

Heritage BC



Annual Report to the Membership
Annual General Meeting
May 10, 2019

Since we last met in New Westminster for the 2018 conference, Heritage BC has experienced a banner year.

A very important step for Heritage BC has been the adoption of a new mission statement and strategies designed to support an evolving sector. This document is also a signal of Heritage BC's own evolution, transitioning from a period of disruption to one of stability and improved relevancy and forward thinking.

Our new mission, which is proudly featured on our website:

Heritage BC supports all people of British Columbia who champion the preservation and conservation of all forms of cultural heritage. We achieve this by developing awareness, appreciation and respect for B.C.'s built and intangible traditions.

Considering the newness and importance of the Strategic Priorities, we have structured this annual report to align with the four strategic directions.

Building a strong, focused, and impactful organization that is recognized as a guiding leader and supporting connector for the sector.

There are many ways to measure relevancy and a typical one is membership. We set a goal to increase the numbers and, with increasing effect goals, we are well on the way to achieving that goal. Today our membership number is edging up to 300, considerably higher than it had been in the past few years.

Years ago, Heritage BC faced financial peril and an uncertain future. As reported last year, "the Board of Directors and staff have been focused on rebuilding the cash position and, as a first priority, establishing a stability fund that will protect Heritage BC, should the organization be faced with another disruption to its business model." This resulted in the establishment of the Stability Fund, held with the Vancouver Foundation. With hard work, and a lean operation, we are proud to again make a contribution to the fund, which will be available to the organization during lean periods.

Another fund held with the Vancouver Foundation is the Heritage Legacy Fund. As the manager of this provincial investment, it is our expectation to increase the investment so that it will generate more revenue for grant distribution. In 2018, we were able to increase the investment with a contribution of more than \$120,000. Today, the total market value of the Heritage Legacy Fund is around \$7M.

Building awareness of the importance and diversity of cultural heritage, so that heritage values are appreciated by all.

Diversity and access are leading priorities for the sector. We heard this from countless individuals at the provincial roundtables and this is reflected in our new mission.

This is also a priority of the conference and we continue to explore ways of assisting sector organizations in telling a richer, more layered story of BC's history and heritage. To be honest, this is one of our greater challenges, as a simple road map does not exist, but we are learning from our experiences and listening to our colleagues.

Of course, diversity and access are not easy for any organization and so we are developing capacity-building programs. At this year's conference, we introduced Taking Action, specially designed to provide leadership, expertise, and funding as catalysts for organizations to move forward in attaining their goals. Another program is



the Indigenous Partnership program, part of the suite of Heritage Legacy Fund programs and designed to encourage collaborative efforts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations.

Accessibility for people with disabilities, a particular issue for historic places, became a new focus for Heritage BC when Laura Saretsky, our heritage program manager, undertook audits of seven provincially-owned historic sites. First initiated by the Heritage Branch, we expanded the project to include a webinar and several downloadable guidebooks to increase the sector's awareness and capacity in increasing access for all British Columbians to their sites.

Building collaborations and maximizing capacities of communities, local governments, private sector organizations, and First Nations governments to create a dynamic future for heritage.

Over the past year, with the support of the Heritage Branch, Heritage BC undertook what is undoubtedly the most extensive review of BC's heritage sector: The Provincial Roundtables on the State of Heritage.

This project found its origin in the perception that the heritage sector was evolving. Recognizing the importance of listening to people in their communities, the project was originally conceived to include 19 roundtables. At its conclusion, the project had expanded to 26 meetings and a survey that attracted 500 participants.

The Provincial Roundtables on the State of Heritage provided an extraordinary opportunity that brought people together to share ideas, situations, challenges, successes, relationships, and aspirations related to heritage and other disciplines such as museums, archives, archaeology, and arts and culture.

The meetings provided immediate benefits of community building, sharing, and learning by simply bringing people together and providing a forum for conversation. While all the participants shared a common interest, it is obvious that organizations and disciplines are siloed and opportunities to meet and talk are rare.

Each meeting included conversations about the definition and understanding of heritage, vision, values and identity, collaboration and the evolving practice of heritage, and the sector's relationship to the economy and the environment.

A year-long study is not needed for us to know the sector faces many challenges, but the value of the project is the extensive description of the current state of the sector and the twelve recommendations that, when fulfilled, will have far-reaching impact.

What we learned:

- Participants consistently describe heritage in inclusive and expansive terms that focus on social or humanistic qualities. There is strong agreement that heritage is about human interaction with each other and the surrounding environment. Yet, the sector itself does not reflect the diversity it espouses.
- The understanding and practice of heritage have evolved beyond the services and systems that are in place to support the sector.
- A great number of people came together under the banner of heritage, yet they describe isolation and siloism. Capacities of knowledge and expertise, and human and financial resources are urgently needed. Much has been done in isolation to improve education and access, however, the lessons learned and the best practices are unknown.
- Legislation needs to be modernized to align with new heritage values, and the sector needs support in its interpretation and implementation.
- The heritage sector sees real potential in acknowledging and recognizing Indigenous peoples, but leadership, tools, and capacity building need to be addressed. Heritage needs systemic change to be open to disenfranchised communities and to empower all communities, so that they can tell their own stories in ways that they feel are appropriate.

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- The sector needs to reframe how it talks about and supports heritage and it needs to recognize the challenges of remote communities.

The Provincial Roundtables on the State of Heritage produced several immediate benefits to the heritage community, including a forum for discourse and a demonstration from the Province of BC that it is willing to listen.

There is much anticipation for the outcomes of this project, especially from the Indigenous participants who have long waited to see their interests reflected in the sector.

The partnership with the Columbia Basin Trust is now in its third year and Jennifer Dunkerson, our staff person located in the Basin Region, is in her second year.

The recipients of the third and final round of the Built Heritage program will soon be announced and, over the course of the program, \$6M will be invested into the conservation of the Basin's built heritage.

Upcoming, we are looking at three special projects for the Basin Region, which will help to build awareness and increase capacities and recognition. In time, we will analyze the lessons learned and the impacts to develop a model and case to be presented to other regional governments and jurisdictions.

Building the capacities of a strong and vital sector through exceptional service and comprehensive learning.

We continue to prioritize Heritage Week as a way to increase awareness and appreciation of heritage throughout the province. This year we mailed over 1,000 posters and contacted 100 local governments with a request to proclaim Heritage Week. We also supported activities through our social media channels and provided complimentary access to 8 recorded webinars.

More and more, our advocacy efforts are proactive with a focus on sharing statistical evidence and success stories. We distribute statistical information that is relevant, sometimes creating graphic interpretations for understandability, and share the sector's success stories. We communicate directly with MPs and MLAs, and in October we met with Minister Donaldson to discuss the early findings of the State of Heritage project.

Perhaps the most important advocacy tool is the Watch List that was introduced in 2018 and created to stimulate awareness and conversation, foster protection and engagement, and encourage advocacy for improved stewardship. While the Watch List features specific heritage buildings, the real purpose is to feature the different categories of the built environment that are regularly under threat: Institutional Heritage, Post War, Modern or Twentieth Century Heritage, Industrial Heritage, Schools, Churches, and Vernacular Heritage.

The Heritage Legacy Fund is a flagship program that has grown from \$75,000 To \$150,000 in disbursements in the past four years. In that time, we expanded the program to include funding for planning and Indigenous partnerships. Going forward, we will continue to evaluate the program based on what we learned in the State of Heritage project.

Gord Macdonald, chair
Paul Gravett, executive director