

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

Title of Presentation:

The Boundary Waters Voyageur Waterway...embracing international heritage.

Category: Panel Discussion

Presenter:

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Abstract:

Canada's river travel heritage and the era of the Voyageur are thickly entwined. Our iconic river heritage images are paintings depicting the life of the Voyageurs. Before the creation of Canada and the extension of the US border west, the primary voyageur route across the continent went along what is today, the southern margin of Quetico Park. When the border was eventually defined it was placed down the center of the chain of rivers and lakes that witnessed so many fur trade canoes. The Boundary Waters Voyageur Waterway captures the Canadian component of this Heritage River but in so doing, it bisects the actual 'heritage'. Much of the other half of each lake and river is within the US Boundary Waters Canoe Area. Immediately beyond Quetico to the west are extensions of this voyageur route, conservation areas on Rainy Lake, the longest section of the Dawson Road portage, and further, the US Voyageur National Park. The Canadian Heritage River is a good first step but a much greater international story remains to be celebrated.

Our current Canadian Heritage River maps depict a waterway along the southern margin on our country. With a wider perspective we see a different image, an historical waterway that serves as the main artery through a collection of many of north American's premier protected areas. A wilderness waterway of international stature just outside the box. It exists in reality....although not in policy. Canada's Heritage River program has demonstrated itself to be a flexible and innovative initiative that could rise to the challenge of an international designation.

Biographical sketch:

Robin Reilly

Robin Reilly's canoe/river interest began through flat water canoe racing in Quebec and later Ottawa and Winnipeg. His Masters Thesis at York University looked at the role of southern Ontario's smaller rivers as linear recreation parks. A later Masters Degree in Manitoba looked at Riverbottom forest restoration. Robin began his park career with Parks Canada in Ottawa working for some of the guys who worked under the Areas for Recreation and Conservation program and spent the summers paddling Canada's Rivers at the nascent stages of the Heritage Rivers program. His first in-park work was in one of the National Park system canoe based parks...Kejimikujik and later he worked in Gros Morne. Later, working for Kluane National Park, he paddled the Alsek Canadian Heritage River. For the 1990's he managed the park program in the NWT and took the lead on the Trans Canada Trail designation for the Mackenzie River. Since 2000 Robin has been Superintendent for Quetico Provincial Park which he proudly describes as Canada's premier lake canoeing destination.