

KITIMAT MUSEUM & ARCHIVES STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2030

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Kitimat Museum & Archives (KMA) Strategic Plan is to establish a Vision, Goals, Strategies and Actions for the facility for the next ten years. The KMA and its collections reflect the rich community and natural history and the arts of the people of the area. The Strategic Plan represents timely new directions for the renewal and evolution of a significant community cultural and historical resource. This bold new initiative will refresh Museum operations and programming, and strengthen its capacity to play a central role as a community and regional hub for arts, heritage and culture.

The current KMA building, which opened in 1969, represents many challenges now evident in unrenewed museum facilities established at the time of Canada's centennial: size constraints; lack of designed accessibility; lack of visual transparency; seismic deficiencies; and aging and inadequate mechanical and electrical systems. The current building is only 2,000 square feet in size, and there are numerous issues that impact its current functionality as a museum and archives.

The KMA has demonstrated community leadership, and has a profile and impact that far outweigh its physical limitations. Despite its ongoing success, the KMA is now at a point of stasis in its development, and has reached the limits of what it can achieve with its aging infrastructure. During the last five decades, this building has served the community well, but is now at a stage where it cannot physically accommodate any further growth, and is therefore limiting KMA operations. The building itself cannot continue to function without significant investment, which will not overcome the space limitations. The clear conclusion is that a renewal of the KMA will necessitate the development of a new physical facility.

METHODOLOGY

Building on the significant work already undertaken prior to the commencement of the Strategic Plan, a research and consultation process began in October 2019. This process involved close and ongoing communication with the KMA Staff and Board, and municipal government. Research provided an understanding of the KMA within its local and regional context, a review of emerging museum trends to anticipate the future and ensure ongoing community relevance, and a physical review of the existing situation and assessment of options for facility renewal.

Through the consultation process we heard very positive comments about the renewal, and there was general agreement that we needed to think 'Big,' that this was an opportunity for the meaningful inclusion of the Haisla, and that "now is the time."

MUSEUM BEST PRACTICES

The trajectory of museum renewal in BC, Canada and abroad today follows that of emerging trends in the cultural sector, which respond to new patterns of tourism, community engagement, technology and communication. Museums need to be more relevant and more financially self-sustaining, and move towards values-based interpretation, based on storytelling, human experience, and ethnic diversity. Traditional lines between disciplines are dissolving, allowing stories to be interpreted and expressed in fresh contexts and diverse voices, using technologies appropriate to storytelling. The rate of cultural change and the high cost of construction indicate that a museum must be multi-purpose, reflective, and responsive to changing conditions.

CULTURAL AND NATURAL TOURISM

A vibrant, dynamic KMA would be a unique destination with a high profile and would be in an excellent position to take advantage of this growing trend of cultural engagement. The KMA's marketing initiatives can be tied to the larger tourism opportunities of Northern BC. As part of the broader tourism spectrum for the region, the KMA is uniquely positioned to tell the story of the land, its settlement, its people and its industries.

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VISION FOR RENEWAL

Several different options were tested to determine best outcomes, and the optimal size for the new KMA facility was determined to be in the range of approximately 12,000 square feet, which would accommodate existing operations and allow the required expansion and renewal. One other option was assessed, for a shared facility with the Haisla Nation, that would require a facility of approximately 20,000 square feet.

The Vision for Renewal also reviewed the potential of new opportunities for the enhancement of the current storyline and collections, including archaeology, the story of the Haisla Nation, local history and industry, and the story of Kitimat today.

OPTIONS FOR A SHARED FACILITY

Since 2018, there has been a Memorandum of Understanding between the KMA and the Haisla Nation Council for the use of Haisla images of activities and events. This paves the way for the exploration of other partnership opportunities, including the concept of a shared or joint venture facility that could house both the KMA and Haisla Nation cultural facilities functions.

Research into appropriate models for a shared or partnered museum facility revealed that a similar project was underway in Fort Langley, Salishan Place by the River, which has been established through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Township of Langley and the Kwantlen First Nation. This has been examined as a potential model for a shared facility.

ACTION PLAN

A staged Action Plan for Implementation outlines eleven steps towards achieving a renewed KMA facility, including further development of a Master Plan, siting, design, fundraising and completion.

REVIEW AND CONSULTATION

A broad review of the KMA Strategic Plan is now underway. The Plan was presented to the Haisla Nation Executive Committee on April 13, 2021, and the Haisla Nation Council on April 27, 2021. The Salishan Place by the River MOU was shared and discussed, and there was unanimous agreement to continue the discussions of a shared facility. The Plan was also presented to members of Kitimat Council on May 20, 2021. Stakeholder consultation is now needed to ensure that a wide cross-section of the public and corporate community can participate in the review, sharing concerns and comments and asking questions. Further review and community consultation is anticipated throughout the remainder of 2021.