

***Townships  
Mines.***

**What a past!  
What future?**



***Eastern Townships Life & Culture: Past, Present, Future***



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**On Feb. 8, 2024, the Townships Sun will be 50 years old!**

Our Contribution Guidelines are at [TownshipsSun.ca/Submit](http://TownshipsSun.ca/Submit).

28 pages!

# Table of Contents

**Editor's Notes**, by R.A. Garber ..... 5

**Community Forum**.....7

**ETRC Townships History Quiz**, by Jazmine Aldrich... 7  
*Just how world-class were the Townships mines?*

**Crossword Fun in the Townships Sun**  
by Rina Kampeas..... 8  
*New! Especially created for the **Townships Sun**.*

**Townships MOON: Are EVs Really Clean?**  
by John Mackley..... 9  
*Are you a victim of disinformation?*

**Chalk and Cheese: A Tale of Two Villages**,  
by Nick Fonda..... 10  
*Saint-Camille & Dudswell embody our conflicted relationship with mining.*

**Mother Lode: Still Dreaming, Still Searching**,  
by Scott Verity Stevenson..... 12  
*How John Henry Pope made his fortune!*

**Mirror**, photo by Solomia Salameh..... 13

**Everyday Amazing**, photo by Harry Welton ..... 13  
*Two Townships Young Voices Photo Award winners.*

**Capelton Mine, Last Vestige of the Copper Excitement**, by Alden Chorush; with photos by Leah Chorush..... 15

**Sherbrooke, Land of the Golden Fleece?**  
by Jean-Marie Dubois & Gérard Coté ..... 18  
*Gold is omnipresent in Sherbrooke West.*

**Learning Outside the Classroom**, by Léa Côté..... 20  
*On the job as videographer for TYVoices 2023!*

**Introducing Townships Young Voices 2024**..... 21  
*A 50th Anniversary initiative...and how you can help.*

**Snow Joke**, by Alexandra Welton..... 22  
*Yes it is! TYVoices 2023 Fiction Award winner.*

**The Traveler and The Stranger**,  
by Johnny Beauvais ..... 23  
*"A sweet taste." TYVoices 2023 Fiction Award winner.*

**Book Review: Ross Murray's Smileyville Keeps You Smiling**, by Angela Leuck ..... 25  
*A Hole in the Ground sequel, mature and mellow.*

**Townships Holiday Book Fest, December 10** ..... 26

**Snow Angels of the Bulge**, by Sarah Freiberg..... 27

**Secrets of Snow**, by Arabella MacFish..... 27  
*Poetry by two TYVoices 2023 Awards winners.*

## FRONT COVER

**The Bussière Quarry and the Granite House at Lac Drolet.** Photo by François Demers, taken with a DJI mini 2, on September 28, 2021.

The **Maison du Granit** is a non-profit organization opened in 1989, focusing on the history of the granite industry and its stone-cutting artisans. The Bussière Quarry operated from 1946 to 1956. Its light gray medium-grained granite with a slight pinkish brown tint was mainly used to build churches. In the distance is the Granit Lacroix quarry, still in operation.

Granite quarries in the Stanstead area offer different colours. At the "Salt and Pepper Granite Quarry," light grey stone is quarried for use in landscaping and bases of funerary monuments.



**François Demers** is a photographer and nature lover in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec. His work has been exhibited at the Métissage Gallery, among other venues.



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# A Handful of Remarks

by R.A. Garber

Here are five matters on my mind.

## What's Behind the Tuition Hike?

"Welcome, out-of-province students! Don't come! Pay more!"

That's how Paul Wells introduced his October 18th post on [Substack](#). He deftly disentangled the many paradoxical messages underlying the Quebec government's tuition hike to \$17,000 for students from the Rest of Canada and elsewhere.

Is the aim to discourage English-speaking students from coming, or to take their money?

Is the problem that they leave, or that they don't leave? In various news reports, Premier Legault has indicated both.

As Wells put it, "If you come you're a menace because one day you'll leave, unless you don't, so the government has to take more of your money, which won't discourage you from coming, although thank God you're going to stop coming, but you're welcome to come! You blight."

We the people are as confused as the policy is incoherent. But one thing is clear: its devastating effect on the three English-speaking universities in Quebec, especially Bishop's.

Is that the point?

## A Mine on Your Land?

Researching the theme of this issue, I learned that early European and American settlers of the Eastern Townships were not just seeking religious freedom or good farmland. Mining was a powerful magnet. Asbestos, copper, gold, granite, and lime have all had a mighty impact on our region.

Mining is still a powerful magnet. Gone are the days when you owned your land from the sky to the earth's centre. Now, you only own the surface.

"Once an ore deposit is found, mineral rights trump property rights," wrote Nick Fonda. (His article is on page 10.)

Who owns mineral rights? In Quebec, prospectors can explore private properties. If they find indicators of a workable deposit, they can "stake" a claim to mine those minerals. If someone else has not already done so, that is.



This is why some 226 landowners and non-profit organizations in the Mauricie region have bought mining claims on their own properties in recent years, the [Globe and Mail](#) reported.

Evidently the Government of Quebec wants *des étrangers* to understand how all this works. On the [Ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts](#) website is information on mineral exploration, and even a short video, all in English.

## Crossword Fun in the Townships Sun

The first time I saw her do a crossword, it was a *New York Times* model, and she puzzled it out in a matter of minutes. I was so impressed that a dozen years later I realized Rina Kampeas would be the perfect person to create the *Townships Sun's* very own crossword puzzle. She has risen to the challenge! Rina is a former Lennoxvillian, a veteran *Townships Sun* reader, and a world-class juggler of words. I hope for many more Kampeas crosswords!

## 50th Anniversary Logo

Our gratitude to Claire Deveau, gifted graphic designer and intrepid daughter of Marie Moliner. She volunteered to create the *Townships Sun's* 50th Logo, and did so with the greatest of ease!

## An Editor Can Dream, Can't She?

I'm dreaming of a 52-page issue to mark the *Townships Sun's* 50th Anniversary in February 2024. I see a print-run of 1,000. I see it in colour from front to back, chock-full of historical delicacies from the magazine's pages, decade by decade. Intrigue. Celebration. Wrath. Comfort. Our community's story. Emotions of all colours. Stories, letters, photos, art.

In my dream, this is an opus to be cherished for our children's children.

But. Awakenings can be rude.

Printing costs have shot sky-high in recent years. We need \$5,000 to create the 50th Anniversary Legacy issue of my dreams. Can you help? Maybe a \$50 donation for our 50th? Maybe more?

To donate, please visit [TownshipsSun.ca/Donate](https://TownshipsSun.ca/Donate) for details. Please specify it's for The 50th. We will be happy to acknowledge our donors on a "Donors' Scroll." Let's share in this legacy, together!

# ETRC Townships History Quiz

by Jazmine Aldrich



(Credit: ETRC, P031 William G. Clark collection)

**Question 1.** Which Eastern Townships mine, pictured here in 1909, was allegedly the largest open pit mine in the world as of 2008 – measuring six square kilometres in total area?

- A- Lac d'Amiante (Black Lake) Mine
- B- Bell Mine
- C- Capelton Mine
- D- Jeffrey Mine

**Question 2.** Which of the following accolades did Bernard Epps **not** attribute to Eastern Townships mines in the February 1979 issue of the Townships Sun?

- A- The Oldest Mine in All Canada
- B- The Largest Copper Mine in All the World
- C- The Richest Mine in All North America
- D- The Deepest Mine in All Canada

**Question 3.** Which Eastern Townships village was reported by the Minister of Colonization, Mines and Fisheries in 1912 as having deposits of multicoloured marble, iron ore, and limestone?

- A- Frost Village
- B- South Stukely
- C- Bondville
- D- Foster



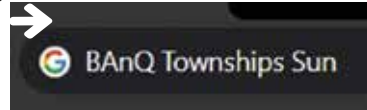
**Jazmine Aldrich** is head archivist at the Eastern Townships Resource Centre. She has also worked with other archival organizations in Quebec and Ontario.

Answers: Page 24

## Townships Sun

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1. Google this.



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3. Search our pages here



Ex: Bernard Epps  
Meganitic Outlaw

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### Community Forum

**RE: June 2023 issue of the Townships Sun, "Church Without Walls" by Carole Martignacco (p.11).**

*I was in the Black Cat bookstore about a month ago when my interest was taken by the Townships Sun journal which included an article by Carole Martignacco. It was thrilling to be given a glimpse of how many layers of history are waiting to be revealed throughout the Townships. Carole's article was thoughtful and measured and I enjoyed reading it.*

*Also, an image of the church (UUEstrie) banner was used and it just happened to be the side that I created all on my own (the other side was a group effort) and I am not sure that any acknowledgment was made.*

*Ann Rothfels*

**Response:**

*Indeed, the beautifully quilted banner of UUEstrie is two-sided, and the photo caption, through my own omission, did not credit Ann Rothfels of Eaton Corner, the artist who conceived this project and singlehandedly created the side shown. It is now hanging in UUEstrie, in North Hatley. My apologies!*

### Community Forum

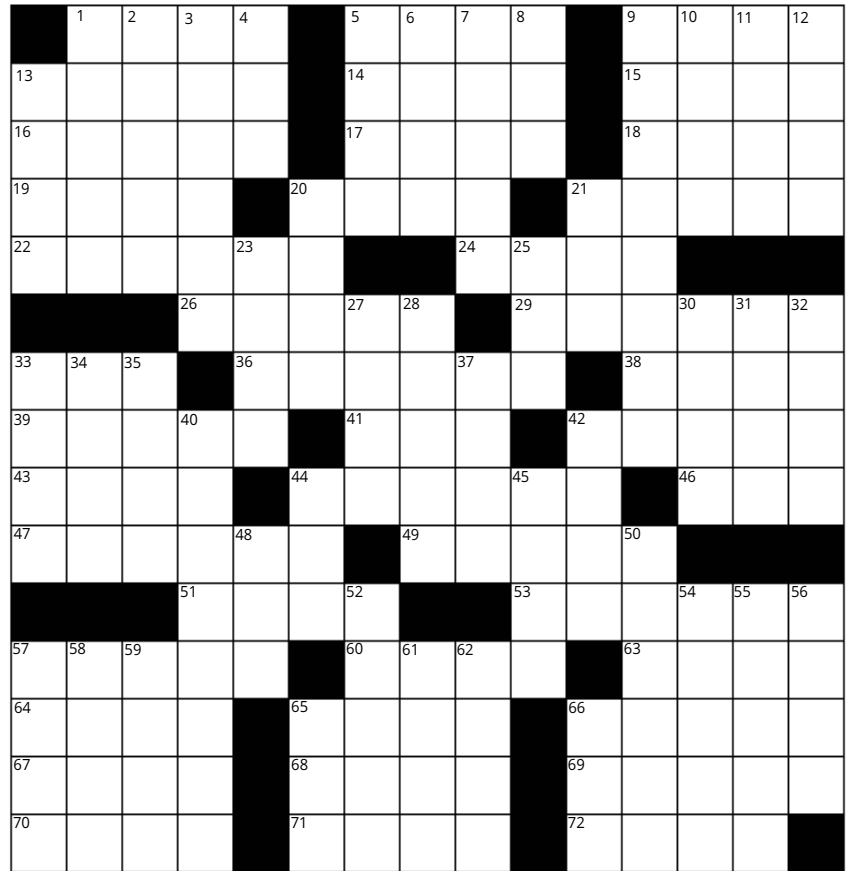
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**NEW FEATURE!**

**CROSSWORD FUN** in the **Townships Sun**

**CLUES - ACROSS**

- 1. Hollow between hills
- 5. Domesticated
- 9. Fellow
- 13. Bright
- 14. By mouth
- 15. How your Mexican friend answers the phone
- 16. Precise
- 17. Supporter
- 18. Account holder
- 19. Fit together
- 20. Worshipped one
- 21. Small waterway
- 22. Mean
- 24. Made yarn
- 26. Nervous one
- 29. Reversals
- 33. A buzzing example to us all
- 36. Take (guest) to the door – two words
- 38. Thought
- 39. Up above
- 41. After Jul and before Sept
- 42. Bare, unadorned
- 43. Not any
- 44. Frequently illuminated - two words
- 46. More than one Master's degree
- 47. Naval rank
- 49. Recruits
- 51. FBI guys
- 53. Certain musical works
- 57. Regarding; as Ophelia might have said it
- 60. A sultanate neighbouring Saudi Arabia
- 63. Do some housekeeping
- 64. Mozart's \_\_\_\_\_ Fan Tutte
- 65. Guitar part
- 66. Succulent in the asparagus family
- 67. Thin and fit
- 68. Response to "Are not!" – two words
- 69. Ancient Israelite king – variant spelling
- 70. Deliver a punch
- 71. Pronto
- 72. Castle part, in former times



**CLUES - DOWN**

- 1. Foxy lady
- 2. Stop! – in nautical lingo
- 3. Alga and fungus in symbiosis
- 4. We've just left it behind.
- 5. A certain tailless amphibian
- 6. Woody's son
- 7. Shopping centres
- 8. English cathedral city
- 9. What the milkmaid does to the cream to make butter – two words
- 10. Stockings
- 11. Towards the side sheltered from the wind
- 12. Green space
- 13. Touchless spa treatment
- 20. Inactive
- 21. What we put coffee in
- 23. Where eggs are laid
- 25. Place
- 27. It falls in the fall
- 28. Early life
- 30. Dutch cheese
- 31. Prefix meaning trillion
- 32. Famous business on Fifth Avenue
- 33. Curse
- 34. Musk, but not a source of fragrance
- 35. Ages
- 37. A certain citrus fruit
- 40. Pretending
- 42. Pace
- 44. Not two
- 45. Its symbol is Fe
- 48. Zero hour for other time zones
- 50. Draw in
- 52. Standards
- 54. Decorative frill
- 55. American performing rights organization
- 56. Pierce
- 57. More than one of a certain ligament
- 58. It's coming soon!
- 59. Jacob's brother
- 61. Flat-topped mountain
- 62. On top of
- 65. Branch of the US Department of Transportation
- 66. Gab

**Rina Kampeas** is a retired freelance translator and a diaspora Townships resident. She enjoys solving crossword puzzles and is exhilarated by the opportunity to construct them for the Townships Sun.



Thanks to CrosswordGrids.com, whose blank grid "15 x 15 Sample Crossword Puzzle Grid #1" was used in constructing today's puzzle.

Answers: Page 19



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# Are EVs Really Clean?

by John Mackley

The saying, “if man were meant to fly, he’d have been born with wings” has gone with the wind. Now we have, “if humans were meant to drive electric cars, free electricity would come from the sun and wind.”

That’s the Electric Vehicle conundrum: Where does the electricity come from? And where, the lithium for their batteries?

## EVs Came Before Gas

A [U.S. Government Census report](#) says that in 1899, about a decade before the Model-T Ford, 4,192 motorized vehicles were produced in the United States. Of these, 1,681 ran on steam, 1,575 (38 per cent) were electric, and only 936 (22 per cent) ran on gas.

When Ford introduced the Model T, it is said, many preferred the electric models for their cleanliness, quiet, and lack of smoke and noxious odours.

My point? Gasoline or diesel powered vehicles have not always been the primary option, and certainly not the most efficient or cleanest. Technology evolves.

## Dirty Extraction and Shipping?

Lithium and cobalt mining are not totally clean. But extracting fossil fuels is far worse. Lithium and cobalt mining gives CO<sup>2</sup> emissions of roughly 2.8 million tons. Fossil fuel extraction of a comparable quantity produces about 34 billion (with a “b”) tons. That’s [12,143 times those of lithium and cobalt](#). Note that lithium and cobalt are in demand for many uses beyond EV batteries.

According to the [International Chamber of Shipping \(ICS\)](#), 90 per cent of world trade involves oceanic shipping. Over 40 per cent of that cargo is fossil fuels, carried by more than 50,000 merchant ships running on diesel fuel, the dirtiest transportation fuel in use. Fossil fuels win the booby prize here, too.

## What’s Next?

Progress from the first “horseless carriage” to assembly-line motor vehicles took over 150 years.

Now we are seeing quantum leaps forward; the coming years will bring more.

Electric and electronic technologies are growing fast. EVs can be recharged from solar or wind power sources. Engineers are developing more efficient energy sources, power usage and storage devices.



*The eDumper is a 45-ton dump truck that never uses more energy than it generates while going up and down its mountainous worksite. (Courtesy: eMining Switzerland)*

Alternatives to lithium- and cobalt-based batteries are already on the way. New electric-powered industrial vehicles and heavy equipment are being manufactured.

Sooner than most of us imagine, the majority of automobiles on the roads will be all-electric, and so will transport trucks, construction machinery, farm equipment, planes, and trains.

In the meantime, CTV News reported, the Canadian Environment Min-

istry has given the green light to Quebec’s James Bay lithium mine, with more than 270 conditions to protect wildlife and respect Indigenous land use. It is estimated that this mine will produce lithium for up to two decades, mainly for North American electric-vehicle batteries. The only active lithium mine in Canada today, in northern Manitoba, is owned by China’s Sinomine Resource Group, and all its product is shipped to China.

Change is inevitable. Petroleum’s days are numbered. We cannot continue down the road of smoggy air, tainted water, and contaminated earth.

Each year, an estimated 1 in 5 deaths (more than 8 million people), can be attributed to fossil fuel pollution, a figure much higher than previously thought, reported a 2021 research article in [Environmental Research](#).

This month’s Townships Moon goes to oil-industry disinformation intended to thwart progress toward a healthier future, and naysayers who guzzle it down.



*John Mackley lives, loves, laughs, and writes in the Eastern Townships.*

# Chalk and Cheese: A Tale of Two Villages

by Nick Fonda

The saying “chalk and cheese” might best encapsulate the municipalities of Dudswell and Saint-Camille, certainly with respect to mining on their territory. They are polar opposites.

Dudswell, which includes the former village of Lime Ridge as well as Marbleton and Bishopton, identifies particularly well with chalk—chemically the same as marble and limestone. All three are forms of calcium carbonate, and quarries of all three were and are found there.

The marble quarry at Marbleton no longer operates, its stone unable to compete in quality with marble from other parts of the world. (Turkey is the world’s biggest exporter of marble, but what is considered the best marble comes from Italy—think of Michelangelo’s sculptures.)

At Lime Ridge, on the other hand, limestone continues to be quarried as it has been since 1824.

Jacques Robert, a retired electrical engineer, was born and raised in Bishopton and is the community’s go-to historian.



Graymont Mine in Lime Ridge. (Photo: R.A. Garber)

“The first settler in the area was John Bishop,” he explains. “He fought against the British during the American War of Independence, was captured, and spent five years in jail in Quebec City. However, he moved to this area early in the 1800s and established a homestead on the shore of what’s now known as Mirror Lake. Early on, he discovered that he had limestone on his property.”

Access to lime was a big bonus for the early settlers. Newly-cleared land was often quite acidic. A sprinkling of lime rendered the land more fertile and productive. Lime mixed with water created whitewash,



The Lime Ridge House interpretation centre tells the story of the little village dismantled in the 1950s. (Photo: R.A. Garber)

cheaper and more easily available than paint. More than just decorative, whitewashing helped control humidity and eliminated insects and vermin. A bit of lime was occasionally tossed into the well to eliminate bacteria and algae. Lime was also a necessary ingredient for the mortar used in brick and stone houses.

Today, lime still has agricultural applications and—among other things—is also used in steel production, in the pulp and paper industry, for water treatment, and in soil stabilization for roads, earthen dams, airfields, and building foundations.

“We know that in 1851 there were 10 settlers who were producing lime on an artisanal basis,” says Robert. “Of the 6,500 barrels of lime shipped from Dudswell that year, 1,750 were produced by Cyrus Lothrop.”

“Both Dominion Lime and Dudswell Lime had quarries in the area in the 1860s,” he continues. “The Sherbrooke-Dudswell Lime and Marble Company established itself here a little later on. It eventually became Graymont, which continues to quarry and mill limestone today.”

“At one time,” he adds, “there were 100 employees or more in the quarries and the mill. Today they have around 40. Graymont is a good corporate citizen. They do dig holes and create slag heaps, but they restore the land and reforest it. They contribute to the

general well-being of the community and they're a discreet presence in the municipality."

Graymont is a Canadian-based company but it also has facilities in South America and Australia, and sells its products and expertise on six continents.

While Dudswell has a long history of mining, Saint-Camille has none at all, although a little more than a decade ago, it seemed for a while that it might, and that idea was disturbing.

The two municipalities also have very different histories. Saint-Camille was settled about half a century after Dudswell and from the beginning was French-speaking and strictly agricultural. The municipality has dozens of dairy farms.

It wasn't limestone that attracted mining interests to Saint-Camille, but gold. While agricultural lime sells for as much as \$475 per ton, a ton of gold is worth about \$67 million (prices fluctuate daily, gold fluctuating more than lime).

Saint-Camille, as a possible site of gold deposits, drew interest at least as far back as 1996 when the federal and provincial governments spent over \$8,000 on a geological study that, after several dozen pages, recommended further geochemical testing.



*St-Camille, from the air. (Drone photo: John Mackley)*

In 2011, Bowmore Exploration Limited, since renamed Osisko Metals, acquired extensive mining rights in the Eastern Townships, including the area around Saint-Camille. While Bowmore previously described itself as an "emerging exploration company focused on the acquisitions, exploration and development of gold mineral properties in Canada and Mexico," under its new name it depicts itself as searching for zinc in Quebec and New Brunswick.

Today, just over a decade after it made its sudden appearance, few people seem interested in commenting on Bowmore's presence in the area.

One Saint-Camillois recalls low-flying helicopters hovering overhead as they conducted aerial surveys that might identify gold-bearing ores.

"I felt as if I were in a war zone," he said. Vivid as his memory was, he suggested that others might be better able to fully recount the village's fight against Bowmore.

Newspaper accounts from the time show that the village mobilized and aired its concerns in both French and English media outlets. The villagers demanded and eventually got a meeting with a Bowmore representative who assured them that a gold mine would make everybody rich. Few were reassured.

In the end, even though the terrain showed traces of gold deposits, none was considered promising enough to proceed to exploratory drilling. Saint-Camille remained an agricultural village.

The stories of Dudswell and Saint-Camille show that we have a conflicted relationship with mining. Highly refined metals are very much a part of our daily environment. We are largely oblivious to the copper wiring that provides light and heat or the steel and aluminum that transports us across town or across the country. Metal has been a fundamental part of our civilizations for the last 7,000 years. Without metals, we would revert to living like stone-age hunter-gatherers.

Yet mining is an invasive and environmentally brutal activity. Few people, certainly not those in Saint-Camille, would want to see a mine shaft being sunk next door. This is especially true of gold mines. Canada is a world leader in gold mining but also has an unenviable reputation, particularly in developing countries, for engaging in highly exploitative practices and causing a great deal of environmental degradation in the form of mountainous slag heaps and contaminated tailing ponds.

Graymont, which extracts a rarely mentioned but surprisingly useful mineral in Dudswell, seems to be showing that environmentally and socially responsible mining is possible. Graymont fills in its abandoned quarries and plants saplings on its slag heaps, if not fully healing the land, at least covering its scars.



*Nick Fonda has been writing about the people who make the Eastern Townships special for close to 50 years. He lives and writes in Richmond.*

# Mother Lode: Still Dreaming, Still Searching

by Scott Verity Stevenson

The Eastern Townships has a modestly rich and certainly sordid history in gold mining—and a breathlessly awaited future in it as well.

About 10 years ago, while exploring my new home and neighbourhood near Island Brook, I came upon a fellow panning for gold in the North River at New Mexico Road. His grandfather once did the same, he said, and he's drawn back to it, not for any riches, he claimed, but for the pleasure of the search.

A couple of friends, stretching from Sherbrooke to Lake Megantic, reported people doing the same near them, either recently or some years back.

About 20 kilometres southeast of Island Brook, as the crow flies, up the North River valley, is an old mine. Now it's the town of Chartierville's gold-mine interpretation centre. Local panners notwithstanding, one would be forgiven for thinking that the region's gold rush days are now the stuff of leisure and museums.



Chartierville town councillor Claude Sévigny at Mining Brook between La Patrie and Chartierville. (Photo: Scott Stevenson)

Perhaps not.

An online search revealed a [Canadian Mining Journal](#) article about gold in the region from just this past August. "Beauce Gold Fields (TSXV: BGF) reports significant gold recovery in bulk sampling on its Ditton gold project near Chartierville in southern Quebec," the article leads. "Sampling...in the Ditton quarry returned fine to nugget-sized placer gold within heavy mineral concentrates."

Beauce Gold Fields is in fact trying to narrow in on the mother lode, the bedrock source of all the gold—so far found only in surface deposits—that has tantalized Townshippers and Beauce residents for generations.

## Déjà Vu

"More than \$1 million was spent this past year hunting the elusive metal in the far southeastern corner of this region, where the Townships meet the Beauce," Barbara Verity, this author's mother, wrote in the *Montreal Gazette* in 1983. "There is gold here, all right. The question is how much is left, and four mining companies are trying hard to find the answer."

Not long after, the '80s' gold rush was relegated to museum status. Until Beauce Gold Fields recently picked up the pan and resumed the search where some of our forebears left off.

My mother also recounts the oral history often repeated in this area about how gold was discovered. Her story comes from a Mr. Ladd in Scotstown, the father of a university friend at the time. He said that an Indigenous man would bring gold to town to pay for his purchases. Locals would try to follow him to learn where he found it—usually unsuccessfully.

Last October, Chartierville town councillor Claude Sévigny picked up the story from there, in an interview and a visit to the municipality's museum and Mining Brook between La Patrie and Chartierville.

"Archie Annance found gold here, but was beaten up for it in Notre-Dame-des-Bois. Claims were stolen from the Amerindians," he said.

## Gold Fever

Sévigny's wife, Thérèse Chouinard, runs Chartierville's Centre d'Interprétation de la Mine d'Or, open from June 24 to Labour Day each year. Visitors' favourite activity is panning for gold: Chouinard has a large, long wooden box on legs outside the museum, in which they put gravel—and gold—for visitors to try panning. Others take to the Mining Brook with their pans.

Sévigny said that adults love it so much their bored kids usually have to drag them away.

Sévigny said that adults love it so much their bored kids usually have to drag them away.

About 700 to 800 visitors come to the museum each year, he said. "Some come with gold fever... But the fever eventually goes away," he added with a smile.

The gold-exploration companies, too, seem to come with fever and eventually leave without it. A couple of documents provided by Sévigny on the history of gold mining in the Chartierville area describe at least five different mining companies successively holding rights there—before the four companies my mother described in the 1980s, and prior to current explorations by Beauce Gold Fields.

Cookshire’s Sam Vermette and Monty Winget “each invested \$10,000 and the government \$1000,” in 1951, wrote Robert Walters, Germain Laflamme, and Bruno Landry in a paper entitled “*Il était une fois un ruisseau.*”

“The \$20,000 investment...enabled the extraction of gold worth about \$12,000,” they wrote (in translation).

### The Pope Fortune

The first gold mining company in the area was that of John Henry Pope, both a renowned “father of Confederation” and a sometimes infamous developer in the Townships for his business dealings and accumulation of wealth. According to the Chartierville museum document, Pope used his privilege to beat Archie Annance to gold at the Mining Brook.

“Unfortunately, Archie caught the interest of Pope, and the latter took steps to appropriate the territory. John Henry Pope slyly asked one of his contacts responsible for the mining office to inform Archie that an operating permit had already been given for the region,” the museum document recounts (in translation).

This was 1868, and Pope’s mining rights covered 5,000 acres, which he operated for 20 years, according to Walters, Laflamme, and Landry. “There is no official record of how much gold was taken from his mines,” they wrote. “It’s believed that Pope took \$75,000 from the Mining Brook alone. According to other estimates, \$500,000 is closer to the truth, which in today’s dollars would be \$15 million.”

But according to the museum document, “Prior to his death, [Pope] made out his will and left much of his wealth to his daughter and gave some to organizations in the region. His fortune amounted to nearly \$250,000, which would be the equivalent of about \$4 million today.”

### Searching for the Mother Lode

The Chartierville mine, as well as today’s explorations, is not far from what the Beauce Gold Fields (BGF) company calls the Bella Fault, running from the Quebec-New Hampshire border near Chartierville up through Lake Megantic and into the Beauce region, the site of Canada’s first and largest gold rush, says the company CEO Patrick Levasseur in a video.

“The Bella Fault crosses the northern part of the property and may well be the source of these very



The largest known gold nugget found at Mining Brook was 9.3 ounces (1866),” reads this sign at Chartierville’s Centre d’interprétation de la mine d’or. (Photo: Scott Stevenson)

high gold concentrations in surface deposits,” BGF reported in an online press release published in April 2021. “Surface gravel in the Chesham River area is reported to contain flake gold. The deeper gravels contain numerous nuggets up to several grams in mass.”

Beauce Gold Fields has 152 claims in the area and 7 properties. Its head office is in Montreal, but principal mining operations are in the Beauce, and its shares are traded on the Canadian Venture Exchange. A well-presented website and public relations speak to its efforts to raise venture funds, on the one hand, and to gain so-called “social acceptability” on the other.

“Last year they dug,” Chartierville councillor Claude Sévigny said, referring to BGF exploration in his municipality. “I haven’t heard of anything this year.”

The councillor, who is responsible for tourism, said resource companies tend to start by hiring local contractors, then make an appeal to council for moral support. “They make grand speeches, but if it’s a big hole, it will stop here,” Sévigny said.



Scott Stevenson farms and writes, and serves on the board of the *Townships Sun*.



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# Mirror

by Solomia Salameh



The photograph was taken during the spring of 2022, when the snow had already melted and the green was returning to Sherbrooke. It was my first spring in Canada, so I started a project to capture the scenery around me. This was one of those pictures, on an evening walk when the sun had set and the moon showed itself above the lake. I thought it was intriguing to see the moon (which reflects the sun) itself reflected in the water. In a way, we are the same continuous reflections of ourselves, yet always to discover more. We are our own mirrors.

**Solomia Salameh**, age 19, of Sherbrooke, is a final-year Honour's Management student at Bishop's University. Having lived abroad,

she returned to live in Canada as of 2021. She enjoys photography, creative writing, and picking up new hobbies. Her photo, "Mirror," won first prize in the Townships Young Voices Awards 2023 (Photography).

## Everyday Amazing

by Harry Welton

For me, this photo encapsulates everything that I love about the Eastern Townships. Our human world is so entwined with nature here. I come from Southampton in England, and where we lived it was very built up with houses and people. Here, life is very different. Nature surrounds us. The photo shows the beautiful pink sky, mountains and forest that I see every night during the winter. I feel so lucky to be able to experience this amazing beauty everyday. I like how the playhouse, bird feeders and fence show how the human world lives side-by-side with nature, interwoven yet separate.



**Harry Welton**, 12 years old, lives in Bromont and likes playing American football. He created this photo in February 2023. It won third place in the Townships Young Voices Awards 2023, Photography category.

# Capelton Mine, Last Vestige of the Copper Excitement

by Alden Chorush



Capelton Mine interpretation centre. (Photo: R.A. Garber)



Tourists' entrance to Capelton Mine. (Photo: Leah Chorush)



Under metal cans containing the miners' lunches, a lighted candle would warm them up by midday. In the background are wooden planks on which the miners would take breaks to align their spines. (Photo: Leah Chorush)



Miners' entrance to Capelton Mine. (Photo: Leah Chorush)

Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Do something that scares you every day," so that's what I'm doing. I'm descending into the Capelton Mine.

It's a lovely autumn day. Sunlight sifts through wispy clouds as we make our way up the slope to the summit of Mount Capel in a creaky carriage drawn by a tractor. The photographer for this story (my daughter) asks me what she should be photographing. Being from Texas, I can't help it. "Shoot first and ask questions later," I tell her.

As we climb the steep slope, the view of the Mas-sawippi valley becomes ever more expansive and glorious and the terrain gets rockier. Our guide explains that this 15-minute ride was an hour-long

walk a century and a half ago when the mine was in full operation.

Just before we reach the entrance of the mine, our guide directs our attention to a little barred-up hole in the side of the mountain. Miners squeezed through that hole on their hands and knees, she says. We get to enter the mine walking upright through a tunnel. We are wearing hard hats that grate harmlessly against low rock overhangs, as opposed to the felt hats worn by those miners. Electric light inside the mine illuminates the entire underground cavern; no need for the candles miners waxed to their hats to allow them to see about an arm's length in any direction.

*Continued on p. 16*

## An Ultra-Brief History

In 1842, the Geological Survey of Canada carried out land surveys across the country. Their report of 1847 makes first reference to the occurrence of copper-bearing minerals in the Eastern Townships. Following this report, mining operations began to spring up all over, most notably in Acton Vale. According to W. Gilles Ross in *Three Eastern Townships Mining Villages in Québec, 1863–1972*, most of the mining activity during that time in the Eastern Townships was for copper.

As late as 1951, a [Quebec government report](#) still refers to the Townships as “the cradle of copper mining in Canada.”

With the phenomenal success of the Acton mine and the discovery of the mineral all over the area in the 1850s, [copper prospecting had become the order of the day in the Eastern Townships](#). But it was events south of the border that threw prospectors into a veritable frenzy to rival the gold rush in the Klondike.

## All That Glitters Is Not Gold

It’s a sad aspect of human affairs that the misfortune of others often brings fortune for the profit-minded. So it went when the American Civil War broke out in 1861. Copper was essential for the manufacture of firearms and ammunition, but the mineral was in short supply in the United States.

With every gunshot, the market for copper shot up. Copper price records for those years, juxtaposed with records of civil war battles, makes for macabre reading indeed. While at first Lincoln’s administration opposed the expansion of slavery, in 1863 his [Emancipation Proclamation](#) declared that all slaves everywhere in the United States were free. But it would take more of an increasingly bloody war to enforce the order. The price of [copper hit an all-time high](#) in the months that followed.

What is now known as “The Copper Excitement” of 1861 to 1866 was in full swing in the Eastern Townships.

That same year, copper deposits were discovered on George Capel’s farm. The copper was largely contained in glittering calcopyrite ore, which was mined and transported by rail to Boston (along what is now the bike path that passes the Capelton Mine gift shop and museum). Copper mining villages sprang up overnight to meet the demand; many of them disappeared just as quickly.

Three of the most profitable mines, and longest lasting, were Capelton, Albert Mines and Eustis. These villages would become tight-knit communities, with churches, schools and general stores. They formed a sort of triangle just a few miles south of Sherbrooke, part of an area glowingly referred to, at a meeting of the Boston Society of Natural History in 1863, as “the great copper-bearing belt of Canada” (Ross).

## Sub-par Safety Standards

Here on the tour, I laugh at myself. There was never the slightest danger here, Mrs. Roosevelt. No claustrophobic antsy feelings assail me. No chance of a rockslide. We don’t have rats scurrying about underfoot (I’ll get to that!). The telephone pole-sized posts that support the overhanging rock seem sturdy enough.

Our guide tells us that miners would bang on the poles every morning; an echoing reverberation was a good sign. She asks a child on the tour to hit a pole. The result is reassuring, even if the physics escapes me.

It is a bit chilly and damp, but in proper attire (no T-shirts or sandals), one can comfortably and vicariously enjoy the miner experience while being ever more thankful for one’s current employment. Of course, it’s hard not to feel a bit mollycoddled on this tour when considering the mining conditions during the heyday of copper extraction in the Eastern Townships. They worked in teams of two, one miner holding the flower-shaped end of an iron rod against the rock while the other smashed the other end of the rod with a sledgehammer. As our guide explains, with such poor visibility it’s easy to imagine the sort of accidents that occurred.

Even later, the pneumatic drills that replaced the rod and sledgehammer were referred to as “widow-makers.” Government records matter-of-factly mention a variety of mining mishaps too grisly to mention here. According to Ross, it was the miners’ wives who bore the burden of accident anxiety. One miner’s wife spoke of the horror of seeing the village doctor riding fast up the hill to the mine, because riding fast meant a bad accident had happened. All of the women would be out waiting for him to return, she said.

“You’d stand there with your heart in your mouth, wondering who it was.”

Today in the mine, we have proper ventilation and good air quality. In contrast, miners, during their

12-hour workdays, would place gunpowder into the holes they carved, and then breathe in dust from exploded rock. Black lung disease was among numerous hazards accounting for their 35-year life expectancy.

And now we are all wondering, as you might be, what the miners were paid. The guide reads our minds: \$1.10 a day. In that time, a more than liveable wage, at least.

### **Run-off and Air Pollution**

Environmental dangers abounded as well. As Ross explains, ore-roasting at smelters all over the area created an air quality that was toxic, to say the least. Noxious sulphuric gases caused bleeding from the mouths and noses of people in the area and also contaminated crops downwind. Hills in the vicinity of the furnaces were denuded of trees, turning the landscape into a barren eyesore of rock waste. Later, when chemical agents were increasingly used by the mining industry, the run-off was disastrous for miles around. Toxic chemicals entered the brooks and streams, killing the fish. Flooding brought the toxic slop seeping into farmlands on the low plain east of the river between Capelton and Lennoxville.

The brick-red colour that persists in some of the streams in the area to this day can be traced back to the iron content in waste rock run-off, says Ross.

### **Miner's Best Friend**

We move about the cavern with our guide, descending stairs with railings, not climbing down the ropes and ladders that miners used. We pass a stable, where we are invited to imagine a mule being brushed and groomed.

These animals were employed in the mines as forced labour. The English language is unfair to mules, in my view. It has falsely affixed to their character the quality of stubbornness. As our guide explains, these poor creatures were bound and lowered into the mines, and forced to haul heavy loads of ore to the top for the entirety of their lives. They went blind in the mines and had a life expectancy of three to five years, thanks in part to the dust they breathed throughout the ordeal that was their lives. Under such conditions, it seems understandable to go on strike from time to time.

But it was rats who were really a miner's best friend. Again, if the language were less anthropocentric, a "rat" would refer not to a traitor but to an intelligent and sensitive survivor-type. Their low-lying bellies can detect the vibrations of a coming rockslide long before it occurs, says our guide. Thus, like the canary in a coalmine, hundreds of rats were brought into the mines and quickly followed out if ever they began to shriek and make their way en masse for the exit.

### **The Light at the End of the Tunnel**

Speaking of exits, we are at the end of the tour. Our guide gives us one last mining experience, and it's a good one. We have to find our way out of the mine with nothing to light the way but a candle. I am happy to see the sun again. But I have since read that many miners came to dislike the sunlight. They spent 12 hours in the mine, went home in the dark, slept and came back, six days a week. On their day off, they "volunteered" at the mine, forming a human chain with buckets to scoop out the groundwater, until the advent of electric pumps gave them a true Sunday rest.

And then, the ultimate rest. The Capelton mine finally closed in 1907. And so it remained until 1995, when the Langlois-Vallières family reopened the mine for this tour we have been on. Albert Mines also closed in 1907 and Eustis followed suit two decades later.

How did these three villages survive the loss of their lone industry? As Ross explains, they were occupied not by transient fortune seekers, as in gold rush communities like the Klondike, but by serious and stable families. They had a vital social and recreational life, as well as emotional and material attachments to the land. After the mines closed, advances such as the automobile made it possible for residents to commute to jobs in nearby Sherbrooke and Lennoxville.

So let us pause and appreciate these survivor-types. Miners have always fascinated me. They do things that most of us could never do. They are like astronauts in a way. They move in those dark and cramped places where humans were never meant to go.

The tour, and this article, provided a taste of the experience. Of course, I didn't mention the chapel, the natural frescoes on the rock wall, the mini-museum inside the mine, and many other things. That's for you to discover, if you dare.



*Alden Chorush is a writer, musician, teacher and vegan cook, happy to have chosen to live in the Eastern Townships since 2015.*

# Sherbrooke, Land of the Golden Fleece?

by Jean-Marie Dubois & Gérard Coté

We all know of the Klondike gold rush in the Yukon between 1896 and 1906, and a little less of the previous ones in California in 1849, in Colorado in 1850, and in British Columbia in 1858.

But before all these, both the Beauce and the Eastern Townships had their own gold rushes. In fact, the first Beaucean gold nuggets discovered were in the Gilbert River in 1823 or 1824 and in the Plantes River in 1834; the first gold rush was in the Beauce, in 1846. One gold nugget, weighing 45 ounces, captured the imagination of many, as might be expected!

In 1860, a second and more important gold rush took place and extended into the Eastern Townships. The rush ended around 1910, but the price of gold later went up on the stock exchange, prompting geologists to continue the search at several sites. In 1898 it was reported that \$2 million-worth of gold had been mined in these two regions (Gauthier, 1986).

A 1989 study done by the Québec Département de l'Énergie et des Ressources (Gauthier, Auclair, & Bardoux) states that in the present Sherbrooke area, gold was present in sediments of all rivers and streams, just as the presence of gold was confirmed in almost all the mines and mining shafts during the 19th and 20th centuries. The study refers to the more important concentrations along the Parcelles River (west of the Université de Sherbrooke) and Dorman River, as well as along the Débordeur Stream in the Fleurimont area.

The gold was mostly found in pyrite, chalcopyrite and a few other minerals, as well as in quartz veins present in almost all types of rocks of the region, though mostly in shale. Since gold is a heavy metal, when eroded, the very small grains, flakes, and nuggets end up in river or stream beds, known as placer deposits. Most often, the gold is found in contact with the bedrock sediments, as well as in glacial and pre-glacial gravel deposits. In the 19th century, four such placer sites were prospected: those of Lyon Brook, Red Brook (ruisseau Rouge de Deauville), Felton Brook and Grass Island Brook.

The first site was likely at the head of the Lyon Brook, near the former Labonté Road in the Industrial Park

area of Sherbrooke. The placers were on Lot 19, Range V, in Orford Township. The mouth of this river is close to the Jacques-O'Bready Autoroute. In 1866, geologist A. Michel dug five exploration wells there, one being ten meters deep. He only found a few gold nuggets. Since then, no one has tried mining these placers.

The placers of the Red Brook and of its tributary, Noir Stream, were at the head of Lake Magog, on Lots 17 and 18 of Ranges VIII and XIX in Orford Township, in the Deauville area. The Canadian Mining Exhibit Company found a minor amount of gold there in 1897 and 1898, as did the geologist Harold William McGerrigle (1904-1970) in 1935. But no serious mining resulted (McGerrigle, 1936).

Felton Brook, now called Nick Brook, flows into the Magog River near Nick Street. The placers occurred between Lots 8 to 11, Range XI, in Ascot Township, in the present area of Rock Forest. In 1865, Ascot Gold Mining dug exploration wells at this location, one as deep as five meters. On Lot 11, they extracted

up to \$996-worth of gold (at 1865 prices). A small amount of gold was found during other explorations in 1897-1898, 1913 and 1935. But there too, no serious mining was undertaken.

The only real mining in the Sherbrooke area was at Grass Island River, which flows into the Magog River between Ringuette and Gatineau Streets in the Rock Forest area. The placers were on lots 1 to 6 of Range XIII in the Ascot Township, on land that belonged to W. S. Hunter. In 1863, General H. P. Adams, an American, created the Golconda Mining Company in order to mine the gold-bearing placers on Lots 2 and 3, west of Saint Catherine Road and south of Lotbinière (formerly Golconda) Street.

The discovery of gold there, and the intensive mining carried out from time to time since then, gave the site a great reputation. In the summer of 1865, 40 men worked for the Golconda Mine. Within three weeks, they found gold valued at between \$1,000 and \$2,000. In 1866, Golconda operated a motor-driven crusher to break down the rock and extract the gold. They hoped to extract between \$5 and \$75-worth of gold per ton when the gold was found



Map of the principal gold-bearing placers in Sherbrooke, by Jean-Marie Dubois.



# Learning Outside the Classroom

by Léa Côté

I was attending Bishop's Forum, hoping to learn more about career opportunities in the English-speaking communities in Quebec. I was expecting to take note of various opportunities around me that might be useful for my future career, and to potentially make a friend along the way.

I was not expecting this to be the start of a whole new experience of academic learning, one that would inspire me, I am sure, for years to come. But that is what happened.

It was all thanks to meeting a graduating student who introduced me to the Townships Young Voices project, and gave me the opportunity to meet my future project manager through a ZOOM meeting. Back then, the Experiential Learning program was still being drafted, but I was able to learn about the Townships Young Voices project, and how it was created to inspire English-speaking youth to participate in workshops and submit creative works for a chance to get published in the *Townships Sun* magazine.

As an English-speaking youth with a passion for arts, I immediately knew this was a cause I wanted to support.

However, I was also very nervous about taking part in this project. I quickly realized it was going to be much more hands-on than any of the lecture courses I had taken. Being naturally shy, I wasn't sure I had the strength to step out of my comfort zone and work alongside professionals, people who had more experience than I in my field. But as an aspiring journalist, I knew that conquering these fears would be inevitable. I was driven to take part in this project in order to improve my communication skills. Taking note of every deadline, receiving feedback, responding to emails from project members in a timely manner—concise communication proved essential.

After officially applying to the Experiential Learning program through Bishop's, the video-making experiential learning process truly began in September 2022, when I met with five of the six workshop leaders. I was mentored by one of my colleagues on how to film videos, and received some pointers on how to

frame subjects, and what kind of lighting to use.

I also learned the importance of having backup audio recorders at hand when filming. The audio for the introductory videos was inadvertently not recorded by the camera, so my first task was to align the audio with the visuals. This meant hours of listening carefully, trying to match the separate audio recording with the lip movements onscreen.

Of course, this was a learning experience, and it taught me two valuable lessons when it comes

to video editing. Firstly, having backup recordings is crucial to ensure a hard day's work of videoing doesn't go to waste. Secondly, patience is a valuable trait when editing videos; should unexpected technical difficulties arise, it can be a lengthy process. I can definitely say that having patience helped me a long way during this project. I had a few instances where I forgot to export projects onto my USB drive before trying to work on a separate computer.

Other valuable lessons I learned in regard to video editing came from the process of having my video work reviewed before publishing it on the [TYVoices YouTube channel](#). As I learned throughout the TYVoices project, dates are susceptible to change, which taught me a valuable lesson about exporting video projects and keeping them saved nearby in case such edits need to be made.

Throughout the months, I took meticulous notes, even when I wasn't receiving direct feedback. I felt it was important to take this opportunity to learn from professionals who regularly worked in fast-paced



Surrounded by Townships Young Voices team members, Léa Côté displays a TYVoices cake at the video shoot that inaugurated her experiential learning curve in September 2022. (Photo: John Mackley)

environments. For instance, I took note of other videos uploaded on the TYVoices YouTube channel and noted editing techniques, such as shot transitions and the application of close-ups. I also took note of how everyone communicates with one another, the usefulness of copying people on emails to keep multiple project members up to date on project information, and the importance of carefully phrasing my words to relay project-related information accurately to my colleagues.

By the end of this project, I felt proud of how much I had learned as a filmmaker, as well as the documentation I had created along the way. And now all I can think about is what other possible ways I can use

these skills to continue supporting causes that are dear to me. I'm excited to figure out what the next cause will be!

My message to anyone looking to pursue an Experiential Learning experience is this: Don't be afraid to put yourself out there. You might be nervous and you might not feel ready, but if you have the determination and patience to learn, you are more than capable of rising to the task.

*Léa Côté, a 21-year-old from Compton, is currently studying at Bishop's University, pursuing a major in English Film/Media and a minor in Communications and Digital Culture. Her article, "Learning Outside the Classroom," won third place in the Townships Young Voices Awards 2023 (Nonfiction).*



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rag 2023

# Snow Joke

by Alexandra Welton

Hi, my name is Amara Trapp and I really want to be on the school's snowball fighting team! I'm small and skinny, perfect for the team. I can fit into small hiding spots, tunnel through the snow, go under cover into the enemy base. All of that.

I'm in my second year at Hillview High, in Bromont. I have many friends at school, and one enemy, too. My math teacher, Mr. Davidson, hates me. Everyone in my class knows it.

Today is December 17th, the day of the snowball fight team tryouts.

"Amara! Hey Amara! Over here!"

That's Gracie. We've known each other since the third grade. That's like five years! (See, I'm good at math!) Gracie is tall and muscular. She's on the swim team and trains four times a week. Every Saturday, after her team practice, she stays at the pool an extra two hours. She is really serious about swimming.

"Hi, Gra—," I start, but then a voice comes over the loudspeaker.

"Good morning, Hillview High!"

It's the morning announcements.

"As you may know, today are the tryouts for the snowball fighting team! Everyone wanting to try out must turn up at their second lesson first. The teachers will take attendance and then let you go to the tryouts."

"Amaraaaaa!!!! I'm so jealous! You get to miss the math lesson!"

Gracie hates math, just like everyone else. I like math, but I hate the lessons, because of the teacher. We have math at the second period today, so I guess I will miss it!

"Hello class. I'm not the only one not looking forward to this class. I really hate teenagers." Mr. Davidson grumbles those sentences under his breath every time he starts a lesson.

"Now then, who is planning on trying out for the snowball fighting team?"

Amélie, Jessica, Justin, and Roger all raise their hands at the same time as me.

"Well, four out of the five of you are free to go. One of you isn't." He says this, staring daggers at me. Everyone must have realised that he meant he wouldn't let me go.

Gracie raises her hand. "But, sir, you have to let Amara go!"

"Miss...."

Mr. Meany Pants didn't bother to learn anyone's names, except for mine, though he purposely gets it wrong every time he says it.

"Gracie. My name is Gracie." She says, hatred in her voice.

"Well, Miss Gravy, I can do whatever I want. I am the teacher here, no? If I don't want to let Smara go, then I won't let her go."

Now it is Victoria's turn to raise her hand. She is one of my really good friends. I'm lucky I have a big gang of friends that I can always count on to stick up for me.

"Sir, in the morning announcements, it said that all the teachers have to let everyone that wants to, try out. So you can't stop Amara."

"Ok, Miss Smarty Pants, I'll let Smara try out, when she has finished this thirty-page exam."

Everyone sits there, dumbfounded. I know if anyone else tries to stick up for me, Mr. Smug Face will give them detention. I give up, and start the exam. It looks like my dream is going to have to wait until next year.

"Hey! Amara!"

It's Gracie.

"The other girls and I are going to distract Mr. Meany while you sneak out to the tryouts."

My eyes widened. "No, you'll get into trouble!"

"Don't worry about us. Just go and knock them dead at the tryouts. Not literally, though!"

I grin. Maybe we can make this work.

Victoria knocks over her water bottle, spilling it onto Gracie's lap.

"Oh. My. God! That is so cold! What did you do that for?"

"Don't look at me! I didn't do it!"

"You did too! I just saw you."

"You're lying!"

"Me? You're lying, you—"

*Continued on p.23*

# The Traveler and The Stranger

by Johnny Beauvais

The snow is as quiet as the night is dark. A thick white blanket covers the land as far as the eye can see. Among snow-covered trees burns a campfire. The fire isn't that big, but it's big enough to serve its purpose. Around the fire are two logs, opposite each other. An old lived-in wagon sits behind one of the logs.

One log is still covered in snow; the other has been brushed clean.

A person, a traveler, sits upon this log, covered head to toe in the warmest clothes they could find for the money they had. They have pulled a blanket out of the wagon and have wrapped it around them. Even so, the winter is unforgiving, and despite the firelight dancing across their face, they are still cold.

The traveler pulls the blanket tighter around them, frowning. All of a sudden, a stranger appears beside the log. This stranger is tall and strongly built; that much is clear even though they wear almost as many layers as the traveler does. They have dark, pin-straight hair, a tan face, and a look in their eyes that the traveler hasn't seen in years.

This new person silently walks over and sits down beside them, staring into the fire and... smiling. It is a slight smile, but a smile nonetheless; also something the traveler has not seen in years.

*Snow Joke Continued from p. 22*

"Ladies, ladies, please!" Mr Davidson strides over to them and I take the opportunity to sneak out the door.

When I get to the tryouts, they make us make snowballs, build a snow fort, and of course, have a snowball fight. We have to fight against last year's school team.

In the middle of the battle, a man runs onto the field. It's misty, so I can't see who it is. We just continue the fight and keep pelting the other team with snowballs. I take careful aim, then throw a snowball at a girl on the other team. It's heading straight for her, but then she ducks. The ball sails on and hits the man right in the face. He screams with rage, wiping the dripping snow off his face. Oh no, it's Mr. Davidson!

He comes stomping up to me and grabs my wrist. He pulls me away, dragging me through our fort, making a massive hole in it. He doesn't stop shouting at

Who is this mysterious person?

"Isn't it rude to stare?" The stranger says suddenly without taking their eyes off the fire, snapping the traveler out of their trance.

The traveler turns away, embarrassed, and shifts in their seat, nervously rubbing their fingers.

"I apologize, I thought I was alone here."

"Alone in heart, maybe," the stranger says.

The traveler isn't sure what they mean.

Neither says a word for a moment. The flames crack and pop, dancing over the burning wood. A wind blows through, causing the traveler to wince and retreat into their blanket, hiding as much of their face as they can. They worry for a moment that the wind will kill the fire.

The stranger, on the other hand, seems perfectly fine. The wind never appears to bother them, and not once do they show any concern for the fire.

"Beautiful fire. It always reminds me of a celebration. My family used to have a lot of them. Not so much anymore. But fires never fail to bring me back to those times," the stranger says.

*Continued on p.24*

me, but I'm not listening. Everyone at the tryouts, including the coaches, are chanting my name.

I'm in detention for the rest of the day. Mr. Snow-face won't stop yelling at me, but it's worth it! When I'm finally allowed to go home, I tell my sister Ava all about it. She hugs me and says I am the coolest sister ever! She never usually says things like that to me.

The next day, when I get to school, one of the girls on the team comes up to me.

"Hey. I'm Laura, captain of the Hillview High snowball team. You were so brilliant yesterday! We'd like to offer you a spot on the team!"



**Alexandra Welton**, age 13, lives in Bromont and loves spending time with her friends, dancing and singing and acting. Her short story, "Snow Joke," won third place in the Townships Young Voices Awards 2023 (Fiction).

The traveler thinks back to their family. They never had many celebrations.

“I wonder what the flames could be so happy about,” the stranger muses.

“Nothing to be happy about here,” the traveler says. “Unless it likes seeing us suffer. No, the only thing here is pain and cold and death. Nothing to celebrate in this season.”

The stranger tilts their head towards them.

“I disagree. Yes, the cold is terrible. It kills and takes, and leaves sorrow and loss behind. But cold isn’t the only thing that winter brings. Winter is the time of year that brings my family together the most. We always play in the snow, play games, talk to each other, and tell stories. And, yes, some of those things we can do regardless of the season, but winter allows it to take hold the most. It brings my family together, even if it is because of the need for warmth.”

The traveler twists their mouth. They find themselves unable to entirely disagree with the stranger. But all that doesn’t change or lighten the situation they’re currently in: surrounded by miles and miles of snow in all directions with not a single other soul in sight.

“Maybe so, but the cold is still terrible. You can have as much fun in it as you want, when you want it. But it’s not so fun when you’re forced to travel through it. Snow still kills, ice still kills, winter is still the season of death,” the traveler says cruelly.

The stranger laughs. Laughs! Despite all that surrounds them, their face, their smile, and their laugh are all still so bright. The traveler doesn’t know how to react.

“Sorry! Sorry. That was quite rude of me.” The stranger calms down. “It’s just that the fire looks pretty alive to me. Misfortune and sorrow may surround us, but you’re still standing, aren’t you?”

The traveler is quiet. Again they don’t know what to say. They don’t know what to think.

They *are* still standing. Still alive, still well, still here. Even if it’s hard.

“It’s only the season of death if you choose to look at it that way,” the stranger says. “When I think of winter, I think of warm nights sitting by fires, drinking soups and holding my loved ones close. I think of hiking through forests and playing winter sports with friends. I think of laughing and being with the people I love, all of us together in a way that isn’t the same at other times of the year. It’s not all so terrible if you choose to look at the good things that come of it.”

The traveler listens. Another wind blows by and they still flinch, but it does not break their concentration.

The stranger reaches into their pocket. Seconds later, in their mittens are two brown square candies the size of coins. The stranger takes one and pops it into their mouth. The traveler takes the other and does the same. Instantly, the traveler’s mouth is overtaken by the sweet taste of maple. It melts on their tongue, melting them along with it.

“But anyway, no matter how bad you think winter is, no matter how bad it can get at times, it’s a natural part of life,” the stranger continues. “Something that can never be changed. And besides, the colder and further into winter it gets, the closer you get to summer.”

The traveler nods, the warmth of the fire and sweetness of the candy deflecting the cold. Everything the stranger says soothes them, immersing them in a special feeling, one they had forgotten. As long as they keep going, stay strong and hopeful, and persist through the days even when they feel they can take it no longer, eventually the snow will melt. Winter won’t last forever. One day summer will arrive, just as one day they will arrive at their destination.

“I thank you for this...” But as the traveler looks up, they find the stranger is gone.

They look around, standing up and spinning to try to locate them, but the stranger has simply disappeared. The traveler considers calling out for them, but then realizes they never exchanged names.

Sitting down, the traveler soaks up the fire. The last bits of candy melt away. The mysterious stranger has left nothing behind but a sweet taste in the traveler’s mouth.

The stranger may be gone, but the traveller will never forget them.



**Johnny Beauvais**, age 15, lives in Cowansville, and describes themselves as “a homeschooled teen storyteller who is currently writing a book and loves music and art.” This story won third place in the Townships Young Voices Awards 2023 (Fiction).

Answers to	B 3
the ETRC	C 2
Townships	D 1
History Quiz:	

# Ross Murray's *Smileyville* Keeps You Smiling

by Angela Leuck

## *Smileyville*

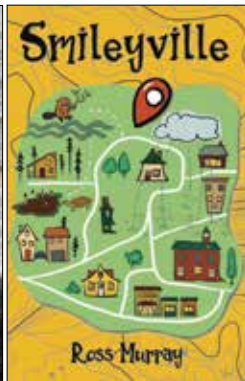
by Ross Murray (2023)

Too Many Cats Publications, 332 pp., \$19.95

Ross Murray loves small towns.

If you've lived in one, you know they can be a mixed bag. At their best, they provide a strong sense of community. It's not like in a city where the person at the supermarket, the daycare owner, the librarian, or local reporter are strangers. Rather, in a small town, you probably know their names and a lot more besides. As, for good or bad, they do about you. From the point of view of story, towns are veritable gold mines.

The town at the centre of Ross Murray's first novel *A Hole in the Ground*, and now his follow up, *Smileyville*, is Beverly. Since the author has lived for decades in Stanstead, Quebec, where he was editor/publisher of the weekly *Stanstead Journal*, it might not seem much of a stretch to assume that Beverly is in some small measure modelled on it.



However, at the book's launch at the Lennoxville Public Library on October 5, Murray gave us the scoop: Beverly is based on a town in Ontario and to a lesser extent, one in New Brunswick, both of which give it a decidedly "Canadian" flavour. So much so that whichever province you live in, Beverly could be your town, with its mill, its locals (including critters such as beavers and turtles), its newcomers who have turned their backs on the city, and its perennial desire to noticed.

Happily, many of the characters we met in *A Hole in the Ground* return in *Smileyville*. Nine years have elapsed since that eventful week in July 1998 when Beverly's sinkhole collapsed, causing pandemonium. Now, in 2006, we quickly catch up on the lives of Jemima MacNaught; her part-time partner, Julian; her father, Rob; ex-mayor Conrad Lemon and wife Marge; and current mayor Charles "Dumb-ass" Dumas; as well as Mary Hubacek, widow of the recently deceased editor/publisher, Leon.

There are new, intriguing characters, as well: Mary's daughter, Ruth; antisocial granddaughter, Zoë; Shannah, the new Black elementary school teacher; and husband Barry. Not to mention Beatrice, the four-year-old daughter of Jemima and Julian.

Murray's choice of the year 2006 is significant. It coincides with the inaugural year of Kraft Hockeyville, an annual competition sponsored by [Kraft Heinz](#), the

National Hockey League, and the [NHL Players' Association](#). It has communities across Canada competing to demonstrate their commitment to the sport of [ice hockey](#). The winning community receives a cash prize dedicated to upgrading their local home arena. All of this undoubtedly set the wheels turning in Murray's mind, leading to his McCabe's Smileyville Contest to choose Canada's nicest town. The contest provides the novel's title as well as central focus, as the oftentimes quarrelling characters pull together to try to win the title and the handsome cash prize for improvements to their community centre.

Does Beverly win? Does it ultimately matter? Not really. What does matter is how, over the months leading up to the selection of the Smileyville winning town, the novel's characters discover more about themselves and their fellow townspeople.

Two lines that define the essence of Smileyville come from Jemima near the end of the book:

"It was a heartfelt appreciation for these people who surrounded her messy life, with their own messy lives, messy together. In that moment, she felt so lucky."

In a small town, people's lives intersect in numerous ways. They are literally in each other's faces. Knowing what they know of each other, they can break into fighting factions or work together, celebrating bonds of community through accepting their own life messes, as well as those of others.

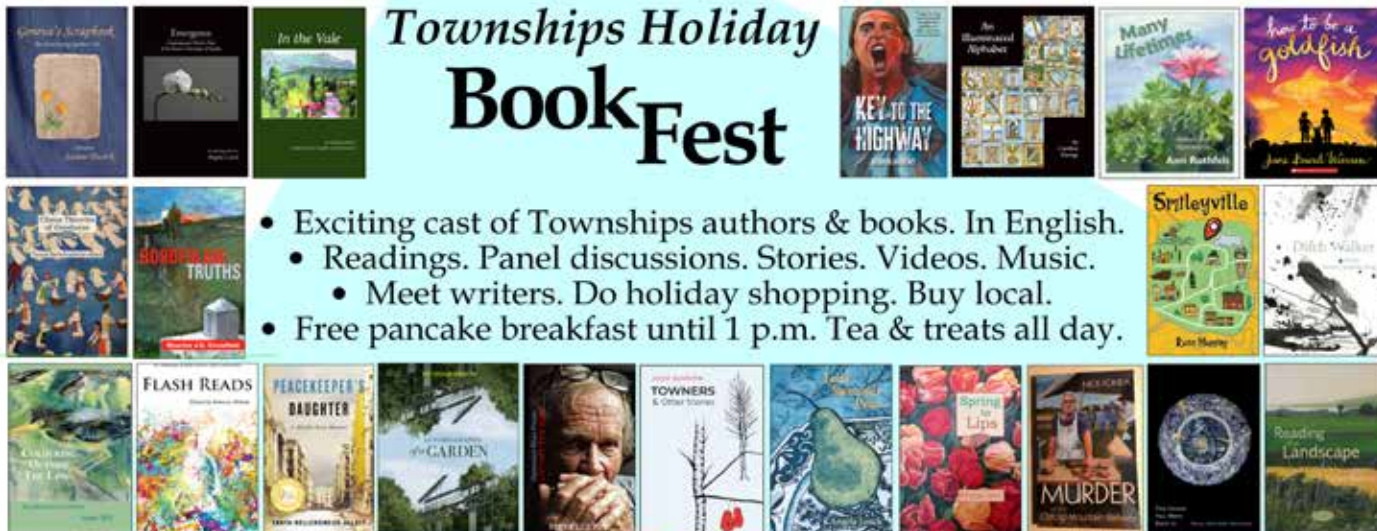
Along the way, of course, there are plenty of smiles and laughs. Murray the humourist doesn't let us down. While there may not be as much laugh-out-loud, roll-in-the-aisle humour as in *A Hole in the Ground*, Murray's satire has mellowed and matured, finding the sweet spot between the difficult truth of human relationships and not taking yourself too seriously.

*Smileyville* can be purchased at local bookstores or at [Amazon.ca](#).



**Angela Leuck** is a poet and publisher. She is the editor of *Emergence: Contemporary Women Poets of the Eastern Townships of Quebec* (Studio Geogeville, 2021).

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## Snow Angels of the Bulge

by Sarah Freiberg

As blinding white as she is,  
She is our soundproofing,  
The quiet she brings,  
It is more comforting than death.

Ringling Bullets,  
Blasting Shells,  
A rain of doom,  
Parade of Death.

The snow is my friend, she is my refuge,  
With her my ears don't ring  
My eyes don't scream,  
At last I am at peace.

She is the Mother who covers the corpses with a  
smooth and soft blanket of death,  
The one who takes her broken sons in with frosted  
warm arms.

I am submerged in the brutality of men,  
In the absence of breath,  
In the fogged gasp of death

Finally, I am nothing but a memory,  
That of a son to a lost mother,  
That of a soldier to a tired father,  
That of a brother to a loving sister.

Frozen in time, the winter covers me in a quilt of  
cold,  
A mosaic of my times and loves,  
Of my fears and services.

Quiet, she is quiet  
We are quiet  
The snow angels of the Bulge are quiet.

**Sarah Freiberg**, age 16, was a Secondary 5 student at Alexander Galt Regional High School when this poem



won first place for poetry in the Townships Young Voices Awards of 2023. The Battle of the Bulge was a bloody conflict fought between Allied and Nazi German forces during World War II.

## Secrets of Snow

by Arabella MacFish

Two parallel tracks engrave the snow,  
steady against the strong wind's blow.  
Forward I travel through the endless wood,  
flakes gather along the fur of my hood.

Cold creeps through my mittens of wool.  
And with it comes a restless pull  
to curl up warm and safe and dry  
in the banks of powder, piled high.

But I know to resist the lure  
that seeps out from within the furs,  
flowing from the frozen earth  
as the winter wind laughs with mirth.

If you follow, you'll not escape  
as new land begins to take shape.  
Great kingdoms made from pillars of ice,  
so enthralling it feels like a vice.

While distracted by this magical tease,  
you won't notice as you start to freeze.  
So while on skis, beware your hidden foe,  
or fall victim to the secrets of snow.

**Arabella MacFish**, age 15, of Hatley Township, moved to the Eastern Townships about three years ago. Since then, she has



begun to love winter sports such as snowshoeing, downhill and cross-country skiing. The latter inspired this poem, which won third place for poetry in the Townships Young Voices Awards of 2023.

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