
**COMMENTS ON THE NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION'S
CULTURAL HERITAGE DRAFT PLAN**

18 FEBRUARY 2012

The Ottawa Valley Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS-OV) is pleased to provide the National Capital Commission (NCC) with comments on its Gatineau Park Cultural Heritage Plan.

We support the NCC's goal of identifying and protecting significant cultural heritage resources in Gatineau Park.

Unfortunately, because such sites have generally not been identified on NCC maps, signs or publications, we cannot comment with any confidence on the completeness of the list of sites provided. However, one glaring omission is the Meech Lake Road Landscape (or at least what remains of it).

The plan states: "The NCC will focus its efforts on cultural heritage resources of national and capital significance." However, as custodian of Gatineau Park, and owner of most of the property in the park, the NCC has responsibility for *all* cultural resources in the park.

It is not clear exactly what criteria were applied in designating cultural resources as national, capital or local. We believe that several of the sites designated "local" have obvious national capital region significance, and thus should be designated "capital." These include the Carbide Willson Ruins complex, the Wakefield Mill Complex, and the Meech Creek Valley Landscape.

While we understand the meaning behind the "retreat to nature" name, the choice of words is unfortunate and the public may view it as cynical. Retreat to nature at Harrington Lake, or The Farm, or O'Brien House, or Willson House? Not for us public!

Until now, much of the cultural heritage within Gatineau Park has been neglected or ignored. Some sites, such as the Percy Sparks house, have already been lost. Others, such as the landscape at the Haven, are soon to follow suit. Some sites, such as the house at 108 Pine Road (owned by the NCC), are threatened by neglect. Still others, notably the Meech Creek Valley Landscape, are threatened by NCC development plans.

Because of the lack of information available to the public, and the inaccessibility to the public of many of these cultural heritage sites, it will be difficult to engage the public in understanding and appreciating their heritage value.

Much more could and should be done to highlight the history behind the many and varied cultural heritage sites throughout the park. A few examples include the Luskville Fire Tower, the Carbide Willson Ruins Complex, Kennedy Road, the Brown lands, and the cottage foundations still visible at Carman and Brown lakes. The NCC should partner with local historical societies in achieving this.

We fully support and encourage the NCC to work with First Nations. There appears to be very little recognition of First Nations or their heritage in the park currently. Hopefully this process will identify and protect key sites used by First Nations in the past.

The prohibited public access to many large and important cultural heritage sites in Gatineau Park – notably Willson House, O'Brien House, The Farm, and Harrington Lake – is very unfortunate. Willson House and O'Brien House, which appear to be under-utilized, should be repurposed to a use that includes public access.

The site of the Moore Farm should be restored within the boundaries of Gatineau Park and include in the inventory of cultural heritage sites.

We look forward to working with the NCC in finalizing this plan. We remain available to meet with you to provide further information or clarifications with respect to our comments. Please feel free to contact us at (613) 232-7297 or by email (jmcdonnell@cpaws.org) to arrange a meeting.

