



STRATHCONA COUNTY
MUSEUM
&
ARCHIVES

Strategic Plan

2021-2026

Treaty 6 Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 territory, traditional lands of Indigenous Peoples including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, and that we are responsible beneficiaries of this Treaty and its legacy.

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Introduction

Strathcona County is a unique community with unique stories. Strathma – Strathcona County Museum & Archives – as operated by the Strathcona County Heritage Foundation (SCHF) strives to grow into new standards of excellence, facilitating the sharing of stories in novel ways that both challenge and reaffirm community identities. Strathma takes an active role in building our community, not only for those who live here but as an ideal model for others to emulate.

As a mirror of Strathcona County – its people, places, ecologies – Strathma will lead in the museum and archives field as an agile and definitive keystone institution. When Strathcona County is mentioned in conversation, the question, “Have you been to Strathma?” will inevitably follow. This five year strategic plan will take us there.

Definition

What is the Strategic Plan? In this context, it...

- ✓ Communicates our strategies to achieve our primary goals and continue with operations that are working well.
- ✓ Provides key priorities for community and stakeholder alignments.
- ✓ Enables us to evaluate our activities and progress within the timeline defined.

It is not...

- ✓ A fully comprehensive inventory of all tasks we will undertake to achieve our priorities.

Building a Model Community

Strathcona County can be difficult to define, both distinctive and vast in its characteristics. As a mirror of Strathcona County, Strathma must listen to and share the myriad of voices that speak and resonate together as Strathcona County's identity. Strathma must be holistically accessible to all, physically, intellectually, and emotionally. Strathma takes a leading role in building Strathcona County into a destination of choice and "Canada's most livable community" for the benefit of our own residents and as a model for other communities. This will be achieved through our exhibits, programs, events, outreach, and all other Strathma operations.

Implementation

- 1) Strathma will be a wayfinding hub for institutions, experiences, and sites within Strathcona County.
- 2) Strathma will be a gathering place and demonstrate that museums are truly a space where people and ideas come together.
- 3) Strathma will build connections through shared experiences and new understandings.
- 4) Strathma will help to craft partnerships with and between community members – people, institutions, businesses, and organizations. Strathma will partner with industrial leaders within the County.
- 5) Strathma will pursue the highest standards of universal accessibility. Strathma will expand its volunteer opportunities and provide the community with ways to meaningfully participate in the telling of our story.
- 6) Strathma will ensure it undertakes environmentally responsible operations.
- 7) Strathma will seek to partner with and support smaller, grassroots heritage/cultural groups for mutual benefit to the organizations and County cultural resources in general.



Sustainable Sharing

Globally, a new landscape in museology is coming into view where convention is reconsidered and the balance between preservation and access is rethought. Policies of transparency and visibility are being embraced and guarded custodianship is left behind. In our future, collections are displayed in their entirety and back-of-house activities are brought front-of-house. Access to object and archival collections will increase, with researchers, classrooms, and the general public utilizing their community's material past beyond exhibits and programs.

Implementation

- 1) Strathma will increase its viewable percentage of collections through open-display storage.
- 2) Strathma will encourage and facilitate interaction with museum and archival collections by researchers, classrooms, and the general public.
- 3) Strathma will hire necessary personnel including a conservator, an archivist, and a collections manager.



Thoughtful Technology and Interpretation

As novel technologies emerge daily, museums and archives can embrace and utilize these as tools for sharing rather than obligatory hurdles. More and more, visitors are seeking hands-on, authentic, sensory-rich experiences which rely on physicality and experiential connection instead of virtual worlds. Fulfilling experiences are those that intrigue, engage, and surprise. Technology will be used in service of these goals rather than used for the sake of use.

Implementation

- 1) Strathma will utilize IPOP theory (ideas, people, objects, and physical experience), developed by Smithsonian Institution, to create exhibits and programs that challenge and redefine visitors' perspectives and expectations.
- 2) Strathma will incorporate new, hands-on, low-tech experiences accessible to all visitors.
- 3) Technology will be used based on its ability to facilitate the sharing of content and story, from long-ago to future-forward.



Balanced Transition

To become a model heritage institution, Strathma must continue to undergo a transition which involves key, interconnected elements. The current building has allowed Strathma to incubate from an idea into a keystone community institution. However, the practical constraints have proven the building and current resource base (staff, funding, property size, collections, exhibit, and programming spaces, etc.) inadequate if Strathma is to continue on its current trajectory toward excellence in the industry and the world. New resource streams are as vital as strategies for growth. As these are established, Strathma will evolve its offsite and virtual activities so it can continue to engage as a universal institution with a strong voice, even in the absence of a centralized physical space.

Implementation

- 1) A Transition Team will be established, including the hiring of a conservator, a collections manager, and an archivist.
- 2) Offsite programming, events, and outreach activities will be expanded
- 3) Strathma will continue to expand and adapt its educational resources to meet the needs of students and teachers.
- 4) New exhibit spaces will be created offsite.
- 5) A new building will be constructed to house Strathma's storage, archives, programming, exhibits, events, and meeting spaces.
- 6) Strathma will continue to evolve its image through branding, visual media, and online presence.



Reflexive and Relatable Storytelling

Strathcona County is unique. Rural and urban cultural spaces, diverse ecology, varied industry and land-use, and a diverse web of communities – all make up the macro-neighbourhood that is Strathcona County. Sherwood Park acts as a hub which expresses this interconnectivity. It is also the region and province's truest suburban community. For this reason, Sherwood Park offers avenues of understanding into the world we inhabit now. Moreover, stories can be shared in ways that challenge visitors to reconsider their worlds as they currently understand them, engaging in new ways of thinking in museology and in our community.

Implementation

- 1) Strathma will continue to build collections that articulate the modern era and will pursue more exhibits and programming that explore the mid-twentieth century and onward as a foundation for our contemporary world.
- 2) Strathma will renew its Natural History Gallery to explore the relationship between people and the natural world of which we are a part. Strathcona County is a living expression of this relationship, and its unique stories will be shared.
- 3) Diverse audiences will be engaged as co-curators so that all members of the community can see themselves within Strathma and community building can continue as a pluralistic creation.
- 4) Strathma will share the Indigenous legacy of connecting to this place as Home. All those who call this place home – past, present, and future – belong to this legacy. This foundational experience, the Legacy of Home, will be explored as a shared narrative for the whole community.
- 5) The use of resources within the landscape has always been integral to lifeways on the land. In this way, industry is a part of the Legacy of Home. Community partners within the industries of the County will be engaged to share their stories.



Responsible Governance and Finance

The Strathcona County Heritage Foundation (SCHF) was established in 1986 with the vision to gather and preserve the vibrant cultures, stories, and community developments of the Strathcona County area.

In 1995, Strathcona County graciously provided SCHF with the building it currently inhabits, Sherwood Park's first fire hall, to found a Museum & Archives to showcase the County's rich history. For the past 25 years, Strathma has operated in that space to share the story of our community.

Strathma will be a leading model in museum and archives governance, with a strong governing body consisting of a Board of Directors, Members, and a partnership with Municipal Government – three expressions of the same community.

Implementation

- 1) Strathma will continue to work with Mayor, Council, and other municipal government agents to develop a pioneering model for museum governance.
- 2) Strathma will seek new sources of funding from stakeholder partners and governments to have the resources to best tell our story.
- 3) Strathma will pursue options for self-sustaining operations such as admission-funded events, programs, and exhibits, as well as profitable services such as rentals and tours.

