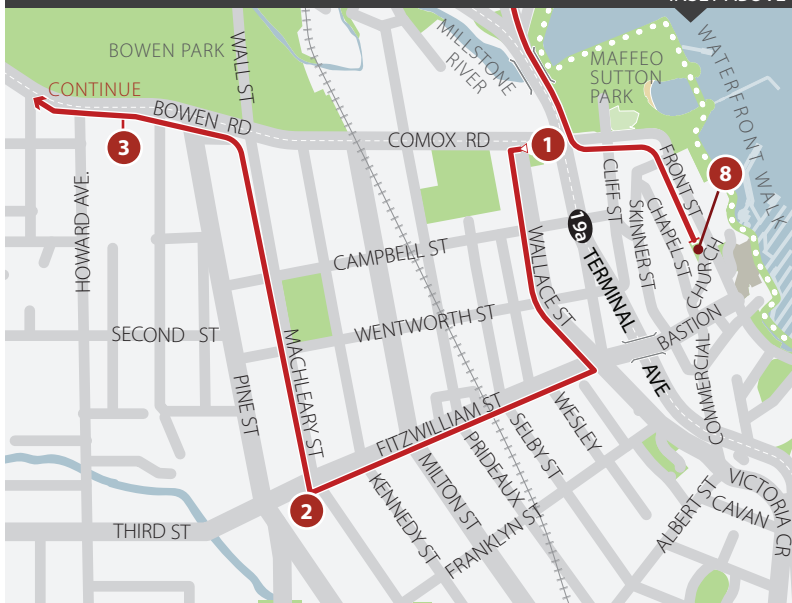




▲ NANAIMO PUBLIC CEMETERY (circa 1962)



### 1 | Pioneer Cemetery Park, 10 Wallace Street



Pioneer Cemetery Park speaks to the community's earliest development and is a valuable record of the lives of Nanaimo's first European settlers. The park is the third oldest cemetery in British Columbia after Fort Langley and Victoria. From the first known burial in 1853 to the final burial in 1895, this cemetery served as an essential community space, both practically and spiritually.

Pioneer Cemetery Park is also an important example of an early preservation project and the development of community heritage consciousness. In 1953, concerned by the overall dilapidation of the site, the newly formed Nanaimo Branch of the British Columbia Historical Association (Nanaimo Historical Society) made a record of all the stones still standing and a sketch of their original positions. In 1958, as their British Columbia Centennial Project, the Hub City Kivans Club cleared the site, set the remaining headstones in a curving rock wall and planted grass and flowers. In 1960, the project was completed and the site was officially converted to a memorial park by the City of Nanaimo.

### 2 | St. Peter's Cemetery, 301 Machleary Street



St. Peter's Cemetery is a rare, tangible link with Nanaimo's Roman Catholic heritage and speaks to the earliest ecclesiastic, social and spiritual history of Nanaimo. The first recorded burial took place in 1876, although the church was established in Nanaimo at least 15 years earlier. The cemetery is the only surviving single denomination graveyard in Nanaimo. The cemetery is important as a communal, spiritual space, and as a publicly accessible, outdoor history museum.

### 3 | Nanaimo Public Cemetery, 555 Bowen Road



Established in 1877 when the city's first cemetery became full, the Nanaimo Public Cemetery is important as a highly visible, tangible link with Nanaimo's past. The modest early grave markers reflect Nanaimo's predominantly working-class population while more elaborate monuments provide the names and tastes of the city's wealthier citizens. Most representative of Nanaimo's history are the many inscriptions about mine accidents, testimony to the over 600 mine related deaths that occurred in the area from the 1860s to the 1950s. Still in active use, the Nanaimo Public Cemetery functions as a fully accessible outdoor history museum.

The Nanaimo Public Cemetery exemplifies the role the local coal company played in the development of the City. In addition to numerous park, school and church sites, the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company also donated the land for this cemetery. Because the company owned all the land in the area, the community was highly dependent on company largess for the acquisition of public land. The company was, in turn, dependent on community goodwill to ensure economic stability. As such, the site testifies to the long standing symbiotic relationship between the coal company and the community.

### 4 | Chinese Cemetery, 1598 Townsite Road



Built in 1924, the Chinese Cemetery is a very good example of an ethnic cultural landscape. In addition to grave markers with Chinese inscriptions, the cemetery features traditional Chinese elements including ornate, brightly painted entry gates, a pagoda structure, an altar and a shrine. Although the cemetery is no longer

exclusively Chinese, it retains, through the presence of these elements, a distinct Chinese character.

The Chinese Cemetery is a rare, tangible link with Nanaimo's Chinese heritage. The Chinese, almost wholly single men, came to Nanaimo as early as the 1860s to work in the mines or to open businesses. Perceived as unfair competition because of their willingness to work for lower wages than white employees, the Chinese settled in what is now downtown Nanaimo but in the 1880s they were removed by the coal company to the outskirts of town in an effort to reduce tensions. By 1908, a new Chinatown, one of the largest in North America at that time, was established near the western edge of the city. The last Chinatown was destroyed by fire in 1960, although much of its population had already dispersed. Because there is so little other tangible evidence of Nanaimo's Chinese heritage, the Chinese Cemetery is especially significant.

### 5 | Wellington Cemetery, 4700 Ledgerwood Road

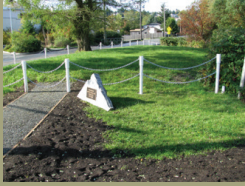


The Wellington Cemetery is one of very few tangible links to the town of Wellington, a formerly distinct community that was subsequently absorbed into the City of Nanaimo. Developed in the 1870s as a coal town by Robert Dunsmuir, who became one of the province's

wealthiest men, Wellington rivaled Nanaimo in population and industrial output until its demise in 1900 when coal operations were moved south of Nanaimo to Extension and Ladysmith. At that time, many of the buildings were moved by railcar to the new communities. Combined with a few remaining 19th century buildings that are scattered throughout the area, the Wellington Cemetery is an important example of the ephemeral nature of single-industry resource towns.

The physical remains of the Wellington Cemetery reveal much about the early social and economic history of the area. The original division of the cemetery into quadrants by religious denomination reflects the importance of those distinctions. In addition, the headstones provide evidence of the community's population composition. Unlike Nanaimo, which was developed predominantly by English and Scottish settlers, the headstones at Wellington Cemetery indicate an ethnically diverse population that included significant numbers of Italians, Finns, and Belgians. Other headstones tell of deaths due to mining accidents, a common occurrence in Wellington's history. As a whole, the cemetery functions as an outdoor classroom of Wellington history.

## 6 | Snuneymuxw Ancient Burial Area



Departure Bay / Bay Street Intersection  
Remains found at this site and the surrounding beach front area date back over 3,500 years, and are associated with the Snuneymuxw First Nation and a winter village settlement site known as St'l'i lep, believed to have been located here for millennia.

The Snuneymuxw continued to live seasonally at the St'l'i lep village site up until the mid 1800s at which time a series of events led to their displacement. The first event occurred in May, 1861 when a pioneer named John Christie pre-empted 114 acres of land around Departure Bay including most of the village site. The remaining portion of the village site was claimed by another pioneer named William Hughes in October, 1861. The land was surveyed in 1870, and title was crown-granted to these men in 1871. Despite this, the Snuneymuxw continued to use the winter village site. However, events that occurred in the 1890s and early 1900s such as the construction of the Dunsmuir Colliery wharfs, the CIL dynamite plant in what is now the Cilaire Subdivision, and continued residential settlement throughout the Bay area disrupted the environment and traditional fishing patterns, and ultimately resulted in the displacement of the Snuneymuxw at this site.

## 7 | Garden Memorial to Chinese Pioneers, 105 St. George St.



The Garden Memorial to Chinese Pioneers speaks directly to Nanaimo's Chinese heritage. Around 1890, this small plot was donated by the New Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company for use as a Chinese burial ground. At that time, the site was just beyond the city's official boundaries. Bodies were interred here, but it was always intended that the bones of the deceased would be returned to China. The site was in use until 1924, when the new burial grounds on Townsite Road were established. This site served as an essential communal space for the original Chinese community and later, as an important commemorative space for their descendants.

The Garden Memorial to Chinese Pioneers is a significant example of a community commemorative project. In 1976, the site was presented to the City by the Nanaimo Chinese Community. This was the first garden in Canada to commemorate the contribution made by the Chinese and their Canadian children to this country. The memorial garden is also a very good example of an ethnic cultural landscape. The brightly painted, stylized pagoda structure, inscribed standing stone found on the site, stylized altar for burning joss sticks and other materials, concrete patio with Chinese-style perimeter fencing and graceful arched staircase all give the park a distinct Chinese character.

## 8 | Dallas Square Cenotaph



The Dallas Square Cenotaph, built in 1921 to commemorate local men who died during World War I, represents deeply felt community sensibilities about memory, war and loss. The Cenotaph is still used as a memorial site and bears witness to annual Remembrance Day ceremonies, giving the community an important opportunity to gather and remember together.

The Cenotaph is a very good example of a simple, graceful monument. Minimally ornamented, the Cenotaph's design, created and executed by local monument works owner E. Millins, was based on an ancient Egyptian model.

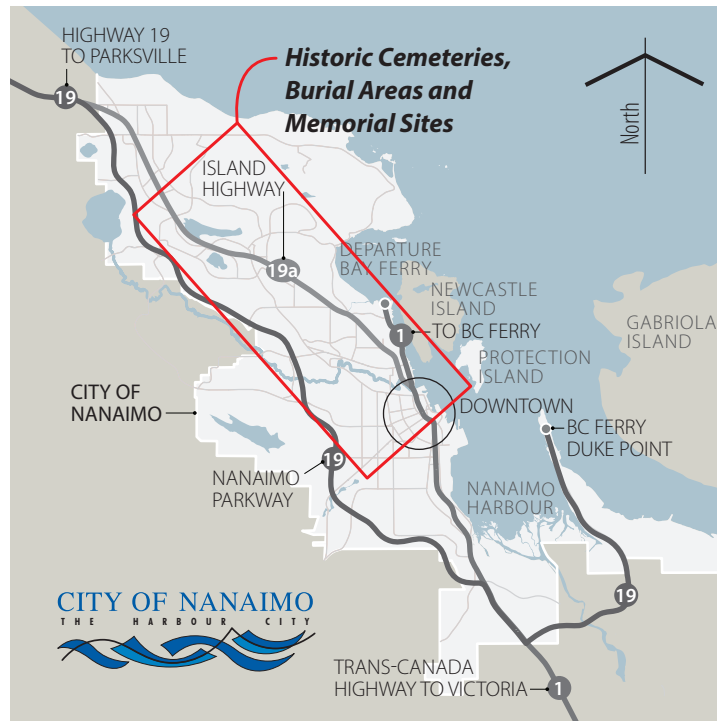
Brochure Produced By:

# NANAIMO Culture & Heritage

IT'S WHO WE ARE

For more information about the buildings featured in this brochure, request a copy of the City's Heritage Register. If you have questions about the City's Heritage Register or Heritage Conservation Program, please contact the Community and Cultural Planning Section.

- location: Service & Resource Centre, 411 Dunsmuir Street
- mail: c/o Culture & Heritage, 455 Wallace Street, Nanaimo, BC V9R 5J6
- phone: 250-755-4483
- online: [www.nanaimo.ca/goto/heritage](http://www.nanaimo.ca/goto/heritage)
- email: [cultureandheritage@nanaimo.ca](mailto:cultureandheritage@nanaimo.ca)



Continue your visit to Nanaimo's past at the:

  
NANAIMO MUSEUM  
100 Museum Way  
250-753-1821

  
NANAIMO ARCHIVES  
150 Commercial Street  
250-753-4462

All historical photos courtesy Nanaimo Community Archives  
Special Thanks To:  
Nanaimo Museum & Nanaimo Community Archives

A Drive Through Time

## Your Guide to Nanaimo's Historic Cemeteries, Burial Areas and Memorial Sites

*Nanaimo's Cemeteries and Burial Areas are unique cultural landscapes which provide a tangible reminder of the people who lived in and built the City of Nanaimo, as well as those who resided in the area prior to European contact. Hallowed places of reflection and remembrance, in many cases, they are the only connection we have with the people who originally settled in Nanaimo and the surrounding lands.*