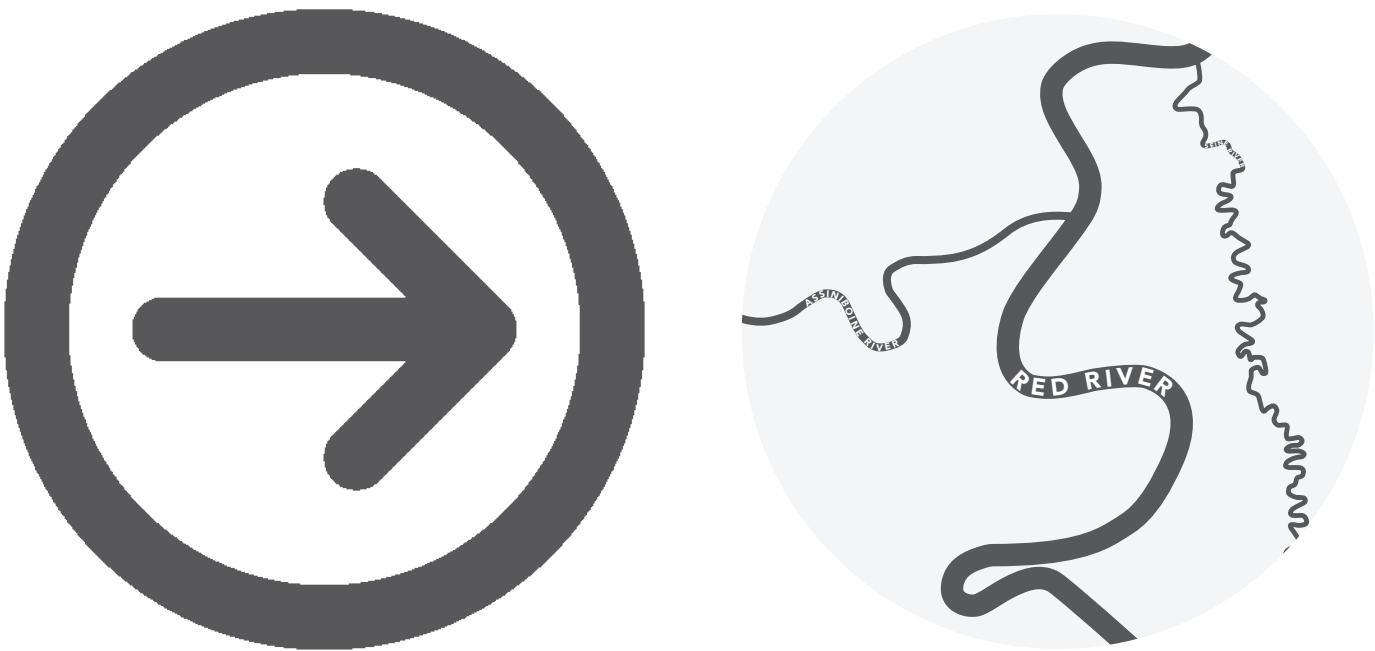


RIVER CITY REVEALED:

WAYFINDING TO THE RED, ASSINIBOINE AND SEINE RIVERS IN WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

By: CHOI HO



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHAT?

User-led and pedestrian-focused research reveals the links and disconnects between walkability, wayfinding, and the Red, Assiniboine and Seine Rivers in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

WHY?

This study on wayfinding to the three rivers draws attention to discouraged pedestrians as well as the people-first strategies and infrastructure which currently have but a low profile in Winnipeg; a mode shift to more people on foot and a more walkable Winnipeg desperately needs a helping hand. The research draws out problems associated with wayfinding in Winnipeg as a fourfold opportunity and catalyst to: celebrate a new image of the city, contribute to the literature on and redefine wayfinding, improve pedestrian access, awareness and appreciation for the urban waterways, and support the development of key recommendations for a “3-Rivers Wayfinding System”.

HOW?

A review of the wayfinding literature, an audit of Winnipeg's existing wayfinding signage, precedent research on effective wayfinding signs, a map of river access points in the study area within a 10-minute walking distance, and a pedestrian-centred postcard questionnaire uncovers seven significant findings which enrich and advance the development of a “3-Rivers Wayfinding System” in Winnipeg.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How can wayfinding be enriched to heighten Winnipeg's “River City” namesake and Winnipeggers' access, awareness and appreciation for the three rivers (Red, Assiniboine and Seine)?

CONTEXT

WALKABILITY IN WINNIPEG

The 2016 Census Data illuminates the car-centric habits of Winnipeggers. Of the total population 15 years and over, employed in the labour force, 77.4% commute via car, truck or van – as a driver or as a passenger. Well behind in the main mode of commuting numbers is public transit at 14.9%, walk at 4.9%, bicycle at 1.8%, and other at 1.0%.

WAYFINDING IN WINNIPEG

The existing wayfinding systems in Winnipeg orient pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and motor vehicle drivers to and from their destinations. Of note, the city currently has no unified or integrated wayfinding system in place to help pedestrians navigate the public realm and built environment.

WINNIPEG AND THE THREE RIVERS

The name Winnipeg has its origin in the Cree name given to the lake 40 miles north [Lake Winnipeg], meaning ‘Win’, muddy, ‘nipee’, water” and reflects the “muddy waters” where the two rivers meet. People have been interacting at the meeting place of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers for at least 6,000 years. The Forks, as it is commonly known, has been the traditional territory and gathering place of the Cree, Ojibwe, Oji-Cree, Assiniboine, Dakota, and the birthplace of the Metis nation; a hub for fur trade and the Canadian Pacific Railway, and a place to settle an influx of immigrants. There is no doubt The Forks and Winnipeg on the whole possess a strong connection to the rivers; the city is likewise often referred to as “River City”.



AUDIT OF WINNIPEG'S EXISTING WAYFINDING SIGNAGE



8 CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING WINNIPEG'S WAYFINDING SYSTEM

1. Ownership of Sign
2. Type of Sign
3. Sign Typology
4. Intended User of Sign
5. Visibility of Sign
6. Legibility of Sign
7. Character/Identity of Sign
8. Quality/Condition of Sign



8 I's OF EFFECTIVENESS

1. Integration
2. Innovation
3. Intuition
4. Interaction
5. Inspiration
6. Identity
7. Implications
8. Impact

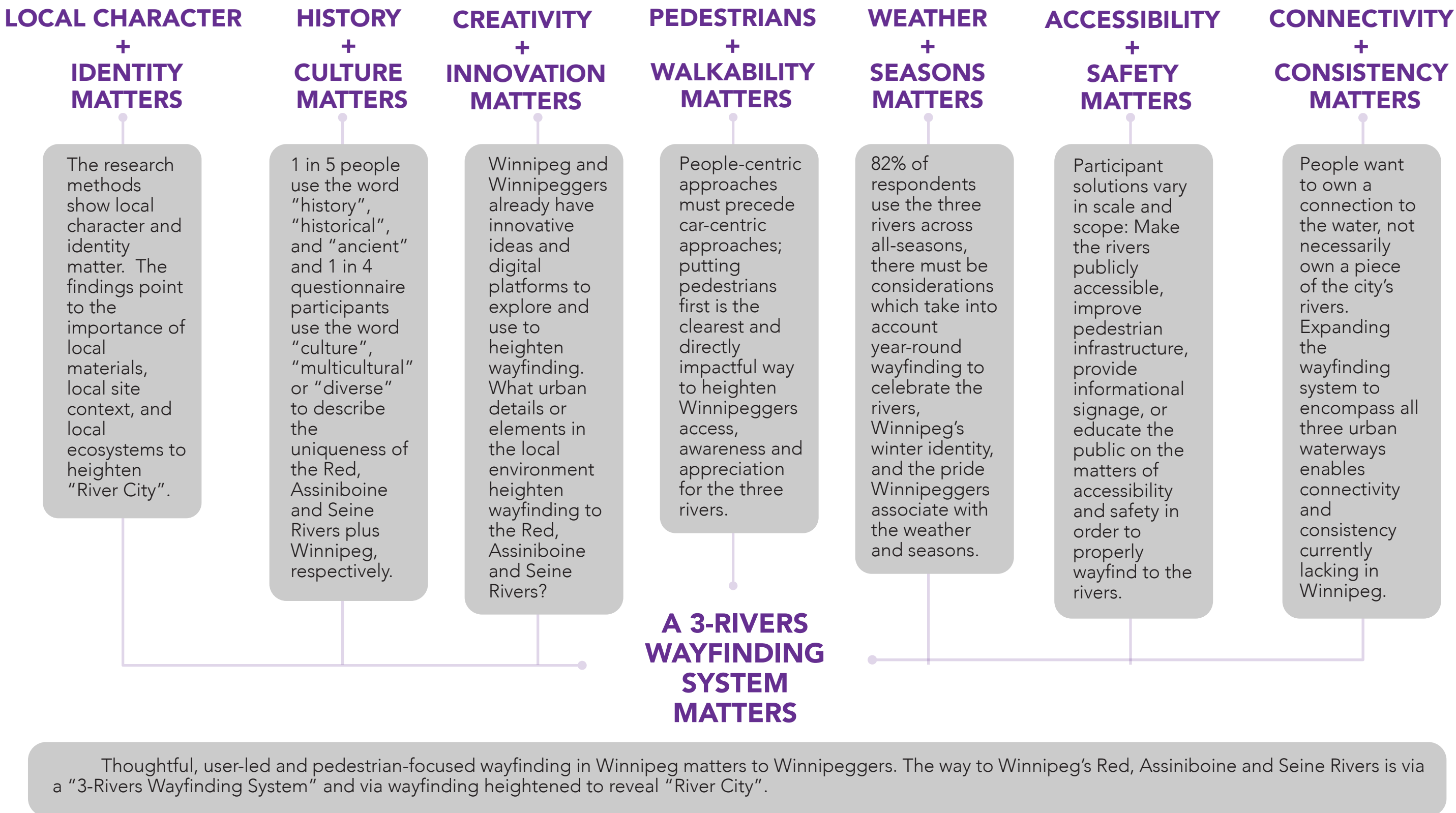
FINDINGS

50 ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE PARTICIPANTS

A 15-question postcard questionnaire was hand-delivered within a 10-minute walking distance from the Assiniboine River in the neighbourhoods of Wolsley and West Broadway. How do pedestrians find their way around Winnipeg? How Winnipeggers perceive the local character and identity of Winnipeg and the three rivers? How do Winnipeggers' celebrate or what are the barriers to celebrating the Red, Assiniboine and Seine Rivers? How can wayfinding heighten access, awareness and appreciation for Winnipeg's three rivers?



DISCUSSION



RECOMMENDATIONS

CAPITALIZE ON LOCAL WINNIPEG RESOURCES

The unique character and identity of “River City” will reveal itself in a “3-Rivers Wayfinding System” which capitalizes on local Winnipeg resources. The city's unique river ecosystem, historical and present-day site context, and natural building materials are a few of the local resources to consider when developing a wayfinding system to the Red, Assiniboine and Seine Rivers. The acknowledgement, understanding, and use of local resources will contribute to a distinct wayfinding system to the Winnipeg rivers and be distinct to the city.

REMIND, RESPECT, AND REJOICE IN WINNIPEG'S INDIGENOUS PAST AND PRESENCE

A “3-Rivers Wayfinding System” in Winnipeg will remind, respect, and rejoice in Winnipeg's Indigenous past and presence. There are a number of strategies worth pursuing; however, making a concerted effort to recognize Indigenous history and culture in a wayfinding system to the three rivers is essential. The process to remind and rejoice will involve meaningful collaborations and conversations. The implementation will involve respectful interventions and wayfinding practices.

REMIND, RESPECT, AND REJOICE IN WINNIPEG'S THREE RIVERS' PAST AND PRESENCE

Similar, and separate, a “3-Rivers Wayfinding System” in Winnipeg will remind, respect, and rejoice in Winnipeg's three rivers' past and presence. Recognizing what the Winnipeg rivers mean to Winnipeggers will shift and celebrate in a new image for “River City”. A wayfinding system to the Red, Assiniboine and Seine Rivers will further allow citizens to remember, respect, and rejoice in the historical significance and ever-presence of the three rivers.

FIND CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS OR CUES IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Winnipeg's local and built environment is an unexpected yet real-life place to find creative and innovative solutions or cues for developing a “3-River Wayfinding System”. Navigating from the urban environment of the city to the natural environments of the city will require ingenuity and uncommon ideas visible within the common spaces and places in Winnipeg. There are examples of effective precedents promoting creativity and innovation, however, the best cues are those already present and also ever-changing in Winnipeg's built environment.

PRIORITIZE AND PUSH PEDESTRIAN-CENTRIC WAYFINDING STRATEGIES

Putting people first and pushing wayfinding strategies to target and attract pedestrian interests is a priority for a “3-Rivers Wayfinding System” in Winnipeg. Without a legitimate focus on strategies centred on people who walk in Winnipeg to wayfind to the rivers, the outcome will always be a detriment to the well-being of the city and its citizens. Breaking down the barriers preventing Winnipeggers from accessing, enjoying, and experiencing the three rivers will demonstrate a first and forward step in prioritizing and pushing for a more walkable Winnipeg and a city of people more appreciative of the rivers.

SHAPE AND DESIGN WAYFINDING FOR WINNIPEG WINTERS

Winnipeg has the nickname of “River City” for the four rivers; the city is also referred to by Winnipeggers as “WinterPeg” for the cold winters. Developing a “3-Rivers Wayfinding System” in Winnipeg to account for seasonal changes and impacts will enhance and embrace Winnipeg's winter city status and prominence. To shape and design wayfinding for Winnipeg winters will further boost the enjoyment of activities to do year-round in/on/along/around the three rivers and improve the safety and comfortability of wayfinding activities for Winnipeggers over the cold “WinterPeg” months.

IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES FOR CONSISTENT AND EFFECTIVE RIVER WAYFINDING

A “3-Rivers Wayfinding System” in Winnipeg will implement strategies for consistent and effective river wayfinding. Consistency among sign typology, and the legibility, character and visibility of wayfinding signs will provide a maximum impact and an effective wayfinding process to the Red, Assiniboine and Seine Rivers. Attention to detail goes a long way and will guide people regardless of their level of familiarity with wayfinding to and from the three rivers.

BUILD CONNECTIONS THROUGH WAYFINDING FOR PEOPLE AND WITH THE RED, ASSINIBOINE AND SEINE RIVERS

The way to heighten access, awareness and appreciation for the Winnipeg rivers is to build connections through wayfinding for people and with the Red, Assiniboine and Seine Rivers. The connections are physical in the form of pedestrian-scaled wayfinding for people to reach the three rivers. The connections are also inherent - the kind of attachments humans possess with nature, with the Winnipeg rivers.

CONCLUSION

A user-led and pedestrian-focused study revealed ways to heighten Winnipeg's storied identity as “River City”. The research methods involving an audit of Winnipeg's existing wayfinding signage, precedent research for effective signs, a map of river access points within a 10-minute pedestrian shed, plus a postcard questionnaire for online participants uncovered eight recommendations for developing a distinct “3-Rivers Wayfinding System” in Winnipeg. The research on wayfinding to the three rivers found the purposeful, directed and motivated way to heighten Winnipeggers' access, awareness and appreciation for the Red, Assiniboine and Seine Rivers in Winnipeg, Manitoba.