

2023

Fort St. James

National Historic Site of Canada

Management Plan

DRAFT

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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. The Agency'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 the Agency's 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 the Agency. The *Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan*, once approved by the President and 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 the Agency'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 prompts Canadians to explore the history that shaped the Canada we know today.

Indigenous nations - Nak'azdli Whut'en, Yekooche, Binche Whut'en and Tl'azt'en, have been living on the shores of Nak'al Bun for millennia. The Fort St. James National Historic Site is built on a landscape that is a gathering place for the Dakelh groups where pre-contact trails and trade routes converge by the mouth of the Stuart River. Dakelh means "we travel by water", and the shores of Nak'al Bun were once busy with dug out canoes. The annual return of the salmon, together with building and travelling by dug out 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, realised 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 a number of 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 archeological 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.

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 Stuart River, 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 interpreters in period dress showcase the stories and ways of life of the fur traders, Dakelh and Métis. Going forward, the focus will be on increasing opportunities to support Dakelh 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 applicable 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), *Parks Canada 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 (ha) in the District Municipality of Fort St. James (pop. 1,386 as of 2021). Fort St. James is approximately 160 km northwest of the city of Prince George (pop. 76,708 as of 2021) and 60 km north of Vanderhoof (pop. 1,967 as of 2021). The site is located in the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, on the shores of Nak'al Bun (Stuart Lake).

The Nak'azdli Whut'en First Nation reserve lies immediately to the south of the site. To the east of the site is a low-density residential area, and to the north are institutional (church, cemetery) and commercial (hotel, retail) uses. A lake front trail along the western edge of the site provides an important link between the Nak'azdli Whut'en reserve and the town area.

The 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 provincial, regional and local levels, but is limited by a lack of visitor infrastructure and services, and the distance from major urban centres.

Relationships with Indigenous partners

The site is located in the traditional territory of the Dakelh - Nak'azdli Whut'en, Yekooche, Binche Whut'en and Tl'azt'en First Nations, and Métis. Today Dakelh and Métis live immediately adjacent to the site and around Nak'al Bun.

Parks Canada began working closely with the Nak'azdli Whut'en First Nation in 2001 through an Elders Advisory Group. In 2012, the Elders Advisory Group, together with Métis with connections to the site, developed an exhibit for the visitor centre highlighting Indigenous perspectives and histories. Parks Canada and Indigenous groups collaborated in the designation of Chief Kw'eh as a National Historic Person and in 2017 a bronze commemorative plaque was installed on site. Other areas of collaboration have included an Indigenous internship program and the hosting of special events on site.

In the spirit of reconciliation, this new management plan marks an opportunity to renew relationships between Indigenous partners and Parks Canada, and to move forward together. There are opportunities for Indigenous people to tell their stories in their own words on site, and to invite partners, including youth and elders to participate in site management.

Visitor experience

The site currently operates from the end of May to early September. At present, visitors explore the restored historic grounds and buildings where interpreters in period dress showcase how fur traders, Dakelh and Métis lived over a hundred years ago. Independent learning opportunities are also available, including a self-guided audio tour and a museum exhibit in the visitor centre.

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 to include additional narratives and new stories, in particular, Indigenous culture and connection to the landscape.

Visitor enjoyment, learning and satisfaction at Fort St. James National Historic Site is 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.

The opportunity to interact with animals has been a popular part of the Fort St. James National Historic Site visitor experience. Animals on site currently include ducks, goats and chickens. Animals provide an opportunity to better understand how people lived in the past and to help establish the feeling of "living history" at the site.

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 guests 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. More recently, the site has participated in local Indigenous community events. There are opportunities to improve outreach and promotion, including through partnerships in the region.

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 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, 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 is able to 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.

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, Fort St. James Secondary School, 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 Agency 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 mm 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°C. 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. All input received from Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public was considered in the preparation of this draft 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 culture and connections of Dakelh - Nak'azdli Whut'en, Yekooche, Binche Whut'en and Tl'azt'en First Nations and local Métis 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 authentic experiences. The site protects and presents cultural resources while prompting Canadians to explore the legacy of colonialism.

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 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, and
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 will support reconciliation by returning Indigenous voices to the historic site landscape. Honouring Indigenous connections and culture will enrich the visitor experience and add 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 and the creation of an Indigenous advisory body will be important to achieve this.

This strategy aims to ensure that storytelling, interpretation, demonstrations and programming 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 space and opportunities for greater participation on site.

This strategy aims to create economic opportunities for Indigenous partners where possible. Local Indigenous employment and opportunities for authentic Indigenous-led visitor offers on site will be explored.

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 Indigenous 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 and elders 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 Dakelh 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.

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.

Conscientious 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 Parks Canada *Framework for History and Commemoration*.

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 archeological 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 increases by 2% annually over a 2022 baseline (577 school children in 2022).
- Outstanding visitor learning results are maintained and more than 90% 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.

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 from new and repeat visitors.

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 new and repeat 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.

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 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 prioritise maintenance investment on site in line with available resources.

The lake front and its sweeping viewscape, 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 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, align with applicable legislation and policy, and 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 reduce the occurrence of incidents 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 prioritise 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 by 2027.

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 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.
- Access to the lake shore is delineated to reduce bank erosion and increase visitor safety.
- Lake shore erosion is mitigated by planting deep rooted grasses and shrubs.

7.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

The purpose of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) 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), an SEA was conducted on the management plan for the Fort St. James National Historic Site.

The SEA evaluated potential effects and expected outcomes resulting from the implementation of the key strategies in the Fort St. James National Historic Site Management Plan. The key valued components of the plan were identified and the elements of the plan that have the greatest potential to interact with these components were assessed. The assessment focused on the strategic direction and management plan actions that would generate direct and indirect positive or negative effects to natural and cultural resources components, and visitor experience components at the site. The SEA also considered potential cumulative effects and indirect effects of the multiple activities proposed in the plan.

The spatial scope of assessment included the area within the boundary of the Fort St. James National Historic Site. The temporal scope considered was 10 years from the date of the plan, at which time, the plan will be reviewed.

Many positive effects and outcomes are expected to occur as a result of the implementation of the Fort St. James National Historic Site Management Plan. One of most important overall positive outcomes of this plan is honouring Indigenous connections and culture and building on existing relationships with Dákelh and Métis partners. Including Indigenous interests, stories and culture into the narrative of the site will enhance visitor experience opportunities, as well as cultural resource protection.

Additional positive effects and outcomes as a result of the Fort St. James National Historic Site Management Plan are the maintenance of the cultural resources tied to the commemorative integrity of the site; enhanced visitor experience opportunities through improved or refreshed visitor offers, interpretation and outreach; and enhanced site resilience and asset maintenance in the face of a changing climate. Initiatives that support the expected positive outcomes in the Fort St. James National Historic Site Management Plan include a *Heritage Buildings Conservation Maintenance Plan*, an *Asset Master Plan*, an accessibility and inclusivity audit and subsequent actions, emergency preparedness and response planning, and a strategy for greening operations.

Although it is anticipated the strategies, objectives, and targets of the management plan will result in an overall positive effect and outcomes tied to the commemorative integrity of the site, there are some actions required to implement the key strategies and objectives that could potentially have negative effects on natural and cultural resources components at this site if mitigation is not applied. For example, project-level actions required to formalize a lake shore trail could result in project-level impacts, although these are likely to be short-lived and minor in magnitude with the implementation of project-level impact assessment.

Actions to renew key assets could affect the status of the federal heritage buildings, archaeological resources, and other character-defining elements of the site if not effectively mitigated through project design and project-level impact assessment. For example, modern additions such as fire suppression and security systems will need to be designed to respect the associative and physical values of the buildings' commemorative intent and integrity, and to the commemorative integrity of the site as a whole. Overall, potential negative effects can be mitigated by adhering to all relevant policy instruments, standards and guidelines, applicable legislation, and implementing project-level impact assessment under the *Impact Assessment Act* 2019, or successor legislation.

The Fort St. James National Historic Site Management Plan supports the following goals from the 2022-2026 *Federal Sustainable Development Strategy*: advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and take action to reduce inequality; improve access to affordable housing, clean air, transportation, parks, and green spaces; reduce waste and transition to zero-emission vehicles; take action on climate change and its impacts; and protect and recover species, conserve biodiversity.

Comments and feedback from participating Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public on the draft management plan will be considered and incorporated into the final Fort St. James National Historic Site Management Plan and the supporting SEA.