STEERING INTO THE FUTURE

MARINE MUSEUM OF THE GREAT LAKES AT KINGSTON

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020 - 2025
THERE HAS BEEN SHIPBUILDING ON THE MUSEUM SITE SINCE THE 1790s
THE MARINE MUSEUM IS CURRENTLY THE ONLY MUSEUM IN CANADA THAT EXCLUSIVELY REPRESENTS THE MARITIME HISTORY OF THE GREAT LAKES.
The Marine Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston is entering a new era in its 45-year history. Having recently purchased the Kingston Dry Dock property, a National Historic Site we occupied since 1975, transition plans for a new 21st Century Museum will soon be a reality. To fulfill our vision, the Board of Directors believes a bold and progressive strategic plan is needed to chart a new course. We intend to transform the Museum into a maritime cultural hub that actively embraces our one-of-a-kind, historic waterfront location in Kingston. We believe that the most successful museums in the 21st Century will continuously refine their strategies as the external landscape evolves, new lessons are learned and opportunities arise. In this spirit, our strategic plan is a dynamic document, defining a clear “destination” – where we want to be in 2025 – and encouraging flexibility and creativity throughout the journey.

This plan aims to drive the positive changes necessary to create an unrivaled, sustainable Marine Museum that excels in delivering our mission and vision. The plan sharpens our focus with three strategic priorities developed to assure a clear path to success. It requires us to rethink how we organize our time and talent, and where we invest dollars. At the same time, the plan strongly reaffirms the Museum’s commitment to ensuring residents and families, as well as tourists, have access to our Museum, its waterfront, exhibits and programs. Finally, the plan strengthens our engagement with donors, non-profit organizations, key stakeholders and opinion leaders as essential drivers of innovation and positive change in our community.

A vital component of culture, heritage and experiential education, is currently missing from Kingston. Our Museum has a community role to play in promoting life-long learning and non-formal knowledge transmission about our region’s
unique and living maritime history. We intend to listen to and consult with citizens and stakeholders on how the Marine Museum can make a higher contribution to our community. In turn, this will help us fully establish our ultimate goals.

In the end, we need generous funding and volunteer support for our National Historic Site to be transformed indoors and out into a safe, welcoming space for a variety of programs, intercultural dialogue, creative play, and connecting people to our unparalleled waterfront. A revitalized Marine Museum has a unique potential to promote cultural and biological diversity, and protect our heritage. We have a mission to raise public awareness of the value and fragility of our region’s precious maritime environment. Our exhibits, programs, services and spaces will promote the responsibility of all citizens to contribute to the care and conservation of the planet’s greatest bodies of interconnected freshwater, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway.

THE MUSEUM IS IN THE UNIQUE SITUATION OF BEING A COMMUNITY MUSEUM, WITH NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT COLLECTIONS TELLING A REGIONAL AND NATIONAL STORY.
MISSION
To inspire an enduring connection to the maritime heritage of Kingston and the Great Lakes.

VISION
To be Canada’s premier Museum for experiencing and preserving the maritime legacy – past, present and future – of the largest interconnected bodies of fresh water in the world.

VALUES
1. Exploration of ideas and opportunities that support our vision for a Museum of the future.
2. Sustainability and respect for our environment and the past, present and future of our Museum.
3. Leadership among museums, within our community, our region, our nation, and maritime peoples around the world.
4. Integrity and accountability for our financial and operational excellence.
5. Diversity and inclusivity in everything we do.

HISTORIC DATES
Pre-Colonial Traditional land of the Wyandotte, Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Indigenous people (known to settlers as Algonquin, Iroquis and Hurons).

1678 LaSalle built the first ever ship on the Great Lakes.

1790 The Museum stands on what is known as Mississauga Point. Ships have been built here since 1790.

1800 Wooden sailing vessels were constructed here during the 1800s.

1889 The Limestone Drydock and Engine House were constructed in 1889.

1890 Sir John A. MacDonald officially opened the Drydock and Engine House in what turned out to be his last official act.

1900 At the beginning of this century, the Kingston Shipbuilding Company began constructing mostly steel hulled ships.

1915, 1941 During the First and Second World Wars, the Kingston Shipbuilding Company added to the original buildings.

1939-1945 During the Second World War, 12 of the famous Royal Canadian Navy corvettes were built in the shipyard.

1986 The Limestone Drydock and Engine House are designated a National Historic Site as a significant 19th Century engineering project and its shipyard history.
NO OTHER MARINE MUSEUM SITE IN CANADA HAS SUCH A DIRECT CONNECTION TO THE HISTORY OF ITS SITE.
Since 1975, the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston has held a pivotal position in our nation as unique purveyors of Great Lakes history in Canada. Designated a National Historic Site of Canada in 1986, our waterfront dry dock, heritage buildings and shipyard comprise a site for preservation, connection, exploration and recreation. It is a place like no other.

Our exceptional collections are a repository of Kingston and Canada’s rich maritime history. Located on Mississauga Point, traditional land of the Wyandotte, Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee First Nations, we are uniquely situated at the confluence of the St. Lawrence, the Cataraqui River and the Great Lakes, the gateway to Canada’s interior. With our Indigenous partners, we will enhance our Museum mission to include a deeper understanding and celebration of Indigenous cultures in our region, and welcome cultural and environmental awareness on our accessible waterfront.

The French also realized this strategic location when they built Fort Frontenac just down the road in 1673 to secure a transshipment port for their fur trade and where LaSalle built the first ship to sail the Great Lakes. As did the British when they established the Royal Navy Dockyard on Point Frederick and built the greatest ship-of-the-line ever to be constructed on the Great Lakes to defend Canada for the War of 1812, the warship HMS St. Lawrence. With this hundreds of years of shipbuilding and shipping history, providing sailing schooners to carry cargo and people along the Lakes and canallers up and down the rivers, we are unsurprisingly the shipwreck capital of Canada!

In 1890, Sir John A. Macdonald laid the First Stone of the Kingston Dry Dock, establishing this historic site as a shipyard and repair facility that would contribute greatly to both the First and Second World Wars before it closed in 1968. Today, on our doorstep passes the Marine Superhighway – the St. Lawrence Seaway – the shipping conduit
of North America’s water-borne economy, along with increasingly popular recreational boating and cruising tourism. We are the world’s freshwater sailing capital and our Museum is home to the Canadian Sailing Hall of Fame.

All of this rich history is reflected in our remarkable collections and informs our aspirations to be an accessible 21st Century Museum. We have amassed the largest vertically and horizontally integrated Great Lakes marine history collections in central Canada, where researchers can cross-reference roughly 12,000 library titles; 5,000 artefacts; 3,500 linear feet of archives; 50,000 ship plans; and 31,000 audio and video recordings, photographs and art that are mutually supportive.

As a result of our ability to ensure the long-term preservation of Canadian Cultural Property that is deemed to be of “outstanding significance and national importance”, we were designated as a ‘Category A’ Canadian Museum in 1982.

Our living collections, archives and artefacts will be the foundation for engaging and serving a more diverse audience and fostering a culture of collaboration and learning. We will continue to build upon these strengths and expand our exceptional program focus through partnerships and experiences.

Our strategy is part of the ongoing “greening” of Kingston’s industrial waterfront, transforming a former ship-building site into a clean, safe public park and port terminal, and a launch pad for a myriad of waterside activities and programs. Our commitment to the remediation of our site is consistent with our goal to be at the forefront in monitoring and defending the environmental health of our Great Lakes and river systems. Preservation of our site will ensure that current and future audiences can engage, explore and access Lake Ontario and our Museum in ways that celebrate our history and preserve our precious environment like never before.
PRIORITIES & GOALS
This strategic plan focuses on three significant priorities which are all of equal importance:

1. experience, audience, and engagement;
2. collections, research, and programs; and
3. operational excellence.

**Priority 1: experience, audience, and engagement**
- Grow, support, and engage audiences through meaningful experiences.

**Goals:**
1. Expand, reach and grow audiences through new partnerships and channels.
2. Implement innovative approaches to visitor experience to deepen engagement through our collections, exhibits, and educational programs.
3. Encourage connections to the ecosystems and natural resources the Great Lakes provide and inspire citizens to see themselves as stewards of our shared heritage and collective future.

**Priority 2: collections, research, and programs**
- Stimulate learning and facilitate insights through collections-based research, collaboration, and programs.

**Goals:**
1. Conduct conversations and events to connect audiences with diverse viewpoints, unique perspectives and expert knowledge at the intersection of environment and culture.
2. Promote scholarship by celebrating and supporting research across the Museum.
3. Diversify, boost, and share our collections through increased public accessibility, inclusiveness and focused acquisition planning.

**Priority 3: operational excellence**
- Expand operations, prioritize organizational culture, and grow partnerships in support of our mission.

**Goals:**
1. Develop organizational success and accountability by refining processes and by recruiting, training, and retaining talented staff and volunteer capacity.
2. Invest in infrastructure projects, integrated systems, space and facilities improvements in support of our operations and of other collaborators, in adherence to best museum practices.
3. Exercise leadership, diversify and refine collaborations to grow our community of supporters, members, donors, and partners.
Funding is urgently needed to restore the shipyard buildings and pier, to provide community access to a space where marine activities and environmental programs can be launched from the waterfront, and participants can connect to our greatest recreational resource and embrace our maritime heritage. We intend to install exhibits in the galleries based on a new Interpretive Plan and create an enhanced Research and Library Centre that is a resource hub for Great Lakes and regional history that supports the Museum’s programs and growing collections. Finally, we plan to build a new Boat Building and Restoration Workshop where community volunteers can actively engage with local youth.

Timeline

2020 – Secure funding to undertake critical infrastructure repairs and open a portion of the building for modest operations; sustain ongoing programs and pop-up exhibits; launch ‘Shipwreck Tours’ and Red Jacket operational; recruit new membership and talent for Board/committees; community / stakeholder consultation and fundraising; pursue partnerships broadly, including deep water dock engagement with City of Kingston.

2021 – Launch capital campaign, launch strategic communications/marketing campaign; pursue outreach initiatives/partnerships; analyze the structure of our staff talent to ensure we can continue to build and grow; hire a curator; continue to pursue membership drive; Red Jacket operational; pier restoration completed and deep water dock operational; continue government engagement at all levels.

2022 – Continued revenue stream solidification/capital campaign; acquire Museum Ship; site development; opening of the first gallery in existing building; continue to pursue membership drive as well as wider community outreach.

2023 – Draining of the dry dock and filling in of
water lots; launch construction of final Museum structure; continue site development; Museum Ship operational.

2024 – Continue construction of final Museum structure; open two additional galleries within existing buildings; Museum Ship and Red Jacket continue operations.

2025 – Finalize Museum structure and open the final galleries; site development complete; grand opening; leverage local, regional, provincial and national connections.

**The Next Five Years**

2026-2030 – This Plan is a dynamic document that will be adjusted based upon our successes and achievements and recalibrated where necessary. To that end, we will develop the next five years in 2023 to ensure we have a clear path and the necessary goals to ensure we are creating a sustainable and successful Museum for years and generations to come.

**Measurements and Targets**

The Marine Museum uses a variety of metrics to ensure we are staying on target, in a timely manner. Our strategic goals are measured by their successful and timely completion. Our annual operational plans and budget ensure there are concise and realistic measures in place to guide our activities and for our entire community to embrace and support. We are driven by the opportunity to dream big while balancing our ability to responsibly grow and create a place like no other for all to enjoy.
WE ARE DRIVEN BY THE OPPORTUNITY TO DREAM BIG WHILE BALANCING OUR ABILITY TO RESPONSIBLY GROW AND CREATE A PLACE LIKE NO OTHER FOR ALL TO ENJOY.
JOIN US TODAY TO CONTINUE THE PRESERVATION OF KINGSTON & THE GREAT LAKES UNIQUE MARITIME HERITAGE

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