

Abstract Submission for 5th Canadian River Heritage Conference

Title of Presentation:

Environmental history and community engagement: introducing the Canadian Water
History Project

Category: River Conservation

Presenter:

Matthew Evenden
Assistant Professor,
Department of Geography,
University of British Columbia
1984 West Mall,
Vancouver, BC
V6T 1Z2

Phone: 1-604-822-6407

Fax: 1-604-822-6150

mevenden@interchange.ubc.ca

Abstract:

Water history analyzes how humans interact with the hydrological environment. At a time when water privatization, water quality, and river development issues hold considerable importance in Canadian society, there is a need to inform public debate and the decision-making process with recent water history scholarship. In Canada, a diverse group of scholars, principally based in history and geography departments, examine different aspects of water history: from the environmental and social consequences of dam and infrastructure development, to the cultural history of rivers, to the resolution of conflicts over international waters.

The Canadian Water History Project (CWHP) aims to promote, coordinate and diffuse research by improving interaction, exchange and discussion among scholars, government and civil society organizations. Formed as a subsection of the Network in Canadian History and Environment/ Nouvelle initiative canadienne en histoire de l'environnement (<http://history.uwo.ca/niche/>), the CWHP comprises a network of scholars and a forum of events.

Although the CWHP is still in a formative stage, this paper seeks to describe its aims, introduce its objectives to a range of government and civil society groups and draw the input of interested persons. In the course of the discussion, I will also consider the place of heritage ideas and historical analysis in academic research and public engagement.

Biography:

Matthew Evenden is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia and specializes in the environmental history of rivers. He is the author of *Fish versus Power: An Environmental History of the Fraser River* published by Cambridge University Press, which received the Clio prize from the Canadian Historical Association in 2005 for the best book in the history of British Columbia. Evenden is co-organizer of the CWHP with Stéphane Castonguay (Canada Research Chair in the environmental history of Québec, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières).