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## State of the Site Report

### *Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada*

December 2008



Parks  
Canada

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Canada

Canada

**State of the Site Report (SoSR)**  
Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada

This report was produced by a number of Parks Canada staff, particularly those who participated in the initial workshop held in September 2007, namely:

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Fort St. James National Historic Site is one of a larger family of national historic sites. Each has had a nationally significant impact on Canadian history or illustrates a nationally important aspect of the history of Canada. Together with national parks and national marine conservation areas, national historic sites are part of a larger system of protected heritage places.

Cover page image: Razing the HBC flag at Fort St. James NHSC  
Photographer D. Houston

**State of the Site Report (SoSR)**  
Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada

**Approved**

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Greg Fenton  
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Date

## **Table of Contents**

Executive Summary.....	5
1. Introduction.....	10
2. Resource Protection.....	11
3. Visitor Experience.....	12
4. Public Outreach Education.....	18
5. Stakeholder Engagement.....	18
6. Aboriginal Perspectives.....	20
7. Results of Management Actions.....	22
8. Key Issues.....	26
9. Conclusion.....	26

## Executive Summary

This state of the site report (SoSR) provides a synopsis of the current condition of Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada and assesses the site's performance in meeting established targets for indicators associated with Parks Canada's mandate. This is the first SoSR for Fort St. James and will serve as a tool for decision-making with respect to issues associated with resource protection, public education, and visitor experiences.



*Fort St. James from the air looking towards the Nak'azdli Reserve  
photographer Chris Grzesiok*

Fort St. James was established as a North West Company trading post in 1806. It was declared a national historic site in 1948 and continued to operate as a trading post until 1952, when the title was transferred to the Government of Canada. Parks Canada began work on the site in 1972 and opened to the public in 1977.

Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada is located in the district of Fort St. James, in north-central British Columbia. It lies along the southern shore of Stuart Lake, between the Nak'azdli Reserve and the village of Fort St. James. Fort St. James received its designation as a national historic site to commemorate its role:

- in the fur trade of the Pacific Slope;
- as an important centre of trade and cooperation with the First Nations of the Pacific Slope;
- as the chief trading post in north-central British Columbia and the administrative centre of the district of New Caledonia; and
- as an important link for transportation and communications in northern British Columbia.

Today, many international travelers, as well as Canadian citizens, visit the site in order to enjoy the breath-taking scenery and the wide range of historical buildings and programs. According to the most recent visitor survey "most visitors enter the site expecting a strong historical element and leave describing a personal experience."

Based on information generated during a commemorative integrity (CI) evaluation update conducted in September 2007, the overall commemorative integrity rating is 8. This is characterized as minor impairment (see table below). Two threats were identified through the CI evaluation that are likely to have an effect on the site or its resources and which could result in a high level of impairment. The most imminent threat is water infiltration resulting in rot in the sill logs in two of the site's buildings.

There is also a slow moving almost imperceptible slippage along the slope of the lake shore (surface water along this slope and wave action contribute to this problem).

The baseline ratings for each element of commemorative integrity, as determined in 2003, were:

Resource Condition: **Green**  
 Effectiveness of Communications: **Green**  
 Selected Management Practices: **Yellow**

The current ratings for each element of commemorative integrity are:

Resource Condition: **Yellow +**  
 Effectiveness of Communications: **Green –**  
 Selected Management Practices: **Yellow**

Ratings from the 2005 visitor survey indicate a high level of satisfaction with their visit:



- the visit as a memorable experience: 95% satisfaction;
- quality of service: 98% satisfaction;
- availability of learning opportunities: 96% good or very good;
- those who participated in interpretation activities: 94% satisfaction;
- value for entry fee: 97% satisfaction.



The survey, including comments from visitors and a visitor experience assessment, indicate people touring the site learn many things about the past, while many also describe in their comments an emotional connection to the site.

The vast majority of visitors do not learn about the existence of the site through Parks Canada's marketing efforts. The shortfalls identified in the site's marketing and promotions are likely contributing to the decline. Some of the visitor comments about possible improvements to their visits match the few weaknesses found in the visitor survey:

- Opportunities to learn about Aboriginal culture and history received a 74.9 satisfaction rate falling just short of the green light and receiving amber instead. This suggests this is not serious but is something to build upon within the site's service offer.
- On the other hand visitors were "very satisfied" with Aboriginal demonstrations.
- Activities that children enjoy and the availability of site information prior to the visit received red ratings.

The CI evaluation and ratings described above provide key input for the overall assessment of the state of the site summarized below.

SUMMARY - STATE OF THE SITE					
		Indicator	Current Rating	Since last evaluation	Highlights
<i>Resource Protection</i>		<i>Resource condition</i>	Y+ 		The resource condition rating has decreased from 2003 because of two main threats to the historic structures: log rot in sill logs, and slippage along the slope above the lakeshore.

	<b>Commemorative Integrity- rating: 8 (minor impairment)</b>	Effectiveness of communications	G- 	↓	The communications component has decreased since 2003 because of ineffective non-personal media in the visitor center. This refers mainly to the 35 year old exhibits in the display room.
		Selected Management Practices	Y 	↔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heritage recording of the buildings has not taken place.</li> <li>Slumping threat is a management priority.</li> <li>The evaluation of cultural resources is not complete.</li> <li>The buildings are currently rated in fair condition due to the presence of rot in the sill logs. Staff members understand and are committed to ensuring the commemorative integrity of the site and the application of the CRM Policy (demonstrated by the careful siting of the Hide Tanning Shed). Built resources continue to be the object of corrective measures. There is a noticeable advancement in the work to complete the cataloguing of archaeological objects.</li> </ul>
<b>Visitor Experience</b>	<b>Visitor Experience</b>	Marketing and Promotion	Target: Maintenance of number of visits. The target for number of visits has not been achieved, with a 14% decline in visits during the last five years.		
<b>Public Outreach Education</b>		Interpretation	Target: 80% of visitors take part; 75% of participants consider they learned something about the commemorative integrity of the site. The target for participation in learning activities has been met.		
<b>Stakeholder Engagement</b>			Visitors understand the reasons for designation as a result of their experience at Fort St. James.		

		<i>Activities and Services</i>	<p><i>Target: 85% of visitors enjoyed their visit; 85% of visitors were satisfied with availability of activities; 85% of visitors were satisfied with availability of services; 85% of visitors were satisfied with quality of services.</i></p> <p>Visitors are very satisfied with the interpretive services at the site. Eight out of nine questions exceeded the target; brochures and literature fell below the satisfaction threshold with an 82% satisfaction rate.</p> <p>Eight of nine facilities and services rated above the national average. Falling below the target was the availability of historic site information prior to visit at only 70.2%</p> <p>When asked about opportunities to do various activities, visitors rated five components above the national average and two below. The latter were learning about Aboriginal culture and history, (74.9% satisfied) and activities that children could enjoy. (70.2 %)</p> <p>Overall based on the visitor comments and measures from the VIP survey, the vast majority of visitors are overwhelmingly enjoying their visits to the site.</p>
		<i>Personal Connection</i>	<p><i>Target: 85% of visitors were satisfied and 50% very satisfied with their visit. Tbd% of visitors consider the site meaningful.</i></p> <p>Satisfaction with the visit overall met the target. Meaningfulness to visitors has not been measured.</p>
	<i>Public Outreach Education</i>	<i>Awareness</i>	At this time, there is no data available to inform the measures and in turn, provide an overall assessment of outreach education. The corporate target is to establish baseline performance expectations for each measure by March 2009.
		<i>Understanding</i>	
		<i>Appreciation</i>	
	<i>Learning</i>		
	<i>Stakeholder Engagement</i>	<i>Support</i>	At this time, there is no data available to inform the measures and in turn, provide an overall assessment of stakeholder relations. The corporate target is to establish baseline performance expectations for the measure related to 'support' by March 2009 and for the others by March 2010.
		<i>Influence</i>	
		<i>Active Involvement</i>	
<b>OVERALL</b>	See summary of key issues.		

Summary of key issues:

- Two significant threats to the site, in terms of CI, are water infiltration resulting in rot in the sill logs of specific buildings and slippage along the slope of the lake.
- The condition of the Men's House is assessed to be in fair condition due to the presence of rot in sill logs. The Fur Warehouse is also assessed in fair condition based on the condition of the west wall. The trade store (a reproduction) is also affected by log rot in sill logs.
- Evaluation of the archaeological objects, to identify their historic value, has not been completed.

- The major threat, in terms of the visitor experience, is the steady decline in site visitation – there were 14% fewer visitors in 2007 as compared to 2003.
- With regard to the activities offered on-site, visitors signalled some concerns, with three ratings below the national targets, and one element of the visitor experience assessment rated low.
- Limited outreach education opportunities are offered, which has an impact on the communications effectiveness for non-visitors. Target audiences for outreach education have not been determined.

#### Aboriginal Perspectives:

The Nak'azdli First Nation has put the site on the table for negotiation in the present treaty process in B.C. A draft position paper to manage the site was tabled at the main table meeting at Takla Landing July 28 1998. Treaty negotiations are currently at a stand still. The Band is not receiving funding from the treaty commission to continue the process at the current time. The Elders Advisory group, established in partnership with the site in 2001, is now well established. Input from the Elders Advisory group concerning their perspective on the state of the land is as follows:

- There is a connection to the land through the elders by their teachings that are being passed on to the younger people at the site.
- The elders have so much to share. There should be more elders on site to tell stories during the operating season.



*“Walking Through Time” along the shores of Stuart Lake, led by one of our interpreters Photographer Bob Grill*

## 1. Introduction

Fort St. James NHSC, on the shores of Stuart Lake, in the current community of the same name, invites visitors to experience one of the legendary fur trade sites in Canada. Simon Fraser and John Stuart founded Fort St. James as a North West Company trading post in 1806. It later served as the Hudson's Bay Company's chief post for New Caledonia (New Scotland). Aboriginal people, most notably the Nak'azdli Carrier, supplied the traders with food and furs and provided a labour force. Many Carrier continue to live around Stuart Lake. The largest group is the Nak'azdli First Nation, whose most populated reserve is located immediately adjacent to the old Fort.



*Gathering the fall harvest with the Trade Store and Fur Warehouse in the background  
Photographer Bob Grill*

Fort St. James was declared a national historic site in 1948. It continued to operate as a trading post until 1952, when the title was transferred to the Government of Canada, in part because of the preservation efforts of local residents. Parks Canada began work on the site in 1972 and it opened to the public in 1977. The community of Fort St. James has been a strong supporter of the national historic site since its inception.

The historic site encompasses:

- A protected fur trade landscape within the community of Fort St. James;
- The largest grouping of original, in-situ wooden buildings representing the fur trade in Canada;
- A number of reconstructed buildings and features;
- A parking lot, visitor reception center, café, and lakeside trail;
- Approximately 6.88 acres of land, including the gardens, fields, historic buildings, and a reconstructed tramway;
- Associated buried archaeological resources;
- Approximately 9500 historic and reproduced objects; and
- An Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque.

## 1.1 State of the Site Report and the Management Plan

This report provides a synopsis of the current condition of Fort St. James NHSC and assesses performance in meeting established objectives for indicators associated with the Agency's mandate. The report and the internal analysis are the basis for the scoping document and five-year management plan review.

The primary purpose of the report is to:

- portray the state of the site regarding resource protection, visitor experience, and public education;
- report on progress to maintain and improve the state of the site including actions in respect of resource protection, visitor experience, and public education;
- identify some of the key issues for consideration in the scoping document.

The report serves to:

- report back to the CEO on the state of the site;
- communicate the state of the site to a wide public audience; and
- assist in decision making by providing baseline information.

The "state of" report is based on several sources - the results of on-going monitoring of natural and cultural resources, an evaluation of the commemorative integrity of the site, a visitor experience assessment, a visitor survey, and input from staff and stakeholders.

## 2. Resource Protection

### i. Resource protection context

The designated place is 6.88 hectares of land extending into Stuart Lake including gardens, fields, subsurface archaeological remains, and the largest grouping of original in-situ wooden buildings representing the fur trade in Canada. The General Warehouse and the Fish Cache are FHBRO Classified buildings and the Officers' Dwelling and Men's House are FHBRO recognized buildings. All five original buildings, including the Dairy, are level one cultural resources. Views of Stuart Lake from the historic grounds remain relatively unchanged over the years. There are several level one historical objects on site and hundreds of archaeological remains, mostly stored in the



Winnipeg Service Center. These are currently being inventoried and assessed for condition. Two main threats to the historic structures exist - log rot in sill logs due to water infiltration and slippage along the slope of the lakeshore (surface water along this slope and wave action contribute to this problem).

*Rainwater backsplashes on the Fur Warehouse's bottom logs Photographer Bob Grill*

The log rot problem is being addressed through epoxy consolidation. Continued monitoring will reveal the success of this action. If the bottom logs continue to deteriorate, they will have to be replaced.

A steep bank leading down to the lakeshore is moving slowly into the lake. The General Warehouse sits closest to this steep bank (about 50 meters above the edge of the bank).

Photographs from the 1890s, compared to now, do not show that the building has moved. However, the Landscape Management Plan places a high priority on the bank slippage and, on page 73, under Future Conservation Work, it says, "The stabilization of the bank is a critical issue for the protection of the site and its cultural resources."

## ii. Evaluation of resource condition and selected management practices

In terms of orientation and siting, the site remains the same as it was at the time of the CI baseline evaluation in 2003. Significant views within the site have not been obstructed as a result of the introduction of the Hide Tanning building in 2005. Two buildings (the Men's House and reconstructed Trade Store) are identified as having accelerated rot in the sill logs. The principal rot is found in the replacement members, but there is some damage to original elements in certain locations. Mitigation measures are in progress. However, the buildings are currently rated in fair condition, due to the presence of rot in the sill logs. Overall, the resource condition element of commemorative integrity is rated Yellow (+). See the Glossary for definitions of green (good), yellow (fair), red (poor) condition ratings.



An artefact from the FSI collection Photographer Bob Grill

With respect to selected management practices, staff members understand and are committed to ensuring the commemorative integrity of the site and the application of the *CRM Policy* (as demonstrated by the careful siting of the Hide Tanning Shed). Built resources continue to be the object of corrective measures. There has also been a noticeable

advancement in the work to complete the cataloguing of archaeological objects. The land slipping into the lake along the lakefront continues to be a threat to the site. No mitigation measures are currently in place to address this threat. The evaluation of the archaeological objects, to identify their historic value, is yet to be completed. Overall, the selected management practices element of commemorative integrity are rated Yellow.

## 3. Visitor Experience

### i. Visitor experience context

Although the first European explorers travelled into British Columbia through passes near Jasper Alberta, Fort St James was one of the very first European settlements on the Pacific slope. It now stands well off the beaten track, more than 900 kilometres away from the main urban centre of Vancouver.

The last visitor survey (2005) indicates the largest group of visitors by origin was international (other than USA), followed by British Columbians. The proportions for the two groups, averaged over three recent surveys (2000, 2002 and 2005), were 41% international versus 30% British Columbians; this large gap narrowed in 2005 (data from Social Science staff during 2007 VE assessment).

Canadians, outside the province of B.C., and Americans visited in fewer numbers, at roughly 15% each over the three surveys. However, more Americans than out-of-province Canadians were identified in the two older surveys - this was reversed in 2005.

The numbers tell us that, until recently, non-Canadians were more interested in the site than Canadian. This phenomenon is attributed to Fort St James being cited in popular European and American guidebooks.

Three main visitor segments are identified from visitor studies:

- Sightseers, by far the largest group at 71% - half of these are international travellers who come to town mainly to visit the site
- Campers at 18% - half of these are British Columbians. They learn about the site en-route and through word of mouth. Their visits include day hikes
- Nature-seekers at 11% - mostly from BC and international, often travelling with children; their visits most often exclude day hikes.

All three groups travel to have a learning experience, view scenery and learn about history and Aboriginal culture. The last two groups, campers and nature-seekers, also seek to spend time with friends or family.

When they arrive at the site, visitors receive information regarding the restored HBC fur trading post, established in 1806 and restored to 1896. In the theatre, there is a welcome message, which includes the reasons for designation, site safety messages, and the introductory video. Visitors can also view the display room (CD-Rom, talking map, information on the First Nations, fur trade (objects, text panels), and exhibits in the lobby. The Chief Kwah exhibit and archaeological displays were added in 2003. In 2005, a



hide-tanning shed was constructed and a new program developed. In 2006, a large outdoor map, with audio introduction, was installed. New way-finding signs were constructed along the roads to the fort in 2006.

The highlight of the visitor experience and the backbone of the site's interpretation program starts when visitors leave the visitor centre and set out down the path along the shores of Stuart Lake to discover the site for themselves. They wander among the historic structures, gardens, and fields and interact with costumed interpreters. The following quotes from the latest visitor survey illustrate this:

- "The exhibition is done so well that you think the people of the past are still living there. I would have liked the best to stay in one of these houses for longer. Thank you very much for this special experience."
- "Vivid explanations of guides, very authentic, by being able to touch the furs you get a long lasting impression."
- "The way we were welcomed, informed, the way history is kept alive, the Aboriginal lady showing tradition work on animal skins."
- "Presentation by staff which was given with lots of love to the visitors."
- Speaking with the native people who were in the buildings. They were very knowledgeable of the history because it had been told to them first hand from their parents and grandparents."
- "Tidiness and cleanliness of the center. All exhibits, learning about Canada's history, the little buildable house in the picnic area. The kids were happy playing and we had a peaceful and relaxing lunch."

"The on-site animation by costumed interpreters is considered a strength by visitors, staff, and the community."<sup>1</sup>

On-going special events include the Salmon Ceremony, Aboriginal Days, Fashion Show, and Open House. Newly introduced on-site demonstrations include woodcutting, a livestock demonstration, and soap making.

Visitors tour the site and talk to interpreters in the buildings. Guided tours of the site are offered occasionally when the site is short of costumed interpreters and also for German-speaking visitors. A taped tour is available to visitors in a number of languages.

The spring season sees mostly school groups, the mid-season independent travellers, and fall sees mostly bus tours. Opening dates remain consistent from the May long weekend until the end of September.

The Friends of Fort St. James, a community-based supportive organization, have developed a new walking tour brochure, which includes the site and the town (only available in English). There are several publications for sale in the gift shop, which relate directly to Fort St. James. The bird's eye view brochure is used as an on-site guide. A lure card is also available. The website has been updated since 2003.

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<sup>1</sup> Fort St. James Management Plan, 2002  
*State of the Site Report – Fort St. James/2008-09*

*A Friends Member shows off their "Walk Through Time" book  
Photographer Bob Grill*



The Christmas program is oriented towards local families and uses some of the same didactic tools as the regular school program.

High school students are invited to come as volunteers.

In terms of marketing opportunities, site staff participate in trade shows and exhibitions, as resources permit. The site uses two booths, built in the Red River style, for trade shows and exhibitions. (These booths are shared with the town).

## ii. State of visitor experience

The following evaluation of the state of visitor experience is based on two information sources, the 2005 visitor survey and the 2007 visitor experience assessment.

There are five indicators for visitor experience, each of which has one or more targets. Performance against these indicators, and the accompanying targets, is discussed below:

### A. Marketing and Promotion

The indicator "**marketing and promotion**" has two targets, one of which will be measured through a national poll. The other requires that the number of visits to a site is sustained over time. Visits stood at 20,000 in 1997 and have declined since then by 50% (note: modifications may have been made during this period to counting methods). During the last five years, visits fell from 12,200 in 2003 to 10,500 in 2007, or almost 15%. In the case of Fort St James, this target has not been met and this presents a major challenge to site and field unit staff.

On the other hand, about 30% of grade three, four, and five elementary school students within a 200-kilometre radius visit the site. The site provides a perfect day trip for motor coach tours driving from Prince George to Prince Rupert. These visitors amount to approximately 25% of site visitation.

### B. Interpretation

The next indicator, "**interpretation**", has two targets for national historic sites. One of these calls for at least 80% of visitors to take part in a learning activity. At Fort St James, more than 90% of visitors saw the audio-visual introduction, and 88% and 80% participated respectively in two additional learning activities.

A second target involves participants learning something about the commemorative integrity of the site. The 2005 visitor survey included six true/false questions concerning the site's history. Seventy eight %of visitors were able to answer four of the six questions correctly, slightly above the target of 75%. Visitors understand the reasons for designation as a result of their experience at Fort St. James. Despite meeting this target, the commemorative integrity evaluation highlighted the fact that the effectiveness of communications is in a slight downward trend primarily due to ineffective non-personal media located in the visitor centre.

*State of the Site Report – Fort St. James/2008-09*

### C. Activities and Services

There are five targets related to the indicator “activities and services”.



The first target concerns visitor enjoyment. In the 2005 survey, visitors were asked, at the beginning of their visit, to provide three words to describe their expectations of the site. Nearly three quarters of the words used related to the history and educational aspects of the site. At the end of their visit, respondents were asked to list three words that would best describe their visit. The responses suggest visitors arrive expecting an educational experience and leave feeling they have learned something of value, while having an enjoyable personal experience.

This is supported by verbal comments from visitors when asked about the highlights of their visit. These highlights are related to many areas, most notably the staff, the animation offered, the authenticity of the site, the Aboriginal programming, the furs, the scenery, and the food.

*Using traditional methods to tan hides Photographer Bob Grill*

The second target looks at satisfaction with activities, specifically the availability of activities. As part of the VE assessment, the staff at the site rated the diversity of activities as very good - 4 out of 5. In the 2005 survey, visitors rated the availability of interpretation activities and the availability of learning opportunities above national targets. However, when asked in the survey about their opportunities to do various activities, visitors rated five components above the national targets<sup>2</sup> and five below. Two of the latter relate clearly to national historic sites - learning about Aboriginal culture and history and activities that children enjoy. The other three relate more to parks - viewing wildlife, experiencing wilderness, and learning about nature and the environment.

The third target also focuses on activities, this time with regard to satisfaction, with the quality of activities. Similarly to the above, visitors rated six components of interpretation and interpretation activities overall at a level above the target figures. However, ‘non-personal interpretation meeting visitor needs’ was rated by staff as 2 out of 5 in the VE assessment. This is supported by a visitor rating that is below target for satisfaction with the brochures/literature.

The fourth target concerns services, namely the availability of services. In the VE assessment, staff rated the meeting of basic comfort needs low, at 2 out of 5. The 2005 survey asked visitors about their satisfaction with the availability of four service elements<sup>3</sup>; three scores met the

<sup>2</sup> have a learning experience, have a recreational experience, view the scenery, and spend time with friends and family, learn about Canada's history and culture

<sup>3</sup> staff, walking trails, picnic / day use areas, historic site information prior to visit  
*State of the Site Report – Fort St. James/2008-09*

national targets. The one that fell below was the availability of information prior to a visit (see comment regarding brochures, above).

The fifth target also relates to services, specifically satisfaction with the quality of services. Visitors rated the condition of four facilities above the national targets in the 2005 survey. Another question asked visitors to rate their satisfaction with a range of items related to service<sup>4</sup>; of nine items; all were rated above the national targets.



*Introducing young visitors to the Fort's livestock population  
Photographer Bob Grill*

#### **D. Personal Connection**

The above three factors of influence in a visit will culminate in many visitors feeling a sense of personal connection to a site. In terms of targets, the indicator has two, one of which is satisfaction with the visit overall. The overall satisfaction score given by visitors to Fort St. James met the national goal (at or over 85%).

The other target relates to meaningfulness; the goal for the number of visitors who consider the site is meaningful to them has yet to be determined. However, more than 85% of visitors were satisfied with "this visit as a memorable experience" and more than 85% felt that the visit met their expectations.

#### **4. Public Outreach Education**

##### **i. Public outreach education context**

The Parks Canada website provides the main presence, in terms of outreach education opportunities. A short history and description of each of the built structures located at the fort are provided. There are no formal outreach education programs developed and used by the site.

##### **ii. State of public outreach education**

There are four indicators used to assess the state of outreach education. Each indicator (i.e. Awareness, Understanding, Appreciation, and Learning) has preliminary measures that contribute to an overall assessment. At this time, there is no data available to inform the measures and in turn, provide an overall assessment of outreach education. The corporate target is to establish baseline performance expectations for each measure by March 2009.

#### **5. Stakeholder Engagement**

##### **i. Context**

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<sup>4</sup> examples: staff knowledge, staff courteousness, the visitor centre and quality of service.  
*State of the Site Report – Fort St. James/2008-09*

The Friends of Fort St. James National Historic Site was established in the 1990s. This small group of dedicated individuals each year holds a membership drive that produces, year after year, more than 200 corporate and individual members in this small community.



*The Friends and their friends after the Ghost Walk (2006) Photographer Bob Grill*

The Friends hold a special heritage Christmas event each year where the site is transformed into a winter wonderland. Attendance increases each year. The Friends organization also helps with the organization of Canada Day celebrations.



*The wonder of a Victorian Christmas  
Photographer Bob Grill*



Most years a “ghost walk” is organized by the Friends group - residents and visitors walk from the old church and encounter “ghosts” from the past as they walk towards the site for the grand finale.

“Quilts in the Park” is another event organized by the group - local quilters display their handy crafts in the historic buildings and on the grounds.

“A Walk Through Time” is one of the books the Friends have produced. There is a similarly named event, with visitors, led by local historians, walking through the village.

The Friends furnished the dairy building in 2007. The Officers’ Dwelling House refurbishing will be completed in 2008. The Friends are the site’s pipeline into the community and a great means of support.

Other stakeholders include the Chamber of Commerce, The Regional District of Fort St. James, regional and local elementary schools, the College of New Caledonia, the University of Northern B.C., and motor coach tour companies.

- In 2007, the site was named ‘tourism business of the year’ by the Chamber of Commerce.
- The District of Fort St. James pays the admission fee for visitors on the annual open house day.
- About 30% of grade three, four, and five elementary school students within a 200-kilometer radius visit the site.
- Various UNBC classes visit the site during the shoulder seasons. A partnership is underway with the history class to use the site in the spring.
- The site provides a perfect day trip for motor coach tours driving from Prince George to Prince Rupert; these visitors amount to about 25% of site visitation.

## ii. State of Stakeholder Engagement

There are three indicators used to assess the state of stakeholder engagement (i.e. Support, Influence and Active Involvement). At this time, there is no data available to inform the measures and in turn, provide an overall assessment of stakeholder relations. The corporate target is to establish baseline performance expectations for the measure related to ‘support’ by March 2009 and for the others by March 2010.

## 6. Aboriginal Perspectives

**i. Aboriginal context**

The site is located along the Shore of Stuart Lake; Nak'azdli Reserve is to the south and the village of Fort St. James to the north. A path runs through the site along the lakeshore and connects the village and reserve. Both local residents and visitors use this path. The 2002 management plan focuses on building relations with the Nak'azdli Band.



*Some of our Elders advisory group members celebrate our national birthday on our Canada Day Float Photographer Bob Grill*

The site manager began meeting with the Elders advisory group in 2001. The group developed the idea of a sewing competition reminiscent of those held years ago. The site's display room was modified to accommodate these crafts.

*Sewing traditional moccasins Photographer Bob Grill*



Later in 2001, the site and Elders received funding from the Aboriginal Innovation Fund to create the "Learn from the Elders" program. This program involves contracting Elders to teach site staff how to tan hides, skin beaver, and demonstrate other traditional arts. The site carpenter used some of this funding to construct the "hide tanning shed", a piece on piece structure where visitors can watch and help tan hides. Parks Canada employees staff this every day and Elders are contracted to teach them. Visitors

in 2007 could speak to site staff member Lindsay Sam while she learned to make moccasins from her Grandmother, one of the members of the advisory group.

Another recent project came from Nak'azdli Elder Lillian Sam, who presented an idea for a new display in the visitor centre. She guided the creation of the new Chief Kwah display constructed in the woodshop and installed on site. Lillian loaned the site some objects to go in the display and it features a knife owned by Kwah on loan from the Royal BC Museum. Lillian is the great, great, great granddaughter of Kwah.



*Lillian Sam at her Kwah display opening Photographer Bob Grill*

In 2007, at one of the Elders meetings, there was a discussion of a “first salmon” day, celebrating the arrival of the salmon in early summer. This idea resulted in a potlatch organized by site staff and available to all visitors. The site did not advertise for fear of attracting a crowd that it would be unable to accommodate. Visitors lucky enough to participate that day had a very memorable experience.



*Salmon Day is celebrated with a traditional potlatch  
Photographer Bob Grill*

Also in 2007, the Nak'azdli Band nominated Chief Kwah as a person of national significance. An elder has been contracted and currently is collecting information for the submission in conjunction with Parks Canada historian Frieda Klippenstein.

- The Nak'azdli First Nation has put the site on the table for negotiation in the present treaty process in B.C. A draft position paper to manage the site was tabled at the main table meeting at Takla Landing July 28 1998.
- “Treaty negotiations are currently at a stand still. The Band is not receiving funding from the treaty commission to continue the process at the current time.”
- The Band also provides wages for interns at the site. The site then agrees to hire successful interns if suitable employment opportunities exist.
- The site’s Old Fort Café is an economic opportunity for Aboriginal people. An Aboriginal entrepreneur has the contract for its operation.

Input from the Elders Advisory group about their perspective on the state of the land is as follows:

- There is a connection to the land through the elders by their teachings that are being passed on to the younger people at the site.

- The elders have so much to share; there should be more elders on site to tell stories during the operating season.

## 7. Results of Management Actions

This section provides an evaluation (status) of the key management actions identified under specific themes in the management plan and contributes to maintaining or improving the state of the site (i.e. the indicators in chapter 2).

The key actions identified to improve the state of the site, taken from the previous management plan, are listed below. *Note: the most recent management plan was approved in 2002.* Therefore, the format of this plan does not correspond to the current requirements as identified in the *Guide to Management Planning 2008*.

### Status of Key Management Actions and Outcomes

**Key Actions that pertain to improving the state of the site, identified in the management plan:**

#### **Objective 1: Ensure the site's commemorative integrity is maintained.**

1. Develop guidelines to interpret the evolution of the site over the entire period of its commemorative significance. These guidelines should address whether or not portions of the site should be restored/reconstructed to a period other than 1896. The guidelines will also address how the visitor will be able to identify original construction from new work.
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<b>Action Status: This is covered in the Heritage Presentation Plan except the identification of new from original work. This is covered in the Standards and Guidelines training (complete).</b>
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2. Prepare a landscape management plan. The scope of the plan will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conducting botanical studies to determine indigenous (pre-contact) vegetation and species introduced during the fur-trade period, both on the site and in the Fort St. James cultural landscape;</li> <li>• addressing the care and propagation of indigenous species;</li> <li>• identifying recently-introduced species;</li> <li>• determining whether they threaten indigenous species; identifying any ecologically-sensitive areas of the Site and taking measures to protect them;</li> <li>• providing guidelines for historic gardening practices;</li> <li>• restricting introduced species to appropriate zones within the Site;</li> <li>• addressing the problem of invasive weeds; and</li> <li>• Considering the maintenance and cyclical replacement of boardwalks, fences, contemporary outbuildings, and other landscape features.</li> </ul>
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<b>Action Status: Completed.</b>
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3. Take measures to protect areas, which contain, or are believed to contain, subsurface archaeological remains.
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<b>Action Status: There is no digging at the site without consulting Parks Canada Archaeological services staff (completed).</b>
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4. Review the existing studies and data related to the erosion of the shore and its slumpage into Stuart Lake. Determine a long-term course of action to protect the shoreline and the site's resources.

**Action Status: Covered in the Landscape Management Plan. Funding has been identified by the CRMAB in future years for determining a course of action (not completed).**

5. Update the maintenance manuals for buildings, ensuring that the Cultural Resource Management Policy is followed. Some issues that should be addressed include cyclical maintenance, monitoring of moisture levels, protection of logs from moisture, ways to protect historic materials and finishes from visitor wear, and methods to distinguish new work from work of the past.

**Action Status: Maintenance manuals have been updated but require further work. A new maintenance plan template will be developed in 2008 for the mountain parks historic sites. In 2007, steps were taken to protect the bottom logs of various buildings from rot. Protection efforts and monitoring will continue in 2008 (not completed).**

6. Undertake a detailed analysis of archaeological artifacts, including a full inventory and condition assessment.

**Action Status: About 40% of the collection remains to be inventoried and assessed. This work will continue in 2008/09 (not completed).**

**Outcome:** The site's commemorative integrity rating out of 10 decreased from 9 (minor impairment) to 8 (minor impairment) between 2003 and 2007. The objective of ensuring the site's commemorative integrity is maintained, based on this 10 point scale, has not been met.

**Objective 2: The programs and services provided at Fort St. James are enhanced in order to improve the visitor's experience.**

1. All means and methods of presentation will be evaluated rigorously, including the costumed interpretation and period animation programs, to determine whether the key messages are being delivered effectively. Exit surveys will be implemented to determine whether the key messages are being delivered effectively.

**Action Status: An extensive evaluation was done. Site surveys indicate messages of national significance are understood and the CI evaluation for this category is green (completed). Two CI reviews and visitor surveys indicate messages are presented and understood (completed). Two exit surveys have been completed since the Management Plan was written (completed).**

2. Develop a training strategy that ensures staff and volunteers are given adequate and appropriate information to convey the CIS messages and the site's history from different perspectives.

**Action Status: Site staff receives two weeks of training each year prior to the site's opening. An ongoing aspect of this training is the importance of presenting various perspectives. Friends have received CI training. A refresher should be given soon (completed).**

3. Refine the school programs so that the linkages between the curriculum and the site messages are clarified so the relevance of programs is well-understood and communicated to

staff and teachers. Train staff on how to work with school groups. Further, develop the activity workbook so it matches the expanding story line of the site. Develop relationships with school organizations to ensure programs are relevant to them.

**Action Status:** The school program was revamped shortly after the Management Plan was implemented. The program undergoes constant change as a result of informal teacher and student input. The site has held Professional Development Sessions for teachers promoting the school program. Interpreter-led programs have replaced the activity workbook. The site has a 30% market share of target students with in a 200 KM radius (completed).

4. Increase First Nations content in the heritage presentation, both in the exhibits in the Visitor Centre and in interpretation on the historic grounds. Include the Carrier view of, and contributions to, the fur trade. Interpret the contributions of First Nations throughout the period of commemorative significance (1806-1952), including building links to modern practice so that visitors may appreciate First Nations culture as a dynamic and complex component of contemporary Canada.

**Action Status:** Since the Management Plan was written, the Chief Kwah display was added to the display visitor centre and an Aboriginal activity area has been constructed under the direction of the elders. Elders are contracted yearly to teach the site's staff how to tan hides in the area. Aboriginal Day has been greatly expanded as a special event for schools. Several new Aboriginal staff have been hired and the Officers' House is being refurbished to have much less of a European feel. A new special event that celebrates the arrival of the first salmon when a potlatch was held with elders. This is planned to be a recurring event (completed).

5. Redesign the exhibits to provide more visitor appeal, more effective interpretation, exhibits that address the entire period of commemorative significance (1806-1952), and opportunities to exhibit Level I artifacts. Provide space and opportunities for temporary and changing exhibits.

**Action Status:** A redesign concept has been completed. New displays have been added and will continue to be added. Temporary and changing exhibits occur every year. The entire period of commemoration is covered in a new AV production shown in the display room (2008). A new exhibit of Level 1 artifacts was added in 2007 (completed).

6. Develop a marketing plan for the site.

**Action Status:** A marketing plan was developed for the mountain park national historic sites including Fort St. James. This plan was, in effect, updated when a visitor experience assessment was undertaken and that includes many key actions (completed).

7. Encourage the Ministry of Highways and Transportation to improve directional and attraction signage on Highways 16 and 27.

**Action Status:** New provincial tourism signs have been added since the Management Plan was written (completed).

8. Redevelop the Interpretation Plan to be the framework for the overall heritage communication program, including orientation, on-site interpretation, and outreach. Consult with First Nations and Métis during the redevelopment process.

**Action Status:** Completed

9. Continue to work with Park Canada's historians and archaeologists, and with the aboriginal, Métis, and other interested communities, to develop information about the history

of the site from varying perspectives.
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<b>Action Status: Ongoing</b>
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**Outcome:** Actions taken and completed suggests visitors have greater opportunities to learn many things about the past while visitor comments suggest many visitors acquire an emotional connection to the site.

**Objective 3: Ensure the website is an effective tool in executing the outreach strategy, and that it delivers the messages of significance in a dynamic way to a “virtual”, off-site audience.**

1. Seek ways to use the Internet and activity workbook to convey site messages to schools.
--

<b>Action Status: Some student related material is on the Internet bit more could be done. The activity workbook is no longer used (not complete).</b>
--

2. The website is an important means of reaching off-site audiences and should be redeveloped to deliver the messages of significance in a dynamic way to a virtual audience.
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<b>Action Status: The web site was redeveloped and is much better, but could be further improved (not complete).</b>
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3. Participate in special events outside the site, to raise awareness about the site and its history. Identify and train a special events coordinator to ensure event continuity and quality.
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<b>Action Status: The site participates in parades off site and sometimes events in surrounding communities. This is balanced with providing our own events (not complete).</b>
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**Outcome:** Actions taken have not been entirely effective in reaching this public outreach education objective. The appropriate messages are now delivered through the website but not in an overly dynamic way.

## **8. Key Issues**

The key issues identified through the most recent CI evaluation exercise relate to two significant threats to the site. The threat of water infiltration and the resulting rot in sill logs in two buildings is a threat that is much more noticeable now than in 2003. Slippage along the slope of the lake is an identified threat that has not been addressed by any means of mitigation. Surface water along this slope and wave action contribute to this problem.

Related to the threat of water infiltration is the current condition of the sill logs in two buildings. The presence of rot in the sill logs is the main factor for the Men’s House and reconstructed Trade Store being in fair condition. The General Warehouse was rated in fair condition based on the condition of the West Wall.

The evaluation of the archaeological objects, to identify their historic value, has not been completed. Some reproductions and possibly curatorial objects are currently identified as level II resources in the CIS.

A major challenge for the site lies in its declining visitation. Attendance in 2003 was 12 186; by 2007, this was 10 534 visits. Visitation has steadily decreased, showing a 14% decline between 2007 and 2003. Shortfalls appear to exist in the identification and attraction of potential visitor markets, in knowledge of regional tourism, and in marketing and promotional activity (taken from the VE assessment of 2007).

Visitors in 2005 rated their satisfaction with brochures/literature and the availability of information prior to their visit below the national standard. In the VE assessment of 2007, staff rated non-personal interpretation as below average.

Outreach education opportunities are limited which has an impact on the communications effectiveness for non-visitors. Target audiences for outreach education have not been determined.

## **9. Conclusion**

Overall, Fort St. James is being managed effectively, in terms of cultural resources, and is identified as having only minor impairment to the commemorative integrity of the site. There are issues with the condition of specific components of selected buildings as well as the need for the identification of the historic value of the archaeological objects.

The reasons for designation and related messages are considered to be communicated effectively to visitors, but, further efforts are required to reach non-visiting audiences. Visitors appear to be understanding the significance of this national historic site. However, the non-personal media (including brochures and publications) located in the visitor centre is considered to be less effective.

Work with the local Aboriginal community is ongoing. Communication is seen as positive as evidenced by regular meetings between site management and the local Elders advisory group.


The ratings from a recent visitor survey, along with a visitor experience assessment, and comments from visitors, indicate people touring the site learn many things about the past while enjoying themselves. However, visitation is declining and the shortfalls identified in the site's marketing and promotional efforts are most probably contributing to the decline. Many of the visitor comments about possible improvements to their visits match the few weaknesses found in the visitor survey, namely the lack of opportunities to learn about Aboriginal culture and history, and do something that children enjoy, as well as lower satisfaction with brochures/literature and availability of site information prior to a visit.


## **Glossary**


From *Guide to Management Planning 2008* (pg. 33-34)





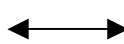

Term	Definition
Indicator	A nationally or bio-regionally consistent summary reporting statement that provides a comprehensive synopsis of each element of the Agency mandate. It is based on a combination of data, measures and critical success factors that provide a clear message about current conditions and the change since the last measurement.
Measure	Data, surveys or other measurements that present conditions or trends. Measures are components of indicators.
Threshold	Level of an indicator or measure that represents a “good”(green), “fair” (yellow), or “poor” (red) condition. It represents the point of transition between the three levels of condition on which the Agency reports.
Target	Aim or objective set by managers and to be achieved within a specified timeframe.

#### Condition Ratings for Commemorative Integrity Evaluations:

**Green**  - Good, effective, or not currently impaired. Any deficiencies are not a threat to the commemorative integrity of the site.

**Yellow**  - Fair, or minor to moderate impairment. Requires improvement.

**Red**  - Poor, ineffective, seriously impaired or a significant attribute missing (whether related to condition, communications or selected management practices).

CONDITION				TREND			
			N/R				N/R
Good	Fair	Poor	Not Rated	Improving	Stable	Declining	Not Rated