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Direction for interpretive programming from Alberta Provincial Park management plans

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ABSTRACT

Park management plans provide strategic direction for the future management of specific parks. These plans set goals and strategies for many park management concerns, including ecological integrity, visitor services, facilities, boundaries, and resource allocation. Understanding interpretive goals, topics, and strategies will help a park or park system develop a coherent approach to interpretive planning, delivery, and evaluation. This study determined how interpretation was prioritized in Alberta provincial parks' management plans. We analyzed 32 management plans based on length (average of 80 pages), age (average of 14 years), goals, topics, and strategies. Overall, 84% of the plans addressed interpretation, devoting an average of 3% of their length to interpretation. The most targeted interpretive goals were "learning," "increasing positive attitudes," "behavior change," and "enjoyment." The most frequent interpretive topics were "heritage," "culture," "conservation," and "flora or fauna." The most common interpretive strategies were "signs," "general personal interpretation," and "guided hikes." Even though interpretation received a low emphasis, newer plans provided more emphasis, expanding on conceptualizing and evaluating interpretation compared with older plans. By summarizing the priorities of management plans for interpretation, this study may help park staff set interpretive goals, evaluate progress, and promote consistency between the goals of park staff and outcomes for visitors. In turn, this information may help park planners and practitioners to better align interpretive goals, strategies, and outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

For most park agencies, the mandate for providing heritage interpretation and environmental education (hereafter called *interpretation* or *interpretive activities*) originates in the enabling legislation (Wade 2010). For example, the mandate for Alberta Parks, the focus of this study, is to "inspire people to discover, value,

protect, and enjoy the natural world" (Alberta Parks 2009: 3). Parks use interpretive activities to help visitors discover, value, conserve, and enjoy parks. Park policies are general principles that assist managers' decisions in parks across an agency. Even when the mandate and policies are clear, park policy-makers, planners,

managers, and field staff can perceive them differently, resulting in quite different goals, topics, strategies, and outcomes (Benton 2011). Thus, the conceptualizing and implementing of interpretive activities vary considerably (Benton 2009) and are affected by many factors, including the agency, audience, park, ecosystem, period, and season (Beck et al. 2018).

Clear objectives can help parks achieve conservation and visitor service outcomes (Kapos et al. 2008). These objectives are described most often in strategic guiding documents that identify goals, plan a course of action to meet those goals, and identify assessment strategies (Kapos et al. 2008; Bryson 2018). Though time-consuming, this approach helps organizations achieve their goals in the long term (Beck et al. 2018). Strategic planning is a more common practice in the private sector than in government, but helps develop a cohesive vision for all levels of employees (Schalock and Bonham 2003). Strategic planning is “concerned with development of the organizational vision and determines the necessary priorities, procedures, and activities necessary to realize this stated vision. Strategic planning involves setting targets and committing resources and discipline” (Jeremiah and Kabeyi 2019: 28). Protected areas have not employed strategic planning to its full capacity, and when used, the focus on natural resource protection has been much greater than on tourism and recreation (Eagles et al. 2002).

At the park level, agencies use documents such as park management plans (also called master plans and park action plans; hereafter called *management plans* or *plans*) to ensure public accountability as they guide planners, managers, and other park staff in making decisions, often for a 10-year period (Alberta Parks 2018). A management plan is “a document that sets out the management approaches and goals, together with a framework for decision making, to apply in the protected area over a given period of time” (Thomas and Middleton 2003: 1). According to Alberta Parks (2018), the steps of the management planning process are pre-planning (identify objectives, identify stakeholders, gather information), planning strategy (determine vision and intent, identify key issues and possible strategies, engage stakeholders), drafting the plan (prepare and review internally), obtaining approvals (consult stakeholders, revise plan), implementing the plan (prioritize and implement actions), and monitoring (evaluate effectiveness and recommend adaptive management).

There are many concerns about the development of park management plans. The history of parks excluding and marginalizing Indigenous Peoples has led to distrust and

lack of engagement in park planning processes (Binnema and Niemi 2006), which in turn has led to a low level of incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge into park management plans (Berberi 2018). In addition, even though some agencies require management plans, they have not yet been done for many parks (Coburn 2011). Even when management plans are available, staff tend to use other forms of knowledge to make decisions (e.g., consulting legislation, fellow staff, or peers; Lemieux et al. 2021). Furthermore, other aspects of park management (e.g., facilities, environmental management, regional connections, boundaries, zoning, and resource allocation) typically receive higher priority in the plans than interpretation (Hvenegaard and Shultis 2016). Finally, park management plans vary considerably in plan quality, evaluation, and implementation (Eagles et al. 2014).

Interpretive programs support many goals of protected areas, such as nature protection, research, visitor experiences, and heritage protection (Manning 2003). Park interpretation can take many forms. Personal interpretation (i.e., amphitheater shows, point duty, or guided hikes) involves direct contact between visitors and park staff, whereas non-personal interpretation (i.e., signs, brochures) does not (Hvenegaard and Shultis 2016). This study focuses on the prioritization of interpretation in management plans and the application of strategic planning for interpretation.

However, there is little literature analyzing the policy content of management plans (Eagles et al. 2014), and of the priorities for interpretation in particular. In a study of Ontario’s provincial park plans, the quality and detail of the plans were lower than desired by park stakeholders (Coburn 2011). The same study, employing a modified list of visitor management categories originally proposed by Hyslop and Eagles (2007), identified visitor education and interpretation as second in policy detail among 30 visitor and tourism policies addressed (Eagles et al. 2014). This result suggests that education and interpretation were valued in the management of these parks; however, the authors caution that, overall, visitor and tourism management policies featured low levels of detail in comparison with other park management activities and objectives. They also suggested that low levels of detail and no obvious efforts to monitor outcomes associated with education and interpretation activities indicate a lack of commitment to evidence-based decision-making. The age of plans is worth noting, since older plans for World Heritage sites appear to pay less attention to tourism and visitor planning than newer ones (Job et al. 2017). Concurrently, noting the plan age is valuable because, in preparing management plans, policy-makers

can shift their priorities about interpretation over time (Hvenegaard and Shultis, 2016).

Overall, management plans can provide helpful strategic planning for interpretation, but those plans need to devote sufficient effort (space and research) to interpretation, carefully explain interpretive goals that align with the guiding legislation, and identify evaluation strategies. Research on management plans can provide insight about the overall direction of the park and park agency, along with the roles and strategies (e.g., development, zoning, enforcement) for various park sectors (e.g., visitor services, nature protection). Thus, the goal of this study is to determine how management plans in Alberta's provincial parks prioritize the goals, topics, and strategies for interpretation.

METHODS

As of 2016, Alberta's provincial park system included 476 sites, and received almost 9 million visits per year, of which about 2 million were overnight visitors (Alberta Parks 2016). The system includes a variety of designations, such as provincial parks, provincial recreation areas, wilderness areas, ecological reserves, wildland provincial parks, heritage rangelands, and natural areas. The purposes, or core goals, for provincial parks are to preserve natural history, conserve and manage flora and fauna, preserve significant natural and cultural features, encourage outdoor recreation and education, and to ensure lasting protection (Province of Alberta 2000). Alberta's park management plans typically have a ten-year lifespan, and provide detail about actions, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. These plans define how a site will be managed for ecological health, describe allowable outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities, describe visitor learning services and facilities, identify management issues and recommend solutions, identify upgrading and development requirements, identify boundary changes, and recommend allocation and prioritization of fiscal and staff resources (Alberta Parks 2018). Management plans also include the context for administration, resources, visitors, infrastructure, and land use; management objectives, efforts for regional integration, and an implementation schedule (Alberta Parks 2018). Some parks have more specific interpretive plans that, in the context of more general management plans, focus on the issues, goals, strategies, and resource allocation related to interpretation.

We searched the Alberta Parks website, corresponded with Alberta Parks planning staff, and explored the online library and archives of Alberta Parks. We collected 32 management plans (in Word or PDF formats) that were actively guiding management decisions at a park site or group of sites in the Alberta Parks System. At present, usually only large,

heavily visited parks have their own management plans. In addition, there are a few plans that cover more than one park. We also found separate interpretive plans for two parks, but did not include them in our analyses since those parks also had management plans.

After reading each plan thoroughly, we recorded the plan's age (in years, derived from the publication date) to indicate temporal trends. We recorded plan length in pages to indicate, roughly, the relative effort given to the planning exercise. We recorded if the plans mentioned any form of interpretation (personal interpretation in particular), in order to detect the level of detail provided by the plans. To assess effort devoted to interpretation, we recorded the number of pages addressing interpretation, the number of citations in total (including peer-reviewed articles, consultant reports, and internal reports), the number of citations addressing interpretation, and if the plan focused on various target audiences (i.e., hikers, off-highway vehicle users, campers, horse riders, day-users, and children). In turn, we calculated and reported the percentage of pages and the percentage of citations addressing interpretation.

Guided by Eagles et al. (2014), we focused on the following information from park management plans: interpretive goals, topics, strategies, and target audiences. Of the many outcomes visitors desire from interpretation, we chose six of those most commonly researched (Hvenegaard et al. 2016; Stern and Powell 2020a; Blye et al. 2021; Cook et al. 2021) and described in management plans. They are: "enjoyment," "learning," "increasing positive attitudes," "behavior change," "connection to place," and "making positive memories." To analyze interpretive goals, we counted (through the "Find" or "Search" function) the number of times a goal (or words associated with that goal; Table 1) was mentioned in each plan. We also recorded if the plan addressed these categories (yes/no).

Interpretive topics are areas that a park wishes to emphasize, as opposed to *interpretive themes*, which are major interpretive messages that park interpreters communicate to an audience; ideally, themes are well-organized, relevant to the audience, and engaging (Ham 2013). We categorized topics inductively, which involved a thorough reading of the interpretation sections, initial annotations, a review with the co-authors for ambiguities and redundancies, and finalizing the codes. We identified seven categories of topics on which the interpretation sections of the plans focused: "heritage," "conservation," "culture," "flora or fauna," "skills," "safety," and "Indigenous issues." We recorded if each plan addressed that topic (yes/no).

In addition, we recorded if plans mentioned any interpretive strategies, such as "guided hikes," "amphitheater

TABLE 1. Search words used in management plans for six interpretive goals.

Interpretive goal	Words searched
Enjoyment	Enjoy, engage, enthusiastic, laughter, jokes, satisfaction, pleasure, fun
Learning	Learn, educate, teach, questions, understanding, inform
Increasing positive attitudes	Appreciate, care, respect, value, think about, change of view, importance
Behavior change	Inspire, action, protect, search, conservation, preserve, help, leave no trace
Connection to place	Part of something, encourage re-visiting, repeat visitors, relationships, comfort, identify with place, awareness, encourage, use and activities, significance of area, fortunate to have these areas or resources
Making positive memories	Remember, take-away, pictures, discover/explore, share findings, positive experiences

shows,” “point duty,” “signs,” “living history,” “inquiry-based approaches” (i.e., those that emphasize a student’s role in the learning process; Lazonder and Harmsen 2016), and “experiential learning” (i.e., direct experiences, focused reflections, and applications of learning; Stern and Powell 2020b). We also recorded if the plan indicated a target audience, provided a work plan for interpretation (e.g., listed goals, objectives, tasks, deliverables, resources, and a timeline), indicated a need or method to evaluate interpretation, and used research about interpretation (i.e., drew from peer-reviewed publications and consultant reports outside of the agency).

We used SPSS software (Version 26.0) with independent samples t-tests to check for differences between groups of management plans (if a particular goal, topic, or strategy was mentioned). We determined statistical significance at $p < 0.5$. For effect size, we calculated Cohen’s *d*, in which 0.2 indicates a small effect, 0.50 indicates a medium effect, and 0.80 indicates a large effect (Cohen 1988).

RESULTS

Description of plans. Of the 32 management plans (hereafter called *plans*), 29 were park-specific (91%) and three were region-specific (9%). The plans represented all regions, including the south (16%), Kananaskis Country (28%), central (25%), northwest (22%), and northeast (9%). The mean age of the plans was 13.6 years (0–22). The mean length of the plans was 80.0 pages (25–240). Plans 15 years of age or newer were longer (102.3 pages) than older plans (60.3 pages; $t = 2.48$, $df = 30$, $p = 0.009$, $d = 0.86$). Of all the plans, 84% addressed interpretation in general and 53% addressed personal interpretation in particular. The mean number of pages addressing interpretation was 2.8 (0–8). The mean allocation of pages to interpretation was 3% (0–9). The mean number of citations in each plan was 19.7 (0–73), of which a mean of 2% (0–13) addressed interpretation. Most plans (81%) had no citations relating to interpretation. Only 19% of plans incorporated an interpretive work plan, 9% included a method of evaluating interpretation, and 6% incorporated research about interpretation.

Interpretive goals. Overall, 84% of plans mentioned learning as a goal for general interpretation and 59% mentioned it as a goal for personal interpretation (Figure 1). About half of the plans mentioned the goals of “enjoyment,” “attitude change,” and “behavior change.” The goal least mentioned was “making positive memories” (13% for interpretation and 9% for personal interpretation; Figure 1).

Plan age was associated with just one interpretive goal, that of “connection to place.” The mean age of plans mentioning this goal was 6.5 years, whereas the mean age of plans not mentioning this goal was 15.3 years ($t = 3.65$, $df = 30$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 1.65$). The number of total citations was positively associated with two goals. When “connection to place” or “making positive memories” were mentioned as goals, there were three times the number of citations as when these goals were not mentioned (Table 2). The percentage of citations focused on interpretation was positively associated with mentions of “enjoyment,” “positive attitudes,” and “behavior change” as interpretive goals (Table 2). These results indicate that newer plans and plans incorporating more interpretive citations were more likely to mention interpretation goals than older plans and those with fewer citations.

Interpretive topics. Overall, 81% of the plans addressed one or more of the seven interpretive topics, as identified in the methods. In particular, 81% of the plans mentioned the “heritage” topic (e.g., full range of inherited park features), followed by the topics of “culture” (75%; e.g., examples of recent human history), “conservation” (59%; e.g., managing ecosystems and park features), and “flora or fauna” (59%; e.g., natural history of particular species). Other topics included “Indigenous issues” (31%; e.g., recognition of Indigenous Knowledge, engagement, history, and culture), “safety” (25%), and “skills” (6%; e.g., backcountry travel). There were no significant relationships between mentioning various topics in the plan and plan age, total number of citations, or percentage of citations on interpretation.

FIGURE 1. Percentage of each management plan mentioning interpretive goals at least once in the context of general interpretation and for personal interpretation.

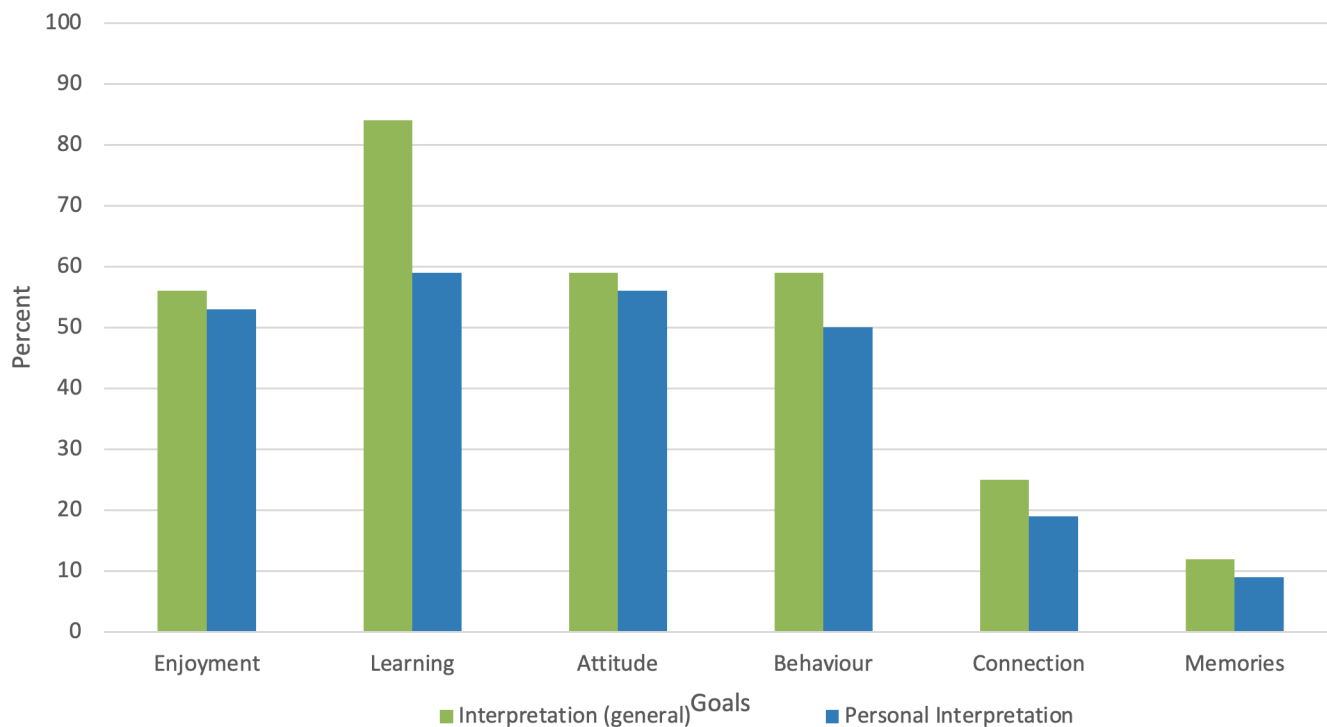


TABLE 2. Relationships between management plan citations and mentioning of interpretive goals.

Goal (mentions)		Number of citations		Percentage of citations on interpretation	
		Mean	<i>d</i>	Mean	<i>d</i>
Enjoyment (18)	Yes	21.3	-	3.0*	+
	No	17.6		0.0	
Learning (27)	Yes	21.1	-	2.0	-
	No	12.0		0.0	
Increasing positive attitudes (19)	Yes	22.4	-	2.8*	+
	No	15.8		0.0	
Behavior change (19)	Yes	22.6	-	2.8*	+
	No	15.5		0.0	
Connection to place (8)	Yes	40.9***	1.50	1.5	-
	No	12.7		1.7	
Making positive memories (4)	Yes	50.0***	1.49	0.3	-
	No	15.4		1.9	

Statistical significance: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$.
 + Effect size could not be calculated because *SD* was too low.

Interpretive strategies and target audiences. Overall, 75% of the plans mentioned at least one of the eight interpretation strategies identified. Plans most frequently mentioned “signs” (75%), “general personal interpretation” (53%), “guided hikes” (31%), “amphitheater shows” (22%), “living interpretation” (22%), “point duty” or “pop-up displays” (3%), “experiential learning” (3%), and “inquiry-based learning” (3%) (Table 3). Only the newest plans of 2018

or 2019 contained inquiry-based and experiential learning strategies. Due to low sample sizes, we did not analyze the three least mentioned strategies. For the remaining five strategies, plan age and the total number of citations were not associated with mentions of any interpretive strategy. There was a positive relationship between the percentage of citations on interpretation and the mention of “signs,” “general personal interpretation,” and “hikes,” but a negative relationship with mentions of “amphitheater

TABLE 3. Relationships among management plan length, citations, and mentioning of interpretive strategies. (The three least-mentioned strategies were not analyzed.)

Strategy (number of mentions)	Mentioned?	Percentage of pages on interpretation		Percentage of citations on interpretation	
		Mean	<i>d</i>	Mean	<i>d</i>
Signs (24)	Yes	4.1***	1.83	2.2*	+
	No	0.8		0.0	
General personal interpretation (17)	Yes	4.7***	1.65	3.1*	+
	No	1.6		0.0	
Guided hikes (10)	Yes	5.2***	1.58	4.3*	0.93
	No	2.4		0.5	
Amphitheater shows (7)	Yes	4.4	-	0.2*	0.61
	No	2.9		2.1	
Living interpretation (7)	Yes	4.4***	0.67	0.2*	0.61
	No	2.9		2.1	

Statistical significance: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$.
 + Effect size could not be calculated because SD was too low.

shows” and “living interpretation” as strategies. About 66% of plans addressed one or more audiences. Plans addressed “hikers” most frequently (63%), followed by “day users” (22%), “off-highway users” (19%), “campers” (13%), “children” (13%), and “horse riders” (6%).

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to determine how management plans in Alberta’s provincial parks prioritize the goals, topics, and strategies for interpretation. Even with a few plans addressing multiple parks, we only found 32 plans for the 476 park units in the system. That said, some less-complex sites have interim management directives instead. Nonetheless, most parks do not have guiding documents that ensure continuity from the broader legislation to more localized management plans. As a result, most parks are missing directions to staff about management priorities. Coburn’s observations of visitor policy in Ontario Parks’ management plans may similarly explain some of our results. According to Coburn (2011), the low level of detail in park management plans is likely due to low valuation of recreation and tourism, conforming to a standardized “blueprint” for plans, poor public engagement, sparse human resources and finances, and imprecise legislation and guiding provincial policy. In addition, in guiding decisions about content and strategies in interpretive programs, interpreters ranked management plans lower in importance than getting information from supervisors, fellow interpreters, and their own previous experiences (Blye et al. 2021).

Interpretive goals. Most plans mentioned some interpretive goals, particularly “learning,” “increasing positive attitudes” “enjoyment,” and “behavior change,” which are consistent with the goals of parks in Alberta’s park legislation (Province of Alberta 2000). The links between

legislation, policy, and planning could be evidence of what Eagles et al. (2014) called “vertical policy coordination,” in which adherence to specific park agency goals are addressed by guidelines and actions at each level of the agency. It is surprising that management plans rarely mentioned the goals of “connection to place” and “making positive memories” since they directly link to the purpose of protecting places for future generations (Province of Alberta 2000) and these goals are gaining attention from researchers (Hwang et al. 2005; Morgan 2009; Kohl 2020). Indeed, interpreters in Alberta’s provincial parks ranked “enjoyment,” “connection to place,” and “making positive memories” higher than “learning,” “increasing positive attitudes,” and “behavior change” (Blye et al. 2021). Since newer plans are more likely to mention “connection to place” as a goal, and because interpreters rank this goal relatively highly (Blye et al. 2021), this trend will likely continue as new plans are drafted.

In order for management plans to successfully integrate strategic planning for interpretation, they should intentionally devote space to interpretation, align interpretation goals with the purposes of the Provincial Parks Act, and identify evaluation procedures. Thus, during the creation of the plan, park planners should devote more time and effort to content and monitoring of interpretive outcomes.

Interpretive topics. Most plans mentioned interpretive topics, most often related to “heritage,” “culture,” “conservation,” and “flora or fauna.” While the provincial park headquarters gives some direction, the management plan, as a guiding document for all aspects of park management, should give direction for park-specific topics to be addressed by interpretive programming

(e.g., significance of petroglyphs, their conservation, and First Nations' stewardship at Áísínai'pi/Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park). The plans already include topics, audiences, and strategies that help define the recommended actions. The topics do link back to the purposes outlined by the Provincial Parks Act, such as the most commonly mentioned topic, "heritage" (Province of Alberta 2000). This is another example of possible vertical policy coordination (Eagles et al. (2014). One topic, "lasting protection" (Province of Alberta 2000), is not mentioned directly as a topic for interpretation in the management plans, but is tied to a topic that was mentioned: "conservation".

Interpretive strategies and target audiences. Most plans recommended some interpretive strategies, the most common of which were "signs," a form of non-personal interpretation, followed by forms of personal interpretation (i.e., "guided hikes," "amphitheatre shows," and "living interpretation"). Surprisingly, "amphitheater shows," "point duty," and "living interpretation" were mentioned in only 22% of the plans, despite being among the interpretive strategies most attended and liked by visitors (Cook et al. 2021). This is an important shortfall, as a review by He et al. (2022) suggests that in-person or personal interpretation is most often the most effective form of environmental communication. Of course, other factors, such as cost and expertise, affect decisions about implementing interpretive strategies. Even though inquiry-based and experiential learning have long histories as teaching techniques, their mentions in newer plans suggests a growing profile due to recent research studies on effectiveness (Kolb and Kolb 2017). Although there was some general identification of target audiences, plans should integrate interpretive goals, strategies, and target audiences, based on current research. Parks should also address diversity in terms of current and potential visitors and stakeholders. Based on a review of environmental messaging strategy studies, Kidd et al. (2019) highlight the importance of matching target audiences with interpretation and environmental communications approaches.

Strategic planning. Alberta Parks can benefit from intentional prioritization of interpretive goals in their management plans. A strategic planning approach should help coordinate interpretation topics and strategies with evidence-based research and evaluation. Research results can guide the strategies used in interpretive programming and increase cohesion of goals among guiding documents, supervisors, and front-line staff (Cook et al., 2021). With the growing amount of research on interpretation (Stern and Powell 2020a), especially in the last ten years, planners must strive to overcome barriers to accessing

this information for decision-making, such as limited staff time and commitment, and data compatibility (Lemieux et al. 2021). As well, the parks that have the resources to develop separate interpretive plans should link them to their over-arching park management plans.

By using a strategic planning structure, plans can more accurately reframe existing content, assess what is missing, and ensure links to other relevant plans (Thomas and Middleton, 2003). Ideally, interpretive goals should reflect the purposes of parks outlined in their enabling legislation (Province of Alberta 2000). In the case of interpretation, one goal directly relates to education; therefore, regional and park-specific plans should emphasize how to achieve this goal. Even though the percentage of plans devoted to interpretation was very low, this percentage was higher for newer plans; thus, if this trend continues, interpretation will receive a higher profile in the future.

The target audience is a key consideration in delivering interpretive programs (Beck et al. 2018; Kidd et al. 2019) and, therefore, a vital part of strategic planning for interpretation. Management plans in this study mentioned "hikers" and "day users" most often, but parks should recognize that each interpretive goal and audience benefits from different strategies (Hvenegaard and Shultis 2016). The audience is also an important part of evaluating interpretive efforts toward achieving goals. Nevertheless, some flexibility is needed at the park-specific level because target audiences can vary (e.g., over time, season, and weather conditions). Goals, topics, and strategies are all part of planning and delivering interpretive programs.

Assessment in strategic planning provides feedback to improve progress in achieving management plan goals (Thomas and Middleton 2003). However, few plans mention interpretation evaluation, citations to publications on interpretation, or interpretation research. Overall, plans with more space allocated to interpretation and newer plans were more likely to include interpretation assessment. If this age-emphasis relationship continues, we should see more emphasis on interpretation in plans over time. Government agencies can encourage this trend in policy, regulation, and legislation by requiring the development of management plans soon after park establishment, and regular updates thereafter. Furthermore, parks should ensure regular evaluation of management plans in meeting their goals.

Limitations. Our study was limited in a few ways. We only focused on the presence of interpretive goals, topics, and strategies in management plans; however, it would be

useful to compare how interpretation ranked (by any of the plan variables) to other parts of the park's operation (e.g., enforcement, conservation, human resources, or maintenance). Due to access and complexity, we did not examine spending on various interpretive strategies. We limited our scope to management plans, as they are the guiding document for regions and specific parks; this means we did not include the two instances where parks had created separate interpretation plans. This research is also limited to what is present in management plans and does not take into account informal data collection or assessment practices.

Future research. Further research is needed to determine how the interpretive priorities and strategies identified in management plans are consistent with the goals of park interpreters, goals of other park staff and park stakeholders, and the outcomes achieved by park visitors. Additional research would inform efforts to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of interpretation programming in meeting specific park goals as well as over-arching agency directives. Other lines of research to pursue include differences in how plans address personal versus non-personal interpretation. More effort is needed to identify how plans are directed to target audiences, interpretive strategies, and work plans. A larger sample size across provinces and agencies would allow for more comparisons to the trends identified in this study. Last, more research is needed on the role of the plan writer(s), and how their training and professional background may influence the plan.

Recommendations. While plans for Alberta Parks were, to a small extent, tailored for interpretation to specific user groups, a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach in interpretive planning is needed (Jameson 2007). This approach would address many perspectives (e.g., archaeology, human rights, ecology, etc.) and scales (e.g., temporal and spatial) and would aid in conceptualizing and implementing plans that support equity, diversity, and inclusion principles (Kohl 2018), especially for Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups.

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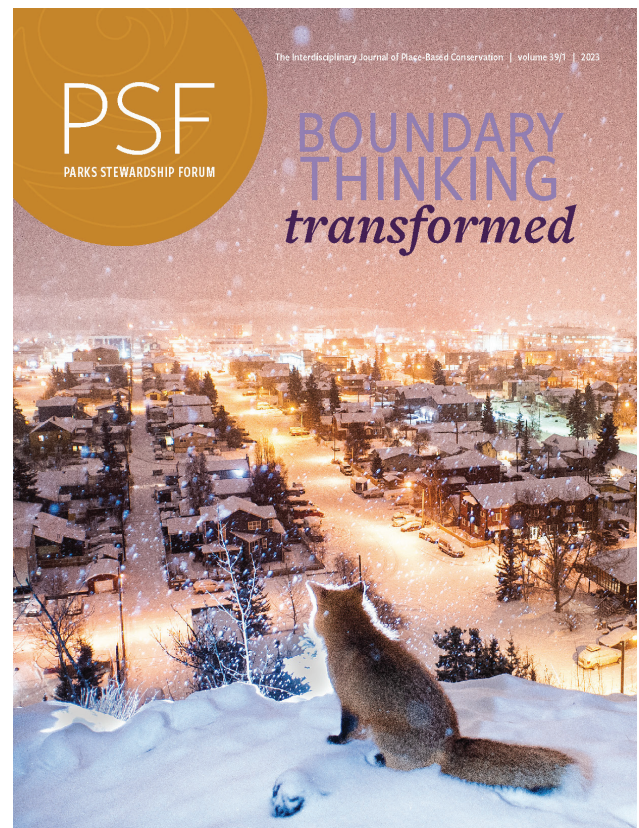
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A red fox on the clay cliffs above the city of Whitehorse, Yukon Territory.
PETER MATHER