



FRIENDS OF FRONTENAC PARK

Vision Statement 2014/15



Prepared by the Friends of Frontenac

Introduction.

The Friends of Frontenac Park was founded in 1991 for the purpose of “develop(ing) and promote(ing) programmes ...which will enhance the public’s awareness ...of the natural environment” of the park. With an eye towards our twenty-fifth anniversary a vision exercise was undertaken in 2014-15 consisting of regular Board discussions, a Vision Day attracting a number of enthusiastic members of the Friends, volunteers, MNR and park staff. A subcommittee of the Board was formed to compile and analyze the discussions, to evaluate over one hundred project suggestions for improving the park experience, to report and to follow up on their findings. Based on a review of the discussions, including an evaluation of the “effort/benefit” and practical applicability of each project a number of themes are identified and a Vision Statement is proposed.

The vision statement is not intended to replace the Friends’ constitution and it is reassuring that many of the themes discussed below comport with the ideals of the constitution. Vision statements are aspirational. They establish a direction, provide a common purpose but are not immune to emerging opportunities or restrictions imposed by resources or ministry regulations. Effective vision statements animate your mission and according to the literature should be compact, portable and inspirational, with attention to direction and desired outcomes. Microsoft’s vision to, “Empower people through great software any time, any place and on any device” offers a model that embraces these principles.

Vision Themes.

Our analyses identified five themes reflecting the aspirations of our participants:

1) Protecting the Natural Environment

The topic generating the most frequent and often passionate response throughout the Vision Day discussions is the desire to protect the natural environment of Frontenac Park. The theme is expressed in various but complementary forms including “protecting the natural wilderness”, “preserving the ecological integrity of the Park” and represented a broad consensus on the need for raising visitor awareness of the fragile nature of the wilderness. The practical application of the theme is expressed in projects such as structured environmental monitoring, recording of the Park’s assets, “bird counts”, and “citizen science” projects. There was a specific desire to encourage and fund more formal research by universities and colleges on “sustainability projects”, “annual water sampling” and the

“Financing a student bursary...to study/inventory species and natural resources in the Park”. It reflects both a growing awareness of the environmental threats posed by climate change and the need to impart this awareness to all park visitors.

2) Reaching Out - Engaging the Local Community

Frontenac Park does not exist in isolation from the surrounding community. The vision discussions recognize both an obligation and the valuable contribution that mutually supported relations with the local communities, year round and seasonal residents, county organizations, farmers and schools can make to the development of the park. Discussions focused on a desire to reach out to the local community, to engage as neighbours, to inform and invite participation of the community in park development, to advise and solicit input from affected parties and to pursue shared interests. “Engage local residents”, “participate in township governance”, “Develop better relationships with Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve” and similar projects to engage with the local community offer strategies to pursue this theme.

3) Reaching In – Embracing a Welcoming, Supportive Park Culture

A shared appreciation of the wilderness experience, expressed at Vision Day in terms that are both personal and aesthetic, is an important element at the core of the park experience. It is this appreciation that provides a foundation on which to build the park community that is evident in the ease with which strangers engage, offering trail directions, sharing locations of interest, a camp fire or supplies in emergencies. It is the Friends’ successful Guide and Host programme transported to the wilderness, creating a welcoming and supportive park culture. The park is one of the easiest places to make friends and activities that bring together visitors sharing similar interests is considered an effective method of promoting a park culture. Coordinating group activities was widely advocated as opportunities to introduce visitors, to explore routes not always available to the solitary canoeist or hiker and perhaps encourage lasting relationships. Projects supporting this theme included a “Senior Challenge”, “buddy system like birding pals” for older people, “hiking club(s)” that meet at scheduled intervals, a “Summer photo quiz”, and “Wildlife Welcomes”. A multi-language, introductory brochure was also suggested as a means to welcome and encourage foreign visitors.

4) Sharing Wilderness Skills

The history of providing programmes of wilderness training and skills is well established and a significant credit to the FOF. It realizes a core objective of the

FOF's constitution and appropriately remains a critical interest among many vision participants. Providing skill training contributes to the confidence, security and enjoyment of the novice and often opens new avenues for the experienced recreationist. There is a personal satisfaction in mastering a skill, in being able to distinguish flora and identify bird species, in adapting to winter camping or conquering remote regions of the park. It is a satisfaction shared by both the trainer and student. Vision participants supported the continuation of current skill programmes and suggested the addition of "Cooking with flora", "animal tracking", "No trace camping", Expedition preparation" and many other novel programmes.

5) Promoting the Park Experience

How often have you heard the expression, "Frontenac Park is the best kept secret in Ontario"? It was repeated at the Vision Day exercise but it appears the vision participants are prepared to challenge that assertion. Discussion centred on a number of projects that would highlight the unique recreational activities of the park, improve general public awareness and target specific population centres with information and promotional inducements. While recreational opportunities remain the main promotional attraction, the park also offers a historical perspective that brings to light the experience of the indigenous people, the development of the farming communities, trapping, logging and mining ventures. All contribute to an enlightened and enjoyable park visit. Expanding promotional content and activities to major population centres, "Outreach programmes to university and schools", providing "weekend buses to.... students", "Building a homestead with local materials" and "research and creation of plaques for the homesteads" were among the projects designed to embellish and promote our "best kept secret".

FOF Vision Statement 2015.

The following statement attempts to capture in a few words, the substance, sentiment and aspirations of those contributing to the vision exercise:

...to promote and to build a welcoming, cooperative, and supportive community of neighbours and park visitors, where wilderness skills are shared, friendships are encouraged, respect for and the preservation of the natural environment is embraced by all park visitors...

Appendix 1: Project Review – Categories, Assessment, Selection and Status.

Introduction.

The Friends of Frontenac Park held a Vision Day on 14 May 2014 and attracted a large, diverse group of interested individuals with significant experience with the park. Representatives from the Ontario Parks Systems provided an overview on the demographics of Frontenac Park visitors, trends in visitor activity, the role of citizen science in environmental monitoring and a variety of methods and internet sites that allow for the reporting of plant and species sightings, formal and casual recording of ecological trends.

The afternoon of the Vision Day exercise was committed to a broad discussion of methods and activities that would best serve this direction. With the exception of offering a number of general categories or themes much of the discussion was left to the participants. Participants were asked to submit their recommendations as to the programmes, activities or park improvements that expressed their vision of how best to enhance the park experience. Over 100 submissions were offered, discussed, clarified or culled for duplication. A lively discussion, at times turning to debate, ensued driven by much enthusiasm and occasional passion. It was clear that the recommendations were not simply a request for a new programme but often represented a broader and deeper concept of the participant's personal experience with the park. The meeting went on beyond the scheduled time allotment at which point the coordinating committee agreed to review, collate, evaluate and compile the information in a manageable format that would allow for further discussion and follow up.

Project Review.

1. Categories.

From over 100 project submissions 74 unique activities or projects were identified and then grouped according to similarities in content, objectives or theme within 14 discernible categories. Little or no editing was applied to the written suggestions and the results of the committee's review are presented in Table 1.

2. Assessment.

The activities or projects were assessed according to three separate measures; an Effort/Benefit analysis, for conformity with Ontario Parks or Frontenac Park regulations and judged for practical applicability and conformity with the objectives and resources of the FOF.

An Effort/Benefit score was derived by rating the 74 activities or projects against 24 specific criteria on a 4-point scale to which numerical weights were assigned. This assessment yields a numerical score that can then be graphically plotted, assigned a Rank and to one of four Effort/Benefit Outcomes - Low Effort/High Benefit, Low Effort/Low Benefit, High Effort/High Benefit and High Effort/Low Benefit.

Ontario Provincial Parks are governed by statutory regulations, operational considerations and generally accepted practices. We are not in a position to ignore or circumscribe either and where necessary our assessments considered these regulations, practices and occasionally weighed our best interpretation of the legal implications of any new programmes. Activities or projects that were impossible to consider because of park regulations, operations, FOF objectives or presented legal conundrums are identified in Appendix 1.

Finally, the FOF Board felt it necessary to consider the practical applicability of many of the suggestions, to determine whether the activity was pertinent to FOF mandate described in the “Purpose” article and within the fiscal or resource ability of the Friends. Activities that failed the meet any of the stated criteria are identified as “rejected”, “delayed pending”, “seeking alternatives to suggested activity”, rejected for “legal issues”, “regulations”, “resources” etc.

3. Selection.

FOF Board members were then asked to identify and prioritizes their “Favourite” projects as a means to expedite selection and the implementation of projects. There were no specific “criteria” provided to Board members to guide their selection of their “Favourite” projects, although it was understood projects identified as favourites would lead the implementation process. Notwithstanding, it was reassuring to find that the selection of favourites appeared to coincide with the results of the “Benefit-Effort” ratings, regulations and applicability outcomes and but in some cases by the ease and immediacy of implementation, the appeal of the activity and occasionally by the enthusiasm expressed by the original advocate.

4. Status.

The “Status” column provides the current state of each activity or project and will be updated as circumstances require. You will note that projects described as “rejected” (as defined above) are unlikely to change status, while others are considered already in place or can be added to current programmes. The six “favourite” projects are identified as “complete” or “implemented” while many of the remaining projects are pending or awaiting Board approval.

The Board is pleased to announce that all the projects identified as board “Favourites” are now operating and some have been operating for as many as three years. These include: the Christmas Bird Count initiated in 2015, the Winter Nature Walk, the Student Bursary/Research Grant, the Multi-Language Brochure available in six languages and the Historical Plaques installed in 2017. A fortuitous invitation to participate in and provide instructors to the Loughborough Elementary School’s “Classrooms Without Walls” programme provided an excellent opportunity to advance our Vision goal of “engaging with the local community”.

Appendix 1, will be available on the FOF’s website and used as our prime vehicle to communicate to Friends' membership, volunteers, Vision Day participants, park officials and the general public. The Website is intended to provide project updates but also to solicit viewer

response, input and encourage participation in the development of programmes that facilitate the Vision objectives.