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# Mission: *To develop Manitoba's Red River as a destination*

The mission of Rivers West is seemingly simple but one that involves the complexities associated with conservation and greenway issues, creating tourism products that capitalize on the Red River's beauty and history, and marketing to visitors and residents. Since the inception of Rivers West in 1999, the organization has gained momentum and achieves its goals through partnerships with government, business and communities along the Red.

Rivers West is governed by a 25 person Board of Directors. Directors are elected by members or appointed by participating communities. Membership is diverse and comprised of any resident in the Rivers West geographic area or an individual who holds an executive position inside an organization within the geographic area.

# Product Development



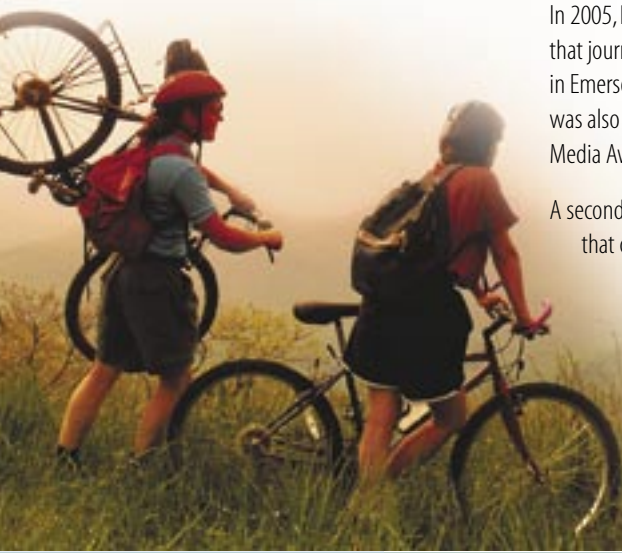
To encourage Manitobans and visitors to explore the culture, geography, history and wildlife of the Red River Valley, Rivers West created a series of self-directed tours. Created under the brand name of *Routes on the Red*, these half or full day excursions bring Manitoba's past to life by introducing visitors to the stories and sites of the fur trade, the lives of the early settlers and Aboriginal people as well as the unique geography and natural flora and fauna of the Red River Valley.

Within each itinerary, visitors find comprehensive directions on how to travel the designated routes plus fascinating facts that present the historic Red in a new way. Ideal for individuals or families, these day trips extend from Lake Winnipeg to Emerson and offer options for cycling, paddling, walking and driving tours.

All marketing efforts drive visitor traffic to the [routesonthered.ca](http://routesonthered.ca) website where each of the itineraries can be downloaded instantly. Full-colour bilingual lure brochures promoting the attractions along the way are also available online and at provincial tourism information centres.

In 2005, Rivers West opened The Forgotten Forest Interpretive Trail, a 1.6 km all-season hiking trail that journeys through the rare and diverse river-bottom forest. The trail is located at Fort Dufferin in Emerson, Manitoba along the Red River. A self-guiding Forgotten Forest interpretive trail guide was also developed and it was awarded first place in the National Association for Interpretation Media Awards in the trail guide category.

A second trail, the St. Norbert Heritage Trail features a series of self-guided walking trails that cover approximately 15 kilometres. Based in and around the community of St. Norbert, the trail and the accompanying trail guidebook explores a storied history that includes a past life as a vital trading centre, as the starting point for annual buffalo hunts and as a transportation hub beginning in the early 1800s.



The Routes on the Red self-directed tours were designed to suit the needs of today's independent and group travelers who want an active and cultural experience with opportunities for learning.

## Follow the Routes on the Red to Adventure

### There are 20 tours to enjoy!

#### Fur Trading Routes on the Red

- People of the Fur Trade
- In the Footsteps of the Voyageurs
- In the Paddlestrokes of the Voyageurs
- Waters of the Fur Trade
- Markets Then & Now
- The Sacred Heart of St. Norbert

#### Settlers Routes on the Red

- People of the Red River Settlement
- Métis and the Path to Confederation
- French & Mennonite Settlement
- Winnipeg's Residential Riverbanks

#### Nature & First Nations

- Routes on the Red
- Glaciers to Grasslands
- First Peoples of the Red
- Shores of Lake Agassiz
- Floods of the Red River Valley
- Prehistoric Prairies

#### Arts & Cultural Routes on the Red

- Gabrielle Roy's St. Boniface
- Galleries and Museums of the Red River Valley
- Carol Shields' Manitoba
- Art, Antiques and Architecture
- Fictional Winnipeg – Murder Mystery Tour





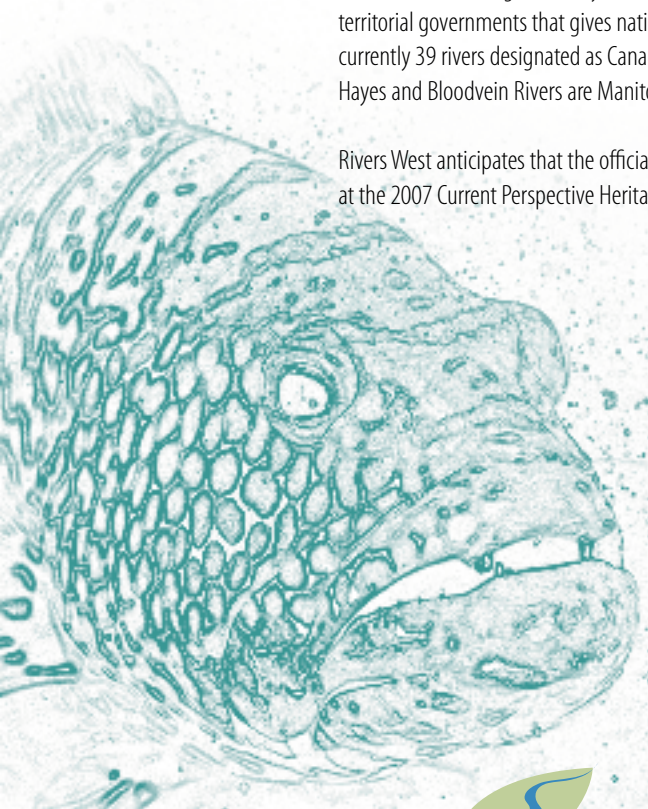
## Heritage on the Red

To recognize the Red River's cultural and heritage values, Rivers West took a lead role in the nomination and anticipated designation of the Red River as a Canadian Heritage River. For the Red to become officially designated as a Canadian Heritage River, Rivers West and the Province of Manitoba have completed a Red River Designation document that outlines a management approach for conserving and promoting Red River culture heritage, natural heritage and recreational values.

This extensive process has involved consultations and workshops to determine how Rivers West and all Manitoba stakeholders are working to manage, conserve, protect and promote Red River values.

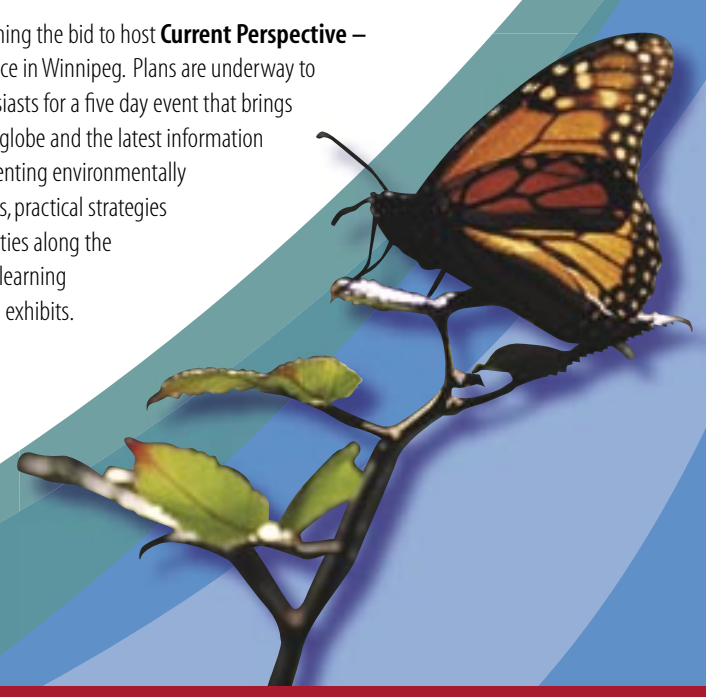
The Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) is a cooperative program of the federal, provincial and territorial governments that gives national recognition to the important rivers of Canada. There are currently 39 rivers designated as Canadian Heritage Rivers (CHRs) in all of Canada. The Seal, Hayes and Bloodvein Rivers are Manitoba's existing CHRs.

Rivers West anticipates that the official designation of the Red River will be announced by the CHRS at the 2007 Current Perspective Heritage Rivers Conference in Winnipeg.



### **Current Perspective** 5th Canadian River Heritage Conference **07**

Rivers West was successful in winning the bid to host **Current Perspective** – the 2007 Heritage Rivers Conference in Winnipeg. Plans are underway to attract more than 200 river enthusiasts for a five day event that brings together experts from around the globe and the latest information on how communities are implementing environmentally sustainable management practices, practical strategies for maximizing tourism opportunities along the river and a hands-on approach to learning through field trips, workshops and exhibits.



# Greenway & Conservation

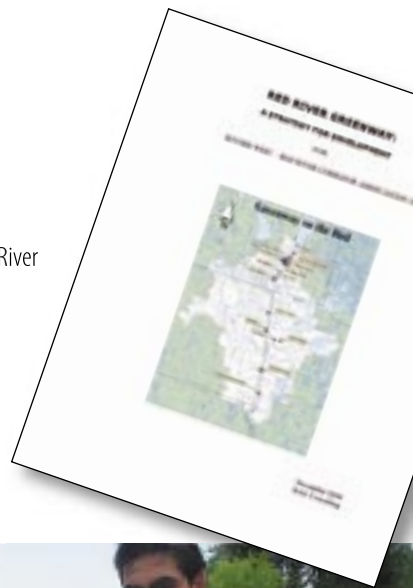
Beginning in fall of 2005, Rivers West, in cooperation with the Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA), undertook a preliminary study to explore recreational plans and possibilities that would complement the expansion of the Red River Floodway. Rivers West consulted with stakeholders such as recreational users, non-government organizations, local municipalities and other organizations with an interest in the development along the expanded floodway. Three open houses were also held to encourage feedback from communities along the Red.

In addition, Rivers West developed a strategy for implementing a greenway along Manitoba's Red River. This plan was created in partnership with Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation and the Nature Conservancy of Canada (Manitoba) as part of the Province of Manitoba's commitment to developing a 250 km greenway along the Red for tourism, economic development, recreation and flood mitigation.

Every year, Rivers West works in partnership to support *Operation Clean-Up*, a program designed to clean-up a 50 km stretch of land along both sides of the Red River.

From May to October, two *Operation Clean-Up* employees travel the shores of the Red raking and shoveling cigarette butts and litter and removing larger items from the water and from 70 trash barrels located along the river. Each year more than 33,000 pounds of garbage are collected and removed – much of it left behind by anglers, tourists, spring run-off and heavy water flow from the south.

Ecological reserves play a key role in protecting unique, rare and representative examples of plants, animals, geological features and ecosystems. In 2005, Rivers West identified a 7 hectare area south of Winnipeg along the eastern bank of the Red River that was privately owned by Tom and Jennifer Shay. Today this property is known as the Jennifer and Tom Shay Ecological Reserve and is home to a relatively undisturbed river-bottom forest. Biological surveys conducted within the reserve have recorded over 150 plant species and 180 bird species including an exceptional variety of both resident and migrant birds. An archaeological site also exists on the reserve and contains artifacts that indicate human occupation up to 2000 years ago.



# Education

The eco-system along the Red provides a unique learning opportunity for students that is directly related to current provincial education curricula. To assist teachers in presenting the information to their classes, Rivers West developed two curriculum guides.

The Grade 4 Curriculum Guide: Habitat Means Home is designed to instruct students about the importance of river-bottom forest in the Red River Basin. It is a fun, activity-based guide using the Grade 4 Science Curriculum, Habitat and Communities Unit that encourages students to appreciate and become good stewards of the river-bottom forest. The educational package also includes PowerPoint presentations and a map.



The second guide is devoted to Grade 8 science students and focuses on the Red River Basin Water Systems. This learning tool includes background information, activities, field trip locations, and resource information such as websites. A number of specially designed field trips were designed for this curriculum guide in partnership with communities along the Red River as a means of addressing topics such as watersheds, erosion, flooding, flood mitigation, drinking water, waste water and pollution, and water management issues.

Rivers West also hosted *Route to the Future*, an interactive workshop for stakeholders along the Red. This one-day event was designed to set priorities and establish future directions for Rivers West and the Red, as well as to find new ways to partner with communities. More than 75 people attended and new strategies were developed in the areas of conservation, marketing and product development.



# Marketing and Media Relations

Rivers West developed a three-year marketing plan that focuses on attracting Manitobans as well as visitors from nearby regional markets. All marketing efforts from print materials to advertising direct consumers to the Routes on the Red website to allow the organization to keep printing and fulfillment costs low.

## Marketing highlights include:

- > Distributing 50,000 free-standing print inserts to Manitoba households in 2005 and 100,000 inserts to Alberta and Manitoba households in 2006;
- > Partnering with Travel Manitoba to promote the Routes on the Red message in more than two million inserts distributed to daily newspapers in Minneapolis, North Dakota, Saskatchewan and NW Ontario;
- > Creating a print advertising campaign in rural Manitoba newspapers, *La Liberté* and publications for regional teachers.



Traffic to the websites has increased substantially over the past two years.

hits

### Riverswest.ca

2004	92,200
2005	170,000

### Routesonthered.ca

2004	180,100
2005	355,200



The new Rivers West and Routes on the Red websites are easy to use for browsers.

## Find Gold on the Red

As a means of introducing Manitobans to the Routes on the Red, Rivers West launched the *Find Gold on the Red* contest. This treasure-hunt style contest directs Manitobans to the local newspaper and its Routes on the Red website for daily clues and their chance to find a \$1000 cash prize hidden somewhere along the routes. A total of \$3,000 is awarded. To extend the reach of this campaign, marketing partnerships with the Winnipeg Free Press and radio stations BOB FM/Q94 FM were developed. This allowed Rivers West to lever its \$11,500 investment into a media value of over \$52,000.



## Media Relations

In 2006, Rivers West created and launched a media relations program for travel writers. Representatives from Rivers West attended the Canadian Tourism Commission's Media Marketplace which provided the organization with a face-to-face opportunity to introduce the Routes on the Red products to a group of more than 150 US travel writers. As a result, writers have confirmed their attendance at an upcoming Routes on the Red summer media trip and others are planning to visit in the fall.

For the Routes on the Red media visit, Rivers West will host five Canadian and US travel writers over four days. Their customized itinerary allows the writers an opportunity to develop story ideas around paddling, cycling, and walking the Routes on the Red, exploring river communities and attractions and enjoying gourmet regional and ethnic cuisine.

Rivers West will also host 12 members of the Travel Media Association of Canada for an afternoon excursion along the Red as well as a British Columbia writer who is pursuing a story for the *Toronto Star*.





# Thank you

*A special thank you to our partners!*

- BOB FM
- Canada Manitoba Economic Partnership Agreement
- Canadian Tourism Commission
- Cloutier Drive Residents' Association
- Destination Winnipeg
- Manitoba Floodway Authority
- Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation
- Manitoba Hydro
- Manitoba Recreational Trails Association
- Nature Conservancy of Canada (Manitoba)
- Province of Manitoba
- Q94 FM
- Robert Belanger - Operation Clean Up
- Sustainable Development Innovations Fund
- The Forks North Portage Partnership
- Travel Manitoba
- Western Economic Diversification
- Winnipeg Free Press



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