

MUSEUMS STRATEGY

2019-2022

Ameliasburgh Heritage Village
Macaulay Heritage Park
Mariners Park Museum
Rose House Museum
Wellington Heritage Museum



ABOUT THIS PROCESS

Blue Dot Strategy™ is a consulting firm with two principal partners, **Elizabeth Lancaster** and **Scott Campbell**. While the firm works primarily with private businesses to develop concise, powerful and living strategies, Elizabeth and Scott periodically volunteer in their community to assist not-for-profits in the same manner. This was the case with *The County Museums*. We thank Elizabeth and Scott for their generosity, expertise and solid facilitation. Team meetings were held monthly from September 2018 to May 2019. The end results are:

1. *A precise aspiration that will be used to prioritize the museums' decision-making over the next three years.*
2. *Five clear objectives (and associated concepts) to assist the museums in making their collective aspiration a reality.*

TEAM MEMBERS

Cynthia Peters, *Prince Edward County Museum Advisory Committee* representative and owner/operator of *From the Farm Cooking School*

Jennifer Lyons, Head Curator at *The County Museums*

Jessica Chase, Assistant Curator at *The County Museums*

Karen Palmer, Destination Development & Marketing Coordinator at *The County of Prince Edward*

Ken Dewar, *Prince Edward Museum Advisory Committee* representative and Chair of the *Prince Edward Heritage Advisory Committee*

Rebecca Lamb, Destination Development & Marketing Coordinator at *The County of Prince Edward*





HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

A system comprised of five seasonal museums, highlighting different themes related to the heritage of the community—much like individual chapters of Prince Edward County’s story. The County Museums are the guardians of 35 buildings/structures and an estimated 50,000 artifacts. They are also the caretakers of heritage gardens, parkland, orchards, outdoor exhibits and an early 19th century cemetery.

A long history in their own right, three of the sites opened in 1967 as part of Canada’s Centennial commemorations. The museums were operated by individual towns/townships prior to Prince Edward County’s amalgamation in 1998, after which a new concept emerged. Five independent sites gradually evolved into a collective known as The County Museums.

GOVERNANCE

The County Museums are owned and operated by the Corporation of the County of Prince Edward. Prince Edward County Council is the governing authority for the Museum system and receives recommendations from the Prince Edward Museum Advisory Committee.

The Museum Advisory Committee leverages volunteer input and expertise to address issues and opportunities for The County Museums, with particular emphasis on:

- Providing input into the museums strategy
- Providing feedback on museum policies
- Formation of, and participation in, sub-committees deemed necessary
- Providing expertise to the Head Curator relating to museum priorities including, but not limited to, technology, marketing, visitor engagement/experience, and fundraising
- Supporting special projects that develop public awareness of and support for The County Museums



OUR VALUES:

- Welcoming and accessible spaces
- Participatory experiences, playful and profound
- Accurate interpretation
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Responsiveness to community interests
- Responsible stewardship and management

MANDATE

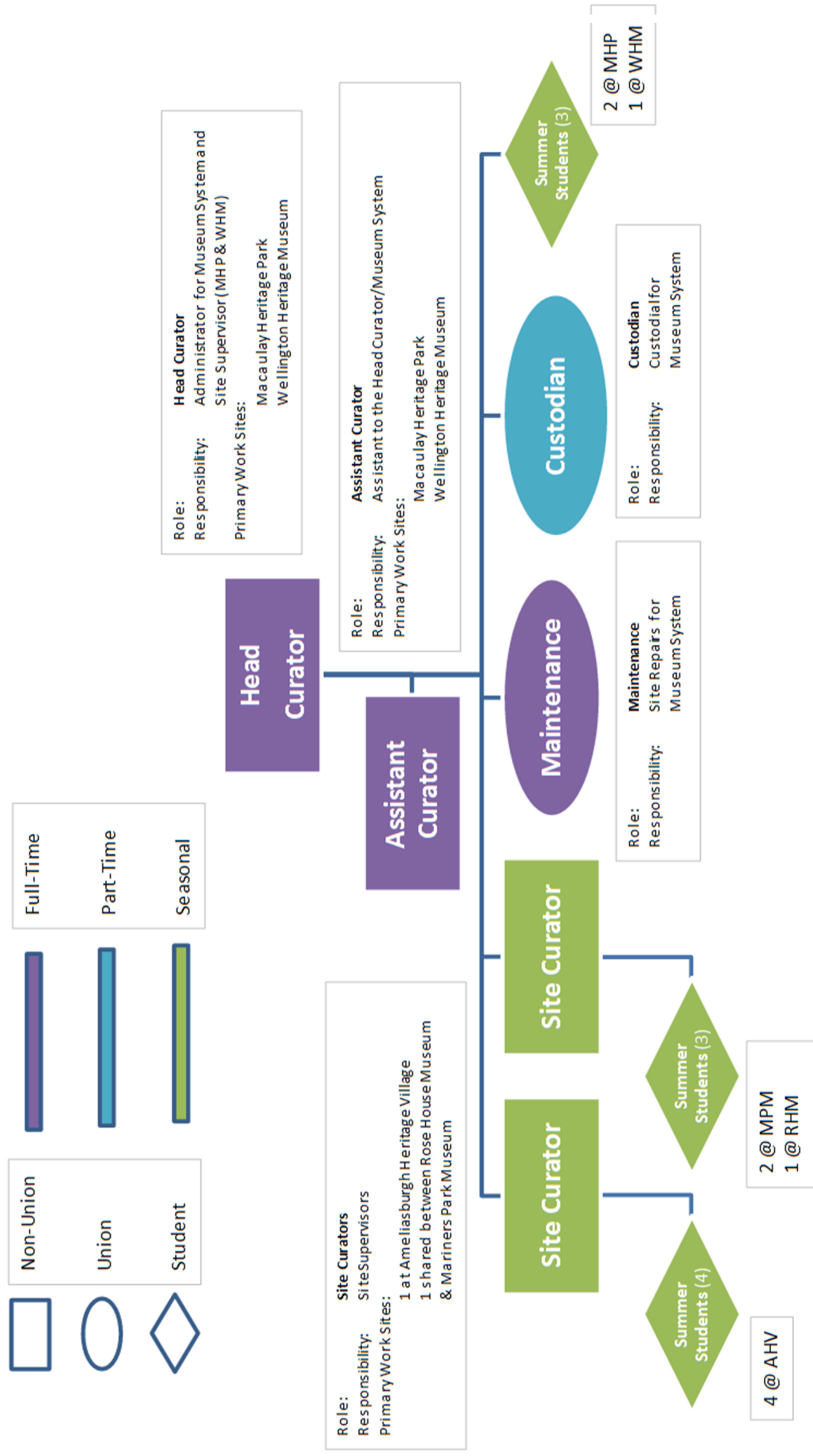
The County Museums are gathering spaces to engage with local heritage, the material and intangible alike, and to reflect on the compelling ties it shares with Prince Edward County's vibrant and contemporary culture.

We interpret the centuries-old heritage of Prince Edward County by collecting, preserving, and exhibiting the material culture that best illustrate its captivating essence, including natural history specimens, historical artifacts, stories, objects of art and heritage sites. Together, these provide the basis for exhibitions and educational programmes, for research and study, for special performances, lectures and symposia, and for outreach. Our facilities will also serve as unique backdrops for community occasions such as special events, ceremonies, and celebrations.

The County Museums serve both tourists to the region and residents of Prince Edward County, including families that have been here for generations and our recent settlers too. Considering the spectrum of our visiting public, the County Museums endeavour to provide multiple access points to local heritage, championing the principles of preservation and animation in every activity.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The County Museums



STRATEGY OUTCOMES

A Strategy is not an operational plan. According to Dr. Harry R. Yarger (*Strategic Theory for the 21st Century*) Strategy is a high-level view and is meant to bridge the gap between today's reality and the ideal future. It assesses both resources and risk.

Our Strategy for 2019-2022 is comprised of:

- **An aspiration**
- **Five clear objectives**
(and rationale for each)
- **Overarching approaches to achieve our objectives**
(not specific tactics, but flexible concepts)
- **Acknowledgement of potential risks**
- **Estimated timelines and resources/considerations**



OUR ASPIRATION:

Preserve:

- Stewardship
- Conservation
- Site Maintenance
- Collections Mgt.
- Safe Storage
- Research

To **preserve** and
bring to life the unique
cultural heritage of
Prince Edward County

Bring to Life:

- Experiential
- Animation
- Entertainment
- Education
- Five Senses
- Connection

The Museums can act as a bridge, between today and yesterday, between long-time residents and recent arrivals, between young and old. They can help us understand the factors and people who helped shaped The County into what it is today. With this aspiration, we aim to place greater focus on the Museums' collection – not just in amassing items that speak to The County's history, but in planning for future acquisitions, exhibitions and interpretive programming. We also aim to keep the Museums vibrant. To do that, we must move to an approach that animates our story, creating experiences that help visitors truly understand information presented to them by giving them opportunities to go beyond merely seeing and reading, to touching, smelling, tasting and more.



OBJECTIVE 1

Implement a system that protects and preserves the museums' collection in accordance with industry standards.

Rationale:

With several small makeshift storage areas, artifacts donated to the Museums in good faith face considerable risk. Adequate, temperature and humidity controlled storage that meets industry standards would allow us to better protect holdings, thereby ensuring artifacts entrusted to our care are available for future generations. Moreover, in order to properly use the Museums collection to tell The County's story, we need space to conduct an up-to-date inventory. The inventory will highlight historical significance and provenance of items, assisting in decision-making around duplication and deaccessioning.

CONCEPTS:

1. Consolidate and assess the collection of all five County Museums
2. Determine preferred option for housing the Museums' collection
3. Raise public awareness about the need for and value of the proper protection and preservation of the Museums' collection
4. Secure funding for proper storage as a fundamental need

Potential Risks:

Costs and/or resources, plus public perception, as well as the capability to implement.

Monitoring/Responsibility	2019	2020	2021	2022	Resources and Considerations
Curatorial Team		X	X	X	\$\$\$\$ - > \$100,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capital Budget \$100,000 to leverage• Additional grant applications/matching funds• Renovate or new build or lease• Moving costs, potential lease costs• Communications related to project/campaign• Human resources to facilitate - possibly extend seasonal employment for Site Curators for packing/moving of collections and inventory work.

OBJECTIVE 2

Source and secure additional funding for programming, exhibits, and technological support.

Rationale:

At present, and aside from staffing costs, the bulk of the Museums budget is dedicated to the care and maintenance of physical properties. Only 1% of the 2019 budget is devoted to the following core museum activities:

Exhibits	0.04%
Educational Program	0.02%
Special Events	0.04%

Without dynamic programming, the Museums risk becoming irrelevant to the very people they are meant to serve, educate and support. Given the municipality's budgeting system, a dedicated and external fund under the care of The County Foundation (or similar organization) would provide an avenue for volunteers, donors, friends and legacy gifts to directly support programming initiatives on an ongoing basis.

CONCEPTS:

1. Establish and use a Museums Fund under The County Foundation or similar organization
2. Pursue alternative grant opportunities

Potential Risks:

Vehicle for fund may not work out; another option may need to be explored. Funding sources may be cut. Competition for fundraising in a small community with finite resources.

Monitoring/Responsibility	2019	2020	2021	2022	Resources and Considerations
Advisory Committee/ Head Curator	X	X	X	X	\$ - \$10,000 to start <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seed funding/ transfer from Reserves to establish fund• Set criteria for project assessment• Committee to consider request(s)• Additional grant applications/matching funds

OBJECTIVE 3

Ensure we are able to base an interpretive plan on relevant visitor data.

Rationale:

Currently, the Museums collect basic attendance data at each site to help better understand visitor trends. A new and more in-depth visitor survey has already been incorporated for the 2019 season, allowing us to better understand the impact of marketing spends and where opportunities for partnerships and sponsorships may exist with other attractions and/or accommodations providers. Going forward, this objective will further focus the Museums' evidence-based decision-making, gathering data to highlight new areas for exhibitions and events, streamline operating hours/seasons and shift staffing resources to where they're needed

CONCEPTS:

1. Maximize the use of currently available data, including online review platforms
2. Mine ticket sales data for relevant information
3. Employ a "passive survey" that visitors to the website are asked to complete
4. Conduct public consultations, publicized through various online channels (e.g., email address database, Instagram account)
5. Use events (both hosted and outreach-focused) where the Museums have a presence for both observational and solicited perspectives

Potential Risks:

Not having our own e-commerce system leaves us with less control over data collection/customization; little uptake in or resistance to visitor survey; insurance risks grow so onerous that hosting partner events becomes difficult; low interest amongst public in partner events.

Monitoring/Responsibility	2019	2020	2021	2022	Resources and Considerations
Head Curator/ Assistant Curator	X	X			\$ - < \$2,000 • Cooperation with Marketing & Destination Development Team • Human resources to facilitate and evaluate

OBJECTIVE 4

Increase museums' engagement with County residents.

Rationale:

If the Museum system hopes to enhance their profile with the community at large, public engagement is crucial. The Museums must move beyond passive learning opportunities about local heritage. Facilitating partnerships, and participatory experiences is key, as is building a "museum community" through a comprehensive membership program .

Museums should not be dead spaces, mired in the past; they are very much about living in the present, our experiences here and now.

CONCEPTS:

1. Partner with key local businesses and community organizations to increase profile of the museums (and potential funding)
2. Use local media and influencers to increase Museums' profile in the County
3. Create a membership program that sustains, deepens and expands interest by regular and new local participants

Potential Risks:

Time needed to build partnerships may outweigh benefits; membership program needs more detail before risks can be fully appreciated.

Monitoring/Responsibility	2019	2020	2021	2022	Resources and Considerations
Advisory Committee/ Curatorial Team	X	X	X	X	<p>\$\$- < \$10,000 per year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• leverage existing advertising, special events and exhibit budgets• Cooperation with Marketing & Destination Development Team and Community Partners• Using existing PastPerfect software for membership system• Human resources to facilitate

OBJECTIVE 5

Implement fully the new volunteer framework approved in 2018.

Rationale:

A sub-committee of the Museum Advisory Committee formed in 2017 to examine possible volunteerism models for The County Museums. This was a result of increasing difficulties recruiting new members for the museums' five "Friends" groups and enticing existing members to serve in executive roles for their respective groups.

The sub-committee presented a final proposal to the Museum Advisory Committee in June 2018. (The report recommended changes to the Museum Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference., What had traditionally been Friends representatives on the Museum Advisory Committee were urged to organize a less formal Operations Team that would meet regularly with the Head Curator and Site Curators to tackle day-to-day issues relating to the County Museums. The Operations Team would also be a support for individual volunteers if Friends groups were to disband in the future. The proposal also recommended that a Volunteer Coordinator be hired as part of a more robust volunteer program at The County Museums. The Museums have 60-70 volunteers annually and recorded 5973 volunteer hours in 2018.

The sub-committee's proposal was approved in principle by both the Museum Advisory Committee and County Council (November 2018).

CONCEPT:

1. Ensure sufficient resources are in place to implement the framework

Potential Risks:

Volunteers "not on board"; inability to secure coordination resources.

Monitoring/Responsibility	2019	2020	2021	2022	Resources and Considerations
Head Curator/ HR		X	X	X	\$\$\$ >\$50,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Determine best avenue to introduce position: grant-funded, temporary contract, volunteer role, PPT, PFT, TPT or TFT?Human Resources DepartmentTraining materials and program development

NEXT STEPS FOR A LIVING STRATEGY: IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION

Action

By year-end 2019, a goal-driven and multi-year action plan will be prepared by the strategy team to identify specific tactics that will be used to meet objectives and listing metrics and KPIs that will be used to evaluate success. Detailed budget-estimates will accompany each action.

Communication and Alignment

All employee and volunteer/committee work should align with the Museums' objectives and overall aspiration.

Having conversations with the curatorial team, about how employee/volunteer work translates into our collective goals, should be prioritized and take place at team meetings.

Focus and Accountability

Regular performance conversations will take place with staff, and to some degree with volunteers and committees as well. Each team/ team member will be aware of and accountable for their role in the Museums' reaching their objectives and overall aspiration.

Track Progress

Curatorial team meetings are the ideal setting to not only communicate and align strategy, but also track progress--measuring activities by the goals and tactics outlined in the action plan. Periodically, members of the strategy team will be invited to participate in these meetings. Progress reports will also be incorporated into Museum Advisory Committee meetings (five times per year) and less formally at volunteer meetings.

Question and Answer

Questions to ask and answer periodically throughout the strategy-cycle and at cycle's end:

Has the strategy been deemed a success? Has our aspiration been realized? Have our objectives been met or have they changed--If the latter, why? Where do we stand with our metrics and KPIs? Have our capabilities grown or have they declined? Has visitor or technological needs changed? When faced with competition or other obstacles, have we risen to the challenge? If our aspiration and objectives have been met, can they shift into something more ambitious or rewarding?