

— THE — **BARKERVILLE** — HERITAGE TRUST —

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 1, 2024 — MARCH 31, 2025



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Message from the General Manager:

The past year has been one of the most challenging and rewarding in Barkerville's long history. We were tested by the unprecedented Antler Creek Fire complex, which led to perhaps the weirdest and most anxiety inducing week and a half in the Trust's existence. We are so grateful to have come through this emergency relatively unscathed, and with an enhanced understanding of the power of community to come together in a crisis.

Our achievements in the face of these challenges are a testament to collective effort. My deepest gratitude goes to our incredible staff, whose resilience and dedication never wavered. Thank you to the BC Wildfire Service and local fire crews for their brave work, to the Province and our donors for their steadfast support, and to the merchants and contractors who are the lifeblood of our town. Most importantly, thank you to our visitors. Your continued patronage through donations, admissions and memberships provides the essential support that allows us to preserve and share this special place.

Looking ahead, we are optimistic. The lessons learned have made us more prepared and resilient than ever. We are eager to continue to welcome guests to a safe and vibrant Barkerville, where the stories of the past continue to inspire our future.

With sincere thanks,



Carrie Chard



A Message from the Chair of the Board



It's my pleasure to share the Barkerville Heritage Trust Annual Report for the past year.

We began the year on a high note, successfully securing the provincial bid to continue managing the Barkerville and Cottonwood sites—an important step in maintaining stability for the site and our community partners. Over the summer, we worked closely with management to protect the Trust's assets, support our staff and merchant partners, and ensure Barkerville could re-open safely once conditions allowed. At the same time, the Board kept advancing long-term priorities, strengthening policies, renewing our commitment to reconciliation and inclusion, and focusing on sustainability so this historic site remains vibrant for generations to come.

The Antler Creek wildfire and resulting evacuation disrupted operations and tested the resilience of our entire community. Through it all, the Board focused on providing steady governance, clear communication, and thoughtful oversight to help management navigate these challenges.

Even amid the crisis, we remained committed to sound financial stewardship, compliance with the BC Societies Act, and accountability to our stakeholders. We continued to review risk management practices, support operational decision-making, and ensure the Trust's stability through uncertain times.

We are proud of how Barkerville endured and adapted this year. Our commitment to strong governance and accountability remains steadfast, and we are grateful to everyone—staff, merchants, volunteers, donors, and partners—who supported us along the way.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Al Richmond".

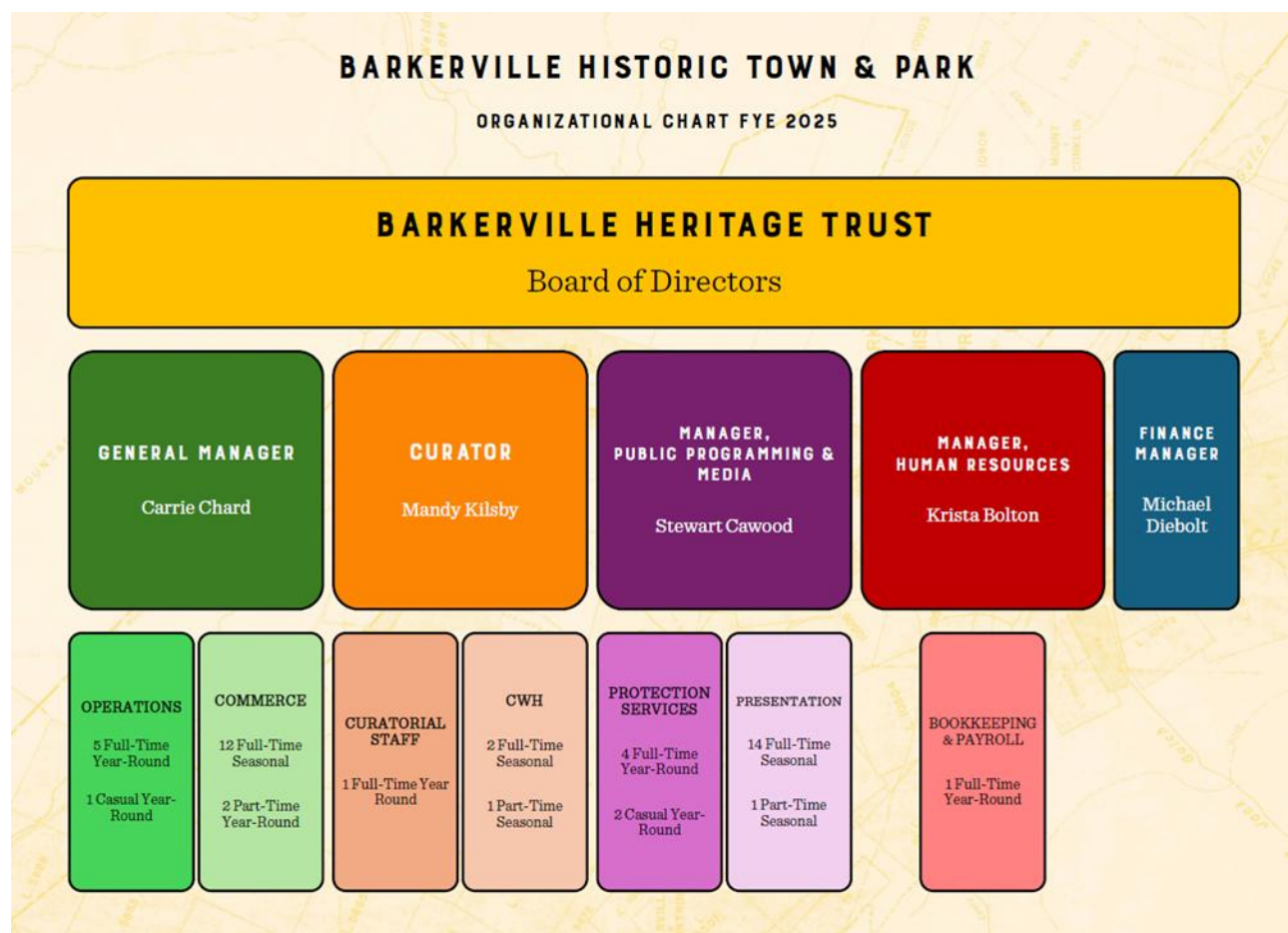
Al Richmond, Chair, The Barkerville Heritage Trust

Governance

Barkerville Historic Town and Park, Cottonwood House Historic Site, and Blessing's Grave Historic Site (the Sites) are located within the shared ancestral territories of the Lhtako Dene Nation and Secwépemc Peoples. All three are provincially designated Historic Sites, with Barkerville and Cottonwood also recognized as two of BC's 12 Provincial Heritage Properties. The Sites fall under the jurisdiction of the Heritage Branch of the B.C. Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, which oversees conservation policy, stewardship, and partnerships under the Heritage Conservation Act (HCA).

The Province contracts the Barkerville Heritage Trust (BHT), a registered charity governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, to manage the Sites under a Heritage Property Licence (HPL). Since 2005, this agreement has ensured both provincial support and the Trust's responsibility to preserve and protect the Sites in compliance with the HCA. The BHT was selected, again, as the site operator following a publicly posted request-for-proposals process in late 2024. The Trust will receive more than \$2 million in annual funding to support site operations, ensure conservation, and maintain public access. A new Heritage Property Licence begins on April 1, 2025.

Day-to-day operations are led by the Trust's CEO and management team, including the General Manager, Curator, Public Programming and Media Manager, Human Resources Manager, and Finance Manager. In addition to safeguarding heritage resources, the Trust delivers public programming and visitor services that share the cultural and historical significance of the Sites with the world.



Truth & Reconciliation

Barkerville is committed to Truth and Reconciliation. We are dedicated to moving beyond a colonial narrative by actively integrating Indigenous voices, histories, and perspectives into every facet of our site. Through collaboration with First Nations partners, we work to share a more complete and respectful history that honours the enduring presence and contributions of Indigenous peoples, both past and present.



Barkerville's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation is woven into the fabric of our storytelling and operations. We are deepening relationships with local First Nations to co-create programs, policies and practices that reflect truth-telling and respect. This includes acknowledging painful histories, celebrating living cultures, and ensuring Indigenous voices lead in sharing their own heritage. We are dedicated to this continuous path of learning and action that fosters brave spaces where all visitors can engage with a more honest and inclusive representation of BC's history.

Mission and Values

The Trust's Mission

The Barkerville Heritage Trust will provide an opportunity to experience life in the Cariboo Gold Rush through activities, storytelling, preservation, and good old-fashioned service that will sustain and grow visitor attendance.

The Trust's Values

Affordability, authenticity, education, efficiency, enthusiasm, entrepreneurship, honesty, inclusivity, innovation, leadership, personal service, quality, respect, stability, stewardship, sustainability, and transparency.

The Trust has committed to support #DifferentTogether, an initiative led by the Honourable Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, to uphold the values of diversity and inclusion and to oppose racism and hate in all its forms.

Executive Summary:

April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025

For the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025, the Barkerville Heritage Trust (BHT) advanced its mandate to preserve, protect, and interpret Barkerville Historic Town and Park, Cottonwood House Historic Site, and Blessing's Grave Historic Site. Operating under a Province of British Columbia Heritage Property Licence, the Trust continued to ensure compliance with the Heritage Conservation Act while delivering heritage interpretation, public programming, visitor services, and promoting regional tourism.

This year was marked by both progress and challenges. As the summer peaked, Barkerville Historic Town and Park faced a temporary closure due to the danger from the nearby Antler Creek wildfire complex. Structure protection installations were deployed across the site and a multi-day evacuation of staff, visitors, and collections was carried out to safeguard people and heritage assets. Thanks to advance planning, coordination with provincial agencies and other groups, strong relationships with partners, and the dedication of staff, no structures within the park were lost and the site reopened safely once the immediate threat had passed.

In addition to emergency response, BHT maintained its stewardship responsibilities by advancing conservation projects, maintaining historic assets, and delivering programming that reflects the Sites' diverse histories and their location within the shared ancestral territories of the Lhtako Dene Nation and Secwépemc Peoples. Relationship building continues to be the key to efforts toward reconciliation, inclusion, and accessibility, and these considerations continue to guide decision-making and public engagement.



The compounding effects of a severe wildfire emergency, persistent sector-wide labour shortages, and historic inflation in operating costs created a perfect storm. Despite careful fiscal management, these pressures have resulted in a significant financial shortfall that pushed the organization into a deficit position. This financial reality has necessitated a fundamental shift in strategy. As we plan for next year, our immediate focus has been on stabilizing operations and implementing a rigorous recovery plan.

Looking ahead, the Trust remains committed to its provincial partnership, its stewardship obligations under the HPL, and its vision to offer world-class heritage experiences that both honour the past and strengthen communities into the future.

FYE 2024 BHT Board of Directors & Management Team

Board of Directors

The Barkerville Heritage Trust is governed by a dedicated volunteer Board of Directors, representing regional, cultural, heritage, and tourism interests from across British Columbia. Their guidance ensures strong governance, accountability, and community representation in the stewardship of Barkerville Historic Town and Park, Cottonwood House Historic Site, and Blessing's Grave. This year we welcomed Coralee Oakes as a new board member.

Al Richmond (Chair)

Kirstin Clausen

Kirk Gable

Melanie Fraser

Richard Liu

Glen Thielmann

Roger Solly

Grant Johannesen

Craig Smith

Chris Lodder

Coralee Oakes



Management Team

Until October 2024, the Barkerville Heritage Trust was led by **Chief Executive Officer Kate Cox**, who provided organizational direction and strengthened relationships with Indigenous communities, government, funders, and the public. Following her departure, the management team has continued to ensure strong leadership and operational continuity during this transition.

- **General Manager, Carrie Chard:** responsible for environmental compliance, site infrastructure, emergency planning, forestry, water resources, guest services, lodgings, retail & ticket sales, and private events.
- **Curator, Mandy Kilsby:** oversees compliance with the Heritage Conservation Act and BC Park Act, as well as the care of collections, heritage landscapes, cemeteries, and exhibits.
- **Public Programming & Media Manager, Stewart Cawood:** directs theatre and street interpretation, public events, marketing, media relations, specialized heritage programs, and protection services.
- **Human Resources Manager, Krista Bolton:** responsible for compliance, recruitment, training, workforce sustainability, labour relations, bookkeeping and payroll, and staff accommodations and support.
- **Finance Manager, Michael Diebolt:** Responsible for financial planning, contracts, audits, and fiscal accountability.

The Trust's Portfolio:

The Barkerville Heritage Trust is proud to steward four significant historic sites that together tell the rich and layered story of the Cariboo Gold Rush. These sites are situated within the territories of the Lhtako Dene Nation and Secwépemc Peoples, in a landscape that shaped—and was shaped by—history. These sites are more than monuments; they are vibrant platforms for honest storytelling—inviting all Canadians to explore our collective past in a spirit of reflection and understanding as we walk toward a shared future.

Barkerville Historic Town & Park

Barkerville, located on Williams Creek in British Columbia, was once the vibrant centre of the Cariboo Gold Rush after gold was discovered there in 1862. Although largely destroyed by fire in 1868, the town was quickly rebuilt. It served as the northern terminus of the Cariboo Wagon Road—a 650-kilometre engineering feat completed in 1865 that spurred economic and political development in the colony by improving access to the gold fields. Designated a National Historic Site in 1924, Barkerville declined in the late 19th century until a major restoration in the late 1950s returned the town to its 1869–1885 appearance. Today, it stands as a testament to the boom-and-bust cycle of gold rush eras and colonial development, surrounded by visible mining landscapes and containing within it the Chee Kung Tong Building National Historic Site.

Blessing's Grave

Blessing's Grave, the smallest provincially designated heritage site, consists of the grave of Charles Morgan Blessing. The site serves as a tangible reminder of the Cariboo Gold Rush and reflects the organized judicial response to frontier crime, which contrast with the more chaotic gold rush experiences elsewhere. Its location along the historic Cariboo Wagon Road evokes the challenges of travel and settlement in the region.

Cottonwood House Historic Site

Cottonwood House Historic Park is a 10.68-hectare provincially designated heritage site located 28 km east of Quesnel, BC, along the original Cariboo Wagon Road. It includes ten historic wooden structures including a roadhouse, general store, barns, and farm buildings, set within a pastoral landscape near the Cottonwood River. Its heritage value lies in its role as a commercial and social hub during the Cariboo Gold Rush era, serving as a travel accommodation, a ranch, telegraph station, and post office. Associated with the Boyd family (1874–1951), it exemplifies post-gold rush settlement and enterprise in the region. The site is one of the few well-preserved roadhouses of its kind. Key character-defining elements include its pastoral setting, the large cottonwood tree, a surviving section of the Cariboo Wagon Road, the cluster of original log buildings, historic construction methods, and evidence of farming and commercial activities.

Richfield Courthouse:

Nestled in a remote wooded valley near Williams Creek, the Richfield Courthouse is a one-storey wooden structure built in 1882. It stands as one of the earliest symbols of British Columbia's judicial system, reflecting the need for law and order during the Cariboo Gold Rush. Its isolated location—the last remnant of the vanished mining town of Richfield—speaks to the transient nature of colonial settlement.

Barkerville Historic Town and Park Fact Sheet

Working under a Heritage Property Licence with the Province of British Columbia, the Barkerville Heritage Trust provides 365-day/24-hour site stewardship and protection for the site's vast landscape and heritage features.

Park Location	86 km east of Quesnel at the end of Highway 26
Elevation	1280 meters in the Cariboo Mountains
Climate	Subarctic Average snowfall = 10-12 meters October-May Average rainy days = 118 June-September
Park Size	457 hectares/1130 acres of subarctic forest
Historic Town Footprint	1 kilometer/18 acres of historic streetscape
Trails	Historic Cariboo Waggon Road and access to hundreds of kilometres of historic gold trails
Buildings	107 Heritage Buildings 62 Replica Buildings 14 Administrative & Service Buildings
Historic Cemeteries	Barkerville Cemetery, Richfield Chinese & Catholic Cemetery
Artifact Collection	200,000+ items
Infrastructure	Water – 1M+ liters of on-demand for fire protection Power – 14,400 high voltage single-phase underground and emergency generators Sewer – 3 kilometers of sewer line to three chamber lagoons Communications – fiber optic systems for internet, fire, security and phone
Lodgings	3 Campgrounds = 161 campsites Lowhee Campground - 89 sites Forest Rose Campground – 47 sites Government Hill Campground - 25 sites Historic Hotel – The Historic St. George (7 bed/7 bath) Historic Guest Houses King House Kelly House 4 Guest Cottages

Public Engagement Overview

The 2024 season at Barkerville Historic Town and Park was profoundly shaped by the extraordinary challenge of nearby wildfires, which led to the temporary closure of the site. The successful evacuation and structure protection effort was a testament to the overwhelming support from our dedicated staff, volunteers, community members, and provincial partners. Their collective commitment safeguarded both the people and the irreplaceable heritage resources of this historic site, powerfully reinforcing the deep connection that communities across B.C. and beyond feel for Barkerville.



Despite this significant disruption, public engagement remained strong throughout the fiscal year. This resilience was supported by robust visitation prior to the closure, expanded programming, and innovative outreach through social media and digital projects. Key highlights included the filming of Barkerville’s web series in the spring, strong pre-wildfire attendance numbers, successful program launches, extraordinary news media and social media engagement, and steady accommodations bookings.

2024 Attendance		
Dates	Main Season of Barkerville	Attendance
June 1 - September 8	100 Days of Barkerville	22,310
July 1	Dominion Day	847
July 21 - August 1	Closed due to fire evacuations	-
	100 Days Total Attendance	23,157
December 14 & 15	Olde-Fashioned Christmas	1057

As we tell the stories of the Cariboo Gold Rush and beyond, this year’s events added a new, powerful chapter of modern-day resilience. Through these efforts, Barkerville continues to be a vital place of learning and connection, where the diverse histories of many peoples—from Indigenous stories to the legacy of Chinese pioneers and European influences—are shared and honoured for all visitors.

Independent Licenses

Barkerville's authenticity and atmosphere is enhanced by a dedicated group of independent, family-owned businesses. These retailers, eateries, and historic hotel operate under merchant licenses within the provincially-owned buildings and provide essential services and authentic experiences for our visitors.

These small business owners are the lifeblood of the guest experience, offering everything from period-specific provisions and handcrafted sweets to memorable dining and comfortable accommodations. Their entrepreneurial spirit and deep commitment to heritage interpretation play a crucial role in bringing the story of Barkerville to life. We are proud to recognize and support our valued business partners:

Hospitality

St. George Hotel & House Hotel Saloon | Operated by Ria Beckman

Retail & Experiential Establishments

Barnard's Express | Tyler Setzer
C. Strouss & Co. Dry Goods & Provisions, Eldorado Gold Panning & Gift Shop, Frank J. McMahon's Confectionery, Mason & Daly General Merchants, and McPherson's Watchmaker's Shop | Operated by Rob, Doug & Bill Rummel
Louis A. Blanc Photographic Studio & Pioneer Clothing | Operated by Tamara Bedard
Kwong Sang Wing Chinese Store | Operated by Chris Chang

Eateries

Goldfields Bakery | Operated by Bob & Tamara Bedard
Lung Duck Tong Restaurant | Operated by Stanley Chik
Wake Up Jake Restaurant | Operated by Evangeline Gayo



Partnerships

Barkerville's ongoing success and emergency response rely on strong collaboration with government, corporate, Indigenous, and community partners. We extend our deepest thanks to all who supported us this year, especially during the Antler Creek Wildfire crisis. We are profoundly grateful to these partners for helping protect and promote Barkerville's heritage.



Province of British Columbia, Heritage Branch: For ongoing stewardship and support.

Lhtako Dene Nation: For their continued partnership in sharing the region's history.

BC Wildfire Service, Quesnel Forest Service, Quesnel Fire Rescue, Wells Volunteer Fire Brigade, Department of Wells, Beaverly Fire Rescue, and Ferndale/Tabor Fire Rescue: For their courageous efforts in wildfire response and structure protection.

Heritage BC: For supporting the production of *Barkerville: The Series*.

Osisko Development (Chris Lodder, Sean Roosen): For generous sponsorship of the Theatre Royal and *Barkerville: The Series*.

District of Wells: For regional collaboration on broader initiatives like economic development and advocacy.

Prince George Airport Authority: For the donation of two Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting Trucks.

Friends of Barkerville: A steadfast partner in the preservation, promotion and protection of Barkerville.

Seneca Enterprises Ltd.: For assisting with structure protection and Fire Smart fuel reduction work.

Theatre NorthWest: For the donation of theatre lighting equipment.

Quesnel Community Foundation: For supporting theatre props and local projects.

BCGEU: For their role in supporting staff and workplace relations.

Our Team



The past year has been one of thoughtful transition for Barkerville’s workforce. In alignment with our long-term vision for sustainability, we have continued to refine our staffing model. This ongoing process ensures our operational structure is both responsive to current economic realities and dedicated to preserving the exceptional care of this historic site.

These strategic adjustments were made in parallel with our commitment to valuing our dedicated team. We successfully concluded negotiations with the BCGEU, resulting in enhanced compensation for our staff. This important achievement reflects our deep respect for their skill and unwavering commitment to Barkerville’s mission.

By fostering a more efficient operational framework and deepening our investment in local talent, we have fortified Barkerville’s foundation for the years to come. Our continued success is a direct result of our team’s remarkable adaptability and profound dedication to sharing Barkerville’s stories.

In Memoriam

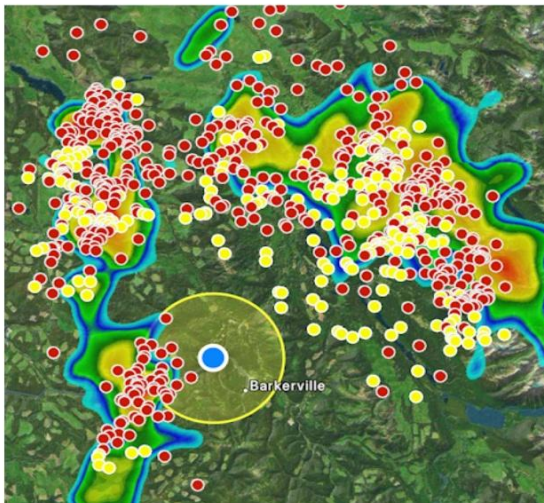
Barkerville mourns the passing of the Honourable Iona Campagnolo and extends our deepest condolences to her family and friends. Campagnolo was the first woman to be named Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, was a lifelong supporter of BC's heritage and served as the Honourary Patron of Barkerville Historic Town from 2011 through 2019.



Barkerville mourns the loss of Robin Sharpe, who dedicated over 26 years to Barkerville Historic Town & Park. As Manager of Visitor Services, his kindness, gentle spirit, and deep passion for the site's history left an indelible mark on staff and visitors alike. Robin's profound love for Barkerville and its stories shaped his legacy. He will be deeply missed, but his contributions will forever remain a cherished part of our community.

Risk Management

The BHT's risk management strategy is defined by its proactive and collaborative approach to safeguarding the site's irreplaceable heritage. Our philosophy is calculated and integrated, prioritizing the preservation of our heritage assets and the safety of our visitors and staff above all else. Our current focus is mitigating the existential threat of climate-related disasters, particularly wildfire. This has been achieved through extensive FireSmarting, strategic fuel management, and critical investments in on-site critical response infrastructure, including roof sprinkler systems and stockpiled emergency water and equipment.



These measures are strengthened by deep partnerships with the BC Wildfire Service and local fire crews, ensuring a coordinated, expert-led response. While these pre-emptive actions are vital for protection, the financial impact of recent emergencies has highlighted the concurrent need to build operational and financial resilience against business interruption.

Projects:

The past year was defined by both strategic investment and extraordinary resilience. Our most significant success was undoubtedly navigating the Antler Creek wildfire, safely evacuating the site, and successfully reopening to the public after a dedicated cleanup of the necessary protection measures implemented by fire crews. This outcome was a direct result of proactive risk mitigation and the incredible efforts of our staff and partners.



That preparedness was supported by major capital projects. The approval of a \$1 million Destination Development Fund grant has enabled continued critical upgrades, including winterizing facilities, upgrading campground wash houses, and other campground upgrades. Wastewater management upgrades continue with additional work on the sewage lagoons.



Ongoing heritage conservation has included roof replacements using fire-resistant materials, structural stabilizations, and extensive Fire Smarting and structure protection work at both Barkerville and Cottonwood House. We significantly enhanced our emergency response capability through advanced staff training and the generous donation of two fire trucks from the Prince George Airport Authority.

These collective efforts—from large-scale infrastructure grants to vital protective measures—fortified Barkerville against immediate threats and secured its legacy for future generations.

April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025 Year in Review

This past year has been one of profound challenge and inspiring resilience. The programming season began with hopeful anticipation as the site opened on June 1st, welcoming visitors to our shops, restaurants, and vibrant public programs. Highlights included the 156th annual Dominion Day celebrations and a meaningful visit from Chinese Canadian community leaders.

However, the summer took an unexpected turn with the outbreak of the Antler Creek Wildfire in July. Prolonged heat, drought, and extraordinary lightning activity led to a complex of wildfires that covered 14,277 hectares and burned for 93 days, and advanced within 2km of the park.

The swift implementation of our emergency protocols, combined with the heroic efforts of staff, BC Wildfire Services and local crews, ensured the protection of our historic assets. After a temporary closure and intensive cleanup, we proudly reopened on August 2nd, grateful to resume sharing Barkerville's stories with the public.

Despite cancellations of some special events due to evacuations, the BHT still celebrated significant achievements: the completion of filming for the upcoming *Barkerville* series, the successful Judges' walking tour to Richfield, and beloved winter events like Olde Fashioned Christmas and the Dog Sled Mail Run. We also honoured the leadership of outgoing CEO Kate Cox and celebrated Board Chair Al Richmond and General Manager Carrie Chard as recipients of the prestigious King Charles III Coronation Medal.

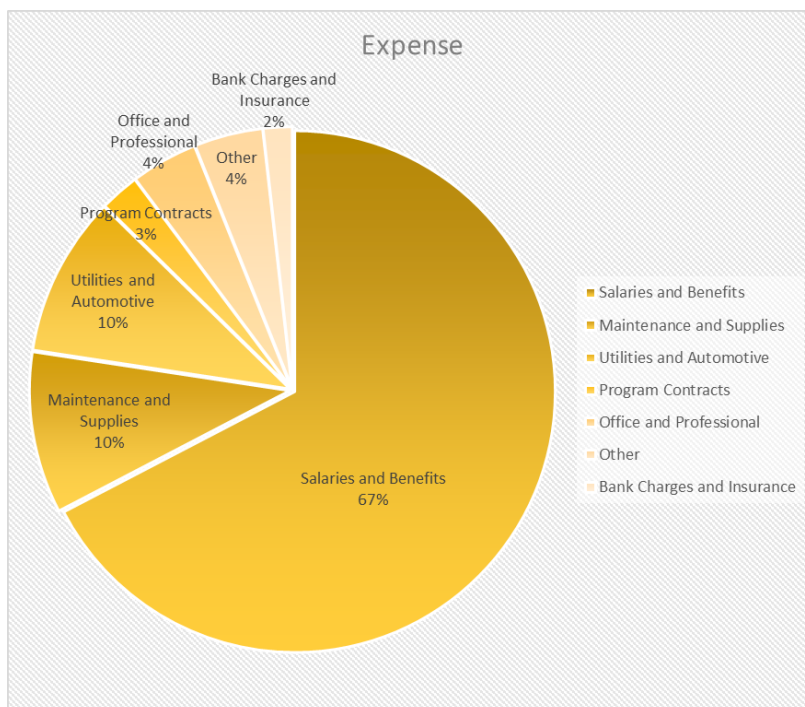
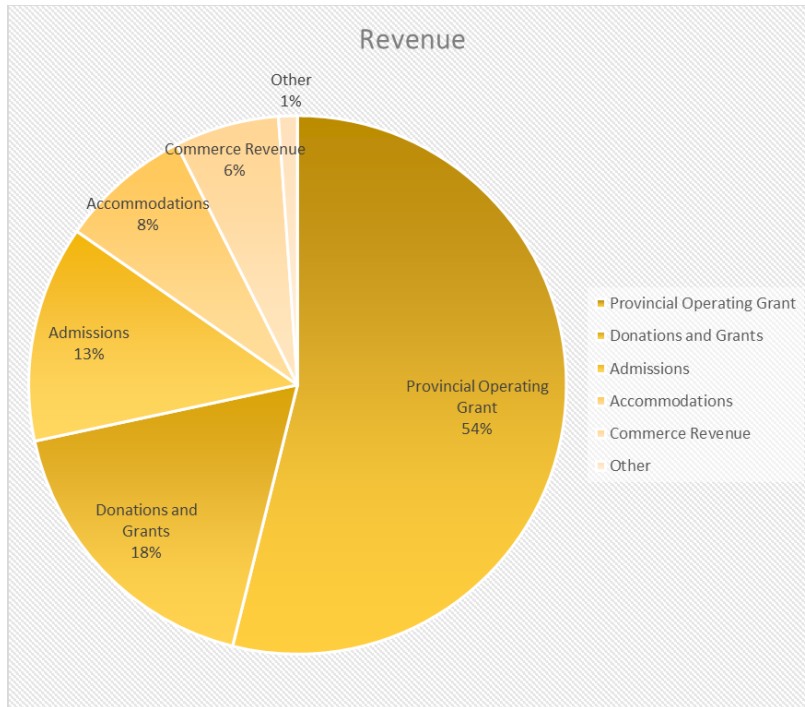
Finally, we are thrilled to announce that *Barkerville: The Series* has officially been released! Produced in-house by the Barkerville Heritage Trust in partnership with the Lhtako Dene Nation, this six-episode mini-series was filmed on-site to authentically capture the spirit and stories of Barkerville. This innovative marketing endeavor follows the fictionalized story of two new interpreters—Jay, an out-of-work actor, and Sarah, from the Lhtako Dene



Nation—as they navigate belonging, identity, and the complexities of sharing the history of a colonial site. With generous support from Osisko Development and Heritage BC, this project blends drama and humour to explore the people behind Barkerville's living history.

As we reflect on a year defined by adaptability and community in the face of adversity, we are grateful to our staff, visitors, and partners. Together, we preserved Barkerville's legacy and laid a strong foundation for the seasons to come.

Revenue and Expense



FUNDING OUR LIVING HISTORY

The operation of Barkerville Historic Town is a carefully balanced partnership between public funding and visitor support, ensuring both preservation and vibrant programming.

The Province of British Columbia provides essential funding for the preservation and protection of the Sites. This covers the critical work of curatorial care, conservation, and the upkeep of 125+ heritage buildings.

Visitor admissions, theatre tickets, and donations fund the living history experience. It costs approximately \$8,000 per day to operate our public programming, including historical interpreters, educational activities, and guest services.

This collaborative model ensures we can operate a world-class living museum while responsibly managing our heritage resources.

A Message of Thanks from the Barkerville Heritage Trust

As we reflect on an extraordinary challenging year, the Board of the BHT extends its deepest gratitude to the many partners who make our mission to provide a premier heritage resource attraction possible. Our work is guided by a careful balance: enhancing our cherished historic sites with vibrant programming while meticulously preserving their irreplaceable character, all while ensuring financial sustainability.

We are profoundly grateful to the Government of British Columbia for providing the core funding for operational and curatorial work. This foundational support ensures the preservation and upkeep of our province's priceless heritage assets, allowing these important sites to endure for future generations.

To our visitors, sponsors, and donors: you are our essential partners in bringing that history to life. Your admissions and contributions directly power the engaging programs and educational resources that transform these historic sites into a dynamic, living museum. Together, we are not just preserving the past but ensuring it remains a vibrant source of learning and inspiration for all. Our ability to operate as a leading tourism and educational resource is made possible by your support.



Finally, we recognize the dedicated community that brings our sites to life each day: our talented staff, our dedicated contractors, and our independent merchants and business operators. Thank you for your invaluable role in enriching the visitor experience and creating a vibrant, living destination that transports people to another time.

Your dedication is what animates this national treasure. Thank you for protecting our shared heritage and ensuring that the story of BC's golden beginnings continues to engage and educate visitors from across the province and beyond.

Photo credits: Mia Ciotto, Mandy Kilsby, Ember Harper-Fedirko, Carrie Chard, Mike Retasket, Stewart Cawood and Lenord Doherty.