

Ontario Heritage Conference, June 2022

Panel Presentation - CHO: Rural and Remote MHCs

SLIDE 1 (COVER).

Thank you Nancy and fellow panelists -

In particular, I thank Wayne Morgan and the CHO for the opportunity to share what is happening in Northern Ontario.

I am making this presentation as Chair of the Timmins Municipal Heritage Committee (which was only recently established in 2019). Although I occupy this position in my volunteer capacity, I do have an M.Phil (Conservation of the Built Environment) and a B.Arch degree - both from the University of Cape Town and worked professionally in Southern Africa for 15 years before moving Canada at end of 2013 - and since then, Timmins has been my home.

SLIDE 2 (CONTEXT: LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT).

Before I speak to Timmins mining and industrial landscape, I begin by acknowledging the importance of Indigenous Peoples to our region:

The City of Timmins is located on Treaty 9 Territory - which are the traditional lands of the Mattagami First Nation. The indigenous community has a long relationship to the land - which predates our resource history - and allows a DEEPER UNDERSTANDING of our CULTURAL LANDSCAPE. For this reason, the heritage committee strives to incorporate this awareness into our work - as we look to identify and conserve #timminsheritage for future generations.

SLIDE 3 (CONTEXT: OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPE).

If we zoom out (with help of Google Maps)

The aerial view allows us to appreciate the network of lakes and waterways that define the natural landscape - and once were part of the old Hudson Bay Trading Route. The Mattagami River (left of slide), which flows through the City of Timmins and is a tributary of the Moose River (which flows North to the Hudson Bay).

This aerial image also illustrates the impact of mining in the region:

The Porcupine Goldfields are one of the richest mineral-producing regions in the western hemisphere (mining has continued through the 20th and into the 21st century) So that today, the City of Timmins is the fourth Largest city in NE Ontario - we a population of just over 41,000 people - not a big number (the whole population would fit very comfortably into the Rogers Centre) but - the city stretches across an enormous geographic area -

- At one time there were more than 150 operations across this landscape – but three mines have come to dominate the Timmins-Porcupine story: (i.e. the Dome, the McIntyre, the Hollinger).
- Present boundaries were established by the amalgamation of Tisdale, Whitney, Mountjoy and Timmins Townships in 1973 . . . note the proximity of mining operations to downtown and residential areas.

SLIDE 4 (DISCOVER / #TIMMINS HERITAGE).

Having said that - it would be a mistake to reduce Timmins heritage to ONLY the “Mac Headframe”, pictured on my opening slide:

- Timmins rich multicultural and resource history is very much reflected in the built environment (as this sampling of images from 2020/21 Doors Open sites illustrate).
- However, the value of this industrial heritage (at local and regional scale) has long been misunderstood (or even overlooked).
- Until recently there were no municipal heritage sites (either designated **OR** listed).
- But - with the demolition of the Dome Mine Manager's House and Hollinger Office Building in 2018 – the need for identification and conservation of Timmins cultural heritage became **urgent!**
- And prompting the establishment of a municipal heritage committee in September 2019:
- Which was driven by the City's CAO, Director of the Timmins Museum (Karen Bachmann), and myself, (as a member of the Museum Advisory Committee)
- And in this regard, my experience working in heritage management across diverse contexts, including remote mining communities of Southern Africa, proved helpful.

SLIDE 5 (CHALLENGES // OPPORTUNITIES).

Timmins is still an active mining region . . . much of our heritage, is still considered part of the mining resource or infrastructure. (On the other hand, our mining companies are paying more attention to **reclamation and legacy planning** - which introduces exciting and creative opportunities).

Although, the community was familiar with its heritage – there was a **preoccupation with past failures** and **poor understanding** of conservation processes – we needed to figure out where to start? And **who** would move it forward?

We also realised that (without the capacity or budget) – we couldn't simply impose a heritage program that had been shown to work elsewhere . . . we needed to find local solutions . . . playing to our strengths - and acting on opportunities to "tell our story"

In the municipality, **heritage had come to be regarded as a problem** to be solved – and we needed to switch gears and **frame it as an opportunity**, capable of solving a broad range of problems and planning concerns (as illustrated in this diagram) . . .

And we proceeded with a two-prong approach:

SLIDE 6 (PROMOTING / A CULTURE OF CONSERVATION).

First, we worked to **promote a culture of conservation**:

- Heritage Orientation Workshop in September 2019 aimed directly at Councilors and municipal staff (and I am grateful that Michael Seaman was able to join us in Timmins for that discussion)
- Awareness campaigns (e.g., Municipal Heritage Scavenger Hunt / Doors Open),
- Presentations to Council on the processes for listing and designation under OHA,
- Engagement with our Downtown BIA, the Chamber City Impact Committee and local historical groups (e.g. SACHA, Timmins Then & Now).
- And we compiled an inventory of **66 sites** of possible Cultural Heritage Value and/or Interest (CHVI). It had no legislative implication but was a compilation of previous lists, undertaken as far back as 1979 and helped generate a quick overview (or snapshot) of our cultural landscape.

SLIDE 7 (ESTABLISHING / THE MUNICIPAL HERITAGE REGISTER).

Second, in response to an enquiry from owner - that the **log home at 438 Wilson** be designated as a heritage site we worked with the City Clerk to “walk” the process through Council, knowing that it might serve as a template for future enquiries:

- we compiled a **Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report and put that forward with a recommendation to Council** that the Log Home at 438 Wilson be added to the MHR as a designated heritage property (resolution adopted November 2021).
- Designed an application form for the nomination of heritage property going forward - when completed, the form serves as a heritage statement (or at minimum, a scoping document) reducing the burden on MHC volunteers and municipal staff.
- And, in May, we **put forward a recommendation to Council** that **seven municipally owned** properties (identified on our inventory) be added to the MHR as listed (non-designated) heritage properties (resolution was adopted by Council in May 2022).

SLIDE 8 (NEXT STEPS: FINDING A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH).

- We found that although listing and designation are useful tools – alone, they are not enough to drive a sustainable conservation program.
- Unfortunately, heritage has suffered a bad reputation, fear and misconceptions abound.
- Further, without incentives, listing and designation are a ‘hard sell’.
- Therefore, we have found it helpful to move away from emphasis on **designation and listing, and instead -**
- We present them as tools in support of a holistic approach to management as illustrated in the diagram . . .
- Starting at top with a community driven approach:
- **Find** the claimants (or champions).
- **Understand** the cultural heritage value and/or interest.
- **Identify** the heritage attributes that support the CHV/I.
- **Undertake** routine maintenance, upgrades, and improvements.
- **Allow** development but understand and mitigate impact on heritage attributes.
- **Support** original use or find new and adaptive uses.

THEREFORE, looking ahead to the next FOUR years:

- The MHC will continue to **promote a culture of conservation**, based on a community-driven and sustainable approach to heritage management, as illustrated in this diagram.

For example:

- Establish and build a comprehensive inventory of heritage properties.
- Delegation to Council and others (eg. TEDC, Timmins Chamber, Downtown BIA).
- Reach out directly to historical / local interest groups / building owners.
- Design and visioning charrettes.
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- **Build capacity** within the Municipal Heritage Committee and city staff.

For example:

- Build capacity within committee, address skills and representation.
- Access training opportunities - such as those offered by the CHO.
- Recommend city create a staff position for a cultural manager / heritage planner.

SLIDE 9 (CONCLUSION).

In conclusion, the City of Timmins has taken significant steps in conservation of municipal heritage, starting with appointment of an MHC and the establishment of a Municipal Heritage Register.

Leave you with two quotes: both highlight the importance of Timmins heritage - not only to the local community - but also its significance at a provincial and arguably a federal level also . . .

And I invite you to take a drive up Highway 11 . . . in order to discover for yourself!

SLIDE 10 (ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS).

- Thank you!
- If you are interested in finding out more - more information at the MHC landing page on the City of Timmins website - or reach out to me directly by email, I welcome any interest in #timminsheritage and I will be happy to follow up with you.

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