



COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSIONS AND SIMILAR ENTITIES

The *Local Government Act (LGA; Section 15)* and the *Community Charter* provide local governments with the authority to form commissions and, more specifically, to establish a “Community Heritage Commission”. (*LGA, s.597*)

The *LGA* does not describe the role or responsibility of the Community Heritage Commission (CHC), but there are a few clues.

By including “community” in the name, it is reasonable to assume a key responsibility of a commission is to represent the community or to be the voice of the community. This community-led approach to identifying and stewarding heritage is well-aligned with what was said during the State of Heritage roundtables: “Heritage describes what matters to a community... the community has to define heritage.”

The CHC is placed under the heading “Heritage Review” (Division 3 of the *LGA*), suggesting the commission’s members will provide evaluations and recommendations related to the local government’s heritage programs and goals, as well as commenting on the community’s heritage assets.

The *LGA* states “an existing organization” may be designated as a Community Heritage Commission, which again suggests a community connection. However, it is noted that this approach to establishing a CHC is not common; instead, local governments customarily establish a new entity that has no other or no previous affiliation or purpose.

The *LGA* does not directly provide information about the CHC’s formation and membership, but there are other clues found under “Regional Districts: Governance and Procedures”. It requires a community commission to be established through a bylaw that includes the name and boundaries of the local community, the time and manner of holding the annual general meetings, and election information. The section also includes information describing the commission’s membership. (See sections 243 and 245 of the *LGA* [link](#).)

It is interesting to note that the legislation that predated the current *Local Government Act* referred to the “heritage advisory committee”, instead of the “community heritage commission”. The change in the name indicates a purposeful change of intent and purpose. In fact, in 2014 the Heritage Branch explained that the CHC could “exercise a greater range of powers than a heritage advisory committee did, including the ability to undertake support activities and/or to take on other non-regulatory activities delegated to it by a council or regional district board.”

The current legislation places greater priority on community input and heritage conservation than had been seen in previous legislation. Local governments are encouraged to follow this direction with the adoption of community heritage commissions.

For more information about Community Heritage Commissions and other heritage conservation tools, please refer to our [resource guides](#).