

# Heritage BC



## **Executive Director Report Dogwood Heritage Society of BC DBA Heritage BC**

### **Annual General Meeting May 28, 2021**

This report summarizes the past year, since the 2020 annual general meeting, as well as reflects on the strategies and goals set out in the 2019 “Strategic Directions”.

#### **COVID-19 Response**

The pandemic resulted in the cancellation of the 2020 conference and a general slowdown of the sector, but it was also a call to action for Heritage BC. We invested considerable time in researching and developing resources to support the sector and to help individuals and organizations navigate the uncertain terrain.

It was also a call to action for advocacy. “Shovel-Ready Heritage”, an idea that originated with the National Trust for Canada, was a campaign to collect information to make a strong case for this sector’s contribution to economic recovery through infrastructure improvements. With the support of the Heritage Branch, the Province took note and included the Unique Heritage Infrastructure stream in the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program. CERIP was part of BC’s \$10 billion COVID response, which allocated \$16M to the Unique Heritage Infrastructure stream. Additional funds were awarded through a partnership with the First Peoples’ Cultural Council.

Honoured to be one of the program delivery partners, our contribution to the delivery of the program ranged from advisor to convening juries and distributing awards.

The importance of this funding program to the heritage sector cannot be over-emphasized. Heritage stood alongside other sectors that are, without question, recognized and supported for economic and employment impact. This was a rare time when heritage stood as an equal to tourism.

Funding through UHI-CERIP is estimated to result in total spending of almost \$25M, an overall GDP contribution of \$14.3M, and employment opportunities for 4,329 British Columbians.

#### **Response to Racism**

In June and July 2020, Heritage BC published several guest posts, providing the space for the writers to tell of their personal experiences about racism, inclusivity and equity. The goal was to encourage the sector to reflect on and learn from their first-person accounts as we ‘listen’ to different perspectives and worldviews.

#### **Annual Conferences**

Many months ago, when we started to plan the 2021 conference, the risk of a face-to-face event seemed too great and without merit, and so it was decided early on that this conference would be held virtually. This was a significant shift for us, but one that has delivered new opportunities.

The new structure of the conference, scheduled over four weeks, allowed us to provide much greater focus on key topics. Instead of the typical 75-minute session, we were able to dedicate entire days to reconciliation, climate adaptation, and intangible cultural heritage, three topics that we consider to be sector priorities.

# Heritage BC



The format allowed us to bring many new ‘voices’ to the conference, another priority for our programming. This year, we featured individuals from the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, several associated with UNESCO international committees, and a member of the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage global network of facilitators. Of course, this is not an effort to diminish the BC ‘voice’ at the conference, but to place BC heritage in the global conversation of internationally prioritized topics, research, and development.

The interest in the conference has been rewarding and we have been pleased to welcome many new people to the event. Attendance per session varies throughout the days, but at times it exceeded 100, which is considerably more than at conference sessions in the past.

As always, we want to thank our 2021 sponsors that helped to make the conference possible:

On This Spot

RJC

Ankenman Marchand Architects

Donald Luxton & Associates

BC Association of Heritage Professionals

Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals

Gambrinus Malting

Iredale Architecture

Merrick Architecture

Julie Schueck, Schueck Heritage Consulting

## **Setting the Bar**

Over the years, we have prepared several extensive resource guides, including “Heritage Conservation Tools-A Resource Guide” and “A Guide to Making a Case for Heritage”. To these, we have added “Setting the Bar – A guide to achieve new standards for reconciliation within the heritage sector.”

With several months of research and input from a team of advisors, “Setting the Bar” offers a set of ten standards and calls-to-action to drive heritage organizations forward, beyond conversation and to take concrete, measurable action. The goal is to prompt each one of us to act and to reframe the embedded systems and challenge the all-too-familiar contexts of our work. Each action can be easily achieved with a willingness to be open to ideas and perspectives, as well as a willingness for self-reflection and the resolve for quantifiable improvement.

## **Heritage Legacy Fund**

The number of queries for the 2020 intake decreased due to COVID-19, but the number of completed grant applications was similar to that received in 2019 (46 applications in 2020 and 50 in 2019).

17 projects were awarded funding, which is the average since we increased the funding envelope to \$150k. The awarded projects are itemized in the 2020 financial statement.

The interest in the 2021 intake skyrocketed with 91 inquiries and the submission of 63 applications.

## **Columbia Basin Trust**

The Heritage Planner position within the Heritage Program of the Columbia Basin Trust has continued to evolve and be shaped to meet expectations and to address the overall needs of the heritage sector in the Basin. As a result of the restrictions and limitations due to the existence of COVID-19, and remaining program potential within the CBT’s current strategic plan, the contract has been extended to March 31, 2022.

# Heritage BC



In 2020, the Heritage, Museum and Archives Grant program completed its final intake of a three-year commitment. There were 29 projects supported through the program with a disbursement of \$240,600. Awarded grants in the Built Heritage Grant program continue to be supported but there was no intake in 2020.

Management and administration of awarded grant projects continues with many deadlines for reporting extended to March 2022. Some projects have been delayed and some organizations have had to revise their scope to address restrictions and limitations due to the pandemic. We have remained very flexible and adaptable to any delays to give organizations a chance to complete their projects.

There have been many additions to the Columbia Basin Heritage Places interactive map over the past year and a contact list for heritage tradespeople was initiated. Participation in the conservation and planning for the CBT-owned Creston Grain Elevators has been an added activity to the heritage planner position and the red elevator is being prepared for physical work to begin in 2021.

The program continues to support heritage organizations by providing communications regarding resources, professional development, and capacity building as well as funding opportunities through other Trust grant programs, and the Heritage Legacy Fund.

## **Heritage Branch**

In the “Strategic Priorities” we wrote, “With a relationship that is based on respect, mutual benefit and excellence of service, the Heritage Branch has been and remains an invaluable partner and collaborator.” The product of this partnership and collaboration is prodigious: The Japanese Canadian and Chinese Canadian cultural maps, the State of Heritage report and the Unique Heritage Infrastructure fund are stand-out examples.

While Heritage BC recognized a potential opportunity, the inclusion of heritage in the Province’s COVID response would not have happened without the support of the Heritage Branch. The State of Heritage report was finalized over a year ago, but the hardly a week goes by without a reference to its findings and recommendations. And, as mentioned earlier, the cultural maps remain among the most visited pages on our website.

The outcomes of the partnership and collaboration have been impactful and far-reaching and the heritage sector has greatly benefited from the results.

## **Measurements: Website, Webinars, Memberships, and et al**

An emphasis of “Strategic Directions, 2019-2021” was to expand the audience in order to increase awareness of heritage issues and programs and, of course, Heritage BC’s role and profile. The following statistics reflect on many of the directions in the plan:

- In the past few months, membership has increased almost 25%, bringing the total to the highest level in over five years and quite possibly higher than at any other time.
- The weekly newsletter readership is at its highest level with nearly 1,700 email addresses, increasing 41% in recent years, and with an open rate that reaches 40% (compared to the industry standard of 25%).
- The visitations to the Japanese Canadian Cultural Map increased 175% and the visitations to the Chinese Canadian Cultural Map increased 353%. These maps are always among the top 10 most visited pages.
- Participation in and support of Heritage Week increases each year; in the past year access to the electronic poster increased by 11%.
- The 2021 campaign of complimentary webinars for Heritage Week reached nearly 300 registrations, an all-time high. After cancelling the conference, we pivoted some of the programming into a webinar series presented through May and June. This series saw some of the highest registrations and attendance numbers we've ever had. One session, Mapping Heritage, had over 80 registrants and over 60 attendees. On average

# Heritage BC



these sessions more than doubled our usual numbers. The increased attendance continued into our fall season.

- There are currently 41 recorded webinars available on the website; many of the older recordings have been updated and represented. The recordings will soon increase with the addition of conference recordings, something that has not been possible in the past. Registrations continue to increase and several of the presentations have been offered in partnership with BC Association of Heritage Professionals and BC Museums Association.
- Comparing baseline figures in the strategic plan, Facebook followers increased 65%, and Twitter followers increased nearly 40%.
- Comparing January through May 2021 with the same period in 2020, unique pages views have increased 43% and page views have increased 35%. For the same periods, users and new users have each increased approximately 52% for the same comparatives.
- Bringing the total to seven heritage maps, two new maps have been added to the website: Submerged Heritage Resources and Columbia Basin Region Heritage Places.

## **Advocacy**

Advocacy has long been a focus for Heritage BC and our efforts now centre on sector-wide awareness at the provincial and federal levels. Many of our activities are coordinated with partnering organizations.

- We submitted a Federal Pre-Budget Consultation letter to the federal Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance. Our letter echoed the priorities put forward by the National Trust for Canada in order to support a unified, national message. The letter also highlighted priorities set forth by the BC Museums Association, including the need for a repatriation and national museums policy.
- Similarly, we submitted a letter to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, Province of BC.
- Last year, we reported on our efforts to improve the standing of heritage conservation in the BC Building Code. While the Building and Safety Standards Branch has not made progress on the review in the past year, we continue to advocate for our recommendations, and we have been assured they will be considered.
- We worked with BCMA, Friends of the BC Archives, Archives Association of BC, and the BC Historical Federation to survey candidates leading up to the 2020 provincial election.
- Following the provincial election and cabinet assignments, we wrote to Minister Conroy and Minister Cullen to introduce them to heritage in BC and to our organization. Minister Conroy's office has indicated a meeting will be organized in the near future. As we have done each year, we emphasized the value of the Heritage Legacy Fund and reminded the Province of an outstanding contribution commitment to bring the total fund investment up to \$10M.
- The board of directors recently endorsed "Decolonizing Heritage Processes and Legislation", published by First Peoples' Cultural Council in 2020. By endorsing the document, the directors not only acknowledge a significant alignment with "State of Heritage" recommendations but also signal the importance of working together and supporting each other for the betterment of heritage for all.

# Heritage BC



- The board signed on to the Climate Heritage Network Memorandum of Understanding. By signing onto the MOU, we indicate our commitment to address climate change and support communities in achieving the decarbonization goals and other ambitions of the Paris Agreement. We also emphasize that culture and heritage (including sites and landscapes, institutions and collections as well as creativity, intangible heritage, traditional ways of knowing and practices) are both impacted by climate change and an asset for climate action.