

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report addresses a number of issues pertaining to human resources (HR) in preservation, *specifically the restoration, rehabilitation, maintenance and repair* of our built heritage and conservation of historic sites. During the last three decades, a workforce of built heritage preservation professionals and trades people has emerged in Canada. Even after thirty or more years of accomplishments, however, the cohort of trades and professional heritage conservation workers is not adequately recognized or understood.

This situation needs to be rectified, not least because of the potential future demand for skilled workers and the threat to our remaining built heritage if we do not meet this demand. If we use the conservative estimate that 10% of pre-1941 buildings possess heritage value, then there are approximately 128,000 residential properties *with heritage value* that require ongoing maintenance, repair and preservation work. The materials and characteristics of this older building stock are fundamentally different from newer stock.

Evidence suggests that there is unmet demand for staff with heritage skills in both the trades and the professions. A number of studies point to the emerging importance of work in repair, renovation and restoration. With its distinct working conditions and skills requirements, further analysis of contractors, workers and training in this area is required.

Education, training, and certification—trends, gaps and needs

The Heritage Canada Foundation's (HCF) survey of educational institutions and subsequent research discovered that the offerings at both the university and college/vocational level are limited. The multidisciplinary nature of built

heritage preservation is reflected in the range of university departments and faculties amongst which heritage-related courses are scattered. There are only a few dedicated programs, however, and what little university training occurs exists almost exclusively within the framework of advanced studies. Two colleges provide training in heritage trades as the primary focus of a program, one of which is in its first year. Two others have been identified that include heritage as a component or add-on.

The need for heritage education in the planning professions, in addition to architecture, is vital. If people in positions of planning, policy and program creation at the municipal, as well as provincial and federal levels do not have knowledge of, or at least sensitivity to, heritage matters, then the climate for conservation suffers. More generally, an awareness of heritage preservation that begins at the elementary and high school level would encourage a culture of conservation. Raising awareness at this time in a child's life through such means as HCF's educational package, which it sends to thousands of schools across Canada each year, could spawn a generation sensitive to and vocal about the importance of our built heritage.

Because work on heritage buildings requires some distinct skills from more general renovation work, widely integrating heritage skills training with contemporary trades training is a prudent system for both students and employers. Inclusion of heritage sensitivity in the requirements for certification at the provincial and possibly at the national (i.e., *Red Seal*) level, too, could be explored. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) recognizes that Canada's housing stock represents an "enormous pool of private capital," and renovation

choices have a direct impact on the integrity, longevity and performance of these homes. Accordingly, the strong influence contractors have on building owners' decisions underscores the need for widespread heritage sensitivity in the trades as well as the professions. As one heritage trades educator pointed out: "our graduates can explain to their clients the difference between renovation and restoration."

Apprenticeship is integral to the development of a skilled pool of human resources in many sectors of the economy. Concern about apprenticeship is felt throughout the building industry. A review of research initiatives on training and apprenticeship reveals key issues facing the building trades that centre on an imminent shortage of skilled tradespeople, and problems related to market volatility, which is less pronounced in the renovation than the new construction market.

Preservationists emphasize the importance of maintenance and repair of the existing building stock. Often requiring only modest means, it is more important than many a luxury rehabilitation. Moreover, regular inspections result in the avoidance of major repairs to buildings. A knowledgeable workforce that could undertake a strong inspection and maintenance program would relieve the emergency mentality that often exists amongst owners and site guardians. It was readily apparent throughout a major study of heritage structures in Ontario that most major restoration work could have been avoided had regular inspections taken place and small problems been addressed as they occurred.

Defining built heritage

The work of those involved in the preservation of heritage buildings is not well recognized in Canada. Built heritage

has only a tenuous connection with the concepts of “culture” and “heritage” and it is therefore often overlooked in the definitions of these. Second, in terms of industry and the labour force, heritage preservation work is often subsumed in the larger context of “renovation” or “building trades.” The widely used North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) includes classifications for historical sites, museums and similar institutions, but these categories do not account for most of the work of heritage preservation, which is undertaken in the private sector. Similarly, the National Occupation Classification system (NOC) does not disaggregate at a level that is useful for understanding human resources in built heritage preservation, by providing categories such as “heritage architect”, “heritage planner” or “heritage mason.”

Definitions are essential in qualifying how built heritage is explicitly included or excluded from broader sectors such as “culture”, “heritage” and “the renovation industry”. In turn, if built heritage is excluded from official definitions of heritage, for example, data collection, policy creation, and public and private sector actions that affect built heritage subsequently suffer.

Data availability, collection and analysis—gaps and needs

Data on the entire enterprise of preserving heritage buildings is extremely limited. The complexity of the built heritage sector and the challenge in defining, classifying and collecting data on the built heritage preservation industry is not unique. Very recently, the burgeoning environment sector was in much the same position. Attempts had been made to identify environmental goods and services in existing classifications, but without appreciable success. Statistics Canada received funding from Industry Canada to develop a national

statistical database on the industry, and began a program consisting of new surveys, modifications to existing surveys and integration of statistics from various components of its economic statistics framework. Similarly, the Cultural Statistics Program (CSP) at Statistics Canada was established in 1972 in response to difficulties associated with data in the culture sector. There is an acknowledged gap in the data required to adequately understand the built heritage preservation field. Data is needed for descriptive analyses, planning, understanding the role and contribution of built heritage to the economy, and monitoring.

A review of Statistics Canada’s latest Draft *Framework for Culture Statistics* (FCS) largely excludes built heritage from its definition of culture. The FCS states that the culture output is the plan; therefore, construction of the building or the building itself is not part of the culture infrastructure of interest, or considered a culture product. Given this definition, architects, planners and the like, of highways, airports, land subdivisions, commercial, institutional and residential buildings, are part of the culture industry, as are individuals primarily engaged in developing plans for renovation; however, a highly skilled carpenter or stonemason is not. Built heritage in some other countries is not so excluded from cultural statistics. The Draft FCS acknowledges that further work needs to be initiated on defining which occupations should be identified as culture.

The Government of Canada recently recognized the need to deepen its commitment to ensure that Canadians will be able to enjoy their rich built heritage, most notably through the Historic Places Initiative (HPI). Part of the HPI is the establishment of a national heritage register, and Statistics Canada officials did suggest that, once it is operational, the register could

provide an important base from which these buildings could be surveyed and monitored. Despite the current lack of funds for new data initiatives at Statistics Canada, during recent communications with officials it was also pointed out that, if the proposed tax incentives offered by the federal government come to fruition, Statistics Canada might then be able to provide measures of the activity associated with the heritage building stock.

Special data requests are also available from Statistics Canada on a cost-recovery basis. In addition to data mining, possibilities include the addition of a question to an existing survey, and specialized research projects (surveys or statistical analysis). There may also be unexplored promise in obtaining data from building and construction surveys. In the future, however, emphasis needs to be placed on the fact that renovation without regard for heritage bears little relation to restoration or rehabilitation. To benefit data collection in the heritage preservation field, this distinction could be made in studies of the construction industry, the carpentry and masonry trades, and training programs.

By assessing evidence from a number of sources, one can begin to cobble together a picture of human resources in the heritage preservation field. Still, we have neither systematically collected data, nor a national built heritage human resources strategy. There are signs of a growing awareness that heritage buildings and HR issues are a distinct and important sub-sector that needs to be addressed. Future development of an HR strategy for built heritage preservationists would place built heritage alongside the many other sectors in which the development of human resources has been recognized as essential to the future well-being of Canada, and by so doing we would help safeguard Canada’s heritage buildings.