



- Thank you to Mark Stone and Parks Victoria for inviting The Canadian Parks Council to be part of this panel discussion on Healthy Parks, Healthy People
- Today I will be telling you about Canada's Healthy by Nature program but before I begin I want to acknowledge the role that Parks Victoria played in setting us along this path
- In 2002 Kris and Andrea Rowe, two Parks Victoria staff members, participated in an exchange with Ontario Parks. During that time Andrea made a presentation about Healthy Parks, Healthy People to the Canadian Parks Council. She made a very compelling case that a similar program should be introduced to parks in Canada.
- Since then Canadian parks agencies have worked to adapt this idea and incorporate it in our programs.
- The fact that I'm here today telling you about Canada's Healthy by Nature program demonstrates the power of international relationships among parks organizations

# Healthy by Nature



- Canadian Parks Council
- Why health is a concern in Canada
- The link between Park and health
- Healthy by Nature key messages
- Examples from Canadian parks systems
- Challenges



PARCS

Today - I'm am going to be talking to you about.....

# Canadian Parks Council



- Federal, provincial and territorial parks agencies working together to:
  - *promote excellence in park planning and management*
  - *advance park and protected areas values*
  - *facilitate cooperation among and provide support to member agencies*



PARCS

- The Canadian Parks Council is a Canada-wide forum for inter-governmental information sharing and action on parks and protected areas.
- Canada is a federation of 10 provinces and 3 territories. Each provincial and territorial jurisdiction and the federal government manages its own parks organization.
- National, provincial and territorial parks organizations have slightly different objectives
- The mandate of Parks Canada is to protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage
- The mandates of the provincial and territorial parks systems include some combination of protecting representative examples of ecosystems, providing recreational opportunities, educating their visitors and facilitating research.
- Each of these parks organizations has its own strong brand and any brand or program that is developed by the Council will be secondary
- As federal, provincial and territorial parks agencies we recognize the need to work closely with municipal parks organizations but we don't have a single integrating body.

## Building the Case



- 36.1% of Canadians 18 and over are over weight
- 80% of heart disease and 90% of type 2 diabetes could be avoided
- Most Canadians are not active enough to receive the health-related benefits of regular physical activity



PARCS

• Like other jurisdictions around the world, Canada is wrestling with rising health care costs and striving to address some of the preventable risk factors.

• The statistics are sobering.

• There are also some regional disparities in these numbers; residents of rural and remote areas of the country tend to be at higher risk, including aboriginal populations. The incidence of Type 2 Diabetes is higher in northern communities versus the south.

• Parks have a significant contribution to make with respect to addressing physical inactivity

• This has been identified as one of the three most important preventable risk factors, along with unhealthy eating and tobacco use.

# Healthy Living Strategy

## - Targets



- Adopted by F/P/T Ministers of Health in 2005
- By 2015, 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



PARIS

- In September 2005 Canada’s Health Ministers endorsed the Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy.
- The Healthy Living Strategy is a conceptual framework designed to both improve health outcomes and reduce disparities across the population.
- 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
- Healthy behaviours are influenced by the social, economic and physical environments where Canadians live, work, learn and play.
- Despite advances in health care, young people today are the first generation since the second world war to face the prospect of shorter life expectancies than their parents.
- The Healthy Living Strategy recognizes that setting makes an important contribution to the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle.

## 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



PARCS

Parks have huge natural advantages in seeking to attract the public and involve them in healthy activities:

- Parks are great settings for physical activity and mental rejuvenation
- Parks are often located in rural and remote areas of the country where populations are less healthy
- Parks organizations are already in the business of communications and educating visitors
- Building parks facilities that support physical activity such as trails requires much less capital investment than building a community recreation building

## HEALTHY *by nature* Building Support

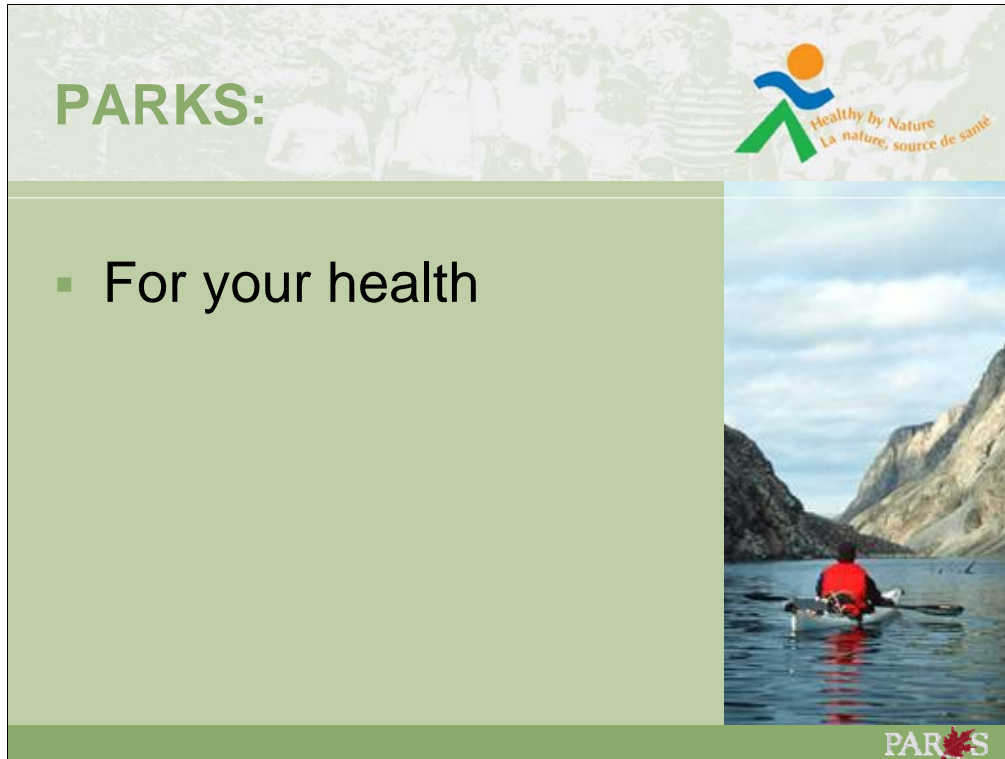


- Endorsement by Parks Ministers
- Forging alliances with:
  - health ministries
  - health promotion NGOs
  - organizations with an interest in parks, recreation and conservation



PARCS

As I mentioned in my introduction, the Canadian Parks Council was inspired to take on the cause of health and parks and In 2006, the ministers responsible for national, provincial and territorial parks endorsed the Healthy by Nature program. They recognized such as program could make a tangible contribution to the Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy.



The CPC's Healthy by Nature program has five key messages.

These messages are implemented on a variety of levels. Individual park agencies use them - alone or with partners, and park agencies collectively advance the program nationally – with or without partners.

These messages are reinforced in materials produced by parks jurisdictions across Canada.

The five key messages are:

### **PARKS for your health**

- Parks offer a full range of physical activities in the great outdoors which will contribute to a healthier life
- One of my colleagues is fond of saying that parks are really the un-credited part of the health care system

**PARKS:**



- For your health
- For your family



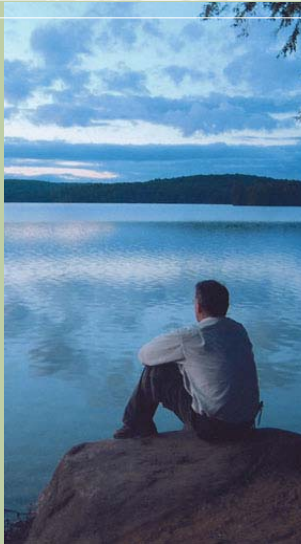
PARCS

The second core message is **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
- “No Child Left Inside” initiatives are spreading across national and state park systems in the United States and are coming to the attention of Canadian parks agencies.
- These programs recognize the powerful role that parks can play in the lives of children

**PARKS:**

- For your health
- For your family
- For your soul



Healthy by Nature  
La nature, source de santé

PARKS

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

- Parks are places to rekindle our sense of wonder and solitude and enjoy a slower pace
- 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:**

- For your health
- For your family
- For your soul
- For your community



Healthy by Nature  
La nature, source de santé

PARCS

- 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 and creating jobs

## PARKS:



- For your health
- For your family
- For your soul
- For your community
- For your environment



PAROS

- Parks provide wildlife habitat and are a key element of ecological diversity
- They can be places where we demonstrate, first hand, the importance of cleaner air, water and soil
- By helping to conserve the environment you can help your own health

## Leading by example – Canadian Parks Council



PARCS

- Every year the CPC organizes Canada's Parks Day – a national day dedicated to showcasing parks in every province and territory in Canada on the third Saturday in July.
- In 2007 and 2008, Parks Day in Canada was themed around Healthy by Nature

## Leading by example – Ontario Parks



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

I'm going to highlight some of the initiatives that are taking place across the country

- Ontario Parks has woven the Healthy by Nature messages into its promotional material
- The 2008 parks guide was built around the Healthy by Nature theme – with a page devote to each of the 5 key messages
- This guide is our main publication with 750,000 copies distributed throughout the province and beyond
- Ontario Parks has an electronic newsletter *The Insider* which is distributed to a list of 105,000 people 6 times throughout our peak season. In 2008 we were able to devote an entire issue to Healthy by Nature and its five key messages
- We have included a Healthy by Nature pamphlet into the material that we send out to potential corporate partners, hoping to engage their interest in supporting this cause
- Ontario Parks has added benchmark questions about parks and health to our Customer Satisfaction Survey and Consumer Survey of all Ontarians. As a result, we know that 82% of all Ontarians believe that a visit to an Ontario park would improve their mental and physical well-being

# Leading by example – Manitoba Parks



**Ministers' Message**

**Manitoba Parks: Healthy by nature**

In today's busy world, it is more important than ever to take time out for the sake of our personal well-being and health. One great way to relieve stress and restore your spirit is to visit a Manitoba provincial park. Studies show that contact with animals, plants and the wilderness can bring a sense of calm and balance to our daily lives. Parks are healthy by nature and also offer a full range of physical activities. Hiking, cycling, swimming, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling all contribute to good health and physical fitness.

This year, there are more opportunities to appreciate Manitoba's natural areas with the expansion of four provincial parks. Whitesmuffs Falls Provincial Park, near Seven Sisters, has been expanded to include protected habitat for Manitoba's provincial bird, the great grey owl. A private donation of land increased the size of Pimicuan Marsh Provincial Park to offer additional trail and recreational opportunities. Beauty Provincial Park introduces new trails to its existing network. Thanks to its expanded boundaries. Finally, the expansion of Point Lake Provincial Park continues to build the government's commitment of protecting Manitoba's natural areas.

Parks are important natural and recreational areas. They are great places to enjoy outdoor activities, view wildlife and create lasting family memories. Make the working environment of Manitoba provincial parks part of your healthy lifestyle.



*Shan Stuthoff*  
Shan Stuthoff  
Conservation Minister



*Karin Ivins-Ross*  
Karin Ivins-Ross  
Healthy Living Minister

**100 in motion™**  
*Physical Activity - do it for life!*

**get out  
get active  
get in motion™**

**In Manitoba's Great Outdoors!**  
Your mind, Manitoba's parks offer exceptional opportunities to get "in motion". Aim for 30-60 minutes of daily activity to create a healthier happier you. The list:

- Take a bike
- Take your bike
- Surf a wave
- Surf a rap
- Walk the dog
- Try a football
- Paddle a boat
- You'll feel better, sleep better and handle stress better

Get more information: 1-800-961-6742 or call [www.manitobaparks.com](http://www.manitobaparks.com)

to make it a priority strategy in life of Manitobans make the working part of their daily life to health and enjoyment.



**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 stargazing 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 – make 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 neighbors have a special interest. 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 clean air, water and soil. By helping with the health of the environment, you can help your own health.



•The 2008 Manitoba Parks Guide also featured a Healthy by Nature theme.

•Manitoba has been able to build an alliance with their Ministry of Healthy Living. The Parks Guide features a joint message from the Ministers of Conservation and Healthy Living that celebrates parks as part of a healthy lifestyle. They are well on their way to delivering cooperative programs.



## Leading by example – *British Columbia Parks*



- Getting active in parks – *Pick your trail!*
- *Project G.O.!* – Get Outdoors with BC Parks (School Program)
- *Wild at Heart* – Knowledge Network (TV series)



PARKS

As you may know, Vancouver will be hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics

- The Premier of British Columbia, the province where Vancouver is located, has committed that British Columbia will be the healthiest jurisdiction ever to host the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

### **Getting active in parks – *Pick your trail!***

- Trails are classified to help users decide which trails suit their personal level of skill and ability.

### ***Project G.O.!* – Get Outdoors with BC Parks**

- The objective of this school program is to increase provincial park use by youth aged 10 to 18
- A website and area specific information cards oriented to youth programmers were developed and visits to provincial parks for these program coordinators were organized.

### ***Wild at Heart* – Knowledge Network (TV series)**

- Wild at Heart 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 inspires 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.

## Leading by example – *Parks Canada*



### ***Healthy Parks for People***

- Enhancing the health of both the Prince Edward Island National Park ecosystem and park users.



PARCS

*Healthy Parks for People* 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.

A portion of the park's Gulf Shore Parkway has been converted to one-way traffic to allow introduction of new active transportation options such as walking, cycling, running and roller-blading.

Nature habitats have been restored in areas of the park where asphalt, gravel and grassed parking spaces are decommissioned.

New education programs deliver entertaining and memorable experiences to support environmental messages.

## Leading by example – *New Brunswick*



- Developing television series with Healthy by Nature theme
- Envirothon – Healthy by Nature messages for students



PARCS

New Brunswick is developing a television series on its provincial parks with Healthy by Nature as the underlying theme.

They also held an Envirothon, similar to a science fair, where students developed plans for sustainable use of parks.

## The Challenges What's Next



- “Philosophical” engagement versus actual action
- Health promotion ministries, parks ministries historically not partners
- Funding elusive
- Various levels of success across jurisdictions



PARCS

The Canadian Parks Council is convinced that park and health have a very logical link and that Healthy by Nature is a worthwhile endeavour. However there have been a number of challenges:

- Many organizations – the CPC’s own members, health promotion ministries and health NGOs – are philosophically supportive of the Healthy by Nature ideal but it is sometimes difficult to translate this into action. Although most people are aware of the health benefits of physical activity, the health benefits of contact with nature are not as well understood.
- In Canada, our parks organizations have departments within government that they traditionally partner with – tourism, environment etc. – health has not been a traditional partner and new relationships have to be built from the ground up.
- These two points together mean that funding for Healthy by Nature has been elusive. Traditionally most of the “health” budget goes to health care rather than health promotion. Health funding is also often directly tied to outcomes. The outcomes of Healthy by Nature are a little less tangible and may take many years to be actually realized.

Our next steps will be:

- To produce an on-line toolkit for CPC members with resources that they can use to implement a Healthy by Nature program within their jurisdiction.
- To continue the effort build bridges between parks and health promotion agendas and to secure funding for this program



Parks and nature are currently undervalued as a means of improving and maintaining health. 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.

We believe that the value of Healthy by Nature to parks system in Canada is that

- Parks will be acknowledged as a vital contributor to human health
- Parks will receive some of the funding that is currently directed to the health sector, and
- Parks will be seen by all Canadians as relevant to their lives

To finish, I would like to relay a story from one of Ontario Parks' visitors.....



To finish, I would like to relay a story from one of Ontario Parks' visitors.....

A story of two business owners, getting a well deserved break from it all.

We had a wonderful time enjoying what was almost the best weekend for sunny weather the whole summer! My husband/business partner and I enjoyed the fishing, canoeing, and relaxation of this beautiful lake. Through the kiosk access #29, we headed into the park to enjoy a few days in the sun. This picture is from our campsite, right beside the best honey hole for bass we were able to find! The fish were great! The time was wonderful and it really helped us focus back on balance in our lives. The north end of the park is one of my best experiences in Algonquin Park. We will definitely come back again.

Darcelle R.

-----

We might be 56 and showing our age ... but we're still 30 inside at Grundy Lake Provincial Park

Ron and Jessie Reiter