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Historic Downtown Prince George Virtual Tour 2015

Host: Deanna

- This is a virtual tour of Prince George's Historic Downtown. It includes both historic and recent photographs to illustrate the differences between Prince George's past and present.
- The Downtown Walking Tours are a free drop in program that meet at the Information Desk of the Bob Harkins Branch at the Prince George Public Library every Tuesday and Thursday at 11am from July 2nd until August 27th.
- Private and seated tours are available for bookings any time throughout the summer months.

Downtown Walking Tour Route 2015



- The route begins at the library and heads towards City Hall, then continues up George Street and 3rd Avenue. We then finish our tour on Quebec Street.

History of the Prince George Public Library



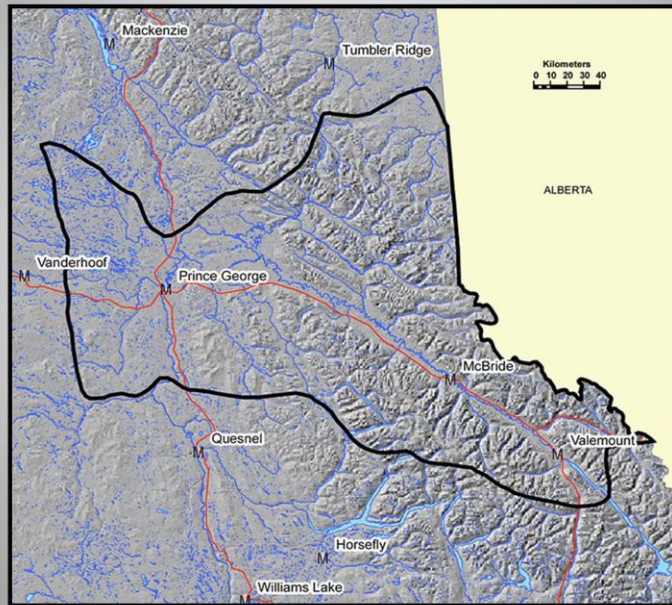
- This is the Bob Harkins branch of the Prince George Public Library; the Nechako branch is in the Hart.
- This branch was named after the late Bob Harkins in 2001.
- Bob Harkins was a library trustee, city councillor, broadcaster, local community volunteer and an avid library supporter.
- The library was designed by Graham Tudor as the final result of an architectural competition and it was completed in 1981.

Canada Games Plaza



- The Civic Centre Plaza was completed in 1994; this area includes the Civic Centre, the Four Seasons Pool and the Two Rivers Art Gallery.
- Previously the Civic Centre Plaza, the plaza was renamed the Canada Games Plaza in 2015 when Prince George hosted the Canada Winter Games.

Lheidli T'enneh Traditional Territory



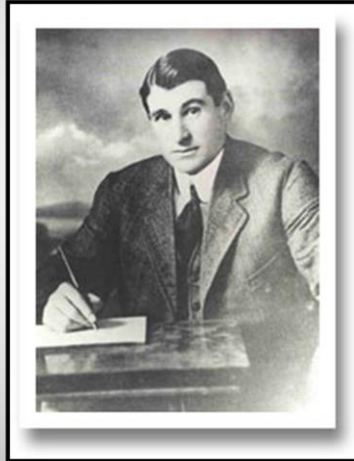
- Prince George is situated on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh, a Carrier nation whose name means 'People of Two Rivers' – those rivers being the Fraser and the Nechako, which intersect northeast of the downtown.
- The Lheidli T'enneh are the earliest known residents of the region and their village was located where Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park – previously Fort George Park – is located.
- In 1807 explorer Simon Fraser founded Fort George while exploring the Fraser river.
- In 1911 the Grande Trunk Pacific Railway purchased the land.
- By 1913 the Lheidli village was cleared and its people relocated to a reservation near Shelley.

Lheidli T'enneh



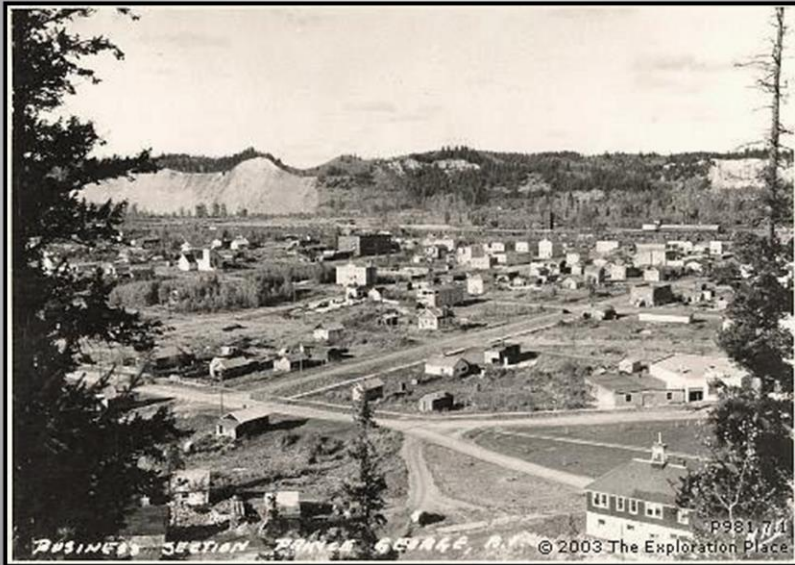
- Lheidli= “where the two rivers flow together”
- T'enneh=“the people”
- Recent archeological evidence found in the region dates their residency back 7,500-9000 years.
- Several clans make up the Lheidli T'enneh people: Frog (Lasilyoo), Bear (Sus), Grouse ('Utsut), and Beaver (Tsa).
- In 1793 Alexander Mackenzie during his second voyage to the Pacific Ocean, made contact with the Lheidli T'enneh people.
- In 2015 the Lheidli T'enneh were the official co-hosts of the Canada Winter Games that were Prince George February 13th- March 1st.
- June 2015 Fort George Park was renamed 'Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park' to commemorate the village that was once situated in the area.

W.G. Gillett – Prince George's First Mayor



- Prince George became a municipality on March 6th 1915.
- Shortly after, W.G. Gillett was elected as the first mayor.
- The name of the town was voted on and Prince George won over Fort George 153 votes to 13.

Prince George in the 1920s



- Prince George was named so for three reasons:
 1. To permanently distinguish Prince George from the other Fort George's along the railway line.
 2. Named after King George V, formerly known as Prince Edward prior to his coronation.
 3. Also named for King George V's fourth child, who never visited the city before his death in 1942.

Prince George Today



- The current population of Prince George is approximately 76,000 people.
- It is known as British Columbia's northern capital, with the main industry being forestry.
- The University of Northern British Columbia is the first new university to be built in Canada in over 25 years.
- Founded in 1990 it celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.
- This year marks Prince Georges centennial, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the city.
- Now we'll head off into some of our tour stops.

En Cha Ghuna (He Too Lives)



- This piece of art is the result of the combined effort of two local Lheidli T'enneh artists; it speaks about the history and land of our city.
- Robert Frederick crafted this canoe out of a cottonwood tree, he the carved a representation of an ancestral oral legend passed onto him by his Elders.
- Jennifer Pighin completed the tile portion in 2011 and the canoe was placed in 2012.
- The name means 'showing respect' in Carrier and the legend is one that speaks of respect and responsibility.
- There are eleven life-size regional fish on this art piece: White Sturgeon, Pink Salmon, Northern Pike Minnow, Burbot, Rainbow Trout, Bull Trout, Sockeye Salmon, Coho Salmon, Long Nose Sucker, Short Nose Sucker, and Chinook Salmon.

City Hall 1920s



- When W.G. Gillett was elected in 1915 his first task was to find a temporary location for the City Hall.
- He selected a two story building located near 3rd avenue. However, the local newspaper soon learned that the building where city officials were meeting was a former brothel and the rent was being paid directly to the notorious former Madame, Irene Jordan.
- Eventually a new location was found and in 1918 the first permanent City Hall was constructed at a cost of \$8,500.

City Hall Present Day



- This is our current City Hall, and was constructed in 1967.
- In 1975 the top three stories were added.

Cenotaph in Veteran's Plaza 1950s



- Prince George's first cenotaph was built in 1950, unfortunately after a few years the concrete began to crumble and it was replaced in 1958.
- In 2010 the entire Veteran's Plaza was expanded and redesigned, which included a new cenotaph.

Present Day Cenotaph in Veteran's Plaza



- On June 6th, 2010 The current cenotaph was dedicated in commemoration of the 66th anniversary of D-Day.
- The Cenotaph contains the names of 62 men who participated in the First World War, Second World War, Korean Conflict or the war on Afghanistan.
- It was designed to be reminiscent of the Vimy Ridge Memorial.
- Each year the Remembrance Day ceremony is held in the Veterans Plaza.

Prince George Hotel 1917



- This is the former Prince George Hotel at its George Street location. In 1914 it was the first business to officially open on George Street.
- It was initially operated as a bar by E.E. Phair who promptly shut it down when prohibition was introduced to British Columbia in 1916.
- It stood empty until 1919 when J.H. Johnson bought the property and converted into one of the most popular hotels in the city.
- J.H. Johnson was the single largest property owner in Prince George.
- During his time as Mayor in 1922 and 1923, Prince George experienced a significant lack of economic growth and very heavy taxation.

Prince George Hotel Pre-Demolition



- To conceal the lack of business at the Prince George Hotel, when a shipment of cars arrived in town for the dealerships, Johnson had them park around the hotel to make it appear busy.
- It continued to operate until 2011 when it was demolished despite protest from many community members.

Wood Innovation and Design Centre



- The building that you see now is the Wood Innovation & Design Centre.
- It is the tallest contemporary wood building in North America and opened in the fall of 2014.
- It showcases the innovative uses of wood as well as provides more opportunities for education and industry.

Shasta Cafe 1949 – George Street



- The Shasta Café was once one of the nicest restaurants in town.
- The restaurant was well known for its generous portions and reasonable prices.
- It was open from 1933 until 1978, and survived the depression.
- William Manson, the original owner retired in 1946, growing weary of the challenges that came with Second World War rationing.
- It changed ownership several times before closing in 1978.

Present Day – Shasta Café



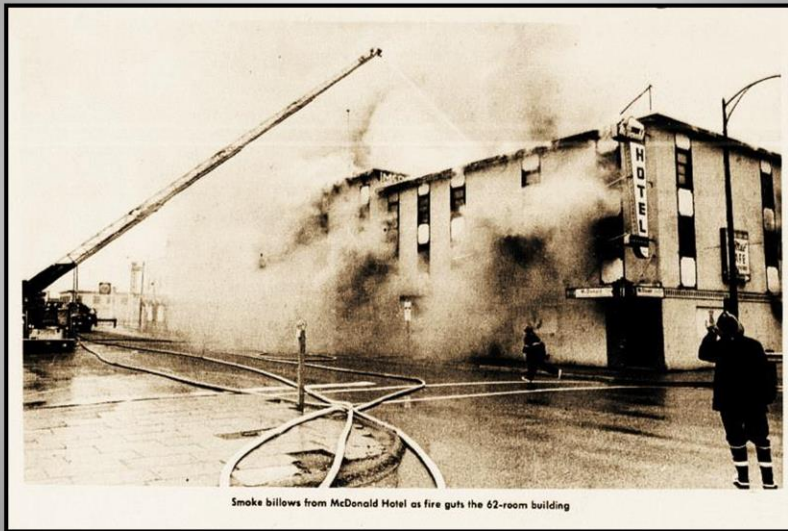
- It witnessed Prince George grow from a small town of 2,500 to a thriving city of 60,000 people.
- Its location here on George Street was recently victim to another downtown fire in March 2014.

McDonald Hotel 1949



- Where the courthouse stands now used to be the McDonald Hotel.
- Estimated to have been built between 1915-1920.
- The life-sized stuffed moose in the lobby became one of its best known features.

McDonald Hotel Fire 1970



- Unfortunately the hotel burned down in 1970 due to a juke-box catching fire, two days after it passed its fire inspection.
- It was immediately rebuilt and operated until 1991 when it was demolished to make way for the courthouse.

Present Day – McDonald Hotel (Courthouse)



- Prior to 1923, Prince George did not have a permanent courthouse, trials and hearings were held at City Hall.
- The location moved several times before settling at this location in 1996 on the corner of 3rd and George Street.

3rd Avenue Mural by Milan Basic



- In recent years public art has been added to the downtown.
- This was painted in 2011 by Milan Basic and completed in 2013.
- It is 70 feet wide by 15 feet high.
- He used a latex paint wash for the background and spray paint for the details.

3rd Avenue Mural by Milan Basic



- Milan also painted the Canada Games mural which will appear near the end of the tour.
- Public art work such as this adds vibrancy and culture to the downtown.

Mason's Café 3rd Avenue 1949



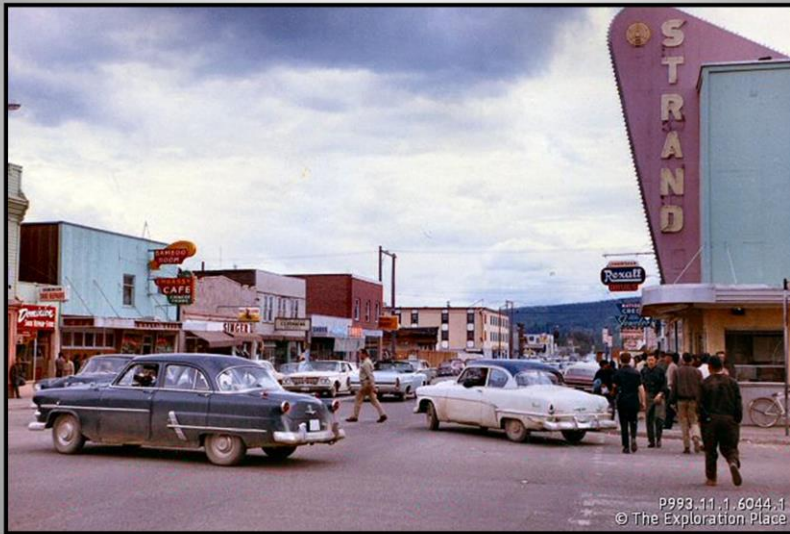
- Built in 1948 and demonstrating the classic Art Deco style with the rounded entry, strong horizontal lines, and evenly spaced windows.
- On opening day in 1949 the owner gave out free ice cream to local children and supposedly tore a ligament in his shoulder from scooping 300 hard ice cream cones.

Present Day – Mason's Café



- Due to its success as a café it became Mason's Steak & Chops.
- It is now home to the White Goose Bistro, which has been called one of the best restaurants in Canada by *Enroute* magazine in 2014.

The Strand Theatre 3rd Ave 1965



- This was the Strand Theatre, open from 1926 until 1976.
- It opening with a showing of the 1925 film “Freshman” and closed with “The Exorcist”
- It was a popular activity to dine at Mason’s and then cross the street to catch a film at the Strand.
- In 1943, John Mallock broke into the Strand Theatre in an attempt to obtain the safe containing over \$600 in dimes and nickels.
- He entered the building after midnight through a ventilation duct on the roof and lowered himself by rope into the projection booth.

Present Day – Strand Theatre



- Two patrolling officers heard Mallock and discovered him attempting to dig his way out of the basement.
- One of the officers interviewed said the crime would have been a success if Mallock had, had more time.
- He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 5 years in prison.
- The Hospital Employees' Union building now stands in its place.

Post Office 3rd Avenue 1953



- On 3rd and Quebec Street is the site of the original post office, which was constructed in 1939.
- Newcomers to the city looked for a bank and a post office as good indicators of the city's potential and moved on if they did not have these services.
- The post master job was one of the highest paying at \$13.00 per day compared to a chefs wage of \$2.00-\$3.00 per day.

Present Day – Intersect Youth & Family Services



- After the post office moved to a larger space, the building has been home to a number of businesses including: a telegraph station, the first transmission tower for the CBC, and now it houses Intersect, a youth and family services building.

W.D. West Studios 1970



- Wally West was a nationally acclaimed photographer who first opened this studio in 1946 on George Street.
- He brought the one hour photo to Prince George, prior to this film was sent to Vancouver to be developed and this took weeks to be delivered.
- Evidence of his financial success, he owned an airplane which he used to commute to various jobs.
- In 1938 he used photography in a court case to determine whether or not cheques had been altered to commit fraud.
- This marked the first instance in BC courts in which photography was used.

Present Day – W.D. West Studios 3rd Ave



- West retired in the 1990s and sold his business to a long time employee.
- In 1991 he sold his personal collection of over 56,000 photos to the city of Prince George, which later donated the collection to the Exploration Place.
- These photos document 50 years of growth and can be viewed on the Exploration Place website.

Northern Hardware 1960



- In 1919, Alex Moffat and Frank Whitmore bought Northern Lumber and turned it into Northern Hardware.
- Since then it has become the longest running family owned business in the city.

Present Day – Northern Hardware



- Since its opening day their motto has been “if we don’t have it, you don’t need it.”
- In its early years, the Northern was one of the first accounts at the Bank of Montreal with the account number 000000000005.
- In 1946 Frank Whitmore sold his share of the company to Moffat.
- It had many locations over the years but settled at this one in 1948.

Library Space 1930s – George Street



- The library was housed in several locations in the early years.
- The first borrowing library was set up by the First Presbyterian Church in 1910.
- In the 1920s one could borrow books out of the back of Pittman's Music store for \$0.10.
- In the 1930s it was in a small room located in the above building.

Present Day – Former Municipal Library



- In 1961, it moved to this building, designed by local architect Trelle Morrow.
- Bill Fraser, became the first full time librarian.
- The Bob Harkins branch where the main library is currently located is two and a half times larger than this building and ten days after opening, circulation increased by 150%.
- This is now a Senior's Activity Centre.

McInnis Building Supplies – 4th and Quebec Street



- This is another long-time business of downtown Prince George.
- John McInnis was a carpenter and contractor who moved to Prince George in 1910 by horse-drawn sleigh.
- He built the first office building in South Fort George and many of the early houses.

Present Day – McInnis Lighting



- He opened McInnis Building Supplies in 1920, and worked there into his 70's before retiring.
- McInnis Lighting is still owned and operated by the family and remains on the site of the original lumber yard.

Corless House – Prince George Historic House



- The Corless Family lived in this house on 4th Avenue.
- This house was built in 1917 and is one of Prince George's few remaining historic houses.
- Richard Corless was assisting the Sandiford Undertakers in Central Fort George when the Spanish Flu pandemic struck in 1918. The Sandiford's fled the area, leaving the Corless family with all of the equipment.
- Tom Corless, 11 years old at the time drove a Ford Model T ambulance picking up the bodies of the deceased.

Present Day – Corless House



- The Corless family continued as the undertakers of Prince George until 1936 when Harold Assman bought them out.
- They left this house in 1947 and it has been various businesses since then.
- For the past 9 years it has been the location of specialty store J.J. Springer which closed its doors in 2014.

Canada Games Mural by Milan Basic – Quebec St



- Milan Basic created this piece on 5th and Quebec Street in honour of the 2015 Canada Winter Games.
- It was painted in July 2012, done over four nights to ensure no one saw it prior to its completion.
- It is 27 feet high and 20 feet wide with a latex base and spray paint detailing.
- The Games ran from Feb 13th- March 1st 2015.
- Prince George is the first city in British Columbia to host a winter edition of the Games and the Lheidli T'enneh are the first Official Host First Nation for the Games.
- The Carrier language has been incorporated along with French and English into the marketing of the event.

Simon Fraser Hotel 1964



- This is the final stop of our tour.
- The Simon Fraser Hotel was named for the famous explorer who established Fort George.
- It opened in February 1960 and cost approximately \$1.2 million to build.
- It was the most modern and luxurious hotel in the region, with music wired into the rooms, indirect lighting, mahogany-panelled lobby walls, ash wood imported from Japan, and wall-to-wall carpeted floors.
- The manager of the Simon Fraser Hotel once said his guests would get “their first taste of a world wider than the Northern frontier”

Present Day – Simon Fraser Hotel



- There were numerous hotels being built in Prince George and eventually the Simon Fraser Hotel went bankrupt.
- The Days Inn recently closed its doors in 2014 due to a sale; though there are plans to reopen as a Holiday Inn.



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Interested in learning more?

- Check out the **Local History** section downtown at the Bob Harkins branch of the Prince George Public Library
- Browse online collections on the Exploration Place website:
www.theexplorationplace.com
- This virtual tour can be found at:
www.lib.pg.bc.ca/walkingtour



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Thank you!



- This document was adapted and expanded in June 2015 by Deanna Foster, Heritage Project Assistant for the Prince George Public Library.
- List of sources and photo credits are available upon request:
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