

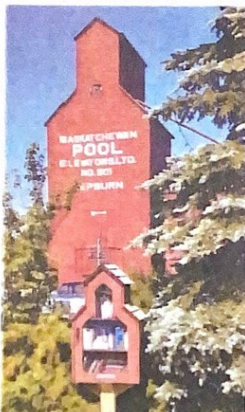
GRAIN ELEVATOR RESEARCH

Grain elevators are an iconic building typology in the prairies, perhaps Saskatchewan especially. Every year there are more stories about the destruction or deconstruction of grain elevators across the province. Heritage Saskatchewan wanted to know what these sites meant to people in the past and what they mean to communities in the present, both the good and the bad.

For the summer of 2023, Heritage Saskatchewan hired Isaac Farrell as a Summer Researcher through the Young Canada Works program. At the end of August, Isaac's contract was extended to work on a public document, and to present a small part of his findings at the 2023 National Trust Conference in Ottawa. Isaac's work was to research and evaluate the state of Saskatchewan's remaining wooden grain elevators. His primary focuses were exploring their changing value to the people of Saskatchewan in the past, present, and future, evaluating the condition of the average grain elevator in the present, and identifying the challenges facing their conservation. Secondary focuses included probing contemporary levels of interest in grain elevators, gauging interest in collaborations between the various elevator museums across the province, and preliminary research on several special interest topics. Over the summer, Isaac primarily conducted his research through eight separate trips to elevators across the province that covered 5,800 kilometres, 133 communities with grain elevators, and over 150 grain elevators. During these travels, Isaac took thousands of pictures of grain elevators, made dozens of notes on their condition, interviewed over twenty people involved with grain elevator conservation

in some capacity, and assembled a partial inventory of Saskatchewan's grain elevators. Outside of these trips, Isaac's duties included reviewing previous literature on grain elevators, compiling a list of relevant people and places to contact for future researchers, and highlighting potential heritage elevators for the future. Isaac has been turning this research into a final report and a document for public use.

Isaac's overall findings were that the number of grain elevators in Saskatchewan has declined significantly over the last 50 years. Many grain elevators are in poor condition, and unless a grain elevator has been actively maintained, it is likely not realistically restorable. Isaac identified several reasons for this decline, including the lack of specific heritage policies protecting wooden grain elevators, and that those in charge of heritage elevator conservation often do not understand how current heritage legislation impacts their elevators. However, he also found that a far higher percentage of wooden grain elevators are actively being used and maintained by the private sector than previous literature on the subject believed, and that despite their overall decline, grain elevators remain one of Saskatchewan's most popular symbols. While often grain elevators are spoken of or remembered nostalgically, Isaac found that they still play a very real role in communities, both as active places of industry, as ties to community pasts, and as a centre point for community identity. Isaac's work has been documented and will be published for circulation in 2024.



Hephburn, Saskatchewan



Bracken, Saskatchewan



Tullis, Saskatchewan