

# Interpretive Program Evaluation Tool

for

## BC Parks

Guided Walks and Evening Programs



by

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### Guided Walks & Evening Programs

Developed by Ann Finlayson, Finlayson & Associates  
and  
Will Husby, EcoLeaders Nature Interpretation

#### Procedure At A Glance

##### Before You Observe The Program

1. Acquire a completed program planning form from the program presenter.
2. Negotiate with presenter time for the program to be evaluated.
3. Ensure you and presenter will have time for interview after the program.
4. Read the Program Planning Form and complete Sections 1 and 2 of this Program Evaluation Tool before you see the program

##### While You Observe The Program

5. While you observe the program complete Section 3 of this Program Evaluation Tool.

##### After The Program

6. Discuss program with presenter after program and complete Section 4 of this Program Evaluation Tool.

## Introduction

B.C. Parks has a long history of delivering quality interpretive programs to park visitors. The programs:

- *provoke* park visitors to see the cultural and natural history of the park in new ways
- *relate* new information about the park to the common experiences of their everyday lives and
- *reveal* how the small, interesting features of the park are part of a larger complex ecosystem or pageant of human history.

In this way park interpreters help park visitors appreciate the natural and cultural features that make each park a special place.

To ensure that park visitors continue to receive high quality, professional interpretive services, an ***Interpretive Program Evaluation Tool*** designed to be used by B.C. Parks staff and interpretive contractors has been developed. It will be used to evaluate interpretive programs for use by Parks to provide feedback to our contractors.

The evaluation criteria in this tool are based on research of the program evaluation systems within agencies throughout B.C., Canada, USA and the United Kingdom. We selected criteria that are considered current good practice in heritage interpretation.

## Objectives of the Evaluation

1. To ensure high quality interpretive programs are presented to B.C. Parks visitors by our contractors, including:
  - a professional approach to the planning and delivery of programs
  - flexibility within programs so that they fit the needs of park visitors and fit the park's messages and resources
  - effective delivery of interpretive programs that follow current good practices in planning, delivery and evaluation.
2. To maintain communications between B.C. Parks field managers and contractors.

## Procedure

The interpretive program evaluation follows three distinct stages.

1. Pre-program Analysis
  - a review of the program planning process looking for a step-by-step program planning process that is indicative of current good practice.
2. Program Evaluation
  - an evaluation of the interpretative program and the interpreter(s) presenting the program.
3. Post-Program Interview
  - a discussion of the program between the presenter(s) and the evaluator where successful techniques can be identified and problems discussed.

## Why is This Tool So Thick?

The people who will conduct the evaluations of interpretive programs in B.C. Parks will have a wide range of interpretive experience and expertise ranging from beginner to expert. The tool has been designed to serve all levels of experience. It provides a clear picture of what is to be evaluated and how to recognize the range of performance – examples have been given where possible. The tool is thick because of the number of examples used to clarify the choices available to the evaluator.

## How Much Time Will it Take to Complete?

The following are conservative estimations of time required for each section of the tool

- Section 2 1 hr.
- Section 3 Duration of the Interpretive program – between 1 and 2 hr.
- Section 4 1 hr.

## Summary information

We have stayed away from providing the evaluator with a “check sheet” similar to past sheets used to evaluate programs. Our reasoning is that check sheets tend to be used quickly and often superficially. However, the utility of a check sheet is that it provides a quick summary view of the evaluation and is of use to managers and others wanting to get a quick sense of the quality of the program. In response to the need for the quick overview, we have provided a summary space on the bottom of the next page. Here, we assume that “Y” (yes) is always better and “N” (no) is always indication of lesser quality. In the same fashion, “C” or better is always acceptable, and “B” or “A” are always of lesser quality. A quick perusal will indicate whether there are significant numbers of “N” or “B” or “A”: if so, this would be an indication of quality problems.

# Section 1: Program Information

Fill this section before or as you evaluate the program.

Park: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Location \_\_\_\_\_ Weather: \_\_\_\_\_

How Many Times Program Presented? \_\_\_\_\_

Program has Been Evaluated \_\_ Time(s)

Number of Program Participants on Day Evaluated (circle one)

1-5    6-10    11-20    21-35    36-50    >50

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## Presenter

Presenter(s) Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Experience Level \_\_\_\_\_ Years

.....ööööööööö...

## Evaluator

Evaluator Name: \_\_\_\_\_

B.C. Parks Staff

Contractor

Number of Evaluations Completed (circle one)    0-3    4-10    >11

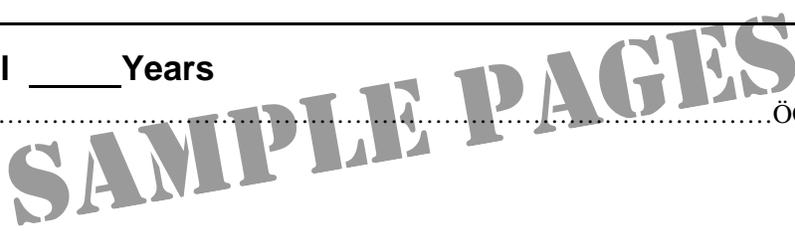
How Well Do You Know The Topic Presented? (circle one)    Not Well    Somewhat    Well

How Do You Feel About Conducting Evaluations? (circle one)    Uncomfortable    OK    Very Comfortable

Signature of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Quick Summary: Add the quantities from the bottom of each page

Y    N    A    B    3C



# Section 2: Professional Procedures

This section of the evaluation can take place several days before the presentation is evaluated. You can do it in your office, on the road – almost any location you can think of. All you require is a completed copy of the program’s planning form.

## Review of Program Planning Form

B.C. Parks requires interpretation contractors to develop interpretation programs using a standard planning form. This form ensures that a professional process is followed. Has the interpreter taken into account the following:

### 2.1 Audience Analysis (check ✓ one)

- a) **No audience analysis.** The needs of the target audience have not been identified.
- b) **Very general identification of audience** – e.g., families. Simple needs of audience have been identified – e.g., many park visitors are interested in fishing.
- c) **General identification of audience complete** – e.g., children ages 7–12 with one or more adult family member. General needs of audience have been identified – e.g., group has a deep interest in tidal pool life but many know little about tidal pool ecology.
- d) **Detailed identification of major portions of audience complete**, including identification of ages, areas of origin (city, local). Most needs of audience have been identified, including levels of understanding of topics, and familiarity with the site.
- e) **Highly detailed identification of major portions of audience**, including ages, areas of origin (city, local), ethnic background, size of groups, and expectations for length of program, level of difficulty of information, and terrain (if guided walk). Most needs of audience have been identified, including levels of understanding of topics, familiarity with the site, plus fears and aspirations of various groups within audience.

### 2.2 Goals and Objectives (check ✓ one)

- a) **No program goals or objectives stated**, or goals and objectives not compatible with B.C. Parks mandate.
- b) **Very general goals and objectives** – e.g., participants will be aware that the boreal forest is the world’s largest. Some objectives are not likely to be achieved – e.g., all participants will love mosquitoes.
- c) **Two to five achievable program goals or objectives stated** – e.g., participants will recognize four common stream invertebrates that are important salmon and trout food. All goals and objectives fit the mandate of the park, region and provincial park system.

### 2.3 Messages (check ✓ one)

- a) **All or most messages do not fit program objectives** or are inappropriate for the park.
- b) **Most messages fit the objectives of the park** but one or more key message does not.
- c) **All messages fit** the objectives of the park.

### 2.4 Site Selection (check ✓ one)

- a) **No site selection made.** Or two or more of the following:
  - site(s) selected put audience in danger – e.g., a family hike along an unfenced gorge,
  - park resources endangered – e.g., a family hike through sensitive wetlands
  - site selected unsuitable for message.

Y	N	A	B	≥C

# Section 3: Delivery of Program

This section must be completed during or immediately after the program is observed.

## 3.1 Agency Standards

Please check ✓ one

	Needs Improvement	OK	Good
Appropriate Dress			
Appropriate Speech and Diction			
Presenter(s) and B.C. Parks Introduced			
Appropriate Behaviour			
Welcoming and Inclusive			
Started and Ended Program On Time			
Speaks Positively About B.C. Parks			
Messages Appropriate to Parks Mandate and Policy			

SAMPLE PAGES

## 3.2 Technical Aspects

**3.2.1 Site Selection** (Y [yes] or a N [no] or circle letter if the question does not apply)

- \_\_\_ a) Was the **program site appropriate** for the program?  
If no, can you suggest an alternative site? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ b) Were the **activity sites appropriate** (e.g., stops along a trail on a guided hike) for the message?  
If no, can you suggest an alternative site? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ c) **Was the site safe** for the participants.  
If no, list unsafe locations. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ d) Were the **site resources protected**?  
If no, list locations where resources were damaged. \_\_\_\_\_

**3.2.2 Audience** (Y [yes] or a N [no] or circle letter if the question does not apply)

- \_\_\_ a) Could all of the audience see the program?
- \_\_\_ b) Could all of the audience hear the program?
- \_\_\_ c) Were they comfortable?

**3.2.3 Presentation** (Y [yes] or a N [no] or circle letter if the question does not apply)

- \_\_\_ a) Did the presenter use **active, vivid language**?
- \_\_\_ b) Did presenter **show enthusiasm** for the topic?

Y	N	A	B	≥C

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- c) Did presentation have plenty of **changes in pace, and volume**?
- d) Did presenter appear to be **talking to everyone** in audience – e.g., plenty of eye contact?
- e) Was presenter able to **respond to audience questions** and needs?

### 3.2.4 Message Clarity (check ✓ one)

- a) **All or most messages were unclear.** It was often hard to determine what the messages were.
- b) **Most messages were clear,** but, one or two were difficult to follow.
- c) **All** messages were clear.

### 3.2.5 Program Structure (Y [yes] or a N [no] or circle letter if the question does not apply)

- a) Was there a clear beginning middle and end?

## 3.3 Presentation

### 3.3.1 Audience Fit (check ✓ one)

- a) Program was **appropriate for few** if any of the audience.
- b) Program was **appropriate for only a small part** of audience.
- c) Program was **appropriate for half** of the audience
- d) Program was **appropriate for most** of the audience.
- e) Program was **appropriate for all** or nearly all of audience.

### 3.3.2 Audience Physical Comfort (check ✓ one)

- a) **Few of the audience were comfortable** throughout the program.
- b) **Over half** of the audience was comfortable most of the time.
- c) **All or almost all** of the audience was comfortable throughout the program.

### Notes:

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## 3.4 Effectiveness of Program

### Interpretive Technique

#### 3.4.1 Provoke (check ✓ one)

When introducing a new concept or feature the program...

- a) **provided information only.** No attempt was made to challenge participants into looking at the topic, object, plant or animal in a new way.
- b) **provided factual information but occasionally,** through use of words and imagery challenged participants to **look at both the familiar and new with a novel or different slant.** The program often subtly challenged participants to think in new ways, consider new information affecting their values and opinions – e.g., introducing mosquitoes in the park as the most important *biological control* of human over-exploitation of Canada’s natural resources. This provocative statement requires thought and clarification and stimulates discussion.
- c) **provided factual information and often,** through use of words and imagery, challenged participants to look at both familiar and new with a novel or different slant.

Y	N	A	B	≥C

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### 3.4.2 Relate (check ✓ one)

When introducing a new concept or feature the program...

- a) **did not relate it** to something within the experience of the majority of the audience and did not use contrast and similarities between the new concept and the common.
- b) **often related it** to something within the experience of the majority of the audience – e.g., reveal the rate of flow of a river in not cubic meters per second but in bath-tub-fulls per minute. Often used contrast and similarities between the new concept and the common – e.g., compared ant colony to human city.
- c) **consistently related it** to something within the experience of the majority of the audience, usually comparing or contrasting the known with the new.

### 3.4.3 Reveal (check ✓ one)

When talking about the habitats, plants, and animals and historical topics the program ...

- a) **provided only facts.** No effort to place this information in context to the overall landscape and/or historical setting was made.
- b) **sometimes put factual information in context** to the overall landscape and historical setting – e.g., talked about how the little things in the park make it a special place, or how a particular species of animal impacts an entire ecosystem or what it was like to live in this landscape before European contact.
- c) **often put factual information in context** to the overall landscape, and historical setting.

### 3.4.4 Use of Real Things (check one)

The program ...

- a) **did not use specimens, artifacts or landscapes** to illustrate facts and concepts.
- b) **often illustrated concepts and facts using specimens, artifacts or landscapes** – e.g., pointed out cut-throat trout feeding under a boardwalk or helped participants identify tree species by touching bark to recognize distinct textures.
- c) **consistently used specimens, artifacts or landscapes** to illustrate key concepts and facts.

### 3.4.5 Use of Visual Aids/Props (check one)

During the program the presenter ...

- a) **did not use visual aids or props** to illustrate difficult concepts and ideas.
- b) **often illustrated** concepts and facts using replicas, models and photos and drawings – e.g., modeled the formation of glacial features such as glacial valleys and moraines using a rock to represent a glacier and sand to represent bedrock.
- c) **consistently used visual aids or props** to model key concepts and facts.

### 3.4.6 Address Audience Learning Styles (check ✓ one)

Behavioural scientists have identified three kinds of learner styles.

- Visual learners take in new information through observing objects, landscapes, pictures, and diagrams.
- Auditory learners take in new information through the spoken word or song or music.
- Kinesthetic learners take in new information through physical involvement such as active participation.

The program ...

- a) concentrated only on **one type of learning style** – e.g., auditory learning in a lecture.
- b) concentrated on **two types of learning style** – e.g., auditory and visual learning in a slide show.
- c) **consisted of a mix of the three learning styles** – e.g., auditory, visual and kinesthetic learning through guided imagery activities on a guided walk.

Y	N	A	B	≥C

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### 3.4.7 Audience Participation (check ✓ one)

The **program design** made it ...

- \_\_\_ a) **impossible for audience participation.** – e.g., during the program members of the audience to had no chance to answer or ask questions related to the program’s topic  
and/or no one in the audience was able to interact with real things (touch, smell, listen to, or taste natural history or historical objects)  
and/or there was no opportunity to stay after the program to ask relevant questions or discuss the topics covered.
- \_\_\_ b) **possible for a small numbers of the audience** to participate. -e.g., several members of the audience had the opportunity to answer or ask questions related to the program’s topic  
and/or a few people had a chance to really interact with features pointed out by the presenter (observe, pick up, smell taste or hear),  
and/or there was time and space for participants to stay after the program to ask relevant questions or discuss the topic.
- \_\_\_ c) **possible for most of the audience** to participate. – e.g., all people who wanted to had chances to answer or asked questions  
and/or all who wished, interacted with the items being interpreted – they looked at the item, or picked it up/touched it, sniffed it or heard it.  
and/or there was plenty of time and space for people to talk with the presenter after the program.

#### Notes:

## 3.5 Effectiveness of the Presenter

### 3.5.1 Presenter’s Encouragement of Audience Questions (check ✓ one)

- \_\_\_ a) The interpreter **did not encourage** audience questions, nor ask questions of the audience that they could answer, and did not give them a chance to touch, hear, smell or see objects and features being interpreted.
- \_\_\_ b) The interpreter **seldom encouraged** audience questions, asked few questions that the audience could answer, and gave them few chances to touch, hear, smell or see objects and features being interpreted.
- \_\_\_ c) The interpreter **often encouraged** questions, asked pertinent questions that the audience could answer, and gave them many chances to touch, hear, smell or see objects and features being interpreted.

### 3.5.2 Presenter’s Encouragement of Audience Interactions (check ✓ one)

- \_\_\_ a) **Did not have the audience interacting** with (touching, closely listening to smelling, looking at closely, tasting) the natural or historic object(s) and features being interpreted.
- \_\_\_ b) Using questions and hands-on activities the interpreter had **around half of the audience gathered round interacting** with (touching, closely listening to smelling, looking at closely, tasting) and discussing the natural or historic object(s) and features being interpreted.
- \_\_\_ c) Using questions and hands-on activities the interpreter had **most of the audience gathered round interacting** with (touching, closely listening to smelling, looking at closely, tasting) and discussing the natural or historic object(s) and features being interpreted.

### 3.5.3 Flexibility (Y [yes] or a N [no] or circle letter if the question does not apply)

- \_\_\_ a) Did the presenter handle contingencies that came up during the presentation?

Y	N	A	B	≥C

# Section 4 Interview

This section must be completed during or immediately after the program has finished.

## Why

An interview after the program will give both evaluator and presenter the opportunity to discuss the audience, the resources being interpreted and the program. Here, in a relaxed setting, you can discuss how the program was successful and identify parts that could be improved. Incidents can be examined and rationale for decisions can be reviewed. Also, many evaluators and presenters may be uncomfortable with the formal approach of the evaluation form sections of this tool. One or both of you may communicate better in this less formal interview. If there have been problems, this interview also can help you identify solutions such as other approaches to be developed by the presenter or further training needs.

## When and Where

After the program is finished, when everyone has left, the site has been cleaned up and all equipment has been put away is a good time for an interview. The presenter and evaluator should retire to a quiet place where you are comfortable and not likely to be interrupted.

## Caution

Any public presentation requires the presenter to trust their audience and put themselves on the line. This is hard stressful work. Remember, you both have the same interest of making sure that the best possible public programs can be presented. A negative, unhelpful interview will not help your goal of providing great service to park users. Try to provide support and suggestions as you work through the interview.

## Questions

Questions should be open ended to give you both a chance to reflect and discuss. Initial questions may be simple to put both of you at ease.

## Sample Questions

The following are sample questions that the evaluator may ask during the interview. Please use the space on this and the following page to write notes about the answers you receive. Do not feel that you have to ask all the questions or ask them in the order listed below.

How do you feel the program went today?

Was this a typical audience for this program? If not, what was different today?

What do you feel about the people who attended this program?

What are the difficulties in presenting this program?

What do you feel were the good interpretive moments of this program?

What do you think people gained from this program?

What would you do differently next time? Why?

You may pick a part of the program and ask for clarification on why it was included in the program