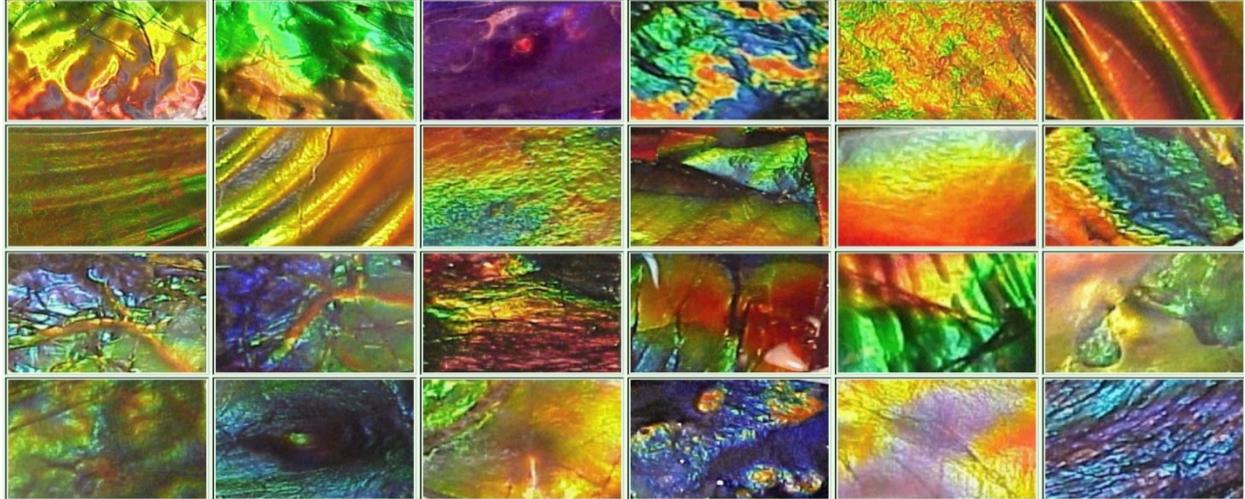




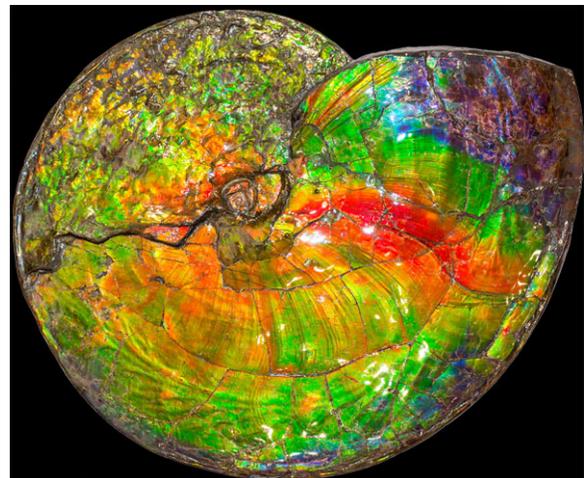
# A brief history of ammolite



<https://www.gemsociety.org/article/ammolite-jewelry-gem-information/>

**Ammolite** is an opal-like organic gemstone found primarily along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. It is made of the fossilized shells of ammonites, which are composed primarily of aragonite, the same mineral contained in nacre (mother of pearl), with a microstructure inherited from the shell. Ammonites are a marine mollusc, member of cephalopod class, that became extinct approximately 65 million years ago. Significant deposits of gem-quality ammolite are only found in the Bearpaw Formation that extends from Alberta into Saskatchewan in Canada and south to Montana in the USA. High quality gems are unique to Alberta. The mechanism producing gem-quality material is uncertain but is probably a combination of rapid burial, heavy pressures, and unique chemical reactions that preserve the iridescent shell structure. Ash from contemporaneous volcanic eruptions to the west probably played a part in establishing the unique chemistry required. An ammonite shell of gem quality is rare; estimates are that less than 10% of

shells found in the St. Mary River area are gem quality, and only 20% of these can be used for jewellery. Most commercial mining operations have been conducted along the banks of the St. Mary River, in an area south of and between the town of Magrath and the city of Lethbridge. Commercial mining of ammolite began in 1981 and that year it was given official gemstone status by the World Jewellery Confederation.



Mike Berisoff (a 1952 graduate of the U of S Department of Geology) and his business partner Marcel Charbonneau were the first to create commercial doublets of the gem in 1967. They had seen ammolite at a gem show in Nanton where specimens of “Buffalo Stone” were being sold by members of the Blood (Kainai) Nation. Legend tells of a very harsh winter where the Blackfoot tribe faced starvation. A young woman within the tribe decided to prevent her people from this fate and thus she underwent a vision quest. While sleeping, the spirit of the buffalo entered her dream realm and revealed to her a beautiful yet powerful gemstone. The buffalo spirit told her that “if you have possession of the stone, hunger shall elude you, your health will go unchallenged, and your well-being will be unquestioned.” She immediately woke from her dream and left the tribe behind in order to search for the stone. When she found the stone in a cave, the stone spoke to her and told her of ways to call back the buffalo. The young woman used the stone as directed and upon her return to camp the morning after, herds of buffalo appeared in the plains. Thus, the tribe's hardships had been diminished.



Mike’s wife Doreen suggested the name “ammolite” for the gemstone and Mike and Marcel went on to form Ammolite Minerals Ltd. In the summers of 1967 and 1968 Mike hired summer students to walk along the St. Mary River near Magrath and collect ammonite and ammolite specimens. Upon his death in 2017 he willed control of his

collection to Ray Robertson and Andy Burnett (also graduates of the U of S Geology Department) to manage it on behalf of his estate. BHR Ammolite was formed for this purpose. The specimen being raffled is one of several hundred. The quality of specimens is highly variable, ranging up to specimens that would sell for several tens of thousands of dollars in stores selling ammolite in places like Calgary, Banff, Canmore and even Vancouver.

Grade	Colors	Brilliance & Intensity	Clarity
AAA	3+	Vibrant vivid colors from any angle	No matrix lines visible
AA	3+	Extra bright colors	Fine matrix lines can be present
A	2+	Bright colors	Matrix lines can be present
Standard	1-2	Good color	Matrix lines can be present

Ray, Andy and their partner Colin Hubbard have spent the past several months establishing the authenticity of the collection with the appropriate authorities and have received a formal “disposition number” for the collection from the Alberta Government. This was the first step in monetizing the collection for Mike’s estate and we are now embarking on a marketing program. Anyone who is interested in purchasing a specimen can contact one of us at [BHRAmmolite@shaw.ca](mailto:BHRAmmolite@shaw.ca) or through the Ore Gange in order to obtain a catalogue.

