

What We Heard

More than 85% of comments received from the public consultation expressed overwhelming support for the proposal to nominate Aisinai'pi / Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park as a World Heritage Site. Listed below is a summary of the most common comments received (similar comments were combined):

WHAT WE HEARD	RESPONSE
Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park is a spectacular and awe-inspiring place.	Aisinai'pi – Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park has the greatest variety of rock art images and compositions on the North America Plains. The park represents a cultural landscape of outstanding universal value, where Aboriginal oral traditions and rock art images are associated with spectacular natural landforms, viewscapes, and topography.
A place as special as Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park needs to be protected.	The designation of a land base as a World Heritage Site is commemorative; it is recognition of the international significance of a specific area, but it does not assert any legal control over the designated lands. However, we will continue to manage the lands in such a way so as to preserve the universal heritage significance of the lands.
The histories and cultures of North America's First Nations must be preserved. The UNESCO designation would be another solid step in preserving that history.	Designation will acknowledge the important role of Aisinai'pi in Aboriginal culture and history, and its continued significance to the Blackfoot people. We are working closely with local Aboriginal communities to ensure that the proposed designation portrays their history accurately.
UNESCO World Heritage Site designation will help draw attention to Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park's outstanding value.	Designation will raise the international profile of the provincial park, and regional tourism and economic benefits can be expected. Designation will likely result in greater visitation from both international and Canadian markets. We are taking steps to deal with increasing visitation.
Designation should ensure that the river valley is promoted for river tourism.	Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park will continue to play an important role in providing river access to the public and is working with neighboring landowners to enhance management of recreation on the Milk River. Additionally, the visitor centre will be a venue in which the public can find out more information regarding appropriate use and activities along the river.
The culture and history of the park needs to be preserved and shared.	Interpretation and education are important components of the management of the site. The new Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park Visitor Centre provides an opportunity for presenting heritage and management messages to the visitors. Provincial Park staff also lead guided tours within park boundaries to educate visitors about the cultural and ecological importance of the site.

In addition, some concerns were raised about the impact of the designation on the local community and on the park. A summary of those concerns and our response is listed below:

WHAT WE HEARD	RESPONSE
Designation will increase demand for camping, and the current campground is at capacity.	Once the Land-use Framework plan for the South Saskatchewan is completed, a Regional Park Plan will be completed for the area. Both planning processes will include opportunities for public input. The regional park plan will address the type and level of recreation and tourism activity that will take place on the land, as well as the facilities required to deliver these services.
Name of the park should not be changed to Aisinaipi.	The name of the provincial park, Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, will not change. The nominated property for World Heritage status will be Aisinaipi / Writing-on-Stone which reflects both the historical Blackfoot name and the name of the provincial park. Aisinaipi is the name that Blackfoot people use for the area which means "it is pictured/written".
Increased tourism and recreational use of the park through designation will result in increased access issues on adjacent private lands such as visitor trespass, littering and vandalism.	One-on-one meetings with concerned local landowners will be held to determine how to work together to mitigate any public access issues.
The park would be well preserved as is without the designation.	World Heritage Site designation is commemorative, and 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. Designation will raise the international profile of the provincial park, and regional tourism and economic benefits can be expected.
Designation could affect the resale value of adjacent lands.	It is difficult to determine if there will be any impact or not at this time.
Restrictions should not be placed on hunting and fishing in the Milk River valley.	A World Heritage Site designation does not place any additional restrictions on lands within or adjacent to the nominated site. The current restrictions on hunting within the provincial park will remain in place.
Landowners should not lose control or authority over their lands as a result of the designation. Designation must not infringe on private landowners' rights to manage their 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 nomination property. The designation of a World Heritage Site does not change in any way the legal status, ownership or decision-making authority of any 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 or of the surrounding lands.
Rock markings created by early homesteaders should not be labeled as graffiti, as it an important part of the history of the area.	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.