



CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS SYSTEM

Nomination Document
for the
Ottawa River

2006



Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee

Kishpin wì-ganòjyàng - www.kichi-sibi.org

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Cover Image: Members of Dean's Big Show at the junction of the Mattawa and Ottawa Rivers, 1886.
John Edward Gardiner Curran Collection/Library and Archives Canada/C-055206.

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River Nomination

- Whereas, the Ottawa River played a key role throughout the history of Canada, both before and after European settlement, as a major trade route, and as such is known as the original “trans-Canada highway.”
- Whereas, the Ottawa River and surrounding region is of outstanding cultural heritage value as the heartland of the Algonquin people and their culture.
- Whereas, the Ottawa River is of outstanding cultural heritage value as the definitive route of Canadian exploration, providing Canada’s most famous European explorers such as Samuel de Champlain, Nicollet, Radisson, De Troyes, La Vérendrye, Mackenzie and Franklin with a passage into central and western North America. The Ottawa River provided a critical link to other Canadian Heritage Rivers, including the Mattawa and LaVase Portages, the French, the Boundary Waters – Voyageur Water Route, and the Rideau Waterway.
- Whereas, the Ottawa River corridor was critical to the development of commercial enterprise, mapping and the settlement of Canada.
- Whereas, the Ottawa River is of outstanding cultural heritage value as the gateway to Canada’s most famous fur trade routes used during the *coureurs de bois* and *voyageur* era in Canada. The Ottawa River served as the earliest route of commerce for the Northwest Company and later for the Hudson’s Bay Company. Forts and trading posts were established along the shoreline of the Ottawa River from Lake Timiskaming to Montreal.
- Whereas, the city of Ottawa, bordering the Ottawa River, is the National Capital of Canada. Ottawa is the seat of the federal government, and showcases Canada’s most significant culture and history.
- Whereas, the significant contributions of the French in North America spanning almost four hundred years include a legacy of exploration, mapping, commerce and settlement along the Ottawa River, beginning with Étienne Brûlé’s explorations in 1608. The French seigneuries along the Ottawa River included L’Original, the earliest seignury in Ontario, and one of very few in the province.
- Whereas, at the head of Lake Timiskaming at the river’s northern-most reaches, the Little Claybelt, created by glacial lakes, spawned settlement resulting in today’s great northern agricultural belt of Ontario and Quebec.
- Whereas, the Ottawa River provided access to rich forests along its tributaries and served as a route to transport large rafts of squared timber and sawn logs to Quebec City en route to Great Britain for the Royal Navy. Large-scale sale of lumber to New England was used to build the cities of Boston, New York and Chicago. This expansion of trade acted as an economic engine that drove Canada’s early commercial development.

- Whereas, the Ottawa River's significant water power has been harnessed over the centuries, driving the region's grist mills and saw mills, and currently producing a significant portion of Ontario's and Quebec's hydroelectricity.
- Whereas, the Ottawa River connects Ontario and Quebec and serves both as a political border and common link between the two provinces.
- Whereas, the Ottawa River is the largest tributary of the St. Lawrence River and Seaway, playing a major role in the St. Lawrence basin ecosystem.
- Whereas, the average flow of the Ottawa River is one of the greatest of Canada's rivers, with a total length of 1271 kilometres and a watershed covering 146,300 square kilometres, twice the size of New Brunswick.
- Whereas, the Ottawa River traverses easily accessible, visible segments of the lithosphere that represent the past 3 billion years of the Earth's history, and is the only Canadian river that crosses four major geological subdivisions.
- Whereas, the Ottawa River provides habitat for over 300 species of birds, and is one of the continent's most important flyways.
- Whereas, the rich ecosystems of the Ottawa River sustain more than 80 species at risk, including the Loggerhead Shrike, Eastern Cougar, Bald Eagle, and American Ginseng
- Whereas, the Ottawa River contains a section of whitewater that is renowned as a world-class paddling and rafting destination.
- Whereas, the Ottawa River borders Ontario's and Quebec's most popular canoe-camping parks, Algonquin Provincial Park and La Réserve faunique de la Vérendrye.
- Therefore, it is recommended by the Province of Ontario that the entire section of 618 kilometres of the Ottawa River bordering the Province of Ontario, from the head of Lake Timiskaming to its junction with the St. Lawrence at the Lake of Two Mountains, be nominated to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System for the purpose of recognizing, celebrating and conserving the River's outstanding cultural heritage values.

Honourable David Ramsey
Minister of Natural Resources, Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs
Province of Ontario

Date