

National Round Table on Heritage Education in Canada

Draft document Strategic plan

September 18, 2020

Forging Canadian Futures through Heritage Learning: Five-year Strategic Plan for the National Roundtable on Heritage Education

Context:

The National Round Table on Heritage Education (NRHE) was established in 2004.

As stated on the National Trust for Canada's [website](#), the mandate of the NRHE is to:

- *understand the current state of heritage education in Canada, including public education, training, and academic programs;*
- *strengthen the heritage education field by identifying demand, gaps, needs, and proposing sectoral or collective objectives; and*
- *advance the field of heritage education through fostering collaboration between institutions and other bodies.*

Each fall, the Roundtable holds a general [meeting](#) – timed to coincide with the National Trust's annual conference – to discuss topics of importance and to set priorities for the upcoming year. The Roundtable's Steering Committee holds bi-monthly teleconferences to further the Roundtable's work throughout the year.

Challenges and Opportunities for consideration:

Leadership and continuity:

- Though the NRHE has a strong leadership core, there remains considerable turnover of participants from year to year. This turnover reduces our capacity to support long term project initiatives;
- The open-ness of the Roundtable gathers people from many sectors and regions, with so many different issues and opportunities, which are often difficult to bridge in the short time frame of the annual or monthly meetings;

Relevance and influence :

- As educators we feel it is our responsibility to contribute in guiding/defining the direction of the Canadian heritage sector;
- The publication of important documents in recent years such as the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development (*Report 10 - Preserving Canada's Heritage: the Foundation for Tomorrow*; *Report 17 - Better Buildings for a Low Carbon Future*) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action have influenced the heritage sector in Canada;

Interdisciplinarity and professional integrity:

- While the field of heritage conservation is increasingly complex and diversified and calls upon the contribution of other types of knowledge such as economics and management, sociology, anthropology, geography, planning, and engineering, the workforce remains for the most part associated to the traditional fields of architecture, art history and history, and the heritage trades.
- The demand for emerging heritage professionals is greater than enrollment in programs, which can be very low in some learning institutions.

National and global inequality:

- The emergence of multiple manifestoes in June 2020 calling for educational programs to address their systemic racism.

With these themes and ideas in mind, this working group of educators (Susan Ross, Shabnam Inanloo Dailoo, Claudine Déom, Chris Wiebe and Nicholas Lynch) have taken the initiative of developing a five year strategic plan whose aim is to develop, implement, and disseminate clear strategies to build and support heritage education practices across Canada.

We are looking to do this by building a more rigorous dialogue between the NRHE participants and colleagues from the education sector and professional practice, our core partners.

What we are asking participants:

To provide comments about the following content, which is divided in two main parts:

1. An overview of the heritage education sector in Canada
2. The elements of the strategic plan

1. An Overview of the Heritage Education Sector in Canada

1.1 The heritage education sector's offer in Canada is diversified. It includes individual courses, programs, and streams within academic, training, and public education programs. It reunites a range of learning institutions at different levels (graduate and undergraduate university, college, and other). Current courses and programs offer a broad range of knowledge and expertise including crafts, planning, design, management, conservation and adaptation, among others.

1.2 In Canada, the expertise in heritage conservation is not clearly recognized in the fields related to the built environment, with some exceptions. This has an impact on the demand of professionals with that particular expertise.

1.3 The Canadian heritage education sector is relatively small (compared to the US or UK). It is therefore a tight network, one that the National Trust has greatly helped to create and support with the NRHE since 2004.

1.4 The heritage education sector in Canada is geographically fragmented outside of Ontario and Quebec.

1.5 In view of the fact that heritage conservation is largely an applied field, most educators are involved in other activities tied to the practice of conservation. We are therefore not a closed off group of individuals, but rather part of a wider network of stakeholders.

1.6 A principal contribution of the heritage education sector is to encourage heritage professionals to participate and support all sectors of society. To sustain this position, heritage professionals must be given the tools to enhance the interdisciplinarity of the heritage sector.

1.7 The heritage education sector also plays a role in the advancement of knowledge related to the field through research projects. Because practice allows very little time for professionals to communicate reflection from their practice, it is the educator's responsibility to help understand how and why practice is evolving (linking its changes to theory) and to identify the gaps in knowledge (data that would inform practice and policies). The heritage education sector exists not only to answer the needs of practice but also to contribute to its evolution (to be forward looking).

1.8 Despite its broad range of program offerings, the heritage education sector in Canada shares common goals that aim to:

- 1.8.1 develop critical thinking about what is of heritage value in the built environment and about intervention on heritage;
- 1.8.2 include heritage conservation as a means to achieve sustainability;

- 1.8.3 train versatile and collaborative heritage professionals who can work in an interdisciplinary context;
- 1.8.4 train engaged and enthusiast heritage professionals who can communicate with all sectors of society; and
- 1.8.5 engage in dialogue with public heritage education organizations to better coordinate and democratize heritage knowledge and debate.

1.9 The gaps the working group has identified so far:

- A. Continuous education in heritage: For whom, by whom, and what?
- B. Theory and practice: How can we bridge the gap for students in learning process?
- C. Heritage planning: how to prepare future professionals for a career in heritage planning?
- D. Interdisciplinarity: How to create such a learning context?
- E. Geographical deserts in heritage education in Canada: can/should we find a remedy? How we can help with sharing existing resources/training opportunities available in other parts of Canada?
- F. From buildings to landscape and back: How do we encourage multiscalar thinking of heritage, and the dynamic and ever changing nature of heritage filed based on emerging thinking in the field?
- G. Defining communities of interest, and address how heritage conservation excludes (list) or reinforces systems of injustice or inequity.
- H. NB. This is an open list...

2. Elements of the Strategic Plan

2.1 Vision Statement

The NRHE is the leading voice for heritage education and training in Canada. While mainly focused on heritage education related to the built environment, it welcomes colleagues/members from other areas in heritage education.

2.2 Mission

- A) understand the current state of heritage education in Canada, including public education, training, and academic programs;
- B) strengthen the heritage education field by identifying demand, gaps, needs, and proposing sectoral or collective objectives; and
- C) advance the field of heritage education through fostering collaboration among institutions and other bodies.

2.3 Strategic Goals and Objectives

2.3.1 Broad and Long Range:

- A) Internal network building – developing long-term relationships/leadership with interested roundtable participants.
- B) External advocacy/Partnerships – developing a comprehensive and representative network of heritage/education professionals, including potentially with organizations outside Canada that can serve as models
- C) Engagement – developing a space for consistent and sustainable engagement on heritage education issues, and also for collaboration, exchange, mutual support.
- D) Reach – develop a more consistent and engaged Roundtable network with reach into all levels of heritage education and key national and international organizations.

2.3.2 Short-Medium Term Goals

- A) Update current information on the existing offerings, helping to clarify the diversity of institutions, programs and courses and to identify gaps (see list in 1.9).
- B) Identify significant issues and gaps in heritage education across Canada.
- C) Identify programs that facilitated inter-regional exchanges to support areas that are weaker in heritage education possibilities.
- D) Develop courses and research projects to fill those gaps through partnerships among institutions and supporting communities and stakeholders.
- E) Explore the benefits of creating a more systematic framework (e.g. certification, required membership) that would help provide credibility to the sector and its educated professionals.
- F) Explore the possibility of supporting the development of tools for educators to expand their skills.
- G) Compile and review related literature on heritage education and training, and the scholarship of learning, to inform strategies.

2.4 Action Plan (prioritized based on the above. Once the goals and objectives are finalized, we can write this section.) Possibilities include:

- A) Identify champions within the working group
- B) Identify participants from the wider Roundtable interested in leading on a goal, or participation in a sub-group
- C) etc.

2.5 Review and Update Cycle (revisit the plan every 5-years)