Ashcroft monument honours Chinese Canadian legacy

ASHCROFT – A commemorative monument unveiled today in the historic Ashcroft Chinese Cemetery recognizes the contributions of Chinese Canadians to B.C.’s rich cultural, historical and economic mosaic.

The restored Chinese altar with a commemorative bronze plaque is housed in a beautiful gazebo accompanied by framed graves with markers to show respect towards the Chinese pioneers buried there. It also serves as a permanent reminder of the Chinese workers who helped to complete the Canadian Pacific Railway in the late 1800s.

Further, the monument honours the Chinese Canadian farmers who constructed irrigation systems for the vegetable canneries in the community where many Chinese people also worked. Their presence still resonates throughout Ashcroft’s farming industry.

The monument is the third in a series of up to 15 markers – interpretive signs, plaques and monuments – that will be established in communities throughout B.C. in coming months. The Ashcroft monument was created in consultation with the Rotary Club of Ashcroft/Cache Creek and the Ashcroft & District Lions Club. This project is the result of the B.C. government’s commitment to create a Chinese legacy for all British Columbians, stemming from the May 2014 apology by B.C.’s legislative assembly.

As one of several provincial Chinese legacy projects completed or currently underway, the commemorative monuments project resulted from a report on the Chinese historical wrongs consultations. The report includes a recommendation for one or more regional plaques or monuments to be created to commemorate the positive contributions of Chinese Canadians to B.C.’s history, culture and prosperity.

The first marker was celebrated in the community of Kelowna in December 2016.

Quotes:

Teresa Wat, Minister of International Trade and Minister Responsible for Asia Pacific Strategy and Multiculturalism –

“B.C.’s Chinese community has played a pivotal role in shaping British Columbia into what it is today. This monument commemorates Ashcroft’s Chinese Canadian pioneers and stands as an enduring testament to their many contributions to Ashcroft and to British Columbia.”

Jackie Tegart, MLA for Fraser/Nicola –

“Ashcroft’s Chinese Canadian community, including railway workers, farmers and merchants,
feature prominently in the story of Ashcroft’s rich multicultural heritage. This monument not only preserves the May 2014 apology in the legislature, it also creates a permanent legacy for all British Columbians and serves as a reminder that B.C. welcomes people of all cultures and backgrounds.”

**Karma Kubbernus, president, Rotary Club of Ashcroft/Cache Creek –**

“Without the effort and skill of the Chinese who settled in Ashcroft, establishing businesses and restaurants and using their talents for irrigation and cultivation on local ranches and farms, the history of Ashcroft would be very different. This commemorative monument honours the many Chinese Canadian pioneers whose hard work and commitment to family and community will forever be remembered and appreciated.”

**Gordon Daily, president, Ashcroft & District Lions Club –**

“The Ashcroft community, led by our local Lions and Rotary service clubs, has long been committed to ensuring that our historic Chinese cemetery is lovingly restored and maintained as a tribute to the many Chinese Canadians who are buried there. This monument helps us to ensure that all who read the inscriptions know that Ashcroft values and respects the many Chinese people who have helped to build our community into the vibrant and caring place it is today.”

**Charles Tsui, grandson of Ashcroft Chinese Canadian farmer –**

“My mother was permanently separated from her father when he travelled to Canada to work on the railway. Years later, our family discovered that our grandfather, Yuk Sum Chow, later worked as a farmer in the Ashcroft area and is buried in the Chinese cemetery there. This monument honours my grandfather and the many other Chinese men and women who made great sacrifices in search of a better life in Canada.”

**Quick Facts:**

- The B.C. government provided $1 million for the Chinese legacy projects – $100,000 of this funding is designated for the provincial monuments project.
- Locations for markers and monuments were recommended by the Legacy Initiatives Advisory Council (LIAC), which provides advice to government on B.C.’s Chinese legacy projects.
- Extensive provincial consultations with British Columbia’s Chinese Canadian community, including community forums held in Kamloops in December 2013 and Kelowna in January 2014, led to the decision to establish this monument. Government heard from local community members who were directly and indirectly impacted by historical discriminatory legislation.

**Learn More:**

Chinese legacy projects: [http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/multiculturalism-anti-racism/chinese-legacy-bc](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/multiculturalism-anti-racism/chinese-legacy-bc)
