Nova Scotia EdGEO Workshop on Goldmining in Nova Scotia

On Friday October 25th, 2019, the Nova Scotia EdGEO Workshop Committee organized a workshop entitled “Gold mining in Nova Scotia: environmental and economic impacts” as part of the annual Association of Science Teachers (AST) conference. The workshop was led by Mike Parsons who expertly navigated the politically fickle topic of past, present, and future gold mining in the province. The first stop of the day was in Bayers Lake Business Park to investigate the impacts of acid-generating rocks on infrastructure and the environment. The afternoon involved a trip out to Montague Gold Mines to explore the remnants of the mine’s infrastructure (including multiple mining shafts) and to examine what remains of the tailings some 80 plus years after the mine closed. Montague Gold Mines has been in the news recently due to the province’s commitment to clean up the mine, and the arsenic warning signs posted around the area (specifically around the tailings; a popular off road vehicle playground) serve as constant reminders of the necessity of remediation of decrepit mining operations and the need for responsible, sustainable mining practices in the province. A big thank you to Mike for taking the time to lead the field trip, to Lori for helping me organize the workshop and for constantly keeping track of everyone, and to Jennifer Bates for providing invaluable advice throughout the process. Thank you to the National EdGEO committee and AST for providing funding for the workshop.

Iron stained rocks of the Cunard Formation; Otter Lake Court, Halifax (photograph courtesy of Lori Campbell)
Left: Iron stained rocks of the Cunard Formation with overlying granite boulders; behind the Michaels on Washmill Lake Drive, Halifax. Mike was so captivating that we did not lose a single teacher to the Michaels! Right: Mike measuring the pH of the runoff from the Cunard Formation behind the Michaels; Washmill Lake Drive, Halifax.
Standing amongst the ruins of the Montague Gold Mines. Blocks of a building foundation can be seen in the background.
The Montague Gold Mines tailings are extensive and contain high levels of arsenic and mercury. Despite signage, the tailings are often used for recreational purposes primarily by off-road vehicles. (Right photo courtesy of Lori Campbell).