

National Trust for Canada  Fiducie nationale du Canada



CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS
National Trust Conference 2025
(with Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals
& Indigenous Heritage Circle)

Heritage Now

October 23–25, 2025 (Halifax, Nova Scotia)

Heritage conservation in Canada has never felt more critically important, whether it's recognizing marginalized histories and places, responding to climate disasters, advancing reconciliation, or helping sustain the sense of place, pride, and wellbeing of communities. And yet Canada's heritage conservation sector is under unprecedented pressure: from social upheaval and cultural conflict, to economic disruption, the climate emergency, and the surging housing crisis. How do we navigate this societal sea change? Where is heritage currently on the public agenda, and where does it need to be? Now is the time for the full spectrum of the heritage sector – from industry and professionals to non-profits, government and educational institutions – to come together and reassert the value of sustaining and reinventing our heritage places. Now is the time for action.

Heritage Now will bring together 500+ participants from a diverse range of backgrounds – from professionals (emerging and established), craftspeople, and advocates, to planners, heritage site owners and operators, construction industry workers and suppliers, developers, insurers, academics, students, and volunteers. The conference will feature innovative case studies and replicable lessons from heritage practice, government, communities, and industry, along with productive discussions on the future of our work.

Presentation/session proposals are invited on the following themes:

1. Heritage Practice in the Marketplace: Housing, Adaptive Reuse, and Systems Change

If we reuse and retrofit our existing building stock, including heritage structures, we know we can create more housing faster, reduce our reliance on raw materials and landfills, generate labour-rich economic impact, and retain places that anchor local identity and pride. But there is a growing disconnect in public policy and the media. Heritage protection is routinely characterized as NIMBY red tape blocking change, and in response hard-won heritage regulations are being rolled back in some jurisdictions or thrust aside with blanket rezoning increasing density. The decades long consensus that heritage protection is a public good appears to be teetering. How can heritage reuse “go on the offensive,” dispel false notions of heritage conservation stopping housing from being built, challenge the dominant disposable buildings business model, and spotlight its broad societal value? Are there ways the heritage sector can be more flexible, provide more clarity, and help unleash development opportunities?

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Housing Creation and Intensification – Scalable strategies for balancing infill or intensification and heritage retention, from downtowns to residential areas; small replicable projects that create large housing/carbon impact; adapting older buildings for affordable housing projects.
- Tackling Thorny Conservation Questions:
 - Façade-Retention – While the S&Gs do not recognize façade retention as a conservation method, can it be a successful form of commemoration? Is it ever appropriate? How much “retention” is enough?
 - Building Relocation – Case studies and lessons unpacking why, how, what? When is it appropriate and when is it not?
- Development vs. Conservation – What are the driving forces in the perceived tension between heritage and housing and how can a win-win scenario be achieved; what policies and decision-making can lead to success stories; lessons in how to marry heritage value with other project imperatives.
- Emerging Heritage Development Models – Innovative combinations of public, private, or NGO partnerships for redeveloping heritage; Indigenous or underrepresented communities adapting/leveraging heritage places for their uses; new financial instruments to propel reuse (e.g. social impact investing, ESG).
- Adaptive Reuse Economy – Analyses of what is needed to grow Canada’s reuse/heritage industry; addressing barriers to reuse in the building code, tax system, accounting practices and financial incentives, property management, real estate appraisal, or insurance industry.

2. The Power of Place and Story: Voices, Built Heritage, and the Land.

The heritage sector has long recognized that heritage places and stories have a crucial role in defining and grounding community identity. At the same time, the sector understands it needs to reinvent the “heritage plane” while flying it: grapple with the heritage identified by previous generations, root out bias, and elevate historically marginalized voices and places. The ability to respond to these imperatives, however, is dependent on community capacity, funding, and will power, which is leading to uneven results across Canada. How can Canadian heritage policymakers, site operators, advocates, and practitioners work together to create an inclusive culture of conservation? How can we ensure the heritage field continues to look beyond built heritage to intangible cultural heritage and landscapes? Especially now, ten years after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, now is the time to take stock and expediate crucial change.

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Telling Our Stories – Reinventing heritage places; transforming existing narratives and expanding the range of voices; intersections between the revitalization of Indigenous languages, cultural expression, and the land; increasing public interest and engagement in our stories; addressing difficult or contested histories and commemorating sites of conscience.
- Elevating the Heritage of Underrepresented Communities – Ways to identify and protecting heritage places of historically marginalized groups; commemorating heritage when no remaining physical fabric remains.
- Cultural Landscapes and Heritage Districts – Understanding the connections between place, land and culture, and strategies for recognizing/managing these places; case studies in protecting and revitalizing tangible and intangible values in ethno-cultural Main Streets and districts; opportunities for community land trusts and heritage properties collaboration; best practices in the application of the S&Gs.
- Transforming Existing Systems– Rebalancing heritage designations, inventories, or programs to reflect evolving community values and constituencies; best practices for auditing and integrating accessibility measures at heritage places.
- Transforming Heritage Organizations and Sites - Building diversity in the heritage sector and space for the underrepresented; the role of heritage sites in redress, reciprocity, co-management, and right relations; strategies to fund and implement the diversification of stories told at heritage sites.

3. Climate Adaptation, Decarbonization, and Material Value: Forging a Heritage Path

Building reuse and retrofit as an alternative to new construction is the single most effective tool to meet global climate goals, limit biodiversity loss, and much more. While the heritage sector has embraced “the greenest building is the one that already exists,” it has often been

reluctant to deviate from long-held principles to accommodate substantial changes like building relocation and deep retrofits, or to consider building deconstruction as a potential conservation treatment. How does heritage conservation fit into growing conversations around the time value of carbon, circular economy, and pollution/waste as colonialism? This track looks at how the heritage sector can accelerate building reuse and landscape preservation, and respond to growing natural disaster and climate impacts.

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Net Zero Energy Retrofits & Digital Modelling– Scalable and replicable strategies for decarbonizing places large and small and retaining heritage value; energy modelling and envisioning change, from the buildings to neighbourhoods.
- Deconstruction, Circular Economy, and Material Values – Unpacking deconstruction’s relationship with heritage conservation and considering it as a conservation treatment; unravelling the relationship between heritage conservation and emerging circular economy ideas and processes; success stories about the use of salvaged building materials.
- Disaster Response, Climate Adaptation, and Vulnerable Heritage – Lessons and proactive strategies for heritage places to respond to/recover from sea level rise, erosion, wildfire; innovative solutions for vulnerable heritage (e.g. traditional medicines, archaeological artifacts), or evolving existing structures to combat changing climate needs.
- Embodied/Avoided Carbon and Life-Cycle Assessment – Calculating, conveying, and operationalizing the value of avoided or “upfront” carbon; understanding heritage conservation in relation to evolving lifecycle assessment (LCA) processes.
- Heritage Sites and Museums – Strategies for sensitively decarbonizing special heritage places where fabric is paramount; reimagining heritage sites and museum buildings as teaching tools for climate action.

4. Strengthening the Heritage Sector: Expanding the Heritage Workforce and Breaking Down Silos

Canada’s heritage sector has many disciplinary silos, and yet the symbiotic relationships between them is not widely appreciated: volunteer advocacy efforts lean on expert opinion, heritage planning is diminished without access to elders and community leaders, architects depend on historians and skilled tradespeople, and academic research paper shift public debate. And yet these symbiotic connections are not widely recognized and appreciated. Canada is sleepwalking into a heritage skills and capacity crisis that will hobble its ability to reuse heritage places, protect Indigenous cultural heritage, rethink recognition and management programs, mitigate climate change, and respond to Canada’s housing crisis. Elsewhere in the heritage sector, NGOs and municipal heritage committees face extreme workforce and funding challenges that threaten their future work, and Canada’s post-secondary heritage education programs are experiencing dramatic funding reductions or

outright closure. How do we spark interest in careers in heritage? How can Canada's heritage conservation sector be more mutually supportive, raise all ships, and advance the sector as a whole?

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Growing the Heritage Industry and Workforce – Building and sustaining Canada's private sector heritage industry or property development capacity; capturing data and understanding heritage human resources gaps.
- Heritage Education and Training– Strategies for ensuring heritage education is a substantial part of all post-secondary (e.g. architecture, engineering, planning, trades); expanding enrollment in Canada's post-secondary heritage programs, and scaling up research capacity.
- Heritage Organizations and Volunteers– Strategies for addressing an aging/declining volunteer-base in the heritage sector and fostering the next generation; assessing needs and increasing funding for heritage organizations.
- Reflecting on the TRC's Legacy – Learning from the progress and challenges in the decade since the 94 Calls to Action were published; educating heritage sector workers on cultural competencies, residential school history, and other Calls to Action impacting heritage work; championing and integrating Indigenous cultural heritage and accelerating non-Indigenous "allyship."
- Legislation and Government Policy - Examining frictions/opportunities with provincial-territorial or federal heritage legislation; evaluations of significant new programs supporting the heritage sector.

PRESENTATION FORMATS:

- **Traditional Presentation (15 minutes)** – These presentations will use case studies and research results that offer broadly applicable insights, principles, or real solutions others can apply in their communities.
- **Spark Presentation (7 minutes)** – Brief, effective, powerful. These "Pecha Kucha" inspired presentations raise heritage issues and offer lessons in dynamic sessions.
- **Deep Dive Presentation or Training Module (30 minutes)** – These presentations or modules will be more in-depth and technical in nature, with the goal of training attendees to understand or implement practice or policy, or to equip attendees with a deeper knowledge of the subject matter than high-level awareness. They will focus on the "how" of a project.
- **Conference Session (75-90 minutes)** – Propose an entire conference session, roundtable, panel discussion, workshop, direct action, cultural performance, etc.

PLEASE INCLUDE WITH YOUR SUBMISSION:

- Title of presentation/session proposed, format, and a summary (450 words or less).

- Please include at three learning objectives that clearly articulate what attendees will learn as a result of attending. For example: "Analyze and interpret a case study that examines how heritage conservation contributes to neighborhood revitalization and fights displacement".
- Which conference stream(s) your presentation/session aligns with.
- Your name, contact information, and short bio (150 words)
- Your student status, if applicable.

To encourage participation of community and other external partners (those working outside of the heritage sector) who will only attend their session, registration fees may be waived in consultation with the National Trust.

The National Trust will work with the presenter(s) and make efforts to find resources to support their participation. If you require an accommodation in order to participate in any part of this conference, or if you have suggestions on how we can improve accessibility, please let us know how we can support by sending an email to conference@nationaltrustcanada.ca

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: Friday, April 4, 2025

Notification of acceptance of submissions will be made later in May 2025. Presenters of accepted abstracts will receive a discount on full conference registration. Student presenters will receive full conference registration at no cost.

All sessions and presentations at National Trust Conference 2025 (with CAHP & IHC) may be live streamed, filmed, and images or video footage taken. To participate in the conference, presenters will need to agree to a speaker release allowing images and video footage to be webcast on the National Trust Conference 2025 website, displayed or archived on other National Trust/CAHP/IHC channels, or used in promotional materials.

To submit your proposal go to the conference website: [National Trust Conference 2025](#)
For more information: conference@nationaltrustcanada.ca