

The History and Objectives of Community Heritage Manitoba

The History of Community Heritage Manitoba Inc.

On October 25th, 1997, in the Town of Baldur, over twenty Municipal Heritage Advisory Committees unanimously voted to create a new provincial heritage organization in Manitoba. That entity was to be called Community Heritage Manitoba. Community Heritage Manitoba evolved over a five year period from a group of Municipal Heritage Advisory Committees, or MHACs. The mission of Community Heritage Manitoba was “to support all member Municipal Heritage Advisory Committees in their efforts to identify, protect, promote, develop and interpret the heritage of their communities.”

In 1986, the Historic Resources Act was proclaimed law in Manitoba. This Act allowed municipal councils the power to create Municipal Heritage Advisory Committees. These committees are established by bylaw as standing committees to councils, with all the inherent rights and obligations that are part of standing committees. By 1992 there were some 15 MHACs in Manitoba.

At this time, some of these MHACs felt that there was a need to share knowledge and experience with each other. This networking opportunity would enhance MHACs and their communities in such areas as tourism, education, promotion, marketing and partnerships. A meeting to which all MHACs were invited was held in the Brandon Civic Administration Building on February 15th, 1992. Twenty two people representing 11 MHACs came to the decision that there should be an annual conference to deal with issues specific to the needs of all MHACs. A group of volunteers organized the first conference which was held in Portage la Prairie on September 26th, 1992. Since then MHACs have held a conference every year to deal with issues such as heritage in the schools, promoting heritage in your community; heritage tourism; networking and partnerships; grantsmanship and new heritage initiatives, to name a few.

During these early conferences there was a feeling that more could be done to assist local MHACs preserve and promote their heritage on a sustainable basis. Over the years communities continued to establish MHACs so that by 1997 there were 42 in existence. The conference organizing committee set up two workshops in February of 1997 to discuss the issue of forming a province wide association. This would be an association of constituent MHACs who would meet on a regular basis to deal with issues specific to the heritage of their communities. The two workshops had 41 attendees in total representing 20 MHACs. The idea of a coordinating body for MHACs was unanimously agreed to by all present. The Coordinating Committee drafted a model of this new association to present for discussion and possible adoption at the 6th annual MHAC Conference held in Baldur October 25th, 1997. And on that sunny afternoon Community Heritage Manitoba was born. Within the year, memberships to CHM stretched from Lac du Bonnet to Virden – from The Pas to Emerson.

Community Heritage Manitoba exploded onto the heritage scene when it initiated a meeting of all heritage partners in Manitoba in 1998. Called "A Vision of Heritage Forum," this meeting of heritage organizations met on May 2nd, 1998 at Yellowquill School in Portage la Prairie. Over 85 delegates attended the forum representing over 45 heritage institutions throughout the province. This was the first time in a long time where all organizations and individuals, all disciplines and interests were invited to one forum to discuss the future of Manitoba's rich and vibrant heritage. The forum was an overwhelming success as was described by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship of the time, Mrs. Rosemary Vodrey, in her presentation to the delegates at the Forum. As a result of this Forum, Community Heritage Manitoba placed itself clearly in the mosaic of Manitoba heritage and now presented itself as a legitimate provincial heritage organization. CHM prides itself as a sustainable organization with its roots deeply entrenched in the heritage of communities throughout Manitoba.

In the following years Community Heritage Manitoba continued to present conferences every October to its constituents, and strives to enhance its working relationship with other heritage institutions and enthusiasts. One of the strongest connections was with the Community Heritage Unit of Manitoba Historic Resources Branch, Culture, Heritage and Tourism. Many initiatives were co-produced such as membership surveys, presentations at conferences and so on.

By 2003, it became apparent to the Board of Directors of Community Heritage Manitoba that in order to present CHM as a viable non-profit organization, and to secure grants, that it would have to become incorporated. A motion for incorporation was passed by the Board in October 2003, and the necessary papers were drawn up immediately. On December 17th, 2003 CHM was incorporated.

In 2004 a new heritage initiative was introduced in Manitoba. Called the Historic Places Initiative, this was a new federal provincial heritage plan designed to offer support to owners of heritage buildings. Community Heritage Manitoba partnered with the Historic Resources Branch and staff of the Historic Places Initiative to produce a conference that provided full information of the program and changes in the evaluation process.

This very successful conference spawned the idea of publishing a book. The conceptualization of the book was to present to municipal officials and staff a "culture of heritage." This book would present Manitoba heritage success stories. It would include both small and large communities from all across the province. It would be interdisciplinary – covering all fields of heritage. It would show how passion and a plan can overcome all obstacles.

This book would be sent to all municipalities in the province with its major purpose being to provide an atmosphere that "it can be done." Manitoba Heritage Success Stories will be available in May 2006 – a success story in itself. This partnership of volunteers and professionals clearly prove that very point. Community Heritage Manitoba will continue to be a leader in the rich cultural heritage of Manitoba.

The Objectives of Community Heritage Manitoba

Community Heritage Manitoba is a membership driven, task oriented volunteer association of Municipal Heritage Advisory Committees (or MHACs). Its mission and objectives are based on enhancing heritage opportunities in local communities. This includes such initiatives as the exchange of information, promotional activities, research opportunities, establishing partnerships and providing knowledge and expertise to MHACs. Through the accomplishment of these objectives MHACs can provide expertise to their constituent members and municipalities for the preservation, protection and promotion of heritage throughout Manitoba.

Community Heritage Manitoba's Mission Statement:

Community Heritage Manitoba shall support all member Municipal Heritage Advisory Committees and heritage partners in their efforts to identify, protect, promote, develop and interpret the heritage of their communities.

Specific Objectives of Community Heritage Manitoba

1. To facilitate the exchange of information and communication of activities among the membership.
2. To facilitate heritage education opportunities to Municipal Heritage Advisory Committees (or MHACs), municipal councils and other heritage partners.
3. To facilitate the promotion of heritage.
4. To establish creative partnerships for the development of heritage on a local, regional and provincial basis.

For further information about Community Heritage Manitoba please email info@communityheritagemanitoba.ca.