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A Century of Parks Canada
1911-2011

edited by Claire Campbell
Publication Date: March 2011

When Canada created a Dominion Parks Branch in 1911, it became the first country in the world to establish an agency devoted to managing its national parks. Over the past century this agency, now Parks Canada, has been at the centre of important debates about the place of nature in Canadian nationhood, and relationships between Canada’s diverse ecosystems and its communities. Today, Parks Canada manages over forty parks and reserves totalling over 200,000 square kilometres and featuring a dazzling variety of landscapes, profoundly affecting the way we, and the world, see our country.

In time to celebrate the centennial of Parks Canada, this vibrant new collection brings together academic and public historians from across the country, representing a host of different disciplines, including archaeology, cultural studies, environmental studies, and aboriginal history. Contributors address Parks Canada’s long-standing struggles to encompass both preservation and use in places created for “benefit, education and enjoyment” of Canadians. These colourful, place-based accounts trace how the agency has designed, managed, and promoted national parks in response to public demand, political strategy, scientific debate, and environmental concern. As it navigated contests of territory, extraordinary geographical diversity, and the changing landscape of the modern Canadian state, Parks Canada has gradually defined national parks as both cultural landscapes and sites of ecological integrity.

Today Parks Canada is recognized as a global leader in the environmental challenges of protected places. Its history is a rich repository of experience, of lessons learned - critical for making informed decisions about how to sustain the environmental and social health of our national parks. By recognizing the relationship between human history and ecological sustainability, this collection represents the next generation of Canadian environmental history.

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