Photo courtesy of Strathcona County Museum & Archives

Strathcona County

Community Heritage Legacy Framework

December 2009

This logo developed for Community Heritage Legacy reflects:

- public pride in Strathcona County's unique history and heritage

- awareness of the identity residents find in community

- the legacy that will endure for future generations as people recognize and value their history and heritage today

Purpose of the Community Heritage Legacy Framework

The Community Heritage Legacy Framework is intended to:

- strengthen the County's commitment to preserving its history and safeguarding its heritage

- provide a central hub for all things history and heritage, both within the County and the community

- engage residents, businesses and the larger community in becoming more aware of local history and heritage

- encourage community development that focuses on history and heritage

- provide support to the community to facilitate activities related to history and heritage

- prioritize and plan for future heritage-related needs and initiatives

- guide and influence new and existing policies and plans

- be used as a guide for responding to historical and heritage issues

- maintain a focus on current trends

Strathcona County

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Contents

Definitions for history and heritage

History and heritage are closely related.

History involves the study of past events, especially human affairs; the total accumulation of past events, especially relating to human affairs or to the accumulation of developments connected with a particular place …
—Canadian Oxford Dictionary, Second Edition, 2004

Local history is the examination of change over time involving interrelated aspects of families, schools, churches, farms, civic organizations and facilities, businesses and communities, province, country and the world.
—Nearby History, David E. Kyvig, Altamira, Second Edition, 2000

Heritage is a community's inheritance from the past; that which a group of people deems of sufficiently high value to preserve for future generations.

Heritage can be tangible or intangible. In comparison to the tangible, that we can see and touch, intangible cultural heritage includes traditions, practices, knowledge and skills, and also the meanings and values that people attach to historic places and other examples of cultural heritage. Intangible cultural heritage is also sometimes known as living heritage, as it reflects aspects of our heritage that are alive today and have survived progress and the passage of time.

For the purposes of this document, the general term heritage includes intangible cultural heritage as well as tangible and natural heritage.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provides definitions for various types of heritage.

Intangible cultural heritage, as defined in the 2003 Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, adopted by the 32nd Session of the General Conference of UNESCO, means:

> *the practices, representations, and expressions, as well as the associated knowledge and the necessary skills that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.*

> *The intangible cultural heritage is manifested* inter alia *in the following domains:*

> *(a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;*
> *(b) performing arts;*
> *(c) social practices, rituals and festive events;*
> *(d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;*
> *(e) traditional craftsmanship.*

Safeguarding means *measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and nonformal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.*

— http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf

At the General Conference of the UNESCO meeting in Paris from 17 October to 21 November 1972, at its 17th Session, the following definitions were provided for natural and cultural heritage.

Natural heritage

- *natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;*

- *geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;*

- *natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.*

Cultural heritage

- *monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;*

- *groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;*

- *sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.*

— http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf

For context, we have included the above definition for cultural heritage, which is tangible in nature. Cultural heritage and cultural landscapes are for the most part covered under Strathcona County's Heritage Resources Management Plan, except for aspects of research, heritage education and awareness and heritage partnerships, which share some common actions with Community Heritage Legacy.

Other related definitions

Archival records may be any media, generally unpublished, which an individual, family or organization has accumulated over time. Most commonly these consist of letters, diaries, minutes, financial records, photographs or any other kind of documentary materials created or collected by the individual.

Community, considered in the broadest sense in this document, includes either some or all of County residents, schools and churches, hamlets, districts and neighbourhoods, not-for-profit organizations and agencies, agricultural societies, community leagues, business and industry, and the media.

Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by equipping them with skills they need to effect positive change in their own communities and in part to foster a sense of identity, belonging and place.

Historic resource means any work of nature or of humans that is primarily of value for its paleontological, archeological, prehistoric, historic, cultural, natural, scientific or esthetic interest including, but not limited to, a paleontological, archeological, prehistoric, historic or natural site, structure or object.
—Province of Alberta Historic Resources Act

Public goods are any benefits (often of an intrinsic value) from a service that accrue to all members of a community independent of their direct use of or subscription to the service.

Four guiding principles from Strathcona's Social Sustainability Framework speak to a sense of place, important for a strong and sustainable community: social inclusion, community connectedness, social responsibility, and health and well-being.

- Social inclusion - A socially inclusive society is one where citizens have a sense of belonging to their communities and have the opportunity to access services, learning, employment, recreational and cultural activities.

- Community connectedness refers to the sense of belonging to a community that occurs through the formal and informal networks developed when people come together for social, educational, recreational, spiritual, cultural and/or work-related purposes.

- Social responsibility is the experience and appreciation of our interdependence and connectedness with others. Social responsibility includes acceptance of individual and cultural diversity … It occurs when citizens value the worth that the community derives from members expressing a sense of responsibility to each other through voluntary engagement and collective decision making.

- Health and well-being is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social wellness. For individuals it includes the capacity of people to adapt to, respond to, or control life's challenges and changes. A healthy community is one that is continually creating and improving physical and social environments and expanding resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing the functions of life and in developing to their maximum potential.

Executive summary

Strathcona County's Community Heritage Legacy Framework is built on the fundamental principle that an awareness and appreciation of community history and heritage are vital to the well-being, strength and continuity of the community. Strathcona is committed to fostering community development that focuses on its history and heritage.

For years and years, Strathcona County Council members and staff have been carefully managing the challenges of rapid population growth fuelled by industrial development and fuelling commercial and retail expansion. While the County does the things it must to keep up with progress, Council determined that it must also make sure we are not leaving behind anything of value. Recognizing the importance of our history and heritage to the community, Council decided in 2005 to establish a proactive program to preserve history and heritage and make it available to the public.

In the first years, the Community Heritage Legacy Initiative looked at the need for action to safeguard the County's human history and its intangible cultural heritage. In 2008, Strathcona County conducted consultations with stakeholders in the community, with Council and the County's administration, and with the general public. The purpose of the consultations was to verify community values concerning history and heritage, identify assets and needs, determine the opinions of County residents and stakeholders, and, based on the results, recommend strategies for consideration. This report completes that process.

In the minds of the many stakeholders, County residents, County staff members and Council members who shared their views in these consultations, growth and development threaten to undermine the County's connections to its past and disrupt a natural continuity toward its future, especially in rural areas.

… at least 90 per cent of respondents said that history and heritage are important and should be remembered and that we should protect and retain our intangible cultural heritage …

In answering the first two questions in a questionnaire on the subject, at least 90 per cent of respondents said that history is important and should be remembered and that we should protect and retain our intangible cultural heritage. Many want to balance opportunities in the economic dimension of County life with opportunities in the social, cultural, natural and environmental, and community-development dimensions. They agree that the County and its residents should, as they are doing, tap into the economic benefits that come from growth. They also believe the County can and should tap into the community-building power of history and intangible cultural heritage—for the benefit of the social and natural environment, the economy and the overall community.

Consultation participants—County residents, stakeholders, staff and leaders—believe the County needs to devote decisive leadership and judicious funding to initiatives that draw on the County's history and heritage in order to preserve and retain them as valued assets and to provide opportunities for residents to learn and appreciate them. They believe this will help to instil residents and communities with identity; pride; and a sense of place, purpose and direction.

... the County's rural communities still have some surviving examples of heritage; strong feelings of identity, place and community; and a strong desire to save and protect those resources.

Respondents said they want the County to encourage residents and organizations to work in partnerships and as individuals on initiatives to research, identify, collect, preserve and celebrate the County's history and intangible cultural heritage. Many of them want this important work to be done creatively, innovatively, assertively and proudly by taking history and intangible cultural heritage into the community in ways that touch the everyday lives of residents.

This approach would not eliminate the need for a museum (or museums) to collect, conserve, store and formally present artifacts. Rather, it would boost the effectiveness of museums by having them serve as resources for innovative, interactive programming that takes place beyond the walls of the museum right in the community—programming that could be provided by museums themselves as well as other organizations and individuals.

Neither would this approach duplicate the services of a museum. Rather, offering learning opportunities outside of the museum would:

- integrate history and heritage into residents' everyday experiences

- increase awareness of the museum and its programs and services

- serve as a bridge to draw more people to museums, websites and books for deeper investigation and learning

Some participants in the consultations expressed a concern that, especially in the urban areas, there are only a few physical reminders of our community's past. Buildings, often called tangible heritage, and other physical reminders are valuable in themselves, and the County's Heritage Resources Management Plan recognizes their importance. Tangible heritage serves as an important visual reminder of the past as well as a focus, anchor and setting to bring intangible cultural heritage to life. The two forms of heritage are, in fact, complementary and interdependent, as several consultation participants pointed out. Both must be respected, protected and safeguarded. Council members and senior administrators look forward to developing an umbrella heritage policy that will serve both the tangible and the intangible, within the context of the natural.

It is true that, aside from the historic sites situated along Sherwood Park's Heritage Mile, the County's urban areas do not have as much for tangible

heritage as such neighbouring places as St. Albert or Fort Saskatchewan. The County's rural areas have a few more examples, some of which reach back to the earliest days of settlement. It is in this rural assortment of tangible heritage and associated natural heritage and intangible cultural heritage that many participants see the greatest opportunity—and the greatest urgency, for some of it is threatened by development or neglect. This is the opportunity for the County and its residents to rediscover, recover and rejuvenate their roots.

Strathcona County was the second municipality in Alberta to receive status as a specialized municipality; the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo was the first. As specialized municipalities, urban and rural communities coexist under a single municipal government. In Strathcona County, the rural area has a rich agricultural heritage which, combined with significant industrial heritage, uncommon and special natural features, and close proximity to Alberta's capital, the City of Edmonton, make it one of a kind.

This unique mix offers governance and management challenges to County Council, administrators and staff, and they have understandably devoted time and energy to meeting these challenges. This unique mix also offers significant opportunities. The urban communities and the country residential communities have lost much of their connection with local history and heritage. It is in these communities that many residents perceive a lack of identity, connectedness, and sense of place and community—a common theme in the consultations.

> County residents, staff and leaders believe the County needs to devote decisive leadership and judicious funding to initiatives that draw on the County's history and heritage …

Fortunately, the rural communities still have surviving examples of heritage. Families of original settlers and other longtime rural residents still retain strong feelings of identity, place and community; and a strong desire to save and protect these remaining heritage resources.

Strathcona County's rural history exists in the everyday lives of rural residents: on the roads they travel; at local shops they frequent; in their churches, schools and community halls. Some residents belong to multi-generational families whose roots go back to the beginnings of European settlement and governance in the County—and even beyond that to the days of the First Nations people, the fur trade and Métis settlement. Other residents live in dwellings, on farms or in rural hamlets with long and interesting histories. These individuals and families in rural areas are closer to the County's history, its natural heritage, its tangible heritage and its intangible cultural heritage. They feel—fear, in many cases—that their history and heritage are slipping away, never to be recovered.

It is clear from the consultations that residents of urban areas share the same interests in history and heritage as residents of rural areas. What urbanites lack are familiarity and everyday exposure to it, and the intimate knowledge and sense of respect and connection that can come with that proximity.

Opportunity at hand

There is now a ready opportunity for Strathcona County to meet community needs for both rural and urban residents through planned and implemented efforts to preserve and convey its history and the best of its heritage. The goal is to have all residents from the most diverse of communities develop a shared sense of community identity, purpose and cohesiveness. They could then confidently look to the future together—from a perspective that embraces knowledge of the past, awareness and appreciation of their common heritage, and respect for the achievements and contributions of the builders of the past and present.

This report envisions Community Heritage Legacy as a proactive advocate of history and heritage …

The diversity that has been a part of the County's character since the earliest known days—from the time of First Nations inhabitants to Métis and European settlement to the more recent arrival of newcomers from, for example, Asia, Africa, Central and South America and other parts of the world—enriches the character and quality of life in our communities. It also challenges all of us to integrate the old and the new in creative ways that build identities and communities that, taken as a whole, are greater and more dynamic than the sum of their parts.

Next steps

The opportunity at hand is to establish Community Heritage Legacy as a capability within the organization to carry out the responsibilities outlined in the Community Heritage Legacy Framework. The logical next step is to adopt strategies to encourage longtime residents to share their history and heritage with other residents and including recent newcomers, so County residents overall can adopt and share in their heritage.

An important point, made by some consultation participants, is that initiatives to increase awareness of history and heritage need not cost a lot of money. Modest funding will do the job, provided it is backed by bold and visionary leadership from County Council and administration, and from dedicated community members— and carried out through innovative, collaborative participatory programs that reach out to residents across the County.

This report envisions the Community Heritage Legacy Initiative as a proactive advocate of history and heritage in Strathcona County. Recognizing and building on a foundation of work done and being done across our municipality, the initiative aims to showcase and connect individual efforts in a way that compounds their effect and gives them all greater visibility. It looks to raise the profile of history and heritage, support those who champion the cause, and help build stronger relationships among them. The program has been developed to work collaboratively on goals that it shares with County departments and community partners, and to engage the larger community in participating.

This executive summary draws on raw and summarized data from consultations with residents, stakeholders and staff, and from higher-level summaries and analyses of that data.

Recommended strategies

These 10 strategies for Strathcona County are recommended to proactively demonstrate the importance of history and heritage, and to achieve the vision, mission and goals of the Community Heritage Legacy Framework.

1. Establish Community Heritage Legacy as a capability within the organization, with Communications as the lead department, to actively advocate for local history and heritage; facilitate and/or co-ordinate County and community initiatives; and serve as a communications hub—as outlined in the Community Heritage Legacy Framework.

2. Integrate history and heritage perspectives into existing and future County policies, plans, initiatives, programs and events. Request that departments review the Community Heritage Legacy Framework and develop and adopt strategies to assist in meeting its goals.

3. Establish a heritage policy that takes an integrated approach to managing tangible, natural and intangible cultural heritage.

4. Develop a three-year action plan for Community Heritage Legacy that engages County departments and the community.

5. Develop an inventory of Strathcona County's intangible cultural heritage, its carriers and disseminators. Continue the research and collection of records and accounts of Strathcona's history and heritage.

6. Develop tools to advance the goals of the Community Heritage Legacy Framework.

7. Bolster efforts and build capacity among individuals and groups in the community with initiatives related to local history and heritage, including the Strathcona County Museum & Archives.

8. Develop a network of interested community members (County residents, schools and churches, hamlets, districts and neighbourhoods, not-for-profit organizations and agencies, agricultural societies, community leagues, and businesses, industry and the media) to participate and advance the goals of the Community Heritage Legacy Framework.

9. Provide engagement, learning and training opportunities to increase County staff and residents' awareness of local history and heritage and involvement in the Community Heritage Legacy Framework.

10. Explore opportunities for additional resources, funding and support: research partners, grant funding, and community volunteers and other partnerships.