

Abstract Submission for 5th Canadian River Heritage Conference

Title of Presentation:
From the City of Lakes to the Tidal Bore:
Considerations for nominating Nova Scotia's Shubenacadie Waterway
as a Canadian Heritage River

Category: River Management

Presenter

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Abstract

The Shubenacadie Waterway is a 115 km series of interconnected canal, lake and river segments which dissect the province of Nova Scotia, joining the Atlantic Ocean at Halifax harbour to Cobequid Bay at the head of the Bay of Fundy. The waterway has important connections to Mi'kmaq, Acadian, and British settlement and use. The waterway also has a long history of recreational use which continues today.

The Canadian Heritage Rivers Background Study which has just been completed for the Shubenacadie Waterway highlights the outstanding attributes of the waterway, but also emphasizes the challenging context in which the river is managed. Successful nomination and designation of the waterway will require the full participation of a wide range of people and organizations who are dedicated to developing a common vision for this historical route.

This paper provides an overview of the many heritage values of the Shubenacadie, including early Mi'kmaq use, its roots as a corridor for commerce and settlement, modern day use for canoe racing and tidal bore rafting, and its current context as a backdrop for urban and regional development. Considering the broad context of use and the potential impacts to the waterway's character, the paper concludes with a discussion of the path forward to considering heritage river designation for the Shubenacadie Waterway in the context of strong local interest and a complex multi-jurisdictional environment.

Biographical sketch:

Peter Labor's affection for Canadian rivers was born on childhood canoe trips through Nova Scotia's wilderness, and took hold during his five years as a member and leader of Lakehead University's cross-Canada Alexander Mackenzie Bicentennial Expeditions. He spent 10 years working in northern Ontario as a guide, interpreter, performer, and educator, and was a founding director of North American Water Trails and a member of the Lake Superior Binational Forum. Peter holds an M.A. in Canadian heritage studies from Trent University, and works as a protected areas and heritage river planner for the province of Nova Scotia.