

NORTHERN BC TOURISM ASSOCIATION CORPORATE STRATEGY

THE ROAD FORWARD
2024 - 2027



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

RESPECTING AND ACKNOWLEDGING INDIGENOUS LANDS IN NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Northern British Columbia Tourism Association respectfully acknowledges the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation on whose territory we operate our main office. We further recognize with gratitude that we carry out our work on the lands of Nations throughout the northern BC region. We honour our ongoing relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities around northern BC, and we commit to continuing to work together. As an organization, we are committed to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, and the BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

We are working with the Destination BC, Indigenous Tourism BC, and the tourism industry to develop and implement actions of reconciliation. This includes collaboration with northern BC Indigenous communities interested in the benefits of tourism.





CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Our Focus, Pillars, and Delivery Themes	5
Organizational Values.....	6
Assessing Our Context	7
A Reality Check.....	8
Our Opportunities	9
Pillar 1: Market Awareness.....	10
Pillar 2: Destination Stewardship.....	12
Pillar 3: Industry Development	14
Pillar 4: Organizational Excellence.....	16



Northern BC Tourism Association Corporate Strategy

This Corporate Strategy is an internal road map for Northern British Columbia Tourism Association (NBCTA). It defines the areas of focus and establishes the pillars that NBCTA will centre on to realize our visionary aspirations.

We have consulted with partners throughout the region to gain insight and deepen our understanding of the requirements needed to support successful destination management for the northern BC region. This has helped shape our strategic priorities as we seek to build on our strengths, and to maintain our role as a champion of tourism in Northern British Columbia.

At the core of our work is the need to disperse the benefits that tourism can provide across the region in a way that supports further development of livable communities, enhances resident quality of life, is sustainable, and aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.



Our Focus

- » To facilitate and steward the development of a strong tourism industry in Northern BC that is integral to the regional way of life.
- » To achieve this, we will work to further establish a compelling and authentic narrative that inspires the travelers to consider discovering Northern British Columbia with care and respect.
- » We will help our partners transform stories into authentic experiences that celebrate our wild landscapes, culture, and our northern way of life.
- » We will advocate for what's best for our visitors and our partners while sustaining the integrity of what makes this region unique.
- » We will provide innovative leadership that adds value to the tourism industry through our commitment to being agile, relevant, and ahead of the curve.



Our Pillars

We have identified four foundational pillars that will shape our priorities and actions. The work under each of these pillars requires a range of actions, including cross-cutting thematic actions that have been identified as delivery themes. Industry collaboration and strategic focus on advancing these pillars and underlying delivery themes will support further development of the sector and steward a sustainable tourism industry.

- 1. MARKET AWARENESS**
- 2. DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP**
- 3. INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT**
- 4. ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

Our Delivery Themes



Mindfully promote the stories of Northern BC



Support the delivery of compelling northern experiences



Advocate for a strong tourism industry in Northern BC



Provide innovative tourism leadership

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

Collaboration

We foster partnerships that encourage innovation.



Sustainability

We support a tourism industry that contributes to the greater good for the planet, people and prosperity through promotion of responsible travel and management of northern BC's natural assets.



Reconciliation

We support true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through tourism.



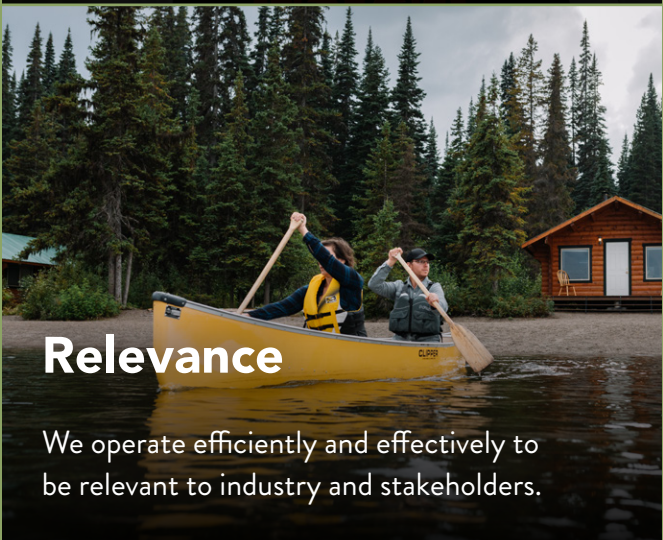
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility

We have a responsibility to ensure everything we do is equitable and inclusive. We work to champion diversity and amplify the voices of all people living in northern BC.



Relevance

We operate efficiently and effectively to be relevant to industry and stakeholders.



Assessing Our Context

Regional tourism priorities have been slowly shifting in recent years in alignment with international trends. Increasingly, destination marketing organizations have evolved into destination management organizations (DMOs), as they embrace a wider scope of roles in the development and sustainability of tourism. In addition to facilitating demand for tourism products through marketing and promotional activities, emphasis has been placed on working collaboratively with a wide range of partners towards the coordinated and sustainable management of the visitor economy. A stronger focus on supporting the components that are needed to develop and maintain a successful tourism sector, including access, infrastructure development, advocacy, and capacity building, together with consideration of the impact that tourism has on resident quality of life are being woven into destination management plans around the world.

This shift is reflected in a document prepared by the UNWTO for DMOs: Responsible and sustainable destination management should entail a process that effectively and harmoniously addresses the interactions between the visitors, the industry that serves them, the community that hosts them and the environment in a broad sense (natural and cultural resources).¹

As we continue to work with provincial and regional partners to address global and emergent issues that impact the tourism sector, we recognize the ongoing significance of the transformational opportunities identified by Destination Next² that must be taken into consideration in developing a road-map for the future:

1. **Destination Stewardship** – in other words, the importance of balancing economic development, sustainable tourism and the quality of life.
2. **Community Alignment** and the momentum that can be gained from building public support around a shared vision for the destination, both at the local or community level and at the regional level.
3. **Digital conversion** and the need to continue focusing on connecting visitors on mobile devices to drive real-time sales in-destination.



1: UNWTO, 2019, UNWTO Guidelines for Institutional Strengthening of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs): Preparing DMOs for New Challenges

2: Destinations International, 2019, Destination NEXT Futures Study 2019: A Strategic Road Map for the Next Generation of Global Destination Organizations



A Reality Check

Developing tourism in Northern BC faces its own set of challenges. In particular, we recognize the following:

- » The size of Northern BC as a region is extensive and compounds issues associated with visitor dispersion, stakeholder engagement, and efforts to create a sense of cohesive identity.
- » Market awareness outside of near-in markets, and knowledge of products and northern experiences remain low.
- » Tourism in Northern BC is at an earlier stage of development than elsewhere in the province, and while the sector continues to grow, the export-ready product offerings remain relatively limited, particularly with regard to curated leisure experiences that would appeal to long-haul markets.
- » The cost of travel to and within Northern BC is often identified as a barrier to growth.
- » Tourism investment in Northern BC is not considered a top priority in many areas of the region and as such, the tourism sector is less mature than other areas of the province. Many local areas do not have a funding model to support tourism development opportunities and there are fewer DMO's.
- » The concept of sustainability has a degree of complexity in Northern BC that has the potential to create polarizing perspectives. While discussions on sustainability and regenerative tourism have become a priority focus in many destinations around the world, generating a commitment to prioritizing sustainability can still be more challenging within the region.
- » NBCTA's role in implementing the Regional Destination Development Strategies is constrained by inadequate resources and a limited understanding of the value of destination development activities by many regional decision makers. This can also have an effect on our ability to influence associated tourism development policies.
- » Global and climate related issues are expected to continue having unknown impacts on the tourism industry globally and in Northern BC.

OUR OPPORTUNITIES

- » We anticipate a growth in demand for nature-based experiences that are perceived as safe, particularly from regional markets. Northern BC is well positioned to offer experiences that are perceived as distinctive, with unique offerings across the region including identified iconics such as the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark, Khutzymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary, or Muskwa-Kechika Management Area. However, leveraging these opportunities will require a coordinated focus on strengthening the concepts of health, wellness and safety in relation to what the North has to offer and building a greater level of awareness of Northern experiences. Improving market readiness and focusing on innovative experience development will need to be a priority.
- » Northern BC has compelling stories to tell – stories that can animate travel corridors and elevate existing sites and attractions. Curating these stories more effectively and re-positioning the circle routes of the north offers potential to build global recognition for northern touring experiences.
- » With several events impacting the tourism economy in Northern BC over the last several years, supporting businesses has proven to be an important opportunity to offer direct business support and enhance connectivity with tourism operators throughout the region.
- » It is an opportune moment to strengthen local understanding of the value and significance of the regional tourism economy. NBCTA has an important role to play in highlighting the benefits that communities derive from tourism, and the way in which tourism can support the viability and liveability of northern communities.
- » There is an increasing recognition that untapping the region's potential in an appropriate way will require ongoing advocacy efforts. NBCTA has a strategic role to play in working collaboratively with industry to further profile industry needs at all levels of government, and to encourage dialogue in global conversations on sustainability, biodiversity and climate change.
- » Indigenous tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors globally. Indigenous nations and partners throughout the region are considering the opportunity to develop authentic tourism experiences that profile stories and celebrate the region's rich Indigenous culture.
- » The importance of having a well-established digital presence has never been more critical. Many tourism businesses are keen to become more digitally sophisticated and enhance their digital readiness.
- » A collective approach to disseminate and analyze visitor data will elevate the industry's ability to understand tourism performance and strategically manage regional tourism activities.
- » There is opportunity to establish a more sustainable and resilient tourism model that better balances the environmental, social, and economic impacts of tourism.

This Corporate Strategy outlines how NBCTA will realign itself with global DMO trends. Our strategic priorities are focused on addressing the challenges that face this region, and leveraging these emerging opportunities. Working in partnership with our stakeholders, we can facilitate the development of a strong and vibrant tourism industry in Northern BC that is integral to our way of life.

A group of people are hiking on a narrow, moss-covered path through a dense forest. The trees are tall and slender, with thick moss growing on the ground and tree trunks. The scene is peaceful and natural.

PILLAR 1:

MARKET AWARENESS

Vision

NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA WILL BE WIDELY RECOGNIZED FOR ITS DISTINCTIVELY AUTHENTIC WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES AND LIFESTYLE AND BECOME A HIGHLY RECOMMENDED DESTINATION BY VISITORS WHO ARE INSPIRED TO EXPLORE THE REGION WITH CARE AND RESPECT.

Two people are standing on a dirt path in a forest, looking at a large totem pole. The person on the left is wearing a light blue jacket and a white helmet, and the person on the right is wearing a red jacket and a white helmet. They are both on bicycles. The totem pole is made of wood and has several carved figures on it.

Objectives

- » Heightened market awareness through strategic alignment across the tourism marketing ecosystem.
- » Content development and distribution through a shared approach to curating and presenting authentic stories that profile and celebrate regional culture and inspire visitors to experience Northern BC.
- » Regionalized campaign development that generates conversion.

Key Activities

Creating strategic alignment through:

- » Supporting the consistency and alignment of marketing activities throughout the tourism ecosystem including all levels of government, communities, businesses, and DMOs.
- » Developing a stronger brand proposition for Northern BC within the provincial marketing ecosystem.
- » Supporting the Destination BC Invest in Iconics and Place Brand process, and strengthening the Super, Natural British Columbia brand.
- » Enhancing and aligning content distribution partnerships with Destination BC and other appropriate partners.

Developing compelling and authentic travel content through:

- » Establishing an in-depth understanding of the target audience and preferred distribution channels.
- » Creating engaging imagery and quality video materials that can be used in each stage of the consumer journey.
- » Ensuring stakeholders are well-informed on content and asset curation within NBCTA.
- » Working within the tourism ecosystem as a primary resource for Northern BC content, with an emphasis on sharing stories that transform Northern icons into motivators for travel.
- » Creating content development and distribution partnerships with like-minded brands and partners to reach qualified audience.
- » Curating and amplifying high quality user-generated content.
- » Developing compelling travel itineraries in partnership with communities, businesses, and DMOs.



Promoting regional messaging through:

- » Developing partnerships and leading multimedia campaigns for Northern BC.
- » Working with communities, DMOs, and sector partners to continue strengthening appropriate partnerships to profile visitor experiences to the northern BC region.
- » Crafting strategic marketing messages focused on safe, respectful, and regenerative travel opportunities in appropriate markets.
- » Establishing and/or maintaining effective partnerships with travel trade and media influencers and partners in key markets that promote the authentic stories and experiences of the region.
- » Sharing stories that transform Northern icons into motivators for travel.

Key Performance Indicators



1. Enhanced awareness and increased consumer consumption in key markets
2. Expansion of content distribution network
3. Collaboration with communities
4. Increased visitation in shoulder seasons
5. Travel Media KPI (i.e. # of published stories or media trips)

Delivery Themes





PILLAR 2: DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP

Vision

THE TOURISM SECTOR IN NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA WILL BE CHARACTERIZED BY A COLLABORATIVE AND STRATEGIC APPROACH TO CREATING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE THAT WILL BE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TO TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE REGION.

Objectives

- » A tourism industry committed to the sustainable use of natural assets and to the promotion of biodiversity.
- » A shared agenda fostered among all partners that promotes destination development and management.
- » Tourism growth that supports the goals and interests of First Nations communities through progressive enhancement of our Indigenous relations.
- » Strong awareness of the benefits of tourism to the economy and to residents' quality of life in Northern British Columbia.
- » Enhanced resilience through facilitating the mitigation, preparedness response, and recovery of the Northern BC tourism industry in times of emergency.

Key Activities

Promoting sustainability through:

- » Positioning NBCTA as a champion of sustainability and continuing to increase sustainability awareness amongst communities and stakeholders.
- » Continuing to increase sustainability awareness amongst communities and stakeholders and maintaining Biosphere Certification.
- » Aspiring and adhering to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.
- » Ensuring the implementation of effective policies, procedures, and systems that prioritize accessibility and inclusion.
- » Developing a tourism industry that is committed to celebrating and upholding the socio-cultural authenticity and traditional values of Northern communities, and to supporting inter-cultural understanding.

Supporting destination development through:

- » Continuing to implement and champion the Regional Destination Development Strategies with advice and local input from the Regional Destination Advisory Committee.
- » Elevating visitor experiences and core iconic features with infrastructure and corridor development to support the Compelling Reasons to Visit BC Strategy.

Enhancing Indigenous relations and supporting reconciliation through:

- » Supporting recommendations relating to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on tourism related matters.
- » Tourism enhancement that supports the goals and interests of Indigenous communities through Indigenous relations, training, development of protocols and intercultural understanding.
- » Working in partnership with Indigenous Tourism BC to strengthen relationship building, partnerships, and collaboration with Indigenous communities.

Strengthening stakeholder and government relations through:

- » Working collaboratively to measure and promote the value of tourism within communities.
- » Continuing to elevate an understanding of tourism's contribution to quality of life for residents to local government.
- » Maintain government outreach and relations while continuing to work with relevant partners on advocacy to ensure the best working environment for a competitive tourism industry.
- » Maintain and develop relationships with all levels of government and First Nations.

Focusing on emergency management through:

- » Supporting emergency management through up-to-date communications with relevant stakeholders and visitors while providing advocacy for visitors.
- » Taking action to support the relief and recovery of the tourism industry when emergencies happen.
- » Advocating for the tourism industry when emergencies happen.

Key Performance Indicators



1. Continued advancement of identified actions from sustainability action plans
2. Tracking the number of objectives and action items being advanced in the 10-year Destination Development Strategies
3. Strengthened Indigenous voices, values, and presence through tourism
4. Measuring resident sentiment and understanding of the value of the tourism industry
5. Profiling the understanding of the tourism industry for all levels of government and First Nations
6. Continuing our work to support and develop an accessible and inclusive tourism industry
7. Supporting local DMOs and authorities to ensure tourism/ visitor safety is a key part of emergency response planning

Delivery Themes



PILLAR 3:

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT



Vision

A COMPETITIVE AND STRATEGIC NORTHERN BC TOURISM INDUSTRY EMPOWERED THROUGH THE DELIVERY OF EFFECTIVE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.



Objectives

- » Industry is empowered through a strategic research program.
- » An effective industry development program is in place that supports a sophisticated and competitive Northern BC tourism sector.
- » Tourism is efficiently serviced by a well-trained committed and motivated regional workforce.



Key Activities

Empowering strategic decision making through:

- » The continuation of the Northern BC Tourism Research program.

Supporting the development of a sophisticated and competitive industry through:

- » Supporting the resiliency of Northern BC tourism businesses.
- » Promoting Destination BC's Learning Centre and profiling opportunities to participate throughout the region, in addition to working with Destination BC on the further development of resources to support tourism stakeholders.

Strengthening and supporting a committed and qualified regional tourism workforce through:

- » Working with stakeholders and partners to support the recruitment, retention, and recognition of the tourism workforce in Northern BC.
- » Supporting tourism training programs.
- » Continuing to foster partnerships with business support organizations such as go2HR, Community Futures, and Chambers of Commerce.



Key Performance Indicators



1. Stakeholder participation and engagement in regional research programming
2. Number of businesses engaged in Industry Development programs
3. Growth in number of market and export ready products
4. Measure of information dissemination to Northern BC stakeholders on opportunities to support their tourism workforce

Delivery Themes





PILLAR 4:

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Vision

A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION THAT LEADS AND SUPPORTS THE
REGIONAL TOURISM SECTOR.



Objectives

- » A diverse team of appropriately skilled and trained staff.
- » Strong organizational governance.
- » Financial sustainability.
- » Effective organizational processes supporting workflow and productivity.



Key Activities

Attracting and retaining a diverse team of appropriately skilled and trained staff through:

- » Developing an exemplary corporate culture.
- » Providing professional development opportunities.
- » Undertaking strategic recruitment.

Developing and employing strong organizational governance through:

- » Attracting and retaining a professional and committed Board of Directors while ensuring diversity and inclusion on the board.
- » Implementing board training and development opportunities for board members.
- » Engaging the board in strategic planning.
- » Monitoring performance of the board.

Ensuring the financial sustainability of the association through:

- » Engaging in effective financial management.
- » Nurturing a strong relationship with Destination BC and the Provincial Government.
- » Exploring new funding opportunities and partnerships.

Developing effective organizational processes and systems through:

- » Investing in technology and appropriate platforms.
- » Developing and maintaining a comprehensive industry database.
- » Developing internal expertise in all processes and systems.

Key Performance Indicators



1. Employee satisfaction
2. Board satisfaction and engagement
3. Strong fiduciary position
4. Annual audit performance
5. Annual reporting

Delivery Theme





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