



Smithers Heritage Register Project Engagement Summary

November 20, 2023

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Engagement Overview

In 2022 the Bulkley Valley Museum (BVM), with the support of the Town of Smithers, successfully received funding from the BC 150 Time Immemorial Grant program to develop a 'ready to adopt and implement' Community Heritage Register (CHR) for the Town of Smithers. The purpose of the CHR is to officially identify properties in Smithers with heritage value or character. It is an educational tool where listed properties can be added or removed, once established.

Between February and November 2023, community engagement was completed to identify community heritage values, defining aspects, and potential properties to include in the CHR. The goal of community engagement was to listen and learn from a diversity of community members and organizations to create a CHR that reflects a range of heritage values, stories, and histories of Smithers. To achieve this, the engagement approach included:

- Connecting with, and building on, heritage work by local organizations.
- Including targeted and broad engagement opportunities.
- Working with a trauma-informed Indigenous facilitator.
- Recognizing registers are living documents and can be developed on over time.

Engagement activities completed:



ACTIVITY	DATE	PARTICIPANTS
<p>COUNCIL PRESENTATION</p> <p>Introduce project, answer questions & hear Council's discussion.</p>	<p>Feb. 14, 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smithers Council & Staff
<p>COMMUNITY INFO SESSION</p> <p>Public drop-in session to learn about the project & share ideas.</p>	<p>Feb. 22, 2023 @ Old Church</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 participants
<p>COMMUNITY SURVEY & NOMINATIONS</p> <p>Share heritage values and places of value. Start to build a list of properties for consideration in the CHR.</p>	<p>Mid Feb. - Nov. 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 57 survey participants • 11 property nominations
<p>SMALL GROUP & ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS</p> <p>Involve local stakeholders already involved with heritage & historic properties. Add to the heritage nomination list for consideration.</p>	<p>Feb. - Nov, 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BV Genealogical Society (12) • Witsset Community Meeting (4) • Witsuwit'en Elders Meetings (3) • Crossroads CRM (2) • Chamber of Commerce Board & Staff (9) • Calderwood Realty (6) • Remax Realty (8) • Town of Smithers Staff (2) • Town of Smithers Advisory Planning Commission (6) • Tourism Smithers (1) • Dr. Tyler McCreary / Shared Histories (1) • Smithers Seniors Society (luncheon)
<p>COUNCIL UPDATE</p> <p>Project update and present findings.</p>	<p>Nov. 28, 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smithers Council & Staff

Engagement Highlights

Community engagement highlights the range of experiences, stories and memories attached to places in Smithers. Key themes that emerged from the community engagement activities are summarized below. Results from the community survey, property nominations and small group / one-on-one engagement are provided in Appendix A, B, & C.



Community Heritage Values

Community heritage values are anything felt to be part of Smithers identity and collective story - past, present, and future. Understanding heritage values is a foundational piece in building a CHR. Key themes from community engagement include:

- Top community heritage values relate to visual heritage (places we can see or touch) and historic or cultural heritage (natural or built places associated with past events, people, activities, or traditions).
- All histories, like the diverse immigrant history, Witsuwit'en history, and resource history should be included in the CHR with a focus on telling a dynamic Smithers heritage story.
- Support for the CHR as an educational tool and value in defining community identity & sense of place.



Defining Characteristics

Community engagement identified specific features that make Smithers the place it is today. These include:

- Strong visual elements associated with Smithers natural setting (i.e., Hudson Bay Mountain, landscape) and built environment (i.e., Main Street, buildings).
- Many places are associated with stories of community members and represent the interconnected relationships. Examples including past businesses, community life, events, and Witsuwit'en culture.



Important Places

Community engagement provided feedback on an initial register list as well as identified other important places to be considered. Key themes include:

- Beyond the downtown core, residential areas have homes with unique stories about past use, former residents, or building.
- Recent heritage provides a link to better understand the past, like the Walnut Park totem pole.

- Some places have both positive and negative memories associated to them, notably for Indigenous residents. Examples include the Alpenhorn man, old Post Office, and the CN Train Station.
- Smithers large parks, like Heritage Park, Veteran's Peace Park and Central Park have many civic-related memories associated with them.
- The CHR list is a work in-progress, with additional research and partnership opportunities to add additional properties.

Preliminary Register List

Below is a preliminary CHR list based on the initial inventory from the BV Museum and community feedback. The properties have enough formal documentation to be researched further within the scope of this project with the list to be refined based on further engagement with property-owners and the community.

- 1) 3815 Railway Ave: CN Rail Station
- 2) 3895 Alfred Ave: Smithers Sash & Door Factory (Greene Law Office)
- 3) 1089 Queen St: Hankinson / Kilpatrick House (private residence)
- 4) 3891 Broadway Ave: Hoskins House (private residence)
- 5) 1107 Main St: Hanson Lumber & Tie (Smithers Sausage Factory)
- 6) 3771 Broadway Ave: McRae Hotel / Smithers Hotel (Fitness Northwest)
- 7) 3752 Broadway Ave: Aida Tailor & Laundry
- 8) 3704 First Ave: St. James Anglican Church (the "Old Church")
- 9) 3692 First Ave: First Nurses Residence (private residence)
- 10) 1176 Main St: Goodacre's Store (Sedaz Lingerie)
- 11) 1201 Main St: Adams Drub Store & Post Office (Central Square Medical / Pharmasave)
- 12) 1226 Main St. Smithers Tribune, Beerda's Dry Goods (NDP Office)
- 13) 1232 Main St. Dominion Telegraph Offices (Blue Water Sushi)
- 14) 1425 Main St. Central Park Building
- 15) Indiantown
- 16) Smithers Secondary Totem Pole
- 17) Smithers Municipal Cemetery
- 18) Chinatown

Additional properties (from community engagement):

- 19) Walnut Park Totem Pole
- 20) Old Post Office (current Friendship Centre)
- 21) Heritage Park (1st Arena and old fair grounds)
- 22) 3908 First Avenue (example of Aladdin Brunswick model kit home)
- 23) Central Park (historic "book end" of Main Street, includes CN Railcar and art)
- 24) Veteran's Peace Park (historic "book end" of Main Street, includes cenotaph)

Next Steps

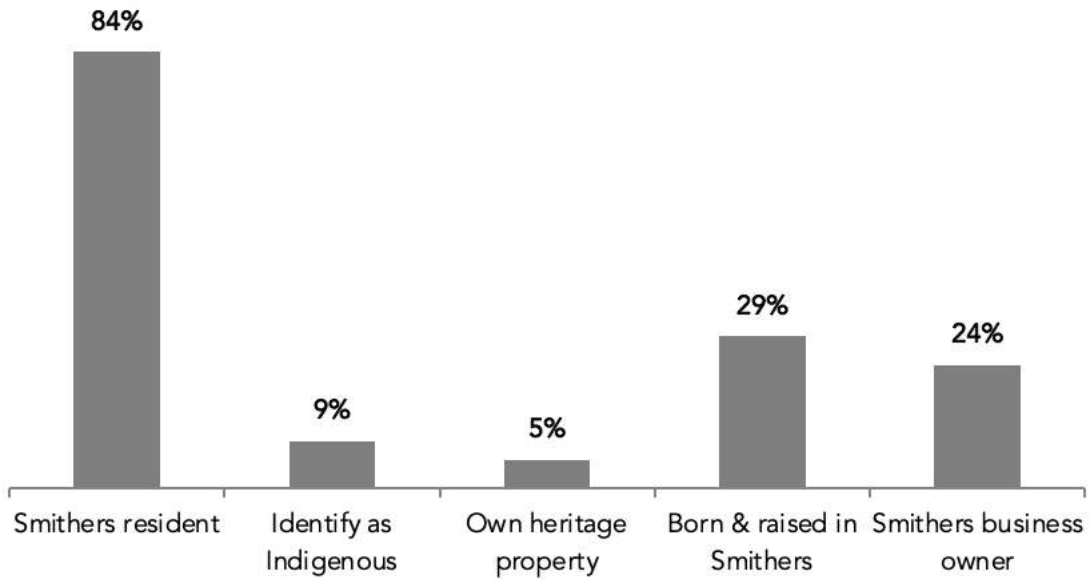


The next step in the project is to move forward with evaluating properties for inclusion in the CHR, including writing Statement of Significance (SOS) for each historic place to be included. A SOS summarizes the description, heritage value and character defining elements of each listed property and explains why it is important, consistent with the BC Register of Historic Places.

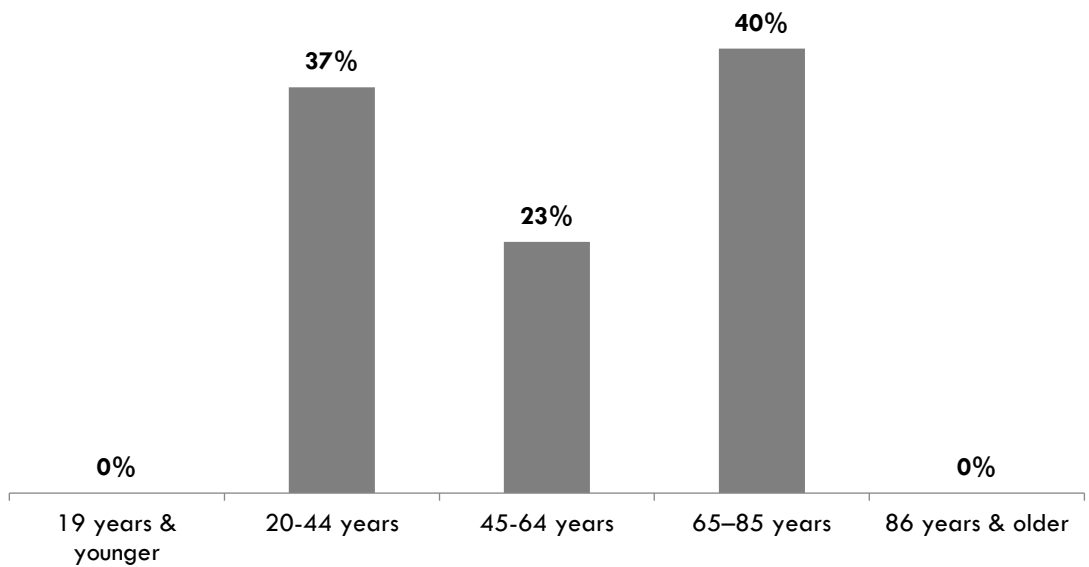
Following the completion of the SOS documentation, both property owners and the community will have a chance to review the draft CHR and provide comments before the final report is submitted to Smithers Council.

Appendix A: Community Survey

Q1. Do any of the following apply to you?



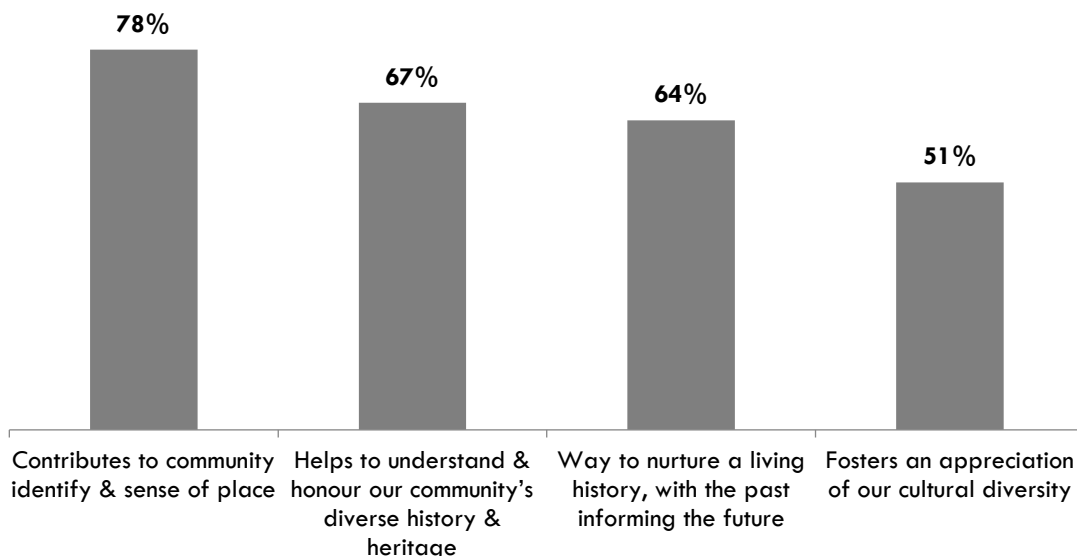
Q2. What is your age?



Q3. If you created a postcard of Smithers, what image would best portray our Town?

- HBM - Hudson Bay Mountain (12 mentions)
- Main Street with HBM (9 mentions)
- Main Street (5 mentions)
- Mountains (4 mentions), rivers (4 mentions), lakes (3 mentions), forest
- Alpenhorn man (2 mentions)
- Witsuwit'en territory, mountains, rivers, trees, natural landscapes, moose, bear, beavers, salmon
- Train Station
- HBM from Highway
- Indigenous art work
- HBM from Main Street
- HBM with CN Station or Bulkley River
- Ski runs
- Stunning mountain views
- Bulkley River with mountain background
- Lifestyle
- Wildlife, winter activities and mountain background
- HBM with cyclers, other outdoor activities, happening in foreground
- HBM which towers over town and the teeming Bulkley River
- Witsuwit'en culture including mountains
- Vibrant picture of Main Street in summer with HBM.
- Aerial view directly above museum/art gallery showing the whole town and river, night & day, 4-seasons.
- Smithers townspeople from the east.
- Something that represents that Smithers sits on Gitumden Clan Territory (clan crest is the grizzly bear), which is also home of the Witsuwit'en Nation.
- Indigenous based with mountains
- Veteran's Park
- Collage of historic properties
- HBM or Babine Mountains at dusk in December when the sky goes bluey/mauve, and the snowy mountains glow white. It's breathtaking.
- Indigenous artwork
- Central Park Building
- Candid shot of people interacting on Main Street, some mountains in the back
- Welcome to Gitumden Territory and home of the Witsuwit'en Nation - sign in the shape of a grizzly bear

Q4. Why is Smithers heritage important to you?



Other:

- Supports reconciliation process
- Broadens perspectives
- It's interesting
- It is the true meaning for the valley
- Should identify shared history, good and bad and the Indigenous peoples who lived here prior to settlement by Europeans
- I feel the real history of how Smithers was settled and formed is violent. It is colonial and needs to be properly openly addressed. It is nice to acknowledge heritage buildings but is it necessary to provide the real account of the attempted destruction of the Witsuwit'en people by cultural genocide.
- Honours and commemorates the work of the people who came before us
- Shows Wiggus - respect to the First Nations people in this and surrounding areas.

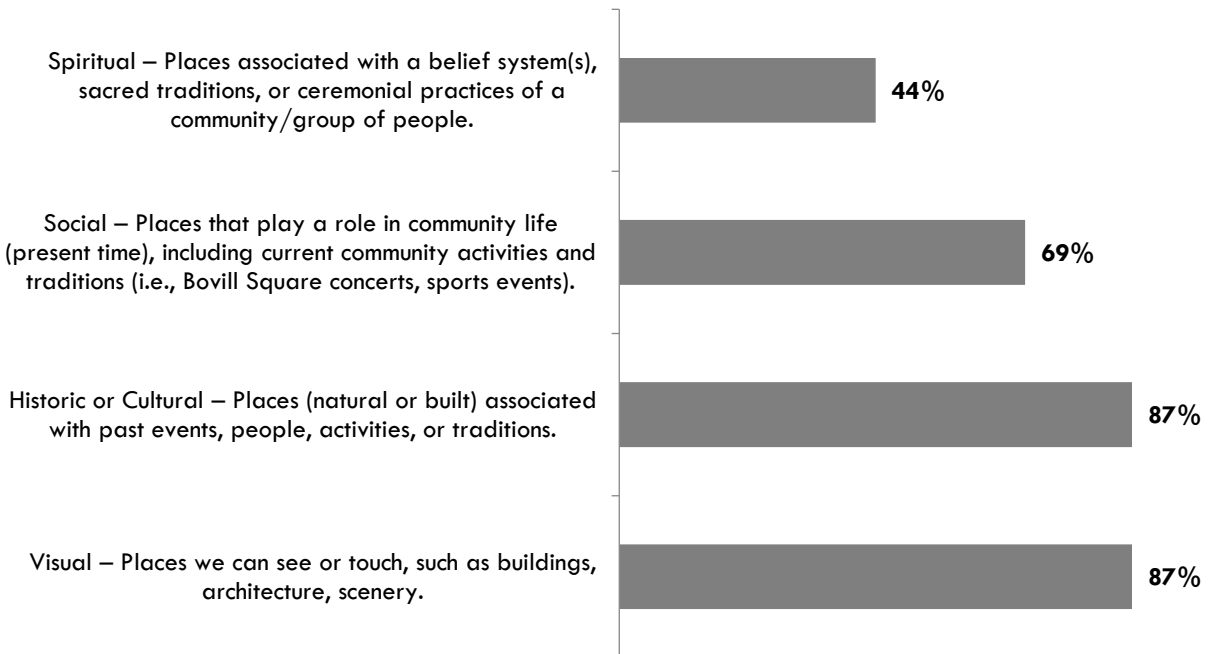
Q5. Is officially identifying and recognizing historic places in Smithers through the creation of a Community Heritage Register important to you?



Q6. If you selected no, what are your concerns?

- Limiting future developments
- No concerns, just seems to ignore that there was something here before settler buildings and settlement
- Hard to celebrate colonial history. I do appreciate the history, but celebrating it is much different. There is an element of erasure if we do not include the colonial supremacy and privileges that these folks acquired to make these buildings. It was tragic and violent for Witsuwit'en and prosperous for settlers.

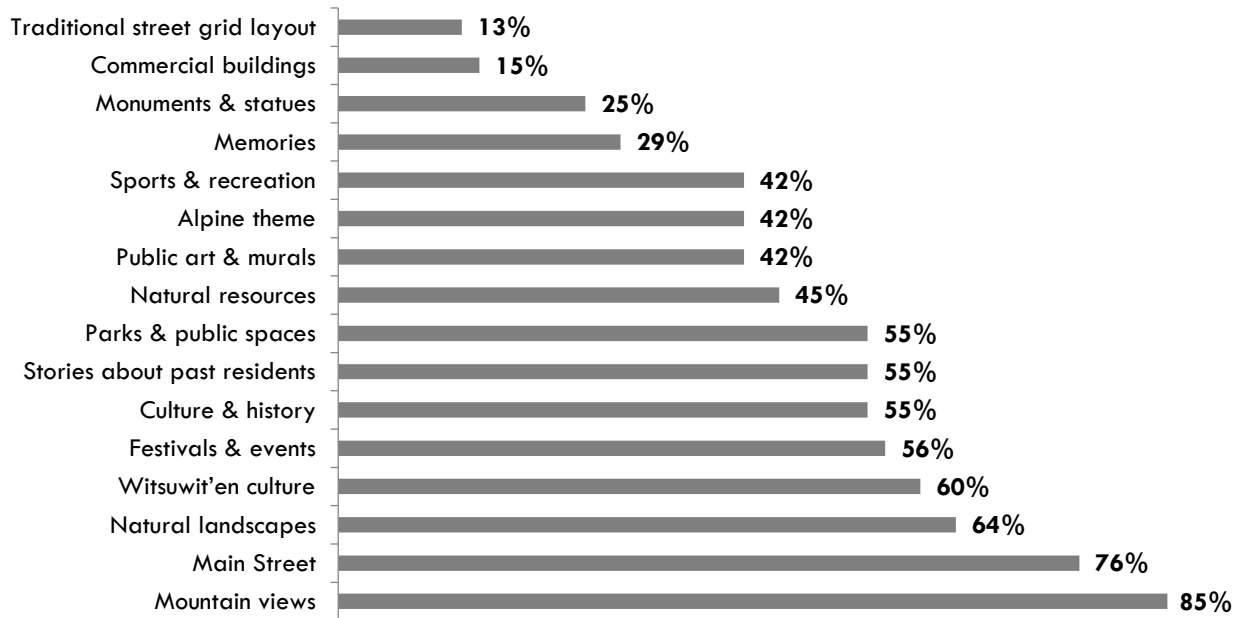
Q7. What aspects of Smithers heritage are important to you?



Other:

- Vibrant community (includes young families) and physical activities (skiing, biking, canoeing, fishing, hiking)
- Places related to cultural & social experiences including topics such as MMIWG.
- Old mines
- Alpine theme
- Historic people within the arts and collection of instruments
- Imagine if we noted that the traditional Witsuwit'en village is where AW is? I am of the belief that showing balanced sides of history would show respect and support reconciliation.

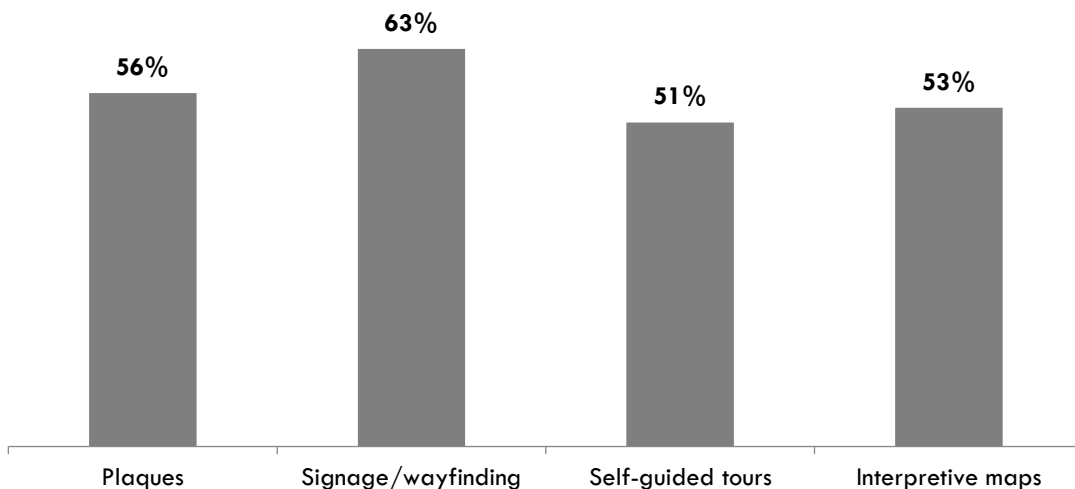
Q8. What do you feel are the defining aspects of Smithers that make it the place it is today?



Other:

- Small town
- Bring back 50s and 60s neon signs
- Arts & culture
- Totem poles, canoe

Q9. In addition to creating a Community Heritage Register, what other ways would you like to see historic places recognized in Smithers?



Other:

- On-line info
- QR on plaques - cemetery
- Plaques embedded in sidewalk (or pavement) identifying heritage
- Map of murals and statues. I also like decolonizing lens applied to signage (e.g. explain that alpenhorn man reflects our colonial history and made indigenous culture invisible).
- Not too much or many
- Important to acknowledge why First Nations values used to exist on a site before being erased by white settlers.

Q10. Other Ideas or comments you would like to share?

- Keep up the good work everyone. This is a rich place to live.
- Broaden the boundaries of the project
- One step at a time -- so, heritage register to start with, more actions to follow with full community support.
- Include the museum, CNR Station and original ski jump area of the mountain.
- Transportation history (train, bus, airplane)
- Community halls in surrounding rural area.
- I would like to see Witsuwit'en place names included for places in consultation with elders.
- I think the shared history book should be utilized to bring the true story of the community to the public. E.g. signage, self-guided walking tours, place names.
- I would like to see Witsuwit'en place names included for places in consultation with elders.
- An Easter egg hunt with small, locally-made artisanal sculptures. See mice from PEI as an example
- Great plan
- Our Main Street is so rich in history
- Will anyone ever address the mural on the side of the doctor's office?
- This is a good idea.
- Identify and mark culturally significant areas to Indigenous persons. Don't shy away from showing how Indigenous persons were displaced outside of the town boundaries.
- The first question didn't allow for this. I'm a Telkwa resident, but since Telkwa does not have many services, amenities or businesses, Smithers feels as much part of what I call home as does Telkwa
- Promote Indigenous Tourism with Witset
- Summer walking tours of heritage Smithers
- I really enjoy the horse-drawn carriage and pedi-bike tours in Victoria. It would be super cool to have a summer time tour in Smithers that ran on weekends
- I love the idea of a walking tour and wayfinding (perhaps with a fun/game aspect to it).
- Context/story behind every totem pole in town is also important.

- More cultural bridging between Indigenous and Settler communities will uncover histories, traditions, and commonalities that few of us know
- stop cancel culture, history is what it is
- The alpine theme (alpine AI) is not a suitable description of our downtown area, might be more suited for the ski hill.

Appendix B: Property Nominations

- **Central Park Building:** 1925(ish) wood frame, well-maintained. The link with past, present, and future. ie govt services, to local arts, to whatever the community wants/needs it for in the future. Location at Main Street + Hwy.
- **CN Trail Car (Central Park):** 1929 CN Buffet-Parlor-Solarium ("the Quesnel"). Bought by disbanded Lions Club in 1974. Worked the tracks between Montreal and Toronto. Interior refurbished in 40's.
- **"Looking Out" Sculpture at Central Park Building:** Erected in 1970's and restored in 2011 (it was vandalized by someone with an axe) It was restored with funds by someone who chose to move to Smithers because this indicated that Smithers was a community that valued public art. Defining that residents were living here as more than a place to work but a place to thrive. A unique sculpture donated in the 1970's by artist Frank Ebermann
- **Walnut Park Totem Pole:** Symbolizes reconciliation and the contribution of Wet'suwet'en Nation to the building the Smithers. Recognizing Indigenous History
- **3956 First Avenue:** One of the earliest residences built in town. Present in Killam photo from 1915. Some original features still present. John Kelly (policeman) built and lived in the house in the early years.
- **3908 First Avenue:** This kit home is an Aladdin Brunswick model constructed during the building boom that occurred in Smithers in 1921- 1922. One of the few remaining kit homes in Smithers. Preserving these heritage buildings reminds people of the history, achievements, and transformations that has shaped this community over time.
- **3838 11th Avenue:** Railroader's home (Block 146 Lot 25, lots 11-14) built in 1927 and owned by George M. Johnson in a less developed area of Smithers at that time.
- **Veterans Peace Park (3 Nominations):** It currently is a significant part of Smithers history, yet it is in very poor condition. This site is significant as it honours our veterans and legacy in past world war conflict. It is a place for community gathering and a tourist attraction.
- **Aldermere Trail & Village Sites** (*out of Town boundary*)

Appendix C: Group & 1-on-1 Conversations

Defining Aspects of Smithers:

- People (5)
- Lifestyle (4)
- Community (3)
- Beauty (3)
- Landscape (3)
- Mountains (3)
- Mill history (3)
- Nature (2)
- Outdoors (2)
- Friendliness (2)
- Friendships
- Diversity of people
- Culture
- Athletes
- Famous Smithers people
- Witsuwit'en community
- Seasons
- Lakes / Rivers
- Town layout (grid; walkable)
- Arts
- Main Street "book end"
- Influence of different cultures on building
- Alpine Theme (history)
- 1st sandman in BC
- Farming history
- Railway history
- Mining history
- Founding companies (Banstra, All-West)
- Immigrants (Dutch, Swiss, German)

Heritage Places:

- Railway Station (5)
- Old Post Office (5)
- Walnut Park Totem Pole (5)
- 1st Arena (3)
- Original Fall Fair Grounds (3)
- Old Bulkley Bridge crossing (3)
- Fall fair event (1)
- Main Street (2)
- Old ROI Theatre (Main St.) (2)
- Koopman's Hardware Store
- Ranger Park (2)
- Paul's Bakery (bread for feast hall) (2)
- Bulkley Hotel (social)
- Goodacres Store (2)
- Hilltop (memories dancing)
- Pool Hall
- Bowling Alley (original)
- Dog n Suds
- Tom's Laundry
- Wayside Store
- Tasty Freeze
- Plaza building (1st building w/elevator)
- Museum
- Buildings in Museum's culture crawl
- Cenotaph
- Alpenhorn man (2)
- Indiantown relocation site (Tatlow)
- Fishing + berry gathering spots (by fair grounds)
- Kit homes (sears, Eaton) (2)
- Kilpatrick House
- Ruby Hoskins house
- Whole block of Broadway
- 12th Ave Gingerbread house
- 1st Ave Anglican minister house (green house with pillars)

- Railway angled house (currently listed)
- Old log buildings in town (2)
- 3926 and 3954 (1st Anglican Mass)
- Pre-1970 homes
- Leo Gregori stonework
- Tommy walkers house
- Leach's house on princess
- Railway houses
- VLA homes
- Columbia + 3rd Ave (Evan's home)
- Kratz House
- "Looking out" sculpture in front of Central Park Building
- Works of art (statues not murals)
- Totem Poles
- Old totem pole sites (cut down)
- Perimeter Trail
- Ball field
- Bulkley River
- River Access (cultural connection)
- Elk's building
- St. Jo's church
- St. Jo's School
- Muheim Elementary
- Old high school
- Hospital residence
- Hospital

Other Places Outside of Smithers Town Boundary:

- Kelly's Cave
- The Bluff
- Malkow Look-Out
- Casler's Cabins
- Round Lake

Other Comments:

- Create a photo inventory of buildings in Smithers
- Interview property owners to get history
- Eventually look at rural area
- Look at real estate records
- Now a great time to do this as knowledge is still around
- Alternative compliance of BCBC an incentive
- Keep educational focus; not limit alteration
- Lots of places in shared histories book & BV Genealogical Book
- Challenge of documenting lost sites (i.e., Indian Town)
- Continue to develop a shared histories lens (takes time)