

The number '30' is rendered in a large, bold font with a wood grain texture. The '3' and '0' are connected at the top. The background of the slide features a dark red vertical bar on the left and a light beige background with a faint, stylized map of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the bottom left corner.

## Interpretive Master Plan Approach

The Interpretive Master Plan approach includes goals, a discussion of the market for heritage interpretation, a vision for attracting and increasing visitor engagement, and interpretive design best practices. It represents a shift from a curatorial-driven approach to a market-driven, visitor-focused approach to interpretation, creating a balance between the two.

## Goal 1.

Contribute to a common understanding and appreciation of the heritage of Nova Scotia through interpretation.

## Goal 2.

Achieve sustainability by ensuring that the Heritage Division thrives and survives into the future.

## Goal 3.

Ensure that interpretation is authentic, relevant and inclusive for all audiences.

Goal 4.  
Ensure best practices in interpretation are followed.

## 3.1 Goals

Four goals guide the Interpretive Master Plan. Collectively, they address the understanding and appreciation; sustainability; authenticity and relevancy; and best practices of interpretation. When acted upon holistically, these goals offer the best opportunity for renewal within the NSM.

# Goal 1.

**Contribute to a common understanding and appreciation of the heritage of Nova Scotia through interpretation.**

**This goal involves engaging and communicating the heritage of the province through interpretation, to ensure that Nova Scotians have a higher awareness of, gain more meaning from, and also value the heritage of Nova Scotia.**

# Goal 2.

**Achieve sustainability by ensuring that Nova Scotia's heritage resources thrive and survive into the future.**

**This goal ensures that heritage and heritage presentation to the public - by the NSM and other partners within the Heritage Division - survives into the future through more sustainable and multi-faceted methods.**

# Goal 3.

Ensure that interpretation is authentic, relevant and inclusive for all audiences.

**This goal speaks to the qualities that interpretation within the NSM and the Heritage Division must embody in order to truly represent the province's heritage and to attract and engage visitors.**

# Goal 4.

Ensure best practices in interpretation are followed.

**This goal focuses on the skills and competence that Heritage Division professionals require to develop quality, engaging heritage interpretation that supports the other three goals.**



## 3.2 Market for Heritage Interpretation

The market for heritage interpretation in Nova Scotia (and the world), along with the expectations of this market, has shifted. It is no longer enough to simply open the door of the museum, expecting visitors to arrive. The demographics of the audience are changing, and heritage institutions are competing for time and attention with many other experiences. The NSM must embrace these changes to increase their relevancy and importance in visitors' lives, and **reach their audiences where they live**. This involves becoming an integral part of visitors' lives, whether the museum is a physical space that a visitor returns to again and again, a trusted source for information on the internet, or a visible presence in everyday media and events.

Audiences can be attracted and engaged with interpretive resources through several different perspectives: geographic characteristics, demographics and personal motivations.

**Geographic segments** organize audiences by their physical location: residents of Nova Scotia and tourists. **Demographics** organize audiences by age: seniors, Baby Boomers, Generation X/ Baby Bust, and the younger crowd. **Personal motivations** organize audiences according to their individual reasons for visiting a heritage attraction: explorers, facilitators, experience seekers, hobbyists, and spiritual pilgrims. Each of these ways of understanding audiences is discussed as part of this section in further detail. Following this, conclusions are drawn about how the Heritage Division should best address these varying perspectives.

### GEOGRAPHIC SEGMENTS

There are two main geographic categories of visitors that relate to this Master Plan: residents of Nova Scotia and tourists. While tourists remain an important source of revenue and interest for the province, research indicates that the residents of Nova Scotia are a primary market for heritage experiences in the province.

**Residents of Nova Scotia**, some 914,000 in total, are a static market with very little overall growth in numbers anticipated. The Nova Scotia resident market is older than average and includes a declining number of school children (-9% between 2006/07 and 2010/11).

Halifax Regional Municipality, already home to over 40% of the province's population, is expected to continue to grow as its economy remains relatively strong and the shift from rural to urban areas continues. This area has a higher than average proportion of university educated individuals (28% compared to 20% for Nova Scotia



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as a whole) and the highest number of school children (53,000 in 2006/07), suggesting that it will be a primary resident market for heritage experiences in the province.



**Nova Scotia's tourism activity** has remained relatively stable for the past few years, at 2.1 – 2.2 million visitors a year. This includes travel for all purposes and over half of these visitors are from other parts of Atlantic Canada. As well, many of the visitors to Nova Scotia are repeat visitors.

The past couple of years have seen significant declines in visits from the US market. Although there have been increases in visits from European markets, these represent a much smaller proportion of overall visitation. The peak visitation period has been shifting away from July/August to August/September and the province is also seeing more visits in the Spring.

There has also been a significant decline in visits by motor coach. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in visits by cruise ship in Halifax and Sydney, although some smaller ports are also starting to see some limited cruise activity.

Visitors to Nova Scotia have a strong interest in culture and heritage: 36% visit museums and a similar proportion visit national and provincial historic sites. The interest in culture and heritage is particularly strong among US and overseas visitors. As a result, the decline in visits from the United States likely translates into fewer visits to Nova Scotia's heritage facilities.

Tourists today are well travelled with high expectations. They are looking for memorable experiences that provide interaction with local residents and immersion in local culture. Those that visit museums and heritage sites are also likely to participate in a range of other activities.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

From a demographic perspective, audiences can be divided into four main groups:

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**Seniors** (and almost seniors), include those that are now between 62 and 80+. 180,000+ Nova Scotians fit into this segment, with about 150,000 of them under 80.



**The Baby Boomers**, include those born between 1947 and 1966, now between 42 and 61. They represent approximately 1/3 of Nova Scotians or some 300,000 persons. Technically, this group includes Generation X, who were born in the last decade of the baby boom.





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**Generation X and the Baby Bust Generation** includes those born between 1967 to 1979, now roughly 30 to 45+ in age.

The **baby boomers** are a significant market and have had a major influence on almost every aspect of life for the past fifty years or more, and will continue to do so for the next 20+ years. This is a well-educated audience segment. As they retire and have more time available, they are expected to indulge their interests in learning, heritage and travel. This suggests the potential for both more visits to heritage facilities as well as the availability of more volunteers. However, **this market is no longer content with passive displays and exhibits; they expect more active learning experiences that reflect their interests and desire to learn new skills.** In retirement, many activities are performed in groups, replacing the social interaction gained through the workplace. Heritage sites have a great opportunity to become the place where these special interest affinity groups gather to deepen their knowledge and perfect a skill (Source: Durel, John and Anita Nowery Durel, *A Golden Age for Historic Properties*).

**Generation X and the Baby Bust Generation** are now in the peak of their family-rearing years and are very family-oriented market segments. They are grappling with the time pressures of juggling dual careers, and the financial and time pressures of an active, growing family.



"Caleb" (flickr)

This group tends to be over-educated and under-employed. The children of this demographic segment are growing up in the age of technology and their exposure to this, including television and other forms of electronic entertainment, makes them hard to impress. Heritage facilities need to recognize the importance of family in efforts to attract these markets. Experiences need to appeal to these "techno-wizard" children, as well as their parents, offer flexibility and good value, and make it easy and hassle-free to participate.

The **Younger Crowd** (the children of the Boomers and the Millennials) are the audience of the future, and an exceptionally challenging one. There has been a fundamental shift in this audience segment, driven by communications technologies, which are an essential and constant part of their life. **Learning is more self-directed and hands-on/minds-on, and it needs to be experiential, participatory and instant to keep their interest.** This market is connected at all times: sharing information and social networking is part of everyday life. To attract this market, **experiences need to be offered in a way that connects with them.** Participatory media that promotes two-way interaction and enables this market to be part of the experience and to have an influence on it is important.

There are also numerous smaller audience groups that are not captured by the broad age groups above (e.g., new Canadian immigrants, disabled visitors, visitors that do not speak English, etc). Interpretation must be inclusive for all audiences, not just its most apparent segments.

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**The Younger Crowd** includes the Baby Boom Echo (the children of the boomers) and the Millennium Kids. Collectively, they represent the audience of the future.

The **seniors** market segment is either retired or close to retirement and have a lot more discretionary time than any other audience segment. They also have a strong interest in heritage, particularly those with a higher level of education. The seniors market is, therefore, a strong market for heritage experiences in Nova Scotia and also an excellent resource for obtaining volunteers.

## PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS

All audience types visit heritage facilities with different personal motivations. Each visitor has individual reasons for coming to a heritage attraction, which must be addressed through interpretation in order to ensure a satisfactory visitor experience. The way we experience and move through a heritage site reflects our own personal motivations and interests.

In his book, *Thriving in the Knowledge Age: New Business Models for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*, John Falk explains that museums must become consumer focused: they must understand consumer behaviour, produce customized products, and compete against many other experiences. **Those that rise above the crowd offer value-added products that are customized to individual visitors.**

In order to understand and address the personal needs and motivations of visitors, Falk breaks the museum audience into five groups: explorers, facilitators, experience seekers, hobbyists, and spiritual pilgrims.

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### Explorers

The explorer's experience at a heritage site is driven by curiosity. They may not be drawn by the particular subject matter of an institution, but are generally interested in museums and other heritage sites. They may wander around and stop to discover an exhibit, artifact, or landscape that strikes their interest. They generally identify themselves as interested in learning and discovering new things.

### Facilitators

In contrast with explorers, facilitators are motivated to visit heritage institutions in order to facilitate the needs and desires of others. They may be parents facilitating a visit for their children or adults bringing another person to the heritage site. The key to this group is that they are present for someone else's benefit (a child, friend, or relative) because they feel it is important for them to "learn something."

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## Interpretive Master Plan Approach

### Experience Seekers

Often tourists, these visitors collect experiences. They are looking to be able to say, "been there, done that." Many are visiting to satisfy the expectations of others, such as a family or friend who recommended a site. They are more focused than explorers, as they have an agenda and often a time frame. Their goal is to see all the highlights of a particular site.



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## Hobbyists

These are visitors who have a strong interest in, and may be highly knowledgeable about, the topic of a museum. Their primary motivation for visiting is to obtain further knowledge about a topic, and as a result they are focused during their visit. Their goal might be very specific, such as reviewing what a certain type of boat looks like before building their own model, or buying rare plants for their home garden.



Isaac Marshal

Mark Holmes



## Spiritual Pilgrims

These are people who have a sense of awe or reverence for the site they are visiting. They may visit a heritage site to escape, get away, contemplate, or rejuvenate. They are not necessarily there for the content. They are there for the aesthetics, to get in touch with the past, or to tap into something greater than themselves.

## CONCLUSIONS

There are many different ways to analyze visitors to heritage attractions in Nova Scotia. Each visitor type – whether defined by geography, demographics, or personal motivation – helps create a more comprehensive picture of future audiences. **As the Nova Scotia Museum and the Heritage Division consider strategies for interpretive renewal, they must focus their efforts with these audience types in mind.**

For the purposes of this Master Plan, an amalgam of these various audience types has been created that is specific to the NSM, shown in the diagram on the next page. As there are many audiences that can be drawn on to attract and retain visitors to the NSM and other Heritage Division programs, individual sites will have specific interested audiences that must be identified, attracted and served through interpretation.



## TARGET AUDIENCES FOR THE NOVA SCOTIA MUSEUM

### **Nova Scotia Residents**

This includes Nova Scotia residents of all ages, personal motivations and communities.

### **Tourists**

This group describes visitors that come to Nova Scotia from away as tourists. They are a diverse group from all over the world, with different needs and wants.

### **Nova Scotia Communities**

This group refers to physical communities in Nova Scotia, which may be targeted by sites and programs in their immediate area, as well as to communities of interest, which are not necessarily geographically defined. For example, a site may attract a community of hobbyists from all over the province that share a common interest.

### **International “Visitors”**

This group refers to the visitors the NSM can attract who may or may not ever physically visit the province. This group is served via online groups, websites and other communication. They may “visit” Nova Scotia in this way because of a particular interest in an aspect of history, a family connection or many other points of interest. At some point, members of this group may become tourists as their interest leads them to physically visit the province.

## 3.3 Best Practices

### TRENDS IN DELIVERING HERITAGE EXPERIENCES

Changing audience interests and expectations, demographic trends, increasing competition from a broad range of alternative experiences and travel destinations, and the increasingly prevalent role of technology today, are forcing museums and heritage institutions to change and adapt. Even with changes, heritage sites face significant challenges in attracting visitors and generating revenues.

To respond to these challenges, the overall visitor experience throughout the NSM system needs to:

- » **Put the visitor first. Audience needs and expectations are paramount** and must be carefully considered. Visitors must be catered to before they arrive (web), while there (washrooms, food, seating, access, orientation, parking, etc.), and after they leave (programs, memberships, web). Everything counts!
- » **Ensure that themes are reflected in all aspects of public experiences and spaces.** All aspects of the facility or site must be considered when reflecting the content, including buildings, landscapes, exhibits, graphics, costumes, activities, sounds, smells, artwork, live events, live animals, and glimpses “behind the scenes.”
- » **Cater to multiple learning styles**, which can include traditional “show and tell,” “hands-on–minds-on” with interactive and engaging experiences, or self-directed and guided experiences. There is a shift towards facilitating rather than informing as visitors become more adept at self-directed learning and information gathering.
- » **Provide a healthy variety of media to attract varied interests and learning styles.** This may include visuals (graphics and text), tactile, audio-visual (sound and video), whole body or kinesthetic, and must not exclude humour, surprise or quiet reflection.
- » **Understand that audiences are not all homogenous** and respond to the interests of different age groups, multi-cultural groups, etc., within a particular region or community of interest. Assumptions that people will be interested in new exhibits and technologies should be tempered with market research and an understanding of visitor needs.
- » **Be socially relevant, with links to real people** (when presenting history) **and the real world around them** (in linkages to the site, surrounding landscape or activity, and content experts).
- » **Make use of new communication styles** including social networking, sharing of information and two-way communication. Initiatives such as *Twitter*, *De-li-cious* and *SMU-Tube* are examples of information sharing. Museums can create discussion through blogs or other online forums to include the public in curatorial and interpretive dialogues (e.g., help select artifacts and specimens for exhibit, ask the curator a question, send in your story).



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» **Make use of new technologies:** multi-media, mobile phones, MP3 players and iPods, the Internet for on-line exhibitions, virtual collections, and Web 2.0 for marketing and relationship building. Audio tours and video clips can be downloaded in advance of visits to a museum or gallery, while at the gallery or used post-

visit for more detailed information. Some facilities use podcasts to interact with visitors, which can be object specific or offer an in-depth exploration of a specific exhibit. They can be released as episodes to help maintain interest or downloaded automatically by members or subscribers to a specific topic area. Users can also utilize multi-media (audio and video) applications (e.g., mp3 and YouTube) to submit their perspectives and interpretations on a theme. Whatever approach is taken, **a key objective is to build relationships with existing and potential visitors.** This will encourage repeat visitation (in-person or on-line) and membership, as well as financial support for the facility.

» **Deliver the best possible experience with the most skilled staff.**

## ATTRACTING AND RETAINING AUDIENCES

Heritage institutions must also pay attention to attracting new audiences and encouraging repeat attendance. Increasing attendance by attracting new audiences and repeat visitors is critical for museums, particularly when there is increasing dependence on self-generated revenue. This can be achieved through:

- » **A regular program of refreshing permanent exhibits** (less emphasis on “permanent” displays and more on “core” themes and experiences that change periodically), where possible.
- » **Temporary and travelling exhibits.**
- » **Varied site programming and demonstrations** (with firm links to current research and curatorial expertise).
- » **Outreach programs and initiatives**, with links to school curriculums and public interests.
- » **Long-term programs and projects that grow over time** (e.g., boatbuilding), or that encourage regular participation (e.g., nature exchange).
- » **Theatres or demonstration spaces** with new shows regularly.

» **Interpreting collections in different ways to attract new interest groups and return visits** (i.e., with more varied, attractive and inclusive content). This can be accomplished through various on-site interpretation techniques. New interpretation of collections and linking different themes can offer a fresh view of history and attract special interest groups and new audiences. Examples include the role of nuns during the American Civil War, children in Roman times, the role of immigrants in shaping the Canadian landscape or, at Mystic Seaport Museum, an exhibit entitled “Black Hands, Blue Seas” that explores the maritime heritage of African Americans. Within the NSM, such examples might include: the role of firefighters in the two World Wars, children in early 19th century Nova Scotia, and the immigrant contribution to the province.

This can also be accomplished through the development of special interest and themed “trails” through exhibits. By offering several trails through the same exhibit, different audiences can be attracted and returning visitors have the opportunity to experience the collection from alternative perspectives. Trails can be tailor-made to appeal to special interests, themes, cultural or demographic groups and delivered in print, audio-guide or podcast format.

- » **Building relationships with visitors**, by staying in contact with them and offering new experiences that match their interests (before, during, and after their visit).
- » **Using the Internet** to attract interest, provide high-level interpretation, generate visits, and follow-up with visitors. Many organizations have taken advantage of social networking and “customized” web sites to create regular places for their publics to return to. This includes sites such as Yahoo, the CBC, and MSN/Hotmail that provide up to date information, links and customized menus of content options for their “members,” who must login to have access to more in-depth information or services. This method also provides a vehicle for delivering additional content through online or downloadable activities, contests, archives, and educational resources.
- » **Increased use of museum sites by the public** for community needs (meetings, clubs, courses, weddings, etc.).

## BEING RELEVANT

Heritage facilities are part of the attractions business. They have to compete with a vast array of opportunities for the discretionary time and money of audiences. **To be successful, they need to be relevant and make a connection with what is important to their potential audiences.**

Relevance means:

- » **Looking beyond traditional exhibits, artifact presentation and visitor programs to make the connection with their public.** Planning must include more than investment in research, interpretive development and knowledgeable staff.
- » **Engaging residents and communities “where they live.”** The museum must seek to position itself where people are today – in the 21st century – both physically and emotionally. This also reflects the need for museums to look to their communities first before devoting energy to attracting dwindling or fickle tourism markets.
- » **Welcoming tourists.** A focus on residents and communities does not mean that tourists are to be ignored. Successful communities and places of interest are appealing to residents and tourists alike. Tourists will often seek out authentic, and social, experiences based around community events (e.g., farmer’s market, coffee shops, etc.).

- » **Moving beyond attendance numbers.** The current relationship between allocated funding and attendance figures has blinded many museums into striving for quantity vs. quality. Meaningful experiences must be brought forward, with less emphasis on “busloads” and more on friends and neighbours.
- » **Transcending the role of the museum.** The institution that thrived in the 19th and 20th century must retool itself for the future. Opportunities to become “more than a museum” should be explored aggressively and enthusiastically.



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## Interpretive Master Plan Approach

» **Assuming many roles**, such as:

**Facilitator:** for genealogy, self-directed learning, etc.

**Caretaker:** stewardship of resources, heritage, artifacts, etc. (publicly renowned).

**Showcase:** the latest in ideas, trends and technologies.

**Meeting Place:** where people come together.

**Venue:** for theatre, art, music, etc.

**Marketplace:** food, produce, gifts, ideas.

**Service provider:** historic tours, programs, and other fee-based initiatives inside and outside of the museum realm.

**Circuit board:** catalyst for new partnerships and exchange of ideas.

**Collaborator:** supporter of public movements (e.g., slow food, green initiatives).

**School:** space for seminars, workshops (music camp, etc.).

**Workplace:** staff take pride in their museums and their work; also public involvement in long-term projects and initiatives (e.g., Hector ship).

**Living history:** transcend the static, traditional heritage of buildings and sites, bringing these spaces to life with real community members and events that help rekindle value in the resource.



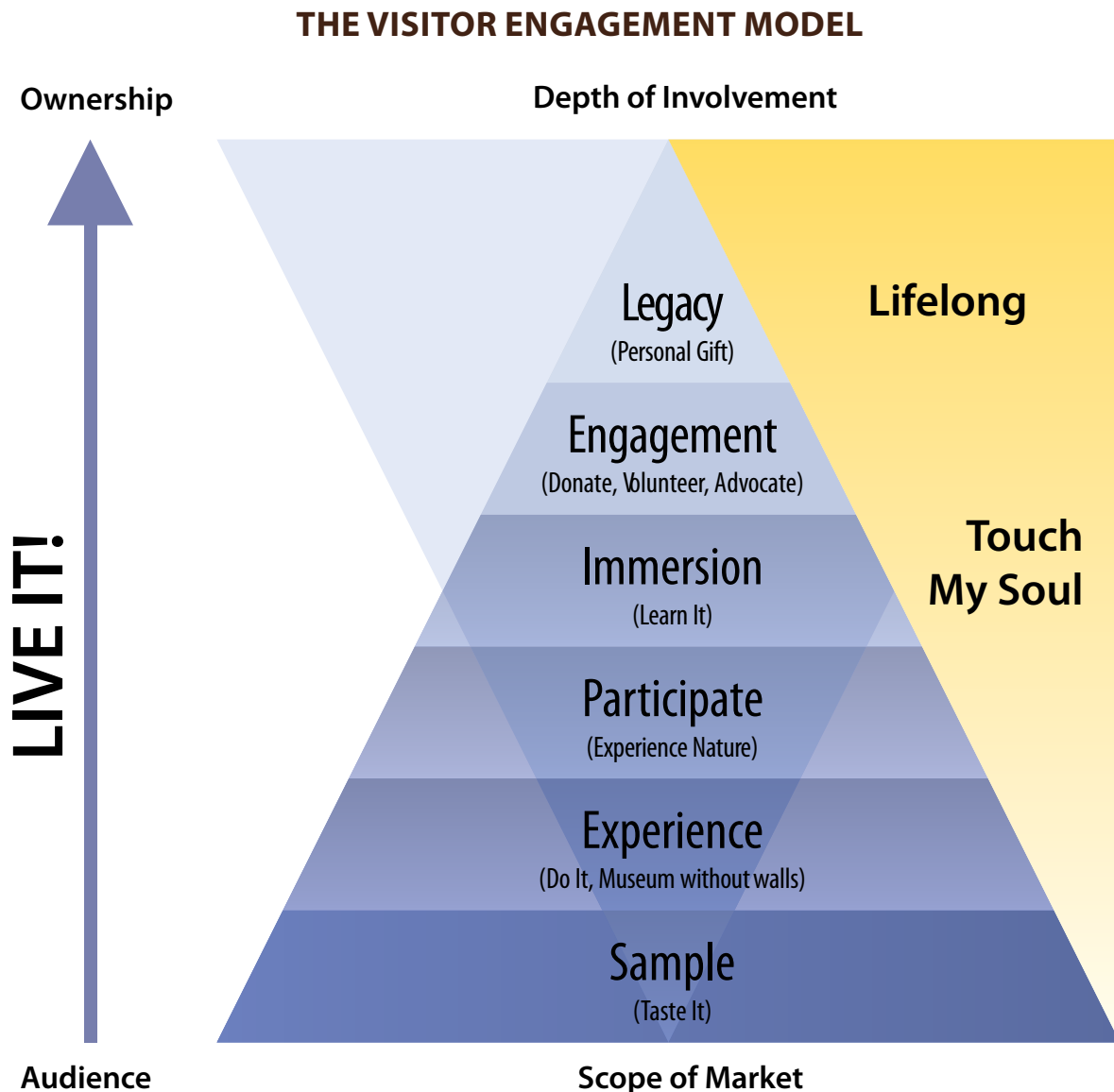
Darrell Burke

## 3.4 Engaging Visitors

### THE ENGAGEMENT MODEL

During the planning process, a visitor experience workshop was conducted to develop possible experiences for future visitors to the NSM. A diverse group of interpretive professionals were involved, including current and former museum staff, interpretive managers, partner organizations (Department of Natural Resources staff, Parks Canada staff, etc.), and the consultant team. Through a facilitated process, participants developed a series of visitor experience ideas that were organized into categories (see Appendix A). The power of this process lies in the categorization of the experiences, rather than the individual experiences. These categories provided conceptual direction for the types of visitor experiences that are desirable in a renewed NSM.

The consultant team used the visitor experience chart to create the Visitor Engagement Model, featured at right. **This diagram represents increased levels of engagement by visitors based on experiences they may be able to have at heritage sites in Nova Scotia.** Overall, the diagram is based loosely on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs; with the broadest visitation (and the broadest needs) at the bottom and the most focused visitation at the top.





## Interpretive Master Plan Approach

The Visitor Engagement Model represents one tool that the Heritage Division should adopt in order to regain its relevancy to visitors and create passionate, engaged museum supporters who are more than just occasional visitors. The diagram should inform Museum decisions now, specifically with regard to target audiences, objectives and strategies. Audiences must be encouraged to move toward a deeper sense of involvement, immersion and “ownership” of the Museum itself, through an increased level of participation and support. The role of the NSM and the Heritage Division is to facilitate that growth through the strategies they implement.

The scope of all potential audiences is represented at the bottom of the Visitor Engagement Model. The market in this case is large and varied, and the typical depth of visitor involvement limited. The depth of involvement increases as one moves towards the apex of the pyramid, where fewer visitors with increased levels of participation and commitment reside. As an incremental process, the engagement deepens through a natural progression up the diagram. However, some experiences may be successful in vaulting visitors towards the top of the triangle in a shorter timeframe without stopping at every step along the way.

The majority of visitors who will progress toward the top of the pyramid will be residents of Nova Scotia, but the model does not exclude those from outside the province. In today’s wired world, connections that build a sense of ownership can be forged over long distances and without ever setting foot at a museum or heritage site.

At the most basic level, museums can provide **sample** experience for visitors: glimpses of what heritage means, such as a sample of food or music, that represent the first “taste” of what the Museum offers. Easy access and a broad distribution of samples appealing to as many audiences as possible are key to this level of visitor experiences.

The **Experience, Participate** and **Immersion** categories represent increasingly deeper levels of engagement or involvement. At these levels, visitors are able to engage in deeper, perhaps more active experiences that may consume all or part of their visit to a site, such as helping feed animals or assisting an archaeologist for a day. These experiences should build interest in, and awareness of, the Museum through activities, experiences and offerings designed to lengthen and broaden the experience. Any of these levels may be considered a turning point, where visitors begin to grasp what the NSM offers. More importantly, visitors may begin to have a deeper level of emotional commitment that brings them back to visit again. Eventually, these visitors will become return visitors who see the museum as a part of their lives.

At the **Engagement** level, visitors have become regular participants in Museum experiences, participating in long-term projects such as boatbuilding, gardening or the development of an exhibit. Volunteer work takes place at this level, where commitment is strongest. These visitors are advocates of museums and of heritage in general, as it now relates directly to their lives. They are some of the strongest recruiters for new visitors. Strategically, the Museum has immersed

itself into the lives of its constituents, who now live with the museum as a backdrop to their own life; as a valuable asset, a mentor, or an old friend. A key strategy for increasing visitor engagement involves encouraging two-way communication between the Museum and the visitor. Social networking (online and elsewhere) and customer relationship management techniques used in retail environments have become the norm in other sectors and should be used to enhance the visitor’s engagement with the Museum.

The culmination of the Visitor Engagement Model is **Legacy**, representing the highest level of heritage involvement. This may be expressed through a personal gift to the museum (such as an object, collection or financial donation) or through a lifetime of research and scholarship that culminates in the transfer of knowledge (such as publications or lectures).

At the initial levels of the Visitor Engagement Model, **the Heritage Division must strive to provide experiences that touch the soul of their visitors, capturing their hearts and imaginations for the future.** Games, celebrations and entertainment are all valid methods for touching audiences and should be part of this approach. Higher levels of the model that focus on lifelong engagement should utilize core programs, activities and interpretation that are structured to support and secure visitors on a regular basis. Visitors who become museum “owners” or partners will work to ensure the survival of the museum into the future.

## ATTRACTING AND RETAINING AUDIENCES IN NOVA SCOTIA

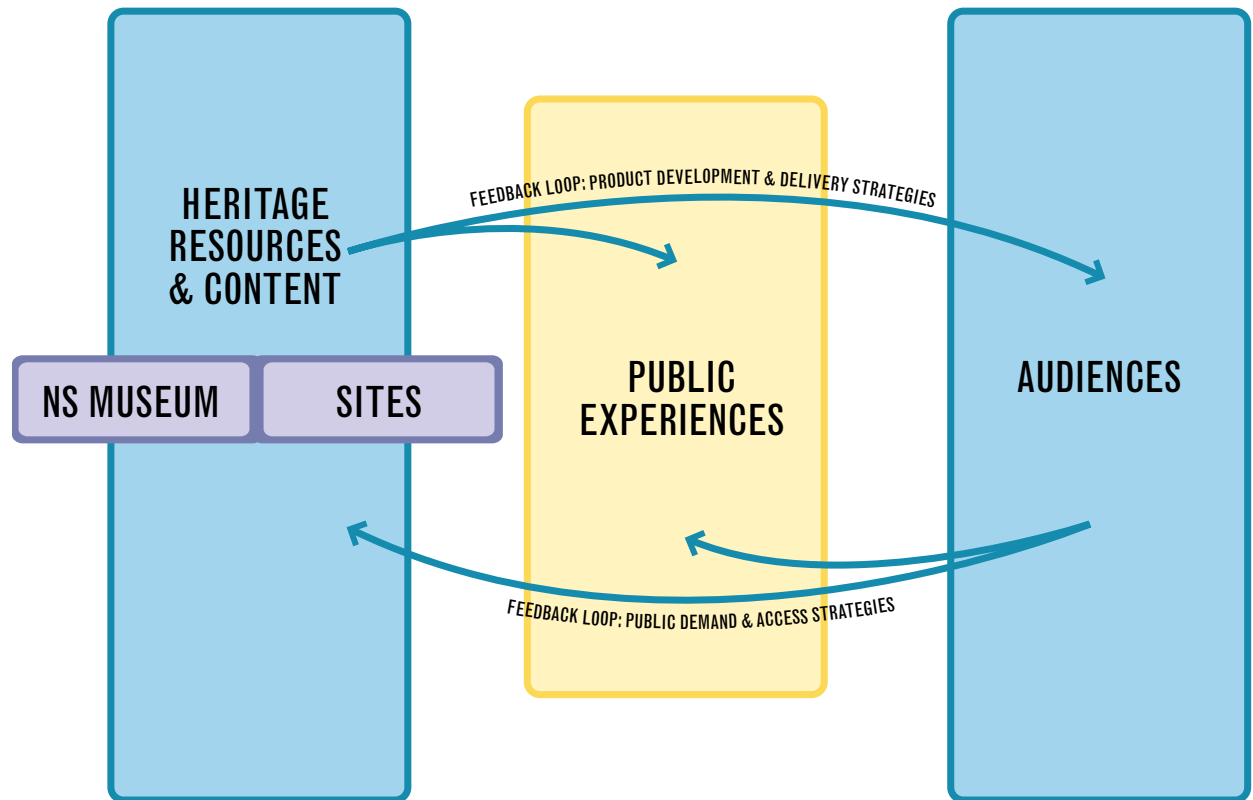
The relationship between the Nova Scotia Museum, its 27 sites, and the target audiences for this plan are represented in the *Attracting and Retaining Audiences* diagram shown at right.

The **Nova Scotia Museum and the sites** are central to renewal, and will play a vital role in the ongoing process of attracting and retaining audiences through the work they do, the experiences they develop, and the feedback they elicit from audiences.

As an entity, the Nova Scotia Museum and the sites rest astride of, and are responsible for, **Heritage resources and content**: the wealth of information and resources that the Museum is able to draw from when developing interpretive experiences for the public (audiences) in Nova Scotia. This body of resources includes the provincial artifact collection, archival information, folklore, stories, places, people, etc.

**Audiences** (as defined in Section 3.2) include Nova Scotia residents, Nova Scotia communities, international “visitors,” and tourists. As stated, these large segments of the visitor population can be broken into smaller categories based on demographics, geographic locations and learning styles. Overall, however, these groups represent the people that the NS Museum and the sites must take into account when planning and delivering public interpretive experiences.

## ATTRACTING AND RETAINING AUDIENCES





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**Public experiences** developed by the Museum encompass where, and how, audiences will be attracted and retained. They are broadly defined as exhibits, programs, and other offerings developed for audiences (residents and visitors). Although such experiences have not been proposed as part of this plan, they should be the natural result of any Museum effort directed at the public. Experiences will vary between specific sites and within each new project. By their very nature, good interpretive experiences can interest multiple groups simultaneously, broadening their impact across various audiences. These experiences can be developed to relate to Nova Scotia visitors, as well tourists and interational “visitors” who may only visit the museum through the web. As the most exciting part of the plan’s implementation, public experiences are vital for growth and change in the Museum system. Everchanging and dynamic, they rely on other parts of the Master Plan to be successful and should be carried out by museum staff and selected consultants for years to come.

In the past, these experiences have been developed by the Museum as a one-way process: the delivery of a heritage resource-based “product” or experience to the public. For engagement to occur and thrive, the process must be driven by Museum resources (a particular site, story, artifact, etc.) as well as what visitors would like to see the Museum offer (the “market”). This creates two distinct streams of feedback.

With carefully planned **product development and delivery strategies**, various segments of the audience can be targeted with specifically designed experiences drawn from the resources and content available within the system. In response, **public demand and access strategies** affect how Museum experiences are revised and reworked over time. This also represents the two-way communication that is required for public ownership.

In the case of content-based institutions like the museum, there must always be a healthy mixture of content-driven and market-driven initiatives, balanced to respond to changes in demand and resources. Development of public experiences should be generated based on what content and resources are available and deemed important to present, thus ensuring that hidden or underrepresented stories are brought forward. Conversely, audience interests and demands can also shape the content and “products” that are offered, ensuring a higher chance of return on investment through increased visitor draw. In addition to the demands the public might make, they also have the power to add or enhance Museum resources by contributing their own content and participating in Museum dialogues.

Audiences have the ability to affect stories that are told, as well as the resources that are developed over time. In return, experiences that are made accessible to visitors will be drawn from stories and resources that are brought forward by the Museum. This is a **continuous feedback loop** where the Museum must listen, and react, to the wants and needs of the audience, refining their products over time based on feedback provided.

Relationships between audiences and the Museum should become two-way as public ownership and feedback become more broadly supported. Understanding individual audiences will allow the Museum to move beyond a curatorial-based exhibits and programs toward market-tested experiences. Market analysis and business casework on all projects will support this shift. Curatorial excellence, good research, and interesting collections will always be central to this mix, as will proactive input from the public through various means.



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