

PG Heritage Commission Chair's Report February 27, 2025

By George Davison

Since the last meeting of the Commission on December 12, we haven't been able to do too much, as the 2025 workplan, approved at that meeting, does not go to Council until March 10. The annual report and the workplan should go to Council in January, so the Commission has its direction for the full year.

I also had to reapply for Commission membership, and talked to James Reinheller, Chad Hellenius and Charmaine Roisum about putting their names in, as we don't know when the bylaw changes will occur. When I asked about the Commission's role in appointments, I was told there is none, as Council makes the selection in an in-camera meeting in February. We are then told who the new commissioners are, but no information about them is available until the first meeting. It seems to me that the Commission should have some say over who is appointed, even if its just in an advisory capacity. We've had too many problems with volunteers in the last few years to not take more effort in the appointment process.

My main activity early in the new year was focused on pulling together the various stakeholders in Prince George's heritage sign project. That meeting was held on the afternoon of January 25 at the Explorartion Place. Thanks to Chad Hellenius for helping set it up, though he was unable to attend. Thanks to Councillor Trudy Klassen, commissioners Linda Campbell, Larry Merritt, Ayesha Rogers and Charmaine Roisum from the PGPL for attending. Unfortunately, commissioners with jobs and our graphic design consultant were unable to attend, either in person or via Zoom. And because two of the stakeholders (Exploration Place & the Lheidli T'enneh) weren't there, we were unable to get very far on funding or on what each organization can contribute to heritage in Prince George.

Outcomes: PGPL could host a heritage signs website & Heritage Week events; others? UNBC Archives? PG Retired Teachers archives? Deferred discussion on signs and signs rubric, but someone suggested setting up a process to adopt-a-sign; good news from Heritage BC, who have moved application deadlines for grants from the spring to the fall.

The Signs Working Group has not met on its own. There are still several outstanding issues:

1. the sign ideas that have been in the works since 2021 (Sager and Berlinic),
2. working more with the Lheidli T'ennah on signage,
3. identifying signs that need updating, and
4. putting the pdfs of existing signs on the Heritage Commission's website.
5. continue fixing signs until the new template and designs are completed
6. Investigate weatherproof and graffiti-proof signs – **kalitec.com** – they're still interested

Heritage BC Webinar – Ayesha, Linda, Melissa and I attended what was supposed to be a webinar “Finding Common Ground” on January 29. We were never admitted to the webinar and instead used the time to do a dry run of a PowerPoint presentation on “Heritage in PG” that I put together for the 30th anniversary of the Commission.

I responded to a forwarded query on January 31 arising out of an article in the UNBC student newspaper about the possibility of a large bunker (like the Diefenbunker) in the area. My research has never indicated anything like that, and I suggested he contact Sheldon Clare, who said there was never any such facility here.

The Registry Working Group (Ayesha, Linda, Jon and I) met in person on February 11, mainly to discuss the upcoming presentation at the library. In addition to the history of heritage, Ayesha would present the Commission's plans for broadening the definition of heritage. It would be a “soft launch” of the Commission's 2025 workplan.

The Community Outreach and Education Working Group (Linda and I) secured the date and time of the “Meet the Heritage Commission” event at the public library with the help of Charmaine Roisum. Unfortunately, the evening fell in the middle of a snow storm and the only attendees were Larry, Linda, Ayesha and I, along with my wife. The presentations were well received, but the public engagement part fell flat!

To-do list:

1. pdfs of existing signs on the Heritage Commission website (this was removed from the recommendations because we were told it could be done)
2. QR codes for signs
3. review of where Knox Church and 2299 Laurier registry applications are
4. bylaw wording to add 3 meetings and 3 more commissioners, with the PGPL and Exploration Place naming 2 of those commissioners
5. name tags and business cards for commissioners (also removed from the recommendations to Council)
6. investigate sourcing weather and graffiti-proofs signs

Non-Commission activities of Commissioners

Beyond the many working group meetings, Heritage Commissioners contribute a lot to the community. Larry Merritt continues his almost daily Facebook posts painting PG’s past and present.

Linda Campbell continues to delve into the city’s past in her Facebook page “Once Upon a Time pg”. The train lady also continues her trips into the history of the region by train along the East Line: see <https://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/local-news/meet-the-train-lady-of-prince-george-9873110>

Ayesha Rogers has recently launched a “Northern Heritage” newsletter. Published every Friday, it explores the region from the perspective of a heritage expert. See https://ayasha177.substack.com/p/northern-heritage?utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web

Finally, I have been asked to do the BC Labour Heritage Centre’s labour history walking tour of PG during the SD 57 PD Day on April 11th. Wayne Axford will be doing the workshop in the morning, and I’ll follow with an afternoon tour through downtown of PG’s labour history.

Google maps has 47 signs & 80 photos of PG’s heritage signs with combined views of over 170,000. Mr. PG’s sign alone has been viewed over 32,000 times; Mr. PG himself almost 15,000 times.