

UCAMA MUSEUM PROJECT UPDATE

In 2003 UCAMA purchased the Lodge Hotel (1912) and the adjacent historic Brighton Block (1912-1913) on Jasper Avenue at a cost of \$1.6 million to rehabilitate for a new museum facility. Both buildings have been designated Municipal Heritage Resources by the City of Edmonton. To meet accepted museum standards, the renovation of the Lodge Hotel is budgeted at \$12 million, which includes furnishings and state-of-the-art exhibits.

In January 2006, UCAMA contracted HIP Architects and David Murray Architect for the design and renovation of the Lodge Hotel. Pending the success of our fundraising efforts, the new facility will be completed in October 2008.

Much work must be done before the physical renovation of the building may begin. It is UCAMA's responsibility to undertake a Historical Resource Impact Assessment (HRIA) before any demolition starts. The HRIA will help inform the architects and the Board of Directors of any significant historical material that may be desirable to preserve in the building. This is particularly important for the interior of the building where features may be hidden by later periods of construction. For instance, we know that the current drop ceilings have obscured a pressed tin ceiling on the first floor of the building. The HRIA will determine the extent of the ceiling and its condition. This information will help the Board and the Architects to determine the most appropriate course of action to take with this resource.

The HRIA will also help us unravel the complex building history of the Lodge. Although from the outside it appears to be a simple three story, brick early twentieth century building, the interior tells a far more complex story. The building has undergone a

number of building phases including an earlier wood framed building which has in effect been encased in the later brick building. The result is single floors with different levels and a multiple roof system. While some features may not be capable of preservation, it is still UCAMA's responsibility to record the history of the building for posterity.

UCAMA has also signed two research contracts, to be followed by others, with historians to develop the background on which the exhibits in the new museum will be based. The Board has already identified three major themes and eighteen sub-themes for the new exhibits, which now need to be fleshed out. For

instance, one of the sub-themes is "expressing Ukrainian heritage through the visual and performing arts". A manifestation of this sub-theme might well be Ukrainian dance troupes. Not only does this artistic expression need to be thoroughly researched, but so do many other as yet unidentified expressions for this single sub-theme. The research for these sub-themes will not only provide information for the displays which visitors will view on opening day, but hopefully for many future exhibits to come.

The research will also assist in identifying gaps in the collections that will need to be filled through acquisition. Although dance troupes have enriched the lives of Edmontonians throughout the twentieth century, UCAMA has only recently received the donation of a Ukrainian dance costume.

The engagement of researchers now allows time for the design, fabrication and installation of the exhibits themselves. The exhibits are the public face of the museum and must be given sufficient time to be properly developed.

Museums are more than brick and mortar. There is a great deal to be done behind the scenes before actual construction begins. So when people ask "when is the new museum going to begin", tell them "it's already begun".

