

# S.S. Keno National Historic Site Commemorative Integrity Statement

## *National Historic Site Objectives*

The objectives of the National Historic Sites Program are summarized in the following statement from Parks Canada's Guiding Principles and Operational Policies:

- \* To foster knowledge and appreciation of Canada's past through a national program of historical commemoration.
- \* To ensure the commemorative integrity of national historic sites administered by Parks Canada by protecting and presenting them for the benefit, education and enjoyment of this and future generations, in a manner that respects the significant and irreplaceable legacy represented by these places and their associated resources.
- \* To encourage and support the protection and presentation by others of places of national *historic significance that are not administered by Parks Canada.*

Commemoration focuses on what is nationally significant about a site, and includes protection as well as presentation. The National Historic Sites Policy states that:

*protection and presentation are fundamental to commemoration since without protection there can be no historic site to be enjoyed, and without presentation there can be no understanding of why the site is important to our history and, hence, to all Canadians.*



The S.S. Keno and her larger, and older, sistership the S.S. Casca at the ways in Whitehorse. The Keno was built in Whitehorse in 1922 to move ore from Mayo Landing on the Stewart River to Stewart Island on the Yukon River.  
Al Olsen Coll., PC

## ***Definition and Purpose of Commemorative Integrity***

Commemorative integrity is used to describe the health or wholeness of a national historic site. A national historic site possesses commemorative integrity when the historic values and those cultural resources symbolizing or representing its importance are not impaired or under threat, when the reasons for the site's national historic significance are effectively communicated to the public, and when the site's heritage values are respected by all whose decisions or actions affect the site.

The purpose of a Commemorative Integrity Statement (CIS) is to focus our management of a site on what is most important; and to ensure that we address the whole (the "site"), not just the parts (the "individual resources"). For national historic sites, commemorative integrity is key to developing and implementing work plans, along with service to clients and ensuring efficient use of public funds. Commemorative integrity is also the basis for reporting to Canadians on the state of their national historic sites.

To effectively focus on commemorative integrity it is necessary to identify and evaluate those characteristics of a site that led to a recommendation by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) and its designation by the Minister. Those characteristics that make the site of importance to all Canadians are Level 1 cultural resources. Characteristics of the site

determined to have a historic value of regional or local importance are Level 2 cultural resources. All Level 1 and 2 cultural resources will be managed by Parks Canada according to the principles of the Cultural Resource Management Policy.

A sound grasp of historic value is essential to ensuring commemorative integrity. This includes a definition of what constitutes the extent of the nationally-designated historic place. The Parks Canada Cultural Resource Management Policy requires that evaluation of resources not only determines their levels, but "what it is that constitutes their value", that is to say, what particular qualities and features make up the historic value of the cultural resource. Historic value can reflect both physical (tangible or artifactual) as well as symbolic (intangible or associative) attributes. It can be derived from an association with many periods in history, a single episode, or from the interaction of nature and human activities.

It is those Level 1 values, that is those attributes of resources or messages, of importance to all Canadians, that shall be the highest management priority for Parks Canada. These values and the threats to them are described in more detail in the section "Commemorative Integrity Objectives".

The S.S. Keno using its spars to lift off a sandbar. In 1937 the vessel was cut in half and three metres was added to its length to increase freight capacity. NAC



## Commemorative Intent

Commemorative intent is a statement of what is nationally significant about the site. It refers specifically to the reasons for the site's national significance, as determined by the ministerially-approved recommendations of the HSMBC. For Board minutes relevant to the S.S. Keno, see Appendix A.

In 1958, during a discussion of Yukon river boats, the HSMBC noted that it; *would like to record its interest in the general subject of transportation in Canada as a matter of national historic importance, and its concern that examples of different types of transport should be preserved. The Board believes that it is of national historic importance to preserve a typical representative or representatives of lake and river stern-wheel steamship transport.*

The Board also recommended; *that the Minister ask the Northern Administration and Lands Branch to consider the possibility of preserving one or more of the Yukon River steamers as a tourist attraction and perhaps as part of a river-steamer museum in the Yukon.*

As part of the Dawson Festival in 1962, the S.S. Keno was re-furbished and sailed downriver to Dawson where on July 1, the Minister declared the vessel a national historic site.

The designation was reconfirmed by the HSMBC in 1987 when it; *reaffirmed the national significance of both the S.S. Keno and S.S. Klondike. Further the Board recommended that the S.S. Keno should be maintained in a stabilized condition as it adds an extra visual dimension to the Dawson experience.*

On the basis of the foregoing, the Statement of Commemorative Intent for the S.S. Keno is:

**The S.S. Keno is of national historic significance because it is representative of Yukon lake and river sternwheel steamers.**

## Commemorative Integrity

The National Historic Sites Policy states that a site has commemorative integrity if:

1. the resources that symbolize or represent its importance are not impaired or under threat,
2. the reasons for the site's national historic significance are effectively communicated to the public, and
3. the site's heritage values are respected by all whose decisions or actions affect the site.

These three elements cover the major responsibilities of Parks Canada in the management of the National Historic Site. To measure the success and effectiveness of this management commemorative integrity objectives have been identified and listed after the description of each of the three elements. Therefore, at S.S. Keno National Historic Site commemorative integrity will be ensured when:

### **1. Resources that Symbolize or Represent the National Significance of the S.S. Keno are Not Impaired or Under Threat**

Resources imbued with these Level 1 historic values are those that symbolize or represent the national significance of the S.S. Keno. These resources are thus instrumental in, or integral to, the designation of national historic significance. Those Level 1 resources are the cultural resource management focus of the Parks Canada program. The following Level 1 cultural resources must not be threatened or impaired:



Wood camps were an important part of the inland water transportation system for the riverboats.  
Frank Coghlan Coll. PC

### *1.1.a. Historic Place - Values*

#### *Background*

Steam powered river transportation was the central element in the development and connection of the Yukon to the outside world for almost a century after the first vessel reached Fort Selkirk in 1866. The character of the system that developed was shaped by the geography of the Yukon and the technology of the riverboats. Alternative transport options developed slowly. Overland winter travel supplemented the summer river transport, but in the late 1920s a more direct challenge appeared as aircraft began regular service to Yukon communities. However, it was only during and after World War II that road transport finally ended the importance of the inland water transport system in the Yukon. The S.S. Keno is representative of the vessels that serviced the Yukon for so long.

The S.S. Keno was designated a National Historic Site in 1962. It has become an important contributor to the historic urban landscape of Dawson, Yukon Territory. The vessel is managed by Parks Canada as a vehicle for national commemoration. Other stakeholders are non-specific but have a vested interest in the continuing presence of the site at its present location.

#### *Physical Values*

The historic place is the S.S. Keno itself and does not reside in the land upon which it rests. The value of the physical resource resides in its documentation and as a representative of a type of vessel constructed for the water transportation network established in the Yukon. This includes the following elements:

- the completeness of the vessel in its hull, superstructure, propulsion and auxiliary systems.
- the surviving unity of the original vessel and equipment.
- the quality of the construction of the vessel and its components.
- the well-executed carvel planking.
- it is an example of the fast water, shallow draft sternwheel steamers that plied the upper Yukon River.
- Broad defining characteristics of importance are those:
  - \* systems associated with the vessel's structure.
  - \* systems associated with the vessel as a freight system.
  - \* systems associated with the vessel as water-borne accommodation.

#### *Associative Values*

The symbolic importance of the S.S. Keno derives from its role in the water transportation



system of the Yukon and its association with other shallow draft sternwheel steamers. Its meaning is enhanced by the current setting which is defined by its proximity to the Yukon River, a major river artery, and in the heart of the Town of Dawson, one of the urban anchors of this transportation network.

#### *1.1.b. Historic Place - Objectives*

The historic place will be safeguarded when:

- the appearance and physical integrity of the S.S. Keno, as defined by original massing, surface material, colour, hull construction and design, and exterior elements (lifeboats, lines, spars, etc.), is maintained;
- integrity of structural framing and mechanical systems is maintained;
- interior and exterior functional organization of space is maintained;
- original materials and mechanical systems are conserved in accordance with the CRM Policy;
- representative samples of removed historic fabric will be preserved and maintained for reference purposes;
- linkages and co-operation with other authorities to foster the integrity of the historic place are actively encouraged;
- proximity and visual access to the river are maintained;
- viewscapes of the vessel and river are maintained;
- the visual contribution of the S.S. Keno to the commemorative integrity of Dawson Historical Complex NHS is acknowledged and maintained.

#### *1.2.a. Moveable Resources - Values*

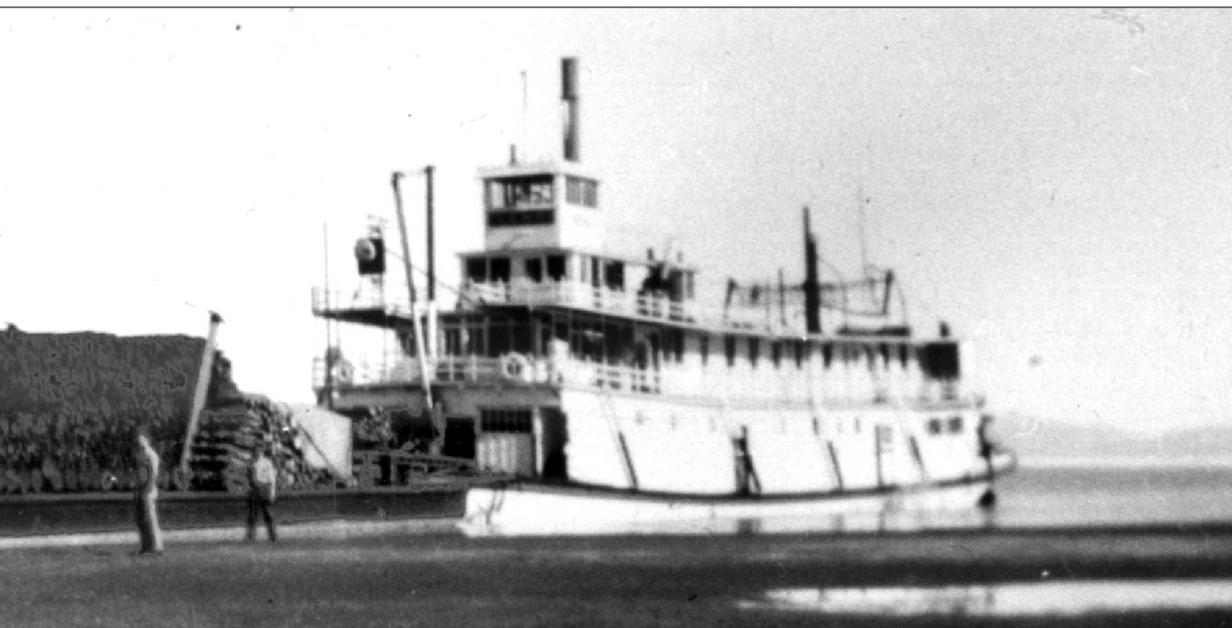
The level 1 moveable resources are important contributors to the values and messages of S.S. Keno National Historic Site. These resources gain their value by:

- being authentic artifacts directly related to the vessel, whose provenance has been established through research and documentation.

#### *1.2.b. Moveable Resources - Objectives*

The site's moveable resources which are cultural resources will be safeguarded when:

- moveable resources related to the commemorative intent of the S.S. Keno have been evaluated, identified, protected, and maintained.
- strategies are in place for effective presentation and monitoring.
- access is ensured for research and presentation.



The inland water transportation system played an important role in supporting the building of the Alaska Highway. It was the extension of the road system that eventually shutdown the boats in the mid 1950s. NAC

## ***2. Reasons for the Site's National Historic Significance are Effectively Communicated***

The second element of commemorative integrity focuses on the effective communication of the reasons for the site's national historic significance. Each of the elements of commemorative intent forms an important component of the learning objectives which must be met if the site is to have commemorative integrity. This means that visitors to the site must understand the role of the S.S. Keno as a representative example of Yukon lake and river stern-wheel steamers.

Effective delivery on these learning objectives also implies that the messages are based on research, knowledge, and awareness and sensitivity to current historiography regarding the elements of commemoration. It also suggests that presentation is balanced. This means that various perspectives on the events associated with this site are communicated. Moreover, the individual components of the story should not be treated in isolation, but are integrated into the presentation of the history of inland water transportation as a whole.

The HSMBC has identified S.S. Klondike NHS in Whitehorse as the primary vehicle for the presentation of the messages of national historic significance related to the inland water transportation system. The Board has also highlighted the S.S. Keno's important role in contributing to the historic values of Dawson Historical Complex NHS. Therefore the S.S. Keno's presence in the urban landscape is its main presentation value.

### *2.1 Nationally Significant Messages - Values*

To achieve commemorative integrity the following learning objective for S.S. Keno NHS must be understood by the audience:

**The SS Keno is a representative example of the riverboats used on the lakes and rivers of the Yukon and exhibits the design and application of steam powered sternwheeler technology.**

Messages supporting the learning objective include:

- \* Stern-wheel steamers were the main form of water transportation in the Yukon and played a major role in the development of the Yukon interior until the 1950s.
- \* This type of riverboat technology was an engineering response to regional transport requirements and to local economic and environmental conditions in the Yukon.
- \* Riverboat transport as exemplified by the S.S. Keno played an important role in the existence of Dawson.

### *2.2 Nationally Significant Messages - Objectives*

The reasons for the S.S. Keno's national historic significance will be effectively presented when as many Canadians as possible:

- are aware of the S.S. Keno's importance and contribution to the learning objectives of Dawson Historical Complex NHS.
- understand the site's national significance and its role in Canadian history.
- have knowledge of the linkages between the messages of national significance and the site's level 1 resources and other related resources.
- and when measures and measurement processes are in place to determine the effectiveness of message delivery.

### 3. The Site's Heritage Values are Respected

#### 3.1 Heritage Values

S.S. Keno National Historic Site is a Parks Canada heritage place, one part of a system of national and international heritage places. The natural and cultural heritage represented by these places is our legacy as Canadians and a significant element of Canadian identity.

Beyond the values of national historic significance, the heritage values associated with the S.S. Keno National Historic Site include the role played by the Town of Dawson as an important transshipment point on the Yukon inland water transport system. This includes understanding the role and history of Dawson as an administrative and supply centre, a transshipment point between riverboat and rail and road transport into the Klondike Goldfields and as the site of shipyards and ways.

The role of S.S. Keno National Historic Site as a gateway to the related cultural and natural heritage of the Yukon waterways is another heritage value. For many visitors it is a point of exposure to the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Yukon inland waterways. These additional heritage values comprise the related histories and interrelationships of sites such as the MV Tarahane in Atlin, the Thirty Mile Heritage River, S.S. Klondike National Historic Site, Canyon City and Fort Selkirk with the S.S. Keno.

Other heritage values also include the level 2 cultural resources managed by Parks Canada, and messages relating to the history of this place beyond the themes and period of commemoration. These resources and messages do not relate to the national designation, but are important to the documentation and communication of the history of water transportation in the Yukon. This includes the waterfront site of the S.S. Keno.

The association of the site with other national historic sites relating to the Yukon (i.e. Dawson Historical Complex, Dredge No. 4, and the S.S. Klondike) is acknowledged. A more general heritage value is the relationship of the S.S. Keno to the larger family of national historic sites across Canada.

#### 3.2 Heritage Values - Objectives

The site's other heritage values will be respected and maintained when:

- Parks Canada is working cooperatively with other stakeholders to protect and present the full history and heritage of the inland waterways of the Yukon;
- Level 2 resources are managed according to the Cultural Resource Management Policy;
- the level 2 messages pertaining to Dawson and the S.S. Keno are communicated to the public;
- the waterfront setting of the S.S. Keno is maintained;
- the S.S. Keno's relationship with other National Historic Sites in the Yukon is effectively communicated;
- the S.S. Keno's membership in the larger family of national historic sites is communicated.

S.S. Keno National Historic Site is located in downtown Dawson. Periodic maintenance stabilizes the vessel as a permanent landscape feature in the community.  
D. Neufeld Coll. PC



## **Appendix A: HSMBC Recommendations on the S.S. Keno**

This appendix reviews the major recommendations referring to the S.S. Keno made by the HSMBC.

In November, 1958 the Yukon riverboats were considered by the HSMBC, within the larger context of the history of transportation in Canada. The following recommendations resulted:

*The Board would like to record its interest in the general subject of transportation in Canada as a matter of national historic importance, and its concern that examples of different types of transport should be preserved. The Board believes that it is of national historic importance to preserve a typical representative or representatives of lake and river stern-wheel steamship transport.*

### Yukon River Boats

*The Board recommends further that the Minister ask the Northern administration and Lands Branch to consider the possibility of preserving one or more of the Yukon River steamers as a tourist attraction and perhaps as part of a river-steamer museum in the Yukon.*

Six months later at the May, 1959 meeting the Board went further and made a definite recommendation to preserve one of the *stern-wheel river boats at Whitehorse*, and

*The Board recommends that the purchase of one of the stern-wheel river boats at Whitehorse be arranged and that steps be taken for its preservation.*

The program's contributions to the 1962 Dawson Festival included the refurbishment and sailing of the S.S. Keno from Whitehorse to Dawson where the vessel was set up as a tourist attraction. At the July 1 opening of the S.S. Keno, the Minister declared the vessel a National Historic Site.

In November, 1987, the Board;

*reaffirmed the national significance of both the S.S. Keno and S.S. Klondike. Further the Board recommended that the S.S. Keno should be maintained in a stabilized condition as it adds an extra visual dimension to the Dawson experience.*