

By Vincent Muller - Week of December 20 to December 26, 2010

IN SEARCH OF THE LOST RIVERS OF TORONTO

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"It's a long story," says Helen Mills when asked how the Lost River Walks began in Toronto. She is the initiator of these walks that have existed since 1994 and whose aim is to discover the city through the ancient rivers that crossed before.

During the 1980s, Helen Mills, who ran his own business, has taken courses part-time at the university. During a course of physical geography, which had no connection with her business, she learned of the existence and disappearance of these rivers. "I was horrified, even though I understand some of the reasons why we took away these rivers, such as cholera."

Today, she devotes herself entirely to the environment, in particular by organizing these steps exist since 1994 and have started following his participation in a meeting of the organization Toronto Green Community, which at the time was called North Toronto Green Community, on the way have manages water in the city.

In this context, she mentioned the idea to search the beds of these rivers mostly disappeared or become mostly underground following the development of the city: "I received a huge network of specialists in different fields. I proposed to organize a march for engaging people in discovering what was there before and have continued until now!

Someone distributed a document, *40 steps to the new Don* to clean and rehabilitate the Don River and its surrounding ecosystem. I said, 'they are crazy, it's impossible!' But I started to work with them and I started watching the rivers as systems and not as blue lines on a map.

“System of rivers “

Helen Mills and many dedicated volunteers lead the Lost River Walks, to rediscover the river system, to reflect on the way we manage water in town and see how we could change things.

"The walks are very interesting, they show a lot about the history of Toronto," says Paula Messina, executive director of Toronto Green Community, which provides logistical support to this initiative and defines strategic planning.

"There are many things that have been influenced by these rivers, the streets of Toronto are gridded but often curved streets testify to the presence of an ancient river," She continues.

Interaction between the natural environment and human development is an important aspect of these walks that meet an average of 35 people, but that have already gathered a hundred. "It is related to the organization" Toronto Field Naturalists, "which leads the world," says Paula Messina.

Walks in French

"We are always looking for new volunteers to lead groups. We would also like to extend visits to groups of students. For that we need more funding, but requests we made so far have not been successful," continues the executive director of Toronto Green Community remains positive and hope that the next request for funds lead.

Although there has never been walks in French, it is a possibility that it refers to the extent of volunteers to conduct tours in the language of Molière come forward. We are open to any proposal that would expand the initiative; Paula Messina emphasizes the beneficial aspect of arranging visits in several languages, including attracting tourists.

The next walk will take place on January 16. The dates are posted on the website of Toronto Green Community: www.torontogreen.ca

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