles for you over the next year to help you make your colony or pack a success. If you have any thoughts or ideas for this column, I can be reached at [jcelms@scouts.ca](mailto:jcelms@scouts.ca).

Have fun! X

– Julian Celms is Director of Beavers, Cubs and Outdoors.

## What do you want to see here?

We tune every Issue of the *Leader Magazine* to your needs and wants! What do you want to see in your Sharing or Paksak column? Do you have successes to share? What sorts of resources or information do you want? What types of articles have you really enjoyed that you want to see more of? Tell us at [leader@scouts.ca](mailto:leader@scouts.ca). Don't be shy!

## PROGRAM STANDARDS

– Check out next month's magazine!

Scouts Canada has developed Program Standards for each of our sections. Having these minimum standards in place, and working with leaders to meet or exceed them, will ensure that leaders deliver programs with a high level of consistency across the country.

The National Program Services Committee (made up of volunteers representing the program sections) established the Program Standards several years ago after consulting Scouters in each province.

Members of the National Program Services Committee believe that the standards have been set at a reasonable level to guarantee that youth receive the fun, challenging, outdoor program for which they joined Scouting.

Scouting recognizes that, in fact, most of our groups currently operate programs that in many ways exceed these standards. This is excellent, and Scouts Canada encourages this to continue. However, Scouts Canada also recognizes that some groups need assistance to meet these standards. The Program Standards can provide guidance and direction to these groups. Consult with your Group/Council Commissioner for more assistance in achieving the Program Standards with your section. You'll be glad you did when you see how much fun you have this year!



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