

Arvida, More than a City

Almost 100 years ago, Arthur Vining Davis, Chief Executive Officer of Alcoa, had a vision. At that time the world was beginning to recognize the important role of aluminum in our lives. Due to the nature of the manufacturing process, aluminum production required extensive power to produce the final product. The Saguenay area had the potential to provide this power through hydroelectric power for an aluminum smelter and the vision quickly became reality.

Arvida was more than a power plant and an aluminum production process. It was the establishment of an international community. Houses, churches, schools and recreational facilities were built by Alcoa for the many workers needed to operate the various facilities. Several thousand houses were built for the workers with 125 different designs some of which reflected the architecture of the original homes of the immigrant workforce.

Bauxite and alumina were required in the aluminum process requiring shipping these products from Africa, the Caribbean and South America bringing jobs well beyond the Arvida. WWII required extensive production and Arvida continued to expand to become the largest aluminum plant in the world and a major supporter of the war effort.

This history has resulted in something very special in today's world. There is a dedication and loyalty by the community that carries on the spirit that first started in the 1920's. Alcoa became Alcan and the city was a true Canadian city owned by Canadians and exemplifying the true Canadian spirit and enthusiasm a community. In 1959, the Queen visited Arvida to recognize the vital role the city played through the years as a vital member of the Commonwealth, its strategic role in WWII, and always the spirit of its people. Visiting the city today one can experience this spirit and true loyalty whether that be in the aluminum smelter, the power plants, the schools, and non-profits. It is further evidenced by the proud veterans who served their country and by their spouses who worked in the smelters and power plants to support the war effort.

Arvida is a city but much more than a city. People are proud when they say: "Je suis Arvidian!". A true community that is most deserving for nomination to UNESCO.



J. H. Dow Davis

Chairman, The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations
Grand Nephew of Arthur Vining Davis, former CEO of Alcoa
Grandson of Edward K. Davis, former CEO of Alcan Aluminium, Ltd.
Son of Nathanael V. Davis, former CEO of Alcan Aluminium, Ltd.