

The Guide
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The Ruiter Valley Land Trust inaugurates its nature interpretation panels

At the launch of the North Missisquoi River recreo-tourism park project by the Municipality of Potton Township, the Ruiter Valley Land Trust unveiled the nature interpretation panels recently set up along the riverside in Mansonville. "It is with a great deal of enthusiasm that our organization has taken part in the restoration of the trails on the banks of the North Missisquoi. As well as making access to the river easier, the municipality's project contributes to the quality of life of Mansonville residents and acts as an attraction for visitors. It also raises public awareness of the natural and historic heritage of the region thanks to the interpretation panels set up on the site" said Stansje Plantenga, president of the RVLT.

The installation of the 4 nature interpretation panels by the RVLT constitutes the first concrete act of the recreo-tourism park. More panels to inform hikers of the details of the natural and historical heritage of Potton will be created at a later date. The first of the Land Trust's panels explains the characteristics of the North Missisquoi River; the second the importance of riverbank vegetation, both for maintaining the ecological balance and as habitat for wildlife; the third looks at the animal species living on the banks of the river, such as the River Otter and the Great Blue Heron; the last panel looks at a threatened species, the Wood Turtle. The Wood Turtle population on the banks of the North Missisquoi is one of the largest in Quebec. "RVLT's nature interpretation panels are a preferred tool for raising awareness of natural areas and the importance of their protection", the president said.

The panels were created with the financial help of the Ministère des Ressources Naturelles, de la Faune et des Parcs through its Forest Resource Development Program and with the help of the biologists from the Appalachian Corridor (ACA) conservation group. Within the project last fall, the RVLT developed an educational program which it presented to grade five and six students at the French and English schools in Mansonville. "The excellent work of the students allowed us to produce two other nature interpretation panels similar to those unveiled today and which have been installed on the trail network of the RVLT near Ruiter Brook Road. We are very proud", the RVLT president said.

Mrs. Plantenga took the opportunity to emphasize the importance of involving young people, community groups, municipals officials and landowners around stimulating projects which aim to protect our natural heritage for the benefit of the entire community. It is in this spirit that the Land Trust has headed up a training program to recognize animal signs. "Many people in our community have participated actively in our "Keeping Track" wildlife awareness program, and also "Flora Track", our wild plant identification program. We are now adapting and developing these programs for young people". The French and English schools in Mansonville, the Scouts and other groups will be invited to take part. The Municipality of Potton Township has already offered financial support to acquire materials and a few sites in the municipal recreotourism park will serve as study areas for the young people who will be called upon to identify various tree, plant and animal species while learning the importance of protecting the habitats of these species.