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Prince of Wales Fort

National Historic Site of Canada

Management Plan

2024



2024

Prince of Wales Fort

National Historic Site of Canada

Management Plan

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PRINCE OF WALES FORT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2024.

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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 Prince of Wales Fort 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 *Prince of Wales Fort 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

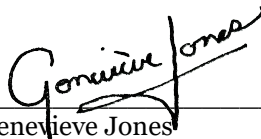
Recommendations

Recommended by:



For -

Ron Hallman
*President & Chief Executive Officer
Parks Canada*



Genevieve Jones
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Executive summary

Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site, including the fort on the west side of the Churchill River, the nearby harbour at Sloop Cove, and the site of Cape Merry Battery on the east side of the river, expands the experiences available to tourists who come to northern Manitoba to see beluga whales, polar bears and northern lights.

The national historic site, along with Parks Canada's visitor centre in Churchill, invites tour companies and visitors to contemplate the human history of life along this edge of the Hudson Bay. The tundra landscape of northern Manitoba around the mouth of the Churchill River has long been a home and gathering place for Cree, Dene, Inuit and later, Métis.

Prince of Wales Fort was constructed by the English from 1731 to 1771, damaged in an attack by the French in 1782, and left abandoned for over 150 years. The fort was designated as a national historic site in 1920, with Sloop Cove and Cape Merry Battery added to the designation in 1933. The designation acknowledges that Prince of Wales Fort is a ruin of national historic significance and national architectural significance, specifically highlighting the time of the fur trade in Canada.

Restoration of Prince of Wales Fort began in 1934 and has required significant investment over time, including two major restoration and stabilization projects since 2000 at a cost of over 16 million dollars. Considering the seasonal limitations of access to the fort and the high costs of work in the north, this level of extensive refurbishment is not sustainable over the long term. However, positive and safe visitor experiences can be supported without a similar scale of investment during the life of this plan.

Visitor access to the West Peninsula (the fort and Sloop Cove) is provided by tour companies via boat during the summer months, often in association with wildlife viewing experiences. During the summer season, Parks Canada strives to provide bear monitors and heritage presenters to support safe and meaningful experiences at Prince of Wales Fort. Only Cape Merry Battery is accessible from Churchill year-round. In the fall when Churchill is busy with polar bear tourism, Parks Canada strives to have team members stationed at Cape Merry.

The management plan presents a 15-year vision for Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site and outlines three key strategies to guide Parks Canada's decision-making:

Key strategy 1: Working with partners to present stories and build community

This key strategy focuses on the important relationships that support the site and the role of Parks Canada in Churchill. Through collaboration with Indigenous partners, tour companies and others, Parks Canada will assess and shape sustainable approaches to conservation and visitation at the fort, Sloop Cove and Cape Merry Battery, with a focus on sharing of broad and inclusive stories about the site and the region.

Key strategy 2: Conserving cultural and natural heritage

This key strategy focuses on maintaining the site's cultural resources and ensuring that visitors can experience an authentic connection to the stories associated with Prince of Wales Fort. The integrity of the fort walls is considered through the lens of the fort as a cultural resource that connects visitors with the essence of the site's stories, without being maintained as a restoration of the original.

Key strategy 3: Supporting safe and meaningful visitor experiences

This key strategy focuses on Parks Canada's role in supporting enriching experiences for those who visit the site or otherwise learn about Prince of Wales Fort. The key strategy includes cultural resources and contemporary infrastructure. The focus remains working with Indigenous and tourism partners to support the existing and evolving tourism markets related to wildlife viewing and northern experiences.

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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 *Prince of Wales Fort 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 management of the national historic site will achieve measurable results in support of its mandate.

Indigenous peoples are important partners in the stewardship of heritage places, with connections to the lands and waters since time immemorial. Parks Canada's work with Indigenous partners is centered around a vision of protected area management and governance that enables Indigenous stewardship, advances reconciliation and supports implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous partners (Cree, Dene, Inuit and Métis), stakeholders, partners and the Canadian public were involved in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of Prince of Wales National Historic Site. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation the 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 Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site in years to come.

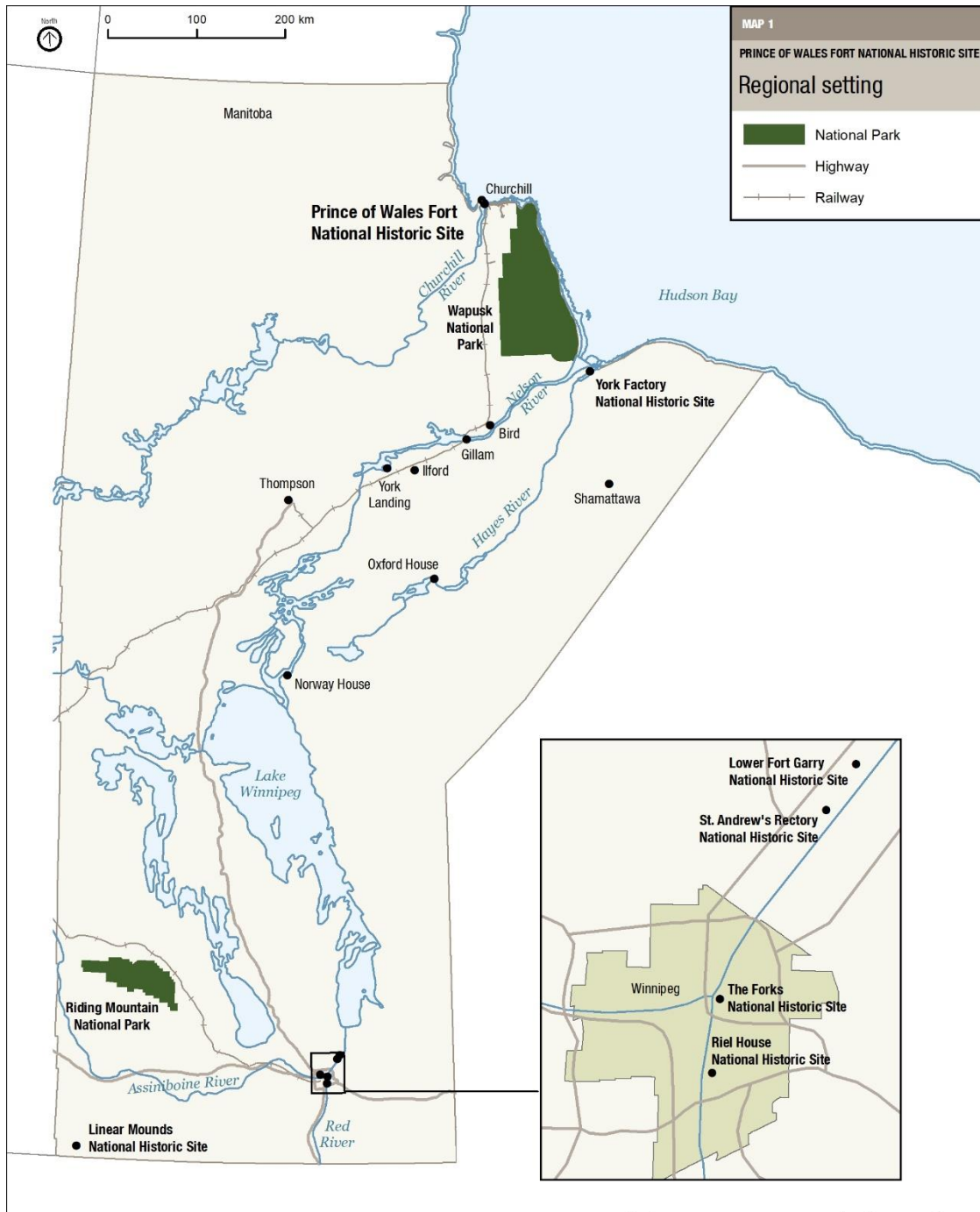
2.0 Significance of Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site

The tundra landscape of northern Manitoba around the mouth of the Churchill River has been a home and gathering place for Indigenous peoples for over 4,000 years. The Cree, Dene, Inuit, and later the Métis, all have a long history living along this edge of Hudson Bay. Early European activity in the Churchill area (beginning in the early 1600s) included exploration and whaling. Fur trade activity in the area expanded in the 1680s (York Factory established in 1684) and in the 1720s tensions were high between English and French merchants. As a result of ongoing English-French tensions, the Hudson's Bay Company selected lands at the mouth of the Churchill River for a fort to protect English interests and construction began in 1731 (Map 1). For the trading post and fort, the river provided access from the interior, the point of land offered a strategic vantage point over Hudson Bay, and ocean access facilitated connections to the North and Europe. Trades people at the fort produced goods that were supplied to other forts, shipped to Europe, or sold to Indigenous people.

Designated in 1920, the fort became one of the first national historic sites under the administration of Parks Canada. The designation of Prince of Wales Fort as a national historic site commemorates its role in the 18th century English-French rivalry for control of the territory and resources around Hudson Bay. Fundamental to this commemoration is the role of the fur trade and its participants: the Hudson's Bay

Company “servants” (including voyageurs, labourers, tradespeople, doctors, etc. who were under contract with the Company); the Cree, Dene, Inuit, and Métis who lived and travelled in the area and traded with the Hudson’s Bay Company; as well as the Company’s French rivals. Additional lands related to Hudson’s Bay Company’s operation of Prince of Wales Fort–Sloop Cove and Cape Merry Battery–were added to the designation in 1933. The designation acknowledges that Prince of Wales Fort is a ruin of national historic significance and national architectural significance. Related to the fur trade, Prince of Wales Fort has links to other national historic sites administered by Parks Canada in Manitoba, including York Factory, The Forks and Lower Fort Garry.

Map 1: Regional setting



The present stone fort was constructed over four decades (1731–1771) and is a 17th-century Vauban style fortification featuring four diamond-shaped bastions tied together by straight curtain walls. The fort followed on early European explorations of the area in the 1600s and replaced an earlier Hudson's Bay Company post (Churchill River Post) that was established in 1717, with the new fort constructed closer to the coast. The Hudson's Bay Company intended the stone fort to be an impregnable English stronghold during the English-French struggle for North America during the fur trade era. However, when three French warships arrived for a raid 1782, the fort's governor, Samuel Hearne, realized that the 39 men present at the fort were no match for the French. The fort was quickly surrendered. Following the surrender, the French looted the fort and damaged its defensive capabilities by setting fires and using black powder charges to damage items such as cannon muzzles. The fort was returned to control of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1783; however, due to the extent of damage from the French attack, it was abandoned in favour of the former location. The abandoned fort sat in ruins for over 150 years until the first restoration work began in 1934. Preliminary archaeology work at the fort began in the 1950s. More detailed studies have been completed since the 1980s, resulting in conservation practices that have increased the understanding of the fort, surrounding communities, and the fur trade. Artifacts relating to how Indigenous peoples used the land and artifacts specific to the fur trade remain frozen in time in the tundra around the national historic site and archaeology studies are ongoing.

Sloop Cove, approximately three kilometres upriver from the fort, was the wintering site for ships. Sloop Cove is notable as the mooring site for ships and for the signatures of Hudson's Bay Company servants who carved their names into the rock at Sloop Cove. Ships from England wintered in the cove as early as 1689. Mooring rings at Sloop Cove and a trail between the cove and the fort are still visible today.

Cape Merry Battery, which supported defence of the fort, is located across the mouth of the river. During the 1740s two batteries were constructed at Cape Merry. The original battery was decommissioned shortly after it was built because the battery's cannon could have been turned on the fort. A second, more strategic location was then selected for placing the battery's six cannon. The original battery was converted into a powder magazine. Remnants of the powder magazine and the second battery are present at the site.

The enduring, unspoiled landscape, relatively unchanged on the West Peninsula since before the fort was established, is recognized as part of the site's historic value. The area is the southern part of the range of polar bears, a species of special concern under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), and an important habitat for migratory birds in the spring and summer, including critical stopover habitat for a shorebird called the red knot, which is listed as endangered under SARA.

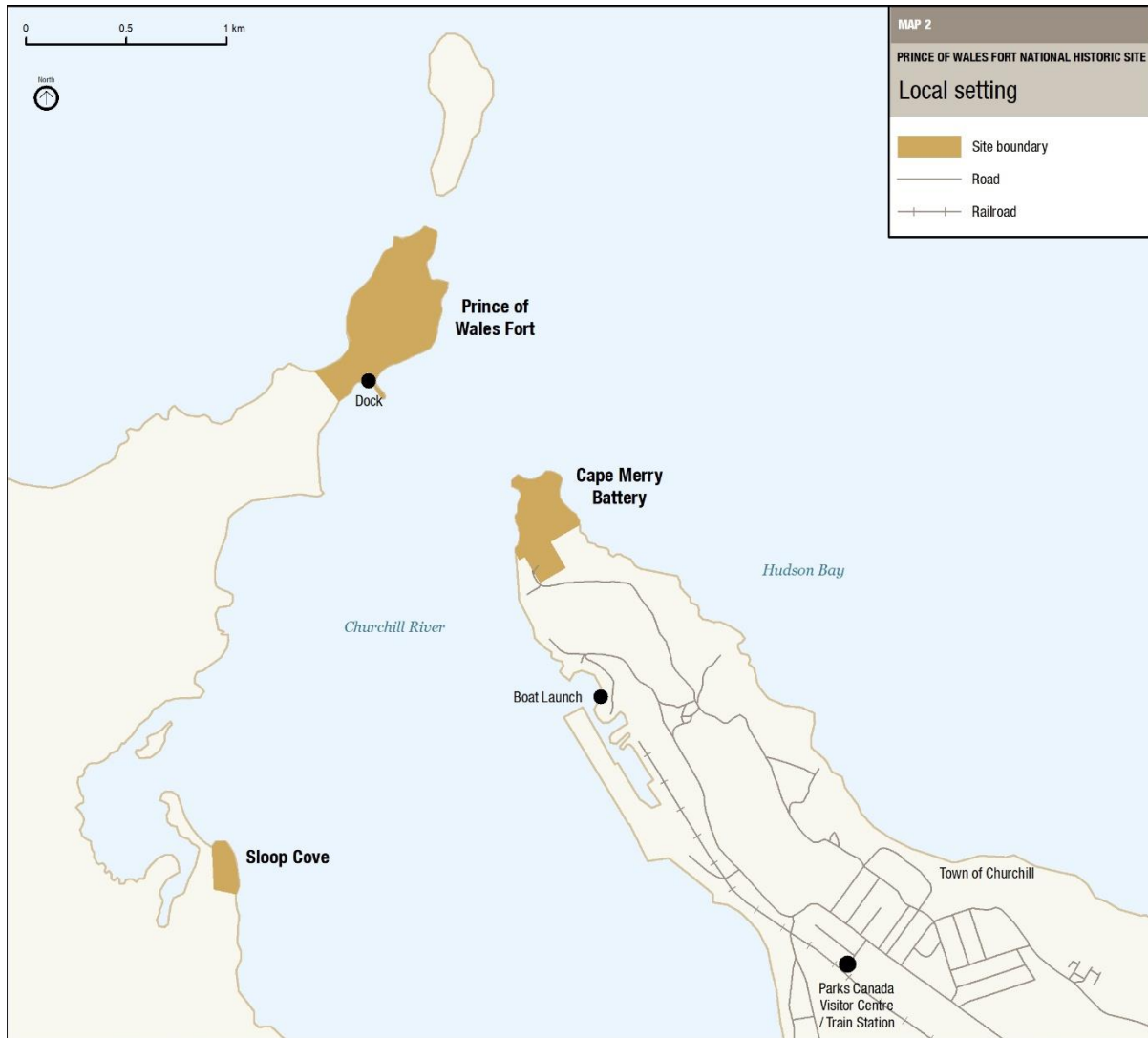
3.0 Planning context

The national historic site consists of three distinct areas: Prince of Wales Fort (the fort), Sloop Cove, and Cape Merry Battery (Map 2). The fort and Sloop Cove are located across the Churchill River from the Town of Churchill on what is called the West Peninsula. Cape Merry Battery is located on the east side of the river, about two kilometres northwest of Churchill.

Northern nature and culture

Churchill, Manitoba offers visitors iconic opportunities to experience the north: polar bears, beluga whales, and northern lights. Churchill is an international destination for wildlife viewing. Most tourists are not drawn to northern Manitoba specifically to learn about forts or the fur trade; however, through the national historic site, visitors can expand their experience in Churchill. Opportunities to come to the Parks Canada visitor centre or visit the national historic site invite people to contemplate the human history of the land, including the cultural connections that Indigenous peoples have to this landscape, the interactions of European explorers and Indigenous peoples, the feat of constructing a stone fort in the north 300 years ago, and the role of the fur trade in Canada's early development.

Map 2: Local setting



Indigenous connections

Human history of the Churchill region dates back more than 4,000 years, including the earliest settlement of Pre-Dorset and Dorset peoples and the pre-contact use of the area by the Dene, Inuit, and Cree. The presence of multiple major periods in Arctic pre-contact history represented in such a southerly location provides important opportunities to learn about the relationships between people and the land, including historic water levels and early technology and culture in the northern environment.

Today, these lands are part of Treaty 5 territory. Cree, Dene, Inuit, and Métis communities are connected to Parks Canada and Prince of Wales Fort through their overall connection to these lands, including their interests in other heritage places in the region. Building on relationships with Wapusk National Park, York Factory National Historic Site, and other regional conservation initiatives, including a proposal to establish a National Marine Conservation Area, each of these groups have potential to become more involved with Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site. Aligned with Parks Canada's *Framework for History and Commemoration*, increased involvement of Indigenous partners, guided by their input, will support the sharing of broad and more inclusive stories about the site and the region.

Tourism partners

Tourism is a main element of Churchill's identity and economy, and Parks Canada, for Prince of Wales Fort and Wapusk, is a key contributor Churchill's tourism offer.

Tour companies are key partners for Parks Canada in Churchill. Tourism in Churchill is driven by several companies that promote Churchill and operate world-class tours for viewing polar bears, beluga whales, and northern lights. Visitation to the national historic site, particularly the tours to the fort in the summer, is dependent on these tour companies.

Tourism seasons and bear safety

There are three tourism seasons in Churchill: summer beluga whale season, fall polar bear season, and winter aurora season (northern lights). Parks Canada has a role to play in each of these tourism seasons. Bear season in October-November is the busiest season for tourism in Churchill. During bear season, Parks Canada focuses on having team members present at Cape Merry Battery. The summer season allows tour operators to add visits to the fort to their itineraries, and the focus of Parks Canada during the summer shifts to welcoming tours to the fort. A range of programs over the years have provided high-quality visitor experiences while maintaining the character of the relatively undisturbed sub-arctic tundra. Visitor opportunities include retracing the footsteps and cart trails of Hudson's Bay Company workers, exploring the fortification, and scanning the waters of Hudson Bay from the fort ramparts to spot beluga whales and polar bears. Tour companies provide the boat transportation to the fort, often in association with tours to watch beluga whales and polar bears.

For the safety of team members, visitors and bears, bear guards accompany tours when visiting the site. Bear management, including respect for the animals and their habitat, is an important part of operations for the national historic site. Parks Canada works closely with tourism companies and other organizations to ensure clear and responsible guidance on respecting and managing bears, to provide the highest level of safety for people and bears.

Access and services

Parks Canada maintains the necessary facilities and services to support visitor access and experiences, such as docks, dredging, washrooms, shelters, and signage.

Visitor access to the fort and Sloop Cove is provided by tour companies and is dependent on the conditions of the Churchill River. While there are occasional opportunities for winter visits to the fort, access to the West Peninsula is generally by boat in the summer. Earlier break-up and later freeze-up of the river due to climate change may lengthen the boating season, which is presently late June to early September. Access by boat is also tide dependent; Sloop Cove and the dock at the fort are only accessible when there is sufficient water in the river.

Unlike Sloop Cove and the fort, Cape Merry Battery is accessible from Churchill year-round (weather permitting). During the busy fall bear season, Parks Canada strives to have heritage presenters and bear guards stationed at Cape Merry. For most of the summer, however, Parks Canada team members are only present at Cape Merry Battery when requested by visitors or tour operators, as scheduling allows. Capacity for Parks Canada to offer tours at Cape Merry in the summer is limited by the availability of Parks Canada personnel. Tour companies still bring visitors to Cape Merry during the summer, using their own bear guards and interpreters. Many local residents and independent travellers also visit Cape Merry during the summer months.

The Parks Canada Visitor Centre, located in Churchill's historic train station, is easily accessible to visitors to Churchill. The visitor centre offers programming, lectures, and exhibits about Prince of Wales Fort, Wapusk and York Factory. Visitors are able to access the stories of each of these heritage places together, including opportunities to learn about northern ecology, Indigenous connections to the land, and the role of the fur trade in Canada's formative years. Operation of the visitor centre is addressed in more detail in the management plan for Wapusk National Park.

Maintenance of the fortification structures

The 2016–2021 Prince of Wales Fort Conservation of Stone Walls project (following an earlier 10 million dollar wall stabilization project that took place 2000–2011) represented a 6 million dollar investment to address deterioration of the stone walls and related structural issues. Work included rebuilding sections of the fort walls, reconstruction of the entrance to the fort and repointing of the Cape Merry Battery. The fort requires ongoing maintenance and monitoring related to the conservation of cultural resources; however, considering the seasonal limitations on access to the fort and the high costs of work in the north, this level of extensive refurbishment is not sustainable over the long term.

Natural forces and climate change

Natural forces have always played a significant role in shaping northern Canada. Since the retreat of the glaciers around ten thousand years ago, land in the north has been rising or rebounding. The west coast of Hudson Bay is known as one of the more dramatic areas of this action (isostatic rebound), where the land still rises at a rate of one metre per century.

In recent years the effects of climate change, including permafrost thaw, have been seen in the Churchill area and have implications for local tourism. Earlier break-up and later freeze-up of the river due to warmer temperatures may lengthen the summer tourism season, which is presently late June to early September. Earlier break-up and later freeze-up of Hudson Bay may impact polar bears and the timing and length of the fall bear season. In addition, potential changes to conditions such as weather patterns or storm frequency may impact cultural resources, asset management or visitor experiences.

Scoping of planning considerations

The above context for Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site was considered during the development of this management plan. Initial stages of planning program included an assessment of the site's commemorative integrity. Through development of the *Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site State of the Site Assessment* and the scoping phase of planning, three main themes that need to be addressed during the implementation of this management plan were identified:

- collaboration with Indigenous partners,
- sustainable approaches to asset management, and
- working with tourism partners and visitors.

4.0 Development of the management plan

The process for updating the management plan for Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site was initiated in 2019, beginning with the development of the state of the site assessment. In January 2020, letters were sent to Indigenous partners and stakeholders to determine their preferred level of consultation throughout the planning program. Despite initial progress, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic restricted travel and opportunities to consult.

The planning process was restarted in 2021, and the state of the site assessment was completed in April 2022. To discuss findings from the state of the site report and share more information about the management planning process, an “invitation to participate” letter was sent to Indigenous partners and tourism industry stakeholders in the Churchill region.

In late 2022, Parks Canada began the process to define the scope of the new management plan for Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site. Work on the draft management plan began in December 2023.

Consultation on development of the management plan was continued with Indigenous partners in early 2024, including in-person meetings with Fox Lake Cree Nation and York Factory First Nation. Additional partners and stakeholders received information about consultation on the draft management plan in the

spring of 2024. External input from partners, stakeholders and the public was considered in the final version of the plan. This input was received in meetings with partners, a public open house in Churchill, and an online survey that was available from June 13 to July 7. To ensure that key partners had time to review the draft plan, consultation opportunities were extended until the middle of September.

The outcome of these communications validated the overall strategic direction for management of the national historic site. Discussions about the site also reinforced that Indigenous partners, tourism stakeholders and the public will continue to provide valuable ideas and feedback during the implementation of this plan.

A “What We Heard” report that summarizes input from the consultation process is available on Parks Canada’s website for Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site.

5.0 Vision

In updating the vision for Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site, Parks Canada considers the site’s role among Canada’s rich tapestry of heritage places and its contributions to the iconic Churchill area over the next 15 years. The vision ignites inspiration and charts a course for decision makers. This vision honours the past and the future to create a legacy for sharing stories that weave together multiple perspectives on history, culture and nature.

Rising from the coastal tundra where the Churchill River meets the Hudson Bay, Prince of Wales Fort stands as a testament to human determination. Visitors to Churchill are wowed by the world-class experiences of seeing polar bears, beluga whales, northern lights and other wonders of the north. The national historic site offers additional opportunities for people to engage with the area’s rich natural and cultural history. Spending time at the fort or Cape Merry Battery, touching the stone walls and the cannons, invites visitors to reflect on the connections between people and the environment, the role of historic structures in sharing stories, and the relationships of allies and rivals during the fur trade in the 18th century.

To plant your feet on the same unchanged bedrock as the people who came and went from Prince of Wales Fort 300 years ago, including those who etched their names in the rocks at Sloop Cove, is a compelling connection to the past. Visitors pause in their schedule to contemplate how the enduring, arctic landscape remains relatively unchanged on the West Peninsula.

Whether driving to Cape Merry, taking a boat to the fort or Sloop Cove, or learning about the site virtually, those exploring the national historic site receive impactful messages that convey the essence of the fort’s setting, history, and cultural significance, as well as its future. The area’s 4,000 years of human history and the site’s location in Treaty 5 territory provide important context for understanding Prince of Wales Fort. The ties of Cree, Dene, Inuit, and Métis people to the lands, waters, ice, plants and animals around Hudson Bay add to the northern experience.

As part of the fabric of the community of Churchill and its tourism offer, Parks Canada plays a role in conservation and education that is evident to locals and tourists alike. Coordinating messaging with Wapusk National Park and York Factory National Historic Site, Parks Canada’s Visitor Centre in Churchill is a focal point of the town. Collaboration remains a cornerstone of the vision for Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site. Invaluable contributions of Indigenous partners, tourism stakeholders, and the local community, guided by evolving demands and creative ways of working together, support Parks Canada in maximizing use of the site in ways that are efficient and sustainable.

While Churchill is famous as a destination for experiencing the natural treasures of Manitoba’s north, Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site adds the opportunity to mix outdoor adventure with national history and local culture, inspiring present and future generations to appreciate and cherish this vital piece of Canada’s heritage.

6.0 Key strategies

As a long-term strategic plan following the Government of Canada’s approach for results-based planning, the management plan for Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site focuses on the results that Parks Canada wants to achieve. The purpose of the management plan is to provide decision makers, partners, stakeholders, and the public with the priorities that will guide decision-making.

Where no specific timelines are given, all targets are meant to be achieved within the ten-year life of this plan. Unless otherwise specified, targets will be measured against a 2019 (pre-COVID) baseline. The directions identified in this section consider available resources and existing capacity for Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site.

Actions and reporting

Decisions on how to reach the objectives and targets identified in this plan are supported by ongoing work planning, in consultation with partners, stakeholders, and the public as appropriate. Over the plan’s ten-year timeframe, this approach allows for flexibility to account for available resources, evolving priorities and emerging opportunities. Informing Indigenous partners, community members, business partners, stakeholders and Canadians about how ongoing decisions fit with the strategies in this management plan is done through annual reporting and other communications. Figure 1 shows how the elements of results-based planning work together to support the long-term vision and to keep interested parties informed about management of the national historic site.

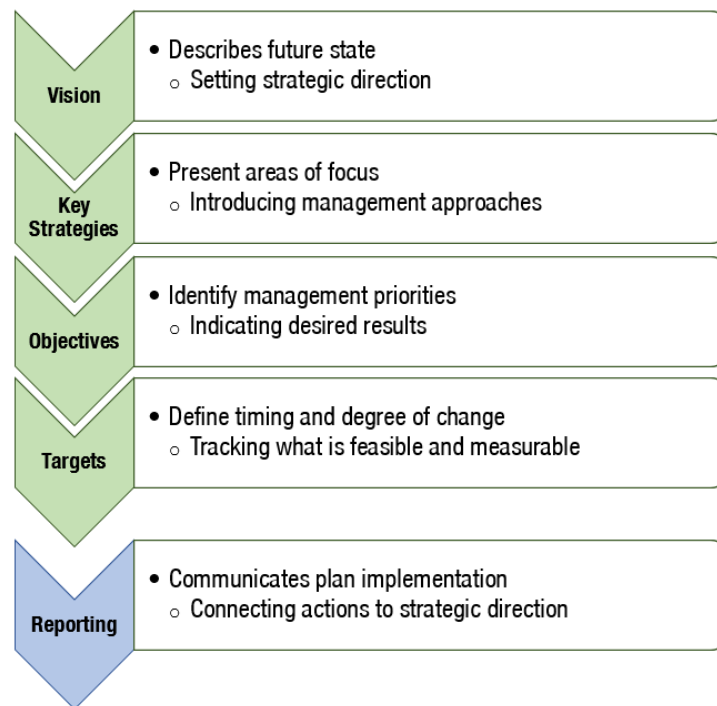


Figure 1: The elements of results-based planning.

National policies

In addition to the key strategies, objectives and targets identified in this management plan, decision-making for the site is guided by Government of Canada and Parks Canada policies that provide direction on overarching issues. This includes policies and guidelines that address the conservation of historic places and cultural resource management (such as Parks Canada's *Framework for History and Commemoration*) and includes national policy direction related to Indigenous stewardship, sustainability and accessibility.

Across the national network of heritage places administered by Parks Canada, Parks Canada is committed to sustainability (for example, the *Greening Government Strategy*), equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (for example, meeting the requirements of the *Accessible Canada Act*). Within the area of sustainable operations, climate change is expected to be a growing influence on the management of heritage places, including Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site. Impacts of climate change will be considered and integrated in all aspects of planning, management, and reporting.

Ensuring all heritage places administered by Parks Canada are well operated, and are welcoming places for all, is an ongoing consideration for Parks Canada throughout the implementation of this management plan. Specific to management direction for Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site for the duration of this management plan, three key strategies have been developed.

Key Strategy 1: Working with partners to present stories and build community

The focus of this key strategy is maintaining and building strategic relationships, including with Indigenous partners and tour companies. Collaboration offers the best opportunities for Parks Canada to advance its objectives for broadening the stories shared about the national historic site, conserving cultural and natural resources, and supporting the needs of visitors, tourism businesses, and the Town of Churchill. This strategy ensures that partners and stakeholders have ample opportunities to share their perspectives on the site's history and on the potential contributions of the site for conservation, visitation, outreach, and education.

In addition to activities at the national historic site's locations (the fort, Sloop Cove, and Cape Merry Battery) programming and outreach related to Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site are provided at the visitor centre in Churchill. Off-site support and outreach are important opportunities to extend the reach of the national historic site to visitors to Churchill who may not be able to physically visit the site, local audiences, and those who wish to learn more about the site from afar. These supports and outreach include blogs, interviews, photo galleries and video. Through these channels, considering internal and external opportunities, visitors are able to access a wide array of information about the site from anywhere in the world.

Consistent with Parks Canada's guidance on history, commemoration, and Indigenous stewardship, the participation of Indigenous partners in the development and delivery of programs, exhibits and events that share and celebrate their stories and cultures is a priority. The focus is developing stronger, more meaningful relationships, at the community level and nation-to-nation.

Objective 1.1: Through stronger connections with Indigenous partners, Indigenous-led content in the site's materials and programs is increased.

Targets

- Engagement with Indigenous communities about their interests and opportunities for sharing Indigenous perspectives is increased.
- The number of materials and programs that include Indigenous perspectives are increased, including in-person programming (heritage presentations) that is delivered with or by members of Indigenous communities.
- Opportunities for members of Indigenous communities to take part in on-site visitor, research and cultural activities, including archaeology programs, are continued and increased where appropriate.

- When developing the next state of the site report, indicators related to Indigenous relations will be assessed in collaboration with Indigenous partners.

Objective 1.2: Strong relationships with tour companies and other organizations operating in Churchill are maintained.

Targets

- Collaboration with local tour operators to offer meaningful and innovative visitor experiences, including boat transportation to the fort, will be maintained.
- Opportunities to increase local understanding and enjoyment of the site through school programs and special events in the community will be maintained.
- Where consistent with the conservation of cultural resources and compatible with site operations new visitor opportunities developed and delivered by private tour operators or Indigenous groups will be evaluated and supported.

Key Strategy 2: Conserving cultural and natural heritage

The focus of this key strategy is ensuring cultural resources and the landscape associated with the national historic site are maintained to provide future generations with an authentic connection to the stories associated with Prince of Wales Fort. Cultural resources include built structures, archaeological sites, cultural landscapes, and historic objects, as well as knowledge and traditions. Initiatives supporting this strategy focus on identifying the site's cultural resources, understanding their significance from Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives, caring for them respectfully, and presenting them in ways that are accessible and engaging. Implementation of related projects is supported by policies, guidelines, protocols, and training, including the involvement of Parks Canada specialists in history, archaeology and restoration. This includes undertaking project-specific impact assessments when required.

Maintaining historic structures is a complex undertaking. Conservation of cultural resources such as fort walls must balance what is necessary for sharing a place's stories against ideal or indefinite restoration. Parks Canada's approach to long-term asset management seeks to extend the usable life of a resource, minimize impacts to environmental and cultural resources, optimize previous investments, and balance multiple perspectives. The strategic direction outlined in this management plan is considered during ongoing monitoring and investment planning. The integrity of the fort walls as a cultural resource, able to connect visitors with the essence of the site's stories, can be maintained even as the stone walls show signs of ruin (as they were in 1782 after the French attack on the fort), without being maintained as a restoration of the original fort. During implementation of this plan, Parks Canada, supported by national experts in archaeology and fort restoration, will continue to monitor the condition of the fort walls and will develop a mitigation plan to guide the ongoing conservation of key features of the fort's ramparts.

The natural environment around the site is also relevant to the story of Prince of Wales Fort, and of high interest to partners and visitors. In collaboration with partners, Parks Canada monitors vegetation, habitat and animals around the site to better understand the regional environment, including the effects of climate change on natural and cultural resources. In addition to the area's high-profile species, beluga whales and polar bears, the site provides important habitat for migratory birds, including coastal stopover habitat for an endangered shorebird called the Red Knot. Related to the implementation of the *Species at Risk Act*, Parks Canada will continue its collaboration with recovery teams and other partners in support of species at risk. The presence of federal lands administered by Parks Canada around Churchill provides Parks Canada and other organizations with opportunities to carry out research along this part of the Hudson Bay coast. The audience that can become informed about and engaged in related research is expanded because of people's connection to the national historic site.

Objective 2.1: The condition of cultural resources is managed so that commemorative integrity and safe, meaningful experiences are maintained.

Targets

- As facilitated through protocols with Indigenous partners, the site's inventory of cultural resources related to Indigenous use of the land outside the fort is increased, including improved incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous languages.
- Through vegetation management, routine maintenance, and monitoring, the integrity of cultural resources is maintained.
- In the next state of the site assessment, the condition rating of the cultural resources indicator for buildings and engineering works is maintained as fair.
- The information available on climate-related risks and potential adaptation options is increased.

Key Strategy 3: Supporting safe and meaningful visitor experiences

This key strategy focuses on connecting people with the cultural heritage related to Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site. The objectives help define Parks Canada's role in providing services and facilities that support enriching experiences for those who visit the site. The strategy addresses how both contemporary infrastructure and cultural assets support visitor experiences.

Parks Canada and partners in Churchill's tourism and culture sectors work together to assess and shape sustainable approaches to visitation at the fort, Sloop Cove and Cape Merry Battery, sharing priorities and ensuring efficient use of resources. In addition to those who visit the site, outreach and education through Parks Canada's urban programs, web pages and social media, including videos, blogs and other virtual tools, are also used to share stories and raise awareness about the opportunities around Churchill to appreciate nature, culture and history. Marketing the national historic site outside of Churchill is addressed by the tour companies. As visitation through tour operators' returns to pre-COVID levels, attracting new markets or developing new offers are not priority targets for Parks Canada. The management focus is supporting the existing and evolving tourism markets related to wildlife viewing and northern experiences.

Previous work on rebuilding and stabilizing the fort walls has put the site in a position where positive and safe visitor experiences can be supported without a similar scale of investment in restoration of the stone walls during the life of this plan.

Objective 3.1: Visitor facilities provide for safe and meaningful experiences that are accessible to people with a wide range of abilities, identities and interests.

Targets

- In the next state of the site assessment, the rating of the built assets indicator for presentations (including interpretive materials) improves from poor to good.
- In the next state of the site assessment, the rating of the built assets indicator for buildings (including kiosks and washrooms) improves from fair to good.
- High-quality exhibits, presentations, and services at the visitor centre are maintained and improved where necessary.
- The ability of Parks Canada to collect information related to visitor satisfaction is improved.

Objective 3.2: While looking toward the sustainability of investments, fortification structures provide for safe and inspiring experiences.

Targets

- The understanding of priority locations for strategic maintenance work, such as vegetation control, drainage and repointing of mortar, is increased.
- The experience of accessing the upper level of the fort ramparts for views of the surrounding landscape is maintained.

- Stability of the fort walls is monitored and managed with respect to providing safe visitor circulation within the fort.

7.0 Management areas

For additional clarity in support of the vision and key strategies presented in the management plan, this section describes the core visitor offer at each of the site's three distinct locations.

As described in the key strategy about working with partners (Objective 1.2), Parks Canada is open to collaborating with partners that may wish to offer appropriate visitor activities or events at Cape Merry, the fort, or Sloop Cove. Proposed activities, aligned with the vision for the national historic site, would require that the proponent manage their own logistics and expenses for required services.

In addition to the management areas included below, the visitor centre in Churchill is a central part of the tourism experience in Churchill. At the visitor centre Parks Canada provides information about tours, programs, events, and bear safety, as well as presenting exhibits about Manitoba's north (including Wapusk, York Factory and Prince of Wales Fort). Operation of the visitor centre is addressed in more detail in the management plan for Wapusk National Park.

7.1 Cape Merry Battery

Unlike the fort and Sloop Cove, Cape Merry Battery is accessible by road. This portion of the national historic site is about three kilometres from town. This different level of access means that tourists and locals can come to Cape Merry independently, without tour guides or members of the Parks Canada team. Although Cape Merry is not far from town, due to the risks of encountering polar bears it is recommended that people travel to Cape Merry by vehicle and with appropriate bear protection. Communications about bear-safe practices are promoted by many organizations in Churchill, including by Parks Canada at the visitor centre.

Core offer: During the high season for polar bear tourism, in October and November, Parks Canada bear monitors and heritage presenters support safe and meaningful experiences at Cape Merry Battery.

7.2 Prince of Wales Fort

The fort is the main attraction on the West Peninsula, providing a destination for tour operators and their clients during the summer whale-watching season. Local tourism operators facilitate bookings and provide transportation to the Fort. On rare occasions events or programs may be organized in the winter.

Core offer: During the summer season, Parks Canada bear monitors and heritage presenters support safe and meaningful experiences at Prince of Wales Fort.

7.3 Sloop Cove

Of the three distinct areas of the national historic site, Sloop Cove has the fewest visitors and has no visitor facilities. While the opportunity exists for visitors to hike approximately 3 kilometres from Sloop Cove to the fort, caution is required related to the disturbance of birds and polar bears.

Core offer: At Sloop Cove Parks Canada has no offer of visitor activities; the focus at Sloop Cove is limited to conservation of the area as part of the national historic site's cultural resources.

8.0 Implementation and reporting

Management plans act as a guide for decision-making, work planning, monitoring, and ongoing engagement. To ensure the plan remains relevant and meaningful, Parks Canada evaluates how its decisions and projects support the strategic direction presented in the management plan and will provide updates on the progress of the plan's implementation through communications with partners, stakeholders, and Canadians.

This management plan is the result of a comprehensive planning process with contributions from Indigenous partners, stakeholders in conservation and tourism, and Canadians. Parks Canada thanks all those who shared their ideas during the development of this management plan.