

Hayes River

HISTORY LESSON IS A NEW DEPARTMENT IN MANITOBA'S NORTHERN EXPERIENCE, HIGHLIGHTING SOME OF THE IMPORTANT ATTRACTIONS THROUGHOUT NORTHERN MANITOBA. IF YOU KNOW OF AN ATTRACTION WITH AN INTERESTING HISTORY, LET US KNOW AT NFABA@LESTERPUBLICATIONS.COM OR 1-877-953-2588.

BY BARBARA EDIE

The Red and Assiniboine rivers are both essential to the story of Manitoba, but it was the 600-kilometre Hayes River that recently became a member of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS). A plaque commemorating the designation was unveiled in June.

The legendary waterway runs through the heart of Manitoba's north, from Norway House on Lake Winnipeg to York Factory on Hudson Bay, and is the longest naturally flowing river in the province.

"This magnificent river has played an influential role in Canada's development as a nation," said Rona Ambrose, Minister of the Environment and Minister responsible for Parks Canada, in a press release announcing the CHRS designation. "As the only navigable waterway connecting the southern interior of Western Canada and Hudson Bay, the Hayes was a vital transportation route for Aboriginal peoples, fur traders and explorers, and opened vast reaches of our country to exploration."

Canadian Heritage status is based on a river's outstanding natural, cultural and recreational values, and the Hayes' role as a central transportation artery for early fur traders makes it an important link to our nation's history. "It opened up the whole Canadian interior for the fur trade and, of course, impacted First Nations peoples of Western Canada significantly," says Don Gibson of Parks Canada.

Essentially unchanged from the river that First Nations people paddled through centuries ago, the Hayes River has had a leading role in the history of Manitoba and the development of the Canadian north.

"The whole area reflects the history of our community; people travelled that river during the fur trade and came through Norway House to do business with the Hudson Bay Company," says Lloyd Flett of the Norway House Community Council. "People value the history here."

All photos courtesy of Manitoba Conservation.



