

Chapter 16

Interpretive Goals Objectives and Themes



for Crimson Lake Provincial Park

EcoLeaders Prepared by
Interpretation and Environmental Education
Box D82, Bowen Island, BC V0N 1G0
email: info@ecoleaders.ca phone: (604) 947-0483
www.ecoleaders.ca



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Introduction

This chapter is designed to be a summary of the relevant Visitor Services goals, objectives, themes and subthemes for Visitor Services at Crimson Lake Provincial Park. It can be used as a reference by Visitor Services staff as part of the planning process whenever they are developing new programs. Detailed information and recommendations for applying these themes will be included in later chapters of this plan.

Many elements described in previous chapters of this plan were taken into account in developing these park interpretive themes. Visitor Services themes also reflect recent key developments which include:

- a desire to develop the overall environmental literacy of park visitors, neighbours and students
 - this includes the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to sustain our environment, lifestyles and communities for the foreseeable future
 - a key part of this will be to better understand and cope with the interactions of their communities with the natural landscapes that they hold dear
 - they will also develop fuller understanding of park initiatives
- the vision of including some Visitor Services programs that may take place in local communities beyond the boundaries of park
- current best practice in education and Visitor Services programming which focuses on interaction and two-way communication
- current desire of park management to develop new methods of delivering Visitor Services services to reflect best practices and reach a broad range of participants
- a desire to involve park neighbours (landowners and other citizens) in conservation, preservation and sustainability activities and issues

Please see the Foundations Summary (Chapter 2) and the Foundations Review (Background Paper 1) for more background.

Goals and Objectives

The core guidelines for developing Visitor Services themes are the program's goals and objectives. Just as there is confusion between a "strategy" and a "tactic," there is also confusion between a "goal" and an "objective." Although the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, there are differences between the two. Think of the goals as the treasure at the top of a stairway, and the objectives as the stairs.

The Process

Objectives are set after the goals are established. Each objective refines a goal. The goal is where we want to be. The objectives are the steps needed to get there.

Goals

Goals are the large statements of what you hope to accomplish but usually aren't very measurable. They create the setting for what you are proposing.

Objectives

Objectives are operational, tell specific things that will be accomplishing in the Visitor Services program, and are more measurable. They focus on output or impact participant attitudes and behaviors. They are more concise specific and finite than goals.

Objectives measure impact of the Visitor Services program. Behavioral objectives are the most important (Exactly what is it you want to get participants to do?), but the objectives can also be attitudinal (What do you want participants to think or believe?), or informational (What do you want participants to know that they didn't know before?).

Objectives also can measure Visitor Services staff output – what they did. But unless output is central agency goals and contributes to solutions to problems, these are kept to a minimum.

Topics and Themes

Themes

Themes provide the conceptual outline for the facts and issues that will be interpreted. They outline the main ideas that will be interpreted at a site. A theme is often expressed in a single sentence, such as:

- Using some basic observation skills, anyone can detect signs of constant change in the landscape.
- The continental climate's cold winters and warm dry summers afford challenges to which plants must adapt.

Dr. Sam Ham in his book, *Environmental Interpretation - A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets* (1992) and in his article "Rethinking Goals, Objectives and Themes." *InterpScan* 29:4 2003, argues that themes are the foundations for the development of interpretation services. They must:

- be clearly connected to corporate or agency level goals and objectives
- help interpreters quickly select the kinds of information and activities to include and not include

Ham claims that most program participants find thematic communication easier to comprehend (People remember themes, but they forget facts. However, research shows that themes help people organize and remember facts.)

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Introduction continued...

- education research shows that thematic communication is highly effective

Subthemes

Subthemes further elucidate and clarify themes. They are also most often expressed as sentences or short paragraphs.

Themes and subthemes are based on the detailed information compiled in the Foundations (Chapters 2 and 13), Features Analysis (Chapter 13) and the general information on audiences and market. Visitor Services staff should refer to these sections of the plan when they refine themes in the future.

Themes provide the key direction in development of Visitor Services at Crimson Lake Provincial Park and are essential in program planning and evaluation.

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Goals and Objectives of the Visitor Services Program at Crimson Lake Provincial Park

Target Participants

Crimson Lake Provincial Park has the following target participants:

- park users
- park neighbours (including individuals and communities)
- the research community (environmental, cultural and formal and informal education)
- students and community youth groups
- teachers and youth group leaders
- people who do not use the park

The Visitor Services goals and objectives will address these targets.

Goal 1: Visitor Services programming at Crimson Lake Provincial Park will support agency mandates and fit the needs and interests of actual and virtual park visitors and potential visitors.

Objective 1.1 Visitor Services Staff will regularly review newly released park and agency management and policy documents and make sure that all programs at Crimson Lake Provincial Park conform to and support current agency mandates and initiatives.

Objective 1.2 Through regular surveys of current and potential visitors to Crimson Lake Provincial Park, Visitor Services staff will understand park user:

- needs
- interests
- demographics
- current and/or preferred activities
- locations in the park where they gather or are active
- current understanding and knowledge of park-related features and issues

by regularly monitoring and gathering information about park users.

Objective 1.3 Through similar survey techniques Visitor Services staff will understand the interests and activities of *potential park users*, including:

- long-time Albertans
- new Canadians from different cultures
- newcomers from other provinces
- people with disabilities

Objective 1.4 Visitor Services staff will use current information gathered above to plan and evaluate the park's Visitor Services offerings that support park and agency foundations and are appropriate and appealing to current and potential park users:

Goal 2: Assist visitors to view the park as a place of quiet inspiration and enjoyment of natural beauty and deep history.

Objective 2.1 Visitor Services staff will provide multiple opportunities for viewing of the park's unique wetland landscape and lake panoramas, closer, more intimate view of landscapes of quiet forest glades and ponds, plus close-up glimpses of native wildflowers and wildlife.

Objective 2.2: Visitor Services staff will work with planners to make intelligent use of trail design and landscape to preserve a feeling of natural solitude (e.g., use winding trails that snake around hills and ponds to conceal other trail users).

Objective 2.3 Visitor Services programs will focus on the affective (emotional impact, development of a love for this landscape) as well as discovery, information and connections.

Goal 3: To connect Albertans with the park's wetlands and other landscapes.

Objective 3.1 Visitor Services programs will focus on natural features and processes (including ecological services) that the park protects.

Objective 3.2 Visitor Services programs will provide park users with opportunities to discover, observe and report the natural features, wildlife and native plant communities of the park.

Themes and Subthemes of the Visitor Services Program at Crimson Lake Provincial Park

Terminology

Themes and subthemes provide focus and structure and help to identify major areas of Visitor Services effort.

Overall Park Theme

The overall park theme is the unifying idea that is a recurrent element in interpretive offerings at Crimson Lake Provincial Park.

This theme is the key recurring idea found within the park's overall Visitor Services program. It guides the development of all Visitor Services toward contributing to the Alberta Parks mandate.

Using the Overall Park Visitor Services Theme

All Visitor Services must fit into the overall theme. Visitor Services field staff use the theme as an overall guide and check to ensure the appropriateness of all new Visitor Services. The overall Visitor Services theme for Crimson Lake Provincial Park is:

Crimson Lake Provincial Park protects, enhances and shares the diverse natural and cultural heritage of the Lower Foothills Natural Subregion, providing a sanctuary for nature and people.

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Visitor Services Themes

The overall park theme is complex and must be broken down into smaller ideas or subthemes that are either written as a short phrase, sentence or paragraph. These explain or clarify the meaning and direction of the overall theme and are stated in terms of the key ideas that participants in Visitor Services and activities should walk away with—they are the learning outcomes of Visitor Services.

Themes for Visitor Services in Crimson Lake Provincial Park are listed on the following pages. Themes guide the development of both personal and non-personal services. They must:

1. **Reflect the park’s goals as reflected in its foundations (Chapter 2).**
2. **Be purposeful—they arise from objectives. Themes must conform to the site’s Visitor Services objectives.**

Subthemes

Each theme is broken down into several subthemes which are usually stated as simple sentences.

Using Subthemes

Subthemes guide Visitor Services staff in developing accurate, relevant and timely Visitor Services offerings. They provide more focus. Most Visitor Services offerings will include several subthemes from several themes.

Using Themes and Subthemes in Planning and Evaluating Visitor Services

All Visitor Services offerings must fit into the matrix of themes and subthemes. When developing a new program, Visitor Services field staff will choose between one to three themes as the guidelines for developing the focus of a Visitor Services offering. For adding further structure, several subthemes can be used to develop the Visitor Services offering.

Another way of thinking is that themes and subthemes are the main learning objectives for the target audiences/ participants. Visitor Services staff will then use information from the features inventory and develop activities to support these learning goals.

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Visitor Services Themes For Crimson Lake Provincial Park

Theme A	Crimson Lake Provincial Park's protects a broad array of wetland types and forms which are home to many specialized plants and animals.	Theme B	Crimson Lake Provincial Park protects several unique lakes.
Theme C	The forest of Crimson Lake Provincial Park are typical of those found in the Lower Foothills Natural Subregion, with some interesting exceptions.	Theme D	Human and natural actions have and continue to shape the landscape.
Theme E	Preserving and maintaining Crimson Lake Provincial Park's biodiversity is important—for people and for the wide variety of living things that live here.	Theme F	Crimson Lake Provincial Park is a place to discover how the natural world works and how it is important to our lives.
Theme G	Getting outside and active on Crimson Lake Provincial Park's trails and lakes is healthy and enriching.	Theme H	Stewardship is everybody's business.
Theme I	Crimson Lake Provincial Park provides excellent year-round recreational opportunities.	Theme J	Crimson Lake Provincial Park is a gateway to the David Thompson Corridor, one of Alberta's best kept secrets.
Theme K	The park is located on the edge of the wild natural David Thompson Corridor. Be aware of the dangers and take adequate precautions		

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Theme A	Crimson Lake Provincial Park protects a broad array of wetland types and forms which are home to many specialized plants and animals.	Priority
Subtheme A1	All major forms of wetland can be found in the park. These include: bog, fen, marsh swamp and shallow open water.	High
Subtheme A2	Although the location of all the wetland types and forms that exist in the park have not yet been documented, one rare and important wetland type that is found in the park is the string-fen form (formerly known as patterned fen).	High
Subtheme A3	There are many interesting wetland plants and animals that can be observed along park trails.	High
Subtheme A4	The park's wetlands are home to some uncommon and rare plants including the linear-leaved sundew.	High
Subtheme A5	Common wetland plant and animal species provide the majority of the park's ecological goods and services. Because of this, they are of equal or higher importance to the park relative to rare and endangered species.	High
Subtheme A6	The park's wetlands provide important habitat for many species of animal including great blue heron (nesting colony), sandhill crane (wetlands are their nesting habitat), and leopard frog (a red-listed species [endangered] that requires wetlands for most stages of its life).	High
Subtheme A7	Crimson Lake Provincial Park protects part of the Crimson-Louse Lake Wetland a provincially significant wetland.	High
Subtheme A8	The Crimson-Louise Lake wetland is one of the few large wetland complexes in Central Alberta.	High
Subtheme A9	Well over 50% of the park is wetland.	High
Subtheme A10	The Crimson-Louise Lake Wetlands provide many ecological goods and services including water purification, flood control and carbon sequestration.	High

Theme B	Crimson Lake Provincial Park protects several unique lakes.	Priority
Subtheme B1	Crimson Lake is unique, it is a mesotrophic lake with no inflow and outflow stream. Currently the hydrology of the lake is not well understood.	High
Subtheme B2	Crimson Lake is mesotrophic lake that has a significant amount of dissolved nutrients needed by aquatic plants. These plants support a diverse aquatic ecosystem.	High
Subtheme B3	Although Crimson Lake supports an abundant aquatic ecosystem, it is so shallow that it cannot support a sport fish population.	High
Subtheme B4	Twin Lakes are deeper than Crimson Lake and support a put and take rainbow trout fishery.	High
Subtheme B5	All lakes in Crimson Lake Provincial Park receive their water from the surrounding wetlands.	Moderate