



Final Project Report 2011



 Parks Canada Parcs Canada



TD Friends of the Environment Foundation



1. Project Overview

Get Outside BC is a collaborative youth leadership project that aims to strengthen youth attachment to British Columbia's parks by empowering young leaders across the province. 2011 was a pilot year for the project initiated as part of the 100th Anniversary Celebrations of both BC Parks and Parks Canada.

The project was developed collaboratively between BC Parks, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – BC Chapter (CPAWS-BC), and the Child and Nature Alliance. Significant funding support (cash and in-kind) for the project came from BC Parks, Parks Canada, and Mountain Equipment Co-op. Additional funding came from TD Friends of the Environment Foundation. The project was guided by a steering committee made up of representatives from all of the project partners (including funders) as well as two youth. CPAWS-BC provided the coordination support for the project, and BC Parks contributed overall project design and management support.

*“Being a natural leader means being a leader in your own community through encouraging youth and adults alike to **get outside** and enjoy nature! It’s more than an idea, it’s a **lifestyle** and now it’s a huge network!”*
– *Get Outside BC 2011 Participant*

The purpose of the project is to connect youth to the outdoors in a meaningful and sustainable way by giving them a sense of purpose and the capacity to inspire others to spend more time in the outdoors. The goal of the 3-phased project is to provide both a gateway experience for youth engagement with BC's parks and subsequent opportunities for engagement through youth-led follow-up events and the creation of a supportive youth network of natural leaders. Rather than providing a one-time experience, *Get Outside BC* aims to provide youth with the tools and resources to develop an enduring connection to the outdoors and a lifelong identity as natural leader.

After a successful pilot year in 2011, CPAWS-BC, the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, Mountain Equipment Co-op and BC Parks are planning to run the project again in 2012.

2. Participants

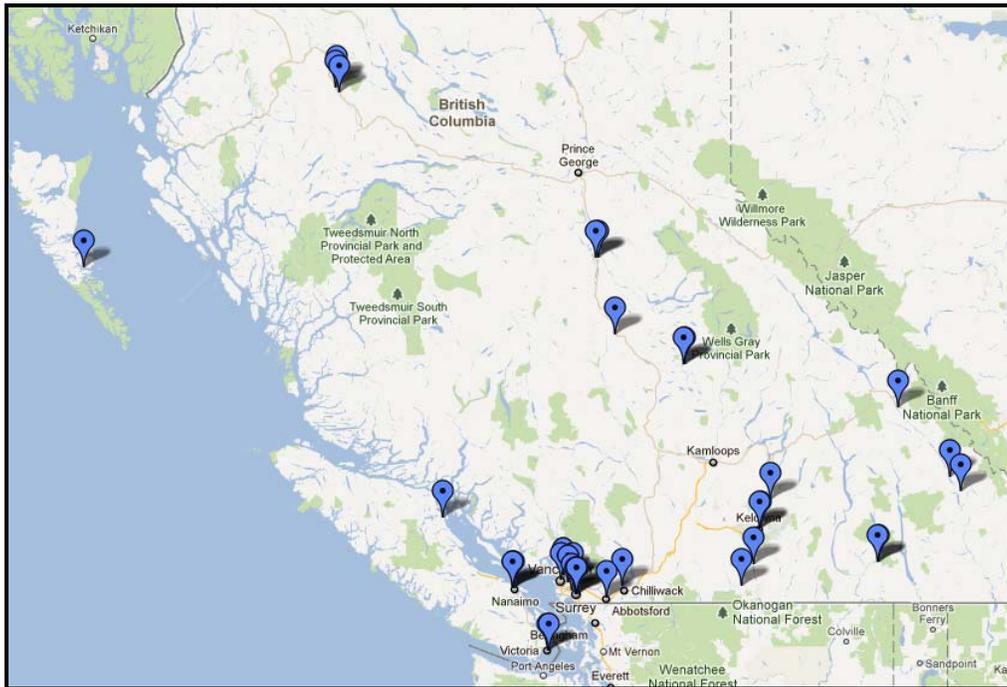
Participants for the *Get Outside BC* project were recruited from across the province based on a call for applications that asked youth to submit a creative expression (e.g. song, video, photos, etc.) of their passion for the outdoors and how they want to help others in their community access the outdoors more frequently. The call for applications was circulated through numerous youth networks and through the newsletters and websites of the partner organizations.

*“I have learned an incredible amount and I truly feel that this has **changed my life**. I feel so **confident and capable** and **inspired and especially hopeful**. . . . I didn’t realize that there were so many people as passionate about the things I’m **passionate** about.”*
– *Get Outside BC 2011 Participant*

The call for applications was announced on April 25th and closed on May 18th. The closing date was extended to May 31st to accommodate students who had been finishing exams when the initial closing happened. By May 31st, 65 youth had applied to be a participant in the *Get Outside BC* project.

Applications were evaluated based on the following criteria: i) creative expression and originality; ii) how well they expressed the importance of the outdoors; iii) why they wanted to attend; iv) leadership qualities; v) geographic and cultural diversity.

The 40 successful applicants were from all regions of the province and ranged in age from 14-18. The map below shows where the participants were from.



Attendance

Based on a few last minute changes, 37 of the 40 youth participated in the Phase I Youth Summit. During Phase II, 33 youth participated in hosting a community outdoor event with 8 advertising their events in their community newspapers.

For the Phase III reunion, 23 youth participated – 20 at the regional reunions and 3 by video conference. Many of the participants who could not attend Phase III were disappointed to miss the reunion; they either had prior arrangements or technical difficulties accessing the video conference from home.

3. Project Details

During 2011, the *Get Outside BC* project was centred around three key themes:

1. LEAD – *Get Outside BC* is action-oriented and empowers youth to feel confident taking a leadership role in inspiring and encouraging other youth to appreciate and spend time in Canada's wilderness.
2. CONNECT – *Get Outside BC* encourages and supports an authentic exchange of ideas, cultural beliefs, and meaningful connections between a diverse group of youth participants that includes aboriginal, immigrant, urban, and rural youth. By deliberately bringing together a diverse group

of youth, this project will foster new connections between previously disconnected groups of youth across BC.

3. **CELEBRATE** - All of the *Get Outside BC* events had a celebratory theme to ensure that youth associate BC's parks and outdoor spaces with fun. This project was a key part of both BC Parks' and Parks Canada's 100th Anniversary in 2011 which enabled youth participants to feel a part of history in the making.

The key success factor of this project is creating a trusting and empowering space for youth to discover their passion for the outdoors and how to let it inspire others. To accomplish this, every aspect of the program had authentic youth engagement at the forefront. Rather than telling the youth what to do and how to be a leader, the project is designed to enable the participants to discover their own sense of leadership and what it means in the context of spending time in the outdoors. The three phases of the project are all designed to leave room for the youth to contribute to the program and utilize their voice in the process.

*"My whole **perspective** has **changed**. After this I have the confidence to rise up and be a natural leader in my **community**."*
– *Get Outside BC 2011 Participant*

Phase I – Youth Leadership Summit

On July 6-8, 2011 37 young leaders, between the ages of 14 and 18, from across British Columbia came to Squamish to participate in leadership and outdoor skill training, networking, mentoring and community event planning. Over two and a half days, the Summit program included the following activities:

1. Natural Leadership – inspiring others to get outside!

This facilitated dialogue set the context for youth to discover their own passion for the outdoors and how to use it to inspire others. There were large group as well as smaller breakout groups that brainstormed the following questions: i) What are the benefits of spending time outside?; ii) Given these benefits, what's keeping people inside?; and, iii) What role can youth play in helping people increase the amount of time they spend outside?

2. Outdoor Ethics: Leave No Trace workshop

Through an in-kind contribution from Mountain Equipment Co-op, a Leave No Trace Master Trainer joined participants at Alice Lake Provincial Park for a 1 hour workshop on Leave No Trace Principles. The workshop was outdoors and interactive, and gave the youth a chance to explore their own outdoors ethics and practice the principles.



3. Adventure Smart - Outdoor Safety & Trip Planning

The Adventure Smart trainer offered a 1 hour workshop on how to prepare for outdoor trips safely and what to consider if you get lost in the wilderness. The youth were given emergency blankets and whistles as part of the workshop.



4. Bear Aware - Conservation Officer

A B.C. Conservation Officer offered a 30 minute workshop on how to be bear-aware when you're out in B.C.'s wilderness. Topics discussed included what to bring when you're heading into bear territory, and what to do if you come across a bear. The Conservation Officer brought along a bear trap that they use when relocating bears, and gave a detailed presentation on how the province deals with problem bears.

5. Camping Skills Training

Four stations were set up at Alice Lake Provincial Park's Group Campsite to teach participants about camp skills including: fire starting, tarp setup, tent setup and cooking with camp stoves. Two BC Parks Rangers participated in the training. In small groups, the participants cycled through each station for 20 minutes. When they were complete, each team had 15 minutes to prepare a skit and set up a proper campsite – the teams then competed for the best skit, best costume and best campsite.

6. Green Jobs & Mentoring

A diverse group of outdoor professionals was invited to participate in a green jobs session to demonstrate to the youth participants that there are exciting career options that support a passion for the outdoors. Following individual presentations, the speakers spent an hour with the youth participants in an open networking session.

7. Creative Journaling

Throughout *Get Outside BC* youth were led through a creative process to aid in reflexive learning called creative journaling. Activities such as drawing, writing, collaborating, and artistic exploration were used to support leadership development and facilitation training. These skills were useful for the youth in their activity planning, memory, and systems thinking.

8. Media Training

Parks Canada staff provided media training including how to write a press release, how to do effective media interviews and how to get media to pick up a story. Templates were provided in the participants' toolkits to help them with press releases.

9. Community Event Planning – Take it Outside on International Youth Day!

Parks Canada provided a training session to walk youth through the key components of successful event planning. Using examples from Parks Canada, the youth were taught that event planning takes passion and perseverance, but that it's worth it in the end!

Phase II – Youth-led Events in Parks on International Youth Day

In honour of International Youth Day (August 12, 2011), the youth participants planned and hosted their own outdoor events with other youth from their own communities.

Youth had access to up to \$250 of funding to support their events. In order to receive the funding, they had to submit a project plan that included a budget, event description and a letter of confirmation from a community partner organization. The community organization had to indicate that they would receive the funding on behalf of the youth.

The largest challenge we encountered for Phase II was ensuring all liability needs were met for the events. When the events were open to the public and took place in community public areas, the communities often wanted proof that the events were insured. CPAWS- BC was able to provide proof of insurance for these events through their insurance company. Other liability challenges arose for smaller events with activities that had a greater risk of injury (e.g., mountain biking, paddle boarding and kayaking). For these types of events, we created a liability form that each Get Outside BC participant could pass out to their event attendees before their events started.

Cumulatively, these youth-led events reached over 500 people! The events ranged from outdoor concerts to multi-day camping trips.

Phase III - Regional Story-telling and Action Planning

The project wrapped up on October 22, 2011 when the participants took part in small, regional reunion events that were connected provincially by webcast. Each participant was able to share their event story and reconnect with their fellow natural leaders. Each regional reunion group was tasked with coming up with a plan for what they are going to do next as a network of Natural Leaders. There was also a portion of time set aside to head out and explore the great outdoors (of



course)! There were 4 regional reunion locations: Vancouver, Nanaimo, Penticton, and Williams Lake along with individuals who joined the webcast from home. This part of the project transitioned the youth into independent ambassadors for the outdoors in their communities. By developing their identity as Natural Leaders, they will stay connected – with a clear sense of purpose – to a North American network of other youth passionate about the outdoors. The Child and Nature Alliance of Canada hosts the Natural Leaders Alliance at www.naturalleaders.ca – an online portal to help young Natural Leaders across the country stay connected. Between this site and the Get Outside BC Facebook group, the 2011 participants are already staying in touch and growing their network.

4. Project Evaluation

Overall (26/37 youth responded)

- 100% of respondents would participate in the Get Outside BC project again if given the opportunity.
- Respondents indicated that based on the skills gained through the project, they have cumulatively influenced 361 children and youth and 185 adults to spend more time outdoors.
- 85% of respondents indicated that it was extremely valuable to have participants from diverse regions across BC.
- 70% of respondents indicated that it was very important for the project to maintain an ongoing network of natural leaders across the province.
- 100% of respondents would like to host another outdoor event in their community; 35% are already planning one and 65% don't have a plan yet, but are working on it.

Summit

- 75% of participants indicated that the Phase I Youth Summit exceeded their expectations, while 25% indicated that it met their expectations.

“There are no words except for WOW. This summit exceeded my expectations.”

“The summit blew away my expectations! It was informative, challenging, and inspiring, as well as just plain FUN. I loved the hikes, listening to the mentors, and just being outside with others who love to be there too.”

- 95% of participants said that the Summit helped them understand what it means to be a natural leader.

“My whole perspective has changed. I now think a Natural leader is just someone who takes youth or kids, or just endorses the outdoors with an inspiring passion. After this I have the confidence to rise up and be a natural leader in my community.”

“A natural leader is someone who not only gets outside and loves the outdoors, but leads others to that way of life as well. They encourage others to love nature as they do.”

5. Next Steps

Due to the success of our pilot year, we are currently in the process of securing funds for Get Outside BC 2012. CPAWS-BC, BC Parks, Mountain Equipment Co-op and Child and Nature Alliance of Canada have already confirmed their participation in next year’s project. We are also in the process of spreading the success of the Get Outside BC project across the country in hopes of eventually making Get Outside a nation-wide project.

