



# Smoky Lake County

Attachment 2

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[www.smokylakecounty.ab.ca](http://www.smokylakecounty.ab.ca)

January 14, 2022

Mayor & Council, Sturgeon County  
9613-100 Street  
Morinville, Alberta T8R 1L9  
C/O Lisa Schovanek, Legislative Officer  
Email: [lschovanek@sturgeoncounty.ca](mailto:lschovanek@sturgeoncounty.ca)

**Re: Alberta Community Partnership (ACP) Grant Application, and Update on the North Saskatchewan Heritage River Initiative under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS)**

I am pleased to provide an update on our collaborative initiative to see 718-kilometers of the North Saskatchewan (*kisiskâciwani-sîpiy, omaka-ty*) designated as a Heritage River under the [Canadian Heritage Rivers System \(CHRS\)](#) for which your municipality has provided a letter of support.

## BRIEFING NOTE

### CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS SYSTEM (CHRS)

- Established in 1984, the CHRS is a national collaboration among the provincial, territorial, and federal governments, and local communities, currently encompassing forty rivers from coast-to-coast-to-coast (including 50km of North Sask. within Banff National Park).
- Alberta joined the CHRS in 1994 under then-premier and former Environment Minister Ralph Klein.
- Designation is commemorative, meaning that it doesn't affect any jurisdiction, ownership, or traditional or treaty rights along the river, nor does it create additional red-tape, regulations, or restrictions.
- CHRS is a vehicle for education and empowerment for residents and visitors to share in and support the storytelling of this life-sustaining element of our landscape, with specific focus on the river's cultural, bio-physical, and recreational values and features.

### NORTH SASKATCHEWAN HERITAGE RIVER INITIATIVE

- This Initiative is centered on supporting sustainable adventure/ecological, cultural, and heritage tourism both through strengthening existing, and establishing new, relationships and recreation planning.
- CHRS designation will contribute to knowledge development, facilitate partnerships and collaborative planning, increased public awareness, stewardship and conservation, and reconciliation.
- The NSR flows across Treaty 6 Territory, which reflects the treaty promise of "...as long as the river flows...". It is imperative we better understand and respect Indigenous perspectives and traditional knowledge in relation to the NSR.

- Our efforts are supported by 15 of 16 North Sask. river-adjacent municipalities, and dozens of other entities such as Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations, Métis Nation of Alberta, EPCOR, Fort Edmonton, Explore Edmonton, Travel Alberta, River Valley Alliance, and North Sask. Watershed Alliance (NSWA), among others.

## NEXT STEPS & CALLS TO ACTION

- Smoky Lake County presented the formal '*Nomination Document*' to the CHRS Board on November 24, 2021, where it, which was accepted then, and has now been recommended to the Minister of Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) Jason Nixon.
    - In the coming weeks, as you have any meetings with the Minister and/or your local MLA, please consider reiterating your support for this initiative, and the potential positive ramifications for our local economies.
  - The last step before designation will then be for project partners to work on and complete a river study, aka a non-statutory 10-year management plan. The intent of this work is to support environmental stewardship, grow the tourism/visitor economy, improve community wellness and recreation, and contribute to Reconciliation.
    - This river study may be modeled after [similar work recently undertaken on the Peace River](#), led by the MD of Fairview on behalf of the Peace Valley Conservation, Recreation, and Tourism Society (PVCRTS) in 2020, including establishing a strategic vision, tour routes/itineraries, and creation of an interpretive plan.
- **The Village of Vilna has kindly put forward an application to the Alberta Community Partnership (ACP) Grant, for which we are asking that your Council consider adopting a resolution of support, as a project partner.**
- We are also working with other orders of government and Industry partners to secure additional funding for this work.

## CONCLUSION

- Smoky Lake County will be following up to share specific information about the next steps of the management planning process, and the ways that the city and members of the public can contribute to and have input on this project.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or wish to learn more, I encourage you to contact myself, by cell: 780-650-5401 or by email: [lhalisky@smokylakecounty.ab.ca](mailto:lhalisky@smokylakecounty.ab.ca)) or, Kyle Schole as the project lead by cell: 780-650-2059, or by email: [kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca](mailto:kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca).

Sincerely,



**Lorne Halisky**  
Reeve & Division 4 Councillor, Smoky Lake County



# Agenda

(5 - 10 minutes, plus questions)

## Introductions

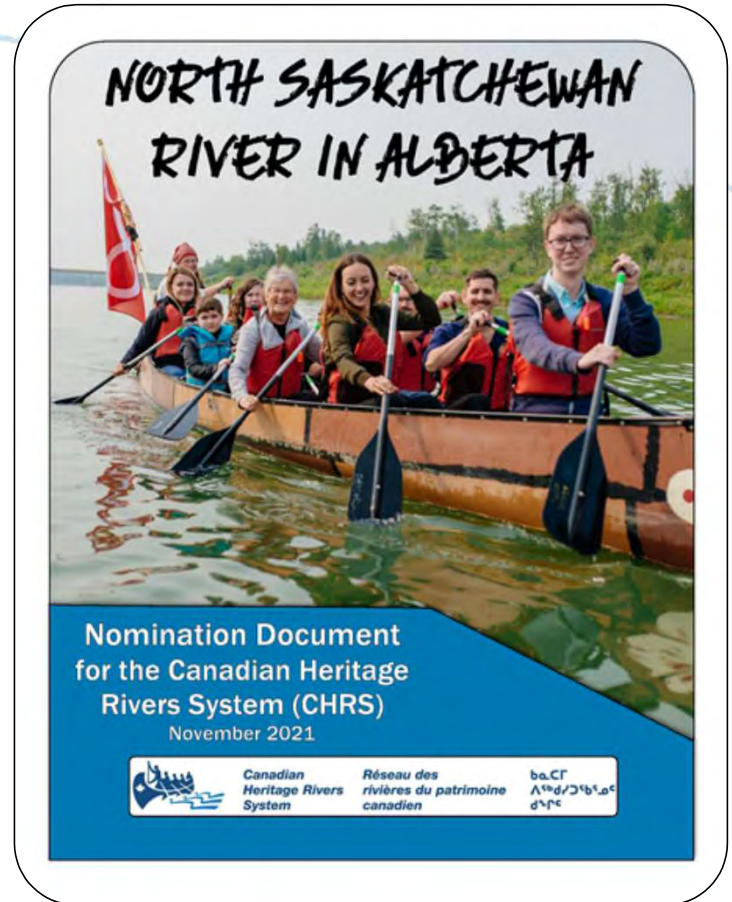
- a) Who is Smoky Lake, and why us?
- b) Alberta's participation in the CHRS
- c) Why is the NSR exceptional?  
(Cultural & Recreational Values, & CHRS Gap Analysis)

## NSR Heritage River Initiative

- a) Nomination Document
  - Engagement: May 2021 'What we heard' Report
  - Nov. 24<sup>th</sup> presentation to CHRS Board: Success
- b) What's next?
  - a) Presentation to the Minister of AEP & then Federal Minister
  - b) River Study/Management Plan (target: Spring 2023)
    - Grants & Fundraising, Steering Committee

## Conclusion

- Thank you & Questions



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A map of Alberta, Canada, showing various parks and natural areas. Labels with arrows point to the following locations:

- Long Lake Provincial Park
- Lakeland Provincial Park
- Garner Lake Provincial Park
- Village of Vilna
- Bellis Natural Area
- Métis Crossing & Victoria District National Historic Site
- Elk Island National Park
- Beaver Hills Biosphere

A dashed blue arrow points from Edmonton to the south, with the text: *A short two-day canoe ride from Edmonton...*

Source: Google

↑  
Kyle Schole  
Planning Technician,  
Smoky Lake County

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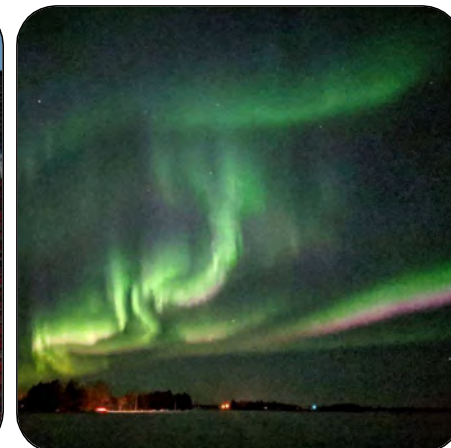
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## Victoria District National Historic Site



### Victoria District National Historic Site of Canada

Designated in 2001, representing:  
Historic River Lots & Ukrainian Settlement



Smoky Lake County; Kyle Schole Photos





# What is the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS)?

- National program comprised of the federal government, provinces, territories, and local communities, established in 1984
- Recognizes 40 Rivers across Canada
- Alberta joined in 1994 under Premier Ralph Klein
- **Non-legislative**, meaning CHRS doesn't create new regulations, red tape, nor affect ownership, jurisdiction, traditional rights, uses, etc.!
- Method for communicating stories, tourism, place-making, community wellness, stewardship, etc., to residents and visitors!

<- 3x B&W: Courtesy of Edmonton Archives





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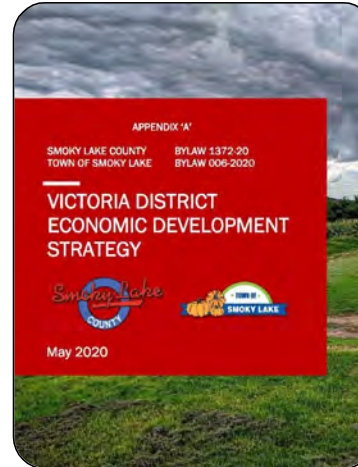
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# Why?

## Three main motivators:

1. **Tourism & Economic Development** - supporting new opportunities for sustainable Indigenous, agricultural, culinary, tourism and cultural interpretation;
2. **Establish & renew relations** - among municipalities Indigenous communities, and other groups;
3. **Strengthened Stewardship** - of land, air, water, and culture;



Metis Crossing files and Smoky Lake's Victoria District Economic Development Strategy

County Reeve Lukinuk  
AB Infrastructure Minister Jansen  
Canada Infrastructure Minister Sohi  
Metis Nation President Poitras  
MLA Paquette





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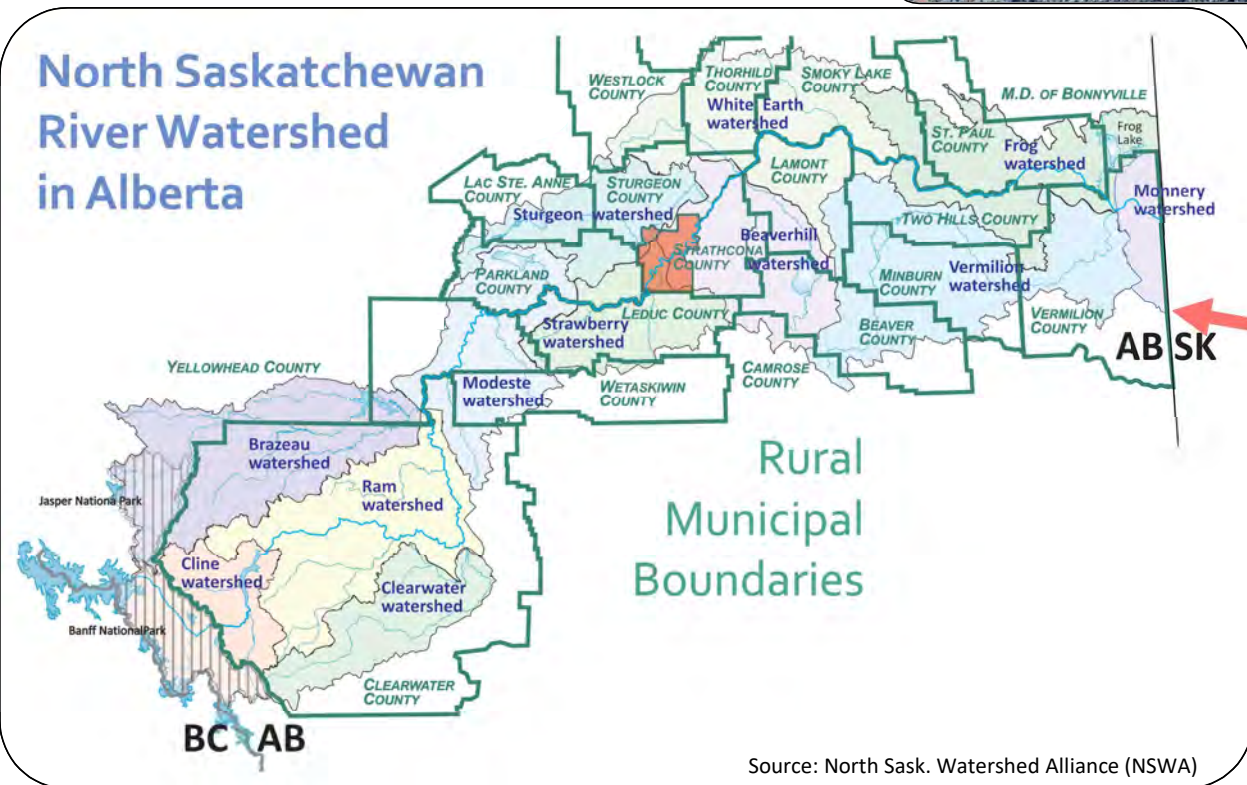
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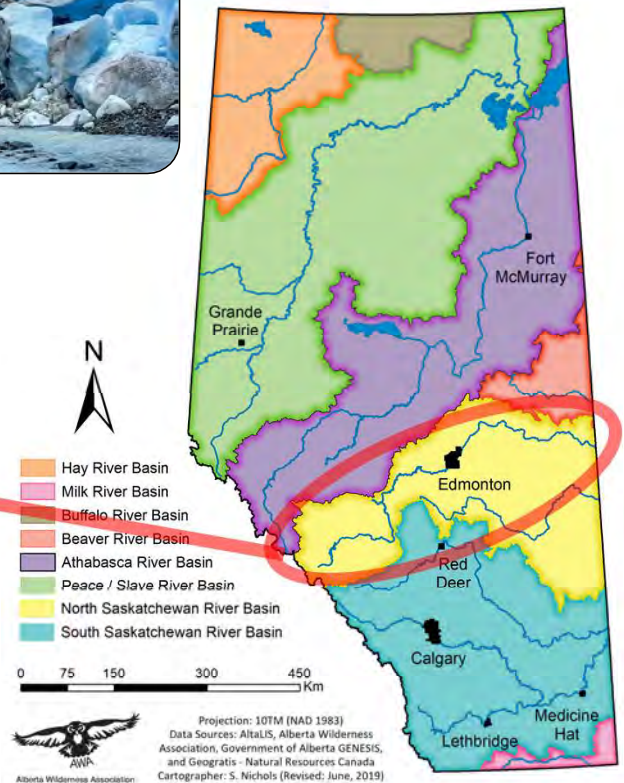
Toe of the Sask. Glacier,  
Sept. 2021

# Where is the NSR?

## North Saskatchewan River Watershed in Alberta



Source: North Sask. Watershed Alliance (NSWA)



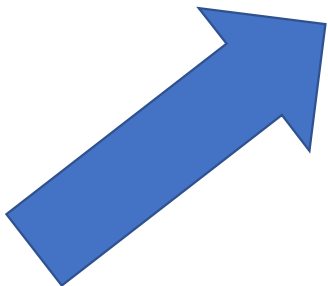
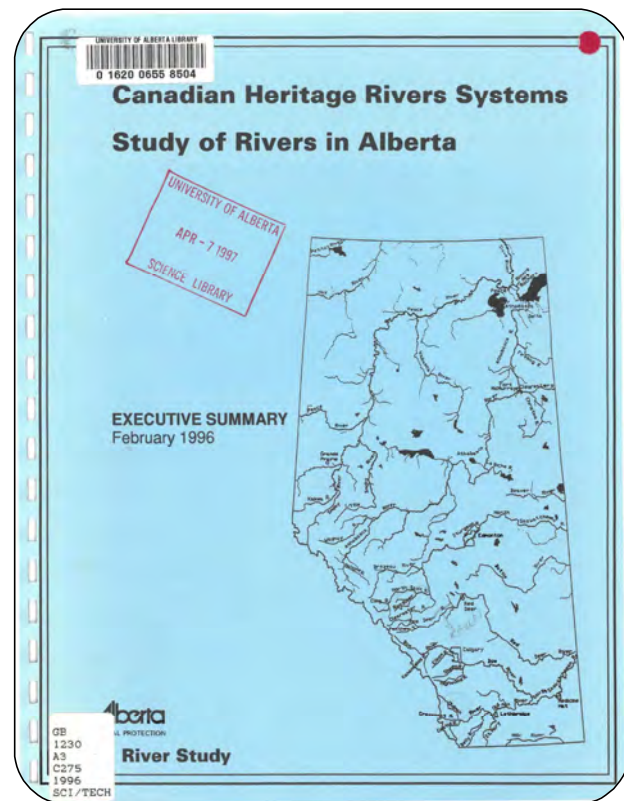


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# Alberta's Heritage River Regime



## CHRS Priority Rivers (AA)

(not ranked in order of priority)

- 1 Peace River
- 2 Clearwater ☒ 2003  
(Athabasca) River
- 3 N. Saskatchewan River
- 4 Red Deer River
- 5 Bow River
- 6 Highwood River
- 7 Oldman River
- 8 S. Saskatchewan River
- 9 Castle River
- 10 Milk River

### Legend

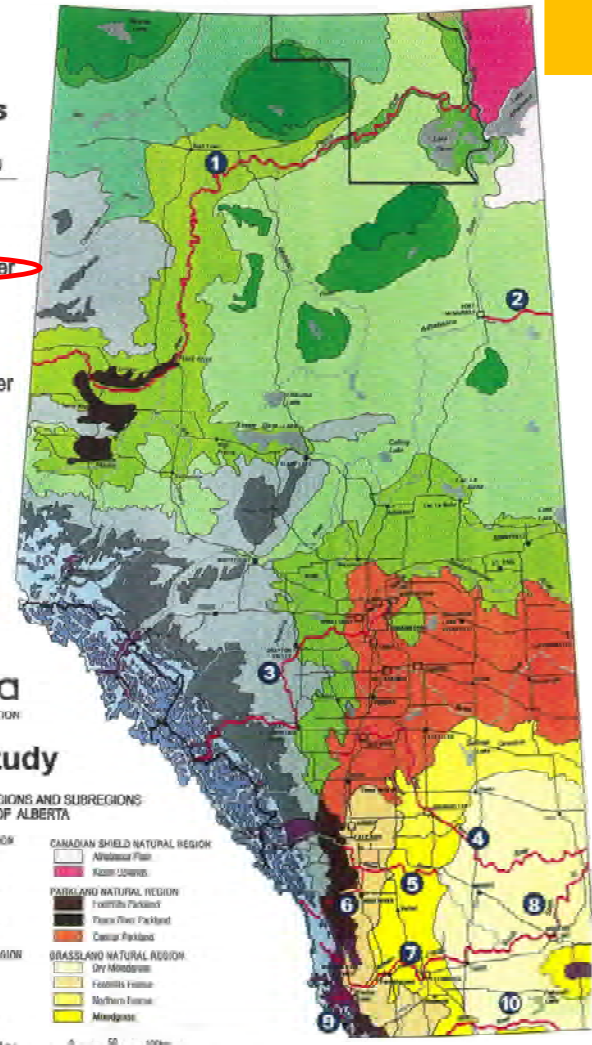
- AA River
- National Park
- Boundary



## CHRS River Study

NATURAL REGIONS AND SUBREGIONS  
OF ALBERTA

- |                                      |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>BOREAL FOREST NATURAL REGION</b>  | <b>CANADIAN SHIELD NATURAL REGION</b> |
| Central Mixedwood                    | Alberta Plain                         |
| Dry Mixedwood                        | Rocky Uplands                         |
| Wetland Mixedwood                    | <b>PARKLAND NATURAL REGION</b>        |
| Sub-Arctic                           | Foothills Parkland                    |
| Peace River Lowlands                 | Peace River Parkland                  |
| Boreal Highlands                     | Central Parkland                      |
| <b>STONY MOUNTAIN NATURAL REGION</b> | <b>GRASSLAND NATURAL REGION</b>       |
| Alpine                               | Dry Mixedwood                         |
| Sub-Alpine                           | Foothills Fescue                      |
| <b>FOOTHILLS NATURAL REGION</b>      | Northwest Fescue                      |
| Upper Foothills                      | Mixedgrass                            |
| Lower Foothills                      |                                       |
- Scale: 0 50 100 km







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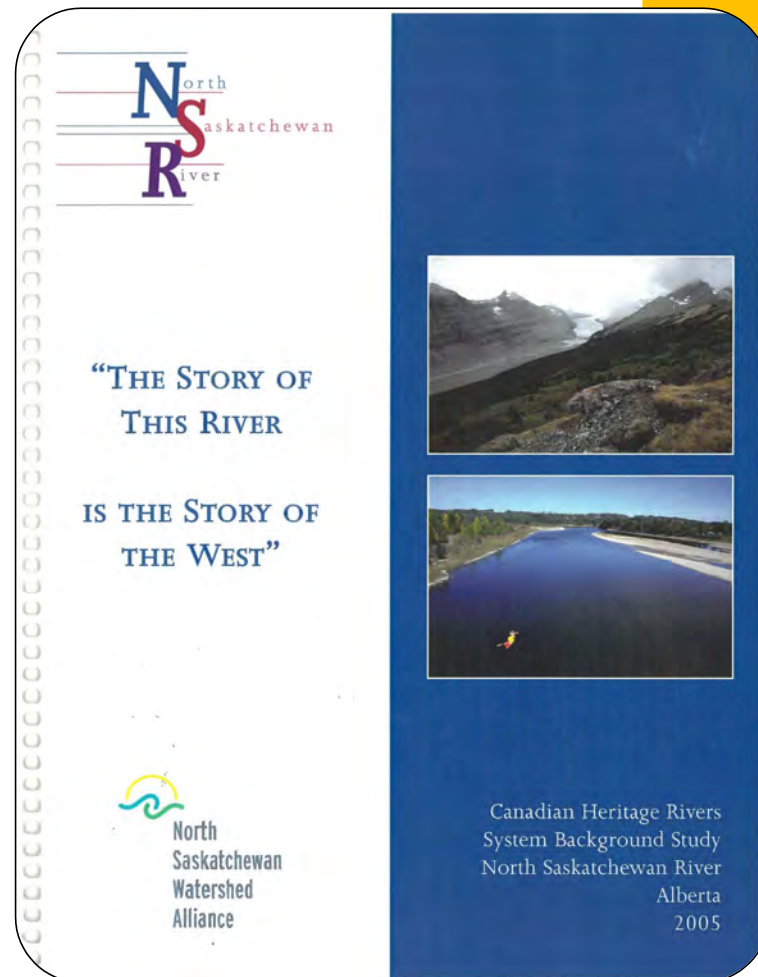
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## The long CHRS journey of the NSR

Background Study Celebration at  
RMH in 2006, with former Lt. Gov. &  
Mayor Helen Huntley.

Images courtesy of author Billie  
Milholland.





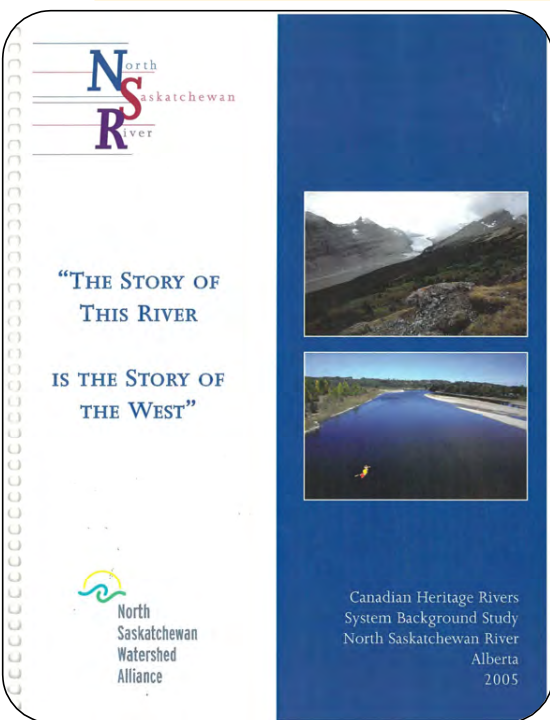


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Here we are:



(2005)



(Fall 2021)



(Spring 2023)



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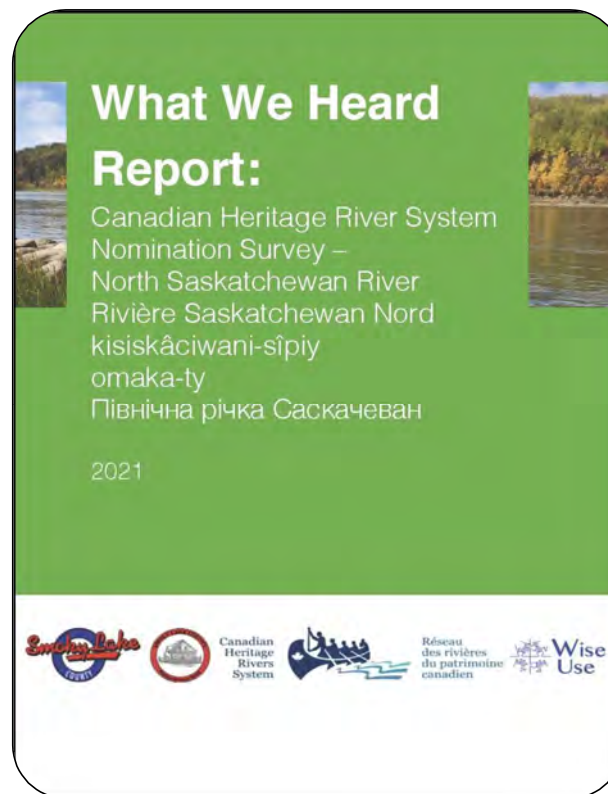
## Process & Engagement

*Most of the people surveyed [87%] supported the nomination of the North Saskatchewan River to the Heritage River System.*

*Those that opposed the nomination [9%] felt that no change was needed or that a designation to the [CHRS] would eventually result in restricted access to the river.*

*From what we heard, there is a yearning to learn more about the Indigenous peoples' history and culture along the river.*

*It is clear from the responses received that the North Saskatchewan River matters to Canadians. It is an icon of Western Canada's identity."*





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# Sturgeon County

Sturgeon  
County

Mayor Alanna Hnatiw  
Sturgeon County

Sturgeon County Office  
9611-100 Street  
Morinville, AB, Canada T8B 1L7  
T: 780-939-8327  
E: [ahnatiw@sturgeoncounty.ca](mailto:ahnatiw@sturgeoncounty.ca)

February 6, 2021

Delivered via Email: [clukinuk@smokylake.ca](mailto:clukinuk@smokylake.ca)

Reeve Craig Lukinuk, Smoky Lake County  
Smoky Lake County  
4612 McDougall Drive, PO Box 310  
Smoky Lake, AB T0A 3C0

Dear Reeve Lukinuk,

**RE: Letter of Support for North Saskatchewan River CHRS Nomination**

Recently Mr. Jordan Ruegg, Smoky Lake's Planning & Development Manager, presented to Sturgeon County Council on your community's aspiration for the North Saskatchewan River to be designated as part of the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS).

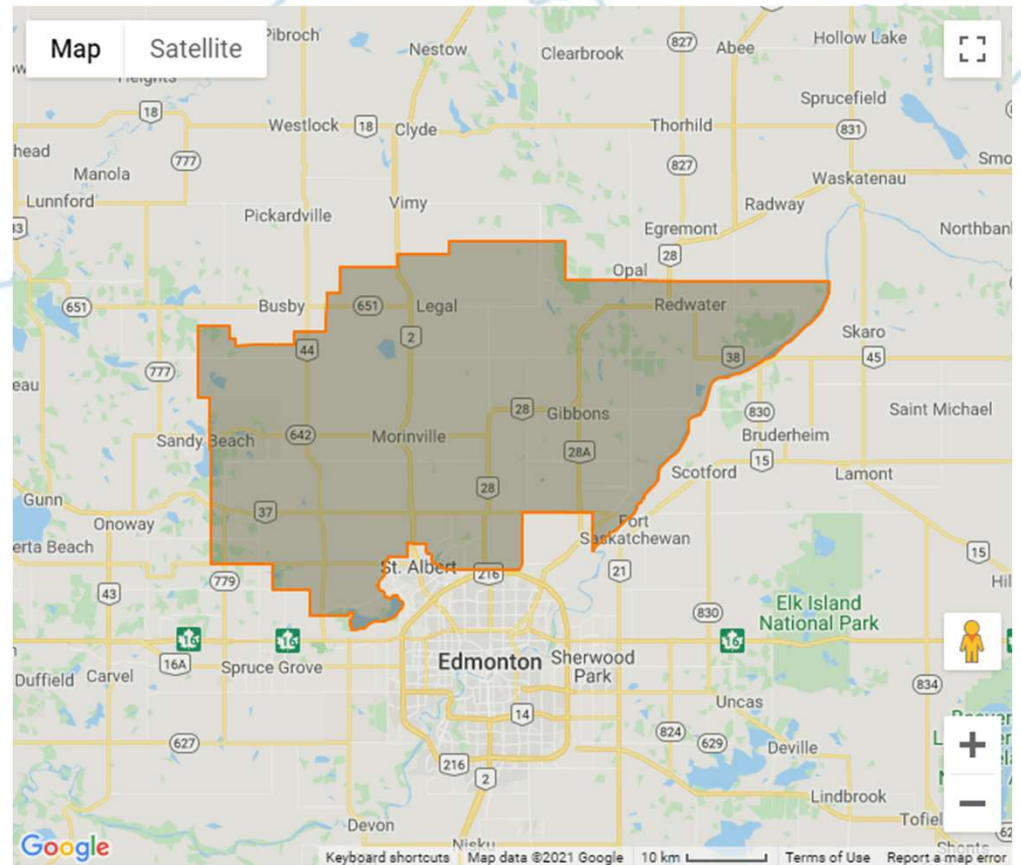
Sturgeon County deeply values local heritage and our role as stewards of our natural environment. We agree that the North Saskatchewan has a rich cultural, natural and recreational value and should be championed as an outstanding river. I am therefore pleased, on behalf of Sturgeon County, to provide this letter of support for Smoky Lake's endeavour to nominate the North Saskatchewan River for inclusion within the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS).

We look forward to the various informational reports you may develop, and to news of a successful designation.

Sincerely,

Mayor Alanna Hnatiw  
Sturgeon County

cc: Council, Sturgeon County  
Reegan McCullough, CAO Sturgeon County





## Who is in support?



<sup>^</sup>Courtesy of the Government of Alberta, Victoria Settlement Provincial Historic Site



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## Why should the NSR across Alberta be designated?

Further to the 2010 Gap Analysis, the Nomination of the NSR in Alberta will provide necessary additional representation of:

- The Prairie and Boreal Plains Terrestrial Ecozones
- Rare Fish, including Lake Sturgeon (*Nameo*)
- Cultural elements including Human Consumption, Interprovincial-Territorial Boundaries, Collection of Shellfish, and Land-based touring
- Representing a 718-kilometer segment of a 1,287-kilometre transportation corridor, the 12<sup>th</sup> longest river in Canada, flowing across three Provinces, to Lake Winnipeg, and onto Hudson's Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, facilitating a wide range of early commercial activities and land-based touring.
- A legacy of First Nations and Métis cultures to the region as evidenced in the numerous riverside archaeological and spiritual sites dating from time immemorial.
- A major historic trade and travel route to the heart of North America.
- A strong wildlife environment that continues today to support harvesting practices of Indigenous peoples, as it also supported their ancestors.





## What's Next?

- Presentation to CHRS Board in November was a success!
- Decision by Minister of Alberta Environment & Parks, and then Federal Minister of Environment Canada. (Winter 2022)
- Fundraising through grants & Industry
  - Industry & Government
  - Parks Canada Funding Contribution
  - Village of Vilna application to the Alberta Community Partnership (ACP)
- River Study & Management Plan (Spring 2023)



^Fire & Ice on the NSR (Abraham Reservoir). Sunrise, Christmas Day 2020; Clearwater County. Kyle Schole Photo





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## Looking ahead: River Study/Management Plan

We are committed to leading a collaborative management planning process, which will be centered on establishing and strengthening relationships along the North Saskatchewan.

- Identify accesses & Infrastructure
- Emergency Services
- Accommodation
- Public & Crown Lands Policy
- Biophysical



^Image courtesy of the  
Government of Alberta,  
Victoria Settlement  
Provincial Historic Site



^Comprehensive river study conducted on  
+200km of the Peace River from the BC  
Border to the Town of Peace River in 2020.



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## Call to action:

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*That the Mayor, on behalf of Council, send a letter of support to the Village of Vilna as the primary applicant, outlining the County's support as a partner for the application for the 2022-23 Alberta Community Partnership (ACP) grant in the amount of \$200,000 to complete a Management Plan for the North Saskatchewan River under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System.*



^Image courtesy of Explore Edmonton.

# Thank you & Questions



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**NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER IN ALBERTA**



Learn more at: <http://www.smokylakecounty.ab.ca/m/nsr-heritage-river-chrs>

Kyle Schole, Planning Technician  
cell: 780-650-2059 / office: 780-656-3730  
email: [kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca](mailto:kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca)

Jordan Ruegg, Planning Manager  
cell: 780-650-5207 / office: 780-656-3730  
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