



February 2026

The Cutting Edge

Monthly Newsletter of the Ottawa Lapsmith and Mineral Club

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President's Message

Due to the cold snap the workshop has been closed from time to time. Supervisors do have the right to cancel for weather reasons. We are now back to normal.

Our next auction will be in late March. Please put some thought into what you would like to contribute.

Problems with the big saw continue. We may have to replace the main shaft.

Don Alp is creating a new Silversmithing workstation. Details to be revealed.

2026 membership, workshop and locker fees are now due.

2026 showcards are now available and are on the counter.

The Gem Expo show is this weekend at the EY centre. The Peterborough show is Feb 27 - March 01.

Kerry Day

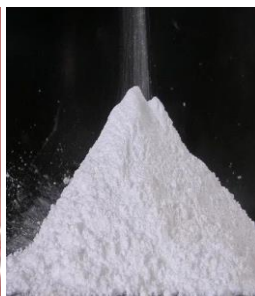
OLMC President

All members are invited to submit articles, proposals, and thoughts that could be included in the newsletters. Also, feel free to send your Classified ads by e-mail to: news@olmc.ca

Faceting Nights

Russ Black reports that there are four faceting machines available Thursday night.

Participants are forewarned that it will take four evenings to finish their first stone. Interested parties should contact Russ at russblackatmac@icloud.com.



A Spoonful of Talcum...

A note on the sedimentation barrel in the kitchen: If the water is murky in the morning (the sediment has not settled), then try adding

one or two tablespoons of alum powder to the water.

Don't
Forget

Membership Renewal for the Year

Members are reminded that both membership fees and workshop fees are due this month. If you paid at the 2025 show or shortly after, then your membership is valid until the end of 2026.

The membership period for 2025 ended on December 31. Members should renew now in order to be an active member for the rest of 2026. It is still \$20 for a single membership. That small price gets you access to the workshop, training courses offered through the club, plus special invites to field trips and other club events.

A copy of the enrolment form is included at the end of this newsletter. You can also download a copy from the club web site: <https://olmc.ca/pdf/membershipform.pdf>

For more information, contact the Membership Chair by e-mail memberchair@olmc.ca.



Web site revamp is in progress

Work has begun to revamp the club web site <https://olmc.ca>. It was re-designed in 2014, and now it needs a refresh. The goal is to change the style, make it more usable for mobile phone viewers, re-organize the content, add a little bit more content, and make it a

easier to maintain and update.

Opinions and criticisms are very welcome. Send your ideas on what you would like to see in the new site to news@olmc.ca. Colour schemes, font choices, more pictures, navigation – everything is open.

Diamonds for Sale

[Jacinthe Diotte](#) has some raw diamonds and is looking for someone to facet them, and bonus if they can be certified. If you are interested in performing this task, please contact Jacinthe Diotte through Messenger.



We want to hear from you!

The newsletter team really wants to hear from the club membership. Maybe you have a small project where you can describe the idea behind it and the work put into it, maybe you're working hard on a cabochon, or even a trip to a museum or rockhounding. Just send in some text and maybe a couple of photos to news@olmc.ca.



Slippery Meteorite Wedding Rings

It was about 20 years ago that a customer brought me this heavy iron-nickel meteorite, telling me that he wanted wedding rings made from it. I could not cut rings from it, but with their finger sizes measured, his father could, in his machine shop. So, I measured their ring fingers, and a week later he came back to me with two cylinders that his father had cored out from the meteorite.

I ground and rounded the edges, slightly doming the outside of the rings. As the polishing progressed, they became increasingly hard to hold onto. They became very slippery, and I must have dropped each one about 30 times during polishing. I thought these rings would be impossible to wear without losing them. The customer then went to Radio Shack and returned with ferric chloride printed circuit etching solution, and we put the rings into the solution. In a few minutes they took on a matte finish, which also revealed the hidden crystal structure of the meteorite. These unique crystal shapes, called the Widmanstätten pattern, can only be formed in zero gravity-outer space-and cannot be duplicated on earth. After etching, with the matte surface, the rings were no longer slippery, and we had no fear they would fall off and get lost.



The metal also had a blue tinge to it, which we learned was caused by a bit of cobalt in the metal. And the extreme slipperiness was caused by silicon also dissolved in the metal. Silicon is used as a lubricant for this reason.

To these customers, their meteorite symbolized eternity, and they were going to house it in a shrine, around which they would build their new home in Chelsea.

Jewellery and former club member John Urban shared this story in 2020 about a pair of meteorite wedding rings that he made for customers from Chelsea. Mr. Urban provided the photos. You can read more about him and his work in this [CTV News story](#) from 2021.

“Poor man’s gold” reaches a new high price

The price of silver rose 6.54% to USD \$95.34 per ounce on January 20, 2026. It continues the price trend of 2025, when the silver price rocketed up by 137% over twelve months compared to gold’s increase by 67%. Like gold, silver is seen as a “safe haven” asset during recessions, although one that is more volatile in recessions because its price is partly due to industrial demand.

Usually gold and silver prices rise and fall together at about the same rate (with a few exceptions), but there has been a noticeable rate gap between them from late 2013 to the end of 2024. That gap may have made investors think that silver was underpriced, so they bought while it was low.

At the same time, worldwide silver production from mines has become more expensive, and cannot meet the industrial demand for use in solar panels, medical devices, circuit boards and switches, electric vehicles and batteries, jewellery and currency.

The problem for the United States is that it must import a lot of the silver that it needs. From 2019-2022, imports came from Mexico, 44%; Canada, 18%; Poland, 5%; Switzerland, 4%; and 29% came from other sources. Perhaps as a result, silver was added to the U.S government “Draft List of Critical Minerals” in 2025.



1000 ounce silver bullion bar; photo By Unit 5 - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, [Wikimedia](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1000_ounce_silver_bullion_bar.jpg)



Chart of historical data for real (inflation-adjusted) silver prices (USD) per ounce from 1915 to January 2026. The series is deflated using the headline U.S. Consumer Price Index (CPI) with the most recent month as the base.

The designation means that silver is treated like other metals such as lithium, copper, and rare earth minerals. It has classified as vital to U.S. national security and economic stability. It could result in government subsidies for producers, faster permits for mining, stockpiling, and national emergency declarations.

One analyst wrote, “When lithium and uranium were added to the same list, demand surged overnight while supply took years to respond. The result was not a gentle price adjustment but violent repricing. Silver now sits at the start of that cycle.”

Ed: Or is silver a [meme coin](https://www.memecoin.com) now? It reached USD\$121.596 on Jan. 29, only to plummet to \$98.5 the next day.

Sources: [Financial Express](https://www.financialexpress.com) | [Finance Magnates](https://www.finance-magnates.com) | [Silverseek](https://www.silverseek.com) | [US Geological Survey](https://www.usgs.gov)

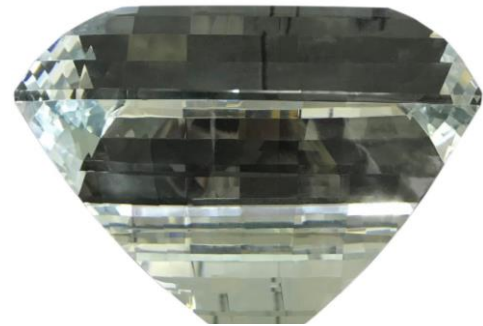
The Brazilian Princess Topaz

The Brazilian Princess Topaz is a massive 21,005-carat (4.25 kg) flawless cushion step cut (emerald-cut) natural light blue topaz from the mountains of Teófilo Otoni, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

At one time, it was considered the world's largest faceted gemstone. Now this stone, described "as big as a car headlight", is relegated to 4th place, though it is still the largest faceted blue topaz. Today it is exhibited at the J. P. Morgan Hall of Gems of the Smithsonian's American Museum of Natural History in New York City, next to the 22,892.5-carat American Golden Topaz.

Natural blue topaz is very rare. Most of the topaz mined in Brazil are varieties of colourless, yellow, and yellowish-brown, and rarely the pink and red varieties.

Museum curators say the Brazilian Princess was a 34-kg crystal discovered in the 1940s in the eastern mountains of Brazil. Then it was bought by gem dealer Edward Swoboda. Not until 1976 was the technology available to cut a near flawless gem of such size. It took a California firm more than a year to cut the 231 facets.

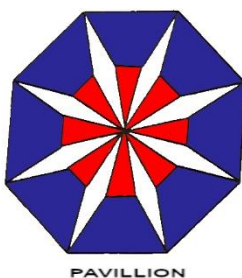


Side and table views of the Brazilian Princess Topaz; photos by American Museum of Natural History, Andrea Huska Mason.

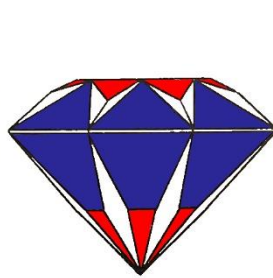
Faceting Pattern: Eight-Ray Star

The eight-rayed star has 57 facets. It does not give high reflection from the large facets, but it is a pleasant pattern. It can be modified very easily to be 10, 12, or 16 symmetrical rays.

You can find this pattern at facetdiagrams.org or on page 78 of "Diagrams for Faceting Volume 1" in the workshop library.



PAVILLION



TABLE

From the Library

The study of fossils provides the clues to the ancient history of our planet. Once we understand how these "silent witnesses to yesterday" lived and became entombed in sedimentary rocks, the history of the earth unfolds like the pages of a history book.

Harish M. Verma
Geology and Fossils

The Kawartha Rock & Fossil Club's 31st Annual

Peterborough Gem, Mineral & Fossil Show

Friday, February 27, 2026, 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm
Saturday, February 28, 2026, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Sunday, March 1, 2026, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Healthy Planet Arena, 911 Monaghan Road,
 Peterborough, Ontario. Minerals, Fossils, Gemstones,
 Beads, Meteorites and equipment.

Displays and silent auctions.

Admission \$5.00, children under 12 free

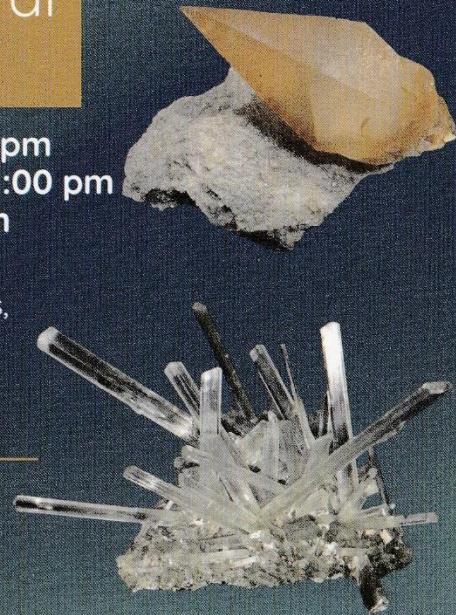


Information

📞 **705 749 8610**

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Kawartha Rock & Fossil Club - KRFC



Ottawa Lapsmith & Mineral Club's

58th Annual Gem, Mineral & Jewellery Show & Sale



58e Salon annuel des pierres, minéraux et bijoux

September 19-20, 2026

First complete T-rex skeleton on display, was fighting a Triceratops

Originally found by a cattle rancher in Montana in 2006, the 14-ton skeletons were finally extracted in November 2024 after a [legal battle](#) over whether the bones were property of the land owner or the mineral rights owner.

All that time, the fossils have been held in storage. Attempts to sell them at auction failed to get the reserve bid of six million dollars. Finally, the non-profit Friends of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences bought the fossils for an undisclosed amount and donated them to the museum.

The tyrannosaur skeleton also has rare skin impressions. Neither skeleton has yet undergone scientific study.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8966075/Scientists-reveal-worlds-complete-T-rex-skeleton.html>

“Kuldevta” stones identified as fossilized dinosaur eggs

Families in Padlya village, Madhya Pradesh, India, had been worshipping smooth palm-sized stones for generations believing them to be tokens of protective spirits. In 2023, paleontologists made the shocking discovery that the stones were in fact Late Cretaceous titanosaur eggs.

Around the Narmada Valley eventually there were found 92 separate nests containing 256 fossilized eggs, including some multi-shelled specimens, making this area the site of the largest known dinosaur hatchery.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/life/indian-villagers-worship-stones-discovered-to-be-dinosaur-eggs/news>

Thieves steal \$35 million from bank via parking garage

In December, robbers ran away with cash, gold, and jewellery from 3,300 safety deposit boxes at the Sparkasse bank in Gelsenkirche, Germany, after drilling a tunnel from an adjacent parking garage into the underground vault room. The estimated value of the items is between €10 million and €90 million.

Police said the theft probably happened on the weekend of December 28-29, but it was only discovered when a fire alarm went off near 4:00 a.m. on Monday morning.

Witnesses told police they saw several men carrying large bags in the stairwell of the parking garage during the night from Saturday to Sunday. Security camera footage showed a black Audi RS 6 with a stolen license plate leaving the parking garage early Monday morning, with masked persons inside.

As of January 2026, the identities of the criminals are unknown, no arrests have been made, and the perpetrators are at large.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/germany-bank-heist-vault-robbery-compared-to-oceans-eleven/>

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Basalt

Basalt is a fine-grained extrusive igneous rock formed when low-viscosity fast-moving lava rich in magnesium and iron (mafic lava) cools very quickly. More than 90% of all volcanic rock on Earth is basalt, and about 20 active volcanoes continue to erupt with basalt lava.

Basalt has a Mohs hardness between 5 and 7, depending on the mineral composition, and typically has conchoidal fractures. It is mostly made of oxides of silicon, iron, magnesium, potassium, aluminum, titanium, and calcium. It is often coloured dark grey to black, but some varieties are light-coloured due to a high amount of plagioclase. Many basalts contain gas bubbles (vesicles) that may be filled with other minerals like zeolites, calcite, or agate. Also, basalt often contains larger crystals called phenocrysts that formed before the magma reached the surface, embedded in a fine-grained matrix. The phenocrysts are usually augite, olivine, or calcium-rich plagioclase.

Weathering will break down basalt to form clay minerals and iron oxides, usually resulting in red or brown soils.

Background photo by David Singleton from London, UK - [flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/dsingleton/1000000000/) - [CC-BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

Workshop Schedule

February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 Lapidary 10am-2pm (RV) Silversmith 6:30-9pm (DA)	4 Lapidary 5pm-9pm (CG)	5 Faceting 6pm-9pm (RB)	6	7 Lapidary 10am-4pm (JM/EC)
8	9	10 Lapidary 10am-2pm (RV) Silversmith 6:30-9pm (JB)	11 Lapidary 5pm-9pm (JL)	12 Faceting 6pm-9pm (DA)	13	14 Lapidary 10am-4pm (CG/KD)
15	16	17 Lapidary 10am-2pm (RV) Silversmith 6:30-9pm (DA)	18 Lapidary 5pm-9pm (DP)	19 Faceting 6pm-9pm (RB)	20	21 Lapidary 10am-4pm (SJ/JC)
22	23	24 Lapidary 10am-2pm (RV) Silversmith 6:30-9pm (JB)	25 Lapidary 5pm-9pm (JGB)	26 Faceting 6pm-9pm (JL)	27	28 Lapidary 10am-4pm (DF/NB)

OLMC Membership Application

☐ New Membership

☐ Membership Renewal

☐ Individual **\$20**

☐ Family (2+ persons in the same residence) **\$30**

Benefits:

☒ Monthly Newsletter

☐ Newsletter advertisement: \$25 per year for members or \$55 for businesses

(Ten quarter pages per year over ten newsletters).

☒ OLMC online auctions

☒ OLMC field trips

*More information can be found at <https://olmc.ca>
You can also go on our Facebook page: [OttawaLapsmithMineralClub](#)*

Names(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____

Please specify your e-mail address to receive OLMC's newsletter:

_____ Do you require a receipt? ☐

Yes

Payments are payable by **cash, cheque** to Ottawa Lapsmith and Mineral Club, or
E Transfer at treasurer@olmc.ca with the application form

Please mail your membership form and fees to:

Ottawa Lapsmith and Mineral Club

PO Box 57012, Ottawa RPO Gladstone, Ottawa, ON, K1R 1A1

Please note that all membership information is used only for administrative purposes.

Administration use only

Card provided: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Supervisor signed: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Date: _____