

# The Low Down **ON SPORT**

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## Meet Hills' trail building powerhouse

By Hunter Cresswell

The Hills have their very own version of folk hero John Henry, and she lives in Val-des-Monts.

While Dominique Larocque may not have a steam-powered rock drilling machine – as Henry did, according to the legend – since 2004 she has been carving sustainable trails for mountain biking, hiking, and traversing her property.

“Everyone thinks I’m mountain biking, mountain biking, mountain biking,” Larocque said. “No, I’m nature, movement, and art... a trail for me is an analogy for life.”

Her 108-acre property is riddled with too many trails to accurately measure, as this reporter found out when he asked how many kilometres the trails cover. Out of the A-frame cottage on her property near the Lafèche Cave, just across the municipal border from La Pêche, she runs the LaRoccaXC mountain bike school and Creative Wheel Studio.

Most of Larocque’s life has been spent on a mountain bike – she raced across the U.S. and Canada in the late 1980s and 1990s and has been heavily involved in mountain bike groups and programs. But, she said, she “never thought I’d be carving trails on my own land.”

Her trails are sustainable in the sense that they’ll last because they’re below a certain grade and won’t wash out during rain or the spring melt.

“It can’t be more than a 10 per cent grade increase,” Larocque said. “When you go above [10 per cent] and it rains, you basically lose all your trail.”



Dominique Larocque and her cat Rumi sitting in front of her cottage in Val-des-Monts, surrounded by the trails she manages. A lifelong mountain biking enthusiast, Larocque has created so many trails on her 108-acre property that she’s lost count of how many kilometres they cover. Hunter Cresswell photo.

Though her trails aren’t very steep, they’re not for the faint of heart. During her lessons, she makes sure students can successfully navigate lower trails without putting their foot down on the ground before giving them a pass to venture higher up the hill.

“Measure twice, cut once. That’s my mantra, I’m in no rush,” she said.

Mountain bikers who want to try out her trails are welcome to make an appointment and pay for a day of riding, but before she lets anyone loose, she checks that they have all the proper safety equipment and are capable of riding the technical pathways.

“Someone has to pay for the

gas and the chainsaw,” Larocque joked.

Larocque hosted a trail-building workshop on International

## Young racer lives F1 dream



The Hills’ own go-kart racer, Bronson Hetherington, only nine years old, lived out his high speed dreams on June 9 at the Formula 1 Canadian Grand Prix in Montreal. The young racing phenom got an up-close view of the world’s fastest drivers before they took to the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve. Hetherington, second from the right, didn’t get the opportunity to meet his favourite driver, Lewis Hamilton, but he did get to meet Lance Stroll, a Canadian-Belgian racing driver for Racing Point, before the Grand Prix began. Hetherington also received an F1 race suit as part of being an F1 Grid Kid, and according to his father, Scott, his parents had to fight to keep him from wearing the suit to school on June 10. Photo courtesy Scott Hetherington.

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