

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

Title of Presentation:

A River Revitalizes a Community

Category: Celebrating River Heritage

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## Abstract

The winter of 1996 – 97 dealt many hard blows to the Red River Valley, particularly the communities of Grand Forks, ND and East Grand Forks, MN. Nine blizzards, brutally cold weather and over eight times the average snowfall had taken its toll on the community. A final ice storm in early April followed by warm weather created ideal conditions for disaster. Residents and volunteers fought the rising rivers with sandbags, shovels, and courage only to learn this would not be enough to stop the rising floodwaters. A record breaking flood crest invaded nearly all of the land area of both cities and forced most residents to evacuate, leaving behind their homes, businesses and community.

To ensure that Greater Grand Forks would be protected against future flooding, the US Army Corps of Engineers proposed the construction of a flood protection system including a greenway, along the Red and Red Lake Rivers. This project would require an unprecedented amount of cooperation between the public and private sector as well as multiple levels of government.

In just ten short years the Greenway has established itself as an award winning facility that both enhances and protects the Greater Grand Forks community. This natural resource, initially designed to manage the impact of rising river water, has already provided economic and recreation benefits to community. A new attitude of a friendly, non threatening river has begun to permeate the community. Development in the commercial area along the riverbank, once considered dangerous, has refocused to capitalize on the aesthetic value of the riverside property. Land along the river, once owned by both public and private entities, allows for the entire 2,200 acres of greenway to be utilized for year-round outdoor recreation activities in an urban setting. The Greenway is a story of citizens and government of all levels working together to protect and ultimately revitalize a community.

Biographical sketch:

Kim Greendahl is the Greenway Coordinator for the City of Grand Forks. As Greenway Coordinator Kim oversees the development of the Greenway with other City departments, federal, state and local governments, and citizen groups, as well as marketing and promotion of the project.

Kim has been in program management field for over 20 years. As a lifelong resident of Grand Forks, she brings a historical perspective to the Greenway and Flood Protection Project and it's impact on the community.