

MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Forest Talk Radio at Laurier Woods Wins Provincial Conservation Areas Award

(October 30, 2019 - North Bay, ON) The land managers and staff of Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities voted Forest Talk Radio – a unique blend of storytelling, science and environmental education - the winner of the 2019 Conservation Areas Innovation Award at the 13 Annual Conservation Areas Workshop October 25.

Forest Talk Radio is a smart-phone application which turns a fungus into a radio show host who uses a storytelling format to share information about tree ecology in the Laurier Woods Conservation Area.

Multi-media artist David Merleau created the online application with site-specific data collected from the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority (NBMCA), and inspiration from Fred Pinto, an internationally recognized forester and president of Friends of the Laurier Woods.

"The Forest Talk Radio application is a fun and creative way to experience the natural heritage of Laurier Woods Conservation Area. It's a new way to explore and learn, thanks to David Merleau whose passion for the woods and his craft create an amazing experience for us all," said Troy Storms, NBMCA's Manager of Lands and Stewardship who accepted the Award on behalf of the project partners during the Conference in Orillia.

When hikers enter Laurier Woods at the Brule Street trailhead, they can download the application for their iPhone using a QR code on a sign posted at the trailhead or through Google Play if they have an Android phone. From there, the application picks up the signal using GPS and smartphone technology. The walk takes about an hour. Just bring your smartphone and your earbuds.

Other Ontario Conservation Authorities have expressed interest in the smart-phone application as a model for similar educational projects in conservation areas throughout the province.

Forest Talk Radio is a project supported by North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority, Friends of Laurier Woods, Near North Mobile Media Lab, Chrisdanat Management Ltd., and funded by the Ontario Arts Council. Information is available on www.foresttalkradio.ca

David is the Manager of the Storytellers of Canada Radio and Podcast Program, a ShortDoc producer with the Third Coast Audio Festival, and has had audio docs featured on CBC's Morning North with Marcus Schwabe. With a diploma in Radio Broadcasting, a degree in Philosophy and Biology, and a Master's Degree in Ethics and Technology, David pursues a creative existence in North Bay Ontario.

The North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority (NBMCA) was founded in 1972 by the Province of Ontario and the NBMCA's 10 member municipalities. A non-profit organization, the NBMCA works closely with the public to balance human needs with the environmental needs of the region's watershed. NBMCA manages 16 Conservation Areas and trails in the watershed and is one of 36 Conservation Authorities who are members of Conservation Ontario.

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