

Caring for Our Rivers

Margaree River – photo by David Williams

A Newsletter for Canadian Heritage River Managers & Stewards
Vol. 1, No. 3 – June 2018

Calling all River Managers & River Stewards!

This newsletter is brought to you by the Technical Planning Committee (TPC) of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) and is a forum through which heritage river managers and stewards can share success stories and connect across Canada.

Tsiigehnjik (Arctic Red River) Adventures

By Chief Paul Niditchie School

Tsiigehnjik, in the Northwest Territories, flows 450 km northwest from its headwaters in the Mackenzie Mountains to its confluence with the Mackenzie River at the community of Tsiighehtchic. The Gwich'in name for the river, Tsiigehnjik, means iron river.

In late March 2018, a group of middle school students from Chief Paul Niditchie School in Tsiighehtchic were joined by community members and elders for a hunting trip up Tsiigehnjik. The river is a significant water way for the Gwich'ya Gwich'in people who traditionally sustained themselves fishing and harvesting moose and caribou from its banks. Recently a cabin was built at a site 32 km (20 miles) up the river which was a traditional stopping place for trappers. Local MLA, hunter and trapper Fredrick "Sonny" Blake Jr. explained to the students that historically families lived in this area year-round, and a sawmill operated in the 1960s and '70s a few miles upstream to satisfy the need for building supplies in Tsiighehtchic and also in Inuvik. *continued on page 2*



Photo: Chief Paul Niditchie School

Traveling up Tsiigehnjik in late March

Hello from our Chair - Kelly Stein



Photo: K. Stein

Cameron River, near Yellowknife

The TPC Chair rotates every year. This year, it's the Northwest Territories turn. I work in Yellowknife with the Government of Northwest Territories as a Conservation Areas Planner, and have been a representative for NWT on the Canadian Heritage Rivers System for about three years.

In that time I've been amazed and inspired by the passion and dedication to Heritage Rivers demonstrated by my counterparts from the rest of Canada. But even more rewarding has been getting to know one of the NWT's Heritage Rivers and its managers and stewards from the Gwich'in Settlement Area. You'll find an article in this newsletter about Tsiigehnjik (Arctic Red River).

The work of students from Tsiighehtchic reinforces for me that it's the communities, stewardship groups and river managers who are at the core of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. I hope we can help you to conserve and celebrate your local Heritage River. And I hope that one day I'll paddle Tsiigehnjik!



Tsiagehnjik (Arctic Red River) Adventures (*continued*)

Students and local resource people, including Sonny Blake ventured to Swan Lake, located 4 miles west of the river, to hunt caribou or moose. Swan Lake was a traditionally rich site to harvest caribou, moose, beavers and other fur bearing animals. Many Gwichya Gwich'in people traditionally harvested in the Swan Lake area via a trail which was maintained during the sawmill era. However, in recent time, the trail has not been used and has grown in.

Cutting the trail to Swan Lake and once again accessing this fertile area was a significant part of this trip for the students, with beneficial implications for the community of Tsiagehtchic.

Margaree Heritage River, Nova Scotia

By David Williams

There are small community cemeteries scattered throughout the valleys and glens of the Margaree River watershed where faded headstones and memorials carved in native stone pay homage to the courage of young Scottish men and women who left family and home in the “old country” in search of a better life. In stark contrast to their few meager possessions, they brought with them a rich heritage and culture which is still remembered and celebrated today by their proud descendants. Perhaps it is in the enduring popularity of Celtic music that we find the Scottish heart still beating with life and vitality. The annual fall music festival known as Celtic Colours (<https://celtic-colours.com/>) draws musicians from all over the world to share their love and appreciation for traditional Scottish music. With some 49 concerts spread over nine days and more than 35 venues across Cape Breton Island, the festival continues to grow in popularity with those who enjoy excellent music, song and dance - or just appreciate a good ‘ole time with family and friends.



Photo: Sally Steele

Cape Breton is a sight to behold—especially in the fall



Photo: Chief Paul Niditchie School

Out on the land around Tsiagehnjik

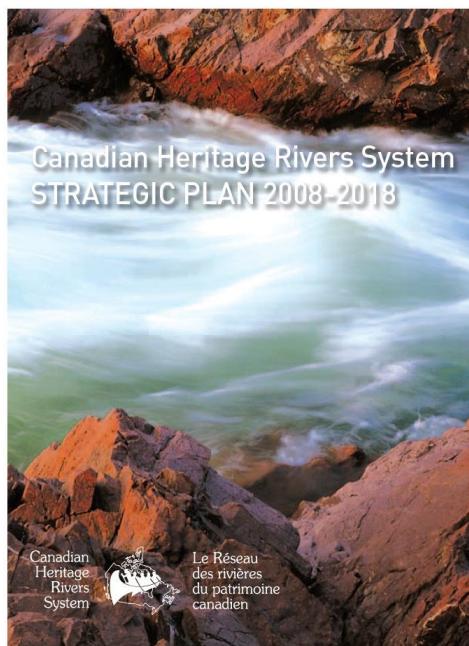
"My favourite places on earth are the wild waterways where the forest opens its arms and a silver curve of river folds the traveller into its embrace."

- Rory MacLean, author and travel writer



Photo: David Williams

Old cemetery in Big Interval, a small community on the Northeast Margaree River



Update on the CHRS Strategic Plan Renewal

The Canadian Heritage Rivers program is guided by a strategic plan that sets out the vision and priorities for the program. We are updating this plan by taking stock of our achievements over the past ten years and by gathering ideas to chart the way forward over the next ten.

Four themes have emerged through various forums for input:

1. Excellence in River Management

A strong network of river managers and partners is key to delivering the CHRS program and realizing the benefits associated with being part of the CHRS. We have heard that the CHRS program should:

- provide river managers and partners with the tools, resources and skills to successfully manage their heritage river and conserve its values
- provide venues for connecting river managers and stewards to share success stories, best practices and innovative tools
- facilitate regular communications about the program and the benefits of belonging

2. Engaging Canadians to Celebrate and Steward Canadian Heritage Rivers

Many organizations and individuals involved with Canadian Heritage Rivers have noted the momentum created by the CHRS Canada 150 Project, which provided funding for events to celebrate river heritage across the country in 2017. We have heard that the CHRS program should:

- continue to build broad awareness of the program and the importance of heritage rivers among Canadians, and especially river stewardship groups, river communities, and Indigenous organizations
- provide regular opportunities to participate and foster a strong network of river stewards
- strengthen the program's relevance by communicating about the program outside of periodic events and clearly communicating its benefits



Photo: Parks Canada Agency archives

Salmon angling on Restigouche River

Current Vision

We envision a system of Canadian Heritage Rivers that serves as a model of stewardship – one that engages society in valuing the heritage of rivers and river communities as essential to identity, health and quality of life.





3. Indigenous Reconciliation

Indigenous Peoples have a significant relationship with water in all its forms that is tied to every aspect of life—spiritual, cultural, physical, and social. The CHRS program has a role to play in advancing broader government and societal objectives for reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. We have heard that the CHRS program should:

- connect with Indigenous Peoples whose traditional territories encompass Canadian Heritage Rivers
- ensure that the program reflects Indigenous values and interests
- promote greater Indigenous involvement with all aspects of the program

4. Conserving Natural, Cultural and Recreational Values and River Integrity

This priority focuses on conserving the values for which rivers were originally designated through sound management and monitoring. We have heard that the CHRS program should:

- incorporate Indigenous traditional knowledge and local knowledge into river management
- involve other organizations and individuals in river management and monitoring (e.g. citizen science)
- ensure that river management plans are up-to-date and river values are monitored



Photo: Doug Harvey

Paddling French River



Photo: Brian Atkinson Photography

Sailing on St. John River



© Peter Mather

South Nahanni River

Nominating and Designating New Canadian Heritage Rivers

The CHRS will retain the ability to designate new rivers and expand existing designations, but this will not be a priority in the new strategic plan.

Next Steps

The CHRS will reach out to Indigenous Peoples across the country with ties to Canadian Heritage Rivers to invite involvement in updating the strategic plan.

If you would like more information about the strategic planning process or have feedback you would like us to consider, please contact Amber Stewart, CHRS Technical Planning Committee Member, Parks Canada by email: Amber.stewart@pc.gc.ca or by phone: (780) 852-8466