

National Roundtable on Heritage Education 2015

Mid-Century Modern and Conservation Education: The Challenge for Teaching, Training, and Public Education

Thursday, October 22, 2015

Athabasca University, Room N231, 322 – 6th Avenue (Calgary, Alta.)

Roundtable 2015 hosted by:



Athabasca University

HERITAGE RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Attendees:

Alberta Museums Association - Katrina Peredun
Algonquin College – Christopher Hahn (Dean), Jack Hollinger
Athabasca University – Aimee Benoit, Shabnam Inanloo- Dailoo (Roundtable Co-Chair),
Judy Larmour, Taraya Irene Middleton, Sharon Morin, Sandra Morton
Weizman, Frits Pannekoek, Veronica Thompson (Dean)
Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals – Jo Ann Pynn
Carleton University – Susan Ross (Roundtable Co-Chair)
City of Calgary – David Down
Edmonton – Marianne Fedori
Government of Alberta – Ali Nayeri, Larry Pearson
Heritage BC – Karen Dearlove
McGill University – Julia Gersovitz
Musée Heritage Museum - Sharon Morin
National Trust – Chris Wiebe
Olds College – Dan Daley (Dean), Sharyl James
Queen’s University – Marcus Letourneau
Université de Montréal - Christina Cameron
University of Calgary - Marc Boutin, Andrea Isfeld, Graham Livesey, Michael McMordie,
Brian Sinclair
University of Victoria - Miranda Angus, Tania Muir
University of Waterloo – Beth Davies, Robert Shipley
Vancouver Heritage Foundation – Judith Mosley
Yukon College & Government of Yukon – Barbara Hogan

Goals for the Meeting:

- To update Roundtable members on initiatives, opportunities, and challenges in heritage education and to set Roundtable priorities for the coming year;
- To explore how mid-century modern conservation is being/could be integrated into traditional heritage conservation courses/ programs; and
- To identify the ways in which heritage conservation and design educators might collaborate to shape public attitudes towards mid-century modern architecture.

1. Welcome, Background, and Goals for the Roundtable Meeting

Wiebe provided a brief overview of the Roundtable's origins in 2004, its purpose, evolving goals and scope of activities.

2. Roundtable Member Updates

- Hahn (Algonquin) – Talked about the challenges of promoting craft in their Carpentry and Masonry programs.
- Daley (Olds College) – Trying to eliminate silos/barriers at the College. Discussion is around partnerships.
- Pannekoek (Athabasca) – Heritage education can also create barriers – putting desks between professionals and communities. Highlighted Calgary Indigenous students in training on archaeological sites and the potential for built heritage MOOCs.
- Cameron (Montreal) – Planning and Environmental Studies are creating a new program offering a design studio on heritage conservation and successfully placing students with the City to do projects. Students and craftspeople need work and experience. There is a chance now with the change of government to push for the revival of the Historic Places Initiative, tax incentives, and federal legislation for heritage buildings.
- Gersovitz (McGill) – Good exercise to try and understand who we are trying to educate. Program managers at the federal level need to be educated through courses (FHBRO, Parks Canada) but these have been cut and need to be reinstated. Engaging people who do the work and manage it. If the managers don't understand our work, it doesn't matter how good a job we do, they won't get it.
- Muir (Victoria) – UVic has been teaching cultural resource management for over 30 years combining face-to-face and online courses. Have launched a new partnership with BC Heritage Branch and they are launching two future courses educating mid-career professionals. Incorporating more work on intangible heritage.
- Shipley (Waterloo) – Noted he will be retiring this academic year. The Heritage Resources Centre at Waterloo is actively seeking heritage allies and hence becoming more involved with environmental and ecological concerns. The Centre curates public discussions to further the field and is always seeking new students to continue its research program. Areas where we need to extend our demographic reach is the real estate and banking industry.
- Hogan (Yukon College) – Yukon College has created a 27 credit program with an eye to capacity building for the heritage community. Many of the courses run in short 6 or 3 week modules, and include the Management of Traditional Knowledge, Documentation of Historic Structures, log building conservation,

- Dearlove (Heritage BC) – A non-profit organization, Heritage BC offers capacity building courses for the heritage sector.
- Letourneau (Queen’s) – Developing and looking to launch a Heritage Planning Program in 2017. This program would target mid-career professionals who work as planners. It will partner with the Queen’s Real Estate Roundtable.
- Mosley (Vancouver Heritage Foundation) - Program offerings have matured into half-day and evening courses, or lunch time talks. These increase capacity for homeowners and professionals and aim is to change attitudes.
- Sinclair (Calgary) – School of Architecture could benefit for more connections with heritage conservation education sector.
- Nayeri (Govt. of Alberta) – The government is having difficulty finding professionals who have heritage understanding, particularly engineers. They are looking at partnerships with UBC, UofC, UManitoba to increase the capacity in heritage architecture and engineering. Lack of accreditation for heritage workers is an ongoing challenge.
- Inanloo (Athabasca) – The Heritage Resources Management program is collaborating with other departments such as RAIC Centre for Architecture at AU and Museums Studies.
- Ross (Carleton) – Gave background on the Canadian Studies Heritage Conservation program as well as the Architectural Conservation programs in the School of Architecture and Faculty of Engineering. Canadian Studies is having good success with heritage courses at the undergraduate level and looking for ways to engage with Indigenous studies and archaeology students.
- Fedori – Disconnect between academic heritage conservation education and public history.

3. Special Presentation – Dr. Brian R. Sinclair, FRAIC – Integrating Architecture Education + Indigenous Culture

- The gathering of educators involved in heritage from across Canada included goals of seeking compassion and deriving lessons from the *Moh-Kins-Tsis | Calgary Indigenous Heritage Roundtable* that was held the day prior to the Heritage Education Roundtable. It also considered the TRC recommendations and responses from various post-secondary institutions, including empathy in classrooms and research programs. Dr. Sinclair’s invited address to the Roundtable focused on EVDA 682.04 “Comprehensive Design Studio”, involving a unique and intensive pedagogy that was centered on the Calgary Centre for Aboriginal Culture. Sinclair’s approach underscored the importance and value of attending to ‘softer’ qualities, fostering openness and nurturing compassion. His studio was opened to counsel from leadership across an array of communities, including Indigenous Elders, local architects and city planners. Visits from and conversations with Elders and talks from Band leaders, participation in ceremonies, and visits to museums were some of the experiences invoked to provide meaningful engagement with and immersion in culture. An overarching emphasis was on empathy, empowerment, and engagement.

- ② While Architecture schools conventionally target technical competency they also have important responsibilities and roles in building respect for Indigenous culture and communities. Students undertaking professional studies are usually endeavoring to make sense of this world – they need to construct both self and world views that inform their decision making and inspire their efforts. Sinclair questioned the potential implications Indigenous perspectives might have for environmental design education and practice. In his teaching, Sinclair has addressed this objective by creating studios and other educational opportunities that integrate environmental/structural/technical systems with social and cultural dimensions. The major studio project centered on the Calgary Centre for Aboriginal Culture was explored and expended upon in the context of the Heritage Education Roundtable.
- ② Dr. Sinclair highlighted the significance of celebrating ‘soft’ qualities as part of the learning path. Such qualities included understanding the sense of community, nurturing personal passions and demonstrating compassion. For example, the studio mindfully delved into the legacy of residential schools – guided by Elders who are products of this dark period of Canada’s history. The students and Indigenous leaders talked together wisdom and values (e.g., traditional ways of knowing) and the need for a deep connection with nature. Such strategies stood in contrast and tension with the Euro-centric notions such as dominion over nature.
- ② The studio project was located in Calgary’s emerging West Village. While sited adjacent to the Bow River, water was not the focus, but the path. Elders advised student to spend time on the land in order to listen to the guidance nature will provide: “The land will tell you what needs to be done if you are open and listen well.”
- ② The studio was concerned with balancing awareness of contemporary pressures/forces with a historical understanding about ‘what it means to be Indigenous’. An overwhelming goal was to propel the design forward embracing multiple views – in essence creating a sanctuary for members of many communities and developing a place of healing for all. Student teams interpreted the charge in various ways. For example, one team looked at weaving as a metaphor. The class took serious steps to build awareness, overlaying technical necessities with cultural understanding and traditional knowledge. Together the students, instructor, Aboriginal members and practitioners from the environmental design professions charted routes forward that celebrated culture, respected needs, and honored project end-users.
- ② It was noted that Dr. Sinclair participates in/with numerous initiatives and groups concerned with Indigenous culture, communities and rights, including one on the University of Calgary’s Aboriginal Policy Committee. He expressed concerns that Indigenous dimensions are often lacking in the curricula and cultures of higher education. The novel studio work he presented at the Heritage Education Roundtable was in part driven by a desire to counter such deficiencies. Architecture students in his studio participated in many aspects of Indigenous Culture, including for example joining a sweat lodge. Such efforts, in Sinclair’s words, allows us to “see through the eyes of the other”, bringing students into tighter connection to Aboriginal culture and communities. Empathy, empowerment, and engagement all prove fundamental, necessary, and potent.

4. Mid-Century Modern and Education – Panel and Discussion

a. Susan Ross

- The subject of “Mid-Century Modern and Conservation Education” needs to talk about modernity more broadly. Where are we at? UQAM has played an important role in moving the discussion forward. Some architecture schools are teaching modern heritage without knowing it. Ross was involved in the Standards and Guidelines second edition which includes guidelines for concrete and not just woodwork. Difficulty drawing the line. Purpose built modern architecture brought hybridity to the design and construction style. Many were built during the era of cheap energy.
- Major national events around mid-century. Conserving the Modern conference at Trent and second conference in Ottawa (NCC, 2015). FHBRO and Parks Canada offered workshops as part of custodian training. The Curtainwall Symposium focuses on the technologies of modern heritage. Getty Conservation Institute also has videos to integrate into teaching.
- Craft questions – Assumption is that there isn’t craft in modern assemblies. But there are craft-based appliques etc. so this is erroneous. Explosion of books on the history of modern architecture in recent years. Carleton working with local groups like Heritage Ottawa to raise modern building profile.

b. David Down

Cities generally have very few tools to regulate heritage. Collaboration between heritage educators and advocates to influence public debates. Examples of mid-century modern challenges in Calgary have been the Ogden Grain Elevator (featured in a book by Le Corbusier), Barron Building, Calgary Board of Education Building, Elveden Centre superblock, the Centennial Planetarium, Century Park, Maryland Heights neighbourhood, and the Calgary Tower.

- c. **Graham Livesey** – Nothing offered or addressed at the U of C architecture curriculum geared towards heritage conservation. One challenge is the emphasis on technical training. There used to be a request to teach local architectural history but that was removed 10 years ago. Would be difficult to integrate into a 3-year curriculum but perhaps a specialized certificate could be added. There has always been a challenge selling modern architecture even though uniquely Canadian figures emerged in the 1950s. Jack Long’s legacy in Calgary, for instance, has been completely destroyed; this is equivalent to burning the paintings of cultural figures. Architecture is treated differently – a commodity not a work of art. Experts need to be the advocates to change this perception. Sometimes the way assemblies were used was novel. University of Calgary has the Canadian Architectural Archives with 50,000 documents – a huge resource.
- d. **Marc Boutin** – Diversity in trajectories make it difficult to push conservation and these include public perceptions. Eau Claire smokestack retention was an important discussion; what is the use of this chimney when all of the industrial buildings have gone? Schism in the public mind between old buildings and modern ones. The idea of optimization and mechanization. Architecture schools are focused on the culture of the future rather than present and the past.
- e. **Marianne Fedori** – From an advocacy perspective, architectural research is crucial. Important that there are internal advocates in City administration. Capital Modern

project in Edmonton gave the city a mid-century inventory up to 1960 – the only such in Canada.

f. Discussion

- There needs to be a broadening of the discussion around mid-century structures beyond architecture.
- Century Gardens (Calgary) – Important to find unlikely advocates. Parkour people use the brutalist park site for their sport. Rather than see them as vandals, the City is using them to advocate for the park’s preservation.
- Urban exploration movement – Transforming industrial heritage into sites for play. When people play with things how do you characterize the engagement?
- Mid-Century buildings are often challenging to work with. How do you modify them? Are they worth saving?
- Accrual accounting works against the rehab of these buildings. Depreciation schedule of 30 years was introduced in the 1970s bringing on a whole range of problems. Many buildings may not have been built to last.
- There was a situation in Kingston Ontario where a brutalist building was bricked over in a “heritage style” so that it would fit into a historic area. This was a loss and a misinterpretation of what constitutes heritage.
- There is a shift in the kinds of places Canadians want to preserve.

5. Priorities & Observations – Notes from Participants

- Architecture schools fully included/engaged in heritage conservation. Architectural accreditation tackling heritage conservation is achieved. Indigenous knowledge and issues are meaningfully included in curricula and conversations.
- What are the barriers in creating a pan-Canadian post-professional degree program in conservation? For us, the program would be a two-year program with professionals from architecture, engineering, and urban planning coming together in a multi-disciplinary environment. The program would have core courses in theory, documentation, Canadian history, etc. along with discipline specific courses. The program would be offered through a consortium of institutions rather than individuals.
- Capacity and knowledge among those doing and influencing projects on older buildings; e.g. architecture students and key trades. We need support in developing a university course. Who can we involve/learn from where this is already offered?
- How do we teach/integrate intangible heritage in our teaching?
- Important to think beyond urban and built heritage. Cultural landscape approaches offer an important way to incorporate rural heritage and Indigenous ways of knowing.
- We talked a lot about advocacy and public perceptions, but we didn’t talk much about value. I think it is important to focus not just on our own “expert” valuations (i.e. architectural value) but to talk around and ask communities what they value. I think an important part of education is being open to being educated; in this sense community values are also critical for advocacy.
- Accreditation criteria for schools of Architecture need to be rethought to include conservation learnings.

- The most important thing that came out of this meeting was the overwhelming need to educate and make people from outside our traditional heritage communities aware – realtors, appraisers, etc.
- Invite the rejuvenated CBC to talk about heritage and buildings as part of its arts and cultural heritage mandate.
- Database of mid-century modern restoration/renovation techniques.
- Question of changing/shifting public value place on buildings/cultural landscapes. The necessity to understand? To shape? Is there a contradiction?
- Accreditation criteria needs to be challenged.
- The people that will support the preservation of buildings or landmarks are people with emotional connection. We talked a lot about urban loss, but just imagine rural loss across the country. Education and awareness must begin in secondary school then carried to post-secondary to instill the value of landscape culture.
- Exploring the idea of how public sees what is heritage and what is worth saving. As a person living through modernist and brutalist architecture I don't see its intrinsic value at first. Why? Is it because I see it as old and outdated and not historical? I see the comparison as my grandparents having lived through the era of "new" houses in the 1950s and seeing the older Victorian homes as old outdated. They moved out and built newer/updated. I look back at what they discarded with fondness. They saw it as just old.
- I feel like there were many assumptions and inquiries about who heritage education audiences are/are not. It would be fantastic to engage in a national needs assessment or collect data in this area as a follow-up to the 2004 National Trust report on education.
- The discussion today has many parallels with furniture making. The craft of furniture construction changed little for centuries (many different styles but the materials and methods of joinery were quite consistent). When modern adhesives and industrial processes (sheet goods, formaldehyde, PVA, etc) furniture "design" exploded. But modern furniture (although very expressive and wonderfully designed) is largely disposable. At the least it will be extremely expensive and problematic to repair. Is the same true of modernist architecture? This is my issue with the craft involved. Authenticity speaks many languages.
- I believe that all public engagement is helpful. Just because people are young or from a different background does not mean that they can't become advocates of history.
- How can we work across disciplines to bring more people to the table? i.e. architects, politicians, real estate industry experts.
- How can the Roundtable be more effective annually (outside of this yearly conversation)? More students need to be involved in the conversation.
- In London, Ontario several mid-century modern buildings were just approved as additions to the City's heritage register! So changing conceptions of heritage are happening, albeit slowly.