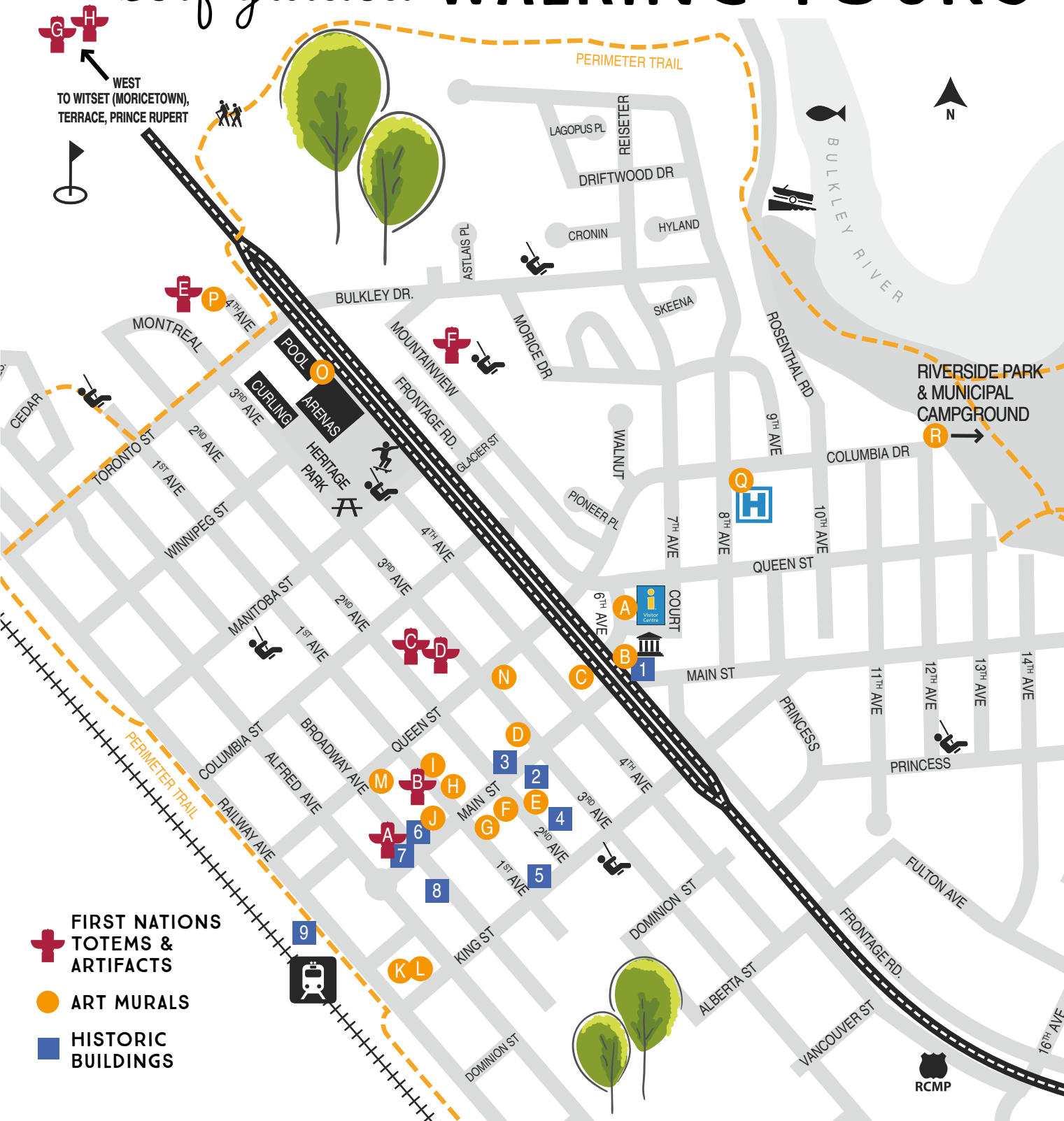


# self-guided WALKING TOURS



## Explore SMITHERS



3 SELF GUIDED WALKING TOURS



Totem poles are cultural installations created by First Nations of the Pacific Northwest to commemorate and honour ancestry, histories, people and events. Discover, learn and appreciate more about this culture as you experience this tour.



### Niwhnitsiy: Our Crests

**1089 Main Street • Bovill Square** • Adorning the top of this outdoor community stage are five nitsiy (crests)—created by Witsuwit'en artist and master carver Chief Dziggot (Ron Austin Sr.)—representing the five Witsuwit'en didikhnī (clans): Gidimt'en, C'ilhts'ekhyu, Likhsilyu, Tsayu, and Likhts'amisyu. An information placard in front of the square on Main Street provides interesting details and more information.



### Witsuwit'en Art & Artifacts

**3873 1st Ave • Office of the Wet'suwet'en** • Inside the entrance to the Office of the Wet'suwet'en. The office is open Mon-Fri 8:30-4:30, vclosed for lunch.



### Coast Mountain College Pole

**3966 2nd Ave** • This 28-foot red cedar totem pole carved by Witsuwit'en master carver Chief Dziggot (Ron Austin Sr.), apprentice James Madam and Ron Austin Jr. proudly welcomes you to the Coast Mountain College, Smithers Campus. The pole was designed by the carvers with input from local Witsuwit'en chiefs. There are five clans represented on the totem pole with significance as to the order they appear. At the bottom, in the most significant spot, is the local Gidimt'en Clan (Wolf/Bear) in whose territory this pole resides, represented with a copper shield as a sign of wealth and knowledge; C'ilhts'ekhyu Clan (Big Frog) is represented with a night hawk crest; Likhsilyu Clan (Small Frog) is the caribou crest; Tsayu Clan (Beaver) has—instead of the traditional chewing stick—a college graduation scroll; Likhts'amisyu Clan (Fireweed) is the killerwhale and fireweed crest. Many community members and groups of secondary and elementary school students came to visit with the artists, watch the progress as they were carving, and helped by bringing water to soak the pole, supplying the carvers with much-appreciated coffee and pastries and became part of the totem pole experience. The pole was raised in 2011 along with several feasts, blessings, and a community Potlach held nearby at the Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Hall.



### Brother Pole

**3955 3rd Ave • Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Hall** • This 11-foot "Brother Pole" is a memorial to honour the missing and murdered Indigenous men, boys, LGBTQ+, and survivors of residential schools. The pole stands as a safe and sacred place of healing for family and friends to mourn, especially important for the missing without headstones. Carved by Nisga'a and Tsimshian artist Mike Dangeli with help from his wife and two sons, the pole was gifted to the Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre in 2021 from the Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS North West Region). The Brother Pole is sister to the Grandmother pole, also carved by Dangeli in Kitsumkalum near Terrace which honours the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.



## FIRST NATIONS TOTEMS & ARTIFACTS WALKING TOUR



### The Healing Pole

**4408 3rd Ave. Smithers Secondary School**

• In reaction to a racist graffiti attack on the school in the late 1990s, the high school student body came up with the idea to create "The Healing Pole". A steering committee of primarily Witsuwit'en people involved students on the project aimed to increase greater awareness of Witsuwit'en culture in the community, encourage a sense of belonging among First Nations students in the local schools, and to inspire all nations to unite as one. The 24-foot pole was carved from Red Cedar over a period of six months by principal carvers Delgamuukw (Earl Muldoe), James Madam, Warner Naziel, Robert Sebastian, Darryl Brooks and Ron Austin. The five Witsuwit'en clans are represented: Bear, Killer Whale, Beaver, and Big Frog holding the Small Frog. The pole was raised in 1999 along with a community Potlach held nearby at the Smithers Civic Centre.   
➡ Learn about the "Honouring Our Elders" Legacy Portrait Project—on the wall behind the pole (next page).



### Walnut Park Totem Pole

**4092 Mountainview Ave. Walnut Park Elementary School** • The

Walnut Park Totem Pole was created when the new elementary school was built upon land, formerly known as "Indian Town", to recognize the area's complicated history. The pole was raised in 2023 at a large gathering and is symbolic of the School District and community's acknowledgment of Witsuwit'en territory and a commitment to honour the story of this land.

This site was once home to many Witsuwit'en families, which became known as the community of Indian Town from the 1920s to the 1970s. In the 1930s, Jack Joseph, a Witsuwit'en leader, lost a daughter at Lejac Residential School in an accident. He and other parents were aware of the terrible treatment and conditions their children experienced at the school. As a concerned father, Mr. Joseph tried to enroll his other children at the public school in Smithers but was informed that Indigenous children had to attend residential school. He and a number of Witsuwit'en residents started a tax revolt, fighting for the right for their children to attend public school. In protest, many Witsuwit'en people in Indian Town refused to pay their taxes. On the basis of unpaid taxes, their deeds reverted to the provincial government and services to their homes were cut. Many of the lots were later purchased by the Town of Smithers and eventually, the residents of Indian Town were forced to leave their homes and relocate.



Master carver and Witsuwit'en hereditary Chief Dziggot (Ron Austin Sr.) and 'Ksan Gitksan artist Dan Yunkws designed and carved the Walnut Park Pole which became a collaborative project with community members and students from Walnut Park School. The bear represents the territory the pole sits on. The bear has two faces: bear and wolf. On the back of the wolf-bear there is an open walnut with children climbing out of its centre. The children grow and change into other creatures,

traditional figures of clans and crests from within the region. As they grow, they become wise until they reach the potential of an eagle: all-knowing and all-seeing. The ten artifacts were carved in a spiral formation creating a 360-degree totem pole – the first on Witsuwit'en territory. The ideas behind the transitional carvings, between the figures, were inspired by the students and visitors during the carving process.

The process of creating this pole is a current day act towards reconciliation. The displacement of Witsuwit'en families is part of the colonial history of the Bulkley Valley. Learning about this history is an important step towards reconciliation and building better relationships in Smithers, on traditional Witsuwit'en territory, and in the rest of Canada. *With info from "Walnut Park Totem Pole: Story of Indian Town and the Walnut Park Totem Pole" pamphlet, published by School District 54*

Watch a video of the Walnut Park Pole raising under Exhibits at [www.bvmuseum.org](http://www.bvmuseum.org) and, to learn more, visit the Bulkley Valley Museum to see 'Alhk'ikh Ts'édilh (Walking Together): The Shared Histories Exhibition.



### The Residential School Pole (in Witset, 30km west of Smithers)

**204 Beaver Rd, Witset (in front of the Witset Health Centre)** • To honour residential school survivors, Witsuwit'en master carver Chief Dziggot (Ron Austin Sr.) worked with Hagwilnehlh (Ron A. Mitchell) who, for six years, met with local survivors to plan this pole raised in Witset in 2013. From the bottom, Likhsilyu—the clan and territory where this pole stands—is the crest of Caribou and Small Frog.

Above, four small children with tears represent the four generations that suffered through the residential school era. Next, a six-foot void space represents the culture and hereditary teachings the kids missed out on while at residential school. Above, the same four children now crawling, clinging to each other for support, tears turned into smiles, one child with foot stuck in the void space represents all those still suffering. The children are climbing towards the Chief—the Dayi—shown in full regalia, representing the return to their culture. On top, the eagle represents courage and forwardness. This pole was commissioned by the community of Witset and funded by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Survivors and community members cleansed the pole by brushing it with cedar boughs before it was raised.



*With info from Niwhts'ide'nī Hibi'it'nē (The Ways of Our Ancestors) by Mélanie H. Morin ➡ ask directions at Widzin Kwah Museum or Kyah Food & Fuel Gas Station in Witset.*



### Widzin Kwah Canyon House Museum | Widzin Kwah Diyik Be Yikh (in Witset, 30km west of Smithers)

**155 Telkwa High Rd, Witset (at the Witset RV Park and Campground)** The Museum houses stories, photographs, writings, recently excavated stone tools and artifacts carbon dated back 6,000 years, from the very ground the Museum rests upon. **Hours & Info ➡ [witset.ca](http://witset.ca)**



## **A SMITHERS COMMUNITY MURAL | Emerenne Saefkow**

**1411 Court Street** • This vibrant geometric design represents the multi-faceted community of Smithers at its brightest. Inspired by the bold colours of the '70s, distinctly modern silhouettes carve out the quintessential elements of Smithers life. Whether you are new to town or have lived here your whole life, you will find your story in this mural. Get a brochure from the Visitor Centre or search [TourismSmithers.com](http://TourismSmithers.com) to learn about each section.

## **B CENTRAL PARK BUILDING | Facundo Gastiazoro**

**1425 Main Street** • The larger than life wallpaper motif on the exterior of the Central Park Building is a post Victorian Design corresponding to the era this heritage building was built (1925).

## **C CELEBRATING CULTURE & REC | Hans Saefkow**

**1323 Main Street** • A sky-blue painting emerges from the bricks of this building. Two snowboarders glide across it, showcasing a deep love of sports in this town. In the centre of the mural is a symbol of our prominent arts scene—a smiling violinist. Using a string from her bow, a fisherman reels in a catch, symbolizing the wealth of recreational activities that Smithers has to offer.



## **D ALEX CUBA MURAL | Facundo Gastiazoro**

**3800 block 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave** • This mural celebrates arts & culture in the community and is a tribute to world-renowned musician and local “Smithereen” Alex Cuba for his 2022 Grammy Award and his contributions to the local and Canadian music industry. The concentric rings represent elements of this land so integral to Alex and this community, in vibrant contrasting colours creating a powerful energetic vibe.

## **E GRENDL GROWS | Facundo Gastiazoro & Robin Lough**

**3768 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave** • Beautiful vines bloom up the walls of the Grendel Group building. Perched atop one of the branches is a small bird, a Junco, chosen by the artist because it is one of the local birds that “stays around”. This mural was created in celebration of the 20th anniversary of Grendel Group, a unique organization that provides education and work experience programs for people with cognitive and physical disabilities. The piece serves as a visual representation of their important place in our community. “The vines intertwine like a basket,” says the artist. “Like the web of community that brings support—together we are stronger.”

## **F AT THE HEART: MMIWG COMMEMORATION | Raven-Tacuara Collective**

**1188 Main Street** • This mural, on the exterior of the Dze L K’ant Friendship Centre, honours the lives and legacies of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) from the communities of Smithers, Witset, and surrounding areas on Highway 16 (The Highway of Tears). The mural was designed after a year-long process where local families of missing and murdered women and girls, in collaboration with local artists “Raven-Tacuara Collective,” worked through a trauma-informed creative process with facilitators to create this beautiful mural in the



heart of downtown, helping us remember the women who were taken away. They were daughters, sisters, mothers, granddaughters, nieces, cousins and friends and they will never be forgotten. The project demonstrates how, through art, we can work through trauma and support each other’s healing process.

## **G EAGLE IN FLIGHT | Hans Saefkow**

**1156 Main Street** • Soaring above the treetops is the underbelly of a bald eagle, a unique perspective of an eagle in flight. Just one of the many magnificent creatures native to Canada and often spotted in the Bulkley Valley.

## **H LET US NEVER FORGET | Hans Saefkow**

**3840 1<sup>st</sup> Ave** • Striking wartime commemorations on two walls of the Royal Canadian Legion. On the front wall, a WW1 veteran is set against sunlight in a poppy field at the Vimy memorial. The script is “In Flanders Fields,” a war poem written during the First World War by Canadian physician Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae and is an actual copy of McCrae’s handwriting. The soldier salutes those who came after him, shown on the side wall as the mural fades into the flag wrapping the corner. These three figures, also saluting the flag, represent following generations and diverse roles: a pilot who fought in WW2, a marine who fought in the Korean War, and an Indigenous soldier who fought in the Afghanistan War.



## **I MOUNTAIN SCENE AND ARTISTIC GRAFFITI**

**3894 and 3852 1<sup>st</sup> Ave** • Our valley houses a valuable collection of talented artists. These two pieces celebrate our diverse artistry.

## **J COMMON GROUND 150 Years in the Valley | Anne Harvard & friends**

**1131 Main Street** • Muted natural tones mark each month of the year in this mural inspired by the 150th anniversary of BC. The Bulkley River and the railway wind through orderly columns, and snapshots of life in the valley.

## **K REFUGIO | Facundo Gastiazoro, Sabina Mina & Megan Ryan**

**3711 Alfred Ave** • Ribbons of script in various languages, all depicting the word “refuge,” interlace themselves with the feathers of ravens, while a red-cloaked avian explorer stands vigilant in its centre. Facing the train station across the street, the light is a beacon meant to beckon travelers, welcoming them to come and rest here.

## **L THE ELECTRIC RAVEN | Leah Pipe & Facundo Gastiazoro**

**3711 Alfred Ave** • This mural celebrates creativity! The Raven stands still and poised whilst colours, lines and electric zaps emit from its body. It is painting itself and bursting with energy. This raven is for all the mural artists who love to create images on large public walls or unusual, unexpected places. Created August 2022.



## **M MUSIC OF THE BULKLEY VALLEY**

**1114 Queen Street** • A five-piece alpine band plays a raucous tune. Bringing together the Alpine theme of Main Street and Smithers’ love of LIVE music, this jolly band encapsulates an integral part of Smithers early town settlement culture.

## **N SYMBOL OF RESILIENCE | Facundo Gastiazoro**

**3892 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave** • Rising from the ground on this wall is a clenched turquoise fist, wrapped with snap-pea vines. While this mural evokes many interpretations, it was first designed to honour the resilience it takes to cultivate food in the Bulkley Valley, as the “Little Community Garden” was situated in the area. The fist symbolizes the power of nature and the vine represents growth.

## **O KID IN DA POOL | Raven-Tacuara Collective & Robin Lough**

**1316 Toronto Street** • A celebration of innocent childhood joy, this jubilant piece overlays traditional First Nations artwork on a prismatic background. Seen from Highway 16, it brings smiles to all who pass through Smithers.

## **P HONOURING OUR ELDERLY | Legacy Portrait Project**

**4408 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave, Smithers Secondary School** • Started in 2005, this is an ongoing project of paintings by local high-school students of some of the outstanding Witsuwit’en and non-Indigenous elders in the community: positive role models and active citizens. It aims to bridge cultures and generations through art—to connect us and promote learning from each other, and to acknowledge the contributions of those who have come before. The project has had a positive impact on the students, elders and the families involved, touched many lives, healed rifts and engaged reconciliation. It has become an ongoing program at the school.

## **Q THE EMBRACE | Raven-Tacuara Collective**

**3950 8<sup>th</sup> Ave, Bulkley Valley District Hospital** • Art as muralism on a building often speaks to what is inside the walls. This mural was envisioned during the Covid-19 pandemic. “Hospitals were in a very stressful moment. We were needing to hug and for many it was not possible to do,” says Facundo Gastiazoro of Raven Tacuara, the northwest BC artist collective that completed the 3-story mural in 2023. The two human figures are populated by icons, many indigenous, adding another layer of meaning. The eagle looking up is hopeful and powerful. The mountains are made by butterfly wings. The figures are surrounded by saskatoon berries — nourishment. “That’s why those elements were chosen... to create a sense of hopefulness, a sense of place and nourishment.” Below it all are two figures on a bench, ambiguous and could be any age — an image of support and togetherness. The mural has an openness to it, allowing the viewer to bring their own interpretation. As they were painting, the artists witnessed a steady stream of people coming and going to the hospital for a myriad of different reasons and, subtly, incorporated some of the wide range of emotions that take place there — from happiness and excitement to sadness and grief. They hope the mural helps embrace the spirits of all.

## **R RIVERSIDE PUMPHOUSE | Emily Wilson**

**3843 19 Ave, Riverside Municipal Campground** • A playful, folk art inspired mural on the pumphouse in Riverside Park/Campground. The colourful mural depicts some of the animals, fish and plant-life that can be found all through the beautiful Bulkley Valley.

*Thanks to the Smithers Visitor Centre staff for initiating this mural walk! Learn more about things to do around Smithers at the Visitor Centre, 1411 Court St. and at [TourismSmithers.com](http://TourismSmithers.com)*

## 1 CENTRAL PARK BUILDING • 1425 MAIN STREET

Our tour starts at the Central Park Building (CPB), at the corner of Highway 16 and Main Street. Built in 1925 by the BC government, the CPB housed the offices of the Government Agent and Mining Recorder, the Court House, a jail, and living quarters



for the Chief of Police. In 1981 it became the first municipally-designated heritage building in Smithers. Today it is a cultural hub that houses the Bulkley Valley Museum, Smithers Art Gallery, a dance studio, and artist spaces.

**Step inside the BV Museum to discover stories, photos and items of historical cultural significance to this valley! Hours 🗨️ [bvmuseum.org](http://bvmuseum.org)**

## 2 1226 MAIN STREET

Cross Highway 16 and head down the right side of Main Street for two blocks. Look across the street to the two-storey rectangular building with the Boomtown facade. One of the oldest buildings in town, it was built in 1913-1914 for the short lived Smithers Tribune newspaper, and was later the home of the Fashion Shoppe (1931-1959), and Beerda's Dry Goods (1959-2016).



## 3 1209 MAIN STREET

Continue down Main to the corner at 2nd Ave. This two-storey building, and the adjoining smaller building to the right, were built in 1913 as J. Mason Adams' drugstore (left in image) and the first post office (right). They are two of the oldest standing buildings in



Smithers. The building has been a drugstore (1913-1960), clothing store (1960-2008), and a doctor's office over its 100+ year history.

## 4 3732 2ND AVE

Cross Main Street, and go left down 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave, to house #3732 (left side). This house, built in 1921, is a mail order "kit" home. "Kit homes" were sold in Canada in the 1910s and 1920s by the Eaton's Department Store and the Aladdin Company. Almost 8000 were shipped to locations across Canada, with an estimated 40% remaining recognizable as kit homes today. There are four in Smithers, including this Aladdin Wabash XVI model. Others can be found at 3908 1<sup>st</sup> Ave, 1089 Queen Street, and 3991 Alfred Ave.



## 5 3704 1ST AVE

Continue on 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave until you reach King Street, and then turn right. At the corner of King Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave is the Old Church and Gardens. Constructed in 1914, the St. James Anglican Church was the first church built in Smithers. In 2005 the aged building was rehabilitated by volunteers into a community events facility and public garden. Today the much loved "Old Church" is managed by the Bulkley Valley Museum.



## 6 1107 MAIN STREET

Continue up 1<sup>st</sup> Ave back to Main. Turn left along Main and walk to the corner of Main & Broadway Ave, location of the Smithers Sausage Factory. This building was constructed in 1926 for the Olof Hanson Lumber & Tie Company (also housing the Royal Bank for several years). In addition to operating his lumber company, Olaf Hanson served three terms as Member of Parliament for Skeena riding (1930-1945). The building miraculously survived two catastrophic fires at that end of Main Street in 1944 and 1945. It changed hands a number of times between 1959 and 1984, when the current owners opened the Sausage Factory.



## 7 1089 MAIN STREET

Look across Broadway Ave to Bovill Square. Named for Bovill Motors, which operated at this corner from 1947-1969, the public square was constructed to mark Smithers' Centennial in 2013. It is a cultural venue that hosts concerts and other community events throughout the year. Adorning the top of the stage are crests representing the five Witsuwit'en ḏídkhñí (clans): Gidim't'en, C'ilhts'èkhyu, Likhsilyu, Tsayu, and Likhts'amisyu. An information stand in front of the square on Main Street provides more information.

## 8 3771 BROADWAY AVE

Look left across Main Street to Fitness Northwest. This building was originally constructed in 1929 as the McRae Hotel, later the Smithers Hotel. The building is a survivor of both the 1944 and 1945 fires that twice devastated this end of Main Street. These fires were an important catalyst for improving fire fighting services in Smithers; in 1948-49 water lines and fire hydrants were finally installed. The Smithers Hotel closed in 2001, ending more than 70 years of operation of a hotel on this site. While the building has undergone some significant changes in its 90+ years, the line of second story windows remain similar to the original building.



## 9 TRAIN STATION 815 RAILWAY AVE

Continue down Main Street to the round-about. Cross Alfred Ave, and take the footpath that runs beside the Smithers Public Library to Railway Ave. Here you will find the GTP / CN Rail Station. Built in 1919 by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (GTP), the Smithers station is a rare example of a custom designed "special" station built at GTP divisional headquarter locations.



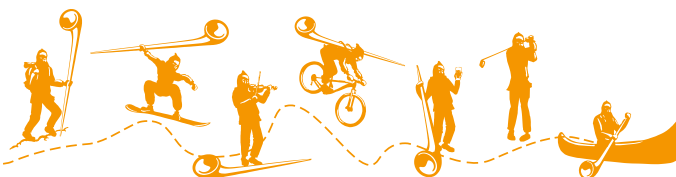
It was the largest station built in the northwest, and was the last one built before the company went bankrupt and became Canadian National (CN) in 1921. The station was a hub on the CN line for rail workers and passengers until it was decommissioned in the late 1990s. The station is federally designated by the Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act. The town is named for Sir Alfred Smithers, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the GTP from 1909-1921.

*Thanks to the Bulkley Valley Museum staff for creating this tour. Find them and learn more in the historic Central Park Building at 1425 Main Street • See more historic places in Smithers on their website at [www.bvmuseum.org/virtual-exhibits](http://www.bvmuseum.org/virtual-exhibits)*

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