



THE THUNDER BAY
HISTORICAL MUSEUM SOCIETY

Strategic Plan

2024 – 2028



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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society acknowledges the original custodians of this land and pay our respect to the elders – past, present, and future – for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture, and the hopes of Indigenous Peoples. We would also like to recognize that the Thunder Bay Museum is on the traditional land of the Fort William First Nation signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850, and to acknowledge the role of the Métis Settlement in the development of our community.

The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society also acknowledges that its mandate includes the region of Northwestern Ontario and that its work relates to other First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous people. We are committed to demonstrating respect for these peoples and promoting the importance of their cultural contributions through history and today.



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society preserves, displays, and interprets Northwestern Ontario's heritage resources for present and future generations.



STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

The 2024-2028 Strategic Planning process has been part of ongoing development and reporting activities. It began in 2022 with a series of consultant-led engagement sessions with Thunder Bay Museum staff, as well as the Board of Directors, Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society members, Indigenous advisors, allied institutions, and community stakeholders to confirm our vision, appraise past achievements, assess the current situation, identify critical issues, set goals and priorities, and discuss strategies to achieve those goals over the next five years. This consultation is part of a conscious attempt at ongoing planning utilizing our five-year strategic plan as a baseline for past, present, and future Museum development. The following plan will create a working tool and basis for:

- Developing annual budgets;
- Reporting to the Board of Directors and Museum members;
- Submitting annual reports for funding agencies; and
- Creating future business plans.

Museum Staff and Board will implement the strategies outlined below through daily operational duties and both standing and ad hoc committees with outside assistance as required.



VISION

Through its exhibits, publications, collections, and programs the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society will engage with the people of Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario in a spirit of openness, inclusivity, and universal access as well as trust, freedom of expression, and debate. Our motto, “Learning From History”, reveals our fundamental commitment to education and dedication to the idea of a community in which citizens enjoy equal opportunities to participate in public life, culture, and exploration of our collective past.



VALUES

Stewardship and Discovery: We are dedicated to the responsible care for the resources that have been entrusted to us and open to new ideas about the collections, their interpretation, and management;

Innovation & Resourcefulness: We support innovation to meet our mission through programs and exhibitions that explore new ways to engage audiences;

Collaborative Learning: We are dedicated to exploring new ideas both internal and external to the Museum, as well as collaborating with community partners to expand our knowledge and resources;

Community Service: We embrace a broad customer and community service ethos within the Museum, and offer visitors a variety of ways to relate to the Museum and its activities;

Integrity: We encourage dialogue, experimentation, transparency, and accountability;

Ethical Operations: We are committed to ethical behaviour in all operations and conduct in accordance with the Canadian Museum Association's Ethical Guidelines;

Diversity and Inclusion: The Society is committed to developing and encouraging diversity and inclusion initiatives promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist and diverse workplace; demonstrating leadership through an inclusive environment free of harassment; and adopting an inclusion engagement process to ensure all voices are heard to inform policies and decision-making;

Community Engagement and Partnership: We will seek to build meaningful partnerships throughout the area of our mandate to better deliver on our mission and improve all aspects of our operations through meaningful cooperation and dialogue;

Accessibility: The Museum will continuously improve accessibility to its facility, programs, collections, and interpretation through policy, digital tools, and capital improvements.

PILLARS

The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Strategic Plan (2024-2028) supports the Society's long-term goals as outlined in its previous planning documents and business plans. These goals include the registration and preservation of artifacts; increased revenue through the creative use of the Museum's collection; an enhancement of the Museum's program of exhibits; an increase of earned revenue, exposure and awareness through partnerships and memberships; a broadening of the scope of the organization's educational programs; the expansion of its publications program to include digital media; and the development of new fundraising initiatives.

The process has led to the identification of five key pillars over the next five years.

1. Preserving History
2. Sharing Stories
3. Responsive to Community
4. Organizational Excellence
5. Building for the Future

In support of these goals, the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society operates a year-round museum, maintains a research library and archival collection, and offers educational programs to adults, children, seniors, schools, and community groups. In addition, the Society employs qualified and dedicated staff with considerable experience in the museum field. These people, together with the Board of Directors and members of the Society, set operational goals, objectives and strategies to operationalize the following strategic plan.

PILLAR 1

Preserving History

Strengthen accessibility, capacity, and the condition of the collections

1.1 Support excellence in collection management

- 1.1.1 Complete physical inventory of 20% of the existing collection per calendar year.
- 1.1.2 Complete migration of all accession records to the database by 2028.
- 1.1.3 Develop and implement long-term goals addendum to the Collecting Plan in 2024.
- 1.1.4 Continue to digitize archival records including completing newspaper digitization, 50% of directories, & 50% of key fonds that will attract high interest and usage while continuing to improve capacity for remote access to these resources while protecting copyright.

1.2 Ensure that policies meet national and provincial standards and guidelines

- 1.2.1 Ongoing review, updating, and reporting in accordance with guidance from, including but not limited to, The Steering Committee on Canada's Archives and the Canadian Museums Association addressing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

1.3 Address storage space constraints and conditions in the near term

- 1.3.1 Develop a report by 2025 from curatorial staff on Museum's storage capacity limits and on what other partner organizations or site owners could offer.



PILLAR 2

Sharing Stories

Enhance the museum's exhibits, educational programs, public programming, and publishing

2.1 Continue excellence in developing interpretive content

- 2.1.1 Complete Long Term Exhibits Plan for permanent exhibits while decolonizing exhibits and weaving in histories of diverse and multicultural communities while achieving relevance to current and new audiences.

2.2 Develop regional mandate delivery through partnerships to deliver more content and programming off-site

- 2.2.1 Install one additional offsite exhibit per year.
- 2.2.2 Establish relationships with Robinson-Superior Treaty First Nations and Metis for programming and hosting of exhibits temporary and/or permanent.
- 2.2.3 Expansion of the size, frequency, and scope of tours and community-based activities.

2.3 Develop programmes that recognize the diversity and contributions of Northwestern Ontario peoples

- 2.3.1 Produce a report for the development of a regional 'hall of fame' to celebrate these contributions and their associated programs.
- 2.3.2 Develop and deliver education programs that recognize the experiences and contributions of diverse groups.



PILLAR 3

Responsive To Community

Committed to advancing a culture of accessibility, diversity, inclusivity, and reconciliation

3.1 Develop new and strengthen existing strategic and operational level partnerships to better engage equity-seeking communities

- 3.1.1 Partner with cultural and disability support organizations to create accessible gallery guides, pamphlets, and devices.
- 3.1.2 Create multiple marketing strategies and partnerships that address different demographics and regional markets.
- 3.1.3 Become a trilingual institution for interpretive content. (English, French, and Anishinaabemowin)
- 3.1.4 Improve the accessibility in exhibits addressing concerns for hearing, vision, and physical needs.
- 3.1.5 Formally establish Museum's Indigenous Advisory Group.
- 3.1.6 Develop partnerships with Indigenous organizations & governments across the region and the provincial level to improve programs, facilitate content delivery, and address the concerns in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).



PILLAR 4

Organizational Excellence

Committed to financial sustainability, effective governance, and operational success

4.1 Create more diverse revenue streams to maintain the budget at par with inflation while meeting or expanding programs and mandate delivery

4.1.1 Secure permanent funding through fundraising revenue for the fundraising coordinator position.

4.1.2 Establish deliverables for key performance indicators for all revenue streams.

4.2 Develop and market fee-for-service programs utilizing supplemental labour. These may include exhibits, film scanning, training, and other services

4.2.1 Secure partnership(s) and contracts with local post-secondary institutions, artists, and skilled labour providers.

4.2.2 Implement policy and accounting procedures to measure ROI performance.

4.3 Build and strengthen the capacity of staff and volunteers

4.3.1 Enact stand-alone volunteer management policy.

4.3.2 Implement staff and volunteer training and professional development as guided by national associations and applicable laws.

4.4 Build and strengthen agreements with the education providers to improve connections with the Museum

4.4.1 Conduct needs assessments with the local and adjacent school boards, followed by negotiations on collaborative programming.

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PILLAR 5

Building for the Future

Ensure the Society has the capacity to implement long-term plans

5.1 Study resource requirements, the feasibility of, and develop plans for expansion to meet the Society's needs for the next 50 years

- 5.1.1 Complete feasibility study with a third-party consultant for expansion of the Museum's facilities.
- 5.1.2 Develop a contract and costing for a project manager to oversee the expansion project.
- 5.1.3 Identify long-term costing for staffing, volunteers, partnerships

5.2 Establish strategic partnerships with allied arts, cultural, and heritage institutions to find efficiencies and collaborative operations

- 5.2.1 Engage consultant(s) on crafting partnership governance models.

5.3 Conduct an advocacy campaign to secure support for expansion plans

- 5.3.1 Create a 'case for support' plan that identifies individuals and organizations at all levels of government and a timeline for engagement.

5.4 Engage in capital fundraising campaign, as necessary, through appeals, grants, and other such activities

- 5.4.1 Develop capital campaign contract requirements and solicit bids by 2026.



CONTACT US

**Comments or concerns?
We'd love to hear from you.**

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