

A tourist's perspective



By Nate Smelle

THE SUN HAS BEEN disappearing a little earlier each evening over the past few weeks. All we can do now is face the fact...summer's almost gone. Wanting to make the most of what remains of the season, I decided to separate myself from the usual scenery in every way possible.

The first and most difficult step in this process of temporarily disconnecting ourselves, for me, is shutting down. Unfortunately disengaging ourselves from our devices is not as simple as just turning them off. To truly shut down and break free from our technological vices it also requires us to turn off that part of our brain that compels us to check our emails, tweets and messages when we really don't need to.

Soaking up the sun on the shores of Bay Lake on my first day off, I could feel myself still connected to this compulsion to communicate. Even though the sun was shining, my phone was at home and I was not technically connected to anyone else in that moment I felt as if I was under its spell. Jumping into the cool water to awaken from this trance I spent the next hour swimming in circles with a curious largemouth bass as I ventured through its aquatic abode. Refreshed, I crawled out of the lake without the distracting tones and vibrations that had previously been preventing my rest and relaxation.

Feeling good to forget about what could be waiting in my inboxes I chose to continue with this experiment in conscious disconnection. Realizing that a more drastic change in surroundings would be necessary for me to effectively leave this baggage behind when I felt the urge to check my devices the next morning, I packed the car and headed north.

By the time my wheels stopped rolling later that day I had found my way to Quebec City. Since visiting this historic and picturesque destination back in April for the Act on Climate March I had wanted to return to experience the city and its history as a tourist.

Wandering the mostly carless cobblestone maze in Old Quebec City after midnight, I took photos of murals, sculptures and a seemingly limitless supply of street art. In a dimly lit alley an accordion player and a guitarist made eerie music for the late night site seers and ghosts still haunting the streets. Unlike my devices, these type of experiences are unforgettable.

Walking back to the hotel exhausted and blistered but inspired, I compared the stroll with that of walking through Bancroft at night.

I also thought of the potential implied by the Town's new population sign declaring "Bancroft: 10,000 artists."

I first visited Bancroft around 15 years ago as a tourist. On my way to Algonquin Park, I stopped at the Canadian Tire gas station to refuel. Catching a glimpse of the massive rock face across from Tim Hortons I drove up the steep hill in search of a lookout. Parking at the top of the hill I got out to take a look around. As I walked through the forest I could see the highlands stretching out to the

horizon. Finding what I was looking for as I stood gazing out on the landscape I had feeling of being home. Little did I know how real this feeling would become a few years later, as I transitioned from tourist to resident.