



*"We see youth as
an indicator species
for parks in
Canada"*



ENGAGING YOUTH IN CANADA'S PARKS

Where are we now? Where do we need to be? How do we get there?



A report for the Canadian Parks Council Youth Engagement Working Group

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Cover photos (clockwise from top left): Chris Ha, Kananaskis Country, Nunavut Parks and Special Places, Alberta Junior Forest Rangers

Report Completed April, 2011

For more information, visit www.parks-parcs.ca

*“Engaging youth in parks from coast to coast is more than just a niche strategy;
it’s the only way to ensure that our parks will have stewards, leaders and protectors
as we move further into the 21st Century.”*

~ C. Hanson, 2007,
Plugging the Connected, Generation into Canada’s Parks,
REACH Consulting

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Amber Church with the assistance of Sarah Burger and staff of Apathy is Boring (Devon LeClair & Ilona Dougherty).

The authors would first and foremost like to acknowledge the members of the Canadian Parks Council's Youth Advisory Panel. This diverse and talented group of young people was intrinsic to this research and we are very grateful for their commitment, passion and enthusiasm. The members of the Youth Advisory Panel are:

Adam Collicutt, Winnipeg, MB	Isabella Drzemczewska Hodson, Calgary, AB
Alison Bray, Whitehorse, YT	Jennifer Mullane, Halifax, NS
Angelina Tryon, Toronto, ON	Jodie King, St. John's, NL
Ashley Grncarovski, Langley, BC	Kathleen Côté, Thunder Bay, ON
Breanna Hall, Oshawa, ON	Marie-Eve Deshaies, Montreal, QC
Corrine Turner, Prince George, BC	Matthew Berry, Ottawa, ON
Dana Andrishak, Rocky Mountain House, AB	Murtaza Amirali, Calgary, AB
Douglas Tsoi, Montreal, QC	Robert Neys, Edmonton, AB
Eva Paleczny, New Liskeard, ON	Timothy Belliveau, Calgary, AB
Hanna Burger, Calgary, AB	Yiorgos Boudouris, Calgary, AB
Ike Stoodly, Calgary, AB	Yolanda Clatworthy, Princess Royal Island, BC

Next we would like to thank individuals from across the country who took the time to speak with us during the research for this report, sharing with us their incredible programs and experiences. These individuals are:

Adriana Bacheschi, Ivavik Bio 20 Youth Camp; Andrea Barnes, Watershed Internship Program; Claudette Landry, Seasonal Interpreter Recruitment Program; Danielle Bellefleur, DEEP Program; Ian Smith, Learning in Nature Adventure Program; James Bartram, Palisades Stewardship Education Centre; Jennell Rempel, Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre; Leese Papatsie, Nunavut Jr. High Environmental Stewardship Certificate Program; Morris Lamrock, Conservation Action Team and Yukon Youth Conservation Core; Paule Bussi res, S paq Program; Remy Rodden, Conservation Action Team and Yukon Youth Conservation Core; Sandrine Grenon-Lalonde, My Parks Pass; Ted Phillips, My Parks Pass

In addition the authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the members of the Canadian Parks Council Youth Engagement Working Group, in particular Don Carruthers Den Hoed and John Good, and to the Child and Nature Alliance, in particular to Becs Hoskins, for their support of the program through use of their Child and Nature web portal.

Letter from the Chairs

The social fabric of Canada is changing: urban migration, a rapidly aging population, more people with disabilities, increased immigration and ethnic diversity, and a growing awareness of aboriginal issues and values are just some of the emerging threads in our cultural cloth. This new weave is an exciting opportunity to enrich the tapestry of federal, territorial, and provincial parks with bold and diverse new perspectives and approaches to conservation and stewardship, recreation and connection, diversity and inclusion.

In imagining an inclusive parks system 30 years from now, members of the Canadian Parks Council Youth Engagement Working Group (YEWG) pictured those people engaged in parks reflecting the diversity of Canadian society. We envisioned a *culture of engagement* able to adapt and evolve to the changing ways that people interact with the natural world. We predicted an increased role for parks in establishing lifelong relationships with the natural world and a social value shift towards environmental literacy. This bright future for parks begins with youth today.

There is much to gain and nothing to lose by equipping Canadian youth to discover (or re-discover) our parks. Dissociation from the outdoors or just simple barriers prohibit many youth from learning about natural or cultural values, but their participation will help create new understandings and reveal new stories. Older employees are aging and retiring, but today's youth will be called to continue the legacy and manage our treasured natural areas with passion and integrity. Canadians are seeking more balanced, healthy, and active lifestyles, and youth are leading many outdoor recreation and adventure experiences that foster physical and mental health. Finally, many Canadians are overwhelmed with environmental threats, but youth are ready to become active stewards in protecting nature and the landscapes that are so important for sustaining life.

More fundamentally, youth are an indicator species. They reflect the state of the relationship between park agencies and the communities that make up Canadian society. Canadian youth move quickly through stages and transitions as they become more independent, and they cross all backgrounds, cultures, abilities, economics, belief systems, ethnicities, and interests.

The work of the Canadian Parks Council working group, the research team, and the youth advisory panel is about empowering and involving youth as collaborators, and about listening to their voices as we create a more relevant and sustainable park system across Canada. Thanks to everyone who contributed to this report, especially the youth who shared their voices.

Sincerely,

Siân French
Chair
Canadian Parks Council
and Director, Parks and Natural Areas
Newfoundland and Labrador

Don Carruthers Den Hoed
Chair
Youth Engagement Working Group
Canadian Parks Council

Executive Summary

The purpose of this research project was to provide a national audit and gap analysis of Canadian park agencies' youth engagement programs based on Canadian Parks Council best practices criteria, refined from work undertaken by earlier phases of the existing research program.

The research set out to accomplish this by working closely with park agencies and a Youth Advisory Panel. The research team solicited case examples of Canadian park programs that were successfully engaging youth in four categories. These categories were programs that:

- **Connect youth with outdoor recreation activities;**
- **Connect youth with their natural and cultural heritage;**
- **Foster the next generation of parks employees;**
- **Foster the next generation of environmental stewards**

The team received 13 projects to review, the majority of which were located in Alberta and the North. Many of the programs reviewed share a number of key characteristics including:

- Connection to curriculum deliverables
- Strong partnerships
- Focus on working with local youth
- Incorporation of traditional knowledge elements

Through discussions with park agencies a number of barriers were also identified including:

- A lack of understanding by management of the value of youth engagement programming
- The struggle to secure and maintain funding for youth engagement programming
- Limited program capacity – all programs surveyed are currently at maximum capacity

The Youth Advisory Panel carried out online and conference call discussions throughout the research program, providing the research team with a wealth of information, reflections and opinions. A series of key themes emerged from these discussions including:

- Park agencies should expand work with schools
- Park agencies should increase the number and type of partnerships they employ
- Park Agencies should foster stronger inter-agency and intra-agency (private, public, and NGO) knowledge sharing
- Park Agencies should build elements of risk and challenge into youth programming
- Park Agencies should provide opportunities for participants to immerse themselves in the natural world, with AND without technology as a mediator
- Park Agencies should create and support a vibrant online space, linked to social media, that can provide up-to-date, easy to find program information, and opportunities for youth to connect with other youth

The Youth Advisory Panel further identified a series of barriers that inhibit youth participation in parks programming:

- Difficulty in accessing information
- Cost
- Lack of non-formal, non-school programming
- Transportation

The research team took the results summarized above and developed a set of recommendations for future work that the Canadian Parks Council could decide to champion to address the gaps and barriers uncovered from this work. These include:

- Foster Internal Value for Youth Engagement
- Develop a “Youth in Parks” Online Space
- Foster Interagency Collaboration and Mentorships
- Identify and Nurture Potential Partnerships
- Support Youth Program Development
- Pilot a National Brand for Parks



Photo by Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation

“I recently had the opportunity to participate in your Watershed Field Study - not as an intern, but as a Biology 20 student. Though I was impressed with the professionalism, enthusiasm, and genuine concern for the watershed that the field guide showed, I was also kind of dismayed by the visible deterioration of some of the sites we visited. I would like to offer my volunteer services to your group; please believe in a fifteen-year-old citizen's sincerity.”

~ Youth Advisory Panel Member, 15

1.0 Purpose of the Work



Photo: Nunavut Parks and Special Places

The purpose of this research project was to provide a national audit and gap analysis of Canadian park agencies' youth engagement programs based on Canadian Parks Council best practices criteria, refined from work undertaken by earlier phases of the existing research program. The research focused on programs that are working to fulfill the Canadian Parks Council's Youth Engagement Working Group's (CPC YEWG) goals of creating a culture of youth engagement throughout Canadian park agencies. For the purposes of this research project youth is defined as young people between the ages of 13 and 30. This age group represents individuals in formative life stages, as well as young families with young (under 13) children. Park programs reviewed for this process were working to achieve at least one of four goals identified by the CPC YEWG:

- Connect youth with outdoor recreation activities;
- Connect youth with their natural and cultural heritage;
- Foster the next generation of parks employees;
- Foster the next generation of environmental stewards

"I think that the way to connect youth with their natural heritage is to emphasize the fact that our collective Canadian heritage is built out of nature, and that nature is really what forged any sense of collective identity that we as a nation have... I have done extensive travelling abroad, and when Canada is mentioned, it is almost always in reference to the vastness of our wilderness and of our rugged landscape... maple leaves, maple syrup, the Rockies, the Prairies, the North, the Canadian Shield, the rocky East, the fall foliage, even the Tulip festival in Ottawa is known worldwide!"

~ Youth Advisory Panel Member

"The link to all of this is having programs available for youth. Trail maintenance days, hiking days, etc. Also, these need to be available in local parks as well. [...] The follow-up could be blogging and looking for new opportunities. "Real" opportunities need to exist in parks for youth to be involved."

~ Youth Advisory Panel Member

2.0 Research Method

This research project proceeded through a series of phases. In the first phase the team reviewed previous work that had been completed by the CPC and built a framework and research plan based on this past success. The second phase involved a Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) that was convened for this research program by *Apathy is Boring* and with park agencies across the country whose programs were nominated as “youth engagement best practices.” The third phase of the work involved the evaluation of synthesis of all of the information gathered in the second phase of the research, and based upon this, the formulation of recommendations for how the Canadian Parks Council could move forward with meaningful and sustainable youth engagement.

2.1 Building on Past Work

Two previous research projects commissioned by Alberta Parks and the CPC YEWG underpinned this project. The first was a report prepared by the Reach Consulting Group, *Plugging the Connected Generation into Canada’s Parks*. The key values and cravings that drive behavior identified in this work became key elements of the research program. The second was the *Best Practices for Youth Engagement Report* prepared by Garry Cotter and Kelsey Lavoie. The current study built on both these documents to further explore and refine the **key values, cravings that drive behavior** and **best practices** of engaging youth. These “elements of best practice for youth engagement” are outlined on the next two pages and form the basis for CPC Youth Engagement Program Evaluation Form (Appendix 1).

ELEMENTS OF BEST PRACTICES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: KEY VALUES

Programs are more likely to engage youth if the key values of youth (and indeed of all public) are met. Survey and advisory panel respondents in previous and current studies suggested that programs should provide opportunities for: experience, transparency, reinvention, connection, and expression. Although they do not address the major barriers faced by youth, (lack of resources, awareness, and accessibility), these program attributes will increase the likelihood of a successful program.

Experience	This is a desire to try new activities, test limits, explore new geographical and social territories and push the boundaries.
Transparency	Canadian youth are savvy and sophisticated, and they quickly reject anything that is fake, over-packaged, and inauthentic or designed purely to sell. They crave truth and access and will forgive mistakes or missteps, as long as the responsible party takes action and admits the flaw.
Reinvention	This generation loves anything that’s faster, more efficient or easier to use. They are comfortable with rapid change and often enjoy the acceleration of technological development. Their collective willingness to shift is simply a desire for reinvention – to find better ways to solve a problem.
Connection	They enjoy collaborative projects and gain profile by sharing information, rather than hoarding it.
Expression	This generation believes that we all have something to say, to contribute, or some unique way to shine.

ELEMENTS OF BEST PRACTICES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: CRAVINGS THAT DRIVE BEHAVIOR

Youth are a moving target, often at the very fringe of social patterns and movements. Currently, there are a few general trends that can predict the cravings and desires of youth, and these are important qualities to incorporate in a program.

Recognition (Shine the Spotlight)	The Connected Generation loves personal recognition. They long to stand out, stand up and be celebrated with their names in lights (or print or pixels).
Adventure (Raise My Pulse)	There's a new premium placed on venturing into the world, collecting exotic adventures and memories, and pushing personal limits. Youth seek highly interactive encounters that teach and challenge and in the process, give them personal insight and explore who they are.
Networks (Make Loose Connections)	The connected generation has embraced technology to build social and professional networks with a brave new structure. This generation is rejecting club-style memberships in favour of loose connections that more accurately reflect their interests, lifestyles and busy days.
Design (Give Me Brand Candy)	The look and feel of objects, places and things is becoming increasingly important. Design is shifting paradigms and spurring people everywhere to rethink established products and industries. Design, along with its strategic twin, innovation, has become a vital tool to stand out and stay strong in an increasingly competitive market.
Editing (Filter the Clutter)	In a world that's inundated with choices, editing is a critical market phenomenon and an important process in our daily lives. We all rely on editors to sift through the raw data and identify the top picks.
Peer-to-Peer (Keep it Underground)	They are suspicious of ordinary "push" campaigns and gravitate toward integrated, contextual offerings from trusted friends and members of their networks.
Collaboration (Build it Together)	The connected generation is becoming intoxicated by its growing ability to spark change. This awareness is spurring mass creativity and launching a power shift away from companies and into the hands of consumers.
Bring it to Life (Brand Theatre)	Brand theatre allows groups of all kinds to create emotional connections with their customers and users. It takes typical experiences a few steps forward by engaging the senses, the imagination and the spirit, and transforms routine experiences into riveting entertainment.
Spirituality (Go Inward)	Increasingly, the meaningful life is defined as the spiritual life, and spirituality has become a dominant public value. The Connected Generation has embraced modern media and blurred the lines between secular and sacred, finding spirituality in all aspects of their lives.
Service (Give Back)	There's a new spirit of volunteerism in the air, led by a young, connected generation that has new ideas about how to give back. Today's volunteers want to give their time and talent instead of simply writing a cheque.

ELEMENTS OF BEST PRACTICES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: BEST PRACTICES

Many programs already exist that can offer insight or perspective for how to structure a program for youth engagement. This exploration of ‘best practices’ is essential to ensure the sustainability of youth programs.

Partnerships	Partnerships may be technical, strategic, financial, etc.
Mentorship	Mentorship may be peer-to-peer or intergenerational.
Engaging Youth by Engaging Families	Especially important for youth under the age of 14, but not as vital for “older” youth.
Social	Provides youth with opportunities to share common experiences with other youth in a supportive environment, and in many cases also provide opportunities for youth to work collaboratively alongside adults and mentors.
Stewardship	Encourage stewardship by providing youth with opportunities to develop a sense of ownership or agency by making meaningful and valuable contribution in their communities.
Nature-Urban Connection	Encourage youth with opportunities to interact with natural systems within the built urban environment so they can make connections with nature in the urban setting.
Careers	Engage youth by providing them mentorship and authentic career related experiences that can assist youth in considering future career options in an area of interest.
Sustainability and Viability of Programs	Project is viable, sustainable, and has solid partnerships, and has the capacity to adjust to meet the changing needs of youth and the diversity among youth.

2.2 Youth Advisory Panel

Young Canadians live different lives than previous generations. Demographic surveys have found that 67% of unmarried 20-24 year-olds live at home. Half of them are currently attending a post-secondary institution, 90% have regular access to the Internet, and the average age at which they will get married or have a child is 29.¹

Similarly, young Canadians are more connected than ever. As of 2009, there were more than 7 million Canadians between ages of 18 and 34 with active Facebook accounts. That’s out of an age bracket that contains roughly 8 million people – and the number of Facebook users has grown since then.²

Today’s youth also have different patterns of engagement than previous generations. In the 2008 Canadian federal election, turnout among Canadians aged 18-24 was 37.4%, compared to 56.55 for the population as a whole.³ Nevertheless, many youth are engaged in other ways: a survey of Canadians aged 15-29 found that 61% feel engaged and connected to their communities, 53% made a charitable donation last year, and 30% volunteer formally.

¹ Farrell, Mike. “Young North Americans Now: An Overview of the Current Continental Youth Landscape.” Presentation to CIPS/Microsoft, May 2007.

² Peters, Joseph. “Facebook Statistics.” Presentation by Ascentum Incorporated, May 2009.

³ Elections Canada. “Estimation of Voter Turnout by Age Group at the 2008 Federal General Election” Working Paper Series, 2010.

The Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) was convened to gather insight from a diverse group of Canadian young people that could directly inform the research project. The panel communicated largely online via the *Youth in Parks Portal* run by the Child and Nature Alliance (www.childnature.ca) and facilitated by Apathy is Boring (www.apathyisboring.com). 23 young people from across the country were selected to be part of the YAP, ranging in age from 13 to 29, some from rural backgrounds, others urban, and representing a range of exposure levels to Canadian parks. Ultimately, 21 youth actively participated.

The group came together on two conference calls, one at the start of the program, and one at the program's conclusion. For many members these calls represented a program highlight for them, allowing them to better connect and engage with their fellow YAP members. Overall, YAP members completed five assignments that they posted to the *Youth in Parks Portal* to share their perspectives with the research team and their fellow YAP members. The first four of these assignments were designed to evaluate, critique, and deepen our understanding of the various Elements of Best Practices for Youth Engagement listed above by asking YAP members for their thoughts and feedback on this previous work. The first of these assignments looked at the four stated goals of the CPC YEWG, the second at key values, the third at cravings that drive behavior, and the fourth at best practice strategies. The Youth Advisory Panel members provided insightful and diverse input on all of these assignments that informed the results of this report.

The final assignment that YAP members completed was the identification of nearby parks programs that they would be interested in participating in. A partial goal of this assignment was to connect YAP members with the programs they identified, allowing them to provide on-the-ground feedback of the programs to the research team and providing YAP members with an exciting experience as part of their involvement in the research program. This goal was not achieved due to logistic difficulties (more time should have been allotted to connecting youth and park agencies) and difficulty in identifying suitable programs (see research results below). Ultimately, only one YAP member was connected with an actual park program, and a variety of others visited parks on their own initiative and reported on their experiences to their teammates via the forum.

Reflection

In terms of feedback on the research process itself, all the youth were asked to provide feedback on online assignments and the use of the web portal. Some enjoyed the format; others had difficulty with internet access or found the medium foreign and too impersonal. If similar web forums are used in future Youth Engagement or other CPC research, thought should be given how to improve the overall experience of users. In terms of assignments themselves, youth generally enjoyed them, but some youth found them very involved and time consuming, and some members found the format repetitive. This partially reflects the diversity of YAP members, but also suggests that more variation in terms of assignment involvement and format should be introduced in future processes.

Finally, the researchers observed a gradual decline in program participation by YAP members over the period of the project. Many YAP members indicated that this was due to a return to school and work commitments in the fall, limiting the time they had to give to the project. If the Canadian Parks Council convenes a similar advisory panel process in the future, it may be preferable to limit their participation to a single season, or to better anticipate the time commitment in relationship to other life events.

2.3 Park Agency Best Practices Audit

The previous work by Cotter and Lavoie evaluated numerous examples of programs aimed at engaging youth in Canada. In order to explore a broad spectrum of approaches to youth engagement, that project focused on initiatives outside of parks, and not run by parks agencies. This allowed those previous researchers and youth to gain insight or perspective of how to structure a best practice for youth engagement without being constrained by conventional park thinking.

For this second phase of the research, the goal was to undertake a national audit of parks programs. The goal was to test the best practices, and to identify gaps in programming. In spring of 2010, Canadian park agencies were invited by the Youth Engagement Working Group (YEWG) to participate in this research by nominating programs for evaluation that engaged youth in any or several of the Canadian Parks Council Youth Engagement Working Group goals to:

- Connect youth with outdoor recreational activities;
- Connect youth with their natural and cultural heritage;
- Foster the next generation of parks employees;
- Foster the next generation of environmental stewards.

By nominating a parks program for evaluation, the parks agency also committed to providing applicable information about the program and to participating in a follow-up phone interview. Parks agencies were engaged by a dedicated Park Agency Coordinator, and given additional encouragement and support from the Youth Engagement Working Group and the Canadian Parks Council Directors. It is important to note that this research focused solely on Park Agency programs, but did not research youth engagement programs solely hosted by other organizations. Many of these programs exist, and present opportunities for future collaboration and leadership. Ultimately 13 park's programs were reviewed, and the results of this aspect of the research are presented in section 4.0 of this report, starting on page 20.

Reflection

Reaction to participate in the best practices audit was mixed. While most parks agencies were excited to hear about the research, it was generally not a priority and in some provinces it was hard to recruit programs for evaluation, for various reasons. For example, this research took place during the summer months, typically a very busy time for parks programs – especially visitor services. That said, for many school-based programs, summer is the least busy season. In the realm of park youth engagement there is no thing as a universal off-season. A future research project spanning a full calendar year might provide the greatest range of opportunities for parks agencies to participate, and a thorough (and seasonally complete) assessment of youth engagement in Canada.

In addition, and an indication that this work is timely, several park agencies shared with the research team that while they want to be taking active steps to engage youth, they do not currently have the capacity or knowledge to do so and therefore did not have programs to nominate. In this case, the agency expressed a keen desire to learn from the results of the report. All agencies that did nominate a program were extremely supportive of the project and the researchers.

3.0 Results: the Youth Advisory Panel

3.1 Over-Arching Themes and Recommendations



Photo by Amber Church

YAP members agreed with the set of best practices characteristics laid out as the research framework for this project. They didn't feel that a program needed to achieve all characteristics in order to successfully engage young people, but they felt that those with a higher percentage of characteristics would find themselves more successful.

YAP members produced an impressive volume of comments and reflections throughout their assignment responses. Upon review of all of this material a series of recurring themes emerged:

Park agencies should expand work with schools

Many Youth Advisory Panel members spoke about the need to connect programs to and partner with schools. This strategy ensures a level of saturation and audience reached that would be difficult to match with other strategies. Although most of the parks programs reviewed for this research employed this very strategy, the prevalence of this comment suggests the need for many more

agencies to work with school systems. In fact throughout the course of their assignments almost every YAP member made a comment to the effect that their school never had access to park programming.

Park agencies should increase the number and type of partnerships they employ

Youth Advisory Panel members strongly stressed the development of partnerships between park agencies and private and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). They currently feel a strong disconnect between the programming parks agencies offer and the programming offered by other groups (even when that programming takes place within park territory). They feel that it would be beneficial for all parties to partner and work together, as this would ultimately lead to improved programming for young people and the improved resiliency and sustainability of programming.

Park Agencies should foster stronger inter-agency and intra-agency (private, public, and NGO) knowledge sharing

Youth Advisory Panel members additionally stressed that they see a need for much greater collaboration between park agencies and they hope to see significantly more information sharing in the future. They would be even happier if this information sharing expanded beyond park agencies to all groups who do parks/environmental programming in order to engage young people.

Park Agencies should build elements of risk and challenge into youth programming

Youth Advisory Panel members also spoke about the need for programming that includes an element of risk, a statement that they backed up with the assertion that of the best practice characteristics, the craving "raise my pulse" was the most important element to them personally. Young people want to feel challenged in their programming. Members agreed that the best strategy to address this need is through

the employment of outdoor recreation activities with some element of, at least perceived, risk (rock climbing, rafting, kayaking, canoeing, skiing, snow camping, snorkeling and diving, hiking, snowshoeing and dog sledding were all mentioned as options by YAP members).

Park Agencies should provide opportunities for participants to immerse themselves in the natural world, with AND without technology as a mediator

Youth Advisory Panel members also spoke passionately about programming that truly immerses participants in the natural world, effectively isolating them from technology for the duration of the program. This doesn't mean that park agencies should shy away from making use of available technology to augment their programs. In fact many YAP members provided suggestions of ways technology should be implemented into programming including: the use of iPod applications for bird call and animal track identification, the use of Global Positioning Satellite equipment (GPS) for geocaching programs, and the use of various online software for trail information and hiking condition updates. That said, YAP members also felt that programs should reduce technology use as much as possible during programming so that youth can unplug, observe, and feel they become part of the natural world. Some suggested banning iPods and cell phones during programs for example (although this suggestion was in no way universally agreed upon by the group).

Park Agencies should create and support a vibrant online space, linked to social media, that can provide up-to-date, easy to find program information, and opportunities for youth to connect with other youth

YAP members also spoke passionately about the need for an online space for youth engagement in Canadian parks. A one stop shop that would include information on programming; details of ride sharing and other transportation options; places for youth to share their experiences with other youth in parks through forums, video, and photography; current conditions; digital bulletin board; and volunteering, co-op, internship, and employment information. They also stressed the need for parks agencies to significantly improve and increase their social media presence, particularly through Facebook and Twitter.



Photo by Amber Church

"There could be many different topics of discussion such as a place to post a picture of a plant you found with a little blog of your finding, such as: "the other day while hiking the coastal trail in Lake Superior Provincial Park I found butterwort ... a small plant found in such an such conditions and feeds on insects!"

Or there could be a forum for music where people could post their favourite music about nature; an art and nature forum; theatre and nature [...] there could be a place to post trips and cool pictures with blogs of your experience; a page with a list of jobs or events ... etc."

~ Youth Advisory Panel Member

3.2 Barriers

Unless barriers to participation in parks are removed, no agency will ever successfully or sincerely engage youth. Barrier identification formed a major component of the previous *Best Practices for Youth Engagement* report compiled by the Canadian Parks Council in 2010 and identified a number of key barriers to youth engagement in parks. These barriers are further explained in Appendix 3, and include:

- Feeling unsafe in parks
- Lack of infrastructure and facilities
- Lack of advertising
- Monetary costs
- Lack of access to transportation
- Feeling unwelcome
- Lack of long-term employment
- Insufficient staff housing and support
- Unclear application processes for employment
- Lack of demonstrated environmental sustainability in park operations

In the current project, Youth Advisory Panel members focused this list of barriers to youth participation in programming and to the development and sustainability of programming. Difficulty in accessing information, cost, lack of non-school programming, and transportation to parks were major themes. While the previous list covered broader topics, youth felt that in order for youth engagement to fully succeed, strategies must overcome the following most significant barriers:

Difficulty in accessing information

The majority of YAP members struggled when challenged to identify nearby park programs that would be of interest to them. Most reported that they couldn't find any programs at all, even when the youth panel member lived close to some of the best practices programs used for this study. Those that were successful in identifying park programming reported finding the available information vague, detail-poor, and incomplete. This group also pointed out that the only reason they found the programming was because they already worked for parks and therefore knew the names of programs and what to search for. Youth today go online for the majority of their information – Google is their first stop to get the answers they are looking for – and currently Canadian park agencies are not even coming close to keeping up. Young audiences are being lost because they can't find programs.

Cost

Cost is a recurring barrier for youth participation in programming. Fees for programming, fees associated with gear rental to take part in recreational activities, park entrance fees, and the cost of travel to and from parks is often prohibitive for young people. Any form of subsidizing or offsetting some of these costs—either by agencies or in partnerships—would be incredibly beneficial for youth.

Lack of non-formal, non-school park programming

Many park agencies direct a great deal of their programming toward formal environmental education and school classes. Although YAP members agreed this is a vital focus, they found that for many

agencies it is the full extent of their focus on youth engagement. Youth engagement programming needs to be expanded beyond the classroom to involve leadership, extracurricular, or service learning components (for example: after school programs, youth corp. initiatives, or volunteer, co-op, and internship programs that provide opportunities for meaningful hands-on involvement, career experience and mentorship).

Transportation

Few parks are located in close vicinity to urban areas. YAP members stressed the difficulty this creates in accessing parks. Current park infrastructure often relies on visitors having access to a personal vehicle – an assumption that proves false when applied to many young people, who are generally not independently mobile. Park agencies need to do more to provide or promote accessible transportation to parks. Strategies could include shuttles and buses from local communities or throughout parks, and car share and ride share programming (the details and organization of which should be available online).

3.3 Suggestions for Youth Programs from Youth

Throughout the course of their discussions YAP members generated a wide range of ideas that could be implemented to better engage youth. In addition, many respondents to the Youth Action Survey (See Appendix 3) provided suggestions throughout the survey process. These program suggestions included:

- Partner with student travel agencies to offer interpretive and outdoor recreation packages.
- Develop a passport system for youth – they receive a stamp for each trail they hike or species they identify – if they fill their passport they receive a free day pass to the park.
- Develop “Young Friends of the Park” organizations to complement the work of the park agency and the Friends of the park organization. These young leaders would advise park administration on park programming and development and organize youth events in the park
- Run a “Day in the Life of a Park Employee” day to connect young people with careers in parks.
- Respondents suggest that parks should provide youth with more opportunities to teach/mentor younger kids and do the kind of work that parks employees do through a park ranger reserve program. Respondents also suggest that parks offer more volunteer opportunities that build on one’s career skill set.
- Support youth-lead nature clubs within nearby communities, and connect them to parks.
- Develop “Junior Ranger or Warden Programs” that allow youth to work closely with parks staff.
- Extend the My Park’s Pass Program beyond grade 8 students.
- Develop art and video contests for young people by building on the successes of *Robert Bateman’s Get to Know Program*.
- Develop a “Park Ambassador Program” to train young volunteers to represent park agencies at local community events.
- Partner with local media to create a space for youth to write park related articles and features.
- Combine language immersion programs with parks programming to reach new Canadians.
- Ask local researchers and First Nations elders to act as guest speakers in parks so that young people can hear information directly from “the source”.
- Develop a parks spokesperson (not a mascot) that youth can identify with.
- Ensure every park employee spends time interacting with the public (not just front-line staff).

- Offer volunteer-weekends or service in-kind programs where youth could help clear trails (or volunteer somehow) in exchange for free camping and equipment rental.
- Provide staff with courses similar to cultural diversity training, but with an emphasis on addressing ageist attitudes.
- Provide designated camping for youth where noise would not disturb other campers, and loosening regulations on what activities are allowed in parks. Conversely, have generator and television/radio-free areas for anyone who appreciates the lack of technology in parks.
- Implement a Canadian park agency post-secondary scholarship or bursary program for students who volunteer or work at parks while attending university or college.

Finally, youth felt strongly that park agencies should act as role models for conservation, reducing one's ecological footprint, and sustainable development. Youth will desire to be involved with parks if they feel they are contributing in a meaningful way to a worthwhile project that benefits the park and the surrounding community.



Photo by M. Dupuis, Quebec Parks

"Maybe if the nature movement had some sort of a character... an actor playing a role, a mascot of sorts... this character could have direct contact with youth around the world in a very fun and interactive way. I don't know who or what the character might be... human, plant, another animal, I'm not sure. But transparency within the youth/nature movement could be achieved if the character honestly answered questions, in an upbeat and fun way, and encouraged youth to get involved and express their opinions."

~ Youth Advisory Panel Member

"The design of information documents and of the website of parks could be improved and be more colourful, energetic and enthusiastic. Or there may be a website especially for youth, with a more communicative design, that explains the diversity of activities waiting for young people."

~ Youth Advisory Panel Member

4.0 Results: Park Agency Best Practices Audit



Photo by Alberta Tourism Parks and Recreation

As outlined in section 2.3 (Page 14), various programs from national, provincial and territorial park agencies were reviewed as part of this research project. These programs provide a snapshot of best practice as it relates to youth engagement across Canadian Park agencies, at least in terms of what park agencies felt were programs worth nominating as best practices.

In addition to the best practices defines for youth engagement, the research team also noted several youth engagement programs which serve a dual

mandate, connecting to communities that are often under-represented in park's programming such as aboriginal youth and new Canadian youth, or low-income youth.

4.1 Park Program Themes

Over the course of the review, a number of themes and approaches emerged that were common to most programs. These are not necessarily best practices in themselves, but they give a picture of what currently drives youth engagement in Canadian parks.

Connection to curriculum deliverables

Almost all programs work closely with schools, aiming their programming directly at classrooms and ensuring that program materials and outcomes were directly connected to curriculum deliverables.

Strong partnerships

Just about every program reviewed made use of strong partnerships with local community groups, school districts, post-secondary institutions, and Friends of parks organizations, significantly strengthening the programs' funding base, capacity and sustainability.

Focus on working with local youth

Most focused their work with youth local to the park's region, reducing travel barriers for young people to participate, and allowing programming to be locally tailored to improve the program's relevancy for the participants.

Incorporation of traditional knowledge elements

Several programs worked to involve traditional knowledge in their programming as well, again increasing the program's local relevance.

4.2 Park Program Regional Gaps

While the Youth Advisory Panel represented a wide diversity of Canadian Youth, the park agency best practices were more limited in geography, especially in terms of regional distribution and areas of focus identified by the YAP members. Possible reasons for this are explained in section 2.3.

Of the programs put forward, the majority came from Alberta and the North, suggesting an unequal regional distribution of capacity and knowledge on the development and management of successful youth engagement programming. The table below outlines the regional distribution of programs reviewed.

Province/Territory	Number of Programs Reviewed
Alberta	4
British Columbia	1
Manitoba	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	0
New Brunswick	1
Northwest Territories	0
Nova Scotia	0
Nunavut	1
Ontario	0
Prince Edward Island	0
Quebec	1
Saskatchewan	0
Yukon	3
Canada-Wide	2

An additional gap was noted in the lack of programming for young people outside of a classroom setting. This point was further reinforced by the difficulty experienced by YAP members when trying to identify programs they would be interested in participating in close to them. In many ways working with classrooms are the low-hanging fruit – crucial low-hanging fruit and the obvious starting place for any agency beginning to develop youth engagement programming – but to take that engagement work to the next level program developers must consider how to work with youth outside of the classroom setting.

4.3 Canadian Park Agency Specific Barriers

Members of the Youth Advisory Panel, as well as the initial *Best Practices Report*, identified barriers to participation in parks in general. However, more specific barriers to the development and continuation of current Canadian parks' youth engagement programming were identified by the Youth Advisory Panel and the researchers series. These barriers were confirmed by park agencies, even for long-established programs that are successfully engaging youth. It is worth outlining these barriers here as they are likely common across the country and will need to be addressed as youth engagement strategies are implemented and begin to seek sustainability.

A lack of understanding by management of the value of youth engagement programming;

The first barrier highlighted was a lack of understanding by management of the value of youth engagement programming. This speaks to the need for an internal education program of parks agencies to raise the general understanding of why such programs should be considered high priorities for agencies.

The struggle to secure and maintain funding for youth engagement programming;

A second barrier, directly tied to the first, relates to funding allocated to programs. In recent years several programs have seen reductions in funding, causing programming reductions to become necessary. This again speaks to the need of champions within park agencies to create an internal sense of urgency for the need for quality youth engagement programming.

Limited program capacity

The third barrier is one of program capacity. In every case of programs reviewed for this research, programs were operating at maximum capacity, often with wait lists. Currently the demand for youth programming is far outstripping the supply.



Photo by Kananaskis Country

"Reinvent Parks for Youth by giving them a hands on, risky activity (with real consequences) that brings them out of the world of technology, and into the present, into nature."

~ Youth Advisory Panel Member

4.4 Park Program Audit Results

The programs reviewed demonstrate many of the best practice characteristics identified through the various research projects. These results are presented in the table below, and program descriptions follow over the next pages.

<i>PROGRAM</i>		Canada's Greatest Summer Job	Conservation Action Team	DEEP Students Program	Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre	Ivavik Bio 20 Youth Camp	Learning in Nature Adventure Program	My Parks Pass	Nunavut Jr. High Environmental Stewardship Camp	Palisades Stewardship Education Centre	Seasonal Interpreter Recruitment Program	Sépaq Program	Watershed Internship Program	Yukon Youth Conservation corps
<i>CPC GOALS</i>	Outdoor Recreation		✓				✓			✓				
	Connect to Natural and Cultural Heritage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Stewardship		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>KEY YOUTH VALUES</i>	Experience	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Transparency	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Reinvention	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Connection	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Expression	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
<i>KEY GENERATIONAL CRAVINGS</i>	Recognition	✓						✓	✓		✓			
	Adventure	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓				
	Networks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Design	✓			✓			✓						
	Editing	✓			✓			✓						
	Peer-to-Peer Influence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Collaboration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Brand Theatre	✓			✓			✓			✓			
	Spirituality		✓			✓	✓			✓				
	Service		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
<i>BEST PRACTICES</i>	Partnership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Mentorship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Engaging Families				✓			✓						
	Social	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Stewardship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Nature-Urban Connect				✓				✓				✓	✓
	Careers	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Sustainability		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>COMMUNITY</i>	Aboriginal					✓	✓	✓	✓					
	New Canadian				✓			✓						
	Disabilities													
	Low Income				✓		✓							
	Urban Youth				✓							✓		

4.5 Park Programs

Canada's Greatest Summer Job

This program took place over the summer of 2010 to celebrate the 125th anniversary of Parks Canada. 32 lucky post secondary students got the opportunity to spend their summers employed by Parks Canada to create films about their experiences in Canada's national parks.

The recruiting process consisted of two phases. First, students were invited to fill out a questionnaire on their knowledge of video production techniques and the history of Canada. Nearly 900 applications were received. Second, after a preliminary selection, the remaining 200 students were asked to produce a one-minute video explaining why they felt they were the best candidate for the position. A selection committee then chose the 32 students based on the technical merits, originality and relevance of each video submitted.

The selected students came together in Banff at the beginning of the summer for a week long training program in video and documentary production. After that students worked at one of the 32 Parks Canada field units across the country. Their task was to produce a series of video reports on their experiences in national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas. Each student needed to produce three five- to eight-minute videos that took into account a series of proposed themes: Tribute to the Parks Canada Team, In Praise of Parks Canada Sites, Visitor Love Stories, and Free Rein to Creation. They also needed to film additional video sequences to be archived and used in future Parks Canada productions.

In addition to giving Canadian students a chance to discover Parks Canada more intimately, this summer employment program was designed to create an archive of good quality, rights-cleared video footage of all Parks Canada Field Units for current and future use online and in other media as well as modernize the multimedia equipment of each of the field units. Also through this project, Parks Canada plans to establish new communication channels and to reach a younger, wider audience, via online video, during and after the program time period. This is an important part of Parks Canada's efforts to further engage youth in the future of Canada's protected areas.

In August, the group met again, this time in the Torngat Mountains National Park of Canada, the country's newest national park. This program provided a unique opportunity for young reporters to gain valuable work experience while discovering and sharing Canada's cultural and natural heritage. Thanks to the partnership between the Banff Centre and Parks Canada, some members of the group also had the opportunity to attend the world renowned Banff Mountain Film Festival, participate in workshops and seminars and see their film screened during the festival (two of the student's films were selected to be screened and the top five films were recognized by the Minister of the Environment at the festival).

Conservation Action Team

The Conservation Action Team was founded in 1990. The program's goal is to give Yukon youth first-hand wilderness experience in camping, ecology, and modeling stewardship. Three camps are operated each summer targeting groups of grades 6 – 7 and grades 8 - 9 youth. Each summer 30-33 youth participate in the program. The camps offer outdoor adventure, learning about the environment, and hands-on conservation work. The Action Team is a mobile program, and participants travel to different parts of the Yukon for 7-12 days. Past destinations have included Fort Selkirk, the Dempster Highway region, the Burwash Uplands and Frances Lake and the Coal River Springs in the southeast.

A typical day at CAT camp involves breakfast followed by activities at base camp such as games, hand-on exploration of an ecosystem, guest speakers such as biologists or conservation officers, skill instruction (hiking, canoeing) and songs. On days the camp is travelling by canoe, they still participate in various activities and interpretation programs as they travel. Traditional knowledge⁴ is also a component of the program's curriculum.

DEEP Student's Program

The DEEP Program at Pacific Rim National Park was originally conceived of by a graduate student from the University of Victoria to combine interpretation and youth programming by focusing on sand dune geomorphology and ecology. The program is designed to target youth who feel some ownership of the region, and therefore the program specifically targets youth local to the region (those from the Tofino/Ucluelet school with hopes of later expanding the program to involve youth from Nanaimo and Port Alberni).

The program allows youth to contribute to a dune restoration project working on the largest dune complex in British Columbia. The goal of the project is to provide youth with the opportunity to work on a project that has both social and environmental components to the work and provide them with tools to harness their energy.

Youth have commented that they appreciate the interdisciplinary nature of the program and enjoy being able to take part in the dune surveys.

⁴ Traditional knowledge (TK), indigenous knowledge (IK), traditional environmental knowledge (TEK) and local knowledge (LK) generally refer to the long-standing traditions and practices of certain regional, indigenous, or local communities. Traditional knowledge also encompasses the wisdom, knowledge, and teachings of these communities.

Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre

Since 1982, the Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre (run by Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation) has educated nearly 800,000 students, teachers, and parent volunteers. Located within Fish Creek Provincial Park, the Centre lies completely within the City of Calgary (Alberta), and is bounded by the Bow River on one end and the Tsuu T'ina First Nations Reserve on the other. This unique position as a nature-urban interface allows the Centre to reach out to and engage an urban population more successfully than many parks programs.

The Centre coordinates 19 curriculum-connected programs ranging from kindergarten through post-secondary, and covering topics from orienteering to biological diversity. These programs involve full-day field schools and many are supported by supplementary materials. All programs are experiential, and several programs use inquiry-based learning techniques to incorporate student formulated questions into the field day. The programs focus on interactions observable within a park, and in particular the value of natural and cultural history.

One example of these programs is the Wetland Education Partnership, through Ducks Unlimited Canada and the City of Calgary, which provides for a Wetland Education Specialist position. This position provides guided field courses that are connected to the grade 5 curriculum. In this multi-component program youth are given the chance to visit and explore both natural and engineered wetlands. The first part of the program takes place in the classroom with an introduction to wetland ecosystems in partnership with City of Calgary education staff. This is followed by the class' day in the field, where they develop a sense of their connection to wetland environments. Finally a post-field trip classroom visit brings the entire program learning together by focusing on participant's own behaviours and how that ties to the larger watershed, along with a focus on how wetlands are connected across the province. In its entirety the program results in 7.5 hours of instruction spread across a one to three month time period. This extended timeframe allows for teachers to draw in more cross-curricular connections to the program. Students have been shown to develop stronger understanding of the links between components of the wetland ecosystem, an appreciation of the environment, and a stewardship ethic. The program has been operating for six years and is always fully booked, serving 3,000-4,000 students a year. The evaluation of the program became the thesis topic for a Masters student based at the University of Alberta.

Another program example is the TD Learning Naturally Program, which is coordinated by the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society in partnership with Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Currently in its twelfth year, this program provides funding for "high needs" schools – those which are financially disadvantaged – to attend a curriculum connected field study within the park. The program covers the cost of busing for the schools, a training workshop for teachers, preparatory program materials to be used in classrooms, and staff to coordinate the field trip. The program covers concepts of both science and social science, focusing on the understanding that the park is part of their community and developing a positive value for natural environments in the students. Approximately 5,000 students participate from this program annually (the program's maximum capacity), resulting in 60,000 to date benefiting from this inclusive education experience.

The Learning Centre – originally built in 1952 as a private home - recently had a grand reopening after retrofitting the building with a series of sustainability features including one of the largest green roofs in Alberta, water and energy conservation measures, and sustainably sourced building materials. During the retrofit the building was also fitted with video conferencing equipment, and the building's five classrooms are each themed to represent a natural region in Alberta, including a large-scale interpretive panel modeled after a large window looking out into that natural landscape. The revised centre also includes permanent display space for rotating art exhibitions to celebrate the relationship between nature, stewardship, and the creative arts.

A key to the success of the Learning Centre is partnerships. The aforementioned City of Calgary, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and the Learning Naturally partners are just a small part of the program. Cooperation in Fish Creek also includes the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society, which creates many public participation programs. Park staff works with various other community groups - such as summer day camps - to help facilitate use of the park. They provide training workshops for group leaders, orienteering maps, program equipment, and guided programs for these groups. A highlight of these programs is work with the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society 4 Seasons Recreation Program, which helps deliver family-based outdoor programming for new Canadians so everyone feels like they belong in one of the largest urban parks in North America.

Ivvavik Bio 20 Youth Camp

The Ivvavik Bio 20 Youth Camp is a week-long science and traditional knowledge camp for grade 11 students that takes place in Ivvavik National Park. The program, which needs to fly students into the park from Inuvik, is jointly managed by Parks Canada and the Inuvialuit, in partnership with local schools, and has been operating for five years.

Program attendance is very competitive as there is only capacity for 10-13 students to participate, who will be accompanied by a teacher and chaperone (limited by the capacity of the twin otter charters that are used for transportation to and from the camp). Students need to draft a statement of interest, complete a series of activities throughout the school year prior to their participation in the camp, maintain good grades and attendance throughout the school year, and be willing to fundraise to help offset the program costs. The program costs \$20,000 annually, the majority of which is borne by Parks Canada. A series of partnerships with local funders helps to support the school's and student's portion of the program costs.

Prior to the camp Parks Canada staff make classroom visits to better prepare the students for the program. They also work closely with the teacher to tailor the camp program to the group of students who will be attending the program that year.

While at camp students take part in monitoring which contributes to Parks Canada research and data sets. They work closely with Parks Canada staff to learn how to become Western Arctic parks staff in the future (to date two youth who have participated are now employees with parks in the Western Arctic).

An elder also joins the class to ensure that the strong focus on traditional knowledge of the camp's programming is maintained.

Chaperones who attend the camp are often drawn from the Beaver Volunteers Program. This international volunteer program brings university students from around the world to help run programs in northern rural communities (often in the high schools).

The opportunity to participate in this program has driven local students to keep their grades and attendance levels up, and to enroll in higher level science courses. In communities where many students still chose to drop out of high school or not attend classes this is a huge success story.

Learning in Nature Adventure Program

The basic mandate of the Learning in Nature Adventures (LNA) program is simply to bring more youth into Mactaquac Provincial Park. The program is designed and coordinated by Ian Smith who drew on his background with Outward Bound, at risk youth connected to the corrections programs, and as a youth counselor with a local First Nation to bring the program to life. The LNA program has been operating successfully for seven years now, with the numbers of youth involved increasing yearly. Ian attributes the program's success partially to the proactive marketing and outreach associated with the program, including seasonal visits to classrooms and partnerships with the three local school districts and the university. The majority of program participants are school classes, although a number of non-profits such as Girl Guides, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Nature Clubs also participate.

Most programs begin with a "circle activity" linking in concepts of the circle of life and bringing a spiritual element to the program, often drawn from Tom Smith's Raccoon Circles work. Sometimes First Nation's elements will also be incorporated in this initial activity, such as rain dances adapted from the Haida Nation to better suit an east coast audience. After covering house-keeping issues such as introductions and concerns the group will move into the main body of the program.

The core of the LNA program relies on fun, active, hands-on elements and draws heavily from the work of Project Adventure and Outward Bound. The class takes part in an outdoor recreation activity – hiking or paddling in the summer, cross-country skiing or snowshoeing in the winter. While the activity is taking place a number of key elements are woven in including themes of the park environment and environmental ethics. Languages (First Nation and French), storytelling and legends are sprinkled through these programs as well. The program draws from the Healthy Parks, Healthy People program (see appendix), an international program which focuses on four quadrants of health: mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional.

All LNA programs work toward educational curriculum outcomes, making the programs more appealing for schools. They also offer the opportunity for teachers to customize the program beforehand, a feature that they have found to be key for recruiting classes to attend the program. Partnerships with the local First Nation and the band-operated school allow for LNA to operate a series of programs tailored towards First Nations youth, including talking circles, smudges and greetings.

LNA programs are available for classes from kindergarten all the way through post-secondary students. Through university co-op programs and high school outdoor pursuit leadership programs, older students are provided with the opportunity to mentor younger youth.

As a government agency Mactaquac Provincial Park was unable to access much needed money from grants to support the development of the LNA program. To overcome this barrier they started a support group for the park who would be able to apply to granting agencies. This proved successful and they were able to secure \$10,000 for the winter program, allowing them to purchase snowshoes and skis with burwin bindings (can be worn with regular winter boots instead of ski boots) for participants to use. A partnership with the local armed forces base allowed them to secure further stock of winter gear. The Friends of Mactaquac Provincial Park also partner with the LNA program, particularly for special events such as “People Power” an annual single day paddling program.

The program is free for participants in order to remove barriers for participation. That said the cost of school buses to bring classes into the park often pose a limiting factor for schools to participate.

Due to management decisions Mactaquac Provincial Park has recently switched from operating year-round to seasonally (May to October) resulting in the reduction in program offerings and limiting the number of classrooms the program can accommodate. This poses a serious barrier to the programs long-term sustainability.

My Parks Pass

The My Park’s Pass Program stemmed from ideas put forward at the Minister of the Environment’s Roundtable. The program which has been developed for grade 8 students began in February of this year.

The program provides a pass to enter all national parks, national heritage site, and national marine protected areas across Canada for all grade 8 students across the country. Along with the actual pass, students receive a booklet highlighting opportunities in parks across the country that they, their classes and families can engage in. The booklet also contained a coupon for a discounted family parks pass that could be applied for a single visit, a seasonal pass or a discovery national pass. In addition the program exempted entry fees for all grade 8 classes visiting parks and historic sites (including the teachers).

Passes were successfully distributed to 7,250 schools; 17,500 classrooms; and 390,000 students. A call centre was made available if schools needed additional passes or home schooled students wanted to participate in the program.

Nature Canada and the Historica Dominion Institute were brought on as partners in the program allowing it to be fully realized by May. Nature Canada provided the program’s website and social networking components linked through their own web presence. Beyond the basics of how to make use of the pass, and links to program partners, the website included a contest where students could match the park or historic site to its location earning the chance to win an iPod touch. Historica Dominion developed mailing lists and handled the distribution of passes throughout Canada.

Grade 8 students were chosen as the target group for this program due the transitional time period most youth experience during this period, including the switch to becoming a teenager and to high school from elementary school. The program designers also wanted to capture youth's enthusiasm before they became too disinterested and while they still maintained a strong sense of curiosity.

The program has been guaranteed for at least a second year, and is expected to develop into a long-term initiative. This fall materials making links between grade 8 curriculum and national parks and historic sites will be delivered to teachers along with the next round of passes. Many parks and historic sites are now considering developing more Grade 8 targeted programming to complement the passes.

Nunavut Jr. High Environmental Stewardship Certificate Program

The Nunavut Jr. High Environmental Stewardship Certificate Program (hereafter referred to as the Certificate Program) began as a modest program targeting grade 4 students from 2 communities in the Western Arctic. The program was so successful that a recommendation was made by the Nunavut Department of Education to expand the program throughout Nunavut, making it available to all students in grades 6-8, and incorporating traditional knowledge in all program elements.

The program is made up of three units. The first focuses on habitat. Included in this unit are concepts of habitat protection, species at risk, the basics of Parks Canada, ecozones, and discussions of what percentage of Canada youth would chose to protect and why and the issue of contaminants in northern communities, their causes and effects. Group activities, games, and songs are used throughout this first unit.

The second unit focuses on environmental stewards, highlighting individuals and organizations throughout Nunavut who are already acting as environmental stewards. The hope is that by drawing on local examples Nunavut youth will be better able to identify a career path for them to also become an environmental steward. This portion of the program also explores careers with Parks Canada in Nunavut. Print media, videos, song, and written activities are used throughout this second unit.

The final unit works to bring everything together by using a series of dilemma cards to prompt discussions about how youth would respond to certain situations in the future. For example what would you do if your friend decided to shoot a raven with a bb-gun. In addition this unit includes a more involved class project where the students conduct an energy audit of their classroom or school and then discuss possible solutions for increased energy conservation measures. This final project was chosen to match local conditions (24 hours of darkness in the winter).

The program concludes with students constructing an inukshuk to signify their commitment to environmental stewardship and to celebrate their success.

The Certificate Program is delivered as a kit to Nunavut schools for classrooms to make use of. The resources available include a CD of activities, teacher's answer guide and background information. The program is available in Inuktituk, French and English to make it more locally relevant. The program has been linked to curriculum deliverables to make the program as useful to classrooms as possible.

The program has just begun. It was piloted last year in Iqaluit, and is being delivered to all schools throughout Nunavut this year.

Palisades Stewardship Education Centre

The Parks Canada Palisades Stewardship Education Centre began as a pilot in 2004 with a week-long stewardship program in Jasper National Park that catered to 50 students a year and earned them three high school credits for their participation. The success of this program surfaced the question “what would a national centre of excellence for environmental education and stewardship look like?” which ultimately drove the development of the centre. Palisades ‘inherited’ the old warden training facility in Jasper National Park, a \$15 million asset, from which they could base their programs. Their programs have become very successful – youth from every province and territory have participated and some schools are now booking up to three years in advance to participate in programs. When asset values of the site, recent infrastructure upgrades and new indeterminate staff positions are considered the Palisades likely represents the single largest investment by Parks Canada in youth education (\$20 million).

Programs are linked to provincial and territorial curriculum and include three full credit year courses in Alberta and are available in both French and English. They begin with 4 to 5 hours of video conference work prior to student’s arrival on site to prepare them for the program. Students then spend a week at Palisades participating in mountain recreation and science programs. The staff team is comprised of teachers, former Park Wardens, former Park interpreters and is complimented by visiting subject specialists from across the Parks Canada Agency. The teachers on staff are directly seconded from school boards to ensure strong linkages to current curriculum.

A wide range of partnerships has been developed as part of the program including work with Waterton and Glacier National Parks for the Robert Bateman’s Get to Know Program, Outward Bound, Canadian Parents for French, and local ski hills. Palisades is expanding their efforts to work collaboratively with other areas of the national parks system, as well as outside programs such as the US Forest Service, the United Nations Years of Biodiversity and Forests, Alberta Parks, Scouting Canada, Fairmont Properties, North Vancouver Outdoor School, and the Arundel Nature Centre (QC).

Each year Palisade offers approximately 20,000 hours worth of on-site programming, 700 hours of digital outreach, and 2,000 hours of programming at the ski hill outreach centre. A full program sees 40 to 50 students go through Palisades programming each week, which run for 40 weeks of the year.

Seasonal Interpreter Recruitment Program

The Seasonal Interpreter Recruitment Program serves as the primary tool for the recruitment of new Alberta Park's interpretive staff. It was developed and has been used province-wide since 2003 for the seasonal hiring process.

Advertising for interpretive positions is directed mainly towards post-secondary institutions, especially those in-province institutions. The positions are additionally listed on the Alberta Parks website and various green jobs online job boards. The deadline to apply is mid-January, allowing for time to screen applicants and notify those who are successful of the timing of recruitment days.

In preparation applicants are asked to prepare a two minute interpretive talk on an assigned topic. They are provided with a two-page information file to base this presentation on, along with photographs of any props that will be available for their use. In addition they are provided with a wealth of information surrounding the terms and conditions of employments with Alberta Parks, including short online videos highlighting typical "days in the life of an Alberta Parks interpreter").

Two recruitment days take place in both Edmonton and Calgary. The day consists of a ten minute individual interview followed by a group workshop composed of a series of activities. The workshop opens with the group participating in an icebreaker activity. Next they complete a natural history quiz composed of 11 or 12 stations (30 seconds for each). This takes place concurrently with the delivery of informal talks that participants have been asked to prepare in advance (the group is divided into two – half is conducting the natural history quiz while the other half delivers their talks, then they switch). Next the group moves into the character exercises. This part of the program is crucial to Alberta Parks because a series of their interpretive programs involve theatre, song and dance. Each candidate is provided with a nursery rhyme to sing, along with two characters to portray while delivering their rhyme (such as a pirate, lounge singer, or vampire). Candidates sing their rhyme three times – once as each character and once as themselves. The group then takes an hour for lunch. Once they reconvene they complete the necessary paperwork for security clearance such as RCMP check. They then complete two writing exercise. The first exercise tests their abilities to write as a character. They are given 5 to 7 minutes to prepare and then present a script for their assigned character to use to sell apples. They are given 20 minutes for the second writing activity that asks them to prepare a paragraph or two to inspire a potential audience to visit the park that they hope to be assigned to as an interpreter. Throughout the recruitment day candidates will be provided with feedback on how they did.

Usually 35 to 40 candidates will be interviewed through the recruitment program. 10 to 15 of these will generally be hired. Coordinators have found that the use of this hiring process has allowed them to reach out to potential staff from a range of backgrounds (science, drama) and that fewer potential employees fall through the cracks of the hiring process as they get a first-hand taste of what they're getting themselves into.

Sépaq Program

Programming by Sépaq (Société des établissements de plein air du Québec) brings the parks to the classroom. Teachers (elementary and secondary) sign-up for the program and a parks staff person will come to the classroom to speak with the students. Presentations are very interactive, guided by student questions, and are designed to meet curriculum deliverables. The program goals are to allow students to get to know Quebec parks and to observe the delicate balance between parks' two-tiered mission of conservation and accessibility. By the end of the classroom visit students should understand the organization of a region, interpret the issues influencing that region, and become more aware of their role as a global citizen.

Teachers are provided with materials to conduct follow-up activities with their classes after the parks staff person's visit. These materials investigate the missions of accessibility and conservation in depth, including analysis of the different uses for park territory such as picnic and camping areas, conservation zones, hunting areas, and hiking trails.

Watershed Internship Program

The Watershed Internship Program is a partnership between Kananaskis Provincial Park, the Friends of Kananaskis Provincial Park, and the Elbow River Watershed Partnership. The program targets grades 8, 9, and 11 (Biology 20) students. Its goals are to increase environmental education capacity, get students out of the classroom, and mentor young educators to build their confidence to move on in their careers.

Prior to the field trip, which forms the major component of the program, teachers whose classes will participate are provided with a training and orientation session for the program. At this session they will be provided with an education package and resource binder with pre- and post-field trip activities to expand the program's impact.

The field trip portion of the program is a full day event, travelling from the headwaters of the Elbow River in Kananaskis Provincial Park to Calgary, where the Elbow River joins the Bow River. The school bus' first stop is in the Elbow River headwaters. Here the group discusses the headwaters and conducts water and invertebrate testing. The field trip's next stop is the Bragg Creek off-highway motorized vehicle use zone. Here the class again conducts water tests (including turbidity) and carries out a discussion about land use impacts and ways we can mitigate them. The trip then continues to the first municipality present along the river, the community of Bragg Creek. Here the group again conducts water testing and discusses ranching and municipal effects on the river system. Finally the group travels to Calgary to conduct a final set of water tests and discuss urban water uses and the effects of agriculture and golf courses on the river system.

Each grade level program is tied to curriculum deliverables and thus has a slightly different focus area. The grade 8 program focuses on freshwater systems, the grade 9 program on environmental chemistry, and the Biology 20 (grade 11) program on environmental indicators and invertebrate populations.

The program hires several interns to deliver the program over the field season through the Friends of Kananaskis Provincial Park. The Friends has partnered with a wide range of funders to provide the internships including the Alberta Ecotrust, the Municipality of Rocky View, and the City of Calgary. Interns are trained for two weeks, mentored through the delivery of the program, and then allowed to fly solo delivering programs. For their training period they visit as many stakeholders on the Elbow River as possible including oil and gas developments, a sawmill, University of Calgary water quality researchers, a City of Calgary water treatment facility, Trout Unlimited, a rancher, and a golf course. In addition they are provided with one day training on environmental programming and delivery best practice. They are given the opportunity to observe a seasoned interpreter delivery the program, and then begin to deliver programs themselves. For the first week they are mentored through this process, including observation and constructive feedback on their work, before they begin to deliver programs on their own.

During the summer months interns will also deliver week-long summer camps for local students on the themes water and nature. These camps are tailored for 6-8 year olds and 9-12 year olds.

Internships are advertised through post-secondary institutions. In addition to the wage, interns are provided with accommodation, increasing the appeal of the internships and removing barriers to apply. At least ¾ of past interns have gone onto the field of environmental education after they have completed their time with the program.

The program opened its doors in 2005. Since this time it has expanded significantly (see table).

Year	Programs Delivered	Students Participated	Interns
2005	14	350	1
2006	20	480	1
2007	29	750	2
2008	41	1000	2
2009	36	1200	2
2010	50 (predicted)	1500 (predicted)	2

The cost of the program is \$8/student to help cover the costs of reagents for water testing and some of the costs associated with the interns. Currently the program only has enough equipment to run two programs a day, resulting in demand for the program outstripping available supply.

Based on the success of this program they are working to expand the model to include a winter program as well – currently in the visioning phase. They hope to partner with the Canadian avalanche association and Parks Canada on this program, which would focus on avalanche safety and snow science, largely targeting high school students who might go out of bounds.

Yukon Youth Conservation Corp (Y2C2)

Y2C2 is a summer employment program fully funded by the Yukon Government for youth 16 and over (generally late high school through second year university) that has been running since 1992. They work on service and conservation projects across the territory. The program focuses on relationship development – learning how to relate to the outside world, each other, and themselves – and environmental stewardship.

The participants in the program are divided into work crews based in Whitehorse, which travel to all Yukon communities to conduct projects. They are led by a team of more experienced youth. Projects are developed through in-kind partnerships with community groups and other government agencies, such as the Yukon Conservation Society, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, local municipalities, Parks Canada and First Nations.

The program has evolved throughout its history. Most projects undertaken by Y2C2 work teams at the program's inception were more grunt work type projects (invasive species removal or the cleaning up of old telegraph wire for example). The program has evolved to include many more specialized projects, often focusing on restoration work.

Senior staff members (work team leaders and program coordinators) take part in a month long training program prior to the beginning of the summer work season. A strong peer-to-peer mentorship role develops between these youth and their work crew participants.

Students can only return to the same position within Y2C2 for two years, after which they can move on to another position if they wish to continue to work with the program. A work crew participant can move on to become a leader or coordinator for example. Six past Y2C2 participants are now employed at the Yukon Department of Environment, while many now occupy positions of influence throughout the territory. Each year more students apply for the program than can be accommodated.



Photo by Kananaskis Country

"This was a really valuable internship to me and I feel like I will have more job opportunities in the future after having done this internship. More importantly I feel that I have participated in a program that is successfully sharing a concern for the environment with youth and a program which has helped me learn how to teach in the great outdoors."

~ Kananaskis Country Water Intern

5.0 Recommendations for Future Work



There are various components of this report that can (and already have) enhance the engagement of youth in Canadian parks. The most important is to apply the Elements of Best Practices for Youth Engagement described on page 10 and provided in Appendix 1. This lens can help in both the design and evaluation of youth engagement programs, even simply by guiding agency questions and assisting in the distribution of resources. Other suggestions are made by members of the Youth Engagement Working Group by way of the themes in section 3.0, including a list of ideas for programs developed by youth, but by no means representing an exhaustive collection.

Finally, creating successful youth engagement programs must begin with the removal of barriers to participation. Sections 3.0, 4.0, and Appendix 3 offer a comprehensive list of inhibitors that may prevent youth (or others) from connecting to Canadian parks. Simply working to remove these barriers will have a significant impact on meaningful program development.

In terms of future efforts by the Canadian Parks Council Youth Engagement Working Group, the research team provided several suggestions to deepen our understanding and increase our effectiveness immediately and in the future. These suggestions, in order of importance, are:

5.1 Foster Internal Value for Youth Engagement

The lack of funds and capacity many park agencies suffer from in relationship to the development and continuation of youth engagement programming speaks to a larger underlying issue of the value this type of programming is seen to carry within park agencies. As one interviewee put it “these programs take years to establish and minutes to cut”. In order for youth engagement to be seen as a priority amongst park management, champions internal to park agencies must strive to increase the sense of value of these programs amongst all park employees (not just amongst interpretive, education, and communications staff). The Canadian Parks Council should support these existing internal champions, work to foster additional champions, and work through all channels available to them to help drive these messages home.

5.2 Develop a “Youth in Parks” Online Space

YAP members and park agencies alike spoke about the need to better share knowledge and experience across agencies and partner groups. YAP members further spoke of the need for a vibrant web presence loaded with opportunities. The Youth in Parks portal that was utilized for this research (or a similar system) could ultimately become this platform. In order to realize this potential the portal would need

to be further developed, incorporating several rounds of feedback from agency and youth users. This should be considered a high priority for the Canadian Parks Council.

5.3 Foster Interagency Collaboration and Mentorships

The survey of best practice park's programs for youth engagement revealed that some jurisdictions are farther ahead than others in terms of this work. It would therefore be useful for the Canadian Parks Council to facilitate mentorship opportunities between different park agencies and programs. The concept would see successful, established programs paired with those programs who are struggling, starting or just getting off the ground, allowing for direct transfer of knowledge and experience. The ultimate goal of this initiative would be to raise the caliber and success of park youth engagement strategies nationwide.

5.4 Identify and Nurture Potential Partnerships

This study has highlighted the vital nature of partnerships for continued success of parks youth engagement programming. That said, it is beyond the capacity of some park agencies to actively seek partnerships or to even determine who likely partners may be. Therefore the Canadian Parks Council should consider conducting a nationwide survey of potential partnerships that park agencies could draw inspiration from when embarking on program development.

5.5 Support Youth Program Development

This research has revealed that although a number of park agencies wish to develop programming to engage youth they lack the funds, capacity and expertise to do so. One option to help alleviate this issue would be for the Canadian Parks Council to provide development assistance to agencies. This could take the form of a contract staff person working for the Canadian Parks Council as a facilitator who could assist park agencies through the development phase of program design. This staff person would not be fully responsible for program design, but could provide much needed capacity for agencies to lessen the burden of program development and make such development an easier sell to management.

Such an approach could provide an additional benefit. The staff person charged with assisting park agencies could document the process of program development they assisted park agencies through, ultimately developing a step-by-step guide to the process of program development which agencies could use as a starting point when developing their own programming in future.

5.6 Pilot a National Brand for Parks

Canadian park agencies branding and communication strategies are not currently meeting the needs of youth users, especially web and social media presences. The Canadian Parks Council should consider providing seed funding to pilot a re-branding initiative for Canadian park agencies, focusing first and foremost on web and social media branding and communications. For this pilot program to be successful it is vital that youth feedback is included throughout the process.

6.0 Conclusions



Photo by Amber Church

When viewing the barriers to, best practices for, and potential next steps for strong youth engagement programming with a big picture lens, it becomes clear that strategies for youth engagement reach beyond the 13-30 demographic. Strategies to better engage youth are also strategies to better engage visitors of all ages. By using youth as a focus or pilot and working to improve their experiences in Canadian parks, the Canadian park experience for the general public as a whole will improve.

"The Sharing Circle, as practiced by the First Nations, seems largely unknown to people who have never taken part in this very special practice. When I had the pleasurable and wonderful opportunity to take part in a sharing circle, we all sat in a circle and each shared one meaningful experience with everyone else. Through sharing our personal memories, we came closer to one another, and there was a real bond in the entire room. We'd all listened attentively to everyone's stories, and we were all brought closer together as a consequence."

Listening to another person's story, whether that person be a stranger or a friend, unites the listener and the speaker. This is something we should take note of - it's the path toward true connection. Storytelling has been with us since we first learned to speak. Oral storytelling has enabled legends, history, and tales to be passed down all over the world for thousands of years. We should incorporate something akin to the sharing circle, or at least storytelling, into our activities. For example, after a weekend spent together in the outdoors, everyone could share their favourite memory of the weekend or their favourite thing about the outdoors. This would inspire everyone and renew their connection to the outdoors and their fellow humans."

~ Youth Advisory Panel Member

"Through understanding what makes Canada unique, youth may be encouraged to discover what is unique about themselves and how they can express their individuality. Perhaps youth programs in parks could help youth learn about both of these things. They could learn to express who they are both through being Canadian but also as an individual in a unique society."

~ Youth Advisory Panel Member

APPENDIX 1: CPC Youth Engagement Program Evaluation Form

Further descriptions of program attributes are available on page 10 of this Youth Engagement Report.

Program:			
Agency:			
Contact:		Web:	
Program Attribute		(y/n)	How will you meet this goal?
CPC GOALS	Outdoor Recreation		
	Connect to Natural and Cultural Heritage		
	Leadership		
	Stewardship		
KEY YOUTH VALUES	Experience		
	Transparency		
	Reinvention		
	Connection		
	Expression		
KEY GENERATIONAL CRAVINGS	Recognition		
	Adventure		
	Networks		
	Design		
	Editing		
	Peer-to-Peer Influence		
	Collaboration		
	Brand Theatre		
	Spirituality		
	Service		
BEST PRACTICES	Partnership		
	Mentorship		
	Engaging Families		
	Social		
	Stewardship		
	Nature-Urban Connect		
	Careers		
	Sustainability		
COMMUNITY	Aboriginal		
	Immigrant		
	Disabilities		
	Urban		
	Low Income		

APPENDIX 2: Profile of Youth Advisory Panel Members

Name	Age	City, Province	Participant Voice
Adam Collicutt	20	Winnipeg MB	<i>(no written participation)</i>
Alison Bray	21	Whitehorse YT	<i>"Getting kids outside in cities is a really cool idea. Obviously it's good because kids are getting out and interacting with nature etc. etc. but it's an interesting way to overcome the misconception that nature doesn't exist every where, that it is only found in 'the environment' or 'the wilderness'. It seems like this differentiation is just hair-splitting, but it is really dangerous because it puts people under the impression that 'the environment' is somewhere outside daily life for people within city limits and makes it easier for people to separate their actions from impacting 'the environment'."</i>
Angelina Tryon	16	Toronto ON	<i>"I find that nowadays, many kids & adults alike keep entertained by stuff that goes on indoors i.e. computers, video games, television and for some people, this has almost become a way of life...they have no desire to go and explore the outdoors because of the lack of "excitement" that parks have to offer. I think a lot of people assume that all you can do at parks is go hiking or bird watching, but this simply isn't true. We almost need to find a way to re-brand parks in a positive way and create programs that will allow people to have fun, take risks, and renew their love for the outdoors."</i>
Ashley Grncarovski	23	Langley BC	<i>"If we want to build leadership, there should have to be a reason for it... One of the most prominent for me would be conservation of natural resources. If there was a program that involved outdoor activities (Be they more extreme like rock climbing, or white-water rafting or kayaking) or less extreme like nature walks or plant identification; part of this program would be to educate why it would be important to preserve / conserve what we have, impressing a responsibility of the user to respect and maintain nature could be a way to build leadership."</i>
Breanna Hall	16	Oshawa ON	<i>"So, what I mean by Unformal Education is integrating classes about the great outdoors and our planet into schools (I know some private schools already have). That would get teachers, students and families involved in the learning and the experience. It could drive children and youth to do something bigger in their community and pursue a career in the environmental field."</i>
Corrine Turner	24	Patricia AB	<i>"The best way to engage the diversity of youth that exists is to continue to group them together, and give them as much ownership of the program as possible. Make them work for it, make them think, and most of all, make them interact with one another to find solutions."</i>
Dana Andrishak	13	Rocky Mountain House AB	<i>"I think it is important to have well trained mentors because youth won't look-up to lazy or impatient leaders. Youth will look up to people who know stories or have had experience with other opportunities and are exciting and encouraging!"</i>
Douglas Tsoi	19	Montreal QC	<i>"En tant qu'un jeune étudiant (universitaire), je sais que la plupart des jeunes sont souvent à la recherche d'un emploi (pour gagner de l'argent, bien sûr!) Donc, ne serait-il une très bonne façon d'attirer des jeunes aux parcs provinciaux? Ce programme donne aux jeunes une opportunité de TRAVAILLER dans un parc provincial avec rémunération. Je crois fortement que ce programme, administré dans tout le Canada, serait très efficace."</i>

Eva Paleczny	22	New Liskeard	ON	<i>"I can't thank my parents enough for all of the real experiences they have given me in the outdoors ... these experiences have given me such an appreciation for nature and also given me a sense of confidence while in the outdoors that so many don't have ... not total confidence though! But enough to try things and get out there ... it is surprising to see the kinds of things parents won't let their kids do now a days and how a lot of youth just seem to see the outdoors as dangerous and scary ..."</i>
Hanna Burger	29	Calgary	AB	<i>"Bring it to life is such an important aspect to providing a connection to further peoples interest in a topic. I think that many parks interpretive programs already do a fantastic job of reaching people on a imaginative level with their theatre programs. I agree that engaging the senses can be as easy as stated, as long as it is remembered. I think that generally youth may not stop to engage their senses, spirituality and imagination unless told to stop and pause to engage."</i>
Ike Stoodly	17	Calgary	AB	<i>"We need to get more exposure of REAL adventures and show it to people, showing them that we aren't faking it. This is real action. If we re-invent the way parks is represented; we need to show that action they can provide, the different levels of action so people don't get into the super hard stuff right away, and that real action can be just as good or even better than watching action from a screen."</i>
Isabella Drzemczewska Hodson	27	Calgary	AB	<i>"A program, no matter how wonderful, can't achieve all of its goals and foster a new generation of park-lovers unless it shows them how they play a part in both the natural world and the future of parks. The message of stewardship needs to be inherent to all parks programs. People need to see why it's important for them to play a role, and listen to ideas and suggestions of how they can do that. This doesn't need (and shouldn't be) a lecture; instead, it should be ingrained in the messages. It's an essential component."</i>
Jennifer Mullane	27	Halifax	NS	<i>"One thing we can do to build leadership in youth to engage others is foster ownership of an idea/program/project/philosophy in youth. Irrefutably, the best leaders - of today and yesterday - were people that were passionate about their cause, that believed in the work they were leading and that took direct ownership of the work they undertook. So, why not find a way to foster ownership in youth of the need to connect youth with nature, via parks."</i>
Jodie King	23	St. John's	NL	<i>"I have always been interested in nature/camping/outdoors/environment (that is something inside me, I can't really describe what brought that on) but it's because of the excitement and the "raising of my pulse" that I keep looking for another adventure in nature. So I totally think that this is really important, and that adding adventure and exciting to any program will be appealing to youth like me! "</i>
Kathleen Côté	27	Thunderbay	ON	<i>"I would love to see more formalized interaction between school boards and parks, meaning that park naturalists could be in the classroom and classes could be in parks. There is now an incredible array of conservation projects, and from the research I've done, they are primarily located in urban settings. Whether it's river clean-up, reforestation riparian areas, herptile counts, or breeding bird surveys, populated areas have an infinite number of ways that youth can get involved. It's somewhat counterintuitive, but it's harder to get involved in nature projects in more remote, wilderness areas like some parts of northern Ontario."</i>
Marie-Eve Deshaies	26	Montreal	QC	<i>"Because nature isn't just inside the park limits, we have to promote every green spaces that we can find in cities, every public gardens, even in the most downtown parts of cities. Biodiversity is there. Youth can learn how to observe well flora and fauna, how to enjoy this specific nature between cement walls."</i>

Matthew Berry	23	Ottawa	ON	<i>"The idea of intergenerational mentoring seems more relevant to me in the context of park programming, as peer-to-peer mentoring generally takes place naturally whereas intergenerational mentoring often requires formal facilitation."</i>
Murtaza Amirali	28	Calgary	AB	<i>"I think that using some of the ideas in the video (http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/1948876), especially in our thought process would assist in building leadership to engage youth."</i>
Robert Neys	20	Edmonton	AB	<i>(no written participation)</i>
Timothy Belliveau	26	Calgary	AB	<i>"There is the conventional approach of drawing from observation but there are also some contemporary artists who take imaginative steps in representing nature. I think teaching kids these things can open up a lot of interest and discussion in parks. It can include parents and adults as well."</i>
Yiorgos Boudouris	26	Calgary	AB	<i>"You may not show vocal support or wear a badge, but in the end, you are surrounded by park life. Certainly, when I was younger, I never proposed the idea of going to the park with my friends. How dull. Instead, we wanted to go fishing, surfing, perhaps some rock climbing, or even a bike ride. Little did we know that all of the activities took place in parks. The shock. So I shall give youth a fair bit more credit I suppose, and assume that they are taking part in park life more than they realize. Sometimes you just fail to read the signs. What does this mean for us? Well, advertise how people are involved daily in parks – rather than present the scenario as something youth do not participate with in the first place."</i>
Yolanda Clatworthy	21	Princess Royal Island	BC	<i>"In my opinion, exposure to nature in a structured, organized setting is not a true introduction to nature and does not do it justice,, if youth were allowed to explore on their own terms and on their own time, they would have the opportunity to gain much more of a profound understanding and meaningful connection with nature... so while educational programs and awareness and camps and nature tours are a good start, I believe that nothing can replace days spent romping through the forest, building tepees, getting muddy, catching frogs etc.. personally, this is how I grew up, and even though I have now been living in cities for awhile, where the closest thing to nature is a landscaped park, I still have that longing to be back in nature and that profound appreciation for all things which are true to their natural form... and the more that I am exposed to nature, the more that I want to be exposed to nature and the more I want to challenge myself, experience more, push my boundaries, and explore wilder and less accessible locations."</i>

APPENDIX 3: Youth Action Survey & Youth Advisory Panel

In 2008, as a way to determine a baseline for youth engagement, the Canada Parks Council conducted the Youth Action Survey, a national survey that polled 213 youth regarding their perceptions and experiences of parks and asked for suggestions as to how park agencies can better engage youth. The survey was sent by parks agencies to current and past staff and volunteers. Due to the sampling methods, survey respondents were for the most part already engaged with parks. Although the following results are not as useful in drawing statistically significant conclusion about what percentages of youth in Canada express certain sentiments, they are very useful in pointing out and exploring the complexity and diversity of sentiments that exist.

In addition to analysis of the National Youth Action Survey, we sought direct reflection and input from youth by establishing the first Youth Advisory Panel. Integrating both the feedback from the survey and the advisory panel with the best practices research process ensures that a diversity of experiences and perspectives of youth are taken into account throughout the development of the following barriers and opportunities relating to the Canadian Parks Council Youth Engagement goals:

Goal 1: Connecting Youth with Outdoor Recreational Activities

According to respondents, youth appreciate a wide variety of outdoor recreational activities, especially if such activities involve opportunities for socializing (meet or share common experiences with other youth), new experiences, and challenging situations. Barriers to these opportunities include feeling unsafe in parks, lack of infrastructure and facilities, lack of advertising, monetary costs, lack of access to transportation, and feeling unwelcome.

Barriers:

Feeling unsafe in Parks

According to some respondents, if youth are not familiar with parks, and even more so if youth are not familiar with Canada's climate and geography, wilderness can seem intimidating and intolerably dangerous. This lack of comfort is not a significant trend in the responses from the survey, but this survey was only sent to those already connected with parks in some way. When consulting youth who are not as closely linked to parks, this barrier is frequently brought up.

Lack of Infrastructure and Facilities

Some respondents feel that youth who have grown up in urban centers are likely to be intimidated by the lack of infrastructure and facilities in parks. Additionally, respondents feel that the lack of maintenance and cleanliness of sanitary facilities is a barrier for certain youth. Although some respondents feel that the "underdeveloped" washrooms are part of the parks experience, they feel that some youth do not share this sentiment, and providing more updated washroom and eating facilities is an effective method of reaching a broader audience.

Lack of Advertising

According to most respondents, not knowing what to do in parks is a substantial barrier for youth. They feel that parks often do not provide enough information regarding what activities are available in parks, where to do them, and how to do them safely. Additionally, respondents feel that information that is available is often full of bureaucratic jargon and acronyms, which can be a barrier to newcomers.

Monetary Costs

According to the survey, and confirmed by most panel members, money is one of the biggest barriers limiting respondents' access to parks. Using parks becomes especially expensive when equipment is needed. This is often the case for activities that are deemed attractive to many youth such as rock climbing, skiing and kayaking. Additionally, guided tours and wilderness survival courses are effective ways of engaging first-time users, but these services are usually offered by private companies, and are therefore quite expensive.

Lack of Access to Transportation

According to the survey, the distance to parks and lack of access to a vehicle are major obstacles limiting respondents' access to parks. Panel members confirm this trend and feel that a high proportion of youth do not have access to a vehicle, and this is typically the only way to get to, and around, a park.

Feeling Unwelcome

Respondents suggest that many youth feel unwelcome in parks by both staff and other visitors, and are often patronized by park staff. Non-youth who have commented on the youth engagement project have sometimes displayed this attitude by suggesting that parks should not encourage more youth to engage in parks because youth are only there to party and will be destructive. These sorts of stereotypes often manifest in discriminatory behaviours and attitudes, which cause youth to feel unwelcome in parks.

Opportunities:

Sporting Opportunities

Most respondents appreciate parks for the opportunities they provide to engage in sports in natural environments.

Freedom from Regulations

Many respondents feel that youth appreciate the opportunities that parks provide to be free from the gaze of authority figures such as parents and teachers. Some respondents feel that loosening unnecessarily strict regulations regarding recreational activities and noise curfews could go far in encouraging this sense of freedom (but acknowledged it should not be detrimental to the experience of other visitors or the natural environment).

Lack of Structure and New Experiences

Most respondents expressed an appreciation for opportunities to have new experiences that are different from their everyday routines and explore settings that they do not usually have access to. Additionally, many respondents feel that youth appreciate the unpredictability of wilderness and appreciate the heightened degree of risk that can accompany experiences in parks. This finding contradicts the earlier point about needing more structure and infrastructure for first-time users, but reinforces the point that to reach a wider audience, parks need to offer a diverse range of ways to engage.

Providing Social Opportunities for Youth:

Almost all respondents feel that youth place a high value on socializing, and appreciate the opportunities parks provide to spend time with old friends and to make new ones. Respondents noted that social activities don't need to be recreational and party oriented; they can also involve working with peers on research or conservation projects.

Encourage Skill Development:

Many respondents expressed an appreciation for the wide range of recreational (as well as non-recreational) skills that one can learn in parks. The main categories are: mechanical, recreational, survival, conservation, park maintenance, traditional land use, public education, ecological, naturalist, and human resource management.

Goal 2: Connecting Youth with Their Natural and Cultural Heritage

According to the survey responses and panel feedback, youth appreciate how parks preserve and cultivate appreciation for natural and cultural heritage. They also appreciate the opportunities that parks provide for self-actualization and interactive learning, but are split regarding the role of modern technology.

Barriers:

Barriers that relate to this topic are the same as some listed above and therefore will not be explored here. Such barriers include: feeling unsafe, lack of infrastructure, lack of advertising, costs, lack of access to transportation and feeling unwelcome.

Opportunities:

Preserve and Cultivate Appreciation for Natural heritage:

Most respondents and panel members feel that parks are a valuable way of preserving natural heritage. Respondents feel parks are also valuable because they provide an opportunity to observe ecosystems relatively untouched by industrialized society and provide a safe haven for wildlife.

Preserve and Cultivate Appreciation for Cultural heritage:

Many respondents feel that it is important to preserve cultural heritage not only because it is valuable in and of itself, but also because it is important for people to experience it firsthand and appreciate the cultural history of a space. They also feel that traditional/Aboriginal knowledge should be integrated with this process. Respondents suggest that park agencies give youth an opportunity to trace their specific lineages: where their family is from, how their ancestors used the land, why the land is the way it is, and why it is important to protect.

Encourage Spiritual Development /Self-Actualization:

Many respondents value the opportunities that parks in provide for self-exploration and developing a deeper feeling of interconnectedness with nature and other non-human animals. Respondents feel that it is important to provide a space for youth to engage with wild spaces without any intervention or intermediary.

Interactive Learning:

Many Respondents feel that part of what makes parks exciting is the opportunities they provide for hands-on and interactive learning. Respondents suggest that parks provide more hands-on learning and research opportunities to volunteers, such as trail maintenance, conducting dragonfly counts and bird banding. Respondents also suggested that parks agencies increase the interactivity of interpretive centers and guided tours.

Integrating Technology/ Lack of Technology

Respondents are split regarding the place of modern technology in parks. Many feel that people come to parks to get away from technology. Others feel that if having more technology would

engage more youth, then it should be encouraged as long as it does not inhibit the abilities of others to enjoy a modern technology-free park experience.

Goal 3: Fostering the Next Generation of Parks Employees

According to the survey responses and feedback from the advisory panel, youth find employment with parks attractive. Barriers that obstruct youth from seeking employment include lack of monetary incentives and long term employment; insufficient staff housing and support; feeling that parks do not serve the needs of the community and the park; and lack of advertising and a clear application process.

Barriers:

Lack of Monetary Incentives and Long Term Employment:

According to the survey, insufficient salary is the biggest reason that youth do not continue to work in parks. Many respondents feel that salaries and hourly wages are not sufficient to encourage long-term employment with parks, and the lack of yearly raises discourages staff from progressing. Respondents also feel that continuous (non-seasonal) work is rare, and that there is a lack of entry level positions.

Insufficient Staff Housing and Support:

Many respondents feel that staff housing is insufficient and some feel that the restrictions enforced in staff housing inhibit a sense of community from developing.

Not Serving the Needs of the Park and the Surrounding Community:

Some respondents feel that parks agencies are unable to serve the needs of the parks and the surrounding communities. Respondents were critical of the fact that having private for-profit organizations involved in parks organizations results in lack of high quality care and maintenance as well as lack of “real” environmental stewardship being done. Respondents were also critical of the amount of bureaucracy in parks agencies.

Lack of Advertising and an Unclear Application Process:

Many respondents feel that the under-advertised, complicated and unclear application process inhibits seeking employment in parks.

Opportunities:

Career Development Opportunities:

Respondents feel that youth are very career-oriented and appreciate work or volunteer experiences in parks that are related to one's career aspirations and could be used to develop one's resume.

Goal 4: Fostering the Next Generation of Environmental Stewards

According to respondents, youth appreciate the opportunities that parks provide to engage in environmental stewardship. They are specifically attracted to opportunities to develop their own environmental educator skills; become educated and involved with park specific issues and research; and become politically engaged in environmental and social issues related to parks. Respondents are frustrated when park agencies do not practice environmentalism and viewed this as a disincentive to engage with parks.

Barriers:

Environmentalism in Practice and Politics

Many respondents were critical of the fact that in an area where park agencies should be role models, they are instead lagging behind (i.e. lack of basic recycling facilities and use of toxic chemicals), and fail to live up to their self-professed image as environmental stewards.

Opportunities:

Provide Issues-based Environmental Education

Most respondents appreciate the opportunities that parks provide to learn about various environmental and social issues. Respondents find it interesting to learn about the issues that a specific park is facing (invasive species, species at risk etc); how the issues are being tackled; how large scale environmental issues relate to specific park issue; and how these issues relate to people's daily lives outside of parks. Respondents are also interested in having parks educate the public about how environmental issues are affecting local communities as well as the environment (i.e. increased rates of cancer in Fort Chipewyan).

Teach Others to Provide Environmental Education

Respondents suggest that not only should parks provide opportunities for environmental education; parks should also empower others to become environmental educators.

Provide Research and Monitoring Opportunities

Most respondents value parks for the opportunities they provide to feel as though they are part of an important project that allows them to contribute to the park mandate in a unique and meaningful way. Some respondents also felt that Youth should be encouraged to contribute to environmental stewardship in unique and creative ways in order to appeal to a wider range of passions. This could include integrating things such as fine arts, spirituality and other atypical interests with environmentalism.

Partnerships with School

Many Respondents mentioned programs that are already happening where youth can earn high school or university credit for volunteer work that they do in parks.

Summary of Survey Results

It is evident from the results that survey participants and advisory panel members put a great deal of time, thought, and energy into their feedback. This in and of itself is an indication of many youths' belief in the importance of parks and their commitment to the protection of parks. It is apparent from this brief summary of the survey results and feedback from advisory panel, that there is a diversity of barriers that youth face when it comes to being engaged in parks. There is also a diversity of strengths and strategies that park agencies can utilize in order to better engage youth. The key here is the diversity. These barriers are not faced by all youth, nor are the suggested strategies effective at engaging all youth. Instead of finding the one perfect strategy for engaging youth, we should focus on finding the many perfect strategies.

APPENDIX 4: Non-Parks Best Practices

The 2008 CPC report by Cotter and Lavoie presented a series of examples of “Best Practices” for engaging youth. While the entire list is not presented here, four non-park programs are presented to illustrate the key elements as outlined in the REACH report, findings of the Youth Action Survey, and input from the Youth Action Panel.

Each of the examples outlined provide opportunities through direct experience to provide youth with new challenges and experiences, opportunities to learn/develop new skills, and experiences which are

<i>PROGRAM</i>		Teton Science School	California Center for Civic Participation	RCMP Youth Academy	The Episcopal Church of America
<i>KEY YOUTH VALUES</i>	Experience	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Transparency	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Reinvention	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Connection	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Expression	✓	✓	✓	
<i>BEST PRACTICES</i>	Partnership	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Mentorship	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Engaging Families	✓			✓
	Social	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Stewardship	✓			✓
	Nature-Urban Connect	✓			
	Careers			✓	
	Sustainability	✓	✓	✓	✓

transparent, authentic and relevant. These “best practice” experiences provide youth with opportunities for reinvention and expression as they provide opportunities for personal growth and meaningful experiences that are authentic and meaningful. These examples of best practices also highlight the desire among youth to make social connections with other youth and mentors.

The programs chosen as samples here also demonstrate best practices as defined by the study results, such as partnerships, mentorships, engaging families, social, nature-urban connect, careers, sustainability and viability, and a decision between programs for a few youth or programs for many. The entire best practices report, along with the Youth Action Survey, are available from the Canadian Parks Council or Youth Engagement Working Group member park agencies.

Teton Science School

The Teton Science School is an example of a best practice because of the diversity of it’s seven distinct programs, the ability to operate multiple programs out of one facility, the extensive partnerships, the diversity in its funding sources, and The Teton Science School’s ability to engage youth from pre-school age through to college and post-graduate level.

The Teton Science School is an environmental education facility located on 800 acres of land on the outskirts of the city of Jackson Hole Wyoming and borders on the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park, Bridger-Teton National Forest and the National Elk Refuge in Wyoming. The Teton Science School is very much a center for excellence that is the epitome of ‘best practices’ for engaging youth. The Teton Science School operates a multi use facility with six innovative programs.

Teton Science School’s Education programs

Teton Science School’s main programs are experiential environmental educational programs for school and youth groups from elementary grades to college, and post grad research. Children’s

programs include residential three and five day environmental education field school programs for visiting schools and youth groups. These programs are offered throughout the school year and match state curriculum in all grade levels. As well, Teton Science School has within it the Journeys School, which is an independent school with an enrolment of 200 full-time students. The Journeys School includes a nature pre-school and students from K-12. These two programs form the core of programming at the Teton Science School.

The Teton Science School also is partnered with several post-secondary institutions with a teacher education program providing professional development that support teachers and environmental education. The Journey's School program is also partnered with teacher education programs and provides opportunities for student teaching practicum.

The Teton Science School also have a graduate program that offers university courses / field school through the facilities partnerships with several Universities. The Teton Science School also supports graduate studies and field research opportunities. This includes a 'researcher in residence' program that provides opportunities for researchers to reside onsite and base their field work at the school. These arrangements have spin-off benefits for the Journey's School and environmental education programs for visiting schools through a sharing of information from field research with students and staff.

Teton Science School's Stewardship programs

The Wyoming Stream Team stream team is a water-monitoring program that is based out of the Teton Science School in partnership with The Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality. The Wyoming Stream Team program is a water quality-monitoring program based at the Teton Science School. The School trains teachers in water quality monitoring and supports students and teachers back in their schools. There are 47 schools statewide (mostly middle schools) that monitor water quality (measuring pH, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, identifying the macro invertebrates, and other data). Students and their teachers monitor streams in their local areas and post their data to the Stream Team website <http://wyomingstreamteam.org/> so that data is available to other students, teachers, the general public. Stream ecologists and the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality also use the site as a screening tool to monitor water quality around the state.

Teton Science School's Revenue Generating programs

The Teton Science School has revenue-generating programs whose profits are used to subsidize the cost of children's and youth education programming.

The Teton Science School operates an eco-tour enterprise year around that serves 5000 guests annually on the schools 880 acres and with guided trips in the neighbouring National Parks. The Teton Science School also is affiliated with Elderhostel and offers several residential Elderhostel programs a year. During the summer months, Teton Science School also provides summer youth and family adventures.

Throughout the year, the facilities of the Teton Science School are available for a wide variety of private rentals and functions that include conferences, weddings, retreats, etc. The Teton Science School has multi purpose rooms available for outside groups and is able to provide full accommodation, food services and meeting spaces. The food-services building can be divided into separate areas to cater to groups of varying sizes, as well as run multiple programs independently on site simultaneously.

The Teton Science School's eco-tours, Elderhostel, summer adventure for families, and private rentals are all for profit endeavours which generates funds used to subsidize and support the Teton Science School core youth environmental education and The Journey's school programs. In addition to these revenue-generating programs, the Teton Science School also has a capital fund raising program designed to create, maintain and manage an endowment fund. Revenues generated from the endowment fund's investments are also used to subsidize operating costs of the core children's and youth education programs.

California Center for Civic Participation and Youth Development:

The California Center for Civic Participation and Youth Development is a non-profit organization that supports youth participation in education, planning and policy-making processes on a local, state, and national and international levels. The California Center is an example of best practices as it provides small groups of youth with opportunities to participate in the democratic process and provide input from youth in critical areas of public policy. The strength of the Californian Center's programs is in the manner in which they bring people together and the role of mentors who support youth led initiatives. The California Center's goal is to develop youth leaders and encourage them to be active participants in the democratic process.

The California Center has a 25 year record of engaging youth in an active role in shaping crucial public policy issues such as education and health, and more recently in issues around climate action and energy. The California Center is a non-partisan organization funded by donations from over 150 associations and corporations; and over 20 philanthropic organizations/foundations (e.g. the Kellogg foundation).

The California Center's youth leadership model brings youth together to work alongside an adult mentor. Generally the model uses small teams of three to six youth supported by one mentor. Mentors are usually affiliated with universities (typically grad students) or community organizations that work with youth. The California Center also believes it is important to bring people together and that it is equally important to support both the youth and adult mentors.

Several times per year, the California Center brings teams of youth and their mentors together for intense two or three day digestible forums addressing key public policy areas including education, energy, transportation, health and economic development so that youth can operate effectively alongside adults. At these forums, youth action teams do field observations, attend presentations, and have opportunities to interview experts in the field to provide youth and mentors greater awareness with social issues, public policy, and ultimately share their observations with other youth. The objective of the youth action forums is to provide youth and their mentors with information, learn how to address public policy and navigate the political landscape.

The California Center's youth action forums are organized so that teams of youth have the opportunity to engage with a variety of policy-makers, elected officials, consultants, lobbyists, commissioners, professors, and others who have an interest/expertise in areas of social issues and public policy. The youth action forums bring teams of youth and their mentors together with leaders from industry, different levels of government, experts and stakeholders. Often, youth action forum concludes with the youth making presentations to panel members from the community and media.

Following attending a youth forum, teams go back to their respective communities, identify a project or goal (youth led initiative) and work with their mentor to do positive work in the community. The California Center deputizes youth to be agents for social change as planners/advocates, participating

directly alongside adult mentors in youth led initiatives. Below are some examples of recent project and youth initiatives supported by the California Center for Civic Participation and Youth Development

RCMP Youth Academy

The RCMP youth academy is an example of a best practice that provide youth who may be considering law enforcement as a career choice with an authentic transparent experience that is as close to Police Academy training as possible. The RCMP youth academy is the result of multiple partnerships with several school districts in the province of British Columbia and is an example of a careers program for engaging youth.

The RCMP Youth Academy is offered every year at Spring Break in mid March and runs for nine full days. The RCMP Youth Academy is a residential program that replicates police training. The RCMP Youth Academy is offered at several locations in British Columbia (BC Lower mainland, Chilliwack, Vernon and Prince George). The RCMP Youth Academy has BC Ministry of Education approval as a registered high school course under the provisions of BAA courses (Board/Authority Authorized). Youth who participate in the RCMP Youth Academy receive four high school credits for “youth leadership” and “volunteer/work experience” under the CAPP requirement (Careers and Personal Planning) for high school completion in British Columbia. For examples of partnerships with the RCMP Youth Academy and some School Districts (SD) see Vernon SD#22, Surrey SD#36, North Vancouver SD#44, Chilliwack SD#33, Richmond SD #38.

The R.C.M.P. Youth Academy is an intensive, 9-day experience, during which students participate in an authentic cadet training program. Cadets spend time in class, learning from experts in a variety of policing fields. Cadets complete several simulated arrest scenarios, and participate in a physical training program as a part of their training. This Work Experience is designed to give students a real-life taste of R.C.M.P. training. (Vancouver Sun, 09/23/2007)

A longitudinal study/survey of youth who attended the RCMP Youth Academy during the period 1995-2001 reported that 80 percent of attendees (who now average 28 years old) have gone on to pursue careers in law enforcement, corrections, or study law (RCMP). Based on the success of the program, the RCMP E division is currently looking at the feasibility of expanding the Youth Academy program to other regions in Canada. The RCMP Youth Academy program was developed using the core principles of Thrive: Canadian Center for Positive Youth Development

It is interesting to note that other organizations have copied the RCMP Youth Academy and run very similar programs. The Municipal Police Department in the City of New Westminster's sponsors the Student Police Academy offered over eight days in early July. Similarly, Maple Ridge Fire Department Youth Academy runs during Spring Break in a program almost identical to the RCMP program, but with the emphasis focusing on careers and scenarios in emergency services. The Maple Ridge Fire Department's Youth Academy is partnered with the Maple Ridge School District and offers youth who reside and attend high school in Maple Ridge high school BAA course credit.

The British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) offers two career programs designed to engage youth who may be interested in careers involving forensics or Bio technology. BCIT, during spring break, offers authentic and transparent experiential program for youth in Grade 11 – 12 in the CSI Student Academy (Crime Scene Investigation). The CSI Student Academy is a 4 day program where youth explore the various disciplines encompassing the field of forensic science and related career opportunities. The CSI Student Academy is a partnership with BCIT, BC Ambulance Service, The Justice Institute, and local Police agencies. The CSI Student Academy takes place on the BCIT campus as well as providing youth opportunities to visit several regional forensic facilities.

The Episcopal Church of America

There are numerous examples of best practices for engaging families and youth in faith based organizations, as well as Christian organizations and individual churches that have adopted environmental stewardship initiatives. The National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE) is a partnership of faith-based organizations in the United States that has commissioned studies on faith and the environment and developed campaigns to promote environmental stewardship, and view promoting environmental stewardship as a new ministry to reach a broader and often younger audience.

The Episcopal Church of America (Anglican tradition) has numerous wilderness camps throughout the United States. While traditionally these camps were run primarily as Christian summer camps for children and spiritual retreats, over the past dozen years 11 of them have been transformed into multi-use year-around environmental education facilities. The Episcopal Church has formed partnerships with schools and now offers a full range of largely secular experiential place-based environmental education programs tied to state curriculum from which teachers select grade-appropriate modules for either a half-week week or full-week programs for their classes to attend. For example, Camp McDowell in Alabama offers hands-on learning in biological systems, geology and cultural history. Similarly, at Camp Stevens CA visiting children participate in organic gardening and forest ecology studies, while in Gina's Orchard program at Bishop Ranch CA focuses on water and stream ecology. Similar programs operate at the Episcopal Churches other facilities in Connecticut's woodlands, Texas's pine forest, Washington States temperate rainforest, and North Carolina's barrier islands. These secular programs run through the school year and these wilderness camps continue to provide Christian summer camps for children and spiritual retreats on weekends/holidays.