

Runway Rivers Signage Design and text

Runway Rivers

Long before the wonders of air flight and the existence of Downsview Airport, water flowed near this very spot. In fact, this whole site is an ancient headwater: a high point of land from which countless streams and creeks radiated outwards, flowing towards *Waasyayishkodenayosh* (Don River) to the east and and *Gabekanaang-ziiibi* (Humber River) to the west. These are the original names of the rivers used by the Michi Saagig – the First Nations people of this territory.

This was a time in which these waterways served as highways for First Nations people (and later European explorers and Metis), who used canoes to expertly navigate the network of interconnecting river and portage routes. These rivers have now all been buried under countless years of development.

Runway Rivers brings these waterways to the surface, acknowledging the power and importance of water in the history of this place.

So welcome to *Runway Rivers*. Explore it by climbing into a canoe and travelling down the rivers and streams that once flowed here.

John Notten about the artist

John Notten is a Toronto-based contemporary artist and educator. The immersive, interactive installations he creates offer a radical shift in the meanings of mundane objects and materials while addressing issues directly related to the site and the communities that occupy them.

Notten's practice addresses themes of community history and interactivity. Recently, his work has reimagined the artifacts of the 'weekend getaway' (canoes, muskoka chairs, tents etc.), interrogating their alternate meanings in the context of Canadian history.

As a perpetual educator, his hope is to foster ideas and awareness in an accessible way through interactivity and the aesthetic of play. Within the public realm, Notten's art has been created with the goal of facilitating the energetic spirit of neighbourhoods, building community, and encouraging dialogue.

Scan this QR code to hear John's welcome to you.



The vibrant swirling artwork you see throughout this site has been created by FLIPS: a Toronto-based multi-media artist, life enthusiast, and visual storyteller.

Inspired by the blending of cultural forces seen in Toronto, FLIPS' focus is on promoting and celebrating world cultures and connectivity amongst people. His motto is that art has the power to unite people and aims to create works that inspire and instil this message.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Flips and his involvement in this project.



Before you start:

1. Reserve your spot and sign the waiver.

Everyone who participates must sign the waiver. Use your device to scan the QR code.

A staff member can help you with this.

Note: if you want to visit the site without engaging with a canoe, no waiver is necessary.

2. Enter to your right to learn more about the lost rivers of YZD

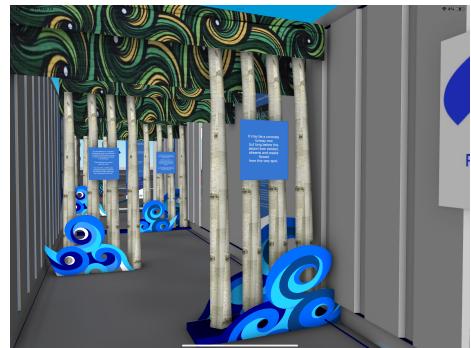
3. When you exit the container, a staff member will set you up with your very own canoe to explore *Runway Rivers*.



Runway Rivers logo sign



View of the container interior. The plan is to have simple, front facing signs with a brief statement to be read as the public weaves through the container. If they wish to learn more, signage on the side walls provide further detail/maps etc.



FRONT FACING SIGN 1:

It may be a concrete runway now but long before this airport ever existed, streams and creeks flowed from this very spot.



DETAILED INFO ON SIDE WALL 1:

The Lost Rivers of Toronto

The Downsview Airport site is the source from which numerous creeks and streams flowed. This height of land was called *Ishpaadinaa* (a high place/ridge) by the Anishinaabeg. Feeding the Don River in the east and the Humber River in the west, it has always played an important role in the water management of Toronto.

Over time, these many rivers were absorbed by the relentless process of urban development in Toronto. While the fresh water traditionally provided a wealth of benefits including irrigation and a source of clean drinking water, expanding populations in the city brought with it rising pollution and waterborne diseases like typhoid and cholera. Paving over this precious resource was a quick way to solve this problem. And gain land.

Today, with increasingly dramatic weather conditions brought on by climate change, the stormwater can overwhelm watercourse infrastructure.

'Daylighting' is the term given to bringing lost rivers up to the surface where they can help with extreme weather. Rivers provide a habitat for plants that capture carbon dioxide while providing expanded routes for water to find its way to Lake Ontario.

Runway Rivers daylights lost rivers in a symbolic way as you learn about the history and importance of these waterways.

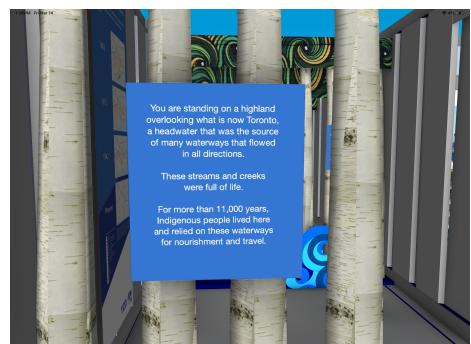


FRONT FACING SIGN 2

You are standing on a highland overlooking what is now Toronto, a headwater that was the source of many waterways that flowed in all directions.

Called *zibinswan* by the Anishinaabeg, these streams and creeks were full of life.

For more than 11,000 years, Indigenous people lived here and relied on these waterways for nourishment and travel.



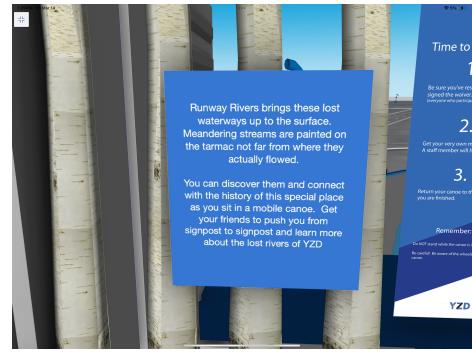
DETAILED INFO ON SIDE WALL 2

Disappearing Rivers of Toronto

Maps since 1902 show the gradual disappearance of waterways that flowed from the Downsview headwater.

Maps are used by permission from an interactive Disappearing Rivers web map that has been developed as a pilot project for Geohistory/Geohistoire, the Canadian Historical GIS Partnership Development Project aeohist.ca on behalf of the Lost Rivers of Toronto Project lostrivers.ca





FRONT FACING SIGN 3

Runway Rivers brings these lost waterways up to the surface. Meandering streams are painted on the tarmac not far from where they actually flowed.

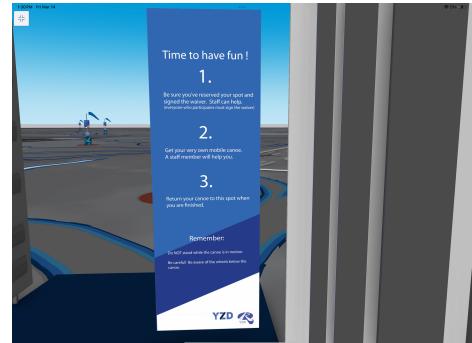
You can discover them and connect with the history of this special place as you sit in a mobile canoe. Get your friends to push you from signpost to signpost and learn more about the lost rivers of YZD.

Not all rivers have been completely lost. Mud Creek is an example of a waterway whose path can be traced from its source near the airport through dense urban environments towards the Don River. Occasionally it reveals itself as it trickles through deep ravines or flows out of culverts and pipes. Mud Creek eventually emerges at the Evergreen Brickworks as it flows into ponds teeming with life.

Mud Creek flows from Downsview Airport

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YZD



This is the basic design of each 'expert' signage which includes chalk box, chalk prompt and blue and white windsock.

A Runway Rivers Story: Lost Rivers. Where Did They Go?

Once upon a time,
many rivers, streams, and creeks flowed below your feet. Then, after many years of development in this area (including the building of the Downsview Airport) these waterways were buried. The map of these lost rivers have been painted before you on the concrete.

Take a journey down these rivers. They have a story to tell.

Scan the QR code and meet **Helen Mills**, an expert on the lost rivers of Toronto. As Founder and Co-Director of Lost Rivers at Toronto Green Community, she can tell you all about the importance of water that has flowed from this site.

The chalk prompt is:

The rivers that once flowed from here are now *lost*. But they still flow under the ground.
Draw what a lost river looks like.



Once upon a time,
long before there was even an airport here, this was the home of the Michi Saagiig (Mississauga) people - who are part of the greater Anishinaabe nation. And they would like you to know that they **are still here**. These lands continue to be the traditional territory of this resilient people.

The Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation is a vibrant community despite centuries of challenge and change. Throughout history, the Michi Saagiig have endured persistent attacks on their ways of life and have worked tirelessly to restore and retain their culture and avoid extinction. Despite many transformations, the Michi Saagiig have endured and have continued to adapt and grow into the resilient First Nation community that thrives today.

Scan the QR code to learn more from Traditional Knowledge and Land Use Coordinator at the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation **Darin Wybenga**.



The chalk prompt is:

First Nations people lived here for a long time before this airport existed. At that time, there were forests and streams. Draw what it looked like here before the airport was built.



A Runway Rivers Story: What the Future Holds

Once upon a time,
this was a busy airport and aircraft manufacturing site. Now that Downsview Airport has been decommissioned, there is an exciting opportunity to create something new here.

Meet _____, at Northcrest who can share some exciting plans for this site's future.



Chalk prompt:

This place will no longer be an airport. Draw or write what you imagine can be in this place in the future.



A Runway Rivers Story: The Canoe That Shaped a Nation

Once upon a time, jiimaan (the canoe) was the essential mode of travel on the waterways of this land. In many places, it still is.

Created and used by many First Nations, including the Michi Saagiig, the canoe is an elegant and efficient craft that has always been essential for transportation, trade, hunting/fishing, and exploration. When the Europeans came and were introduced to the canoe, they discovered that it was better-suited to reaching the farthest reaches of the landscape than any vessel they were familiar with.

This unprecedented access to the land initiated a long history of expansion, displacement, and excessive resource extraction that continues today.

Today, we may think of the canoe solely as a recreational craft, a staple of the cottage weekend getaway. But *Runway Rivers* offers a reminder of the important role it played in the nation-building project of Canada.

To learn more, use the QR code to hear from knowledge holder **Mark Sault** of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation for his thoughts on the history of the jiimaan.

Chalk prompt:

The streams that were once here flowed into the Don and Humber Rivers. Draw a canoe that might have travelled one of these important rivers.

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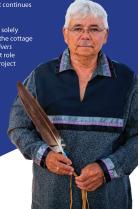
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The streams that were once here flowed into the Don and Humber Rivers.

Draw a canoe that might have travelled one of these important rivers.

A Runway Rivers Story: Our Water is Alive

Once upon a time, countless streams and creeks flowed from this very spot. Now buried, the lost rivers that fed both the Don River in the east and the Humber River in the west were an essential part of the original inhabitants' life here.

For many First Nations, including the Michi Saagiig, *nibs* (water) is a precious, sacred element necessary for life. These teachings remain the core of Anishiaabe belief.

Scan the QR code to hear from **Carolyn King, C.M.** elder from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Chalk prompt:

Water flows, splashes, gurgles, and bubbles. Draw what you think water looks like.



A Runway Rivers Story: From River to Airstrip

Once upon a time,
travel by canoe on the waterways that once flowed here was eventually replaced by new technologies
for getting around.

Eventually, after many years of development in this area, the DeHavilland Aircraft Company of Canada started building airplanes here.

Runways replaced waterways.

Luby Gorejko, now retired from DeHavilland Aircraft, was there to be part of this important chapter in Canadian history. Scan the QR code to hear from him as he proudly recounts the contributions of skilled Canadian workers who's efforts helped shaped Canadian aviation history.

Chalk Prompt:

The airport is no longer in use but can you draw some of the aircraft that flew from this spot since 1929?

A Runway Rivers Story:
From River to Airstrip

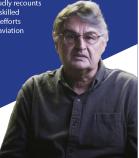
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 YZD 



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 YZD 



A Runway Rivers Story: Mud Creek. Still Flowing.

Once upon a time,
there were countless creeks and streams that flowed from this headwater. Many of them have been lost forever, buried beneath the concrete and long forgotten.

However, Mud Creek, which has always begun its journey to Lake Ontario from just east of the main runway of this airport, continues to flow. Its meandering path southward has been lovingly traced by dedicated individuals. In places it pops its head up from its largely underground journey, trickling out of culverts and bubbling into ponds at the Evergreen Brickworks.

Scan the QR code to listen to **Helen Mills**, who has scoured the ravines and backyards of this city in search of Mud Creek for over 30 years.

Chalk prompt:

Mud Creek still flows from here to Lake Ontario even though a lot of it is hidden underground. Draw what an underground river looks like.

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A Runway Rivers Story: History Flows From Here

Once upon a time,
this site served as an important headwater for many waterways that flowed in all directions. As a high-point of land in the area it was the ideal location for streams and creeks to begin their journey to feed the Don River in the east and the Humber River in the west.

For the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, both the Waasayishkodenayosh (Don River) and the Gabehanaang-ziiibi (Humber River) are very important. These two rivers play a pivotal role in the history of Toronto as they offered effective routes for transportation, commerce, and trade.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the importance of these rivers from elder **Carolyn King C.M.**

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For the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, both the Don River (Gabe-henwak) and the Humber River (Waasayishkodenayoshi) are very important. These two rivers play a pivotal role in the history of Toronto as they offered effective routes for transportation, commerce, and trade.

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Chalk prompt:

Tiny streams become larger creeks before they become mighty rivers. This looks like the branch of a tree. Draw small streams, becoming bigger creeks, and then becoming a large river, like the Don or Humber River.

