
My Freedom. My Frontier

Tourism Partnerships and Development



***Working together to
build on what we already
have...***

Regional Economic Development Initiative
(REDI) in Partnership with Mackenzie
Frontier Tourist Association (MFTA)
May 2020

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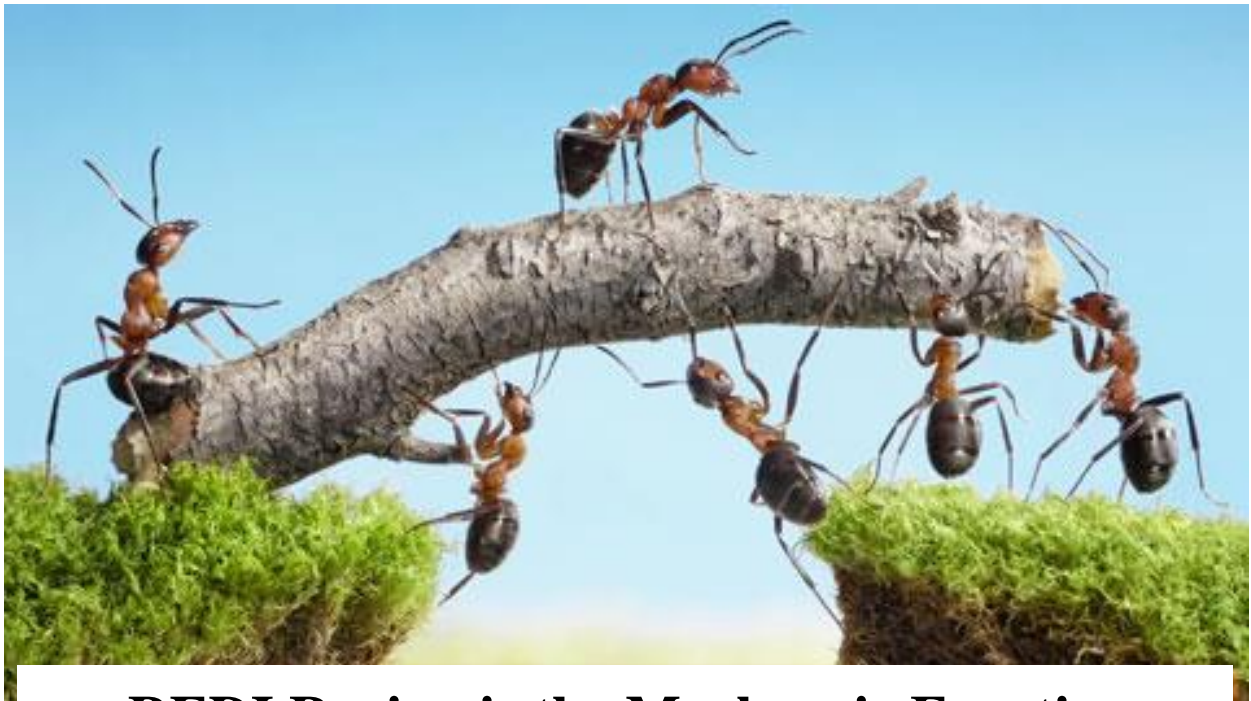
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REDI Region is the Mackenzie Frontier

My Freedom My Frontier

Working towards success through Partnerships

The Mackenzie Frontier also follows the boundaries of the REDI Region. We make up the far Northwest corner of Alberta. Covering over 80,000 square kilometers of beautiful wild country spanning across 12 percent of Alberta's landmass. This vast, lush terrain is home to nearly 600 species of wildlife, preserved history, vibrant cultures and warm hospitality. This report will review some of the current data available, identify some of the challenges that are present and highlight possible areas that could be built upon using partnerships.

We are hoping to show that a team and multi-partner approach may be what this region needs to substantially advance tourism development.

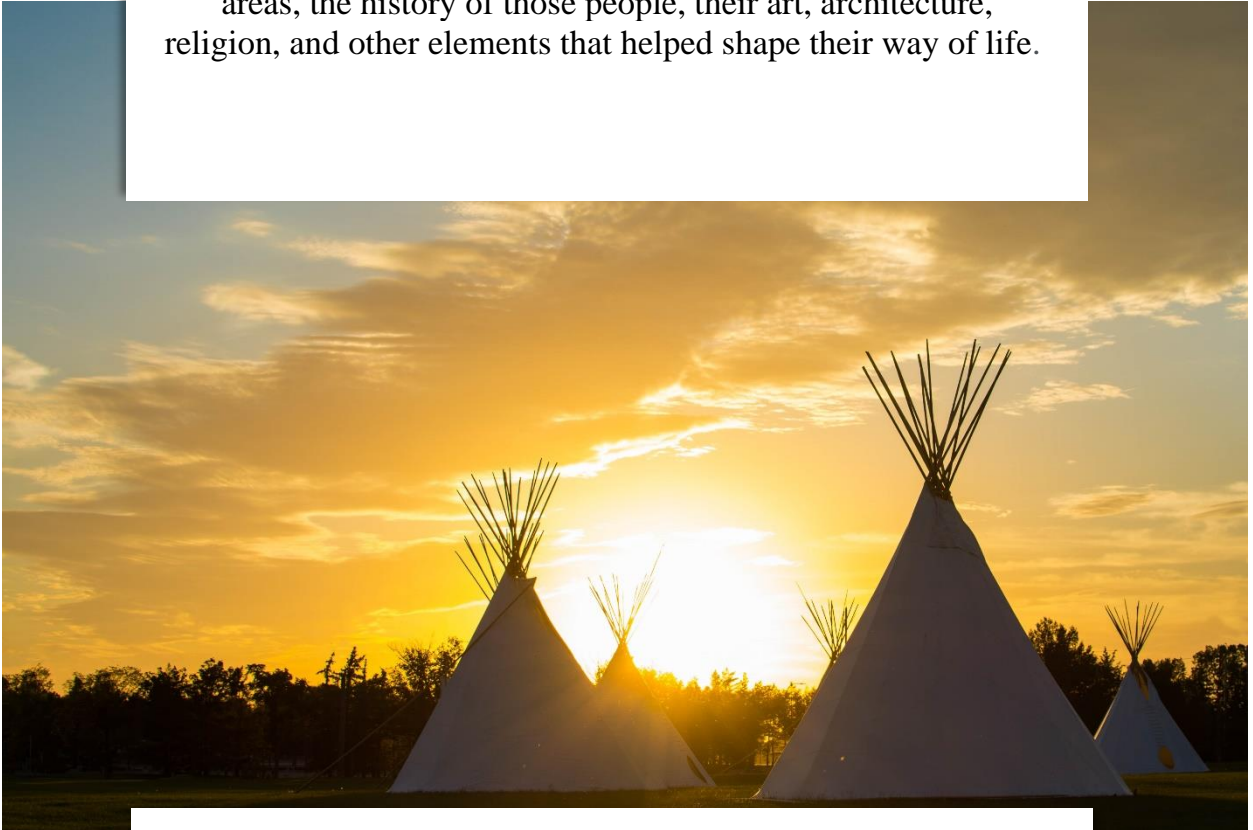
This report was completed in partnership between Mackenzie Frontier Tourist Association (MFTA) and Regional Economic Development Initiative of the Northwest (REDI)



Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is the subset of tourism concerned with a traveler's engagement with a country or region's culture.

Specifically, the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas, the history of those people, their art, architecture, religion, and other elements that helped shape their way of life.



Indigenous Tourism

Indigenous Tourism can be defined as a tourism activity in which Indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction.

This includes experiences presented in a manner that is appropriate, respectful and true to the First Nation, Metis or Inuit culture being presented.

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Executive Summary

There are studies, documents and reports, across a multitude of media and organizations that highlight tourism concepts for the Frontier region. Multiple agencies either at a Municipal, Provincial or Federal scale have offered advice and guidance. Reports that have opportunities identified, and most of the opportunities highlighted have all come with a price-tag that is sometimes downright frightening.

We are going to try and summarize some of what is out there and include the knowledge that we have gathered over the past few years in regard to ideas and opportunities that are percolating in the Frontier. Include the list of additional sources that we have found for those of you that want to delve deeper. We are confident that this report will help assist the REDI Board, Mackenzie Frontier Tourist Association Board and our Members, Municipalities, our First Nation Governments, current and potential tourism operators from all walks of life with direction and areas where they can start rolling up their sleeves and build on the bones of what is already available.

The real work will commence and continue once this report is finalized and circulated. Bringing awareness to stakeholders, partners and the public to the potential within the Frontier and some of the opportunities that are within the region. This work will be carried out by REDI and MFTA, our collective members and interested parties across the Region. We are confident that this report will start the creative ideas flowing and with our Frontier spirit and attitudes it will be interesting to see how tourism develops in the Region.

We feel that tourism growth in the Frontier and some of the challenges that we face can be overcome by creating an atmosphere for partnerships, setting attainable expectations for both operator and tourist, build on what we have and the active promotion of opportunities. We need to think about what ‘tourism’ means to us and be authentic. Be true to the region, our cultures and share all the reasons why we love calling the Frontier home! We will continue to promote that everyone is a tourist and that tourism in this region is important and doable to all our Frontier residents; Frontierian’s, is that a word? Maybe it will catch on! We all play a role in a successful tourism destination area, operation, event or experience.

This report we hope will become a living document, that will grow with additional conversation, ideas and as tourism is developed in the Frontier. It is not meant to be put on a shelf and forgotten... use it, share it, make notes in the margins, cover it with additional ideas on sticky notes and keep us in the loop to your additions and developments!

#explorefrontier #buildthefrontier #mackenziefrontier

Growing the Mackenzie Frontier

The Government of Alberta is moving to release the 10-Year Tourism Strategy that will support the development of the province's overall tourism industry. The Provincial target is to increase tourism revenue to \$20 billion by 2030, that is about double of what exists today. This is an aggressive target and it will take a lot of work, buy in and development in all areas of this province. The graphic shows that key themes that will be included in this not yet released Provincial strategy. Tourism in the Frontier is building and hasn't seen the growth as other parts of the Province, but the possibilities are endless.

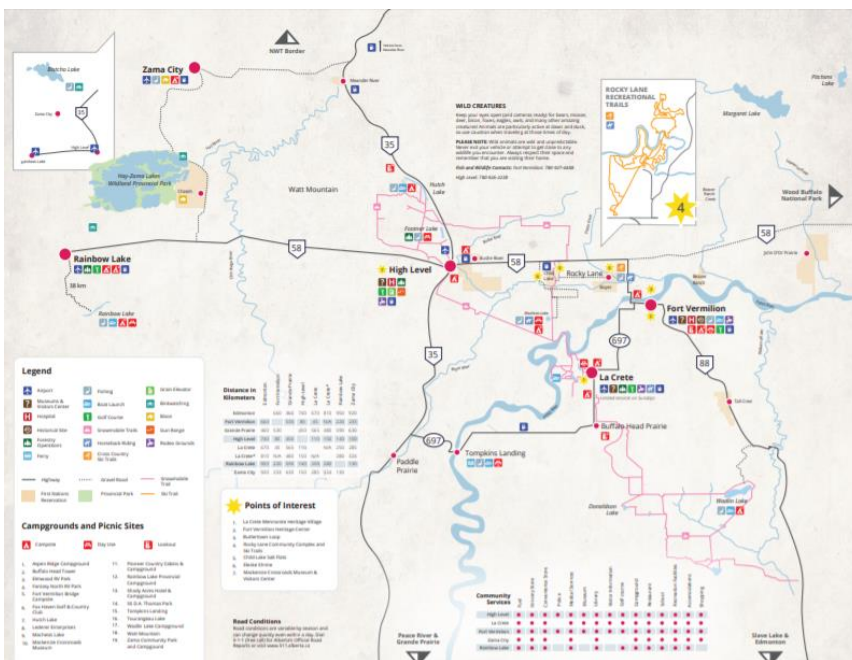
KEY THEMES



A tourist is defined as someone who travels more than 40 km one way from their place of residence. With a region the size of New Brunswick, our residents are tourists too when they attend events or explore the region.

The 'tourism mindset' is the first step in creating an atmosphere of regional and community buy in and investment whether that be fostering ideas, financial, manpower or visitor support.

Something we see as ordinary; some would view as extraordinary and would love to experience it... keeping this concept and 1) taking what we have, know and love; 2) develop, package and promote these ideas; 3) using experiences, events and



facilities is one of the keys to success. The ability to substantially expand tourism at all levels including international tourism in the region is dependent on the development of experiences and events that are put together with purpose; that are aligned with guest needs and wants; with facilities that are safe and sustainable; and include the little details that have a high satisfaction in regards to guest stays. Marketability and promotion are also a part of that overall package and could be different depending on the target audience. Tourism growth across the Frontier could and will look different depending upon which area of the Frontier you happen to be in. As the region is the size of an Atlantic Province... diversity, differing partnerships, culture and ideas are abundant... from Rainbow Lake to Fox Lake and from Zama City to Wadlin Lake the Frontier is a beautiful place full of remarkable people and amazing possibilities!

Tourism Growth and Development

In the Mackenzie Frontier we have an abundance of possibilities to grow and expand Indigenous tourism activities, events and business. Staying true to the culture and the people, all the while offering a spectacular experience for tourists of all demographics.

A tourist visiting the Frontier could,



...have the opportunity to take a bus tour and attend a tea dance, sit next to an interpreter who explains the significance of the movements and introduces them to the dancers, engage in a drum making class with stories being told by an Elder and finish off the day with traditional meal including locally sourced ingredients.

Or

...spend an educational afternoon spent wandering through low-impact museum exhibits and supporting multiple local artisans by doing a little early holiday shopping, participating in preparing a meal cooked over a fire and enjoying a hot chocolate watching the flames and finishing it the day off by spending the night in comfort in a traditional metis tent.

Or



... enjoy a couples get-away, flying into a remote lodge, spending time on the lake engaging in some amazing fishing, experience a sweat lodge with a traditional healer, explore the surrounding wilderness and learn about the flora and fauna, create handmade healing balm or lotion to take home, capture some incredible photo opportunities and thoroughly enjoy the food and the company.

These are examples of the types of experiences that tourists are seeking, and so much more. Building momentum, starting small and then adding to the available facilities, operators and events... thus creating marketable and enjoyable experiences. If you think about these examples...you may not be able to do all aspects, but is there one part that you could do? Do you know someone else who would be great at another part? Is there a facility close that could be another partner so that you don't have to start from scratch?

In a very rudimentary poll on social media and by phone, it is shown that there is no one idea or theme when people think about Tourism... there is no right or wrong answer. What is evident is that people want to explore, engage and be 'tourists'! Working together will help us keep or maximize the tourism dollars that are spent here in the Frontier!

When I say 'Tourism' what are the first three words that come to your mind?

adventure, roads, animals	lake, fun, camping
family, camping, campfires	fishing, hunting, 'the boys'
adventure, accommodations, relaxing	camping, new places, money
culture, learning, museums	new, local, cheap
couples, relax, unwind	unplug, get-a-way, affordable
experience, travel, road trips	excitement, new, tours
swim up bar (yes that's his 3 words)	food, food, food
non-existent in this area	camping, ski hill, snowmobiling
traveling, people, industry	Banff, jasper, skiing
nice parks, playgrounds, picnics	splash park, river run, bouncy facilities
pickle ball, nice washrooms, water slide	stocked ponds, landscaping, bossaball
experiences, adventure, unique	fishing, quads, gold panning
history, people, architecture	unplugging, relax, pampering
income, community, jobs	zip-lining, boating, see mountains
markets, music, friends	rodeos, outdoors, camping
skiing, family, hot chocolate	hunting, the boys, fishing
swimming, lake, camping	exploring, driving, pictures
camping, big trees, peaceful	cabins, getaway, memories
camping, golfing, culture	snowmobiling, winter, trails
shopping, food, comfy beds	doing stuff, events, fun
outdoors, camping, family	fishing, hunting, outdoors
photos, sporting events, tours	hiking, biking, festivals
crafts, shops, food	learn new things (another 3-worder)
attractions, adventures, FnF	Camping, fishing, Museums
golf, nature parks with amenities, ocean	Fatboys motorcycle rally (blatant pitch!)
guided tours, camping, history	day trips, local food, photography
camping, nature, campfires	learning, adventure, stories
big red chairs, enchanted forest	tubing hill with lift, alpine coaster on watt
best kept secret (what NW Alberta is)	camping, sightseeing, history
food, brewery, distillery	dancing, hand games, tournaments

When reading what locals are saying about tourism... where does your mind go?

Indigenous Tourism Growth and Development

Indigenous Tourism has been growing faster than any other tourism sector in Canada, one must note that the stats are slightly skewed as they include air transportation and resort casinos, which aren't readily available or an option in many areas, including the Frontier. We need to look deeper to identify the opportunities that need to be unpacked and challenges to expect. Some of the statistics are from the research completed by Conference Board of Canada.

Indigenous tourism sector growth is outpacing Canadian tourism activity overall.

- Growth in Indigenous tourism sector employment and GDP is substantially outpacing growth in employment and GDP generated by overall tourism activity in Canada (employment: +18.7% vs +5.1%; GDP: +23.2% vs +12.0%).
- Indigenous Operators are mission-driven to promote local cultures, preserve heritage and support community economic development. There are some unique partnerships that can be created and developed to deliver authentic tourism experiences and strengthen culture and knowledge within and between our communities. The following chart shows labour income and revenues per sector. It is important to be realistic in the revenues and employment numbers of a growing tourism economy. A large share of these numbers are attributed to air transportation and casino gaming resorts. This region will probably not see those opportunities in the near future, so concentration on other domains is critical.

Direct Economic Footprint of Indigenous Tourism Sector, by Domain, 2017

(\$ millions)

Domains	Labour income	GDP (basic prices)	Revenues
Accommodation	158.1	251.5	455.0
Recreation and outdoor activities	117.1	184.8	330.2
Gaming	189.0	240.6	605.6
Food and beverage	71.8	84.9	191.7
Arts and heritage	89.2	117.9	213.3
Transportation	317.7	496.3	1,398.8
Travel services—retail	150.9	301.7	470.7
Other	45.9	65.0	128.2
TOTAL TOURISM SECTOR	1,139.8	1,742.6	3,793.5

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

Indigenous tourism is diverse and made up of many different business models.

- While the main drivers of employment and GDP contributions come from air transportation and resort casinos, it is the cultural workers, such as Elders and knowledge keepers, who define many of the authentic Indigenous cultural experiences available to tourists in Canada.

-
- Partnerships and the focus on small scale operators and experiences that are packaged together using a multitude of business models could be the key to success. There are a wide range of management options and business structures available, either one or a combination of methods could work to build out an experience or product. Community non-profits; sole proprietor; incorporated business; co-ops; family run operations; Band owned corporations; partnerships; on reserve, owned or leased land off reserve; land or facility leases; co-managed opportunities with different levels of government; all of these are options to develop a marketable and successful tourism opportunity.

Barriers to growth include access to financing and training.

- Indigenous tourism is growing, with business owners identifying access to financing and marketing support & training as their main barriers to growth. Finding the right people to help along the path is important.
- Partnering and starting smaller, perfecting the experience and building out might be the path forward to address financing challenges. One might have the idea and the skills to put into action, and another takes on the marketing, online sales and promotion, while yet another focuses on the finance and reporting components of the business... together a successful operation. Or one might be the guide, another can pull together an amazing meal and yet another entity has the facility.

International travellers are particularly important to Indigenous cultural tourism.

- Compared with Indigenous tourism businesses without a cultural focus, those involved in cultural tourism more frequently mentioned tourists from foreign markets as part of their customer base. Foreign markets are more expensive to market to and competition is high. The need to have a strong local and provincial base as well and partnering with other operators to package an experience. Test the waters and perfect the product in order to get it to full-market and export ready.

Indigenous tourism has growth potential.

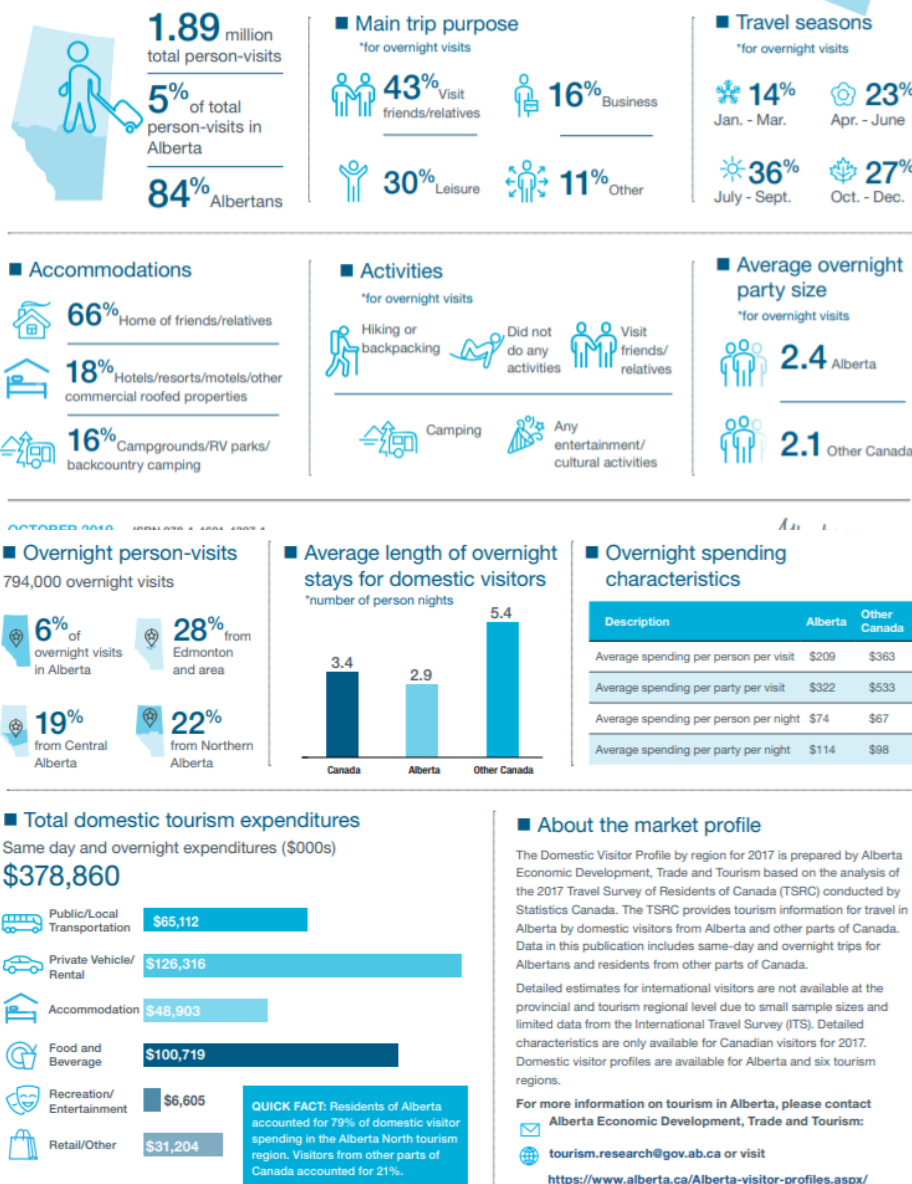
- The ability to think outside the box, partner with the right people who love what they do and have the right skill sets, setting realistic goals and targets are all critical to growing tourism opportunities in the Frontier. Regardless of the business structure or tourism sector, authentic cultural experiences involve Elders, cultural leaders and doing what one is good at and partnering with others who have the skill sets you need to be successful. A possibility to include unique experiences of cross-culture experiences in order to maximize and keep the client in the region longer.

Markets & Statistics and what can be Learned from Them

In the Mackenzie Frontier region from the recent campground statistics we have seen visitors from all over Alberta, BC, New Brunswick, Ontario and across the NWT, nine of the States – including Hawaii and the Countries of Switzerland, Germany and China. This is just a very small sampling of the travelers that are coming to the Mackenzie Frontier looking to explore and experience

Domestic Tourism in Alberta North Tourism Region 2017

A summary of 2017 domestic visitor numbers, expenditures and characteristics



The following statistics are for the North Region of Alberta Tourism.... As you can see it's over half the land mass of the Province. It is hard to pull out really any useable statistics for just the Frontier region. What is evident is the North is under-visited compared to areas in the south.

MFTA has a goal to increase the statistics that are compiled within the region, to try and create these types of statistics that are specific to the Northwest.

MFTA has identified the following first three market demographics that we call our low hanging fruit. Targeting marketing strategies need to be developed for each of these demographics

Within the Frontier -

This is a readily available market to test, engage and gather buy in and feedback, as let's face it we are already here! Testing and development (working out the kinks) are critical, regardless if you are developing Indigenous or non-Indigenous tourism events, facilities or experiences. Similar to the concept when testing out a new recipe, you test out on the family first, then take it to the potluck and then publish in the community cookbook. Regionally, domestic and internationally.

This rolls back to the concept that anyone who travels 40km from their home is a tourist... our region is full of them. With over 30,000 people on our doorstep that could be potential tourists, a market where we can engage our Frontier citizens to become a 'tourist for a day'! There can be many marketing campaigns targeted at our locals! The biggest reason according to tourism statistics that people visit the Frontier region is visiting friends and family (VFR) or attend family events. Capitalizing on this and encouraging our locals to tour the region with family is a target demographic that we can build on. Hosts are excited about the opportunity to show off their community, their life and their surroundings. This is the time to show off why we northerners (near-northerners if your family is from further north) love living where we do. Here's our chance to have a local adventure, visit somewhere we wouldn't normally go, be a tourist as well! Touring around friends and family allow the hosts to rediscover the places we live and view our surroundings in a different way. There is some good information contained in the Visiting Friends and Relatives in Alberta Study 2016 (link included in references).

Just outside our borders -

We border the Northwest Territories and have surrounding regions that are all within a few hours drive, the target demographic just outside our borders adds another target demographic. It is in some cases already here. They come for school and sporting events, team sports, shopping, a quick weekend away and many are part of the friends and family group. Marketing campaigns are could share the concepts of the 'within the frontier' and the 'travel-thru-ers'.

The Travel-Thru-ers -

The travel-thru-ers, not sure if that is a real word but MFTA has been using it for years, so it's a word with understanding in the Frontier! Applied to Northerners (NWT) heading south, or Southerners (all parts to the south of the Frontier) heading North, this demographic is again somewhat of a captive audience as they literally have to 'travel-thru' the Frontier to get to their destination. We just need to 'capture' them for a short time and entice them to experience more of the Frontier than the paved surfaces of Highway 35 or 88. Marketing our Indigenous tourism opportunities to travellers that are already heading the NWT is a target group that are already coming this way. They will be able to experience the different cultures that are evident across the North.

We need to do a better job at marketing events of all kinds to neighboring communities including those just outside our borders, remember to add information on all types of accommodations we have available so that they can try a different one every time they visit! The travel time to even

come for the day does not hold the same significance as residents in other parts of the Country... we are all Northerners, so driving a few hours is a cakewalk for most. The possibility of adding to this market by someday linking to neighboring jurisdictions as Highway 58 extends west of Rainbow Lake into British Columbia, and to the east through Wood Buffalo National Park linking North into the Northwest Territories and South into Fort McMurray would create not just trade corridors but also additional high value tourism routes.

Provincial –

Province wide there are 22,196 tourism-related businesses (Stats Canada 2018), that employ 127,000 people; although we know from experience that StatsCan is not all that reliable especially within this region, and it would depend on how the business identified on their survey. Is the local pizza place a tourism business? They might not think so, but if you're a tourist and you visit there it is! So, these statistical numbers may be on the low side. What we do know is that there are opportunities all over the place (maybe not in pizza) to build on this in the Mackenzie Frontier, with not only full-time operators but also seasonal, event or experience specific operators.

With the downturn in overall economy travelers are being more careful with their travel dollars.

We are predicting that as the world levels back out after the recent Covid-19 pandemic that more and more will be choosing stay-cations, local travel and domestic travel, whether it be for a long weekend or summer holidays with the kids. This means that experience packages, setting up camp for a week and day tripping it around the region will become a possible new normal.

There are lots of marketable ideas to target this demographic. Target an event already taking place, or create day trips, and experiences of differing adventure levels and promote at one of the campgrounds, become the destination, offer unique accommodations or 'cool places to stay'. The move to unplug and unwind could be promoted, take the challenges that we have with connectivity and turn it into a marketable benefit.

Canadian –

Alberta has room to grow, if you look at the following statistics, we are far behind Ontario and British Columbia in Indigenous tourism employment and GDP. This does offer us a challenge as those areas are much more established... so this region needs to do whatever we do a little different, with unique marketing and targeting the right audiences. Ontario employs the largest amount of people in the Indigenous tourism sector, providing 12,924 jobs, followed by British Columbia (6,957) and Quebec (4,083). In terms of direct economic footprint of the Indigenous tourism sector, Ontario continues to lead the way, with the highest GDP at \$622.1 million, followed by British Columbia (\$260.3 million) and Alberta (\$166.2 million).

Employment in the Indigenous Tourism Sector, by Province/Territory, 2017

Province/territory	Employment (jobs)	Employment (full-year jobs)
N.L.	1,004	783
P.E.I.	187	146
N.S.	876	795
N.B.	829	692
Que.	4,083	3,178
Ont.	12,924	10,750
Man.	1,255	1,002
Sask.	3,608	2,984
Alta.	2,939	2,395
B.C.	6,957	5,137
Y.T.	974	758
N.W.T.	1,675	1,358
Nun.	1,727	1,459
TOTAL TOURISM SECTOR	39,036	31,439

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

The table below shows spending within Alberta by the travelers' home location. It is very easy to see that much of our tourism dollars come from within Canada. While international tourists tend to spend more per person, we see many more Canadians.

2017 Tourism Expenditures and Visitation in Alberta by market

*Small sample size. Data contain high margin of error and are subject to significant year-over-year fluctuations.
Source: Statistics Canada, International Travel Survey and Travel Survey of Residents of Canada.

Market of origin	Tourism Expenditures	Person-visits
Canada	\$6.8 billion	34.9 million
United States	\$847 million	941,000
United Kingdom	\$188 million	157,000
China	\$172 million	140,000
Japan	\$132 million	73,000
Australia	\$116 million	95,000
Germany	\$109 million	98,000

Looking at the Domestic Market Snapshot (below) and the top 10 Activities of Interest, what can be taken from this? There are some low-hanging successes to be gained from looking at the opportunities to partner and incorporate Indigenous tourism activities or culture in activities that are already available, thus building out experiences.

Testing the market, finding additional partnerships to build and grow from possibly a every Saturday through July and August feature to seasonal and eventually a year-round business. It is said that everything is better with food... and that seems true as #2 is trying local food and drink... so adding food to what you do may be a good idea, adding incredible locally sourced and prepared food could be a great idea!

The breakdown of similar data that relates to the local region is unavailable, but with the previous work and projects with MFTA, there is a real wish to for neighbors to work together, learn from each other, partner, experience and forge friendships and awareness between our cultures, our communities and our people and then turn around and market that outside our borders.



Domestic Market Snapshot

Indigenous Tourism Opportunity

TRAVELLERS IN THE PAST 3 YEARS
THAT TOOK PART IN AN INDIGENOUS
EXPERIENCE

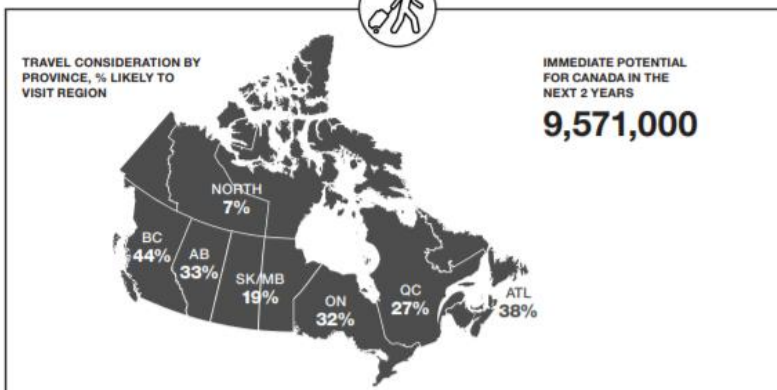
9%

% OF MARKET INTERESTED
IN INDIGENOUS CULTURAL
EXPERIENCES

27%

IMMEDIATE POTENTIAL FOR
INDIGENOUS TOURISM IN THE
NEXT 2 YEARS

2,584,000



Sources:
Statistics Canada, International Travel Survey - Frontier Counts (Dec. 2017 and May 2018)
Global Tourism Watch 2017, Destination Canada EQ Profiles



Top 10 Activities of Interest

- 1 Natural attractions like mountains or waterfalls
- 2 Trying local food and drink
- 3 Hiking or walking in nature
- 4 Historical, archaeological or world heritage sites
- 5 Nature parks
- 6 Viewing wildlife or marine life
- 7 Art galleries or museums
- 8 Food and drink festivals or events
- 9 City green spaces like parks or gardens
- 10 Northern lights

Out of 46 activities, interest in *Exploring aboriginal culture, traditions or history* ranked **#25**

International -

One in every three international visitors to Canada say they are interested in Indigenous tourism experiences. The country with the highest percentage of visitors interested in these experiences is France, with 63 percent of visitors wanting to partake in these types of experiences. Following with Germany, with 47 percent.

International markets are critical to increasing the spending within the Tourism sector as a rule they leave behind more per trip than domestic travelers. But these markets have more competition and are more expensive to market to. Expectations can be higher and additional challenges like language barriers can also play into logistics. Operators must set their expectations for return within reach and continue to build on their successes.

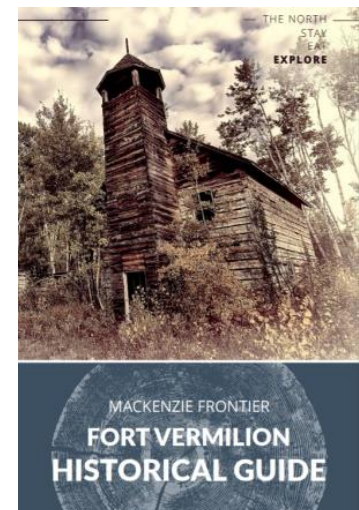
Marketing in the Frontier

The Alberta Tourism Information Service (ATIS) is a free digital marketing platform designed by Travel Alberta to help your Alberta tourism business by amplifying your marketing efforts. Add your Business Listings, Events and Offers into ATIS and your content is shared across multiple marketing channels and websites, including travelalberta.com and a growing network of publishers, websites and apps promoting Alberta as a destination of choice for visitors around the world. Getting started is easy and free.

An area that MFTA has been focusing on is brand recognition, local promotion, destination management and getting our story out! This is also should be a component of every tourism operator. MFTA has partnered with Travel Alberta and Move Up Magazine to feature two of our members in each quarterly issue... this has multiple benefits two being promotion and the silent but amazing secondary benefit is that people in the region are starting to think differently about tourism. Locals now see the Rocky Lane Agriculture Society operating cross-country ski trails as a 'tourism operator' not just the non-profit group in the area that has the community hall and hosts fall suppers. They see that that the local chapter of the Trappers Association is celebrating a way of life that is important within our communities and an area that could be developed into a product to market in the tourism space.

Print publications are a required piece of the tourism promotion package. Our print publications are consistently requested by Visitor Information Centers across the Province and into the NWT, we have heard from them that the MFTA brand is becoming more and more recognizable. Connectivity is an issue in our area, so we have found that our print publications are still highly requested. MFTA has been putting much of its resources and time into developing print publications that feature our region, as we are a relatively new DMO we are in the growth stage of our resources.

The newest one is the Wildlife in the Frontier, which was developed using a local content specialist, designer, featuring local photographers and is a beautiful publication. This is an example of putting partners together to supply a service and produce a product. The Fort Vermilion Historical Guide is another example of this partnership where the Lean To Museum was a critical source of information as well as the partnership with Mackenzie County and the Hamlet of Fort Vermilion with the signage installation for the walking tour. Again, highlighting local photographers and content designers.



Online marketing and positive audience conversations/impressions are critical for all types of tourism including Indigenous Tourism. Online sentiment is fast, and we have all seen the impacts of positive and negative.

International markets will look at the comments both from travelers and also to the ‘home or local’ comments, stories and impressions while making travel decisions... so we better make sure the locals are aware and are part of the positive support group. This goes back to our first target audience is local, and when the region is the size of New Brunswick the locals are diverse.

Online media is over a wide range including but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TripAdvisor; also includes local media such as Travel Alberta (ATIS), websites and forums. In short you want people to be your experience promoters! You want positive feedback on travel and social media sites, you want them to hashtag, tag, rate you 5 star, give a review that engages other to visit. You do not want a negative review, and if you get those try and take what they say, learn from it and improve upon, and correct.

What one can learn from these three posts and what we can take away and improve... this is just one interpretation... what can you as the reader pull from the information supplied?
An example is below:



Experience promoter

Those actively recommending or speaking positively about the experience to others

thetravellingmom - Spent a truly special cultural and culinary experience Wanuskewin Heritage Park in Saskatoon last night. The Park is seeking UNESCO World Heritage status, in recognition of its ancient settlement,



Experience passive

Those speaking about the experience from an indifferent point of view

lamarr1969 - The valley at Wanuskewin Heritage Park. Cold for end of April... #wanuskewin #valley #beautifulday #cold #damsnow #hangry



Experience detractor

Those actively discouraging or speaking negatively about the experience to others

★★★★★ a year ago

pretty light as to what they have inside there

i was traveling with a retired couple one of which has limited mobility. she did not want to go outside so we stayed inside. not a lot in there.

Experience Promoter – as she is a promoter and a mom (based on the handle), impressions are that this facility/experience is good for families with kids, she specifically mentions the culinary... everything is better with great food, the culture was special – doesn’t say what made is special, leaves that to the imagination for others to seek out. The elevation of status of the venue seeking UNESCO status and the history surrounding it with the word ancient. We want more like #thetravellingmom to visit our site!

Experience passive – this visitor is around 50 years old if his/her handle is the year they are born, was there in April, possibly off season as he/she was #hangry and doesn't mention the food like the Experienced Promoter did. It was cold and snowy, so possibly more internal activities could be offered for adverse weather. Neutral response but still stated what a #beautifulday it was.

Experience detractor – 2 stars, concerning as it brings down average rating. Mentions the lack of interior activities. Also mentions the limited mobility options for the site. This may be something that can be addressed with virtual tours, rental equipment for outside touring, path development or areas where the group can enjoy different areas (one outside and one inside) to experience the facility in full.

Same facility, three completely different experiences. You always want to hear from the promoters, but if you really want to improve your business or experience then you will also spend time deciphering the passive and detractor comments as well and see where you can improve or address their comments.



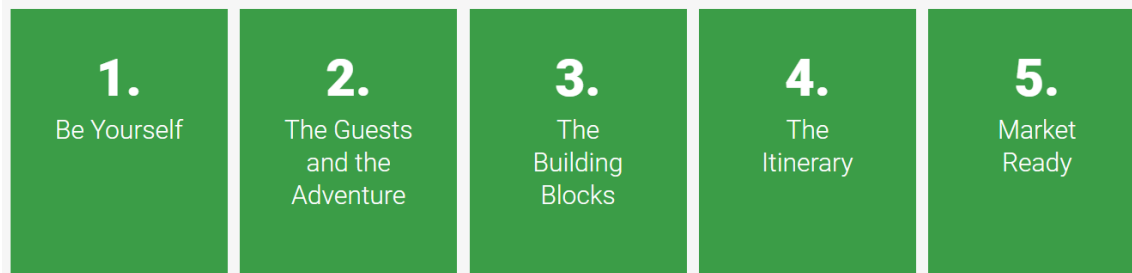
Coming up with the Idea, Planning and Challenges

When developing a plan for tourism, whether it be a multi-million dollar facility, an experience that you want to develop and market or a partnership that has the opportunity to build on...be true to one's own character, be authentic. One of the best knowledge sites that we have found that is easy to follow, realistic and shared by tourism professionals that are in the trenches is the one that proudly boasts... "Our guests, the visitors to the region and our industry all benefit when we work together, share and collaborate." Pursuit Adventures (<https://pursuitadventures.ca/crafting-experiences/>) , has some very good information written in plain language that is a great place to start you thinking about tourism in a different way. Offers how to start with a couple questions that will require you to think about things in a different way... will walk you through some of the development stages, which of course can be transferred into a business plan that will lead to financing options or partnership development.

Our Guide To

EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

The goal: Memorable activities that create connections with place and people.



Curious to find out more? [Start here >](#)

Taken from pursuitadventures.ca

Challenges that may exist-

Fear: whether this is the fear of failure, the unknown, taking the risks... fear can hold us back if we let it. We have to acknowledge our fears and find ways to move beyond them. There are many common fears that entrepreneurs face. If we don't confront those challenges, the fears will ultimately consume us.

Finding the right people to join the team – finding the right people is critical to success. You need to find people who bring something to the table, but more importantly believe in the idea, are willing to build and stay true to the vision and are willing to put in the work it takes. It can be hard for entrepreneurs to make room for partners and to delegate tasks, because of the fear of being let down, in this case you need to rely on the skills of all involved.

Unrealistic expectations – thinking big is what successful entrepreneurs are good at! The challenge is that your idea may be ahead of its time, the market isn't quite ready, or you don't have the resources to do it all. To succeed, you need to be flexible, adjust expectations to match realities. Patience, hard work and bringing the right people in will help with success. The second part of this is customer expectations, ensure that your marketing is on point, that people know what to expect and ensure delivery of them.



Lack of infrastructure – that big idea, knowledge and skills of how to get there, and the energy to do it may be held up by lack of infrastructure to succeed. This is a real challenge in this region as we are geographically challenged as well as we lack much of the hard infrastructure to build on. This is where an idea must adapt to what is available or what is financially feasible at the time to

build. Creative use of existing parks, campgrounds and buildings. Partnership for trail usage between snowmobile and mountain bikes, sharing kitchen space... be creative.

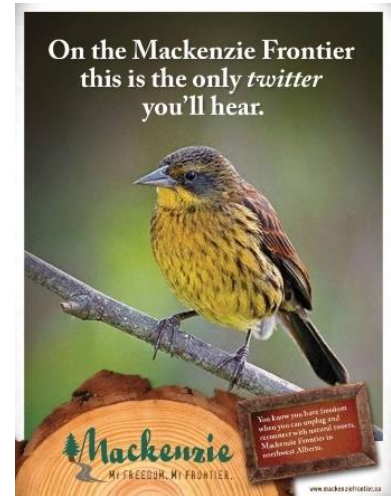
Regulation & Legislation – there seems to be within every faucet of operation a lengthy list of permits, regulation, legislation and liability requirements. The current government is addressing some of what they call 'red-tape', and it will be up to operators to bring issues they are having to the attention of the government department responsible. Regulations and rules are in place to ensure compliance, provide safety to the employees and guest, and to ensure that crown land (through leases) is being utilized appropriately. The challenge comes into play when the rules become so restrictive, burdensome or expensive that it eliminates the ability to operate.

Financing – the million-dollar question! All entrepreneurs are challenged with finding the funding to back their idea. Questions about how much of your personal funds can be diverted to the business, where funding opportunities are and how to access, are there differing options for capital or start up operating costs. Making it through the first 2-3 years, financially, is by far the biggest challenge for startup operators. Again, going back to putting together the right people, the right business model and the right partnerships can make this challenge a little easier.

Connectivity – our region is known for its wide-open spaces!... along with that comes the large dead-air spaces as well. Internet and even cell service is a challenge for much of the region, with the exception of the urban areas. This may be a problem if one is trying to market online, communicate via email or social media, online bookings or even talking on a cell phone. While the

upside of this connectively issue... is that this is exactly what some tourists are looking for... unplugged, disconnected from their reality. Remember adapt and turn the challenge into a benefit. “Let’s Wander where the Wi-Fi is weak” or “There is no Wi-Fi in the forest, but you will find a better connection”

Privacy – one of the underlining challenges with growing and marketing some of the Indigenous culture, events and areas is the wish for retained privacy. This aspect came up in many of the conversations held. Sharing of cultural activities, attendance at some events and engaging in tourism are felt by some as an unwanted intrusion on their way of life. This area needs to be explored by the communities to what would be acceptable and to what degree.



This article outlines some of the Challenges faced by Indigenous Entrepreneurs, and in some cases applicable to all Entrepreneurs, her words and wisdom come directly from experiencing the challenges. What is wonderful about this article is that it also covers some solutions and ideas on how to overcome the challenges that may exist and also links back to the statement ‘be true to one’s own character, be authentic’.

Challenges Faced by Indigenous Entrepreneurs, by Mackenzie Brown



In 2011, the National Household Survey found that more than 43,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada are business owners. Entrepreneurism in Indigenous communities is rising. Entrepreneurship, however, is difficult. It is not something you wake up and start doing. There is planning, thought, and action involved. Being from a culture that is very different from Western

society comes with certain challenges that are unique to Indigenous entrepreneurs. This blog is meant to touch on some of the common challenges faced by Indigenous entrepreneurs in the world of business.

I am speaking from a Nehiyaw (Cree) perspective and in general terms. I am not indicating that all Indigenous cultures share the same world views, or that Western ideologies are all the same.

A Nike shoe on one foot, a moccasin on the other...

Many Indigenous peoples live, work and exist in community. The Western business world, on the other hand, can be quite competitive and focused on individual gain. I don’t know a single Indigenous entrepreneur who hasn’t started their business without involving some aspect of their culture or having a mandate to bring awareness to Indigenous issues. Indigenous economic activity tends to be oriented toward the strengthening of culture and benefitting community. For many Indigenous entrepreneurs, a sign of success is community advancement, awareness and building

relationships with others. In a Western world view, success is often based on accumulating personal wealth. These two world views do not mix with one another and this can lead to frustration for the Indigenous entrepreneur.

It is important to walk on both paths

Being an entrepreneur is about two paths: the Indigenous and the Western. You must stay true to your traditions, culture, and customs, but learning to navigate a different ideological system will also make you successful. The world of business is not the same as the Indigenous world, but to be successful is to honour both. Being a businessperson also means being able to confidently market yourself and your business. Culturally, we are taught to be humble. Learning this new skill that is out of our comfort zone can be difficult.

The things learned in Indigenous paradigms such as the importance of relationships, balance, creativity, honour, and respect will make you successful in business. However, knowing how to write a business plan, do accounting, how to invoice and keep your records for taxes will also make you successful. The [2016 Aboriginal Business Survey](#) found that only four in ten Indigenous entrepreneurs have a formal business plan, which is typically required documentation for any kind of funding or loans. Stay true to the two worlds that you walk between, as you need both on your journey.

Understanding accounting, marketing, and taxes

A huge part of a business is the work that goes on behind the scenes: in other terms, paperwork. This is not just a challenge for Indigenous entrepreneurs, but entrepreneurs in general. Learning how to do paperwork is a must in having a successful business. You can have great customer satisfaction, you can have fantastic products, but if you can't complete the proper paperwork at the end of the day, your business will not stay afloat.

Marketing is something Indigenous entrepreneurs can find difficult. Traditionally, we were trade people who shared information through word of mouth. Marketing your business through the digital world is very different from traditional information sharing but is necessary in a world of advertisements and digital access

For Indigenous entrepreneurs, there is added confusion regarding taxation. Taxes are different for Indigenous peoples and depend on whether their revenue comes from on or off reserve. This can be a bit tricky to navigate. It is important to know that Indigenous peoples are not exempt from taxes. First Nations people receive tax exemptions under certain circumstances, although these exemptions do not apply to Inuit and Métis. Ultimately, all Canadians pay taxes, but First Nations have options to reduce the amount they must pay. To find out more about Indigenous taxation, visit the [Canada Revenue Agency website](#).



Living in Rural Areas

Although more than 55.8% of Indigenous peoples in Canada now live off reserve, more than half 56% in Indigenous entrepreneurs have established their business on reserve and/or in rural areas. (taken from 2016 Aboriginal Business Survey). Getting resources to start a business in a rural area is a bit more difficult. Four in ten Indigenous entrepreneurs in Canada either have no Internet connection or a non-reliable connection. Access to resources on reserve is a huge challenge faced by those living rurally.

Don't do everything

Indigenous peoples are inherently creative and multi-talented. I often meet with Indigenous entrepreneurs who want to do everything. They can bead, they can build, they can sing, they can teach, and so on. When starting off, it is important to choose one to three things to specialize in. It is better to cater your business around one thing you can do well, than trying to do many other things at once.

I also find that Indigenous entrepreneurs feel a responsibility to help our Indigenous communities through their businesses. As I mentioned earlier, for Indigenous entrepreneurs, success is often more about relationships and building up community than it is about personal gain. This, in turn, can lead to entrepreneurs doing too much and eventually burning out. Sometimes it can feel like the weight of responsibility in paving a path for your community is on your shoulders. My advice to them is to make sure to take time for yourself and to remember that there is a supportive community to help you. You are not alone.

The journey of an Indigenous entrepreneur can be quite different than someone who is non-Indigenous. There are many catered services to help Indigenous entrepreneurs navigate a new system and reach profitability. Look to your culture for guidance, look to your community for support and keep walking the sweetgrass road to success.

Mackenzie Brown

Mackenzie Brown is a First Nations Cree woman from the Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, currently residing in Amiskwaciwaskahikan, Edmonton. She is a performer, drummer, tourism entrepreneur, philanthropist, and advocate for at-risk youth in the Edmonton area.

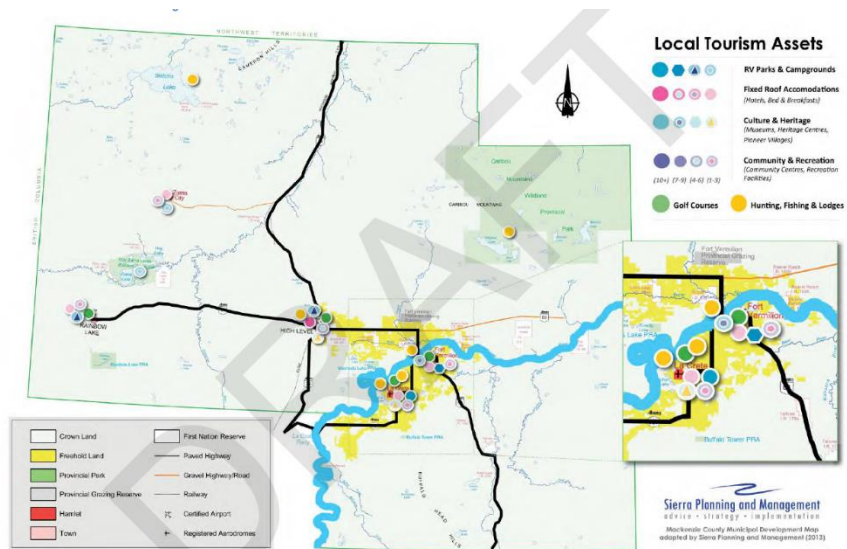
Mackenzie and her mom perform as [**“Warrior Women”**](#). They drum and teach around Alberta for the Northern Alberta Teachers Conference, the annual Jasper Dark Skies Festival, Youth Dream Catchers Conference, Canada Day, Aboriginal Day festivities and more. Along with drumming, Mackenzie is also an avid acrylic artist and traditional First Nations crafts artisan. Her art has been featured in the Pump House Gallery, the Edson Gallery Museum, the Gray Gallery Grant MacEwan, recognized for the Alberta Indian Arts and Crafts Award of 2017, featured for the Alberta Business Competition 2017 and sold to people travelling worldwide at Jasper Park Lodge. She is the recent recipient of the 2019 Esquao Award for Children's Future.

Partnerships and Opportunities

Who is involved will depend upon the business model that is put to use. So other than your friends, relatives and peers, or if you are a non-profit or entity that wishes to develop who can you look for to assist with your tourism project. Groups like REDI or MFTA are not equipped to fund projects, but can be of assistance to get you in touch with other organizations that may be interested in partnering, building on to the idea, have a facility or even financing. Think about the people, businesses, municipalities, nations or the non-profits in the area that have the facilities, the people that have the skills and the energy to help you attain the goal you are after.

Opportunities previously identified -

These opportunities and ideas are not new and are definitely not an exhaustive list, many of these were initially compiled through a partnership with Alberta Tourism and REDI in 2013 during a high-level assessment of opportunities in our area. Since that time some were featured in the publication 'Invest in Alberta's Tourism Industry – Northwest Alberta' report.



REDI, MFTA, Non-Profits, communities and our municipalities have been working away at these basic building blocks over the past few years to bring some of these opportunities to fruition. As this report focuses on building partnerships and building on what is already available some of these have been expanded with additional concepts to get people thinking about the possibilities.

We have some unique tourism opportunities in the northwest, we just have to figure out how to develop and market in a time where investment is harder to secure, and legislation and regulation make it more difficult. Use your imagination and investigate your skill set and see what would be available for you as a Tourism Entrepreneur to be involved in.

Some brainstorming ideas include building experiences, facilities or packages around:

- Rural and agri-tourism, where food comes from, farm stays, harvest for day,
- hiking, mountain biking, canoeing or kayaking down one of our rivers, enjoying the trails whether that's on horseback, bike or hiking,
- dogsled tours, cross country skiing, downhill skiing,
- wagon train experiences,
- the life of a trapper, winter animal tracking by snowshoe,
- artisan creation and shopping opportunities,

- ATV-ing or snowmobiling, sleigh rides,
- Aurora watching, sleeping under the stars,
- historical trail development with experiences and unique ‘stay’ options worked into the routes
- fairs, festivals, tea dances, drum making, farmers markets, hand game tournaments,
- day in the life of a taxidermist, outfitting, hunting, historical and storytelling,
- Cultures from the region, industrial tourism, mill tours, unique accommodations,
- learning to cook over a fire, bush survival, foraging, making a meal from what you gather,
- Hay-Zama Wildland Park is one of the best birding sites in the Province,
- off-the-beaten path experiences, self-guided tours, driving tours,

Some of these are predominantly lower cost options for travelers on a budget, others could offer the full complement of services... The possibilities are endless.

Here are some of the short-term and immediate-term opportunities that were highlighted in a previous REDI report. Some of these are expanded in this report.

Short-term Developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage investment in the RV campground sector to better meet the needs and expectations of today's RV markets. ▪ Stimulate creative expansion of the local accommodations sector and provide accommodation options reflecting the region's character (for example wilderness lodges, urban hotels/motels and B&B's and agricultural farm stays). ▪ Re-invest in the existing market opportunities for fishing and expand to include other activities including wildlife viewing, photography, etc. to broaden seasonality. ▪ Exploit the opportunities presented by the Wildlands and their iconic values – innovate around the potential for select and scoped commercial tourism operations in these parks. ▪ Develop/deepen local recreational assets and services.
Immediate-term:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop the resources, skills and strategic plan for the DMO to selectively identify and market distinct tourism experiences that currently exist. This will centre on the primary assets of the region, and packaging opportunities for visitor experiences. This recognizes that only several of the assets in the region represent strong enough attractors to act as primary motivators for travel. These include assets such as the Wildland Provincial Parks, the Peace River itself, the world's most northerly agricultural zone, canoe access into Wood Buffalo National Park, as well as the Deh Cho trail which although part of a broader loop is a demand generator of significance. ▪ Developing an integrated approach to marketing also recognizes that the area has a number of significant assets which, when collectively considered, provide the opportunity for a number of related experiences and potential packaging along the key themes emerging: cultural discovery, lakes and rivers, wildlife and touring.

Partnerships and Opportunities that take it that one step further -



Creative Economy –

Two target groups that are a good fit are artisans and youth involvement in developing a ‘creative economy’. Benefits can be seen in the following areas: crossing the boundaries of multi-culturalism, cultural engagement can be positioned to encourage social development and inclusion, development of leaderships skills, enhancing internal creativity, building on community ties, passing down skills and

creative spirit, transference with artists and youth skills in social media and online marketability, development of traditional culinary, supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs and growing rural tourism and economy.

Unique opportunities could be developed such as cooperatives working out of community buildings, or a group of artisans/crafters working from home that put together skills to complete the finished product. Partnering with other youth or young adults to put together packaging, marketing, online sales or market/vendor tours. Putting together a professional vendor look and feel that is easily mobile. Having available opportunities for vendors to market their products is critical, this is an area where partnering with all types of events across the region, active farmer's markets, festival vendors spaces, displays within regional museums and visitor information centers, partnerships with local businesses that have a space dedicated to local crafts and arts. The build out of fostering a Creative Economy would be the benefit of a year-round cross culture Farmer's Market space for home-based businesses, artisans, growers and culinary vendors to develop a year-round income and their own brand recognition.



Cultural Mapping Exercise -

A **cultural mapping exercise** could be completed, cultural mapping is the process of recording and organizing all the cultural events your community hosts, the historical and cultural assets in your area, local artisans, and venues that support arts and culture. Once you have all these assets recorded and organized you can look for overlaps where you can encourage collaboration and growth. You can also identify areas of the community or times of the year that are quieter, and brainstorm ideas to fill these gaps.

Available accommodations for packages and experiences -

The Town of High Level hosts most of the traditional hotel/motel type of accommodations. With one hotel/motel facility in each of Fort Vermilion, La Crete and Rainbow Lake. Zama City has a hybrid motel/camp facility. There are many secondary camp facilities, most of these located in Rainbow Lake and Zama City, some of which could be repurposed for tourism initiatives. In previous years hotel rooms ran at a premium and were often fully booked.



This outlines that hotels in High Level averaged 54.2% occupancy in 2019, which provides a unique opportunity to partner with packages that offer a full experience including hotel accommodations. The similar would be true for facilities across the region. Or take it one step further and investigate partnerships with other hoteliers or enhance the Dene owned property by adding culture and décor to package rooms which follow the tourist experience.

Camp facilities that have seen a decline in use due to slower industrial use, could also be prime opportunities for partnership with outfitters, guides and tourism operators. Thinking outside the traditional and how you can use existing infrastructure could eliminate the need for high capital outputs.

Occ%= Occupancy Rate ADR= Average Daily Room Rate RevPar= Revenue Per Available Room	December			Year-To-Date		
	Occ%	ADR	RevPar	Occ%	ADR	RevPar
Airdrie	37.4	\$89.53	\$33.52	50.2	\$94.63	\$47.54
Bonnyville	33.8	\$87.73	\$29.65	45.1	\$87.63	\$39.53
Drayton Valley	32.3	\$92.80	\$30.01	38.7	\$100.85	\$39.02
Edson	49.4	\$104.94	\$51.87	58.2	\$108.44	\$63.07
Fort Saskatchewan	24.7	\$92.34	\$22.82	35.8	\$93.45	\$33.41
High Level	34.4	\$129.97	\$44.70	54.2	\$131.86	\$71.50
Jasper	44.1	\$209.79	\$92.46	67.1	\$280.93	\$188.40
Lethbridge	36.3	\$107.73	\$39.11	57.5	\$110.39	\$63.49
Med. Hat	40.6	\$109.79	\$44.56	59.0	\$106.97	\$63.16
Red Deer	27.5	\$100.32	\$27.55	42.2	\$108.18	\$45.67
Whitecourt	33.9	\$102.67	\$34.81	41.1	\$101.88	\$41.85

Events that could be Expanded and Built upon

Fort Vermilion Agricultural Fair -

The Fort Vermilion Agricultural Fair was started roughly 2015 by Mackenzie County as a way to bring the region together in an event that had something to offer all ages, all demographics... a true for everyone event. Partnerships were developed with non-profit groups including the local Agricultural Societies, Recreation Board, Mackenzie Applied Research, surrounding First Nations and volunteers from across the region. Held in early August, every year it is bigger and has higher attendance. Recently a volunteer group has taken on the role of organizing, and the County through the Agricultural Service Board assists wherever it can, the event costs are covered by sponsors and partnerships and operated by volunteers. Developing new and growing partnerships are critical to the future success of this event.



During this weekend, many mini events make up the overall larger event. Events such as an opening parade, farm and agricultural events and seminars, children's events, Teepee Village with cultural demonstrations, bench show, trade show and vendor village, BBQ and pancake breakfast, jigging and music under the big tent. Many of the mini events are organized and put on by these partner organizations. One will run the parade while another the bench show and so on. The organizing committee keeps it all together and organized. Moving into the future, this event will stay a premier event in the region with the continued support of non-profits, organizations, the municipality and Indigenous communities from across the region. It could be expanded to offer a great 'Week in the Frontier' by developing other events and tourism packages around the same time linking the Fort Agricultural Fair and the La Crete Rodeo which is normally held within a few days either before or after the Ag Fair.

Local First Nation Assemblies and Cultural Days

There are multiple opportunities across the region to develop additional cultural opportunities by building on the existing events that are held. This we believe could be a two-fold approach, including the regional 'tourists' in the events to share the culture and create an additional understanding between our peoples and communities. The other is more of a 'cultural outfitter' type small business opportunity. Local individuals that know the culture, language, understand the dynamics and can create a marketable tourism package that organizes attendance, interpretation and involvement in the events.

The Dene Tha host a large yearly Assembly which is a gathering of their people to celebrate the rich culture and the community. The 25th Annual Dene Tha Assembly was held in Chateh in July 2019. These events are open to the public and offer cultural events throughout the weekend and rotate through the three Dene Tha communities of Chateh, Meander River and Bushe River yearly.

Working with the organizing committee to promote the event, teach first timers the basics of hand-games, the meaning of the dances and introduction to the multiple events.



A similar weeklong celebration is also held within the Little Red River Cree Nation. Beaver First Nation and Tall Cree First Nation host events like Tea Dances, Culture Camps and Youth Days. A deeper look with a cultural mapping exercise could bring all these opportunities together. As well as provide information as to what a marketable tourism package could look like.

Fort Vermilion Winter Carnival



The Winter Carnival in Fort Vermilion has made a comeback in 2020 after many years. Legend has it the first Winter Carnival was in the late 1960's. It is an event that has a lot of history surrounding it. It bridges and brings together all the cultures of the community. With continued support, volunteers and partnerships this event will grow year after year. Partners and sponsors like the Fort Vermilion Metis Local and Region 6 Metis Nation, High Level Parent Link, North Peace Tribal Council, Fort Vermilion Recreation Board, Fort Vermilion Support Services, Mackenzie County, RCMP, corporate partners such as Pharmasave, Sheridan Lawrence Inn and Norbord. These partners worked together to pull the event together. Competitors and attendees were from all over the region, and into the Territories. The Carnival hosted team events like the pole push, crowning of the King & Queen of the North and the Princess pageant, dog sled races, hand games tournament, talent show, hockey

skills competition, drum dance and more food that anyone can eat throughout the weekend.

Building on this event could include daily bus tour transportation from other communities to the event. Adding additional events, and engaging all businesses, non-profits and public spaces within the community to host an event, special program or be involved. As with this event and many other events across the region, the success is in the people... the volunteers and the organizers.

This is just a sampling of the events in the region that tourism operators, non-profits and communities could build upon and around. Start thinking of our community events as tourism attractions. This slight change would slightly change how you would plan, market and promote as well... plan for a tourist, as anyone outside the immediate community is one!

Identified Opportunities: Some you have heard of and maybe some you haven't

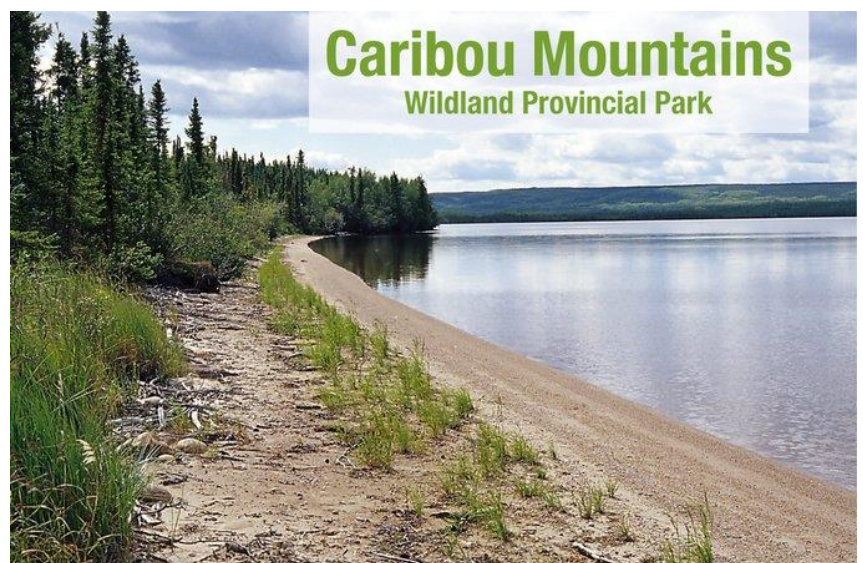
There are many opportunities across the Frontier, some have been captured within this report but others are on napkins drawn during a conversation at the local pub, on flip charts and sticky notes from brainstorming sessions, imbedded in discussions at Council tables and coffee tables. This is not an exhaustive list. The opportunities listed here are some that have been published previously, that were brought up within the conversations during the information gathering stage of this report, and some that have been identified by MFTA and/or REDI.

A few have been featured in Alberta Tourism Investment (ATI) publications, promoted by MFTA and other local stakeholders, but within that ATI publication all required a greater level of investment, and we felt didn't read well for partnership development and thinking outside the box to achieve the 'concept' of the idea. The base infrastructure or feature is in place but needs to be built out. We have removed the financial component that was listed as a high-level view in the investment report as we feel that in some cases the projections were extreme and scared some people off of really looking in to the idea and how it could be done.

We have two such successes with this process... list the idea, get people talking and let them run with it, without the link back to large capital investment. The first example of this is the Equine Camping at Machesis Lake Campground, this was completed by a partnership between the Rocky Lane Agricultural Society, Rocky Lane Pony Club and Mackenzie County, with the blessing of Alberta Parks... it cost a fraction of what the estimated budget would be. The second is the Down-hill Ski Facility located in the Buffalo Head Hills area, which is currently being developed by a non-profit group, which is trying hard to have initial public usage by winter of 2020.

Caribou Mountains Wildland Provincial Park Tourism Base Camp and Research Station Development

An opportunity exists for the development of a minimum-footprint, tourism base camp and research station (BC&RS) in the Caribou Mountains Wildland Provincial Park. This may be amplified by the focus on Caribou recovery across the country, and as this area is home to the Caribou Mountain Boreal Caribou herds. It is envisioned that this eco-tourism opportunity will promote and facilitate tourism and research visitation to northern Alberta parks.



This could include semi-permanent or permanent accommodations that would be located in remote wilderness settings. This wildland park also borders Wood Buffalo National Park. These experiences are developed using the principles of sustainable tourism.

The proposed development could feature 30 double occupancy tent platform accommodation structures. It would also require a central building to include laboratory space and a dining and meeting area. Additional tent and small eco-cabin accommodations could also be built along outpost locations. There is also the possibility of extending the operating season to accommodate visitors during the shoulder season (fall and winter).

It is anticipated that this opportunity could potentially be developed through a public-private partnership including the Little Red River Cree Nation and Beaver First Nation, federal and provincial government, a private investor/operator and an academic institution.

Site

Within the Caribou Mountains Wildland Provincial Park, there are multiple sites that could host this type of Tourism Opportunity. There are some sites along Margaret Lake, Eva Lake, Pitchimi Lake and Wentzel Lake that have First Nation interest, some of these properties were once operated as commercial fly-in fishing lodges and could be either rejuvenated or repurposed.

Two potential sites for the base camp / research station are Wentzel Lake and Pitchimi Lake; however, Wentzel Lake is closer in proximity to the park and would provide potential viewing opportunities for wood bison herds known to populate the area. The potential sites would be accessed by visitors via fixed-wing airplane or helicopter. Potential development locations would require further investigation and partnerships conversations. These areas could also expand to share traditional knowledge teachings.

Market Attraction

This type of development could appeal to domestic and international soft adventure and eco-tourism enthusiasts. This market has a high propensity to visit national/ provincial parks and other protected areas. Visitors in this market may also be interested in wilderness excursions and Aboriginal cultural opportunities. Recreational activities such as northern lights viewing, hiking, bird watching, wildlife photography, sport fishing, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing could also be promoted to attract potential markets. The proposed research station could draw universities from Alberta, other Canadian provinces and international research teams with an interest in northern and wildlife research.

Caribou Mountains Wildland Provincial Park Fishing Lodge Revival

A unique opportunity exists to reopen the Margaret Lake Lodge, located within the Caribou Mountains Wildland Provincial Park, as the Little Red River Cree Nation owns the facility or—through an agreement with the First Nation—to act as independent operator.

To preserve and protect the remote and natural landscape of the Caribou Mountains Wildland Provincial Park, new lodge development within wildland parks is limited. However, Margaret Lake Lodge, which is owned by the Little Red River Cree Nation, offers an opportunity for reinvestment in a fly-in fishing lodge. This facility could also host indigenous experience packages, feature culinary opportunities and youth teaching and training. The proposed reopening would likely require renovations to the existing two-storey lodge. Similar renovations to the eight to ten existing rental cabins in the area, which can accommodate 30 to 40 guests, and enhancements to the existing outpost locations could also be considered. Other on-site enhancements would also be required, as well as the development and implementation of a renewed branding and marketing strategy for the lodge.

Site

Margaret Lake is considered one of Alberta's trophy lakes and features large lake trout, pike and whitefish. It is located within a relatively short distance from the local airstrips.

Market Attraction

The reopening of Margaret Lake Lodge could draw fishing enthusiasts, soft adventure travellers and ecotourists seeking wilderness experiences. Recreational activities such as bird watching, wildlife viewing and wildlife photography could also be promoted to attract visitation to the lodge. Additional build outs could be developed incorporating traditional experiences, teachings, culinary experiences and even extend to health and wellness retreats.



Fort Vermilion / Rocky Lane – Education Hostel Development

An opportunity exists to develop an education cultural and/or agriculture themed educational hostel that would provide interpretive and education opportunities related to agricultural sciences and/or cultural awareness and teachings as well as meet tourism demand for accommodations in Fort Vermilion and the surrounding area.

The proposed hostel would feature the development of two new dormitories that can accommodate eight guests each, eight new double occupancy rooms, a kitchen/restaurant area, meeting rooms and offer agricultural and cultural interpretive programming in partnership with the Fort Vermilion Experimental Farm and Rocky Acres Program, Rocky Lane Ag Society and Beaver First Nation. A different type of accommodations could be developed and built, such as cabins that could also be used for unique accommodations. Partnership with the Rocky Lane School could also be developed, in if in the future the school is to be repurposed, the facility converted. The development of a hostel could provide additional sources of revenue for the groups involved, as well as provide employment and cultural opportunities for the Beaver First Nation members. The inclusion of an agricultural program that provides off-campus learning for students through hands on farm operations. Think of the tourism opportunities and spin off development from a facility such as this, festival and event attendance, youth involvement, culinary and creative economy development.



Site

Rocky Lane is a community located approximately 29 kilometres northeast of Fort Vermilion. Other attractions in the area include the Fort Vermilion Heritage Centre and the Historical Fort Vermilion Experimental Farm site at Stoney Point.

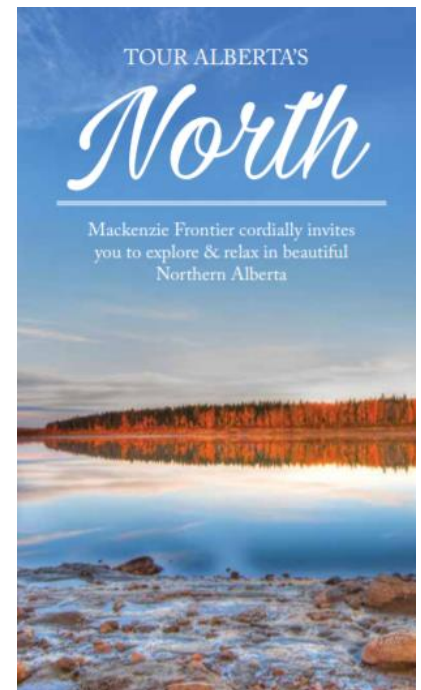
The land on which the Rocky Acres Program operates is owned by the Rocky Lane Agricultural Society. Other sites within the region, using this idea could also be researched. Directly at the Experimental Farm in Fort Vermilion, Machesis Lake Recreational area or on privately owned land. A secondary location for this type of development could be at the Experimental Farm in Fort Vermilion, this facility operates in conjunction with Mackenzie Applied Research.

Market Attraction

The Rocky Acres Program could draw regional students and visitors seeking ag-tourism and educational experiences. To increase potential visitation, the program could also offer summer student camps involving both day and overnight stays. With the partnered cultural component, this could be packaged and marketed to visitors seeking unique ‘stays’ or learning opportunities. Cultural camps and educational experiences could also be developed.

High Level, Fort Vermilion, La Crete, Old Carcajou and Tompkins Landing Driving Tour Development

The area between the communities of High Level, Fort Vermilion, La Crete, Old Carcajou and Tompkins Landing is home to several cultural heritage assets. This circle themed route has been dubbed the Frontier ‘Circle Tour’ and has the opportunity for continued build outs. This currently is a designated, self-guided driving tour that provides visitors with access to historical and cultural points, natural landmarks and other tourist attractions and services within the area. There is potential to develop additional stops and features along this route, and a few jump-off points where visitors could venture off the path and experience what the local area has to offer. The route could also feature programming and experiences to extend the driving tour’s operating season. The route’s possible proximity to local accommodations and access to Aboriginal cultural experiences, local cuisine, and other recreational opportunities such as hiking/ walking trails, golfing and river tours could attract interest in the route. The promotion of special events and festivals could also be strategically used to attract potential visitors. It is anticipated that this initiative could support the development of new and enhanced tourism business opportunities in the region. Additional interpretive signage and points of interest could also be included throughout the route. A secondary ‘Off-Road Circle Tour’ with more of an adventurer theme could be developed High Level – Rainbow Lake – Zama City – High Level.



Site

The communities that could form part of the proposed route have rich historical and cultural links to the First Nations, European, Métis and Mennonite settlements. The highways and ice bridge or ferry infrastructure within the region also provides potential opportunities to draw visitors to the driving tour. As the ‘bones’ are already in place, and additional development within this route and inclusion in the promotional materials would enhance all features already involved.

Market Attraction

This is the route that promotes ‘stay a day or two on your way through’ promotion. Marketing to travelers that are already using the Mackenzie Highway 35 or Highway 88. Driving travelers such as long-stay RV’ers, 55+ demographics looking for historical, visitors seeking experiential learning such as Indigenous, local culinary, wildlife and historical experiences. This route also offers the ideal of a part-time tour operator to organize and sell ‘packages’ including transportation, accommodations, the ‘stops along the route’ and one can’t forget the food! Marketing and branding efforts could be coordinated in partnership with the Mackenzie Frontier Tourist Association, as that is who markets the existing Frontier Circle Tour.

Machesis Lake Area

Equine Tourism – Unique Stays - Additional Development

The build out to the Equine Tourism facility at Machesis Lake Recreation Area offers unique possibilities for partnerships between the Beaver First Nation, Rocky Lane Pony Club and Mackenzie County. Machesis Lake currently offers recreational areas, trails and services to visitors and could potentially draw more visitors seeking additional soft adventure experiences. Mackenzie County in partnership with the Rocky Lane Agricultural Society and the Rocky Lane Pony Club built an equine camping facility within the existing Recreational area. This site features 8 campsites with pens, hitching posts, manure bins and site amenities.

All for the purpose of soft adventure and stays that access the trail system that surrounds the facility. Possibilities to expand this into full experiences where packages are developed that provide horses, guides, unique accommodations such as cabins, tents or teepees, culinary opportunities using locally foraged and secured ingredients, cultural, art and story telling. Additional tourism related amenities and services could be added as market demand is established.



Site

Quiet, off the grid spaces that boast 18 hour days in summer, the base facilities are already in place within the Machesis Lake Campground. This Provincial area lease is held by Mackenzie County, and they currently operate the facility with a full-time caretaker Mid-May – Mid-September. A site alternative to Machesis Lake is the Watt Mountain area (Hutch Lake Campground), which currently has a significant trail network (principally used for snowmobile or ATV travel) and Watt Mountain also provides opportunities for wildlife viewing. Depending upon the location, the base facility bones are already in place, and the partnerships would vary with the location discussed, Watt Mountain area would be an opportunity for the Dene Tha First Nation. Both sites could be adapted and utilized under agreement during the off seasons for outfitting or guiding experiences as well.

Market Attraction

Equine tourism provides a unique opportunity, and a good fit to partner and build out inclusive of packages, experiences and learning development within the region.

Other Campground Facility Expansions and Partnerships

Numerous locations throughout the REDI/MFTA region offer potential opportunities for the expansion and increased utilization of existing RV campground facilities. This region has a large driving and drive-through tourist demographic, as well as visitors that are looking for non-traditional and unique accommodation options.

The current rural recreational facilities are predominately operated by Mackenzie County, on leased land from the Government of Alberta. These facilities for the most part are under-developed and under-utilized. Over the past five years Mackenzie County has put a substantial contribution into continued to develop these facilities, upgrades to playgrounds, water sources, washroom facilities and site and dock development.

At Wadlin Lake a partnership to develop additional campsites was developed that reduced the cost substantially, in lieu of offering camping sites for a set term to the private company that completed the work. This type of partnership could be expanded upon at this facility as well as others to help reduce the costs of development.

The one challenge the County had during this project was wading through the Provincial bureaucracy, a more streamlined long-term approval process is required for operation of provincially leased recreation sites.

The three rural campgrounds operated by the Mackenzie County have seasonal caretakers in place to ensure compliance and provide guest services. Partnerships could be developed to bring additional experiences to the areas and promotion of these to the visitor demographic.



We will speak in generalities, where most of these ideas can be built on and development in almost any of the areas, with similar but different partnerships to bring it all together. Within these current facilities, the Government of Alberta owns the land and Mackenzie County holds the leases and operates within a limited budget. The only limit to partnering or joint operation would be imagination and cooperation. Additional RV site development, teepee, tent or cabin development within the facilities, events and festivals, packaged experiences, learning, cultural and story telling opportunities, creative artisan and sales development, foraging and culinary options, outfitting and guiding, canoe or other water craft rentals and tours, equine options, ATV or snowmobile tours. Most of these areas do not have water, sewer or power within the campgrounds, and the addition of these basic services could be looked at or other options to provide them. Some of the areas also have great historical and cultural significance that tourists of all shapes are wanting to experience.

Our local demographic and population fit into this as well, building relationships with our neighbors, learning and experiencing the history and building out future together will make this region stronger.

Other facilities that could benefit from partnerships are the Fox Haven Golf Course and the Rainbow Lake Campground. Fox Haven is located just outside the Town of High Level and is owned and operated by a non-profit society. Unique accommodations like cabin rentals would be a great addition to this facility and would promote golf & stay packages. Rainbow Lake Campground is leased from the Province by a non-profit Society. Partnerships for events, facility development and improvements would increase the value and usage of this facility. Road access may be a challenge as the access is an industry maintained and operated road.

Partnerships with private campground operators may also be available, thinking outside the box to join forces and create unique experiences.

Market Attraction

The RV travel market is expected to remain an important component of the tourism sector in northern Alberta. The proposed expansion(s) could cater to long-haul RV travellers, regional vacationers, weekend getaway markets or the international touring market. Regional stakeholders have identified a general lack of serviced sites for RV travellers. Many existing campsites along the Mackenzie Highway are filled to capacity in the summer, representing potential demand for increased serviced RV camping facilities. Add unique accommodations for passenger vehicle tourists and the opportunities for these facilities are enhanced.

Fort Vermilion Bridge Campground –

This site provides an extremely unique opportunity to bridge the multiple cultures and bring them together to promote and celebrate the regions diversity. This area is culturally significant to just about all of the diverse populations that make up the Mackenzie Frontier. The Cree, the Beaver, the Metis people and the different groups of Settlers from the Polish to the English. This site also is in the midst of ‘Buttertown’ and across the river from one of the oldest communities in the Alberta. Along the shores of the Peace River.

Fort Vermilion Bridge Campground is situated 10 kilometres northwest of Fort Vermilion and northeast of the Fort Vermilion Bridge. The campground is also located along the Buttertown Loop trail. The campground is operated by Mackenzie County under lease from the Province of Alberta. The county is seeking to expand the area along the Peace River, east of the current campground location. This would capture the historical sites along the river that supported the past ferry landings. If amendments to the existing lease are approved, the development site could be located within this area.



This site has the ability to build in services like power as it's close to the boundaries. Development of RV sites of multiple sizes, unique accommodation options, walking trail development and interpretive signage, facility creation such as central washroom and shower facilities, cook house, cultural areas and festival grounds, possibility of moving some of the surrounding heritage buildings to the site, linking the history of the area to the Old Bay House (when it is open and operational), possible jump off point for river excursions and tours.

This site is one of the most exciting sites that could truly blend the cultures of the region, while offering an amazing experience for tourists.

Hutch Lake Campground -

The Hutch Lake Campground & Day Use Area is 35 kilometres north of High Level, west of the man made Hutch Lake. It is operated by Mackenzie County under lease with the Province of Alberta. The campground offers several potential locations for the proposed RV sites and unique accommodation, like cabins, teepees or serviced tents. Partnerships could be developed to offer these non-RV accommodations, base camp for tours, vendors or utilized as an event venue. Partnership opportunities with the Town of High Level, the Dene Tha or private tourism operators within this area again are only limited by realizing the possibilities, cooperation and coordination. Mentioned previously as well



Wadlin Lake -

Wadlin Lake Campground and Day Use area is operated by Mackenzie County under a land lease with the Province of Alberta. It is located off on Highway 88, situated on the northeast shore of Wadlin Lake. Has 35 unserviced campsites, dock facility and basic campground amenities. This is another site that could be built upon using partnerships and cooperation. Similar to Hutch or Machesis this campground offers lots of room to expand within the current boundaries of the lease. RV areas as well as unique accommodation, like cabins, teepees or serviced tents for those that do not have RV's and still want to experience the region. Partnerships could be developed to offer these unique accommodations, base camp for tours, vendors or utilized as an event venue. This lake hosts a protected pelican nesting site. Partnership opportunities with the private tourism operators, Tall Cree or Beaver First Nation within this area again are only limited by realizing the possibilities, cooperation and coordination.



Hay Zama Lakes Wildland Provincial Park Cultural Learning Centre and Summer Lodge Development

An opportunity exists to develop a multi-purpose and multi-season facility to serve as both a Dene Tha' First Nation cultural learning centre and summer lodge near the Hay-Zama Lakes Wildland Provincial Park area. The development of this facility would be part of a potential longer term opportunity to create a sustainable model for tourism in the park area.

During the winter and spring, the facility would serve as a cultural learning centre focusing on traditional activities, storytelling, land-based skills and youth programs. During the summer and fall period (May to October), the facility would be used as a lodge to accommodate visitors. The facility could also be used by local Dene Tha' communities during the off-season. This site is also one of the areas that has an Industry significance, it was the only 'off shore' drilling in Alberta, Industry has been phased out of this area and industrial tourism could play a part in the development and marketing. This site (facility) and area could be one of the operational points for the Dene Tha owned outfitting company. Unique accommodations instead of a large scale lodge would be a great starting point, individual cabins, teepee or hunting style tent accommodations. For any of the Casons (large culvert diversion structures) that are still in place from industrial times, would make incredible tenting / lookout sites throughout the park.

This area was also the location where in 1984, 29 wood bison were introduced, the herd has now grown and expanded to cover most of the Chateh / Zama area. The herd is protected and known as the Hay-Zama Bison Herd. Hunts do take place to effectively manage the herds population.

Site

Hay-Zama Lakes Wildland Provincial Park, which is about 12,000 acres, is one of two wildland provincial parks in the REDI region. It is located adjacent to the community of Chateh. The provincial park was designated as a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and is recognized as an important area for migratory birds. The park is twinned with the Dalai Lake Biosphere Reserve in northeast China, making it a prime area for wetland tourism and research. There is an unrealized management plan for this park, although it may be outdated. To move forward, a group of local stakeholders should be convened to develop a realistic plan, with the emphasis on Dene Tha involvement, in conjunction with the Province of Alberta, the local communities, municipalities of Mackenzie County and the Town of Rainbow Lake and industry stakeholders.

Market Attraction

As a wetland complex, the park draws visitors seeking unique wilderness and cultural experiences. Although camping is permitted, the wet terrain makes much of the area unsuitable for this activity. There are currently no developed camping facilities adjacent to or in the vicinity of the park. The area could be difficult terrain to navigate; however, the Dene Tha' First Nation could potentially offer visitors with guided services. This area could be focused on supporting the Dene Tha youth, culture and environment through eco-tourism and camp programming, could be built out to include foraging and culinary, artisan development and sales and corporate team building training retreats.

Mackenzie Frontier Region Bed & Breakfast – Airbnb – Creative Stay Development

Opportunities across the region, exist to increase the creative stay options in the Frontier. Combining these types of stays with local food experiences, inclusion in tourism packages and promotion locally and using Airbnb as one of the marketing platforms. These could be themed throughout the region, offer only seasonal stays, or be more year round. Packaged with other tourism opportunities or on their own or with existing facilities like Campground, Museums, cultural points of interest. Developed in close proximity to other venues or attractions. Additional opportunities exist within proximity to the Frontier Circle Tour route, and a complete development of the ‘Adventure Circle Tour’ that could encompass the west side of the Frontier. Harvest Hosts is another platform that our operators, farm, residents could tap into that offers the platform for promotion, structure and does not require large capital investments.



These types of accommodations depending on building materials could be used throughout different seasons for different types of occupants. Cabins year round, or three season. Deluxe tents for summer camping, and then for fall hunting season. Families, couples or singles, and could target driving demographics, or even our large local touristy group.

Market Attraction

Marketing could be targeted across demographics. Could also use platforms like Airbnb. Could potentially attract vehicle travellers journeying through the Deh Cho Travel Connection, or residents of the NWT, domestic Frontier tourists, including international visitors. Could also draw business travellers and tourists visiting friends and relatives in the region.



Bistcho Lake Area – Tapawingo Lodge Enhancement and Additional Development

An opportunity exists to expand the current Tapawingo Lodge, a fly-in fishing lodge located on the shores of Bistcho Lake. The investment could include adding to or renovating the existing waterfront rental cabins. The lodge currently includes 11 basic cabins (nine of these units are rental cabins) that each can accommodate up to six people. Cabins include wood heaters, propane light fixtures and cook stoves. The complex also features a central lodge. Additional guest amenities and services provided by the lodge include a recreation area, barbeques and picnic tables, motorboats, shower facilities and a private unlicensed air strip. Guests can bring their own sleeping bags, food supplies and fishing gear.



Site

Tapawingo Lodge, privately owned and operated, is located near the remote Bistcho Lake on 22 acres of land leased through the Government of Alberta. Bistcho Lake is one of Alberta's largest lakes. Access to the lake during winter is available through an leased access maintained by the local Industry. This road, if secured and upgraded for public use, could potentially enable access to the lodge year round by adventurous type travelers. Bistcho Lake is relatively shallow and is stocked with walleye, pike, whitefish, burbot and arctic grayling. Land surrounding the lodge is called Bistcho.

Much of the land around Bistcho Lake area is designated as a provincial Environmentally Significant Area. Species found in the area include woodland caribou, moose, wolverines, black bears, muskrats and various birds. There are development and opportunities for the Dene Tha to enhance this area. Much of the area is culturally significant to the Dene Tha and offers unique possibilities for cultural and educational camps. There is a development plan in place to create a Indigenous Protection Area in the Bistcho area, within this there may be opportunities for eco-tourism, research and traditional teachings.

Market Attraction

Tapawingo Lodge provides visitors with fishing and hunting opportunities in a remote area of Alberta's northwest. The lodge would appeal to visitors seeking opportunities for wildlife and northern lights viewing, as well as traditional Aboriginal cultural experiences.

Other ideas within this area are varied and could include a rejuvenation and renewal of the Dene Tha cabin area, increase the participation in this area in species, flora and fauna conservation, small scale commercial fishing which would help assist infrastructure development for access in the area and facilitate more of a opportunity for fresh local fish supply. Boosting outfitting in the area could utilize existing infrastructure and partnerships in Zama City.

Development of First Nation, Métis and Cultural Centres and Permanent Exhibits

The opportunity exists for the development of cultural exhibits and centres to showcase not just First Nation and Métis heritage through hands-on learning opportunities, but all cultures of the region. Experiences like this would cater to visitors seeking Indigenous, historical and cultural tourism experiences. It would also open up additional educational opportunities to our regional residents on the history and peoples.

If new standalone facilities were the target the site for the first cultural centre could potentially be located along Highway 88 south of Fort Vermilion. The area is home to Tallcree First Nation communities. The second cultural centre showcasing the Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement would be located along Highway 35 at the gateway location between the Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement and Mackenzie County. Both of these options offer challenges as new standalone facilities require high capital investment and the somewhat isolated locations would also make it more difficult to partner and provide full service events.



Opportunities may exist to partner with existing historical facilities such as the Lean-To Museum in Fort Vermilion, the Mackenzie Crossroads Museum in High Level and/or the Mennonite Heritage Village Museum, these venues may have ability to expand their cultural displays and interpretive areas to include a cross-cultural experience for travelers and even our local residents, school field trips and special collections. This could offer learning experiences with more in-depth knowledge and understanding of the region and its people. Enhancing visitor experience while staying true to the cultures of the area. These facilities could also partner with events, and teaching opportunities throughout the year, storytelling, artisan arts and crafts and specialized tours. This would also link into the development of the Fort Vermilion Bridge Campsite development as a multi-cultural exhibit, tourism and event facility.

Rocky Lane Recreational Trail Expansion

The opportunity exists to work with the Rocky Lane Agricultural Society to expand the Rocky Lane Recreational Trails. The expansion would feature some lighted trails and the linking of existing trails to the Ponton River to facilitate activities such as canoeing and survival type cross country skiing expeditions. The non-profit society has approximately 100 acres of land currently being used for cross-country skiing, including more than 15 kilometres of groomed trails for beginner to advance levels of classic and skate skiing. The society works with local community groups and schools to provide agricultural education, cultural development and recreation opportunities in the Rocky Lane area. This area could also add dog sledding excursions, additional hiking and possible mountain biking, to offer visitors another reason to visit the area.

Wagon and Historical Trail Identification and Development

There are multiple areas across the region where historical trails were used and could be redeveloped into current day experience opportunities, either by motorized vehicles, bikes, horses and even wagon trains. Camp facilities could compliment overnight stays and interpretive signage and mapping could provide guideless information and points of interest. A future project or in conjunction with Creative Economy Mapping could include identification of trails across the Frontier.

Geocaching

Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor treasure hunt! Thousands of people around the world are seeking out hidden treasures and interesting locations. Using GPS enabled devices to find the 'cache'. There are multiple locations within the Frontier already and this ready-to-build-upon opportunity could be enhanced across the Frontier by anyone, rural, urban or out in the middle of the bush! MFTA has been researching Frontier cache items that could be used across the region in partnership with interested parties.

Industrial Tourism

The Frontier has oilfields that date over 50 years. Some interesting history surrounds the discovery and development of the oil and gas fields on the west side of the Frontier. The communities of Rainbow Lake and Zama City were developed and are maintained from this resource. The Hay-Zama Complex was the only off-shore drilling site in Alberta, and some innovative developments in drilling technology were developed and tested in this area, that later went on to be used in other off-shore areas. The Hay-Zama area has now staged out all industrial use and is moving toward additional tourism development. The link that could be made to facilities like Leduc #1 Museum and even the development of an Industrial Circle Route that could loop from High Level, Rainbow Lake, past the Hay-Zama Complex to Zama City and back to High Level. This could be geared towards individuals that have or do work in the field or have family that did. Other industrial tourism like Mill Tours, the history of Forestry and possibly even cut-block tours to use as not just tourism but also for education on the work that our Industry does and the importance of it to our Region.

Development of Ecotourism Initiative

The western border of Mackenzie County, neighbouring the Wood Buffalo National Park, offers an opportunity for the development of an ecotourism-based canoe outfitting operation. The development could feature canoeing along the Peace River into the national park as well as designated zones for four to six day camping excursions. Return trips by motorized craft could be possible if the national park's policies allow for such access. Currently, there is little access into the Wood Buffalo National Park at its western border. There may be potential demand for remote access to the national park via the Peace River and possibly to its outflow into Lake Athabasca, particularly among backcountry and river travel enthusiasts. Little Red River and entrepreneurs from the Beaver Ranch and Fort Vermilion Area are well situated to explore these options.

Other eco-tourism opportunities exist from one end of the Frontier to the other. Kayak trips down any of our waterways such as the Chinchaga or Hay River... hiking Watt Mountain or along the Zama Ridge, eco-tourism staging sites in the Bistcho Lake, Rainbow Lake, Margaret Lake and others.

Cabin Development along Snowmobile Trails

Snowmobiling remains a popular activity within the Frontier region. Snowmobiling opportunities exist at various locations along the region's backcountry and trail systems. These trails are inclusive of routes maintained by local groups as well as numerous unmaintained trails. An opportunity exists for the development of log cabins along trails currently maintained by the two regional snowmobile associations, the Watt Mountain Snowmobile Wanderers Club and the La Crete Polar Cats.



Various locations along these trails offer potential for the development of clusters of five basic log cabins accommodating up to five persons per unit. Cabins could be furnished with solar powered lighting and basic cooking facilities, and outhouses would be provided; however, supplies would be purchased by visitors.

Additional development for snowmobile trails connecting locations across the Frontier. Local and Domestic touring opportunities could be developed using these connecting trails. At one point there was a trail that connected Fort Vermilion to Fort Chipewyan through Wood Buffalo National Park which allowed outdoor enthusiasts the chance for overnight trips from one side of the Province to the other. There are many connections that could be developed. The challenge is to ensure that our volunteer groups, current and any new, which have developed and maintain the majority of trails up until this point have the resources and support to continue to maintain the system and develop.

This infrastructure could offer group excursions, guided tours and overnight events. Cabins and tenting sites could be used in the summer months as well for hiking, ATV tours, mountain biking tours. If we let the imagination run and if cooperation and legislation allow, these could be used for checkpoints along a Northern Death Race type trail, or used by local outfitters and guides to provide hunting packages to bring additional revenue into the region and assist in financing the cabin and trail development.

Motorcycle Tourism

In 2014, there were 708,700 Canadian licensed motorcyclists riding 717,500 licensed and in-use motorcycles, that is the most recent statistic that we could find, we are sure the number has grown since then. The demographics are concentrated among youth and empty nesters, with 54% of these being in Western Canada and the Yukon.

In many of the reports that we viewed, bikers are goal orientated.

When they head out on the ride... they set a goal to ride so many kms, get to a landmark or place, or something similar. Catering to bikers, is relatively simple, they like have scenic or interesting stopping points, road conditions need to be good, a little adventure to the route like twists and hills, they like to enjoy the stops that are offering services and products that cater to their needs. Great food and unique places to stay that are easy to find. Secure parking is critical as the sense of pride and attachment bikers have to their machines is particularly high. Some of these are in the control of the operator and some are not.

Partnering with bike clubs to delve deeper into what could be promoted and make available throughout the Frontier, may be a good start to tapping into this tourist demographic. The travel-thru demographic is also a part of this group as many bikers set their sights on Yellowknife and the Frontier could be a few days adventure during that longer planned trip. The 'Circle Route' is also a biker favorite and could be built out to include biker-friendly signage and stops, possibly even a biker themed geocache!

Figure 5: Importance of factors in choosing accommodation when motorcycling

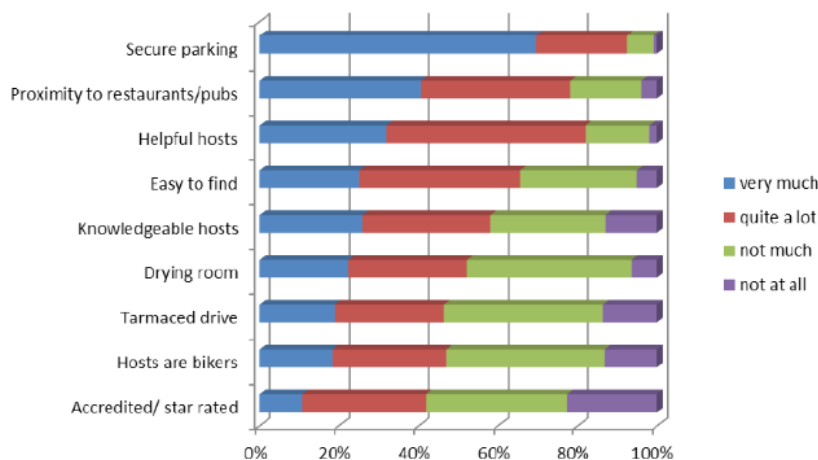
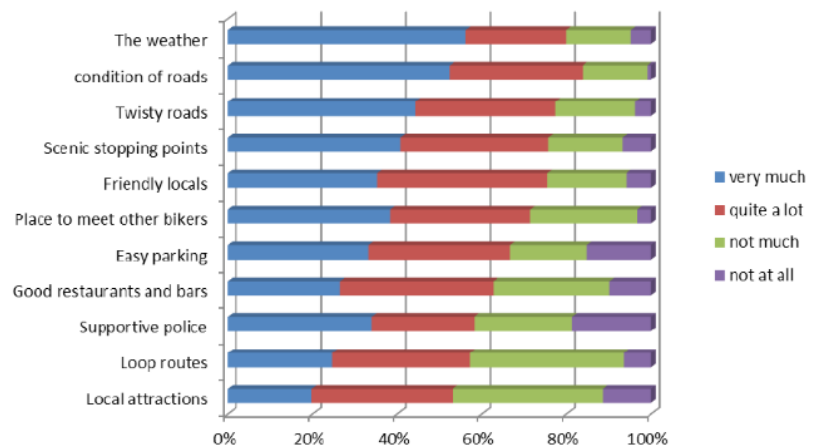


Figure 4: Importance of factors in choosing a motorcycling destination



Terms and Definitions

One of the challenges we encounter is the various ways we talk about guiding, tourism, experiences and outdoor recreation depending on our context. These are the definitions used throughout this website along with similar wording used by other organizations.

Adventure: Doing things that are new and different for each of us, doing things that can be a little scary but that also make us curious to explore further.

Adventure Travel: Travel that combines nature, culture and activities with a sense of adventure, often involving some physical or mental exertion and a willingness to step outside of one's comfort zone.

Experience: Memorable activities that create connections with place and people.

Experience Development: The sum of all the actions and considerations necessary to create a quality tour and improve future ones.

Experiential Travel: A broader concept than Adventure Travel focusing on active and meaningful engagement with the places visited, including its history, people, culture, food and environment.

Direct Instruction: A teacher-directed method that uses of straightforward, explicit teaching techniques. It is usually used to teach a specific skill. In a guiding context it is often the best option when short term performance is the goal rather than long term learning. This is part of what is sometimes referred to as "sage on the stage" guiding.

Guests: The people who take part in the tour and for whom you will be responsible. Guests can include clients, students, friends, club members, children, etc.

Guest Experience: The result of all the interactions between a guest and the organization, measured against the guest's expectations.

Guide: Any person taking a leadership role for others under their care while delivering an experience.

Guided Discovery: A learning model that encourages guests to discover concepts on their own, with the support of the guide facilitating the experience. In the guiding context this is a great option to create engagement and to promote long term learning. This is part of what is sometimes referred to as "guide on the side" guiding.

Outdoors: Any place outside that requires some thought and management to ensure people remain comfortable and engaged in the activity. Outdoor environments can be fairly close to accessible services or in remote natural spaces.

Tourism: The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines it as the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. In general, activities taking place 40 km or further away from one's residence are considered tourism.

Tours: Includes all the activities your guests take part in from the moment they join until the moment they leave you.

Venue: Used interchangeably with location and work site as the place where the tour takes place.

Visitor Economy: The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) defines it as any direct, indirect, and induced economic activity resulting from visitors interactions with their destination. It includes everything that makes a place special and attractive to a visitor.

Demand Generators: The attractions, activities and things to see and do in a region that are the primary motivator for a visitor to travel to that region.

Demand Supporters: The attractions, activities and things to see and do in a region that are not the main motivator for visiting but contribute to the overall appeal of the destination and can be added to an itinerary.

Hidden Gems: may not be something you would consider part of your destination's tourism offering but have potential to add value to your visitor's experience.

Destination Marketing/Management Organization (DMO): An organization that promotes and supports the development of a destination, in our region this is the Mackenzie Frontier Tourist Association.

Travel Alberta: The crown corporation, owned by the Government of Alberta, responsible for the promotion of tourism in Alberta.

Mackenzie Frontier Tourist Association (MFTA): A member based organization that promotes and supports the development of tourism in the Mackenzie Region of NW Alberta.

Regional Economic Development Initiative of the Northwest (REDI): A group of NW Municipalities and members that work together to promote Economic Development across sectors within the region.

Travel Trade: The distribution network for the sale of travel experiences and products.

Travel Agencies: Retail companies that sell tourism products directly to consumers.

Online Travel Agencies (OTA): An e-commerce website selling tourism products directly to consumers.

Tour Operators: Distribution companies that purchase travel products in bulk from suppliers (tours and activity providers, hotels, airlines, attractions) for sale to travel agencies, other tour operators or directly to visitors.

Receptive Tour Operators: Canada based tour operators that specialize in distributing Canadian travel products on the international markets.

Net Rates / Pricing: The wholesale rate offered to tour operators, travel agencies and packaging partners.

Visitor Ready: A business that has permits, licenses and insurance in place required to operate legally. Also referred to as Traveller Ready.

Market Ready: A business that has the processes in place to market their products on the regional markets.

Export Ready: A business that has the processes in place to market their products on the national and international markets.

Explorer Quotient (EQ): A market segmentation tool from Destination Canada that looks at the travellers beliefs, attitudes and values to better understand their travel motivations.

Responsible Tourism: Responsible tourism is any form of tourism that can be consumed in a more responsible way.

Sustainable Tourism: The UNWTO defines it as tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.

Recreation and outdoor activities: This domain includes outfitters, hunting, fishing, and wilderness guides, as well as various types of recreational and adventure camps, including recreational vehicle parks and campgrounds.

Arts and heritage: The arts side of this domain includes businesses primarily involved in producing, organizing, and/or promoting live events that involve the performances of actors and actresses, singers, dancers, and musical groups; and artists, athletes, and other entertainers. The heritage side of this domain also includes museums, public galleries, public parks, heritage sites, and other establishments primarily engaged in preserving and exhibiting objects, sites, and natural wonders of historical, cultural, and educational value.

Links & Resources:

www.mackenziefrontier.com

www.rediregion.com

<https://industry.travelalberta.com/about/strategy/ten-year-tourism-strategy>

https://indigenoustourism.ca/corporate/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/10266_IndigenousTourismSector_RPT.pdf

<https://indigenoustourism.ca/corporate/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2019-Market-Snapshots-Destination-Canada.pdf>

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<https://pursuitadventures.ca/crafting-experiences/experience-development/be-yourself/>

<https://indigenoustourism.ca/corporate/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/18-10-Accelerating-Tourism-Growth-Booklet-v5-WEB-1.pdf>

https://www.creativecity.ca/database/files/library/rural_arts_summ_overview.pdf

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/artisan-development-projects>

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