**University of Manitoba**

**Banff National Park Based Field Course**

**May 24- June 4, 2022**

Project Title: Visitor Experience Study of Johnston Canyon Day-use Area

***Background***

Johnston Canyon is one of the most popular front country day hikes within the Banff Field Unit. It is a fairly easy scenic hike, making it ideal for people of diverse ages and abilities. It is located along the Bow Valley Parkway, approximately 30 km west of the Town of Banff and is accessible year-round. The hiking trail leads to the Lower and Upper Falls (1.1 km to the Lower Falls: 2.7 km to the Upper Falls) and continues further to the Ink Pots.

This area is highly visited by sightseers seeking opportunities to experience the natural and cultural heritage of Banff National Park and view the scenic waterfall. Visitors may choose to spend upwards of half a day experiencing the area hiking and having snack /meal at the restaurant located near the trailhead. The area is used by people of all ages, specifically sightseers, tour busses, road bikers, and hikers.

Johnston Canyon Resort is a third party operator which offers rustic cabin accommodations, a restaurant, gift shop, and snack bar. The resort is located roadside, within close proximity to the trailhead.

Due to its popularity, visitors are encouraged to visit Johnston Canyon during non-peak hours during the summer and during the off season. Parks Canada has recently worked towards mitigating congestion issues related to parking. The new parking lots will be operational in 2021. This project will focus on the effectiveness of wayfinding signage and the overall visitor experience at this popular visitor destination in Banff National Park.

This research is being conducted by the University of Manitoba as part of a field school on behalf of Parks Canada. It is one part on a multi-year visitor experience project. Parks Canada will only receive the compiled results of the survey.

**Project Description:**

There are three components to this field course project, each of which will contribute to an overall visitor-experience study of Johnston Canyon Day-Use Area.

***Project A: Visitor Flow*** - ***Identification of real or potential user conflicts*** (vehicular and pedestrian)

A steady increase in visitation leads to congestion within the two designated parking lots. Through observation studies the students will observe the following:

- Are there areas where visitors appear to have difficulty with parking? What are the issues? (e.g. parking lot 1, parking lot 2, Johnston Canyon Resort parking lot, along Bow Valley Parkway)

- What is the demand for parking? (P1 vs P2 vs roadway)

- Is the existing wayfinding signage effective for visitors to understand where to park? If not, where are the gaps where additional signage could improve the situation?

- Is the sense of arrival/orientation to the area effective? Do visitors look confused about where to go to access different activities/facilities? If so, where are the opportunities to improve the situation?

***Project B: Do existing assets, facilities and infrastructure effectively support the user demand?***

- Is the built infrastructure (i.e. washrooms, information kiosks, commercial facilities, etc) adequate for demand?

- Are the washrooms/privies clean? Are there line-ups?

- When the washrooms/privies are being cleaned, are there lineups?

***Project C: Visitor Insights***

Students will be asked to conduct an informal intercept visitor survey with the purpose of collecting visitor experience-based information. Visitors will be approached and asked to participate when returning to the trail exit to ensure they can provide informed responses to the questions.

- Are the existing garbage and recycling bins being used effectively? Are more required? Is litter an issue?

- Is the existing wayfinding and interpretive signage effective for visitor flow/acceptable activities?

- Are the pathways, railings, bridges and viewing areas appropriate for the expectations, abilities and numbers of visitors?