

## The Evolution of the Field in Canada and British Columbia

This section provides a historical perspective of how the parks and recreation field has evolved in Canada and BC.

Before we move forward, it is valuable to understand where the field has come from and the forces that are acting on it now. The evolution of the field is described in terms of broad "Eras", beginning with the Early Years (pre-1960), and then moving through the Inputs Era (60's and 70's), to the Outputs Era (80's to mid 90's), to the Benefits Era (mid 90's to the present), and finally to the Outcomes Era of the coming decade.

Appendix A contains a comprehensive history of the field in British Columbia. This history was derived from a review of a number of sources, but primarily from two focus groups that involved a number of the key contributors to the development of the field in this province.

This section provides a brief description of the Eras, and also lists some of the key milestones that occurred in British Columbia during these times.

The point must be made that the Eras are broad shifts that have occurred in the field in Canada and BC. These shifts didn't occur at the same time in all communities, or even in all provinces and territories. While the Eras are couched in specific decades, the Inputs Era didn't end on December 31, 1979, nor did the Outputs Era begin the next day. Rather, the Eras blended with each other, with some communities advancing to new ways of thinking and acting far sooner than others.

### **2.2.1 The Early Years**

Many elements of the public and not-for-profit recreation and parks field in Canada can be traced back well over a century. At that time, recreation occurred in community halls, church basements, and on playing fields and parks. The vast majority of these activities were self-developed by volunteer organizations, sport clubs, the YMCA and YWCA, churches and ethnic organizations. Some public support for recreation was provided to women's organizations for the first playground programs in the early decades of the 1900's to offset the negative impacts of urban environments upon children. It was an early recognition that recreation was not only a personal good, but also a social good.

Later, during the Depression, the federal government created the Dominion-Provincial Training Plan to alleviate unemployment and social issues by training young leaders and carrying out community projects such as trail and park development.

Government roles were largely limited to the parks area at a national, provincial and local level. National and provincial parks were created, and local governments developed largely passive parks and cemeteries, initially leaving sport fields to the volunteer sector. There were limited or no program roles played by municipalities, outside of the provision of a small number of recreation facilities. The local government role was only expanded beyond parks after the end of World War II. A number of arenas and a few indoor and outdoor pools were built, and often named as "Memorial" to those that had lost their lives during the War.

By the 1950's, the development of more formal approaches to recreation services were witnessed as the post-War birth rate soared. Early leaders, many trained as physical instructors in the Armed Services, began to look at broader approaches to school physical education and community services. There were still less than a handful of "recreation directors" in the province.

### *BC Milestones of the Early Years*

- In 1934 a training program called "Provincial Recreation" (shortened to ProRec) was established under the Dominion-Provincial Plan and continued until 1953. It trained and educated practitioners with an emphasis on physical activity.
- The first BC conference on recreation was hosted in Victoria in 1954 by the Province to look at the future development of recreation after ProRec had been discontinued the previous year.
- In 1957, when the National Recreation Association (an American organization, now called the National Recreation and Parks Association) held its Pacific region conference in Vancouver, a committee was formed to look at establishing a recreation association in BC.
- In May 1958, the British Columbia Recreation Association (now the British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association) was formally created at its inaugural conference in Vernon.
- In 1958, the first facility capital grants program was created as a federal/provincial/local government partnership to construct recreation and other community facilities to celebrate the BC Centennial of becoming a colony. Funding was limited, but a few facilities were constructed.

### **2.2.2 The Inputs Era - the 1960's and 70's**

Building on the developments in the late 1950's, the current systems really began to evolve rapidly in the 1960's. As the birth rate continued to soar with the Baby Boom generation, (those born between 1947 and 1966), communities began to build facilities and provide greater program opportunities to meet increased demands. Public departments that had focused primarily on parks were expanded to include recreation services and staff. The early emphasis was on children and youth services, as were the facilities that tended to be single-purpose sport oriented structures. By the late 1960's, recreation services had broadened to be more inclusive of all age groups, genders and conditions.

This also applied to facilities. The 1967 Canadian Centennial brought a major surge of facility construction projects, many of which are now nearing the end of their useful lifespan. While the majority of the Centennial projects were still single-purpose facilities, there were a few complexes that created a broader range of opportunities within the same structure.

The growth of the field accelerated in the 1970's, with the expansion of staff, services, and indoor and outdoor facilities. A number of communities throughout BC initiated their first long range master planning exercises to identify their gaps and priorities for parks, indoor facilities, and service provision. Parks planning began to include the concept of "linear parks" as part of the overall open space system. Trails and bikeways were now seen as integral to recreation experiences and community environments. By the end of the 70's, most new indoor community recreation facilities combined a number of spaces within multi-purpose complexes. The diversity of programs was extended and there was growing commitment to the inclusion of persons with a disability, the economically challenged, and other populations whose access to opportunities had previously been limited.

A generation of new leaders, many with university degrees or college diplomas brought new philosophies and skills to the field and influenced the directions that departments and organizations took. They understood the concept of community development, were committed to meaningful citizen participation in decision making, and believed that many services are best offered by or through a partnership with the community and its organizations. The 1970's were also a time of philosophical debate across Canada around whether the facilitator/enabler or the direct provider role should be adopted in program planning and provision. Some believed that this was an either/or proposition and that the roles were mutually exclusive. By the end of the decade, most practitioners understood that a balance in approaches was needed.

In March 1978, the Ontario government brought eleven participants together in the Town of Elora for a retreat to examine the future of the recreation movement in that province. The resulting proceedings, *The Elora Prescription*, became a national landmark document for the field. Written as an interpretation of the participants' collective thoughts, the Elora Prescription identified that the recreation and parks field needed to make some fundamental shifts, and that many current practices had become "bankrupt" in an era of change. These shifts were summarized as eight "From - Towards" constructs, including moving "from provider towards facilitator, enabler, educator". The coming decade would present some new challenges, directions and opportunities.

### *BC Milestones in the Inputs Era*

- In the early to mid-1960s, the University of British Columbia developed the Recreation Education degree program to increase the number of practitioners with a university degree that had more specific professional development in the field. This program lasted more than two decades.
- The 1967 Canadian Centennial included a large capital program to encourage as many communities across Canada to build and then open facilities during the Centennial Year. It led to an unprecedented scale of recreation facility and park development in BC. New capital grants programs were created in the 1970's, with the source of funds being shifted to lottery proceeds in 1975.
- The Province hired a number of regional consultants to assist smaller communities in particular in developing Recreation Commissions and services.
- The BCRA continued to grow. It added its first publication, the Recreation Reporter in 1963, and its membership grew rapidly during this period from 246 in 1968 to 600 in 1979.
- In 1970, the BCRA added the parks area and formally became the BCRPA. In 1974, Dr. Eric Broom completed and tabled the "Broom Report" in the Legislature. The report called for a stronger and clearer role for the provincial government in leisure services. The Government recognized the important role that recreation played in communities throughout the Province. This led to a shift of the Province toward policy development, leaving program development to communities.
- The BCRPA, Sport BC, the Outdoor Recreation Council, and BC School Sports became recognized by the Province as "umbrella organizations" that could guide and assist with policy and program implementation.
- Professional development opportunities continued to expand with diploma programs in various emphasis areas at Langara, Malaspina, Capilano, BCIT, Cariboo College and Douglas College.
- In 1979, the University of Victoria inaugurated the Leisure Studies degree program which was based on a cooperative education model, in which students dedicated a semester or more to working within a variety of recreation and park agencies.

- In 1978-79, the Province introduced the Festival of Games, which began with the BC Summer Games and grew to include the Winter, Seniors, and Disabled events.

### 2.2.3 The Outputs Era - the 1980's to the mid 90's

The recession across Canada in the early 1980's was felt in all provinces, including British Columbia. While the federal and provincial levels of government continued to spend through this period, with resulting increases in accumulated deficits, municipalities had no options beyond increasing taxes and other revenues, or reducing expenditures. Constraint became a common word within the vocabulary of local governments, and for the most part, Recreation and Parks Departments reacted well to the challenges.

The fiscal realities challenged departments to change or eliminate many of the taken-for-granted aspects of their operations and services. Departments and not-for-profit agencies embraced strategic planning and other management tools to help them become more effective and efficient. Expenditure reductions were achieved through parks and buildings maintenance management programs, energy and cost saving initiatives, and more efficient staffing allocation. The need to increase revenues resulted in better marketing, a higher quality of programs, customer service improvements, and the development of more inviting and less utilitarian facility spaces.

As the recession eased after 1982, the improvements that it had partly precipitated remained. Departments across Canada and British Columbia were generally more efficient and had developed a greater capacity to manage change. An emphasis on the fiscal bottom line, however, had led to the elimination of some beneficial services, and in some communities to a focus on a user-pay philosophy by both politicians and practitioners. In the worst examples, several public departments began to focus primarily on the economic bottom line, with revenue production, recovery rates, client retention, and profit margins as the key measures on which to base and justify service provision. During the Outputs Era, a common concern was that many in the parks and recreation field had "learned the cost of everything and the value of nothing".

This was most evident in communities that began to focus their services within the four walls of their facilities, rather than on a more balanced approach that included building community partnerships. It was these communities that often ran into the greatest difficulty for three fundamental reasons:

- Justifying and measuring their performance primarily in fiscal terms often led to being judged only in terms of ongoing improvements in fiscal performance - in other words, those who judge you primarily in economic terms will generally expect better results.
- Politicians didn't see these insular departments as having a relevant role to play in addressing key community issues or in shaping community environments.
- Community organizations and agencies, that were not direct tenants of indoor or outdoor facilities, failed to view the departments as key partners and were reluctant to offer public support.

In 1990, the Recreation and Parks Federation of Ontario embarked on the development of the first "Benefits Catalogue". The intent of the Benefits Catalogue was to convince political decision makers that recreation and parks services provide significant personal, social, environmental and economic benefits. In testing the information, however, Parks, Facilities and Recreation Ontario (now Recreation and Parks Ontario) found that the politicians understood these broad benefits and roles far better than many of the practitioners they talked to. Therefore, the focus of the first Catalogue, co-published with CPRA in 1992, was shifted to educating practitioners about their roles, approaches and impacts in communities.

The uncertainty of the early 1990's was reflected in the May 1991 edition of *Recreation Canada* with the theme, "Is There a Future?" The question was a serious one and many in public recreation wondered if their departments were going to survive in the coming decade. The field was being impacted by the growing federal and provincial deficits, calls for Margaret Thatcher style privatizations, unsolicited proposals by the private sector, and a general distrust of governments at all levels. Other leading recreation and parks practitioners expressed their concern that the field had lost its sense of direction and was increasingly becoming more market-driven than community-driven, and that engaging in strategic alliances around key community issues and needs would be vital to the field's future.

The response of many provincial governments to growing deficits and debts included the elimination of transfer payments to municipalities, a similar elimination of cost-sharing capital grant programs, and the devolution of many other services to the local level. At a time when any level of government was reluctant to increase taxes significantly, there were resulting cuts to services, increased user fees, and delays in capital projects - including renovations needed to stave off deterioration to aging community recreation facilities. Recreation and Parks Departments and not-for-profit providers of services became more innovative, explored alternative delivery systems and revenue sources, and began to explore a variety of partnerships. The boundaries between public institutions and the private and not-for-profit sectors were further blurred at this time.

In summary, the 1980's and early '90s were an era when recreation and parks became far more sophisticated and efficient in its operations, embracing strategic planning, marketing, team building and other management systems and skills. In spite of the fiscal challenges, this era also saw the second great wave of recreation facility construction supported by grant funds, with a number of innovative new complexes coming on line.

The fiscal challenges posed during this era, however, did lead some departments to focus on a market/revenue driven focus. These departments saw their role as providers of products - parks, facilities, programs - rather than as a partner in creating personal, family and community benefits. By the early to mid 1990's, the Benefits Movement was challenging departments across Canada to rethink their approach and emphasis, and to become even more open to forming strategic alliances around community issues.

### ***BC Milestones in the Outputs Era***

- After the Province reduced operating grant support to provincial organizations in the mid 80's, BCRPA created the BC Recreation and Parks Foundation in 1986 to raise funds to ensure the long-term viability of the Association.
- As part of overall government restraint, the Regional Recreation Consultant positions were eliminated by the Province in 1986.
- While cut-backs were occurring in many areas of the provincial government, lottery revenues continued to climb. A portion of these funds were designated for municipal recreation, sport and cultural facility projects. The Province contributed up to one-third of the total capital cost, with the other two-thirds coming from municipal governments and community partners. The late 1980's and early 1990's saw a major expansion of recreation facilities through "Go BC" and then "BC 21".
- College programs continued to be introduced, but tended to be in niche markets such as ecotourism and outdoor leadership.
- The BCRPA played a stronger policy and advocacy role, and also increased its professional development programs, and in the mid '80s, the Association's membership reached 1,000 for the first time.

#### 2.2.4 The Benefits Era - mid 1990's to the present

The impact of the 1992 Benefits Catalogue was subtle. Departments began to increasingly use the evidence-based benefits in communications to politicians, and placed benefits statement in leisure guides aimed at the public. The 1997 Benefits Catalogue had a greater impact. It was organized into eight key outcome messages supported by a total of forty-four benefit statements, each backed by solid evidence.

1. Recreation and active living are essential to personal health - a key determinant of health status
2. Recreation is a key to balanced human development - helping Canadians reach their potential
3. Recreation and parks are essential to Quality of Life
4. Recreation reduces self-destructive and anti-social behavior
5. Recreation and parks build strong families and healthy communities
6. Pay now or pay later! Recreation reduces health care, social service and police/justice costs
7. Recreation and parks are significant economic generators in your community
8. Parks, open space and natural areas are essential to ecological survival

The eight key messages helped the field to broaden its view its role and the impacts it could have on individuals, families and communities. The benefit messages were increasingly used as a planning, rather than just as a communications tool. The eight message areas began to form the "core philosophy" of the recreation and parks field and were more commonly integrated within strategic plans and documents of municipal departments. The BCRPA vision and its Strategic Plan are also benefits and outcomes based.

While all practitioners and departments have not embraced this direction, there are clearly observable shifts which demonstrate that a benefits-based approach has been accelerating over the last decade.

- The recreation and parks field sees health as part of its mandate and has initiated active living strategies such as the Active Communities Initiative
- The field has become more sensitive in managing urban forests, in reducing energy and water uses, protecting natural habitats, and engaging in recycling
- It has created more partnerships around working with at-risk youth, including alliances with the police, justice and social services
- It is also more inclusive of children and families living in poverty and in working with diverse cultures
- There are stronger internal partnerships with planning and engineering departments in creating active transportation systems, resulting in both health and environmental benefits
- The field is more proactively reaching out to other sectors to look for collaborative approaches and strategies

The next shift in the Benefits approach will be to use the benefits in strategic planning processes that are based on identifying clear outcomes, or desired end states, and then working toward them.

#### *BC Milestones in the Benefits Era*

- The BC 21 capital grants program was dropped in 1995 with a considerable amount of the lottery funding being diverted to deal with rising healthcare costs. The Federal government later developed the Federal-Provincial Infrastructure program(s), but these funds were more difficult to access for recreation and community facility projects.
- In 1998, Vancouver/Whistler was selected by the Canadian Olympic Association as the Canadian city for the bid for the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympics. The Games were awarded to Vancouver/Whistler in July 2003.
- The World Health Organization makes physical activity as the theme for the 2002 World Health Day. The BCRPA plays a key role in its launch and the ongoing hosting of the event.
- The 2003 BCRPA Strategic Plan has led to a more results-oriented organization and approach.
- The ActNow BC program was formally announced in 2005 with physical activity as one of four key components. The BCRPA develops and manages the Active Communities Initiative which was launched in September 2005.
- BCRPA is a member of and chairs the BC Healthy Living Alliance and contributed to the development of the *Winning Legacy*. The parks and recreation field is seen as a key contributor to health and healthy lifestyle choices, and is recognized for its strong connections to the community level and its use of the community development approach.

### 2.2.5 The Outcomes Era - The Coming Decade

The 1992 and 1997 Benefits Catalogues have had a subtle but profound affect. They have helped the field become more outcomes focused, and to broaden its mandate from the delivery of traditional services to the creation of individual and community benefits.

In the 1990's the Benefits Movement largely focused on using the evidence of the benefits of recreation and parks as advocacy and communication tools - aimed at municipal councils, other institutions and citizens. The shift now is toward using the Benefits approach as a key planning and evaluation tool.

This approach is already evident in the 2003 BCRPA Strategic Plan and in the use of logic models by provincial ministries and a number of municipalities. In these cases, the planning processes start by identifying the key desired outcomes, then the actions and strategies are geared to achieving them, and the performance measures that will show actual change.

This shift comes at an important time because political decision makers are increasingly demanding that their departments measure and demonstrate their impact on the community. As governments grappled with restraint, there was a greater focus on demonstrating that plans and resources actually led to the results they purported to create. While restraint has eased, the need to ensure that public expenditures are actually producing the desired outcomes remains.

This *Strategic Plan for the Parks and Recreation Field* is based on an Outcomes approach. In Section 5.3, five major Outcome Themes are identified along with 26 Progress Indicators. The Outcome Themes are:

1. Individual health and wellbeing
2. Community health and wellbeing
3. Environmental health and wellbeing
4. Economic health and wellbeing
5. Organizational health and wellbeing

These holistic Outcome Themes and Progress Indicators were used as a key source in identifying Actions for the Strategic plan that is intended to guide the parks and recreation field over the next decade.

### 2.2.6 Summary of the Eras

Whatever the challenges, it is clear that the recreation and parks field in British Columbia has emerged as stronger, more effective, more innovative, and better positioned than at any point in its history. However, it will be a challenge to develop leadership within the field to maintain that status and support more programs. While the evolution of the field has been affected by challenges, it has continued in a positive direction. The five eras of this evolution are summarized in *Figure Three*.

**Figure Three**  
**Eras of Evolution for the Field**

Era	Time Frame	Characteristics
The Early Years	Early 1900s to 50s	Growing public support for recreation and parks
Inputs Era	1960s and 70s	New infrastructure and programs
Outputs Era	1980s to mid 90s	Users, efficiencies, management
Benefits Era	mid 90s to present	Benefits messages, a broadened role, partners
Outcomes Era	2006 to 2016 and beyond	Benefit-based outcomes, public goods, integrated approaches

## Appendix A: History of the Field

### Prior to 1950: Where it All Began

#### Practitioners

Many elements of the public and not-for-profit recreation and parks field in all of Canada can be traced back well over a century. Most of the recreation opportunities at that time were focused on physical activity including sports, exercise drills and gymnastics. In the 1850's, exercise course material was produced to guide teachers in the provision of physical education. As early as the 1860's Cadet training became closely associated with school programs and Federal Government funding was available to schools providing exercise drills for their students. In the early 1900's, women's groups and other charitable organizations began to provide summer play ground programs in larger cities across the country.

As well, in the early years organizations such as the YMCA, local sports clubs, national sport organizations and church groups offered a variety of sport related opportunities.

#### Government

In 1934 Provincial Recreation (Pro Rec), the precursor to public recreation in British Columbia, was established and continued through 1953. The main focus of Pro Rec was training and education through their instructor's school and emphasized physical fitness. The man with the vision at the time was Jan (Ian) Eisenhardt whose motto was "Don't follow where the path may lead you, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail". The fitness programs promoted by Pro Rec during the depression years certainly laid the foundation for the fitness activity we experience today. Following the establishment of the Pro Rec organization recreation commissions were created by the provincial government.

## 1950 to 1960: Early Beginnings

### Practitioners and the BCRA

As the Pro Rec organization started to wind down, discussions started within the Canadian Association of Physical Education and Recreation about establishing a British Columbia recreation organization. These discussions took place from 1952 through 1955 and were the main topic at the first BC provincial conference of recreation held in Victoria in 1954. The Deputy Minister and Superintendent of Education, Mr. H.L. Campbell, stated that recreation would prosper in British Columbia when non-professional (lay) people took a deep interest in it. He also stated that there must at all times be cooperation between the provincial government and the people in the community.

In 1957, at the Pacific National Recreation Association Conference hosted by Vancouver, a committee chaired by Robert Osborne was formed to investigate the possibility of establishing a Recreation Association of British Columbia. In May 1958 the British Columbia Recreation Association (BCRA) formally came into being at the inaugural conference in Vernon. The primary purpose of the BCRA was communication, advocacy, training and professional development.

There were very few professional practitioners in the field in those days. Public recreation services were provided by local recreation commissions, primarily with the support of volunteers.

### Government

In 1958 the three levels of government jointly created a facility grant program for the construction of recreation facilities in the province as a part of the British Columbia Centennial celebrations.

## 1960 to 1970: First Steps

### General

The current systems of parks and recreation services delivery began to evolve more quickly during the 1960's. As the birth rate soared with the Baby Boom generation, communities began to build facilities and provide greater opportunities to meet the increased demands. Public departments that had focused primarily on parks were expanded to include recreation services and staff. The early emphasis was on children and youth services, as were the facilities that tended to be single-purpose, sport orientated structures. By the late 1960's, recreation services began to broaden to be more inclusive of all age groups, genders and conditions. This also applied to facilities. The 1967 Canadian Centennial brought a major surge of facility construction projects,

many of which are now nearing the end of their useful lifespan. While the majority of the Centennial projects were still single-purpose facilities, there were a few small complexes that created a broader range of opportunities within the same structure.

### **Practitioners and the BCRA**

As a newly formed association, the BCRA used the 1960's to establish some recognition and credibility as the organization representing those individuals and commissions providing recreation services in communities throughout British Columbia. In 1963 the *Recreation Reporter* was introduced as a newsletter intended to provide effective communication among Association members. The Association included 246 members in 1968.

### **Education**

The University of British Columbia established a Recreation Education program during the 1960's which began the move toward professional practitioners with university degrees entering the field. The UBC program ran through the mid 1980's when it was discontinued in its original format.

### **Government**

Federal and provincial financial support was established for facility construction as part of the 1967 Canadian Centennial celebrations. Many facilities built during this program still exist today. The Provincial Government also started providing sport and recreation consultants to provide assistance to communities throughout the Province. Much of the work done at this time by the sport and recreation consultants was with smaller communities helping them establish recreation commissions and assisting with planning programs and recruiting volunteer and seasonal staff.

## **1970 to 1980: Accelerated Growth**

### **General**

The growth of the field accelerated in the 1970's, with the expansion of staff, services and indoor and outdoor facilities. A number of communities throughout the country initiated their first master planning exercises to identify their gaps and priorities for park, indoor facilities and service provision. Parks planning began to include the concept of linear parks as part of the overall open space system. Trails and bikeways were now seen as integral to recreation experiences and community environments.

By the end of the 70's, most new indoor community recreation facilities combined a number of spaces within multi-purpose complexes. The diversity of programs was extended and there was growing commitment to the inclusion of persons with a disability, the economically challenged and other populations whose access to opportunities had been limited. The quality and sophistication of services during this decade were positively influenced by the graduates from the growing number of universities with recreation management programs. This generation of new leaders brought new philosophies and skills to the field and influenced the directions that departments and organizations took.

### **Practitioners and the BCRPA**

In 1970 it was recommended that the name of the BC Recreation Association be changed to include the word "Parks" and that the membership bylaws be changed to admit members of the parks profession. This resulted in the name becoming the BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA). The membership of the organization stood at 349 in 1970.

Also in 1970 the Association created 8 regions within the Province including Greater Vancouver, Fraser/Sechelt, Okanagan/Similkameen/Boundary, West Kootenays, East Kootenays, Central, Northeast and Vancouver Island. Each region elected a representative to sit on the BCRPA Board of Directors.

The BCRPA became recognized by the Provincial Government as a recreation “umbrella organization” along with other “umbrellas” including Sport BC, BC School Sports and the Outdoor Recreation Council of B.C.

During this period the Recreation Society of B.C. was established with its primary objective being the professional development of the practitioners within the recreation field. A few years later a report titled “Toward Unification” was completed recommending a single organization to represent the field of recreation combining the BC Recreation and Parks Association, the Recreation Society of BC and the Recreation Facilities Association of BC. The report resulted in the merging of the Recreation Society and the BC Recreation and Parks Association. The Recreation Facilities Association of BC chose to remain as a separate organization. Shortly after the merger the Recreation Society became the Professional Development Branch of the BCRPA in 1977.

The “Broom Report” was completed and tabled in the legislature in 1974 with the BCRPA following up with correspondence and meetings culminating with the following recommendations being presented to the Provincial Government

“That the Provincial Government establish an interdepartmental Leisure Services Coordinating Committee, under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Leisure Services, to Coordinate Provincial Government Policies and Programs Relating to Leisure Services”.

“And That the Provincial Government:

1. Create a new Department of Leisure with a Mandate for Cultural, Heritage and Recreation Development in British Columbia;
2. Establish Within the Department of Leisure Services Three Main Branches with the Responsibility in the Above Named Areas”.

This document dealing with the delivery of recreation services in British Columbia was certainly a milestone in the growth and development of the recreation field in the Province. The Provincial Government recognized the important role that recreation played in communities throughout the Province. Further discussions resulted in the Government agreeing to establish a Ministry for Sport and Recreation. However, the government of the day was defeated before that was accomplished. As a result the Provincial Government took a stronger lead role in the policy development area leaving program development and delivery to communities. The Broom Report became part of the curriculum in some post secondary recreation management programs.

The first permanent office of the BCRPA was located in Vancouver and shared with Sport BC. The BCRPA office later moved into space of its own on Hornby Street in Vancouver. With a permanent office and an Executive Director, the BCRPA conference grew into an annual event with registrations exceeding 500 delegates by mid decade. The BCRPA began advanced planning of the conferences in various communities throughout the Province with some of the early locations being Victoria, Vernon and Kelowna. The membership of the BCRPA had grown to 500 by 1975.

In 1977 the BCRPA became the first provincial recreation organization to negotiate a joint membership agreement with the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association providing their members a simpler and more economical means of belonging to the national association.

In 1978 the Therapeutic Recreation Branch was established and later became the Recreation Integration Branch. As well during this period the Aquatic personnel in the province applied to the BCRPA to become a division of the BCRPA. With the approval of this application the Aquatic Recreation Branch was established. Also in 1978 the regions of the province grew from 8 to 12 with each having a representative elected to the BCRPA Board of Directors. At this time the Aquatic Recreation Branch and the Integrated Recreation Branch were also represented on the Association's Board of Directors. During this period strategies were implemented in an attempt to include more students in the BCRPA.

In 1979 the Aquatic Recreation Branch initiated the first aquatics specialist course in BC in partnership with Camosun College. The membership of the BCRPA included 600 members in 1979.

### **Education**

During the 1970's many post secondary education institutions created programs for prospective recreation professionals, to prepare them for positions within the field of recreation. The University of Victoria started a degree program in Leisure Studies in 1979. The U Vic program was the first full time coop model in the Province where all students in the program were required to complete a number of work terms each lasting approximately 3 months.

During this period several colleges throughout the Province established diploma and certificate programs designed to prepare individuals to work in the parks and recreation field. Langara College has been a key contributor to the recreation leadership training for many years. BCIT's program focused on recreation facilities operations and their management. Capilano College's diploma began as an outdoor education program and developed into recreation leadership and tourism. Malaspina College began a diploma in general recreation which became a leadership and tourism program. Camosun College offered an aquatic certificate which became a recreation leadership program with transfer options to the other institutions degree programs. Douglas College established a diploma program in therapeutic recreation which has since developed into a degree program.

### **Government**

In 1972 the new NDP government created a facility capital funding program. Many communities took advantage of this cost sharing opportunity with the Provincial and federal governments to construct community recreation facilities. In 1975 when the Social Credit Party was re-elected, the facility capital funding program was discontinued and replaced by a program using lottery proceeds to assist with facility construction. In the late 1970's the Province shifted from a program role to a policy development role with more substantial roles played by partners such as the BCRPA. In 1978-1979 the Province introduced the Festival of Sports which began with the BC Summer Games and grew to include the winter, senior and disabled games. This initiative provided funding for the Provincial sport governing bodies operations as well as funding assistance for communities to enhance and develop facilities to host the games.

Provincial Government Sport and Recreation Consultants were established during this period with responsibility for administering the facility capital funding program and assisting communities in establishing parks and recreation commissions. The Sport and Recreation Consultants also helped communities to develop programs and recruit staff to delivery the services often on a seasonal basis.

## **1980 to 1990: Restraint and Consolidation**

### **General**

The recession across Canada in the early 1980's was felt in all provinces. While the federal and provincial governments continued to spend through this period, with resulting increases in accumulated deficits, municipalities had no options beyond increasing taxes and fees, and/or reducing expenditures. Constraint became a common word within the vocabulary of local governments, and for the most part, parks and recreation departments reacted well to the challenges. The fiscal realities challenged departments to change or eliminate many of the taken-for-granted aspects of their operations and services. Departments and not-for-profit agencies embraced strategic planning and other management tools to help them become more effective and efficient. Expenditure reductions were achieved through parks and recreation maintenance management programs, energy and cost saving initiatives and more efficient staffing allocation. The need to increase revenues resulted in better marketing, a higher quality of programs, customer service improvements and the development of more inviting and less utilitarian facility spaces.

### **Practitioners and the BCRPA**

The recently established Aquatic Recreation Branch initiated regular aquatic surveys and developed pool operator courses. The Fitness Branch came into being and implemented the Provincial Fitness Leaders registration program. This development resulted in the creation of a program coordinator position within the BCRPA. The Parks Branch was established and the parks spring training program was launched. The Commissioner and Volunteer Branch was formed and educational material and opportunities were offered to members of the Branch. The elimination of the Government Recreation Consultant positions which had provided regional advice to communities required departments to become more independent. The BCRPA now played a larger role in providing these communities with assistance. In 1983 the 12 BCRPA regions were reduced to 6 including Vancouver Island, South Coast/Fraser Valley, Okanagan, Kootenays, Central and North Cariboo. Under the chairmanship of Kevin Pike, membership reached 1000 excluding registered fitness leaders. In 1986 the BC Parks and Recreation Foundation was established to review revenue generation opportunities on behalf of the Association. The BCRPA administrative office moved to Richmond and began selling documents, manuals and other Provincial Government produced material.

### **Education**

More colleges throughout the Province continued to create programs that were general recreation programs initially and then developed into a more specific niche as they became more established. Cariboo College in Kamloops began with a general recreation program then moved to specialize in guiding for activities such as mountain climbing and river rafting. Thompson River University was another institution offering educational opportunities for students interested in recreation as a profession. East Kootenay College which became the College of the Rockies began with a general program in outdoor education but has since changed to a program preparing students for careers in the golf industry.

## **Government**

Between the mid 1970's and mid 1980's Government Ministers responsible for sport and recreation began to participate in the BCRPA conferences showing government support and recognition of the importance of recreation services. In the early 1980's restraint became the focus of government and all government departments were affected. This was the first Provincial experience of downsizing government and resulted in the demise of the sport and recreation consultants in the Province. The Skills Program was developed jointly by the provincial and federal governments and delivered by local community recreation departments. Late in this decade the Ministers Advisory Council on Sport and Recreation was created and co-chaired by Mae Brown and Bob Vaughn. The federal and provincial governments established senior's wellness, people with disabilities, youth and women as their four main initiatives and partnered with provincial organizations such as the BCRPA to address these initiatives at the community level.

## **1990 to 2000: The Benefits/Outcomes Era**

### **General**

The early 1990's was a time of uncertainty and the future of the field was a major concern of many departments throughout the country. The field was being impacted by growing federal and provincial deficits resulting in thoughts of privatization, unsolicited proposals by the private sector and a general distrust of governments at all levels. The first Benefits Catalogue was co-published by Recreation and Parks Ontario and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association in 1992. This first edition focused on educating parks and recreation practitioners about their roles, approaches and impacts in communities. The impact of the 1992 Benefits Catalogue was subtle. Departments began to increasingly use the evidence-based benefits in communications to politicians and placed benefits statements in leisure guides aimed at the public. In 1997 the second edition of the Benefits Catalogue was published and had a greater impact. It was organized into 8 key outcome messages supported by a total of 44 benefit statements, each backed by solid evidence.

1. Recreation and active living are essential to personal health - a key determinant of health status.
2. Recreation is a key to balanced human development - helping Canadians reach their potential.
3. Recreation and parks are essential to Quality of Life.
4. Recreation reduces self-destructive and anti-social behaviour.
5. Recreation and parks build strong families and healthy communities.
6. Pay now or pay later! Recreation reduces health care, social service and police/justice costs.
7. Recreation and parks are significant economic generators in your community.
8. Parks, open spaces and natural areas are essential to ecological survival.

The 8 key messages helped the field to broaden its perspective of its role and the impacts it could have on individuals, families and communities. The benefit messages were increasingly used as a planning, rather than just as a communications tool. The 8 message areas began to form the "core philosophy" of the recreation and parks field and were more commonly integrated within strategic plans and documents of municipal departments.

### **Practitioners and the BCRPA**

The BCRPA established partnerships to conduct major workshops such as the aquatics and facility operations sessions which alternate annually. Other partnerships that were established or renewed with updated agreements include those with the BC Parks and

Recreation Foundation, the Recreation Facilities Association of BC, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and Sport BC. In cooperation with the Provincial Government the BCRPA assumed responsibility for the administration of the Leadership Development Grants.

### **Education**

The Ministry of Education requested a review be undertaken to determine what education needs the field of parks and recreation needed. The Recreation Education Articulation Committee was created to carry out the review. A core curriculum was developed by the committee and was followed relatively cooperatively for a few years. When funding was no longer available to the committee the level of cooperation between the educational institutions decreased and they became much more competitive in the promotion of their programs. During this decade the post secondary institutions experienced funding shortages, increased difficulty recruiting students and increased expense for students. The University of Victoria introduced a Master of Arts in Leisure Service Administration which was discontinued after only a few years. Royal Roads University came into existence and offered another approach to practitioners to further their education in the field.

### **Government**

The Provincial Government completed a strategic planning session to determine what role government should play in recreation and equity was the specific initiative the Province chose to focus their attention on. At the same time a recommendation was approved to establish the Sport and Recreation Division with Lee Southern serving as the Executive Director.

## **2000 to 2006: Taking a More Holistic Approach**

### **Practitioners and the BCRPA**

Advocacy initiatives became a significant part of the recreation field's responsibility recently. As part of Act Now BC, the Active Communities Initiative is aimed at increasing the number of British Columbians who are physically active on a regular basis by 2010. This initiative is a cooperative effort by the Provincial Government and the BCRPA. The second Act Now BC physical activity initiative is aimed at children. Action Schools BC is a best practices physical activity model designed to assist elementary schools in creating individualized action plans to promote healthy living with the BCRPA participating as a member of the Advisory Committee. As well as these obvious partners working relationships have been established with organizations such as Promotion Plus, BC Healthy Living Alliance and the United Way Council of Partners. Some of the issues being tackled which the BCRPA are involved in include Infrastructure Renewal; the Active Communities Initiative; Tools and Training for Recreation Practitioners; the BC Healthy Living Alliance; and, the Sport and Recreation Leadership Council. As we entered the twenty-first century, the contribution that the parks and recreation field can make to the health of individuals and communities has been recognized by the health sector and the Provincial Government. The result has been many more partnerships emphasizing the health of our population.

The BCRPA budget has grown from \$600,000 to \$3.2 million and has experienced an increase in staff from 4 full time equivalent employees to the current 14 full time equivalent employees. That growth has taken place in the very recent past and is mainly attributable to the formation of a number of partnerships with other organizations. The 2003 strategic plan is now in place with the BCRPA taking a bolder position in selling itself through a newly developed marketing plan. The BCRPA

initiated partnerships with the Ministry of Health, 2010 Legacies Now, the Sport and Recreation Leadership Council, Active Communities, and the BC Healthy Living Alliance. A reworking of the governance model and membership structure was completed and a more results-oriented organization was the result. The BCRPA Board represents the entire Province with Regional Directors forming the communication links with practitioners throughout the Province. The Executive Director title became Chief Executive Officer with responsibility for management and governance. The BCRPA is now a major national player in the parks and recreation field and has developed a strong working relationship with the other provincial parks and recreation organizations.

The inclusion of health services, libraries and such into recreation complexes has made the benefits of recreation more visible to people who may otherwise not visit their community recreation facilities.

### **Education**

Over time various trends have lead to specific programs being developed by institutions including aquatics, therapeutic recreation, outdoor education, recreation leadership, facility management and in the 1990's tourism became a big part of the recreation education system. Health has become a major focus and the role recreation facilities and programs are beginning to play in the health sector. Distance education is becoming more and more popular and educational institutions are looking at how this option fits with the education of parks and recreation practitioners. Many of the colleges that started out with certification and diploma programs now offer degree programs. The cooperative education model has been adopted by more institutions ensuring that students receive significant practical experience along with their academic work.

### **Government**

With the emphasis on improving the health and well-being of the B.C. population and using the 2010 Winter Olympics as a catalyst, the Provincial Government has established several partnerships with the BCRPA and their member communities. The BCRPA is recognized as an organization that can provide linkages and leadership within the delivery system for government initiatives. As a result, the Province has utilized the capacities of the BCRPA to a greater extent than ever before.