

# Baile nan Gàidheal | Highland Village Site Development Plan

Baile nan  
Gàidheal  
Highland Village  
MADE OF STORIES

## Project Summary



Baile nan Gàidheal | Highland Village, the only centre of its kind in a living Gàidhealtachd (Gaelic speaking area) outside of Gaelic Scotland.

## Introduction

Baile nan Gàidheal | Highland Village is a living history museum and Gaelic folklife centre located on a picturesque 43 acre hillside overlooking Cape Breton Island's world renowned Bras d'Or Lake. The Village, which is the only centre of its kind in a living *Gàidhealtachd* (Gaelic speaking area) outside of Gaelic Scotland, illustrates and promotes the stories, traditions and identity of Gaelic Nova Scotia.

Baile nan Gàidheal transports visitors through four eras of the Nova Scotia Gaelic story, between the late 18th and early 20th centuries: (1) *Gàidhealtachd na h-Albann*/Gaelic Scotland, c. 1770s -1830s; (2) *Coille Mhór na h-Albann Nuaidh*/The Forests of Nova Scotia, c. 1770s - 1850s; (3) *A' Stéidheachdadh Gàidhealtachd Ùireadh*/Building New Communities, c. 1850s - 1880s; and (4) *Gàidhealtachd na h-Albann Nuaidh*/Gaelic Nova Scotia, c. 1880s - 1920s.

Our costumed animators in first person character share the stories and traditions transmitted through generations of Gaels. Eleven period buildings, cultural presentations, craft demonstrations, re-enactments of daily folklife, farm animals, and the physical and natural setting of the Highland Village site support staff in telling their stories.

The Village is set in one of the most spectacular locations In Nova Scotia. Its hillside setting overlooks the Bras d'Or Lake (and the Barra Strait), which was designated in 2011 as an UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Incredible vistas from the site include the hills and shores of all four counties of Cape Breton Island.

In addition to on-site experiences, Highland Village staff are also involved in partnerships, capacity building and outreach in the Gaelic cultural



community, museum and cultural sector, tourism industry and the local Central Cape Breton community.

The Museum is one of 28 sites in Nova Scotia's provincial museum system (Nova Scotia Museum). It is operated locally by the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society, incorporated under the Societies Act of Nova Scotia, and a registered charity with the Canada Revenue Agency.

In 2016, after much consultation and research, the Board of Trustees of the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society approved a Site Development Plan for the Highland Village. The plan includes:

- the construction of a new welcome centre,
- addition of new interpretive and support structures,
- interpretive enhancements throughout the site, and
- renovation of the existing visitor/administration building as a cultural resource centre.

The estimated cost of implementing this plan is \$3.6 million (see breakdown on page 4).

*Our Need: For the past decade, no new features have been introduced at Highland Village.*

On an annual basis, the Highland Village assesses operating results and measures success against the organization's mission, vision and detailed organizational objectives related to: programming, Gaelic language and cultural development, research, human resources, physical infrastructure, marketing, partnerships and long-term funding.



While the Highland Village site has its strengths, especially with scenery and period buildings, a confusing gateway/entrance area and aging contemporary infrastructure are identified as weaknesses and challenges. *No new features have been introduced at Highland Village in over a decade.* As well, the infrastructure that supports the operation of the Museum is dated and inadequate. Namely:



- the Museum has no suitable archival and artifact storage/research space;
- the Museum lacks space to adequately orient visitors to the experience they will have in the Village;
- there is a lack of space for education programming for school groups and other learning opportunities for visitors;
- public spaces (gift shop, washrooms, etc.) are inadequate;
- and, there is insufficient space to accommodate the management and administrative functions of the Museum.

In response to this situation, the staff and board of the Highland Village embarked on the development of this three-year Site Development Strategy. To guide our decisions, in July 2015, we contracted the team of Architecture 49 and Aldrich Pears Associates to assist with developing more detailed plans and costs for the major elements of the *Strategy*. A team led by A.L. Arbic Consulting was also contracted to develop a business plan to map out the implications of implementation of the *Strategy* on its operations. That report was approved by the Board of Trustees in March 2016.

## Site Development Elements

**Arrival & Welcome Plaza** - Clear and attractive informational signage will welcome and orient visitors, as well as provide information regarding programs and events.

**New Welcome Centre** - A new 2,200 sq. ft. Welcome Centre building will be the main point of contact for most visitors arriving at the Museum. The Centre will include admissions, retail sales, orientation and exhibition space. The Centre's proximity to the tuning room/stage building will enable the Museum to make better use of that space for programming and special exhibits.

**Cultural Resources Centre** - A new Cultural Resource Centre, renovated from the existing main building, will include two full stories and nearly 5,100 sq. ft. of space to house the public research, collections management, archival, and administrative functions of the Museum.



**New Shingle Mill** - A new 500 sq. ft. timber framed building will house a shingle mill with equipment from the Cash family in Irish Cove. The Village currently features a working carding mill from the same family.

**New Carriage House/Agricultural Story** - A new story & a half timber framed carriage house (1,800 sq. fit of display space) will be constructed in the Gaelic Nova Scotia era to better interpret agricultural themes. It will feature farming artifacts from the era as well as a working carpentry shop and will free up the existing barn for a working barn.

**New Costume/Animation Support** - A new 500 sq. ft. "garage kit" style costume/animation support building will better support the Village's expanding animation and interpretive offerings.

**Other Interpretation/Programming Enhancements** - Other key enhancements include: adapting the little barn next to the church as a hands-on activity centre for visitors and a welcome building for cruise ship passengers; development of an exhibit to tell the Gaelic Nova Scotia story post 1920 to today; incorporation of interpretation on the



relationship with the Mi'kmaq; incorporation of interpretation on the Bras d'Or Lake and its Biosphere Reserve status; and other signage and exhibits that support themes identified in the interpretive content framework and the Nova Scotia Interpretive Master Plan.

**New Large Artifact Storage Building** - A new 2,000 sq. ft building will be built across from the workshop to house large artifact storage including large farm artifacts and winter storage for tractor attachments. It will be a simple “garage kit” style building.

**Workshop Replacement** - The operational capacity of the Village’s maintenance program workshop will be enhanced with the construction of a new 1,200 sq. ft “garage kit” style building.

**Canteen Renovations** - A renovated canteen will enable the Village to improve food service & food safety for special events as well as to allow workshops on Gaelic food.

**Vegetation Improvements** - A reforestation program will replace dead or dying pasture spruce with a more reflective mix of hardwood and softwood species. Apple trees and other plants will be added to support interpretation of food, wool dyeing, medicinal remedies, and improved aesthetics.

## Site Development Budget

Welcome Centre	\$717,400
Cultural Resource Centre	\$1,230,850
Entry Site/Landscaping	\$284,400
Interpretation & Signage	\$553,000
Shingle Mill	\$48,300
Carriage House	\$86,250
Costume/Animation Support Building	\$57,500
Large Artifact Storage	\$69,000
Workshop	\$63,250
Canteen Improvements	\$86,000
Vegetation Improvements	\$57,500
Other Enhancements	\$32,200
Escalation Allowance	\$314,350
<b>Total Project Costs</b>	<b>\$3,600,000</b>

## Sources of Revenue

Province of Nova Scotia	\$1,200,000
Government of Canada	\$1,200,000
Community/Private Sector Fundraising	\$1,100,000
Municipality of Victoria County	\$100,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,600,000</b>

## Impact on Operations

The goal of the Baile nan Gàidheal | Highland Village is to become the premier venue for experiential presentation and transmission of Gaelic language, culture and folklife in Nova Scotia. Inspired by the rich cultural legacy of our Gaelic ancestors, the Village has developed a wide range of offerings designed to serve our constituent cultural community.

The successful completion of this plan will allow the Highland Village to build on our successes and significantly grow and expand its experiential programs and opportunities including:

- Expand site stories to include natural history, Mi'kmaq culture; and the post 1920s Gaelic Nova Scotia story.
- More relevant content around growing and eating food, and offering insights into sustainable foodways.
- Improved community connection through sustainable living programs and connections with students.
- Themed programs and experiences for families.
- Increased capacity to provide workshops for people to build/do things (crafts, foodways, etc). This will enable us to address and take advantage of the “Makerspace” and “Skillsharing” movements.
- Introduction of “value added” costumed offerings for visitors looking for a more in-depth cultural experience.
- Enhanced hands-on opportunities for all visitors throughout the site.

- Improved community gathering spaces for social language learning and cultural transmission.
- Significantly improved research space for genealogy and family history, music and other archival assets. The facility will also include space for listening and recording audio.
- More efficient and effective servicing of our important cruise ship market and passengers.
- Increased capacity for off and shoulder season programming.
- Proper space for visitor orientation which will allow us to develop empathic relationships between visitors and the Gaelic Nova Scotia story, and to more effectively introduce participatory opportunities for visitors.
- Space to house and host temporary in-house exhibits and displays.

## Capital Campaign Cabinet:

Denis Ryan, Chair

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M.A. MacPherson

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## Contact:

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