Be the River
Poetry on the Don
November 3 2019
Land Acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge Toronto as a gathering place for many people of Turtle Island. We recognize the long history of First Nations people in Ontario and show respect today to the Wendat, the Petun, the Haudenosonee, the Anishinabek, and the Mississaugas of the Credit; the Chippewa also travelled the routes.

This territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. This territory is also covered by the Upper Canada Treaties.

Today, Toronto is a home and meeting place for many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island (North America). We are grateful to be here - Chi Miigwetch
Be the River – A Poetry Walk in conjunction with Phantom Pain by Maria Thereza Alvarez, November 3, 2019

1. Gathering at St Matthew’s Clubhouse:
   • Welcome, introductions, how the walk is organized, washrooms.
   • Land Acknowledgement
   • Poem
2. Under the trees before the bridge:
   • Four poems
3. Cross the bridge – no reading – mindfulness moment
4. At the west side of bridge
   • The west “oxbow” bend in the Don & the social history of the area. Brooks Bush Gang, Setayesh on sewers
   • Form a “human river” and walk the meander or as close as we can get (fence line?)
   • Poems
5. Phantom Pain Sculpture
   • Interpretation, Evergreen and Toronto Biennial
   • Poems

1. At Riverdale Farm
   • From Lost Rivers to Rivers Rising
   • Rhonda Lucy, Joce Tremblay
2. At the Sanctuary Pond
   • Poems
   • Closing Rhonda Lucy Joce Tremblay Water Ceremony?
1. Gathering at St Matthew’s Clubhouse:
Welcome, introductions, how the walk is organized, washrooms.
Land Acknowledgement, comments from Rhonda Lucy Joce Tremblay

Maureen Hynes’s “Withrow Avenue”
Withrow Site

Some further information on the site:

11,000 years ago, people followed the retreating ice into the Great Lakes area, hunting mammoth and caribou.

15,000 Years - 14,800 lived sustainably
There is well documented evidence that Riverdale has attracted human habitation since early prehistory. An archeological site was discovered in 1886 during the original excavations for constructing Withrow Avenue near Broadview on land that is now part of the Withrow Avenue Public School grounds. This “Withrow site” was excavated in 1886 by David Boyle of the Royal Ontario Museum, called the Father of Canadian Archeology, and Professor W.H. Vander Smissen. It contained two ossuary pits, or communal gravesites, each yielding about 30 skeletons. Few implements were found with the human remains, but elsewhere at the site Boyle and Vander Smissen found slate knives, a slate spear head and stone axe heads and chisels. (Mima Kapches, “1886-1986: The Centennial (?) of the Discovery of the Withrow Site”, Arch Notes, 86-3 (May/June 1986), pp 11-17.)

Recent analysis of the record of Withrow site specimens and artifacts point to a long history of occupation. Dr. Kapches of the ROM suggests that the site was used during the Late Archaic (3000 - 1000 BCE), Initial Woodland (1000 BCE - 1000 CE) and pre-historic Iroquoian (1000 - 1650) Periods, as well as in the post-contact “European” period, for a brass ornament was also recovered. Several artifacts and skulls from the Withrow site have been retained in the ROM collections, although they have yet to be analysed thoroughly. (Personal conversation with Dr. Shelly R. Saunders, McMaster University, Department of Physical Anthropology, June 1996.)
Slate tools: A spear head and knife (fragment) used for dressing skins - Late Archaic. Taken from Withrow Avenue site 1886 or 1887. [Annual Report of the Canadian Institute, Sessions 1887 and 1888.]
Carrying dynamite to blow up Riverdale Park, Broadview Avenue ca. 1907
Levelling in Riverdale Park (between 1900 and 1930)
A note says, "75 men working at levelling park at $2 per day."
2. Under the trees before the bridge:

M Hynes’s “Crossing at Dawn”
Section 11 of Anita Lahey’s “The Don River, Crossings and Expeditions”
Dilys Leman “Skinny Dipping in the Don River, 1910”
Sheila Stewart – “Where are the Water Babies”
Public Morals
In 1890, Toronto passed the first of several by-laws designed to regulate “morality.” Prohibited activities included panhandling, selling alcohol to “any child, apprentice, or servant” without the permission of the parent or master, being drunk in public, gambling, swearing, keeping or visiting a brothel, and “indecency,” which covered what we would now define as pornography. Public nudity was also forbidden, including nude swimming between six in the morning and ten at night—which seems to have left the door open for nighttime skinny-dipping. The penalty for breaking the law was a fine of up to fifty dollars, at a time when a general labourer might earn ten dollars a week.

Skinny dipping in the Don, Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 7339
Boys swimming in the Don River at "Bare Ass Beach" in Riverdale

James & Son
Picture, 1923,
Publisher
Toronto Star
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Toronto Star Photograph Archive
- Public Domain
Provenance
From the Toronto Star Archives

3. Cross the bridge – no reading – mindfulness moment. Historic images follow
House Of Refuge, Broadview Ave., w. side, betw. opp. the ends of Langley & Riverdale Aves., view from Don River.
1865 Pencil drawing (B 4-66b).
House of Refuge, c.1860. Toronto Public Library, TRL, Historical Picture Collection, B 4-66b. http://maps.library.utoronto.ca/dvhmp/refuge.html
Gerrard St. E. bridge over Don R. ("Bell's Bridge"), looking s.e., Hoch, James, 1827-1878

Toronto Public library Accession Number: JRR 912 Cab II
https://static.torontopubliclibrary.ca/da/images/LC/pictures-r-1623.jpg
4. At the west side of bridge and along the fence

Images of the “oxbow” bends in the Don

Be the River! Form a “human river” and walk the meander or as close as we can get (fence line)

Setayesh on sewers

The Wet Weather Flow Management Plan

Possible Women Fishing poem here?
Don River, looking s.e. towards Don Jail, from below Walter McKenzie's house 'Castle Frank', Bloor St. E., s. side, just e. of opp. Drumsnab Rd., Toronto, Ont.

Notes: Inscribed on vso: Toronto Jail From Castlefrank. 1870.
Channeling the Don, Filling in a Marsh
River Don Straightening Plan, 1886, City of Toronto Archives, Series 725, File 12. Concentrating on a portion of the Lower River between Winchester Street and the Grand Trunk Railway bridge at Eastern Avenue, the Don Improvement Plan (1886-1891) saw the meandering Lower River straightened, widened, and deepened, dramatically transforming the landscape and hydrology of the marshy lower valley.

http://maps.library.utoronto.ca/dvhmp/don-narrows.html
Three Women Fishing 1908?
City of Toronto Archives 1244, Item 167A
Inscribed lower left: Don River / LM. / 06; Inscribed on verso: The Don / Mrs. Mill Pellatt / Not by E.M.A.M. Signature is Lena [Colleyna] Morgan. Shows Lady Pellatt fishing. TEC 322

Don River. 1906, Toronto, Ont., Morgan, Colleyna Mary Russell, 1871-1967

https://static.torontopubliclibrary.ca/da/images/LC/e5-109f.jpg
Riverdale Park, looking s. (?) to foot bridge across Don R., approx. opp. Carlton St., Toronto, Ont. Ryan, John, 1923

Notes
Inscribed in pencil, vso right: The Tom Sawyers & Huck Finns / got out their floats & lines / on Saturday they even brought / the dog along
One of a group of prints most of which were reproduced in The Globe, Toronto, 1922-4.
Stamped in deep reddish purple ink, vso c.: FROM / JACK RYAN / PRESS PHOTOGRAPHER / 15 BLEECKER ST. NORI 4470;

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https://static.torontopubliclibrary.ca/da/images/LC/pictures-r-5819.jpg
5. Phantom Pain

Interpretation Biennial and Evergreen Poems
6. At a Community Garden at the Farm
   • From Lost Rivers to Rivers Rising
   • Rhonda Lucy, Joce Tremblay
Davenport Trail, Indian Road Trail, Lakeshore Trail, Road to Yonge St

With thanks to Wendy Smith
Toronto Park Lot Project
http://parklotproject.com
Gardeners are creating a new kind of urban ecosystem
New urban foodwebs
a new place for nature
Indigenous Food Sovereignty
7. At the Sanctuary Pond
   • Poems
   • Don River Valley Park, Restoration dreams
   • Closing Rhonda Lucy, Joce Tremblay
Adam Broadhead (www.daylighting.org.uk).
at Wildbachstrasse, Zurich. March 2011

**Daylighting Urban Rivers**
Nebelbach, Zurich, is a daylighted street stream along a downtown residential street, incorporating traffic calming measures. The stream flowed into the combined sewer, and in 1991 this project was constructed to separate up to 70 l/s of the clean water baseflow through an artificial but naturalistic street stream. Apparently trout live in this stream, but I didn't see any. In fact, I think the main benefit of this is the aesthetic and the land value improvements as part of downtown urban regeneration, as well as reducing the sewer baseflow.

“a critical component of cities' watershed and of sustainable development”. All that is required is a willingness to acknowledge a landscape that predates our arrival
Daylighted Streams
Portland, Vancouver, Yonkers, Salt Lake City,
What next for Black Creek?
The boundaries of home?

A river is not just a blue line on a map, but rather the focal point of a geographical community, a mosaic of ecosystems that includes all the people, plants, animals in the area drained by the river, its WATERSHED, as well as the non-living parts, such as rocks and soil and of course water. Water flowing from the high points to the low points in the river system connects everything and transports anything that is put into it.

For 8,000 years until about 200 years ago, the Garrison Creek watershed was home to diverse forests and to birds, fish, and animals that supported the people who lived here or passed through on ancient trading routes.

Where did all the water go?
A river is not just a blue line on a map
"In the effort to raise awareness and consciousness about pollution, laws and any issues that impact water, and for the Spirit of the water, Nohkomis Josephine Mandamin has walked the shorelines of all five Great Lakes ... she has literally walked more than 20,000 kilometres for the water — equal to nearly half the earth's circumference."

[Image of people walking along a lakeshore]

She hopes that the water walks will remind people of their connection to water and encourage people to preserve it. "You as an individual, no matter whether you are indigenous or non-indigenous, you can take steps in your day to day life in ensuring there is clean water for future generations."

[Links to more information about Nohkomis Josephine Mandamin's water walks and the importance of preserving water]

http://www.motherearthwaterwalk.com/?page_id=2286

There is no door at the edge of the ravine where nature begins and the city ends.
From Lost Rivers to Rivers Rising
Communities, Watersheds, Urban Ecosystems, Neighbourhoods and the creation of a Blue Green City
Depave Paradise
There’s lots to do
We hope you’ll join ☺️
The End