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# Bellevue House

National Historic Site of Canada

Management Plan

2023



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National Historic Site of Canada

## Management Plan



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BELLEVUE HOUSE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2023.

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#### Note to readers

The health and safety of visitors, employees and all Canadians are of the utmost importance. Parks Canada is following the advice and guidance of public health experts to limit the spread of COVID-19 while allowing Canadians to experience Canada's natural and cultural heritage.

Parks Canada acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic may have unforeseeable impacts on the *Bellevue House National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan*. Parks Canada will inform Indigenous peoples, partners, stakeholders and the public of any such impacts through its annual implementation update on the implementation of this plan.

For more information about the management plan or about  
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## Foreword



From coast to coast to coast, national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas are a source of shared pride for Canadians. They reflect Canada's natural and cultural heritage and tell stories of who we are, including the historic and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples.

These cherished places are a priority for the Government of Canada. We are committed to protecting natural and cultural heritage, expanding the system of protected places, and contributing to the recovery of species at risk.

At the same time, we continue to offer new and innovative visitor and outreach programs and activities to ensure that more Canadians can experience these iconic destinations and learn about history, culture and the environment.

In collaboration with Indigenous communities and key partners, Parks Canada conserves and protects national historic sites and national parks; enables people to discover and connect with history and nature; and helps sustain the economic value of these places for local and regional communities.

This new management plan for Bellevue House National Historic Site of Canada supports this vision.

Management plans are developed by a dedicated team at Parks Canada through extensive consultation and input from Indigenous partners, other partners and stakeholders, local communities, as well as visitors past and present. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this plan for their commitment and spirit of cooperation.

As the Minister responsible for Parks Canada, I applaud this collaborative effort and I am pleased to approve the *Bellevue House National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan*.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Steven Guilbeault', written in a cursive style.

**Steven Guilbeault**  
*Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister responsible for Parks Canada*



## Recommendations

*Recommended by:*



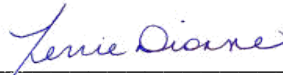
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Ron Hallman  
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Parks Canada*



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*Acting Superintendent  
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## Message from the Bellevue House Community Advisory Committee

*[At the time this message was completed, the Bellevue House Community Advisory Committee consisted of 12 members, including Indigenous representatives, representatives from regional minorities, an equity, diversity and inclusion representative, and representatives from the cultural heritage sector.]*

This community advisory committee first came together in winter 2021–2022 to advise on renewal activities at Bellevue House National Historic Site. Over the course of our journey together, this committee has experienced first-hand what is possible when all people feel welcomed to give their input on Sir John A. Macdonald’s legacy and the histories that have shaped this land. It has led to greater understanding and to more opportunities to learn from those histories and from each other.

The members of this committee occupy various places in Canadian society. There are members who have long been engaged in expanding narratives that only glorified Macdonald as a nation builder and overlooked the painful impacts of settler colonialism on Indigenous peoples. For others, this is a new conversation. Some of us joined the committee because what we learned about Macdonald growing up in this country excluded certain voices, and we want to learn more. Some of us joined because the stories of our communities have been underrepresented in the past and we felt a responsibility to share our voices. We want to contribute to Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and promote change that extends beyond Macdonald’s legacy and injustices to Indigenous peoples, and to all other Canadian groups who have also suffered injustices.

In the process of writing this message for the management plan, we were asked to think back on our hopes and motivations for joining the committee. One of our members returned to a quote from the Honourable Murray Sinclair, delivered as part of his address at the 2022 memorial service for Macdonald’s death:

*... this role that Sir John A. played ... needs to be placed in counterpoint to the grand things that he did and so we must never be unwilling to recognize that our image of the man has not been complete to this point in time but it needs to be made complete. We can continue and we should continue to acknowledge what he has done in order to build this country but we should also acknowledge that what he did to build this country was at great cost to the Indigenous people of Canada.<sup>1</sup>*

This is what the committee is hoping and seeking to do – to make the story more complete. The new experiences encountered at Bellevue House will not exclude the good things in our shared history, but the story is not complete without inclusive community engagement. If Bellevue House fails to stay relevant to everyone, then it could lose its legitimacy as a heritage place that speaks on behalf of the community to tell a range of stories and truths.

Bellevue House is already taking action to expand the image of Macdonald. The primary strategic direction of this management plan commits the site to leading in presenting multiple perspectives on Macdonald’s legacy by providing opportunities for diverse groups to share their voices. The creation of this committee is an early step toward achieving this objective. Today, this community advisory committee is calling on neighbours and visitors to join us on this journey of collaboration with open hearts and open minds. It is time to be curious, to ask respectful questions, and to listen to the conversation. Sir John A. Macdonald is an integral part of Canada’s history, and Bellevue House is a historic symbol of that story. However, we need a more complete picture of the man’s legacy; a picture that includes everyone. We will continue to support this management plan so long as Bellevue House National Historic Site demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that all people from this diverse Canadian society may feel and know that their part in that history is accurately remembered and shared.

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<sup>1</sup> The Honourable Murray Sinclair, “2022 06 06 Sir John A Ceremony – YouTube,” Kingston Historical Society, June 6, 2022 [31:53–32:39].



## Executive Summary

Bellevue House National Historic Site is located at 35 Centre Street in Kingston, Ontario, in a quiet residential neighbourhood approximately 2.5 kilometres from the downtown core. The land on which the house is built is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Wendat people. The site is recognized for being a home of Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, and for its Italianate architecture.

As the only historic site administered by Parks Canada that recognizes and presents Sir John A. Macdonald, this site has great potential for remembering and understanding Macdonald, his role in Canadian history and the development of Canada. Through investments into the historic house and programming, Parks Canada is renewing Bellevue House as a place of discovery, learning and reflection. Visitors can learn about Macdonald's legacy, impacts of Confederation, accomplishments, as well as lesser-known and painful aspects of our shared history. Many perspectives have informed this revitalization, which is expected to increase engagement and interaction with visitors.

The western downtown area of Kingston has seen, in recent years, the development of new cultural attractions and activities, and Bellevue House is well positioned to benefit from this growth.

The three key strategies for the ten-year management plan focus on the following:

### **Key Strategy 1: An evolving understanding of Sir John A. Macdonald's legacy**

Sir John A. Macdonald is remembered and evaluated in a range of ways depending upon the experiences and lenses of different groups in Canada. Some elements of Macdonald's legacy are challenging to acknowledge and to present. Through this strategy, Bellevue House commits to leading an open and ongoing dialogue and presenting a range of perspectives surrounding the development of Canada and Macdonald's role in it. It will connect Macdonald's complicated legacy to its continued influence on Canadians and Indigenous peoples to this day.

The site also lends itself to conversations around the telling of history: debates on revisionism, questions around who is the arbiter of "truth," and junctures when lesser-known facts need to be brought to light. These make for engaging and passionate opportunities for visitors and partners to weigh in on commemoration, and to help the site evolve and remain relevant as it connects past struggles to today's movements for human rights. To advance this work, Bellevue House will continue to build partnerships with Indigenous peoples and racialized communities, expanding upon a narrative that speaks about Macdonald and themes of colonial power and privilege in his time. This approach will contribute to Bellevue House's draw as a place of reflection, discourse and reconciliation.

### **Key Strategy 2: An active community partner**

Bellevue House has the potential to become a more active, effective and recognized participant in the Kingston area tourism market. This strategy aims to increase awareness and enhance the site's presence and leadership in the city's network of historic places. Increasing the site's involvement in community events and local initiatives will open up opportunities for new partnerships and stronger collaboration. Efforts to promote the site and enhance its exposure will put Bellevue House on the map as the leader in presenting the story of Sir John A. Macdonald and inclusive interactive engagement. Showcasing built heritage conservation and contributing expertise regionally are also foundational to the site's future and role in Kingston.

### **Key Strategy 3: A renewed heritage experience**

This third strategy seeks to raise the profile of the experiences offered at Bellevue House by renewing the interior of the house, continuing to modernize experiences to be more inclusive of all target audiences, and developing new programming, including immersive activities. By renewing and refurbishing the house, and pursuing new programming and presentation styles, the site will not only attract more people and repeat visitors but will result in increased visitor satisfaction and appreciation.



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## 1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada administers one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and historic places in the world. Parks Canada's mandate is to protect and present these places for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Future-oriented, strategic management of each national historic site, national park, national marine conservation area and heritage canal administered by Parks Canada supports its vision:

*Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.*

The *Parks Canada Agency Act* requires Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for national historic sites administered by Parks Canada. The *Bellevue House National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan*, once approved by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada and tabled in Parliament, ensures Parks Canada's accountability to Canadians, outlining how historic site management will achieve measurable results in support of its mandate.

Indigenous peoples, the Bellevue House Community Advisory Committee, stakeholders, partners and the Canadian public were involved in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national historic site. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of Bellevue House National Historic Site by articulating a vision, key strategies and objectives. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the plan objectives and will review the plan every ten years or sooner if required.

This plan is not an end in and of itself. Parks Canada will maintain an open dialogue on the implementation of the management plan, to ensure that it remains relevant and meaningful. The plan will serve as the focus for ongoing engagement and, where appropriate, consultation, on the management of Bellevue House National Historic Site in years to come.

## 2.0 Significance of Bellevue House National Historic Site

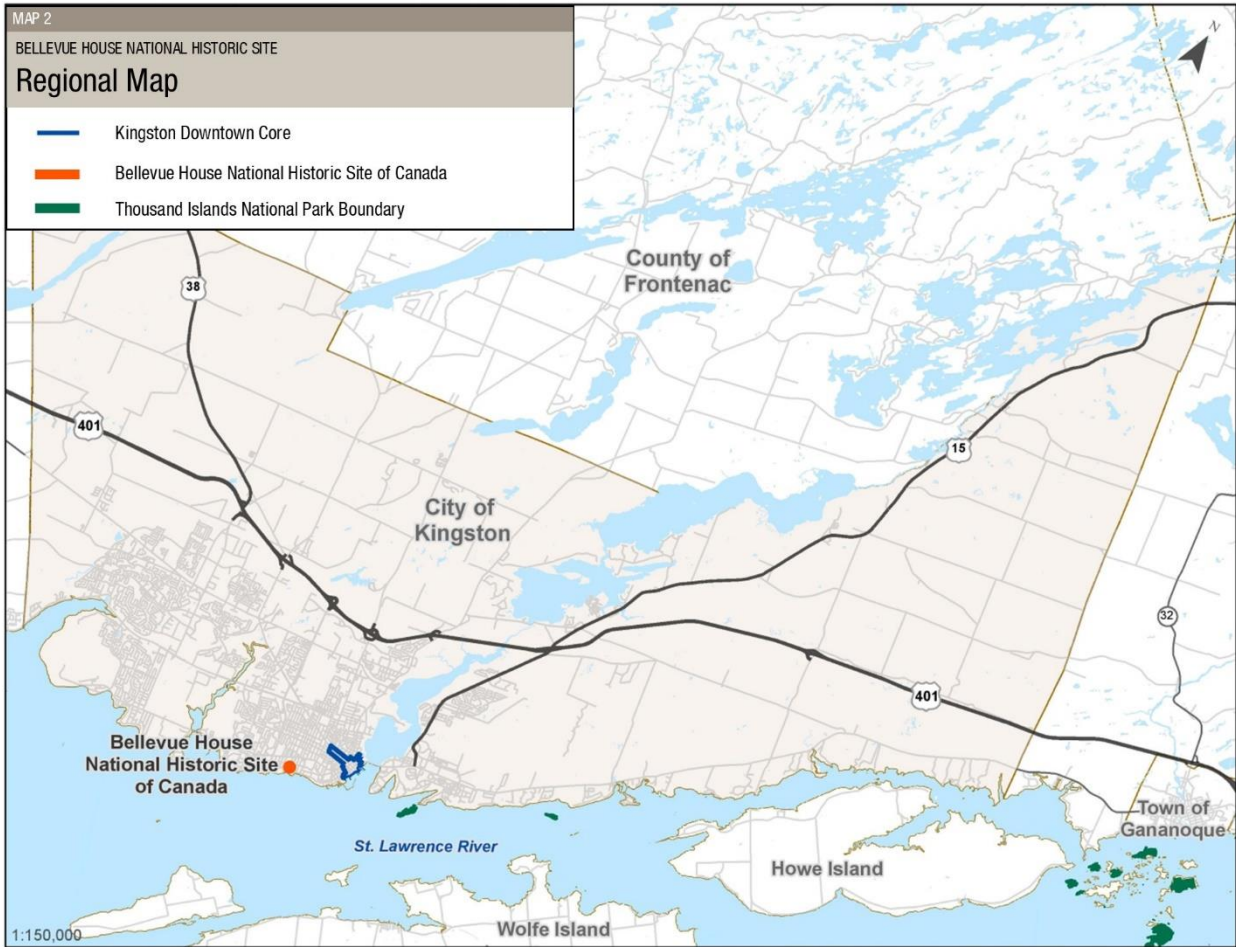
Bellevue House is located at 35 Centre Street, in a quiet residential neighbourhood in the heart of Kingston, Ontario. Becoming a national historic site in 1964 and opened to the public in Canada's centennial year, 1967, Bellevue House was designated for its association with Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister. Macdonald and his family occupied the house in 1848–49. At that time, Macdonald was a promising politician and a local corporate lawyer. Bellevue House is one of the only places in the country where Macdonald's life and legacy are presented to the public.

Bellevue House was also designated for its outstanding example of Italianate architecture in the picturesque manner. One of the most interesting examples still in existence in Canada today, the house's character is defined by its Tuscan villa design. Built in the early 1840s, the house was a product of a time when Kingston's wealthier families were selling their town homes in favour of fashionable suburban estates. The Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office classified Bellevue House as a historic building in 1994. Today, the house, wooded setting, and Victorian gardens are restored to reflect the period when Macdonald lived there and to provide the backdrop for sharing historical context of the wealthy and elite of Canada's first capital.

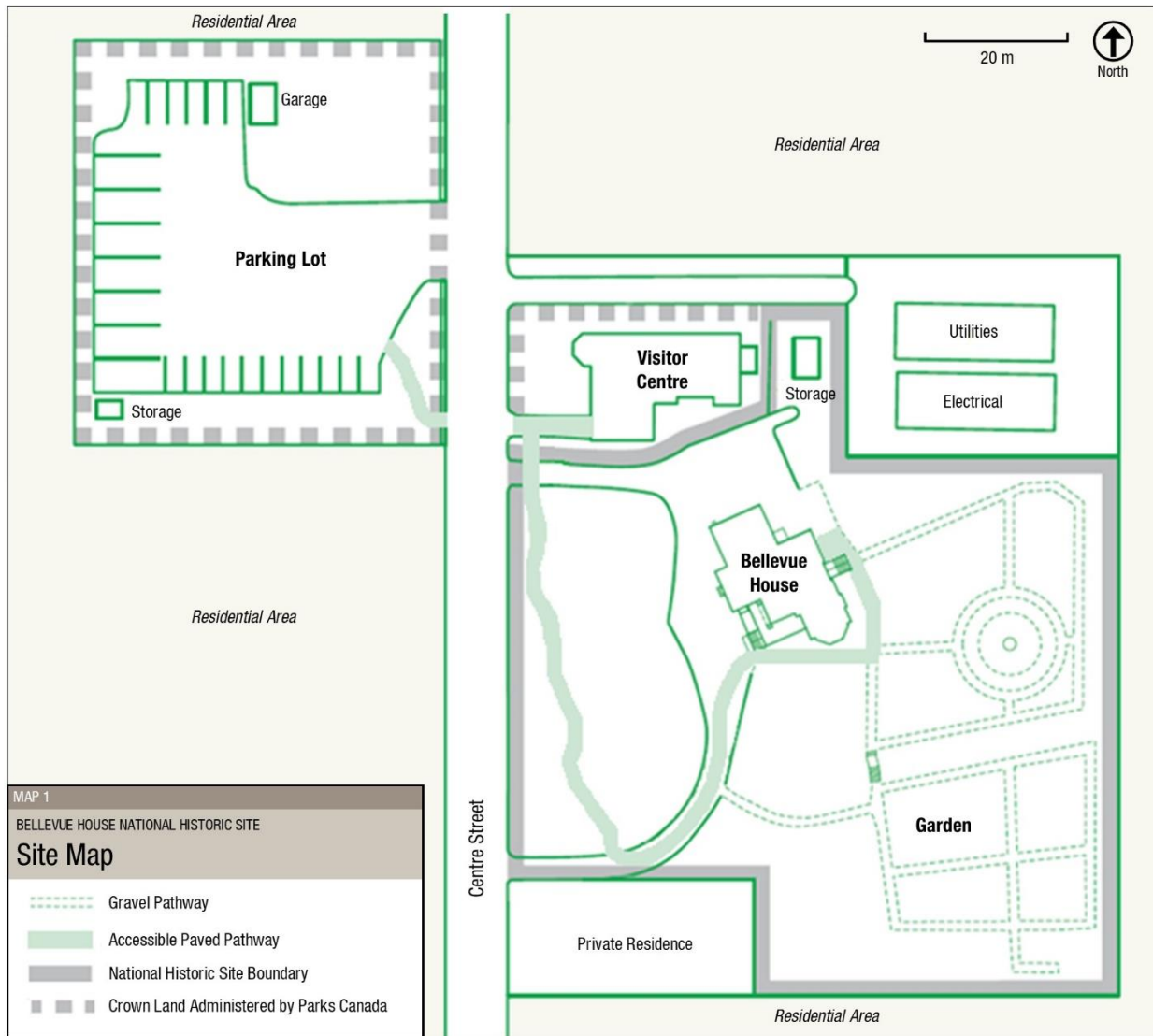
Visitors are welcomed to the site where the stage is set in a modern visitor centre before being invited to visit the historic villa and renewed experience. A number of objects that belonged to Sir John A. Macdonald and his family, such as a desk chair, a cradle, a few books and a chest of papers, are on display in the collection at Bellevue House. Visitors can also explore the one-hectare footprint of the site including a Victorian ornamental garden, a heritage kitchen garden, and an heirloom apple orchard. At the time Macdonald lived at Bellevue House, these gardens beautified the property and

created a mood of tranquility by cultivating a naturalized environment around the house. Today the grounds and gardens encourage visitors to stroll the paths and reflect on their visit. A parking lot on the opposite side of Centre Street is available to visitors and tour groups.

Map 1: Regional Setting



Map 2: Bellevue House National Historic Site



### 3.0 Planning Context

Bellevue House National Historic Site is located in the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Wendat people and is situated approximately halfway between Akwesasne and Tyendinaga Mohawk First Nations.

Sir John A. Macdonald represents an influential figure in the Kingston region, where he arrived from Scotland with his parents at the age of five. He was raised and educated in Kingston and later became a lawyer, a city councillor, and eventually, Canada's first prime minister. Bellevue House offers one of the best opportunities for learning about and presenting Sir John A. Macdonald and understanding the forces that shaped him and his role in Canadian history.

Macdonald remains today a controversial figure, particularly in regard to aspects of the formation of the Canadian Confederation, his involvement in the colonization of the West, and the residential school system. In 2016, an interpretation program renewal began to provide a more inclusive story of Macdonald and his legacy. Since then, Parks Canada has been on a journey to better understand and present some of the more complex and unrepresented facets of Sir John A. Macdonald and Canada's history.

In 2017, the *Many Voices of Confederation* program included new site exhibits and Indigenous art installations housed in the visitor centre. Along with complementary programming, these encouraged Canadians to explore the many viewpoints, and specifically the lesser-known and underrepresented voices and stories related to Macdonald. The employees' training program was also improved to include Indigenous perspectives, cultural awareness, and dialogic approaches. Parks Canada has received positive feedback for this direction and will continue down this path of deep learning, reckoning, and continuous improvement.

Parks Canada is developing relationships with both the formal councils of Akwesasne and Tyendinaga, as well as Indigenous peoples from other communities, both regionally and nationally, to engage meaningfully for future management and operations of Bellevue House National Historic Site. Through Thousand Islands National Park of Canada, and collaboration on the stewardship of Cairn Island (*Tsikatsikwahere*), Parks Canada has also established a strong relationship based upon conservation values with the Mohawks of Akwesasne and intends to build on this positive engagement for future work at Bellevue House.

The site is operated from mid-May to mid-October; visitors can arrive on their own or as a stop on Kingston's heritage tour with Kingston Trolley Tours. Bellevue House National Historic Site attracts approximately 20,000 visitors a year. The majority of visitors are adults over the age of 45 and families, mainly from Ontario. Youth segments tend to be underrepresented in the overall visitor base. Visitors have expressed high levels of appreciation for the site's guided tours and exhibits, and enjoy the state of preservation of the house and facilities. After a decline between 2010 and 2013, site visitation rebounded substantially, almost doubling between 2013 and 2016. With this rise in visitation, facilities and programming were often at capacity, and there was an increased demand for experiential-based opportunities. The *Bellevue House National Historic Site Visitor Experience Strategy* was developed in 2017, which evaluated the site's market potential and proposed new types of programming. In 2018, the historic house was closed when architectural assessments identified the need for repairs to the original plaster ceilings at Bellevue House, while the rest of the site remained operational.

In the years 2020–2022, the global COVID-19 pandemic limited access and hours of operation at the site, which led to a decline in visitation. The visitor centre remained closed for most of the early seasons of 2020 and 2021, opening with limited capacity from late July 2021, with most of the programming being hosted in the outdoor spaces. The pandemic created a window of opportunity to develop a wider range of experiences using a variety of ways to present the stories of the site.



Today, Parks Canada is completing a renewal of interior spaces and is finalizing programming and exhibits of the historic Bellevue House. Guided by the *Framework for History and Commemoration*<sup>2</sup>, the renewed spaces in the house and around the grounds will present and promote a diverse story about the early history of Canada and examine how Macdonald's complex legacy continues to influence and impact Canadians, Indigenous and other racialized peoples today. Central to this renewal process are the engagement approaches being taken to engage with the local Indigenous communities, members of the local equity, diversity and inclusion group for Kingston, as well as other stakeholders in the tourism and heritage sectors. Together, forming a community advisory committee, Parks Canada is advised on approaching challenging subject matter and delivery channels in a meaningful and insightful way.

The previous management plan for Bellevue House dates back to 2004. The site has made many improvements since then, namely the modernization of the visitor centre, significant capital improvements on the historic house, and has undertaken a transformation of the visitor experience and how the story of Sir John A. Macdonald is presented.

Changes to the visitor centre included new exhibits, a gift shop, and public Wi-Fi access. Bellevue House offers guided tours, tools, and activities designed to attract new audiences, including the creation of a Facebook page to promote and raise the profile of the site.

In terms of capital improvements, architectural assessments in 2018 identified the need for repairs to the roof, electrical system and the original plaster ceilings at Bellevue House. Parks Canada restored and renewed the historic house, repairing the roof, front porch, ceiling and wall plaster, floors, and upgraded roof drainage and electrical systems. The initial \$2.13 million investment from 2019 to 2022 created an opportune time to restore and upgrade interior spaces and for the wholesale redesign of the visitor experience. New approaches, exhibits, and visitor programming offered within the home are being completed and the historic house is scheduled to reopen in 2023.

These projects included more barrier-free access on the grounds of the house, adding to the experience for diverse audiences and taking advantage of more ways to tell the stories the historic site represents. Infrastructure investments also reduced operational greenhouse gas emissions and added resiliency in a changing climate.

Kingston's motto is "Where history and innovation thrive," and the city is rich in history, cultural attractions, vibrant arts, culinary experiences, and leisure activities. With close to eight million visitors to the southeastern Ontario region each year, Kingston remains a tourism destination for visitors from all over the world and is easily accessible by automobile or public transit from Toronto, Montréal, and Ottawa. Bellevue House is one of many heritage attractions in the city. In the eastern part of the city, Fort Henry National Historic Site of Canada continues to draw approximately 120,000 visitors a year, and theatres, music and sporting events round out the offerings. The western downtown area has seen a growth in cultural attractions and activities with the world-class Isabel Bader Performing Arts Centre, tours at the Kingston Penitentiary, Canada's Penitentiary Museum, the Tett Centre and the opening of a new waterfront park and trail. Bellevue House is located on the trolley stop near these attractions and will benefit particularly from the growth in visitation to the western edge of the downtown area. Parks Canada works cooperatively with regional partners such as the Southeastern Ontario Regional Tourism Organisation, Tourism Kingston, the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, the Kingston Association of Museums, Art Galleries and Historic Sites, Kingston Accommodation Partners and the City of Kingston to promote the site.

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<sup>2</sup> Guiding document adopted by Parks Canada in 2019, which encourages an interpretation of history that goes beyond thinking about the origin of a historic place designation. This framework document proposes a more inclusive, accessible and engaging approach to public history that reflects 21st century Canada. <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/plan/cadre-framework>

## 4.0 Development of the Management Plan

Parks Canada engaged and consulted with a broad range of interested parties during the preparation of this management plan. The objective of consultation is to ensure that management planning is open and transparent, reflects sound financial management, contributes to Government of Canada and Parks Canada priorities, and is results-based to allow for assessment to inform future decision making. The input of Indigenous peoples, partners, stakeholders, youth and the general public has helped to shape the management direction for the future of the national historic site.

During 2018 and 2019, the initial stages of the planning process were completed. This included internal completion of the State of the Site Assessment and development of a scoping document. A draft management plan for Bellevue House was written following early consultation and engagement with Indigenous peoples, and key partners and stakeholders. Due to health restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, Indigenous and public consultations on the draft management plan initially scheduled for spring 2020 were delayed so that alternate means of consulting in a safe and efficient manner could be found.

The discovery of residential school mass graves in 2021 further impacted the consultation schedule. The historic site management team felt that it needed to reaffirm the direction of the management plan and the consultation approach to ensure that the needs of Indigenous peoples were respected during this difficult time.

Incidental to management planning, but entirely complementary, concurrent engagement with Indigenous partners, historically marginalized groups, and many partners related to the programming and interpretation renewal also took place in the past two years. This body of work deeply informed the management planning direction. Focus groups and written feedback supports the strategy direction the new management plan is taking. The ongoing, inclusive engagement continues to influence decisions and development at the site.

The Indigenous and public consultation specific to the draft management plan was officially launched in February 2022 and included an open public comment period held between February 10 and April 5, 2022. During this period, the draft plan was posted online along with surveys and comment cards to gather feedback on the proposed direction. The consultation options were advertised in local newspapers, the Parks Canada website, social media pages, as well as through local radio and television media.

### **4.1 Indigenous consultation and engagement**

Parks Canada consulted and engaged with Indigenous communities from the early stages of the management planning process. Feedback received from the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte in 2019 indicated how they would like to be involved with the process, indicating interest in having opportunities to review and provide perspectives of First Nations in relation to the portrayal of Sir John A. Macdonald at national historic sites.

In October 2021, Parks Canada engaged an Indigenous consultant, Inclusive Voices Incorporated, to assist with management planning consultations and engagement by reaching out to Indigenous communities in the greater Kingston and eastern Ontario region. With support from Inclusive Voices Incorporated, an invitation to comment on the draft plan and to participate in online meetings was sent directly to Indigenous chiefs and advisors, members of the Bellevue House Community Advisory Committee, members of the Kingston Aboriginal Community Information Network, as well as other partners and stakeholders.

An online consultation session was held for Indigenous community members in February 2022, led by Inclusive Voices Incorporated, along with Parks Canada team members. This engagement process was designed to allow for a safe space to enable authentic, open discussion, and gather meaningful feedback. Participants were encouraged to complete the online comment card and to participate in an additional

interactive engagement session with Inclusive Voices Incorporated to ensure inclusion during the consultation process.

#### **4.2 Partner, stakeholder, and public consultation**

Several online meetings were held in February 2022 with partners, stakeholders, and the public, led by Inclusive Voices Incorporated and Parks Canada team members. Representatives from the local tourism, culture, academic, and community sectors participated in the partner and stakeholder meetings, and a summary of the key components of the management plan was presented to the History and Legacy of Sir John A. Macdonald Working Group of the City of Kingston Municipal Council.

A separate session for youth with an interest in Bellevue House, including university and other local students, ensured their ideas were heard in a smaller forum, surrounded by peers.

Feedback was gathered during these sessions and participants were encouraged to complete the online comment card, send feedback through email, or join an interactive engagement session with Inclusive Voices Incorporated.

#### **4.3 Consultation and engagement summary**

In summary, Parks Canada offered six formal online sessions, engaged with over 60 participants, and received 89 comment cards. This feedback generally supported the content of the draft management plan and offered ideas for enhancing the visitor offer at Bellevue House. Much of the feedback focused on the importance of working with partners and stakeholders to tell more inclusive stories, honouring the experiences of Indigenous and racialized communities, and ensuring accuracy and commemorative integrity. Feedback from consultation has informed revisions to all sections of this management plan. An overview of the consultation process as well as the highlights from the feedback received can be found in the What We Heard report, available on the Parks Canada website.

## **5.0 Vision**

The vision presented below expresses the future desired state of Bellevue House National Historic Site in 15–20 years.

Bellevue House National Historic Site is widely recognized as a place that is inclusive and welcoming, where visitors can learn about and contend with Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister, and reflect on Canadian history.

Every person coming for a visit to Bellevue House perceives Canada and its origins through their own lens: a country of refuge; a land symbolized by beloved icons; or a place of pain representing oppression, inequality, and intergenerational trauma. The historic site provides a place of contemplation on Canada's colonial beginnings and the impacts of government policies in the development of the country.

All visitors will be welcomed in an open and respectful way, regardless of motivations for visiting, and can interact with a breadth of perspectives and insights into how events are remembered and experienced differently. Thanks to respectful relationships and increased collaboration with Indigenous, racialized, and diverse community groups, the expansion of the narrative around Confederation will continue to evolve. Visitors will be invited to consider Macdonald, within the context of his time, and with today's values, understanding, and hindsight, as we aspire to grow and reconcile our pasts.

Knowing many people expect the site to remain relevant and address topical subjects yet understanding that others may just want an outing to the beautiful grounds and home, the site will meet visitors of all ages and backgrounds "where they're at," with engaging, inspiring options.

Set in a quiet Kingston neighbourhood, Bellevue House uses its rich decor and its well-preserved historic fabric to explore the context of Kingston in the 1840s, to showcase a glimpse of the personal life of Macdonald and to set the stage for the influences and times that shaped his path.

Within the walls of the house's unique architecture, the redesigned visitor experience promotes a more inclusive and diverse story. The home, grounds, and facilities support growing visitation, a setting for partnerships and events, and ensure the historic site remains an active and recognized participant in the Kingston tourism market.

Bellevue House National Historic Site continues to be a renowned leader taking part in sharing the greater stories of Canada and leaving visitors inspired to be part of a change.

## 6.0 Key Strategies

As a long-term strategic plan, in line with the Government of Canada's approach for results-based planning, the Bellevue House National Historic Site management plan focuses on the results that Parks Canada plans to achieve at the site within the next ten years. The intent of the management plan is to provide decision makers, partners, stakeholders and the public with the priorities that will guide actions and decision making at the site.

The components of results-based planning work together as follows:

- Key strategies present major themes and introduce broad management approaches working toward achieving the vision as presented.
- Objectives present management priorities and identify desired results.
- Targets measure success in achieving objectives over the implementation period.

The management directions identified in this section take into account available resources and existing capacity for Bellevue House National Historic Site. Nevertheless, some undertakings may require additional support and rely on opportunities to partner with external collaborators. Where no specific timelines are given, all targets are meant to be achieved within the ten-year life of this plan.

The following three key strategies frame the management direction for Bellevue House.

### **Key Strategy 1: An evolving understanding of Sir John A. Macdonald's legacy**

Sir John A. Macdonald is remembered and evaluated in a range of ways depending upon the experience and lens of different groups in Canada. People settling before or during Confederation would have experienced Macdonald, and those times, very differently than Indigenous peoples. Decisions regarding Confederation also left women and minority groups out of the democratic process. Some elements of Macdonald's legacy are challenging to acknowledge and to present.

Through this strategy, Bellevue House commits to leading an open and ongoing dialogue; to presenting the many perspectives around the development of Canada; and to examining how Macdonald's complicated legacy continues to influence Canadians and Indigenous peoples today. By addressing the story of Macdonald from multiple points of view and continuing to update themes and messages, the historic site will position itself to be on the forefront of these challenging discussions. The site also lends itself to partnerships in the telling of history; debates about themes of revision; questions about who the arbiter of "truth" is, at any given time; and bringing lesser-known facts to light.

These make for engaging and passionate opportunities for visitors and partners to weigh in on commemoration, and to help the site evolve while remaining relevant as it connects past struggles to today's movements for human rights. These discussions with visitors and interactions with partners challenge us all to play a role in progress toward a better country. To move forward in this work, Bellevue House must continue to build partnerships with Indigenous and racialized communities and

other diverse groups to help expand a narrative that speaks about Macdonald and themes of colonial power and privilege. Linking from the 1840s through Confederation to the modern day, these approaches will contribute to Bellevue House's draw as a place of reflection, discourse, and reconciliation.

**Objective 1.1:** Opportunities are provided to diverse groups to be engaged in the visitor experience planning and delivery in order to share a range of perspectives around the stories of Macdonald and his legacies.

Targets

- By 2024, a dialogue is initiated with local Indigenous partners through respectful, mutually beneficial engagement efforts.
- By 2025, regular meetings are occurring with Indigenous partners and groups of varying cultural heritage with the intent of identifying meaningful and valued outcomes and developing new offers.

**Objective 1.2:** Supported by Parks Canada's *Framework for History and Commemoration*, Bellevue House is part of the broader reflection regarding different perspectives on Confederation and visitors can engage in this dialogue.

Targets

- By 2024, Bellevue House leverages its membership to the network of the International Coalition of the Sites of Conscience to provide annual training or support resource for training.
- By 2025, Bellevue House presents the rights and roles of women in Macdonald's time including the women who shaped him both personally and professionally.
- By 2026, an interpretive approach for making the connection between the site's outdoor spaces and the significance of the traditional territory is developed with Indigenous partners.

## Key Strategy 2: An active community partner

Bellevue House has the potential to become a more active, effective, and recognized participant in the Kingston area tourism market. The national historic site is a key player among Kingston's attractions, and Parks Canada is looked upon as an expert in maintaining and preserving the cultural values and assets of heritage places it manages. Bellevue House can play a bigger role not only in presenting the story of Sir John A. Macdonald but also in sharing the story of the upper-class community in the 1840s. In addition, demonstrating expertise in care for heritage places leads visitors to develop an understanding of other aspects of Parks Canada's work and an appreciation of the value of the site. Therefore, this strategy aims to increase awareness and enhance the site's presence and leadership in the city's network of historic places. Increasing the site's involvement in community events and local initiatives will open up opportunities for new partnerships and stronger collaboration. Through these, efforts to promote the site and enhance its exposure will put Bellevue House on the map as a leader in both heritage presentation and built heritage conservation.

**Objective 2.1:** Awareness about the existence of the site and appreciation of its national significance increases among visitors who come to Kingston.

Targets

- By 2027, the number of followers on Bellevue House social media channels doubles (from 2023 baseline).
- The number of visitors who agree with "this place and its stories are meaningful to me" meets the target of 85 percent in the next state of the site assessment.

**Objective 2.2:** Partnerships are developed to help present and promote Bellevue House.

Targets

- Within five years of the plan's publication, two or more multi-year partnering agreements are established, to help deliver, or complement, the Bellevue House stories.
- By 2027, through promotion and building relationships with regional partners, Bellevue House is recognized as a leading Kingston heritage attraction.
- By 2026, a product development plan including events and strategies to identify partner arrangements is completed and supports the aims of key strategy 1.

**Objective 2.3:** The house and facilities are in good condition, reflecting Parks Canada's expertise in managing and protecting heritage buildings.

Targets

- The house and associated cultural resources are in good condition in the next state of the site assessment.
- By 2025, a long-term maintenance plan is in place to support the reduction of operational greenhouse gas emissions and to add resiliency to the site in a changing climate.

### **Key Strategy 3: A renewed heritage experience**

This third strategy seeks to raise the profile of Bellevue House by continuing to modernize the experiences, and by developing new programming content including immersive activities to be more inclusive of all target audiences. By pursuing leading techniques in interpretation and developing new programming and presentation material, the site can provide visitors with renewed opportunities on the grounds and in the historic house. This will reflect the need for diverse perspectives and program offers, in order to attract more people, encourage repeat visitation and increase visitor satisfaction and appreciation.

**Objective 3.1:** Visitors to Bellevue House appreciate engaging, new, and diverse hands-on experiences.

Targets

- Visitor satisfaction regarding the availability and the quality of activities offered at Bellevue House remains stable or increases in the next state of the site assessment.
- By 2025, key pieces of the *Bellevue House National Historic Site Visitor Experience Strategy* (2017) are implemented including completion of the interpretive renewal connecting the visitor centre, historic house and grounds, enhanced guided tours, and more active experiential programming.

**Objective 3.2:** Visitation increases among targeted markets (adult leisure tourists, young adults, families and school groups).

Targets

- By 2025, a youth engagement strategy is in place and attracts an increased number of school groups and families.
- Overall visitation to the site increases by four percent annually.
- By 2026, revenue increases by 15 percent through enhanced programming, partnering opportunities and alternative uses at the site (e.g. site rentals, school programming, partner events).

**Objective 3.3:** The visitor centre is better connected to the house from both a physical and program perspective, thus facilitating a more natural flow to the visitor experience.

Targets

- Visitor enjoyment continues to exceed the target of 90 percent on the next state of the site assessment.
- In the next state of the site assessment, more than 90 percent of visitors meet the target of having learned something during their visit.

## 7.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

The purpose of a strategic environmental assessment is to incorporate environmental considerations into the development of public policies, plans, and program proposals, to support environmentally sound decision making. In accordance with the *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals* (2010), a strategic environmental assessment was conducted on the *Bellevue House National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan*.

Many positive effects will occur as a result of the implementation of the plan. The biggest positive effect of this plan will be the potential to improve the protection of cultural resources while reducing the environmental impacts of operations with the development of a new long-term maintenance plan. The management plan also supports the *Federal Sustainable Development Strategy* goal of taking action on climate change and its impacts.

Objectives identified in the management plan that could potentially result in negative environmental effects include the development of new visitor experiences and long-term maintenance activities. However, these effects can be better minimized by project-level impact assessment. Operations at the site are required to mitigate impacts on climate according to Greening Government requirements in support of the *Federal Sustainable Development Strategy*.

Comments from Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public were incorporated into the strategic environmental assessment and management plan as appropriate.

There are no important negative environmental effects anticipated from the implementation of the management plan. Individual projects at the site will be evaluated separately under the *Impact Assessment Act*, or successor legislation, as necessary.