

TRANSFORMING THE GRAND RIVER

Geography matters. In many ways, the Grand River has determined the course of history for Canada. The geography attracted Aboriginal peoples at the close of the last ice age, and led to the emergence of vibrant and complex agrarian aboriginal nations.

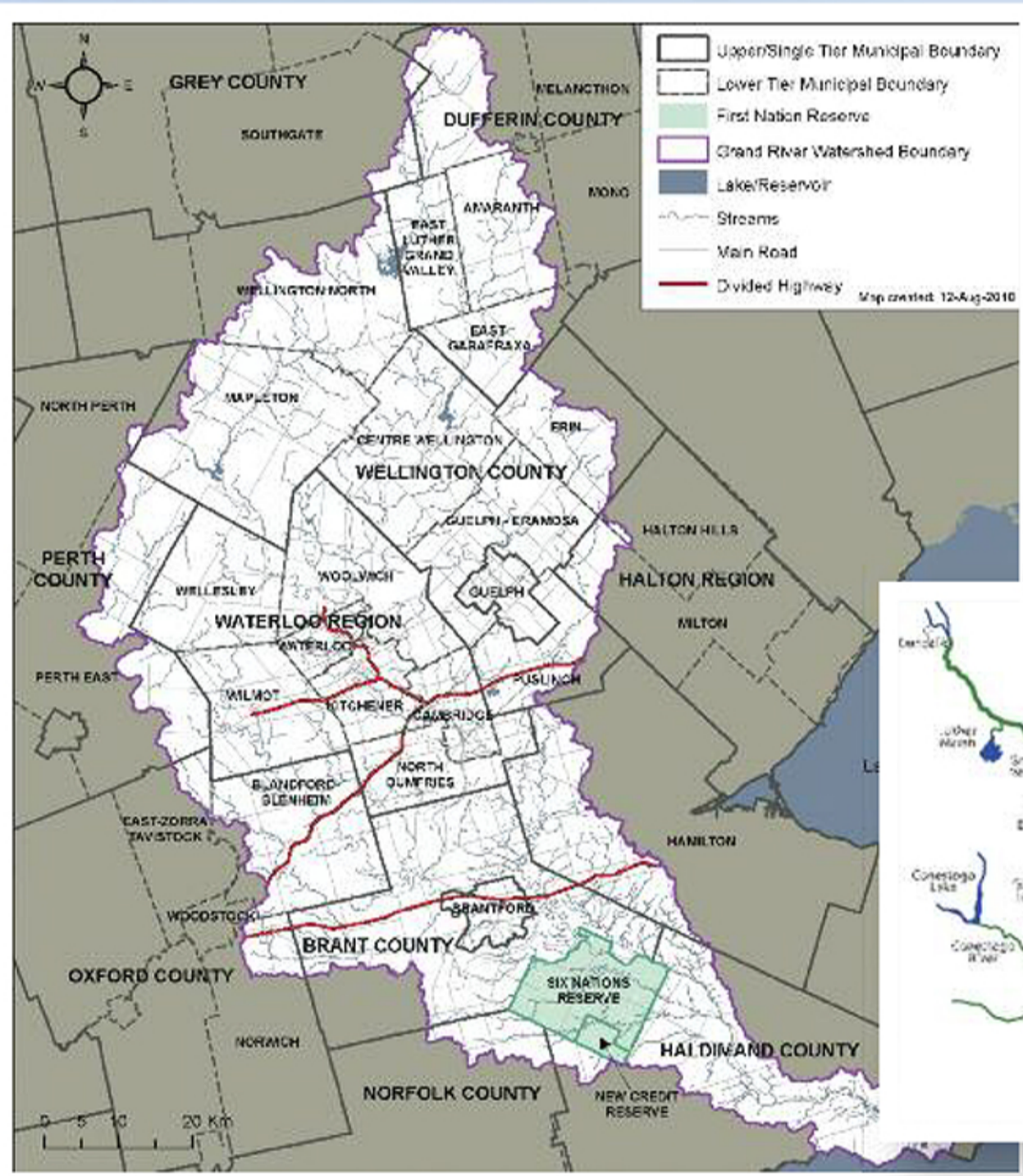
Following European colonization, the region became strategically important and figured heavily in the various events that shaped modern North America. The early settlements that located along the Grand River Watershed have today become some of Ontario's major cities and commercial centres. The region's excellent waterways and the river's natural capacity to provide power to operate heavy machinery made it an ideal place to locate the centres that would later provide the industrial infrastructure of the Province of Ontario, and serve as a major driver of the Canadian economy.



◀ Just below Brantford, The Grand River opens up into a slow and relatively shallow watercourse used for transporting goods until the 1850's when the railways were built.
Grand River Sunrise



▲ The fast flowing water of the Grand River attracted the first settlers to this area and in 1817, Roswell Matthews built the first house in what was to become the Village of Elora. Incorporated as the Town of Elora in 1852, the town soon became a hub for the fertile farm land surrounding it, a centre for furniture plants, as well as an organ factory.
Elora in flood.
Source: Archives Ontario



◀ The Grand River Watershed feeds the needs of thousands of industries and almost one million citizens.
▲ The Grand River Watershed today.
Source: Canadian Heritage River Systems website.
▼ Grand River Watershed. Source: Article by Emily Stahl (Nov. 2010).



▲ American Standard—one of Hespeler's main businesses along the Speed River—started up in 1847. Today, this historic building is being converted into luxury condominiums.
American Standard factory in Hespeler.



◀ The main street of St. Jacobs, Ontario in the 1890s. On the left—receiving a paint job—is the Snider Mill, with Gingrich's woolen factory across the street, next to the felt factory. On the far side of the Conestogo River—a main tributary to the Grand—and across the bridge, are the village tannery and the wagon factory. This small community—typical of towns along the Grand— offered all that local businesses needed for success.

Heritage view of St. Jacobs. Source: The Early History of Jakobstettel.

The Elora Gorge, with its high walls and fast flowing water is one of the many natural features of Grand River.

