

2021

S.S. Klondike
National Historic Site of Canada

Management Plan

Executive Summary

The S.S. *Klondike* National Historic Site (NHS) commemorates inland water transportation in the Yukon. The S.S. *Klondike* is one of Canada's few remaining steam-powered paddlewheelers that linked the Yukon to the outside world and played a critical role in shaping modern Yukon and Canadian society. The first S.S. *Klondike*, built in 1929 by the British Yukon Navigation Company (BYN Co.), ran aground in 1936. An almost identical boat was rebuilt from many of its parts, and was launched in 1937. This second S.S. *Klondike* operated until 1955, becoming obsolete after the highways to Dawson City and Mayo were built. Parks Canada acquired the S.S. *Klondike* in 1960, and moved it upstream of the Whitehorse shipyards in 1966. The S.S. *Klondike* was designated as a national historic site in 1967 and was opened to the public for tours in 1981.

The S.S. *Klondike* is located in the city of Whitehorse and sits within the traditional territories of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation. It is a well-known landmark and one of Whitehorse's most popular tourist attractions. It lies along the Whitehorse waterfront next to a popular year-round multi-use trail, and is linked by roads and pathways to other sites in the downtown. The symbol of the City of Whitehorse is a sternwheeler, and the S.S. *Klondike* is highlighted in city and territorial tourism literature, reflecting the historic significance and public appeal of Yukon's sternwheelers.

This management plan sets a vision for the future of S.S. *Klondike* NHS, with strategies and objectives aimed at reaching that vision. As such, this plan is the main guide for the management of the S.S. *Klondike* NHS, and an important accountability document for Canadians as to how the site will be managed.

Three key strategies are identified in the plan to guide the work of managing the site for the foreseeable future:

- **Key strategy 1** focuses on defining appropriate conservation approaches for the S.S. *Klondike* and its associated cultural resources.
- **Key strategy 2** focuses on offering immersive and innovative visitor experiences at the site that strengthen local engagement, attract target audiences and increase revenues.
- **Key strategy 3** focuses on involving partners and stakeholders in understanding, promoting and raising awareness of the S.S. *Klondike* NHS.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	ii
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Significance of Insert Name National Historic Site	4
3.0 Planning Context	4
4.0 Vision	6
5.0 Key Strategies	7
6.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment	9
 Maps	
Map 1: Regional Setting	2
Map 2: S.S. <i>Klondike</i> National Historic Site	3

1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada manages 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 park, national marine conservation area, heritage canal and those national historic sites administered by Parks Canada supports the Agency's vision:

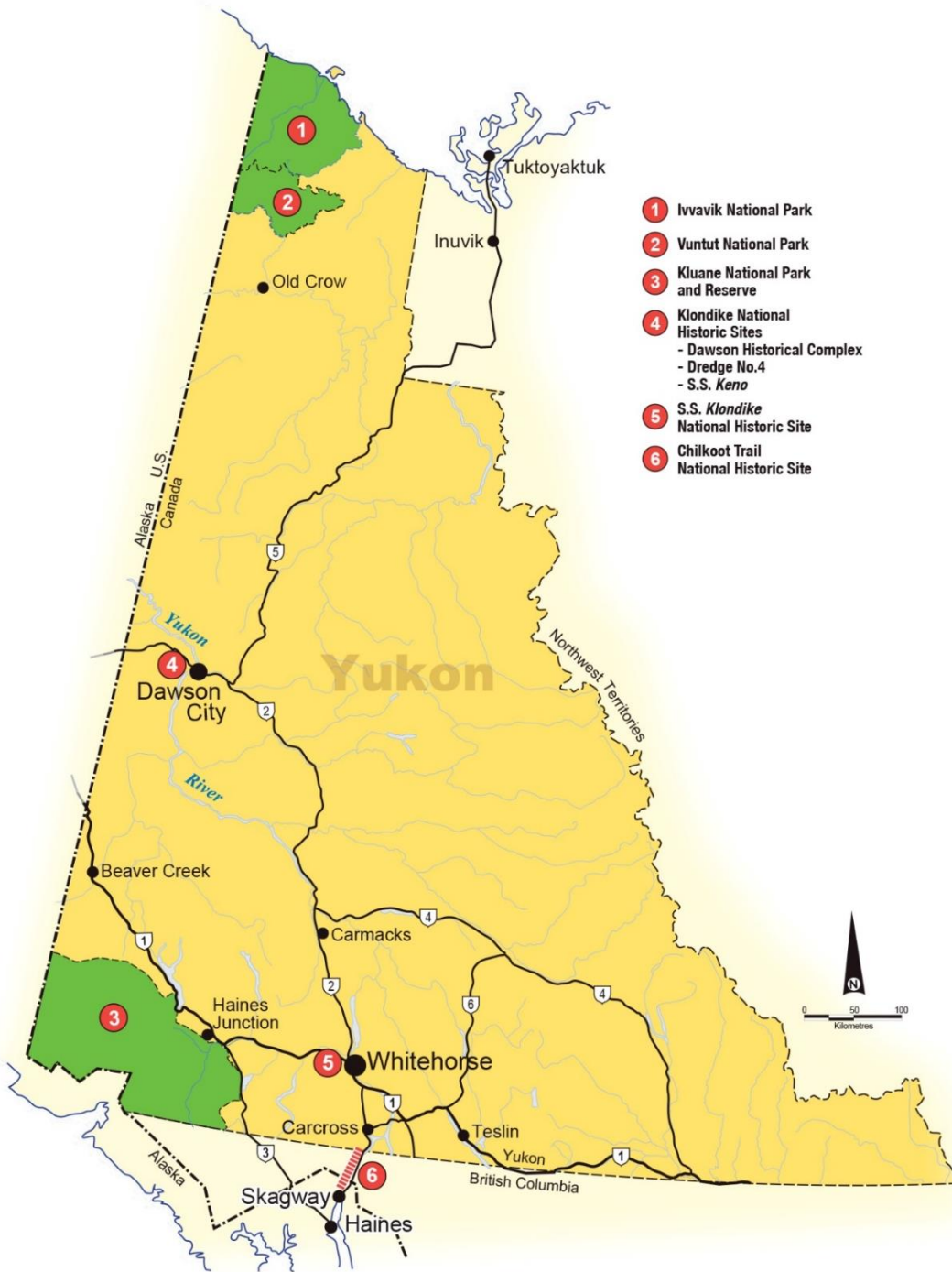
Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

The *Parks Canada Agency Act* requires Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for national historic sites administered by the Agency. The S.S. Klondike National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan, once approved by the 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.

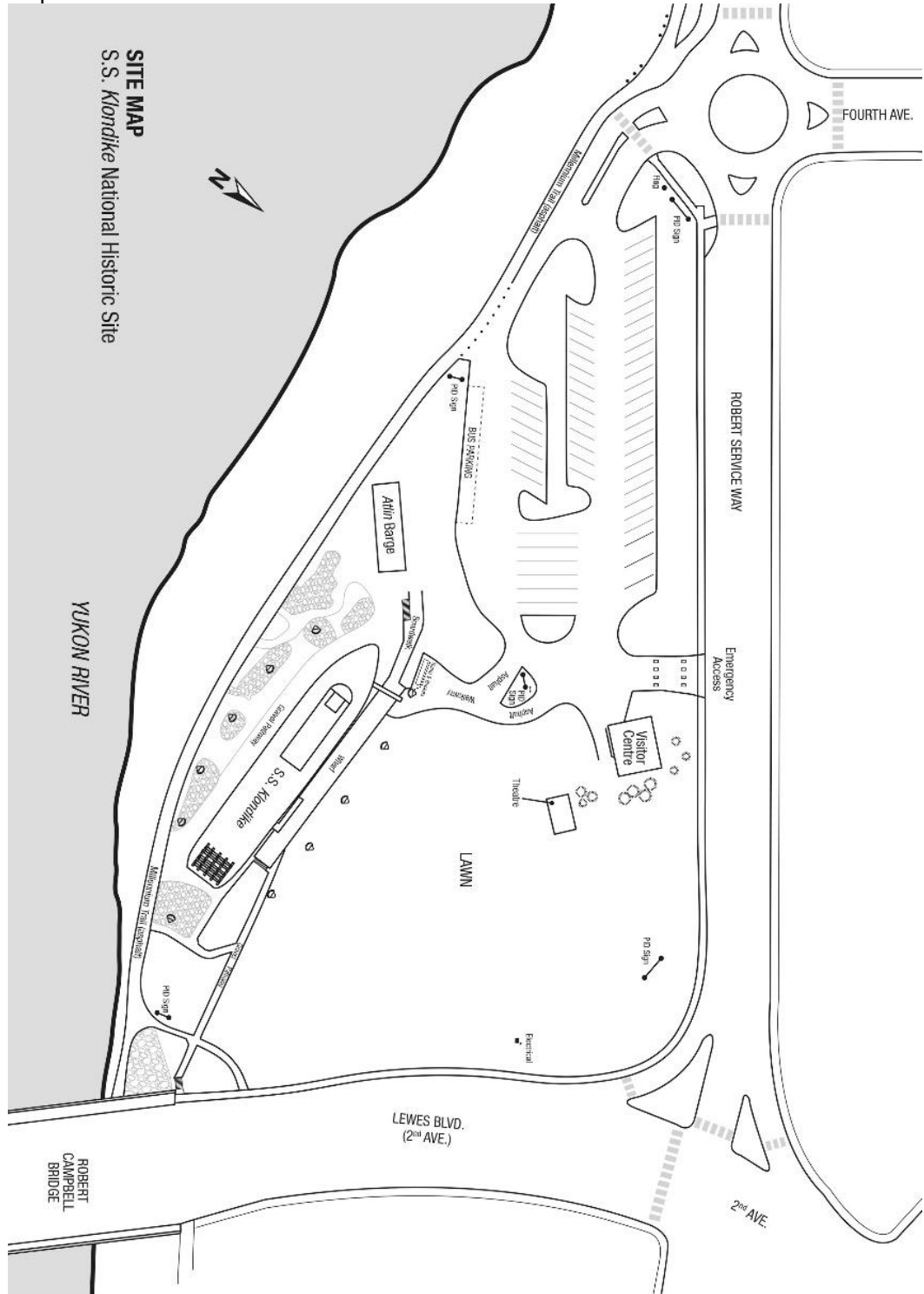
Local First Nations, stakeholders and members of the public participated in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national historic site. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of S.S. Klondike National Historic Site by 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 10 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 on the management of S.S. Klondike National Historic Site in years to come.

Map 1: Regional Setting



Map 2: S.S. Klondike National Historic Site



2.0 Significance of S.S. *Klondike* National Historic Site

The S.S. *Klondike* National Historic Site (NHS) commemorates inland water transportation in the Yukon. The S.S. *Klondike* is one of Canada's few remaining steam-powered paddlewheelers that linked the Yukon to the outside world and played a critical role in shaping modern Yukon and Canadian society.

The first S.S. *Klondike*, built in 1929 by the British Yukon Navigation Company (BYN Co.), ran aground in 1936. An almost identical boat was rebuilt from many of its parts, and was launched in 1937. This second S.S. *Klondike* operated until 1955, becoming obsolete after the highways to Dawson City and Mayo were built. Parks Canada acquired the S.S. *Klondike* in 1960, and moved it upstream of the Whitehorse shipyards in 1966.

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recognized the history of transportation in the Yukon as being of national historic significance in 1967, and recommended the S.S. *Klondike* be used to interpret this story. Following extensive restoration of the boat to its 1937 appearance, the S.S. *Klondike* was opened to the public for tours in 1981.

The S.S. *Klondike* is furnished with hundreds of authentic artefacts and expert reproductions directly related to the S.S. *Klondike* or other vessels of the BYN Co.; these objects represent typical materials used and transported aboard the vessels and are important contributors to the values and messages of the S.S. *Klondike* NHS.

While sternwheelers were the workhorses of the BYN Co. fleet, an integral component of sternwheeler-based transportation was the use of barges to increase freight-hauling capacity. The *Atlin* barge, which is currently dry docked at the S.S. *Klondike* NHS, may well be the last surviving riverboat-era barge that was used in the Yukon River watershed. The importance of barges to the transportation system is emphasized by the fact that the S.S. *Klondike*, which was built large enough to carry the same amount of freight as a smaller boat pushing a barge, herself pushed barges during World War II in support of the construction of the Alcan Military Road, which became the Alaska Highway. Barges were especially important in the Yukon where a short navigation season required that large amounts of freight, most notably silver-lead ore concentrate coming out of the Mayo mining district, be moved in a limited amount of time.

The S.S. *Klondike* NHS speaks to evolving relationships between people, the Yukon River watershed, and the outside world. The Yukon River and its tributaries have always been among the forces shaping life in the region. The arrival of new transportation methods, including riverboats, impacted people's lives, their relationships to the river system, and the environment. Riverboats moved goods, people and resources, and contributed to the colonization of the Yukon and the creation of an intensive mining economy. The positive and negative legacies of boats like the S.S. *Klondike* continue to be felt in the Yukon today.

The S.S. *Klondike* is a well-known landmark and one of Whitehorse's most popular tourist attractions. The symbol of the City of Whitehorse is a sternwheeler, and the S.S. *Klondike* is highlighted in city and territorial tourism literature, reflecting the historic significance and public appeal of Yukon's sternwheelers.

3.0 Planning Context

The S.S. *Klondike* NHS is located in the downtown area of Whitehorse, Yukon (Map 1). It lies along the Whitehorse waterfront next to a popular year-round multi-use trail, and is linked by roads and pathways to other sites in the downtown (Map 2).

Parks Canada's Yukon Field Unit oversees the S.S. *Klondike* NHS and administers its day-to-day operations. Seasonal staff provide visitor services and personal interpretation from

late May until early September. The grounds and parking lot remain open year round, used regularly by community members and visitors. Visitation has shown an increasing trend and the site welcomed approximately 40,000 visitors in 2019.

Visitors onboard the vessel are charged an admission fee with the option of paying an additional fee for other interpretive offers bringing the history of the boat alive. The site can be rented for a wide range of events, from private weddings to community fundraisers. Parks Canada also actively collaborates on special events with various organizations and entities such as Air North, Yukon Historical and Museums Association, Yukon Heritage Resource Board, MacBride Museum and the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon.

The S.S. *Klondike* NHS sits within the traditional territories of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation. Both self-governing First Nations signed comprehensive land claim agreements with Canada in 2002 and 2005, respectively. In 2018, Parks Canada signed a Memorandum of Understanding with both First Nation governments with the goal of incorporating Indigenous heritage, history, perspectives and languages to the visitor experience offer at the site. Indigenous people outside of the Whitehorse area also have connections to the site. Riverboats travelled many miles of the Yukon River system and the industry employed and affected the lives of countless Indigenous people around the Yukon and northern British Columbia.

Key planning considerations and critical management priorities identified for the 10-year planning period include:

Structural rehabilitation of the vessel: The S.S. *Klondike* is in need of major structural and systems rehabilitation. Investigations carried out between 2015 and 2018 show that the boat is in poor condition. Sections of the vessel have not been open to the public since 2015 because of structural issues. To determine appropriate rehabilitation solutions, the boat's current condition must be understood by Parks Canada and the many others who care for this iconic vessel.

Adaptation to climate change: The annual air temperature for the region has increased by 1.0 to 2.5 °C since the 1950s and this warming trend is expected to continue. A slight increase in total annual precipitation has been observed in most of the Yukon and the greatest increases are projected to occur in winter and spring. Temperatures fluctuations, which range from -40 to +30 °C with months of freeze-thaw cycles, and increased humidity will pose challenges to the conservation of the asset. These challenges need to be considered in the analysis of rehabilitation solutions.

Management of the historical object collection: Capacity to manage historical objects that are part of exhibition display is an ongoing challenge, aggravated by the condition of the vessel and the presence of hazardous materials. While a complete inventory of historical objects was conducted in 2019, an adequate schedule and approach to collection management is needed to ensure their ongoing protection.

Indigenous presence: Further effort to bring Indigenous heritage, cultures and languages alive at the S.S. *Klondike* NHS is required. A recent exhibit renewal (done in collaboration with nine different First Nations along the Yukon River) has significantly improved this. The 2018 Memoranda of Understanding between Parks Canada and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation have the potential to further advance relationships and the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives at the site.

Historical research: There has been limited historical research related to the S.S. *Klondike* NHS since the 1970s. While past research remains an important resource, it does not satisfy current needs. New research focused on Indigenous connections and

environmental changes related to riverboats will enhance visitor experience and enable us to develop future interpretive products and cultural resource management strategies.

Visitor experience offer: Work is required to develop visitor experience products that fully meet the site's potential and include multiple perspectives. In particular, Parks Canada would like to expand the site's visitor offer for youth, families, and seniors in the local, regional and national markets. Visitor experience products must meet the needs of target audiences, with a fee structure that better matches local tourism industry pricing, in order to be sustainable.

Regional awareness, support and partnering: While there are strong existing relationships with regional governments, stakeholders and Yukoners, more can be done with partners to enhance the protection and celebration of the S.S. Klondike NHS. The site is strategically placed to play a more active role along the waterfront. Through collaboration with partners – like the City of Whitehorse, Government of Yukon, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and Kwanlin Dün First Nation – there are opportunities to be more fully integrated into the broader community and the wider visitor offer.

4.0 Vision

The vision presented below expresses the desired state of S.S. Klondike NHS in 15 to 20 years.

The S.S. Klondike National Historic Site is a premier destination in the Yukon. The steam-powered sternwheeler sits proudly on the waterfront, making an immediate impression on all who visit downtown Whitehorse. The grounds, bustling with activity, are a vibrant meeting place for the community, its atmosphere reminiscent of the old days on the waterfront.

The site attracts Yukoners and visitors alike to explore the many layers of riverboat history, with its connections to the mining industry, Indigenous peoples, the river and the city. It is a place to understand both the positive and negative impacts of this history.

Upon entering the grounds, you are welcomed to Ta'an Kwäch'än and Kwanlin Dün Traditional Territories. This place has had human use for millennia – for family connections, for fishing, for travel and for trade. The site shares the stories of a river transportation system that evolved to meet the needs of the developing mining sector, and brought with it a time of profound change for Indigenous communities. You hear the stories of Indigenous families that travelled to find work with the boats every spring. You are aware of the hardship of the many people forced to relocate from the waterfront, impacting the social fabric of communities. You stand in the place that was once the old neighbourhood of Whiskey Flats, where cabins, houses and shacks stood during the mid-20th century.

As you approach the iconic sternwheeler, you feel curious and excited to experience this massive multi-storey vessel. Visitors feel welcomed to facilities that take into account accessibility for everyone and inclusion for people of all social identity. Thanks to rigorous and modern conservation efforts, the boat is protected from deterioration and yours to explore. Walking up the gangplank onto the bow, you sense you are entering a special place. You appreciate the complexity of the ironwork, ropes, spars and winch, the size of the boiler. You hear the sounds of the engine and the paddlewheel. Everywhere you walk, you are surrounded by period objects and furnishings and your mind slips, momentarily, into the past. You learn about the people whose lives revolved around the riverboats – shipwrights, master pilots and engineers; deck hands, stewards and passengers; and those who worked ashore at the wood camps and shipyards. As you leave the boat, you feel you have just taken your own riverboat journey.

The S.S. Klondike National Historic Site is a place of inspiration for present and future generations, fostering connections and building a strong sense of place and community.

5.0 Key Strategies

Three key strategies frame the management direction for the S.S. Klondike NHS for the next ten years. The strategies, and corresponding objectives and targets, focus on achieving the vision for the site through an integrated approach to management. Yearly updates on the implementation of the management plan will be provided to Canadians.

Key Strategy 1: On the Ways - Understanding and Taking Care of Our Site

The focus of this key strategy is to define an approach for the conservation of the S.S. Klondike based on a comprehensive understanding of the vessel's condition which is a complex undertaking. The S.S. Klondike is in poor condition due to structural issues from decades of being dry docked and exposed to a harsh northern climate. Once a comprehensive understanding of the vessel's condition has been defined, Parks Canada will meaningfully engage with key partners, stakeholders and the public to develop a strategy to protect the vessel. To enable people to continue to discover and connect with the rich history of this site, a Strategic Asset Management Plan will be developed with partners, stakeholders and public involvement and will incorporate climate change adaptation.

“On the Ways”

During the riverboat era, boats and barges were taken out of the water before freeze-up each year. They were hauled up greased timbers—called ways—and stored on cribbing. While they were “on the ways,” ships were maintained and repaired for the coming season.

Historical research, cultural resource management, contemporary conservation approaches and visitor experience will be considered over the life of this plan. Effective use of the object collection and new historical research will help tell the story of the S.S. Klondike NHS.

Objective 1.1: The condition of the S.S. Klondike and Atlin barge improves as Parks Canada strategically invests in these assets.

Targets:

- By 2025, a strategy for the long-term protection of the vessel is developed based on a comprehensive understanding of the vessel's condition.
- By 2025, the Atlin barge improves from a poor to good condition rating.
- By 2030, the S.S. Klondike condition is improved from 2019 levels, as a result of the implementation of a well defined conservation approach.

Objective 1.2: The management of the S.S. Klondike NHS's historical object collection improves.

Target:

- By 2030, a system to manage the historical object collection is in place and includes regular inventory and assessment and intervention when required.

Objective 1.3: Public awareness, understanding and involvement related to the protection and celebration of the S.S. Klondike increases through meaningful engagement with partners, stakeholders and the public.

Target:

- By 2030, personal and non-personal communication products (e.g. website, social media, printed materials, traditional media and personal interpretation) on the rehabilitation of the S.S. *Klondike* increases by 15% compared to 2019 levels.

Objective 1.4: Parks Canada's knowledge of the history related to the site increases through new historical research that fills gaps, informs site management and is completed in consultation with partners and stakeholders.

Target:

- By 2025, new historical research is completed and will improve awareness of the history related to the site.

Key Strategy 2: *All Aboard!* – A Tourism Destination for Everyone

The focus of this key strategy is to provide immersive and innovative experiences that strengthen local engagement, attract target audiences and increase revenues. This will be guided by a plan encompassing all aspects of visitor experience (target markets identification, marketing, promotion, product development and delivery, visitor satisfaction, accessibility and inclusion). New historical research will inform the visitor experience plan. With revitalized visitor experience offers and activities, the site will be a favourite destination for locals and visitors. As a result, there will be a greater awareness and appreciation for the S.S. *Klondike* NHS and a sense of pride amongst local residents.

Objective 2.1: Visitation increases and the revenues continue to help support services.

Targets:

- Visitation at the S.S. *Klondike* NHS increases by 2% per year.
- By 2025, the number of youth (e.g. seventeen years old and under) participating in programming increases by 5% from 2019 levels.
- By 2030, revenue increases by 10% through visitation, programming, events and merchandise sales.

Objective 2.2: More dynamic, immersive and innovative experiences are offered to engage visitors in the history of riverboats.

Targets:

- The trend for enjoyment and satisfaction remains consistently high.
- Exhibits and interpretative content reflect multiple historical perspectives and are refreshed every five years.

Objective 2.3: More community members feel connected, engaged and proud of the S.S. *Klondike* NHS.

Target:

- By 2025, the number of attendance at special events increases by 5% from 2019 levels.

Key Strategy 3: *All Hands On Deck* – Working Together

The focus of this strategy is to involve partners and stakeholders in understanding, protecting and celebrating the site. Collaborative efforts lead to more opportunities to explore and discover the site and enhance decision making. Community needs and the site's role within the waterfront are considered in planning for infrastructure upgrades. Formal partnerships with the two local First Nation governments continue. Parks Canada respects, supports and works to implement the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation Final Agreements and identifies and collaborates on opportunities that achieve mutual objectives. Yukon First Nations citizens are welcomed and engaged in a

way that acknowledges their historical and continued connection to the site, with Indigenous perspectives incorporated into the visitor offer.

Objective 3.1: Awareness, understanding and respect for Indigenous histories, traditional knowledge and contemporary ties to the Yukon River and the site improves.

Targets:

- By 2025, the number of Indigenous stories, perspectives and use of language in interpretive programs and products related to the S.S. *Klondike* NHS increases from the 2019 service offer.
- Inclusion of Indigenous stories in film, media and outreach increases from 2019 levels.

Objective 3.2: Awareness of the site is enhanced through strategic marketing, partnerships and public outreach activities.

Target:

- By 2030, virtual reach has increased by 10% through website, social media, videos and emerging technology from 2019 levels.

Objective 3.3: Strategic relationships with regional governments and partners are strengthened, integrating the S.S. *Klondike* NHS into the broader community and wider visitor offer in Whitehorse.

Target:

- The number of strategic relationships and cross-promotional initiatives in the region increase by 10% in the next 10 years.

6.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

Parks Canada is responsible for assessing and mitigating the impacts of management actions on ecosystems and on cultural resources.

In accordance with *The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals (2010)*, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is conducted on all management plans. The purpose of SEA is to incorporate environmental considerations into the development of public policies, plans, and program proposals to support environmentally-sound decision making. Individual projects undertaken to implement management statement objectives at the site will be evaluated separately to determine if an impact assessment is required under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*.

The scope of the assessment included the area within the boundary of the S.S. *Klondike* National Historic Site in downtown Whitehorse and consists of the vessel, the *Atlin* barge, parking, lawn and a small visitor center. The site sits within the traditional territories of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation. The time frame considered was ten years from the date of the plan, at which time the plan will be reviewed. There are no environmental components of note at this site.

Many positive residual effects will occur as a result of the implementation of the plan, for example: the renewal of partnerships with Yukon First Nations; protecting priority cultural resources; and improving engagement, awareness and appreciation for the site among Indigenous partners, residents and tourists. A revitalized visitor experience will result in greater awareness and appreciation for the S.S. *Klondike* NHS and a sense of pride amongst local residents and will support the Parks Canada mandate.

Actions identified in the management plan that could potentially result in negative environmental effects are related to operations, such as earthworks or disposal of waste wood, required for structural rehabilitation of the vessel. However, these effects can be minimized by following existing guidelines, including the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, and implementing a sediment and erosion control plan and conducting project-level impact assessments, if required.

Individual projects undertaken to implement management statement objectives at the site will be evaluated separately to determine if an impact assessment is required under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*.

Public and Indigenous engagement was conducted on the plan in **X dates to be filled in after consultation occurs**. Public concerns raised were incorporated into the Plan as appropriate.

The Plan supports the Federal Sustainable Development Strategies of Connecting Canadians with Nature. There are no important negative environmental effects anticipated from implementation of the management plan.