

FACT SHEET

Nomination of *Áísínai'pi* – Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park as a UNESCO World Heritage Site



WHY SHOULD WE NOMINATE *ÁÍSÍNAI'PI* – WRITING-ON-STONE PROVINCIAL PARK AS A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE?

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage recognition is awarded only to those sites that are considered to be of outstanding universal value. It is the highest form of international recognition that a place can receive.

Áísínai'pi – Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park has the highest concentration and greatest diversity of rock art (images carved and painted on rock surfaces) on the Northern Plains of North America. More than 100 rock art sites have already been recorded in the *Áísínai'pi* – Writing-on-Stone area. *Áísínai'pi* – Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park also represents a cultural landscape of outstanding universal value, where Aboriginal oral traditions and rock art images are associated with spectacular natural landforms, viewscales, and topography.

Designation will acknowledge the important role of *Áísínai'pi* – Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park in Aboriginal culture and history, and its continued significance to the Blackfoot people. The history of the North-West Mounted Police and the early European settlement of the Writing-on-Stone area are also significant stories of the region. These aspects of history will continue to be presented and interpreted in the park. The new visitor centre includes exhibits and information on these important historical themes.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF WORLD HERITAGE SITE DESIGNATION?

World Heritage Sites include the greatest human achievements on earth, such as Stonehenge, the Great Pyramids of Egypt, and the Parthenon of Greece.

Designation of *Áísínai'pi* – Writing-on-Stone as a World Heritage Site will raise the international profile of the provincial park, and regional tourism and economic benefits can be expected.

Designation can also lead to greater international-federal-provincial cooperation in enhancing the interpretation and conservation of a site.

WILL THE NAME OF THE PARK CHANGE BECAUSE OF WORLD HERITAGE SITE STATUS?

The provincial park name will continue to be Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. However, the proposed name for the World Heritage Site will be *Áísínai'pi* – Writing-on-Stone. *Áísínai'pi* is the name that Blackfoot people use for the area which means “it is pictured/written”.

WHAT IS THE AREA TO BE DESIGNATED? WILL DESIGNATION APPLY TO PRIVATE OR LEASE LAND?

The proposed World Heritage Site nomination property is restricted to the boundaries of Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. No private land or public lease lands will be included in the nominated property. The total

size of the proposed nomination area is approximately 1718 hectares. The nomination property is owned and managed by the Government of Alberta.

IS A BUFFER ZONE PROPOSED?

A specific buffer zone is not proposed as part of this nomination. Existing designations, legislation, and provincial management systems provide adequate protection for the surrounding region and for maintaining the integrity of Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. These measures will remain in place regardless of whether or not a nomination is successful.

WILL THE LEGAL STATUS OF LANDS CHANGE?

The designation of a World Heritage Site by UNESCO **does not change** in any way the legal status, ownership or management of any of the lands included in the designation area. No level of government, local, provincial, federal, or international, acquires any new control or authority over any of the nominated land base. UNESCO will not have jurisdiction over the site, and neither the provincial nor federal governments acquire any new level of jurisdiction.

The designation of a land base as a World Heritage Site is simply **commemorative**; it is recognition of the outstanding international significance of a specific area, but it does not assert any legal control over the designated lands.

There is the expectation by UNESCO that any designated lands will be managed in such a way so as to preserve the international heritage significance of the property. However, UNESCO does not take on any role as managers of the property; this is left entirely to existing authorities.

WILL DESIGNATION AS A WORLD HERITAGE SITE LEAD TO INCREASED VISITATION AND GREATER IMPACTS?

Visitation to Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park has increased substantially over the past decade. A recent market assessment and visitor projection study for the park also projects higher visitation to the park over the next 15 years. However, much of the increase in visitation will consist of adults who choose to visit the park for a day, explore the new visitor centre and take part in guided tour events.

Despite gradual increases in tourism, Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park is situated in a remote setting that will not likely be subjected to high levels of tourism, regardless of the designations attached to the area.

Designation of Áísínai'pi – Writing-on-Stone as a World Heritage Site will likely result in greater visitation from both international and Canadian markets. Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation is taking steps to deal with increasing visitation. The new Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park Visitor Centre acts as a destination centre and will serve to manage visitation and help reduce impact to the site. The Visitor Centre also provides an opportunity for presenting preservation and management messages to the visitors. Provincial park staff lead guided tours within park boundaries. This approach has worked successfully at other UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Alberta (Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump and Dinosaur Provincial Park).

HOW WILL ABORIGINAL PEOPLE BE INVOLVED IN THE DESIGNATION OF ÁÍSÍNAI'PI – WRITING-ON-STONE?

We are working closely with local Aboriginal communities on the designation of Áísínai'pi – Writing-On-Stone as a World Heritage Site. Aboriginal communities will ensure that the proposed designation portrays their history accurately. Aboriginal communities and the public will be involved when regional park plans are prepared following designation. Blackfoot communities were closely involved in the successful nomination of Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park as a National Historic Site, an event that fostered closer ties with the local community.

HOW WILL THE LOCAL COMMUNITY BE INVOLVED?

There will be two public information sessions held in the local community to create awareness of the proposed nomination and to gather feedback:

Date: **Wednesday, April 21, 2010**
Time: 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Location: Heritage Hall Senior's Centre, Milk River, Alberta

Date: **Thursday, April 22, 2010**
Time: 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Location: Sandman Hotel (Chinook Room), 421 Mayor Magrath Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta

Albertans are also invited to email their feedback to Parknews@gov.ab.ca. Feedback must be submitted by May 31st, 2010.

WHEN WILL A DECISION BE MADE ON THE PROPOSAL?

Consultation activities are being planned in 2010 to provide opportunities for the public to play a meaningful role in the nomination process and increase community understanding of the importance of World Heritage Site designation and site management.

The preliminary draft nomination package will be forwarded to Parks Canada for review and approval in April/May 2010.

The preliminary draft will be ready for submission to the World Heritage Committee in February 2011.

ARE THERE OTHER UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN ALBERTA?

Alberta is home to 5 of Canada's 15 UNESCO World Heritage sites, including Dinosaur Provincial Park, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, Wood Buffalo National Park, Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks, and Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park.

Proposed designation of Áísínai'pi – Writing-on-Stone as a UNESCO World Heritage Site was identified as goal in the Writing-On-Stone Management Plan in 1997, and in 2004 the government of Canada placed Áísínai'pi – Writing-on-Stone on Canada's Tentative List.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.albertaparks.ca/consult

FURTHER INFORMATION ON WORLD HERITAGE CAN BE FOUND BY GOING ONLINE TO:

- World Heritage Site: <http://whc.unesco.org/>
- World Heritage Information kit: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/567/>
- World Heritage Operational Guidelines: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines>