Two women honoured at awards gala

Two women who have played leading roles in conservation efforts in the Grand River watershed were honoured at a special gala evening at the River Run Centre in Guelph in October.

Betty Schneider of Waterloo received a standing ovation after she was presented with a Watershed Honour Roll Award by the Grand River Conservation Authority. The award, which is not given out each year, was for her many years of support for the GRCA, the Grand River Conservation Foundation and many community conservation projects.

Schneider served on the GRCA board for 11 years beginning in 1966 and was its first woman member. In 1970 she became the first president of the foundation board, serving for five years. During those years she played a role in developing the nature centres and the Memorial Tree program. She was a founder of the Grand Valley Trails Association, which has developed and maintains a 275-km trail along the Grand.

A 1967 headline in the Kitchener Waterloo Record proclaimed, “Betty’s a Woman of many firsts” while a photo caption declares she is used to being the only woman in a crowd and shows a photo of her touring Conestogo Dam with other authority officials.

“If anyone’s apt to restore your faith in the power of the individual in today’s supposedly democratic society it’s Mrs. Herbert Schneider, mother of four children,” the article declared. It described Schneider as “someone who doesn’t sit around waiting or hoping for changes and instead initiates them, sometimes through existing channels but more often by creating channels of her own.”

At the awards presentation, Schneider spoke from her wheelchair and had the audience in laughter several times.
Murray Riverview

Marilyn Murray of Guelph, a past-president of the foundation and a leading philanthropist in the Guelph area, was thanked for her years of service by the naming of the lookout onto the Speed River just behind the River Run Centre. It is now called the Marilyn Murray Riverview. The lookout is adjacent to the River Run Centre on the Alf Hales Memorial Trail.

Murray, who received a Watershed Award last year, was honored for more than 20 years of service to the foundation as a board member and president where she was involved in projects to protect natural areas and build trails. She recently chaired The Living Classroom — Campaign for Outdoor Education which raised $2.2 million to support outdoor education programs for elementary school children.

The Grand River Conservation Foundation also presented a $50,000 cheque to the City of Guelph. This fulfills the foundation’s $250,000 commitment to construct the Alf Hales Trail in the city. The presentation was made by foundation board member Norm Lundvall to Mayor Karen Farbridge.

Watershed awards

In addition to those presentations, four Watershed Awards were presented to groups and individuals who undertook projects to enhance the Grand River watershed.

The 2007 award recipients were Dennis Wendland of Kitchener, Ignatius Jesuit Centre of Guelph and bird box builder Joe Kral. A joint award went to Dufferin Aggregates and Capital Paving for their work on Mill Creek in Puslinch. These Watershed Award recipients will be featured in the next issue of Grand Actions.
The 2007 S. C. Johnson Scholarship recipient is Marian Saavedra, a fourth year University of Waterloo environmental engineering student. This scholarship is given out at the Water Forum each year to a student at a watershed educational institution.

Local solutions to global realities at Water Forum

By Barbara Veale
GRCA Co-ordinator of Policy, Planning and Partnerships

Almost 300 people attended the 7th annual Grand River Watershed Water Forum to learn more ways to sustain the Grand River watershed’s valuable water resources.

Held Sept. 14, the event focused on global trends and what they mean to local water management.

Henry Lickers, environmental coordinator for the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, delivered the traditional First Nations Thanksgiving.

He reminded delegates that every single living and non-living component of this earth supports life and we need to pause to thank the Creator for these gifts. Lickers also expressed his hope that we listen to the “small voices” of great teachers that “echo through the corridors of time” to guide us in finding the answers to handle environmental issues and guide our hearts toward peace and harmony.

GRCA chair Alan Dale and Cambridge MPP Gerry Martiniuk, greeted participants. A cheque for $37,000 to enhance habitat on private land for aquatic species at risk was presented to the GRCA by a representative of Cambridge MP, Dr. Gary Goodyear.

Denis Auger

Denis Auger from the Canadian Space Agency manages the earth observation application development program and he said the Great Lakes region is so big that it can be seen clearly from space.

Auger explained that Canada’s sophisticated earth observation satellites help scientists learn what is happening to our natural resources. They measure things such as the thickness of ice in rivers and lakes, changes to the nature and size of wetlands, sources of pollution, and depletion of the ozone layer. Information from Radarsat sensors is also used to monitor global natural disasters and climatic conditions.

Henry Lickers

Henry Lickers then reflected on the process of relationship building at Akwesasne to remediate environmental contamination from years of industrial discharges of PCBs and dioxins.

The impact on the nearby First Nations community was devastating, taking away the traditional livelihood of the people and creating conflict among neighbours.

A fiercely independent nation, the Akwesasne followed the teaching “bend our necks to no one,” but, this is balanced with the “great way of peace.”

Working with local municipalities and chemical industries, the residents of Akwesasne have been able to change attitudes and promote understanding of the issues they face by working together to remediate local lands and waters.

Paul Emerson

Paul Emerson, CAO for the Grand River Conservation Authority, launched the fifth annual Grand River Watershed Report that focuses on the twin challenges of population growth and climate change.

With a rapidly growing population that depends on groundwater and surface water, these two challenges put...
more pressure on the natural system. Emerson stressed the need for municipalities, agencies and other partners to work with the GRCA to build a more resilient watershed. Emerson highlighted three key actions: protect and enlarge forests and wetlands to allow flora and fauna to adjust to changes in the climate; plant more trees to help clean and cool the air and to sequester carbon (thereby reducing the impacts of carbon emissions); and ensure aquifer recharge to protect municipal water supplies and river habitat and health.

The full Watershed Report is available online at www.grandriver.ca.

Source Water Protection

The morning panel of speakers focused on activities related to source water protection.

Craig Ashbaugh

Craig Ashbaugh, the new chair of the Lake Erie Source Protection Committee, was introduced. Ashbaugh is a former board member of Long Point Region Conservation Authority, the GRCA and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. He was appointed to his post in August by the province after a selection process.

The Source Protection Committee is being set up to implement recommenda-

ions from the Walkerton Inquiry and other committee members were appoint-
ed in November.

Ashbaugh said he will encourage a collaborative approach to developing a Source Water Protection Plan and will work with municipalities, agencies and groups within the source protection area.

John Johnston

John Johnston from the department of earth and environmental sciences, University of Waterloo focused his talk on research undertaken to find a pattern of fluctuation in water levels of the Great Lakes. Over time, changes are quasi-periodic, based on geologic and historical records. Patterns over millions of years appear as a set of ridges, while over the centuries, fluctuations appear as groups of ridges. About every 30 years, changes occur as a single ridge with one cycle of high and low levels. Johnston’s research shows that there is a natural pattern to the fluctuations in the Great Lakes, however, the impact of population growth and demands on water over the past century and predictions into the future are difficult to ascertain.

Saad Jasim

Dr. Saad Jasim, chief operating officer for the Walkerton Clean Water Centre spoke about the training and education programs offered by his facility. It was set up by the province in January 2005 “to create a world-class institute dedicated to safe and secure drinking water for the people of Ontario.

“ Its mission is to become renowned for our knowledge-based, innovative approach to training,” Jasim said. Over 6,000 water treatment plant operators and water managers have been trained at the centre during the past two years. It also houses a state-of-the-art technology demonstration facility and offers graduate scholarships to water research students.

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There were many opportunities to meet and talk about water issues.
Ian Smith

Ian Smith, director of the Source Protection Programs Branch for the Ministry of the Environment, spoke to the process of developing source protection plans as prescribed by the Ministry. Smith stressed that the 19 new Source Protection Committees in Ontario will prepare source protection plans based on a locally-driven multi-stakeholder process that is science-based. It also builds on existing structures and resources such as conservation authorities and municipal programs. The plans will be flexible to ensure that the solutions are workable, have public transparency and take a precautionary approach.

Committee membership includes representation from municipalities, First Nations, agriculture, business and the public.

Sarah Takaki

The afternoon session opened with a presentation by Sarah Takaki from Engineers Without Borders.

Takaki stressed that globally, over 1.2 billion people live in desperate poverty without water and sanitary facilities. Of these, over one-third live in sub-Saharan Africa.

Engineers Without Borders operates in four African countries and helps to develop leaders to build local capacity and influence decision makers. They focus on agriculture, governance as well as water, sanitation and hygiene promotion.

Takaki spoke about her experiences working on a water and sanitation project in northern Ghana in west Africa.

Brian Denney

Brian Denney is the CAO for the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority which is implementing “The Living City,” a new vision where human settlement can flourish indefinitely as part of nature’s beauty and diversity.

The objectives include healthy rivers and shorelines, regional biodiversity, sustainable communities and business excellence. The TRCA is working with several partners to promote new sustainable technologies, green building designs and innovative planning approaches to create a “greener” city.

Innovative solutions

The afternoon panel focused on emerging issues and innovative solutions to water management problems.

Cam Walsh

Cam Walsh, manager of wastewater services for the City of Guelph, emphasized that even though Guelph has advanced sewage treatment that meets some of the most stringent effluent criteria in the industry, further work is still needed.

This is because the Speed River, which runs through Guelph, is small and has a limited capacity. For this reason, the city is considering new technologies that are economical and improve the effluent quality. They are also evaluating alternative treatment facilities and locations and looking at ways to reuse effluent. The city is exploring ways to increase the assimilative capacity of the Speed River and ensure sustainable biosolids management. Walsh is doing his best to anticipate emerging issues and future regulatory requirements and consider the future impact of watershed management initiatives.

Quintin Rochfort

Quintin Rochfort from Environment Canada presented the results of research on urban stormwater management. A variety of innovative techniques are being developed as advanced source controls, such as bioretention ponds, green roofs, rainwater harvesting and other approaches.

Rochfort suggested that a new set of principles should guide storm water management to keep natural systems in site plans and minimize disruption of them, aim for low imperviousness, treat storm water close to the source and find simple, low-cost methods.

Rochfort concluded that more needs to be done to find favourable institutional arrangements and a regulatory framework and get stakeholders working together.

Steven Clarke

Steven Clarke with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs spoke about “green” energy sources from manure, food waste, corn and other grains.

These are being used successfully in Ontario on farms and in agribusiness. Clarke indicated that provincial grants are available to help farmers with feasibility studies, design and construction of biogas systems until the year 2010.
Gord Miller

As has become a tradition, Gord Miller, the environmental commissioner of Ontario, brought Water Forum to a close with his insights into the speaker presentations. The overall message was very positive, with new technologies and approaches being implemented which will reduce our “ecological footprint,” he said.

Miller also concluded that we know what we need to do and that there is a need for strong leadership and courage to shift away from old ways of doing business to embracing new approaches that will ensure long-term sustainability.

Exhibits

An important part of Water Forum was the over fifty exhibits which were shown during the event. These displays highlighted innovative technologies and approaches for improved water management and land use planning.

If you are interested in viewing the presentations, most are available on the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca.

Lots of people came to the Grand Biothon at Apps Mill Nature Centre in Brantford this fall, an annual event that supports outdoor education.

First History on the Grand Local History Symposium held in October was a success

By Warren Stauch
Heritage Working Group member

More than 125 local history enthusiasts participated in the first History on the Grand Local History Symposium held on Saturday, Oct. 27 at the University of Waterloo’s award-winning School of Architecture in Cambridge.

The symposium, organized and hosted by the City of Cambridge Archives Board, and chaired by Cambridge archivist James Quantrell, attracted members of the academic community, historical and heritage groups as well as anyone interested in the history and heritage of Cambridge and the surrounding area.

The organizers, pleased with the success and positive comments, hope the symposium will be held annually or every two years.

Cambridge mayor Doug Craig opened the day-long event and welcomed those assembled by illustrating how the purchase and subsequent restoration of an older house in Hespeler led to a number of interesting stories about previous owners and their connections to the past.

Dr. Kenneth McLaughlin, professor and chair of the history department at St. Jerome’s University, University of Waterloo, was the keynote speaker. His speech was entitled “Without our Past, How Can We Know It’s Us?” He illustrated how local history came alive for him as a young boy growing up in Hespeler and then later when, as a university professor, he authored a number of local history books.

Concurrent morning and afternoon sessions, were divided into sub-topics, including Environmental History and Rivers in History, the Social Significance of Physical Spaces, Public History, Moments in Local History, People and Places and Community Histories. Although many of the presentations focused on Cambridge, other parts of the Grand River watershed such as the Speed River in Guelph and the Grand River Depot at Port Maitland were also covered in presentations.

Guided walking tours, led by members of Heritage Cambridge, were another option even though the weather didn’t co-operate.

Local historical societies and heritage groups had items on display. The sponsors were the City of Cambridge, the Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation and the TD Bank.

Groomed cross country ski trails and ski rental facilities will open at Shade’s Mills (pictured above) and Laurel Creek conservation areas when the snow arrives, while snowshoeing (including rentals) will be featured at Pinehurst Conservation Area.
Pedestrian bridge over Highway 401

The long-awaited pedestrian and cycling bridge over Highway 401 connecting Cambridge and Kitchener opened in October.

The bridge is an important community link connecting the Trans Canada Trail in Kitchener and Cambridge. It provides a safe, easy route for pedestrians and cyclists to cross Highway 401 at the west end of these cities.

The 100-metre bridge features an enclosed arched canopy that rises 14.5 metres above Highway 401 and the structure is reminiscent of the conestoga wagon, reflecting the past and present. Planning for the bridge began in 2003. An Environmental Assessment was completed in 2004, final design and construction tendering was completed in 2005 and construction finished this year.

The $1.7-million cost of the bridge was funded equally by the Region of Waterloo, City of Cambridge, and City of Kitchener, along with a $100,000 grant from the Trans Canada Trail Foundation.

WHAT’S HAPPENING?

Eleventh Heritage Workshop Feb. 18

Learn more about the traditions, events and influence of Six Nations on the history and development of the Grand River watershed at the 11th Heritage Day Workshop, Monday Feb. 18, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Six Nations Community Centre, Ohsweken.

The Six Nations of the Grand River Territory has been an important part of the Grand River watershed’s history and heritage for over 200 years. The life and times of E. Pauline Johnson and the role of the arts in promoting understanding of Six Nations culture and heritage will be a focus of the workshop.

The workshop is free, but registration is limited and available on a first-come basis. Donations are welcome. To register contact Brandee Sandy, Chiefswood National Historic Site, 519-752-5005 or by e-mail chiefs@execulink.com.

NOW AVAILABLE

Grand Registry: Count yourself in

The newest version of the Grand Actions Registry is now available online at www.grandriver.ca.

It is compiled each year by the GRCA to recognize the many municipalities, agencies, institutions, organizations, businesses, and individuals who contribute to improving the health and heritage of the Grand River watershed. Activities featured include environmental and cultural heritage projects, per-
WHAT YOU CAN DO

Use less bottled water

By Tim Patterson
GRCA Green Team member

Most or all of us have consumed bottled water, because of its perceived quality or its convenience. Here are some things to consider regarding your health, the environment, and the financial costs of bottled water:

• Bottled water can cost more per litre than gasoline, and more than 240 times as much as tap water.
• About 40 per cent of bottled water on the market comes from tap water.
• Water bottling companies do not have as stringent quality control regulations as municipal water plants.
• There is a financial and environmental cost to manufacture plastic water bottles.

If you prefer not to drink straight tap water, it can be filtered. Setting it out in a pitcher also allows the chlorine to dissipate.

If you still prefer bottled water, consider buying large refillable bottles and transferring the water to reusable containers to save money and also use less plastic in the process.

A tanker truck brought City of Guelph water to the Hillside Festival this year, delighting festival-goers and saving thousands of water bottles from the garbage.

The Grand Strategy Calendar

Building Sustainable Business is the theme of the 27th Annual Guelph Organics Conference, University of Guelph Jan. 24-27. The conference provides a comprehensive program of over 30 workshops, an organic expo and sampling fair with over 135 tables. For information, call 705-444-0923, or visit www.guelphorganicconf.ca.

11th Annual Heritage Day Workshop and Celebration, Six Nations Community Centre, Ohsweken, Monday, Feb. 18, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The theme of the workshop is Restoring Grand Heritage: A First Nations Perspective. For more information, visit www.grandriver.ca.
Morning Program – Moderator: Kim Hill, Two Rivers Community Development Centre

8:30-9:00 a.m.  Registration (beverages will be available)
9:00-9:15 a.m.  Opening Thanksgiving – Cleveland Thomas
9:15-9:20 a.m.  Welcoming Remarks
9:20-9:30 a.m.  Kanata Native Dancers
9:30-9:55 a.m.  The Making of an Exhibition: Faithfully Yours, E. Pauline Johnson – Tom Hill, Museum Consultant
9:55-10:20 a.m. Six Nations’ Contribution to Sport – Cheryl Henhawk, Six Nations Parks & Recreation
10:20-10:30 a.m. Heritage Vignette
10:30-11:00 a.m. Refreshment Break & Displays
11:00-11:50 a.m. From Moccasins to Military Boots: A History of Haudenosaunee Allies – Panel Discussion

Afternoon Program – Moderator: Barry W. Hill, Brant County Federation of Agriculture

1:30-1:45 p.m.  Singer - Cheri Maracle (invited)
1:45-2:10 p.m.  The Importance of Restoring Natural Heritage: The Case of Red Hill Valley – Rick Hill, Kayanase
2:10-2:35 p.m.  More than Grunts and Gestures: Restoring Traditional Languages – Points to Ponder – Amos Keye, Language Director, Woodland Cultural Centre
2:35-2:45 p.m.  Heritage Vignette
2:45-3:00 p.m.  Closing Thanksgiving
3:00-4:00 p.m.  Reception

Registration is free and limited to a first-come, first-served basis. Donations will be gratefully received at the event. Registrations will be accepted until Friday, February 8, 2008.

To register, please return completed form to: Brandee Sandy, Chiefswood National Historic Site, 1037 Highway 54, Ohsweken, ON, N0A 1M0  Email: chiefs@execulink.com  Phone: 519-752-5005  Fax: 519-752-9578
Registration Forms are also available at: www.chiefswood.com

HOSTED BY: Heritage Working Group of The Grand Strategy
SPONSORED BY: Chiefswood National Historic Site, Six Nations of the Grand,
Two Rivers Community Development Centre, The Ontario Trillium Foundation, Grand River Conservation Authority
ORGANIZED BY: Chiefswood National Historic Site, Woodland Cultural Centre, Two Rivers Community Development Centre,
Six Nations of the Grand, Ministry of Culture, County of Haldimand, Grand River Conservation Authority
Directions to Ohsweken Community Centre