



Invasive Species
Council of BC

Engaging Key Audiences Around Invasive Species: *Volunteers Taking Action!*

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ISCBC Webinar January 2020

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSOR

Our Youth Volunteer program is generously funded by the Government of Canada under the Canada Service Corps program.



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Canada under the Canada
Service Corps program

Canada 

Current Research on Engagement

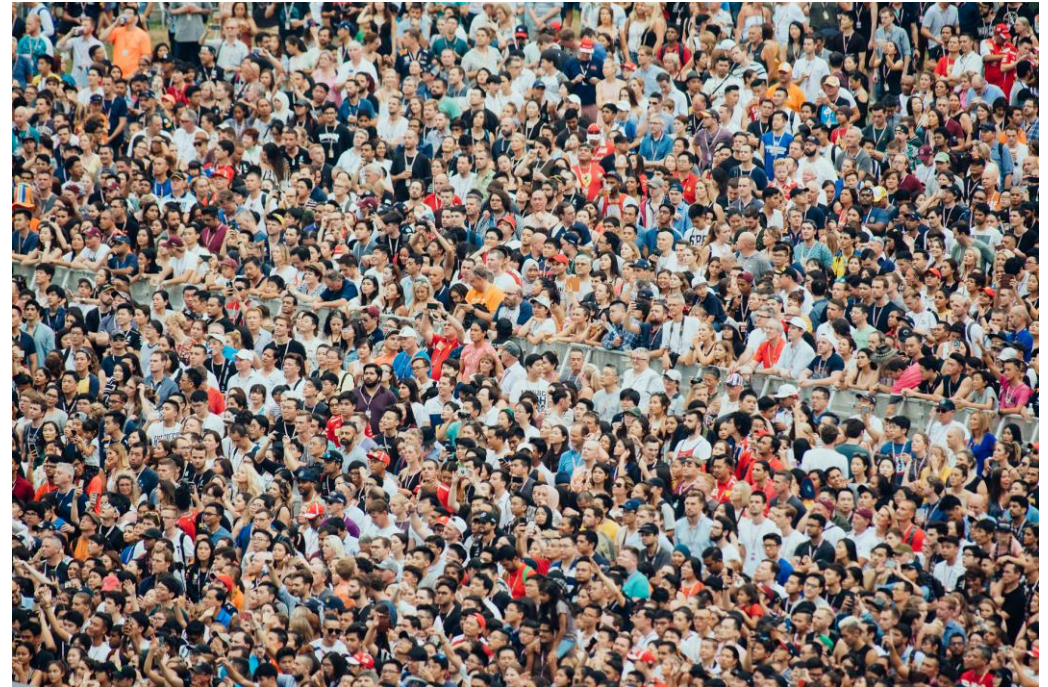
Challenges: Disconnection, Duality, Denial, Powerlessness

Solutions: Positive Strategies and Techniques

Volunteering: Some Current Research

Resources

People are the
main vectors/pathways



ALL OF US!

Invasive species are a serious issue world-wide:

****second only to habitat loss in impacting biodiversity***

- Important to engage and support all British Columbians in taking action:
- Young people particularly important audience



Education and Outreach
is an Essential and Critical
Tool for Invasive Species
Management for any
audience we work with



Public Education & Environment

4 Major Challenges Identified

1. Disconnection
2. Dualism
3. Denial
4. Powerlessness



1. Disconnection

The average North American spends almost 90% of their day indoors....

(State of the World Report: 2012)



Over 87% of the world's population live in cities.

*“ Why should I go outside to play?...
there are no electrical outlets....”*

- third grader, San Diego (Louv, [Last Child in the Woods](#)
(2007))



An assumed **polarity** of humans and the environment...

“Us” and “the environment”
as if we are somehow separate, or independent.



Denialism is the rejection of undisputed scientific facts.

- differs from scientific debate;
it attempts to manufacture uncertainty on an otherwise undisputed topic.

(e.g. tobacco smoking, causes of AIDS, climate change, evolution)

Invasive species - included in the list

The Rise of Invasive Species Denialism
(Russell & Blackburn, 2017). Trends in Ecology and Evolution, Vol. 32 No. 1

Invasion Biology: Specific Problems and Possible Solutions
(Courchamp et al, 2017) Trends in Ecology and Evolution, Vol. 32 No. 1

Powerlessness or Paralysis

Psychic numbing – coined during the nuclear era / peace movement

Helplessness and despair lead to tuning out of a problem or crisis

Fuelled by a lack of concrete actions to take



Issue of invasive species poses its own unique challenges:

Four Distinct Types of Difficulties

1. Understanding
2. Alerting
3. Supporting
4. Implementing

“ Despite increasing evidence, the importance of invasive species is not generally acknowledged by the public, not fully accepted by decision makers, and has recently been increasingly disputed by some scientists and the media”.

Courchamp et al (2017)

1. Understanding

Invasive species are poorly understood by society

- Need basis in ecology and evolution – somewhat complex
- Wide array of inconsistent terminology



2. Alerting

Main challenge is measuring & demonstrating impacts:

- **Time:** significant impacts take a long time (usually decades)
- Direct consequences *complex* to demonstrate: burden of proof? E.g. a degraded habitat due to?



3. Supporting

Large “sympathy capital” for many invasive species:

- *beautiful* (exotic plants, fish, pets)
- *cute* (squirrels, cats, rabbits)
- *useful* (game, fur animals)

“Not fair or ethical to kill them –
not their fault”



4. Implementing

Success is almost never definitive: years of management can be undone by one breach.

- Accessing funding a challenge
- Legal difficulties: whose responsibility is it when one is released?
- Very few adequate laws internationally
- ***Internet sales***



Disconnection....



Re-Connection!

Duality.....



Understanding Systems, Interdependence

Denial....



Supporting Better Understanding

Powerlessness.....



Concrete Actions to Take!

Direct Experience, Outdoors



1. Disconnection: *Re-Connection*

Substantial body of research: *directly* links importance of nature and the outdoors to:

- Fundamental childhood development
- Adult mental and physical health/ Healing
- ADHD treatment success
- Addiction treatment success
- Stress relief - Japanese: Forest Bathing”



1. Disconnection: *Re-Connection*

“Access to active play in nature and outdoors ... is essential for healthy child development. We recommend increasing children’s opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all settings—at home, at school, in child care, the community and nature”— Canada's Chief Public Health Officers”

Nature prescriptions!

**BC Parks Foundation:
HealthyByNature.ca**

**Launched July 21 2018: BC
Parks Day**



2. Duality: *Understanding Interdependence*



“Passion does not arrive on videotape or on a CD; passion is personal. Passion is lifted from the earth itself by the muddy hands of the young; it travels along grass-stained sleeves to the heart” -
Richard Louv

3. Denial... Support Better Understanding

- Understand and know what **Native Species** are and their importance
- Understand what **Invasive Species** are
- **Impacts** of invasive species:

Golden Rule...Know Your Audience! Focus on Issues Relevant to them



Alien

Invasive

Non-native

Exotic

Introduced

Weedy

Noxious

Pests

- Native Species
- Non-Native but non-invasive
- Invasive Species
- 4 Characteristics of Invasiveness



How people perceive and
process the world around
them

- based on brain research



Learning Styles Theory

- There is no "1 type" of learner or "best way" to learn stuff, but at least four
- (Lawrence describes 16 , Gardner describes eight multiple intelligences; McCarthy – four.)



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4-MAT System - McCarthy

Type one: Imaginative Learners

Learn by listening and sharing ideas, strengths

Favorite question: Why??

Type 2: Analytic Learners

Good at creating concepts and models - value sequential thinking, need details and data, do well in traditional classrooms

Favorite question: What?

Type 3: Common Sense Learners

They are real pragmatists, very skills-oriented and hands-

Favorite question: How does this work?

Type 4: Dynamic Learners

learn by trial and error, believe in self-discovery, risk takers, like change - good at adapting.

Favorite question: What if?

- Exemplary Outreach Programming
- Use current research
- Develop programs with *direct input* from users, and pilot them thoroughly
- Ensure wide range of learning styles reached

Community-based Social Marketing/ Behaviour Change

- Clean Drain Dry
- PlantWise
- PlayCleanGo
- Don't Let It Loose!
- Don't Move Firewood



Hands-on Projects & Events

Participatory Projects

Clear goals and sub-goals to demonstrate success



4. Powerlessness: Action Learning

Important, large area of research – skills & techniques to support and promote action/project-based learning



4. Powerlessness: Take Action!

Invasive species, unlike many large-scale environmental issues, are something that volunteers / youth in particular - can actually *do* something about!

Invasive species awareness, understanding, removal, management and restoration are **all hands-on, concrete actions** that do make a difference – *see results!*



Volunteering a fundamental act of good citizenship

[Study: General Social Survey - Giving, Volunteering and Participating \(2013, 2018\)](#)

- Canadian youth have volunteered more than any other age group!
- **53% of Canadians aged 15-24** involved in volunteering = puts youth above national average of 44%!

Why do people , especially young people, volunteer?

- “Helpers’ high” – physical & psychological “feel good” sensation
- Boost career / resume builder / new professional contacts
- Learn new skills: esp. leadership & time management
- Gain real world experience
- Social reasons - Reduces isolation, frustration, depression
- Make an *impact* – make a difference
- Contribute to a cause they believe in
- Help empower others
- Be a contributing part of their community
- Have Fun!

Youth Volunteers: Know Your Audience!

(2017 study) Canadian youth are:

- Career-focused, flexible, receptive to new ideas
- More open-minded – have grown up being exposed to greater diversity than previous generations
- Energetic and enthusiastic – have high levels of vitality
- Technologically savvy – respond to innovative online communications & recruitment techniques
- Prefer peer camaraderie – enjoy meeting new people, participating in volunteer activities with their friends
- In many instances, affected by mandatory community service requirements



Volunteer.ca
-many resources,
research, courses
and handbooks

Youth Volunteers: Preferred Tasks

1. With **education & research** organizations, sports & recreation organizations, social service organizations
2. **With organizations that support environmental issues**
3. International, as youth see themselves as world citizens and tend to define 'community' as being global in nature;
4. **Flexible** enough to accommodate their other commitments for school, work, friends, and family
5. With volunteer job descriptions that give clear understanding of what they will do, significance of their participation
6. Where youth can receive **constructive feedback & certification** where possible
7. Where they can volunteer **with other youth, including their friends.**



57% Lack of Time: people / young people are busy, have jobs, other responsibilities

Feeling they lack sufficient expertise or knowledge about environmental issues or science to contribute effectively

Unaware of opportunities for environmental stewardship in their communities

Uncertainty as to how they could become involved.

68% agreed they'd volunteer more if they could do it as a family



Recognition is Essential!

Know your volunteers to understand how they prefer to be recognized.

Every individual has a unique style & preference for how they want to be recognized.

- Many prefer expressions of thanks *throughout year*, rather than annual reception
- Most volunteers want to know the *impact* of their efforts.
- Some more motivated by knowing the impact of their time than by a certificate or gift.
- Youth volunteers want *skills* they have demonstrated or acquired to be *recognized*: support their educational or career paths – letters of appreciation, references.



Let your volunteers know the impact they have on your organization's mission and the community.

Recognize 4 challenges

Re-Connection: Direct
Experiences Outdoors

Explicit Ecology: Demonstrate
Interdependence, Connections

Strive for **Understanding** - Use
consistent, clear terms & concepts

Provide skills and tools for
volunteers to take concrete
meaningful actions!

- Change / update
Communication models
- Ensure Relevance to audience
- Tailor Programs to your
volunteers
- Recognition!

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