

(Draft 2) For publication in the PG Citizen Vision Supplement...

'Golden Raven' Cultural Marketing Plan Takes Flight This Spring

The Regional District of Fraser Fort George is launching an extensive marketing campaign aimed at promoting the cultural attractions in the region. Currently, the Regional District provides funding to eight cultural facilities in the region, including the Two Rivers Art Gallery, Exploration Place, Prince George Railway and Forestry Museum, Huble Homestead, MacKenzie & District Museum, Whistle Stop Gallery in McBride, Valley Museum and Archives in McBride and the Valemout and Area Museum.

Two years ago, the Board approved a Regional Cultural Plan brought forward by the Select Committee on a Regional Cultural Plan, under the leadership of Don Bassermann. The plan highlighted the opportunities and efficiencies that could be realized if the attractions worked collectively to market and brand themselves. Thanks to a partnership with Tourism Prince George, UBCM and Tourism BC's Community Tourism Foundations program, funding to fully develop a cultural marketing plan was provided.

Stephanie Killam, current Chair of the Regional District's Cultural Services Advisory Committee says the project has many objectives including increased awareness of the cultural identity of the region, increased revenues and visitations for the facilities and the region as a whole, understanding of the value of the cultural identity, and to engage in promoting that cultural identity. "Northern BC is rich in culture and heritage, and we wanted to develop a plan that would not only promote our facilities, but highlight the importance of celebrating culture and heritage in the region," says Killam.

The first step in developing the marketing plan was to create a brand that reflects the region, connects with the audience and has relevance to the project. After much consultation and research, "Golden Raven" was officially approved by the Board in June of 2007 as the brand for the Regional Cultural Marketing plan. The Golden Raven was selected for many reasons. The Raven is year round bird that is native to the region and is deeply rooted in aboriginal history. It possesses human qualities, and is considered smart, playful and resourceful. Gold is a color of value that implies quality and is a reminder of the gold rush days and the opening up of the region.

The Golden Raven brand will ensure visitors enjoy a quality experience when visiting a cultural site bearing the Golden Raven designation. Only cultural venues which meet quality standards are privileged to display the Golden Raven.

The Golden Raven program is officially launching this spring. The program has a \$110,000 budget for the first year, and includes extensive advertising in tourism and trade publications, local and regional media outlets. Visitors can learn more about Golden Raven experiences online with a new website that will be launched in the coming weeks (www.goldenraven.ca).

Support materials such as brochures, rack cards, site signage and a passport program to encourage visits to all Golden Raven facilities have all been developed.

“We are very excited to launch the program. We have some phenomenal facilities in this region that offer visitors a unique experience and appreciation for the culture and heritage in this area. This program allows us to vigorously promote what we have, and we look forward to sharing the Golden Raven experience with visitors from throughout the region, the province and beyond,” says Killam.