

Museums of Prince Edward County Strategic Plan 2006 to 2010

Executive Summary

PREFACE

This strategic planning process for the Museums of Prince Edward County was first initiated in 2001 by the Museum Board. The Museum Board undertook an information gathering exercise with each of the Site Committees to address questions relating to their purpose and role in their respective communities, the nature of their artifact collections, their priorities and financial status, their future ambitions and needs, and their strengths. After a review of information gathered, three brainstorming sessions were held in 2003 to determine core values and philosophy and guidelines for the establishment of the vision and strategic direction for the next 3 to 5 years. As a result of the information gathering a working group of the board was established to develop the strategic plan.

It is the results of this plan, developed through research and consultation, which is presented with special recognition of the working group members:

Gerald Rayner (chair)
Theresa Durning
Janice Gibbins
Elizabeth Hunter

A full report of the working group is available from the Recreation, Parks, and Culture Department.

PRINCIPLES AND CORE VALUES

The following set of principles and core values provide the guidance for the development of the strategic plan. These are as follows:

Stewardship – responsible for the preservation, conservation, restoration, interpretation and exhibition of all their heritage assets and passionately undertake such responsibilities to the best of their abilities;

Accountability – good stewardship and prudent use of all resources, including funds, plus the measurement and recording of results (e.g. effectiveness of programs, increase in visitors and funds), display of accountability not only to the public at large but also to donors, grant givers and the municipality;

Communication & Education -- reaching out to many groups to communicate in various ways and for various purposes:

- educating the young in particular to appreciate local history
- fostering the knowledge and understanding of the history of PEC in visitors and our own citizens
- assisting and training staff and volunteers in researching, assessing and displaying quality artifacts
- informing local and heritage papers and other media of museum activities to build a higher profile
- building partnerships with local and Provincial heritage groups to generate a wider awareness of the strengths of our museums and to create reciprocal learning experiences.

Innovation –ongoing creative thinking by the personnel of the Museum Board and the museums; expanding communication will aid this endeavor. New initiatives in programming, exhibit development, websites, preservation, display, collection, training and learning will be sought and shared to secure the future for our museums.

Professionalism – it is expected that museum employees and volunteers will always adhere to professional standards and approaches in undertaking their work and will do so with enthusiasm and passion.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Museums of Prince Edward County are stewards of the heritage of the County and are committed to communicating the particular stories of this area in an inclusive, engaging and professional manner.

VISION FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

That the museums of Prince Edward County:

- enhance their level of performance excellence
- undertake new areas of theme/exhibit development
- build a higher profile in the County and in the Provincial heritage community
- strengthen & enrich the contributions of volunteers

resulting in the museums being increasingly regarded as historical, social, cultural and economic assets contributing to making the County a recognized heritage destination in Ontario.

SIX STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Six Strategic Objectives have been identified to fulfill the Vision Statement over the period 2006 to 2010, as follows:

- (1) Enhance, as appropriate, the level of excellence of each County museum, particularly with respect to the Provincial Ministry Standards
- (2) Identify, prioritize and develop new Themes/Exhibits for the future
- (3) Build a County cultural network
- (4) Strengthen and enrich the volunteer experience
- (5) Build a higher profile of the museums with local citizens
Increase awareness of the economic impact of heritage tourism and the value of the County museums as a vital part of economic growth
Identify and develop community partnerships
- (6) Create a heightened awareness of the County museums within the Provincial heritage community

PLAN OF ACTION

IMPLEMENTING THE SIX KEY OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this Section is to draw together all the follow-up actions that arise from the six strategic objectives reviewed in the report of the Working Group. These actions which range from those which are of an operational nature to those which are of a study or research nature are intended to serve as priorities for the 5 year period 2006 to 2010. Understandably, it will be the responsibility of the relevant management personnel of the Recreation, Parks & Culture Department and of the museums themselves, under the policy guidance of the Museum Board, to determine how these priorities will be implemented (in the context of any other priorities), and the actual timing of each during the 5 year period (while recognizing that the Working Group has proposed particular target dates in certain instances).

Strategic Objective 1:

The actions proposed with respect to this Strategic Objective relating to the ten Provincial Standards of Operation of community museums may be summarized as follows:

- Governance: develop a method of proposing and appointing members to the Site Committees on a staggered basis to ensure continuity
- Finance: investigate the appropriate insurance value for museum collections.

- Collections: full implementation of registration procedures (including accessions, & deaccessions) and data base records management as outlined in Collections policy; clearing backlog of un-catalogued artifacts in three museums; designation of artifacts for educational purposes; simplification of existing Collections policy to better accommodate reality of small community museums.
- Exhibition: include annual budgetary allocation for exhibit development; tap new non-Municipal sources of funds for exhibit development, institute a more formalized exhibit planning process with objectives and evaluation; address Human Resource concerns.
- Interpretation & Education: increased development and diversification of school curriculum-based programs including more formal evaluation of these programs and training for those who implement them; wider offering of public programs, special events and heritage exhibits.
- Research: Revision and formal adoption of Research policy; undertake research consistent with exhibit and partnership development (**Strategic Objectives 2 and 5**).
- Conservation: improve availability and conditions of storage areas; improve light, temperature and humidity controls; prepare training manual for staff and volunteers addressing issues of conservation & formalize implementation of training.
- Physical Plant: complete preparation of Maintenance Manual and Emergency and Disaster Plan for each site; and implement measures to reduce risk of environmental damage to artifacts and buildings; regular update of 10 year plan of expected capital cost for each site.
- Community: address the questions of a cultural network in **Strategic Objective (3)**; of volunteers in **Strategic Objective (4)**; and of Community partnerships in **Strategic Objective (5)**; conduct more visitor research and improve documentation of visitor statistics; revisit importance of a marketing strategy for promoting and delivering museum programs.
- Human Resources: Continue implementation of a professional development and training schedule for staff, and provide improved training for volunteers

Strategic Objective 2:

Implement exhibit development using the 4 phases of exhibit development.

A priority schedule for exhibit/theme development for the years 2006 and 2007 includes four themes that are already under development: Dutch Settlement, The Canning Industry, Quakers and Food Heritage and two new initiatives: exterior exhibits at the Mariners' Museum and an exhibit replacing the school room display at the Ameliasburgh Museum. New exhibits should provide "hands-on" tactile experiences whenever feasible.

By November 2007 this priority schedule should be updated, as appropriate for the years 2008, 2009 and 2010, drawing upon the list of potential exhibit themes identified during the strategic planning process

Strategic Objective 3:

The purpose of this Strategic Objective has already been admirably addressed by the creation of the Cultural Round Table and the Municipal Cultural Policy. The key will be to ensure that the Round Table remains a dynamic entity and that the person attending who represents the museums plays an active part in its deliberations, particularly with respect to the expected tasks of mapping the County's "cultural resources" and the development and delivery of a communications strategy.

Strategic Objective 4:

In addressing the purpose of this Strategic Objective which is to enhance and strengthen the volunteer program, it is recommended that the distinction in skills and motivation required of volunteers serving in governance functions versus front line services functions be given further emphasis. It is also recommended that such distinctions, as may be identified and validated, be highlighted in volunteer and staff recruiting, orientation and training sessions since well-motivated and well-oriented staff and volunteers are an important element in attracting museum visitors.

In the interest of enhancing volunteer motivation it is recommended that an informal survey be undertaken of existing museum volunteers to determine what motivates them and how they would prefer to be recognized (e.g. social events, support for their sites, trips, educational opportunities). The Working Group is of the view that this might best be done by engaging someone under short-term contract, such as one of the curators during the off-season.

It is recommended that a Charter of Rights and Responsibilities for Volunteers, similar to one provided by Volunteer Canada or Imagine Canada, be introduced for the museum community during the year 2007.

Strategic Objective 5:

In seeking a higher profile of, and an increased awareness of the economic impact of heritage tourism on the museums of the County, as called for under this Strategic Objective, it is recommended that the museums' representative on the Tourism Development Alliance take a particularly proactive approach in the development and implementation of the Tourism Destination Strategy and the 3 Year Marketing Plan to ensure active museum involvement.

More particularly, it is recommended that at least two new prospective museum community partners whose role should be compatible with the Cultural Policy and the Tourism Strategy, be identified and enlisted in support of the museums by the end of 2007.

For illustrative purposes, three possible examples of such partnerships might be: (1) to include local or regional businesses acting as financial sponsors of museum events, exhibits or brochures; (2) as a repository of heritage knowledge and material the museums might sell their services to those working in the tourism industry who may wish to incorporate heritage images in publicity items or heritage background materials in a particular tourism activity or program; (3) a heritage component of a larger pre-packaged culinary tour might include a visit to a museum where County stories would be told or the nature and meaning described of a special Exhibit designed to address the interests of the particular touring group.

To facilitate further review of prospective new partnerships, the Working Group recommends that the Museum Board invite one of its members to compile a list of community partners that have worked with the museums in the past and those partnership opportunities that the museums may wish to cultivate over the next 3 to 5 years.

It is also recommended that the museums continue to participate in festivals and events such as Doors Open and Taste!

It is further recommended that museums activity be included in the proposed 3 Year Tourism Marketing Plan and, drawing on this experience, a 3 Year Marketing Plan specifically for the museums be developed for introduction not later than the start of 2008.

Strategic Objective 6:

In building a higher awareness of the County museums within the Provincial heritage community as called for in this Strategic Objective, the Working Group recommends that this be undertaken gradually over the next few years by building a link with museums located within a reasonable distance of the County.

Staff and volunteers should continue to participate in programming offered by the Ontario Museum Association, the Ontario Historical Society, and other associations relevant to the cultural/ heritage sector.