

A photograph of children in colorful raincoats and boots walking away from the camera on a muddy forest path. The child in the foreground wears a bright green raincoat with a bear hood and a backpack featuring a 'Tonka' truck. The path is surrounded by lush green ferns and trees, with some autumn-colored leaves on the ground.

Get Out and Go Wild

IN RIVERVIEW, NEW BRUNSWICK

**THE FRAMEWORK FOR RECREATION
IN CANADA GOALS AND PRIORITIES:**



**CONNECTING PEOPLE
AND NATURE**

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Many residents and visitors were missing time in nature, which is important for physical and mental health. In a public consultation, people identified some key barriers to engaging in nature, including a fear of getting lost, the high cost of equipment, a lack of fitness, and an inability to find their way around a nature area. Riverview recreation staff was trying to find ways to encourage people of all ages to use their parks and trails and to be outdoors in nature more often.

IMPLEMENTATION

When the 2016-20 Strategic Plan was being developed for the town, the Framework for Recreation in Canada had just been released. There was a great deal of alignment between the two documents. At the same time, a Capital Plan was proposed to develop a 130-hectare site into a nature park (Mill Creek Nature Park). It would be a natural space that would attract people to participate in recreation activities, including cross-country skiing, walking, fat-tire biking, snowshoeing, bird-watching and contemplating.

The Department developed programs to address the barriers to participation (see above) by introducing programs such as bird watching, painting, yoga, signed trail development, forums and seminars.

In addition, the Department has:

- Worked with the Fundy Biosphere Reserve and the Riverview public library to develop a daypack lending service. The 4 daypacks include field observation equipment (i.e. critter dipper net, bird guide), maps and guides, ideas for activities, as well as a list of emergency organizations and safety tips including 10 essentials for hiking in the wilderness.
- Hosted “Go Wild - an evening for women who are curious about hiking”, which attracted 200 women to each of two events. Over 12 affiliated outdoor organizations hosted booths (e.g. Scouts, Fundy National Park, a geocaching group). Women volunteered at the booths to ensure a safe space. A panel presentation included one woman who is very experienced in overnight backpacking and one who is new to day hiking.
- Partnered with traditional outdoor organizations, businesses and non-traditional organizations to offer experiential outdoor programming opportunities targeting people who do not necessarily think the outdoors is for them.
- Learned about programming for preschoolers in nature by visiting the Roachville, NB Forest School and participating in a professional development workshop. This helped change staff’s perspective on outdoor play and risky play, and gave them ideas on how to shape children’s programming in the outdoors.
- Moved the fall-winter-spring preschool program outdoors, and made it an all-weather forest program. Three- to five year olds play at Mill Creek Nature Park for 2 hours, twice a week from fall to spring. The Park also became a base for the summer camps so children can hike 2 km from the Riverview Middle School into the park and practice their outdoor skills. Amenities at the site include a nearby eagle’s nest, a beaver dam, a brook, a shed for storing program supplies, a fire pit and seating (constructed from local material). The rest is woods! Recently, they moved to a new Adventure site in the park, to ensure their footprint does not have long-term effects on Mother Nature.
- Organized transportation for hikers, which allows hikers to do small sections at a time and finish the trail without the need to camp overnight.
- Organized new outdoor events, such as the Maple Hike, How to do the Dobson Trail, Thru-Hiking the Appalachian Trail (talk delivered by 55-year-old woman who successfully completed her thru hike), Snowshoeing 101 and more.

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“Just Do It! Sometimes you have to learn by trial and error. Taking people into nature can mean dealing with the unexpected.”

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OUTCOMES

- The program has built effective partnerships with some outdoor equipment providers and local non-profit organizations. These partnerships have led to further opportunities to engage residents in the outdoors, e.g. a winter festival that included drop-in snowshoeing with a volunteer leader from one of the non-profit organizations.
- Parents have learned the benefits of kids participating in outdoor programs and nature school. Complaints about dirty, sweaty and tired kids have decreased significantly. Staff has found that kids participating in outdoor programs are more independent, content and able to resolve conflict than those participating in indoor programs.
- The programs foster economic development and relationships with businesses, who have become more aware of the services they can provide to enable people to recreate in the outdoors.
- Community residents have grown and taken on leadership roles. For example, after the Go Wild event, one woman created a snowshoeing group. She then took some formal training and organized a Learn-to-Hike program, designed for people who have no experience with hiking. A second volunteer leader offers an inclusive program for adults who would like to learn Basic Bushcraft skills such as how to whittle, make fires, tie knots and build shelters. Recently, a Valentine's Day event named the Sweetheart Snow Shoe attracted 100 participants.
- All recreation staff has the Recreation Framework, and the town's strategic plan on their walls. When making decisions, they consult both documents to ensure that we are continuing to focus on recreating in nature.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Just Do It! Sometimes you have to learn by trial and error. Taking people into nature can mean dealing with the unexpected.
- Run your outdoor programs in rain or shine or muck. In Riverview, participation during inclement weather remained the same or increased.
- There are simple things that we don't think of as barriers such as signage. When planning for the construction of trails, have professionals design a signage package for both summer and winter. Be sure that skiers and snowshoers can always see wayfinding signage (hint: make them glow in the dark).
- Most people do not relate to media ads featuring confident people who are fit, white, and decked out in top quality gear on top of a mountain or at the end of a 58-km trek. Ensure that all communications with residents and visitors have a consistent message: The outdoors is for everyone.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- Riverview Parks, Recreation and Community Relations: <https://www.townofriverview.ca/parks-and-recreation>
- Ash Arrowsmith: aarrowsmith@townofriverview.ca

Framework Goal and Priority	Goal 3 – Connecting People to Nature
Population Addressed	All ages
Community	Riverview is a town in Albert County, New Brunswick (population 20,000) located on the Petitcodiac River, across from Moncton and Dieppe. It is in the midst of old Acadian forests and close to Fundy National Park.
Setting	The great outdoors (rural)
Lead Implementer and Organization	Ash Arrowsmith, Community Resource Worker, Parks, Recreation and Community Relations, Town of Riverview
Key Partners	Fundy Biosphere Reserve Riverview Public Library Local businesses Not-for-profit organizations
Activity Focus	Variety of programs in nature
Stage of Development	Completed, ongoing