

Heritage Sub-Committee of the Humber Watershed Alliance for the *Humber River Bridge Inventory* and *The Shared Path/Le Sentier Partagé*

For almost two decades, the Heritage Sub-committee of the Humber Watershed Alliance has worked to preserve and protect the ecology, history and culture of the magnificent Humber River. A volunteer-based organization, it is made up of watershed residents, elected officials, representatives from community groups, government agencies and local businesses. The committee works with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) to promote the Humber's waterways and engage citizens into taking an active role in their preservation.

The group came together in 1994 as the Humber Watershed Task Force to implement the river's first watershed management plan, *Legacy: A Strategy for a Healthy Humber*, which was completed in 1997. In 1999, it went on to successfully advocate for the designation of the Humber River Watershed as a Canadian Heritage River—one the first “urban” rivers to be designated. It remains the only Canadian Heritage River with a subway stop on it (Old Mill Station)! This year, the committee finalized the *Humber River Bridge Inventory (HRBI)* and initiated and assisted with *The Shared Path/Le Sentier Partagé: Toronto's Historical Park*.

The Humber River watershed is the largest in the TRCA's jurisdiction. Within the watershed, the Humber flows through a variety of landscapes—the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges Moraine, tracts of rich farm lands, and more. All told, the area includes 1,800 kilometres of waterway and 600 bodies of water, numerous species of plants, fish and animals, and is home to 732,000 people.

Published in May of 2011, the HRBI is the first inventory of its kind in the Greater Toronto Area and one of the most comprehensive bridge reports ever conducted in Canada. Thirty-three heritage bridges have been identified, giving the TRCA a clear picture of the state of the Humber's heritage infrastructure from which future plans can be developed for the protection of cultural resources.

The Shared Path/Le Sentier Partagé: Toronto's Historical Park is a new discovery path that aims to bring to life Canada's vibrant and ancient history where much of it took place: along the banks of the Humber River. The path follows the natural contours of the shoreline where detailed interpretive signage and a dozen themed story circles tell the story of the river's Aboriginal heritage, the role the fur trade played in shaping settlement patterns and the impact water-powered industry had on the Humber's ecosystem. *The Shared Path* was launched in June of 2011.

These vital projects have helped raise the profile of the historical significance of the Humber watershed, which has resulted in more partnerships being formed, higher levels of community engagement and a greater public awareness of the river's contribution to the development of the Toronto area and beyond.

The members of the Heritage Sub-committee of the Humber Watershed Alliance have worked tirelessly to safeguard the Humber River and protect it for future generations. The committee's unwavering commitment to the preservation of the river has been crucial to the recognition of the Humber's rich cultural and natural heritage value.

The Heritage Sub-committee of the Humber Watershed Alliance was nominated by the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario.