

Percé: Aspiring Geopark

IRENE M. BRIAND¹ AND PIERRE JUTRAS² - 1. *Percé Geopark Application Committee, Percé, Quebec G0C 2L0, Canada <i.briand@hotmail.com>* ¶
2. *St. Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 3C3, Canada*

The Percé area includes two iconic Canadian tourist destinations, both shaped by geology: the majestic Percé Rock and Bonaventure Island, which hosts one of the world's largest gannet colonies. Visitors are greeted by further landscape features of stunning beauty, such as Cap Blanc, the red cliffs of Mont Sainte-Anne, La Grotte, Les Trois-Soeurs, Pic de l'Aurore and the Cannes-de-Roches Cove. The site already welcomes 175,000 visitors per year, which allows for a splendid opportunity to promote the earth sciences. A geopark would in turn enrich the visitor's experience.

The singular landscape of the Percé peninsula and its off-shore extension, Bonaventure Island, owes its existence to being located in the middle of a late Carboniferous brittle fault system that juxtaposed together rocks with very different levels of resistance to erosion, which are currently being individualized by coastal marine erosion. Rocks in this highly tectonized area vary in age from Cambrian to Carboniferous and belong to three tectonostratigraphic domains.

Université Laval has agreed to partner with the Aspiring Geopark, and professors from the Université du Québec à Rimouski and Saint Mary's University have agreed to participate. Both the Miguasha and the Bonaventure Island and Percé Rock national parks are also invaluable partners. These organizations will help shape the Aspiring Geopark into a unique cultural and educational experience.

Local businesses, economic development agencies and the federal and provincial governments have committed to a 7 million dollar budget. The park will be administered by a cooperative that has been established by these local partners.

Cultural and educational activities will centre around the main geosites and the pavilion to be built on Mont Sainte-Anne. Multi-media interpretation displays and activities, as well as guided visits to geosites, will shape the visitors' experience. Public presentations by geoscientists will enrich this experience and promote the earth sciences for both local residents and tourists. Field trips, field schools and research by geoscientists from our partner institutions will be encouraged and planned.

Designation as a UNESCO assisted Geopark will ensure that Percé will become an ambassador for geoeducation, and will in turn give Percé a much welcomed exposure to international geotourism.

Presented in Theme 4