

Old Pinawa Dam Heritage Park

By the Pinawa Community Development Corporation

The first permanent settlement in the area, now called Old Pinawa, exists along the Pinawa Channel.

To meet Winnipeg's increasing demands to power electric streetcars at the turn of the 20th Century, the Winnipeg Electric Company looked to the Winnipeg River as a generating source.

As a result, the first Town of Pinawa was born, along with the earliest year-round hydroelectric power dam between the Rockies and Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.

The existing concrete framework withstood the mighty force of the Winnipeg River as its turbines were turned by a diverted flow down the Pinawa Channel to create Manitoba's first year-round hydroelectric generating station in 1906.

The site ceased generating power in 1951 and the town-site was abandoned.

The majestic concrete ruins that greet you at the Pinawa Provincial Park resemble an ancient Roman coliseum.

Manitoba Conservation and the Friends of Old Pinawa have worked in partnership to enhance the park and promote tourism in



The beauty of a waterfall is captured in the concrete structure at Pinawa Provincial Park.

Photo by Peter Bremner

the area. Interpretive signage, self-guiding interpretive brochures, an amphitheatre, heritage walk, picnic shelter, picnic facilities, the Centennial Spillway Trail and a bridge allowing access to an interpretive nature trail provide added enjoyment.

The dam site is located along PTH 520, five kilometres north of PR 211 and six kilometres south of PR 313.

The new Pinawa townsite was started in 1963 by Atomic Energy of Canada Limited

(AECL) to house the employees for its Whiteshell Research Laboratories.

As well as housing for their staff, AECL built a staff hotel (now Wilderness Edge Retreat and Conference Centre) for their single employees, a gas station, shopping mall, municipal building, marina, motor inn, schools and a hospital.

Pinawa was initially designed to accommodate employees and their families and provided only a limited

commercial base.

The town and surrounding environs was designated a Local Government District (LGD) in July 1963.

In 2008 the Old Pinawa dam was honoured by the IEEE Milestones In Electrical Engineering Committee and received an Engineering Milestone bronze plaque from the Manitoba Electrical Museum. Manitoba Hydro donated a duplicate bronze plaque, which is mounted on the ruins in the park.