

WHAT WILD SALMON CAN TEACH US ABOUT SAVING WATERSHED HERITAGE

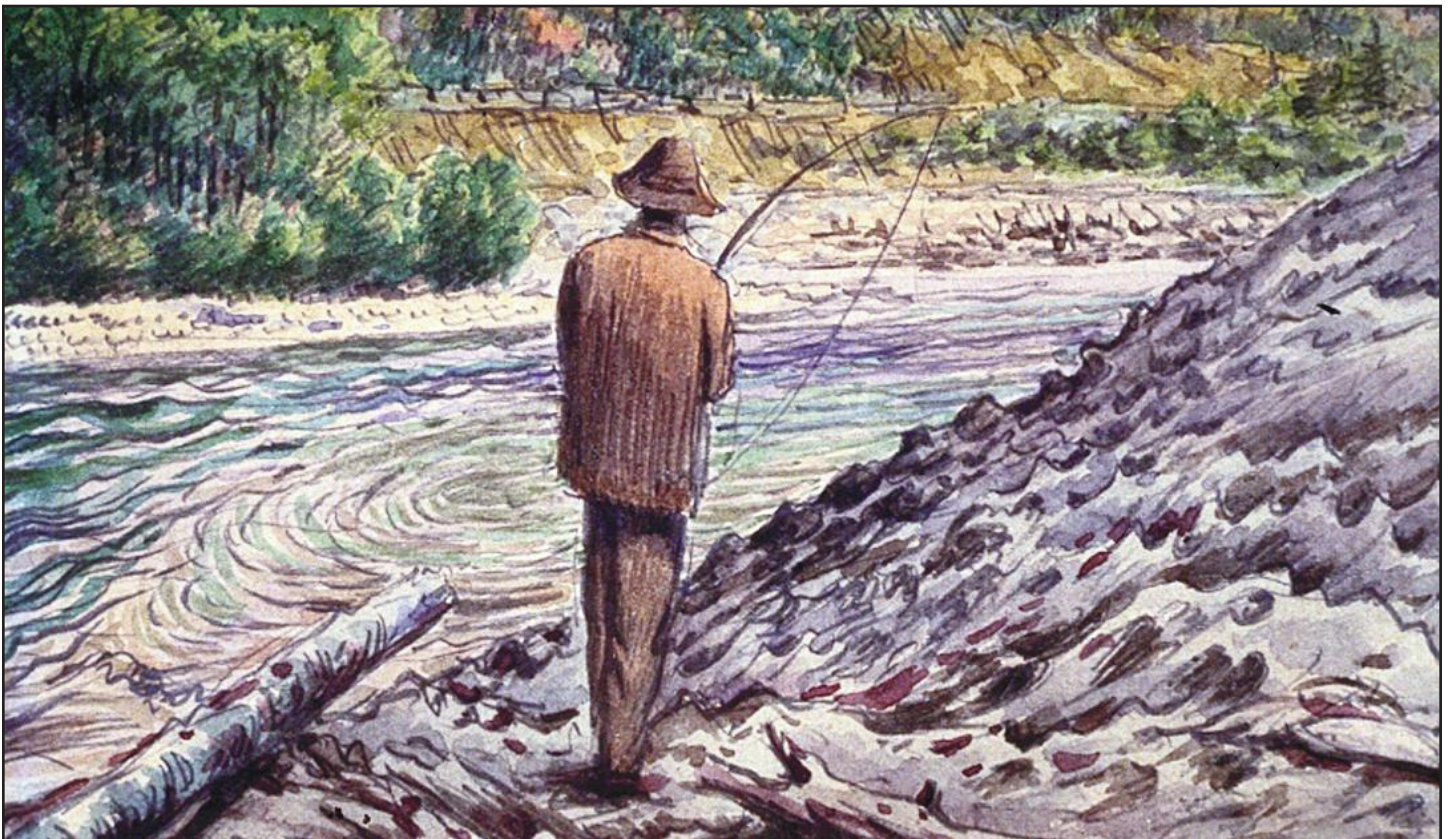
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Quebec Heritage

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News



Sewers and Science

The Enterprising John William Hughes

Textbook Stuff

Lies My Quebec History Teacher Told Me

One Hundred Years of Home and School

Quebec Federation Marks Two Critical Anniversaries

Quebec Heritage News

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Cover: William George Richardson Hind, "Salmon Fishing," c.1861.
McCord Museum, M11442.

EDITOR'S DESK

Imitation Games

by Rod MacLeod

One day in May 1884, English playwright W. S. Gilbert toddled over to Knightsbridge to see the Japanese Village, a kind of early Epcot exhibition showcasing the customs, costumes and cuisine of the exotic East for which London, indeed much of the Western world, was mad keen. There, Gilbert purchased some sort of Samurai sword, which he hung on his wall at home – not too securely, it would seem, as the thing promptly fell off and banged him on the head. This, at least according to legend, inspired him to write *The Mikado*, an operetta set in Japan with characters who sport Japanese names and follow certain Japanese customs – all in the service not so much of showcasing Japan but of lampooning Victorian society and politics. A classic British farce set to lush and intricate music, *The Mikado* has been performed consistently since its debut throughout the English-speaking world (and beyond), including an 1886 Montreal production depicted in one of Notman's more sensational composite photos (featuring Hugh Montagu Allan – yes, the lord of Ravenscrag). The show remains popular today, although some companies think twice about staging it for fear of being accused of cultural appropriation.

Before seeing a Montreal production of *The Mikado* last year, I discussed the cultural appropriation issue with the producer, who had initially worried that having White people dressed as Asians would provoke criticism. Apparently it did not; such matters do not tend to trouble the largely suburban patrons of community theatre. A very different response awaited visionary Quebec director Robert Lepage, whose musical *SLĀV* opened at the Montreal Jazz Festival and had critics and public contemplating punishments worthy of the bloodthirsty Mikado himself (“something lingering, with boiling oil”). The Festival pulled Lepage's show, prompting one of the season's most intriguing bits of cultural

discourse.

Collaborating with French jazz singer Béatrice Bonifassi, Lepage had put together a “theatrical odyssey based on slave songs.” It promised to be a moving and possibly informative spectacle. What disturbed people was that no one on the creative team behind the show was Black and that with one ex-



ception all the performers were White. Apparently it did not occur to either the producers or the Festival that having White actors pretending to be Black slaves might push some uncomfortable buttons, particularly in the wake of the blackface incident on the 2015 Bye Bye show. Although no actual blackface was used in *SLĀV*, the actors dressed like extras from *Gone with the Wind* and mimed picking cotton – which is arguably in the same ball park. Lepage and Bonifassi responded to both charges (that Whites were telling Black stories and that Whites were playing Blacks) by

citing artistic freedom: i.e., that writers can write what they want and that acting is all about being who you are not. Much of the theatre world and the media agreed with them – and cried censorship when the show was cancelled.

Of the two charges, the second is the easier to deal with. Theatre has changed a lot in the last few decades, certainly when it comes to actors' complexities; most companies are as visually diverse as the society they inhabit – considerably more so than a great many professions. The prevailing philosophy is colour-blind casting: the hue of one's skin does not determine the role one plays. This approach is de rigeur at Canada's most prestigious theatrical venue: at Stratford last summer, I saw two Brontë sisters, one set of *Comedy of Errors* twins, Lady Chiltern, Professor Harold Hill, and *Coriolanus* all played by people of colour. The reason theatre has to be colour blind (at least as a default) is not just multicultural lip service; there are highly trained actors of colour out there, and if companies were only able to hire them when staging plays with obvious Black characters there wouldn't be much work for them. We've moved on, thank you, and to those (and I know some) who feel that a Black Hedda Gabler is weird, I say: get over it.

Curiously, Stratford's *Coriolanus* was directed by Robert Lepage himself, and it was one of the most stunning things I have ever seen on the stage. Lepage is brilliant – and obviously colour blind when it comes to casting. So what went amiss with *SLĀV*? Well, it's one thing to cast differently hued people without regard for said hues in a show in which race is irrelevant, such as *Coriolanus*, but it's another matter entirely in a work that is largely about race – *Othello*, to take a classic example. Casting a White actor as Othello implies one of two things: that there weren't any Black candidates for the role (very hard to believe) or that the actor in question will have to resort to blackface

(unconscionable). If a show calls for clear racial distinction on stage, one has to be anything but colour blind in casting. And a show about slavery would surely fall into this category.

To those who found it offensive to see Whites pretending to be Black, Lepage and Bonifassi trumpeted artistic licence. Actors, they argued, are entitled to assume the guise of the “other” – in fact, it’s part of the job, and good actors do it well. Up to a point, that makes perfect sense: actors work hard to feel emotions they do not actually feel, to be motivated by things that do not really motivate them, to love or hate people they do not happen to love or hate. They can even play people from cultural backgrounds not their own. But that is no excuse for blackface – or any variation on that theme, which is what the *SLĀV* performers were essentially doing by dressing and behaving like Black slaves. Surely it isn’t “part of the job” to be offensive. Surely we value actors for their ability to make us feel wonderful and terrible things and consequently learn something about the human condition – and not for their ability to indulge in caricature like some old music hall comedian. Actors can certainly play racists, but it is quite another thing to be racist while acting.

I think the troubling word I used there was “entitled.” Feeling that one is entitled to assume the guise of the other is part of a larger claim to artistic freedom, which Lepage and Bonifassi underscore as sacred. Indeed, they asserted that all the opposition to *SLĀV*, and especially the decision to close it down, was an attack on artistic freedom. They are, of course, right to the extent that condemning things without knowledge or understanding is contrary to civil and open discussion; in fact, it is one of the scourges of our time. They are wrong, however, to confuse criticism with oppression – and to do that is also one of the scourges of our time, given how readily public figures (mis)use terms like “witch hunt” to characterize all complaints against them. Artistic freedom is crucially important in a democracy, but it should not be used by influential people as a free pass to obscure all manner of sins – even sins of omission, which would be what we might level at Lepage.

Or, more to the point, the sin of appropriation. Clearly Lepage meant well with *SLĀV*, just as he meant well with *Kanata*, his take on the plight of Indigenous peoples which also came under fire later in the year for a similar array of content and casting issues. We can applaud Lepage’s desire to speak of injustice, and the skill he can clearly bring to framing it and choreographing it on stage, but we can also lament his choice to tell someone else’s story. Again, the argument for artistic freedom has it that artists can say what they like about anything. This may be technically true, but it serves neither art nor justice when creative people tackle projects that lie outside the boundaries of their experience and justify all shortcomings by calling it Art. The adage “write about what you know” is there for a reason.

Of course, one can study a subject at length, even become an expert in the field, and often that is good enough; certainly in History the marshalling of evidence and thoughtful interpretation is almost always as close as we can get to understanding the past, which has famously been described as a “foreign country.” But historians, especially those concerned with past injustice and social inequality, are wary of pronouncing on times, places and peoples they are not very well acquainted with – and they feel this way not just because of high academic standards but also out of a sense that other people’s experiences should not just be tossed into the mix to prove a theoretical point. Having done their homework, however, and reconstructed the lives of, say, industrial workers, prostitutes or domestic servants, such historians often claim that that they are giving a voice to the voiceless. This claim is reasonable, since the people in question have typically left almost no mark in the written records and certainly do not appear in text books. Arguably, the same approach could be applied to the study of cultural minorities in the past, but it’s complicated.

In general, giving someone a “voice” is a morally tricky business – particularly when that someone is alive and well and capable of telling their own story. And, of course, there is a difference between retelling a story as part of a teaching experience (what do we learn from, say, the story of Job, from “The

Fox and the Crow,” from the Tale of Taluliyuk?) and presenting it as part of your own imparted wisdom. When it comes to the experiences of actual communities, dissemination has considerable value; appropriation does not. Historians should be spending a lot more time incorporating Black and Indigenous experience into lectures and textbooks. They (particularly White historians) should not be telling these stories as if the Black and Indigenous people around them were part of some all-but-inaccessible foreign country.

The same is true for other cultural products: songs, for instance, which *SLĀV* is all about. The spectacle of White performers belting out “Negro” spirituals provoked critics to cry cultural appropriation – and Lepage’s defenders to counter that people should be allowed to sing what they like. To me, the issue is not what is permissible but rather what is respectful. I might well belt out “Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho” in the shower, but I wouldn’t dream of doing so on a public stage – for one thing, it would sound awful, but more to the point it would seem weird. I guess it didn’t seem weird many decades back when people like Bing Crosby and Elvis Presley performed the number – or at least not to White audiences. This is not to deny that these singers brought considerable flair to their renditions, only that the result seems inauthentic now. And don’t get me started on Frank Sinatra doing “Old Man River” as a Big Band number! At least such performances haven’t distracted listeners from associating these songs principally with Black voices, but in other cases damage was done: Presley’s “Hound Dog,” for instance, was intended (by its composers – who, curiously, as with “Old Man River,” were White) to be sung by a Black performer – namely raunchy R&B diva “Big Mama” Thornton. Presley has been criticized for much appropriation of Black music (even of Rock & Roll itself), particularly when he won fame and fortune while Black singers couldn’t get the air time. A counter argument is that Presley adapted musical styles and placed his own dynamic stamp on them. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Perhaps.

Lepage’s defenders were quick to point out that culture has always been

borrowed and adapted, so it was unfair to condemn *SLAV* for simply doing that. Again, up to a point, they are right. If you stand back a little, almost everything is a composite of earlier forms, recast and reimagined, consciously or not. Borrowing and adapting is the heart and soul of the creative process. It's also the bedrock of cultural and intellectual history, which emphasizes connection and inspiration and what that implies. The Romans borrowed from the Greeks, and in turn influenced Christian designers (we call much of it "Romanesque") and also the Renaissance and eighteenth-century Neo-Classicism, which has informed both democratic and totalitarian designs. At the same time, other Antique styles morphed into Islamic, and arguably into Gothic, which kept up a stiff competition with Classicism into the twentieth century. Historians used to look down on the nineteenth century for being eclectic, but Victorians were really just ratcheting up the pace of cultural borrowing in line with a global perspective, adopting all the earlier styles (various "neos" and "revivals") along with more exotic elements from Egypt, the Middle East, and (to return to where we started) Japan. Japan particularly prompted a veritable cultural revolution in both Europe and North America, not least helping to mold Impressionism. This thirst for the exotic has been criticized as Orientalism (in the sense articulated by scholar Edward Said) for its patronizing overtones and links to imperialism. While this is undoubtedly true, it is hard not to read genuine admiration into many works by Monet, Van Gogh and Whistler – or for that matter *The Mikado*. Just because such imitation often used unsophisticated idioms, causing mild or considerable offence today, does not make it any less sincere.

Then again, it is tricky to distinguish genuine admiration from a fad. The Japanese craze of the later nineteenth century was for most of its adherents little more than the passionate pursuit of the latest thing. Its impact in Montreal can be traced directly to the 1886 production of *The Mikado*, which drew huge crowds to the Academy of Music. Soon after, the Castanet Club, which held a glamorous annual ball,

decided that this year's theme would be Japan. Daughters of wealthy families rushed to Notman Studios to pose for the camera in a variety of gorgeous kimonos that they would later show off at the ball. Miss Abbott, Miss Allan, Miss Angus, Miss Sise and other twentysomethings were immortalized, individually or in groups of three (clearly miming "Three little maids from school are we"), saucily waving fans and twirling parasols. Several young men also had their portraits taken wearing costumes straight out of *The Mikado*, including the city's wealthiest eligible bachelor, Hugh



Montagu Allan, who even sported a skullcap crowned with a tufted topknot. No doubt a good time was had by all, but clearly these revelers felt very little actual appreciation for Japanese culture. Despite the obvious expense on display, these antics were the precursors of wearing feathered headdress at frat parties.

I was reminded of the thorny question of cultural appropriation while attending another of last year's cultural events: "From Africa to the Americas, Face-to-Face: Picasso, Past and Present," at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. This ambitious exhibition promised much food for thought, certainly in its title but also in its introductory texts, which argued that Western scholarship has traditionally deemed art objects from Africa and other colonized spaces to be "primitive," whereas art objects from Europe were "art." This distinction is echoed in the way we have exhibited these objects: European ones go into art museums, African ones in ethnographic museums. Unfortunately, the exhibition did not really explore this idea, other than by doggedly juxtaposing paintings

and sculptures by Picasso with African works that seemed similar. Still, I was left musing over the implications for one of art history's critical watersheds. Whistler may have longed for "all one sees that's Japanese" (to quote W. S. Gilbert) but Picasso invented Cubism, and the earth shifted.

The legend goes that Picasso wandered into the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro and was so inspired by the sight of several African masks on display that he began to paint human figures that way – most famously some of the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, the seminal work that foreshadowed Cubism, *Guernica*, and much of the artist's later oeuvre that he would reputedly dash off in a few minutes whenever he wanted to buy a new house. Picasso seems to have been genuinely impressed by the African art he saw (as were a great many of his colleagues), but a large part of its impact no doubt stemmed from its exoticism – which had the added benefit of shocking the bourgeoisie. Moreover, like the kimono-wearing Allan siblings, Picasso made no attempt to understand the significance

of the culture that inspired him; he merely seized on the form. Appropriation without appreciation implicitly undermines the value of the source material, no matter how remarkable the result may be. Even so, Picasso's attention to those masks did help bring African art into the narrative of otherwise Eurocentric cultural history. (Incidentally, there is now a smattering of African art in the Louvre, albeit largely thanks to a loan from the Trocadéro's successor, the Musée du quai Branly – whose mandate as a repository of "indigenous" art remains controversial.)

I think that much of the recent debate about cultural appropriation misses the point. "Appropriation" is really not the issue: people have always borrowed ideas and styles from other people. What is at stake is respect. That means, to begin with, acknowledging and revering the source material, and striving to understand its significance. Above all, it means not insulting the culture, either by inappropriate use of something sacred (wearing feathered headdress, for instance) or by offensive slurs (eg, black-

face in all its forms). Many examples straddle boundaries uneasily: White people dressing up in kimonos, for instance. Togas don't seem to be a problem, nor do the duds of Ancient Egypt, but kimonos raise the flag of racism – possibly because there are Japanese people around who can take offence. But that doesn't explain the acceptability of wearing items associated with certain other cultures. Recently, a colleague who is Jewish asked me (slightly tongue in cheek) if wearing a tartan scarf made her guilty of cultural appropriation. I assured her no – then wondered about it. In retrospect, perhaps I ought to have said: yes, it is cultural appropriation, but not to worry: it doesn't matter.

The real variable here is power. There isn't a level playing field, so it makes little sense to reduce the argument to artistic freedom or the universality of cultural borrowing. There have been relationships between peoples based on disproportionate levels of power, and this has led to oppression, including enslavement and genocide. For the oppressors (that is, people of that cultural background whether or not you were personally involved) to then appropriate the culture of the oppressed is problematic at best. If we're going to make progress as a multicultural society we can't condone having White people playing Black on stage in the name of artistic freedom. By contrast, we can all wear tartan scarves with impunity because the Scots haven't been on the receiving end of much oppression lately (not that they weren't in their time persecuted for wearing the tartan, but that's a sidebar). And while the twentieth century saw a fair amount of oppression inflicted by Japan, that doesn't absolve anyone from engaging in the kind of racist caricature that came out of Hollywood and much government propaganda – and falls into the same category as minstrel shows. Whether that means *The Mikado* should no longer be performed with Japanese costumes and accoutrements is an interesting question; I'm inclined to think it is wiser, and potentially more interesting, to do it in modern dress, since the show is principally about the oppressors (i.e., the Brits – or whoever is putting it on) making fun of themselves. And that is entirely appropriate.

Heritage in Brief



New Carlisle's Caldwell House Finds a Good Home

by Betty Anne Smollett
President, Heritage New Carlisle

Thanks to Mrs. Katherine Smollett, the Municipality of New Carlisle received one of New Carlisle's most precious gems: the Caldwell House, built in 1799.

In November 2018, with the help of the municipal workers and a volunteer construction family, the little house

was picked up and very gently moved to its new location without any problem. At the present time, it sits under the watchful eye of the Kempffer Cultural and Interpretation Centre, overlooking the back yard.

In the spring, the Caldwell House will be placed on its permanent foundation, the strapping will be removed, and a committee will be formed to take on this exciting project. The first phase will be to repair the leaking roof.

On behalf of the New Carlisle Municipality and the members of the Board of Heritage New Carlisle, we would like to thank Mrs. Smollett for her dedication to safeguarding our history, and also for the donation she has made to our community with regard to our built heritage. This will allow us to present our history for future generations.

(Note: Katherine Smollett wrote about the Caldwell House a year ago. See QHN, Letters, Spring 2018.)

Letters

Praise for The Point

I wanted to thank you and your team for all your amazing work on the issue featuring our articles on Point St. Charles (*QHN*, Fall 2018). I'm so proud of it, as we all are at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling."

Tanya Steinberg
Montreal, Qc.

Digging "Digs"

Articles about First Nations politics often draw negative comments, even trolls. However, I have received several interesting and positive comments about the article "Digs at Gatineau" by Chief Roger Fleury (*QHN*, Winter 2019).

"What a saga!"
-Jacques Kurtness, Mashteuiatsh, Qc.

(Kurtness is the first Québécois First Nations person to get a PhD in psychology)

"That's a good piece. What an outrage. Can't believe they weren't included in the process."
-Anne Trueman, Chelsea, Qc.
(Trueman is a producer at Global TV)

"It's a real pleasure to read this article. I am sure, you were very glad about the finding of the 'treasure.' The article is great."
-Crit Jamin, Breda, Netherlands
(Jamin is a professor of intercultural education in the Netherlands)

Wes Darou
Cantley, Qc.

DONORS & DREAMERS

RELATIONSHIP ADVICE

The secret to finding long-lasting donors

by Heather Darch

This is the fifth in a series of articles by Heather Darch addressing the perennial question of fundraising. It was inspired by her work on the QAHN project, DREAM.

Invariably, someone at one of the QAHN DREAM conferences would say, “I wish we knew a wealthy person who would give us a ton of money.” The conference attendees would laugh and agree that they had the same pot-of-gold wish. Professional fundraiser Camilla Leigh says that the cultivation of a major donor takes, on average, 18 months of work. It’s important not to underestimate the time this can take. “Think of it like a courtship,” she said. “It takes meaningful exchanges, mutual respect and vision before you ask someone to marry you.” Never ever ask a major donor for support the first time you contact them. It’s like “popping the question” to a stranger; it won’t turn out the way you hope.

There are five stages to major gift fundraising. The first is planning. Before your fundraising team embarks on any fundraising initiative, they must understand the fundraising objectives from the ground up. These goals need to be translated into a rationale for giving, otherwise known as a case for support; the intersection between what your organization does and how that impacts the external community in a positive way. This stage takes an investment of time and energy, but it’s crucial if a major donor is to have the sense that they’re dealing with a well-managed organization guided by a strong sense of purpose.

The second stage is identifying your “prospects,” or prospective major donors. It will take time to find out all you can about your prospects – their interests, their hobbies, their businesses, and how your cause might connect with them. Camilla Leigh says that it’s important to know if donors are big spenders or savers, if they give to similar organizations and if they give from income or assets. It takes some forensic work to get the big picture of who is out there and where they focus their energies and direct their money. Check the publicly available donor lists of arts, heritage and cultural organizations. This information identifies people who have made a commitment to support work which may be similar to yours – and they have not elected to be anonymous.

The third stage is cultivation. When you have identified your prospects you will not be approaching them initially to ask for anything, but simply to ascertain their interest in your organization. As Camilla Leigh emphasized at QAHN’s DREAM conference in Morin Heights, “The stronger and more emotional connection you can make, the greater the emotional commitment will be and the greater the inclination will be to give at higher levels.” At this stage, it’s really about letting them get to know you – and for you to learn more clearly what motivates them. “The ask” will only come after a relationship has been developed.



The stronger and more emotional connection you can make with a donor, the greater that donor’s commitment will be to your organization.

The fourth stage is the solicitation. Your request has to be customized and aligned with the donor’s interests. Ask yourself this before you make your pitch: Does the donor know you and understand your goals? Is he or she emotionally connected with your work? Does the donor intellectually understand the transformational change their gift could make? More importantly, do you understand what giving means to the donor? Having done all the research, you should have a good idea what your donor will want to support and the giving level.

Camilla Leigh warned that not all requests are met favourably, even after careful planning. But no rarely means no; it means you didn’t ask the right way or at the right time. “But you shouldn’t get a no because you didn’t do your homework.”

The fifth stage is stewardship. Stewardship is not the final phase, but really the beginning of a lasting and mutually beneficial relationship. Find ways to say thank you and develop a stewardship plan. The relationship you have developed with your donors can build to the next ask. Whether your prospects make a gift or not, keep in touch with them. If they have funded part of your work, they will want to know what difference their money is making. If they didn’t give, there may be other opportunities in the future.

With the five stages in place, the prospective major donor will go from ignorance to awareness, from interest to participation, and finally to financial support and sustained giving over time.

QAHN News

by Matthew Farfan

9th Annual Arts, Culture and Heritage Working Group Meeting, Montreal

The annual gathering of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Working Group took place on February 13 at Thomson House on the campus of McGill University. Organized by the Department of Canadian Heritage in partnership with QAHN and the English Language Arts Network (ELAN), the event serves as a way for community partners working in the arts, cultural and heritage sectors to network – both among themselves and with their partners from various federal government departments and agencies. The theme for this year's event was "Building New Relationships in a Changing Landscape." Despite extremely snowy weather and a number of cancellations, the day-long meeting went ahead as planned, and was felt by a number of participants to have been one of the most productive in recent memory.



A Visit to the Maude Abbott Medical Museum, McGill University

Following the conclusion of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Working Group Meeting, a group of heritage representatives from the event took the opportunity to visit to the newly inaugurated Maude Abbott Medical Museum, at McGill's Faculty of



Medicine. Visitors to the museum, which is named after pioneering physician (and McGill alumna) Dr. Maude Abbott, received a personal tour by museum director Dr. Richard Fraser. For more information on the Maude Abbott Medical Museum, visit: <https://www.mcgill.ca/medicalmuseum>.

2019 Heritage Talks Lecture Series

QAHN's 2nd annual Heritage Talks lecture series, which is supported in part by the Chawkers Foundation, commenced in January with a talk at the Black Community Resource Centre called "Saving Montreal:

Top: 9th Annual Arts, Culture and Heritage Working Group Meeting, Montreal. Photo: Matthew Farfan.

Middle: Dorothy Williams and QAHN President Grant Myers. Photo: courtesy of Grant Myers. Bottom: Maude Abbott Medical Museum. Photo: M. Farfan.

Blacks in the Battle of Chateauguay," by Dr. Dorothy Williams. In February, the series headed downtown to the historic Louis-Joseph Forget House where Dinu Bumbaru of Heritage Montreal explored "Montreal's Square Mile." The next conference took place at Concordia University, with Louis Rastelli of Archive Montreal speaking about the university's infamous "Sir George Williams Affair." In March, there were talks at the Brome County Museum in Knowlton, where Abbey Lacroix and Jeremy Reeves looked at "Medical Training in the Canadian Army during the First World War," and the Atwater Library in Westmount, where Fergus Keyes spoke about "Irish Immigration to Quebec since 1663." Conferences in this fascinating series continue right into June. For complete program information, visit QAHN.org.

Coming Right Up: 6th Annual Montreal Wine and Cheese!

QAHN's annual Montreal Wine and Cheese will take place this year at the Atwater Library in Westmount, on Thursday, April 25, 2019, from 5 to 7 p.m. This informal gathering of Montreal's heritage community has become a much-anticipated tradition. Don't miss it! RSVP by calling toll free at: 877-964-0409, or email us at: home@qahn.org.



INVITATION

6th ANNUAL MONTREAL WINE & CHEESE April 25, 2019

The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) cordially invites you to its 6th Annual Montreal Wine & Cheese!

Hosted by QAHN's Montreal Committee, this informal event, a tradition on Montreal's heritage calendar, is a great chance to exchange ideas about the challenges currently facing the heritage community in Quebec, and to explore one of the island's great historic institutions – the Atwater Library. A variety of heritage-related materials, including the latest issue of *Quebec Heritage News*, will be available! We look forward to seeing you!

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER:
Susan McGuire, "The History of the Mechanics' Institute"

WHEN:
Thursday, April 25, 2019, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

WHERE:
Atwater Library, 1200, Atwater Avenue, Westmount, Qc.

RSVP (before April 1):
Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network office, home@qahn.org or call toll free 1-877-964-0409.



Monday, April 15th, 7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.
Uplands, 9 Speid Street, Lennoxville.
Consolations of the Marsh: Remembering Henry Mousley, by Dwane Wilkin. FREE.

Wednesday, April 17th, 7:30-8:30 p.m.
Benny Library, 6400 Monkland Avenue, Montreal.
Honouring the International Year of Indigenous Languages, by Kevin Deer. FREE.

Saturday, April 27th, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Rupert Youth Welfare Association, 24 chemin Shouldice, Rupert (La Pêche). **Food and Farming Lessons From the Past; Planning for the Future.** Panel discussion with Bob Friesen, Charlotte Scott, Peter Andrée, and Bob Milling.
Moderator: Guillaume Lamoureux. FREE.

Saturday, May 4th, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
Historic Quebec City Walking Tour with Simon Jacobs. **Meeting point:** In front of Morrin Centre, 44 Chaussée des Écossais, Quebec City. FREE.
***RSVP required:** communications@qahn.org or 514-266-9682

Sunday May 5th, 1:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.
Stanbridge East Community Centre, 5 Academy Street, Stanbridge East. **Missisquoi's Cemeteries: Headstones, History and Heartache**, by Heather Darch. Brief presentation followed by cemetery tour. Involves walking and driving. FREE.



The Chawkers Foundation



Saturday, May 11th: **Lecture-Luncheon**
10:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
The Colby-Curtis Museum, 535 Dufferin Street, Stanstead. Tickets: **\$15 members of Stanstead Historical Society/\$20 non-members.**
RSVP required: 819-876-7322.
The Fish That Got Away by Dwane Wilkin.

Saturday, May 25th: **Lecture-Luncheon**
10:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
Golden Rule Lodge, 560 Dufferin Street, Stanstead. Tickets: **\$15 members of Stanstead Historical Society/\$20 non-members.**
RSVP required: 819-876-7322.
Golden Rule Lodge: The Masonic History of Stanstead, Quebec, by Grant Myers and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Luncheon to follow at the Colby-Curtis Museum, just steps from the Lodge.

Wednesday, June 5th, 7:00-8:00 p.m.
Benny Library, 6400 Monkland Avenue, Montreal.
Heritage Plays: A History of Gaspesian Fiddle Music, talk with live music by The Douglastown Project. FREE.

Sunday, June 9th, 2:00-3:00 p.m.
Eaton Corner Museum, Foss House, 374, Route 253, Cookshire-Eaton.
The Witch of New Mexico Road: Irish Folklore in the Eastern Townships, by Grant Myers. FREE.

For complete program details please visit qahn.org

NO BACKWARD STEPS

The Story of a Montreal Plumber

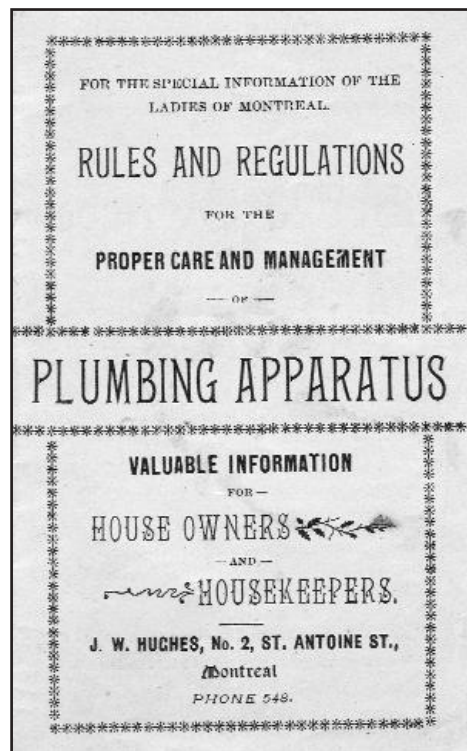
by Sandra Stock

The Atwater Library and Computer Centre traces its origins directly to the Mechanics' Institute of Montreal, established in 1828. Mechanics' Institutes were products of the British Industrial Revolution, designed to offer further training and helpful information to the growing part of the population designated as skilled labour. As industry became more complex and occupations more varied, the nature of work tended to fragment and specialize. As time went on, the need for basic manual skills declined and the need for literacy and for innovative skills increased. This process still continues in our time as our economies head towards robotics and other digital means of work and away from the human assembly line and actual physical toil.

The pervading social and religious philosophy of this time, amplified in the Victorian period, emphasized Improvement and Progress: life can become better and more prosperous if only we all work for it. This is not always true, of course, and there were downsides, such as the belief in the "deserving" as opposed to the "undeserving" poor, which rather belied the idea of charity. But in general this was an optimistic age and Montreal was to be part of the new wealthy and healthy future.

An activity of the early Montreal Mechanics' Institute that has successfully continued to this day is the Atwater Library's series of Thursday public lectures on various topics. In the winter of 1884, every second week, the Thursday lecture was one of a series called "The Science and Art of Practical Plumbing, as Applied to Domestic Purposes," given by J. W. Hughes. For example, on January 17, this series of five lengthy lectures started off with "On the Hydraulics of the Trade; giving a short sketch of some of the methods of rais-

ing, conveying and distributing water from the most ancient and simple to the more modern and complex," and continued into March with "General Summing up; a few remarks on the Plumber and his boy (apprentice), what he is, what



the public think he is, and what he may be in future, with hints on practice and conduct." The personal and social "improving" tone is evident here, yet today we'd call this a form of community activism and our Victorian plumber would likely have a university degree in hydraulic engineering.

John William Hughes was born in London, England, in 1845. His father, also called John Hughes, was from a military family of mixed Welsh, Irish and English origins. John Sr. himself was part of the household of Lord Palmerston, the British foreign secretary and later prime minister. However, John

Sr. was ambitious and thought he and his family would do better in the colony of Canada. Unlike many emigrants, John Sr. managed to obtain a good position for himself before leaving England: he was to be the manager of St. Anne's Market, then the seat of the government of Canada, of which Montreal was the capital. Unfortunately, when the Hughes family arrived in Montreal in 1849, St. Anne's Market was a smoking ruin, having been destroyed a short time previously in a riot by a Tory mob opposed to the Rebellion Losses Bill. John Hughes Sr. would have to look for another job.

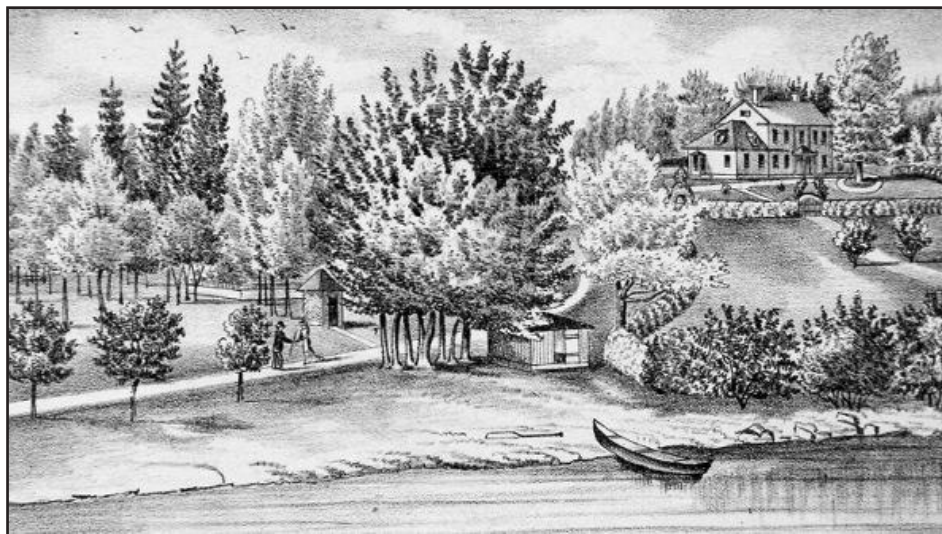
Undeterred, John Sr. decided to take up farming. The acreage he received was somewhere between what are now the towns of Stanbridge East and Bedford in the Eastern Townships. As far as we can tell, not having any agricultural background or experience didn't appear to discourage him. Eventually, he ended up becoming a kind of manager for the most important local landowner, Henri Des Rivières (1804-1865), the seigneur of Montarville (St. Bruno). The Des Rivières family were the heirs of James McGill and were connected by marriage and descent to most of the powerful seigneurial families of the Montreal region. Both Henri and his wife, Marie-Angélique Berenger Hay (1805-1875), were also closely involved with the English-speaking upper class, which partly explains why they wanted their son, François-Guillaume (Willie), to learn English. John William was thus recruited into the Des Rivières household at Malmaison, their large Stanbridge mansion, as a playmate for this seigneur's son (they were the same age), which would help Willie become bilingual. Through this effective although slightly medieval mode of mutual education, John William, who was obviously very bright, learned fluent French, which certainly proved a major asset for him later.

Here we should mention John William's exceptional mother, Jane Elgar Hughes. Born in Kent, England, to what is described in the Hughes annals as a prosperous middle-class family, Jane encouraged and supplemented the education of the Hughes children. Schooling was very spotty and often unavailable in the Canadian colonies at that time – even in urban centres, never mind in the wilds of Stanbridge. Jane lived to the age of 91, dying in 1906, and appears to have been another of those assertive and knowledgeable women born in the early nineteenth century who belie the Victorian stereotype of the silent and dominated wife. Jane was not as keen a pioneer farmer as her husband, and was very pleased when the family moved back to Montreal in 1863.

All of these moves and uncertain employment were not uncommon for newcomers to Canada at this time. It was difficult to adapt to the major cultural changes resulting from increased immigration in a rapidly industrializing world. Like many who followed them, success in the Hughes family came only in its second generation (John William) and not with the initial pioneer (John Sr.).

As a young man, John William would return to the Townships region as a member of the Prince of Wales Rifles, during the Fenian Raids of the 1860s and 1870s. He was present at the Battle of Eccles Hill, and among his papers is a lengthy description of this event, along with descriptions of military conditions in the field. He was a successful volunteer soldier and showed good leadership qualities. He was promoted to the rank of lieutenant by the end of this venture.

In Montreal, John William had some brief further schooling, but then, at the age of 13, was hired by D. W. Crerar, a wholesale and retail confectioner and grocer, listed in the *Lovell's* Montreal street directories of the 1860s as located at 264 Notre Dame Street. The Crerar family and their several "apprentice boys" lived above the shop premises – the usual practice at that time. Although he described himself as "small" for his age, John William was hired mainly as a messenger because of his good facility with French. He seems to have done fairly well with Mr. Crerar. He was paid the sum of \$2.00 a month, which he



James McGill married the widowed Charlotte Des Rivières who had four children. Her grandson was Henri. After James McGill's death, Charlotte's family contested McGill's will on the grounds that if the funds left to build the college were not utilized by a certain date, they reverted to the Des Rivières family. The college was not properly started by this date, but the Des Rivières lost the case anyway. Henri Des Rivières built the dam at Notre-Dame-de-Stanbridge and constructed a saw mill and a flour mill. The family manor, Malmaison, still exists and is a recently inaugurated historical interpretation centre. Marie Angelique's diaries and household journals have survived as important records of the period. François-Guillaume (Willie) married Eugénie Taschereau, sister of Louis-Alexandre Taschereau, Premier of Quebec, 1920-1936. Willie's sister, Marie-Marguerite, married Judge Thomas McCord.



gave to his mother to administer. He persisted in having the clever Jane Hughes take care of his earnings, and would do so for some time – probably a good idea. He went home on Sundays to his family, who were living at Côte à Baron, on St. Laurent Street just above Sherbrooke. This situation was not to last very long; John William soon left the confectioner/grocer's employ and subsequently entered the trade at which he was to excel.

He was apprenticed to the firm of

Prowse & McFarlane, described in *Lovell's* as "Tin and Coppersmiths, general stove warehouse & house furnishings depot," located at 66 Great St. James Street. John William applied himself to learning everything he could about plumbing, and he also started going to night school at the Mechanics' Institute.

At that time the quality of household sanitation in Montreal was extremely poor. Hughes described these conditions in a speech given at the Mon-

H. Belden Co., "La Malmaison, the residence of F. G. Des Rivières," 1881. McCord Museum, M987.253.235.

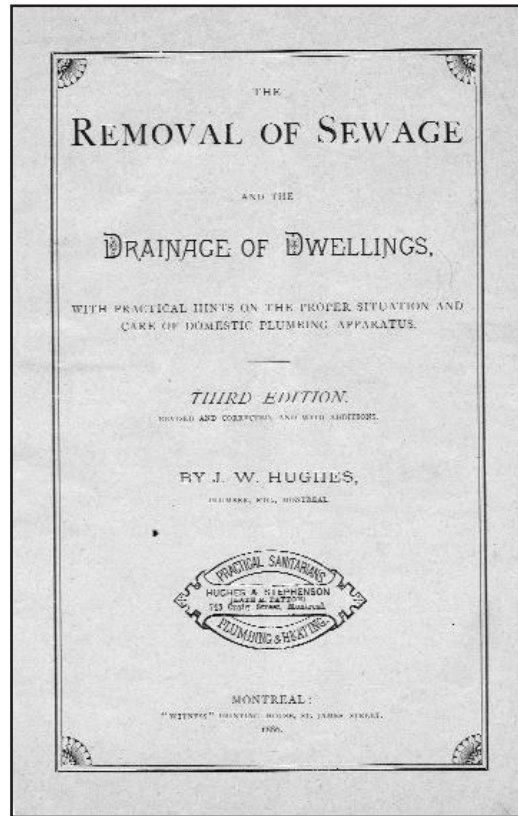
Henri Des Rivières, before 1862. McCord Museum I-3251.0.1.

trear Architects' Sketch Club in 1908: "The masses of people in my early days in Montreal were not troubled with plumber's bills because they had no plumbing in their houses. While there was a waterworks, and certain streets were provided with mains, the introduction of water into the house was by no means universal and there were large districts where there were no mains. The water was distributed from barrels drawn on a two-wheeled cart, carried into the house in tin pails of regulation size, the price being three pails for a penny." (Collard)

Hughes went on to describe early electricity in the city: "The first building in Montreal to be wired for electric lights was fitted up by my employer, Richard Patton. We knew nothing of switches, cutouts, porcelain insulators and the whole assortment of electric fixtures and fittings. We used the ordinary electric bell cone, bored a hole and threaded it through, and never had a fire." (Collard). This seems really old tech, but for the time it was the equivalent of our digital innovations.

After reading so much of John William Hughes' own diaries and written articles for trade magazines, along with many transcripts of lectures he later delivered, it is clear that the world he started working in was almost medieval, and that over the course of his career this world evolved into a very different place in regard to building infrastructure and public and private health. Hughes' firm always advertised itself as promoting the improvements that plumbing would offer, along with other new related household conveniences such as heating and electricity.

Hughes' business would go through several name changes due to different partners. In the 1884 edition of *Lovell's Directory*, there is a bold-printed advertisement for "Hughes & Stephenson, Established 1860, Late R. Patton, 745 Craig Street. Plumbing, Gasfitting, Steam, Hot Water and combination Heating, Metal Workers &c., &c., Electrical Bells fitted; Locksmithing, &c., Drainage and Ventilating a Specialty." Variety of services offered was most likely one of the keys to the company's ongoing success. Ten years later, Hughes & Stephenson is listed as "Practical Sanitarians," and the advertisement includes "locksmiths" and "chandeliers"



among the services offered. Humorous as these quaint-sounding skills seem to us, they were cutting-edge then. Hughes also designed fixtures for heating and plumbing; among his papers are a patent for a hot water heater. His company also worked on a multihouse "boiler" (furnace) for a row of new homes on Ste. Famille Street in the 1880s.

In 1898, construction started on the Canadian Pacific Railway's Viger Station. The architect was Bruce Price, and all the plumbing, heating, gas fitting and bell hanging was done by the firm of J. W. Hughes. (By then he was the sole owner of his company.) A very crumpled and yellowed newspaper clipping with a panoramic drawing of the Viger Hotel and Station was among the Hughes annals,



with a handwritten note on it from John William stating his contribution with obvious pride; this very splashy edifice must have been the highlight of his career. Although an impressive edifice in the Châteauesque style, Viger Station did not fare well over time. Its railway function, and the once luxurious hotel above it, closed due to the shifting of Montreal's economic core to the northwest. The once attractive Viger Gardens fronting it were destroyed in the 1970s for the construction of the Ville Marie Expressway, and the area soon became desolate and isolated. Lately, there has been an upswing in this part of Montreal and new ventures have attempted to renew both the area and the building itself.

The 1880s and 1890s appear to have been the most productive and prosperous period for John William Hughes. He had come from being a plumber's apprentice to lecturing architecture students at McGill. He was among the founders and directors of the Master Plumbers Association of Montreal, whose trademark he designed: it shows a beaver mounted over a cauldron and other classic plumbing tools, with the Latin inscription "Vestigia Nulla Retroesum" – No Backward Steps! This was perhaps appropriate personally, as well as illustrating Hughes' lifelong desire to advance the status and professionalism of the trades in general and plumbing in particular. In the 1880s, John William was elected to the governing body of the Mechanics' Institute, and he served as its secretary for several years. He was widely published in trade journals in Canada and the United States. He was an excellent writer with a clear, straightforward style. It is interesting to note that, in one of his articles he expressed concern that the Mechanics' Institute was "turning into a public library" and losing its primary mission as an educational facility for working men.

Although we know so much about John William's childhood and working life, very little information has survived about his immediate family. In 1869, he was married to Sarah Ann Barrett Williams in Montreal. In his small personal diary, all that he records is the births, baptisms and deaths of their nine children – all born within twelve years of the marriage – and only four, from what we can tell, survived to adulthood. This

Top: The Removal of Sewage and the Drainage of Dwellings. Harbeson family collection.

Bottom: Viger Station and Hotel, c.1901. McCord Museum, VIEW-3175.

was not an uncommon fate for people at that time, but still must have been very difficult. There is also no mention of his siblings after childhood. His father, John Sr., who died in his fifties, is barely mentioned and only his mother, Jane, appears in any family photographs among the items that have survived. For the last part of his life, John William's son, Arthur Wentworth Hughes (1873-1937), was a partner in the business – hence "J. W. Hughes & Son." In the last (by date) items found among this enormous collection of diaries, articles, speeches and other documents are a few legal papers indicating that Arthur was involved in a court case about the Hughes estate, challenged by two other male relatives (brothers or uncles? it is unclear) who John William had never mentioned in these writings. Some unhappiness appears to have entered the business and the family and the company finally appears to have dwindled.

If there is a lasting legacy from such an intelligent and energetic person as John William Hughes, it can be found in the contributions he made towards making Montreal a healthier and cleaner place, and

in his belief in education and what we would call life-long learning. He had the ability to adapt to his changing circumstances – as has the big influence in his life, the Mechanics' Institute, which has also had the ability to change with the times and persist.

No Backward Steps!

Author's Note:

Arthur Wentworth Hughes married Elizabeth Harbeson around 1910, and although they had four children there was only one grandson and he died in 2012, leaving no family. The surviving papers, diaries, newspaper clippings, manuscripts, and photographs of John William Hughes, eventually passed into the Harbeson family connections – to this author and to my cousin, Erik Norenus, the great niece and great nephew of Elizabeth Harbeson Hughes. Erik has dealt with the items from John William's military career – arms and memorabilia – and a very large parcel of all the J. W. Hughes papers were passed along to me.

Sources:

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J. W. Hughes, "Relating to personal matters in the life of J. W. Hughes," Montreal, January 1900 and July 1901 (handwritten personal account from the author's collection).

Lovell's Montreal Directories, 1884 to 1914.

McCord Museum archives online, Des Rivières and Taschereau Families (P752) fonds.



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THE CUSHINGS OF LOWER CANADA

Part I: Elmer Cushing's Compensation

by Joseph Graham

Lemuel Cushing arrived in Chatham, on the Ottawa River, in 1822. He was 16 years old and looking for work. He had grown up in Trois Rivières and Montreal and his first work experience was a short apprenticeship with cousins in Peacham, Vermont. His older brother Hezekiel had been given a horse and \$5.00 and told to find his relatives in Peacham, travelling in some cases through trackless forest. Hezekiel, who was only twelve at the time, had accomplished this task before Lemuel was born. He had gone on to serve in the defence of the colony in the War of 1812 and became a successful farmer in Rigaud. He was an inspiration and a hard act to follow for the young Lemuel.

Lemuel's father, Job, moved his family to Montreal when Lemuel was eight, and the story of his brother faded into the background as he learned his new life. It was not until his father died seven years later that he considered following his brother's path and travelled to Peacham to learn the lessons that had served his brother so well. His stay was short because many young men were leaving Vermont to find work in the rapidly developing Ottawa Valley. Within a year, he was headed back north and facing a new challenge.

In Chatham, Lemuel soon found work in lumbering, and within a short time saw an angle that would allow him to work as a middleman. He managed to parlay profits into a stable business and was among the most important citizens in Chatham by the time he was 25 years old. To accomplish this task, he traded in shillings, louis, dollars, promissory notes and barter, purchasing and selling in Montreal and wherever else he could while keeping inventory in those pre-electronic days with only well-organized, hand-written ledgers. His store, built in stone somewhere between the late 1820s and the mid 1830s, survives today. Lemuel married Catherine Hutchins of Lachute in 1836, just before the "Troubles." The Troubles of 1837 and 1838, also called the Patriot Rebellion and the 1837 Insurrection, are much romanticized today, but at the time they tore society apart, especially in rural areas where the issues were often interpreted around local divisions, pitting the French inhabitants of the seigneuries against English and other immigrant homesteaders. Cushing supplied arms for a militia and led a party of men to

St. Eustache, where they saw action in the aftermath of the uprising, stopping rowdy armed men from pillaging, and saving the local records at St. Benoit. Dependent as he was upon good, clear ledgers, it is not surprising that Cushing could appreciate the value of the registry documents.

The Cushing family boasted a military tradition on both sides of the border. Lemuel's grandfather, also called Job Cushing, rose to the rank of colonel in the American War of Independence, and fortuitously passed away before his grandson, Lemuel's brother, fought the Americans in the War of 1812.

Lemuel's role in the Patriot Rebellion would have given him pause as well. The patriots, after all, were inspired in large part by Thomas Jefferson and the other Founding Fathers of the United States. While he had served with Benedict Arnold, Colonel Cushing had not joined Arnold when the latter changed sides. In fact, it is altogether curious that an American war hero of that time would choose to retire in a British colony. Lemuel could speculate on why his grandfather had left the United States. His uncle Elmer,

the most colourful family member at the time, could well have been the cause.

Elmer Cushing came to Montreal in the 1790s, not as a Loyalist, but more as a young man seeking opportunity. Montreal was a boomtown in the period after American independence. This was the time that Molson's Brewery and other all-Canadian enterprises began, and the city, flooded with immigrants, many from the United States, was rapidly growing and changing to fulfill its new role as the largest British city in North America. Elmer set up a hostel called the American Coffee House. While he had some success with it, he soon found that he had grown too fast, and was in debt to what he called the "Gentlemen of the City." Around this same time, he received a visitor, a man named David McLane. McLane was an American who solicited Elmer Cushing's cooperation to set up a safe house for an advance party who declared that they intended to recapture the colony for France.

From McLane's point of view, Cushing must have looked like a fair bet. He was an American, son of a hero of the War of Independence, the American Revolutionary War, and could well have been judged a sympathizer with such an American-French



Lemuel Cushing's store, Cushing, Qc. Photo: Joseph Graham.

plot. He was down on his luck, being seriously in debt to members of the British elite, and owned an establishment called the American Coffee House. McLane was wrong. Was David McLane really a spy, sent to prepare for an invasion, or was he just a big talker? The invasion never happened. Is it because the Colonial authorities were tipped off? Was it nipped in the bud, or did McLane fall victim to a very nervous and paranoid administration?

Cushing lost the American Coffee House to his creditors, but in a peculiar twist the colonial authority awarded him Shipton Township, an area of 58,692 acres. Was it compensation for service to the Crown in turning in a spy?

Sources:

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F. Murray Greenwood, *Legacies of Fear*. Toronto, 1993.

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Joseph Graham, author of Naming the Laurentians, is writing a book that re-examines much of our early history, the elements that drove European society, and the extraordinary damage these ideas inflicted on North America.

JUST KIDDING

by Mark W. Gallop

My grandmother Doris Dickson was a school teacher until she married my grandfather. The daughter of an Anglican minister, she grew up in villages across Quebec’s Eastern Townships as her father moved from parish to parish. She earned an Arts degree from Bishop’s University in 1923 before setting off on a young woman’s adventure of independence in the mill town of Grand-Mère.

I have a black-paged photo album with snaps of her hiking and boating in the Quebec wilderness with an exuberant young group. These were her fellow teachers and the office workers from the Laurentide Pulp and Paper Company who all boarded at the company-owned Laurentide Inn. My grandfather, a British émigré and former Royal Air Force pilot, was an accountant with the paper company and was part of this social grouping.

My grandmother died when she was 62 and I was just three. I think I have some early memories of her, but know that these may be imprints superimposed on my memory from my early childhood photos with her. But I cling to these phantom recollections knowing that my younger siblings don’t have the luxury of such a pretense.

Family stories are therefore my primary connection to the grandmother I barely knew, and one has stayed with me for its simplicity and the apt way I see it reflecting her vocation and inner spirit. As a former teacher, she took great exception to the use of the term “kids” rather than “children.” “They are not goats!” I imagine her declaiming.

Does she have a point? This Old Norse word has been used to refer to human young-folk for over three centuries, although the *Oxford English Dictionary* makes the point that it was initially not just an informal use, but “low slang.” Its respectability

has steadily progressed. By the mid-nineteenth century Charles Dickens used it in *Oliver Twist*, his iconic novel of degenerate childhood.

The advancement of the term “kids” since my grandmother’s teaching days has been unrelenting. We hear it frequently, including in some highly respectable circles. Just about the only place “children” remains in regular use is in academic and professional writing. While now considered neither slang nor improper, “kids” remains informal, suiting our casual society. It can be playful (“just kidding”), pejorative (“don’t kid yourself”) or emotive (Here’s looking at you, kid”). But as one website for grammarians notes, “Kids’ can be derogatory at times, but ‘children’ is always formal and polite.” And isn’t “formal and polite” the demeanor a teacher would most appreciate in her classroom?

Mark Gallop spent three decades in the investment and financial services sector, and now devotes his time to historical research and writing. He is a Trustee of the Mount Royal Cemetery and a past President of the Atwater Library.



Doris Dickson (centre) near Grand Mère. Photo courtesy of Mark Gallop.

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LIFE'S LITTLE IRONIES

Two Buildings, Two Stories

by Robert N. Wilkins

Within a stone's throw of one another, at the intersection of St. Urbain and Sherbrooke streets, stand two buildings of historic significance to Montreal. Both are over a century old, and both also represent a certain degree of irony considering who occupies them today.

The older of the two is found just east of St. Urbain Street at 82 Sherbrooke West. The three-storey, free-standing Montreal greystone edifice was constructed in 1875 and was inhabited in its first few years by one Joseph May, "fancy dry goods importer." May sold his varied French products in a shop on St. James Street, near Victoria Square.

The hard-working businessman died at the age of 60 in 1879, most likely in his new home. As a measure of his unquestionable success, he even had his child photographed by William Notman, a privilege enjoyed almost solely by this city's nineteenth-century elite.

Individuals prominent in the English-speaking community in Montreal followed May: merchants Robert and James Mitchell, lawyer R. Stanley C. Bagg (of the illustrious nineteenth-century family of the same name), and businessman Stephen B. Heward, who lived in the enchanting Victorian building until 1898.

During the Edwardian Period, a leading French-speaking banker inhabited the structure, along with his wife, 11 children, one granddaughter and three servants. Tancrede Bienvenu was a high roller in the newly established Provincial Bank, today La Banque Nationale. Bienvenu left the house in 1912 after a twelve-year stay, moving his rather large family to Mount Pleasant Avenue in Westmount.

However, by far the longest occupier of the gabled-roofed edifice was the Montreal Reform Club, which used the building as its city headquarters for half a century. The association purchased it in 1913 for \$55,000. Established on June 17, 1898, the Reform Club was the social wing of the Liberal Party of Canada, and its provincial wing here in Quebec that, until July of 1964, was part of the same federal apparatus. By 1947, the club counted a remarkable 850 members, 670 French-speaking and 180 English-speaking.

In the context of this extensive political history, it can only be assumed that many of the great Liberal and federalist names of the twentieth century appeared within the club's confines.

For instance, former long-time Grit prime minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier was photographed entering the elegant building to address the club on December 4, 1915, less than four years before his death. Other Liberal politicians surely followed through the years.

The irony, of course, is that since April of 1973 the building has belonged to the nationalist and pro-independence *Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal*. On May 17, 1976, the SSJB renamed the property *La Maison Ludger Duvernay*, in honour of the founder of the Society. Yet, to the best of my knowledge,

the *Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal* has never complained of the presence of frightening federalist ghosts within its walls!

The other structure of interest is the 109-year-old Montreal Commercial and Technical High School building on the northwest corner of Sherbrooke and St. Urbain. It was designed by the renowned Canadian architect, Jean-Omer Marchand. Officially opened on February 1, 1907, in the presence of Lieutenant-Governor Sir Louis-Amable Jetté and Premier Lomer Gouin, the glistening facility

quickly became the flagship of the Protestant Board of School Commissioners, later the now-defunct PSBGM.

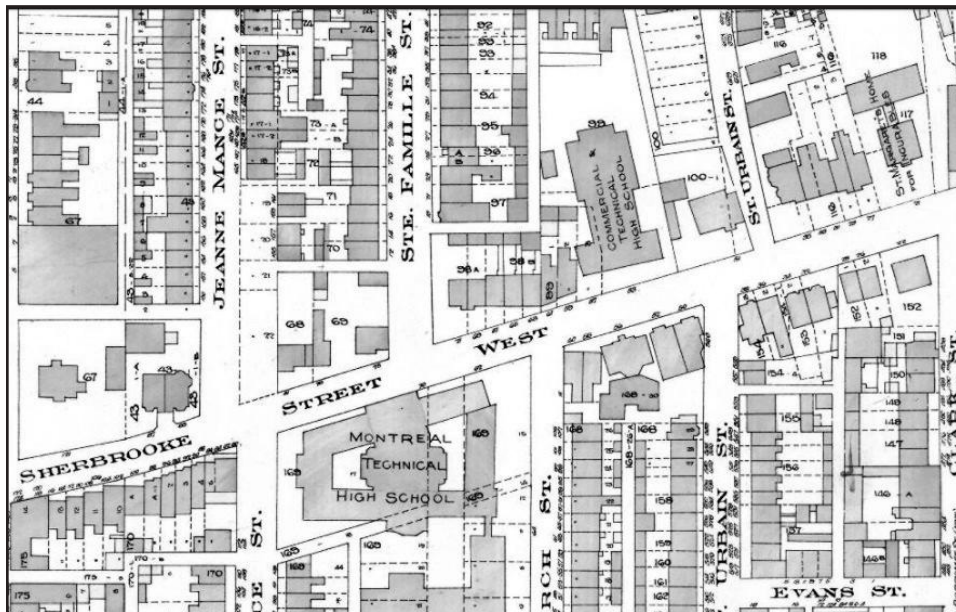
Outside, the four-storey construction of pressed brick resting on large blocks of Montreal limestone was a wonder to behold in the Edwardian Period. The entrance was particularly imposing for the time with four columns of sandstone stretching from the ground floor to the cornice, with massive bases and ornamental Ionic capitals with moulded and enhanced entablatures.

Inside, there were sixteen well-lit classrooms, various laboratories, a library, a gymnasium, two playrooms, lunchrooms, and a 600-seat auditorium, all of which were of the most up-to-date design and construction.

Furthermore, the edifice was considered to be fireproof throughout, being graced with terracotta floors and concrete partitions. This alone was an important factor as later that same month and year the notorious Hochelaga School Fire took place in the city's East End, taking the lives of sixteen children and also that of Sarah Maxwell, their principal.

The Montreal Commercial and Technical High School was, at the time, a symbol of the power and prestige of the city's English-speaking Protestant population as reflected in its





diverse educational and social institutions. It offered a three-year course in both manual training for boys and domestic science for girls. There was also significant emphasis on the importance of mastering the French language.

Less than two years later, Governor-General Grey and his wife, Alice Holford, visited the celebrated establishment to launch the introduction of evening classes to its extensive program. Grey, who had put in place the foundation stone for the edifice only four years earlier, was, according to a *Gazette* report, “much struck by the character of the education offered, and the zeal with which it was being acquired by the students.” (*Montreal Gazette*, December 15, 1908)

In its early years, the state-of-the-art facility was leased out for other purposes unique to this town’s Anglophone community. For instance, for the second half of 1909, the school was used as a temporary location for St. Gabriel’s and Chalmers Presbyterian Church services, as the two congregations prepared to unite the following year on Prince Arthur Street as First Presbyterian Church.

The Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal eventually gave up the building in 1957, whereupon it became, for the latter half of the twentieth century, the École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal. It is here, in so far as this property is concerned, that

some incongruity begins to manifest itself. To begin with, the École des Beaux-Arts was first created in this city in 1922, with considerable encouragement and support from the *Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal*, and was then located in the Monument National on Boulevard St. Laurent. In addition, with the passage of time, this onetime emblem of the impressive narrative of the English-speaking population of this city, the Montreal Commercial and Technical High School, is now home to none other than the *Office québécois de la langue française*. In fact, immediately to the east of the notable building is found a commemorative effigy and a tiny garden dedicated the memory of the father of the OQLF, Dr. Camille Laurin, who died in March of 1999.

A third building could also be mentioned, even though it is no longer there. The magnificent Skaife residence, situated at 70 Sherbrooke West, was demol-



ished in 1909 to make way for the Montreal Technical School on the southeast corner of the intersection at Jeanne Mance. That establishment still stands, today part of the Université du Québec à Montréal.

According to the May 11, 1909, edition of *The Montreal Star*, Adam Skaife inherited the ancient home from his great grandfather, John Platt, and the majestic domain was considered to have been, at the time, from 150-200 years old. Skaife had made his fortune in association with J. H. R. Molson & Brothers, otherwise known as Molson Brewery.

In his country-like estate nestled away on Sherbrooke Street, Adam Skaife was often seen seated, alone or with others, on the edifice’s summer veranda, overlooking the property’s beautiful gardens. It was indeed an idyllic setting, now forever lost to the inescapable march of time.

Robert N. Wilkins is a local historian and author of *Montreal 1909*, published by Shoreline Press.



Top: Charles Goad, Atlas of the City of Montreal and Vicinity, 1912.

Middle: Former Commercial and Technical High School. Photo: Robert N. Wilkins.
Bottom: Garden, Adam Skaife’s House, 1908. McCord Museum, II-120550.

FAKE AND FOUL

Quebec's New History Textbook

by Sam Allison and Jon G. Bradley

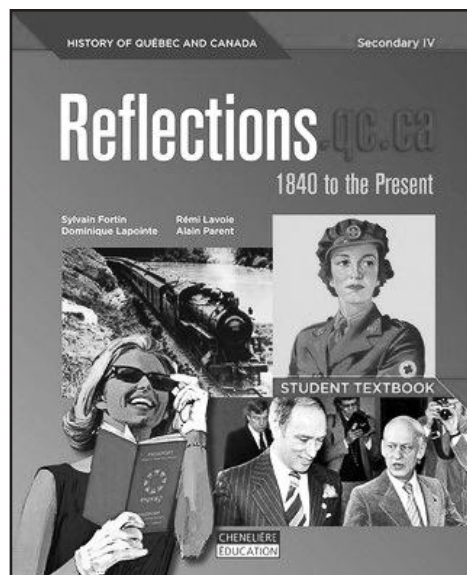
In October 2017, the second official history textbook for the compulsory *History of Quebec and Canada* course was distributed to Quebec's English school sector. This translated student textbook for the second half of the course consists of 430 pages and is directed at Secondary IV (Grade 10) adolescents. In total, there are 750 pages of text for the entire course—a huge compendium.

Scattered throughout the two texts are approximately 600 images, 225 quotations, and 145 maps, most of which are irrelevant, distracting, and of minor importance. The volumes are a vast collection of trivial and inconsequential so-called facts about the “Québécois,” a recent identity adopted by Quebec nationalists to replace “French Canadians.” The ideology surrounding “nationhood” paints historical events, people and places a “distinct” Quebec hue appropriate for those who believe Quebec to be a “distinct society.” Consequently, there is next to nothing said about the Township System and the huge advances in agriculture brought by Scots, English, Irish and Loyalist farmers. Indeed, Anglophone students reading these texts will be surprised to find that their ancestors were entirely Anglican – unless they are Irish, in which case they were all Catholics. There are neither Scots nor Irish Presbyterians remembered in Quebec's textbook.

Quebec as a Nation

This student book invents a “Québécois nation” as the bedrock of the past. The course title, *History of Quebec and Canada*, is merely a façade, and claims that there is virtually no collective memory about Canada. Indeed, former Quebec Première Pauline Marois, who initiated this new course development, made it very clear that this program was

to reflect nationalist thought and to portray a “unique” world view through a Quebec lens. This historical perspective positions the Francophone Québécois as “Us” with all non-Francophones as “Them” in a continual war where the



“Us” are being thwarted by the “Them” from achieving nationhood.

There are many “great historical conversations” omitted from this book, such as the industrial changes brought by the Scots. However, we will examine World Wars I and II to illustrate its historical myths – widely held but false notions of the past. There are approximately nine pages on World War I, twelve on World War II, a whopping 30 pages about Quebec's Quiet Revolution in the 1960s, and 19 pages on the 1837 Rebellion in Lower Canada (Quebec). To Quebec Nationalists, the great changes centre on the 1837 Rebellion and the subsequent 1840 Act of Union. The Canadian Confederation of 1867 and the Treaty of Paris ceding New France to Britain now occupy a secondary place on the historical landscape.

This distribution of textbook space graphically illustrates that, in Quebec Nationalist thinking, both World Wars (and the events surrounding them and emanating from them: the Versailles Treaty, the Influenza pandemic, the League of Nations, the Great Depression, the Baby Boom, etc.) are minor, unrelated events in the social, economic, political and demographic evolution of Quebec. Modernity, in this book, starts in the 1960s with the Quiet Revolution. Furthermore, two of the most important recent historical events – namely, the October Crisis and Bill 101 – are almost ignored, garnering minimal attention.

World War I

This text describes World War I in the following way:

French Canadians did not feel a sense of belonging to the British Empire. They saw this war as an imperialist war. Moreover, the structure of the Canadian Army was such that most Francophones were enrolled in the infantry, the most dangerous branch, and were required to use English only.

In fact, there were many French-speaking regiments besides the Royal 22nd Regiment (commonly referred to as the “Van-Doos”) which is referenced in the text. This student book identifies English Canadians as “imperialists” who promoted the British Empire by enlisting. In reality, over one-half of the Canadian Army was born in Britain, including many “Home Children,” the over 100,000 young people sent to Canada by British religious, charitable and government organizations in the latter parts of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Less obvious, French Canadians,

per head, enlisted in only slightly fewer proportions than English Canadians. Both English and French Canadians born in Canada were underrepresented in the Canadian Army. However, Quebec Nationalist thought maintains the fiction that French Canadians disliked Canada so much that they refused to fight in large numbers. French Canadian support for Quebec nationalism during World War I has been much exaggerated while the numbers of French Canadians actively serving have been very deliberately underestimated.

There were indeed Conscription riots in Quebec, and Canada was deeply divided because of Conscription. However, Conscription did not go down well in any country, including “Imperialist Britain,” where Conscription was not even attempted in Ireland. Henri Bourassa, a leading Quebec nationalist of the time, spent more time and energy fighting what he called the “Huns of Ontario” than he did the “Huns” in Europe.

Nationalists have constructed what historian Maria Grever calls “a narrative template” that excludes French Canadians such as Talbot Mercer Papineau who fought for Canada. Major Papineau, grandson of the 1837 rebel leader Papineau, penned a critique of Henri Bourassa’s opposition to the war. Papineau wrote an article in the *Montreal Gazette* of July 28, 1916, that was headlined worldwide and was reprinted, to give one example, in *The Times* of London:

As I write, French and English Canadians are fighting and dying side by side... Is their sacrifice to go for nothing or will it not cement a foundation for a true Canadian nation... independent in thought, independent in action, independent even in its political organization – but in spirit united for high international and humane purposes...

Major Papineau won the Military Cross for his gallant actions and was killed during the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917. His body was never found! Although a war hero and intellectual whose complex ideas in time of crisis rate debate, he is totally ignored in this textbook.

There is, unfortunately, an even more ridiculous omission. Montreal’s Royal Victoria Hospital has a small memorial to one of its doctors who served and died in the war: John McCrae, author of “In Flanders Fields.” The poppy, as a symbol of war memory, came out of his most evocative feelings. McCrae’s poem is by far the most famous literary work ever produced by an English-speaking Quebecer but is excluded from this book. The poem is not printed for debate or discussion. As an interesting side-bar, it is ironic to



observe that one of the most strident lines in the McCrae poem (“To you from failing hands we throw the torch be yours to hold it high”) has been prominently displayed on the wall in the inner sanctum of the Montreal Canadiens hockey team dressing room since 1952.

Many significant conversations about World War I are absent because this student text concentrates on carefully selected inconsequential Québécois people involved in equally minor events. Quebec’s adolescents are not even told that a Serbian teenager precipitated the incident that ignited the “War to End All Wars.” The assassination of the Archduke of Austria, an action by an adolescent, is excluded.

World War II

In the twelve pages of text devoted to World War II, we also experience limit-

ed conversations that can be ascribed to amnesia, hypocrisy, and cherry-picking of facts. The textbook forgets that Montreal was the world headquarters of Ferry Command, which was the main reason Dorval Airport was built, in 1940. The world’s first regular trans-Atlantic air service was established operating out of Montreal, which sent approximately 10,000 bombers to Britain. These planes were often piloted by women, who were engaged in this dangerous war effort even though they did not receive the right to vote in Quebec provincial elections until 1940. Quebec was the last Canadian province to grant such a fundamental democratic right, and did so a full 22 years after a similar right at the federal level.

Equally stunning, the entire war against Japan is missing from the textbook; there is no mention of the Canadians captured with the fall of Hong Kong or the valour of the Regiment du Hull fighting the Japanese in the Aleutian Islands in 1943. The dropping of the two atomic bombs and the ending of the War in Japan is similarly ignored. The construction of nuclear weapons and their use still marks our world today and frames contemporary geopolitical realities.

The textbook has literally dozens of images and sidebars about the construction of Quebec buildings – including the Edifice Camille-Laurin, headquarters of the Office québécois de la langue française. This tribute to Camille Laurin, father of Bill 101, blithely ignores the fact that he played a major role in trying to allow known Vichy French war criminals the opportunity to emigrate to Canada in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Although the book is filled with descriptions of the different types of Quebec nationalism – “Clerico-Nationalism,” “Nationalism of Survival,” “Anticlericalism” and “Ultra-Montanism” – there is nothing about the Vichy Nationalism practiced by Laurin and other Quebec intellectuals throughout the 1930s into the early 1950s. No mention, for instance, that Vichy Nationalists opposed General Charles de Gaulle during World War II, when, on a visit to Montreal and Ottawa, he declared “Vive le Canada!” The textbook does, however, contain de Gaulle’s speech and photograph in 1967 when he



proclaimed “Vive le Québec libre!”

Cherry-picking descriptions of Québécois nationalisms does not give high school students a chance to construct their own views about events and people supporting or opposing that specific form of nationalism.

As for amnesia about English-speaking Quebecers and World War II, perhaps the most egregious example is illustrated by the exclusion of John Peters Humphrey (1905-1995). In the wake of the war, especially emanating from the discovery of the extent of the Holocaust and the dropping of the nuclear weapons, there was an intense worldwide reaction against nationalism and the violation of human rights. McGill law professor Humphrey wrote the first draft of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the 1940s and his ground-breaking work has been codified and honoured by the United Nations itself as well as numerous developing countries. Again, we experience the historical unwillingness of these textbook authors to recognize the global importance of any English Quebecers.

The October Crisis and Bill 101

The events of the 1970 October Crisis, according to some, left a scar on the

soul of Montreal. Indiscriminate bombings, death and injury, kidnappings, murder, and armed soldiers in the streets just a few short years after the celebrations of Expo 1967, terrorized citizens. Notwithstanding the import of these events, the textbook devotes only a single page of approximately 200 words of narrative along with a reprint of part of the FLQ Manifesto and a single black and white photo of soldiers in the streets of Montreal. The narrative provides no background to the series of incidents. It ignores the bombing death of Vincent O’Neil and the injury to (and heroism of) Walter Leja. It glosses over the kidnappings of both Richard Cross and Pierre Laporte. In fact, notwithstanding the fact that Laporte was manually strangled to death by his kidnappers, the textbook merely states that “Pierre Laporte was found dead.” The inclusion of a section of the FLQ Manifesto appears to be grossly out of place when attempting to analyze ensuing events. At no point are students asked to engage in any kind of discussion regarding democratic responsibilities or civic discourse. In its totality, this sole page paints the FLQ as a misunderstood group of activists who really did no harm and their impact was short-lived and of no consequence.

In a similarly brief manner, Bill 101 (the Charter of the French Language), is relegated to a solitary page. In this case, students see a coloured photograph of the entrance to the Office de la langue française, a quotation from the Charter that “reassures” Anglophones, a small box with suggested questions, and two paragraphs totaling approximately 200 words. The first paragraph justifies the imposition of the Charter enshrining



French and restricting English by asserting that immigrants were promoting “the anglicization of Montreal.” The second paragraph states that many Anglophones felt threatened by the Charter and left, mainly for Toronto. This section flatly states that only 90,000 English speakers fled the province rather than the 300,000 that left following the enactment of the Charter. Interestingly, the serious long-term population implications, including the demise of the English school systems, are not entertained.

Both the October Crisis and Bill 101 continue to impact Quebec society in general and the minority English citizenry specifically. To treat these two seminal events with such disdain diminishes the past and renders the historical chronicle invalid. Instead of meeting these catastrophic happenings with a serious and investigative lens, the text trivializes the past so as to paint the landscape with a different hue.

“Unfacts” and Foul Porn Sites

The late Canadian Senator and preeminent constitutional expert, Eugene Forsey (1904-1991), vigorously objected to Quebec’s history courses and openly criticized “the English-speaking appeasers who have swallowed the unfacts hook, line, and sinker.” While Forsey was writing in the late 1980s, we suggest that “appeasement” has progressed since then into “active collaboration” with Quebec nationalist history ideas.

Predating by a quarter century the contemporary cries of “fake news” by certain American politicians, Forsey accurately framed the study of history in secondary schools in Quebec as founded on “unfacts.” His singular cries for honesty and balance in the curriculum have been ignored. The present set of student texts demonstrates how the past can be hijacked by the present to alter reality for the sole purpose of political indoctrination. There are at least eight entirely fictitious characters in this textbook occupying 16 pages – more space than is given to either world war.

In World War I, the

nick-name “bluebird” was bestowed by wounded soldiers upon Canadian nurses in recognition of their colourful blue and white uniforms. “Evelyn, the bluebird” in the text is not a real person and, by using a phony narrative, the textbook authors have denigrated the approximate 3,000 nurses who volunteered overseas, as well as additional thousands who attended recovering soldiers in hospitals in Canada. Neither “Evelyn, the bluebird” nor World War I appears in the index. Consequently, inquisitive Quebec adolescents searching for additional Internet information on “Evelyn, the bluebird” will find themselves immersed in a dozen-and-a-half foul, pornographic sites. The Ministry of Education dismissed calls to remedy this incredible situation by simply stating that high school students are not instructed to seek further data from the Internet for “Evelyn” – a World War I nurse. The Ministry pointed out that this “My Story” vignette, like all eight such snap-shots scattered throughout the student books, was invented and fabricated to portray “an ordinary person who might have lived.”

Canadian nurses served in all theatres of war, including Belgium, Gallipoli, France, Russia, and South Africa. Canadian nurses died of wounds received in the line of duty, drowned in sinking ships, survived Zeppelin bombings, and were awarded medals of bravery. It is no historical accident that Canadian women won the vote partly by their wartime bravery, and that the very first women voters were nurses serving overseas. To demean such real-life exploits via a fraudulent narrative not only insults the memories of these brave women, but raises the more overriding concern: what else and who else is fake in the student texts?

A recent independent report authored by three eminent Canadian historians at the request of the English Montreal School Board found little to praise in the history program. Further, the historians unanimously recommended that the textbook be immediately withdrawn as it was filled with a myriad of errors and distortions that no number of errata sheets could rectify.

Unfortunately, despite increasing levels of criticism, Quebec Education

Minister Jean-François Roberge dismisses every critical analysis by simply stating that the subject of history will always be open to debate. Additionally, according to his own Ministry officials, the use of fiction within the historical landscape is a respected and oft-used pedagogical tool. Apparently, directing adolescents to pornographic web sites through pseudo history is not regarded as particularly reprehensible in Quebec’s school system.

Sam Allison recently retired after 35 years teaching in the secondary classroom. His most recent book, Driv’n by Fortune: The Scots’ March to Modernity in North America, 1745-1812, was published in 2015 by Dundrun Press.

Jon G. Bradley, former professor with the Faculty of Education at McGill University, is a co-author of the second edition of Making Sense in Education: A Student’s Guide to Research and Writing, published in 2017 by Oxford University Press.

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A HISTORY OF ACHIEVEMENT

Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations, 1944-2019

Home and School Creed 1947

That it should learn first-hand all school conditions and all community conditions affecting the child. That it should be a cooperative, non-partisan, non-sectarian, non-commercial effort to produce Canadian citizens who shall be capable of perpetuating the best of our national life. That it brings the men and women of the community into touch with one another; thus helping to break down prejudice and misunderstandings, and develops a common interest in the home, the school and the community.

QFHSA Mission Statement 2019

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations, Inc. is an independent, incorporated, not-for-profit volunteer organization dedicated to enhancing the education and general well-being of children and youth. The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations Inc. promotes the involvement of parents, students, educators and the community at large in the advancement of learning and acts as a voice for parents.

In 1944, the Quebec Provincial Council of Home and Schools merged with the Greater Montreal Federation of Home and School Associations to form the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations (QFHSA). Forty-five (45) established Home and School associations, some already 25 years old, came together under the leadership of an outstanding group of volunteers, many of whom were prominent leaders in their communities and were infused with a strong social conscience.

First up on the agenda to address were issues related to the health and welfare of children, followed by fostering a sense of citizenship in Canadian youth, especially for new immigrants. In 1959, the Federation launched Operation Bootstraps, an ambitious study on the need for education reform in Quebec. When the government of Quebec introduced a Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education, known as the Parent Commission, the Federation was ready to present a 45,000-word brief, comprising seventeen reports, with 176 recommendations, which was praised for its outstanding coherence

and insight. Many of the Commission's recommendations echoed the Federation's brief, one of which was to set up a Department of Education (Bill 60, 1964).

The late 1960s saw QFHSA, through its Education Committee, take on an increasing role in responding to the emerging governmental language and education legislation. Countless briefs, position statements, resolutions and actions to both the provincial and federal governments over the years have stressed the rights of parents to choose the language of instruction for their children's education.

At the grassroots level, parents were engaged at their local school, bringing in nutrition, physical activity and cultural programs to enhance education. They championed literacy projects, hot lunch programs and manned school libraries in response to budget cutbacks.

Today, the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations is still organized on a local school basis, with a network of associations extending from the Gaspè in the east, Gatineau in the west, La Tuque in the north and North Hatley in the south. Our members assist teachers in the classroom and resource centres; they staff libraries, help supervise field trips, organize after-school extracurricular activities and, through various fundraising activities, provide schools with improved libraries, computers, lab equipment, music and art programs and opportunities for the wider community to come together through spaghetti suppers and Family Fun Days. In many and various ways, our parent volunteers not only enrich the educational experience of the children in the school but also contribute to the preservation and vitality of the English community surrounding them.

This year, QFHSA celebrates 75 years of parental involvement in education, and Home and School, as a social movement, celebrates 100 years of activism in Quebec. These hard-working women and men, from over the decades, have seen many changes to the educational environment in schools, but have held fast to the main driving force of Home and School, which is to ensure the health and well-being of children and youth by fostering strong connections between the home and the school.

100 years of volunteer parental involvement! A History of Achievement, indeed!

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THE FISH THAT GOT AWAY

What Wild Salmon Teach Us about Watershed Health and Heritage

by Dwane Wilkin

Back in the 1990s when I was a reporter, I met a guy in Richmond who told me a fish story. The St. Francis River in those days still had a bad reputation. Like a lot of rivers in southern Quebec it had been treated like an open sewer for a very long time. And it wasn't just the paper mill waste; until the 1980s none of the towns and cities along the St. Francis treated human waste: it all ended up in the river on its way to the sea.

I grew up in the Eastern Townships and when I was a teenager I spent the odd spring afternoon fishing for trout in back country streams, but the idea of eating fish out of the St. Francis always made me queasy. (It still does.) We stayed away from the river as much out of fear of poisoning as drowning. Anyway, who would have wanted to come into contact with the water? I can still picture islands of foul grey foam floating downstream, clinging to the shore. In the valley between Sherbrooke and Drummondville the air was infused with a sour tang of sulphur and sewage.

After the government introduced tougher environmental protection laws about 35 years ago, less mill waste and sewer sludge entered our rivers untreated. The foam got thinner and lighter and finally disappeared. Eventually, even the fish were pronounced safe to eat. The list of 50 or so species that live in the St. Francis these days is actually quite impressive: it includes small and largemouth bass, brown and rainbow trout, pickerel, pike and, in the river's lower reaches below Drummondville, a population of lake sturgeon that is particularly important to the Abenaki First Nations community of Odanak.

What really caught my interest that day, though, was a mystery. My inform-

ant claimed somebody from Richmond had hooked a good-sized wild salmon just below the Mackenzie Bridge, where the rapids give way to a few deep channels. Of course as with all the best fish tales, he had no proof – the fish had got away. But a salmon it was, he had no



doubt. I wondered if he was right.

That was the late summer of 1995. By all accounts, native wild Atlantic salmon had not been seen in the St. Francis for more than eighty years. Was it possible that this iconic animal, the so-called king of fish, was actually making a comeback in the river once described by the historical geographer Derek Booth as the “veins and arteries” of the Eastern Townships?

Well, I'm sorry to say, whatever was caught in the river back in the 1990s, the St. Francis salmon has definitely not made a comeback. If it had been otherwise, I imagine that a great number of people who make their home in the valley today would have their own stories to tell. Probably a few could even describe first-hand what it is like to stand on the bank of a stream or on a

bridge somewhere and see a group of fish swimming through shallows and jumping over rapids on their way upstream to spawn. And yet, as it turns out, the odds of a catching a salmon near Richmond decades after they supposedly went extinct were not then, or now, entirely impossible.

In the late 1980s a small group of citizens based in Drummondville began to investigate whether it might be possible to restore salmon to the St. Francis River watershed. Yvan Gosselin, Pierre Laprise and Pierre Laroque called themselves the Société Saumon St-François. Although Gosselin had a background in biology, he credited a local historian named Yolande Allard with much of the inspiration for the group's initiative. Because of her long involvement in the Société d'histoire de Drummondville, which includes significant efforts to preserve built heritage in that city's historic downtown, Allard is highly

regarded as an authority on local and regional history. What is not widely known is that in 1988, as part of her Master's Degree studies at Bishop's University, she wrote a definitive study of the history of St. Francis salmon, entitled “Préservation ou Développement: Le cas du saumon Atlantique dans la rivière Saint-François avant 1900.” Sadly, this work remains unpublished.

Allard records with depressing detail how our native wild salmon population, having adapted to the creases and folds, the currents and textures and even the odours of local waterways over 10,000 years evolution, was wiped out in the space of a few short decades in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As one might expect, this outcome resulted from the same combination of ignorance, greed, apathy and political in-

action that threatens our planet today.

Some readers may wonder why a historian or anyone else would take an interest in fish. So let's take a moment to consider the Atlantic salmon's unique biology.

Wild Atlantic salmon are not only migratory, they are anadromous, meaning they spend part of their life in fresh water and part at sea. This pattern has been understood for centuries by human communities who relied on the annual salmon harvest for part of their sustenance: in Western Europe salmon breed in the wild from northern Portugal to Norway, Iceland, and Greenland, and on the east coast of North America from Connecticut to northern Labrador and the Arctic.

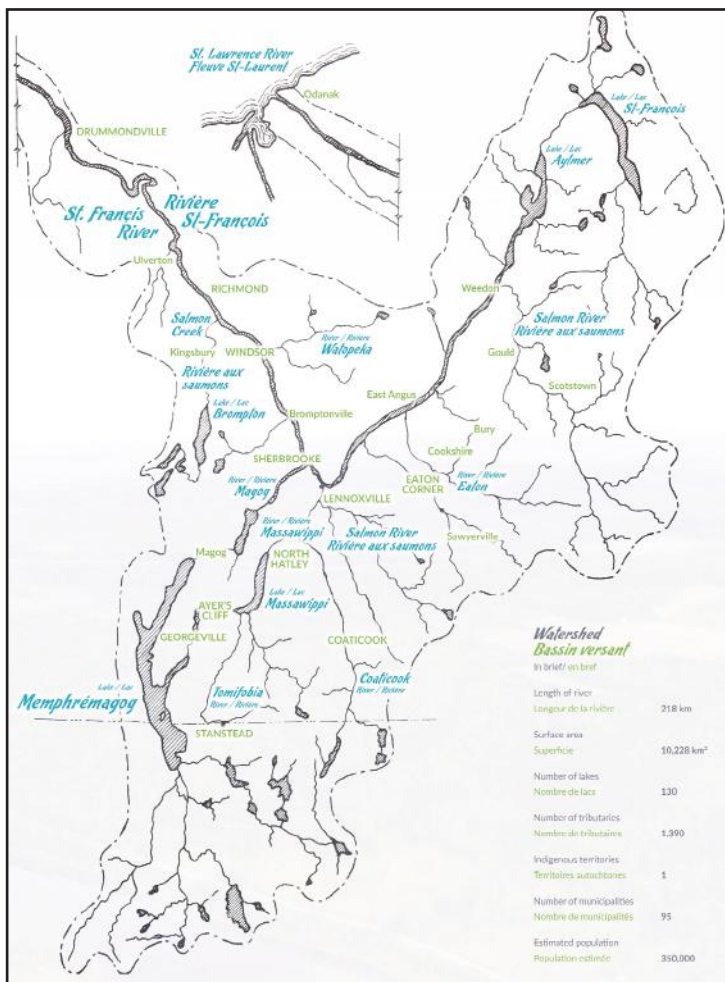
Salmon are hatched from eggs laid in nests scooped out of gravel stream-beds. Migration to the sea starts when the fish reach about six inches in length, which can occur anywhere from one to four years after they hatch. They're known as smolt at this stage, or, in French, saumoneau.

It wasn't until the 1950s that scientists learned where salmon go when they leave fresh water. It turns out that they hitch a ride on ocean currents and literally "surf" northward to the Western Greenland coast. Here, they may spend up to four years feeding and growing before heading back to their home streams. Just how this homing instinct works is still not completely understood. The salmon seem to find their way through the ocean using inborn sensors to "read" a combination of environmental cues, such as day-length, the angle and position of the sun, the earth's magnetism, as well as water temperature and salt levels.

Once back in fresh water, though, a fish will follow its sense of smell all the way back to its place of birth. I can think of no more vivid example of life's delicate, interdependent and wondrous complexity. Undetectable to humans, but dis-

tilled in each and every freshwater stream washing over the land, there is a scent made from the sum of different plants and animals and soil intermingling in its current, that guides the salmon home.

Knowing this, it's hard to read Madame Allard's account and not dream about watching the salmon run again.



So, what happened, exactly?

Well, many of the physical features that made rivers in the Townships perfect for salmon – narrow gorges, rapids and waterfalls – were also easily adapted to waterwheels and drive-shafts, technologies as crucial to frontier settlement as the Internet and cars are to the modern world. Water-powered saw, grain and woollen mills proliferated in this region throughout the nineteenth century. This was documented in the 1930s by the famous French-born geographer Raoul Blanchard, whose writing contains many examples that show how ubiquitous these early mill sites were.

In the course of 100 years, for instance, eleven mills were built along the

Ulverton River, a tributary of the St. Francis that drains Brompton Lake and is only about 20 kilometres long. In Stanstead County, Blanchard counted 21 grain mills, 33 saw mills, twelve wool-carding mills and eleven fulling mills in operation as early as 1827 – this at a time when the entire population of the county barely numbered 8,000. In their accounts of the early settlement period, popular histories usually cast such industrial fervour glowingly as proof of the colonist's irreproachable will to tame the land and better his life; what generally gets passed over is the resulting displacement and destruction of other species that followed. The tread of the pioneer was heavy indeed and it rippled through rivers, lakes and streams.

In Allard's reading of the historical record, two types of ecological degradation ultimately led to the demise of the native Townships salmon. First, enormous quantities of bark and sawdust were freely dumped into local waterways by sawmill owners. Sawmill waste – essentially, particles of water-logged wood – was extremely harmful to fish habitat, smothering eggs laid on stream-bottoms, depleting the water's oxygen supply and warming temperatures in parts of the watershed that were critical to the survival of young fish. In the first few decades of settlement, mills

could be erected anywhere without the least regard for their downstream effects. No legal framework for protecting fisheries existed in Canada until 1857, by which time, sawmill pollution had already caused sharp population declines.

A secondary source of pressure was the sheer number and size of dams built to operate mill machinery. Dams interfere with fish migration; even the most athletic adult salmon can't get over an obstacle higher than about four times its body length. A person can walk along nearly any stream in the Townships today and come across traces of pioneer mill sites: old mill ponds and dam footings abandoned long ago, serving no purpose. A study done in the early 1990s

by the Société Saumon-St-François identified 47 dams in the St. Francis watershed that were still virtually impassable. Most of these are situated on private land.

But mill owners were generally reluctant to outfit their dams with fish ladders – a common practice in European society since the Middle Ages, but which New World colonists apparently

der, writing in his 1860 book *Salmon Fishing in Canada*, criticized Canadian lawmakers for failing to act. “A very few years ago,” he wrote, “every stream on both sides of the St. Lawrence from Gaspé and Labrador to the Falls of Niagara abounded with salmon; and it is no small reflection upon the legislators of the country, that they have suffered such a valuable article of commerce to be so wantonly and recklessly destroyed.”

Alas, there was very little money to be made from fish. Industrialists, such as William Angus, whose private interests were pitted against the commonwealth of natural river systems, simply ignored their responsibility. They regarded the land as theirs to treat as they liked.



Of course, what happened here was part of a pattern of habitat loss and pollution caused by industrial growth across the Eastern Seaboard: wherever European colonists and their descendants settled, local wild salmon populations were threatened. By some estimates, small dams built or relied on by our pioneering forbears resulted in the loss of half of all Atlantic salmon habitat by 1850. This is not only because dams prevent fish from reaching their breeding grounds, but because salmon trapped below these dams were easily speared or netted in huge quantities. Hence, early mill sites also encouraged overfishing.

It would be wrong, however, to assume nobody ever gave any thought to the cost of all this industry. Some evidently did.

In the 1840s and 1850s, a conservation movement of sorts arose in the Townships and elsewhere in the country, influenced possibly by romantic ideas of nature found in popular European literature of the time. Canada East legislators passed laws between 1845 and 1850 that sought to forbid the dumping of waste logs into rivers and lakes, although no sanctions against the spewing of sawdust and bark were imposed. Restrictions on fishing at certain times of the year were also introduced.

abandoned. A fish ladder or fishway (known in French as a *passee-migratoire*) is simply an engineering feature that allows fish access to their natural migratory range. In the absence of enforceable regulations, or adherence to cultural norms that might have dissuaded mill owners from separating the fish from their home streams, one of the few avenues available to people concerned about the fate of wild Townships salmon was what the media today would term “public shaming.”

Allard reports the story of a medical doctor from Sherbrooke named Edward Dagge Worthington who was able to persuade the owners of the Clarke Mill at Brompton Falls to install a fish passage there, arguing that doing so was the mill owners’ moral responsibility to the community. The plight of the salmon also seems to have been a pet cause among the British upper classes, who took a somewhat proprietary interest in the health of colonial fisheries. Sir James Edward Alexan-

In the late nineteenth century, as the forest industry in the Townships began to transition away from lumber production into paper manufacturing, enormous new hydroelectric power dams dealt the remaining salmon their final death blow. In 1895, two of the most productive nesting streams in the St. Francis – the Eaton River, which flows through Cookshire, and the Salmon River, flowing through Scotstown and Gould – were completely blocked to migrating fish by a 12-metre high dam, built by the Royal Pulp and Paper Company near the town that still bears its founder’s name: East Angus.



Three years later, local residents reported catching never-before-seen numbers of fish trapped below the dam. Observers described the harvest as miraculous, but it was no miracle. Pathetic might be a better word. The roe-bearing fish, returning to spawn in the streams of their birth as thousands of generations

Top: “Driving logs on the river by the old forge,” Drummondville, c. 1900. Photo: C. H. Millar, McCord Museum, MP-133.12.

Bottom: Pulpwood in the St. Francis near East Angus, c. 1920. Photo: Quebec Central Railway, by Derek Booth, 2006.

before them had done, were killed instead and along with them, all future possible generations of their offspring.

The paper industry visited similar insults on the St. Francis again in 1901 at Brompton Falls, and at Windsor in 1908. My informant's father was 10 years old the year that the 122-metre long Windsor dam was built. It's no wonder he remembered how bountiful the fish were in Richmond below the site of the old paper mill, during the salmon seasons of 1909, 1910 and 1911. Coming up against the dam, exhausted by their journey from Greenland, their homing urge defeated by a giant wall of concrete, the fish were forced to turn around and head back down the main current, presumably in search of alternative streams in which to lay their eggs. Many were caught making their way up Salmon Creek, a stream that flows out of the Orford Mountain highlands and enters the St. Francis on its western bank just a few kilometres south of Richmond. But after 1911, the salmon never came back.

Never, that is, unless you believe the man who swore he caught one back in 1995.

By 1990, the capacity of the St. Francis to sustain wild salmon was about to be tested in an experiment. A study of waterways around Weedon and La Patrie had found that the St. Francis compared very favourably, in terms of viability indicators, with other salmon streams, notably the Jacques Cartier River, north of Quebec City: salmon had been successfully restored to the Jacques Cartier in the 1980s. I eventually met up with Yvan Gosselin and he told me about this experiment. In 1990, the Société Saumon-St-François started raising funds to buy 2,000 smolt from a fish hatchery in the Gaspé. The plan was to release the fish into tributaries of the Upper St. Francis in the fall, and find out whether they would migrate to the sea in the spring. In the end, though, they didn't get the support they needed, either from conservation authorities or from the Quebec Federation of Atlantic Salmon, a private sports-fishing association. The project was delayed. The following spring, in 1991, just 200 fish were released. Not in the clean, quick-running, cold-water breeding streams of the river's upper valley, either, but in the

lower valley near Drummondville, the second largest city in the watershed.

What happened to these fish was never documented, because the citizen's group folded a year later.

Today, in all of Quebec, there are just 130 rivers left in which wild salmon breed. These are mostly situated to the east of Quebec City, along the north shore of the St. Lawrence and on the fringes of the Gaspé, regions historically spared intensive industrial development and urban growth. Salmon sport-fishing is a key part of the tourism industry in Eastern Quebec, helping to support local economies. Back in the 1990s, Yvan Gosselin learned that neither the province nor the Salmon Federation would get behind a restoration project that might create potential competition for that industry. The St. Francis, after all, is just a couple hours' drive from Montreal. Why would people who fish for salmon recreationally spend thousands of dollars travelling to the Gaspé or the North Shore if they could just hop in their car and hit the Eastern Townships Autoroute?

That argument, it seems to me, illustrates why communities at the local level – indeed at the level of real, ecological systems – need more say in the stewardship of natural waterways. Policies framed by arbitrary lines of jurisdiction and power, profit-seeking and self-interest cannot be relied on to restore and preserve this heritage. Communities of direct mutual interest on the other hand – those who inhabit the same watershed – have much more incentive to cooperate. Indeed, they already do, to a limited extent, through the Conseil de gestion des eaux du bassin de la Rivière Saint-François (COGESAF), the parapublic body charged with coordinating (very modest) conservation initiatives in the 10,243-square-kilometre territory drained by the St. Francis. With a staff of only three people, though, this agency alone will hardly be able to shepherd and finance the kind of long-term, multidisciplinary heritage initiative that a salmon-restoration program of this magnitude would necessitate.

The list of creatures we share the earth with is long, although scientists have been telling us for quite a while


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that it's getting smaller every day. Human practices and laws premised on the view that God gave mankind dominion over the earth have already condemned many species to oblivion. That myth still informs our relation to waterways and wildlife. We divide territory into political zones – some we save for fishing trips and outdoor holidays; others we relegate to the business of feeding and watering humans and carrying off their waste. But this is not a conservation ethic; it is just property management. Maybe our conservation efforts would be better rewarded if we affirmed the right of other species to exist, instead of judging their worth merely as resources to be consumed.

People have been dreaming about the return of the salmon ever since they disappeared. One of those dreamers was Percy Erskine Nobbs, a prominent Montreal architect who was also an avid sports-fisherman. In the 1940s, Nobbs founded the Atlantic Salmon Federation, which tried to pressure hydroelectric companies to build more fishways. He believed the St. Francis salmon could be restored and wrote about it in his 1949 book *Salmon Tactics*. I think it's time we started to dream about the St. Francis salmon again too, not because salmon are delicious to eat and fun to catch, but because restoring them to their native habitat would force us to heal some of the damage caused by 220 years of settlement and development.

As they got further along in their restoration project back in the 1990s, the Société Saumon-St-François began to hear objections from provincial wildlife managers: if they succeeded, it would be impossible to control fish stocks in a watershed that is so populated. How would you keep people from poaching? Water temperatures and pollution levels would need to be constantly monitored. And so on.

Given the scope of the challenge humanity faces today trying to address global climate change, investing more in environmental monitoring and conservation of our waterways strikes me as a perfectly reasonable and modest action that political leaders could begin taking right away to protect and enhance public health. As for poaching, that presuppos-

es that harvesting must be the main purpose of bringing the salmon back; on the contrary, since communities as a whole stand to benefit from improving and protecting the watershed, I don't understand why, collectively, we could not simply agree to declare our native wild salmon off-limits to fishing of any kind.



I have been giving a lot of thought lately to that fish that got away back in 1995. If it was indeed a salmon it would certainly raise a few questions, such as: where did it come from? And, how did it end up in the St. Francis River, where salmon had been considered extinct for more than 80 years?

The obvious explanation to me, though I admit it is conjecture, is that the fish was one of the 200 hatchery-raised smolt released near Drummondville four years earlier, to test whether the fish would migrate downstream. That was the experiment carried out in 1991 by the Société Saumon-St-François without any support from conservation authorities. I think it's safe to speculate that by 1995 any surviving members of this cohort would have completed their migration to and from Greenland, implying that in addition to swimming thousands of kilometres to reach its adopted home-river, this particular fish had managed to evade a whole raft of ocean predators, including sharks, seals, skate, cod, halibut and, of course, humans.

You have to admire a creature with

so much perseverance.

When the Hemmings hydroelectric dam in Drummondville was built for Southern Canada Power in 1920, its designer incorporated a narrow passage in the concrete, ostensibly for fish to pass through. I suspect that fishway maintenance has never been a high priority for the dam's owners. It was certainly plugged with debris when I visited it a few years ago. Yet, somehow our plucky salmon got over the dam – perhaps she lucked out and arrived when water levels were optimal, and proceeded upriver sniffing out a suitable stream-bed in which to lay her eggs. I realize that I am taking some liberties at this point, assigning gender to a fish that is at best, the product of third-hand memory. It may have been a male. To be honest, we'll never know.

Doubt can be a driver of human spirit and curiosity. To reckon honestly with the past is to recognize the toll that the growth of human civilization has exacted from other life forms with whom we share this planet, and to find ways to make amends. A good place to begin, I propose, is by celebrating, preserving and indeed, restoring the natural heritage of our waterways.

There is no reason why people should accept that the destructive practices of the past must dictate the future uses of our lakes and rivers. Repopulating waterways with wild Atlantic salmon is not a business proposition; it is first and foremost an ethical responsibility whose fulfilment will depend ultimately on individuals, communities, industries, schools and government agencies all working together. Success, when and if it comes, won't just be the number of fish counted or tourists lured to riverbanks to see the running salmon.

The true prize will take time to manifest, surfacing tentatively and gradually taking shape in our future relations to the land and water. It is a story about hope, and I hope that it comes true.

Dwane Wilkin, a former editor of QHN, and executive director of QAHN from 2005 to 2011, has overseen many heritage projects, including the creation of the recent traveling exhibit, "Waterways of the St. Francis."

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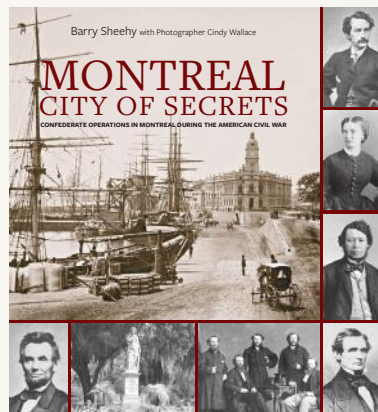


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