

BELOW Sanacore racing the Trans-Vallée in Quebec

Léa Sanacore

Mont-Saint-Hilaire, Que.

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Growing up in a musical family on the south shore of Montreal, singer-songwriter Léa Sanacore, 32, was inspired to run by her mother, who would often run take the family's rambunctious Labrador puppy for 10-km runs in the early morning. Léa also participated in Terry Fox runs at school. Her parents taught her to play fiddle as a young child, and she later picked up guitar; she began her career covering songs by Joni Mitchell and James Taylor at bars and coffee shops, and eventually she started to write her own songs.

2013 was a big year for Sanacore: she and her father, Denis, performed their song "Here, Now and Then" in the film *The Young and Prodigious T.S. Spivet*, directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet (who is also known for the movie *Amélie*). She also recorded her first indie folk/rock album, *In Between the Lines*. Through the years, she has performed with various Quebec artists, including Florence K and Roch Voisine. She is currently pursuing her master's in songwriting at Laval University.

Sanacore discovered trail running in 2016, while trying to cope with a difficult professional situation in her performing career. She was experiencing anxiety, and sometimes had panic attacks on stage. "I wasn't sure if I'd be able to be a professional musician any more," Sanacore says. "I needed something else in my life." During this time, she stumbled upon some videos online about trail running—specifically, a documentary about the Western

States Endurance Run 100-miler in California.

"It sparked something in me, seeing these athletes go through these hardships—that they would choose to do that," she says. "I put on my running shoes, and that feeling of stepping on a trail for the first time, with no music, just silence and nature—it was a profound experience of feeling very peaceful, for the first time in months. It actually changed my life."

Sanacore emphasizes that she also had professional therapy—"I think it's important to be open about that," she says. "But having something else—and for me it was trail running—is so important in life, not to centre everything around that main passion, but to have balance, and exercise."

Sanacore now lives in Mont-Saint-Hilaire, an area that's rich with trails, and close to popular trail-running destinations in the Eastern Townships. In 2017 she joined a local trail running club, which gave her a strong sense of community.

She has done several road and trail races, including the Mount Washington Road Race in New Hampshire, the 12K distance at the Bromont Ultra (her first trail race, in 2017), a half-marathon encircling the base of Mont-Saint-Hilaire and her most technically challenging race yet—the 17K at Le Trans-Vallée, northwest of Quebec City.

Being somewhat injury-prone (she has struggled with plantar fasciitis and a minor knee injury, in addition to some upper-body injuries related to fiddle-playing), Sanacore generally runs three or four times a week, including a long run, an interval or tempo workout on the road and a couple of easy runs. "I like the balance between trails and road," she says. "But I prefer trails." —Anne Francis **R**

Jean-Francois Laplante, Olee Olivier Mura