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Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada

State of the Site Assessment (2022)



Prepared by:

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Approved:

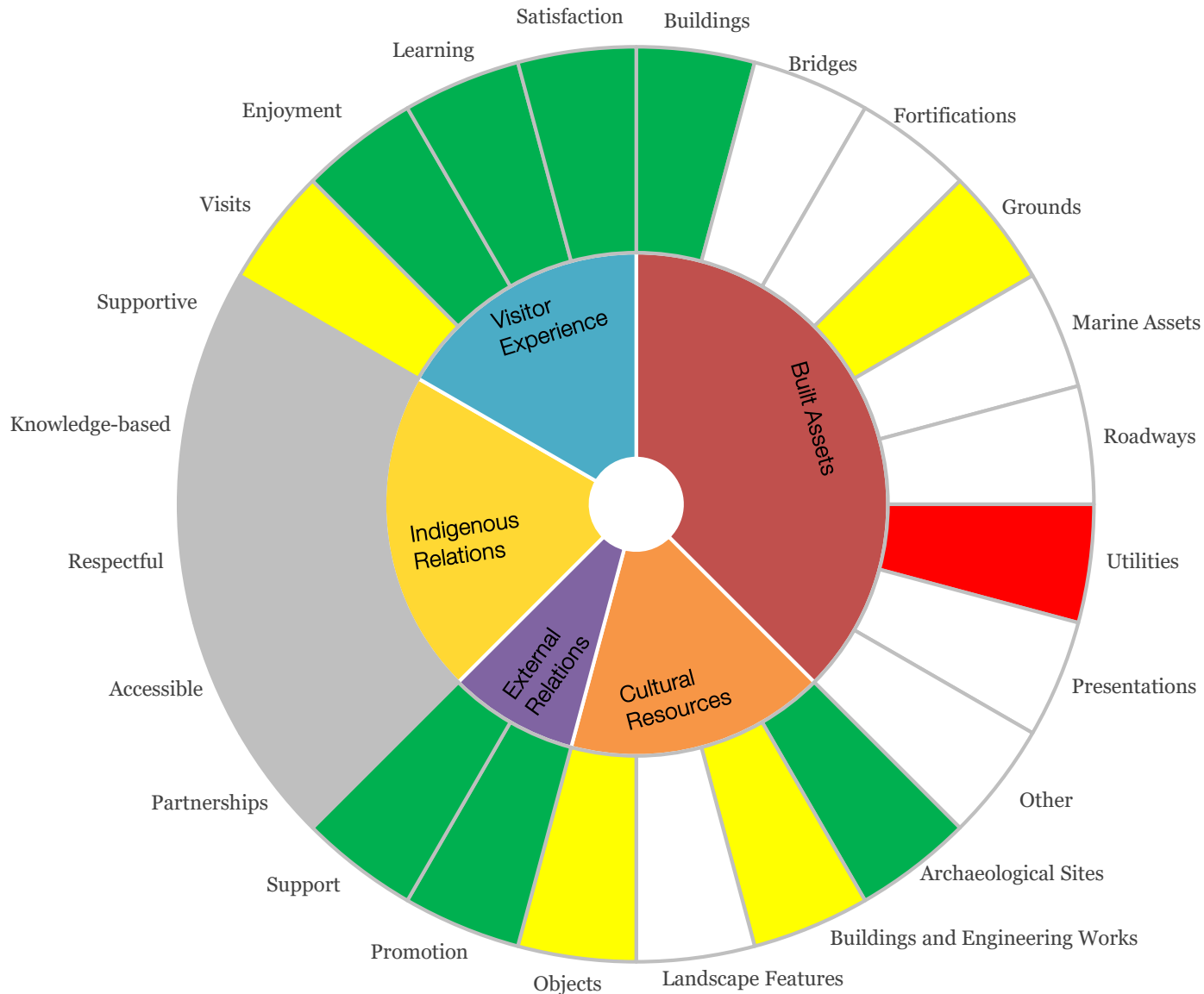
Michaela Kent
Executive Director, Alberta

June 13, 2022

Date

Overview of Indicators







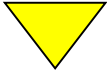

Fort St. James National Historic Site



Indicator Ratings	
	Good
	Fair
	Poor
	Not Rated
	Not Applicable

“State of the Site” assessments are used to communicate the overall condition of key aspects of the site. The results reported in this assessment are based on monitoring data collected by Parks Canada for a suite of indicators used for consistent reporting across Parks Canada administered places. These assessments are undertaken every ten years to support identifying key management issues to address in the next site management plan.

Cultural Resource Indicators

Indicators	Measures	
Archaeological Sites	<i>National significance</i>	
	<i>Other heritage value</i>	
Buildings and Engineering Works	<i>National significance</i>	
	<i>Other heritage value</i>	
Landscapes and Landscape Features		
Objects*	<i>Objects (Historical) - National significance</i>	
	<i>Objects (Historical) - Other heritage value</i>	
	<i>Objects (Archaeological)</i>	

*Trends were not assigned to object ratings due to a change in assessment methodology from the last State of the Site Assessment.

Sources:

Commemorative Integrity Assessment, 2022
Parks Canada Artifact Information System, 2021

Overview

Fort St. James was founded in the early 1800s and operated as a fur trading post until the 1950s. Most cultural resources associated with the site date to this time period.

Archaeological Sites

The historic site as a whole is considered to be an archaeological site of national historic significance. It was rated as being in 'good' condition in the previous (2008) State of the Site Assessment, and 'good and decreasing' in this assessment. Though there has been no damage to or deterioration of known archaeological resources on site since 2008, several construction projects were completed on site between 2015-2021 without any archaeological assessment, and the ground disturbance associated with this construction may have impacted unknown archaeological resources.

Building and Engineering Works

The five original in-situ wooden fur trade buildings on site are classified as resources of National Historic Significance. All five receive regular maintenance and are in fair, stable condition. Water infiltration causing rot in sill logs remains an ongoing issue, though mitigation measures have been successful at slowing the impact of this threat. Sprinkler systems were temporarily installed on the historic buildings in 2018 to mitigate wildfire risk.

Objects

There are over 14 historic objects of national historic significance, but their exact number, storage location, and storage conditions are unknown, and as such the indicator has been rated as poor.

There are 2,218 objects of other historical value in Parks Canada's collections associated with Fort St. James, the majority of which are reproductions or are historic objects not directly associated with the site. The collection is rated as fair because object cataloguing requires improvement, and because demonstration furs are becoming worn after 50 years of visitor handling and will require replacement over the next 10 years.

Archaeological objects were assessed as fair because the collection is stored in locations with good environmental and security controls, but the collection requires assessment to determine which objects are of national historic significance or of other heritage value.

External Relations Indicators

Indicators	Measures	
Promotion	<i>Events</i>	
Support	<i>Volunteers</i>	

Sources: Jasper Field Unit Promotions and Outreach Data, Facebook InSights, Urchin by Google, Google Analytics and HootSuite Analytics

Overview

Fort St. James has a robust external relations program. The site regularly conducts public outreach, engages with partners and stakeholders, and has a strong web and social media presence.

Promotions

Special Events: Special events remain popular at the Fort, and, with the exception of 2020 and 2021, when events had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of special events held each year is increasing. Current events include Victoria Day, a Seniors Tea, a Fall Fair, Metis Day, Hallowe'en, and a Salmon Day.

Outreach: The Fort regularly conducts off-site outreach at regional events such as the British Columbia Northern Exhibition (BCNE) in Prince George, the Vanderhoof Fall Fair, and the Historic Places Day event in Prince George.

Volunteers

The volunteer program remains steady, and volunteers continue to assist with special event programming. The Friends of Fort St. James remain active.

Social Media and Web

The site continues to have a strong and growing digital outreach presence. The Fort's website receives nearly 1,000 visitors per year. Facebook and Twitter accounts were created for the site in 2015/16. From an initial following of 312 fans, the Facebook page has grown by approximately 10% per year to a total of nearly 1,000 followers. In 2020, the Fort broadcast its "world-class chicken races," in which visitors cheer on chickens as they race against one another through lanes lined with chicken-wire to get to their feed, live on its Facebook page. This proved to be popular: Over 2,500 users watched the videos.

Indigenous Relations Indicators

Indicators	Measures	
Indigenous Partnerships	<i>Indigenous Collaboration in Heritage Place Planning and Management</i>	N/R
	<i>Indigenous Collaboration in Heritage Place Operations</i>	N/R
Indigenous Accessibility	<i>Indigenous Partner Access to Heritage Place Traditional Lands & Activities</i>	N/R
Mutual Respect	<i>Team Member Commitment to Building Mutual Respect, Trust and Understanding with Indigenous Partners</i>	N/R
	<i>Extent of Reconciliation with Local Indigenous Communities</i>	N/R
Incorporation of Traditional Knowledge	<i>Incorporation of Traditional Knowledge</i>	N/R
	<i>Use of Indigenous Languages</i>	N/R
Support for Indigenous Communities	<i>Economic Opportunities for Indigenous Peoples</i>	N/R
	<i>Capacity Building for Indigenous Peoples</i>	N/R











Relationships with Indigenous peoples formed a key part of the site's past and will continue to form a key part of the site's future. Dakelh people supplied the fur trading post with food, furs, and labour, and today many Dakelh continue to live near the site.

An Elders Advisory group collaborated with Parks Canada on site operation and management from 2005 to the mid 2010s. However, with the passing of several group members, interest in the group dwindled and it no longer exists. Parks Canada continues to collaborate with Indigenous partners for special events like Metis Day. Additionally, an interpreter who is a member of a local First Nation provides part-time Indigenous interpretation on site. Exhibits at the site's Cultural Exchange Shed and Visitor Centre present elements of the Dakelh connection to the land and the Fort.

Indigenous involvement in site planning, management, and operations is low at this time.

Efforts are underway to renew Fort St. James' relationship with Indigenous partners and provide more opportunities for Indigenous involvement with the site. As such, rating these indicators at this stage would be premature as the indicators and measures of the relationship between Parks Canada and Indigenous partners should be collaboratively determined.

Visitor Experience Indicators

Indicators	Measures	
Visits	<i>Attendance (person-visit)</i> 2011/12: 12,161 2016/17: 8,650 2020/21: 1,917	
Enjoyment	<i>Enjoyed Visit: 99%</i>	
	<i>Satisfaction with Availability of Services: 94%</i>	
	<i>Satisfaction with Availability of Activities: 89%</i>	
	<i>Satisfaction with Staff Demonstrating Passion: 99%</i>	
	<i>Satisfaction with Condition of Facilities: 98%</i>	
Learning	<i>Learned Something : 99%</i>	
Satisfaction	<i>Overall Visit Satisfaction: 99%</i>	
	<i>Satisfaction with Information Prior to Arrival : 83%</i>	
	<i>Satisfaction with Value for Entry Fee: 96%</i>	

Overview

Indicator ratings for Enjoyment, Learning, and Satisfaction are based on the 2016 Visitor Information Program survey, which had a margin of error of 3.9%.

Visits

This indicator is rated as fair because attendance has not met the corporate visitation target of a 2% increase per year. Attendance approached 20,000 visitors per year in the 1990s, then decreased to an average of 12,000 per year in the 2000s, and an average of 10,500 per year in the 2010s. These statistics exclude low attendance years caused by the Shovel Lake Wildfire in 2018 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021. Several factors may have contributed to the reported decline in visitation: In the 2010s, the site operating season was shortened by 1 month such that the site no longer operates in September, and BC ferry schedules were changed, which led to less tour busses frequenting the site. Furthermore, visitation statistics currently only count paid visitors, and as of the mid 2010s Indigenous peoples and youth, both of whom make up a significant portion of visitors, receive free admission.

Enjoyment

99% of respondents enjoyed their visit to Fort St. James, surpassing the target of 90% set in the 2013 Site Management Plan. Satisfaction with the availability of services, with Parks Canada staff and with the condition of facilities continues to be strong. In 2010 the site introduced daily chicken races, in which chickens race out of their coop and down a track to get to their feeder, as a new activity for visitors. Highway billboards promoting the races have proven effective at getting travelers to make an unplanned stop at the site, and the races have proven to be an effective tool at driving repeat visitation from locals. Other new initiatives over the last decade include the expansion of the café, the construction of a picnic shelter that is bookable for private events, and the creation of a self-guided audiotour, all of which have been popular with visitors.

Learning




99% of respondents felt they learned something from their visit, surpassing the management plan target of 85%.

Satisfaction

Visitor satisfaction with the site continues to be high.

Sources:
Parks Canada
Attendance
Statistics 2011-
2021
Visitor Information
Program 2016

Built Assets Indicators

Indicators	Measures	
Buildings	<i>Administration, Operation, Public Use, Utility, Staff, & other Outbuildings</i>	
Grounds	<i>Trails, Grounds, Parking Areas, Monuments & Plaques, Signs</i>	
Utilities	<i>Water Systems</i>	

Sources: Maximo asset management database, accessed Spring 2022

This is the first year built assets were included in the State of the Site Assessment. As such, no trends could be established.

The following national indicators were assessed to be not applicable to this site: Bridges, Fortifications, Marine Assets, Roadways, Presentations, and Other Structures.

Overview

Site assets include a Visitor Centre and parking lot adjacent to a historic fur trade landscape faithfully restored to its appearance in 1896. The 6.88 hectare former fur trading post is composed of 5 original in-situ wooden fur trade buildings, reconstructed buildings, and historic grounds and pathways.

Buildings

Buildings were rated in fair condition. Over the last decade, continued maintenance has kept most buildings in good condition, and several new buildings (a new washroom, an Interpretation Office, and a picnic shelter bookable for private events) have improved site functionality. However, the Visitor Centre requires significant rehabilitation to ensure its long-term sustainability.

Grounds

Boardwalks were recently replaced, and fields and gardens remain in good and stable condition. However, the Tramway (a dock feature) recently collapsed, fences are rotten, and land slumping is affecting the lakeshore pathway, leading to this measure being rated as fair.

Utilities

The site water distribution system is in poor condition: Fire hydrants have exceeded their lifespan, poor drainage is creating freezing issues, and the majority of pipes servicing the hydrants and the sprinkler system are old iron pipes that leak.

Key issues

Issue 1: Strengthening Indigenous relations

Indigenous collaboration in site management and operations has decreased over the last decade. Over the next 10 years, a key priority for the site will be to strengthen its relationship with Dakelh people on the basis of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership, and to provide opportunities for their involvement in site management, interpretation, and operations.

Issue 2: Asset renewal

Assets were rated as in poor to good condition. Over the next decade, site utilities, parking, fencing and pathways will require replacement, the site Visitor Centre will require rehabilitation, and improvements will be required to improve site accessibility. Investment will be required to support delivery of Parks Canada's mandate and sustain quality visitor experiences.

Issue 3 : Stabilizing attendance

Even when accounting for attendance anomalies caused by COVID-19 and the Shovel Lake Wildfire, site attendance is decreasing. Annual attendance decreased from 20,000 visitors in the 1990s, to 12,000 visitors in the 2000s and approximately 8,600 visitors in the 2010s. While this may be due in part to changes in counting metrics, a reduction in ferry services and consequential reduction in tour bus visits, and a shortened operational season, additional management actions will be required to stabilize and increase attendance.

Appendix 1: Species at Risk Indicators


















White Sturgeon, Nechako population

There is one species at risk occurring at Fort St. James NHS: White Sturgeon. This endangered fish is present in Stuart Lake; and the site's boundaries include a portion of the Stuart Lake lakeshore. The portion of the lakeshore contained on site has not been identified as critical habitat for the species.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is currently leading the preparation of an action plan for the recovery of White Sturgeon, in cooperation with the Province of British Columbia, Indigenous communities, and affected stakeholders, including Parks Canada.

Parks Canada will work to assist Fisheries and Oceans Canada in the preparation and implementation of the action plan for the recovery of White Sturgeon where possible.

Legend

Trend\State	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Rated
Improving				
Stable				
Declining				
Not Rated				
Not Applicable				

The 3 categories for Species at Risk reporting:

- Reached:** All actions are completed and conservation target is reached
Partial: Some actions are completed but conservation target is not yet reached
Not initiated: No actions have been implemented