

Chapter 8

Protecting, Presenting, and Enjoying Our Cultural Heritage

During our consultations, Chief Laurie Carr of the Hiawatha First Nation showed us some old photographs mounted on the wall along a corridor in her office. The photographs were of her people harvesting wild rice from Rice Lake. We were reminded with great sensitivity that the wild rice harvest was a traditional activity that started to disappear when dams were constructed in the 19th century, raising water levels in Rice Lake.

The long ago tradition of harvesting wild rice is part of the cultural heritage embodied in the waterway. This cultural heritage includes the buildings, the individual places and the specific events that tell the story of our past. But it also includes the wide range of human creativity and invention that has been influenced and inspired by the presence of water. It is the stories of people, the original people and the people who came more recently – how they came to be here, how they lived, how they sustained themselves and adapted to the land and how the land and water supported them. It is the stories of political evolution, of nation building and of the art, the music and the literature that emerged as an expression of people's lives and their relationship to the land and the water.

Our identity within these two large watersheds of Ontario has been and continues to be influenced by the presence of and use of water. This is a story of national significance – a story that needs to be protected and shared with those who live in and visit this region, including our children.

It seems to us that there are real opportunities to improve performance in protecting the cultural heritage of the waterway and providing Canadians with a chance to learn from and enjoy it. In this chapter, we offer recommendations on how the waterway's heritage can be protected; how Canadians can come to know and better understand that heritage; and finally, how Canadians' enjoyment of that heritage can be enhanced.

A Broader Perspective on Historic Significance

Our cultural resources discussion paper describes how the waterway came to be designated as nationally significant. In 1924, the Chairman of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada observed that construction of the canals of Canada were "important events in the industrial history of Canada."³¹ In 1929, the Trent and several other canals were designated as "nationally important." By 1938, the first official plaque appeared at Bobcaygeon marking construction of the lock as the beginning of the improvement of the natural waterway connecting Lake Ontario with Georgian Bay.

In 1967, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada designated the Rideau Canal as nationally significant. The Trent-Severn and other Canadian historic canals were deemed only to be of "national interest" likely because their historic infrastructure was not as intact as that of the Rideau. This relegation to something of a second-class historic status was reinforced by the Board in 1973 when it observed that "the canals of Canada have already been sufficiently commemorated and that no further commemorations be considered."³²

³¹ Taylor, J., cited in Carter-Edwards, Dennis. 2007. *Commemorating the Canal: the Trent Severn Waterway and the HSMBC*. Unpublished Parks Canada paper, p. 2.

³² HSMBC minutes. 1973. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 9.

In 1979, the Peterborough Lift Lock was subsequently given “national architectural significance.” Later, the Canal Lake Arch Bridge and the Simcoe to Balsam Lake section of the waterway were formally designated. Somewhat later, that significance was revisited and it was determined that being “part of Canada’s national canal system” was what made the waterway nationally important.

It seems to us that the perspective of both the Historic Sites and Monuments Board and Parks Canada has reflected too narrow a view of what makes the waterway significant.

We submit that its national significance lies in the long tradition of use and adaptation of the water and the associated landscapes of these two watersheds and the continuing evidence of that use and adaptation. First Nations people lived and traveled along the lakes and rivers many thousands of years ago. Ancient fish weirs under the waters of Atherley Narrows and Lovesick Lake, the petroglyphs at Stoney Lake, the artefacts at Healey Falls and Burleigh and the Serpent Mounds burial site on the shores of Rice Lake are some of the earliest chapters in the long and rich history of the waterway.

Samuel de Champlain voyaged along much of the waterway in the early 17th century. The Jesuits and fur traders followed remaking the culture of the place.

The log chute of Hawk Lake, recently reconstructed by volunteers, recaptures the era of a lumbering industry that extended into the Haliburton and North Kawartha wilderness. Lumbering and milling reshaped the landscape with construction of dams to support the mills and the movement of logs toward Lake Ontario and Georgian Bay and thence to faraway markets. Half-pay soldiers from the Napoleonic Wars continued the transformation as they “felled and brushed and cleared and fought a war with stump and stone.”³³

The waterway story is also one of constitutional change and the evolution from Huronia to Upper Canada to Canada and Ontario. It is a realization of the skill and vision of Nicol Hugh Baird, principal surveyor, and R. B. Rogers, Liftlock engineer, as well as the many others who believed in the dream of a waterway, kept the idea alive, planned the route, and designed and built engineering monuments such as the two liftlocks and the marine railway at Big Chute.

The waterway has also been a source of inspiration to our artists and storytellers. Mazo de la Roche, Stephen Leacock, Catherine Parr Trail, Tanglefoot, the Leahy family, Ronnie Hawkins, Franklin Carmichael, Ethel Curry, Katherine Wallis, Elizabeth Wyn Wood and Arthur Shilling are just some of the creative individuals who have drawn their “muse” from the waterway and land along the waterway for their writing, music and art.

The national significance of the dams and locks throughout the watersheds also lies in the positive and not so positive impact their construction had on the people of the region and how they lived. A vast engineering work, whose origins in many communities preceded the opening of the waterway and extended far beyond it, provided power and supported their growth. It also changed the lives and traditions of First Nations and flooded portions of their lands. The waterway continues to be a living and evolving entity and its designation needs to embrace that evolution.

We submit that wise precedent for what we are suggesting has already been set in the designation of **Sahoyúé-Şehdacho National Historic Site of Canada** on the south shore of Great Bear Lake in the N.W.T. as a cultural landscape. The watersheds of the Trent and Severn are no less important a reflection of the lives of our people over many centuries. Together, they indeed form a ***national heritage region***.

³³ Tanglefoot. 1994. “Immigrant Tears,” *Saturday Night in Hardwood Lake*, Tanglefoot Media. For lyrics see <http://www.tanglefootmusic.com/lyrics/snhl.htm#immigrants>.

RECOMMENDATION 19

Properly recognize the waterway's historic importance by designating the entire Trent and Severn watersheds as a cultural landscape of national historic significance.

Protecting Historic Resources

During our public consultations, we were impressed by the passion and commitment shown by Canadians toward the waterway stories. Many view the waterway as a valuable national heritage institution. The Orillia Museum of Art and History described it as a “rich depository of Canadian heritage.”³⁴ We agree.

Parks Canada is the federal agency mandated to protect the legacy of the people, places and events that are of national significance and to provide opportunities for Canadians to enjoy them. The highly committed staff of Parks Canada are admired by many for their knowledge and helpfulness. Parks Canada is one of the most highly respected government institutions in Canada.

We believe that Parks Canada is the right agency to protect the waterway and tell its story. However, we feel that its performance in many areas needs to improve. We have some suggestions.

The last cultural resource inventory of the waterway was completed in 1994-95 – more than a decade ago. That inventory identifies hundreds of historic resources – some owned by Parks Canada and many not. The list includes an Orange Lodge built on the banks of the Otonabee River in 1852, a power plant at the Quaker Oats Company in Peterborough, a bridge tender's house on the Trent University campus, an abandoned swing bridge, dams built in Haliburton in the early part of the last century, a theatre in Lindsay, the remnants of an historic inn at Gamebridge and our favourite, a “berth for spare gates stored under water.”

Few, if any, of Parks Canada's national historic sites rival the Trent-Severn Waterway for the number, diversity and geographic distribution of the historic resources that make up its story. Recent surveys also identify underwater archaeological resources including First Nations' sites and more modern entities such as the Ragged Rapids power plant.

We feel that Parks Canada is not adequately equipped to understand, protect and share information about the historic resources associated with the waterway. The historic resources inventory is outdated and incomplete. Asset condition reports have been completed for some resources but largely from an engineering perspective without considering historic values.

A 2004/05 Commemorative Integrity Evaluation reviewed some Level 1 and Level 2³⁵ assets and found many of them to be in “fair” condition. It was observed that as many as 10 per cent of the assets are subject to wear and tear due to operational use within a marine environment. The evaluation also noted that “some...are in poor condition and need major repair to retain their historic value and operational use.”³⁶ The evaluation did not assess all Parks Canada owned assets nor did it evaluate privately owned assets related to primary waterway themes.

³⁴ Orillia Museum of Art and History. 8 August 2007. *Submission to the Panel on the Future of the Trent-Severn Waterway*.

³⁵ Parks Canada's Cultural Resource Management Policy assigns “levels” of historic importance to individual assets with Level 1 assets being accorded the highest historic importance rating.

³⁶ Parks Canada, Trent-Severn Waterway National Historic Site of Canada. 2005. *Commemorative Integrity Evaluation: 2004/5 Executive Summary*, p. 3.

It is widely accepted that protection of natural resources requires regular monitoring to ensure awareness of their condition, use and threats. Parks Canada has established monitoring programs to protect ecological integrity within national parks. We urge that a similar monitoring program be established to provide for the protection of cultural resources in Canada's national historic sites.

We believe that the presence of a senior cultural resource specialist at the waterway management table would provide the professional expertise and ongoing advocacy that cultural resource protection requires. Such a position would also serve as a focus for the development of partnerships with other cultural institutions and private owners to encourage the protection of historic resources not owned by Parks Canada.

This position must be supported by adequate technical expertise. Currently, such expertise is drawn from a Professional and Technical Service Centre located in Cornwall and Ottawa. The services provided by the centre are of high quality, particularly in the areas of conservation, historical research and underwater archaeology. The trend to co-locate service centre staff with parks and sites is a positive one that should be encouraged. Proximity to the actual historic resource builds knowledge and relationships that cannot be duplicated from a distance. Notwithstanding existence of the service centre, a "knowledgeable client" capacity at the local level is essential to maximizing its effectiveness.

In our meetings with First Nations, our attention was drawn to the very real threats to underwater archaeological sites, particularly those relating to First Nations heritage. There are probably thousands of such sites along the waterway, many of which were flooded by construction of dams over the last two centuries. First Nations people showed us examples of the artefacts that have been found through a largely informal diving program. These included 1,500-year old Algonquin pottery, a 9,000 year-old projectile point and remnants of fish weirs that are more than four millennia old.

It was suggested to us that development along the shore and in the water should not be permitted without a requirement for an underwater archaeological survey. It was also suggested that a more detailed inventory of underwater archaeological sites be prepared in partnership with local dive clubs and others.

We agree in principle with those recommendations although we understand that they come with significant logistical and cost implications. To fully assess the implications of these recommendations we suggest that Parks Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Culture, together with First Nations, develop a better understanding of the challenge and consider a strategy to ensure that key First Nations archaeological resources are protected.

Parks Canada is also custodian of an impressive and diverse collection of documentary material associated with the construction, maintenance and operation of the waterway. The collection includes plans and drawings for individual engineering works, lock stations and proposed routes including N.H. Baird's original coloured drawings of the first detailed canal survey in the 1830s. The numerous contracts for building and repairing works along the waterway are carefully detailed in the voluminous ledgers that form part of the archival collection.

Over the years, waterway workers and staff took hundreds of photographs of construction activity along the waterway. This collection of photographs constitutes a unique visual record of the evolution of the extensive features along the entire corridor. Other records such as decades of data on water levels throughout the watershed, realty transactions, routine correspondence and personal diaries provide valuable insight into particular aspects of the waterway. Collectively, this material constitutes a nationally significant cultural resource.

These documents were only recently moved to a separate storage area. The storage area does not meet accepted archival standards for protecting such unique documents. But at least it is an important start.

The collection is now being digitized to make the information more accessible for regular use, and able to be searched without the risk of damaging the original documents.

We believe that Parks Canada needs to take the next steps to properly protect the collection and to provide access for research. Parks Canada could construct and staff a new facility to house the collection. However, we suggest that a partnership with another archival organization such as the Peterborough Museum and Archives, the Trent University Archives or the Trent Valley Archives would be a better approach.

RECOMMENDATION 20

Significantly enhance Parks Canada's capacity to manage its historic resources throughout the waterway region by:

- (a) Implementing an ongoing cultural resource inventory and monitoring program;**
- (b) Enhancing cultural resource management capacity through additional managerial and technical staff;**
- (c) Considering a strategy to protect First Nations archaeological resources in concert with the Ontario Ministry of Culture and First Nations; and,**
- (d) Entering into a partnership with another organization to protect and provide access to the original archival material documenting the surveying and construction of the waterway.**

Enhancing Interpretation and Education

The Trent-Severn Waterway is geographically Canada's largest national historic site with an annual visitation that is higher than all but a few of the national parks and historic sites administered by Parks Canada. More than 50 million people live within a day's drive and more than 10 million people can visit one of its 44 lock stations with a drive of less than two hours.

During the summer of 2007, a total of 137,000 boats, each carrying several passengers, passed through locks. Parks Canada's statistics record 1.4 million land-based visitors to lock stations although we believe the actual number is much higher.

Statistics Canada recently reported that almost half the people in the Greater Toronto Area were born somewhere other than Canada. Forecasts suggest that the GTA population could increase by 3.5 million people in the next 25 years mostly through immigration. These new Canadians represent an extraordinary audience for the important stories the waterway can tell them about Canada.

There are more than a thousand schools in the region full of students who could also learn from the stories of the waterway.

Despite the existence of the largest and most diverse audience in the Parks Canada system, the education and interpretation program at the Trent-Severn Waterway was virtually eliminated during the 1990s. There are currently no curriculum-based education programs that tell students about the waterway. There are no personal interpretation programs delivered to waterway visitors. Most of the interpretative signage found at individual locks and at the Peterborough Lift Lock Visitor Centre is more than two decades old. We do acknowledge that new funding has been identified to upgrade the aging interpretive signage along the waterway. This is helpful but would be more so if the capacity existed to do the required planning and assessment of effectiveness on an ongoing basis.

We strongly feel that the lack of a comprehensive interpretation program represents a lost opportunity on the part of Parks Canada to deliver on its mandate and we urge the Agency take immediate and substantial steps to take advantage of a huge audience that would benefit from the stories. We have several suggestions in that regard.

First, an extraordinary number of cultural institutions – museums, galleries and historic places – are presently engaged in telling the stories of this heritage region. This is a ready-made network of protectors and storytellers with whom Parks Canada should work.

Second, we were repeatedly struck during our consultations by comments about the knowledge and helpfulness of staff at the locks and bridges. We also heard from front line staff themselves of their passion for telling the waterway stories. Yet their job descriptions contain little or no reference to communications and interpretation. These men and women should be regarded as the waterway's storytellers. They should be recruited and paid for an interest and skill in communicating with the public and their job descriptions should reflect that responsibility. They should be provided with the training, information and support to enable them to do that job and they should be evaluated on their performance in that respect.

Finally, the national heritage region constitutes a major educational resource to students and researchers in the natural, cultural and social sciences. Outreach programs targeted at schools and ethno-cultural communities could carry both the waterway story and the stories of Canada to important audiences that Parks Canada is currently not reaching. Cooperative research and science opportunities could be developed through a network of university and college cooperative research and teaching units similar to that found in association with American national parks and historic sites. This concept has been considered for Canadian national parks and we suggest that the notion be broadened to embrace historic sites.

RECOMMENDATION 21

Significantly improve Parks Canada's capacity to tell the waterway story to visitors, students and residents of the larger waterway region by:

- (a) Investing significant new resources in interpretation and communications staff;**
- (b) Developing and implementing an interpretive plan that reflects the stronger and broader vision that we have described;**
- (c) Revising the recruitment and training model for lock and bridge staff to enhance their ability to become Parks Canada's front line storytellers;**
- (d) Implementing a curriculum-based schools extension program; and,**
- (e) Establishing a network of cooperative research and teaching units with educational institutions through the heritage region.**

Designating and Protecting Cultural, Natural and Scenic Landscapes

The concept of a heritage region includes valued landscapes that are essential to the Region's heritage identity. Cultural landscapes convey significant historic themes and contribute to its historic character. The Peterborough Lift Lock, for example, would have much less impact were it surrounded by high-rise buildings. The City of Peterborough is conscious of the importance of this icon but that consciousness has not been translated into a formal protocol between the city and Parks Canada.

Scenic landscapes contribute immeasurably to the experience of waterway visitors by providing visual evidence of past natural conditions and of the evolution of land use, particularly agricultural. There are, for example, almost no

remaining views of the Canadian Shield landscape of the Severn section of the waterway that don't have cottages and resorts and other buildings along the shoreline. This is a great loss to the experience.

Natural landscapes along the waterway encompass some of the most productive habitats in Canada including significant fish sanctuaries and hundreds of wetlands. These natural areas are valued for their ecological importance, but also for their economic, research, aesthetic, religious and cultural contributions.

We are concerned about the loss of these cultural, scenic and natural landscapes. These landscapes are just as important to the history of the waterway as the original locks, bridges, dams and buildings. As they disappear, we're losing important visual representations of our past. We're also losing opportunities to build awareness and to provide sites for research and education.

In the 1971 *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* plan and in the 2000 Parks Canada Management Plan for the waterway, landscapes of importance have been identified. Virtually no concrete action, however, has ever been taken to ensure their protection. Parks Canada and municipalities along the waterway must work together to ensure that some of these land-scapes are preserved for the education and enjoyment of future generations.

RECOMMENDATION 22

Protect important cultural, scenic and natural landscapes throughout the waterway region by:

- (a) Updating the list of designated landscapes;**
- (b) Developing formal protocols with municipalities to provide for their protection; and,**
- (c) Encouraging municipalities to designate important landscapes within their jurisdictions.**

Improving the Visitor Experience

Canadians spend a lot of time dreaming about the water. The image of spending time on or beside the water distracts almost all of us when we find ourselves in our workplaces on those hot and humid summer days that characterize Ontario. We think how nice it would be to have a cottage or to visit a resort on a lake somewhere. We think about sitting in a boat fishing with our children and grandchildren or taking the family to the beach. We think about watching the boats go by, some from far away places, and wish we had a boat.

Recreational use of the waterway is a tangible expression of that dream. We have traditionally thought of boating and, in particular, use of the locks as the main recreational use of the waterway. However, we now understand its importance to a wide range of users and how it is an essential contributor to the social health of our communities.

The number and diversity of waterway users is extraordinary. Boaters travel the entire length of the system, pass through a single lock to visit friends on the next lake or go to town to shop or visit restaurants. The waterway is a destination for long distance boaters – the Great Loopers who travel the Canadian and the U. S. waterways. It provides boating opportunities to fishers, cottagers and residents who visit and live along its length and on the Haliburton lakes. Nobody knows how many people use the waterway in these ways, but the number likely reaches into the six-figure range. The National Geographic recently included the Trent-Severn among its “Journeys of a Lifetime: 500 of the World’s Greatest Trips.”³⁷

³⁷ Retrieved from the World Wide Web: <http://travel.canoe.ca/Travel/News/2007/12/05/4708987-cp.html>.

Non-boaters use the waterway to an even greater extent. More than 1.5 million people a year visit lock stations to fish, picnic and watch the boats. Provincial parks, conservation areas and municipal and county parks serve countless others – both waterway residents and visitors from the Greater Toronto Area. More than 16,000 camp-sites, mostly privately-owned, offer low cost access to the waterway.

During our consultations, we heard many suggestions on how service could be enhanced, particularly for boaters. Suggestions included showers and shore power, longer hours of service, more mooring around communities, reduced aquatic vegetation in the navigation channels, reduction or elimination of lockage fees to encourage increased use, improved labour relations, better customer service and enhanced promotional efforts.

We don't have sufficient information to evaluate most of these suggestions. However, we also don't believe that Parks Canada understands its products and customers well enough to adequately consider them either. As far as we were able to determine, Parks Canada has very little information on who its customers are now and who they might be in the future.

We suggest that a professional effort be made to understand, in detail, who waterway customers are, where they come from or might come from and what elements of the service and price might influence their decisions. Parks Canada needs, for example, to find out why most of the 40,000 resident boaters along the system are not using the locks. They also need to better understand the nature of what is probably their most rapidly growing market segment – family visits from GTA ethno-cultural communities.

Understanding the current market is a beginning. On an ongoing basis, Parks Canada needs to be more sophisticated in measuring actual use of and customer satisfaction with its services and facilities on the waterway. This requires a real-time, electronic user-monitoring system that allows managers to have a much better idea of when, where and by whom their services are being used. It also requires ongoing measurement of customer satisfaction and not just the periodic surveys that occur now.

This should not be Parks Canada's challenge alone as there are many potential partners with an interest in successfully accommodating visitor use of the waterway. The marine industry and businesses adjacent to the waterway derive huge benefit from both land and water-based use. Municipalities and the province are also important beneficiaries through tourism and associated tax revenues. We believe that these organizations should work together to better understand and respond to market demand and should contribute both financially and otherwise to these efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 23

Improve Parks Canada's ability to understand and respond to changing market demand and customer satisfaction through professional market analysis, customer tracking and satisfaction measurement in partnership with the Province and business organizations.

Aids to Navigation

We would like to comment on the controversial issue of removal of navigation aids. During 2006, Parks Canada removed approximately 400 of over 2,000 buoys and other aids to navigation along the waterway. The removal was part of a broader effort to balance the waterway budget and occurred after a review of the existing navigation aids in concert with the Canadian Coast Guard. The removal has evoked substantial public criticism. Many members of the public and some business operators along the waterway told us that this decision was ill-advised and put lives

and property at risk. Criticism has not been universal, however. More than one member of the Canadian Power and Sail Squadron advised us that the removal of aids was reasonable.

We have talked to Parks Canada, members of the public and representatives of the Coast Guard. We accept that the decisions made in the recent review of the aids to navigation were based on sound standards and criteria used elsewhere. But we wonder if the standards applied were designed to accommodate the kind of boaters that typically use the waterway. Coast Guard representatives also suggested informally that more public involvement would have improved the process.

We urge Parks Canada, the Coast Guard and users to think about whether or not the unique nature of the waterway and the inexperience and/or unfamiliarity of many of its users warrant a different standard. We think it probably does.

RECOMMENDATION 24

Ensure boater safety and enjoyment of the waterway by revisiting, in consultation with the Coast Guard and a panel of users, the standards used in the recent review of aids to navigation and consider replacement of some of the removed buoys where inexperienced boaters and those new to the waterway might be at risk.