

Advancing Reconciliation

LOUGHEED HOUSE, CALGARY, AB

Heritage is living at Lougheed House through the Lougheed House Re-Imagined program. The initiative ties together a diversity of voices that tell a much deeper, complex story of place, beyond the walls of the house itself. In their words, "a visitor can pluck a single thread that contributes to the intricately woven tapestry of our great city and explore how vital it is to the Calgary of today."

Heritage can advance Reconciliation and promote inclusion. Each community has the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage. Heritage belongs to everyone, and everyone has their heritage. Heritage is about sustaining all communities, and uplifting all groups as part of the collective story in a way that is truthful, inclusive and equitable for all. Once the home of former Senator James Lougheed and Lady Isabella Hardisty Lougheed, Lougheed House in Calgary, Alberta sits on 2.8 acres in Calgary's Beltline neighbourhood. It was designated a national historic site of Canada in 1992 because it is a lone, early survivor of an upper-middle-class eclectic mansion on the Canadian Prairies. But Lougheed House connects and intersects with so many stories beyond its architecture!

Built in 1891, Lady Isabella named the mansion Beaulieu (beautiful place) and it became a centre for the growing social and political scene in Calgary. During its 131-year history, it has been witness to the significant growth of the city and the



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histories of those who have lived and worked at Lougheed House in the last century reflect that evolution.

Today, Lougheed House's lush gardens and gorgeous rooms provide a rich backdrop to new conversations reflecting those histories as well as sometimes unexpected perspectives under the banner Lougheed House Re-Imagined. For example, Lady Isabella was Métis — a key aspect of the site's history and a touchstone for partnerships with the Métis Nation of Alberta – Region 3 — and recent exhibits like the Métis Residential School Exhibition which honour, educate and share Métis history and culture.

Calgary's Queer history also has a place at Lougheed House. In 2019 the House explored Queer history in Calgary with the ROAR project, a series of exhibitions and events developed by and for the Queer community. It explored the role of the Lougheed House site and the Beltline neighbourhood in that history.

The more recent 'We Were Here' explored the stories of early Chinese immigrants to Calgary and Calgary's early Chinatowns, through creative writing, illustrations, and historical photographs. It also featured the stories of Chinese Calgarians who worked at Lougheed House as the Lougheeds' cooks. The project saw a significant increase in attendance and engagement with the Chinese community and visitors to Lougheed House.

In 2020, Lougheed House received the Robert R. Janes Award for Social Responsibility from the Alberta Museums Association, recognizing the site's commitment to creating exciting and unique visitor experiences that tell the lesser-known stories of Calgary and to integrating social responsibility into all aspects of its museum practice.

Heritage is more than preservation — it is also adaptation and reconciliation. Heritage is not static. Historic places are canvases on which we expose the multi-layered histories of these places as they move across time and adapt to the needs of communities.

By Dr. Patricia Kell

SOURCES

[*How Heritage Matters: Two Questions, Ten Takes – National Trust for Canada \(nationaltrustcanada.ca\)*](#)
(Audrey Gray contribution, 2023)

[*Diverse Layers and Stories at Three Heritage Places – National Trust for Canada \(nationaltrustcanada.ca\)*](#)
by Katie Pearson 2022