

Heritage BC



September 6, 2018

Honourable Doug Donaldson
Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
Room 248 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Donaldson,

Now in its 37th year, Heritage BC is the only not-for-profit organization supporting the province's cultural heritage sector through training and skills development, capacity building in heritage planning, and funding through the Heritage Legacy Fund.

Over the last three years, the society has taken steps to introduce indigenous voices into the planning for and articulation of the heritage values that have long been absent from the narrative of B.C.'s cultural heritage. With these foundations in place, I am writing to you today to seek your government's support to expand the Heritage Legacy Fund to help to address your mandate with respect to the rights of indigenous peoples.

All British Columbians have experienced the loss of irreplaceable cultural heritage, and recognizing the threat persists, Heritage BC is committed to supporting those who champion the preservation and conservation of *all* forms of cultural heritage, including indigenous cultural heritage, and to developing awareness, appreciation and respect for B.C.'s built and intangible historic places.

To that end, Heritage BC is focused on:

- Building awareness of the importance and diversity of cultural heritage, so that heritage values are appreciated by all.
- Building collaborations and maximizing capacities of communities, local governments and private sector organizations to create a dynamic future for heritage.
- And building the capacities of a strong and vital sector through exceptional service and comprehensive learning.

In 2013, Heritage BC was appointed by your ministry to manage the Heritage Legacy Fund, which was established with a \$5M investment in 2003 by the then government. Today, through careful investment and financial management, the market value exceeds \$7,250,000, an increase of 45%. A goal in the coming year is to add approximately \$120,000 to the principal, which will further accelerate the growth of the fund for years to come.

Since 2005, 221 grants have been distributed, totaling \$2,284,443 that stimulated a further \$12M in investment in the rehabilitation of B.C.'s historic environment. On average, the Heritage Legacy Fund contributes 19% to the overall project costs, but has fluctuated from 22% during the highest period of earned interest, to the current rate of less than 10% - a decrease in contribution of more than 50%.

Through the Fund, not-for-profit organizations, local governments and First Nations Fund recipients, located throughout the province including some initiatives in the Stikine region with which you may be familiar, have received grants from \$250 to \$25,000 to support the installation of interpretive signs, the design of educational programs, the restoration of heritage sites and the development of feasibility studies.

The Heritage Legacy Fund was originally established to conserve and support conservation, to gain further knowledge about BC's heritage, and to increase public awareness. In 2017, the program was extended to provide funding for planning and, in 2018, to include Indigenous partnerships.

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The vision of the Indigenous partnerships program includes listening, acknowledging and welcoming different viewpoints, integrating Indigenous stories, values and practices, and developing knowledge and understanding that centres Indigenous voices.

Heritage BC believes reconciliation is about taking an open-minded view of BC's history, as we work toward inclusion and equality and establish respectful relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. We demonstrate this belief and provide sector leadership in numerous ways, including a definition of reconciliation (specifically for the sector), a new code of values, and a heightened commitment as expressed in our strategic plan (soon to be released).

As Indigenous Partnership program is new and the projects are only just beginning, we cannot provide outcomes at this time. But, we can provide a demonstration of support from the Tsilhqot'in National Government, which expresses what is possible from this program: "By providing an indigenous voice to the exhibit this Residential School consultation display will be promoting awareness of the history and legacy of the Indian Residential School. Therefore, promoting reconciliation and the healing for the survivors, families and communities."

Recently, Heritage BC had the honour of partnering with the BC Museums Association to deliver \$7.6M in investment to 221 recipients through the Canada | BC 150 fund program on behalf of the Province. That this program received funding requests exceeding \$24M from 416 applicants, including many indigenous communities, illustrates the huge demand for investment in provincial cultural heritage infrastructure.

The Heritage Legacy Fund tells a similar story. In the past three funding cycles, the program received 89 requests totaling \$1,163,950 and could service only 25% of requests to 56% of the applicants, due to the low current rate of return on the endowment and the relatively modest size of the endowment compared to the public good it is intended to service.

For fourteen years the Heritage Legacy Fund has proven to be an exceptional investment by the Province and has well met the vision established in 2003. However, there is considerable evidence the goal of the fund – to "conserve and support conservation" – is falling short of the ever-present demand that remains unmet.

In recognition of the success of Heritage BC in growing and sustaining the Heritage Legacy Fund endowment, and in recognition of the Fund's positive impact on communities throughout the province, including specific funding targeted toward reconciliation with indigenous people and stewardship of indigenous cultural heritage the Heritage BC membership passed a motion at the 2018 Annual General Meeting requesting the provincial government contribute an additional \$2.35 million dollars to match the growth since 2003 of the Heritage Legacy Fund.

It is our hope that we may meet with your to discuss this request and to provide further information about the value and impact of the Heritage Legacy Fund and how it furthers your mandate goals.

Most Sincerely,

Gord Macdonald
Chair, Heritage BC

Paul Gravett
Executive Director, Heritage BC