



Chapter 1: Parks Canada Agency Direction

Introduction

Visitor Experience and Outreach products are integral to the overall operation of Prince Albert National Park and make significant contributions to many of Parks Canada's National programs. Their importance is stated clearly in the park's two main foundation documents, *Parks Canada*

Agency Corporate Plan 2010–2011/–2014–2015 and *Prince Albert National Park Management Plan (2008)*. This chapter is a brief summary of the key elements of these documents that outline the direction of the park's Visitor Experience and Outreach programs.





Serving Canadians

THE
PARKS CANADA
CHARTER

OUR MANDATE

On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure the ecological and commemorative integrity of these places for present and future generations.

OUR ROLE

We are guardians of the national parks, the national historic sites and the national marine conservation areas of Canada.

We are guides to visitors from around the world, opening doors to places of discovery and learning, reflection and recreation.

We are partners, building on the rich traditions of our Aboriginal people, the strength of our diverse cultures and our commitments to the international community.

We are storytellers, recounting the history of our land and our people — the stories of Canada.

OUR COMMITMENTS

To protect, as a first priority, the natural and cultural heritage of our special places and ensure that they remain healthy and whole.

To present the beauty and significance of our natural world and to chronicle the human determination and ingenuity which have shaped our nation.

To celebrate the legacy of visionary Canadians whose passion and knowledge have inspired the character and values of our country.

To serve Canadians, working together to achieve excellence guided by values of competence, respect and fairness.

2002



Directions: National Perspective

Parks Canada Charter

Parks Canada Charter

Mandate

This one sentence encapsulates what the Parks Canada Agency is all about. Every Visitor Experience and Outreach staff member in the park should know it by heart.

Prince Albert National Park has a clear commitment to the people of Canada to protect in perpetuity the ecological and commemorative integrity of the southern boreal forest and transitional lands that it encompasses. As well, the park must foster understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the park's natural and cultural features—the function of the park's Visitor Experience and Outreach programs.

Our Role

These four short sentences provide guidance to the activities of the agency and for Visitor Experience and Outreach in Prince Albert National Park, including:

- promotion of protection of the park's natural and cultural integrity
- facilitating discovery, learning and connection with Prince Albert National Park—its land, its history and its people, to visitors from Canada and around the world
- partnership and collaboration with local Aboriginal groups, individuals and communities, plus Aboriginal communities and cultures from across Canada
- collection and sharing of the vast range of stories about Prince Albert National Park's nature and people

Our Commitment

This section of the charter identifies four guiding principles for all operations within the Parks Canada Agency.

Protection

This is a first priority for the agency. Therefore, all Visitor Experience and Outreach program delivered by Prince Albert National park must not directly or indirectly have adverse impact on the natural and cultural features of the park or its natural and commemorative integrity. For example, an interpretive trail within the park should not degrade habitat.

Presentation

This is a major thrust of both Visitor Experience and Outreach in Prince Albert National Park. The focus topics will be:

- the park's natural features and processes, their beauty, function, value and significance
- the park's human history

Celebration of the Legacy of Visionary Canadians

At Prince Albert National Park, this can include the history of the founding of the park.

Serving Canadians

According to the charter, this is achieved through the pursuit of excellence, competence and a culture of respect and fairness.



Directions: Vision

A vision statement defines the desired or intended future state of an organization or enterprise in terms of its fundamental direction. It is an aspirational description of what an organization would like to achieve or accomplish in the mid-term or long-term future. It is intended to serve as a clear guide for choosing current and future courses of action.

The Parks Canada Agency and Prince Albert National Park's vision statements provide overall guidance for all park initiatives including the Visitor Experience and Outreach products.

This section includes the Parks Canada and Prince Albert National Park vision statements and lists their implications for the park's Visitor Experience and Outreach products.

Parks Canada Vision

In the Corporate Plan, this section asserts that to deliver its strategic outcome and fulfill its corporate direction, Parks Canada has embarked on a renewal program with a new Vision Statement and...

Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

The corporate plan identifies a strategy for achieving this vision by

... ensuring Agency activities are relevant to Canadians and thus strengthen and deepen Canadians' understanding and appreciation of their national heritage places. This will, in turn, build a strong sense of connection to these places in the hearts and minds of Canadians.

This vision and strategy will require that the park's staff will have a clear understanding of the interests needs and motivations of Canadians in order to design and deliver products that catch Canadians' attention and are meaningful to them.

There is no average Canadian. Therefore, park staff will need to continue to identify and segment the park user and outreach markets.

Vision for Prince Albert National Park

The park's vision statement is the result of extensive consultations with all major stakeholders during the preparation of the park's management plan.

Prince Albert National Park will welcome visitors from across Canada and around the world to a rich, protected landscape representative of Canada's southern Boreal region. Visitors will experience, enjoy and learn about the ecology, history and cultural resources of the lakes, wetlands, forests and native grasslands that characterize this part of Canada. From arrival in the national park community of Waskesiu through the diverse ways in which visitors experience and learn about this northern landscape, Prince Albert National Park will be seen as exemplifying the national park ideal in the heart of Canada's prairie provinces.

By the year 2020, Prince Albert National Park of Canada will be well known as a place that:

- *Provides meaningful opportunities for active participation in the stewardship, presentation and celebration of natural and cultural heritage within and beyond the boundaries of the park in ways that promote the value and importance that Canadians place on our national parks and national historic sites.*
- *Integrates park management with that of the larger ecological and cultural landscapes through partnerships with organizations such as the Prince Albert Model Forest and Prince Albert Grand Council.*
- *Collaborates with Aboriginal people to preserve, present and protect the unique rich aboriginal history of the land, while incorporating Traditional Knowledge into science and decision-making.*
- *Serves as a living example of how people can enjoy memorable experiences in ways that sustain the nature and cultural heritage of this special*



place. As one of the premier visitor destinations within Saskatchewan, the park, its partners and stakeholders work together to welcome all Canadian and international guests and facilitate meaningful heritage experiences that foster lasting memories and build a culture of stewardship.

- *Offers opportunities for visitors to connect with the cultural features, artifacts and stories that arise from the relationships of people to this place, including Aboriginal people, early European immigrants and those who have arrived more recently to add to the diversity of modern Canada.*
- *Protects healthy, functioning ecosystems for all time. This will be achieved in collaboration with others by maintaining and/or restoring natural processes (such as fire and flooding), plants, animals and physical features that have shaped this region, and by controlling or eliminating non-native species and pathogens.*
- *Includes a full complement of predator and prey species and vegetation communities representative of Canada's southern boreal plains and plateau natural region, with relationships among these species remaining essentially unimpaired.*

The park vision statement clearly shows the importance of the overall Visitor Experience and Outreach programs in the park. Most of these outcomes cannot be achieved without strong, innovative and effective Visitor Experience and Outreach products and services.

The vision statement also indicates key areas of effort for staff. In order that they occur in the vision statement, these include:

- be welcoming
- target audiences are visitors from across Canada
- visitors will experience, enjoy and learn
 - about the ecology, history and cultural resources of the park and the region that it represents
- exemplify the national park ideal
- provide meaningful opportunities for active participation in:
 - stewardship
 - presentation and celebration of natural and cultural heritage
- work through partnerships
- collaborate with Aboriginal people
- be an example of how people can enjoy memorable experiences in sustainable ways

Parks Canada Responsibilities

The Corporate Plan outlines the responsibilities of Parks Canada. Three have direct connection to Prince Albert National Park's Visitor Experience and Outreach programs:

Stewardship

Visitor Experience and Outreach programs at the park must highlight the stewardship activities taking place. This includes what they are, why they are taking place and the benefits to ecological and commemorative integrity in the park to park visitors (Visitor Experience) and all Canadians (Outreach).

Offer Canadians a Variety of Recreational Opportunities and Learning Experiences

Prince Albert National Park has a wide variety of recreational opportunities. Staff must ensure that visitors and potential visitors are aware of them.

In addition, Visitor Experience staff can make important contributions by applying their knowledge of park resources, visitor needs interests and characteristics and effective communication media and methods to integrate interpretation and education into many new park infrastructure projects such as trails, visitor centres, viewpoints and visitor gathering sites.

Personally Connect with Heritage Places

Visitor Experience staff and to some extent Outreach staff have a major opportunity to assist Canadians in making personal connections with places in the park. This can range from working with park operations staff to ensure that some locations have places where people can sit quietly and commune with the powers of nature and feel the ground that supported the footsteps of their family and ancestors to opportunities to take part in real stewardship activities such as censuses, habitat monitoring and restoration.



Corporate Plan Outcomes and Areas of Activity

The Corporate Plan identifies the central outcome of Parks Canada’s overall program as:

Canadians have a strong sense of connection, through meaningful experiences, to their national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas and these protected places are enjoyed in ways that leave them unimpaired for present and future generations.

This is a task for Visitor Experience and Outreach programming. Authors such as Sam Ham and Betty Weilder have conducted research that indicates that meaningful experiences are achieved by engaging participants intellectually and emotionally if it is to be

personal, relevant and meaningful for them.

To do this, staff must:

- have a clear understanding of target audience segments (what they already know about the park, their interests and motivations, behaviours and values)
- select interpretive themes that fit the needs, interests and activities of each segment
- choose appropriate locations, media and methods and program durations that will engender involvement and connections

Areas of Program Activity

The Corporate Plan also describes five Parks Canada program activity areas and identifies the expected results as performance indicators and explains how Parks Canada plans on achieving the expected results.

Of these, three have direct bearing on Visitor Experience and Outreach in Prince Albert National Park:

Activity 2 –Heritage Resource Conservation

This program includes:

- maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity in national parks through protection of natural resources and natural processes
- ensuring the commemorative integrity of national historic sites managed by Parks Canada
- influencing the commemorative integrity of those managed or owned by third parties
- protection and management of cultural resources under the administration of Parks Canada
- sustainable use of national marine conservation areas including protection of unique marine ecosystems.

Key Outcomes:

- the protection of Canada’s natural and cultural resources ensures that current and future generations will enjoy a system of protected heritage places
- the intact ecosystems and historic sites protected by Parks Canada provide opportunities for Canadians to:
 - appreciate and personally connect with nationally significant places and stories
 - engage directly in the management of Canada’s national treasures

How This Can Be Achieved at Prince Albert National Park

The park’s Visitor Experience and Outreach programs can support these initiatives by:

- reminding visitors and outreach audiences that a key function of the park and all Parks Canada properties is to protect and enhance ecological integrity, species at risk and the commemorative integrity of the park’s history and historic sites
- highlighting the value of intact ecosystems to people’s everyday lives through introducing the concept of ecological goods and services
- highlighting specific challenges to ecological integrity and how the park is addressing them
- celebrating the successes in preserving ecological and commemorative integrity
- working with park resource conservation staff and partners to provide opportunities for Canadians to volunteer to take part in monitoring and restoration projects

Activity 3 –Public Appreciation and Understanding

This program activity aims to increase Canadians’ understanding, appreciation, support and engagement with respect to the natural and historical heritage of Parks Canada administered places. This is accomplished by reaching Canadians at home, at leisure, at school and in their communities through relevant and effective communication and public outreach education initiatives.

Key Outcomes:

This activity area provides direction mostly for the park’s Outreach program. However, it does provide some direction for Visitor Experience staff as well. Key outcome areas are discussed below.



Connecting with Urban Canadians

The Corporate Plan indicates:

- *urban Canadians will be more aware, understand and appreciate Parks Canada’s heritage places*
- *achieved by building connections with targeted audiences and networks in the metropolitan areas of Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver (MTV)*

This can be addressed by the park’s Outreach products.

Outreach

To achieve this outcome Outreach will need to have:

- up-to-date information on needs, interests of urban Canadians and an understanding of their current knowledge and attitudes about Parks Canada and Prince Albert National Park
- a clear understanding of what traditional and new media is used by urban Canadians

This information will be used to:

- craft messages and programs that fit the needs and interests of urban Canadians
- choose appropriate media and methods for contacting urban Canadians

Visitor Experience

Currently, very few urban Canadians from the Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver areas come to Prince Albert National Park. Research on trends in tourism suggest that this is unlikely to change in the next five years. So it is unlikely that the park’s Visitor Experience program will contribute to the increased awareness of Parks Canada through direct visitation from the nation’s major urban centres.

Deeper Relationships with Stakeholders and Partners

The Corporate Plan indicates:

- *stakeholders and partners will have opportunities to build deeper relationships with Parks Canada*

Activity 4 –Visitor Experience

The Corporate identifies the following expected national outcomes of the Visitor Experience program:

10 percent visitation increase by March 2015

Prince Albert National Park is currently bucking the national trend of declining visitation. Recent statistics show that visitation is remaining steady year by year. That said, innovative Visitor Experience and Outreach programming at the park level can assist the agency in reaching this goal.

Making Canadians and International Travelers Aware of Visitor Experience Opportunities

This can be achieved through:

- promotion through traditional and new media to specific target markets
- developing a culture of excellence in Visitor Experience products and services

Engaging Canadians Through Mass Media

To achieve this outcome Outreach staff will need to continue to follow Parks Canada’s strategic communications approach.

Providing Canadians with Access to Relevant Information

The Corporate Plan indicates:

- *Canadians will have increased access to relevant information*
- *achieved through renewal of the Parks Canada website and strategic investments in new media*

To achieve this outcome Outreach and Visitor Experience will need to work with national office staff who are redesigning the park’s website and choosing new media. It will be imperative that designers are regularly reminded of the particular needs of the park and its outreach audiences.

Increased Opportunities for Canadians to be Involved with Parks Canada

The Corporate Plan indicates:

- *Canadians will have increased opportunities to be involved with Parks Canada*

To achieve this outcome Outreach and Visitor Experience will need continue to develop volunteer stewardship activities in the park as outlined under Program Activity 2.

Engaging Aboriginal Peoples in the Planning and Management of Parks Canada Heritage Places

- *Aboriginal peoples will be engaged in the planning and management of Parks Canada heritage places*

To achieve this outcome Outreach and Visitor Experience will need continue to:

- develop relationships with Aboriginal communities
- increase their knowledge and sensitivity too Aboriginal culture, history and sensitivities

- can result in a word-of mouth and viral promotion through media such as Twitter and FaceBook

Visitor Expectations, Desires and Needs Are Met Through Delivery of Meaningful Experiences

A key focus of Visitor Experience staff should be the achievement and maintenance of a culture of excellence whereby park visitors continually experience high quality visitor experiences. This can be achieved through:

- regular monitoring and review of trends in visitor needs, interests and activities
- regular professional development that highlights best practice
- a standardized planning and evaluation process that ensures that all new Visitor Experience programs are designed to deliver meaningful experiences