

= Ontario Highway 71 =

King 's Highway 71 , commonly referred to as Highway 71 , is a provincially maintained highway in the Canadian province of Ontario . The 194 @-@ kilometre @-@ long (121 mi) route travels concurrently with Highway 11 for 40 kilometres (25 mi) from the Fort Frances @-@ International Falls International Bridge in Fort Frances , where it continues south as US Route 53 (US 53) and US Route 71 (US 71) in Minnesota . At Chapple , Highway 11 continues west while Highway 71 branches north and travels 154 kilometres (96 mi) to a junction with Highway 17 just east of Kenora . Highway 71 is part of the Trans @-@ Canada Highway for its entire length .

The current routing of Highway 71 was created out of a route renumbering that took place on April 1 , 1960 , to extend Highway 11 from Thunder Bay to Rainy River . The portion of the highway that is concurrent with Highway 11 follows the Cloverleaf Trail , which was constructed by the end of 1880s and improved over the next several decades . The portion between Highway 11 and Highway 17 follows the Heenan Highway , which was constructed to connect the Rainy River region with Kenora and the remainder of Ontario 's road network ; before its opening the area was accessible only via the United States . Both highways were incorporated into the provincial highway system in 1937 following the merger of the Department of Highways (DHO) and the Department of Northern Development .

= = Route description = =

Highway 71 connects the Rainy River region with the Trans @-@ Canada Highway near Kenora . The first 65 kilometres (40 mi) of the highway traverses the largest pocket of arable land in northern Ontario . Following that , the route suddenly enters the Canadian Shield , where the land is unsuitable for agricultural development .

The highway begins at the international bridge in Fort Frances ; within the United States , the road continues south as US 53 and US 71 in Minnesota . From the bridge , it proceeds along Central Avenue , encountering Highway 11 one block north . The two routes travel north concurrently to 3 Street West , where both turn west . At the Fort Frances Cemetery , the route branches southwest and exits Fort Frances after splitting with the Colonization Road (Highway 602) . It follows the old Cloverleaf Trail west through Devlin , where it intersects Highway 613 , and Emo , where it merges with the Colonization Road . Approximately six kilometres (3 @.@ 7 mi) west of Emo , in the Manitou Rapids First Nations Reserve , Highway 71 branches north , while Highway 11 continues west to Rainy River .

North of the Manitou Rapids Reserve , Highway 71 presses through a large swath of land mostly occupied by horse and cattle ranches . It intersects Highway 600 and Highway 615 , both of which have historical connections to Highway 71 . The highway passes through Finland and enters the Boreal Forest , descending into the Canadian Shield over the course of a kilometre and a half (approximately one mile) . From this point to its northern terminus , the highway crosses through rugged and isolated terrain , curving around lakes , rivers and mountains on its northward journey . It passes through the community of Caliper Lake before crossing between Rainy River District and Kenora District midway between there and Nestor Falls .

North of Nestor Falls , the highway travels along the eastern shore of Lake of the Woods , providing access to Crow Lake , as well as to Whitefish Bay just southeast of Sioux Narrows . Here the route crosses the Sioux Narrows Bridge , the last part of the highway to be constructed and a formidable engineering obstacle in the 1930s . North of Sioux Narrows , the highway meanders northward through an uninhabited region , zigzagging among the numerous lakes that dot Kenora District and crossing the Black River . It provides access to Eagle Dogtooth and Rushing River Provincial Parks several kilometres south of its northern terminus at Highway 17 , four kilometres (2 @.@ 5 mi) east of the split with Highway 17A and 20 kilometres (12 mi) east of downtown Kenora .

= = History = =

Highway 71 was created out of a renumbering of several highways in the Rainy River District during the late 1950s as Highway 11 was extended west of Thunder Bay . The history of the route is tied to the two major highways in Rainy River District : the Cloverleaf Trail and the Heenan Highway .

The Cloverleaf Trail , the older of the two roads , was initially developed as the Rainy River colonization road . A line was blazed as early as 1875 , possibly as part of the Dawson Trail , and improved in 1885 into a trail . This initial trail followed the Rainy River west from Fort Frances to Lake of the Woods ; Highway 602 now follows the road between Fort Frances and Emo . In 1911 , James Arthur Mathieu was elected as a Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) in the Rainy River riding . As a lumber merchant , Mathieu promoted improved road access in the region . Between 1911 and 1915 , he oversaw construction of the gravel Cloverleaf Trail between Fort Frances and Rainy River .

The Heenan Highway would become the first Canadian link to the Rainy River area ; before its opening in the mid @-@ 1930s , the only way to drive to the area was via the United States . In 1922 , Kenora MPP Peter Heenan and Dr. McTaggart approached the government to lobby for construction of a road between Nestor Falls and Kenora . Nestor Falls was the northernmost point accessible by road from the Rainy River area . Heenan would become the Minister of Lands and Forests in Mitch Hepburn 's cabinet . This provided the impetus for construction to begin in 1934 . Unlike the Cloverleaf Trail , the Fort Frances ? Kenora Highway , as it was known prior to its opening , was constructed through the rugged terrain of the Canadian Shield . Rocks , forests , lakes , muskeg , and insects served as major obstacles during construction of the 100 @-@ kilometre (62 mi) highway , which progressed from both ends . By late 1935 , the only remaining gap in the road was the Sioux Narrows Bridge . Construction on this bridge was underway by March 1936 ; it was rapidly assembled using old @-@ growth Douglas fir from British Columbia (BC) as the main structural members . These timbers were cut in BC , and shipped to be built on @-@ site like a jig @-@ saw puzzle . The bridge was completed on June 15 , 1936 , completing the link between Fort Frances and Kenora .

On July 1 , 1936 , Premier Mitch Hepburn attended a ceremony in front of the Rainy Lake Hotel in Fort Frances . On a rainy afternoon , at 5 : 30 p.m. , Peter Heenan handed Hepburn a pair of scissors with which to cut the ribbon crossing the road and declare the highway open . Hepburn , addressing the crowd that was gathered , asked " What would you say if we call it the Heenan Highway , what would you think of that ? " . The crowd cheered and Hepburn cut the ribbon .

The Cloverleaf Trail and the Heenan Highway were assumed by the DHO shortly after its merger with the Department of Northern Development . Following the merger , the DHO began assigning trunk roads throughout northern Ontario as part of the provincial highway network . Highway 71 was assigned on September 1 , 1937 , along the Cloverleaf Trail . The portion of the Heenan Highway lying within Kenora District was designated as Highway 70 on the same day . The portion within Rainy River District was designated as Highway 70 on September 29 .

The original route of Highway 70 split in two south of Finland ; Highway 70 turned east to Off Lake Corner , then south to Emo , while Highway 70A turned west to Black Hawk then south to Barwick . The northern end of the highway was also concurrent with Highway 17 for 21 @.@ 7 kilometres (13 @.@ 5 mi) into Kenora , and the southern end concurrent with Highway 71 for 37 @.@ 0 kilometres (23 @.@ 0 mi) between Emo and Fort Frances . During 1952 , the highway was extended south from its split to Highway 71 , midway between Barwick and Emo . By 1953 , the new road was opened and informally designated as the new route of Highway 70 . The old routes were decommissioned on February 8 , and the new route designated several weeks later on March 10 , 1954 . Both forks were later redesignated as Highway 600 and Highway 615 .

Throughout the mid- to late 1950s , a new highway was constructed west from Thunder Bay towards Fort Frances . Initially this road was designated as Highway 120 . In 1959 , it was instead decided to make this new link a westward extension of Highway 11 ; a major renumbering took place on April 1 , 1960 : Highway 11 was established between Rainy River and Fort Frances , Highway 71 was truncated west of the Highway 70 junction , and the entirety of Highway 70 was renumbered as Highway 71 . This established the current routing of the highway .

Although now rebuilt as a steel structure , the original Sioux Narrows Bridge was considered to be

the longest single span wooden bridge in the world , at 64 metres (210 ft) . The original bridge remained in place until 2003 , when an engineering inspection revealed that 78 % of the structure had failed . A temporary bridge was erected while a new structure was built . The new bridge was completed in November 2007 , incorporating the old timber truss as a decorative element . A ribbon cutting ceremony to dedicate the bridge was held on July 1 , 2008 , 72 years after the original dedication by Mitch Hepburn .

= = Major intersections = =

The following table lists the major junctions along Highway 71 , as noted by the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario .