

Evaluating Historic Resources in Alberta

The Alberta government's Historic Resources Management Branch has developed a standardized, three-part evaluation process for the designation of historic resources under the Alberta *Historical Resources Act*. This system is intended to ensure consistency, and has been formulated for use across Alberta.

To be considered an historic place eligible for designation as a Provincial Historic Resource it must:

1. Be an eligible resource type;
2. Be significant to our past; and
3. Possess integrity.

1. ELIGIBILITY

The following resources are not eligible for provincial designation:

- a. Buildings, structures or objects outside Alberta's jurisdiction**
Resources located in areas owned or regulated by the federal government are not eligible. With the exception of situations where a university requests designation, property subject to the provisions of the provincial *Universities Act* is not eligible.
- b. Buildings, structures or objects that are situated in an historical park or village**
Grouping of buildings relocated outside of the living parts of their communities that have been created for purposes of interpretation, protection, or maintenance are not eligible. Creating such a grouping destroys the integrity of location and setting, and can create a false sense of historic development.
- c. Small moveable objects**
Small moveable objects are not eligible. Such works include transportable artefacts, sculpture, furniture and other decorative arts that, unlike a fixed outdoor sculpture, do not possess association with a specific place.
- d. Reconstructions**
Reconstruction is defined as the process of recreating the exact form and detail of a vanished resource or major part thereof. A resource in which most or all of the fabric is not authentic is not eligible for designation.
- e. Human remains**
Human remains are typically beyond the purview of the Alberta *Historical Resources Act* and therefore are not eligible for designation.

The following resources are not ordinarily eligible for designation but may be considered in certain circumstances:

- a. Cemeteries**
Cemeteries serve as a primary means of an individual's recognition of family history and as expressions of collective identity. A cemetery may qualify if it derives its primary significance from distinctive design features or is associated with a significant event (note that in all circumstances, cemeteries are designated exclusive of any human remains).

b. Birthplaces or graves

The lives of persons significant in our past are normally recognized by the designation of resources that illustrate or are connected with that person's productive life's work. The birthplace or grave of a figure of importance may qualify if there is no other appropriate resource associated with their productive life (note that in all circumstances, cemeteries are designated exclusive of any human remains).

c. Resources that have been moved

Moving a resource destroys the relationships with its surroundings and may cause the loss of historic features such as landscaping or foundations. A resource moved from its original location may qualify, if:

- i. it was moved early in its history and developed significant historical associations on its new location prior to the last 50 years;
- ii. it is primarily significant for its exceptional architectural value;
- iii. it is the sole surviving resource most importantly associated with an historic theme, event, activity, person or institution;
- iv. it was specifically designed to be relocated as part of its normal use; or
- v. it is in the immediate vicinity of its original location and its association with its historic environment is maintained.

d. Resources primarily commemorative in nature

Commemorative resources are designed or constructed after the occurrence of an important historic event or after the life of an important person. They are not directly associated with the event or with the person's productive life, but serve as evidence of a later generation's assessment of the past. A commemorative resource generally must be over fifty years old and must possess significance based on its own value, not on the value of the event or person being memorialized.

e. Resources that have achieved significance in the last 50 years

This consideration guards against the listing of resources of passing contemporary interest and ensures Alberta's designated resources are truly historic places. A resource that has achieved significance in the last 50 years may qualify for exemption from this exclusion, if:

- i. it can be demonstrated that the resource is extraordinarily significant under any of the five significance criteria; or
- ii. it is particularly fragile, of high significance, and would probably not survive for 50 years without protection.

2. SIGNIFICANCE

To be considered for designation as a provincial historic resource, a resource must represent an important aspect of Alberta's history and demonstrate significance within that context. Significant historic places are those eligible historic places that meet at least one of the following criteria.

A. Theme / Activity / Cultural Practice / Event

A resource must be directly associated with a theme, activity, cultural practice or event that has made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of Alberta's history. Resources may be associated with a single event or with a pattern of events, repeated activities, historic trends or themes. Significance relating to cultural practice is derived from the role a resource plays in historically rooted beliefs, customs, and practices.

B. Institution / Person

A resource must be directly associated with a significant institution or with the life of a significant person in Alberta's past. The resource is usually associated with an institution or person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he, she or it achieved significance. A resource associated with an individual's formative or later years may also qualify if it can be demonstrated that the person's activities during this period were historically significant or if no resources from the person's productive years survive.

C. Design / Style / Construction

A resource must embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, style, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or express high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishing entity or district.

D. Information Potential

A resource must have yielded, or be likely to yield, information important to Alberta's history, prehistory or natural history. Certain important research questions about human history can only be answered by the actual physical material that comprises some cultural resources. This criterion includes resources that have the potential to answer, in whole or in part, those types of research questions. This criteria most often refers to archaeological sites.

E. Landmark / Symbolic Value

A resource must be particularly prominent or conspicuous, and must have acquired special visual, sentimental or symbolic value that transcends its function. A landmark contributes to the distinctive character of Alberta.

3. INTEGRITY

A resource needs to retain sufficient physical features, or character-defining elements, to communicate its historic significance. This is known as integrity. An integrity assessment identifies the resource's character-defining elements and relates them to the reasons the resource is historically significant.

The assessment considers seven aspects:

1. **Location** - the place where an historic resource was constructed or the site where an historic activity or event occurred.
2. **Design** - the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure and style of a resource. A resource's design reflects historic function and technologies as well as aesthetics.
3. **Environment** - the physical setting of an historic resource. This involves where a resource is situated as well as its relationship to surrounding features or open space and also how it contributes to the sense of continuity to the area.
4. **Materials** - the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period or time frame and in a particular pattern or configuration to form an historic resource. Integrity is compromised if a resource does not retain the key materials dating from its period of historical significance.
5. **Workmanship** - the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history which can provide information about technological practises and aesthetic principles.
6. **Feeling** - the resource's continued ability to convey the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, express the resource's historic character.

7. **Association** - the direct link between an historic resource and a significant historical theme, activity or event; or an institution or person. A resource retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer.

A list of character-defining elements indicates the materials, forms, location, and spatial configurations that must be retained in order to communicate the significance of a resource and preserve its heritage value, including:

- Style, massing, scale or composition of the resource;
- Features of the resource related to its function;
- Interior spatial configurations, or exterior layout, of the resource;
- Materials and craftsmanship of the resource;
- Relationship between the resource and its broader setting;
- Traditional activities that continue to occur at the resource; and
- Features or materials that have direct bearing on important research themes.