

# STAR POWER

In Quebec, you can't get more famous than actor Roy Dupuis. Can one of the province's best-loved artists also be one its most influential advocates for river conservation?

By Sarah Gilbert  
Photos by Guillaume Simoneau

Roy Dupuis ambles into the dimly lit Montreal cinema looking like he's come straight from the bush. His rough beard is salt and pepper and he wears a black fleece, baggy jeans and hiking boots. He carries a Gortex jacket and a Tilley hat. Anywhere else in Canada it might be possible for a handsome, outdoorsy guy to blend in with a downtown crowd. But this is Quebec. And in Quebec, few people are more famous than actor Roy Dupuis. An intense, charismatic leading man — known for roles such as Maurice Richard in *The Rocket*, Romeo Dallaire in *Shake Hands With the Devil* and many more — he is an icon. There is no blending in. Wherever he goes, like it or not, there will be an audience.

On this rainy Saturday afternoon in March, the audience is welcome. Dupuis is making an appearance at the Montreal Environmental Film Festival for the English premiere of his latest project, *Chercher le courant* (Seeking the Current). A documentary, the film chronicles a 500-kilometre journey down Quebec's Romaine River in 2008, the year before construction began on a series of hydroelectric generating stations designed to harness its natural power. Dupuis serves as the film's narrator, guiding viewers through a thoughtful evaluation of the environmental and economic issues raised by the Quebec government's drive to expand the province's status as a hydro powerhouse.

"This is one of the most important films I've ever been in," Dupuis tells the audience. A man in the middle of the theatre who's already seen it shouts out his verdict: "This film has to be seen by every Quebecer!" The crowd applauds. Dupuis nods, then does something he tends to do rarely: he smiles.

And so he should. Since 2002, Dupuis has been using his profile as an artist to push for a broad-based rethink of Quebec's appetite for hydro development. Much of this work has been done in his role as co-founder and board president of Fondation Rivières/Rivers Foundation, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to river protection and public education about energy conservation and alternative forms of renewable generation, such as wind, solar and geothermal power. →

