



Wanuskewin
Heritage Park

Thundering Ahead

Campaign for Canada's Wanuskewin Heritage Park

NEWS RELEASE

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WANUSKEWIN NAMED TO CANADA'S TENTATIVE LIST FOR UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN: Wanuskewin Heritage Park has been named to Canada's Tentative List for UNESCO World Heritage Sites. In an announcement at the Ottawa Locks this morning, the Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and Minister responsible for Parks Canada, declared eight new sites to be considered for the international honour. Wanuskewin is the first site in Saskatchewan to reach this significant milestone. Canada's Tentative List was last updated in 2004. Canada has 18 sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

"Indigenous nations from across the Great Plains recognize the significance of Wanuskewin as a sacred location. This is a gathering place. We come here for ceremonies, to understand our history and to connect with our ancestors," says Candace Wasacase-Lafferty, Chair of Wanuskewin's Board of Directors. "Being named to Canada's Tentative List for World Heritage Sites reaffirms the importance of this place and the need to protect it for future generations."

Mayor of Saskatoon, His Worship Charlie Clark is quoted: "Wanuskewin has been a visionary contributor to our community since archaeological excavation began in the early 1980s. Today's announcement is an incredible accomplishment: The culmination of many years of hard work by an extraordinary group of leaders. I congratulate the team at Wanuskewin on achieving this significant milestone in their journey to UNESCO World Heritage designation."

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List represents some of humanity's most outstanding achievements and nature's most inspiring creations. Inscription on the World Heritage List is the highest recognition for a protected heritage area in the world. In order to be considered, a site must first be included on their country's Tentative List. A public process to solicit applications was initiated by Parks Canada in 2016. Wanuskewin Heritage Park submitted their application in January 2017.

Recently, Wanuskewin launched an aggressive \$40 million capital fundraising campaign and visionary renewal, called *Thundering Ahead*. The plan is to reintroduce exhibit galleries and improve educational offerings, expand the current facility to accommodate larger conferences and meeting groups, renovate the 25-year-old interpretive centre, preserve the ecology and biodiversity of Opimihaw Valley, and expand the land base to be home to a small herd of Plains bison. The team has nearly raised its project budget and renovations to the building will begin this winter.



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"This renewal represents something significant for Wanuskewin," says Wasacase-Lafferty, "Yes, it's about offering a more robust visitor experience at World Heritage standards, but it's also about the people who came before us. We acknowledge that the archaeological record of this site confirms occupation by Indigenous peoples for at least 6,400 years. Our future success lies in continuing to come together as a community in this space."

Wanuskewin's value to the international heritage community is stated in their Tentative List application such that: *The archaeological resources at Wanuskewin are among the finest examples of Pre-Contact occupation of the Great Plains of North America and are an exceptional testament to traditional human settlement on the Northern Plains. Nineteen Pre-Contact sites have been identified on the terraces, point bars and coulee depressions that form Opimihaw Valley. Considered a terrestrial island, all of the heritage resources are contained within a well-defined boundary and are highly concentrated. This complete and intact record of cultural development in the region from 6,400 years ago to present day includes habitation sites, bison jumps, tipi rings and the most northerly Medicine Wheel recorded in North America. There is evidence of nearly every Pre-Contact cultural group recognized across the Plains having gathered at this site; and contemporary Indigenous nations affirm the significance of Wanuskewin as a spiritual place. Considered a sacred site and gathering place, Wanuskewin continues to be relevant as a place for peaceful co-existence, education, ceremonies and reconciliation for all nations.*

On February 26, 2016, Wanuskewin announced its formal intent to apply for UNESCO World Heritage designation through the Parks Canada Tentative List. On June 17, 2016, they revealed a team of exceptional community leaders who committed to help Wanuskewin realize its ambitious plan. On August 31, 2016, the City of Saskatoon announced its support through the long-term lease of 375 acres of adjacent land to be home to Wanuskewin's future bison herd. *Thundering Ahead* publicly launched on February 9, 2017. Wanuskewin Heritage Park is located five kilometers north of Saskatoon. It opened in 1992 and has been host to many historic events, including a royal visit in 1987 when Queen Elizabeth II declared it a National Historic Site. In December 2016, the Catholic Church announced that an invitation had been extended to Pope Francis to visit Wanuskewin to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

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