

THRIVING TOGETHER

Nurturing Our Team at Nature Canada

By Emily McMillan, Executive Director
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The supports that Nature Canada has in place for our team are significant, and sometimes not visible. So, it is important to pause and celebrate the strides we've made as a team, and discuss future steps aimed at continuous improvement. The purpose of this document is to provide clarity around the retention initiatives we've implemented, as well as those we plan to undertake.

Rooted in Success: Fostering our Team's Potential

At Nature Canada, staff form the bedrock of our success. Our work is complex and heavily relationship based. That's why each year a staff member stays with us increases their potential for lasting impact. It takes time to develop the skills, relationships, and knowledge which benefit our organization and mission. The departure of a team member is a great loss of potential, as well as a financial impact in terms of time needed to recruit, hire, and onboard someone new.

Our board and senior management are committed to minimizing such disruptions. More than that though, **we are committed to being an**

employer of choice. We want Nature Canada to be a place people want to work and are happy. And we are willing to put time and energy into making that happen.

This summary of our efforts is many years in the making. Our senior management team invests effort into every aspect of our operations. Feedback from all staff, through avenues such as the annual staff survey, serves as a crucial mechanism for driving improvement. We can all be proud of the amazing organization that we have built **together.**

Tracking Our Team's Stability and Growth

Looking back at our team retention, we've achieved a great deal of stability over the last couple of years.

2020 was a tough year; a lot of people made big life changes. Since then, our retention rates have consistently aligned with the sector average of 75%. We do bring in a relatively large number of

temporary staff, such as summer students, which may make it feel like we have high turnover, especially when we were all working remotely. But, we know that interns and students bring a lot of vitality to Nature Canada and we provide them with a strong start to their career, hopefully within the nature sector.

RETENTION RATE OVER TIME (PERMANENT STAFF)	
2020	48%
2021	77%
2022	76%
2023	75%
2024 SO FAR	96%

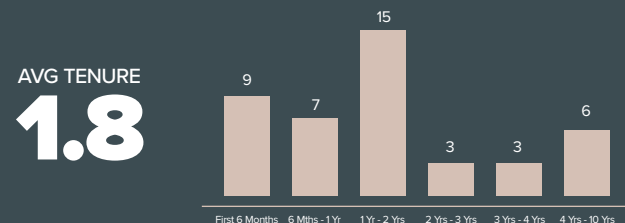
# HIRES OF TEMPORARY STAFF (INCLUDING SUMMER STUDENTS)	
2020	6
2021	15
2022	9
2023	7

Taking a look at how long each person has been with us, we can see a good trend of more staff staying longer. A different look at the numbers shows that in the past, there was a tendency to leave after between one and two years of working here. We have taken this on as an opportunity - a chance to enhance our retention strategies and cultivate an organizational culture where individuals can thrive and remain part of our team for five years and beyond.

Current Distribution by Tenure of Permanent Staff



Distribution by Tenure of Permanent Staff Who have Exited since 2020





Cultivating Growth and Longevity

We've identified four key pillars which shape our efforts to be a workplace of choice and increase retention of team members.

- Holistic Compensation
- Steadfast Support and Confident Growth
- Culture of Appreciation
- Work Life Balance and Flexibility

In each case, we will outline what we have put into place (Roots) and what we are planning (Shoots).

Holistic Compensation

Our compensation is more than just a paycheque. Wages, benefits, security, and opportunities for professional development are all vital parts of the compensation we offer at Nature Canada.

Roots:

- Annual raises to salary to reflect cost-of-living (COLA)

- Clarifying salary levels based on roles (Pay Bands)
- Annually evaluate the competitiveness of salaries, benchmarking with Charity Village and TREC
- Parental leave
- Child care assistance in travel policy
- Professional development budget
- Reduction in short-term employment contracts
- RRSP matching
- Health & Dental Benefits
- Confidential Employee Assistance Program covering counselling and support services
- Increase in Mental Health benefits from \$500 to \$2000
- Vacation time, starting at 4 weeks annually

Shoots:

- More discussion of how best to support individual professional development

Wages

Pay bands have emerged as a popular strategy among organizations to ensure transparent and equitable pay structures. Equitable pay takes into account individual differences like experience, skills, and the value someone may add to the organization. Pay bands also let us assess and adjust current salaries to compare to market rates each year.

Current Pay Bands at Nature Canada (Thousands):

Pay Band	2024
Executive	120-140
Director	90-120
Manager	75-90
Senior Officer/Organizer	65-75
Officer/Organizer	60-65
Coordinator	50-60

Wages in the nonprofit sector are still lower than the private sector and government. Nature Canada has set a goal to stay competitive in salaries by staying in the top 75th percentile of environmental charities of our size in Ottawa, as measured by Charity Village and TREC (Training Resources for the Environmental Community).

ANNUAL CASH COMPENSATION BY LEVEL



2023 Canadian Nonprofit Sector Salary Benefits Report, Charity Village



We have also been able to keep up with inflation with Cost of Living Allowances (COLA), based on the Consumer Price Index. In 2024, the COLA was 4%. These across-the-board increases have led to the movement of pay bands over time.

Professional development is an ongoing conversation at Nature Canada. While we have money set aside for individual training, we have been focusing on training and development as a team. This ties in with our efforts toward Equity and Anti-racism and Reconciliation. We plan to continue working to ensure that everyone is able to experience development of their skills, in a

myriad of ways (e.g. staff retreats, work time for free training, paid conferences, mentorships, etc).

Benefits

Wages are only a portion of overall compensation. Nature Canada has a generous benefits package that increases one's overall compensation well above their salary.

With this example, we can see that **the benefits we provide result in over fifteen thousands dollars more per staff per year in total compensation.**

Base Salary	\$70,000
RRSP Match (4%)	\$2,800
Health Benefits (family*) - Employer Contribution	\$6,156
Paid Additional Vacation Time (2 weeks**)	\$2,692
Paid Sick Time (2 weeks)~	\$2,692
Christmas Holiday Closure (~3 days)	\$807
Staff Retreats (Avg Cost per person)	\$1,100
Adjusted Total Compensation	\$86,247

*Approximate based on family coverage. Single coverage would be \$2,318.16.

**Additional 2 weeks vacation on top of legal requirement for 2 weeks.

~Legal requirement is three unpaid days.



Steadfast Support and Confident Growth

From the moment a new team member joins us through their ongoing journey with the organization, we can ensure their success by providing clear guidance, open channels for feedback, and ample opportunities for learning and advancement. We provide opportunities for skill development through internal and external training opportunities.

We also recognize that investing in the development of our senior management team is crucial. The skills and abilities of Directors can profoundly impact the morale and productivity of the entire organization. Strong leadership not only sets the tone for our organizational culture but also ensures that our staff receive the guidance, support, and mentorship necessary to thrive in their roles. We have worked to ensure Directors provide regular feedback, support, and guidance to their teams, including career discussions. **Our goal is to create an environment where every team member feels supported and empowered.**

Roots:

- Improvements to Onboarding
- Consistent one on ones with Directors
- Following best practices for performance evaluation

- Regular best practice updates to Personnel Policy
- Coaching mindset among Directors
- Seeking feedback through Regular annual staff survey and Skip level meetings
- Staff retreats
- Senior management team retreats
- Lunch and Learns
- Foster a culture of open feedback and regular check ins

Shoots:

- Continue EAR learnings and policy development
- Continue journey of Reconciliation
- Continue Senior Management Team retreats & trainings
- ED's performance evaluation will seek feedback across the organization
- Collaborative work planning to facilitate transparency in management, allowing all to see project timelines, responsibilities, and progress updates.

Atmosphere of Appreciation

A workplace is also a community. Fostering a sense of camaraderie through shared experiences outside of the day to day work ensures we get to connect as people. Building a culture of appreciation that results in an atmosphere of positivity and respect takes intentionality. We want our workplace to be not just somewhere to earn a living, but a place where individuals feel recognized and see their impact. We believe that every contribution, no matter how small, deserves celebration and acknowledgment.

Roots:

- Mandatory EAR training in probation period
- Birthday recognition (card & gift card)

- Improved onboarding
- Shout outs at staff meetings
- Anniversary celebrations (15 and 25 years)
- Celebration slack channel
- Social events: walks in nature, lunches together

Shoots:

- Anniversary celebrations (1 and 5 years)
- Celebrating non-Christian holidays
- Win board
- Program team meeting dedicated to celebration





Flexible Work-life Balance

To create a workplace where our lives feel in balance, we have pursued a variety of approaches to ensure flexibility, support, transparency, and accountability:

- Flexible internal processes: Streamlined meetings, efficient communication channels.
- Supportive Leadership: Clear role expectations, equitable treatment, open communication, and managerial support.
- Achievable Workloads: Balanced task assignments, realistic deadlines.
- Nurturing Culture: Encouragement of innovation and collaboration, fostering a culture of psychological safety and open communication.

Roots:

- Finding efficiencies with meeting clean ups
- Using technology for better coordination and transparency: Slack, Asana

- Clarifying priority work using the Ecocycle
- Hybrid work policy and flexibility in daily hours
- Annual training on Personnel Policy
- Travel Policy per diems on par with government
- Corporate credit cards for travel to reduce burden of paying up front
- Clarity around roles and responsibilities
- Campaign roll out plans
- Individual Work Plans

Shoots:

- Training in psychological safety
- Change in vacation policy to earn one more day per year of service
- Pilot Own Your Fridays (4-day work week)



Conclusion

By prioritizing aspects such as compensation beyond a mere paycheque, strengthening our management team, fostering a culture of appreciation, and promoting work-life balance and flexibility, we are committed to creating a workplace where every team member feels valued, supported, and empowered. We want to thrive!

As we continue to evolve and refine our strategies, our ultimate goal remains unchanged: **to cultivate a workplace culture that not only**

attracts top talent but also nurtures it for long-term success.

Moving forward, we will continue to actively evaluate our initiatives and gather feedback to ensure that we are meeting the evolving needs of our team members and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Together, we are building a community where individuals can flourish both personally and professionally. In this way we will grow and deepen the impact of Nature Canada.