



COMMUNITY  
TOURISM  
FOUNDATIONS®

S I T U A T I O N   A N A L Y S I S  
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**Contacts:**

Tourism BC Representatives:

April Moi  
Northern BC Tourism Region  
[april@nbctourism.com](mailto:april@nbctourism.com)

Caterina Papadakos  
Tourism BC  
(604) 660-3754  
[Caterina.Papadakos@tourismbc.com](mailto:Caterina.Papadakos@tourismbc.com)

Tourism BC Facilitator:  
Simone Carlysle-Smith  
(604) 885-5924  
[simonecs@telus.net](mailto:simonecs@telus.net)

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## 1 Introduction

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### 1.1 BACKGROUND

This Situation Analysis is a background document for the Tourism Plan being prepared for Dawson Creek and Pouce Coupe. The process is being facilitated through Tourism British Columbia's Community Tourism Foundations® program and is designed to not only create a tourism plan, but also develop an understanding of the ongoing cycle of planning activity that is required in implementing and maintaining a plan.

This situation analysis includes assessments of the supply-side (e.g. destination features, infrastructure and tourism products) and demand-side (e.g. markets, visitor volumes, spending) factors that define the tourism industry in the area. It also includes the tourism management role and funding for lead organizations in tourism development and planning.

*Refer to the Appendices for the Planning Process.*

### 1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNITY TOURISM FOUNDATIONS® PROGRAM

The *Community Tourism Foundations* program is designed for communities starting out in the business of tourism. It offers a range of tools, proven resources and customized destination development assistance. Its step-by-step approach can accommodate the needs of communities at different stages of the tourism development process. The full planning cycle is engaged, beginning with an initial assessment phase, followed by a market, product and destination analysis and a subsequent strategic planning phase. The program process is concluded with assistance to implement the Tourism Plan.

Tourism BC's new *Community Tourism Opportunities* program may provide funding support for implementation of the Tourism Plan assessed on a project-by-project basis administered by the Regional Destination Marketing Organization (RDMO), Northern BC Tourism (NBCT).

A separate but related program, the *Tourism Partners Program*, provides local operators the opportunity to reach a wider audience by allowing them to participate in sophisticated, Tourism BC-branded, cooperative marketing campaigns also administered by the Regional Destination Marketing Organization, Northern BC Tourism.

### 1.3 PURPOSE

This Situation Analysis report is the second of three reports that will be delivered as part of the *Community Tourism Foundations* process. An Initial Meeting Assessment report was prepared following the initial meeting between the community, Tourism BC and the facilitator. A final Tourism Plan will also be prepared, which will outline the goals, objectives, strategies and key tactics to implement the plan. In the case of Dawson Creek, the Tourism Plan will be an update to their existing plan; for Pouce Coupe this will form part of their initial Tourism Plan.

#### **1.4 METHODOLOGY**

The content of this report was based on findings from the initial meeting on November 06, 2008, a literature review, a review of web-based resources as well as tourism trends and market research provided by Tourism BC. A tourism inventory was supplied by Tourism Dawson Creek. A planning workshop was facilitated April 15, 2009 to review the current situation and discuss strategies for moving Tourism Dawson Creek forward with next steps in the destination life cycle and establish a tourism vision for Pouce Coupe. The results will guide direction for the new tourism plan.

Support material will be provided under separate cover as a resource document entitled *Dawson Creek and Pouce Coupe Situation Analysis Supplementary Appendices*.

A web page has been set up by Tourism Dawson Creek to keep stakeholders informed of the program process and to post the reports. Visit: [http://www.tourismdawsoncreek.com/tourism\\_foundations.php](http://www.tourismdawsoncreek.com/tourism_foundations.php)

#### **1.5 STRUCTURE**

This report has six major chapters: planning context, market and travel trends analysis, destination and product assessment, tourism development capacity, a discussion of implications for tourism development and, finally, planning requirements.

## **2 Planning Context**

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Tourism planning and development is a continuum: as one milestone is achieved, there is typically another to strive for as the community moves through the destination life cycle, which includes the early stages of development planning (vision and plan), growth (product development), maturity (products from the vision are achieved and the destination is being utilized by the target markets), decline or rejuvenation (the destination requires redevelopment or it will decline, losing market share and economic impact). The success of any community that aspires to become a visitor destination will be dependent on the recognition that it takes a community to deliver a positive visitor experience, as each component is interdependent, and that the community forms part of a regional context as a visitor experience.

Tourism planning needs to recognize and, where possible, coordinate with other planning initiatives that may have relevance for tourism. This planning context is multi-dimensional in terms of spatial reference (e.g. provincial, regional and local), theme or mandate (e.g. tourism, economic development, land use, environmental, human resources) and lead agency (e.g. federal, provincial, private sector). Higher authorities may be engaging in activities that affect inputs to tourism, or they may be directly undertaking tourism initiatives themselves. Understanding their areas of responsibility, guiding principles and plan objectives will help identify gaps and opportunities that can be addressed in the Tourism Plan.

### **2.1 NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL INITIATIVES**

The following refers to the provincial, regional and local level plans and key initiatives related to tourism. Organizations more directly involved in tourism development are discussed in Chapter 5.

Planning occurs at all levels, nationally, provincially, regionally and locally. Key initiatives for tourism include but are not limited to:

National initiatives such as the National Tourism Strategy and funding announcements by the federal government in the 2009 budget.

*Refer to the Appendices for more information on National Initiatives.*

Provincial initiatives include the Provincial Tourism Action Plan to 2015, 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Tourism Strategies, Aboriginal Blueprint Strategy, British Columbia Resort Strategy and Action Plan, Tourism and Hospitality Education and Training, Recreation Trails Strategy, Bike BC and Sustainable Tourism Partnership amongst others. The Arts and Culture Division of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts is embarking on a provincial cultural strategy and is set to conduct stakeholder interviews over the coming months in communities throughout the province. As well, there was an announcement that \$400,000 will be invested in Visitor Centres.

#### Tourism British Columbia

Significant progress was made towards achieving the goal of \$18 billion in tourism revenues by 2015, with an estimated increase for 2007 of 4.7% to \$10.6 billion. A further sign of positive growth was the accomplishment of a 7.9% increase in province-wide hotel revenue, which represents one of the key indicators of overall tourism performance. At the British Columbia Tourism Industry Conference in February

2008, Tourism British Columbia introduced Tourism 2.0, a new business model for working with regional and community partners. The fundamental principle of Tourism British Columbia's partnership programs is to build tourism business throughout British Columbia in a way that is inclusive of industry and achieves more collectively than independently.

*Refer to the Appendices for more information on Provincial Initiatives.*

## **2.2 REGIONAL INITIATIVES WITH TOURISM IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Alaska Highway Community Initiative<sup>1</sup>***

Since 2004, the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association (NRAHTA) has served as the coordinating body for the Alaska Highway Community Initiative (AHCI). This international consortium was formed by 13 communities located along the Alaska Highway that signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)<sup>2</sup> signifying their interest to work together on matters of mutual interest regarding the future planning and development of the Alaska Highway corridor. The formation of AHCI was in response to results of the 2003 Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Research Project, which indicated a need to improve the traveller's experience along the Alaska Highway. On behalf of the AHCI, NRAHTA has implemented individually funded projects. The majority of the projects completed to date have been undertaken in the Northeastern region of BC. Significant aspects of development planning within the AHCI include Aboriginal Tourism Development through the North East Native Advancing Society (NENAS), establishing a proposed Corridor Management Plan according to the America's Scenic Byways Program, and assisting in the implementation of Tourism BC's Tourism Essentials Program.

The Alaska Highway Corridor Community Consultation Workshops were facilitated by NRAHTA and NENAS from November 2005 to May 2006 in connection with the AHCI. These workshops took place in 10 individual communities with over 300 representatives participating. Tourism BC's "Community Tourism Essentials" was used as the base program to analyze the community's tourism components and identify the action steps for overall tourism improvement. During these workshops the Scenic Byways program was introduced and the representatives were made familiar with the requirements to qualify the Alaska Highway as an International Scenic Byway. This was made possible through financial contributions administered through Tourism BC, Northern BC Tourism, Western Diversification (WD) and AHCI. The workshop outcomes were divided into five categories: attractions, services, hospitality, infrastructure and promotions.

The final report provided a regional overview of issues identified as stumbling blocks to tourism development. An overview of the consolidated strengths shows that overall the communities felt that their "friendly community," "attractive town core" and "outdoor adventure product" were their outstanding strengths. Their weaknesses focused on "poor signage," "poor customer service," "lack of Tourism Marketing/Development plan" and a "lack of community support." The communities felt that in terms of the Scenic Byways they could contribute by fulfilling demand for outdoor activities, events/attractions and promoting arts and culture. Respondents felt that the highway could be improved with more amenities and by developing local tours, new attractions and increasing accommodation and that by generally developing

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<sup>1</sup> April Moi, Tourism BC

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.alaskahighwaylegacy.com/Signed%20MOU.pdf>

tourism opportunities in their own communities they could reap the economic benefit of their close proximity to the highway corridor.

As of August 2008, the tourism function of NRAHTA merged with Northern BC Tourism. Outcomes of initial planning sessions indicate the evolution of the organization to represent the Alaska Highway as a Community. There are several more stages to the development of this concept; however, collaborative planning to address issues relating to the Alaska Highway will continue to be the prime area of focus of these stakeholder groups. Tourism BC and Northern BC Tourism will be working closely with the communities to raise the awareness of the Alaska Highway as a tourism icon.

### Bear Mountain Wind Park<sup>3</sup>

AltaGas' 102-MW Bear Mountain Wind Park, located near Dawson Creek, is on track to become British Columbia's first fully-operational wind park. By November 2009, Bear Mountain Wind Park will be generating enough clean, renewable electricity to power most of B.C.'s South Peace region. The power from the project will be sold to BC Hydro. Once the Park is operational, Bear Mountain will again be open for public use. Only the area immediately around the substation will be fenced, but the rest of the mountain will be available, as it has been for years, for hikers, cross-country skiers, and other recreational users. The Park will feature on site public signage and off-site interpretive information in partnership with an outreach/interpretive centre in Dawson Creek.<sup>4</sup>

### Centennial Green – Re-development proposal of the Centennial Pool.<sup>5</sup>

Peace Energy Cooperative (PEC) approached the City of Dawson Creek Council in September 2008 with an interest in reconstructing the Centennial Pool and developing what they are calling "Centennial Green", a renewable energy and sustainable living centre. PEC suggests developing the property into a facility with a focus on renewable energy and sustainable living. They see this facility first as a public gathering space, possibly with a small cafe, an indoor play-land, a potential host spot for events such as the farmer's market, as well as accommodating organizations that are focused on making a difference in sustainability, and providing education workshops and meeting space. The project could have the potential to save local tax payers close to a million dollars over 5 years by avoiding demolition costs and landfill costs and by reducing heating costs in nearby public buildings. Centennial Pool is currently owned by the city of Dawson Creek. It is Peace Energy Co-ops' intention to request a long-term lease of the building and lands, allowing the City to retain ownership while off-loading the costs of development.

### *Tourism Opportunities Study Dawson Creek Forest District, 2001<sup>6</sup>*

A Tourism Opportunity Study (TOS)<sup>7</sup> is an information tool that can be used to identify, develop and promote appropriate, sustainable tourism development opportunities around the province. The studies are useful tools for business people, governments and local communities. For any particular study area (typically a forest district), a TOS contains the following information:

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.altagas.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=199&Itemid=199](http://www.altagas.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=199&Itemid=199)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.altagas.ca/images/operations/bmwpfinal%202.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [http://web.me.com/lukas.armstrong/Centennial\\_Green/home.html](http://web.me.com/lukas.armstrong/Centennial_Green/home.html) and <http://www.peaceenergy.ca/whatsnew.html>

<sup>6</sup> Lions Gate Consulting Inc. in association with Geoscape Environmental Planners, Sunderman and Associates, Catherine Berris Associates and KJ Solutions Ltd. <http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/cis/initiatives/tourism/tos/index.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/cis/initiatives/tourism/index.html>

- a set of maps showing a “snapshot” of the area’s current tourism industry and which resources they are using;
- maps and text analyzing what kinds of tourism activities could be conducted in areas that are not currently being used in tourism operations;
- a short summary of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT Analysis) facing the development of designated tourism products in the area as a whole; and
- a concise overview of the best opportunities for development for each of several designated communities within the study area (Community Tourism Development Profiles).

The TOS can be used by communities and entrepreneurs as a tool for furthering tourism development. In some cases, the TOS may contain sufficient information for undertaking immediate tourism development activities. In other cases, additional detailed economic feasibility studies may be required to provide more in-depth analysis and planning around specific tourism themes, or complex, multi-use developments.

The TOS for the Dawson Creek Forest District provided the following highlights; the full report can be found online at: <http://lmbwww.gov.bc.ca/cis/initiatives/tourism/tos/index.html>

#### *Regional Tourism Profile*

A total of 132 tourism operators were identified as being based in or using the study area. Of these, 74 offered accommodations, 26 offered tours and experiences, 46 were classified as attractions, rental services or miscellaneous services, and 6 offered scheduled transportation services or car rentals. Several operators offered both accommodation and tours or several types of touring activities. The distribution of tourism operators by community was as follows: Dawson Creek (42%), Chetwynd (22%), Tumbler Ridge (12%), Hudson’s Hope (12%) and Other (12%).

According to Tourism BC, visitors to the Northeast are evenly split between BC residents and non-residents. The bulk of non-resident visitors are made up of regional Canadian and US travellers (i.e. Alberta, Washington, Oregon) and long-haul US travellers heading to Alaska. Long-haul Canadian, Europe and Asian markets comprise a very small share of total visitation. The typical visitor is in the region for three days as part of a multiple-destination holiday in BC. Their main activity is sightseeing, although almost one-third of both residents and non-residents are seeking an outdoor adventure. Non-residents tend to spend more and stay longer in the area than BC residents.

#### *Community Analysis*

The major strengths of the study area are its diverse natural attributes, a full range of experiences from the scenic alpine to prairie lands, abundant wildlife and ability to deliver on the wilderness experience and quality heritage resources. Weaknesses include distance from markets, poor road conditions, infrastructure gaps, lack of interpretative facilities and a lack of community cooperation on key product development such as circuit tours.

Opportunities for tourism development in the study area are good. Lodges, huts, river/lake, trail products and winter products all have potential to expand. The main challenges to tourism and economic development will continue to be the lack of infrastructure, services and access to financing, both for communities and for businesses.

## 2.3 LOCAL PLANNING AND KEY INITIATIVES

Both Dawson Creek and Pouce Coupe have expressed an interest in working more closely together. While at different stages of development in the destination lifecycle (Pouce Coupe – visioning and planning and Dawson Creek – growth and product development), the initial meeting group identified opportunities to work together. This will be expanded upon in the tourism plan.

### Village of Pouce Coupe

*Official Community Plan Village of Pouce Coupe Bylaw # 652, 1993.*

There are no direct references to tourism or visitors in the OCP.

#### 2.1 General Objectives

With respect to the general form and character of land use within the Village, the objectives of Council are:

1. To preserve the existing character of Pouce Coupe in a manner that reflects the quality of life desired by the community and projected growth demands.
2. To promote health, safety, convenience, and welfare of Pouce Coupe residents.
3. To secure a proportion of future regional, residential, commercial, and employment growth that is comparable with the existing regional situation.
4. To provide opportunities for residential, commercial, industrial, public institutional, and agricultural development, which do not compromise the ability to manage growth.
5. To encourage the provision of sufficient employment opportunities to meet the need of Village population.
6. To maintain the central area of the Village as the social, commercial, and employment activity focus of the Village.
7. To preserve and enhance the air, water and land environment.
8. To ensure that municipal services are developed and maintained to an adequate standard.
9. To ensure adequate light, air and access, and to prevent overcrowding of land.

#### General Policies.

1. All future development in the Village will conform to the policies and designations contained within this Plan.
2. The phasing of future development will be dependent on the provision of community water and sewer services.
3. The discharge of storm water management systems, where possible, will be utilized for groundwater recharge. Where discharge is into natural watercourses, the guideline and regulations set by the Ministry having authority will be met.
4. All development proposals affecting land within the Village are subject to Section 5.0 Implementation of this Plan.
5. Utilities other than office buildings and works yards are permitted in all designations, provided that the utilities have no outdoor storage of any kind, and no garages for the repair and maintenance of equipment.
6. There is no minimum parcel size of a parcel to be used solely for the unattended equipment necessary for the operation of a utility, a community radio or television antenna, or navigational aid.
7. Residential development at a greater density than one parcel per 1.8 hectares (4.5 acres) will not be permitted unless adequate community water supply, sewer and drainage services are provided.
8. All measurements in the by-law are expressed in the Standard International Units (SI) system. Approximate equivalents expressed in the Imperial Measurement system are included for

convenience only, to the extent of a discrepancy or inconsistency between measurements, the SI measurement shall govern.

Land Use Designations are classified by the following categories:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Agricultural
- Public Institutional

***Union of BC Municipalities Phase II Funding***

Phase two tourism funding will support improvements to Pouce Park campground. Plans include power to sites and paving the ground in front of the shower house for special needs visitors. Current budget: \$17,000.

***Tourism BC Community Tourism Opportunities***

Pouce Coupe has been approved for funds to support a professional brochure, site signage for the Heritage Walking Tour and new banners along the highway. Current budget \$12,000. Website improvements for tourism content have also been identified as another opportunity.

***Pouce Coupe Economic Marketing Strategy – March, 2009***

The Village of Pouce Coupe commissioned the Community Futures Peace Liard to produce the Economic Development Marketing Strategy. The initial draft was prepared in October 2008. A meeting with community stakeholders was held March 24, 2009, the final report is now complete and approved by council. Next steps include determining funding options and priority projects. The strategy will be implemented by the Chief Administrative Officer and the Mayor and Council of the Village of Pouce Coupe. Council recognized that there are many economic development partners in the region. The role of the Village of Pouce Coupe will be to:

- Bring stakeholders and resources together in a complementary fashion
- Act as a support and partner
- Simplify the process
- Fill the gaps where necessary

The four major goals are:

1. Business Retention – Encouraging Growth in EXISTING Businesses
2. Business Investment and Promotion – Telling the World about Success
3. Business Incubator – Nurturing NEW Business and Utilizing Empty Buildings
4. Community/Quality of Life – Building on Community Pride and Participation

The following notes in the “Timeline” are those projects that have an impact for tourism and they are identified from that perspective as having the highest priority.

<i>Goal: Business Retention – Encouraging Growth in EXISTING Businesses</i>	<i>Tourism Relevance Priority</i>
1. Business Advisory Council	

2. Bring businesses together with support from advisors	High priority
3. Annual Business Recognition Dinner	

<i>Goal: Business Investment and Promotion - Investment Strategy</i>	<i>Tourism Relevance Priority</i>
1. Community Profile	High
2. Promote residential housing	
3. Investment website	High (include tourism potential)
4. Develop a market strategy	High (include tourism potential)
5. Develop land inventory	High (include tourism potential)
6. Lead developments	
7. Expand services and increase tax-revenues	

<i>Goal: Business Incubator</i>	<i>Tourism Relevance Priority</i>
1. Emporium Investment Building Feasibility Study	
2. Old Library Building	

<i>Goal: Community/Quality of Life</i>	<i>Tourism Relevance Priority</i>
1. Pedestrian stop light	High
2. Community Beautification Committee	High
3. Tree Highway Corridor	High
4. Highway Signage	High
5. Parking	High
6. Deal with Emporium Building	
7. Planters and Hanging Baskets	High
8. Walking path	High
9. Rest Areas	High
10. Public Transportation – <i>Step Up 'N Ride</i>	
11. Market Community Centre	High
12. Volunteer and leadership development, volunteer recognition	High

***Tourism BC Community Tourism Essentials Workshop, Pouce Coupe, 2006***

<i>Goal: To Improve Tourism Attractions</i> <i>Tourism Objectives Summary – Attractions</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. To more effectively organize volunteer support	Volunteer coordinator position was never sought or implemented, there is volunteer burn out and support for volunteers is required. Ideally a projects coordinator position will be created through the Village to support community projects, which would include tourism initiatives, perhaps part time contract.

2. To improve trestle	No action. Considering the development of a park/tourist viewing location. Ideally connecting a walking trail, gazebo and picnic area, interpretive signage and guardrail for safety would draw visitor to the site. Land assessment and access to be determined. Connect bus tours with trestle when product market ready.
3. To improve Museum	New special needs washroom installed, painted up and downstairs walls, painted Heritage house. Exterior building not insured, need storage facility. Needs painting. Exterior sign around fence required, funds secured. End of April confirmation of proposed funding for improvements.  Tourism BC Community Tourism Opportunity funding will support historic signs for walking trail signage and brochure program for summer 2009.
4. To improve Pouce Park	Added 11 new sites; plan to add power to them in spring 2009. Sani-dump needed. Add events to draw visitors to the park. Utilize band shell. New bridge will re-direct traffic to one main entrance/exit. Annual plan is outlined based on resources available. Connect walking trail to Dawson Creek connecting the communities through the to EnCana Centre. Tree-line the highway to connect the communities visually.

<i>Goal: To Improve Tourism Attractions Tourism Objectives Summary – Services</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. To more effectively organize volunteer support	Volunteer coordinator position was never sought or implemented. Volunteer email and telephone tree in place where folks call one another. Need a master list of events and volunteer opportunities and create a master volunteer registry. Also utilize Dawson Creek registry.
2. To create a community centre / facility	New Community Centre opened March 2008. Ideal for small weddings and events. Has kitchen facilities, new tables and chairs. Promotion of the centre is noted in the new economic development marketing strategy.
3. To beautify downtown area	Added new banners 2007. Economic development marketing strategy has full section on beautification. Tourism BC Community Tourism Opportunity funding will support eight banners utilizing the Share the Excitement branding in 2009.

	Community Clean Up program, paint program village spring clean up and yard pick-up service have all been noted to support beautification.
4. To improve services for Aboriginal residents	nil

<i>Goal: To Improve Tourism Hospitality Tourism Objectives Summary – Hospitality</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. To generate community support for tourism	Community involvement in current tourism planning process with participants in the initial meeting and planning session. Will create awareness on the Pouce Coupe website and link to the Dawson Creek online resource centre.
2. To involve the community in tourism activities	Always an open invitation to the community for their input and assistance. Volunteer register will open communications.
3. To improve local knowledge base in the community	Incorporate tourism information into a resident newsletter.
4. To stimulate businesses to have staff take SuperHost programs	nil

<i>Goal: To Improve Tourism Infrastructure Tourism Objectives Summary – Infrastructure</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. To increase availability of industrial/residential lots	Built 4 new industrial lots and sold them. Built 33 Residential lots in summer 2008. Sold 2. New residential lots could appeal to a Bed and Breakfast business. Double lots are 80x100' feet.
2. To create an Aboriginal Friendship Centre	Nil / There is a Aboriginal Friendship Centre in Dawson Creek.
3. To improve exit/access at the Park	Widened driveway, summer 2008. New bridge construction will re-shape entrance, summer 2009.
4. To expand the library	New library moved into school in March 2008

<i>Goal: To Improve Tourism Promotion Tourism Objectives Summary – Promotions</i>	<i>Status</i>
1 To stimulate cultural involvement in community groups	Set up Teepee at Pouce Park in summer 2008
2 To create a tourism marketing plan	Economic Development Strategy completed March 2009, current tourism planning process will recommend key strategies and tactics including brochure, website enhancements and partnerships with Dawson Creek. .
3 To engage more youths in tourism programs	Two youth were hired in summer student program and worked at the museum. Curator will be hired

<i>Goal: To Improve Tourism Promotion</i> <i>Tourism Objectives Summary – Promotions</i>	<i>Status</i>
	full-time equivalent from May 01-Sept. 01, 2009.
4 To create a Tourism Pouce Coupe website	Complete 2007. <a href="http://www.poucecoupe.ca/">http://www.poucecoupe.ca/</a>

### **Dawson Creek**

Dawson Creek has been active in tourism planning for several years. The Dawson Creek approach to developing the tourism industry is inclusive of stakeholders and community driven. Current priorities include moving existing plans forward towards implementation. The focus of the workshop will be a review the status of current plans and workshop participants will identify solutions to move progress forward. Key outcomes will include the timing of implementation steps, champion and lead organization, partners, funding options, overlap with other plans or initiatives and next steps.

### **Sustainability**

Sustainable tourism development is planning that meets the needs of current tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future.

Community based tourism management can include promotion of sustainable tourism practices surrounding the management of tourist locations by locals or more concisely, the community. This form of tourism is based on the premise that the people living next to a resource are the ones best suited to protecting it. This means that the tourism activities and businesses are developed and operated by local community members and certainly with their consent and support.

Sustainable tourism typically involves the conservation of resources that are capitalized upon for tourism purposes, such as coral reefs and pristine forests. Locals run the businesses and are responsible for promoting the conservation messages to protect their environment. Community-based sustainable tourism (CBST) associates the success of the sustainability of the ecotourism location to the management practices of the communities who are directly or indirectly dependent on the location for their livelihoods.

A salient feature of CBST is that local knowledge is usually utilized alongside wide general frameworks of ecotourism business models. This allows the participation of locals at the management level and typically allows a more intimate understanding of the environment. The use of local knowledge also means an easier entry level into a tourism industry for locals whose jobs or livelihoods are affected by the use of their environment as tourism locations. The involvement of locals restores the ownership of the environment to the local community.<sup>8</sup>

Whether a community has high value natural resource areas to protect or whether the composition sustainability is more focused on ensuring resources are available for on-going activities and development, a sustainable tourism strategy is required within the broader context of economic development and community planning.

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On March 25 2009, Tourism Dawson Creek hosted a workshop in cooperation with Northern BC Tourism and the University of Northern BC and Vancouver Island University. The workshop guided stakeholders through the *Green Your Business: Toolkit for Tourism Operators* workbook, which was a collaboration between the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC), the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC), Parks Canada along with author Marr Consulting. The guide aims to provide practical tips and sound guidance to the Canadian tourism industry with a special focus on small- and medium-size enterprises (SMEs).

The City of Dawson Creek has committed to Sustaining Dawson Creek through a community-based process that is complemented by government support through planning, policy and resources such as <http://www.planningforpeople.ca/index.asp>. Key areas of: Sustainable Planning Process / Community Planning (Land Use Charrette, OCP update, Zoning, Bylaws) / Community Energy Plan / Arts and Culture / Economic Development / Energy / Governance / Green Space / Social Well Being / Transportation/ Waste / Water.

Vision Statement:

*Dawson Creek will be a visionary community that works together for innovative social, cultural, economic and environmental vitality.*

#### **City of Dawson Creek Economic Development Plan - Update 2009**

The City of Dawson Creek will undertake an update to the existing 1998 Economic Development Strategy, which is now dated.

The Plan's economic development Vision is:

*To create a positive business and community climate that supports expansion and diversification of the Dawson Creek area economy.*

The goals to support this vision are:

- To promote a positive image of the Dawson Creek area
- To gain broad community support for economic development
- To promote business and investment opportunities compatible with the broader needs and goals of the community
- To diversify the economic base to add stability
- To expand and diversify the tax base
- To create a range of employment opportunities, particularly for local residents
- To supporting existing businesses and investment do not unfairly impact on the ability of existing Dawson Creek are businesses to compete.

Six strategic objectives are:

1. To pursue and promote economic development in an organized manner.
2. To diversify the primary industry sectors, particularly forestry and agriculture.
3. **To enhance the tourism sector**
4. To revitalize the retail sector.
5. To ensure that the infrastructure, services and environment needed to support growth are in place.
6. To attract new residents based on community lifestyle

Key sectors identified in the strategy include: Agriculture, Forestry, Oil and Gas, Mining, Retail, Tourism, Transportation, Communications, Construction, Manufacturing and Secondary Processing, Health Services, Educational Services, Government Services and Home-Based Businesses.

The Tourism Economic Development Objective is: To enhance the tourism sector. The main strategy for this objective is to “Explore means of increasing funding and support for local tourism initiatives.”

Tourism references include Visitor Centre statistics estimate approximately 300,000 people visit the community each year, many of which are traveling the Alaska Highway, however many are coming for sporting tournaments, community events and outdoor recreation. Three areas for economic development opportunity were identified as: Alaska Highway; eco-tourism and outdoor adventure; and sports and recreation.

#### Community Economic Development Principles

CED principles are noted as a context for planning. CED is a community-based and community-directed process that explicitly combines social and economic development and is directed towards fostering the economic, social, ecological and cultural well being of communities and regions. As such it recognizes, affirms and supports all paid and unpaid activity that contributes to the realization of this wellbeing. Community Economic Development principles include: equity, participation, community building, cooperation and collaboration, integration, interdependence, living with ecological limits, self-reliance, community control, capacity building, diversity and appropriate indicators.

[http://www.planningforpeople.ca/is/sustainability\\_planning/economic\\_development.asp](http://www.planningforpeople.ca/is/sustainability_planning/economic_development.asp)

#### *Tourism Dawson Creek 2006-2012 Tourism Development Plan*

As part of this planning process the existing Tourism Plan will be updated and will be known as the *Sustainable Dawson Creek Tourism Development Plan 2010-2015*. The current six-year Tourism Development Plan outlines six strategic areas: Destination Development; Sports and Events; Communication; Visitor Services; Marketing and Promotion; and Education. There is no annual action plan, however the Tourism Development Coordinator and NRAHTA Executive Director prioritize items in the five-year development plan and budget for those items based on resources available. Tourism Dawson Creek produces quarterly status reports to the City of Dawson Creek.

The following goals and objectives outline the plan.

#### **Destination Development**

Goal: To improve the quality of the visitor experience and enhance Dawson Creek’s Tourist Attractions

Objectives:

1. To improve the visual appeal of the Mile “0” Post and Mile “0” Cairn
2. To improve signage
3. To stimulate the upgrading of attractions
4. To improve downtown visual appeal
5. To avoid the Alaska Highway becoming “just another road”
6. To develop a plan for and implement the Alaska Highway House attraction

7. To support NRAHTA's coordination and development of a dinosaur/pre-history circle tour
8. Investigate and implement guided tours

Goal: To improve Tourism Services

Objectives:

1. To improve cleanliness of facilities (restaurants, accommodations, attractions)
2. To improve residents' tolerance of tourists
3. To improve customer service

Goal: To improve Tourism Hospitality

Objectives:

1. To improve/create appropriate historic signs and plaques
2. To upgrade business yard maintenance
3. To improve schedule of public transport to RV parks
4. To improve "Welcome to Dawson Creek" signage
5. To stimulate creation of additional quality campgrounds

<i>Measurements for Destination Development</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Increased visual appeal from 2006	Dawson Creek has increased its visual appeal through a number of activities including but not limited to: City-wide clean up campaign; downtown hanging flower baskets; street banners along 8th Avenue and around City Hall; flower pots in the downtown core (Horticultural/City).
2. Completion and implementation of attractions master plan	The Dawson Creek Attractions Master Plan was completed in fall 2007. To date there has been very little from the proposed plan that has been implemented to costs. In addition, each attraction has its own governing structure and its own goal, which don't always coincide with the goals and objectives in the attractions master plan.
3. Implementation of downtown revitalization plans and components	
4. Creation of resource inventory along identified Dawson Creek corridor	In 2009, Tourism Dawson Creek has plans to conduct the Alaska Highway inventory to support the American Scenic Byways program and National Historic Site nomination. Potential partners for this program could include Tourism Dawson Creek, NRAHTA, Peace River Regional District and District of Taylor.
5. Creation, construction, operation of the Alaska Highway House	The Alaska Highway House (Phase 1) opened up in July 2007. In 2009, plans are underway to market it as the premier attraction in Dawson Creek and along the Alaska Highway. The goal for 2009 is for 10,000, which would be almost double the traffic of 2008 (6,220).
6. Development of a viable and marketable	Although Dawson Creek has limited dinosaur/

<i>Measurements for Destination Development</i>	<i>Status</i>
dinosaur/prehistory product in Dawson Creek and to support the Northern Dino Tour	prehistory product to offer, Tourism Dawson Creek has been very supportive of the Northern Dino-Tour Campaign working with other northern communities to enhance circle tour travel, product development, and cooperative marketing efforts.
7. Implementation of guided tours of downtown core and Pioneer Village	
8. Completion of economic impact assessment of tourism within Dawson Creek	Tourism Dawson Creek in partnership with Northern BC Tourism is conducting a Value of Tourism study in Dawson Creek, through Tourism BC, which will help support future planning, and build awareness for the value of tourism in the community. The project is scheduled for completion in spring 2009.
9. To foster relationships with educational institutions to offer tourism/hospitality and experiential learning programs	Tourism Dawson Creek has built working relationships with the University of Northern British Columbia and Vancouver Island University through the Tourism Research Innovation Program. Tourism Dawson Creek has also been kept up to date with the progress of the Outdoor Adventure program at Northern Lights College in Tumbler Ridge.
10. Creation of historic plaques in coordination with the self-guided downtown historic walking tour	This project was completed in the spring of 2008. Tourism Dawson Creek acquired funding and support from Heritage BC Legacies Fund, City of Dawson Creek 50th Anniversary project, Tourism Dawson Creek and South Peace Historic Society.
11. Creation of four new highway "Welcome to Dawson Creek" entrance signs	Not completed to date.
12. Increase the number of campground/RV sites to the Dawson Creek inventory	

### **Sports and Events**

General Status: A formal Sport and Event Plan is required that will build on the existing facilities inventory while planning for future opportunities (arts and cultural centre, convention centre and wellness area) resulting in a cooperative plan for both partners Tourism Dawson Creek and Global Spectrum Facility Management.

There are two options to undertake the strategy:

- 1) Internal approach produced in cooperation with Tourism Dawson Creek and Global Spectrum Facility Management
- 2) Professional facilitation hiring consultants who specialize in both Sport and Event tourism.

Tourism BC's Sport Tourism program is currently accepting Expressions of Interest from communities to be considered for the June intake, which is estimated that 3-4 communities will be accepted. At present

Tourism Dawson Creek is preparing the Expression of Interest for this program for the May 01, 2009 deadline. The next intake would occur for December 2009. Given this program focus is on Sport Tourism the process may need to be supplemented with an event component through additional consultation.

Tourism Dawson Creek has identified the need for a Sport Tourism position, which is subject to securing resources.

Goal: To develop Dawson Creek as a year-round sports and events centre

Objectives:

1. To improve the coordination of sports tourism opportunities
2. To market Dawson Creek as a sports tourism and events centre
3. To extend the length of stay of participants, spectators, and friends or family
4. To host pre-Olympic and Paralympic training opportunities in Dawson Creek
5. To market and promote key events in Dawson Creek

Goal: To develop the City as a place for meetings, conferences, business travel and events (MCBTE)

Objectives:

1. Work with local agencies to host MCBTE in Dawson Creek
2. Work in partnership with Multiplex operators to maximize use and activity
3. Develop a comprehensive events and conference servicing program

Goal: To encourage visitors to stay longer in Dawson Creek

Objectives:

1. To assist weddings/reunions organizers
2. To assist conference, event and tournament organizers
3. Market and promote Tourism Dawson Creek programs

Sport Tourism Progress

- The completion of the South Peace Multi-plex, sporting venues include Event Centre; Pool; Agri-plex
- Successful Northern BC Winter Games 2008
- A member of the BC Sport Tourism Network
- Hosted pre-season Junior A Hockey exhibition (Prince George, Grande Prairie, Burnaby)
- A member of the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance <http://www.canadiansporttourism.com>
- Hosted EnCana Battle of the Borders Woman's Hockey
- Tourism Dawson Creek support sport event organizers (delegate/athlete bags)
- Tourism Dawson Creek proposed a Sport & Event Coordinator in the 2007-2008 budgets. This position was cut when the TDC budget was cut.
- Plan to officially launch a new sport tourism website in April 2009 [www.sportsdawsoncreek.com](http://www.sportsdawsoncreek.com). A tool to be used for local community sports groups and to promote the City of Dawson Creek as sport hosting community.
- Promote Dawson Creek as a sport hosting community on [HostingBC.ca](http://HostingBC.ca)
- Attendance at the 2009 BC Sport Tourism Marketplace in Richmond
- Showcase sport events on Tourism Dawson Creek website (events calendar)
- Tourism Dawson Creek/City has worked with hotels to coordinate rooms for sporting events.
- The City of Dawson Creek, B.C. will host Canada's National Women's Team for a conditioning camp from May 25 to June 17, the final team activity before centralization for the 2009-10 season begins in Calgary in August 2009. Canada's National Women's Team will be based at the EnCana Events Centre

in Dawson Creek for the 24-day camp. Twenty-six players have been identified for centralization for the 2009-10 season, and all will be in attendance for the camp. These players will be vying for one of 21 roster spots for the team that will represent Canada at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver, B.C. from February 12-28, 2010.<sup>9</sup>

<i>Measurements for Sports and Events</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Host the Tourism BC and 2010 Legacies Now "Sports Tourism" workshop	Tourism Dawson Creek hosted the Tourism BC Sport Tourism Essentials Workshop in 2006. Planning to submit EOI to be a part of the Community Sport Tourism Development Program, May 1, 2009.
2. Creation and implementation of an "Events Toolkit"	
3. Hiring Sports and Events Coordinator	
4. Attend provincial and national sports/events marketplaces	Tourism Dawson Creek will participate in the 2009 BC Sport Marketplace in Vancouver.
5. Creation of a hard copy and web-based Sports/Events tourism planner	Sports Dawson Creek website project to be completed in spring 2009 with UBCM funding.
6. Incremental increase in the number of sports and events that are held in Dawson Creek	
7. Host Olympic or Paralympic teams leading up to 2010	The City of Dawson Creek will be hosting the Canadian Olympic Women's Hockey Team training camp in May 2009.

### Communication

Goal: To communicate to stakeholders, operators and citizens of Dawson Creek

Objectives:

1. Create and distribute a newsletter
2. Review and update stakeholder list on an ongoing basis
3. Create a "What's New" section on Tourism Dawson Creek's website
4. Continue to develop the "Be a Tourist In Your Own Town Month"
5. Continue to develop the "Stay Another Day Program"
6. Support labour force development to address tourism operator human resource issue

Goal: To maintain industry relations

Objectives:

1. Participate in industry associations
2. Represent the region and Association at industry functions
3. Liaise with industry to ensure correct interpretation of Dawson Creek and Northeastern BC

<i>Measurements for Communication</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Produce and distribute the Mile "0" Signal	Tourism Dawson Creek provides community

<sup>9</sup> Hockey Canada News Release, April 17, 2009 NR045.09 <http://www.hockeycanada.ca/>

<i>Measurements for Communication</i>	<i>Status</i>
	stakeholders with quarterly updates if possible. These are emailed through our stakeholder database, industry partners, and then mailed to other groups in the community.
2. Update the stakeholders list and Community Partner Organizations	Tourism Dawson Creek Stakeholder list is updated on an ongoing basis. The Community Partner Organizations database is updated bi-annually in partnership between Tourism Dawson Creek and Parks and Recreation
3. Be active in industry associations	<p>Tourism Dawson Creek is a member in good standing of the following organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Bus Association</li> <li>• BC Destination Marketing Association</li> <li>• BC Sport Tourism Network</li> <li>• Branding the Peace (through NRAHTA)</li> <li>• British Columbia Museum Association (Alaska Highway House)</li> <li>• Canadian Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus</li> <li>• Canadian Sports Tourism Alliance</li> <li>• Council of Tourism Associations of BC (through NRAHTA)</li> <li>• Dawson Creek and District Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Deh Cho Travel Connection</li> <li>• Experiences BC: RV &amp; Camping Coalition (through Northern BC Tourism)</li> <li>• National Tour Association (through NRAHTA)</li> <li>• Northern BC Film Commission</li> <li>• Northern BC Tourism Association</li> <li>• Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association</li> </ul> <p>Tourism Dawson Creek is also actively engaged in the following community groups and associations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mile 0 Park Society</li> <li>• Dawson Creek Air show Committee</li> <li>• Dawson Creek Heritage Commission</li> <li>• Downtown Dawson Creek Merchant Association</li> <li>• Measuring Up the North Committee</li> <li>• Provincial RV &amp; Camping Working Group</li> </ul>

**Visitor Services**

Goal: To Improve Tourism Services

Objectives:

1. To improve entrance (off Alaska Highway) to Visitor Centre/Museum/Art Gallery
2. To increase number of public washrooms (especially downtown)
3. To increase quality accommodation inventory
4. To increase air flight frequencies to/from major centres
5. To improve standards of taxi services

Goal: To influence visitors' travel choices to Dawson Creek and the surrounding region

Objectives:

1. To provide salient, current information
2. Upgrade the Visitor Centre to meet the needs of the visitor
3. Keep accurate statistics
4. Investigate the possibility of operating satellite Visitor Centres

Goal: Operate the Visitor Centre in an efficient and customer-orientated manner

Objectives:

1. Offset operational costs through the sale of merchandise
2. Access local, regional, provincial or national funding programs

Goal: To Increase visitors' length of stay in Dawson Creek

Objectives:

1. To develop an ambassador program
2. Develop a "Tourism Friendly" business program
3. Develop an orientation program for operators, community groups and visitor centres

<i>Measurements for Visitor Services</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Improved entrances to NAR Park	
2. Have public washrooms downtown	With the completion of the Alaska Highway House, it provided one new washroom facility in the downtown core. This is an area that could still be improved.
3. Increase gift shop revenues	This has been accomplished by providing items that a person can find only in Dawson Creek and using Alaska Highway clothing and product as a main selling feature. Tourism Dawson Creek also established an e-commerce site where visitors are able to purchase products online just like e-bay.
4. Increase revenues by accessing government programs	Tourism Dawson Creek has successfully received money through HRDC funding for summer staff positions, funding for special events, and special project funding through Tourism BC. Tourism Dawson Creek relies on these funding pockets to meet budget projections.
5. Implementation of an ambassador program	A Dawson Creek Ambassador program is in the 2009 work plan.
6. Tracking and distribution of Visitor Centre	Stats are done in accordance with Tourism BC

<i>Measurements for Visitor Services</i>	<i>Status</i>
stats	Visitor Centre network; stats are monitored and used frequently and are used to determine times of operation and staffing. They are also kept to benchmark progress from year to year.

## Marketing and Promotion

Goal: To Improve Tourism Promotions

Objectives:

1. To improve availability of partnering funds
2. To generate event awareness within community
3. To better communicate promotional opportunities
4. To create and communicate tourism marketing plans
5. Create a draft strategic marketing plan from above outcomes
6. To improve participation in co-op advertising opportunities
7. To create and improve filming opportunities in Dawson Creek
8. Access and support research projects relevant to Dawson Creek and the Alaska Highway

Goal: To use a variety of marketing mediums to market Dawson Creek

Objectives:

1. To improve Dawson Creek's web presence
2. To increase Dawson Creek collateral pieces
3. To participate in Consumer Shows
4. To develop relationships and participate in Trade Shows
5. To develop partnerships to extend Dawson Creek's message
6. To use print advertisements
7. To use cooperative marketing opportunities to leverage and maximize dollars
8. To utilize media relations opportunities to maximize Dawson Creek's exposure
9. Develop a Media Kit and photo library
10. Market to niche sectors

<i>Measurements for Marketing and Promotion</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Creation of the Dawson Creek Marketing and Sales Opportunities Guide	This has not been implemented to date.
2. Implementation of 2% hotel tax or other funding mechanisms to support marketing initiatives	Has not been implemented at this time. There has been dialogue, but the formal application process has not begun.
3. Participation and purchase of marketing materials to track the ROI	A number of website domains have been purchased and used on marketing materials to track the ROI. Tourism Dawson Creek currently owns the following domain names: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• www.tourismdawsoncreek.com</li> <li>• www.stayandplay.ca</li> <li>• www.alaskahighwayhouse.com</li> <li>• www.rvbc.ca</li> <li>• www.alaskahighway.ca</li> </ul>

<i>Measurements for Marketing and Promotion</i>	<i>Status</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.sportsdawsoncreek.com">www.sportsdawsoncreek.com</a></li> </ul>
4. Attend trade and consumer shows	<p>Tourism Dawson Creek, in partnership with the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association, has taken part in a number of consumer shows as part of the organization's marketing mix. These shows have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edmonton RV Show</li> <li>• Edmonton Motorcycle Show</li> <li>• Vancouver Motorcycle Show</li> <li>• Quartzite, Arizona RV Show</li> <li>• Abbotsford Sport and Outdoor Show</li> <li>• Dawson Creek Kiwanis Trade Show</li> </ul>
5. Work with partners to create research relevant to DC and the Alaska Highway	<p>Tourism Dawson Creek has been very active in research projects with partners to provide quantifiable data to support tourism in Dawson Creek and throughout the region. These include the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Visitor Study (2005), the Motivations of RV travel, and the Northern Rockies Value of Tourism study. In 2009, Tourism Dawson Creek is completing a Dawson Creek Value of Tourism Study. Economic Impact Studies for the Northern BC Winter Games and Fall Fair Rodeo have also been conducted by Tourism Dawson Creek.</p> <p>Research will continue to be a priority to TDC in its effort to educate the community as a whole on the value of the tourism industry. Future projects will include Economic Impact studies on the South Peace Multiplex facility, and a revision of the Alaska Highway Visitor Study with close collaboration with the North to Alaska program and our Northern BC Tourism, Yukon and Alaska partners.</p>
6. Generate awareness about the Dawson Creek tourism industry	<p>Tourism Dawson Creek, in partnership with the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association, has attended regional, provincial, national, and North American industry events to promote and generate the awareness of Dawson Creek and the Alaska Highway Experience.</p>

**Education**

Goal: To raise the level of customer service, satisfaction and tourism professional development opportunities within Dawson Creek

Objectives:

1. To educate front-line staff on local product and events
2. To educate the (business) community on value of tourism
3. To offer *SuperHost* to stakeholders and interested parties
4. To participate in and host NRAHTA, NBCTA or other tourism AGMs and adjoining conferences
5. To offer Tourism BC Business Essentials programs
6. To facilitate human resources and training opportunities

<i>Measurements for Education</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. To deliver Tourism British Columbia's <i>SuperHost</i> programs at least twice a year	Tourism Dawson Creek is the coordinating body for the Tourism BC <i>SuperHost</i> program.
2. To offer and coordinate Tourism British Columbia's Essentials workshops in Dawson Creek	Tourism Dawson Creek has hosted the Community Tourism Essentials and Sport Essentials Workshops in Dawson Creek in 2006.
3. Create a Community Orientation program	
4. Develop partnerships with educational institutions	Tourism Dawson Creek has a healthy relationship with the University of Northern British Columbia and Vancouver Island University.

### *Dawson Creek Attractions Master Plan, 2007*

In 2007, Alderichpears Associates et al. were commissioned by Tourism Dawson Creek to produce the Dawson Creek Attractions Master Plan. The Master Plan provides general direction and specific guidance for enhancing the attractions of Dawson Creek and the region. It analyses the existing attractions, recommends actions to improve these facilities where needed and addresses the need for new facilities.

The City of Dawson Creek is the lead organization with support from Tourism Dawson Creek.

#### Status:

Currently not all the attraction organizations are united as far as the concepts presented in the Plan, therefore it is difficult to move forward. The other barrier is the capital cost required for each of the projects. Tourism Dawson Creek has championed the completion of the initial Alaska Highway House exhibits in the downtown area. A new way-finding signage post was resurrected in Northern Alberta Railway Park (NAR) in spring 2008 but then was quickly destroyed by vandals. A focus in 2009 will be to begin work on the NAR Park museum's building structure, management structure and funding. Review shuttle/transportation opportunities also peddle bikes. Funding to hire a museum curator, Walter Wright Pioneer Village and archives. Grants supported bus improvement projects. Overlap with other plans include archives, historical society, Tourism Dawson Creek, City of Dawson Creek, Mile Zero, heritage commission, accessibility study, OCP, economic development plan update.

The Master Plan provides overview direction and specific recommendations in order to provide an entertaining, informative, seamless and coherent visitor experience for tourists and residents alike.

The Plan focused on four zones:

- NAR Park
- Downtown Dawson Creek
- Beyond Downtown
- Other Places (highway approaches, airport, etc.)

The Plan is presented in seven sections:

- Goals
- Challenges, opportunities and needs
- Thematic structures
- Visitor experience descriptions
- Economic analysis of the potential impact of implementing this plan
- Process for moving forward with this plan
- Cost estimates by attraction

#### Goals

- Develop a unified vision for Dawson Creek visitor attractions and identify opportunities for cross-promotion, joint ventures, etc.
- Provide specific direction for enhancing visitor experiences at Dawson Creek attractions over time.

Objectives:

- Identify priorities for development (phasing opportunities over time) related to Dawson Creek attractions
- Address the mix of tourist and residential attractions with the aim of extending visitor stays, creating (or enhancing) economic benefits to Dawson Creek
- Focus on Dawson Creek’s unique assets and resources
- Scale the attractions to the resources (economic and human) of the community and to expected visitation
- Identify potential costs
- Develop a management framework to support the vision

**Vision:**

The attractions of Dawson Creek will be a must-see for all Alaska Highway travellers and a source of community heritage information and pride for residents.

**Goals for NAR Park**

- To facilitate choices regarding Dawson Creek and Alaska Highway visits and purchases
- Link attractions and stories at NAR Park in a complementary way
- Develop a vision for NAR Park as the main tourist destination in Dawson Creek
- Direct visitors downtown

<i>General Implementation</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. A detailed design plan (site, architecture and interpretive concepts) for selected developments is required to inform further decisions and funding	Complete.
2. Traffic and long-term parking issues should be resolved as part of this step as they will affect the long-term use of the site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transit</li> <li>• No plan for change as per the provincial regulations</li> </ul>
3. Site developments, services and access are critical and should be resolved by the City before any long-term work begins	

<i>Short-term Implementation</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Cairn/Arch renovation and upgrade — immediate requirement that visitors can benefit from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgraded /re-lift</li> <li>• Lights - solar</li> </ul>
2. Grain Elevator — temporary exhibits on ground level to raise awareness and provide added variety for visitors on the site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• storage</li> </ul>
3. Limited site programs could begin	
4. Comboose should be interpreted or reopened in some capacity (food service or programs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be revised by TAC</li> </ul>

<i>Medium-term Implementation</i>	<i>Status</i>
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<i>Medium-term Implementation</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Grain Elevator and Elevator components — adding a key attraction and opening up accessibility for the Art Gallery	
2. Station Museum renovation and rehabilitation — this may/may not include expanded spaces; regardless it should proceed. This upgrade may need to be tagged on to the Grain Elevator and Elevator project in order to raise public awareness for a “new” improved NAR Park, and make it attractive to funders. The Station will likely have trouble finding funding as a stand-alone project — especially if the work is simply to protect the building.	
3. Station Museum exhibits could be renovated and upgraded as part of this expansion work. The relocation of the Community Museum (either at NAR Park or in the Village) would determine how work would proceed in either case.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five-year plan for improvements by the City: basement, roof, etc.</li> </ul>
4. Art Gallery expansion could take place at the same time, or spaced out to minimize disruption on this end of the site. Funding sources for this work may be different than the above attractions.	
5. Comboose location and role would be determined as part of this stage	

<i>Long-term Implementation</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. The VC, Community Museum and Alaska Highway House development would occur — and are targeted out further as a result of significant funding requirements. VC funding — as it may be easier to obtain than the other components — should be used to leverage the two attached components — either immediately or as a phased building.	
2. Site exhibits would be developed to their full scope	
3. Site programs could be augmented	
4. Additional rolling stock expanded over time	

### Goals for Downtown Dawson Creek

- Draw residents and tourists downtown and create economic benefits for the community
- Provide opportunities for community participation and sponsorship
- Widen/extend visitation to the greater Dawson Creek area
- Reinforce the unique characteristics of Dawson Creek
- Create an awareness of Dawson Creek history in new and established residents

#### Status:

New Alaska Highway House exhibit draws visitors from NAR Park to the downtown area. Two projects that have been discussed recently, are the old post historic post office building and the old pool. The City of Dawson Creek owns the post office building and studies have been conducted on its operation as an arts and cultural centre.

The downtown merchant groups have in the past discussed the concept of a business improvement area, but no one to this point has championed the process.

Currently there are two “proposed” infrastructure projects in the downtown area. (Both haven’t been approved to date, but are in the research, planning and feasibility stage.) The projects are the development of the old Post Office building to be retro-fitted to become the Calvin Kruk Centre for Performing Arts. The Post Office building was purchased by the City of Dawson Creek in 2008. The other project is proposed by a private interest group (Peace Energy Cooperative) that wants to purchase the old pool.

<i>Implementation Short Term</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Spirit Square should be the focus for immediate funding	In 2008 the City of Dawson Creek received grant funding through the provincial BC 150 Spirit Square funding. The proposed project was to have a Mile 0 square in the downtown area, and have the Mile 0 Post in a visitor-friendly location. At that time the community could not match the funding, and the project was cancelled.
2. Banners, sculptures and graphics	City has purchased metal banners
3. Prepare design program for selected interpretive components — detailed stories and locations should be identified in coordination with the landscape architect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking tour complete and new signage</li> <li>• Annual mural project on-going</li> <li>• Signage</li> </ul>
4. Walking Tours and Murals are ongoing and could be funded on a regular basis in short and long term	
<i>Implementation Long Term</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Sculpture program should be expanded beyond Spirit Square	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey statue</li> <li>• City Hall</li> </ul>
2. A detailed site plan should be developed	

<p>3. All interpretive developments should be coordinated with streetscape improvements to ensure that both work together (e.g. hardscaping and siting of panels, sculptures, benches, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a plan, City refers to plan when considering changes</li> </ul>
<p>4. Cultural Anchor, Archive and Roots Group theming will only be required once a new facility is identified</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural and or now post office building</li> </ul>

**Goals for Beyond Downtown Dawson Creek**

- Provide opportunities for community participation and sponsorship
- Widen/extend visitation to the greater Dawson Creek area
- Reinforce the unique characteristics of Dawson Creek
- Create an awareness for Dawson Creek history in residents new and old

Status:

Pioneer Village is a wonderful attraction in the community and region. There are a lot of great ideas/concepts and future development of that product as described in the Dawson Creek Attractions Master Plan. The Attractions Master Plan also outlines the current situation, which has not changed since the completion of the master plan document.

Airport: There is an airport advisory committee that is a task force of City Council. In order to see larger air carriers come to Dawson Creek, a large capital expansion would have to be completed. Even if this were done it would not guarantee companies like Air Canada and West Jet would make Dawson Creek a destination. Example: West Jet only flies to one destination within a certain area (based on population). Grande Prairie receives West Jet service for the area and region, much like the Comox Airport incorporates the population of central and northern Vancouver Island and parts of the Interior. This is why Nanaimo does not have West Jet service.

<p>Walter Wright Pioneer Village  <i>Implications: Short Term</i></p>	<p><i>Status</i></p>
<p>1. Decision on the direction of the Village is required before any further development can occur</p>	<p>On-going</p>
<p>2. Based on a decision by the City, a design (site, architecture and interpretation) plan should be developed to define the work required</p>	

<p>Walter Wright Pioneer Village  <i>Implications: Medium Term – The following presumes either Option 1 or 2 is selected.</i></p>	<p><i>Status</i></p>
<p>1. Renovation and upgrading exhibits for key historic houses and equipment shed that would form heritage component in Option 2</p>	<p>Equipment</p>

Walter Wright Pioneer Village <i>Implications: Medium Term – The following presumes either Option 1 or 2 is selected.</i>	<i>Status</i>
(as these are assured of existing in both options)	
2. Welcome Centre upgrades and expansion (non-museum)	Visitor Centre - satellite
OR	
3. Conversion of selected buildings to public space and RV park use	

Walter Wright Pioneer Village <i>Implications: Long Term</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Welcome centre upgrades with Museum	
2. Upgrades for other historic houses	No

Interpretive Attractions <i>City Walking Trail, Carriage Tours, Shuttle Bus program, Kiskatinaw Bridge McQueen's Slough Implications Short Term</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Carriage Tours should be funded and augmented	Cancelled but trolley or alternate form of transportation to be reviewed.

Interpretive Attractions <i>City Walking Trail, Carriage Tours, Shuttle Bus program, Kiskatinaw Bridge McQueen's Slough Implications Medium Term</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Kiskatinaw Bridge components should be planned and implemented. Roadwork required for the historic highway segment at this location should be discussed with DOT so that conditions can be addressed as soon as possible	Road upgrades Park upgraded
2. City Walking Trail components should be augmented	Extended to EnCana Centre (Pouce Coupe would like connecting trail from EnCana Centre)
3. McQueen's Slough interpretation	None – hard to find, need better signage to set this up

Interpretive Attractions <i>City Walking Trail, Carriage Tours, Shuttle Bus program, Kiskatinaw Bridge McQueen's Slough Implications Long Term</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Shuttle Bus Program — including vehicles and infrastructure required to carry out the program — should be developed over time. A business case for the program should be undertaken to help define audience capacities and admission costs.	Researching Lack of taxi an issue

### Attractions Management

#### Goals

- Create a framework for organizing and coordinating attractions activity in Dawson Creek
- Identify short-, medium- and long-term actions required

<i>Management Changes – Station Museum</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. The South Peace Historical Society will transfer ownership of the station building to the City of Dawson Creek and the City will undertake the necessary repairs to the building.	Budget of \$300,000 to do foundation. Five-year plan to do repairs as per recommendations by South Peace Historical Society.
2. The City and the Historical Society will enter into an agreement whereby the City pays the Historical Society a fee for operating the Museum and retaining a professional manager / curator. The City will undertake to pay for maintenance and services, and may provide administrative support. This agreement should also extend to Walter Wright Pioneer Village	Needs review
3. The Historical Society will retain ownership of the moveable artifacts. In the event of dissolution of the Society, ownership of the artifacts will be transferred to the City.	Needs review
4. The City will appoint two voting members to the Board of the Mile 0 and Tourism Dawson Creek will appoint one voting member to the Board of the Mile 0 Park Society.	Complete – two representatives to Mile 0 Society but not to South Peace Historical Society (SPHS).
5. The Historical Society will undertake to increase earned revenues and to pursue fundraising opportunities.	
6. The Historical Society will provide regular	Regular reporting by museum (SPHS).

reporting to the City with stated deliverables.	
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<i>Management Changes – Walter Wright Pioneer Village</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. The South Peace Historical Society will transfer ownership of the historic buildings and the entrance building to the City of Dawson Creek.	Under review.
2. The agreement between the City and the Historical Society described with the Museum will extend to the Village.	Under review.
3. The Historical Society will be responsible for staffing the Village entrance building, and for all programs and interpretation in the Village.	
4. The City will take responsibility for maintenance and heritage stewardship of the buildings and grounds.	
5. Any changes to the buildings or grounds must be approved by the Historical Society and reviewed by the Community Heritage Commission.	
6. The Historical Society will retain ownership of the moveable artifacts. In the event of dissolution of the Society, ownership of the artifacts will be transferred to the City.	
7. The current lease agreement between the Historical Society and the Mile 0 Park Society will be terminated. The future management of Sudeten Hall should be negotiated at that time.	
8. The Historical Society will undertake to increase earned revenues and to pursue fundraising opportunities.	
9. The Historical Society will provide regular reporting to the City with stated deliverables.	

<i>Management Changes – Archives</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. The City will provide a permanent home for the Archives in a new or adapted building. (Ideally, this will be located in the new cultural anchor that is proposed in this Master Plan.)	

<i>Management Changes – Archives</i>	<i>Status</i>
2. Discussions will be held between the City and the Peace River Regional District to investigate whether the Regional District might become involved with ownership and/or management.	
3. Overall management and direction will be the responsibility of the City (unless by Regional District), with the City (or Regional District) hiring a manager and other staff as needed.	
4. The Historical Society may continue to maintain and expand the community archives, working in cooperation with the archives Manager.	

<i>Management Changes – Art Gallery Elevator Complex</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. The Dawson Creek Art Gallery will continue to be operated as at present.	
2. The City will work with the Art Gallery to meet its expansion needs in a manner consistent with the heritage values of NAR Park and with any future site and attractions planning.	
3. Any proposed additions or alterations within NAR Park will be reviewed by the Heritage Commission.	
4. The City will work with the Roots Group to find it long-term accommodation, preferably in the same building as the Archives.	

<i>Management Changes – Alaska Highway House</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. The City of Dawson Creek, Tourism Dawson Creek, and the Historical Society will work together to determine the manner of implementing the proposed Alaska Highway House.	Tourism Dawson Creek and the City of Dawson Creek.

<i>Management Changes – Kiskatinaw Bridge</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. The Regional District, Tourism Dawson Creek, and NRAHTA will work together to investigate ways to interpret and market the bridge and the Old Alaska Highway more aggressively and in coordination with	On-going

marketing other heritage attractions in Dawson Creek and the South Peace region.	
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<i>Management Changes – Community Heritage Commission</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. The Heritage Commission will assert its mandate to advise City Council on all matters relating to the City's heritage.	On-going
2. The Commission will receive support from the City for administrative services, and for a program of upgrading the skills of its members.	On-going

**City of Dawson Creek Heritage Strategy, 2007**

The City of Dawson Creek commissioned Commonwealth Historic Resource Management to produce *A Heritage Strategy for the City of Dawson Creek*. The plan provides a strategic framework and an action plan that is intended for implementation over the next five years. The City of Dawson Creek has enabled two bylaws for heritage programming: one to designate the NAR Station as a municipal heritage site (1982) and to establish a Community Heritage Commission (2005). *Note: The City of Dawson Creek has since incorporated Heritage Policy in the Official Community Plan Bylaw 3550 March 2008, Section 3.7.*

The City of Dawson Creek is the lead organization on this initiative with support from the South Peace Historic Society and Tourism Dawson Creek.

**Vision**

The City of Dawson Creek, in partnership with the broad Dawson Creek community, will develop and support a heritage program that is inclusive, accessible and cooperative; which is coordinated with cultural activity; and contributes to the education and enjoyment of residents and visitors.

**Status:**

- Feasibility Study on the NAR Park Museum
- Supported, Tourism Dawson Creek's applications for historic walking tour signage panels.
- Currently researching heritage funding opportunities
- Supported, the SPHS request to the city to improve the museum's structure

The Heritage Commission is a committee that is assigned by council. The commission receives \$25,000 a year from the city budget. This money has been used as partnership dollars in grant applications.

In 2008 a proposal from the South Peace Historic Society went to City Hall for the amount of \$300,000 to be placed in the 2009 budget for the upgrade of the museum. Work on the museum will take place in 2009 pending final approval of the City Capital Budget. The Heritage Commission has endorsed the proposal by the South Peace Historic Society.

<i>Heritage Program Strategies</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Acknowledge fully that the delivery of	

<i>Heritage Program Strategies</i>	<i>Status</i>
heritage services comprises a core municipal responsibility.	
2. Develop the City's capacity to manage heritage resources. Rationalize the municipal management infrastructure to include direct municipal participation and coordination, integrate heritage management into municipal operations, and avoid unnecessary overlaps and duplications.	
3. Identify the City's built, natural and intangible heritage resources.	Ongoing/under review
4. Institute a program of preserving and protecting the most significant heritage resources by using the protection tools enabled by Part 27 of the Local Government Act, including the provision of heritage incentives to encourage voluntary protection.	Yes, just unveiled new City Coat of Arms, and City flag. The Heritage Commission played a key role in this project.
5. Invest in improving Dawson Creek's Heritage Facilities in order to make improvements to their physical plant, management, and visitor experience.	Investment in the NAR Park Museum for 2009
6. Increase public awareness and appreciation of Dawson Creek's tangible and intangible heritage with programs of education and interpretation.	Under review
7. Use heritage as an opportunity and a tool in community development.	
8. Use heritage as an opportunity and a tool in community development.	Under review
9. Ensure that heritage (and cultural) programs are inclusive and accessible to all segments of the Dawson Creek community.	Ongoing

***Tourism BC – Sport Tourism Workshop, 2006***

In 2006, 36 sport tourism stakeholders participated in a Sport Tourism workshop. The workshop outcomes identified social capital, community facilities, current sporting events, potential sporting events, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and next steps.

<i>Sport Tourism Workshop Next Steps</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Parks and Rec committee master plan	
2. Tourism Dawson Creek directory – "Who's	Community Directory, completed and updated bi-

who?" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website</li> </ul>	annually.
3. Sports and Recreational Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and Rec Committee</li> </ul>	
4. Partnership / dialogue between community groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charlie</li> </ul>	
5. Community calendar of events – sports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism Dawson Creek</li> </ul>	Sporting events are placed on Tourism Dawson Creek website. New Dawson Creek sport website will be launched in 2009 and teams will be able to upload there events onto the sports calendar.
6. Tourism Dawson Creek to systematically collect event info <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sport organizations to inform / update Tourism Dawson Creek</li> </ul>	Ongoing
7. Take event planning to a more professional level	Hired a contract employee to gather information from sport organizations, facilitate workshop in May 2009, and launch new sport website. The new South Peace Multi-plex has also provided Dawson Creek with a distinct selling feature in trying to enquire provincial and national sport organizations to train and complete in Dawson Creek.
8. Combine sports and cultural events	
9. Hire a professional event coordinator	Not done to date
10. Check co-op options	Not done to date, based on having funding to hire someone.
11. Open door policy – Tourism Dawson Creek and event coordinator	Yes, for any event, culture, arts, sport
12. Cooperation between hotels and event organizers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information</li> <li>• Planning ahead</li> <li>• Lots of advance notice</li> </ul>	Tourism Dawson Creek plays a liaison role in working with hotel operators and sports organizations on finding rooms for sporting events.
13. Community office to store sport information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City and sport organizations</li> <li>• Volunteer Dawson Creek</li> </ul>	Not done to date

*Communications Plan, 2005*

In 2005, Alderichpears Associates were commissioned by Tourism Dawson Creek to produce the Communications Plan, which was to establish an overall thematic strategy for the Alaska Highway corridor. The strategy applies to an interpretive strategy for Dawson Creek and a concept plan for the Alaska Highway House. Current overall status, phase one of the Highway House is complete, entrance ways to community landscaped and handscaped, improvements to signage undertaken. Other initiatives require

funding. Overlap with other plans include Attractions Master Plan, Post Office Feasibility Study, Northern BC Alaska Highway plans, City Plans including public works. Next steps include support and participation in future planning for the Alaska Highway Corridor, re-visit Dawson Creek Thematic Strategy (in particular ensure that items such as garbage cans are included in City plans and current projects, review funding sources, re-visit Alaska Highway House, review relationships with other attractions, create a business plan/case for moving forward with a Business Improvement Area (BIA). Key partners include the City of Dawson Creek, Tourism Dawson Creek, Northern BC Tourism, Downtown merchants and all levels of government. Timing for success includes reviewing year one, having quick wins in year one, two-year focus on Cultural Centre Development. A funding grant has been approved for approved for the centre, federal and provincial funding has been provided for refurbishing the Post Office. For downtown revitalization key partners include Tourism Dawson Creek, City of Dawson Creek, and Dawson Creek merchants.

<http://www.planningforpeople.ca/index.asp>

The Communications Plan consists of four strategic areas:

1. Alaska Highway Corridor Thematic Strategy
2. Dawson Creek Thematic Strategy
3. Dawson Creek Downtown Revitalization
4. Alaska Highway House Concept Plan

### **Alaska Highway Corridor Thematic Strategy**

General Status: Many of these areas will be addressed with the evolution of the NRAHTA and the new role of the Alaska Highway Community. Future plans to address these goals and objectives will be supported in future plans that will be developed in coordination with the Alaska Highway communities, Tourism BC, Northern BC tourism and other partners.

#### Goals and Objectives

- Increase tourism-based economic benefits for communities along the Alaska Highway
- Create a cohesive experience for visitors travelling the Alaska Highway
- Foster cooperation between communities up the highway in order to link visitor experiences, ensure a balance of stories and tell highway stories at appropriate points
- Provide visitors with a context for their trip up the highway
- Encourage more visitors to spend more time and visit more places
- Meet the needs of each group travelling the highway

<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Maintain and strengthen their communication and cooperation initiative	On-going
2. Coordinate familiarization tours for their travel counselling and interpretive staff...	Continue current efforts
3. Develop a strategy for providing a special identity and character for each region and community...	On-going
4. Create a long-term 10-year strategy for addressing tourism on the Alaska Highway...	In progress with Northern BC Tourism and Alaska Highway partners.

<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Status</i>
5. Investigate...scenic byways legislation...or designation that would provide the highway with elevated status and profile. (National Scenic Byways Criteria includes Archaeological, Cultural, Historic, Natural Recreational)	In progress
6. Identify funding...to support these initiatives.	

### **Dawson Creek Thematic Strategy**

General Status: This plan must be re-visited. Ensure items as noted in section 5 are included in current City plans and incorporated into current projects. Funding sources must be re-visited.

#### Interpretive Goals

- To orient and direct visitors to Mile "0."
- To encourage interest and exploration of the Alaska Highway. Give visitors a context for their journey.
- To coordinate Dawson Creek attractions and stories.
- To facilitate choices regarding Dawson Creek and Alaska Highway visits and purchases.

#### Urban Goals

- To encourage visitors to stop and shop.
- To create unity of image for downtown.
- To create opportunities for development with a unified vision.
- To create downtown commercial and cultural opportunities.

<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Detailed analysis of resources of each facility	Done - AMP
2. Visioning workshop	Done
3. Master Plan with concept plan and detailed operation and business plans (pending item above)	Partially completed – needs to be re-visited
4. Funding	No
5. Design (Drawing and documentation for signage, way finding, banner, billboards, sculptural concepts, sites, landscape, urban design and municipal works)	
6. Fabrication and installation	

### **Dawson Creek Downtown Revitalization**

General Status: Cultural Centre is the anchor. Downtown revitalization plan must be re-visited with new information. New two-year focus on the new Arts and Cultural Centre development. Re-visit the turn-down of Spirit Square. Mile 0 post must be moved. Improve safety of visitors, determine a more economical

project scale. Review plan for small improvements for short-term success. Review opportunities for tax incentives. TDRP – look for recommendations in the plan that align with current City projects e.g. sidewalk improvements.

Revitalization Strategy – Enhance its overall appeal as a pedestrian-friendly environment for both residents and visitors to Dawson Creek.

Goals:

- Ensuring a cleaner, more attractive downtown
- Increasing occupancy
- Attracting new residents
- Attracting more visitors
- Making use of existing assets
- Encouraging people to “stop and shop”

Objectives:

- Promoting more downtown activity
- Reinforcing the unique characteristics of Dawson Creek
- Establishing a public art program
- Connecting to the natural environment

Requires identification of a champion.

<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Review of initial concepts with stakeholders	Done
2. Preparation of more refined designs and cost estimates	Done
3. Review with authorities having jurisdiction, including municipal and provincial	Done
4. Identification of funding sources, both public and private	Done
5. Determining a phasing plan	Done
6. Preparation of working drawings, specifications and cost estimates for the initial phases	Done – Cultural Centre anchor
7. Review by stakeholders	Done – Plan must be re-visited with new information
8. Approval by authorities with jurisdiction	
9. Tendering and award contract	
10. Construction	Next two years – New Arts and Cultural Centre

### **Alaska Highway House Concept Plan**

General Status: Phase 1 complete. Formalize operations and marketing, funding, planning and budget.

Goals and Objectives

- To provide a comprehensive Alaska Highway experience
- To encourage interest and exploration of the Alaska Highway

<i>Implementation – Phase 1</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Chamber of Commerce Building	Done
2. 3D Map	Map not 3D
3. Wild side theatre	Quonset Hut Theatre
4. Layers of time	
5. Oh *&#@ Theatre	

<i>Implementation – Phase 2 - Long-term Vision</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Fundraising	
2. Planning	
3. Design Phasing	
4. Budget	

***Tourism BC Community Tourism Essentials Workshop, Dawson Creek 2006***

Tourism Dawson Creek has been consistent in engaging tourism industry stakeholders in Tourism BC workshops to identify their opportunities and challenges, which has set the direction for the current tourism plan. The following chart highlights the unresolved issues or concerns since participating in the workshops from 1989 to 2006. This schematic was reviewed at the initial meeting of the Community Tourism Foundation process; the 2008 column reflects the current status.

<b>Issues/Concerns</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>
Lack of commitment by local tourism industry				→
Poor signage				→
Unattractive downtown visual appeal				→
Shortage of quality accommodation		→		→
Lack of flights to major centres				→
Community unaware of the value of tourism				→
Front-line staff lacking knowledge of local product		→		→
Lack of quality campgrounds	→		→	→
Poor highway entrances		→		→
Need for a community marketing plan			→	Tourism Dawson Creek
Need for attractions and/or upgrading	→		→	Master Plan

The following list highlights key outcomes from the last workshop in 2006.

Attractions:

- A-1: To improve visual appeal of Mile "0" Post and Cairn
- A-2: To improve signage
- A-3: To stimulate upgrading of attractions
- A-4: To improve downtown visual appeal

Services:

- S-1: To increase number of public washrooms (especially downtown)
- S-2: To increase quality accommodation inventory
- S-3: To improve air connections
- S-4: To improve coordination of sports tourism opportunities

Hospitality:

- H-1: To educate front-line staff on local product and events
- H-2: To improve entrance (off AH) to VIC/Museum/Art Gallery
- H-3: To educate business community on value of tourism
- H-4: To improve cleanliness of facilities

Infrastructure:

- I-1: To improve/create appropriate historical signs and plaques
- I-2: To upgrade business yard maintenance
- I-3: To improve public transport to RV park
- I-4: To improve "Welcome to Dawson Creek" signage

Promotions:

- P-1: To improve availability of partnering funds
- P-2: To generate event awareness within community
- P-3: To better communicate promotional opportunities
- P-4: To create and distribute tourism marketing plans

***South Peace Community Multi-Plex and EnCana Event Centre***

The EnCana Events Centre is part of a larger facility, the South Peace Community Multiplex, which includes the Kenn Borek Aquatic Centre and the Lakota Agriplex. The South Peace Multiplex is owned by the City of Dawson Creek and is partially managed by Global Spectrum Facility Management. The Kenn Borek Aquatic Centre is managed by City of Dawson Creek staff, the Lakota Agriplex is managed by the Dawson Creek Stables and Arena Association and Global Spectrum Facility Management collaborates with both parties to oversee capital and maintenance for the entire facility.

The contract between the City of Dawson Creek and Global Spectrum Facility Management was signed effective January 1, 2008. Global Spectrum Facility Management contract defines its role to manage all aspects of the EnCana Events Centre including booking events, marketing and promotion and facility maintenance. The 2009 EnCana Event Centre Business Plan has been adopted by City Council.

Highlights of the Business Plan are as follows:

The City of Dawson Creek has engaged Global Spectrum Facility Management, Ovations Food Services, Front Row Marketing Services and New Era Tickets to provide professional industry experience to operate within the EnCana Events Centre and the South Peace Community Multiplex.

#### Goals

- 1) Generate more events
- 2) Increase attendance
- 3) Increase customer spending
- 4) Offer great customer service and client satisfaction
- 5) Manage and control expenses

#### EnCana Events Centre Vision Statement

Recognize the EnCana Events Centre as the premier entertainment facility in the entire British Columbia and Alberta Peace Region while leading the City of Dawson Creek towards an increased quality of life and sustainable social and economic growth by utilizing the EnCana Events Centre as its catalyst.

#### EnCana Events Centre Mission Statement

To increase the number of entertainment opportunities to the citizens of the Peace Region while striving to meet and exceed the City of Dawson Creek's and our customers' expectations.

#### EnCana Events Centre Mandate

The Mandate of the EnCana Events Centre is to provide "Entertainment. All the Time."

#### Conference Centre

The unfinished conference centre space is one of the top priorities for Global Spectrum as there is no alternate facility in the City to host large conferences (350+) with banquet and exhibitor space. The financial projections are based on this facility being completed by 2010. If the project is deferred, lower attendance and revenue streams will result. The capital investment required to complete this area is estimated at three million dollars.

#### Wellness and Recreational Area

Although the unfinished Wellness and Recreation area is not part of the scope of work that Global spectrum Facility Management has been hired to manage, the space provides partnership opportunities with the City of Dawson Creek to create revenue potential and increased traffic to the facility. A "packaged" recreational experience to enhance the current pool and walking /running track has great potential with the addition of the climbing wall and wellness infrastructure to complete a "one stop" health and leisure experience.

If the City chooses not to develop the unused recreational footprint, Global Spectrum could explore additional revenue generating options including additional meeting room space or food venue opportunities that again would enhance the overall experience when coming to the Multiplex.

#### Event Projections

The projections below are prepared using the following assumptions:

- 1) A Junior A hockey team will be secured in 2009
- 2) In 2011 the team will make the playoffs
- 3) The convention centre will be completed and operational by 2012
- 4) Attendance will increase as the facility establishes its market position

	2009	2010	2011
Number of Events	59	66	77
Attendance	110,250	202,963	223,284

### Coordinated Plan

There are many organizations within the community and region that can and do support each other in their efforts to attract and bring events to Dawson Creek. ***It is recommended that a coordinated plan be developed that includes all stakeholders.*** With the South Peace Community Multiplex and other recreational infrastructure Dawson Creek has a wealth of potential to attract numerous conferences, trade shows and other events to the City.<sup>10</sup>

Lakota Agri-Centre is managed by the Dawson Creek stable and arena association.

- Facility Information:
- 120' x 250' clear span building
- Dirt floor riding interior
- Suitable for equestrian, rodeo and livestock activities / events
- Large washstall capacity for horses and cattle
- Spectator seating for 350 people with public washrooms
- 100 stalls in Phase 1 and an additional 100 stalls in Phase II
- Outside paddocks and dedicated truck and livestock rig parking
- Can be used in conjunction with the EnCana Centre

The Kenn Borek Aquatic Centre facility is managed by the City of Dawson Creek, Parks and Recreation Department. Successes to date include over 100,000 swimmers in its first year of operation. To date the pool is still seeing an average of 9,000 users per month.

### ***City of Dawson Creek***

#### *Official Community Plan (OCP) City of Dawson Creek Bylaw # 3550 revised March 17, 2008*

The City of Dawson Creek Official Community Plan is intended to establish the policy framework within which planning decisions are made by Council.

While there is no dedicated section for the tourism sector, broad objective and policy statements that relate to tourism are as follows:

### **Objectives**

2.1 The broad social, economic and environmental objectives of the Council with respect to the form and character of existing and proposed land use and the provision of municipal services within the City of

<sup>10</sup> EnCana Events Centre, Business Plan February 16, 2009

Dawson Creek are set out in this section. These objectives are to be achieved through the implementation of the policies contained in Section 3 of the OCP document.

2.2 Objectives section tourism references include: 2.2: 2, 3, 9, 13, and 16.

Following are the objectives of Council with regard to the form and character of existing and proposed land use and the provision of services in the City of Dawson Creek:

1. To create an environment which is clean and provides for the health, safety, convenience and welfare of all members of the community.
2. To encourage the development and **diversification of the local economy** by encouraging the development of various commercial and industrial uses within the City.
3. To support community enhancement initiatives in the City that will:
  - beautify and improve the physical appearance of Dawson Creek
  - **project a positive image to residents and visitors**
  - **encourage travellers to spend more time in the community**, and
  - encourage more investment and spending in the local economy
  - encourage celebration and conservation of community heritage
4. To preserve and protect the natural environment and to avoid development on land areas which are subject to hazardous conditions by reason of flooding, erosion or soil instability.
5. To ensure compatibility between various uses of land within the City.
6. To provide an efficient, safe and co-ordinated street system for intra City and through City travel.
7. To develop, maintain and where necessary improve service systems within the City consistent with Council's land use policies and financial capabilities.
8. To encourage the development of a range of housing forms at varying densities and under various forms of tenure so as to accommodate the housing needs of different people.
9. To **stimulate the development of a range of commercial activities** within the City by designating land for various forms of commercial land use in order to meet the needs of the local residents, residents of the City's service area, **tourists** and traveling public.
10. To locate industrial land uses where precedent for industrial development has been established and where access by road or rail can be provided.
11. To ensure a supply of land at all times for the development of institutional uses.
12. To develop a system of parks and recreation facilities which will meet the full range of recreational needs in the City.
13. To **develop and support a heritage program**, which is inclusive, accessible, and co-operative, which is coordinated with cultural activity, and which contributes to the education and enjoyment of residents and **visitors**.
14. To work with the Regional District to promote sound growth policies on lands adjacent to, and affecting, the City of Dawson Creek.
15. To support stream bank stabilization for the Dawson Creek in the Regional District and work towards a similar program in the City.
16. To encourage **property and business owner efforts to improve the physical appearance** of their properties and businesses.
17. To support infill development of residential and commercial areas and consider development of new commercial and residential areas.
18. To support the development of affordable, rental and special needs housing.

19. To consider a Boundary Extension to include developed industrial areas adjacent to the current Municipal Boundaries.

### **Policies Section 3.0**

Land Use Designations are classified by the following:

1. Residential
2. Commercial
3. Industrial
4. Institutional
5. Parks and Recreation
6. Development Reserve
7. Special Development Area

Tourism related references include: Commercial 3.3: 6,7,11; Parks and Recreation 3.6: 4, Recreation facilities 3.6: 6,7 Exhibition Grounds 3.6: 8,9 Heritage Policies 3.7: 1-6; Implementation 3.15: 6 Community Enhancement Plan. 9. Form and Character; 14 Signage.

Commercial 3.3: 6,7,11

6. To create a safer, more appealing environment for visitors to the Mile 0 Post, Council will work toward improvements to the Mile 0 Post area, which may include the creation of a small piazza around the Post.

7. To make a clearer visual connection and a safer and more pleasant walk between the Mile 0 Post and NAR Park, Council will work toward implementing streetscape, landscape and sidewalk improvements between these two points.

11. In order to improve the visual impression that the traveller will have of the City, Council will encourage sidewalk and boulevard improvements to the Alaska Avenue and 8th Street Corridors.

Parks and Recreation 3.6: 4

Council will make ongoing improvements to the NAR Park to improve visibility, organization and access to the site. One improvement Council will consider is to create a gathering space with a view of the traffic circle and additional interpretative signage.

Recreation facilities 3.6: 6,7

6. Council shall provide and maintain recreation facilities in the most cost effective manner in order to meet the recreational needs of the City's residents.

7. Council supports and encourages the continuing improvement of Mile 0 Rotary Park.

Exhibition Grounds 3.6: 8,9

8. Council shall continue the development of exhibition grounds consistent with the financial capability of the City to undertake the required improvements.

9. Council shall provide for the acquisition of lands and development of the Dawson Creek Trail in locations as generally shown on Schedule H. These lands may be acquired through dedication of land at time of subdivision, donation or by cash acquisition.

Heritage Policies 3.7: 1-6

1. Council, advised by the Community Heritage Commission, shall provide for the Identification of the City's built, natural and intangible heritage resources. Specifically, Council shall:
  - a. Create an Official Community Heritage Register;
  - b. Encourage the creation of inventories of significant natural and intangible heritage resources.
2. Council shall institute a program of preserving and protecting the most significant built heritage resources, consistent with Part 27 of the Local Government Act. Specifically, Council shall:
  - a. Protect publicly owned properties on the Community Heritage Register through heritage designation;
  - b. Introduce a program of heritage incentives;
  - c. Seek opportunities to designate private properties listed on the Community Heritage Register
3. Council, in cooperation with community partners, shall invest in improving Dawson Creek's heritage facilities in order to make needed improvements to the physical plant, management, and visitor experience. Specifically, Council shall address:
  - a. the NAR Station Museum;
  - b. Walter Wright Pioneer Village;
  - c. A new community and municipal Archives;
  - d. Other existing and proposed publicly owned facilities and resources.
4. Council, in cooperation with community partners, shall encourage an increase in public awareness and appreciation of Dawson Creek's tangible and intangible heritage with programs of education and interpretation.
5. Council, in cooperation with community partners, shall use heritage as an opportunity and a tool in the community and economic development.
6. Council shall ensure that heritage programs are inclusive and accessible to all segments of the Dawson Creek community.

#### Transportation 3.11

##### Highway Network

1. Council shall work toward implementing the major road network plan indicated on the Major Road Network Map contained in Schedule D and require that all future roads conform to the highway network plan in their design and alignment.

2. Council shall work with the Ministry of Transportation, the local Beautification Committee and other groups to further beautify and improve the traffic circle.

##### Collector Highways

3. Council shall strive towards ensuring that major roads are developed to provide access to future or existing neighbourhood centres as identified on the Official Community Plan Map contained in Schedule B.

##### Local Highways

4. Council shall favour subdivision designs, which discourage the movement of through traffic on such local roads, which do not form part of the major road network.

##### Transit

5. With regard to transit, Council may upgrade transit facilities consistent with the ability of the City to provide such a system and consistent with the demand for improved transit.

##### Transportation

6. It is Council's policy to designate the route following Highway 2 to Adams Road to the Golf Course Road to the Hart Highway as a Truck Route Bypass (also known as the Dangerous Goods Route) and to discourage the use of other routes through the City by trucks that are not stopping in the City.

7. Council will work with the airport operating contractor to promote the continued use and expansion of service to Dawson Creek. Council will also advocate the development of improved airport arrival features such as a welcome sign, information booth, streetscape, landscaping and façade improvements

Implementation 3.15: 6

Community Enhancement Plan

Several policies within this Official Community Plan concern physical appearance, beautification, economic development and quality of life. Many of these policies can be implemented in the context of a Community Enhancement Plan. The Community Enhancement Plan outlines what community enhancement projects the City wishes to achieve, general cost estimates, and the prioritization and timing of when these projects will be undertaken. Council will work with property owners, residents, service clubs, the Beautification Committee, the Chamber of Commerce and other community groups to implement the recommended improvements of the Community Enhancement Plan.

9. Form and Character

Recognize this unique City and its surroundings when considerations are being made for development. Without promoting only one particular theme or identity there are some very strong cues existing that distinguish Dawson Creek as a proud, economically viable and vibrant community:

- Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway
- Grain elevators
- Agriculture
- NAR site
- Railway
- Northern City
- Arts and culture
- Mile 0 logo
- Open prairie landscape
- Pioneer settlement
- Forestry
- Heritage
- Gateway to the Peace Country
- Sports and recreation

By recognizing the City's own commitment to enhancement in the public sector, this too can be matched in the private realm by having a clear understanding of the surroundings and reflecting this through development as a concerted effort to the benefit of local businesses and the community as a whole.

14. Signage

The clutter generated by signs in commercial districts, particularly along the City gateway entrances, through retailers and fast food outlets attempts at out-competing neighbouring businesses with bigger, bolder messages designed in some way to distract the passing motorist for their attention, does little to distinguish Dawson Creek from any other North American highway commercial district. The City's Sign Bylaw is a detailed and comprehensive regulation. Design guidelines attempt to give direction to the visual effect, so that Dawson Creek is distinguishable from other municipalities. Balancing visual effect as functionality, whereby safety, congestion, distracting signage, pedestrian movement and access create potentially unsafe situations. ***Concerted efforts at sign consolidation are needed, where only what is absolutely necessary to be posted and visible to the passing motorist is done so, in order that a total volume of signs can be reduced.*** No private signs are allowed in the public right-of-way. The

number of messages on a single sign should be limited to those which can be read at the posted driving speed without impairing safety. Signs should be installed on landscaped or decorative bases. Signs should complement the architectural character, design and materials of the related building. Franchise holders must work closely with City staff in order to realize the City's intent for having sign design guidelines without compromising their franchise commitments.

### 3 Market and Travel Trends

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This section of the report is an abridged version of a resource document to support the next steps of a situation analysis. The full report can be found online at:  
[http://www.tourismdawsoncreek.com/tourism\\_foundations.php](http://www.tourismdawsoncreek.com/tourism_foundations.php)

Tourism is largely a discretionary item and is dependent on personal disposable income. When economies are strong, tourism expenditures grow more rapidly than consumer spending as a whole. Likewise, during recessions, tourism can decline quickly and substantially.

#### 3.1 ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

*Please note: changing conditions to the global economy are ongoing; current volatility in the markets due to the recent economic downturn will alter these estimates over time, resulting in a direct impact on travel projections and trends.*

The global economy, led by the United States, slowed significantly in 2008. The Canadian economy is expected to grow by only 0.6% in 2008 and 0.3% in 2009 while the US economy is expected to grow by 1.4% in 2008 and shrink by 0.7% in 2009.<sup>11</sup> A recovery is not expected to begin until at least 2009 Q3. The economies of British Columbia and Alberta have been less affected, but declining oil, lumber and base metals prices are acting as a drag on their economies. Alberta (+1.3%) and BC (+1.0%) are both forecast to grow in 2009, but at a much slower pace than in recent years. Poor US economic performance in 2009 will more than offset the benefits of a more favourable exchange rate and lower gas prices; American visitation is expected to continue to decline in 2009. Japan and the UK, BC's two largest overseas markets, have also entered sharp recessions with growth rates of -0.9% and -1.4%, respectively, predicted for 2009.<sup>12</sup> This will probably lead to a decline in visitation from these countries in 2009.

*Refer to the Appendices for more information on the Economic Outlook.*

#### 3.2 WORLD TOURISM TRENDS

Tourism is an important part of the worldwide economy, making up approximately 6% of worldwide exports of goods and services (2003).<sup>13</sup> In another record year for the industry in 2007, 903 million international tourist arrivals were recorded by the WTO (World Tourism Organization), increasing 6.6% or an additional 56 million international tourist arrivals from 2006.<sup>14</sup> Growth (international arrivals) was highest in the Middle East (+15%) followed by Asia and the Pacific (+10%), Africa (+7%), Europe (+5%) and the Americas (+5%).

The World Tourism Organization expresses optimism for the tourism industry over the long term, forecasting international arrivals to reach over 1.6 billion by the year 2020.

Negotiations for Approved Destination Status (ADS) for Canada in China has been slow and ADS is not expected to be granted to Canada in the near term.

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<sup>11</sup> IMF World Economic Outlook, International Monetary Fund, November 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Economist Magazine, December 5, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> <http://unwto.org/facts/eng/economy.htm>. Accessed December 15, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, October 2008. World Tourism Organization.

In 2007, Canada ranked #14 in international tourism, decreasing one position from 2006. British Columbia holds a 0.5% share in international tourism arrivals. In tourism receipts (or tourism revenue), Canada ranked #13 in 2007, decreasing two positions from 2006. In 2007, Canada held a 1.8% share and in 2006 British Columbia held a 0.4% share in international tourism receipts.

*Refer to the Appendices for more information on World Tourism Trends and the Canadian Tourism Industry.*

### **3.3 MARKET TRENDS**

Tourism is a worldwide industry and British Columbia is a small player. Due to worldwide competition, the dependence on personal disposable income, consumer confidence, and world events that are not within anyone's control (such as wars and disease), international tourism growth is volatile in the short term. Despite the Iraq war, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), and a weak US economy, tourism has proven to be resilient and is expected to grow at a healthy rate over the long term. For communities in BC, domestic visitors are likely to show less volatility and would be expected to make up the vast majority of visitors.

Canadian and American travellers present the largest potential volume of visitors to BC communities. The US market is expected to continue to be an important international market but the number of visitors is not expected to grow in the short term, with challenges such as new passport requirements and border and security issues. Leisure travel in Canada and the US makes up a larger number of trips, and is growing faster, than business travel. Baby boomers continue to be the largest demographic segment, with the baby/bust/Generation X the second-largest segment that is seeing the highest growth rates. Having an Internet presence is important as the majority of American and Canadian travellers use the Internet for vacation planning and about half book online.

*Refer to the Appendices for more information on Market Trends*

### **3.4 ACCOMMODATION**

At year-end 2007, national occupancy levels were recorded at 65% with an average daily rate of \$127. In BC, the 2007 accommodation room revenue was \$1,966,282 increasing 8.3% from 2006; provincial occupancy was 66.9%, up 1.3%. Provincial average daily room rate was \$128.49, up 5.4%.<sup>15</sup>

*Refer to the Appendices for more information on Accommodation*

### **3.5 ALBERTA MARKET**

Dawson Creek's proximity and relationship with Alberta is important. Within a six-hour drive from Dawson Creek is a population of over 2 million people.

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<sup>15</sup> Tourism BC Year In Review, 2007

In April 2007 Tourism BC commissioned R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. to conduct the Community Tourism Foundations Perceptions/Incidence Study. The purpose of this study was to assess the consumer awareness of travel opportunities across the province.

The survey was administered for six weeks by telephone to the general public residing in five markets: GVRD, Vancouver Island, Northern BC, Southern Interior and Alberta. A total of 3,132 surveys were completed during this time; of these, 709 were residents of Calgary and Edmonton (Alberta). This report contains the findings of the study as it pertains to the Alberta market. Edmonton and Calgary are large, developing near-in markets with over 1.7 million residents (988,193 in Calgary and 730,372 in Edmonton). As many smaller communities heavily rely on near-in markets to develop and increase tourism, Alberta is an important market to understand.

The Alberta market was more likely to take trips to near-in destinations such as Windermere/Columbia Valley, Golden and Fernie. However, most Alberta respondents had not taken recent overnight leisure trips to the prompted Community Tourism Foundations destinations. Similarly, familiarity ratings seemed to increase for near-in destinations but overall the majority reported being not very familiar with many of the communities mentioned. The lack of knowledge about these destinations may be a contributing factor in low incidence of visitation; therefore, there is a large opportunity to educate this key market especially about near-in destinations.

Overall, most Alberta respondents had not taken recent overnight leisure trips to the prompted Community Tourism Foundations destinations. Windermere/Columbia Valley had the highest incidence of travel with just over 23% of respondents having traveled there in the past two years. Several near-in Community Tourism Foundations destinations (Golden, Fernie, and Cranbrook) fell within the 10%-12% range of respondents having recently traveled there. Those who had not recently visited a specific prompted Community Tourism Foundations destination were asked about their general familiarity with that destination. Familiarity ratings ranged from 1.58 (Prince George) to 3.63 (Cranbrook) but largely remained low with most prompted destinations having a high incidence of respondents being not at all familiar.

Alberta residents are looking for spring/summer destinations that are safe/clean, provide relaxation, are affordable and the weather is hot and sunny. The most important factor when choosing a destination in the next 6 months was that the destination is safe and clean. In fact, over 6-in-10 respondents indicated that this was Extremely Important and, on average, this factor rated as 4.46 on a five-point scale where 1 is Not Important At All and 5 is Extremely Important. The Alberta market is affluent, well-educated, and middle-aged. Given the recent economic boom that Alberta has experienced, it is not surprising that the Alberta travel market is affluent; 45% of respondents reported a household income of over \$100,000. Over 1-in-3 respondents in the Alberta have a University Degree (Bachelor's) and an additional 1-in-8 have a Graduate Degree. Although there is dispersion across all age brackets, Alberta respondents tend to be middle aged – nearly half (47%) are between the ages of 35 and 54.

### **Alberta Tourism Statistics**

The total number of person visits to Alberta in 2007 was 22.28 million, an increase of 13.9% from 2006 (19.56 million person visits). Of the 22.28 million person visits to Alberta, residents of Alberta accounted for approximately 80% of the visitors. Residents of other Canadian provinces accounted for 12% of all visitors and international visitors accounted for 8%. Tourism expenditures in Alberta for 2007 was \$5.64 billion, an

increase of 9.4% from 2006 (\$5.15 billion). Of the \$5.64 billion, Alberta residents accounted for \$2.97 billion or 53%. Residents of other Canadian provinces accounted for \$1.23 billion (22%), while international visitors spent \$1.44 billion (25%) in Alberta.

The last travel leisure intention survey posted on the Travel Alberta industry website<sup>16</sup> is dated October 2005. The highlights of resident travel intentions is as follows:

- Albertan Travellers are planning to take an average of 6.4 leisure trips during the next 6 months. These include trips both within and outside of Alberta. This is down slightly from 7.4 leisure trips planned between May 1st, 2004 and October 31st, 2004. The decrease to 6.4 trips is primarily due to fewer Albertan Travellers planning 10 or more trips and more planning one to four trips during the next six months.
- Similar to previous years, Alberta will receive the largest proportion of Albertans' leisure travel, as 75% of trips are planned for Alberta destinations.
- More than forty percent of Albertan Travellers are planning at least one trip to the Canadian Rockies (43%) while slightly less than one-third are planning to visit Edmonton and Area (32%), Calgary and Area (30%), or Alberta Central (29%) during the next six months. Twenty-two percent are planning a trip to Alberta South, while 11% are planning a trip to Alberta North.
- **An average of 1.6 trips are planned to destinations outside of the province.**
- Over half (57%) of all trips that Albertan travellers expect to make in the next 6 months will be a weekend in duration, while more respondents are planning to take trips 3 to 7 nights in length (18%) compared to 2004 (11%). Consequently, the average length of trips planned by Albertan Travellers has increased compared to 2004.
- One-quarter of trips are planned with less than one weeks notice (27%), one-quarter are planned with two to three weeks notice (23%), and 50% of trips are planned anywhere between three weeks to more than 6 months in advance.
- The top information resources used to plan leisure trips include: the Internet in general (40%), word-of-mouth (21%), the Alberta Motor Association (AMA) (21%), and previous experience (15%).

### **3.6 GROWTH IN NICHE TOURISM<sup>17</sup>**

Visitors to a destination are increasingly seeking to be an active participant in the experience. They are looking to be emotionally involved, educated, challenged, entertained or surprised. With the growth of "experiential tourism" there has been a corresponding growth in niche sectors that can deliver an experience. The Canadian Tourism Commission's repositioning of Canada as a destination where travellers can enjoy extraordinary personal experiences will heighten this demand for engaging experiences that go beyond the traditional goods and services offered by the travel industry. Key opportunities include: Aboriginal Cultural Tourism, Culture and Heritage Tourism, Golf, Meetings and Conventions Market, Nature-based Tourism, Sport Tourism, Winter Tourism, Wellness, and Culinary Tourism.

British Columbia, with its spectacular scenery and remote but accessible areas, provides great opportunity for product and market development capitalizing on current trends, however, each community within the

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<sup>16</sup> <http://tpr.alberta.ca/tourism/research/default.aspx>

<sup>17</sup> Tourism Planning Group, Tourism BC

regions will require a strategy to differentiate and brand itself within this broader context to find its own niche.

*Refer to the Appendices for more information on Niche Tourism.*

### **3.7 THE VALUE OF TOURISM IN BC**

Tourism in British Columbia is estimated to be worth \$13.2 billion in visitor revenue in 2007. Tourism GDP was nearly \$5.5 billion in 2006, based on a 1997 constant dollar. The tourism sector in British Columbia increased 4.6% in 2006, outpacing the provincial economy for the fourth straight year. Tourism accounted for one in every fifteen jobs in the province in 2006 and employs about 120,000 British Columbians. Tourism British Columbia is targeting a doubling of tourism revenues by 2015.

*Refer to the Appendices for more information on the Value of Tourism.*

### **3.8 BC TRAVEL TRENDS**

Tourism visitors reached 23.1 million overnight visitors in 2006. The largest market is BC residents making 49.1% of all visits to BC. The rest of Canada and the US markets are about the same size, around 21% of total visits. Asia Pacific makes up less than 4% and Europe, less than 3%. Overall, overnight customs entries from all international markets in 2006 were down 1.5% from the previous year. This is largely due to the further decrease in entries from the United States, which were down another 2.0% for the year. Tourism is seasonal in British Columbia and, despite significant efforts that have been made over the years to build the shoulder seasons, it is expected to continue to be a seasonal business. BC residents are the least volatile in travel patterns, without the degree of fluctuation experienced from international visitation. While international visitors spend more than BC residents (about 75% more in BC per trip than domestic visitors), they have correspondingly higher standards, tending to limit their experiences to those that are export ready.

*Refer to the Appendices for more information on BC Travel Trends.*

### **3.9 NORTHERN BC REGIONAL PROFILE<sup>18</sup>**

Tourism indicators for the Northern British Columbia tourism region provide a general overview of the region. The most recent annual data as well as historical trend data are presented, including visitor volume, accommodation and transportation indicators, and information about regional tourism products. Wherever possible, provincial data is provided to allow comparison between regional and provincial tourism performance.

#### Visitor Volume Indicators

##### *Regional Customs Entries*

Year-end figures reveal significant increases in the number of overnight entries of visitors from the United States (up 25.8% from 2006) and overseas visitors (up 46.6% from 2006). American visitors comprise

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.tourismbc.com/special\\_reports.asp?id=2065](http://www.tourismbc.com/special_reports.asp?id=2065) July 2008

88.4% of all international visitors to the region. Overall, there was an increase of 27.9% for all international entries to the region.

Total international customs entries to the region had been steadily declining; however, the arrival of cruise ships to the region in 2004 reversed this trend. Consequently, the region posted an annual average growth rate in customs entries of 8.8%, from 2000 to 2007.

Prince Rupert and Stewart comprise the vast majority of total regional customs entries volume (71.0% and 28.7%, respectively). Stewart was the entry point for the greatest number of overseas visitors to the region, with 50.7% of the 17,130 overseas customs entries. Prince Rupert provided the entry point for the greatest percentage of US visitors to the region, with 73.9% of the 130,900 US customs entries. It should be noted that regional customs entries can be misleading, as many international visitors to the Northern British Columbia tourism region initially enter through border crossings in other tourism regions, including those outside of the province.

Increases from 2006 were reported for both Prince George and Prince Rupert (48.1% and 52.9% respectively), however, volumes to Stewart declined by 9.1% (compared to 2006).

#### *Visitor Centres*

A total of 119,572 visitor parties used the Visitor Centres (VCs) in the region in 2007, representing 7.2% of those visiting VCs province-wide. The months of June, July and August combined represented 70.1% of total parties to the region in 2007. The number of visitor parties for the region peaked in July of 2007 (31,746).

Provincially, Visitor Centre usage declined 0.2% from 2006. VC usage in Northern British Columbia did not follow this trend, as visitor parties to the region increased by 4.4% compared to 2006; however, decreases for the same period of 2006 were evident in the first and fourth quarters.

From 2000 to 2007, visitation to Northern British Columbia VCs averaged a decline of 1.1% annually.

*Caution is advised when interpreting these figures as they reflect not only changes in visitation to the region, but also changes in the hours of operation for the VCs within the region.*

#### Accommodation Indicators

##### *Accommodation Type and Capacity*

Of the 2,273 fixed-roof accommodation properties listed in the 2008 British Columbia Approved Accommodation Guide, 188 or 8.3% are located in the Northern British Columbia tourism region. Motels are the strongest accommodation product in the region by type, with 29.8% of all regional accommodation properties classified into this category. Provincially 10.6% of all motels and 10.6% of all hotels are located in the Northern British Columbia region. Hotels comprise 58.7% of regional capacity. Hotels and motels combined account for 57.4% of all properties in the region and 91.9% of all regional accommodation capacity.

*Room Revenue*

In 2007, total room revenue in the region increased 4.2% compared to 2006, totaling \$141 million. The region's 2007 room revenue total accounted for 7.2% of total provincial room revenue for the year. Room revenue in the region exhibited continuous growth from 2000 to 2007, with an average annual growth rate of 8.1%.

All Regional Districts posted room revenue growth in 2007, compared to 2006, with the exception of Peace River/Northern Rockies (down 7.1%). However, the Peace River/Northern Rockies District generated nearly half (47.9%) of the region's room revenue and 3.4% of the provincial total. Fraser-Fort George generated 28.1% of the region's room revenue and 2% of the provincial total. The greatest increase over 2006 was seen in the Skeena-Queen Charlotte District (35.7%).

All urban centres posted room revenue growth in 2007, compared to 2006, with the exception of Fort St. John (declined 16.8%). Prince Rupert and Smithers witnessed the greatest increase in room revenue (at 30.3% and 30.1% respectively). Of the urban centres, Prince George generated 20.7% of regional room revenue, followed by Fort St. John at 16.4%. Prince George generated 1.5% of provincial room revenue and Fort St. John 1.2%.

*Hotel Occupancy Rates*

In 2007, hotel occupancy rates in British Columbia averaged 67%, a 1.3 percentage point increase over 2006. Annual hotel occupancy rates in Prince George for 2007 showed a minor increase of 0.7 percentage points over 2006.

*Average Daily Room Rates*

Provincial average daily room rates grew by 5.6% to \$128.72 in 2007, compared to 2006. In 2007, annual average daily room rates for Prince George increased by 4.6%.

Transportation Indicators

*Regional Airports*

Over six hundred thousand passengers travelled through the three airports in the Northern British Columbia tourism region in 2007. The passenger statistics presented in the adjacent table largely reflect recent changes in regional airline schedules and air seat capacity.

Travel statistics show an increase in overall passenger volume for 2007 as compared to 2006, with the greatest increase occurring at the Smithers Airport (up 22.4% over 2006).

**2007 Northern British Columbia Transportation Passengers**

	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Total 2006
<b>Smithers Airport</b>	<b>15,088</b>	<b>18,624</b>	<b>23,521</b>	<b>21,201</b>	<b>78,434</b>
% change*	1.2%	21.6%	33.7%	30.2%	22.4%
<b>Prince George Airport</b>	<b>99,012</b>	<b>103,418</b>	<b>97,996</b>	<b>106,874</b>	<b>407,300</b>
% change	-3.7%	4.5%	6.8%	6.1%	3.3%
<b>Fort St. John Airport (North Peace)</b>	<b>30,755</b>	<b>29,710</b>	<b>27,312</b>	<b>31,537</b>	<b>119,314</b>

% change\*      3.4%      4.9%      1.8%      .0.5%      2.6%  
Source: Regional airport authorities  
\*All % change figures are for changes from same period of 2006

### *BC Ferries*

BC Ferries routes in the region include the Inside Passage route, with service from Port Hardy on the northern tip of Vancouver Island to Prince Rupert, and the route servicing the Queen Charlotte Islands. The region experienced an overall annual increase of 11.7% in 2007. The third quarter showed the strongest increase over the same period in 2006 (up 24.1%).

Passenger volume on the Northern British Columbia routes declined from 2000 to 2003 and, despite an increase in volume in 2004 and 2007, there was an average annual decline of 3.2% in passenger volume from 2000 to 2007.

### Regional Tourism Products

#### *Overview of Tourism Product Offering*

The Northern British Columbia tourism region offers a diverse range of tourism products, including Aboriginal arts and culture, fresh and saltwater fishing, canoeing, kayaking, whitewater rafting and skiing. In 2001, there were approximately 2,193 nature-based tourism businesses in the province, of which, 18.3% operated in the Northern British Columbia tourism region. Nearly half (47%) of all provincial guide outfitters could be found in this region in 2001.

### **Conference Delegate Days**

Information on the Prince George Civic Centre for 2007 indicates a total of 109,061 participants attending events, a 5.3% increase over 2006; and 14,676 non-resident delegates attending events taking place in the centre, a significant increase of 30.5% over 2006.

### **Cruise**

In 2007 the Port of Prince Rupert received 60 cruise ship calls and 98,519 passengers. Both passenger volumes and the numbers of vessels significantly increased compared to 2006. Passenger volumes increased by 54.8% over 2006 and the number of vessels increased by 87.5% (up from 32 to 60 vessels in 2007).

The increase in volume for the 2007 cruise season is due in part to new ports of call by new cruise lines, bigger ships on more days a week and longer length of stay (increase in shore excursions and expanded tour capacity).

While the economic impact of the 2007 cruise season to the Prince Rupert area is not currently available, in 2005 the total industry, through passenger and cruise line spending, contributed an estimated \$8 million to the region during the six-month season.

### **Fishing<sup>19</sup>**

Results from the 2005 Survey of Recreational Fishing in Canada show that anglers spent an average of 12.5 days fishing in the region that year. The majority (71.6%) of those participating in recreational fishing

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<sup>19</sup> Tourism BC

in the region were from British Columbia. Anglers from other Canadian provinces represented 18.6% of the regional total, while anglers from the US and other international countries comprised 9.8%.

Among regional anglers who reside outside of British Columbia, the survey results indicated that many made one or more trips to BC in 2005. Overall, 73.7% reported making a single trip, 23.4% reported making two to five trips, while 2.9% made six or more trips.

The recreational fishing survey is conducted every five years by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

### **Skiing and Snowboarding**

Northern British Columbia is a popular destination for skiers and snowboarders. Overall, the Northern British Columbia tourism region possesses 145 runs, representing 8.3% of the province's ski runs.

Hudson Bay Resort, 20 minutes outside of the community of Smithers, is the region's largest facility with 34 runs; Shames Mountain Ski Resort follows with 28 runs.

### **Parks and Camping**

Camping and wilderness areas offered in provincial parks are an important component of the provincial tourism product. The BC Provincial Park network consists of 893 provincial parks, protected areas, recreation areas, or ecological reserves, covering 13.8% of the total land base (13.09 million hectares). This network includes 340 vehicle-accessible campgrounds offering a variety of facilities, including 11,760 campsites and 7,000 kilometres of hiking trails.

A total of 14.1% of all provincial campsites are located in the Northern British Columbia tourism region. Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site, located in the Queen Charlotte Islands, is the only National Park in the Northern Region. This remote park, consisting of 138 islands, is accessible only by boat or float plane. Although visitors are permitted to camp in the park, there are no developed sites and services and facilities are limited where available.

## Regional Geographic and Demographic Information

### *Geography and Climate*

The land area of the Northern British Columbia region stretches from the Queen Charlotte Islands in the west to McBride in the east, and north to the Yukon and Alaska borders, representing 61.8% of the province's total land area. The region is diverse in its geographic features with spectacular mountain ranges, heavily forested valleys, alpine meadows, hot springs and glacial lakes.

### *Demography*

The Northern British Columbia tourism region comprises well over half of the total provincial land area (61.8%), but contains only 6.1% of the province's total private dwellings and 6.2% of the provincial population. Prince George is the largest community in the region with a total population of 70,981.

The population in the Northern British Columbia region has decreased 2.7% since the previous census in 2001. This population decrease occurred in all census divisions of Northern British Columbia except for Northern Rockies and Peace River, where the population increased by 7.5% and 5.8% respectively. The

most significant decrease was in the Skeena-Queen Charlotte census division (down 9.4%), an area that contains the Queen Charlotte Islands.

The regional population is quite young with 62.9% of the total regional population under the age of 45. Provincially 57.0% of the total population falls within this age range. Earnings in the region are higher than provincial averages; however, unemployment rates are higher than provincial figures with 9.1% reported as unemployed and seeking employment in 2006.

### 3.10 RESEARCH REPORTS

Research that is relevant to Northern BC includes various market and sector profiles, which are supplied by separate cover in the *Supplementary Situation Analysis* document.

Refer to the Appendices for the Executive Summaries of the Travel Activities and Motivations of Canadian Visitors to BC: Activity Profile Focus on Campers and RVers, 2008, the Northern BC Market Profile (west), 2007 and the Prince Rupert Visitor Study (alternative route to Alaska), 2008. Full reports and additional research from Tourism BC can be found at: <http://www.tourismbc.com/template.asp?id=2>.

Of primary relevance to the area are the Northern Rockies – Alaska Highway Visitor Research project, 2005 and the RV Travellers Study, 2007. Key findings are summarized below. Full copies of the reports are available online from the Tourism Dawson Creek Resource Centre.

<http://www.tourismdawsoncreek.com/resourcecentre.php>

#### ***Northern Rockies – Alaska Highway Visitor Research, 2005***<sup>20</sup>

The Northern Rockies–Alaska Highway Visitor Research Project was undertaken in 2003 to provide data on the characteristics and volume of travellers along the highway and to support marketing plan design and product development in the Northern Rockies–Alaska Highway region. The project was sponsored by a partnership of eleven local, regional, provincial, and national organizations that provided direct funding and/or in-kind services.

Between May 15 and September 25, 2003 interviews were conducted with travellers intercepted at two Visitor Centres, four attractions/museums and three campgrounds in Northeastern BC. The target population included all people travelling to or through Northeastern BC, except for those on a day trip, travelling for personal reasons, working as part of a construction crew or in shipping/transportation, or travelling as part of an organized bus or RV caravan tour group. Follow-up surveys were mailed to travellers in the target population in the fall of 2003 and 59% were returned by March 2004.

Additional analysis of this research examined the travel patterns that differentiate between Canadians, Americans and International travellers. At the time of writing of this report the analysis of the American traveller was available.

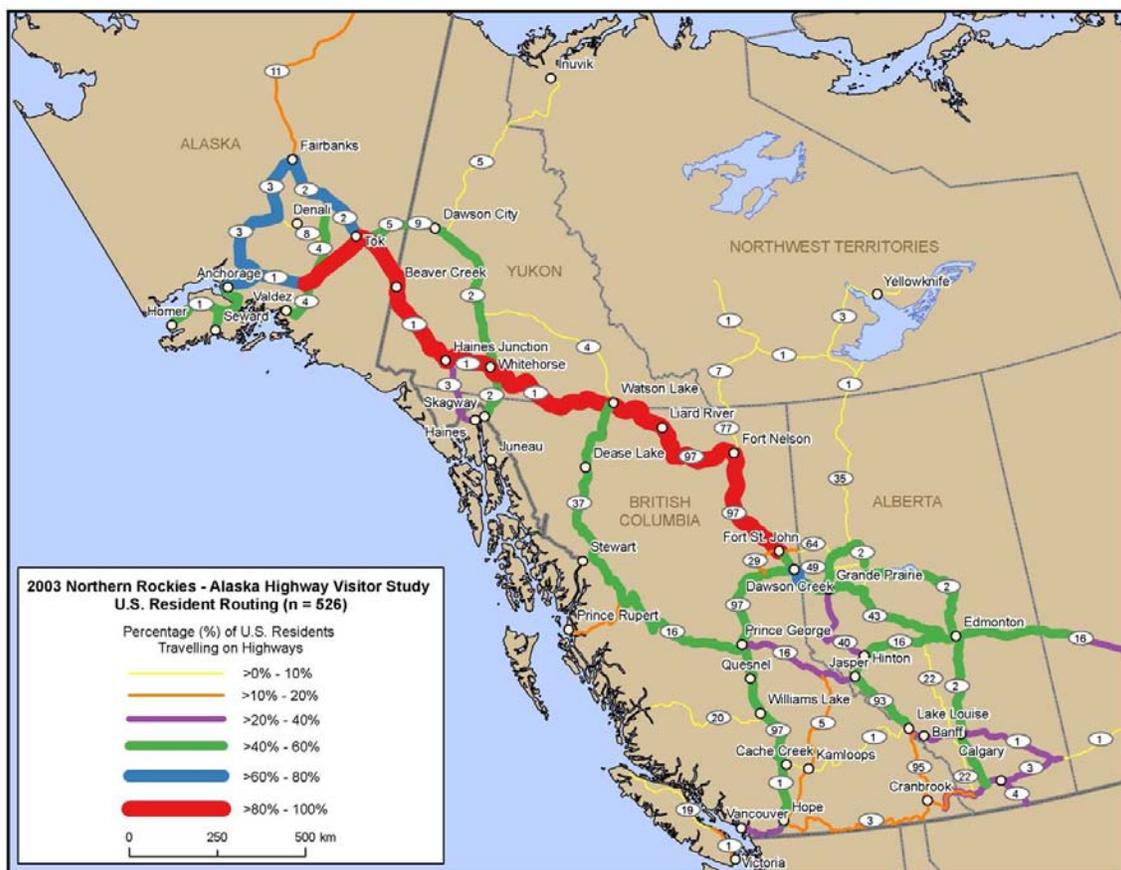
On the follow-up surveys travellers were asked to draw in the route of their trip on a map included in the questionnaire. The analysis of the routing maps provided by respondents was not included in the final report of the 2003 Northern Rockies – Alaska Highway Visitor Research Project released in 2005. In 2007,

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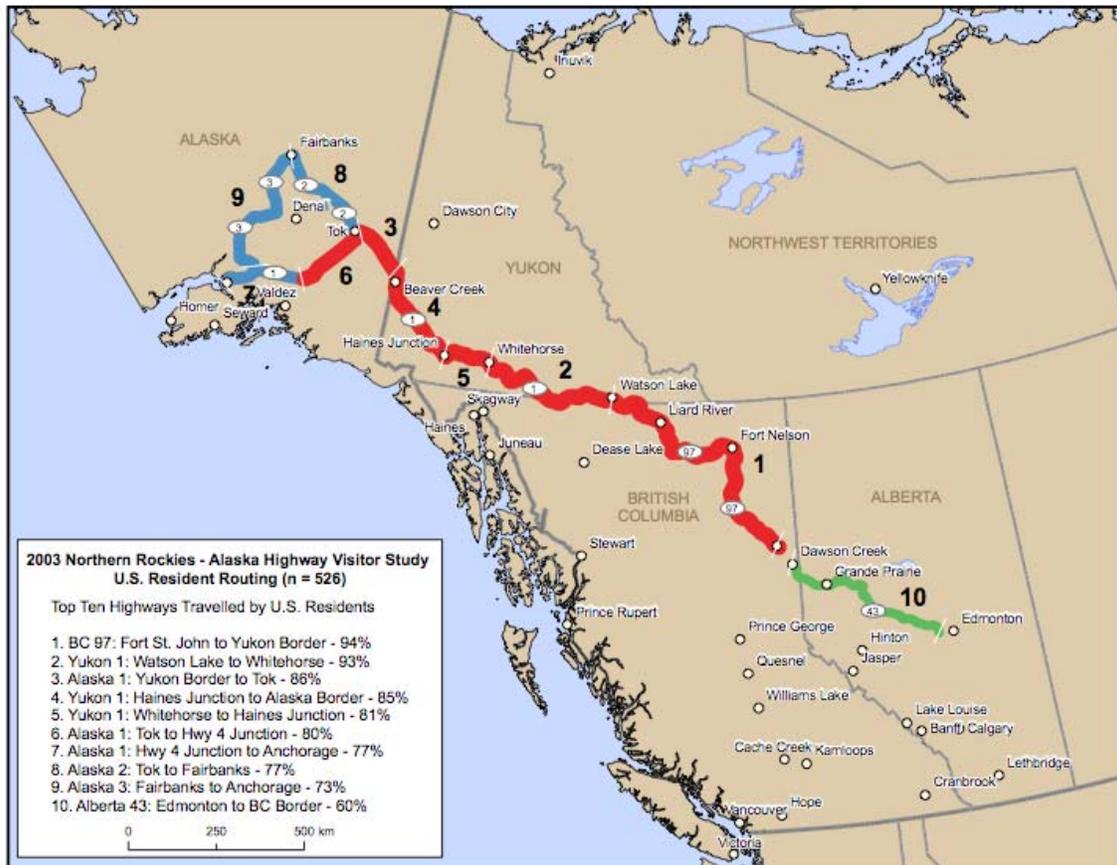
<sup>20</sup> [http://www.tourismbc.com/special\\_reports.asp?id=2065](http://www.tourismbc.com/special_reports.asp?id=2065)

the mapping analysis of American travellers was examined to determine the popular routes of travel to Alaska and the communities spent overnight along the routes. Further mapping analysis of Canadian and other International travellers has yet to be completed.

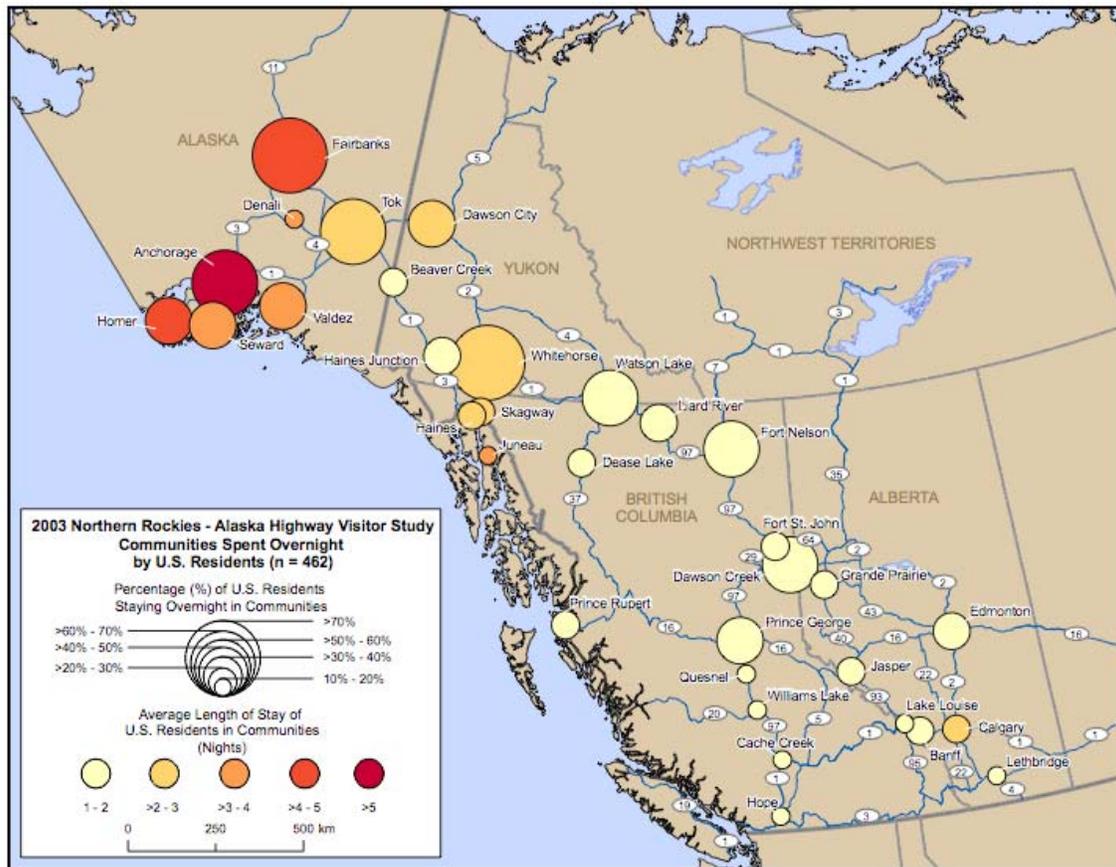
The following map summarizes the routes of American travellers who completed the routing pattern question in the follow-up survey. The thickness/colours of the routes represent the percentage of U.S. residents travelling on the highways in British Columbia, Alberta, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Alaska. The percentages represent if a respondent had travelled on the particular route once and was not double counted if the respondent took the same route on the return trip. Not surprisingly Hwy 97 in Northeastern British Columbia was the most popular travel route of American residents; as all respondents were intercepted along Hwy 97. Other popular routes include Highway 1 in the Yukon and in Alaska, and Hwys 2 and 3 in Alaska. A number of routes were travelled in Alberta from Edmonton, following Hwys 16, 2 and 43. Other travelled routes in British Columbia include Highway 16/37 through Northwestern BC and the southern portions of Hwy 97 through Prince George and Williams Lake.



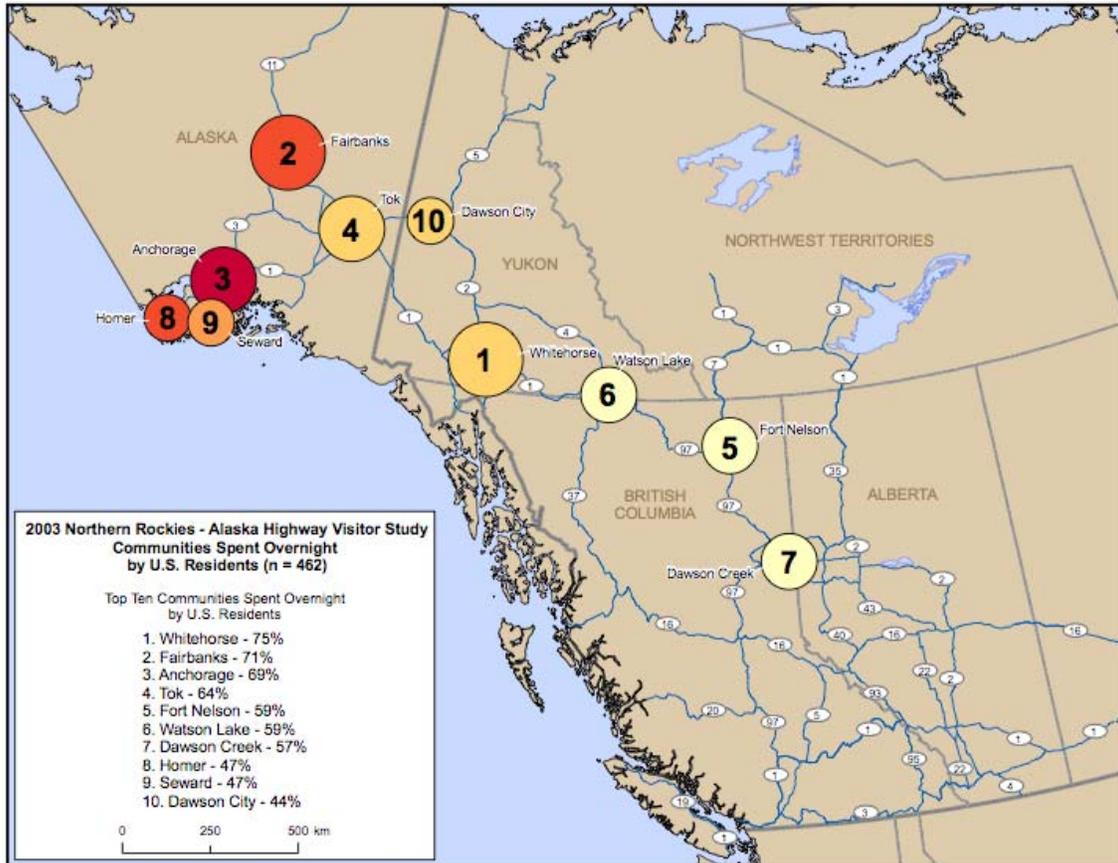
The following map highlights the ten most travelled routes by American travellers. The most popular route was from Fort St. John in Northeastern BC to Watson Lake, followed by routes leading to and within Alaska. One highway segment that went through Alberta included the route between Edmonton and Dawson Creek.



The communities where visitors stayed overnight were analyzed from the follow-up surveys; the following map summarizes the number of American travellers that stayed overnight in each community and their average length of stay. As would be expected, the majority of American travellers staying overnight were along the most popular routes highlighted in the previous two maps. Interestingly, American travellers spent only 1-2 nights in the majority of British Columbia and Alberta communities (not including Calgary) and spent longer amounts of time in Alaska. Communities at highway junctions were additionally popular, which included Tok, Whitehorse, Watson Lake, Dawson Creek and Prince George.



The final map highlights the ten most popular communities spent overnight in by American travellers. Whitehorse, in the Yukon, was the most frequented overnight stop, followed by locations in Alaska, and communities in British Columbia, which included Fort Nelson and Dawson Creek.



Key findings from the Executive Summary follow.

### Demographics

Overall, half of all travellers were Canadians and 45% were Americans. BC and Alberta residents made up 70% of Canadian travellers intercepted in Northeastern BC. The top six states of residence for Americans were Alaska, California, Washington, Michigan, Florida and Texas. Overseas visitors accounted for 6% of travellers and were predominantly Europeans from Germany or Switzerland.

The travellers in this region are different in terms of age and travel party composition from other travellers in BC. Over half were over 55 years of age; a quarter were 65 years and older. Most people were travelling in parties of two or four and less than 15% were travelling with children. Early in the season, travellers were more likely to be from the US and over 55 years of age. In the summer months, more Canadians and younger people were travelling in or through the region.

#### Trip characteristics

Most people were travelling for leisure (83%); nearly 10% were visiting friends and relatives, and 5% were travelling for business purposes. Three-quarters of Americans said their primary destination was Alaska, compared to 20% of Canadians. Half of Canadians were travelling to Northeast BC or the Yukon (27% and 24% respectively). While 40% of overseas travellers were destined for Alaska, nearly a third said they were on a circle tour with no specific destination.

A third of travellers had visited their destination (or travelled on the same route) before. Sixty percent of these travellers had visited at least twice between 1997 and 2002; 28% had visited four or more times in the five-year period. Travellers were motivated to take their trip by the idea of seeing wildlife and wild landscapes, visiting places they had never been before, and/or taking a journey they had heard about and always wanted to make. At least sixty percent of travellers said these three motivations were very important in their decision to take their trip to the North. Opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities or travel in places where they felt safe were also important motivations.

Half of travellers used self-contained vehicles – truck campers, camper vans, 5th wheel trailers, and motorhomes – as their primary mode of transportation. Self-contained vehicles were particularly popular among the older, Alaska-bound and leisure traveller segments. Most travellers were driving to and from their destination; however, 21% included a one-way flight or cruise in their trip.

Most travellers used two or three types of accommodation during their trip. Campgrounds – both government and private – were the most popular form of accommodation, followed by hotels or motels. Mode of transportation had the largest impact on choice of accommodation, as the majority of travellers in self-contained vehicles used campgrounds as their primary accommodation, compared to 40% of travellers driving a car, truck or van. A third of travellers spent at least one night in a roadside pullout or parking lot during their trip. This proportion increased to 50% for travellers driving a camper van/truck camper or motorhome.

#### Trip length and expenditures

On average, travellers spent about 40 nights away from home on their trip. Regional travellers (from BC, Alberta, the Yukon and Alaska) spent about 20 nights away from home, whereas long-haul travellers were away for 50 nights or more.

During their trip, two-thirds of travellers in the North said they had some degree of flexibility in their return dates and 40% said they could change their return date by a week or more. Overall, 8% of travellers extended their trip in the North for four to eight additional nights. Although relatively few travellers lengthened their trip, nearly 70% of travellers indicated that they wanted to extend their trip. Prior commitments and time constraints were the two most frequently cited reasons for not being able to stay longer.

On average, travel parties spent \$150 per day (\$CDN) during their trip. While total trip expenditures ranged from \$50 to \$50,000, the typical travel party spent about \$6,000 on their trip. While daily expenditures varied primarily by mode of transportation, total trip expenditures were driven predominantly by trip length. Basic expenses – for transportation, accommodation and food and beverages purchased at grocery stores

– accounted for 70% of daily expenditures. Discretionary spending included food and beverages purchased in restaurants, shopping, entertainment, attractions and outdoor recreation. Interestingly, the expenditure allocations were very consistent across the trip and demographic characteristics.

#### Trip activities

Travellers participated in seven different types of activities, on average. Over three-quarters of travellers visited a provincial, state or national park, visited a museum, heritage or historic site or walked, hiked or cycled during their trip. Overall, participation rates for most activities were higher for the long-stay, Alaska-bound, motorhome traveller segments. Travellers were also asked about their interest in various activities on a similar trip. Comparing the participation rates and interest levels identifies areas of opportunity for the tourism industry. For example, while a third of visitors attended a fair or festival on their trip, 56% were interested in this activity on a similar trip. However, interest in a given activity was strongly dependent on whether a traveller had already participated in this activity. For example, interest in attending a fair or festival was much higher among travellers who had attended a fair or festival during their trip (86%), compared to travellers who had not (44%).

#### Travel information

While half of travellers planned their trip within four months of departure, a quarter spent a year or more planning for their trip. On average, travellers used two or three sources of information in the planning stage. Canadians relied mainly on past experience and word of mouth, while US travellers favoured the Milepost guide and the Internet, and overseas travellers used the Internet and books.

During their trip, travellers typically used five different sources of information. Visitor Centre (VC) counsellors were the most frequently cited source of information, followed by the Milepost, brochures, past experience, and advice from local residents or staff working at campgrounds, restaurants or attractions. Overall, the Milepost was rated as the most useful source of information, followed by VC counsellors and past experience. About 60% of travellers who stopped at a VC in Northeastern BC wanted map or route information. Travellers were also looking for accommodation and attraction information. During their visit to the Dawson Creek and/or Fort Nelson VCs, 80% of travellers spoke with a VC counsellor.

#### Experiences and destination images

Over 90% of travellers said their travel experiences in the North met or exceeded their original expectations. Travellers on longer trips more frequently said that their experiences exceeded their expectations in a given region of the North, compared to those on shorter trips. While more first-time travellers said their experiences exceeded their initial expectations compared to return visitors, between 20% and 40% of return visitors still indicated that their overall experience exceeded their expectations.

Travellers were asked about the images or characteristics they associated with Northern BC, Northern Alberta, the Yukon and Alaska. Scenery was the most frequently cited destination image for each region, followed by wildlife, history and hospitality. Some unique characteristics and differences were identified by travellers, but these results show that travellers do not differentiate specific regions within their image of “the North.”

#### Traffic volume

Between May 15 and September 25, 2003, a traffic count was conducted at two locations north of Fort Nelson to determine the volume and origin of traffic travelling the Alaska Highway. These observations were used to estimate hourly traffic rates by month, time of day and traffic direction to calculate total traffic volume and traveller volume.

Overall, 139,700 vehicles travelled on the BC portion of the Alaska Highway, north of Fort Nelson. Non-commercial vehicles accounted for 86% of total traffic on average, giving a total of 120,600 traveller (non-commercial) vehicles. The total number of travellers – 320,400 – was estimated using the average party size (from the intercept interviews).

#### *RV Travellers Study, University of Northern BC, 2007*

In 2007, the RV Travellers Study was released. Ownership of recreational vehicles reached record levels in 2005 with nearly one in twelve US vehicle-owning households now owning an RV and the annual retail value of RV shipments reaching US\$14 billion. The number of RV enthusiasts and RV buyers is likely to grow extensively in the US as well as Canada as the baby boomer generation retires and Generation X, with their high interest in the outdoors, seek new and more independent ways to access nature. However, despite the size and growing nature of this market, it is generally poorly catered to by destinations.

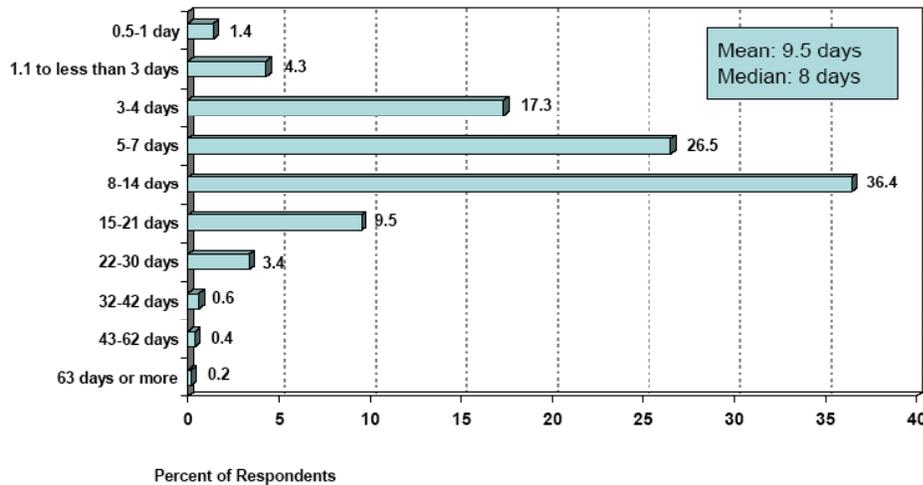
For Northern BC communities in close proximity to major highways leading north to the Yukon and Alaska, RVers constitute a significant market segment.

#### Key findings include:

- The importance that destinations cater to their needs. RV friendliness means welcoming residents and businesses, and high-quality campgrounds with amenities that add to the convenience sought by RVers.
- RVing is a lifestyle chosen to experience freedom, flexibility and fellowship while enjoying the conveniences of home.
- RVers are less influenced by gas prices (i.e. only 15% indicated that gas prices affected their plans “much” or “very much”), especially when they RV for extensive periods of time during the year.
- A majority of RVers engages in extensive planning long before a trip. Word of mouth, Internet, brochures such as the Milepost guide, and RV-related sources are key.
- A lot of trip planning occurs en route, with things like where to stay and what to do left open. Thus, wireless Internet, visitor information centres and signage are essential for them.
- RVing seems to be a natural progression from tent camping and backpacking as one becomes older and needs more convenience.
- Technology provides RVers with important travel information and means to communicate with family, friends and other RVers. Cell phones, digital cameras, laptops, Internet and wireless connections are widely used by RVers despite their older age.
- RVers believe they are under-recognized by the tourism industry, including tourism bureaus, campgrounds and other tourism businesses.
- All RVers appear to be interested in attending rallies and stated that hosting a rally is an indication that a destination is RV-friendly.
- RVers travel in caravans for social purposes but also to increase a sense of safety and for convenience.

- On their trip to/through Dawson Creek, BC, most traveled in groups of 2 adults with no children. A majority of them was headed to Alaska and only spent a limited time in British Columbia. Of the time spent in British Columbia, most was spent in Northern BC. Neither the BC inside passage ferry accident nor high gas prices had an influence on their trip. Popular travel activities during the trip were visiting museums and historic sites, visiting parks, walking, hiking or cycling, shopping, and taking cruises and boat trips.

### Length of Stay in Northern BC



### Trip Behaviour

The RV trip which led them to/through Dawson Creek, BC took on average 80 days, with the median length being 70 days. Only 11.2% stated that their trip was 1-30 days long and a third (33.6%) indicated it was 31-60 days long. The majority (55.2%) reported a trip length of 61 days or more. On average, RVers spent 24% of this time in British Columbia. Almost 70% (68.5%) of the time spent in British Columbia was spent in Northern British Columbia. RVers spent on average 15.5 days in British Columbia and on average 9.5 days in Northern British Columbia. They stayed in Dawson Creek, BC on average for 3 days; however, the median length of stay was 2 days. Average lengths of visits to other Northern BC destinations were also very short.

Alaska was the primary destination for most (86.9%) RVers who participated in the survey. Northern BC was the primary destination for 4% and other parts of BC for 0.8% of the respondents. Only 1.1% indicated they had no specific destination.

As far as activities are concerned, a majority of the respondents indicated that they either had or planned to participate in the following activities on their trip to/through Dawson Creek, BC: visit a museum, heritage or historic site (81.1%), visit provincial, state or national parks (74.9%), walking, hiking or cycling (65.7%), shopping (64.9%), and take a cruise or boat trip (64.9%).

Travel parties on this trip consisted on average of 3.2 adults and 0.08 children, however most often of 2 adults and no children.

A majority of the RVers (98.8%) indicated that they had not changed their trip because of the BC Inside passage ferry incident. Also, about a third said gas prices had absolutely no influence on their trip. Only 15.2% indicated that gas prices had influenced their travel behavior much or very much.

Public Campgrounds are most popular with US Campers and RVers

The majority of Campers (77%) and RVers (68%) stay in public campgrounds. A further one in three American Campers claim to have stayed in a private campground (33%) and about one in five have pitched a tent in a wilderness campsite (21%).

Perceptions of RV Destinations

Respondents were asked to list 3 aspects of a great RV destination, and 3 aspects of a terrible RV destination. Most responses referring to great RV destinations involved comments about scenery, activities and specific campground amenities. The most frequently mentioned aspects of a terrible RV destination were poor selection and quality of RV parks, poor accessibility and no campground amenities.

Specifically, respondents mentioned natural beauty of the area, views and scenic drives as important features. In terms of activities, most respondents stated that they wanted lots to see and do at the destination and opportunities for general sightseeing. In addition, outdoor activities, especially hiking, wildlife viewing and fishing were frequently listed. They also listed the availability of high quality RV parks and amenities such as full hook ups, 50 amp electricity, grassy, shady & level sites, large and pull through sites as well as wireless internet as important. Local food, culture, events and historic sites also seem to attract them. Moreover, courteous fellow campground users and good/safe roads are attractive features of a destination. Cleanliness was a theme which also frequently emerged from the comments as was welcoming locals and RV friendly businesses. Available information and signage were also frequently mentioned as contributing to a great RV destination, as were good prices and parking. Offering interesting geography, openness which supports feelings of liberty, as well as providing new experiences, were additional destination aspects mentioned by the respondents.

The list of aspects of terrible destinations was even more focused on campground availability, quality and overall management. Poor accessibility of campgrounds, destinations and attractions were also important factors mentioned by the RVers in the sample. Bad weather and unfriendly people at the destination are definite "turn-offs". Boring and expensive destinations, as well as destinations which are too developed and too commercial will be avoided by RVers. Poor or no information and poor security are also concerns reported by the survey respondents.

Most RVers in the sample consider BC as an RVing destination to be the same as Alaska, Yukon, Alberta and Atlantic Canada. Importantly, only very few consider it to be worse. When asked about the RV capital of the world, most associate this term with Quartzsite, AZ (34.8%), followed by Elkhart, IN (25.2%), and **Dawson Creek**, BC (11.8%). Of those who mentioned other destinations, most referred to various destinations in the US, with a majority being located in Florida.

Compared to US travelers, Canadians are more likely to rate BC as somewhat or much better than Alaska. US travelers are more likely to indicate that they do not know how BC compares to Alberta and Atlantic Canada.

Over 30% of US travelers associate the slogan “RV Capital of the World” with Elkhart, IN compared to only about 7% of Canadian travelers. Almost 24% of Canadian travelers associate the slogan with **Dawson Creek**, BC compared to 8% of US travelers. Over 34% of both US and Canadian travelers associate the slogan with Quartzsite, AZ. US travelers are more likely to also associate it with Livingston, TX, while Canadians are more likely to associate the slogan with other RV destinations.

Caravan travelers are a lot more likely to indicate they do not know how BC compares to Alaska and to the Yukon Territory. The percentages actually rating BC are much closer for Alberta and Atlantic Canada and in those cases, the independent travelers rate BC higher than the caravan travelers. Caravan travelers are more likely to recognize Quartzsite, AZ, Elkhart, IN and Livingston, TX as RV capitals while independent RV travelers are more likely to indicate that **Dawson Creek** or other destinations are RV capitals.

The shorter the trip length the more likely RV travelers are to rate BC as better compared to Alaska, the Yukon Territory and Alberta.

The longer the trip length, the greater the association of RV capital of the World with Quartzsite, AZ and Elkhart, IN as well as Livingston, TX. The shorter the trip length, the greater the association with **Dawson Creek**, BC and other destinations.

### 3.11 LOCAL VISITOR PROFILE

Key visitor types for Dawson Creek and Pouce Coupe area are primarily leisure travellers, Free Independent Travellers (FIT) with interests in events, and touring (en route to Alaska or other destinations).

Famous for Mile "0" of the Alaska Highway the area attracts leisure visitors for day trips and overnight stays for tourists in transit en route to Alaska and regional markets for organized sports, recreation and entertainment. Business travel includes workers for the oil, gas and coal sectors and government employees for meetings. Traditional summer peak season has occupancy availability in fixed-roof accommodations as Alaska-bound visitors typically travel in RVs and off-season fixed-roof accommodators fill with business travel (workers for oil, gas, etc.). Market origin includes: Regional BC and Alberta, Canada other, US, Europe, Asia/Pacific.

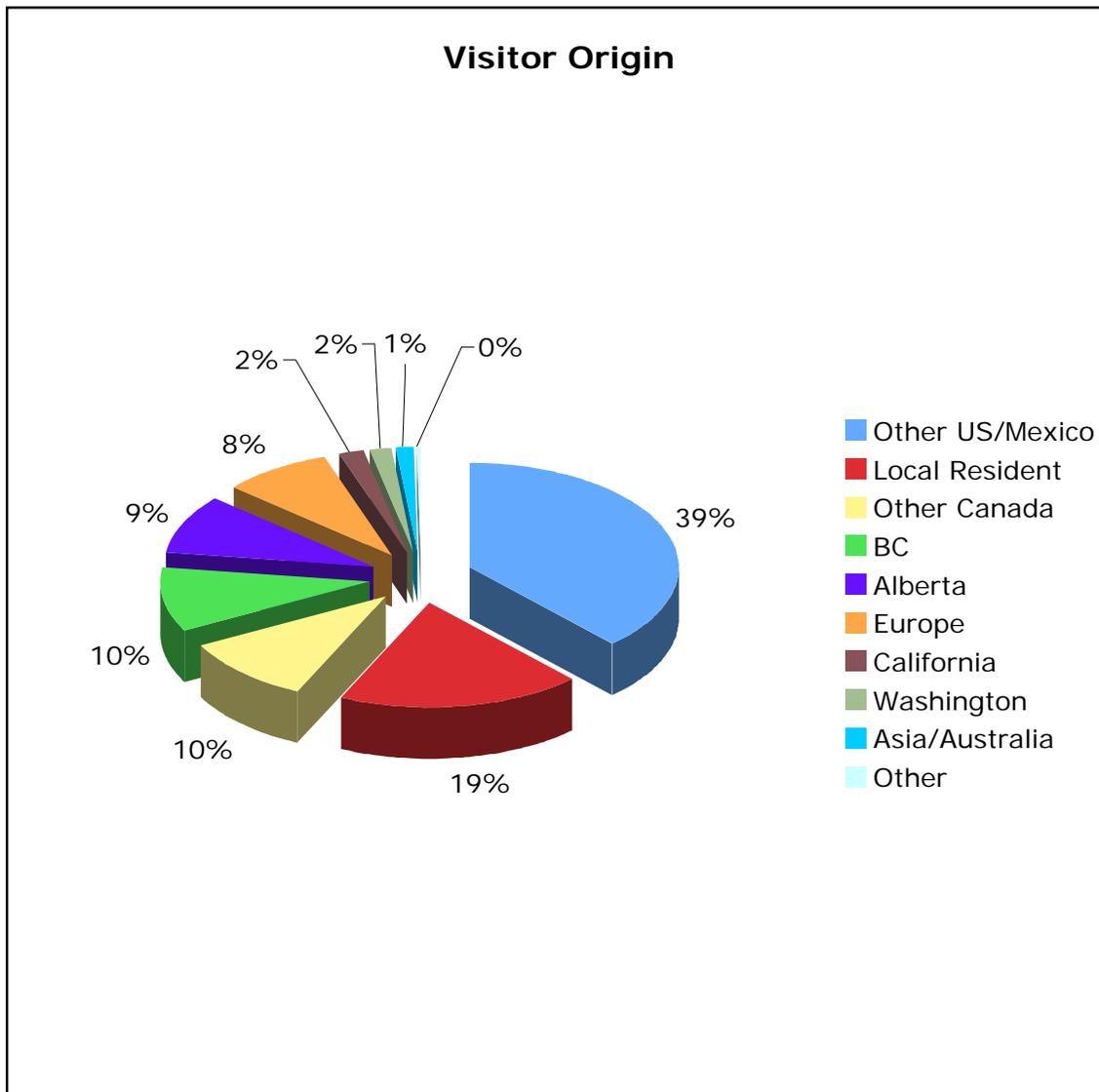
#### Visitor Centre Visitor Profile 2008

Visitor Centre information has limitations as it only reflects those visitors who entered the centre.

##### *Dawson Creek Main Visitor Centre*

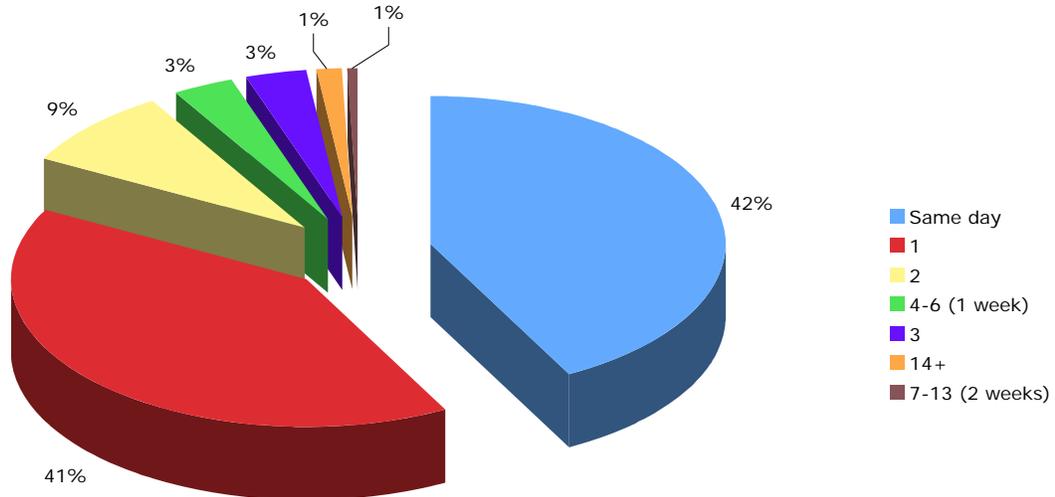
In 2008, the main Visitor Centre in Dawson Creek (the second busiest visitor centre in Northern British Columbia) served 7,846 parties for a total of 19,096 visitors. The centre fielded 1,436 phone calls and 2,189 fax/mail/email inquiries. Of the 7,846 parties, the majority were classified as "Other/Mexico" 2,985 (38%); 1,435 (19%) were local residents, followed by "Other/Canada" 822 (11%) and BC 776 (10%).

<b>Visitor Origin</b>	<b>7,815</b>	<b>100%</b>
Other US/Mexico	2,985	38%
Local Resident	1,435	19%
Other Canada	822	11%
BC	776	10%
Alberta	719	9%
Europe	659	8%
California	162	2%
Washington	118	2%
Asia/Australia	110	1%
Other	29	0%



The majority of visitors to the Centre were staying in the community the same day 2,680 (42%), followed by one overnight stay 2,588 (41%).

**Nights in Community**



Of 8,986 information requests Attractions was the most requested at 1,800 (20%), followed by Transportation 1,487 (17%), Site Facilities 1,437 (16%), Shopping 1,409 (16%) and Accommodation 955 (11%).

Top community specific requests of 6,052 include North to Alaska 3,515 (58%), Northern BC 781 (13%), Dawson Creek 725 (12%), Alberta 635 (10%) and Yukon/Northwest Territories 396 (7%).

<b>Information Requested</b>	<b>8,986</b>	<b>100%</b>
Attractions	1,800	20%
Transportation	1,487	17%
Site Facilities (e.g. Washrooms)	1,437	16%
Shopping	1,409	16%
Accommodation	955	11%
Community Services	524	6%
Food / Beverage	403	4%
Adventure Recreation	319	4%
Events / Conferences	249	3%
Other	178	1%
Parks	143	1%
Investment/Moving	61	1%
First Nations	21	0%

*Dawson Creek Satellite Visitor Centre*

In 2008, the Satellite Visitor Centre in Dawson Creek was open May-September serving 2,137 parties for a total of 6,045 visitors. The centre fielded 130 phone calls and 1 fax/mail/email inquiry.

The majority were local residents 920 (44%), "Other/Mexico" 536 (25%), followed by BC 187 (9%) and Alberta 155 (7%).

The majority of visitors to the centre were staying in the community one night 556 (46%) followed by same day visitors 370 (31%).

The majority of information requests included attractions 712 (40%), Site Facilities 394 (22%) followed by Shopping 168 (9%).

<b>Visitor Origin</b>		
	2,134	100%
Local Resident	920	44%
Other US/Mexico	536	25%
BC	187	9%
Alberta	155	7%
Other Canada	155	7%
Europe	109	5%
California	25	1%
Asia/Australia	23	1%
Washington	22	1%
Other	2	0%

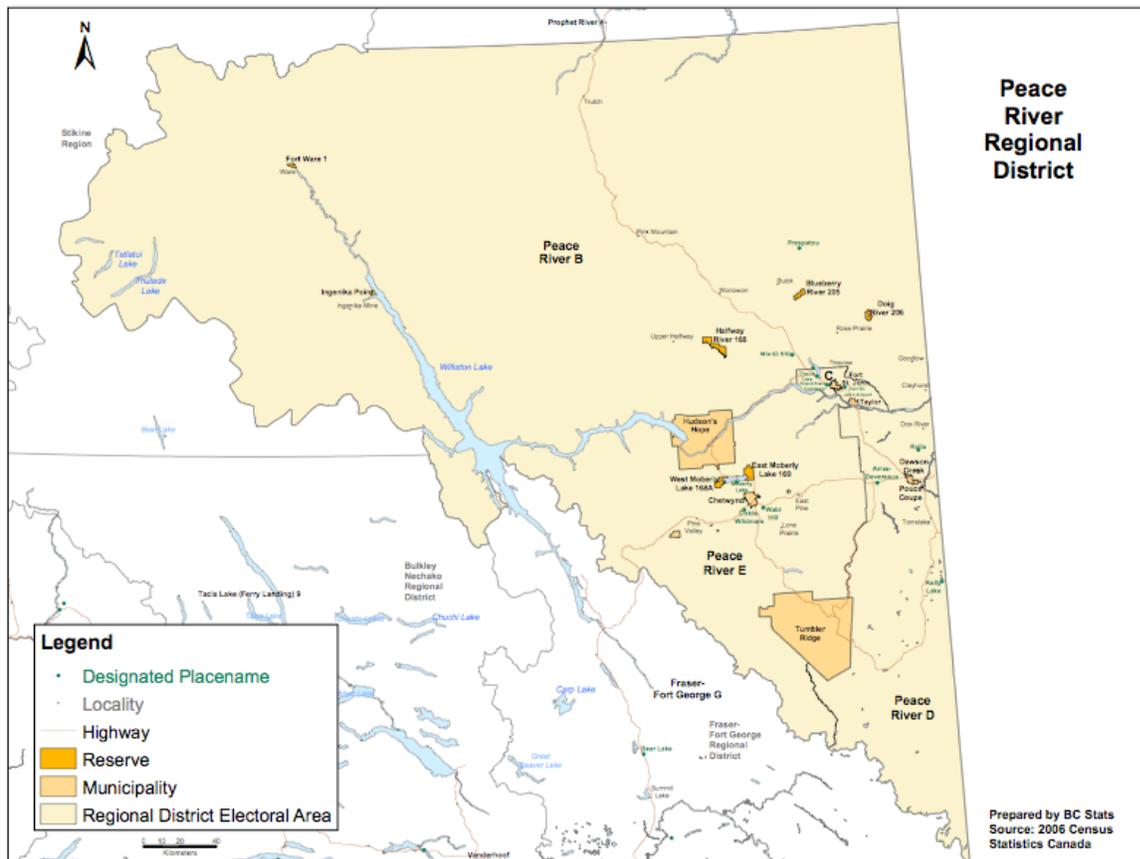
<b>Nights in Community</b>		
	1,210	100%
1	556	46%
Same day	370	31%
2	175	14%
3	53	4%
4-6 (1 week)	41	3%
14+	8	1%
7-13 (2 weeks)	7	1%

<b>Information Requested</b>		
	1,788	100%
Attractions	712	40%
Site Facilities (e.g. Washrooms)	394	22%
Shopping	168	9%
Events / Conferences	114	6%
Transportation	105	6%
Accommodation	73	4%
Community Services	66	4%
Adventure Recreation	48	3%
Other	33	2%
First Nations	32	2%
Food / Beverage	29	2%
Parks	14	1%
Investment/Moving	0	0%

## 4 Destination and Product Assessment

### 4.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

Recognizing that visitors do not distinguish a destination by political boundaries, but rather the attraction base of the area, the tourism marketing boundaries may differ from the political boundaries. The study area for the purposes of tourism planning is the City of Dawson Creek and the Village of Pouce Coupe located on the northeast corner of British Columbia in the centre of the Peace Region. Incorporated in 1936, Dawson Creek has a total land area of 22.32 square km.<sup>21</sup> Incorporated in 1932, Pouce Coupe has a total land area of 2.06 square km.<sup>22</sup> Both are in the Peace River Regional District.<sup>23</sup> Dawson Creek is the point of origin of the Historic Alaska Highway, which stretches 2,400 km north to Fairbanks in Alaska. Dawson Creek by highway is 41 miles (65 km) southeast of Fort St. John, 258 miles (412 km) northeast of Prince George, 717 miles (1,198 km) north of Vancouver, and 78 miles (125 km) west of Grande Prairie, Alberta. Population 11,615. Pouce Coupe is located 10 km southeast of Dawson Creek on Highway 2 approximately 35 km from the Alberta border. Population is under 1,000. Refer to the OCPs for more information.



<sup>21</sup> 2006 Census

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> BC Stats – Community Profiles <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/dd/facsheet/facsheet.asp>

## 4.2 HISTORY

### Dawson Creek<sup>24</sup>

For over 50 years, the famed Alaska Highway has been a significant draw for visitors and residents alike. Building of the Alaska Highway is an epic tale that involves mystery, romance, and intrigue. In 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. This significant event forced the American and Canadian governments to re-evaluate their security. There was an obvious need to shore up and protect the sovereignty of North America. In response, a secure land transportation link was needed to transfer goods, materials and men from the continental states to Alaska. As one part of the wartime measures, 1,500 miles of road needed to be punched through the vast untamed wilderness of northern Canada and Alaska. Building in these northern areas would not be an easy feat; men and women would battle the mountains, muskies and mosquitoes for eight months to finish this vital artery.

On March 9, 1942, Dawson Creek, a small northern Canadian community with a population of 600 people, bustled and swelled with activity when the first train carrying American troops arrived. In a matter of weeks the town's population exploded to 10,000. Seven regiments of American engineers (approximately 11,000 men including three regiments of men with African American heritage), 16,000 civilians from Canada and the United States, and 7,000 pieces of equipment were thrown into action against some of the toughest and most unforgiving wilderness areas in the world. On November 20, 1942, after little over nine months of intense construction, 250 soldiers, civilians, policemen and government delegations from Canada and the United States, met at mile 1061, known as "Soldiers Summit," where they cut the ribbon officially opening the "Alcan" Highway. The total cost for construction of the 1,523-mile route, which also includes 133 major bridges and more than 8,000 culverts which, if placed end to end, would stretch over 57 miles, was about \$140 million USD. This remarkable achievement has developed into a major transportation link in North America, stretching from Mile "0" at Dawson Creek, British Columbia, through the Yukon Territory and into Alaska. In 1946, reconstruction and upgrading was carried out under Canadian Army supervision. On April 1, 1971, the Canadian Federal Government turned over maintenance of the Yukon section of the Alaska Highway to the Yukon Department of Highways and Public Works. Since completion of the Alaska Highway in the 1940s, a continuous program of upgrading, widening and straightening has been under way. Virtually 100% of the Alaska Highway is now paved. The Alaska Highway, once an emergency wartime road, has developed into a vital link between the giant industrial regions of the US and Canada and the natural resources of Alaska and Yukon. But, aside from the economic aspects of the highway, it also represents a permanent monument to the resilient and enduring friendship between two great nations. On September 28, 1996, a ceremony was held in Dawson Creek. At this time the Alaska Highway was designated as the 16th International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.

### Pouce Coupe<sup>25</sup>

The name "Pouce Coupe" is both musical and intriguing, and various tales are told of its origin. The most authentic is that given in "The Land of Twelve Foot Davis" by J.C. MacGregor. A.N. McLeod's Fort Dunvegan Journal, 1806, reads: "Sunday 17 August, Pouce Coupe with a few others arrived. They have made a poor hunt," referring to an Indian Chief Pooscapee of the Beaver Tribe. This is the first reference to Pouce Coupe, whose name has been commemorated in that of a town and river in the Peace River Country.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.dawsoncreek.ca/discover/history/index.asp>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.poucecoupe.ca/about/history.php>

The first white man to settle on the Pouce Coupe Prairie was Hector Tremblay, a French Canadian on his way to the Yukon gold diggings in 1898. Tremblay was very impressed with the Peace River Country and he decided to stay on a flat where the Dawson Creek runs into the Pouce Coupe River. Here he set up a trading post and brought his wife and family from Kamloops in 1908. He soon set about cutting trails south to Grande Prairie and north to Fort St. John. The Edson Trail was cut out of the wilderness in 1911, which started the main influx of settlers from Edmonton in the years 1912 to 1914 to the Pouce Coupe Prairie over the Grande Prairie Trail. In 1916 the Bank of Commerce opened its doors for business. In 1917 Constable G.J. Duncan moved to Pouce Coupe to establish the Police Barracks. Here he registered all births, deaths, and marriages and, acted as official Administrator, Mining Recorder, Game Warden, etc. This building still stands as the office of Hillcrest Motel. The first Pouce Coupe Post Office was granted by the Dominion Government in 1914 with C.B. Duke as postmaster, later the Post Office was moved to Frank Haskin's store. In 1915 George Salway was appointed Lands Agent. This was a welcome arrangement as it saved the long 100-mile trip to Grande Prairie where the first settlers filed on their homesteads.

In the early 1920s, part of Charlie LeRoy's homestead was subdivided into a townsite. Prior to this the settlement had all been on Frank Haskin's land, clustered around the store known as the "Pouce Coupe Trading Coy." Buildings began to go up on the new townsite. In the winter of 1920-1921 a Government Agency was established. Lester Harper was appointed Provincial Assessor. The court cases beyond the jurisdiction of the local Magistrate were dealt with once a year when Judge Robertson came by outboard motor up the Parsnip River and into the Peace River where he was met at Hudson Hope by the Government Agent and brought down the Peace to Rolla Landing and then by road to Pouce Coupe. October 17, 1921, Red Cross Out Post Hospital serving all the settlements in the northern Peace River District was completed overlooking Bissette Creek. On January 30, 1954, the new Pouce Coupe Community Hospital was finally opened, which is used as an extended Care Unit today serving all of the BC Peace River Block.

In 1933, a Women's Institute was formed as the first in the Peace River Block. The United Church was built in 1929 and the building is now used as the Senior Citizens Hall. Christ Church Anglican was built in 1932 and is still open every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. for services. The first passenger train arrived in Pouce Coupe on January 15, 1931, and served the North until May 31, 1974, when the service was discontinued. The old railway station was moved to Main Street in 1972 and now houses the Pioneer Museum.

### 4.3 TOURISM INDICATORS

#### *Development Projects*

New development includes:

- South Peace Community Multiplex, which houses the EnCana Event Centre, Kenn Borek Aquatic Centre, and Lakota Agri-Centre
- The Alaska Highway House opened in 2007 and is a new product that needs to be taken to the next level
- Wind generation tourism product development possibility
- New 62-unit motel in Dawson Creek
- Recent upgrades to Pouce Coupe Park
- Agri-tourism (market development)

#### *Performance Measurement and Research*

Ideally a community should be in a position to determine the value of its industry to the local economy at the community level. Measuring tourism performance is key to demonstrating success to stakeholders, partners and the community, and to controlling and monitoring its development to ensure the industry develops in a way that reflects the Vision Statement. The ability to record and measure progress and accurately determine the value of the tourism industry and its contribution to the local economy greatly enhances the community's perception of tourism, and can be used to attract new investment and develop new partnerships. Research is required for both the product and market side of the industry.

The following section provides a snapshot of local and regional tourism trends and some context for how the tourism sector contributes to the regional economy.

Tourism Dawson Creek (TDC) compiles tourism statistics such as transportation, attractions, caravans and bus tours, room revenues, and Visitor Centre data. Tourism Dawson Creek Visitor Centre staff tracks and submits Visitor Centre statistics as required by the Tourism BC Visitor Info Network program. The accommodation sector participates in the Tourism BC Commercial Accommodation Survey, however, there has been inconsistency from hotels to submit the data. Dawson Creek is currently participating in the Tourism BC Value of Tourism program.

The online Resource Centre <http://www.tourismdawsoncreek.com/resourcecentre.php> has all the local reports and some research reports. The Tourism Dawson Creek Community Tourism Statistical Review Report Series to 2006 summarizes key statistics from a variety of sources. Three Economic Impact Studies have been completed: Northern BC Winter Games Economic Impact studies 1998 and 2005 and Dawson Creek Exhibition 2005 Economic Impact & Visitor Satisfaction Analysis. Tourism Dawson Creek currently produces quarterly activity reports for the City of Dawson Creek.

### *Indicators*

#### *Caravan and Bus Tours*

Both Caravan and bus tours have declined for 2008, compared to 2007, however, the number of visitors increased for bus tours for 2008.

	2007		2008		Difference	
Bus Tours/Visitors	36	1,110	34	1,221	-2	+111
Caravans	36	1,607	32	1,266	-4	- 341

Source: Tourism Dawson Creek

#### *Economic Dependencies*

In 2006, BC Stats ranked the Dawson Creek area as having one of the most diversified economies in the province, with a low degree of vulnerability to changes in any one economic base sector. Out of the province's 63 local areas, Dawson Creek ranked second in terms of economic diversification. As shown in the following table, the leading sectors are the public sector, mining (which includes oil and gas) and forestry. Tourism contributes about five percent of total community income, a slight improvement over 2001 but still below the 1996 level of six percent. The contribution from agriculture, a historically important economic generator, has seen its share of total community income drop to three percent.

#### **Dawson Creek Local Area Economic Dependencies %**

Year	FOR	MIN	F&T	AGF	TOU	PUB	OTH	TRAN	ONEI
2006	12	20	0	3	5	21	18	12	8
2001	16	17	0	5	4	25	12	15	6
1996	14	25	0	5	6	21	10	13	5
1991	13	21	0	6	3	21	14	12	10

Source: BC Stats 2009

Key: FOR forestry, MIN mining and oil & gas, F&T fishing and trapping, AGF agriculture and food, TOU tourism, PUB public sector, OTH other, TRAN transfer payments from government, ONEI other non-employment income.

#### *Room Revenues*

Annual room revenues in Northeast BC have climbed about 45% in the past five years, more than double the provincial growth rate of 21.0% and well ahead of other regions of the province. Revenues in Dawson Creek more than doubled during this time. For the region as a whole, and for Dawson Creek in particular, the increased revenues are attributable to a sizeable increase in the room inventory (about 30%) and an even stronger performance RevPar (annual revenues per room).

It is important to note, however, that room revenues for the region have been driven mainly by business travel rather than leisure travel; the oil and gas sector and, to a lesser extent, the mining sector created very strong room demand during the period shown.

**Room Revenues, 2003-2007**

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007		
	Revenue	Revenue	Revenue	Revenue	Revenue	Properties	Rooms
	(\$ '000)	(\$ '000)	(\$ '000)	(\$ '000)	(\$ '000)		
NORTHEAST	46,264	50,656	63,236	72,514	67,468	85	4,193
Hotels	20,041	24,589	28,694	33,189	39,031	32	2,436
1-75 Rooms	8,246	8,733	10,718	14,035	13,054	16	725
Motels	11,389	12,602	16,832	25,112	18,598	37	1,151
Urban Centres:							
City of Dawson Creek	5,899	6,800	9,027	12,085	12,541	16	649
Motels	3,845	4,369	5,440	6,506	5,650	10	327
City of Fort St. John	19,026	20,572	27,585	27,787	23,126	22	1,391
BC	1,485,670	1,590,956	1,688,343	1,815,312	1,967,921	2,501	100,714

Source: Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services, January 2008

*Airport Activity*

The Dawson Creek Airport is located approximately four kilometres south of the City. It has a 5,000-foot runway and a parallel float plane base. Scheduled service is provided by Central Mountain Air. Rental car service is supplied by National Car Rental. The airport charges no General Aviation fees, and offers an on-site weather station, flight planning, hangar facilities, fuel and a campsite for tent or under-wing camping. Washroom and shower facilities are available. Aircraft movement trends over the last three years are shown in the following table. The total number of movements declined appreciably in 2008 versus 2007, but this change is attributable mostly to the small plane categories.

**Dawson Creek Airport Aircraft Movements, 2006-08**

Month	2008				2007	2006
	Local	Scheduled	Itinerant	Total		
January	22	108	302	432	533	584
February	78	100	348	526	538	683
March	54	100	470	624	595	766
April	124	102	379	605	524	802
May	214	102	475	791	921	1,242
June	46	102	489	637	1,268	1,413
July	56	110	435	601	984	1,516
August	30	96	594	720	1,246	1,288
September	5	106	534	645	968	968
October	8	104	606	718	1,269	659
November	0	90	112	202	1,054	530
December	0	96	80	176	430	530
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>1,216</b>	<b>4,824</b>	<b>6,677</b>	<b>10,330</b>	<b>10,981</b>

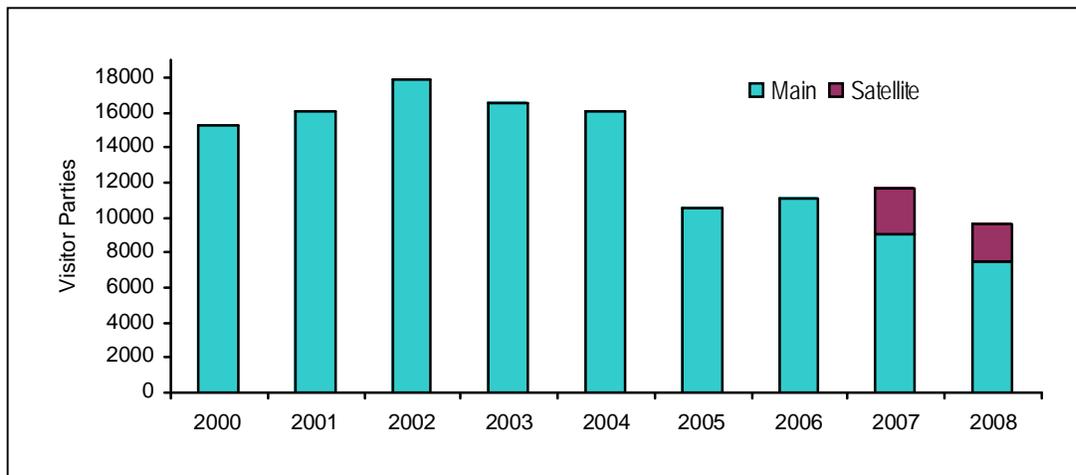
Source: Transport Canada

*Visitor Centre Attendance*

After several years of attendance in the order of 15,000 to 17,000 visitor parties in the first half of this decade, attendance dropped noticeably in 2005 and has been in the range of 10,000 visitor parties since. A satellite VC was opened in 2007 and now accounts for close to one-quarter of total attendance.

Eighty-five percent of total annual attendance is between the months of May and September, with June and July being the busiest months.

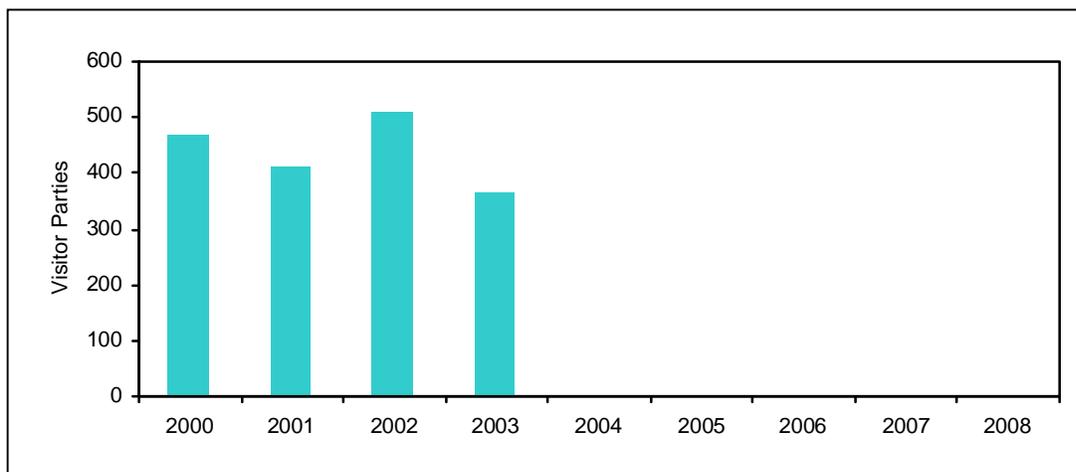
**Dawson Creek Visitor Centre Attendance, 2001-2008**



Source: Tourism British Columbia, March 2009

Pouce Coupe used to have its own Visitor Centre and hosted a high of 506 visitor parties in 2002, which represented about three percent of the combined Pouce Coupe and Dawson Creek VC attendance. The VC, which operated only during the peak summer months, was closed after the 2003 season.

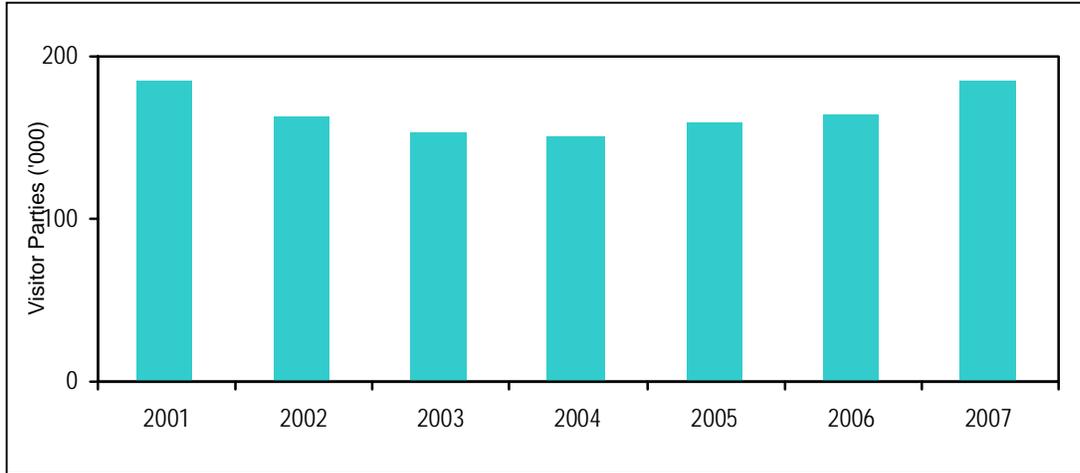
**Pouce Coupe Visitor Centre Use 2000-2008**



Source: Tourism British Columbia March 2009

A total of 120,000 parties visited all Visitor Centres in Northern BC in 2007, representing 7.2% of those visiting VCs province-wide. Usage was up 4.4% relative to 2006, compared to total provincial Visitor Centre usage, which was down 0.2%. Between 2000 and 2007, visitation to Northern BC VCs declined at an annual average of 1.1%. The peak period for visitors is July and August, when almost half of all parties arrive.

**Northern BC Visitor Centre Use 2001-2007**



Source: Tourism British Columbia, November 2008

#### **4.4 TOURISM IN DAWSON CREEK**

The City of Dawson Creek has recognized tourism as a means of stimulating local economic activity and economic diversity. As a result, the City has invested a substantial amount of money to promote, market and develop the tourism industry. However, the tourism industry within Dawson Creek is largely underdeveloped, under-promoted and given all the opportunity the region has to offer, highly cyclical. Fortunately, Dawson Creek is positioned very well to take advantage of the 320,000 visitors who drive the Alaska Highway annually. Information gathered from the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Visitor Research Study shows the value of the traditional summer tourism cycle, which spans from May to September in Dawson Creek, is approximately \$15.3 million.<sup>26</sup> Dawson Creek is strategically located in Northeastern British Columbia at the confluence of four major highways (97N, 97S, 2, 49). Moreover, Dawson Creek is recognized around the world as Mile “0” of the Alaska Highway. The Mile 0 Post and Mile 0 Cairn are icons of the Alaska Highway and provide international recognition to the City. Tourism Dawson Creek’s Visitor Centre welcomes approximately 38,000 people between the months of May and October and the value has been measured at approximately \$15.3 million.<sup>27</sup>

#### **4.5 TOURISM INDUSTRY COMPOSITION**

An inventory of tourism businesses and features was compiled by Tourism Dawson Creek. Dawson Creek has fourteen B&B/Cabins for a total of 29 units; seven hotels for a total of 445 units; and ten motels with 361 units for a total fixed roof capacity of 835 units. There are eleven RV Park/campsite facilities for a total of 492 sites. Pouce Coupe has one RV/campsite at the regional park and three accommodation properties (two motels and one small vintage hotel.) There are a mix of food and beverage service in Dawson Creek including Asian Cuisine, Fast Food, Pizza, Soup/Sandwich, Pubs/Lounge/Bars, Family Restaurants and Steak/Seafood and Pasta Selections for a total of 43 establishments. There are no restaurants in Pouce Coupe, however there is a limited food store at the local gas station. There are five antique/giftstores in Dawson Creek.

#### **4.6 TOURISM PRODUCTS AND ATTRACTIONS**

##### **Dawson Creek**

Key attractions include: Alaska Highway House, Mile 0 Post and Cairn, Pioneer Village, NAR Park Station Museum, Dawson Creek Art Gallery. Activities include: golf, fishing, hunting, downhill and cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, organized sports and South Peace Community Multiplex. Major events include the following: Dawson Creek Exhibition and Fall Fair – the largest event in Northeastern BC, Mile 0 Cruise, a biannual Air Show and Heritage Days.

An analysis of the existing situation suggests that NAR Park is the main stopping point for tourists, primarily because it has a Visitor Centre, the Mile 0 Cairn and a large RV parking lot. These elements, together with the Art Gallery and Station Museum, create a critical mass of attractions in an authentic location (this is Mile 0 and the end of steel). Downtown Dawson Creek currently has limited appeal for visitors. While the Milepost draws visitors downtown, pedestrian access from NAR Park to downtown is not well defined and the downtown area is not pedestrian friendly. In fact, the sidewalks are in need of repair. The completion of the temporary Alaska Highway House in the Tourism Dawson Creek office provides a strong complement

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<sup>26</sup> Dawson Creek Tourism Plan 2006-2012

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

to the Milepost, as do the historic murals and self-guided city tours, however, the downtown still lacks clear connections to NAR Park. Beyond downtown there are a variety of visitor experiences, some of which stand out as tourist attractions and others that are more resident-focused. There are few linkages between these attractions. Walter Wright Pioneer Village has considerable potential but at this time is not a significant draw for tourists or residents. As well, the current management structure at the site is not sustainable in its present form. With the exception of Pioneer Village, which requires a significant investment, resident and tourist visitation to beyond downtown sites could be greatly improved with minimal investment.<sup>28</sup>

### **Pouce Coupe**

Pouce Coupe Regional Park with event and RV/camping facilities, museum, trestle and annual Canada Day BBQ.

### **Major Events**

The province of British Columbia and the City of Dawson Creek will experience unprecedented international opportunities and major milestones. These include:

- 2006: 50th anniversary of the Dawson Creek Exhibition held at the local fairgrounds  
75th anniversary of the Northern Alberta Railways arriving in Dawson Creek
- 2008: City of Dawson Creek's 50th Anniversary of Incorporation as a City  
Province of British Columbia's 150th anniversary of the founding of British Columbia as a colony
- 2010: Province of British Columbia hosts the Winter Olympic and Para-Olympic Games
- 2012: 70th anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Highway

## **4.7 TOURISM SERVICES**

Tourism services are the demand supports for the destination. Services are not what attract visitors to the region but without them the development of tourism is limited.

### ***Accommodation***

One of the issues facing tourism within Dawson Creek is the increased demand for quality accommodation properties including hotels, motels, RV parks, campgrounds, and bed and breakfasts. This is largely due to the activity in the oil, gas, and coal sectors within Dawson Creek and surrounding area. Although these crews and individuals are not travelling to the communities for pleasure, they are still classified as a tourist in that the majority are travelling more than 75 kilometres in distance and thus staying overnight. Moreover, the lack of export-ready tourism product hinders the capacity to attract visitors.<sup>29</sup>

An inventory of tourism businesses and features was compiled by Tourism Dawson Creek. Dawson Creek has fourteen B&B/Cabins for a total of 29 units; seven hotels for a total of 445 units; and ten motels with 361 units for a total fixed roof capacity of 835 units. There are eleven RV Park/campsite facilities for a total of 492 sites. Pouce Coupe has one RV/campsite at the regional park and three accommodation properties (two motels and one small vintage hotel.) Source: Tourism Dawson Creek

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<sup>28</sup> Dawson Creek Master Attractions Plan, 2005 Executive Summary

<sup>29</sup> Tourism Dawson Creek 2006 – 2012 Tourism Development Plan

### *Food and Beverage*

There are a mix of food and beverage service in Dawson Creek including Asian Cuisine, Fast Food, Pizza, Soup/Sandwich, Pubs/Lounge/Bars, Family Restaurants and Steak/Seafood and Pasta Selections for a total of 43 establishments. There are no restaurants in Pouce Coupe, however there is a limited food store at the local gas station.

### *Visitor Services*

#### Dawson Creek

Tourism Dawson Creek operates the two visitor centres, one year-round at the NAR Park Station Museum and a satellite centre open May-September at Pioneer Village. Visitor Centre staff include one full time manager position and one part-time assistant position. Staffing is supplemented for the summer season under the Service Canada – Canada Summer Jobs program. Three to four full-time equivalent summer students are requested each year for the Centre, although support from this program has been in decline over the past several years for Visitor Centres and some have not received any support. Staff from the visitor centre receive T/VC training and the manager attends the annual conference for Visitor Centres. Tourism Dawson Creek supplements the visitor service budget through membership of the Tourism BC Visitor Centre Network, providing regional and provincial information to visitors. Tourism BC

#### Pouce Coupe

The Pouce Coupe Historical Society is a tourism champion for the community and receives funds from the municipality to operate a local visitor centre in conjunction with the museum. The museum is open limited hours and is currently not part of the Tourism BC Visitor Centre Network.

### *Retail Shops and Services*

The historic downtown offers a range of services. There are five antique/gift stores; three auto body service shops; nineteen automotive stores/mechanical repair shops; six communications/computer services; six financial institutions, seven general merchandise, four grocery stores, one Laundromat, three malls; three photo-processing stores, five drugstores and two postal outlets in Dawson Creek. There are limited services in Pouce Coupe with one gas station that has food services.

### *Travel Trade Services*

Tourism Dawson Creek has identified Travel Trade as an important priority over the past 3 years. Tourism Dawson Creek caters to the RV Caravan and Motor coach sector.

The travel trade program consists of:

- Dawson Creek Trip Planner and 2009 flat sheet
- Database of and contact with every bus tour and caravan that has come through the city in the past five years.
- Hiway Howdy Program: staff personally met every tour group and welcomed them to the city and provided city pins, coupon books etc.

The *Hiway Howdy!* program takes into consideration two elements: the individual participant on group travel and the company tour planners and their field staff: wagonmasters, tailgunners and tour guides.

In the scope of Tourism Dawson Creek's (TDC) *Hiway Howdy!* program, the Northern Experience can be defined as *the* gateway, introduction to, and the setting of the stage for an individual travelling the Alaska

Highway (North America's last frontier) that will reveal an international diversity of culture, history, wildlife, and scenery, while discovering and enjoying what Dawson Creek has to offer.

The second focus of the program for planners and tour leaders is to make sure that this Northern Experience happens for their clients in the most rewarding and efficient way possible; and to offer Tourism Dawson Creek services that will make company staff feel confident about planning tours and embarking on their northern guiding experience.

### Goals & Objectives

1. To facilitate pre-planning for group travel decision makers to/from Dawson Creek and have available contact information for the region and the complete Alaska Highway tour.
2. To provide a local contact and assistance for head tour offices while the tour is en route.
3. To provide field staff a local contact while en-route, and on-site assistance while in the city.
4. To add value to every tour/caravan without a large expense to operators.
5. To establish Dawson Creek as a tour-friendly destination that companies know their clients will have the best experience possible.
6. To foster longer stays in Dawson Creek for both caravans and bus tours and to attract new travel trade to the area, thus increasing economic returns.
7. To enhance the experience of each individual on group travel and make them feel *special* while establishing Dawson Creek in their memory as a high point on their Alaska Highway trip.
8. To change the passive *wait-until-they-come-to-us* attitude to a *proactive* program as the competition for the tourist dollar grows.
9. To provide a method of gathering numerical visitor statistics of organized rubber-tire traffic for Dawson Creek.

### Research

Historically, upon arrival to Dawson Creek, RV caravan leaders were dependent on the local Visitor Centre. Stopping by the Centre, wagonmasters and tailgunners would pick up print information on Dawson Creek and the Alaska Highway for each member of their group. Inquiries about booking local group activities were answered and some pre-tour planning assistance was available through the Visitor Centre Manager who would also give the tour leaders Mile 0 Post pins to hand out to their clients.

At this time, bus tours, road rallies and motorcycle rides to/through Dawson Creek would simply come and go with no fanfare or assistance, making the city just another bathroom and coffee break in a series of stops along the Alaska Highway.

In the planning stages of *Hiway Howdy!* minimal data on caravans and no data on bus tours were available to Tourism Dawson Creek. In 2005, research was started by Visitor Centre staff acquiring business cards from tour guides arriving on-site. Local hotels were contacted for lists of tours that had rooms and/or catering functions booked. Many staff hours were also spent on Internet Google research. All of this was compiled and in the pre-season tour planning months, head offices were contacted by cold call, tour planner names procured, *Hiway Howdy!* info flat sheets were e-mailed/faxed out and follow-up phone calls were made.

### Execution

The development of the *Hiway Howdy!* Program came out of the passive historical contact that the Dawson Creek Visitor Centre Manager and staff had with RV caravans and other group rubber tire traffic. Because of some knowledge of caravan needs and activities and no bus tour data, the initial focus of the program was targeted at caravan companies. In the second year, the program was extended to bus tours also by cold call e-mail/fax information and persistence.

#### *Difficulties Encountered*

How to positively impact pre-tour planning, tour leader duties and the individual experience in Dawson Creek was the question to be answered for this program. The *Hiway Howdy!* program had many unique challenges:

- Marketing by telephone by cold-call is sometimes viewed negatively.
- Building travel company owner and tour leader trust in Tourism Dawson Creek staff through phone and e-mail was the biggest hurdle to get the program underway. Companies were very hesitant to expose their clients to an unknown source. Two long-time caravan wagon masters to Dawson Creek were approached to be used as a reference when contacting companies, which worked well.
- The marketing of the program took countless staff hours. The first cold call, which often resulted in leaving a message and having to phone back several times, e-mail/fax of promotional and explanation material and then follow-up phone call(s) to book a presentation or step-on guide welcome service.
- Companies and tour leaders showed slow acceptance of anything new as is echoed by the adage: *if it's not broken, don't fix it.*
- TDC staffing levels and budget restraints: with the success of the program and only one staff member available to compile research, organize and carry out the whole program is an on-going physical, time management and mental challenge.
- Translators for French and German Tours: Volunteer teachers from the French immersion school were trained to do the presentation. German tours however have to be done by TDC staff with the tour guide translating everything, difficult, but the effort is greatly appreciated.
- PowerPoint presentations had to be modified after the first year as it was realized there are tours going up the highway, coming down the highway, different interests of caravans and bus tours, and different tour country of origin.

#### *Elements of Hiway Howdy!*

- Bus/Venue Rental

It was known that caravans required bus rental for day-trips to a local game farm and had rendezvous dinners at a local hotel and/or halls. Reservations were done individually by each head office tour planner in a company head office somewhere directly with a local bus charter company or a venue. Because of tour companies being from out-of-town, payment was due before services rendered.

To facilitate rentals, TDC contracted a bus supplier, booked required trips and reserved venues. Payment was set up to be made to TDC by company cheque, cash or credit card on arrival in Dawson Creek making it much more convenient for the companies

- Travel/Welcome Bags

To save time for Caravan leaders in the collection of local and highway travel information for their clients, travel bags are pre-stuffed with current Dawson Creek and Alaska Highway travel guides, a self-guided historic walking tour booklet, pertinently dated local events, an of-interest pamphlet of historic mile events along the highway and discount coupons. TDC staff personally delivers these bags to the tour leaders upon arrival, which also opens communication between the two parties.

For the tour leaders, TDC (with the aid of the City of Dawson Creek) provides a special welcome bag that has city branded gifts: pens, pencils, highlighters, clipboards, note cards, etc.

- **Mile 0 Merchant Coupon Book**  
Something else beside just print material was needed to encourage visitors to go downtown and frequent local shops: thus the discount coupon program was invented. Some local businesses were approached to participate in the venture at a cost of \$300 plus tax. This pays for the graphic design and printing of the coupon book with a profit to Tourism Dawson Creek to cover staff hours spent on the project. Expiring in April of each year, participation fees are again collected for reprints. With a print run of 10,000, the coupon books are also distributed to conventions and sports teams, giving merchants year-round benefits. Initially involved in the Mile 0 Merchant Coupon book, Chances, the local gaming casino went one step further to supply \$5 for \$10 slot play coupons.
- **Travelers' Certificates**  
As a marketing tool, an individual souvenir of visiting Dawson Creek and a minimal cost for companies to add value to their tours, travelers' certificates were made available for purchase (see Supporting Material Section, Certificate Samples). These are pre-personalized with the client's name and date of arrival ready for presentation upon their arrival to the city. A minimal charge for this memento covers printing costs and makes a small profit for Tourism Dawson Creek.
- **The Personal Welcome Presentation**  
Hiway Howdy! evolved to focus on the individual traveler on these tours. To provide more hype about arriving at Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway and more excitement about the future trip, the welcome presentation was invented. Produced intently to be entertaining and informative, a PowerPoint presentation and a personal welcome by a Tourism Dawson Creek representative are offered at no charge. At the end of the presentation, local events are discussed, a Q & A session is held and each person is presented with their welcome bag, a Mile 0 Post pin and some small door prizes are drawn for.

To include the short stop-over bus tours in the program, a step-on welcome, welcome bag and Mile 0 Post pin is offered. Because TDC staff is now on-site with tours, group photography (with the individual travelers' cameras) has become a welcome duty allowing the tour guide and driver to be in photos.

## Results

- Local problem solving information: tour leaders and their companies are contacting TDC rep for solid information and assistance.

- Examples: *2008*: Discovery Tours had breakdown delay en-route and had to change local room reservations. TDC was contacted by company owner that felt there was a problem. TDC spoke to hotel manager and got reservation change confirmed.  
*2007*: road closure -mudslide at Dease Lake: Caravans-had to return to Dawson Creek: TDC assisted Fantasy and Good Sam Caravans with last-minute accommodations and catered dinners.  
*2006*: From internet research, EM Hawaii Tours, Honolulu, HI was cold-called by TDC staff. From that call, it was discovered that this was a new product and the owner/guide was in need of assistance. Tour arrangements were put together mutually by TDC and contacts in Alaska, Yukon and Prince George south to Vancouver. Result: a successful tour, a happy company owner and a new and positive business relationship for TDC.
- Positive feedback has been received from head tour offices and on-the-tour ground staff for every part of the program: their tours are enhanced for minimal cost and it makes them look good to clients.
- TDC has fostered telephone/e-mail friendships with tour planner contacts throughout the United States, Canada, Australia and Europe.
- Personal friendships have been established with repeat tour guides and caravan leaders.
- Face-to-face with tour guides about their route and planned stops renders information as to which bus tour groups can be targeted to stay in Dawson Creek in the future and which groups could possibly be convinced to stay longer.
- Dawson Creek merchants are working well with TDC resulting in Dawson Creek becoming known in the industry as a tour friendly destination. Through the coupon program and presentations at RV Parks and hotel catering facilities, TDC is also becoming well known in the community.
- Personal Welcome  
2006 was the first year for Hiway Howdy and it was focused on RV Caravans and collecting business cards from bus tour guides to establish a data base' 2007 was the first year for personally meeting bus tours: both overnight stays and afternoon stops.

The number of Mile 0 Post pins presented personally by TDC staff to group tours is recorded on-site and has rendered a concrete method to collect and track numerical stats on group rubber tire traffic and for year-to-year comparisons. Unsolicited feedback on the welcome presentations from head office staff, field staff and individual travelers has been very positive with tour planners booking in advance. Tour guides are now including the presentation in the individual traveler tour log.

#### **4.8 TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE**

Tourism infrastructure includes the basic amenities visitors require to access and stay at a destination. A community's infrastructure has a direct impact on residents' quality of life as well as visitors'; it will either enhance or detract the visitor experience in the community.

##### ***Access and Transportation***

Dawson Creek is easily accessible from every direction during summer and winter due to its location at the crossroads of several major highway systems including Highway 97 South to Prince George and Vancouver (The Hart Highway); Highway 97 North to the Yukon and Alaska (The Alaska Highway); Highway 49 East to the Alberta Peace; and Highway 2 South to Grande Prairie and Edmonton.

The historic Alaska Highway is celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of this marvel of ingenuity and hard work. The Alaska Highway is completely paved, although the highway is always undergoing regular maintenance and improvements. The distances are great and the original wooden mileposts have been exchanged for kilometre posts.

The Stewart/Cassiar Highway (Highways 37 & 37A) is a shorter route to Alaska and is almost completely paved. There are only 115 kilometres (71 miles) of gravel in four separate sections. The Stewart/Cassiar Highway begins at the Yellowhead Highway near Kitwanga, 243 kilometres (151 miles) east of Prince Rupert and joins the Alaska Highway 23 kilometres (14.3 miles) west of Watson Lake in the Yukon.<sup>30</sup>

Bus service is available through Greyhound with daily service to and from Edmonton, Prince George, Fort St. John and Fort Nelson. North to Whitehorse, limited service is available.

The Circle Tour of Northern British Columbia incorporates the Alaska Highway through the Rocky Mountain foothills to Watson Lake in the Yukon, linking with the Stewart/Cassiar Highway and Yellowhead Highway 16 in the south. The Inside Passage Tour and the Native Heritage Tour follow the same route, from Port Hardy on Vancouver Island north by ferry to Prince Rupert. Visitors catch another ferry to the Queen Charlotte Islands, or venture east on the Yellowhead Highway to Prince George, and south through the peaceful Cariboo to Vancouver along the historic Cariboo Wagon Road.<sup>31</sup>

Dawson Creek forms part of the Northern Dino Touring Route, which includes Chetwynd, Fort St. John, Hudson's Hope, Tumbler Ridge and Grand Prairie, Alberta.<sup>32</sup>

The local airport offers 52 flights per week with connections to Vancouver, Kelowna, Calgary and points beyond. Non-stop service is available to Vancouver at the main terminal through one airline Central Mountain Air.

### ***Broadband***

Business and leisure travellers now expect to have high-speed Internet access when they travel. Regular broadband services are available through most accommodation providers, which includes wireless. Tourism Dawson Creek and the Peace Region Internet Society launched a free wireless network in the downtown core, Walter Wright Pioneer Village and Northern Alberta Railways (NAR) Park.

### ***Signage***

The City of Dawson Creek has done some great improvements over the years in regards to signage (example; overhanging signage on Alaska Avenue and a city wide signage theme for parks and trails). This signage theme needs to be continued throughout the community for entrance signs, attractions, and recreational facilities. Signage is an area that needs to be addressed: proper way finding to recreational facilities, attractions, and points of interest is definitely lacking. Current entrance and facility signage display the Dawson Creek branding. Approach, directional and facility signage is currently good for easy orientation

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<sup>30</sup> [http://www.northernbctourism.com/getting\\_there](http://www.northernbctourism.com/getting_there)

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.britishcolumbia.com/regions/towns/?townID=3690>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.northerndinotour.com/index3.htm>

throughout the area. Pouce Coupe added welcome signage recently to both entrances of the community. Directional signage to find the museum after the initial sign is lacking. Signage is still considered an issue that needs to be addressed in the current plans.

Pouce Coupe has added new welcome and directional signage from the UBCM Phase I funds.

### *Trails*

The Trail Guide for Radar Lake Interpretation Trails highlights three trails: Lake, Radar Lake Forest Trail, and Pioneer.

### *Visual Appeal*

The need for beautification has been addressed in the existing plans, which include key recommendations for the downtown core. The City of Dawson Creek has a number of beautification and community enhancement projects for the downtown core and the major arterial highways into the City. Overall expenditures on parks, beautification, recreational facilities maintenance or enhancement, are upwards of \$700,000 annually. A number of volunteer groups (Beautification Committee, Horticultural Society, Gardens North) support the City's efforts.<sup>33</sup> Some projects include city-wide cleanup campaign; downtown hanging flower baskets, street banners along 8th Avenue and around City hall, flower pots in the downtown core.

### *Parking*

Alaska Highway Visitor Parking: Historically visitors to Dawson Creek utilize the large parking lot at NAR Park, this is the staging point and beginning of their Alaska Highway Adventure. The parking lot is adjacent to the Dawson Creek Art Gallery, Station Museum and Visitor Centre, and the Mile 0 Cairn. This area provides ample parking for RVs and bus parking and is also in close walking distance to the downtown core.

### *Visitor Amenities*

There are adequate visitor amenities such as public washrooms, sani-dump, etc.

### *Facilities*

South Peace Community Multi-Plex<sup>34</sup>

The South Peace Community Multiplex has a building footprint of 17,175 m<sup>2</sup>, within this state of the art facility is the Lakota Agri-plex (6,118 m<sup>2</sup>) which includes one hundred horse stalls and a 200' x 100' clear span riding arena; the Kenn Borek Aquatic Centre (3,716 m<sup>2</sup>) which includes an eight lane, twenty-five metre swimming pool an indoor water slide, lazy river, sauna, steam room, hot tub, kid's pool and diving boards; and the EnCana Events Centre (17,552 m<sup>2</sup>) which is located in the center of the South Peace Community Multiplex. The EnCana Events Centre is a state of the art events centre designed to host numerous events including concerts, circuses, ice shows and hockey games. The facility has 4,500 fixed seats and the ability to expand to 6,500 seats. There are twenty-four VIP Luxury Suites and a 250 metre indoor running track, four concessions and a 5,000 sq. ft. main kitchen. The facility was designed for both

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.dawsoncreek.ca/life/enhancement/index.asp>

<sup>34</sup> EnCana Events Centre, Business Plan 2009

the client and the promoter. For the promoter/tour manager there is a large indoor loading dock where three tractor trailers can park inside and unload in a safe, secure and private setting. There are two electrical rooms, one stage left and one at centre ice both with 400, 200 and 100 Amp electrical panels with both rooms on a common ground. The EnCana Events Centre also has acoustical liner throughout the facility to ensure the sound within the facility is second to none. For the client, extra effort was put into ensuring that they are comfortable. The bathrooms are spacious ensuring no line ups; all seats have no sightline issues and were installed wider to ensure comfort for all patrons. There are four fully operational concessions offering a wide range of beverages, and food choices.

A shell exists for where a convention or meeting space could be developed.

### *Roadways*

Dawson Creek is located at the intersection of a few major highways. The two main arteries, the Alaska Avenue and 8th Street are the responsibility of the Province of BC. There is some concern on other main roads about improvement of potholes and accessibility. These concerns are addressed annually in the cities capital budget, road construction is always needed every year as the climate over the winter tends to do damage to the roadways.

#### 4.9 TOURISM HOSPITALITY

Tourism Hospitality includes the attitude of the community as a whole towards tourism as an industry and visitors to the community. Community tourism development stakeholders include government, residents, businesses, First Nations, community/recreation/business groups and organizations.

##### *Community Acceptance of Tourism Development*

The Official Community Plan of the City of Dawson Creek references tourism, Pouce Coupe does not. Not uncommon in many communities is the misconception that the tourism industry is not an economic driver, especially when compared to forestry or industry-type jobs. However, tourism provides not only entry-level employment opportunities but also high-paying positions in management functions, and tourism businesses make major investments in tourism infrastructure. Educating the community stakeholders at all levels is required to ensure tourism, when compared to other industries, is recognized for its overall potential contribution to the local economy. At present tourism makes up a small percentage of the local economy, but through strategic development tourism can grow in the Study Area.

##### *Community Welcome of Front-line Staff*

Front-line staff in the retail, hospitality and service industries all contribute to the atmosphere of the community, and ensuring people have local product knowledge and a welcoming attitude is critical to leave a favourable impression of a visitor experience. Gas stations, accommodations, restaurants, realtors and stores do what they can to provide information upon request. Internal familiarization is important, such as creating awareness in the locals of what there is to offer tourists. *SuperHost* training is being offered by Tourism Dawson Creek on a regular basis.

##### *Business Development: Research, Education, Training and Certification*

Training and certification form part of business development. Resources to assist businesses and organizations in the tourism industry are vital for communities whether the vision for the community is to be a service centre for visitors en route to other destinations or to become a visitor destination. Partnerships for a general business development program could be established, which could include the specialized resources for the tourism industry with local government, Community Futures Development Corporation Peace-Liard,<sup>35</sup> Northern Lights College, Lakes District Campus,<sup>36</sup> University of Northern BC<sup>37</sup> and the school district.

Tourism Dawson Creek Approved Accommodation designation is any fixed roof accommodation or RV/Campground that has become Tourism BC Approved. Tourism Dawson Creek in turn provides these operators with a free listing in the Dawson Creek Visitor Guide, plus they are promoted first when dealing with sport groups, travel trade, meetings and conferences. The objective is to increase hospitality standards in Dawson Creek.

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.communityfutures.biz/programs/workshops.php>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.nic.bc.ca>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.unbc.ca/about/>

### *Human Resource Strategies*

The tourism industry in British Columbia provides direct employment for over 118,000 British Columbians (267,000 for all tourism-related jobs). With British Columbia hosting the 2010 Winter Olympic Games and the accelerated tourism growth targeted by the provincial government, direct employment needs to grow to approximately 174,000 by 2015. At this rate of growth, averaging 4% annually, BC's tourism industry faces shortages of skilled labour across a broad range of tourism occupations and across all regions of the province.

A conservative estimate projects that, for example, by 2010 BC will require 9,927 more cooks, 1,557 more professional chefs, 10,000 new managers for the food and beverage sector, and 5,000 more managers for the accommodation sector. There will be increased employment in new tourism destinations outside Vancouver, Victoria and Whistler – areas that currently have a limited tourism workforce. For more detailed information on projected labour force demand for British Columbia and reports on tourism and hospitality labour market analysis for specific regions of BC visit go2's website: <http://www.go2hr.ca/research.aspx>.

Currently there are no local labour or skill force programs for tourism.

### *Government Policy*

Government policy at all levels is crucial for tourism development to occur. The commitment for funding for tourism has grown in the past years under the provincial Liberal government, and the provincial plans noted in the introduction have provided an overview. The City of Dawson Creek has demonstrated a proactive stance for tourism development by investing in tourism planning, infrastructure, Tourism Dawson Creek and many more initiatives. In order for tourism development to be successful in the long run, government policy at all levels must acknowledge the tourism sector and recognize its contribution to the quality of life for residents and economic impacts with broad goals and objectives in local and regional Official Community Plans, committee participation, committees of council and, at higher levels, provincial and national policy and strategy.

## **5 Tourism Development Capacity**

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The implementation of initiatives contained in a Tourism Plan will depend on the community's ability to work cooperatively in accessing resources and mobilizing stakeholders around a common cause. This section of the report outlines the current capacity in Dawson Creek and Pouce Coupe for moving ahead with planning and provides suggestions of how that might best be achieved.

The term "destination management" is relatively new to the tourism sector, and denotes the role of the public sector agency (in most cases with private sector partnership) in undertaking functions that industry is not in a position to execute on its own. This includes:

- The formulation and approval of tourism visions, objectives, and policies (in government plans, economic development programs);
- Legislation and regulatory frameworks for tourism activities;
- Integration of tourism interests and objectives with economic development and planning processes of the destination;
- Destination marketing and promotion;
- Visitor Services;
- Facilitation of tourism product development;
- Investment promotion; and,
- Human resources development and training.

Organizational issues within any community and the priority that local government or local community organizations assign to tourism play a significant part in determining how well the destination is managed. This planning process provides an ideal opportunity to assess the delivery of tourism in the study area and to identify ways of improving the competitiveness of the destination.

The tourism industry is comprised of a network of businesses, organizations and government agencies that provide the products, services, transportation and programs to meet the needs of tourists. Collectively these tourism industry stakeholders contribute to the visitor experience.

The following table profiles the tourism management functions typically found in community tourism development.

Service	Primary Function	Typical Delivery Agencies
Destination and Infrastructure Development	Infrastructure and community development; includes transportation and municipal services, as well as bylaws and community plans that identify tourism as a growth opportunity.	Local/regional, provincial and federal government
Product, Business and Industry Development	Creation, expansion and attraction of activities, events and attractions (i.e. tourism products). Also includes services to businesses to improve their competitiveness (quality assurance programs, training, networking).	Economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, government agencies, educational institutions, destination marketing organizations, private sector
Destination Marketing	Destination marketing and business inventory management. This primarily involves promoting and partnering with industry to promote the area.	Destination marketing organizations, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, local/regional government
Visitor Services	Operations of Visitor Centres and responding to visitor inquiries, also known as internal marketing focusing on local initiatives within the community.	Chambers of commerce, destination marketing organizations, economic development organizations

Tourism Management key areas of responsibility are noted in the table below as a guide only. These include Planning; Communications; Finance and Operations; Infrastructure/Product Development; Business and Industry Development; Marketing; and Visitor Services.

Tourism Function	Responsibilities
Planning	<p><i>Refer to the Annual Planning Cycle for Tourism Management in the Appendices.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate annual planning process to include an evaluation of the previous year's activities</li> <li>• Review and update multi-year tourism strategy</li> <li>• Produce annual tourism plan from five-year strategic plan (e.g. tourism infrastructure, visitor services, business and industry development, product development, cooperative marketing, etc.)</li> <li>• Produce Request for Proposals (RFPs) and recruit contractors to produce plans or projects as required</li> <li>• Produce special project plans (e.g. new events, GIS mapping, website, online database/inventory)</li> <li>• Research and apply for government and tourism programs for leveraging and</li> </ul>

Tourism Function	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>partnerships</li> <li>• Review and update the three-year marketing strategy</li> <li>• Produce annual marketing plan</li> <li>• Establish tracking and evaluation criteria for plans and activities</li> </ul>
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications, e.g. internal communications protocol</li> <li>• E-newsletter to industry / broadcast emails to industry</li> <li>• Graphic standards (published guidelines for usage)</li> <li>• Industry input sessions</li> <li>• Industry resource centre on website</li> <li>• Internal contact list (online database)</li> <li>• Media releases to local media</li> <li>• Organization and industry website sections</li> </ul>
Finance and Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget (staff/contractors, planning, marketing, business and industry development, infrastructure, communications, product development, visitor services)</li> <li>• Financial reports</li> <li>• Research government grants and programs / funding applications / reports</li> <li>• Staff orientation, training, recruitment, retention</li> <li>• Succession Planning and Records Management</li> </ul>
Infrastructure/Product Development	<p>Policy issues and program development as it pertains to: <i>Infrastructure Development and Policy</i>. Issue identification and liaison role to policy makers as it pertains to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crown Land</li> <li>• Fees and licenses</li> <li>• Native culture</li> <li>• Issues such as affordable housing</li> <li>• Land tenure</li> <li>• Official Community Plans</li> <li>• Policies and regulations</li> <li>• Transportation infrastructure</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul> <p><i>Community Tourism Development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beautification</li> <li>• Broadband</li> <li>• Hospitality (attitude of the community about tourism and visitors)</li> <li>• Master plans and strategies for infrastructure</li> <li>• Signage</li> <li>• Trails</li> </ul> <p><i>Product Development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business attraction / retention programs</li> <li>• Land and resource use</li> <li>• Primary and secondary research</li> <li>• SWOT, gap and opportunities analysis</li> </ul>
Business and Industry Development	<p>Policies, issues and program development as it relates to Business and Industry Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual industry professional development workshop</li> </ul>

Tourism Function	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification</li> <li>• Industry standards</li> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Packaging</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Sector development</li> <li>• Skill and labour pool</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Workshops</li> </ul>
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement three-year marketing strategy with annual marketing (tactics) plan to coincide with annual planning process</li> <li>• Branding / graphic standards</li> <li>• Image bank</li> <li>• Marketing tools and equipment (visitor guide, maps, booth equipment)</li> <li>• Media relations</li> <li>• Online database and inventory</li> <li>• Packaging</li> <li>• Partnerships and alliances</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Quick Facts</li> <li>• Research (market, visitor and industry)</li> <li>• Tourism website (consumer and industry)</li> <li>• Tracking and evaluation mechanisms</li> <li>• Travel shows</li> <li>• Travel trade</li> </ul>
Visitor Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfillment (responding to visitor inquiries via phone, mail and email, ambassador program, Visitor Centre)</li> <li>• Hospitality of the people in the community</li> <li>• Public washrooms or other facilities</li> <li>• Reservation systems / accommodation availability matrix</li> <li>• Visitor Centre operations and programs</li> <li>• Way finding (signage programs)</li> </ul>

## 5.1 ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP

The following table outlines the functions of community tourism development and the roles of the government and organizations in the delivery of tourism services. The tourism planning process identifies a series of goals and objectives related to the full spectrum of tourism development activity.

To understand the roles of tourism management the following table is supplied for discussion purposes only. The following groups, organizations and local government have a role in the delivery of tourism development and marketing.

Destination and Infrastructure Development	Product, Business and Industry Development	Destination Marketing	Visitor Services
Vision and Policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Dawson Creek, Mayor and Council</li> <li>• Village of Pouce Coupe</li> <li>• Peace River Regional District</li> </ul> Economic Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Dawson Creek, Mayor and Council</li> <li>• Village of Pouce Coupe</li> <li>• Peace River Regional District</li> </ul>	Product Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism Dawson Creek</li> <li>• Village of Pouce Coupe</li> <li>• Sector Organizations</li> </ul> Business and Industry Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism Dawson Creek</li> <li>• Village of Pouce Coupe</li> <li>• Sector Organizations</li> <li>• Dawson Creek Chamber of Commerce</li> </ul>	External marketing activities (outside the area) as it relates to attracting visitors to the destination. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism Dawson Creek</li> <li>• Global Spectrum Facility Management</li> </ul>	Internal marketing as it relates to servicing visitors once they have decided to come to the destination. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism Dawson Creek</li> <li>• Pouce Coupe Museum</li> </ul>

*Tourism Advisory Committee*

As noted in the Tourism Dawson Creek Tourism Development Plan Appendix 1, the framework for a Tourism Advisory Committee has been outlined. One outcome of the current tourism planning process is to establish a Tourism Advisory Committee. To gather insight and to maintain two-way communications with the tourism industry, the Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) would be comprised of tourism stakeholders representing industry, government, First Nations and key organizations. The TAC would be an advisory group to Tourism Dawson Creek, which for the purposes of partnerships and communications includes the study area of the Peace River Regional District Area which both Dawson Creek and Pouce Coupe are located.

The following will be refined in the tourism plan reflecting the discussion at the planning workshop In April 2009. The original Terms of Reference that follow was created in May 2006, which focus on Dawson Creek, the broader desire for an alliance with Dawson Creek, Pouce Coupe and the Regional District will define the new model to ensure a wide variety of stakeholders are represented.

*Mandate:*

The Tourism Advisory Committee of Tourism Dawson Creek (a subsidiary organization of the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association) is committed to increasing the awareness and visitation of Dawson Creek.

*Purpose of Committee:*

To represent the Dawson Creek tourism sector and provide advice and consultation to Tourism Dawson Creek.

*Objectives:*

- To help Tourism Dawson Creek foster the growth of the tourism industry in Dawson Creek
- To assist Tourism Dawson Creek in building greater awareness of the importance of tourism in Dawson Creek
- To support Tourism Dawson Creek in marketing and developing Dawson Creek as a destination
- To advise Tourism Dawson Creek on issues and initiatives that affect the tourism industry
- To provide input on broad tourism policy issues
- To secure a funding mechanism for additional tourism marketing
- To be an effective representative of the Dawson Creek Tourism sector

*Reporting Relationships:*

The Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) provides support, feedback and advice to Tourism Dawson Creek in consultation with the City of Dawson Creek, TAC and Tourism Dawson Creek management and staff. The Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association (NRAHTA) Board of Directors is responsible for setting the strategic direction and objectives for Tourism Dawson Creek. The NRAHTA board member appointed to the TAC will convey the positions of the TAC to the NRAHTA Board.

*Structure of the Committee:*

The committee is to be comprised of no more than 13 members, each representing a different tourism industry sector. No sector will have more than one (1) representative. A NRAHTA board member or representative, Tourism Dawson Creek managers and City of Dawson Creek management also sit on the committee. Sectors represented are:

- Accommodation (1)
- Arts/Culture (1)
- Attractions (1)
- Bed and Breakfasts (1)
- City of Dawson Creek (1)
- Events (1)
- Media (1)
- NRAHTA (1)
- Restaurant (1)
- Retail (1)
- RV Parks (1)
- Transportation (1)
- Travel (1)

Additional sectors may be added at the discretion of the committee to a maximum of thirteen (13) members. Quorum will be seven (7).

The group will appoint a chair for a term of one year. A chair may be elected for no more than three consecutive terms. The chair will be the official spokesperson for the committee. In the event the chair is unavailable, a designate will be selected.

*Meeting Schedule:*

The committee will determine a schedule that suits members. The committee will meet four times per year.

*Tourism Dawson Creek Support:*

Tourism Dawson Creek will be responsible for circulating an agenda prior to each meeting. Tourism Dawson Creek will also record and distribute minutes of the meeting to committee members. Meetings will be held at Tourism Dawson Creek offices.

***Tourism Dawson Creek***

Established in August 2001, Tourism Dawson Creek (TDC) is a destination management organization (DMO) with emphasis on development and management of the tourism industry. It is currently a division of the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association (NRAHTA). Tourism Dawson Creek operates the two visitor centres, one year-round at the NAR Park Station Museum and a satellite centre open May-September at Pioneer Village. Tourism Dawson Creek also manages the Alaska Highway House. Currently there is no tourism advisory committee for Tourism Dawson Creek. Over the years, Tourism Dawson Creek has established a wide range of industry memberships and forged relationships with local, regional, provincial and national groups.

- Tourism Dawson Creek is a subsidiary organization of the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association (effective April 1, 2004).
- Tourism Dawson Creek is the recognized Destination Management Organization (DMO) for Dawson Creek with a focus on tourism development and improving the visitor experience.
- Tourism Dawson Creek has two organizations under its umbrella: the Visitor Information Centre and Alaska Highway House.

- Dawson Creek is situated in Northeastern BC, Mile 0 of the world-famous Alaska Highway
- Dawson Creek positions itself as “Mile 0 to Adventure”

#### Vision Statement

That Tourism Dawson Creek be recognized as a provincial leader and innovator in destination development and marketing while leading the City of Dawson Creek towards sustainable economic growth and development utilizing the tourism industry.

#### Mission Statement

To facilitate and coordinate the development and promotion of the tourism industry within the City of Dawson Creek for the benefit of the community by creating year-round, memorable visitor experiences through quality visitor information and visitor services management, sport and events, destination development, marketing, communication and education.

#### Operating Principles

Tourism Dawson Creek will operate on the following principles:

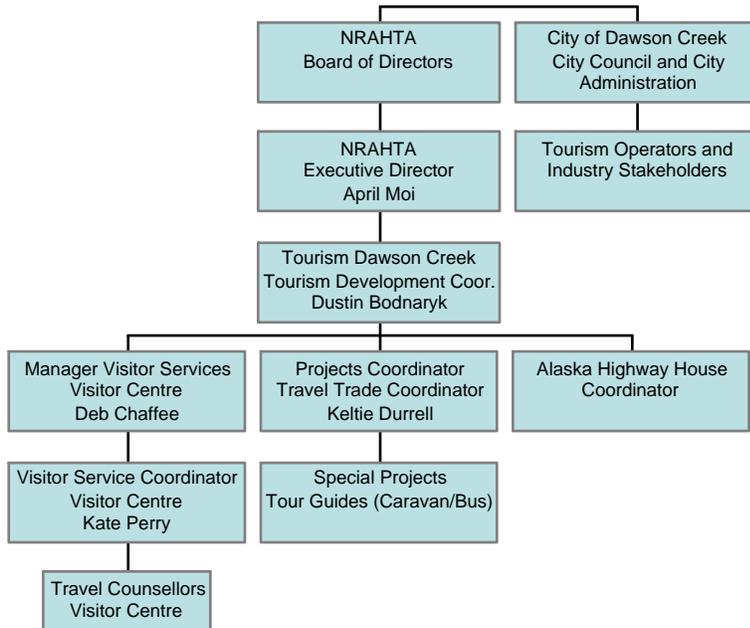
- An advocate for industry standards and professionalism
- Entrepreneurial, creative
- Research based and industry driven
- Passionate about customer service, satisfaction and loyalty
- Inclusive and innovative

#### Governance Structure

Tourism Dawson Creek is a division of NRAHTA. The General Manager of Tourism Dawson Creek reports to the Executive Director of NRAHTA and the board of directors. In addition, the General Manager of Tourism Dawson Creek and the Executive Director of NRAHTA report quarterly to the City of Dawson Creek Mayor and Council on the activities of Tourism Dawson Creek.

NRAHTA operates as an independent non-profit association under the direction of an executive and a board of directors. To ensure fair and equal representation, the area is divided into four sub-regions. At the NRAHTA Annual General Meeting, the members within each sub-region elect two directors and two alternate directors. The Association office is centrally located in Fort St. John with a satellite office in Dawson Creek. The Board of Directors has oversight of the staff and management of Tourism Dawson Creek.

**Tourism Dawson Creek Organizational Structure**



***City of Dawson Creek***

*Vision Statement*<sup>88</sup>

Dawson Creek will be a visionary community that works together for innovative social, cultural, economic and environmental vitality.

*Mission Statement*

The Corporate Mission of the City of Dawson Creek is to provide excellence in service and leadership that promotes a dynamic community within a healthy environment for all generations.

*Guiding Principles*

Trust and Integrity – We will have a reputation for acting with integrity and will earn the trust of our stakeholders by: Keeping promises; Pledging to align our actions with the guiding principles that support our vision; Modeling competence and anchoring behaviour on enduring values; Communicating with care and respect; Working to develop positive relationships and Sharing information in a timely and comprehensive way.

*Inclusively*

We will create an invitational climate by: Ensuring all individuals have equal access to services and opportunities for success; Seeking ways to reflect and celebrate the diversity of our community and ensuring physical accessibility; Engaging people in issues that directly affect them; and Maintaining and strengthening our links to the First Nations, Aboriginal and Métis.

<sup>88</sup> <http://www.dawsoncreek.ca/discover/vision/index.asp>

*Tourism*

- Signed a five-year contract between the City of Dawson Creek and NRAHTA to advance tourism as an Economic Development strategy effective April 1, 2006 through to May 31, 2011
- NRAHTA will administer/oversee Tourism Dawson Creek Contract
- City of Dawson Creek adopted the 2006-2012 Tourism Development Plan
- Funding provided for special events, 50th Anniversary celebrations
- Funding provided for Community magazine (Community/Economic Development: \$20,000, and Dawson Creek Visitor Guide: \$50,000); revenue goes to the Dawson Creek District Chamber of Commerce
- City of Dawson Creek council appoints Tourism Dawson Creek to apply and administer UBCM Funding

**South Peace Multiplex Managed by Global Spectrum Facility Management**

*Global Spectrum Facility Management*

Global Spectrum Facility Management provides innovative management, marketing, operations and event booking services for public assembly facilities, including arenas, civic and convention centers, stadiums, ice facilities, equestrian centers and theatres.

*New Era Tickets*

New Era Tickets provides professional and reliable ticketing systems. This professional service is utilized at the EnCana Events Centre, raising the bar for ticketing services in the Peace Region.

*Ovations Food Services*

Ovations Food Services is an industry leader in the catering and food service industry. The EnCana Events Centre boasts our own catering and concessions department offering suite, group and arena fare with great service and value.

*Front Row Marketing*

Front Row Marketing is a sports and entertainment marketing company specializing in the development of contractually obligated revenue for facilities, teams, colleges, municipalities and sports properties. As a consultant, Front Row develops, implements and manages the sales process for key revenue sources such as Premium Seating, Facility Naming Rights, Venue Advertising, Sponsorship Evaluation Analysis, Sponsorship sales and Vending Rights.

**Village of Pouce Coupe – Tourism Function**

The Village of Pouce Coupe undertakes the economic development function of which tourism is a component. Tourism activities are managed through the Chief Administrative Officer. Currently there is no tourism advisory committee for the Village of Pouce Coupe. The Pouce Coupe Historical Society is a tourism champion for the community and receives funds from the municipality to operate a local visitor centre in conjunction with the museum.

### **Groups or Organizations that have a role in Tourism**

Other organizations that have a role in tourism include the Chamber of Commerce, Branding the Peace, Airport Advisory Committee, Spirit of BC Committee, Dawson Creek Heritage Commission, Dawson Creek Arts Society, Dawson Creek Athletics Association, South Peace Historic Society, Mile 0 Park Society.

#### ***South Peace Economic Development Commission<sup>39</sup>***

The South Peace Economic Development Commission (SPEDC) is an economic development commission established in the 2005 Bylaw 1572 by the municipalities and rural areas of the South Peace region of the Peace River Regional District (PRRD) representing Pouce Coupe, Dawson Creek, Chetwynd and Tumbler Ridge, as well as Area 'D' and 'E' of the PRRD. SPEDC is active in gathering, analyzing and distributing research and information to local and regional government, in-region stakeholders and senior governments. It will pursue the role of facilitator, develop partnerships and leverage internal resources with those from government and the private sector in such a way as to advance the economic development interests of the region. Core program areas will include promoting and marketing the South Peace region, attracting new businesses, investment, workers and families, and helping existing businesses and entrepreneurs strengthen and expand their operations.

#### ***Northern BC Tourism – Agent Tourism BC***

The Northern BC Tourism (NBCT) is one of the Province's six Regional Destination Management Organizations (RDMOs) contracted as Tourism BC's agent. The northern region encompasses well over half of the total provincial land area extending from the Queen Charlotte Islands in the west, to the entrance of Mount Robson Provincial Park in the east, and north to the Yukon border. NBCTA is an independent organization with a Board of Directors and has staff in three offices spread across the region in Fort St. John, Prince Rupert and the main office in Prince George.

Northern British Columbia Tourism focuses its efforts on working directly with communities and tourism operators to grow tourism, both through visitation and tourism industry investment, by providing both community development and strategic cooperative marketing opportunities. NBCTA's mandate is to provide a range of Tourism BC programs to benefit operators and communities from strategic planning and development to sales and marketing. With input from community and industry partners NBCTA creates a regional tourism management strategy for the North that becomes a part of the overarching provincial tourism plan.

#### ***Tourism British Columbia***

Tourism British Columbia is the lead tourism organization in British Columbia. It became a Crown corporation in April 1997. Current funding is generated from 3% of the existing 8% hotel tax. Tourism British Columbia is responsible to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts. The corporation's principal stakeholder group is the BC tourism industry, and it is governed by a 15-member industry-led board of directors with management, financial and legal authority as ascribed under the Tourism British Columbia Act.

Tourism British Columbia is responsible for promoting British Columbia to the world as a preferred travel destination, and works closely with British Columbia's tourism industry to promote and develop tourism

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<sup>3939</sup> <http://www.southpeacebc.ca/>

throughout the province and to ensure the continued long-term growth and prosperity of BC's tourism industry. Tourism BC markets British Columbia to consumers and the travel industry through a variety of joint marketing and promotional campaigns in countries around the world. Tourism BC's mandate is to promote development and growth in the tourism industry, to increase revenues and employment throughout British Columbia, and to increase the economic benefits for all British Columbians.

Tourism BC has a number of programs designed to promote and encourage tourism growth on a provincial scale, working with the six Regional Destination Management Organizations (RDMOs), product sector groups, city destination marketing organizations (Tourism Vancouver, Tourism Victoria, and Tourism Whistler), communities, visitor centre network, educational programs such as *SuperHost*, and providing research services.

Tourism BC works closely with, and primarily funds, the six Regional Destination Management Organizations. The six RDMOs promote and encourage tourism growth in each of their respective regions through regional programs that complement Tourism BC's provincial programs. Communities in BC work with Tourism BC and the regional RDMOs to promote and encourage tourism growth in their respective communities.

## **5.2 FUNDING**

### ***Community Tourism Budget***

#### **Dawson Creek**

The City of Dawson Creek is the major financial supporter of tourism development and management for Dawson Creek. This includes destination development capital investments, reports and studies, operation of Tourism Dawson Creek, the visitor centre, supporting events and other organizations that supply tourism products or services. Tourism Dawson Creek's operational budget for 2008 was \$315,000, plus \$75,000 for the Visitor Centre for a total of \$390,000. Tourism Dawson Creek also actively looks for special grant funding for specific projects to increase Tourism infrastructure and services (Heritage Branch, Union of BC Municipalities).

The City of Dawson Creek also provides funding support for local events such as the fall fair Rodeo, Dawson Creek Air Show and, for 2008, the Dawson Creek 50th Anniversary celebrations.

#### **Village of Pouce Coupe**

The Village of Pouce Coupe has secured three grants: \$35,000 for economic development from Northern Development Trust, \$15,000 from the UBCM Phase II tourism program and \$6,000 from the Tourism BC Community Tourism Foundations program.

### ***Tourism BC Community Tourism Opportunities program***

Tourism BC's new *Community Tourism Opportunities* program may provide funding support for the tourism projects assessed on a project-by-project basis administered by the Regional Destination Management Organization (RDMO), Northern BC Tourism.

### *Additional Hotel Room Tax*

At this time neither community collects the Additional Hotel Room Tax (AHRT). For Dawson Creek this source could yield approximately \$250,000 to \$330,000<sup>40</sup> per year subject to market conditions. The voluntary program provides communities the ability to tax visitors up to a maximum additional 2% on accommodation sold in BC by fixed-roof properties with four units and over. Many communities use this revenue to fund incremental tourism activities carried out by a designated tourism organization. Although not legislated, a requirement of the program is dependent on 51% of the accommodators who control 51% of the room inventory to agree to the tax. Local and regional government must also pass bylaws and one will be identified to receive the tax from the provincial government for transfer to the tourism organization. A tourism business plan is required to set the direction for the spending of funds. The program requires a renewal process every five years. To date every community that has initiated the tax has renewed the program, suggesting there is general satisfaction with the results.

## **5.3 MARKETING**

Tourism marketing and promotion involves how the destination will position itself in the marketplace and communicate the brand to target markets.

- Target Markets
- Unique Selling Points (USPs)
- Branding and Positioning
- Communication Tools
- Distribution Channels
- Packaging
- Pricing
- Promotional Mix

### *Visitor Types*

Key visitor types for Dawson Creek and the Pouce Coupe area are primarily leisure travellers, Free Independent Travellers (FIT) and groups via RV Caravans touring (en route to Alaska or other destinations) and special interests in events. Famous for Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway, the area attracts leisure visitors for day trips and overnight stays for tourists in transit en route to Alaska and regional markets for organized sports, recreation, entertainment, reunions, weddings). Business travel includes workers for the oil, gas and coal sectors and government employees for meetings. Traditional summer peak season has occupancy availability in fixed roof accommodations as Alaska-bound visitors typically travel in RVs and off-season fixed-roof accommodators fill with business travel (workers for oil, gas, etc.). Market origin includes: Regional BC and Alberta, Canada other, US, Europe, Asia/Pacific.

### *Target Markets*

For Alaska bound travellers, targets include US, Canada, Europe and Asia/Pacific. For the event mix of conventions, travel shows, consumer shows, family shows and concerts, key targets include the Peace Region, which is a large geographic area with unique topography. The overall population is approximately

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<sup>40</sup> Estimate based on calculating 2% of BC Stats revenues for 2007 and 2008, December 2008 figures not yet available. Source: Tourism Dawson Creek.

221,465 disbursed over vast landscape roughly the size of California and is largely comprised of agricultural and forested lands.

Major communities by radius and population:

- 150 km radius of Dawson Creek, population 133,295: Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Tumbler Ridge, Chetwynd, Pouce Coupe, Taylor, Grande Prairie, Spirit River, Rycroft, Wembley, Sexsmith (included are portions of Counties, Municipal Districts, and Regional Districts)
- 200 km radius of Dawson Creek, population 7,010: Hudson's Hope, Mackenzie, Grimshaw, Valleyview (included are portions of Counties, Municipal Districts, and Regional Districts)
- 300-400 km radius of Dawson Creek, population 81,160: Fort Nelson, Peace River, Fox Creek, High Level, Grande Cache, (included are portions of Counties, Municipal Districts, and Regional Districts)

Source: EnCana Business Plan, 2009

### *Unique Selling Points (USPs), Branding and Positioning*

- Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway
- Events Centre of the region
- History, arts and culture
- Sporting facilities
- Mile 0 to Adventure
- Agricultural roots
- Small town community with large town amenities

### *Branding*

The Dawson Creek brand is well positioned in the global market as the city famous for being Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway. The Alaska Highway is a world-renowned icon that attracts a significant number of people to the North and utilizes Dawson Creek as a staging area. The Alaska Highway is the only paved land route to Alaska and the Yukon and it is the lure of Alaska that attracts the American visitors through the area. The City of Dawson Creek and Tourism Dawson Creek underwent a partial re-branding exercise in 2001 when the city logo was redesigned and a new tourism logo was created. The City of Dawson Creek is using "Capital of the Peace" and "Centre of It All" as its positioning statements. Tourism Dawson Creek changed its positioning statement in 2001 to "Mile '0' to Adventure" which encapsulates a wide variety of mental images. First, it recognizes Dawson Creek as Mile 0 and, second, it denotes the many adventures that are in our area and beyond.<sup>41</sup>

The City of Dawson Creek passed council resolutions to retain the integrity of the symbol and graphic identity of the city logo.

1. In order to protect the integrity of the symbol and graphic identity of the city logo, organizations, businesses or individuals wishing to use the logo must seek prior approval from the City of Dawson Creek.

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<sup>41</sup> Tourism Dawson Creek, Tourism Plan 2006-2012

2. The city logo may be used by organizations, businesses or individuals to recognize funding provided (in dollars or in-kind) or a mutually beneficial partnership (such as promotion of a city service).
3. No organizations, businesses or individuals shall use a symbol that imitates the city logo or that is deceptively similar in appearance to the city logo.
4. Authorized users of the city logo must at all times use his/her/its best efforts to preserve the distinctiveness, value and validity of the logo and these examples shall be non-exclusive and not be limited to:
  - a) Make any alteration to the logo in any way, shape, or form, including colour, variations or distortion of any form.
  - b) Use or adapt the logo as part of another graphic, symbol, mark or logo.
  - c) Use the logo in proximity to or in conjunction with another graphic, symbol or mark.



Tourism Dawson Creek uses a variation of the city logo for their identity. There are four variations of the Tourism Dawson Creek logo. Currently there is no graphic standards usage guide for tourism.



### ***Image Bank***

Tourism Dawson Creek maintains an image bank on behalf of Tourism, the City of Dawson Creek, and the District Chamber of Commerce. The pictures in the image bank are of low and high resolution and are used for a number of marketing initiatives to promote Dawson Creek. Currently no signature series or access to images are available via the Internet for media. There are a number of photo's of Dawson Creek and area that are owned by Tourism British Columbia, through photo shoots that have been coordinated by Tourism British Columbia-Northern Region. Hi-Definition video has been captured by local Hank Bridgeman of Peace Videoworks and Simon Radcliffe of Direct Ad Media, other programs include Picture BC.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Booth Display***

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.picturebc.ca/>

Tourism Dawson Creek uses self-standing zap banners as part of their booth displays at consumer shows. When attending consumer shows outside of the immediate region banners with Alaska Highway imagery and messaging is utilized. When Tourism Dawson Creek participates in local trade shows including Dawson Creek, or Fort St John (immediate region) Tourism Dawson Creek branded zap banners are used.

The reasoning behind this is that when attending consumer shows in the lower mainland, Edmonton, and the United States, the consumer is not interested in Dawson Creek as their destination, and does not have the same allure as marketing the Alaska Highway.

### ***Merchandise***

There are number of items for sale through the Visitor Centre (pins, mugs, clothing, stickers, spoons, hats, etc. There are also a number of items that are purchased as promotions to hand out at trade shows and as gifts. Tourism Dawson Creek works in close partnership with the City of Dawson Creek and these items are purchased By the City of Dawson Creek. (i.e. mile 0 post pins; Dawson Creek mugs).

### ***Communication Tools***

#### **Dawson Creek**

##### *Visitor Guide, Maps and Print Brochures*

The official Dawson Creek Dawson Community Guide and Visitor Guide are funded in part by the City of Dawson Creek, which provides \$31,000 to the Dawson Creek Chamber to manage the Community Magazine project. A magazine committee made up of Dawson Creek Chamber, Tourism Dawson Creek, the City of Dawson Creek, and Arts Society forms the working group. In 2009, a total of 20,000 Community Magazines were produced and an additional 50,000 Visitor Guides. The Visitor Guide forms part of the Community Magazine.

The magazine style format (8 1/4 x10 3/4") contains a mix of advertising and information of key attractions in the Dawson Creek area. The publication opens with the history of the Alaska Highway followed by Railways Park, historical downtown, "0" Park, events, travel tips, geo-caching,<sup>43</sup> detailed street map of Dawson Creek, accommodation tables, golf, fishing, birding, winter and day trips with a regional map. From an external marketing perspective the guide lacks lure information, compelling images and general awareness content for attracting potential targets to consider Dawson Creek in travel plans. The magazine format limits distribution potential for racking to 4x9 format.

A series of individual rack brochures printed in single colour includes information on several topics including transport/automobile, birding, special event or wedding, services, fishing lakes and rivers, restaurants, city services and moving guide, campgrounds/gas stations. These publications are available for download off the Tourism Dawson Creek website.

A two-sided pad map of the town area highlights key attractions, suitable for arrivals into the area. A street map in 8.5x11" format, an area map, map of BC and map of Canada are available online at:

<http://www.tourismdawsoncreek.com/howtogether.php>

A large format Alaska Highway poster map in full four color charts the key points of interest along the route.

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.geocaching.com/>

### **Pouce Coupe**

Pouce Coupe has a three-fold rack size brochure, output on linen stock with a sepia colour scheme. The main panel highlights the Pouce Coupe Museum and Visitor Centre. Currently Pouce Coupe is updating the brochure.

#### *Local Websites*

##### **Dawson Creek**

The official tourism website is <http://www.tourismdawsoncreek.com/index.php>.

The site has the main navigation along the top with Visitor Info, Attractions, Local Events, Alaska Highway and Corporate Services. The side navigation is Home, Online Shopping, What's New, Recreation, How to Get Here, Travel Tips, Free Magazine and Contact Us. Primary graphic links are Share the Excitement, attractions and tours, events, community organizations, hosting events, interactive map, Mutliplex and EnCana events centre. The Mutliplex website <http://www.southpeacemultiplex.com/about/index.htm> lacks content and has a broken link to information on the complex.

From a search engine optimization perspective the home page does not feature key search words or links to other sections in the main content or list enough detail of the compelling reasons to visit the area. The phrase "something for everyone" is challenging to live up to and should be used on context for a range of features in a product line as opposed to the entire destination. From the perspective of moving potential visitors through the purchase cycle, information to create awareness and interest in the area is lacking. A lot of information is present but is summarized in the introductions assuming the reader is familiar with the area. Given that the Internet is an international communication tool, all content should start with the assumption the reader has little or no awareness of the destination.

Given the importance of both the Alaska bound traffic and the local events at the EnCana Centre (and recreational facilities) there is no compelling information that summarizes these key opportunities to communicate effectively that reasons to stop in or come to Dawson Creek. The links to external sites before summarizing what the area has to offer is a lost opportunity.

##### **Pouce Coupe**

The official website for the Village of Pouce Coupe is <http://www.poucecoupe.ca/>. The site has been recently updated with tourism funds from UBCM Phase I. The main sections on the top navigation bar include About, Community, Business, News and Events, Village Office and Contact. Side navigation includes photo gallery and guest book. Home page information does not provide a welcome message that would appeal to all users of the site, which include residents, business and visitors. There is no dedicated "Visit" navigation option that summarizes the key information a visitor would require.

#### *Distribution Channels*

Tourism Dawson Creek has the mandate for destination marketing and markets direct to consumers and works with the travel trade for caravan and bus tours.

#### *Packaging*

Tourism Dawson Creek staff, as part of the 'Hiway' Howdy Program' arrange for group tours to coordinated through Sewell Valley Game Farm. (See Travel Trade Services above)

### *Pricing*

Accommodation rates are higher in the North than other areas in BC. Access to the North by air can be more costly from the Lower Mainland compared to other destinations in BC or points south or west.

### *Focus of Effort for Marketing*

The current focus of effort is to support visitors who are already coming through the area en route to Alaska and other destinations. The strategy includes product development through built attractions, sports, events, small meetings and conferences. Tourism Dawson Creek has the mandate for tourism marketing and produces collateral, participates in travel shows, advertising, trade relations (FAM tours, meet and greet), media relations (Tourism Dawson Creek supports Northern BC Tourism with hosting media) and host of the official tourism website <http://www.tourismdawsoncreek.com/index.php>.

### *Promotional Mix*

Tourism Dawson Creek's 2009 Marketing Plan includes:

#### **Key Consumer Advertisements**

Hello North – Dawson Creek  
Milepost

- Dawson Creek
- Alaska Highway House
- NBCTA Guide – General
- Cooperative Opportunity with stakeholders
- Bells Alaska Travel Guide

#### **Other Advertisements**

- Tumbler Ridge Visitor Guide
- BC Magazine
- Alaska Highway House

#### **Trade Shows**

American Bus Association (ABA)

#### **Consumer Shows**

Quartzsite RV

#### **Website**

Website development & maintenance  
<http://www.tourismdawsoncreek.com/index.php>.

#### **Miscellaneous**

HD Video  
Events  
Media  
Photography

### *Northern BC Tourism*

The 2009/10 Northern BC Tourism Marketing Strategy highlights include focus of effort for the following product segments:

- Touring
- Adventure Travel and Eco-tourism
- Fishing and Outfitting
- Culture and Heritage
- Group Travel

Marketing activities include print advertisements (newspapers and publications), direct marketing (direct mail and consumer shows), website, public and media relations, special incentive programs, fulfillment and trade development. The plan focuses on markets with the greatest potential, primarily in North America.

The Northern BC 2009/10 marketing strategy builds on the creative direction of the 2008/09 strategy. The plan focuses on North American markets with the greatest potential being in the regional US (Washington,

Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Alaska), our neighbouring provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) and the Yukon, as well as long-haul Europe, Asia/Pacific and US. The association will appropriately direct resources to effectively target these markets.

Marketing efforts have expanded by adding more public relations and direct marketing activities to the advertising mix. The marketing strategy reflects the following directions:

- Increase marketing efforts in British Columbia, Alberta, and other short-haul markets
- Increase festival and events marketing efforts
- Maintain approach in long-haul and overseas markets
- New resources to outdoor adventure travel segment

### *Tourism BC*

Tourism British Columbia initiatives include:

[www.HelloBC.com](http://www.HelloBC.com), the official Tourism BC consumer website. Dawson Creek information is categorized by: Dawson Creek Main; Accommodations; Culture and History; Dining; Geography; Things To Do; Transportation; and Visitor Centres. Links to the local websites are Tourism Dawson Creek and the City of Dawson Creek.

Pouce Coupe information is categorized by All; Travel Info; Accommodation; and Things To Do.

Expanded content on the HelloBC.com website is ongoing for communities throughout BC; the Northern BC content upgrade will be completed by fall 2009.

Blog content online for Dawson Creek features recent content from March 13, 2009, about the Surveyor Statue.

<http://www.hellobc.com/en-CA/HelloBCBlogs/BritishColumbia.htm?LOCID=173&FXMID=%7c1%7c>

Pouce Coupe does not currently have any posts in the blog section of the Tourism BC website.

Key Tourism BC guides include:

- Approved Accommodation Guide
- British Columbia Escapes
- British Columbia Vacation Planner
- Outdoor Adventure Guide

Tourism BC programs for businesses can be found at: <https://www.tourismbc.net>

### *Google Searches*

A Google search entering "dawson creek" resulted in the Google maps<sup>44</sup> in number one spot followed by *Dawson's Creek* (television show);<sup>45</sup> *Dawson's Creek* TV series 1998-2003<sup>46</sup> and the City of Dawson Creek number five.<sup>47</sup> Tourism Dawson Creek ranked number nine.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=dawson+creek&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.dawsonscreek.com/>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0118300/>

A Google search entering “Alaska highway” resulted in North to Alaska in number one spot,<sup>49</sup> Wikipedia number two,<sup>50</sup> and Milepost number three.<sup>51</sup>

A google search for “events Dawson Creek” resulted in the EnCanaEvents Centre listing at number five. <http://www.dawsoncreekeventscentre.com/>. Dawson Creek events from the Tourism Dawson Creek website listed as number one. No links to the EnCana Events Centre was found from the Dawson Creek website when searching through an event channel.

#### **5.4 RESEARCH AND TRACKING**

Key research that is most relevant to the area includes the Northern Rockies – Alaska Highway Visitor Research, 2005 and the RV Travellers Study, University of Northern BC, 2007. Market research that has relevance is the Travel Activities and Motivations of Canadian Visitors to BC: Activity Profile Focus on Campers and RVers, November 2008.

Current industry research includes Tourism BC’s Value of Tourism project, which estimates tourism’s contribution to the local economy. The objective of the research is to provide a conservative and credible estimate of visitor volume and direct tourism expenditure within a community. Participants include a minimum of 50% of the accommodation providers in a study area who provide a year of data for aggregate outputs. Ideally if the reporting is on-going trend analysis can be conducted over time.

Existing data tracked consists of Visitor Centres, Alaska Highway House, Airport, Hotel Room Revenue and website activity. Current ROI of marketing activities with the website domains requires some assembly of information for a report. Economic impact studies were produced for both the 1998 and 2005 Northern BC Winter Games. Program reports for sport/conference/reunion event hosting on the number of events that have been provided support by Tourism Dawson Creek, are available which includes the amount of product that has been given out (pins, guides, delegate bags, etc.).

The research projects that have been completed still remain relevant to this day. The projects put into perspective the quantitative value of the tourism industry, and provide support on how communities need to plan properly in order to increase the visitor experience.

The Northern Winter Games Economic Impact study has been used and will continue to be used in bid applications for large sport events and to gain support from the City and local businesses in the value of hosting sporting events.

Consistent reporting of trend analysis is ideal, which could be summarized in an annual report.

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.dawsoncreek.ca/home.asp>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.tourismdawsoncreek.com/>

<sup>49</sup> [http://www.northtoalaska.com/?gclid=CMbEppCWx5kCFQ6jagodyV\\_Stg](http://www.northtoalaska.com/?gclid=CMbEppCWx5kCFQ6jagodyV_Stg) NorthToAlaska.com is a joint program sponsored by Alaska, the Yukon and Alberta.

<sup>50</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alaska\\_Highway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alaska_Highway)

<sup>51</sup> <http://milepost.com/>

## **5.5 COMMUNICATIONS**

Tourism Dawson Creek produces an email newsletter that is sent to over 400 contacts. Much of its communications is done in-person with key contacts throughout the community. A “What’s New” webpage provides updates on current activity. The last posting was Winter 2008 announcing the Alaska Highway House is open and a new interactive map has been launched. A resource web page exists on the Tourism Dawson Creek website under Corporate Services, with other information for industry:

<http://www.tourismdawsoncreek.com/corporateservices.php>

Connectivity to the industry, which provides two-way communications includes membership in good standing to many tourism related organizations and local community groups. Refer to the Communication section of the current Dawson Creek Tourism Plan.

## **6 Key Development Issues**

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This section summarizes the conclusions and implications affecting tourism development in the Dawson Creek and Pouce Coupe area.

### **6.1 STRENGTHS AND ASSETS**

- Alaska Highway Community Initiative
- Built attraction base is growing and plans have been developed
- Central visitation point for the majority of visitors travelling through and to the area
- Dawson Creek is easily accessible from every direction during summer and winter due to its location at the crossroads of several major highway systems including Highway 97 South to Prince George and Vancouver (The Hart Highway); Highway 97 North to the Yukon and Alaska (The Alaska Highway); Highway 49 East to the Alberta Peace; and Highway 2 South to Grande Prairie and Edmonton.
- Desire to formally establish a Tourism Advisory Committee
- General roadways are in good condition
- Good planning for attractions development
- Good programming for tourism through the BC Government and new announcements for a national tourism strategy
- Good visitor research studies
- Known Alaska route (320,000 visitors drive the route annually; 2012 is the 70th anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Highway)
- Local government support for tourism
- Located directly on the highway
- Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway
- Proven track record for successfully hosting the 1998 and 2005 Northern BC Winter Games, supported by economic impact studies
- Proximity to Alberta
- Proximity to Chetwynd, Tumbler Ridge, Pouce Coupe, Taylor, Hudson's Hope and Fort St. John (all within 1-hour to 2-hour travel time)
- Record room occupancy due to the oil and gas sector
- Recreation, sports and entertainment complex - South Peace Community Multi-Plex – and potential for convention centre
- Scheduled air service and airport close proximity to the community
- Second busiest visitor centre in Northern British Columbia, visitor numbers down from 2002-2004 peak period
- Service centre for tourists (leisure and business travellers)
- Sport facilities
- Steady stream of Alaska-bound visitors are already intending to come to the area
- Sustainability identified as a strategic direction for the City and Dawson Creek and Tourism Dawson Creek (Wind energy initiatives)
- The Circle Tour of Northern British Columbia incorporates the Alaska Highway through the Rocky Mountain foothills to Watson Lake in the Yukon, linking with the Stewart/Cassiar Highway and

Yellowhead Highway 16 in the south. The Inside Passage Tour and the Native Heritage Tour follow the same route, from Port Hardy on Vancouver Island north by ferry to Prince Rupert. Visitors catch another ferry to the Queen Charlotte Islands, or venture east on the Yellowhead Highway to Prince George, and south through the peaceful Cariboo to Vancouver along the historic Cariboo Wagon Road.

- Tourism Dawson Creek – lead tourism organization
- Tourism Opportunity Study/Regional Tourism Assessment: The major strengths of the study area are its diverse natural attributes, a full range of experiences from the scenic alpine to prairie lands, abundant wildlife and ability to deliver on the wilderness experience and quality heritage resources.
- Value of the traditional summer tourism cycle, which spans from May to September in Dawson Creek, is approximately \$15.3 million.
- Very good Official Community Plan references and commitment from the City of Dawson Creek
- Key visitor types for Dawson Creek and the Pouce Coupe area are primarily leisure travellers, Free Independent Travellers (FIT) and groups via RV Caravans touring (en route to Alaska or other destinations) and special interests in events. Famous for Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway, the area attracts leisure visitors for day trips and overnight stays for tourists in transit en route to Alaska and regional markets for organized sports, recreation, entertainment, reunions, weddings). Business travel includes workers for the oil, gas and coal sectors and government employees for meetings. Traditional summer peak season has occupancy availability in fixed roof accommodations as Alaska-bound visitors typically travel in RVs and off-season fixed-roof accommodators fill with business travel (workers for oil, gas, etc.). Market origin includes: Regional BC and Alberta, Canada other, US, Europe, Asia/Pacific.

## **6.2 WEAKNESSES AND CHALLENGES**

- Additional Hotel Room Tax option currently not adopted
- Ambitious plans for attraction development, downtown, tourism infrastructure and potential for a conference centre require additional resources, both financial and human
- Annual statistics report required that summarizes trend analysis for annual review and strategic planning
- Communication materials require integrated targeted website content sections and print materials for each visitor type and stage in the purchase cycle, some refinement is required working from the current base.
- Dated Economic Development Plan (Dawson Creek) but update set for 2009
- Dated Official Community Plan (Pouce Coupe) but update set for 2010
- Global economic downturn will have direct and indirect effects on tourism travel e.g. Caravan tours are in decline and initial indicators for 2009 are a sharp decrease
- Lack of appreciation for the Value of Tourism
- Pouce Coupe accommodation options are limited and the lifecycle of the properties are either in the maturity or decline stage
- There are few tourism operators in Pouce Coupe and the accommodation sector is occupied with long-by rentals and industry
- Tourism Opportunity Study/Regional Tourism Assessment: Weaknesses include distance from markets, poor road conditions, infrastructure gaps, lack of interpretative facilities and a lack of community cooperation on key product development such as circuit tours.
- While a cross-section of community stakeholders has been involved in many workshops over the years, there is not the level of community engagement desired

- While increased accommodation options are available in Dawson Creek, the record level occupancy is due to the oil and gas sector, although event and convention markets would utilize fixed roof accommodation, RVs and Caravans will utilize the RV park.
- Written annual action plan required that summarizes key focus of effort for each year (support process with planning matrix)

### **6.3 OPPORTUNITIES**

- Event development
- For Northern BC communities in close proximity to major highways leading north to the Yukon and Alaska, RVers constitute a significant market segment
- Given the current economic climate, camping and RV markets are expected to increase as people will still travel but will spend less.
- Increase capture ratio of drive-by traffic en route to other destinations
- Increased community awareness and engagement was identified as an opportunity to create momentum within the community. Enhancements to the existing communications strategy may support greater community engagement.
- Integrated sport and event plan
- Partnerships between Dawson Creek and Pouce Coupe
- Small meetings and conferences – develop a conference plan
- Sport Tourism
- Tourism currently contributes approximately 5% to the local economy, which could increase with additional resources
- Tourism Opportunity Study/Regional Tourism Assessment: Opportunities for tourism development in the study area are good. Lodges, huts, river/lake, trail products and winter products all have potential to expand. The main challenges to tourism and economic development will continue to be the lack of infrastructure, services and access to financing, both for communities and for businesses.
- Tourism Revenue from the Additional Hotel Room Tax could yield between \$250-\$330,000 annually for incremental tourism initiatives
- Target Markets: For Alaska bound travellers, targets include US, Canada, Europe and Asia/Pacific. For the event mix of conventions, travel shows, consumer shows, family shows and concerts, key targets include the Peace Region, which is a large geographic area with unique topography. The overall population is approximately 221,465 dispersed over vast landscape roughly the size of California and is largely comprised of agricultural and forested lands.

Major communities by radius and population:

- 150 km radius of Dawson Creek, population 133,295: Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Tumbler Ridge, Chetwynd, Pouce Coupe, Taylor, Grande Prairie, Spirit River, Rycroft, Wembley, Sexsmith (included are portions of Counties, Municipal Districts, and Regional Districts)
- 200 km radius of Dawson Creek, population 7,010: Hudson's Hope, Mackenzie, Grimshaw, Valleyview (included are portions of Counties, Municipal Districts, and Regional Districts)
- 300-400 km radius of Dawson Creek, population 81,160: Fort Nelson, Peace River, Fox Creek, High Level, Grande Cache, (included are portions of Counties, Municipal Districts, and Regional Districts)

#### **6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- British Columbia, with its spectacular scenery and remote but accessible areas, provides great opportunity for product and market development capitalizing on current trends, however, each community within the regions will require a strategy to differentiate and brand itself within this broader context.
- By creating a tourism plan for Pouce Coupe and refining the existing plan for Tourism Dawson Creek, all aspects of community tourism development will be addressed with varying degrees of detail. The plans will cross-reference each other where partnerships are identified.
- Canadian and American travellers present the largest potential volume of visitors to BC communities with regional markets being a key focus for the event product in the area and long-haul travellers bound for Alaska.
- Economic outlook is not favourable in the short term, however, early indicators are that people will continue to travel closer to home and for less costs resulting in camping and RV markets anticipated to increase.
- Implementation of existing plans requires additional resources and community engagement at all levels in order to achieve the goals and objectives.
- Pouce Coupe is in the initial stage of the tourism destination life cycle (vision and planning); by contrast, Dawson Creek is in the growth stage (product development). For Pouce Coupe, resources are limited in terms of human and financial capacity, with \$35,000 for economic development and \$21,000 tourism funding. In contrast, Tourism Dawson Creek has \$390,000 in base funding, plus grants.
- Pouce Coupe provides limited visitor amenities and one major annual event; by contrast, Dawson Creek has developed attractions to appeal to tourists in transit en route to Alaska and aspires to increase the capture ratio with new product and services.
- The recently opened South Peace Community Multiplex provides opportunities to expand the event, meeting and small conventions markets; sport facilities provide opportunities for increased sport tourism; and the demand for fixed-roof accommodation by industry currently supplies a stable occupancy. The convention facility is not completed and requires a plan.
- The US market is expected to continue to be an important international market but the number of visitors is not expected to grow in the short term, with challenges such as new passport requirements, border and security issues. Leisure travel in Canada and the US makes up a larger number of trips, and is growing faster than business travel. Baby boomers continue to be the largest demographic segment, with the baby/bust/Generation X the second largest segment that is seeing the highest growth rates.
- Having an Internet presence is important as the majority of American and Canadian travellers use the Internet for vacation planning and about half book online.
- While there are opportunities for both communities to partner on initiatives, the difference in destination life cycle and resources must be taken into account. While Pouce Coupe and Dawson Creek are within the same geographic area, they are at different stages of development, therefore they will evolve differently while still having opportunities to work together.

## **7 Planning Requirements**

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- Create the initial tourism plan for Pouce Coupe and supply a revised tourism plan for Dawson Creek
- Identify best practices for core programming: communications, product and industry development, marketing, visitor services, research and resource library.
- Identify issues and challenges for existing plans to move forward with implementation for Dawson Creek.
- Recommend an enhanced tracking and evaluation process that relates to each objective and strategy within the plan.

## **8 Appendices**

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### **8.1 APPENDIX A: TOURISM PLANNING PROCESS**

#### *The Need for Planning*

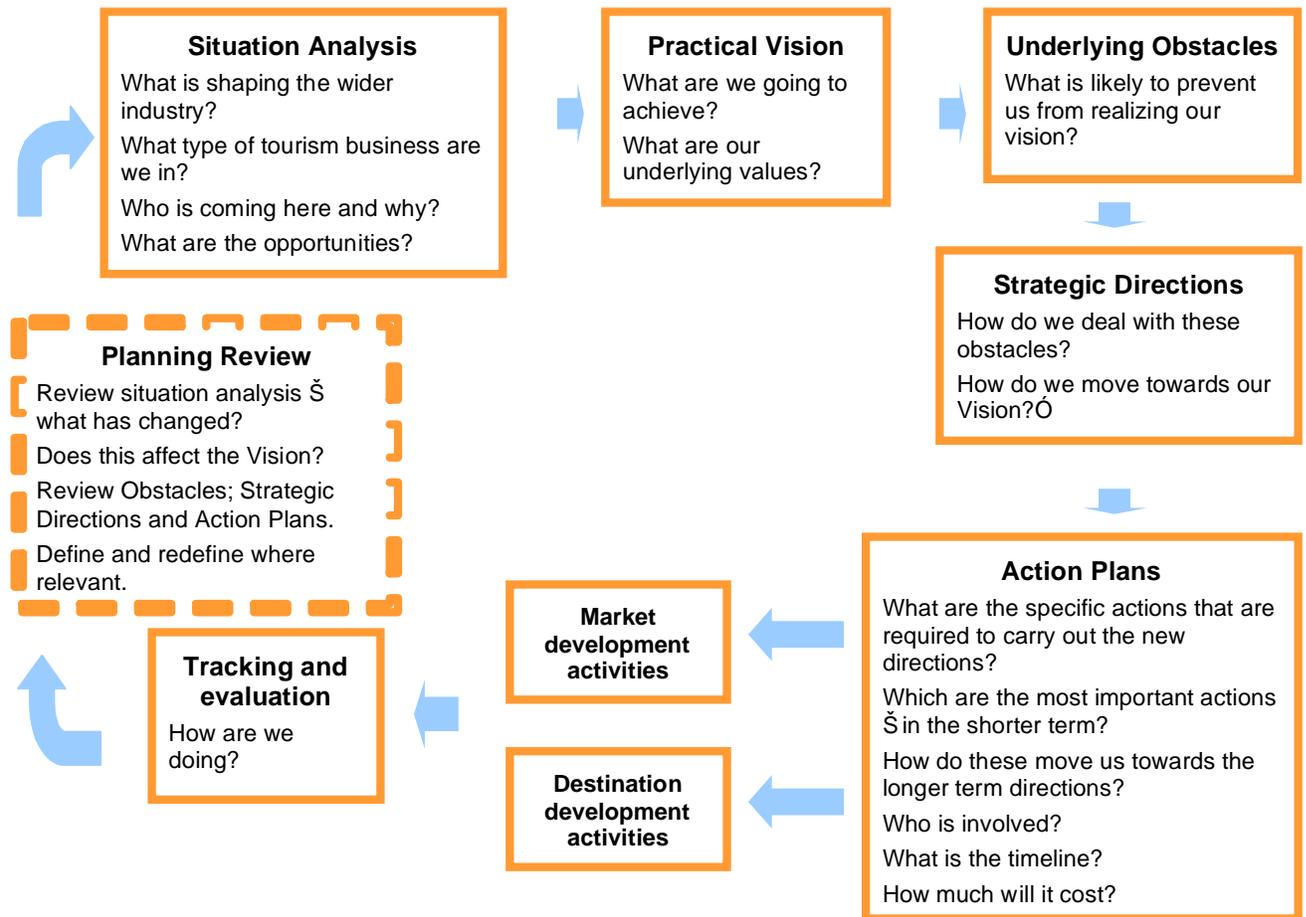
- The local tourism industry within any community is diverse in its nature and is comprised of a range of sectors. It is essential that there be a common understanding of the characteristics and needs of these sectors.
- The process creates an increased awareness of the benefits of tourism to the community – its local economy, culture and environment.
- It should ensure that tourism development is in keeping with the character of the region.
- It allows for a longer-term focus in planning and policy implementation regardless of local political changes.
- It facilitates economic development and should be positioned as an important driver for economic growth.
- It increases the likelihood of collaboration between potential partners.
- It assists in determining the need for developing/improving community infrastructure and in planning and developing new tourism facilities.
- It creates an enhanced understanding of target markets and a greater appreciation of the need for integrated marketing communications.
- It assists in identifying the financial requirements associated with delivering tourism services effectively.

#### *The Planning Process*

A formal planning process provides structure and rigour to decision making. It involves answering the following questions:

- What is the current tourism and economic environment?
- What opportunities and issues is the community facing?
- What tourism business objectives does the community expect to achieve?
- What tourism products does the community offer that are of interest to the visitor?
- What does the community need to do to make its current and potential products of greater interest to the visitor?
- Who are the current visitors?
- How is the community communicating with existing and potential visitors?
- Who will do what and when?
- How will progress be measured?

The process must build over time as a community gains experience and evaluates the success of its programs and activities. This planning cycle is illustrated in the following page.



### *The Situation Analysis*

The Situation Analysis is based on a synthesis and analysis of information collected during the planning process. This document presents an overview of the current status of the tourism industry, together with the related opportunities and issues facing the community. Areas of discussion include:

- The macro environment in terms of global and national tourism and economic trends;
- The provincial context – tourism trends in relation to market size, visitor revenue;
- Tourism product and destination analysis – including an overview of existing product and planned developments; an identification of any infrastructural issues;
- Destination management – a review of issues relating to managing the destination, such as human resources, community understanding of the value of tourism, quality assurance, etc.;
- Destination marketing in terms of existing marketing activities, together with an analysis of current demand, visitor characteristics, destination awareness and potential marketing activities; and
- Community tourism organization structure for the delivery of tourism services and funding.

### *Planning Principles*

In the preparation of a tourism plan the following principles should be adhered to:

- Responsiveness to visitor needs – communities must develop an understanding of visitor needs if the tourism experiences that are to be developed and marketed are appropriate for the marketplace.
- Inclusiveness – to address the issues and opportunities facing the tourism industry, consultation and collaboration within the community must form the basis of plan development.
- Effective partnerships – given the potentially fragmented nature of the tourism industry within any community, effective partnerships among community stakeholders and the relevant regional and provincial partners are essential to build a strong, cohesive and sustainable industry.
- Sustainability – tourism must be developed in a manner that recognizes the need for economic, social/cultural and environmental sustainability.
- Community support – to be successful, tourism development within a community must be supported by all elements of a community – its residents, the business sector and local government.

### *Your Tourism Plan*

Your tourism plan serves as the embodiment of the overall vision and economic goals, and serves as a roadmap for the years ahead to achieve your community's vision with regard to tourism. Your tourism plan should ideally encompass three to five years and while it serves as a roadmap, it should also be flexible enough to take new, unexpected opportunities into consideration during implementation.

#### Structure of a Tourism Plan

Prior to preparing the tourism plan, a thorough situation analysis should be completed. The two main stages include:

- The situation analysis
- The tourism plan

The situation analysis is a factual document and analyzes the information you have gathered in preparation for writing the tourism plan. The situation analysis answers two key questions:

- What economic and tourism environments are you experiencing?
- What opportunities and problems are you facing?

To ensure your tourism plan is embraced by your community, it is important that key stakeholders are involved in its development. These stakeholders might include local government, First Nations, chamber of commerce, those involved in the tourism industry, and even residents.

## 8.2 APPENDIX B: KEY NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL INITIATIVES

The National Tourism Strategy will get underway for Canada. In January 2009, the announcement of \$800 million for tourism and travel investments by the Government of Canada was included in the 2009 budget.<sup>52</sup>

- \$40 million over two years to the Canadian Tourism Commission (\$20 million for domestic marketing and \$20 million for emerging markets)
- \$100 million for marquee festivals and events over two years
- \$150 million for Canada's national parks system over two years (\$75 million for visitor facilities and \$75 million for national historic sites)
- \$25 million to create new hiking trails across the country
- \$407 million for improvements to passenger rail service in the Montreal to Toronto corridor operated by VIA Rail
- Additional funding of projects which will assist in the development of vital tourism infrastructure
- \$24 million over two years for cruise ship tourism
- \$60 million over two years for local and community cultural and heritage institutions (i.e. theatres and museums)
- \$140 million over five years for Northern Economic Development, a substantial portion of which will be directed towards tourism projects

### *Provincial Tourism Action Plan to 2015*<sup>53</sup>

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts<sup>54</sup> is a key driver for expanding the tourism industry through the Tourism Action Plan.

The Tourism Action Plan is a detailed outline of the British Columbia government's commitment to the tourism industry over the next ten years and beyond. The plan articulates the government's goal of enabling British Columbia's tourism industry to grow from "good" to "great" and double tourism annual revenues to \$18 billion by 2015.

It identifies actions in four key strategic areas that government and its agencies will carry out to help industry increase the demand for and supply of tourism and outdoor recreation products and experiences.

- **Development and Investment:** The plan identifies eight specific actions by government that will encourage a positive business climate; increase investment in tourism; maximize potential of Crown assets; and develop and expand cultural attractions.
- **Access and Infrastructure:** The plan identifies four specific actions by government that will coordinate investments; encourage hassle-free entry to and travel through British Columbia; and improve air-lift capacity.

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<sup>52</sup> [http://www.tiac-aitc.ca/english/pressrelease\\_Jan27\\_2009.htm](http://www.tiac-aitc.ca/english/pressrelease_Jan27_2009.htm)

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.tca.gov.bc.ca/tourism/>

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.gov.bc.ca/tsa/index.html>

- Marketing and Promotion: The Tourism Action Plan identifies 18 specific actions by government that will clarify roles and enhance coordination across government ministries, Crown corporations and the tourism industry; attract more visitors and encourage them to stay longer; leverage the 2010 Winter Games; identify and promote emerging markets and products; and promote Aboriginal tourism and parks and outdoor recreation.
- Tourism Workforce: The plan identifies three specific actions by government that will enhance training; attract more workers to British Columbia; and raise the retention rate within the tourism sector.

### *2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Tourism Strategies*<sup>55</sup>

The upcoming 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games provide unprecedented opportunities for British Columbia and Canada to showcase the uniqueness of the province, and the country, to markets worldwide. The key objectives of the Canadian Tourism Commission's (CTC) tourism strategy *Leveraging Canada's Games 2008-2012 Olympic Games* are to:<sup>56</sup>

- Accelerate the CTC corporate strategy to differentiate Canada in a manner relevant to consumers;
- Add depth and dimension to Canada's image as a tourism destination;
- Accelerate the building of a bold tourism personality for Canada;
- Ensure the 2010 Winter Games have a lasting positive effect on Canada's tourism sector;
- Support the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee's (VANOC) goal of promoting the 2010 Winter Games as "Canada's Games";
- Support VANOC's commitment to applying sustainability principles and practices.

Tourism BC will implement its countdown to the 2010 Olympics Tourism Strategy. The current Spirit of 2010 Tourism Strategy<sup>57</sup> has been successful in initiating multiple programs and services.

The four primary desired outcomes of the current tourism strategy are:

- Increased numbers of visitors, particularly visitors with high spending ability
- Increased tourism investment
- Increased use of existing tourism resources
- Leveraging Olympic opportunities

The focus of effort to meet the tourism strategy objectives requires the following:

- Market research and targeted marketing
- Increased facilities and infrastructure to attract expanding and lucrative tourism markets
- Measures that create an "open for business," competitive investment climate
- Olympics and Paralympics opportunities strategy

Refer to: <http://www.2010wintergamessecretariat.com/>

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<sup>55</sup> <http://www.gov.bc.ca/themes/2010olympics/>

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.corporate.canada.travel/en/ca/index.html>

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.ecdev.gov.bc.ca/2010secretariat/Pages/default.aspx>

Community Resources:

<http://www.2010wintergamessecretariat.com/Resources/CommunityResources/Default.aspx>

Tourism BC 2010 Resource Centre: <http://www.tourism2010.com/CMS/>

Four Host First Nations: <http://www.fourhostfirstnations.com/>

### *Aboriginal Blueprint Strategy*<sup>58</sup>

In partnership with the Province of British Columbia, Tourism BC, Aboriginal Business Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia has initiated a project to direct the future development and marketing of Aboriginal tourism in British Columbia. The overall objective of this initiative is twofold: first, to create a realistic and achievable “blueprint” for Aboriginal tourism product development over the long term with special consideration given to the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games; and second, to develop a business plan for ATBC that will support the growth of the Aboriginal tourism industry in British Columbia.

The three major components include:

- Program development in the areas of Product Development, Branding and Industry Development
- Mobilizing for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games
- A Marketing Strategy

### *Resort Development*<sup>59</sup>

The resort sector represents an enormous opportunity for British Columbia and contributes significantly to the provincial economy and to the tourism industry. British Columbia has some 700 resorts, from fishing lodges to ski mountains to eco-tourism operations. Development of new resorts and expansion of existing facilities would provide significant benefits throughout the province. Resort development and expansion requires the initiative and cooperation of a number of government ministries, agencies and the private sector.

The British Columbia Resort Strategy and Action Plan (the “Resort Strategy”) was completed in November 2004 in response to the recommendations of British Columbia’s 15-member Resort Task Force Advisory Group. British Columbia’s resorts and resort communities are key components of the province’s tourism sector. This strategy will enhance British Columbia’s competitive edge in resort development and lead to the creation and expansion of all-season resorts in this province. The five key strategic directions are:

- Maintain and Enhance British Columbia’s Competitive Edge in Resort Development
- Increase Resort Development
- Support Resort Communities
- Improve Transportation Infrastructure
- Build First Nations Partnerships

#### *Resort Revenue Sharing Program*

Under the program, an eligible community receives a share of the provincial hotel room tax, an amount based on a formula that takes into account the level of tourist accommodation in the community, relative

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<sup>58</sup> [http://www.tca.gov.bc.ca/tourism/aboriginal\\_tourism.htm](http://www.tca.gov.bc.ca/tourism/aboriginal_tourism.htm)

<sup>59</sup> [http://www.tca.gov.bc.ca/resort\\_development/strategy/strategy\\_and\\_action\\_plan.htm](http://www.tca.gov.bc.ca/resort_development/strategy/strategy_and_action_plan.htm)

to other BC communities. To be eligible, municipalities must have tourism-based economies or be incorporated as a “mountain resort municipality” under the Local Government Act.

Communities must be prepared to put in place an additional two percent hotel room tax, prepare a resort development strategy that reflects the input of stakeholders and enter into a five-year results-based tourism development agreement that sets out what will be achieved through revenue sharing.

To date, Whistler, Golden, Rossland, Harrison Hot Springs, Radium Hot Springs, Kimberley, Osoyoos, Valemount, Revelstoke, Ucluelet, Tofino and Invermere have reached similar agreements with the Province. One other municipality – Fernie – is currently eligible to enter into an agreement.

The BC Resort Municipality Initiative is part of the Province’s ongoing commitment to meet the goal of doubling BC tourism revenue by 2015.

### ***Tourism and Hospitality Education and Training***<sup>60</sup>

The BC government is committed to ensuring that a skilled workforce is in place to provide quality tourism and hospitality products and services during the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games and to support training for the expansion of this vital industry into the future. As part of this commitment, the government established a tourism and hospitality consortium in consultation with stakeholders. The British Columbia Tourism and Hospitality Education and Training Consortium will provide overall strategic direction and facilitate communication and planning among educational institutions, industry and government to ensure the education and training requirements of the tourism industry are met.

### **Trails Strategy Development**<sup>61</sup>

Currently, five provincial agencies (Ministry of Transportation; Ministry of Agriculture and Lands; Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts; Tourism BC; and BC Parks), several levels of government (federal, provincial, regional district, municipal), and many stakeholders and interest groups (e.g., First Nations, recreation and stewardship groups) are either directly or indirectly involved in the management of BC trails. The objective of the Recreation Trails Strategy development project is to coordinate a shared and sustainable vision for managing the province’s trails, and develop a framework for guiding future decision making to strengthen the benefits from our recreation trail network. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, together with the Ministry of Environment (BC Parks), has initiated a Recreation Trails Strategy for British Columbia. Development of the trails strategy will take a multi-phased approach. The first phase, completed in 2007, assessed the status of BC’s current recreation trail network and proposed a process for developing a made-in-BC trails strategy. This information is summarized in the *Recreation Trails Strategy for BC – Background Report*. Phase 2, currently under way, involves the development of a Trails Strategy by a broad-based Trails Strategy Committee. The Trails Strategy for British Columbia, once completed, will describe an action plan that enables the development of a world-renowned network of sustainable trails, accessible to all, which fosters social, cultural, health, economic and environmental benefits for trail users, communities and the Province. In fact, this is the vision for the provincial trail program described in the Draft Strategy. This Draft Strategy, developed through collaboration and consensus by a multi-agency stakeholder and government Trails Strategy Committee, outlines broad, strategic, provincial-level goals

<sup>60</sup> [http://www.tca.gov.bc.ca/tourism/education\\_and\\_training.htm](http://www.tca.gov.bc.ca/tourism/education_and_training.htm)

<sup>61</sup> [http://www.tca.gov.bc.ca/sites\\_trails/Initiatives/Prov\\_Trails\\_Strategy/recreation\\_trails\\_strategy.htm](http://www.tca.gov.bc.ca/sites_trails/Initiatives/Prov_Trails_Strategy/recreation_trails_strategy.htm)

determined to be fundamental to a sustainable, world-class trail program. The next step in the process will be to solicit community and stakeholder feedback, to refine the proposed actions and develop a plan to implement the strategy over the next five years. By spring 2009, the Trails Strategy Committee will have solicited feedback on the Draft Trails Strategy from across British Columbia. This included community meetings in select regions across BC as well as an ongoing opportunity to provide direct input and comments via email to the Trails Strategy Committee. Feedback and comments on the Draft Strategy can be emailed to: [TrailStrategy@gov.bc.ca](mailto:TrailStrategy@gov.bc.ca), include Draft Trails Strategy in the subject line.

The Spirit of 2010 Trail is the first segment in the creation of a world-class recreational rails-to-trails product that will stimulate the development of incremental tourism infrastructure and incremental tourism visits across a significant portion of British Columbia. The Spirit of 2010 Trail is 750 kilometres in length and there is the potential to convert over 2,000 kilometres of rail trails in total. The rails-to-trails movement has become an accepted model in North America for sustainable economic development in rural and urban areas. It is the conversion of former railway corridors into world-class recreational trails for use by cyclists, hikers, equestrians and Nordic skiers. It has enabled primarily rural communities to develop a sustainable business case for economic development using rail trails.

All of the corridors along this trail run through, or adjacent to, forest-dependent communities adversely affected by declines in softwood lumber trading. The Spirit of 2010 Trail network will enable the economies of the affected communities to lessen their dependence on traditional primary resource industries and develop new direct and indirect spending through incremental visits from international, national and regional visitors and create local jobs.<sup>62</sup>

Bike BC<sup>63</sup> is the Province's three-year, \$31-million program for cycling infrastructure. Through Bike BC, the Province will partner with communities to fund a variety of cycling projects, including the creation of safe and high-quality cycling corridors, improvements to existing cycling infrastructure and other equipment that makes cycling a safer and more convenient option for travellers.

#### Mountain Pine Beetle – Trails<sup>64</sup>

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts (MTCA) is responsible for managing the Province's 1,240 recreation sites and 650 recreation trails. The current mountain pine beetle (MPB) infestation in British Columbia spans more than 10 million hectares and is impacting a significant number of recreation sites and trails in the interior of the province. To address concerns related to the MPB outbreak, MTCA has implemented a MPB Mitigation Program funded by the Federal MPB Program. The overall objectives of the recreation site and trail MPB Mitigation Program are to ensure that safety, public health and environmental issues are addressed on provincially designated recreation sites and trails affected by MPB infestations; minimize the negative economic impacts to tourism and local communities; and restore recreation resource values at recreation sites and trails affected by the MPB.

#### Sustainable Tourism Partnership<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> <http://www.spiritof2010trail.ca/aboutUs.aspx>

<sup>63</sup> News Release Sept. 16, 2008 2008OTP0224-001396, Office of the Premier Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

<sup>64</sup> [http://www.tca.gov.bc.ca/sites\\_trails/Initiatives/Mtn\\_Pine\\_Beetle/mountain\\_Pine\\_Beetle.htm](http://www.tca.gov.bc.ca/sites_trails/Initiatives/Mtn_Pine_Beetle/mountain_Pine_Beetle.htm)

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.cotabc.com/news/#News925>

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts (MTCA) has announced the Province, industry organizations and businesses have contributed \$560,000 to create a new BC Partnership for Sustainable Tourism. The BC Partnership for Sustainable Tourism will:

1. Establish best practices for sustainability specific to tourism businesses;
2. Develop and implement a certification program for “green” tourism operators;
3. Set up a system for tracking and reporting sustainable tourism indicators;
4. Offer practical carbon calculators for small and medium-sized tourism enterprises;
5. Embark on communications and outreach for businesses and travellers; and
6. Hold workshops across the province to educate businesses on carbon emission strategies and best practices.

#### Other initiatives

The Arts and Culture Division of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts is embarking on a provincial cultural strategy and is set to conduct stakeholder interviews over the coming months in communities throughout the province.<sup>66</sup> As well, there was an announcement that \$400,000 will be invested in Visitor Centres. Details were not available at the time of writing of this report.

#### Tourism British Columbia<sup>67</sup>

The Tourism 2.0 model combines regional strengths with the international reach that Tourism British Columbia can deliver. Among the goals for Tourism 2.0 are to:

- Build stronger relationships between communities, the regions and Tourism British Columbia.
- Create efficiencies specific to trade, media, regional community programs and online marketing, to ensure we make a bigger impact as a destination when selling our tourism experiences within a very competitive marketplace.
- Leverage Tourism British Columbia’s existing resources, such as HelloBC.com.

Tourism 2.0 is a key element of Tourism British Columbia’s comprehensive strategy to maximize the benefits of hosting the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. This strategy is based on specific activities supporting three key stages. Some of the priorities for each stage include:

#### **Stage One – Preparation**

- Communities – a key part of Tourism British Columbia’s strategy is to lay the groundwork in British Columbia so that all communities can take advantage of the anticipated growth. In fiscal 2007/08, 143 communities worked directly with Tourism British Columbia in developing marketing plans.
- Visitor Centres – the British Columbia Gateway Visitor Centre in Osoyoos was opened in 2007, with new construction planned for Gateway Visitor Centres at Peace Arch, YVR and Merritt. These new centres will improve the quality of visitor servicing at the key access points, and meet the provincial government’s new standards for green design. Currently, over 13,000 businesses are represented in the 109 Visitor Centres province-wide.
- First Nations – Tourism British Columbia continued to work with the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia to implement key elements of the Aboriginal Tourism Blueprint Strategy, as part of the

<sup>66</sup> [http://www.tca.gov.bc.ca/arts\\_culture/](http://www.tca.gov.bc.ca/arts_culture/)

<sup>67</sup> Tourism British Columbia Annual Report 2007-2008, <http://www.tourismbc.com/>

Corporation's \$5 million investment in this important sector. In spring 2008, the first 16 graduates of a "Train the Trainer" program, Aboriginal Trailblazers, was launched.

- Experiences BC – this innovative program provides a platform for key sectors to partner with Tourism British Columbia on development and marketing. Among the sectors engaged are Nordic, history and heritage, river outfitters, camping and RV, dive, mountain biking, backcountry lodges and Rails to Trails. A major campaign for wine and culinary tourism was also launched in 2007 including print, travel media, Internet and social media elements.
- Accessibility – one of the goals of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games is to be the most accessible Games. In partnership with the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts, the British Columbia Hotel Association, 2010 Legacies Now, Tourism Vancouver, Tourism Richmond, Tourism Whistler and the six tourism regions, 3,000 accommodation properties will be inspected and have corresponding accessibility certifications prior to 2010.
- BC150 – Tourism British Columbia has been supporting BC150 activities through editorial and full-page features in key publications, web listings and a special commemorative editorial feature in *British Columbia Magazine*.™

#### **Stage Two – The Olympic Destination**

- Destination Brand – further energize the Super, Natural British Columbia® brand in international markets by capitalizing on Olympic and Paralympic theming before and during the Games. The first integrated messaging including use of the Host Province logo and content was in Tourism British Columbia's 2007/08 ski campaign, which promoted British Columbia's 12 export-ready ski resorts. Share the Excitement!™ was introduced to leverage the 2010 Winter Games and create a positive association with ski experiences in British Columbia.
- Online – Tourism British Columbia continued to see a strong response to online strategies including a 27% increase in traffic to HelloBC.com of 6.3 million visitors, and further expansion into social media environments such as MySpace and Facebook. New websites for the United Kingdom and Australia markets were planned, developed and launched using the core consumer website platform, including hundreds of pages of unique market specific content. Increased investment in search engine optimization and marketing resulted in 1.7 million visitors referred from search engines, an increase of 65%.
- Media Relations – advertising equivalency exceeding \$140 million is estimated in media coverage outside British Columbia. Over 200 individual press trips were supported throughout the year, and British Columbia represented 27% of all Canadian print coverage tracked by the Canadian Tourism Commission in 2007. Activities specifically focused on the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games were initiated and will continue to build.

#### **Stage Three – Beyond 2010**

- Technology – Tourism British Columbia's vision for technology is a critical foundation for the Corporation's marketing, as an enabler to get the right destinations, experiences and product information to consumers around the world through individual preferred channels of communication. Utilizing the increased awareness of British Columbia generated by hosting the Games, Tourism British Columbia will further leverage its technology platform to enable expansion in a number of key areas:
- Increased content through the involvement of communities and industry.
- Utilize the consumer website platform by developing more foreign-language websites.
- Enhance functionality.
- Package content specifically for mobile devices.

- Develop personalized marketing, direct to individual consumers.
- New markets – increased awareness from the Games will help in expanding into new markets such as India.

To date, indicators show that the provincial tourism industry is on track to achieve its projected growth, though a variety of challenges exist – air access, border crossings, passport requirements and labour shortages. The industry has been able to overcome many of these challenges with support from government, and with creative solutions, including diversification of markets and improved partnerships. It is important to note that the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts' comprehensive Tourism Action Plan identifies these issues, and Tourism British Columbia is doing its part to fulfill the organization's responsibility towards positive outcomes.

### 8.3 APPENDIX C: MARKET AND TRAVEL TREND ANALYSIS

World economic trends and world tourism trends are examined in this section to provide a context for tourism in British Columbia. Because tourism is largely a discretionary item, it is dependent on personal disposable income. When economies are strong, tourism expenditures grow more rapidly than consumer spending as a whole. Likewise, during recessions, tourism can decline quickly and substantially. The World Tourism Organization indicates that the growth of international tourism arrivals significantly outpaces growth of economic output as measured in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) when GDP reaches a certain level. In years when world economic growth exceeds 4%, tourism growth tends to be higher. However, when GDP growth falls below 2%, tourism growth is lower than GDP growth. During the period from 1975 to 2000, when GDP grew by 3.5%, tourism grew on average 1.3 times faster, with an average rate of 4.6% per year.

#### *Economic Outlook*

*Please note: changing conditions to the global economy are ongoing; current volatility in the markets due to the recent economic downturn will alter these estimates over time, resulting in a direct impact on travel projections and trends.*

The global economy, led by the United States, slowed significantly in 2008. The Canadian economy is expected to grow by only 0.6% in 2008 and 0.3% in 2009 while the US economy is expected to grow by 1.4% in 2008 and shrink by 0.7% in 2009.<sup>68</sup> The US economy entered a recession in December 2007, which worsened significantly in the fourth quarter of 2008, with GDP anticipated to have decreased about 4% in 2008 Q4. A recovery is not expected to begin until at least 2009 Q3. More than one million jobs were lost in the US between September and November 2008. While the job losses were concentrated among younger, less educated workers, older college graduates, who comprise the bulk of BC's US visitors, were also affected. The Consumer Confidence Index declined in both Canada and the US during 2008; in November it was at 44.9 (1985 = 100).<sup>69</sup> The economies of British Columbia and Alberta have been less affected, but declining oil, lumber and base metals prices are acting as a drag on their economies. Alberta (+1.3%) and BC (+1.0%) are both forecast to grow in 2009, but at a much slower pace than in recent years. Poor US economic performance in 2009 will more than offset the benefits of a more favourable exchange rate and lower gas prices; American visitation is expected to continue to decline in 2009. Japan and the UK, BC's two largest overseas markets, have also entered sharp recessions with growth rates of -0.9% and -1.4%, respectively, predicted for 2009.<sup>70</sup> This will probably lead to a decline in visitation from these countries in 2009.

Global economic situations and exchange rates have a clear impact on travel patterns, with respect to how much people travel and the destinations they choose. Studies have shown that Canadian overnight travel to the US is more sensitive to exchange rates than US overnight travel to Canada. For every 10% increase in the value of the Canadian dollar, historically, overnight travel to the US increases 15-16%.<sup>71</sup> In the final

<sup>68</sup> IMF World Economic Outlook, International Monetary Fund, November 2008.

<sup>69</sup> University of Michigan, November 2008.

<sup>70</sup> Economist Magazine, December 5, 2008.

<sup>71</sup> Exchange Rates the Potential Impact of a Stronger Canadian Dollar on Travel to/from Canada in 2004/2005, CTC April 2004.

quarter of 2008, the Canadian dollar was worth about US\$0.79 after falling from US\$1.03 at the beginning of the year.<sup>72</sup>

Although it is difficult to quantify the relationship between travel patterns and exchange rates, as many other contributing factors will affect travel, such as the cost of transportation, air access, distance, passport regulations, border issues, and the marketing activities of competitive destinations,<sup>73</sup> a combination of factors have been influencing the downturn of two key international markets for British Columbia: the US and Japan. The US is British Columbia's main international market and changes in the economy and other factors not only affect the number of visitors from the US to BC but also can affect BC and Alberta residents' propensity to travel in BC; the US is a key competitor of British Columbia's in many markets.<sup>74</sup> Japan is British Columbia's largest Asia-Pacific market. In 2008 the rapidly weakening Japanese economy, combined with decreased air capacity to BC have led to a decrease in visitation. Additionally, the Japanese tourism product has become more price competitive in recent years.<sup>75</sup> For example, skiing has become more affordable in Japan, providing competition with the Canadian ski market in the Japanese market, as well as Australia, for which skiing in Japan is a viable alternative to skiing in BC.<sup>76</sup>

### *World Tourism Trends*

Tourism is an important part of the worldwide economy, making up approximately 6% of worldwide exports of goods and services (2003).<sup>77</sup> In another record year for the industry in 2007, 903 million international tourist arrivals were recorded by the WTO (World Tourism Organization), increasing 6.6% or an additional 56 million international tourist arrivals from 2006.<sup>78</sup> Growth (international arrivals) was highest in the Middle East (+15%) followed by Asia and the Pacific (+10%), Africa (+7%), Europe (+5%) and the Americas (+5%).

The World Tourism Organization expresses optimism for the tourism industry over the long term, forecasting international arrivals to reach over 1.6 billion by the year 2020.

### *Approved Destination Status for Canada in China*

In January 2005, Canada and China formally agreed to begin negotiating Approved Destination Status (ADS). Once the negotiation process is completed, it will be significant in building visitation from this market, allowing Chinese citizens to apply for a visa to travel to Canada for pleasure purposes. BC received 78K visitors from China (not including Hong Kong) in 2005, making up 0.3% of the total 22.89 million visitors to BC. While this is not a large number currently, outbound travel from China has grown by 18% annually in recent years (China National Tourism Administration). The experience of other countries once they have been granted ADS shows that it leads to a steady growth rather than an overnight explosion in Chinese tourism. Australia, for example, which was granted ADS in 1999, has seen a 22% average annual increase in arrivals from China since 2000, while Canada has seen an average annual increase of 13% (a 9% difference). *Unfortunately, progress on negotiations has been slow and ADS is not expected to be granted to Canada in the near term.* In addition, Chinese travellers are focused on key Canadian icons such as Niagara Falls, Vancouver and Toronto, and are looking for urban experiences.

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<sup>72</sup> Bank of Canada, December 2008.

<sup>73</sup> *Situation Analysis for Tourism in British Columbia (Draft)*, TBC, December 2007.

<sup>74</sup> *Situation Analysis for Tourism in British Columbia (Draft)*, TBC, December 2007.

<sup>75</sup> *Situation Analysis for Tourism in British Columbia (Draft)*, TBC, December 2007.

<sup>76</sup> *Situation Analysis for Tourism in British Columbia (Draft)*, TBC, December 2007.

<sup>77</sup> <http://unwto.org/facts/eng/economy.htm>. Accessed December 15, 2008.

<sup>78</sup> *UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, October 2008*. World Tourism Organization.

Therefore, the large urban areas of British Columbia will have the greatest potential to attract Chinese visitors.

### *Canadian Tourism Industry*

The worldwide tourism market is very competitive. In 2007, Canada ranked #14 in international tourism, decreasing one position from 2006. British Columbia holds a 0.5% share in international tourism arrivals. In tourism receipts (or tourism revenue), Canada ranked #13 in 2007, decreasing two positions from 2006. In 2007, Canada held a 1.8% share and in 2006 British Columbia held a 0.4% share in international tourism receipts. However, due to the rising Canadian dollar, outbound tourism is also growing significantly. The June 2007 Canadian Tourism Commission outbound travel statistics indicate a sharp increase in overnight travel to the United States (up 8.5%, year over year). During the same month, travel to other international countries was up by 7.9%.<sup>79</sup>

### *Market Trends*

Tourism is a worldwide industry and British Columbia is a small player. Due to worldwide competition, the dependence on personal disposable income, consumer confidence, and world events that are not within anyone's control (such as wars and disease), international tourism growth is volatile in the short term. Despite the Iraq war, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), and a weak US economy, tourism has proven to be resilient and is expected to grow at a healthy rate over the long term. For communities in BC, domestic visitors are likely to show less volatility and would be expected to make up the vast majority of visitors.

### Changes in International Visitation

- There is an ongoing decline in US overnight trips, with those travelling by automobile showing the greatest level of decline. This particular market segment for Canada as a whole amounted to 5.2% in 2006. Given that the US sector represents 75.7% of the total international market, it is not surprising to note that international visitation overall continues to decline. In 2006 international visits to Canada fell by 3.2%.
- The decline of this market within BC is similar to national trends. The data for 2006 shows a decline of 6.5% when day visitors are included in the calculations.
- Growth from emerging markets to Canada compensates for declining numbers travelling from the US and other key markets including Japan, Germany and the UK. Visitors from countries such as China, Mexico and South Korea have all shown significant increases. These increases are also reflected within BC.

### Canadian Travel Patterns

- Outbound travel is at an all-time high and increased by 7.7% in 2006.
- Domestic demand is strong and accounted for three-quarters of all tourism revenue in 2006.
- The most reliable market for BC is BC residents.
- The performance of the Canadian hotel industry continues to gain momentum. Revenue per available room is expected to rise by 4.8% for 2007, following a growth of 6.6% in 2006.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

### US Travel Trends

- Visitation is in steady decline, especially with border areas and the drive markets.
- Due to time poverty, shorter, more frequent trips (average 4 per year) and four-day getaways over weekends are growing.
- Travel radius is 4-6 hours (either driving distance or non-stop air time).
- 29% were estimated to take fewer vacations in 2008.
- Focus is on value – less brand loyalty (want brand quality for least cost).
- Togethering: travel with multi-generations.

### Socio-Economic and Political Factors

- There are distinct differences between the various demographic segments that are driving market preferences. The Baby-Boom generation (1946-64) is the largest bulge, and as this group swells the growth of the 55+ age group distinct changes in activity participation and demands can be expected, with a decline in the more physically demanding activities such as downhill skiing and an increase in nature-based “soft” adventure. Generation X (1965-80) is a small cohort and is characterized by a high-spend per trip, while Generation Y (1977-94) is a larger segment and is fuelling growth in the adventure travel industry in particular.
- The strengthening Canadian dollar relative to all currencies from key markets has hurt the price competitiveness of Canadian destinations. The US market in particular will be heavily impacted by the currency changes and further decline in that sector can be anticipated. In addition to this, overseas destination marketing organizations have become more aggressive in their marketing campaigns and are succeeding in attracting higher numbers of visitors from Canada’s source markets. Recent events have seen the Canadian dollar return to the lower levels prior to the spike before the current recession.
- When fuel prices rise, related travel costs and the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative contribute to reduced travel from the US. To some extent these same factors may increase domestic growth in travel, although when the Canadian dollar is strong it could well counter-balance any advantage as Canadian outbound travel grows in response to currency changes.
- The role of the Internet continues to expand as a critical element of the “buying” process and the potential for converting “lookers” to “bookers” is growing. Over 42% of online travel consumers are researching and purchasing travel online today.<sup>80</sup>
- Environmental consciousness – trends are indicating visitors are expecting companies to practise environmental stewardship, but they do not want to pay extra for it.

### *Conclusion*

Canadian and American travellers present the largest potential volume of visitors to BC communities. The US market is expected to continue to be an important international market but the number of visitors is not expected to grow in the short term, with challenges such as new passport requirements and border and security issues. Leisure travel in Canada and the US makes up a larger number of trips, and is growing faster than business travel. Baby boomers continue to be the largest demographic segment, with the

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<sup>80</sup> A Couple of Chicks E-Marketing <http://www.acoupleofchicks.com/>

baby/bust/Generation X the second-largest segment that is seeing the highest growth rates. Having an Internet presence is important as the majority of American and Canadian travellers use the Internet for vacation planning and about half book online.

### *Accommodation*

At year-end 2007, national occupancy levels were recorded at 65% with an average daily rate of \$127. Although demand was not as strong as the 4 to 5% annual growth levels experienced during the 2004-2006 period, the Canadian accommodation industry posted a respectable 2.7% growth in 2007, one percentage point ahead of the national supply growth of 1.7%. With a further 1.8% increase in supply expected in 2008, occupancy is projected to improve to 66%, reflecting a continued 3.0% growth momentum. Average daily rates are forecast to increase by 3% in 2008 to reach \$131.<sup>81</sup>

In BC, the 2007 accommodation room revenue was \$1,966,282 increasing 8.3% from 2006; provincial occupancy was 66.9%, up 1.3%. Provincial average daily room rate was \$128.49, up 5.4%.<sup>82</sup>

The type of accommodation that travellers stay in while on vacation was reviewed in a 2003 Canadian survey. This showed that 35% of their nights were spent in commercial accommodation (such as hotels, motels, bed & breakfasts, hunting and fishing lodges, resorts, camping or trailer parks, and commercial cottages and cabins), while 61% of their nights were spent in private accommodation (such as the home of friends and relatives, private cottages, or vacation homes). The increase in property ownership at destination resorts will ensure that the "private accommodation" sector remains high.

### *Growth in Niche Tourism*<sup>83</sup>

Visitors to a destination are increasingly seeking to be active participants in the experience. They are looking to be emotionally involved, educated, challenged, entertained or surprised. With the growth of "experiential tourism" there has been a corresponding growth in niche sectors that can deliver an experience. The Canadian Tourism Commission's repositioning of Canada as a destination where travellers can enjoy extraordinary personal experiences will heighten this demand for engaging experiences that go beyond the traditional goods and services offered by the travel industry.

### Aboriginal Cultural Tourism

The market positioning of quality Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences in BC has gained significant profile in recent years with the work of the Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC<sup>84</sup> and the ongoing implementation of the Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Blueprint Strategy.<sup>85</sup> The government's announcement in September 2007 of a \$5 million investment to facilitate further implementation of this strategy has acted as a catalyst in the ongoing development of this niche sector. In addition, Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC's work with the Four Host First Nations of the 2010 Olympic & Paralympic Winter Games,<sup>86</sup> VANOC,<sup>87</sup> and Tourism

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<sup>81</sup> [http://www.pkfcanada.com/trends\\_research/news\\_articles/2007/december.htm](http://www.pkfcanada.com/trends_research/news_articles/2007/december.htm)

<sup>82</sup> Tourism BC Year In Review, 2007

<sup>83</sup> Tourism Planning Group, Tourism BC

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.aboriginalbc.com/>

<sup>85</sup> [http://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/tourism/aboriginal\\_tourism.htm](http://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/tourism/aboriginal_tourism.htm)

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/sport/>

<sup>87</sup> <http://www.vancouver2010.com/en/OrganizingCommittee/AboutOrganizingCommittee>

BC,<sup>88</sup> and the Association's focus on the opportunities presented by the Games to showcase Aboriginal tourism product and to position this product as an integral part of Canada's tourism portfolio will continue to accelerate growth in both demand and supply.

### Culinary Tourism

Culinary tourism is emerging as a product in its own right and one that also has the potential to strengthen existing sectors. Regions with an agricultural industry are discovering the benefits of marketing regional cuisine as an experience that allows the visitor to appreciate new qualities of an area. These culinary opportunities, which can be associated with other products such as local wines, arts and culture, are creating the ambiance and sense of uniqueness that assists a community with building competitive advantage.

### Culture and Heritage Tourism

The growing demand for experiential tourism is paralleled with an increasing level of interest in arts, culture and heritage products, including Aboriginal cultural tourism. As visitors seek to "connect" with a destination, there is rising demand for tourism product that gives them insight into the character and essence of the local landscape. While culture and heritage may not be a primary motivator for a destination, it has become critical as a complementary experience and plays a key role in extending the length of stay. The work that the Canadian Tourism Commission is doing in raising the profile of the country's culture and heritage product is creating a new awareness and potential demand for community-based experiences, and communities need to identify their strengths and opportunities to develop the product base.

### Golf

Research on the golf industry undertaken by Ipsos Reid<sup>89</sup> on behalf of the Royal Canadian Golf Association has concluded that 5.95 million Canadians currently play golf – representing a national golf participation rate of 21.5%, which is one of the highest rates in the world. Key findings include:

- Canadians spend a projected \$12.9 billion per calendar year on direct golf expenditures such as green fees and memberships (\$7.25 billion), golf equipment (\$2.25 billion), apparel (\$1.73 billion) and golf travel (\$1.62 billion);
- The total golfing population has increased 21.6% since 2001 (4.89 million);
- Golf continues to be dominated by male participants aged 18-64 (61% of total golf population);
- The participation rate of women has increased from 9.7% in 2001 to 12.3% in 2006; and
- The increase in overall golf participation rates has been driven largely by a rise in the "core" population. This sector has grown by 47% since 2001. Similarly the total number of rounds played per annum has increased just over 42% in the same period and club membership has grown by almost 30%.

### Meetings and Conventions Market

The meetings and conventions market is worth approximately \$500 million in visitor revenues to BC and is a high yield market. With the completion of the Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre expansion, this value will continue to grow. The meetings and conventions market includes the following events: Conventions (with trade shows), conferences, meetings, trade shows and consumer shows.

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<sup>88</sup> <http://www.tourismbc.com/>

<sup>89</sup> Ipsos Reid on behalf of RCGA, 2006, The 2006 Golf Participation in Canada Report

According to Future Watch 2008, the report on the annual survey conducted by Meeting Professionals International,<sup>90</sup> expectation for 2008 in North America is for a steady year with little or no change in overall volume. Independent planners expect the most growth (as do corporate planners), with associations being slightly less. Canadian planners and suppliers were asked to describe the impact of the labour shortage; staffing issues in hotels, restaurants and convention centres emerged as the overwhelming concern, with 77.3% of Canadian respondents – though, curiously, only 72.1% of suppliers – assigning the issue a high ranking. Solid majorities of Canadian respondents say the labour shortage will result in fewer meetings with lower attendance; 37.9% of all Canadians and 52.4% of suppliers predict that some meetings will move to the United States. About one in five corporate planners say the labour shortage will lead companies to hold more meetings in Canada.

### Nature-based tourism

This encompasses a wide range of activities that take place within a natural landscape. Canada and BC in particular are well positioned to attract significant demand in this area, and trends are demonstrating that young seniors and those aged 35 to 55 are fuelling growth in this sector with their demand for new and enriching experiences related to adventure, nature and culture. The preferred activities include hiking, general nature observation, canoeing, cycling, mountain biking, fishing and cultural interpretation; and while many visitors undertake these activities independently, the demand for guided services and packaging is growing.

### Sport tourism<sup>91</sup>

Sport tourism includes any activity in which people are attracted to a particular location as a sport event participant, an event spectator or to attend sport attractions or sport business meetings. The significant economic impact and community development benefits make sport tourism one of the fastest emerging tourism sectors in the country. For communities throughout BC, sport tourism offers the opportunity to raise their profiles as world-class sport event-hosting destinations, generate new tourism business year-round, and achieve widespread international recognition for BC's active communities and people. BC has an unprecedented opportunity to showcase its world-class facilities and event-hosting capacity by hosting the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.<sup>92</sup> Tourism BC recognizes the potential for sport tourism and has developed a sport tourism partnership with 2010 Legacies aimed to assist communities that wish to embark on sport tourism planning and development.

### Sustainable tourism

Sustainable Tourism refers to a level of tourism activity that can be maintained over the long term because it results in a net benefit for the social, economic, natural and cultural environments of the area in which it takes place.<sup>93</sup> Responsible Tourism can be regarded as a movement. It is more than a form of tourism as it represents an approach to engaging with tourism, be that as a tourist, a business, locals at a destination or any other tourism stakeholder. It emphasizes that all stakeholders are responsible for the kind of tourism they develop or engage in.<sup>94</sup> Sustainable development is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but

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<sup>90</sup> <http://www.mpiweb.org/cms/mpiweb/default.aspx>

<sup>91</sup> Tourism BC

<sup>92</sup> <http://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/sport/>

<sup>93</sup> [http://www.culture-routes.lu/picture/glossaire\\_list.php3?id\\_rubrique=17&PHPSESSID=4](http://www.culture-routes.lu/picture/glossaire_list.php3?id_rubrique=17&PHPSESSID=4)

<sup>94</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable\\_tourism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_tourism)

also for future generations to come. The term was used by the Brundtland Commission, which coined what has become the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development as development that, "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Sustainable development ties together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social challenges facing humanity. As early as the 1970s "sustainability" was employed to describe an economy "in equilibrium with basic ecological support systems"[4]. Ecologists have pointed to the "limits of growth" and presented the alternative of a "steady state economy" in order to address environmental concerns.

The field of sustainable development can be conceptually broken into three constituent parts: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and sociopolitical sustainability.

### Wellness

New niche tourism products are developing in response to a growing concern and interest in issues that relate to a person's well-being and environmental ethics. Products that embrace these changes in lifestyle values are becoming important elements within a destination and have the capacity to attract new market segments as well as adding value to the existing visitor experience. The spa and wellness sector has seen significant growth in recent years with revenue from the overall industry growing by 30% in 2005 alone. Destinations such as the Yukon are recognizing the potential of aligning this new sector with traditional outdoor products in a way that enables the territory to reposition the destination and attract new markets.

### Winter Tourism

The Canadian Tourism Commission recognizes that winter tourism is both a challenge and an important opportunity for Canada's tourism industry. While hosting the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games will undoubtedly strengthen British Columbia's position as a winter tourism destination in the marketplace, considerable effort will still be required to capitalize on this profile in areas outside the Lower Mainland. Current trends in the alpine skiing and snowboarding sector indicate that ongoing growth of these activities as a base for a community's tourism industry cannot be assumed. In 2002 the Canadian Ski Council identified a combination of negative forces that had the potential to seriously impact domestic participation, and this, combined with a decline in the US market, was cause for significant concerns over the longer-term sustainability of the industry. Since then the Canadian Ski Council has been engaged in a proactive and aggressive campaign to stimulate growth in snow sports participation.

To ensure the longer-term viability of snow sports the Canadian Ski Council has highlighted the need for the industry to focus on conversion and retention. Their research has shown that resorts vary considerably in their ability to promote the activity and that there is a vital need to evaluate the overall resort experience and to develop competitiveness at this level if the industry is to maintain a good outlook. Turning visitors into repeat customers and growing the profitability of the industry for a community hinges not just on the quality of the ski terrain and associated infrastructure, but equally on the quality of the additional attributes of a resort and its community, which should enhance the actual ski experience. The impact of demographic trends and the changing market expectations must be clearly understood at the local level if resort-based communities are to maintain and strengthen their market position.

In other areas of winter sports and related tourism there are indicators of growth, with evidence of latent demand in activities such as snowmobiling. The key issue concerning many of these other activities relates to inadequate information on suitable sites and trails. While local users may be very familiar with

opportunities, there is a tendency for community tourism organizations to overlook the importance of developing strong partnerships with community user groups to promote and develop these opportunities as a tourism asset.

### *Conclusion*

British Columbia, with its spectacular scenery and remote but accessible areas, provides great opportunity for product and market development capitalizing on current trends, however, each community within the regions will require a strategy to differentiate and brand itself within this broader context to find its own niche.

### *The Value of Tourism in BC*

Tourism in British Columbia is estimated to be worth \$13.2 billion in visitor revenue in 2007. Tourism GDP was nearly \$5.5 billion in 2006, based on a 1997 constant dollar. The tourism sector in British Columbia increased 4.6% in 2006, outpacing the provincial economy for the fourth straight year. Tourism accounted for one in every fifteen jobs in the province in 2006 and employs about 120,000 British Columbians.

Tourism British Columbia is targeting a doubling of tourism revenues by 2015. This is an aggressive target that is not without risk, as all market conditions need to be positive to achieve it. In 2006, provincial room revenues were up substantially (7.8%) over 2005. Year-to-date provincial room revenues in 2007 have increased (7.8%) compared to the same period in 2006.<sup>95</sup>

British Columbia's tourism industry is expected to grow steadily over the next three years, with visitor expenditures estimated to increase 10.9% between 2007 and 2010. Worldwide markets are growing, with revenue from the Asia/Pacific region expected to increase by a total of 19.2% during this time.<sup>96</sup>

The forecast for tourism revenue for 2008 is \$13.1 billion, followed by targets of:

- \$12.6 billion for 2009
- \$13.3 billion for 2010
- \$19.6 billion for 2015

Total tourism to BC experienced steady growth until 2000, with a decline in 2001 due to the September 11, 2001, events. There was a rebound in 2002, but then further setbacks occurred in 2003 due to the war in Iraq, SARS, and the forest fires in BC. Tourism grew again in 2004 and 2005, achieving record visits in 2005 with a 1.7% increase in total numbers over the previous year and 3.1% increase in tourism revenues.

### *BC Travel Trends*

Tourism visitors reached 23.1 million overnight visitors in 2006. The largest market is BC residents making 49.1% of all visits to BC. The rest of Canada and the US markets are about the same size, around 21% of total visits. Asia Pacific makes up less than 4% and Europe, less than 3%.

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<sup>95</sup> [http://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/tourism/tourism\\_statistics.htm](http://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/tourism/tourism_statistics.htm)

<sup>96</sup> Tourism British Columbia, Annual Report 2007-2008

Overall, overnight customs entries from all international markets in 2006 were down 1.5% from the previous year. This is largely due to the further decrease in entries from the United States, which were down another 2.0% for the year.

Tourism is seasonal in British Columbia and, despite significant efforts that have been made over the years to build the shoulder seasons, it is expected to continue to be a seasonal business. The warm weather months from June to September will likely continue to be the core season for many types of tourism experiences in BC. There are some tourism experiences that lend themselves to different seasons to help spread the business throughout the year, such as meetings and conventions or activities that are of interest to adults without children. Some markets are more amenable to travelling beyond the June to September period, such as BC residents who tend to travel in BC throughout the year.

BC residents are the least volatile in travel patterns, without the degree of fluctuation experienced from international visitation. They are an important market for BC communities as they travel within BC more often (good source of repeat visitation), explore areas of the province beyond Vancouver / Victoria / Whistler, have a higher propensity to travel in BC year-round, and are more accepting of varying qualities of facilities, amenities, and customer service levels. BC residents represent the first wave of visitors to allow a community to build its tourism business to become more export ready.

While international visitors spend more than BC residents, (about 75% more in BC per trip than domestic visitors) they have correspondingly higher standards, tending to limit their experiences to those that are export ready. While the international markets are attractive, negative experiences have far-reaching consequences so they should be targeted only when the destination has high-quality facilities, amenities, and customer service levels. The promotional costs of reaching these consumers and their market expectations with regard to facilities, amenities, and customer service levels are significantly higher.

#### **8.4 APPENDIX D: RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARIES**

##### *Prince Rupert Visitor Study, 2008*<sup>97</sup>

The Community Tourism Foundations Visitor Study of Prince Rupert was undertaken in the summer (June 1 through August 31) of 2007. The study was designed to provide information on the characteristics and volume of travellers to Prince Rupert and to support marketing plan design and product development in the Prince Rupert area. Partial funding for this project was provided by Tourism British Columbia's Community Tourism Foundations program in partnership with key stakeholders in the area. The project was managed and carried out by Tourism British Columbia's Research and Planning department.

Key findings include:

Overall, between June and August of 2007 it was estimated that about 190,000 travellers visited Prince Rupert. Those travellers spent approximately \$52.2 million in the Prince Rupert region. Leisure travellers accounted for 79% of all travellers and 57% of all traveller revenues. Although business travellers accounted for only 21% of traveller volume they were responsible for 43% of traveller revenues, due to their longer length of stay and higher daily expenditures. Cruise ship passengers accounted for a high proportion

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<sup>97</sup> [http://www.tourismbc.com/special\\_reports.asp?id=2065](http://www.tourismbc.com/special_reports.asp?id=2065)

of traveller volume (46% of total) but only 9% of expenditures because of their comparatively short length of stay and lower expenditures.

#### Overnight Leisure Travellers

Over half (55%) of overnight leisure travellers to Prince Rupert were from somewhere in Canada, 29% were from British Columbia and 27% were from other parts of Canada. Residents from the United States and other international countries each represented 22% of overnight leisure travellers.

Over half (58%) of Canadian travellers from outside of British Columbia were from Alberta while an additional 25% were from Ontario, fewer were from Manitoba (6%), Saskatchewan (5%), Quebec (3%), the Territories (3%) and only 1% were from the Maritime Provinces in Eastern Canada. Almost a quarter (21%) of American travellers were from Washington State, 17% were from California and 8% were from Montana. Fewer were from Oregon (7%), Alaska (7%) or Idaho (4%).

International travellers, other than US residents, accounted for 22% of overnight leisure travellers. Almost all travellers from countries other than Canada or the US were European (84%), 15% were from the Asia/Pacific region and only 1% were from other countries.

Only 11% of overnight leisure travellers were under 35 years old while over 56% were 55 years old or older and a third were between 35 and 54 years old. Overnight leisure travellers to Prince Rupert were skewed to older age groups.

Overnight leisure travellers to Prince Rupert were highly educated. Over 47% had a university degree, master's or PhD. Twenty percent had a college or technical degree, and 18% had a high school diploma.

More than one-third of travellers were high income earners with a household income of over \$100,000 annually while another 25% earned between \$65,000 and \$99,000. The remaining 40% earned less than \$65,000 per year.

On average, there were 2.6 people per overnight leisure traveller party. Approximately 13% of these travel parties had children while the remaining 87% of parties were adult only.

Visitors to Prince Rupert were frequent travellers taking an average of 3.4 leisure trips in the past year with 32% taking four or more trips.

Just over one-third (36%) of overnight leisure travellers had previously been to Prince Rupert. Not surprisingly, British Columbian residents had the highest incidence of previous visitation to Prince Rupert (64%). In comparison, 28% of US travellers and 11% of other international travellers had previously visited Prince Rupert.

Approximately 35% of overnight leisure travellers in Prince Rupert did not have a primary destination and were touring. Twenty-three percent of overnight leisure travellers were primarily visiting Prince Rupert and 10% were visiting Alaska. Just over one in four were destined for somewhere else in BC – of these nearly 18% were destined for the Northern BC region.

The most common type of accommodation used in both Prince Rupert and the rest of the trip was a hotel/motel/resort, followed by camping/RV, staying at bed and breakfasts, followed by friends and relatives.

Although approximately half (51%) of overnight leisure travellers were inflexible in terms of spending more time in Prince Rupert, one in three travellers could spend at least one extra day. In addition, 16% could spend a few more hours than originally planned.

The average trip time away from home for overnight leisure travellers was 28 days, of which 16 days were spent in British Columbia and nearly 3 days were spent in Prince Rupert. Trip length was significantly different depending on the origin of the traveller.

The most popular primary activity for overnight leisure travellers was general sightseeing (49%), followed by other sports and recreation (15%) and fishing (11%). Fewer travellers indicated their primary activity was shopping or entertainment (7.6%), or culture, attractions or an event (7.4%).

Overnight leisure travellers responses from the mail-back questionnaire indicated that the most popular specific activities that visitors participated in while on their trip were Wildlife Viewing (75%), visiting a Municipal, Provincial or National Park (73%) and visiting a Museum, Heritage or Historical Site (66%). While in Prince Rupert, participation in these various activities shifted with Shopping for Local Arts and Crafts (56%) being the most popular, followed by Wildlife Viewing (53%) and visiting a Museum, Heritage or Historical Site (52%).

Approximately two-thirds of visitors travelled to and departed from Prince Rupert via road (Car/Truck/Motorcycle/RV). Ferries were the second most popular arrival and departure mode of transportation to and from Prince Rupert. Fewer travellers travelled to/from Prince Rupert via air, private boat, train, bicycle or bus. Of the 25% of travellers arriving by ferry, the majority (82%) came on a BC Ferry from Port Hardy, followed by arrivals on the ferry from the Queen Charlotte Islands and arrivals on the Alaska State Ferry.

On the mail-back questionnaire travellers were asked to draw in the route of their trip. The most popular highway and ferry route travelled was Hwy 16 from Prince George to Prince Rupert, where over three-quarters of respondents travelled at sometime during their trip. The BC Ferries Inside Passage route from Port Hardy to Prince Rupert was the second most popular route, used by more than half of respondents. Other popular routes included the BC Ferries Queen Charlotte Islands route (Prince Rupert to Skidegate), Hwy 16/Hwy 93 from Banff to Prince George, Hwy 97 from Prince George to Cache Creek, BC Ferries Vancouver to Victoria routes, Hwy 1/Hwy 19 on Vancouver Island, and Hwy 37 from Terrace to Stewart. Differences were apparent when routes taken by travellers of different origins were compared. The three main routes taken by British Columbian residents were Hwy 16 between Prince George and Prince Rupert, Hwy 97 from 100 Mile House to Prince George, and the British Columbia Ferries Inside Passage route from Port Hardy to Prince Rupert. The linking routes of Port Hardy to Vancouver (either through Victoria or Nanaimo) and Vancouver to 100 Mile House (on Hwy 1) formed a circle route that was travelled by British Columbian residents. Additionally, more than half of the British Columbian residents indicated that they travelled to the Queen Charlotte Islands from Prince Rupert. Alberta highway routes that were travelled by British Columbian residents were those that connected British Columbia through Dawson Creek (Hwys 43

and 49). As expected, routes in the bordering US states of Washington, Idaho and Montana, and the Kootenay Rockies were not travelled frequently (<10%) by British Columbian residents.

The most popular travel routes of Canadian residents from outside of British Columbia were those from the major centres of Edmonton and Calgary to British Columbia, which included Hwy 16 from Jasper, and Hwys 1 and 43 from Lake Louise and Grande Prairie. Similar to British Columbian resident routing, the bordering US states and the Kootenay Rockies were not travelled much by Other Canadian residents. However, Other Canadian residents travelled more frequently in the Northern Canadian territories, continuing on Hwy 1 in the Yukon, and Hwys 77 and 35 to the Northwest Territories. A variety of smaller routes were travelled in Alberta, whereas British Columbian residents only travelled on the main highways in Alberta.

International residents' (US and Overseas residents) travel routes were different from both British Columbian and other Canadian residents. International travellers preferred to tour throughout the province instead of following main routes when travelling to Prince Rupert. International residents travelled on the BC Ferries Inside Passage and on Vancouver Island more frequently (which was highlighted by travel on Hwy 4 to Tofino/Ucluelet and taking the BC Ferries Tsawwassen-Swartz Bay route between Vancouver and Victoria). The touring component of other Canadian residents was predominately on Hwy 1 around Cache Creek and Kamloops, whereas the International residents travelled throughout the region, particularly in the Okanagan Valley. As expected, there was more travel in the US, with more routes taken in Washington, Idaho and Montana. International residents travelled farther north into Alaska via the Alaska State Ferry and on Hwys 1 and 93, the route connecting Banff and Jasper National Parks, when compared to the two other traveller origins.

Travellers indicated they stayed overnight in many communities along the most popular route of Hwy 16 from Prince George to Prince Rupert, including Prince George, Smithers and Terrace. Also, travellers frequently stayed overnight in communities along Vancouver Island's Hwys 19 and 1, including Port Hardy, Campbell River, Nanaimo and Victoria.

Overall, daily expenditures on a trip and in Prince Rupert were approximately \$296 and \$202, respectively. However, there were significant differences in daily expenditures based on traveller origin and main purpose of trip. Canadians from outside of British Columbia (\$229) spent significantly more in Prince Rupert than travellers from British Columbia (\$192), the US (\$194), or other International (\$193). In all cases, travellers had a higher average daily expenditure on their trip than in Prince Rupert.

Overnight leisure travellers to Prince Rupert planned ahead. Over half (55%) planned their trip thirteen or more weeks in advance.

Advice from friends and relatives (53%), visitor guides and brochures (53%) and past experience (48%) were the most commonly used information sources before trips. Approximately 35% of travellers used local and regional websites for their planning. During trips, Visitor Centres were the most commonly used information source (65%), followed by visitor guides and brochures (60%) and advice from friends and relatives (33%).

*Travel Activities and Motivations of Canadian Visitors to BC: Activity Profile Focus on Campers and RVers, 2008*

Tourism BC Research and Planning released the *Travel Activities and Motivations of Canadian Visitors to BC: Activity Profile Focus on Campers and RVers* in November 2008. Given the current economic climate, camping and RV markets are expected to increase as people will still travel but will spend less. The following are key findings.

**Millions of Canadians Take Camping Trips.**

People who take a trip in order to go camping are only a fraction of tourists who go camping on their vacations. Of the total Canadian adult population, 34% (24.8 million) and 38% of Canadian travellers (20.9 million) indicate that they participate in camping during a typical year. In fact, 8 million Canadians (39% of all travellers) say they went on a camping trip over a two-year period. Of these 8 million Canadian tourists, 3 million say they took a trip in order to go Camping/RVing. At nearly 2 million, Campers – Canadian adults who take vacations in order to go camping (who generally rely on a tent or tent trailer for shelter) represent one in 10 Canadian overnight pleasure travellers to any destination and one in 10 of the 6 million Canadians who have come to British Columbia for a vacation in the past two years or so. At eight hundred thousand, RVers (who rely on a truck camper, travel trailer or motor home (RV) for shelter on their camping trips) represent one in 23 of the Canadian overnight pleasure travellers to any destination and one in 17 of the 6 million Canadian who have come to British Columbia for a vacation in the past two years or so.

**Public Campgrounds are Most Popular Among Campers and RVers.**

While they may patronize different types of campgrounds on different trips, the majority of Campers (78%) and RVers (65%) stay in public campgrounds. A further one in three Canadian Campers claim to have stayed in a private campground (34%) and about one in four have pitched a tent in a wilderness campsite (24%).

Use of private campgrounds is more prevalent among RVers than among Campers, with half of RVers saying they have recent experience in one. Close to one in five RVers have stayed in a campsite in a wilderness setting over the past two years, suggesting that even though they use a motorized form of shelter (trailers, RVs, etc.) for “most” of their camping trips, they do not necessarily use only this type of shelter.

**They Live in Every Canadian Province but are Concentrated in the Larger Cities.**

Campers and RVers live in every province but, not surprisingly, are apt to reside in provinces where camping and RVing facilities are most prevalent – such as Central Canada and the West. Campers are distributed across Canada in a manner almost identical to the adult population as a whole. Camping seems to be particularly popular among pleasure tourists who reside in the larger cities such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. RVing seems to be particularly popular among pleasure tourists from Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton. Calgary is home to about one in 27 adult Canadians but significantly more RVers (one in 16) live in the city. The same can be said for Edmonton, one in 29 adult Canadians but one in 18 RVers live in the city. In contrast, Campers and RVers are less likely to live in the Maritimes and the Prairie provinces. Marketing efforts to attract Campers and RVers may be facilitated by their concentration in the West, which has easier access to British Columbia’s national, provincial, municipal and private parks and campgrounds.

Campers are Younger and RVers are Older.

Campers are concentrated at the younger end of the age spectrum. One in five of them are young adults (18 to 24 years), and one in four are between 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 years of age. Under one-fifth are in their mid-forties to mid-fifties and less than one-tenth are in their mid-fifties to mid-sixties. Only one in 43 Campers are 65 years of age or older. RVers, in contrast, are more concentrated at the older end of the age spectrum. Over half of these tourists are 45 years or older (54.4%). One-fifth are in their mid-forties to mid-fifties and in their mid-fifties to mid-sixties. Unlike Campers, one in seven RVers are 65 years of age or older. The age distribution of RVers is more like the adult population as a whole (compared with Campers).

Campers and RVers are Evenly Distributed by Gender.

Men are marginally more likely to be Campers than are women, while women are marginally more likely to be RVers than are men.

Campers Have More Formal Education than RVers but Similar Incomes.

The two camping-oriented segments differ somewhat in terms of education and occupation/work status. Specifically, 31.0% of Campers have a university degree, whereas only 16.9% of RVers are university educated. Not surprisingly in light of the age differences between the two groups, RVers are more likely to be retirees (19.0%) than are Campers (3.9%) and more Campers work for more than 30 hours a week as paid employees (63.1%) than RVers (43.2%). Despite their differences in age and education, Campers and RVers are quite similar to one another with respect to household incomes. Both groups represent a broad range of incomes. About one in three report household incomes under \$60,000, and in the \$60,000 to under \$100,000 bracket. Just under one-quarter of Campers and RVers fall within the more affluent \$100,000+ income range.

The United States is the Key Competitor for These Canadian Tourists.

One half of Campers and RVers have been to the United States on a recent overnight pleasure trip, suggesting that America is a particularly attractive destination for these camping and RVing enthusiasts.

Ontario is the Main Canadian Competitor for Campers while Alberta is Key for RVers.

Ontario is the main provincial competitor for Canadian Campers, followed by Quebec, while Alberta is the main provincial competitor for Canadian RVers. British Columbia is especially successful in attracting RVers vis-a-vis the general travelling public in Canada.

A Safe Destination is a Priority.

Most Campers and RVers start the trip-planning process with a destination in mind, although about one quarter of these tourists start their trip-planning process with a focus on the type of vacation experience they wish to have and about one-fifth with the activities they want to enjoy while on their trip. The destination should be safe, offer convenient access by car, pose no health concerns, have many things for adults to see and do, and offer camping.

They are Low Involvement Tourists.

There is comparatively little overlap between Campers or RVers and other sectors of interest to tourism businesses in British Columbia. Specifically, about one-quarter of Campers are also Hikers, Self-Guided Touring Travellers, History/Heritage Tourists and/or Alpine Skiers and about one-fifth are Anglers, but no more than one in 11 are members of any other trip activity sector covered in this report. Over one quarter of

RVers are Anglers and nearly one-quarter are also History/Heritage Tourists and Self-Guided Touring Travellers but the only other segments to attract more than one in 10 RVers are Alpine Skiing and Golfing.

#### Just Being in Nature May Be Sufficient.

The outdoor activity profile of Campers and RVers suggests groups of tourists seeking comparatively sedentary experiences and passive interactions with nature. They seem to want to be in nature rather than to engage nature, with some obvious exceptions such as hiking, especially among Campers, and fishing for RVers. Perhaps these tourists rely on the camping experience per se as a means of appreciating and being in natural settings. Some of them may also regard camping as an economical form of accommodation for trips that are motivated by other types of activities. Regardless of the explanation, missing as prominent trip drivers for Campers and RVers are the more vigorous outdoor activities such as climbing, backpacking, skiing, paddling or rafting.

#### Campers and RVers are not Especially Driven to Take Cultural, Culinary or Shopping Trips.

By and large, Campers and RVers utilize a destination's cultural, culinary and retail infrastructure as things to see and do while on overnight pleasure trips rather than as the driving force behind or motivation for their trips. For example, four in 10 Campers and three in 10 RVers have strolled around a city to observe its buildings and architecture on recent pleasure trips, but only one in 10 have taken a trip in order to engage in this activity. Perhaps because they tend to live in families with children, Campers are particularly apt to take a trip to go to an amusement park. Even though they are more likely to be empty nesters than are Campers, RVers are also drawn to amusement parks. Spectator sporting events and casinos are popular entertainment venues, especially for RVers. Similar to many entertainment-oriented activities, dining out at restaurants offering local ingredients and cuisine and visiting local outdoor cafes are much more common trip experiences than trip drivers for Campers and RVers. Shopping for apparel, books or music, local arts and crafts and antiques is a common trip pastime for Campers and RVers but tends not to be the motivation for their recent overnight pleasure travel.

#### The Internet Tops the Chart as a Trip-Planning Tool.

Over seven in 10 Campers and nearly six in 10 RVers rely on the Internet for travel information. Nearly six in 10 Campers and five in 10 RVers rely on anecdotal information provided by friends and relatives and on their own past experience. Around four in 10 of both market segments rely on maps. About one third of both market segments rely on official DMO travel guides, and around three in 10 rely on Visitor Centres and travel agents to obtain travel information. In the main, these are the same sources of information that may be influencing Canadian pleasure travellers who have recently done so, to take trips to British Columbia.

#### Campers and RVers Have Very Favourable Impressions of British Columbia.

Canadian Campers and RVers are most enthusiastic about British Columbia as an appealing destination for pleasure travel. Campers accord BC a rating of 8.6 and RVers an even higher rating of 8.8 on a 10 point scale. Though significantly lower than BC's, moderately favourable ratings are accorded to a host of destinations including Hawaii, California, Alberta, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. British Columbia is given the highest rating as an appealing destination for pleasure travel, and only one tenth of Canadian Campers and RVers refrained from rating the province, thus indicating that Canadian travellers are knowledgeable about the destination and its touristic appeal.

#### Competition from the US and Other Canadian Destinations is the Key Challenge.

With the myriad of private, municipal, provincial and national parks in BC, the province is an ideal location for both camping and RVing. At present, the province is attracting about 33% of this market. Although Campers and RVers have favourable impressions of BC and are aware of its touristic appeal, many choose to vacation in the United States and other Canadian provinces.

### ***Northern BC Market Profile***

In 2007, Tourism BC conducted primary research to understand the perceptions of various communities throughout BC in select markets for the *Community Tourism Foundations* program. Research results for Perceptions of Northern BC as a travel destination are summarized below.

R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. was commissioned by Tourism BC to implement the Community Tourism Foundations Perceptions/Incidence Study. The purpose of this survey was to assess the consumer awareness of travel opportunities across the province. The survey was structured to collect data about the following issues:

- Frequency with which respondents took an overnight leisure trip to the community;
- Familiarity with the community;
- Importance of different factors in choosing a destination for an overnight leisure trip;
- Things that appeal to respondents about overnight getaways or vacations to the community;
- Comparison of community to other similar destinations; and
- Demographic characteristics of the respondent.

The Community Tourism Foundations Perceptions/Incidence Study survey was administered by telephone to the general public residing in the GVRD, Lower Vancouver Island, Northern BC, the Southern Interior and Alberta. A total of 3,132 surveys were completed; of these respondents, 485 were residents of Northern BC.

The Northern BC market was most likely to take a trip to Prince George. However, most Northern BC respondents had not taken recent overnight leisure trips to the prompted Community Tourism Foundations destinations. Similarly, familiarity ratings were highest for Prince George, but, overall, the majority reported being not very familiar with many of the communities mentioned. The lack of knowledge about these destinations may be a contributing factor in the relatively low incidence of visitation; therefore, there is a large opportunity to educate this key market, especially about near-in destinations.

Overall, many Northern BC respondents had recently taken overnight leisure trips to the prompted Community Tourism Foundations destinations. Not surprisingly, considering the geographical location and important role the city plays, Prince George had the highest incidence of travel with just over 57% of respondents having travelled there in the past two years. With the exception of Bella Coola Valley/West Chilcotin, which had a visitation rate of 7%, the remaining near-in Community Tourism Foundations destinations fell within the 20-24% range of respondents having recently travelled there. Those who had not recently visited a specific prompted Community Tourism Foundations destination were asked about their general familiarity with that destination. Familiarity ratings ranged from 1.58 (Bella Coola Valley/West Chilcotin) to 3.31 (Prince George) but largely remained low, with most prompted destinations having a high incidence of respondents being not at all familiar.

Northern BC residents are looking for spring/summer destinations that are safe/clean, provide relaxation, and are affordable. The most important factor when choosing a destination in the next 6 months was that the destination be safe and clean. In fact, nearly 6 in 10 respondents indicated that this was Extremely Important and, on average, this factor rated as 4.39 on a 5-point scale where 1 is Not Important At All and 5 is Extremely Important. Northern BC is a middle-class, middle-aged travel market. With over 4 in 10 respondents reporting an annual income of under \$65,000, Northern BC has a lower average household income compared to some other markets included in this study. However, there is still distribution across all brackets but overall it represents a middle-class market. Similarly, there is dispersion across all age brackets; however, Northern BC respondents tend to be middle-aged – half (50%) are between the ages of 45 and 64.

## **8.5 APPENDIX E: TOURISM ANNUAL PLANNING PROCESS**

Objective: Produce an Annual Tourism Action Plan

Process:

- Review existing plans for current status, year in review, key accomplishments, lessons learned.
  - Utilize Planning Matrix (spreadsheet tool)
- Update Situation Analysis and summarize key findings
- Prioritize objectives for current year
  - Identify strategies for implementation
- Develop budget and identify partnerships
- Develop tactics plan with projects briefs