

COMMITTEE REPORT TO COUNCIL

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DATE: December 3, 2024

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Dr. George Davison, Chair, Prince George Heritage Commission

SUBJECT: Prince George Heritage Commission 2024 Annual Report

ATTACHMENT(S): Prince George Heritage Commission 2025 Work Plan
City of Prince George Heritage Commission Bylaw No. 8133, 2008

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council APPROVES the Prince George Heritage Commission 2025 Work Plan as attached to the report dated December 3, 2024, from the Chair of the Prince George Heritage Commission titled "Prince George Heritage Commission 2024 Annual Report."

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Mayor and Council on the progress of the Prince George Heritage Commission for the year 2024.

The Prince George Heritage Commission advises on matters regarding the protection, conservation, and interpretation of heritage resources and buildings within the Community. This year is the 30th anniversary of the Commission. The committee consists of nine (9) members appointed by Council, with terms of reference for the Commission guided by the City of Prince George Heritage Commission Bylaw No. 8133, 2008 (attached).

WORK OF THE HERITAGE COMMISSION IN 2024:

The Commission meets on March 14, June 13, September 12, and December 12. While the Commission made significant progress this year, conducting its business is challenging with only four meetings annually. Working groups have met several times outside of formal meetings.

The Heritage Registry Working Group has taken on the task of reimagining heritage in Prince George. The Register was created in 2007, and it has 15 buildings and sites on it; but almost 500 old houses, buildings and trees that have heritage value have been documented. That work was done years ago, but the world of heritage has not stood still.

Over ten years ago, the Prince George Heritage Context Study (2010) proposed a thematic framework for heritage. Now, the Commission proposes that heritage recognizes that this region has been the territory of the Lheidli T'enneh for thousands of years, and that heritage resources represent broad patterns or themes of local history, such as education, culture, economy/industry, health, transportation, recreation, neighbourhoods and view lines, to name a few. To do this, we recommend that a call be put out to the public to nominate Prince George heritage (January – March), that the Commission evaluate those submissions (April), prepare Statements of Significance (May – August), and publicize our findings (Fall 2025). To do so, we have drafted new forms to encompass the broader definition of heritage. The new forms do not just represent reconciliation but also guide the ideas of heritage away from structures only, and more in line with the context study themes.

The Heritage Interpretive Signs Working Group has had several meetings to discuss the process of developing and maintaining heritage signs throughout the City. One of the first things the new Community Heritage Commission did in the mid-90s was to erect 8 signs along the river trails. Now, there are 61 heritage signs in the city, about half of which need repair. At a rate of three (3) signs per year, it'll take 10 years to fix the damaged signs, and the current repair program does not include any consideration for updating design and content. In many cases, the language and design are outdated and contrary to the City's values of inclusivity, accessibility, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Updating design and content requires contacting those who erected the signs, agreement on next steps, and staffing and budget to carry out the work.

The PG Retired Teachers presented to Commissioners on April 15 Tiiu Lucas' book, *Local Schooling: A brief history of the first six decades of formal education in the Fraser-Fort George Region*. They have kindly provided the Commission with copies of both books. They have also done preparatory work for several signs of early PG schools, a proposal that is on hold until we figure out what to do with signs in general. Likewise, two signs the Commission proposed in 2021 are on hold as they await the Commission's reimagining of heritage signs in Prince George.

The Networking and Capacity Building working group has been working towards a stakeholder meeting for over a year. The main stakeholders include the city, the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, the Exploration Place and Prince George Public Library. Before November 14, they had not met since PG's centennial. At a recent meeting at the Exploration Place, we discussed the importance of having physical signs, but also the need to update them and publicize them. Grants are available from various sources (Heritage BC, Canadian Heritage, private foundations and corporate sponsors) but the Commission alone cannot apply for grants. For Heritage BC partnership grants up to \$20,000, the city would have to provide \$10,000; for Canadian Heritage grants up to \$250,000, the city would have to put up 25%. We agreed to continue the dialogue early in the new year. Both the Library and The Exploration Place have named representatives to join the Commission, either as regular guests or through a formal appointment.

The Heritage Fair on May 10, coordinated by Krystal Leason of the Huble Homestead/Giscome Portage Heritage Society, was a great success and a couple of us were judges. The Heritage Commission's Creative Spirit Award went to Kenna, from Beverly Elementary for her project, "A History of the Beverly Fire Department."

BUDGETARY IMPACT

For the past 4 years, the Commission has not spent any of its \$7,000 budget. We have relied on our own resources, and to date, there has been no expenditure for partnership building with the Lheidli T'enneh, Library or Exploration Place.

Meaningful revitalization and celebration of Prince George's heritage resources require financial support. The Commission would like to lead and support grant-writing for Heritage work, but this requires some financial support from the City. For example, available provincial grants cover 50% of costs, and federal funding covers 75% of costs. The Commission's membership includes experienced grant-writers, and the Exploration Place has offered to support grant writing and submission. However, applications cannot be contemplated without the support, including the financial support, of the City.

HERITAGE COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP:

Three (3) new members were appointed to the Heritage Commission on December 14, 2023, one of whom resigned in the new year; three (3) more were added in March and one (1) more in June bringing the total current membership to nine (9) members.

2024 RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Heritage Commission requests that Council pass the following recommendations to support its 2025 work plan:

1. Increase the number of Commission meetings from four (4) to seven (7) annually.
2. Endorse reconciliation with the Lheidli T'enneh through future Commission projects.
3. Provide additional financial support for updating and replacing heritage signs.
4. Increase Commission membership to twelve (12) to enhance capacity and collaboration.
5. Direct staff to investigate increasing staff support for the Commission.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Dr. George Davison, Chair
Prince George Heritage Commission