



Designation of the Hayes River (Manitoba) as a Canadian Heritage River

*Manitoba Conservation, Norway House
Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation,
Shamattawa First Nation and York Factory
First Nation worked cooperatively
between 1998 and 2006 to nominate
and designate the Hayes River to the
Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS).*

Background

The Hayes River historic fur trade route in Manitoba extends 600 kilometres from York Factory on Hudson Bay to Norway House near Lake Winnipeg. This route is an outstanding example of river heritage in Canada. It was the main travel artery for the Hudson Bay Company's fur trade industry for almost 250 years. This route traverses some of the most pristine natural areas of Manitoba.

The process to include the Hayes River in the CHRS began in 1987 with the preparation of a background study. The river was nominated to the CHRS in 2000. The management plan was completed in 2005 and the river was designated in 2006.



Manitoba Conservation and Bunibonibee Cree Nation representatives at public drop-in, photo copyright Manitoba Conservation

First Nation representatives were involved in all key stages of the project.

Preparation of the management plan was the responsibility of Manitoba Conservation and was done with the assistance of a First Nations Advisory Committee having representatives from Norway House, Bunibonibee, Shamattawa and York Factory First Nations. An extensive public participation process was an integral part of preparing the plan.

Initiative

- In 1994 through 1997 the First Nations along the Hayes River asked government to designate the Hayes as a Canadian Heritage River to help them in their efforts to protect it against hydro-electric development. The 1997 Manitoba CHRS system study showed the Hayes as a strong candidate for designation.
- In 1998 Manitoba Conservation initiated work to nominate and designate the river. This work began with meetings with the First Nations to confirm their support and to establish working relationships for the project.
- Manitoba Conservation prepared and submitted the nomination document which was accepted in 2000.
- The management planning process began in 2000 and was facilitated by a consultant and managed by a steering committee of Manitoba Conservation staff, and representatives from each of Norway House, Oxford House, Shamattawa and York Factory First Nations.
- Manitoba Conservation staff did the overall coordination and day-to-day management of the project. The members of the First Nations Advisory Committee coordinated consultations in the First Nations, and reviewed and advised on material for consultations and on the final management plan. Manitoba Conservation and the consultant facilitated all the consultation sessions.
- Consultation drop-in sessions were held in Norway House, Oxford House, Shamattawa, York Landing, Thompson and Winnipeg in February 2002 and May/June 2004. There were also several workshops with specific stakeholders.
- First Nation representatives were involved in all key stages of the project. This involved meetings regarding the nomination, establishing the program for preparation of the management plan, scheduling and facilitating public reviews, participation in stakeholder workshops, review of draft and final plans, and planning the designation ceremonies.



Lessons learned

There were three features of this initiative that are worthy of noting as best practices: *common goals, clear processes, and well established working relations.*

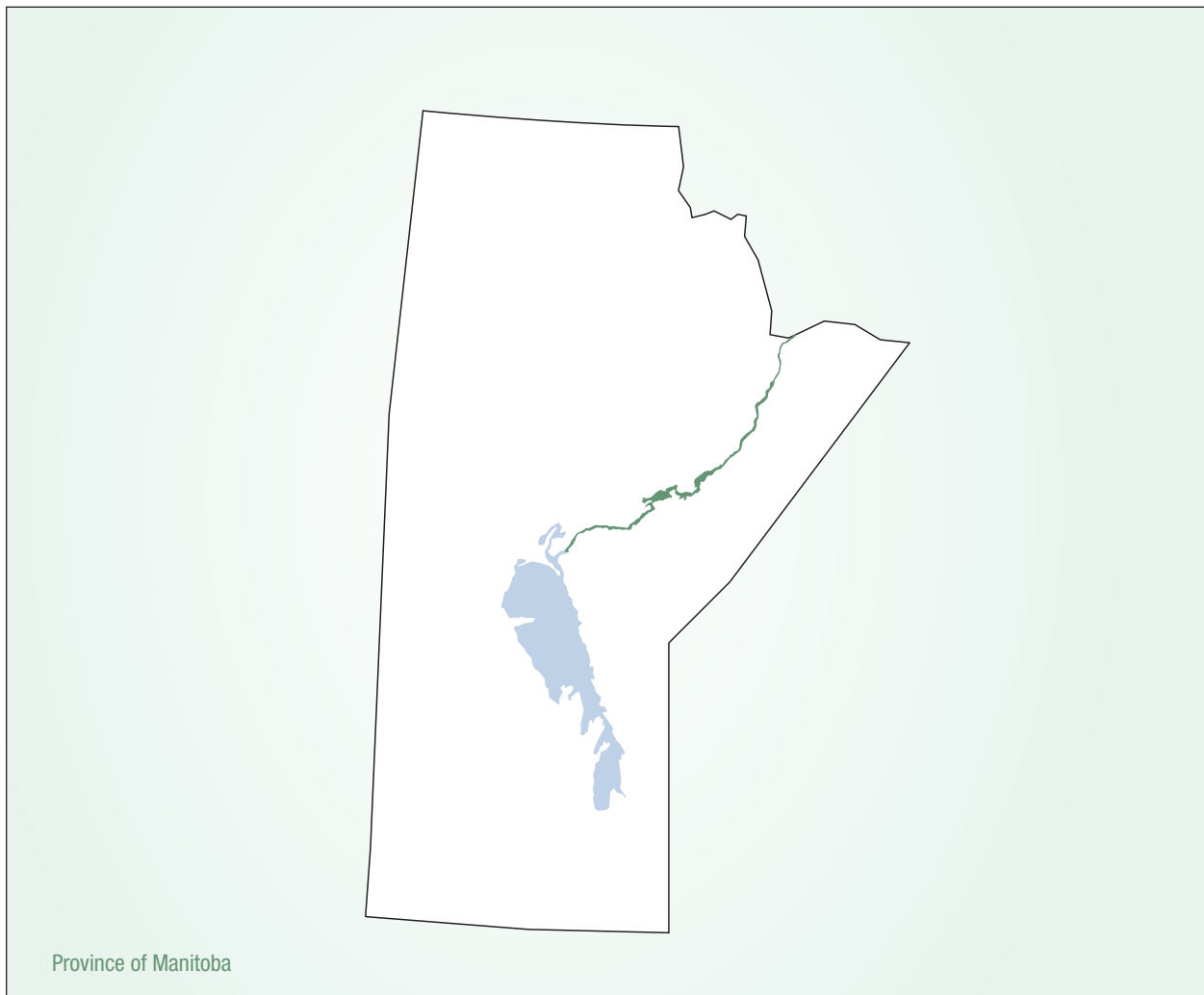
The Manitoba Government and the First Nations all had a common goal of achieving Canadian


Heritage River designation for the Hayes River. The commitment to this goal by all five partners was very clearly stated and understood by all the partners. It was also clear to all the partners that their collective commitment to this goal was essential for the river to be designated.

All of the partners had a clear process through which they had to work. The Canadian Heritage



Hayes River Canadian Heritage River





Rivers System sets out the process for designating a river to the system. Within this process, Manitoba Conservation and the First Nations chose how to conduct the consultation process within each community. All the partners chose to use drop-in and workshop type sessions for the consultations.

Throughout most of the project the contact people at the Manitoba Conservation and at the First Nations remained constant. This allowed for the development of sound working relationships between these people and clear lines of communication. The value of having clearly identified contacts was so significant that it was included as a recommendation in the management plan for the Hayes – that the First Nations identify a councillor portfolio with responsibility for CHRS at the Band level.

Conclusions

The process to designate the Hayes has proven to be successful. In addition to achieving the designation of the river that all partners sought, a working relationship amongst the partners has been strengthened and will be useful for implementing the management plan. The Hayes River process has been used as a role model for other CHRS projects like the Churchill River in Sask.

*The Hayes River process
has been used as a role model
for other CHRS projects*



Public drop-in at York Factory First Nation, photo copyright Manitoba Conservation

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