# FOLLOW THE Hands Of History

Northern British Columbia UPER, NATURAL



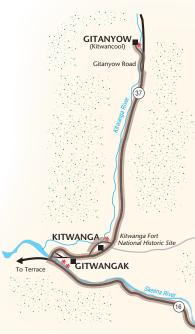
The Hazeltons, British Columbia



Welcome to one of British Columbia's most historic and scenic areas. Immerse yourself in centuries of First Nations culture and learn dramatic tales of pioneer settlement by taking the "Hands of History" self-guided driving tour. The Tour is marked by a series of distinctive "Hand of History" signposts. Each of these markers displays a Gitxsan design of peace, an open hand, and a short description of a person, historical event, or landform that played an important part in the history of the Upper Skeena region.

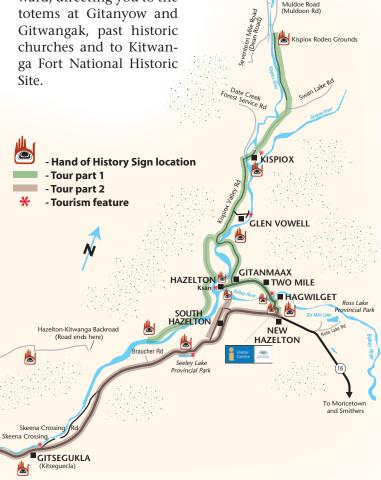
The entire Tour covers 150 miles or 240 kilometres but is easily modified to fit your schedule and interests. Depending on your pace, the tour will take 4 to 8 hours.

The route is described in two segments, each commencing at the Visitor





Centre on Highway 16 in New Hazelton. The first segment takes you across the heights of Hagwilget Canyon Bridge, to the riverfront, pioneer community of Hazelton, to 'Ksan Historical Village & Museum and into Kispiox Village and its display of totem poles. The second part of the Tour follows the Skeena River westward, directing you to the totems at Gitanyow and Gitwangak, past historic churches and to Kitwanga Fort National Historic Site. Points of interest in the itinerary in this brochure marked with a are the location of a "Hand of History" plaque. There are many scenic places we have not highlighted in this guide, so feel free to stop along the route for a picnic, photo or exploration. Enjoy your adventure. You will not be disappointed!



## Part 1: Hazelton/'Ksan/Kispiox



The contemporary Hagwilget Bridge was opened in 1932 and designed by Alexander Carruthers. At the time it was the highest suspension bridge in Canada. This bridge replaced one constructed in 1912 by Craddock & Company, also a suspension bridge, built of wrought iron and wood. Concrete footings for the Craddock Bridge are visible 30 metres north of the current bridge. The Craddock Bridge was too narrow for automobile traffic. Engineering complexity is also shown in the historic aboriginal bridges at this location. Early images of the aboriginal bridges reveal a cantilever bridge with a central suspended span built with wood and rope and later with wood and telegraph

wire. (Cedarwood Consulting; www.rdks.bc.ca) The canyon walls of the Bulkley River are composed of layers of hard sandstone, tilted steeply by geological processes. (Geotour Guide for the Hazeltons 2010, GSC)



- 1. Hazeltons Visitor Centre/ public washrooms
- 2. Royal Bank/bank machine
- 3. Hagwilget Church
- Hagwilget Canyon Bridge
- 5. Greyhound bus depot
- 6. gas station/bank machine
- 7. Canada Post
- Bulkley Valley Credit Union/ bank machine
- 9. tennis court
- New Hazelton Elementary School
- 11. RCM Police
- District of New Hazelton Office
- 13. hiking trails start
- 14. Allen Municipal Park
- 15. Via Rail

## Valley

### KM 0/Mile 0 HAZELTONS VISITOR CENTRE

Start in New Hazelton at the distinctive log building that serves as our regional Travel Infocentre. Statues of a Miner, Horse Packer and Logger are marked with brass plaques which explain the importance of these figures in local history. When inside the Information Centre have a look at the upstairs "mini museum" that introduces the region's history through the use of photo displays and artifacts.

From the Visitor Centre, turn left onto Highway 62.

KM 1.5/Mile .9 HAGWILGET



**BRIDGE TURNOUT** Park in the paved area before crossing the

bridge. Hagwilget Canyon has been crossed since antiquity with a number of bridges. The current span was built in 1932 and soars 80 metres (260 feet) above the Bulkley River. A short distance uphill from the turnout is the beginning of a trail that will take you down to the river's edge. Hagwilget, a Wet'suwet'en community, means "gentle or quiet people".

### KM 1.8/Mile 1.1 HAGWILGET VIEWPOINT

Turn left into the small parking area just across the bridge. Note: this area may be too small for large motorhomes. Trails descend here from the parking area to the downstream side of the bridge. Across the street another trail can be taken for spectacular views of Hagwilget Peak and the Bridge.





### KM 3.2/Mile 2.0 TWO MILE

This community got its name as a place that was "two miles" from Hazelton. Two Mile was historically the home of the lawless and luckless who for many reasons were banned from Hazelton city limits.

Continue down Highway 62. The road enters Gitanmaax, which means "people who harvest salmon using torches".

### KM 7.0/Mile 4.3

### VIEW ROCHE DE BOULE MOUNTAIN RANGE

Look to the left for excellent views of Roche de Boule Mountain Range, French for "falling rocks". (Gitxsan name – Stekyooden, which means "stand alone") The



road is narrow, so please choose pull-out spots carefuly

### KM 7.6/Mile 4.7 'KSAN TURNOFF

Just after a sharp right hand curve, turn left off Highway 62. Keep to your left to reach the parking lot.

### **KM 7.9/Mile 4.9** '**KSAN PARKING LOT** Internationally renowned 'Ksan Historical Vil-

'Ksan Historical Village and Museum was opened in 1970 as a place





### Hazelton/ Gitanmaax

1.'Ksan Historic Village & Museum

- 2.'Ksan Campground
- 3. Hazelton Library/Museum
- Bastion Park/public washroom
- 5. Saint Peter's Anglican Church
- 6. Village of Hazelton Office
- 7. Gitanmaax Band Office
- 8. Canada Post
- 9. Gitanmaax Hall
- **10.** gas station/bank machine
- 11. Wrinch Memorial Hospital
- 12. Hazelton Secondary School
- 13. Skeena Ice Arena

where Gitxsan (means "People of the Skeena") and Wet'suwet'en First Nations culture could be preserved and shared. The facility includes a museum, traditional totems, longhouses, an excellent gift shop and tours. Within walking distance is 'Ksan campround and RV park. Call (250) 842-5544 for 'Ksan hours or check at the Visitor Centre. Be sure to take a short 300 metre walk down the trail marked by the "VIEWPOINT" signpost for a spectacular view of

Roche de Boule Mountains and the confluence of the Bulkley and Skeena Rivers.

### KM 8.2/Mile 5.1

Exit 'Ksan the way you entered and turn left.

### KM 8.8/Mile 5.5 Entry to "OLD TOWN HAZELTON".

At next stop sign, turn right, proceed one block, and turn left towards the river.

### KM 9.1/Mile 5.7

Park near the replica of a Skeena riverboat.

Welcome to one of the oldest pioneer communities in Northwest BC, established in 1866 at the confluence of the Skeena and Bulkley Rivers. The name "Hazelton" is attributed to one-time Hudson's Bay Company employee and local businessman, Thomas Hankin, after the hazel bushes found in this area. Into the 1900s Hazelton was a booming supply and administrative centre and the furthest point upstream riverboats could travel from the coast on

the Skeena River (which means "river of the mists" or "cloud water").

A recommended starting point is the Hazelton Pioneer Museum, located in the library building. This interpretative centre gives you a concise picture of the events and people that shaped the region.

After you have toured the museum, enjoy more of the community's heritage by wandering past the restored buildings, structures and monuments in the downtown area. These include St. Peter's Anglican Church, dating from the 1880s, Hazelton Landing on the riverfront, machinery recovered from a sternwheeler, and a steam 'donkey engine,' used to winch large logs from the forest. Interpretive signs are placed around town or better still, in season, join a free walking tour at the tourist information kiosk just upstream from the replica riverboat. Public washrooms are also located in the kiosk.

Leave Hazelton the way you came in. Proceed past the entry to 'Ksan, and up Highway 62 towards Two Mile.

### KM 11.5/Mile 7.1

KISPIOX ROAD JUNCTION Turn left at the Kispiox Road junction (ESSO – Gitanmaax Food & Fuel).

This paved road leads to scenic views, Kispiox Village and the Kispiox Valley.

Proceed up the Kispiox Road.

KM 16.2/Mile 10.1 OUTLAW TERRITORY 🙋 Turnout on right. In 1902, Simon Gunanoot was accused with his brother-in-law of murdering two men after a beer hall argument. Simon evaded capture and spent the next 12 years as the most celebrated fugitive in British Columbia history. In 1914 Simon Gunanoot surrendered and was shortly thereafter acquitted of all charges. His story has become a celebrated legend of wilderness survival and triumph.

Continue up the Kispiox Road.

### **KM 16.6/Mile 10.3 FOUR MILE BRIDGE** (also known as Anlaw – Gitanmaax Reserve)

The Four Mile Bridge crosses the Skeena River. After the Fraser River, the Skeena is the second largest river entirely situated in British Columbia. During summer months native fishing nets can be seen either side of the bridge span.

Continue on the Kispiox Road. Soon after the bridge, look for the gravel road heading uphill. On your return from Kispiox Village and the Kispiox Valley, this is the Kitwanga Backroad you will be taking. (Closed to through traffic since 2007.)

Continue on the paved Kispiox Road.

### KM 20.5/Mile 12.7

GLEN VOWELL VILLAGE (Gitxsan name: Sik-e-dakh, which means "bright lights behind mountain." Glen Vowell is named after a land surveyor) Turn right on the paved road at the Glen Vowell Village sign, drive slowly, as there are two speed bumps. Glen Vowell is a small Gitxsan community alongside the Skeena River.

### KM 21.7/Mile 13.5

Continue past the distinctive Victorian style Band Administration building on the right.

### KM 22.0/Mile 13.7

At the end of the road, turn left at the "T" intersection.

KM 22.2/Mile 13.8 GLEN VOWELL SALVA-TION ARMY CHURCH Glen Vowell was founded in 1898 by Kispiox Village residents who had become members of the Salvation Army. This heritage building is a reminder of the missionary era when different religious denominations competed for converts amongst residents of the Upper Skeena region.

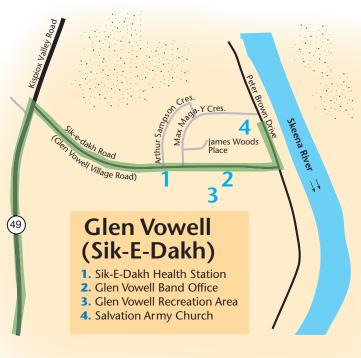
### KM 22.2/Mile 13.8

Turn left immediately past the church and proceed back towards entry to the village.

### KM 22.8/Mile 14.2

Turn right onto access road, proceed back to Kispiox Road.





#### KM 23.8/Mile 14.8 KISPIOX ROAD.

Turn right onto Kispiox Road.

### KM 25.6/Mile 15.9 FARLEIGH'S MARKET GARDEN

During the summer months the Farleigh family operates the best vegetable farm in Northwestern B.C. Feel free to stop and stock up on fresh produce.

### KM 28.1/Mile 17.5 KISPIOX RIVER BRIDGE

Cross this wooden bridge over the famed Kispiox River. This river has a worldwide reputation for its very large Steelhead Trout.

### KM 28.4/Mile 17.6 KISPIOX VILLAGE

(Anspayaxw which means "People of the Hiding Place") Turn right at the first road past the distinctive Kispiox Band Administration building on the right. Proceed down the gravel road.

### KM 28.9/Mile 18 KISPIOX TOTEMS

Park in the large gravel parking area in front and to the side of the old Fish Hatchery building. A Hand of History sign



here relates the story of Fort Stager, part of a failed attempt in the 1860s to build a telegraph line to Europe via the Bering Strait, through Asia.

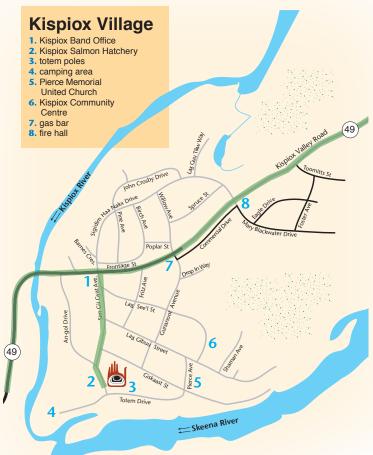
With about 600 residents, Kispiox is a large Gitxsan community located at the confluence of the Kispiox and Skeena Rivers. Kispiox is renowned for its master carvers, totems and scenic setting. Across from the hatchery parking lot is a line of 16 extraordinary totems. It is also a short walk from the hatchery to the riverside.

Return the way you came to the Kispiox Road.

The basic unit of Gitxsan society is the House or Wilp, which corresponds with a territory and is led by a hereditary chief. The Gitxsan are organized into four clans: Lax Gibuu (Wolf), Lax Seel/Ganeda (Frog), Giskaast (Fireweed) and Lax Skiik (Eagle). It is a matrilineal society, meaning members trace lineage through their mothers. Wilp history is recorded on totem poles. (www.gitxsan.com)

### KM 29.4/Mile 18.3 KISPIOX ROAD Turn right and continue up the Kispiox Valley.

The Kispiox Valley is home to 500 people who live on farms and large acreages. Constructed in the time of the Klondike Gold Rush, the Yukon Telegraph line, which stretched between Ashcroft and



Atlin, extended northward through the Kispiox Valley. The line operated from 1900 to 1936, and provided employment for local ranchers and packers who supplied isolated telegraph operators. The Kispiox Valley is now known for its pleasant rural lifestyle.

### KM 41.6/Mile 25.9 KISPIOX RODEO GROUNDS/



COMMUNITY HALL

Perhaps take a walk on the grounds and to the river. It is here where the annual KISPIOX VALLEY RODEO is held the first weekend in June and the annual KISPIOX VALLEY MUSIC FESTIVAL, the last weekend in July. Return back down the Kispiox Road the way you came towards Hazelton. At this point you can either return to Hazelton and/or Highway 16, or continue with the "Hands of History" adventure.

For those who wish to complete the entire tour, proceed down the Kispiox Road to the intersection at the Kitwanga Backroad (Hazelton-Kitwanga Road).

### KM 60.9/Mile 37.8 KITWANGA BACKROAD

Turn a sharp right and drive uphill along the scenic back road towards Kitwanga. (This turn may not be feasible for large motorhomes.) The Kitwanga Backroad is a gravel road but maintained to high standards.

### KM 66.2-63.4/Mile 41.1-41.3

HAZELTON OVERLOOK Excellent views of Hazelton, the Skeena River and Roche de Boule Mountains (Stekyooden Peak). Please pull as far off the road as possible if you stop to take photos.

Continue on the Backroad.

A famous legend of the Tsimshian relates how the village of Temlaham in the Skeena Valley was destroyed when mountain goats caused a landslide that killed all but one man. The destruction was punishment for the maltreatment of a baby goat by the children. The lone survivor was the one person who finally rescued the baby goat from its tormentors and who is responsible for our knowledge of this story today. Geological investigations suggest a massive debris flow occurred on nearby Chicago Creek about 3500 years ago.

## KM 74.5/Mile 46.3

Look for the plaque and gravel turn-off on left. Temlaham (Prairie Town) figures in legend after legend of the Tsimshian, Haida, Tlingit, and Gitxsan peoples. This "paradise lost" is the legendary birthplace of all northern Northwest Coast aboriginal nations. This is a great place for a picnic or a stroll down to the river. Farms in this area take advantage of some of the best climate in Northwestern British



Columbia – 19 inches of rain a year and a warm southern exposure.

The Kitwanga Backroad is closed a few kilometres further along. Congratulations on completing the first part of the tour. Return the way you came on the Backroad and turn right at the Kispiox Road to return to Hazelton, New Hazelton or Highway 16.

### KM 97.8/Mile 60.1 HAZELTONS VISITOR CENTRE

End of Part 1 of the Tour.

More Adventures: More determined travellers can find two other Hands of History Signs in the area not mentioned in this itinerary. One sign about mining is accessed along the gravel Hazelton-Kitwanga Road by turning right off Highway 37, 6.7 kilometres north of the junction with Highway 16 at Kitwanga. This sign tells of the colourful mining history of the area and shows where former mines are located above Carnaby. The second sign is west along Highway 16 at Cedarvale, towards Terrace. At Cedarvale, missionary Robert Thomlinson founded a religious community called Minskinish in the late 1800s. A very pleasant 2.2 km detour off the highway is worth taking at Cedarvale. Stay on this road, Cedarvale Ferry Road, as it returns to the highway a short distance to the south.



# Part 2: Skeena Valley/Kitwanga

### KM 0/Mile 0 HAZELTONS VISITOR CENTRE

Starting at the Visitor Centre in New Hazelton, this segment of the tour heads westward following the Skeena River and CN rail line and north on a 15 minute drive along the Stewart Cassiar Highway 37 to Gitanyow (Kitwancool). The Hands of History stops of interest are described from Gitanyow back towards our starting point in New Hazelton.





From the Visitor Centre, exit the parking area and turn right onto Highway 16 (towards Kitwanga and Terrace).

### KM 43.1/Mile 26.8 STEWART-CASSIAR HIGHWAY 37 JUNCTION

- At the Petro-Canada gas station, turn right on this paved highway and proceed north 21 kilometres (13 miles) to Gitanyow Village (Kitwancool). The Stewart-Cassiar Highway offers remarkable natural sights en route to Stewart and beyond to the Yukon and Alaska. Traveller information is available at the Hazeltons Visitor Centre or visit www.stewartcassiar.com.

#### KM 64.2/Mile 39.9 GITANYOW TURN-OFF

(also known as "Kitwancool") Gitanyow means "place of many numbers" – Turn left past the GIT-ANYOW ACCESS ROAD sign and proceed into the village. The totems of Gitanyow are reputed to be the most artistic and creative examples of the carvers art.

### KM 65.9/Mile 41.0

Cross the small bridge over Kitwancool River, stay to the right as you enter the community. In August and September, look for spawning salmon in the river.

### KM 66.6/Mile 41.4 GITANYOW TOTEMS

Turn right off the road just past the fire hydrant, park in large open area to the side of the cedar carving shed.

It is almost impossible to describe the magic of the Gitanyow totems. Perhaps it is the isolation of the village or the sound of the Kitwancool River in the background...or maybe it is the power of seeing more than 20 towering sculptures that display images that are truly of another world. It is worth taking time to wander amongst these timeless sentinels of Northwest Coast culture.

Return to the highway the way you came.

### KM 69.0/Mile 42.9 STEWART-CASSIAR HIGHWAY JUNCTION Turn right and proceed back down the way you came (approx. 14.5 kilometres).

### **KM 83.5/Mile 51.9 KITWANGA JUNCTION** Turn right at signs marking the exit to Kitwanga.

Kitwanga Fort (Battle Hill) commemorates the history of a "Daa'ootsip," or fortified village that was occupied by the Gitwangak during the late 1700s and early 1800s. From this hilltop stronghold, the warrior chief 'Nekt led a series of raids against neighbouring First Nations. The stronghold was attacked twice by warriors seeking revenge for 'Nekt's attacks. Both times the Gitwangak defeated the attackers by rolling spiked logs upon them. (Parks Canada brochure)

### KM 84.3/Mile 52.4 KITWANGA FORT NATIONAL HISTORIC

**SITE** (BATTLE HILL) On your right, this National Historical Site preserves the legendary fortress of 'NEKT. The Gitxsan constructed a number of trails that connected their villages. At strategic trail or river locations, forts were built to control trade and defend territory. Excavations at this site have found evidence of intricate fortifications, log bastions and remnants of food and cooking utensils. Parks Canada information panels are placed on the short path to the hilltop fort site.

### KM 84.9/Mile 52.8

HISTORIC SAINT SAVIOUR'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

### KM 85.4/Mile 53.1 KITWANGA

A stop for food and gas

KM 86.0/Mile 53.4 STEWART-CASSIAR HIGHWAY JUNCTION Turn right.

### KM 89.4/Mile 55.6 CEDARVALE-KITWANGA ROAD

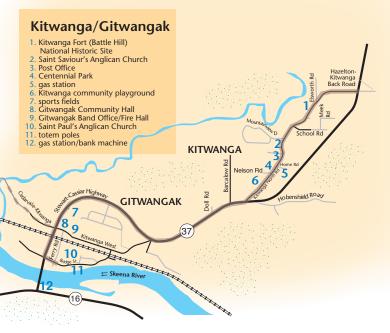
An optional side-trip is to turn right onto the Cedarvale-Kitwanga Road. After approximately 9 kilometres spectacular vistas across the Skeena River and to the 2500 metre high Seven Sisters Mountains come into view. This is mostly a gravel road and not recommended for large motorhomes.

### KM 89.9/Mile 55.9

GITWANGAK TOTEMS ACCESS (Gitwangak, means "people of the place of rabbits") Turn left onto paved road immediately before Skeena River Bridge (Bridge Street).

### KM 90.0/Mile 55.59 ST. PAUL'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

Turn left into parking lot. The distinctive church constructed in 1893 is



yet another reminder of the missionary past. The original bell tower in front of the church was destroyed by fire and rebuilt by community members in 1979.

### KM 90.3/Mile 56.1 GITWANGAK TOTEMS

These 8-10 excellent examples of the carver's art were placed in this location in 1926 after a restoration project assisted by Canadian National Railways. Walk a short distance behind the totems to view the Skeena River.

Turn around in a turnout just past the totems and

return towards the bridge and highway the way you came.

### KM 90.9/Mile 56.5

Turn left and cross the Skeena River. This bridge was built in 1973 and replaced a car ferry further downstream at Cedarvale that was the only way to cross the Skeena River between Hazelton and Terrace.

### KM 91.3/Mile 56.7

Turn left off the bridge into the Petro-Canada gas station. A place for gas and maybe a photo of the "NORTH TO ALASKA" signpost.



### KM 91.14/Mile 56.8

Turn left out of gas station parking lot onto Yellowhead Highway 16.

KM 108.1/Mile 67.1 **SKEENA CROSSING** Large pull-put on right, just before entering the community of Kitsegukla. This Hand of History plaque commemorates construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (now the Canadian National Railway) and specifically the 1912 completion of a railway bridge crossing just upriver from this location. Ironically sternwheelers on the Skeena River supported this construction project but soon met their demise as rail travel became the preferred method of transportation.

Continue down Highway 16.

KM 108.4/Mile 67.3 ENTERING KITSEGUKLA Also called Gitsegukla, which means "people of the sharp pointed mountain" is a Gitxsan village located near river canyons that provide excellent opportunities to net some of the 5 million salmon that migrate up the Skeena River annually.

Continue down Highway 16.

### KM 115.3/Mile 71.6 CARNABY SAWMILL

**SITE** – this sawmill was once one of the largest employers in the area before closing down in 2001. Forestry has been a mainstay of the region's economy, starting with supplying wood to fuel the sternwheelers, to cutting railway ties and mining timbers, to producing lumber in high production mills for overseas markets.

### KM 124.7/Mile 77.5 SEELEY LAKE

Turn right off Highway 16 at Seeley Lake Provincial Park. A "Hand of History" sign commemorates the mythic grizzly bear that inhabited the lake in centuries past. Good fishing, swimming and camping.

Turn right from the parking area to return to Highway 16. Continue down Highway 16 until you see the signs for South Hazelton.

### KM 127.3/Mile 79.1 SOUTH HAZELTON ENTRANCE

Turn left off the highway and proceed along Aldous Street into South Hazelton. At approximately 3 km the road will turn right (Omineca Avenue).

South Hazelton and New Hazelton were born of the railway—both originating with the railway construction starting around 1909. Great futures were predicted and grand plans drawn; South Hazelton was promoted as "The Chicago of the North."

### KM 130.4/Mile 81.0 HAZELTON STATION ROAD

Turning left at Hazelton Station Road takes one on a 2 kilometre descent along a gravel road to Anderson Flats, along the Bulkey River opposite 'Ksan and Gitanmaax. Due to some steepness and sharp corners, larger motorhomes are advised to use caution.

### KM 132.5/Mile 82.3 MISSION POINT



Anderson Flats has played an important role in the history of the region. It has been the location of native trading, explorer's camps, a Methodist mission, a Hudson's Bay outpost, a slaughter yard, and a golf course. The site is now a provincial park, favourite local picnic ground and fishing hole.

Return the way to you came, to the top of the hill

### KM 134.7/Mile 83.7 ALDOUS STREET

After crossing the railway tracks again, turn left at the top of the hill.

### KM 135.4/Mile 84.1

**HIGHWAY 16 JUNCTION** Turn left and continue down Highway 16, past the Visitor Centre, through New Hazelton to the "Welcome to the Hazeltons" sign at the paved turnout on the left.

### KM 140.3/Mile 87.2 BANK ROBBERIES

Near this location the last "Wild West" bank robbery and shootout in Western Canada took place. Russian anarchists met a gruesome fate when they came up against the sharp-shooting townsfolk of New Hazelton.

### KM 141.82/Mile 87.7 HAZELTONS VISITOR CENTRE

A short return through New Hazelton brings you back to the Visitor Centre and completion of the tour. We trust the experience was rewarding and thank you for visiting the Hazeltons: The Historic Heartland of Northwest British Columbia.





# Hands of History Information

Hazeltons Visitor Centre Box 340, New Hazelton, BC VOJ 2J0

June to September: Tel: 250.842.6071 Fax: 250.842.6271 Off-Season: Tel: 250.842.6571 Email: tourism@newhazelton.ca

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Archival images courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives A-06892 "Kitwancool Village Totems" E-01983 "Original Bridge, Hagwilget Canyon" E-08391 "Hazelton Indian Village" B-03838 "SS Hazelton, Kitselas Canyon" H-06886 "Official Tower Opening - St. Paul's Church" (photo by Gary White & John Veillette)

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For more information on tourism in the Hazelton area: www.hellobc.com/en-CA/RegionsCities/NewHazelton.htm www.hazeltonstourism.ca www.ksan.org www.hazelton.ca www.newhazelton.ca www.newhazeltonlibrary.bc.ca www.gitanmaax.com www.gitxsan.com www.gitsegukla.org www.heritagebcstops.com

