Ten years ago, my moving truck and I weaved our way under Highway 15, and then took one of the seven bridges over the aqueduct canal, into Verdun, my new neighbourhood. Since then, several sites have become part of my quotidian or fired my imagination. Here are just a few:

**FARMING AT THE DOUGLAS**
My colleague, Mélanie, and I decided last spring to dive into urban farming. An extracurricular activity, a folly, or a combination of both, we strapped our tools onto our bikes and set out to “work the land” at the Douglas.

In 1881, the Protestant Lunatic Asylum opened its doors. Nearby riverside farmers worried that their livestock would “catch” the patients’ mental illnesses. The Douglas’s grounds were so vast that a portion, north of the aqueduct canal, was integrated into Angrignon Park. Affiliated with McGill University since 1946, this institution has been responsible for many revolutionary advances in mental health. What’s more, for over 70 years, the Douglas has worked and cultivated a portion of its 165 bucolic acres to feed its patients and staff. Today, vast parcels have become community gardens, including several small gardens measuring 25’ x 100’! That represents quite the feat for a first-time vegetable gardener!

**CRAWFORD PARK**
My boyfriend and I felt the lure of a little nest we could call our own, and searched for many long months, within a 50-km radius, often really pushing the limits of what we could afford. One January evening, we found ourselves on an enchanting street, trees blanketed in white, our footsteps squeaking on the snow, the smell of wood smoke in the air. Magical… The house, 1946-not-so-magic, would be ours a few weeks later. It was the beginning of our great renovation project at Crawford Park, my little garden planted from scratch, and my love affair with Verdun.

This ensemble of homogenous maisonettes, all identical, Monopoly-style, spans no more than six north-south streets. Starting in 1941, Parkdale Homes Development Corporation bought undeveloped lots on the western edge of Verdun, for the modest sum of $25 apiece, promising 88 new houses, 35 of which would be reserved for war veterans. Today, this first sector developed under the National Housing Act, named Crawford Park, is scattered with these little one-and-a-half storey red brick cottages. The notary told me that ours was originally purchased (and paid for in cash) for the modest sum of $5,000. Those were the days…

**THE NATATORIUM**
Just saying the word is fun! This outdoor swimming palace, inaugurated in 1940, was, for a long time, the largest outdoor swimming pool in Quebec, and even Canada. Diving competitions, fountains spouting from the middle of the pool, its location right on the banks of the St. Lawrence River, the wooden boardwalk of times past, this project was launched in the 30s, in the middle of the Depression, as a make-work scheme. Another motive was to encourage people to STOP swimming in the river (ironic today given that a few feet away are two floating docks giving swimmers direct access to the river).

Despite the Art Deco details that are now covered up by several layers of paint, and the rooftop terrace that has been closed, the Natatorium still has the aura of a mythical place. On my bucket list: getting into my bathing suit next summer and taking a dip there.

**THE LASALLE STATION … IN VERDUN**
Lionel-Groulx, Charlevoix, LaSalle (what?!), de L’Église, Verdun… Even 10 years later, as soon as I hear “next station, LaSalle,” I often think I’ve gone too far on the green line (God forbid, I end up in LaSalle!), but then am reassured when I hear the announcement “next station, de l’Église.” Once outside this station, opened during the second wave of
development of Montreal's metro (September 1968, Gillion and Larouche architects), I find myself in a puzzling parallel suburban universe. Verdun, is that you? In short, the LaSalle aedicule (in Verdun) resembles an enormous concrete bait box. I always feel like I've been reeled in!

THE ETHEL PARKING LOT
My discovery of the summer! This multilevel parking lot, circa 1986, an incentive for shopping on Wellington, offers a surprise on the top level. Discover the immense painting “Lucette ou l’incompréhension de soi,” in the series “Sommeils lourds” by the French duo Ella & Pitr. A bold initiative by SDC Wellington.

FYI, Edna, Ethel, Gertrude and Evelyn streets are all named after the daughters of the fifth mayor of the village of Verdun, Henry Hadley, who was mayor from 1896 to 1899.

Verdun is all that and more. It’s rollerblading along the banks of the St. Lawrence and crossing paths with people dressed in their country best, off to go line dancing. It’s dancing the rigodon at -15°C on Wellington and savouring maple taffy. It’s breakfasting with family at our favourite cheap diner (there’s one on every corner!). It’s the people, the streets, the buildings… It’s the history… and what’s now become my history.

#verdunluv 4 ever!