



*Innovative thinking for better cultural heritage conservation - Des approches novatrices
pour une meilleure conservation du patrimoine*

Opening statement

Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade

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Council on Monuments and on Sites
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Thank you Madame Chair,

I am Christophe Rivet, the President of ICOMOS Canada, the Canadian Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites.

On behalf of ICOMOS Canada, I would first like to thank the Standing Committee for initiating this important study. We believe it is timely to address this subject because the world is a place that requires more engagement from countries like Canada, with values of openness, sharing, innovation, and a sense of collective destiny.

I'll start by saying a few words about us to set the context for our comments. ICOMOS is the only global non-governmental organization dedicated to the conservation of the world's cultural heritage buildings, sites, landscapes, and areas. It carries out its work through more than 100 national committees and 28 international scientific committees. The expertise available through that network of professionals, all volunteers, include architecture, archeology, engineering, landscape architecture, history, geography, and many more that together allow a holistic approach to the conservation of cultural heritage. ICOMOS has the mandate to advise UNESCO on cultural heritage matters especially in the context of the World Heritage Convention. It also focuses on developing theory and guidance for best practices through a series of charters.

ICOMOS Canada is the Canadian national committee of ICOMOS. We have been active since the early 1970s in influencing the theory and best practices in conservation in Canada and abroad. We are an independent and multidisciplinary organization with members from coast to coast to coast. Recently, we have taken a leadership role internationally on sustainable development policies and bridging policies between environmental and cultural conservation. We have also strategically aimed to build close ties with our colleagues from the Americas and from the countries belonging to the Francophonie.

We are happy to share with the Committee a few important observations about our experience with cultural diplomacy, both in terms of what Canadians in our field have achieved, and in terms of what other countries have invested to build relationships through heritage conservation. To be clear, our comments consider cultural diplomacy as not solely about promoting Canadian cultural heritage abroad, but rather about Canada actively engaging in supporting the conservation of cultural heritage as a mechanism to build relationships with other countries. This is in line with other countries' definition of cultural diplomacy.

First, it is important to note that there are a number of international frameworks that promote the use of cultural diplomacy. In fact, Canada has made commitments towards the protection and conservation of cultural heritage as early as 1976, by adopting the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage or World Heritage Convention. In 1998, it ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict or Hague Convention. Canada led the development and ratification of UNESCO's Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2005. Through these commitments, where Canada illustrated itself as a leader, the federal government has already demonstrated that it recognizes the importance of cultural heritage in building relationships with other nations.

An overview of the history of our own organization, illustrates the relationship between cultural heritage, building ties, and creating the conditions for economic and diplomatic relationships. Over the years our members have been involved in international efforts to bring peace and restore normalcy in parts of the world that had suffered natural and human induced disasters. These include participating in United Nations sanctioned missions in Cyprus in the 1970s and Dubrovnik in the 1990s. It also includes reconstruction efforts after terrible earthquakes and hurricanes in places like Haïti and Iran, or due to the ravages of war, such as Afghanistan. Canadians have led international bodies involved with cultural heritage conservation, such as the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. Through these experts, Canada's presence was felt throughout the world.

Beyond these times of crisis, Canadians also are involved in establishing bridges of cooperation between countries, through non-government organizations and academic institutions. For example, universities like McGill, Université de Montréal, UBC, University of Alberta, Carleton have all had projects abroad that involved cultural heritage conservation through initiatives in archaeology, architectural conservation, and engineering. The Willowbank school of restoration in Queenston signed a cooperation agreement with the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region in Shanghai to share expertise. Their presence is felt positively in the countries where they operate as their expertise helps these communities preserve what is most cherished.

ICOMOS Canada recently signed a cooperation agreement with the city of Quito which focuses on applying a sustainable development approach to conserving the historic centre. This was the result of the successful Canadian presence at Habitat III in 2016. What we witnessed through the establishment of our cooperation is that other countries, such as Spain and France, have consistently invested in conservation programmes to

help Quito manage its rich heritage. The interest of Canadians to contribute to the long term management of the historic city was received very positively by the authorities because it offered a new perspective on best practices and new relationships to share experiences. In particular, we were seen as strong on democratic governance practices and community engagement tools for social inclusion and economic growth. It is worth mentioning that the Canadian embassy in Quito was very supportive of our endeavours.

What is clear from these examples is that Canada has much to offer the world. Our expertise in cultural heritage conservation, such as in architecture, engineering, urban planning, and archaeology, is respected world wide for its rigour and its principles. Furthermore, we are seen as bridge builders, offering expertise that marries European and North American approaches, French and British traditions, and increasingly demonstrated inclusion of Indigenous perspectives. We are trusted in sharing experiences that aim for good governance and social inclusion. These are not simple matters to demonstrate professionally and it is a testimony to our values as a people.

Of note however, is the fact that Canada lacks a coherent and invested approach in facilitating these initiatives which limits considerably our ability to leverage the benefits from this work. Other countries establish relationships first by investing in cultural programmes, not just to export their own culture but to nurture their potential trading partner's culture. The impact of these investments is well understood. It establishes a strong presence in the country and symbolizes a commitment to the relationship. It also creates the conditions for economic growth to occur as investments in cultural heritage lead to attractive tourism destinations, better infrastructure, and resilient and proud communities. These conditions are essential to establish promising trade relations.

I was invited earlier this year to participate as an international expert on a panel organized by the European Commission to discuss the impact of cultural diplomacy. The premise of the discussion was that culture was a source of job creation and growth, that it promotes social inclusion and cultural diversity and for these reasons, the European Union's diplomatic efforts include culture in order to promote inter-cultural dialogue. This conclusion confirms that for Europe, establishing an inter-cultural dialogue is the foundation of trade and diplomatic relations.

Other countries have for years invested in development projects that targeted cultural heritage. Ambassadors from the United States have benefited from discretionary funding in the form of the Ambassador's Fund that allowed investments in conservation projects where they were posted. Australia has invested in promoting Australian conservation expertise for export across Southeast Asia and the Pacific. This not only strengthened the professional body in the country but established Australia's presence

in the communities across the region. China currently pursues a policy of establishing trade agreements that include sharing of resources and investments in cultural heritage conservation projects, such as the ones in Cambodia or Central and Eastern European countries. In essence, these countries make their presence felt in other countries by investing in conserving other peoples' heritage as a sign of good will and respect. In return, they are perceived as respected partners, diplomatically and economically.

International development initiatives led by national development agencies, the World Bank, or the International Monetary Fund, all consider that conserving cultural heritage is part and parcel of carrying out development work. This means that international engineering firms, many of them Canadian, implement their major infrastructure projects in ways that conserves and respects local heritage. It is a condition sine qua non of a successful project that takes root in the communities.

And what about Canada? There is no deliberate strategy from our country to invest in development the way other countries do. In the past there were efforts to establish cooperation programs between agencies such as Parks Canada and Parks Victoria and the agency responsible for Angkor Wat in Cambodia, but these were narrow in focus and did not establish relationships for the breadth of expertise available in our country. In consequence, from our experience, we are missing out on an opportunity to be first in line to establish relations that are deeper and lead to future economic and diplomatic opportunities.

Yet, the benefits are real: investing in something your potential diplomatic partner cares about creates the good will that benefits in the long run. It establishes your presence in that country and is a strong symbol of the commitment to and value of the relationship. Furthermore, investing in projects like these that improve the lives of communities through better infrastructure, and creates the conditions for economic growth and future trade, tourism, and infrastructure opportunities.

Canadians are already doing it, but with little support from government and with limited recognition for our country's contribution. It is a missed opportunity and more importantly a condition for strong relations. In Latin America and Africa, Canada is competing with other countries who invest in the heart and soul of these countries, establishing a strong presence and a preferred relationship. We no longer can ignore this fact if we wish to strengthen our network of trading partners.

ICOMOS Canada would like to offer a few recommendations deriving from our experience:

1. The Government of Canada should develop a cultural diplomacy policy that is anchored distinctively in both the export of Canadian expertise and the investment in cultural heritage abroad. This policy should be accompanied by a roadmap identifying the intersection between Canada's economic interests and the type of cultural heritage conservation activities so as to better leverage its presence in these countries;
2. The Government of Canada should establish a cultural diplomacy advisory committee comprised of members of industry and NGOs to offer recommendations to the minister responsible for Global Affairs on means to strengthen the value of Canadian investments through cultural diplomacy;
3. The Government of Canada should consider assigning international development investments specifically towards projects that relate to the conservation of cultural heritage so as to promote Canadian expertise, technology, and good will. In particular an analysis of funding provided for research, innovation, and development work abroad should be carried out so as to clarify the picture of existing and potential investments made by the Government of Canada abroad on cultural heritage.

In conclusion, what we see through these observations, is that countries around the world care about their heritage, it is core to their identity and it is key to establishing relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. Canada stands as an international example of respect of diversity and openness to other cultures. It is incumbent on us to take advantage of that reputation to further our economic and diplomatic interests through a long term presence in the cultural heart of our potential trading partners.