

Children and Nature – Growing Together

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June is Parks and Recreation month throughout Alberta. The theme this year is “Children in Nature”.

Banff surely is one of the best places on earth to live; and although we are a small town with a huge tourist base, we too can get caught up in the hustle and bustle of our daily lives with work, school, and after-school commitments that we often forget what is right outside our doorstep to enjoy - the largest playground waiting to be discovered.

Come out and discover one of our many playgrounds, parks, or trails within the townsite and surrounding areas. It's a great place to reduce stress, feel rejuvenated and enjoy yourself, allowing you to reconnect with yourself, your family, and nature.

Many studies have shown that children's learning and overall well-being improve if they are given the green space to play. Whether it is having a large play area at the school yard, or being able to escape for an adventure outside to regenerate the senses and blow off some steam, there is growing evidence to suggest that both adults and children heal faster, have far better learning capacity, and just a general overall feeling of well-being when they are able to access, play in, and explore these green spaces. Whether it's a noon hour stroll along our river paths or an afternoon at Cascade Ponds, our parks can offer up something for everyone.

Trees too, play a vital role in our outdoor playground. Banff is home to over 800 plant species. Trees, both coniferous and deciduous, make up only a small portion of this list but have a very large impact in our outdoor playground. Trees create a sense of peace and calm, helping us feel sheltered, happy, content, and at home amongst them. They are great to climb when large enough, provide us with shade on a hot day and protection from the wind, as well as intercept water when it rains, limiting storm runoff and preventing erosion on slopes. Trees clean and cool the air, absorbing such pollutants as ozone, carbon monoxide, and sulfur dioxide and at the same time releasing oxygen. They also add value to our urban landscape both directly and indirectly; adding dollar value to homes and offsetting heating and cooling costs as well, just by being planted and present. By planting trees and shrubs, we return to a more natural, less artificial environment. Birds and other wildlife are attracted to the area and the urban landscape is softened. Natural harmony is restored to the urban environment, and we in turn reap the many benefits provided by the presence of the urban forest.

So come and help us celebrate Children in Nature: bring your inner child, Mother Nature has an open-ended invitation...**Stop by anytime!**

Scrambled words: anumonit has