



## **Behind the Scenes at Barkerville in Mid Winter**

It's mid-winter in Barkerville. There is over 6 feet of snow, piled higher in places, with the temperature hovering between minus 15 and 36 - not an ideal time to be out in the displays cataloguing artifacts.

But then again, mid-summer is not an ideal time for workers with laptops and a maze of electrical wires to be in full view of visitors who expect a certain level of historic ambiance at Barkerville.

Barkerville has over 200,000 historic objects in its collection. The care of these objects is the responsibility of Curator Bill Quackenbush. For over 18 years, Bill has worked tirelessly identifying and organizing this amazing conglomeration that is spread over 133 storage and display buildings. For the last two years, Barkerville has had assistance from the federal Museums Assistance Program or MAP.

This winter's project is to catalogue as many of the 18,000 artefacts on display as possible. But from the beginning, logistical hurdles were horrendous. Many buildings don't have electricity or heat. The cataloguers needed to work directly in Barkerville's collections database necessitating a wireless connection with our server.

With the assistance of Mike Miller of James & Sons Electric, an antenna connecting Barkerville's wireless network was erected near the administration building and a router mounted on a tall steel tripod, affectionately known as the 'coat rack'. Positioned in the middle of the main street, the coat rack is able to pick up signals from the far end of Chinatown where laptops can be connected in nearby displays.

Four cataloguers, working in teams of two, photograph, apply a catalogue number and describe each object in the display. But, before they do that, they have to shovel away snow to get to the building; find the nearest source of electricity; run cords for the 'coat rack', electrical heaters and the lap tops; and, split wood and light fires where there are functioning wood stoves – all not in the job description of most museum workers!

The curator predicts that the team will have catalogued about 10,000 artefacts or 55% of all of the objects on display by the time the project ends in March. An incredible achievement under severe conditions!

**Judy Campbell, Chief Executive Officer.**

January 2008