



# Education Opportunities

Looking at a National Park on Bowen Island

## What If We Had a National Park on Bowen Island?

This paper looks at the possibilities for learning that a National Park on Bowen Island can provide islanders and the people of Canada.

Parks Canada's mandate requires that its parks play a major role in education of Canadians about the site's natural and cultural heritage. The agency also has a mandate to involve communities close to the park in these initiatives.

### Want to confirm this?

See Parks Canada's Corporate Plan ([www.pc.gc.ca/docs/pc/plans/plan2009-2010/index\\_e.aspx](http://www.pc.gc.ca/docs/pc/plans/plan2009-2010/index_e.aspx)).

What happens with education programming in a national park on Bowen Island will depend on the vision and energy of Parks Canada staff, partners of the agency, and the vision, courage and inventiveness of the citizens of Bowen Island and the Bowen Island Municipality.

### More Opportunities to Contribute to Our Community and Develop Skills

Imagine local historical societies, conservation groups, artists and musicians extending their current programming by working with Parks Canada on collaborative projects where they use their skills and talents to make meaningful contributions to education and conservation.



Imagine local musicians, thespians and artists working with Parks Canada and the Bowen Municipality to help design a community centre that has a dual function as a community centre and a program space for Parks Canada. Furthermore, each year they work with the park to create special events such

as Art-in-the-Park, featuring workshops where professionals provide skills training in writing, painting, photography which are open to Bowen Islanders and the general public. Local theatre groups work to write and perform historical plays depicting the history of the island.

Imagine local historians working with Parks Canada experts to develop exhibits on Bowen's history and upgrade the local archives computer system or other equipment for use by the community and Parks Canada.

Imagine local naturalists and conservation groups working closely with Parks Canada's biologists and ecologists to help them identify the park's important habitats, sensitive ecosystems and rare plant and animal species and use state of the art computer technologies to map their locations.

As well, students and interested community members also contribute through the park's Citizen Science program, where they work with professional researchers to make real contributions to the study and maintenance of the park's natural and cultural features.

### Is this Pie in the Sky Dreaming?

Parks Canada is doing these types of things in other parks and historic sites across Canada. To find examples do Google searches using key words such as "Parks Canada" and "Art in the Park"

"Parks Canada" and "cooperating associations"

"Parks Canada" and "management plan"

"Parks Canada" and "Citizen Science"

### School Programming

Imagine each grade of Bowen's schools taking part in regular curriculum-based science and social studies learning sessions led by park staff and local experts. Students take part in real research and interact with live animals, park ecosystems, historic artifacts, historic sites and real scientists. Students in Bowen schools help, testing out new programs and mentoring visiting classes.



Imagine a Bowen-based education centre focusing on schools on Bowen Island and the lower mainland. Bowen

students could take part in week-long studies of biology, ecology and history and participate in parts of ongoing research and management programs that are taking place in national parks. A site like the former CNIB lodge could be converted into a residential learning centre where students and teachers from further afield can stay and take part.

To see a spectrum of Parks Canada school program offerings across Canada, Google "Parks Canada", "education".

In Jasper National Park, Parks Canada is developing a stewardship education centre aimed at youth from across Canada

(see: [www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/ab/jasper/edu/edu5.aspx](http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/ab/jasper/edu/edu5.aspx)).

## Year-Round Public Programming

Imagine year-round programs about Bowen's natural and cultural history led by Parks Canada staff with contributions by many of Bowen's own local experts working as volunteers or within cooperating associations such as the Bowen Island Historians and Heritage Preservation Society or the Bowen Nature Club and Fish and Wildlife Clubs. With a Partner like Parks Canada, all Bowen Islanders who choose to can learn about what is special about our island.



A Google search using key words such as "Parks Canada" and "Visitor Experience" will provide information on a wide spectrum of public and school education programs at National Park sites across Canada.

## Life Long Learning

Imagine park staff, experts, volunteers and partners providing hour-long to week-long courses workshops and activities. Islander's and Canadians of all ages experience and discover Bowen Island's nature and history first-hand. Bowen's many clubs and organization and on-island experts are an important component of the park's Life-long Learning offerings.



Parks Canada partners include Robert Bateman's Get to Know program ([www.gettoknow.ca/ca/](http://www.gettoknow.ca/ca/)), Routes to Learning Canada (provides Elderhostel education programs—[www.routestolearning.ca/ProgramListing.aspx?CategoryName=Canadian+Adventures](http://www.routestolearning.ca/ProgramListing.aspx?CategoryName=Canadian+Adventures)), the Canadian Nature Federation, and the Child and Nature Alliance.

## Imagine a Learning Centre



Imagine a LEEDS Platinum learning centre similar to the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve's admin. centre.

The building is used for public and school education programs and as a community arts and meeting centre.

The Learning Centre will be the starting point for a multitude of guided and self-guided discovery and learning activities focusing on what is happening this time of year in the island's forests, wetlands and sea shores. It will also feature seasonal historical and cultural events and tours.

The building could be either a renovated Old General Store or a new building. Both options could incorporate new state-of-the-art low-energy sustainable technology. Bowen is the home of architects with this type of design experience. Perhaps much of the building's technology could be provided by local island professionals. Bowen Islanders and people from the lower mainland could come here to see the latest green technology in action and learn how it can be incorporated into their homes and businesses.

The learning centre is a hub of the park's trails. At the front desk, families may borrow self-guided discovery packs full of activity ideas and discovery tools (e.g., dip nets or binoculars) for discovering the plants and animals of the forest, wetlands or seashores. They may also sign up for a guided activity led by park staff, partners groups and knowledgeable local volunteers. It may be a rock hounding expedition or a capture and release

bug hunt, a course on First Nations medicinal plants, a tour of a heritage site and many others.

Newcomers may also spend time looking at exhibits that introduce the island's ecosystems and tell the story of the island's history and geology.

After their inspiring stop at the learning centre, islanders and visitors will take to the park trails and begin their discovery activities. They will walk from the learning centre to nearby forest, wetland and seashore along park trails. For sites somewhat further afield they will ride their own or rented bicycles from a Snug Cove concession. To reach the far side of the island, visitors and residents can choose to take a low-cost island shuttle bus that runs regularly to well marked trailheads along its route.



Many Parks Canada sites include learning centres. To learn about them try a Google search (e.g., Parks Canada, learning centre, visitor centre, interpretation centre).

Partners for the Park is a big-tent group of Bowen Islanders and some off-islanders who are enthusiastically examining the possible outcomes of a National Park Reserve on Bowen Island. For digital copies of this document and others and to learn more about who we are, visit our website [www.bowenpark.ca](http://www.bowenpark.ca)

