



Cultural Heritage

“Every community in Ontario has its own unique culture and heritage. Each city ... has places spaces and stories that enrich it, inspire it, enlighten it and guide it in its growth and development. These places are integral parts in the identity of our communities and they also play a significant role in economic development by helping enhance a community’s quality of life, strengthen its distinctiveness, stimulate revitalization and attract tourist dollars. Our cultural heritage is what we value from the past, and what we want to preserve for future generations.”

- Rich history dating back to the Paleo-Indians some 11,000 years ago and with advent of the first explorers and fur traders, Thunder Bay established as “the crossroads of a continent.”
- Vast system of waterways linked Thunder Bay to distant places.
- North West Company voyageurs and fur traders who pioneered this region known as The Nor’Westers
- North West Company constructs new fort in 1805 named Fort William after chief executive officer, William McGillivray.

When it was discovered in the early 1960’s that the range of mountains from the tip of Mt. McKay stretching along highway 61 had no name – it set off a two- year struggle to select and officially approve an appropriate name. That battle awakened a sense of true ownership and local pride - the range was “ours to name.”

- Bland names suggested by Ottawa based Committee on Geographical Names, such as Lakehead Ridge, were strenuously challenged.
- Support from local historians and citizens and several Minnesota Historical Societies for the name The Nor’Westers as a “fitting and romantic memorial to those fur traders who pioneered this region.
- August 15, 1962, Committee approves The Nor’Westers... “A nameless range will be accorded the dignity of a title of national significance with local history, proposed and sponsored by local groups.”
- Iconic range and proud citizens forever linked

Dedication ceremony for the baptism of The Nor'Westers was scheduled to coincide with the 1963 Fort William Winter Carnival.

- Impressive ceremony for baptism held at Fort William Gardens was unique as all participants had either aided in the struggle to obtain the name or were pioneers of the area or their descendants. This included: Chief Frank Pelletier in full regalia; Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, renowned historian of the North West Company, who termed Fort William the second most historic spot in Canada

Inspired by this acclaimed event was Evelyn Halliday who designed The Nor'Wester Tartan to commemorate the christening and to perpetuate the memory of our courageous founders and pioneers.

- To "preserve our precious heritage" she chose colours to symbolize the significant features of the range. The tartan and colour legend can be viewed at <http://www.tartanregister.gov.uk/tartanDetails.aspx?ref=3146>
- Tartan was part of uniform of the guides at the Fort William Historical Park

Initiatives to promote The Nor'Westers as some form of parkland began in 1963. Some felt the time had come to have "Canada's geographical heritage, which rested... on the fur trade and The Nor'Wester voyageurs, properly recognized and protected... before other interests get a toe-hold on precious land of national importance." In 1962, it was stated, "Loc Lomond, more than any other factor, accounts for the strong sense of proprietorship that local residents have for the range.... With the finest drinking water in the world."

The 50th anniversary of the naming and baptism of The Nor'Westers will be February 2013.

- Most fitting location to celebrate this historic event would be the Fort William Historical Park – Voyageur Winter Carnival – one of the top festivals and events in Ontario also held in February. Just imagine how a celebration of this historic anniversary in conjunction with this annual Winter Carnival could benefit our Northwestern Ontario communities!

"Sometimes, it is only when a property is threatened that a community recognizes its value." Preserving The Nor'Westers respectfully honours the memory of everyone who worked tirelessly to bestow a name of dignity and to those creatively inspired by her vibrant heritage and marvelous beauty. Family heirlooms are sacred treasures passed down from generation to generation. The Nor'Wester mountain range is our precious heirloom worthy of a dignified vision for its future that is compatible with its remarkable stature, longevity and spirituality.