

Nature Connection in Recreation



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA) would like to acknowledge the First Nations, the Métis, and all of the people across Alberta who share a history and a deep connection with this land. We dedicate ourselves to moving forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

“ RECONCILIATION
WILL NEVER OCCUR UNLESS
WE ARE ALSO RECONCILED
WITH THE EARTH ”

- What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND NATURE

Goal #3 of [The Framework for Recreation in Canada](#)

In 2015, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council released their most recent Framework for Recreation in Canada. The Framework outlines five goals as part of a pathway toward individual, community, and environmental well-being. Goal #3 aims to use recreation to connect people to Nature. This resource supports this goal by providing actionable steps to **move Nature from the background to the foreground of recreational activities.**

[Connecting Canadians with Nature](#) outlines many benefits of Nature connection:

PHYSICAL

SPIRITUAL

COGNITIVE

MENTAL

ENVIRONMENTAL

SOCIAL

NATURE IS FOR EVERYONE

Opportunities to connect with Nature should be accessible to all individuals regardless of age, race, ethnicity, identity, ability, religion, economic status, and life experience.

[The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Recreation Settings eCourse](#) and the [Healthy Communities Framework](#) created by Communities ChooseWell are free online tools that provide recreation professionals with a foundation for awareness, education, reflection, and actionable steps to help improve the health and well-being of our communities.



LEARNING

ABOUT PEOPLE & NATURE



WHOSE LAND DO YOU RECREATE ON?

Indigenous Peoples have always lived in a harmonious relationship with the land. What is currently called Alberta is home to 138 First Nations Reserves, 8 Métis Settlements, and five treaty territories. Whether recreating inside or outside, we must remember that we are always on traditional Indigenous land.

[Native Land Digital](#) is an interactive website that helps you learn which traditional territories, languages, and treaties make up the land you live and recreate on. The Government of Alberta has also created a [PDF Map](#) of the First Nations reserves, Metis settlements and treaty territories across the province.

WHAT PLANTS LIVE NEAR YOU?

Identifying plants can help you better understand Nature and the gifts that each plant offers.

[iNaturalist](#) is a Nature app that connects you to a community of scientists and naturalists to help you identify the plants and animals in your area.

WHAT ANIMALS LIVE NEAR YOU?

Alberta is home to many fish and wildlife. Learning about the wildlife in your area can help you gain a better understanding of the natural world.

Use [The Alberta Fish and Wildlife website](#) to learn more about the different animals in your area and how you can live and recreate with them safely and respectfully.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?

We all can better understand Indigenous ways of knowing and being with the land by doing our research and committing to an ever-evolving learning journey.



Start Your Learning Here:

- [A Brief Introduction to Indigenous Peoples in Alberta](#)
 - [Walking with Indigenous Communities](#)
 - [Indigenous Voices in Partnerships](#)
 - [Healthy Eating in Recreation Settings](#)
- eCourse:**
- [Indigenous Traditional Food Systems](#)
 - [Healthy Eating and Indigenous Recreation](#)

WHERE DO YOUR FOOD AND WATER COME FROM?

Staying fueled by food and hydrated with water is crucial to healthy outdoor recreation.

- ▶ Do you know what bodies of water your drinking water comes from?
- ▶ What do you know about the land where your food was harvested or hunted?



**Connecting with Nature can mean more than just being outside.
Find a way to connect that works for you!**

MOVE OUTSIDE

- ▶ Do your home workout on the driveway
- ▶ Read a book in the park
- ▶ Swap the treadmill for an outdoor trail

GET TOGETHER

- ▶ Host a picnic with local foods
- ▶ Have a sandcastle-making competition
- ▶ Go camping with friends



FEEL

- ▶ Walk barefoot on the grass
- ▶ Swim in the water at different temperatures
- ▶ Let the wind guide your cycling route

TASTE

- ▶ Pick wild raspberries for a snack
- ▶ Catch a fish for dinner
- ▶ Plant a vegetable garden



SMELL

- ▶ Smell different tree species
- ▶ Sniff the flowers on a walk around the block
- ▶ Notice the difference between the inside and outside air

SLOW DOWN

- ▶ Experiment with how slow you can make an activity
- ▶ Take a break on your hike to enjoy being with Nature
- ▶ Swap a fast-paced activity for a slower one

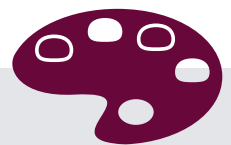


GO ALONE

- ▶ Make a new snow-shoe path in your backyard
- ▶ Enjoy a moment of solitude on a park bench
- ▶ Walk in a single-file line when hiking with a group

LISTEN

- ▶ Take a break from listening to music while running
- ▶ Notice the sounds of the birds near the playground
- ▶ Try paddling without making noise



CREATE

- ▶ Paint with the colours of the Earth
- ▶ Dance like the forest
- ▶ Build a snow person using only things found outside

LOOK

- ▶ Pay attention to the flowing paths of the river
- ▶ Search for animal tracks while cross-country skiing
- ▶ Observe the way the plants at the park change with the seasons

Throughout history, Indigenous Peoples have maintained a balanced relationship with this land through reciprocity, enabling all beings to thrive.

We can learn from them about caring for Nature by practicing the **Basic Laws of Reciprocity** shared in [Parks for All](#):

RESPECT

“Treat what has been provided with respect”

GRATITUDE

“Give thanks for what you have”

GENEROSITY

“Be generous with others whenever possible”

HOW CAN YOU CARE FOR NATURE?

Examples:

- ▶ Say "thank you" to Nature you connect with
- ▶ Recreate close to home
- ▶ Prioritize active transportation
- ▶ Pick up litter you see outside
- ▶ Follow [The Seven Principles of Leave No Trace](#)
- ▶ Only take what you need
- ▶ Share what you harvest or hunt with others

ASK YOURSELF:

- ▶ How do I feel before and after connecting with Nature?
- ▶ Does technology help me connect or disconnect with Nature?
- ▶ Does Nature feel different in areas with more pollution?
- ▶ How can I help others connect with Nature?

