



BRITISH COLUMBIA'S GOLD RUSH TOWN



Barkerville's Gold Rush Resonates with Guangdong Province

After nearly a year of planning, Prince George and Barkerville hosted a delegation from Guangdong Province which is in the south of China. The highlight was a visit to Barkerville, an historic site that houses the richest collection of artifacts and buildings in North America related to the early migrations from Guangdong Province. Many of the 83 million people in Guangdong know that the Gold Rush of the 1870s brought early migrants to North America but very few are familiar with the name 'Barkerville' - one of the biggest boomtowns north of San Francisco at that time. Mr. Wu Xiaosheng, the leader of the four member delegation from the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office that visited in August, believes that the historic relevance of Barkerville and other sites in the region will draw visitors back to explore Canadian roots. Adding to the appeal is that this is a living museum that still has much of its original Chinatown intact. He was impressed with what has been done to preserve Chinese heritage in Barkerville noting that the Trust's efforts to date have far exceeded what other countries have accomplished.



Mr. Wu Xiaosheng and Mr. Mr. Liu Xiaotao experience the 1870s in Barkerville



Officials from Guangdong Province initially became interested in the central interior's Chinese history when introduced to the published research of Lily Chow, formerly of Prince George. The delegation encouraged her to have her work, which includes the award-winning *Sojourners of the North*, translated for distribution in Guangdong Province, and also within Chinese communities mostly now located in urban Canada. Many of the early migrants came from the city of Jiangmen to Barkerville to look for gold and then made their way through the central interior. When the gold rush ended, some came to work on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in Prince George in the early 1900s. Though the direct links are not clear, the region still has a small but vibrant Chinese population. The group's tour of the central interior included a visit to a monument erected in honour of the Chinese community at the Prince George cemetery, as well as two hosted receptions by local Chinese community groups.

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Foundation for Future Cooperation in Heritage and Tourism

Upon their return the delegation will be reporting to the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office on the significance of Barkerville for developing foreign relations. They will suggest that Prince George and Barkerville could become destinations for tourists once visitors from China can more freely travel to North America. They will also be looking for ways for the two regions to enhance their cooperation by establishing more regular links.

Some of the specific follow-up opportunities for both parties of the delegation include:

- Encourage the tourism trade in BC as well as in Guangzhou to investigate the area
- Establish regular communications with the OCAO including website links
- Invite Guangdong media to profile the story of Barkerville
- Explore development of a sister city relationship
- Support Approved Destination Status with China and direct flight service from Guangzhou to British Columbia
- Promote education opportunities with University of Northern BC, College of New Caledonia, and School District #57 in Guangdong Province

Initiatives Prince George on behalf of the City of Prince George will continue to work together with Barkerville Heritage Trust on initiatives aimed at furthering this cooperation.

Delegation from the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of Guangdong Province:

Mr. Wu Xiaosheng
Mr. Cui Dong
Mr. Deng Xiaowei
Mr. Liu Xiaotao

Other western Canadian destinations of interest for this group included Edmonton, Winnipeg and Vancouver.



Mr. Wu Xiaosheng is presented with a framed photograph of Barkerville by Prince George Mayor Colin Kinsley

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Mayor Colin Kinsley with Mr. Wu Xiaosheng at the Prince George Cemetery

Hosting Delegation:

City of Prince George
Barkerville Heritage Trust
Initiatives Prince George
University of Northern British Columbia
Exploration Place - Fraser Fort George Museum
Prince George Railway and Forestry Museum
Chinese Student and Professional Association (Prince George)
Chinese Benevolent Society (Prince George)
Chinese Freemasons Society (Prince George)