

MESSAGES FROM ACROSS TIME AND SPACE

DEAR SUDBURY,

The bottles assembled here contain a collection of messages to you. They capture some of our thoughts both about, and inspired by, your city. We invite you to explore this collection and, should you wish, to take a message-in-a-bottle and pass it along to another Sudburian (individual or organization).

Like the classic “message in a bottle,” these are transmissions from what can seem like far-away places, but places that you are nonetheless connected to by the currents of water and air and by the links formed by infrastructure, communication and relationship.

We’ve tried to be conscientious visitors, to observe and participate, to listen and engage, to learn about and from Sudbury. While what we’ve seen and heard here reflect unique local concerns, we also think that what is happening in Greater Sudbury has echoes and deep relevance beyond the region. The ideas we wish to share are very much grounded in this place, ranging from such tangible features as the city’s built infrastructure to the deep time of geological and cosmic forces.

As a mining town, you are likely familiar with the old strategy of bringing a canary into the coal mine with you—a warning system to let the miners know when invisible dangers were approaching. As we think about the state of our planet, we wondered what canaries we could possibly consult now about what the future holds. And we wondered, what if those canaries weren’t in cages, signaling only with their death. What if instead they could speak to us, tell us what they were noticing in the world around them? What would these canaries say?

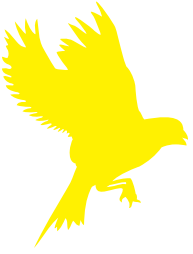
We’ve been thinking about how you live here. What, like a canary in a coal mine, are potential signs that things are at risk both for you and for others, and what are signs of success and creative response to collaborative futures?

While we are visitors here, we also see ourselves as part of here. We are all linked into a complex global web of cultures, technologies, economies and climate, equally present on what is an increasingly interconnected planet.

— DodoLab and smudge studio, June 2012

The thoughts and ideas shared in this project combine the respective research and interests of DodoLab (Guelph/Hamilton) and smudge studio (Brooklyn, New York), distinct artist collaboratives who met in Sudbury in the fall of 2011 during the Musagetes Café program. Over the past two years, DodoLab has been visiting Sudbury on a regular basis to run a series of community investigations in partnership with SACY (Sudbury Action Centre for Youth) and with the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation and Musagetes Foundation. smudge studio and DodoLab began collaborating with their project Amulets for Infrastructure staged in Sudbury and Kyoto, Japan, earlier this year. For more information about DodoLab, smudge studio and Musagetes, visit:

DodoLab (Lisa Hirmer and Andrew Hunter) - dodolab.ca
smudge studio (Jamie Kruse and Elizabeth Ellsworth) - smudgestudio.org
Musagetes Café - musagetes-sudbury.ca



DEAR SUDBURY, RE: MESSAGES ACROSS TIME & SPACE



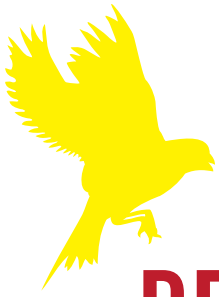
Sudbury & Falconbridge Towers

It is hard not to imagine your twin water towers in conversation, communicating with each other from a distance across the space of the original city. It has become a standard moment in films about “close encounters” for the alien occupants of the mother ship to emerge and attempt to communicate. Steps appear from beneath the craft, a door opens in the side or the top of the ship opens up like the roof of a sports stadium. Illuminated messages scroll across the side or flash from the surface. There is always sound and some complicated attempt at translation, often leading to misunderstanding and miscommunication.

We meet another water tower further out in what was once considered a separate community, now officially part of your Greater Sudbury. The Falconbridge tower embodies different proportions, it seems to be stretching its legs, craning its neck to be seen and heard by the towers in the core, echoing the postures of many other small outer communities that we hear feel isolated, peripheral to the energy in the historic centre and new suburban developments.

Speaking across space, time and culture is hard; it requires patience and understanding. Like much of your past, that is not totally past (the super stacks, rising up from the city’s horizon, are a bold reminder of this), the water towers linger, faintly transmitting signals that tell of the city’s industrial heritage, waiting to be reimagined or asked to move along.

What past, dear Sudbury, do you hope the future city imagines about itself? What stories would you like to tell? And how will you tell them?

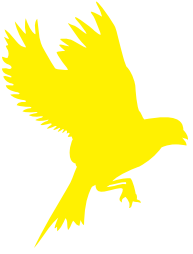


DEAR SUDBURY, RE: SUDBURY HAS A VERTICAL AXIS



A 1.85 billion year old geo-cosmological event is still unfolding in Sudbury. It began with the crash of the second largest known meteor to impact the Earth, creating the landforms and landscapes of today's Sudbury. Daily life in Sudbury moves in direct relation to its meteoric past. Some say that the nickel mined in Sudbury during the last 100+ years was splashed up from the core of the Earth by the meteor's impact. Others say that it was deposited by the meteor itself. In either case, the meteor laid deep foundations for life in Sudbury, and for its utterly unique and singular material and cultural realities. Through the continuous mining of what the meteor left behind, Sudburians live in intimate relation with an ongoing geo-cosmological history.





DEAR SUDBURY, RE: HERE, THERE, ANYWHERE?



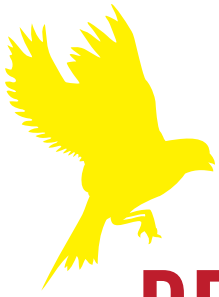
Coppercliff & Kingsview



Copper Cliff clings to a great mound of rock and clusters around your earliest mining site in some unplanned meandering that suggests a foreign logic of arrangement – the hill towns of Italy most likely. Milan Street, Genoa Street, Venice Street, Florence Street, Domenico Street: a compressed network of narrow lanes and crowded houses that seem to overlap their property lines, eaves jutting over roofs, driveways angling into other driveways. Between two houses perched on the highest curve of settlement, a walkway has been poured in thick concrete over the rock, a grey blob slowly oozing down and settling in. The houses press right up to the roads. Between them, behind them, sometimes beneath them, humps of worn black rock muscle in, appearing as discrete presences but really only the surface protrusions of a single mass into which the houses are nestled. The construction of Copper Cliff, clearly having happened before the possibility of an infinitely malleable landscape, has adapted itself to the terrain. The builders of this unusual neighbourhood used the strange and uneven rock as part of their construction plans, finding the spaces where it made sense to build, figuring out how to work the uniqueness of each site to their advantage.

Like Copper Cliff, the new Kingsview suburban environment is based on an imported model. But here, unlike Copper Cliff, the terrain has literally been forced to conform to the ideas brought into it. The landscape is no longer something given, something with which the built has to reconcile; rather, it is something malleable, something to be shaped by the human imagination. Great effort seems to be put into creating the kind of suburban landscape that could be almost anywhere. The inconvenient rocky landscape is blasted into flat platforms for easy construction in an almost ceremonial erasure – a purging of the rough and difficult specificity of this place.

But why do the builders build so much of *there up here*? We, and many of the people we spoke to during our time in Sudbury, like it *here*. Sudbury is unique.



DEAR SUDBURY, RE: SUDBURY CAME FROM SPACE



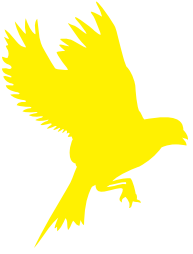
NASA radar image (Shuttle Challenger on flight 41-G) of southern Ontario highlighting two impact craters varying in size and age

Two hundred tons of extraterrestrial particles fall through the Earth's porous atmosphere each day. Most are merely the size of dust particles. More rarely, objects the size of small mountains fall through space, enter our world and trigger massive geo-cosmological events such as species extinction or ice ages. Collisions like that leave an astrobleme in their wake.

Astrobleme comes from the Greek astron and blema, meaning "star wound." It is technically defined as the "remains of an ancient meteorite-impact structure on the Earth's surface, generally in the form of a circular scar of crushed and deformed bedrock."

The second largest collision between our planet and a meteorite occurred 1.85 billion years ago, and created the Sudbury Basin or the Sudbury Nickel Irruptive. It happened in the Paleoproterozoic era (1.6-2.5 billion years ago), when the planet was a very different place. Things were still just getting started here on Earth. Continents were only beginning to stabilize after the massive volcano eruptions during the Archean. Oxygen was in very short supply. A year was 450 days long, and a day came and went in 20 hours.





DEAR SUDBURY, RE: WHAT MAKES POSITIVE PUBLIC SPACE?



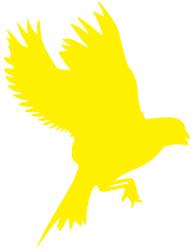
Market Square & The First Annual Tournament of Beasts

The round wooden stage in your market square seems dormant most days; a simple, empty platform, looking like a landing pad or maybe the remains of an old fountain, it is posted with a small sign decreeing *No Loitering* – a precaution that appears humorously paranoid on a day when the area is utterly empty. The space around the stage appears designed for occupation; benches step down from a deck; the stage itself seems to be a comfortable enough height to sit down for a moment. The contradiction between the non-verbal invitations to use space and the signs forbidding it, gives the market square an atmosphere that is slightly surreal.

Almost two years ago we staged a small event along with SACY (The Sudbury Action Centre for Youth), inspired by large signs posted at the entrances of Memorial Park which references By-Law 76-100 and outlines specific restrictions on alcohol, dogs, cats and golfing. Inspired by the question, asked in jest, *What possible incident could have happened in the park involving drunken canines and felines with pitching wedges and putters?*, The First Annual Tournament of Beasts was staged as a creative way to encourage conversations about public spaces.

The youth from SACY, dressed as animals other than cats and dogs, were playing croquet, not golf, in the park. In doing this they wanted to ask their city: *Wouldn't encouraging use and presence in a space be a better means to nurture a vibrant public life? And wouldn't this vibrancy discourage the kinds of activity that make spaces desolate and threatening?*

So, what do you think Sudbury? What kinds of public space do you want for the future? And, what are the best tools to create them?



DEAR SUDBURY, RE: A NEW SUDBURY SATURDAY NIGHT?



New Songs for Sudbury (Tor Lukasik-Foss and SACY)



“Will they think no more of Inco,” Stompin’ Tom asked in his classic country stomp *Sudbury Saturday Night*, but it is not going out to “bingo” or getting “stinko” that mutes thoughts of Inco today, is it? Like so many resource and industrial towns, ownership, technology and the progression of labour needs have distanced the community of Sudbury from the industrial operations that were once at its core.

But what then, Sudbury, happens now on a Sudbury Saturday night?

Last fall a group of young people at SACY (Sudbury Action Centre for Youth), with the help of artists Tor Lukasik-Foss and DodoLab, sang their Saturday night stories, with new lyrics to Stompin’ Tom’s song:

*I could go and hit the bar but I don’t own a car
And the last bus leaves at 12:30 at night
I’d love to hang out at the Chapters, for some coffee and some laughter
But I can’t afford the cab there, so I’m staying home tonight.*

Could this be considered the new Sudbury Saturday night? Or perhaps your Saturday is different?

Can we even still say that there is a typical Sudbury Saturday night with the same conviction that was possible in the era of the original song? Perhaps the realities of Sudbury’s citizens are too different to singularly sum up today.



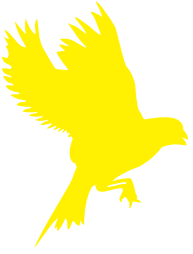
DEAR SUDBURY, RE: LIVING THE ANTHROPOCENE



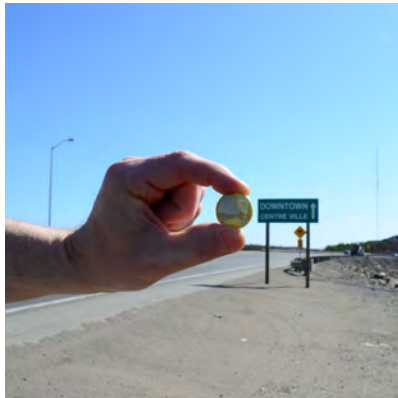
Sudbury at sunset, October 2011

Geologists have declared the arrival of a new geologic epoch named after us: The Anthropocene (*anthropo*, or man, plus *cene*, or new). Nobel prize winning Dutch atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen proposed, in 2002, that the geologic markers of human civilization on the earth warrant the declaration that we have entered a new geological reality. We are in a new phase in the history both of humankind and of the Earth. In this "new now," natural forces and human forces are intertwined to such an extent that the fate of one determines the fate of the other. Perhaps the Anthropocene didn't arrive all at once on the planet. Perhaps it appeared at different times in different places, and continues to do so. You could say that one of its earliest sightings was in Sudbury—giving Sudburians deep local knowledge of this epoch's changing material realities.





DEAR SUDBURY, RE: THE ROADS, THE ROADS...



Amulets for Sudbury Infrastructure Project

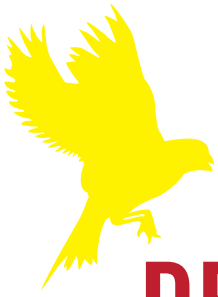
During our time here, many Sudburians have joked that the roads – or, more specifically, the potholes that plague them – are the biggest issue in the city, and that any civic project, no matter the scope or scale, is forced, in the end, to compete with the endless task of keeping the city’s 3,600 kilometres of roads in repair.

Indeed, we have noticed that the roads here do not move across the landscape, but rather move through it, into it. Even the main highway leading to Sudbury cuts through large swaths of the Canadian Shield that have been blasted away to allow for level road passage. This is not an easy terrain to occupy up here.

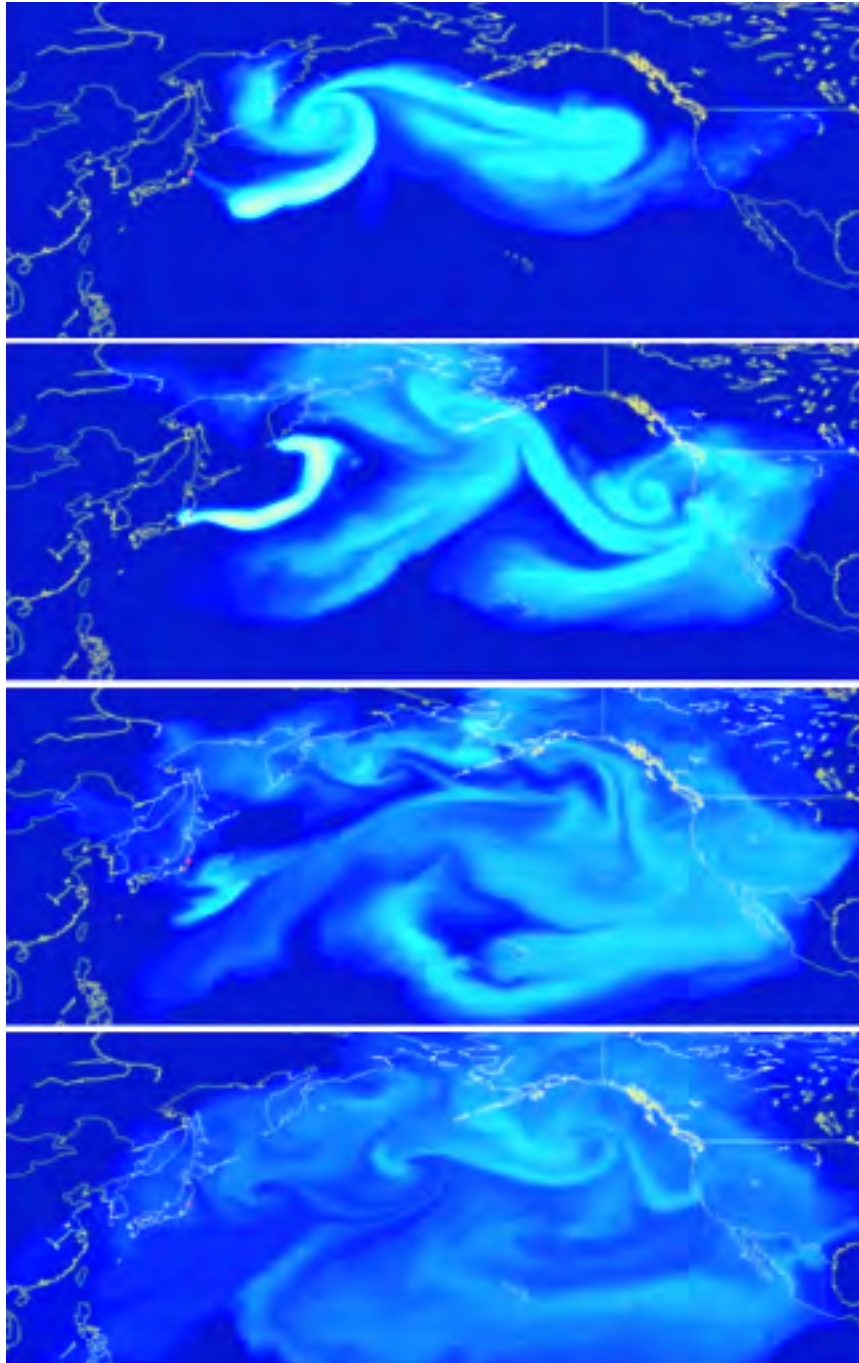
The very spirit of your city seems to be one based on spreading out into the landscape, of distance and being distanced, of having your space around you, of being “up north” – an occupation based on the road. The supply lines that bring resources into Sudbury from the outside are long and the city itself takes up an immense geographic area. It is no surprise then that roads play such a dominant role as they literally stitch the city together and connect it to the sources of the things it needs.

If you are here by choice, lucky enough to be able to afford a house in a more rural setting and have the vehicles to facilitate the distance, the appeal seems obvious, an idyllic setting in the iconic Canadian northern country – on a lake, in the woods, close to nature, hiking and swimming in the summer, snowmobiling and skiing in the winter, bears in your backyard. But those who are young or whose resources are limited have told us they feel stuck. The very things that form the allure of living “up north” – isolation, natural settings, distance from urban cores – can lead to significant struggles.

This is a place where common urban problems like sprawl and car dependence are magnified by climate and terrain, where transit and infrastructure solutions appropriate to the metropolitan urban cores of the south or dense cities of Europe don’t always make sense. But this also means that solutions for Sudbury could be incredibly innovative. If they work here, they could work in innumerable other places. They could, dear Sudbury, change how we think about transportation.



DEAR SUDBURY, RE: FLOWS IN, OUT, ACROSS



stills from CERE's simulation of cesium-137 dispersion
from Fukushima Daiichi from March 11-April 6, 2011





DEAR SUDBURY, RE: REMNANTS OF INDUSTRY



Hartera Paper Mill, Rijeka Croatia



Rijeka is a northern Croatian city on the Adriatic coast, which has certain statistical similarities to Sudbury. These two cities have populations of about the same size and identities closely linked with their industrial past. And, as the roles that once predominant industries decline in both places, the cities are faced with similar questions about how to respond to change and how to reinvent themselves.

The Hartera site is a former paper mill that once produced thousands of tons of fine cigarette papers sold all over the world and provided employment for thousands of people. But in 1996, the mill went bankrupt and the city is now faced with deciding what to do with the extensive complex of industrial buildings nestled between the river and valley cliff. There is a desire to preserve the buildings and infrastructure of the mill as a part of Rijeka's industrial history but the massive scale of the site presents significant financial challenges.

In 2005 a self-organized group of citizens started the Hartera Music Festival, a grassroots effort to test the potential of the site and instigate change by doing rather than engaging in drawn-out planning processes. Not quite legal but tolerated and a definite source of local pride, the Hartera Music Festival has been happening every summer since and attracts thousands of young people from all over Europe.

Sometimes we can understand a city differently through the lens of another place; like the perspective of an outsider it can push us to reconsider the things we see everyday.

On a postcard written to the city of Sudbury a young woman from Rijeka writes: *Change shaped my city. Change is scary. But necessary. And liberating...*