



## Ancient rivers, streams gone but not forgotten

North Toronto walk helps explain the vital role of underground waterways, investigates long-gone systems that served Huron tribe hundreds of years ago

April 29, 2009

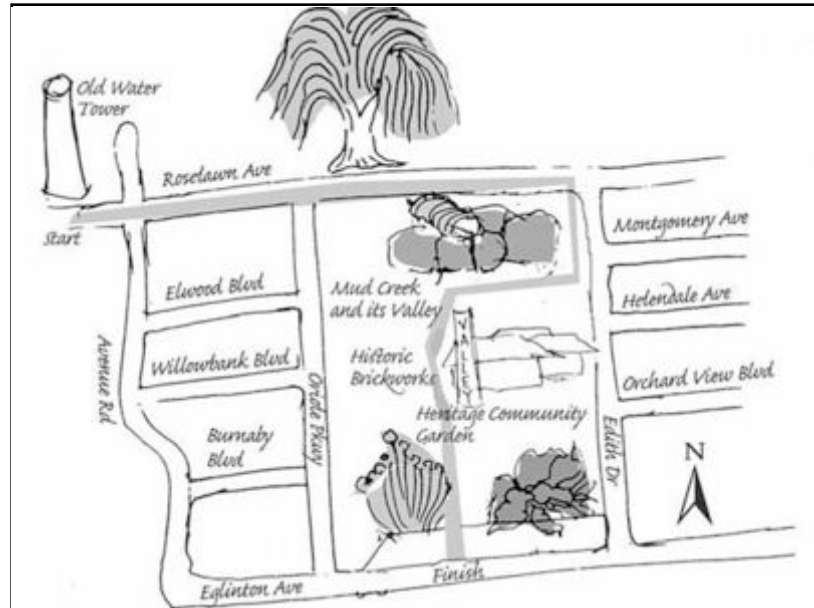
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STAFF REPORTER

We encounter them every day but rarely do we think about where they come from and why they are there: odd bends in city streets that deviate from the grid, hills and valleys that rise and fall in the middle of residential neighbourhoods and dead-end streets that seem to have no reason for existing.

These anomalies in urban geography often mark ancient rivers and streams. Most of these waterways have long since disappeared. But they are not forgotten.

Helen Mills, founder of Lost River Walks, is encouraging residents to appreciate water systems that play a vital role in their lives, whether they know it or not.

"We want people to have a different framework



TORONTO STAR GRAPHIC

### WALKING SERIES

**Monday:** Don River, a City of Toronto Discovery Walk

**Yesterday:** Scarborough Bluffs with Toronto Field Naturalists

**Today:** Thirsty City, a look at our lost rivers

**Tomorrow:** Mount Pleasant Cemetery, as seen by the ROM

for thinking about the city by reminding them that there's a whole life-support system that is obscured," says Mills, 58.

Lost River Walks, which Mills helped start in 1995, recently teamed up with RiverSides, a non-profit organization, to launch a series of "Thirsty City" walks. The first, called "Suburbs, Springs, Sewers & Sprawl," starts at the communication tower near Avenue Rd. and Roselawn Ave., once the site of a large spring fed by an aquifer that provided water to a Huron tribe that farmed the area in the 1400s.

After Europeans established a farming community in the 1800s, a large wooden reservoir was built. It was later converted to a steel water tower when North Toronto amalgamated with the city in 1912. The tower joined the city's water system, bringing water from Lake Ontario.

"This shows the familiar pattern of how we've successively been expanding beyond the carrying capacity of local water sources for a very long time," says Mills.

Following Roselawn Ave. east and down the hill to the gates of Eglinton Park, walkers pass a massive willow, a thirsty tree that indicates the presence of underground water. Walkers then reach the path of Mud Creek, now the Avenue Manor Combined Trunk Sewer.

Entering Eglinton Park from the north, walkers encounter the park clubhouse, the approximate site of the Davisville & Carlton Brick Manufacturing Company.

Continuing south leads to a heritage community garden. The garden features crops common 500 years ago, including sunflowers, tobacco, corn, beans and American groundnut.

After each walk, experts hold workshops to discuss themes that come up during the walk. Following a recent walk, participants heard from a lawyer fighting urban sprawl in the Oak Ridges Moraine and from a resident of Walkerton concerned with protecting drinking water sources.

*A map and field guide is available at [thirstycitywalks.ca](http://thirstycitywalks.ca). The next walk takes place June 7 and explores the Don River and Toronto waterfront.*

**Friday:** Hidden Thornhill, a Jane's Walk

**Saturday:** An essay on walking, plus a host of Web resources