

HEALTHY *by nature*

A presentation to the
Alberta Recreation and Parks Association
by the Canadian Parks Council



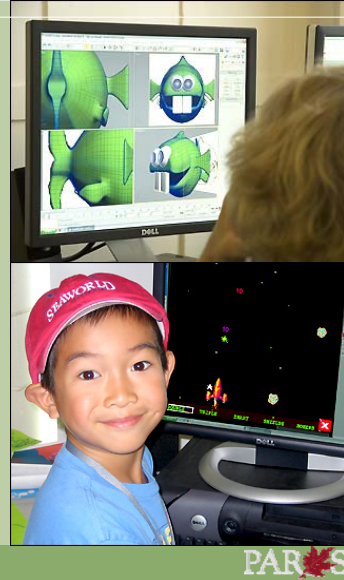
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•The Canadian Parks Council comprises Canada's national, provincial and territorial park agencies and we are pleased to be here, today, to engage parks practitioners in Alberta in a discussion that our members have been involved in for a number of years, concerning the contributions that parks make to the health and well-being of Canadians. We will present some of the results of our discussions and look forward to exploring with you opportunities for parks agencies to contribute to the societal objective of a healthier and more active population while, at the same time, building understanding of the importance of healthy park environments and enlisting people's help in conserving them.

Consider this...

Most Canadians are not active enough to receive the health-related benefits of regular physical activity.

(Coalition for Active Living)



- Governor Schwarzenegger grabbed headlines recently when he announced that Californians collectively had added 360 million pounds of obesity in ten years which carries with it heightened risk of disease ranging from diabetes to heart disease to cancer – and a generally lower quality of life.
- Here in Canada we tend to be more understated in our social commentary, but the situation is no less dire
- The Coalition for Active Living states that the level of physical inactivity amongst Canadians is reaching epidemic proportions. **Most Canadians are not active enough to receive the health-related benefits of regular physical activity.**

Here are the numbers . . .

In Canada, preventable chronic diseases are associated each year with:

- up to 47,000 premature deaths
- \$2.1 billion in direct health care costs
- \$5.3 billion in lost economic productivity

(Public Health Agency of Canada)



•Canada's health sector is grappling with some very sobering statistics.

•Each year, up to 47,000 premature deaths occur resulting from preventable chronic diseases. More than 2/3 of these deaths result from 4 groups of diseases – cardiovascular, cancer, type 2 diabetes, and respiratory. These chronic diseases share common preventable risk factors (physical inactivity, unhealthy diet and tobacco use) and the environmental determinants that underlie these personal health practices . . .”

•Over 80% of coronary heart disease and 90% of type 2 diabetes could be avoided or postponed by a combination of healthy living practices – including regular physical activity.

•Obesity rates are steadily climbing in Canada – today 36.1% of Canadians 18 and over are overweight and 23.1% are obese. (In 2004, these two categories equaled 14.1 million individuals.)

•An astonishing one-third of children 2-17 are either overweight (26%) or obese (8%).

•“Physical inactivity costs the Canadian health care system at least \$2.1 billion annually in direct health care costs, and the estimated annual economic burden is \$5.3 billion.”

Healthy Living Strategy - Targets

- Adopted by F/P/T Ministers of Health in 2005
- Seeks to increase by 20% the proportion of Canadians who:
 - participate in moderate to vigorous physical activity 30 minutes/day
 - maintain a “normal” body weight of less than 25 BMI
 - make healthy food and diet choices



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• In September 2005 Canada's Health Ministers endorsed the Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy.

• HLS is a conceptual framework designed to both improve health outcomes and reduce disparities across the population.

Based on a population health approach, it is designed to support Canadians in making positive health choices. Three specific targets have been developed to provide a standard reference point for all sectors to measure success of their own strategies and interventions

1) By 2015, increase by 20% the proportion of Canadians who make healthy food choices according to the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) and the Statistics Canada/Canadian Institute for Health Information (SC/CIHI) Health Indicators

According to the baseline data in the 2003 CCHS, the proportion of the adult population consuming fruits and vegetables at least five times per day was 39.0%. A 20% increase would mean that 46.8% of people would be doing so.

2) By 2015, increase by 20% the proportion of Canadians who participate in regular physical activity based on 30 minutes/day of moderate to vigorous activity as measured by the CCHS and the Physical Activity Benchmarks/Monitoring Program.

According to the baseline data in the 2003 CCHS, 50.4% reported at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity. A 20% increase would mean that 60.5% of people would be participating in regular physical activity by 2015.

It is interesting to note that this physical activity target builds on the target of 10 percentage points by 2010 set by Ministers responsible for Physical Activity, Recreation and Sport.

The benchmark of 30 minutes / day is consistent with the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

3) By 2015, increase by 20% the proportion of Canadians at a “normal” body weight based on a Body Mass Index of 18.5 – 24.9 as measured by the NPHS, CCHS, SC/CIHI Health Indicators.

Although it was not initially included in the benchmarks, awareness of the link between physical health and emotional and spiritual well-being is increasing with the result that the strategy is also expected to address mental health.

Healthy Living Strategy – *Environmental Influences*

Healthy behaviours are strongly influenced by the social, economic and physical environments where Canadians live, work, learn and play.



- From the outset of the Healthy Living Strategy, the contribution of setting to the pursuit of healthy lifestyles has been recognized as very important. Consequently, parks have a huge natural advantage in seeking to attract the public and involve them in healthy activities.

- The paper *Taking Action on Healthy Living* – a preliminary document for the Healthy Living Strategy – states:

*This Healthy Living Strategy will improve the health of Canadians by supporting them in making positive health choices. It is founded on a population health approach, which recognizes that **healthy behaviours are strongly influenced by the social, economic and physical environments where Canadians live, work, learn and play.***

- Dr. Trevor Hancock, who is speaking to us at lunch time, explained to a group of park managers, last fall that a relatively small percentage of the improvement in population health can be expected to come from the “Health Care System” and that the environment along with socio-economic conditions and living standards are much more important in improving and maintaining health.



A number of the policy and program priorities in the Healthy Living Strategy relate directly to the desire to increase physical activity levels and to do so by:

- Involving some non-traditional partners
- Supporting and facilitating affordable, appropriate and accessible physical activity facilities and opportunities; and
- Enhancing collaboration, understanding and planning across health and “non-health” sectors

As a framework for action between many sectors, the Healthy Living Strategy recognizes that action toward common goals of healthy living and well-being will require collaboration between multiple players which will result in a more informed community and improved identification and communication of opportunities across sectors.

Failure to integrate efforts between sectors mean

- > gaps in knowledge development and exchange will persist;
- > public messaging will not be consistent – and may, therefore, be confusing;
- > impact on health outcomes will fall short of what could be achievable; and
- > lost opportunities.

Change requires effective and consistent messaging in support of policy and program, and research and surveillance initiatives. The Healthy Living Strategy contemplates a social marketing campaign including:

- Forging Strategic Alliances
- Healthy Living Strategic Alliance Toolkit
- Federal advertising campaign (Including component targeted to Aboriginal communities)
- Use of key tools, such as a Healthy Living Website and 1 800 O Canada

Where do parks fit in?

Encouraging Canadians to spend more time in outdoor pursuits in parks will:

- support improved physical and mental health and well-being
- increase understanding of the important connection between healthy human populations and healthy ecosystems



The Healthy Living Strategy stresses the need for a personal and community-level commitment to making healthy choices. The Canadian Parks Council feels that the parks sector can and should be part of the efforts to encourage Canadians to make such lifestyle changes.

Encouraging Canadians to spend more time in healthful outdoor pursuits in parks will support improved physical and mental health and well-being while also providing opportunities for them to better understand the important connections between healthy ecosystems and healthy human populations.

Where do parks fit in?

There is a unique opportunity to build a bridge between the health promotion agenda and the parks agenda and to demonstrate how these two sectors can work together to support one another.



There is a unique opportunity to build a bridge between the health promotion agenda and the parks agenda and to demonstrate how these two sectors can work together to support one another. Emphasis on health is on the upswing and Canadians love their parks. The link is a natural one and park agencies through Canada have a tremendous opportunity – individually and collectively – to reposition parks as an integral facet of a healthy population.

Health benefits of parks

Health Studies have shown that:

- contact with nature, plants, animals, landscapes and wilderness offers a range of medical benefits
- exercise is more beneficial when it occurs in natural settings like parks.

(Deakin U. Report: Health Benefits of Nature, 2000)



When urban parks were first designed in the nineteenth century, city officials had a strong belief that parks would reduce disease, crime, and social unrest as well as providing 'green lungs' for the city and areas for recreation (Rohde & Kendle, 1997). At this time, it was also believed that exposure to nature fostered psychological wellbeing, reduced the stresses associated with urban living and promoted physical health (Ulrich, 1993). These assumptions were used as justification for providing parks and other natural areas in cities, and preserving wilderness areas outside of cities for public use (Ulrich, 1993; Parsons, 1991).

A comprehensive literature review and analysis of research conducted to better understand how humans benefit from nature, carried out by Deakin University for Parks Victoria (Australia), indicates that early park proponents were right. Amongst other evidence, data so far has shown that 'green nature' can

- reduce crime (Kuo, 2001),
- foster psychological wellbeing (Kaplan, 1992a; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989),
- reduce stress (Ulrich et al., 1991b; Parsons, 1991),
- boost immunity (Parsons et al., 1998; Rohde & Kendle, 1994),
- enhance productivity (Tennessen & Cimprich, 1995), and
- promote healing in psychiatric and other patients (Beck et al., 1986; Katcher & Beck, 1983).

'Green nature' is most likely essential for human development and long-term health and wellbeing (Driver et al., 1996).

Research also suggests that exercise is more beneficial, leading to relief of anxiety and depression, when it occurs in natural settings like parks, rather than along urban streets (Bodin & Hartig 2003).

Parks and nature have enormous untapped health potential as they provide an opportunity for people to re-establish and maintain their health in a holistic manner. Recent developments in public health and health promotion have focussed on the environmental and social aspects of health (Chu & Simpson, 1994). Parks are in an ideal position to address both these, and other aspects, of human health and well being.

Using the natural environment to promote human health



- While a healthy ecosystem is recognized as essential to human health, it seems that the development of programs that use the natural environment as a foundation to promote human health have only been explored in a very preliminary way.
- One of the most intriguing of these efforts is the Healthy Parks, Healthy People program, developed by Parks Victoria, to communicate the importance of parks and nature to human health and well-being.
- This flagship program is an integral part of the Parks Victoria “brand.” Parks Victoria manages most of the parks in the state from urban parks in Melbourne to national parks and marine conservation areas.
- They developed a program in conjunction with partners including the Heart Foundation, Asthma Victoria and Arthritis Victoria that focusses on healthy hearts, healthy lungs and healthy joints that is supported by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.
- New South Wales and Western Australia have established similar programs with the expectation that all five Australian State will eventually come on board.
- Elsewhere in the world similar programs are being launched. A Healthier US Initiative is under way and the National Park Service has established an Advisory Board Subcommittee on Health and Fitness, to develop a public education campaign integrating park units, managed areas and outdoor recreation programs.
- Many state jurisdictions are also starting programs. Connecticut’s “No Child Left Indoors” program includes among other things, state park passes that families can sign out from public libraries.

Promoting healthy lifestyles

Making BC the healthiest jurisdiction ever to host an Olympic Games

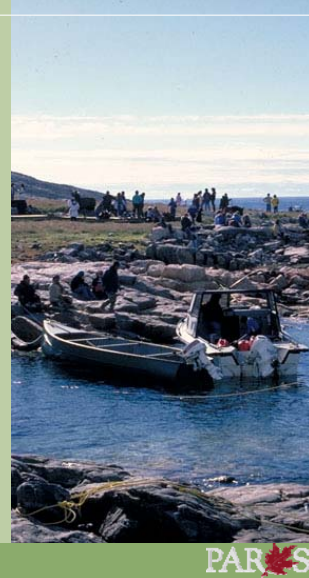


- In my own province of British Columbia, Premier, Gordon Campbell, has committed British Columbia to being the healthiest jurisdiction ever to host the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- I'll tell you more about how BC Parks is supporting the ACT Now BC Program, later.

- John is now going to speak about the Healthy by Nature concept that the Canadian Parks Council presented to parks ministers, last fall.

HEALTHY *by nature*

- Linking personal health and well-being to a healthy environment
- Encouraging participation in activities that improve well-being



When Canada's Parks Ministers met, last fall, they embraced the Healthy by Nature idea with enthusiasm recognizing that:

- The Healthy by Nature communication program provides opportunities to engage Canadians and to have them think of parks in a fresh way - a way that emphasizes the link between their personal health and the health of their families, their communities and the environment.

- It will also make a tangible contribution to the goals of the Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy by encouraging people to participate in activities that will improve their physical and emotional well-being.

- It has the further benefit of providing opportunities to increase understanding of and engage people in conservation of parks and the environment.

- While this has certainly been at the core of the mission of natural environment parks, for many years, our messages have not resonated with Canadians. Mention Ecological Integrity, Biological Diversity and people's eyes tend to glaze over.

HEALTHY *by nature*

Forging alliances with:

- health ministries
- health promotion NGOs
- organizations with an interest in parks, recreation and conservation



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Involvement in the Strategy will enable the parks sector to forge alliances with other ministries (principally health, sport & fitness and community development) as well as with health promotion NGO's such as those concerned with Asthma, Heart Disease and Arthritis and others with an interest in parks, recreation and conservation like the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association or Nature Canada.

We need to work together if we are to get people of all ages outside -- whether it be through sports or hiking or hands-on participation in conservation.

Healthy by Nature provides a consistent set of messages that can be implemented on a variety of levels. Individual park agencies can use them - alone or with partners, and park agencies collectively can advance the program nationally – with or without partners.

PARKS: *for your health*

- Parks offer a full range of physical activities in the great outdoors
- Hiking, swimming, skiing and canoeing are all part of a healthier life



Five key messages are at the centre of the communication program:

The first is **PARKS for your health**

- The opportunities that parks provide for year-round, healthful outdoor activities (such as hiking, canoeing, walking and cross-country skiing) can play a direct role in addressing physical inactivity, one of the key preventable risk factors for chronic disease.
- Parks provide accessible opportunities for physical activity, often at a much lower cost than hard infrastructure such as community centres, arenas and swimming pools.
- And remember that the 2003 research by Bodin and Hartig suggests that exercise is more beneficial, leading to relief of stress and anxiety when taken outdoors.

PARKS: *for your family*

- Parks are wonderful places in which to share memorable family experiences and strengthen relationships
- Parks are places that help children reach their full potential by helping them to connect with nature



The second core message is **PARKS for your family**.

- In the face of mounting responsibilities and growing time scarcity, family time is considered to be precious, yet it remains evasive for many. (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2000)

- As Canada's population becomes ever more urbanized the opportunities that parks can provide for families to relax together and for children to safely explore the wonders of the natural world will become ever more important.

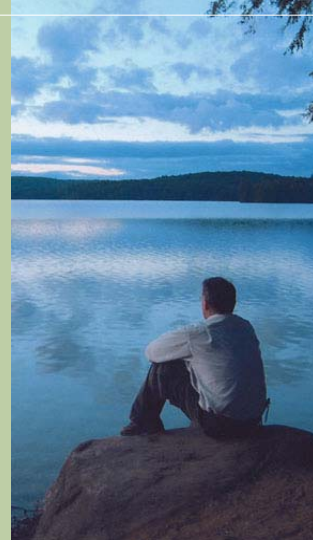
- The public understands that recreation plays a role in overall happiness and family unity, however declines in participation are putting these benefits at risk (Outdoor Recreation in America 2003, The Recreation Round Table)

- Author Richard Louv, who we will be hearing from, tomorrow, speaks of North American children as suffering from Nature-Deficit Disorder; caused in part by competition from television, computers, from modern fears that prevent us from allowing children to play freely, outdoors and from a trend toward more structured play vs. imaginative exploration. He contends that children require a connection with nature to reach their full potential. (Last Child in the Woods – Richard Louv)

- In fact parks provide settings for people to enhance all manner of social networks and personal relationships from couples and families, to social clubs and organisations of all sizes, from casual picnicking to festivals and special events.

PARKS: *for your soul*

- Parks are places to rekindle our sense of wonder and solitude
- They touch us spiritually, culturally and aesthetically, and contribute to emotional well-being, reduce stress, improve overall health and foster personal growth and renewal



PARKS

The third core message element is **PARKS for your soul**

- The Canadian Mental Health Association acknowledges that a state of good health includes both physical *and* emotional health and the Public Health Agency of Canada has indicated that mental health pressures are becoming a significant issue at a faster rate than expected.
- People have long valued the power of natural areas to enhance and heal the human spirit. The land is sacred in many aboriginal cultures and the people dependant upon nature for both physical sustenance and spiritual well-being.
- Stress is a fact of modern life. Finding a balance between work and home life can be challenging. Nearly half of all Canadian adults aged 25-44 reported feeling trapped in a daily routine in 1998 and more than half worried that they did not have enough time for family and friends.
- Natural environment experiences are increasingly precious as Canadians are more likely than ever to live in an urban environment. In 2001 80% of Canadians lived in urban areas compared with just 62% 50 years ago. Despite increased urbanization, nature is very much part of the Canadian psyche and the desire to reconnect still very strong.
- Parks provide an ideal place to connect with nature, to take time away from the daily pressures of life. They provide places for quiet contemplation, reflection, solace, inspiration and rejuvenation.

PARKS: *for your community*

- Parks can be an important focus for community pride and involvement, particularly in rural and remote parts of Canada
- Parks contribute to healthy communities by attracting visitors, creating jobs



Many rural and remote communities are suffering economically from the loss of traditional employers. Parks, which are often located in these remote areas, provide a means for people to protect and present their natural and cultural heritage and their traditional ways of life. Bringing people together around common concerns (e.g. environment, history or culture) and through special events and festivals helps to build social capital. A relatively new concept, social capital is defined as "the processes between people which establish networks, norms, social trust and facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit." Clearly, using this definition, parks can play a significant role in establishing and supporting the social fabric of nearby communities.

In addition to social capital, parks have significant economic impacts. A national study undertaken by the CPC concluded that spending by parks agencies and the visitors that come to parks adds approximately \$2.5 billion dollars to the economy and creates the equivalent of 60,000 full time jobs each year and returned \$137 million in taxes to government. Parks are clearly important business generators.

A whole range of sustainable tourism programs that encourage healthy lifestyles and protection of the environment and that contribute to the well-being of communities can be built around parks.

PARKS: for your environment

- Parks provide wildlife habitat and ensure ecological diversity
- They demonstrate, first hand, the importance of cleaner air, water and soil
- By helping to conserve the environment you can help your own health



PARKS

Healthy park ecosystems provide a wide variety of useful services. They provide habitat for plants and animals, aesthetic and cultural benefits and recreational opportunities. Human economies depend on “free of charge” aspects of intact natural areas to provide:

- clean air and water
- regulate rainwater runoff
- retain and remediate soil
- stabilize climate through means such as sequestering carbon
- moderate extreme weather events, like floods and droughts
- productive forests and oceans
- conserve the genetic base for many pharmaceuticals

Human activity is changing the environment in which we live. Despite the services that they provide, ecosystems are under tremendous pressure from urbanization, industrial development and pollution. Parks provide large blocks of protected land. They protect habitats, preserve biological diversity and ensure that some areas remain free of development. In Canada 100 million hectares, nearly 10% of our land, is devoted to parks and protected areas and park agencies are working to establish protected areas in every ecoregion.

Parks themselves are good for the environment but interest in parks is good for the environment, too. People who are active in outdoor recreation are more likely to be interested in the environment.



A number of park agencies have already embraced the Healthy by Nature concept and are contributing to healthy living programs in their jurisdictions.

1. Prince Edward Island National Park -- *Healthy Parks for People*

This project is a three-year initiative at Prince Edward Island National Park. Its aim is to engage a range of interest groups and partners in the development of new options for memorable visitor experiences that contribute to improved health of the park ecosystem and the visitor.

Project deliverables include:

- Construction of a multi-use trail by renovating a portion of the Gulf Shore Parkway corridor to accommodate safe pedestrian and cycle use, and present new opportunities for environmental education;
- Establishing a public transit shuttle service through collaboration with adjacent communities and businesses for access to and travel within the park;
- Elimination of asphalt and gravel surface parking spaces and restoration of natural habitat in areas of the park where asphalt, gravel and grassed parking spaces are decommissioned;
- Introduction of new active transportation options such as walking, cycling, running, and rollerblading to enhance the visitor experience and encourage physical activity;
- Creating new relationships that involve community groups (like the Active Living Alliance), government agencies (including PEI Tourism & Department of Transportation) and local businesses in promoting and delivering stewardship initiatives;
- Introducing new education programs that deliver entertaining and memorable experiences to support environmental messages.

2. *Parks and People*

•Parks and People is a national funding program established jointly by Nature Canada (formerly the Canadian Nature Federation) and the Parks Canada Agency. The program addresses Healthy by Nature issues by providing grants to organizations such as nature clubs, school clubs or community organizations to enable these organizations to offer urban children a learning experience in parks or an natural environment. The types of programs that have been supported within this partnership are varied, but typically involve physical activity in a park setting that contributes both to environmental education and health and well-being of youth.

- This is very consistent with the message of Richard Louv that you will hear about tomorrow morning.



Advertising:

- Healthy by Nature messages were added to the annual Parks Guide
- Autumn advertisements show couple hiking with the tag line “Keeping Fit? It’s a walk in the park!”
- Winter advertisement – depicts people snowshoeing and cross-country skiing
- Secured front window 3 panel display at Toronto’s Mountain Equipment Co-op. (MEC) store with tag line “Get Active, Get Healthy” showing biking, snowshoeing and hiking

Support through Ontario Parks’ Corporate Partners:

- Ontario Parks “Healthy by Nature” handout created for inclusion with Ontario Parks Partnership Packages which includes messages to Ontario Parks’ partners, i.e. Pepsi, Sobeys, MEC, etc.
- Month long Ontario Parks displays at Hewlett Packard corporate headquarters in Toronto – connection made between outdoor activity and diet as components of a healthy lifestyle
- Campsite24.ca (teachers/children’s website sponsored by Pepsi) features lesson plans and other information that highlights diet and outdoor activity

Website Promotions:

Several Blog articles featured on the Ontario Parks website: “Planning a fall getaway in Ontario? Check out the Fall Colour Report!” ; Healthy By Nature! – Celebrating Health & Health Promotion Week in Ontario; It’s In Your Health – Get Healthy Get Fit

Work with Health Promotions:

Set up initial contact with Ontario’s new Health Promotion Ministry to develop joint programming. Applied for Government’s “innovation funding” to develop a comprehensive advertising campaign around Healthy by Nature. (Note: At this point, no funding has been approved).

Ontario Parks Research:

A majority of campers, who responded to the 2005 Camper Survey, reported some type of improvement to their general health and well-being from their most recent trip to a provincial park. Mental, social and spiritual well-being were most improved.

A benchmark question related to how a parks visit improves physical, mental and spiritual health was added to the 2006 Ontario Parks Consumer Survey. This survey is repeated every three years so there will be an opportunity to monitor changes in awareness and the impact of any future programming, over time.

Leading by example – *Alberta Parks & Protected Areas*

- 'Healthy Living' one of four program goals in Strategic Plan
- Expansion of regional trail in Glenbow Ranch Prov Park
- KananACTIVE outdoor learning program in Kananaskis Park
- Fish Creek Prov Park enables many forms of active living and also supports sweat-lodge ceremonies for FN children



Alberta finished a new Strategic Plan for its Parks and Protected Areas Division in 2006. In it the connection between Healthy Parks and Healthy People is highlighted and Healthy Living is included as one of four new program goals.

The Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park, recently established through the generosity of the the Harvie family, is on the very edge of Calgary. This new park not only protects a threatened landscape, but when completed, one of the park goals will be to help meet the growing demand for hiking, biking and walking in the Calgary area. It will provide an important link in a regional trail along the Bow River from Cochrane all the way to downtown Calgary. This trail will allow Cochrane commuters to choose a more sustainable form of transportation, and also participate in healthy living.

In Fish Creek Provincial Park in southern Calgary, pathways are used from before dawn to after dark by nearby residents for jogging, walking, roller blading, and more. The park is also contributing to the mental and emotional well-being of Aboriginal foster children living off-reserve in Calgary. The Native Multi-Service Team has been conducting sweat lodge ceremonies in this natural, yet readily accessible setting.



Getting active in parks – *Pick your trail!*

- About 50 'easy' to 'moderate' trails were assessed by a summer crew
- The crew applied a user-friendly classification and rating system to assist potential users to decide whether a particular trail would be suitable for their personal level of skill and ability.

Project G.O.! – Get Outdoors with BC Parks (School Program)

- The objective of this initiative (done in partnership with several agencies) is to increase provincial park use by youth aged 10 to 18 by raising awareness among youth programmers of the wide range of exciting activities and opportunities in B.C.'s provincial parks.
- The first phase focused on youth programmers. A website oriented to programmers and area-specific information cards were developed and three workshops focusing on youth programmers' needs were conducted. Facilitating programmer visits to provincial parks was also a focus of the workshops.
- The second phase focuses on the expansion of this pilot project into schools. Parks staff are researching the development of curriculum programs and reviewing potential partners to assist with the development and implementation of the program.

Wild at Heart – Knowledge Network (TV series)

- This is an ambitious TV series – and interactive website – profiling a variety of parks that offer a memorable experience for park users. This highly innovative series will inspire people to lead healthier, more active lives by promoting the responsible use of BC Parks as a way for British Columbians to get fit and maintain a physically active lifestyle.
- I understand that this series has been picked up by the public broadcasters in both Alberta and Ontario so watch for this series later this year!

HEALTHY *by nature*

- Build a bridge between the parks and health promotion agendas
- Improve physical and mental health of Canadians
- Build greater appreciation of importance of parks and conservation to human health



Parks and nature are currently undervalued as a means of improving and maintaining health. Although most people are aware of the health benefits of sport and recreation, the health benefits arising from contact with nature are not well understood. Although further research is required, the Canadian Parks Council believes that repositioning of parks in the minds of both the community and government as a positive health resource, is warranted.

Parks should be recognized for the essential role they play in preserving, maintaining and promoting a population health as well as a healthy environment. Parks are an ideal catalyst for the integration of environment, society, and health by promoting an ecological approach to human health and wellbeing based on contact with nature. The potential exists for parks to gain an expanded role, scope, and influence in society, especially in terms of public health, as well as changing the way park management bodies relate to other organisations and agencies and to the public.

Encouraging Canadians to spend more time in parks will support improved physical and emotional health, and provide opportunities to inform and educate them about the important connection between healthy ecosystems and healthy human populations. Park agencies have a unique opportunity to build a bridge between the parks agenda and the health promotion agenda and to demonstrate how the two sectors can work together to support one another.

HEALTHY *by nature*

For further information please contact the
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•Thanks for this opportunity to introduce Healthy by Nature to you, today. We look forward to this afternoon's discussions and to spending time with you throughout the Workshop.