

BACKGROUNDER

Parks Canada Celebrates its 100th birthday!

May 19, 2011 marks the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Parks Canada – the world's first national park and national historic site service. Parks Canada now manages one of the most extensive networks of protected national heritage places in the world, a growing collection of 167 national historic sites, 42 national parks and 4 national marine conservation areas.

Twenty-six years after the establishment of the first national park in Banff, the Government of Canada led the world in creating a service to manage Canada's national heritage places for the benefit, education and enjoyment of Canadians and their visitors from around the globe. *The Dominion Forest Reserves and Parks Act* that received Royal Assent on May 19, 1911, creating the Dominion Parks Branch, now known as Parks Canada. Today, a century later, Parks Canada carries on this tradition of world leadership, providing protection, education and visitor experience programs that are admired worldwide.

To commemorate Parks Canada's 100th birthday throughout the Centennial year, a series of events have been planned to celebrate with Canadians the country's impressive family of national parks, marine conservation areas and historic sites.

Special events and activities in 2011

- A centennial kick-off celebration in Toronto on May 21, featuring a Parks Canada-themed Blue Jays game, street festival and a free outdoor concert and an overnight camp-out in Rogers Centre will bring "The Parks Canada Experience" to the heart of the country's largest urban area.
- On Canada Day (July 1) and Parks Day (July 16), Parks Canada will offer visitors the chance to enter all its places across the country for free.
- For those who find themselves in Canada's largest cities on Parks Day, *Experience Parks Canada!* urban festivals, including free concerts, will reach out to Canadians in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.
- Exciting programs for children and youth, including: a continuation of the My Parks Pass, an annual pass for Grade 8/secondaire 2 students, giving them a full year of free access to all national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas across Canada; *Operation Unplugged*, a TV show and website venture that will showcase eight urban youth who trade their "techno-dependent" lifestyles for a summer "unplugged" in Canada's national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas where they will compete in challenges under the guidance of a host and Parks Canada staff; a new Xplorers program to give young visitors the chance to have fun while discovering Canada's treasured places, a renewed Parks Canada mascot and much more.
- An unprecedented presence in Canada's capital, with participation in high profile annual events such as Canada Day, a special Confederation Boulevard banner series and a high-visibility photo exhibit portraying Parks Canada's fascinating history in celebration of its centennial.
- Many exciting family activities and free events across the country at Parks Canada places and in neighbouring communities.

- Fascinating HD documentaries, including *The National Parks Project* on Discovery Canada, season two of *A Park for All Seasons* on Oasis HD and the pilot of a new series on national historic sites on Treasure HD, offering Canadians behind the scenes visits like never before.
- Special issues of magazines to commemorate the centennial, including *Canadian Geographic*.
- A commemorative silver dollar from the Royal Canadian Mint and a commemorative postage stamp from Canada Post.
- Special “learn to camp” programs across the country and brand new accommodations offerings in certain national parks.
- Festive “*Fab Forts Weekend*” August 20-21, at Parks Canada’s historic fur trade and military outposts, with a grand finale, coast-to-coast 100-gun salute Sunday afternoon.
- And much more to come....follow us on Twitter for details!