

# WELL-LOVED TRAILS TELL OF OUR RELIANCE ON NATURE



**MIKE HENDREN**  
Column

Close your eyes. Picture yourself beneath a tree, and breathe deeply. In your yard, in a park or way up in the boreal forest, it doesn't matter where you're standing in your mind's eye. Your tree is cleaning the air you just breathed in, and it might also be sheltering a squirrel or boasting a choir of songbirds. That's the power of nature.

Nature also serves as a refuge for many people who seek out its songs, fresh smells and vibrant colours when everyday stresses mount up.

Over the last 24 months, the footsteps on trails in conservation areas and parks across Ontario have marked our rekindled connection with the natural world.

Across the province, people are flocking to nature to help soothe anxieties brought on or amplified by the pandemic.

In fact, results from a recent Ipsos Public Affairs poll for the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) pointed out that 40 per cent of people in Ontario are spending more time in nature now than they were before the pandemic began.

One-third of all respondents said that being in nature helps them cope with stress and anxiety brought on by the pandemic.

These findings underscore why protecting and caring for nature is so vital.

People are turning to nature reserves and green spaces for physically distanced outdoor activities



## OUR CHANGED WORLD

*Canada's leading thinkers reflect on how COVID-19 has changed our community, Canada, and the world, and forever altered the future.*

that support their physical, mental and emotional health.

We are embracing opportunities to get fresh air, exercise, feel a sense of calm and take a break from increased telework and screen time.

Of the 18 per cent of people in that poll who said they are spending less time in nature, lack of access was a barrier for many who said they require transportation or don't have natural spaces close to where they live. Others said they simply don't have time.

From the nature in your garden to the remarkable 15 million hectares that NCC has helped protect across Canada — roughly double the size of New Brunswick — each leaf, bird and bug plays an important role, not just in our own well-being, but also in the natural systems that support biodiversity and help lessen the impacts of climate change.

It's why we're taking significant steps to help protect 30 per cent of Canada's land by 2030, because when nature thrives, we all thrive.

So, wherever you are, take a deep breath in and experience the power of nature surrounding you.

*Mike Hendren is the regional vice-president for the Nature Conservancy of Canada in Ontario.*



## ADVISORY COUNCILS INSPIRE THEMED EDITION

*It's about trust. Our relationship with our readers is built on transparency, honesty and integrity. As such, we have launched a trust initiative to tell you who we are and how and why we do what we do. This column is part of that project.*

When we set out to hear from leaders in our community and invited them to join our advisory council, we knew we'd be engaging in many meaningful conversations.

These discussions have yet to disappoint.

In fact, they've proven to be a source of great inspiration for many editorial initiatives, including today's themed edition: Our Changed World.

It's thanks, in part, to members of Torstar and Metroland's advisory councils that we set out to explore the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our everyday lives.

We heard through many discussions how the pandemic had forced municipi-



**CATHERINE O'HARA**  
Column

ties, groups, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and residents to adapt to a new way of life. And this got us thinking: are these changes permanent? Sustainable? Innovative?

Our Changed World is a probing examination of the impact of the pandemic on our lives. While our journalists dig deep to explore the impact on the local community, some of Canada's leading thinkers help us understand how the pandemic changed employment and work, health care, retail, government, our relationship with the natural world, housing, community, education, im-

migration, our children — and more.

Throughout this special edition, you'll also hear from local residents — your friends and neighbours, who shared their personal experiences with us. Some tell us the pandemic hasn't had a significant impact on their day-to-day life, while others report having to shift and pivot to adapt to what they now consider to be the new norm. They have reconsidered how they operate their business, re-evaluated their relationship with nature, and reconsidered how they access health care.

In all, we hope that this special edition will enlighten, delight and inspire you.

*Catherine O'Hara is deputy director of content for Metroland.*

*We welcome your questions and value your comments. Email our trust committee at [trust@metroland.com](mailto:trust@metroland.com).*

TO LEARN HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR OWN CONTENT VISIT [THEIFP.CA](http://THEIFP.CA)

## ABOUT US

This newspaper, published every Thursday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. The Metroland family of newspapers is comprised of more than 70 community publications across Ontario.

This newspaper is a member of the National NewsMedia Council. Complainants are urged to bring their concerns to the attention of the newspaper and, if not satisfied, write The National NewsMedia Council, Suite 200, 890 Yonge St., Toronto, ON M4W 2H2. Phone: 416-340-1981. Web: [www.mediacouncil.ca](http://www.mediacouncil.ca)

**nnc** National NewsMedia Council  
**ocna**  
newsroom@theifp.ca  
IndependentAndFreePress  
@IFP\_11

## WHO WE ARE

- VP, Regional Publisher**  
Kelly Montague
- Regional General Manager**  
Jason Pehora
- Director of Content**  
Lee Ann Waterman
- Deputy Director of Content**  
Catherine O'Hara
- Managing Editor**  
Karen Miceli
- Director of Distribution**  
Charlene Hall
- Circulation Manager**  
Kim Mossman
- Directors of Advertising**  
Cindi Campbell and Graeme MacIntosh

## CONTACT US

**The Independent & Free Press**  
901 Guelph Line  
Burlington, ON L7R 3N8  
Phone: 905-873-0301  
Classifieds: 1-800-263-6480  
Fax: 905-873-0398  
**Letters to the editor**  
All letters must be fewer than 320 words and include your name and telephone number for verification purposes. We reserve the right to edit, condense or reject letters. Published letters will appear in print and/or online at [theifp.ca](http://theifp.ca)

**Delivery**  
For all delivery inquiries, please e-mail [lpolar@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:lpolar@miltoncanadianchampion.com) or call 905-234-1019.

