

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Inclusion of the Ottawa River in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System could serve as a catalyst for individuals, organizations and local government to ensure the sustainable future of the river and its communities. Organizing to produce this background study has already brought people and organizations together to plan for a common vision.

The Ottawa River is an exceptional example of a river with outstanding human heritage, and as such, its inclusion as a heritage river would be of benefit to the CHRS. In addition, as an interprovincial river bordering Quebec, the Ottawa River would be the first river in the province of Quebec to be designated as a CHR. The Ottawa River would also be the first river in the System to have two designated rivers flowing into it: the Mattawa along its upper stretches, and the Rideau along the lower section.

The Ottawa River Background Study has outlined the outstanding human heritage, natural heritage and recreational values of the river. The river meets several of the CHRS Integrity Values Guidelines as defined in **Canadian Heritage Rivers System: Objectives, Principles and Procedures**. The following specific points support this conclusion.

7.1 Human Heritage Integrity Assessment

- The nominated area includes the entire length of the Ottawa River, from its source. It encompasses the entire Ottawa Waterway, including the canoe, exploration and fur-trading routes that were seminal to the history of Canada.
- The visual appearance of the river enables the appreciation of several different periods in history, from the routes and portages taken by early First Nations inhabitants to European settlement, logging and hydroelectricity.
- Numerous sites and artefacts associated with the river's human heritage values can be visited today and are unimpaired by impoundments and human land uses. In some cases, it is possible to view the progression of canal and hydroelectric development at the same site.
- The water quality, which has been steadily improving over the past decades, does not detract from the aesthetic appearance or the cultural experience provided by the cultural values of the Ottawa River.

In addition, the following human heritage values have been found to be exceptional:

- The Ottawa River has provided the setting for at least 8000 years of Aboriginal and 400 years of European settlement.

- The Ottawa River enabled the exploration of North America by major figures in Canadian history, including Champlain, Nicollet, Radisson, La Vérendrye, De Troyes, Jolliet, Mackenzie and Franklin.
- The Ottawa River was one of North America's most important trading routes for centuries, and was part of the famous fur trade route to the interior.
- The great white pines of the Ottawa River Valley built the warships of Britain in her war against France, and went on to construct Boston, New York, and Chicago.
- Mill sites along the river became the focus of settlement at Ottawa-Gatineau, today the Nation's Capital, as well as a number of smaller towns and villages.
- Immigrants drawn by the forestry industry went on to create a unique Ottawa Valley culture.
- The Ottawa River includes legendary sets of rapids that were circumvented by a series of military and commercial canals, leading to bustling steamboat traffic.