



The Ottawa River Institute

"Fostering sustainable communities in the Ottawa River watershed"

www.ottawariverinstitute.ca

Ottawa River Institute Annual Report for 2010

As in past years, the most prominent area of activity for the **Ottawa River Institute** (ORI) in 2010 was sustainable energy, under the leadership of our coordinator **Cheryl Keetch**, and funded by the **Ontario Trillium Foundation** (OTF). In October of 2010, we submitted a final report to Trillium for the 2009-2010 energy grant.

In 2010, ORI delivered a number of energy related workshops across the County. A variety of speakers provided the latest information on ways to feed electricity from renewable sources into the Ontario power grid, how to burn wood more efficiently and with fewer emissions, and how the power of the sun can provide you with solar domestic hot water.

Between September and November 2010, Cheryl organized three **Home Energy Upgrades** workshops, with additional financial support from the Ottawa River Power Corporation. Thirty households received kits of materials to take home and use to increase their home's energy efficiency and comfort.

As our coordinator, Cheryl also organizes meetings of the ORI Fundraising committee, helped develop our fundraising plan, and maintains our contact lists of members and donors. She also provided ongoing coordinator support to the **Ottawa Valley Food Co-operative**. The collaborative project between ORI and the Ottawa Valley Food Co-operative, funded by the Ottawa Trillium Foundation, continued through to August of 2010. This project enabled the development of the **Local Food Buying Guide for the Upper Ottawa Valley**, and supported the organization of workshops on topics such as food preservation, cheese making, ecological agriculture; and local food self-reliance.

June 26th was a beautiful sunny day at the Pembroke waterfront when we joined with the **Pembroke Area Field Naturalists** (PAFN) for a successful launch of our collaborative, two-year, OTF-funded project which promotes biodiversity and community drumming circles throughout Renfrew County. This well-attended event featured both of the main components of this project: a live demonstration of the **Renfrew County Biotabase**, and a community drumming circle in the waterfront amphitheatre. To start the day off, **David Beimers** and **Chris Michener** of the PAFN co-led a bird walk on the Kiwanas Walkway along the Ottawa River and entered species seen into the Biotabase using a rocket stick and portable computer. The innovative Biotabase project is the vision of Chris Michener, long-time PAFN member and ORI founding member. Chris saw a need for the public to know what flora and fauna occur in the county, and for naturalists to have a means to record, organize and map their field data for posterity. Information from the database will in turn be available to assist in the preservation of Renfrew County's rich biodiversity for future generations. The database itself is hosted by the highly respected organization Bird Studies Canada in partnership with ORI and PAFN. It now lists many different species (plants, birds, mammals, insects, reptiles, amphibians, fish, etc.) found in Renfrew County and is being populated with records for specific locations. After the bird walk and Biotabase demonstration, a community drum circle, led by **Jean Breerton** was greatly enjoyed by about 30 participants. This was the first of many drum circles Jean has facilitated as part of the project.

These have proven to be quite popular for people of all ages - from schoolchildren to seniors - as a means of alleviating stress and tension, enhancing community spirit or simply as an enjoyable group activity.

In recognition of the **International Year of Biodiversity (IYB)** ORI President **Ole Hendrickson** made presentations to five municipal councils (Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards, Renfrew, Bonnechere Valley, Laurentian Valley, McNab/Braeside) in early 2010. With funding from Maple Leaves Forever and private donors, we also celebrated IYB in May of 2010, by donating 28 red maple trees to 28 participating schools of both school boards in Renfrew County, for planting in their school yards. We also worked with the two Killaloe elementary schools, and partnered with the Community Resource Centre and KidActive, to pilot a Walking School Bus, as a physically active way of getting children to schools, in June of 2010.

We're very grateful to **Richard Copeland** and also to Cheryl for keeping our ORI website up to date. Richard's blog entries on his off-grid house, gardening and local food, and on the Green Energy Act and the MicroFit program, have kept readers of the website informed and entertained. Our website also features our **Watershed Ways** columns, which cover a wide variety of topics on sustainable living and appear in a number of Ottawa Valley newspapers.

Board member **Kathryn Kasaboski** continued with her management support of the **ORI Sustainable Living Book Collection**, which has its own shelf at the Bonnechere Union Public Library, in Eganville, and is accessible to people in other communities through inter-library loans. If you have a book or two you'd like to donate, we're accepting donations of books on sustainable energy, sustainable communities, ecological integrity (including nature guides) – anything related to the ORI mission.

ORI Board member **Claire Lepine** is the organizer of **Seedy Sunday**, supported by ORI. These "Seedy" events highlight the importance of farmers and gardeners adapting food plant varieties to changing conditions by saving seeds, particularly heritage varieties, mainly using organic methods of food production. In the Ottawa Valley, Seedy Sunday showcases seeds and plants for sale, local food producers, a local food lunch and gardening presentations. It includes an exchange table for swapping seeds, plants and other gardening goods. It was held in March 2009, 2010 and 2011 at Fellowes High School in Pembroke, with nearly 500 participants in 2010 and about 320 in 2011.

In collaboration with the **Bonnechere River Watershed Project**, we submitted a new grant application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, in November 2010 and in April 2011, our new eighteen month OTF-funded **Nature in Your Neighbourhood** project began.

Conclusion

The Ottawa River Institute has had a very successful ninth year of operation, thanks to the contributions of many people. We are very grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, local power companies, local donors, members, volunteers and staff for their support and assistance. We look forward to continued progress in the future toward sustainable communities and ecological integrity in the Ottawa River watershed!

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