

SEPTEMBER is BC Firefighter Appreciation Month at Barkerville Historic Town

Barkerville, BC – On September 16, 1868, a devastating fire in Barkerville spread quickly through the town's compliment of wooden buildings, shingled roofs, and canvas ceilings to almost completely devour what had by then become the centre of British Columbia's economic activity.

With the harshness of winter fast approaching, those industrious and persistent Barkerville pioneers struck back in the face of misfortune. Reconstruction began two days later, at an impressive pace. Within six weeks, ninety buildings had been rebuilt, the town's boardwalks were improved, and Barkerville's previously narrow and winding main street was both widened and straightened.

To commemorate this amazing feat – the rebuilding of what was considered to be “the largest city north of San Francisco and west of Chicago” - and to show appreciation for the continued, dedicated work of British Columbia's professional and volunteer firefighters over the last century-and-a-half, Barkerville Historic Town has proudly declared September “Firefighter Appreciation Month.”

Any BC firefighter visiting Barkerville from now until September 26th, 2010, will receive a free family admission pass when he or she presents valid identification.

In addition, Saturday, September 18th - 142 years to the day that Barkerville's rebuilding began – is now officially *Williams Creek Fire Brigade Day* at Barkerville.

Fire Brigade-themed games and activities are planned for the general public on Saturday afternoon, including an Amazing Race-style relay to “help rebuild Barkerville,” and a special “Fire Brigade Follies” edition of the Theatre Royal's fall season show “Gold Rush Nuggets,” at both 1 pm and 7 pm. Members of the Wells Volunteer Fire Brigade will be on hand throughout the day to show off their skills and equipment, and to answer any questions guests may have about modern ways to keep valuable resources like Barkerville Historic Town safe from seasonal wildfires.

The fast arrival of fresh lumber played a critical part in the recovery of Barkerville after the Great Fire of 1868. Thanks to the funding from the Federal Government's Western Economic Diversification initiatives, and the restoration efforts of the Quesnel Antique Machinery Park, visitors to Barkerville during *Williams Creek Fire Brigade Day* on September 18th will also have a rare opportunity to witness the revival of Barkerville's 1868 Waterous Engine Works sawmill. The refurbished “rack and pinion” sawmill will be fired up at the machinery shed on Barkerville's back street at 2:30 pm.

Come visit Barkerville Historic Town on September 18th – *Williams Creek Fire Brigade Day* – and help honour the efforts of those who continue to keep our province safe from fire while enjoying a beautiful autumn afternoon filled with fun, firefighter-themed activities.

ABOUT BARKERVILLE HISTORIC TOWN

Barkerville Historic Town is the largest historic site in western North America (www.barkerville.ca). Barkerville is provincially, nationally and internationally recognized for its historic significance associated with its place in western Canada's gold rush era and the role the gold rush played in BC joining Canada. Barkerville is widely known as a "must see" for travel itineraries in western Canada. The historic town is also a significant contributor to the Cariboo regional economy and is widely regarded as a unique component of the regional identity.

The Barkerville Heritage Trust, as Barkerville's operating and managing partner, works in conjunction with the Province of British Columbia, the owner and statutory guardian of Barkerville's heritage resources, to ensure that Barkerville is efficiently managed, entertaining and educational to visitors, and financially stable as the premier heritage resource and tourism attraction for the Cariboo. The ultimate aim is to maintain and enhance Barkerville's position as a nationally significant heritage resource and tourism attraction for British Columbia and Canada.

Barkerville is situated 80 km east of Quesnel, British Columbia in the foothills of the Cariboo Mountains, close to Troll Mountain Ski Resort and Bowron Lake Provincial Park. The nearby community of Wells (8 km from Barkerville) is the service and housing centre for the area (www.wellsbc.com) and is itself a dynamic cultural community, home of Island Mountain Arts, the acclaimed Toni Only Artists' Project, the International Celtic Harp School (www.imarts.com), the dynamic indie music festival ArtsWells (www.artswells.com), and the Sunset Theatre (www.sunset-theatre.com). Wells is also situated close to a wide variety of winter and summer outdoor activities

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