



# IF WALLS COULD TALK WALK

By VMF x Vancouver Biennale

3 KM / 3,750 - 4,500 STEPS  
45 MINUTES - 1 HOUR

## ABOUT THE TOUR

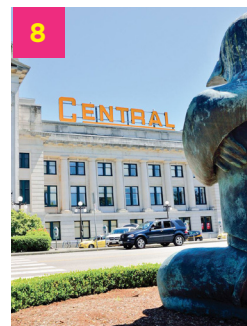
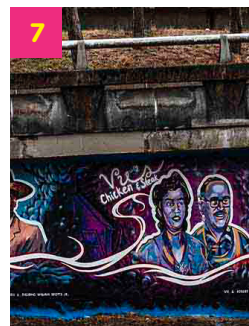
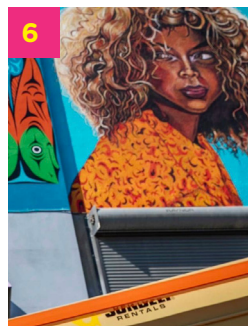
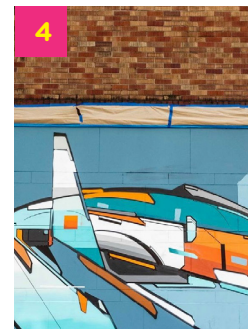
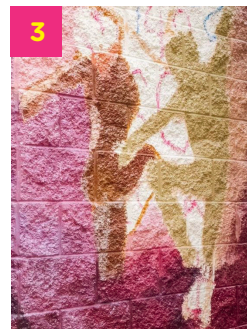
This walk includes murals curated by the Vancouver Mural Festival (VMF) and the Black Strathcona Resurgence Project (BSRP) which started in 2020. The black community has historically shared space with Strathcona and Chinatown on the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil Waututh people. Take a short walk with us, packed with art and interesting bits of history - Did you know Nora Hendrix, musician Jimi Hendrix's mother lived here?

About the Black Strathcona Resurgence Project (BSRP): VMF is partnering with local Black artists, curators, businesses and communities to embark on a multi-year project centering on Black storytelling through the visual impact of public murals. Led by Project Manager and Curator Krystal Paraboo, in collaboration with a powerful team of Black leaders from different backgrounds who sit on the Advisory Committee, to help guide the project from programming to community engagement.

All mural photos are courtesy of Vancouver Mural Festival.

## ROUTE STOPS

1	<b>THOSE WHO LIVED HERE - YAIMEL LOPEZ</b>	Union St. and Gore
2	<b>236 E GEORGIA ST (LANEWAY) - MULTIPLE ARTIST</b>	236 E Georgia St
3	<b>251 UNION ST. (LANEWAY) - MULTIPLE ARTISTS</b>	251 Union St
4	<b>HABESHA PRICHORDE - MEDIAH</b>	700 Main St. East
5	<b>AFRICANA - ENIA SITOLE</b>	700 Main St.
6	<b>SOLIDARITY STORYTELLING - MULTIPLE ARTISTS</b>	700 Main St.
7	<b>HOPE THROUGH ASHES - ANTHONY JOSEPH</b>	West Side of Main on Union
8	<b>PACIFIC CENTRAL STATION</b>	303 National Ave
9	<b>AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL FOUNTAIN CHAPEL</b>	823 Jackson Ave
10	<b>LORD STRATHCONA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</b>	592 E Pender St.





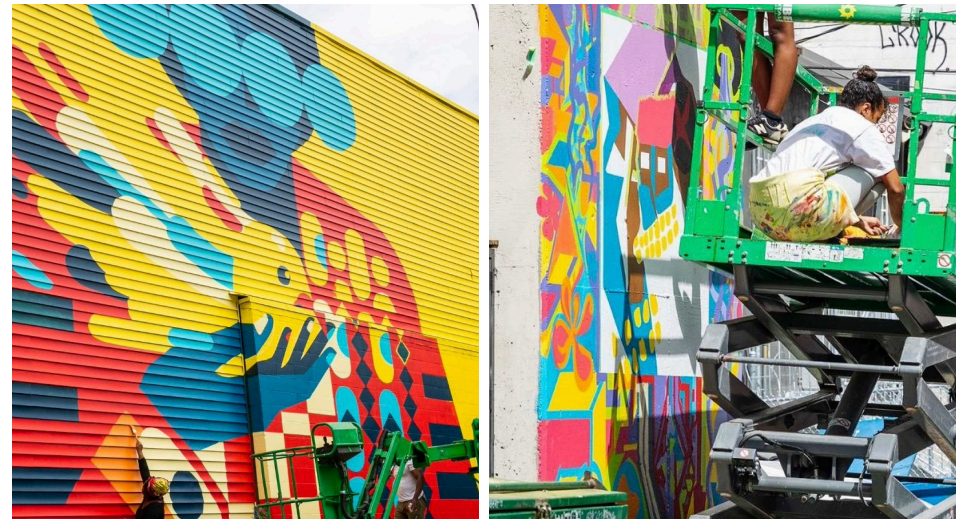


**#1 - THOSE WHO LIVED HERE - YAIMEL LOPEZ**

***Those Who Lived Here***  
**Yaimel López**  
**2021**

This work is about collective memory, a call to not forget those who were here before and laid the foundations of what exists today.

There are five partial portraits, alluding to a part of history that has been erased. The intention is to create a system where all the planters look different but the same; the use of colour and patterns are designed with that purpose in mind. The characters were taken from an old photo of Hogan's Alley, but the intention is not to represent a specific individual but talk about history through them.



**#2 - 236 E GEORGIA (LANEWAY) - MULTIPLE ARTISTS**

***Our Lovely Meme* / Joslyn Reid / 2021**

"Our Lovely Meme" is a celebration of our Jamaican Carnival culture, with a focus on Pitchy Patchy, one of the original figures in this artform. The colours and texture evoke a wide range of emotions, from curiosity to fear to overwhelming joy. Pitchy-Patchy is defined by his/her attire, wearing clothing made of tattered, colourful pieces of cloth. This vibrant display of colours and textures is a centerpiece in Jamaica's Carnival tradition. Some interpret this symbolic reveling as a celebration of Love, Fear, and Unity through the performance arts. The bird metaphor represents freedom, order, immortality, fertility, protection, strength and connection.

***The Three Headed GOAT / COMO HOMBRE* / 2021**

My vision for this mural would be to incorporate my style of psychedelic-sci-fi-graffiti tone to curate imagery that brings remission to society's orthodox way of thinking. I was introduced to expressions of love through food and religious practices, while my paternal side taught me the importance of being resilient, creative, and ambitious (something which can be accredited to their upbringing in Buenaventura, Columbia). Both my parents expressed their creativity through appearance, and I learned at an early age that the world is not black and white. Thus, I embraced a worldview that was full of colour. Yet, growing up I always felt a sense of emptiness. The lack of representation of minorities and individuals with non-conformant learning styles has been a challenge that I have experienced myself and something that I still see my community struggling with. My passion is to use art to show people who do not fit the status quo, like my little cousin Rashed, that achievement bodies more than corporate success and that our strength is collective, lying within our community itself.





#3 - 251 UNION ST. (LANEWAY) - MULTIPLE ARTISTS

***Sunburst Migrations / Odera Igbokwe / 2021***

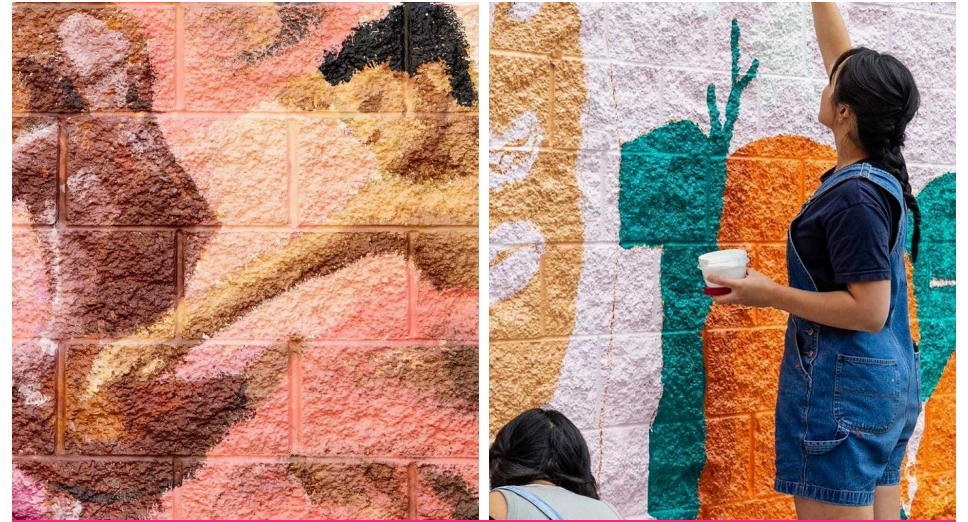
My artwork is a vision into what our stories look like when we push past oppression and colonization, and how vibrant and nuanced resilience can be. It celebrates the multitudes of sexuality, gender expression, and gender identity in the face of postcolonial homophobia and misogyny. This mural contains a figure composed of energy that flies and meditates in the sky. In the background are flickers of light and mountains covered in patterned trails and roads that represent the migration and diaspora of Black people across the world--specific to Strathcona/the Greater Vancouver area. At the bottom there is a procession of humanoid and android like creatures looking up in awe of the more organic human figure that are both futuristic and ancient feeling, so pulling from art history sculptures as a base form and then adding a futuristic touch.

***Sacred Mountains / Zac George / 2021***

*This work is in progress.*

**Artist Statement:** The sacred mountain sees everything and has the ability to pray for and watch over people of Vancouver. Our mountains hold a lot of history and strength and if you look over to the North Shore, you'll understand.

Together- sacred mountain turned orange in prayer for the children lost to Residential Schools.



#3 - 251 UNION ST. (LANEWAY) - MULTIPLE ARTISTS

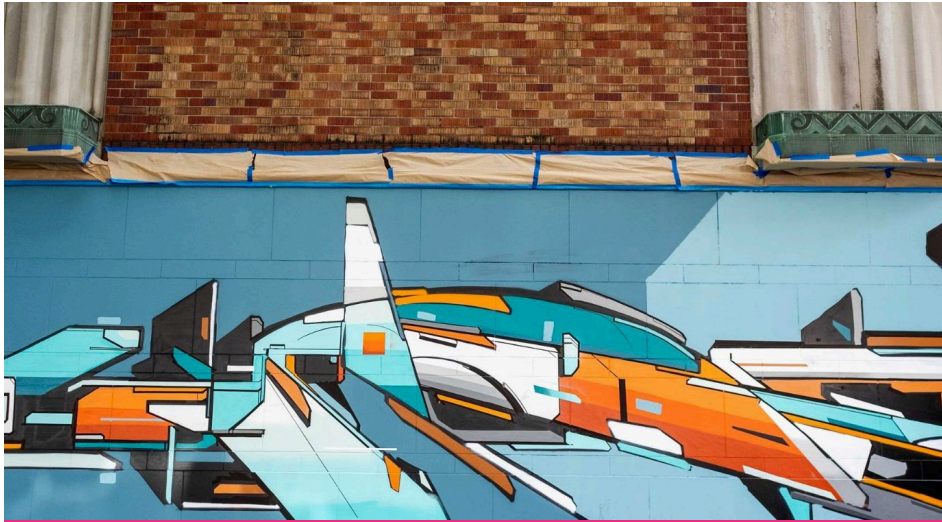
***Untitled / Rachel Achus / 2021***

This image features a Black woman with a bow and arrow in a mythological setting with black cherubs at her feet reminiscent of Italian Renaissance painting. Paintings of that era focused heavily on white Christian iconography. Black people in those paintings were depicted as enslaved or providing labour. This mural challenges that narrative and portrays Blackness in an ethereal, soft setting.

***Resilient Chinatown / Paige Jung / 2021***

I am happy to partake in this project that provides visibility to Black communities in the Hogan's Alley neighbourhood. I was happy to know that there was a solidarity element and that I would get the opportunity to provide representation to the Chinese community established in this area, especially Chinatown. This mural provides a homage to Chinese elders who have planted the seeds for the younger generations who continue to live in this neighbourhood today. Our Chinese elders carry an array of wisdom and strength that I want to put at the forefront of this project.





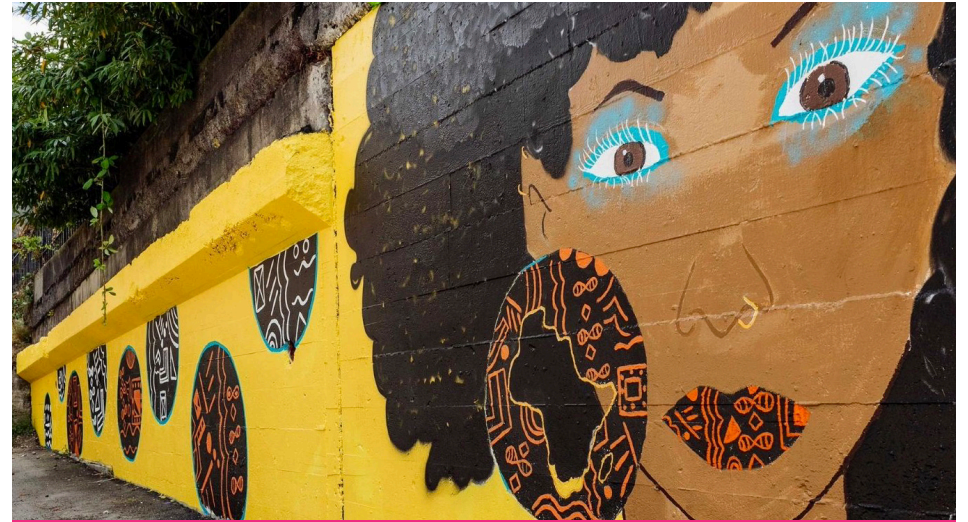
#### #4 - HABESHA PRICHORDE - MEDIAH

**Habesha Prichorde**  
**MEDIAH**  
2021

MEDIAH's landmark mural titled 'HABESHA PRICHORDE' fuses his cutting edge, futuristic visual aesthetic with a vibrant Pan- African colour palette. The dynamic linework is intended to depict the various pathways of the African diaspora into the unknowns of the Americas.

The gradient of colours portrays the diverse variety of African-Caribbean cultures that contribute to Vancouver's beautiful tapestry. This landmark mural will help to serve as a visual 'cultural reset' for the Black community in Vancouver. The Black residents will hopefully appreciate having a landmark mural that was painted by an established international Black artist that both pays homage to their historical presence and portrays a bright unified future.

MEDIAH's past large-scale murals have proven to transform neighbourhoods as they breathe dynamic, creative life into the community. Additionally, his murals attract tourists which in turn stimulates local businesses. MEDIAH's abstract style sparks conversation and dialogue between residents, pedestrians, and local business owners, resulting in broader cultural solidarity within the Strathcona neighbourhood. After 18 months of isolation and social distancing there has never been a better time to create a mural that will bring the community at large together.



#### #5 - AFRICANA - ENIA SITOLE

**Africana**  
**Enia Sitole**  
2021

In this work, you will find a portrait of a Black woman with a large Afro. Her lips and earrings are made of a traditional design found in common African fabrics. Her earring contains a gold outline of the African continent. This is my way of portraying how it feels to be Black and African in a North American setting. The design is intentionally on her lips as a means of reclaiming a voice and refusing to be silent in the wake of Black oppression. Black women are specifically always silenced, so I wanted to bring attention to this.





## #6 - SOLIDARITY STORYTELLING - MULTIPLE ARTISTS

### Solidarity Storytelling / Jie (Emma) Xie, Chase Gray, John Sebastian / 2021

Solidarity Storytelling was produced to reflect the support of intercultural relations of the Black Strathcona Resurgence Project (BSRP). The location of this building is at the intersection of Chinatown and Hogan's Alley and is ultimately on the unceded ancestral territories belonging to the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), Sə́lilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations. The vision for this mural was to interweave Chinese, Black and Indigenous culture and presence in a vibrant and dynamic manner that honours the past, present and future generations of these communities building towards a decolonized future collectively. In solidarity with one another, each panel depicts layers of storytelling from the aforementioned communities that reflect elders, youth, queer & 2-Spirit identities.

**Left Panel:** Jie Xie depicts one of Tibet's most renowned meditation masters of recent times, named Akhyuk Rinpoche (1927-2011). He revitalized the study and practice of Buddhism in Eastern Tibet beginning in the 1980s, eventually drawing tens of thousands of students from across Tibet and China to his Buddhist encampment of Yachen monastery. It was inspired by a mantra from the Tibetan tradition, which translates to "help us clarify, or purify, our Body, Speech, and Mind." It is pronounced as "Om Ah Hum". By reciting this mantra, you are also purifying the environment, as well as yourself and all other beings within it. This image is important to the Chinese and Asian cultures present in this neighbourhood to go on a journey of healing and moving forward.



## #6 - SOLIDARITY STORYTELLING - MULTIPLE ARTISTS

**Middle Panel:** The Indigenous section of this mural includes the Coast Salish design on the top frame, and the middle panel. The top border is a Coast Salish design that reflects my Musqueam heritage, and how salmon are an important part of history and wealth. There are many symbols of protection, strength, and peace within northwest coast Indigenous art; including the copper shield, eagle feathers, and cedar. My goal was to make this piece reflect unity. The copper shield is brought out to assert hereditary rights and privileges, and represents an ancestral being, with the ribs and backbone shown in the "T" shape. The top figure is my representation of a Two-Spirited person or ancestor, mixing the traditionally gendered colours of red and black. The sun and moon are a perfect representation of being harmoniously different, and creating an endless, equal flow of time. Night and Day; an ever present constant to keep us going.

**Right Panel:** The last section of the mural is an ode to the young, Black femmes who have been at the forefront of the Black Lives Matter movement, making endless contributions to activism as a whole. This portrait depicts a young Black woman in an orange-patterned garment. She is intentionally portrayed wearing her natural hair, and looks over her shoulder with a stoic expression. Black women are always being told to smile and are judged when they do not, yet society doesn't take the time to account for the emotional labour and exhaustion they go through on a daily basis. This side of the panel honours and centres the humanity of Black femmes.





**#7 - HOPE THROUGH ASHES - ANTHONY JOSEPH**

*Hope Through Ashes*  
**Anthony Joseph**  
2020

**Artist Statement (Anthony Joseph):** Hogan's Alley embodied hope for a thriving united Black community in BC. In destroying Hogan's Alley, the city of Vancouver destroyed a Black community but not Black culture as it continues to flourish in a diaspora within Vancouver's cultural fabric. In painting a mural about Hogan's Alley on the Georgia Viaduct, I am adding art to the very instrument that led to the destruction of Vancouver's first concentrated Black community. This reflection serves as a somber tone, placing the painting within smoke from the neighborhood's demolition. Only upon learning of the resilience of the Black community within Hogan's Alley can hope be conveyed through its former residents, their legacies rising from the ashes.



**#8- PACIFIC CENTRAL STATION**

**An ode to the Black Railway Porters**

A significant landmark, Pacific Central Station has a historical connection to the surrounding area. The station was a place of employment for many of the Black men in the nearby neighbourhood of Hogan's Alley, and some of the first Black inhabitants of Strathcona were railway porters who sought accommodation close to work. Employment discrimination limited the opportunities open to Black people, who in the 1940s in the Lower Mainland still were "largely confined to such occupations as barbering, cooking and semi-skilled work," according to Crawford Killan. In the early 20th century, employment as a rail porter was one of the few opportunities available, a job that came with the challenges of long hours, low pay and discriminatory treatment from both passengers and employers, the latter who limited advancement and offered little to no job security.

In 1917, the first Black railway union in North America was formed in Winnipeg, beginning an ongoing struggle to win labour rights. In the 1940s, the American Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters expanded into Canada, and notable Strathcona resident Frank Collins became president of the Canadian branch. To learn more about the history of the rail porters and the Collins brothers, see the video "Sleeping Car Porters" by Black Strathcona.

Pictured above is a sculpture from the 2014-2016 Vancouver Biennale entitled BIRD WRAP, by artist Ivan Eyre.





**#9 - AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL FOUNTAIN CHAPEL**

With Nora Hendrix as a leader, the Black community in Strathcona looked for a church, after spending their own.” The community contacted the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.), who offered \$500 towards a church, if the community was also able to raise \$500.

At the eastern end of Hogan’s Alley, the church became the cultural hub of the community, and was always busy with services, dinners, bazaars, meetings, and events. It also started a choir, which Nora was part of, which would sing at the church as well as venues around the city. Nora fondly remembers large gatherings at the church for American Thanksgiving, and regular chitlin dinners that would quickly sell out (Opening Doors).



**#10 - LORD STRATHCONA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

### **Lord Strathcona Elementary School An ode to Barbara Howard**

Barbara Howard grew up in the Grandview neighbourhood in the 1920’s. As a student at Laura Secord Elementary she was known to sprint the block and a half to school when she heard the bell ring and still be at her desk on time! At 17, Howard was chosen for the 1938 British Empire Games in Sydney, Australia, after running the 100-yard dash in 11.2 seconds, one-tenth of a second faster than the Games record. She was the first black female to compete for Canada.

However, as her athletic career blossomed, the next two Olympic Games were cancelled due to World War II. After graduating from UBC, she became the first visible minority teacher hired by the Vancouver School District, spending her 40-year career at schools on the city’s East Side, including Lord Strathcona Elementary.

Currently students at Lord Strathcona Elementary School are campaigning to change the name of the school in her honour.

We hope you enjoyed exploring Strathcona, Hogan’s Alley, and Chinatown with us today! If there was something you found especially interesting or if you had a favourite mural, tag us at #VanBiennale or the VMF at @vanmuralfest

