

- leveraging publicly owned assets

The EAS is continuing to explore formally establishing the Eastside Arts District.

Next steps include:

- expanded community engagement, including with Indigenous communities
- confirming District boundaries
- establishing secure funding to promote creative businesses, non-profit organizations, public art, arts production spaces
- continuing collaboration with all levels of government
- developing a governance and financial structure
- designing a roadmap for policy implementation
- producing an online arts and cultural asset mapping tool for the area

Long-term goals include:

- acquiring space for a community-owned Eastside Arts District office and inclusive arts hub
- producing additional public events and programming
- developing new production, rehearsal, presentation, and performance spaces for artists, cultural producers, and audiences.

When *A City Without Art? No Net Loss, Plus!* was presented a Gold Award, PIBC's jury stated it was "an outstanding and highly innovative joint effort between a not-for-profit and the artistic community." CIP's jury made similar comments. Since that time, competition over the land base in the Eastside has dramatically escalated. Now is the time to make the Eastside Arts District a reality. ■

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Street sign at UBC, Vancouver.

BUILDING GOOD RELATIONS – UPDATING THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION ACT

/ John Somogyi-Csizmazia and Maria Stanborough RPP, MCIP

In March 2022 the BC Provincial Government released its *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)* - Action Plan. While DRIPA was adopted in 2019, the Action Plan took a few years to coordinate, no doubt interrupted by the pandemic.

In Section 4 of the DRIPA Action Plan, the Province has set an important action for heritage:

4.35 Work with First Nations to reform the *Heritage Conservation Act* to align with the UN Declaration, including shared decision-making and the protection of First Nations cultural, spiritual, and heritage sites and objects. (Ministry of Forests, Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport)

The Province made a commitment to reforming the *Heritage Conservation Act*, and is in the process of engaging with First Nations across BC.

This action has been a long time in the making. Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders have been calling for change almost since

The First Peoples' Cultural Council defines heritage as:

... comprised of all objects, sites and knowledge, the nature or use of which has been transmitted from generation to generation, and which is regarded as pertaining to a particular people or its territory. The heritage of an indigenous people also includes objects, knowledge and literary or artistic works which may be created in the future based upon its heritage.

the last major revision of the *Heritage Conservation Act* (HCA) in 1996. In the HCA, anything that is dated pre-1846 is considered 'archaeological' and the responsibility of the Archaeological Branch of the BC government; anything 1846 or after is considered 'heritage' and the responsibility of the Heritage Branch.

The 1846 date was chosen as it is the year that the border between British-ruled North America and the United States was drawn. The date is a marker of colonization although, in 1846, the area now known as British Columbia was home to primarily Indigenous peoples who had lived here since time Immemorial, with a few European trading outposts.

The legislation for archaeological and non-archaeological heritage has embedded in planning a separation between Indigenous Cultural Heritage (as anything pre-1846) and settler heritage (1846 and after). While Indigenous communities continue to exist after 1846, the legislation seems to suggest that this is when Indigenous living culture ends. The *Heritage Conservation Act* also focuses on material heritage, and omits reference to intangible heritage such as stories, traditions and ceremony.

This approach to heritage is anti-thetical to most Indigenous views. The First Peoples' Cultural Council defines heritage as:

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to generation, and which is regarded as pertaining to a particular people or its territory. The heritage of an indigenous people also includes objects, knowledge and literary or artistic works which may be created in the future based upon its heritage.¹

Indigenous Cultural Heritage is not embedded in a structure or year, but is represented in the interconnection of history and peoples with the environment, from the past to the present and into the future.

Along with the colonial timeline set for heritage, one of the other primary concerns expressed about the HCA is how archaeological sites are managed. The Province, through the Archaeology Branch, ensures protection of any identified archaeological site; they are designated Provincial heritage sites and may not be altered without a permit.

One of the greatest concerns of this process is that a site that may have significant importance to a First Nation, or many First Nations, is held under the authority of the Province without Indigenous oversight or co-management. There is a process for government and First Nations to co-manage protected archaeological sites under section 4 of the HCA, but there is little to no political will on the part of the Province to enact it.

While the outcome of the Province's engagement with First Nations is not known at this time, it is fair to speculate that the *Heritage Conservation Act* will be revised, if not completely overhauled, to recognize and ongoing importance of

Indigenous Cultural Heritage throughout the province.

This change comes at an important time for heritage. The National Trust for Canada is exploring the public perception of heritage and where there may be room for improvements. The Trust identified a number of negative perceptions of heritage, including that it is "elitist and not representative – celebrating privileged capital assets only belonging to a few." Importantly for Indigenous Cultural Heritage work, heritage is also seen as, "Rooted in a past now seen to be wrong."²

For people working in the heritage field, this moment in heritage's evolution offers opportunity to revisit what heritage means for our communities. The first step may be to explore and re-evaluate what is identified as 'heritage' and how it can represent more than the dominant settler past. We can ask how community heritage represents a more complex, diverse understanding of place, starting with Indigenous Cultural Heritage that is both pre- and post-contact, as well as the diversity of heritage of all community members.

In all of this change, there are examples of success in heritage planning which can represent how to incorporate diversity and work with First Nation partners. As a starting point, most communities have street names that represent the colonial story of the province, but not the diversity. We have examples that range from Sussex Drive in Ottawa - named after a son of King George the III - to Hastings Street

in Vancouver – named after Admiral George Hastings, commander-in-chief of the Pacific Station of the Royal Navy during the 1860s.

A number of communities are looking to change this approach. The University of British Columbia recently completed a project that has signage in both English and hən̓q̓əmi̓nəm̓, the Musqueam Nation's language.³ The Musqueam signage is not a direct translation but an Indigenized naming. For example, Memorial Road is translated to, "that which is used to remember them."

In Duncan, Hul'q'umi'num and English street signs are installed in the downtown. Central Saanich Council unanimously approved a motion to add WSÁNEĆ names on signage for streets, parks and trails throughout the district. And Fort St. James, the site of the oldest Hudson's Bay Company Trading Post in BC, is working on a wayfinding and signage project in partnership with the neighbouring Nak'azdli Whut'en First Nation

As another great example of partnership, in 2021 the Town of Courtenay unanimously voted to work with the K'ómoks First Nation in order to implement their Cultural and Heritage Policy. Currently, the K'ómoks policy refers to standards and procedures for the management of archaeological sites in relation to development in KFN territory, and that any heritage work done requires a KFN permit. In time, depending on the outcome of the Province's engagement with First Nations, the policy may also speak to a process for intangible and natural cultural heritage features. ■

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¹<https://fpcc.ca/stories/review-on-heritage-legislation/>

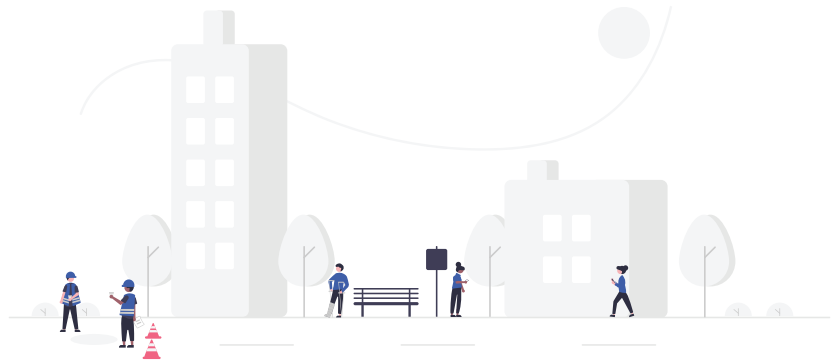
²<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZLAWHeX46U>

³<https://planning.ubc.ca/transportation/transportation-planning/musqueam-street-signs>

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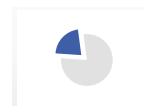


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