

BANFF NATIONAL PARK

**SUMMARY OF THE 2017 ANNUAL PLANNING FORUM
FEBRUARY 9TH AND 10TH, 2017
BANFF CENTRE, CAVE AND BASIN, BANFF PARK LODGE
BANFF, ALBERTA**

FORUM THEME: VISIONS OF BANFF NATIONAL PARK'S FUTURE.

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1.0 Round Table Meeting, February 9

The Planning Forum began with a meeting of the Round Table at the Banff Centre, with the following objectives:

- To present the Round Table members with an overview of 2016 accomplishments and plans for 2017,
- To provide Round Table members with the opportunity to express their views to/ask questions of the Field Unit Superintendents
- To provide the opportunity for Round Table Members to speak with each other and find common ground.

2.0 Open House, February 9

The Planning Forum continued with an evening Community Open House at the Cave and Basin National Historic Site. The objective of the session was to provide stakeholders, members of the public and media with a behind-the-scenes look at recent achievements in Banff National Park as they related to Park Management Plan objectives.

Throughout the event, managers and subject-matter experts answered questions and gathered input from attendees.

3.0 Welcome and Agenda, February 10

The Planning Forum continued with a meeting at the Banff Park Lodge, for Round Table and public gallery members.

Facilitator Leslie Taylor welcomed the group and restated the ongoing goals for the annual planning forum, which are to:

- report on progress, opportunities and challenges in implementing the Park Management Plan,
- solicit a broad range of perspectives and ideas on matters pertaining to Park Management Plan implementation, and
- foster open stakeholder dialogue, mutual understanding and shared stewardship for the park's future.

She noted the special focus for this year's forum (exploring Visions of Banff National Park's future - BNP at its future best), reviewed the agenda, and introduced Lisa Edwards as graphic recorder, a new approach for the forum this year.

4.0 Superintendents' Welcome, February 10

Banff Field Unit Superintendent **Dave McDonough** welcomed the group and expressed appreciation to the Round Table for work done in their session on the afternoon of February 9 and to everyone who

participated in the Open House on the evening of February 9. He noted that it had been a great opportunity for the public to discuss park issues and achievements directly with the park staff involved.

He noted that everyone in attendance (Round Table members and gallery attendees) share a heartfelt attachment to the park and recognize its iconic status and everyone's shared responsibility in managing it.

He added that the Minister's Round Table has initiated a national conversation on where national parks and protected areas should go in the future. There are many new pressures: new technologies, urbanization and a disconnect with nature. National parks and historic sites belong to all Canadians for their education and enjoyment, are preserved for future generations and help shape Canada as a nation. Today's meeting will dovetail our local park conversation with that national conversation, using the questions on today's agenda.

He mentioned that the park management planning process will culminate in a new plan in 2020. This is an informal kick-off. Informal discussions, starting now, will provide input early to help with the process, right from the stage of creating of the terms of reference.

Acting Field Unit Superintendent for Lake Louise Yoho Kootenay Field Unit **Rick Kubian** added that working on the longer term picture shapes short term decisions. He reiterated the iconic nature of Banff, noting that what Parks Canada does in Banff National Park shapes national parks around the world.

5.0 Storytelling Session

To set the stage for discussions of Banff National Park's future best and what makes for a great national park experience, the group warmed up with a storytelling session. Participants were asked to describe personal park experiences that represent, from their perspective, what national parks should be. Round Table and gallery members participated. Their stories focused on:

- meeting a park interpreter in historic costume - bringing history to life
- Digger the imaginary grizzly bear - bringing park values to the sidewalks of the townsite
- walking within a group of deer - interacting respectfully with wildlife
- skating on Johnson Lake - having an "off-the-asphalt" experience
- meeting a senior at Shadow Lake Lodge - knowing that parks stay preserved over generations
- Buffalo Treaty signing - re-establishing relationships with indigenous people through ceremony and recognizing the spiritual and cultural relationships that First Nations have with landscape
- first visit to Sulphur Mountain gondola - the draw to come back, the privilege of living here, a sense of awe and a sense of connection
- learning mountain skills - there are adventures in nature for people at every level
- camping in Banff as a child - learning medicinal plants from grandmother
- Palliser Pass with the Skyline Hikers - families reconnecting with each other and with the mountains
- talking with a Thai peddler about Lake Louise - people around the world know and revere our national parks landscapes
- staffer on prescribed burn takes time to talk with tourists - visitor education is always a priority

- Authentic Canada Program and Brewster invitation - introducing new Canadians to our national parks
- taking a 100-year-old donor to "his" alpine hut - the connection of our elders to national parks.
- watching bighorn sheep near the Icefield - experiencing an emotional connection with wildlife
- cross-country skiing around Cascade Mountain - access to the backcountry
- rainy camping experience with new Canadians - appreciating our national parks through new eyes
- seeing rock art in a canyon - listening to the past helps guide us into the future
- seeing wolverine tracks - it's enough to know that "they're out there" and that this ecosystem supports them
- skiing with Philippine families - the joy and awe of recreating in national parks
- explaining snow depth, ice depth and avalanches to visitors - education is key to a great winter visitor experience
- the work of conservation groups - making sure stories like these exist into the future
- teaching our children that we are related to all living things - teaching children to be good stewards of the land and culture
- spending childhood weekends in the mountains - the draw of these places
- being still and silent in the mountains - personal, spiritual experience

6.0 Superintendents' Announcement

The superintendents announced two expansions to public transit in the park:

- Roam bus service from the town of Banff around the Lake Minnewanka loop (a 2-year pilot, from May long weekend to mid-September) and
- moving from 3-day-a-week to 7-day-a-week service from the village of Lake Louise to upper Lake Louise (May 19 to September 10), then offering 7-day-a-week service to Moraine Lake during larch season

7.0 Breakout Sessions

Round Table members and gallery members went into breakout groups to explore a series of questions on Banff National Park today and in the future.

Flipchart notes from the breakouts are reproduced verbatim below. They have been categorized for ease of review. The note "x 2" indicates that the same comment was made in both groups. Comments were made by individual participants, so there may be contradiction between different comments.

7.1 Thinking of Banff National Park as it is today, what are you proud of?

Respect for environment

- ecological integrity (a work in progress)
- the ecological gains and ecological health found within the park
- it has been maintained in its natural state, and this can continue
- fosters a sense of stewardship

- great ecological monitoring program
- buffalo are back! (x 2)
- invasive species management
- conservation efforts, natural state
- animal protection
- controlled development
- that it exists at all
- recognition by government that it is important to keep the footprint of the town of Banff small
- many connections - a special, protected place
- animal traverse corridors
- regulation within park to ensure protection of park
- Parks Canada staff responding to wildlife concerns (wildlife guardians)

Connection with indigenous partners

- traditional territory
- First Nations/indigenous involvement, with recognition and respect for indigenous groups
- ongoing partnerships with indigenous group

Visitor experience

- people want to visit
- a welcoming community
- inclusive for people of all places
- commitment to visitor experience
- visitor safety program and prevention
- people come here, enjoy in awe, enjoy activities and different experiences
- able to include and connect people from around the world in a meaningful way
- commonality of emotional connection
- visitor experience and conservation create the emotional connection for visitors
- the healing aspect of BNP. Revitalization of health brings people back.

International recognition

- Banff is recognized as a cultural institution on a par with the pyramids or the Louvre
- Banff is part of a World Heritage Site
- being world leaders, e.g. wildlife crossing structures
- Canada #1 destination for 2017: National Geographic, Lonely Planet, New York Times.
- seen as world leaders in conservation and innovation, followed by tons of parks around the world (x 2)
- ahead of other countries in creation of parks

Open planning process

- ability to plan for the park with other stakeholders
- stakeholder engagement: common vision, shared goals
- individuals can contribute
- civil, respectful discourse between Parks Canada and stakeholders
- transparent, democratic discussion

A proud history

- seeing how things have evolved
- history of Parks Canada - not first to create, but have done a great job of balancing conservation and visitor experience

General/miscellaneous

- shuttle and Roam service, gains in transit system (x 2)
- Parks Canada staff
- conservation/visitor experience/communication partnership
- strong presentation and conservation at the same time
- strong values must remain with pressure
- human community and animal community, respectful to both - doesn't happen in other places, coexistence of humans and wildlife
- representing who we are - positive outlook for future/children
- bordering other parks

7.2 Thinking of the park 20 years from now, what values or principles should guide its management?

Environment

- conservation, connectivity on a large landscape scale (x 2)
- by 2037, it will be understood that ecological integrity is the mandate
- still here in a natural state
- acknowledge/manage climate change
- effective management of species at risk
- maintain/improve as world leader in conservation
- maintain commitment to legal protection
- limit growth footprint
- protect Banff from impacts of industry
- more park
- connectivity: provide access for more wildlife crossings (too much linear development)
- set targets for wildlife numbers

Visitor experience

- balance of visitor experience and ecological integrity, needs to be equal
- visitor experience: having too many regulations will hinder
- create introductory "appetizer" experience to encourage return experience
- understand all visitors and how they experience the park
- iconic visitor experience offering is celebrated
- diversity of who we are today: tap into our current market.

Education and interpretation

- access and education: early education/prevention opportunity
- interactive communication and education
- eco-cultural programs and initiatives

- make Parks Canada part of the curriculum

Connection with indigenous partners

- incorporate more traditional knowledge to address current and future challenges
- including First Nations
- openness to sacredness of Banff National Park
- look to First Nations history, pre-contact history (x 2)
- reconciliation

Governance, planning, management and regulation

- Banff is unique: municipality to consider this when governing
- hang onto core values
- listen to each other, create solutions
- Banff has a leadership role in understanding how visitors want to experience the park and providing new opportunities. Limit experiences to ensure we conserve landscape: we can only handle so much. Make hard decisions now to ensure the future of the park. Be a leader in this approach. Be brave about doing something unpopular.
- establish core values, clear and strong
- plan for the future residents/managers of park, with good strong regulations
- consider balance with strong clear direction
- reactive vs. proactive
- precautionary approach
- enabling innovation (e.g. highway crossings)
- regional collaboration
- lack of data is a continued issue: Need data to plan for the future. Parks is limited by lack of funding. Should communicate where funding goes. Historical proof of what has been done to support current decisions.

General/miscellaneous

- strengthen connection between culture and conservation
- population growth alarming: Calgary expansion is out of our hands
- lots of change over last 300 years
- understanding our place (reflective experience): move forward with past knowledge, understand what was done well and what was not done well, the idea of conservation has changed.
- affordable housing/population growth: control need to reside. This issue will remain and must be addressed. Need people and need to house those people.

7.3 Thinking of the park 20 years from now, what should remain unchanged?

Environmental protection

- freedom to roam for wildlife - most important thing for visitor experience and ecological integrity
- enforcement of restrictions
- protection of headwaters
- maintain, build on conservation efforts

- boundaries remain
- Parks Canada commitment to the priorities of the National Parks Act

Limits on Town of Banff

- maintain town permanent resident population cap at 8,000 (x 2)
- maintain town boundary (x 2)

Culture and history

- cultural events
- maintain historic sites

Education and interpretation

- pass on the passion for Parks to future generations
- education programs
- education/prevention

Collaborative planning and management

- community collaboration, continue to work with province, stakeholders, indigenous groups collaboratively

International recognition

- best practices/world leader

General/miscellaneous

- maintain accessibility
- continue to invest in Parks Canada
- maintain volunteer involvement
- always consider what could be changed

7.4 Thinking of the park 20 years from now, what should you like to see more of?

More protection

- core values
- more positive and proactive (please don't litter vs. thank you for not littering)
- education/enforcement regarding littering
- increased enforcement around feeding of wildlife
- protection of cultural sites
- more prescriptive management plan
- more efficiency in the monitoring of ecological integrity, more monitoring, with more volunteers to assist.
- more focus on adhering to policy and laws that govern the park
- strengthen rigour of environmental assessment
- more wildlife permeability in places where we have created barriers to wildlife movement (N-S and E-W)

More education and interpretation

- more education/ prevention before enforcement

- interpretation
- staff and volunteers on the ground for face-to-face connection with visitors, in townsite, front country, backcountry
- interpretation at Vermilion Lakes excavation site
- restore funding for education, interpretation, cultural knowledge and stewardship
- more hospitality standards, training and certification levels for front-line hospitality staff
- more environmental education

More opportunities for appropriate activities

- opportunity to engage visitors in learning/stewardship experiences delivered with Parks Canada, community members (e.g. litter pick, volunteering)
- diversity/cultural connections/opportunities (Authentic Canada Program) identified as best practice nationally but now does not exist.
- more responsible recreational opportunities
- nature-based activity X 2
- authentic experiences

More data, information, science

- data to inform hard decisions we must make
- more science and research to inform decisions and policies
- learning from history
- sharing of information

More indigenous involvement

- more indigenous perspective in external communications products, use of oral history
- more understanding from Parks Canada staff of indigenous history
- more indigenous events/celebration
- indigenous people to live/return to Banff
- indigenous influence to share traditional knowledge
- exercising of rights in traditional territory
- First Nations internship/employment opportunities across Parks Canada
- more focus on aboriginal leadership and on reconciliation
- more indigenous national historic sites, including cultural and sacred infrastructure

More technology

- new technology reaching outside the Bow Valley
- new technology collecting data
- new technology for visitor services

More collaboration

- collaboration/communication between various departments of Parks
- partnerships - open communication with Parks Canada
- more consciousness of responsibility as world leader in national parks conservation
- meaningful public engagement, regularly and proactively
- more consultation
- broadened engagement

- partnership with youth groups, e.g. BanffLife

More transit

- accessibility for people without cars - easy and friendly ways to get to BNP
- investment in public transit

More funding

- enhanced and sustainable funding for Parks Canada
- more funding for science program X 2

General/miscellaneous

- positive reinforcement to visitors
- reintroduce more wildlife that were here before
- year-round focus, increased shoulder season visitation
- infrastructure improvements
- connection to external landscape
- toilets
- more competition for commercial leaseholds under Leasehold Regulations
- more carbon-emission regulations and disclosure so we become carbon-neutral

7.5 Thinking of the park 20 years from now, what should you like to see less of?

Fewer traffic and transportation issues

- single occupancy vehicles
- traffic congestion
- less road work in peak times
- human and wildlife mortalities on road
- less grain on the railway
- fewer high pollution vehicles

Less inappropriate/illegal behaviour

- garbage
- poop
- feeding wildlife
- off-leash dogs
- wildlife habituation and wildlife jams
- nightlife/alcohol-related experiences
- less wildlife harassment

Fewer unrealistic expectations

- less creation of expectations of seeing wildlife
- less use of the term "sustainable growth" - trying to find that balance realistically

Less pollution

- GHG emissions from residents and visitors, relative to other protected areas

Less counter-collaborative behaviour

- less "bad news" - create, focus on positives
- less slagging of each other and more working together. We're all here for the same reason/goal. Less exaggeration.

General/miscellaneous

- dogs in general
- invasive species
- less focus on the mandate to increase visitation
- less focus on revenue
- less focus on infrastructure, development, marketing, tourism
- no targets for visitation, no focus on visitation targets in the management plan
- less focus on getting visitors to the park for mass events that have nothing to do with a national park, nothing to do with nature
- less focus on Parks Canada branding and marketing

7.6 Is there something currently overlooked that Parks Canada should be mindful of for the future of Banff?

Education and enforcement

- Parks Canada learning module for residents (enviro-friendly residency in Canmore)
- bus tours: lack of regulation and understanding, opportunity for education
- additional enforcement around parks pass fee

Environmental issues

- meaningful discussion around limits (people, development, cars, etc.)
- invasive species, education and removal
- chronic wasting disease
- wolf predation on ungulates and bison
- ecological integrity is not defined as balance with human use - term needs careful definition
- consider using Karelian bear dogs for aversive conditioning with bears and wolves

Cultural/historic protection and interpretation

- Shuswap dwelling site (Kekuli site)

Indigenous involvement

- sports/recreation opportunities for indigenous youth (Truth and Reconciliation Commission #87-91)
- joint strategy between federal government and First Nations (Truth and Reconciliation Commission #7)

Stakeholder/partnership involvement

- more involvement of businesses
- efforts of stakeholders and volunteers: monitoring, photographs, volunteering, remote wildlife camera checking
- shared accountability and reward with Parks Canada and stakeholders

- research priorities and project with the Canadian Mountain Network and Mountain Studies Initiative at the University of Alberta
- transparency, accountability, open, fair, inclusive public process

The Town of Banff

- sustainable town to ensure future (people, development, industry)

Changing demographics

- aging population: residents and visitors
- response to demographic change in Canada
- focus on youth and new immigrants in management plan - present focus is on expensive pay-for-service activities, this is a disconnect

Transportation

- exploring changes to fee in relation to mode of travel
- encouraging transport hubs outside the Park

General

- Parks Canada's act, their own policies. The law that governs parks is not subject to interpretation, there is no three-tiered mandate

8.0 Reflection on Breakout Sessions

The overall group was asked which question was easiest to answer. Responses:

- what you want more of - because it's human nature to want more rather than less.
- what makes you proud - because if you can't answer that, you shouldn't be here!
- what was overlooked - because many government studies and initiatives re indigenous peoples provide answers to this question.

The overall group was asked what question was missing. Responses:

- what are you not proud of?
- who is not here that should be?
- how can we improve safety in front country and back country?

The overall group was asked whether their thinking changed during the discussions. One example was:

- I thought that sufficient data didn't exist, I learned that data exists, it's just difficult to make it generally publicly available.

Other comments:

- Would like more facts available to all of us, to provide better background to discussion.
- Avoid paralysis by analysis.

9.0 Presentation of Breakout Session Highlights

Reporters from each of the breakout sessions presented the highlights of the discussions held in their group.

10.0 Graphic Record Review

Round Table and gallery members were asked to review and discuss the graphic record. Their comments:

Overall impression

- curious about whether this picture would have been the same or different if we had drawn it 10 years ago
- lots of passion, lots of emotion in these charts
- the charts show everybody here has a personal connection, personal stewardship
- like the strategic level of discussions - not in the weeds
- having our discussions represented on these charts makes them more memorable

Piece of the graphic recording that really stood out

- a sense of collaboration and positivity, working together
- bison reintroduction - the positive, collaborative approach
- Banff as a world leader: how do we benchmark our best practices, work together for best results

How does the chart make you look at things differently

- Brings the stories to life: a positive experience, shared positivity

What's missing?

- There's a lot there that has to be done. We need to represent the challenges: resources, money, hurdles, hoops to jump through.
- the items that were discussed in the breakout groups when the graphic recorder wasn't there
- incorporating First Nations history into tourism experiences

11.0 Closing

Participants were asked whether they appreciated having the extra layer of graphic recording, and confirmed that they did.

Banff Field Unit Superintendent **Dave McDonough** congratulated the group on a successful meeting and on their involvement in and passion for the subject, and stated that this is encouraging as we move into the sesquicentennial in 2017 and the new management plan in 2020. He mentioned as highlights and takeaways from his point of view:

- the positive involvement of the indigenous partners at the table.
- that preserving and presenting Banff National Park is a community effort.
- that there's a lot of knowledge in the room
- that all the people in the room can help Parks with the broader engagement of the public.

He reminded the attendees that there will be other forums and public sessions, and expressed hope that people will engage in those as well. The Superintendent thanked all the Parks Canada staff who put the event together, and thanked the facilitators and recorders.

He noted next steps:

- Parks staff will look at specific comments on the flip charts, looking for the themes to help build the process of further engagement
- these themes will help formulate initial concepts as Parks moves forward into the management planning process
- the State of the Park document in 2018 will give us a basis of additional facts and information
- BNP hopes to engage people from across the country in the planning process

Acting Field Unit Superintendent for Lake Louise Yoho Kootenay Field Unit **Rick Kubian** commented on the respectful and collaborative conversation, and on the degree of agreement on concepts such as the importance of ecological integrity and the wish to provide extraordinary visitor experiences.

He added that there may be work to do in getting younger people into the conversation. He thanked the Round Table members and members of the public, with special note to those who travelled from away.

Facilitator Leslie Taylor thanked the organizers and the Superintendents, and asked attendees to fill out feedback forms.