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National Historic Site of Canada

# Fort St. James

**Management Plan**

2024



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# Fort St. James

National Historic Site of Canada

## Management Plan

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FORT ST. JAMES NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2024.

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## Foreword



As the steward of national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas in Canada, Parks Canada is committed to protecting and restoring the ecological and commemorative integrity of protected heritage areas from coast to coast to coast.

We are committed to work with, learn from, and share leadership with Indigenous peoples and elders who have walked the land since time immemorial and who have made possible the creation of so many protected places.

We acknowledge and appreciate the key role that the community of Fort St. James and neighbouring communities play in helping Parks Canada to fulfill its mandate, on behalf of Canadians, including many collaborations aimed at protecting ecological integrity and the provision of natural and cultural tourism related services for visitors to Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada.

We are proud to collaborate with Indigenous partners, local and regional residents and stakeholders, visitors past and present, and with interested people and parties from across the country.

Together, we strive to ensure heritage places in Canada are welcoming and include diverse voices and perspectives. We invite all Canadians to these sites to discover nature and connect with the rich and varied history in Canada.

As the key accountability documents for the management of heritage places, management plans are developed through extensive consultation. These plans articulate long-term visions, set strategic management directions and establish objectives for Parks Canada administered places.

I would like to thank everyone involved in the development of this management plan for their contributions and their commitment to the future of this special place. I am pleased to present the *Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan*.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R. Hallman".

Ron Hallman  
*President & Chief Executive Officer*  
*Parks Canada*



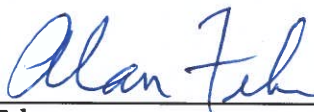
## Recommendations

*Recommended by:*



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**Andrew Campbell**  
*Senior Vice-President*  
*Operations Directorate*



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**Alan Fehr**  
*Superintendent*  
*Jasper Field Unit*



## **Executive summary**

Fort St. James National Historic Site, on the shore of Nak'al Bun (Stuart Lake) in north-central British Columbia, allows Canadians to step back through time and contemplate those who came before us and the stories that unfolded. As the largest group of in situ original wooden fur trade buildings in Canada, Fort St. James National Historic Site prompts Canadians to explore the history that shaped the Canada we know today.

This management plan sets the strategic direction for Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada for the next ten years. It replaces the 2013 management plan and provides updated direction consistent with the mandate of Parks Canada. Indigenous partners, stakeholder groups and the public were consulted on this management plan and helped shape the future of the national historic site.

This plan presents a 15-year vision that will guide management of the Fort St. James National Historic Site. The plan outlines four key strategies to support the vision, and objectives and targets to guide site management and decision making.

### **Key strategy 1: Honouring Indigenous connections and culture**

This key strategy focuses on honouring Indigenous connections and culture on site to support reconciliation by strengthening Indigenous voices, enriching the visitor experience, and adding meaning and relevancy to the stories visitors learn on site.

### **Key strategy 2: Protecting and presenting cultural heritage**

Protecting and presenting cultural heritage is core to Parks Canada's mandate. Parks Canada's priority is to safeguard cultural resources and national heritage places it administers. At Fort St. James National Historic Site, cultural resources come to life for visitors as they wander through the historic buildings and experience the site's cultural heritage.

### **Key strategy 3: Welcoming visitors**

This strategy focuses on welcoming visitors to experience Fort St. James National Historic Site. Over the next decade the site will continue to provide an exceptional visitor experience while increasing visitation.

### **Key strategy 3: Site resilience**

The site's assets and amenities form the backdrop for visitors' experience of the cultural resources and contribute to making visits safe, accessible and memorable. This strategy aims to increase the site's resilience and ensure that assets and utilities are well maintained.





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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 *Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan*, once approved by the President & Chief Executive Officer of Parks Canada, ensures Parks Canada's accountability to Canadians, outlining how historic site management will achieve measurable results in support of Parks Canada's mandate.

Indigenous peoples are important partners in the stewardship of heritage places, with connections to the lands and waters since time immemorial. Indigenous peoples, stakeholders, partners and the Canadian public were involved in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of Fort St. James National Historic Site. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of the Fort St. James 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 Fort St. James National Historic Site in years to come.

Map 1: Regional and local setting



Map 2: Fort St. James National Historic Site map



## 2.0 Significance of Fort St. James National Historic Site

A visit to Fort St. James National Historic Site on the shore of spectacular Nak'al Bun (Stuart Lake) allows Canadians to step back through time and contemplate those who came before us and the stories that unfolded. As the largest group of in situ original wooden fur trade buildings in Canada, Fort St. James National Historic Site prompts Canadians to explore the history that shaped the Canada we know today.

The Fort St. James National Historic Site is located on the unceded territory of Nak'azdli Whut'en, Yekooche, Binche Whut'en and Tl'azt'en First Nations, who have been living on the shores of Nak'al Bun since time immemorial. The site is built on a landscape that is a gathering place for Dakelhne (Dakelh people) where pre-contact trails and trade routes converge by the mouth of the Nak'alkoh (Stuart River). Dakelh means "we travel by water," and the shores of Nak'al Bun were once busy with dugout canoes. The annual return of the salmon, together with building and travelling by dugout canoe, shaped a way of life centred around the lake.

Métis stories are also integral to the fabric of Fort St. James National Historic Site. The first voyageur canoes or "singing canoes" that arrived on site in 1806 included Métis. Many generations of Métis families travelled to, worked and lived at the site, with a rich cultural heritage shaped by Indigenous and European influences.

Fort St. James was established as a fur-trading post in 1806 when Simon Fraser, John Stuart, Jean-Baptiste "Waccan" Boucher and their crew, searching for river routes to the Pacific Ocean on behalf of the North West Company, realized the potential of the site's lake front location as a connector to the North. In 1821 the site came under the control of the Hudson's Bay Company as its administrative headquarters for the region. The climate of the area was extreme with long, cold winters and short summers. Indigenous peoples' knowledge, resources and labour were integral to the success of the site and the survival of the newcomers.

The establishment of the site more than two centuries ago had a significant impact on Indigenous people. Indigenous land, labour, services and knowledge were taken advantage of in order to establish and operate Fort St. James. Newcomers, including fur traders, colonial administrators and religious figures disrupted the culture and way of life of the local Indigenous people.

In 1948 Fort St. James was designated as a national historic site for its role in the fur trade of the Pacific Slope (the area west of the continental divide that slopes down to the Pacific Ocean). The designation commemorates the site as the primary trading post in north-central British Columbia, the administrative centre of the District of New Caledonia, an important centre of trade and cooperation with Indigenous peoples and as a vital link in transportation and communications in northern British Columbia. Trading post operations continued until 1952.

In 1969 efforts by the local community to preserve the site prompted the governments of British Columbia and Canada to undertake a program to preserve, restore and interpret Fort St. James National Historic Site. Extensive historical research, an archaeological program and architectural studies were undertaken in the early 1970s. Administration of the site was transferred to Parks Canada in 1972 and the site was opened to the public in 1977.

Today Fort St. James National Historic Site has been restored to its 1896 appearance. There are five original buildings on site: Officer's Dwelling, General Warehouse, Fish Cache, Men's House and Dairy. All but the Dairy have federal heritage building designations.

There are several reconstructed buildings and features at the site in their original 1896 forms and locations. These include boardwalks, fences and gardens, as well as the pier tramway, flagpole, Trade Store, Graham Warehouse and paddock. The site has many archaeological artefacts and objects linked to its occupants during the period of commemorative significance from 1806 to 1952, as well as Indigenous cultural objects dating back long before.

Fort St. James National Historic Site is associated with persons of national historic significance including Chief Kw'eh, Simon Fraser, James Douglas and Father Morice. In 2016, in collaboration with Indigenous partners, the Chief Kw'eh National Historic Person plaque was installed at the site, in line of sight to Chief Kw'eh's gravesite. Chief Kw'eh "dreamer of the salmon" (ca 1755 to 1840) is remembered for the way he provided for the people and how he led them through a time of profound change. Chief Kw'eh's dagger is on loan to the site from Nak'azdli Whut'en First Nation for safe keeping and access for his descendants and visitors.

The site is part of a broader cultural landscape which includes heritage resources such as the numerous pre-contact and historical trading routes that converge at the site, Chief Kw'eh's gravesite at the mouth of the Nak'alkoh, numerous Indigenous archaeological sites, a fur trade burial ground adjacent to the site boundary and ancient pictographs along the edge of Nak'al Bun. Fort St. James National Historic Site is thematically linked to other trading posts of the era, including Fort George, Fort Fraser and Fort McLeod.

Today, the Fort St. James National Historic Site offers visitors the unique experience of being immersed in living history. Visitors explore the historic grounds and buildings where interpretation showcases the stories and ways of life of the fur traders, Dakelhne and Métis. Going forward, the focus will be on increasing opportunities to support Dakelhne and Métis to honour, share and protect Indigenous stories, culture and perspectives. Fort St. James National Historic Site will prompt Canadians to explore history and the difficult legacy of colonialism in Canada.

## 3.0 Planning context

### Policy context

This plan provides strategic direction for Fort St. James National Historic Site, building on the foundation of previous management plans approved in 2002 and 2013. The condition of the site's natural and cultural resources and program activities were reported in the 2022 *Fort St. James National Historic Site State of the Site Assessment*.

The site is administered by Parks Canada as part of the Jasper Field Unit, in line with Government of Canada legislation, regulations and policies, including the *Parks Canada Agency Act* (1998), *Historic Sites and Monuments Act* (1985), the *Impact Assessment Act* (2019), the *Species at Risk Act* (2002), *Framework for History and Commemoration: National Historic Sites System Plan* (2019), Parks Canada *Cultural Resource Management Policy* (2013) and the *Commemorative Integrity Statement for Fort St. James* (1996).

### Geography and local economy

Situated in north-central British Columbia, Fort St. James National Historic Site comprises 6.88 hectares in the District Municipality of Fort St. James (population 1,386 as of 2021 census). Fort St. James is approximately 160 kilometres northwest of the city of Prince George and 60 kilometres north of Vanderhoof. The site is in the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, on the shores of Nak'al Bun (Stuart Lake).

The Fort St. James National Historic Site is in the centre of the community of Fort St. James, between the Nak'azdli Whut'en First Nation reserve and the town of Fort St. James. A trail along the lakeshore borders the site and allows pedestrian access between the Nak'azdli Whut'en reserve and the town. The position of the site highlights its strong connections to the Nak'azdli Whut'en First Nation and the role of the site as a trading and communication post that influenced the development of the community of Fort St. James.

The Fort St. James National Historic Site is the leading visitor attraction in the region and contributes to the tourism sector in the District of Fort St. James. Continued development of the tourism industry is a priority at the national, provincial, and local levels, in particular the development of Indigenous-led tourism opportunities for domestic and international visitors. The growth of the tourism industry in the



community of Fort St. James faces challenges including the lack of visitor infrastructure and services, and the distance from major urban centres.

### **Relationships with Indigenous partners**

The Fort St. James National Historic Site is located on the unceded territory of the Nak'azdli Whut'en, Yekooche, Binche Whut'en and Tl'azt'en First Nations. Today Dakelhne and Métis live immediately adjacent to the site and around Nak'al Bun.

Through the centuries, Indigenous partners have been crucial to the operation and success of the Fort St. James National Historic Site. In recent years, Parks Canada and Indigenous groups collaborated in the designation of Chief Kw'eh as a National Historic Person and in 2016 a bronze commemorative plaque was installed on site. Today, Indigenous perspectives and histories are highlighted in the visitor centre exhibit, Indigenous interpreters share stories on site, and Indigenous partners host special events on site that honour their local communities and invite visitors to learn more about the rich cultures of north-central British Columbia.

This new management plan marks an opportunity to strengthen relationships between Indigenous partners and Parks Canada. The plan ensures a greater role for Indigenous partners in the management of the Fort St. James National Historic Site. The plan also recognizes the importance of the site to Indigenous peoples as a meeting place, a place of learning, and a place of sharing to support community connection.

### **Visitor experience**

The site currently is operational with interpretation from the end of May to early September. During the summer season, visitors explore the restored historic grounds and buildings; interpretation showcases how fur traders, Dakelhne and Métis lived and worked on site in the late 1800s. Independent learning opportunities are also available, including a museum exhibit in the visitor centre and a self-guided audio tour which is accessible year-round.

The Fort St. James National Historic Site tells remarkable stories about ways of life that used to be. The incredible distances furs, goods and people travelled to get to and from the site before the invention of trains, cars or airplanes is astounding. The old wooden buildings and interior furnishings speak to the challenges of life without electricity, internet or central heating in an unforgiving climate. The vegetable garden and fish smoke house tell a story of self-sufficiency for the people that lived and work on site. The site offers meaningful and relevant opportunities for visitors to learn many far-reaching lessons for environmental sustainability and technological change in a rapidly changing world.

The site's school program is an important draw for local and regional classrooms during late May and June. In 2022, the site hosted 577 school children from the region with programming focused on life as a fur trader in New Caledonia in 1896. There are opportunities to expand program content in order to include more Indigenous voices and stories and to increase participation from a variety of age groups from the local and regional community.

Visitor enjoyment, learning and satisfaction at Fort St. James National Historic Site are assessed through the Parks Canada Visitor Information Program survey. The last survey, conducted in 2016, found that 99% of respondents enjoyed their visit and 99% of respondents felt they learned something. This exceeds the targets of 90% set by the 2013 management plan.

Despite outstanding visitor ratings, visitor numbers have been decreasing from close to 20,000 visitors annually in the 1990s to an average of 10,500 annually over the past decade. These counts exclude low visitation years due to the Shovel Lake Wildfire in 2018 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Several factors have contributed to the decline in visitation, including a shortening of the operating season and a reduction in bus tour groups after a change to the BC Ferry schedule. There have also been some inconsistencies in past reporting of those who receive free admission (youth and Indigenous partners) and attendees of group events.

Currently, special events, like the annual Salmon Day Festival and Caledonia Days, hosted in collaboration with partners, are well loved by the local community and draw repeat visitation to the site. Daily special events such as the “world class chicken racing” have been a unique site offering that engages visitors of all ages.

An on-site café provides locally inspired meals for visitors with produce grown from the site’s garden and is a popular part of the visitor offer. Currently the grounds are available for on-site camping; however, camping infrastructure is limited and the uptake of this offer has been very low.

## **Outreach**

Fort St. James National Historic Site has a growing digital outreach presence on web and social media. The site conducts outreach at regional events including the Historic Places Day event and the British Columbia Northern Exhibition in Prince George, and the Vanderhoof Fall Fair. There are opportunities to improve outreach and promotion, including through partnerships in the region, new signage promoting the site, and targeted outreach to school and community groups.

## **Cultural heritage**

Parks Canada is dedicated to safeguarding cultural resources and protecting the commemorative integrity of national heritage places it administers. At Fort St. James National Historic Site this means conserving the site’s cultural resources, communicating its heritage values and national significance, and ensuring that the site’s heritage values are respected in all decisions and actions. The site’s period restoration benefited from extensive research and sound preservation principles and is considered an important example of the evolution of cultural resource management at Parks Canada.

Buildings on site are regularly monitored and maintained; this includes the original Officer’s Dwelling, General Warehouse, Fish Cache, Men’s House and Dairy, as well as the several reconstructed buildings. There are over 23,000 records associated with archaeological objects recovered from the site, 14 objects of national historic significance and over 2,000 objects of other historical value associated with the site.

Risks to the site’s cultural resources include theft and vandalism, water filtration, erosion, environmental conditions such as temperature, humidity, and exposure to light, fire, and physical damage from handling. Issues with the heating and ventilation system in the visitor centre are causing risks to the preservation of objects. Impacts on cultural resources from a changing climate are expected to increase as threats from wildfire and flooding become more significant.

## **Site assets and management**

Site assets include a visitor centre, boardwalks, fields, gardens, fences, utilities and the lake front trail and pier tramway. Since the last management plan, investment through the federal government’s infrastructure program permitted improvements to the fire suppression system and an investigation of bank stability on the lake front. Assets in need of maintenance and rehabilitation include the visitor centre, parking lot, pier tramway, water distribution system, electrical system, and the fire suppression and sprinkler system, which needs additional work despite recent investment.

Security is an important consideration for the site since the public can access the site at anytime from the lake front trail. Improvements to the site’s security system, including the installation of security cameras and lighting, are planned to discourage and address threats from fire, vandalism and theft.

## Stakeholder relationships

Fort St. James National Historic Site has important relationships with stakeholder groups, in particular, the Friends of Fort St. James. Formed in 1992, the volunteer members of the Friends of Fort St. James National Historic Site operate a gift shop on site and run on-site events. The Friends of Fort St. James National Historic Site are a dedicated group of local residents who care for, advocate for, and fundraise to support community events and interests at the site. Their longstanding commitment to the national historic site speaks to the importance of the site at the heart of the local community and to the important contribution of volunteers to the success of the site.

Other stakeholders include the Municipal District of Fort St. James, Northern British Columbia Tourism Association, Fort St. James Chamber of Commerce, Vanderhoof Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Prince George, Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, College of New Caledonia, Fort St. James Tourism Board, BC Parks and the University of Northern British Columbia.

## Natural environment

Fort St. James National Historic Site is on the shores of spectacular Nak'al Bun (Stuart Lake). The lake shore is subject to erosion and slumping. The *Historic Landscape Conservation Maintenance Management Plan (2006)* sets out approaches for ongoing maintenance of the site's grounds and historic landscape values.

The Nechako River population of white sturgeon is a federally listed fish species at risk that occurs within Nak'al Bun (Stuart Lake), and a very small portion of the species' critical habitat overlaps the site boundary. White sturgeon is a species of special interest and importance to Indigenous people. The Minister for Fisheries and Oceans and the Minister responsible for Parks Canada are the competent ministers under the *Species at Risk Act* for the Endangered Nechako River populations of white sturgeon. Parks Canada will continue to protect individuals and critical habitat as required through the *Species at Risk Act*.

Climate change is an important consideration for the management of natural and cultural heritage across the Parks Canada system. In the region, temperature is projected to increase by two degrees and precipitation is projected to increase by 40 millimetres in the next thirty years as compared to a 1960–1990 period. In the same comparison window, the frost-free season (the period between the last frost of spring and the first frost of fall) is expected to lengthen by one month and there will be three more days annually with temperatures higher than 30 degrees Celsius. Increasing temperatures and precipitation levels, as well as the intensity and frequency of events such as flooding and wildfire may present new risks and impacts to key values at the site.

## 4.0 Development of the management plan

This plan was developed through consultation with Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public. Consultation ensures the management plan reflects the interests of Canadians on the future direction of heritage places.

The first phase of consultation was held over the spring and summer of 2022. Parks Canada asked participants to identify topics for consideration in the draft plan and to help create a vision for the site. In early 2023, Indigenous partners and Parks Canada met to further explore stories to be told on site and how they should be shared.

The second phase of consultation was held over the summer and autumn of 2023. An online survey, a pop-up booth on site, and meetings with Indigenous partners and stakeholder organizations offered Canadians the opportunity to have their say on the direction for the site over the next decade. Revisions to the draft plan were made to incorporate priorities and concerns raised during consultation.

All input received from Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public was considered in the preparation of the Fort St. James National Historic Site Management Plan.

## 5.0 Vision

*The vision provides a picture of the desired future state of Fort St. James National Historic Site looking ahead 15 to 20 years.*

Fort St. James National Historic Site welcomes visitors to the shores of Nak'al Bun (Stuart Lake), amidst the largest collection of original in situ fur trade buildings in Canada. With one foot in the past and one foot in the present, visitors discover Canada's cultural heritage and learn about the processes that shaped northern British Columbia and modern-day Canada.

The site stands on the unceded territory of the Nak'azdli Whut'en, Yekooche, Binche Whut'en and Tl'azt'en First Nations. Dakelhne and Métis culture and connections are honoured at Fort St. James National Historic Site. Indigenous interests and perspectives, including those of Elders and youth, are integral to site management. Indigenous partners lead programming to tell their own stories in their own words and Indigenous language is alive on the site landscape.

The site is relevant to visitors of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, sparking curiosity and imagination by bringing history to life and enabling relevant and authentic experiences. The site protects and presents cultural resources and plays an important role in telling truth about difficult aspects of Canada's past and present.

As it has been for more than two centuries, Fort St. James National Historic Site continues to be at the heart of the local community. The site hosts engaging special events in collaboration with partners, bringing visitors and the community together. The site attracts visitors to the area and is a gateway to exploring and understanding the north-central region of British Columbia.

Going forward, Fort St. James National Historic Site will continue to protect and present Canada's cultural heritage. Indigenous partners, the local community, tourism operators and visitors will continue to collaborate with Parks Canada as stewards of the site. Current and future generations will continue to enjoy exceptional experiences at the site and learn how the past has shaped the Canada we know today.

## 6.0 Key strategies

National historic sites provide exceptional opportunities for Canadians to develop a sense of connection to their cultural heritage. The opportunity to be immersed in history and culture on the very spot where history unfolded is truly distinctive. Maintaining the authenticity, relevancy and quality of this experience is central to the Parks Canada mandate.

Four key strategies outline the broad approaches that Parks Canada will use to achieve the vision presented in section 5.0. These strategies will guide the management of the Fort St. James National Historic Site consistent with the mandate of Parks Canada.

These strategies are:

1. Honouring Indigenous connections and culture
2. Protecting and presenting cultural heritage
3. Welcoming visitors
4. Site resilience

This management plan focuses on the results that Parks Canada aims to achieve at the Fort St. James National Historic Site within the next ten years. The management directions identified take into account available resources and existing capacity. Certain undertakings may require additional support and rely on opportunities to partner with external collaborators.

### Key strategy 1: Honouring Indigenous connections and culture

Dakelh and Métis partners are integral to the past, present and future of Fort St. James National Historic Site. Honouring Indigenous connections and culture on site supports reconciliation by strengthening Indigenous voices, enriching the visitor experience, and adding meaning and relevancy to the stories visitors learn on site.

This strategy aims to strengthen relationships between Parks Canada and Indigenous partners and to promote Indigenous interests and perspectives in the management of Fort St. James National Historic Site. Indigenous partners have requested a greater role in site management going forward and the creation of an advisory body will be important to achieve this.

Storytelling, interpretation and programming will expand to reflect the diversity of Dakelh and Métis culture and connections with the site. Indigenous partners will shape how stories and culture are shared and protected. The importance of youth and Elders will be honoured by creating opportunities for greater participation on site.

This strategy aims to create economic opportunities through increasing Indigenous recruitment and by exploring opportunities for authentic Indigenous-led visitor offers on site. This strategy also supports the role of the site in providing a meeting place, a place of learning and a place of sharing for Indigenous partners.

**Objective 1.1:** There are strong relationships between Parks Canada and Indigenous partners and Indigenous interests and perspectives are integral to the management of Fort St. James National Historic Site.

Targets

- An advisory group is established to incorporate Indigenous interests and perspectives into site management by 2025.
- There is a strong, respectful relationship between Parks Canada and Indigenous partners, as rated by Indigenous partners in the next State of the Site Assessment.

**Objective 1.2:** Interpretation and demonstration of Dakelh and Métis culture and connections to the lake and landscape are a special part of the Fort St. James National Historic Site visitor experience.

Targets

- First Nations and Métis partners shape how stories and culture are shared with visitors on site.
- Indigenous language is present in programs and signage on site.
- Youth, Elders and knowledge holders deliver and participate in programs on site.

**Objective 1.3:** The site enables opportunities for Dakelh and Métis partners through Indigenous recruitment and exploring authentic Indigenous-led visitor offers on site.

Targets

- Indigenous staffing from First Nation and Métis partner communities increases as a percentage of total staff from a 2022 baseline.
- Opportunities to present local Indigenous-led visitor offers on site are explored in collaboration with Indigenous partners.

**Objective 1.4:** The Fort St. James National Historic Site welcomes Dakelh and Métis partners to connect with their culture and community on site.

Targets

- The site is used as a venue for community events, workshops, and outreach, hosted by Indigenous partners.

## Key strategy 2: Protecting and presenting cultural heritage

Protecting and presenting cultural heritage is core to Parks Canada's mandate. Parks Canada's priority is to safeguard cultural resources and national heritage places it administers. At Fort St. James National Historic Site, cultural resources come to life for visitors as they wander through the historic buildings and experience the site's cultural heritage.

Stewardship of heritage buildings, artefacts and other cultural resources ensures that commemorative integrity is protected for the enjoyment and education of present and future generations. Best practices from regular maintenance to periodic conservation ensure that the cultural resources of Fort St. James National Historic Site retain their heritage value.

Fort St. James National Historic Site is known for its excellent interpretative programming. Visitors gain a new understanding and perspective of Canada's cultural heritage and draw a meaningful connection to their own lives today.

Creative programming engages visitors, sparking their curiosity and imagination. A diversity of narratives are intertwined to bring the people who lived and worked at the site to life. The principles of integrity, inclusiveness and relevance underpin heritage programs in line with the *Framework for History and Commemoration* (2019).

**Objective 2.1:** Cultural resources, including buildings of national historic significance, archaeological sites and archaeological and historic objects, are protected.

Targets

- A risk mitigation plan is in place by 2026 to protect historical and archaeological objects from a variety of environmental and human caused hazards.
- The state of and risks to buildings of national significance are considered through a built heritage conservation maintenance plan.

**Objective 2.2:** Fort St. James National Historic Site is known for its excellent interpretative content, programs and services which reflect collaboration with Indigenous partners.

Targets

- The interpretative stories of the site are expanded and diversified in collaboration with Indigenous partners.
- New creative and innovative programming approaches are explored to engage all visitors.

**Objective 2.3:** Canadians learn about Fort St. James National Historic Site and the stories associated with the site both in person and online.

Targets

- Visitation by school programs, including Indigenous school programs, increases by 2% annually over a 2022 baseline (577 school children in 2022).
- Outstanding visitor learning results are maintained and more than 85% of visitors feel they learned something from their visit, as measured by the Visitor Information Program survey.
- Virtual education programs are developed to share the cultural heritage values of the site beyond in person visits.
- Online content is expanded to reflect the diversity of Dakeelh and Métis culture and connections to the national historic site.

### Key strategy 3: Welcoming visitors

This strategy focuses on welcoming visitors to experience Fort St. James National Historic Site. Over the next decade the site will continue to provide an exceptional visitor experience while increasing visitation.

Increasing social media presence, engagement, outreach and promotion aims to foster increased interest in the site. Parks Canada will continue to work with partners to host and promote a variety of special events on site to attract new and repeat visitors.

Fort St. James National Historic Site welcomes people of different abilities, backgrounds and interests to a variety of on-site experiences. An accessibility and inclusivity audit will help identify improvements to be implemented where possible. The site will explore opportunities and partnerships for third party operators to offer additional visitor experiences on site that are authentic, inclusive and true-to-place.

**Objective 3.1:** The site provides an authentic, inclusive, and true-to-place visitor experience while increasing visitation from new and repeat visitors.

Targets

- A strategy is developed to identify target market needs and opportunities to increase attendance and revenue.
- Visitation shows an increasing trend in the next state of the site assessment.
- Outstanding visitor enjoyment ratings are maintained, and more than 90% of respondents enjoy their visit as measured by the visitor information program survey.

**Objective 3.2:** Outreach, promotion and new partnerships with stakeholder groups beckon visitors to experience and learn about Fort St. James National Historic Site.

Targets

- Collaboration with destination marketing organizations and tourism partners showcases Fort St. James National Historic Site.
- Outreach and promotion of the site increase over the 2022 season baseline.
- Social media content and engagement increase over the 2022 season baseline.
- On site and off-site wayfinding and promotional signage aligns with the Parks Canada brand, *Official Languages Act* and reflects the cultural values of the site.

**Objective 3.3:** Fort St. James National Historic Site welcomes people of different abilities, backgrounds and interests to a variety of on-site experiences.

Targets

- An accessibility and inclusivity audit is carried out on site facilities, programs and services, and improvements are implemented where possible.
- Opportunities for Parks Canada and third-party operators to offer authentic, inclusive and true-to-place visitor experiences at the site are explored.

**Key strategy 4: Site resilience**

In addition to the original heritage buildings and reconstructed buildings, Fort St. James National Historic Site includes a visitor centre, boardwalks, fields, gardens, fences, utilities and the lake front trail and pier tramway. The site's assets and amenities form the backdrop for visitors' experience of the cultural resources and contribute to making visits safe, accessible and memorable.

Over the next decade, actions will focus on increasing prevention of and preparedness to existing and emerging threats to protect the cultural integrity of the site. Security is a concern for the site, and new security measures will be implemented to reduce threats from vandalism, theft and fire.

This strategy aims to increase the site's resilience and ensure that assets and utilities are well maintained. An Asset Master Plan will prioritize maintenance investment on site in line with available resources. As part of the Asset Master Plan, a strategy for greening operations will be developed to increase the environmental sustainability of the site by improving energy and water conservation, solid waste and wastewater management and fleet management.

The lake front and its sweeping views, once bustling with canoes and a tramway, is an important part of the Fort St. James National Historic Site experience. This strategy aims to address issues with the reconstructed pier tramway, which is in a state of disrepair, enable access to the lake shore and mitigate bank erosion.

The site's heritage values will be respected in all decisions and actions that affect the site. Any alterations to site assets will be consistent with Parks Canada's mandate and the objectives of this management plan, will align with applicable legislation and policy, and will be subject to impact assessment.

**Objective 4.1:** Planning and action to respond to existing and emerging threats protects the cultural integrity of Fort St. James National Historic Site.

Targets

- Emergency preparedness and response planning reduces risks to the site from fire, flood, and other hazards and is informed by climate change data projections.
- New security measures deter the occurrence of incidents such as theft or property damage on site.

**Objective 4.2:** Site assets, including buildings, visitor facilities, utilities and grounds, are well maintained and support Parks Canada's mandate and the objectives of the management plan.

Targets

- An Asset Master Plan assesses contemporary assets to identify and prioritize maintenance and repairs in the context of heritage conservation, visitor experience and operational requirements.
- A strategy for greening operations improves energy and water conservation, solid waste and wastewater management and fleet management will be developed through the Asset Master Plan.

**Objective 4.3:** The lake front landscape of Nak'al Bun (Stuart Lake) is maintained and contributes to a safe visitor experience.



### Targets

- Visitor safety issues with the pier tramway are resolved either by restoring or removing the reconstructed infrastructure, as informed by an options analysis which considers visitor safety, visitor experience, the importance of the cultural resource and financial resources.
- The lake shore trail is maintained and access to the lake shore is delineated to reduce bank erosion and increase visitor safety.
- Lake shore erosion is mitigated by vegetation management.