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The North Saskatchewan River Museum Project Statement of Intent

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North Saskatchewan River headwaters and the Saskatchewan Glacier

Introduction

Commentary on the Saskatchewan River has included the following:

"Between 1776 and 1798, five different Fort Sturgeons were built in the area around present day Prince Albert by the North West Company, the Hudson's Bay Company and the XY Company."¹

"The Saskatchewan or 'the river that runs swift' is truly well named, for even upon the smoothest and deepest parts of the river, long lines of bubbles and foam, ever speeding swiftly and noiselessly by, serve to indicate the velocity with which this mighty artery courses unceasingly onward, swelling as it goes, with the gatherings of its many wide-spreading tributaries, to mingle its restless and muddy waters in the Arctic Seas."²

"Shoals, sand bars, ice, and floods - the words pepper all accounts of Saskatchewan River steamboating. ...Not a boat of any kind made the trip from Grand Rapids to Edmonton without a mile or two of hauling. ... During the winter of 1884-85 Captain Dogle of the SS Marquis lived in a shack on the north shore of the North Branch at the mouth of the Sturgeon,..."³

In 1910, a survey of the river was conducted by the federal department of public works to identify the costs and feasibility of creating a commercial transportation corridor from The Pas to Edmonton.⁴

¹ Milholland, Billie. (2002). **North Saskatchewan River guide: mountain to prairie a living landscape**. Edmonton: North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance. p. "reach 26" first page.

² Hind, Henry Youle.(1860) **Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan exploring expedition of 1858**. London: Charles E. Tuttle Company. (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig, c1971. Reprint of narrative first published in 1860, with a new introduction by Roy St. George Stubbs.). p. 444.

³ Campbell, M.J. (1950). **The Saskatchewan**. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Ltd. P. 221

⁴ Voligny, L.R. (engineer in charge). (1917). "Report of the survey of the North Saskatchewan River from Edmonton to Lake Winnipeg, 1910-1915." Ottawa: Canada, Department of Public Works.

Natural resources have been transported along the river, furs, timber, coal and so on, spurring settlement and economic activity. Here is what MacGregor had to say in 1949 about that history:

"(Europeans) had poled and paddled up its headwaters in the Rockies, and at the same time established a fur trade empire, the likes of which the world had never seen, using the Saskatchewan as their main artery of travel. Following the fur trader came the explorer, the missionary, the gold seeker and, finally, the homesteader and farmer. ... Great cities grew up at favorable points on the prairies, most of them on the broad Saskatchewan itself."⁵

Activity on the North Saskatchewan, of course, continues today. The river is used as a water supply, as a waste water carrier, for recreational purposes, for transportation, and it is used in the generation of power.

What follows is a description of the proposed project.

The Museum and Archive: a description of intent

While the river's natural history as well as related scientific research and academic papers are being tracked by various organizations such as the SWA (Saskatchewan Watershed Authority) and the NSWA (The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance), the proposed North Saskatchewan River Museum and Archive (NSRM) is intended to collect information on and artifacts relating to the historical and contemporary social, economic and political influences of the river on surrounding communities (aboriginal and non-aboriginal). It will also document the use of the river by individuals, groups and communities. These are topics left unaddressed in an organized fashion by any organization that focuses some part of its resources on the North Saskatchewan River.

The main objective of the museum is to maintain archives, both real and virtual (see a test website: web.ncf.ca/er075/nsrm.html) with a priority on public access for research, educational and publication purposes. A second priority for the museum itself will be the use of the archived material in the development of educational programming.

The strategy of the NSRM in the following months will be to prepare proposals for funding for research to identify the feasibility of the museum/archive, the niche it will occupy and its relationship with other organizations.

The result of the research will be a report on the future of the museum and archive including its organization and structure, budgets and funding-raising activities, data and artifact collection and storage, as well as the maintenance and continual development of the virtual archive, including its use, in part, as a social networking site.

⁵ MacGregor, J.G. (1949). Blankets and Beads: A History of the Saskatchewan River. Edmonton: Institute of Applied Art. pp. 9-10.