

NORTHWESTERN BC

# DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Including Highways 16 and 37



DESTINATION  
BRITISH COLUMBIA®

PRINCE RUPERT SHORELINE

Photo: Harbour Air

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FRONT COVER PHOTO: MOUNT EDZIZA PROVINCIAL PARK, JF Bergeron

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## A. A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION

Geographically, Northwestern BC is the largest of the 20 Destination BC planning areas. The planning area is very diverse with coastal areas, mountains, significant headwaters, glaciers, rivers, lakes, hot springs and valleys. Northwestern BC's outstanding cultural and natural assets support (or could support) a range of adventure, eco-tourism, cultural and Indigenous tourism experiences. The area has a wealth of provincial parks and protected areas. With regard to existing tourism, there are several key themes within the planning area, as highlighted below.

### TRAVEL CORRIDORS

Touring is a long-standing experience available in Northwestern BC. The primary touring routes are BC Ferries Route 10 (Port Hardy to/from Prince Rupert), Highway 16 (also known as the Yellowhead Highway), and Highway 37

(also known as the Stewart-Cassiar Highway). Currently, there are efforts to create additional circle tours and travel routes in the area, including the Nisga'a Lisims Government's Circle Tour Project which proposes several

circle tours that will be tested later in 2019. Another important initiative is the current collaborative effort of several local governments and tourism industry representatives to re-brand Highway 16 which presents opportunities to further develop touring experiences related to this corridor.

## SIGNIFICANT PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS

There is a wealth of parks and protected areas in Northwestern BC, which can serve as attractions unto themselves. These parks draw visitors for a range of outdoor activities and serve as operating areas for guided activities (under Park Use Permit). There are several provincial parks and protected areas that have garnered widespread attention including (but not limited to): Khutzeymateen Park, the Great Bear Rainforest (the largest coastal temperate rainforest in the world), Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park, Kitlope Heritage Conservancy, North Tweedsmuir Park, the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Park (located in the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh, the Park protects a portion of the only inland temperate rainforest in the world), Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park, Mount Robson Provincial Park, Mt. Edziza Park, Atlin Park and Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Wilderness Park (which is part of the Kluane-Wrangell-St. Elias-Glacier Bay-Tatshenshini-Alsek park system, designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994).

## INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Northwestern BC has a significant number of Indigenous communities. The 38 Indigenous communities in the planning area are diverse in terms of their cultural traditions and ways of life. While several of these communities

currently offer rich tourism experiences, there is untapped potential to further develop authentic, Indigenous tourism experiences in Northwestern BC by those communities that wish to pursue these opportunities. Complementing this potential is growing demand amongst many markets for authentic Indigenous tourism offerings.

## COMMUNITIES

There are many unique communities throughout Northwestern BC.

### Examples include:

- The coastal city of Prince Rupert — with its cafes, shops, and coastal accommodations
- Terrace — a transportation hub and gateway to fishing
- Kitimat — providing access to fishing on the Kitimat River
- Smithers — with its Alpine-themed architecture and surrounding outdoor activities
- Houston — offering outstanding steelhead fishing and outdoor adventures
- Burns Lake — an emerging mountain biking destination located in the heart of the Lakes District
- Fort Fraser — one of BC's oldest European-founded settlements
- Vanderhoof — home of the Nechako White Sturgeon
- Prince George — the largest city in northern BC, which serves as a major transportation hub and base for many surrounding outdoor activities
- McBride — serving as the “Gateway to the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Park” and as a base for adventures in the Robson Valley, McBride also offers a new mountain biking park

- Valemount — with its outstanding mountain views and mountain biking park
- Fort St. James — Canada’s oldest fur trading post and home to Fort St. James National Historic Site
- Port Edward — home of the North Pacific Cannery National Historic Site
- The Hazeltons — located at the confluence of the Skeena and Bulkley Rivers
- Stewart — known for its hanging glaciers (over 20 in the area), bear viewing and its proximity to Hyder, Alaska
- Dease Lake — a former Hudson’s Bay trading post and currently the service centre for Highway 37 communities and for people visiting Mount Edziza Park, Spatzizi Plateau Wilderness Park and Spatzizi Headwaters Park
- Telegraph Creek — located off Highway 37 in Northern BC at the confluence of the Stikine River and Telegraph Creek
- Atlin — the province’s most northwesterly community that emerged during BC’s last gold rush in 1898

## COASTAL ACTIVITIES

The coastal areas of Northwestern BC provide outstanding scenery and settings for a range of marine activities, including fishing, boating, non-mechanized marine recreation, coastal wildlife viewing, cruise ships, and coastal hiking.

## UNIQUE TRAILS

Trails are featured throughout the planning area, consisting of:

- Traditional Indigenous trails
- Coastal trails

- Mountain biking parks and trails (some currently under construction)
- Backcountry horse trails
- Hiking trails
- Historic trails

## OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

The planning area’s natural assets support a wide range of outdoor activities, many of which are offered now and many that could be developed to meet market demand.

## B. KEY CHALLENGES

The most critical challenges for the planning area regarding destination development are:

- Its size and resulting challenges related to coordination between communities, which impact tourism and destination development
- Its distance from key markets, which can make travel to the destination costly and inconvenient
- The need for more guided and packaged tourism experiences
- Declining populations of fish and wildlife
- Lack of awareness in many key markets about the tourism assets and experiences available in Northwestern BC
- Attracting and retaining sufficiently skilled workers
- Climate change and associated threats to the natural and built environment
- Industrial development

## C. UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITIONS AND EXPERIENCE THEMES

The key experience themes for Northwestern BC are highlighted below. Note that, while these currently exist to some degree, there is significant potential to build on these opportunities through the 10-Year Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy.

Superb outdoor adventure and eco-tourism based on wilderness, diverse outdoor settings and world-renowned parks of Northwestern BC. Northwestern BC features ocean and coastline, rivers, lakes, glaciers, hot springs, mountains, valleys and forested areas. It has a large number of designated provincial parks and protected areas, some of which are garnering international attention (the Great Bear Rainforest, the Khutzeymateen Park, Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park, Mount Edziza, Spatsizi Wilderness Park, to name a few). Wild and untouched or lightly-touched areas are becoming increasingly rare worldwide, which reinforces what is special about Northwestern BC. Looking out 10 years and beyond, there is tremendous potential to further develop outdoor adventure and eco-tourism experiences in these wild outdoor settings, while, at the same time, maintaining their integrity.

Sportfishing — Northwestern BC has long been known for its sport fisheries, both salt and freshwater. The wide variety of pristine and scenic lakes, rivers, alpine, meadows, trails and old industry roads make the area a prime destination for angling. Freshwater

angling guides, and lodges in the area, provide visitors with opportunities to catch Steelhead fish, as well as Chinook and Coho salmon and other species. Even today, when fisheries and fish habitat face pressures throughout many areas of BC, including the Skeena watershed, the area is still considered one of the best fishing destinations in the province.

Outstanding thematic touring/circle routes that are enriched by diverse landscapes, natural features and wildlife, heritage and culture experiences, outdoor adventure experiences and Indigenous culture. While this unique selling proposition is anchored by Highway 16 and Highway 37, there are many additional routes with tremendous thematic potential that can help further develop Northwestern BC into a top touring destination in North America, particularly when combined with existing and potential touring opportunities in neighbouring Northeastern BC.

Rich Indigenous culture is a key attribute of Northwestern BC. With 38 Indigenous communities, and a growing number of them embracing the development of authentic tourism experiences,

Indigenous tourism has the potential to grow considerably. Coupled with growing demand for these experiences in markets worldwide, this presents a considerable opportunity for Northwestern BC.

Cultural and heritage tourism — Northwestern BC has rich and diverse cultural and heritage assets. There is a growing interest to develop cultural and heritage tourism as a way to help travellers better understand the people, place and cultural identity and diversity of an area. The development of cultural or thematic routes, attractions, museum programs, guided tours, or an individual business can link the Indigenous,

Euro-Canadian history, rural and natural environments, food or agricultural offerings. While stimulating community pride and relationships, cultural and heritage tourism can also serve as a platform upon which to tell the story of shared history. Ultimately, an expanded variety of experiences offer visitors more things to do; thus, increasing length of stay and driving associated economic benefits to businesses and the community. With appropriate planning and collaboration, there are many opportunities to build experiences around the culture and heritage of the Northern BC Tourism Region.

## D. A DISTINCTIVE DIRECTION

### VISION

Participants in the process were instrumental in developing the following 10-Year destination vision.

#### Destination Vision

NORTHWESTERN BC IS A FOUR-SEASON DESTINATION THAT INSPIRES DISCOVERY, WHERE WILD, DIVERSE LANDSCAPES CONNECT VIBRANT COMMUNITIES FULL OF ENTHUSIASTIC AND WELCOMING HOSTS.

HERE YOU ARE INVITED TO EXPLORE VIBRANT INDIGENOUS CULTURES, RICH HISTORY, ABUNDANT WILDLIFE, WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES AND ADVENTURES FOR ALL ABILITIES.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles guided the development of the Destination Development Strategy. These principles should also guide decision-making during the implementation phase.

### Priority actions must:

- Support and enhance existing community values and aspirations
- Build on core attributes that make the destination distinctive
- Recognize the concept of sustainability as an underlying core value
- Align with provincial strategic priorities that relate to tourism
- Promote collaboration and inclusivity as the basis of making progress
- Celebrate and respect the role of First Nations in shaping Northwestern BC's economic, environmental and cultural assets

## OVERARCHING GOALS

Three overarching goals are presented below. Progress implementing the overall Destination Development Strategy will help achieve these overarching goals.

### NORTHWESTERN BC OVERARCHING GOALS

Increase the net promoter score year-over-year

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Increase the overall value of tourism over the ten-year implementation period

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Increase the overall market readiness of the destination over the ten-year implementation period

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## DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The vision and overarching goals are supported by the following six development goals and associated objectives. The supporting actions are described in the main body of the Destination Development Strategy.

### SNAPSHOT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Development Goals	Supporting Objectives
<b>A. ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY</b>  The resources upon which tourism depends — natural features, wildlife and fisheries, habitat, water resources, air quality — are well managed over the long-term.	A-1 Improve/sustain the health of wildlife populations
	A-2 Improve/sustain the health of fisheries
	A-3 Maintain and increase the integrity of key areas and natural features that are critical to the tourism industry
	A-4 Encourage the tourism industry to develop and adopt common environmental sustainability practices

## SNAPSHOT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Development Goals	Supporting Objectives
<p><b>B. INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESS &amp; AMENITIES</b></p> <p>Infrastructure, access and amenities are provided and well-maintained to support destination development.</p>	<p><b>B-1</b> Increase the number of roadside amenities and pull-outs to support existing and potential priority tourism experiences</p>
	<p><b>B-2</b> Maintain visitor safety and the ability to respond to emergencies</p>
	<p><b>B-3</b> Increase and improve signage along travel routes</p>
	<p><b>B-4</b> Build on the wealth of provincial parks to meet the needs and interests of existing and future visitors</p>
	<p><b>B-5</b> Continue to improve trails and trail networks to meet the needs and interests of existing and future visitors</p>
	<p><b>B-6</b> Provide First Nations interpretive, locational and welcome signage in key locations</p>
	<p><b>B-7</b> Increase the presence of facilities, infrastructure and services that support universal design</p>
	<p><b>B-8</b> Ensure BC Ferries' scheduling and reservations systems support tourism from an economic sustainability perspective</p>
	<p><b>B-9</b> Provide VIA Rail scheduling and services that support tourism growth</p>
	<p><b>B-10</b> Encourage the development of travel infrastructure and services that decrease greenhouse gas emissions</p>
<p><b>C. COLLABORATION</b></p> <p>Collaboration amongst tourism operators, Indigenous peoples, communities, governments, and destination management/marketing organizations supports destination development and management.</p>	<p><b>C-1</b> Increase communication and collaboration amongst and between tourism partners in Northwestern BC to support the implementation of the Destination Development Strategy</p>
	<p><b>C-2</b> Enhance collaboration and meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and operators</p>
	<p><b>C-3</b> Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement destination development priorities</p>

## SNAPSHOT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Development Goals	Supporting Objectives
<p><b>D. EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <p>Unique, market-ready products/experiences exceed expectations of visitors, while maintaining the environmental and cultural integrity of the destination.</p>	<p>D-1 Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready Indigenous tourism experiences including products for touring visitors and for destination visitors</p>
	<p>D-2 Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready tourism products/ experiences</p>
	<p>D-3 Develop remarkable experiences around the key iconic features</p>
	<p>D-4 Further develop thematic corridors and circle routes as core experiences for Northwestern BC</p>
	<p>D-5 Develop more market-ready winter tourism experiences</p>
	<p>D-6 Continue to develop the mountain biking experience in key locations that possess great terrain for this activity coupled with local interest in developing mountain biking infrastructure and services</p>
	<p>D-7 Continually improve tourism services</p>
	<p>D-8 Ensure Northwestern BC can provide some products/experiences and services that meet the needs of international visitors from both existing and emerging markets</p>
	<p>D-9 Establish designations and associated experiences that build awareness about Northwestern BC</p>
	<p>D-10 Enhance urban tourism, including heritage and cultural experiences</p>
	<p>D-11 Enhance and/or expand the range of coastal boating and cruising experiences in a manner that is respectful of the environment and Indigenous communities</p>
<p><b>E. TOURISM WORKFORCE</b></p> <p>A strong, well-trained, motivated tourism workforce is available to deliver high-quality experiences.</p>	<p>E-1 Improve Northwestern BC's ability to attract and retain appropriately-skilled workers and volunteers</p>
	<p>E-2 Help develop a more entrepreneurial culture by providing relevant training and capacity building opportunities</p>
<p><b>F. GOVERNMENT COORDINATION AND SUPPORT</b></p> <p>Ongoing, strong government coordination and support for tourism development and management exists.</p>	<p>F-1 Build better government understanding and support for tourism</p>
	<p>F-2 Enhance local, regional and First Nation government support for destination development</p>
	<p>F-3 Ensure that targeted government policies and land and tenure management support destination development</p>

## II. ACRONYMS

<b>AGRI</b>	Ministry of Agriculture	<b>FLNR</b>	Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
<b>BCFRO</b>	British Columbia Fishing Resorts and Outfitters' Association	<b>GOABC</b>	Guide Outfitters' Association of BC
<b>BCMA</b>	British Columbia Museums Association	<b>IRR</b>	Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
<b>BCOBTA</b>	British Columbia Ocean Boating Tourism Association	<b>ISC</b>	Indigenous Services Canada
<b>CEA</b>	Community Energy Association	<b>ITAC</b>	Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada
<b>CCP</b>	Comprehensive Community Plan	<b>ITBC</b>	Indigenous Tourism Association of British Columbia
<b>CDMO</b>	Community Destination Marketing/Management Organization	<b>JTT</b>	Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology
<b>CIRNAC</b>	Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada	<b>MAH</b>	Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
<b>DBC</b>	Destination British Columbia	<b>MRDT</b>	Municipal and Regional District Tax
<b>DC</b>	Destination Canada	<b>NBCTA</b>	Northern BC Tourism Association
<b>DDS</b>	Destination Development Strategy	<b>NCRD</b>	North Coast Regional District
<b>DMO</b>	Destination Marketing/Management Organization	<b>NDIT</b>	Northern Development Initiative Trust
<b>EMBC</b>	Emergency Management BC	<b>NPO</b>	Not-for-Profit Organization
<b>EMPR</b>	Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources	<b>OCF</b>	Official Community Plan
<b>ENV</b>	Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy	<b>PAVCO</b>	BC Pavilion Corporation
<b>EV</b>	Electric Vehicle	<b>RDBN</b>	Regional District of Buckley Nechako

**RDFFG** Regional District of Fraser  
Fort George

**RDKS** Regional District of Kitimat  
Stikine

**SCIBC** Spinal Cord Injury BC

**TAC** Ministry of Tourism, Arts  
and Culture

**TAVI** Tourism Association  
of Vancouver Island

**TIABC** Tourism Industry Association  
of British Columbia

**Tourism Partners** — This includes the many not-for-profit organizations and associations associated with tourism, in addition to private sector organizations and entities associated with tourism.

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

**TRAN** Ministry of Transportation and  
Infrastructure

**UBCM** Union of BC Municipalities

**UNBC** University of Northern BC

**UNESCO** United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural  
Organization

**UNWTO** United Nations World Tourism  
Organization

**WD** Western Diversification

**WTA** Wilderness Tourism Association

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# FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**FOREWORD** This Destination Development Strategy is the final report resulting from an 18-month, iterative process of gathering, synthesizing and validating information with stakeholders about the current status of tourism in Northwestern 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 Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy will contribute to the tapestry of long-term regional and provincial planning that will support 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 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 (DBC), 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 or traveled through for our community meetings, including:

Cheslatta Carrier Nation	Haisla	Nee Tahi Buhn
Dease River	Iskut Band	Saik'uz First Nation
Gingolx	Kispiox	Skin Tye
Gitanmaax	Kitselas	Stellat'en First Nations
Gitanyow	Kitsumkalum	Tahltan
Gitga'at	Lake Babine	Takla First Nation
Gitlaxt'aamiks (New Aiyansh)	Lax Kw'alaams	Taku Tlingit
Gitsegukla	Laxgalts'ap	Tl'azt'en Nation
Gitwangak	Lheidli T'enneh	Ts'il Kaz Koh (Burns Lake Indian Band)
Gitwinksihlkw	Liard	Wet'suwet'en
Gitxaala	Metlakatla	Witset
Glen Vowell	Nadleh Whut'en	Yekooche
Hagwilget	Nak'azdli Whut'en	

Destination British Columbia, NBCTA and the project facilitation team would also like to thank the participants who contributed throughout the process by attending the community meetings, participating in surveys, stakeholder interviews and follow-up conversations, and forwarding relevant documents that provided the background information for the Situation Analysis. The development of the Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy was guided by input from approximately 200 tourism partners in Northwestern BC, representing the diversity of communities, organizations, businesses and interests in the planning area.

In addition to the above input, the Northwestern BC Working Committee provided invaluable insights that helped formulate each objective and associated action documented in this Destination Development Strategy. Destination British Columbia would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the following individuals for their thoughtful contributions through their participation on the Working Committee (listed in alphabetical order).

## NORTHWESTERN BC DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT WORKING COMMITTEE

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Lisa Girbav, Lax Kw'alaams Business Development Ltd.	Val Anderson, Village of Burns Lake
Liz Smaha, Tourism Terrace	<b>Special thanks are offered to the facilitator of the Northwestern BC destination development process:</b>
Lucille Green, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (Robson Valley)	Jennifer Nichol, Grant Thornton LLP

# 2

# INTRODUCING THE STRATEGY

MOUNT EDZIZA PROVINCIAL PARK  
Photo: Taylor Burk

The Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy has been prepared to enhance the competitiveness of Northwestern 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 and provincial agencies, First Nations, destination marketing organizations (DMOs), tourism operators and other community interests to guide the long-term growth of tourism in the planning area.

**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 above program vision is supported by three provincial 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.

## A. PROGRAM VISION AND GOALS



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/ 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 Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy is intended to serve as a guide for tourism partners as they proceed with implementation. This document should be reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect changing circumstances. Also, results should be tracked regularly to determine if adjustments are needed to better achieve the 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 Northwestern 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 consumer and hence, competitive in its target markets. Destination development happens when industry and government plan and work together to enhance the quality of the visitor’s experience by ensuring tourism products, services, amenities and practices meet and exceed visitor expectations over the long term.

Tourism has two primary revenue drivers – supply and demand. Creative marketing efforts strive to generate 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 of experiences via social networks (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and third-party platforms allowing the traveller to “review” their experience (e.g., TripAdvisor, Google), the quality of the destination and the experiences it offers are now essential elements of the marketing toolbox.

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 experiences; policies that establish and maintain opportunities and growth barriers; 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; and, capability, skills and training our industry needs so that we all can excel at what we do. These dimensions are illustrated below.

FIGURE 2:  
Five Dimensions of Supply – the Visitor Experience



## D. METHODOLOGY

The Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy was developed based on extensive, collaborative efforts during an 18-month process that culminated in the creation of a Situation Analysis report and this Destination Development Strategy.

FIGURE 3:  
Project Steps  
and Timelines

The destination development planning approach was highly iterative, allowing for multiple opportunities for stakeholder input and validation (Figure 3). The process followed a semi-structured strategic approach, created by Destination BC. This approach allowed for flexibility to ensure the unique

considerations of each planning area were assessed and respected. A volunteer Working Committee contributed their expertise to reviewing and discussing the key findings from the Situation Analysis and helped develop the goals and supporting objectives and actions contained in this strategy.

KEY STEPS	TIMELINES
Conducted project planning and document review	January–February 2018
Facilitated session 1 workshops in seven locations	March–May 2018
Conducted meetings in Indigenous communities	March–May 2018
Conducted post-session 1 online survey and interviews	May–June 2018
Facilitated session 2 workshops in three locations	June 2018
Conducted meetings in Indigenous communities	June 2018
Conducted post-session 2 online survey and interviews	July–August 2018
Completed Situation Analysis (Draft 1)	September 2018
Conducted community workshops and meetings with operators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atlin</li> <li>• Highway 37A and Stewart</li> <li>• Highway 37 and Dease Lake</li> </ul>	September–October 2018
Set draft goals, objectives, actions and priorities with Working Committee in Smithers	October 2018
Reviewed draft goals, objectives, actions and priorities with representatives from 12 communities who were not able to attend the Working Committee session	November–December 2018
Prepared Destination Development Strategy (Draft 1)	December 2018
Reviewed Destination Development Strategy (DBC, NBCTA, ITBC, TAC)	December 2018–March 2019
Revised Destination Development Strategy (Draft 2)	March 2019
Reviewed Destination Development Strategy (Draft 2) (Working Committee)	March–July 2019
Revised Destination Development Strategy (Draft 3)	July 2019
Finalized Destination Development Strategy	August 2019



## 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 detailed Situation Analysis that provides foundational research related to the Northwestern BC planning area, access and infrastructure, key tourism assets, key markets, a destination assessment, and priority planning area considerations that were used to inform the development of the Destination Development Strategy.
3. The Destination Development Strategy.

3

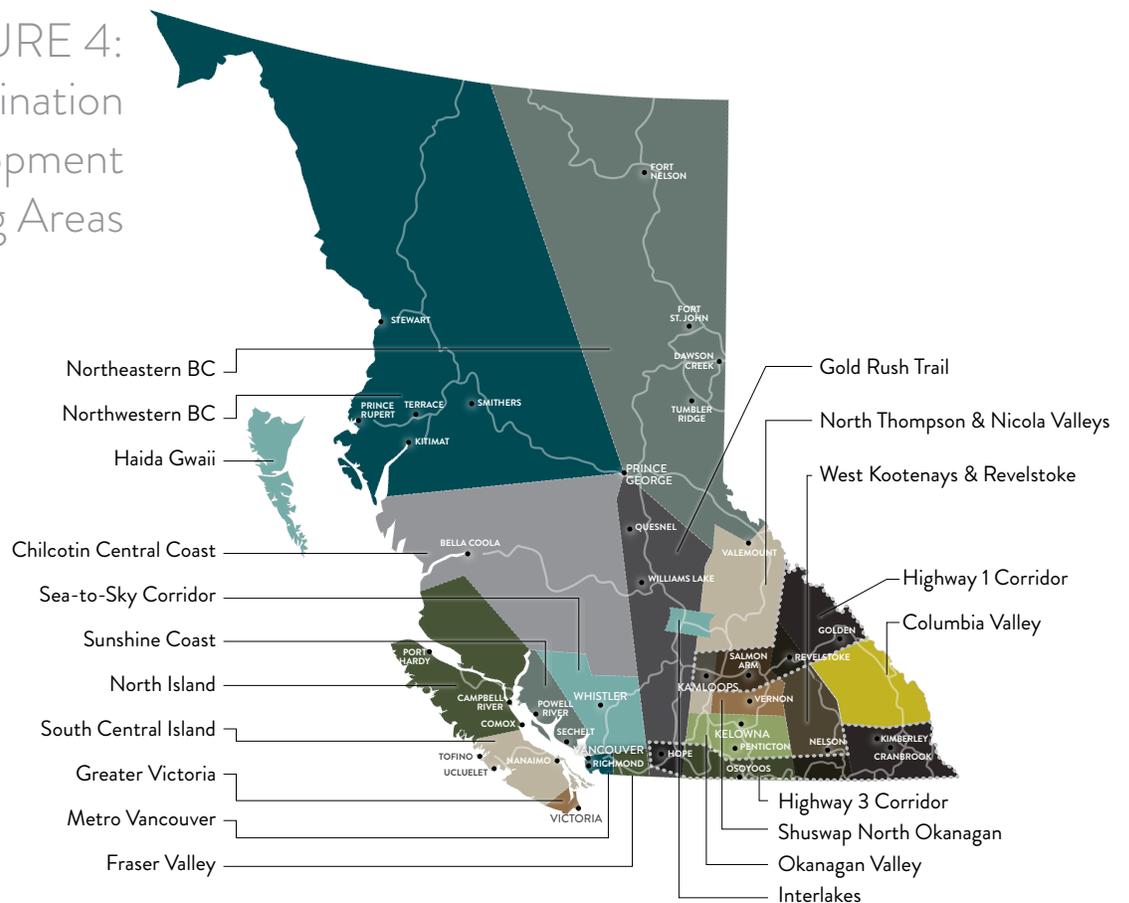
# ALIGNMENT



HIGHWAY 16, BETWEEN TERRACE AND PRINCE RUPERT  
Photo: Grant Harder

The Northwestern 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 (see map below).

FIGURE 4:  
Destination  
Development  
Planning Areas



The two other planning areas in Northern BC are: Northeastern BC and Haida Gwaii. Over the course of DBC’s Destination Development Program, each of the province’s six tourism regions will integrate their planning area destination development strategies into a regional destination development strategy 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

FIGURE 5:  
Levels of Destination  
Development Planning





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 DDP process include:

1. Associations and agencies representing different tourism sub-sectors (e.g., culture and heritage, 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 development, specifically in relation to the involvement and interests of the private sector.
2. Destination Marketing/Management Organizations (DMOs): The marketing and promotional (and, in some cases, destination development) efforts of community DMOs are relevant to the DDP process as these efforts are typically focused on the supply-side of a community's tourism industry (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, management of industrial impacts, commercial property tax frameworks, regulation of the sharing economy, etc.).



4

# SUCCESS NETWORK

NISGA'A HOT SPRINGS  
Photo: Grant Harder

Success networks represent the businesses and organizations (private sector, government and not-for-profit) who are encouraged to collaborate to bring the opportunities to fruition. Successful destination development implementation requires that key partners play a role.

The recommended actions contained within this Destination Development Strategy form the foundation for additional discussions regarding implementation locally, regionally, and provincially. Organizations identified within each tactical success network will be in a position to review the potential for growing tourism, by leading or supporting implementation. This does not imply that the organizations have committed to 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 BC's visitor economy.

The stakeholders demonstrated a desire to work together throughout the community consultations. The complexity of tourism opportunities in Northwestern BC is understood.

Many tourism partners have already articulated their desire to work cooperatively on destination development initiatives. It is believed that by working collaboratively 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Canada</li> <li>• Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada</li> <li>• Western Economic Diversification</li> <li>• Parks Canada</li> <li>• Department of Ocean and Fisheries</li> <li>• VIA Rail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous Communities (38)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination BC (DBC)</li> <li>• Indigenous tourism Association of BC</li> <li>• Ministries/ Agencies:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tourism, Arts &amp; Culture</li> <li>- Transportation &amp; Infrastructure</li> <li>- Forests, Lands &amp; Natural Resource Operations, incl. Rec Sites and Trails</li> <li>- Indigenous Relations &amp; Reconciliation</li> <li>- Environment and Climate Change Strategy, BC Parks</li> <li>- Agriculture</li> <li>- Municipal Affairs &amp; Housing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Airports</li> <li>• Regional Districts (4)</li> <li>• Stikine Region*</li> <li>• Regional Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>• Economic Development Organizations</li> <li>• Funding Organizations &amp; Trusts</li> <li>• Regional DMOs</li> <li>• Post-Secondary Educational Institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Governments (19)</li> <li>• Atlin Community Improvement District</li> <li>• Community DMOs</li> <li>• Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>• Visitor Centres</li> <li>• Tourism Operators</li> <li>• Arts, Culture, Heritage Organizations</li> <li>• Clubs/Volunteer Groups</li> <li>• Residents</li> <li>• Port Authorities</li> <li>• Airports</li> </ul>

\*The Stikine Region is the only area in BC that is not incorporated under a regional district or municipality. Within the Stikine Region, the one local authority is the Atlin Community Improvement District which provides basic services including drainage, fire protection, sidewalks, solid waste disposal, street lighting and waterworks to the residents of Atlin. The improvement district also has a planning advisory role with authority to represent the community's interests in communications with provincial agencies on land use matters.

This strategy is intended to inform actions for the future, which over time may be embedded in local, regional, and provincial decision making. The result will be an integrated system of priorities that will lead to 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 involved parties would need to be verified. In many instances, executing an initiative may require sharing responsibilities and entities listed will be responsible to lead their own areas.

The regional representative (Northern BC Tourism Association) has an important role to play as the regional destination development champion. 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.

FIGURE 7: Key Government and Management Organization Roles





5

# A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION

PRINCE RUPERT  
Photo: Andrew Strain

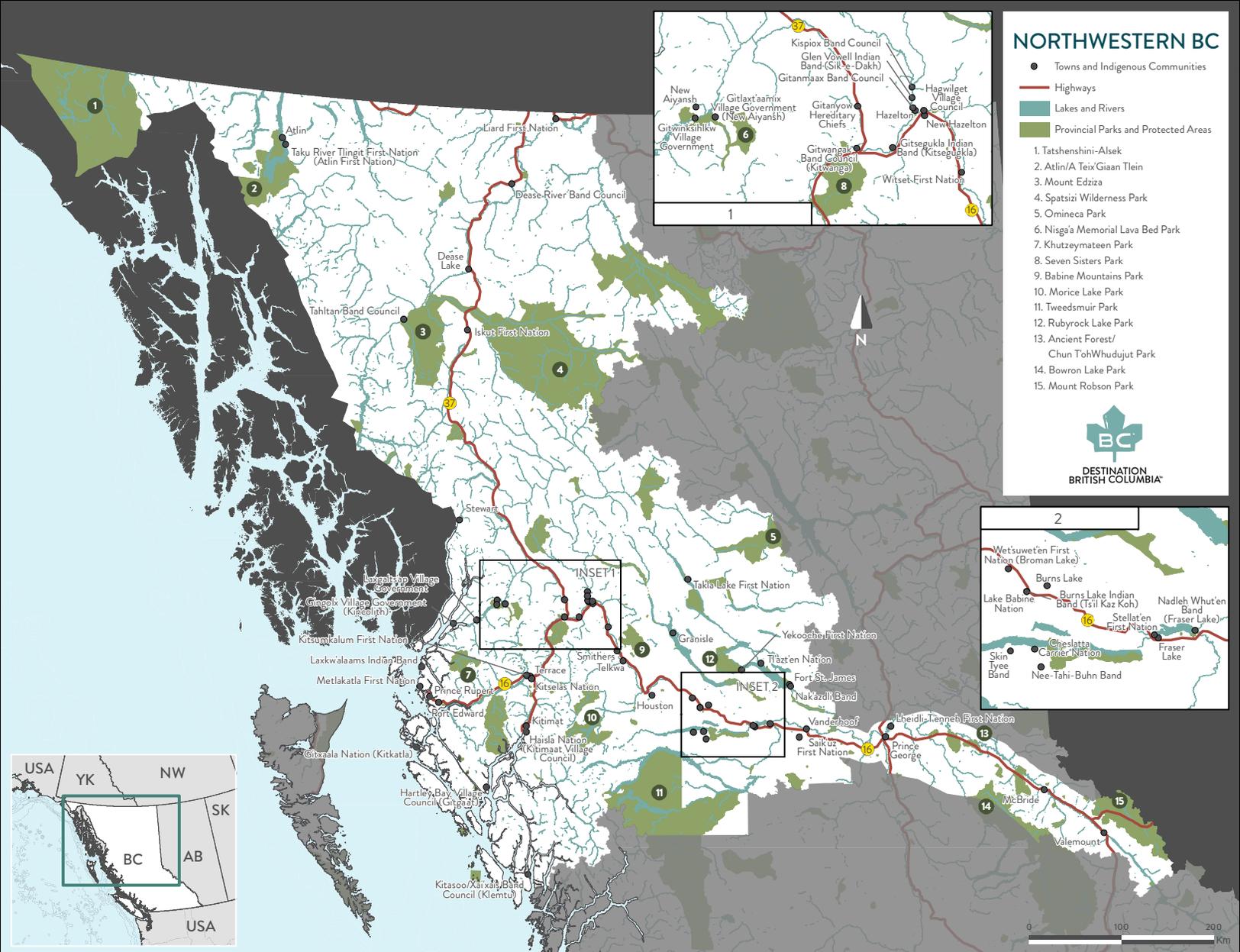
## A. LOCATION AND ACCESS

### OVERVIEW OF NORTHEASTERN BC

While the planning area is labelled “Northwestern BC”, it also encompasses the east-west travel corridor, Highway 16 (or the Yellowhead Highway) which extends from the Alberta border to the Pacific Ocean. The planning area also encompasses the north-south travel corridor, Highway 37 (or the Stewart-Cassiar Highway). Given the location of Prince George on Highway 16 and Highway 97, it is included in both the Northeastern BC and Northwestern BC planning areas.

The Northwestern BC planning area spans:

- From Mount Robson and Valemount in the east
- To Prince Rupert and Stewart in the west
- From southern points:
  - North Tweedsmuir Park, Kitlope Heritage Conservancy
  - Prince George, McBride and Valemount
- To northern points/borders:
  - Dease Lake, Telegraph Creek
  - Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Wilderness Park



Access to Northwestern BC can be by highway, rail (VIA Rail), air, ferry or cruise ship, depending on your point of entry. The two main highways are Highway 16 (east-west) and Highway 37 (north-south).

- Also known as the Yellowhead Highway, Highway 16 traverses east-west through the planning area. Its eastern point in BC is located at Yellowhead Pass at the Alberta border and its western point on the BC mainland is Prince Rupert. The highway carries on west to Haida Gwaii, outside the planning area. The mainland segment of Highway 16 in BC is 1,173 kilometres in length.
- Highway 37 travels north-south within the planning area, from Kitimat in the south to the Yukon in the north, where it carries on as Yukon Highway 37 to the junction of the Alaska Highway. The total length of Highway 37 is 874 kilometres.



Four communities have airports that currently offer scheduled passenger service: Prince George, Smithers, Terrace and Prince Rupert.

BC Ferries' route 10 offers service from Port Hardy on Vancouver Island with stops at several communities on the way to Prince Rupert. BC Ferries' route 11 offers service between Prince Rupert and Skidegate on Haida Gwaii.

The Port of Prince Rupert serves as a port of call for cruise ships sailing to/from Alaska and Vancouver or Seattle.

Given the size of the planning area and distances to key markets, travel to/from Northwestern BC is viewed as a considerable challenge to tourism growth. The exception is access to Prince George, which is closer to southern BC and offers a relatively large, well-serviced airport.

## B. POPULATION BASE

The planning area encompasses the following Indigenous communities, regional jurisdictions and communities. The total population for the planning area is estimated to be just over 172,000.

### INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

There are 38 Indigenous communities in the planning area (listed below in alphabetical order). The total registered population of these communities is 13,172 (2019), which is approximately 7.7% of the planning area's total

population. The total registered population including both those living in the communities and outside the communities is 43,380 (2019). This represents approximately 25.2% of the planning area's total population.

COMMUNITY	REGISTERED POPULATION (2019)		COMMUNITY	REGISTERED POPULATION (2019)	
	IN COMMUNITY	TOTAL		IN COMMUNITY	TOTAL
Cheslatta Carrier Nation	142	363	Lax Kw'alaams	650	3,905
Dease River (Good Hope Lake)	36	183	Laxgalts'ap (one of four Nisga'a villages)	596	1,826
Gingolx (one of four Nisga'a villages)	409	2,020	Lheidli T'enneh	98	451
Gitanmaax	693	2,441	Liard (located in BC and YT)	144	1,209
Gitanyow	367	871	Metlakatla	90	985
Gitga'at	142	774	Nadleh Whut'en	254	562
Gitlaxt'aamiks (New Aiyansh) (capital of the Nisga'a Nation)	877	1,869	Nak'azdli Whut'en	705	1,978
Gitsegukla	402	1,010	Nee Tahi Buhn	39	152
Gitwangak	403	1,364	Saik'uz First Nation	331	963
Gitwinksihlkw (one of four Nisga'a villages)	178	392	Skin Tyee	54	186
Gitxaala	429	2,008	Stellat'en First Nations	212	569
Glen Vowell	188	428	Tahltan	294	1,958
Hagwilget	199	792	Takla First Nation	207	829
Haisla	728	1,940	Taku River Tlingit	71	415
Iskut Band	321	784	Tl'azt'en Nation	538	1,794
Kispiox	585	1,685	Ts'il Kaz Koh (Burns Lake Indian Band)	45	128
Kitselas	307	683	Wet'suwet'en	84	256
Kitsumkalum	246	770	Witset	660	2,055
Lake Babine	1,350	2,546	Yekooche	98	236

Source: Population figures sourced from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada <http://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx>.

## REGIONAL JURISDICTIONS

The following regional districts and communities are in the planning area. Note that only the southern portion of the Fraser Fort George Regional District is within the planning area boundaries (Prince George, McBride, and Valemount). The population of the following communities is estimated to be 128,926 (2016).

- Fraser Fort George Regional District (southern portion)
- Bulkley-Nechako Regional District
- Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine
- North Coast Regional District
- Stikine Region (unincorporated)

### Communities and Corresponding Populations in the Planning Area:

REGIONAL DISTRICT/REGION/COMMUNITY	POPULATION (2016)	REGIONAL DISTRICT/REGION/COMMUNITY	POPULATION (2016)
<b>BULKLEY NECHAKO REGIONAL DISTRICT</b>		<b>KITIMAT STIKINE REGIONAL DISTRICT</b>	
Burns Lake	1,779	Dease Lake	303
Houston	2,993	Hazelton	313
Granisle	303	Kitimat	8,131
Smithers	5,401	New Hazelton	580
Fort St. James	1,598	Stewart	401
Fraser Lake	988	Terrace	11,643
Telkwa	1,327	<b>NORTH COAST REGIONAL DISTRICT**</b>	
Vanderhoof	4,439	Prince Rupert	12,220
<b>FRASER FORT GEORGE REGIONAL DISTRICT*</b>		Port Edward	467
McBride	616	<b>STIKINE REGION***</b>	
Prince George	74,003	Atlin Community Improvement District	400
Valemount	1,021		

\*Only the southern portion of the Fraser Fort George Regional District is included in the planning area.

\*\*Masset, Port Clements and Queen Charlotte (located in Haida Gwaii) are also located in the North Coast Regional District; however, Haida Gwaii is a separate Planning Area.

\*\*\*The Stikine Region in the uppermost corner of northwestern BC is an unincorporated area and is the only area in the province that is not in a regional district.

## C. ECONOMIC BASE

Forestry, mining, agriculture, small business, independent operators (contractors) and transportation related to the operations of the Port of Prince Rupert are the primary historical economic drivers in Northwestern BC. Tourism is also an important economic

driver, providing opportunities for growth and diversification. The presence of many small businesses and independent operators presents opportunities in terms of capacity, but challenges in terms of coordination and communication related to economic development.

## D. DESTINATION OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

Geographically, Northwestern BC is the largest of the 20 Destination BC planning areas. The planning area is very diverse with coastal areas, mountains, significant headwaters, glaciers, rivers, lakes, hot springs and valleys. Northwestern BC's outstanding cultural and natural assets support (or could support) a range of adventure, eco-tourism, cultural and Indigenous tourism experiences. The area has a wealth of provincial parks and protected areas. With regard to existing tourism, there are several key themes within the planning area, as highlighted below.

Source: Northeastern BC Visitor Centre Statistics, Destination BC



## TRAVEL CORRIDORS

Touring is a long-standing experience available in Northwestern BC. The primary touring routes are BC Ferries Route 10 (Port Hardy to/from Prince Rupert), Highway 16 (also known as the Yellowhead Highway), and Highway 37 (also known as the Stewart-Cassiar Highway). Currently, there are efforts to create additional circle tours and travel routes in the area, including the Nisga'a Lisims Government's Circle Tour Project which proposes several circle tours that will be tested later in 2019. Another important initiative is the current collaborative effort of several local governments and tourism industry representatives to re-brand Highway 16 which presents opportunities to further develop touring experiences related to this corridor.

## SIGNIFICANT PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS

There is a wealth of parks and protected areas in Northwestern BC, which can serve as attractions unto themselves. These parks draw visitors for a range of outdoor activities and serve as operating areas for guided activities (under Park Use Permit). There are several provincial parks and protected areas that have garnered widespread attention including, but not limited to: Khutzeymateen Park, the Great Bear Rainforest (the largest coastal

temperate rainforest in the world), Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park, Kitlope Heritage Conservancy, North Tweedsmuir Park, the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Park (located in the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh, the Park protects a portion of the only inland temperate rainforest in the world), Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park, Mt. Edziza Park, Mount Robson Provincial Park, Atlin Park and Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Wilderness Park (which is part of the Kluane-Wrangell-St. Elias-Glacier Bay-Tatshenshini-Alsek park system, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994).

## INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Northwestern BC has a significant number of Indigenous communities. The 38 Indigenous communities in the planning area are diverse in terms of their cultural traditions and ways of life. While several of these communities currently offer rich tourism experiences, there is untapped potential to further develop authentic, Indigenous tourism experiences in Northwestern BC by those communities that wish to pursue these opportunities. Complementing this potential is growing demand amongst many markets for authentic Indigenous tourism offerings.

<sup>1</sup>Population statistics (2016) are sourced from Statistics Canada, with the exception of Atlin. As Atlin is an unincorporated community, Statistics Canada does not have Census data for it. Atlin's population was sourced from: [www.hellobc.com/atlin.aspx](http://www.hellobc.com/atlin.aspx).



## COMMUNITIES

There are many unique communities throughout Northwestern BC.

Examples include:

- The coastal city of Prince Rupert — with its cafes, shops, and coastal accommodations
- Terrace — a transportation hub and gateway to fishing
- Kitimat — providing access to fishing on the Kitimat River
- Smithers — with its Alpine-themed architecture and surrounding outdoor activities
- Houston — offering outstanding steelhead fishing and outdoor adventures
- Burns Lake — an emerging mountain biking destination located in the heart of the Lakes District
- Fort Fraser — one of BC's oldest European-founded settlements
- Vanderhoof — home of the Nechako White Sturgeon
- Prince George — the largest city in northern BC, which serves as a major transportation hub and base for many surrounding outdoor activities
- McBride — serving as the “Gateway to the Ancient Forest/Chun T’oh Whudujut Park” and as a base for adventures in the Robson Valley, McBride also offers a new mountain biking park
- Valemount — with its outstanding mountain views and mountain biking park
- Fort St. James — Canada’s oldest fur trading post and home to Fort St. James National Historic Site
- Port Edward — home of the North Pacific Cannery National Historic Site

- The Hazeltons — located at the confluence of the Skeena and Bulkley Rivers
- Stewart — known for its hanging glaciers (over 20 in the area), bear viewing and its proximity to Hyder, Alaska
- Dease Lake — a former Hudson’s Bay trading post and currently the service centre for Highway 37 communities and for people visiting Mount Edziza Park, Spatzizi Plateau Wilderness Park and Spatzizi Headwaters Park
- Telegraph Creek — located off Highway 37 in Northern BC at the confluence of the Stikine River and Telegraph Creek
- Atlin — the province’s most northwesterly community that emerged during BC’s last gold rush in 1898

## COASTAL ACTIVITIES

THE COASTAL AREAS OF NORTHWESTERN BC PROVIDE OUTSTANDING SCENERY AND SETTINGS FOR A RANGE OF MARINE ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING FISHING, BOATING, NON-MECHANIZED MARINE RECREATION, COASTAL WILDLIFE VIEWING, CRUISE SHIPS AND COASTAL HIKING.



## UNIQUE TRAILS

Trails are featured throughout the planning area, consisting of:

- Traditional Indigenous trails
- Coastal trails
- Mountain biking parks and trails (some currently under construction)
- Backcountry horse trails
- Hiking trails
- Historic trails

## OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

The planning area's natural assets support a wide range of outdoor activities such as those noted below.

SPRING/SUMMER/FALL	WINTER
Fishing	Downhill skiing
Wildlife viewing	Backcountry skiing
Hiking	Cross country skiing
Mountaineering	Nordic skiing
Foraging	Snowshoeing
Camping	Heli-skiing
Boating (all types)	Cat-skiing
Mountain biking	Ice fishing
Hunting	Snowmobiling
River rafting	Hunting
Flight seeing	Dog sledding
Gold panning	
Horseback riding	



The most critical challenges for the planning area regarding destination development are:

- Its size and resulting challenges related to coordination between communities, which impact tourism and destination development and cooperative, coordinated marketing
- Its distance from key markets, which makes travel to the destination costly and inconvenient
- The need for more guided and packaged tourism experiences
- The need to coordinate activities and build capacity, using local knowledge, to develop unique experiences, such as wilderness tripping
- Declining populations of fish and wildlife
- Lack of awareness in many key markets about the tourism assets and experiences available in Northwestern BC
- Attracting and retaining sufficiently skilled workers
- Climate change and associated threats to the natural environment
- Industrial development

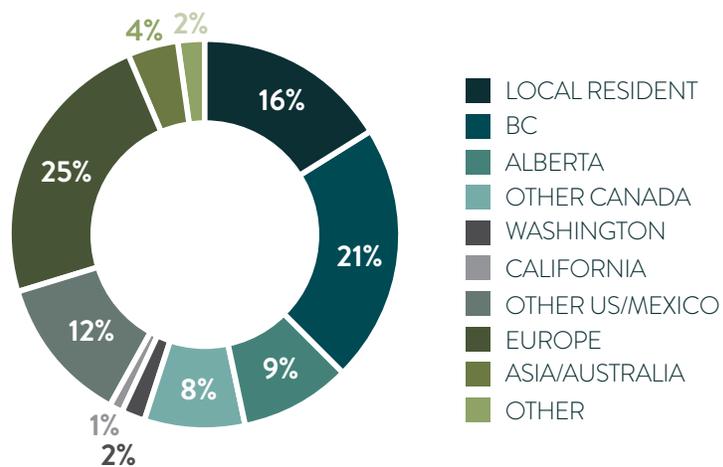


## E. KEY MARKETS AND PRODUCTS

The percentage breakdown for visitors to Northwestern BC visitor centres is shown below, using 2016 as a representative year. The BC market, broken down by local residents and other BC residents, comprises 37% of the total. Other key markets include: Europe (25%), Washington (16%), other US/ Mexico (12%), Alberta (9%), and other Canada (8%).

FIGURE 8: Monthly Visitation to Northwestern BC Visitor Centres

**NORTHWESTERN BC  
VISITOR CENTRE  
MARKET ORIGIN  
2016**



Source: Northwestern BC Visitor Centre Statistics, Destination BC

The following table 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: Northwestern 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	X	X	X	P	P	P	P	
HUNTING	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
FISHING	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
MOTORCYCLING TOURING	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	P	P	
BOATING – FRESHWATER	X	X	X	X				• May include: canoeing, paddle boarding, kayaking, power boating • Restricted somewhat because cannot double- trailer in BC • The lack of available rental boats in the central interior is also a constraint
BOATING – COASTAL	X	X	X	X		X	P	• May include: canoeing, paddle boarding, kayaking, power boating, sailing • Restricted somewhat because cannot double-trailer in BC

PRODUCTS/ EXPERIENCES	LOCAL/ REGIONAL	LOWER MAIN- LAND	REST OF BC	AB	OTHER CANADA	US	OTHER INTER- NATIONAL	COMMENTS
ATVING	X		P	X	P			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes combined with hunting</li> <li>• Restricted in parts of Muskwa-Kechika</li> <li>• Restricted in some BC Parks</li> <li>• Need services and amenities</li> <li>• Need to avoid impacts on environment and non-motorized activities</li> </ul>
WILDLIFE VIEWING/ ECOTOURS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
DESTINATION FESTIVALS, ARTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE, MUSEUMS	X	X	X	X	P			
INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCES	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market readiness varies throughout planning area</li> <li>• New experiences currently under development</li> </ul>
CABIN/LODGE EXPERIENCE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market readiness varies throughout planning area</li> </ul>
CAMPING	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rental equipment needed</li> </ul>
CONFERENCES/ CONVENTIONS	X	X	X	P	X (PG)			
CULINARY/ AGRITOURISM	P	P	P	P			P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need regulatory revisions to allow serving of local game/produce</li> </ul>
SNOWMOBILING	X	X	X	X	P	P		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zoning/trail designation needed</li> <li>• Club support important to develop and maintain trails</li> <li>• Need to avoid impacts on environment and non-motorized activities</li> </ul>
HELI-SKIING	X	X				X	X	
FLIGHT SEEING AND HELI TOURS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
DOWNHILL SKIING	X	X	X	X	P	P	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The potential development of Valemount presents opportunities attract more international markets</li> </ul>

PRODUCTS/ EXPERIENCES	LOCAL/ REGIONAL	LOWER MAIN- LAND	REST OF BC	AB	OTHER CANADA	US	OTHER INTER- NATIONAL	COMMENTS
<b>OTHER WINTER EXPERIENCES</b>	X	P	P	X		P	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May include: snowshoeing, Nordic skiing, cross-country skiing, dog sledding, snowmobiling, ice fishing,</li> <li>• Zoning/trail designation needed</li> <li>• Club support is important to develop and maintain trails</li> </ul>
<b>ENTERTAINMENT/ EVENTS</b>	X	X	X	X				
<b>ROCK &amp; ICE CLIMBING</b>	X	P	P	P	P			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The potential development of Valemount presents opportunity to build awareness about opportunities in NWBC</li> </ul>
<b>RIVER RAFTING</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Tatshenshini River attracts international visitors, through established rafting companies</li> <li>• There are also existing and emerging opportunities for river rafting in other areas, such as the Bulkley River, Kispiox River and the Spatsizi River</li> </ul>

## 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 industry. To build on these strengths and address these challenges, the area's tourism partners have identified key opportunities that formed the foundation of the Destination Development Strategy. These key strengths, challenges and opportunities are summarized below. A more extensive list is provided in Appendix 3.

Figure 10: Key Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

KEY STRENGTHS	KEY CHALLENGES	KEY OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water features: headwaters, rivers, lakes, coastal areas, glaciers, hot springs</li> <li>• Diverse landscapes and natural features</li> <li>• Wealth of parks and protected areas</li> <li>• Diversity of Indigenous communities and cultures</li> <li>• Resilient and unique communities and populations</li> <li>• Unique/iconic areas and features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declining wildlife and fisheries resources (some species)</li> <li>• Transportation barriers to, from and within NWBC</li> <li>• Communities/operators in more remote locations lack convenient access to programs</li> <li>• Low awareness about region and experiences</li> <li>• Lack of sufficient roadside services and facilities</li> <li>• Need for more market-ready and export-ready experiences</li> <li>• High cost of operations in remote areas</li> <li>• Difficulties attracting and retaining staff</li> <li>• Operators lack time and resources to contribute substantively to industry initiatives</li> <li>• Industrial development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop thematic touring and circle routes</li> <li>• Build experiences around iconic attractions/areas</li> <li>• Clarify identity of Northwestern BC</li> <li>• Develop and deliver authentic Indigenous experiences</li> <li>• Develop and deliver market and export-ready experiences</li> <li>• Further develop ecotourism and adventure tourism</li> <li>• Enhance industry and government collaboration and communication to support destination development</li> </ul>



## G. EXPERIENCE POTENTIAL

The key experience themes for Northwestern BC are highlighted below. Note that, while these currently exist to some degree, there is significant potential to build on these opportunities through the 10-Year Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy.

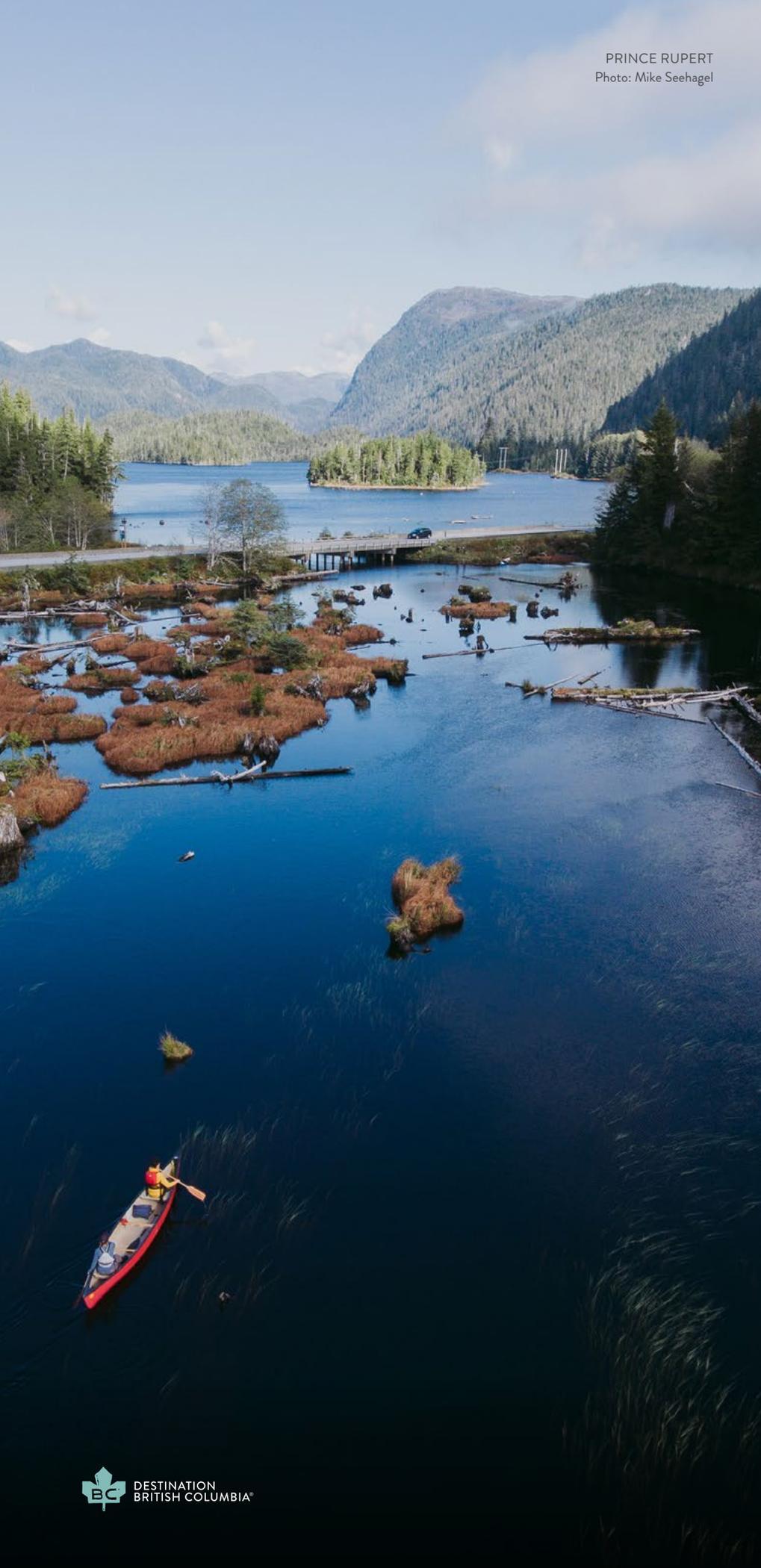
### **SUPERB OUTDOOR ADVENTURE AND ECO-TOURISM BASED ON WILDERNESS, DIVERSE OUTDOOR SETTINGS AND WORLD-RENOWNED PARKS OF NORTHWESTERN BC.**

Northwestern BC features ocean and coastline, rivers, lakes, glaciers, hot springs, mountains, valleys and forested areas. It has a large number of designated provincial parks and protected areas, some of which are garnering international attention (the Great Bear Rainforest, the Khutzeymateen Park, Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park, Mount Edziza, Spatsizi Wilderness Park, to name a few). Wild and and untouched or lightly-touched areas are becoming increasingly rare worldwide, which reinforces what is special about Northwestern BC. Looking out 10 years and beyond, there is tremendous potential to further develop outdoor adventure and eco-tourism experiences in these wild outdoor settings, while, at the same time, maintaining their integrity.

**SPORTFISHING** Northwestern BC has long been known for its sport fisheries, both salt and freshwater. The wide

variety of pristine and scenic lakes, rivers, alpine, meadows, trails and old industry roads make the area a prime destination for angling. Freshwater angling guides, and lodges in the area, provide visitors with opportunities to catch Steelhead fish, as well as Chinook and Coho salmon and other species. Even today, when fisheries and fish habitat face pressures throughout many areas of BC, including the Skeena watershed, the area is still considered one of the best fishing destinations in the province.

**OUTSTANDING THEMATIC TOURING/ CIRCLE ROUTES** that are enriched by diverse landscapes, natural features, wildlife, heritage and cultural experiences, outdoor adventure experiences and Indigenous culture. While this unique selling proposition is anchored by Highway 16 and Highway 37, there are many additional routes with tremendous thematic potential that can help further develop Northwestern BC into a top touring destination in North America, particularly when combined with existing and potential touring opportunities in neighbouring Northeastern BC.



**RICH INDIGENOUS CULTURE** is a key attribute of Northwestern BC. With 38 Indigenous communities, and a growing number of them embracing the development of authentic tourism experiences, Indigenous tourism has the potential to grow considerably. Coupled with growing demand for these experiences in markets worldwide, this presents a considerable opportunity for Northwestern BC.

**CULTURAL AND HERITAGE TOURISM** Northwestern BC has rich and diverse cultural and heritage assets. There is a growing interest to develop cultural and heritage tourism as a way to help travellers better understand the people, place and cultural identity and diversity of an area. The development of cultural or thematic routes, attractions, museum programs, guided tours, or an individual business can link the Indigenous, Euro-Canadian history, rural and natural environments, food or agricultural offerings. While stimulating community pride and relationships, cultural and heritage tourism can also serve as a platform on which to tell the story of shared history. Ultimately, an expanded variety of experiences offer visitors more things to do; thus, increasing length of stay and driving associated economic benefits to businesses and the community. With appropriate planning and collaboration, there are many opportunities to build experiences around the culture and heritage of the Northern BC Tourism Region.



6

# A DISTINCTIVE DIRECTION

KHUTZEYMATEEN  
Photo: Andrew Strain

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

- Paints a picture of what “success” looks like
- Is set out over a long period of time
- Is sufficiently challenging to motivate, inspire and influence tourism partners, but, at the same time, is achievable

The Working Committee, with input from other tourism partners, developed the following 10-year destination vision for Northwestern BC.

## DESTINATION VISION

Northwestern BC is a four-season destination that inspires discovery, where wild, diverse landscapes connect vibrant communities full of enthusiastic and welcoming hosts.

Here you are invited to explore vibrant Indigenous cultures, rich history, abundant wildlife, wilderness experiences and adventures for all abilities.



## B. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles guided the development of the Destination Development Strategy. These principles should also guide decision-making during the implementation phase. Priority actions must:

- Support and enhance existing community values and aspirations
- Build on core attributes that make the destination distinctive
- Recognize the concept of sustainability as an underlying core value
- Align with provincial strategic priorities that relate to tourism
- Promote collaboration and inclusivity as the basis of making progress
- Celebrate and respect the role of First Nations in shaping Northwestern BC's economic, environmental and cultural assets

## C. GOALS

There are three levels of goals that will be included in the Destination Development Strategy:

- BC destination development program goals that are applicable to all the planning areas in BC
- Northwestern BC — overarching goals
- Northwestern BC — destination development goals

### BC DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM GOALS

- Make British Columbia the most highly recommended destination in North America
- 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

### NORTHWESTERN BC OVERARCHING GOALS

The overarching goals are listed below. Progress implementing the development goals, objectives and actions noted on the subsequent pages will help achieve these overarching goals. The right-hand column below lists two of the Northern BC Tourism Association Strategic Priority Goals. These two goals are complementary to two of the overarching goals.

## NORTHWESTERN BC OVERARCHING GOALS

## COMPLEMENTARY GOALS FROM THE NBCTA STRATEGIC PRIORITIES DOCUMENT

Increase the net promoter score year-over-year

Increase the overall value of tourism over the ten-year implementation period

Increase the overall market readiness of the destination over the ten-year implementation period

Increase the economic contribution the region's available, market-ready tourism product makes to the Northern British Columbia region.

Facilitate an increase in the depth and breadth of market-ready product available within the region.

Note that the above three overarching goals will need to be measured, using baseline data for a given year against which progress can be evaluated over time. Another point to note is that the achievement of the value of tourism goal will depend on a blend of product/experience development and marketing. Marketing is outside the scope of the Destination Development Strategy, but will be addressed separately by DBC, NBCTA and DMOs. Guidance on measuring achievement of these overarching goals is provided in the Monitoring and Measuring Success section of the strategy.

## NORTHWESTERN BC DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT THEMES AND GOALS

The vision and overarching goals are supported by the following six development goals, which the workshop participants helped draft and the Working Committee refined.

THEMES	DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT GOALS
Theme A: Environmental Integrity	The resources upon which tourism depends — natural features, wildlife and fisheries, habitat, water resources, air quality — are well managed over the long-term.
Theme B: Infrastructure, Access and Amenities	Infrastructure, access and amenities are provided and well-maintained to support destination development.
Theme C: Collaboration	Collaboration amongst tourism operators, Indigenous peoples, communities, governments, and destination management/marketing organizations supports destination development and management.
Theme D: Experience Development	Unique, market-ready products/experiences exceed expectations of visitors, while maintaining the environmental and cultural integrity of the destination.
Theme E: Tourism Workforce	A strong, well-trained, motivated tourism workforce is available to deliver high-quality experiences.
Theme F: Government Coordination and Support	Ongoing, strong government coordination and support for tourism development and management exists.

# 7

# STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

PRINCE GEORGE  
Photo: Andrew Strain

The overall structure of the Destination Development Strategy is illustrated below. Each of the six goals has supporting objectives, and each of the 31 objectives has supporting actions. Collectively, these are intended to help achieve the vision.

The goals are interconnected. For example, success in achieving one goal, and its supporting objectives and actions, will support the achievement of other goals. For example, the goal, and supporting objectives and actions, related to infrastructure, access and amenities will contribute to the success of the experience development goal. This interconnectedness flows through most of the goals and objectives.

Destination Vision

Overarching Goals (3)

Development Themes & Goals (6)

Supporting Objectives (33)

Supporting Actions (54)



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

SNAPSHOT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	
Development Goals	Supporting Objectives
<p><b>A. ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY</b></p> <p>The resources upon which tourism depends — natural features, wildlife and fisheries, habitat, water resources, air quality — are well managed over the long-term.</p>	<p>A-1 Improve/sustain the health of wildlife populations</p> <hr/> <p>A-2 Improve/sustain the health of fisheries</p> <hr/> <p>A-3 Maintain and increase the integrity of key areas and natural features that are critical to the tourism industry</p> <hr/> <p>A-4 Encourage the tourism industry to develop and adopt common environmental sustainability practices</p>
<p><b>B. INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESS &amp; AMENITIES</b></p> <p>Infrastructure, access and amenities are provided and well-maintained to support destination development.</p>	<p>B-1 Increase the number of roadside amenities and pull-outs to support existing and potential priority tourism experiences</p> <hr/> <p>B-2 Maintain visitor safety and the ability to respond to emergencies</p> <hr/> <p>B-3 Increase and improve signage along travel routes</p> <hr/> <p>B-4 Build on the wealth of provincial parks to meet the needs and interests of existing and future visitors</p> <hr/> <p>B-5 Continue to improve trails and trail networks to meet the needs and interests of existing and future visitors</p> <hr/> <p>B-6 Provide First Nations interpretive, locational and welcome signage in key locations</p> <hr/> <p>B-7 Increase the presence of facilities, infrastructure and services that support universal design</p> <hr/> <p>B-8 Ensure BC Ferries' scheduling and reservations systems support tourism from an economic sustainability perspective</p> <hr/> <p>B-9 Provide VIA Rail scheduling and services that support tourism growth</p> <hr/> <p>B-10 Encourage the development of travel infrastructure and services that decrease greenhouse gas emissions</p>



## SNAPSHOT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### Development Goals

### Supporting Objectives

#### C. COLLABORATION

Collaboration amongst tourism operators, Indigenous peoples, communities, governments, and destination management/marketing organizations supports destination development and management.

- C-1 Increase communication and collaboration amongst and between tourism partners in Northwestern BC to support the implementation of the Destination Development Strategy
- C-2 Enhance collaboration and meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and operators
- C-3 Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement destination development priorities

#### D. EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

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

- D-1 Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready Indigenous tourism experiences including products for touring visitors and for destination visitors
- D-2 Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready tourism products/ experiences
- D-3 Develop remarkable experiences around the key iconic features
- D-4 Further develop thematic corridors and circle routes as core experiences for Northwestern BC
- D-5 Develop more market-ready winter tourism experiences
- D-6 Continue to develop the mountain biking experience in key locations that possess great terrain for this activity coupled with local interest in developing mountain biking infrastructure and services
- D-7 Continually improve tourism services
- D-8 Ensure Northwestern BC can provide some products/experiences and services that meet the needs of international visitors from both existing and emerging markets
- D-9 Establish designations and associated experiences that build awareness about Northwestern BC
- D-10 Enhance urban tourism, including heritage and cultural experiences
- D-11 Enhance and/or expand the range of coastal boating and cruising experiences in a manner that is respectful of the environment and Indigenous communities



## SNAPSHOT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### Development Goals

### Supporting Objectives

#### E. TOURISM WORKFORCE

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

- E-1 Improve Northwestern BC's ability to attract and retain appropriately-skilled workers and volunteers
- E-2 Help develop a more entrepreneurial culture by providing relevant training and capacity building opportunities

#### F. GOVERNMENT COORDINATION AND SUPPORT

Ongoing, strong government coordination and support for tourism development and management exists.

- F-1 Build better government understanding and support for tourism
- F-2 Enhance local, regional and First Nation government support for destination development
- F-3 Ensure that targeted government policies and land and tenure management support destination development

# 8

# GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

## A. ORIENTATION TO THIS SECTION

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** (see categories below), **SUCCESS NETWORK**, and **GEOGRAPHIC RELEVANCE** (e.g., relevant specifically to Northwestern BC, relevant to the entire Northern BC region, and/or relevant to the province).
- The Working Committee provided input regarding assigning priorities and the success network for each action.

FIGURE 11:  
Priority Setting  
Framework

## PRIORITIZATION

The Northwestern BC Destination Development Working Committee used the following framework to determine the prioritization of each action.

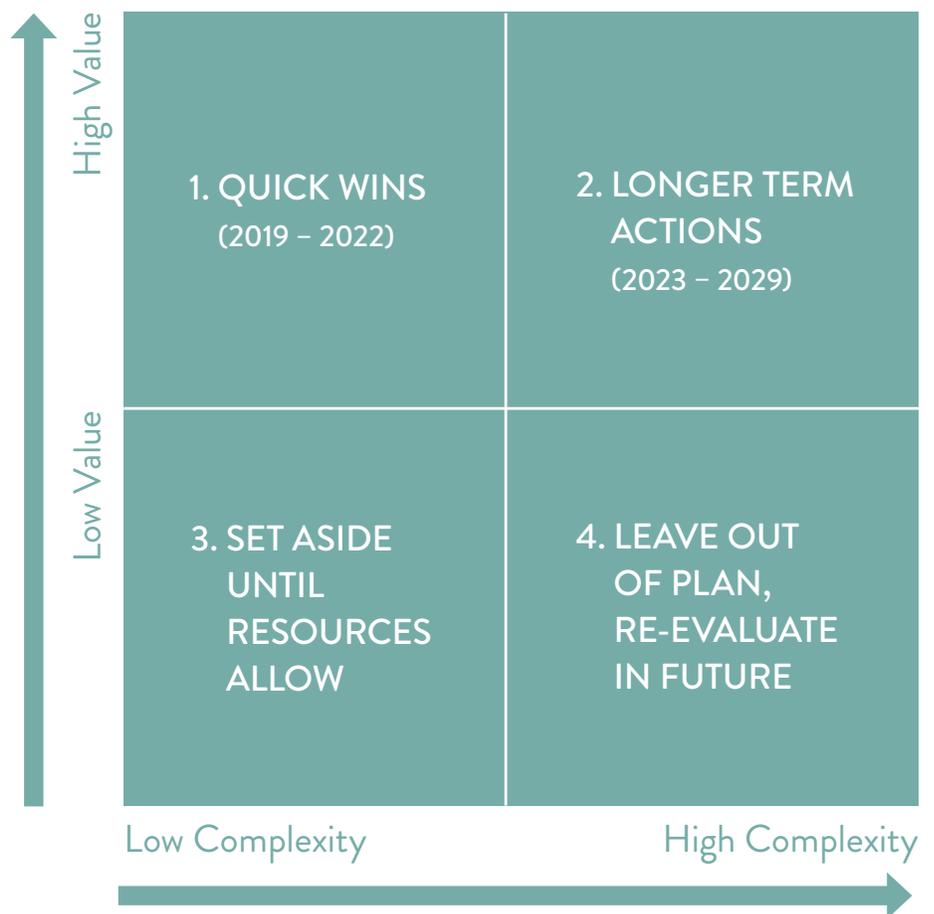
**1. QUICK WINS** actions that are of high value and low complexity that can be achieved within three years (2019–2022).

**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/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.





## SUCCESS NETWORK<sup>2</sup>

The success network includes those people/organizations that would ideally support the implementation of specific actions. Note that the listing of 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 noted 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.

Also note that “tourism partners” refers to: tourism businesses, operators, associations, and organizations.

<sup>2</sup>Organizations 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.

## PLANNING AREA, REGIONAL, PROVINCIAL RELEVANCE

Under each action, there is a reference to the relevance of the action to the:

- **PLANNING AREA** Relevant primarily to Northwestern BC
- **REGION** Relevant also to the entire Northern BC tourism region
- **PROVINCE** Relevant also to the entire province

If the action is of regional relevance, it will be considered for inclusion in the Northern BC Destination Development Strategy (the Regional Strategy), to be developed in the future.

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

# THEME A: ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY

## DEVELOPMENT GOAL

The resources upon which tourism depends — natural features, wildlife and fisheries, habitat, water resources, air quality — are well managed over the long-term.

Land and resource management is very important and, in the case of Northwestern BC, fish, wildlife and supporting habitat management is critical. Some species are in serious decline. The land and natural environment is critical to the current and future existence of tourism in Northwestern BC. A high-quality natural environment — including land, flora, fauna, fisheries, watersheds, rivers, lakes, glaciers, coastlines, mountains, the land base, water quality, and air quality — is the competitive strength of Northwestern BC. Given the pace of development elsewhere, the natural environment will only become more

valuable over time, but only if it is well-managed. Land, resource and environmental management are critical to the future of the tourism industry in Northwestern BC. Responsible tourism operations that observe progressive environmental sustainability practices are also important to help ensure that the environment and natural resources important to tourism are maintained and/or enhanced. The objectives and actions noted below are intended to achieve the environmental integrity goal noted above.

A. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>A1. Improve/sustain the health of wildlife populations.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> A-1-1</p> <p>Work with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy and Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (Wildlife Management Branch), First Nations and relevant associations to monitor and address complex issues that are impacting wildlife populations. Specific initiatives could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated land and resource management</li> <li>• Partnering with relevant associations to seek solutions to declining fish and wildlife populations</li> <li>• Partnering with First Nations to seek solutions to declining wildlife populations</li> </ul> <p>Working with government agencies and relevant associations to help restore habitat.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> FLNR, ENV, NBCTA, DBC, TAC, BC Parks, IRR, TIABC, Indigenous communities, Nisga’a Nation, local governments, First Nation governments, regional districts, BC Wildlife Federation, Habitat Conservation Foundation, tourism operators, BCGOA, DFO, UBCM, BC Hydro, major project proponents</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>A2. Improve/sustain the health of fisheries</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action A-2-1</p> <p>Work with the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, First Nations and relevant associations to monitor and address complex issues that are impacting fisheries populations.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> FLNR, ENV, DFO, NBCTA, BCFROA, IRR, TIABC, Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC, Indigenous communities, First Nation governments, Nisga’a Nation, local governments, regional districts, Sport Fishery Advisory Board, Sport Fishing Institute of BC, BCFROA, Habitat Conservation Foundation, tourism operators, major project proponents</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>

A. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>A3. Maintain and increase the integrity of key areas and natural features that are critical to the tourism industry.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action A-3-1: Partner with relevant provincial ministries to develop a framework that can guide tourism industry representatives in efforts to maintain and enhance the land and natural features that are important to tourism. This framework should include steps to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify land/areas and features that are potentially at risk of degradation</li> <li>• Identify the potential activities and entities that place land/areas and features at risk</li> <li>• Identify the responsible authorities and processes that may influence the current and future needs of the tourism industry</li> <li>• Use existing, and potentially new, channels to communicate with the responsible entities about the priority concerns (e.g., Regional Destination Management Committee and the BC government’s Regional Interagency Management Committees)</li> </ul> <p>Key considerations in developing this framework may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring and providing input regarding visual quality objectives (VQOs) in key areas</li> <li>• Encouraging tourism operators to participate in fuel management and fire mitigation discussions</li> <li>• Participating in the referral processes in place when a major industrial project and/or a resource development project is proposed</li> <li>• Requesting that the government of BC monitors major project investments and developments to help ensure they are not damaging priority tourism assets</li> </ul> <p>Note that the BC government’s recently-released Strategic Framework for Tourism in British Columbia 2019–2021<sup>3</sup> can serve as a reference document to assist with implementing this action.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> FLNR, ENV, EMPR, TAC, NBCTA, TIABC, Indigenous communities, Nisga’a Nation, local governments, First Nation governments, regional districts, Habitat Conservation Foundation, tourism operators, Regional Destination Management Committee, Regional Interagency Management Committees</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>A4. Encourage the tourism industry to develop and adopt common environmental sustainability practices.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action A-4-1 Develop and communicate a Northern BC tourism code of conduct to support environmental sustainability practices within the tourism industry. This can be led by NBCTA, with input from a cross-section of tourism operators, relevant associations and community representatives. The United Nations World Tourism Organization’s (UNWTO) Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030, Highlights (December 2017) and the BC government’s Strategic Framework for Tourism in British Columbia 2019–2021<sup>4</sup>, in addition to other tools and resources, can assist with developing this code of conduct. Note that this objective and action should link with Objective B-10 and Action B-10-1.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, TAC, TIABC, relevant associations, local governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, DMOs</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

<sup>3</sup>Welcoming Visitors – Benefiting Locals – Working Together: A Strategic Framework for Tourism in British Columbia 2019–2021, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, March 2019

<sup>4</sup>Welcoming Visitors – Benefiting Locals – Working Together: A Strategic Framework for Tourism in British Columbia 2019–2021, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, March 2019

## THEME B: INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESS AND AMENITIES

### DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Infrastructure, access and amenities are provided and well-maintained to support destination development.

**There are several key considerations regarding infrastructure, access and amenities, which are highlighted below.**

- Given the size of the destination and distances to key markets, access to Northwestern BC is viewed as a considerable constraint with regard 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 passenger train and bus service.
- The importance of the touring market to Northwestern BC emphasizes the need to provide well-located and good quality roadside amenities, in addition to effective emergency services, cell services, Wi-Fi and electric vehicle (EV) charging services and stations. Universal access and design are also key considerations. At this time, these facilities and services require improvements to meet visitor requirements.
- Parks and trail networks are an important aspect of infrastructure for a destination. Northwestern BC has a wealth of parks, protected areas, trail networks and recreation sites 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/closing dates for park services and amenities
  - Coordination of trail investments and upgrades between local clubs, Recreation Sites and Trails, BC Parks, First Nations, regional districts and municipalities
- Extreme weather events and weather-related disasters are occurring more frequently. These occurrences can have significant impacts on tourism. For example, the safety, both perceived and real, of a destination can impact tourism negatively. The impact of these incidents and how they are portrayed in the media, can impact visitors' decisions regarding whether they travel to the area. These incidents are magnifying the need for:
  - Alternative travel and evacuation routes
  - Reliable communications infrastructure
  - Reliable emergency services
  - Emergency preparedness plans and training
  - Accurate communication regarding conditions so that visitors and others can make informed decisions about where and when it is safe to travel

The following objectives and supporting actions are intended to address the concerns and needs noted above.

B. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>B1. Increase the number of roadside amenities and pull-outs to support existing and potential priority tourism experiences.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-1-1: Based on existing routes and potential new routes/themed circle tours, work with TRAN to identify priority needs related to new, strategically placed pull-outs (including washrooms, baby change tables, picnic amenities, signage, accessibility), develop and implement a plan to provide and maintain essential amenities, facilities and services. Also, identify needs related to enhancing existing pull-outs. Stage implementation over several years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review existing research.</li> <li>• Conduct additional gap analysis research.</li> <li>• Conduct research on best practices for providing these facilities and services, including low-cost “green” washrooms.</li> <li>• Review ways to coordinate this with the Highway 16/97/5 Electric Vehicle (EV) Network Feasibility Study.</li> <li>• Review ways to coordinate this action with Spinal Cord Injury BC’s Access North initiative.</li> <li>• Based on the above research, identify priority needs.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, local governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, regional districts, FLNR, DMOs, SCIBC, Community Energy Association (EV Networks), TRAN, BC Parks, Visitor Network</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>B2. Maintain visitor safety and the ability to respond to emergencies.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-2-1: Work with provincial government ministries to conduct a scan profiling the current situation with regard to provision of emergency services at key locations in Northwestern BC. Once this is completed, and priority deficiencies and risks are identified, work with the myriad of relevant agencies and authorities to improve the provision of emergency services on the highways. 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 with regard to this action include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 911 agencies</li> <li>• RCMP</li> <li>• FLNR (regarding safe use of logging roads)</li> <li>• Municipal fire departments</li> <li>• Dispatch centres for different agencies (e.g., RCMP, BC Ambulance Service, Fire Rescue, BCEHS air ambulance)</li> <li>• Various dispatch protocols</li> <li>• Regional districts and municipal governments</li> <li>• Visitor centres</li> <li>• Capacity of emergency service providers</li> <li>• Distance from trauma care</li> <li>• The role of visitor centres</li> <li>• The opportunity to make helicopters available in areas of higher risk</li> <li>• Communication with visitors regarding availability of Wi-Fi and cellular services (see B-2-2)</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Regional districts, local governments, FLNR, TIABC, First Nation governments, Nisga’a Nation, Indigenous communities, health authorities, BC Aboriginal Network on Disabilities, Visitor centres, NBCTA, TRAN, BC Parks, EMBC, RCMP, cell phone utility providers</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>

B. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-2-2:</p> <p>Work with the federal government, the government of BC, other authorities and the private sector to provide reliable Wi-Fi and cell service in Northwestern BC. This should include identifying priority areas for cellular network expansion/enhancement. Provide better communication (through signage and visitor centres) regarding where Wi-Fi and cell services are available and not available. Community Mapping Network BC may also be able to assist with mapping areas where Wi-Fi and cell service is/is not available.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Local governments, regional districts, NBCTA, TIABC, Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, TAC, TRAN, regional districts, UBCM, Community Mapping Network BC</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-2-3:</p> <p>Identify and plan for alternative travel routes in key locations to support emergency preparedness.</p> <p>This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current or historical logging roads</li> <li>• Backcountry roads</li> <li>• Marine routes</li> </ul> <p>Note that, depending on the alternative routes, this may serve the dual purpose of providing interesting side trips and/or circle routes for touring visitors. For example, rationale for investing in the upgrading of the Cranberry Connector would provide an alternative access route in the event of an emergency, while also providing an interesting touring experience.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> TRAN, FLNR, NBCTA, TIABC, regional districts, local governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, EMBC, special interest groups (e.g., related to forest fire prevention, management and recovery)</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-2-4</p> <p>Work with the tourism industry and other partners to support training, communication protocols, and other activities to achieve more proactive emergency preparedness and related crisis management.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, EMBC, TIABC, local governments, regional districts, Indigenous communities, First Nation governments, tourism associations, tourism operators, visitor centres, DMOs</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>B3. Increase and improve signage along travel routes throughout the planning area.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-3-1:</p> <p>Work with TRAN to improve existing signage and develop new signage for thematic corridors and circle routes (this needs to tie in with the Product/Experience Development objective related to thematic corridors). BC Ferries' Route 10 and 11 need to be factored into this planning, as these routes are key to the touring visitor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire a consultant to conduct research and prepare a business case. This should include consultation with key industry members.</li> <li>• Given the cost of signage programs, this needs to be strategically phased, starting with higher-profile routes such as Highway 16 and Highway 37.</li> <li>• In addition to development costs, annual maintenance costs need to be identified.</li> <li>• This action should also consider signage that links to the Yukon regarding messaging about BC highways (directional signage as well as signage that provides key information regarding highway conditions).</li> </ul> <p>Signage is a key element of the visitor experience, both from a functional (direction, way-finding, interpretive information) and an aesthetic perspective. Accurate information, a common look and a common identity is important to a signage program. It will be important for NBCTA and DMOs to provide input from a tourism perspective regarding the design and overall "look" of new signage, to complement the work of TRAN.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, DBC, TRAN, BC Parks, local governments, regional districts, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>

B. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>B4. Build on the wealth of provincial parks to meet the needs and interests of visitors.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-4-1: BC Parks reviews research regarding visitor needs related to BC parks, and makes enhancements to park infrastructure using their ongoing capital program. This action emphasizes the importance of continuing to work with BC Parks and private sector operators to communicate visitor preferences for certain parking/camping site configurations and facilities to meet the needs of visitors, looking out 10 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct research to understand trends in this area. Parks Canada has completed a study related to RV camping needs, which could be referred to when implementing this action.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to attract private sector investment in these facilities both inside and outside BC Parks.</li> <li>• Consider extending the operating season of selected parks, if visitor demand during the shoulder season is high and if resources allow.</li> <li>• Within the context of the mandate of BC Parks, consider the economic benefits to communities and First Nations created by the recreation services and opportunities, and park enhancements.</li> </ul> <p>BC Parks also reviews needs related to accessibility, which is very important.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> BC Parks, NBCTA, local governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, visitor centres, DMOs, tourism operators, Spinal Cord Injury BC, BC Hydro (in parks where BC Hydro provides electricity)</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-4-2: BC Parks also prepares expansion plans. This action emphasizes the importance of continuing to monitor the capacity utilization of selected parks (BC Parks) and rustic sites (FLNR recreation sites). If utilization is nearing or exceeding capacity, this could support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The expansion of selected parks, if there is sufficient carrying capacity and available capital resources</li> <li>• The revitalization of rustic sites</li> <li>• A business case for the private sector to invest in camping and recreational infrastructure in the area, if there is suitable land available.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> TRAN, FLNR, NBCTA, regional districts, local governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, EMBC, special interest groups (e.g., related to forest fire prevention, management and recovery)</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

B. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>B5. Continue to improve trails and trail networks to meet the needs and interests of existing and future visitors.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-5-1: Trails and trail networks form a key element of tourism infrastructure in Northwestern BC. Work with Rec Sites and Trails (FLNR), BC Parks, local governments, First Nation governments, and residents regarding investments in, and coordination of, priority trail networks, and public access via trails to rivers and other sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rec Sites and Trails Branch regularly solicits input from local residents and clubs regarding trail investment and maintenance. This acknowledges that resources are finite and priorities must be determined, with input from key users.</li> <li>It is important to be aware that that municipal governments may have legal access to trails, lakes and other areas that may have been forgotten about over time due to other entities using land. If there is a need to gain access to certain areas for tourism use, it may be useful to review the legal status of the land in question.</li> <li>BC Parks also plays a key role regarding trail development and maintenance in BC Parks.</li> <li>Local outdoors clubs are also instrumental in the development and maintenance of trails.</li> <li>This should tie in with the Mountain Biking objective noted under the Product and Experience Development goal.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> FLNR, NBCTA, DBC, TAC, BC Parks, BC Mountain Biking Association, Aboriginal Youth Mountain Bike Program, Trail Weavers, Backcountry Horsemen of BC, TRAN, Indigenous communities, local governments, First Nation governments, regional districts, NDIT, Spinal Cord Injury BC, Visitor centres, DMOs, tourism operators, local clubs</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>B6. Provide First Nations interpretive, locational and welcome signage in key locations.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-6-1: Support First Nation governments' and Indigenous communities' efforts to identify and work with the appropriate authorities to improve signage related to Indigenous communities, tourism features and welcome signs referencing traditional territory in key locations. To accomplish this, the following steps are needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct an audit to assess the need for new and/or improved signage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At airports</li> <li>Along highways and travel corridors</li> <li>In communities</li> <li>At existing and future Indigenous tourism attractions/events</li> </ul> </li> <li>Based on the audit, identify priorities and associated costs for development and annual maintenance.</li> <li>If signage is identified for certain attractions, ensure that the attraction is market-ready before installing the signage.</li> <li>Present proposals to relevant agencies and authorities: airport authorities, municipalities, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, NBCTA, ITBC, TAC, IRR, TRAN, BC Parks, airport authorities, Heritage Branch (FLNR), local governments, regional districts, museums, attractions, visitor centres, historical societies</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

B. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>B7. Increase the presence of facilities, infrastructure and services that support universal design.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-7-1: Build on the ongoing work of SCIBC to establish a coordinated approach to the development of accessible travel and tourism experiences and services in the Northern BC tourism region. Support the adoption, development and promotion of accessible tourism industry practices. Also, work with the Rick Hansen Foundation, and use their Accessibility Certification, where appropriate. 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 and wilderness experiences. Collaborate to identify resources to support these initiatives.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Spinal Cord Injury BC, Rick Hanson Foundation, NBCTA, DBC, TRAN, BC Parks, local governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, regional districts, tourism operators, visitor centres, local businesses, FLNR, go2HR, museums, attractions</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>B8. Ensure BC Ferries' scheduling and reservations systems support tourism from an economic sustainability perspective.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-8-1: Continue efforts to work with BC Ferries to optimize schedules to support tourism growth, particularly in the shoulder seasons. Note that this scheduling should tie in with the Alaska Marine Highway schedule to the extent possible.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, TAVI, North Island Tourism Association, Haida Gwaii (Misty Isles Economic Development Society, Council of Haida Nation), municipalities, Tourism Prince Rupert, BC Ferries, TAC, DBC, TIABC, tourism operators, accommodation properties, local businesses, Indigenous communities on the ferry route, other communities on the ferry route</p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-8-2: Provide feedback to BC Ferries regarding how the reservations system impacts the touring market and make suggestions for improvements. For example, some visitors who have tried to make reservations on BC Ferries have been told that the ferry is full. However, it has been noted that this information is not always accurate.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, TAVI, Haida Gwaii (Misty Isles Economic Development Society, Council of Haida Nation), municipalities, Tourism Prince Rupert, BC Ferries, BC Ferries Vacations, TAC, DBC, TIABC, tourism operators, accommodation properties, local businesses, Indigenous communities on the ferry route, other communities on the ferry route</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>

B. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>B9. Provide VIA Rail scheduling and services that support tourism growth.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-9-1: Continue efforts to work with VIA Rail to optimize schedules and potential packages to support tourism growth. Look at the possibility of adding one passenger train per week in certain locations.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, DMOs, TAC, DBC, VIA Rail, tourism operators, chambers of commerce, BC Ferries, airlines, accommodation operators, buses, Port of Prince Rupert, local governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>PLANNING AREA</p>
<p><b>B10. Encourage the development of travel infrastructure and services that decrease greenhouse gas emissions.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action B-10-1: Support initiatives to decrease greenhouse gas emissions. This should involve working in partnership with like-minded organizations, such as the Community Energy Association<sup>5</sup>. Note that this objective and action should link with Objective A-4 and Action A-4-1.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, Community Energy Association, regional districts, local governments, First Nations governments, Indigenous communities, DMOs, TAC, DBC, VIA Rail, tourism operators, chambers of commerce, BC Ferries, airlines, accommodation operators, buses, Port of Prince Rupert</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>

<sup>5</sup>A key initiative that is currently underway is the Community Energy Association’s EV Network Planning Study for northern and central BC. The study’s vision is to electrify 2,780 kilometers of highway from the Thompson-Nicola region, through Kamloops and Prince George along Highway 16 west to Haida Gwaii. The four regional districts in Northwestern BC are supporting this study.

# THEME C: COLLABORATION

## DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Collaboration amongst tourism operators, Indigenous Peoples, communities, governments, and destination management/marketing organizations supports destination development and management.

The destination development planning process has encouraged collaboration amongst tourism interests in communities and areas within Northwestern BC. This has been a positive outcome of the process, and will need to continue going forward to help achieve the goals and objectives defined in the Destination Development Strategy. A concerted effort

will be required to create and sustain communication tools and forums to facilitate ongoing collaboration and communication. Human and financial resources are also critical to implementation. There is also a need to ensure that relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous operators are productive and respectful.

C. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>C1. Increase communication and collaboration amongst and between tourism partners in Northwestern BC to support the implementation of the Destination Development Strategy.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action C-1-1: Develop and use communications tools to ensure that progress regarding destination development and the implementation of the 10-Year Destination Development Strategy is communicated regularly. Include the organizations noted in each success network, in addition to those who participated in the strategy development process, as targets for this communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include in this communication the status of progress in relation to the measurements provided in the Monitoring and Measuring Success section of the strategy.</li> </ul> <p>Ensure that more remote communities and areas are included in this communication.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, DBC, representatives from each community, Indigenous community, and regional district, DMOs, visitor centres, MAH, local government associations, tourism operators, chambers of commerce, museums</p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action C-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. Piggy-back on existing events, where feasible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use existing forums to assist with this: UBCM, NBCT AGM, BC Tourism Industry Conference, etc.</li> <li>• Where affordable, host a dedicated event to celebrate successes and plan next steps</li> </ul> <p>Ensure that such events can be “attended” by those in more remote locations, if they are unable to attend in person.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCT, DBC, representatives from each community, Indigenous community, regional districts, local governments, First Nation governments, DMOs, visitor centres, local government associations, operators, chambers of commerce, museums, sector associations, BC Protected Areas Research Forum</p>	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	PLANNING AREA
	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
REGIONAL SCOPE	

C. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>C2. Enhance collaboration and meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and operators.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b>  <b>Action C-2-1:</b>            Work with interested Indigenous communities on destination development strategies and initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain collaborative partnerships to support resources for Indigenous outreach.</li> <li>• The approach used to collaborate with each Indigenous community must be relevant to them, accounting for their unique characteristics and their form of leadership; for example, some may have hereditary leadership, some may have elected leadership and some may have a combination of hereditary and elected leadership. This must observe constitutional rights.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA (Indigenous tourism specialist), representatives from Indigenous communities, ITBC, IRR, FLNR, BC Assembly of First Nations, other ministries, as appropriate</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>Action C-2-2:</b>            Conduct initiatives to encourage positive and respectful relationships between Indigenous operators, Indigenous communities, non-Indigenous operators and relevant ministries.</p> <p>This is important given the growing interest of Indigenous Peoples, non-Indigenous people and operators in providing rich, authentic experiences that blend outdoor adventure and Indigenous culture. This is also important given growing market demand for these experiences.</p> <p><b>Examples of initiatives include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural training programs for operators (note that Lax Kw'alaams Business Development LP and the Nisga'a Nation are currently developing cultural training programs and tools).</li> <li>• Using structured formats for cultural sharing plans so that culturally-sensitive areas and sites can be identified and protected.</li> <li>• Cross-government initiatives related to First Nations economic development, which could include outreach programs for Indigenous economic and tourism development.</li> <li>• Hosting forums to enhance cross-cultural understanding and develop respectful relationships.</li> <li>• Business development forums where Indigenous communities, Indigenous operators, non-Indigenous operators, and other parties can discuss opportunities to develop authentic, market-ready experiences.</li> <li>• Development of protocols by Indigenous communities to guide collaboration between themselves and non-Indigenous operators.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA (Indigenous tourism specialist), IRR, ITBC, First People's Cultural Council, BC Parks, FLNR (Rec Sites and Trails), BC Aboriginal Investment Council, DBC, Indigenous and non-Indigenous operators, local governments, First Nation governments, relevant associations</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>

C. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>C3. Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement destination development priorities.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action C-3-1: Coordinate and monitor the implementation of destination development priorities. This could be done in conjunction with Action C-1-1.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, ITBC, TAC, NDIT, DBC, FLNR (Regional Economic Operations), regional districts (economic development personnel), members of the Working Committee, representatives from communities, Indigenous communities, First Nation governments, regional districts and local governments</p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action C-3-2: In coordination with Action C-1-1 and C-3-1, source funding for priority destination development initiatives and coordinate the identification of priorities for relevant provincial ministries to assist with their funding decisions. This recognizes the fact that sourcing funding is time-consuming. Possible funding sources are listed in the Funding Programs section of this strategy.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, DBC, representatives from communities, Indigenous communities, First Nation governments, regional districts, local governments, NDIT, Nechako-Kitimat Development Fund, Canadian Access and Inclusion Project, SCIBC, Community Futures, DMOs, sector associations, FLNR, IRR</p>	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	PLANNING AREA AREA
	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
PLANNING AREA AREA	

# THEME D: EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

## DEVELOPMENT GOAL

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

There are many product and experience development opportunities in Northwestern BC. Given that the majority of Northwestern BC is in a “developmental” stage of destination development, it will be important to transition experiences from visitor-ready, to market-ready and, for selected experiences that meet travel trade criteria, export-ready, as defined below.

**VISITOR-READY** Refers to businesses which have their licenses, permits and insurance in place to operate legally.

**MARKET-READY** Refers to businesses that market to potential visitors; communicate with potential visitors year-round and are ready to accept reservations.

**EXPORT-READY** Refers to businesses that market via travel trade distribution channels, understand commission or net rate pricing and agree to trade bookings and a cancellation policy.

It is also important to focus both on enhancing existing products and experiences, as well as developing new ones.

Workshop participants identified the following product and experience enhancement and development opportunities in the sessions. These are ordered in priority, based on the online survey results.

- Build all-season tourism experiences
- Develop partnerships between First Nations and tourism operators
- Develop and rebrand Highway 16 experiences
- Increase Indigenous cultural tourism experiences and showcase authentic First Nations art and culture
- Focus on outdoor adventure: rafting, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, hiking, zip lining, sturgeon centre tours, hot springs, etc.
- Encourage partnerships between operators to make the customer experience seamless
- Develop market-ready experiences and packages
- Develop experiences that will appeal to the BC and urban markets
- Provide more guided tours — nature photography, eco-tourism, wildlife viewing, etc.
- Develop experiences and workshops around people who create — woodwork, artisans, etc.
- Develop experiences related to heritage and culture

The following objectives and activities aim to capitalize on the opportunities noted above, in addition to addressing other issues and opportunities that emerged through the research, interviews and discussions.

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>D1. Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready Indigenous tourism experiences including products for touring visitors and destination visitors.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-1-1: Proactively connect with First Nations to determine levels of interest in developing authentic tourism experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This should be done in a manner that respects the protocols of First Nations.</li> <li>• This should also account for the current initiatives that Indigenous communities are offering or developing.</li> <li>• It is important to coordinate this action with Actions C-2-1 and C-2-2.</li> <li>• The identification of Indigenous community designates with whom the NBCTA/ITBC’s Indigenous Tourism Specialist can communicate would help achieve this action.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA (Indigenous Tourism Specialist), ITBC, ITAC, Indigenous communities, First Nation governments, IRR, FLNR, BC Aboriginal Network on Disabilities, museums, BC Parks, DMOs</p>	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	REGIONAL SCOPE

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-1-2:</p> <p>Drawing on support from provincial ministries, local governments and First Nation governments, provide economic support, capacity-building, education, research and guidance to Indigenous communities/entrepreneurs who are interested in enhancing an existing business or starting a new tourism business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness level of existing available resources (see Funding Programs section later in Strategy).</li> <li>• Work with DBC and BC Statistics to 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.</li> <li>• Provide educational opportunities to build awareness about visitor-ready, market-ready and export-ready criteria.</li> <li>• Explore with ITBC and other partners the opportunity to engage interested First Nations in a planning process specific to their communities, similar to the Community Tourism Foundations planning process.</li> <li>• Develop an inventory of mentors that can assist Indigenous communities and future operators in the development of experiences.</li> <li>• Conduct exposure tours for interested First Nations, featuring several successful First Nations tourism businesses in BC. An exposure tour provides opportunities for people to visit and observe a successful business/operation and then take that learning back to their home community/business.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA (Indigenous Tourism Specialist), ITBC, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, UNBC, IRR, FLNR, post-secondary institutions, Community Futures, go2HR, funding organizations</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p>Action D-1-3:</p> <p>Link existing and future authentic Indigenous tourism products/experiences throughout Northwestern BC so that experiences featuring a “string” or “cluster” of experiences can be offered.</p> <p>Note that it is important that, within a string or cluster, there are distinctive products and experiences (rather than offering a string of experiences that are very similar).</p> <p>It is also important to feature experiences that are dynamic and participatory, rather than static. Storytelling is a key component of an authentic and engaging experience.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Indigenous communities and operators, First Nation governments, NBCTA (Indigenous Tourism Specialist), ITBC, UNBC, IRR, FLNR, SCIBC, mentors</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PLANNING AREA AREA</p>
<p><b>D2. Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready tourism products/experiences</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-2-1:</p> <p>Develop an inventory of visitor, market and export-ready tourism products and experiences (both non-Indigenous and Indigenous experiences). Update this inventory annually to gauge the growth of tourism products/experiences and their associated maturity level (visitor, market, or export-ready). Note that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NBCTA has prepared an initial product/experience inventory to support the development of this strategy. This is included in the Situation Analysis document.</li> <li>• This action ties into the third overarching goal noted earlier: Increase the overall market readiness of the destination over the ten-year implementation period.</li> <li>• This action also ties into the performance measurement for the overarching goal (see the Monitoring and Measuring Success section).</li> <li>• This action should be conducted for each of the three Northern BC planning areas and is therefore a “regional” action.</li> </ul> <p>Note that this should also include clear documentation on attractions that are considered “anchor” attractions for Northwestern BC. For example, this would include such built attractions as the Museum of Northern BC in Prince Rupert, Exploration Place in Prince George, Ksan Historical Village, and others, in addition to “anchor” natural attractions, such as the Great Bear Rainforest, etc. (Note that destination development initiatives related to the Great Bear Rainforest require collaboration between NBCTA and the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association).</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, DMOs, visitor centres, tourism operators</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-2-2:</p> <p>Work with DBC and provincial ministries to invest in updated research to guide product and experience development to help ensure that experiences meet current and future market demand.</p> <p>This action will entail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying and prioritizing research needs</li> <li>Identifying innovative and cost-effective options for conducting research on a more timely basis</li> <li>Identifying potential funding sources and partners</li> <li>Making the business case for investing in the research</li> <li>Conducting the research projects and communicating the results to interested parties</li> </ul> <p>Note that research related to visitor volumes, travel patterns and product/experience and service preferences needs to be included in future research plans and investments.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, consortium of local interests who see value in this research, ITBC, DBC, Destination Canada, Heritage Canada, Heritage BC, BC Parks, BC Statistics, Data BC, NDIT, TRAN, Statistics Canada, FLNR, local governments, regional districts, post-secondary institutions, tourism operators, Visitor Centre Network, funding organizations</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-2-3:</p> <p>Hold an annual product/experience development forum that can be attended in-person or as a webinar featuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research regarding the types of products/experiences markets are seeking</li> <li>Educational forums regarding how to develop visitor-ready, market-ready and export-ready products/ experiences.</li> <li>Guest speakers, such as key tour operators.</li> <li>New tools and resources that Destination BC, Northern BC Tourism and/or ITBC have developed to assist industry with product and experience development.</li> <li>Universal design and accessibility.</li> <li>Professional development sessions related to starting and operating a business.</li> <li>Networking session where participants can discuss opportunities to work together.</li> <li>Relevant government agencies and information regarding new/revised regulations, policies and licensing processes.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, UNBC, VIA Rail, TAC, NDIT, Indigenous communities, First Nation governments, local governments, regional districts, Community Futures, economic development organizations, Business Development Bank of Canada, BC Ferries, DMOs, FLNR, DBC, ITBC, chambers of commerce, other industry partners</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-2-4:</p> <p>Work with organizations/operators – such as the University of Northern BC (UNBC), BC Ferries, VIA Rail and tour operators such as Smithers Adventure Tourism – to facilitate the development high-quality, special interest niche tours/packages/experiences that showcase the natural and cultural features of Northwestern BC and the remarkable experiences developed around the iconic features (see Appendix 5). Over time, this should encourage the transition from visitor-ready, to market-ready to export-ready tourism experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 iconic features should start discussions with UNBC regarding developing niche tours that are built around the iconic.</li> <li>• VIA Rail is also looking for opportunities to develop side trips for passengers travelling by train.</li> <li>• Northern BC Tourism, Tourism Prince George and other organizations will have information provided by tour operators and travel trade that they communicate with at trade shows that can provide direction regarding the types of experiences key markets are seeking.</li> <li>• It is important to recognize that these are low-volume, high-value tours. This initiative addresses five opportunities that were identified through the planning process workshops:</li> <li>• Develop products and experiences that feature ecotourism.</li> <li>• Develop interpretive, educational and special interest tourism in selected areas.</li> <li>• Support the growth of Indigenous tourism.</li> <li>• Develop experiences that showcase the unique people and communities of the Northwest and that profile artisans (woodworkers, carvers, weavers, craft brewers, coffee roasters, artists, organic farmers, and others).</li> <li>• Develop tourism around land stewardship and education.</li> <li>• Build on the type of high-quality special interest tours that UNBC is offering.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Coast Mountain College, VIA Rail, BC Ferries, DMOs, FLNR, BC Bus North, Rocky Mountaineer, tourism operators, mountain bike clubs, jeep clubs, accommodation owners/managers, International Hostel Association, other industry partners</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>D3. Develop remarkable experiences around the key iconic features.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-3-1:</p> <p>Identify current and future remarkable experiences that exist or that can be developed around key iconic features (see Appendix 5) and anchor attractions (see Action D-2-1). Prepare a plan and schedule for developing, profiling and linking these experiences as a Northwestern BC iconic features initiative over the next 10 years. This should include sub-plans for priority iconic features.</p> <p>In addition to developing the experiences, include the development of thematic signage using a common “look”/ graphics and an interpretive literature program that profiles the top iconic features. Attractive, coordinated and informative signage and interpretive literature are important components of the visitor experience. There is also a need to coordinate this planning process with the Access North Initiative.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, BC Parks FLNR (Rec Sites and Trails and BC Heritage), Heritage BC, DMOs, local governments, regional districts, SCIBC, VIA Rail, BC Ferries, tourism operators, relevant associations</p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-3-2:</p> <p>Coordinate the top iconic features with other aspects of product/experience development in Northwestern BC and Northeastern BC: circle tours, thematic travel routes, niche package development, and other experiences and attractions.</p> <p>In the development of such experiences, it is important for First Nations to provide their cultural sharing plans in a structured format so that culturally-sensitive areas and sites can be identified and protected.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, BC Parks, FLNR (Rec Sites and Trails and BC Heritage), Heritage BC, DMOs, local governments, regional districts, VIA Rail, BC Ferries, tourism operators, relevant associations</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p> <p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>D4. Further develop thematic corridors and circle routes as core experiences for Northwestern BC.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-4-1: Develop thematic corridors and circle routes which, eventually, should tie into other planning areas (most notably Northeastern BC, Haida Gwaii, the Cariboo and Vancouver Island). This should be coordinated with the infrastructure/signage action for thematic corridors.</p> <p>This action will entail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on the current initiatives that are underway and existing circle tours, including, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Highway 16 rebranding and experience development initiative</li> <li>- The Nisga'a Circle Route project that is currently under development</li> <li>- Efforts to upgrade the Cranberry Connector</li> <li>- Inside Passage Wilderness Tour (with BC Ferries)</li> <li>- The Great Northern Circle Route</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Researching successful thematic corridors and circle routes elsewhere</li> <li>• Identifying potential new routes in Northwestern BC</li> <li>• Mapping out the experiences for each route</li> <li>• Coordinating this process with the Access North Initiative</li> <li>• Preparing plans for the development of each route</li> </ul> <p>Ensure that more remote areas are engaged in this process, where relevant, such as Atlin, Stewart, Dease Lake and other communities along Highway 37.</p> <p>Also ensure that mechanisms are introduced to communicate accurate conditions regarding road conditions.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, DMOs, TRAN, BC Parks, BC Ferries, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, local governments, regional districts, FLNR, SCIBC, museums, VIA Rail, trail societies/clubs, DFO, Community Energy Association (regarding the EV Travel project), the Government of Yukon, the Government of Alaska, Alaska Marine Highway, relevant sector groups/ associations</p>	1. QUICK WINS
	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	PROVINCIAL SCOPE
	REGIONAL SCOPE

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>D5. Develop more market-ready winter tourism experiences.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-5-1:</p> <p>Develop a clear understanding of existing winter tourism experiences. To do this, prepare an inventory and assessment of current winter tourism assets, products, services and festivals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief description of the asset, product, service</li> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Current stage of development</li> <li>• Current users/markets</li> <li>• Key competition</li> <li>• Opportunities for further development</li> </ul> <p>Specific opportunities raised during the planning process included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Para Nordic sports</li> <li>• Downhill skiing</li> <li>• Heli-skiing and cat skiing</li> <li>• Backcountry skiing</li> <li>• Winter mountain biking, including fat biking</li> <li>• Snowmobiling</li> <li>• Cross-country skiing</li> <li>• Nordic skiing</li> <li>• Dog sledding</li> <li>• Snowshoeing</li> <li>• Curling</li> <li>• Hockey</li> <li>• Winter ice fishing</li> <li>• Ice skating</li> <li>• Floating cabins” featuring ice fishing</li> <li>• Package development featuring winter activities, transportation (e.g., VIA Rail), and sponsorships with outdoor clothing company(ies)</li> </ul> <p>Note that there are opportunities to develop trails linking communities with existing pipeline right-of-ways. These trails can be used for mountain biking, hiking, snowmobiling, snow shoeing and cross-country skiing.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, Economic development officers, FLNR, local government representatives (to provide information for inventory), regional districts representatives (to provide information for inventory), Indigenous communities, First Nation governments, existing operators, industry associations and sport associations</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>PLANNING AREA AREA</p>
<p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-5-2:</p> <p>Based on the above inventory and assessment, develop and implement a multi-year plan to further develop winter tourism. This should build on existing locations, facilities and opportunities.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Economic development officers, FLNR (Regional Economic Operations), NBCTA, local government representatives, regional districts representatives, Indigenous communities, First Nation governments, tourism operators</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PLANNING AREA AREA</p>

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>D6. Continue to develop the mountain biking experience in key locations that possess great terrain for this activity coupled with local interest in developing mountain biking infrastructure and services.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-6-1: Build on the provincial mountain biking sector work and the Northern BC Mountain Bike Strategy that have been completed to further develop mountain biking in areas of Northwestern BC that have the attributes that would make them competitive. This should also tie in with the work that is underway with the Aboriginal Youth Mountain Bike Program and Trail Weavers. Areas in Northwestern BC that are currently developing mountain biking infrastructure and services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Areas in the Nisga'a Traditional Territory</li> <li>• Valemount (market-ready)</li> <li>• Prince George</li> <li>• McBride (close to being market-ready)</li> <li>• Fort Fraser</li> <li>• Fort St. James</li> <li>• Burns Lake (market ready; designated an "Epic Riding Centre" by the International Mountain Biking Association)</li> <li>• Hazelton</li> <li>• Houston</li> <li>• Smithers (market-ready)</li> <li>• Terrace (market-ready)</li> <li>• Lake Babine Nation</li> <li>• Dease Lake</li> <li>• Boya Lake</li> </ul> <p>As noted under Action D-5-1, there are opportunities to develop trails linking communities with existing pipeline right-of-ways. These trails can be used for mountain biking, hiking, snowmobiling, snow shoeing and cross-country skiing. It would also be good to explore whether the Nyan Wheti historical overland trail network could provide some longer-distance mountain biking routes.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> FLNR, NBCTA, DBC, TAC, BC Parks, BC Mountain Biking Association, Western Canada Mountain Bike Tourism, Aboriginal Youth Mountain Bike Program, Trail Weavers, TRAN, Indigenous communities, local governments, First Nation governments, regional districts, NDIT, visitor centres, DMOs, tourism operators, local clubs</p>	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	REGIONAL SCOPE

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

PRIORITY

D7. Continually improve tourism services.

**ACTIONS**

Action D-7-1:

Coordinate initiatives aimed at improving tourism services. Several initiatives that workshop participants raised are as follows.

- Bring awareness to local businesses about the importance of consistency of businesses 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 SuperHost program
  - The Ambassador Program, which demonstrates the value of tourism to your business (Tourism Prince George)
- Work to continually improve collaboration related to visitor services throughout the planning area, focusing efforts at the Northwestern BC destination level. This needs to embrace the evolving nature of how visitor services are being delivered in response to the growing use of remote technology. At the same time, this also needs to acknowledge the importance of in-person visitor servicing in smaller communities in Northwestern BC, where this service helps ensure the safety and security of visitors when they venture into more remote areas. For example, visitor centres are becoming increasingly important in the accurate communication of wildfire, flooding and road conditions.
- Facilitate private sector investment and municipal investment in rental equipment businesses (bikes, cars, boats, snowmobiles, etc.) to create visitor activities and support transportation needs within the destination.
- Work with provincial tourism organizations to determine if a provincial-wide liability insurance program can work to support a range of tourism operations. Look at examples such as insurance programs used by organizations such as Helicat Canada.

**SUCCESS NETWORK** NBCTA, DBC, ITBC First Host, go2HR SuperHost™ Program, DMOs, visitor centres, local governments, chambers of commerce, regional governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, Community Futures, post-secondary institutions, TRAN, Drive BC, MAH, municipal, regional and provincial economic development officers, TIABC, Insurance Council of BC, sector associations, BC Float Plane Association

1. QUICK WINS

PROVINCIAL SCOPE

PLANNING AREA AREA

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>D8. Ensure Northwestern BC can provide some products/experiences and services that meet the needs of international visitors from both existing and emerging markets.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-8-1: Given the longer-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 Northwestern BC can enhance existing products/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/ experiences are market-ready and export-ready.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> DBC, NBCTA, ITBC, Destination Canada, UNBC and other post-secondary institutions, DMOs, Rural Dividend Fund, Statistics Canada, BC Statistics, sector associations, tour operators, travel trade representatives, airports (passenger origin data), airlines</p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-8-2: Apply the research collated through Action D-8-1 to assist with decision-making regarding future product and experience development. Share this intelligence with the private sector, to support private sector investments, and with governments at all levels, to inform investment decisions. This should be done through training and educational programs.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, ITBC, DMOs, tourism operators, organizations/ operators that offer niche tours, such as UNBC, VIA Rail, etc., airlines, JTT, FLNR (Regional Economic Operations), economic development organizations</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PLANNING AREA AREA</p>
<p><b>D9. Establish designations and associated experiences that build awareness about Northwestern BC.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-9-1: Explore opportunities to secure UNESCO Global Geopark designations, additional UNESCO World Heritage Site designations, sustainability designations and/or another high-profile designation. Possible themes for a designation are listed below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gold</li> <li>• Jade</li> <li>• Geological features</li> <li>• Sustainability practices (with a tourism industry focus)</li> <li>• BC Parks, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut</li> <li>- Tatshenshini-Alsek (already designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site)</li> <li>- Mount Edziza</li> <li>- Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed</li> <li>- Khutzeymateen</li> <li>- Tweedsmuir</li> <li>- Mount Robson</li> <li>- Spatsizi</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Unique flora and fauna/biodiversity</li> <li>• Indigenous culture</li> <li>• Marine protected areas</li> <li>• Great Bear Rainforest</li> <li>• Connections with designations nearby (e.g., Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Global Geopark)</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, DMOs, local governments, regional districts, Indigenous communities, First Nation governments, tourism operators, Parks Canada, post-secondary institutions, Skeena Wild, FLNR, Energy and Mines, BC Parks, UNESCO and other organizations that award such designations</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PLANNING AREA AREA</p>

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-9-2: Link high-profile designations with existing and potential tourism experiences that are compatible with the designation. These linkages may be with high-profile designations in Northeastern BC, Haida Gwaii or planning areas in other tourism regions</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, DMOs, local governments, regional districts, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, tourism operators, Parks Canada, BC Parks, Destination Canada, FLNR, tourism partners</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>D10. Enhance urban tourism, including heritage and cultural experiences.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-10-1: Work with the Heritage Branch, local governments, regional governments, First Nation governments and indigenous communities to provide opportunities for relevant partners to collaborate in the development of an urban destination strategy that leverages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conference and meeting facilities in key locations</li> <li>• Major event facilities</li> <li>• Sport tourism</li> <li>• Key festivals and events</li> <li>• Museums and cultural attractions</li> <li>• Downtown beautification through design guidelines (NDIT Business Façade Program may support this)</li> <li>• Local/regional cuisine</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, DMOs and visitor centres, NDIT (support for festivals/events and the Business Façade Program), local governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, regional districts, tourism partners</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>3. SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW</p> <p>PLANNING AREA AREA</p>
<p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-10-2: Work the Heritage Branch of FLNR, Heritage BC, TAC, and other partners in local, regional, provincial and federal government agencies, to 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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding is required to support a collective approach to bring archives, collections and interpretation together.</li> <li>• A key source of funding can be municipal governments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A heritage committee and a heritage plan must be in place.</li> <li>- The local government is then in a better position to introduce a bylaw to generate funding from the tax base.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Other important, supplemental funding sources are admission fees, gift shop revenue, tours and other activities.</li> <li>• There are examples of where museums and visitor centres have combined operations; such operations can be contacted to gain an understanding of their successes and lessons learned.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Address barriers to infrastructure grant funding for seasonal museums (these type of grants are typically only available for museums that operate year-round).</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Regional districts, local governments, regional and local heritage and cultural organizations, BCMA, regional and municipal, economic development officers, TAC, MAH, FLNR, NBCTA, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, , Heritage BC, DMOs, Community, Culture, and Recreation (CCR) Program, BC Arts Council</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>

D. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>D11. Enhance and/or expand the range of coastal boating and cruising experiences in a manner that is respectful of the environment and Indigenous communities.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-11-1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the continued development of infrastructure and shore excursions to encourage sustainable growth in the cruise ship sector.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> The Port of Prince Rupert, cruise lines, tourism businesses and operators, regional districts, local governments, regional and local heritage and cultural organizations, regional and municipal, economic development officers, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, Heritage BC, DMOs</p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action D-11-2</p> <p>Support the continued development of guided and unguided kayaking, boutique and/or expedition cruises, which enable exploration of coastal areas and communities, and responsible access to sensitive and popular areas such as the Great Bear Rainforest. Note that destination development initiatives related to the Great Bear Rainforest require collaboration between NBCTA and the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, BCOBTA, tourism operators, BC Parks, regional districts, local governments, regional and local heritage and cultural organizations, regional and municipal, economic development officers, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, Heritage BC, DMOs, tourism partners</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>

# THEME E: TOURISM WORKFORCE

## DEVELOPMENT GOAL

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

A strong, appropriately-trained and motivated tourism workforce is critical to advance destination development. Considerations emerged through the planning process specific to the labour market and volunteer forces, which are highlighted below.

### Attraction and retention

Like many areas in BC, Northwestern BC faces challenges with regard to 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 more competitive wages in other sectors such as mining, and oil and gas. Lack of sufficient accommodation for staff is also a factor contributing to this issue. Attraction and retention is particularly critical in remote areas such as Atlin, Stewart, Dease Lake and other isolated areas with small populations and that are more challenging to access.

### Training and capacity building

There are existing skill gaps within the tourism industry, and skill gaps anticipated for the future as the industry develops. Indigenous communities in Northwestern BC also 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 hospitality operations and service businesses, the process also identified a need to develop a more entrepreneurial culture in Northwestern BC.

The objectives and actions below are intended to help achieve the goal of ensuring there is a strong, well-trained workforce in Northwestern BC.

E. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>E1. Improve Northwestern BC's ability to attract and retain appropriately-skilled workers and volunteers.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action E-1-1: Develop a Northwestern 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 staff and fill key skill gaps needed to sustain a thriving tourism industry. This should be coordinated with First Nations employment organizations/agencies to ensure that labour issues for all communities are addressed.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> go2HR, JTT, Ministry of Labour, TIABC, federal government (Temporary Foreign Worker Program and Canadian Working Holiday Visa), AEST, TAC, MAH, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, local governments, regional districts, NBCTA, DMOs, tourism operators, Community Futures, NDIT, GOABC (Apprenticeship Program), secondary schools, post-secondary institutions, employment organizations</p>	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	REGIONAL SCOPE

E. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action E-1-2: Work with local governments, economic development offices/organizations, the high schools, and tourism organizations (Destination Management or Marketing Organizations) to enhance the experience of volunteering, through initiatives such as recognition programs, incentives and training programs that build volunteer capacity. Explore opportunities to develop and formalize a volunteer program whereby secondary and post-secondary students receive credits by volunteering with tourism/hospitality businesses, festivals and events, visitor services and visitor programming</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Local governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, NBCTA, go2HR, DMOs, visitor centres, secondary schools, post-secondary schools</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>E2. Help develop a more entrepreneurial culture by providing relevant training and capacity building opportunities.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action E-2-1: 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. Tie this into secondary school curricula where appropriate.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> go2HR, NBCTA, ITBC, Aboriginal Business Development Centre, NDIT, JTT, Community Futures, economic development managers (municipal and First Nations), UNBC, College of New Caledonia, Northern Lights College, Credit unions, Tricorp, Business Development Bank of Canada</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>PLANNING AREA</p>

# THEME F: GOVERNMENT COORDINATION AND SUPPORT

## DEVELOPMENT GOAL:

Ongoing, strong government coordination and support for tourism development and management exists.

A positive operating environment is critical to destination development. All levels of government can impact the operating environment for tourism businesses. Important to achieving 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, Comprehensive Community Plans, economic development plans/strategies, and park and recreation master plans.

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

Another key issue relates to some First Nations’ challenges gaining timely access to reserve land for economic development when the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure is hampered dealing with the Federal Government to secure access.

F. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>F1. Build better governmental understanding and support for tourism.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action F-1-1: Conduct initiatives to increase awareness about the value of tourism and raise the profile of tourism with targeted audiences including local and regional governments and local residents. This will entail conducting research and analysis to enable the estimation of the value of tourism.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, ITBC, DBC, JTT, BC Statistics, TIABC, TAC, TRAN, FLNR Regional Economic Operations), DMOs, local governments, regional districts, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, North Central Local Government Management Association, Chambers of commerce</p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action F-1-2: Using the “value of tourism” results noted in Action F-1-1, work with local and regional governments to secure more consistent support for tourism. Also focus on the fact that infrastructure, amenities and civic attractiveness benefit residents as well as tourists. Tourism can improve the overall quality of life for residents.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, DBC, TAC, MAH, FLNR, DMOs, local governments, regional governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, UBCM, North Central Local Government Management Association</p>	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	PROVINCIAL SCOPE
	REGIONAL SCOPE
	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
REGIONAL SCOPE	

F. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>F2. Enhance local, regional and First Nation government support for destination development.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action F-2-1: Work with local, regional, and First Nation governments to encourage input from tourism industry representatives when updating Official Community Plans (OCP), Comprehensive Community Plans (CCPs) or Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSP) so that key tourism interests are well documented in the OCP, CCP and ICSP and related planning documents.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, regional governments, local governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, DMOs, visitor centres, tourism businesses/operators/associations/organizations, residents, municipal committees (heritage, accessibility, etc.)</p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action F-2-2: Work with local, regional and First Nation governments to encourage input from tourism industry representatives when developing economic development strategies or plans so that destination development priorities are reflected in these plans.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, regional governments, local governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, DMOs, visitor centres, tourism businesses/operators/associations/organizations, residents, BC Economic Development Commission, JTT, economic development organizations/ managers</p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action F-2-3: Work with local, regional and First Nation governments to encourage input from tourism industry representatives when developing local parks, recreation and culture master plans, or providing input to parks and recreation master plans being prepared by governments within BC, so that destination development priorities are reflected in these plans.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, regional governments, local governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, DMOs, visitor centres, tourism businesses/operators/associations/organizations, residents, municipal committees: parks, heritage, culture, recreation, BC Parks, TAC, FLNR (Rec Sites and Trails)</p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action F-2-4: Work with local, regional and First Nation governments to encourage 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.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> NBCTA, regional governments, local governments, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, DMOs, visitor centres, tourism businesses/operators/associations/organizations, residents, airports, airlines, BC Ferries, Transit, FLNR (Resource Roads), VIA Rail</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>PLANNING AREA</p>

F. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>F3. Ensure that targeted government policies and land and tenure management support destination development.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action F-3-1:</p> <p>Work with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, BC Parks and Northern Health to improve the process and overall efficiency related to obtaining tenure, permits and development approvals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The process must be transparent and clear. Identification of key government contacts is essential.</li> </ul> <p>Improving the level of certainty with regard to timelines for obtaining/renewing permits is critical. The process must address the need for government decisions to be rendered in time for operators to respond to clients who would like to book their vacation; otherwise, these operators lose bookings and revenue.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> TAC, NBCTA, DBC, FLNR, FrontCounter BC, BC Parks, tourism operators, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, Parks Canada, IRR, ENV, EMPR, relevant sector associations, Northern Health)</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>ACTIONS</b> Action F-3-2:</p> <p>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. The solutions to this issue must factor in the variation amongst First Nations regarding governance and land management.</p> <p>First Nations are missing economic development opportunities as a result of long delays in securing access from provincial highways to reserve land to facilitate the development of facilities and services.</p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> TRAN, FLNR, IRR, First Nation governments, Indigenous communities, Lands Advisory Board (Federal), CIRNAC, ITBC, local governments, regional districts, First Nations Summit</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>

# 9

# IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

## A. CATALYST PROJECTS

The following 19 actions were identified as catalyst projects to initiate early implementation of Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy. Note that some of these actions are also noted as “provincial” or “regional” in scope later in this section.

### DEVELOPMENT THEME A – ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY

#### Action A-4-1

Develop and communicate a Northern BC tourism code of conduct to support environmental sustainability practices within the tourism industry. This can be led by NBCTA, with input from a cross-section of tourism operators, relevant associations and community representatives. The United Nations World Tourism Organization’s (UNWTO)

Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030, Highlights (December 2017) and the BC government’s Strategic Framework for Tourism in British Columbia 2019–2021<sup>7</sup>, in addition to other tools and resources, can assist with developing this code of conduct.



## DEVELOPMENT THEME B – INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESS AND AMENITIES

### Action B-6-1

Support First Nation governments' and Indigenous communities' efforts to identify and work with the appropriate authorities to improve signage related to Indigenous communities, tourism features and welcome signs referencing traditional territory in key locations. To accomplish this, the following steps are needed.

- Conduct an audit to assess the need for new and/or improved signage:
  - At airports
  - Along highways and travel corridors
  - In communities
  - At existing and future Indigenous tourism attractions/events
- Based on the audit, identify priorities and associated costs for development and annual maintenance.
- If signage is identified for certain attractions, ensure that the attraction is market-ready before installing the signage.

Present proposals to relevant agencies and authorities: airport authorities, municipalities, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

### Action B-7-1

Build on the ongoing work of SCIBC to establish a coordinated approach to the development of accessible travel and tourism experiences and services in the Northern BC tourism region. Support the adoption, development and promotion of accessible tourism industry practices. Also, work with the Rick Hansen Foundation, and use their Accessibility Certification, where appropriate.

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 and wilderness experiences.

### Action B-10-1

Support initiatives to decrease greenhouse gas emissions. This should involve working in partnership with like-minded organizations, such as the Community Energy Association.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>A key initiative that is currently underway is the Community Energy Association's EV Network Planning Study for northern and central BC. The study's vision is to electrify 2,780 kilometers of highway from the Thompson-Nicola region, through Kamloops and Prince George along Highway 16 west to Haida Gwaii. The four regional districts in Northwestern BC are supporting this study.



## DEVELOPMENT THEME C – COLLABORATION

### Action C-1-1

Develop and use communications tools to ensure that progress regarding destination development and the implementation of the 10-Year Destination Development Strategy is communicated regularly. Include the organizations noted in each success network, in addition to those who participated in the strategy development process, as targets for this communication.

Include in this communication the status of progress in relation to the measurements provided in the Monitoring and Measuring Success section of the strategy. Ensure that more remote communities and areas are included in this communication.

### Action C-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. Piggy-back on existing events, where feasible.

- Use existing forums to assist with this: UBCM, NBCT 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

### Action C-2-1

Work with interested Indigenous communities on destination development strategies and initiatives.

Maintain collaborative partnerships to support resources for Indigenous outreach. The approach used to collaborate with each Indigenous community must be relevant to them, accounting for their unique characteristics and their form of leadership; for example, some may have hereditary leadership, some may have elected leadership and some may have a combination of hereditary and elected leadership. This must observe constitutional rights.

### Action C-2-2

Conduct initiatives to encourage positive and respectful relationships between Indigenous operators, Indigenous communities, non-Indigenous operators and relevant ministries.

This is important given the growing interest of Indigenous Peoples, non-Indigenous people and operators in providing rich, authentic experiences that blend outdoor adventure and Indigenous culture. This is also important given growing market demand for these experiences.

### Action C-3-1

Coordinate and monitor the implementation of destination development priorities. This could be done in conjunction with Action C-1-1.



### **Action C-3-2**

In coordination with Action C-1-1 and C-3-1, source funding for priority destination development initiatives and coordinate the identification of priorities for relevant provincial ministries to assist with their funding decisions. This recognizes the fact that sourcing funding is time-consuming. Possible funding sources are listed later in this section.

## **DEVELOPMENT THEME D – EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Action D-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.
- This should also account for the current initiatives that Indigenous communities are offering or developing.
- It is important to coordinate this action with Actions C-2-1 and C-2-2.

The identification of Indigenous community designates with whom the NBCTA/ITBC's Indigenous Tourism Specialist can communicate would help achieve this action.

### **Action D-1-2**

Drawing on support from provincial ministries, local governments and First Nation governments, provide economic support, capacity-building, education, research and guidance to Indigenous communities/entrepreneurs who are interested in enhancing an existing business or starting a new tourism business.

### **Action D-2-1**

Develop an inventory of visitor, market and export-ready tourism products and experiences (both non-Indigenous and Indigenous experiences). Update this inventory annually to gauge the growth of tourism products/experiences and their associated maturity level (visitor, market, or export-ready).

### **Action D-2-2**

Work with DBC and provincial ministries to invest in updated research to guide product and experience development to help ensure that experiences meet current and future market demand.

### **Action D-5-1**

Develop a clear understanding of existing winter tourism experiences. 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

### **Action D-6-1**

Build on the provincial mountain biking sector work and the Northern BC Mountain Bike Strategy that have been completed to further develop mountain biking in areas of Northwestern BC that have the attributes that would make them competitive. This should also tie in with the work that is underway with the Aboriginal Youth Mountain Bike Program and Trail Weavers.

### **Action D-8-1**

Given the longer-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 Northwestern BC can enhance existing products/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/experiences are market-ready and export-ready.

## **DEVELOPMENT THEME E – TOURISM WORKFORCE**

### **Action E-1-1**

Develop a Northwestern 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 staff and fill key skill gaps needed to sustain a thriving tourism industry.

This should be coordinated with First Nations employment organizations/agencies to ensure that labour issues for all communities are addressed.

## **DEVELOPMENT THEME F – GOVERNMENT COORDINATION AND SUPPORT**

### **Action F-1-1**

Conduct initiatives to increase awareness about the value of tourism and raise the profile of tourism with targeted audiences including local and regional governments and local residents. This will entail conducting research and analysis to enable the estimation of the value of tourism.

## B. 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 will inform the creation of a Regional Destination Development Strategy.

This Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy, along with 19 other planning area strategies in British Columbia, will inform the creation of a single Provincial

Destination Development Strategy. Objectives identified as “provincial” often involve multiple provincial government organizations including, for example, Destination BC, TAC, ITBC, go2HR, TIABC and possibly other provincial ministries.

### PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES

The following objectives and actions are proposed for inclusion in the Provincial Destination Development Strategy.

PROVINCIAL – LEVEL ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>Development Goal A: The resources upon which tourism depends — natural features, wildlife and fisheries, habitat, water resources, air quality — are well managed over the long-term.</b></p>	
<p><b>OBJECTIVE: IMPROVE/SUSTAIN THE HEALTH OF WILDLIFE POPULATIONS</b></p>	
<p>Action A-1-1: Work with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy and Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (Wildlife Management Branch), First Nations and relevant associations to monitor and address complex issues that are impacting wildlife populations. Specific initiatives could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Integrated land and resource management</li> <li>· Partnering with relevant associations to seek solutions to declining fish and wildlife populations</li> <li>· Partnering with First Nations to seek solutions to declining wildlife populations</li> </ul> <p>Working with government agencies and relevant associations to help restore habitat.</p>	<p>2</p>
<p><b>OBJECTIVE: IMPROVE/SUSTAIN THE HEALTH OF FISHERIES</b></p>	
<p>Action A-2-1: Work with the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, First Nations and relevant associations to monitor and address complex issues that are impacting fisheries populations.</p>	<p>2</p>

PROVINCIAL – LEVEL ACTIONS

PRIORITY

OBJECTIVE: MAINTAIN AND INCREASE THE INTEGRITY OF KEY AREAS AND NATURAL FEATURES THAT ARE CRITICAL TO THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Action A-3-1:

Partner with relevant provincial ministries to develop a framework that can guide tourism industry representatives in efforts to maintain and enhance the land and natural features that are important to tourism. This framework should include steps to:

- Identify land/areas and features that are potentially at risk of degradation
- Identify the potential activities and entities that place land/areas and features at risk
- Identify the responsible authorities and processes that may influence the current and future needs of the tourism industry
- Use existing, and potentially new, channels to communicate with the responsible entities about the priority concerns (e.g., Regional Destination Management Committee and the BC government’s Regional Interagency Management Committees)

Key considerations in developing this framework may include:

- Monitoring and providing input regarding visual quality objectives (VQOs) in key areas
- Encouraging tourism operators to participate in fuel management and fire mitigation discussions
- Participating in the referral processes in place when a major industrial project and/or a resource development project is proposed
- Requesting that the government of BC monitors major project investments and developments to help ensure they are not damaging priority tourism assets

Note that the BC government’s recently-released Strategic Framework for Tourism in British Columbia 2019–2021<sup>9</sup> can serve as a reference document to assist with implementing this action.

2

Development Goal B: Infrastructure, access and amenities are provided and well-maintained to support destination development.

OBJECTIVE: MAINTAIN VISITOR SAFETY AND THE ABILITY TO RESPOND TO EMERGENCIES

Action B-2-1:

Work with provincial government ministries to conduct a scan profiling the current situation with regard to provision of emergency services at key locations in Northwestern BC. Once this is completed, and priority deficiencies and risks are identified, work with the myriad of relevant agencies and authorities to improve the provision of emergency services on the highways. 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 with regard to this action include:

- 911 agencies
- RCMP
- FLNR (regarding safe use of logging roads)
- Municipal fire departments
- 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
- Distance from trauma care
- The role of visitor centres
- The opportunity to make helicopters available in areas of higher risk

2

<sup>9</sup>Welcoming Visitors – Benefiting Locals – Working Together: A Strategic Framework for Tourism in British Columbia 2019–2021, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, March 2019.

PROVINCIAL – LEVEL ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<b>OBJECTIVE: INCREASE AND IMPROVE SIGNAGE ALONG TRAVEL ROUTES THROUGHOUT THE PLANNING AREA</b>	
<p>Action B-3-1:</p> <p>Work with TRAN to improve existing signage and develop new signage for thematic corridors and circle routes (this needs to tie in with the Product/Experience Development objective related to thematic corridors). BC Ferries' Route 10 and 11 need to be factored into this planning, as these routes are key to the touring visitor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire a consultant to conduct research and prepare a business case. This should include consultation with key industry members.</li> <li>• Given the cost of signage programs, this needs to be strategically phased, starting with higher-profile routes such as Highway 16 and Highway 37.</li> <li>• In addition to development costs, annual maintenance costs need to be identified.</li> <li>• This action should also consider signage that links to the Yukon regarding messaging about BC highways (directional signage as well as signage that provides key information regarding highway conditions).</li> </ul> <p>Signage is a key element of the visitor experience, both from a functional (direction, way-finding, interpretive information) and an aesthetic perspective. Accurate information, a common look and a common identity is important to a signage program. It will be important for NBCTA and DMOs to provide input from a tourism perspective regarding the design and overall “look” of new signage, to complement the work of TRAN.</p>	1
<b>OBJECTIVE: ENSURE BC FERRIES' SCHEDULING AND RESERVATIONS SYSTEMS SUPPORT TOURISM FROM AN ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY PERSPECTIVE</b>	
<p>Action B-8-1:</p> <p>Continue efforts to work with BC Ferries to optimize schedules to support tourism growth, particularly in the shoulder seasons. Note that this scheduling should tie in with the Alaska Marine Highway schedule to the extent possible.</p>	1
<p>Action B-8-2:</p> <p>Provide feedback to BC Ferries regarding how the reservations system impacts the touring market and make suggestions for improvements. For example, some visitors who have tried to make reservations on BC Ferries have been told that the ferry is full. However, it has been noted that this information is not always accurate.</p>	1
<b>OBJECTIVE: ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRAVEL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES THAT DECREASE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS</b>	
<p>Action B-10-1:</p> <p>Support initiatives to decrease greenhouse gas emissions. This should involve working in partnership with like-minded organizations, such as the Community Energy Association.<sup>10</sup></p>	1

<sup>10</sup>A key initiative that is currently underway is the Community Energy Association's EV Network Planning Study for northern and central BC. The study's vision is to electrify 2,780 kilometers of highway from the Thompson-Nicola region, through Kamloops and Prince George along Highway 16 west to Haida Gwaii. The four regional districts in Northwestern BC are supporting this study.

**Development Goal C: Collaboration amongst tourism operators, Indigenous Peoples, communities, governments, and destination management/marketing organizations supports destination development and management.**

**OBJECTIVE: ENHANCE COLLABORATION AND MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND OPERATORS**

**Action C-2-2:**

Conduct initiatives to encourage positive and respectful relationships between Indigenous operators, Indigenous communities, non-Indigenous operators and relevant ministries.

This is important given the growing interest of Indigenous Peoples, non-Indigenous people and operators in providing rich, authentic experiences that blend outdoor adventure and Indigenous culture. This is also important given growing market demand for these experiences.

**Examples of initiatives include:**

- Cultural training programs for operators (note that Lax Kw'alaams Business Development LP and the Nisga'a Nation are currently developing cultural training programs and tools).
- Using structured formats for cultural sharing plans so that culturally-sensitive areas and sites can be identified and protected.
- Cross-government initiatives related to First Nations economic development, which could include outreach programs for Indigenous economic and tourism development.
- Hosting forums to enhance cross-cultural understanding and develop respectful relationships.
- Business development forums where Indigenous communities, Indigenous operators, non-Indigenous operators, and other parties can discuss opportunities to develop authentic, market-ready experiences.
- Development of protocols by Indigenous communities to guide collaboration between themselves and non-Indigenous operators.

1

**Development Goal D: Unique, market-ready products/experiences exceed expectations of visitors, while maintaining the environmental and cultural integrity of the destination.**

**OBJECTIVE: ENHANCE URBAN TOURISM, INCLUDING HERITAGE AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES**

**Action D-10-2:**

Work the Heritage Branch of FLNR, Heritage BC, TAC, and other partners in local, regional, provincial and federal government agencies, to 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.

- Funding is required to support a collective approach to bring archives, collections and interpretation together.
- A key source of funding can be municipal governments.
  - A heritage committee and a heritage plan must be in place.
  - The local government is 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 shop revenue, tours and other activities.
- There are examples of where museums and visitor centres have combined operations; such operations can be contacted to gain an understanding of their successes and lessons learned.
- 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.

Address barriers to infrastructure grant funding for seasonal museums (these type of grants are typically only available for museums that operate year-round).

1

PROVINCIAL – LEVEL ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<b>OBJECTIVE: ENHANCE AND/OR EXPAND THE RANGE OF COASTAL BOATING AND CRUISING EXPERIENCES IN A MANNER THAT IS RESPECTFUL OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES.</b>	
<p>Action D-11-1</p> <p>Support the continued development of infrastructure and shore excursions to encourage sustainable growth in the cruise ship sector.</p>	1
<p>Action D-11-2</p> <p>Support the continued development of guided and unguided kayaking, boutique and/or expedition cruises, which enable exploration of coastal areas and communities, and responsible access to sensitive and popular areas such as the Great Bear Rainforest. Note that destination development initiatives related to the Great Bear Rainforest require collaboration between NBCTA and the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association.</p>	1

**Development Goal E: A strong, well-trained, motivated tourism workforce is available to deliver high-quality experiences.**

No provincial actions were identified under Development Goal E.

**Development Goal F: Ongoing, strong government coordination and support for tourism development and management exists.**

**OBJECTIVE: ENSURE THAT TARGETED GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND LAND AND TENURE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT**

<p>Action F-3-1:</p> <p>Work with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, BC Parks and Northern Health to improve the process and overall efficiency related to obtaining tenure, permits and development approvals.</p> <p>The process must be transparent and clear. Identification of key government contacts is essential.</p> <p>Improving the level of certainty with regard to timelines for obtaining/renewing permits is critical. The process must address the need for government decisions to be rendered in time for operators to respond to clients who would like to book their vacation; otherwise, these operators lose bookings and revenue.</p>	2
<p>Action F-3-2:</p> <p>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. The solutions to this issue must factor in the variation amongst First Nations regarding governance and land management.</p> <p>First Nations are missing economic development opportunities as a result of long delays in securing access from provincial highways to reserve land to facilitate the development of facilities and services.</p>	1

## REGIONAL PRIORITIES

The following objectives and actions are proposed for inclusion in the regional Northern BC Destination Development Strategy. It is acknowledged that all provincial initiatives (summarized previously) will impact and be relevant to the regional strategy.

REGIONAL – LEVEL ACTIONS	PRIORITY
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**Development Goal A: The resources upon which tourism depends – natural features, wildlife and fisheries, habitat, water resources, air quality – are well managed over the long-term.**

OBJECTIVE: ENCOURAGE THE TOURISM INDUSTRY TO DEVELOP AND ADOPT COMMON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES	
<p>Action A-4-1</p> <p>Develop and communicate a Northern BC tourism code of conduct to support environmental sustainability practices within the tourism industry. This can be led by NBCTA, with input from a cross-section of tourism operators, relevant associations and community representatives. The United Nations World Tourism Organization’s (UNWTO) Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030, Highlights (December 2017) and the BC government’s Strategic Framework for Tourism in British Columbia 2019–2021<sup>11</sup>, in addition to other tools and resources, can assist with developing this code of conduct.</p>	1

**Development Goal B: Infrastructure, access and amenities are provided and well-maintained to support destination development.**

OBJECTIVE: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF ROADSIDE AMENITIES AND PULL-OUTS TO SUPPORT EXISTING AND POTENTIAL PRIORITY TOURISM EXPERIENCES	
<p>Action B-1-1:</p> <p>Based on existing routes and potential new routes/themed circle tours, work with TRAN to identify priority needs related to new, strategically placed pull-outs (including washrooms, baby change tables, picnic amenities, signage, accessibility), develop and implement a plan to provide and maintain essential amenities, facilities and services. Also, identify needs related to enhancing existing pull-outs. Stage implementation over several years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review existing research.</li> <li>• Conduct additional gap analysis research.</li> <li>• Conduct research on best practices for providing these facilities and services, including low-cost “green” washrooms.</li> <li>• Review ways to coordinate this with the Highway 16/97/5 Electric Vehicle (EV) Network Feasibility Study.</li> <li>• Review ways to coordinate this action with Spinal Cord Injury BC’s Access North initiative.</li> <li>• Based on the above research, identify priority needs.</li> </ul> <p>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</p>	1  2

<sup>11</sup>Welcoming Visitors – Benefiting Locals – Working Together: A Strategic Framework for Tourism in British Columbia 2019 – 2021, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, March 2019.

REGIONAL – LEVEL ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<b>OBJECTIVE: MAINTAIN VISITOR SAFETY AND THE ABILITY TO RESPOND TO EMERGENCIES</b>	
<p>Action B-2-2:</p> <p>Work with the federal government, the government of BC, other authorities and the private sector to provide reliable Wi-Fi and cell service in Northwestern BC. This should include identifying priority areas for cellular network expansion/enhancement. Provide better communication (through signage and visitor centres) regarding where Wi-Fi and cell services are available and not available. Community Mapping Network BC may also be able to assist with mapping areas where Wi-Fi and cell service is/is not available.</p>	<p>1 2</p>
<p>Action B-2-3:</p> <p>Identify and plan for alternative travel routes in key locations to support emergency preparedness.</p> <p>This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current or historical logging roads</li> <li>• Backcountry roads</li> <li>• Marine routes</li> </ul> <p>Note that, depending on the alternative routes, this may serve the dual purpose of providing interesting side trips and/or circle routes for touring visitors. For example, rationale for investing in the upgrading of the Cranberry Connector would provide an alternative access route in the event of an emergency, while also providing an interesting touring experience.</p>	<p>1 2</p>
<p>Action B-2-4</p> <p>Work with the tourism industry and other partners to support training, communication protocols, and other activities to achieve more proactive emergency preparedness and related crisis management.</p>	<p>2</p>
<b>OBJECTIVE: BUILD ON THE WEALTH OF PROVINCIAL PARKS TO MEET THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF VISITORS</b>	
<p>Action B-4-1:</p> <p>BC Parks reviews research regarding visitor needs related to BC parks, and makes enhancements to park infrastructure using their ongoing capital program. This action emphasizes the importance of continuing to work with BC Parks and private sector operators to communicate visitor preferences for certain parking/camping site configurations and facilities to meet the needs of visitors, looking out 10 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct research to understand trends in this area. Parks Canada has completed a study related to RV camping needs, which could be referred to when implementing this action.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to attract private sector investment in these facilities both inside and outside BC Parks.</li> <li>• Consider extending the operating season of selected parks, if visitor demand during the shoulder season is high and if resources allow.</li> <li>• Within the context of the mandate of BC Parks, consider the economic benefits to communities and First Nations created by the recreation services and opportunities, and park enhancements.</li> </ul> <p>BC Parks also reviews needs related to accessibility, which is very important.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>Action B-4-2:</p> <p>BC Parks also prepares expansion plans. This action emphasizes the importance of continuing to monitor the capacity utilization of selected parks (BC Parks) and rustic sites (FLNR recreation sites). If utilization is nearing or exceeding capacity, this could support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The expansion of selected parks, if there is sufficient carrying capacity and available capital resources</li> <li>• The revitalization of rustic sites</li> <li>• A business case for the private sector to invest in camping and recreational infrastructure in the area, if there is suitable land available</li> </ul>	<p>1</p>

REGIONAL – LEVEL ACTIONS	PRIORITY
OBJECTIVE: CONTINUE TO IMPROVE TRAILS AND TRAIL NETWORKS TO MEET THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF EXISTING AND FUTURE VISITORS	
<p>Action B-5-1:</p> <p>Trails and trail networks form a key element of tourism infrastructure in Northwestern BC. Work with Rec Sites and Trails (FLNR), BC Parks, local governments, First Nation governments, and residents regarding investments in, and coordination of, priority trail networks, and public access via trails to rivers and other sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rec Sites and Trails Branch regularly solicits input from local residents and clubs regarding trail investment and maintenance. This acknowledges that resources are finite and priorities must be determined, with input from key users.</li> <li>• It is important to be aware that that municipal governments may have legal access to trails, lakes and other areas that may have been forgotten about over time due to other entities using land. If there is a need to gain access to certain areas for tourism use, it may be useful to review the legal status of the land in question.</li> <li>• BC Parks also plays a key role regarding trail development and maintenance in BC Parks.</li> <li>• Local outdoors clubs are also instrumental in the development and maintenance of trails.</li> </ul> <p>This should tie in with the Mountain Biking objective noted under the Product and Experience Development goal.</p>	1
OBJECTIVE: PROVIDE FIRST NATIONS INTERPRETIVE, LOCATIONAL AND WELCOME SIGNAGE IN KEY LOCATIONS	
<p>Action B-6-1:</p> <p>Support First Nation governments’ and Indigenous communities’ efforts to identify and work with the appropriate authorities to improve signage related to Indigenous communities, tourism features and welcome signs referencing traditional territory in key locations. To accomplish this, the following steps are needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct an audit to assess the need for new and/or improved signage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At airports</li> <li>- Along highways and travel corridors</li> <li>- In communities</li> <li>- At existing and future Indigenous tourism attractions/events</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Based on the audit, identify priorities and associated costs for development and annual maintenance.</li> <li>• If signage is identified for certain attractions, ensure that the attraction is market-ready before installing the signage.</li> <li>• Present proposals to relevant agencies and authorities: airport authorities, municipalities, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.</li> </ul>	1
OBJECTIVE: INCREASE THE PRESENCE OF FACILITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES THAT SUPPORT UNIVERSAL DESIGN	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on the ongoing work of SCIBC to establish a coordinated approach to the development of accessible travel and tourism experiences and services in the Northern BC tourism region. Support the adoption, development and promotion of accessible tourism industry practices. Also, work with the Rick Hansen Foundation, and use their Accessibility Certification, where appropriate.</li> <li>• 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 and wilderness experiences.</li> <li>• Collaborate to identify resources to support these initiatives.</li> </ul>	1

**Development Goal C: Collaboration amongst tourism operators, Indigenous Peoples, communities, governments, and destination management/marketing organizations supports destination development and management.**

**OBJECTIVE: INCREASE COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION AMONGST AND BETWEEN TOURISM PARTNERS IN NORTHWESTERN BC TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

**Action C-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. Piggy-back on existing events, where feasible.

- Use existing forums to assist with this: UBCM, NBCT 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

1

**OBJECTIVE: ENHANCE COLLABORATION AND MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND OPERATORS**

**Action C-2-1:**

Work with interested Indigenous communities on destination development strategies and initiatives.

- Maintain collaborative partnerships to support resources for Indigenous outreach.
- The approach used to collaborate with each Indigenous community must be relevant to them, accounting for their unique characteristics and their form of leadership; for example, some may have hereditary leadership, some may have elected leadership and some may have a combination of hereditary and elected leadership. This must observe constitutional rights.

1

**Development Goal D: Unique, market-ready products/experiences exceed expectations of visitors, while maintaining the environmental and cultural integrity of the destination.**

**OBJECTIVE: INCREASE THE PRESENCE OF AUTHENTIC, MARKET-READY INDIGENOUS TOURISM EXPERIENCES INCLUDING PRODUCTS FOR TOURING VISITORS AND DESTINATION VISITORS**

**Action D-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.
- This should also account for the current initiatives that Indigenous communities are offering or developing.
- It is important to coordinate this action with Actions C-2-1 and C-2-2.

The identification of Indigenous community designates with whom the NBCTA/ITBC’s Indigenous Tourism Specialist can communicate would make help achieve this action.

1

REGIONAL – LEVEL ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>Action D-1-2:</b> Drawing on support from provincial ministries, local governments and First Nation governments, provide economic support, capacity-building, education, research and guidance to Indigenous communities/entrepreneurs who are interested in enhancing an existing business or starting a new tourism business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness level of existing available resources (see Funding Programs section later in Strategy).</li> <li>• Work with DBC and BC Statistics to 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.</li> <li>• Provide educational opportunities to build awareness about visitor-ready, market-ready and export-ready criteria.</li> <li>• Explore with ITBC and other partners the opportunity to engage interested First Nations in a planning process specific to their communities, similar to the Community Tourism Foundations planning process.</li> <li>• Develop an inventory of mentors that can assist Indigenous communities and future operators in the development of experiences.</li> <li>• Conduct exposure tours for interested First Nations, featuring several successful First Nations tourism businesses in BC. An exposure tour provides opportunities for people to visit and observe a successful business/operation and then take that learning back to their home community/business.</li> </ul>	1
<b>OBJECTIVE: INCREASE THE PRESENCE OF AUTHENTIC, MARKET-READY TOURISM PRODUCTS/ EXPERIENCES</b>	
<p><b>Action D-2-1:</b> Develop an inventory of visitor, market and export-ready tourism products and experiences (both non-Indigenous and Indigenous experiences). Update this inventory annually to gauge the growth of tourism products/experiences and their associated maturity level (visitor, market, or export-ready). Note that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NBCTA has prepared an initial product/experience inventory to support the development of this strategy. This is included in the Situation Analysis document.</li> <li>• This action ties into the third overarching goal noted earlier: Increase the overall market readiness of the destination over the ten-year implementation period.</li> <li>• This action also ties into the performance measurement for the overarching goal (see the Monitoring and Measuring Success section).</li> <li>• This action should be conducted for each of the three Northern BC planning areas and is therefore a “regional” action.</li> </ul> <p>Note that this should also include clear documentation on attractions that are considered “anchor” attractions for Northwestern BC. For example, this would include such built attractions as the Museum of Northern BC in Prince Rupert, Exploration Place in Prince George, Ksan Historical Village, and others, in addition to “anchor” natural attractions, such as the Great Bear Rainforest, etc. Note that destination development initiatives related to the Great Bear Rainforest require collaboration between NBCTA and the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association.</p>	1
<p><b>Action D-2-2:</b> Work with DBC and provincial ministries to invest in updated research to guide product and experience development to help ensure that experiences meet current and future market demand.</p> <p>This action will entail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying and prioritizing research needs</li> <li>• Identifying innovative and cost-effective options for conducting research on a more timely basis</li> <li>• Identifying potential funding sources and partners</li> <li>• Making the business case for investing in the research</li> <li>• Conducting the research projects and communicating the results to interested parties</li> </ul> <p>Note that research related to visitor volumes, travel patterns and product/experience and service preferences needs to be included in future research plans and investments.</p>	1

REGIONAL – LEVEL ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>Action D-2-3:</b></p> <p>Hold an annual product/experience development forum that can be attended in-person or as a webinar featuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research regarding the types of products/experiences markets are seeking.</li> <li>• Educational forums regarding how to develop visitor-ready, market-ready and export-ready products/experiences.</li> <li>• Guest speakers, such as key tour operators.</li> <li>• New tools and resources that Destination BC, Northern BC Tourism and/or ITBC have developed to assist industry with product and experience development.</li> <li>• Universal design and accessibility.</li> <li>• Professional development sessions related to starting and operating a business.</li> <li>• Networking session where participants can discuss opportunities to work together.</li> <li>• Relevant government agencies and information regarding new/revised regulations, policies and licensing processes.</li> </ul>	1
<p><b>Action D-2-4:</b></p> <p>Work with organizations/operators – such as the University of Northern BC (UNBC), BC Ferries, VIA Rail and tour operators such as Smithers Adventure Tourism – to facilitate the development high-quality, special interest niche tours/packages/experiences that showcase the natural and cultural features of Northwestern BC and the remarkable experiences developed around the iconic features (see Appendix 5). Over time, this should encourage the transition from visitor-ready, to market-ready to export-ready tourism experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 iconic features should start discussions with UNBC regarding developing niche tours that are built around the iconic.</li> <li>• VIA Rail is also looking for opportunities to develop side trips for passengers travelling by train.</li> <li>• Northern BC Tourism, Tourism Prince George and other organizations will have information provided by tour operators and travel trade that they communicate with at trade shows that can provide direction regarding the types of experiences key markets are seeking.</li> <li>• It is important to recognize that these are low-volume, high-value tours. This initiative addresses five opportunities that were identified through the planning process workshops:</li> <li>• Develop products and experiences that feature ecotourism.</li> <li>• Develop interpretive, educational and special interest tourism in selected areas.</li> <li>• Develop experiences that showcase the unique people and communities of the Northwest and that profile artisans (woodworkers, carvers, weavers, craft brewers, coffee roasters, artists, organic farmers, and others).</li> <li>• Develop tourism around land stewardship and education.</li> <li>• Build on the type of high-quality special interest tours that UNBC is offering.</li> </ul>	1
<b>OBJECTIVE: DEVELOP REMARKABLE EXPERIENCES AROUND THE KEY ICONIC FEATURES</b>	
<p><b>Action D-3-1:</b></p> <p>Identify current and future remarkable experiences that exist or that can be developed around key iconic features (see Appendix 5) and anchor attractions (see Action D-2-1). Prepare a plan and schedule for developing, profiling and linking these experiences as a Northwestern BC iconic features initiative over the next 10 years. This should include sub-plans for priority iconic features.</p> <p>In addition to developing the experiences, include the development of thematic signage using a common “look”/ graphics and an interpretive literature program that profiles the top iconic features. Attractive, coordinated and informative signage and interpretive literature are important components of the visitor experience. There is also a need to coordinate this planning process with the Access North Initiative.</p>	1 2

REGIONAL – LEVEL ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action D-3-2:</li> <li>• Coordinate the top iconic features with other aspects of product/experience development in Northwestern BC and Northeastern BC: circle tours, thematic travel routes, niche package development, and other experiences and attractions.</li> <li>• In the development of such experiences, it is important for First Nations to provide their cultural sharing plans in a structured format so that culturally-sensitive areas and sites can be identified and protected.</li> </ul>	1
<b>OBJECTIVE: FURTHER DEVELOP THEMATIC CORRIDORS AND CIRCLE ROUTES AS CORE EXPERIENCES FOR NORTHWESTERN BC</b>	
<p><b>Action D-4-1:</b> Develop thematic corridors and circle routes which, eventually, should tie into other planning areas (most notably Northeastern BC, Haida Gwaii, the Cariboo and Vancouver Island). This should be coordinated with the infrastructure/signage action for thematic corridors.</p> <p><b>This action will entail:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on the current initiatives that are underway and existing circle tours, including, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Highway 16 rebranding and experience development initiative</li> <li>- The Nisga'a Circle Route project that is currently under development</li> <li>- Efforts to upgrade the Cranberry Connector</li> <li>- Inside Passage Wilderness Tour (with BC Ferries)</li> <li>- The Great Northern Circle Route</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Researching successful thematic corridors and circle routes elsewhere</li> <li>• Identifying potential new routes in Northwestern BC</li> <li>• Mapping out the experiences for each route</li> <li>• Coordinating this process with the Access North Initiative</li> <li>• Preparing plans for the development of each route</li> </ul> <p>Ensure that more remote areas are engaged in this process, where relevant, such as Atlin, Stewart, Dease Lake and other communities along Highway 37. Also ensure that mechanisms are introduced to communicate accurate conditions regarding road conditions.</p>	1 2
<b>OBJECTIVE: CONTINUE TO DEVELOP THE MOUNTAIN BIKING EXPERIENCE IN KEY LOCATIONS THAT POSSESS GREAT TERRAIN FOR THIS ACTIVITY COUPLED WITH LOCAL INTEREST IN DEVELOPING MOUNTAIN BIKING INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES</b>	
<p><b>Action D-6-1:</b> Build on the provincial mountain biking sector work and the Northern BC Mountain Bike Strategy that have been completed to further develop mountain biking in areas of Northwestern BC that have the attributes that would make them competitive. This should also tie in with the work that is underway with the Aboriginal Youth Mountain Bike Program and Trail Weavers. Areas in Northwestern BC that are currently developing mountain biking infrastructure and services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Areas in the Nisga'a Traditional Territory</li> <li>• Valemount (market-ready)</li> <li>• Prince George</li> <li>• McBride (close to being market-ready)</li> <li>• Fort Fraser</li> <li>• Fort St. James</li> <li>• Burns Lake (market ready; designated an "Epic Riding Centre" by the International Mountain Biking Association)</li> <li>• Hazelton</li> <li>• Houston</li> <li>• Smithers (market-ready)</li> <li>• Terrace (market-ready)</li> <li>• Lake Babine Nation</li> <li>• Dease Lake</li> <li>• Boya Lake</li> </ul>	1

REGIONAL – LEVEL ACTIONS	PRIORITY
OBJECTIVE: ESTABLISH DESIGNATIONS AND ASSOCIATED EXPERIENCES THAT BUILD AWARENESS ABOUT NORTHWESTERN BC	
<p>Action D-9-2: Link high-profile designations with existing and potential tourism experiences that are compatible with the designation. These linkages may be with high-profile designations in Northeastern BC, Haida Gwaii or planning areas in other tourism regions.</p>	2

**Development Goal E: A strong, well-trained, motivated tourism workforce is available to deliver high-quality experiences.**

OBJECTIVE: IMPROVE NORTHWESTERN BC'S ABILITY TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN APPROPRIATELY-SKILLED WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS	
<p>Action E-1-1: Develop a Northwestern 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 staff and fill key skill gaps needed to sustain a thriving tourism industry. This should be coordinated with First Nations employment organizations/agencies to ensure that labour issues for all communities are addressed.</p>	1
<p>Action E-1-2: Work with local governments, economic development offices/organizations, the high schools, and tourism organizations (Destination Management or Marketing Organizations) to enhance the experience of volunteering, through initiatives such as recognition programs, incentives and training programs that build volunteer capacity. Explore opportunities to develop and formalize a volunteer program whereby secondary and post-secondary students receive credits by volunteering with tourism/hospitality businesses, festivals and events, visitor services and visitor programming.</p>	1

**Development Goal F: Ongoing, strong government coordination and support for tourism development and management exists.**

OBJECTIVE: BUILD BETTER GOVERNMENTAL UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT FOR TOURISM	
<p>Action F-1-1: Conduct initiatives to increase awareness about the value of tourism and raise the profile of tourism with targeted audiences including local and regional governments and local residents. This will entail conducting research and analysis to enable the estimation of the value of tourism.</p>	1
<p>Action F-1-2: Using the “value of tourism” results noted in Action F-1-1, work with local and regional governments to secure more consistent support for tourism. Also focus on the fact that infrastructure, amenities and civic attractiveness benefit residents as well as tourists. Tourism can improve the overall quality of life for residents.</p>	2

## C. FUNDING PROGRAMS

To assist planning areas such as Northwestern BC in their implementation efforts, DBC has compiled a list of funding programs and tourism resources to be investigated.

The different funding options highlighted include: Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT), DBC programs, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD), TRAN programs, community trusts, Resort Municipality Initiative (RMI), municipal funding and business levies.

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ALSO HAS AN ONLINE TOOL ON THEIR WEBSITE WHICH PROVIDES POTENTIAL FUNDING OPTIONS.

### Possible funding sources include:

- \$40 million in additional funding for the Connecting British Columbia program, which extends high-speed internet access to rural and remote communities
- Private sector investment
- Specific grant funding from government programs
- Community Futures
- Funding through local and regional district governments
- Funding/financing through Tricorp
- 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 funding through Crown-Indigenous Relations 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, for initiatives that are compatible with the organization's criteria
- Funding through Nechako-Kitimat Development Fund, for initiatives that are compatible with the organization's criteria
- 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)
  - Canadian Access and Inclusion Project
- Other existing or future funding programs, such as the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program BC Fund (either Rural and Northern Communities stream or the Community, Culture and Recreation stream)

### Possible funding sources specific to Indigenous communities include:

- The Aboriginal Business and Community Development Centre (Prince George)
- Indigenous Tourism BC
- Northern BC Tourism Association
- TRICORP
- Coast Funds
- Futurpreneur Canada
- ThriveNorth
- Partnerships with universities/colleges



- All Nations Trust Company
- First Nations Citizen Fund
- NDIT
- Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training
- Traditional banks
- Indigenous Services Canada
- IRR
- Community Futures
- New Relationship Trust
- Women's Enterprise Centre
- Local community foundations
- Community investment foundations
- Private sector community giving programs

**Websites with tourism resources include:**

- Destination BC: [www.destinationbc.ca/research-insights/](http://www.destinationbc.ca/research-insights/)
- and [www.destinationbc.ca/learning-centre/](http://www.destinationbc.ca/learning-centre/)
- ITBC: [www.indigenoussc.com/corporate/](http://www.indigenoussc.com/corporate/)
- Go2HR: [www.go2hr.ca/](http://www.go2hr.ca/)

10

# MONITORING AND MEASURING SUCCESS

The following table provides guidance regarding monitoring and measuring success for each of the three overarching goals and the six strategic goals. More specific methods for measuring success for each action will need to be developed when detailed action plans for priority actions are developed.

## MEASURING SUCCESS FOR THE THREE OVERARCHING GOALS

Overarching Goals	Performance Measures	Indication of Success
<b>Increase the Net Promoter Score year-over-year</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of tools that gauge the NPS</li> <li>Changes in the NPS over specified time intervals, reflecting visitors' likelihood to recommend the destination to others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the aggregate NPS increases over time, this suggests that the overall visitor experience in the destination, including the range of components that contribute to the experience, is improving.</li> <li>A higher NPS reflects the likelihood that customers will recommend a product/company/place to others.</li> <li>See Appendix 4 for additional information regarding the NPS.</li> </ul>
<b>Increase the overall economic value of tourism over the ten-year implementation period</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of valid methodologies and supporting data to estimate the value of tourism</li> <li>Changes in the value of tourism over specified time intervals, reflecting changes in levels of visitation and/or visitor spending</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the value of tourism increases over time, this suggests that there is higher levels of visitation and/or higher levels of spending per visitor and/or increases in average length-of-stay per visitor.</li> <li>This may be attributed in part to destination development (more experiences available, better experiences available, better service, more effective transportation and access, more attractive destination, etc.), which results in higher levels of visitation and/or spending.</li> <li>However, it should be noted that marketing can also influence changes in visitation, spending and, ultimately, the value of tourism. It will likely be a blend of destination development and marketing that will influence changes in the value of tourism, in addition to potential external factors, such as currency values, global economic conditions, and other factors.</li> </ul>
<b>Increase the overall market readiness of the destination over the ten-year implementation period</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in the number of market-ready experiences over specified time intervals (as determined through an inventory that is updated periodically as per Action D-2-1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the number of market-ready experiences increases over time, this is an indication that the destination is increasing its overall level of market readiness.</li> </ul>

## MEASURING SUCCESS FOR THE SIX STRATEGIC GOALS AND SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES

Development Theme Overarching Goals	Performance Measures	Supporting Objectives	Indication of Success
<p><b>THEME A: ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY</b></p> <p><b>DEVELOPMENT GOAL</b> The resources upon which tourism depends — natural features, wildlife and fisheries, habitat, water resources, air quality — are well managed over the long-term</p>	<p><b>Measuring Outputs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiatives/ management programs that aim to improve habitat, enhance wildlife and fish populations, natural features, viewscapes, air quality and natural areas</li> <li>Development and adoption of sustainability practices within the tourism industry</li> </ul> <p><b>Measuring Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in wildlife and fisheries populations determined through research programs of the Province of BC and the DFO</li> <li>Tourism industry feedback regarding changes in natural features, viewscapes, special natural areas, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A-1</b> Improve/sustain the health of wildlife populations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relative to a 2019 baseline of wildlife populations, there is a healthier balance of populations by species in 2029.</li> <li>Wildlife populations that were declining are increasing.</li> </ul>
		<p><b>A-2</b> Improve/sustain the health of fisheries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fish resources that were declining are increasing.</li> </ul>
		<p><b>A-3</b> Maintain and increase the integrity of key areas and natural features that are critical to the tourism industry</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural features, corridors, areas and viewscapes that are important to tourism are well-maintained.</li> </ul>
		<p><b>A-4</b> Encourage the tourism industry to develop and adopt common sustainability practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The tourism industry develops and adopts a strong code of conduct that supports environmental sustainability.</li> <li>This may be measured by the number of tourism operations that formally subscribe to a new code of conduct.</li> </ul>
<p><b>THEME B: INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESS AND AMENITIES</b></p> <p><b>DEVELOPMENT GOAL</b> Infrastructure, access and amenities are provided and well-maintained to support destination development</p>	<p><b>Measuring Outputs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of research regarding infrastructure, amenity and service gaps</li> <li>Changes in the number and quality of signage for Indigenous communities and attractions and Traditional Territory acknowledgement and welcome sign at key locations</li> <li>Meetings with TRAN, and agencies involved in emergency services to discuss needs and secure commitments to address priority needs</li> </ul>	<p><b>B-1</b> Increase the number of roadside amenities and pull-outs to support existing and potential tourism experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs have been identified and funding has been sourced to build and maintain roadside amenities.</li> <li>Roadside amenities meet the needs of visitors.</li> </ul>
		<p><b>B-2</b> Maintain visitor safety and the ability to respond to emergencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergency services are consistently available on key routes.</li> <li>Communication regarding road conditions is timely and accurate.</li> <li>Cell service and Wi-Fi service is consistently available throughout Northwestern BC.</li> </ul>
		<p><b>B-3</b> Increase and improve signage along travel routes throughout the planning area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signage for thematic corridors, circle routes and key attractions is effective.</li> </ul>

Development Theme Overarching Goals	Performance Measures	Supporting Objectives	Indication of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of communities and attractions that SCIBC engages</li> <li>• Initiatives to influence BC Ferries' and VIA Rail's scheduling</li> <li>• Completion of the Highway 16/97/5 EV Network Feasibility Study (2019) and deployment of EV stations (2020)</li> </ul> <p><b>Measuring Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in roadside amenities, emergency services, and signage</li> <li>• Establishment and funding of a regular maintenance schedule for roadside amenities</li> <li>• Visitor survey regarding level of accessibility of key attractions and facilities</li> <li>• Visitor feedback regarding BC Ferries' scheduling</li> <li>• Changes in the use of VIA Rail passenger service</li> <li>• Increase in the number of EV charging stations</li> <li>• Increase in the number of vehicles using EV stations</li> </ul>	<b>B-4</b>	<p><b>Build on the wealth of provincial parks to meet the needs and interests of existing and future visitors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research is completed to gain an understanding of facilities and amenities needed in parks.</li> <li>• Parks are enhanced, based on research.</li> <li>• Facilities, amenities and operating hours support visitor needs and contribute to the positive reputation of Northwestern BC.</li> </ul>
	<b>B-5</b>	<p><b>Continue to improve trails and trail networks to meet the needs and interests of existing and future visitors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trails and trail networks meet the needs of visitors and contribute to growing the positive reputation of Northwestern BC.</li> </ul>
	<b>B-6</b>	<p><b>Provide First Nations interpretive, locational and welcome signage in key locations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective and appropriate signage related to First Nations is provided at gateways (e.g., airports), along highways and corridors, in cities/towns and at Indigenous communities and attractions is available.</li> </ul>
	<b>B-7</b>	<p><b>Increase the presence of facilities, infrastructure and services that support universal design</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractions, services and facilities throughout Northwestern BC are accessible to people of all abilities and ages.</li> </ul>
	<b>B-8</b>	<p><b>Ensure BC Ferries' scheduling and reservations systems support tourism from an economic sustainability perspective</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BC Ferries' "summer" schedule extends into early October to support market demand, and results in increased visitation during September and October.</li> <li>• BC Ferries' communication regarding available space is more accurate.</li> </ul>
	<b>B-9</b>	<p><b>Work with VIA Rail on scheduling that supports tourism growth</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VIA Rail is able to provide reliable passenger service for a set number of days per week.</li> </ul>
	<b>B-10</b>	<p><b>Encourage the development of travel infrastructure and services that decrease greenhouse gas emissions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EV stations are established and well-used along Highway 16.</li> <li>• Eventually, EV stations are established and well-used on Highway 37.</li> </ul>

Development Theme Overarching Goals	Performance Measures	Supporting Objectives	Indication of Success
<b>THEME C: COLLABORATION</b>  <b>DEVELOPMENT GOAL</b> <b>Collaboration amongst tourism operators, Indigenous Peoples, communities, and destination management/ marketing organizations supports destination development and management</b>	<b>Measuring Outputs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the number of partnerships with interest in destination development</li> <li>Resources dedicated to the implementation of destination development</li> </ul> <b>Measuring Outcomes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey to gauge stakeholder and partner satisfaction regarding collaboration to implement destination development initiatives</li> </ul>	<b>C-1</b> Increase communication and collaboration amongst and between tourism partners in Northwestern BC to support the implementation of the Destination Development Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication tools are regularly used — in-person, electronically and remotely (e.g., webinar, teleconference, video conference) — to ensure partners are aware of the status of destination development and have opportunities to provide feedback.</li> <li>Regular forums regarding destination development are held in conjunction with existing annual events, such as the NBCTA AGM and other events.</li> <li>Dedicated destination development forums are also hosted when resources allow.</li> <li>An annual survey indicates that partners are satisfied with these communication and industry development tools.</li> </ul>
		<b>C-2</b> Enhance collaboration and meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate consultation occurs in a timely manner.</li> <li>Increased participation in destination development by First Nations.</li> <li>Increased collaboration with ITBC.</li> <li>Refinement of communication and engagement protocols with First Nations.</li> <li>Increased collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous operators to develop and deliver authentic experiences and products.</li> </ul>
		<b>C-3</b> Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement destination development priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A dedicated position is established to secure resources and monitor implementation.</li> <li>Funding is sourced for key priorities.</li> </ul>

**THEME D:  
EXPERIENCE  
DEVELOPMENT**

**DEVELOPMENT  
GOAL**  
Unique, market-ready  
products/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/ experiences noted in the DDS
- 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 (Note that this is also a measurement related to the third overarching goal: Increase the overall market readiness of the destination over the ten-year implementation period)
- Comparing the above inventory of products and experiences to those that are identified as priority development opportunities in the DDS

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

- Interested First Nations are engaged in developing tourism products/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/ experiences, both for touring visitors and destination visitors.
- Visitors can experience clusters and “strings” of Indigenous tourism products throughout Northwestern BC.
- Indigenous products/experiences add value to thematic corridors, conferences/conventions and sport tourism events.

**D-2** Increase the presence of authentic, market-ready tourism products/ experiences

- Updated research is available to guide experience and product development decisions and investment.
- Annual forums are offered — both in-person, electronically and remotely — 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/experiences, both for touring visitors and destination visitors.

**D-3** Develop remarkable experiences around key iconic features

- Partners work collaboratively to enhance experiences related to selected iconic features/areas.
- Experiences are developed around the iconic features/areas.
- Iconic features/areas become an integral part of efforts to build identity for Northwestern 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 subsequent, related activity that supports the strategy).

Development Theme Overarching Goals	Performance Measures	Indication of Success
	<p><b>D-4</b> Further develop thematic corridors and circle routes as core experiences for Northwestern BC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Led by NBCTA, thematic corridors and circle routes are well developed, offering storytelling experiences, amenities and services that appeal to key markets.</li> <li>• Thematic corridors are unified by a common identity and “look”.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>D-5</b> Develop more formalized winter tourism experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relative to a 2019 baseline, there is growth in the number of formalized winter tourism experiences offered in Northwestern BC.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>D-6</b> Continue to develop mountain bike experiences in key locations that possess great terrain for this activity coupled with local interest in developing mountain biking infrastructure and services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 for locals and for visitors.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>D-7</b> Continually improve tourism services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater consistency in business hours is achieved.</li> <li>• Collaboration between visitor centres continues.</li> <li>• The method for delivering visitor services is assessed periodically.</li> <li>• Relative to a 2019 baseline, there is an increase in rental equipment businesses to support adventure tourism in Northwestern BC.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>D-8</b> Ensure Northwestern BC can provide some products/ experiences and services that meet the needs of international visitors from both existing and emerging markets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research related to the interests of international markets is collated and disseminated periodically to support future product and experience development and investments in Northwestern BC.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>D-9</b> Establish designations and associated experiences that build awareness about Northwestern BC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one key designation is secured and experiences are developed around this designation.</li> </ul>

Development Theme Overarching Goals	Performance Measures	Indication of Success
	<p><b>D-10</b> Enhance urban tourism, including heritage and cultural experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination across the planning area regarding festivals and events and other urban experiences occurs.</li> <li>• Downtown areas are more attractive (through building façade improvement programs and other downtown beautification initiatives).</li> <li>• Museums throughout Northwestern BC are linked and offer enriching, interactive experiences.</li> <li>• Museums are more financially sustainable.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>D-11</b> Enhance and/or expand the range of coastal boating and cruising experiences in a manner that is respectful of the environment and Indigenous communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of market and export-ready coastal experiences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>THEME E: TOURISM WORKFORCE</b></p> <p><b>DEVELOPMENT GOAL</b> A strong, well-trained, motivated tourism workforce is available to deliver high-quality experiences</p>	<p><b>Measuring Outputs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of a labour market strategy that is relevant to the different types of areas in Northwestern BC</li> <li>• Provincial initiative to help address succession planning issues</li> </ul> <p><b>Measuring Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey of operators and communities to determine if labour and skill shortages have declined and if capacity has increased through training initiatives</li> </ul>	<p><b>E-1</b> Improve Northwestern BC's ability to attract and retain appropriately-skilled workers and volunteers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Northwestern BC labour market strategy that is relevant to the different types of areas in Northwestern BC is prepared and implemented to help address labour and skill shortages.</li> <li>• Operators report that they are better able to fill key positions.</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>E-2</b> Help develop a more entrepreneurial culture by providing relevant training and capacity-building opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number and availability of programs that support entrepreneurial training and guidance.</li> <li>• Participation in these programs, resulting in a more entrepreneurial culture.</li> </ul>

Development Theme Overarching Goals	Performance Measures		Indication of Success
<p><b>THEME F: GOVERNMENT COORDINATION AND SUPPORT</b></p> <p><b>DEVELOPMENT GOAL</b> Ongoing, strong government coordination and support for tourism development and management exists</p>	<p><b>Measuring Outputs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of credible value of tourism studies and associated campaigns</li> <li>• Number of local government and First Nations government plans that include tourism in a meaningful way</li> </ul>	<p><b>F-1</b>    <b>Build better government understanding and support for tourism</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number and availability of programs that support entrepreneurial training and guidance.</li> <li>• Participation in these programs, resulting in a more entrepreneurial culture.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Measuring Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> </ul>	<p><b>F-2</b>    <b>Enhance local, regional and First Nation government support for destination development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of local government, regional government and First Nations government plans and initiatives seek and include input from the tourism industry.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey to gauge changes in tourism industry satisfaction with government support for destination development, and associated policies and processes (focusing on the objectives of this goal)</li> </ul>	<p><b>F-3</b>    <b>Ensure that targeted government policies and land and tenure management support destination development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process for obtaining tenure, permits and development approvals are more streamlined and efficient, based on a survey of existing operators.</li> <li>• TRAN's process to facilitate First Nations' ability to gain access to First Nations Reserve land for economic development is effective.</li> </ul>

# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX 1: PLANNING PROCESS

The following planning process was followed to ensure this strategy was developed based on thoughtful participation from a diverse group of industry partners that impact tourism

either directly or indirectly. The process follows a semi-structured design prepared by Destination BC that was customized specifically for Northwestern BC.

Key Steps	Timelines
Conducted project planning and document review	January–February 2018
Facilitated session 1 workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prince Rupert</li> <li>• Terrace, Kitimat, Stewart</li> <li>• Prince George</li> <li>• McBride &amp; Valemount</li> <li>• Smithers</li> <li>• Burns Lake</li> <li>• Indigenous Session (Prince George)</li> </ul>	March–May 2018
Conducted meetings in Indigenous communities	March–May 2018
Conducted post-session 1 online survey	May–June 2018
Conducted post-session 1 interviews	May–June 2018
Facilitated session 2 workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prince George</li> <li>• Smithers</li> <li>• Terrace</li> </ul>	June 2018
Conducted meetings in Indigenous communities	June 2018

Key Steps	Timelines
Conducted post-session 2 online survey	July–August 2018
Conducted post-session 2 interviews	July–September 2018
Completed Situation Analysis (Draft 1)	September 2018
Conducted community workshops and meetings with operators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atlin</li> <li>• Highway 37A and Stewart</li> <li>• Highway 37 and Dease Lake</li> </ul>	September–October 2018
Set draft goals, objectives, actions and priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working Committee session in Smithers</li> </ul>	October 2018
Review draft goals, objectives, actions and priorities with people who could not attend workshops or Working Committee session — calls with the contacts from the following communities/governments were held: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nisga’a Lisims Government</li> <li>• Prince Rupert</li> <li>• Lake Babine First Nation</li> <li>• Smithers</li> <li>• Prince George</li> <li>• Houston</li> <li>• Valemount</li> <li>• McBride</li> <li>• Kitimat</li> <li>• Fort St. James</li> <li>• Regional District of Bulkley Nechako</li> <li>• Regional District of Fraser Fort George</li> </ul>	November–December 2018
Prepared Destination Development Strategy (Draft 1)	December 2018
Reviewed Destination Development Strategy (DBC, NBCTA, ITBC, TAC)	December 2018–March 2019
Revised Destination Development Strategy (Draft 2)	March 2019
Reviewed Destination Development Strategy (Draft 2) (Working Committee)	March/July 2019
Revised Destination Development Strategy (Draft 3)	July 2019
Finalized Destination Development Strategy	August 2019

## APPENDIX 2: PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The following planning considerations were developed based on participant input during workshops, research and interviews.

### 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 Northwestern BC amongst many markets. 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. This contextual information is important to consider during this process, but will be particularly important to explore following the completion of the Destination Development Strategy.

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

- Media and worldwide attention regarding the Great Bear Rainforest and the Khutzeymateen
- Growing awareness regarding the special attributes of the newly designated Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Wudujut Provincial Park

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

### CURRENT EXPERIENCES AND STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

While there are market and export ready businesses and experiences available, Northwestern BC still lacks a critical mass of “market-ready” and “export-ready” products and packages<sup>12</sup>. The planning area also lacks “market-ready” and “export-ready” Indigenous products and packages. 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 packaged and guided products.

The destination promotes itself as part of larger driving routes or circle tours that are designed to enrich the visitor experience, 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 the planning area stage a spectrum of cultural heritage/nature events/festivals and sporting events/competitions, some of which attract overnight visitors.

<sup>12</sup>Visitor-ready — Refers to businesses which have their licenses, permits and insurance in place to operate legally.

Market-ready — Refers to businesses that market to potential visitors; communicate with potential visitors and are ready to accept reservations.

Export-ready — Refers to businesses that market via travel trade distribution channels, understand commission or net rate pricing, and agree 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 Northwestern BC is viewed as a considerable constraint with regard 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 Prince George, Terrace, Prince Rupert and Smithers. Dease Lake Airport offers much more limited service.
- Of these communities, Prince George, Terrace and Prince Rupert offer the largest number of passenger flights.
- While the cost of flights has decreased over the last 10 years, flight costs are still considered high and serve as a constraint.

#### DRIVING

- The most prominent form of travel to Northwestern BC is by vehicle.
- The BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure invests in highway improvements throughout the destination.
- Roadside amenities (well-maintained pullouts with washrooms, picnic tables, etc.) are viewed as inadequate.
- Winter travel to the destination can be impacted by harsh weather conditions, which can constrain the development of winter experiences.
- Wayfinding and interpretive signage can be improved. This is critical to address in efforts to further develop quality touring experiences in Northwestern BC, particularly given participants' interest in developing thematic travel corridors.

#### COMMUNITY AND INTER-COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

- There is no certainty regarding the provision of commercial passenger bus service between communities.
- Public transit is very limited.

- Taxi services are also limited in some communities.
- Increasingly, communities and accommodation properties 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 Northwestern BC, any deficiency in emergency services, cell services and Wi-Fi services presents risks for visitors and may deter them from visiting the area.

**ACCOMMODATION** Key planning considerations related to accommodation are as follows:

- Most communities offer commercial accommodation. This includes motels, several hotels, camping and RV facilities and a limited number of adventure-based resorts, lodges and cabins.
- While accommodation does exist in the planning area, as noted above, the area:
  - Lacks a diverse range of quality accommodation options
  - Needs investment in some properties that are outdated and/or run-down
- At this time, Indigenous commercial accommodation is limited; however, there has been development in recent years, in addition to recent interest in new investment.

**PARKS AND TRAIL NETWORKS** Northwestern 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 around parks, including facilities and opening/closing dates for park services and amenities.
- Coordination of trail investments and upgrades between local clubs, Recreation Sites and Trails (Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development), 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/interests

The destination development planning process has encouraged collaboration amongst tourism interests in most communities and areas within the planning area. This has been 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 the Destination Development Strategy. A concerted effort will be required to create and sustain communication tools and forums to facilitate ongoing collaboration and communication. This is a critical factor to support the success of the Destination Development Strategy, particularly given the large size of Northwestern BC.

### Collaboration and engagement with First Nations

While there has been very good participation in the planning process from economic development managers/officers from several of the Indigenous communities in the planning area, a concerted effort to meaningfully engage Indigenous communities using appropriate protocols is needed. Many participants in the process have indicated that there is strong demand for authentic Indigenous tourism experiences, and that the planning area has potential to provide such experiences; however, any such development must be initiated by interested Indigenous participants. There is also a need to develop productive partnerships between:

- Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses
- Indigenous businesses and the provincial government (BC Parks, etc.)

## POSITIVE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

A positive operating environment is critical to advance destination development. Planning considerations specific to the operating environment of the Northwestern BC planning area that have emerged through the process 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 have 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 that planning process participants have expressed is identifying funding to implement priorities identified through this process. This will need to be discussed during the upcoming Working Committee sessions.

### HEALTH OF FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE POPULATIONS

Wildlife and fisheries in Northwestern BC are considered core attributes of the area from a tourism perspective, supporting sport fishing, touring experiences, backcountry experiences and guide-outfitting. Many participants are very concerned about the declining population of certain fish and wildlife 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 through the destination development process. This needs to be balanced with allowing access for wildlife viewing, where this does not compromise wildlife and habitat.

## CROWN LAND TENURE

There is a focus on adventure and eco-tourism experiences in Northwestern 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 labour and volunteers that have emerged through the planning process are highlighted below.

### ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

Like many areas in BC, Northwestern 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 sectors such as mining and other resource sectors. This is a key planning consideration for the Working Committee.

### TRAINING AND CAPACITY-BUILDING

There is also a need to address issues related to skill gaps in Northwestern BC, gaps that exist currently and gaps anticipated for the future. This need is also apparent within the Indigenous communities in the planning area. In addition to the range of skills needed to work in different types of tourism operations and hospitality businesses, the process also identified a need to develop a more entrepreneurial culture in Northwestern BC.

## PRODUCT/EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

### Range of Opportunities

There are many product and experience development opportunities that are important to the planning considerations for the Working Committee as they define key goals, objectives and actions for the Destination Development Strategy. Given that the planning area is in a “developmental” stage of maturity, it will be important to further develop priority experiences. While 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 market and/or export ready. Product and experience development themes that have emerged in the process include the following:

- Authentic, “visitor-ready”, “market-ready” and “export-ready” Indigenous tourism experiences
- Authentic “market-ready” and “export-ready” tourism experiences
- Festivals and events (festivals, sport events, competitions, etc.)
- Heritage, arts and culture (experiences related to art galleries, farmers’ markets, art exhibits, museum programs, music festivals, educational programs, etc.)
- Thematic corridors and circle routes
- Diverse resorts and accommodations
- Winter tourism
- Mountain biking
- Experiences/products to meet the needs of future, international visitors
- Quality, reliable 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 Northwestern BC

## APPENDIX 3: CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Priority Constraints

The following constraints were identified during the workshops and interviews. Following the workshops, an online survey gave participants an 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

- Lack of consistent Internet access and cell service
- Poor road conditions (in some areas) present safety issues, particularly in winter
- Air access is expensive, particularly to/from more remote areas
- Roads and other infrastructure are aging
- Reliance on touring market makes area vulnerable to gas price increases
- BC Ferries' schedule has significant impact on visitation
- Transporting supplies to remote areas is costly
- VIA Rail service that is late at times
- Poor access and signage for resource roads/mid and backcountry roads

#### Human Resource Constraints

- Lack of qualified staff
- Many locals lack knowledge about tourism assets, impacting their ability to interact with visitors
- Labour shortages (exacerbated by a growing number of retirees and small population base)
- Lack of mentorship programs — tourism development/management

- Limited resources to provide training for tourism development and operations in some Indigenous communities
- Youth not returning after training outside region
- Shortage of cooks/chefs/kitchen staff/housekeepers
- Lack of training related to establishing effective web presence and business planning
- Limited options for training and capacity-building

#### Product/Experience Development Constraints

- Lack of consistency in providing high-quality visitor experiences
- High risk associated with developing a new business discourages investment
- Rich history is not communicated well
- Short operating season makes it difficult to run a profitable tourism venture
- Lack of a coherent vision for tourism in NWBC
- Lack of good quality restaurants and amenities in many communities
- Smaller communities “shut down” at 5 PM
- Lack of guiding services in some areas
- Lack of higher-end accommodation in many communities
- Lack of certainty regarding cruise industry curtails investment in shore excursions/experiences

## **Government Policy, Support and Coordination Constraints**

- Lack of government resources to support tourism development
- Insurance for many types of tourism operations is very expensive
- Regulatory constraints can impede ability to obtain adventure tourism tenure
- Coordination between recreational groups not effective in some areas
- Challenges operating on land due to delay in obtaining park use permits
- Cost of obtaining permits from the provincial government can be high

## **Destination Management and Sustainability Constraints**

- Uncertainty regarding annual fisheries limitations impedes ability to guarantee the visitor experience
- Lack of integrated resource planning
- Wildlife and habitat are not well managed
- Not effectively monitoring/managing climatic impacts on fish, wildlife, snow levels, etc.
- Waterfront access is not adequately granted and managed
- Road closures due to avalanches and fires present significant risk if there is not an alternate route
- Strong focus on resource extraction affects tourism development
- Sewage treatment is inadequate in some areas

## **PRIORITY OPPORTUNITIES**

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

### **Transportation, Access and Infrastructure Opportunities**

- Provide good quality tourism signage (not commercial signage)
- Invest in trail development, maintenance and signage and expand trail networks to encourage access to wilderness
- Provide and maintain rest stops on key touring routes
- Provide consistent broadband infrastructure
- Upgrade aging BC Parks facilities
- Develop the “Great Northern Loop” with series of “bucket-list” stops
- Develop integrated transportation plan for Northern BC
- Develop more campgrounds to meet existing and future demand
- Improve the VIA Rail passenger schedule
- Establish a program to make major improvements to downtown areas

## Human Resource Opportunities

- Focus on customer service training
- Provide coaching services for business development, incubator businesses, and start-up businesses
- Advocate for people to relocate to northern communities and work in the tourism industry
- Provide access to relevant and affordable tourism training programs
- Provide services that help interested First Nations establish and run tourism ventures
- Provide workshops for local operators to facilitate package development
- Provide a Northwestern Indigenous tourism facilitator to support tourism planning and coordination
- Focus on local operator education through programs such as Remarkable Experiences

## Product/Experience Development Opportunities

- Build all-season tourism experiences
- Develop partnerships between First Nations and tourism operators
- Develop and rebrand Highway 16 experiences
- Increase Indigenous cultural tourism experiences and showcase authentic First Nations art
- Focus on outdoor adventure: rafting, bear viewing, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, hiking, zip-lining, sturgeon centre tours, hot springs, etc.
- Encourage partnerships between operators to make the customer experience seamless
- Develop market-ready experiences and packages
- Develop experiences that will appeal to the BC/Vancouver markets
- Provide more guided tours – nature photography, eco-tourism, bear viewing, etc.
- Develop experiences and workshops around people who create –woodwork, artisans, etc.

## Government Policy, Support and Coordination Opportunities

- Continue to build stronger relationships between First Nations governments, Indigenous communities, local governments, non-Indigenous operators and the general public
- Improve fisheries management
- Improve regional communication, cohesiveness and collaboration to support destination development
- Create more certainty regarding regulations for fishing, guiding and fish days (days allocated to guides)
- Improve alignment between resource road mandates and tourism objectives
- Reduce red tape for new businesses making it easier for the establishment of start-ups
- Streamline permitting for tourism operators
- Achieve a long-term solution to issues around Aboriginal title
- Seek government assistance to help further establish a sharing economy (e.g., Airbnb, Uber, etc.)

## Destination Management and Sustainability Opportunities

- Develop trails and backcountry experiences responsibly
- Focus on ecotourism and sustainable tourism
- Develop well-coordinated “activity zones” for mountain biking, canoeing, kayaking, camping on shorelines or beaches, rock climbing, hiking, and other activities
- Use a framework approach to manage forests
- Adopt best practices for destination development from other jurisdictions
- Capitalize on the use of clean energy and green infrastructure
- Discuss/align common interests with associations representing resource extraction
- Improve provincial policies regarding water use

## CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED BY ATLIN PARTICIPANTS

The following constraints and opportunities were identified during the Atlin Workshop which was held on September 6th, 2018. These are recorded separately, as the Atlin Workshop was held after the online survey which ranked the constraints and opportunities that emerged earlier in the process.

### Constraints (Identified at September 6th, 2018, Atlin Workshop)

- Poor awareness about the good condition of access roads
- Lack of restaurants in smaller communities, especially for dinner
- Lack of packaging
- Poor signage
- Prohibitive insurance costs
- Undeveloped relationships with First Nations
- Challenges attracting and retaining employees
- Lack of employee housing
- Seasonal nature of tourism
- Community groups working in isolation
- Limited funding for visitor centres
- Lack of essential medical and emergency services in smaller communities
- Small population base
- Lack of opportunity to take some government courses in remote communities
- Lack of cell service in some areas
- Lack of political representation from unincorporated areas
- Uncertainty regarding regulatory and political regimes
- Overpriced real estate due to many recreational properties in some communities
- Climate change and potential impacts on tourism
- Government restrictions related to using BC Parks
- Remoteness and related implications: difficult access, lack of awareness in markets and within government about remote areas and communities

### Opportunities (Identified at September 6th, 2018, Atlin Workshop)

- Develop tour coordination services
- Develop passenger shuttle services between key communities
- Introduction of a group insurance program (by the provincial government)
- Create more walking/hiking trails
- Develop more interpretive materials: historic sites, walking and hiking trails, and other attractions
- Create opportunities to communicate meaningfully with various levels of government
- Find ways for community organizations to work collaboratively
- Coordinate certain initiatives in the northern portion of the planning area with the Yukon
- Develop an activity billboard at the entrance to town
- Conduct a survey of visitors to obtain feedback on their experiences
- Partner with BC Parks regarding multi-year tenures for park activities
- Partner with Indigenous communities regarding joint insurance for tourism businesses
- Build housing for employees and potential new residents

## CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED BY HIGHWAY 37A AND HIGHWAY 37 PARTICIPANTS

The following constraints and opportunities were identified during meetings held the week of October 1st, 2018. These are recorded separately, as these meetings were held after the online survey which ranked the constraints and opportunities that emerged earlier in the process.

### Constraints (Identified at October 1st–4th meetings)

- Difficulty attracting and retaining staff
- Poor air service in some areas (e.g., Dease Lake Airport currently does not offer regular service)
- Poor communication regarding the drivable condition of Highway 37 (no longer a gravel road)

- Very limited food and beverage services
- Very limited Wi-Fi and cell service in many areas
- Need for more campgrounds in several areas
- Lack of signage and/or ineffective signage
- Lack of visitor centre services in some areas:
  - Remote areas which attract the touring market - they need visitor information
  - Communication is critical to ensure people are aware of the area and road conditions/if highway is open or closed
  - People need to feel safe and need to know the types of services available down the highway
- Driving conditions not always safe — insufficient rest stops, cell service, road conditions, signage
- Accurate communication about driving conditions is not available in some areas
- Liability insurance is expensive and difficult to obtain
- No or limited equipment rentals in many areas
- Alignment with BC has been challenging for Highway 37 operators; the Yukon is more responsive
- Limited opportunities for contact with the provincial government and Destination BC for Highway 37 operators
- Lack of clarity regarding who to contact in the provincial government
- Inability to obtain crush or gravel for construction in areas around Highway 37 (this makes it challenging when building or expanding a tourism facility, such as a resort)
- Poor or inconsistent recycling programs in northern portion of Highway 37
- Develop more cafes/bistros in communities that currently offer limited food and beverage services
- Explore opportunity to secure UNESCO Global Geopark status, focusing on:
  - Gold
  - Indigenous culture
  - Jade
  - Connection with Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Global Geopark
  - Geological features
- Establish the northern section of Highway 37 as “BC’s Gateway for the North” (to/from the Yukon and Alaska)
- Establish mobile visitor services in key locations where visitor information is non-existent or limited
- Offer SuperHost training
- Upgrading of the Cranberry Connector would expedite access and provide an interesting circle route
- Offer shopping, food and beverage and activities to heli ski visitors when weather is bad
- Further develop winter tourism: cross-country skiing, world class sledding (existing trails are good), snow shoeing
- Build pull-outs at key locations for wildlife viewing
- Enhance downtown facades/streetscapes through programs offered by NDIT and other agencies
- Link northern operators and communities with Northern BC Tourism, Destination BC and the provincial government
- Develop better communication between communities and businesses
- Capitalize on the growing numbers of:
  - Motorcycle groups
  - Cycling groups
  - Mountain bikers
- Build on the growing popularity of northern Canada with the Chinese market
- Work with RV rental companies (Fraser Way, Canada Dream and others) — provide information about Highway 37 and its attractions

### **Opportunities (Identified at October 1st–4th meetings)**

- Create more experiences to encourage people to stay longer
- Develop more campgrounds
- Develop more mountain biking trails/parks
- Build on the “BC Bike Ride North” which has been staged for the last two years
- Identify and access grant funding

## APPENDIX 4: 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.

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).



## APPENDIX 5: ICONIC FEATURES AND AREAS

During the Session 2 workshops, participants agreed that we need to identify iconic features around which a strong common identity for Northwestern BC can be developed. These must be unique to the planning area. For example, what is our “Grand Canyon” or our “Eiffel Tower” or our “Taj Mahal”?

The Northwestern BC planning area has been divided into six sub-planning areas. Workshop participants identified top iconic features for each of the six sub-planning areas. Following the Session 2 workshops, an online survey provided an

opportunity for people to identify those they believe are most important. Based on the survey results, the top iconic features for each of the six sub-planning areas are presented below.

Sub-Planning Area 1: Valemount to Prince George	Ranking Based on Survey
Mount Robson	1
Ancient Forest/Chun T’oh Whudujut Provincial Park	2
Valemount Mountain Bike Park	3
Downtown Dunster	4
Valemount Snowmobile Trails	5

Sub-Planning Area 2: Prince George to Telkwa	Ranking Based on Survey
Lakes District (Babine, Takla, Fraser, Francois, Stuart, Ootsa)	1
Fort St. James National Historic Site	2
Burns Lake Mountain Bike Park	3
Hiking Trails	4
North Tweedsmuir Park	5
Nation Lakes Canoe Route	6
Telegraph Wilderness Trail	7

Sub-Planning Area 3: Smithers to Gitwangak (Junction of Hwy 16 and 37)	Ranking Based on Survey
'Ksan Village	1
Steelhead Fishing	2
Hudson Bay Mountain	3
Witset Canyon/Moricetown	4
Gitxsan Totem Poles	5
Kispiox Totem Poles	6
Hagwilget Bridge	7

Sub-Planning Area 4: South and West of Gitwangak	Ranking Based on Survey
Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park	1
Great Bear Rainforest & Kermode Bears	2
Skeena River Fishing	3
Khutzeymateen/Bear Viewing	4
North Pacific Cannery National Historic Site	5
Kitlope Conservancy (world's largest intact coastal temperate rainforest)	6
Cow Bay (in Prince Rupert)	7
Seven Sisters Mountain Range	8
Hot Springs	9
Nass Valley	10
Shames Mountain	11
Skeena River drive	Added after survey, therefore, no ranking

Sub-Planning Area 5: Gitwagak to Yukon Border (Highway 37)	Ranking Based on Survey
Stewart-Hyder Glaciers (Salmon Glacier, Bear Glacier)	1
Stewart-Cassiar Highway	2
Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park	3
Stewart-Hyder Alaska Bear Walk	4
Mount Edziza	5
Stikine River Provincial Park	6
Stikine River and Headwaters	7
Gateway to Hyder, Alaska*	(added later)
Glacier Highway (Highway 37A)*	(added later)
Stikine Canyon*	(added later)
Boya Lake*	(added later)

Sub-Planning Area 6: NW Corner (Atlin, Taku River Tlingit, Tatshenshini)	Ranking Based on Survey
Gold Rush History (last gold rush in BC – 1898)	1
Atlin Lake	2
Ruby Mountain	3
Llewellyn Glacier	4
Teresa Island	5
Tatshenshini – Alsek Park	6

