

# LE FOURNEAU

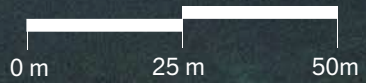


## ABOUT LE FOURNEAU

Le Fourneau (Smuggler's Cove Provincial Park) is a 7.74 hectare park located off Nova Scotia Trunk 1 along the Yarmouth and Acadian Shores, located just south of the village of Meteghan. The park has extensive ocean views of the Baie Sainte-Marie, unique cliffside walking trails through old-growth forests, picnic areas and tables, and public restrooms with running water. The cove area is inaccessible at high tide, but during low tide, visitors can take the 80-step stairway to the ocean floor and walk along basalt rock formations. A series of interpretive panels are placed on the viewing decks leading to the cove that explain cultural, geological and biological site features.



# LE FOURNEAU



# HISTORY

The lands in the southern half of Clare, including those at Meteghan at L'Anse-aux-Hirondelles (present-day Smuggler's Cove), were granted in 1785 as part of the "Young Men's Grant". In the region of Meteghan, 14 lots were granted to descendants of Clare's original families from up the bay. The leader of this group was Prudent Robichaud, a former resident of L'Anse-des-LeBlancs, who is credited as the founder of Meteghan. Prudent was the father of Marie-Joséphine Robichaud, and father-in-law of Joseph Dugas, Clare's first settlers. Marie-Joséphine's brother, Armand Robichaud, accompanied his father on the move and also received land at Meteghan.

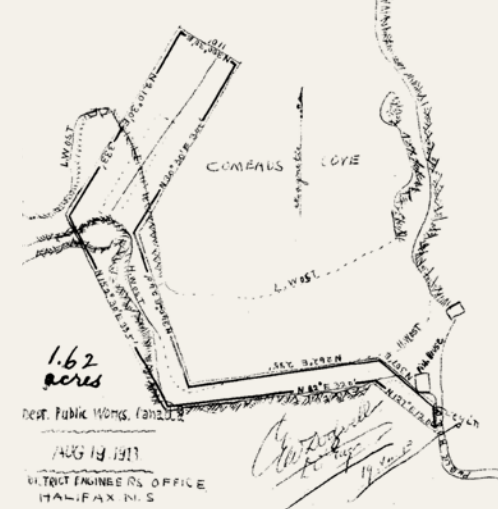
Also in 1785, five hundred acres of land situated approximately 1 kilometre to the south of Meteghan near Lac des Guillot were granted to Jesse Oales, a militia officer from Digby County. He later sold his land to Acadian families. Originally part of the Oales acreage, the cove was known to locals as L'Anse-aux-Hirondelles (Swallows Cove) and the cave in the cliffs was known as Le Fourneau (The



**L'Anse-aux-Hirondelles**  
The village of L'Anse-aux-Hirondelles dwarfed by its wharves. The road down to cove is in the foreground, centre-right.

Oven). Later on, English cartographers called it Comeau Cove, a name that has never been used by locals but can still be found on nautical charts and some roadmaps.

Here, the coast is comprised of steep cliffs that are part of a Meguma bedrock formation that extends all the way south to Cap Sainte-Marie. The deep curve of the cove made it one of the few suitable locations for a harbour along the southern stretch of Baie Sainte-Marie in the late 18th century. A very small fishing village was built on the southern edge of the cove, with a road leading from the shore up to the main highway. The village had a long wharf that extended across the mouth of the cove and formed a protected basin behind it. The tide flows into the cave twice a day making it inaccessible from the beach except at low tides. In the early 1900s, land in the cove was expropriated by the federal government for the



**"Comeau's Cove" Breakwater**  
Plan showing land to be used as a breakwater to protect Le Fourneau. 1913. (NS Registry of Deeds).

purposes of building a breakwater extending from the southwestern point of the cove.

The cove developed a reputation as a smuggler's roost during the time of Prohibition between 1921 and 1933. Prohibition laws made it illegal for anyone to produce, import, distribute or consume alcohol. Unlike the trade in illegal drugs today, dealing in and consuming alcohol – although a crime – was not considered to be socially inappropriate. To a certain extent, smugglers and bootleggers in the community were tolerated and smuggling happened anywhere that boats could offload without scrutiny. French-speaking Acadian sea captains could buy rum and wine from the French islands of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon south of Newfoundland and smuggle it into Clare to fulfill local demand. They would also sell spirits to American smugglers off the New England coast. From 1931 to 1933,



#### Smuggled liquor

Sometimes the smugglers were caught red-handed, as in this photo of a seizure of illegal liquor in Clare. Early 1930s. (Harold Robicheau/Centre acadien)



#### Visit La Fourneau!

A vintage postcard from the mid-twentieth century.

alcohol sales were permitted in Nova Scotia but still banned in the United States. During those years, legal Canadian whiskey was also smuggled into east coast American ports from Nova Scotia. Fishing boat captains said that they could earn more in one smuggling run than they could from fishing for a year.

During Prohibition years, ship captains commissioned boats to be built specifically for the smuggling trade. Smuggler's boats needed to be fast – to outrun the U.S. and Canadian coast guards – and as invisible on the horizon as possible. The Reo II was built in Meteghan in 1931, measuring 29.3 meters long (96 feet) and designed to have an extremely low deck to minimize its silhouette on the water. She was painted grey to make her difficult to see. She had 5 powerful engines and a capacity of 129 tonnes. Under Captain Aubrey Backman, the Reo II would travel to Saint-Pierre to take

on her illegal cargo and then proceed to the edge of international waters off the coast of New England. There, American smugglers would transfer her cargo to their vessel and pay her captain with rolls of cash. The Reo II was considered to be the fastest of the smuggling boats of the time and post-prohibition was requisitioned into the Canadian Navy, as HMCS Reo II. In her final 15 years (1970-1985) she was afloat and on display at the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic in Lunenburg.

Local legends suggest that Le Fourneau was used as a hiding place for smugglers' contraband but common sense suggests that flooding from the tides would make this impractical. Those who decide to explore the cave will find its walls covered top to bottom with the names and dates of previous visitors, some of whom entered the cave during high tide and signed the top of the cave.

By the 1950s, Meteghan had grown to be a prosperous village with its own fishing fleet, wharves, fish processing plants, shipyard, and stores selling all manner of goods. The village had a church, glebe, cemetery, convent, post office, primary school, hotel, doctor, and dentist. With the development of Nova Scotia tourism after World War II, Smuggler's Cove became a favourite photo opportunity for visitors to Clare, who were arriving by car ferry from New England. In Meteghan, tourists could visit La Vielle Maison, a traditional Acadian house outfitted as a historic house exhibit. The lands on the south of the cove became a day-use provincial park in 1982, with picnic facilities. Staircases leading down to the beach and barrier fencing on the cliffs have made the park safer for visitors. As part of a municipal initiative beginning in 2002, interpretive panels on the local nomenclature, smuggling activities and the fishing industry were added.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## LANDSCAPE

Le Fourneau is encircled by tall slate cliffs. The plateau of slate outcrops slopes upward from the water's edge, reaching 5 metres above sea level at the base of the cliffs. The cliffs then rise vertically, forming the ridgeline upon which the provincial park is situated at approximately 20 metres. The top of the cliff reaches an elevation of 25 metres above sea level in the parking lot area. The trail hugging the ridge-line around the park changes in elevations between 25 metres at the parking lot and then fluctuates in elevation between 20-25 metres along the trail.

The entire site has a fairly significant slope from Trunk 1 toward the edge of the cliffs. Elevations indicate a fairly aggressive slope towards the cliffs edge, an important consideration for user-experience, safety and accessibility. Where the staircase exists currently, there is a significant grade change from the top of the stairs to the bottom, being approximately 20 m. The existing staircase infrastructure is critical for visitors to access the cove, mitigating dangers of the steep cliff face.



### Cliffs and Coastal Rocks

Low lying groundcover shrubs, such as crowberry and coastal sedge, occupy the steep sided basalt cliffs of La Forneau.

The parking area is occupied by an open lawn area, surrounded by **lowland meadow**. Lowland meadow terrain supports natural drainage on the site. The area hosts small grasses such as coastal sedge, dwarf spruce and alders, defined as a brush landcover. Meadows attract sea and land-based species including grackles, robins, and blue jays and small mammals such as snowshoe hares, American mink, raccoons, and other small rodents.

Lowland meadows are surrounded by **mixed-wood/softwood drumlin**, defined by their raised elevation and coastal proximity. These areas are mostly forested with mature canopies and low lying salt tolerant groundcovers. Areas along the ridgeline trail are composed of the same species as forests above the cove, but are comparatively less mature and classified as young forests. The entire upper drumlin area has well-drained medium texture soils. Canopy trees are composed of mixed-wood species dominated by white spruce (softwoods). Other tree species include red maple, eastern larch and white birch.



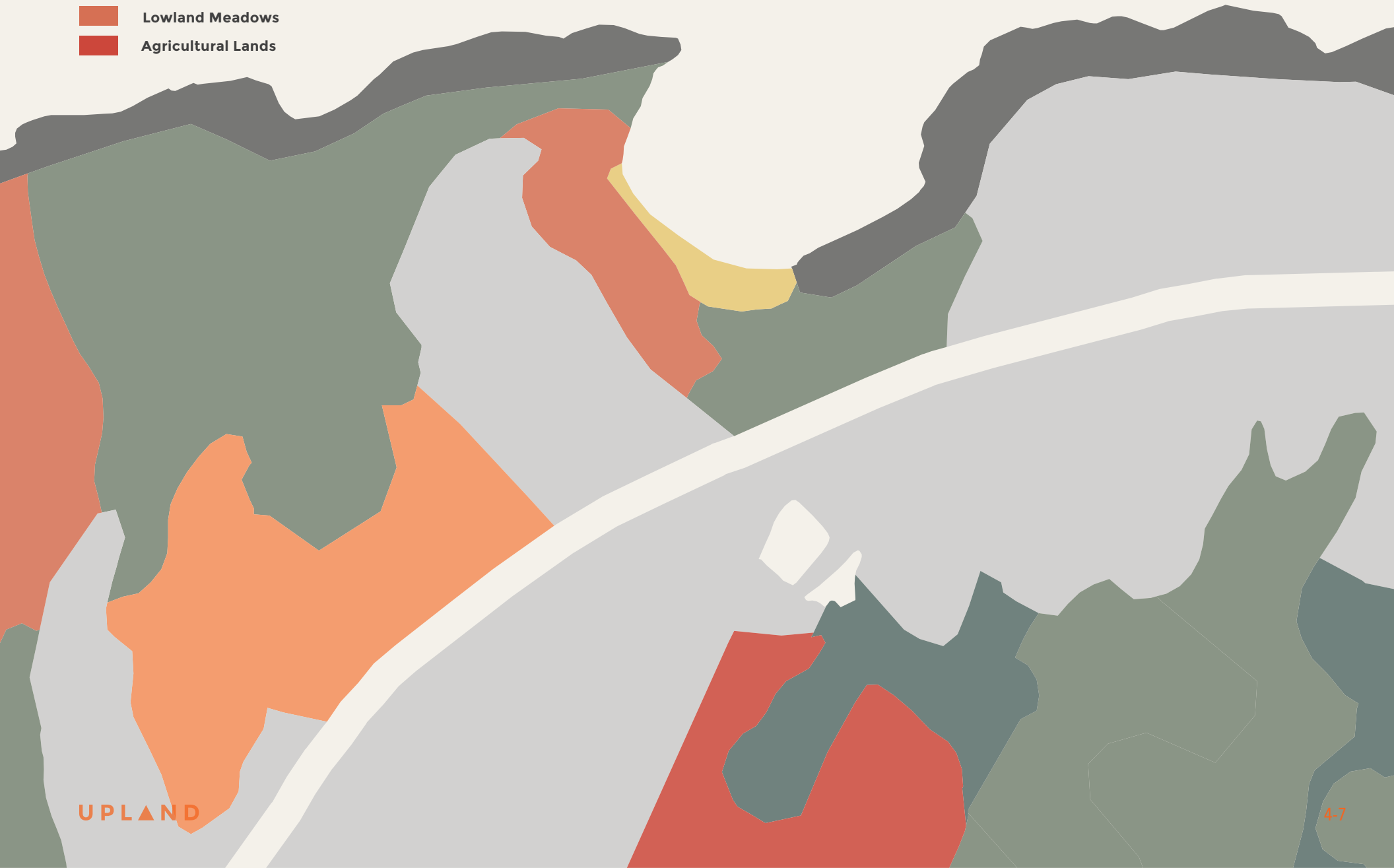
### Lowland Meadow

The flat, meadowed plateau above the basalt cliffs has been used as a pleasant picnic area for visitors to the Park and is surrounded by softwood forest.

Slate cliff formations, which form part of the **Cliffs and Coastal Rocks**, are the identifying feature of Le Fourneau. The cliff faces, particularly at the base, are fluted from wave action. Cliff faces are met by slate outcrops, extending into the sea. Slate is a metamorphic rock formed from sedimentary parent material. Vegetation found on the open cliff face and along the upper cliff ridges is similar to low-growing salt-tolerant plants found in barren ecosystems throughout Nova Scotia. These species include crowberry and coastal sedge, *Rhodiola rosea*, *Draba arabasiens* and *Saxifrage*.

The cove area at the base of the cliffs consists is a cobblestone **inter-tidal beach** with some irregular sedimentary rock formations that extend out into the water. The tidal changes leave behind crab, mussels, seaweed and sponges. These attract various birds such as terns, eagles and falcons. Shells of slipper limpets and hornwack are also washed ashore. Various algae and kelp are found washed on shore and remain on the rocks with changing tides.

- Mixedwood/ Softwood Drumlins
- Alder Forest with 75% or less alder tree cover
- Inter-Tidal Beach
- Cliffs & Coastal Rocks
- Lowland Meadows
- Agricultural Lands



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### THINGS TO DO

Le Fourneau is an incredibly beautiful, but small site that is limited in the variety of activities that are available. Activities for visitors are limited to self-guided activities such as picnicing, small walks, and exploring

the cove and cave. The cove and cave are also popular sea kayaking destinations. An annual Canada Day celebration is held at Le Fourneau, featuring live entertainment, face painting, games & crafts for kids, cupcakes and a BBQ.



### REVIEWS

Le Fourneau has received 29 reviews on tripadvisor.com. Of these, visitors have left generally positive reviews of their experiences at the park.



#### Comments:

“Beautiful sights! A few picnic tables, quiet, exercise but you can just sit there and watch your children at a short distance.”

“Great experience to walk down the stairs to the small beach. Great picnic spot.”

“...bit unclear where to go”

“This beautiful cove has a rich history and could easily be missed from the road. It is a little tricky to find but it is worth jumping out of the car for a few pictures.”

“...has a million dollar view of Saint Mary’s Bay.”

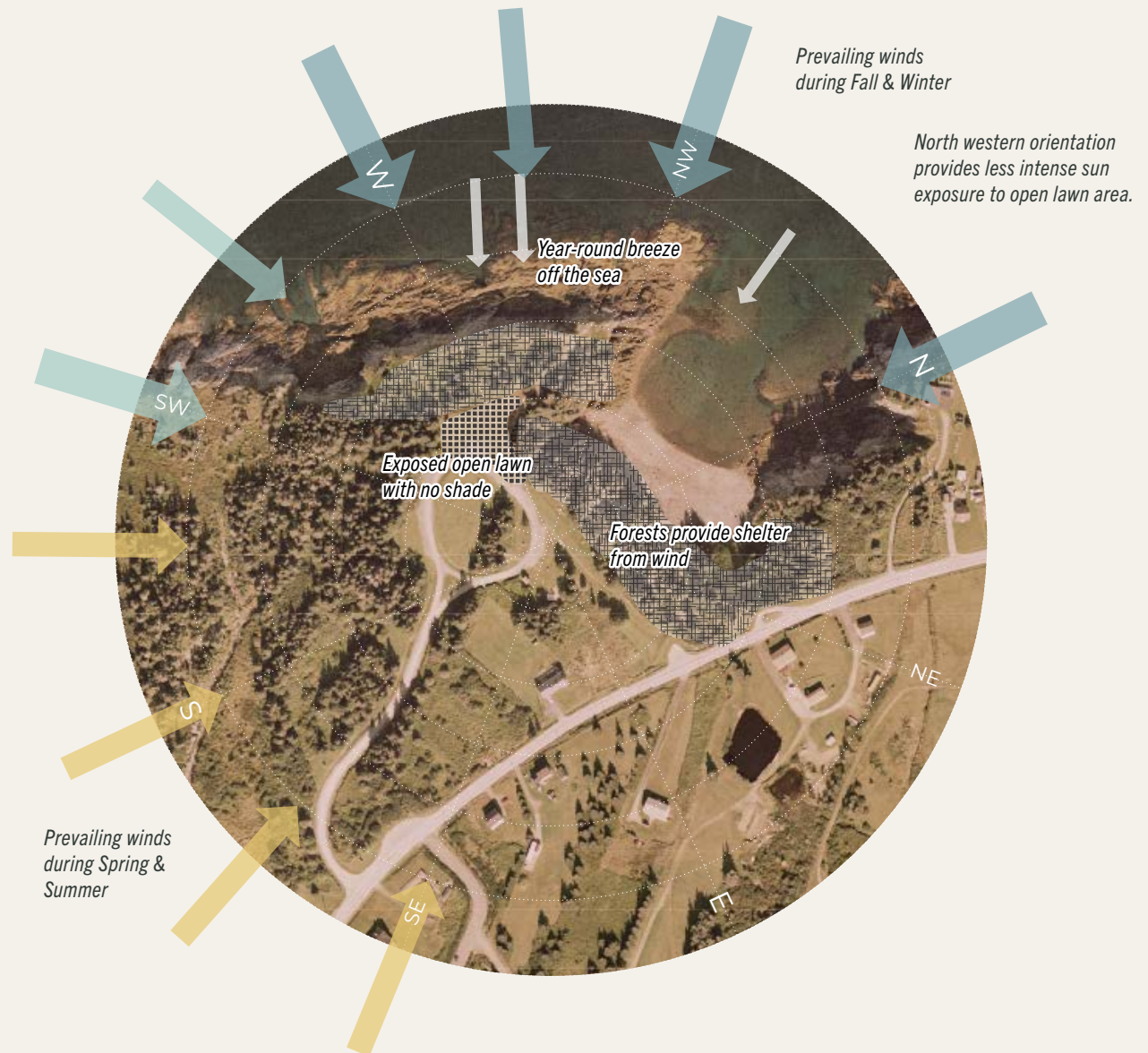
“A gem of nature the likes of which I had never seen before in all my travels.”



## MICROCLIMATE

Proximity to the coastline makes the site highly exposed to wind, and a northwest facing slope means the site receives less intense direct sun exposure. Despite the parking lot and open lawn area being susceptible to fairly extreme conditions, the surrounding forest cover aids with slope retention, moisture retention and provides a wind barrier.

Within the cove area at the water's edge, the microclimate is extremely different than the upper cliff area; cool, damp and exposed to wind, salt spray depending on the time of day. The enclosed north facing cove tends to be shaded most of the time, especially with the dense forests surrounding the ridgeline. Although these conditions are not optimal for long stays by the water's edge, they are comfortable for short visits. On especially warm days, however, the conditions are excellent for longer stays. These conditions contribute to the experience of being so intimately engaged with the tidal waterscape of Le Fourneau.



## STRUCTURES AND AMENITIES

Le Fourneau has many of the services one would expect at a Provincial Park, including a small parking area, picnic area, restroom, a series of interpretive panels, and a network of trails throughout the site.

### Parking Area

The park provides various angled parking spaces for about 15-20 vehicles. The spaces are accessed via the looped gravel road that circles around the entrance of the park.

### Picnic Area

The upland meadow area of the park hosts a combination of picnic tables, picnic shelters and benches that are placed on a mowed lawn. A restroom facility is also located near the picnic area.



Picnic Area

### Ridgeline Trail and Lookoff

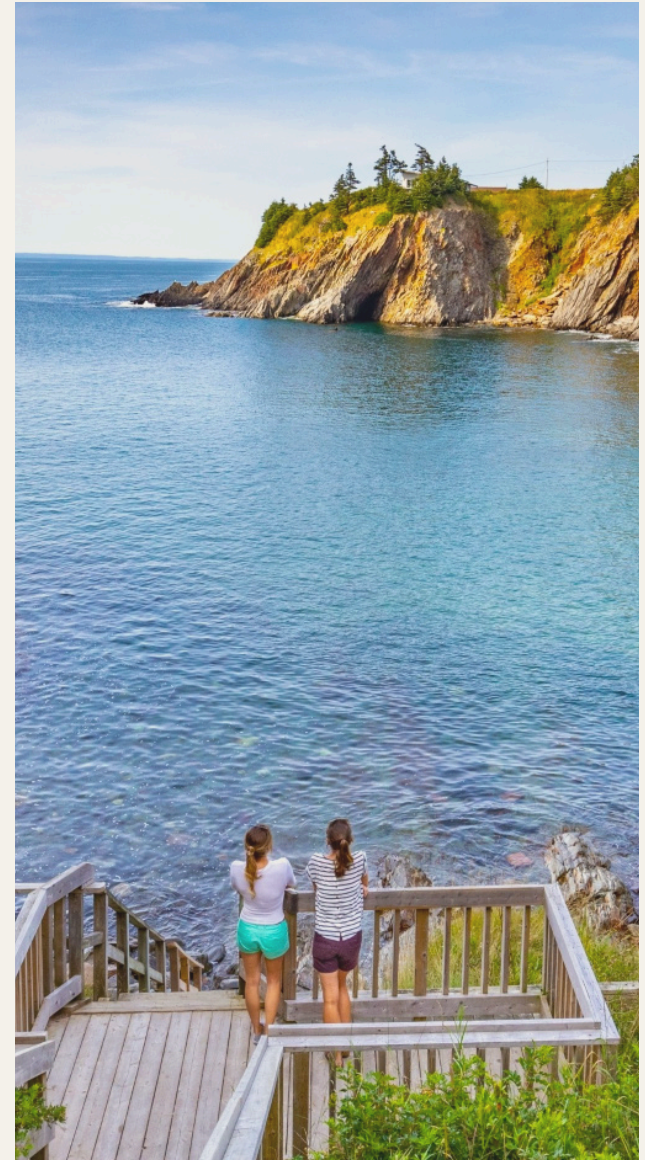
The park offers a 200 metre mowed-grass trail that wraps along the western ridge, providing spectacular views of the Baie Sainte-Marie.

### Staircase and Viewing Platform

An 80 step staircase and viewing platform provide visitors with an exciting way to reach the cove and beach area. A viewing platform includes interpretation panels that guide visitors through a historical narrative of the cove from past to present. The platform also provides views of the cave across the cove. During low tide, visitors can walk along the rocky beach and explore aquatic wildlife at the water's edge.



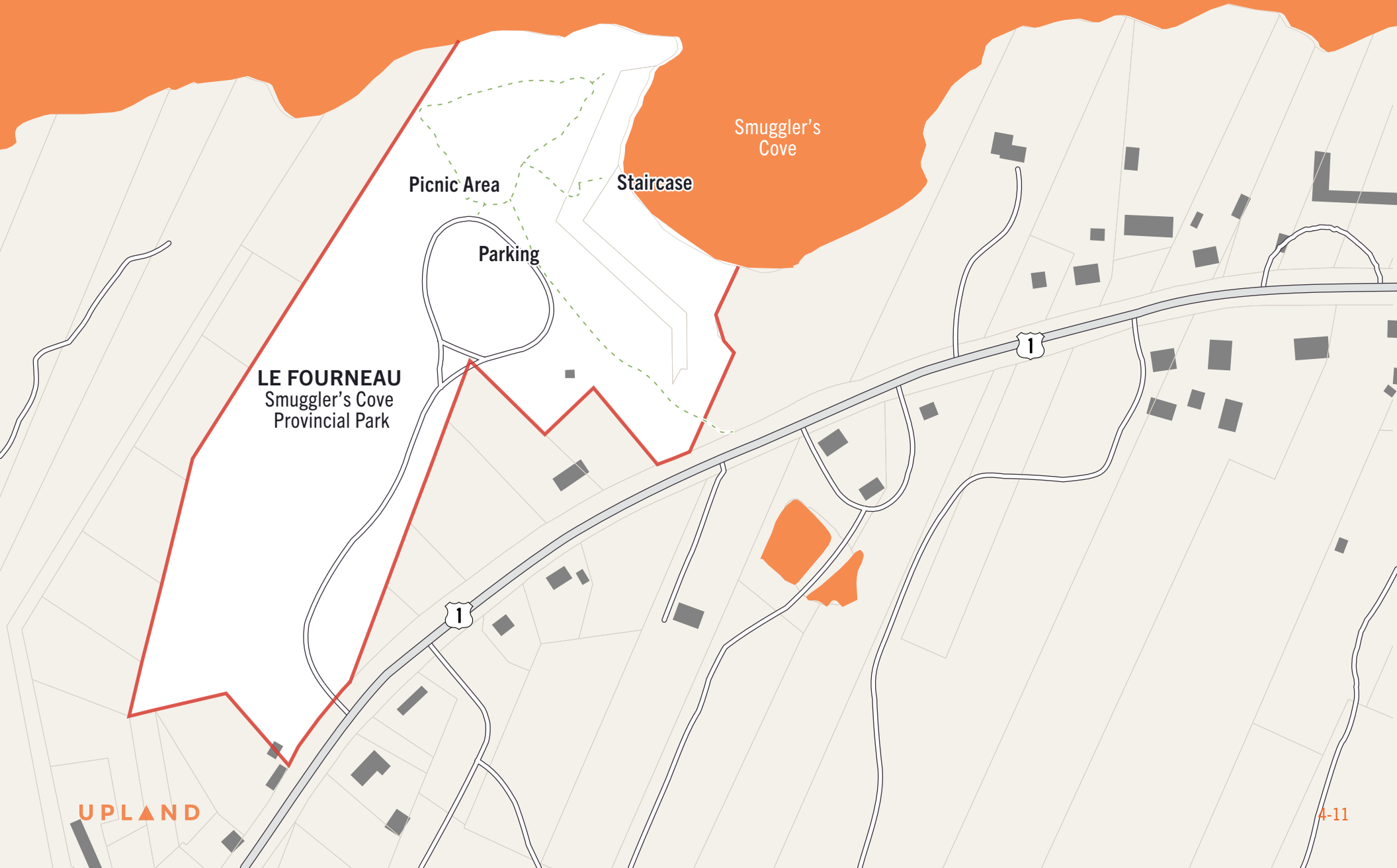
Ridgeline Trail



### Viewing Platform

Pressure treated pine platforms are located on the staircase, offering views to the cove and cave. Interpretive panels share stories of 1920s rum smuggling.

# LE FOURNEAU



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# LE FOURNEAU SITE IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed improvements to Le Fourneau include enhanced circulation by reconfiguring the access route and parking lot location, which will expand the accessible open space for visitors and maximize views to the ridge for seating and picnicing. Similarly, expanding the extent of the trail network would offer opportunities to highlight views of the Baie Sainte-Marie along the trail and link the site through a walking loop. Improvements to interpretive panels and installing wayfinding signage would enhance the visitor experience.

**LF1**

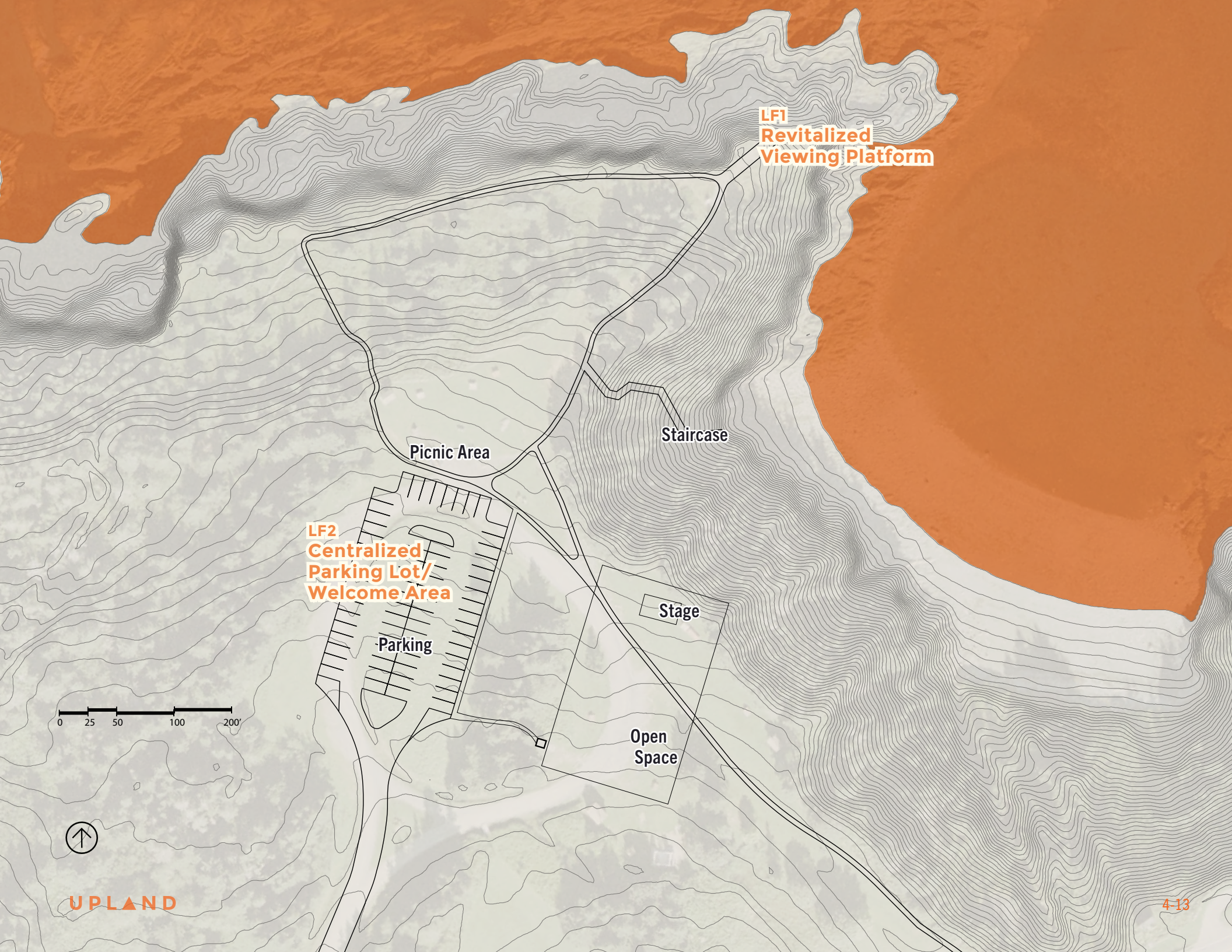
**Revitalized Viewing Platform**

**LF2**

**Centralized Parking Lot/Welcome Area**

**LF3**

**Interpretation Plan**



**LF1**  
**Revitalized**  
**Viewing Platform**

**Picnic Area**

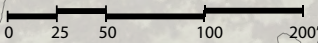
**Staircase**

**LF2**  
**Centralized**  
**Parking Lot/**  
**Welcome Area**

**Parking**

**Stage**

**Open**  
**Space**



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# REVITALIZED VIEWING PLATFORM

OBJECTIVES



TIMELINE



A look-off could be constructed along the existing upper-ridge walking trail at the cliff's edge. The look-off would entice visitors and create a unique attraction for the site. The look-off could be combined with interpretive information about the cove and provide a direct view of the cave.

The proposed structure would feature similar architectural materials to other proposed infrastructure in the overall Public Spaces Master Plan, and will be wheelchair accessible. The railing for the observation deck will extend along the ridgeline trail, replacing the existing ageing chain link fence.



# CENTRALIZED PARKING LOT/ WELCOME AREA

OBJECTIVES



TIMELINE



Re-designing the parking lot consolidates parking in one area, and reduces the need for the large looping roadway. Not only will this provide an opportunity to re-naturalize the areas no longer needed for the gravel road, but it could also expand the area of open space. The newly available open space could be used for community events, like concerts and festivals. A small stage platform could be provided at the lower end of the open space, and sited in such a way that it will not obstruct the views behind it.



## OBJECTIVES



## TIMELINE



## 1 Trailhead Interpretation

An interpretive and wayfinding panel bears a site map of the park with important elements identified, and critical information regarding the site (length and degree of difficulty of the trails, cautionary notes about the stairs, etc.) An interpretive text accompanies the map, providing an introduction to the cove: L'Anse-aux-Hirondelles – A Place With Many Names. The cove's French and English names are explained, opening the storylines that follow in other interpretive locations on site: cliff swallows (les hirondelles), smugglers (rum-running and boatbuilding), cliffs and views. The back of this interpretive sign contains Meteghan Hinterland information for visitors: see item 5.

## 2 In the Weeds

At the bottom of the staircase to the cove, an interpretive panel provides some inspiration for beachcombing with the stories of two important edible seaweeds: dulse and Irish moss. Dulse is a dried seaweed commonly eaten locally as a snack food or added to soups and stews. Irish moss was harvested at the cove and sold to food processors who used it as a thickening agent in food and cosmetic products. Both of these seaweeds can be found at the low tide mark on the shore.

## 3 Fishing and Rum-running in the Cove

An interpretive panel that tells the story of L'Anse-aux-Hirondelle's history as a protected cove used by Acadian fishermen, and then

as a safe harbour for alcohol smuggling. The background details of rum-running (Canadian and American prohibition are explained, and the storyline is expanded to include the local boatbuilding boom at Meteghan that resulted from rum-running. The story of the most famous rum-running boat, the Reo II, is told.

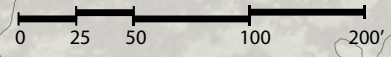
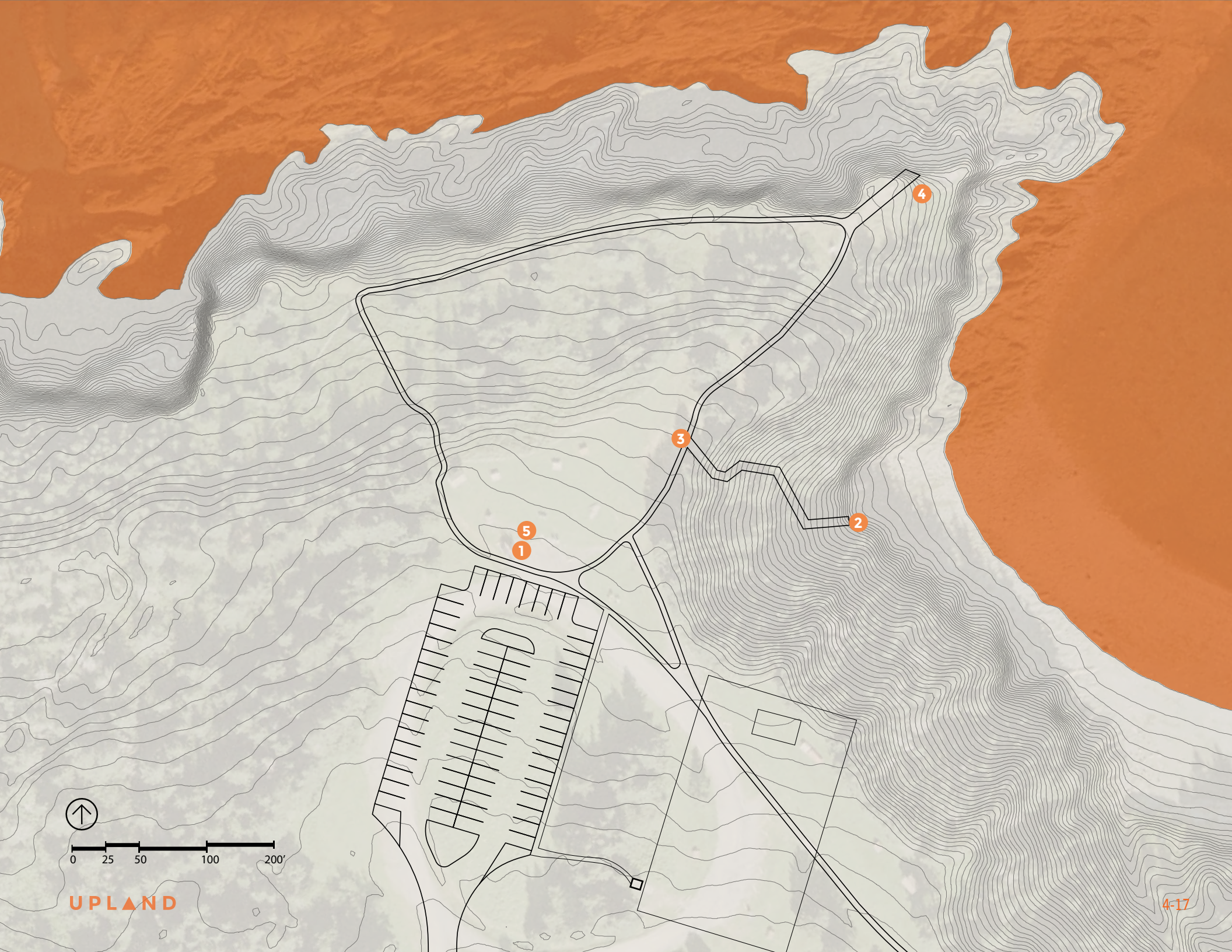
## 4 The Cave and the Cliff Swallows

The viewing platform in this location provides an excellent view of the cave and the cove. An interpretive panel on the platform would describe the cave, its dimensions and interior markings. The panel also bears a sidebar that contains natural history interpretation of the cliffs as a habitat for cliff swallows, a species that is currently at risk. The panel is illustrated with photographs of the interior of the cave.

## 5 Park Hinterland Information

A map and information panel provides details about the nearby village of Meteghan, locating the commercial district of the village (as a source for picnicking supplies) and suggesting the public wharves and breakwater as a destination for further exploration. A sidebar on the panel traces the Mi'kmaq origin of the name Meteghan and the settlement history of the village. This interpretive panel is located on the back of the trailhead sign.





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