



The Ottawa River Institute

"Fostering sustainable communities in the Ottawa River watershed"

www.ottawariverinstitute.ca

Ottawa River Institute Directors' Report for 2013

In 2013, our twelfth year, Ottawa River Institute (ORI) continued work in our areas of expertise such as energy conservation, local foods, and increased knowledge of natural habitats and wild species. We also continued to partner with other local organizations to build a common understanding of the environment in the Ottawa River watershed and its importance. For example, while financial support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation for our joint work with the Pembroke Area Field Naturalists (PAFN) concluded in early 2013, and our joint project with the Bonnechere River Watershed Project concluded in 2012, collaboration with these two organizations remains active and strong. We were able to secure limited funding for presentations on home energy conservation and winterizing techniques, and for home energy upgrade workshops in 2013. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful with major grant applications on local foods, watershed conservation, and community resilience and self-reliance. We will increase our efforts to diversify revenue sources in the months to come.

Renfrew County Biotabase

One of the major outcomes of the ORI-PAFN joint project, the Renfrew County Biotabase, contained roughly 10,000 records of the County's flora and fauna as of the end of 2013. This innovative, state-of-the-art, citizen science database is maintained through a 3-way partnership that also includes Bird Studies Canada, a well-established and highly respected national organization. Information in the Biotabase is universally accessible and secure for the long term. Our vision is that the Biotabase will include information on the widest possible variety of taxonomic groups found in Renfrew County, from mosses to mammals. The taxonomic coverage of the Biotabase grew significantly with incorporation of results of Deep River's summer 2013 Bioblitz (ORI Director Anne Davies was one of the Bioblitz trip leaders). We would like to thank all local and visiting naturalists who have contributed to the Biotabase.

Drum Circles

Another component of the ORI-PAFN collaborative project was a series of group drum circles led by ORI advisor Jean Brereton, assisted by ORI Board member Anne Davies and others. Jean organized drum circles with groups ranging from pre-schoolers to seniors. Group drumming is attracting attention from scientists and educators, who find it builds skills in emotion management, focus and listening. A 2011 published study of 101 grade five students in Los Angeles – half of whom participated in weekly group drumming sessions for three months – found "significant improvements in multiple domains of social-emotional behavior" among the drummers. In the words of the authors, drumming is a "non-verbal, universal activity that builds upon a collectivistic aspect of diverse cultures and does not bear the stigma of therapy." And drumming is really fun, as anyone who has participated in one of Jean's drum circles will attest. We take our hats off to Jean for continuing to organize and lead these events.

YouTube Videos

ORI coordinator Cheryl Keetch has produced a series of nearly 50 videos, aimed at the general public, on a variety of topics: identification of owls, sparrows and waterfowl; Renfrew County nature hotspots such as Lake Dore and Shaw Woods; how to choose binoculars best suited for your own interests, etc. Posted on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/ORIBRWP>, many of these videos feature experienced and knowledgeable Pembroke Area Field Naturalists such as Manson Fleguel and Christian Renault. Highly entertaining and not to be missed!

Renfrew County Nature Notebook and Facebook Page

The internet and digital photography make it far easier for members of the public to share images, videos and sound recordings of wildlife and scenic landscapes. Add your own photos, stories, videos and sound clips to ORI's new Nature Notebook Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/naturenotebookrenfrewcounty>, and follow nature through Renfrew County's changing seasons. If you see an unfamiliar plant or animal, post its picture, and let other nature watchers comment on what it might be.

Renfrew County has no shortage of special species and places! Not even all long-time residents are aware that the Province of Ontario protects more than 25 areas in the County with unique features, and has designated dozens of other areas as significant wetlands and areas of natural and scientific interest. Our Nature Notebook (<http://www.naturenotebook.ca>) tells you where these special places are, and provides details on what you may see and hear when you visit.

Seedy Sunday

ORI was very pleased to again sponsor "Seedy Sunday", held Sunday March 3, 2013 at Fellowes High School Auditorium in Pembroke. Seedy Sundays (and Saturdays) are growing in popularity across Canada. Gardeners, seed savers, seed vendors, local food producers, organic practitioners and environmental groups come together in a venue where they can learn from one another, exchange ideas and seeds, and purchase seeds and plants in a fun social setting. It's a day to educate, learn and promote local food, more sustainable methods of growing and the preservation and use of heirloom, organic and open-pollinated seed. ORI coordinator Cheryl Keetch assisted the event by managing the kitchen and kitchen volunteers.

Home Energy and Winterizing Presentations

In October 2013 ORI Coordinator Cheryl Keetch gave presentations in Pembroke, Renfrew and Arnprior on home energy conservation and winterizing techniques and procedures to about 45 Ontario Works recipients. As well, Ottawa River Power Corporation provided \$3000 during 2013 for hands-on home energy upgrade workshops, which Cheryl delivered in early 2014.

Websites, Facebook, YouTube

Cheryl keeps the ORI website up to date with news and other articles. We also have an active ORI Facebook page (as well as our Nature Notebook Facebook page). Please sign up as a 'friend' of our pages to be notified of events and activities through your Facebook news feed:

(<https://www.facebook.com/ottawariverinstitute>) (<https://www.facebook.com/naturenotebookrenfrewcounty>)

Watershed Conservation

At the February 2013 Renfrew County Stewardship Forum, ORI directors John Almstedt and Ole Hendrickson agreed that ORI would partner with other organizations to address water quality challenges in Renfrew County, in particular the algae blooms that occur each summer on Muskrat Lake. We congratulate the new Muskrat Watershed Council and Algonquin College for taking the lead on this issue, and look forward to working with them and other partners in future.

Watershed Ways

ORI director and secretary/treasurer Lynn Jones continues as editor (and occasional writer) of our Watershed Ways columns, which she sends out to local newspapers. Recent titles include “Listening to Nature”, “Cold Winter on a Warming Planet”, “Trails in the County of Renfrew”, and my two articles on local geology, “When Continents Collide” and “Prehistoric Spring in the Ottawa Valley”. If you missed these articles when they were first published, you can find them on our website at <http://www.ottawariverinstitute.ca/watershed-ways>.

*Ole Hendrickson, President
for the ORI Board of Directors*