

Case Study # 4
British Columbia



Mount Robson

Global Travel & Tourism Partnership International Conference
Sustainable Tourism Case Study
Canadian Academy of Travel & Tourism
Prince George Secondary School
Prince George, British Columbia, Canada

Written by
Angela Peters and Savanna Bakala

Academy School Coordinator
Suzanne Sharp

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the following groups for giving us the opportunity to participate in this worldwide conference, and the presentation of this case study. Without help from the following this would not be possible:

- Aldo Papone Award
- Global Travel & Tourism Partnership
- Canadian Academy of Travel & Tourism
- School District #57
- Prince George Secondary School Staff (Mr. Mike Empey and Mr. Rory Summers)
- Prince George Secondary School Local Industry Advisory Group
- Mount Robson Provincial Park Staff (Mr. Wayne VanVelzen, Area Supervisor)
- BC Parks, Prince George District (Ms. Gail Ross, Planning Officer)
- University of Northern British Columbia, Resource Recreation and Tourism program (Dr. Sanjay Nepal, professor and Mr. Paul Way MSc. graduate student)
- College of New Caledonia, Northern Outdoor Recreation and Ecotourism program, Valemount, BC (Mr. Bruce Wilkinson and Mrs. Wendy Dyson)
- Mount Robson Provincial Park, Tourism BC Visitor Information Centre (Ms. Mandy Wilkinson)
- Mount Robson Lodge, Robson Shadows Campground, and Mount Robson Whitewater Rafting Company (Mr. Terry Cinnamon)
- Our Parents

MOUNT ROBSON

**Second Oldest BC Provincial Park,
Highest Peak in the Canadian Rockies,
Part of the UNESCO Rocky Mountain World Heritage Site**

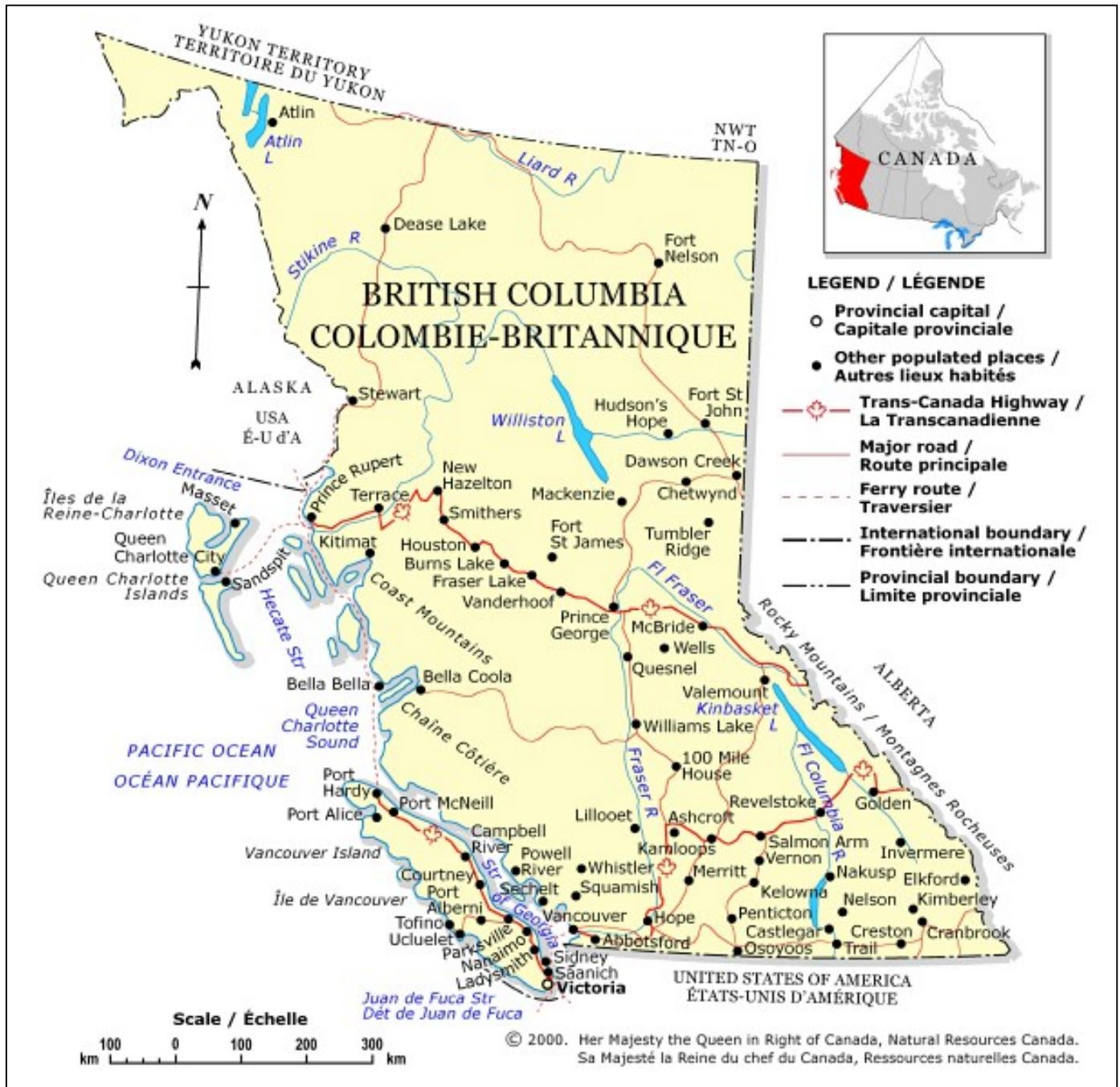
**A case study researched, written and compiled by
Angela Peters and Savanna Bakala**



Entrance gate to Mount Robson Provincial Park

Background Information on the Canadian province of British Columbia

British Columbia is the westernmost of Canada's ten provinces. Canada is a country approximately 9,970,610 square kilometres in size with a population of close to 28 million people, divided into ten provinces and three territories. Land mass bordering the province of BC includes the United States of America's Washington, Idaho and Montana to the south, Alberta to the east, the Northwest and Yukon Territories to the north, and Alaska to the northeast.



Map of British Columbia

Some interesting facts about British Columbia are:

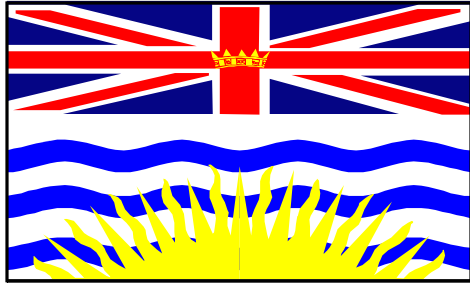
Provincial Flower: Pacific Dogwood

Provincial Gemstone: Jade

Provincial Bird: Steller's Jay

Provincial Tree: Western Red Cedar

The motto of British Columbia is "*Splendour without Diminishment*"



Flag of British Columbia



Flag of Canada

With 95 million hectares, British Columbia takes up ten percent of Canada's land mass; a surface bigger than France and Germany combined. As of July 2002, 4.096 million people call British Columbia their home and 35,000 immigrants arrive each year to start new lives in this beautiful province. In 2002, BC generated 9.3 billion dollars in tourism revenue and is looking forward to a bright future as it was recently selected to host the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Whistler and Vancouver.

What is Sustainable Tourism?

"Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems" (World Tourism Organization, n.d.).

"Sustainable tourism has three interconnected aspects: environmental, socio-cultural, and economic. Sustainability implies permanence, so sustainable tourism includes optimum use of resources, including biological diversity, minimization of ecological, cultural and social impacts, and maximization of benefits to conservation and local communities. It also refers to the management structures that are needed to achieve this" (UNEP Tourism Program, n.d.).

Introduction to the Problem: Sustainable Tourism in Mount Robson Provincial Park

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. BC Parks is also committed to providing province-wide opportunities for a diversity of high quality and safe outdoor recreation that is compatible with protecting the natural environment.

Since the late 1980s, the number of visitors to BC Provincial Parks has steadily increased, resulting in significant environmental impacts in many areas. The increasing visitor use in Mount Robson Provincial Park illustrates the growing popularity of BC Parks and provides for an excellent case study in the challenges of balancing the goals for conservation and recreation use. The Berg Lake Trail, a world-renowned hiking trail and backcountry experience, takes visitors to Mount Robson Provincial Park through some of the most spectacular scenery in BC. Our case study on Sustainable Tourism will outline the effects of recreational use on the Berg Lake Trail in Mount Robson Provincial Park and how it faces tremendous visitor pressure and environmental impacts.

Mr. Wayne VanVelzen, Area Supervisor for Mount Robson Provincial Park states that “approximately 3500 people hike and camp on the Berg Lake Trail each year; they average three nights on the trail for an average of 10,500 user nights. Day use on the trail is generally in the range of 35,000 per year. The most effective tool we have to protect the park is the Park Act, which restricts commercial mining and logging while providing direction on acceptable uses and activities. The other main tool we have is the Mount Robson Park Master Plan, which details allowable uses via zoning. The main challenge to preserve ecological integrity that park managers face is public education.”

The case writers wondered if Mount Robson Provincial Park, through its various planning tools was demonstrating sustainable tourism development by providing sufficient environmentally-friendly recreation opportunities for today’s tourists and the local economy while protecting the park resources for future generations.

British Columbia, with its numerous provincial parks and protected areas, is a popular tourist destination for nature, adventure, and recreation enthusiasts. British Columbia’s Provincial Parks, established under the authority of the *Park Act*, is “dedicated to the preservation of natural environments for the inspiration, use and enjoyment of the public.” 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. Parks are a heritage, a way to share the finest natural environments today, then pass them on for posterity. For communities, parks may mean employment, nearby recreation spots or distant vacations. For the individual, parks offer solitude, physical challenge and spiritual renewal.

Background Information on Mount Robson Provincial Park

“On every side the snowy heads of mighty hills crowded round, whilst, immediately behind us, a giant among giants, and immeasurably supreme, rose Robson’s Peak.”

These powerful words were spoken in 1865 when the explorers Milton and Cheadle first saw the majestic peak of Mount Robson. Standing at 3,954 metres, Mount Robson is the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies. Mount Robson Provincial Park is located in British Columbia, Canada (Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, n.d.).

Mount Robson is only one of the 808 provincial parks and protected areas that attract over 25 million visits each year. These provincial parks and protected areas add up to a total of 11.9 million hectares of protected land and account for 12.6 percent of British Columbia land base, far

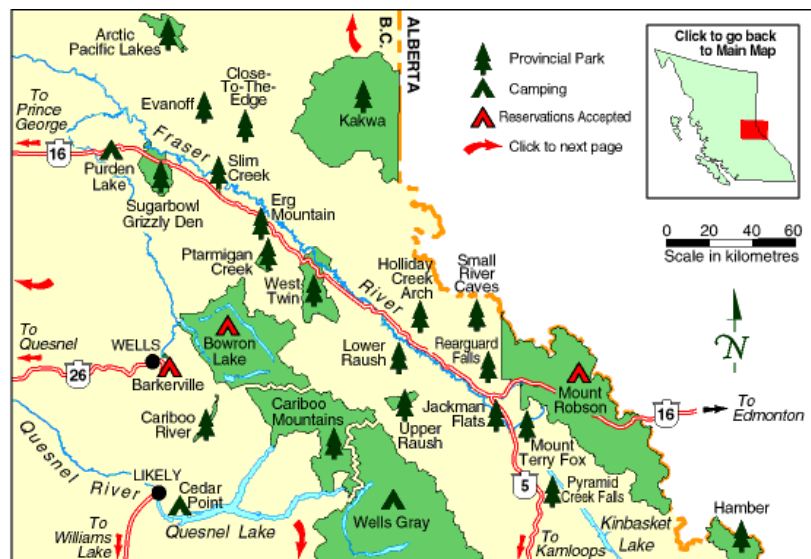
exceeding United Nations recommendations. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated Mount Robson as a world heritage site, part of the Rocky Mountain World Heritage Site, in 1990.



Bordered on the east by the Continental Divide and Alberta's Jasper National Park, the park consists of over 217, 200 hectares of rugged snow-capped mountains, broad and narrow valleys, precipitous canyons, glacier-fed lakes, rivers and streams, and forests typical of the western slopes of the Canadian Rockies (BC Parks, 1997). Mount Robson is located on Global Positioning System (GPS) at 48°W15' longitude and 52°N58'. Mount Robson

Provincial Park is located approximately 500 km from Edmonton, 300 km from Prince George, 120 km from Jasper and 320 km from Kamloops. With an average highway speed of 100 km per hour, it is easy to see how many hours it would take to drive these distances. Mount Robson

Provincial Park is located near and helps generate tourism revenue for the nearby small communities of Valemount, McBride and Tete Juane Cache. Visitors to the Park often stop in these small communities to buy gas, use accommodation, and buy food, souvenirs, and other supplies. It also provides employment for some of the recreational businesses that operate within the Park. You can get to Mount Robson Provincial Park by train (VIA Rail), bus (Greyhound or tour bus), motor vehicle, or private aircraft (airport in Valemount). It is these methods of transportation that enable over 100,000 visitors to take in the breathtaking views that Mount Robson Provincial Park has to offer (Mount Robson Visitor Information Centre, 2003).



Along with being a major tourist attraction, bringing thousands of people from hundreds of countries each year, Mount Robson Provincial Park is also involved in trade and transportation. Highway 16, Canadian National Railway, Telus fiber optic system, and Terasen pipeline all pass through the park and Park Use Permit regulates this industrial use. Besides a great view of the imposing Rocky Mountains, Mount Robson Provincial Park also houses the headwaters of the mighty Fraser River, which runs over 1,200 kilometres through the entire length of the province before emptying into the Pacific Ocean in Vancouver.

The earliest known inhabitants of the area were the Texqakalit First Nations people. They called Mount Robson 'Yuh-hai-has-hun,' which translates to 'The Mountain of the Spiral Road' and

refers to the layered appearance of the huge mountain peak. A group of 115 men and one woman called the Overlanders, were early explorers that passed through the Yellowhead Pass in 1862 in search of the best route across Canada to the Pacific Ocean. Mount Robson also has a rich history of mountain climbers. A climb was first attempted in 1907, but it was not until 1913 that Conrad Kain, W.W. Foster and A.H. McCarthy finally stood on the summit of Mount Robson. Trappers, hunters, prospectors, railway workmen and turn-of-the-century pioneers all played a role in shaping Mount Robson's history. Today, only memories and pictures remain of that era. Tools, furniture and historical artifacts can be found at the Mount Robson Visitor Information Centre and the Valemount and Area Museum. "It has never been officially recorded for whom Mount Robson was named. As early as 1863 the mountain was known as "Robson's Peak" which might indicate that it was named for Colin Robertson, onetime Hudson's Bay Company factor and later a member of Parliament, who sent Iroquois fur hunters into the area in 1820. Some suggest it might have been named after John Robson, Premier of British Columbia from 1889 to 1892. Whatever the source of the name, Mount Robson, "The Monarch of the Canadian Rockies", is unforgettable" (BC Parks, 1997).

In 1911 the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway proposed the building of the Chateau Mount Robson. The hotel was to be the railway's signature resort, designed as a central block with wings facing Mount Robson; it was to accommodate 500 guests. Famous Canadian architect Francis Rattenbury designed the building but the plans were never carried out, as the railway was not successful at attracting visitors from Europe and Asia (Chisholm, 2001).

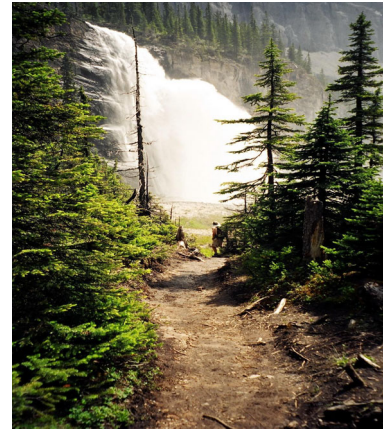
"In 1913, the *Mount Robson Park Act* established Mount Robson Provincial Park, but while many alienations existed within the Park, nothing in the Act disturbed pre-existing rights and interests" (BC Parks, n.d.). "Mount Robson was established to conserve vegetation, wildlife, fish, heritage resources and special features" (BC Parks, 1992).

Mount Robson provides full representation of landscapes and biogeoclimatic zones. As one starts up the Berg Lake Trail, they encounter Interior Cedar Hemlock (ICH) as the shadow of Mount Robson creates a small rain-forest area with massive cedar and hemlocks and sensitive mossy underbrush. As the elevation increases the vegetation changes to Sub-boreal Spruce (SBS), Engelmann Spruce-subalpine Fir (ESSF) and finally in the upper slopes, the Alpine Tundra (AT) zone. As the vegetation communities change, so do the birds and animals. Moose, Yellowhead, Kinney, and Berg Lakes are the largest and most significant lakes within the park. Over 170 species of birds have been recorded in Mount Robson Park and every June the "Bird Blitz"



brings birdwatching enthusiasts from far and wide to observe and count the diverse bird population. Forty-two species of mammals, four amphibians, and one reptile have also been recorded in the park. Excellent wildlife viewing opportunities exist within the park. Visitors have spotted Mule Deer, Whitetail Deer, Moose, Mountain Caribou, Elk, Wolverine, Coyote, Black Bear, Grizzly Bear, and Mountain Goats. They do not count animals in the park, but estimate there are 10 to 20 grizzly bears. Over 100 kilometers of the Fraser River's headwaters are within Mount Robson Provincial Park and provide some of the furthest upstream spawning ground for several species of Pacific salmon.

The 23-kilometre Berg Lake Trail is a world-renowned hiking and back country experience. Hikers follow the roaring Robson River to the pristine shores of Kinney Lake, which provides a mirror for the mountains that surround it. This gentle 4.5-km section of the trail is very popular with day-use hikers, and a picnic site and viewpoint are provided. Beyond Kinney Lake, the trail enters the Valley of a Thousand Falls. After crossing suspension bridges at Whitehorn, hikers encounter the spectacular White Falls, Falls of the Pool, and literally get drenched from the spray of Emperor Falls. At the beautiful blue-green Berg Lake, visitors often see huge sections of ice break off the massive Mist, Berg, and Robson Glaciers. There are a total of 78 wilderness tent sites along the Berg Lake Trail. All sites have tent pads, bear poles, toilets, wash basins and grey-water pits. Campstoves are mandatory for all cooking as no campfires are allowed in the wilderness campsites. Beyond Berg Lake, many day hikes take visitors to alpine meadows, ice caves, mountain lakes and spectacular views of the back of Mount Robson.



In the Valley corridor along Highway 16, three vehicle and tent campgrounds offer 178 sites. Campers enjoy large treed sites, each with a picnic table, fire pit, camping and parking area. Drinking water, flush and pit toilets, garbage and recycle bins, showers, horseshoe pits, firewood, and group camping facilities are also available in these campgrounds. Interpretive programs are offered at Robson Meadows Campground at the Amphitheatre throughout the summer months.

These interpretive programs inform park visitors about wildlife, safety, conservation, ecosystem integrity and management issues like prescribed fires. A Tourism British Columbia Visitor Information Centre is located at the Mount Robson Viewpoint and offers a wide range of services and information for people travelling within BC. Interesting displays and informative audio-visual displays about the park are available during the day. The Visitor Centre also serves as the registration/fee collection station for backcountry campers using the Berg Lake Trail wilderness tent sites.



A variety of private services are available in Mount Robson Park, including a gasoline station, restaurant, souvenir and food store. Private accommodation is available at Emperor Ridge Campground, Mount Robson Lodge, Robson Shadows Campground, and Mt. Robson Mountain River Lodge Bed and Breakfast. About ten companies currently hold Park Use Permits that allow for commercial recreational use ranging from guided mountaineering, horse trips, rafting, wildlife viewing, heli-hiking, and guided backpacking trips.

Visitors to the Park

Mount Robson's beauty attracts tourists from all over the world. One international visitor from Spain interviewed stated, "It is beautiful, we would like to buy it and take it home." In 2003 (May to October), the Tourism British Columbia Visitor Information Centre located in Mount

Robson Provincial Park recorded a total of 85,881 visitors. (It should be noted that not all visitors to the park stop at the information centre and 2003 visitor numbers experienced a decline due to road closures caused by forest fires in Jasper and Kamloops areas). About thirty percent of these visitors were from Europe. Other visitor origins include the rest of Canada, the United States, Mexico, Australia and Asia. Mount Robson Provincial Park has become more and more popular over the years. BC Parks hope that Mount Robson can sustain this popularity for many years to come.



Each year approximately 3,500 people hike and camp on the Berg Lake Trail. They average three nights on the trail for an average 10,500 user nights. Day use is generally in the 35,000 range per season. The other trails in the park receive a smaller amount of use compared to the Berg Lake Trail, about 150 parties per season for an average of 450 user nights. About 150 climbers attempt the ascent of Mount Robson peak each year, but only ten to thirty-five percent reach the summit of this unpredictable mountain, average climbing time is four to five days. All climbers must register and pay a fee for a permit before attempting the climb.

There are three vehicle and tent campgrounds along Highway 16 in Mount Robson Provincial Park. Robson Meadows has 125 treed campsites, Robson River has 19 treed campsites and Lucerne has 34 treed sites. Each of these campgrounds offers at least one wheelchair accessible site. Reservations can be made up to three months in advance at Robson Meadows through the BC Parks Discover Camping reservation service. Camping at Robson River and Lucerne is only available on a first-come, first-served basis. Camping fees are \$17.00 per night at Robson River and Robson Meadows and \$14.00 at Lucerne. Extra fees are charged for group camping, sani-station, and firewood. Over a year, an average of 38,000 campers use the campgrounds. British Columbia Residents comprise 35percent of the total campground users, while Americans account for 10 percent (BC Parks, 1992).



Wilderness campsites are located along the Berg Lake Trail and reservations are accepted. At 7 km from the trailhead Kinney Lake has 14 tent pads; at 11 km from the trailhead Whitehorn has 22 tent pads; at 16 km from the trailhead Emperor Falls has 9 tent pads; at 19 km from the trailhead Marmot has 7 tent pads; and at 21 km from the trailhead Berg Lake has 26 tent pads. Whitehorn campground receives the most users because of its convenience, being it is located halfway to Berg Lake. In 1996 BC Parks imposed a quota system on the Berg Lake Trail System and now all visitors must register and pay in advance at the Visitor Information Centre before camping overnight. Each day, once all of the sites are booked, then no further permits are issued and campsite users must show permits in order to set up their tents. Wendy Dyson, Mount Robson Visitor Information Centre Manager states that, “throughout the summer, most of the camping spots are sold out, even during the middle of the week, and many people who show up for last minute reservations are turned away. The cost to tent overnight is five dollars (Canadian)

per person per night.” Other wilderness campsites are located beyond Berg Lake in the Robson Pass, at Alpine Lakes and Mount Fitzwilliam.

Government Policy on BC Parks

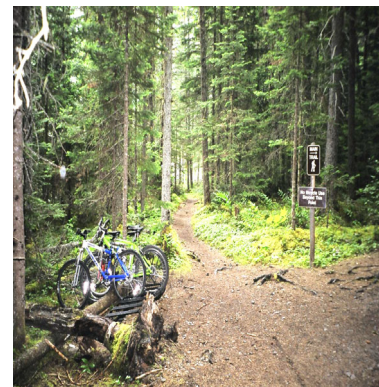
The most effective tool to protect Mount Robson Provincial Park is the Park Act. This restricts commercial logging and mining while providing direction on acceptable uses and activities. The Park Use Permit Act regulates industrial users such as CN Rail, Telus, and Terasen. This details conditions that allow the commercial/industrial activity while providing strict guidelines on impacts and rehabilitation of any area. All of the recreation businesses in the Park must follow strict guidelines. Each operator pays BC Parks \$100 per year and must submit a safety and environmental plan before a permit is issued. They are restricted in the size of the group to fourteen people. The heli-hiking company, Robson HeliMagic tours is restricted in the number of flights per year and to landing only on Monday and Friday after 8:00 a.m. so they do not disturb campers.



There is only one landing pad at Whitehorn that is also used to bring in supplies to backcountry rangers and for medical emergencies. The recreational operators in the park realize that their very livelihood depends on maintaining the natural environment. Wildfoot Tours offering birdwatching and wildlife viewing, backcountry hiking and salmon spawning tours in Mount Robson Provincial Park follows a ‘Leave no Trace’ policy to reduce the impact to the local land. Their environmental ethics policy includes planning ahead and preparing, travel and camp on durable surfaces, dispose of waste properly, leave what you find, minimize campfire impacts, and respect wildlife (Wildfoot Tours, n.d.).

The other main tool used for environmental protection is the Mount Robson Master Plan, implemented in 1992. “This plan for Mount Robson Park defines the role of the park and establishes the objectives and desired actions to guide the management and development in the future. It also provides direction for a number of key park issues, including helicopter access, recreational horse use and outdoor recreation” (BC Parks, 1992). The plan details allowable uses via zoning, separating the park into four zones, which include Wilderness Conservation, Wilderness Recreation, Natural Environment, and Intensive Recreation. Approximately eighty percent of the park is zoned ‘Wilderness Conservation’, this means human use is allowed but no facilities will be in place to accommodate the use. These large natural areas are free of any evidence of modern human being with no trails cut or maintained, no bridges, shelters, or other facilities.

Mountain bike use has been restricted to only certain trails in the park and on the Berg Lake Trail mountain bikers share the trail with hikers but can only go to Kinney Lake. The Berg Lake Trail was originally built as a horse-packing trail and is still used by some trail ride operators today. They have reduced the distance that horses are allowed to travel to the north end of Kinney Lake and restricted trail use to June and September during non-peak hiking times.



Mount Robson Provincial Park also has a comprehensive Ecosystem Management Plan that was implemented in March 2001 to look at the general health of the park's ecosystem without the constraint of human use. Some of the issues discussed in this plan include increased fire hazards, mountain pine beetle infestation, biodiversity conservation, wildlife habitats, habitats of endangered/threatened plants, animals and vegetation communities, crown land adjacency issues, and public safety concerns. Some of the suggestions in this plan include wildlife highway access control through the installation of wildlife exclusion fencing, fire management approaches such as prescribed burning, and silvicultural treatments for mountain pine beetle and spruce beetle. The Master Plan and Ecosystem Management Plan for Mount Robson Provincial Park are available on the BC Parks website (<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/>) under Conservation.

Mount Robson Provincial Park Regulations

Overnight hikers on the Berg Lake Trail System must register at the Visitor Centre and are required to watch a video on the Berg Lake Trail that outlines environmental and safety issues. They are provided with a Berg Lake Trail brochure that includes a trail map and has information on trail activities, park hazards, and special regulations:

- “Enjoy Mount Robson Park but please leave it as you found it so that future visitors may also enjoy the park. Flowers, shrubs, trees, and rocks are part of the parks natural heritage. Please do not damage or remove them.
- For backcountry users, good wilderness ethics are a must! Keep the water clean: use wash basins, the drain pits provided, and biodegradable soap. You must pack out all garbage.
- Please supervise children. Natural hazards exist along the Berg Lake Trail.
- Dogs are not allowed on overnight trips. Day hikers must keep dogs on a leash at all times.
- Cyclists use extreme caution. Hikers have the right of way. No bicycles beyond kilometre 7 at Kinney Lake” (BC Parks, 2000).



Throughout the park signs are prominently posted warning of park hazards:



- “NEVER FEED OR APPROACH BEARS.
- Keep food away from animals. Use the bear poles where provided.
- Please stay on marked trails for your safety and the protection of the park's resources.
- Visitors should keep in mind that it is easy to lose bearings in the forest, and some trails have steep sections with drop-offs that may be dangerous” (BC Parks, 2000).

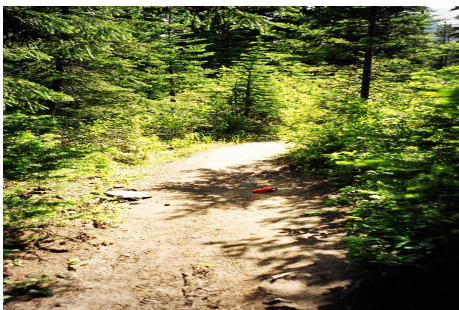
Park Rangers work to maintain the park and enforce the above rules, although recently some park staff positions have been terminated. The three vehicle and tent campgrounds are now privately operated. Terry Cinnamon of Mount Robson White Water Rafting Company, a long time resident and recreation operator in the park says, “I remember many years ago when my

father was a park ranger, the rangers used to operate the campgrounds and collect fees as well as being on the trails. You would see a ranger with his gear on, his badge and ranger hat – it gave you a proud feeling of the area.” He felt the government funding cuts and partial privation has resulted in less enforcement of the park environmental ethics, “there used to be 3 to 5 rangers on the trail at one time, now there are only 2 rangers for the whole park. Park operators now collect fees for groups of parks, some drive around in rusty old trucks.”

Challenges to Sustainable Tourism in Mount Robson Provincial Park

If Mount Robson continues to be a popular tourist attraction then actions must be taken to ensure proper preservation. Wayne VanVelzen, Mount Robson Provincial Park Area Supervisor states, “the quota system on the Berg Lake Trail is working great. Ongoing measurements over the past ten years indicate the impacts on the natural resources on the Berg Lake Trail are being reduced. Water quality, vegetation cover, trail braiding and user satisfaction are all on the increase since introduction of the quota system.” Enforcement of the park regulations and even the quota system are becoming increasingly more difficult due to cutbacks in park staff and rangers. There is talk of fully computerizing reservations for overnight users on the Berg Lake trail, thus eliminating further BC Parks staff positions. Visitors would not be exposed to the educational component of watching the Berg Lake Trail video or verbally having the map and park regulations explained.

There are many beautiful sights to see along the trails, and hikers may be tempted to stray off the trail to get a closer look or to tour through an area that interests them where there is no trail. Park regulations and signs advise against leaving the trail because these excursions may damage plant life. On our visit to Mount Robson Park, we noticed that as we hiked up the Berg Lake Trail and throughout the highway campgrounds many new smaller trails have developed as a result of people leaving the designated trail. We saw several visitors straying off trails to view the Robson River, get close-up photographs of birds, and climb on rock faces. The main trails are also facing degradation because of such frequent and excessive use. Some trails have become very eroded, muddy and slippery which could lead to accidents to the visitors in the park and damage to tree roots that are close to the trails. Fortunately there is regular trail maintenance and the trails have improved considerably since the 1970s, many of the trails have been re-graveled recently. In sensitive areas board walks and suspension bridges have been built to preserve vegetation.



In previous years, campsites along the Berg Lake Trail were often full and visitors that wanted to stay overnight would hike off trail and set up their own campsite wherever. This was a growing problem considering staying on trails is vital to vegetation preservation and there is a greater risk of wildlife encounters in a secluded quiet spot. Garbage and toilet paper were being left at these impromptu campgrounds for park staff to clean up and encouraged wildlife encounters. Campers may cut down or break off twigs and parts of trees or fires. All of the uncontrolled campsites have been cleaned up the areas are fenced off to prevent further abuse by non-registered campers. Any person without a permit is not allowed to stay overnight and park rangers check the Berg Lake Trail campsites daily. In the highway vehicle and tent campgrounds, campers are advised to bring their own firewood and

there is some available for purchase, so cutting trees and breaking off twigs is reduced. Campfire hours have been restricted to reduce wood smoke pollution.

Bruce Wilkinson, former Mount Robson park interpreter and ecotourism operator pointed out that “school groups that hike, bike and camp on the Berg Lake Trail in May, June and September are not restricted to the group size of fourteen that recreational permit users must comply with. The students litter more, vandalize park property, pick flowers, break off twigs for wiener roasts, have campfires in prohibited areas, and wander off trails treading on sensitive ecosystems.” About five years ago, any school group that wanted to use the Berg Lake Trail had to pre-register and a park ranger would visit their classroom to show the Berg Lake Trail video, go over park regulations and discuss environmental impacts. BC Park staff would visit elementary schools and a Jerry’s Rangers program was offered to children visiting in the parks, but government cutbacks have eliminated these educational programs.



All animal species in the park seem to be doing well. In recent years, people are more educated about wildlife problems and how to avoid them. There are usually no problems with bear/human encounters even though there are many sightings both on the trails and in the highway campgrounds. Written wildlife information is provided via handouts, on the BC Parks website, on signs throughout the park, and interpretive programs often focus on wildlife/human interactions. Bear-proof garbage disposal containers are provided in all provincial campgrounds and picnic areas. This past year interpretive programs were cut from the BC Parks budget and Mount Robson Park had to rely on volunteers to provide this service. Park users value the interpretive programs and park managers rely on these programs to get the message about wildlife, safety, conservation, ecosystem integrity and management issues across to the public.



Highway mortality of wildlife over a one year period would average 2 to 3 moose, 6 to 8 black bear, 10 to 15 deer, both Whitetail and Mule Deer. On occasion, once every few years, there are wolf, lynx, Grizzly Bear, and elk hit by vehicles. Large four-foot by eight foot reflective signs are posted at key sites on the highway warning people to slow down in the evening. Wildlife reflectors are also installed at two important locations that range from one to two kilometres in length. Brushing the road allowance to improve visibility has been a big step in reducing highway mortality rate of wildlife. The Ecosystem Management Plan discusses the possibility of adding sections of animal exclusion fencing once further studies and conclusive evidence from areas such as Banff National Park are available.

British Columbia’s parks and protected areas provide residents of the province with a wide range of benefits that contribute to social, environmental, and economic well being. Financially, parks have the ability to generate lots of money, but they also take a great deal of money to operate. In November 2002, a Recreation Stewardship Panel developed a New Funding and Management Model for Fish, Wildlife, and Park Recreation. Three sources of revenue for the Ministry of

Water, Land and Air Protection (which now includes BC Parks) are general taxation, user fees, and contributions. For the 2002/2003 fiscal year the Ministry's recreation user fee revenue was 38.2 million dollars from visitor expenditures, contributions, and park use permits. The expenditures to provide recreation services are 43.7 million dollars, leaving a gap of 5.5 million dollars funded by general taxation. Economic activity generated by the park system sustains about 9,100 direct and indirect person-years of employment every year (Ministry of Water, Lands and Air Protection, 2001). Both employment and park expenditures contribute to provincial and federal tax revenues.

The Recreation Stewardship Panel recommended a new funding model for the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. They recommended that conservation and protection of parks, fish and wildlife should be a fundamental responsibility of the government and be funded through general taxation. The panel felt that the users should primarily pay for the services required to support recreation, such as campgrounds and hiking trails. Voluntary contributions of money, goods and services should be used to support enhanced levels of conservation or recreation. The panel felt that education and interpretation are a key part of both the recreation and conservation roles of the Ministry and recommended that fish, wildlife, and park interpretation and education be re-established (Recreation Stewardship Panel, 2002). Park user fees for a number of day-use areas in the Vancouver and Victoria area were implemented in the summer of 2003. Mount Robson Provincial Park staff is unsure at this time as to whether they will have to implement user fees for day-use hikers on the Berg Lake Trail or if there will be other fee increases for overnight hikers.

The issue of parks paying for themselves is a major concern. In order to make BC Parks profitable user fees would need to increase for all activities from hiking to camping. There would possibly be further staffing cutbacks and there could be increased development within the parks. There has been some discussion in the British Columbia government on whether or not to privatize BC Parks. The maintenance of all of BC Park vehicle and tent campgrounds has been operated under private contract for the past fifteen years. The private sector operates these campgrounds under contract and gains revenue for maintaining them. BC Parks still manages the campgrounds, sets campground fees, and collects a percentage of the revenue earned by the private sector operators and if an operator fails to meet BC Park standards then their contract is not renewed.

Conclusion:

BC Parks and Mount Robson Provincial Park are currently demonstrating exemplary practices for sustaining tourism for future generations. The quota system on the Berg Lake Trail is working, but plans to move towards a computerized system that removes the educational aspects of trail registration would be ill advised. More regulation of school groups is needed to reduce the impacts of these large, poorly supervised groups during the months when backcountry park ranger staffing is minimal. Trail and campsite maintenance and informational signs and brochures have reduced impacts on vegetation and wildlife Recreation Park Use Permits seems to have been well managed in Mount Robson Provincial Park. There are a good variety of recreational opportunities for those visitors willing to pay for these services and none of the current operators are operating at capacity; they are not turning away customers. The Park Use Permit Act provides strict guidelines, and all of the current recreation operators in the park have

demonstrated good stewardship. We believe the current level of recreational opportunities provides good added value for visitors to Mount Robson Park. Further expansion of the park for motorized vehicle use, ski lifts, resorts or other heavy-use commercial activities is definitely discouraged. Any further privatizing could result in the park not being properly cared for. If Mount Robson Provincial Park was fully privatized, the new private owners could hike up the fees, implement new fees, terminate the quota system, cut jobs, and the overall conservation of the park may be affected.

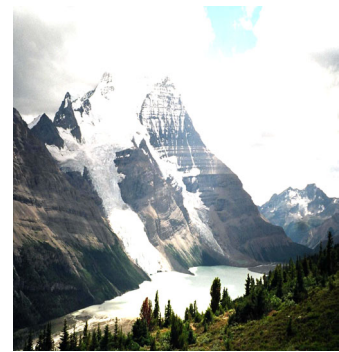
According to Jeanette Townsend, Mayor of the nearby town of Valemount, an Alberta developer, Sunrise International Incorporated plans to construct a 75 million-dollar resort in the town. The resort will include a 4.8-km gondola, a hotel, a restaurant, two eighteen hole golf courses, condominium, and residential lots. The BC Government has not fully finalized the plans as yet, but the project is expected to proceed in 2004. The proposed resort is expected to create many jobs; however there are mixed feelings on the matter. “The Robson Valley Region has tremendous potential for growth, we only need to look at a resort town like Whistler to see what can come of mountain tourism. I believe we are well on our way in the Robson Valley,” stated Shirley Bond, Prince George-Mount Robson MLA (Prince George Citizen, September 2003). Terry Cinnamon of Mount Robson White Water Rafting Company, whose company would benefit from the proposed expansion, said, “we do not want to see Mount Robson become Whistler.” Bruce Wilkinson a Mount Robson park stakeholder and Valemount resident says that “on the one hand development is good, but right now we can leave our doors unlocked at night and I do not want to lose that feeling.” The development in Valemount could have a potential negative impact on Mount Robson Provincial Park, as it would bring increased visitor demands to the area. The case study writers believe that turning the Mount Robson area into the next Whistler should not be the price that it has to pay to sustain itself. The park and its natural beauty should remain the attraction not expanded recreational use.

A common theme from the stakeholder we interviewed centered on insufficient government funding. Bruce Wilkinson, former park interpreter and ecotourism operator, and current instructor of a college Ecotourism program in the nearby community of Valemount states, “the government has to place a value on the park and its staff.” Terry Cinnamon of Mount Robson Lodge and White Water Rafting Company says, “the park is still a great place to go, the potential for tourism is strong, but government budgetary restraints mean there is not enough coverage in the park.” “We shouldn’t be taking a market approach to our parks, and closing up some parks that are not being well-used,” suggests Dr. Sanjay Nepal, assistant Professor, Resource Recreation and Tourism Program, at the University of Northern BC. Hopefully the provincial government and Ministry of Water, Lands, and Air Protection will listen to the advice of the Recreation Stewardship Panel and fund the conservation, protection, education and interpretation aspects of BC Provincial Parks sufficiently. Recommendation to increase user fees and add fees for day-use hikers was something we are not in favour of. It would be a shame to see our parks limited only to those people who can afford the price.

Wayne VanVelzen, Mount Robson Provincial Park Area Supervisor states that, “the main challenge to preserve the ecological integrity that park managers face is public education. An example would be the use of fire to create and preserve biodiversity. For many years people have been told that fire is the enemy while science suggests that fire is a critical component of a

healthy diverse ecosystem. People want wilderness to exist but at times the demands of human use reduce the health of all the components that make wilderness. For the most part I believe ‘Don’t build it and they will come’.” The Master Plan for Mount Robson Provincial Park, the Mount Robson Provincial Park Ecosystem Management Plan, and BC Park’s Vegetation Plan are all excellent government policies and planning tools that demonstrate BC Parks long-term planning and vision for sustainable tourism. Since eighty percent of the park is zoned ‘Wilderness Conservation,’ we feel that Mount Robson’s natural areas and resources will not be depleted anytime soon. The BC Government is currently discussing the option of logging in BC Parks to remove beetle-infested trees. We feel that fires are a better option than logging as they are more environmentally friendly and assist in restoring the ecosystem thus improving the wildlife habitat. With natural occurring fires or controlled burns comes the chance that these fires can get out of control and complete destruction could occur.

Mount Robson Provincial Park will continue to be a popular tourist destination because of the spectacular scenic views, quiet spots to relax, and opportunities for fitness and recreation. As our world gets increasingly busier and more stressful, Mount Robson Provincial Park will always be there, and will offer everything a person needs to unwind and recharge. Lynn Tanod in her article *Hiking the Berg Lake Trail* in the Fall 2003 issue of British Columbia magazine describes her Mount Robson experience, “I have that feeling that others achieve while meditating or singing in a cathedral: complete peace. A hike on the Berg Lake Trail does that. It is for the mind what an avalanche is for a mountainside: a natural disturbance that makes way for growth and renewal.” Hopefully, with the combined efforts of us all, Mount Robson Provincial Park, along with the rest of the world, will remain so that our children and great grandchildren can enjoy it.



Notes to the Instructor

Since beginning the research on this case study, there have been two new developments that are a cause for a concern to Mount Robson Provincial Park and all of the BC Park System. The nearby BC Park of Barkerville, home to an important heritage attraction, recently had sixty percent of its staff cut as the BC Government attempts to make the park more economically sustainable. The premier of British Columbia, Mr. Gordon Campbell, announced at a meeting of BC mayors that he was considering allowing logging of beetle-infested trees in BC Parks.

Work Cited

BC Parks (n.d.). The History of BC Parks. <<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks>>.

BC Parks (1992). Master Plan for Mount Robson Provincial Park. Ministry of Environment Lands and Parks, BC Parks Prince George District, Northern BC Region.

BC Parks (1997). Mount Robson Provincial Park. BC Parks.

BC Parks (2000). Mount Robson Provincial Park - Berg Lake Trail. BC Parks.

Chisholm, B. (ed.) (2001). Castles of the North – Canada’s Grad Hotels. Toronto: Lynx Images.

Canadian Academy of Travel and Tourism

Cinnamon, T. (September 2003). Personal Interview.

Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (n.d.). Mount Robson Provincial Park.
<<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/mtrobson.htm>>.

Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (2001). Economic Benefits of British Columbia's Provincial Parks. Province of British Columbia.

Mount Robson Visitor Information Centre (2003). Monthly Statistics – Mount Robson: 2002 and 2003. Tourism BC.

Nepal, Sanjay (September 2003). Personal Interview.

Prince George Citizen Newspaper (September 2003). Resort Project Awaits Go Ahead. Prince George, BC.

Recreation Stewardship Panel (2002). A New Management and Funding Model for Fish, Wildlife and Park Recreation – Final Report and Recommendations. Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection.

Tanod, L. (Fall 2003). *Hiking the Berg Lake Trail*. British Columbia Magazine. Volume 45, Number 3.

UNEP Tourism Program (n.d.). About Sustainable Tourism.
<<http://www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism/sust-tourism/about.htm>>.

UNESCO (n.d) Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks. <<http://whc.unesco.org/>>

VanVelzen, W. (September 2003). Telephone Interview.

Way, P. (September 2003). Email Information and Photo Source.

Wildfoot Tours (n.d). Gentle Adventures – Wildfoot Interpretive Tours.
www.valemount.com/wildfoot)

Wilkinson, B. (September 2003). Personal Interview.

World Tourism Organization (n.d.). Sustainable Development of Tourism.
<<http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/concepts.htm>>.

Additional Resources for Case Study #4

Appendix C

The following resources were used in gathering background information for the Mount Robson Provincial Park - Sustainable Tourism Case Study. These resources can be used to provide students with a greater understanding of BC Parks, Mount Robson Provincial Park, and the topic

of sustainable tourism. Most of the BC Parks resources listed below are available on the BC Parks website at <http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/>. Many of the BC Parks reports demonstrate why the provincial parks of British Columbia are world renowned for their planning and commitment to conservation and management of natural resources.

BC Environment (n.d.). Bears + Garbage = DANGER. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks.

BC Parks (n.d.). BC's Park Legacy Panel Interim Report – Classifying Protected Areas. <<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/bcplp/interim/10vision.htm>>.

BC Parks (n.d.). BC's Park Legacy Panel Preliminary Report – Appendix C: Ecosystem-Based Management. <<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/bcplp/prelim/20appenc.htm>>.

BC Parks (n.d.). BC's Park Legacy Panel Preliminary Report – Managing Private, Industrial and Commercial Uses. <<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/bcplp/prelim/13vision.htm>>.

BC Parks (n.d.). Mount Robson Provincial Park - Visitor Information Centre and Viewpoint Area. BC Parks.

BC Parks (n.d.). Wildfire Management in Parks and Protected Areas – Questions and Answers. <http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/conserves/wildfires/q&q_wildfire_mgmt.htm>.

Blackwell, B. A., and Associates Ltd. et al (2001). Mount Robson Provincial Park Ecosystem Management Plan: Occasional Paper No. 6. BC Parks Prince George District, Ministry of Environment Lands and Parks, BC Parks Division. <http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/conserves/occ_paper/mtrobson.htm>

Canadian Geographic (n.d.). World Wonders – Canada's 12 Extraordinary Sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Canadian Geographic Enterprises.

The Ecotourism Society (n.d.). Ecotourism Guidelines for Nature Tour Operators. The Ecotourism Society.

Ministry of Environment Lands and Parks, BC Parks Division (1999). Vegetation Management. BC Parks Conservation Program Policies.

Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (n.d.). Day-Use Parking Fees and Annual Parking Pass Information – Frequently Asked Questions. <http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/operations/rec_pass/rec_pass.htm>.

Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (2002). Bear – People Conflict Prevention Plan for Parks and Protected Areas 3rd Edition. <<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/conserves/bearconf.htm>>.

Queens Printer (2003). Park Act. <http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/P/96344_01.htm>.

