

# TUNNELLING INTO THE PAST

**They help us move around underneath cities, rivers, mountains and oceans. Let's explore some of Canada's most famous tunnels.**

The engine of a steam train emerges from one of the Spiral Tunnels in Kicking Horse Pass while the same train's cars travel overhead.

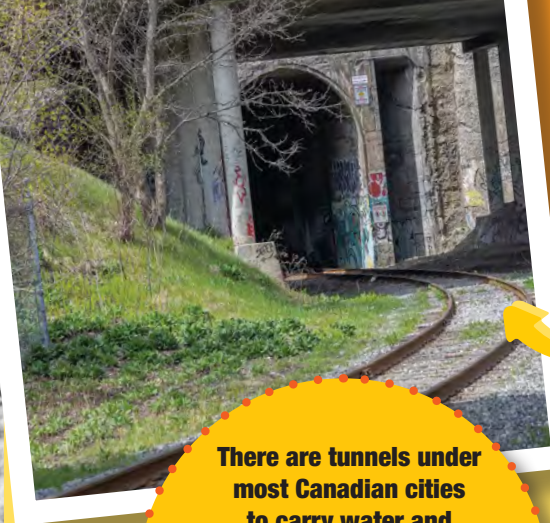
## Trains and Traffic

How do you avoid dangerously steep slopes, avalanches and landslides to get trains through the Rocky Mountains? Tunnels, of course! The famous Spiral Tunnels near Field, B.C., opened in 1909. The two huge loops allow trains to go through two mountains and under the Trans-Canada Highway (twice) to avoid having to climb or descend too sharply. Not far away is the Mount Macdonald Tunnel. At 14.6 kilometres, it's one of the longest in the world. The first underwater railway tunnel in North America opened in 1891. It connected Sarnia, Ont., to Port Huron, Michigan, under the St. Clair River.



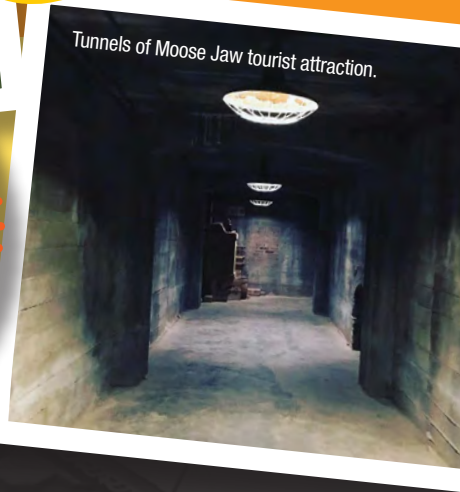
Buses in the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel, 1940s.

When the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel was ready to open to vehicles in 1930, American President Herbert Hoover turned a special gold key in Washington that rang bells in cities on both sides of the Detroit River. Drivers travelling under the river are using the world's only underwater international border crossing for cars and trucks.



**A 1.6-kilometre tunnel runs right under the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City. Starting in 1931, trains used it to take passengers from ships in the St. Lawrence River to catch a different train to Montreal. Freight trains still use it.**

**There are tunnels under most Canadian cities to carry water and sewage (waste from the toilet). Many towns and cities also have some underground tunnels used for pipes, electrical cables or to store stuff.**



Tunnels of Moose Jaw tourist attraction.

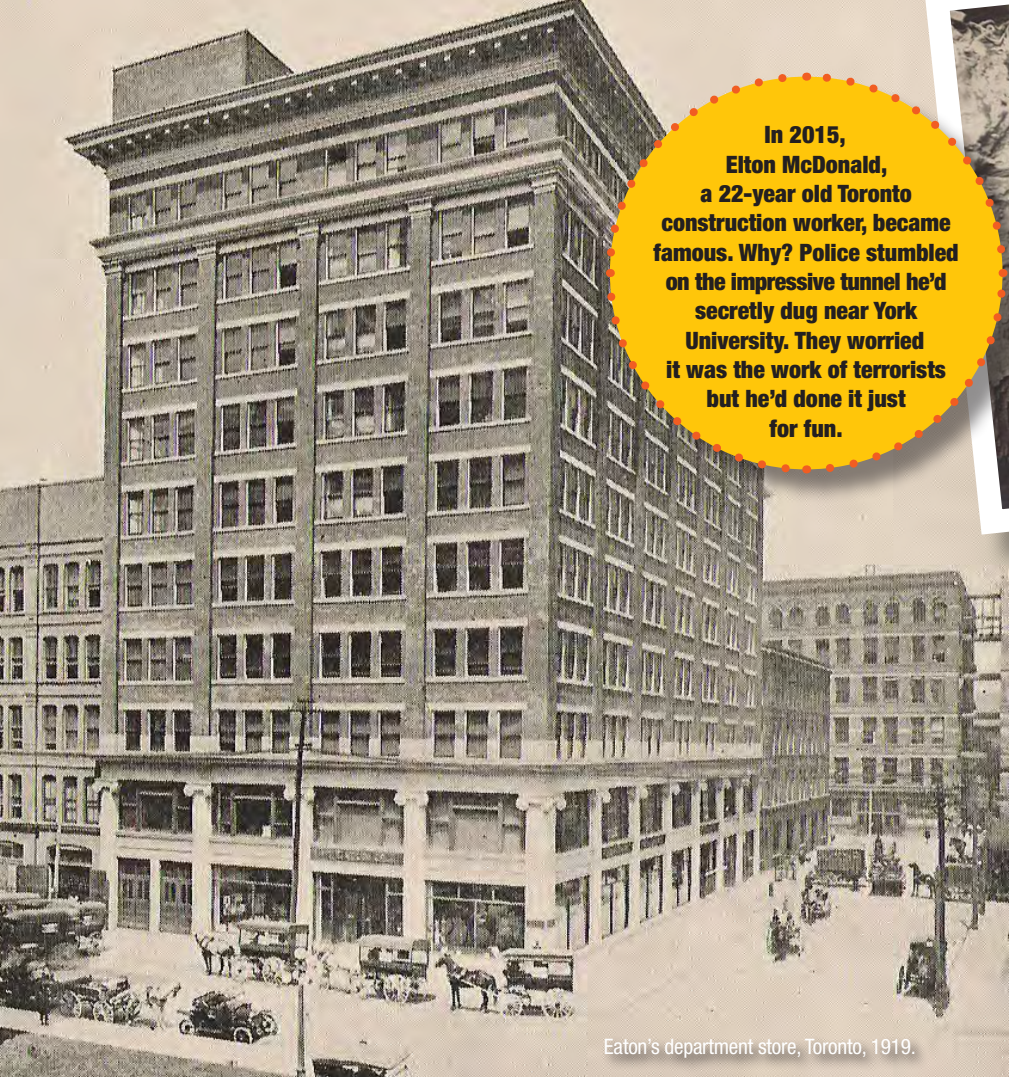
## **Tourists and Tales**

Moose Jaw, Sask., is famous for a network of tunnels running under its downtown. A company called the Tunnels of Moose Jaw provides tours led by costumed performers who follow scripts. One tour takes visitors back to 1929. It asks whether the legendary American gangster Al Capone might have come to Moose Jaw and run his illegal alcohol business from there. Another tour talks about Chinese workers employed by a mean white boss. It suggests they lived underground out of fear of racist attacks in the city. The tours are more like plays than true histories. No one's ever proved Al Capone spent time in Moose Jaw. And a Saskatchewan historian has found that in 1908, of the nine laundries in the city, eight were run in regular street-level locations by Chinese immigrants. Moose Jaw actually had one of the bigger Chinese populations in the province and was considered a welcoming place by the standards of the time.

Nova Scotia Archives: Tunnels of Moose Jaw - Moose Jaw Public Library



Members of Moose Jaw's Chinese community, 1920s.



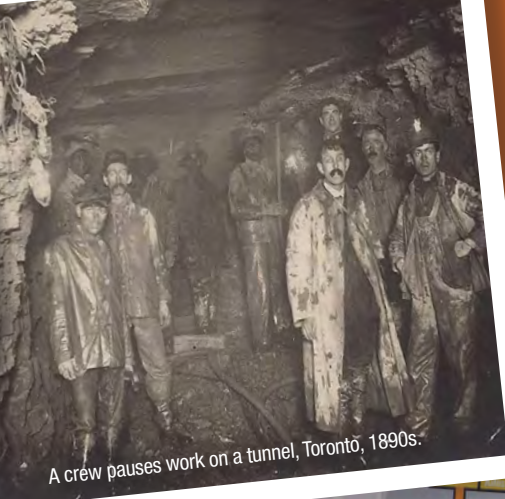
**In 2015, Elton McDonald, a 22-year old Toronto construction worker, became famous. Why? Police stumbled on the impressive tunnel he'd secretly dug near York University. They worried it was the work of terrorists but he'd done it just for fun.**

Eaton's department store, Toronto, 1919.

## Cities

Toronto and Montreal each have about 30 kilometres of connected walkways under their downtowns. Toronto's first tunnel, built in 1900, ran between two sections of the Eaton's store. Other businesses had short tunnels. After two businesses linked their tunnels in the 1970s, the system kept growing into what's now known as the PATH. Montreal used to call its system The Underground City / La ville souterraine. Now it's the RESO, which is how the word "réseau" (network) sounds in French. It started with some walkways under the Place Ville-Marie shopping and office complex in 1962 and grew from there. Both systems allow people to escape humid summers and cold winters by heading underground to walk to hotels, restaurants, shops, subway stops and more.

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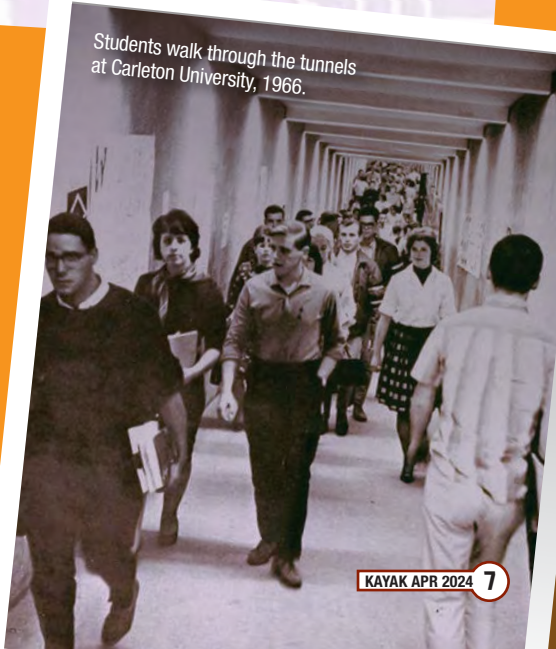


A crew pauses work on a tunnel, Toronto, 1890s.

Montreal's RESO system of tunnels runs under most of the city's downtown.



Students walk through the tunnels at Carleton University, 1966.



At universities all over Canada, students can move among campus buildings through tunnels. (Memorial University of Newfoundland calls its system MUNnells.) Carleton University in Ottawa has more than five kilometres of tunnels, the longest network of its kind in the country.