

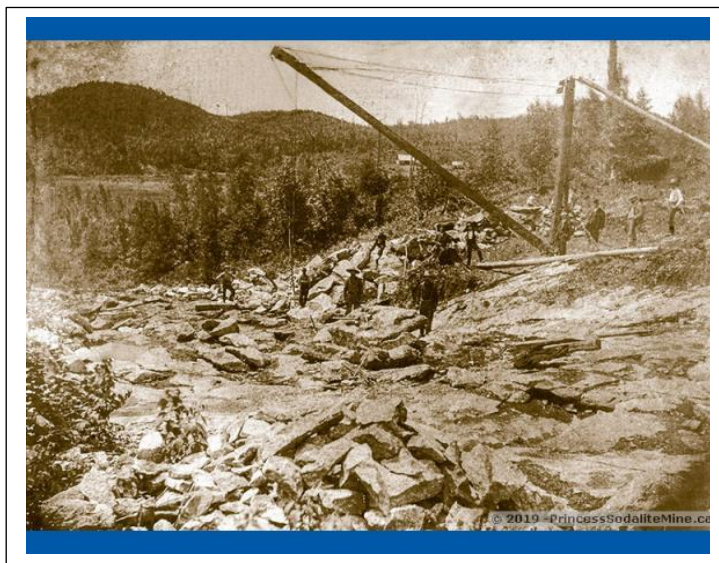
CCFMS Company and Landowner Award 2022
Andrew B. Christie, Owner of the Princess Sodalite Mine in Bancroft, Ontario
Nominated by the Nipissing Rock and Mineral Club Inc.

“To recognize a company or a landowner who has made extraordinary efforts to support rockhounding or lapidary by one or more CCFMS-affiliated clubs – plaque.”

Background

Andrew B. Christie purchased the Princess Sodalite Mine in Bancroft, Ontario in 1995, and has kept it open to the public as a fee for collecting site since then. Andy is the ninth owner of the mine, which was discovered in 1893, first began commercial operations in 1906 (see photo at right from <https://www.princesssodalitemine.ca/>), and was first open to collectors in 1961. The mine is famous for deep blue sodalite that occurs in nepheline syenite at the mine site. The mine rests on a portion of a long band of nepheline syenite that appears and disappears in the area, but while there are

other occurrences of sodalite in the region, the others have been mined out, they sit on private land closed to the public, or they are small stringers that are much less colourful and significant in size. The Princess Sodalite Mine property consists of an operating quarry, old mine dumps, a rock shop (bottom right photo), and a “rock farm” that is regularly seeded with specimens. In the rock farm, members of the public of all ages, and with little or no rockhounding experience, can collect specimens of 75-100 varieties of rocks, minerals and fossils in a safe environment.



Why Andrew Christie is Nominated for this Award

The quarry and mine dumps are generally off limits to the public. However, in 2017 (with the Kawartha Rock and Fossil Club), and at the request of the NRMCM in 2019, 2021 and 2022, Andy Christie allowed members of the NRMCM to tour the quarry and work the mine dumps for specimens (photo at right). Many buckets of beautiful blue sodalite were extracted each year. The fee Andy charged for the sodalite was modest. Because of the size of the working face of the mine dumps, participation has been restricted to 15-20 people, but this field trip is so popular that there has been a long waiting list of club members wanting to rockhound there each year. Andy Christie did not have to do this for our club(s), but he did!



Andy Christie set up his “rock farm” in the 1990s so adults and kids unfamiliar with rockhounding could collect specimens of all sorts in a safe environment. Each year, thousands of adults and children from across Ontario and beyond visited the Princess Sodalite Mine and rock farm. The Princess Sodalite Mine was kept open to the extent possible during the covid-19 years, giving families a fun activity they could enjoy outside. On weekends it was not unusual to see long lines of people waiting to get in. Andy has also generously donated specimens over the 27 years he has operated the mine to inspire and assist kids who want to get going in rockhounding. The NRMCM has been a recipient of this generosity. Andy does this because he is a rockhound himself with significant knowledge who is pleased to see others enjoying the hobby.

For all the above reasons, the NRMCM believes Andrew B. Christie is an ideal candidate for the 2022 CCFMS Company and Landowner Award.