



**2010 NHSAO Conference: “A Work in Progress”
Evaluation Report**

10 individuals submitted their feedback/evaluation form. Some neglected to provide information for certain sections.

Conference Statistics:

Registration

Sunday Reception – 30 delegates

Full Conference – 53 delegates

Day 1 Dinner – 42 delegates

Day 1 Only – 3 delegates

Day 2 Only – 12 delegates

Speakers – 26 confirmed (session leads/facilitators included)

First-time attendees – 31 delegates

Feedback on the conference facilities

Comments made in regard to the conference facilities were mostly positive. Attendees found the locations inspiring and pleasant. Several individuals expressed their delight in being able to experience multiple National Historic Site venues during the conference. One individual noted that this tied into the theme of the conference very well, as attendees got to experience sites at various “stages of preservation, restoration and promotion.” There were no concerns brought up regarding the audio or visual aspect of the conference; individuals could hear and see speakers clearly throughout.

There were two individuals who each expressed a minor concern. One noted that “noise in the nearby workshop was a little distracting” during a barn session. Another concern brought to our attention was that the chairs weren’t that comfortable.

Feedback on the food served (menu, quantity, quality, etc.)

The reviews on the food have been overwhelmingly positive. The word “excellent” was used by numerous individuals; one of which particularly “loved the squash soup.” Delegates enjoyed the variety of choices at each meal and the fact that the options catered to the health conscious mind. This appealed greatly to the only diabetic who attended. Another commented on the visually pleasing presentation of the meal.

Two individuals expressed qualms relating to the food, both of which regard practicality. One noted that during some of the meals, having to stand and juggle their food and drink

posed challenging; they would have preferred the option to be seated if desired. Another issue brought up by an attendee was that with the “make your own sandwich” meal, it was difficult to manoeuvre and collect food.

Feedback on presentations

The implementation of the Pecha Kucha format during session 5 was a phenomenal success. It was the frontrunner in receiving accolades from our conference delegates. Individuals appreciated the ground-level glimpse of events into a multiplicity of National Historic Sites and the contexts in which surround them. To quote one individual: “great to hear of good progress in some areas, but sad to hear about Bellevue in Amherstburg.”

Delegates also liked the balance between the practical and the theoretical, represented via barn workshops and Bright Salon presentations. They liked that these speakers were positive and current. One person who attended the barn workshops thoroughly enjoyed the hands-on nature of how certain sessions were conducted and found them very informative. Another noted their appreciation for the voices of experience on restoration issues. However, another delegate noted that they would have liked more time allocated to sessions. They felt that they could not “delve into the issues uncovered during the presentation.”

The keynote speaker, Christopher Newton, was also commended. Summed up in one word, an attendee wrote: “WIT!” They stated that he connected extremely well with the overall theme of the conference. Note that this was very unique given the fact that academic learning does not stem from the cultural heritage field.

Feedback on what delegates would like to see *more of*

The topic of “building science” was mentioned by two individuals. One stated that “it is one thing to restore a building – brick, mortar, paint and plaster – but if the problem causing the damage is not resolved, restoration will be required again in 5 years.” Building code issues was also mentioned in conjunction by the second of these delegates.

Others offered comments relating to presentations and what they would like to see in the future. One individual particularly enjoyed the Pecha Kucha session, and would like to see more presentations from attendees on their national historic sites. Another mentioned that they would like to see more presentations on completed work, alongside references to architectural projects with historical themes.

Here are some one-off comments left in this section (in no particular order)

- private ownership of designated buildings
- adaptation of the architectural, urban, industrial, and hospitality – to contemporary use
- technical advice and work experiences
- commemorating our success
- small groups
- local professionals to be presented with their achievements

Feedback on what delegates would like to see *less of*

Only one person opted to leave a comment in this section. They wanted to hear less personal stories, because “although [they] maybe entertaining, individuals should stick to the assigned agendas.”

Suggestions for topics/themes for future conferences

The only suggestion that was mentioned more than once was in regards to accessibility. One individual stated that they would focus on “accessibility for national historic sites” while another mentioned “accessibility (barrier-free) for old buildings.”

Here are the other responses left for this section (in no particular order)

- public programming
- collective activities
- existing structures
- the choice between restore versus rehabilitate or renovate
- adaptive reuse issues
- insurance – how do we insure “original” artefacts or belongings of the family
- Aboriginal issues

Suggestions given for future conference venue locations (in no particular order)

- Amherstburg, especially during 2012/2013 for the 1812 bicentennial
- Ethnocultural historic sites
- South-western or northern Ontario
- Site visit to selected project should be organized
- Union Station in Toronto (to see actual restoration work)
- Other historic sites under restoration
- Dundurn
- Billy Bishop Home and Museum in Owen Sounds. Although they don't have the space at their facility, only half a block away is the Tom Thomson Art Gallery & Library that would be able to accommodate
- Mnjikaning Fish Fence Circle would like to host a conference over the next 2-4 years in Rama first nation, subject to approval of the proposal by Rama's Chief and Council

Feedback on the Sunday/evening reception

The reception held at Willowbank was well received by our delegates. They found the setting warm and welcoming. One individual noted that “being in this fine old mansion in the evening with lost of candlelight was delightful” while another remarked on the “beautiful ambiance.”

Others mentioned that the reception was good for renewing acquaintances and meeting new people, as well as being a good opportunity to “break the ice” in a relaxed setting. One delegate labelled the soiree as “fine” but noted that “it had too much of a cocktail party atmosphere.”

Feedback on the conference package

Those who chose to report in this section found the conference package very comprehensive and helpful. One individual stated that they needed an address to input into their GPS (this was in fact provided, but it might be a good idea to draw more attention to this in the future by make it more prominent or placing it in multiple locations throughout the program).

Other comments

The majority of the feedback left in this section was praise and thanks for putting the hard work put into the conference and hosting an excellent event. But multiple individuals also expressed their interest in the revival of the pre-conference tour. One person noted that they “enjoyed the previous conferences where they had the choice to come explore the area the day before the agenda began (e.g. those at the Rideau Canal tour were well treated)” while another mentioned that they “would have liked time to tour the area (only saw one play) and even though they are not much of a shopper, but would have enjoyed a tour by someone with the time and interest to host.”

Some of the less prevalent comments include (in no particular order)

- pre-conference arrangements were good; the e-mails sent were very effective
- lots of interesting people; a good mix of government employees and people from the private sector
- would love contact information and any slides/notes from presentations
- excellent price for the conference
- great accommodations