



# Ottawa River Institute Update – 2018

## Greetings of the Season to all our ORI members and friends!



Once again it is time to update members on ORI's recent activities and future plans. We are very grateful for your continuing interest and support, and extend our very best wishes for the holiday season and the coming year!

Our efforts in 2018 were carried out in conjunction with local partner organizations and exclusively funded by local donors. **Thank you very much for your continuing interest and support!**

A special thank you to the Sisters of St. Joseph, Pembroke for a generous donation that will contribute to some new activities in 2019.

We are pleased to welcome our newest members; Peter Ruppell, James Robertson, Ian Pineau, Jen Hilton, Karim Mufarrij, and Arthur Goldsmith.

*Photo by Kim Elkington*

## Our Freshwater, Our Future ~ Renfrew County Stewardship Forum

ORI was a co-host of the May 16, 2018 Renfrew County Stewardship Forum, with the theme "Our Freshwater, Our Future." Participants spoke from a wide range of perspectives, from Aboriginal traditional knowledge (water is the "blood of Mother Earth"), through farming, lake property ownership, conservation authorities, fishing, hunting, protection of special natural areas, citizen science, and shoreline protection. All participants agreed that the freshwater theme and collaborative stewardship were "important" or "extremely important". Municipal councilors and County staff will be encouraged to attend the 2019 Forum, which will revisit these themes as part of the "Freshwater Partners Renfrew County" initiative. ORI is an active partner in this initiative, which is spearheaded by the Bonnechere River Watershed Project (BRWP).

## Celebrate Our Rivers Paddle Series

ORI worked with BRWP and others to sponsor another successful "Celebrate Our Rivers" paddle series in 2018. Many partners are involved in this program, which includes events on the Ottawa, Madawaska, and Bonnechere Rivers. The ORI-led paddles featured some of our lesser-known waterways: the Little Mississippi, Snake, Muskrat, and Barron Rivers.

We will apply for a small grant from MEC this winter to add paddling instruction and a stewardship component to the Celebrate our Rivers series for 2019. (Photo at right taken by Lynn Jones during the Little Mississippi paddle, June 24, 2018).



## Facilitating dialogue on Renfrew County Trails

ORI continues to convene bi-yearly meetings of an informal "Renfrew County Trails Association", enabling dialogue between trail users (snowmobilers, cyclists, ATVers, walkers, skiers, etc.) and County representatives working on the Ottawa Valley Recreation (Algonquin) and K&P Trails. Steady progress is being made on the Algonquin Trail: the Pembroke to Petawawa section is already open for general use, and the Arnprior to Renfrew section should be open this winter. Provincial funding (tied to commuter cycling) for stone dust application now allows year-round use of Trail segments through the County's major population centers.

## Mini-Bioblitz at Gervais Caves in Westmeath

ORI partnered with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and the Pembroke Area Field Naturalists to organize a mini-bioblitz on July 26<sup>th</sup> at the NCC's Gervais Caves property north of Westmeath. Participants observed and recorded the flora and fauna found in this unique area of sinkholes and undisturbed Ottawa River shoreline, and helped restore portions of the property by removing "Creeping Jenny", an invasive vine.

## ORI Annual General Meeting at Deacon

The May 15<sup>th</sup> 2018 ORI AGM featured a hike up the Deacon Escarpment, from which we all enjoyed spectacular views of Golden Lake, Round Lake, and the stretch of the Bonnechere that links them. We then convened at the Sands on Golden Lake for our business meeting where, in addition to regular business, we welcomed new board member, Craig Trendell, and viewed a slide show of photos from the Celebrate our Rivers paddle series.

## **\*\* NEW INITIATIVES FOR 2019 \*\* (your donations will help fund these activities)**

**Campaign for Real Clean-up at Chalk River:** Several ORI members and directors have been working to raise awareness about threats to the Ottawa River of radioactive pollution from two badly-flawed nuclear waste dump proposals put forward by the multinational consortium that currently manages the Chalk River Laboratories on behalf of Canadian taxpayers. The ORI board has decided to contribute to this effort by carrying out a "Campaign for Real Clean-up at Chalk River". This will be a modest campaign, dependent on member donations. We will develop and publish a series of attractive and informative one-page graphic fact sheets to promote responsible management of nuclear waste in state-of-the-art facilities, away from rivers and wetlands. The campaign will make it clear that Canada can be a world leader in keeping radioactive waste out of the biosphere while providing economic stimulus to the local economy and jobs for generations of Ottawa Valley residents. The fact sheets will be widely disseminated by hand, word of mouth, local and social media. If funding permits, we will also conduct annual baseline environmental sampling, testing for radionuclides in Ottawa River water, sediment and mussel shells. ***We would greatly appreciate your support for this initiative.***

**Promotion of Nature and Forest "Therapy":** We would like to develop and disseminate a series of illustrated fact sheets describing the many benefits of spending time in nature. We will promote increased use of Renfrew County's protected areas, trails and waterways by school groups, employers, and the general public through regular and social media (see our [Nature Notebook website](#) for maps and descriptions of some of the areas we hope to promote). We will draw upon the considerable scientific research described in Florence Williams' 2017 book, *The Nature Fix*. A copy of this book will be added to the ORI bookshelf in the Bonnechere Union Public Library in Eganville as part of this initiative.

We also would like to promote improved signage for the Valley's natural areas. We've noticed that where provincial and county highways cross over rivers and creeks, or pass alongside lakes, these water bodies are not always identified. Similarly, signage and mapping for walking trails in public spaces (such as provincial parks and conservation reserves, county forests, crown land areas of natural and scientific interest, etc.) could be improved. If you have a favorite walking trail that could benefit from better signage, please let us know - we will discuss this with public land managers in the coming months.

We also hope to secure a TD Tree Days grant to plant trees in fall 2019 along a stretch of the Algonquin Trail near Pembroke.

***We'd like to say a big "THANK YOU"*** to all ORI members, supporters and partners as we mark our 17<sup>th</sup> year; from ORI Directors John Almstedt, Ole Hendrickson, Lynn Jones, Sandra Palmer, Craig Robinson, and Craig Trendell; and from ORI Coordinator Cheryl Keetch.

Please visit the [ORI website](#), [ORI Facebook page](#), [Nature Notebook website](#) and [Nature Notebook Facebook Page](#). We're trying to make our web presence as helpful to members as possible and appreciate your feedback.

***For more information and/or to get involved in anything you read about in this newsletter, please get in touch (our e-mail is [info@ottawariverinstitute.ca](mailto:info@ottawariverinstitute.ca)). We would love to hear from you!***

## As we approach the winter solstice, we leave you with this ancient Celtic peace prayer...



Deep Peace of the running wave to you, Deep Peace of the flowing air to you  
Deep Peace of the quiet earth to you, Deep peace of the gentle night to you  
Moon and stars pour their healing light on you. Deep peace to you.