

York Boats Launched at Lower Fort Garry Historic Site

July 21, 2014.



James Bezan, Member of Parliament for Selkirk-Interlake, poses with guests and costumed interpreters in a York boat at Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site. The three York boats were built as one of a series of projects aimed at celebrating Métis history and culture. Left to right: a Historical interpreter, Lawrie Barkwell (Louis Riel Institute), Sharon Conway (Louis Riel Institute), James Bezan, Marilyn Peckett (Parks Canada), Tom Kynman (Parks Canada) and a historical interpreter.

(Government of Canada/Handout)

Government of Canada Launches New York Boats at Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site

July 19, 2014

Today, on behalf of the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of the Environment and Minister responsible for Parks Canada, James Bezan, Member of Parliament for Selkirk-Interlake, launched three York boats at Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site.

The York boats initiative at Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site was one of 18 projects outlined in a \$4.25 million investment by the Government of Canada announced in 2011 to help Métis communities preserve their history and culture and present their rich heritage to all Canadians.

Parks Canada is developing public programming around the York boats at Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site, which will be implemented in 2015. Through initiatives like these, Parks Canada is supporting Canada's National Conservation Plan by taking concrete action to connect Canadians to our natural spaces. In addition, the ongoing work of Parks Canada and programs – like the Xplorers program, Learn-to Camp and special events and exciting new activities and programs across the country – are enhancing visitor experience and facilitating personal connections with Parks Canada places.

Quick Facts

- Two of the boats were built using modern materials and methods to Transport Canada standards, and are certified for carrying public passengers. The third boat was constructed with traditional materials and methods, and is on display inside the walls of Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site.
- York boats were named for York Factory, the Hudson's Bay Company headquarters and depot in northern Manitoba. York boats were the Hudson's Bay Company's workhorse of fur trade transportation in western Canada, able to withstand the pounding of rough waterways while still nimble enough to be portaged over dry land, though the size and weight of a York boat made portaging one no easy task.
- The York boat's design was based on a boat called the Orkney yole, which in turn was based on the Viking longship.
- At approximately 14 metres in length, York boats usually had a crew of six to eight men (including a steersman), many of whom were Red River Métis, and could be rowed or operated under sail. York boats could carry up to six tonnes of cargo.

Quote: "Our Government is pleased to officially launch these beautiful York boats here at Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site. York boats were crucial to the fur trade, and these modern examples represent our Government's investment in Métis culture and history in Manitoba."



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