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O N L I N E E D I T I O N

Saturday, August 6th, 2005

Excavation contract awarded

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A northern First Nation and a Dauphin company have teamed up to win the first Winnipeg floodway expansion excavation contract.

Nelson House Forest Industries, owned by the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, and Strilkiwski Contracting submitted the lowest of five bids for the \$1.4 million contract to create a third opening in the floodway embankment east of Grande Pointe.

The work involves moving 400,000 cubic metres of dirt -- a tiny fraction of the 22 million cubic metres that will be moved over the next five years to more than double the capacity of the floodway.

The provincial and federal governments are expanding the floodway at a cost of \$665 million to protect Winnipeg from floods larger than the 1997 Flood of the Century.

The Manitoba Floodway Authority will give aboriginal companies preference on some contracts, but this first excavation contract was not one of those set aside.

"These folks gave us the most competitive bid," authority head Ernie Gilroy said.

The two companies have worked together since 2002 on projects for Manitoba Hydro and building northern roads.

The contract will create about 20 full-time jobs.

Nisichawayasihk Chief Jerry Primrose said the contract should provide experience for some of the construction workers who have been training in preparation for the Wuskwatim dam that Manitoba Hydro wants to build near his community.

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