

## BACKGROUND

Special Areas recognizes the value of public consultation as a part of the municipal decision-making process and is committed to creating opportunities for meaningful public participation.

Special Areas municipal parks are important amenities for both local residents and visitors from across the province. Special Areas invests significant resources into these recreation areas and feedback from users is critical to ensuring services and amenities meet visitor expectations.

The goal of this public engagement was to gain insights from park users, including demographic information, preferred uses, current amenities and potential future amenities, and quality of service. This feedback would be shared with Administration to inform future development at municipal parks.

## WHAT WE DID

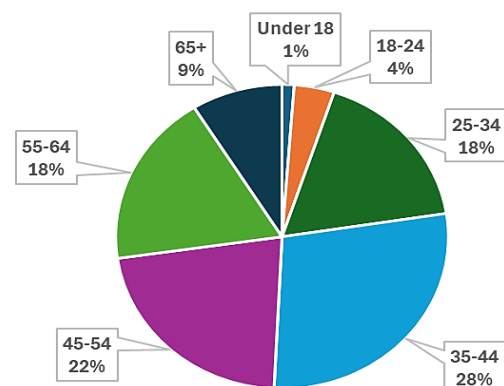
Public engagement was undertaken to collect feedback from visitors during the 2024 camping season. Three different online surveys were created, one for each Special Areas municipal park with a developed campground: Prairie Oasis Park, Blood Indian Park, and Carolside Campground.

The three different surveys collected a total of 847 responses during the engagement period: 589 at Prairie Oasis Park, 194 at Blood Indian Park, and 64 at Carolside Campground. Of the responses received during this engagement, 49% were from online collectors and 51% were from in-park collectors.

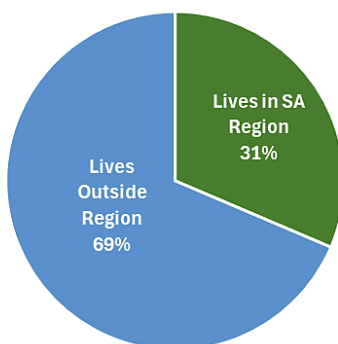
## WHAT WE HEARD – KEY FINDINGS

Respondents were asked to share which age group they belonged to. Visitors to Special Areas parks were most likely to be between 35 and 44 years of age. The next largest group was visitors aged between 45 and 54.

Of note, visitors to Prairie Oasis Park tended to be younger than visitors to either Blood Indian Park or Carolside Campground. Carolside Campground had the largest percentage of visitors over the age of 55.



Survey respondents were asked to identify where their primary residence was located to help identify where park visitors were coming from, and what percentage of users could be considered “local”.



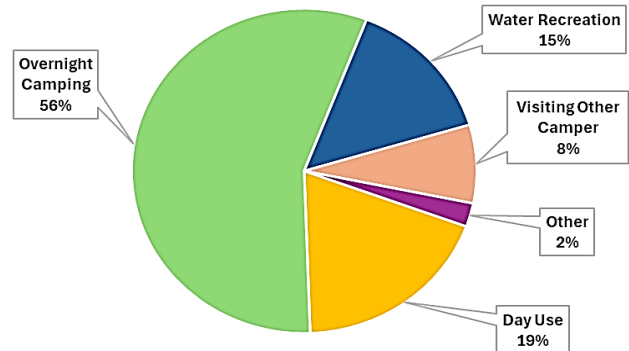
The majority of survey responses were received from individuals who lived outside the Special Areas region. When responses from rural residents were combined with those living in a town or village located within the Special Areas, 31% of survey responses were received from local residents.

The percentage of local to non-local visitors ranged from park to park, from 52% of non-local visitors at Blood Indian Park to 68% at Prairie Oasis Park.

## REASON FOR VISITING & QUALITY OF SERVICE

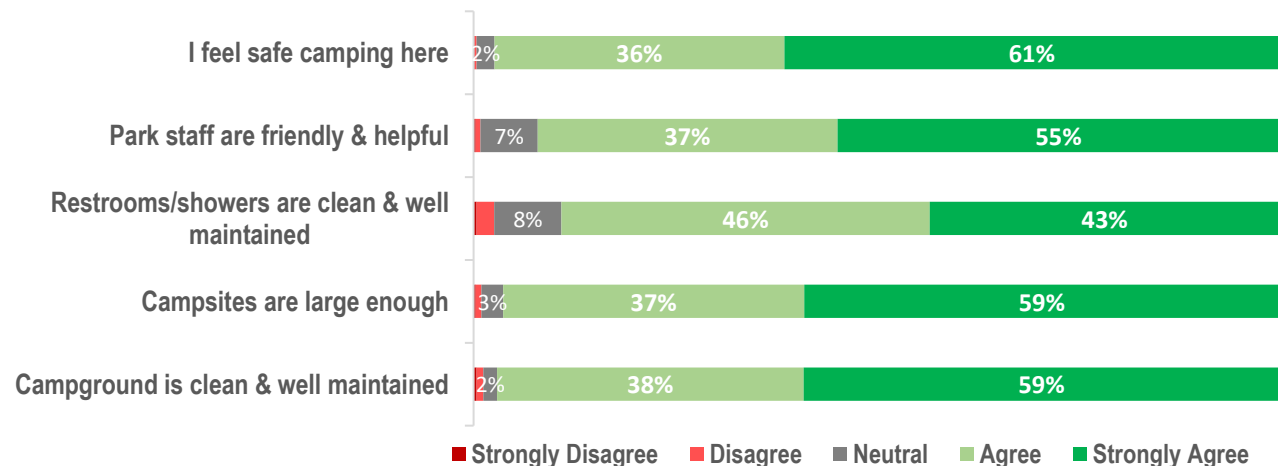
Survey respondents were asked to share their primary reason for visiting the parks.

The majority indicated they were visiting for overnight camping, with day use being the next most frequent reason. Day use areas included amenities like the spray park at Blood Indian Park, the beach/concession area at Prairie Oasis Park, and rest stop facilities at Carolside Campground.



Overall, reasons for visiting varied between the different parks, with water recreation (specifically fishing) being a key reason for visiting Carolside Campground. Water recreation was a key reason for visiting Prairie Oasis Park, with a focus on watersports and boating.

As a part of each survey, respondents were asked to share feedback related to the services provided at the park. Overall, responses indicated users felt park facilities were clean and well maintained, with large enough campsites. Staff were considered to be friendly and helpful, and respondents indicated they felt safe when camping there.



A park-specific question was included in the survey for Prairie Oasis Park about the registration booth. The registration booth was introduced in 2023 to help manage registrations for overnight campers, including first-come, first-serve campsites. More than 80% of respondents agreed with the statement that the registration booth had appropriate hours and staffing levels.

A park-specific question related to the spray park was included in the Blood Indian Park survey. Less than half of survey respondents agreed with the statement that the spray park was an important reason for coming to the park.

Respondents were asked to rank their overall stay out of a total possible five stars. Overall, visitors reported a very positive stay with an average score of 4.55 stars (out of a total possible 5 stars).

Prairie Oasis Park had the highest average score at 4.6 stars, with Blood Indian Park and Carolside Campground averaging 4.4 stars.



## FEEDBACK ON PARK AMENITIES

A critical component of this engagement was to get feedback from visitors related to current and potential amenities. Overall, feedback indicated visitors to all parks felt that amenities like small group sites, availability of toilets/showers, serviced sites (power/water), and a campground store or concession were most important.

Of potential future amenities, things like watersport rentals and more group camping sites were valued by visitors. Conversely, potential amenities like comfort camping, seasonal campsites, and dedicated (seasonal) marina slips were less valued.

Respondents were asked to share feedback related to the potential development of seasonal campsites (lots), including what an appropriate annual fee would be. Generally, most respondents were not in favor of seasonal lots being developed. If seasonal lots were available, most respondents indicated a fee ranging between \$3500 and \$5000 would be appropriate.

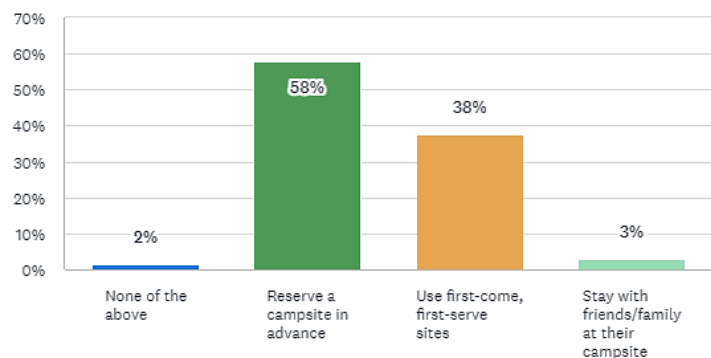
Finally, respondents were asked to share feedback both on what they enjoyed most about their visit and what could be improved. Over 650 individual responses were received, a 77% response rate. Feedback on what was enjoyed most by visitors highlighted many key amenities developed at each park, along with natural attractions like access to water and overall sense of quietness and relaxation. Common descriptors used in positive comments included: quiet, peaceful, clean, relaxing, beautiful, nice, and spacious.

When sharing feedback related to how parks could be improved, visitors commented on issues with the reservation system and reservable sites (Prairie Oasis Park), invasive fish species at Blood Indian Park and negative impacts to their fishing experience, increasing tree coverage and availability of shaded areas, increasing frequency of facility cleaning, and requests to build new or upgrade facilities.

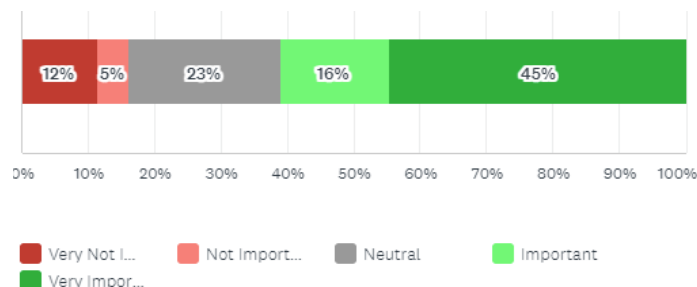
## FEEDBACK ON RESERVATION SYSTEM – PRAIRIE OASIS PARK

Over half of all respondents to the Prairie Oasis Park survey indicated they used the online reservation system to book their campsite when overnight camping.

Further analysis indicated when responses were sorted based on where people lived (e.g. local residents versus visitors from outside the area), local visitors were much less likely to use the online reservation system.



When asked how important reserving a campsite was, the majority of respondents said it was either very important (45%) or important (16%). When responses were sorted based on where people lived, the ability to reserve a campsite in advance was significantly more important to visitors from outside the region.

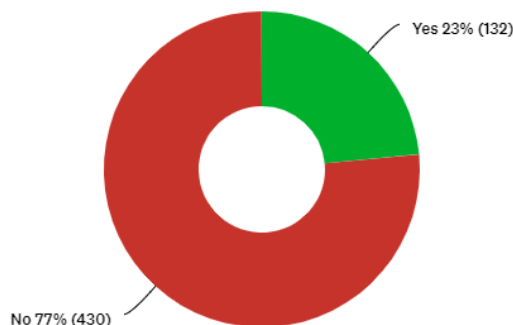


## FEEDBACK ON POTENTIAL DAY USE FEE - PRAIRIE OASIS PARK

Respondents were asked to share feedback about the potential for a day use fee at Prairie Oasis Park.

Overwhelmingly, respondents indicated a fee for day use should not be charged.

When responses were sorted based where respondents lived, only 17% of local visitors thought a day use fee should be charged, with 83% of respondents opposing the idea. Over a quarter of respondents from outside the region supported a day use fee, with 74% opposing it.



## FEEDBACK ON POTENTIAL RESERVATION SYSTEM – BLOOD INDIAN PARK

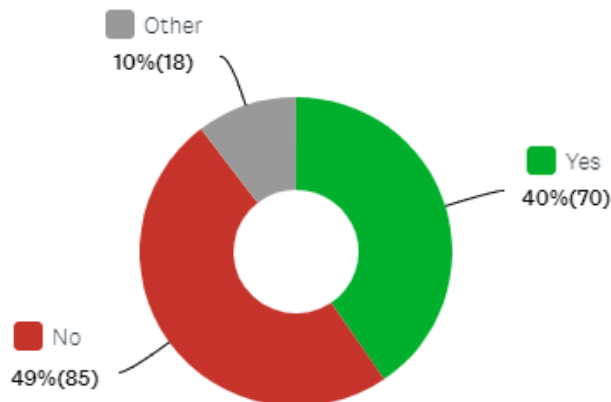
Respondents were asked to share feedback about the potential for using an online reservation for serviced sites at Blood Indian Park.

Almost half (49%) of all respondents indicated they were not in favor of a reservation system being used.

10% of respondents provided comments instead of answering yes or no. These comments ranged from versions of no (e.g. never, don't use, bad idea), N/A or neutral, to comments highlighting the value of both reservable and first-come, first-serve sites.

When responses were sorted based where they lived, over two-thirds of local visitors were opposed to an online reservation system at Blood Indian Park, with less than a quarter (23%) supporting the idea.

Generally, support for an online reservation system at Blood Indian Park was mostly found among individuals who visit the park from outside the region.



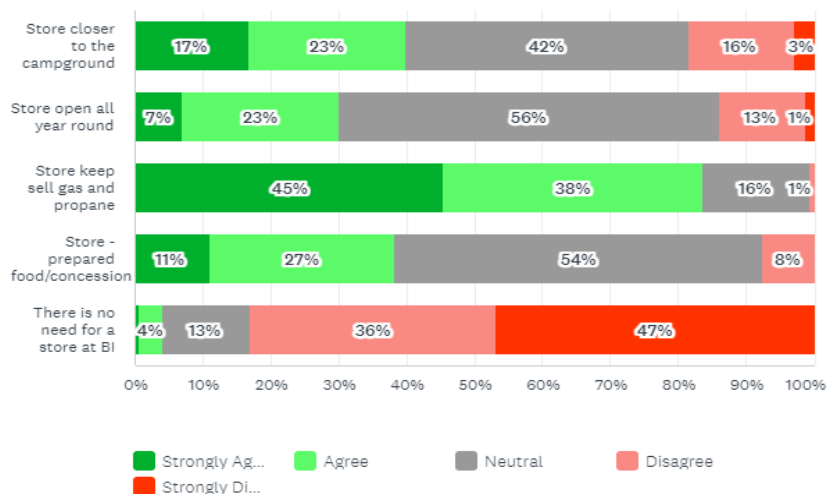
## FEEDBACK ON STORE / TRADING POST – BLOOD INDIAN PARK

Respondents were asked to share feedback related to the store at Blood Indian Park.

Generally, there was strong evidence that a store is a valuable part of current services at Blood Indian Park.

This was most clear in how strongly people opposed the statement “*There is no need for a store at Blood Indian*”, with 83% of respondents opposing that statement.

Almost half of all respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.



Of the statements related to services at the store itself, the strongest support related to the sale of gas and propane, with 83% of respondents either strongly agreeing (45%) or agreeing (38%) with the statement. Overall, there was slightly stronger support from local residents for this service when compared to responses from outside the region.

Respondents were generally neutral on statements related to store location, year-round operation, and if it sold prepared food similar to the concession at Prairie Oasis Park. Both local and non-local park users strongly supported a store at Blood Indian Park.

## HOW FEEDBACK WILL BE USED

Preliminary reporting was shared with the Parks Supervisor after these surveys closed in October. This report summarized feedback related to current and future amenities, including potential future development. The goal of providing this information ahead of the formal report was to make sure feedback collected this season was available for budgetary discussions.

A more in-depth report was prepared for Administration, and presented a detailed analysis of the feedback collected during this public engagement. The goal of collecting feedback was to ensure it was shared with decision-makers on the different programs, services, and amenities which impact park users. By sharing this information, feedback collected during this public engagement will be used to inform strategic planning, infrastructure, and future amenities and services available at municipal parks.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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