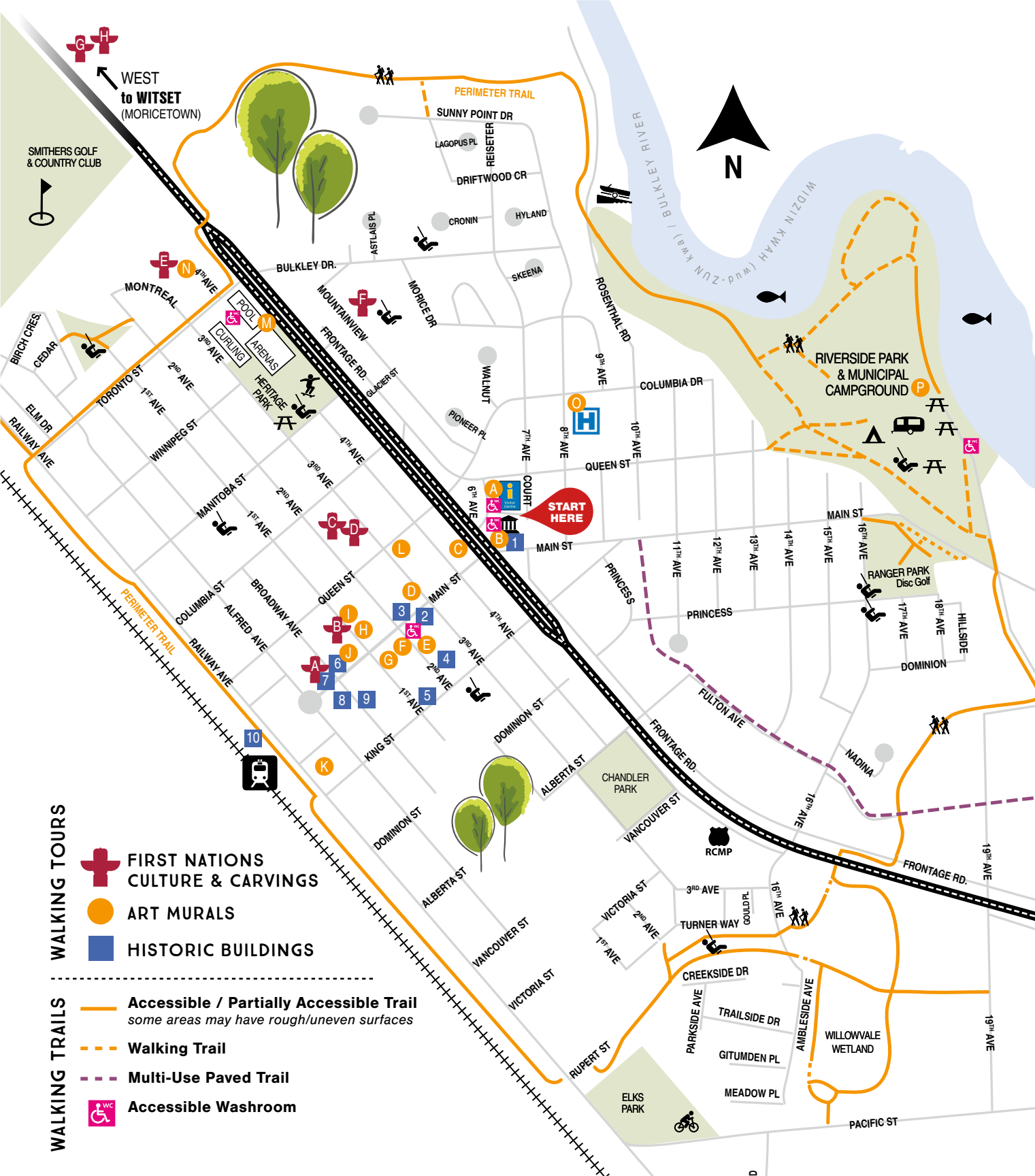


Smithers walking tours

murals • culture • history



- WALKING TOURS**
- + FIRST NATIONS CULTURE & CARVINGS
 - ART MURALS
 - HISTORIC BUILDINGS
- WALKING TRAILS**
- Accessible / Partially Accessible Trail
some areas may have rough/uneven surfaces
 - Walking Trail
 - Multi-Use Paved Trail
 - ♿ Accessible Washroom

Totem poles are cultural installations created by the First Nations of the Pacific Northwest to honour ancestry, history, people, and events. Discover and appreciate this rich culture along the tour. We gratefully acknowledge that Smithers—and these walking tours—are located on the unceded traditional territory of the Gidimt'en Clan of the Witsuwit'en (Wet'suwet'en) Nation.

+ Nihwnitsiy: Our Crests

1089 Main St. • 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 didikhní (clans): Gidimt'en, C'ilhts'ekhyu, Likhsilyu, Tsayu, and Likhts'amisyu. An information placard in front of the square on Main St. 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, closed 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 those missing without headstones. Carved by Nisga'a and Tsimshian artist Mike Dangel 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 a pole in Kitsumkalum (near Terrace), also carved by Dangel. Called "Grandmother Pole," it honours missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.



+ 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 \(Murals Tour "F" next page\).](#)

+ 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 "Indiantown", 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 Indiantown 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 Indiantown 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 Indiantown 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 Indiantown and the Walnut Park Totem Pole" pamphlet, published by School District 54

➔ [Watch a video of the Walnut Park Pole raising at www.bvmuseum.org \(under "LEARN"\)](#) and 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)

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 Hagwilnekhlh (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 Nihwts'ide'ni Hibi't'ne (The Ways of Our Ancestors) by Mélanie H. Morin ➔ ask directions and learn more at [Widzin Kwah Canyon House Museum](#) or [Kyah Food & Fuel Gas Station](#) in Witset.

+ Widzin Kwah Canyon House Museum (in Witset)

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](#) ➔ [witsnet.ca](#)



A Smithers Community Mural | Emerenne Saefkow

1411 Court St. • Bright, bold, and full of energy, this geometric mural reflects the many sides of life in Smithers. Inspired by the colours of the '70s, modern silhouettes highlight the people, activities, and landscapes that define the community. Look closely—you may find your own story within it. Learn more at TourismSmithers.com (search "community-mural").

B Central Park Building | Facundo Gastiazoro

1425 Main St. • 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 St. • A sky-blue mural bursts from the bricks, where snowboarders carve across the scene—an ode to Smithers' love of sport. At its heart, a smiling violinist honours the town's arts scene, her bowstring cleverly doubling as a fisherman's line—capturing the spirit of recreation and culture that defines the community.

D Alex Cuba Mural | Facundo Gastiazoro

3800 block 3rd 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 Grendel Grows | Facundo Gastiazoro & Robin Lough

3768 2nd 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 St. • 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 Hwy 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 "The 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 St. • Soaring above the treetops is the underbelly of a bald eagle—a rare perspective of this iconic bird in flight, and one of the many magnificent creatures of this valley.

H Let Us Never Forget | Hans Saefkow

3840 1st Ave. • Two striking murals honour generations of Canadian service on the walls of the Royal Canadian Legion. The front wall depicts a WWI soldier standing in a poppy field at the Vimy Memorial beside the poem "In Flanders Fields," shown in the original handwriting of its author, Canadian physician Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae. As the mural fades into the flag wrapping the corner, the soldier salutes those who came after him, shown on the side wall—three figures, also saluting the flag, represent different generations and roles: a WWII pilot, a Korean War marine, and an Indigenous soldier who fought in Afghanistan.



I Mountain Scene & Artistic Graffiti

3894 and 3852 1st 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 Havard & friends

1131 Main St. • Muted natural tones mark the months of the year in this mural celebrating BC's 150th anniversary. The Widzin Kwah / Bulkley River and the railway weave through scenes of life in the Bulkley Valley.

K Refugio | Facundo Gastiazoro, Sabina Mina, & Megan Ryan

3711 Alfred Ave. • Ribbons of script spelling "refuge" in many languages weave through raven feathers in this striking mural. At the centre, a red-cloaked avian explorer stands watch. Facing the train station across the street, the glowing light acts as a beacon welcoming travellers to rest and find refuge here.

L Symbol of Resilience | Facundo Gastiazoro

3892 3rd Ave. • Rising from the ground, a clenched turquoise fist is wrapped in snap-pea vines. While this mural evokes many interpretations, it was created to honour the resilience required to grow food in the Bulkley Valley, specifically on this site which was once home to the "Little Community Garden". The fist symbolizes the power of nature while the vine represents growth.

M Kid in Da Pool | Raven-Tacuara Collective & Robin Lough

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

1 Central Park Building • 1425 Main St.

Our tour starts at the Central Park Building (CPB). 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.



5 The Old Church • 3704 1st Ave

Continue on 2nd Ave until you reach King St., and then turn right. At the corner of King St. and 1st 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 Hanson Lumber Building • 1107 Main St.

Continue up 1st 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 this end of Main St. in 1944 and 1945. It changed hands a number of times between 1959 and 1984, when the current owners opened the Sausage Factory.



7 Bovill Square • 1089 Main St.

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.



8 McRae / Smithers Hotel • 3771 Broadway Ave

Look left across Main St. and stroll down Broadway to Fitness Northwest. This building was originally constructed in 1929 as the McRae Hotel, later the Smithers Hotel. The building survived both the 1944 and 1945 fires that twice devastated this end of Main St. The 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 hotel operation on this site. While the building has undergone significant changes in its 90+ years, the line of second-storey windows remain similar to the original building.



N Honouring Our Elders | Legacy Portrait Project

4408 3rd 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, 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. The project and team were recognized with a British Columbia Reconciliation Award in 2026. Read more: peryrath.com/honouring-our-elders/



O The Embrace | Raven-Tacuara Collective

3950 8th 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.



P 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 at the Smithers Visitor Centre, 1411 Court St. and at TourismSmithers.com

9 Aida Laundry • 3752 Broadway Ave

Across the street and a little farther down Broadway you'll see this "Boomtown" style building, built between 1913-1920. It was the home of Kintaro and Sadako Aida's tailoring and laundry business from 1920-1945. Their son Tatsuo "Tat" Aida continued to run the business until 1951. It has housed numerous businesses over its 100+ year history.



10 GTP / CNR Train Station • 3815 Railway Ave

Continue down Main St. to the round-about. Cross the street and walk left on Alfred Ave, then right on Murray St. 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.



Step inside the BV Museum to discover stories, photos and items of historical cultural significance to this valley! Central Park Building at 1425 Main St. • Hours bvmuseum.org

Thanks to the Bulkley Valley Museum staff for creating this tour. Learn more about these and other heritage spots at bvmuseum.org/heritage-register.

3 Mason Adams Drug Store • 1209 Main St.

Continue down Main to the corner at 2nd Ave. This two-storey building, and the adjoining smaller building at 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 (2008-2025) over its 100+ year history.

4 Aladdin Wabash "Kit" Home • 3732 2nd Ave

Cross Main St., and go left down 2nd 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 1st Ave, 1089 Queen St., and 3991 Alfred Ave.



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