

## Gaspesian companies interested in acquiring Magdalen Islands shellfish processing plants

GILLES GAGNÉ

SAINTE-THÉRÈSE-DE-GASPÉ – Two Gaspé Peninsula firms, E. Gagnon et Fils and Unipêche MDM are interested in submitting bids in order to acquire the two plants of LA Renaissance in the Magdalen Islands, a company that went bankrupt on February 9, leaving 300 people unemployed.

The debt of LA Renaissance amounted to \$19.9 million, without including receivership fees of a few hundreds of thousands of dollars. The entire 67 lobster fishermen delivering their products to LA Renaissance and owed a total of \$2.5 million refused the restructuring proposal of the company. Other creditors followed in their footsteps.

Their vote was a determining factor in LA Renaissance's bankruptcy, whose repayment proposal spanned over seven years and was subjected to many conditions considered unlikely by a majority of creditors.

"We will submit an offer for all the company's assets, like we did in 2013-2014," points out the vice president of E. Gagnon et Fils, Bill Sheehan.

In 2013, the former owner of the processing plants of Grande-Entrée, on Grosse-Île, and Gros-Cap, was experiencing financial difficulty and the facilities were put up for sale. Quebec's Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPAQ) had a say in the choice of the future owner due to various factors, including the debt owed to the government and conditional grants.

The MAPAQ opted for LA Trading, a company from New Brunswick owned by Lynn Albert. She formed LA Renaissance and acquired the two plants. However, despite massive support, loans and grants, from both levels of government, LA Renaissance



Photo: Robert Nicolas

*Two Gaspé Peninsula-based firms want to acquire Magdalen Islands plants to increase their overall capacity.*

also experienced financial problems that were seriously worsened by the pandemic, which led Lynn Albert to file for the protection of the court in August 2022.

Bill Sheehan mentions that it is possible, even if March is knocking at the door, to resume activities in both plants this spring.

### Fairly large plants

"According to the numbers we have, the company hired 300 people from the Magdalen Islands in the two plants, and 150 foreign workers. The administrative steps to bring back the foreign workers were made earlier this year. We are confident that the (Canadian) government shall show goodwill in the management of this (foreign workers) file. Time is a factor. Under normal circumstances, it would be too late to bring in foreign workers, considering that the request was made by LA Renaissance and that the name of the company won't be the same if activities resume in April. We

are told that everybody is pushing in the right direction. Once this precaution is established, the rest is paperwork management," explains Mr. Sheehan.

When asked why E. Gagnon et Fils, which already owns two plants in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé, one in Shigawake, formerly known as Assels Seafood, and one in Cape Cove, Poissonnerie Caron, is interested in buying two more plants, Bill Sheehan replies quickly: "It is to keep doing what we have done for many years, which is expanding. We started with Dégustmer in Sainte-Thérèse, then bought the Gagnon plant, also in Sainte-Thérèse, then Caron, the Coop of lobster fishermen, then the Shigawake plant. It is a way to progress," he says.

For now, the president of E. Gagnon et Fils, Raymond Sheehan, and his sons Bill, George and Jerry are moving forward despite not much accurate information about LA Renaissance's business data, notably about the capacity of the two plants.

"We don't have the data and we don't have access to it for now. We can think that the capacity of lobster processing is somewhere between 2 million and 3 million pounds. They were buying the catches of 60 fishermen. We visited the plant back in 2013-2014. We know that the equipment was in decent shape at the time and that some upgrades were made since. It remains to be seen that they were stored properly after last season because of the company's difficulties but we think that they were (stored properly) since the management had plans for the future at that time. We will have to make sure that there is no major failure anyway if we buy the plants," adds Mr. Sheehan.

### Time is a factor

Mr. Sheehan comes back to the notion of time. "It is a last minute deal but it is feasible. We will have 30 days at most to make a bid. I think the deal will materialize at the end of the first week of

March. It will represent a challenge for the company that will take control of the plants. There is a trained staff; some of the workers will come back, and some won't. The second part of the puzzle will be to make sure to keep the supply coming from the fishermen. There are five other lobster buyers in the Magdalen Islands and they will want to increase their share of the pie," specifies Bill Sheehan.

Moreover, two groups from the Magdalen Islands are interested in acquiring wholly or parts of LA Renaissance's assets. One is a cooperative in and spearheaded by a group of lobster fishermen and the second firm is Fruits de mer Madeleine, an Étang-du-Nord based crab processing business only interested in one of the two plants.

Both groups are smaller than E. Gagnon et Fils but Bill Sheehan is aware that there is a strong will in the Magdalen Islands to keep control of the Grande-Entrée and Gros-Cap facilities locally.

"The opportunity must be interesting for us. We will not make an offer that would not make business sense. We will follow the normal steps. We have a game plan that should satisfy both parties, the people in the Maggies and us," concludes Bill Sheehan.

The Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé plant owned by E. Gagnon et Fils has a capacity of 13 million pounds of snow crab in April, May and June. The company is also buying the catches of close to 60 of the 167 lobster fishermen's permits located in the Gaspé Peninsula, for a total volume of between 3 million and 4 million pounds. E. Gagnon et Fils also take care of the marketing process of some of the region's other lobster buyers.

*Unipêche MDM also interested - see page 3 for full article.*



FIRE SERVICE DISPUTE:

# Grande-Rivière gives its version of the facts

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE – Grande-Rivière would have liked to discuss the problems experienced by Percé before they ended the agreement to share a director general of fire services prior to the 2022 Christmas holidays.

Grande Rivière mayor, Gino Cyr, took advantage of the February 13 council meeting to provide an update on this file.

Following receipt of Percé's withdrawal from the trio formed with Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé and Grande-Rivière for the sharing of the director general of the fire department, Grande-Rivière signified in January by resolution the intention to end in 2024 the mutual agreement that has existed since 1989 with that town and



The mayor, Gino Cyr, explained his version regarding the Percé fire services saga.

Percé. The mayor admits that Percé's decision to hire its own director led Grande-Rivière to review the entire file since the tourist capital contributed 47% towards the salary of the director of fire services which served the three municipalities. "In the agreement, it is clearly stated that if a partner is no longer in agreement with this

## QUEBEC LIBERAL PARTY: Michel Marin is the new regional director

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

SAINTE-ANNE-DES-MONTS - The man who represented the Liberal Party of Quebec in the election last October in the riding of Gaspé has become the Liberal's Regional Director for eastern Quebec and Saguenay-Lac - Saint-Jean. Michel Marin thus puts an end to 30 years in the forestry world to embrace a career at the political level.

"I decided to continue after my experience as a Liberal candidate in the riding of Gaspé. Considering I had the (political) bug for a long time, campaigning was the turning point. I decided to take a full-time job for the Liberal Party (of Quebec) to work on recovery," explains Mr. Marin, who was also a municipal councillor in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts for five years, in the early 2000s.

He will have to work with the riding associations, replenish memberships, conduct fundraising activities, market the party and bridge the gap between the regions and the party on issues and news from the field.

The last few weeks have not been easy for the political party with the departure of the



Photo: Courtesy of M. Marin

Michel Marin has left his career in forestry to help the provincial Liberals rebuild the party.

leader, Dominique Anglade and the expulsion of Liberal Member of the National Assembly for Vaudreuil, Marie-Claude Nichols.

"A political party is constantly evolving. It adjusts to the realities of society. The Liberal Party has 155 years of history and that shows that it has been able to adjust... We are going to present ourselves as an alternative for Quebecers to have a good government," says Mr. Marin.

Party cohesion is an important element.

"It is not exclusive to the Liberal Party. When the results are not those expected, often there is a bit of tension. There

are people who are not happy or who are trying to identify why it happened. It's not dramatic. That too is part of political life. It will run its course and the party will rebuild itself around new people," says Mr. Marin.

Becoming the alternative to the Coalition Avenir Québec is in his sights for 2026.

"They have been in power for four years. They are entering their fifth year and we can see that the problems are not improving in several areas such as health and education. We will see what citizens think of it over time and at the end of this mandate," says Mr. Marin.

sharing, he must notify his intention not to renew. The resolution that was sent to Percé is that we will not renew the agreement under the current conditions because the costs were established in 1989. We are now in 2023," explains the mayor, Gino Cyr.

The agreement provides for three months' notice. Grande-Rivière provided a year's notice.

"For us, this year, with the decision made by Percé, there is an impact on the budget. I decided very early on to revise to get the information and sit down with Percé to explain our new pricing," says the mayor.

"If we are not able to agree, there are other bodies to validate whether the two parties are respecting their agreements," adds Mr. Cyr.

If there is no agreement, Grande-Rivière will respect the risk coverage, but will no longer act in the forefront.

"The figures are such that we do more than 50% of the interventions in Percé than what was planned. We used pricing that was no longer up to date.

We are taking advantage of this situation. With a year in advance, it allows us to compare with other municipalities and to have something adequate. If we agree, there will be a renewal of the agreement," says the elected official.

"When the (Percé) mayor says that maybe we sent the resolution because they decided to leave, I can tell you that indeed yes, because, for us, it forced us to review our policies and the agreement provided that we had to warn our partner that we had no intention of renewing under these conditions," says the mayor.

"I am (working) in good faith," concludes Mayor Cyr.

On February 7, the mayor of Percé, Cathy Poirier, stated that the two municipalities should have perhaps spoken before announcing the end of the agreement. She understood that with the decision of her town to hire a director for its fire department, Grande-Rivière wanted to review the pricing of certain services, adding that the agreement had to be suitable for everyone.



Photo: N. Sergerie

Posters have been put up near the Musée de la Gaspésie where the offices of the Quebec National Library and Archives are located.

## Strike at the Quebec National Library and Archives in Gaspé

Nelson Sergerie  
GASPÉ - The Gaspé service point of the Quebec National Library and Archives was affected by the strike announced on February 14 by the Union of United Workers of the Quebec National Library and Archives.

Only one worker works at the Musée de la Gaspésie location and the strike ended on February 18. Picketing and other actions are planned for Gaspé.

The workers have been without a contract since March 2020 and have not had a raise for almost five years, according to the Confederation of National Unions (CSN).

Members voted 94% in favour of a 10-day strike in January. Negotiations have been ongoing since October 2021.



Photo: G. Gagné

Gino Lebrasseur says Unipêche M.D.M. will not invest without Magdalen Islands partners.

## Unipêche MDM is also interested in Magdalen Islands plants

GILLES GAGNÉ

PASPEBIAC - The Unipêche M.D.M. group, whose management is also interested in LA Renaissance's two processing plants, is proposing a model different from the E. Gagnon et Fils one. It would be a partnership with investors from the Magdalen Islands, says the director general of the company, Gino Lebrasseur.

"The Unipêche group has an interest in being a partner for the resumption of the plants' activities with the people of the Islands. If Magdalen Islanders feel that the Unipêche group can do something in this direction, we are open to discussions. It is not our position to make an offer without partners from the Magdalen Islands," assures Mr. Lebrasseur.

"We have seven plants, good expertise in the sector of fisheries and we can be a partner. What will the strategy of Farm Credit Canada, the deciding creditor of LA Renaissance, be? Some documents will soon be issued and we will know more. We are looking at the structure of the business and we are discussing it with the Magdalen Islands people. We already work with Magdalen Is-

landers in many files. They know where to find us," he adds.

Farm Credit Canada is the main guaranteed creditor, as it is owed \$9.1 million from LA Renaissance.

Unipêche M.D.M. could be involved in the ownership of the two plants, or in marketing the products of the future owners, he mentions.

Unipêche M.D.M. was founded in 1987 when a group of snow crab fishermen bought the Paspebiac processing plant that had been operated by various owners since the 1960s. The company's head office is located in Paspebiac.

In the Gaspé Peninsula, the company also owns plants in Grande-Rivière, Port Daniel, Mont-Louis and Tourelle (a sector of Sainte-Anne-des-Monts). The two plants on the northern side of the peninsula mainly process fish while the Grande Rivière facility processes snow crab. The Port Daniel plant includes a significant lobster pond. The Paspebiac facility mainly processes crab and lobster. The company's two other plants are located on the North Shore.

Altogether, the company employs 700 people during the fishing season.

## Police report

Seven tickets for excessive speeding were issued by the Sûreté du Québec near the Shigawake-Port Daniel School between January 30 and February 10, a period that included 10 school days. The seven excessive speeding tickets are included in a total of 17 speeding tickets issued during radar operations near the school as part of the school bus safety campaign that ended on February 10. "The difference between a speeding ticket and an excessive speeding ticket is that, in the latter, the speed comes close or surpasses twice the limit determined for a zone. For example, a driver caught by our radar at 100 kilometres per hour in a zone of 50, like the Shigawake-Port Daniel one, will pay a \$530 ticket, plus the fees, and will lose 10 demerit points. Moreover, his driving licence will immediately be suspended for seven days," explains Sgt. Claude Doiron, spokesperson for the Sûreté du Québec.

"Our intervention in Shigawake-Port Daniel was triggered by complaints filed by citizens, and parents worried about their children because they found the area dangerous, and wanted to remind people that it is a school zone, that people must pay attention to the road signs, as the speed limits are clear. Maybe a yellow light or flashing lights should be added. The Quebec Department of Transport is in charge of road signs and speed limits and we don't have much of a say in that regard. However, we sit on common public safety committees and we can try to sensitize Transports Québec to the reality prevailing near that school," adds Sergeant Doiron. He points out that the difficulty in that area might stem from the fact that the school zone is bordered by two 90 kilometres per hour speed zones.

A former employee of La Source store in Chandler is suspected of having defrauded the company of a large sum of money. Marie-Ève Dupuis, 30, appeared on February 13 at the Percé Courthouse to face a charge of fraud exceeding \$5,000. The woman allegedly committed the thefts from October 2019 to February 2022. Also in Chandler, Cathy Anglehart, 43, faces a similar charge regarding the Office municipal d'habitation, or the Municipal Housing Authority, which manages apartment buildings under the control of the municipal administration. The facts alleged against the former director general took place between July and November 2021. The two women are scheduled to come back to court on March 27.

A 58-year-old man from Gaspé faces charges of sexual assault on two minors. The accused allegedly committed some of the offenses on his own child, from 2015 to 2017 and another victim, from 2005 to 2007. The children were 11 and 7 when the alleged crimes started. The identity of the suspect cannot be released in order to protect that of the victims. The man is scheduled to return to the Percé Courthouse on April 11.

The Quebec region division of the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans has recently released a list of offenders fined in recent months for various violations of legislations that fall under its mandate in 2022. Lobster fisherman Steeve Duguay, of Pabos Mills, is fined \$1,000 for failing to comply with license conditions by sending his logbook entries after the 72-hour maximum delay and \$750 for failing to comply with license conditions by not completing his logbook prior to landing. Another lobster fisherman, Bertrand Pagé, of Cape Cove, is fined \$1,350 for failing to comply with license conditions by not completing his electronic logbook and ensuring that the data is complete and closed prior to landing, and \$800 for having fished lobster when the season was closed.

Another Cape Cove lobster fisherman, Yves Couture, is fined \$1,000 for possession of female lobsters carrying eggs. The same offence was committed by Bertrand Desbois, of Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé, who was fined \$2,000. The catches of both men were seized.

Tuna, lobster and halibut fisherman Kevin Caron, of Cape Cove, must pay a \$1,000 fine for failing to comply with license conditions by possessing a dead red tuna without a valid Fisheries and Oceans Canada issued numbered tag. In the same file, he is also fined \$1,500 for landing a tuna without first obtaining an authorization from a dockside observer. As a lobster fisherman, he must pay \$1,000 for having failed to respect his license conditions by letting ropes float on the surface of the water, linking fishing gear to main buoys, and \$500 for omitting to identify the main buoys with a sequential number. He is also fined \$1,500 because he omitted to ensure that his boat monitoring system was operational during the whole fishing trip.

Grande-Rivière's Guillaume Lebreux must pay \$1,200 for illegally landing Atlantic halibut without first obtaining an authorization from a dockside observer. His fish was seized.

Réjean Denis, of Paspebiac, is fined \$306 for possession of small clams under the legal size and soft-shell clams. His daily harvest was seized.

## Gaspé Peninsula Wood Producers Syndicate Director General, Guylaine Fournier, steps down

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND – Six months after being chosen to head the Gaspé Peninsula Wood Producers Syndicate, Guylaine Fournier stepped down from the position. She announced her departure on February 16 and her tenure ended the following day. She had been working for the organization over the last 24 years. She mentioned that she wants to tackle new endeavours, after spending half of her life working for the syndicate. A seasoned administrator, René Boudreau, was named interim director general of the organization and he began his mandate on February 20. Guylaine Fournier states that she will remain available over the next weeks to ensure a smooth transition. She also commits to being available and helping the next director general once he will be appointed.

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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Legault government displays another lack of environmental foresight

Recently, the Quebec government of François Legault specified that it does not intend to make a move in order to reduce the popularity of sports utility vehicles and light trucks, despite statistics showing that such vehicles contribute to the aggravation of environmental crises.

The numbers are staggering. Research appearing in the 2023 edition of the report on the State of energy in Quebec reveals that the sales of sports utility vehicles, SUVs, as well as sales of vans and pickup trucks have increased markedly over the years in the province. These sales have increased by 253% between 1990 and 2021, to the point of representing 71% of vehicle sales in the province in 2021.

Unfortunately, this increasing popularity represents a nuisance to the achievement of Quebec's environmental goals, including climate targets. Pierre-Olivier Pineau, an energy expert and researcher for HEC Montreal, the Hautes études commerciales of Université de Montréal, affirms that “the proliferation of SUVs is very bad news for urban sprawl and land use, since they take up more space. It is also a catastrophe for household and infrastructure costs, because SUVs and roads are very expensive.”

**An overall increase**

According to the most recent report from the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec, the SAAQ, in 2022, there were nearly 2.38 million personal vehicles of the “light truck” type, which includes SUVs, vans and pick-up trucks. In 2017, that number was 1.86 million. This is an increase of 520,000 vehicles, or 28%, in a mere five years.

The upward trend in the number of “light trucks” is a reality in all the regions of Quebec. In Montreal, their number has increased from 266,615 in 2017 to 336,158 in 2022, again according to the last report from the SAAQ. This is also a 28% hike in five years. In the Quebec City region, the number rose from

164,477 to 214,107 during the same period, for a 30.2% increase. The hike is also constant in most other regions, with high numbers for Laval, Lanaudière, Montérégie, the Eastern Townships, Centre-du-Québec and the Laurentians.

At the same time, there is a decrease in “automotive” type vehicles in all regions, including in urban areas such as Montreal, Laval or Quebec City.

Electrifying SUVs?

Benoit Charette, the Quebec Minister of the Environment, showed once more that he is far from a leader in his alleged specialty, as he does not intend to act to reverse this trend to acquire larger and more energy-consuming vehicles.

His reasoning is lame because he bases his “decision,” or the decision he was told to promote, on the fact that his government has passed a law that prohibits the sale of new gasoline vehicles from 2035 and on, as well as the excuse that his government is investing like no other government before in public transport projects, which remains to be proven statistically and quality-wise.

The Legault government adds that the solution for personal vehicles, including SUVs, involves electrification. Minister Charette stresses that “already” 13.2% of the 2022 sales are plug-in cars, “which puts Quebec on a very good path to meet our greenhouse gas targets”.

According to the data included in the latest State of energy in Québec report, electric vehicles now represent just over 5% of vehicles on Quebec roads. In fact, consumers mainly buy electric “trucks,” including SUVs. So, “an electric SUV can consume 50% more energy than an electric car,” specifies Pierre-Olivier Pineau. That reality does not bode well for electricity demand in the coming years, not to mention the demand for renewable resources required to produce these vehicles.

Other factors spell trouble for our society: the emphasis put on individual vehicles, be them electrical, will perpetuate the fact that building or keeping large parking lots negatively affects the design of our cities and towns, hampers our capacity to opt for green spaces and the necessity to limit large and ugly asphalt-laid surfaces generating unwanted heat during the summer.

**The advertising effect**

The increase in SUV acquisitions is largely and unfortunately attributable to the effects of advertising.

People are still prone to surrender to massive publicity campaigns suggesting that they deserve a large vehicle. It is part of their social standing, among other things.

This conclusion is shared by political analyst and sustainable mobility specialist at Équiterre, Andréanne Brazeau, who deplores the standardization of large vehicles on our roads. She remarks that manufacturers are pulling small vehicles off the market, which is not surprising, because governments are not putting in place the options to curb this big vehicle trend. The profit for car dealers is higher for huge vehicles and eventual repairs are more costly.

“Advertising plays an extremely important role in this normalization,” she adds. For example, a study published last year by Équiterre showed that light trucks appear in 79% of automobile advertisements in newspapers and magazines. The industry invests significant sums in it because it works. Large vehicles are often associated with adventure or natural environments. “It's ironic, because vehicles contribute to urban sprawl, and therefore to the destruction of natural environments,” she stresses.

Barely 15% of “light trucks” are registered for commercial purposes in Quebec, according to SAAQ data. Ms. Brazeau consequently pleads for the imposition of dissuasive measures with regard to the purchase of energy-intensive and imposing vehicles. She evokes the idea of taxation based on consumption and the weight of vehicles, specifying that the income could be used to finance public and active transport, but also state support for the purchase of smaller electric cars.

Using eco-taxation to reverse the current trend and discourage the purchase of these vehicles makes sense. Otherwise, their popularity will continue to increase as it has become normal to have large vehicles. It is a vicious circle.

However, we cannot count on the CAQ government to lead us towards these kinds of thoughts and practices. About 18 months prior to the October 3 election, Premier Legault was defending the addition of multi-lane roads in the Quebec City and Montreal suburbs by saying that “electric cars will need freeways.”

If we keep building freeways instead of supplying decent commuter services and implementing more carpools whose vehicles can be used widely using a reservation system, we will never meet our greenhouse effect gas reduction targets. These modern measures must also benefit rural areas like the Gaspé Peninsula.

Various forms of transport account for about 45% of our compounded polluting emissions. Curbing those emissions cannot be achieved through the massive use of individual vehicles. It is that simple.

Thank you

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# Projections show an increase in sea levels for the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Climate change will have significant impacts on sea levels in the Gaspé Peninsula, according to new data from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Sea Level Projection Tool.

NASA calculated the increase using data from the sixth report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the conclusion is obvious: the water level is expected to continue to increase.

Two points were measured in the Gaspé Peninsula

In Rivière-au-Renard, the average establishes an increase of 14 centimetres in 2030, 21 centimetres in 2040, 28 centimetres in 2050, 36 centimetres in 2060, 45 centimetres in 2070, 55 centimetres in 2080, 65 centimetres in 2090, 75 centimetres in 2100 and 121 centimetres in 2150.



The water levels would increase quite a bit at the Rivière-au-Renard wharf, according to NASA.

The best possible scenario shows an increase of 27 centimetres in 2050, 50 centimetres in 2100 and 70 centimetres in 2150.

In contrast, the worst scenario projects 31 centimetres in 2050, 96 centimetres in

2100 and 208 centimetres in 2150.

The scenarios established take into account all the measures adopted by the countries, and in the absence of new additional measures to curb climate change.

The other point measured in the Gaspé Peninsula is located in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts. The increase is slightly less significant.

NASA calculates 11 centimetres in 2030, 17 centimetres in 2040, 23 centimetres in

2050, 30 centimetres in 2060, 38 centimetres in 2070, 47 centimetres in 2080, 56 centimetres in 2090, 64 centimetres in 2100 and 105 centimetres in 2150.

NASA says the tool allows users to easily view the report's projections.

**Note:** The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations' body for assessing the science related to climate change. The IPCC provides scientific information on climate change, its implications and potential future risks. As part of this effort, the IPCC surveys and provides projections on future sea levels across the globe under a range of possible future scenarios. The NASA Sea Level Projection Tool provides easy access and visualization to the report's future scenarios. You can access the tool at <https://sealevel.nasa.gov/ipcc-ar6-sea-level-projection-tool>.

# Carleton-sur-Mer will have to resume a process on an annual basis for housing construction assistance

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CARLETON-SUR-MER - Carleton-sur-Mer will have to make a request each year to obtain authorization to invest more than 1% of its municipal budget for assistance to private businesses, in particular for the construction of housing.

The Town has a \$450,000 project to stimulate housing

construction on its territory, but since its budget is close to \$10 million, it could only allocate close to \$100,000 a year towards support on all the municipal territory.

Quebec authorized the municipal council to override the 1% rule for 2022, but was told at the same time that the process must be repeated each year if they want to continue in the same direction, which is the case given the obvious

lack of housing on its territory.

"We have several promoters on the starting line, we have not yet granted funding directly, but we expect to write cheques in 2023," says Mayor Mathieu Lapointe.

"As long as we have not exceeded \$100,000, we can write the cheques, but if we are more than seven dwellings, we will have to wait for acceptance. We will do it in an accelerated way because we know the mechanics. From now on, we will file with Municipal Affairs and we will put it on the agenda every year," adds the mayor.

Currently, there are more than seven dwellings on the drawing boards. The program contributes \$15,000 in aid per dwelling.

Carleton-sur-Mer, however, has room to maneuver for the moment. "The Town's contribution is given once construction is complete. We confirm the funding at the start of the work and we give the cheque at the end, which means that we will be alright for 2023. There will be no issue," says Mr. Lapointe.

The process to redo the re-

quest involves adopting resolutions, and holding public consultations, but this does not represent a halt for 2023, the mayor notes.

The housing construction support program is for a period of five years.

"We know that we will always have the same project and the same intentions. It requires additional work that could be simplified. But the good news is that it will not harm construction on the territory," believes the mayor,

when questioned as to whether it would not be appropriate to ask permission for the duration of the program.

With the assistance of \$450,000, 30 housing units are eligible for financial assistance, in addition to that offered by the Regroupement des MRC of the Gaspé Peninsula.

According to a study, between 50 and 90 homes are needed in the MRC of Avignon.



Photo: N. Sergerie

Carleton-sur-Mer wants to promote the construction of 30 housing units with its project.

## Destination Gaspé will be directed by Pascale Rémillard

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - Pascale Rémillard becomes the second director general since the establishment of Destination Gaspé.

She takes over from Stéphane Sainte-Croix, who became the Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé in October.

Ms. Rémillard is known to the tourism community in Gaspé and has experience in management and in the cultural and event sector.

The president of Destination Gaspé, Daniel Côté, mentions that in addition to planning the tourist season and the development of cruises, she will have to continue structuring the organization.

Among her priorities, Ms. Rémillard wants to develop winter tourism. She will take office on March 13.

# Region’s Aboriginal Fisheries and Aquaculture win two Atlantic Canada First Nations awards

GILLES GAGNÉ

GESGAPEGIAG – Gesgapegiag and Gespeg venture Salaweg, and lobster boat captain Jeremy Jerome, each won a prize at the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat Fisheries Awards presentation, held in Halifax on January 26.

Salaweg received the “Innovation in Fisheries Award” for its progress over recent years, as the venture has been growing and processing algae since 2017 in the Baie des Chaleurs area.

Adam Jerome, research and communications officer for the Mi’gmaq Wolastoqey Indigenous Fisheries Management Association, the body administering Salaweg, is very proud of the award handed out to the venture. It is all the more rewarding since he has been around Salaweg since the project was just an idea in 2016.

“It is my baby. I want to see it thrive. It is an achievement for a First Nation initiative. Above all, though, it is a team effort. Salaweg belongs to Gespeg, Gesgapegiag and the Wolastoqey community. We have a new board and I am confident that we will be better known soon,” points out Adam Jerome.

It is the second award related to Salaweg, as the Mi’gmaq Wolastoqey Indigenous Fisheries Management Association had won a prize in 2020 in Moncton, namely the “Excellence in Aquaculture Award.” It was also handed out at the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat Fisheries Awards.

Salaweg started growing algae off the coast of Paspebiac in 2017. The first processing stage takes place in Shigawake, in a plant owned by E. Gagnon et Fils. The plant was known before as Assels Seafoods. The



Jeremy Jerome won the Captain of the Year Award for Atlantic Canada’s First Nations.

Photo: Courtesy of Jeremy Jerome

final processing stage is located in Gesgapegiag.

“Our primary seaweed is sugar kelp, whose scientific name is *Saccharina latissimi*. We are now growing a second type of seaweed, dulse, or *Palmaria palata*, a red seaweed that also grows well in cold waters,” says Adam Jerome.

Salaweg mainly sells a relish prepared with algae and two types of spices, one for fish and one for meat. Although the pandemic made it hard to carry out a sound marketing campaign for a small company, recent efforts paid off.

“A Montreal company, Yuzu Sushi, recently ordered 400 bags of 500 millilitres of our relish,” adds Adam Jerome with enthusiasm.

Salaweg gets its harvest from 23 ropes of 150 metres in length. Most of them are used for kelp. The ropes are anchored at the bottom of the sea by concrete blocks. Thanks to individual buoys, they are easy to locate for the harvesters.

## Jeremy Jerome chosen out of 150 captains

Jeremy Jerome won the “Captain of the Year Award,” a feat considering the importance of commercial and commu-

nity-oriented fisheries for the First Nations in Atlantic Canada. Over 100 Native captains now evolve in that field.

Lobster boat captain, Jeremy Jerome, experienced “quite a shock” when he was called during the first half of January to be informed that he was the Captain of Year, chosen out of 150 First Nations captains operating fishing boats along the east coast of Canada.

“It was quite a shock, a very big surprise, something I never thought of, something I didn’t

think was possible. It makes a person proud. I receive calls from friends, from other fishermen, from people I deliver the lobster to. I share the honour with my crew,” says Jeremy Jerome.

As he is saying this to the SPEC, a pickup truck stops by him, and a Non-Native fisherman gets out, calling him “the star” and adding with a big smile, “I just wanted to stop and congratulate you.” It is certainly gratifying.

In April, Jeremy Jerome will start his 25th season at the head of a Gesgapegiag lobster boat. He was hired in 1998, a year before the Marshall decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, a decision confirming the First Nations’ right to fish commercially and for their community. Gesgapegiag had bought a fishing permit a year prior to the Marshall judgement.

“I had experience in commercial fishing when I was called by the band administration in 1998. I was working as a deckhand since 1997 on a fishing boat off the coast of Rhode Island. My captain there said that I should go if I was to

work closer to my community. I was travelling back and forth at the time. We were fishing mackerel and halibut in Rhode Island. My former captain is still alive and he tells me after 25 years that I can go back. He kept my spot,” explains Jeremy Jerome with a smile.

Between his first season in 2000 and 2022, the context has improved drastically for the Gaspé Peninsula lobster fishermen but he is not taking anything for granted.

“I have not calculated how many percent above the total of 2000 today’s catches represents. I have seen seasons of 4,000 pounds when I started. Today, I saw 4,000 pounds in three days. My crew and I fish in Zone 21a, which covers the area between Bonaventure and New Richmond. Our home port is Bonaventure. We must protect the resource. It has always been that way. We try to put emphasis on conservation. We try to be very careful with female lobsters. We follow the rules issued by DFO (the Department of Fisheries and Oceans). We never know what can happen. Stocks could go down at one point,” he insists.

## Decline in the number of suicides

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – According to the Suicidal Behavior in Quebec: Portrait 2023 Report published on February 6 by the National Institute of Public Health (INSPQ), the number of suicides in the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands was down from 13 in 2020 to seven in 2021.

The seven people who took their own lives represent a rate of 7.4 per 100,000 inhabitants, which ranks the region second in the province. Only Laval has a lower suicide rate than the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands.

The provincial average is 11.7 suicides per 100,000 population.

In the region, the 2021 data represents the best result since 2016.

Unsurprisingly men are more likely to commit suicide. INSPQ data shows that men are three times more likely to end their own lives than women.

For the period of 2018-

2020, the INSPQ indicates a rate of 28.2 per 100,000 inhabitants. The region ranks among the lowest in comparison with the rest of Quebec. Among women, the rate was 9.0 per 100,000 population.

When it comes to this data, the INSPQ notes that it needs to be interpreted with caution.

In 2021, 43 people from the region were hospitalized for attempted suicide for a rate of 55.5 per 100,000 population. This figure is higher than the Quebec average of 46.4.

Despite that reality, this is the best year in this regard, while the data has been in constant decline since 2017.

The number of emergency room visits for suicide attempts was 19 in 2022, the same number as in 2021. This figure is relatively stable year after year, according to the INSPQ.

In addition, the number of emergency room visits for suicidal thoughts was 321 in 2022, or 400.1 per 100,000 inhabitants, which is within

the provincial average.

The data is encouraging, which makes it possible to work further upstream, according to the person in charge of the suicide prevention file at the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands Public Health Department, Nancy Gédéon.

The important thing is to remain attentive to others. “Example: if you see a friend, a colleague, who is in distress or you see signs of distress, it is important to be proactive and ask if the person has suicidal thoughts,” explains Ms. Gédéon.

Prejudices remain tenacious in the face of suicide. “If people in the community think that people who are thinking about suicide are weak or just want attention or people with mental health issues, it’s like a barrier to getting help. when we need it,” says the manager.

Although the majority of suicide victims are male, younger people are also more prone to suicide according to Ms. Gédéon.



Yan Tapp, of Gespeg, and Adam Jerome, of Gesgapegiag, received the “Innovation in Fisheries Award” on behalf of Salaweg.

Photo: Courtesy of Adam Jerome



# 51 new foreign nurses expected next fall on the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre is expecting 51 new nurses from abroad next fall, a cohort that adds to the 37 arrivals last fall and who are continuing their training to practice in the region.

If all goes well with the immigration process, the new nurses will arrive in the Gaspé next September or October.

These new caregivers will come from Algeria, Benin, Ivory Coast, Congo and Morocco.

What differs from those received last fall will be that out of the 51 people, 33 have their families with them.

"The two big challenges are housing and daycare. We have the profile of each of the candidates and we are already trying to establish how the distribution will be done and (consult) the community to put in place the winning conditions to receive them," explains the Director of Human Resources at the CISSS, Alain Vézina.

Once they arrive, these



Photo: N. Sergerie

Algerian Hayet Tazairt, who is in Gaspé, is one of the 37 nurses who arrived on the Gaspé Peninsula last fall.

nursing graduates will follow refresher training that lasts between eight to 12 months in collaboration with the Cégep de la Gaspésie.

During their training, they can work as patient attendants for up to 20 hours per week.

"We are enthusiastic. It is a beautiful project which presents challenges but which will bring its benefits. We are working hard with partners and elected officials to bring

together the conditions for success with this cohort," says Mr. Vézina.

The 37 nurses from the first cohort are still studying and working.

"Integration is getting better and better. We really want these people to stay in the end. We see to putting everything in place for the integration to continue. The objective of all this is that people come to the Gaspé and

will be nurses of the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS for the benefit of the region," says Mr. Vézina.

Some nurses will find themselves homeless in May.

"It's on a case-by-case basis. We accompany people and we make it easier for them to find long-term housing," explains the director.

Unlike the private sector where some companies go so far as to build housing for

their workers, the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS is not there yet.

"Everything is on the table. We work from different angles to identify sustainable solutions and how we can support this approach. All of the partners in their missions are challenged to make things easier," says Mr. Vézina.

This topic is at the heart of the Regroupement des MRC de la Gaspésie, which recently met with the CISSS to discuss the issue of housing.

"We are very happy to welcome them, but that comes with the issue of housing and childcare services," says the president, Mathieu Lapointe.

More broadly, the president explains that 30% of newcomers rent apartments that are not available in the summer period.

"It is a major issue. We have to find solutions. Otherwise, housing must be added for all clientele on the territory. That's what we're working on," says Mr. Lapointe.

Municipalities are considering regulating AIRBNB-type accommodations, which could free some housing units.

## Former POW, Gerald Dow, passes away at 100 years of age

GILLES GAGNÉ

MARIA – Gerald Dow, one of the last surviving World War II veterans on the Gaspé Peninsula, and member of the Canadian Legion, Branch 172, died on February 11 at St. Joseph Residence in Maria. He was 100 years of age and would have turned 101 on May 15.

Mr. Dow was a prisoner of war of the Germans from July 1944 until his group, composed mostly of Canadian and British prisoners, was freed by the American army in late April 1945. He kept many tokens from his war years, including letters between him and his family.

In one of the letters sent to his parents, written on April 27, 1945, he wrote "just a few lines to let you know that I am alive and well. Was recaptured by the Yanks on Tues. and we are being well fed and getting the best of everything... We have been on the march from



Photo: Cynthia Dow

Gerald Dow was one of the local seniors featured in a display of portraits by Barry Leblanc at the Cascapedia River Museum.

Poland since Jan. and have had a rough time. We were sure happy when the Yanks came down the road about 3 p.m. We can hardly believe yet that we are free."

Mr. Dow was a member of

the Essex Scottish Regiment and arrived in France on June 10, 1944, just after the D-Day landings by the Allied troops.

After two months fighting on the frontlines, he was taken prisoner near Caen and sent

first to Germany, and then to Poland, where he was forced to work as a slave labourer in a coal mine.

As the Allied Forces moved into Poland in 1945, the Germans forced their prisoners to

walk hundreds of miles back to Germany. Mr. Dow had to walk at times in stocking feet through snow, sleet and rain. It was near Regensburg that the Third American Army liberated him and his fellow comrades. He has received several military honours for his service, including the Legion of Honour Award from France.

Born in Port Daniel to CNR station agent, Clare Dow, and Olive Skene, Gerald was one of nine children. He and his late wife, Jean Willett, ran a general store in New Richmond West for 28 years.

He was an avid fly sports fisherman. One of his first outings, when he got home from the war, was with Phil Doddridge, another former prisoner of war, of the Japanese in his case, who also turned 100 in 2022. Mr. Doddridge died last fall.

With information from an article written in 2022 by Cynthia Dow



# Gaspesian Way Boutique supports local artisans and authors

DIANE SKINNER  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

NEW CARLISLE: Where can you go to buy items created locally by Gaspesians? Go to the CASA office in New Carlisle and pick up some unique items and books.

Gaspesian Way Agent, Dawn Assels, informs SPEC that the Gaspesian Way Boutique offers a variety of products from numerous local artisans from all over the Coast. These include natural soaps made by Shannon Major, jambolins created by Alex Armstrong, spices made from ingredients found here and developed by Chef Andrew Woods, Wood Creations by Mélissa Bélanger and a variety of excellent books written by local authors. In addition, you can purchase T-shirts, sweaters, hats and mugs.

Dawn mentions that it is important to support local Gaspesian Artisans who help the local economy to grow by providing revenue for the creators of the items that are for



Looking for a uniquely Gaspesian item for a gift, or for yourself? Have a look at The Gaspesian Way Boutique located at the CASA office in New Carlisle.

Photo: Courtesy of CASA

sale. In addition, it furnishes a connection for tourists through the Boutique who would otherwise not be familiar with the

products. In addition, it puts a spotlight on the The Gaspesian Way social media channels.

Dawn Assels has worked for CASA for a little over a year. Her job involves anything related to the Gaspesian Way, which is a CASA brand. She runs the social media pages on Facebook and Instagram. She promotes contests that are held throughout the year plus any special events. This information is for the benefit of locals and tourists.

Dawn updates the Gaspesian Way website as needed. In her role, she oversees the Boutique that is located at the front of the CASA office in New Carlisle, including displaying items and ensuring that all sizes for clothing, such as T-shirts, are wellstocked. You may see Dawn at local markets throughout the year. She also helps to film the Gaspesian Way Christmas shows and to live stream different events.

CASA created The Gaspesian Way to help inform and attract English-speaking tourists to experience the beauty, his-

tory and culture of the Gaspé Coast. The Gaspesian Way helps to inform locals about a variety of events and to promote community pride. It helps to inform tourists and locals about our unique history and culture. The Gaspesian Way provides a link between tourists and locals and will attract visitors.

Currently Dawn is working on improving the website so that it is easier for people, both tourists and locals, to plan activities. Simply put in your travel dates and locations that you wish to visit and activities with dates and locations will be displayed.

If you want to peruse the items for sale at The Gaspesian Way Boutique, go to the CASA office at 168 Gerard D. Levesque Blvd, New Carlisle, during office hours or phone 418-752-5995.

If you are an artisan or author who might be interested in placing your items for sale at the Boutique, call CASA and ask for Dawn Assels who can provide more information.

## Meet some of the artisans Gaspesian Way Boutique

DIANE SKINNER  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

**Shannon Major**  
Eco-friendly household and skin products

Shannon forages in the woods and on the beaches to gather materials for her soap-making.

After that she returns to her kitchen where she heats, cools, mixes, pours and taps. Then she unmoulds her soaps, a moment of magical success!

Though it is a slow process, Shannon feels it is well worth the effort. She began her process of soap making with lard from her backyard pigs. All the herbs, honey, flowers, clays and beach are all from the Gaspé Peninsula. Now her lard is Canadian sourced.

Shannon comments, "It's important for local artists to feel supported and recognized by their surrounding communities. It's no easy task competing with big box stores, but I work hard to produce a quality product. I'm blessed to have my soaps showcased through the Gaspesian Way."



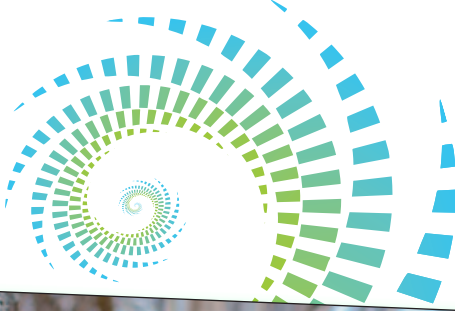
**Alex Armstrong**  
Jambolins, a 3-stringed musical instrument

Alex's uniquely Gaspe-

sian jambolins are made almost entirely from reclaimed materials so his process starts with dismantling, pulling nails and finishing with a lot of

sawdust and hours of sanding and "fretting." Alex comments, "The cedar tops of the instruments are made from reclaimed siding from a home

overlooking the bay, in Port Daniel, and the necks and bodies are made from church



Alex Armstrong



**GASPESIAN WAY:**

**Cont'd from page 8**

pews from Sainte-Brigitte Catholic Church. I asked a friend if he could tell me what kind of wood the pews were made from, and he said it was “Gaspesian Maple.” I later found out it was just swamp

maple, but I liked his story better.” Alex firmly believes that artisans who are devoted to their craft are unlikely to produce low-quality, mass-produced items. True artisans take time to create and perfect so you will get a quality item made by a real person.



*Mélissa Bélanger*

**Mélissa Bélanger  
Wood creations**

Mélissa, who has been creating items from wood regularly for five years, is largely self-taught. She had an opportunity to work with an experienced cabinet maker three years ago who taught her some advanced techniques. Some of her items include decorative art, handmade furniture, cutting boards, wood frames, signs and funeral urns. She sources her materials from nature and tries to reuse wood that may otherwise not be used. She creates her own plans. She is inspired by wood, stones and metal.

Mélissa believes that there are many talented craftspeople in the area and their unique items are offered at a good price because they do not have to be transported long distances. In the future she would like to increase her amount of production. Her dream? To one day have her own shop.

**Andrew Woods  
Unique Gaspesian  
spice blends**

Andrew’s passion for cooking began in his childhood on the Gaspé while spending time preparing spaghetti sauce with his

grandparents. He is currently a sous-chef in Montreal. Andrew has created four unique blends of spices. He was inspired by the historic Black Whale Cookbook, published in 1948. He feels that the spices are a “taste of home”. His blends include Acadian Cajun (dried mushroom, coriander and wakame), Arome Floral (flowers, incl. dandelions), Gaspesian Roti (flowers and sumac), and Ma Tante’s Cipaille (nutmeg, ginger, balsam, fir and more.)



*Andrew Woods*

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# Round table wants to speed-up railway repairs

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – Various citizen groups led by Solidarité Gaspésie are creating a “table for discussion and mobilization on transportation” to ensure the acceleration of the repair of the railway to Gaspé. These groups also want to improve the dissemination of information on this issue, for the benefit of the public.

With an envelope of \$280.5 million, this refurbishment has been experiencing delays since its announcement on May 5, 2017. To date, between \$100 million and \$120 million have been disbursed, out of a total of \$165.1 million invested or committed. The annual amount invested for this railway, owned by Transports Québec since 2015, therefore averages \$20 million.

Carol Saucier, the spokesperson for Solidarité Gaspésie, assures that this repair constitutes the most important economic and social file in the region at the present time because “projects need the railway to develop or count on more efficient, less expensive and less polluting transport, then because the population needs the return of its passenger train.”

He adds that a better exchange of information should make it possible to “accelerate the repair work, set a schedule and take measures to ensure that Transports Québec respects this schedule.”

In 2015, following the acquisition of the Matapedia-Gaspé line, which is 325 kilometres long, Transports Québec put 60% of it in a dormant state. That is the portion between Caplan and Gaspé. This decision was made even though the McInnis cement plant in Port Daniel was under construction and a major company such as windmill blade manufacturer LM Wind Power was negotiating for a huge export contract to the southern United States.

In 2016-2017 the two companies became the main customers of the municipally-controlled carrier, the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, but the cement, and the blades between 2016 and 2022, are or have been transported by truck to the rail transshipment centre in New Richmond. This change of load entails significant



Workers from the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie will be called upon to speed up repair work on the railway.

costs.

## Closely monitor the progress of the rehabilitation

“Among the objectives of the discussion and mobilization table, we want to share information from the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie but also the expertise of the public. We want to share our concerns and expectations. We want information as the file evolves,” says Carol Saucier.

He notes that the participation of citizen groups in rail demands takes some pressure off local politicians.

“Indeed, there are actions that could be taken, particularly for the section between Port Daniel and Gaspé, representations that citizen groups can make more easily to Transports Québec than to elected officials, considering that the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie is linked to the municipalities and that it maintains a business relationship with this ministry,” noted Mr. Saucier.

For repair purposes, Transports Québec has divided the 324 kilometers of track between Matapedia and Gaspé into three sections. The Matapedia-Caplan portion, 128 kilometre long, is repaired and functional. The upgrade of section 2, between Caplan and Port Daniel, 72 kilometre long, is on track. This project will be completed in 2024, at a time that has not yet been determined. The 124 kilometers between Port Daniel and Gaspé constitute the portion affected by uncertainty as to the deadline for carrying out the repairs.

“With the information we have, the 2024 schedule

holds up for section 2. For section 3, Transports Québec published a call for interest in the fall and 12 companies responded. We learned during a meeting held on January 20 that the Ministry of Transport intends to combine certain calls for tenders to make them into more attractive packages, to attract big players and allow them to come forward in some of these tenders,” explains Carol Saucier.

## Delays accumulate

Solidarité Gaspésie and associated groups, namely the Gaspé Citizens' Committee for Development, the Coalition of Gaspésians for the return of the train and the Côte-de-Gaspé Chamber of Commerce work with the prefects, members of the Regroupement des MRC de la Gaspésie, to put the upgrade folder for sections 2 and 3 on the fast track.

“As regards the evaluation of the works of section 3, we know that the costs will increase. The signal we receive for the work remains the same: the government is going to go to Gaspé. It is expected that in early May, we will know more about the work to be done with a timeline for Gaspé and partial timelines, to reach intermediate points,” says Mr. Saucier, who hopes that the Ministry of Transport will do what is necessary to respect a tight schedule.

“For section 2, there were long periods without a call for tenders, which led to delays in the schedule. For section 3, we don't want it to take 10 years. We will not give an idea of the date. We will wait to see the extent of the work,” confirms the

spokesperson for Solidarité Gaspésie.

When former Quebec premier Philippe Couillard announced the repair of the Gaspé Peninsula line up to Gaspé in May 2017, he indicated that the work would be completed in 2020 to Port Daniel. The Legault government then ruled in April 2019 that the repairs to Gaspé would be completed in 2026, before bringing it back to 2025, in the face of regional outcry.

It became evident in 2019 that the rehabilitation would not be completed until Port-Daniel in 2020, and the timeline was pushed back to 2022, before being pushed back again to 2024 a year ago after 20 months without publication of a call for tenders.

This postponement to 2024 has had an impact on the traffic of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG), which was counting on 2022 to directly serve the Port Daniel cement plant and

increase the annual number of loaded wagons. The cessation of blade traffic in May 2022 could not be compensated by a greater volume of cement and the SCFG suffered a loss of traffic of 31.3%, from 4,636 carloads in 2021 to 3,190 last year.

Carol Saucier firmly assures that the exchange and mobilization table is also working to bring the VIA Rail passenger train back to New Carlisle as soon as the track is functional there, at the end of 2023 if possible. For several years, the management of this public carrier has maintained that it will return between Matapedia and Gaspé only when the entire line has been repaired. The previous leadership, under Yves Desjardins-Siciliano, had expressed an openness to returning in stages.

The contribution of the SCFG technical team, which received an envelope of \$19 million to participate more in the repair of the railroad, should also make it possible to accelerate the pace of work.

Meanwhile, Transports Québec announced on February 14 the immediate launch in some cases and imminent in other cases of repair work on the last culverts and small bridges located between Caplan and Port Daniel. A call for tenders is, therefore, launched to repair the bridges over the Paspebiac river and the Saint-Godefroi river in Hope Town. In the coming weeks, other calls for bids will be published for the Saint-Siméon river, Cullen's Brook and Day brook bridges in Bonaventure.

## A round table that could lead to other topics

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - The Table for Exchange and Mobilization on Rail Transportation could become a table for discussing regional development issues.

The spokesperson for this table, Carol Saucier, mentions that it was clear in the short term that the table will first address the rail component. “We are completely open later on to addressing other development issues for the region, so the table (purpose) could widen,” said Mr. Saucier.

Since the housing crisis and climate change are cited as examples, the table may reach out to stakeholders involved in those issues as well.

When the Prefects Table was created, civil society had obtained a seat, a seat that disappeared during the modification to create the Regroupement des MRC de la Gaspésie.

“To also establish means of dialogue and exchange between civil society, citizen groups and prefects... We are in the process of initiating that with the prefects with the issue of rail transport, but it could also go further,” suggests Mr. Saucier.





Reduce the risk of heart disease by getting to and maintaining a healthy weight.

## HEART MONTH: Know the risks of heart disease and reduce them!

DIANE SKINNER

Heart disease is one of the leading causes of death in Canada, second to cancer. The most common type of heart disease is IHD (ischemic heart disease). Ischemia is a condition in which blood flow and, therefore, oxygen is reduced to the heart.

Overall rates of heart disease have been declining, thanks to research, drugs and prevention. Changing our lifestyle can help to reduce the risk of getting heart disease.

What are the risk factors of heart disease? Some risks are inherited, and others are the result of choices we make. Risk factors include diabetes, smoking, high cholesterol, lack of exercise, high blood pressure, poor diet (not enough fruit and vegetables and consuming too much trans or saturated fats, salt), sleep apnea, a family history of heart problems and obesity. Having a number of these risk factors increases your chances of having heart disease.

If you are a man over the age of 45 or a woman over the age of 55 who has gone through menopause, your likelihood of having heart disease increases. Certain ethnic groups have higher rates of heart disease: Aboriginal Canadians, and people who are from cultures such as African, Chinese, Hispanic and South Asian.

### Reducing the risks

Limit alcohol to two drinks a day for women and three drinks a day for men. Watch for a change in the number of alcoholic drinks suggested as new data suggests that we limit drinks even more.

Reduce stress by avoiding people and situations that give

you stress. Relax by doing something calm but enjoyable, such as listening to music, watching a movie, chatting with a friend, taking a walk or meditation/reflection. Practice saying the word “no” to situations that will put you under stress.

Be physically active. Start slowly if you have been very inactive. Walk a little and add more steps as you feel comfortable.

Eat a nutritious diet. Choose more fruits and vegetables and limit processed foods, sugar and salt.

Maintain a healthy weight. Every pound you take off is a strong step in the right direction.

Quit smoking. If you smoke, your risk of stroke is twice as high as people who do not smoke. If you smoke and you care about your health and longevity, quit today. Second-hand smoke also increases your risks.

Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

### Heart attack symptoms for women

The most common symptom of a heart attack in women, as for men, is some sort of chest pain or pressure that lasts for more than a few minutes. It may come and go. But, for women, they may experience no chest pain at all. Women are more likely to experience shortness of breath, pain in one or both arms, heartburn, nausea or vomiting, discomfort or pressure in the neck, sweating, dizziness, tiredness, and shoulder, jaw, upper back or stomach pain. This may be due to the fact that women tend to have blockages in their smaller arteries, not just the main arteries.

# Reflections

by  
**Diane Skinner Flowers**



## It's not how smart you are... It's how you are smart!

When our children are young, we are amazed as they learn, grow and develop new skills, but by the time they are in grade three, we tend to judge their abilities based mainly on school success in math and reading. This is a very limited snapshot of a child and their abilities. What about the child that can build tiny cities out of Lego? What about the child who can sing along with every song on the radio? Then there are the children who can name every type of tree and wildflower in the area. These interests and abilities demonstrate that they are children who may have intelligence and awareness in different areas. Simply, there are different ways a human can be “smart”.

In 1983, a psychologist named Howard Gardener studied children's various abilities and concluded that the common IQ test measures one kind of intelligence only. Gardner concluded that there are at least eight different kinds of intelligence which he called multiple intelligences. Each person has a distinct and unique set of strengths and areas of weakness. Reflect on your abilities. Perhaps you have strong skills in reading and writing while your partner can fix a motor and build a cabin. These are two different ways a person can be smart.

Abilities are shaped by the environment, our life experiences and genetics, characteristics that are part of us since birth. This list of the multiple intelligences identified by Gardner is a guide to the variety of ways we can be smart.

**Spatial:** Visualizing, creating, and manipulating something. This would describe the child who can make or assemble things. The builders. The artists. The creators.

**Bodily/Kinesthetic:** Involves coordination and dexterity and the use of one's whole body or parts of the body. These people like to walk, run, bike, hike, play team games and so on. The athletes. The outdoor lovers.

**Musical:** Expressing, understanding and creating music—by singing, playing musical instruments, composing, etc. involves an appreciation and ability for music of various kinds. The music lover or musician.

**Linguistic:** Being attuned to words and their meanings. Maybe a strength in reading, writing, speaking, or an ability to learn a second language. The reader, writer, and poet. Crossword lover.

**Mathematical/Logical:** Understanding and recognizing the patterns and relationships between numbers and symbols. Strong computing skills and the ability to solve problems through measurement and estimation. The logical person. The analyst. The fact lover. The logical one. The accountant.

**Interpersonal:** Being attuned to other people. Their feelings and emotions. Individuals with high interpersonal intelligence are often associated with leadership and tend to be good at communicating with and understanding other people. They are good at working with others. The social butterfly. The leader in groups. The one with charisma.

**Intrapersonal:** Awareness of one's feelings, thoughts and anxieties. Having a strong ability to use that understanding of oneself to control themselves can make good plans and decisions to benefit themselves. The strong-minded one. The content person.

**Naturalist:** Understanding and appreciating nature such as plants, animals and the environment. Can identify, observe and categorize things in the natural world. The observer. The one who spots small details. The advocate for clean air and water.

You may be thinking, but wait I am a strong reader and I love music in all forms, and I know the name of all the birds that are found near my home. That is not a contradiction to this theory of multiple intelligences. We are all a blend of different skills, interests and abilities. You may find that you possess one or two or more of these areas very strongly. That is how you are smart: linguistic, musical and naturalist.

Knowing how your child is smart can be helpful in several ways. One is knowing yourself better, which is never a bad thing. Another is encouraging a child who struggles in reading. You can tell them that there are a number of ways we can be smart, and reading is just one. Every intelligence has value. Areas of intelligence can be strengthened. Some diminish as we go through life.

This is the beauty of the vast variety of human beings and their distinctive strengths and abilities. We are unique and have worth regardless of our strengths and weaknesses. It's not how smart you are. It's how you are smart! So, what about you?



# Distillerie des Marigots wins again at the World Gin Awards

**Gilles Gagné**  
CAPLAN – On January 19, thanks to its aged Récif gin, Caplan’s Distillerie des Marigots qualified to represent Canada at the World Gin Awards, prizes that will be



*Gin aficionados recommend refrigerating aged Récif for 15-30 minutes before drinking.*

awarded in England on February 23. The Distillerie des Marigots takes part in the Matured Gin category. Released a few months ago, the aged version of Récif gin won the gold medal in Canada. The product is the result of the aging process in oak barrels of the original Récif gin. It is composed of 14 indigenous and locally grown herbs. “I am proud to offer a product that stands out for its unique aromatic properties, thanks to the exclusive use of local aromatics. That it is recognized as the best in its category in the country is, for me, proof that it is by letting our intuition, our desires and our personal inspirations guide us in our creative process that we manage to create alcohols that people remark,” notes Joseph St-Denis Boulanger, owner and master distiller of the Caplan company. In 2022, the first product of the Distillerie des Marigots, the Récif, won a gold medal at the World Gin Awards in the Contemporary Style Gin cate-



Photos: G. Gagné

*Distillery owner Joseph Saint-Denis Boulanger is glad to have followed his intuition and inspiration since the foundation of his business in 2020.*

gory. Gins from 15 other countries across five continents will be judged on February 23 in the aged gin category. Although 17 countries were represented in the qualifications, only the 15 gold medal winners can enter the international final. Aged gin is still a niche spirit in Quebec, despite its growing popularity of gin. The matured Récif gin receives a warm welcome on the market, both from visitors to the distillery and from customers of the SAQ, says Joseph Saint-Denis Boulanger. “Each batch is as unique as the meticulously selected premium barrel that has housed it for months. Aged Récif is the union of artisanal know-how and Gaspésie flavours marked by time and the effect of oak wood,” he also remarks. Aged Récif gin is available at the Distillerie des Marigots, in Caplan, and in certain Société des alcools du Québec (SAQ) branches. It can also be found online on the SAQ website.

## Keeping the Mi’gmaw language alive Supporting the Mi’gmaq urban community

**DIANE SKINNER**  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE  
GESGAPEGIAG, MONTREAL: Amy Martin has found her calling. She is teaching the Mi’gmaw language in Montreal at Native Montreal, an organization that seeks to contribute to the cultural strength of the aboriginal community residing in Montreal. Members of the Mi’gmaq community living in Montreal do not have the support of their home communities, such as residents of Gesgapegiag and Listuguj do. One way that Native Montreal supports the Aboriginal community is by teaching the language.



Photo: Courtesy A. Martin

*Amy Martin, Mi’gmaw language instructor in Montreal, with her granddaughter Ember. On Saturdays, they speak Mi’gmaw and on Sundays, they speak French.*

Amy Martin is currently teaching language classes for Mi’gmaq children ages five to twelve and for adults on Saturdays. She finds it very rewarding when she sees the appreciation in her students’ eyes, especially when she speaks about Gespe’gewa’gi, our territory. She teaches the Mi’gmaq Honour Song by George Paul, the Indigenous national anthem and she requires both of her language classes to learn the song in its entirety. In fact, that is how she begins each class. It gives,

Amy says, “A good start to the class.” Organizations such as Native Montreal are important for Urban Indigenous people living far away from their home communities. Amy was surprised to learn that there are a lot of Mi’gmaq families raising their children in an urban setting, sometimes for access to special services related to health and educa-

tion. There are Mi’gmaq people in Montreal who come from all seven districts of Mi’gma’gi. Many are from Gespe’gewa’gi because Montreal is the closest urban centre within the province and a lot of Mi’gmaw pursue their educations at Concordia and McGill University. Amy considers herself lucky to be trilingual. She speaks Mi’gmaw, French and

English. Her father and the teachers from Wejgwapniag School in Gesgapegiag, taught her Mi’gmaw as a young girl. Her foster dad taught her French. In fact French was the first language she spoke. English was the third and last language Amy learned. She is currently teaching her granddaughter to speak Mi’gmaw, which they speak on Saturday and, on Sundays, they speak French together. Her granddaughter is excited to speak German, English, French and Mi’gmaw with her Giju, her grandmother. Amy adds, “Kids are like sponges. They pick up the language very quickly.”

Amy was employed as an Administrative Assistant in Gesgapegiag for ten years. She worked in various departments including Health, Education, and Social Services. She then returned to university as a mature student in 2017. Then in August, 2019, she won a seat at the Micmacs of Gesgapegiag Council, an outcome she was not expecting! A year into her term, COVID hit and this created a lot of tension and at that point Amy realized that politics was not a good match for her skills. She states, “I consider myself more of an activist than a politician. I like to be a voice for change, and that is easier to do at the grassroots level.”





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# Announcements



## Obituary



### DENNISON: Joan (née Cuning)

Joan Dennison (née Cuning) died January 27 at the Moncton Hospital after a period of failing health.

Joan was born in Sandy Beach, Gaspé, to Rowena (Baker) and Charles Cuning in 1938. She moved to Montreal to work and lived there for many years.

She was predeceased by her husband, Brian Dennison. Joan is lovingly remembered by her sons Brian Charles "Chuck" (Stephanie) and Heath and by her grandchildren Brian, Arielle, Sophia, Zachery and Jacob. She was the dear sister of Sylvia, Arthur, Sandra and Darleen (Jacques) and the beloved aunt to many nieces and nephews.

Joan lived in Moncton, New Brunswick, with her sister Sylvia for the last 26 years. She loved nature and took great delight in the birds that came to their feeders. She also had a keen interest in environmental issues.

Joan attended St. George's Anglican Church in Moncton and was a woman of strong faith. The family thanks Rev. Chris VanBuskirk who ministered to her at her home and in hospital when it became too difficult for her to attend church.

There will be an interment of Joan's ashes at St. John's Anglican Church in Sandy Beach in the summer.



## In Memory



### BRENNAN: Carmelle (Brideau)

In fond and loving memory of my wife who passed away February 14, 2007.

*I have lost my soul's companion,  
A life linked with my own;  
And day by day I miss her more,  
As I walk through life alone.*

Always loved and remembered by husband Frank and family.

### SAWYER: Doris

### SAWYER: Reid

In loving memory of our parents. Mom passed away January 25, 2010 and Dad passed away February 16, 2019.

*May the winds of love blow softly,  
And whisper for you both to hear,  
That we'll always love and miss you,  
And wish that you were here.*

Loved and missed by your family.

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Wednesday at 4 p.m. to appear in  
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COAST ROUND-UP

GASPÉ:

Cancer Society

Membership Renewal

With 1,600 members between Corner of the Beach and Grande Vallée, we are pleased to announce that new memberships and renewals are being accepted and are good for one year, until March 2024. Please note that there has been a change in membership pricing. New membership/renewals \$15 per person or \$25 per couple.

All new membership and renewals can be sent to Gaspé Cancer Foundation, P.O. Box 6078, Gaspé, Quebec G4X 2M6. Payment can also be made by e-transfer to gaspe45@hotmail.com. Please include your name, address, phone number and email address. For more information, please contact Tony Patterson at 418-368-3276; Beatrice Coffin at 418-368-1566 or Patricia Ste. Croix at 418-649-3779.

GASPÉ:

Royal Canadian Legion

Please be advised that Legion memberships are available for \$50. Returning and new members welcome.

PORT DANIEL:

Three Star

Golden Age Club

Tuesdays: Pétanque from

7 p.m. to 9 p.m. every Tuesday evening to have fun and learn a new game. Cost is \$3.

March 4: Music night beginning at 7 p.m. \$5 per person

March 17: Pot luck supper beginning at 5 p.m. for members and guests.

April 28: Gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m. \$10 a strip and \$20 a series.

May 13: Mother's Day tea from noon to 2 p.m. \$10 per person.

PORT DANIEL:

Tea and Bake Sale

February 25: The St. James Port-Daniel and St-Paul's Shigawake, Anglican churches are having a Tea and Bake Sale at Three Star Golden Age Club in Port-Daniel, 177 Route 132 from noon to 3 p.m. Weather permitting. Cost: \$10 Please come and enjoy a few hours out and support our churches. Contact information: Landis 418-752-4236 or Audrey 418-752-6171. Hope to see you there!

SHIGAWAKE:

Community Centre

March 4: Ski-doo Rally

April 10: Gift bingo - Details to follow.

HOPE TOWN:

Sports Club

March 10: Super gift bingo at the Optimist Club in Saint Godefroi beginning at 7 p.m.

HOPE:

Hope Baptist Church

Sundays: Sunday School starting at 10 a.m. Worship service beginning at 11 a.m.

PASPEBIAC:

Knitters Needed

La maille de l'amitié, a group of knitters who are eager to help men, women and children who are receiving chemotherapy at Maria hospital by providing knitted hats, is looking for knitters. If needed, patterns and samples are available at the library in Paspebiac, which is also where you should drop-off your knitted items. You can also include a short note of encouragement, identified by your name only. For more information contact Claudette Whittom (418) 752-3633 or Doris Chedore (418) 752-5190.

NEW CARLISLE:

Life Association

March 11: Gift bingo in collaboration with The Anchor at the New Carlisle Royal Canadian Legion beginning at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6:30 p.m.) \$10 a series or three for \$20.

NEW CARLISLE:

LLB Membership

Please note that membership renewals for the Linda LeMore-Brown Foundation are available for the 2023 year. You can renew your membership by sending

\$20 cash, e-transfer or cheque by mail to: C.P. 219, 168 Gérard D. Levesque, QC G0C 1Z0 or in-person on Tuesdays or Fridays between 9 and 11 a.m. For more information, please call 418-752-7223.

NEW CARLISLE:

Royal Canadian

Legion Branch #64

Please be advised that Legion memberships are available for \$45. Returning and new members welcome.

Wednesdays: Line dancing every Wednesday in February and March at 7:30 p.m. \$7 per person.

Thursdays: Open from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Fridays: Darts beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Saturdays: Open at 2 p.m. Everyone welcome!

February 24: Music with Tammy Adams beginning at 8:30 p.m. \$10 per person.

March 7: General meeting at 7 p.m. at 1 Mount Sorrel, New Carlisle.

NEW CARLISLE:

Bible Chapel Meetings

Sundays: 9:30 a.m. Breaking of Bread for believers. 2 p.m. Gospel meeting and Sunday School.

Thursdays: 7 p.m. Prayer

Meeting and Bible Study. Everyone welcome! For more information: 418-752-3372 or 418-752-6011.

NEW RICHMOND:

United Church

Luncheon

March 5: Luncheon from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Church Hall. Soups, sandwiches, tea, coffee and desserts. \$8 per person. Take out available. All proceeds will go to the humanitarian fund.

UNITED CHURCH

NEW RICHMOND

Sunday, February 26

10 a.m. Service

UNITED CHURCH

HOPE TOWN

Sunday, February 26

10 a.m. Service

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, February 26

NEW CARLISLE

10 a.m. Morning Prayer

PORT DANIEL

9 a.m. Morning Prayer and Annual Vestry Meeting

Please be advised that all cheques must be made payable to THE GASPÉ SPEC



ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20  
Opportunity awaits you, Aries. You just need to know where to look to get the best deal. Start chasing after your heart's desire because you could just get it this week.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21  
A financial windfall could be just over the horizon, Taurus. Stay the course over the next several days and wait and see what falls into your lap. You may be very surprised.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21  
People in your life want the best for you, Gemini. Accept their support and good wishes and use each as a

guiding light when challenges arise.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22  
The stars are all but shouting that you need some self-care right now, Cancer. Put aside all of the tasks you think you need to do and turn attention to tending to your own needs.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23  
Leo, your love interest seems like he or she is keeping something from you, but avoid drawing any conclusions. A surprise may be in store for you.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22  
Virgo, take it slow may be the advice that is coming your way, but that might be hard right now. Your time is in demand and many people

are seeking your expertise. Take a breath.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23  
You don't have to travel too far to find happiness this week, Libra. It's in all the small things around you. No extraordinary gestures are needed to make you smile.  
SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22  
Scorpio, a potential love match could be on the horizon. Approach this with caution, but don't be afraid to share your thoughts and dreams with someone special.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21 - Be careful when sharing your deepest desires and secrets, Sagittarius. There are many people you can trust, so make an effort

to identify them before opening up.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20 - Capricorn, your dreams can take you far, but smarts and action need to factor into the equation as well. Start fleshing out your plan and get moving.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18  
Your friends can be a great help when you need some relationship advice this week, Aquarius. Seek their input and factor it into any decision you make.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20  
Pisces, if a friend or family member causes drama for you, don't let it get in your way. Offer to help but be ready for this person to seek their own path.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

FEBRUARY 19

Millie Bobby Brown, Actress (19)

FEBRUARY 20

Rihanna, Singer (35)

FEBRUARY 21

Sophie Turner, Actress (27)

FEBRUARY 22

Rajon Rondo, Athlete (37)

FEBRUARY 23

Dakota Fanning, Actress (29)

FEBRUARY 24

O'Shea Jackson, Jr., Actor (32)

FEBRUARY 25

Sean Astin, Actor (52)

# Gesgapegiag street named by 12-year-old, Anabelle Jerome

DIANE SKINNER  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GESGEPEGIAG: - Anabelle Jerome, a 12-year-old grade 6 student at Wejgwapieniag School, won a recent contest in Gesgapegiag to name a new street and she tells SPEC that when she heard the good news she was shocked, excited and proud.

Sarah and Emily Jerome from the Lands, Estate and Membership Committee came to the school and told the class about the Lands' Street Naming Contest. There are two new streets in Gesgapegiag and the contest included choosing a name and designing a picture to go on the street sign. A second part of the contest was to design pictures for the streets that are established in the community.

Anabelle chose the name Nipug't which means Wood Lane. She chose to draw a hand axe for the street sign. In addition to winning the "Name the Street" contest, Anabelle had three designs chosen for other community street signs. For Jerome St., she drew an arrow, for Micmac drive she drew a traditional headband with feathers

and for Gitpu (Eagle) Lane she drew an eagle. All her designs are coloured with traditional native colours: red, white, black and yellow.

Anabelle speaks Mi'gmaq and says it is her second language. She has heard it spoken "Since the day she was born," and she now speaks it every day. Her grandma, dad and all her aunts and uncles speak it. She also has Mi'gmaq language class in school. She was proud to receive a certificate and the honour of naming the street and displaying her creative designs in the community. The whole school had a pizza party to celebrate the good news!

Stephanie LaPointe, Anabelle's mom, feels very proud of her daughter's accomplishment. Stephanie states that her daughter has always enjoyed drawing and she completed all her designs at school for the contest. Anabelle has other interests including basket-making with her grandma, as well as singing and dancing.

**Photo:** Winner Annabelle Jerome with Emily Jerome from the Lands, Estate and Membership Committee.



Photo: Facebook



Winning contest entry.

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