

## **Abstract Submission for 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian River Heritage Conference**

Title of Presentation:

Grand (CHURCHILL) river, Labrador: A public awareness documentary video for the preservation and protection of this river

Category: Community Engagement

Presenter:

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## Abstract

The Grand (Churchill) River is the longest river in Labrador with a watershed draining an area of approximately 93,415 km<sup>2</sup> including 12,000km<sup>2</sup> diverted from the Upper Naskaupi and Kanairiktok rivers for use in the Churchill Falls Hydroelectric Project. This project was completed in 1971 and provides 5225 MW of power. Further hydroelectric development in the watershed is planned at Gull Island and Muskrat Falls located respectively 110km and 40km upstream from the mouth of the river (Anderson 1985: 163). A total of 20 fish species have been reported in this River and this magnificent waterway is the most ecologically diverse region of Labrador. The Grand River was called *Mishta shipu* (Big River) by the Innu and it is still known by those names locally. Without the knowledge or support of Labradorians it was renamed the Hamilton River in 1821, and the Churchill River in 1965. This Grand River region was the homeland of Aboriginal people for thousands of years and the earliest Euro-Canadian settlement in the Grand River watershed came in 1743 with the establishment of the first trading post by Sieur Louis Fornel at Northwest River. During the nineteenth century, the Hudson's Bay Company established a series of posts along the Grand River. With the establishment of these fur-trading posts a population of mixed-ancestry (Aboriginal and European) was born, giving way to distinct Métis traditions and communities.

In this paper we will explain the goals of Grand Riverkeeper, Labrador Inc. which is to preserve and protect the water quality and the ecological integrity of the Grand River watershed and its estuary, through actions of public awareness, monitoring, intervention and habitat restoration. The organization actively promotes economically and environmentally sustainable management approaches that will maintain the heritage and intrinsic value of this river and its valleys for present and future generations. We will be showing excerpts from an 18-minute video documentary produced with the financial and production assistance of Sofia Hilton Foundation of Canada, directed by members of Grand Riverkeeper Labrador Inc. and with the involvement of a number Labrador participants. The production was gifted to the Labrador Heritage Society.

This film has won Honourable Mention, in the Environment category, at the 2007 Waterwalker Film Festival. It has been selected, along with the other winners, for the 2007 Waterwalker National Film Tour in cities throughout Canada, the United States and Internationally. The Waterwalker Film Festival, an annual event, pays tribute to the late Bill Mason, the great conservationist, canoeist, painter, author and filmmaker. His vision was to raise support and public awareness for waterway and wilderness preservation through the celebration of these films on canoeing, kayaking, water safety, the environment and conservation and protection of our natural resources

## **Reference**

Anderson, T.C. *The Rivers of Labrador*. Canadian Special Publication of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences 81. Ottawa, Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Labrador Heritage Society 2006. *Grand River: Labrador's Treasure, Newfoundland's Secret*. DVD documentary, 18 minutes.

### Biographical sketch:

Clarice Blake Rudkowski is a member of the Labrador Metis Nation. Her father spent a lifetime supporting his family by trapping along Labrador's Churchill River. After raising a family and operating her own businesses for twenty-five years, she earned a degree in Fine Arts and currently practices her art and does free lance writing. Community development and environmental issues have been a lifelong obsession. She has written a book involving story, art (photography) and environmentalism that focus on hydro development on this river. The book received support from the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council and was the subject of a paper presented (and subsequently published) at the Nordic Association for Canadian Studies, in Stockholm, Sweden. She is President of Grand Riverkeeper Labrador Inc., an organization that promotes economically and environmentally sustainable ecosystem management approaches that will maintain the heritage and intrinsic value of their river and its valleys, for present and future generations.