

Langley Heritage Society

{fall 2025}

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"Providing the window into the past to preserve Langley's heritage for today and tomorrow"

President's Message

As your directors look back at 2025 we feel very satisfied with what has been achieved. We visited eight of our restored and managed sites on November 29 and enjoyed lovely short visits with our tenants. Township Councillor Barb Martens joined us for part of our tour.

Projects this year included bathroom renovations, veranda repairs, exterior painting, new fences, chicken house improvements, and numerous appliance replacements. We are looking forward to seeing the signage in place at the Old Yale Barn to explain the history of that part of Langley.

We enjoyed great numbers at the CNR Station and our planning new programming for the 2026 season.

I wish to thank everyone who has attended our speaker series and the Douglas Day Dinner. Myself and your board of directors wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Fred Pepin
LHS President

"The Langley Heritage Society is located on the traditional and unceded lands of the Kwantlen, Katzie, Matsqui, and Semiahmoo peoples. We respect this land and its original occupants."

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Society News

Remembrance Day 2025

A crystal clear Remembrance Day drew large numbers to Murrayville, Langley City, Fort Langley and Aldergrove. The Langley Heritage Society honoured the sacrifices of so many and the profound costs of war by laying wreaths at each cenotaph.

A 2023 Ipsos Reid poll for the non-profit Historica Canada indicates many Canadians are not aware of



Ceremonies at Murrayville were led by LHS member Rosemary Genberg. Photo Glenn Disney



Above: LHS member June Speedie and family presented a wreath in memory of Daisy & John Speedie at the Aldergrove Cenotaph ceremony conducted in front of the Legion. Photo Mark Forsythe

Right: Kwantlen First Nations took part in drumming and singing at the Fort Langley Cenotaph. Photo Fort Langley Remembrance Day



Glen Valley Treasure

The 1917 Hassall House was restored by Metro Parks, with help from the Langley Heritage Society. Born in Birmingham, England in 1886 and a veteran of the Boer and First World Wars, Jack Hassall and his wife, Christina, bought the house in 1918. The riverboat 'Skeena' used to dock near the house at the foot of 272nd Street. Adjacent 'Two-Bit Bar' reflects the fee charged for fishermen to park in Mrs. Hassall's parking lot. Today it's part of Glen Valley Park.

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From Canada's Historic Places: "Although a typical pioneer home, this house is one of a few remaining in the Glen Valley area that was built on land acquired from the Soldiers' Settlement Board. It tells an important story in the development of northeast Langley, and in particular the community of Glen Valley, during the early 20th Century.

This area was first settled early in Langley's history, as it was near the Hudson's Bay Fort, the land was flat and fertile, and it was adjacent to the Fraser River. Settlement picked up again in the early 20th Century with the arrival of the Canadian Northern Railway line after 1910."



Hassall Residence. Photo Mark Forsythe

Heritage Apples Celebrated

Station manager Helen Williams represented the Langley Heritage Society at DRBIPA's 20th annual **Derby Reach Park Day** on October 4, 2025. There was live music, apple tasting, family-friendly activities, and guided tours of the heritage apple orchard and the forest to learn about the history and ecology of the heritage area.

The Langley Heritage Society assisted with the restoration of Houston House and the Karr/Mercer barn. It's another example of a community-led restoration that combined the resources of the society and the GVRD.



Photo taken by Dan Ferguson

From Historic Places we know this 1876 barn was one of the earliest hay-drying barns constructed in the Chilliwack area and one of the oldest extant barns in the Fraser Valley. "It's an important physical reminder of pioneer farming and building techniques." Relocating the barn was the only way to save it as the land was to be transformed into Minter Gardens. "It was common practice in the farming community to take down and move a barn when necessary. It speaks to the frugal and practical nature of a rural community. Its new location on the Derby farmsite contributes to the overall educational value of the site. The site was originally occupied by the first Hudson's Bay Company Fort in 1827 and later by the Townsite of Derby (1858-60)."

Thin Ice - A Christmas Story

By Mark Forsythe

The flood plain beside the Salmon River was transformed into a vast sheet of ice. Coyote tracks traced a long arc on a fresh skiff of snow; grey smoke curled skyward from chimneys as the wood piles drew down. Down the Canadian National tracks in Glen Valley a crew was thawing out switches before the train from the east rolled by. It's mid-December 1930. Men have been riding the rails from distant places, enduring the mountain country's frigid temperatures, setting up make-shift "jungles" beside the tracks. They sleep beneath wooden stakes and old grain bags, and if they're lucky, later line up for bread and stew.



A boy kicks his toe at ice chips that skitter across the wooden station platform. Each year his uncle had sent a Christmas box from Edmonton, but this year felt different. He wasn't sure why. Adults around him were speaking in whispers, especially after everything went haywire in October last year. "Black Tuesday" they called it. The radio kept saying people need to brace for hard times. "Hold onto your job." With so many sawmills closing down, that wasn't going to be easy. Farmers worked those jobs for 30 cents an hour just to keep things going. And fishermen — how could they survive on 1 cent a pound for their salmon catch? Buying gas had become so expensive that some folks were hooking up horses to pull their cars, calling them Bennett Buggies as they thumbed noses at the PM.



Photo Mark Forsythe

Everything around the boy was changing fast. The VV & E Railway had stopped running trains through Langley, its tracks were now destined to be torn up. Even Richard Simpson, the station agent at Fort Langley, had called it a day and retired with his wife Mary. The boy already missed them whenever he came hunting for a telegram. Then again, it wasn't all bad. His mother was bartering backyard eggs for butter. All the kids were

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wearing old clothes, underwear made from flour sacks and shoes stuffed with cardboard. At least they were all together. People were helping each other as best they could. The Lattimers at Milner left a mark on their fence to let people know they could knock on the door and get a meal. When people walked by their house on the way to Murrayville to pick up relief cheques, Mrs. Lattimer pulled down the blinds. She didn't want her kids to see who was in dire need. Others did the same.

"Boy! A message for you." The new station agent was calling him from the telegraph doorway. "Something for you on the next train." This wafted over him like a fresh chinook breeze. Uncle Ted hadn't forgotten. Christmas Day arrived and the flood plain was still as smooth as a plate of glass. He could see bent grasses and a horseshoe beneath the ice. The boy pulled on his new skates (they were slightly used). He tossed a puck onto the ice and watched it rocket and bounce across the surface. His blades cut and crunched into the ice, frigid air burned his cheeks as he chased after the puck. Like a freight train steaming into the future.

School Programs Return!



Visit

Explore

Learn

Program fees: \$202.50 per class (50 people max)

Archaeology Adventure (Grades 6-7)

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday
9:30 to 11:00am | 12:00 to 1:30pm
Location: salishan Place by the River

Step into the shoes of an archaeologist for a day! In this 90-minute hands-on program, students will engage in a simulated excavation, unearthing replica artifacts, documenting their findings, and analyzing their significance. They will explore the technologies and activities represented by the artifacts, gaining a deeper understanding of past cultures and the importance of archaeological practices.



Multiple construction issues delayed the opening of the new arts, culture and heritage centre, salishan Place by the River, but this fall the schools program has returned with the support of volunteer docents, and financial contributions from the Langley Heritage Society. Our society sponsors student visits from nine schools by covering program delivery costs and bus travel. We also sponsor the classroom spaces in the facility through a \$60,000 donation. Alex Arboleda is Education Programs Curator and provided an outline of what's being offered during this school year.

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Two docent-led programs

- Archaeology Adventures (Grades 6-7)
- Colonization in the Fraser Valley (Grades 4-6)

Instructor-led program

- 1920s Schoolhouse Experience at Lochiel School (Grades 3-6)

Two self-guided programs

- Nature Exploration Tour (all ages)
- Fort Langley Community Heritage Walk (all ages)

The schools sponsored by the Langley Heritage Society include: Douglas Park Community School, Langley Meadows Community School, Nikomekl Elementary, Betty Gilbert Middle School, Parkside Elementary, Shortreed Community School, H.D. Stafford Middle School, Willoughby Elementary School and Yorkson Middle School.

Our society is excited to see youth explore the rich history and pre-history in this part of the Fraser Valley. We also encourage youth through the annual Bays Blackhall scholarship, and co-sponsor youth music performances each summer at the CNR Station in conjunction with the Fort Langley Jazz and Arts Festival.

Douglas Day Dinner

A hearty thank you to Pierce Smith, curator at the Fort Langley National Historic Site and a director with the Langley Heritage Society, who shared fascinating stories about the legacy of Sir James Douglas. The annual Douglas Day Dinner at the Fort Langley Community Hall reminds us of his many achievements, multicultural heritage and the relationships he forged to create what became British Columbia in 1858.

As ever, it was a delicious meal from Valley Caterers and a chance for about 70 members to reconnect. Thanks also to one of the society's founding directors, Gordon Yusko, for joining us, and Grant Rawstron from the Fort Langley Legacy Foundation, who outlined early plans to acknowledge the 200th anniversary of the establishment of Fort Langley in 2027. The dinner wouldn't be possible without the organizing skills of Dave and Donna Buckley.



Photo Glenn Disney

Director's Tour



Directors with the Langley Heritage Society recently visited properties that our society has restored and manages. Each has tenants who care about local heritage and assist with the upkeep of these buildings. Learn more about our 40 year history of restored buildings here: <https://langleyheritage.ca/restored-buildings/>



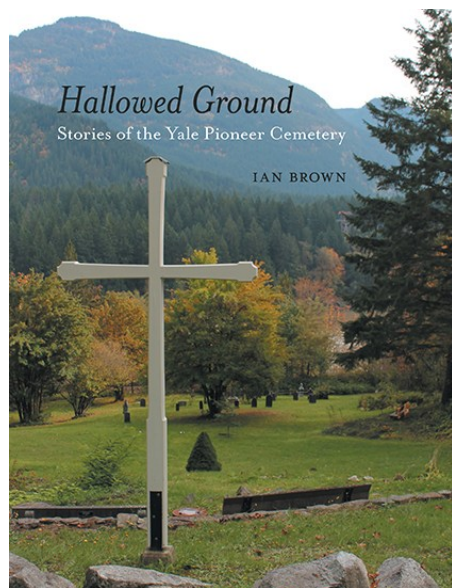
Various snapshots from the eight properties visited on the 2025 director's tour. We're grateful for Township Councillor Barb Martens joining us for part of the day. Photos Mark Forsythe, Helen Williams

Mark Your Calendar

The Langley Heritage Society **Speaker Series** continues through the winter at Milner Chapel.

Where 6716—216th Street, Langley
Time 7 pm

January 20, 2026: Ian Brown
Hallowed Ground: Stories of the Yale Pioneer Cemetery



February 16, 2026
Family Day
CNR Station OPEN 10am—4pm

February 21, 2026
Member Heritage Tea & Social
Milner Chapel
Watch for more details.

Annual General Meeting
Date: Friday, May 1, 2026
Where: Fort Langley Community Hall
9167 Glover Road, Fort Langley
Time: 5:30 pm doors open



Fraser Highway, heading east to Langley with Mount Baker in the distance. 176th and Fry's Corner is at bottom of the hill — once a popular place to skate. Photo City of Vancouver Archives

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Langley Heritage Society wishes to express our gratitude to all our volunteers and supporters who contribute to our projects.

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