



**ONE COMMUNITY | SIX DECADES | TEN STORIES**

**A curriculum for  
English 7-10  
Social Studies 7-10**

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**Creative Cultural Collaborations Society  
September 2014**



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## Introduction

The **BlackStrathcona** project, with its unique website ([www.blackstrathcona.com](http://www.blackstrathcona.com)) and student study guide, will be of great interest to teachers of senior elementary and junior secondary grades (7-10).

From the early 1900s to the late-1960s, a small Black community lived in Strathcona, a neighbourhood east of downtown Vancouver. (Refer to Home page on website to locate Strathcona within Vancouver.)

While the Strathcona neighbourhood itself has always been ethnically diverse, with many Italian, Chinese and Japanese Canadians, a number of Black families, Black businesses, and the city's only Black church – the Fountain Chapel – were located there. As such, Strathcona was the first and last neighbourhood in Vancouver with a substantial concentrated Black population.

The story of this fascinating community is largely unknown in British Columbia, yet the community thrived for nearly six decades. The **BlackStrathcona** project depicts the cultural life, institutions and social geography of the community and celebrates its creativity and resilience.

The heart of the **BlackStrathcona** project is in the ten individual video stories. The stories combine narratives presented by professional performers, many of whom are personally descended from original Black settlers, with rarely seen archival photographs and film.

The stories transport students back to another era, to one of restaurants serving Southern-style soul food, to jazz musicians, to big name celebrity visitors, and also to the discrimination and difficulties faced by a minority community in Vancouver's less than progressive past.

## Curriculum Rationale

The **BlackStrathcona** project, along with this student study guide, are a valuable local curriculum asset for teachers in British Columbia.

Students can access the **BlackStrathcona** project in two ways. The first is in the classroom via the website.

The second way to access the project is by taking students on field trips to the Strathcona neighbourhood itself. Once in Strathcona, students can use mobile devices, such as iPhones or iPads, to scan QR Codes on purpose-built street signage placed on power poles and light standards around the neighbourhood. The QR Codes in turn download the video stories to the screens of the mobile devices. (Refer to [Interactivity](#) page on website to see a description of this process.)

Through ten compelling video stories, students are afforded windows into the social history and geography of the Black community in Strathcona. (Refer to [Home](#) page on website to locate the ten video stories on the map of Strathcona.) Students will get the sense that although the community dispersed long ago, it is in another sense still alive with unseen histories and layers, and that powerful connections can exist between the past and the present.

The study guide incorporates a variety of learning activities, which connect to BC Prescribed Learning Outcomes in Social Studies and English Language Arts in grades 7 through 10, both in skill development and in content. (PLO connections follow this rationale.) From literal comprehension of content to drawing inferences, comparing and contrasting, summarizing, evaluating, analyzing and interpreting, the study guide has questions for each segment ranging from literal to more complex, evaluative and analytical tasks. This facilitates the teacher task of differentiation for the variety of learners in BC classrooms.

The **BlackStrathcona** project could be used as a standalone unit for Black History Month. It could also provide a valuable local perspective for teachers using the novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*, as one example. As well, this tool will be very relevant within a unit or theme of multiculturalism and anti-racism. We are proud to invite you to introduce your students to this exciting learning opportunity.

## Prescribed Learning Outcomes Connections

### ***English Language Arts 7-10***

- recalling, summarizing, and synthesizing
- drawing inferences & conclusions
- distinguishing between fact & opinion
- demonstrate comprehension of visual texts
- express opinions & make judgments supported by explanations and evidence
- explain connections of text to self, text to text, text to world
- use writing and representing to critique, express personal opinions and respond to experiences

### ***Social Studies 7***

- Apply critical thinking skills including comparing, classifying, inferring, imagining and verifying
- Summarizing and drawing conclusions to a number of problems and issues

### ***Social Studies 8***

- locate and describe current and historical events on map
- compare daily life, family structures, and gender roles in a variety of civilizations
- demonstrate awareness of artistic expression as a reflection of the culture in which it is produced
- describe how societies preserve identity, transmit culture, and adapt to change
- describe various ways individuals and groups can influence legal systems and political structures
- analyse how people interacted with and altered their environments, in terms of population, settlement patterns, resource use and cultural development

***Social Studies 9***

- describe how different forms of artistic expression reflect the society in which they are produced
- assess how identity is shaped by a variety of factors, including family, gender, belief systems, ethnicity, nationality
- analyse roots of present-day regional, cultural, and social issues within Canada
- describe a variety of diverse cultural traditions and world religions

***Social Studies 10***

- identify the influence of immigration on, and the contributions of immigrants to the development of Canada

# Vie's Chicken & Steaks

## Story 1

**Instructions:**

From the website, view video segment #1, *Vie's Chicken & Steaks*. You may also wish to refer to the script to respond to these questions.

**Questions:**

1. What food offerings were available on Vie's menu?


2. List three reasons why her restaurant was so popular.

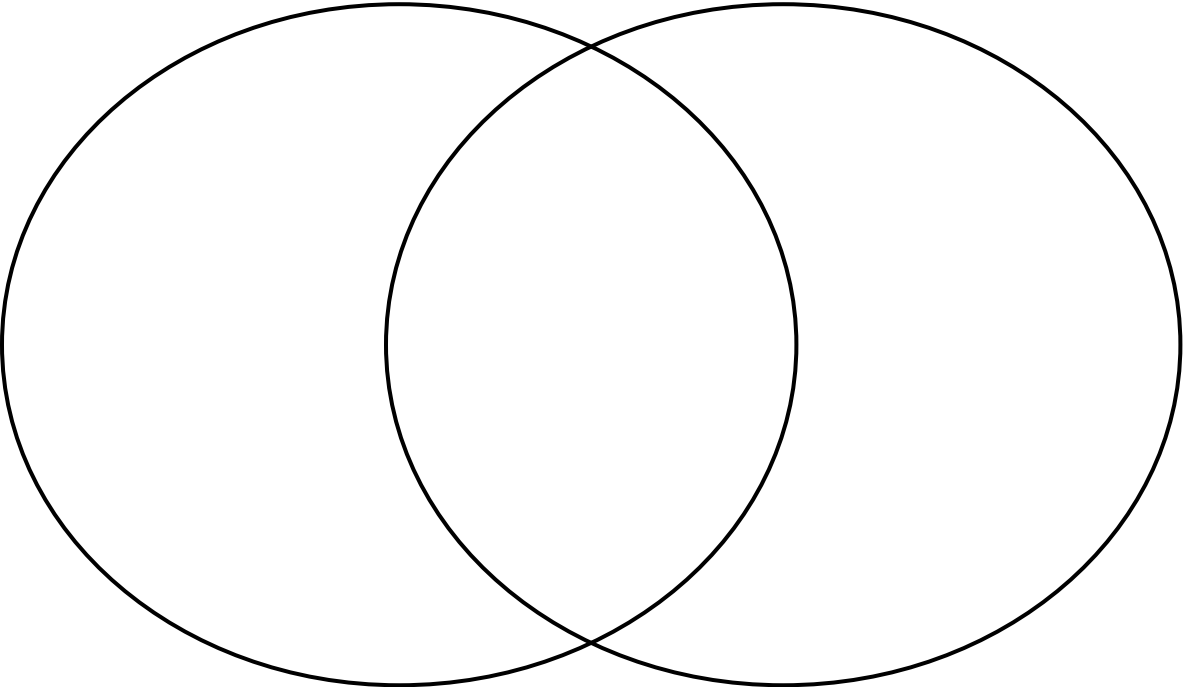

3. The narrator includes a number of celebrities of the day who visited the restaurant. Research the names below and then complete the chart, indicating what each one's particular talent was.

Name	Talent
Ella Fitzgerald	
Sammy Davis Junior	
Lena Horne	
Billy Holiday	

4. Vie hired only women to work in the restaurant. What reasons might she have had for that practice?


5. Compare Vie’s Chicken & Steaks with a restaurant you are familiar with. In the Venn Diagram below, list the similarities in the overlapping circles and the differences in each of the other sections.

Vie’s Chicken & Steaks                      Similarities                      Your Restaurant





## Vie's Chicken & Steaks

A late night haven

From the corner of Main to the alley on Union, that's where you'd find the spot.  
Vie's Chicken and Steaks was pretty, pretty hot.

My grandma owed the joint. Umhmm. And ran it first class too.  
T-bones / Porterhouse / Filet Mignons and half a chicken was the meat on the menu.

Biscuits that was homemade, baked fresh everyday.  
Melt in you mouth and sold out quick, because Grandma didn't play. That right!

She served it with mushrooms / onions / peas / salad and fries, and that was the complete menu when you came to Vie's. Yeah!

The hours were 5 at night till 5am, but after midnight it was always strong.  
There was no liquor license so folks bought they own along.

My Grandma supplied the ice and the mix, and would always take a minute and sit to have her a drink or two. Umhmm.

The cops would come in after they beat.  
The cabbies would come in off the street.

The entertainers back then when they came to town would walk thru her doors because Grandma didn't mess around. Ooooo! Ella Fitzgerald... Duke Ellington... Lou Rawls... Lena Horne... Billy Holiday!

Sammy Davis Jr. would come in. He loved Vie's but he'd always come in clean.  
Vie's Chicken and Steaks was a hot, hot part of that night scene.

And there was a time when Jimmy Hendrix grandmama worked for mine.  
Now I remember Rosy the dishwasher and my Mom and Leah would waitress.

Everybody was friends.  
My Grandma hired only women, even way back then.

And the laughter would be jumpin, jumpin all night long up outta that place.  
First class dining! First class dining at Vie's Chicken and Steaks! Ooooo!

# Sleeping Car Porters

Story 2

**Instructions:**

From the website, view video segment #2, *Sleeping Car Porters*. You may also wish to refer to the script to respond to these questions.

**Questions:**

1. What does a sleeping car porter do?


2. What were three of the problems Sleeping Car Porters experienced in the workplace before they formed a union?


3. What were the benefits for Porters in belonging to the union?


4. Why do you think Blacks were the only porters?


5. Would you like to have been a sleeping car porter? Think about the advantages and disadvantages. Write your response in a short paragraph.


6. Research the Sleeping Car Porters Union from its start to the present day. Summarize the **main points** of its history in point form notes.


# Sleeping Car Porters

## Fought for labor and civil rights

### Act 1

Behind me - at the corner of Main and Prior, where the Georgia Viaducts are now - there used to be a three-story brick building. That building housed the Porter's Club, a meeting place for Black railway porters during the 1920s. Porters were some of the first Blacks in Strathcona, and were one reason why the Black community got started here.

### Act 2

Some of the more notable porters from Strathcona were the four Collins Brothers, who grew up on East Georgia, a few blocks from here. The Collins brothers were like hundreds of other porters who worked on Canada's railways from the early 1900s through the 1960s. Although they were respected within their communities, on the job they faced discrimination. Porters could be fired without notice or without cause. Much of their income came from tips, making them dependent on the whims of passengers. And they were refused promotions to supervisory positions like conductor, even though they often did many of the conductor's duties.

Efforts to unionize were squashed by the railway companies. That changed in 1942 when the US-based Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters expanded into Canada. The President of the Canadian branch of the Brotherhood was Frank Collins, the eldest of the four Collins brothers. Under Frank's leadership, the Brotherhood fought discrimination and unfair labour practices. In fact my dad, who worked for one of the rail companies, benefitted directly from those efforts. Over his 35-year career, he rose through the ranks to become a senior purchasing agent, a supervisory position with higher pay and shorter hours.

### Act 3

By making gains in their work place, porters were in turn able to contribute to their communities, and to make better lives for their families. They also made better lives for generations of families that followed them... including mine.

# Hogan's Alley

Story 3

**Instructions:**

From the website, view video segment #3, *Hogan's Alley*.  
You may also wish to refer to the script to respond to these questions.

**Questions:**

- 1. When did Blacks first come to the part of Vancouver described in the video?

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- 2. From which places did they come?


- 3. Why do think Blacks all lived in the same small area of Vancouver?


- 4. Using the graphic organizer below, compare your own neighbourhood with Hogan’s Alley as it is described in the video. Use some of the following criteria: building types, inhabitants, kinds of businesses, parks, restaurants, recreational facilities.

Hogan’s Alley versus Your Neighbourhood

How Alike

[Empty box for notes on similarities]

How Different with regard to

	Building Types	
	Inhabitants	
	Kinds of Businesses	
	Restaurants	
	Recreational Facilities	

Conclusion or Interpretation

5. What kinds of work did people do in the Hogan’s Alley neighbourhood?  
List at least 4 kinds of jobs.


6. What is meant by the phrase a “den of crime and squalor”?


7. What city planning led to the end of Hogan’s Alley?


8. Using the material on the website and what you see in the area, how is Gore Avenue today different from Hogan’s Alley of the 1950’s? What remains the same?

Gore Avenue and Hogan’s Alley	
Similarities	Differences



# Hogan's Alley

## The beginning and end of Black Strathcona

### Act 1

I'm standing on Gore Avenue in what used to be called Hogan's Alley. The Alley ran back to Jackson Avenue, two blocks to the east. It also ran one block towards Main to the west, but more on that later. In its heyday from the 1930s to 40s, Hogan's Alley was a collection of small cottages, Southern-style restaurants and makeshift nightclubs. And depending on your point of view - it was either a den of crime and squalor, or the most interesting and vibrant place in Vancouver.

### Act 2

This neighbourhood has always been racially mixed. At one time included several hundred Blacks. The majority came from two immigrant steams - from California, and from Oklahoma via Alberta. One immigrant from California was Fielding Spotts. Mr. Spotts arrived on Vancouver Island as an infant in 1860. His father was part of the first wave of Black migration to BC during the Fraser Gold Rush, but he was more concerned about escaping the growing racism in the United States. As Vancouver became the economic centre of the province, the Black population began to move here, and in 1902, Mr. Spotts moved with them. He worked as a labourer and lived in this cottage on Prior Street. In 1937, he died there at age 79.

A few years later, the Crump family moved to Strathcona from Alberta. Originally from Oklahoma, the Crumps left the US for the same reason as Mr. Spotts - to escape racism. Mr. Crump instilled in his twin sons - Robert and Ronnie - a love of music. The Crump Twins, as they were known, were born entertainers. Not only did they have a boxing routine, they also tap danced, and formed their own musical duet. The Crump Twins wowed audiences all over town, but they loved to play the local places - like Mammy's Chicken Inn - here in Hogan's Alley. And they became, for decades, a fixture on its infamous music and club scene.

### Act 3

But in the 1960s, the music came to an end when the City decided that Hogan's Alley, and parts of Chinatown, would be leveled for a freeway. Due to resistance from the community, the freeway was never built, but in 1972, this was - the Georgia Viaduct. The Viaduct destroyed the western end of Hogan's Alley. That demolition, and the fact that it was now easier for Blacks to find housing in other parts of the city brought an end to the first and last Black neighbourhood in Vancouver.

# Fountain Chapel

## Story 4

### **Instructions:**

From the website, view video segment #4, *Fountain Chapel*.  
You may also wish to refer to the script to respond to these questions.

### **Questions:**

1. Why do you think Nora Hendrix thought it was important for Blacks to have their own church?


2. Why do you think Nora Hendrix had to obtain funding from an American (non Canadian) church group?


3. The story presenter says “if you wanted to meet anyone in the Black community, you came here”. What do you think would be the reason for that?


4. Besides a religious focus, what other purposes did the chapel serve for the community? List at least 4.


5. Are there places in your community that serve similar functions? Briefly describe or sketch one or more and list what they offer.

Description	What it offers

6. *What is located at 825 Jackson Avenue today? List at least three visible changes in the building from the original version seen on the website.*

In the 1950's original building	Today's building

# Fountain Chapel

## The heart of Black Strathcona

### Act 1

This building at 823 Jackson was once the heart of Black Strathcona. It was the Fountain Chapel, and it sits at the eastern end of what used to be Hogan's Alley. For nearly 70 years, the church would be packed to the rafters for services. And if you wanted to meet anyone in the Black community, you came here. The chapel was also used for all kinds of meetings, bazaars and community suppers.

### Act 2

But Blacks in Vancouver didn't always have a church to call home. When Nora Hendrix, grandmother of musician Jimi Hendrix, came to Vancouver in 1911, she said, "there was no church." What Nora meant was – there was no church for the growing population of Blacks. After years of holding services in rented halls, Nora was part of the group that worked to get a church of their own. The group contacted the African Methodist Episcopal church, the AME, a US-based denomination founded to fight racism. The AME told the group, "If you raise \$500, we'll raise \$500." So with \$1,000 down, they purchased this building in 1918. Over the years, the Fountain Chapel continued the AME's tradition of activism. In the 1923, the congregation ensured a fair trial for Fred Deal, a railroad porter who was charged with killing a Vancouver Police constable. And in 1952, they demanded an inquiry into the police beating and subsequent death of Clarence Clemons, a Black longshoreman.

### Act 3

In the 1960s, during the city's urban renewal programs, the Black community was gradually displaced from Strathcona. In 1985, the Fountain Chapel was sold, and is now a private residence. But the Fountain Chapel still serves as a reminder of the Black community that once lived and thrived here in Strathcona.

# Jimi & Nora

## Story 5

**Instructions:**

From the website, view video segment #5, *Jimi & Nora*.  
You may also wish to refer to the script to respond to these questions.

**Questions:**

1. This segment tells the story of Jimi Hendrix’s life. What was his family connection to Vancouver?

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2. List four significant events in Hendrix’s life that the rap alludes to (hints at).


3. Research Hendrix’s background. Write a short description of what was unique about his music.


4. Listen to some of Hendrix’s music. Choose one of his songs and compare it with a favourite song of yours. Use the Compare and Contrast graphic organizer below to detail the similarities and differences using some of the following criteria: type (rock, hip-hop, etc.), tempo (slow or fast), loudness, types of instruments and lyrics. Write a conclusion about which one you prefer and why.

Hendrix Song	versus	Your Song
_____		_____

How Alike
-----------


How Different
---------------

	Type	
	Tempo	
	Loudness	
	Types of Instruments	
	Lyrics	

Conclusion or Interpretation
------------------------------

5. Why do you think Hendrix was so popular in his era?


6. Do you think a rap-style, spoken word performance used in this segment is the best way to tell the story of Hendrix's life? Why or why not?


## Jimi & Nora

Seminal musician with local roots

Jimi Hendrix  
is still lighting a candle on the veranda at 827 Georgia Street East Vancouver  
Burning up childhood summers in and around the neighbourhood  
he always knew he would be good  
a bright young bluesman  
born to a family of entertainers  
travelling to Electric Church  
playing at the home of Nora Hendrix  
preaching to the street corner choirs  
amplifying sound with Dante's Inferno  
electrifying guitars and audiences.

Jimi and Nora  
are still cooking up on lyrics in the back of Vie's Chicken & Steaks,  
sacrificing the beasts of the earth for a plate of soul food:  
Grandson waiting on his grandma to nourish his mind with a matriarchal mural  
painted between rock and hard places  
an airbourne nomad with a Van city crashing pad  
filling the shack with the aroma of afro-peripheralism at play  
Pacific Northwest of the center stage – a heroic blaze of glory  
adding meat to the story of pioneers and rifles.

By 1970 Jimi has bones to pick in London hotel rooms,  
the Queen consents to have her off ramp extended like a contract  
destroying Nora's square mile, her grandchild and his girlfriend Betty Jean  
forcing families into blockbusting exile and project housing  
administrative arson and capital zoning  
Children versus Profit  
there is unrest undermining urban renewal in war.

Justice only exists in an invisible world, which Jimi can clearly see  
as a paratrooper in the military taking a leap of faith  
dropping bombs bursting deadlier than agent orange napalm  
electric alchemy  
gold to platinum.

Wanted: dead or alive  
the green of greed, gambling and envy  
is a plane crash waiting to happen  
mid-air collision  
star spangled disaster  
indigenous rocks are rare in this hazy atmosphere.



The price on your afro is the number one headband  
traded with the devil at the crossroads  
for sleeping pills and poison wine  
they flipped the story and strung you out like you played yourself.

“I too am Rock & Roll,” was his flaming epitaph smashed on stage  
an epic wreckage of genius and rage.

*“Now dig this baby,  
and stop acting so crazy!”*

Just make my Cherokee heart sing  
while my lips burn up these strings and smoke signals to the nation.

Have you ever seen music on a parachute in boot camp?  
Have you ever seen guitar string dental floss after a hearty meal?  
Your service is to love and not to fight.

Make yourself comfortable in a living room of passion and desires burning bright  
cuddle the cosmic flame of winter  
Your blood still ignites the hearts and minds of lovers and prophets  
In a time where hearts are broken and prophecies are false  
your rhythm is true.

*The Blues have always been American*

As American as the Grand Prince of the African Methodist Episcopalian Fountain  
Chapel of Zenora Moore

Ross Hendrix is petitioning to be a Canadian citizen  
because Vanrock is the preferred city to be living in.

Seattle serves as a suitable port of entry  
and somewhere in this experience  
an Indigo Voodoo child is dressed in Royal Purple  
flipping and restringing a right-handed Fender Strat over discarded military arms  
sweating lighter fluid  
and spitting  
Fire

# Militant Mothers

## Story 6

**Instructions:**

From the website, view video segment #6, *Militant Mothers*.  
You may also wish to refer to the script to respond to these questions.

**Questions:**

- 1. What was the problem for the children living on Raymur Avenue in getting to school?


- 2. What were the first actions the mothers took before they resorted to blocking the tracks?


- 3. What is “direct action”? What happened once the mothers took “direct action”?


4. Why do you think the railway company did not keep its promise to restrict the times the trains travelled?


5. What could have been done to prevent this problem from happening in the first place?


6. Work with a partner to discuss the following:

Do you think sometimes it is necessary to break the law in order achieve something that would benefit or be a greater good? Why or why not? Can you describe an example of a situation that you think might benefit by using “direct action”?

Be ready to report out briefly to the class on your discussion results.

7. Do research on the Occupy Movement or the Idle No More Movement. Both advocate various forms of direct action to achieve their purposes. In point form, list what each group hoping to change?

Occupy	Idle No More

# Militant Mothers

## Beating the Power Brokers

### Act 1

From this corner at Keefer and Campbell, I'm going to tell you about a group of courageous women. The story starts in 1970 when the Raymur Housing Project was built to house low-income families. The children from Raymur went to Seymour Elementary School – just two blocks to the east.

### Act 2

A short walk. But there was a problem. A set of train tracks runs between the Raymur Housing Project and Seymour Elementary School. So to get to school, the children had to cross the tracks and dodge trains. A group of mothers from Raymur, including Carolyn Jerome, asked the city and the rail company to build a pedestrian overpass. They got no response. They wrote letters, signed petitions, made speeches to City Hall. Still no response. So January 6, 1971, the mothers turned militant. Carolyn Jerome and a group of 25 other mothers from Raymur decided to shut down the railroad. They went to the tracks, and they stood in the path of the oncoming trains, and they refused to move. It didn't take long before the rail company noticed that. After months of petitions and phone calls, nothing happened. But after one day of direct action, the mothers got results. The rail company promised to alter its schedule to avoid school opening and closing times. But the Mothers knew they were a low priority for the rail companies. And - sure enough - promises were broken.

*Carolyn Jerome - You set up a time and you've run past that time. You set up another time, another half-hour and we've still gotta cross over that half-hour and we've gotta come out here again. If you're really legitimate about these - why don't you put some money up? We want some honest proof that these time schedules are going to be kept. We're not leaving 'til that's done.*

*Unidentified Man - The Canadian National gives its word categorically...*

*Carolyn Jerome - We took Furturer's word, we took Mattison's word, now you want us to take the CNR's word. How dumb do you think we are?*

The mothers occupied the tracks two more times until finally the standoff went to court. In the end, the courts ruled in favour of Carolyn and the mothers. And at the beginning of that new school year, the overpass was built linking the Raymur Housing Project and Seymour Elementary School.

### Act 3

If you have a moment, take a walk one block over to the overpass. At the top, stop, look down. Imagine the mothers – a group of them – standing on the tracks. It's a reminder of what it takes to create change in a community, and what courage and direct action can accomplish.

# Barbara Howard

## Story 7

**Instructions:**

From the website, view video segment #2, *Sleeping Car Porters*. You may also wish to refer to the script to respond to these questions.

**Questions:**

1. The British Empire Games were the equivalent of today’s Commonwealth Games, a meeting of approximately 15 nations and many hundreds of athletes.

How fast was Barbara Howard? Research the equivalent to the 100-yard dash in metric measurement and the time it takes to run it today. Compare today’s time with Howard’s.

100-Yard Dash Metric Equivalent: \_\_\_\_\_

Barbara Howard’s Time	Metric Equivalent Time

What might be an explanation for the difference?


2. Why do you think Barbara Howard was considered so unique and popular when she visited Australia in the late 1930’s?


3. What do you think might have been the reasons for the Vancouver School Board’s policy of **not** hiring teachers from minority groups?


4. What do you think would have been the ethnic makeup of the students at Strathcona School at the time of Barbara Howard’s employment?

--

5. Is it important to see teachers from a variety of ethnic groups on a school staff? Why or why not?


6. Because of her talent for running, Barbara Howard experienced a lot of “firsts” in her life. List four of those.


7. Work with a partner and discuss the following question:

Do you think sport is a way to unite or divide people?

Talk together about your views on this and why and see if you are in agreement. Explain your reasons for your position to each other. Be ready to report your discussion outcome to the rest of the class when called upon.

## Barbara Howard

One of the fastest women in the world

### Act 1

This building behind me is Strathcona School. If you were a student here in the 1950s, or if your parents or your grandparents were, the gym teacher here was once one of the fastest women in the world. Her name is Barbara Howard, and even as a young age she was known for speed. She was always picked first for relay teams and won a pile of red ribbons in sprints. But in 1938, when Barbara was in Grade 11, she reached a whole new level, when she ran some qualifying races for the British Empire Games. Her time over 100 yards beat the Games' record by one-tenth of a second. That race put her on the Canadian team for the 1938 British Empire Games in Sydney, Australia. Now it's one thing to beat records, it's another to convince your mother – at the age of 17 – to allow you travel across the world.

### Act 2

But a couple months later, Barbara was on an ocean liner bound for Australia - her first trip away from home. Now when she arrived in Sydney, it was a little different than what she expected. As a Black female athlete, rare in Australia at the time, she became a media sensation. And even one young fan gave her a toy koala bear. But amidst all the attention, Barbara still had to compete in the Games. In team relays, Barbara did well - winning a silver in the 440-yard and a bronze in the 660. But in the 100-yard dash... she came in sixth. When she returned home, Barbara never talked about the Games. She felt she had disappointed Canada, and was ashamed she didn't win a gold medal. Eager to compete again, Barbara had her heart set on gold for the 1940 Olympics in Tokyo, but the Games were cancelled due to World War Two.

### Act 3

When the Olympics were finally held again ten years later, Barbara had retired from track and had earned an education degree at the University of British Columbia - which brings us back to Strathcona School. In 1948, when most ethnic minorities were banned from teaching, Barbara became the first visible minority to teach in Vancouver here at Strathcona. She is also the first Black female athlete to represent Canada in an international sports competition. In 2012, she was inducted into the BC Sports Hall of Fame. At age 91, Barbara Howard got the recognition she deserved, for a remarkable journey that took place 74 years earlier.

# Ernie King

Story 8

**Instructions:**

From the website, view video segment #8, *Ernie King*.  
You may also wish to refer to the script to respond to these questions.

**Questions:**

- 1. Ernie King was definitely multitalented. List at least 4 of his skills and talents.


- 2. Ernie King started the first Black theatre, the Sepia Players, in Vancouver. Why do you think he did this?


- 3. Why do you think Ernie chose the motto “there’s nothing in the world you cannot do”? Could this motto apply to anyone? Why, why not?




4. Is there still a nightclub on 343 East Hastings? Go on Google maps to find out. Report on what is there today.


5. Research the kinds of subjects South African playwright Athol Fugard wrote about. Why would Ernie King have staged the plays of Fugard for Vancouver audiences?


# Ernie King

Musician, actor, entrepreneur

## Act 1

Now my Uncle Ernie, he was a building man. That's what they always use to say about the man who opened the famous Harlem Nocturne Nightclub right here at 343 East Hastings Street. Let me tell you, my Uncle Ernie, he had talent, he had drive and boy was he stubborn, just so committed to the Black art scene here in Vancouver. In fact, his motto was, "There's nothing in the world you can not do."

## Act 2

See, my Uncle Ernie served in the Second World War and that's where he learned to play a mean trombone. After he got back he was cheated in a job, so my Uncle Ernie promised that he would never work for nobody but himself. And that is when he started the jazz band - Five Guys Named Moe. He got the Guys a gig around Hastings and Main, but after the gig ended, he had a great band but no place to play. So what did he do? What else, he bought this building and opened up the Harlem Nocturne. From opening night, this club was packed. And it quickly became famous for three things: being the only Black-owned nightclub here in Vancouver having famous musicians, and for it's floorshows featuring dancer Choo Choo Williams - my Aunt Marcy, Uncle Ernie's wife. After a ten-year run, Uncle Ernie closed the Harlem Nocturne.

A few years later, sticking to his word of not working for nobody, my Uncle Ernie started the city's first Black theatre - the Sepia Players. Now, you have to understand this was during a time of major racial tensions in the city - it was difficult for Black performers to get gigs, especially gigs that reflected their lived realities. And so it was my uncle that gave these performers their first opportunity in Vancouver, but also he staged the first Canadian productions of South African playwright Athol Fugard. All the while, my uncle is acting on stages, performing on television and starting new bands.

## Act 3

As a musician, actor and hardheaded entrepreneur, my uncle, Mr. Ernest King, provided a voice and gave space to the Black art community, which changed the entire landscape of Vancouver's entertainment industry. There is truly, "nothing in the world you can not do."

# Leonard Lane

## Story 9

**Instructions:**

From the website, view video segment #9, *Leonard Lane*.  
You may also wish to refer to the script to respond to these questions.

**Questions:**

- 1. What buildings do you find now at the corner of Gore and East Georgia?


- 2. What event “politicized” Leonard, that is, made him want to fight discrimination?


- 3. What sorts of causes did Leonard advocate for? List four.


4. Work with a partner to do the following:

Leonard fought to remove biased or prejudiced textbooks from schools. Look at your social studies textbook. Count how many pictures of males and females are in a chapter. Do the same thing for pictures or illustrations of whites and non-whites? Examine the topics in a chapter. What are these events mostly concerned with? Do you believe textbooks today are biased? Why/why not?

Discuss the above together and report out your findings to the rest of the class when asked.

5. How easy do you think it might be to remove certain texts from the curriculum? How do you think someone would go about doing this?


6. What do you think was Leonard's greatest contribution to the Black community and why?


# Leonard Lane

## Community Builder

### Act 1

One of the unsung heroes of Black Strathcona once lived at this apartment at the corner of East Georgia and Gore Avenue. His name is Leonard Lane, a man who dedicated his life to bettering his community.

### Act 2

Born in Saskatchewan in 1921, Leonard moved to Vancouver when he was drafted into the army. After the war, Leonard became an active member of the Fountain Chapel, where he performed in dance groups, sang in the choir, and organized sports programs for Black youth. By the 1950s, Leonard had married, started a family and was working at a sawmill in False Creek. It was during these years that Leonard became politicized when he was refused service in local restaurants. Those incidents moved Leonard to begin fighting prejudice and discrimination.

In 1958, Leonard attended the first meeting of the British Columbia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. Leonard became one of the fulltime staff members of the Association. His first task was to take on the Minister of Education over the use of racist language in schoolbooks of the day. Leonard worked on housing issues, and on wrongful dismissals and discrimination in the workplace. And he was also one of the original members of the Unity Credit Union. In the 1960s, the Credit Union provided loans to younger members of the Black community to help them buy their first homes. Leonard was treasurer for eight of the twelve years the credit union operated. It was Leonard's hope that one day the Credit Union would have its own permanent building. That never happen... the Unity Credit Union became part of the main branch of the Vancity Credit Union.

### Act 3

That was about the only thing that Leonard didn't get done that he set his mind to. Eventually Leonard moved out of Strathcona, and retired in 1980s. But he left a legacy - of how an individual can pull together with others to make his community better than he found it.

# Leona's Kids

## Story 10

**Instructions:**

From the website, view video segment #10, *Leona's Kids*.  
 You may also wish to refer to the script to respond to these questions.

**Questions:**

1. What did Leona Risby do for a living?

--

2. Leona's children had many accomplishments. Complete the chart below to details the talents and achievements of each one.

	Talent / Achievements / "Firsts"
Leonard	
Thelma	
Chic	
Sy	

3. Talk with a partner about the following:

The narrator maintains that all this talent "runs in the family". Do you think that talent is genetically inherited or are children in the same family perhaps all exposed to influences that develop them to become artistically talented?

Try to decide what your position is on the above and why and report out to the class when asked.

## Leona's Kids

### Great talent runs in the family

#### Act 1

I'm standing at 247 East Georgia Street. In the late 1940s, this address was the Country Club Inn, a southern-style restaurant run by my grandmother, Leona Risby. Not only did Leona serve up the best hot tamales in town, she also served up amazing floorshows put on by her kids. Leonard, Thelma and my dad Chic, would push back the tables and perform Afro-Caribbean tap and jazz routines. From the warm confines of their mom's restaurant, Leona's kids grew up to take Vancouver's entertainment industry by storm.

#### Act 2

The eldest son - Leonard Gibson - was an award-winning dancer, choreographer, and teacher. Like many gifted performers, Leonard found his passion early. By age 10, he was working with big time touring companies of the day. At 19, Leonard received a scholarship to study dance in New York with the legendary Katherine Dunham. In the 1960s, he toured Europe and started his own dance school and dance company in Toronto. But before Leonard left Vancouver in the 1950s, he created a ground-breaking project. 'Bamboula: A Day in the West Indies,' was the first musical variety tv series produced by CBC Vancouver. Leonard choreographed, performed and sang in Bamboula, and invited his sister, Thelma Gibson Towns, and his brother, Chic Gibson, to be part of the multi-racial cast.

Like Leonard, Thelma is a multi-talented artist. She toured internationally and worked in nightclubs across Canada, in the West Indies and Africa. One of Thelma's passion projects was teaching and performing Afro-Cuban dance, and I am proud to say that, as a child, I was one of Aunt Thelma's students. In 2005, Thelma was given a lifetime achievement award from the Black Historical and Cultural Society of BC.

Although Chic Gibson considered becoming an athlete, his family drew him to entertainment. Chic had a long and varied career working in clubs, theatre, television and film. But he also opened doors in fields outside the entertainment industry. He was both the first Black to be hired by BC Hydro, and to join the Vancouver Junior Chamber of Commerce. Chic also served as the Vice President of the film actors union in British Columbia.

In the 1960s, Vancouver was a hotbed for rhythm and blues. And that's where Sy Risby, the fourth and youngest member of the family, made his mark. Sy was a vocalist with several bands, including the legendary Night Train Revue.

### **Act 3**

Over their careers, Leona's kids made extraordinary contributions to the arts and culture of Vancouver. To mark that legacy, they performed in *East End Blues and All that Jazz*, a musical tribute to Vancouver's Black community that ran from 2006 to 2011. Leonard, Thelma, Chic and Sy... Great talent does indeed run in the family.



# Summative Activities

## *Post Walking/Viewing Tour*

1. Think about which of the locations stood out most for you and why that is. Prepare a 3-minute talk on the segment and/or location you found to be most powerful. Contrast in your presentation what is there now and what was there in the past before the end of the Black Strathcona community.
  
2. If you could travel back in time, which of the locations would you most like to have visited, seen or been a part of? Why? Write a paragraph in response to this.
  
3. The community of Black Strathcona was destroyed to make way for the construction of the Georgia Street Viaduct. Use the graphic organizer to develop reasons in favour of this happening (why it should, the benefits) and reasons why it should not. After you explore both sides of the issue, record what your decision would have been should you have been able to decide on the community's fate.

Reasons for "Yes"	Reasons for "No"
Your Decision	

- 4. Research the community of Africville, Nova Scotia. Use the Compare and Contrast graphic organizer to note the similarities and differences between the two communities in terms of religion, geography (place in the city), inhabitants, economic opportunities and the destruction of the community. What conclusion could you make about how Blacks were treated on each side of Canada in the 1960's?

Black Strathcona versus Africville

How Alike

How Different with regard to

	Religion	
	Geography	
	Inhabitants	
	Economic Opportunities	
	Destruction of Community	

Conclusion or Interpretation

## Additional Resources

For a more comprehensive history and analysis of early Black migration to British Columbia and of the Black experience in Strathcona refer to:

*Go Do Some Great Thing*

- Crawford Killian, Commodore Books, 2008

*After Canaan*

- Wayde Compton, Arsenal Press, 2010

*Opening Doors In Vancouver's East End: Strathcona*

- edited by Carole Itter and Daphne Marlatt, Harbour Publishing, 2011

*Strathcona: Vancouver's First Neighbourhood*

- John Atkin, Whitecap Books Ltd., First Edition, 1994

## Credits

### ***BlackStrathcona Study Guide***

*Curriculum Developer*  
Mary Filleul,  
ACE Consulting & VSB Transition Teacher

### ***BlackStrathcona.com***

*Writer / Director*  
Gordon McLennan

*Producer*  
Esther Rausenberg

*Project Consultant*  
Wayde Compton

### *Storytellers*

Vie's Chicken & Steaks	Bertha Clark (also written by)
Sleeping Car Porters	Adrian Neblett
Hogan's Alley	Dana Matthews
Fountain Chapel	Marquise du Monde
Jimi & Nora	Kevan Cameron (also written by)
Militant Mothers	Vanessa Richards
Barbara Howard	Storma Sire
Ernie King	Teeanna Munro
Leonard Lane	Reese Alexander
Leona's Kids	Carrie Gibson

*Funding Provided by*  
Vancouver Foundation  
City of Vancouver  
Province of BC  
BAND – Black Artist's Networks Dialogue  
Strathcona BIA  
TB Bank – Then and Now

A production by Creative Cultural Collaborations Society in partnership with  
Vancouver Moving Theatre