



STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2027 NAVIGATING THE FUTURE



CONTEXT

Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre has a rich history rooted in preserving and celebrating the heritage of Muskoka. The company began in 1866 after building the first steamship in the fleet, *Wenonah*. Our charitable organization began in 1973, sponsored by the Ontario Roadbuilders, with the restoration and operation of the historic *RMS Segwun*, the fifth oldest operating steamship in the world. We later expanded with the addition of *Wanda III* in 1993 and *Wenonah II* in 2002. The Muskoka Discovery Centre, a local museum, was opened in 2006 focused on wooden boats, steamships, and resort history. Several years ago, there was a shift in the strategic direction of the Muskoka Discovery Centre to showcase Muskoka's broader history, environment, and Indigenous heritage through interactive exhibits, educational programs, and partnerships with cultural thought leaders in Muskoka. The strategic shift resulted in our first new exhibit in 12 years, Watershed Wonders, followed by three captivating new exhibits: *Wanda III: Steam to Green*, *Evolving Muskoka: Life on the Edge of the Shield*, *Misko-Aki: Confluence of Cultures* opened in 2023. An upcoming exhibit aligned with our core theme of sustainability called *Love Muskoka Sustain Muskoka* will open in 2026. The organization is now at a pivotal point in its evolution, offering an enhanced cultural experience in Muskoka through cruises aboard one of the three ships in the fleet and through visits to the Muskoka Discovery Centre, which features a range of exhibits and programs.

The purpose of the 2025-2027 Strategic Plan, Navigating the Future, is to set out the goals and actions necessary for the Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre to achieve its vision of becoming a vibrant cultural centre in Muskoka that enriches the lives of residents and visitors alike.



MISSION AND VISION

OUR MISSION

To present dynamic, entertaining, and educational experiences through our iconic steamships and the Muskoka Discovery Centre.

OUR VISION

To be recognized as a leading cultural experience in Ontario where Muskoka's history is brought to life through iconic steamship cruises and engaging, educational exhibitions. We strive to inspire lasting appreciation for the region's heritage through meaningful, interactive experiences.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CHAIR

We are pleased to present the strategic plan for the next three years.

The Muskoka Steamships & Discovery Centre continues to evolve to offer an authentic experience, either on one of our three ships or by immersing yourself into the stories of Muskoka through our exhibits.

Our Impact Continues to Grow

Our work is gaining national recognition. In 2024, the Canadian Museums Association honoured *Misko-Aki: Confluence of Cultures* with its Outstanding Achievement Award. The exhibit was praised as “an amazing educational experience available to the world through both the physical exhibit at the Muskoka Discovery Centre in Gravenhurst, Ontario, and the digital platform at www.miskoaki.com, in both French and English.”

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario also recognized *Misko-Aki* in 2024 with the Award of Excellence in the Indigenous category.

We’re proud to contribute to the Muskoka community in many ways. Our historic ships offer memorable experiences for families, groups, and visitors — whether it’s celebrating a special event or simply enjoying the unique charm of Muskoka from the water.

In 2025, we welcomed Wanda III back to service — a beautifully restored and now electrified steam yacht originally launched in 1915. It offers a unique glimpse into a bygone era, now paired with a modern focus on sustainability.

The Muskoka Discovery Centre also provides a distinctive event space with seating for up to 200 guests and features a newly installed 9’ x 16’ LED display, the only one of its kind in the region.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CHAIR

How can you help?

There are many ways to help us share iconic Muskoka through cruises and experiences. The best way is by becoming a Member! By cruising or visiting the MDC with friends, family and guests, you will be helping us promote Muskoka and the need to protect it for generations to come.

In summary, we aim to contribute to the vitality of our Muskoka community by providing a vibrant entertaining cultural centre, heritage experiences on our classic passenger vessels, strengthening our community and making a difference in people's lives.



Gary Getson
Board Chair



John Miller
President

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

THE STRATEGIC PLAN SETS FOUR GOALS, ALONG WITH THEIR ACTIONS, THAT WILL GUIDE THE WORK OF THE BOARD, STAFF, AND VOLUNTEERS OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS.



STRENGTHEN APPEAL OF MSDC AS A CULTURAL CENTRE

NAVIGATING THE FUTURE
STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2027

Create Award-Winning Experiences

- Continue working with world class designers and fabricators.
- Build network of thought leaders in Muskoka and beyond.

Enrich Programs Onboard & at MDC

- Continuing to expand themed events, exhibits, and programming at Muskoka Discovery Centre.
- Continue partnerships with Muskoka's classic resorts, by offering special cruises demonstrating the cultural heritage of Muskoka.

Grow Indigenous Heritage & Culture Appreciation

- Continue partnerships with Indigenous groups demonstrating "two eyed seeing" including community-led events and workshops.

Celebrate Our Fleet

- Celebrate the *RMS Segwun*, 138 years old in 2025, and our fleet.
- Continual focus on funding to support restoration and maintenance of our ships to enable operation for the next century.

Offer Curriculum-based Camps

- Build and incorporate engaging educational experiences into Day Camps for ages 4 to 13.



STRIVE FOR AN UNRIVALLED VISITOR EXPERIENCE

NAVIGATING THE FUTURE
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Build & Renew Exhibits

- Develop permanent physical and digital exhibits that are relevant, engaging, and educational for all ages.
- Broaden the target audience by combining traditional cruises with themed cruises targeting families and cultural diversity.

Deliver Excellent Customer Service

- Improve end-to-end user experience for our MSA and MDC patrons.

Maintain Strong Operational Performance

- Continue investment in Visitor Experience Training for staff and volunteers with an emphasis on hospitality, emergency management, and health and safety.
- Provide outstanding food & beverage, hospitality and heritage commentary on ship cruises and in the MDC.
- For MDC, maintain a clean and inviting environment with refreshed exhibits.

Measure Customer Satisfaction

- Continually seek customer feedback on satisfaction and experience, through exit data, public posts, and reviews and develop a plan to act on it.

Increase Communications

- Increase our ability to inform, educate, and be relevant to Muskoka and beyond through social media, Reflections magazine, and newsletters.



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCY

NAVIGATING THE FUTURE
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Increase Membership & Partnerships

- Increase the number of members in all categories and increase donor recognition.
- Develop partnerships/relationships with organizations to help promote our mission and vision.

Increase Community Connection

- Maintain external input through our Advisory Council of local stakeholders.
- Digitize exhibits and collections to increase accessibility and expand reach.

Increase Funding From All Levels of Government

- Ensure funding reflects the importance of the MSDC in Muskoka by seeking sustained support from the federal, provincial, and municipal governments.

Inspire Staff Excellence

- Ensure employee performance objectives are aligned with the strategic plan.

Maintain a Safety Conscious Organization

- Make the health and safety of staff and visitors a core value of the ships and MDC to ensure risk mitigation anticipating the needs of visitors.

Review Governance Structure

- Carry out a review of board governance to ensure a highly skilled diverse board, financial accountability, and responsible management of the organization.



EMBED SUSTAINABILITY INTO ALL OUR ACTIONS AND DECISIONS

NAVIGATING THE FUTURE
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Promote Our Use of Renewable Energy Technology

- Promote the use of electric power for *Wanda III* passenger cruises and the exhibit *Wanda III: Steam to Green*.

Complete *Love Muskoka Sustain Muskoka*

- Design and launch the Love Muskoka Sustain Muskoka exhibit and create complementary programming that further emphasizes environmentalism and sustainability.

Expand Environmental Education at MDC

- Work with environmental thought leaders and community partners to develop and display relevant and current environment content.

Practice the Five R's

- Practice the Five R's of waste management: rethink, refuse, reduce, reuse, and recycle.

GreenStep Certification

- Maintain our Silver GreenStep certification to enhance sustainability efforts and strive for Gold.

Work with the Town of Gravenhurst to make the MSDC a model of sustainability through building improvements and demonstrations of technology.



Make a Difference with Us

- Join as a Member of the organization
- Become part of our amazing volunteer team
- Make a donation to support our projects
- Visit realmuskoka.com and discover how you can make a difference

Connect with Us



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