

Abstract Submission for 5th Canadian River Heritage Conference

Title of Presentation:

Defining an Approach to Cultural Landscapes and the CHRS

Category: River Conservation

Presenter:

Richard Wyma
Manager, Parks: Program Development
Nunavut Parks & Special Places
Department of Environment
Government of Nunavut
P.O. Box 1000, Station 1340
Iqaluit, Nunavut X0A 0H0

E-Mail: rwyma@gov.nu.ca

Tel: 867-975-7724

Fax: 867-975-7747

Abstract

In every corner of the world, landscapes have been shaped by the interactions of people and place over time. Nunavut is no different. Tent rings, kayak stands and fox traps dating back more than 4,000 years still exist today — in most cases, in a landscape that is largely untouched. Not only are these places evident; they are still used, their value uncompromised after so many centuries. These places are living examples of the Inuit's cultural heritage. The landscapes are rich in value not in spite of, but because of the presence of people.

As a result, conservation approaches need to sustain traditional connections to the land and engage people in stewardship of place. But how, exactly, can this be achieved? In Nunavut, it is not possible to isolate cultural sites and landscape – that is, cultural heritage must recognize not simply tangible landscape elements and patterns, but the intangible environmental qualities and associations as well.

How can integrity be measured if the resources have been completely compromised, or the meaning of the place lost to the current generation? For example, as elders pass, stories associated with places pass too. The landscape remains significant and worthy of recognition; but no one today knows what makes the area a culturally significant landscape. This is where the intangible associations of a landscape come most into play.

In the absence of models that can be applied to this broad approach, Nunavut Parks has been exploring and developing models that may be used to assess the value of specific sites and cultural landscapes across the territory as a whole and aid in the management of cultural heritage in Canadian Heritage Rivers.

Biographical sketch

Richard Wyma is the Manager, Parks: Program Development with the Government of Nunavut. His responsibilities include park and special place management and planning, heritage appreciation and education, communications and managing the Territory's Canadian Heritage Rivers Program. He is also a PhD Candidate in Landscape Architecture at the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development at the University of Guelph, and is undertaking research based on a Landscape Ecological Analogy for Planning of Place.