

Let's GO to BC Parks!

The focus of this teaching module is the provincial park system in British Columbia.

ALL GRADES



BC Parks



HCTF Education



HABITAT CONSERVATION
TRUST FOUNDATION

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Core Competencies of BC Curriculum

Personal and Social Awareness and Responsibility

Social Awareness and Responsibility involves the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of connections among people, including between people and the natural environment. Personal and social awareness and responsibility focuses on interacting with others and the natural world in respectful and caring ways.

People who are socially aware and responsible contribute to the well-being of their social and physical environments. They support the development of welcoming and inclusive communities, where people feel safe and have a sense of belonging.

A socially aware and responsible individual contributes positively to their family, community, and environment; empathizes with others and appreciates their perspectives; resolves problems peacefully; and develops and sustains healthy relationships.

Contributing to community and caring for the environment

Students develop awareness of and take responsibility for their social, physical, and natural environments by working independently and collaboratively for the benefit of others, communities, and the environment. They are aware of the impact of their decisions, actions, and footprint. They advocate for and act to bring about positive change.

Why visit a BC Park?

BC provincial parks are vast repositories of native plants and animals. Protecting 14.4% of the province there is incredible biodiversity represented across the province and within each park. Many ecosystems are intact making provincial parks excellent places of study. A variety of projects and studies are currently being conducted within provincial parks. They are excellent places to teach children about the environment and the importance of preserving local ecosystems. What people value, they will protect.

Parks are places to connect with nature and enjoy unspoiled beauty. They offer intrinsic value, from feeling refreshed to appreciating the natural world. Numerous studies have concluded that being outside and playing in nature is crucial for the healthy development of children. Children who spend a significant amount of time in nature also experience better emotional stability and improved mental health. With many young people spending a lot of 'screen time', going for a walk and observing nature puts the focus on 'green time'. Physical activity is tantamount to choosing a healthy active lifestyle.

Being outdoors is also a wonderful way for students to make connections with each other, to team build, and for a teacher to observe and connect with their students.

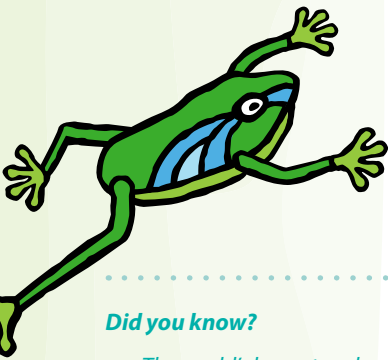
People benefit greatly by being in nature. Stress levels reduce, happiness increases.

The BC Parks Mission Statement: As a public trust, BC Parks' mission is to protect representative and special natural places within the province's Protected Areas System for world-class conservation, outdoor recreation, education and scientific study.



Did you know?

- Tweedsmuir Park at 989,616 hectares, is British Columbia's largest provincial park.



Did you know?

- The world's largest sockeye salmon run can be viewed at Tsútswech Park.
- The second Saturday in July is designated as 'Parks Day' – a day to celebrate British Columbia's world-class parks system.

BC Parks is committed to serving British Columbians and their visitors by:

- Protecting and managing for future generations a wide variety of outstanding park lands which represent the best natural features and diverse wilderness environments of the province.
- Providing province-wide opportunities for a diversity of high quality and safe outdoor recreation that is compatible with protecting the natural environment.

Inherent in this mandate is the requirement to maintain a balance between BC Parks' goals for protecting natural environments and outdoor recreation.

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/about/mandate.html>

Where can I find a provincial park to take my students on a field trip?

Explore the BC Parks website. Find out what projects BC Parks is carrying out in different parks. Connect with the nearest BC Parks district office.

The following link to BC Parks website has excellent information on the provincial parks in British Columbia, as well as valuable information on available facilities, closure and opening dates, and more. <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/>

If there is not a provincial park within a reasonable distance to your area or school, there may be a national, municipal or regional park nearby.

What's the difference between all these green spaces and protected areas?

Guess what, a park is not a playground! A park is defined as "an area of land, usually in a largely natural state, for the enjoyment of the public, having facilities for rest and recreation, often owned, set apart, and managed by a city, state, or nation".

- **National Park** - a scenic or historically important area protected by the federal government for the enjoyment of the general public or the preservation of wildlife. There are 48 national parks protected from coast to coast. Examples include: our oldest national park, Banff National Park; our smallest national parks, Georgian Bay Islands, Yoho National Park, Prince Edward Island National Park; and our largest national park, Wood Island National Park.
- **Provincial Park** - administered by the provincial government. They protect and conserve ecosystems, special features, rare and endangered plants and animals, and often offer outdoor recreation in the form of wilderness hiking, camping, water activities and nature appreciation.
- **Regional Park** - an area of land preserved for its natural beauty, historic interest, recreational use or other reasons, and under the administration of a local government body. There are regional districts throughout British Columbia. The Capital Regional District in Victoria, for example has 31 regional parks and 3 regional trails. Metro Vancouver has 22 regional parks. Check online for your nearest regional district parks.
- **Municipal Park** - administered by local government these parks are typically small and offer green space and recreation to locals and visitors of a municipality. Check online for some municipal parks near your school.

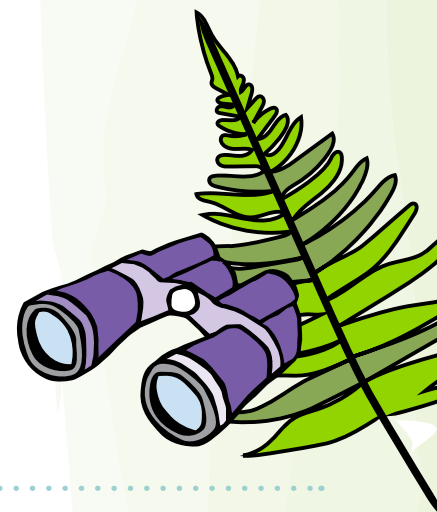
A note about Ecological Reserves:

There are 148 ecological reserves protecting over 162,000 hectares of land in British Columbia. Ecological reserves were created for the purposes of “natural heritage preservation and scientific research.” They maintain ecological diversity through the preservation of representative, and special natural ecosystems, flora and fauna, ecological reserves are open to the public for activities such as nature photography, birdwatching and hiking. There is very little if any infrastructure in ecological reserves.

Have students research a provincial park, conservancy or ecological reserve in your area.

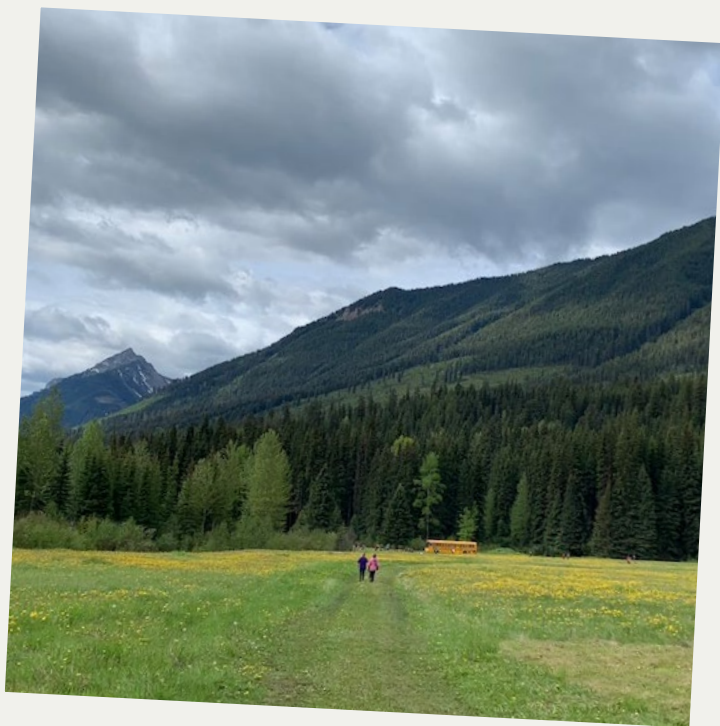
Inquiry questions:

- Should protected area boundaries change as climate changes some areas in the province?
- How has climate change affected the province?
- Should BC protect more land for conservation?
- How does our provincial park system compare to another province? Other countries?
- BC Parks has a dual mandate of conservation and recreation. How do we best balance this as we move into the next decade?
- How do you think we can create a better park system?
- What is the most important thing for you in managing and maintaining our world-class provincial park system?
- Should BC Parks limit the number of daily visitors that can enter a popular park?



Did you know?

- *Memory Island is BC's smallest provincial park at less than a hectare.*
- *The parks and protected areas system has grown to over 1000 protected areas, covering over 14 million hectares, 14.4% of the province since the first park was established on Vancouver Island in 1911.*



**Did you know?**

- In 1911 Strathcona Provincial Park on Vancouver Island became the first provincial park.

A Wee Bit o' BC Park History

BC Parks began in 1911 with the establishment of Strathcona Provincial Park on central Vancouver Island. By 1930 there were 13 parks and 50 reserves set aside for public use and recreation. Most of the travel to these large wilderness parks such as Mount Robson Provincial Park or Garibaldi Provincial Park was by train, and travel within the parks by horseback or on foot.

After the wars and the Great Depression people had more free time and became more mobile, able to afford vehicles that could take them to explore different parts of the province.

During the 1950's more than 70 new parks were established however their main focus was public convenience, and having picnic sites or campgrounds as well as being accessible to major travel routes and destinations. In 1957, the distinction between park management and forest management was recognized, and the Department of Recreation and Conservation was created.

More provincial parks were created in the 1960's – 1980's. People realized that important natural and cultural sites might disappear as population increased and resource extraction continued. B.C. became the first province in Canada to formalize and give permanent status to Ecological Reserves. Simultaneously a desire to explore nature, see wildlife and engage in outdoor recreation pursuits continued as did the evolution of canvas tents and coolers to motorhomes and generators.

In 1965 the Park Act, followed by the Ecological Reserve Act in 1971 recognized the need to conserve and protect certain areas of the province for their flora, fauna and special features and for nature-based and recreation-based pursuits.

The Protected Areas Strategy in 1993 aimed to involve major stakeholders and the public to commit 12% of the province's land base in protected areas by the year 2000. This major achievement doubled the amount of protected areas and parks. Currently, 14.26% (13.5 million hectares) of British Columbia's land base is protected. BC Parks has grown to be a world-class parks system with over 340 campgrounds, 6000 km of hiking trails, 118 boat launches and 263 day-use areas.

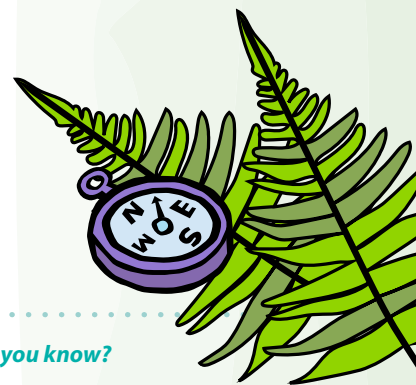
Pre-trip Timeline:

Create a timeline with your students beginning with the first park created in BC – Strathcona Provincial Park in 1911 and most recently some new additions including the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Park in the Prince George area in 2016. Students can add to the timeline mural with their grandparents', parents' and their own birth years, draw and add the types of vehicles that were used in different time periods, the special feature(s) of the parks nearby, significant world events and so on.

Preparing for Your Trip

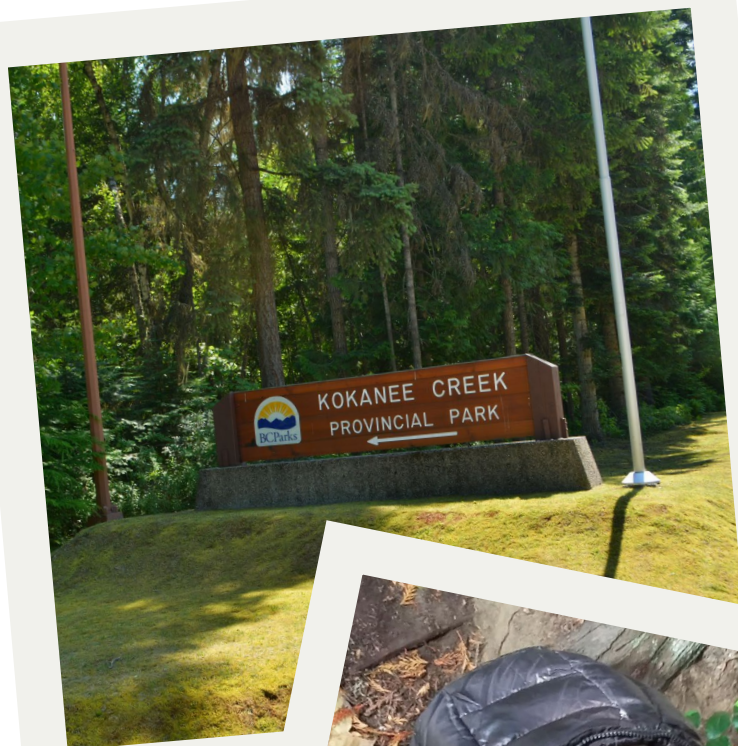
Before the field trip have your students brainstorm in groups or as a class some of the student's responsibilities while visiting a provincial park. You can pose the question with primary grades comparing visiting a park with having a guest come to your home or visiting someone in their home. How would you like your home to be treated? We are guests in the animal's homes. Be the best guest and get invited back.

Download the mobile app, i Naturalist. This wonderful citizen science app provides important information that is included and added to the BC Parks' database.



Did you know?

- Mushroom picking is **not allowed** in provincial parks as per Sections 10(2) and 32(1) of the Park, Conservancy and Recreation Area Regulations: http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/180_90_00



You Made it to a BC Park!

The other resources in the Lets Go Series also provide excellent backgrounders and activity ideas for specific habitats found within BC provincial parks. These resources and more can be found here on HCTF Education's website: <https://www.hctfeducation.ca/lessons/outdoors-projects-and-places/>

- **Energy burners** - see the links above for lots of active energy-burner ideas.
- **Tuning into your natural surroundings** - gather students in a circle. Have them turn facing outward and stand tall, take a deep inhale and exhale and root their feet into the earth, like a tree. Close eyes, if comfortable. Feel the sun, the wind on the back, front, face. Listen to the sounds of the river, ocean, wind in the trees, birds, the rustle of the grasses. Open eyes and look as if anew at the natural surroundings of the park. Stamp feet, lift and shake arms (branches). Turn to face inward circle. Pause for a moment of gratitude to this field trip and protected area.
- **Create a Park with Special Features** – select an area in the park along the trail that will create minimal impact. Arrange the students in teams of 4 or 5. Give each team a reusable bag (better than a plastic bag) with the following items inside: 7 toothpicks, flagging tape, pencil and small pieces of paper. Teams create a park that has special features by designating 7 special features with a 'creative' name inserted on a toothpick. Give the students 15 minutes to do this. Once completed teams 'tour' the completed parks. Tours are conducted by the 'park ambassadors' (a spokesperson or persons from each team). Dismantle 'parks' and leave the area undisturbed.
- **Take A Hike** – most provincial parks have excellent trail systems, many with loops (people love loops). Take your students on a hike. If they have phones or the school has tablets, students can take photographs of the smallest thing they see, the largest thing they see, 5 different shades of green, brown, gray, patterns, dead things, living things, most beautiful thing they see, the list is endless. Create a 'pic list' before you head to the park.
- **Try 'forest bathing'** – Originally practiced in Japan, and now gaining popularity worldwide, forest bathing, or shinrin-yoku is a way to appreciate a forest. It is not exercise, hiking, or jogging. And it is not bathing in the traditional use of the word (all clothes remain on). Shinrin in Japanese means "forest," and yoku means "bath." So shinrin-yoku means bathing in the forest atmosphere or taking in the forest through the senses. There are lots of websites available that discuss the benefits of forest bathing and the simple methods that are used to practice.
- **Geocaching** - Try geocaching with your students. It's a modern-day scavenger hunt using GPS. All you need is a GPS device or a GPS-enabled mobile phone so that you can navigate to the cache. Generally, the goal of the geocache is to lead you to a location (or locations) where you can experience a fabulous view, a special feature within a park, or something hidden inside a cache. Parks have sensitive habitats with protected plants and animals unique to that park. Below is the link to the BC Parks geocaching policy: http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/geocaching_policy.pdf
 - There are many websites available that will assist you in learning about geocaching: <https://www.geocaching.com/about/finding.aspx>



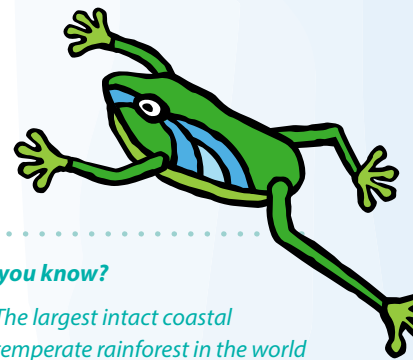
Did you know?

- *Mount Robson Provincial Park protects the highest point in the Canadian Rockies, Mount Robson.*
- *26,253,500 people visited BC Parks in 2018/2019.*

Post Trip Learning Extensions and Connections

Now that your students have visited a provincial park:

- **Investigate stewardship and action projects** being done in provincial parks:
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/partnerships/researchMonitoring.html>
- **Get involved** by developing an action project that could be conducted in a provincial park. Work with a local naturalist organization or stewardship group in your area. Contact the local BC Parks district office near you.
- **Restore an area** of the schoolyard, a local pond or waterway to its natural state. Apply for grants through community groups.
- **Decisions, Decisions** – divide the class into different interest groups (park manager, international tourist, local community member, dog walker, birdwatcher, camping family) to create a new park – what facilities (for example, toilets, campsites, trails, boat launches), special features (for example, rare plants, waterfalls, salmon spawning grounds) does your park need to protect and also allow public use of the protected area?
- **Photo collage** – create a collage of the photographs taken by students and display them in the school hallway.
- **Create a brochure** – in teams of 3-4 select a provincial park and create a brochure showcasing its special feature(s), flora and fauna, available facilities, why visit and so on. Share presentations.
- **Senior-level grades** – check out the 3 pieces of provincial legislation that is used to create a provincial park. BC Parks' authority is drawn from three pieces of legislation, the Park Act, Ecological Reserve Act and the Environment and Land Use Act, and their associated regulations, policies and agreements.
- **Share** – a 'wow' moment that each student experienced while visiting a BC Park.



Did you know?

- The largest intact coastal temperate rainforest in the world is protected in Kitlope Heritage Conservancy.

