— THE —
BARKERVILLE
— HERITAGE TRUST —

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 1, 2025 – MARCH 31, 2026



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Message from the Chair of the Board:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the Barkerville Heritage Trust's Annual Report for 2025-2026.

As someone who has spent decades serving communities across the Cariboo, I know that strong organizations are built through dedication, partnership, and a shared commitment to the places we value. This year, Barkerville Heritage Trust continued to demonstrate those qualities through its stewardship of Barkerville and Cottonwood House Historic Site. We reached an important milestone with the implementation of a new seven-year operating agreement with the Province of British Columbia, providing stability and a clear path forward for the years ahead.

At the same time, the Trust continued to invest in heritage conservation, wildfire preparedness, visitor experiences, and cultural programming. From major risk-reduction initiatives and building conservation projects to expanded Indigenous and Chinese Canadian interpretation, our staff and partners worked tirelessly to ensure these nationally significant heritage resources remain vibrant, relevant, and resilient.

On behalf of the Board, I extend my sincere thanks to our staff, volunteers, merchants, donors, sponsors, Indigenous partners, community organizations, and government supporters. Your contributions make it possible for Barkerville to continue educating, inspiring, and welcoming visitors from around the world.



As we look ahead, we remain committed to protecting these remarkable places, strengthening community partnerships, and ensuring Barkerville and Cottonwood House continue to inspire future generations.

Al Richmond
Chair, Board of Directors
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 Dakelh (Carrier) and Secwépemc (Shuswap) 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 the 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 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.

Board of Directors

The Barkerville Heritage Trust is governed by a dedicated volunteer Board of Directors representing a broad range of regional, cultural, heritage, tourism, business, and community interests. Their leadership helps ensure strong governance, accountability, and stewardship of Barkerville Historic Town & Park, Cottonwood House Historic Site, Richfield Courthouse, Blessing's Grave Site, and the Cariboo Wagon Road Northern Terminus Memorial Cairn.



Al Richmond (Chair)
Craig Smith (Vice-Chair)
Roger Solly (Treasurer)
Kirstin Clausen
Melanie Fraser
Richard Liu
Kirk Gable
Coralee Oakes
Chris Lodder
Glen Thielmann
Hildur Sinclair

Management Team

- **Carrie Chard, General Manager**: Site operations, infrastructure, environmental compliance, emergency preparedness, guest services, accommodations, retail operations, and financial administration.
- **Mandy Kilsby, Curator**: Heritage conservation, collections management, archives, exhibits, cultural resource stewardship, regulatory compliance, and strategic initiatives supporting preservation & interpretation of heritage assets.
- **Stewart Cawood, Public Programming & Media Manager**: Interpretation, theatre, special events, marketing, communications, information technology, security systems and visitor engagement.
- **Krista Bolton, Human Resources Manager**: Human resources, labour relations, recruitment, training, payroll, financial administration, occupational health and safety, and staff accommodations.

Truth & Reconciliation

Barkerville Historic Town & Park remains committed to advancing Truth and Reconciliation by working to present a more complete, inclusive, and accurate history of British Columbia. Through ongoing collaboration with local First Nations partners, we are integrating Indigenous voices, knowledge, and perspectives into our storytelling, programming, and operations.

This commitment extends beyond interpretation. We are strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities to help guide the development of programs, policies, and practices that reflect respect, reciprocity, and shared stewardship. By acknowledging the impacts of colonialism, supporting Indigenous-led storytelling, and creating opportunities to celebrate living cultures and traditions, we strive to ensure that Indigenous histories and contemporary experiences are represented authentically and meaningfully.



Truth and Reconciliation is an ongoing journey of learning, listening, and action. As we continue this work, Barkerville is dedicated to creating welcoming spaces where visitors can engage with a fuller understanding of BC's history and the enduring contributions of Indigenous Peoples, past, present, and future.

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.



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 Dakelh 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 bit of evidence 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	**290**	Barkerville: **239** Richfield: **4** Cottonwood: **40** Wells: **7**
Historic Cemeteries	Barkerville Cemetery, Richfield Chinese & Catholic Cemetery, Cottonwood Cemetery, Blessing's Grave	
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 2025 season introduced several new experiences designed to bring Barkerville's history to life in fresh and engaging ways. New programs included *The Mrs. Houser Story*, which received excellent visitor reviews, *The History of Gold Rush Music*, and a renewed weekend walking tour to Richfield that expanded opportunities for guests to explore the wider historic landscape.

These additions complemented popular returning offerings such as town tours, stagecoach rides, Indigenous programming, and signature events including Dominion Day, the Indigenous Peoples' Celebration, and the Chinese Mid-Autumn Moon Festival.

The 2PM show at the Theatre Royal attracted 8,471 audience members, a considerable increase from the average of 6,000 attendees in previous seasons. Similarly, Barnard's Express Stagecoach saw 5,757 people book a ride, representing a significant increase from the 3,500–4,000 riders recorded in previous seasons.

Beyond the historic town, *Barkerville: The Series* continued to earn strong reviews while reaching new audiences, as we pursue a partnership with TV networks to extend its broadcast footprint. The year also saw the launch of a major website refresh, improving the visitor experience.



2025 Ticketed Admissions*		
Dates		**Paid admissions**
May 16th to May 30th	Shoulder Season	1,215
May 31st to September 7th	Main Season	34,071
	Total summer guest count	**35,286**
December 13th and 14th	Olde-Fashioned Christmas	1,026
2025 total		**36,312**

*Figures represent admissions recorded through ticket sales and admissions processing. Visitation outside regular programming hours and Cottonwood House Historic Site visitation are not included.

Independent Licenses

Barkerville's authenticity and atmosphere are enhanced by a dedicated group of independent businesses operating within the site's historic buildings. These merchants, restaurateurs, and hospitality providers offer unique products, services, and experiences that play an important role in bringing Barkerville's history to life.

This year also marked an important period of transition, as preparations were made for the transfer of several long-standing businesses from the Rummel family to Lhtako Dene Nation. This transition reflects both the remarkable legacy of the Rummel family, whose contributions helped shape the modern Barkerville experience over nearly five decades, and an exciting new chapter in the site's ongoing evolution.

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/Acknowledgments

The Barkerville Heritage Trust is grateful for the support of the many organizations, communities, and partners that help sustain our work.

- **Province of British Columbia, Heritage Branch** – for ongoing stewardship and support.
- **Lhtako Dene Nation** – for continued partnership in sharing the history and cultures of the region.
- **Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT), Northern Routes, BC Festivals and Fairs (BCFFE), and the New Pathways to Gold Society** – for supporting the Indigenous Peoples' Celebration and Chinese Mid-Autumn Moon Festival.
- **Osisko Development** – for generous sponsorship of the Theatre Royal and interpretive programming.
- **Quesnel Community Foundation** – for supporting theatre enhancements and community projects.
- **District of Wells** – for collaboration on economic development, emergency preparedness, shared infrastructure, and long-term community sustainability.
- **BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU)** – for supporting staff and positive workplace relations.

Together, these partnerships help ensure Barkerville and Cottonwood House remain vibrant places where history, culture, and community continue to thrive.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Cheryl Chapman (Sunrise When the Salmon Come) of Aboriginal Affects Consulting on her well-deserved recognition as a 2026 BC Tourism Industry Award recipient and for her Heritage BC award nomination, honoring her exceptional contributions to cultural heritage, tourism, and community leadership in Barkerville and beyond.



Our Team

Throughout 2025-2026, the Trust continued to adapt to organizational change while operating with a smaller team. Despite reduced capacity, staff remained focused on delivering exceptional visitor experiences, caring for collections, and maintaining historic assets.



Time and again, our team demonstrated the dedication, creativity, and adaptability that keep Barkerville moving forward. Whether supporting daily operations, tackling unexpected challenges, or taking on responsibilities beyond their roles, staff consistently stepped up to ensure the Trust's success.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to every employee whose expertise, hard work, and commitment make our mission possible. Their efforts preserve an important part of British Columbia's history and create meaningful connections for visitors, researchers, and communities.

We also proudly recognize the outstanding team and at Cottonwood House Historic Site. While Barkerville's larger profile can sometimes draw more attention, Cottonwood's success is built on a remarkable crew whose passion, professionalism, and care bring the site's stories to life. Their contributions are an essential part of the Trust's work, and we are deeply grateful for everything they do.



Managing Risk and Building Resilience

During FY2025-26, the Barkerville Heritage Trust continued to strengthen its approach to risk management through long-term operational planning, emergency preparedness, heritage conservation, and visitor safety initiatives. The renewal of the Trust's operating agreement with the Province of British Columbia provided organizational stability and certainty for future planning. Ongoing efforts to safeguard heritage assets, prepare for environmental emergencies, and diversify programming helped ensure that Barkerville and Cottonwood House remain resilient, sustainable, and welcoming destinations for future generations.





Major Projects & Initiatives

- **New Heritage Property Licence & Site Management Agreement** secured the Trust's stewardship role through 2032 and established a new framework for operations, governance, and accountability.
- **Merchant and Contract Modernization** included the review and updating of merchant licences, contracts, policies, and legal agreements, as well as preparations for the transition of several merchant businesses to Lhtako Dene Nation.
- **Building Information Project** created a comprehensive inventory of Barkerville's historic structures, including condition documentation, photography, mapping, and asset records to support conservation planning and risk management.



- **Heritage Conservation Projects** included building restoration and maintenance work, long-term planning for the Kelly General Store, and development of a ten-year heritage building maintenance strategy.
- **Sewage Lagoon Upgrade** improved critical site infrastructure and supports the long-term sustainability of operations.

Visitor Experience & Interpretation initiatives included expanded programming at Cottonwood House and renewed activities at Richfield Courthouse, alongside the launch of new programs such as *The History of Gold Rush Music* and *The Mrs. Houser Story*. Efforts also continued to strengthen Indigenous and Chinese Canadian interpretation and to prepare for the Chinese Canadian Museum's upcoming *Odysseys and Migration* exhibition.

- **Wildfire Preparedness & Risk Reduction** projects included fuel management, dangerous tree removal, FireSmart activities, emergency planning, and investments in fire protection equipment and infrastructure.
- **Organizational Development** initiatives included information technology upgrades, policy modernization, grant development, and workforce planning.

April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026 Year in Review



While much of our work this year focused on the day-to-day stewardship of Barkerville and Cottonwood House, it was also a year of important milestones that will shape the future of both sites.

On April 1, 2025, a new seven-year Heritage Property Licence and Site Management Agreement came into effect, confirming the Trust's role as steward of Barkerville and Cottonwood House through 2032. The agreement provides long-term stability for heritage conservation, public programming, and operations, allowing the Trust to continue planning for the future with confidence.

The 2025 visitor season welcomed more than 34,000 ticketed admissions from across British Columbia, Canada, and around the world. New programs, including *The Mrs. Houser Story*, *The History of Gold Rush Music*, and guided walks to Richfield, complemented returning favourites such as the Indigenous Peoples' Celebration, Chinese Mid-Autumn Moon Festival, and Victorian Christmas. Programming also expanded at Cottonwood House and Richfield Courthouse, while *Barkerville: The Series* continued to reach new audiences across British Columbia.

Significant work was undertaken behind the scenes to strengthen the site's future. Priorities included wildfire preparedness, heritage conservation, collections management, major infrastructure improvements such as the sewage lagoon upgrade, and the launch of a redesigned Barkerville website.

The year also marked an important transition as the Rummel family prepared for retirement after nearly five decades of service and several long-standing merchant operations began transitioning to Lhtako Dene Nation.

As always, Barkerville and Cottonwood House remained much more than simple heritage sites. Through the dedication of staff, partners, and supporters, they continued to serve as s vibrant destination where British Columbia's diverse histories are preserved, shared, and experienced every day.

ECONOMICS

Revenue and Expense April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026

Photo Credits: Mia Cirotto, Cariboo Adventure Media, Barkerville Staff