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00:00:07,237 --> 00:00:17,207

Hello, and welcome to Capital Stories, a National Capital Region podcast celebrating the NCC's 125th anniversary.

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00:00:17,267 --> 00:00:24,613

Today, we're joined by Michel Prévost, the president

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00:00:24,633 --> 00:00:27,154

of the Outaouais Historical Society. Is that correct?

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00:00:27,194 --> 00:00:27,794

That's right.

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00:00:27,854 --> 00:00:35,297

And Heather Thomson, our Heritage Program Manager at the NCC.

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00:00:35,457 --> 00:00:36,177

Very good.

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00:00:36,197 --> 00:00:38,758

Thank you both for joining us today.

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00:00:38,798 --> 00:00:39,458

My pleasure.

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00:00:40,458 --> 00:00:46,364

We'll be talking a bit about the history of the NCC, but also about the history of the region.

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00:00:46,424 --> 00:00:51,128

And, Michel, I know that you're an expert when it comes to these questions.

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00:00:51,168 --> 00:01:06,132

I'd like to begin with a question that situates our listeners in the region in 1899.

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00:01:06,142 --> 00:01:21,475

If we were here the year that the NCC - or the Ottawa Improvement Commission, which came before the NCC - was founded, what was the situation here in the region?

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00:01:21,535 --> 00:01:27,961

Can you briefly describe people's thinking at that time?

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00:01:28,941 --> 00:01:36,829

You have to realize that, in 1897, the public service was not as big as it is today.

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00:01:36,889 --> 00:01:44,657

Ottawa, and Hull even more, were both very industrial cities.

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00:01:44,717 --> 00:01:50,022

In fact, the public service began to grow mainly after the Second World War.

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00:01:50,462 --> 00:01:59,886

In 1897, Ottawa-Hull still greatly relied on the lumber industry.

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00:01:59,926 --> 00:02:06,069

For example, where the LeBreton Flats area is today, we had G. R. Booth.

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00:02:06,109 --> 00:02:15,133

So, there was lumber everywhere, big sawmills. And on the Hull side, there was E. B. Eddy.

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00:02:16,154 --> 00:02:21,298

And, in 1899, the pulp and paper mills started up.

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00:02:21,338 --> 00:02:27,142

E. B. Eddy began paper manufacturing, but there were still sawmills.

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00:02:27,162 --> 00:02:37,230

Hull was seen as the capital - and often referred to as the world capital - of matches. Millions of matches were being produced daily.

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00:02:38,210 --> 00:02:53,616

Sawn wood was everywhere. Cardboard was being produced. It was all industry along the Chaudières Falls and Brewery Creek.

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00:02:53,656 --> 00:03:06,282

For example, you had what would become Canada Packers, a slaughterhouse. There's the food and milk sectors, too.

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00:03:06,322 --> 00:03:17,868

Today, much of this is gone, but let's not forget that in 1900, Hull was Quebec's third-biggest industrial centre.

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00:03:18,588 --> 00:03:22,611

Of course, the population was not at all like today.

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00:03:22,671 --> 00:03:28,636

Well, Ottawa, had over 50,000 people, but compared to over a million today..

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00:03:28,696 --> 00:03:37,564

Hull, which was the biggest city in the Outaouais region, counted 14,000 residents in the 1901 census.

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00:03:37,604 --> 00:03:42,648

At that time, this was considered a very big city.

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00:03:42,728 --> 00:03:48,031

And there were other, smaller towns: Aylmer, Pointe Gatineau, Buckingham..

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00:03:48,071 --> 00:03:57,055

The city of Gatineau, for example (which later became Gatineau Mills in the [19]20s), did not even exist.

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00:03:57,095 --> 00:03:59,556

All around, there were fields, many fields.

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00:03:59,616 --> 00:04:11,362

Agriculture.. Today there are residential areas everywhere, but, in both Hull and Ottawa, there's still a lot of agriculture.

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00:04:12,242 --> 00:04:22,288

Also, the ByWard Market, the oldest market in this area, was very active back then.

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00:04:22,328 --> 00:04:29,091

It should also be noted that Ottawa and Hull were major railway cities.

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00:04:29,131 --> 00:04:30,872

There were many railways.

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00:04:30,912 --> 00:04:34,034

In fact, the first railway line in Ottawa was in 1854, and linked up with Prescott.

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00:04:36,475 --> 00:04:41,958

However, expansion occurred during the Second World War... the last half of the 19th century.

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00:04:41,998 --> 00:04:46,781

Today, we've forgotten how important the railways were.

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00:04:46,821 --> 00:04:52,805

It was the main method of communication, but also [for transporting] goods.

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00:04:52,885 --> 00:04:59,148

Towns that were not connected - or villages that were not connected - by rail, declined.

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00:04:59,188 --> 00:05:20,027

For that reason, Ottawa (1854) and Hull (from 1877), were lively towns at the turn of the century, but I have to say, they weren't very pretty cities, because they were very industrial.

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00:05:20,088 --> 00:05:23,811

Also at that time, it was very noisy. There was a lot of pollution.

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00:05:24,612 --> 00:05:28,174

And, unlike today, there wasn't any urban planning,

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00:05:28,234 --> 00:05:51,765

so development was disordered and, in 1899, the most dilapidated sectors were along the Rideau Canal, near the Rideau Falls, and along the Ottawa River, on both sides of the river, Brewery Creek...

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00:05:51,805 --> 00:05:55,827

Which explains why in 1884,

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00:05:55,887 --> 00:06:06,651

Sir Wilfrid Laurier made a declaration that possibly shocked the world. I'm going to read what he said word for word, because it shows very clearly what the city was like,

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00:06:07,472 --> 00:06:16,804

and I quote: "I would not wish to say anything disparaging about the capital, but it is hard to say anything good.

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00:06:16,864 --> 00:06:22,972

Ottawa is not a handsome city, and does not appear destined to become one either."

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00:06:24,033 --> 00:06:29,137

However, Sir Wilfrid Laurier had a vision.

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00:06:29,217 --> 00:06:35,501

He saw that Ottawa could become "the Washington of the North."

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00:06:35,561 --> 00:06:41,685

And that's why, in 1899, he created the Ottawa Improvement Commission.

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00:06:42,245 --> 00:06:49,211

That's why it's important to celebrate the National Capital Commission's 125th anniversary this year.

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00:06:49,251 --> 00:07:03,001

Because, when people say, "Oh, it's so beautiful here! There's so much green space, the Ottawa River has improved so much," it's because people before us planned what is here now.

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00:07:03,041 --> 00:07:09,556

And what we have in 2024 is the result of what began in 1899.

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00:07:09,566 --> 00:07:12,709

And I think it's important to emphasize this.

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00:07:12,749 --> 00:07:13,390

Absolutely.

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00:07:13,450 --> 00:07:16,492

You also talked about urban planning.

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00:07:16,532 --> 00:07:19,775

A few years later,

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00:07:19,815 --> 00:07:27,482

Frederick Todd was hired. I think he was the first urban planner to begin talking about ideas and a vision for the Capital.

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00:07:27,702 --> 00:07:30,324

Heather, what do you think?

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00:07:30,344 --> 00:07:35,748

Was Frederick Todd an important person in our history? Or not!?

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00:07:35,768 --> 00:07:36,789

Discuss!

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00:07:36,829 --> 00:07:38,771

Yes, absolutely,

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00:07:38,831 --> 00:07:57,508

and I think it's interesting because Frederick Todd maybe corrected Laurier's vision a little, because by saying that Washington... even though it's quite pretty, does not have all the natural beauty that our region is lucky to have.

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00:07:57,568 --> 00:08:03,334

So, he saw the rivers, the escarpment, all of the beauty of the Chaudières Falls.

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00:08:04,515 --> 00:08:23,028

Even though it was a bit covered up by the lumber industry at the time, he saw, at the time, that there was a lot of potential to get people to appreciate the river; get people to enjoy the natural beauty of the region and the city - both cities, in fact.

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00:08:23,508 --> 00:08:32,955

I think it was a slight correction of Laurier's vision, even if Laurier also just wanted to improve the city.

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00:08:33,813 --> 00:08:47,099

In fact, Laurier had more of an "Ottawa" vision, whereas Todd was the first person to identify the Gatineau Hills as something that needed to be protected.

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00:08:47,139 --> 00:08:50,460

In that sense, he was a visionary. He was an urban planner, but also a

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00:08:51,080 --> 00:08:52,661  
landscape architect.

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00:08:52,701 --> 00:08:55,983  
He even worked with Olmsted, in New York,

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00:08:56,003 --> 00:09:00,306  
who's responsible for Central Park.

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00:09:00,386 --> 00:09:05,789  
And, what he was looking for was a picturesque view.

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00:09:05,849 --> 00:09:09,592  
And for him, nature had to be part of the city.

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00:09:09,632 --> 00:09:13,094  
So, in that sense, it for sure was not going to happen overnight.

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00:09:13,114 --> 00:09:26,221  
But, we can say that Todd was a visionary. In fact, we're lucky that he came to work here, in Ottawa, for the Improvement Commission.

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00:09:26,261 --> 00:09:42,389  
And I would also add that at the start, we weren't thinking about the Quebec side, because there were four members on the Improvement Commission, but only one representing "Ottawa."

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00:09:42,449 --> 00:09:48,472  
There was still no National Capital "Region" vision.

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00:09:48,752 --> 00:10:14,262  
It's only when Sir Herbert Holt, for the first time, spoke about a federal district and started thinking about the other side of the river. They were talking about Ottawa-Hull, but again referring to the Gatineau Hills in particular.

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00:10:14,942 --> 00:10:28,193  
Unfortunately, the report was tabled in 1915, and an appeal was also made to Edward Bennett, another visionary landscape architect and urban planner.

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00:10:28,253 --> 00:10:55,214

In 1915, the Holt Report was the first to mention a district, except that... we were in the middle of a world war and after that, there were problems. There was the economic crisis after the First World War. Which meant that it was only at the end - in the middle - of the [19]20s that we went back to the idea of investing to improve the Capital.

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00:10:55,274 --> 00:11:04,442

In 1927, the dream became reality. The Federal District Commission was created.

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00:11:04,462 --> 00:11:11,728

That's when we truly conceived the idea of what we know today as the National Capital "Region."

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00:11:12,328 --> 00:11:23,381

And not long after that, we created Jacques-Cartier Park, for example. Also, it started becoming more park-like on the other side, instead of industrial. Right?

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00:11:23,401 --> 00:11:24,502

That's right.

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00:11:24,562 --> 00:11:32,672

The first locations that were slated for improvement on the Hull side were along the Ottawa River.

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00:11:33,672 --> 00:11:42,916

The first item was Brébeuf Park and Jacques-Cartier Park. But Jacques-Cartier Park was more interesting because it was right in the downtown area.

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00:11:42,976 --> 00:11:49,939

They began by purchasing property east of Alexandra Bridge.

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00:11:53,221 --> 00:12:09,454

Today - and we've totally forgotten this - there was a shipyard, the Ottawa Transportation Company, and in 1941, the NCC purchased the entire area and also inherited the oldest house in Hull,

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00:12:09,914 --> 00:12:18,563

the Charron House, which had once belonged to Philemon Wright and the Wright family descendants.

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00:12:18,583 --> 00:12:24,268

So eventually, the NCC bought this magnificent and unique little house.

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00:12:24,308 --> 00:12:29,273

It's one of only two houses still remaining from the Philemon Wright era.

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00:12:29,553 --> 00:12:45,711

Philemon Wright (who was the first - said to be the founder of Hull Township) was to play a very, very important role in the region, especially during the first half of 19th century and then in the second half. It was mainly E. B. Eddy, but it's still interesting.

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00:12:46,491 --> 00:12:57,198

The NCC had visions (not at the time, but the Federal District Commission) for everything along the river.

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00:12:57,278 --> 00:13:04,722

So they looked right to the end, to the mouth of Brewery Creek.

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00:13:04,902 --> 00:13:09,225

There was a big factory, the Gilmour factory, that would be appropriated.

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00:13:09,825 --> 00:13:22,795

But there were still some interesting lots, because there was a big textile mill, Woods, that employed more than 500 people during the Second World War.

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00:13:22,835 --> 00:13:26,117

It was a large, a huge, building.

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00:13:26,157 --> 00:13:34,904

But after the Second World War, the textile industry declined; in the Woods mill, which had an excellent reputation.

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00:13:34,964 --> 00:13:35,864

And in 1960, the NCC bought the Woods company as well.

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00:13:39,307 --> 00:13:41,088

Thank you.

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00:13:41,128 --> 00:13:46,190

I'd just like to go back for a bit to talk about the history of the NCC

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00:13:46,250 --> 00:13:50,931  
and I know that in the [19]20s and 30s, there was a new prime minister,

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00:13:50,971 --> 00:13:52,192  
Mackenzie King,

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00:13:52,292 --> 00:13:58,834  
and, Heather, he had his own ideas [about] moving the Capital vision  
ahead.

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00:13:58,874 --> 00:14:04,796  
Can you talk a bit about Mackenzie King's role and his relationship with  
a

108  
00:14:04,816 --> 00:14:05,397  
Mr. Jacques Gréber?

109  
00:14:06,717 --> 00:14:14,322  
Of course. It's interesting. King was very close with Laurier.

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00:14:14,362 --> 00:14:21,347  
In fact, the two were very close and he shared a lot of the same visions  
as Laurier.

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00:14:21,407 --> 00:14:24,449  
So he sort of carried on with that.

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00:14:25,089 --> 00:14:31,691  
He was able to meet Jacques Gréber and had many discussions with him.

113  
00:14:31,771 --> 00:14:38,213  
He hired him to come and see the situation here in the capital, Ottawa,  
and to make a plan;

114  
00:14:38,233 --> 00:14:44,295  
to create a more solid plan than the previous ones.

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00:14:44,375 --> 00:14:49,797  
Michel, perhaps you would like to talk a bit about King, on that subject.

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00:14:50,635 --> 00:14:56,800

I will talk about him, I'll come back to this at the end, about Gatineau Park, and also about Mackenzie King.

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00:14:56,820 --> 00:15:01,624

So yes, of course, the Gréber Plan was truly transformative.

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00:15:01,664 --> 00:15:04,486

They had big plans.

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00:15:04,506 --> 00:15:12,693

Many of them were based on Todd's ideas, on the Holt-Bennett Plan ideas, as well, but it went beyond that.

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00:15:13,394 --> 00:15:23,279

They had big plans; for example, getting rid of the railways, as Michel mentioned, that went everywhere through the downtown.

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00:15:23,339 --> 00:15:42,548

He wanted to get rid of that. Remove industrial buildings from the city centre, but go forward with walkways, parks; create spaces, and sites for public servants, to work in; create Gatineau Park, and further develop the idea of Gatineau Park.

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00:15:43,849 --> 00:15:46,150

And the Greenbelt too.

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00:15:46,190 --> 00:15:50,253

There were big, major, plans to transform LeBreton.

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00:15:50,313 --> 00:16:00,060

Then, the National Capital Act, which created the NCC, gave the NCC the powers to implement the Gréber Plan,

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00:16:00,680 --> 00:16:09,875

which [included] expropriations, and budgets to implement those plans.

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00:16:09,935 --> 00:16:14,423

So it greatly transformed the Capital on both sides of the river.

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00:16:15,667 --> 00:16:20,018

We can't overstate the importance of the Gréber Plan, in 1950.

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00:16:20,028 --> 00:16:27,390

Much of what we have today comes from the Gréber Plan; very, very positive things

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00:16:27,410 --> 00:16:33,151

and other things; today we question having removed the railways.

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00:16:33,211 --> 00:16:41,493

– Gréber wanted to demolish the central railway station, which today is a heritage gem.

– And a designated building!

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00:16:42,933 --> 00:16:44,034

Exactly.

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00:16:44,094 --> 00:16:57,563

Basically, Gréber was saying that the industrial character in downtown Ottawa and Hull was not reflective of a major capital city.

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00:16:58,023 --> 00:17:00,894

It took some time, only happening in 1972.

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00:17:00,904 --> 00:17:14,608

More specifically, they did not like seeing, right in front of Parliament, Parliament Hill, piles of wood and the noticeable E. B. Eddy mill.

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00:17:14,669 --> 00:17:24,551

And, finally in 1972, the NCC bought what is today the site of the Canadian Museum of History.

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00:17:25,492 --> 00:18:07,258

They got rid of the old mill. Got rid of all the piles of wood and then they would say they had vastly improved the view from Parliament Hill; but it also improved air quality – and less pollution in the Ottawa River. This was also part of an improvement plan and Gréber would have been quite happy to see it go, the mill and its mounds of wood, right in front as it were. Because in the [19]70s, E. B. Eddy was still running at full capacity and covered a large area.

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00:18:08,543 --> 00:18:12,848

It's interesting – so many changes took place.

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00:18:12,888 --> 00:18:17,253

But, as you mentioned, there are remnants from every era.

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00:18:17,293 --> 00:18:23,579

Like Charron House. The Digester Tower, right beside the museum, is still there.

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00:18:24,180 --> 00:18:25,220

A little after E. B. Eddy.

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00:18:25,260 --> 00:18:33,763

- But it no longer belongs to the NCC. It was transferred to the museum.

- But it's still...

- But it's sad to see that it hasn't been developed.

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00:18:33,803 --> 00:18:46,186

I've led guided tours in that area, and there's a plaque of Laurier. But when you approach the Digester Tower, there's no interpretive sign, and that's not the NCC's fault.

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00:18:46,946 --> 00:18:55,934

But the NCC's portfolio includes the Gilmour and Hughson Office, further down in the park, but in the Maison du vélo.

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00:18:55,954 --> 00:19:03,641

What remains is still interesting; they bring back a bit of our history. But, it's so different from back in the day.

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00:19:03,961 --> 00:19:05,983

And it's not promoted enough.

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00:19:06,823 --> 00:19:10,866

We need more interpretive signage.

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00:19:10,886 --> 00:19:17,270

Well, there's always vandalism, but we have to make sure... We can use inexpensive materials that can be easily replaced.

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00:19:17,330 --> 00:19:21,453

Once again, it's the president of the Outaouais Historic Society [who is speaking].

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00:19:21,533 --> 00:19:25,155

We need to promote our history more.

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00:19:25,576 --> 00:19:33,325

With Mackenzie King playing a role in establishing Gatineau Park, maybe we can talk a bit about the history of the park.

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00:19:33,345 --> 00:19:33,605

Michel?

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00:19:34,348 --> 00:19:55,197

In fact, some people consider Mackenzie King to be the father of Gatineau Park, but it should be noted that the same year that Todd tabled his report in 1903, Mackenzie King bought his first property, which was the origin of the famous Mackenzie King Estate.

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00:19:55,677 --> 00:20:13,343

Mackenzie King knew this place well. He loved nature, but he saw in the [19]30s that the park - what makes up the park today - the area was deteriorating, because the great depression was causing people to cut down wood.

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00:20:13, 383 --> 00:20:19,825

People needed lots of firewood and were... clear cutting.

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00:20:20,365 --> 00:20:22,966

And Mackenzie King... and the people too.

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00:20:23,006 --> 00:20:30,589

It should be noted that in the [19]30s, it was the locals who asked the government to intervene.

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00:20:30,649 --> 00:20:40,913

I found a very nice quotation in a Mackenzie King speech, that he presented to Parliament. He describes what today is Gatineau Park.

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00:20:40,923 --> 00:20:45,575

"Whole hillsides which face the approaches to Ottawa from other parts of the country have been completely denuded of their trees.

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00:20:45,635 --> 00:20:53,461

There have been left devastated areas which are nothing else but barren rocks and eroded soil.

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00:20:53,501 --> 00:21:01,408

...Streams and springs are drying up, and the wild life of woods and waters disappearing..."

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00:21:01,468 --> 00:21:06,092

So, it's quite astonishing.

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00:21:06,132 --> 00:21:10,056

The magnificent Gatineau Hills were being lost.

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00:21:10,076 --> 00:21:17,245

That is why Gatineau Park was officially created in 1938.

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00:21:17,285 --> 00:21:28,619

Certainly at the beginning, these... 6,000 hectares, were very not much, but it was really from 1950 on, with the Gréber Plan.

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00:21:28,659 --> 00:21:39,728

In the Gréber Plan, it's very, very clear that there's support for the creation of a large park and, over a few years, this grew to more than 35,000 hectares.

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00:21:42,310 --> 00:21:49,334

In 1950, Mackenzie King died and bequeathed his estate to Canadians.

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00:21:49,374 --> 00:21:59,420

And, one area that was annexed to Gatineau Park much later, in 1994, but which is my favourite place, is Meech [Creek] Valley.

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00:22:00,200 --> 00:22:14,902

The Société de développement de l'Outaouais expropriated, in the early [19]70s, the farms on Meech Creek Valley to create a zoo;

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00:22:15,382 --> 00:22:20,787

a project that no one wanted and that wasn't achieved. That was never undertaken.

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00:22:20,847 --> 00:22:30,236

And, fortunately, in 1994, there was a property transfer and that whole sector was annexed.

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00:22:30,256 --> 00:22:32,338

And it's really beautiful.

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00:22:32,378 --> 00:22:37,362

In the fall, I find that it's the most beautiful part of Gatineau Park.

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00:22:37,402 --> 00:22:40,445

The views are gorgeous.

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00:22:41,065 --> 00:22:59,068

For myself, Gatineau Park is the most beautiful gem on the Quebec side, and I know that the NCC is very proud of it. I can't imagine the region without Gatineau Park.

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00:22:59,088 --> 00:23:10,951

In fact, when we bought our property back in the [19]80s, we asked the agent to find a house close to Gatineau Park.

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00:23:10,971 --> 00:23:23,574

So, I'm two houses away from Gatineau Park. I've used it a lot and I think that there's great pride by people on both sides of the river.

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00:23:23,614 --> 00:23:30,655

People from Ottawa have been going to the Quebec side for a long time to see the hills.

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00:23:30,695 --> 00:23:43,141

I've been told that Lady Aberdeen, the wife of the governor general at the end of the 19th century, used to take hikes and go discovering, in what today is Gatineau Park.

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00:23:43,241 --> 00:23:49,445

So, it's a long tradition. If we have time, I'd like to share a little anecdote.

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00:23:49,505 --> 00:23:53,468

A few years ago, the NCC invited me and some others.

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00:23:53,508 --> 00:23:59,233

We toured around Gatineau Park to identify heritage sites.

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00:23:59,293 --> 00:24:12,424

In Meech Creek Valley, where the wonderful little covered bridge is located, we discovered, in a field, a completely abandoned cemetery, the Baldwin Cemetery.

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00:24:12,484 --> 00:24:20,351

The grass... trees had grown. We couldn't enter. There was a fence around it, and we couldn't get in.

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00:24:20,391 --> 00:24:24,255

And I told the NCC, those people were expropriated.

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00:24:24,295 --> 00:24:29,540

You expropriated - not you exactly, but your predecessors...

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00:24:29,560 --> 00:24:36,907

You expropriated, and I think the NCC has a duty to honour memory; to honour the memory of those pioneers.

187

00:24:36,947 --> 00:24:44,911

And I returned, a year or two later, and the NCC had completely cleaned the graveyard.

188

00:24:44,931 --> 00:24:51,552

Today, there's a historical plaque, and they are once again burying members of the Baldwin family there.

189

00:24:51,592 --> 00:24:56,834

So, I guess we can say the graveyard is still "alive" today.

190

00:24:56,874 --> 00:25:02,255

These are the kinds of small discoveries that can be made in Gatineau Park.

191

00:25:02,295 --> 00:25:03,776

Myself, I love covered bridges.

192

00:25:03,836 --> 00:25:07,939

There are not as many. Before, we had over 100 in the Ottawa-Gatineau region.

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00:25:07,999 --> 00:25:18,351

There are fewer than 10 and two are in Gatineau Park: the Meech Valley bridge and also the one on the La Pêche River, at the mouth of Philippe Lake.

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00:25:18,411 --> 00:25:21,254

These are gems that need to be protected as well.

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00:25:21,275 --> 00:25:21,655

Absolutely.

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00:25:22,753 --> 00:25:35,061

I should thank you, Michel, because it's thanks to you and others that the Baldwin Cemetery has become part of our cultural plan for the park and our heritage inventory.

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00:25:35,121 --> 00:25:50,431

We lean a lot on the heritage groups - stakeholders, people who know a lot about the history of the region - to sometimes help us identify these sites. Because sometimes, there's so much

198

00:25:51,392 --> 00:25:57,095

land for us to manage in our portfolio.

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00:25:57,115 --> 00:26:00,597

And also, sometimes people are not aware of the importance of those sites, so,

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00:26:00,637 --> 00:26:02,438

thanks so much for that.

201

00:26:02,478 --> 00:26:09,041

Another little anecdote about this: We were at Leamy Lake Park with

202

00:26:09,081 --> 00:26:13,484

[Marcel] Beaudry at the time, who was with us, and I said to

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00:26:13,524 --> 00:26:20,788

Mr. Beaudry, in front of everyone, "We need interpretive panels in the park."

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00:26:20,828 --> 00:26:22,809

And Mr. Beaudry said, "Yes, yes, yes."

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00:26:22,869 --> 00:26:31,334

And afterwards, someone, who I won't name, but someone from the NCC, came up to me and said, "We've been asking for this for a long time internally."

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00:26:31,374 --> 00:26:37,117

And then he said, "When it comes from other people, when it comes from outside groups, it has more of an effect."

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00:26:37,877 --> 00:26:44,419

And today, if you go to Leamy Lake Park, there are nice interpretive panels.

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00:26:44,439 --> 00:27:04,131

So, I think it's true. People should not hesitate to put pressure on the NCC when they see, for example, the McConnell farmhouse in front of the Bellevue Cemetery, which is falling apart, so...

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00:27:04,151 --> 00:27:17,943

I think it's important that residents, especially in the Aylmer sector, put pressure the on the NCC to let them know that this building needs to be restored before it falls into ruin.

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00:27:18,869 --> 00:27:19,390

Very well.

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00:27:19,430 --> 00:27:22,533

So now we're into the [19]60-[19]70s.

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00:27:23,634 --> 00:27:31,642

What are the most important events since Gatineau Park was established?

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00:27:31,662 --> 00:27:38,569

Over the last 30-40 years, Heather, what are the most important events and developments, in your opinion?

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00:27:39,085 --> 00:28:02,579

Well, Michel, I think it would be good to talk a bit about the expropriations in Vieux-Hull, huh? Because that, was ... What we see today - the Portage complex - is so present now in the landscape, but we've totally removed the heart of Vieux-Hull for that project; those projects, those many projects.

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00:28:02,599 --> 00:28:04,339

I don't know if you want to talk a bit about this.

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00:28:04,359 --> 00:28:08,640

Um, yes, I've done guided tours in this area.

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00:28:08,800 --> 00:28:22,463

In 1968, the Pierre Elliott Trudeau government was elected, and a promise was made: to put 25% of the federal jobs on the Quebec side.

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00:28:23,043 --> 00:28:30,706

And it was decided that part of Vieux-Hull would become a federal precinct.

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00:28:30,746 --> 00:28:43,710

Some will mention the rise of Quebec nationalism... And the federal government wanted more of a presence in Quebec, and moved right across the river.

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00:28:43,950 --> 00:28:56,364

At the time, expropriations started in 1969, phase 1 to phase 4; this went on for 10 years, between [19]69 and 1979.

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00:28:56,374 --> 00:29:08,518

More than 5,000 people were expropriated, more than 1,000 buildings were demolished and at the time, there was no consultation.

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00:29:08,558 --> 00:29:12,079

You received a letter and you were expropriated.

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00:29:12,619 --> 00:29:22,121

This was quite disruptive. It's incomprehensible that we did this in such a brutal way at the time.

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00:29:22,161 --> 00:29:35,103

This was done by the NCC, but I just finished writing an article about the construction of the Boulevard des Allumettières, and this time it was the Quebec government that did the same thing.

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00:29:35,163 --> 00:29:38,584

There was no BAPE, no consultation at that time,

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00:29:38,884 --> 00:29:44,788

but they destroyed the cultural and social elements. The institutions disappeared.

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00:29:44,828 --> 00:30:02,619

Notre-Dame parish, the oldest parish on the Hull side, died out because in 1971, the big church burned down. And the oblates were stuck with this white elephant and said, "We have no more parishioners."

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00:30:02,660 --> 00:30:09,953

Hull Island's population went from more than 25,000 residents, before, to about 13,000.

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00:30:09,963 --> 00:30:19,166

So you can imagine the shock, and also a great loss of built heritage.

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00:30:19,226 --> 00:30:32,089

For example, the courthouse and registry office were demolished... At the time, the intentions were good, because we ended up doing the same thing in Ottawa's Lowertown.

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00:30:33,209 --> 00:30:37,971

The historic areas were the oldest.

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00:30:38,392 --> 00:30:44,534

So, there was a property that had deteriorated a lot.

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00:30:44,574 --> 00:30:47,376

The streets were very narrow.

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00:30:47,436 --> 00:30:50,637

And, in the Gréber Plan, there is that as well.

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00:30:50,677 --> 00:30:53,258

Gréber really liked cars.

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00:30:53,358 --> 00:30:54,499

He wasn't the only one.

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00:30:54,539 --> 00:30:59,301

After the Second World War, the car was king, everywhere.

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00:31:00,121 --> 00:31:04,643

The car was king, we wanted to make getting around easier.

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00:31:04,683 --> 00:31:08,664

So that's when we expanded the roads.

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00:31:08,724 --> 00:31:13,506

Buildings were erected in Vieux-Hull, but roads were also needed.

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00:31:13,546 --> 00:31:19,449

So, for Boulevard Maisonneuve, many people were expropriated.

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00:31:19,509 --> 00:31:22,650

And what we see today is a lot of concrete all over.

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00:31:22,690 --> 00:31:28,013

If you compare it with the Boulevard des Allumettières, it's like night and day.

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00:31:28,073 --> 00:31:35,417

And also, in the early [19]70s, the NCC financed the construction of Portage Bridge.

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00:31:35,477 --> 00:31:38,859

So we have completely, completely changed.

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00:31:38,879 --> 00:31:43,121

When we look at the photos... When I do my guided tours, I bring photos.

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00:31:43,721 --> 00:32:01,882

There are not many cities where you can't recognize the downtown area because everything was changed and the Quebec government also had a small part where the Jos-Montferrand building was built.

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00:32:02,382 --> 00:32:06,903

And people still ask: "But why didn't people protest?"

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00:32:06,943 --> 00:32:21,126

It should be noted that the federal government's and the NCC's plan was supported not only by the Government of Quebec, by the City of Hull, but also by the Hull Chamber of Commerce.

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00:32:21,166 --> 00:32:33,530

Because they thought that these thousands of civil servants who arrived from the Hull side; that these people were going to go shopping on the Portage Parkway...

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00:32:33,570 --> 00:32:41,073

At the time, there were furniture stores there, they thought people would stay in the evening, would go eat out at restaurants.

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00:32:41,134 --> 00:32:56,943

And that is not at all what happened. The main road (which would become Promenade du Portage), which used to be very busy and lively before the federal buildings were built, really started to decline.

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00:32:57,003 --> 00:33:11,513

And today, go on Promenade du Portage at nighttime, after the public servants have gone home. And we know that since the pandemic, there is less and less. A lot less. So, there's not much life along Promenade du Portage,

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00:33:11,553 --> 00:33:16,454

if we exclude the sector called Place Aubry, where there's some life.

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00:33:16,494 --> 00:33:29,057

But even today, we can say that the expropriations that started in 1969 still greatly impact the downtown.

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00:33:29,677 --> 00:33:45,780

The population started to grow again, because they started to build many high-rise buildings, but I think we're going to have to live a long time with the impacts of the expropriations that took place in the 1970s.

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00:33:45,790 --> 00:33:55,538

If we did the same thing today, we would do it differently, that's for sure, but those were the times. That's how it was done then.

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00:33:56,667 --> 00:34:13,443

You would think that the NCC, maybe, would have learned something about expropriation, since in the [19]60s, there was the LeBreton Flats situation, but I don't think so, eh, Heather?

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00:34:13,503 --> 00:34:23,167

Well that's it. I think it was around the same time, but also the same mentality prevailed, because it was a time of big plans.

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00:34:23,226 --> 00:34:28,429

We have a big plan, we implement it, and that's it. Without consultation.

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00:34:28,469 --> 00:34:38,853

So, it was exactly the same thing at LeBreton. People received a letter, and they were expropriated. There was a lot of misery, also, for the community, as you mentioned before.

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00:34:39,194 --> 00:34:57,732

Exactly. Just a small anecdote about that. When we initiated the LeBreton Flats project, I think it was during a public consultation, and there were all these commissioners from across Canada, and the person who made the presentation said that it was on "vacant lands."

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00:34:58,553 --> 00:35:21,925

So right away afterwards, I intervened and said, "You must remember that there were people living there before the 1960s and that it was a poor, working class population, but that it was inhabited." And that the NCC still had a duty to remember and to not simply say that it was "vacant" land.

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00:35:21,965 --> 00:35:30,489

So, at that time it wasn't only the NCC, there was... it was called Ottawa-Carleton. But Heather is absolutely right.

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00:35:30,589 --> 00:35:32,470

We have to look everywhere.

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00:35:32,510 --> 00:35:42,056

The idea of having public consultations, to inform, was not yet part of our thought process.

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00:35:42,436 --> 00:35:48,620

Fortunately, things have changed quite a bit because, at the time, people waited for a letter.

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00:35:48,700 --> 00:35:54,403

And the letter stated that you would receive an amount, and you have this much time to vacate.

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00:35:55,103 --> 00:36:01,488

At least, when we look at Vieux-Hull, the building began immediately.

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00:36:01,548 --> 00:36:16,239

So when you look at LeBreton Flats; when we look at what was called the McConnell, Laramée-McConnell axis, the land remained vacant for 30 years, and we could still see the foundations of houses, and it had become a dump.

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00:36:16,719 --> 00:36:40,168

So imagine the families who had been expropriated very, very quickly and who said: "Nothing was built and our homes became a dumping ground." It was very hard for those people. In Vieux-Hull, people were expropriated, but construction began right away, so maybe you can call that... a small consolation!

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00:36:40,188 --> 00:37:07,236

For the project we're working on now, with LeBreton, we did an oral history project (maybe you know that) and we asked people to send us stories, to share stories about their lives, experiences, families (who were there) and we heard a lot of nice stories; in fact, just "life stories" before the expropriations; but yes, also painful stories about expropriations, for sure.

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00:37:08,056 --> 00:37:25,224

So, on our website, you can hear some of the stories that people shared about that time and afterwards, too. Because, as you mentioned, during that time it was "vacant," it was being used for other things, such as camping...

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00:37:25,264 --> 00:37:25,845

...a snow dumping site!

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00:37:25,905 --> 00:37:32,288

A few other things during that time that were... that took place.

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00:37:33,108 --> 00:37:37,653

But it was time to do it, because people were getting older.

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00:37:37,673 --> 00:37:42,499

This year, we are celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the allumettières' [matchgirls'] strike.

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00:37:42,519 --> 00:37:52,391

But before the [19]80s, no one cared about the allumettières. They had all died, and they could not be interviewed.

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00:37:52,791 --> 00:38:04,742

So when it's time to do something, you have to act quickly because those people disappear and with them, parts of history disappear as well.

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00:38:04,782 --> 00:38:07,685

So, it's extremely important to document.

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00:38:07,725 --> 00:38:18,975

And I also know that archaeological digs have been carried out at the foot of the cliff, but not for... because we know it's a very important Indigenous site - but to document the industrial site.

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00:38:19,535 --> 00:38:23,597

After the 19th century.

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00:38:23,618 --> 00:38:30,822

It's also important before building to ensure that archaeological digs are carried out.

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00:38:30,882 --> 00:38:40,848

And at the NCC, you have quite a project. And archaeology is also very important. Just because we can't see it doesn't mean it's not important.

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00:38:41,328 --> 00:38:41,688

Absolutely.

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00:38:42,377 --> 00:38:53,083

Since there's not a lot of time left in our discussion, are there any other developments, other themes that you want to discuss? Let's say about the last 30 years? Michel?

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00:38:53,103 --> 00:39:03,568

I would like to talk about the project to enhance the Jacques-Cartier heritage site, in Pointe-Gatineau, where the Saint-François-de-Sales church is located.

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00:39:04,408 --> 00:39:10,111

I stopped doing guided tours in that area because it had deteriorated too much.

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00:39:10,672 --> 00:39:22,268

But in the 2010s, in collaboration with the Ville de Gatineau... We know there can be tension between the cities and the NCC, but there are also some interesting projects.

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00:39:22,288 --> 00:39:27,254

And Gatineau and the NCC invested \$42 million in that sector.

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00:39:27,915 --> 00:39:36,601

And we have breathed new life into the area. The long parkway along the Gatineau and Ottawa rivers;

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00:39:36,641 --> 00:39:46,348

Abinan Park. It's wonderful. It honours Indigenous people and it's nice to lead guided tours in that area.

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00:39:46,849 --> 00:39:54,154

So I find that it's a great example of beautification, of improvement.

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00:39:54,194 --> 00:40:09,544

There are restaurants starting up there. It's lively; there's greenery there already, even if it hasn't been very long. Plants, flowers, trees are growing.. It's such a nice project.

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00:40:09,604 --> 00:40:15,668

And I tell people, "It's the best place for a view of the Ottawa River."

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00:40:15,728 --> 00:40:21,472

And people seeing it for the first time realize how beautiful this viewpoint is.

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00:40:22,112 --> 00:40:27,555

It's becoming more known, but more by the Gatineau side.

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00:40:27,575 --> 00:40:36,239

I think it would be great if Ottawa residents and tourists could discover this beautiful area.

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00:40:36,279 --> 00:40:42,181

So Pointe-Gatineau, compared to how it was before - it's like night and day.

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00:40:42,221 --> 00:40:45,623

So that's a great example of collaboration.

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00:40:46,343 --> 00:41:01,417

The other one that we're still waiting for is Brewery Creek, which is an exceptional site. However, it's very hard to develop. The land is contaminated.

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00:41:01,477 --> 00:41:17,552

Let's hope that one day... That's another gem that will have to be developed because it's exceptional to have a creek like that coming inland.

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00:41:17,612 --> 00:41:20,474

In fact, that's why we refer to Hull as an "island."

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00:41:20,514 --> 00:41:23,397

You have the Théâtre de l'Ile.

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00:41:23,437 --> 00:41:28,542

There, unfortunately, you have the old water tower where Les Brasseurs du temps used to be, which has now closed.

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00:41:28,602 --> 00:41:31,485

So let's hope we can find new use for it.

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00:41:31,525 --> 00:41:43,671

But the Historical Society dreams of having a trail that would start from the old water tower and go to the Zibi project.

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00:41:45,932 --> 00:42:04,321

When Maxime Pedneaud-Jobin, a former mayor, was first elected, he identified this as a priority project. And there, apart from the bridge, which was rebuilt by the Ministère des Transports du Québec... That area is so beautiful, the Théâtre de l'Ile, with all the green space.

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00:42:04,361 --> 00:42:11,005

It's a great spot, one which deserves to be enhanced in the coming years.

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00:42:11,045 --> 00:42:15,448

And most of the land is owned by the NCC.

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00:42:15,508 --> 00:42:22,933

And another project that the Historical Society was greatly involved in was the Wright-Scott House.

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00:42:23,673 --> 00:42:27,236

They even wanted to build townhouses all around it.

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00:42:27,276 --> 00:42:34,023

The Historical Society opposed it, along with the Association du patrimoine du ruisseau de la Brasserie.

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00:42:34,123 --> 00:42:38,727

In the end, the NCC bought the building and restored it.

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00:42:38,767 --> 00:42:45,473

And now, I think it's going to become "housing" again, as it was before, but it's an extraordinary site.

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00:42:45,753 --> 00:42:48,475

But again, there's no interpretation.

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00:42:48,555 --> 00:42:49,676

So, that would be good.

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00:42:49,716 --> 00:42:57,841

I'm happy to see that the house will be occupied because a building that is unoccupied is often prey to vandals or arsonists.

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00:42:57,881 --> 00:43:06,947

The building will be occupied, but we could post some interpretive panels because we are on the site of the founder of Hull Township, Philemon Wright.

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00:43:06,987 --> 00:43:09,469

His house is a little higher up and that's where his garden was.

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00:43:09,849 --> 00:43:17,231

The beautiful Wright-Scott House belonged to his granddaughter, Nancy Louisa Wright-Scott,

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00:43:17,251 --> 00:43:19,372

and Scott was Ottawa's first mayor.

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00:43:19,392 --> 00:43:25,534

So, that's where we see the relationship between the two shores.

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00:43:25,554 --> 00:43:37,117

So, we'll end on these two points, but we could - listen... There is so much history in the last 125 years that we could have done a much longer podcast.

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00:43:37,157 --> 00:43:38,138

A second podcast.

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00:43:38,218 --> 00:43:39,518

A second podcast.

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00:43:39,578 --> 00:43:44,840

But I think we still had a good overview with Heather.

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00:43:44,860 --> 00:43:45,561

I agree.

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00:43:45,601 --> 00:43:48,162

Heather, is there anything to add before we wrap up?

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00:43:48,182 --> 00:43:56,685

I just want to highlight... I think you mentioned that there are many connections between the two shorelines and the view too, the views on the Gatineau side.

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00:43:57,725 --> 00:44:05,369

We sometimes forget that, in fact, we go that way and we see the Rideau Falls, Parliament, you know.

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00:44:05,689 --> 00:44:09,131

It's beautiful! We have so many beautiful and wonderful views.

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00:44:09,211 --> 00:44:28,979

And also, I think, enhancement, as you mentioned is so important. But also, highlighting Indigenous history, because now, especially in the field of heritage conservation, we focus on things that we can see, buildings that exist.

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00:44:29,019 --> 00:44:38,042

But now, more and more, we're also trying to collaborate with Indigenous communities, because there is so much history - eight thousand years of history.

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00:44:38,082 --> 00:44:48,645

For example, in Leamy Lake Park, where our colleagues in archaeology do a lot of digs. In fact, there are currently public digs taking place.

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00:44:49,105 --> 00:44:57,394

Where people discuss and talk about so many artifacts that are thousands of years old.

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00:44:57,434 --> 00:45:03,441

So this is another thing that we'll work on and promote as we go.

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00:45:04,187 --> 00:45:16,397

We see it in the toponymy. I gave the example of Abinan Park. In my guided tours, it enables me to show connections, to remember. And we also have some wonderful interpretive panels.

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00:45:16,437 --> 00:45:29,327

There's also a sculpture by Simon Brascoupé. It's a basket that was very important for crops, and it was the first thing the Ville de Gatineau ordered from an Indigenous person.

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00:45:29,887 --> 00:45:34,075

People are interested in this kind of history.

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00:45:34,975 --> 00:45:48,099

In conclusion, maybe, I had one small question, because I heard that... We talked a lot about the lumber industry, but you have a family connection with someone famous in the industry: Jos Montferrand.

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00:45:48,119 --> 00:46:01,362

That's right. I'm a distant cousin of Jos Montferrand who, as we said, is the king of the Ottawa River; great defender of French Canadians against the Irish.

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00:46:01,862 --> 00:46:23,607

That's where in 1829 (today, the Chaudières Bridge), the biggest battle that ever took place in the region; where my little cousin supposedly defeated, all by himself, over 150 Shiners, Irish gang members who had decided to kill him that night.

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00:46:24,427 --> 00:46:33,564

Jos Montferrand was a giant who was 1.93 m tall; 6 feet, 3 or 4 inches.

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00:46:33,574 --> 00:46:38,697

I don't have those genes, but let me explain.

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00:46:38,717 --> 00:46:41,599

I'm related on my mother's side.

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00:46:41,639 --> 00:46:48,584

So Jos Montferrand's height and strength came from his father and all those good qualities came from his father.

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00:46:48,624 --> 00:46:51,336

So, Jos Montferrand was here from 1827

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00:46:51,346 --> 00:46:59,194

to 1857, the year that Queen Victoria and her advisors chose Ottawa as the capital.

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00:46:59,214 --> 00:47:13,148

But remember that Jos Montferrand is one of French Canada's greatest legendary figures and the most famous figure in the region - but he's also known as Joe Mufferaw - and people don't realize it's Jos Montferrand!

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00:47:13,188 --> 00:47:13,849

That's right!

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00:47:14,469 --> 00:47:15,389

Of course.

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00:47:15,429 --> 00:47:16,050

Perfect!

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00:47:16,110 --> 00:47:19,911

I'd like to thank both of you, Michel, Heather.

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00:47:19,931 --> 00:47:21,732

This was a very, very interesting discussion.

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00:47:21,852 --> 00:47:25,553

Thank you for joining us today.

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00:47:25,613 --> 00:47:27,194

Until next time.

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00:47:28,394 --> 00:47:31,216

Goodbye.