

Update on the Exhibition *Gold: a Nova Scotia Treasure*

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Introduction

Since 2010, the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources has been involved with the planning of a major exhibition of the province's gold mining heritage. The exhibition is scheduled to open in the fall of 2012 at the Stellarton Museum of Industry. This initiative, titled *Gold: a Nova Scotia Treasure*, was jointly conceived by the Stellarton Museum of Industry and the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia as a means to showcase art works, historical photography, gold specimens and artifacts held in the collections of various government departments. A steering committee was formed with the addition of members from the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, and the Department of Natural Resources. Planning for the exhibition began in earnest and continued throughout 2011, dominating the activities of the author. During 2011 the project was presented to the local mining community and public in general by way of an article in the Spring

2011 issue of the *Nova Scotia Minerals Update* newsletter and a display at the Geology Matters Conference in the fall (Fig. 1). *Gold: a Nova Scotia Treasure* is intended to be strongly visual, tactile and educational, and consists of both a physical exhibit and a web-based virtual exhibit. The physical exhibit is designed to be a travelling exhibition and easily disassembled, and will open at the Museum of Industry in September 2012. Following a stint there it will be transferred to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia for much of the late winter and spring of 2013, after which the entire exhibit, or portions of it, will travel to museums and other venues about the province, including the Museum of Natural History, Sherbrooke Village and Yarmouth County Museum.

Format of the Physical Exhibition

The exhibition explores Nova Scotia's gold heritage utilizing a themed approach. The importance that gold mining has had in the



Figure 1. Poster used to promote the physical exhibit *Gold: a Nova Scotia Treasure* at the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources Geology Matters Conference, October 2011.

province's storied past is, of course, front and centre. However, the uses of the metal in modern society, its impact on art, and the allure it has to mankind in general both locally and globally will also be explained and featured. All of these concepts are highlighted by separate themes with the gist of each described as follows. "Gold in Nature" examines the natural facts, physical and chemical characteristics of gold, and where, when and how it formed mineable deposits. "Gold Mining Past and Present" focuses on our province's late 19th and early 20th century gold rushes that resulted in dozens of past producing gold mines. Displays explain how the gold was found, how it was mined and all the corresponding social and economic implications. The 80 year period of historic gold mining by primitive methods and with no environmental control whatsoever, unfortunately, has left a negative legacy of abandoned mine openings and arsenic-laden mine tailings. The consequences of these are displayed. On the other hand, a theme on "Gold Mining Today" explains how modern mining avoids these sins of the past and explains how mines nowadays operate using modern techniques and under strict environmental regulation and control, which includes full mine site reclamation following mine closeout. "Gold Mining Today" also heralds that there is still very high potential for more gold mining in the province. The value of gold is at an all time high and a projection that it will remain so for some time has spurred much re-evaluation of the province's gold deposits. Two deposits are approaching production status and several are in a stage of advanced exploration.

From a social perspective a "Gold in Society" theme will portray why we are so fascinated by the glitter and glamour of gold, how it is used in society and industry, and, in particular, its common usage as a societal reward. "Gold in Art" investigates the role artists played in recording our gold rush history and how artisans, past and present, work gold into things like jewelry and other adornments.

The Virtual Exhibit

The physical exhibit during 2012 and 2013 will coincide with an online virtual exhibit that will continue after the physical exhibition is finished. Funding for the virtual exhibit is being provided totally from a grant provided from the Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC) through their Investment Program for Museums. During the fall of 2011 and early part of 2012, the steering committee worked with ISL Marketing and Development of Halifax via a contract with the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia to design and develop an exhibit website (Fig. 2). The website is designed to be a long term, permanent exhibit with opportunities for periodic updates and will generally mimic the physical exhibit in content. There will be differences, however, such as the inclusion of much a more detailed inventory of maps and historic photography from past mining activities. The website is designed to be very user friendly, easily navigable and includes lots of interactive content.

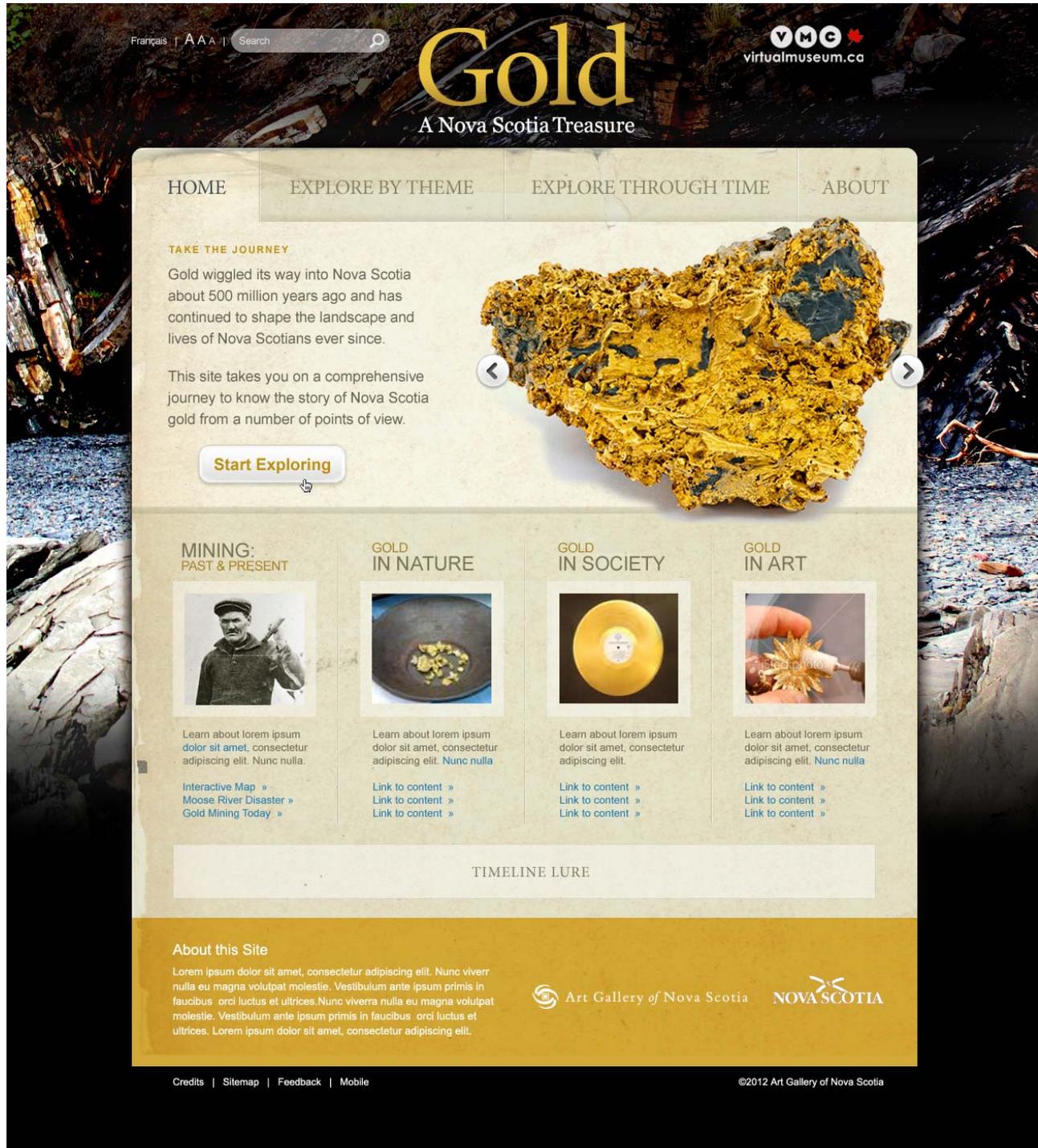


Figure 2. Preliminary version of the home page for the web-based virtual exhibit for *Gold: a Nova Scotia Treasure*.