HEALTHY by nature

Canadian Parks Council · Conseil Canadien des Parcs
Table of Contents

Introduction ....................................................... 1

Healthy Parks, Healthy People ....................... 2
Healthy by Nature ........................................... 6

Key Messages

PARKS: for your Health ................................. 8
PARKS: for your Family ................................. 11
PARKS: for your Soul .................................. 13
PARKS: for your Community ...................... 16
PARKS: for your Environment .................. 18

Workplan & Opportunities

Workplan .................................................... 20
Opportunities ............................................. 20
Research Gaps ............................................. 20
Introduction

There is little doubt that protection of biodiversity, and maintenance of ecological integrity are among the most important challenges of our time and that conservation of protected areas is one of the most important strategies for achieving that end.

The importance of a healthy ecosystem to the human population it supports are known. However, parks and other categories of protected areas are highly valued by society for more than just biodiversity and environment. They are recognized as landscapes that deeply touch the spiritual, cultural, aesthetic and relational dimensions of human existence; and there is a growing acceptance of the strong link between a healthy parks system and a healthy society. Yet, 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 those preliminary efforts has been the Australian initiative to establish a Healthy Parks, Healthy People program which first began communicating the importance of parks and nature for human health and well-being to governments and the community at large. The Australian example has been applied to programs for all levels of parks, and is a key part of parks messaging.

The initial interest of the CPC in understanding the application of this concept in Canada coincided with the decision of Canada’s Health Ministers to develop a Healthy Living Strategy. The paper Taking Action on Healthy Living, a preliminary document for the Healthy Living Strategy argues:

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 [emphasis added].

The final Strategy similarly recognizes that factors like the built environment, and arguably, the natural environment, are known to have an impact on healthy living, making it clear
that the contribution of setting to the pursuit of healthy lifestyles is recognized as important. Consequently, parks and protected area agencies have a huge natural advantage in seeking to attract the public and involve them in healthy activities.

As a framework for action between many sectors, the Healthy Living Strategy recognizes that action towards 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.

Emphasis on health is on the upswing and Canadians love their parks. The link is a natural one and park agencies throughout Canada have a tremendous opportunity – individually and collectively – to reposition parks as an integral facet of a healthy population. The social marketing campaign contemplated in the Healthy Living Strategy stresses the need for a personal and community-level commitment to making healthy choices. The Working Group feels that the Parks sector can and should be a central part of the efforts to encourage Canadians to make such lifestyle changes.

Healthy Parks, Healthy People

In June 2005, the CPC approved the Terms of Reference for a Healthy Parks, Healthy People Working Group to develop a Discussion Paper as to how best to pursue the CPC’s interest in collaborating with federal, provincial and territorial health ministries (and other partners) on a Healthy Parks, Healthy People initiative; and to ensure that CPC Directors have a shared vision of what the Council wants to achieve.

The Objectives of the Working Group, defined in its original Terms of Reference are:

To work collaboratively with others, such as the FIP/T Healthy Living Task Group (including health ministries, aboriginal health agencies and non-governmental health promotion organizations) the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and others to:

> increase awareness and understanding of the contribution parks and protected areas make to a healthy environment and, in turn, to people’s health; and
encourage people to take advantage of the opportunities parks provide for healthful outdoor activities and enlist their support for the protection of parks and the environment.

In June 2005, in advance of a Working Group workshop, the CPC wrote to the Co-Chairs of the F/P/T Healthy Living Task Group in follow up to correspondence received from Health D.M.s. CPC received a response from the F/P/T Healthy Living Task Group in September, indicating support for a meeting to explore the Healthy Parks, Healthy People concept further and asking for a copy of the Discussion Paper. CPC wrote, indicating agreement to meet in the New Year (2006) and a copy of the paper was provided.

In its meeting in June 2005, the Working Group met with a representative of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) who expressed considerable interest in the Healthy Parks Healthy People initiative. This was reflected in the Discussion Paper, which was presented to the CPC in Inuvik in August 2005.

The Discussion Paper further recognized that there are significant opportunities for the CPC to be proactive in developing, and promoting a strong initiative that links healthy parks and healthy people that includes:

› relevance to current government priorities;
› promotion of the mental and emotional health benefits of parks; and
› potential funding and partnerships.

In addition, the CPC can be seen as a leader in promotion of healthy living in Canada, and be among the first to suggest concrete action in support of the Strategy.

The Discussion Paper realized that the critical avenue for the CPC to pursue any initiative linking Healthy Parks and Healthy Living is through communications and marketing; and made nine recommendations for CPC’s consideration. In its Board Meeting in Inuvik on August 9, 2005, the CPC approved, in principle, embarking on a Healthy Parks, Healthy People initiative and provided the following direction, based on recommendations contained in the discussion paper.

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› encourage people to take advantage of the opportunities parks provide for healthful outdoor activities and enlist their support for the protection of parks and the environment.
That the Working Group:

› continue its work, conduct further research and consultation and develop a proposal based either on the pilot project or on another initiative it may choose to recommend to council
› prepare an outreach piece to refine the Healthy Parks, Healthy People messages at the core of the initiative and to inform CPC and member jurisdictions’ discussions with other agencies and interested organizations
› share the CPC Discussion Paper and continue to pursue discussions with the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Healthy Living Task Force and other interested parties
› infuse Parks Day and CPC Website with healthy Parks, Healthy People messages;
› continue to investigate program and funding opportunities and to bring a work plan and funding submission forward
› consider whom it wishes to recommend that Council invite to participate in its work; and
› report its finding to Council no later than the May 2006 meeting.

In keeping with the direction from the CPC, the Working Group has been meeting via teleconference and has proposed a ‘made-in-Canada’ initiative called Healthy by Nature that builds on the Healthy Parks Healthy People initiative. Each key message is directly related to parks, and is also supported by related research.
The Healthy Parks, Healthy People initiative has been successfully applied as a means of promoting the strong and obvious link between healthy people and healthy parks, and the mental and physical benefits of spending time in parks.

The term healthy, as applied to people, is widely understood, and that part of the ‘Healthy Parks, Healthy People’ message is easily grasped. In fact, in review of existing applications, it appears that most are supported and understood primarily from a ‘healthy people’ perspective, which may be appropriate for those jurisdictions where the concept is being applied (Australia, New Zealand). However, ‘partner campaigns’ (e.g. Arthritis Victoria, etc.) do not appear to be reciprocal in mentioning the HP/HP campaign similarly. As a result, it is not as clear what is meant by ‘Healthy Parks’, because it has not been as fully developed in current practice.

In Canada and internationally, there are an increasing number of ‘healthy initiatives’, some of which are already taking advantage of a ‘healthy __, healthy ___’ association, which lends some confusion to its application.

By building on the Healthy Parks, Healthy People initiative, in the context of the Healthy Living Strategy, the CPC has an opportunity to extend the connections between environment, parks, and population health more directly.

While it is important not to lose sight of the need to protect parks to ensure that they can continue to contribute clean air, clean water and healthy ecosystems which in turn sustain us, this may be too complex a message to form the core of a “brand” for a population health initiative.

To fully reflect the intention of the CPC initiative, and ensure it resonates with people, the CPC Working Group has developed a new ‘brand’ and related key messages around “Healthy by Nature” that may be more appropriate to the CPC and Canada’s F/P/T parks.

The Working Group feels that while the word ‘park’ is not directly mentioned (though it would be by association with the CPC or other park jurisdictional logos), ‘nature’ is, and in fact, has a broader appeal and understanding. Research shows that ‘nature’ is a unique and important aspect that visitors associate with F/P/T parks. It is felt that this association will help distinguish

Healthy by Nature
Healthy by Nature Key Messages

PARKS: for your health - Parks offer a full range of physical activities in the great outdoors. Hiking, canoeing, skiing are all part of a healthier life.

PARKS: for your family - Parks are the very best settings in which to share memorable family experiences and strengthen relationships. Imagine the joy of storytelling around the campfire or the thrill of your child catching a fish for the first time.

PARKS: for your soul - Parks are the special places to rekindle your sense of wonder and solitude. Restore some balance – wake up to a bird’s song or quietly watch a deer and her fawn graze in a nearby meadow.

PARKS: for your community - Parks are in fact small communities unto themselves where all your neighbours have a pride in nature. And, when you visit these communities you’re also contributing to the economic well-being of nearby villages, towns and cities.

PARKS: for your environment - Parks protect wildlife habitat and ensure ecological diversity. You’ll see, feel and learn firsthand, the importance of cleaner air, water and soil. By helping with the health of the environment, you can help your own health.

In speaking to people who may be questioning their lifestyle choices and those of their families, the CPC needs to be able to differentiate our initiative from other options (e.g. joining a gym, or taking a spa vacation). By triggering the strong emotional attachment Canadians have with nature and reinforcing it with good imagery, we can position healthful activities in parks as a good way to improve physical and emotional well-being for families.

Key Messages

There is a strong and obvious link between healthy people and healthy parks. 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, indicates that humans are dependent on nature for a variety of reasons. The most obvious include exposure to and participation in activities in parks, such as hiking, canoeing, or dog sledding. These obvious benefits directly respond to physical inactivity - one of the key preventable risk factors that Canadians are experiencing and one of the goals of the Healthy Living Strategy.

Less obvious, though, parks are places to take refuge from stresses and renew spiritual health. They are places for families to get together for picnics and for children to safely explore the magic of the natural environment. They are places communities can be proud of and identify with. And, parks are the primary means of maintaining intact natural ecosystems and preserving biodiversity in a world that is becoming increasingly urbanized.
PARKS: for your health

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

Health studies have shown that contact with nature, plants, animals, landscapes, and wilderness, offers a range of medical benefits. These include decreased body fat/obesity, lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, enhanced survival after a heart attack, faster recovery from surgery, fewer minor medical complaints, reductions and prevention of hypertension, increased bone and muscle strength (particularly in children) and lower self-reported stress (Frumkin, 2001). In fact, 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 and 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. It has even been suggested that the major determinants of health have little to do with the health care system, and that public health needs to increasingly focus on the environmental and social aspects of health. Parks are in an ideal position to address both these, and other aspects of human health and well-being.

Consider this...

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 [Coalition for Active Living].

In Canada, preventable diet and activity-related diseases are associated with 20,000 to 47,000 premature deaths each year; result in $2.5-$4.6 billion in health care costs and drain the economy as a whole by $5.3 and $9.9 billion per year [Public Health Agency of Canada].

Despite this, individuals who once used their leisure time for physical fitness are increasingly viewing physical activity as a basic requirement of health maintenance similar to eating, sleeping, or personal hygiene [CPC Trend Watch].

The Health community is also changing its perspective - from managing illness to a broader understanding that emphasizes prevention including mental, physical, social and spiritual well-being [CPC Trend Watch].
Institutions are responding to this health crisis with policies that stress physical activity.

› The Public Health Agency of Canada has set a target to increase, by 20%, the proportion of Canadians who participate in regular physical activity by 2015

› The benchmark of 30 minutes of physical activity per day is consistent with the World Health Organization’s Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

Where do parks fit?

Recreation opportunities are most expensive when an indoor facility or structured program is required (CPC Trend Watch). Parks provide inexpensive, accessible opportunities for physical activity.

Parks have many kilometers of trails and beaches and hundreds of campsites to support recreational activities, many of which are specially designed for people with mobility impairments and other disabilities.

Parks offer an enormous range of year-round activities for all ages, activity levels and all interests including hiking, biking, swimming, canoeing, skiing, birdwatching, walking, dogsledding, and others.

Resources

The Public Health Agency of Canada: Healthy Living Strategy

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is a federal body designed to provide leadership and to work collaboratively with provinces and territories on efforts to renew the public health system in Canada and support a sustainable health care system. As part of this effort an Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy was adopted by all jurisdictions that is guided by the following overarching goal, “As a nation, we aspire to a Canada in which every person is as healthy as they can be – physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually”.

The Healthy Living Strategy provides a framework for sustained action based on Healthy Living and targets have been set to obtain a 20% increase in the proportion of Canadians who are physically active, eat healthy and have healthy body weights. Park agencies across Canada can contribute to this...
target by improving access to and promoting the physical benefits that parks support.

› Public Health Agency of Canada: Health goals for Canada: A federal, provincial, and territorial commitment to Canadians [www.healthycanadians.ca/home.html]
› Public Health Agency of Canada Website. [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html]
› Canadian Health Network Website. [www.canadian-health-network.ca]
› Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy Website [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hl-vs-strat/index.html]

**Coalition for Active Living**
The Coalition for Active Living is a national action group of more than 80 organizations that focus on health promotion and disease prevention through physical activity. Their goal is to ensure that the environments where Canadians live, learn, commute, work and play support regular physical activity. [www.activeliving.ca]

**CPC Trend Watch**

**Deakin University Report: Health Benefits of Contact with Nature**
In 2002 Deakin University, Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, in Australia compiled a literature review of research related to the human relationship with nature and how humans might benefit from nature in terms of health and wellbeing. It was prepared for the Parks Victoria Healthy Parks Healthy People program, to help clarify and communicate the importance of parks and nature for human health and wellbeing to governments and the community at large. The full text of the report can be downloaded from the Parks Victoria Website: [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/resources/mhphp/pv1.pdf]

**CPRA Benefits Catalogue**
The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association is currently updating a Catalogue of the Benefits of Recreation, first developed in 1992. [www.cpra.ca/e/initiatives/catalogue.htm]

Parks offer an enormous range of activities for all ages, activity levels and all interests including hiking, biking, swimming, canoeing, skiing, dogsledding, and others.
PARKS: for your family

Parks are the very best settings in which to share memorable family experiences and strengthen relationships. Imagine the joy of storytelling around the campfire or the thrill of your child catching a fish for the first time.

Parks based outdoor recreation provides immeasurable value to the physical and mental well-being of individuals and families. Families that recreate together report greater stability and satisfaction.

Parks agencies work with visitors and communities to create a wide range of safe and unique opportunities for families to learn about the ecological and cultural heritage where events unfold, and at the same time, provide venues for shared family experiences and activities.

Consider this...

Although the definition of a family has evolved in recent years, the family unit remains critical to the fabric of Canadian society. (Canada e-book, Statistics Canada).

At the same time, families are challenged by divorce, working parents, scant leisure time and rising expectations.

In the face of mounting responsibilities and growing time scarcity, family time is considered to be precious, yet it remains evasive for many. (It Keeps Getting Faster: Changing Patterns of Time in Families, Vanier Institute of the Family, 2000).

The public understands that recreation plays a role in overall happiness, family unity, health, improved educational opportunities, deterrence of crime and substance abuse. However, declines in participation rates are putting these benefits at risk (Outdoor Recreation in America 2003, The Recreation Roundtable).

Author Richard Louv has diagnosed North-America children as suffering from Nature-Deficit Disorder; caused in part by competition from television and computers, from modern fears that don't allow children to wander freely outside; from a trend towards more structured play versus imaginative exploration. He contends that children require a connection with nature to reach their full potential. (Last Child in the Woods, Richard Louv).

Canadian athlete, Silken Laumann notes that “kids used to live outside and adventure was part of most days”, whereas today, “we have our children wrapped in bubblewrap”. While
they may be safer, they don’t have as much fun.
Part of the answer to childhood obesity and declining health is to be found in rediscovering outdoor play. [Child’s Play, Silken Laumann]

Where do Parks Fit?
Families are already a major component of park users and make up a large percentage of all campers. They provide places for families, and extended families, to spend time together away from the routine of daily life. Parks are a place where families can engage in structured activities or simply cook, have tea, play cards, or camp on the land together.

Parks offer opportunities for unforgettable experiences like seeing a rare bird for the first time, walking to a spectacular waterfall or camping in the backcountry.

Additional Resources
Statistics Canada: Canada e-Book
Canada e-Book is an online resource that uses sound, images, tables, graphs and both analytical and descriptive text to look at Canada – The Land, The People, The Economy and The State. [http://142.206.72.67/r000_e.htm]

The Vanier Institute of the Family
The Vanier Institute of the Family is a national, charitable organization based in Ottawa dedicated to promoting the well-being of Canadian families. The Institute posts a virtual library on its website with numerous literary contributions from renowned researchers and theorists about the importance of families to Canadian society.

› The Vanier Institute of the Family [www.vifamily.ca]


Author Richard Louv has diagnosed North-America children as suffering from Nature-Deficit Disorder ... He contends that children require a connection with nature to reach their full potential.
PARKS: for your soul

Parks are the special places to rekindle your sense of wonder and solitude. Restore some balance – wake up to a bird’s song or quietly watch a deer and her fawn graze in a nearby meadow.

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 and spiritual well-being.

In his book on the American wilderness movement, Wilderness and the American Mind, Roderick Nash (1982) describes how the early wilderness writers (e.g. Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, etc.) eloquently describe how undeveloped nature has the power to renew the spirit, to put one in touch with one’s self and the universe. These authors have long held that being connected to natural areas restores a sense of relatedness to the spirit, to ourselves, and to each other.

Modern scholars, such as Rachel and Stephen Kaplan (1989, 1995, 2001) tell us that contact with nature, especially in parks and protected areas, is essential to our well-being. Their attention restoration theory argues that the natural environment provides psychological restoration to people by providing distance from their normal routine, and providing new places that encourages exploration and discovery. Natural settings in protected areas are “… not the only contexts that permit such effortless attention; they have, been shown to be strong in the qualities that lead to mental restoration” (Kaplan, R. 2001, p. 58).

Park visitors continue to be restored in natural areas and use park-based recreation experiences to develop their own environmental ethics. These opportunities may not be completely dependent on protected areas, but definitely seem to be facilitated by the settings of and associated activities within protected areas.

Consider this...

Natural environment experiences are increasingly precious as Canadians are more likely than ever to live in an urban environment. In 2001, 80% of the population lived in urban areas versus 62% in 1951 (Statistics Canada).

Societal values are shifting to emphasize self-fulfillment, self-expression, inner-orientation,
and self-actualization. People are increasingly looking for depth of experience (CPC Trend Watch).

Travel Alberta, the destination marketing organization for the province, describes a major segment of society as “real relaxers”. This group desires tranquility and peace and quiet. In the 2005 Alberta Parks Camper Survey, 44.5% of visitors identified themselves as real relaxers indicating that they strongly desire opportunities to unwind (Alberta Parks and Protected Areas Camper Satisfaction Survey, 2005).

Traditionally, Canadians have looked to organized religion to care for their inner-self. However participation in organized religion is on the decline. In 1981, about 7% of Canadians reported that they had no connections with an organized religion; by 2001, that figure had increased to 16%. (Canada e-book, Statistics Canada)

Stress is a fact of modern life. Finding a balancing between work and home life can be challenging. Nearly half of all Canadian adults aged 25 to 44 reported feeling trapped in a daily routine in 1998, and more than half worried they did not have enough time for family and friends. (Canada e-book, Statistics Canada)

The Canadian Mental Health Association acknowledges that a state of good health includes both physical and emotional health. Both are essential for a well-balanced life. However mental fitness does not receive nearly the attention that physical fitness does.

**Where do parks fit?**

Parks provide an ideal place to connect with nature, to take time away from the daily pressures of life. They provide places of quiet and solace, and time for rejuvenation.

A majority of campers at Ontario Parks reported some type of improvement to their state of general health and well-being from their most recent trip to a provincial park; mental, social and spiritual well-being were most improved (Ontario Parks Camper Survey, 2005).

**Resources**

**Canadian Mental Health Association**

The goal of the Canadian Mental Health Association [www.cmha.ca] is to help Canadian recognize that a state of good health includes both physical and mental health. The awareness

Modern scholars, such as Rachel and Stephen Kaplan (1989, 1995, 2001) tell us that contact with nature, especially in parks and protected areas, is essential to our well-being.
Natural environment experiences are increasingly precious as Canadians are more likely than ever to live in an urban environment. In 2001, 80% of the population lived in urban areas versus 62% in 1951 (Statistics Canada).

The importance of psychological restoration, and Attention Restoration Theory and its relationship to parks and natural areas has received increased attention, due in part to the work of Rachel and Stephen Kaplan. Kaplans work has been published in a number of peer reviewed journal articles and books, including the following related to PARKS: for your Soul.


Parks are in fact small communities unto themselves where all your neighbours have a pride in nature. And, when you visit these communities you’re also contributing to the economic well-being of nearby villages, towns and cities.

Parks have long been a means for people to protect their natural and cultural heritage and their traditional ways of life. They build social capital in our communities by bringing people together.

Parks-based activities provide opportunities for local residents to share their culture through performances, arts and crafts, and support for traditional land uses - all of which can boost self-pride and confidence through sharing what is important and special to them.

Consider this...

The concept of place attachment and favourite places, taken from social and environmental psychology, are increasingly used to measure people’s attraction to and use of natural areas, including protected areas. Parks, forests, lakes and other natural settings have constituted the predominant category of favourite places.

Where do parks fit?

Parks are significant economic generators in the Canadian economy. They particularly support rural and remote communities.

Many rural and remote communities are suffering economically from the loss of traditional employers. Parks are often located in these rural areas. Parks provide a venue for collective activities and a focus for building relationships around common concerns (e.g. environment, health, history and culture).

Spending by parks agencies and by the visitors that come to parks adds approximately $2.5 billion to the Canadian economy and is responsible for creating the equivalent of 60,000 full time jobs each year. Parks are clearly important business generators for all provinces and territories across Canada (The Outspan Group Inc., 2005).

Using a different economic model, Ontario Parks has estimated that its parks provide $1.5 billion of economic benefit each year, through visitor expenditures, park management, capital construction and their associated multiplier effects. Much of this benefit is realized in the local communities adjacent to parks.
In Nunavut, for example, total economic activity in Nunavut in/from Katannilik Park quadrupled to over $400,000 in its first five years of operations. Direct spending in Kimmirut related to parks-based tourism increased from $45,000 annually to more than $280,000 in the same period. (Katannilik Park Visitor Use Survey, 2000).

In its *Nunavut Economic Outlook: An Examination of the Nunavut Economy*, the Conference Board of Canada emphasized that parks and tourism strengthen and support Inuit culture, and provide Nunavummiut with a much wider range of employment opportunities than other sectors because these activities are an integral part of Inuit life. (Conference Board of Canada, 2002)

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

**Resources**

**Economic Impacts of Parks**


PARKS: for your environment

Parks protect wildlife habitat and ensure ecological diversity. You'll see, feel and learn firsthand, the importance of cleaner air, water and soil.

Put simply, ecosystems, and biodiversity more generally, provide a wide variety of useful services that enhance human well-being. They provide habitat for plants and animals, aesthetic and cultural benefits, and recreational opportunities. Human economies depend on the ‘free of charge’ aspects of natural ecosystems: purification of air and water; regulation of rainwater runoff and drought, soil remediation, climate stabilization (for example, through carbon sequestration), and moderating extremes of climate - flooding, erosion.

Despite these services, ecosystems are under tremendous pressure. Forests are being converted to other uses, wetlands are being drained, and marine areas being modified through impoundment, extraction, land use changes and pollution.

Parks are the chief means of maintaining intact natural ecosystems and preserving biodiversity in a world that is becoming increasingly urbanized.

Consider this...

Ten percent of known Canadian mammal species are at risk of extinction, 5% of bird species are at risk, and 8% of reptiles and amphibian species are at risk (CPC/Royal Roads University/Rethink, Trend Watch for the Protected Areas Manager). One of the major threats to these species is loss of habitat.

Human activity is directly changing the environment in which we live. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has concluded that global warming is a result of a combination of natural and human factors but that most of the warming during the past 50 years was likely due to human influences.

Each year, every one of Canada’s 15 million cars and light trucks discharge over 4 tonnes of pollutants into the air. (Canada e-book, Statistics Canada)

Green spaces improve air quality - removing carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, and other pollutants from the air (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, Benefits Catalogue).

Canadians believe that environmental problems will have a deleterious affect on their health.
The percentage of Canadians who believe that environmental problems will affect the health of future generations “a great deal” rose from 50% in 1999 to 63% in 2003. (Globescan International Environment Monitor)

Where do parks fit?

Parks provide large blocks of protected space. They protect habitats, preserve biodiversity and ensure that some areas can remain untouched by development. In Canada, 100 million hectares (nearly 10% of our land) is devoted to parks and protected areas and jurisdictions are working toward establishing a protected area in every ecoregion.

Parks themselves are good for the environment but interest in parks is also good for the environment. People who are active in outdoor recreation are more likely to be interested in the environment (Outdoor Recreation in America 2003, The Recreation Roundtable).

Resources

*Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*

Recognizing the problem of potential global climate change, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988 [http://www.ipcc.ch/index.html]. The role of the IPCC is to assess on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis the scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the scientific basis of risk of human-induced climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation.

*Statistics Canada: Canada e-Book*

Canada e-Book [http://142.206.72.67/r000_e.htm] is an online resource that uses sound, images, tables, graphs and both analytical and descriptive text to look at Canada – The Land, The People, The Economy and The State.

*Globescan International Environment Monitor*

Globescan Inc. (formerly Environics Inc.) is an international supplier of custom public opinion and stakeholder research services. Since 1997, they have produced an International Environment Monitor that has tracked public awareness of environmental issues.

Ten percent of known Canadian mammal species are at risk of extinction, 5% of bird species are at risk, and 8% of reptiles and amphibians (CPC/Royal Roads University/Rethink, Trend Watch for the Protected Areas Manager). One of the major threats to these species is loss of habitat.
opinion on key dimensions of environmental concern and action across over 20 nations. In 2004, Globescan introduced the first global public opinion survey on humanity’s relationship to nature. [http://globescan.com]


Outdoor Recreation in America

Go for Green – The Active Living and Environment Program
Go for Green [www.goforgreen.ca/] is a national non-profit organization that encourages Canadians to pursue healthy, outdoor physical activities that protect, enhance, or restore the environment.

Their programs include active transportation, commuter challenge, and active and safe routes to school.

IUCN: How Much is an Ecosystem Worth?

Parks themselves are good for environment but interest in parks is also good for the environment. People who are active in outdoor recreation are more likely to be interested in the environment.
Workplan
In keeping with CPC direction, the Working Group has drafted a workplan highlighting actions, outcomes, responsibilities, budgets and time frames for implementation of the Healthy by Nature initiative. The following Workplan (p. 21) details these efforts.

Opportunities
As described on the Opportunities Chart (p. 22), the Working Group has defined, by theme area:

› **Partnerships** – opportunities for collaboration between Parks agencies and other F/P/T and NGO partners in each theme.

› **Opportunities** – In support of Healthy by Nature program development, the Working Group has identified other initiatives and programs that may be of interest to other jurisdictions, or help in the development of national Healthy by Nature programs, Parks Day and outreach throughout Canada.

› **Actions/Deliverables** – These are presented as a way of moving beyond identification of potential partners and discussions of opportunities. Actions/Deliverables will be more fully developed as specific initiatives and opportunities are further explored.

Research Gaps
As noted by theme, research describes how humans relate to nature, demonstrates the benefits from interaction with nature, and supports the role of parks in helping reconnect humans to nature.

There are gaps, however, which appear to be shared by information needs in support of the Healthy Living Strategy, particularly as it relates to mental health, youth, and remote/rural communities.

For Parks, those gaps also include linking benefits of ‘nature’ and parks, defining the relative significance of these relationships specifically to parks planning and management, and the importance of these relationships to youth and in remote/rural communities. Identifying these gaps more clearly may help facilitate research in support of both initiatives.
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<th>WG Rec’n</th>
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<th>Responsibility</th>
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<th>Time Frame</th>
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| 4       | Clear messaging regarding the role of parks in advancing population health and identification of needs for further research | › Synthesize and interpret research  
› Prepare message lines and supporting documentation  
› Identify gaps in research and knowledge regarding contribution of parks to population health in Canada  
› Identify potential partners to pursue research (academic community, CPRA, etc.). CPRA is updating its Catalogue of the Benefits of Recreation. | CPC Working Group | | February 10, 2006 for distribution to CPC Directors  
February 10, 2006 for distribution to CPC Directors As research needs are identified Opportunities will be explored as research needs arise |
| 7       | HP/HP messaging focus of Canada’s Parks Day communications (e.g. poster, web site, media releases) | › Prepare sample messages, templates, graphic materials  
› Meeting with Parks Day / Communications Working Group | CPC - John Good, Executive Director  
Parks Day Committee - Kathy McPherson, Chair; Laurie Collette, Nat’l Coordinator  
Park Jurisdictions - Parks Day Coordinators  
CPC - $15k  
Park Jurisdictions  
PHAC (None in 2006) | | Begin ASAP to be up and ready for Parks Day 2006 - July 15. Begin ASAP with objective to begin loading portions of the site throughout winter of 2006 |
| 9       | New CPC Web Site incorporating HP/HP messages | › Develop communications objectives and concept for web site  
› Develop site architecture  
› Seek commitment by Parks Directors | CPC - John Good, Executive Director  
Parks Day Committee - Kathy McPherson, Chair; Laurie Collette, Nat’l Coordinator  
Park Jurisdictions - Parks Day Coordinators  
Webmaster  
CPC - $15k | | |
| 9       | Jurisdictions incorporating HP/HP messages in communications program (web sites, media releases, publications, etc.) and links to CPC HP/HP web site | › Prepare sample messages, templates, graphic materials, etc.  
› Seek commitment by Parks Directors | CPC Jurisdictions - with lead by Parks Day Coordinating Committee  
Park Jurisdictions | Park Jurisdictions As opportunities arise in conjunction with communications activities |
| 9       | HP/HP Messages incorporated in visitor programs / activities / special events in F/P/T Parks | › Develop programs, ideas, outlines and resources and make available (on-line)  
› Develop a mechanism for sharing ideas, best practices | CPC - Curriculum Development Committee  
Park Jurisdictions - representatives  
NGOs - potential representatives  
Park Jurisdictions  
PHAC | CPC  
Park Jurisdictions  
PHAC Would require additional funding beyond CPC Budget for Parks Day.  
Park agencies may need funding for facility and program development. |
| 2,5     | Proposal for HP/HP Program, Campaign | › Develop Concept  
› Prepare TOR including objectives, proposed messages / branding, target audiences, strategies and tactics, potential partners, funding sources and budgets | CPC Working Group to pursue  
CPC - to fund meeting, development of work plan, etc. | | May 2006 - to present to CPC |
| 3       | Consultations continue with PHAC and NGOs | › Seek opportunities to collaborate (research, communications, etc.) | CPC Working Group | | Spring 2006 - tentative meeting with F/P/T Healthy Living Task Group |
| 8       | Jurisdictions continue to work with sister ministries and provincial NGOs | › Park agencies liaise with others (e.g. sport, tourism, health, education) seeking to build support and synergies for HP/HP Initiative | | | Ongoing |
## HEALTHY BY NATURE - OPPORTUNITIES/ACTIONS/PARTNERSHIPS

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Soul</th>
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HEALTHY by nature

PARKS: for your health
Parks offer a full range of physical activities in the great outdoors. Hiking, swimming, canoeing, skiing are all part of a healthier life.

PARKS: for your family
Parks are the very best settings in which to share memorable family experiences and strengthen relationships. Imagine the joy of storytelling around the campfire or the thrill of your child catching a fish for the first time.

PARKS: for your soul
Parks are the special places to rekindle your sense of wonder and solitude. Restore some balance – wake up to a bird’s song or quietly watch a deer and her fawn graze in a nearby meadow.

PARKS: for your community
Parks are in fact small communities unto themselves where all your neighbours have a pride in nature. And, when you visit these communities you’re also contributing to the economic well-being of nearby villages, towns and cities.

PARKS: for your environment
Parks protect wildlife habitat and ensure ecological diversity. You’ll see, feel and learn firsthand, the importance of cleaner air, water and soil. By helping with the health of the environment, you can help your own health.