

Developing a National Policy on Training, Education and Research in Visitor Monitoring and Management: Lessons from Canada

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Background

Canada has a long history of creating and managing parks, at all levels of government: national, provincial, regional, and municipal. However, the country lacks policy in two important areas: 1) an accepted strategy on training and education, and 2) a national research strategy.

In April 2016 an initiative began to coordinate policy and operations of all park agencies and non-government bodies in the country. Ideas were discussed at the Canadian Parks Summit held in Canmore, Alberta, at an invitation-only meeting of policy leaders. At this Summit, a policy paper was presented by Paul F. J. Eagles from the University of Waterloo and Christopher J. Lemieux of Wilfred Laurier University, entitled: *Policy on Training, Education and Research: A Call to Action*. This MMV 8 abstract builds on that paper, and the subsequent discussions.

Training and Education

All parks and protected areas require some level of management. The activities can vary from small-scale site monitoring of a local nature reserve to massive, large-scale tourism and resource management of a World Heritage Site. Canada has thousands of people currently employed in various aspects of park planning and management. Their responsibilities can vary greatly dependent upon their location and their level within the hierarchy. In provincial and national parks, forestry and biology degrees are common as a base for employment as managers. At the ranger level, policing and enforcement is common as entry training. Fields not covered in forestry or biology education includes: law, education, political science, policy analysis, governance, planning theory and practice, labour management, economics, finance, pricing, tourism, recreation, and social marketing. Social science research methods are also usually not covered (Eagles and Lemieux, 2016). At the municipal level of parks, recreation training is paramount.

Strangely, there is very little literature that discusses the types of educational training and education that should be held by park managers. There are a plethora of programs at colleges, universities, and park agencies, which provide some aspects of management. Many of these programs simply repeat what the instructors were taught themselves, in earlier decades. None are based on national standards.

The World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA, 2015) recommends that protected area management become a distinct profession with standards, qualifications and career structure. The WCPA recommends that by 2020 there should be a minimum of five universities world-wide that offer dedicated education programs in park management. Canada does not have a national consensus, research direction,

or curriculum that can serve as the basis for a national educational effort. As a result, there is a perception that the education is ad hoc, rather than strategic (WCPA, 2015).

The country lacks answers to basic questions such as:

1. What should be the scope of knowledge of a park manager?
2. What range of expertise should exist in a park agency?
3. What curriculum elements should constitute professional training for management?
4. How can education and training be delivered to existing staff and to future staff?
5. What should the public know about parks and protected areas?

An international effort to answer these questions will be proposed at MMV 8.

Research

All planning and management actions should be based on up-to-date research. All organizations need to constantly assess future opportunities and risks, and plan accordingly. Parks and protected areas often have substantial amounts of science-based research findings available for use. Are these data effectively incorporated into management decisions? What research data do the decision-makers need?

Research on the actual management processes of parks is sparse. However, the conservation, tourism, and resource exploitation demands made on parks are large and growing.

Eagles and Lemieux (2016) state:

There is widespread concern that Canada's current aspirations in parks exceed its capacity. A large number of park management agencies have low management capacity, too low to fulfill the mandate given by society and outlined in legislation. Many parks in Canada, and especially provincial parks, have little or no staff to carry out even basic management objectives. The level of finance is very low. The requirements placed on current staff often exceed their current educational attainment. The current level of research on planning and management is low, and in many subject areas is non-existent.

The Canadian Council of Ecological Areas (CCEA) reports that there are 7,605 protected areas listed for Canada, with a total area of 108,003,139 square kilometers. This is 10.33% of the terrestrial area of the country and .92% of the marine area in protected areas (CCEA, 2014). However, Canada is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity and is bound by Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 which requires all signatories to dedicate 17% of its land surface and 10% of its marine area as protected areas by 2020. The recently-elected government of J. Trudeau has made fulfillment of these targets a priority.

Given the massive park creation effort underway, it is time to consider the development of a research strategy in park management.

In order to stimulate debate, Eagles and Lemieux (2016) propose five priority research areas that should be addressed in the next decade in Canada:

1. Management capacity and effectiveness
2. Finance and economics

3. Education and training
4. Tourism, public engagement, and visitor management
5. Policy, law and governance

The proposal is for each priority area to be the subject of a federally-funded research chair at a Canadian university. All of these would be coordinated through a National Center of Excellence, also funded by the national government. The total funding proposal is for CDN \$10,000,000 for each chair, and CDN \$50,000,000 for the Center of Excellence.

These proposals are now being vetted in Canada. They should have relevance in other countries, to various degrees. It is hoped these proposal will stimulate debate at MMV 8.



Canada Council on Ecological Areas (CCEA). (2014). *Report on Protected Area in Canada*. Available at http://ccea.org/cceawordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/CARTS_Report_20141231_E.pdf. [Accessed 31 May 2016].

World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). (2015). *Strategic Framework for Capacity Development in Protected Areas and other Conserved Territories 2015-2015*. Available at http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/sfcd_final_july_2015.pdf. [Accessed 31 May 2016].

Eagles, P.F.J. and Lemieux C.J. (2016). *Policy on Training, Education and Research: A Call to Action*. Available at www.lin.ca. [Accessed 31 May 2016].