

What We Heard

Remembering Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin



Public Engagement

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Executive Summary

Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin (Abbot Pass Hut) was located at 2,926 metres on a mountain pass (col) near Lake Louise on the border of Banff and Yoho national parks. For 100 years, it was a destination and a refuge for hikers, climbers, mountaineers and others inspired by high and wild places. It was dismantled for safety in June 2022 after ongoing slope erosion compromised the hut's structural safety and stabilization efforts were unsuccessful.

In spring 2023, Parks Canada launched a two-step public engagement process about how best to remember this national historic site and classified federal heritage building. Phase One asked Canadians what mattered most about this heritage place. Phase Two asked select organizations what actions should be taken to remember it. This report outlines what Parks Canada heard during both phases of engagement.

Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin was significant, in part, due to its location and the activities that took place there. For this reason, engagement asked about "Abbot Pass Heritage Place" including the hut, the pass, activities that took place, there and the experience of getting and being there.

Overall, feedback indicated that Abbot Pass Heritage Place mattered to Canadians as:

- The Birthplace of Canadian Mountaineering – A place of historical significance to the climbing and guiding communities, a tribute to the Swiss Guides and connection to the legendary figures of the past, a symbol of adventure and exploration in the present, and a place of inspiration and education for future generations.
- A Refuge and Recreational Gateway Unique in Canada - As a source of safety, comfort and shelter in the high alpine, a base camp for classic mountaineering objectives, a gateway to broader exploration, and a symbol of wilderness accessibility.
- An Architectural Reflection of the Alpine Environment – A superbly constructed stone hut that blended seamlessly with its natural surroundings and a rare example of built heritage in the Canadian Rockies from the early 20th century.
- A Location Equally Breathtaking and Inhospitable – As a place that demanded a measure of suffering from those who visited but rewarded them with awe-inspiring beauty that left a lasting impression.
- A Place of Connection – The site of adventures, celebrations, rites of passage, life-long memories, significant personal achievements, and transformative experiences some verging on the transcendent or sublime.

We also asked what actions could be taken to remember Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin. This is an abbreviated summary of the recommendations we received in order of priority:

- Oral History – Participants recommended that Parks Canada collaborate with third parties to research, collect, process, manage, and store the intangible history of Abbot Pass Hut, and that this history be made available and accessible

in perpetuity for all. For participants this included, specifically, the collection of oral histories in collaboration with third parties.

- Interpretive Content and Activities – Participants recommend that Parks Canada develop interpretive content and activities related to Abbot Pass Hut in collaboration with appropriate third parties from within and outside of Parks Canada through a Request for Proposal process. Specific content and activities, and guidelines for all activities, were also recommended.
- Physical Representation – Participants recommend that Parks Canada explore the possibility of a physical representation of Abbot Pass Hut. Participants also recommend that some salvaged materials be reserved for interpretive use by Parks Canada, some for interpretive and legacy projects led by appropriate third parties administered through a Request for Proposal process, and some until the results of a potential future development proposal for a new hut are known. Finally, participants also recommend Parks Canada reserve select salvaged materials in heritage collections in perpetuity, including but not limited to the 1922 date stone.
- National Recognition – Participants recommend that Parks Canada advise and support community third parties that may pursue the redesignation of Abbot Pass as a cultural landscape of national historic significance. They also recommend that Parks Canada explore the possibility of placing Abbot Pass Hut on a Canadian coin or stamp, or both.

The results of public engagement will inform Parks Canada decisions about how best to remember Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin and communicate its current heritage values.

Parks Canada wishes to thank everyone who participated.

Background

For 100 years, Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin (Abbot Pass Hut) was a destination and a refuge for hikers, climbers, mountaineers and others inspired by high and wild places. It was dismantled for safety in June 2022. In spring 2023, Parks Canada launched a public engagement process about how best to remember this national historic site and classified federal heritage building¹.

Why we engaged

The Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office (FHBRO) requires “due diligence with respect to the... heritage value of federal heritage properties on federal land.”² This means that a FHBRO building can only be dismantled as a last resort and, if dismantled, the custodian of the building is encouraged to find new ways to communicate its heritage values. Heritage values are what make a heritage place significant to a community of people. They are comprised of the many meanings and values that people attach to a place. These may change over time.

Parks Canada engaged with Canadians to better understand the values and meanings that Canadians ascribed to Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin in 2023. The results of public engagement will inform future Parks Canada decisions about how best to communicate the heritage values of Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin.

What we asked

The heritage value of Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin cannot be separated from its history or location. For this reason, we asked Canadians to reflect on “Abbot Pass Heritage Place” inclusive of:

- the building, the pass and the landscape
- stories about everything that has happened in those places
- the whole experience of getting there and being there (e.g. sights, sounds, sensations)

The term Abbot Pass Heritage Place refers to all of these elements together. The terms Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin and Abbot Pass Hut are also used in this report and refer to the building itself.

What we did

Parks Canada conducted a public engagement process to collect a cross-section of the perspectives of Canadians for whom Abbot Pass Heritage Place carried special significance. The public engagement process shed light on the heritage values of this place but was not a rigorous research assessment of heritage values.

¹ See Annex A for a timeline including the dismantling of Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin.

² Government of Canada. (2021). *Directive on the Management of Real Property*. (Article 4.3.28). Retrieved from the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat website: <https://www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=32691>

Parks Canada took a phased approach to public engagement:

1. Phase One: Online Survey

From April 20 to May 22, 2023, Parks Canada invited Canadians to tell us why Abbot Pass Heritage Place mattered to them and what should be remembered about it. Phase 1 produced insights about the tangible and intangible heritage of this place, and why it mattered to Canadians. Open-ended survey responses were coded for themes manually and then with generative artificial intelligence (AI).

2. Phase Two: Workshop

On June 27 and 28 2023, Parks Canada hosted an in-person workshop with organizations already celebrating Abbot Pass Heritage Place or likely to do so in future. We asked what should be done to remember Abbot Pass Heritage Place. Phase 1 informed Phase 2, which produced a list of recommended activities.

The results of both phases of engagement are outlined in this report.

Scope

Some questions and activities were outside the scope of engagement because they were part of separate processes already underway, or because they were governed by government policies or directives.

Some of the questions that were out of scope included:

- Land-use decisions, including those requiring development or building permits such as:
 - Rebuilding Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin
 - New habitable structures at Abbot Pass or elsewhere
 - Management of visitor use at Abbot Pass (e.g. which activities are permitted)
 - Public events at Abbot Pass
- New place names in the Lake Louise area
- Permanent interpretive exhibits inside the Lake Louise Visitor Centre
- Historical themes relevant to the broader Lake Louise area
- New national historic designation processes coordinated by Parks Canada

Some of the questions that were in scope included:

- What do we want to remember about this heritage place? (Phase 1 – Online Survey)
- What actions should we take to remember this heritage place? (Phase 2 – Workshop)
- What forms could our actions take? (e.g. monument, sign, program, digital, etc.)

- Where could actions take place? (e.g. locations)
- Who are we trying to reach with commemoration? (i.e. key audiences)
- How could salvaged components of the hut be used to remember it?

Considerations

Potential New Hut

In February 2023 a working group led by the Alpine Club of Canada announced its intention to submit a development proposal for a new structure in place of Abbot Pass Hut. No formal application had been received at the time of public engagement.

New structures are outside the scope of public engagement because they are subject to a mandatory development review process that involves rigorous impact assessment and evaluation against park management plans and related policies.

The development review process concerns itself with a potential new hut. The public engagement process concerns itself with the commemoration of the old hut.

Indigenous Connections

Abbot Pass and Abbot Pass Hut may have significance to Indigenous communities in Alberta and British Columbia. Parks Canada reached out to communities to invite participation in ways that worked best for community members. One community expressed an interest and was informed throughout the process.

Phase 1

Why did Abbot Pass Heritage Place matter?



Online Survey 2023

Phase 1 – Background

How we engaged in Phase 1

In Phase 1, Parks Canada asked why Abbot Pass Heritage Place mattered and what should be remembered about it. Comments were solicited through an online survey that was divided into four sections exploring general impressions, tangible heritage, intangible heritage, and common themes³:

- Part 1 – Why did Abbot Pass Hut matter to you?
- Part 2 – The building, the pass and location
- Part 3 – The social and cultural experience
- Part 4 – Common interpretive themes

Parks Canada distributed the survey to Indigenous communities, mountain communities in B.C. and Alberta, recreation and heritage organizations, guiding and tourism operators, heritage professionals, environmental non-governmental organizations, and the public. We shared via email, web, social media, news media and meetings. The survey was open to all.

Who we heard from in Phase 1

From April 20, 2023 to May 22, 2023 a total of 281 people responded to the survey – a strong response rate compared to similar Parks Canada engagement processes. Respondents ranged from those who had never been to Abbot Pass Heritage Place to those who had been more than 100 times.

Of respondents, 70% had visited and half of those had been there three or more times. In total, 29% had never visited, 36% had been once or twice, 25% had been a few times, 10% had been many times. Privacy considerations prohibited the collection of more detailed demographic information.

Phase 1 – What we heard

... about the building, pass and location

Building

When asked about the building, participants ranked its location more highly than its function, craftsmanship, materials, architectural design, or structural innovation. While each element mattered, none mattered more than the location.

³ A copy of the survey is provided in Annex B. Complete survey results can be requested from Parks Canada by contacting the Lake Louise Yoho Kootenay Field Unit at LLYKSuperintendent-DirecteurLLYK@pc.gc.ca

Location

The location was significant to participants for its historical associations and classic alpine objectives, and for its aesthetic beauty and proximity to the relatively accessible Lake Louise. Respondents were split on whether Abbot Pass is less significant since the loss of the hut. Half said the Pass remains significant, 40% said the Pass is less significant, and 10% were undecided.

Role in the Hut Network

More than 80% of participants agreed that Abbot Pass Hut played a special role in the wider network of alpine huts in the Canadian Rockies. When we asked why, we heard of its:

- **Unique Design** – Stone construction and traditional design distinguished it as the best-built and among the highest quality, high alpine huts in the network.
- **Historical Significance and Longevity** – At 100 years old, it was one of the oldest huts in the network. It was associated with the earliest mountaineers in Canada, the Swiss Guides who supported them, and Canadian Pacific Railway's influence.
- **Connections and Access** – On the Continental Divide, the hut provided access to iconic peaks like Mt. Victoria and Mt. Lefroy. It also provided safe shelter on mountaineering routes connecting the Lake O'Hara area, Lake Louise area, Prospector's Valley, Moraine Lake and the Neil Colgan Hut.
- **Alpine Experience and Adventure** – The hut served as a refuge for visitors with different levels of skill and experience. For hikers and scramblers, reaching the hut was a lasting personal accomplishment. For climbers, it was a base for exploration and skill-building. For all visitors, it offered an immersive high-alpine experience, a sense of adventure, and a connection to the past.

Other aspects of the building and location that participants noted as significant included:

- **Construction Challenges** – The technical challenges of constructing the hut at this location and the physical effort and risk required to do so.
- **Combination of Features** – Its location, stone construction, Swiss influence, and the way in which the building seamlessly integrated into the landscape.
- **Inhospitable Environment** – Due to the harsh climate, high elevation and exposure
- **Shelter and Safety** – Where particularly welcome because of alpine wind, weather, rockfall, and as a stopping place between other alpine locations.

[... about the social and cultural experience](#)

Significant activities

Participants rated climbing and mountaineering, particularly the historical development of these activities, as the most important activities that took place at Abbot Pass

Some participants wished to see prominent climbers associated with the hut celebrated, and serious accidents associated with the hut commemorated.

... about why this place mattered to participants

Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin belonged to all Canadians. Some had never visited while others visited more than a hundred times. When we asked, “Why does Abbot Pass Heritage Place matter to you?” some consistent themes emerged. A selection of responses is available in Annex D.

We heard that Abbot Pass Heritage Place matters because it is/was:

... the Birthplace of Canadian Mountaineering

Climbing and Mountaineering in Canada

A large number of respondents told us that Abbot Pass Heritage Place was the birthplace of the golden age of mountaineering and outdoor recreation in the Canadian West. It was a place of historical significance to the climbing and guiding communities, a tribute to early guides and mountaineers, a symbol of adventure and exploration, and a place of inspiration and education for future generations. Participants expressed a strong desire to preserve the legacy of the building and its significance for future generations, including the preservation of stories and experiences associated with this heritage place.

Swiss Guides and the Canadian Pacific Railway

A significant number of respondents also expressed that, for them, the hut was a tribute to the contributions of Swiss Guides specifically, and the Canadian Pacific Railway, to mountaineering and outdoor recreation in the Canadian West. Some participants also noted the influence of Swiss Guides on the overall culture and history of local mountain communities.

... a Refuge and Recreational Gateway Unique in Canada

Safety and Shelter

Most participants valued Abbot Pass Hut for its role as refuge providing shelter, comfort and safety and in the high alpine during poor weather or in the event of injury. Its presence was seen as important to climbers attempting objectives in the area.

Alpine Accessibility

Many participants also valued Abbot Pass Hut for providing access to classic routes on Mount Victoria and Mount Lefroy. Some cited the hut’s role in facilitating multi-day trips and traverses between Lake Louise, Moraine Lake, Lake O’Hara, Prospectors Valley, and the Neil Colgan Hut.

A few participants felt that access to wilderness and high alpine areas was becoming more difficult and expensive. They cited difficulties with the reservation system, high demand and limited availability, increasing fees, vehicle restrictions, and the relatively small number of alpine huts as hindering access to wilderness areas.

There was support for Parks Canada's mandate but also disappointment that the management actions required to address the pressures of increasing frontcountry visitation may introduce physical and financial barriers to accessing alpine areas already perceived as restricted for conservation purposes. There is a desire for Parks Canada to protect opportunities to explore inhospitable places in ways that increase access for diverse backgrounds, economic circumstances, and abilities.

... an Architectural Reflection of the Alpine Environment

Many participants valued Abbot Pass Heritage Place as rare example of built heritage associated with the early Historic or post-contact period in Canadian Rockies. Participants expressed appreciation for the way in which the stone hut blended seamlessly into the natural environment. They noted that this was unique among alpine shelters in the national parks and that the craftsmanship and traditional design of the hut also contributed to its charm and value.

... a Location Equally Breathtaking and Inhospitable

Almost all participants expressed admiration for the scenic beauty of Abbot Pass, the difficulty of reaching it, and the frequently harsh environmental conditions. The location offered breathtaking views combined with a sense of wonder and adventure. It was described as "dramatic" and "awe-inspiring", "gorgeous", "magnificent", "mind-blowing" and "magical". Comments suggested that the difficulty of reaching Abbot Pass Heritage Place, ascending the scree slope on the Lake O'Hara side, combined with the inhospitable weather heightened the pleasure and appreciation of its beauty.

... a Place of Connection

Transformative life experiences

Many respondents shared poignant reflections about Abbot Pass Hut as a place where they made cherished life-long memories, accomplished significant personal achievements, and had transformative experiences. Participants recounted adventures, celebrations, rites of passage, cherished family memories and quiet moments spent in nature. A few recalled experiences that could be described as transcendent or sublime. Many returned or expressed regret over being unable to return with parents, friends, loved ones, and children. They expressed a desire to honor the legacy of the original building and its location and ensure the opportunity for future generations to experience its' magic.

Making and sharing of memories

Some participants expressed appreciation for Abbot Pass Hut as a gathering place. For some, it fostered a sense of camaraderie among climbers and mountaineers and kinship with legendary figures who had come before. The hut was described as a part of their local history and identity. Some also valued the way in which the hut served as a gathering place for like-minded people from around the world.

Phase 2

What should be done to remember Abbot Pass Heritage Place?



Workshop 2023

Phase 2 – Background

How we engaged in Phase 2

In Phase 2, Parks Canada asked what should be done to remember Abbot Pass Heritage Place. We did this by convening a working group representing organizations who are already undertaking commemorative activities or likely to do so in future.

The purpose of the Working Group was to generate ideas and recommend activities to share the story of Abbot Pass Heritage Place with Canadians. The Working Group was informed by the results of the first phase of public engagement which *outlined what should be commemorated*. The Working Group recommended *how to commemorate Abbot Pass Hut*.

These recommendations will be considered by the Superintendent of the Lake Louise, Yoho and Kootenay Field Unit for Parks Canada. Decisions may be made in consultation with other senior Parks Canada officials and are contingent upon resource availability.

Who we heard from in Phase 2

Organization in attendance	Participant
Alpine Club of Canada (ACC)	Chic Scott
	Victoria Curran
	Dan Verrall (Day 2 only)
Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG)	Jordy Shepherd
	Derek Wilding (Day 2 only)
Edelweiss Swiss Village	Ilona Spaar
Plain of Six Glaciers Teahouse	Susanne Gillies-Smith
Whyte Museum	Kayla Cazes
Golden Museum	Brittany Newman
Banff Lake Louise Tourism	David Matys
Parks Canada	Rhonda Owchar
	Julie Champagne
	Amy Krause
Invited – Unable to Participate	
Lake O'Hara Trails Club	
Lake O'Hara Lodge	
Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise	

Phase 2 – What we heard

For each recommendation, the Working Group used a rating system of 1 (do not agree) to 5 (fully agree) to indicate agreement. Unless noted otherwise, all recommendations received consensus at a level 5 (fully agree) on the rating scale.

Recommendations are listed in order of priority as determined by the Working Group.

Oral History

- Recommend that Parks Canada collaborate with third parties to research, collect, process, manage, and store the intangible history of Abbot Pass Hut to be made available and accessible in perpetuity for all to use.

Notes: The Working Group stated that this recommendation is of highest importance and provides context and information for the following recommendations.

- Recommend that Parks Canada in collaboration with appropriate organizations and using professional heritage best practices gather three to five oral histories related to Abbot Pass Hut from each of the following organizations and submit them to an archival institution for future generations.
 - Alpine Club of Canada (ACC)
 - Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG)
 - Swiss Guide descendants
 - Plain of Six Glaciers Teahouse
 - Lake O’Hara Lodge and/or Lake O’Hara Trail Club
 - Parks Canada
- Recommend that Parks Canada also gather oral histories from diverse Abbot Pass Hut visitors including but not limited to Indigenous persons, women, and environmental scientists.
- Recommend that Parks Canada sets a timeframe, with defined start and end dates, for the gathering of the oral histories while remaining flexible to accepting additional histories as needed.

Interpretive Content and Activities

- Recommend that Parks Canada interpretive content and activities related to Abbot Pass Hut be developed in collaboration with third parties and using the following guidelines:
 - Visual
 - Interactive
 - Immersive
 - Educational
 - Mobile / travelling
 - Engaging the senses
 - Informed by research
 - Accessible to wide audiences

- Aligned with the themes identified in the Online Survey from Phase One
- Developed with expertise from within and outside Parks Canada
- Developed in collaboration with appropriate third parties, such as through a Request for Proposal process

The Working Group then suggested and prioritized the following interpretive activities for consideration. An informal dot-voting method was used in which each member selected their top five choices. Due to limited time, specific evaluation criteria were not used.

The highest prioritized ideas were:

- A travelling museum-style exhibit including digital elements capable of travelling to various locations such as schools (9 votes)
- An interpretive display or item at the Plain of Six Glaciers (7 votes)
- A website about Abbot Pass Hut (6 votes)
- Interpretive theatrical performance (e.g. Parks Canada Mountain Wit) (5 votes)
- Collaboration with the Royal Canadian Geographic Society on a school exhibit about Abbot Pass Hut, within the context of a larger topic such as mountains and environment (4 votes)

Note: Several group members suggested that Idea 5 could be combined with Idea 1.

Additional proposed ideas:

- A virtual reality experience or 3D model (3 votes)
- An interpretive display or item at Lake Louise suitable for children and photo-ops (3 votes)
- A grant to create a film about the Abbot Pass Hut entered into the competitive Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival (3 votes)
- A documentary film expanding on the previously released Alpine Club of Canada short film about Abbot Pass Hut (1 vote)
- A fact sheet for visitors distributed to businesses and other entities (2 votes)
- An interpretive tour app (0 votes)
- A visitor registry at the original Abbot Pass Hut site (0 votes)

Physical Representation

- Recommend that Parks Canada explore the possibility of a physical representation of Abbot Pass Hut that could include salvaged materials and would convey themes identified by the online survey in Phase 1 of public engagement.

Notes: Working group participants agreed that this physical representation could take various forms and proposed a range of ideas such as a small physical structure, a wall exhibit in a museum, or a hut footprint and interpretive exhibit. The Working Group recognized the financial challenges of building and maintaining a replica for interpretive purposes.

All but one person agreed to a physical representation of some kind at a 5 (fully agree).

- Recommend that Parks Canada reserve some salvaged materials from Abbot Pass Hut until the results of the proposed development application for a replacement hut are known.

Notes: In February 2023 a working group, led by the Alpine Club of Canada, announced that it plans to submit a development proposal for a new structure in place of Abbot Pass Hut. No formal application had been received at the time of engagement. Development proposals are subject to development review. This involves rigorous impact assessment and evaluation against park management plans and related policies. A future development proposal may be informed by public engagement but will be considered separately.

- Recommend that Parks Canada reserve some salvaged materials from Abbot Pass Hut for its own interpretative uses.
- Recommend that Parks Canada reserve some salvaged materials from Abbot Pass Hut for use by appropriate third parties via a Request for Proposals for use in interpretive and legacy projects.
- Recommend that Parks Canada reserve select salvaged materials from Abbot Pass Hut in collections in perpetuity including but not limited to the date stone, other representative stones, and wood from the structure.

National Recognition

- Recommend that Parks Canada provide advice and support to a community third party that may pursue the redesignation of Abbot Pass as a cultural landscape of national historic significance.

Note: The Working Group recognized that a formal process for redesignation would need to be followed and that Parks Canada cannot propose new national historic designations but can advise and support third parties who wish to do so.

- Recommend that Parks Canada explore the possibility of placing Abbot Pass Hut on a Canadian coin or stamp, or both.

Note: The Working Group identified this recommendation as a lower priority than others. Members expressed mixed opinions relative to its importance with some stating that public interest in stamps and coins has decreased, while others argued for their value as a form of cultural archive of interest to Canadians and international audiences.

Additional Ideas for Consideration

Some members suggested that an Alpine Guide Training Fund should be established, like a scholarship, managed by Alpine Club of Canada and Association of Canadian Mountain Guides.

Notes: The Working Group discussed whether this idea was within its scope. Some members thought that this type of fund could provide knowledge about Abbot Pass Hut in perpetuity while honouring the themes identified in the online survey. A majority of members said that the fund would not be a recommendation while several members expressed a strong interest.

Annexes

Annex A: Background

Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin was located at 2,926 metres on a windswept mountain pass (col) near Lake Louise on the border of Banff and Yoho national parks. It was built in 1922 under the sponsorship of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It was designed by Swiss mountain guides Edward Feuz, Jr. and Rudolph Aemmer. The structure was built of stone from the pass and was named for Philip Stanley Abbot (1867 - 1896) who became North America's first documented climbing fatality after falling while attempting a first ascent of Mount Lefroy.

Parks Canada took ownership of Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin, also known as Abbot Pass Hut, in 1968. The building was leased to the Alpine Club of Canada in the 1980s. In the 1990s it was designated by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) as a national historic site, and by the Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office (FHBRO) as a classified heritage building. It was recognized for: 1) its historical associations with outdoor recreation in Canada, 2) its architectural significance as an example of the rustic design style, and 3) for being an architectural extension of the natural environment.

In 2003, the site was also identified and recorded as an archaeological site after exposed historic debris on Abbot Pass was reported to Parks Canada by a public informant.

In 2016, Parks Canada received reports of slope instability below the hut. Geotechnical assessments were completed in 2017 and Parks Canada undertook extensive stabilization work in 2018. Cold, snowy weather at Abbot Pass in 2019, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, prevented work from proceeding. In 2021, the slope eroded from under a portion of the hut and structural cracks appeared in the building. An area closure was put in place and a second geotechnical assessment revealed more extensive instability than previously known. A heritage recording was completed and, in 2022, Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin was dismantled and substantially removed for safety.

A small ruin remains at the site along with the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque commemorating the national historic site. In 2023, Parks Canada began a public engagement process to determine how best to remember Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin and communicate its heritage values in future.

Annex B: Online Survey

In Phase 1, Parks Canada asked why Abbot Pass Heritage Place mattered and what should be remembered about it. Participants were invited to complete an online survey, provided below. Full survey results can be requested from Parks Canada at 403-762-1250 or by emailing LLYKSuperintendent-DirecteurLLYK@pc.gc.ca

1. Abbot Pass Hut was important to people who went there and to people who never visited in person. Have you been to Abbot Pass or Abbot Pass Hut?
 - No, I've never been
 - Yes, once or twice
 - Yes, a few times
 - Yes, many times
2. Why does Abbot Pass Heritage Place matter to you? Abbot Pass Heritage Place is defined as the building, the pass and the landscape, activities and stories, sights, sounds and sensations (i.e. the whole experience)
3. Abbot Pass Hut was designated as a national historic site by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada in 1992 and as a classified heritage building by the Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office in 1999. It was designated for its:
 - Historical value as a representation of outdoor and alpine recreation in Canada, an icon to the national and international alpine community, and a reminder of the pioneer days of Canadian alpine climbing.
 - Architectural value as an example of rustic architecture based on the model of high-altitude vernacular, alpine huts of Switzerland and a very rare example of a stone cabin in the national parks, using natural materials in appropriate colours and textures.
 - Environmental value for being accessed via a steep scree slope, constructed on a high mountain pass, and designed as a mountain refuge that harmonized with its environment through careful selection and use of materials.

Are there other reasons why the story of Abbot Pass Heritage Place is significant to Canada today? For example, did the original designations omit something important or has the story evolved over time?

- No, I can't think of any other reasons why its story is significant.
 - Yes, I think there are more reasons why its story is significant.
4. (This question only appears if respondents answer "yes" to the previous question.) For what other reasons is Abbot Pass Hut Heritage Place significant to

Canada today?

5. With whom should Parks Canada share the story of Abbot Pass Heritage Place in the future?

Page 2 – Tell us more about the building and its location

Tell us more about the significance of the physical and geographical aspects of Abbot Pass Heritage Place including the hut and its location. This section has 4 questions.

6. Which of the following aspects of the design and construction of Abbot Pass Hut resonated most with you? Please rank them in order of importance to you:
 - Architectural design
 - Structural innovation
 - Craftsmanship
 - Materials
 - Function
 - Location
 - Other

Are there other aspects of the design and construction of Abbot Pass Hut that are important to you?

7. Abbot Pass Hut was part of a wider network of huts accommodating visitation and mountaineering in the Canadian Rockies. Did Abbot Pass Hut play a special role in this network of alpine huts?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
8. (This question only appears if respondents answer “yes” to the previous question.) Why was Abbot Pass Heritage Place special in the network of alpine huts? Abbot Pass Heritage Place is defined as the building, the pass and the landscape, activities and stories, sights, sounds and sensations (i.e. the whole experience)
9. What makes Abbot Pass significant compared to other alpine locations? Please rank these elements in order of importance to you:
 - Proximity to Lake Louise and Lake O’Hara areas
 - Environmental considerations
 - Alpine objectives in the area
 - Inaccessibility of the site

- Accessibility of the site
- Historical associations
- Aesthetic beauty
- Other

If there are other reasons why Abbot Pass is significant compared to other alpine locations, what are they?

10. Is Abbot Pass less important now that the hut has been substantially removed?

- Yes, Abbot Pass is less important
- No, Abbot Pass remains just as important
- Not sure

Page 3 – Tell us more about human activities and stories

These questions will help us understand social and cultural aspects of Abbot Pass Heritage Place. This section has 4 questions.

11. Thinking about the activities that took place at, or were supported by, this heritage place which activities are most significant? Please rank these in order of importance to you.

- Architectural design and construction
- Historical climbing / mountaineering
- Contemporary climbing / mountaineering
- Hiking / scrambling
- Emergency shelter
- Social connection
- Other

Are there other activities that took place at, or were supported by, Abbot Pass Heritage Place that are significant to you?

12. Are you aware of historic events or people of significance associated with Abbot Pass and/or Abbot Pass Hut?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

13. (This question only appears if respondents answer “yes” to the previous question.) Which historic events or people or significance do you associate with Abbot Pass Heritage Place?

14. When you think of Abbot Pass Heritage Place, what sights, sounds, smells, tastes and sensations come to mind?

15. What emotions do you most associate with Abbot Pass Heritage Place?

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This is the last section of the survey! It will help us understand which themes matter most to you. It has 4 multiple choice questions:

16. Abbot Pass Hut was built in 1922 by certified Swiss mountain guides with support from the Canadian Pacific Railway and modelled on high-altitude alpine huts in Switzerland. When telling the story of Abbot Pass Heritage Place, how important is it to reflect this history?

- Very important
- Important
- Not very important
- Not important

17. Abbot Pass Hut was used frequently by mountain guides while guiding. When telling the story of Abbot Pass Heritage Place, how important is it to reflect this history?

- Very important
- Important
- Not very important
- Not important

18. Abbot Pass Hut was substantially removed for safety due to slope degradation caused by climate change. When telling the story of Abbot Pass Heritage Place, how important is it to reflect this history?

- Very important
- Important
- Not very important
- Not important

19. Are there any other themes you feel are important to the story of Abbot Pass Heritage Place?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

20. (This question only appears if people answer “yes” to the previous question.)
What other themes do you feel are important to the story of Abbot Pass Heritage Place?

Annex C: What sights, sounds, smells, tastes & sensations come to mind

Selected responses:

- “Dramatic landscapes, seracs falling into the Death Trap, howling winds, warm sunrises and sunsets, the distinct smell of rockfall, warm lemon tea on the hut's porch, the joy of safely returning from a successful climb, the relieve of finding a warm shelter at the end of a long approach or mountaineering day, peacefulness, anxiety of thinking about the next day's climb, sadness of leaving the hut to return down to civilization.”
- “The howling wind, the crunch of snow underfoot, the sound of a fire in the cabin, of singing songs and telling stories to pass the time.”
- “The crunchy of rocks underfoot as you fight to maintain footing on the approach to the hut up the scree slope. The crisp fresh mountain air for an Alpine start to climb Mt. Victoria and LeFroy. The colors of alpenglow as the sun begins to kiss the peaks. And who can forget the view from the loo!”
- “Pure mountain air, refreshed by glaciers. Majestic mountains. Deep blue sky and starry heavens you can almost reach and touch.”
- “Watermelon snow, cold air, warm sunshine, wet rock, sweat, tired legs”
- “Wind, sounds of laughter”
- “The sounds of the high alpine; the smell of the glacier and the rock; the sounds of wind and distant rockfall, seracs. The sound of boots on ledges.”
- “Windy, cold nipping at face, sound of wind, hot chocolate, oatmeal, smelly drying clothes and socks (!), laughter, murmuring quietly in the morning, sleeping backs rustling, clink of metal climbing gear, accents of visitors, snowflakes falling on your face, the tingle of thawing toes and fingers”
- “Wind, sunrises, climbing gear rattling on harnesses”
- “Smoke, wind, limestone, snow, smooth worn wood, fire, fire black stove, clanking climbing gear, sleeping bodies.”
- “Amazing views, the wind, snoring, climbing gear getting sorted, coffee early in the morning, laughter, smiling faces.”
- “The sights of high peaks and a sunrise or sunset on them, the sight of a tiny pristine lake far down, the sound of the wind or the crows drafting and coming to see what's happening and if there's any scraps for them.”
- “The smell of a wood burning in the stove, the crackle of rockfall down the West Face of Lefroy, the incredible views out over the Plain of Six Glaciers and Lake Oesa.”
- “The amazing views on both sides of the pass, the views up Mt LeFroy and Mt Victoria and down to Lake Louise. The crispness of the air. The smell of dinner on the stove. Laughter from people around the table. The fear of going out to the out house at night.”

Annex D: Why does Abbot Pass Heritage Place matter to you?

Selected responses:

“The history of mountain guiding was felt in this building. I am a professional mountain guide and took many clients to the hut. I loved the history of how it was built and the local masonry work. I loved that it could be approached or descended on both sides of the pass, both very different trips. I loved the access to climb Mt. Victoria and Lefroy and those routes are no longer easily done in a day without the hut. This was THE most classic mountaineering trip in the Canadian Rockies – bar none – because of this history of the place, the history of the guiding, the hold hut, the route up the peak (and over, down to Lake O’Hara). Honestly what a perfect trip for a visiting mountaineer: Day 1 – meet, bus to Lake O’Hara, hike to the hut Day 2 – (early season only) climb Mt Lefroy Day 3 – climb Mt. Victoria, descend Huber Ledges to 3:30 but out I loved guiding here and this was the heart of mountaineering in the Lake Louise group.”

“As a little girl who hiked to the teahouse and viewpoint beyond with my dad and family many times, looking up the pass to see the hut was my first insight into the wild world of alpine mountaineering. I’ve made many return trips to look up in awe, even driving up from the States with my husband to share the wonder. In the years since, my husband and I moved to Canada, and are expecting our own child this summer. While we’re not alpinists, we’re devoted lovers of mountains, hiking, skiing, and wild places. Abbot’s Hut symbolizes the sense of wonder, adventure, wild, and resilience that drew me to mountains in the first place.”

“I am now 92 years old and had an amazing experience hiking up to and staying at Abbot Hut. The Hut in Abbots Pass is a tribute to the many guides who led and advised numerous climbers and hikers about Mount Lefroy and Abbots Pass. In the early 50’s a group of us were working during the summer at the Banff Springs Hotel. We hiked up Abbots Pass to the Hut. There was a Swiss guide in the hut who noticed that I did not have the correct hiking footwear. The following day he provided me with a pole like stick and instructed me to dig my heels in and glissade down through the scree. The group of us plus his two climbers of Mount Lefroy arrived safely at the bottom of the pass. I want to thank the Province of Alberta, the little hut and many guides who helped myself and so many to live through an exciting adventure! My experience hiking to and staying in Abbott Hut is one I cherish to this day.”

“It was the destination for one of my most memorable mountain trips ever, a guided mountaineering trip with the ACC. We witnessed a wolverine coming up and over the pass from the hut steps.”

“It was a beautiful building in a spectacular setting. I once approached it as a thunderstorm approached, we ran the last 100 meters to the hut with thunder and lightning all around and it felt like true shelter in a storm!”