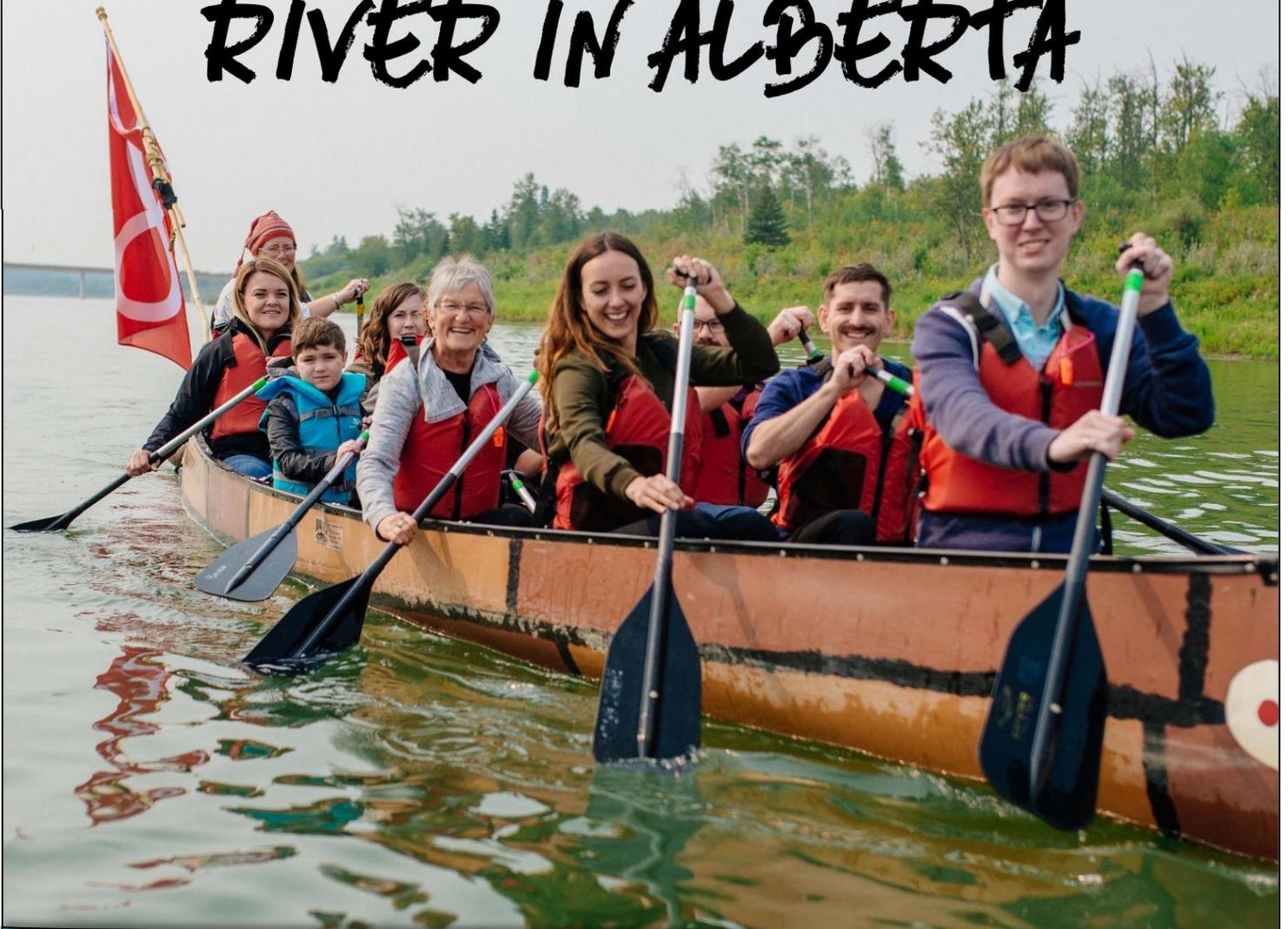


# NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER IN ALBERTA



## Nomination Document for the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS)

November 2021

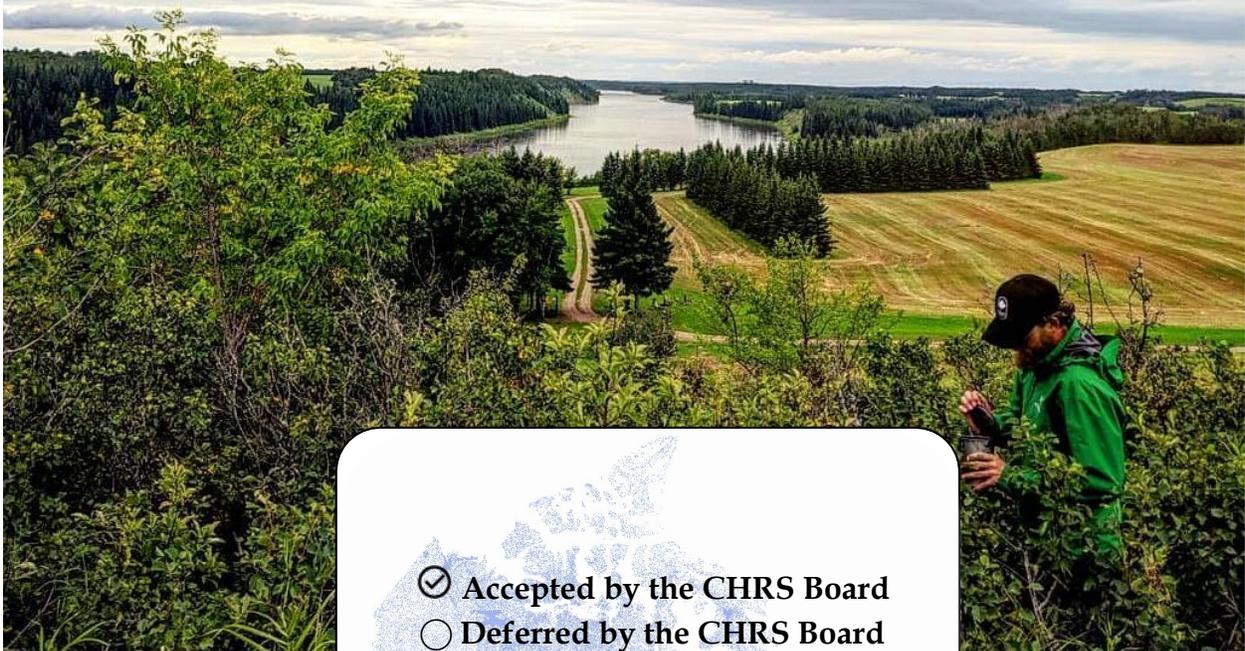


Canadian  
Heritage Rivers  
System

Réseau des  
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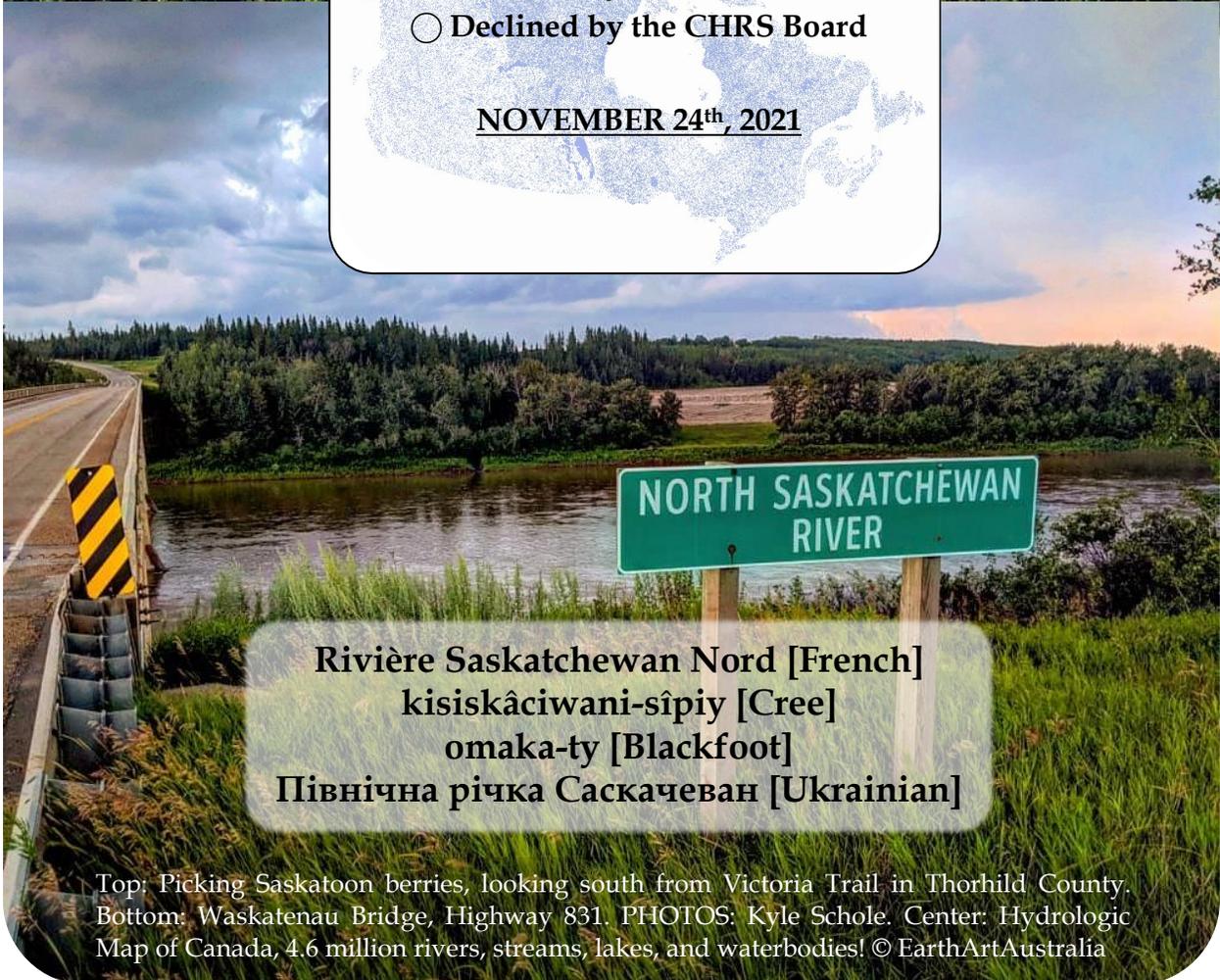
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ISBN: 978-1-7776516-0-2



- Accepted by the CHRS Board
- Deferred by the CHRS Board
- Declined by the CHRS Board

NOVEMBER 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021



**Rivière Saskatchewan Nord [French]  
kisiskâciwani-sîpiy [Cree]  
omaka-ty [Blackfoot]  
Північна річка Саскачеван [Ukrainian]**

Top: Picking Saskatoon berries, looking south from Victoria Trail in Thorhild County.  
Bottom: Waskatenau Bridge, Highway 831. PHOTOS: Kyle Schole. Center: Hydrologic  
Map of Canada, 4.6 million rivers, streams, lakes, and waterbodies! © EarthArtAustralia

## General Acknowledgments

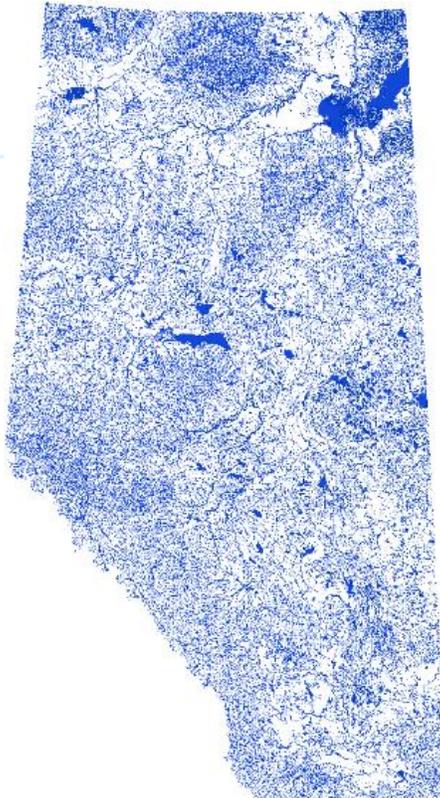
This Nomination has been assisted by the past work of the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA), which since 20 05, has been designated as one of Alberta’s 11 Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs), under the Alberta *Water for Life Strategy*.

These independent, non-profit organizations report on the health of our watersheds, lead collaborative planning, and facilitate education and stewardship activities. In 2020, the NSWA celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



We gratefully recognize local author and daughter of Elk Point, Alberta, Billie Milholland, for her passionate & lifelong contributions to river heritage and storytelling.

Right: Hydrologic Map of Alberta, over 72,000 rivers and streams, and almost 32,000 lakes! © EarthArtAustralia



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This document graciously received financial support from Smoky Lake County and Parks Canada.



*We apologize for any unintentional errors of omission, problematic word choices, or otherwise.*

## Territorial Acknowledgment

The main stem of the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta under this Nomination outside of Banff National Park, and the many streams, creeks, and tributaries across its wider watershed flows primarily through Treaty 6 Territory as well as Treaty 8 Territory. These are also the traditional territories of diverse Indigenous people including the Cree (Nehiya), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Ktunaxa, Metis, Nakota Sioux (Stoney), Iroquois, Dene (Denesuline), Ojibwe, Saulteaux, Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Inuit, Tsuut'ina, Assiniboine, and the Homeland of the Métis Nation, as well as Regions 4, 3, 2, and 1 of the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA).

Communities across Alberta owe their strength and vibrancy to this land and diverse Indigenous peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory, as well as settlers from around the world, who continue to be welcomed here and call this place home. We respect and appreciate these many histories, languages, and cultures, which continue to enrich and strengthen our vibrant communities. We are grateful to walk alongside our Indigenous brothers and sisters to respect, nurture, recreate on and appreciate the land and waterways that make up what we now know as Alberta.

*“The North Saskatchewan River, kisiskaciwan-sipi, ('it flows swiftly') ~ holds substantial traditional significance, being a place of gathering, commerce, and ceremony from time immemorial.”*

**- Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations Grand Chief Vernon Watchmaker**

*“The Métis Nation of Alberta supports this nomination of the North Saskatchewan River, as it is significant to Métis culture. This nomination will also support the broader spirit of collaboration between our communities to continue to work together towards maintaining ecological integrity along this area, support river health and wellness, and promote local and regional economic growth.”*

**- Métis Nation of Alberta President Audrey Poitras**



*First Nation dancer - image courtesy of Explore Edmonton*

## Timeline

### **CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS SYSTEM (CHRS) EST. - 1984**

A partnership of the provincial, territorial, and federal governments.  
Alberta does not initially participate.

### **NSR IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK DESIGNATED - 1989**

Forty-nine (49) kilometers of North Saskatchewan River within the federal lands of Banff National Park were designated under CHRS.  
(*Excluding the remainder across the Provinces of Alberta & Saskatchewan*)

### **ALBERTA RESEARCH STUDIES**

Advisory Committee established by Minister of Environment Ralph Klein – 1991

Report to the Minister – May 1992  
(*Recommended Alberta join the CHRS, which occurs in February 1994*)

**Phase 1** – Development of a Thematic Framework – 1994

**Phase 2** – A Preliminary Application of the Evaluation Framework – 1995

**Phase 3** – River Integrity and Management Feasibility Study, Final Report – 1996

### **NORTH SASKATCHEWAN WATERSHED ALLIANCE (NSWA, AB)**

**Background Report:** ‘*CHRS Background Study North Saskatchewan River in Alberta: The Story of the River is the Story of the West*’ – 2005

(*Ceremony at Rocky Mountain House officiated by former Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta, the Honourable Helen Hunley*)

State of the Watershed Report – 2005

Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) – 2012

North Saskatchewan River in Alberta Heritage River Initiative – led by Smoky Lake County, kick-off in 2019

### **NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER BASIN COUNCIL (NSRBC, SK)**

**Background Report:** *Canadian Heritage Rivers: The North Saskatchewan River [in the Province of Saskatchewan]* – 2017

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS)

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) is a collaboration among the federal, provincial, and territorial governments established in 1984 to recognize Canada’s outstanding rivers to ensure their future management, protect, and enhance their significant heritage values for the ongoing benefit and enjoyment of Canadians.



*Canada’s Heritage Rivers (currently 39 designated, and 1 nominated) across Canada from coast-to-coast-to-coast)*

– **CHRS 2020-2030 Strategic Plan**

To attain Canadian Heritage River status, a citizen-led group or government jurisdiction must come forward to propose a river to the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board, proving that it meets one or more of the natural or cultural selection and integrity guidelines, as defined by the CHRS.

The nominated section must also be large enough to encompass these values and to provide the user with an appreciation of the river’s resources, as well as an enjoyable recreational experience. Responsibility for collection and analysis of information to determine heritage values and for

subsequent nomination of the river rests with the specific government within whose jurisdiction the nominated river lies.

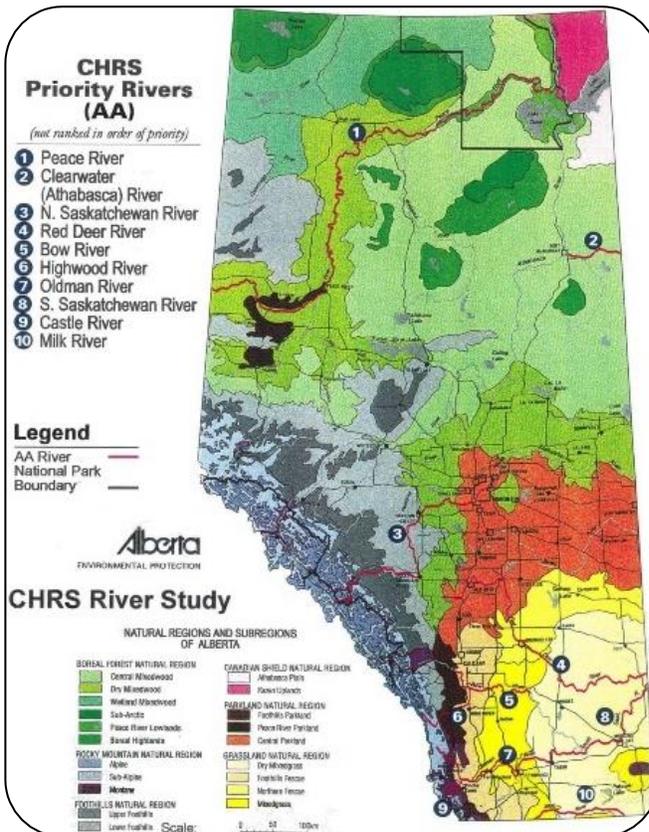
A Board of representatives from participating provinces, territories, and the federal government manages the CHRS program. When considering a river for inclusion, the Board will determine how well the nominated river satisfies the “*Guidelines for the selection of Canadian Heritage Rivers.*” The Board will consider both the river and its surrounding landscape, which together capture the heritage values.

Within three years of acceptance for nomination by the Ministers, a management plan shall be filed with the CHRS Board, upon acceptance of which the river or section of river shall be formally included in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. The Board will undertake periodic reviews of Canadian Heritage Rivers to ensure that the designated rivers continue to merit inclusion in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System.

Participation in the CHRS is honorary and voluntary. Participants retain their traditional legislative authority, including ownership and management. A CHRS Management Plan is not ‘red tape.’ It is not prescriptive. It does not bring about or require additional legislation or development restrictions.

**Attaining status as a Canadian Heritage River brings numerous advantages, including increased coordination between organizations along the river, better conservation of natural and cultural heritage, and a strengthened regional tourism sector.**

## 1.2 Alberta’s Heritage Rivers program



Priority candidate rivers as identified in the 1996 CHRS Study

Alberta joined as a member of the CHRS board in February 1994, under then-Premier and former Minister of Environment Ralph Klein.

In 1996, the then-department of Alberta Environmental Protection conducted a “Canadian Heritage Rivers System Study of Alberta Rivers.” This assessment ranked 72 Alberta rivers for possible nomination to the CHRS and established priority rivers for further research.

The North Saskatchewan River ranked # 1 Human Heritage Values and #3 in Natural Heritage Values, with the highest-rating overall for those two categories. These results indicated that the North Saskatchewan River warranted further study for potential CHRS nomination.

Alberta’s Heritage Rivers process provides the framework for stakeholders along the river to position their river for nomination and prepare the management plan, both which must precede CHRS designation.

In October 2003, the Clearwater River became the first river in Alberta outside a National Park designated a Canadian Heritage River.

## 1.3 The NSR in Alberta Heritage River Initiative

*The purpose of this section is to introduce the nomination of the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS).*

This document has been prepared by Smoky Lake County (having been significantly assisted by the past work of the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA)), on behalf of Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP, the lead agency managing the CHRS in the Province of Alberta) for submission to the CHRS.

The NSWA is a non-profit society bringing together over 200 member organizations and citizens representing industry, federal and provincial government departments, Indigenous communities, agriculture, municipalities, and environmental NGOs from throughout the watershed. The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance's designated mandate is to protect and enhance water quality, water quantity, and ecosystem functioning of the NSR Watershed within Alberta.

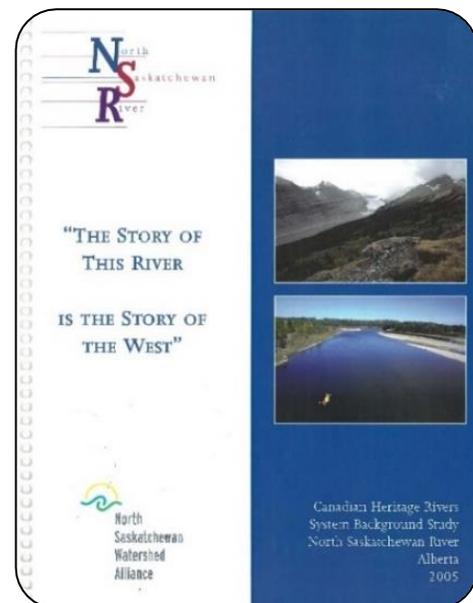
**Designation of the NSR in Alberta as a Canadian Heritage River will substantially increase the awareness of the river's heritage value on local, provincial, national, and international levels, and Indigenous and sustainable adventure tourism.**

### 1.3.1 Background Study

In May 2001, the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA), a registered not-for-profit society, decided as a supplement to its watershed philosophy to undertake a CHRS Background Study of the North Saskatchewan River. CHRS Background Studies are designed to determine if a River meets the selection and integrity guidelines to be nominated as a Canadian Heritage River.

An excerpt from the NSWA Background Study: *The Story of the River is the Story of the West* (2006): "All six of the river-reaches in Alberta are suitable for nomination, either separately, or in combination with many of the others. The seventh reach, which extends into Saskatchewan, cannot be included in Alberta's nomination, but is suitable for a nomination spearheaded by stakeholders in Saskatchewan."

The most significant heritage value of the North Saskatchewan River is found in its Cultural Value, in the diverse and continual role the river has played in the development of human history in western Canada. This river was a major transportation and resource corridor from its inception, at the end of the last ice age, to the middle decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Archaeological evidence verifies the key role of the North Saskatchewan River in Paleolithic history in western Canada: human activity along the river is evident from about 11,500 B.P. to the present. The Saskatchewan River's name originates from the Cree, 'kisiskâciwanisîpiy,' (or in Blackfoot, 'omaka-ty') meaning "swift-flowing river". Diverse Indigenous peoples fished in the kisiskâciwanisîpiy, omaka-ty, as well as hunted bison, woodland caribou, moose, and smaller mammals in the plains, and foraged for roots and berries in the river valley.

*Kisiskâciwanisîpiy* is on Treaty 6 territory, which is a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Ktunaxa, Metis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibwe, Saulteaux, Anishinaabe, Inuit, Tsuut'ina, Assiniboine, and many others.

Historical documentation emphasizes the pivotal position of the North Saskatchewan River as the main transportation and communication route from eastern Canada to the Rocky Mountains, from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The river played a significant role in Indigenous community displacement westward, the western expansion of the fur trade, early missionary efforts in the West, major exploration, scientific, survey and military expeditions, as well as in the early European settlement of the West.

The Natural Heritage Value of the North Saskatchewan River is also significant. The river flows through complex and varied ecosystems and for much of its length forms a general geographic demarcation line between boreal forest and prairie grassland, creating interesting and unusual environments that support a broad diversity of wildlife, including many rare plant and animal species. The river flows through four provincially defined Natural Regions within Alberta and through five Natural Subregions, creating a significant variation in recreational opportunities.

The recreational value of the North Saskatchewan River is today also more significant than the findings of the 1996 Study of Alberta Rivers suggests, as that study was published just prior to many important changes in how municipalities, industry, and agriculture approach water quality issues. The subsequent improvements, which are ongoing, have improved the recreation value of the river substantially.



*Victoria Settlement Provincial Historic Site on the NSR, Government of Alberta*

### 1.3.2 Location and Description

*The purpose of this section is to briefly describe the location of the river through a map, a description of its setting and information on access to the river.*

The North Saskatchewan River flows within the North Saskatchewan Watershed across central Alberta and into Saskatchewan. The river travels 1,287 km from its origins in the Columbia Icefields in the Rocky Mountains of Western Alberta to the 'Forks' within the province of Saskatchewan. This route transects four of Alberta's six natural regions: Rocky Mountains, Foothills, Boreal Forest, and Parkland.

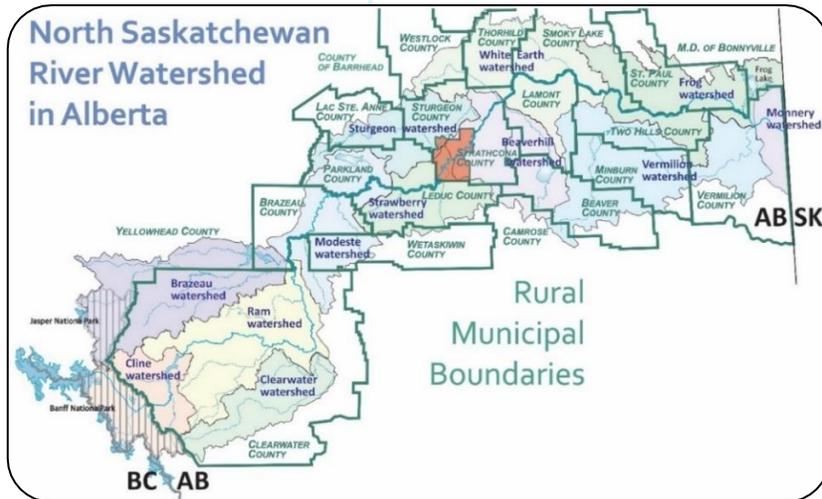
# NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER IN ALBERTA

## Nomination Document for the CHRS

On this long journey, the North Saskatchewan River streams from the Saskatchewan Glacier, which is part of the Columbia Icefields in Banff National Park, in the Rocky Mountains. As it tumbles through the steep-walled gorge between Mount Athabasca and Mount Saskatchewan, the waters of Nigel Creek join it, and then the Alexandra River enters the North Saskatchewan River's southeasterly flow. At Saskatchewan Crossing, the Howse and the Mistaya Rivers add volume to the river, which now turns east down through the foothills, collecting outflow from the Ram and Clearwater Rivers before travelling past the Town of Rocky Mountain House. At that juncture, the river turns north, gathering water from the Baptiste and the Brazeau Rivers before continuing past Drayton Valley.



Map identifying the 718 kilometer portion of North Saskatchewan River within Alberta, Canada, to be nominated to the CHRS.



Municipal jurisdictions across the NSR Watershed in Alberta.

Source: North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA)

North of Drayton Valley, it flows east again, meandering past the town of Devon and then through Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan. It takes in the Sturgeon River as it leaves major urban centres behind and reaches its northernmost point near Smoky Lake.

The North Saskatchewan River gathers in the waters of the Vermilion River just before it crosses the provincial boundary, then the Battle River as it flows between the two Battlefords in the province of Saskatchewan, and finally, with the addition of several smaller rivers, it flows past the City of Prince Albert. At 'The Forks,' a dramatic meeting with its sister tributary, the South Saskatchewan River, creates the Saskatchewan River, which now wanders through marshy

lake lands until it reaches Cedar Lake, then on to Lake Winnipeg at Grand Rapids, and eventually to the Hudson Bay.

Settlement patterns vary in density and scale, from the Saddle Lake Indian Reserve, within the homeland of the Saddle Lake Cree Nation, to small hamlets like Heinsburg, to medium-sized

towns like Rocky Mountain House and Devon, to the large City of Edmonton, the capital city of Alberta. Shoreline and water-based recreation opportunities abound along the entire river system. This includes boating, hiking, hot air ballooning, photographic adventures, entertainment venues, wildlife watching, botany excursions, historic sites, gold panning and diverse fishing opportunities. Anglers fish for lake trout, mountain whitefish, bull trout, rainbow trout, perch, pike, gold eye, moon eye, burbot, sauger, walleye and the river dinosaur – sturgeon.

Burtonsville Island, 105 km west of Edmonton, is a good example of the many natural areas on the river. This site consists of a group of islands surrounded by a fork in the North Saskatchewan River; it contains old-growth balsam poplar & white spruce forest with a tall, dense shrub layer; mixed stands of poplar, spruce & trembling aspen with trees of varying height, density & understory composition; willow, alder & early successional habitats dominate active channel banks & older inactive river channels; the site is used extensively for outdoor survival skills training.

### 1.3.3 Nomination Methodology

*The purpose of this section is to describe the method used for information collection and heritage value evaluation.*

The NSR in Alberta Nomination Document identifies significant cultural, natural, and recreational values found along the river and justifies Alberta’s pursuit of Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) status for its portion of the river. The nomination is based on the river’s outstanding cultural and recreational heritage values in fulfillment of the submission requirements of the CHRS Principles, Procedures and Operational Guidelines (PPOG), the Cultural and Natural Values Frameworks, and the GAP Analysis.

*“To stick your hands into the river is to feel the cords that bind the earth together in one piece.”*

*- Barry Lopez*

Smoky Lake County embarked on an initiative to advance the Nomination of the NSR in Alberta as a Heritage River in 2019. This NSR Heritage River Initiative recognizes the grassroots-driven and community-focused nature of the CHRS. From the beginning, community support has been sought and obtained, as described in Section 1.3.5 Indigenous Engagement and Public Participation, and Section 1.3.6 Community Support.

In the same way, Smoky Lake County engaged the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA), the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations, and individual First Nations, seeking and obtaining their endorsement and input in crafting this document. CHRS Nomination and subsequently, Designation, will not be the conclusion of this work, but merely a beginning. Significantly, many municipalities in



*Dragon Boat Race on the NSR within the City of Edmonton*



*Paddling the NSR near the confluence of the Vermilion River Billie Milholland Photos.*

Alberta are only just beginning to be open to building relations with Indigenous organizations, and this NSR Heritage River initiative provides an opportunity to contribute to this objective.

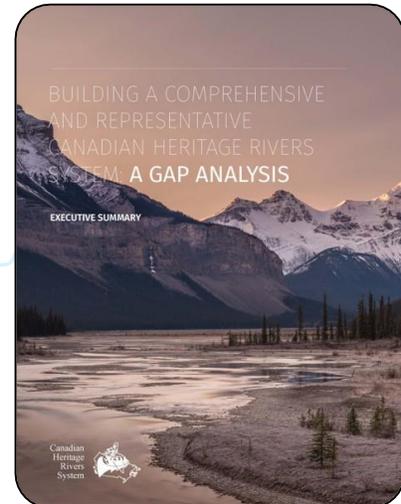
Specifically, the County also retained professional services from Aquality Environmental Ltd., for provisions relating to natural values, as well as Wise Use, for advice and assistance relating to the public plan.

### 1.3.4 Role in the System

*To describe the role which the river might play in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System from a national perspective, referring to the characteristics which make it distinct.*

Inclusion of the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta will contribute to addressing the GAP Analysis, by adding to the cultural and recreational river heritage of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System:

- Representing a 718-kilometer segment of a 1,287-kilometre transportation corridor, the 12<sup>th</sup> longest river in Canada, flowing across three Provinces, to Lake Winnipeg, and onto Hudson's Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, facilitating a wide range of early commercial activities and land-based touring.
- A legacy of First Nations and Métis cultures to the region as evidenced in the numerous riverside archaeological and spiritual sites dating from time immemorial.
- Representation of Edmonton as the capital of Alberta, along the NSR, including I Capital North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System being the largest urban park in Canada, with over 160-kilometers of maintained pathways and trails.
- A major historic trade and travel route to the heart of North America.
- A strong wildlife environment that continues today to support harvesting practices of Indigenous peoples, as it also supported their ancestors.
- A spectacular and varied wilderness and recreation route – navigable in the upper reaches with good white-water skills, and opportunities across all reaches to experience a variety of boating and wilderness in remote, yet accessible locations.
- A wide range of recreational activities and experiences within wilderness, rural and urban settings.



2010 CHRS Gap Analysis

Further, although the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta is *not* being nominated based on its natural values, it also contributes:

- A drainage basin for four of Alberta's six physiographic regions, including the Cordilleran Eastern Range, and Prairie Range, as well as the Boreal Plains terrestrial ecozone.
- Significant plant and animal communities, including confirmed populations provincially or federally recognized species at risk including Lake Sturgeon fish.
- Extraordinary opportunities for natural heritage appreciation.

### 1.3.5 Indigenous Engagement & Public Participation

Smoky Lake County undertook engagement with dozens of Indigenous organizations, including the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA), Métis Settlements including Kikino, Buffalo Lake, Elizabeth, and Fishing Lake, the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations, and individual First Nations across Treaty 6 territory including Alexander First Nation, Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Cold Lake First Nation, Enoch Cree Nation #440, Ermineskin Cree Nation, Frog Lake First Nation, Heart Lake First Nation, Kehewin Cree Nation, Louis Bull Tribe, Montana First Nation, O'Chiese First Nation, Onion Lake Cree Nation, Paul First Nation, Saddle Lake Cree Nation, Samson Cree Nation, Sunchild First Nation, Whitefish Lake Indian Reserve #128 (Whitefish (Goodfish) Lake First Nation).

Smoky Lake County contacted each of the aforementioned Treaty 6 First Nations by phone and email in January and February 2021. Later, the County sent a letter to over 80 First Nations contacts across Alberta in October 2021, providing information about the Initiative, and committing to further engagement during the management planning process. A Letter of Support has been provided by both the Métis Nation of Alberta, and Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations, and a record of engagement is appended to this document.

Input received from these organizations contributed to the iterative process of this Nomination, and will continue to do so during the forthcoming management plan and beyond.

In addition to obtaining formal support from fourteen fellow river-adjacent municipal Councils, Smoky Lake County also participated in two public webinars:

- March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021, hosted by *Partners for the Saskatchewan River Basin*, and
- April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021, hosted by Smoky Lake County with panelist guests Alberta Senator Paula Simons, author Billie Milholland, and historian Thomas Long.

Finally, during the month of April 2021, Smoky Lake County partnered with 'Wise Use' to conduct a river-centric province-wide public input survey. This process garnered hundreds of responses, culminating in a 'What We Heard' Report, which was published in May of 2021:

*"Most of the people surveyed [87%] supported the nomination of the North Saskatchewan River to the Heritage River System. Those that opposed the nomination [9%] felt that no change was needed or that a designation to the [CHRS] would eventually result in restricted access to the river. The [NSR] generates and sustains a wide variety of*

### What We Heard Report:

Canadian Heritage River System  
Nomination Survey –  
North Saskatchewan River  
Rivière Saskatchewan Nord  
kisiskâciwani-sîpiy  
omaka-ty  
Північна річка Саскачеван

2021



recreational activities, cultural practices, and nature appreciation. The river and adjacent lands provide diverse opportunities for enjoyment and gathering of people, culture, and history... the river provides a platform to connect to the past and enrich the present.

From what we heard, there is a yearning to learn more about the Indigenous peoples' history and culture along the river. Numerous special areas were identified providing daily and multiday exploration. Tensions exist between developing economic opportunities and protecting the extraordinary nature. Access to the River was a primary theme among the survey responses and highlights a need for education about the commemorative nature of the Canadian Natural Heritage River System designation. It is clear from the responses received that the North Saskatchewan River matters to Canadians. It is an icon of Western Canada's identity."

A Record of Engagement may be found appended to this document, and efforts undertaken to-date represent only a beginning; moving forward, including the subsequent management planning process, this initiative serves as an opportunity to cultivate communication, collaboration, and new relations among Indigenous organizations and others where dialogue has not yet existed or been achieved.

In addition to direct engagement efforts, this initiative to-date has also received media coverage in several local and regional publications, including:

- Globe and Mail: (August 6, 2017) *The North Saskatchewan River: 'The story of the West'*
- Lakeland Today: (December 12, 2020) *North Saskatchewan River could become part of Canadian Heritage Rivers System.*
- Fort Sask. Online: (January 17, 2021) [Fort Saskatchewan] *City council backing river project to promote tourism and culture.*
- Smoky Lake Signal: (January 19, 2021) *Designation of the North Saskatchewan River.*
- Rocky Mountaineer: (February 2, 2021) [Clearwater] *County lends support to heritage designation for North Saskatchewan River.*
- Redwater Review: (February 3, 2021) *Sturgeon signs on to Smoky Lake's push for Canadian Heritage River System status.*
- City of St Albert News Release - March 8, 2021
- Battlefords News-Optimist: (March 23, 2021) *Heritage designation sought for N. Sask. River.*
- Smoky Lake Signal: (April 13, 2021) *Treaty 6 Letter of Support for the nomination of the North Saskatchewan River.*
- Leduc Representative: (April 15, 2021) [Leduc City] *Council votes to support CHRS designation for North Saskatchewan River.*

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## NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER IN ALBERTA

### Nomination Document for the CHRS

- Taproot Edmonton: (April 20, 2021) *City council endorses heritage nomination for North Saskatchewan River.*
- Smoky Lake Signal: (May 18, 2021) *EPCOR Supports Nomination of the North Saskatchewan River as Canadian Heritage River.*
- SaskToday: (May 23, 2021) *Heritage designation sought for N. Sask. River.*
- AlbertaViews Magazine: (September 2021) *Rediscovering a River - The life-giving North Saskatchewan by Senator Paula Simons.*
- CBC Edmonton Radio-Active interview on August 25, 2021, at 4pm.
- CBC Edmonton News: (September 3, 2021) *Northern Alberta county angling for North Saskatchewan to become a heritage river.*



### 1.3.6 Community Support

The North Saskatchewan River’s journey toward inclusion in the CHRS has been and meandering storied. All said, over eighty letters have been obtained from municipalities, businesses, individuals, Indigenous organizations and communities, and community groups, including:

#### River-Adjacent Municipalities

*Endorsing organizations are listed relative to their order of river-flow from West to East:*



#### Indigenous Organizations



*Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA)*



*Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations*



*Tsuut'ina Nation, in Treaty 7*



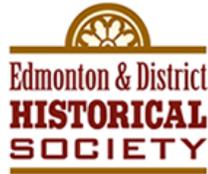
*Blood Tribe, of the Blackfoot Confederacy, in Treaty 7*

Fifteen of sixteen directly NSR-adjacent municipalities across Alberta, as well as several Indigenous Organizations have provided their formal support, demonstrating significant community support for nomination of the NSR in Alberta to the CHRS.

**Other Support**



*Alta. Riparian Society*



*AB Senators Doug Black and Paula Simons*



*MLA Jackie Armstrong Homeniuk*



*NSR Valley Conservation Coalition*



*Edmonton River Valley Conservation Coalition*

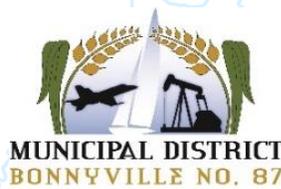


*Travel Lakeland*



# NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER IN ALBERTA

## Nomination Document for the CHRS



Village of Marwayne



Courtesy of Explore Edmonton

## 1.4 Overview: Cultural, Natural, & Recreational Values

### 1.4.1 Overview of Cultural Heritage Values

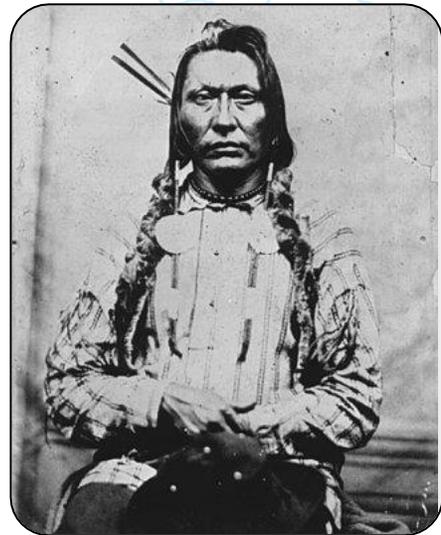
*The Cultural Heritage Value of a river is related to human use and the influence of the river on human activities.*

The Saskatchewan River’s name originates from the Cree, ‘*kisiskâciwanisîpiy*,’ (or in Blackfoot, ‘*omaka-ty*’) meaning “swift-flowing river”.

Cree	English
<i>Sipiy</i>	‘a river’
<i>Sokiciwan</i>	‘it flows through fast’
<i>Ka sapostek wiyak</i>	‘it flows or runs through’
<i>Sipiy ka pimeakak</i>	‘what makes the river flow or travel’
<i>Patoteciwan</i>	‘water that misses or does not follow the path’
<i>Pawistik</i>	‘a rapids’
<i>Paskestikweyaw</i>	‘place that goes off the main river and splits’
<i>Sipastik</i>	‘a river which branches off then returns to the main river’
<i>Sakitawak</i>	‘end of a river where it pushes the water through’
<i>Wapak</i>	‘narrows of a river’
<i>Wawakamon</i>	‘a crooked or curved part of the river,’ meander
<i>Natimik</i>	‘the area upstream’
<i>Sipisis</i>	‘small body of water flowing into a river’

*Source: Local and Traditional Knowledge in the Athabasca River Watershed (Parlee et. Al., 2019)*

Upper portions of the North Saskatchewan are the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy, Ktunaxa, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut’ina peoples. Lower portions, as well as south of



*Mistahimaskwa, Big Bear  
1825—1888 PHOTO Canadian  
Heritage Archives*

the river, are the traditional territories of the Assiniboine people, and the region north of the river is the traditional territory of the Cree. Furthermore, Métis people have long lived along the river and throughout the region.

Along much of its course, the North Saskatchewan River delineates the prairie–parkland divide and acted as a natural boundary between plains Blackfoot and Woodland Cree First Nations people for thousands of years.

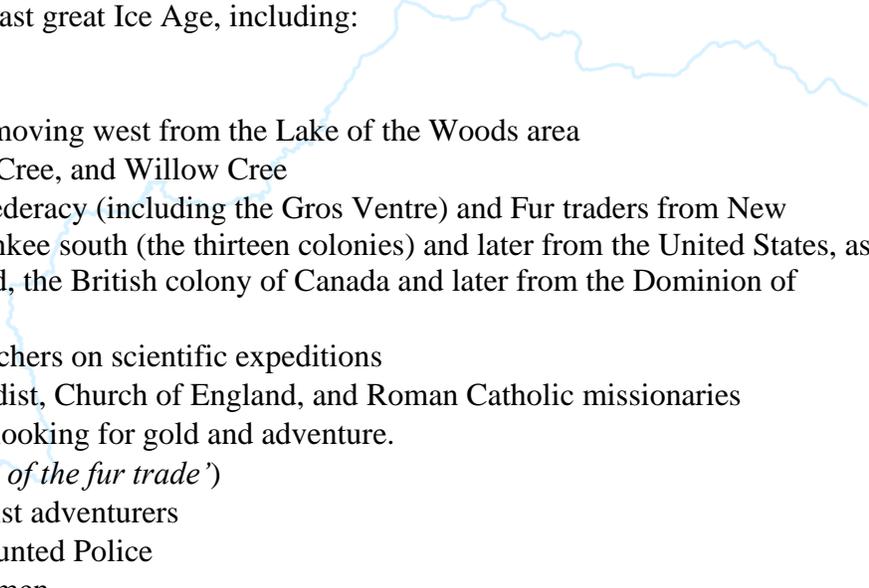
The North Saskatchewan River has played a vital role in the social, economic, and cultural well-being of Indigenous people. For many Indigenous peoples, physical and spiritual signs, and signals

that the land is healthy are very important to their own feelings of health and wellbeing and that of their communities.

Those who signed the Treaties were promised the right to pursue their usual vocations of hunting, trapping, and fishing, ‘so long as the river flows.’ Indeed, Indigenous people have a strong and spiritual relationship to this area. Populations and health of waterfowl, fish, muskrat, and beaver are important traditional indicators of watershed health.

Further, a significant part of the modern development of western Canada, from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is written in the history of this river. Indeed, the NSR has a considerable concentration of heritage value of both provincial and national significance. It has naturally offered a geographically convenient corridor for reasonable access to western Canada from both the Hudson Bay and eastern Canada right up until the bridge building boom after the second World War.

A wide variety of cultural groups have lived along the length of the North Saskatchewan River, since its inception after the last great Ice Age, including:

- 
- Paleolithic people
  - Assiniboine people moving west from the Lake of the Woods area
  - Woods Cree, Plains Cree, and Willow Cree
  - The Blackfoot Confederacy (including the Gros Ventre) and Fur traders from New France, from the Yankee south (the thirteen colonies) and later from the United States, as well as from England, the British colony of Canada and later from the Dominion of Canada.
  - Explorers and researchers on scientific expeditions
  - Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of England, and Roman Catholic missionaries
  - Early entrepreneurs looking for gold and adventure.
  - The Métis (*‘children of the fur trade’*)
  - Early European tourist adventurers
  - The North-West Mounted Police
  - River-boat and ferrymen

River-related resource harvesting was not limited to fur. The river’s colourful resource gathering history includes:

- Fish and game for food, fur, and feathers
- Harvesting pigment clays for decoration, and clay for pottery and brick making
- Coal mining
- Washing for gold
- Cutting timber for lumber
- Harvesting plant cash crops like Seneca root, chokecherries, and Saskatoon berries
- Harvesting food and medicinal plants, berries, nuts, herbage, roots, and rhizomes

Local and regional communities are aware of many early fur trading posts that do not have an official designation. The plethora of publications that feature various aspects of the history of the North Saskatchewan River are also significant indicators of the river's importance, as well as the local and regional stories that are still told in all the river communities.

Many archeological sites have been identified along the river. Two of the most significant (from Rabbit Hill down along Whitemud and Blackmud, and on the south bank across the river from Rundle Park) are located within the City of Edmonton.

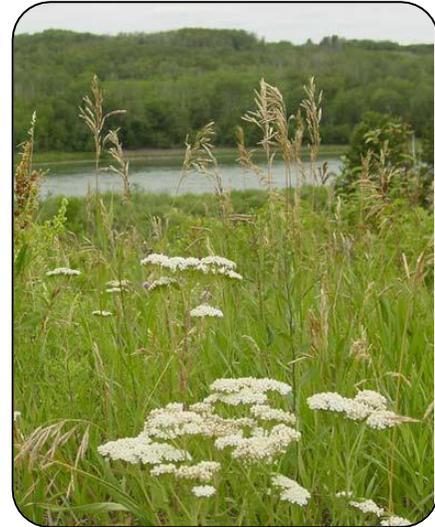
Riparian settlement along the North Saskatchewan River followed the pattern set in place by the fur trade, which had followed a pattern developed by Indigenous people as they moved from one seasonal encampment to another.

In several places the river determined how agricultural land was divided through land surveys. The River Lot method of surveying was adopted for the early communities of Victoria Settlement, Lobstick Settlement, Fort Saskatchewan, and Edmonton Settlement. These same River Lots are still evident today at Victoria and Lobstick Settlement, and along with other segments representing early Ukrainian settlement have been designated a National Historic Site of Canada known as the Victoria District.

Interesting residential and municipal river front architecture abounds. This is particularly noticeable in Edmonton: the river hill advantage of the Provincial Legislature buildings, the river orientation of the heritage Fairmont Hotel (The Hotel MacDonald), and the unique riverbank construction of the Shaw Conference Centre, which seems to rise right out of the river against a backdrop of complimentary architecture provided by the dramatic pink glass and steel of Canada Place towering behind it.

In Edmonton, the sinuous shape of the river makes possible one of the most unique and intriguing urban skylines in North America, without losing the attractive and essential presence of the riparian ribbon of green.

Permanent riverside dwellings on the North Saskatchewan River were at first, the major fur trading posts, all of which (with only one exception – Devon) evolved into the present riverside urban areas of today.



*Medicinal Yarrow along the North Saskatchewan River*  
PHOTO B. Milholland

One of the most complex networks of interconnected overland trails in the West linked the various inhabited regions of North Saskatchewan River basin. The most prominent was the Saskatchewan Trail, also called, at various times, the Old Saskatchewan Trail, the Edmonton Trail, the Hudson's Bay Trail, the Company Trail and in more recent times, the Carlton Trail. Smoky Lake County has also designated the surviving portions of this trail as a Municipal Historic Area under the Alberta *Historical Resources Act*.



*Looking East from Victoria Trail. PHOTO K. Schole.*

### 1.4.2 Overview of Natural Values



*North riverbank at Devon, Alberta*

Although the North Saskatchewan River is seeking nomination based on cultural values, this document also presents the significant natural and recreational values associated with this river. It cannot be nominated for its natural values because of two “*human-made impoundments within the nominated section*”, the Big Horn Dam and the Brazeau Dam.

Nonetheless, the North Saskatchewan River creates an extensive and diverse natural corridor system, which is an essential element in the support of a significant bioregional conservation network. Bioregional conservation networks are linked systems of core wild areas, buffer zones and corridors of suitable habitat nested within areas dominated by human activity. The North Saskatchewan River corridor and its associated tributaries link diverse wetland, forest, and shrub/grass ecosystems

in a complex pattern across regional landscapes, providing habitat and resources essential for the survival of a vast number of living organisms.



*Mouth of Big Horn River*  
PHOTOS B. Milholland

Human occupation and development along this vast corridor have occurred in the case of Indigenous peoples since time immemorial, and by European settlement more recently in the last few centuries. Nonetheless, the river retains significant biodiversity and natural phenomena, formations and features often compromised in other river systems.

This natural corridor also plays a key role in the quality of life of urban residents. The ecological goods and services provided by natural ecosystems within cities has been well documented in improving air quality, cooling temperatures, preventing soil erosion, improving water quality, and providing aesthetic and spiritual relief for urban dwellers. The North Saskatchewan River corridor provides a unique natural experience by linking several growing urban centres to the regional landscape. Because

much has been done to preserve natural ecosystems within the urban matrix this natural experience is significant.

The entire river corridor contains areas of exceptional natural value in the extensive braided channels and snyes in the upper reaches, and wide meander bends in the lower reaches that have tall sandstone cliffs and low gravel shores. Since the river descends from mountain to prairie, it encompasses a remarkable variety of interesting and unusual natural features.



*Metasequoia*

The upper-reaches of the river has a compilation of white-water features varying from ripple to cataracts, prolonged rapids, and exhilarating whirlpool features. The lower reaches are populated with a wide variety of vegetated islands.

Other unique natural features along the North Saskatchewan River corridor are sand hill, sand cliff and sand dune formations scattered from the area around Rocky Mountain House downstream to the area around Redwater.



*Cephalopoda*

At Whirlpool Ridge in the uppermost reach, the river cuts through an ancient geological formation where Precambrian rock of at least 600 million years old has been forced over rock of the Middle Cambrian and even younger strata, forming a very hard ridge. In this area, where the NSR runs parallel to the ridge, the actual 'whirlpool' marks the place where the river changes course and cuts through the ancient ridge.

Much of the North Saskatchewan River flows over sedimentary rock deposited during the late cretaceous and early tertiary eras. This results in riverbanks composed of various combinations of

sandstone, shale, coal, and bentonite clays. Outcrops of this rock are rare because it weathers easily and becomes covered with vegetation. Usually, it is only along the banks of major rivers like the NSR that they may be seen. They are particularly evident in the river valley around Edmonton.

Upstream of Edmonton, exposed shale-like rock weathers to reveal fossilized plants, some over 60 million years old. The two most common fossils are *metasequoia* and *cercidiphyllum*. This is significant, because in western Canada, fossilized animals are more commonly found than plants.

Downstream of Edmonton, near the Saskatchewan border, fossil cephalopods from the cretaceous era are regularly shed from the north facing riverbanks every spring. Fossil cephalopods are common in western Canada, but they are not usually this readily accessible to the ordinary passer-by, making this a highly desirable location for educational groups. Approximately 1 km north of Rocky Mountain House stand a large glacial erratic that fell from a mountain (Gog Group rock) on to a glacier ice flow 18,000 years ago and traveled on the ice until the glacier melted at the end of the last ice age and left it where it stands today.

The NSR flows through four of Alberta's six natural regions) and supports significant aquatic ecosystems. Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve supports significant plant communities in a willow-birch fen and a spring fed wetland.

Near Rocky Mountain House, south of Highway 11, a seldom-visited patterned fen extends for several kilometres in a north-west to south-east direction. Here a floating mat of densely intertwined sedges supports black spruce and tamarack in places and a multitude of buck bean throughout but will not support the weight of a human.

The diverse ecosystems of the North Saskatchewan River corridor support many rare plant species, which have disappeared from other habitat. Rare species that are found along the North Saskatchewan River corridor could be indicative of favourable habitat benefiting other species. Rare plant species along the North Saskatchewan River include moss, lichen, fern, orchid, grasses, and a disjunct wood anemone.

### 1.4.3 Overview of Recreational Values

Recreational activities provide health, spiritual and intrinsic value for river users, but the activities also bring people closer to the river. In this way the Recreational Value of the North Saskatchewan River results in stimulating awareness and stewardship of this valuable river.

River-related recreational development along the river is extensive, spearheaded by provincial, municipal, and private interests. These developments



*Dwarf Birch Betula nana*  
PHOTO Dave Powell USDA  
Forest Service Forestry  
Images



*Black Spruce Picea mariana*  
PHOTO David Shorthouse  
U of A Forestry Images

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include walking and hiking trails, walking bridges, nature observation sites, canoeing, land and river touring, seasonal river competitions and riverside entertainment. Each reach has developed river-based recreation commensurate to the local character of the river.



*Pelicans take-off.*  
*Linda Treleaven Photo*



*White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus**  
*PHOTO Bruce T. Smith*

General river-related activities include hiking, backpacking, horse packing, historic wagon train re-enactments, mountain biking, paddling, kayaking, canoeing, historical voyageur canoeing, river boating, rafting, competitive rowing, nature tours, fishing, camping, gold panning, (many activities are now packaged as 'eco-adventures') riverside picnicking, cross-country skiing, dog sledding, winter hiking and camping. There is an abundance of natural camping spots along the river and on river islands.

The Capital Region River Valley Park System covers 18,000 acres linking over 100 km through the North Saskatchewan River valley. This vast parkland is approximately 12 times larger than Central Park in New York City.

Dragon Boat races, historic sternwheeler adventures, tobogganing, cross-country skiing, dog sledding, winter hiking, and camping. There are also Indigenous ceremonies connected with the NSR, and with making a crossing thereof. Fish species include burbot, goldeye/mooneye, lake sturgeon, mountain whitefish, northern pike, sauger, suckers, and walleye.



*Boys with young sturgeon, caught in 1940's in North Saskatchewan River. PHOTO Edmonton Archives*

## 1.5 Formal Nomination

*To formally nominate the river or section of the river for inclusion in the Canadian Heritage River System*

*Whereas the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) is a commemorative program established in 1984 as a collaboration among the provincial, territorial, and federal governments recognizing outstanding rivers from coast to coast to coast for their natural, cultural, and recreational heritage, offering residents and visitors a chance to experience great waterways, learn about their rich history; and*

*Whereas a 49 km section of the North Saskatchewan River within Banff National Park was designated a Canadian Heritage River in 1989; and*

*Whereas the Province of Alberta joined the CHRS under Premier Ralph Klein in 1994, and the subsequent 1996 Alberta CHRS Study ranked the remainder of the North Saskatchewan River across Alberta as being in the “AA” top-10 category in an inventory of 75 Alberta rivers or river sections identified for more detailed study for their CHRS potential; and*

*Whereas the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA) completed a CHRS Background Study which was accepted in 2005, and further demonstrated the suitability of the river for inclusion to the System; and*

*Whereas the North Saskatchewan River corridor contains concentrations of artifacts representing at least 13,000 years of human activity along most of the river including evidence of the harvesting of mega-fauna at the end of the last Pleistocene glaciation; and*

*Whereas the North Saskatchewan River has played a key role in the history of Western Canada, including paleolithic and contemporary Indigenous people and communities, and both before and after European settlement as a major trade and transportation route; and*

*Whereas the North Saskatchewan River played a key part in the signing, oral history, and shared understanding of Treaty No. 6 both at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt in 1876 and also the Adhesion at Fort Edmonton in 1877; and*

*Whereas the North Saskatchewan continues to be of great importance to present-day Indigenous peoples, including First Nations and Métis whose homeland and traditional territories are within the river’s watershed; and*

*Whereas the North Saskatchewan River has outstanding cultural heritage value as a major exploration route for the first fur traders, scientific expeditions, 19<sup>th</sup> century tourists and early settlers; and*

*Whereas the North Saskatchewan River has outstanding cultural heritage value in the role it played during the migration west of the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) and in activities associated with the 1885 Northwest Resistance; and*

*Whereas the diverse chain of fur trading forts constructed along most of the river from the Saskatchewan border to the Rocky Mountains between the late 1600's and late 1800's represents the activities of both major and minor fur trading initiatives (from both upper and lower Canada, from Britain and from the United States); and*

*Whereas the North Saskatchewan River corridor holds ample evidence of the history of Indigenous peoples in the region, early contact history the intense rivalry of early fur traders, early missions, the era of river steamboats, and European settlement history; and*

*Whereas the river flows through complex and varied ecosystems and for much of its length forms a general geographic demarcation line between boreal forest and prairie grassland, creating interesting and unusual environments that support a broad diversity of wildlife, including many rare plant and animal species; and*

*Whereas the river flows through four provincially defined Natural Regions within Alberta and through eight Natural Subregions, creating a significant variation in recreational opportunities; and*

*Whereas the riverbanks are home to a variety of unique biological and geological phenomena, including a 1,000-year-old Limber Pine (*Pinus flexilis*) and an immense post-glacier Cordilleran erratic; and*

*Whereas the entire river affords countless and diverse opportunities for river travel adventure, pullout areas, and historic and contemporary trails such as those of the River Valley Alliance for river-based touring, angling, paddling, wildlife viewing, hiking, climbing, berry picking, camping, and other traditional uses;*

***THEREFORE***, it is recommended by the Province of Alberta that the 718 km section of the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta from the Banff National Park boundary to the Alberta/Saskatchewan provincial border be nominated to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System for the purpose of recognizing, celebrating, and conserving the river's outstanding cultural & recreational heritage values.

---

Honourable Jason Nixon, Minister  
Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP),  
Province of Alberta

---

Date

## *Roll on North Saskatchewan*

*Born in the Rockies when the ice age receded,  
In a Columbia glacier a mile above the sea;  
Through wild canyons, the newborn river twists and bends,  
Its journey will be long before it ends.  
Kelsey, La Verendrye, the Blackfoot and the Cree  
All searched that river for their destiny;  
Near here David Thompson,  
His bride Charlotte by his side,  
Felt a country stirring as he looked across the great divide.  
Still many miles to go before that river takes its rest,  
The story of this river is the story of the west.  
At Rocky Mountain House where  
The Nor-westers built a post,  
They pushed their fur trade empire across to the coast;  
Trading with the Peigan and the Kootenays,  
They loaded their canoes to make the long paddle east.  
Across the flatlands where that widening river flowed,  
Through the territory of the buffalo,  
By the time the steel rails stretched across Saskatchewan,  
The buffalo who drank from the riverbanks were gone.  
Roll on, roll on, roll on you North Saskatchewan.*

The Story of this River is the Story of the West is the chorus from the song: Roll on North Saskatchewan Words and Music by James Gordon from his CD “The Song the River Sings – A Musical Journey Down Canada’s Heritage Rivers” Published by Pipe Street Publishing (SOCAN) [jamesgordon.ca](http://jamesgordon.ca)

## 1.6 Next Steps

This Nomination Document demonstrates that the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta provides outstanding cultural and recreational heritage and satisfies the necessary Selection and Integrity Guidelines in these areas required for nomination to the System. In addition, although impoundments at Brazeau and Abraham Lake disqualify the NSR from the Natural Values Selection and Integrity Guidelines, its Natural Values remain outstanding and exceptional.

Therefore, the North Saskatchewan River is worthy of nomination to the CHRS based on its outstanding cultural heritage values. It is also realistic to expect that the integrity associated with each values theme can be conserved and maintained with cooperative management strategies. Several major or regional management plans (both statutory and non-statutory) and other initiatives are already in-place or underway, such as:

- **Province of Alberta**
  - *Stewardship Act* and Land Use Frameworks, (work on the NSR Regional Plan is ongoing)
    - North Saskatchewan River Surface Water Standards Framework, (Ongoing)
      - *Draft Vision: "That the Water Quality of the North Saskatchewan River is maintained or improved."*
  - Water for Life Strategy, (2003)
  - Industrial Heartland Capital Region Water Management Framework, (2007)
- **North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA)**
  - State of the Watershed Report, (2006)
  - Integrated Watershed Management Plan – IWMP, (2012)
- **EPCOR Utilities Ltd.**
  - Edmonton Source Water Protection Plan, (2020)
  - WaterSHED Monitoring Program, (2018)
    - A partnership among EPCOR, the City of Edmonton, Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP), and North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA).
- **Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board (EMRB)**
  - Growth Plan: *'Re-Imagine. Plan. Build.'*, (2020)
  - Regional Agriculture Master Plan, (Fall 2021)
- **City of Edmonton**
  - Edmonton City Plan, (2020)
  - Breath Green Network Strategy, (2017)
  - Ribbon of Green Concept Plan, (1990) and Master Plan, (1992) Ribbon of Green SW+NE, (2020) & River Valley and Ravine System Area Redevelopment Plan, (1985) – (Modernization currently ongoing)
  - River Crossing Heritage Interpretive Plan, (2017)
  - *The City is also undertaking the 'Touch the Water' and 'North Shore Promenade' projects.*

- **River Valley Alliance (RVA)**
  - o Phase I trails system connecting Devon to Fort Saskatchewan is ~70% complete
- **Explore Edmonton**
  - o Ten-Year Tourism Master Plan (2021)
    - *Strategy #3: “Activate the river valley to create a more vibrant destination and gathering place “*
- **Numerous other Municipal and Intermunicipal Development Plans – (MDPs & IDPs)**

In many ways, Nomination and Designation under the CHRS represents the beginning, not the conclusion of a process. Upon endorsement of this Nomination Document by the Ministers and CHRS Board, and within three years, a collaborative Heritage Management Planning Committee led by Smoky Lake County will undertake a Management Plan. This will identify challenges and opportunities and may guide decision-makers in the ongoing management of the NSR as a treasured ribbon of green.

As with this Nomination Document, the forthcoming Management Plan will also satisfy the requirements of CHRS Principles, Procedures and Operational Guidelines (PPOG), the Cultural and Natural Values Frameworks, and the 2020-2030 CHRS Strategic Plan.

## 2.0 CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUES

*The purpose of this section is to describe the outstanding cultural heritage features of the river and its immediate environment using the document “A Cultural Framework for Canadian Heritage Rivers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2000”.*

Few kilometres along the NSR in Alberta are without, what Robert Burns attributes to the Thames in England, “*Liquid History*”. Because the angular direction of receding glaciers after the last glaciation encouraged early repopulation of the area, the North Saskatchewan River has a rich cultural heritage reaching back at least 11,500 years.



*Paddle into the Past at Métis Crossing, Courtesy of Explore Edmonton*

## 2.1 Description of Cultural Heritage Values

### 2.1.1 Resource Harvesting

Many types of human harvesting and subsistence activity have been recorded along the entire length of the river: fishing (including early netting and fish weirs); farming (including pre-contact tobacco gardens); hunting (including buffalo jumps and pounds); trapping; boat building; berry and root gathering; and even pottery production. A wide variety of Indigenous peoples have lived along the length of the North Saskatchewan River since its inception after the last Ice Age.

There is paleolithic evidence along the North Saskatchewan River to suggest human activity during the early post-glacial era. From European contact onward there is documented evidence of Indigenous people harvesting fish from the North Saskatchewan River as well as from its feeder lakes. After contact, the river was also harvested by the Europeans of the fur trade, Europeans from the riverside missions, and eventually, European settlers.

#### Fishing

Especially at the mouths of creeks, streams and tributaries, the river offered an abundant harvest of fish, including Lake Sturgeon, and molluscs. The names of various lakes and tributaries suggest preferred places for early fish harvests. There are creeks and lakes still named, Jackfish, Sturgeon, and Fishing.

Other examples are Net Setting River, Turtle River, Trout Creek, Perch Lake and Tulliby Lake. Harvesting shoreline resources includes trapping river-dwelling, fur-bearing animals for pelts; collection of aquatic plants for food, housing materials and medicine; hunting land mammals and birds, or collecting eggs for food, as well as mining and quarrying.

#### Shoreline Resource Harvesting

The river was a gathering place for land animals in search of water and rich riparian grazing or for a place to ford during migration. This brought additional human food resources into a river valley already favoured for shelter, travel, and fishing. Waterfowl and small water mammals such as beaver and otter were abundant in the river valleys and big mammals such as bison also came to the river to drink, to cross the river on migratory routes and to follow the river in grazing patterns. Indigenous peoples made effective use of waterfowl and shorebirds found near rivers. They also harvested eggs.

Place names are often indicative of what was harvested in the vicinity of the river: Currant Lake, Red Willow Creek, Rose Creek, several Birch Lakes, several Birch Hills, Birch Creek, Strawberry Creek, Poplar Creek; Whitegoat Creek, Bison Creek, Whiterabbit Creek, Waterfowl Lakes, Ram River, Bighorn River, Elk Creek, Elk River, Swan Creek, Swan Lake, Little and Big Beaver Creeks, Deer Creek, Egg Creek, Weasel Creek, Frog Creek, Frog Lake, Moosehills Lake, Maskwa (Bear) Creek and Moswa (Moose) Creek, as well as Gold Island, Gold Bar Island, Willow Island,

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Pelican Island, Otter Island, Moose Islands, Kinosisis (small fish) Island, Bird Island, Mistapoos (jack rabbit) Island, Rabbit Island and Badger Island.

During the Paleolithic Period, early people used river clay for decoration and making pottery. This is evidenced by the names of tributaries where different coloured pigments were harvested: e.g., Whitemud Creek, Blackmud Creek, Paintearth Creek, and Vermilion River. They also hunted ‘megafauna’ along the river, like Mastodon, Camel, Horse, Big Horn Bison and Giant Beaver.

Quartzite, chert, petrified wood, and mudstone were found along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River and used by early people to fashion effective spear and arrow points.

The Made Beaver was a unit of account used in the Hudson’s Bay Company, where one male beaver skin collected during winter months was equivalent to one Made Beaver. From 1796 – 1799 the fur harvest from Edmonton House alone was 35,000 Made Beaver. It is indicative of the great volume of fur sent to Europe from the valleys of the North Saskatchewan River Basin over the course of at least two centuries.

There are not many buffalo pounds or buffalo jumps recorded along the river, but locations of a few that existed have been found along the lower reaches near the Alberta/Saskatchewan border. From the late 17<sup>th</sup> century to the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the fur trade required vast tons of pemmican to feed employees. Indigenous peoples along the North Saskatchewan River manufactured most of this pemmican and much of it was shipped north to the traders along the northern rivers.

By 1870, total pemmican and dried meat provisions procured for the Hudson’s Bay Company Northern Department exceeded 120,000 pounds. Most of this came from along the North Saskatchewan River.

Other shoreline resources, harvested for centuries, are no longer found along the river. Pronghorn, now present only in Southern Alberta, were once prolific along the south banks of the North Saskatchewan River between Edmonton and “The Forks”. Trumpeter Swans, now endangered and seldom sighted along the river, were once harvested in the thousands



Hairbell (*Campanula uniflora*)



Buffalo Berry (*Shepherdia Canadensis*)



Fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*)



Manitoba maple keys (*Acer negundo*)

PHOTOS B. Milholland

for their feathers and quills (In 1812, Fort Edmonton shipped, 1296 swanskins and 450 hundredweight of swan quills). Into the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, even Grizzly Bear were commonly hunted along the river to just past Edmonton, for food and floor robes.

In April 1820, Lieutenant Hood of the Franklin Expedition, recorded maple sugar making along the Saskatchewan. *“The maple is found in small groves in the Saskatchewan River valley, and those places are resorted to in the spring by the Indian women for the purpose of sugar making...sugar is produced in the form of hard cakes – very pleasant to eat by itself, but nothing to be compared to cane sugar in its sweetening properties.”*

As early as 1830, from Rocky Mountain House to Edmonton, coal was mined for forge work from superficial coal seams visible along the riverbanks.

In the 1860’s, gold mining began in earnest along the North Saskatchewan River, working the gold bars of the Saskatchewan near Edmonton, where gold seekers washed out fine gold with a machine called a “grizzly” or prospected up the river as far as the mountains.

Berries and plants were harvested in great abundance along the North Saskatchewan River for thousands of years. In 1872, even as the great buffalo herds began to wane, George Grant, from the Sanford Flemming expedition along the North Saskatchewan River observes, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, around Moose Creek, *“Both yesterday and today, the Saskatoon berries that are put in the best or “berry pemmican” were pointed out to us and the creeper which the Indians make into “kinni-kinnick” when they can’t get the bark of the red willow to mix with their tobacco.”* Then on August 24 near Victoria Mission, he records, *“The ground was literally covered with cranberries, bearberries, the uva ursi, and other creepers.”*

George Grant also records the extensive use of coal along the North Saskatchewan River. *“Coal that crops out on the riverbank...a bushel or two was brought up from the river side at our request; it looked like shale, or dull, dried stuff from which most of the bitumen had leaked out. Trying it in the smiddy, it burnt well and gave good heat...The section at Edmonton is only three feet thick...but, at the Rocky Mountain House, one hundred and forty miles distant to the south-west, the seam is ten feet, the coal of a much superior quality, and used regularly in the forge.”*

It is often assumed that buffalo harvest of any significance only happened south of the North Saskatchewan River on the prairie. There is ample evidence to refute that. For example: On October 17, Charles Napier Bell, 18 years old, and five Métis arrived at the deserted Roman Catholic Mission at *St. Paul de Cris* on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River near the present site of Brosseau. They gathered to set up a Buffalo Hunting camp to supply winter meat to a post at Saddle Lake.

## Extraction of Water

Historically, most of the water removed from the North Saskatchewan River was used for drinking, washing and in the form of ice for the icehouses of the fur trade and later for more diverse settlement use. River ice cooled summer produce in North Saskatchewan River

communities into the 1950's. During the late fur trade era there was limited use of water mills for grinding grain during the late fur trade era.

With the influx of European settlers, water use for human, animal, agricultural and industrial consumption was continual and largely unregulated. The first users were fur trade communities, missions and the small river communities of Métis that grew up around European settlements. From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, European settlements along the river created a greater need for river water and river ice. This resulted in the formation of municipalities that began to extract river water for human use.



*Cutting river ice*

*PHOTO Edmonton Archives*



*Contemporary river view east from Fort George & Buckingham House Provincial Historic Site, near Elk Point.  
Kyle Schole photo.*

December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1847, artist Paul Kane describes the use of river ice for icehouses that are built to preserve from “700 to 800 buffalo carcasses” – “As soon as the ice in the river is of sufficient thickness, it is cut into square blocks of uniform size with saws...” “Great icehouses were built at Fort Vermilion, Fort George, White Earth, Edmonton and many other Forts des Prairies.”

## 2.1.2 Water Transport

### Commercial Transportation

In 1796, Peter Fidler at Buckingham House (a Hudson's Bay Company fort just west of the present Alberta/Saskatchewan border), had the first York Boat built for the Saskatchewan River system, while his superior, William Tomison, who disapproved of this type of riverboat, was in England on furlough. From the 1700's to the 1950's, after freeze-up, the river continued to be a major highway between forts and riverside settlements. Dog teams were used as transportation on the frozen river.

In 1871, in June, Hudson's Bay Company Governor Sir Stafford Henry Northcote, told shareholders, “Where possible, the brigades of York Boats would be replaced by steamers.” Then in 1875, the first North Saskatchewan River sternwheeler, *The S. S. Northcote*, reached Edmonton from Grand Rapids. It provided the main Hudson's Bay Company transportation between

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Edmonton and Prince Albert, Saskatchewan until the route was taken over by *The Lily*. *The Marquis* and *The Northwest* were the largest steamers to travel the North Saskatchewan River. Joe Favel, *The Northcote's* pilot, in a conversation with NWMP Sam Steele, "*The Missouri River is not so good a stream as the North Saskatchewan.*"

The *Northcote* was built in the style of Mississippi River boats and on her first voyage to Edmonton she carried a cargo of 130 tons.

In 1885, between April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 13<sup>th</sup>, General T. B. Strange at Fort Edmonton built barges to transport 224 men and one gun downriver to Fort Pitt area to help with Northwest Resistance. The last steamboats plied the North Saskatchewan River between 1900 – 1905.



York Boat re-enactment, Fort Edmonton Park.

PHOTO B. Milholland

## Transportation Services

Shipyard services along the North Saskatchewan River include early temporary encampments where birch rind canoes were built each season. York Boats were constructed at all the major fur trade forts along the North Saskatchewan River as well as at some of the minor forts, like Buckingham House. A few steam riverboats were constructed on the North Saskatchewan River, and those in the late 1800's; but John Walter built, at his shipyards on the riverbank at Edmonton, all lesser riverboats, scows, barges, and ferries.



Former Eldora Ferry Crossing in winter, Sturgeon County. PHOTO K. Schole

## Exploration and Surveying

The French initiated the earliest European explorations of the West along the North Saskatchewan River. They were the *coureurs des bois*, country born and much more at home in the wilderness than the British perched along the Hudson's Bay. Many were Métis, the intrepid children of the fur trade.



Early surveyors cross North Saskatchewan River, Glenbow Archives PHOTO

## NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER IN ALBERTA

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For about 250 years, from the time of the first French fur trader on the North Saskatchewan River to the coming of railroads, river navigation was the only efficient means of importing trade goods from eastern Canada and Europe into ‘the West’. It was also the quickest and most efficient means of exporting river resources to eastern Canada and Europe. Canoe and York Boat were used extensively on this river, and in later years, scows, barges, rafts, and sternwheelers added to the commercial river traffic.

Métis Joseph La France, who traveled to England in the early 1740’s to tell his story about traveling in the land of the Saskatchewan, had traversed the North Saskatchewan River in the 1730’s. From the middle 1700’s to the turn of that century, each year at least 250 canoes and about

550 people from the ‘Saskatchewan’ traveled to the Hudson Bay with their furs. These were largely Cree and Nakota People who formed a formidable middleman trade system with the Atsina and others on the plains who were not interested in making that long trip.

*“These men knew the river, every rapid, bend, and channel.*

*Had they not traversed its banks in the tedious and back breaking job of towing Cumbersome loads upstream?...*

*Laughter and song down the river, sweat and strain and swearing upriver, all part of their work.”*

- Peter Erasmus, Metis, Buffalo Days and Nights.  
Source: Fort Edmonton



*Steamer Excursion to Big Island. Transportation Steamer (City of Edmonton). Image courtesy of City of Edmonton Archives EA-10-1322*

report on the state of the fur trade. Butler’s book, published in 1872, *“The Great Lone Land”*, documents his journey on the river, and was a popular travel book right into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1874 the North-West Mounted Police made their long march from eastern Canada to Fort Edmonton. From Fort Carlton to Edmonton, they used the old river trails along the North Saskatchewan River.

Scientific inventories of expeditions up the North Saskatchewan River, like the ones led by John Franklin and John Henry Lefroy, made the concept of a transcontinental British North American nation seem possible and even desirable. This resulted in exploration and survey expeditions led by men like Blakison, Hector, and Sandford Fleming, seeking an overland route for the transcontinental railroad. In 1859, James Carnegie, the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Southesk, traveled along the North Saskatchewan River. In 1875 he wrote, “Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains” which described his travels. In 1870 William Francis Butler made a trip up the North Saskatchewan River to

## 2.1.3 Riparian Settlement

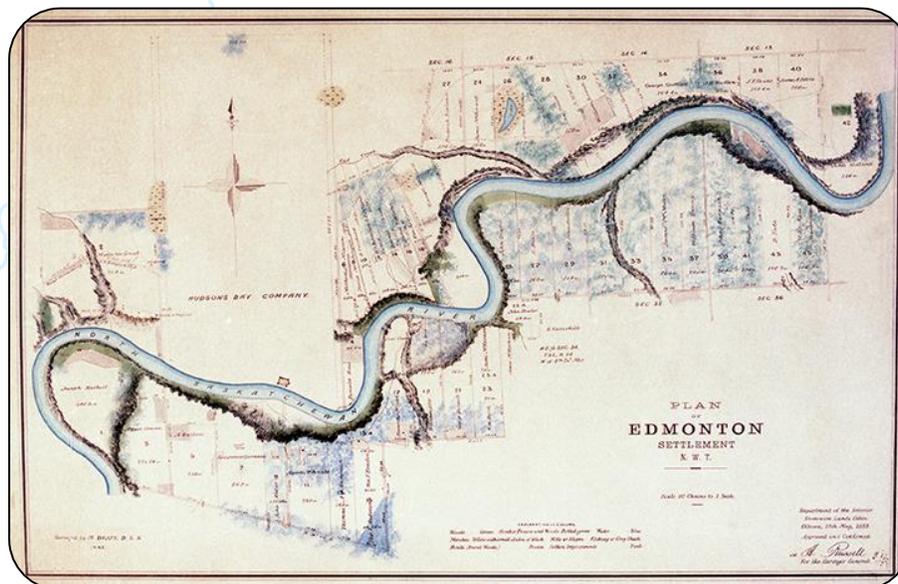
### Siting of Dwellings

In many places, riverside transportation patterns such as the Victoria or Carlton Trail and riverside industries influenced the direction, style, and pattern of subsequent human dwellings. This is also true of Victoria Settlement (now a Provincially and Nationally designated Historic Site), where the river determined how agricultural land was divided through land surveys. This river lot method of surveying was also implemented at early Edmonton Settlement, as well as Fort Saskatchewan/Augustus, and enduring evidence of the River-lot system is present on today's Edmonton urban streetscape.

Victoria was the site of early Métis settlement. In the same area, later, along both sides of the river, Ukrainian settlers sought proximity to each other, creating a different ethnic homogeneity on the river. This is also true of French settlers, downstream in the area around Duvernay.

### River-based Communities

Prior to European contact, Indigenous communities migrated from one part of the North Saskatchewan River to another, their seasonal patterns of movement dictated by weather patterns, fish runs, migrating herds, sap, root, and berry harvesting, as well as by inter-tribal trade and competition.



*Image courtesy of the City of Edmonton Archives EAM-85.*

Today, the Edmonton streetscape reflects the city's river lot settlement heritage. Contemporary river and river valley neighborhoods also include Cameron, Capitol Hill, Clareview, Fort Edmonton, Glenora, Gold Bar, Hermitage, Highlands, Horse Hill, Kinnaird, Laurier, Lessard North, Mayfair, Oleskiw, Oliver, Riverbend, Riverside, Riverview, Rundle, Terwillegar, Victoria, Walterdale, Whitemud, and Windermere.

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Riparian European settlement along the NSR in Alberta followed patterns set in place by the fur trade, which followed patterns developed by Indigenous people moving from one seasonal encampment to another. Indigenous people chose sites along the river that were the most advantageous for shelter, resource harvesting and protection. The first Europeans along the river were guided by Indigenous people and soon adapted the advantageous resting places to their own settlement requirements. Archaeological surveys have revealed evidence of human activity along the river for about 13,000 years.

The present urban areas on the North Saskatchewan River, in Alberta: Rocky Mountain House, Devon, Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan built in response to rapid urban expansion along the river. All these communities have interesting residential and municipal river front architecture. This is particularly noticeable in Edmonton: the river hill advantage of the Provincial Legislature buildings, the river orientation of the heritage Fairmont Hotel (The Hotel MacDonald), and the unique riverbank construction of the Shaw Conference Centre, which seems to rise right out of the river against a backdrop of complimentary architecture— the dramatic pink glass and steel of Canada Place towering behind it.

In Edmonton, the sinuous shape of the river creates one of the most unique urban skylines in North America, without losing the attractive and essential presence of the riparian ribbon of green. Few early non-fort permanent dwellings on the NSR were farms in the traditional sense. Most were homes built by the Métis, or by retired fur traders or former labourers of the fur trade, like John Walter of Edmonton who initiated many early riverside industries (ferry services, shipyards, sawmills, tanneries, and brick yards).



*Downtown, Walterdale Bridge, and Rossdale Power Plant in the City of Edmonton, Courtesy of Explore Edmonton.*

Most early settlers grew gardens, raised livestock, and planted a few acres of grain, but river-related occupations remained their primary employment. The people of the fur trade who settled along the river continued to trap fur, as well as wash for gold; pilot all



*Walterdale Flats John Walter Lumber Mill Bldgs. Image courtesy of the City of Edmonton Archives EA-10-250.*

types of river craft from scows to steamers; guide and translate for explorers, survey crews and eventually for the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP); and work on the early logging crews.

*“The flood of 1915 was vital to the process of shaping Edmonton into the city we know today. Our river valley may not look the same, nor be under the same protections, had the flood not devastated*

*it. ...[T]he river rose to over 42 feet above the low water level (four feet higher than the flood of 1899, previously considered the worst flood in Edmonton).*

*After, ...city officials started to pay more attention to the idea of a mostly empty river valley. Later in 1915, the Alberta government moved to adopt Todd's line of thinking in principle going forward. By 1933, Edmonton had established zoning bylaws to protect the valley from industrial development. Today, we have the largest continuous stretch of urban parkland in North America, with our river valley encompassing over 7,400 hectares of land. ...The North Saskatchewan has jumped its banks in Edmonton 20 times in the last 150 years, and the open space serves as important protection for the city when this happens.*

*After the severe floods during the summer of 2013, the government of Alberta banned future developments in the province's floodways—the areas of land most susceptible to “100 year floods” (floods that tend to happen in the area every 100 years). While Edmontonians have largely avoided building in these floodways since 1915, some parts of Rosedale and Riverdale are in the fringe zone area, and some newer condominiums in Cloverdale were recently built right in the floodway.” Scott, Sally., (June 29, 2015)., *Edmonton's River Valley Floods*, City Museum Edmonton, Accessed June 2021: <https://citymuseumedmonton.ca/2015/06/29/june-29-1915-edmontons-river-valley-floods/>*

## 2.1.4 Culture and Recreation

### Spiritual Associations

From paleolithic history through to recent times, the North Saskatchewan River corridor has provided sites for sacred and spiritual activities. Wherever people gather, in any historical era, they eat, drink, celebrate and worship, so it is likely that most archeological sites along the river have *sacred or spiritual* significance.

A few enduring sacred sites of European significance include Father Lacombe's mission sites at the twin communities of Brosseau & Duverney, the George McDougall mission at Victoria Settlement.

Early Europeans took little interest in Indigenous ceremony that did not directly relate to a European agenda. However, since most of the major Fur Trade posts were built at popular seasonal encampment sites, it is reasonable to suggest that these sites also represent Indigenous spiritual associations with the river.



*Pow Wow site downstream from Graves Flats on the North Saskatchewan River.*

*PHOTO B. Milholland*

The relationship that early Indigenous peoples had to their landscape differed dramatically from that of Europeans. This spiritual connection is often misunderstood or ignored altogether by non-Indigenous people.

There remains a substantially un-tapped opportunity for a wider interpretation of significant Indigenous sites of spiritual association.

Rivers inspire and provide a location for artistic expression, spiritual life, and leisure. Spiritual association may include sacred or spiritual sites, ritual, or ceremonial sites, and early Indigenous or European burial sites. Culture is expressed through museums, art galleries, cultural sites, and architecture. Early recreation included recreational boating, angling, land touring as well as organized river recreational facilities and clubs.

There is archaeological and historical evidence of the continuous use of the North Saskatchewan River valley for harvesting shoreline resources from time immemorial, including from the early postglacial period to the present. Over 780 archaeological sites have been recorded in the North Saskatchewan Watershed in the Edmonton area.



*Voyageur Canoe, Victoria Settlement Provincial Historic Site. Courtesy of the Government of Alberta*

Along the entire length of the river there are many reconstructions and interactive interpretations of historic sites and events. Many of these are associated with the early fur trade, which was completely river oriented.

## Cultural Expression

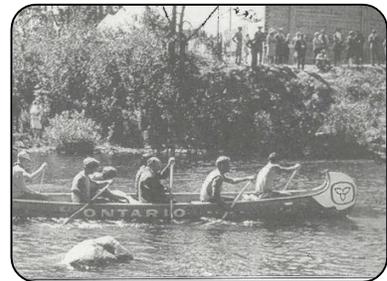
The whole North Saskatchewan River is one long historical canoe route, due primarily to its prominence in the long history of the fur trade. Within this long canoe route are a wide variety of specific modern-day canoe routes, many of which have been utilized for re-enactments, like the centennial National Voyageur Canoe Competition of 1967 that began on the NSR at Rocky Mountain House. Today, the Team Alberta Canoe from that race is on display at the Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site.



*Team AB practicing on NSR*



*Start of race, Rocky Mtn. House.*



*Arrival at Ft. Edmonton*

*Courtesy of Doreen Guilloux, 'Paddling Portaging & Pageantry, the World's Longest Canoe Race from Rocky Mountain House to Montreal, Stories from the Hearts of the 1967 Centennial Voyageurs'.*

The North Saskatchewan River has museums and cultural centres along all its reaches. These museums and cultural centres interpret river history, and local clubs and societies keep the culture

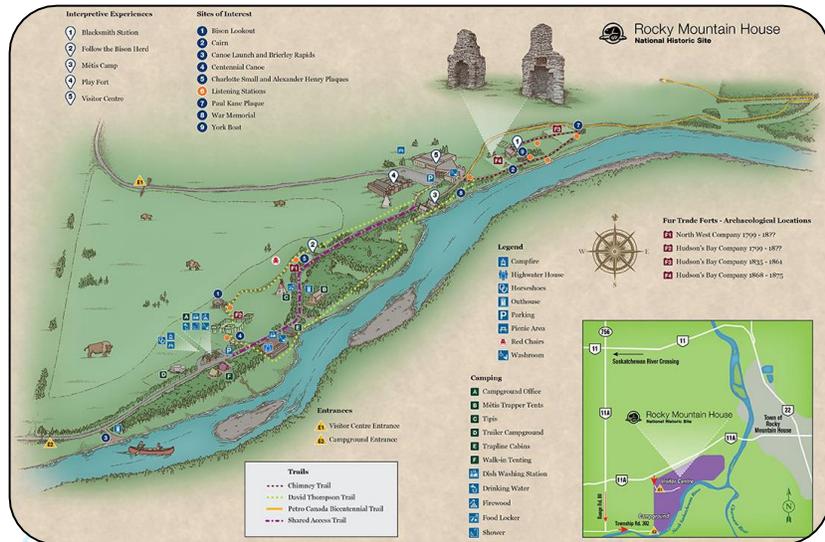
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of the river alive. Most modern river tour groups, both commercial and non-commercial, incorporate some interpretation of river history into the programs of their routes.

The Shunda Valley, west of Rocky Mountain House along the David Thompson Highway and the ‘West Country,’ and the entire upper North Saskatchewan River corridor, have a long an Indigenous occupation since time immemorial. Nestled in this ancient valley, the settlement of Nordegg is home to the Brazeau Collieries National Historic Site, a former coal mine.

Four forts once stood prominently on the land at the confluence of the North Saskatchewan and the Clearwater Rivers in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. For 76 years, Rocky Mountain House was a centre of commerce for the west. The renowned mapmaker David Thompson used the site to launch expeditions seeking passage to the west coast.



Today, Parks Canada shares the stories of the many different people who have spent time on the banks of this historic river highway and protects the archaeological remains of the four trading posts and lands used by Indigenous Peoples for time immemorial.

Source: Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site of Canada

A visit to Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site presents an opportunity to explore the lifestyle of the fur trade by retracing the steps of the early explorers, visiting a Métis camp, blacksmith forge/boathouse, and fort sites, learning a new trade or craft, or observing how Red River carts and York boats were made.



Interpretation at Fort Edmonton Park  
Courtesy of Explore Edmonton

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Fort Edmonton Park is nestled on 158-acres of wooded parkland along Edmonton’s River Valley and began as a Canada Centennial reconstruction project in 1967, and first opened in May of 1974 along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River and has grown to represent Edmonton’s history from the 1700s to the late 1920s. “*Key to the Park’s operations is its living-history museum component, which includes numerous historic buildings and artifacts. The museum is animated in the summer through the talents of costumed interpreters and volunteers.*”

-[www.fortedmontonpark.ca](http://www.fortedmontonpark.ca)

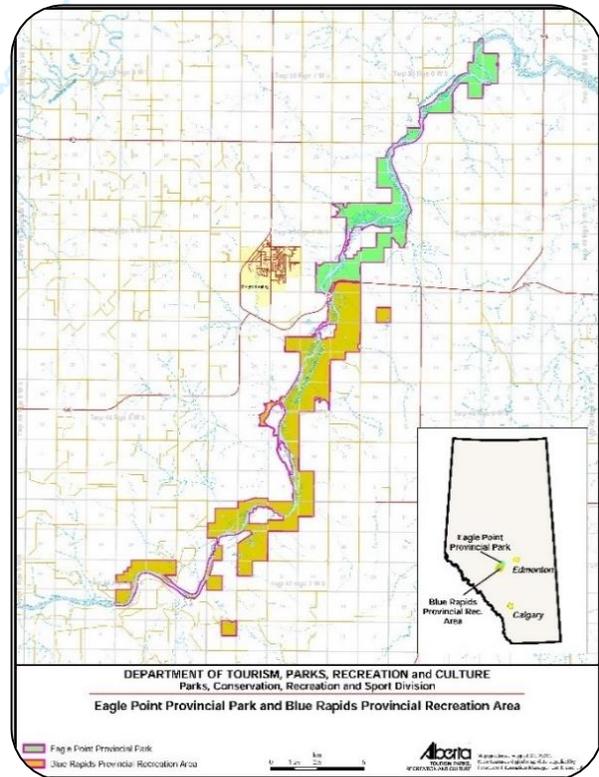
In the Summer of 2021, Fort Edmonton Park reopened to the public following a \$165 million make-over, including a new Indigenous Peoples Experience. This signature exhibit allows visitors to explore life through the diversity of First Nations and Métis peoples’ histories, cultures, experiences, and perspectives, local to Indigenous life in the ‘Beaver Hills,’ or Edmonton region.

Other attractions at the Park include period transportation (a steam train, streetcars, and horse-drawn rides), an on-site full-service boutique hotel, a recently-expanded 1920s-style Midway (including a Ferris wheel, carousel, outdoor maze, funhouse, games and the much-acclaimed Cabinet of Curios exhibit), and a state-of-the-art 4-D theatre, in the guise of a 1920s vaudeville stage.

Eagle Point Provincial Park, and Blue Rapids Provincial Recreation Area, together referred to as the Eagle Point – Blue Rapids Park (EPBRP) System, are protected areas stretching across 53 km of the North Saskatchewan River in Brazeau County, Alberta. Together, they protect the natural and cultural features of a contiguous stretch of the North Saskatchewan River riparian corridor. The establishment of the Eagle Point – Blue Rapids Park System represented a landmark achievement in community-based park planning and management in Alberta.

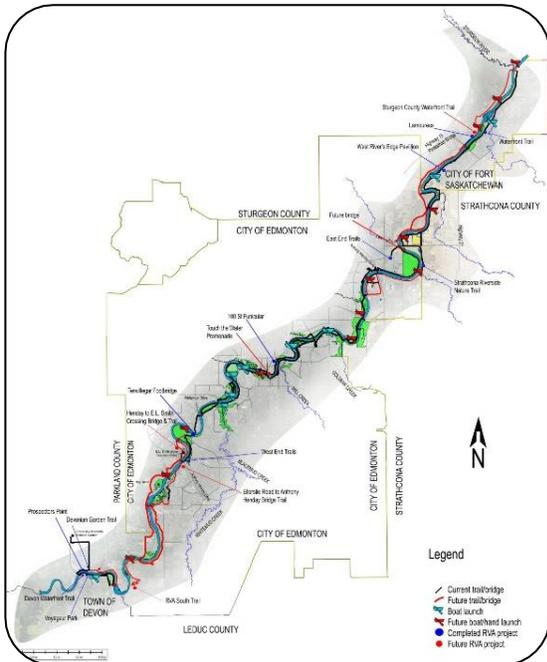
The initiative to create the Provincial Park and Provincial Recreation Area was an effort to bring better management to the area, enhance outdoor recreation opportunities, and revive, enhance and protect ecological values. As a largely forested riparian corridor, decisions about the management of environmental resources must be made.

Any decisions about environmental management in the Park System must consider the importance of successfully co-existing with industry and providing a diversity of recreational activities. Important issues include minimizing sediment loading into waterways, respecting minimum instream flow requirements for the North Saskatchewan River, and the conservation of terrestrial and aquatic habitats and species.



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The work of the River Valley Alliance (RVA) has been ongoing for almost 20 years. Incorporated in 2003, the RVA has been working tirelessly to connect people to the river valley – and through the river valley – by making it easier to access and enjoy for all.

RVA is an alliance of six municipalities working together for with an aim to create a single river valley park system that includes a combination of primary, secondary and adventure trails, pedestrian bridges, and boat docks/launches for year-round recreational activity. Connecting Devon to Fort Saskatchewan and stretching approximately 100 km, Phase I is currently about 70% complete.

Fort Saskatchewan also enjoys an active Historical Society operating a Museum and Historic Site.

Kalyna Country Eco-Museum is a “living museum”, which showcases the natural and cultural history of East European farming settlements and Indigenous communities within the drainage basin of the North Saskatchewan River.

The NSR is the ‘spiritual center’ of the Victoria District National Historic Site located in the Smoky Lake area. A self-guided driving tour along the Victoria Trail offers panoramic vistas of the North Saskatchewan River as it winds from the former ferry crossing at Vinca Bridge to Heinsburg and beyond.



*Métis Crossing*

Sitting on +/- 600-acres of land comprised of historic river lot titles from the original Métis settlers to the region in the 1800s, Métis Crossing is the first major Métis cultural gathering center in Alberta. Located in and boutique lodge in Smoky Lake County, the gathering center and its accompanying trails, boutique lodge, café, and commercial kitchen is a premier center for cultural

interpretation, including programming such as ‘Paddle into the Past,’ ‘Tales of the Trapline,’ and ‘Meet the Métis.’

The Crossing is aimed to engage and excite through an exploration of Métis cultural experiences, through visitors’ “head, heart, hands, and hunger.” The Crossing represents and shares elements

of Métis culture, pride of culture and respect, family reconnection and reconciliation, sacredness of place and empathy and acknowledgement.

### 2.1.5 Historic Significance for Indigenous People

Indigenous hunter-gatherers are believed to have entered the northern plains following the retreat of the last glacier, approximately 11,000 years ago. There is archaeological evidence that around 9000 BC, hunters using fluted spear points were hunting bison. It is further theorized by Archaeologist James V. Wright that eastern Early Archaic peoples migrated to the western plains around 6000 BC, where they encountered the Plano peoples. Finally, there is evidence of organized Bison hunts on the northern plains by 3000 BC, using increasingly advanced spear points with distinctive rippled flaking. These ancestral peoples laid the basis of the tribal cultures that were found at the time of European contact.

One of the first Europeans to reach the interior of the northern plains was Henry Kelsey, led by Nakota and Nêhiyawak guides in 1690. He reported that much of what is present-day southern Saskatchewan was occupied by the Atsina, (also called Gros Ventres), as well as the Nakota and Hidatsa to the southeast and the Shoshone (also called Snake) in the southwest. To the north, the area between the forks of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers and to the west was occupied by the Blackfoot, and the Chipewyan (a branch of the Dene), occupied areas of the northern boreal forest.

The advent of settlement and fur trade brought about dramatic changes in territorial distributions, and the traditional lifestyles of First Nations, including their seasonal migrations and economic activities.

Indigenous peoples transformed from their traditional subsistence hunting, to hunting furs for European trade. Cree and Assiniboine peoples in the lower basin acted as a bridge or intermediaries between European and Blackfoot people in the upper North Saskatchewan.



*Bull boats, made from hide wrapped branch frames, were used primarily by women to cross rivers in Blackfoot territory. Source: Fort Edmonton.*

*“The fishing areas were really vital in times of famine because there would always be fish (kinosew). That’s why, if you look at all the modern-day reserves, most of them are by rivers or lakes – at least they had that basic food source.”*

- Chief Billy Joe Laboucane,  
Lubicon Lake, Northern Cree.  
(Source: Fort Edmonton)

European explorers and settlers also brought disease, which devastated First Nations communities, including outbreaks of smallpox in 1780, 1838, 1856 and 1869. These outbreaks killed a significant percentage of First Nations people which had lasting impacts on social and economic well-being.

Indigenous livelihoods have long and continue to be inextricably interconnected with the river and the river valley. For many Indigenous peoples, physical and spiritual signs, and signals that the land is healthy are important to their own feelings of health and wellbeing and that of their communities.

Historically, many diverse Indigenous peoples fished in the *kisiskâciwanisîpiy*, hunted bison, woodland caribou, moose, and smaller mammals in the plains, and foraged for roots and berries in the river valley. Further, this river also used to be a main vessel for travel and transportation.

### Treaty No. 6

The North Saskatchewan River flows across Treaty 6 Territory, which itself reflects the treaty promise of “...as long as the river flows...”. This promise of perpetuity signifies the sacred nature of treaty – a partnership among peoples. The Canada of today could not have existed without the signing of treaties with Indigenous peoples of this land.

*“What we speak of and do now will last as long as the sun shines and the river runs, we are looking forward to our children’s children, for we are old and have but few days to live.”*

- Mistawāsis (Big Child), Plains Cree, at the Signing of Treaty 6 on August 22, 1876, at Fort Carlton

### Indigenous Spiritual Associations

*“Every single time we cross the river, even now in cars, there is a water ceremony that we’re doing. Then it begins to be, that you feel it every time you pass over that water. You begin to be aware of your environment and what it’s made out of. Things you can see and things that you can’t see. That’s what the culture brings you to. It’s that process of living every single day in a state of prayer.*

*...This place was always a trade area, with many visitors. Many Nations would come together here. And that river itself, it’s a sacred river. “Sacred runways” they call them the Veins of our Mother.”*

- Jo-Ann Saddleback, Samson Cree  
(Source: Fort Edmonton)

Many Cree who lived along the North Saskatchewan viewed each body of water as the home of water spirits, with the most powerful being its ‘keeper’. Although this spirit keeper was very mysterious, it was often visualized as a serpent. The other water spirits took on many other forms including sea-serpents, water-lynxes, and half-beaver or half-fish mermaids and mermen. All the water spirits tended to the land and sustained its nourishment by governing the river’s flow.

Visitors to the river would make offerings to the spirits by releasing ribbons or sparkling jewelry into the water. Beforehand, offerings would be smudged with sweetgrass or sage, so that the act

could bring good returns. This ceremonial practice was to pay special recognition to these ‘keepers of the land’ so that in return the water spirits could be asked to bless the land.

*“The belief that everything is alive and has spirit – is sentient and knowing - is fundamental. It strongly influences or defines the way in which many Aboriginal peoples in the north read the landscape around them. Harvesters have learned over time (generations) that if they are to survive and live well, they must maintain proper relationships with the animals they harvest which include giving thanks to the animals, water, or Creator for what has been provided, not taking, or harvesting in excess of what is required. The rule, “take*

*“The Elders, they say that water (tu) is a woman’s spirit”*

- Diane Meguinis, Tsuut’ina, Dene  
Source: Fort Edmonton



## Early Recreation

Emphasizing the early nature of recreational activities along the river lends a sense of continuity to the modern recreational value of the river. Modern river-based recreation on the North Saskatchewan River retains, to a large degree, a heritage character beyond the practical enjoyment factor.

Modern day voyageur canoes still ply the river. Replicated steamboats are a reoccurring river recreation theme, and even the early use of river rafts has its modern-day equivalent. Recreational boating routes followed by early tourists on the North Saskatchewan River mainly were by means of canoes; however, some early tourists made use of Hudson's Bay York Boats when they could, as well as Sternwheelers during the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It is difficult to separate the recreational sites along the North Saskatchewan River, associated with early hunting and angling, from the sites used for regular food harvest for sustenance. The sites were often the same. Early tourists on the river who hunted and fished for food (i.e., artist Paul Kane) did so as a recreational supplement to the diet provided for by the hired hunters who accompanied them. This is like anglers today, who may cook the fish they catch even though they are not dependent upon them.

Hiking and horseback riding have been part of the recreational experience on this river from the beginning of human presence on the river.

We often limit our acknowledgment of Indigenous use of the river and the river corridor to that of efforts to survive. It is important to remember that wherever humans congregate, games and other sporting events ensue. We may not be able to identify favoured places for races and other early Indigenous recreational activities along the river, but we must acknowledge their existence.

Often fur traders would depart from their watercraft, while on regular fur trade business and walk or ride along the river for sport, while their crew brought along the canoes or York Boats.

Every fort had hired hunters and fishers to provide for the daily needs of the employees, but this did not prevent employees from hunting and fishing for their own pleasure whenever they had a chance.



*Above/below: Fire & Ice on Abraham Reservoir, part of the NSR in Clearwater County. PHOTO K. Schole*



Big Island, upstream from Edmonton, is the site of early daylong community picnics and excursions.

Upstream from E.L. Smith Water Treatment facility and across from the Windemere Golf Course is Big Island. It is one of a series of islands in a twisting stream between Edmonton and Devon. There's Midnight Island, Fraser's Island and Big Island. Long-time residents of Edmonton remember family stories of Sternwheeler excursions to Big Island where everyone would picnic and party very late and the babies and small children would sleep on the upper deck. Today it is still a popular picnic and barbeque site accessed by watercraft.

### 2.1.6 Jurisdictional Use

The use of rivers by the government indicates their economic, public, and social importance. The North Saskatchewan River was pivotal in the signing of Treaty 6, as forts up and down the river became staging areas for these significant events. The North Saskatchewan River was often used as military routes in times of conflict, particularly during the Northwest Resistance of 1885.



*Sir Samuel B. Steele,  
sergeant major in the  
North-West Mounted  
Police.*

*PHOTO Library and  
Archives Canada*

Indigenous groups used the North Saskatchewan River as a jurisdictional dividing line between the plains people to the south and east of it, and the river and forest people to the north and west of it.

Under the management of the Hudson's Bay Company, the river became a racetrack for rival fur trade interests.

Through its fur traders of New France, France attempted to usurp the English jurisdiction of Rupert's Land along the North Saskatchewan River. Neither country had any means of defending territory except by the dominance of their fur trading activities. The geographic position of the river allowed fur traders to penetrate the west rapidly and build riparian posts from which to launch expeditions both north and south.

### Conflict and Military Associations

Until the coming of the railroads, most government travel into the north-central areas of what are now Alberta and Saskatchewan, from eastern Canada, was by means of the North Saskatchewan River. The North Saskatchewan River provided a welcome river route for the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) during their first long trek west, and then during the hostilities of the North-West Resistance of 1885.

Most of the recorded skirmishes, massacres, pitched battles and other outbreaks of hostilities that occurred on, near, or in relation to the North Saskatchewan River happened because of the North-West Resistance of 1885.

There is also some evidence of European/Indigenous conflict during the fur trade as well as European-European and Indigenous-Indigenous conflict during that same era, especially before the amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North-West Company in 1821.

The two main military expeditions on the North Saskatchewan River that required the efficient transportation of troops involved the coming of the NWMP to the west in 1874 and the North-West Resistance of 1885.

## Boundaries

The North Saskatchewan River acted as a natural boundary between the Cree and Assinaboine people on the north side, as they moved west under pressure of the advancing fur trade, and the Blackfoot Confederacy on the south side of the river, who had become more mobile with the introduction of the horse at the end of the seventeenth century.

The North Saskatchewan River, on its north/south route also provided temporary protection to the Kootenay, Shushwap and Flathead people from the same Plains groups. After the Kootenay, Shushwap and Flathead people were displaced west across the mountains, the Cree and Assinaboine used the east/west obstacle of the river for protection from the people of the plains.

At the river near the early forts at Rocky Mountain House, the Blackfoot and the Cree used separate places to cross the river and those two locations are still known as ‘the Blackfoot Ford’ and ‘the Cree Ford’. Most of the forts of the fur trade era were built on the north or west side of the river to keep a barrier between them and the plains people.

After Alberta and Saskatchewan became Provinces in 1905, provincial governments took over the ferries on the North Saskatchewan River that the Territorial Governments had operated. Eventually, they assumed control of many privately operated ferries as well.

The North Saskatchewan River is a “transboundary river”, crossing through the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. During the era of ferries there was sometimes some confusion as to which jurisdiction had responsibility for the ferry services near the border, but in general, sharing the river did not result in any transboundary disputes. In fact, today, groups concerned for the welfare of the North Saskatchewan River cooperate between the two provinces. (e.g., The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance, based in Edmonton, AB, the North Saskatchewan River Basin Council based in Hafford, SK, and Partners for the Saskatchewan River Basin, based out of Saskatoon, SK).

Rivers form the base for ecosystems that need mitigation from the effects of human use of the river. Humans too, often need mitigation from river forces on their property (e.g., efforts at flood control – historic dikes, canals, dams); improvements to water management and aquatic ecosystems to improve/repair river values (e.g., legislation, advocacy, fish ladders, monitoring stations); as well as regulation of river access and use through the establishment of protected areas.

## Environmental Regulation

Established provincial legislation, policy, and guidelines pertinent to land use activities serves as a basis for the evaluation of compliance. Where circumstances dictate, inappropriate activities from a regulatory perspective should be reviewed in the context of planning and management goals for a Canadian Heritage River.

Provincial legislation likely to be used in the evaluation of compliance includes:

- *Public Lands Act*
- *Land Stewardship Act*
- *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*
- *Forestry Act*
- *Water Act*

## 2.2 Assessment of Cultural Heritage Values

*The purpose of this section is to identify which of the CHRS Cultural Value Selection Guidelines and Integrity Guidelines appear to be met by the River, by quoting the guidelines and briefly describing the cultural heritage values that appear to meet them.*

The following assessment applies Selection Guidelines for Cultural Values and Cultural Value Integrity Guidelines as required for the Nomination of Canadian Heritage Rivers (CHRS, 2001). The assessment demonstrates that the North Saskatchewan River satisfies all the required Selection and Integrity Guidelines for cultural values.

### 2.2.1 Selection Guidelines: Cultural Values



*Kutenai man around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century PHOTO Canadian Heritage Archives*

Therefore, outstanding Canadian cultural value will be recognized when a river and its immediate environment:

**GUIDELINE:** *is of outstanding importance owing to its influence, over a period of time, on the historical development of Canada through a major impact upon the region in which it is located or beyond; or*

The North Saskatchewan River is of outstanding historical importance in the context of Western Canada as a primary exploration, transportation, and settlement corridor for thousands of years by First Nation peoples, and during the last four centuries of European and indigenous exploration, fur trade, and settlement histories.

The North Saskatchewan River has provided the location for many important Canadian historical events and has functioned as a major conduit for the expansion of western Canadian settlement and the development of the Canadian west in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This river has influenced profoundly the historic development of western Canada.



Artist Paul Kane, PHOTO  
CineFocus Canada

**GUIDELINE:** *is strongly associated with persons, events or beliefs of Canadian significance.*

The North Saskatchewan River is strongly associated with a substantial number of persons of Canadian significance, including:

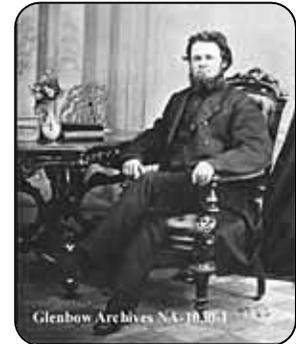
- Henry Kelsey, Samuel Hearne, the La Vérendryes, Chevalier de Niverville, Jacques Repentigny Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, and Anthony Henday who were among the first Europeans to enter the Canadian west;
- Peter Pond, Peter Pangman, Angus Shaw, John McDonald of Garth, Alexander Henry and Duncan McGillivray, 18<sup>th</sup> century fur traders on the river; Philip Turnor, Peter Fidler, and Charlotte Small, a Métis woman who joined her husband David Thompson on his expeditions and early surveys;
- Sir John Franklin, Aemilius Simpson, Lieutenant John Henry Lefroy, Lieutenant Thomas Blakiston, Captain John Palliser, wildlife enthusiast Eugene Bourgeau, geologist James Hector, and Sir Sandford Fleming, early 19<sup>th</sup> century explorers and scientists; William Francis Butler, whose book, “*The Great Lone Land*” was a popular travel guide to western Canada right into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; Paul Kane, James Carnegie, sixth de facto and ninth de jure Earl of Southesk, and William Wentworth-Fitzwilliam, the Viscount Lord Milton, with his friend, Dr. Walter Cheadle, mid 19<sup>th</sup> century tourists on the river; Chief Maskepetoon, Chief Pakanuk *Pakan*, and Chief Mistahimaskwa *Big Bear*, important early Indigenous leaders on the river;
- Victoria Belcourt Callihoo, Gabrielle Dumont, Peter Erasmus, Ralph G. Steinhauer, Jim Brady, Veteran Joe P. Cardinal, Dr. Olive Dickason, Audrey Poitras, prominent Indigenous and Métis leaders on the river;
- George and John McDougall, Henry Bird Steinhauer, and Father Lacombe, early 19<sup>th</sup> century missionaries on the river; John Rowand, Richard Hardisty, notable fur trade factors on the river; General T. B. Strange, Colonel MacLeod, Sergeant Major “Sam” Steele, and Captain Francis Dickens early NWMP commanders on the river.

*Note: Several historic figures present along the river participated in establishment of the Canadian residential school system, a painful legacy of colonialism in Canada.*

The North Saskatchewan River is also associated with several events of Canadian significance, including: The North-West Resistance of 1885 and the Frog Lake Massacre of 1885. Prior to these two significant events, and in anticipation of potential upheavals of this nature, in August of 1873, the Government of Canada created the North-West Mounted Police (now the Royal Canadian Mounted Police), specifically, to address unrest in the west. In 1874, taking the northern route of the famous “long trek” they reached Fort Edmonton. In 1875, Sturgeon Creek Post was built on the river in the vicinity of the modern City of Fort Saskatchewan.

**GUIDELINE:** *Contains historical or archaeological structures, works or sites which are unique, rare or of great antiquity;*

The remains of chimneys from three rival fur trade forts on Fort Island, on the river north of the Village of Myrnam, date back to 1799. The Hudson’s Bay Company Clerk’s Residence, at Victoria Settlement on the North Saskatchewan River, was built in 1864-65. Today, it is the oldest structure in Alberta in its original location. The remains of chimneys on the river at one of the old sites of Rocky Mountain House date back to the middle 1800’s.



*Rev. George McDougall  
PHOTO Glenbow  
Archives*

**GUIDELINE:** *Contains concentrations of historical or archaeological structures, works or sites which are representative of major themes in Canadian history;*

The fur trade era in western Canada, which stretches from the middle 1600’s to the late 1800’s, is well represented by means of historical and archaeological sites along the North Saskatchewan River. One of the earliest known fort sites along the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta was built by Peter Pangman in 1788, near present day Edmonton. There is no modern-day representation of that fort; however, the Provincial Historic Site of Fort George/Buckingham House, on the river just southeast of the town of Elk Point, is an exceptional interpretation of the rival forts built there in 1792.



*Dr. Olive Dickason PHOTO  
NAAF website*



*River Lot 3 Provincial Historic Site, Victoria  
Settlement PHOTO Alberta Community  
Development*

## **2.2.2 Integrity Guidelines: Cultural Integrity Values**

In addition to meeting one or more of the above cultural value guidelines, for a river to be judged to have outstanding Canadian cultural value, it must meet all the following cultural integrity guidelines:

**GUIDELINE:** *The nominated section is of sufficient size to include significant representations of all of the features, activities or other phenomena which give the river its outstanding cultural value;*

The entire 718 kilometre of the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta is included in this nomination and encompasses all the significant representations of the features, activities or other phenomena which give the North Saskatchewan River its outstanding cultural value.

**GUIDELINE:** *The visual character of the nominated section enables uninterrupted appreciation of at least one of the periods of the river's historical importance;*

The many periods of historical importance demonstrated by the North Saskatchewan River remain uninterrupted for purposes of appreciation and interpretation within the context of developed or undeveloped, urban or rural landscapes that comprise the River corridor.

**GUIDELINE:** *The key artifacts and sites comprising the cultural values for which the river is nominated are unimpaired by impoundments and human land uses;*

Despite impoundments that exist along the North Saskatchewan, the historical and cultural essence of the river may still be experienced, and outstanding key cultural heritage values along the corridor are unimpaired by human land uses, with many protected as Provincial Parks, Provincial Historic Sites, Municipal Historic Sites and by National Historic Sites of Canada.

**GUIDELINE:** *The water quality of the nominated section does not detract from the visual character or the cultural experience provided by its cultural values;*

Water quality in the North Saskatchewan River is considered good overall, and much better than it was thirty years ago, primarily due to improved treatment. Most of the river is suitable for recreational uses such as swimming and fishing, and the water quality of the nominated section does not detract from the aesthetic experience, nor the cultural experience provided by the cultural values of the river.

### **3 NATURAL HERITAGE VALUES**



*River bend near [Windsor] Salt plant  
PHOTO B. Milholland*

*The purpose of this section is to describe the outstanding natural heritage features of the North Saskatchewan River and its immediate environment using the document "A Framework for the Natural Values of Canadian Heritage Rivers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2001."*

The following describes the outstanding natural heritage features that the North Saskatchewan River would contribute to the CHRS. The description is organized according to the six heritage value themes of the Framework for the Natural Values of Canadian Heritage Rivers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2001.

## 3.1 Description of Natural Heritage Values

### 3.1.1 HYDROLOGY

#### Drainage Basins

The North Saskatchewan River (NSR) is a large, irregularly meandering prairie river that is part of the Hudson Bay and Mackenzie River Basin drainage and the largest river basin in Canada. The river travels 1,287 km on its long journey, the NSR flows from the Saskatchewan Glacier in the Rocky Mountains, part of the Columbia Icefields in Banff National Park. As it tumbles through the steep-walled gorge between Mount Athabasca and Mount Saskatchewan, the waters of Nigel Creek join it, and then the Alexandra River enters the river's southeasterly flow. At Saskatchewan Crossing, the Howse and the Mistaya Rivers add volume to the river, which now turns east down through the foothills, collecting outflow from the Ram and Clearwater Rivers before traveling past the Town of Rocky Mountain House. The river then turns north, gathering water from the Baptiste and the Brazeau Rivers before continuing past Drayton Valley. North of Drayton Valley, it flows east again, meandering past the town of Devon, and then through Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan. It takes in the Sturgeon River as it leaves major urban centers behind, reaching its northernmost point near Smoky Lake. The NSR gathers with the waters of the Vermilion River just before it crosses the provincial boundary, then the Battle River as it flows between the two Battlefords in the province of Saskatchewan, and finally, with the addition of several smaller rivers, it flows past the City of Prince Albert. At 'The Forks', a dramatic meeting with its sister tributary, the South Saskatchewan River, creates the Saskatchewan River, which then wanders through marshy lake lands until it flows to Hudson's Bay via Tobin Lake, Cedar Lake, Lake Winnipeg, and the Nelson River. The NSR watershed in



*River-bank at Rocky Mountain House  
PHOTO B. Milholland*

Alberta is 57,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and one of the most developed in the province, supporting a wide array of agricultural, industrial, and natural resource-based operations (Hebben, 2005).

The NSR is **Stream Number 2** as per the CHRS drainage basin scheme (National Atlas of Canada, 2019).

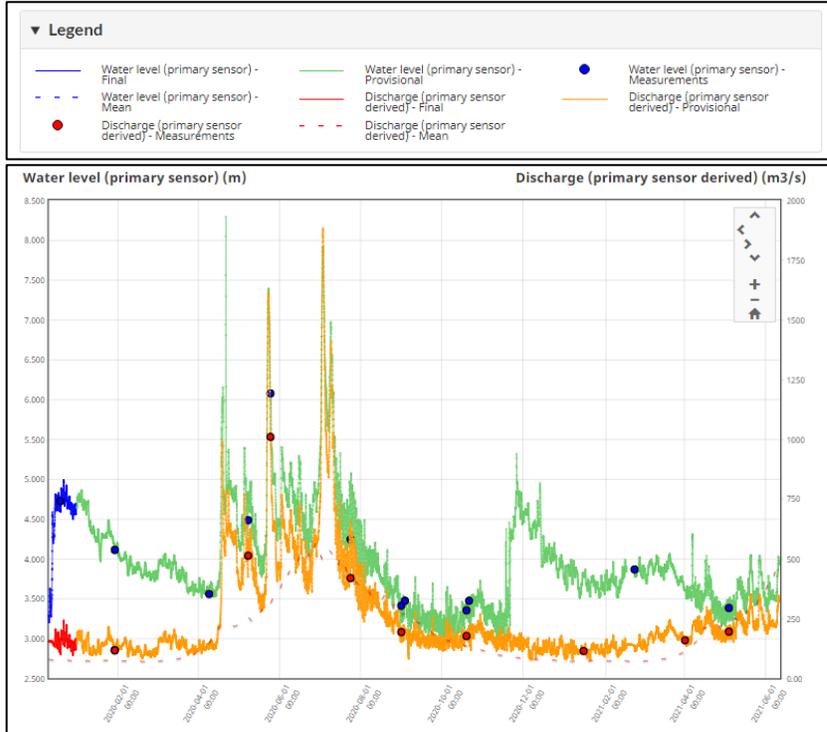
#### Seasonal Variation

The North Saskatchewan River in Alberta undergoes significant seasonal variation between the peak flow rate in the early summer and the lower flow rates in the late fall and through winter. Glacial melt is a small contributor to annual flows, but this water arrives when the river needs it the most, during the warmer, drier parts of the later summer months. Like most prairie rivers, there is one main runoff event in the spring after ice break-up, followed by smaller runoff events during larger storms in early summer. Colour is the best predictor of water quality in the NSR (EPCOR, pers. Comm.).

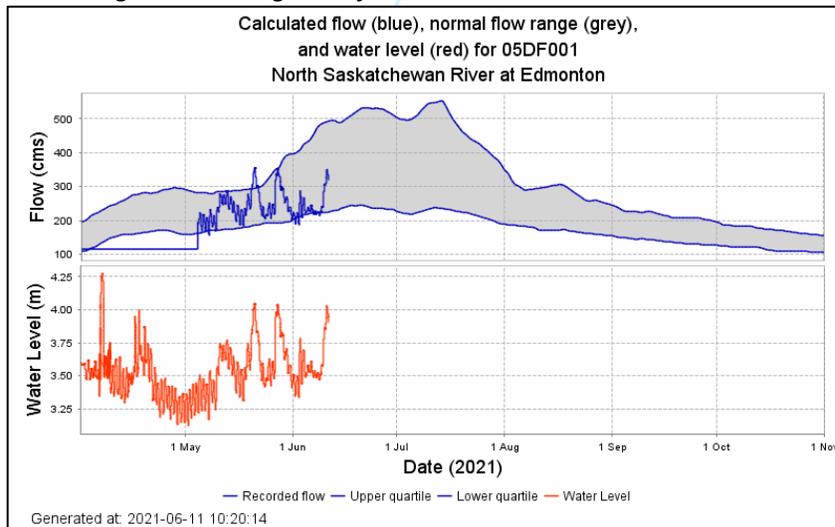
The river has generally a stable flow during winter under ice cover. The river's flow is influenced by TransAlta Utilities' Bighorn dam (on the NSR) and the Brazeau dam (on the Brazeau River, a

# NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER IN ALBERTA

## Nomination Document for the CHRS



Hydrograph of North Saskatchewan River from January 1, 2020, to June 1, 2021, at the Edmonton sampling location (Government of Canada). The highest discharge and flow were in the late summer months.



Hydrograph of North Saskatchewan River from the Edmonton sampling location (Government of Alberta). Flow rate projected to be the highest during July and August and the lowest in the winter seasons.

large tributary of the NSR), which store spring run-off and release it over low flow periods during the rest of the year.

These hydroelectricity projects were constructed in 1972 and 1963, respectively. Regulation of the river has changed the flow pattern with the average winter discharge (between the months of November to March) having increased from approximately 44 m<sup>3</sup>/s to 122 m<sup>3</sup>/s.

During December to March much of the river is frozen, except for some sections within the City of Edmonton. The river is typically ice covered for five months of the year. During this time very little surface run-off water enters the river, and variations in water level are mostly influenced by dam regulation.

Major flooding events (> 3000 m<sup>3</sup>/s) over the past century include 1899, 1944, 1952, 1954, 1986, and 1915, when mean daily flow at Edmonton was 6300 m<sup>3</sup>/s.

The **yearly discharge** at the Alberta-Saskatchewan border is **more than 7 km<sup>3</sup>**.

## Water Content

### Physical Properties

The North Saskatchewan River in Alberta is a naturally turbid river with a heavy sediment load (> 400 mg/L TSS) and high level of total dissolved solids (> 100 mg/L). Turbidity by itself is not an indication of the cleanliness or safety of water, merely a measure of how clear the water is. In the North Saskatchewan River, turbidity is natural and is due to 'glacial flour' (rock finely ground from glacial activity) and from suspended clay particles eroded from the steep banks.

Typically, grain size of river-bed material becomes smaller downstream in prairie rivers. In the NSR, there is a short abrupt decrease in grain size in the headwaters, superimposed on more gradual general decreases in grain size along the gravel reaches to the Saskatchewan border (Shaw and Kellerhals, 1982). The headwater reaches are confined to Proterozoic and Paleozoic rocks which are predominantly limestones and quartzites. It is common to find gravel bar surfaces dominated by ironstones (Shaw and Kellerhals, 1982).

The mean annual sediment yield and variation in concentration increases downstream of the North Saskatchewan River (Ashmore and Day, 2011). There is also a gradual increase in suspended solids, ions, organic carbon, and turbidity as the river moves from the headwaters (Shaw, 1994). Conversely, the concentrations of suspended and dissolved solids fluctuate with the seasonal changes. The highest dissolved substances were found in the winter, while particulate material, or suspended substances, were highest in the spring and summer when flow was the highest (Shaw, 1994).

### Chemical Properties

Over a 25-year period at two long term monitoring sites, several variables have undergone significant **increases** including hardness, sodium, magnesium, and sulphate while dissolved phosphorus, total nitrogen total coliform bacteria and fecal coliform bacteria have shown significant **decreases** (Hebben, 2005). pH, dissolved oxygen nutrients, metals exceeded guidelines infrequently, but overall, these data reflected **good water quality** (Hebben, 2005).

### River Size

The North Saskatchewan River in Alberta is a **medium river** in terms of average flow volume (85-400 m<sup>3</sup>/s), but **large** in terms of overall length (>1,000 km). This nominated portion (from the Banff Park boundary to the border with Saskatchewan) measures 781 kms.

The NSR measures 1,287 km in total from its origins at the Saskatchewan Glacier to its confluence with its sister, the South Saskatchewan, near Prince Albert.

## 3.1.2 PHYSIOGRAPHY

### Physiographic Regions

The North Saskatchewan River in Alberta lies in the **Cordilleran Eastern Ranges** and **Prairie Range** (Bird, 1980; Bostock, 1964).

### Geological Processes

The geology of the NSR in Alberta consists of **bedrock formation by sedimentation** with typical features such as layering of sedimentary rocks, sandstones, limestones, shales, including fossils, fossil beds and springs. **Surficial materials have formed by wind deposition** with sand dunes and volcanic dust type features.

The North Saskatchewan River is a major waterway within the “prairie” physiographic region of Canada. Most of the sedimentary rock through which the North Saskatchewan carves its course was deposited during the late cretaceous era. At Whirlpool Ridge, Precambrian rock of at least 600 million years old was forced over rock of the Middle Cambrian and even younger strata, forming a very hard ridge. In this area, the North Saskatchewan River runs parallel to the ridge, and the actual ‘whirlpool’ marks the place where the river changes course and actually cuts through the ancient ridge.

During part of the post-glacial era the climate was very dry and northwest winds formed large sand dunes. The sand dunes along the North Saskatchewan River are considerable but are not often noticed because they are generally stabilized by vegetation. Where they occur in forests, they carry jack pine, juniper, and blueberries on the sandy ridges, but marsh wetlands and shallow open water lie in the depressions between.

The sandstone cliffs in the upper reaches, and then downstream of the Berrymore Ferry to the Genesee Bridge are a maze of islands and side channels, which wind along high sandstone cliffs. These represent a unique landscape continually changed by the forces of wind and water (Milholland, 2006).

Glacial deposits from the last ice age can be seen clearly where the river dissects glacial moraine (knob and kettle topography) near Hairy Hill, downstream of Edmonton. Glaciolacustrine deposits, the sediments deposited in glacial lakes, which consist primarily of well-stratified fine sand, silt and clay can be observed in the top layers of river cliffs along most of the river expanse.

Several sites of high paleontological sensitivity exist along the river in the Edmonton area. Exposed rock weathers to reveal fossilized plants, some over 60 million years old.

Within approximately 1 km of the NSR at Rocky Mountain House is a glacial erratic. It is not as big as “Big Rock” at Okotoks in southern Alberta, but it belongs to the same group. It fell from a mountain (Gog Group rock), on to a glacier ice flow 18,000 years ago and traveled on the ice until the glacier melted at the end of the last ice age and left it where it stands today.

## Hydrogeology

The **bedrock type** of the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta is **soluble carbonates and pervious shales** (National Atlas of Canada, 1974).

The NSR has high porosity surficial unconsolidated materials with thin soils and barrens (National Atlas of Canada, 1974; Douglas, 1968).

## Topography

Gradient is determined by the overall difference in height over the length of the nominated section, in meters per kilometer. **The gradient of the NSR in Alberta is steep (> 5m/km).**

Relief is the height of the river's immediate environment above sea level. **The relief of the NSR in Alberta is > 1,000 meters.**

### 3.1.3 RIVER MORPHOLOGY

The entire NSR corridor contains areas of exceptional natural value in the extensive braided channels and snyes in the upper reaches, and wide meander bends in the lower reaches that have tall sandstone cliffs and low gravel shores. The relative stability of a river can be determined by determining its pattern as shallow and wide channels are generally straight and low width-depth ratios are narrow and deep (Schumm, 1977). Channel dynamics can also be altered by sediment deposition (Knighton, 1998). Understanding the variety of patterns and dynamics provide an empirical foundation for determining past river morphology (Schumm, 1977). Since the river descends from mountain to prairie, it encompasses a remarkable variety of interesting and unusual natural features. The upper reaches of the river has a compilation of white-water features varying from ripple to cataracts, prolonged rapids, and exhilarating whirlpool features.

Most geomorphic changes on Earth can be attributed to flowing water while the formation of each river is a result of upstream factors, hydraulic variables, and lithology (Morisawa, 1985). Fluvial geomorphology is highly complex as the hydraulic variables and upstream factors are constantly changing (Morisawa, 1985; Calow and Petts, 1994). Many important interactions such as organic matter outputs, nutrient changes, and predation occur on the land-water boundary of fluvial systems (Calow and Petts, 1994). The lower reaches are populated with a wide variety of vegetated islands. Other unique natural features along the North Saskatchewan River corridor involve the deposition of finer sediments at downstream locations (Knighton, 1998) and are sand hill, sand cliff and sand dune formations scattered from the area around Rocky Mountain House downstream to the area around Redwater. Evidence suggests that the channel of the North Saskatchewan River was formed during the Pleistocene from glacial activity (Boydell, 1972).

At Whirlpool Ridge in the uppermost reach, the river cuts through an ancient geological formation where Precambrian rock of at least 600 million years old has been forced over rock of the Middle Cambrian and even younger strata, forming a very hard ridge. Geomorphic thresholds are an important factor when considering pattern variability in fluvial systems (Schumm, 1977) while “the hydrological regime is an important determinant of ecosystem structure and function” (Calow and Petts 1994).

In this area, where the North Saskatchewan River runs parallel to the ridge, the actual ‘whirlpool’ marks the place where the river changes course and cuts through the ancient ridge. Much of the North Saskatchewan River flows over sedimentary rock deposited during the late cretaceous and early tertiary eras. This results in riverbanks composed of various combinations of sandstone, shale, coal, and bentonite clays. The gradual removal of sediment over time creates unique morphology (Knighton, 1998). Outcrops of this rock are rare because it weathers easily and becomes covered with vegetation. Usually, it is only along the banks of major rivers like the North Saskatchewan that they may be seen. They are particularly evident in the river valley around Edmonton. Upstream of Edmonton, exposed shale-like rock weathers to reveal fossilized plants, some over 60 million years old.

The NSR exemplifies the extent to which the physical, biological, and chemical characteristics vary from the headwaters to the mouth (Calow and Petts, 1994).

The NSR Valley alternates between broad flat or rolling floors and sections sliced narrowly into bedrock. One example is the North Saskatchewan River gorge from Devon downstream to Edmonton where it opens up to a wide valley to beyond Fort Saskatchewan. The North Saskatchewan River channel varies from braided and sinuous in the mountains and foothills to occasional tortuous and branching sections to wide meandering channels. The meander bends may have tall sandstone cliffs and low gravel shores, and many of the meander banks have been undercut caused by continual erosion (Knighton, 1998).

The North Saskatchewan River descends from mountain to prairie, with sections of steep and swift descent. This change from one flow regime to other results in a variety of white-water elements: riffle, cataract, prolonged rapids, whirlpool, and chute (Morisawa, 1985). The relatively gradual descent over the rest of the reaches results in level water elements: swift water and pool and riffle.

## Valley Types

The valleys of a river system can incorporate concave, convex, or straight walls with narrow to wide floodplains. The interfluves can be flat, rounded or peaked. The most suitable description for the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta would be Category 1: **concave-walled valleys in a narrow floodplain with peaked interfluves**. The valleys in the North Saskatchewan River reflect the unique geological history of this system.

## Channel Patterns

The North Saskatchewan River is well known for its picturesque meandering patterns. Meandering rivers can create free-standing water bodies over time. Oxbow lakes are unique features that result from the eventual erosion of a bank where the river breaks from its meander, leaving behind wetland habitats.

The North Saskatchewan River has created one of these special features in the Whitemud Creek Ravine near Edmonton. This lake provides an ecosystem that is different than the river itself. The most appropriate classification for the North Saskatchewan River would be Category 3: **meandering with the water flowing in wide loops; floodplain may have oxbows and other features** (Morisawa, 1971).



*The North Saskatchewan River as it leaves the Saskatchewan Glacier in the Rocky Mountains*



*Meandering channel of the North Saskatchewan River as it enters the Edmonton area.*



*Braided channel of the North Saskatchewan River*



*Braided channel pattern of the North Saskatchewan River Northwest of Drayton Valley  
Courtesy of Google Maps*

## Channel Profile

The NSR has mostly **level water with White Water Riffles** (Glacier Rapids) with shallow, sustained ripples over cobbles, often with shallow pools, islands and bars and also includes large waterfalls (Weeping Wall) where water falls freely for significant height with abundant mist and spray and a deep plunge pool.

## Fluvial Landforms

The NSR has **braiding depositional landforms** with temporary islands, shoals, and point or longitudinal bars caused by accretion of sands, gravels, and cobble in channel.

### 3.1.4 BIOTIC ENVIRONMENTS



*Salix discolor* (pussy willow) on the NSR in spring.  
PHOTO B. Milholland

The North Saskatchewan River is a riverine system with its upper head zone within the boundary of Banff National Park, which also comprises the section of river already designated as a Heritage River.

One of the characteristics of the lowland zone is high species diversity, and it is within this characteristic that the North

Saskatchewan River represents an outstanding example.

There are at least thirty Environmentally Sensitive Areas designated along the North Saskatchewan River where biodiversity abounds.

## Riverine Systems

### Aquatic Ecosystems

The River Continuum Concept provides a framework to predict and link patterns in biodiversity with geomorphological features of a river system (Vannote *et al.*, 1980) and can be applied to the North Saskatchewan River. While the river continuum concept has not been directly applied to the NSR, it was applied in the South Saskatchewan River by Culp and Davis (1982). During the summer-fall periods, the benthic macroinvertebrate communities of the South Saskatchewan River system demonstrated a longitudinal zonation related to the subalpine forest, fescue prairie, and mixed prairie terrestrial ecosystems through which it flows. This zonation was primarily attributable to significant downstream increases in periphyton biomass, plant nutrients, and water temperature. Zonation was reduced in the late winter-spring periods and absent in May, during spring runoff.

Longitudinal trends in macroinvertebrate functional feeding groups generally followed the predictions of the river continuum concept, with trophic composition apparently more strongly affected by autotrophic processes in the summer, and heterotrophic processes in the winter. By combining the river continuum concept with a watershed classification system based on geology, climate, soil type, and terrestrial vegetation, we suggest that biological comparisons of longitudinal zonation are enhanced.

The general characteristics of the headwaters include the area of sediment production; coarse channel substrate; low seasonal water temperature; low species diversity; and primary invertebrates include shredders and collectors. The NSR headwaters are an area of high dissolved oxygen, low seasonal water temperature (Shaw, 1994) and low species diversity. Due to its fast-moving nature, coarse channel substrate, and sediment production with a large detritus presence, the headwater zone provides a unique ecosystem primarily consisting of shredder and collector invertebrates. The change in physical conditions in the North Saskatchewan River creates a continuous gradient which elicits a response within the populations of macroinvertebrates “resulting in a continuum of biotic adjustments and consistent patterns of loading, transport, utilization and storage of organic matter along the length of a river” (Vannote et al., 1980).

As we move downstream, unique communities consisting with their physical gradients can be observed. The middle zone of the North Saskatchewan River is the area of sediment transport, broad seasonal water temperatures, variable discharge and consists primarily of collectors and grazers. These communities reflect the variation in seasonal water temperatures, discharge, and availability of different resources as sediment is transported. Sediment nutrient levels increase as they move downstream (Alberta Environment, 2010; Shaw, 1994). The concentration of algal communities was the lowest in the upper sections of the river and increased downstream (Alberta Environment, 2010). Consistent with River Continuum Concept, the shifts in species composition were reflected consistently with the physical gradients in the North Saskatchewan River (Alberta Environment, 2010).

Towards the border with Saskatchewan, the lowland zone is a region of sediment deposition; fine sediment substrate; stable discharges; and high species diversity. The cumulative effects of stable discharges, fine sediment deposition, collection of nutrients, and fine sediment create a rich environment for high species diversity in the lowland zone. As the general physical characteristics change in the North Saskatchewan River, a continuous gradient of physical conditions is created. According to Vannote *et al.* (1980), “in order to understand the biological systems of river systems, the gradient of physical factors created by the fluvial system need to be considered”.

## Lake Systems

A number of lakes fall within the NSR watershed, following a trend of trophic status from the mountain headwaters of oligotrophic to mesotrophic, eutrophic, and hypereutrophic in downstream reaches. Many unique saline lakes and wetlands are also found downstream of Edmonton.

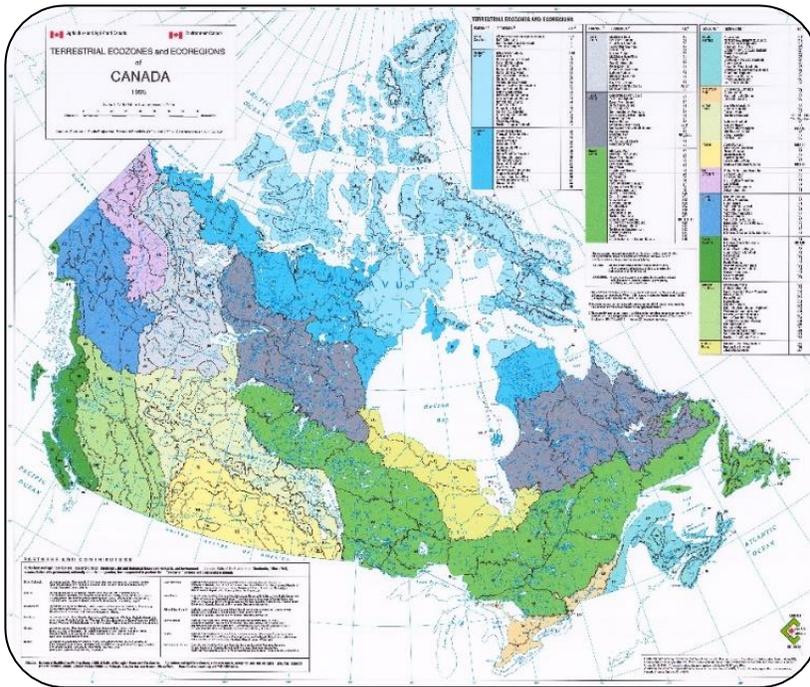
## Wetland Systems

The NSR supports significant aquatic ecosystems, especially in the upper reaches. Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve supports significant plant communities in a willow-birch fen and a spring fed wetland. Near Rocky Mountain House, south of Highway 11, a seldom-visited patterned fen extends for several kilometers in a north-west to south-east direction. Here a floating mat of densely intertwined sedges supports black spruce and tamarack in places and a multitude of buck bean throughout but will not support the weight of a human. Dwarf birch and willow line the perimeter of the fen (Milholland, 2006).

The North Saskatchewan River's largely undeveloped riparian areas support an abundance of plant and animal species. High biodiversity flourishes along the river due to the natural function of diverse interconnecting ecosystems (the river flows through four of Alberta's six natural regions), as well as in close proximity to at least thirty Provincial Environmentally Significant and Protected Areas. Pembina Field Provincial Natural Area supports breaks and floodplain of North Saskatchewan River, oxbows or abandoned river channel environments, diverse shrublands on hillsides and in old channels, and mature riverine balsam poplar. Buck Lake Creek Provincial Natural Area supports a black spruce ecosystem and labrador tea peatland. Burtonsville Island is a provincial Natural Area encompassing one large island and several smaller islands, which host a variety of riverine habitats. Vegetation is abundant, bird life plentiful and diverse, and there is also a wide variety of mammals and amphibians. Surrounded by the fresh water of the North Saskatchewan River and Shoal Water Lake Creek, other than some logging in the 1940's and 50's, the island has sustained minimal impact.

The NSR also falls within the Prairie Pothole region (PPR). The PPR is an expansive area of the northern Great Plains that contain thousands of shallow mineral wetlands known as potholes. These potholes are the result of glacier activity in the Wisconsin glaciation, which ended about 10,000 years ago. The decaying ice sheet left behind depressions formed by the uneven deposition of till in ground moraines. These depressions are called potholes, glacial potholes, kettles, kettle lakes or shallow open water. They fill with water in the spring, creating wetlands, which range in duration from temporary to semi-permanent. They range in salinity from freshwater to highly saline, with correspondingly unique vegetation that can inhabit highly saline environments. The region covers an area of about 800,000 km<sup>2</sup> and expands across three Canadian provinces (Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta) and five U.S. states (Minnesota, Iowa, North and South Dakota, and Montana). The hydrology, salinity and permanence of these wetlands is variable, which results in long term productivity and biodiversity. The PPR is a prime spot during breeding and nesting season for millions of migrating waterfowl. Unfortunately, Alberta has lost approximately 67% of its pothole wetlands, largely due to agricultural drainage and aggregation in the white zone.

## Terrestrial Ecosystems



The NSR transects four of Alberta’s six natural regions: Rocky Mountains, Foothills, Boreal Forest, and Parkland. The most noteworthy ecozones the NSR encompasses is the **Montane Cordillera and Prairie**.

The Montane Cordillera is characterized by short, warm summers, and long, cold winters (Wiken, 1986). Both ecozones provide unique habitats for many different plants and animal species.

flat land, the prairie ecozone provide important rangelands and pastures necessary for Canada’s agricultural needs (Wiken, 1986). Like the Great Plains, the Prairies have a disproportionate number of rare and endangered species, and native prairie is itself an endangered ecosystem.

Characterized by natural grasslands, low valleys and

### 3.1.5 VEGETATION

#### Significant Plant Communities

Because the North Saskatchewan River flows through four different Natural Regions and five Sub regions, it supports a unique variety of vegetative communities. Although many vegetative communities are not unique in and of themselves, taken together with all the other diverse vegetative communities supported by this river system, the overall biodiversity of vegetative communities along the North Saskatchewan River becomes an exceptional representation in the CHRS system.

The North Saskatchewan River creates an extensive and diverse natural corridor system, which is an important element in the support of a significant bioregional conservation network. Bioregional conservation networks are linked systems of core wild areas, buffer zones and corridors of suitable habitat nested within areas dominated by human activity. The North Saskatchewan River corridor and its associated tributaries link diverse wetland, forest, and shrub/grass ecosystems in a complex pattern across regional landscapes, providing habitat and resources essential for the survival of a vast number of living organisms. In spite of over 100 years of human development this vast corridor still retains significant biodiversity and natural phenomena, formations and features often compromised in other river systems. (Milholland, 2006).

Dynamic vascular plants with neoglacial colonization, dynamic trees such as lodgepole pine fire succession and dynamic shrubs that colonize shifting bars are also present.

The North Saskatchewan River's largely undeveloped riparian area supports an abundance of plant and animal species. Manitoba maple, sandbar willow balsam poplars, hungry willow, and red-osier dogwood make up only a fraction of this riparian community. High biodiversity flourishes along the river due to the natural function of diverse interconnecting ecosystems (the river flows through four of Alberta's six natural regions), as well as to the proximity to at least thirty Provincial Environmentally Significant and Protected Areas.

Along the length of the river there are at least thirty Provincial Natural Areas supporting a variety of important terrestrial ecosystems. Because the North Saskatchewan River flows through four Natural Regions and five Sub regions, it supports a unique variety of vegetative communities. Taken together with all the diverse vegetative communities supported by this river system, the overall biodiversity of vegetative communities along the North Saskatchewan River becomes an exceptional representation in the CHRS system. Management of rare species used to be approached on an individual species basis. Recent scientific knowledge verifies what naturalists have long believed, that no species exists alone.

Biodiversity is a significant factor in the conservation of rare species. Localized communities and specific habitats must be considered in any management activity.

The diverse ecosystems of the North Saskatchewan River corridor support many rare plant species, which have disappeared from other habitat. Rare species that are found along the North Saskatchewan River corridor could be indicative of favourable habitat benefiting other species.

Rare and significant plant species along the North Saskatchewan River include moss, lichen, fern, orchid, grasses, and a disjunct wood anemone.

## Rare Plant Species

The diverse ecosystems of the North Saskatchewan River corridor support many rare plant species, which have disappeared from other habitat. Rare species that are found along the North Saskatchewan River corridor could be indicative of favourable habitat that benefits other species. Every reach of the river shelters a variety of plants ranked S1 and S2 in the province. In the upper reaches is found a rare moss, *Miehlichhoferia macrocarpa* (Hook). It was first discovered by Thomas Drummond, the assistant naturalist from the second Franklin expedition (1825-27). In the vicinity of Nordegg, a disjunct plant, a wood anemone (*Anemone quinquefolia*), is found growing in mixed wood clearings, on sandy stream sides and the riverbank. The next nearest population of wood anemones is in east central Saskatchewan.

Rare plant species that are found along the North Saskatchewan River include Small Yellow Lady's Slipper, Indian Milk-Vetch, and Slender Mouse-ear Cress. Slender Mouse-ear Cress is listed as threatened under COSEWIC.

### 3.1.6 FAUNA

The Montane Cordillera is home to woodland caribou, mule deer, wapiti, bighorn sheep, badger, fisher, hoary marmot, stellar's jay, and blue grouse. Ferruginous hawk, sage grouse, mule deer, white-tailed deer, jack rabbit, coyote, pronghorn antelope, American avocet, and burrowing owl are some of many species that live in the Prairie ecozone.

The North Saskatchewan River flows through four Natural Regions and five sub regions and supports a unique variety of animal species. Some of these species occur as individual populations and others occur within more complex interrelationships. In the area of the Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve, grasslands usually associated with the prairies thrive, attracting bighorn sheep, deer, elk, and moose in a valley that provides winter protection from fierce weather events. The North Saskatchewan River creates a unique kind of demarcation line wherein some species are found at the most southern part of their range and other species are found at the most northern part of their range.

#### Significant Animal Populations

Significant populations of mammals include the diversity of large mammals (wolf, cougar) and bird diversity in the Graveyard Flats upstream of the Saskatchewan River Crossing.

Spotted frog and long-toed salamander are two wetland species restricted to the Rocky Mountain Natural Region in Alberta. South-facing cliffs and river crevices along the lower reaches of the North Saskatchewan River provide hibernation sites for garter snakes. Declared in 1989 by American Fisheries Society to be "threatened" Lake Sturgeon are found in the vicinity of Edmonton and downstream.

Big Lake is recognized as an important waterfowl molting and staging site, and in other studies it has been recognized as one of the 20 most important waterfowl habitat units in Alberta. Beaverhill Lake is an important waterfowl staging area (spring and fall) with more than 200,000 individuals regularly using the site each year. The Whitford and Rush Lakes, just south of Victoria Settlement, are extremely important wetland sites for waterfowl and other water birds.

The North Saskatchewan River supports both cold-water and cool water sport and game fish. Coldwater habitat on the river, suitable for trout and other cold-water fish is mainly located above the junction of the Clearwater and the North Saskatchewan River. The North Saskatchewan River system supports at least 37 species of fish. Eight species of sport fish can be found in the river near Edmonton, and the fishing here has been reported as some of the best in the area.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Provincial Status <sup>1</sup>
Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	Sensitive
Boreal Toad	<i>Anaxyrus boreas boreas</i>	Sensitive <sup>2</sup>
Northern Leopard Frog	<i>Lithobates pipiens</i>	At Risk
River Shiner	<i>Notropis blennioides</i>	Un-determined
Sauger	<i>Sander canadensis</i>	Sensitive
Sharp-Tailed Grouse	<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus</i>	Sensitive
Common Garter Snake	<i>Thamnophis sirtalis</i>	Sensitive
Lake Sturgeon	<i>Acipenser fulvescens</i>	At Risk
Pearl Dace	<i>Margariscus margarita</i>	Underdetermined
Piping Plover	<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	At Risk
Spoonhead Sculpin	<i>Cottus ricei</i>	May be at risk
Alder Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax alnorum</i>	Sensitive
Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Sensitive
Least Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax minimus</i>	Sensitive
Pileated Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>	Sensitive
Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>	Secure
Cougar	<i>Puma concolor</i>	Secure
Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	Sensitive
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	At Risk
Whooping Crane	<i>Grus americana</i>	At Risk
Barred Owl	<i>Strix varia</i>	Sensitive
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	May be at risk
American White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>	Sensitive
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Sensitive
Common Nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles minor</i>	Sensitive
Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	Sensitive

1 – from (Alberta Environment and Parks, 2021)

2– based on Western Toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*) rather than Boreal Toad (*Anaxyrus boreas boreas subspecies*)

Many species living along or in the North Saskatchewan River are sensitive and at risk (FMWIS). The Harlequin Duck and Northern Leopard Frog are both listed under COSEWIC as Special Concern.

## Rare Animal Species

Examples include regionally rare bird species peregrine falcon and regionally rare isopod and amphipod invertebrate species.

### 3.2 Assessment of Natural Heritage Values

The purpose of this section is to identify which of the CHRS Natural Value Selection Guidelines and Integrity Guidelines appear to be met by the River, by quoting the guidelines and briefly describing the natural heritage values that appear to meet them.

The North Saskatchewan River is not being nominated to the CHRS for its natural heritage values. Previous study of the CHRS Selection Guidelines for Natural Heritage Values as required for the Nomination of Canadian Heritage Rivers, has confirmed that the North Saskatchewan satisfies CHRS Natural Heritage Values Selection Guidelines. However, the River is unable to satisfy certain Natural Integrity Values required for nomination.

### 3.2.1 Selection Guidelines: Natural Values

Outstanding Canadian natural heritage value is recognized when a river and its immediate environment:

**GUIDELINE:** *Is an outstanding example of river environments as they are affected by the major stages and processes in the earth's evolutionary history which are represented in Canada;*



*Birch trees along the North Saskatchewan River*  
*PHOTO B. Milholland*

During part of the post-glacial era the climate was very dry, and it was then that northwest winds formed large sand dunes. The sand dunes along the North Saskatchewan River are considerable but are not often noticed because they are generally stabilized by vegetation. Where they occur in forests, they carry jack-pine, juniper, and blueberries on the sandy ridges, but marshes lie in the depressions between.

Glacial deposits from the last ice age can be seen clearly where the river dissects glacial moraine (knob & kettle) near Hairy Hill, downstream of Edmonton. Glaciolacustrine deposits, the sediments deposited in glacial lakes, which consist primarily of well-stratified fine sand, silt and clay can be observed in the top layers of river cliffs along most of the river expanse.

**GUIDELINE:** *Contains outstanding representations of significant ongoing fluvial, geomorphological and biological processes;*

The sandstone cliffs in the upper reaches, and then downstream of the Berrymore Ferry to the Genesee Bridge, where there is a maze of islands and side channels, which wind along high sandstone cliffs; these represent a unique landscape continually changed by the forces of wind and water.

There is also evidence of shifting gravel bars upstream of Drayton Valley (Google Earth imagery 1985 v. 2016). More pronounced changes in fluvial processes may be found in areas of higher elevation, faster moving water and softer bed-loads.

## NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER IN ALBERTA

### Nomination Document for the CHRS



**GUIDELINE:** *Contains along its course unique, rare or outstanding examples of biotic and abiotic natural phenomena, formations or features;*

Approximately 1 km north of Rocky Mountain House is a glacial erratic. It is not as big as ‘Big Rock’ at Okotoks in southern Alberta, but it belongs to the same group. Alexander Henry documented it in his fur trade journal. It fell from a mountain (Gog Group rock), on to a glacier ice flow 18,000 years ago and traveled on the ice until the glacier melted at the end of the last ice age and left it where it stands today.

The North Saskatchewan River’s largely undeveloped riparian area supports an abundance of plant and animal species. High biodiversity flourishes along the river due to the natural function of diverse interconnecting ecosystems (the river flows through four of Alberta’s six natural regions), as well as near at least thirty Provincial Environmentally Significant and Protected Areas. Some examples of this are: In the upper reaches, the Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve supports significant plant communities in a willow-birch fen and a spring fed wetland. Pembina Field Provincial Natural Area supports breaks and floodplain of North Saskatchewan River, abandoned river channel environments, diverse shrublands on hillsides and in old channels, and mature riverine balsam poplar. Buck Lake Creek Provincial Natural Area supports a black spruce ecosystem and labrador tea peatland. Burtonsville Island is a provincial Natural Area encompassing one large island and several smaller islands, which host a variety of riverine habitats. Vegetation is abundant, bird life plentiful and diverse, and there is also a wide variety of mammals and amphibians. Surrounded by the fresh water of the North Saskatchewan River and Shoal Water Lake Creek, other than some logging in the 1940’s and 50’s, the island has sustained minimal impact.

**GUIDELINE:** *Contains along its course habitats of rare or endangered species of plants and animals, including outstanding concentrations of plants and animals of Canadian interest and significance;*

Management of rare species used to be approached on an individual species basis. More recent scientific knowledge verifies what many naturalists have long believed, that no species exists alone. Biodiversity is now considered a significant factor in the conservation of rare species. The landscape, localized communities and specific habitats must now be considered in any management activity. The diverse ecosystems of the North Saskatchewan River corridor support many rare plant species, which have disappeared from other habitat. Rare species that are found

along the North Saskatchewan River corridor could be indicative of favourable habitat that benefits other species.

Every reach of the river shelters a variety of plants ranked S1 and S2 in the province. In the upper reaches is found a rare moss, *Miehlichhoferia macrocarpa* (Hook). It was first discovered by Thomas Drummond, the assistant naturalist from the second Franklin expedition (1825 – 27). Near Nordegg, a disjunct plant, a wood anemone (*Anemone quinquefolia*), is found growing in mixed wood clearings, on sandy stream sides and the riverbank. The next nearest population of wood anemones is in east central Saskatchewan.

Spotted frog and long-toed salamander are two wetland species restricted to the Rocky Mountain Natural Region in Alberta. South-facing cliffs and river crevices along the lower reaches of the North Saskatchewan River provide hibernation sites for garter snakes. Declared in 1989 by American Fisheries Society to be “threatened” Lake Sturgeon are found in the vicinity of Edmonton and downstream.

### 3.2.2 Integrity Guidelines: Natural Integrity Values

In addition to meeting one or more of the above natural heritage value guidelines, for a river to be judged to have outstanding Canadian natural heritage value, it *must* meet all the following natural integrity guidelines:

**GUIDELINE:** *The nominated section is of sufficient size to include significant representations of all of the natural processes, features, or other phenomena which give the river its outstanding natural value;*

The entire North Saskatchewan River corridor in Alberta is included in this nomination and includes all the significant representations of the natural processes, features or other phenomena which give the North Saskatchewan its outstanding natural value as a heritage river in the context of the CHRS.

**GUIDELINE:** *The nominated section includes those ecosystem components which contribute significantly to the provision of habitat for species in need of protection;*

The entire nominated section includes all necessary ecosystem components which contribute significantly to the provision of habitat for species in need of protection – including the river’s waters, the river’s riparian areas, natural marsh lands, sand hills and cliffs.

**GUIDELINE:** *There are no human-made impoundments within the nominated section;*

The North Saskatchewan River is impounded by the Big Horn Dam and the Abraham Lake Dam in the upper reaches for both the generation of hydroelectricity and flood control, and therefore cannot satisfy this guideline.

**GUIDELINE:** *All key elements and ecosystem components are unaffected by impoundments located outside the nominated section;*

The regulation of flow via impoundments at the Bighorn and Brazeau dams (each within and outside of the nominated section respectively) which has affected the natural features and values of the North Saskatchewan River, including everything from benthic invertebrates to trees. Specifically, the increased flows during the winter season contribute to higher oxygenation levels than would otherwise be observed, thereby positively influencing biotic health.

**GUIDELINE:** *The water in the nominated section is uncontaminated to the extent that its natural aquatic ecosystem is intact;*

Over the last 75 years, the water quality of the North Saskatchewan River has been affected by urban, industrial, and agricultural land uses – both adjacent to the river and more broadly within the context of the river’s watershed – which has influenced the natural aquatic ecosystem. More recently, however, there have been significant improvements to the water quality including downstream of Edmonton because of upgraded wastewater collection and water treatment systems, allowing the river to enjoy a relatively intact aquatic ecosystem.

**GUIDELINE:** *The natural aesthetic character of the nominated section is free of, or not adversely affected by, human developments;*

The North Saskatchewan River does not have the same natural integrity as it had 300 years ago, having been influenced and modified by human land use and development including agriculture, shoreline vegetation clearing and urban development.

However, the vast majority of river does contain an abundance of natural landscapes that provide many continuous kilometres on the river of wilderness characteristics not adversely affected by human land use and developments.



*Contemporary riparian zone in the Hermitage area within the City of Edmonton  
PHOTO B. Milholland*



*An in-situ example of early riparian settlement, Anderson House (aka ‘House in the Middle of the Road’) Municipal Historic Resource, on Victoria Trail, Smoky Lake County.  
K. Schole Photo*

## 4 RECREATIONAL HERITAGE VALUES

*The purpose of this section is to describe the outstanding recreational features of the North Saskatchewan River and its immediate environment, and how these values would contribute to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System based on the Selection Guidelines for Recreational Heritage Values and Recreational Value Integrity Guidelines.*

River-related recreational opportunities along the NSR in Alberta are extensive and ongoing, spearheaded by provincial, municipal, and private interests. These opportunities include extensive walking and hiking trails, walking bridges, nature observation sites, canoeing, river touring, seasonal river competitions, and riverside entertainment.

### 4.1 Description of Recreational Heritage Values

#### 4.1.1 Boating

The North Saskatchewan River offers excellent opportunities for a wide range of boating activities and sustains high levels of use. Canoes, kayaks, rafts, “pleasure/cruising boats,” fishing boats, personal watercraft, “commercial tour boats,” ply the river throughout the year. In addition to recreational use, there are also competitive boating events involving rowing and paddling for local clubs as well as annual feature events e.g., raft races, bathtub race, dragon boat race, and historical recreations of water transportation on the river.



*Courtesy of Explore Edmonton*



*Fluvial formations of the riverbank near Smoky Lake as seen by kayak. PHOTO K. Schole.*

The mountain and foothills geology, the distinct milky-blue colour of the river, the braided channels, the unique and variable sets of rapids and convenient river access make the upper reaches of the North Saskatchewan River the most popular for extreme wilderness adventure touring and experienced paddlers.

Kayaking the Brierlies Rapids on the North Saskatchewan River at the Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site. Kayaking, canoeing, and rafting on the North Saskatchewan River is popular and can be incredibly scenic.

The middle reaches are bracketed by heavily forested riverbanks which alternate with high, bare sandstone cliffs and the river gradually widens to about .4 to .8 km (1/4 to 1/2 mile) across. Here the river continually cuts new channels, which adds to the adventure.

The lower reaches are pastoral, full of islands and bracketed by a deep river valley that preserves a sense of remote wilderness while being an easy drive from Edmonton. In fact, even within the City of Edmonton, canoeists can experience that remote feeling on the river. Many half-day, full day and overnight trips are possible on this part of the river where wildlife abounds. The gravel bars are popular with weekend gold panners.

### 4.1.2 Angling

Fishing has always been a popular recreational activity on the North Saskatchewan River throughout the year. Innumerable rural and urban opportunities exist for access to shoreline angling, angling from boats or through the ice.



*Fishing on the NSR near Devon, Courtesy of Explore Edmonton*



*Riverbanks at Drayton Valley  
PHOTO B. Milholland*

Because the North Saskatchewan River supports both cold water and cool water game fish, there is added intrigue and adventures for anglers. Eight species of sport fish can be found in the river near Edmonton, and the fishing there has been reported as some of the best in the area.

### 4.1.3 Water Contact Recreation

Up and downstream of Edmonton, water quality is consistently suitable for water contact recreation, including swimming. Water quality issues are being addressed with ongoing water quality improvement initiatives, some of which use leading edge technology.

The North Saskatchewan Region Surface Water Quality Management Framework considers the maximum allowable concentrations for the protection of aquatic life, recreation, aesthetics, and agriculture. Draft indicators, triggers, and limits for the NSR upstream of the Clearwater River, at Devon, and Pakan stations have been proposed for E. coli. The most stringent chronic guidelines were adopted from the Environmental Quality Guidelines for Alberta Surface Waters (2018).

EPCOR discusses the myths of the NSR and discusses the opportunities for recreational use, including paddling sports, angling, and wading. In a 2010 discussion paper, it was stated in a section referring upstream water quality to that below Edmonton (<https://www.epcor.com/products-services/water/Documents/north-saskatchewan-river-water-quality.pdf>): *“However phosphorus levels are approaching 70% of the NSWA’s objective values and increased loadings must be managed accordingly. Similarly, pathogens numbers have shown decreases in recent years, but values are still above NSWA’s proposed water quality objectives and established guidelines for irrigation and recreation.”*

North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper and Swim Drink Fish Canada also have been monitoring water quality with a focus on recreational suitability. The results provide references for a range of recreation activities including boaters, anglers, rowers, and others who might not be swimming, but do touch the water. The primary water quality parameter used is E. coli and the results of testing are published online at <https://www.theswimguide.org/find/> as either *“meets water quality standards”* or *“failed to meet water quality standards”*.

The Government of Canada through Environment and Climate Change Canada has collected long-term water quality monitoring data for the North Saskatchewan River Basin. The current dataset for E.coli extends from May 2003 to September 2019 and for fecal streptococci from January 2000 to May 2016.

### 4.1.4 Water Associated Activities

Riverside festivals occur all along the river. These include numerous annual running competitions along river side trails, the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, Heritage Days Festival, Earth Day Celebrations, River Day Celebration, Canada Day Riverside Events and Fireworks Display.

Accessible river side trails encourage year-round use for walking, hiking, mountain biking, nature tours, camping, riverside picnicking, tobogganing, cross country skiing, dog sledding, wagon train re-enactments, bird watching, gold panning and trail riding.

Since 1994, river valley park rangers have worked in Edmonton’s River Valley to improve the quality of experiences for all river park users. Rangers patrol the 7400-hectare boundary of the river valley, ravine systems and the North Saskatchewan River valley. This includes over 150 km of trails, the various parks, and amenities. In the summer park rangers patrol by all terrain and off-

highway vehicles (ATVs and OHVs), mountain bikes, jet boat, and truck. In the winter, Rangers use cross-country skis, snowshoes, and a snowmobile.

The City of Edmonton's Park Operations of the river valley maintain all the major parks along the river valley, including 53 km of paved trails, 58 km of granular trails, and 52 km of ski trail. The City of Edmonton has a ten-year implementation strategy for a citywide network of multi-use trail corridors.

This strategy establishes a comprehensive system of self-propelled transportation facilities throughout the City linking residential districts to the downtown, university, and the river valley. Sixty-two km of additional multi-use trail corridors are proposed.

### 4.1.5 Winter Activities

Recreational use of the river continues during winter: ice-fishing, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, dog sledding, snow shoeing, winter camping on the islands and skating being the prominent activities.



*Voyageur Canoe in the shoulder season, Courtesy of M tis Crossing*

## 4.2 Assessment of Recreational Values

*The purpose of this section is to identify which of the CHRS Recreational Value Selection Guidelines and Integrity Guidelines appear to be met by the River, by quoting the guidelines and briefly describing the recreational values that appear to meet them.*

The nominated portion of the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta provides excellent opportunities for recreation and meets all the recreational selection and integrity guidelines as outlined by CHRS. Recreational values strengthen the ability of visitors and residents to enjoy both the cultural and natural heritage values of the river.

### 4.2.1 Selection Guidelines: Recreational Values

Outstanding Canadian recreational value will be recognized when a river and its immediate environment possess a combination of river-related recreational opportunities and related natural and/or cultural values which together provide a capability for an outstanding recreational experience.

**GUIDELINE:** *Recreational opportunities include water-based activities such as canoeing and other forms of boating, swimming, and angling, and other activities such as camping, hiking, wildlife viewing, and natural and cultural appreciation which may be part of a river touring experience.*

The entire North Saskatchewan River provides excellent opportunities for boating, swimming, fishing, trail use, natural and cultural heritage appreciation and camping, many elements of which are part of a river-touring experience.

**GUIDELINE:** *Natural values include natural visual aesthetics, and physical assets such as sufficient flow, navigability, rapids, accessibility, and suitable shoreline.*

The North Saskatchewan River possesses a broad diversity and significant quality of scenic beauty along the entire river corridor including urban and rural tree-lined riverbanks and natural environments that provide access for a wide variety of recreational experiences including scenic drives, walking/hiking, cycling, boating and sport fishing.

### 4.2.2 Integrity Guidelines: Recreational Integrity Values

In addition to meeting both recreational value guidelines, for a river to be judged to have outstanding Canadian natural heritage value, it must meet all the following recreational integrity guidelines:

**GUIDELINE:** *The river possesses water of a quality suitable for contact recreational activities, including those recreational opportunities for which it is nominated;*

The water quality along the North Saskatchewan River permits water contact recreational activities including paddling and swimming, and as such is suitable for the recreational opportunities it presents.

**GUIDELINE:** *The River's visual appearance is capable of providing river travellers with a continuous natural experience, or a combined natural and cultural experience, without significant interruptions by modern human intrusions;*

The visual appearance of the North Saskatchewan River does provide river travellers with a rich and varied mix of natural and cultural experiences along the entire corridor. The river corridor contains few modern intrusions even when it flows past towns, cities, shoreline residences and agricultural landscapes. Much of the river can allow travelers to “paddle into the past” and achieve a sense of what the river’s earliest travellers must have encountered. Very little compromises a river traveller’s overall natural heritage and cultural heritage experience on the River.

**GUIDELINE:** *The River is capable of supporting recreational uses without significant loss of, or impact on, its natural or cultural values or its visual character.*

The North Saskatchewan River corridor is capable of supporting recreational uses without the loss or impact to its natural or cultural values or visual character. Indeed, it already does so, and continued development of recreation and tourism along the river could be a strong component of the sustainable economic development of riverside communities.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The North Saskatchewan River in Alberta will contribute to and play a major role in the CHRS, providing representation of several distinct and significant Western Canadian cultural heritage themes. Further considering beyond the river's outstanding cultural and recreational heritage, this document also illustrates that the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta possesses outstanding and unique representations of both natural heritage values and recreational values.



*Clerk's Quarters, Victoria Settlement Provincial Historic Site, Courtesy of Métis Crossing*



*View from Highway 831 near Waskatenau in Autumn, Courtesy of Steve Ricketts*

However, the NSR is unable to satisfy CHRS Natural Integrity Value Guidelines that address impoundments on a river. As a result, the North Saskatchewan River is not nominated to the CHRS based on its outstanding natural value.

The Province of Alberta regards the nomination of the North Saskatchewan River as both a necessary and important step leading to the designation of the North Saskatchewan River as a Canadian Heritage River.

The near-future designation of the North Saskatchewan River will promote continued awareness and initiatives on the part of the public and all levels of government, to further protect, enhance, and interpret the river's cultural heritage, natural heritage, and recreational values for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations of Albertans and all Canadians.

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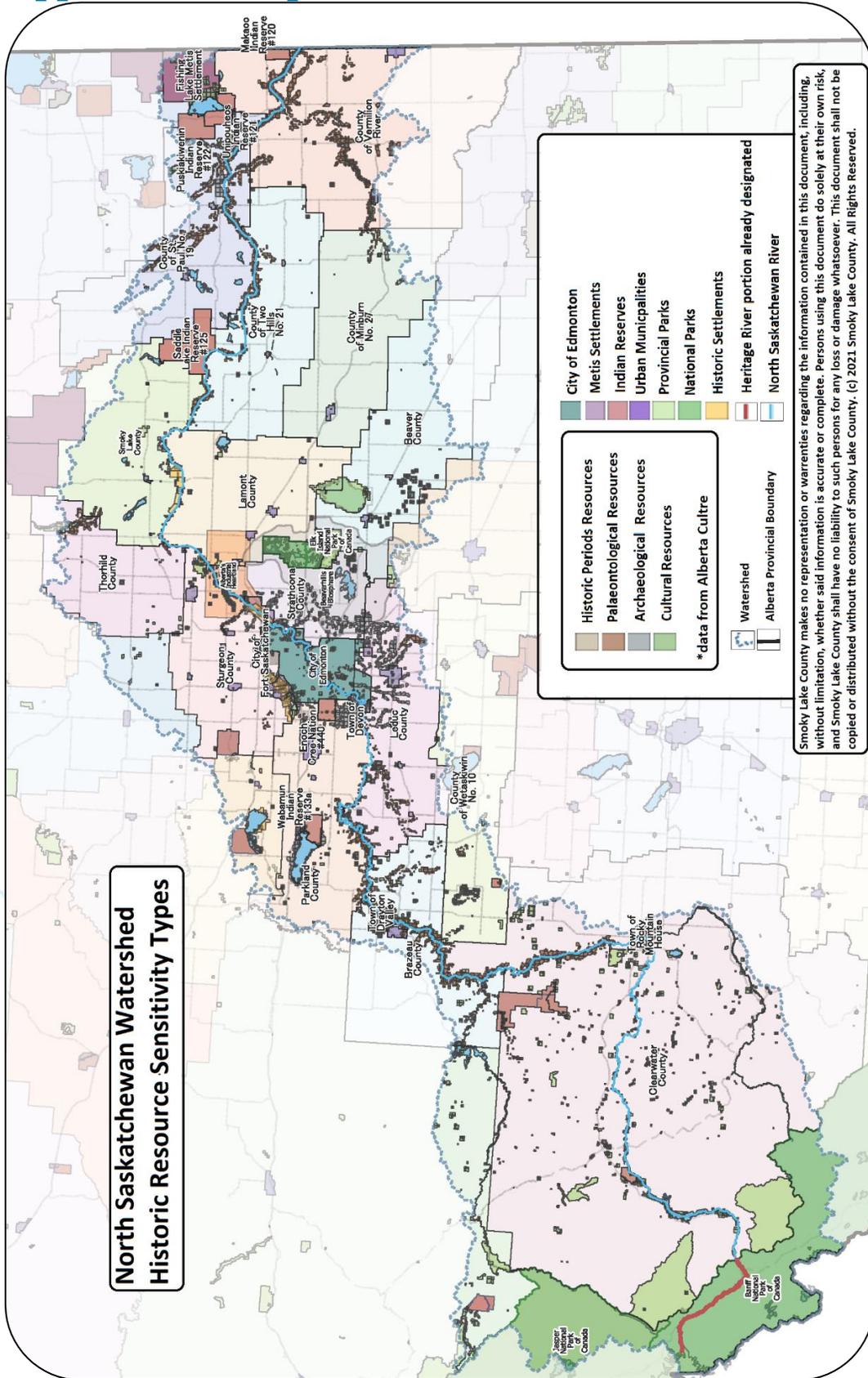
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**Appendix A: Map of the NSR Watershed in Alberta**



## **Appendix A<sub>(i)</sub>: Heritage Sites**

### **A selected listing of heritage sites in proximity along the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta:**

- Nordegg/Brazeau Collieries National Historic Site
- Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site
- Fort Edmonton
- Government House Provincial Historic Resource
- Legislature Building and South Grounds Provincial Historic Site
- Old St. Stephen's College Provincial Historic Resource
- John Walter Museum and Historical Area Municipal Historic Resource
- Northern Alberta Pioneer and Descendants Cabin Municipal Historic Resource
- Hudson's Bay Company Stables / Ortona Armoury Municipal Historic Resource
- Rosssdale Brewery Municipal Historic Resource
- McDougall United Church Municipal Historic Resource
- McDonald Hotel Municipal Historic Resource
- Brighton Block Municipal Historic Resource
- West End Telephone Exchange Municipal Historic Site
- Lodge Hotel Municipal Historic Resource
- Gibson Block Building Municipal Historic Resource
- Robertson-Wesley United Church Municipal Historic Site
- Edmonton Milling Company Municipal Historic Resource
- J.B. Little Brickyard House Municipal Historic Resource
- George Durrand Residence
- J.J. Duggan Residence Provincial Historic Resource
- Rosssdale Power Plant Provincial Historic Resource
- Rutherford House Provincial Historic Site
- Fort Saskatchewan & North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) Post
- Russo Greek Orthodox Church of St. Peter And St. Paul Provincial Historic Resource
- Notre Dame De Lourdes (Our Lady of Lourdes) Roman Catholic Church Provincial Historic Resource
- Nativity of The Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
- Presentation of The Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church (Delph)
- Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of St. Mary (Szypentiz District)
- Victoria District National Historic Site, which also encompasses:
  - o Victoria Settlement Alberta Provincial Historic Site
  - o Pakan Methodist Church Provincial Historic Site
  - o Métis Crossing (Canada's first and only major Métis cultural centre)
  - o River Lot 3 Provincial Historic Resource
  - o Victoria Trail Municipal Historic Area
  - o Ferry Crossings Municipal Historic Area (*6 individual sites*)

- Ruthenia School Municipal Historic Resource
- Rubulak Ukrainian House Municipal Historic Resource
- McDonald Stopping House Provincial Historic Resource
- Anderson House (House in the Middle of the Road) Municipal Historic Site
- CNR Station & Water Tower Provincial Historic Resource
- Fort George/Buckingham House Provincial Historic Site
- Frog Lake National and Provincial Historic Site



## **Appendix A<sup>(ii)</sup>: Parks and Protected Areas**

**A selected listing of parks and protected areas in proximity along the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta:**

- Banff National Park
- White Goat Wilderness Area
- Siffleur Wilderness Area
- Kootenay-Cline Provincial Park (PNT)
  - o Thompson Creek Provincial Recreation Area
  - o Lake of the Falls Natural Area
  - o Landslide Lake Natural Area
  - o Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve
  - o Kootenay Plains Provincial Recreation Area
- Crescent Falls Provincial Recreation Area
- Kiska/Willson Public Land Use Zone
- Douglas Fir Natural Area
- Gold Eye Lake Provincial Recreation Area
- Snow Creek Provincial Recreation Area
- Dry Haven Provincial Recreation Area
- Fish Lake Provincial Recreation Area
- Provincial Recreation Area
- North Ram River Provincial Recreation Area
- Saunders Provincial Recreation Area
- Beaverdam Provincial Recreation Area
- Harlech Provincial Recreation Area
- Alexo Natural Area
- Shunda Viewpoint Provincial Recreation Area
- Jackfish Provincial Recreation Area
- Prairie Creek Clearwater NA
- Horburg Provincial Recreation Area
- Chambers Creek Provincial Recreation Area
- Crimson Lake Provincial Park
- Rocky Mountain House Natural Area (PNT)
- Mill Island Natural Area
- Brazeau Reservoir Natural Area
- Blue Rapids Provincial Recreation Area
- Rocky Rapids Natural Area
- Eagle Point Provincial Park
- Modest Natural Area
- Saskatchewan Natural Area
- Burtonsville Island Natural Area
- St. Francis Natural Area (PNT)
- Genesee Natural Area

- Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park
- Riverlot 56 Natural Area
- Strathcona Science Park Natural Area
- Northwest of Bruderheim Natural Area
- Redwater Provincial Recreation Area
- Elk Island National Park
- North Bruderheim Provincial Recreation Area
- Victoria Settlement Natural Area
- Bellis Natural Area
- Ukalta Dunes Natural Area (PNT)
- Perch Lake Lac Canard Natural Area (PNT)
- Whitney Lakes Provincial Park



## Appendix B: Checklist for Annual Report Submissions

NAME OF RIVER: North Saskatchewan River in Alberta

YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_

Listed below are values for which the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta was nominated to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, and activities which might in future affect these values.

Check off those values which have experienced significant changes (natural or human induced), and potentially important activities which have occurred, in the past year (April 1, 20\_\_ to March 31, 20\_\_).

For each value checked, also complete an **ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION FORM**.

### 1. CHANGES IN CONDITION OF RIVER VALUES

#### Natural Theme Representations:

- Hydrology
- Physiography
- River Morphology
- Biotic Environments
- Vegetation
- Fauna

#### Cultural Theme Representations:

- Resource Harvesting
- Water Transport
- Riparian Settlement
- Culture and Recreation
- Jurisdiction

#### Recreational Values:

- Boating
- Angling
- Water Contact Recreation
- Water Association Activities
- Winter Activities

#### Resource Integrity:

- Natural Integrity
- Cultural Integrity
- Recreational Integrity
- Resource Integrity

- River size
- Ecosystem integrity
- Water quality

## **2. ACTIVITIES POTENTIALLY AFFECTING RIVER VALUES**

### **Planning:**

- Management planning
- Site or area plans
- Operational plans
- Land use category/zoning
- Consultation/public meetings
- Boundary changes

### **Operations:**

- Resources conservation actions
- Facility developments
- Permit approvals
- Access/egress changes
- Cooperation/volunteer groups
- Environmental assessments

### **Research:**

- Visitor use research
- Natural resource research
- Historical/archaeological

### **External Activities:**

- Mineral exploration/development
- Oil and gas exploration/development
- Streamflow alterations/threats
- Local residents' activities
- Non-government organization
- Other external activities

<sup>1</sup> Individualized versions of this form designed for each river should be completed and submitted.

## Appendix C: Selected Letters of Support



ALBERTA  
ENVIRONMENT AND PARKS

107863

OCT 23 2020

*Office of the Minister  
Government House Leader  
MLA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre*

Reeve Craig Lukinuk  
Smoky Lake County  
PO Box 310  
4612 McDougall Driver  
Smoky Lake AB T0A 3C0  
[craiglukinuk@smokylakecounty.ab.ca](mailto:craiglukinuk@smokylakecounty.ab.ca)

Dear Reeve Lukinuk:

Thank you for your letter regarding the nomination of a portion of the North Saskatchewan River under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System.

Alberta Environment and Parks supports your group's effort to nominate this river and, as the jurisdictional representative, we will make the formal nomination on your behalf. A heritage river designation would reflect the care and stewardship that local governments and stakeholders have undertaken along the river corridor, and help local municipalities and businesses promote the natural beauty, rich cultural history, and myriad recreation and tourism opportunities in your region.

Once the nomination is endorsed by the Canadian Heritage Rivers System Board of Directors, the next step is for Smoky Lake County to prepare a nomination document with relevant information and background studies. The Canadian Heritage Rivers System is a grassroots, locally driven program in Alberta. Alberta Environment and Parks will support your efforts where possible, and share available data about natural, cultural and recreation/tourism values pertinent to the river.

I applaud your efforts in pursuing this nomination, and for assembling substantial local and regional support in this regard.

Sincerely,

Jason Nixon  
Minister

cc: Tracy Draper, Alberta Environment and Parks  
Brian Joubert, Alberta Environment and Parks



ALBERTA

CULTURE, MULTICULTURALISM AND STATUS OF WOMEN

*Office of the Minister*

January 29, 2021

Mr. Kyle Schole  
Planning, Development, and Heritage Assistant  
Smoky Lake County  
4612 McDougall Drive  
PO Box 310  
Smoky Lake AB T0A 3C0

Dear Mr. Schole:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your application to have the North Saskatchewan River designated as a Canadian Heritage River.

The North Saskatchewan River, Rivière Saskatchewan Nord, *kisiskâciwani-sîpiy, omaka-ty*, is one of the great rivers of western Canada. From time immemorial, the river has been an essential conduit for economic and cultural exchanges among Canada's Indigenous peoples. In the post-contact period, the river remained a central travel route for Indigenous people, while also accommodating an increasing number of European explorers, traders, and settlers. Until supplanted by the transcontinental railroads in the late-1800s, the North Saskatchewan River was the primary transportation corridor through north-central Alberta, and some of Alberta's major urban centres were established upon its banks.

The North Saskatchewan River continues to be of great social and natural significance. It affords recreational opportunities to the many domestic and international visitors who enjoy the river valley's parks and trail systems, and remains an essential water source for agricultural, industrial, and municipal users.

Sincerely,

Leela Sharon Aheer  
Minister

Room 227 Legislature Building, 10800 - 97 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6 Canada Telephone 780-422-3559

Classification: Protected A

**NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER IN ALBERTA**  
Nomination Document for the CHRS



Métis  
Nation of  
Alberta

*Office of the Provincial President*

100 Delia Gray Building  
11738 Kingsway Avenue  
Edmonton AB T5G 0X5

Phone: 780 455 2200  
Fax: 780 452 8946  
www.albertametis.com

December 20, 2019

Kyle Schole  
Planning, Development & Heritage Assistant, Smoky Lake County  
4612 McDougall Drive  
P.O. Box 310  
Smoky Lake, AB T0A 3C0  
Email: [kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca](mailto:kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca)

To Whom It May Concern:

**Re: Letter of Support for Inter-Provincial Nomination of the North Saskatchewan River for the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS) from the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA)**

Smoky Lake Regional Community Economic Development Committee (RCDC) that extends into other river neighbors and community partners along the North Saskatchewan River Watershed for support on inter-provincial nomination of the North Saskatchewan River for the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS).

Within the Smoky Lake Region, the River flows past the Victoria District National Historic Site, Victoria Settlement, the Former Fort White Earth (Edmonton House III), and Métis Crossing, a site of extreme cultural significance to the Métis homeland.

The Métis Nation of Alberta supports this nomination of the North Saskatchewan River as it is significant to Métis culture, other community partners and neighbors along the river. The nomination of both the Saskatchewan and North Saskatchewan Rivers will ensure the long-term management of these rivers and that this area, rich in cultural, natural and recreational value, are conserved and protected for the continuing benefits and enjoyment of Canadians and visitors to Canada. This nomination will also support the broader spirit of collaboration between our communities to continue to work together towards maintaining ecological integrity along this area, support river health and wellness, and promote local and regional economic growth.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Audrey Poitras  
President  
Métis Nation of Alberta

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dan Cardinal  
Vice President  
Métis Nation of Alberta

*Together We Will Continue To Build A Strong Métis Nation*



March 11, 2021

Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) Board  
Attention: Ashley Campbell, Director, Heritage Designations and Programs Branch  
Indigenous Affairs and Cultural Heritage Directorate  
Parks Canada Agency  
3rd Floor, 30 Victoria Street  
Gatineau, QC J8X 0B3

Email: [Ashley.campbell@canada.ca](mailto:Ashley.campbell@canada.ca)

Sent by: E-mail

**RE: Nomination of the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta to the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS)**

---

Tansi,

I am pleased to provide this letter on behalf of the Nations across Treaty No. 6 Territory, to express our enthusiasm in support of nominating and designating the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta to the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS), which would honor its exceptional natural, cultural, recreational and spiritual values.

The North Saskatchewan River, *kisiskâciwan-sîpiy*, ("it flows swiftly") holds substantial traditional significance, being a place of gathering, commerce, and ceremony from time immemorial. *The Great Binding Law* provides a framework to live in harmony with the land for generations to come. It tells us that if we look after the land, the land will look after us. It is also an extension of kindness to newcomers, including regulators and resource developers ensuring that no more polluting of this sacred river will be allowed.

Further, the spirit and intent of Treaty was expressed by Commissioner Alexander Morris at the entering into of Treaty No. 6 at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt in 1876, when he stated, "*What we speak of and do now will last as long as the sun shines and the river runs, we are looking forward to our children's children, for we are old and have but few days to live.*"

The North Saskatchewan River has always been an integral part of our heritage since time immemorial and continues to be an integral part of our Treaty No. 6. At Fort Pitt when Commissioner Morris indicated "as long as yonder river flows" he was pointing to the North Saskatchewan River. Water is life to the Indigenous Peoples of Treaty No. 6 Territory, as a matter of fact our word for water literally means life; "Nipi" derived from "Niya" My "Pimatisiwin" Life. So much so that when Treaty No. 6 was entered into by our ancestors, the mountains where the headwaters of the rivers are were not even on the table for discussion, these they reserved for all future generations so that the clean/clear life-giving water would always be there for the continued good health and good medicine for all.

With its deceptively slow-moving surface and its ever-shifting features, with its permanence and its continual movement, the river is a suitable metaphor for Indigenous storytelling. Indeed,

**NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER IN ALBERTA**  
Nomination Document for the CHRS

traditional stories are the most ancient literature of this land, yet they continue to change and shift and to speak to the realities of people in the present day.

Today, the North Saskatchewan River continues to be of great importance. Designation under the CHRS would serve to encourage enduring respect and stewardship of this landscape and grow relations among river communities. These are values and aspirations we support.

Ay Hy



OKIMAW VERNON WATCHMAKER  
GRAND CHIEF, CONDEDERACY OF TREATY 6 FIRST NATIONS

CC: Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change; [ec.ministre-minister.ec@canada.ca](mailto:ec.ministre-minister.ec@canada.ca)  
Hon. Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Canadian Heritage; [hon.steven.guilbeault@canada.ca](mailto:hon.steven.guilbeault@canada.ca)  
Amber Stewart, Integrated Land Use Planner, Jasper National Park; [Amber.Stewart@canada.ca](mailto:Amber.Stewart@canada.ca)  
Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations; [carolyn.bennett@parl.gc.ca](mailto:carolyn.bennett@parl.gc.ca)  
Hon. Jason Nixon, Alberta Minister of Environment and Parks; [aep.minister@gov.ab.ca](mailto:aep.minister@gov.ab.ca)  
Hon. Leela Aheer, Alberta Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism, and Status of Women; [cmsw.minister@gov.ab.ca](mailto:cmsw.minister@gov.ab.ca)  
Hon. Rick Wilson, Alberta Minister of Indigenous Relations, [ir.ministeroffice@gov.ab.ca](mailto:ir.ministeroffice@gov.ab.ca)  
Tracy Draper, Director, Land Management Branch, Alberta Environment and Parks, [Tracy.Draper@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Tracy.Draper@gov.ab.ca)  
Brian Joubert, Senior Parks Planner, Alberta Environment and Parks, [Brian.Joubert@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Brian.Joubert@gov.ab.ca)  
Smoky Lake County Council, c/o Kyle Schole, [kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca](mailto:kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca)  
Edmonton City Council, c/o Kyle Witiw, [kyle.witiw@edmonton.ca](mailto:kyle.witiw@edmonton.ca)  
Edmonton Historical Board, c/o Dan Ross, [dan.rose.yeg@gmail.com](mailto:dan.rose.yeg@gmail.com)

THE HONOURABLE DOUG BLACK, Q.C.  
SENATOR - ALBERTA



SENATE | SÉNAT  
CANADA

L'HONORABLE DOUG BLACK, C.R.  
SÉNATEUR - ALBERTA

Friday, March 26, 2021

Smoky Lake County Council  
c/o Kyle Schole, Planning, Development, & Heritage Assistant  
4612 McDougall Dr, Box 310  
Smoky Lake, AB, T0A 3C0

Dear Reeve & County Council,

I am pleased to be writing in support of nominating and designating the North Saskatchewan River to the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS), which would honour its exceptional natural, cultural, and recreational values.

The North Saskatchewan River, *kisiskâciwani-sîpiy, omaka-ty*, (“it flows swiftly”) possesses enduring heritage significance and myriad recreational opportunities. The human history surrounding the river corridor is more than sufficient to warrant designation to the CHRS.

As an example, the Métis Crossing Cultural Gathering Centre within the Victoria District National Historic Site is a remarkable place of interpretation, learning, and reconciliation.

A journey along the North Saskatchewan is truly a Canadian ‘paddle into the past’. From coast to coast, heritage rivers offer Canadians and visitors a chance to experience great waterways, learn about their rich history, and share in their stewardship. Designation of the North Saskatchewan River to the CHRS will encourage ongoing use, respect, and stewardship among river communities.

The beautiful North Saskatchewan is currently (and appropriately) designated in Banff National Park, and this cross-province designation is the next logical step.

I commend you on the momentum you have generated in support of the project. Congratulations on taking a leadership role in championing and spearheading this worthy initiative. I look forward to following your progress to successful designation of this important Canadian waterway!

Sincerely,

Senator Doug Black, Q.C.

cc: Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
Hon. Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Canadian Heritage  
Hon. Jason Nixon, Alberta Minister of Environment and Parks  
Ashley Campbell, Director, Heritage Designations and Programs Branch, Indigenous Affairs and Cultural Heritage Directorate, Parks Canada Agency  
Amber Stewart, Integrated Land Use Planner, Jasper National Park  
Tracy Draper, Director, Land Management Branch, Alberta Environment and Parks  
Edmonton City Council, c/o Kyle Witiw  
Edmonton Historical Board, c/o Dan Rose



SENATE | SÉNAT  
CANADA

THE HON./ L'HON  
PAULA SIMONS

SENATOR | ALBERTA  
SÉNATRICE | ALBERTA

Dear Members of the Heritage Rivers Board,

As an Independent Senator from Alberta, as a member of the Senate Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment, and Natural resources, and as a born-and-bred Edmontonian, I'm writing to you in support of the application to have the North Saskatchewan River declared a national heritage river.

I grew up on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River valley. The river has helped to define my life. And it has helped to define my city and my province. I believe the river is a natural candidate for this designation. In the first place, it is an important environmental legacy. Because it has been relatively untouched by industrial development, or heavy transportation, it remains for much of its length a healthy riparian ecosystem. Clean-up efforts over the last decades have seen a return of many of the fish species that historically populate the river. The valley itself is an essential wildlife corridor that connects Banff National Park to the environs of Elk Island National Park. And of course the river is the source of fresh drinking water for many communities large and small all along its banks.

Secondly, it is a much-storied river with a rich multicultural heritage. The Cree called it kisisikâciwanisîpiy, the swiftly flowing river. For the Blackfoot, it was omaka-ty, the big river. For centuries the river sustained the First Nations as a source of water and food and as a corridor that made trade connections. Later, it brought the fur traders west to Edmonton and carried their furs back to Hudson Bay for shipment to Europe. It was the river that brought French-Canadians voyageurs, labourers from the Orkney Islands, and even Alberta's first black resident (a Hudson's Bay Company navigator) who arrived via canoe in 1799. It was the river that helped to give birth to Alberta's Metis Nation, and this river carried the poetic Earl of Southesk west in 1859 to visit Fort Edmonton as the first celebrity tourist. It was the river that brought many of the first settlers to northern Alberta long before the railway arrived, whether they were from Lebanon or Ukraine or Norway. It was the riverside where people farmed or built their mines and brickyards. That history deserves to be recognized and celebrated, not just locally but as part of the Canadian story.



SENATE | SÉNAT  
CANADA

THE HON. / L'HON.  
PAULA SIMONS

Senator | Alberta  
Sénatrice | Alberta

Finally, I support this effort led by the County of Smoky Lake because it has gained the broad, almost universal support of communities and cultural institutions that line the river. The politicians and planners of Smoky Lake have achieved the near impossible – they have united Albertans all along the river in endorsing this initiative.

Today, the river is seeing a new kind of life as Albertans embrace its recreational potential, whether they are canoeing, tubing, swimming, fishing, or letting their dogs frolic in the water. Declaring the river a national heritage resource could be a boon for all sorts of ecotourism initiatives.

In short, I hope you will give some serious consideration to accepting this application to name Alberta's full-length of the North Saskatchewan River one of Canada's remarkable heritage rivers.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Senator Paula Simons  
Senator, Alberta

**NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER IN ALBERTA**  
Nomination Document for the CHRS



4638 - 90A Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T6B 2P9

To: Smoky Lake County Council  
4612 McDougall Drive, PO Box 310  
Smoky Lake, AB T0A 3C0

**MUNICIPAL  
SHAREHOLDERS**

**Sent by: Email**

May 28, 2021



**RE: Letter of Support for Nomination of the North Saskatchewan River,  
Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS)**

To Whom it May Concern,

Further to the letter of support from Alberta Minister of Environment and Parks Jason Nixon, and subsequent support from our six municipal shareholders, it is a pleasure to provide this letter on behalf of the River Valley Alliance Board of Directors, supporting nomination of the North Saskatchewan River for the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS).

*"The Canadian Heritage River System is a cooperative venture ...designed to offer international, national, provincial and regional recognition to outstanding rivers in Canada that demonstrate exceptional examples of Canadian cultural, natural, and recreation values. The main objective is to ensure the long-term management of these rivers in order that their unique values are conserved for the continuing benefit and enjoyment of Canadians and visitors to Canada." - from the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA) Heritage River Background Study (2005).*

We understand and appreciate that the CHRS is a voluntary, community-driven program and designation under the CHRS does not add to or increase development restrictions along the river corridor. However, the program serves to celebrate and

promote the natural, cultural, and recreational values of the river, a designation that the North Saskatchewan River is certainly worthy of.

The River Valley Alliance serves to co-ordinate, preserve, protect, and enhance one of the largest metropolitan river valley park systems in the world – a legacy for generations to come – by connecting 100 kms of trail system and making it easier for all to access and enjoy regardless of age or ability. As such we support the nomination of a portion of the North Saskatchewan River for inclusion as a nationally recognized watercourse within the Canadian Heritage River System.

Best Regards,



Katherine O'Neill  
Chair, Board of Directors  
River Valley Alliance



Kristine Archibald  
Executive Director  
River Valley Alliance

cc: Kyle Schole, Planning, Development, & Heritage Assistant , <[kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca](mailto:kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca)>



202, 9440 49 Street, Edmonton, AB T6B 2M9 | [NSWA.AB.CA](http://NSWA.AB.CA)

May 19, 2021

County of Smoky Lake Council  
4612 McDougall Drive, P.O. Box 310  
Smoky Lake, AB  
TOA 3C0

**RE: Letter of Support for Canadian Heritage Designation for the North Saskatchewan River**

The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA) is pleased to provide this letter supporting the nomination of the North Saskatchewan River for the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS) by the County of Smoky Lake.

With the County of Smoky Lake being committed to identifying and preserving its vast and rich local historic and heritage assets through municipal policies, bylaws, and its participation on the Smoky Lake Heritage Regional Heritage Board, the County is uniquely qualified to lead the designation of the NSR for its cultural values.

The NSWA applauds the County of Smoky Lake for its efforts in securing support from both provincial and municipal governments and preparing the application and subsequent management plan required for the CHR designation. NSWA would be happy to provide the County with our original CHR reports and background information in support of your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Ken Crutchfield, Chair  
North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance

cc Leah Kongsrude, Executive Director NSWA

---



03 June 2021

Smoky Lake County Council  
4612 McDougall Drive, PO Box 310  
Smoky Lake, AB T0A 3C0

RE: Letter of support to designate the North Saskatchewan River within the Canadian Heritage River System

To Whom It May Concern,

As a leading cultural institution in Alberta, and Canada's largest open air museum, Fort Edmonton Park is a driver within the tourism industry because of its clear cultural relevance to Canada. It is uniquely positioned in the Edmonton River Valley and its history is directly associated with the fur trade. All of its historic locations have had a critical reliance on the North Saskatchewan River.

There are few waterways that have such significance to the emergence of culturally relevant spaces, and the banks of the North Saskatchewan River stands as the very reason Fort Edmonton exists today.

Designation within the CHRS will bolster the historic relevance of Fort Edmonton Park, and the new Indigenous Peoples Experience, which was created in partnership with the Metis Nation of Alberta, and the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations. It is a world class new exhibit with a river running through it; the North Saskatchewan River.

I am pleased to submit my strong support in recommending the North Saskatchewan River be considered for inclusion in the Canadian Heritage River System. Thank you for considering this endorsement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darren Dagleish".

Darren Dagleish  
President and CEO, Fort Edmonton Management Company

Cc. Cameron John, Chair of the Board



2000 – 10423 101 Street, Edmonton, Alberta  
T5H 0E8 Canada  
[epcor.com](http://epcor.com)

April 28, 2021

Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) Board  
Attention: Ashley Campbell, Director, Heritage Designations and Programs Branch Indigenous Affairs  
and Cultural Heritage Directorate  
Parks Canada Agency  
3<sup>rd</sup> floor, 30 Victoria Street  
Gatineau, QC J8X 0B3  
Email: [Ashley.campbell@canada.ca](mailto:Ashley.campbell@canada.ca)

**Re: Nomination of the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta to the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS)**

I am pleased to provide this letter on behalf of EPCOR to express our support in nominating and designating the North Saskatchewan River (NSR) in Alberta to the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS).

The North Saskatchewan River is the sole source of drinking water for over one million people in the Edmonton region. As well the river assimilates treated wastewater from EPCOR's Gold Bar wastewater treatment plant and the stormwater collection system. As the utility who both provides drinking water and manages discharges of storm and wastewater to the NSR, EPCOR is committed to ensuring that the water quality and aquatic ecosystems of the NSR are maintained or improved over time as the City grows.

EPCOR recognizes that collaborative watershed management combined with watershed science, will ensure the NSR will continue to support healthy aquatic ecosystems and maintain the current good water quality and supply that we have come to depend on. As such, EPCOR contributes financially and in-kind to the established Watershed Planning and Advisory Council, the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA). EPCOR also sits on the NSWA's board and Headwaters Alliance group.

Understanding the importance of having a strong scientific foundation for decision making, EPCOR spearheaded the development of a tributary monitoring network for the North Saskatchewan River basin (the WaterSHED project) in 2018 which supports monitoring of 19 tributaries in the NSR watershed. This program was developed and carried out in partnership with the NSWA, City of Edmonton and Alberta Environment & Parks' Monitoring Evaluation and Science Division. To build on this monitoring work, EPCOR is currently leading the development of a ten year basin-wide modelling strategy and tool to look at future growth, climate change, and management scenarios as they effect water quality and quantity. EPCOR also funds University-based research projects to better understand groundwater contributions, climate change impacts and impacts of agricultural beneficial management practices on the NSR.

In the urban watershed, EPCOR has developed an Integrated Watershed Management Strategy to quantify and manage total loads to the NSR from the City of Edmonton's footprint. A highlight of this strategy is the implementation of Low Impact Development (LID) features across the City to reduce urban flooding and runoff to the NSR.

The North Saskatchewan River is integral to the histories of Indigenous people and settlers alike, and the Edmonton reach marks an important gathering place in both pre-contact and post-contact times. The North Saskatchewan River valley at Edmonton has been occupied for at least eight to ten thousand years.

EPCOR has funded archaeological investigations in the River Crossing (Rossdale) area of Edmonton, and at our E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant in west Edmonton, which have added to the understanding of the significance of human occupation along the river.

At River Crossing/Rossdale, EPCOR's utility services stand adjacent to and overlapping with the footprints of several earlier versions of Fort Edmonton (which occupied five locations on the North Saskatchewan River between 1795 and 1915). Several of our buildings there are provincially designated heritage buildings, as is our former power generating plant which was recently transferred to the City of Edmonton for future adaptive reuse.

Rossdale was a burying ground for Indigenous people and others who lived at Fort Edmonton and in the surrounding area. When human remains were found on the site, a commitment was made to honour those buried there. Part of Rossdale Road that crossed the burial ground was rerouted around it and the decision was made to build a memorial. The human remains were reburied at a special ceremony in August of 2006 and the site is now legally designated as a cemetery or burial ground. The memorial was designed with input from the City of Edmonton, EPCOR, descendants, stakeholders and community volunteers, including people of First Nations, French Canadian, Métis and European ancestry.

At our E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant in west Edmonton, archeological investigations have identified seven campsite occupations that ranged between roughly 3,500 and 9,000 years before present. We will be promoting public understanding of this history through upcoming interpretive installations, and have entered into a partnership with Enoch Cree Nation to facilitate the reintroduction of ceremony and cultural practices to this area, which includes their former reserve lands. At both sites, we have protocols with 30 Indigenous Nations and representative groups that includes a process for their participation in monitoring ground disturbance activities.

As an organization that is closely connected to the North Saskatchewan River, and that has invested significantly in advancing management, research, monitoring, modelling, implementation and education for over 30 years, EPCOR welcomes and supports the designation of the NSR as a Canadian Heritage River. Specifically EPCOR supports the CHRS's building opportunities for cooperative river management that unites communities; the celebration and support of the cultural connections of Indigenous Peoples with rivers; the promotion of stewardship and citizen engagement; the engagement of new Canadians and youth in river education, conservation, and recreation; and the encouragement of the protection of water resources to improve public health, well-being and quality of life.

Yours truly,



Shawn Bradford  
Senior Vice President Water Canada  
EPCOR Utilities Inc.

cc. Martin Kennedy, Director, Public & Government Affairs



January 26, 2021

Reeve Craig Lukinuk  
Smoky Lake County  
PO Box 310  
4612 McDougall Drive  
Smoky Lake AB T0A 3C0  
[craiglukinuk@smokylakecounty.ab.ca](mailto:craiglukinuk@smokylakecounty.ab.ca)

Dear Reeve Lukinuk:

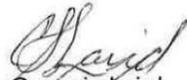
On behalf of Clearwater County, I am pleased to provide this letter of support for the nomination of a portion of the North Saskatchewan River under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) designation.

The North Saskatchewan River majestically flows by many campsites, recreation areas and culturally significant locations within Clearwater County. Our communities are greatly enhanced by this River's legacy which deserves to be celebrated and recognized for its unique Canadian cultural, natural, and recreation values.

With a CHRS designation, this beautiful scenic river, rich in history and adventure, will be conserved for the enjoyment of residents and Canadian and international tourists, now and forever. Initiatives such as this encourage and support Clearwater County's high regard for environmental stewardship practices that value and protect the natural environment for future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this initiative and Council looks forward to hearing of a successful outcome of the nomination.

Sincerely,

  
Cammie Laird  
Reeve

# EXPLORE EDMONTON

January 25, 2021

World Trade Centre  
5th Floor, 9990 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 1P7

Phone: 780.424.9191  
Toll Free: 1.800.463.4667  
[www.exploreedmonton.com](http://www.exploreedmonton.com)

Smoky Lake County Council  
4612 McDougall Drive, PO Box 310  
Smoky Lake, AB T0A 3C0

**RE: Letter of Support for Nomination of the North Saskatchewan River for the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS)**

To Whom It May Concern,

I am pleased to provide this letter of support on behalf of Explore Edmonton, toward the nomination of the North Saskatchewan River for the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS). From the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA) Heritage River Background Study (2005):

*"The Canadian Heritage River System is a cooperative venture designed to offer international, national, provincial and regional recognition to outstanding rivers in Canada that demonstrate exceptional examples of Canadian cultural, natural, and recreation values. The main objective is to ensure the long-term management of these rivers in order that their unique values are conserved for the continuing benefit and enjoyment of Canadians and visitors to Canada."*

The North Saskatchewan River, which runs through Edmonton, is our city's primary natural asset, a special gathering place for our indigenous peoples, generations before first contact and a major attraction for residents and visitors alike. In our efforts to attract national and international visitors to Edmonton, we promote the River Valley as a haven for outdoor adventure, rich in cultural, natural, and recreational value. Our region greatly benefits from the River's offerings, and I wholeheartedly support shining a new spotlight on the River through this nomination for the Canadian Heritage River System.

I hope you will look favorably upon this nomination. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further help.

Yours sincerely,



Maggie Davison

Interim CEO  
780.700.9351 | [mdavison@exploreedmonton.com](mailto:mdavison@exploreedmonton.com)

**NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER IN ALBERTA**  
Nomination Document for the CHRS



January 27, 2021  
United Albertan Paddling Society  
PO Box 4930 South Edmonton  
Edmonton, AB T6E 5G8

Smoky Lake County Council  
4612 McDougall Drive, PO Box 310  
Smoky Lake, AB T0A 3C0

Letter of Support:  
Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS) Designation – Portion of the North Saskatchewan River

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Greetings:

The United Alberta Paddling Society (UAPS) would like to express its enthusiasm and support to Smoky Lake County regarding the designation of the North Saskatchewan River to the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS).

UAPS is a recreational whitewater kayaking club based out of Edmonton, Alberta. With strong instructional programming for both adults and youth, UAPS has been introducing paddlers to the excitement of whitewater since 1978. On-river activities such as canoe and kayaking are some of the best ways to experience the crown jewel of Edmonton that is the North Saskatchewan River. UAPS members enjoy refining their moving water skills on the North Saskatchewan River in Edmonton and beyond. The series of rapids near the Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site is a popular favourite among whitewater kayakers looking to spend some time surfing and cartwheeling.

As a member of the 2011 Cross Canada Canoe Odyssey I travelled along the North Saskatchewan River from its headwaters at Howse Pass all the way to Cedar Lake in Manitoba. Watching the characteristics of the River change from a braided turquoise stream to a meandering brown prairie river was a highlight of this journey. There was a great diversity of landscapes, wildlife, and cultural features that were distinct from other regions throughout Canada.

UAPS supports the objective to ensure the long-term management of this river in order that its unique values are celebrated and conserved for the continuing benefit and enjoyment of Canadians and visitors to Canada. As such, we support the nomination of a portion of the North Saskatchewan River for inclusion as a nationally recognized watercourse within the Canadian Heritage River System.

Kind regards,

*Nathalie Brunet*

Nathalie Brunet  
Special Director of Facilities  
On behalf of the UAPS Executive Committee  
n.n.brunet@gmail.com / 780-914-1332



Edmonton  
City Council



**City Council Minutes**

April 19, 2021

9:30 a.m.

Council Chamber, 2nd floor, City Hall

Present: D. Iveson, M. Banga, T. Cartmell, T. Caterina, J. Dziadyk, B. Esslinger, S. Hamilton, B. Henderson, A. Knack, S. McKeen, M. Nickel, A. Paquette, M. Walters

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**8.2 Initiative to Designate the North Saskatchewan River a Heritage River (M. Walters)**

S. McCabe, Deputy City Manager, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development, answered questions.

**Moved by:** M. Walters

**Seconded by:** S. McKeen

That the Mayor, on behalf of City Council, write a letter to the Alberta Minister of Environment and Parks conditionally supporting the initiative being led by Smoky Lake County in collaboration with other river municipalities and Indigenous groups to nominate 818 km of the North Saskatchewan River across Alberta as a Heritage River under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS).

In Favour (13): D. Iveson, M. Banga, T. Cartmell, T. Caterina, J. Dziadyk, B. Esslinger, S. Hamilton, B. Henderson, A. Knack, S. McKeen, M. Nickel, A. Paquette, and M. Walters

**Carried (13 to 0)**

---

*Note: the full length of the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta being nominated is 718 km (not 818km). This discrepancy is due to differences in methodology for measurement of river length.*



**EDMONTON  
HISTORICAL  
BOARD**

**Prince of Wales Armouries**  
10440 108 Avenue  
Edmonton Alberta T5H 3Z9

Daniel Rose CHAIR  
Dominic Schamuhn VICE CHAIR  
Stephanie Bailey  
Neil Cramer  
Anna Gibson Hollow  
Carrie-Ann Lunde  
Nancy MacDonald  
Alison McGavigan  
James McTague  
David Rynning

February 25, 2021

His Worship Don Iveson and City Councillors,  
2nd Floor, City Hall  
1 Sir Winston Churchill Square  
Edmonton, AB T5J 2R7

Dear Mayor and City Council members,

**RE: Support for North Saskatchewan River Canadian Heritage Rivers System application**

On behalf of the Edmonton Historical Board, we are pleased to recommend our support for the application proposed by Smoky Lake County to recognize the North Saskatchewan River under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS). EHB is pleased to have been consulted on this exciting initiative and support this unique opportunity to celebrate the North Saskatchewan River.

For generations, the North Saskatchewan River has been a place of gathering, commerce, and ceremony. As a defining feature of the natural and cultural heritage of our city, the role of the North Saskatchewan River in shaping the course of growth of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region cannot be understated.

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System is a national program for recognizing, celebrating, and conserving the natural, cultural and recreational values of rivers across Canada. Established in 1984, the CHRS is a model of stewardship, cooperation, and participation among Canada's federal, provincial, and territorial governments. The CHRS works in conjunction with local communities and stewardship groups to give national recognition to Canada's outstanding rivers and encourages their long-term management to conserve their natural, cultural and recreational values for the benefit and enjoyment of Canadians, now and in the future.





**EDMONTON  
HISTORICAL  
BOARD**

**Prince of Wales Armouries**  
10440 108 Avenue  
Edmonton Alberta T5H 3Z9

Designation of the North Saskatchewan River under the CHRS is a fitting opportunity to promote our city's natural heritage and recognize the cultural value of the river to all Edmontonians. We encourage City Council to support this application.

Thank you,

Dan Rose  
Chair, Edmonton Historical Board

CC: Kyle Schole, Planning, Development, & Heritage Assistant, Smoky Lake County  
Martin Kennedy, Chair, Edmonton Heritage Council  
Tim O'Grady, President, Edmonton & District Historical Society





April 19, 2021

**Mr. Craig Lukinuk, Reeve**  
4612 McDougall Drive, PO Box 310  
Smoky Lake, AB T0A 3C0



Dear Reeve Lukinuk,

**Letter of Support for Nomination of the North Saskatchewan River, Canadian Heritage River System**

Further to the letter dated October 23, 2020 from the Alberta Minister of Environment and Parks, Jason Nixon, it is a pleasure to provide this letter of support on behalf of Strathcona County for the nomination of the North Saskatchewan River to the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS).

Strathcona County supports this nomination to recognize the North Saskatchewan River as an important ecological and recreational corridor, and believes that this nomination to the CHRS will help ensure a long-term commitment to conservation.

Strathcona County understands that the CHRS is a voluntary, community-driven program, and that designation under the CHRS does not add to or increase existing development restrictions along the River corridor, nor does it create new rules or restrictions because of participation.

The CHRS serves to celebrate and safeguard the future of our environment for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of future generations. As such, Strathcona County supports the nomination of a portion of the North Saskatchewan River for inclusion as a nationally recognized watercourse within the Canadian Heritage River System.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rod Frank, JD".

Rod Frank, JD  
Mayor  
Strathcona County

cc: Kyle Schole, Smoky Lake County, Planning, Development, & Heritage Assistant,  
<kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca>

**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**  
2001 Sherwood Drive  
Sherwood Park, Alberta, T8A 3W7  
780-464-8000  
[www.strathcona.ca](http://www.strathcona.ca)





## **Victoria Home Guard Historical Society**

Guard founded:1885    Incorporated:1997

December 12, 2019

NORTH SASKATCHEWAN WATERSHED ALLIANCE (AB)  
202, 9440 - 49 STREET  
EDMONTON, AB T6B 2M9

**RE: Letter of Support for Inter-Provincial Nomination of the  
North Saskatchewan River for the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS)**

To Whom It May Concern,

Smoky Lake County Council has asked the Victoria Home Guard Historical Society for a letter supporting a nomination of the North Saskatchewan River for the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS). I was excited to present an historical view because the North Saskatchewan River is closely connected our **Victoria District National Historic Site of Canada (VDNHSC)** designation.

According to the Heritage River Background Study (2005):

*“The Canadian Heritage River System is a cooperative venture between federal, provincial and territorial governments designed to offer international, national, provincial and regional recognition to outstanding rivers in Canada that demonstrate exceptional examples of Canadian cultural, natural and recreation values. The main objective is to ensure the long-term management of these rivers in order that their unique values are conserved for the continuing benefit and enjoyment of Canadians and visitors to Canada.”*

The North Saskatchewan River has significant historical value in the settlement of the West and especially in Smoky Lake County. The components of VDNHSC are rooted in its location along the river.

Aboriginal camps as old as 6000 years have been found at what became Victoria Settlement. The location was a traditional crossing of the Kis-is-sak-tche-wan—the Swift Current or North Saskatchewan River. Southern tribes crossed the river for fish in northern lakes, and northern Cree crossed for the buffalo to the south of the river. The camps were an important aboriginal meeting place.

Page 1 of 3

P.O. Box 28, Warspite, Alberta T0A 3N0 CANADA



## Victoria Home Guard Historical Society

Guard founded:1885      Incorporated:1997

Fur traders came on the river and located where there was an aboriginal population and buffalo for food and clothing. The early Methodist missionaries also came by river and in 1862 established a mission at Victoria where there were potential converts. Soon after, in 1864, the Hudson's Bay established a fort at Victoria. Both the fur trade and the missionaries are factors in VDNHSC designation.

The northern section of the Carlton Trail, the overland route connecting Winnipeg and Edmonton, more or less followed the North Saskatchewan River. The Carlton Trail was the Red River Cart highway of the 19th century. The Victoria Trail is the last section of the Carlton Trail.

The Hudson's Bay Company replaced Red River Cart transport with steamboats on the North Saskatchewan because they were thought to be more efficient. Steamboats brought passengers, farm machinery, calico cloth, nails, bacon, salt, tea, gunpowder and more. The boats returned with fur, flour and lumber.

Starting in 1875 Victoria, later known as Pakan, was a destination on the steamboat route from Grand Rapids, Manitoba to Edmonton Alberta, on the North Saskatchewan. From 1909 to 1918 John Walter's steamer *City of Edmonton* hauled freight along the river from Edmonton, returning with grain and livestock. It was a common sight in this area.

Settlers came down the river to find their homesteads. The Watt family travelled on a scow to their homestead on the north bank of the river near Lobstick Settlement. Other families rafted downriver en-route to the Barr Colony near Lloydminster.

The North Saskatchewan River was a source of food and extra income for settlers. Those panning for gold on the river might earn two dollars per day. Settlers harvested and sold ice for summer food storage. The Andrew Creamery bought 600 tons of ice every year. At Pakan, ice sold for \$4.00 per ton. In the early years the river provided sturgeon, pickerel, gold-eye, jackfish and more, for food and recreation. Settlers picked berries along the river valley for food and for sale. In 1880, for example, the Whitfords of Victoria sold cranberries at \$9.00 for a large

box to Lovisa McDougall of Edmonton. We still pick berries locally in the river valley along the Victoria Trail.



## Victoria Home Guard Historical Society

Guard founded:1885    Incorporated:1997

Building materials for the George McDougall Hospital at Pakan were floated down the North Saskatchewan on a scow that was later dismantled to become part of the hospital. Ferries built by John Walter in Edmonton were floated to various locations along the river in our county and beyond.

Smoky Lake County's famous river lot system originated in Métis settlement along the North Saskatchewan. The river lot system is an important feature in the VDNHSC designation.

The North Saskatchewan River played an important role in the development of our county and deserves to be included in the Canadian Heritage River System. The Victoria District National Historic Site owes its beginnings to the way the river brought features of western Canadian settlement together in the beautiful North Saskatchewan River valley.

Best Regards,

Elaine Breadon-Peiche  
President,  
Victoria Home Guard Historical Society (VHGH)

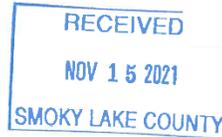
Encl:            VHGH Map, 2019

cc:              North Saskatchewan River Basin Council (SK)  
                  Brian Joubert, Senior Parks Planner, Alberta Environment and Parks  
                  Glenn Van Dijken, MLA for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock  
                  Hon. Jason Nixon, MLA for Rimbey-Rocky-Mountain-House-Sundre, Minister for AEP  
                  Métis Crossing  
                  Métis Nation of Alberta  
                  Shannon Stubbs, MP for Lakeland  
                  Smoky Lake County  
                  Town of Smoky Lake  
                  Tracy Draper, Director, Land Management Branch, Alberta Environment and Parks  
                  Victoria Settlement  
                  Victoria Trail Agricultural Society  
                  Village of Vilna  
                  Village of Waskatenau

Fw: North Saskatchewan River Nomination



**TSUUT'INA**



**From:** Violet Meguinis  
**Sent:** Monday, November 15, 2021, 4:23 p.m.  
**To:** [halisky@smokylakecounty.ab.ca](mailto:halisky@smokylakecounty.ab.ca)  
**Cc:** Monica Onespot; Emmet Crowchild; Chief Roy Whitney  
**Subject:** North Saskatchewan River Nomination

**Dzinisi guja (good day),**

**Attention:** Lorne Halisky, Reeve & Division 4 Councillor, Smoky Lake County

We received your October 29th, 2021 letter to the Tsuut'ina Nation Chief and Council in regards to the designation of the North Saskatchewan River as a Heritage River under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System.

I am including our Chief and Council in this email and attaching the letter we received to give context as to purpose of this reply.

We the Tsuut'ina Nation have a special connection to the river, not only for sustenance but for health as water is considered to be medicine. We also utilized the river for travel, trade and to connect with other Dene Nations.

We also have many oral stories of the river in our history and one of them speaks of our ancestors camped near the river by Fort Edmonton during Treaty making era.

We support the nomination and we are committed to creating a management plan. We look forward to this initiative and the life long protection of this great river.

**Siiyisgaas! (thank you)**

**Violet M. Meguinis, B.Ed.**  
**Tsuut'ina TUS Consultation Director**

**Tsuut'ina Nation Consultation**  
**Chief Joseph Big Plume Building - 3rd Floor**

**Work Cell:**

**Direct Line:**

**Email:**

**Appendix D: Record of Engagement**

Date: as of October 31, 2021

Individual, Group, or Organization Contacted (including First Nation, Métis Settlement*, or other Indigenous Organization)	Date Transmitted	Addressee(s) or correspondence received from.	Method of Contact	Documentation Provided	Purpose and details	Concern(s) expressed	Status
Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA)	Oct. 30, 2019	Metis Nation of Alberta	Letter Sent		Reeve's Introduction & Project Kick-off Letter		Ongoing
	Dec. 20, 2019	President Poitras & Vice Pres. Cardinal	Letter Received		Formal support	Letter of Support	
	Jan. 4, 2021	Consultation Group (comprised of: Metis Crossing Executive Director, Consultation Policy & Regulatory Analyst, Region 4 Climate Leadership Coordinator, Metis Crossing Experience Development Coordinator, Region 2 Consultation Coordinator, Region 2 Consultation and Environmental Assistant)	Email Sent	Lakeland Today Newspaper Article	Project Presentation		
	Mar. 2, 2021	Consultation Group	Zoom	Public Participation Proposal	Public participation scoping meeting	County will provide opportunity to comment on survey questions design.	
	Mar. 5, 2021	Region 2 Consultation Coordinator	Email	Draft Survey	Comments for Public Participation survey questions design.	<p>"...would it be a good idea to have a project description and/or executive summary at the top describing the project? And then maybe have a description under deliverables about next steps once the project is complete</p> <p>i.e. public outreach, the canoe trip, etc. Also, have a description of the stages listed in the tables for deliverables may also be a good idea.</p>	

# NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER IN ALBERTA

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	Mar. 22, 2021	Metis Crossing Experience Development Coordinator	Email		Comments for Public Participation survey questions design.	<p><i>I'm not fond of the language in Q7 in Recreation Heritage. Is there a better descriptor of appreciation than "outstanding?"</i></p> <p><i>In Cultural Heritage, Q6 - same as in Q7 - I think there could be a better way to phrase that in the sense of reasons of why the river is meaningful, impactful, etc.</i></p> <p><i>For Q3 in Natural Heritage, it might be more accessible if there was a glossary for some of those terms. Q5 - same as above.</i></p> <p><i>For all three, the last two questions "Do you have any North Saskatchewan River management concerns?" and "What improvements could be made to the management of the North Saskatchewan River?" - would it be helpful to state those with the specific topic? For example, "Do you have any management concerns about the North Saskatchewan River when it comes to cultural heritage?" or similar."</i></p> <p>These comments here implemented into the final survey design.</p>	
	April 26, 2021	Metis Crossing Experience Development Coordinator	Zoom		Review preamble portion of the Nomination Document.		
	May 10, 2021	Consultation Policy & Regulatory Analyst	Email				Ongoing
	July 6, 2021	Consultation Group	Email		County shared the draft		

					Nomination Document		
	July 30, 2021	Metis Crossing Experience Development Coordinator	Email		Comments on the draft Nomination Document	<p><i>Please make sure Métis has the little accent doo-dad.</i></p> <p><i>“Aboriginal spiritual associations” “and early Aboriginal or European burial sites” – why not Indigenous? Pg. 41 and on... and on... and on...</i></p> <p><i>“and Indian Reservations within the drainage basin” – Reserves pg. 43</i></p> <p><i>“The Crossing represents” – Métis Crossing represents... pg 43, also we are now at “over 600 acres”</i></p>	We believe all the above comments are addressed in the Nom. Doc.
Kikino Métis Settlement	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Coordinator	Email		Introductory		Ongoing
	Feb. 4, 2021	Shelby Kennedy, Consultation Coordinator	Zoom		Project Presentation	Generally receptive, will forward item to Chief & Council	
Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement		Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister’s Oct. 23/20 Letter & Project Presentation		Ongoing
	Jan. 20, 2021	Council Chairman Stan Delorme	Phone and Email		AEP Minister’s Oct. 23/20 Letter	Generally receptive, will add item to next Council agenda	
Fishing Lake Métis Settlement	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister’s Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing
Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations	Feb. 8, 2021	Bilateral Treaty Coordinator	Phone		Introduction to Project. Should we proceed?	Yes.	Ongoing
	Mar. 11, 2021	Grand Chief	Email			Letter of Support Received	
	April 13, 2021	Bilateral Treaty Coordinator	Email		Notice that City of Edmonton will be considering this matter.	Grand Chief quoted for Media Release	
	April 26, 2021	Bilateral Treaty Coordinator	Email		Feedback sought.	Amendments to preamble	
Alexander First Nation	Jan. 20, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister’s Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing
Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister’s Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing
Beaver Lake Cree Nation	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister’s Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing

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Cold Lake First Nation	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing
	Jan. 27, 2021	Consultation Officer			Project Presentation		
Enoch Cree Nation #440	Jan. 20, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing
Ermineskin Cree Nation	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing
	Feb. 3, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		Project Presentation		
Frog Lake First Nation	Oct. 30, 2019	Frog Lake First Nation	Letter		Reeve's Project Kick-off Letter		Ongoing
	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		
Heart Lake First Nation	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing
	Jan 27, 2021	Consultation Officer	Zoom		Project presentation		
Kehewin Cree Nation	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing
Louis Bull Tribe	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing
	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email				
Montana First Nation	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing
O'Chiese First Nation	Oct. 30, 2019	O'Chiese First Nation	Letter		Reeve's Project Kick-off Letter		Ongoing
	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		
Onion Lake Cree Nation	Oct. 30, 2019	Onion Lake Cree Nation	Letter		Reeve's Project Kick-off Letter		Ongoing
	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		
Paul First Nation	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing
Saddle Lake Cree Nation	Oct. 30, 2019	Saddle Lake Cree Nation	Letter		Reeve's Project Kick-off Letter		Ongoing
	Jan. 22, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email, and Phone-call Returned		Minister's Oct. 23 Letter, Project Presentation, and CHRS Charter		
Samson Cree Nation	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing
Sunchild First Nation	Jan. 20, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing
Whitefish Lake Indian Reserve #128 (Whitefish (Goodfish) Lake First Nation)	Jan. 25, 2021	Consultation Officer	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter		Ongoing

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University of Alberta	Mar 11, 2021	Faculty of Native Studies	Zoom		Project Presentation & AEP Minister's Oct 23/20 Letter	Expressed tacit support, discussed opportunities for knowledge transfer	Completed
Keepers of the Water	Feb 17, 2021	Jesse Cardinal	Email			Call Request	Ongoing
	Feb. 23, 2021	Jesse Cardinal	Zoom	Provided the draft Nomination Doc.	Project Presentation	Expressed support, will present the project information to the Board, possibly co-host future engagement session.	
Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA)	Dec. 10, 2021	CEO	Email				Ongoing
	Jan. 12, 2021	CEO	Zoom		Project Presentation	Expressed support, provided feedback about the role of ITA not as representing Indigenous Communities but tourism businesses.	
	June 7, 2021	Development Manager	Email		What We Heard Report		
Indigenous Tourism Canada	Dec. 16, 2020	Brenda Holder, cc: Keith Henry, CEO	Email		AEP Minister's Oct. 23/20 Letter	Expressed tacit support	Ongoing

**Notes:**

- \*is defined as Metis Settlements as established under the *Alberta Metis Settlements Act*.
- This record is not fully exhaustive, nor reflects every phone-call and/or voicemail, of which there have been many.
  - o This includes having successfully left a VM with every Treaty 6 First Nation in Alberta during the last week of January and first week of February 2021.
- An online survey collected public perspectives from March 31 to April 30, 2021. A summary of this work is published in the *'What we Heard'* Report.
  - o 390 people responded to the survey, and
  - o 279 completed the survey.
- Additionally, a letter under the Reeve's signature was transmitted in October 2021, addressed to over 80 First Nations and consultation contacts across Alberta, with the aim to:
  - 1) notify or provide an update on the Heritage River Initiative, and
  - 2) commit to further engagement through the management planning process.

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Other Engagement			
Date	Audience	Product	Outcome
Oct 30, 2019	River Municipalities across AB & SK, and several First Nations	Reeve's Letter Sent - Project Introduction & Kick-off	Several letters of support obtained during late 2019, early/mid 2020.
Nov 5, 2019	Smoky Lake Regional Heritage Board		Letter of Support Received
Nov 18, 2019	Village of Marwayne		Letter of Support Received
Nov 29, 2019	Smoky Lake Regional Economic Development Committee (RCDC)		Letter of Support Received
Dec 9, 2019	Paddle Alberta		Letter of Support Received
Dec 10, 2019	Paddle Canada		Letter of Support Received
Dec 12, 2019	Victoria Home Guard Historical Society (VHGHS)		Letter of Support Received
Dec 18, 2019	Town of Marshall, SK		Letter of Support Received
Dec 19, 2019	City of Spruce Grove		Letter of Support Received
Dec 20, 2019	Metis Nation of Alberta		Letter of Support Received
Dec 23, 2019	Town of Stoney Plain		Letter of Support Received
Jan 4, 2020	Portage College		Letter of Support Received
Jan 9, 2020	Lac Ste. Anne County		Letter of Support Received
Jan 16, 2020	Westlock County		Letter of Support Received
Jan 20, 2020	Village of Clyde		Letter of Support Received
Jan 24, 2020	Travel Alberta		Letter of Support Received
Feb 3, 2020	Edmonton Heritage Council		Letter of Support Received
Feb 7, 2020	Edmonton and District Historical Society		Letter of Support Received
March 7, 2020	River Valley Conservation Society		Letter of Support Received
June 17, 2020	Town of Rocky Mountain House		Letter of Support Received
Nov 10, 2020	Lamont County	Project presented via Zoom	Letter of Support Secured
Nov 18, 2020	Two Hills County	Project presented via written correspondence	Matter differed pending more info
Nov 17, 2020	Cows & Fish Riparian Society		Letter of Support Received
Nov 19, 2020	Parkland County		Letter of Support Received
Nov 24, 2020	Thorhild County	Project presented via Zoom	Letter of Support Secured
Dec 1, 2020	Brazeau County	Project presented via Microsoft Teams	Decision differed to future meeting
Dec 8, 2020	St. Paul County Council	Project presented via Zoom	Letter of Support Secured
Dec 8, 2020	North Sask. River Basin Council (NSRBC)	Bi-lateral project update	
Dec 8, 2020	Vermillion River County	Project presented via written correspondence	Letter of Support Secured
Dec 10, 2020	Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta (CEDA)		Letter of Support Received
Dec 13, 2020	Alberta Bilingual Municipalities Association (ABMA)		Letter of Support Received
Dec 16, 2020	Two Hills County	Additional info provided via written correspondence	Letter of Support Received
Dec 16, 2020	County of Vermillion River		Letter of Support Received

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<b>Dec 16, 2020</b>	Lakeland Agricultural Research Association		Letter of Support Received
<b>Dec 17, 2020</b>	Village of Vilna		Letter of Support Received
<b>Dec 18, 2020</b>	Ceyana Canoe Club		Letter of Support Received
<b>Dec 21, 2020</b>	Village of Waskatenau		Letter of Support Received
<b>Dec 22, 2020</b>	Alberta's Lakeland Destination Marketing Organization		Letter of Support Received
<b>Dec 22, 2020</b>	Riverland Recreational Trail Society		Letter of Support Received
<b>Dec 22, 2020</b>	North East Muni-Corr Ltd.		Letter of Support Received
<b>Dec 23, 2020</b>	Agroforestry & Woodlot Extension Society (AWES)		Letter of Support Received
<b>Jan 7, 2021</b>	County of Wetaskiwin No. 10		Letter of Support Received
<b>Jan 11, 2021</b>	Beaver County		Letter of Support Received
<b>Jan 12, 2021</b>	Yellowhead County		Letter of Support Received
<b>Jan 12, 2021</b>	Town of Smoky Lake		Letter of Support Received
<b>Jan 12, 2021</b>	Village of Elk Point	Project presented via written correspondence	Letter of Support Secured
<b>Jan 12, 2021</b>	City of Fort Saskatchewan	Project presented via WebX	Letter of Support Secured
<b>Jan 12, 2021</b>	North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA)	Admin call with Executive Director with via Zoom to request letter of support	Agreed to forward matter to NSWA Board
<b>Jan 13, 2021</b>	Camrose County		Letter of Support Received
<b>Jan 18, 2021</b>	Eagle Point Blue Rapids Park Council (EPBRPC)	Initial call with Executive Director	Agreed to bring forward the matter to the Board
<b>Jan 19, 2021</b>	Brazeau County	Follow-up presentation via Teams, answered questions	request more info
<b>Jan 20, 2021</b>	Cows & Fish Riparian Society	Call/Project Presentation with Executive Director	Letter of Support Secured
<b>Jan 20, 2021</b>	Municipal District of Bonnyville No. 87		Letter of Support Received
<b>Jan 25, 2021</b>	Explore Edmonton		Letter of Support Received
<b>Jan 25, 2021</b>	Village of Elk Point		Letter of Support Received
<b>Jan 26, 2021</b>	Clearwater County	Project presented via Zoom	Letter of Support Received
<b>Jan 26, 2021</b>	Sturgeon County	Project presented via Zoom	
<b>Jan 26, 2021</b>	Eagle Point Blue Rapids Park Council (EPBRPC)	Follow-up Project presented via Zoom	
<b>Jan 27, 2021</b>	United Albertan Paddling Society (UAPS)		Letter of Support Received
<b>Feb 2, 2021</b>	Brazeau County	Matter considered from previous meeting, provided more info via correspondence	
<b>Feb 6, 2021</b>	Sturgeon County		Letter of Support Received
<b>Feb 12, 2021</b>	Senator Paula Simons	Project presentation via Zoom	Initially expressed interest & willing to explore further
<b>Feb 16, 2021</b>	City of St. Albert	Project presented via Zoom, previously considered at Community Living Committee	Letter of Support Secured, and press release
<b>Feb 18, 2021</b>	'Partners for the Sask. River Basin'	Project webinar via Zoom, ~three dozen attendees	
<b>Feb 22, 2021</b>	Town of Devon	Project presented via written correspondence	Letter of Support Secured
<b>Feb 23, 2021</b>	North Sask. River Basin Council (NSRBC)	Bi-lateral project update	
<b>Feb 24, 2021</b>	City of St. Albert		Letter of Support Received
<b>Feb 25, 2021</b>	Edmonton Historical Board		Letter of Support Received
<b>Mar 2, 2021</b>	Brazeau County	Additional information provided via correspondence	

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Mar 2, 2021	Metis Nation of Alberta Consultation Group	Workshop	Planning session
Mar 11, 2021	Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations		Letter of Support
Mar 15, 2021	North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA)	Reeve call with Executive Director with via Zoom to follow-up	Agreed again to forward matter to NSWA Board Meeting (May)
Mar 16, 2021	Town of Rocky Mountain House	Project update presentation via zoom	Update only, previous support
Mar 19, 2021	Alberta Industrial Heartland Association	follow-up from December	
Mar 22, 2021	Senator Doug Black's Office	Project Presentation	
Mar 24, 2021	Edmonton Historical Board	Project Presentation via Zoom	Letter of Support Secured
Mar 26, 2021	Senator Doug Black		Letter of Support
Mar 31, 2021	<b>Public Input Survey Launched</b>		
April 1, 2021	North Saskatchewan River Valley Conservation Society	Survey featured in newsletter	
April 7, 2021	<b>Hosted a public conversation webinar with Senator Paula Simons &amp; Thomas Long &amp; Billie Milholland</b>	Project presentation via zoom	Webinar recorded and posted to YouTube
April 8, 2021	Travel Alberta (North) Call	Project Update	Update only, previous support
April 8, 2021	Edmonton Heritage Council	Survey featured in newsletter	
April 13, 2021	Strathcona County	Project Presentation via Zoom	Letter of Support
April 12, 2021	City of North Battleford, SK		Letter of Support
April 16, 2021	Alberta Bilingual Municipalities Association (ABMA)	Survey featured in newsletter	
April 19, 2021	Edmonton River Valley Conservation Coalition (ERVCC)	Email	Cc'd on Letter of Support to Edmonton City Council
April 19, 2021	City of Edmonton	Notice of Motion, Carried, did not present	Letter of Support Secured
April 19, 2021	Strathcona County	Presentation to Council via Zoom	Letter of Support
April 19, 2021	City of Leduc	Project presentation via WebX	Letter of Support Secured, and press release
April 20, 2021	Taproot Edmonton News Article		
April 26, 2021	City of Edmonton Administration	Post-Council Discussion & Debrief	
April 28, 2021	EPCOR		Letter of Support
April 29, 2021	Paddle Alberta	Project Update	Update only, previous support
May 3, 2021	Explore Edmonton, Travel Alberta, and Indigenous Tourism Alberta	Project Update	Update only, previous support
May 11, 2021	Leduc County	via Mayoral correspondence, did not appear for a project presentation	Letter of support secured. <i>*thereby achieving 15 of 16 river-adjacent municipalities in AB</i>
May 19, 2021	River Valley Alliance (RVA)	Project presented to board via correspondence, did not appear	Letter of Support Secured
May 19, 2021	North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA) Board	Project presented to board via correspondence, did not appear	

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<b>May 27, 2021</b>	All municipalities, Indigenous partners, etc.	Shared the 'What we Heard' report	
<b>May 28, 2021</b>	River Valley Alliance (RVA)		Letter of Support Received
<b>June 3, 2021</b>	Fort Edmonton Park Management Company		Letter of Support Received
<b>June 15, 2021</b>	All 15 river-adjacent municipalities & project partners	Shared 'What we Heard' Report	
<b>June 21, 2021</b>	North Sask. River Basin Council (NSRBC)	Project Update	
<b>July 5, 2021</b>	City of Edmonton Administration	Project Update	
<b>July 8, 2021</b>	Travel Alberta, Indigenous Tourism, Explore Edmonton	Project Update	Meeting notes; anticipated next steps
<b>Aug 4, 2021</b>	City of Edmonton Administration	Project Update, comments on draft document	
<b>Aug 4, 2021</b>	Senator Paula Simons		Letter of Support Received
<b>Aug 13, 2021</b>	Treaty 6 and Metis Nation permanent Flag Raising Ceremony	Metis Nation of Alberta (MNA) President Audrey Poitra & Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations Grand Chief Vernon Watchmaker were guests at the Smoky Lake County Office	
<b>Aug 16, 2021</b>	City of Edmonton		Letter of Support further to April 19 Motion received
<b>Aug 25, 2021</b>	CBC Edmonton Radioactive	Live interview at 4pm	
<b>Sept 2021</b>	Alberta Views Magazine	Project featured in article by Senator Paula Simons	
<b>Sept 3, 2021</b>	CBC Edmonton News Article		
<b>Sept 2021</b>	Alberta Bilingual Municipalities Association (ABMA)	Project featured in Newsletter	
<b>Oct 21, 2021</b>	City of Edmonton Administration	Project Update, share latest revisions, management planning process discussion	
<b>Oct 26, 2021</b>	North Sask. Watershed Alliance (NSWA)	Featured in Newsletter	

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