



— NIAGARA PENINSULA —
CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

Board Member Handbook

APRIL 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Conservation Authorities Act (CAA) was created in 1946 and is the reason Conservation Authorities exist in Ontario.

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) was created in 1959 under the CAA. The NPCA oversees conservation programs within the Niagara Peninsula watershed, which encompasses the Niagara Region and portions of the City of Hamilton and Haldimand County (refer to map on page 4).

The objects of a Conservation Authority under The CAA are to provide, in the area over which it has jurisdiction, programs and services designed to further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources.

The NPCA manages the Niagara Peninsula watershed by:

- Developing and implementing programs that help protect life and property from natural hazards such as flooding and erosion.
- Managing its 41 properties, including Ball's Falls, Binbrook, Long Beach and Chippawa Creek, where it practices conservation, restoration, education, and the management of natural resources.
- Providing comments to municipalities on planning applications that occur in the Niagara Peninsula watershed where that development is taking place in NPCA's development review area.

A Board of Directors governs Conservation Authorities. Board Members represent their respective municipalities, cities and counties. More information on NPCA can be found on their website npca.ca

At the request of the NPCA, **the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation (Foundation)** was created in 1969 under **The Corporations Act (now The Not for Profit Corporations Act)**.

The Foundation is a registered charity, governed by a volunteer Board of Directors who are dedicated to raising funds that aid in the conservation of our natural environment for present and future generations.

In accordance with the Foundation's [Letters Patent](#), our sole objective is to be the custodian of funds for NPCA projects and programs that contribute to improving our water quality, increasing green spaces, wetland and habitat restoration, and environmental research and education. The Foundation's website provides further information at niagaraconservationfoundation.com



MAP OF NIAGARA JURISDICTIONAL WATERSHED AND FOCUS FOR OUR FUNDRAISING

VISION

A leader in providing resources to support conservation work throughout the Niagara Peninsula watershed.

MISSION

It is our mission to raise funds toward environmental endeavors that include increasing green space, improving water quality, habitat restoration, environmental research and education and conservation programs and projects, including museum projects.

VALUES

We are trustworthy and transparent by engaging in practices with our donors and partners that are accessible, accountable, fair, professional and timely and that are built on a foundation of respect, integrity and honesty.

We are responsible stewards through our communication to and relationships with our donors, and through our stewardship of the financial support directed to environmental initiatives.

We enable, engage and collaborate by funding environmental initiatives and bringing community organizations together to consult and form partnerships based on the respective strengths of each organization to focus on key environmental initiatives.

We have sound governance and management by adopting best practices and policies to ensure that full fiduciary and management responsibilities are achieved.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND PRIORITIES

The Foundation's current [Strategic Plan – A Commitment to Conservation – 2020 to 2022](#) outlines 6 strategic areas of focus for the next 2 years:

1. Update and approve the NPCF Strategic Plan – 2020 – 2022.
2. Strengthen organizational governance.
3. Become Niagara's environmental charity of choice.
4. Build strong community partnerships.
5. Continue with ongoing programs.
6. Development a Fundraising Strategy.

2. THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF

Foundation [By-Law #9](#) currently enables a Board of Directors of twelve (12). This is a volunteer Board who are proud to contribute their time and expertise to raising funds for a better environment for current and future generations.

The Foundation endeavors to have members who represent the various geographic locations in the watershed, a gender balance, an ethnic and age diversity and a number of skills sets.

A list of the current Board of Directors and their biographies can be found [here](#).

The Foundation has one staff member: the Executive Coordinator. The NPCA further assists the Foundation by providing office facilities, financial, budget and audit assistance, HR support and liaison with staff experts in education, conservation lands, communication and administration.

Due to limited staffing, we are a working Board of Directors. In addition to two-hour meetings six times per year, Board Members are requested to assist with events, contribute to the Foundation within their ability and lend their expertise to developing programs and projects.

ANNUAL REPORTS

Below is a list of the Annual Reports for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation over the past four years. All are linked directly to our website.

[2017 Annual Report](#)

[2019 Annual Report](#)

[2018 Annual Report](#)

[2020 Annual Report](#)

POLICIES

Below is a list of the policies for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation. All are linked directly to our website.

[Role of Officers](#)

[Board Recruitment](#)

[Board Responsibilities](#)

[Financial Accountability](#)

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Risk Management](#)

[Oath of Confidentiality](#)

[Donor Bill of Rights](#)

[Confidentiality and Privacy](#)

[Donor Recognition and Stewardship](#)

[Conflict of Interest](#)

[Gift Acceptance](#)

MEETING SCHEDULE

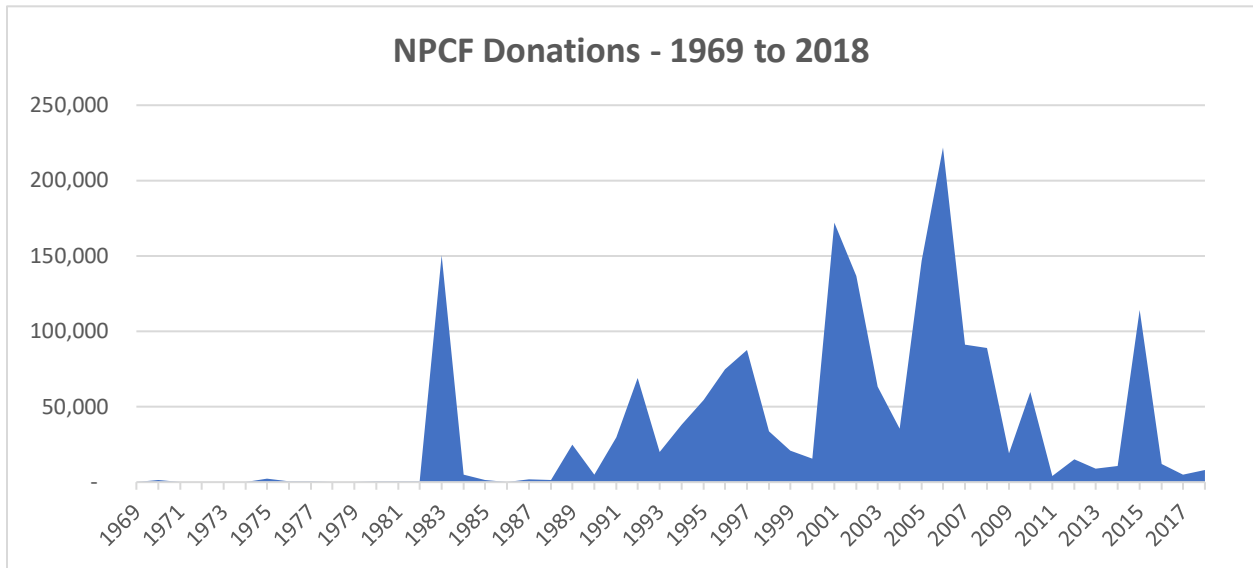
Below is the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation Board of Directors meeting schedule as well as a schedule for when agenda packages are sent to Board Members.

Agenda Package Distribution	Board of Director Meetings - 2021
February 2 nd , 2021	February 11 th , 2021
March 30 th , 2021	April 8 th , 2021 (Annual Meeting)
June 1 st , 2021	June 10 th , 2021
August 3 rd , 2021	August 12 th , 2021
October 5 th , 2021	October 14 th , 2021
November 30 th , 2021	December 9 th , 2021

3. PROGRAMS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since 1959, the Foundation has raised almost \$2 million for NPCA conservation projects and education. Like most not-for-profits, donations can vary from year to year, depending on grants, capital campaigns and donations. Our Foundation is no different.

And like all not-for-profits, the global pandemic has had a profound impact. The Foundation, however, is dedicated to returning to a steady annual income of \$250,000 within the next few years.



Past and Current Programs include the following. Past programs currently in abeyance due to COVID are outlined in red:

Memorial Program

Chair’s Event

Authentic Wild Game Dinner

The Holiday Trail Event

Rt. Hon. John Turner Gala

Director’s Donation Challenge

Speaker Series

Education Bursary Program

Conservation and Education Program Support

The Gallery at Ball’s Falls Capital Campaign

Rt. Hon. John Turner Leadership Award

OUR EXCITING VISION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND NATURE BASED TOURISM AT BALL'S FALLS CENTRE FOR CONSERVATION



“You cannot protect the environment unless you empower people, you inform them, and you help them understand that these resources are their own, that they must protect them.”

Professor Wangari Maathai

In his 2005 book, “Last Child in the Woods,” Richard Louv wrote about what he called nature-deficit disorder and cited 60 scientific studies looking at the benefits of nature and the problems that can come from being too isolated from the natural world.

It is well documented that nature has a healing power. Environmental education enables us to interact with nature, allowing us to better understand and protect our environment. We have all heard that our obligation as a society is to leave behind a better world for our children. One way to better appreciate and protect our environment while addressing our nature deficit is in our own backyard – at Ball’s Falls Conservation Area.

The Centre for Conservation at Ball’s Falls Conservation Area is embarking on an exciting journey to enhance “The Gallery” - an educational experience which will provide engaged, tactile, and experiential learning for people of all ages. Linked to this experience is the ability to address our “nature-deficit” and become a viable and sustainable tourism destination in Niagara.

We need YOUR help to make this vision a reality.

OUR DREAM HAS BEEN VISIONARY FOR 50 YEARS

Recognizing the need to protect green spaces and invest in environmental education, the *Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation (Foundation)* was created 50 years ago to raise funds for the *Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (Authority)*.

Our vision – We are leaders in providing resources to support conservation work throughout the Niagara Peninsula watershed.

Our mission – Working with our community, we are dedicated to raising much-needed funds to increase greenspace, improve water quality, provide for habitat restoration, and support environmental research and education.



“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”

Benjamin Franklin

ACHIEVING OUR VISION AND MISSION

The Conservation Authority was created in 1959 under *The Conservation Authorities Act*. For over 61 years, the Authority has enacted successful watershed and restoration programs that protect significant environmental spaces, restore degraded natural areas, provide for flood protection, and deliver environmental education.

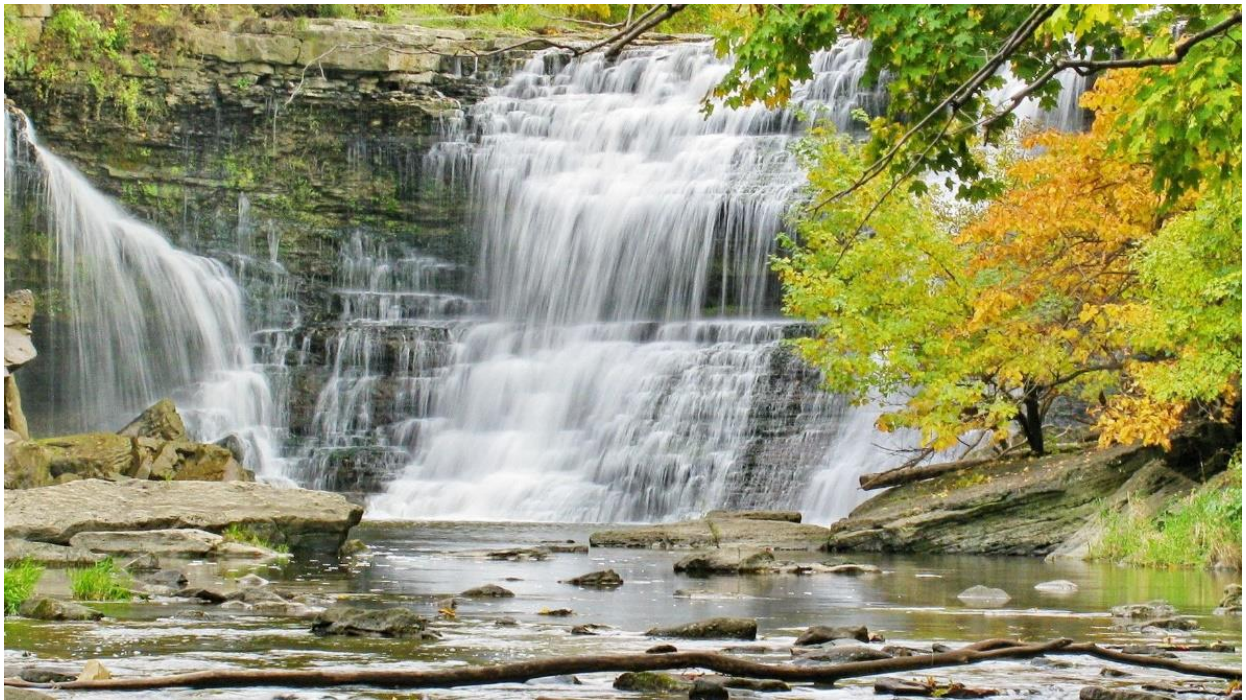
- npca.ca

The Foundation, created in 1969 under *The Corporations Act* is a proud fundraising partner who has raised close to \$2 million dollars for the Authority's land protection and education programs – niagaraconservationfoundation.com

The Authority has amassed an impressive chain of 41 conservation areas throughout the Niagara Peninsula Watershed totalling 2853 hectares (7300 acres) of land. These properties represent some of Ontario's treasures protecting the Niagara Escarpment, the Ontario Greenbelt, shoreline areas, wetlands, and an UNESCO World Biosphere site.

Ball's Falls Conservation Area represents ...

The Centrepiece of the Niagara Benchlands...



Twenty Mile Creek cascades over the Niagara Escarpment at Ball's Falls

LET'S TAKE A JOURNEY THROUGH OUR "CENTREPIECE"

Set within the breathtaking Twenty Valley, Ball's Falls Conservation Area offers spectacular scenery and natural beauty. Your visit begins at the Ball's Falls Centre for Conservation.

Designed and built to have a limited impact on natural resources, this award-winning **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design** (LEED) Gold certified facility features **The Gallery** with interactive exhibits and displays focusing on nature, conservation, and culture in the context of the area's history, the Niagara Escarpment, and the Niagara Peninsula watershed.

As you continue your adventure, you discover that Ball's Falls has been lovingly maintained to its early mid 19th century industrial hamlet atmosphere featuring the original Ball family home (a red-brick Victorian manor built in 1846), an operating grist mill which began operations in 1809, a lime kiln, black smith shop, carriage shed, and the lovingly restored Ball's Falls Historical Church featuring a rustic and elegant interior which can accommodate up to 110 guests.

Take in the incredibly breathtaking view of the majestic Twenty Mile Creek as it plummets over both the upper and lower falls. The falls tumble delightfully over high cliffs, and you can view them at close proximity from above or below. Then wind up your visit with a hike or stroll along the Cataract Trail aside the banks of Twenty Mile Creek with easy access to the Bruce Trail.

Ball's Falls, its welcoming Centre and educational Gallery along with its majestic scenery have provided you, your family and friends with the perfect setting for a fulfilling day.

Your Nature Deficit has now been addressed!



BUILDING ON OUR SUCCESS

The NPCA has delivered educational programming and services, including cultural heritage, at Ball's Falls Conservation Area since its official opening to the community in 1964.

Educational programming at the site has had two primary focuses which continue as central themes today, including outdoor programs, environmental studies of natural heritage, as well as historical and cultural heritage studies.

This is a place where learning happens, where students, classes, children, youth and adults all come to immerse themselves in natural and cultural heritage. They are able to walk forested trails significant to early settlers over 200 years ago, and for Indigenous Peoples long before that. Within this setting, students engage in true experiential learning about the geological history of the land, its rich biodiversity of waters and skies in a recognized UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. They are taken back in time to pre-colonial days, and early to mid-settlement. It is here in this place, within these natural surroundings that future generations develop their relationship with the environment.

THE IMPACT OF OUTDOOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

There are many reasons why outdoor education and recreation are important for children, youth, and people across the life course. Being present in natural settings is well known to have positive effects on self-reported mental health and wellbeing and being active in the outdoors is not only invigorating, but supportive of physical health as well. Engagement in these areas has especially profound effects on people that have little access to the outdoors, or natural areas. Researchers have found that youth from inner-city and urban settings experienced both mental and physical benefits from outdoor education and recreation in the summer camp setting, fostering a connection to the natural environment, which is less accessible to those in such areas (Blakey, 2018). Other findings include that outdoor settings promote greater physical activity, which in turn improves sleeping and eating habits in children and youth (Blakey, 2018). Outdoor education teaches the relationships between biotic and abiotic elements found in the world in ways that are not available in traditional classroom settings, building a greater understanding of life and life cycles.

One of the most poignant justifications for outdoor, environmental and Indigenous education comes from Indigenous scholar and environmental scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer, who in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, asks how students (and future environmental scientists, teachers and scholars) can ever address climate change and human impacts on the environment if they do not believe that people can have a strong, positive and reciprocal relationship with the natural world. The significance of outdoor education lies within inspiring strong, positive relationships between people and the environment. From this relationship comes a sense of responsibility and reciprocity – a desire for the protection, preservation and honouring of the lands, waters and skies, and everything that lives within them for future generations. Only when we believe that people can have positive relationships with and impacts on the environment can we move towards a sustainable future.

This is the mission of the Ball's Falls outdoor, heritage, and environmental education programs. Whether it be students, educators and their families engaging in school trips to the conservation area, camps, or special events, NPCA programs offer an enriching opportunity to enjoy outdoors, explore and truly experience nature.

Outdoor learning, whether in a play-based, child-led or structured setting, is beneficial to childhood development. Benefits and improvements to health and development include:

- Climbing over logs in the forest requires problem-solving and develops gross and fine-motor skills.
- Understanding of bodily capability and strength-building.
- Development of social skills and self-regulation in outdoor settings. Students can display their emotions in a physical and healthy way in an outdoor setting, where open space allows for running, jumping, yelling, stomping and other big actions that are not permitted in traditional classrooms and learning spaces.
- Outdoor play and learning promote healthy risk-assessment and risk-taking behaviour in age and capacity-appropriate ways. Students must determine for themselves if they feel safe outside, engaging in activities like climbing, balancing on logs, being in open spaces.
- Learning adaptability and resiliency in changing environments and elements. Learning to play comfortably and safely outdoors, students understand how to prepare for a day in nature and consider the impacts and implications of changing weather and terrain conditions.

Learning About Water Quality in the Rain...

Learning at Ball's Falls Conservation Area is outside, all the time – except where severe weather, precipitation and winds make it unsafe. A fantastic example of this, is with the Ball's Falls Nature School – where learning not only happens in the rain – but because of the rain. Students that attend NPCA's Grade 9 and 11 Water Quality Program, have an opportunity to experience life as a water quality technician, where work takes place outside, especially when weather patterns change and fluctuate and affect surface water conditions. Imagine a group of 100 Grade 9 students learning to sample and test natural waters in the pouring rain. That experience, while it may be uncomfortable with soggy shoes, is nevertheless unforgettable, and drives home the message that the education program seeks to encourage: that the lands and waters are interconnected, and everything that we do as humans, as stewards of the land, has an impact and outcome.

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

While most of the educational programming takes place outdoors, the value of an indoor space for learning, conversing, sharing and presenting new ideas is critical to the? Organizations' commitment to educational excellence. A significant investment was made to the NPCA's delivery of educational and recreational services with the opening of the Centre for Conservation at Ball's Falls Conservation Area in May 2008. Featuring a multipurpose space with a 150-person capacity, the Centre is a hub for education, and a setting for the introduction of environmental programs providing a generous and vast space for day camps and programs, as well as corporate meetings, private events, and weddings. Featuring an interpretive Gallery, the Centre is also a place of self-guided environmental education for visitors and tourists to the Conservation Area.

In addition to investing into educational facilities, over the past four years the NPCA has expanded and enhanced the selection of education programs and delivery. Programming has been focused on partnerships and collaboration with partners and stakeholders in education, such as publicly funded school boards, private and home schools, and local community groups. In 2017, staff met with the District School Board of Niagara to collaboratively develop a new, multi-day, overnight camp program for intermediate students. In spring 2018, the NPCA delivered the first session of the Outdoor Overnight Adventure Program at Ball's Falls Conservation Area, a two-day, one-night camping and environmental education program focused on providing youth with an authentic camping experience, as well as offering inclusive recreational and environmental lessons. In the first year, Ball's Falls hosted 312 intermediate students over the spring and fall sessions, with strong positive reviews from teachers. In 2019, over 500 students attended the Overnight camp program, demonstrating the growth, increasing interest and successful impact of this program. Students spend their days and nights hiking,

exploring, conducting research, stargazing and learning to prepare campfires to cook their own meals. This immersive experience set in the heart of Niagara’s natural green space is truly one of a kind within the region. The program has established a new momentum and investment in outdoor education within the Niagara Peninsula watershed.

In late 2019, a suite of enhanced education programs and day camps was prepared. With marked staff enthusiasm for the promise of a new year, and increased demand for programming, the impact of the global pandemic required a pivot and new approach for the delivering of these services. As Figure 1 demonstrates, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, interest and participation in programming has been steadily increasing.

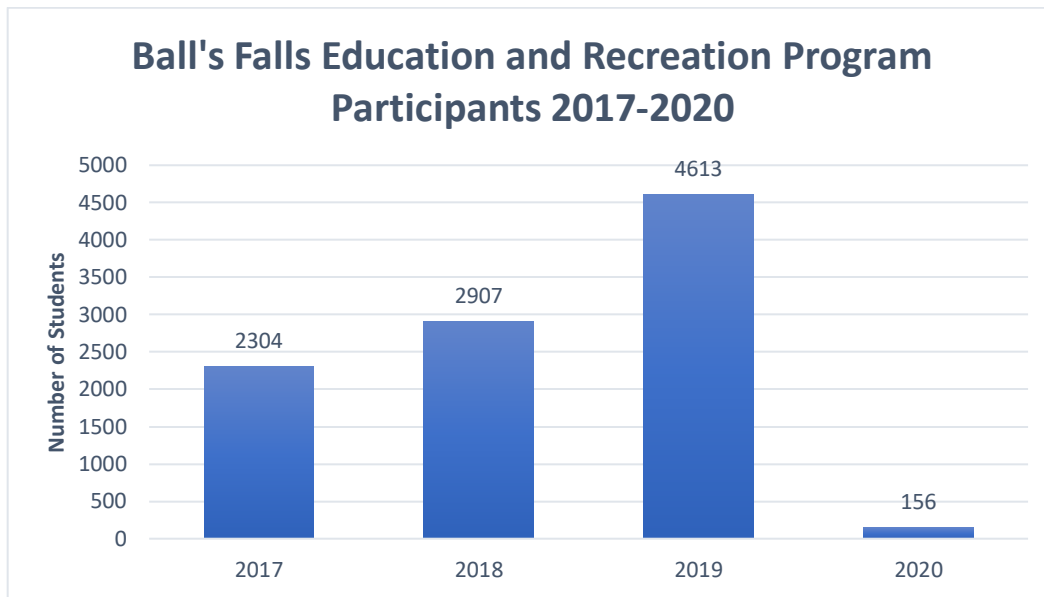


Figure 1: Ball's Falls Education and Recreation Program Participants 2017-2020

In 2020, staff developed at-home environmental education programming and materials for families and for educators, with strong positive feedback. Later in the year, the NPCA was one of the first organizations authorized to operate summer day camp programming due to the nature of the camps being set outdoors and in small group formats. These adaptations led to an innovative approach for educational programs, with the opening of the Ball’s Falls Nature School, an outdoor, small group school that combines traditional curriculum-based lessons, with inquiry-based and child-led forest exploration. In its first year of operation, Ball’s Falls Nature School provided environmental experiences for over 20 students who attended for either full-time or part-time learning. The Nature School is led by OCT-certified teachers with teaching specialities in environmental sciences, geography, and geology, and is designed for students in junior kindergarten through Grade 2. While 2020 presented various challenges, programs were adapted, and innovation occurred to allow authentic and valuable educational experiences to continue at Ball’s Falls.

BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Outdoor learning and recreation are recognized as an equity-based form of engagement, where there are no requirements to participate or engage within outdoors or within nature. Students, children, families, classes do not need anything but themselves to learn outdoors. Outdoor education fosters a holistic understanding of concepts, and the world. It is important for teachers in traditional settings, and for school boards to incorporate,

support, fund, and promote outdoor learning – especially in urban settings, where many students and communities do not have access to natural settings or environments. For many students, their first interaction with the natural world and environment is within a school setting program, or field trip. Without access to these specific experiences, families, communities, and classes may not have opportunities to actively engage in nature. Outdoor education provides new perspectives to teachers and students – concepts not previously experienced in a classroom setting. Students see their teacher transform from the role of authoritarian to a guide and supporter. In return, teachers see their students engage differently than with traditional classroom teachings and curriculum, as students are encouraged to engage their senses actively. This often reveals different learning types and teaching strategies. When educators teach about nature and the environment within the environment, students can develop an intimate, sensory, and experienced-based relationship with the earth, developing a stronger sense of awareness, and responsibility for protecting and understanding natural systems. This is the heart of conservation and conservation education. When we learn about something, and can touch, smell, hear, feel, and taste it – we become more connected. Outdoor education fosters these connections.

Access to healthy environments, greenspaces, and recreation are important determinants of overall health. Outdoor recreation/education is physically engaging, while also mentally and emotionally calming. For younger students who learn in the outdoors, this experience provides a newfound feeling and sense of control which is a determinant of health for all age groups. Students who struggle in traditional classroom settings can thrive in outdoor education and day camp programs. Recently launched provincial programs are including “Nature Prescriptions” where medical practitioners can now prescribe their patients time spent outdoors to benefit and improve their physical health, mental health, and sense of wellbeing.

Ben’s Story...

My time at the Ball’s Falls Adventure Camp has been some of the best days of my life. From when I first arrived at 8 years old, to my continued involvement a decade later at 18, I have always been drawn to the area. As a camper, the fun, educational and engaging atmosphere provided to me by the camp leaders made me fall in love with the stories and nature of Ball’s Falls. Every summer, each return to camp was always a highlight.

Once I became too old to continue to attend camp, I found a new role there, volunteering as a junior leader. As a junior leader, I was eager to have the chance to share my knowledge to new campers, and to help continue the atmosphere that would make them enjoy and appreciate the area as much as I did at their age. My work as a volunteer junior leader eventually made way for my first job as a full camp leader. Here, I got to spend an even larger role in helping both campers and visitors appreciate the beauty I see at Ball’s Falls.

The time I spent at Ball’s Falls made me realize that I wanted to incorporate nature and people’s interactions with it into my career. I am currently in my first year of Geography and Environmental Management at the University of Waterloo. In whatever future career I find, I hope to continue to try to help people appreciate and understand the nature around us.

It is testimonials such as this, that demonstrate the importance of outdoor education and environmental programming and the meaningful impact they have on youth that will be making decisions for the future of this watershed and surrounding lands.

“The Gallery” is in need of YOUR help.

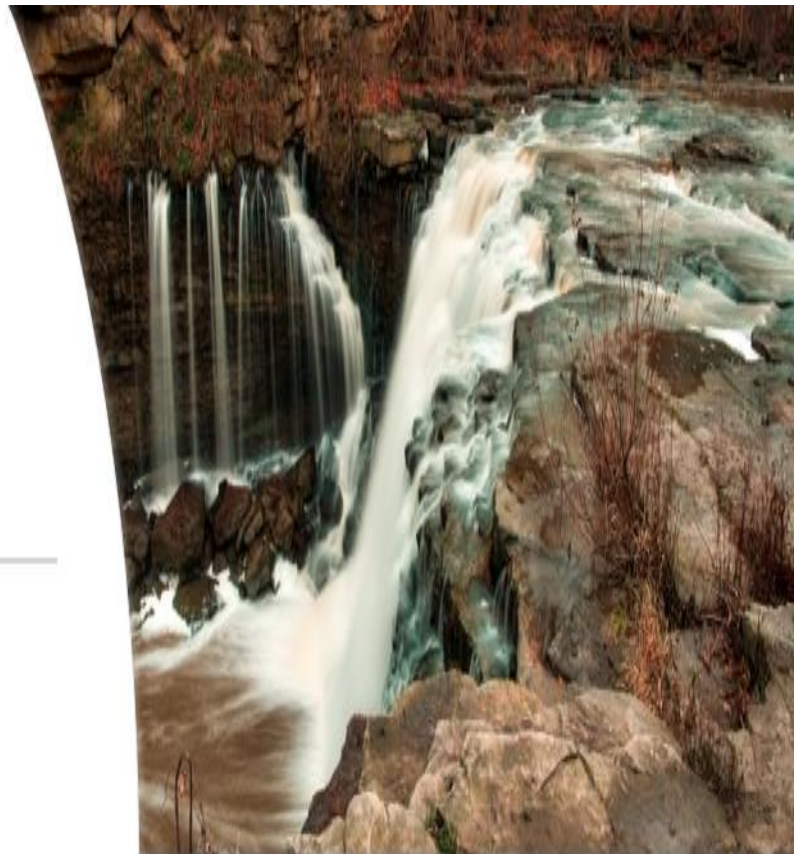
Gallery Challenges	Gallery Opportunities
Lacks interactivity and multimedia.	New design will provide state-of-the-art interactive educational models.
Lacks site flow for visitors.	Improved accessibility and flow of space will better accommodate visitors. The new “flow” will create a starting place for outdoor education programs.
Current educational content is only in English.	The new design will contain both official languages.
Gallery lacks integration with regional tourism partnerships and programs.	New investments will allow for engagement in the 2020+ Tourism Strategy for Twenty Valley, Town of Lincoln, West Niagara and will be a primary geosite within the proposed Niagara Peninsula Global GeoPark
Lack of marketing linkages to other regional sites and programs of value.	The Centre and Gallery will become an established part of the Ecotourism Hub in West Niagara and promote other sites within Ball’s Falls Conservation Area.
Lacks self-guided tours of Ball’s Falls features and significance.	The new Gallery will engage all ages, abilities, and diversities and incorporate accessible learning and activities.
Existing Gallery requires updated programs on critical topics such as climate change, Indigenous culture and history? etc..	The new Gallery will communicate Conservation Authority programs and services as well as integrate with broader watershed programming initiatives..

Phase 1: Design 2020 – May 2021 Fully Funded \$39,550

The team is working with a consultant to produce new Gallery environmental education programs:

Flowing Past: The Twenty Mile Creek *How culture and the environment interact*

1. Twenty Mile Creek Watershed
2. Birds of Niagara Identification
3. Carolinian Forest Diversity: Plants and Animals
4. Indigenous History
5. Early Settler History: The Rise and Fall of Glen Elgin
6. Geological History: The Niagara Escarpment
7. The NPCA and Ball's Falls Today
8. Climate Change in Niagara: Impacts and Solutions
9. Nature is Health: Wellbeing and Recreation



Phase II: Build
May to December 2021
Budget \$60,000
Raised to Date \$25,500

Funds raised by the
Foundation to date for
Phase II include:

Enbridge Gas
Nevada Funds
Calamus Estate Winery



We anticipate annual visitation to Ball's Falls Conservation Area to be 350,000 people, including tourists, daily visitors, school groups and special event guests.

Visitors to Ball's Falls Conservation Area generally begin their journey within The Centre for Conservation, where they will learn about the significance of area, trails and cultural heritage, while immersing themselves in an engaging experience within The Gallery. Tourists and visitors to the region (which region? Lincoln, The Regional Municipality of Niagara?) will discover why the Niagara Escarpment, the Niagara Peninsula watershed, the Carolinian forest, and Ball's Falls are so unique.

The Gallery will serve as the starting place for education programs, where students will be oriented before their outdoor exploration. With your support, The Gallery will provide an educational and interactive opportunity for visitors from across generations to learn and play on their way to an authentic nature experience.

Phase III:
Waterscape
2022
Budget \$250,000

New Waterscape feature will:

- Adapt the Centre's hallways for an interactive, holistic experience
- Integrate with trail systems (NPCA, Bruce Trail) and Heritage Village
- Connect to similar heritage sites and museums
 - (Ex. Morningstar Mill and Town of Lincoln Museum)
- Integrate with Conservation Ontario and Authority initiatives
- Provide an ecotourism hub in west Niagara, a starting place for natural and cultural heritage exploration



Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation needs YOUR support to raise \$284,500 to see our vision come to fruition.

We invite you to join us as we make a positive difference in our environment, right here in Niagara!

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