

# Metamorphosis in *Perth-Andover*

Golf and much more attract visitors to this village on the  
Canada/U.S. border

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY DALE DUNLOP

**C**OVID had a devastating effect on tourism in Atlantic Canada. The village of Perth-Andover in the Upper Saint John Valley suffered a serious financial blow when the venerable Castle Inn closed. To add insult to injury, Canadian members of nearby Aroostook Valley Golf Club were denied access to a route they had been using for more than 80 years to get to their club. However, as my wife Alison and I discovered on a visit to the area last summer, with adversity comes ingenuity. The inn has reopened not just as a hospice, but as a learning centre as well, and those resourceful golfers have come up with a unique way to reach their beloved course.

The Castle Inn is now the Pathsaala Inn, a Sanskrit word for “seat of learning.” It is one of four Canadian campuses of the Elephant Thoughts charity, which supports educational programs in India, Nepal, Tanzania, Mexico, and Cuba, primarily serving Indigenous communities.

The campuses offer a combination of programs that teach culinary,



Formerly the Castle Inn, the Pathsaala Inn offers culinary experiences and accommodations in gorgeous surroundings.





hospitality, horticultural, and business skills. I was told that about 50 per cent of the students at the campus are Indigenous. Executive Director Jeremy Rhodes described the charity's relationship with the Tobique First Nation.

"Elephant Thoughts has been working alongside their friend and strong partner Wolastoq Education Initiative (WEI) based in Tobique First Nation for over 10 years, co-delivering alternative education programs," Rhodes says. "WEI is a partner in our youth programs taking place at Pathsaala."


Built in 1936 by a local lumber baron, the inn resembles a small French chateau. Set amid well-tended flower and vegetable gardens, it has an ideal location overlooking the Saint John River. The interior is decorated with some unusual and beautiful artifacts and folk art from the countries where Elephant Thoughts does its work, including masks, statues, and ornamental boxes. You'll want to explore the different common rooms




A pool, hot tub, and steam room are among the amenities at Pathsaala.

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*The first hole, appropriately dubbed the International, plays right along the border and a ball hit out of bounds is literally in another country*

with your camera. The collection of exotic doors alone is worthy of a photo gallery.

Creature comforts include an indoor pool, steam room, hot tub, hiking paths, a bar and 13 rooms, all with unique décor. Breakfast is included. On Fridays and Saturdays renowned Indigenous Chef Ray Bear teams with local Chef Matt Francis to oversee an evening meal that features a combination of foraged ingredients, herbs, and vegetables from the garden and locally sourced seafood, meat, and poultry.

When I asked Ray why he would make the six-hour commute from his home in the Halifax area every week, he responded that he enjoys, “work in an environment where young individuals can learn at their own pace and thrive in their unique ways, free from the constraints of a traditional school setting.”

Ray added that he teaches through the lens of “Two-Eyed Seeing,” which integrates modern teaching methods with the philosophy of being one with the land.

The Aroostook Valley Golf Club is one of two Canadian courses that abut the United States border and has members from both countries. The course was built in 1929 by a group of Americans who deliberately positioned the clubhouse within Canada so that they could legally have a drink as, until 1933, Prohibition was still in effect in Maine.

On our first visit you could drive to a

parking lot on the Canadian side of the border, but it involved a short stretch on a road that was in Maine. American border officials nixed that option a few years ago. Today, Canadian access is via a dirt road through a potato field, to a parking lot where you take a golf cart another kilometre along the left side of a paved road that is actually in Maine. So just getting to the club house, which is entirely within Canada, is quite an adventure. There are more detailed directions on the website.

This part of New Brunswick is a land of rolling hardwood hills intermixed with farmland, perfect terrain for a golf course. It is one of the most scenic courses in Atlantic Canada with a few very memorable holes.

The first hole, appropriately dubbed the International, plays right along the border and a ball hit out of bounds is literally in another country. The Canada/U.S. border markers along this hole are a great place for a photo.

The Punch Bowl, the par-five 14th hole, has one of the most demanding approach shots you'll find anywhere, requiring a precision downhill shot that must avoid a large pond that guards the tiny green. It is followed up the equally difficult par three Devil's Hole, a daunting tee shot through a narrow chute that is all carry to the green 30 feet in elevation

below the tee box. These two holes alone are worth the trouble to make your way to Aroostook Valley. The 9th and 18th holes feature a huge double green with United States and Canadian flags on the pins.

After the round of golf, there are some great outdoor activities to pursue in Perth-Andover. The Cultural Waterfront Walkway, a portion of which is on the Trans-Canada Trail, features a series of plaques telling the story of settlements in the village from the Maliseet through the English, Irish, and Scottish periods. At the information booth you can rent kayaks, canoes, or paddleboards to explore the river or go fishing.

If you didn't have lunch at the golf course, try one of the great croissant sandwiches at the 878 Waterfront Bistro or enjoy a cold one at the Tobique Trading Company that doubles as a craft brewery and a coffee roastery.

To make this a true golf getaway, consider playing the modern Covered Bridge Golf Course in Hartland and Mactaquac Golf Course, which hosts future PGA players at the Explore NB Open. 🏌️

[pathsaala.ca](http://pathsaala.ca)

[avcc.ca](http://avcc.ca)

[coveredbridgegolf.nb.ca](http://coveredbridgegolf.nb.ca)

[nbparks.ca/en/activities/1/mactaquac-golf](http://nbparks.ca/en/activities/1/mactaquac-golf)

