



THE OPENING OF THE HARRISON VISITOR CENTRE & SASQUATCH MUSEUM

In partnership with Sts'ailes and the Rick Hansen Foundation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAY 1, 2024

(Harrison River Valley, BC) With great pride, Tourism Harrison, with the support of Sts'ailes and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs, announces the official opening of the Harrison Visitor Centre & Sasquatch Museum, sharing the history of the Sa:sq'ets and Harrison River Valley.

"We are honoured to open the doors to the new visitor centre and museum after receiving government funding three years ago alongside 50 other innovative tourism projects," says Robert Reyerse, outgoing Executive Director of Tourism Harrison. "The funding allowed us to strengthen our partnerships with Sts'ailes and the Rick Hansen Foundation, creating an accessible museum and an enhanced multi-media and sensory visitor experience."

The word Sasquatch is thought to be an anglicized mispronunciation of the Sts'ailes word Sa:sq'ets, meaning 'hairy man'. The Sts'ailes People believe the Sa:sq'ets is a spiritual being that can vanish into the spirit realm at will and is the primary caretaker that watches over the land. The Sa:sq'ets is an integral aspect of their cultural identity and spiritual beliefs, so much so that their adopted logo is a stylized image of the Sasquatch as is the Sts'ailes national flag. Their experiences with the Sa:sq'ets dates back to time immemorial with oral stories shared throughout the generations.

"It is an honor to be a part of the Harrison Visitor Centre & Sasquatch Museum planning committee and to contribute an authentic Sts'ailes perspective on the Sa:sq'ets. The stories, culture, teachings and history of our People with the Sa:sq'ets are to be respected for future generations. The connection to our sacred lands and healing are to be portrayed with a deep sense of pride and reverence with the Sa:sq'ets. We are pleased with the museum and hope you enjoy the displays," says Boyd Peters, Rights & Title Director of Sts'ailes.

Three times the size of the original museum, the Harrison Visitor Centre & Sasquatch Museum's main feature is the 'Land of the Giants' exhibit highlighting the region's renowned indigenous wildlife — the majestic bald eagle and prehistoric sturgeon — along with the legendary Sasquatch. The ecologically rich, Harrison River, is one of the world's most protected and productive salmon eco-systems earning the title of Canada's first certified salmon stronghold. The abundant salmon attract tens of thousands of eagles each winter and the river is home to the modern-day dinosaur.

The Harrison Visitor Centre & Sasquatch Museum also includes a recreated Sts'ailes longhouse, an interactive kiosk, artifacts, carvings, foot castings, interpretive panels, and fact-driven storyboards from prominent researchers, such as Thomas Steenburg.

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In process is the application to receive the **Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification**.

“Accessibility takes into consideration the many different ways people experience their community and the world around them. Ensuring spaces are accessible, safe, and inclusive means that people of all abilities can fully participate and engage in the places where they live, learn, work, and play. By focusing on accessibility and inclusivity at a gold-level standard in the design and construction of a new facility, the Harrison Visitor Centre & Sasquatch Museum will lead the way in ensuring visitors feel welcomed and can immerse themselves in the history, artifacts, and lore of this beautiful region,” says Rick Hansen, Founder of the Rick Hansen Foundation.

The construction of the Harrison Visitor Centre & Sasquatch Museum was, primarily, funded through **British Columbia’s Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program’s Destination Development stream** and the **Government of Canada’s Enabling Accessibility Fund**.

“Our government is proud to support people who work in the tourism sector and visitors who travel throughout the province,” says Lana Popham, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport. “Tourism infrastructure projects like the Harrison Visitor Centre & Sasquatch Museum are good for visitors, good for communities and good for the economy. The Sasquatch Museum is a great example of how spaces like this create a more vibrant British Columbia for everyone.”

A community open house is held until May 4, 2024 with the grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony taking place on June 21, 2024, aligning with Harrison’s **Sasquatch Days celebration**.

For more information on the Harrison Visitor Centre & Sasquatch Museum, see this **web page**. Images for publication may be **downloaded here** and interviews will be arranged upon request with the incoming Executive Director, Stephanie Gallamore.

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ABOUT THE HARRISON RIVER VALLEY

The Harrison River Valley communities — Harrison Hot Springs, Agassiz, Harrison Mills, and the District of Kent — have united. Tourism Harrison is now covering the Harrison River Valley. The region shares land with the traditional territories of Sts’ailes, Seabird Island, Sq’ewá:lxw, Cheam, Douglas, Leq’a:mel, Samahquam, Sq’ewlets, and Skatin. Located in the Fraser Valley, the region is blessed with wildlife, natural hot springs, glacier-fed lakes and rivers, and mountain vistas, with a brand essence speaking to “breathing and healing together in the wild”. The Harrison River Valley is located an hour from the Canada-US border and is 1.5 hours from downtown Vancouver.

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