

## Joan Sawyer Imhoff retires after 32 years at The Gaspé Spec

DIANE SKINNER

NEW CARLISLE: Time is marching onwards and with that comes many changes. After 32 years of working for The Gaspé Spec, Joan Sawyer Imhoff has decided to retire and enter the next phase of her life. She will join her husband, Steven Imhoff, who has already retired. Readers of Spec and Spec staff will miss her greatly.

Over the years, Joan has collaborated with many colleagues and connected with the Spec-reading community with a professionalism and kindness that is remarkable. If you ask anyone to tell you about their interactions with Joan, it goes well beyond her professionalism and skills in her job. She has sometimes been referred to as the “Face of Spec,” for many years her desk was situated to warmly greet the community who would come into the office for a myriad of reasons. The visitors would renew their subscriptions, arrange gift subscriptions, place an obituary, or an announcement. Joan always had time to inquire about individuals and their families.

Joan was born and raised in New Carlisle, the youngest of three and the only girl. She went to New Carlisle High School and Bonaventure Poly-

valent School, where she was a straight A student. She loved everything about school but especially all the sports as she was very athletic and competitive.

She started dating another “New Carlisler,” Steven Imhoff, in 1980 before going off to college. She studied secretarial at Gaspé Cegep and came home every weekend on the train as her dad was an engineer for CN. She worked at SPEC as a summer student for three summers.

Joan moved to Montreal in 1984 because Steven was transferred there for his job at CN. There, she worked at a printing company called Pentagon Graphics. Shortly after, Joan and Steven got married in 1985. They moved back home where they had their first born, Jonathan, in 1988. Almost four years later, they had Heather. During those four years, Joan worked for the Bank of Nova Scotia, Canada Post and the Eastern Shores School Board before returning to Spec where she stayed for 32 years.

For sure, Joan will be keeping busy in her retirement. She likes to golf, do puzzles, paint, read, play darts and crochet. She even plans to take up piano lessons when she is retired!

Joan's retirement will not only be filled with hobbies, but also travelling and spending



Photo: Heather Imhoff

*Joan looks forward to spending quality time with her grandchildren, Eleanor and Wilson Almond, after retirement.*

time at the beach with her husband of 39 years. She is incredibly happy to be able to spend more time with her grandchildren: Eleanor and Wilson, too!

Joan's daughter, Heather, adds, “Mom and Sharon Farrell worked together for 23 years. They were together all day, every weekday - often finishing each other's sentences and voicing each other's thoughts. I cannot count the number of times that my mom called me Sharon over the years. I thought that when Sharon retired in 2015 that would be the end of it but, no, I still get the odd ‘Sharon’ even now, nine years later! I remember one time Sharon called our house to talk to my mom. I answered the phone and said ‘Hello!’ Sharon replied, ‘Where is the blue folder?’ No hi, how are you or anything. I said, ‘What blue folder?’ She added ‘You know, the blue folder!’ I replied, ‘I don't know.’ Then she realized that she wasn't talking to my mom, and said, ‘Oh Heather, you sound just like your mom! Pass her the phone.’ It was so funny!”

Heather says SPEC was her mom's second home. “She worked there for the same number of years as I have been alive! As her current fellow employee, she will be greatly missed but, as her daughter, I could not be happier for her.”

### Beautiful Memories

Sharon Farrell, retired Spec publisher, worked with Joan for over 25 years and her reflections about working with Joan are a testament to the valued employee Joan was. Sharon states that Joan is “professional, courteous and accommodating. People would come to the office to see her because they valued her advice and assistance on various issues. She made people feel welcome.” Sharon adds that over the years working with Joan was so enjoyable because they worked hard but found time to have fun too.

Sharon McCully, Publisher of The Record newspaper, in Sherbrooke, who worked for Spec from 1981 to 1988 where she says she learned everything

she knows about journalism, recounts, “It is hard to imagine the young woman with the bouncy curls and matching personality who would arrive like a fresh breeze at the Spec office with her sleeves already rolled up, now focused on retirement and being a grandma. Joan joined a group of can-do women in the 1980s who were passionate about the Gaspé community and the readers it served. They successfully shepherded the newspaper through geographic and weather challenges to get the paper to press each week, faced technological change, and remained cheerful while doing it. The resourcefulness and determination demonstrated by Joan and others on the team are behind the newspaper's remarkable story. She may not go to the office in the future, but I'm certain her time at SPEC will remain imprinted on her heart as it is for everyone who ever worked there, and her name will always be associated with the paper's success.”

Penny MacWhirter has worked with Joan since 2011, first helping out with the Obituary and Classified pages on Joan's days off and later replacing Sharon Farrell as publisher. Penny says, “Although I had a media and communications background, I knew very little about newspapers. Joan was a good teacher. Frankly she's still teaching me layout rules.” She adds that “Joan is Spec.” When the phone rings most of the time the caller asks for Joan. “For our subscribers, speaking to Joan is like chatting with an old friend. She genuinely cares about everyone and is a great listener. Not to mention she seems to know everyone from New Richmond to Gaspé and can still recite her high school days like it was yesterday. I will certainly miss working with Joan, her bright smile and welcoming attitude made being at the Spec office feel like an extension of home,” says Penny.



Photo: Facebook

*You might spot Joan on the beaches of the Coast searching for sea glass.*



# Murder trial: The prints on the weapon discovered at the crime scene match those of the the accused

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – On January 23, during the fifth day of Brandon Metallic’s trial, crime scene technician Mélanie Fournier informed the court that the fingerprints from the weapon found at the crime scene likely belong to the accused. Mr. Metallic faces charges of unpremeditated murder and manslaughter.

Police officer Fournier explained to the court that after comparing images of fingerprints taken from Mr. Metallic on June 21, 2022, with those found on the rifle in the basement of the house where the bodies were discovered, she observed significant similarities.

Brandon Metallic is charged with the unpremeditated murder of a 21-year-old man and the manslaughter of a young girl. A publication ban protects the identities of the victims involved in the tragedy that unfolded on May 15, 2021, in a residence on Riverside Road West, within the Listuguj First Nations community.

Mélanie Fournier, an employee of the Quebec City Police Service, often designated by SPVQ, explained in particular how she had followed each “ridge” of prints, the ridges being the visible lines appearing in the images. She followed them, one by one, from a central imprint for each case. These were the prints of the index and middle fingers of Brandon Metallic's left hand.

"Once the comparison process was completed, with a comparison of each ridge, I was not able to eliminate Mr. Metallic. Based on my experience and knowledge, I am able to say that the fingerprints of Mr. Metallic were those appearing on the weapon and the fingerprint taken on June 21, 2022," she explained.

In response to criminal prosecutor Florence Frappier Routhier, police officer Fournier indicated that she had asked a fellow technician, Étienne Boulanger, to check her work, without providing her conclusion. He came to the same conclusion.

When questioned by prosecutor Frappier Routhier about the absence of prints on the trigger, Ms. Fournier indicated that “We shouldn’t be surprised. The trigger is a very small piece of metal and the



*These fingerprints, taken 13 months apart, including one recovered from the firearm, are confirmed to belong to Brandon Metallic, according to crime scene technician Mélanie Fournier.*

quantity of ridges would be insufficient to give clear prints.”

Wanting to determine if the accused had taken the weapon in the middle of the day on May 15, 2021, a moment identified as fateful for the victims, Florence Frappier Routhier asked Mélanie Fournier if it is possible to establish the timing of Mr. Metallic’s contact with the weapon.

“I can’t specify it. The only way would be with circumstantial elements. (...) I did not have the circumstantial information,” said Officer Fournier, adding shortly after that “for the moment, we are not there yet.” “There” refers to the scientific method for determining when a fingerprint was left.

## A discreet accused

Since January 18, all testimonies have taken place in the absence of Brandon Metallic. Judge Guy De Blois expelled him from the courtroom that day due to frequent and untimely interventions, when he lacked the right to speak. This resulted in Mr. Metallic following the proceedings from another room within the courthouse where he could only intervene when the microphone was on.

On January 19, the accused's agitated behaviour towards the agents who accompanied him prompted the judge to return him to his cell. From where he could still attend the hearing of witnesses thanks to the presence of audio-visual equipment. The New Carlisle prison is located in a building adjacent to the courthouse and the two buildings are connected.

This absence of the accused complicates witness hearings. After each testimony, attorney Ariane Cayer, the court appointed facilitator (friend of

the court), must visit Brandon Metallic's cell and ask him if he wishes to cross-examine the witness. This results in frequent 20-minute breaks following each testimony, whether the testimony lasts five minutes or an hour.

Despite reports to the court of Ms. Cayer’s repeated attempts, Mr. Metallic remains unresponsive. The accused remained lying in his cell and did not respond to the invitation to cross-examine the witnesses,

For instance, the testimony of six witnesses on January 23 necessitated six such breaks, totalling 120 minutes. Hence, Mr. Metallic’s decision to absent himself effectively consumes half of the witness hearing time.

From the courtroom, a camera placed in front of the accused's cell makes it possible to discern his presence, or at least his elongated shape and the blanket which drapes him.

## Bloodstains and colouring page

On January 23, detective Sylvain Fortin, also from the SPVQ, told the court that he had been dispatched to Listuguj the day after the crime as a “context investigator”. It was

he who was assigned the job of recovering Brandon Metallic's clothes once the latter was arrested and placed in a cell at the Listuguj police station. Clothes had to be put in paper bags provided for this purpose.

Detective Fortin indicated that the accused's clothes were on the ground in front of a cell. Brandon Metallic's pants, a hoodie, socks and shoes “bear traces of dried blood,” said the investigator, correcting himself a little later to specify “traces resembling blood.”

In addition to the clothing, Mr. Fortin retrieved Mr. Metallic’s mobile phone, a stone artifact in the shape of an arrowhead and a child's colouring page of a purple rabbit and a bird, fitted on a four-

his arrest, although emotional. “He cried calmly once he got into the police car. I could see his tears,” she said.

Shortly before, Sûreté du Québec agent Sylvain Roussel, who is based in Matapédia and who was called for reinforcements by the Listuguj Police Department, had described the state of Brandon Metallic as that of “a man who is in his head.”

This Superior Court trial, spanning five weeks with 14 jurors, including two substitutes, is conducted in English.

The Quebec City Police Service spearheaded the investigation since one of the victims died during the intervention of the first two police forces called to intervene,



*Brandon Metallic was carrying these colouring pages when he was arrested.*

by-six inch sheet of paper.

Natasha Carrier Poulin, a police officer in Listuguj in 2021, attested that these colouring pages had been found in the accused's pants pocket just after his arrest on the afternoon of May 15, 2021, outside the house at 94 Riverside West.

Officer Carrier Poulin also recalled a detail heard on January 17 to the effect that Brandon Metallic was calm during

namely the Listuguj Police Department and the Sûreté du Québec, on May 15, 2021.

The intervention occurred after the first victim was shot around lunchtime. The Listuguj Police Department was called shortly after by the occupant of the house where the shooting had taken place. The accused was handcuffed around 5:15 p.m. and transferred to the Listuguj police station.



*The weapon discovered in the same house that the victims were found bore two fingerprints, identified by the labels.*

Photos: G. Gagné

# Brandon Metallic told responder Toby Condo “She is already gone”

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE - A Lis-tuguj responder who called Brandon Metallic urgently on May 15, 2021, believed that the little girl had left the house.

Toby Condo, a community caregiver, testified on January 24 about the conversation he had with the accused while the house he was in was under siege. He intervened hoping that the events would end peacefully.

“She’s already gone,” Brandon Metallic reportedly told Mr. Condo on the phone between 1 and 2 p.m. The call lasted between 5 and 10 minutes. Concerned, Mr. Condo had questioned the suspect about the whereabouts of the little girl, hoping that the operation would end without additional victims.

However, the body of the girl was later found lifeless, as well as the body of a man in his twenties.

Also on January 24, Linda Vézina, a specialist in forensic ballistics indicated that the

firearm found at 94 Riverside West, a Simonov SKS semi-automatic rifle, is functional. The five cartridge casings analyzed are linked to this weapon, she said. However, it was not possible to link the projectiles and the shirt analyzed to the weapon since they were too damaged. The shirt belonged to the young man who was shot in that house.

January 25 : A shot was fired from the basement

Ballistic expert Linda Vézina’s analysis of the weapon made it possible to determine that the semi-automatic rifle was equipped with a clip, with a capacity greater than five cartridges. She also confirmed that at least one projectile was fired through the house’s bathroom. She had to analyze the floor covering. This projectile would have come from the basement, where the rifle was found.

In her January 18 testimony, the occupant of the

house, Kennedy Martin, said the little girl was in the bathroom when she ran away. Expert Vézina also mentioned that shots were also fired in the living room. According to laboratory analysis of a perforation in the fabric of the chair, the shape of the mark suggests that the projectile was destabilized before lodging in the backrest.

On the other hand, the absence of gunshot residue on the sweater of the male victim means that it is not possible to establish the distance between him and the barrel. Tests carried out by the expert have established that from a metre-and-a-half, no grain of powder or black carbon residue penetrates a target.

The accused remained in his cell again without cross-examining witnesses on January 24-25.

Judge Guy De Blois mentioned to the court that the trial will likely be completed by February 2.

With information provided by CIEU-FM.

## Police report

The police services of Quebec, in collaboration with the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ) and Stratégie route Québec, recently unveiled the results of the concerted provincial operation on alcohol and drugs which took place from November 30, 2023, to January 2, 2024.

Nearly 300 drivers were arrested for driving while impaired by alcohol, drugs or a combination of the two during the operations. During the four-and-a-half week period, several hundred road checks were carried out across the province, several of them carried out by two partners of the operation. The establishment of these checkpoints targeting the ability to drive impaired by alcohol or drugs allowed the police to intervene both in a coercive manner and in terms of raising awareness among many drivers. During the period of the concerted national operation, the SAAQ broadcast an awareness campaign on impaired driving. With the theme, *When you drink, you don't drive*, this campaign aimed to make drivers aware that it is risky to get behind the wheel after consuming alcohol, even in small quantities. When drinking, it is always better to have an alternative solution for a safe return home. It is possible to plan an alternative solution as there are many of them.

Although the holiday season is over, police operations to prevent impaired driving will continue throughout the year. Patrol officers can intercept motorists in order to detect impaired driving and arrest the offending drivers. Officers use different techniques and tools to detect drugs and alcohol in drivers. In addition, the mandatory screening in force allows police officers to require a driver to provide a breath sample at the side of the road, no matter if they suspect or not that the driver has recently consumed alcohol.

A week after a similar safety reminder issued by Transports Québec, the police services of Quebec, in collaboration with Stratégie route Québec and the Fédération des clubs de motoneigistes du Québec (FCMQ), intensified their surveillance in the trails on January 27 and 28 as part of the second concerted provincial operation targeting snowmobilers exhibiting behaviour that could compromise their safety and that of other users.

Police officers, FCMQ trail surveillance officers and road controllers carried out various interventions, whether on trails or at their intersection with a public road, as well as to ensure that equipment is secured during their transport on the Quebec roads. Police organizations also deployed an awareness campaign on their various social media platforms. This aimed to remind off-road vehicle users of the importance of respecting the laws in force and adopting prudent behaviour at all times. The theme Avoid slipping! On a snowmobile, think about it was largely mentioned during that weekend.

The stakeholders of the campaign insist on a few safety tips, like avoid going for a snowmobile ride alone and always inform someone close of the planned itinerary. Before going for a ride, it is preferable to plan it and find out the status of the network (iMotoneige). Respecting the signs and adjusting the speed according to trail conditions and maintaining a safe distance between the snowmobiles are important safety rules, as well as keeping the white headlight(s) and the rear red parking light both lit.

Crossing public roads where signage allows it, maintaining the right at all times, always wearing a helmet and safety glasses (if the helmet does not have a visor), as well as respecting private property by making sure to have the owner's authorization to travel there or staying on the trails are also reminders to users.

Driving ability impaired by alcohol, drugs or a combination of both and speed are the main causes of fatal snowmobile collisions. Over the last six years, 24 people died annually in Quebec while riding a snowmobile. Last year, during the concerted national operation, no snowmobilers lost their lives.

million in grants from the federal and provincial governments, which represents around 50% of the allocated budget.

Responses are awaited for the rest while the project is now estimated, including all components, i.e. work, professionals and expertise, at \$4.5 million, including a reserve to deal with inflation in the construction sector.

In a note summarizing the project, the organization indicates that no change has occurred in the support offered by the Town of Gaspé, which still offers \$3,000 annually, the same amount granted to all community organizations in the area.

# The Griffon Community Centre project is progressing well

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The project to create the Griffon Community Centre in Anse-au-Griffon has reached an important milestone as the contract for phase 1 of the conversion work on the village's former church should soon be awarded.

Calls for tenders were launched before the holidays and ended on January 25.

According to the organization, six contractors visited the future construction site and eight companies ordered the documents.

Phase 1 of the project consists of setting up the community room in the church. Insulation work on the interior of the building, electricity, plumbing, acoustics and bathroom fittings to meet standards are planned.

Some work had already started on the large windows and the exterior weatherproofing was made.

The work, estimated at between \$1.7 and \$2 million including professional fees,



The Griffon Community Centre will be located in the former Anse-au-Griffon church.

Photo: N. Sergerie

should be launched in the coming weeks, once the contract is signed with the contractor, which should happen at the beginning of February.

Alongside the work, a study will be carried out in collaboration with Nergica to identify renewable energy sources for the centre's heating and air conditioning.

Once this first phase is completed, the centre will have a room, both for a socio-cultural component and for sporting and community purposes.

However, there will occasionally be the possibility of holding shows of all kinds, small and large scale, plays, or others but without any specific programming.

A phase 2 is already in the plans and a new call for tenders will be made in the summer or fall.

In this section, the project will mainly affect the presbytery and the development of the mezzanine of the church. For the moment, the lead organization has obtained \$2



Gilles Gagné

Commentary

## No wonder the Quebec government is postponing return to balanced budget

On January 25, Quebec’s Finance Minister, Éric Girard, divulged that his government will likely miss the target of returning to a balanced budget by 2027-2028. His first explanation rests on Quebec’s slowing economy, which affects the revenues collected by the government.

At the same time, government expenditures are rising. Mr. Girard explained that this increase stems from the salary increases granted to the public sector employees, which surpassed initial forecasts at the beginning of the negotiation process, as presented by Minister Girard during his last economic update.

Premier François Legault also mentioned the outcome of the public sector employees’ negotiation in his explanation regarding a longer deficit period.

Minister Girard did not specify by how long the deficit period will be extended, asking people to be patient as the government budget will be presented within two months or so, likely at the end of March.

Premier François Legault attempted to offer somewhat reassuring words when he stated that he does not intend to resort to austerity measures that would reduce services to the population.

Since the terrible effects of the budgetary cuts made by the Liberal Party government of Philippe Couillard in 2014-2015, the word “austerity” has practically been banned from Quebec’s political parties’ vocabulary, except to refer to that bleak period. In 2017, recognizing the highly negative perception of the budgetary cuts imposed over the three previous years, the Couillard regime tried to convince the population that its measures were rigorous instead of austere, to no avail. The Liberal Party practically never recovered from its austerity period, and we can wonder if it will ever recover.

It is no wonder Premier Legault is putting emphasis on the word “rigour” rather than austerity. However, he will be judged on his government’s actions. Using the word “rigour” did not serve the

Liberal Party at the end of the 2014-2018 term, as their previous actions totally corresponded to the economic definition of austerity.

When the Liberal Party candidate in Bonaventure, François Whittom, launched his campaign in August 2018, he announced that the Gaspé Peninsula demography would be the backbone of his platform. He was quickly reminded by the regional press that his government had axed 95% of the Stratégie Vivre en Gaspésie budget in 2015, despite the stunning results the organization had obtained in attracting newcomers to the region. Mr. Whittom’s campaign never took off despite his potential. A 95% blind budgetary cut imposed on an efficient organization is austerity, not rigour.

### The government is partially misleading people

While there is no doubt that the relatively slight economic downturn will affect the Quebec government’s revenues, choosing the five-year, 17.4% wage increase granted to the 420,000 members of the Inter-Union Common Front is taking a misleading shortcut.

Firstly, the government could have offered a lower package earlier in the negotiation process, which might have been accepted. The degree of frustration was such at the end of the fall that there was very little flexibility left on the teachers’ part. Some of them demonstrated over four weeks without a strike fund! It speaks volumes about their anger.

Secondly, the Legault regime failed miserably over the last years in recognizing the importance of teachers and providing them with proper working conditions, a situation that goes far beyond wage increases.

Thirdly, in the health sector, where there is no agreement yet, which spells much higher salary hikes than an earlier deal negotiated before anger settles in, a lack of recognition through granting permanent status to a greater number of employees would have sharply diminished the costly recourse to private agencies. Those agencies cost hundreds of millions of dollars yearly to the Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) government. Who coughs up the money at the end? Quebec’s taxpayers do.

Fourthly, it will be hard for anybody to convince François Legault and Éric Girard that the sum of \$3.5 billion handed out to Quebecers as part of the government anti-inflation shield policy was money

thrown out the windows. However, it was, to a certain extent. Everybody earning up to \$104,000 received a payment. Some people, the wealthiest, did not need the money at all, and Quebec as a whole would have been better off providing higher support to low-income households. There is a consensus among economists that giving money to such a wide cross section of the population just fuels inflation, much to the detriment of low-income people. The latter is paying more through unnecessary inflation than the money they received.

Fifthly, the CAQ government shouldn’t have allowed income tax reduction totalling \$1.7 billion annually for the duration of the term, which brings the total impact of that decision to \$6.8 billion over four years. Yes, some taxpayers needed a break, again the low-income households. However, extending the income tax reduction to wealthy people instead of improving the fate of the have-nots was strictly an electoral measure. There is a greater benefit to the economy from a more fair taxation system, which means increasing the revenues of low-income households, instead of giving more to people who don’t need it.

Sixthly, it is very hard to elude the debate surrounding the generous support provided by the CAQ government to huge projects such as the Ford battery plant in Bécancour, which will receive \$322 million and the Northvolt battery facility in MacMasterville, where Quebec will inject \$1.37 billion. This is just naming a few. Although some of that money comes in the form of loans, another part is a grant. A quick look at the way huge companies reimburse loans would probably bring bad surprises. What is more disconcerting, though, is the fact that the CAQ is blinded by the size of the projects, as if an economy is sturdier when based on multinational firms, while it is usually stronger when there are more small and medium-sized players.

Lastly, a point likely to complicate Minister Girard’s task between now and the March budget is the government’s potential to expect a shortage that could reach \$1 billion in the amount coming as annual royalties from Hydro-Québec. A lack of rain and a lack of snow have depleted the power dams’ reservoirs, and the utility is making less money than expected.

Overall, there doesn’t seem to be a realistic evaluation of the way ventures are supported by the current government. This reality will not help Éric Girard predict Quebec’s return to a balanced budget.

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Québec

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# Owners of illegal kennel face consequences

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – Micheline Beebe, 60, and Filbert Landry, 64, two of the four owners of a Pointe-à-la-Croix kennel, were fined \$15,000 each for possessing more than 15 dogs and failing to ensure their safety and well-being.

They entered guilty pleas on January 22 to 23 at the New Carlisle Courthouse. “A total of eight charges were initially laid against the couple, four for possession of more than 15 dogs and four for failing to ensure their safety and well-being, and they pleaded guilty to six of them. The fines include the court fees,” explains criminal and penal prosecutor Sam Bernard.

Justice of the Peace, François Paré, also restricted the couple from owning more than three sterilized dogs over the next 10 years. These fines and restrictions are penal measures, meaning Micheline Beebe and Gilbert Landry will not have criminal records.

The two other owners of the kennel, Christian Roy, 57, and Mélanie Landry, 41, also pleaded guilty to the same two offences, resulting in a \$7,000 fine for Mr. Roy and a \$9,750 fine for Ms. Landry. The court fees are included in both cases as well.

Justice of the Peace Paré may decide on additional fines for Christian Roy and Mélanie Landry, considering the claims made by Quebec’s Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPAQ), for reimbursements totalling \$128,000 and slightly over \$50,000 for inspection and seizure fees incurred during the operations



The owners of the kennel entered guilty pleas for possessing more than 15 dogs and failing to ensure their safety and well-being.

Photo: Facebook

in Pointe-à-la-Croix and Escuminac on April 12 and May 2, 2023.

“According to evidence brought to court by the MAPAQ, the May 2 operation led to the seizure of 102 dogs,” points out criminal and penal prosecutor Sam Bernard.

At the time, the MAPAQ reported seizing 95 animals in total, 74 adult dogs and 21 puppies, after a joint operation with the Sûreté du Québec, the MAPAQ and service providers, such as veterinarians and technicians. The operation was initiated by a complaint from the Municipality of Pointe-à-la-Croix and citizens concerned about the fate of the dogs.

The MAPAQ team estimated after the April 12 inspection that the well-being of the animals were not respected regarding a proper shelter, the nutritional aspects and the general condition of the animals.

In May 2023, MAPAQ

spokesperson, Johan Dallaire-Boily, explained the delay between the inspection and the seizure, citing the need for a sufficient number of cages, accommodations to house the animals and staff to evaluate the condition of every dog. That kind of assessment must be performed by a veterinarian.

People who had bought animals from the owners of the kennel had reported on social media that some of the dogs had wounds, were dirty and exhibited erratic behaviour.

The seizure operations were carried out on two properties in Pointe-à-la-Croix, one on chemin de la Petite-Rivière-du-Loup and the other on rue des Méandres, while the operation carried out in Escuminac took place on a property located on Shipyard Road.

The seized dogs were mostly golden doodles, a variety obtained from a mix between a golden retriever and a poodle.



Photo: Town of Percé

Town of Percé Fire protection service director Éric Fugère and mayor of Percé Cathy Poirier.

## Percé firefighters cleared of blame, CNESST reports

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - The Town of Percé fire department has been cleared of any blame following an investigation by the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité (CNESST) into a fire in Cap-d'Espoir on June 21.

The Town of Grande-Rivière asked the organization to examine the fire extinguishing operation.

In its recommendations, the CNESST asked the Percé fire department to continue drafting written operational procedures, a task already initiated by the fire department's director, Éric Fugère.

"We've been cleared of all

charges, and they've asked us to establish safe operational guidelines," notes Mr. Fugère, who assumed the position less than a year ago.

According to the municipality, none of the procedural deficiencies identified in the report concern firefighters from the Percé fire department.

The Town of Percé had terminated its agreement with the Town of Grande-Rivière regarding the sharing of fire safety services.

"I am pleased with the outcome of the CNESST investigation. It was essential for me that the population be informed and reassured about the quality of our service," says the mayor of Percé Cathy Poirier.

## Influenza is less severe than expected this year

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - According to Dr. Yv Bonnier Viger, the director of Public Health for the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, the peak period for the influenza virus seems to have passed in the region.

"It's not very different from the rest of Quebec. We reached a certain peak a week or a week and a half ago and, since then, the number of cases seems to be decreasing," notes the specialist. Even though the number of influenza cases is only an estimate, the trend seems quite clear. "Last year, this (the peak) happened two or three weeks earlier," he notes. The strength of the virus also seems somewhat weaker than last year.

"Again, we do not monitor all cases. It's a sampling that we take, but according to what we see in the cases, there would be more at the top last year compared to what we see this year," Dr. Bonnier Viger adds, that an upswing would be unlikely.

Currently, in the province, it is mainly Type A cases of influenza that are circulating. Hospitals in the region are coping well in terms of patient traffic. "If we had more people vaccinated, it would be even better but let's say that it is not a difficult season compared to other seasons, especially in our region," notes the specialist. The number of people who were vaccinated is equivalent to last year. "It's not excellent because, of course, we would like to vaccinate a little more, but it's still good," notes Dr. Bonnier Viger.

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# Manon Jeannotte sworn in as Lieutenant Governor of Quebec

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Manon Jeannotte was officially sworn in as Lieutenant Governor of Quebec on January 25 in Quebec City.

For the sake of solemnity and simplicity, the lieutenant-governor-designate chose to hold the ceremony at her official office rather than at the National Assembly of Quebec, as is customary, with only a few guests present, including friends and family.

The former chief of the Micmac Nation of Gespeg will be the 30th lieutenant governor in the history of Quebec, the second woman and the first person of Indigenous origins to occupy this position.

She succeeds the Honorable J. Michel Doyon, who had

been in office since 2015. When she was appointed last December, Ms. Jeannotte welcomed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with great humility and thanked him for his trust.

She sees her selection as a gesture of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

She indicated that even if it's an honorary position, by doing community activities and being with the community, she thinks there's something to be done, particularly in the inclusion of the two peoples, and that's how she intends to act.

Ms. Jeannotte will be the representative of King Charles III in Quebec.

Her first trip as Lieutenant Governor will be to meet the Monarch, the Canadian head of

state. She mentioned in December that her second trip will probably be to traditional Mi'gmaq territory.

Before assuming her current role, Ms. Jeannotte served as a councillor from 2011 to 2015 and later as chief of the Gespeg Nation from 2015 and 2019, where she was able to represent and defend the interests of the community in addition to establishing more open relationships with elected officials and the population from Gaspé.

In October 2020, she co-founded the First Nations School in Montreal with Ken Rock, overseeing its launch in November 2021 and serving as its director since February 2022.

Under her leadership, the



The Lieutenant Governor was sworn in office on January 25 in Quebec City

Photo: First Nations School of Montreal

school has trained 448 participants in two years, 65% being women, nearing its goal of 1,000 participants within five

years. Her mandate as Lieutenant Governor is for a minimum of five years.

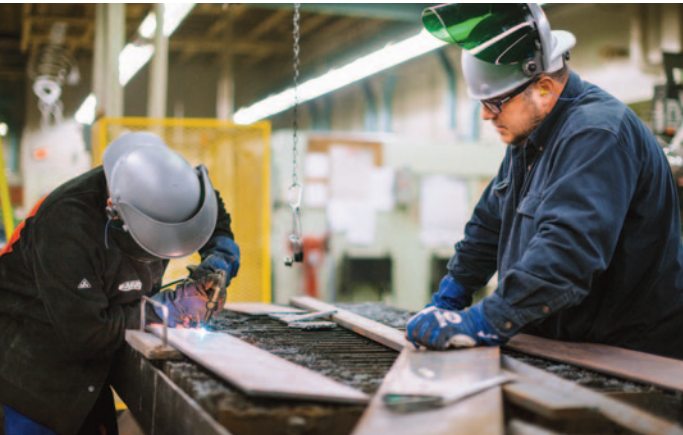


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DISCOVER MORE



# \$3.5 million from Ottawa for Nergica

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The federal government has awarded two grants totalling \$3.5 million to Nergica to support its ongoing activities.

Of this amount, \$3 million, distributed over three years, will be used to enhance the innovation capacity of businesses and establish a network structure for the wind energy industrial cluster.

This funding will also sustain Nergica's services, supporting businesses in the Quebec wind industry in terms of development and innovation.

The Centre collégial de transfert de technologie affiliated with Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles will receive a \$525,000 contribution from Canada Economic Development. This investment will enable Nergica to develop, structure and support innovation in the solar photovoltaic energy sector.

Nergica, which employs approximately forty individuals,



Frédéric Côté, Nergica; Diane Lebouthillier, Member of Parliament; and Daniel Côté, Mayor of Gaspé

Photo: N. Sergerie

als, particularly researchers, 60% of whom hold a master's or doctorate, operates with an annual budget of \$6.5 million. Half of this budget comes from projects developed with companies and the sale of electricity from the Rivière-au-Renard research site.

Both federal and provincial governments provide support which enables the organization to work on some 80 projects annually, with ninety percent of interventions taking place within Quebec.

"Funding from Canada Economic Development is valuable because it is support on which we can build. We have a lot of project financing and business development. Having operating funding allows us to secure jobs, carry out project development, and deliver our services to businesses," explains the general director of Nergica, Frédéric Côté.

The organization focuses on three main categories: operators of wind and solar power plants such as optimizing en-

ergy production in a cold climate, supporting companies developing new solutions, and assisting groups to develop renewable energy projects.

"For example, we worked with a company that had developed sensors to put on airplane wings and wanted to see if the technology could be adapted to wind turbine blades. We carried out a validation on our site in Rivière-au-Renard, which allowed this company to position itself in new markets and develop a product adapted

to renewable energy," explains Mr. Côté.

Another notable instance is the deployment of state-of-the-art equipment to provide renewable energy to the Relais de la Cache on Route 299.

Currently, the site operates without electricity from Hydro-Québec and relies on solar panels and diesel generators.

With development projects in the wind sector, especially with the wind energy calls for tenders from the Quebec government, Nergica is capitalizing on this momentum.

"The more megawatts installed in Quebec, the more activity there is here. For us, this is good news and prospects for development. I am hopeful that in the coming months, we will have good news to announce," suggests Mr. Côté.

Diane Lebouthillier, Member of Parliament for the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands made the funding announcement on January 11 in Gaspé on behalf of her government.

Cont'd on page 9

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# More than 50% of waste ends up in landfills

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE - Despite several awareness campaigns over the years, the percentage of waste that ends up in the landfill remains high. The Gaspé Peninsula Intermunicipal Residual Materials Treatment Board reached this conclusion following an analysis of garbage bins last fall.

According to the report pertaining to an analysis of the bins' content, 37% of organic material and 19% of recyclable material end up in the Gaspé landfill.

"It's still significant, despite the fact that there has

been a certain improvement since 2015. Overall, this represents a little more than 50% of the materials that should not have been deposited there," explains Nathalie Drapeau, the director of the Gaspé Peninsula Intermunicipal Residual Materials Treatment Board.

The region has all the tools to "do things right" with eco centres and a sorting centre.

"There is no reason not to participate in good practices. This report confirms that there is work to be done, and we are not giving up," notes Ms. Drapeau.

Ms. Drapeau believed that the financial pressure of recent years, which resulted in sharp increases in bills for citizens,

would convince them to act accordingly.

"This is a potential of \$400,000 which could be recorded as a reduction in expenses or sold as resources. For example, when we bury 10% of the cardboard and paper, we're burying money," says Ms. Drapeau.

"This \$400,000 roughly equals the budget increase of the last two years. It would have been good news if we could reduce the costs," she explains.

On the other hand, since 2015, the proportion of "real waste" has increased by 9%. "It's possible (to reduce), but we must continue our efforts," notes Ms. Drapeau.



Too much waste ends up in the landfills.

Photo: N. Sergerie

Support and awareness campaigns will continue to assist citizens struggling with waste sorting.

Additionally, more problematic sectors will receive particular attention in an effort to change behaviour.

# Child car seats will no longer end up in the landfill

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE - Expired child car seats are now being salvaged by the Gaspé Peninsula Intermunicipal Waste Management Board at the eco-centres located in the Rocher-Percé and Gaspé MRCs.

Once a sufficient volume of car seats has been collected, they will be shipped to Produits Re-Plast in Victoriaville, in Central Quebec, where they will be transformed into street furniture.

"It's an initiative of the Mères au front de la pointe de la Gaspésie (Mothers on the frontline). Two representatives approached us to tell us about the project and how it was being done elsewhere in Quebec. We were up for it. At the board we are always very interested in giving a second life to objects. It's a great project," explains the board's project

manager, Laurent Gélinas.

"They will be recycled for plastic. Unfortunately, the foam will be thrown away, but the majority of the seat is plastic. The vast majority of the seat will be recycled," notes Mr. Gélinas.

"Next spring or fall, we plan to arrange for a shipment to the transport company to sort the components and send the material to the recycler," adds Mr. Gélinas, who is unable to specify the number of seats that could be salvaged in the territory covered by the board.

The organization is always looking for new ways to recover objects that currently end up in landfills.

"Every year, we receive several thousand tons of waste.

We are always racking our brains to find the best possible method of valorization. Currently, 60% of the material we receive at ecocentres has the right to a second life," he says. Examples of those materials include timber, branches, tires and gyprock.

"There are materials that pose challenges: wool insulation for which we have not found a market and vinyl siding where it is more difficult to find a solution. We are looking for solutions to divert materials from landfills," explains Mr. Gélinas.

The Quebec government is tightening landfill rules by increasing fees.

"The government taxes us

on what we bury and penalizes us for a certain material. You have to use your imagination and creativity, and the car seat

recovery project is one more material that can be diverted," states Mr. Gélinas.

At this time, child booster

seats are not part of the program. The project manager says it is something they could take into consideration.



Photo: The Gaspé Peninsula Intermunicipal Waste Management Board

Child car seats are now recyclable

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JOAN:  
▶ *Cont'd from the cover*

Spec News editor and journalist, Gilles Gagné, who has worked with Joan for over 30 years, states, “Joan was discreet, mostly in the background, and it took a while before I interacted with her. Calmly, Joan dealt with a lot of files for the paper. I started contributing more to the paper as years passed, as a volunteer in the mid-1990s and, later as a stringer, until I was contacted to take the news editor position at the end of the summer of 2001. Despite the little time I spent at the office, I remarked years ago that she was a good storyteller, with a sharp sense of humour. She told us at one point how her children were waving methodically at their grandparents when their school bus was passing in front of their house, whether the grandparents were looking or not. One of the funniest episodes of my interaction with Joan occurred about 15 years ago, when SPEC's annual Christmas supper took place at a Bonaventure restaurant then called Le Bec Flûté. It was in 2007 or 2008. Joan had translated the menu, full of sophisticated meal names, from French to English. The result was hilarious, and the meal was nonetheless delicious.”

Journalist Cynthia Dow reflects that, “The thing that really struck me about Joan was her incredible patience with people who would come in to visit! There she would be, typing away furiously on Social Notes (which were generally hand-written on notepaper), answering the phone, trying to solve Post Office issues, signing up new subscribers and, all the time, she would be kind, polite and truly interested in those who would come in, plop down in the nearest chair, and intend to spend an hour or so whiling away their time! And, of course, there was always a jar of mints on her desk as a friendly offering! Frankly, I do not have her patience, and after a few pleasantries with the visitor, I would head back into my office to work but Joan had no

such escape hatch: her desk was in the main room. Despite these daily and sometimes quite lengthy interruptions, she remained friendly and engaged, and still managed to get her work done. She is a superb multi-tasker!”

Even more indicative of Joan’s kind character, when these visitors would leave, she never complained about them taking up so much of her time. She would sympathize with their loneliness and comment on how well they were doing since... their illness / their accident / the death of their spouse/ their retirement, or whatever reason brought them into the office for companionship. She was, in effect, a great social worker for the community.

Joan is that rare human being who can be efficient, effective and focused, and still have time and a kind word for those less fortunate. I wish I was more like her! Joan, I wish you the very best retirement: at times adventurous, at times relaxing, and always fun!”

Jewell Roy, retired teacher and current proofreader for the Spec has known Joan since childhood. “Joan was my student and I loved her as a student. Even now I love working with her at Spec. We have become good friends. A lovely memory I have is one time when Joan and Heather dropped in at my home after a special church service, and I played the piano while she sang, and we had such a great time laughing together. Happy Retirement, Joan.”

Elaine Sexton, President of the Spec board of directors states, “I went to school with Joan, so I have known her for decades. When I joined Spec as a director 20 years ago, I could see what an asset Joan was as part of the team. On behalf of the Board, our volunteers and our faithful readers, we wish you a wonderful, well-deserved retirement. May good health and happiness be with you for many years to come.”

Long-time Spec subscriber, Mr. George LeGrand recalls interacting with Joan multiple times over the years. Joan

helped him to write the notice for the paper when his wife passed and how kind and patient she always was. An avid reader, Joan would set aside books for him that she knew he would like, even during COVID when she would deliver the books to him at the Gilker Residence. This is a small example of the innumerable positive and caring interactions Joan has had with Spec subscribers over the years.

Holly Smith, Circulation Manager and soon-to-be Office Manager, first met Joan in 2018 at Spec. Despite the 20-year age difference, their connection surpassed the bounds of mere colleagues, quickly blossoming into a deep friendship. Holly says she’ll miss their late-night calls, discussing the day's forgotten details even at 10 p.m. “Which, incidentally, would have been useful on page 12 of the January 24 issue of Spec,” says Holly referring to the big yellow square. Holly mentions a time shortly after beginning at Spec, when Joan was sorting books for the bookroom and sent a book flying through the air without first making sure Holly was paying attention to catch it. “The memory of Joan’s left arm's strength tossing books my way when I least expected it will never be forgotten. I think I still have the scar on my forehead.” Holly adds, “Above all, I'll miss your constant support – you've been my greatest advocate and a treasured friend. Wishing you nothing but the best in your well-deserved retirement.”

Lynden Bechervaise, who was one of the founders of Spec (which stands for social, political, economic and cultural news) in 1975, reflects, “Joan was always a dedicated employee and she and Sharon Farrell were quite a team! We wish her all the best in her retirement.”

Joan, you are wished all the best in your well-deserved retirement. Relax and enjoy time with your adorable grandchildren Eleanor and Wilson. Hope to see you strolling on the beaches of the coast hunting for that elusive piece of turquoise sea glass.

Reflecting on the challenges ahead, she notes, “There is a lot of work to be done to raise awareness to find out how we can do better.”

On this subject, past concerns about social acceptability for the installation of wind farms on land are similar to what is experienced for offshore wind farms.

“We can see similarities there because, ultimately, it is access to a territory and the sharing of uses. These are the same concerns. How do we reconcile different uses in the best possible way while respecting historical uses and new uses? The root of the question is there,” notes Mr. Côté.

For example, the Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Office now has the mandate to analyze renewable energies.

“There is a shift that is taking place,” said Mr. Côté.

Reflections

by  
Diane Skinner Flowers

Are you in your right mind?

*If the left half of the brain controls the right half of the body, then only left-handed people are in the right mind.*

What do all these people have in common? Bill Gates, Leonardo da Vinci, Paul McCartney, Albert Einstein, Jimi Hendrix, Celine Dion, Justin Bieber, Keanu Reeves, LeBron James, Barack Obama, Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, Brad Pitt, Oprah Winfrey, Jim Henson, Jim Carrey, Howie Mandel and Queen Victoria. They are all (or were) left-handed.

The British Royal Family has a high incidence of left-handers. In the British royal family, for example, the Queen Mother, Queen Elizabeth II, King Charles and Prince William are or were all lefties. Over 60% of NHL forwards shoot left and over 70% of the defencemen shoot left.

Left-handed people are a minority, and live in a right-handed world. Years ago, left-handed people were viewed as unacceptably different, and children were sometimes forced to change their handedness. Thank goodness this stigma no longer exists. Handedness is genetic and can be determined very early. The orientation of right or left-handedness can be observed in fetuses by observing which hand the fetus holds up to his/her mouth.

People who are left-handed are noticeably different simply because there are fewer of them. About 10% of the population is left-handed. Left-handedness is male dominant. In fact, males are three times more likely to be left-handed.

It seems there is, for example, a higher degree of creativity in this population. Is this claim supported by scientific studies? In classes of gifted students (those with I.Q.s higher than 130), the usual percentage of left-handers is often around 20%. Questions worthy of some study here might be: are lefties more intelligent than the average person OR is the distribution of the intelligence scores for lefties different than for right-handed people?

In his book Right-Hand, Left-Hand, Chris McManus states that left-handedness is increasing and that, as a group, lefties represent a higher proportion of high achievers. He claims that this is because their brains are structured in a different way. Left-handed men are 15% richer than right-handed men with the same education, he asserts. I might be going out on a limb here, but I am guessing that McManus is a leftie.

Children who are lefties require specific attention, but not criticism. They need special scissors, additional room for their left elbows and a left side computer mouse. In a class of 20 you will statistically have two lefties. Be mindful that the world is designed for right-handed people: cars, guitars, golf clubs, pencil sharpeners, measuring cups, cursive handwriting, can openers, circular saws, boomerangs and guns.

The most widely accepted theory of handedness has to do with the left and right hemispheres of the brain. The left side of the brain controls the motor coordination of righties. The right hemisphere controls this in lefties. The speech of right-handers is controlled by the left side of their brain. In left-handers the right hemisphere of the brain controls speech. Those that can use both hands are called ambidextrous, though this is a rare ability occurring in just 1% of people. Twins are more likely to be left-handed. Handedness runs in families and when both parents are left-handed, there is a 25% chance that their children will be lefties.

It seems that a slightly higher proportion of lefties may be geniuses, athletes, artists, actors and writers. On the other side some behavioural psychologists claim there may be a higher incidence of criminal behaviour, mental health issues and language difficulties. I am not a geneticist, and all of this is based on a bit of personal observation, having taught classes for gifted students, and some research; but what I do know is that lefties are different, and their handedness should be respected by teachers and parents. Besides, the next time you watch reruns of the Simpsons take note of Bart. He is a left-hander.

NERGICA:  
▶ *Cont'd from page 7*

Ms. Lebouthillier, who is also Minister of Fisheries, acknowledges the concerns of the fishing industry regarding offshore wind farms, such as the upcoming mega project in Maine.

“The importance of Nergica for information is important because we always need experts,” adds Ms. Lebouthillier.

Reflecting on the challenges ahead, she notes, “There is a lot of work to be done to raise awareness to find out how we can do better.”

On this subject, past concerns about social acceptability for the installation of wind farms on land are similar to what is experienced for offshore wind farms.

“We can see similarities there because, ultimately, it is access to a territory and the

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20  
Something will occur this week that surprises you, Aries. You may even wonder if it is a trick being played on you. It is no trick, so buckle down for an adventure.  
TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21  
You have pushed your mind and body quite far over the last several days, Taurus. Now you have to slow down or pay the consequences. Do not add anything else to your list.  
GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21  
Gemini, you may believe you have discovered a good thing and it could be right. But don't wait too long to act since this good thing has an expiration date. The clock is ticking.  
CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22  
Cancer, you might not be able to control what is happening this week, but you can control how you react to different situations. Keep your distance if an altercation arises.  
LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23  
Something you discover about a friend this week could leave you reeling, Leo. The signs have been there for awhile and you really should have seen it coming.



VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22  
Virgo, if you are on the move this week, there is a chance that you will experience some interesting people along the way. At least one person might be a good networking contact.  
LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23  
More than anything right now, this week you need to relax and unwind, Libra. Take things at a slow pace, and spend more time at home with family then at work.  
SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22  
Try not to take any financial risks right now, Scorpio. If you are planning to invest, then you may want to get all of the facts before gambling too much in the stock market.  
SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21  
This week you will be back to your best, Sagittarius. Things will work out, so use your positive


attitude to the benefit of yourself and others.  
CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20  
Capricorn, even though you are conservative by nature, this week you are ready to take a chance of some sort. Enjoy the journey even if the efforts do not bring you enormous success.  
AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18  
Aquarius, a kind word from you may be all that is needed to bring a smile to someone's face. Do not underestimate the power of a kind and simple gesture.  
PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20  
You don't usually lack confidence, Pisces. But you may not want to push ahead with a project for fear of failure. You should be more adventurous and not worry too much.

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JANUARY 29: Adam Lambert, Singer (42)  
JANUARY 30: Kid Cudi, Rapper (40)  
JANUARY 31: Justin Timberlake, Singer (43)  
FEBRUARY 1: Harry Styles, Singer (30)  
FEBRUARY 2: Gerard Piqué, Athlete (37)  
FEBRUARY 3: Warwick Davis, Actor (54)

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## A black and white portrait of a woman with short, dark, curly hair. She is wearing glasses and a light-colored blouse with a floral pattern. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a textured, light-colored surface.

She leaves behind to mourn her children: Betty (late husband Kenneth), Eldon (Anola), and Evelyn (Gerald; grandchildren: Myles, Angela, Jason, Heather, Ellis, Clayton and Lisa; Eight great-grandchildren; sister-in-law Dorothy Harrison; and many nieces and

She will be greatly missed by family, friends and neighbours.



Also thanks to the nurses and Doctor Basques as well as the support staff who came

The kindness from you all was truly appreciated and will never be forgotten. God bless you all.



CLARK  
SCOTT B. CLARK  
1946 ~ 2002  
HUSBAND OF  
CAROL A. TEED  
1947



### Covering Port Daniel to New Richmond

Page 11, January 31, 2024 - Spec





Photo: Ann Marie Jacques

Author Emma Metallic and Illustrator Natalie Laurin at their book launch at the Flying Canoe Bookstore in Campbellton, New Brunswick.

# Nipugtug: In the Forest

DIANE SKINNER  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

LISTUGUJ: Emma Metallic, author, and Natalie Laurin, illustrator, are justly proud of their newly released first book collaboration. The title *Nipugtug* (pronounced nee-book-dook), translates from Mi'gmaw as "In the Forest" and is intended for language learners of all ages. Emma states, "My time spent in the adult Mi'gmaw immersion program and our Gespe'gewa'gi trails inspired me to write this story."

The book, written in both English and Mi'gmaw, is set in the Gespe'gewa'gi trails and follows the journey of a young Mi'gmaw woman who snowshoes through the forest at different times of her life. Along the way, she meets animals and trees who guide her through her language learning journey. Emma reflects that it took her a few months to write the book. Emma lives in Listuguj and has always enjoyed writing. She reflects, "It's always been a helpful tool for me to process things or ideas."

The illustrations are a perfect complement to the story and have been beautifully created by Natalie Laurin. The two met while attending university in Halifax. Emma is a proud Mi'gmaw writer, and Na-

talie is a Métis and settler illustrator. The two collaborated while at university on a project where Natalie was just completing her degree in design. Eventually, Emma and Natalie worked together to create beautiful paintings that complement the text for the scenes which depict the story of Nipugtug.

Funding was received from SSHRC (Social Sciences Humanities Research Council), a federal research funding agency that promotes and supports research and training in the humanities and social sciences. This funding was used to create Nipugtug: The Gallery Experience. The paintings were then used in the book.

Emma works as an educational assistant at the Alaqsite'w Gitpu School in Listuguj. Emma is proud to state, "I'm grateful and honoured to have had the experience to create this book. I hope it inspires others to keep learning Mi'gmaw and to go after what you are passionate about."

The book is available for \$18 by contacting Kegedonce Press, an Indigenous publishing house supported by the Canada Council for the Arts whose motto is W'daub awae meaning "speaking true."

# Escuminac cancels Smelt Festival

GILLES GAGNÉ

ESCUMINAC – The Municipality of Escuminac is cancelling its Smelt Festival this year due to mild weather, which has prevented the formation of an ice floe in the Pointe-à-la-Garde sector, along with a shortage of staff due to the departure of its municipal director general.

Mayor Bruce Wafer points out that the event will take place in 2025 if the weather conditions permit and if the municipality's staffing situation is resolved.

"Look, it was 2 degrees yesterday, on January 25. There is no ice floe. We had one forming a few days ago, and the full moon's high tides

made it disappear. There are two shanties on thin ice in Pointe-à-la-Garde. They were put there by courageous people. The ice floe used to form at the end of November in front of my (Escuminac's Fleurant's Point) house and, by mid-December, the commercial smelt fishermen were catching fish. It is not like that anymore," explains Mr. Wafer.

The event was scheduled to take place from February 16 to 18. "It is usually a safe date to have an ice floe. The staff situation at the municipality and our current capacity to recruit volunteers also played a role in the cancellation. We have organized the festival having to plan four different pandemic contexts,

and the municipal team is a bit exhausted. There are fewer and fewer volunteers," adds Bruce Wafer.

"We will hold a festival next year if the weather helps us a bit. We crossed the tipping point. We will have to live with the climate's new realities. We are also concerned about the lack of smelt in the bay. Besides, we need cold weather to have excellent fish. The smelt are supposed to freeze on the ice. It is our trademark. It is also hard to hold the festival in March because of the possibility of mild weather," states the mayor.

The event's budget amounts to about \$15,000. Service sponsorships increase the value of that amount.

# More snow is needed to tour the Gaspé Peninsula on snowmobile

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - According to the Fédération des clubs de snowmobobilistes du Québec, another snowfall is needed to enable touring the Gaspé Peninsula by snowmobile.

As of January 25, trails between Saint-Maxime-du-Mont-Louis and Gaspé remained closed, as the snow is not yet deep enough to allow the safe practice of this important economic activity in the region.

"This year is very unique. Normally, during the holiday season, some areas, often including at your own home, are open. Unfortunately, we didn't have any snow. But now, we are starting to have good cover, but we still have certain areas where more snow is needed to be optimal," stated Stéphane Desroches, director of the federation.

The clubs have announced that the trail is closed mostly due to safety concerns, as the lack of snow inhibits the installation of signage along the snowmobile trail.

Additionally, this winter, the popular link between Murdochville and the Relais de la Cache remains closed due to a bridge being damaged..

The director of the federation is confident that the trail will be reopened next year. "I want to reassure everyone. Next spring, in the Cache sector, there is talk of a bridge



Photo: Archives

that must be redone. We are talking about complications in finding a contractor and finalizing the file. There is a question of permits. Everything is regularized but at this moment, we cannot build a bridge," underlines Mr. Desroches.

Even if certain sections are still closed, the peak snowmobile season has not yet begun. "In our data and talking to our tourism partners, it's February and March. In January, it's the locals who are happy but tourist-wise, the two most important months are February and March. I have no doubt that everything will be perfect," says the director.

The federation has been assessing the potential impacts of climate change on trails for several years and has implemented action plans accordingly.

The clubs have become more efficient and can now operate in significant quantities of snow, as was the case in the past.

"Our primary goal when we repair a trail or a bridge - and I'll use a visualization - is to be able to drive around in a Honda Civic. When you have a nice surface, you don't need three or four feet of snow to have a nice carpet of snow," says Desroches.

"It also means that if there's ever a thaw, it's easily repaired on the next run. In that sense, we work very well," he says.

All winter activities together, including snowmobiling, contribute significantly to the region's economy. Tourisme Gaspésie estimated the impact at around \$88 million, with snowmobiling playing a substantial role.