

Fort St. James, B. C.

## **Fish Cache**

Fort St. James National Historic Park

### **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

The Fish Cache at Fort St. James was built in 1888 and is one of a number of buildings of the former Hudson's Bay Company Post located on Stuart Lake. It is administered by Parks Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 89-113.

#### **Reasons for Designation**

The Fish Cache at Fort St. James was designated Classified for its historical associations, its rare functional type and unique architectural form, and its contributing role in defining the character of the site.

The Fish Cache and its companion structures at Fort St. James comprise an excellent example of a Fur Trading establishment. A fine example of Red River frame construction, the form of the Fish Cache was inspired by traditional native structures combined with Hudson's Bay Company design and construction. The structure's unusual shape, style and height give it prominence as an integral element of the fort's cultural landscape. The site itself has been restored to represent the interdependent historic arrangement of fences, boardwalks, gardens, open fields and buildings, and retains its physical relationship to Stuart Lake.

#### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage value of the Fish Cache resides in its overall form, materials and construction system, and in the expression of its functional role as a facility for storing fish and meat. The building's value is also reinforced by its relationship with its setting.

The massing of the structure is simple, consisting of a one-storey square block with a pyramidal roof, held above grade on four corner supports. The entrance to the raised structure is reached by an exterior wooden stairway. These three features - the roof, the stairs and the unusual relationship to grade - are integral to the character of the building and should be respected.

The Red River Frame structure, composed of squared log uprights and filler logs, posts and beams and slats, is a defining feature of the building. The original material of the upper section of the building is largely intact, while rotted sections of the lower beams, supporting posts, stairs, door and shingled roof have been replaced over the years. Regular maintenance will enhance the longevity of this building. When replacement of elements is required, traditional materials and details appropriate to Red River Frame construction should be employed.



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**Fish Cache** (Continued)

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The interior of the building is a single room, with cross beams at ceiling level that were used for hanging fish and meat. Any early interior finishes or hardware which reflect this activity should be retained. Any alteration of the interior should be preceded by investigation to identify original finishes and features, and these elements incorporated into new work.

The Fish Cache is connected to other buildings by a series of fences, boardwalks, gardens and spaces which contribute to the function and character of the park and which should be maintained for continued public use and interpretation. The archaeological vestiges of a former roothouse should be protected during any site work. The site's generally flat topography should be respected in any site development. The relationship to the water and to the tree enclosure should also be respected to maintain an identity distinct from the adjacent modern community.

It is this building's unique form, functional type and placement within the complex as a whole which make it an integral element of this cultural landscape. The Fish Cache should be maintained in its present position without changes, alterations or additions.

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