



## THE SPECIAL PLACES INITIATIVE

### Identifying Your Community's Best Heritage Sites

## Introduction

Communities value their heritage. Over the past 50 years they have published hundreds of local histories, vital repositories of a people's memory. Some communities have undertaken local plaque programs and created walking tours that eloquently describe important aspects of the community's past. Rural municipalities across Manitoba have protected more than 330 buildings and sites, key tangible connections to a community's origins and an ongoing reflection of its present and future paths. It's an impressive legacy, a firm foundation upon which those interested in heritage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can build.

The Historic Resources Branch (HRB) has developed a major project called "Special Places" that will build on these successes. The project will help communities develop the necessary processes, protocols and products that will lead to a deeper appreciation and celebration of local heritage. It will also put in place the messages and frameworks that will initiate the community into the kind of sophisticated dialogue that defines heritage activity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Special Places project has three specific goals:

- 1) to prepare an overview of resources and collection of pertinent facts and information (an inventory);
- 2) to analyze the inventory and collected information to gain a better understanding of

what a community has in terms of heritage resources; and

- 3) to work with the community to evaluate its sites and develop a short list (typically about 10) that are seen to most effectively describe and sum up key aspects of the community's history.

The many activities and benefits generated by a Special Places project will ensure that communities have a better understanding of their architectural heritage. An appreciation of buildings and architecture is a key goal of Special Places, providing communities with the necessary context and fascinating details they need to truly understand and celebrate their distinct and authentic heritage. In fact, the underlying premise of Special Places is to help communities appreciate what it is that makes every Manitoba town unique and authentic. Increasingly, communities, planners and tourists are paying attention to those physical qualities that give a place its own distinct personality, and that make that community a place worth living in and a destination worth visiting.