

Abstract Submission for 5th Canadian River Heritage Conference

Title of Presentation:

Heritage Designation of the Ottawa River/ Rivière des Outaouais/ Kichi Sibi
Heritage Values and Community Participation

Category: Community Engagement

Presenters:

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Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee Members

Abstract

For over four years, community members along the Ottawa River/ Rivière des Outaouais/ Kichi Sibi have been working together to achieve Canadian Heritage River status for their river. They believe that this will increase awareness of the river's unique cultural, natural, and recreational values, enhance its profile, and encourage its conservation and sustainable management.

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) approach is well-suited to rivers that embody a rich cultural heritage. The Ottawa's cultural heritage constitutes the basis of its Heritage River candidacy and stems from its central role in Canadian history, including its importance to the Algonquin people, its role as *the* major corridor to central and western Canada for early European explorers and fur traders, and its facilitation of the lumber trade that led to the early settlement of the Ottawa Valley, including the nation's capital.

The Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee (ORHDC) was formed in 2003 to spearhead the pursuit of Heritage River status. This citizens' group represents the general public, organizations, agencies and municipalities along the river and includes Francophone, Anglophone, and Algonquin community members. The Ottawa River Heritage Designation Initiative has achieved a remarkable level of citizen engagement and serves as an example of effective community participation in the CHRS program.

The Quebec-Labrador Foundation/ Atlantic Centre for the Environment (QLF) coordinated the writing of the Background Study and Nomination Document. Several regional sub-committees coordinated public involvement in this process and local experts contributed written chapters to the Study. The ORHDC's public involvement strategy also includes their website and public consultations along the river.

The Ottawa River is a trans-boundary waterway that borders two provinces. The CHRS model and strong grassroots support will be two important factors in overcoming the challenges of integrated planning in this complex political and legislative environment.

Biographical Sketch:

Simone Hanchet has been working with the Quebec-Labrador Foundation/ Atlantic Centre for the Environment (QLF) for the past three years. QLF is a non-profit organization that supports the rural communities and natural environments of eastern Canada and New England. QLF works at the community level on initiatives such as biological conservation, land, river, and seascape protection, environmental education, and community development through eco-tourism and cultural heritage preservation.

Over the past three years, QLF has supported the Heritage River designation efforts of communities along the Ottawa River/ Rivière des Outaouais/ Kichi Sibi.

Simone coordinates QLF's Leadership Program and has been involved in the Ottawa River Heritage Designation Initiative. She pursues her academic interests in community-based environmental education through her graduate studies at Concordia University.