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Media Release

Visit the Bear Meeting Place on the Red Hill Valley Trail

HAMILTON, ON – September 15, 2014 – The Bear Meeting Place on the Red Hill Valley Trail opened on Saturday morning however the official opening event was cancelled due to rain. The Bear Meeting Place is the first of four meeting place features proposed for the trail by the Red Hill Valley Joint Stewardship Board, comprised of City of Hamilton and Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council representatives.

The Bear Meeting Place is a new architectural feature that was designed to reflect the image of a bear footprint. To both the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinabek people who travelled through this valley, the black bear is a symbol of strength and power associated with spiritual medicine. The Seneca Nation has a story of a giant bear called Nia'gwahe, or okwari in Mohawk that once roamed these lands. Seldom seen, the bear always left his big footprints on the landscape.

“The Joint Stewardship Board brings together western and indigenous knowledge and practices to ensure a resilient and ecologically healthy valley now and for future generations,” said Sheri Longboat, Coordinator with the Joint Stewardship Board. “We are very proud of the Bear Meeting Place as our first collaborative project and hope trail users will take time to explore this meeting place and the rich ecology and history associated with it.”

An interpretive plaque is installed on the trail with more details about The Bear design and connections to Onkwehonwe or Indigenous people's history and tradition.

Three other meeting places will be implemented in the future to represent a Turtle, Nest and Eel. These sites along the trail will be designed for sharing and learning and visitors can stop to rest and experience the beauty of the valley landscape. The Turtle Meeting Place is planned for 2016 and will be located at the end of the trail near the QEW bridge crossing. An opening event to celebrate both the Turtle and Bear will be planned for 2016.

In addition to the meeting places, the Joint Stewardship Board has completed the conceptual design for an Environmental Interpretative Centre to be located in the Valley. Once completed, the proposed centre would deliver educational programming around Hamilton history, Indigenous history, the valley ecosystem, and engineering and restoration.

The Joint Stewardship Board was established in 2005 and is a commitment between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council and City of Hamilton to collaborative environmental guardianship of the Red Hill Valley. Grounded in the spirit of shared responsibilities, the Board brings together unique and different knowledge and resources in order to restore and protect the Red Hill Valley for future generations.

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