



Banff National Park

The Engagement Process

SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Discussions about Banff's future, the next national park management plan, and preferences for engagement in the development of a new plan, began in 2016 at the Banff National Park Annual Planning Forum. Working from that initial input, the planning team identified engagement activities and discussion questions for the scoping phase of the Banff National park management plan review.

Providing the framework for all face-to-face meetings, as well as the online survey, the discussion questions focused on:

- the vision for Banff National Park, including what components of the park and its experience are most important to protect going forward;
- which trends might affect future park management;
- the values and principles that should guide future park management;
- topics that Parks Canada should address in the planning process;
- which aspects of the current plan/approach should continue in future; and
- ways and means to work together going forward.



WHO WE HEARD FROM

The engagement activities were carried out between January 29 and June 13, 2019, and resulted in about 4,500 written and oral responses, as summarized below:

Activity	Responses
Face to Face Meetings (10)	853
Online Survey	1269
Online / email comments - Individual	195
Email comments - Organizations	7
Advocacy Campaign Submissions (identical comments sent online)	2191
Total	4515

The responses ranged in length from a few words to multi-page submissions. About 48% of the comments were identical email submissions appearing to originate from an advocacy campaign initiated by an environmental, non-governmental organization. Every submission and comment was carefully read and considered by the planning team in conducting its analysis.

Some individuals participated in more than one activity (and submitted more than one response), consequently the number of participants is estimated at 18% less than the total number of responses, or about 3 700 people. Nearly all individual participants seemed familiar with Banff National Park, having either visited (often multiple times) or worked in the park. Most responses originated from Alberta, however responses were received from seven Canadian provinces and from the United States.

Ten face-to-face meetings were held where participants included: Indigenous representatives from Treaties 6, 7, and 8, the Métis Nation of Alberta; the Pespeswellkwe Nations from B.C.; other government organizations; youth; special interest groups; and Banff's Round Table of stakeholder representatives.

What We Heard

WHAT WE HEARD FROM INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

... About Banff's Future

Modern day Banff sits in the Treaty 6, 7 and 8 territories, the homeland of the Métis Nation of Alberta, as well as the traditional territories of many other Indigenous groups originating on both sides of the Continental Divide. Comments were received from Siksika, Piikani, Kainai, Montana, Pespeswellkwe and Treaty 8 Confederacy First Nations, as well as the Métis Nation of Alberta.



Indigenous representatives focused on the fact that modern-day Banff National Park, is a part of their long-standing traditional territory; consequently, in the future, Indigenous histories, languages, cultures and perspectives should be accurately and honestly reflected throughout the park and in the next management plan.

Authenticity was cited as being very important to Indigenous groups, with artworks, crafts and symbols made by non-Indigenous peoples, currently being displayed / sold in Banff, seen as disrespectful. Indigenous representatives expressed the hope that businesses and the municipal government would work more closely with them in future, to ensure that authentic Indigenous products and information was part of the Banff 'brand' and a value-added component of the park experience.

Indigenous representatives also expressed the view that in the future, place names of local landmarks should be changed to Indigenous names, and there should be consistent acknowledgement throughout the park that Indigenous peoples were living here before Europeans arrived. They also commented that there should be more opportunities for park visitors to learn about Indigenous culture and history, especially from Indigenous peoples themselves. It was further noted that capacity-building and employment of Indigenous peoples is central to their future inclusion in the life and management of the park.

... About Guiding Principles and Values for the Future

Some Indigenous representatives shared the view that the next national park management plan should consider the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples*, and the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report, in setting any guiding principles or determining any future actions.

Other representatives emphasized that collaboration between Indigenous groups and Parks Canada was critical for the future, and this should involve all levels—Chief and Council, Elders/knowledge keepers, technicians, youth and communities. Relationship building was recognized as important to building effective collaborations and takes time. It was noted as important for both sides to keep an open dialogue and to positively influence our respective decision-makers.

Assessment and protection of culturally important places and items was also mentioned as an important principle.

It was also flagged that the cultures, spiritual identities, and ways of life of Indigenous peoples is rooted in their connection to the land, and the next management plan should recognize this relationship and Indigenous stewardship of the land, as well as reflect the potential for Indigenous communities and Parks Canada to work together on environmental stewardship, studies and assessments.

... About Climate Change



Concern was expressed about climate change and its environmental consequences. It was stated that addressing climate change in the next plan is urgently needed, and that Parks Canada should focus less on “economics” and visitors, more on the importance of taking care of the land. It was stated that if the wrong decisions are made in the coming years, the next generation will be born into a landscape that is not “hospitable”.

... About Other Matters

Comments from Indigenous representatives also touched on the following:

- The need for Parks Canada and others in Banff to understand and respect the proper protocols when seeking to engage Indigenous groups, and the importance of seeking different or mutually beneficial ways of working together, such as Indigenous approaches, rather than the usual western or “colonial” processes;
- The need for Parks Canada, other levels of government and businesses to have cultural awareness training with each Indigenous group so there is an understanding of the proper protocols (including ceremonies) and the historical and value context of Indigenous peoples;
- The need for Parks Canada to ensure early discussions with each nation as to how to continue management plan discussions, and that these discussions happen in a way that is inclusive and respectful of elders (Parks Canada has committed that these discussions will continue);
- The role and responsibilities of the Banff Indigenous Advisory Circle should be formalized and recognized in the next park management plan;
- The need for Indigenous peoples to be able to use and access the land for traditional, spiritual and wellness reasons is important; and
- The need for continued inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the management planning process.



WHAT WE HEARD FROM STAKEHOLDERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

... About Banff's Future Best

Stakeholders and the general public expressed a desire to see Banff retain its reputation as a place of great natural beauty and wilderness. They also commented that Banff in the future should be a place that is:

- a showcase for ecological management and cultural identity;
- protected and managed as part of the broader landscape;
- accessible to all (including affordability, right to enter, and accommodating for those of different physical abilities);
- known for its authentic, nature-based experiences, and well maintained facilities;
- a model of respectful, sustainable use and/or growth by residents, visitors and businesses; and
- a welcoming, comfortable and safe place for Indigenous peoples to relate their histories and practice their cultures, and engage in the day-to-day life and management of the park.

Some respondents expressed the view that accessible, untouched wilderness and natural landscapes, are key to what makes Banff, Banff. Any loss of large tracts of undeveloped areas or ecosystem impairment, would result in Banff failing in its core mission as a national park and its sense of place would irrevocably change. Other respondents stated that if Banff were managed firstly as an ecological place, its reputation and desirability as a destination, and its social relevance and support from Canadians, would follow.

... About Trends that Might Affect Future Park Management

Respondents commented on future trends largely as an intensification of current ones; specifically, continuing globalization, population growth and demographic shifts, and climate change were collectively predicted to lead to increasing visitation, pressure for development, and challenges to managing for ecological integrity. Concerns were also expressed that increasing visitation may also drive up the cost of visiting the park, potentially making it less accessible to the 'average Canadian'.

In tandem with globalization and demographic shifts, respondents also commented on the fact that visitor expectations, values and needs would also shift, and this in turn would have a trickle-down effect on patterns of use in the park, appreciation and understanding of the place, safety practices, and sense of responsibility. Accordingly, some respondents urged Parks Canada to put more effort into educating visitors on the park's significance and how to use it in a respectful manner.

Other respondents flagged that future park management was also likely to be affected by: changes in technology and transportation; shifting government priorities; and public and Indigenous expectations for greater engagement and influence in decision-making.



... About Which Current Approaches and Initiatives Should Continue

Respondents commenting on this topic were largely of the view that ecological integrity must continue as the first priority in making decisions, along with limits to commercial development. Some also made specific mention of initiatives from the last plan that should continue including: bison restoration; wildlife corridor restoration; biking opportunities, and effluent treatment leadership targets. Other respondents noted that Parks Canada's public transportation efforts of recent years (e.g. public transit,) should continue as a means to ease congestion, improve access and reduce our carbon footprint.

... About Guiding Principles and Values for the Future

Consistent with the views expressed in other areas, respondents stated that protection of ecological integrity should continue as a guiding principle for future management and decisions, with clear consideration for ecological thresholds and use of the precautionary principle where these thresholds are not known.

Some respondents held the opinion that Banff's significance extended beyond its boundaries to the broader landscape and perhaps even in the world. Specific comments on this topic noted that Banff National Park provides ecosystem services far beyond its own boundaries, including provision of clean water to millions of people in Calgary and other downstream communities, and that this role and responsibility should be recognized in the next management plan.

Other key principles that respondents wanted to see applied to future park management actions and decisions included:

- using science as a basis for decisions;
- ensuring public interest takes precedence over private interests;
- being publicly transparent and accountable;
- fostering accessibility and inclusivity;
- applying landscape-level thinking to decisions; and
- ensuring quality verses quantity (of experiences).

Some respondents also noted that a principle whereby Parks Canada would engage with Indigenous peoples on their own terms and in their own timeframes would be important if there is to be progress in reconciliation.

... About Climate Change

Climate change was one of the most frequently mentioned topics. The overall sentiment expressed by respondents was that climate change is already and /or will dramatically change human use and natural systems, and that this should be a key consideration for



all future park planning and decision-making. Some respondents were of the opinion that Parks Canada's planning and response to climate change were already lagging behind.

Other respondents were of the opinion that Banff National Park is the ideal venue for Parks Canada to establish itself as a leader in research and education on climate change effects on hydrology, glaciology, alpine and subalpine regions, species distribution changes, and the links between climate change impacts and human activities, use, and development.

Some respondents encouraged Parks Canada to both demonstrate and foster stewardship to reduce contributions to climate change by itself, park residents, visitors and businesses. This included Parks Canada influencing or even requiring park businesses to adhere to higher standards in respect of waste generation, energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and water treatment / conservation. It was recommended that the next national park management plan should place additional emphasis on watershed conservation and management, and fire management.

... About Visitation Levels and People Management

Visitation was another frequently commented upon topic. Perspectives varied significantly on this subject; however, the prevailing view was that Banff National Park is "overcrowded", with experiences on park roads and parking lots, in and around the communities of Banff and Lake Louise, at popular day-use areas, and on front-country trails in the summer, being cited as examples. In the opinion of some respondents, high levels of visitation increase the pressure for more development in the park. Comments on this topic also noted that visitation and use of the park should not occur at the expense of natural or cultural resources, and ideally should reflect respect and appreciation for the place.

Some respondents expressed the view that current visitation levels are already damaging to the environment or have the potential to, and that further increases are not ecologically sustainable. Parks Canada was encouraged to identify both ecological and visitation thresholds (for the park as a whole and/or for specific areas in the park), and to develop strategies to actively manage visitors within the identified capacity. Numerous tools or tactics for managing visitation levels including: caps, seasonal / area restrictions, differential fee structures, reservation systems, lotteries, etc. were also mentioned, however other respondents stated that there were already too many restrictions in the park and users' right to free access should not be further impeded.

... About Development

Development was another popular topic, and it was often tied to comments about visitation. Perspectives on the level of development in Banff National Park varied, with some respondents expressing the view that the park was overdeveloped, others



expressing the idea that there was more development needed, and still others commenting that the level of development was about right. Some respondents appeared to see the re-development within the town of Banff as an indicator of high / increasing levels of development in the park as a whole.

Respondent comments on this subject indicated support for:

- Continuing (or implementing) limits to commercial development and for concentrating development in specific areas (Note: While some respondents understood that limits to commercial development were already in place, others did not appear to be aware that limits existed);
- Maintaining the fixed boundaries for ski areas, the communities, and the “population cap” for the Banff town site (Note: there is no specific “cap” on the town’s population);
- Parks Canada challenging the business community to respond to visitor demand and measure its success through means other than development and/or growth;
- More emphasis on low-impact, nature and culture-based activities instead of infrastructure-based activities; and
- Ensuring that any development that does occur is sympathetic to Banff as a natural park and protected area, and not a “theme park.”

