

PARKS CANADA'S HISTORICAL SERVICES PROGRAM ON THE WEST COAST

Since 1997 historical services have formed an essential part of an integrated program delivered by the Western Canada Service Centre to national parks, national historic sites, and marine conservation areas on Canada's West Coast. Within the new Parks Canada Agency, the Service Centre is focused on assisting the field units in achieving their mandate of commemorative integrity for national historic sites, and ecological integrity for national parks and marine conservation areas.

The national historic sites system comprises more than 800 historic places commemorated by the Government of Canada since 1919, of which approximately 80 are located in British Columbia. They range from First Nations sites documenting thousands of years of history to 20th century sites illustrating a variety of themes and cultural resources. Parks Canada manages several national historic sites where it has invested in the protection and presentation of cultural resources associated with these commemorations. Such sites include Fort Langley, where aspects of the fur trade are interpreted, along with the proclamation of the Colony of British Columbia in 1858; Fort Rodd Hill, formerly a component in Canada's defence system; Fisgard Lighthouse, the first permanent light station on the West Coast, and the Gulf of Georgia Cannery, now being developed to present aspects of the fishing industry to Canadians, encompassing the roles of its diverse labour force, including women, Chinese-, Japanese- and Euro-Canadian workers.

In addition, Parks Canada is working with other owners of national historic sites recommended for cost-sharing assistance to negotiate agreements to protect or present cultural resources of national historic significance. For example, Parks Canada is now contributing to the conservation and presentation of the McLean Mill National Historic Site at Port Alberni, which commemorates British Columbia's forest products industry. We are working with the North Pacific Cannery at Port Edward, and the managers of the Royal Theatre in Victoria to identify elements for possible cost-sharing.

The history program is assisting local communities with nominations of sites with potential to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC). On the north Coast, we are cooperating with the Metlakatla First National and the Allied Tsimshian Tribes to develop a research paper on Pike Island in the Metlakatla Pass near Prince Rupert. The paper will be reviewed by the HSMBC considering the First Nations' request to commemorate this site.

In recent years Parks Canada has been promoting the concept of

"commemorative integrity". Commemorative integrity is defined as the health or wholeness of a national historic site. It is achieved when the cultural resources that symbolize a site's national historic significance are not impaired or under threat, when the reasons for the commemoration are effectively communicated to the public, and when the site's heritage values are respected by all whose decisions or actions affect the site. Commemorative integrity statements identify the core values and prescribe objectives for protection and presentation programs at these sites, in keeping with the intent and spirit of the commemoration.

On the West Coast, commemorative integrity statements have now been developed for several national historic sites: Fort Rodd Hill; Fisgard Lighthouse; the Gulf of Georgia Cannery; Vancouver's Stanley Park, the outstanding example of urban park in Canada; Hatley Park, the former Dunsmuir Edwardian estate and campus of Royal Roads Military College; XB:ytem, an ancient site of the Stó:ló First Nation at Mission, B.C.; Yuquot, the place of initial contact between Europeans and Northwest Coast First Peoples and a site of the Mowachaht-Mucha First Nation for 4000 years; Congregation Emanu-El in Victoria, the oldest synagogue in Canada; and Nunstans, the well-known Haida village and a world heritage site. For third-party owned national historic sites recommended for cost-sharing, commemorative integrity statements are being planned to focus future investments in such sites as Craigdarroch Castle in Victoria, and the Carnegie Library in Dawson City, Yukon.

Implicit in the concept of commemorative integrity is the notion that the protection and presentation of Canada's cultural heritage is best achieved through cooperation between all levels of government, heritage agencies, and local communities. Here, there is a premium on consultation and collaboration. Most commemorative integrity exercises have involved local groups, First Nations, and other constituencies in the workshops where the historic values of these sites are debated and consolidated into statements.

Parks Canada also manages the system of national parks, including Pacific Rim National Park Reserve on the west coast of Vancouver Island, and Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve in the Southern Queen Charlotte Islands. Beyond their natural or ecological values, these park reserves contain many cultural resources relating to the complex human history of these areas.

In Gwaii Haanas, the disciplines of history and archaeology are joining with park reserve staff to record and interpret the post-contact sites of the park reserve. These sites document the social

and economic history of the area in the context of industrialization of this region between 1860 and 1945. Industries represented at these places include copper and gold mining, forest and marine extractive industries, including fishing and whaling. Beyond documenting industrial heritage, the study is contributing to an understanding of the impacts of industrialization on the settlement and lifeways of Haida and other residents of the area before the Second World War.

At Pacific Rim, history and archeology are also collaborating with the park reserve to carry out a survey of former homesteads, industrial sites and government installations such as transmitter stations, to document the surviving cultural resources. Research in assorted land records, such as preemption and surveyors' documents is assisting in identifying the surviving features, which are being recorded and mapped for future interpretive programs.

Historical research is also integral to the development of new national parks. Parks Canada is seeking to establish a new national park in the southern Gulf Islands as part of a joint Canada-B.C. initiative called the Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy (PMHL). An extensive oral and documentary history project has been carried out with former residents of properties acquired by the PMHL for possible inclusion in a new national park. Oral histories have also been initiated with two First Nations of the Saanich and Hul'qumi'num peoples, to document Aboriginal occupation and use of the islands and their resources over many generations.

Parks Canada is proposing to establish four marine conservation areas along the coast of British Columbia, with the goal of working with others to protect the marine environment. Currently plans are being developed for historical and archaeological services to assist in the mapping of former marine ecosystems, using the reconstructed populations and distribution of sea otters and other species on the coast as benchmarks of the state of the marine environment before European interventions. Key sources for this research will include the ships records of the maritime fur trade, ca. 1790 to 1820.

In the new Parks Canada Agency, the role of the historian has evolved into one where the skills of group facilitation, negotiation, and interdisciplinary teamwork have become integral to the function. Outside the organization, historians are contributing to historical publications, teaching programs at University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University, and to cultural resource management courses for the wider heritage community. Historical research continues to be an important service, but increasingly, we will be enlisting partnerships with others to work

with us in documenting and presenting British Columbia's heritage at the sites where their history occurred.

Many of the commemorated national historic sites and cultural resources in coastal national parks do not readily conform to the dominant themes in textbooks, but they nevertheless present a microcosm of the experience of many groups in Canadian history. Among other aspects, these sites represent the histories of Aboriginal peoples, women, cultural communities, urban and rural residents, industrial workers, military personnel and their families. While focus on commemoration continues to evolve, these sites collectively offer the potential to bring Canadians closer to their roots, and hopefully to a better understanding of their shared identities.

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