

NORTHEASTERN BC DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Prince George Area | Highway 97 (John Hart Highway) | Alaska Highway Corridor



DESTINATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA™

DUNE ZA KEYIH PROVINCIAL PARK

Photo: Taylor Burk

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1	6. A DISTINCTIVE DIRECTION	29
II. ACRONYMS		a. Vision	
1. FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6	b. Goals	
2. INTRODUCING THE STRATEGY	9	7. STRATEGY AT A GLANCE	32
a. Program Vision and Goals		8. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	34
b. Purpose		a. Objectives and Actions	
c. A Focus on the Supply and Experience		b. Catalyst Projects	
d. Methodology		c. Provincial and Regional Priorities	
e. Project Outputs		9. MONITORING AND MEASURING SUCCESS	63
3. ALIGNMENT	14	10. FUNDING PROGRAMS	70
4. SUCCESS NETWORK	16	APPENDIX	71
5. A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION	19	Appendix 1: Planning Process	
a. Location and Access		Appendix 2: Planning Considerations	
b. Population Base		Appendix 3: Constraints	
c. Economic Base		Appendix 4: Opportunities	
d. Destination Overview and Assessment		Appendix 5: Net Promoter Score Information	
e. Key Markets and Products			
f. Summary of Key Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities			
g. Experience Potential			

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION FOR NORTHEASTERN BC

DESTINATION CHARACTERISTICS

Northeastern BC is characterized by its vastness, touring routes, parks, wildlife, palaeontological resources, welcoming communities, indigenous cultures, and resource sector activity. The physical size of the destination lends itself to diversity in natural environments, which features prairies, agricultural lands, mountains, parks, lakes, rivers, and forests. With the exception of Prince George (population 70,000+), communities in the area are relatively small.

Overall, Northeastern BC has outstanding cultural and natural assets that support (or could support) a range of adventure, eco-tourism, cultural, and First Nations tourism experiences. The area has a

wealth of BC Parks. The destination includes several iconic features and unique attributes that can potentially appeal and cater to different markets and help define the destination.

The north and south are distinctive with the north characterized by the central plains and the northern Rocky Mountain range, while the south is situated at the northernmost part of the upper Fraser River watershed on the east side of the mountains. When looking at existing tourism, there are differences and similarities between the north and the south sections of the planning area, described below.

Northern Section of Planning Area

The focus of tourism in the northern section of the planning area is touring, primarily by car, recreational vehicle (RV), and motorcycle. While primary visitor research has not been conducted since 2003, anecdotal observations from visitor centre staff suggest that the Alaska Highway is the main attractor for the touring market. This touring product offers a blended experience featuring heritage, culture, and nature.

THE NORTHERN SECTION OF THE PLANNING AREA ALSO OFFERS BACKCOUNTRY ADVENTURE TOURISM EXPERIENCES; HOWEVER, THE CURRENT VOLUME OF VISITORS PARTICIPATING IN THESE TYPES OF EXPERIENCES IS MUCH SMALLER THAN FOR TOURING.

Hunting is also established in the area. Sport tourism is an established and growing segment in the northern section of the planning area. While some winter product is available — primarily cross-country skiing and snowmobiling — most visitation occurs in the summer, spring, and fall.

Southern Section of Planning Area

The focus of tourism in the southern section of the planning area is sport tourism, event tourism, and adventure and eco-tourism. The southern section is more easily accessed than the north, due to the size of and frequency of flights at the Prince George Airport, VIA Rail service and closer proximity to the population centres in southern BC. While some winter product is available — including downhill skiing, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling — most visitation occurs in the summer, spring, and fall.

KEY CHALLENGES

Overall, Northeastern BC is in the developmental stage of the tourism lifecycle, with some lodges and experiences that have been offered for decades.

Northeastern BC faces several key challenges for destination development including:

- low awareness amongst many markets
- distance from key markets
- cost of travel
- lack of a critical mass of market-ready and export-ready product and experiences
- coordination constraints due to the distance between communities

B. A DISTINCTIVE DIRECTION

C. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITIONS AND EXPERIENCE THEMES

There are three dominant selling propositions and experience themes for Northeastern BC.

OUTSTANDING THEMATIC TOURING AND CIRCLE ROUTES that are enriched by diverse and high-quality natural landscapes, natural features and wildlife, heritage and culture experiences, outdoor adventure experiences, and First Nations culture. While this unique selling proposition is anchored by the iconic Alaska Highway, there are many additional routes with considerable thematic potential that can help further develop Northeastern BC into a top touring destination in North America.

PALAEONTOLOGICAL EXPLORATION AND ADVENTURES that are built on the rich resources found throughout

much of the destination, the emerging presence of the Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Global Geopark, and the vast trail networks featured in and around communities and in provincial, regional, and municipal parks which provide access to those resources. It should be noted that the discovery of Palaeontological resources in Northeastern BC is still in its infancy.

SUPERB OUTDOOR ADVENTURE AND ECO-TOURISM BASED ON THE WILDERNESS AND DIVERSE OUTDOOR SETTINGS OF NORTHEASTERN BC. While some parts of Northeastern BC are impacted by the resource sector, the destination does feature vast areas of nature and wilderness that are wild and untouched. Wild and untouched areas are becoming increasingly rare worldwide, which reinforces what is special about Northeastern BC.

Destination development participants and the Working Committee were instrumental in developing the following 10-year destination vision for the planning area:

DESTINATION VISION

NORTHEASTERN BC OFFERS UNIQUE AND DIVERSE ADVENTURES OF A LIFETIME IN WORLD-CLASS SETTINGS WITH RICH HERITAGE AND CULTURE, SPECTACULAR WILDLIFE, VAST WILDERNESS, AND WELCOMING COMMUNITIES.

The vision is supported by six goals developed with input from workshop participants and refined by the Working Committee. The goals are designed to achieve the vision and address the priority opportunities and barriers

identified during the planning process. The strategy identifies objectives and accompanying strategies to achieve the goals. The supporting actions are described in the main body of this strategy.

II. ACRONYMS

AGRI Ministry of Agriculture

AHCS Alaska Highway Community Society

AHHS Alaska Highway Heritage Society

CDMO Community Destination Management/Marketing Organization

DMO Destination Management/Marketing Organization

DBC Destination British Columbia

DC Destination Canada

DDS Destination Development Strategy

EMBC Emergency Services BC

ENV Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy

GOABC Guide Outfitters Association of BC

CIRNAC Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

ISC Indigenous Services Canada

ITBC Indigenous Tourism Association of British Columbia

FFGRD Fraser Fort George Regional District

FLNR Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

IRR Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

EDUC Ministry of Education

FIN Ministry of Finance

MKMA Muskwa-Kechika Management Area

MRDT Municipal Regional District Tax

TAC Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture

NBCTA Northern BC Tourism Association

NEDDS Northeastern BC Destination Development Strategy

NDIT Northern Development Initiative Trust

NRRM Northern Rockies
Regional Municipality

OCP Official Community
Plan

CCP Comprehensive
Community Plan

PAVCO BC Pavilion
Corporation

PRRD Peace River Regional
District

PWGSC Public Works
and Government
Services Canada

RDMO Regional
Destination Management/
Marketing Organization

SCIBC Spinal Cord
Injury BC

TIABC Tourism Industry
Association of
British Columbia

TPB Tourism Policy Branch
(within BC Ministry of
Tourism, Arts and Culture)

TRAN Ministry of
Transportation and
Infrastructure

TRUGG Tumbler Ridge
UNESCO Global Geopark

UNBC University of
Northern BC

UNESCO United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

WD Western Diversification

WTA Wilderness Tourism
Association



1

FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MACKENZIE
Photo: Kaila Walton

FOREWORD This Destination Development Strategy is the final report resulting from a 26-month, iterative process of gathering, synthesizing, and validating information with stakeholders about the status of tourism in Northeastern British Columbia. The report synthesizes primary and secondary research gathered from multiple stakeholder conversations, surveys, studies, and input from the Working Committee.

As one of 20 destination development strategies that will be produced between 2016 and 2019, the Northeastern BC Destination Development Strategy contributes to the tapestry of long-term regional and provincial planning that supports the further development of British Columbia as a world class tourism destination offering remarkable, authentic experiences that exceed

visitor expectations and align with the provincial brand.

This is a 10-Year Destination Development Strategy. Given that certain conditions can change over time, this strategy should be viewed as a living document; it may need to be adjusted over time to address changing circumstances.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Destination British Columbia, the Northern BC Tourism Association (NBCTA) and the project facilitation team extend our sincere thanks to the First Nations on whose traditional territories we gathered for our community meetings, including:

- Kwadacha Nation
- Daylu Dena Council
- Blueberry First Nations
- Doig River First Nations
- Fort Nelson First Nation
- Halfway River First Nation
- Prophet River First Nation
- Saulteau First Nations
- West Moberly First Nations
- McLeod Lake Indian Band
- Lheidli T'enneh First Nation
- Tsay Keh Dene Nation

Thank you to our tourism partners who participated in the process by attending planning workshops, conducting interviews, hosting site visits, and responding to surveys. The participation of our partners throughout the process was invaluable, but it is important to note that no endorsement of this strategy or any action listed within was obtained.

This strategy was guided by input from approximately 160 tourism partners in Northeastern BC, representing the diversity of communities, organizations, businesses, and interests.

Additionally, the Northeastern BC Working Committee provided invaluable insights that helped formulate the objectives and associated actions in this strategy.



Destination British Columbia would also like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the following individuals for their contributions on the Working Committee:

**Northeastern BC
Destination Development
Working Committee**

Heather Sjoblom, Tourism Fort St John & North Peace Fort St John Museum

Dave Lueneberg, District of Taylor

Roya Compo, Tourism Prince George

Tamara Danshin, FLNR Regional Economic Operations, Economic Development

Gil Davis, Saulteau First Nation

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Katy Dillon, Ministry Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

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Joyce Lee, Tourism Dawson Creek

Jaylene MacIver, Northern Rockies Regional Municipality

Lucy Martin, McLeod Lake First Nation

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Desirae McMurray, BC Parks and Conservation Officer Service Division, Ministry of Environment

Teresa Ryder, Indigenous Tourism BC

Wayne Sawchuk, Muskwa-Kechika Adventures

Daniel Schildknecht, Northern Rockies Lodge

Bev Vandersteen, Fort Nelson Chamber of Commerce

Sarah Waters, Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark

Shaely Wilbur, City of Dawson Creek

Special thanks are offered to the facilitator of the Northeastern BC destination development process:

Jennifer Nichol, Grant Thornton LLP

2

INTRODUCING THE STRATEGY

The Northeastern BC Destination Development Strategy was developed to enhance the competitiveness of Northeastern BC over the next 10 years and beyond. The strategy was developed as part of Destination BC's Destination Development Program. The program is a critical part of Destination BC's corporate strategy.

It facilitates the collaboration of local, regional, provincial agencies, First Nations, destination management/marketing organizations (DMOs),

tourism operators, and other community interests to guide the long-term growth of tourism in the planning area.

A. PROGRAM VISION AND GOALS

The provincial vision for the Destination Development Program is as follows:

- BC is a world-class tourism destination that offers remarkable products and experiences that are authentic, driven by visitor demand, exceed expectations, and align with BC's brand.

The provincial vision is supported by three goals:

- Make BC the most highly recommended destination in North America
- Create 10-year strategies for tourism development and improve return-on-investment for government and private sector investments in tourism assets



- Elevate BC's ability to compete as a premium destination while making the province more attractive for investment

Destination development brings together planning, policy, and capacity building efforts to:

- Ensure that a destination is well positioned to make future strategic decisions
- Address impediments to growth and capitalize on opportunities

- Outline key assets of a destination including the main product themes and experiences available
- Outline key priorities for new product, infrastructure, and amenity development
- Identify impediments to development and tourism growth (e.g., potential policy or capacity issues, available funding, access to funding, etc.)

B. PURPOSE

The Northeastern BC Destination Development Strategy is a guide for tourism partners as they proceed with implementation. This document should be reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect changing circumstances. Results should also be tracked regularly to determine if adjustments are needed to better achieve its goals and objectives.

The purpose of this strategy is to not only provide underlying support for the goals of the provincial Destination Development Program mentioned above but also to:

- Provide strategic direction for the region, and guidance for local and regional planning
- Enhance Northeastern BC's ability to leverage their resources and programs
- Foster joint action and inter-community dialogue

FIGURE 1:
Tourism Revenue
Drivers



C. A FOCUS ON THE SUPPLY AND EXPERIENCE

Destination development is the mechanism whereby the natural life cycle of tourism (e.g., development, stagnation, decline, and rejuvenation) is managed to ensure a destination evolves to remain desirable for the ever-changing consumer and hence, competitive in its target markets. Destination development happens when industry and government plan and work together to enhance the quality of a visitor's experience by ensuring tourism products, services, amenities, and practices meet and exceed expectations over the long term.

Tourism has two primary revenue drivers — supply and demand (Figure 1). Creative marketing efforts strive to generate short-term demand for a destination and create immediate urgency for people to want to visit. Destination development focuses on the supply side of tourism by creating a compelling visitor experience to attract new visitors and entice repeat visitation. In this age of near instantaneous sharing via social networks (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and third-party platforms the traveller can review (e.g., TripAdvisor, Google) the quality of the destination and the experiences it offers.

There are multiple dimensions to supply that are considered in destination development planning to enhance the visitor experience:

- the setting in which our experiences take place and how to access them
- policies that establish and maintain opportunities for growth
- the investment enhancement framework
- products and experiences matched to consumer interests, including infrastructure and amenities (which are all often public in nature and used by residents as well as visitors)
- visitor servicing programs that meet and exceed guest expectations
- capability, skills, and training our industry needs so that we can all excel at what we do

These dimensions are illustrated in Figure 2.

D. METHODOLOGY

This strategy was developed based on an extensive, collaborative effort during a 26-month process that culminated in the creation of a Situation Analysis report and this document.

Iterative destination development planning provided ample opportunities for input and validation (Figure 3). Developed by Destination BC, the strategic process was semi-structured allowing for flexibility which ensured the unique considerations of Northeastern BC were assessed and respected. A volunteer Working Committee contributed their expertise. This Working Committee reviewed and discussed the key findings from the Situation Analysis and helped develop the goals and supporting objectives in this strategy. See Appendix 1 for the full process outline.

E. PROJECT OUTPUTS

The three key outputs from this project include:

1. An asset inventory of accommodation, tourism businesses and attractions, tourism organizations, food and beverage establishments, parks and recreation sites, sports and arts facilities, meeting facilities, transportation, and visitor services.
2. A 175-page Situation Analysis that provides foundational research related to the Northeastern BC planning area, access and infrastructure, key tourism assets, key markets, a destination assessment, and priority planning area considerations to inform the development of this strategy.
3. This Destination Development Strategy.

FIGURE 2:
Five Dimensions
of Supply — the
Visitor Experience



FIGURE 3:
Key Project
Timelines

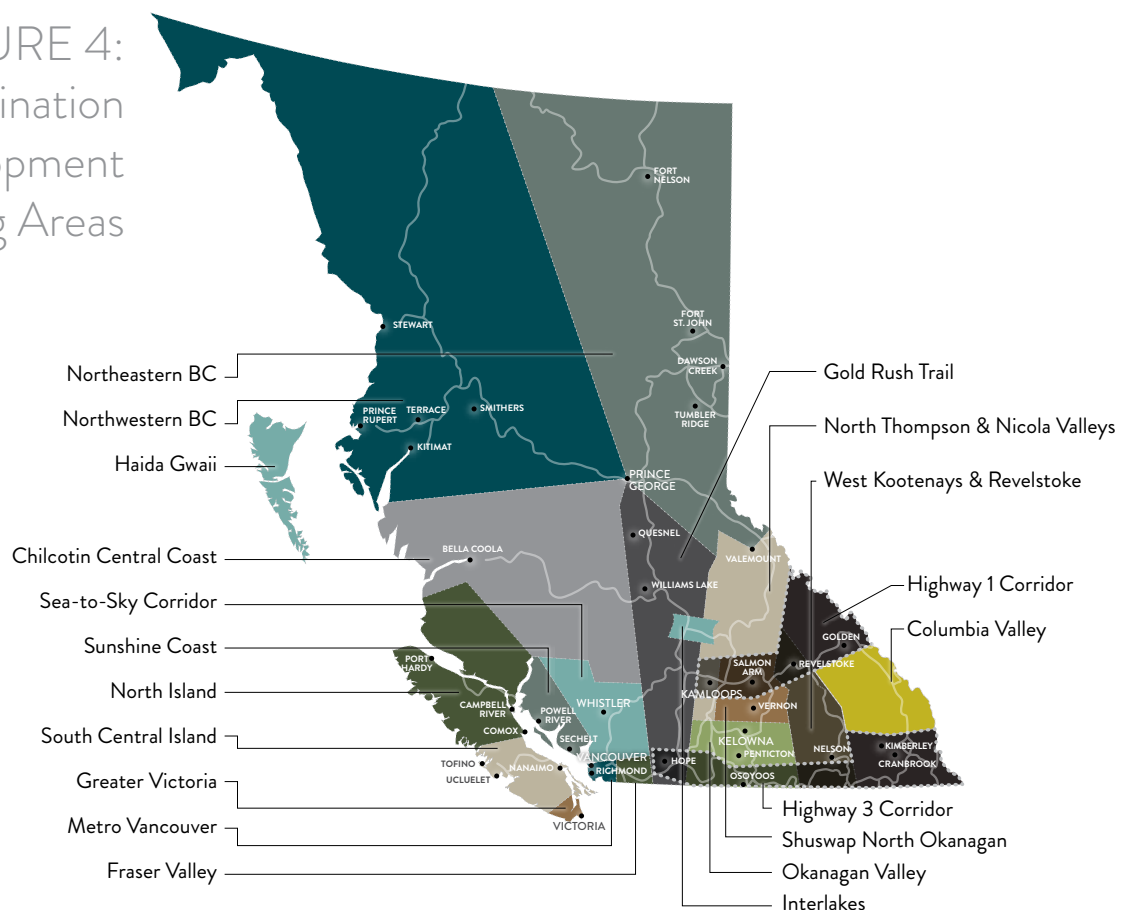
ACTIVITY	DATES
Project launch simultaneously in two locations: • Prince George • Fort St. John Note that, for those that could not attend in person, there was an option to participate via webinar. Several participants used this method.	September 2016
Pre-project staging and document review	September 2016
First in-community consultation held in three locations: • Prince George • Dawson Creek • Fort Nelson Interviews and Industry Survey #1	October 2016
Second in-community consultation held in three locations: • Prince George • Fort St. John • Fort Nelson Interviews and Industry Survey #2	November – December 2016
Draft #1 of Situation Analysis	January – March 2017
Priority setting and preliminary findings with the Working Committee • Workshop in Fort St. John • Nine follow-up teleconference sessions to discuss and/or refine strategies	April – July 2017
Destination Development Strategy Draft #1	August 2017
Destination BC and cross-government of BC review of Draft #1	August – December 2017
Destination Development Strategy Draft #2	December 2017
Tourism Partner Review of Draft #2	January – October 2018
Finalization of Destination Development Strategy	November 2018

ALIGNMENT

FORT ST. JOHN
Photo: Andrew Strain

The Northeastern BC Destination Development Strategy is one of three Destination Development Strategies being prepared for the Northern BC Tourism region, and one of 20 for the province.

FIGURE 4:
Twenty Destination
Development
Planning Areas



The two other planning areas in Northern BC are: Northwestern BC and Haida Gwaii. Over the course of the Destination Development Planning program, each of the province's six tourism regions will integrate their planning area Destination Development Strategy into a Regional Destination Development Strategies which, in turn, will be used to inform a provincial Destination Development Strategy.

It is important to recognize that visitors do not make travel decisions based on artificial boundaries created by governments and organizations. As a result, planning areas span multiple jurisdictions thus reinforcing the importance of an integrated approach with a shared vision and prioritized investments.

The Destination Development Strategies themselves will be influenced by, and where appropriate, reflect and complement, other planning initiatives. At the senior government level, tourism and related strategies developed by the Government of Canada, Destination Canada, and the government of BC provide high-level guidance on the changing tourism landscape and how domestic industry (and communities) can adapt and thrive. In addition to government planning processes related to tourism, other layers of planning that are relevant to the destination development planning process include:

1. ASSOCIATIONS AND AGENCIES REPRESENTING DIFFERENT TOURISM SUB-SECTORS (e.g., culinary, sport fishing, kayaking, boating) **AND SERVICES** (e.g., advocacy, human resources, marketing): These organizations play an important role in many aspects of the demand-side of tourism sector development, specifically in relation to the involvement and interests of the private sector.

2. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT/MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS (DMOS): The marketing and promotional (and, in some cases, destination development) efforts of community DMOs are relevant to the destination development planning process as these efforts are typically focused on the supply-side of a community's tourism sector (e.g., marketing the community's tourism assets).

3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PLANS: These plans can have direct or indirect implications for tourism destination development (e.g., trail development, zoning for commercial short-term accommodation, protection of visual/scenic assets, commercial property tax frameworks, regulation of the sharing economy, etc.).

FIGURE 5:
Levels of Destination
Development Planning





SUCCESS NETWORK

MUNCHO LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK
Photo: Andrew Strain

Success networks represent the clusters of businesses and organizations (private sector, government, and not-for-profit) who are encouraged to collaborate and work in harmony to bring the opportunity to fruition. Successful destination development implementation recognizes that we all have a role to play.

The recommendations contained within this Destination Development Strategy form the foundation for additional discussions that are focused and aligned, regarding implementation locally, regionally, and provincially. Organizations identified within each tactical success network will be able to review the potential for growing tourism locally, regionally, and provincially, by leading or supporting implementation and action. It does not imply that the organizations have committed or endorsed the tactic. This strategy is intended to inform conversations that may lead to future investments and actions, or that will contribute to growing this planning area's and British Columbia's visitor economy.

It is important to note that the development opportunities are not mutually exclusive.

The stakeholders demonstrated a desire to work together throughout the community consultations. The complexity of the tourism opportunity is understood in the planning area.

Tourism partners have already articulated their desire to work cooperatively on destination development initiatives. It is believed that only by working collaboratively that the true potential of the planning area can be realized.

The following partners have been identified collectively through the strategy development process as likely playing a role in moving a potential objective or action forward:

FIGURE 6: Key Government and Management Organizations

FEDERAL	FIRST NATIONS	PROVINCIAL	REGIONAL	LOCAL
• Destination Canada • Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada • Western Economic Diversification • Parks Canada • Canadian Heritage • Public Works and Government Services Canada	• Kwadacha • Daylu Dena Council • Lheidli T'enneh • Tsay Keh Dene • Blueberry • Doig River • Fort Nelson • Halfway River • Prophet River • Saulteau • McLeod Lake	• Destination BC (DBC) • Indigenous tourism Association of BC • Ministries/Agencies: - Tourism, Arts & Culture - Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation - Transportation & Infrastructure - Forests, Lands & Natural Resource Operations, incl. Rec Sites and Trails - Heritage - Environment - BC Parks - Agriculture	• Northern Development Initiative Trust • Ventures Connect • Community Futures • Northern BC Tourism Association • University of NBC • Northern Lights College • College of New Caledonia • Alaska Highway Community Society • Muskwa-Kechika Management Area • Regional Districts: - Northern Rockies - Peace River - Fraser Fort George	• Chetwynd • Dawson Creek • Fort Nelson • Fort St. John • Hudson's Hope • Mackenzie • Pouce Coupe • Prince George • Taylor • Tumbler Ridge

This strategy is intended to inform actions for the future, which over time may be embedded in the local, regional, and provincial decision making process. The result will be an integrated system of priorities that will achieve better development decisions, drive greater tourism revenues, and realize benefits for businesses and communities in the planning area. All of this will contribute to a thriving, vibrant, and growing economy.

Joint strategy ownership among all planning area tourism partners is a critical component of this program's success. The planning process identifies a suggested success network of tourism partners to champion and move actions within each objective forward. However, during implementation, leads and parties involved would need to be verified. In many instances, executing an initiative may require the sharing of responsibilities, and listed entities will be responsible to lead their own areas.

The regional representatives (Northern BC Tourism Association) have an important role to play as regional destination development champions. As this planning process is not intended to duplicate ongoing efforts or create new organizational or administrative structures, the implementation of this strategy should first be executed through existing organizations, where possible.

In addition to the above organizations, there are multiple local organizations that play a role in destination development, including:

- Destination management/marketing organizations
- Chambers of commerce
- Economic development organizations
- Arts organizations
- Music organizations
- Trail-oriented organizations
- Cycling organizations
- Heritage organizations
- Business development organizations
- Conservation and environmental organizations

It is the aspiration that, over time, this strategy will inform and become embedded in local, regional, provincial, and federal decision making processes. The result will be an integrated system of priorities that will result in better development decisions that drive greater tourism revenues and benefits for businesses and communities in Northeastern BC. This will contribute to a thriving, vibrant, and growing economy.

Figure 7 illustrates the potential roles for different partners in destination development.

FIGURE 7: Key Government and Management Organization Roles



5

A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION

MUNCHO LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK
Photo: Andrew Strain

A. LOCATION AND ACCESS

OVERVIEW OF NORTHEASTERN BC

The Northeastern BC planning area spans:

- From the northern tip of the BC portion of the Alaska Highway (Highway 97) to the Yukon-BC border south to Prince George
- From the western edge of the Muskwa-Kechika Management area east to the Alberta border

Access to Northeastern BC is primarily by highway and air. Passenger airports are in Prince George, Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Fort Nelson, and Mackenzie. Mackenzie Airport services chartered flights and private aircraft, rather than regularly scheduled passenger carriers. Privately operated and limited passenger bus service is available to/

from some communities. Prince George is the only community that is serviced by passenger rail (VIA Rail).

Given the size of the destination and distances to key markets, travel to Northeastern BC is viewed as a considerable constraint to tourism growth. The exception is access to Prince George, which is closer to southern BC and offers a larger, well serviced airport, in addition to regularly scheduled passenger train and bus service.

The length of Highway 97 from Prince George to the BC-Yukon border is over 1,300 kilometers and takes approximately 15 hours to drive by vehicle.

NORTHEASTERN BC

- Towns and Indigenous Communities
- Highways
- Lakes and Rivers
- Provincial Parks and Protected Areas

1. Maxhamish Lake Protected Area
2. Thinahtea South Protected Area
3. Liard River Corridor Park
4. Muncho Lake Park
5. Dune Za Keyih Park
(A.K.A. Frog-Gataga Park)
6. Kwadacha Wilderness Park
7. Northern Rocky Mountains Park
8. Klua Lakes Protected Area
9. Finlay Russel Park
10. Redfern-Keily Park
11. Tatlatui Park
12. Chase Park
13. Graham - Laurier Park
14. Omineca Park
15. Pine Le Moray Park
16. Gwillim Lake Park
17. Carp Lake Park
18. Monkman Park
19. Kakwa Park
20. Ancient Forest/
Chun T'oh Whudujut Park



0 50 100 Km

B. POPULATION BASE

Northeastern BC, with a population of just over 162,500, encompasses the following regional jurisdictions, First Nations, and communities.

REGIONAL JURISDICTIONS

- Peace River Regional District
- Fraser Fort George Regional District
- Northern Rockies Regional Municipality (including Fort Nelson)

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

- Chetwynd
- Dawson Creek
- Fort St. John
- Hudson's Hope
- Mackenzie
- Prince George
- Pouce Coupe
- Taylor
- Tumbler Ridge

FIRST NATIONS

- Kwadacha Nation
- Daylu Dena Council
- Blueberry First Nations*
- Doig River First Nations*
- Fort Nelson First Nation*
- Halfway River First Nation*
- Prophet River First Nation*
- Sauteau First Nations*
- West Moberly First Nations*
- McLeod Lake Indian Band*
- Lheidli T'enneh First Nation
- Tsay Keh Dene Nation

* These First Nations are signatories to Treaty 8.

C. ECONOMIC BASE

Northeastern BC's economy was founded on trade, construction, forestry, agriculture, fishing, oil and gas, and mining. BC Hydro's preliminary work related to the potential construction of the Site C Dam is boosting the region's employment rate. The largest growth in

demand over the coming years is expected to be in education and health related occupations, in addition to oil and gas, if the current rebound continues. Growth areas for the region are also expected in transportation, administration, and tourism.

D. DESTINATION OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

Northeastern BC is characterized by its vastness, touring routes, parks, wildlife, palaeontological resources, and the natural resource sectors. With the exception of Prince George (over 70,000), communities in the area are relatively small.

The size of the destination lends itself to diversity in natural environments, which feature prairies, agricultural lands, mountains, expansive parks, lakes, rivers, and forests.

Overall, Northeastern BC has outstanding cultural and natural assets that support (or could support) a range of adventure, eco-tourism, cultural, and Indigenous tourism experiences. The area has a wealth of BC Parks. The destination includes several iconic features and unique attributes that can potentially appeal to and cater to different markets and help define the destination.

NORTHERN SECTION OF PLANNING AREA

The primary focus of tourism in the northern section of the planning area is touring, primarily by car, recreational vehicle, and motorcycle. While primary visitor research has not been conducted since 2003, anecdotal observations from visitor centre staff suggest that the Alaska Highway is the main attractor for the touring market. This touring product offers a blended experience featuring heritage, culture, and nature. The area also offers eco and backcountry adventure tourism experiences; however, the current volume of visitors participating in these types of experiences is much smaller than for touring due to:

- The planning area's distance from key markets, and the resulting expense and inconvenience of travel
- The very limited number of operators who are currently offering guided experiences in Northeastern BC



- High operating costs for backcountry operators, which makes these types of experiences very expensive (which is one factor that has led to the limited number of operators)
- The fact that these experiences are, in fact, intended to be low volume and low impact

Hunting is also an established activity in the area. Sport tourism is an established and growing segment in the northern section of the planning area. While some winter product is available — primarily cross-country skiing and snowmobiling — most visitation occurs in the summer, spring, and fall.

SOUTHERN SECTION OF PLANNING AREA

The primary focus of tourism in the southern section of the planning area is sport tourism, event tourism, and adventure and/or eco-tourism. The southern section is more easily accessed than the north, due to the size of and frequency of flights at the Prince George Airport, VIA Rail service, and closer proximity to the population centres in southern BC.

While some winter product is available

- including downhill skiing, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling
- most visitation occurs in the summer, spring, and fall.

The planning area has several iconic features that currently serve, or potentially could serve, as demand generators and focal points around

which to galvanize a common identity for Northeastern BC. Through the planning process, participants identified the following features and/or areas as the top five for Northeastern BC:

- Alaska Highway Corridor
- Liard River Hot Springs
- Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Global Geopark
- Ancient Forest
- Muskwa-Kechika Management Area

There are several additional assets that offer potential for development and could further increase visitor interest in travelling to Northeastern BC. Of particular note, is the emergence of potentially significant attractions and experiences related to:

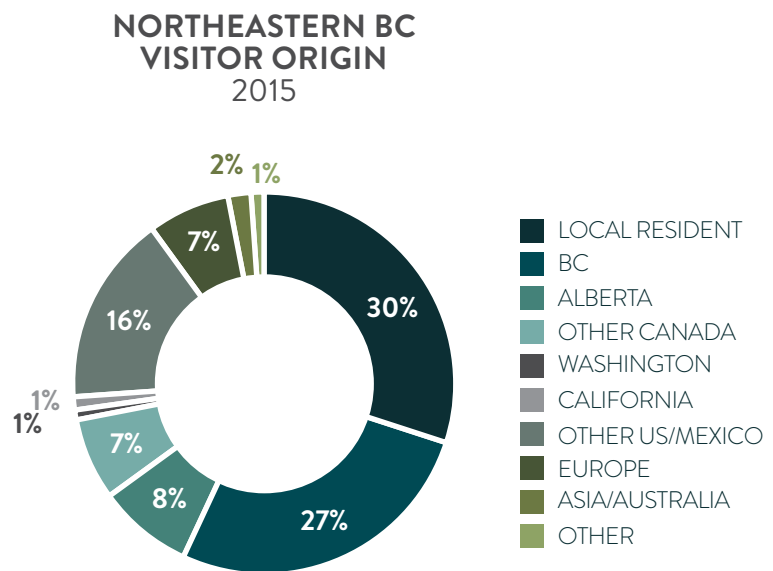
- Palaeontological resources throughout Northeastern BC
- Indigenous cultural experiences
- The growth of:
 - Sport tourism: attracting regional, provincial, and more recently, national and international events
 - Concerts and/or events
- Support for significant cultural and heritage initiatives:
 - Nomination of Alaska Highway through the National Historic Sites program
 - Northeastern BC Heritage Strategy
 - Fraser Fort George Regional District Cultural Plan

E. KEY MARKETS AND PRODUCTS

The percentage breakdown for visitors to Northeastern BC Visitor Centres for 2015 is shown below. The BC market — broken down by residents and BC residents — comprises 57% of the total. Other key markets include: other US/ Mexico (16%), Alberta (8%), other

Canada (7%), and Europe (7%). While this provides an indication of market origin for visitors to Northeastern BC, the reader should be cautioned that Visitor Centre data may not necessarily reflect the visitor profile in its entirety, as not all visitors use a Visitor Centre.

FIGURE 8:
Visitation to
Northeastern BC
Visitor Centres
(2015)



Source: Northeastern BC Visitor Centre Statistics, Destination BC

The table below identifies the current product and experience offerings and associated markets, in addition to potential product and experience offerings. An X means that there is a

current match and a P means that this is an experience that could be further developed to meet market demand from certain markets.

FIGURE 9: Northeastern BC Product-Market Match

PRODUCTS/ EXPERIENCES	LOCAL/ REGIONAL	LOWER MAIN- LAND	REST OF BC	AB	OTHER CANADA	US	OTHER INTER- NATIONAL	COMMENTS
TOURING/ EXPLORING	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	• International — Germany, UK
HIKING	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
MOUNTAIN BIKING	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
HUNTING	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
MOTORCYCLING	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	• Groups and individuals • Overseas visitors have trouble transporting bikes to Canada • Distance between gas stations is a constraint
SPORT TOURISM/ SPORTING EVENTS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	• U17 hockey including domestic and international participants • Fort St. John speed skating includes international participants
BOATING	X	X	X	X				• Restricted somewhat because cannot double- trailer in BC
ATVING	X		P	X	P			• Sometimes combined with hunting • Restricted in parts of Muskwa-Kechika • Restricted in some BC Parks • Need services and amenities • Need to avoid impacts on environment and non-motorized activities
WILDLIFE VIEWING/ ECOTOURS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

PRODUCTS/ EXPERIENCES	LOCAL/ REGIONAL	LOWER MAIN- LAND	REST OF BC	AB	OTHER CANADA	US	OTHER INTER- NATIONAL	COMMENTS
DESTINATION FESTIVALS, ARTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE, MUSEUMS	X	X	X	X		75 TH Anniversary	75 TH Anniversary	• 75th anniversary of Alaska Highway important for US & International markets
INDIGENOUS PRODUCTS/ EVENTS	X	P	P	P	P	P	P	• Potential international markets — China, Germany, UK
CABIN/LODGE EXPERIENCE	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	• Some cabins/lodges exist, but not enough to meet demand • Opportunity to partner with BC Parks
CAMPING	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	• Rental equipment needed
CONFERENCES/ CONVENTIONS	X	X	X	P	X (PG)			
CULINARY/ AGRITOURISM	P	P	P	P			P	
SNOWMOBILING	X	X	X	X	P	P		• Zoning/trail designation needed • Club support important to develop and maintain trails • Need to avoid impacts on environment and non-motorized activities
OTHER WINTER EXPERIENCES – SNOWSHOE, NORDIC	X	P	P	X				• Zoning/trail designation needed • Club support important to develop and maintain trails
ENTERTAINMENT/ EVENTS	X	X	X	X		*		• The Yukon is also a market
ROCK & ICE CLIMBING	X	P	P	P	P			• The development of Valemount presents opportunity to build awareness about opportunities in Northeastern BC, and Tumbler Ridge specifically
RIVER RAFTING	X	P	P	P	P			

F. SUMMARY OF KEY STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

From a tourism destination perspective, the planning area benefits from a range of strengths. However, it is also facing destination development challenges, some of which have the potential to impact the future growth and sustainability of the tourism sector.

To build on these strengths and address these challenges, the area's tourism stakeholders have identified key opportunities that form the foundation of this strategy. These key strengths,

challenges, and opportunities are summarized below. A more extensive list is provided in Appendices 3 and 4.

FIGURE 9: High Level Summary of Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

KEY STRENGTHS	KEY CHALLENGES	KEY OPPORTUNITIES
• Diverse landscapes and natural features • Abundant wildlife • Expansive natural areas • Resilient communities and populations • Unique areas and features • Rich palaeontological resources • First Nations heritage • Frontier heritage • Event and sport tourism infrastructure • High profile sporting events	• Transportation barriers to, from, and within • Low awareness about region • Lack of sufficient roadside services and facilities • Need for more market-ready experiences • Lack of rental equipment • High cost of operations in remote areas • Low understanding and support for tourism • Staff attraction and retention	• Develop thematic touring and circle routes • Build experiences around iconic attractions and/or areas • Clarify identity of Northeastern BC • Develop visitor, market, and export ready experiences • Further develop ecotourism • Develop tours that extend from Alaska Highway

G. EXPERIENCE POTENTIAL

Key experience themes for Northeastern BC are highlighted below. While these currently exist to some degree, there is significant potential to build on these opportunities through this 10-year strategy.

Outstanding thematic touring and/or circle routes that are enriched by diverse and natural landscapes, natural features and wildlife, heritage and culture experiences, and eco-tourism experiences. While this unique selling proposition is anchored by the iconic Alaska Highway, there are many additional routes with considerable thematic potential that can help further develop Northeastern BC into a top touring destination in North America.

Palaeontological exploration and adventures that are built on the rich palaeontological resources throughout much of the destination, the emerging presence of the Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Global Geopark, and the vast trail networks featured in and around communities and in provincial, regional, and municipal parks. It should be noted that the discovery of palaeontological resources in northeastern BC is still in its infancy.

The superb outdoor adventure and eco-tourism opportunities based on the outdoor settings of Northwestern BC are clear. While some parts of Northeastern BC are impacted by the resource sector, the destination does feature vast areas of nature and wilderness that are wild and untouched. Wild and untouched areas are becoming increasingly rare worldwide, which reinforces what is special about Northeastern BC.



A DISTINCTIVE DIRECTION

NORTHERN ROCKIES LODGE
Photo: Emanuel Smedbol

THE DIRECTION FOR THE STRATEGY

A. VISION

A destination vision provides a clear, compelling, and bold picture of the preferred future for the destination. A destination vision:

- Paints a picture of what success looks like
- Is set out over a long period of time (i.e. 10 years)
- Is sufficiently challenging to motivate, inspire, and influence tourism partners, yet at the same time, is achievable

The Working Committee, with input from planning area participants, developed the following 10-year destination vision for Northeastern BC.

DESTINATION VISION

NORTHEASTERN BC OFFERS UNIQUE AND DIVERSE ADVENTURES OF A LIFETIME IN WORLD-CLASS SETTINGS WITH RICH HERITAGE AND CULTURE, SPECTACULAR WILDLIFE, VAST WILDERNESS, AND WELCOMING COMMUNITIES.



B. GOALS

A. CORE ICONIC FEATURES

Core iconic features are central to product/experience development and awareness building for Northeastern BC

B. COLLABORATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND RESOURCES

Strong collaboration between operators, First Nations, communities, governments, and DMOs supports destination development

C. POSITIVE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Government support for tourism development and management is robust and coordinated, creating a positive operating environment

D. INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

Infrastructure, access, amenities, and emergency services are provided and maintained to support destination development

E. EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Unique, market-ready products and experiences exceed expectations of visitors while maintaining the environmental and cultural integrity of the destination

F. TOURISM WORKFORCE

A strong, well-trained, motivated tourism workforce is available to deliver quality experiences

THE VISION IS SUPPORTED BY SIX GOALS THAT WERE DEVELOPED WITH INPUT FROM WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS AND REFINED BY THE WORKING COMMITTEE. THE GOALS ARE DESIGNED TO HELP ACHIEVE THE VISION AND ADDRESS THE PRIORITIZED OPPORTUNITIES, AND BARRIERS THAT WERE IDENTIFIED DURING THE WORKSHOPS.

FIGURE 10: Northeastern BC Destination Vision and Goals



7

STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

PRINCE GEORGE
Photo: Andrew Strain

VISION

The vision and goals are supported by objectives and actions. The overall structure of the strategy is illustrated below. Each of the six goals has supporting objectives, and each of the 32 objectives has supporting actions. Collectively, these are intended to help achieve the planning area's vision.

These goals are interconnected. Success in achieving one goal and its supporting objectives and actions support the achievement of other goals. For example, the goal — and supporting objectives and actions — related to Infrastructure and Transportation will support the successful achievement of the Experience Development goal. This interconnectedness flows through the goals and objectives.

A snapshot of the goals and objectives is provided in the next table. A more detailed description of each goal, objective, and supporting initiatives follows in the table below.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIC GOAL A: **CORE ICONIC FEATURES**

Core iconic features are central to product and/or experience development and awareness-building for Northeastern BC.

Supporting Objectives:

A-1 Develop remarkable experiences around the key iconic features

A-2 Coordinate iconic features with communities and other experiences and/or products

STRATEGIC GOAL B: **COLLABORATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND RESOURCES**

Strong collaboration between operators, First Nations, communities, governments, and DMOs supports destination development.

Supporting Objectives:

B-1 Enhance communication and collaboration amongst and between the range of tourism partners in Northeastern BC to support the implementation of this strategy

B-2 Enhance collaboration and meaningful engagement with First Nations

B-3 Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement destination development priorities

STRATEGIC GOAL C: **POSITIVE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT**

Government support for tourism development and management is robust and coordinated, creating a positive operating environment.

Supporting Objectives:

C-1 Build better government understanding and support for tourism

C-2 Enhance local, regional, and First Nations government support for destination development

C-3 Improve and/or sustain the health of wildlife populations

C-4 Ensure that targeted government policies and land and tenure management support destination development

STRATEGIC GOAL D: INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

Infrastructure, access, amenities, and emergency services are provided and maintained to support destination development.

Supporting Objectives:

D-1 Ensure roadside amenities and pull-outs support existing and potential priority tourism experiences

D-2 Improve the provision of emergency services and cell service in key areas

D-3 Improve overall signage along travel routes in collaboration with federal and provincial agencies

D-4 Improve the frequency and reliability of air passenger service

D-5 Build on the wealth of provincial and regional parks in Northeastern BC to better service existing and future visitors

D-6 Continue to improve trails and trail networks to better service existing and future visitors

D-7 Improve First Nations interpretive, locational, and welcoming signage in key locations in Northeastern BC

D-8 Increase the presence of facilities, infrastructure, and services that support universal design¹

STRATEGIC GOAL E: EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Unique, market-ready products and/or experiences exceed expectations of visitors, while maintaining the environmental and cultural integrity of the destination.

Supporting Objectives:

E-1 Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready Indigenous tourism experiences including products for touring visitors and for destination visitors

E-2 Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready tourism products and/or experiences

E-3 Build on the strength of heritage, arts, culture, festival and event assets, and initiatives

E-4 Further develop thematic corridors and circle routes as a core product for Northeastern BC

E-5 Expand and enhance the range of resorts and accommodation experiences

E-6 Continue to build the urban tourism experience

E-7 Continue to develop sport tourism

E-8 Develop more formalized winter tourism experiences

E-9 Develop the mountain biking experience in key locations that possess great terrain for this activity

E-10 Continually improve tourism services

E-11 Ensure that future product and/or experience development and services meet the needs of the international visitors from both existing and emerging markets

STRATEGIC GOAL F: TOURISM WORKFORCE

A strong, well-trained, motivated tourism workforce is available to deliver quality experiences.

Supporting Objectives:

F-1 Improve Northeastern BC's ability to attract and retain appropriately skilled workers and volunteers

F-2 Address succession planning and business continuity issues related to tourism businesses

F-3 Help develop a more entrepreneurial culture by providing relevant training and capacity building opportunities

¹Universal Design (UD) is an approach to design that increases the potential for developing a better quality of life for a wide range of individuals. It is a design process that enables and empowers a diverse population [diverse ages, people with disabilities, people with varying ranges of mobility] by improving human performance, health and wellness, and social participation (Steinfeld and Maisel, 2012), downloaded July 24, 2017, from www.universaldesign.com/what-is-ud/



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

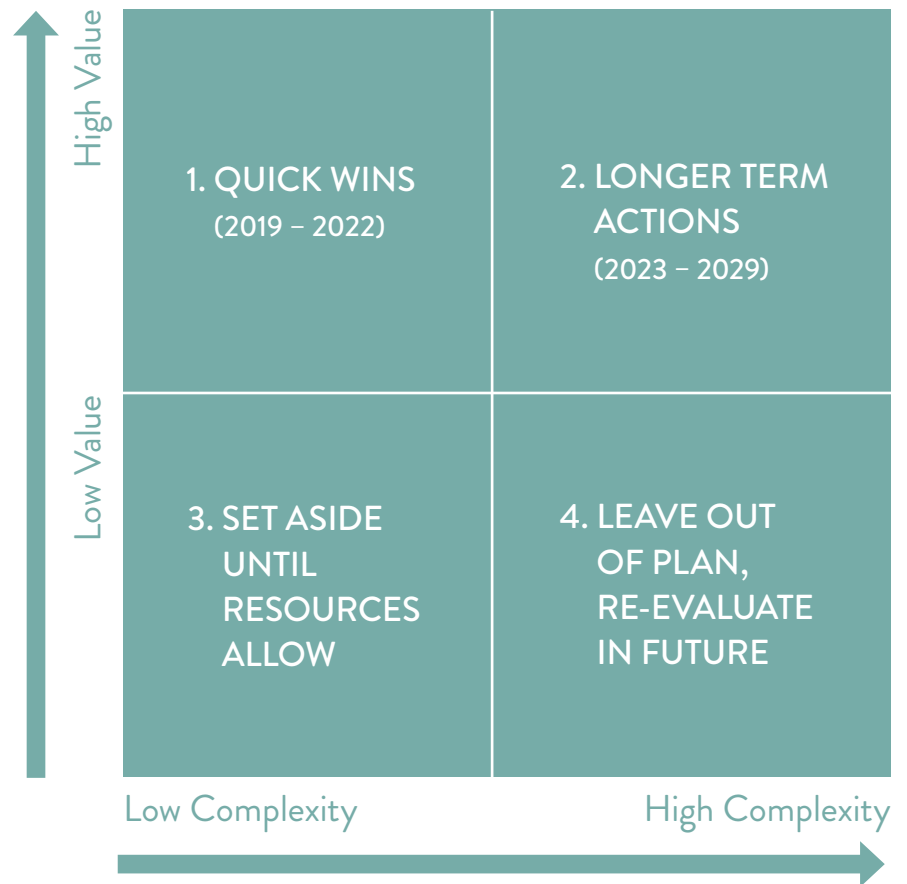
MONKMAN PROVINCIAL PARK
Photo: Mike Seehagel

A. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

This section presents the detailed description of goals and supporting objectives and actions.

- There is a separate subsection for each goal, which first introduces the goal statement and provides brief contextual background.
- Following the background is a table that documents and describes each objective and supporting action that the Working Committee developed to help achieve the goal. Also included in the table is an indication of priority, success network, and geographic relevance (e.g., relevant specifically to the planning area, relevant to the entire Northern BC region, and/or relevant to the government of BC).
- The Working Committee provided input regarding assigning priorities and the success network for each action.

FIGURE 11:
Priority Setting
Framework



PRIORITIZATION

The Working Committee used the following framework to determine the prioritization of each action.

1. QUICK WINS actions that are of high value and low complexity that can be achieved within three years (2019–2022).

2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS actions that are of high value and high complexity that require four to 10 years to achieve (2023–2029); albeit activities can begin immediately to achieve the outcome.

3. SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW actions that are of low complexity and low value, to be addressed when time and/or resources exist.

4. LEAVE OUT OF STRATEGY, RE-EVALUATE IN FUTURE actions that are of high complexity and low value and not realistically achievable in the 10-year time frame of this strategy.

Actions that may serve as catalysts are also noted. Catalysts are more immediate and their early completion can serve to motivate the implementation of other actions.



Presenting the destination development objectives with a consistent framework will allow the province to examine the various priorities across all planning areas to identify those that belong within a regional or provincial strategy. The success network² is identified, and where the proposed objective has provincial or regional scope beyond this planning area, it is noted. This list does not represent all the opportunities that emerged during the planning process, but those that emerged as a higher priority for tourism destination development.

SUCCESS NETWORK

The success network includes those people and/or organizations that would ideally support the implementation of specific actions. Note that the listing of specific organizations in a success network does not necessarily mean that the specified organizations would be involved, but that their involvement would be beneficial to implementing the specific action. The level of involvement for the organizations listed will be determined when a more detailed action plan is developed for each action; the organizations listed may play a lead or a supporting role, depending on the mandate of the organization and its resources.

PLANNING AREA, REGIONAL, PROVINCIAL RELEVANCE

This refers to whether the specified action is:

- **PLANNING AREA** — specific: Relevant primarily to Northeastern BC
- **REGION** — specific: Relevant also to the entire Northern BC Tourism Region
- **PROVINCE** — specific: Relevant also to the entire province

If the action is of regional relevance, it will likely be included in the Northern BC Destination Development Strategy, to be developed in the future.

If the action is of provincial relevance, it will likely be included in the Provincial Destination Development Strategy, also to be developed in the future.

²Organizations and partners listed under the success networks have been identified collectively through the strategy development process as likely playing a role in moving a potential objective or action forward. In no way is this meant to suggest any form of commitment or endorsement of the objective or action.

A. CORE ICONIC FEATURES

Strategic Goal

Core iconic features are central to product and/or experience development and awareness-building for Northeastern BC.

A key element of a Destination Development Strategy is the identification of core iconic features around which experiences and destination identity can be developed. This is particularly important for Northeastern BC, given that the area is in earlier stages of tourism development. Participants in the planning process believe that there is very low awareness about Northeastern BC in many markets. Overall, there is limited understanding about how special the area is and the types of experiences that are offered and that could be offered.

Early in the process, participants were asked fundamental questions: “What are the three to five defining features for Northeastern BC? For example, what is the Taj Mahal, the Eiffel Tower, the Grand Canyon of Northeastern

BC?” This led to the identification of key iconic features and/or areas for the entire planning area. A long list was developed and, an online survey offered participants the opportunity to rank the top iconic features. These features serve (or could serve) as key identifiers for tourism around which products and/or experiences could be further developed. The top five are listed below.

This goal and the supporting objectives and actions aim to develop remarkable tourism experiences associated with the iconic features and/or areas. This goal and Goal E: Experience Development are interconnected and should be implemented in a coordinated manner.

ICONIC FEATURE	RANKING
ALASKA HIGHWAY	1
LIARD RIVER HOT SPRINGS	2
TUMBLER RIDGE UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK	3
ANCIENT FOREST	4
MUSKWA-KECHIKA MANAGEMENT AREA	5

A. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
A1. Develop remarkable experiences around the key iconic features. ACTIONS A-1-1 - Identify current and future remarkable experiences that exist or that can be developed around the Top Iconic Features. Prepare a plan and schedule for developing, profiling, and linking these experiences as a Northeastern BC Iconic Features initiative over the next 10 years. This should include sub-plans for each of the five feature areas. - Note that this can include developing niche tours with organizations such as the University of Northern BC and VIA Rail (see Action E-2-3). - Include the development of thematic signage using a common look and/or graphics and an interpretive literature program that profiles the top iconic features. SUCCESS NETWORK Alaska Highway Corridor - NBCTA, DBC, NDIT, Coordinate with Action E-4-1, Alaska Highway Community Society and relevant partners Liard River Hot Springs - NBCTA, DBC, NDIT, BC Parks, Fort Nelson First Nation Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Geopark - NBCTA, DBC, NDIT, TRUGG Society, First Nations Ancient Forest - NBCTA, DBC, NDIT, BC Parks, relevant clubs, First Nations Muskwa-Kechika - MKMA Executive Committee, DBC, NDIT, NBCTA, First Nations, nearby communities, tourism operators	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	PLANNING AREA SCOPE
A2. Coordinate iconic features with communities and other experiences and/or products ACTIONS A-2-1 - Coordinate the top iconic features with other aspects of product and/or experience development in Northeastern BC: circle tours, thematic travel routes, niche package development, etc. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, those involved with leading the initiatives for each iconic feature (see A-1-1) ACTIONS A-2-2 - Coordinate key attractions and events in nearby communities with the iconic features, to develop and link the top iconic features and related experiences with nearby communities, including their key events and attractions. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, those involved with leading the initiatives for each iconic feature (see A-1-1) DMOs, community representatives	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	REGIONAL SCOPE

B. COLLABORATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND RESOURCES

Strategic Goal

Strong collaboration between operators, First Nations, communities, governments, and DMO's supports destination development.

The destination development planning process has encouraged collaboration amongst tourism interests in communities and areas within Northeastern BC. This was a positive outcome of the process. Continued collaboration will be needed to achieve the goals and objectives defined in this strategy.

A concerted effort will be required to create and sustain communication tools and forums to facilitate collaboration and communication. Human and financial resources are also critical to implementation.

B. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
B1. Enhance communication and collaboration amongst and between the range of tourism partners in Northeastern BC to support the implementation of the Destination Development Strategy. ACTIONS Action B-1-1 Under the auspices of NBCTA, establish a committee, with a dedicated position, to develop communications tools to ensure that progress regarding destination development and the implementation of the 10-year strategy is communicated regularly. • This needs to be coordinated and managed by a dedicated position. • Cost-effective tools should be used, such as webinars, email communication, video conferencing, etc. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, representative from each community, First Nations	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	REGIONAL SCOPE
ACTIONS Action B-1-2 Host events/forums featuring relevant and inspirational guest speakers, professional development and initiatives that will help coordinate implementation of the 10-Year Destination Development Strategy. Leverage existing events, where feasible. • Use existing forums to assist with this: UBCM, NBCTA AGM, BC Tourism Industry Conference, etc. • Where affordable, host a dedicated event to celebrate successes and plan next steps. • Ensure that such events can be "attended" by those in more remote locations, if they are unable to attend in person. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, ITBC, representative from each First Nation	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	REGIONAL SCOPE

B. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS		PRIORITY
B2. Enhance collaboration and meaningful engagement with First Nations. ACTIONS Action B-2-1 Working with ITBC, Treaty 8, and other relevant organizations, and observing protocols of First Nations governments, develop a work plan aimed at engaging interested First Nations in destination development strategies and initiatives. The approach will be used to collaborate with First Nations and must be relevant to them, accounting for their unique characteristics and their form of leadership. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, ITBC, representative from each First Nations		1. QUICK WINS
		CATALYST
		REGIONAL SCOPE
B3. Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement destination development priorities. ACTIONS Action B-3-1 Provide resources to establish a mechanism (dedicated person, committee, and/or group) to coordinate and monitor the implementation of destination development priorities. This is the same committee and/or person referred to in Action B-1-1. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, DBC, representative from each community, First Nations		1. QUICK WINS
		CATALYST
		REGIONAL SCOPE
ACTIONS Action B-3-2 In coordination with Action B-3-1, establish a position which identifies source funding for priority destination development initiatives and coordinates priorities for relevant provincial ministries to assist with their funding decisions. Sourcing funding is time consuming and, given the importance of this 10-year strategy, a position is required. Investment related to destination development may be: - Specific grant funding from a government program - Dedicated funding from a municipal or regional government - Provincial ministry investments in: - BC Park enhancements - Recreation site and trail enhancements - Transportation and infrastructure enhancements - Federal government investments in the Alaska Highway by Public Works and Government Services Canada - Federal government funding through Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) - Federal government funding through Western Diversification - Multi-sectoral partnership approach to healthy living and related grant funding through Public Health Canada - Funding through Northern Development Initiative Trust - Funding through Community Futures - Funding through partnerships with the private sector - Funding and/or in-kind benefits through partners related to specific designations and/or national or international organizations, for example: - National Geographic - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) - United Nations World Heritage Sites - World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) - Other existing or future funding programs Information related to potential funding can be found in the Funding section of this strategy. • SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, DBC, representative from each community, First Nations		1. QUICK WINS
		CATALYST
		REGIONAL SCOPE

C. POSITIVE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Strategic Goal

Government support for tourism development and management is robust and coordinated, creating a positive operating environment.

A positive operating environment is critical to destination development. All levels of government can impact the operating environment for tourism businesses. The key to this is ensuring that governments and residents have a solid understanding of the social, cultural, heritage, and economic value of tourism.

Related to this is local and regional government support for tourism through planning processes for official community plans, economic development plans and/or strategies, and park and recreation master plans.

Government legislation, regulations, policies, and processes related to land tenure, permits, and development approvals also affects the development and operating environment for tourism. A delay in government's decision for approving or renewing a permit can result in missed business opportunities

for tourism business operators in Northeastern BC. These businesses are often unable to accept bookings as they do not have their permits in place. Unfortunately, this is a common scenario for operators in Northeastern BC.

Land and resource management is also very important and, in the case of Northeastern BC, wildlife and habitat management is critical. Some species are in serious decline, while others are overly abundant.

Another key issue relates to some First Nations' challenges gaining timely access to reserve land for economic development. For example, when the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure is hampered dealing with the federal government to secure access.

C. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS		PRIORITY
C1. Build better government understanding and support for tourism. ACTIONS Action C-1-1 Conduct initiatives to increase awareness about the value of tourism, with targeted audiences including local and regional governments, First Nations, and residents (who are tax payers and can influence government). This will include first estimating the value of tourism for regional districts and then for the entire planning area of Northeastern BC. Destination BC is developing a cost-effective methodology and tool to assist regional districts in estimating economic and employment impacts resulting from tourism activity. • A holistic approach should be used to demonstrate the economic, cultural, and social values that can be attributed to tourism where possible. Note: Achieving this objective will translate into greater success achieving Objective C-2. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, NDIT, municipal governments, regional districts, First Nations, DMOs, tourism businesses, related associations and organizations, DBC ACTIONS Action C-1-2 Using the value of tourism results noted in Action C-1-1, work with local and regional governments to secure more consistent support for tourism. Look to examples where this has been done effectively, such as on Vancouver Island through the Tourism Association of Vancouver Island (TAVI). Focus on infrastructure, amenities, and civic attractiveness that benefit residents as well as tourists. Tourism can improve the overall quality of life for residents. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, municipal governments, regional districts, First Nation, DMOs, tourism businesses, related associations and organizations, DBC		1. QUICK WINS
		CATALYST
		REGIONAL SCOPE
		1. QUICK WINS
		CATALYST
		REGIONAL SCOPE

C. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
C2. Enhance local, regional, and First Nations government support for destination development.	1. QUICK WINS
ACTIONS Action C-2-1 Work with local governments, regional governments, and First Nations to ensure they seek input from tourism industry representatives when updating official community plans and comprehensive community plans (CCP) ³ so that key tourism interests are well documented in the related planning documents. Given human resource capacity constraints, typical within the tourism industry, it is important that a municipal economic development or tourism development staff person or municipal planner solicits and coordinates this input from the tourism industry. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, municipal governments, regional districts, First Nations, DMOs, tourism businesses, related associations and organizations	REGIONAL SCOPE
Action C-2-2 Work with local governments, regional districts, and First Nations to ensure they seek input from tourism industry representatives when developing economic development strategies or plans so that destination development priorities are reflected in these plans. See the human resource capacity constraint noted under C-2-1. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, municipal governments, regional districts, First Nations, DMOs, tourism businesses, related associations and organizations	1. QUICK WINS REGIONAL SCOPE
Action C-2-3 Work with local governments, regional districts, and First Nations to ensure they seek input from tourism industry representatives when developing local parks and recreation master plans or providing input to parks and recreation master plans being prepared by governmental bodies, so that destination development priorities are reflected in these plans. • See comment in C-2-2 regarding human resource capacity constraints. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, municipal governments, regional districts, First Nations, DMOs, tourism businesses, tourism operators, related associations and organizations	1. QUICK WINS REGIONAL SCOPE
Action C-2-4 Work with local governments, regional districts and, when appropriate, First Nations governments to ensure they seek input from tourism industry representatives when developing transportation master plans or providing input on the transportation master plans of senior governments, so that destination development priorities are reflected in these plans. • See comment in C-2-2 regarding human resource capacity constraints. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, municipal governments, regional districts, First Nations, DMOs, tourism businesses, related associations and organizations	1. QUICK WINS PROVINCIAL SCOPE

³Comprehensive Community Plans (CCP) are developed by First Nation governments

C. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
C3. Improve and/or sustain the health of wildlife populations. ACTIONS Action C-3-1 Work with the Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy and Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (Wildlife Management Branch) and relevant associations to monitor and address complex issues that are impacting wildlife populations. Specific initiatives could include: • Integrated land and resource management • Partnering with relevant associations to seek solutions to declining wildlife populations • Partnering with First Nations to seek solutions to declining wildlife populations • Working with government agencies and relevant associations to help restore habitat • Introducing limited entry hunts • Balancing predators and prey (currently, the ungulate population is declining, and the grizzly bear population is increasing) SUCCESS NETWORK FLNR, ENV, NBCTA, DBC, TAC, First Nations, BC Wildlife Federation, Habitat Conservation Foundation, tourism operators, BCGOA, MKMA	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS REGIONAL SCOPE
C4. Ensure that targeted government policies and land and tenure management support destination development. ACTIONS Action C-4-1 • Work with the government of BC to explore ways to enable restaurant operators to source and serve local game (possibly farmed) and produce for visitors. This supports the development of culinary tourism that is based on local and regional food. • The Working Committee acknowledges the regulatory complexity associated with gaining approval to serve local wild game. There is an example of a First Nations resort in the Kamloops area that serves farmed game: elk, bison, and boar. This can be further explored as an option for Northeastern BC. • The Working Committee believes that a process to enable establishments to serve local produce should be pursued. SUCCESS NETWORK Members of the Working Committee, NBCTA, DBC, TAC, FLNR, First Nations, AGRI, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, relevant tourism operators, MKMA	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS REGIONAL SCOPE
Action C-4-2 • Work with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, Rural Development and BC Parks to improve the process and overall efficiency related to obtaining tenure, permits, and development approvals. • The process must be transparent and clear. Identification of key government contacts is essential. • Improving the level of certainty regarding timelines for obtaining and/or renewing permits is critical. The process must address the need for government decisions to be rendered in time for tourism operators to respond to clients who would like to book their vacation; otherwise, these operators lose bookings and revenue. SUCCESS NETWORK TAC, NBCTA, DBC, FLNR, FrontCounter BC, BC Parks, tourism operators	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS REGIONAL SCOPE
Action C-4-3 • Encourage First Nations to seek advice from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to gain access to First Nations land in a timely fashion, ultimately assisting with First Nations economic development. • First Nations are missing economic development opportunities because of long delays in securing access from provincial highways to reserve land to facilitate the development of facilities and services, such as accommodation and gas stations. SUCCESS NETWORK TRAN, TAC, First Nations, Lands Advisory Board (federal), CIRNAC	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS PROVINCIAL SCOPE

D. INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

Strategic Goal

Infrastructure, access, amenities, and emergency services are provided and maintained to support destination development.

Given the size of the destination and distances to key markets, access to Northeastern BC is viewed as a considerable constraint to destination development and tourism growth. The exception is Prince George, which is closer to southern BC and offers a larger, well serviced airport, in addition to regularly scheduled passenger train and bus service.

The importance of the touring market to Northeastern BC emphasizes the need to provide well-located and quality roadside amenities, in addition to effective emergency services, cell services and wi-fi, and electric vehicle charging services. Universal access and design are also key considerations. These facilities and services require improvement to meet visitor needs.

Parks and trail networks are also an important aspect of infrastructure for a destination. Northeastern BC has a wealth of parks, protected areas, and trail networks which contribute to the overall destination experience. Key considerations for destination development include:

- The need to be aware of current and future visitor needs regarding parks, including facilities and opening and/or closing dates for park services and amenities
- Coordination of trail investments and upgrades between local clubs, Recreation Sites and Trails (Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations), and BC Parks

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS		PRIORITY
D1. Ensure roadside amenities and pull-outs support existing and potential priority tourism experiences.		2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
ACTIONS Action D-1-1 Based on existing routes and potential new routes and/or themed circle tours, identify priority needs related to new pull-outs (including washrooms, picnic amenities, signage), develop and implement a plan to provide and maintain essential amenities, facilities, and services. Review existing research (such as Got to Go research conducted by North Peace Economic Development Commission). • Conduct additional gap analysis research • Identify priority needs • Identify associated budgets for capital investment and ongoing maintenance, and potential sources of funding, to form the basis of a business case to address priority gaps • Stage implementation over several years SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, DBC, consortium of municipalities, First Nations, DMOs, SCIBC, TRAN, PWGSC, BC Parks		REGIONAL SCOPE
Action D-1-2 Based on key attractions, iconic features, and proposed product and/or experience development, identify priority needs related to new pull-outs (including washrooms, picnic amenities, signage). Identify associated budgets for capital investment and ongoing maintenance, and potential sources of funding. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, consortium of municipalities, First Nations, DMOs, TRAN, PWGSC, BC Parks		2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
		REGIONAL SCOPE

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
D2. Improve the provision of emergency services and cell services in key areas. ACTIONS Action D-2-1 Conduct a scan to profile the current situation regarding provision of emergency services and the state of emergency preparedness at key locations in Northeastern BC. Once this is completed, and priority deficiencies and risks are identified, work with the relevant agencies and authorities to improve the provision of emergency services on the Alaska Highway and other routes. This is challenging given the low population levels and resulting low levels of funding (levels of provincial funding are based on population size). Note that there are many agencies and authorities that influence safety and emergency services. Examples of the agencies, resources, and factors that must be considered regarding this action include: • 911 agencies (note that, currently, there is no 911 in the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality) • Dispatch centres for different agencies (e.g., RCMP, BC Ambulance Service, Fire Rescue, BCEHS air ambulance) • Various dispatch protocols • Regional districts and municipal governments • Visitor Centres • Capacity of emergency service providers • EMBC • FLNR • Distance from trauma care SUCCESS NETWORK Regional districts, municipalities, First Nations, health authorities, Visitor Centres, NBCTA, TRAN, PWGSC, EMBC, BC Parks, FLNR Action D-2-2 Work with the federal government (who recently indicated that provision of wi-fi may be considered an essential service for all parts of Canada), the government of BC, other authorities, and the private sector to provide reliable wi-fi and cell service in Northeastern BC. SUCCESS NETWORK TAC, NBCTA, municipalities, Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, regional districts, BC Parks, UBCM	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS REGIONAL SCOPE 2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS REGIONAL SCOPE
D3. Improve overall signage along travel routes in collaboration with federal and provincial agencies ACTIONS Action D-3-1 Work with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and Public Works and Government Services Canada to develop signage for thematic corridors and circle routes (this needs to tie in with the product and experience development objective related to thematic corridors). • Hire a consultant to conduct research and prepare a business case. • Given the cost of signage programs, this needs to be strategically phased, starting with a high-profile route such as the Alaska Highway. • In addition to development costs, annual maintenance costs need to be identified. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, DBC, TRAN, PWGSC, TAC, BC Parks, municipalities, regional districts, First Nations Action D-3-2 Coordinate this action with D-3-1. Work with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, BC Parks, and Public Works and Government Services Canada to develop signage for core attractions and iconic features (this needs to tie in with the core and/or iconic features objective). • The Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Geopark signage may be referred to as a model and to estimate costs. • In addition to development costs, annual maintenance costs need to be identified. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, DBC, TAC, BC Parks, TRAN, PWGSC, municipalities, regional districts, First Nations	3. SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW REGIONAL SCOPE 2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS PROVINCIAL SCOPE

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
D4. Improve the frequency and reliability of air passenger service. ACTIONS Action D-4-1 Start dialogue between key stakeholders regarding ways to improve the frequency and reliability of air passenger service to northern airports, and specifically to Fort Nelson Airport. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, Transport Canada, Northern Rockies Regional District, other municipalities, selected operators, airport managers, airline managers (all types of airlines)	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	PLANNING AREA SCOPE
D5. Build on the wealth of Provincial and Regional Parks in Northeastern BC to better service existing and future visitors. ACTIONS Action D-5-1 Work with BC Parks and private sector operators to communicate the need for certain parking and/or camping site configurations to meet the needs of current and future vehicle types, looking out 10 years. • Research is needed to understand trends in this area. Parks Canada has completed a study related to RV camping needs, which should be referred to when implementing this action. • Explore opportunities to attract private sector investment in these facilities both inside and outside BC Parks. • Explore opportunities to ensure that BC Parks incorporates accessibility standards (see action D-8-1). SUCCESS NETWORK BC Parks, NBCTA, SCIBC, municipalities, Visitor Centres, First Nations, DMOs, private sector operators	1. QUICK WINS
	PROVINCIAL SCOPE
Action D-5-2 Work with BC Parks to identify opportunities to extend the season of selected parks to meet the needs of visitors who are increasingly travelling deeper into the shoulder seasons. This will require: • Identifying parks where there is demand for extended seasons. • Researching and developing a business case on a park-by-park basis, recognizing there are costs associated with operating parks. • Testing the extended season on several parks. • Coordinating with Parks Yukon if possible (Parks Yukon has extended the season for some of their parks.). SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, DBC, TAC, BC Parks, TRAN, PWGSC, municipalities, regional districts, First Nations	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	PROVINCIAL SCOPE
Action D-5-3 Work with regional districts to identify key investments that would enhance regional parks to better meet the needs of existing and future visitors. • There is an opportunity to better integrate some regional parks with the tourism experience. This will require: - Identifying regional parks that are considered unique and that have suitable facilities, amenities, and services. - Coordinating with regional districts to make enhancements that will further increase their appeal to visitors. - Developing interpretive materials to increase awareness amongst Visitor Centre staff and visitors about the attributes and amenities of these parks (Intended to help optimize the visitor experience.). SUCCESS NETWORK Regional districts, DBC, Visitor Centres, DMOs, NBCTA, First Nations	1. QUICK WINS
	REGIONAL SCOPE

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS		PRIORITY
D6. Continue to improve trails and trail networks to better service existing and future visitors. ACTIONS Action D-6-1 Work with Recreation Sites and Trails BC to determine priorities regarding investments in and coordination of priority trail networks. Recreation Sites and Trails BC regularly solicits input from locals and clubs regarding trail investment and maintenance. This acknowledges that resources are finite, and priorities must be determined, with input from key users. This is a key element of tourism infrastructure in Northeastern BC and is important to this strategy. SUCCESS NETWORK FLNR, NBCTA, DBC, TAC, BC Parks, NDI, SCIBC, municipalities, First Nations, Visitor Centres, DMOs Action D-6-2 Continue working with local and regional governments, FLNR, BC Parks, Parks Canada, and National Historic Sites and Monuments Board to encourage investment in, and coordination of, priority trail networks, including the identification of the stories behind many historic trails. There are opportunities through provincial programs to obtain funding to support trail development and enhancement. Trails are a key element of heritage in Northeastern BC. Identifying the stories that exist behind trails, and building authentic heritage tourism experiences around these stories for visitors, presents an important development opportunity. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, FLNR, NDI, TAC, DBC, local volunteer, groups focused on trail development, Parks Canada, Heritage Canada, municipalities, AHHS, regional districts, Visitor Centres, First Nations, DMOs		1. QUICK WINS
		CATALYST
		REGIONAL SCOPE
D7. Improve First Nations interpretive, locational, and welcoming signage in key locations in Northern BC. ACTIONS Action D-7-1 Work with First Nations to identify and work with the appropriate authorities to improve signage related to First Nations communities, tourism features, and welcome signs referencing traditional territories in key locations, such as airports. To accomplish this, the following steps are needed: • Investigate protocols for gathering appropriate information for signage • Conduct an audit to assess the need for new and/or improved signage: - At airports - Along highways and travel corridors - In cities - At existing and future Indigenous tourism attractions and/or experiences • Based on the audit, identify priorities and associated costs for development and annual maintenance. • Present proposals to relevant agencies and authorities: airport authorities, municipalities, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, DBC, IRR, ITBC, First Nations, Working Committee, TRAN, BC Parks, airport authorities		1. QUICK WINS
		REGIONAL SCOPE
D8. Increase the presence of facilities, infrastructure, and services that support universal design. ACTIONS Action D-8-1 Build on the ongoing work of Spinal Cord Injury BC (SCIBC) to ensure that the Access North initiative receives strong support from municipalities, regional districts, provincial government agencies, tourism operators, and other relevant associations in Northeastern BC. Where appropriate, coordinate research efforts (e.g., audits of roadside amenities) to ensure that universal design amenities and other amenities are provided to support the touring market. Coordinate this work with efforts to develop thematic corridors. SUCCESS NETWORK SCIBC, TRAN, BC Parks, municipalities, regional districts, tourism operators, NBCTA, DBC, Federal Acceptability Organizations		1. QUICK WINS
		CATALYST
		REGIONAL SCOPE

E. EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Goal

Unique, market-ready products and/or experiences exceed expectations of visitors, while maintaining the environmental and cultural integrity of the destination.

There are many product and experience development opportunities in Northeastern BC. The majority of Northeastern BC is in a developmental stage of destination development. It is vitally important to further develop priority experiences through this strategy. Over the 10-year period, it will be important to transition experiences from visitor-ready, to market-ready and, for selected experiences that meet travel trade criteria, export-ready.

VISITOR-READY — Refers to a business that has their licenses, permits, and insurance in place to operate legally.

MARKET-READY — Refers to a business that markets to potential visitors, communicates with potential visitors year-round, and is ready to accept reservations.

EXPORT-READY — Refers to a business that markets to and through travel trade distribution channels, understands commission or net rate pricing, agrees to trade bookings, and a cancellation policy.

E. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
E1. Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready Indigenous tourism experiences including products for touring visitors and for destination visitors. ACTIONS Action E-1-1 Proactively connect with First Nations to determine levels of interest in developing authentic tourism experiences. This should be done in a manner that respects the protocols of First Nations. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA (Indigenous Tourism Specialist), ITBC, DBC, First Nations representatives on Working Committee, First Nations communities, IRR Action E-1-2 Provide economic supports, capacity building and/or education, research, and guidance to First Nations communities and entrepreneurs who are interested in enhancing an existing business or starting a new tourism business. • Ensure that First Nations are aware of existing resources available, such as: - The Northeast Aboriginal Business Centre (Fort St. John) - The Aboriginal Business and Community Development Centre (Prince George) - Indigenous Tourism BC - Northern BC Tourism - Partnerships with universities and/or colleges (such as the upcoming collaboration between Treaty 8 Tribal Association and the University of Victoria to deliver entrepreneurship training programs in First Nations communities) • Draw upon existing research, supplemented with new research as needed, to provide critical information regarding market demand and market preferences from key markets, to guide future product and experience development. • Explore with ITBC and other partners the opportunity to engage interested First Nations in a planning process specific to their communities, like the Community Tourism Foundations planning process. • Conduct exposure tours for interested First Nations, featuring several successful First Nations tourism businesses located elsewhere in BC. Note that an exposure tour is a method for exposing a target audience to a successful operation or business that exists elsewhere. Exposure tours are intended to help individuals, groups, and businesses observe a successful operation in action and, if appropriate, utilize the resulting key learning to develop businesses and/or operations in their home jurisdiction. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA (Indigenous Tourism Specialist), ITBC, DBC, First Nations representatives on Working Committee, Treaty 8 Tribal Association, Northeast Aboriginal Business Centre, Aboriginal Business and Community Development, First Nations, IRR	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	PROVINCIAL SCOPE
	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	PROVINCIAL SCOPE

E. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
Action E-1-3 Link existing and future authentic Indigenous tourism products and/or experiences throughout Northeastern BC so that experiences featuring a string or cluster of experiences can be offered. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA (Indigenous Tourism Specialist), ITBC, First Nations representatives on Working Committee, Treaty 8 Tribal Association, First Nations, IRR Action E-1-4 Link certain authentic Indigenous tourism products and/or experiences with: • Thematic travel corridors and circle routes • Conferences and/or conventions • Sport tourism This will involve: • Clearly identifying and documenting authentic visitor, market and export ready experiences as they become available. • Communicating these to tour operators, conference and/or convention centres, DMOs, and Northern BC Tourism so that they can advise interested parties about the opportunity to offer pre and/or post event Indigenous tourism experiences. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA (Indigenous Tourism Specialist), ITBC, First Nations representatives on Working Committee, Treaty 8 Tribal Association, First Nations, IRR	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	REGIONAL SCOPE
	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	REGIONAL SCOPE
E2. Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready tourism products and/or experiences. ACTIONS Action E-2-1 Invest in updated research to guide product and experience development to help ensure that experiences meet current and future market demand. This will entail: • Identifying and prioritizing research needs • Identifying innovative and cost-effective options for conducting research on a regular basis • Identifying potential funding sources and partners • Making the business case for investing in the research • Conducting the research projects and communicating the results to interested parties SUCCESS NETWORK Consortium of local interests who see value in this research, NBCTA, DBC, ITBC, Working Committee members Action E-2-2 Hold an annual product and/or experience development forum that can be attended in-person or as a webinar featuring: • Research regarding the types of products and/or experiences markets are seeking • Education regarding how to develop visitor-ready, market-ready and export-ready products and/or experiences • Guest speakers, such as key tour operators • New tools and resources that Destination BC, Northern BC Tourism and/or ITBC have developed to assist industry with product and experience development • Universal design and accessibility • Professional development sessions related to starting and operating a business • Networking session where participants can discuss opportunities to work together • Relevant government agencies and information regarding new and/or revised regulations, policies, and licensing processes SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, DBC, ITBC, Working Committee members	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	REGIONAL SCOPE
	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	REGIONAL SCOPE

E. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
Action E-2-3 Work with partners — such as the University of Northern BC (UNBC), VIA Rail, and tour operators — to develop high-quality, special interest niche tours, packages, experiences that showcase the natural and cultural features of Northeastern BC and the remarkable experiences developed around the iconic features. Over time, this should encourage the transition from visitor-ready, to market-ready, to export-ready tourism experiences. UNBC has successfully developed and delivered niche tours in Northwestern BC and, on a more limited basis, tested some in Northeastern BC. Collectively, these tours have been called the Northern Adventure Series. Key contacts for each of the five iconic features should start discussions with UNBC regarding developing future niche tours that are built around the iconic features (see A-1-1). Northern BC Tourism, Tourism Prince George, and other organizations will have information gleaned from tour operators that they communicate with at trade shows that can provide direction regarding the types of experiences key markets are seeking. It is important to recognize that these are low-volume, high-value tours. This initiative addresses four opportunities that were identified through the planning workshops: • Develop products and experiences that feature ecotourism (#7 in terms of priority) • Develop interpretive, educational, and special interest tourism in selected areas (#8) • Develop tourism around land stewardship and education (#12) • Build on the type of high-quality special interest tours that UNBC is offering (#15) VIA Rail is also looking for opportunities to develop side trips for passengers travelling by train. This would need to focus on opportunities in the southern portion of Northeastern BC, near Prince George. SUCCESS NETWORK UNBC, VIA Rail, DMOs, NBCTA, DBC, ITBC, Working Committee members, First Nations, other industry partners	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS REGIONAL SCOPE
E3. Build on the strength of heritage, arts, culture, festival and event assets, and initiatives. ACTIONS Action E-3-1 Ensure that relevant heritage strategies are linked, and that information generated through the National Historic Site nomination process contributes to the planning area's destination development strategy. Content from these processes and documents can be used to support the development of thematic corridors and cultural tours (such the existing Golden Raven Tours)⁴. Key processes and strategies include: • The Fraser Fort George Regional District Heritage Strategy⁵ • The Northeastern BC Heritage Action (in progress)⁶; as soon as the Heritage Strategy is released, review it to determine key elements that can be referenced in, and coordinated with, the Northeastern BC Destination Development Strategy • Alaska Highway National Historic Site nomination process SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, Alaska Highway Community Society, FLNR, Heritage Branch, TAC, Canadian Heritage, Parks Canada, local museums, Heritage BC, heritage and cultural organizations, First Nations, DMOs, municipalities, regional districts, Working Committee members	1. QUICK WINS CATALYST REGIONAL SCOPE

⁴tourismpg.com/blog/2017/golden-raven-cultural-attraction-itineraries

⁵www.rdfg.bc.ca/documents-resources/reports

The study and action plan for the Northeast Heritage Strategy will set out a path to promote and celebrate the history, living culture, and nature of the Northeast as a platform for strengthening and building authentic visitor experiences for residents and visitors. The study's objectives are as follows:

- Outline a partnership approach involving governments, community champions, and organizations with responsibilities for safeguarding and interpreting heritage places, stories, and experiences
 - Focus on unifying themes and concepts for heritage in the Northeast to support collaboration
 - Build awareness of unique features and visitor experiences in the Northeast
- Identify priorities to attract new visitors to the Northeast by strengthening existing opportunities and creating new ones
 - Set out an action plan in the areas of governance, funding, and capacity-building

E. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
Action E-3-2 Conduct and, if relevant, apply research on best practices related to improving the financial sustainability of community museums to help ensure that museums can operate in a manner that enhances their value as community attractions that appeal to current and future visitors. <i>Note: Funding is required to support a collective approach to bring archives, collections, and interpretation together.</i> • A key source of funding can be municipal governments and First Nations governments. • A heritage committee and a heritage plan must be in place. • The local government and First Nations governments are then in a better position to introduce a bylaw to generate funding from the tax base. • Other important, supplemental funding sources are admission fees, gift shops, tours, and other activities. • Given that financial sustainability and the need to create more participatory, dynamic experiences are issues faced by museums throughout BC and elsewhere, it may require a provincial approach to encourage the revitalization of museums. SUCCESS NETWORK BC Museums Association, regional and municipal economic development officers, regional and local heritage and cultural organizations, TAC, NBCTA, Heritage BC, DMOs, local museums, municipalities, First Nations, regional districts, Working Committee members Action E-3-3 Conduct and, if relevant, apply research on best practices related to offering an enriching experience to visitors and residents through museums. This should tie into the product and/or experience development forum (see Action E-2-2). • This may include: - Hosting events at museums, such as A Night at the Museum - Hosting live artists at museums to demonstrate their craft - Developing more interactive exhibits where visitors can experience what it was like to live in Northeastern BC at different points in history - Selling food that reflects the area <i>Note: Offering more interactive events and exhibits will justify charging an admission fee, which will generate operating revenue for museums.</i> <i>The Northern Trails Historical Society works to connect all museums in the North Peace and may offer a vehicle to assist museums enhance their interactive components. This can serve as a model for the southern portion of Northeastern BC.</i> SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, local museums, BCMA, regional and local heritage and cultural organizations, TAC, BC Museums Association, Heritage BC, DMOs, municipalities, regional districts, Working Committee members, DBC, First Nations, The Heritage Branch	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	PROVINCIAL SCOPE
	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	PROVINCIAL SCOPE
E4. Further develop thematic corridors and circle routes as a core product for Northeastern BC. ACTIONS Action E-4-1 Further develop the Alaska Highway as a key attractor for Northeastern BC, around which other thematic corridors and circle routes can be developed. Where practical, coordinate with the Yukon and Alaska to enhance the overall Alaska Highway experience. This action entails developing and providing a consistent storytelling experience. Experiences must be linked. Provision and maintenance of roadside pull-outs, washrooms, and signage is critical (see Action D-1-1). After this process, there needs to be a common identity and look developed for all signage and interpretive materials. To the extent possible, this should be coordinated with the Yukon and Alaska. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, AHHS, AHCS, FLNR, Heritage Branch, TRAN, PWGSC, TAC, Canadian Heritage, Heritage BC, heritage and cultural organizations, local museums, DMOs, municipalities, First Nations, regional districts, Working Committee members, representatives from the Yukon and Alaska	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	CATALYST
	REGIONAL SCOPE

E. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
Action E-4-2 Develop thematic corridors and circle routes which, eventually, should tie into other planning areas (most notably Northwestern BC and the Cariboo). This should be coordinated with the infrastructure and/or signage action for thematic corridors (see Action D-3-1). • This action builds on work that Northern BC Tourism has started for the planning area. • Building on the work that has already commenced, this action will entail: - Researching successful thematic corridors and circle routes elsewhere - Identifying potential routes in Northern BC - Mapping out the experiences for each route - Coordinating this process with the Access North Initiative - Preparing plans for the development of each route SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, DMOs, municipalities, First Nations, local museums, regional districts, SCIBC, Working Committee members	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	PROVINCIAL SCOPE
Action E-4-3 Develop thematic routes and experiences that feature palaeontological resources of Northeastern BC where appropriate (Tumbler Ridge and Hudson's Hope). The growing inventory of palaeontological discoveries in Northeastern BC has spurred interest, activities, and major developments. Such discoveries have contributed to the establishment of the Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Global Geopark and the Dinosaur Discovery Gallery in Tumbler Ridge. Northeastern BC has a wealth of palaeontological resources, some of which have been discovered and many that have not yet been discovered. This action focuses on developing and connecting experiences related to these rich resources. Thematic routes and experiences can be developed in phases. SUCCESS NETWORK TRUGG, Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation, NBCTA, DMOs, municipalities, local museums, First Nations, regional districts, SCIBC, Working Committee members	1. QUICK WINS
	PLANNING AREA SCOPE
E5. Expand and enhance the range of resorts and accommodation experiences. ACTIONS Action E-5-1 Prepare an accommodation feasibility and investment strategy, which assesses key locations where unique resort, cabin, and RV accommodations could be developed to support circle routes, thematic corridors, and the iconic features and wonders of Northeastern BC. Key activities to support this action include: • Conducting a scan of existing accommodation and gaps related to developing circle tours and experiences related to the iconic features • Conducting research related to demand for accommodation • Conducting market research to help identify where different types of accommodation could be developed • Preparing a feasibility study related to several of the potential developments • Advertising these investment opportunities to the private sector SUCCESS NETWORK Municipal, regional, and provincial economic development officers, NDI, JTT, FLNR, NBCTA, DMOs, municipalities, First Nations, regional districts, Working Committee members	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	REGIONAL SCOPE

E. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
E6. Continue to build the urban tourism experience. ACTIONS Action E-6-1 Provide opportunities for relevant partners to collaborate in the development of a destination strategy that leverages: • Conference and meeting facilities in key locations (Prince George, Fort St. John, etc.) • Major event facilities (Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Prince George, etc.) • Key festivals and events • Downtown beautification through design guidelines (NDIT Business Façade Program may support this action) • Local and/or regional cuisine SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, DMOs, Visitor Centres, NDIT (festival and/or event support and the Business Facade Program), municipalities, First Nations, regional districts, Working Committee members	1. QUICK WINS PLANNING AREA SCOPE
E7. Continue to develop sport tourism. ACTIONS Action E-7-1 Develop a sport tourism strategy that identifies core facilities, the types of events and markets that these facilities can attract, key sporting events to target, and a coordinated approach to attracting and servicing events over the next 10 years. It is important to be selective, targeting specific events, given that developing bids and then hosting the events is labour intensive. • This action will need local and provincial government support to: - Provide a paid position to lead and coordinate this initiative - Conduct economic impact studies to demonstrate the value of hosting such events • First steps will be to: - Gauge levels of interest in establishing a consortium of general managers, DMOs, and municipal representatives - If this interest is strong, source funding for the paid position SUCCESS NETWORK Paid position (funded by municipal contributions) who reports to a consortium including: general managers from sport facilities, DMOs and municipal representatives, NBCTA, new provincial Sport and Multiculturalism Secretariat, economic development officers, PavCo	1. QUICK WINS CATALYST PLANNING AREA SCOPE
Action E-7-2 Build on the success of key adventure races and/or competitions that feature the natural terrain and elements of the area, such as the Emperor's Challenge mountain run held in the Tumbler Ridge area. Over the 10-year period covered by the Destination Development Strategy, introduce additional quality adventure competitions that draw visitors and generate positive profile for the area. When implementing this action, it will be important to gauge whether certain events can grow, given transportation and accommodation constraints in some areas. Like Action E-7-1, it will be important to demonstrate the economic value of hosting these events. It will also be important to coordinate this action with trail development in the planning area. SUCCESS NETWORK Consortium of current event organizers and municipal representatives, First Nations, NBCTA, new provincial Sport and Multiculturalism Secretariat	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS REGIONAL SCOPE

E. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
E8. Develop more formalized winter tourism experiences. ACTIONS Action E-8-1 Develop a clear understanding of existing winter tourism experiences, which can help extend tourism into winter. To do this, prepare an inventory and assessment of current winter tourism assets, products, services, and festivals: • Brief description of the asset, product, service • Location • Current stage of development • Current users/markets • Key competition • Opportunities for further development Location specific opportunities raised during the planning process included: • Downhill skiing (Powder King is renowned for long vertical runs) • Winter mountain biking • Wind kiting on frozen lakes • Snowmobiling • Cross-country skiing when the northern lights are visible • Curling • Hockey • Winter ice fishing SUCCESS NETWORK Economic development officers, NBCTA, municipal representatives, regional districts representatives, First Nations Action E-8-2 Based on the above inventory and assessment, develop and implement a 10-year winter tourism plan. SUCCESS NETWORK Economic development officers, NBCTA, NDIT, operators, regional districts	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	REGIONAL SCOPE
E9. Develop the mountain biking experience in key locations that possess terrain for this activity. ACTIONS Action E-9-1 Build on the provincial mountain biking sector work and the Northern BC Mountain Bike Strategy to further develop mountain biking in areas of Northeastern BC that have the attributes that would make them competitive. This will entail: • Identifying the locations that can support quality mountain biking • Determining if there is strong local interest in further developing mountain biking • Determining the status of support infrastructure and services that currently exist in these locations • Based on the above research, identifying the gaps that need to be filled, and associated investments to advance the development of this experience • Determining the potential markets for the experience in Northeastern BC, and key competition for these markets • If the above research and analysis supports further development of mountain biking, sourcing funding to develop the infrastructure and services • Connecting with the broader, provincial mountain biking sector to learn about and share best practices <i>Note: Prince George is already involved with Mountain Biking BC (the provincial mountain biking association). This objective was higher value in certain communities.</i> SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, NDIT, Powder King Ski Hill, Prince George mountain biking representatives, Mountain Biking BC, Tourism Prince George, First Nations governments, municipalities, regional districts	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	PLANNING AREA SCOPE
	REGIONAL SCOPE

E. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
E10. Continually improve tourism services. ACTIONS Action E-10-1 Bring awareness to local businesses about the importance of consistency of business hours and good service, where this is practical and cost-effective. Programs that can help educate local businesses about the need for consistent hours and good service include: • The Remarkable Experiences Program offered by Destination BC. • The Ambassador Program, which demonstrates the value of tourism to your business (Tourism Prince George). SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, go2HR (SuperHost), DBC — Remarkable Experiences Program, DMOs, chambers of commerce, tourism partners Action E-10-2 Work to continually improve collaboration related to visitor services throughout Northeastern BC, focusing efforts at the Northeastern BC planning area. This needs to embrace the evolving nature of how visitor services are being delivered in response to growing use of technology. At the same time, this also needs to acknowledge the importance of in-person visitor servicing in smaller communities in Northeastern BC, where this service helps ensure the safety and security of visitors when they venture into more remote areas. Over the next 10 years, it will be important to monitor the need for Visitor Centres in Northeastern BC. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, Visitor Centres, DMOs, DBC, sponsor organizations (chambers of commerce, local governments, First Nations governments) Action E-10-3 Facilitate private sector investment in rental equipment businesses (bikes, cars, boats, snowmobiles, etc.) to create visitor activities and support transportation needs within the destination. Note that this will entail: • Training in risk management, health, and safety • Exploring how to reduce the cost of liability insurance, which is currently expensive and is a barrier to starting certain types of businesses • Conducting research and analysis to build business cases for starting equipment rental businesses SUCCESS NETWORK Municipal, regional, and provincial economic development officers, First Nations, Visitor Centres, DMOs, DBC, Community Futures Action E-10-4 Communicate with provincial tourism organizations to determine if a provincial liability insurance program is possible to support a range of tourism operations but, specifically, equipment rentals as noted in Action E-10-3. SUCCESS NETWORK TIABC, DBC, TAC, RDMOs	1. QUICK WINS
	REGIONAL SCOPE
	1. QUICK WINS
	REGIONAL SCOPE
	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	REGIONAL SCOPE
	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	PLANNING AREA SCOPE

⁷It can be challenging for more remote businesses to maintain consistent hours, given sporadic customer demand, particularly during winter and shoulder seasons. Such businesses cannot justify staying open, when operating costs exceed revenue.

⁸Note that this could potentially be achieved through buying group insurance to obtain a better price through a provincial insurance purchasing program (see Action E-10-4).

E. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
E11. Ensure that future product and/or experience development and services meet the needs of the international visitors from both existing and emerging markets. ACTIONS Action E-11-1 Given the long-term outlook of the Destination Development Strategy, there is a need to monitor research related to international markets, including both existing and emerging markets, to ensure that Northeastern BC can enhance existing products and/or experiences and develop new products and services that will meet and exceed these visitors' expectations. This should help determine characteristics that will help ensure that products and/or experiences are market-ready and export-ready. SUCCESS NETWORK DBC, NBCTA, UNBC, DMOs, ITBC Action E-11-2 Apply the research collated through Action E-11-1 to assist with decision making regarding future product and experience development. Share this intelligence with the private sector, to support private sector investments. This can be done through training and educational programs. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, DMOs, organizations and tourism operators that offer niche tours, such as, UNBC, VIA Rail, ITBC, etc.	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	REGIONAL SCOPE
	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	REGIONAL SCOPE

F. TOURISM WORKFORCE

Strategic Goal

A strong, well-trained, tourism workforce is available to deliver high-quality experiences.

A strong and well trained tourism workforce is critical to advance destination development. Considerations emerged through the planning process specific to labour, volunteer forces, and succession planning.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

Like many areas in BC, Northeastern BC faces challenges attracting and retaining appropriately skilled labour. This is due to an overall shortage of this type of labour in BC, the predominantly seasonal nature of business operations, and lower salaries relative to other sectors such as oil and gas, and mining.

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The Working Committee identified existing skill gaps in the Northeastern BC workforce, and there are gaps anticipated

in the future. The First Nations communities in Northeastern BC also identified that they face barriers to participating in the industry due to skill gaps. In addition to the range of skills needed to work in different types of tourism operations and service businesses, the planning process also identified a need to develop a more entrepreneurial culture in Northeastern BC.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

With the anticipated retirement of tourism operators and business owners, there is a risk of losing some tourism businesses, facilities, and/or products if a motivated successor is not available. This issue is surfacing in various locations in BC. Efforts are required to encourage investment in existing and new tourism related businesses in Northeastern BC.

F. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
F1. Improve Northeastern BC's ability to attract and retain appropriately skilled workers and volunteers.	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
ACTIONS Action F-1-1 Develop a Northeastern BC tourism labour market strategy to address recruitment and retention issues and skill gaps. This will entail working with go2HR, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture and Indigenous Tourism BC regarding initiatives to attract and retain enough staff, particularly given challenges related to: • Higher paying jobs that can be offered in the resource sector • The remoteness of many communities in the northeast, which may be a deterrent to attracting and retaining workers This should be coordinated with First Nations employment organizations and agencies to ensure that this action addresses First Nations labour issues as well.	REGIONAL SCOPE
SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, UNBC, DMOs, go2HR, AEST, TAC, ITBC	
Action F-1-2 Work with local governments, First Nations, economic development offices and organizations and tourism organizations (Destination Management and/or Marketing Organizations) to enhance the experience of volunteering, through initiatives such as recognition programs and training programs that build volunteer capacity.	3. SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW
SUCCESS NETWORK Local governments, First Nations, NBCTA, municipal governments, DMOs	PLANNING AREA SCOPE

F. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
F2. Address succession planning and business continuity issues related to tourism businesses. ACTIONS Action F-2-1 Work with other regions and the government of BC on initiatives to help mitigate issues regarding succession planning and business continuity for tourism businesses. This may entail, for example, support from local governments to assist with advertising opportunities to invest in tourism businesses where the current owners plan to retire and sell in the future. SUCCESS NETWORK NBCTA, go2HR, RDMOs, municipal governments, First Nations, employment agencies, regional districts	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS PROVINCIAL SCOPE
F3. Help develop a more entrepreneurial culture by providing relevant training and capacity building opportunities. ACTIONS Action F-3-1 Identify and promote programs that provide entrepreneurial training and guidance, including those provided by Community Futures, Small Business BC, Aboriginal Business Development, and colleges. Ensure that municipal and First Nations economic development managers are fully aware of these types of programs, so that they, in turn, can respond to inquiries in their communities. SUCCESS NETWORK go2HR, NBCTA, Community Futures, economic development managers (municipal and First Nations), UNBC, College of New Caledonia, Northern Lights College	1. QUICK WINS REGIONAL SCOPE

The following 22 actions were identified as top priority catalyst projects for immediately moving the Northeastern BC Destination Development Strategy into implementation:

B. CATALYST PROJECTS

In an effort to focus and prioritize efforts, the Northeastern BC Working Group has determined the Catalyst Projects for immediately working together on to move the strategy into implementation.

CATALYST PROJECTS

CORE ICONIC FEATURES

- Develop remarkable experiences around the key iconic features. (Objective A-1)

COLLABORATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND RESOURCES

- Enhance communication and collaboration amongst and between the range of tourism partners in Northeastern BC to support the implementation of the Destination Development Strategy. (Objective B-1)
- Host events/forums featuring relevant and inspirational guest speakers, professional development and initiatives that will help coordinate implementation of the 10-Year Destination Development Strategy. Leverage existing events, where feasible. (objective B-1-2)
- Enhance collaboration and meaningful engagement with First Nations. (Objective B-2)
- Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement destination development priorities. (Objective B-3)
- In coordination with Action B-3-1, establish a position which identifies source funding for priority destination development initiatives and coordinates priorities for relevant provincial ministries to assist with their funding decisions. Sourcing funding is time consuming and, given the importance of this 10-year strategy, a position is required. (Objective B-3-2)

POSITIVE OPERATION ENVIRONMENT

- Build better government understanding and support for tourism. (Objective C-1)
- Using the value of tourism results noted in Action C-1-1, work with local and regional governments to secure more consistent support for tourism. Look to examples where this has been done effectively, such as on Vancouver Island through the Tourism Association of Vancouver Island (TAVI). Focus on infrastructure, amenities, and civic attractiveness that benefit residents as well as tourists. Tourism can improve the overall quality of life for residents. (Objective C-1-2)

INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

- Continue to improve trails and trail networks to better service existing and future visitors. (Objective D-6)
- Continue working with local and regional governments, FLNR, BC Parks, Parks Canada, and National Historic Sites and Monuments Board to encourage investment in, and coordination of, priority trail networks, including the identification of the stories behind many historic trails. There are opportunities through provincial programs to obtain funding to support trail development and enhancement. Trails are a key element of heritage in Northeastern BC. Identifying the stories that exist behind trails and building authentic heritage tourism experiences around these stories for visitors, presents an important development opportunity. (Objective D-6-2)
- Increase the presence of facilities, infrastructure, and services that support universal design. (Objective D-8)

EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

- Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready Indigenous tourism experiences including products for touring visitors and for destination visitors. (Objective E-1)
- Provide economic supports, capacity building and/or education, research, and guidance to First Nations communities and entrepreneurs who are interested in enhancing an existing business or starting a new tourism business. (Objective E-1-2)
- Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready tourism products and/or experiences. (Objective E-2)
- Hold an annual product and/or experience development forum that can be attended in-person or as a webinar (Objective E-2-2)
- Build on the strength of heritage, arts, culture, festival and event assets, and initiatives. (Objective E-3-1)
- Conduct and, if relevant, apply research on best practices related to offering an enriching experience to visitors and residents through museums. This should tie into the product and/or experience development forum (see Action E-2-2). (Objective E-3-3)
- Further develop thematic corridors and circle routes as a core product for Northeastern BC. (Objective E-4)
- Expand and enhance the range of resorts and accommodation experiences. (Objective E-5)
- Continue to develop sport tourism. (Objective E-7)
- Develop more formalized winter tourism experiences. (Objective E-8)
- Ensure that future product and/or experience development and services meet the needs of the international visitors from both existing and emerging markets. (Objective E-11)

C. PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES

A key deliverable of the Destination BC Destination Development Program is the creation of regional and provincial strategies.

Objectives and actions that are shared commonly across the Northern BC tourism region may become regional priorities and at the very least will inform the Regional Destination Development Strategy.

This Northeastern BC Destination Development Strategy, together with the other 19 strategies, will then inform the creation of a single Provincial Destination Development Strategy.

Objectives identified as provincial in scope may involve multiple provincial organizations, including Destination BC, ITBC, go2HR, MTAC, and TIABC.

It is recommended the following Northwestern BC objectives and actions become provincial initiatives within the Provincial Destination Development Strategy:

OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY
THEME C: POSITIVE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT	
C-2. Enhance local, regional, and First Nations government support for destination development.	1
C-4. Ensure that targeted government policies and land and tenure management support destination development.	2
THEME D: INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION	
D-3. Improve overall signage along travel routes in collaboration with federal and provincial agencies.	2
D-5. Build on the wealth of Provincial and Regional Parks in Northeastern BC to better service existing and future visitors.	1
THEME E: EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT	
E-1. Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready Indigenous tourism experiences including products for touring visitors and for destination visitors.	1
E-3. Build on the strength of heritage, arts, culture, festival and event assets, and initiatives.	2
E-4. Further develop thematic corridors and circle routes as a core product for Northeastern BC.	2
THEME F: TOURISM WORKFORCE	
F-2. Address succession planning and business continuity issues related to tourism businesses.	2

It is recommended the following Northwestern BC objectives and actions become regional initiatives within the Regional Destination Development Strategy:

OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY
THEME A: CORE ICONIC FEATURES	
A-2. Coordinate iconic features with communities and other experiences and/or products.	2
THEME B: COLLABORATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND RESOURCES	
B-1. Enhance communication and collaboration amongst and between the range of tourism partners in Northeastern BC to support the implementation of the Destination Development Strategy.	1
B-2. Enhance collaboration and meaningful engagement with First Nations.	1
B-3. Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement destination development priorities.	1
THEME C: POSITIVE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT	
C-1. Build better government understanding and support for tourism.	1
C-2. Enhance local, regional, and First Nations government support for destination development.	1
C-3. Improve and/or sustain the health of wildlife populations.	1
C-4. Ensure that targeted government policies and land and tenure management support destination development.	2
THEME D: INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION	
D-1. Ensure roadside amenities and pull-outs support existing and potential priority tourism experiences.	2
D-2. Improve the provision of emergency services and cell services in key areas.	2
D-3. Improve overall signage along travel routes in collaboration with federal and provincial agencies.	3
D-5. Build on the wealth of Provincial and Regional Parks in Northeastern BC to better service existing and future visitors.	1
D-6. Continue to improve trails and trail networks to better service existing and future visitors.	1
D-7. Improve First Nations interpretive, locational, and welcoming signage in key locations in Northern BC.	1
D-8. Increase the presence of facilities, infrastructure, and services that support universal design.	1

OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY
THEME C: POSITIVE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT	
E-1. Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready Indigenous tourism experiences including products for touring visitors and for destination visitors.	2
E-2. Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready tourism products and/or experiences.	1
E-3. Build on the strength of heritage, arts, culture, festival and event assets, and initiatives.	1
E-4. Further develop thematic corridors and circle routes as a core product for Northeastern BC.	2
E-5. Expand and enhance the range of resorts and accommodation experiences.	1
E-7. Continue to develop sport tourism.	2
E-8. Develop more formalized winter tourism experiences.	1
E-10. Continually improve tourism services.	1
E-11. Ensure that future product and/or experience development and services meet the needs of the international visitors from both existing and emerging markets.	1
THEME D: INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION	
F-1. Ensure roadside amenities and pull-outs support existing and potential priority tourism experiences.	2
F-2. Improve the provision of emergency services and cell services in key areas.	1



MONITORING AND MEASURING SUCCESS

The following table provides guidance regarding monitoring and measuring success for each of the Strategic Goals. Specific methods for measuring success for each action will be needed when detailed action plans for priority actions are developed.

Note that an overarching measure of success is the relative change in the Net Promoter Score for Northeastern BC (see Appendix 5 for information pertaining to the Net Promoter Score).

Strategic Goals	Performance Measures	Supporting Objectives	Indication of Success
A. CORE AND ICONIC FEATURES			
Core iconic features are central to product and/or experience development and awareness-building for Northeastern BC	Measuring Outputs • Number of remarkable experiences developed around iconic features Measuring Outcomes • Baseline visitor survey regarding awareness • Periodic visitor survey regarding increase and/or decrease in awareness	A-1 Develop remarkable experiences around the key iconic features A-2 Coordinate iconic features with communities and other experiences and/or products	• Partners work collaboratively to enhance experiences related to each iconic feature and/or area. • Experiences are developed around the iconic features and/or areas. • Iconic features become an integral part of efforts to build identity for Northeastern BC as a tourism destination, ultimately supporting efforts to increase awareness about the destination (note that this links to branding and marketing efforts that are not included as part of the Destination Development Strategy, but that need to be addressed as a related activity that supports the strategy).
B. COLLABORATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND RESOURCES			
Strong collaboration between operators, First Nations, communities, governments, and DMO's supports destination development	Measuring Outputs • Increase in the number of partnerships with the interest in destination development • Resources dedicated to the implementation of destination development priorities Measuring Outcomes • Survey to gauge stakeholder and partner satisfaction regarding collaboration to implement destination development initiatives	B-1 Enhance communication and collaboration amongst and between the range of tourism partners in Northeastern BC to support the implementation of this strategy	• Communication tools are regularly used — in-person and remotely — to ensure partners are aware of the status of destination development and have opportunities to provide feedback. • Regular forums regarding destination development are held in conjunction with existing annual events, such as the NBCTA AGM and other events. • Dedicated destination development forums are also hosted when resources allow. • An annual survey indicates that partners are satisfied with these communication tools.
		B-2 Enhance collaboration and meaningful engagement with First Nations	• Appropriate presentations and consultation occurs in a timely manner. • Increased participation in destination development by First Nations. • Collaboration with ITBC. • Refinement of communication and engagement protocols with First Nations.
		B-3 Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement destination development priorities	• A dedicated position or committee is established to secure resources and monitor implementation. • Funding is sourced for key priorities.

Strategic Goals	Performance Measures	Supporting Objectives	Indication of Success
C. POSITIVE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT			
Government support for tourism development and management is robust and coordinated, creating a positive operating environment	Measuring Outputs • Number of credible value of tourism studies and associated campaigns Measuring Outcomes • Survey of industry members, tourism organizations, and DMOs to gauge if there is an increase in the meaningful inclusion of tourism destination development in a range of local and regional government plans • Survey to gauge changes in tourism industry satisfaction with government support for destination development, associated policies, and processes (focusing on the objectives of this goal)	C-1 Build better government understanding and support for tourism	• Credible value of tourism studies are completed. • Using the value of tourism results, campaigns targeting governments and residents are conducted to increase awareness about tourism benefits. • Periodically leverage existing local government and First Nations government surveys to ask questions about residents' understanding about tourism benefits.
		C-2 Enhance local, regional, and First Nations governments support for destination development	• A range of local government, regional government, and First Nations governments plans and initiatives seek and include input from the tourism industry.
		C-3 Improve and/or sustain the health of wildlife populations	• Relative to a 2019 baseline of wildlife populations, there is a healthier balance of species in 2029 in Northeastern BC.
		C-4 Ensure that targeted government policies and land and tenure management support destination development	• Local game (possibly farmed) and local produce are readily available in restaurants that choose to focus on local and regional cuisine. • The process for obtaining tenure, permits, and development approvals are more streamlined and efficient, based on a survey of existing operators. • TRAN's process to facilitate First Nations' ability to gain access to First Nations land for economic development is effective.

Strategic Goals	Performance Measures	Supporting Objectives	Indication of Success
D. INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION			
Infrastructure, access, amenities, and emergency services are provided and maintained to support destination development	Measuring Outputs • Meetings with TRAN, PWGSC, and agencies involved in emergency services to discuss needs and secure commitments • Completion of research regarding infrastructure, amenity, and service gaps • Number of communities and attractions that SCIBC engages Measuring Outcomes • Increase in roadside amenities, emergency services, and signage • Establishment and funding of a regular maintenance schedule for roadside amenities • More frequent scheduled air service, where this is deemed economically feasible by air carriers • Visitor survey regarding level of accessibility of key attractions and facilities	D-1 Ensure roadside amenities and pull-outs support existing and potential priority tourism experiences	• Needs have been identified and funding has been sourced to build and maintain roadside amenities. • Roadside amenities meet the needs of visitors.
		D-2 Improve the provision of emergency services and cell service in key areas	• Emergency services are consistently available on key routes. • Cell service and wi-fi service is consistently available throughout Northeastern BC.
		D-3 Improve overall signage along travel routes in collaboration with federal and provincial agencies	• Signage for thematic corridors, circle routes, and key attractions is effective.
		D-4 Improve the frequency and reliability of air passenger service	• Reliable, scheduled air passenger service is provided year-round, enabling operators to make bookings months in advance.
		D-5 Build on the wealth of provincial and regional parks in Northeastern BC to better service existing and future visitors	• Research is completed to gain an understanding of facilities and amenities needed in parks. • Facilities, amenities, and operating hours support visitor needs and contribute to the positive reputation of Northeastern BC.
		D-6 Continue to improve trails and trail networks to better service existing and future visitors	• Trails and trail networks meet the needs of visitors and contribute to the positive reputation of Northeastern BC.
		D-7 Improve Indigenous interpretive, locational, and welcoming signage in key locations in Northeastern BC	• Effective and appropriate signage related to First Nations is provided at gateways (e.g., airports), along highways and corridors, in cities, towns, and at First Nations communities and attractions.
		D-8 Increase the presence of facilities, infrastructure, and services that support universal design	• Attractions, services, and facilities throughout Northeastern BC are accessible to people of all abilities and ages.

Strategic Goals	Performance Measures	Supporting Objectives	Indication of Success
E. EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT			
Unique, market-ready products and/or experiences exceed expectations of visitors, while maintaining the environmental and cultural integrity of the destination	Measuring Outputs • Completion of research regarding tourism development and investment opportunities for the range of products and/or experiences noted in this strategy • Hosting of annual forums to assist operators and to encourage collaboration Measuring Outcomes • Increase in the number of products, experiences, thematic corridors, circle routes that are visitor, market, and export ready, determined by periodically updating the inventory every two years • Comparing the above inventory of products and experiences to those that are identified as priority development opportunities in this strategy	E-1 Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready Indigenous tourism experiences including products for touring visitors and for destination visitors	• Interested First Nations are engaged in developing tourism products and/or experiences and can access capacity building support to help pursue these interests. • Relative to a 2019 baseline, there is an increase in the number of authentic, market-ready Indigenous tourism products and/or experiences, both for touring visitors and destination visitors. • Visitors can experience clusters and strings of Indigenous tourism products throughout Northeastern BC. • Indigenous products and/or experiences add value to thematic corridors, conferences, conventions, and sport tourism events.
		E-2 Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready tourism products and/or experiences	• Updated research is available to guide experience and product development decisions and investment. • Annual forums — both in-person and remote — to help interested operators and partners collaborate to develop experiences and products. • Relative to a 2019 baseline, there is an increase in the number of authentic, market-ready tourism products and/or experiences both for touring visitors and destination visitors.
		E-3 Build on the strength of heritage, arts, culture, festival and event assets, and initiatives	• Heritage strategies support and integrate with destination development in Northeastern BC. • Museums throughout Northeastern BC are linked and offer enriching, interactive experiences. • Museums are more financially sustainable
		E-4 Further develop thematic corridors and circle routes as a core product for Northeastern BC	• Led by NBCTA, thematic corridors and circle routes are well developed, offering storytelling experiences, amenities, and services that appeal to key markets. • Thematic corridors are unified by a common identity and look.
		E-5 Expand and enhance the range of resort and accommodation experiences	• Relative to a 2017 baseline, there is a greater range of resorts and accommodations throughout Northeastern BC.

Strategic Goals	Performance Measures	Supporting Objectives	Indication of Success
E. EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT			
		E-6 Continue to build urban tourism experiences	• Relative to a 2019 baseline, there is an increasing number of conferences and meetings, supported by market-ready pre and post conference experiences. • Festivals and events support urban tourism. • Relative to a 2019 baseline, there is growth in the number of restaurants that feature local and regional cuisine.
		E-7 Continue to develop sport tourism	• Relative to a 2019 baseline, there is growth in the number of sport tourism events and resulting economic benefits.
		E-8 Develop more formalized winter tourism experiences	• Relative to a 2019 baseline, there is growth in the number of formalized winter tourism experiences offered in Northeastern BC.
		E-9 Develop the mountain biking experience in key locations that possess terrain for this activity	• Relative to a 2019 baseline, there is growth in mountain biking infrastructure and services in communities and areas that are interested in developing this experience.
		E-10 Continually improve tourism services	• Greater consistency in business hours are achieved. • Collaboration between Visitor Centres continues. • The method for delivering visitor services is assessed periodically. • Relative to a 2019 baseline, there is an increase in rental equipment businesses to support adventure tourism in Northeastern BC.
		E-11 Ensure that future product and/or experience development and services meet the needs of the international visitors from both existing and emerging markets	• Research related to the interests of international markets is reviewed to support future product and experience development and investments in Northeastern BC.

Strategic Goals	Performance Measures	Supporting Objectives	Indication of Success
F. TOURISM WORKFORCE			
A strong and well trained tourism workforce is available to deliver high-quality experiences	Measuring Outputs • Completion of labour market strategy • Provincial initiative to help address succession planning issues	F-1 Improve Northeastern BC's ability to attract and retain skilled workers and volunteers	• A Northeastern BC labour market strategy is prepared and implemented to help address labour and skill shortages.
	Measuring Outcomes: • Survey of operators to determine if labour and skill shortages have declined	F-2 Address succession planning and business continuity issues related to tourism businesses	• Note that this will not be pursued as it is not a significant issue for Northeastern BC and was determined to be low value and high complexity
		F-3 Help develop a more entrepreneurial culture by providing relevant training and capacity building opportunities	• Increase in the number and availability of programs that support entrepreneurial training and guidance. • Participation in these programs, resulting in a stronger entrepreneurial culture.

10

FUNDING PROGRAMS

To assist planning areas such as Northeastern BC in their implementation efforts, Destination BC has compiled a list of funding programs to be investigated.

The different funding options highlighted include: Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT), Destination BC Programs, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD), Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Programs, Community Gaming Grants, Community Trusts, Resort Municipality Initiative (RMI), municipal funding, and business levies.

The government of BC also has an online tool on their website which provides potential funding options.

Possible funding sources include:

- Northern Development Initiative Trust
- Continuation of the annual funding for the Rural Dividend Program
- Continuation of the funding for the Connecting British Columbia program, which extends high-speed internet access to rural and remote communities

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: PLANNING PROCESS

The following planning process ensured this Northeastern BC Destination Development Strategy was written based on a thoughtful process with consistent participation from a diverse group of industry partners that impact tourism either directly or indirectly. The process followed a semi-structured design by Destination BC that was customized for Northeastern BC.

1. Session 1 — Kick-off Meetings in Fort St. John and Prince George on September 16, 2016
 - a. Introduced the program, engaged tourism partners, and began to gather information that helped in understanding the context of the destination.
2. Review of over 50 planning area reports, strategies, and plans, as well as other information (e.g., websites)
3. Session 2 — Working sessions with representative tourism partners in Fort Nelson on October 12, 2016, in Dawson Creek on October 14, 2016, and in Prince George on October 16, 2016
 - a. Reviewed the operating context and captured participants' input regarding constraints and opportunities.
4. Tourism partner interviews
 - a. Conducted interviews to develop a deeper understanding of the operating context, constraints, and opportunities.
5. Industry Engagement — Survey 1
 - a. A broader group of participants were surveyed to validate existing input and provide further input into the constraints and opportunities identified in Session 2. There were 94 survey responses from 341 invitees, resulting in a 28% response rate.
6. Session 3 — Three Vision Creation workshops: in Prince George on November 28, 2016, in Fort St. John on November 30, 2016, and in Fort Nelson on December 5, 2016
 - a. Reviewed the planning considerations, discussed shared vision and goals, and identified destination development themes.
7. Industry Engagement — Survey 2
 - a. A broader group of participants were surveyed to validate and provide further input into the vision, goals, and development themes. There were approximately 98 survey responses from 350 invitees, resulting in a 28% response rate.

8. Session 4 — Working Committee on April 10–11, 2017 in Fort St. John

- a. A smaller Working Committee (approximately 25 people) continued to provide input for the Destination Development Strategy over a two-day workshop.

9. Working Committee calls — Following the April workshop, nine additional sessions were held by teleconference to discuss the goals, objectives, and strategies in further detail.

10. Participants were invited to provide feedback on the draft Situation Analysis and the draft Destination Development Strategy.

APPENDIX 2: PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

This section summarizes the planning context from the Situation Analysis and provides the key directions of the Northeastern BC Destination Development Strategy.

LEVEL OF AWARENESS

Current Low Level of Awareness in Many Markets

A key planning consideration is the current low level of awareness about the tourism experiences available in Northeastern BC amongst many markets⁹. It is acknowledged that the Destination Development Planning process does not entail the preparation of marketing and awareness-building strategies; however, the issue of low levels of awareness is important to understand as foundational context for the Destination Development Strategy.

This observation is based on anecdotal information provided by participants in the planning process.

There are several initiatives underway around which exceptional tourism experiences can be further developed, which will also help increase awareness of specific sites within Northeastern BC. These initiatives are both developmental and awareness-building in nature.

For example:

- The establishment of the Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Global Geopark in 2014¹⁰, a designation that is encouraging the development of experiences and infrastructure, and is also providing a platform for increasing awareness for the area
- The current nomination of several sites on the Alaska Highway as National Historic Sites, which, like the designation mentioned above, provides incentive to further develop the Alaska Highway experience and serves as a platform for increasing awareness
- The nomination of the Ancient Forest as a UNESCO World Heritage Site

The Working Committee should view these initiatives, in addition to others, as key opportunities to develop outstanding experiences, which will also provide opportunities to eventually build awareness in key markets.

⁹This is not the case with some markets, such as some US visitors who have historical knowledge and interest in the Alaska Highway and some visitors who are drawn to outstanding fishing and hunting opportunities in Northeastern BC. Northeastern BC's local and regional markets also have good awareness about many of the tourism attributes and experiences in the planning area.

¹⁰Global Geoparks are sites affiliated with UNESCO. They promote their geo-diversity through community-led initiatives to enhance regional sustainable development. They promote awareness of geological hazards and many help local communities prepare disaster mitigation strategies. They celebrate the 4.6 billion years of Earth's history, and the geo-diversity that has shaped every aspect of our lives and of our societies. The Global Geoparks Network now includes 111 sites in 32 countries (http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/11_new_sites_added_to_global_geoparks_network/#.VCWYE5SSz9p)

CURRENT EXPERIENCES AND STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

Current Types of Experiences

NORTHERN SECTION OF PLANNING AREA

The primary focus of tourism in the northern section of the planning area at this time is touring, with the Alaska Highway being the main attractor for the touring market. This touring product offers a blended experience featuring heritage, culture, and nature.

The area also offers eco and backcountry adventure tourism experiences; the current number of visitors participating in these types of experiences is much smaller than those participating in touring due to:

- The planning area's distance from key markets, and the resulting expense and inconvenience of air travel
- The very limited number of operators that are currently offering guided experiences in Northeastern BC
- High operating costs for backcountry operators, which makes these types of experiences very expensive (which is one factor that has led to the limited number of operators)
- The fact that these experiences are, in fact, intended to be low-volume and low-impact

Hunting is also a predominant, established activity in the area. Sport tourism is a fairly established, and growing, segment in the northern section of Northeastern BC. While some winter product is available in the northern section of Northeastern BC — primarily cross-country skiing and snowmobiling — most visitation occurs in the summer, spring, and fall.

SOUTHERN SECTION OF PLANNING AREA

The primary focus of tourism in the southern section of the planning area at this time is sport tourism, event tourism, conferences and conventions, and adventure and eco-tourism. The southern section is more easily accessed than the north, due to the size of the Prince George Airport and its number of scheduled flights, VIA Rail service and better proximity to the population centres in southern BC.

While some winter product is available — including downhill skiing, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling — most visitation occurs in the summer, spring, and fall.

Current Level of Development

An important planning consideration is the current stage of development for the destination. There are areas and products that are more established in the planning area, and some facilities that need to be refurbished. Overall, Northeastern BC is in the development stage with regard to services and tourism product and/or experience offerings. This presents opportunities to influence how Northeastern BC matures as a destination over the next 10 years and beyond.

The entire planning area lacks a critical mass of visitor-ready, market-ready, and export-ready products and experiences¹¹. Note that this was the highest ranking concern in the category of product and/or experience development in the online survey conducted to support this planning process.

Additional details regarding the stages of development are as follows:

- The planning area also lacks visitor-ready, market-ready, and export-ready Indigenous products and experiences.
- There are limited opportunities to book or purchase products in advance of trips, with the exception of transportation and accommodation and the limited number of available guided products.
- The destination promotes itself as part of larger driving routes or circle tours that are designed to enrich the visitor experience, but which require further development to meet current and future visitor needs and to be competitive with more established travel routes and touring products elsewhere.
- Communities in Northeastern BC stage a spectrum of cultural, heritage, and nature events and festivals, sporting events and competitions, some of which attract overnight visitors.

¹¹Visitor Ready — Refers to a business which has their licenses, permits and insurance in place to operate legally.

Market Ready — Refers to a business that markets to potential visitors, communicates with potential visitors year-round, and is ready to accept reservations.

Export Ready — Refers to a business that markets to and through travel trade distribution channels, understands commission or net rate pricing, agrees to trade bookings, and a cancellation policy. (source: Destination BC)

SUPPLY-SIDE CONSIDERATIONS

Transportation and Access

Given the size of the destination and distances to key markets, travel to and within Northeastern BC is viewed as a considerable constraint to destination development and tourism growth. The exception is Prince George, which is closer to southern BC and offers a larger, well-serviced airport, in addition to regularly scheduled passenger train and bus service.

Key planning considerations related to transportation and access are as follows:

FLIGHTS

- Several communities have airports with regular passenger flights. These include Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Fort Nelson, and Prince George.
- Of these communities, Prince George and Fort St. John offer the largest number of passenger flights.
- Fort Nelson and Dawson Creek are not as well-serviced as Prince George and Fort St. John.
- Flight schedules for some airports — Fort Nelson most notably — are often not set far enough in advance for some lodge and adventure tourism operators who have visitors who typically book six or more months in advance of their trip. This is a constraint for operators who rely on advanced bookings, often from long haul markets.
- While the cost of flights has decreased over the last 10 years, flight costs are still considered high and serve as a constraint to some types of travel.

DRIVING

- The most prominent form of travel to Northeastern BC is by vehicle. Touring the Alaska Highway serves as a considerable draw for the overall destination. However, up-to-date research is required to determine the size and characteristics of this market; the most current research was conducted in 2003.
- The BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure invests in highway improvements throughout the destination, with the exception of the portion of the Alaska Highway running north of Fort St. John to the Yukon border, which is maintained by Public Works and Government Services Canada.

- Roadside amenities (well-maintained pull-outs with washrooms, picnic tables, etc.) are viewed as inadequate, particularly on the Alaska Highway. This situation worsens as one drives north on the Alaska Highway. This is viewed by participants in this process as a top constraint with regard to destination development.
- Winter travel to the destination can be impacted by harsh weather conditions, which is a factor with regard to further developing winter experiences.
- Wayfinding and interpretive signage is not at a standard that supports a quality touring experience. This is critical to address efforts to further develop quality touring experiences in Northeastern BC, particularly given participants' interest in developing thematic travel corridors.

COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

- Public transit, particularly in the northern communities, is very limited.
- Taxi services are also limited in some communities.
- Increasingly, communities and accommodations are adding shuttle services enabling visitors to travel to/from airports and within communities.

Emergency Services, Cell Services, and Wi-Fi Services

Given the importance of the touring market in Northeastern BC, any deficiency in emergency services, cell services and wi-fi services presents risks for visitors and may deter them from visiting the area.

Key planning considerations related to emergency services, cell, and wi-fi services that workshop participants and survey respondents indicated as priorities are:

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Emergency services are considered inadequate, particularly in the northern half of Northeastern BC. While municipal employees in Northeastern BC have worked with the myriad of organizations and authorities to improve emergency services, such services are still lacking.

WI-FI AND CELL SERVICE

Wi-fi and cell services are considered inadequate, particularly in the northern half of Northeastern BC. This has implications for emergency services, as cell coverage and wi-fi services are needed to communicate important information regarding highway conditions and to contact authorities should there be an emergency. Poor wi-fi and cell services also impact visitors' ability to obtain important travel information and communicate with other travellers. In a study conducted in 2003, survey results indicated that visitors touring the Alaska Highway relied on the internet to obtain travel information and communicate with fellow travellers. While more recent research is not available, it is safe to assume that the reliance on remote technology has increased amongst the touring market.

Accommodation

Key planning considerations related to accommodation are as follows:

- All communities in Northeastern BC offer commercial accommodation. This includes motels, several contemporary hotels, camping, and RV facilities and a limited number of adventure-based resorts, lodges, and cabins.
- While accommodation does exist in Northeastern BC, as noted above, the area:
 - Lacks a diverse range of quality accommodation options
 - Needs re-investment in some properties that are outdated and/or rundown
- At this time, First Nations commercial accommodation is limited and includes:
 - Liard Hot Springs Lodge and RV Park (Fort Nelson First Nation)
 - Dunn-Za Lodge (West Moberly First Nation)
- It should be noted that a significant number of business hotels were built in all communities in Northeastern BC, except Pouce Coupe and Taylor, in response to demand from the oil and gas and other natural resource sectors. When the oil and gas sector is performing well, these hotels have limited inventory for the leisure market. Conversely, when the oil and gas sector is not performing well, these hotels have excess inventory and often struggle to build occupancy levels and average room rates.

Parks and Trail Networks

Northeastern BC has a wealth of parks, protected areas, and trail networks which contribute to the overall destination experience. Key considerations for destination development include:

- The need to be aware of visitor needs regarding parks, including facilities and opening and closing dates for park services and amenities.
- Coordination of trail investments and upgrades between local clubs, Recreation Sites and Trails (Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations), and BC Parks.

At the same time, it is important to be aware of limited resources and the need to develop a solid business case for government investments.

COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Collaboration and engagement amongst the range of tourism partners and/or interests

The destination development planning process has encouraged collaboration amongst tourism interests in most communities and areas within Northeastern BC. This is a positive outcome of the process to date and will need to continue going forward to help achieve the goals and objectives that will be defined in this strategy. Sustained effort will be required to create communication tools and forums to facilitate ongoing collaboration and communication. This is a critical factor to support the success of this strategy.

Collaboration and engagement with First Nations

While there has been very good participation in the planning process from economic development managers and/or officers from several of the First Nations in Northeastern BC, a concerted effort to meaningfully engage First Nations using appropriate protocols is needed. Many participants indicated that there is strong demand for authentic Indigenous tourism experiences, and that Northeastern BC has potential to provide such experiences; however, any such development must be initiated by interested First Nations, which first requires meaningful engagement in the process.

POSITIVE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

A positive operating environment is critical to advance destination development. Planning considerations specific to the operating environment of Northeastern BC are highlighted below.

Understanding the value of tourism

Government partners at the local, regional, provincial, and federal levels have varying levels of understanding about how tourism contributes to economic development and growth. Similarly, many residents also do not understand the value of tourism. Planning participants indicated the importance of increasing knowledge about the value of tourism. This needs to be done using defensible, quantitative methods, complemented by a targeted awareness building strategy.

Funding to implement priorities arising from the destination development process

A key concern is identifying funding to implement priorities outlined through this process. This will need to be discussed during the upcoming Working Committee sessions.

Health of wildlife populations

The wildlife in Northeastern BC is considered a core attribute of the area from a tourism perspective, supporting touring experiences, eco and backcountry experiences, and guide outfitting. Many participants are very concerned about the declining population of certain species, particularly given how special some of these species are to the area. There is a need to explore strategies to help address this concern.

Support for serving local game and food products

Workshop participants indicated that visitors are seeking local cuisine, including local game and food products, but that there are government restrictions limiting their ability to source and serve these products. Given the importance of this to tourism business operators and restaurants in Northeastern BC, and given growing visitor demand for authentic, local cuisine, this is a planning consideration that the Working Committee would like to address.

Crown land tenure

There is a current focus on adventure and eco-experiences in Northeastern BC that is expected to increase in the future, particularly given the efforts of the destination development planning process. Issues related to obtaining tenure and monitoring the potential misuse of tenures by non-tenure holders were voiced during the workshops and interviews. This issue should be considered during the upcoming Working Committee sessions.

TOURISM WORKFORCE

A strong, well-trained, and motivated tourism workforce is critical to advance destination development. Planning considerations specific to the labour, volunteers, and succession planning that have emerged through the planning process are highlighted below.

Attraction and retention

Like many areas in BC, Northeastern BC faces challenges attracting and retaining skilled labour. This is due to an overall shortage of certain types of labour in BC, in addition to the challenges resulting from seasonal operations and attractive salaries that can be offered by the natural resource sectors.

Training and capacity-building

There is also a need to address issues related to skill gaps in Northeastern BC. This need is also apparent within the First Nations communities in Northeastern BC. In addition to the range of skills needed to work in different types of tourism operations and service businesses, participants identified a need to develop a stronger entrepreneurial culture in Northeastern BC.

Succession planning

With the anticipated retirement of tourism operators and business owners, there is a risk of losing some tourism businesses, facilities, and products if a motivated successor is not available. This issue is surfacing in various locations in BC. Ways to encourage investment in existing and new tourism businesses in Northeastern BC should be considered by the Working Committee in upcoming sessions.

PRODUCT AND EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Range of Opportunities

There are many product and experience development opportunities that are important planning considerations for the Working Committee as they define key goals, objectives, and strategies. Given that Northeastern BC is in a developmental stage, it will be important to further develop priority experiences.

Product and experience development themes that have emerged in the process include the following¹²:

- Authentic, visitor-ready, market-ready, and export-ready Indigenous tourism experiences
- Authentic, visitor-ready, market-ready and export-ready tourism experiences
- Heritage, arts, culture, festivals, and events
- Thematic corridors and circle routes
- Diverse resorts and accommodations
- Urban experiences, to complement existing eco-experiences
- Sport tourism
- Winter tourism

- Mountain biking
- Experiences and products to meet the needs of future international visitors
- Quality tourism services

Iconic Features

The planning area has several iconic features that currently serve, or potentially could serve, as:

- Demand generators
- Focal points around which to galvanize a common identity for Northeastern BC

Through the planning process, participants identified the following features and/or areas as the top five for Northeastern BC:

- Alaska Highway Corridor
- Liard River Hot Springs
- Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Global Geopark
- Ancient Forest
- Muskwa-Kechika Management Area

¹²While many of these opportunities have not yet been developed, it is important to note that some experiences currently do exist, but can be improved to make them more visitor, market and/or export ready.

APPENDIX 3: CONSTRAINTS

The following constraints were identified during the workshops and interviews. An online survey gave participants an additional opportunity to indicate how important it is to address specific constraints. These are ordered according to importance based on the online survey results.

Transportation, Access, and Infrastructure Constraints

1. Funding for maintaining trails, parks, and other natural assets
2. Poor cell coverage in some areas
3. Maintained washrooms on some routes
4. Inadequate emergency services on northern routes
5. Insufficient rest stops
6. High cost of airfare
7. Insufficient wayfinding signage
8. Suitable space for current and future vehicle types at BC Parks
9. Infrequent flights
10. Insufficient interpretative signage
11. Local bus and taxi services
12. Insufficient signage for First Nations

Human Resource Constraints

1. Challenging to recruit and retain enough staff

2. Challenging to attract staff from resource sectors
3. Underdeveloped entrepreneurial culture in some communities
4. Challenging to attract volunteers
5. Succession planning is an issue for tourism businesses
6. Shortage of skilled workers

Product and Experience Development Constraints

1. Lack of products and packages
2. High cost of overall operations in remote areas
3. Lack of Indigenous tourism products
4. Lack of municipal investment in tourism development
5. Lack of knowledge about tourism amongst some locals inhibits ability to provide information to visitors
6. High cost of providing food and beverage in remote locations
7. Risk for private sector to invest in businesses

8. Lack of current, relevant research to support product development
9. Lack of rental equipment for visitors
10. Lack of consistent and/or convenient shop hours
11. Need for wider variety of resorts
12. BC Parks investment in Liard Hot Springs is needed

Destination Management and Government Policy Constraints

1. Uncertainty regarding resourcing to help implement the Destination Development Strategy
2. Lack of resident, local government, regional government, and First Nations governments understanding about the value of tourism
3. Resource industries and some associated pollution
4. Inadequate information sharing and collaboration across government

5. Changes in land base impacting habitat and migration routes
6. Government administrative processes challenging for growth
7. Large size of area impacts collaboration between communities
8. Climate change
9. Seasonal closures of parks limits operating season
10. Inadequate coordination between federal and provincial governments
11. Poor coordination between North and South Peace
12. Regulatory constraints regarding sourcing and serving local game and produce to visitors who are interested in local and/or regional cuisine
13. Challenges related to co-managing Provincial Parks with First Nations when contracting out park management
14. Severity of winter weather conditions

APPENDIX 4: OPPORTUNITIES

The following opportunities were identified during the workshops and interviews. An online survey gave participants an additional opportunity to indicate how important it is to address specific opportunities. These are ordered according to importance based on the online survey results.

Product and Experience Development Opportunity

1. Develop tourism circle routes and loops
2. Identify several iconic attractions and/or experiences that define the tourism experience in the Northeast
3. Develop winter tourism
4. Provide clarity regarding the identity of Northeast BC for visitors and people outside the region
5. Further develop products and experiences that will appeal to BC residents, given they are a large market
6. Develop visitor-ready, market-ready, and export-ready products and packages

7. Develop products and experiences that feature ecotourism
8. Develop interpretive, educational, and special interest tourism in selected areas
9. Develop tours that extend off the Alaska Highway
10. Further develop sport and event tourism
11. Support and encourage the development of visitor-ready, market-ready, and export-ready Indigenous products and experiences
12. Develop tourism around land stewardship and education
13. Develop the theme: Follow the Rockies to the North
14. Further develop and enhance the corridor for US visitors who already have a strong connection to the area

15. Build on the type of quality special interest tours that the University of Northern BC is offering
16. Focus on regional cuisine
17. Develop mountain biking infrastructure and services
18. Develop products and experiences that feature northern lights viewing
19. Develop natural resource sector tourism (e.g., oil and gas, hydro, mining, and others)
20. Support and encourage the development of First Nations casinos

Supporting Infrastructure Opportunities

1. Make route improvements a priority: viewpoints, pull-outs, maintained washrooms, signage, garbage facilities
2. Provide reliable cell services
3. Provide reliable emergency and medical services throughout Northeast BC travel routes
4. Ensure funding is available to maintain key trail networks
5. Ensure parks can accommodate current and future RVs and other vehicle types
6. Provide wayfinding signage that links the region with a common look
7. Provide all-season parks and services
8. Provide good signage for First Nations tourism attractions and services

APPENDIX 5: NET PROMOTER SCORE INFORMATION

The Net Promoter Score (NPS), developed by Frederick Reichheld and Bain & Company in 2002, is a simple metric that helps organizations monitor the engagement of their customers. It reflects the likelihood that customers will recommend a product/company/place to friends, family, or colleagues.¹³

In the context of the tourism industry, NPS is based on responses to the question, “How likely are you to recommend [Insert Name] as a travel destination to a friend, family member or colleague?”

Responses are scored from 0 = “not at all likely” to 10 = “extremely likely”. Respondents are divided into three categories:

- **DETRACTORS** (scores of 0 to 6): Unhappy visitors, unlikely to tell others to visit and might even damage the reputation of a destination through negative word of mouth.

- **PASSIVES** (scores of 7 or 8): Marginally satisfied visitors not excited enough to tell others about their travel experience.
- **PROMOTERS** (scores of 9 or 10): Loyal enthusiasts likely to return and rave about their travel experience.

NPS IS CALCULATED
BY SUBTRACTING
THE PERCENTAGE OF
DETRACTORS FROM
THE PERCENTAGE
OF PROMOTERS.

The intention to recommend a travel destination, reported by the NPS, is a proxy measure of overall satisfaction with the travel experience. Satisfaction with the travel experience and the intention to recommend greatly increase

the likelihood of a return visit to British Columbia. And word of mouth advocacy, either face-to-face or through social media, is critical for attracting first time visitors to British Columbia.

NPS is regarded by researchers as the question that best predicts the future growth of customer centric businesses like the tourism industry. Many tourism businesses and destination management organizations, including Destination Canada, are also measuring NPS to help monitor and measure efforts to improve customer loyalty.

Destination BC measures NPS through an annual consumer research study conducted in BC’s five key North American Markets (BC, Alberta, Ontario, Washington State and California). BC’s Net Promoter Score (NPS) is relatively high in all markets (ranging from +62 to +72).

¹³The following has been provided by Destination BC: <http://www.destinationbc.ca/Resources/Monitoring-and-Evaluation/Net-Promoter-Score.aspx>. The original research that developed NPS is described in an article by Frederick F. Reichheld in the Harvard Business Review: <https://hbr.org/2003/12/the-one-number-you-need-to-grow>.



