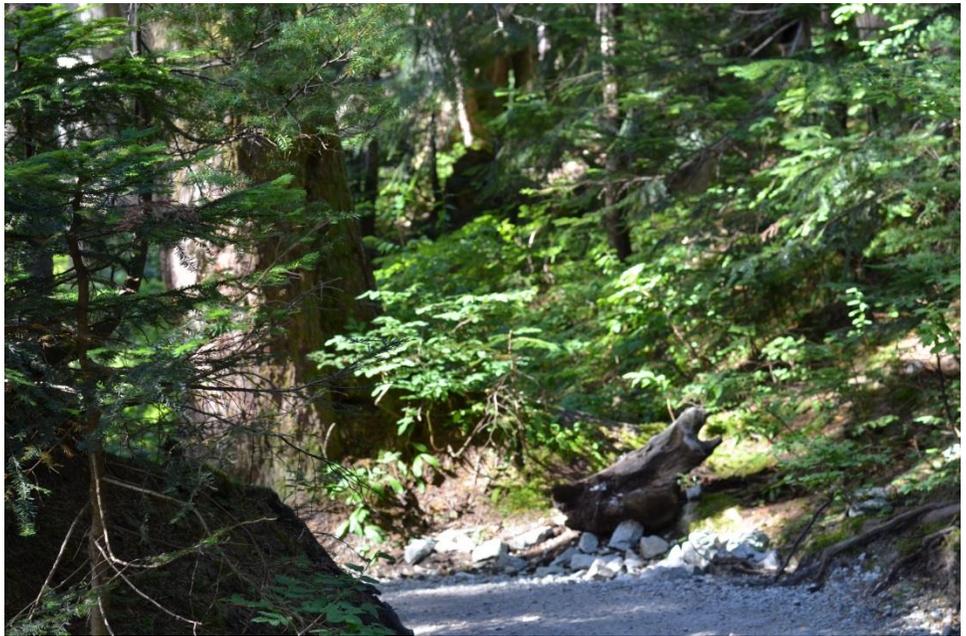


Connecting People to Nature: British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association



June 2017

Applied Research Project - Recreation
Studies, Langara College

This Applied Research Project partnered with the British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) to explore what is currently happening in the BC recreation field to connect people and nature with the intention of growing knowledge, understanding and momentum within the community recreation field in this area – through collecting and sharing stories.

**APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT - RECREATION STUDIES, LANGARA
COLLEGE**

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Introduction and Proposal Overview

(Appendix A – Full proposal)

Connecting People and Nature is identified as one of the five goals in the National Recreation Framework. This is an area that is starting to grow within Community Recreation as this excerpt from the National Recreation Framework points out:

People have an inherent need to connect with the natural world and the recreation field plays a vital role in meeting that need. Connecting with nature is associated with improved cognitive, mental, and physical health, enhanced creativity and positive social behaviours.

Traditionally, recreation has contributed to this goal through the provision and stewardship of outdoor places and spaces, and the development of enabling policies, programs and services related to natural environments. These activities continue to be essential components of recreation's role.

More recently, the need to increase appreciation of and exposure to nature through participation in the community design process has become increasingly important. Recreation contributes to creating walkable, safe, livable communities through the provision of parks, trails, waterways, community gardens and landscaped areas. Recreation supports policies, which ensure that neighbourhoods are designed to maximize opportunities for healthy, active living and exposure to nature. (National Recreation Framework p. 24)

This Applied Research Project partnered with the British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) to explore what is currently happening in the BC recreation field to connect people and nature with the intention of growing knowledge, understanding and momentum within the community recreation field in this area. A secondary purpose of this research project was to provide an opportunity to share knowledge and promising practices between Parks and Recreation within the Municipal sector.

Description of Research Project

- Using the BCRPA network, the researcher collected stories and experiences from municipal Parks and Recreation professionals that are involved in programs that connect people and nature
- These stories were shared with BCRPA members through the Healthy in Nature website <http://hin.bcrpa.bc.ca/resources/stories-about-connecting-nature>
- Research and collect stories and ideas of people and nature programs outside of local government (private and not-for-profit organizations) to offer new ideas and perspectives to community recreation practitioners in this area
- Provide connections to research that address challenges and barriers to programming people and nature programs
- Share information on the BCRPA Collaboration site, provide live facilitation of collaboration site for this topic area for a specific time period
- Presented update of research project and a “call for stories” to BCRPA Symposium, April 2017 through “Snapshots” session
- This project provided 75-100 hours of researcher work in this area

Deliverables

- Collect stories and experiences from Municipal Parks and Recreation professionals who are involved in programs that connect people and nature
- Share these stories with BCRPA members through the Healthy in Nature website
- Research and collect stories and ideas of people and nature programs outside of Municipal Parks and Recreation (private and not-for-profit organizations) to offer new ideas and perspectives to community recreation practitioners in this area – post these on Healthy in Nature Website
- Provide connections to research that address challenges and barriers to programming people and nature programs (researcher provides research support to challenges practitioners have in creating/delivering these programs)
- Share information on the BCRPA Collaboration site, provide live facilitation of collaboration site for this topic area for a specific time period
- Presented update of research project and a “call for stories” to BCRPA Symposium, April 2017 through “Snapshots” session
- Contribute updates to BCRPA communications (newsletters/update emails)

Background and Context

There is a growing awareness within the National Recreation Field that connecting people to nature is an important part of individual and community wellness and part of the work of Recreation Professionals. What has traditionally been in the Municipal “Parks” portfolio is now also becoming part of the Recreation area and Program Coordinators who have traditionally programmed within recreation centers are planning programs outside of their facilities to create opportunities for people to connect to nature.

This Applied Research Project aimed to collect and share stories of what is currently happening in community recreation to connect people to nature.

For this Applied Research Project, the researcher partnered with BCRPA – the reasons for this were:

- BCRPA had an important role in the creation of “A Framework for recreation in Canada 2015” – and has a role in promoting this document and advocating for widespread implementation of the goals in the Framework. Connecting People to Nature is Goal 3 in the Framework.
- BCRPA membership is primarily Municipal Parks and Recreation employees – and this was the target population for collecting and sharing stories
- BCRPA created and operates the Healthy in Nature Website – which provides information and resources on increasing awareness of the benefits of nature – this was a great vehicle to post and share connecting to nature stories
- BCRPA created and operates the “Online Collaboration Site” which was a part of this research project.
- The BCRPA mission statement and strategic plan was aligned with the purpose of this Research Project. The mission statement of the BCRPA is:

The BCRPA is committed to leading the parks, recreation and culture sector in building and sustaining healthy active communities, including fostering economic and environmental sustainability. We inspire and support community leaders and

practitioners through advocacy, communication, education, and resources..

<http://www.bcrpa.bc.ca/about-bcrpa/strategic-intentmission>

This applied research project connects to BCRPA's mission statement by supporting recreation practitioners in creating programs that connect people to nature and communicating stories of how they are doing that in their own words. These stories and the opportunity for Online collaboration in this topic area creates resources to support this work. The Online Collaboration Site provided an opportunity to open a dialogue about how this is happening share ideas with a common purpose of providing specific examples that support Goal 3 in the Recreation Framework.

The researcher has been involved in Connecting People to Nature research as well as leading nature programs, and teaches a Special Topics (RECR 2295) course at Langara College "Connecting to Nature". The researcher is a member of BCRPA, and past Board Member. Her previous work within the Municipal Recreation System provided a perspective that understood the busyness of the job and how stories could be useful as a method to transmit knowledge in a functional way. The researcher has a passion for growing awareness on Connecting People to Nature in Community Recreation and for focusing on the small, simple, do-able ways practitioners can create more awareness of the importance and benefits of doing this. These are the researcher's biases but they also created interest to engage in the momentum of this topic area.

Story Telling as an Applied Research Method

Story telling -- or the practice of collecting and sharing stories -- was used intentionally as a research method in this Applied Research Project. This method of transmission created a low-barrier way for recreation practitioners to share information in their own words and was practical, easily accessible and understood.

The purpose was to use a story format to share ideas. Within the qualitative research field – particularly in the disciplines of Health and Education, storytelling as a research method is gaining credibility as an important way to understand the world.

Cox and Bowles identify the value of telling a story:

At the most basic level "Telling the Story" is a means of transmitting ideas from one person to another. (Cox 2001) Storytelling is a part of life, intrinsic to most cultures. They help people make sense of the world--life's experiences, dilemmas and hardships. Stories can educate, inspire and build rapport. They are a means of communicating, recreating, and helping preserve cultures (Bowles 1995) by translating memories into a more concrete manner that can be handed down verbally or in written form. Telling the story can provide the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of one's experiences and oneself.

Sandelowski and White talk about a renewed focus on valuing narratives within the academic area of behavioral and social sciences:

"One mark of the turn away from positivism and toward interpretation in the behavioral and social sciences has been a renewed attention to the human "impulse to narrate" (White, 1980, p. 5). Mourning the devaluation of narratives as sources of knowledge, and emphasizing the moral force, healing power, and emancipatory thrust of stories, scholars across the discipline have (re) discovered the narrative nature of human beings" (Sandelowski, 1991).

For this Applied Research Project it seemed important to use the power of narrative and stories in helping people connect with -- and understand things. I specifically chose the medium of "stories" for this Applied Research Project because the research shows how powerful they are in how we experience the world. "One theory in educational research holds that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. Thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways human experience the world." (Connely and Clandinin 1990).

"Research suggest the human brain is hardwired for stories (Bentley, n.d.). When presented with a story, both sides of the brain work to process the words, interpret the story, and store its meaning in memory. Facts activate only the language processing areas of the brain, while stories activate the motor and sensory areas as well. Essentially, stories make the brain behave as if we are experiencing the events firsthand." (Berns et al.,2013; Weldon, 2014; Zak 2013) in "The Power of Stories Enriching Program Research and Reporting." (OPRE 2016).

In this Applied Research Project, the stories were used less as a research method which explored who told the story and how they told it – but more as a method of sharing information in an accessible way that resonated with our human interest and connection to stories. The stories were explored by the researcher for common themes, and general analysis -- but the point of this as a research method was to provide a medium to share information from an inherently human perspective in an inherently human way.

The following is an excerpt from the initial "Call for stories" in BCRPA Communique explaining why stories were important:

This work is part of an Applied Research Project I am working on with the BCRPA. I've conducted many research projects but this one is different. With this one I am focusing on harnessing the power of the storytelling narrative to help increase knowledge, understanding and momentum within community recreation in this area.

Facts and figures matter but stories are what people instantly connect with. Learning through real experiences is how we in turn experience and understand the world.

There is power in telling a true story – and your story will help others in their pursuit to connect their community to nature.

So tell me your story

Do you provide opportunities in your recreation work to connect people to nature? It can be something that may seem small or it can be big and purposeful – all stories are welcome. The more diversity we have in how people are creating opportunities for people to connect to nature – the more ideas and directions we can use in our own work.

Methodology

There were two parts to this research project. The primary purpose of the project was to collect and share stories of how Recreation Practitioners are creating opportunities to connect people to nature. In

this part, a call for stories went out by email from BCRPA, stories were collected by the researcher and then posted on the Healthy in Nature website. The second part of this research project was to moderate the Online Collaboration Site operated by BCRPA for a set amount of time to draw attention to the topic area and provide an opportunity for members to engage in the topic area – ask questions, post comments, resources etc.

Part 1 – Collecting and Sharing Stories

The initial “Call for stories” email was sent out through BCRPA Communiqué to their email distribution list of members on Feb. 28th with a deadline for stories of April 30 (see Appendix C for Call for Stories document). Reminders were sent out in consecutive BCRPA Communiqués, and the deadline was extended to May 15.

People who wanted to contribute a story contacted the researcher by email and then emailed the story to the researcher. As stories were received the researcher read them and added a heading with the story title, and the name of the contributor. The story was uploaded by the researcher on the Healthy in Nature Website. This was then approved and posted by BCRPA as per the protocol for the Healthy in Nature Website submission guidelines. A new tab was created for the stories -- under the “programming tab” in a new tab titled “Stories about Connecting to Nature” <http://hin.bcrpa.bc.ca/resources/stories-about-connecting-nature>. In some cases, the researcher embedded photos that were attached and in two stories, the researcher added photos from her collection. Stories stayed in the writer’s own words.

The researcher did not “edit” or “re-write” stories. Story contributors were encouraged to write in their own words and from their experience. This was an intentional choice and one that evolved in a valuable way as the stories came in. The researcher wanted to leave this open – recognizing that there was value to story writers knowing their story would be accepted in their own words. The diversity of writing and voices was a powerful part of the collection of stories. (See ‘Researcher Learning’ section for more information in this area). The contributors were then sent an email thanking them for their story and for making a meaningful contribution to the work in this area.

In total, 22 stories were received and posted on the Healthy in Nature Website. Initially the researcher was targeting 30-50 stories, and when it looked like the amount of stories voluntarily contributed would be less than the targeted amount, the researcher explored the possibility of contacting people and asking them to write a story. This idea was not implemented as the researcher decided there would be more integrity to the Project if the stories that were received and posted were done so voluntarily from the “Call for Stories”.

During the BCRPA Symposium April 6, 2017, the researcher presented at the “snapshots” session to all of the delegates updating them on the research and asking them to send in stories – there was an increase in the amount of stories received after this session. There was also a small increase in the stories after each of the communiqués were sent out.

Part 2 – Moderating the Online Collaboration Site

In addition to collecting and sharing stories about connecting people to nature, part of this research project included the researcher moderating BCRPA’s Online Collaboration site

<http://collaboration.bcrpa.bc.ca/discussions?topic=8>

This is a posting forum where members can post information, question and engage in dialogue about topics. Historically the site has been more of a one-way dialogue, with members viewing the posts, but not engaging in discussion. It was thought that with a designated moderator available for four weeks in

the Healthy in Nature topic area – it would create more engagement and increase discussion. It was unknown if this goal would be successful – but worth trying as part of this research project.

The researcher moderated the Online Collaboration Site between May 16 and June 16 2017. This was announced to BCRPA member email list via the Communiqué prior to May 16 and during the May 16 – June 16 time period.

During this time period four articles were posted by the researcher on the Healthy in Nature topic area – hoping to create interest and engagement as well as a Welcome message inviting people to join the conversation and start a discussion.

The articles were:

1. The Value of “Risk” In Connecting People to Nature
2. How do you connect to Nature
3. National Momentum for Connecting People to Nature
4. What I learned about how you connect People to Nature

(For Full articles see Appendix F)

Findings and Discussion

Connecting People to Nature Stories

The purpose of this applied research project was to create a way to collect and share information in a vehicle that worked for Recreation Practitioners and that resonated with the recreation culture. It also created an opportunity to try a different way of doing research that gave the participants a voice and provided a framework for practitioners to share ideas and stories from their own perspectives. (List of Stories Connecting People to Nature, Appendix E)

In total, 22 stories were collected and posted on the Healthy in Nature website between Feb 22 and May 31, 2017. These stories were submitted voluntarily as a result for the email call for stories and the research presentation at Symposium. At the start of the project, it was unknown how many stories would be submitted and this number was a positive result for the project. The stories reflected diversity on many levels. They were rich and thoughtful, enthusiastic, insightful, simple, interesting and heartfelt. A consistent theme within the stories reflected the importance of connecting people to nature as part of Municipal recreation work.

Although collecting and sharing the stories was the primary purpose of this Applied Research Project, the stories received were analyzed in the following areas:

Were the stories from Urban or Rural areas of BC?

- Lower Mainland 14 (Surrey, Richmond, Port Coquitlam, Coquitlam, Maple Ridge, North Vancouver, New Westminister, Vancouver, Burnaby)
- Outside of Lower Mainland 8 (Victoria, Campbell River, Cowichan Valley, Powell River, Kelowna)

Ages of participants in Programs

All ages – from 0 – Senior (including families and communities) were represented in the stories that were collected. This result speaks to the diversity of programs and ages that connecting to nature can access.

Types of Programs

- Hiking
- Exploring
- Learning/ educational
- Summer Camps
- Preschool/Kindergarten
- Gardening
- Walking
- Community building
- Camping

Recreation or Parks as contributors?

The majority of the stories were from Municipal Recreation – there were two stories from Parks – this was interesting – and could be a result of the profile of the membership of BCRPA – or who is reading the Communiqués and attending Symposium.

Who submitted the stories?

The majority of stories were submitted by people at the Programmer Level or Managers.

Why 22 stories?

This was the amount of stories that were voluntarily contributed over the timeline of this Research Project. This number was higher than expected by the researcher. It was unknown how many stories would be contributed. Initially, it was thought that the majority of the stories would have to come from the researcher contacting specific people and asking for stories. As the stories voluntarily came in and the number rose above 20, it was decided that this in itself was an important result for this project and should be valued as good engagement from the recreation field in writing and sharing their own stories.

Themes from the stories

The following themes were identified from the collection of stories – some of the themes overlap categories, but special effort was spent to ensure that the character of each of the themes was recognized and not “lumped” together into a few general themes. These themes may be important in designing new programs that connect people to nature.

- Connection to Nature and community
- Learning about nature in their community
- Increase awareness of nature and surroundings
- Play and education in Nature
- Working with community stakeholders and partners
- Know and love nature better
- Kids are thrilled by the simplest things – weeding garden
- Environment to learn and be yourself
- Environment to relax, de-stress, slow down, build relationships
- Physical and mental wellness
- Started small – with an idea
- Learn about ourselves
- Connect to others
- Nature Discovery

- Benefits of nature – decreased anxiety, health, healing
- Learn skills
- Health
- Perspective of nature (everywhere) – small hits of nature – perspective of what Nature is/can be
- Simple practices – profound and positive results
- View nature with a wide angle
- Unstructured play in nature
- Children’s longing for nature
- Simple / not prescriptive / open / creative / engaged / invested in time outside
- Social connections
- Simple Walking

Following is the article posted on the Online Collaboration site that reflects how the themes connect:

What I learned about how you connect people to nature in recreation

My Applied Research project – Collecting Stories about how you connect people to nature in Recreation -- is wrapping up. There are over [20 stories](#) posted on the Healthy in Nature website from Recreation Practitioners in BC about connecting people to nature.

What I really love about this project is that the stories are thoughtful, diverse and doable – sometimes with surprising outcomes or “unintended consequences”. These stories confirm that small ideas can have big impacts in our community in connecting people to nature. Earth-shattering is overrated – this research project was about sharing small ideas and stories that contribute in a meaningful way to connecting people to nature. Small but mighty....and doable.



Here’s what I learned from your stories (I have live links to the stories I highlight for easy access to the submitted story):

Connecting to nature benefits any age

From nature preschools in [West Shore Parks and Recreation](#) and [Terra Nova Nature School in Richmond](#) to [middle school youth in Victoria](#) to the [Baby and Me hiking group in North Vancouver and Coquitlam](#) and the [Seniors Garden Club in Burnaby](#) and [Walking Group in Powell River](#) – People at every age and stage in their lives benefit from connecting to nature.

Connecting to Nature builds community connection

The [Community gardens project, adopt a walkway, and neighborhood events in Campbell River](#) grow community. Surrey is working to [connect people to their parks](#) and create community. [Bird Week](#) partners with many smaller community organizations to create a

community that is bird-engaged. [Cameron's summer camp](#) worked with community stakeholders to bring nature and environmental awareness to the camp. The [Baby and Me hiking group](#) grows a community of parents in nature -- and in Cowichan Valley the [Lake to Lake walk and Marathon](#) connects people to nature and the community.

Connecting to Nature gives us perspective about ourselves and our place in the world

[Hiking to blue lake in Kelowna](#) gave participants an opportunity for nature discovery, to learn about themselves and connect to others. [An outdoor meeting in New Westminster](#) inspired programmers to ask questions about what they are doing to connect themselves and their community to nature. At [UVIC, second year students](#) are challenged to see what barriers there are in connecting to nature and the benefits of a nature connection.

Connecting to Nature is part of a healthy human experience

In Maple Ridge, programming reflects an emphasis on [children and families](#) and healthy eating, in the community. In Victoria [the Nature's Way Program](#) helps to decrease anxiety in youth.

Connecting to Nature can have unintended consequences and surprising results

[Rock rolling](#) in Kelowna is a simple story that shows how one leader can make a difference in a spontaneous, nature-way. In [Kate's Kindergarten class](#), there is some perspective shift about what nature is. In Port Coquitlam, encouraging summer camp and program leaders with [an "intention" to connect to nature](#) created really positive results.

Nature is everywhere – even unlikely places

In a hospital room as in the story about [Cheney's dad](#). Or "[Nature as the 'unintended consequence'](#)" story of the Walk Richmond group. Nature is a community garden, a pocket park, a woodlot attached to an elementary school.

Online Collaboration Site

The researcher’s role as moderator on the Online Collaboration Site was open and flexible. The purpose was to engage members in discussion about connecting people to nature. The first post welcomed ideas and discussion – this was followed up by a response from a BCRPA staff member and response from the researcher – but no further engagement. After touching base with Janet Rerecich at BCRPA – a strategy was employed for the researcher to post a “thought-provoking” article in a topic within Healthy in Nature each week in the hope that it would engage some discussion. In total four articles were posted, with the following view results:

Post	Date	Views	Response posts
Welcome to the “Connecting People to Nature” Conversation moderated by Janet Ready	May 15	285	2
The Value of “Risk” In Connecting People to Nature	May 17	176	1
How do you connect to Nature	May 24	123	0
National Momentum for Connecting People to Nature	May 29	128	0
What I learned about how you connect People to Nature	June 16	55	0

The results show that there was a significant amount of “views” of the posts but minimal to no response posts or desire to engage in discussion. This was disappointing but was consistent with Janet Rerecich’s experience with the Online Collaboration site. It may signal that members are interested in viewing and receiving information but don’t have the time or desire to create or engage in conversation.

Other parts of the research project

One of the pieces of the proposed research project was to research and collect stories of people and nature programs outside of municipal recreation to post on the Healthy in Nature website – to offer new ideas and perspectives to community recreation practitioners in this area. As a result of the limited researcher time and focus on the primary purpose of the project, this was not done. There may be opportunity for a follow-up research project that does this in the future. It was decided that the main focus should stay on providing stories specifically from municipal recreation practitioners to other practitioners.

In conversations with BCRPA at the beginning of this Project, it was identified that a secondary area of research could be to provide an opportunity to share knowledge and promising practices between Parks and Recreation in the Municipal sector. There were only two stories contributed from the Parks area and while BCRPA membership includes Parks and Recreation, it is hard to measure if this was accomplished. This was explored in a small way by the researcher, but the result was learning that each municipality has different organizational structures where sometimes Parks and Recreation are in the same area and sometimes Parks is in another area like Engineering. It was difficult to identify how to approach this and what information to collect to be helpful. This may be an area that could be explored in future years as BCRPA is focusing on growing member engagement from the Municipal Parks area.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This Applied Research Project was small in scope but had a clear purpose of using stories as a vehicle to share information about how Recreation Practitioners are creating opportunities to Connect People

to Nature. Using Goal 3 of the Framework for Recreation in Canada, these stories helped this goal to come alive within Municipal Recreation.

The “Stories about connecting to nature” tab of the Healthy in Nature website will continue to be open to read the stories and for people to upload more stories if they want to add to the collection.

As discussed in the above section, “Findings and Discussion”, further research could be done in the following two areas:

1. Research and collect stories and ideas of people and nature programs outside of Municipal Parks and Recreation (Private and not-for-profit organizations) to offer new ideas and perspectives to community recreation practitioners in this area
2. Research and create an opportunity to share knowledge and promising practices in a more intentional way between Parks and Recreation in the Municipal sector.

It is recommended that this report be submitted to the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association to include on their website as a resource for Recreation Practitioners across Canada.

It is recommended that the researcher submit an application to share this information at a session during the Framework for Recreation in Canada Forum in Regina Saskatchewan May 2018.

Researcher Learning

This Applied Research Project provided a lot of opportunities for learning. In this section I will reflect on what I learned during the process and how that learning can help me grow into a better recreation educator and contribute more strongly to the Recreation Studies Department at Langara College.

Initially, as the researcher in this project, my intent was to write and/or edit the stories to ensure they met a certain standard and format before they were posted...but as the stories came in, I realized that they were more powerful and effective in the story teller’s own words. So they were published as they were sent in – with an email back to the story teller that their story was really helpful in growing the momentum and ideas. In making this decision, and in receiving the stories, I learned that there is power each persons’ own words and voice. Recognizing and honoring this is important to me as a researcher. I realized that Recreation is a culture of collaboration; building on each other’s ideas and stories would resonate most effectively if they stood as they were submitted by the contributor. There is value in people speaking from their own experience in recreation. This research method provided a framework for recreation practitioners to share their expertise in a human way. I feel that this brought integrity to the research and ensured that the stories stayed real, engaging and accessible.

I originally thought that there would be a very small amount of stories submitted voluntarily – I thought I would spend a lot of time tracking down stories and asking people to write – like an investigative journalist. This part of the research project was a gaping unknown. There were two stories that were done this way, but the rest of the stories were submitted voluntarily already written – there were prompts from BCRPA through their Communiqué and an opportunity for me to personally talk about the research and ask for stories through the Snapshots session of Symposium – but I was impressed with the amount of stories that came from practitioners without formally tracking them down. I believe this speaks to the nature/culture of the recreation field. I think people genuinely wanted to share ideas and

what they are doing to connect people to nature in order to help other practitioners. When the number of stories collected went over 20, I made an intentional decision to let the contributed stories be the research project and not try to contact people individually to write stories. There are probably pros and cons to this decision – but I felt there was integrity in having stories contributed voluntarily.

The Online Collaboration part of the research was challenging – Janet at BCRPA was a great support and we connected a few times during the one month timeline to review how it was going and adapt strategies to try to increase participation. I was hoping to have more engagement on the site – but the results were consistent with how the site has been used historically by members, so it wasn't out of the ordinary -- and in hindsight it shows that sometimes what seems like a great idea, may have a different way of rolling out – or being picked up. It was good to try different approaches for this part of the research with the principle of trying to provide meaningful information and ideas to members.

I learned again how the nature of Applied Research is very fluid – and if the researcher is too rigid and structured in their approach – it can be frustrating and some great opportunities can be missed. (Oh...wait....kind of like teaching ☺)...a lot like teaching.

I was lifted up by the reception of BCRPA to the research idea and from the engagement I had with the story contributors and delegates at Symposium. It provided confirmation to me that I really like working in Recreation and for Recreation Practitioners – that part of my mission as a Recreation Educator is to support the practitioners in their work – and I felt through this project I could do that.

Working on this project helped me to feel connected to Recreation Field. As an instructor – I have moved out of the practical work of recreation and want to ensure that I continue to be engaged in the field so I can bring that knowledge and relevance into my teaching. By using Goal 3 in the Framework for Recreation in Canada as a reference and creating an applied, practical way to share information and increase momentum in this area – I got to have a ground level perspective of how it is currently working and could work. This knowledge and the connections I made in this project translate into my teaching and providing current, relevant examples of recreation within a National perspective. In partnering with BCRPA on this project, I developed better relationships with their staff and a stronger connection to the Association.

I teach the RECR 4400 Applied Major Project course in the Bachelor of Recreation Management where students complete a major research project -- and on more than one occasion during this Research Project I thought of the students in that course and how hard it is to do applied research. I came up with better ways to teach the course and more empathy for their research journey in the course. For me it is important as an authentic and credible teacher to ensure that I am doing work that I am asking them to do.

I had the opportunity to try using storytelling as a research method. I have been working on incorporating this into my teaching and my assignments – and seeing how it worked in this project inspired me to keep working on it. I think there is something really important there that I am continuing to unwrap and understand – and this project provided confirmation on that and engaged my curiosity as to how to use it more in my teaching. It also proved to me that it resonates with the recreation culture.

In this project, I intentionally approached it with the belief that small is okay – that the stories didn't have to be earth-shattering to be valuable...that each story contributed to a bigger conversation. This

connected to the grassroots history of recreation and reminded me that it is also an important principle in my teaching. The scope of the research project was small, but it is these small things that create momentum in recreation. Historically we have seen that and it is an important part of the culture.

I teach RECR 2295 Special Topics "Connecting to Nature". For this fall 2017 term, I will be including the stories on the Healthy in Nature website into the curriculum for the Community and Nature section of the course. The knowledge that I gained working on this Research Project directly translates into more informed teaching in that course.

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Appendix A

Applied Research Project Proposal, Recreation Studies Dept., Langara College

Partnering with British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) to explore and share what is currently happening in the BC Recreation Field to connect people and nature

Background and Rationale

Connecting People and Nature is identified as one of the five goals in the National Recreation Framework. This is an area that is starting to grow within Community Recreation as this excerpt from the National Recreation Framework points out:

People have an inherent need to connect with the natural world and the recreation field plays a vital role in meeting that need. Connecting with nature is associated with improved cognitive, mental, and physical health, enhanced creativity and positive social behaviours.

Traditionally, recreation has contributed to this goal through the provision and stewardship of outdoor places and spaces, and the development of enabling policies, programs and services related to natural environments. These activities continue to be essential components of recreation's role.

More recently, the need to increase appreciation of and exposure to nature through participation in the community design process has become increasingly important. Recreation contributes to creating walkable, safe, livable communities through the provision of parks, trails, waterways, community gardens and landscaped areas. Recreation supports policies, which ensure that neighbourhoods are designed to maximize opportunities for healthy, active living and exposure to nature. (National Recreation Framework p. 24)

This proposed Applied Research Project partners with the British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) to explore what is currently happening in the BC recreation field to connect people and nature with the intention of growing knowledge, understanding and momentum within the community recreation field in this area. A secondary purpose of this research project is to provide an opportunity to share knowledge and promising practices between Parks and Recreation within the Municipal sector.

Description of Proposed Project

- Using the BCRPA network, the researcher will collect stories and experiences from local government Parks and Recreation professionals that are involved in programs that connect people and nature
- Share these stories with BCRPA members through the Healthy in Nature website
- Research and collect stories and ideas of people and nature programs outside of local government (private and not-for-profit organizations) to offer new ideas and perspectives to community recreation practitioners in this area

- Provide connections to research that address challenges and barriers to programming people and nature programs
- Share information on the BCRPA Collaboration site, provide live facilitation of collaboration site for this topic area for a specific time period
- Possibility to present research to BCRPA Symposium, April 2017
- This project provides 75-100 hours of researcher work in this area

Deliverables

- collect stories and experiences from local government Parks and Recreation professionals that are involved in programs that connect people and nature
- Share these stories with BCRPA members through the Healthy in Nature website
- Research and collect stories and ideas of people and nature programs outside of local government (private and not-for-profit organizations) to offer new ideas and perspectives to community recreation practitioners in this area – post these on Healthy in Nature Website
- Provide connections to research that address challenges and barriers to programming people and nature programs (researcher provides research support to challenges practitioners have in creating/delivering these programs)
- Share information on the BCRPA Collaboration site, provide live facilitation of collaboration site for this topic area for a specific time period
- Possibility to present research to BCRPA Symposium, April 2017
- Contribute updates to BCRPA communications (newsletters/update emails)

Timeline

Deliverables will be completed by May 1, 2017 – Specific timeline of research will be coordinated with BCRPA.

Connection to Langara College Academic Plan, Strategic Plan, Vision, Mission and Values

This project connects strongly to the Langara College Academic Plan and Strategic Plan as well as the values of the college in significant ways:

This research project connects to the Academic Plan Priority One – Learning and Teaching. Working with the Healthy Community Partnership promotes and supports innovation and quality in teaching and curriculum design. Collaborating with partners in the field to collect and share stories of connecting people to nature initiatives supports Goal five of the National Recreation Framework provides forward thinking and innovative ideas in how the recreation field looks at their opportunities and responsibility in this area. Applying this perspective creates an opportunity to connect new ideas to the Recreation Studies Curriculum and provide the faculty researcher with experiential education opportunities to increase their knowledge and experience in teaching.

This research project connects to the Academic Plan Priority Five – Environmental, financial and social sustainability. There is a strong element of “cross-disciplinary” intention in this proposal working with the BCRPA and other private and not-for-profit providers of connecting to nature initiatives. This project will also build partnerships with these community partners and provide applied research in a real and tangible way to the community.

This research project connects to the Langara's strategic priority of "student focus" We will provide our diverse student community with the services, programs, skills and experiences to be productive, creative, and engaged global citizens. (Langara Strategic Plan). By supporting our faculty to conduct applied research within the Recreation field, we are able to use this research to enhance the curriculum in our Recreation courses and connect them strongly to what is currently happening in the Recreation Field.

This research project connects to the College strategic priority of "Employee sustainability" -- Provide ongoing opportunities for leadership and professional development at all levels of the organization. This project provides an opportunity for leadership and professional development for faculty within the department of Recreation Studies in working with the Parks and Recreation Community in BC to conduct applied research.

This research project also connects to Langara College's strategic priority of "Communication and Advocacy". This project serves to "expand Langara's profile with key stakeholders" (Langara Strategic Plan). This applied research project creates a valuable connection for the Langara College Recreation Studies department to the BC Recreation and Parks Association and expands our faculty and program profile of Applied Researchers in this area.

This research project connects to all of the Langara College Values – with a specific focus on the "innovative" category as Langara College is currently seeking opportunities for Applied Research that is well connected to the community:

- **Student-Focused**
Decisions are made with learners in mind.
- **Collegial**
Open and inclusive discussion in a respectful environment.
- **Innovative**
New ideas are welcomed and integrated where possible.
- **Accessible**
Programs and services are accessible to learners across our community.

Benefits to BCRPA and the Recreation Field in BC

Use the research to grow knowledge, understanding and momentum within the community recreation field in this connecting people to nature goal. Provide an opportunity to share knowledge and promising practices between Parks and Recreation within the Municipal sector. Create positive momentum and support for Recreation Practitioners in moving forward with this goal of the National Recreation Framework. Provide relevant, practical support and information to members about an emerging area of community recreation.

This proposal was created in collaboration with the British Columbia Parks and Recreation Association (BCRPA). Contact: Janet Rerecich, Professional Development and Initiatives Manager, Rebecca Turncliffe, Chief Executive Officer

This proposal is submitted by Janet Ready, Recreation Studies Faculty and Department Chair, September 30, 2016.

Appendix B

Backgrounder – Connecting People to Nature

Applied Research Project (Jan – May 2017)

Researcher: Janet Ready, Recreation Studies Dept., Langara College – in partnership with the British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA). **Purpose of the research Project**

SHARE YOUR NATURE STORIES

If you have a story about how you or your recreation organization is connecting people to nature – email it to Janet Ready, Recreation Studies Dept – Langara College.

jready@langara.bc.ca

Stories will be posted on the BCRPA Healthy in Nature website:

<http://hin.bcrpa.bc.ca/>

To explore what is currently happening in the BC recreation field to connect people and nature and share that information through stories -- with the intention of growing knowledge, understanding and momentum within community recreation in this area.

Connection to the National Recreation Framework

Connecting People and Nature is identified as one of the five goals in the National Recreation Framework. This is an area that is starting to grow within Community Recreation as this excerpt from the National Recreation Framework points out:

“People have an inherent need to connect with the natural world and the recreation field plays a vital role in meeting that need. Connecting with nature is associated with improved cognitive, mental, and physical health, enhanced creativity and positive social behaviours.

Traditionally, recreation has contributed to this goal through the provision and stewardship of outdoor places and spaces, and the development of enabling policies, programs and services related to natural environments. These activities continue to be essential components of recreation’s role.

“PEOPLE HAVE AN INHERENT NEED TO CONNECT WITH THE NATURAL WORLD AND THE RECREATION FIELD PLAYS A VITAL ROLE IN MEETING THAT NEED.”

More recently, the need to increase appreciation of and exposure to nature through participation in the community design process has become increasingly important. Recreation contributes to creating walkable, safe, livable communities through the provision of parks, trails, waterways, community gardens and landscaped areas. Recreation supports policies, which ensure that neighbourhoods are designed to maximize opportunities for healthy, active living



and exposure to nature.” ([National Recreation Framework](#) p. 24)

Description of the Research Project

- Using the BCRPA network, the researcher will collect stories and experiences from local government Parks and Recreation professionals that are involved in programs that connect people and nature
- These stories will be shared through the Healthy in Nature website <http://hin.bcrpa.bc.ca/>
- Research and collect stories and ideas of people and nature programs outside of local government (private and not-for-profit organizations) to offer new ideas and perspectives to community recreation practitioners in this area
- Provide connections to research that address challenges and barriers to programming people and nature programs
- Information will be shared on the BCRPA Collaboration site, provide live facilitation of collaboration site for this topic area for a specific time period
- Researcher will be presenting at the “snapshots” session, BCRPA Symposium, Kelowna April 6, 2017
- This project provides 75-100 hours of researcher work in this area

Timeline of the Research Project

January

- Prep for Research Project, Backgrounder written, identify contact list of people to start contacting

February and March

- Send out call for stories and research project information to BCRPA members
- Collect stories, research and interviews
- Post stories on Healthy in Nature Website

April

- Present update of research at BCRPA Symposium
- Code stories for barriers/challenges/successes
- Facilitation of Collaboration site – BCRPA
- Write final report

Appendix C

Stories to Inspire and Inform



STORIES TO INSPIRE AND INFORM

Hello, My name is Janet Ready, an instructor in the Recreation Studies Department at Langara College as well as a member of the BCRPA Board of Directors, and I want to tell your story.

Specifically, your story on how your Recreation organization is Connecting People to Nature.



This work is part of an Applied Research Project I am working on with the BCRPA. I've conducted many research projects but this one is different. With this one I am focusing on harnessing the power of the storytelling narrative to help increase knowledge, understanding and momentum within community recreation in this area.

Facts and figures matter but stories are what people instantly connect with. Learning through real experiences is how we in turn experience and understand the world.

There is power in telling a true story – and your story will help others in their pursuit to connect their community to nature.

So tell me your story

Do you provide opportunities in your recreation work to connect people to nature? It can be something that may seem small or it can be big and purposeful – all stories are welcome. The more diversity we have in how people are creating opportunities for people to connect to nature – the more ideas and directions we can use in our own work.

Please send me your story, or feel free to connect with me directly through email or phone: jready@langara.bc.ca 604-323-5128. I am happy to work with you to recount your unique experiences.

I need to hear from you by April 30. As stories are received they will be posted on the [Healthy in Nature website](#) hosted by the BCRPA – so don't wait until the deadline!

The BCRPA will also be letting you know when new stories are posted so you can see what your colleagues are doing and in turn be inspired by them.

Thank you for being a part of this! I look forward to hearing from you.

More information on my Research Project can be [found here](#). And for more information on me, check out [my bio](#).

Two Stories to get you started

Here are two moving stories of how recreation practitioners are Connecting People to Nature:

[Seniors Walking Group in Powell River](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
Janet Ready
Faculty and Dept. Chair,
Recreation Studies Dept., Langara College
jready@langara.bc.ca



[Connecting to Nature as an “intention” in the Summer Camps in Port Coquitlam](#)

Janet Ready | 604-323-5128 | [E-mail](#)

Recipient Name

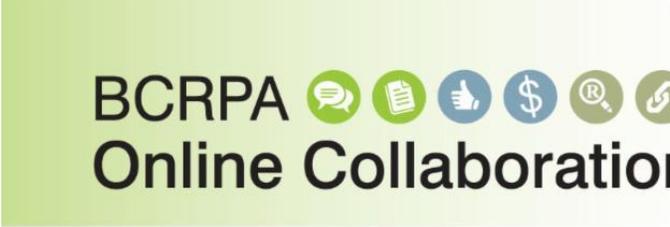
Street Address

City, ST ZIP Code

Appendix D

From BCRPA Communique May 16, 2017

Connecting People to Nature Stories



BCRPA Online Collaboration Site

From May 16 - June 16, Janet Ready, Instructor in the Recreation Studies Dept., Langara College, and former BCRPA Board Director, will be facilitating conversations within the "Healthy in Nature" topic area of the BCRPA Online Collaboration Site.

Janet is currently involved in an Applied Research Project with BCRPA on "Connecting People to Nature" and as part of that project has been providing ideas, connections, and research through the Healthy in Nature site. She will now be initiating conversations, on the Collaboration site, on how we can connect people to nature in our work and where the challenges and success are.

Check in to the ["Healthy in Nature" topic area of the Collaboration site](#) between May 16-June 16 and be part of the conversation! While you are there, subscribe to the conversation thread to receive email alerts letting you know when someone has contributed to the discussion.

If you have some experience, best practices, or simply a general opinion to share on this topic, [log in](#) to the BCRPA Collaboration Site and join the conversation. Your contributions can help more than you know.

Appendix E

List of Stories about Connecting People to Nature

Healthy in Nature Website BCRPA

1. Baby and Me Hiking in North Vancouver, Coquitlam
2. Bird Week Events and Stories from Vancouver Park Board and Vancouver Bird Advisory Committee
3. Cameron Seniors Garden Club at Cameron Recreation Complex in Burnaby
4. What we are doing to Connect Families and Children to Nature in Maple Ridge
5. Connecting People to Nature – and creating meaningful results – Campbell River
6. Connecting People to Surrey’s Parks
7. Connecting to Nature in Early Childhood – West Shore Parks and Recreation’s Nature Preschool
8. Full-On-Fun at Cameron Recreation Centre – Connecting Children with Nature through Playful Exploration in a Summer Day Camp
9. Get out Camping – Port Coquitlam
10. Get Outside...it’s naturally fun! New Westminster
11. Hiking to Light Blue Lake – Regional District of Central Okanagan
12. Lake to Lake Walk & Marathon – Cowichan Valley
13. Nature as the “unintended consequence” – Richmond
14. Nature’s Way – A program for middle school age youth – City of Victoria
15. Rock Rolling – afterschool program – Kelowna
16. Terra Nova Nature School – Richmond
17. Time in Nature – University of Victoria
18. Unexpected Lessons on Reconnecting with Nature – One Green Square Wellness
19. Connecting to Nature – 4 class lessons – Kindergarten
20. Kate’s Kindergarten Class – North Vancouver
21. Connecting to Nature as an intention in Port Coquitlam Summer Camps
22. Hearts in Motion Walking Club – Powell River

Appendix F

The Risk of being too safe - Rethinking risk in recreation

Janet Ready, Faculty, Recreation Studies, Langara College

Risk is an important part of our lives. We need risk to help us develop as adults and we are continually assessing risk and making decisions in our lives that help us grow. Taking risks is important to how we build character – we learned how to assess risk as we grew up -- but today's children are not given the same freedom or opportunity. We have become a "risk adverse society" (Gill 2015). By taking risk out of play and life for children – we are doing them a disservice.

"Canadian children are safer now than at any other time in history." Says Mike Ungar, PhD, professor of Social Work at Dalhousie University -- "So why are we so fearful for them? When they're young, we drive them to playdates, fill up their time with organized activity, and cocoon them from every imaginable peril. We think we are doing what's best for them. But as they grow into young adults and we continue to manage their lives, running interference with teachers and coaches, we are, in fact, unwittingly stunting them."



Ungar says our motivation to keep our kids safe is causing us to do the opposite: put them in harm's way. By continuing to protect them from failure and disappointment, many of our kids are missing out on

the "risk-taker's advantage," the benefits that come from experiencing manageable amounts of danger. "In our mania to provide emotional life jackets around our kids, helmets and seatbelts, approved playground equipment, after-school supervision, an endless stream of evening programming, and no place to hang out but the tiled flooring of our local mall, we parents are accidentally creating a generation of youth who are not ready for life. Our children are too safe for their own good." (2015)

It's time to re-think the value of risk in our children's development (and ours). Instead of being risk adverse, let's think about the risk taker's advantage. The Oxford dictionary defines risk as, "A situation involving exposure to danger". It is scary – but it may sum up everything we do as humans in our lifespan – so let's start to think about the importance of risk in our lives and in our society...especially in our roles as Recreation Professionals.

At the recent BCRPA Symposium, Tim Gill – author of "No Fear. Growing up in a risk adverse society" and one of the United Kingdoms, leading thinkers on childhood, --talked about the value of risk in growing up and how this generation is missing out on the benefits of being able to assess risk and use those skills to develop.

"The problem is with us – it's not with the kids" (Gill – BCRPA Symposium 2015). Many of us can agree we had different childhoods than kids do now. We had more freedom and more responsibility for managing ourselves. Society has changed and the same freedoms may not be available to this generation, and

although we can't turn back the clock – we can create different ways to open and expand the horizons of kids today.

One of those ways is by re-framing the way we look at risk in designing play spaces and play opportunities for kids. Instead of taking all of the risk away– we can look at the benefits of risk in our play spaces and programs and intentionally designing them to include risk that creates opportunities for children to develop and practice their risk assessment skills. Childhood is a journey – progressive handing over of risk management duty to children (Gill).

JOAN ALMON IN AN ARTICLE TITLED, THE ROLE OF RISK IN PLAY AND LEARNING IDENTIFIES THE VALUE OF RISK IN CHILDREN'S PLAY:

REAL PLAY MEANS TAKING RISKS—PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, AND EVEN COGNITIVE. CHILDREN ARE CONSTANTLY TRYING OUT NEW THINGS AND LEARNING A GREAT DEAL IN THE PROCESS. THEY LOVE TO MOVE FROM ADVENTURE TO ADVENTURE. THEY FACE THE RISK OF MISTAKES AND EVEN OF INJURIES, BUT THAT DOES NOT DETER CHILDREN. THEY EMBRACE LIFE, PLAY, AND RISK WITH GUSTO, AND THEY ARE PREPARED FOR A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF BUMPS AND BRUISES WHILE GROWING UP. EVEN A BROKEN BONE DOESN'T SLOW THEM DOWN FOR LONG. FORTUNATELY, THEY HEAL FAST.

Although no one wants to see a child injured, creating an environment that is overly safe creates a different kind of danger for them. Growing up in a risk-averse society, such as we currently have, means children are not able to practice risk-assessment which enables them to match their skills with the demands of the environment. As a result, many children have become very timid and are reluctant to take risks. At the opposite extreme, many have difficulty reading the situations they face and take foolhardy risks, repeatedly landing in trouble.

Appropriate Risk

When children are given a chance to engage freely in adventurous play they quickly learn to assess their own skills and match them to the demands of the environment. Such children ask themselves—consciously or unconsciously—“how high can I climb”, or “is this log across the creek strong enough to support me?” They become savvy about themselves and their environment. Children who are confident about taking chances rebound well when things don't work out at first. They are resilient and will try again and again until they master a situation that challenges them—or wisely avoid it, if that seems best. (2015)

Gill has developed a model that re-frames risk and how it can benefit children in the “Risk-Benefit Assessment – Play Safety forum” *Managing Risk in Play Provision – Implementation Guide*. (See the link in the Resources section of this article). This approach considers the benefits of risk to children as well as the risks of risk. “Children need and choose exciting places to play, which inevitably means managing situations that are inherently risky. This publication recognizes this and gives guidance to providers about how this can be reconciled with a natural desire for children’s safety. It introduces the concept of balancing risks with benefits in a process of risk-benefit assessment that has now become recognized as an appropriate approach to risk management across play, leisure and education.” (Risk Benefit Assessment)

Risk is dangerous – but there is also a lot of value to it within our lives and children’s development....and there a greater risk to being too safe.

References

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<https://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/2013/the-role-of-risk-in-play-and-learning> (Retrieved 23 June 2015.)

Gill, Tim. BCRPA Symposium Keynote Speaker. May 2015.

Oxford Dictionary. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/risk> (retrieved June 23, 2015)

Ungar, Mike, PhD. Too Safe for their own Good. How Risk and Responsibility Help Teens Thrive. 2007. McClelland and Stuart.

Resources:

Risk-Benefit Assessment – Play Safety forum” Managing Risk in Play Provision – Implementation Guide.

<http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/risk.pdf>

Managing risk in play provision: A briefing for Risk Managers

<http://rethinkingchildhood.com/tag/risk-assessment/>

Tim Gill – Rethinking Childhood Blog

<http://rethinkingchildhood.com/2015/04/14/canada-tour-may-2015-dates-venues-risk-nature-play/#more-4560>

PARENTS, STOP HOVERING: 'RISKY' PLAY MAY HAVE BENEFITS FOR KIDS

<http://consumer.healthday.com/kids-health-information-23/child-development-news-124/risky-play-has-benefits-for-kids-review-says-700697.html>

Do You Connect to Nature?

By Janet Ready, Faculty

What is your relationship to nature? Unless we can articulate our own relationship and connection with



nature – aren't we just jumping on the Richard Louv bandwagon? Raising the alarm about humans disconnecting from nature and developing knee-jerk programs to re-connect? If it's our children and our recreation participants that are being diagnosed with Nature Deficit Disorder aren't we part of the problem?

Are we as recreation professionals walking the talk? Are we having conversations about what nature means to us, with our coworkers, participants and family — and using these conversations to examine what “connecting to nature” is? We need to

explore how we develop that connection in our current situation (because it's going to look a lot different than our experiences as kids – the social and technological landscape has changed).

Where are your favorite nature places? Do you visit them often? How do you engage with those natural places – is it a playground – surfing, mountain biking, hiking, climbing... a testing ground... a soul rebuilding sanctuary... a quiet place where you can listen and hear without the clutter and static of life...do you go there to get a sense of perspective...does it fill you with a sense of wonder and awe...does it create a sense of belonging for you.... Why is connecting to nature important to you – what do you get out of it, what do you put in?

Understanding and sharing our relationship with nature is a powerful influence for others to model. Dr. Louise Chawla reports in her research that “Positive, direct experience in the out-of-doors and being taken outdoors by someone close to the child — a parent, grandparent, or other trusted guardian — are the two most significant contributing factors that contribute to individuals choosing to take action to benefit the environment when they are adults.” (2006)

How do you connect to nature?

How does this inform your work as a recreation practitioner?

References

Chawla, Louise. “Learning to Love the Natural World Enough to Protect It,” in *Barn* nr. 2 2006:57-58. © 2006 Norsk senter for barneforskning. *Barn* is a quarterly published by the

Louv, Richard. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. 2008.

Connecting People to Nature - National information and Resources

The National Recreation Framework – Goal 3 Connecting People and Nature

Help people to connect to nature through recreation. This provides some great research and context on a national level – and why creating opportunities to connect to nature is within our responsibilities as recreation providers.

<http://lin.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/framework-for-recreation-in-canada-2016.pdf>

Connecting Canadians with Nature – Canadian Parks Council

This reflects what our current situation is in Canada with connecting to nature and what the benefits are for Canadians in connecting to nature – documents good research in bite size pieces to create a solid argument for why this is important in Canada.

http://www.parks-parcs.ca/english/ConnectingCanadians-English_web.pdf

The Nature Playbook – Canadian Parks Council

This is a solid, easy to follow guide with the purpose of connecting a New Generation of Canadians with Nature. This work results from commitments made at the 2014 meeting of Canada's ministers responsible for federal, provincial and territorial parks in Toronto, Ontario. It is the follow-up action piece to a previous publication: Connecting Canadians with Nature—An Investment in the Well-Being of our Citizens, published in 2014.

<http://www.parks-parcs.ca/pdf/playbook/nature-playbook.pdf>

Canadian Parks Summit

The first Canadian Parks summit was Spring 2016 and the second Parks Summit was March 2017. The intent is to create a national document for Parks. Keep your eye on this – some good momentum here on a National Level

<http://lin.ca/canadian-parks-summit>

Nature Canada

Nature Canada is the oldest national nature conservation charity in Canada. Over the past 75 years, Nature Canada has helped protect over 63 million acres of parks and wildlife areas in Canada and countless species that depend on this habitat. Today, Nature Canada represents a network comprised of over 45,000 members and supporters and more than 350 nature organizations across the country and with affiliates in every province.

<http://naturecanada.ca/tag/connecting-people-to-nature/>

What I learned about how you connect people to nature in recreation

My Applied Research project – Collecting Stories about how you connect people to nature in Recreation -- is wrapping up. There are over [20 stories](#) posted on the Healthy in Nature website from Recreation Practitioners in BC about connecting people to nature.

What I really love about this project is that the stories are thoughtful, diverse and doable – sometimes with surprising outcomes or “unintended consequences”. These stories confirm that



small ideas can have big impacts in our community in connecting people to nature. Earth Shattering is overrated – this research project was about sharing small ideas and stories that contribute in a meaningful way to connecting people to nature. Small but mighty....and doable.

Here’s what I learned from your stories (I have live links to the stories I highlight for easy access to the submitted story):

Connecting to nature benefits any age

From nature preschools in [West Shore Parks and Recreation](#) and [Terra Nova Nature School in Richmond](#) to [middle school youth in Victoria](#) to the [Baby and Me hiking group in North Vancouver and Coquitlam](#) and the [Seniors Garden Club in Burnaby](#) and [Walking Group in Powell River](#) – People at every age and stage in their lives benefit from connecting to nature.

Connecting to Nature grows community

The [Community gardens project, adopt a walkway, and neighborhood events in Campbell River](#) grow community. Surrey is working to [connect people to their parks](#) and create community. [Bird Week](#) partners with many smaller community organizations to create a community that is bird-engaged. [Cameron’s summer camp](#) worked with community stakeholders to bring nature and environmental awareness to the camp. The [Baby and Me hiking group](#) grows a community of parents in nature -- and in Cowichan Valley the [Lake to Lake walk and Marathon](#) connects people to nature and the community.

Connecting to Nature gives us perspective about ourselves and our place in the world

[Hiking to blue lake in Kelowna](#) gave participants an opportunity for nature discovery, to learn about themselves and connect to others. [An outdoor meeting in New Westminster](#) inspired programmers to ask questions about what they are doing to connect themselves and their community to nature. At [UVIC, second year students](#) are challenged to see what barriers there are in connecting to nature and the benefits of a nature connection.

Connecting to Nature is part of a healthy human experience

In Maple Ridge, programming reflects an emphasis on [children and families](#) and healthy eating, in the community. In Victoria [the Nature's Way Program](#) helps to decrease anxiety in youth.

Connecting to Nature can have unintended consequences and surprising results

[Rock rolling](#) in Kelowna is a simple story that shows how one leader can make a difference in a spontaneous, nature-way. In [Kate's Kindergarten class](#), there is some perspective shift about what nature is. In Port Coquitlam, encouraging summer camp and program leaders with [an "intention" to connect to nature](#) created really positive results.

Nature is everywhere – even unlikely places

In a hospital room as in the story about [Cheney's dad](#). Or "[Nature as the 'unintended consequence'](#)" story of the Walk Richmond group. Nature is a community garden, a pocket park, a woodlot attached to an elementary school.