



News Release

For Immediate Release: 12:00 Noon Thursday June 29, 2017

Commemorate Canada 150 on a Canadian Heritage River!

June 29 – July 1st, 2017

Athabasca River

Today the Athabasca and its Keepers host a unique 3-day canoe voyage of Athabasca Watershed Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation and the importance and value of Keeping this Canadian Heritage River for all living things. This wild, beautiful and still free, undammed river provides Boreal homes and livelihood for all peoples and a great diversity of native plants and animals—featuring such creatures as Bald Eagles, moose, bear, lynx and many more.

Celebrating the Athabasca River – Commemorating Canada's 150th

Canada's 150th is on July 1; Indigenous peoples have been present and sustainably caretaking this water, air and land for over 15,000 years. Keepers of the Athabasca's Flowing into Right Relationship paddle and workshop series invites us to learn more about our natural and cultural history and plan better ways to move forward together. This reach from Mirror Landing to Athabasca has provided a vital highway for Original Peoples from ancient times. During pioneer days, this stretch provided canoe and paddle wheeler transportation for settlers moving from Athabasca Landing to Lesser Slave Lake and the Peace Country and the Klondike gold rush as well as on up to Ft. Assiniboine to Jasper and beyond to British Columbia.

We will travel from Smith (Mirror Landing) to Athabasca, overnighting at Tomato Creek, a traditional stopping place for Indigene, fur traders, settlers, and travelers, arriving at the River Rats Festival with a traditional Indigenous prayer welcome to the territory, a water ceremony and drum dance for Canada Day. At the waterfront in Athabasca, our ground crew will set up tipis and we will have a talking circle for story sharing, and conversations about the indigenous history of the area.

It is our goal to bring people together and to speak truthfully about the challenges our great river and our peoples face when we reach for truth, reconciliation and healing the water, land and people. Our canoe trip will bring people back on the river, back on the old traditional highway, to connect with the wild land and move at a slower pace than our day-to-day lives. We all need to start listening to the water and land and to the way the Indigenous people managed the land. Hopefully, this way we can restore balance. As the Peoples of Turtle Island have always believed, The Keepers of the Water acknowledge that Water is Life and a Sacred Gift to be treasured and protected by each of us humans.

In 2017, Canadians are uniting for Canada 150 from coast to coast to coast by celebrating their Canadian Heritage Rivers at the heart of their communities.

“The 150th anniversary of Confederation provides Canadians with the wonderful opportunity to become active in their communities and celebrate the rich history of their rivers. Communities across the country will take part in events that highlight the importance of preserving our precious natural resources for future generations.”

*The Honourable Mélanie Joly
Minister of Canadian Heritage*

“As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation, I encourage Canadians to visit and learn about the importance of Canadian Heritage Rivers. Our rivers tell the stories of our land and people. Their role was crucial in trade and transportation and in building a sense of identity and pride in communities across the country. I am pleased to see that communities across the country are celebrating Canada 150 with their heritage rivers.”

*The Honourable Catherine McKenna
Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister responsible for Parks Canada*

“We all have the same feeling when we go to our rivers—that feeling of wonder and amazement, the peace and calm that comes over us and the sensation that we are at the edge of something grand. This is what rivers give us: a sense of place, a sense of self, a sense of connection and a sense of pride.”

*Molly Demma
Project Director and Executive Director
The St. John River Society (New Brunswick / NB)*

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) is Canada’s national river conservation program. Established in 1984, the CHRS gives national recognition to Canada’s outstanding rivers and encourages their long-term management to conserve their natural, cultural and recreational values for the benefit and enjoyment of Canadians, now and in the future. There are currently 42 Canadian Heritage Rivers across the country, totalling close to 12,000 km.

For background information on the Athabasca please visit <http://chrs.ca/the-rivers/athabasca/>

Related Links



[Canadian Heritage Rivers System](#)



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Contacts

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Eau Canada! Video

See and hear river enthusiasts from across the country sing their rendition of O Canada! in honour of Canada 150.

<https://youtu.be/sV-3YkxhDIQ>



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