

Best Practice

Saving our Past for the Future

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THE PRACTICE

Heritage Conservation has been an ongoing practice in the community of Ogema for at least the last 30 years. There never was an “aha” moment where someone said we should save our heritage sites. It was something that was being done and we continued to do it. The Deep South Pioneer Museum located at the edge of town was started by Ogema residents but the inventory of artifacts is an accumulation from many donors from Deep South Saskatchewan.

THE PROCESS

One of the most important ways to start conserving the heritage in your community is to have a Community Heritage Inventory. This is a tool that has been created to develop effective strategies to manage the heritage resources in your area. Ogema has been identifying and preserving Heritage sites in our community for 30 years but only just recently started to create the Heritage Inventory so that all the information is in one place. The heritage conservation and management are being integrated into the Official Community Plan. The Deep South Pioneer Museum had a list of their buildings (30 individual buildings on the museum grounds located on the west side of Ogema) with the background information located in each building. A community history book was printed with an update and a lot of information is located in it. The Town of Ogema designated the Fire Hall and the BA Station as Municipally Designated Heritage sites and the Fire Wall and the Grandstand were designated heritage by Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society. When the Official Community Plan was started, the heritage component was discussed and now the inventory process has been started. This is important as the benefits of having a community heritage inventory include: continuity as government official’s change; a historical record; civic pride; inclusive communities; civic engagement.

Another good heritage conservation practice that we use in Ogema is reusing older buildings instead of demolishing them. There are environmental benefits from the rehabilitation of Heritage Properties. Heritage Canada Foundation states, “Recent research shows that even if 40% of the materials are recycled, it takes approximately 65 years for a green, energy-efficient new office building to recover energy lost in demolishing an existing building. Most new buildings, however, aren’t designed to last anywhere near 65 years.” “The adaptive reuse of a building prolongs the service-life and usefulness of the materials that were used in its construction and maintenance. As a result demand on natural resources is lessened and there are fewer environmental impacts from extracting and processing raw materials that are used in the manufacture of building products. A significant amount of material in landfills is

construction, demolition and renovation debris.” - *Environmental Benefits of Heritage Conservation pamphlet by Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.*

THE RESULTS

The results were that Ogema has been noticed internationally for their Heritage Conservation and we have the awards to prove it. Although our town hasn't celebrated their 100th Anniversary, we have been trying to preserve our heritage legacy for over 30 years. Community pride has increased over the years, as evidenced at the community gatherings when the Communities in Bloom judges were here. Tourism has increased as we have people coming to our Museum on weekends and show day. Since the train station was moved here, there have been many people come to see the station and many have commented on the upcoming train tour plans. It was a lot of work for a lot of people to prepare for the judging and it also was costly to participate in these competitions. Many hours were spent all year round to participate for a few days while the judging took place. It was worthwhile though as many people have commented on our community and it has increased the pride of our residents.

LESSONS LEARNED

All the things that Ogema has done to conserve their heritage can be done in other communities as long as there are still buildings there to conserve. Sometimes this idea comes too late to a community and there is nothing to save. Different volunteer groups made application to designate different buildings as heritage sites and we were fortunate to have different people from various organizations to be involved in this process. It would be a good practice to have the Town Municipal Office has the Community Heritage Inventory included with the Official Community Plan so that the entire inventory is located in one place. Ogema didn't start out this way but we are organizing it now to be included in the Official Community Plan.