



Aboriginal Peoples

Background: Mountain National Parks

A Need for Change

Since the approval of the current management plans, Aboriginal peoples have become more involved in the management and operation of the mountain parks. This work needs to be recognised and formalised. The revised plans need to reflect the interests and role of Aboriginal people in park management, authentic visitor experiences, and renewing cultural connections.

Background

- Canada's seven southern mountain national parks were created between 1885 and 1914. At the time, park legislation and management, based on European and North American ideas about conservation and tourism, did not consider the perspectives and traditions of Aboriginal peoples.
- Early managers considered many traditional activities inconsistent with national park goals and, as a result, Aboriginal groups lost their physical and cultural connection to parts of their traditional territories.
- The perspectives, cultural ties, and stories of Aboriginal people are an important part of the historic fabric and the future of the mountain national parks. Parks Canada is committed to building strong, effective, and mutually beneficial working relationships with Aboriginal peoples.

Existing Management Plan Direction (excluding Waterton Lakes NP)

Jasper

Increase integration of traditional and local knowledge into decision-making.

Collaborate on the protection and presentation of Aboriginal heritage in the park, including the facilitation of new Aboriginal tourism products and programs.

Maintain and present cultural resources related to Jasper's Métis history in cooperation with the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Yoho and Kootenay National Parks

Work with Aboriginal people to raise the profile of Aboriginal heritage in the parks.

Involve First Nations when working on Aboriginal archaeological sites.

Collect and better integrate Aboriginal traditional knowledge into decision-making.

Pursue the designation of a national historic site in Kootenay National Park that commemorates Aboriginal heritage.

Banff

No specific direction.

Mount Revelstoke and Glacier

Broaden partnerships and improve working relations with Aboriginal groups.

Share information, fund archaeological and social research, and record the oral history of Aboriginal traditional use; incorporate this information into heritage presentation programs.

Considerations

- It is important to acknowledge the past and heal broken connections.

- Some Aboriginal groups have expressed interest in participating in park management (e.g., the Jasper Aboriginal Forum).
- Open management will support the relationship between national parks and Aboriginal groups.
- Protocols for traditional use may be required; some parks have already started this process.

Future Directions

Parks Canada welcomes public comments on the following proposed direction for the revised management plan.

- Increase collaboration between Parks Canada and Aboriginal groups with a historic relationship to mountain national parks in order to protect and present Aboriginal heritage.
- Enhance the visitor experience by improving Aboriginal interpretation and education.
- Where interests and opportunities occur, include Aboriginal peoples in the planning and implementation of prescribed burns.
- Continue to pursue and support traditional use studies in national parks, with active participation of all Aboriginal groups with a historic connection to the parks; use results in planning and management.
- Support opportunities and the acquisition of skills that allow Aboriginal peoples to participate in the management and benefits of the mountain national parks.

Jasper National Park

- Since 2006, the Jasper Aboriginal Forum has provided a valuable opportunity to work with regional Aboriginal groups on management-related issues.
- The dialogue resulting from the forums influences park management and operational decisions.
- Jasper is looking at ways to support access to the park so aboriginal groups with a historical connection to the area can carry on traditional ceremonial, spiritual, religious, and cultural practices.
- Aboriginal peoples used fire to influence vegetation and wildlife in what is now Jasper National Park; in recognition of this traditional practice, Parks Canada and one of Jasper's Aboriginal Forum groups have planned a cultural burn in the spring of 2009.
- Other recent cooperative projects include:
 - FireSmart-ForestWise – a partnership with the Métis Nation of Alberta that employs and helps train Métis youth by providing jobs, experience, and leadership skills
 - a traditional land use study as part of the Icefields Parkway planning project
 - recovery planning for species at risk
 - cultural programming including Aboriginal Day, Parks Day, Aboriginal Circle, Wildlife Festival, cooperative school programs, and an annual Aboriginal Youth Leadership Camp
 - partnerships with Jasper's cultural resource management team to address historic and archaeological issues
 - collaboration with the TMX Environmental Surveillance Team during the Kinder Morgan Canada pipeline construction
 - participation in the EA review process
 - active involvement in the ecosystem fire management process
 - a referral system developed in collaboration with the Foothills Research Institute