Vibrant parks feel magical, but they don’t happen by magic. Parks become great public spaces when dedicated people animate their parks. When parks are brought to life, they enhance cities, connect communities and improve quality of life.
Animated
City Parks
Matter

GROWING SOCIAL ISOLATION/LONELINESS

25% - 30% of Canadians across all age groups report persistent loneliness and social isolation.

Social isolation has the same negative health impacts as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Radio Canada citing Dr. Robin Lennox, 2018
Cigna, 2018

INCREASED POLARIZATION

Only 48% of people have a high level of trust in those from a different ethnic background or who speak a different language and only 39% have trust in those with differing political views.

Research shows that trust is built on a base of shared positive experiences, like those in vibrant parks.

Toronto Community Foundation, 2018

DIMINISHING ACCESS TO NATURE

Children spend less time outside than maximum security inmates. Experts say 20 mins of nature a day is required for a measurable improvement in mental health.

University of Michigan, 2018

INCREASED SOCIAL CAPITAL

38% of Canadians don’t feel they have a stake in their local community.

Only 6% of people who say they don’t know their neighbours have a strong sense of belonging to their community.

Community Foundations of Canada, 2015

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Each additional supervised activity in a park leads to a 48% increase in park use, making parks engines that power human connection and community.

National Study of Neighborhood Parks - RAND Corporation, 2016

SHRINKING SOCIAL CAPITAL

38% of Canadians don’t feel they have a stake in their local community.

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Community Foundations of Canada, 2015

86% of Canadians live in cities and more Canadians live alone than ever before. The potential of parks to offset many of the challenges of urban life makes them more relevant now than ever.

Statistics Canada, 2018

Knowing your neighbours is the #1 variable linked to higher sense of trust and belonging in your community.

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Vibrant Parks with Deep Roots in Communities

Park People fosters sustained programming, partnerships and engagement in parks - the elements that make them dynamic neighbourhood hubs.

How do we do this?

Park People engages community park groups, government, funders, and partners to help city parks meet their full potential. We provide ongoing support to help them meet new challenges in animating and activating their parks.

Over time, the park serves as critical social infrastructure that fosters connection among people who may otherwise stay to themselves, or stay inside.

Photo: First Story Tour (2018)
Park People supports the animation and activation of publicly accessible open spaces - parks, community housing lands, plazas, utility corridors - to enhance cities, connect communities & improve quality of life.

Programs & Services:

Networks
Linking community park groups together in order to foster connection and learning among the people who bring their city parks to life.

- National Network
- Toronto Park Network

Policy & Research
Tracking and sharing the trends, challenges, and leading practices to shape the future of city parks.

- Canadian City Parks Report
- Special reports
- Advocacy on municipal and city park issues

Knowledge Sharing
Surfacing and spreading best practices among the key players invested in vibrant city parks:

- Direct support for community park groups
- Webinars
- Online Resources
- Workshops
- Networking and socials
- National Conferences
- City-Specific Summits

Park Activation Models & Programs
Developing and implementing pilot projects and city-specific initiatives to address particular park contexts and opportunities.

- City specific programs and events
- Sparking Change: Direct support to activate underserved parks
- Replicable pilot projects and funding programs

Grants & Funding
Providing financial support to help make awesome things happen in parks.

- Granting programs
- Placemaking and park activation funding
Friends of Cedarbrook & Thomson Memorial Parks: A Field Report

Scarbrough, Ontario

Park People’s Parks 44 program helped spark the creation of a new park group in Scarborough in 2015. Working closely with the community park group, the city councillor and key partners, we’ve been able to play an ongoing role in the group’s efforts to improve, protect and activate two city parks.

Sustained effort and investment by Park People has helped Friends of Cedarbrook & Thomson Memorial Parks play a vital role in building a vibrant community, powered by parks.

“Friends of Cedarbrook & Thomson Memorial Parks is making an impact by helping make our parks vibrant community places, where residents feel connected to their neighbourhood. They are fulfilling a community need that has made a great impact.”

Paul Ainslie, City Councillor

“The city knows that we’re involved with Park People and that we have Park People behind us. We’re not just out here on our own doing our own thing. That lends huge credibility to our work.”

Leah Yuyitung, Founder of the Woburn Community Residents Group

“The park group is truly a pillar of this newcomer community. They have essentially brought the park to the community and the community to the park and as a consequence, have knits us all more closely together.”

Paul Ainslie, City Councillor

Case Study

2015

Catalyzing Potential

Group attends Park People Park Forum to better understand the potential of community park group model

Group established with support from City Councillor through Park People’s Parks 44 Program, becoming the first park group in their city ward

Group begins leading regular Nature Walks series

2016

Getting Attention

Host first movie night with funding and support from Park People’s Moonlight Movies - best-attended event ever in the park

Host Arts in the Parks, a Park People / Toronto Arts Foundation partnership to bring free park events to parks outside the downtown core

Attended Park People Summit to refine skills and build networks

2017

Building Capacity

Attends Park People Park Governance Workshop and formalizes governance model distributing work among membership

Attends Park People Volunteer Engagement Workshop and adopts new vision statement

Attended Park People’s Fundraising Park Talk which leads to securing charitable trusteeship with Scarborough Arts

Trusteeship enables group to host move night with funding and support from Park People in partnership with Toronto International Film Festival / Canada 150

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2018

Building Credibility

Attends Park People webinar on Community Outreach

With city support generated through long-term presence in the park, new native plant garden built at park entrance

Attended Park People / First Story Tour highlighting Indigenous history and presence in parks

Hosted several park groups at Park People Tour showcasing the work of park groups across the city

Attended Park People Summit to refine skills and build networks

2019

Expanding & Leading

Receives TD Park People Grant to host 3 new events in the park including sunset serenade, pumpkin parade, and movie night

Featured in Park People online Resource on Governance

“Park People’s support has made it possible for us to solidify the park’s role in the health and well being of the community.”

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Since 2011, Park People has engaged 850 Community Park Groups, in 46 Cities who’ve hosted more than 3,000 Events, attended by 275,000 People, supported by 23,000 Volunteers.

We’ve also directed investments of $6M to parks & park programming.

Join us to make something awesome happen in our city parks.

WE’RE CANADA’S ONLY DEDICATED CITY PARKS ORGANIZATION, ACTIVATING THE POWER OF CITY PARKS TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE.

PARK PEOPLE

PARK PEOPLE helps people activate the power of parks in order to improve quality of life in cities across Canada.

Parkpeople.ca        416-583-5776 info@parkpeople.ca