Photo Credit: Megan McLellan

McBride Tourism Master Plan
Final Report: November 25, 2020

expedition
MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

November 25, 2020

Karen Dubé
Community Economic Development Coordinator
Village of McBride
100 Robson Centre, 855 SW Frontage Rd.
McBride, British Columbia, V0J 2E0

Dear Ms. Dubé,

Please find enclosed the final McBride Tourism Master Plan. It has been a pleasure working with you to develop this report. We are looking forward to learning about your community's tourism successes moving forward.

If you have any questions or require clarification on the attached report, please feel free to contact me at 780.266.7888.

Sincerely,

Justin Rousseau, Managing Director
Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.

Photo Credits:
Images in this report were sourced from Destination BC, Village of McBride, Visit McBride, Expedition Management Consulting Ltd., Ancient Forest Alliance, and SnoRiders.

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Executive Summary

Photo Credit: Jongsun Park

Community Overview

The McBride region is a special place in northeastern British Columbia. The people who call the region home are welcoming and passionate about the quality of life that they enjoy. The region has strong links to its railway heritage and its history in the agricultural and forestry sectors. The McBride region is located within the traditional territories of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation and the Simpcw First Nation.

The region is fortunate to have unparalleled access to an expansive backcountry that provides opportunities for outstanding snowmobiling, heli-skiing, hunting, hiking, and many other activities for both residents and visitors to enjoy. The region's proximity to well-known attractions such as the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut, Mount Robson, and the Fraser River further positions the region for increased visitation. If developed and managed appropriately, tourism has the potential to bring significant economic, social, and environmental benefits to the region.

Tourism Product Strengths and Gaps

Tourism assets in the McBride region were inventoried and assessed for their market readiness. In total, 151 assets were identified across 11 tourism product categories. The region's tourism product strengths and gaps are described below.

Tourism Product Strengths:

Natural Attractions

The McBride region provides access to outstanding natural assets that can provide a compelling nature-based tourism offering. The region is home to an abundance of front-country and back-country areas that showcase mountains, lakes, rivers, creeks, glaciers, waterfalls, and trails. The Mount Robson and Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Provincial Parks are both within an hour drive of the Village of McBride. These assets make the McBride region an excellent destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

Outdoor Recreation

The region's abundance of natural attractions offers a significant number of opportunities for outdoor recreation. A wealth of seasonal and year-round activities are available from hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking to snowmobiling and heli-skiing. Many of the available recreation activities are supported by local organizations and businesses that can offer support, guidance, rentals, lessons, tours, and equipment sales.

Cultural Attractions, Festivals, and Events

The McBride region has several cultural and heritage attractions that showcase the unique history of the area, including the McBride Heritage Railway Station, Whistle Stop Gallery, Dunster Station Museum, and Roundhouse Theatre. The region also hosts several festivals and events that show potential for tourism growth, including the Robson Valley Music Festival, Art in the Park, Pioneer Days, and more. These offerings present an opportunity to differentiate McBride from its competitors and attract more visitors.

Agritourism Assets

The McBride region has a variety of agricultural businesses that could be further developed to create an agritourism asset cluster in the area. Local farms and ranches could offer experiences for visitors and/or supply locally produced products to other businesses in the Robson Valley and Jasper. It is important to note that Jasper does not offer this opportunity to its visitors, which represents a product gap that McBride could capitalize on.

Specialty Shops

Unique establishments and specialty shops in the region such as the Historic McKale House, House of Jasper, and the Dunster Store offer opportunities for further tourism experience development.

Tourism Product Gaps:

Visitor and Market Ready Tourism Product

Although there are some visitor and market ready tourism products available in the region today, there is an overall lack of consumable experiences for visitors. Additional product development is needed to achieve a critical mass of experiences that will consistently attract visitors.

Tourism-Related Programming and Experiences

The region currently lacks tourism-related programming and experiences. There is an opportunity to develop packages, itineraries, and other tourism-related programming that will leverage existing assets in the areas of natural attractions, outdoor recreation, agritourism, culture and heritage, and specialty accommodations.

Tour Operators

While there are some local businesses and individuals who provide tours, there is currently a lack of established tours. Existing tours are typically conducted on an ad hoc basis, rather than following set schedules and pricing.

Campgrounds

There is a lack of RV and camping opportunities in the region. An opportunity likely exists to develop new camping opportunities, while attracting more visitors to established sites.

Facilities and Public Spaces

The McBride region is lacking high-quality facilities and public spaces that can be further leveraged to attract visitors. Additional attractions with broad-based appeal are needed. A gap is the limited number of boat launches providing access to the Fraser River (there is currently only one formal boat launch).

Accommodations

There may be opportunity to enhance the quality and diversity of room offerings to make them more attractive to modern visitors.

Culinary Attractions

The study area has a few unique restaurants, cafés, and markets. However, an opportunity exists to further develop these into culinary attractions and experiences that will promote visitation and add to the overall visitor experience. Another gap is the lack of breakfast options for sledders in the winter.

Key Themes from the Community Engagement Process

As an input into the tourism master plan, McBride region residents, stakeholder groups and Village Council and staff were engaged through a variety of consultation activities, including surveys, one-on-one interviews, and facilitated workshops. Six key themes were synthesized from all of the engagement inputs received. They are as follows.

1

Maintaining Quality of Life

A top priority for many stakeholder groups and respondents to the surveys was maintaining the quality of life that is currently enjoyed in the McBride region. Stakeholders and residents would prefer to attract visitors who will experience the destination in a manner that is respectful, low impact, and contributes to the community characteristics that drew them to the region in the first place.

2

Strong Support for Tourism Development

There is strong support among multiple stakeholder groups to further develop tourism in the McBride region. These groups recognize that McBride must develop new industries to sustain the community's economy and quality of life.

3

Building Capacity for Tourism Development

Capacity for tourism development is viewed as a major challenge by stakeholders. There is a need to establish an organization with sustainable funding that will take the lead on tourism development.

4

Developing More Experiences

Stakeholders and residents recognize that the McBride region needs to develop more experiences to transition from a stop-over destination to a sought-after destination. These groups would like to see new experiences developed that will attract visitors, extend stays, and increase local spending.

5

Enhancing Tourism Marketing

Stakeholders said they would like to see enhanced tourism marketing in the McBride region. They believed the region could be doing a better job of sharing their offerings to receptive markets.

6

Improving Collaboration and Partnerships

There is a desire among stakeholder groups to work together to achieve tourism objectives.

Case for Change

The McBride region is faced by several challenges. The downturn in the forestry sector, an aging population, stagnant growth, and the loss of government offices and employment opportunities have had significant adverse effects on the community. Many have been left wondering how the quality of life that they enjoy will be sustained. This situation has led businesses, community leaders, and residents to look to other industries for opportunity.

An industry that shows strong economic potential is tourism. Tourism has long been viewed as an opportunity in the region; however, the region has not yet reached its full tourism potential. More needs to be done to transform the McBride region into a compelling destination that reaps the sustainable benefits that tourism can produce.

What is needed now is the courage and will to take action. The region can no longer wait for tourism to develop organically. Collective buy-in and commitment to action is needed from private, public, and non-profit sector organizations that have a stake in tourism development in the McBride region. These stakeholders must work collaboratively and embrace a philosophy of managing tourism growth in a way that will give everyone the chance to benefit.

Vision for the Future

Through tourism, the region has an exciting opportunity to invite visitors to discover and celebrate the natural landscapes and unique cultures that make the community so special.

10 Year Vision

> *By 2031, the McBride region will be known as the home base for outdoor adventure and cultural connection in the Robson Valley.*
>
> *The region will be recognized as the place to be to access iconic natural attractions, including the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut, Mount Robson, and the Fraser River. Visitors will enthusiastically engage in opportunities to learn about the histories of the people who call this amazing place home.*

5 Year Outcomes (i.e. what will be different in 5 years?)

- McBride will have a well functioning tourism committee up and running.
- The region will see new investment to support tourism development and visitation.
- The region will have developed and implemented at least three highly engaging tourism packages that link McBride with iconic outdoor attractions, such as the Ancient Forest, Mount Robson, and the Fraser River.
- The McBride Visitor Centre will be known as the "go to" place to get visitor information and engage in high quality interpretation of the region's natural and human history.
- Compelling, on-brand tourism messages will be well received by high value tourism markets.
- Tourism businesses will report increased revenues as a result of tourism development activities.
- Residents will report a high level of satisfaction with tourism development in the region.

10 Year Outcomes (i.e. what will be different in 10 years?)

- Tourism will be widely recognized as a key contributor to the economic and social prosperity of the community.
- McBride will have expanded its market reach. It will be very well known for outdoor adventure regionally and will have made significant inroads nationally and internationally.
- The identity of the region will be maintained and the quality of life of residents will be enhanced.
- The region will be poised for future sustainable tourism development.

Market Strategy and Target Markets

The McBride region will employ a product development strategy moving forward. This strategy will primarily consist of developing new tourism experiences that will attract key target markets.

Taking into account visitor data and considering what inspires travel to the McBride region, the following target markets have been identified.

1. *Overnight visitors from British Columbia and Alberta travelling to the McBride region to participate in outdoor adventures, explore area attractions, and enjoy an authentic, frontier town experience.*
2. *Stop-over visitors travelling through the McBride region who are seeking to immerse themselves in natural landscapes, agritourism and culinary offerings, and cultural experiences.*
3. *International visitors seeking niche-based experiences, such as dark sky/northern lights viewing, eco-tourism, agritourism, and mechanized recreational pursuits. Particular attention should be given to high yield Fully Independent Travellers (FIT) from Europe and the United States who are seeking experiences that are "off the beaten track."*
4. *Visiting friends and relatives travelling to the McBride region or neighbouring communities who are looking to connect with their hosts through authentic experiences.*

> **McBride Region's Competitive Advantage**
> *What makes the McBride region unique is that it offers the combination of uncrowded wilderness, proximity to iconic attractions, and authentic local history.*

Uncrowded Wilderness

Authentic History

Iconic Attractions
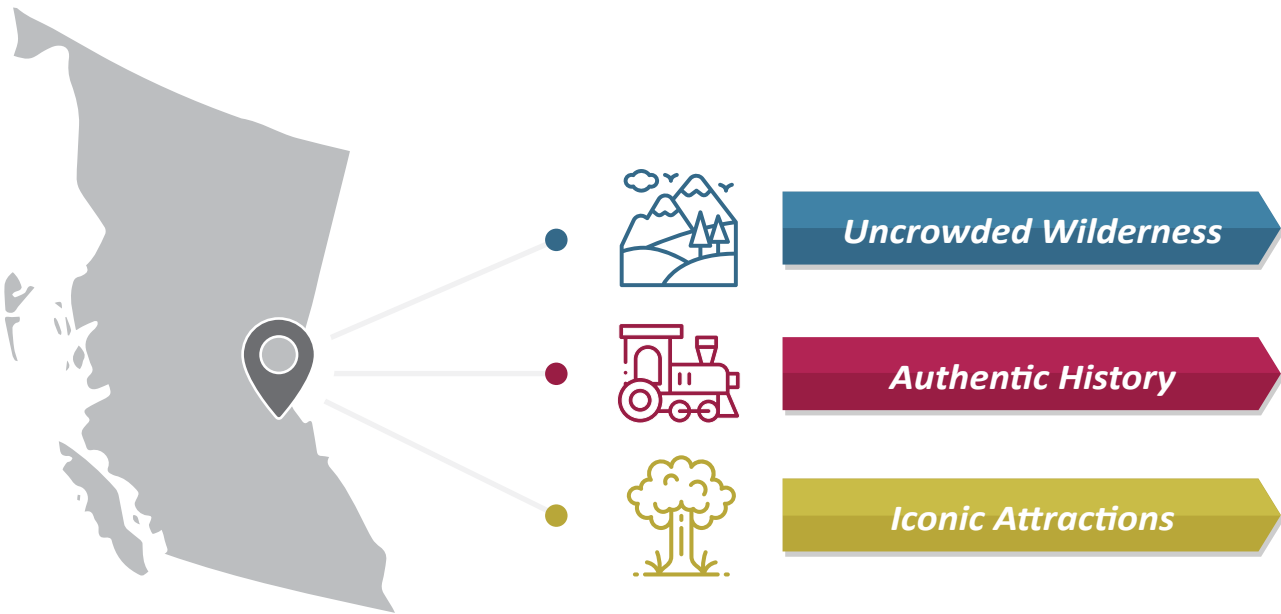
Focus Areas and Goals

Four overarching focus areas with accompanying goals have been developed to guide the tourism master plan.

Focus Area 1.   Organizational Development

Goal: *Build organizational and funding capacity to ensure tourism development is sustainable in the McBride region.*

Focus Area 2.   Product Development

Goal: *Develop compelling tourism experiences to attract visitors to the McBride region.*

Four product development streams have been identified through the master planning process which show the greatest potential for development in the McBride region. These streams include:

1. Nature-Based and Outdoor Adventure Experiences
2. Cultural Tourism/Festivals and Events
3. Agritourism and Culinary Experiences
4. Visiting Friends and Relatives Tourism

Focus Area 3.   Marketing and Promotional Development

Goal: *Establish a compelling tourism brand and entice travellers to visit by promoting the region's experiences to key target markets.*

Focus Area 4.   Destination Development

Goal: *Enhance the capacity of local businesses and stakeholders to develop the McBride region into an attractive, high-performing destination.*

Key Experience Development Opportunities

In the near-term, it will be important for the region to develop new experiences to offer to visitors. Four experience opportunities have been proposed for development.

1. Travel Through Time Package

This package would take visitors on a journey through multiple time periods within the McBride region. The experience would begin with a guided trip to the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut. Here visitors would learn about the park and be amazed by the venerable old growth forest. Many of the trees have stood for over a 1,000 years. Experiencing such majesty would

McBride Heritage Railway Station – Destination BC/Jongsun Park

give visitors an appreciation for deep time, far beyond the timescales that humans are accustomed to. Following the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut experience, visitors could be treated to cultural programming to learn about the history and traditions of local Indigenous Peoples.

From there, visitors would be transported 100 years into the past with a visit to McBride's Heritage Railway Station and Main Street. Interpretation and storytelling would connect visitors to the community's past as a frontier town on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. Era-appropriate activities would entertain visitors, while lunch is prepared and served at a nearby café or restaurant.

Accommodation, dinner, and evening activity options could be readily built into packages to encourage overnight stays in McBride. A train ride from or into Jasper could be added to enhance the experience and expand market draw. Many more opportunities for customization could present themselves depending on the stakeholders who become involved and market demand.

2. Explore the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut

The Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Provincial Park is a unique and compelling attraction that could be leveraged to a much greater degree to develop experiences for visitors. There is significant opportunity to develop enhanced programming that would activate this attraction to encourage visitation to the region (e.g. interpretation, activities, packaged experiences, events, etc.). There is further opportunity in that the Park is not promoted to the extent it could be. For example, the Park is listed on the websites

Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut – Ancient Forest Alliance

of Tourism Prince George and the McBride Visitor Centre, but neither has positioned the Ancient Forest as an anchor attraction. This gap presents an opportunity for the McBride region to consistently align itself with this attraction and leverage it to drive visitation to the area.

3. Experience the Frontier on Main Street McBride

McBride's Main Street has a distinct frontier town aesthetic and excellent views of the surrounding mountains. Located just off Highway 16 and adjacent to a working train station, Main Street McBride has strong potential to be further developed into a compelling tourist attraction and hub of visitor activity. The street could become a historic precinct that shares the storied history of the community. Interpretation and animation would bring this story to life and capture the attention of visitors.

Pioneer Days Along Main Street McBride – VisitMcBride.ca

4. Sled the Backcountry in McBride

Backcountry areas in the McBride region offer world-class terrain for snowmobiling in the winter season. The three maintained sledding areas of Bell Mountain, Lucille Mountain and Renshaw offer an extensive territory for sledders to explore. However, there is currently a gap in terms of tourism-related experiences and packaging to fully activate this significant asset. As an example, comparable snowmobile destinations such as Valemount, Revelstoke, and Golden offer sellable tours and customizable, multi-night packages to their visitors. There is opportunity for McBride to offer similar experiences with a relatively small investment of time and resources.

Snowmobiling in the McBride region – SnoRiders

Implementation Framework

An implementation framework has been developed to support the tourism master plan. The framework identifies a guiding principle for implementation, an organizational structure, roles, and funding mechanisms for tourism development in the McBride region.

Guiding Principle for Implementation

> We will work together collaboratively with a strong preference for cooperation. We recognize that by working together we can realize our shared vision for tourism in the McBride region.

Roles in Implementation

Village of McBride – Takes the lead role in ensuring the master plan is moving forward in the most effective and cohesive manner.

Committee of Council – A multi-stakeholder group that acts as a forum for consistent communication, collaboration and idea sharing related to the implementation of the master plan.

Stakeholder Groups – Stakeholder groups including local businesses, organizations, and engaged citizens will play a key role in growing tourism in the McBride region. Actively involving these groups in the implementation of the master plan will help maintain a high degree of community support and strengthen the capacity of the region to develop tourism.

Action Plan and Performance Measures

The action plan contains 74 action items, grouped into 20 separate priority initiatives across the four focus areas for the master plan. Performance measures have also been developed for the plan. The top 10 action items to focus on in the near term and a high level overview of how the action plan will be implemented is provided next.

Top 10 Action Items

1 Obtain formal commitment from the Village of McBride to implement the Tourism Master Plan.

2 Establish a Host Organization (Village of McBride) and Committee of Council who will be primarily responsible for implementing the Tourism Master Plan.

3 Work with eligible accommodation providers to determine the feasibility of establishing a Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT).

4 Allocate resources to implement the Tourism Master Plan. Wherever feasible, resources should be leveraged between partner organizations to build collaboration between stakeholders.

5 Encourage local tourism businesses that are struggling due to the COVID-19 pandemic to participate in the BC Tourism Resiliency Network.

6 Increase the capacity of the Village of McBride to support tourism development through the addition of a Tourism Development Coordinator.

7 Host a tourism development forum to encourage collaboration and kick off the implementation of the Tourism Master Plan.

8 Focus efforts on developing highly engaging tourism packages (as identified in Appendix K). Experiences will tell the story of the region and highlight important regional attractions.

9 Provide tourism experience and package development training to existing and potential new tourism operators.

10 Develop enhanced visitor information resources, including digital and traditional sources. The VisitMcBride.ca website should be redeveloped and positioned as the main tourism website for the region.

Implementation Timeline

Develop Capacity
2021

- Obtain formal commitment to implement the Master Plan.
- Establish the Host Organization and Committee of Council.
- Work to establish an MRDT in the Village of McBride.
- Allocate resources to implementation.

Build Compelling Experiences
2021 - 2023

- Build compelling experiences that will drive visitation.
- Provide experience package development training to tourism operators.
- Work with partners to develop compelling tourism experiences.

Promote Experiences to Receptive Markets
2023 - 2025

- Develop enhanced visitor information resources.
- Promote the McBride region's experience offerings to receptive markets.
- Work with partners to promote tourism experiences.

Develop as a Destination
2025 - 2030

- Support the managed growth of tourism in the McBride region.
- Deliver exceptional experiences to visitors.
- Collaborate regionally to grow tourism.
- Ensure performance targets are being met and/or exceeded.

Conclusion

The McBride Tourism Master Plan offers a strategic direction that will advance the McBride region toward its vision to become known as the home base for outdoor adventure and cultural connection in the Robson Valley. The region is in the early stages of development, but there are strong indicators signalling an opportunity for tourism growth.

The master plan will require a high degree of collaboration and significant investment from multiple stakeholders to be successful. It is only through cooperation that the community will achieve its shared vision and build a competitive destination in the long-term. Now is the time to invest in tourism and forge a future that includes a high quality of life for residents, strong income for businesses, and the preservation of the natural environments and cultures that make the McBride region a special place.

The McBride Tourism Master Plan offers a strategic direction that will advance the McBride region toward its vision to become known as the home base for outdoor adventure and cultural connection in the Robson Valley.

01 Project Overview

Community Overview

The McBride region is a special place in northeastern British Columbia. The people who call the region home are welcoming and passionate about the quality of life that they enjoy. The region has strong links to its railway heritage and its history in the agricultural and forestry sectors. The McBride region is located within the traditional territories of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation and the Simpcw First Nation.

The region is fortunate to have unparalleled access to an expansive backcountry that provides opportunities for outstanding snowmobiling, heli-skiing, hunting, hiking, and many other activities for both residents and visitors to enjoy. The region's proximity to well-known attractions such as the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut, Mount Robson, and the Fraser River further positions the region for increased visitation. If developed and managed appropriately, tourism has the potential to bring significant economic, social, and environmental benefits to the region. Tourism is an industry of industries that the McBride region can leverage to maintain and enhance the quality of life of its residents now and into the future.
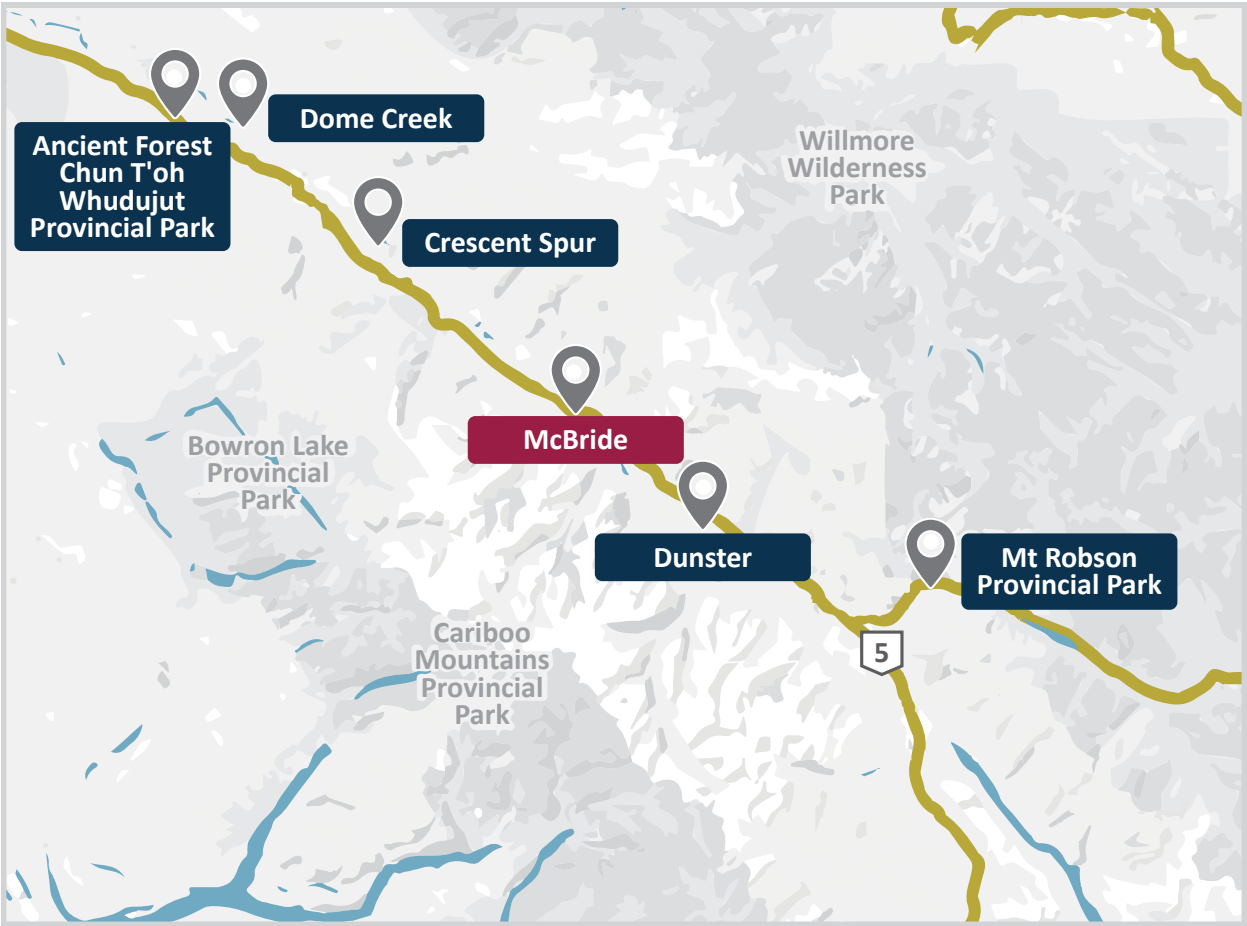
Project Purpose

The Village of McBride commissioned this study to review the current state of tourism in the McBride region and develop a master plan for its future development. The plan communicates a comprehensive roadmap that will set the direction of tourism development within the McBride region over the next 10 years.

Process

The project had five, interconnected phases as described below.

PHASE 1	*Project Startup*
PHASE 2	*Community Engagement*
PHASE 3	*Destination Analysis & Opportunity Assessment*
PHASE 4	*Draft Tourism Master Plan*
PHASE 5	*Final Tourism Master Plan*

Project Team

The McBride Tourism Master Plan was overseen and developed by the Project Team. Below is a list of Project Team representatives.

Project Team	
Organization	**Representatives**
Village of McBride	Heidi Frank – Chief Administrative Officer (interim) Karen Dubé – Community Economic Development Coordinator
Consulting Team	
Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.	Justin Rousseau – Managing Director Maxwell Harrison – Senior Associate Drew Ziegler – Senior Associate Breanna Hives – Graphic Designer Trisha Larsen – Principal, The Web Advisors Stephanie Tambellini – Branding and Graphic Design Specialist, The Web Advisors

Overview of Research

A variety of primary and secondary research activities were conducted to develop this report. Primary research was gathered through facilitated sessions with residents, stakeholders and Village Council, surveys of residents and stakeholders, and one-on-one interviews with stakeholders and potential partners. Secondary research was gathered from local, regional, provincial, and national data sources, information requests of the Client, and a review of relevant literature. A list of research activities undertaken and organizations consulted during the project is provided in Appendix A.

02

Case for Investment in Tourism

There are many economic and community benefits to be gained through investment in tourism. This section provides a definition of what tourism is, as well as a brief overview of the benefits tourism can bring to the McBride region.

What is Tourism?

Tourism is a dynamic and competitive industry that has no universally accepted definition. For the purposes of this report, tourism can be broadly defined as:[1]

> *"The activities of people travelling to places outside their usual environment for leisure, business or other purposes for not more than one consecutive year."*

Tourism is often referred to as an industry of industries. It is comprised of all businesses, organizations and individuals that provide services and experiences to travellers. Using the North American Industry Classification System, we can further define tourism as an economic sector made up of the following five industries: Accommodations, Food & Beverage, Recreation & Entertainment, Transportation, and Travel Services.

Accommodations

Travel Services

Food & Beverage

Tourism Industry

Recreation & Entertainment

Transportation

British Columbia's Tourism Industry

There is incredible opportunity within British Columbia for tourism development.[2] According to Destination BC, "the tourism industry is a key driver of economic success across BC – growing faster than the provincial economy as a whole, with increasing revenues, employment, wages and visitors." Tourism plays a vital role in the continuing economic success and development of BC and makes a significant contribution to the economic and social vitality of communities throughout the province. Specifically, tourism has significant strategic value to the province and McBride for the following reasons:[3]

Economic Spinoffs

Tourism is a powerful economic engine, and its spin-off benefits exceed that of many other industries. Most tourism businesses buy goods locally, hire locally, and retain their profits locally.

Value for Residents

Tourism makes life better for all British Columbians. Through tourism, new career opportunities are created, a greater diversity of amenities are supported, and an enhanced appreciation for cultures and landscapes is generated.

Investment Attraction

Tourism can enhance the reputation and awareness of communities on a regional, provincial, national, and even international basis. Tourists are potential investors and can become valuable ambassadors for business development in the McBride region.

Provincial Tourism Goal

The Province of BC has set an ambitious goal to achieve 6% annual growth in tourism revenue across the province.[4] This will result in a near doubling of total tourism revenues from $20B in 2018 to $39B by 2030. To achieve this goal, new sustainable destinations will need to be developed to attract visitors and increase spending in the Province. The McBride region could be one of the destinations that will help achieve this broader goal.

6% annual growth in tourism revenue
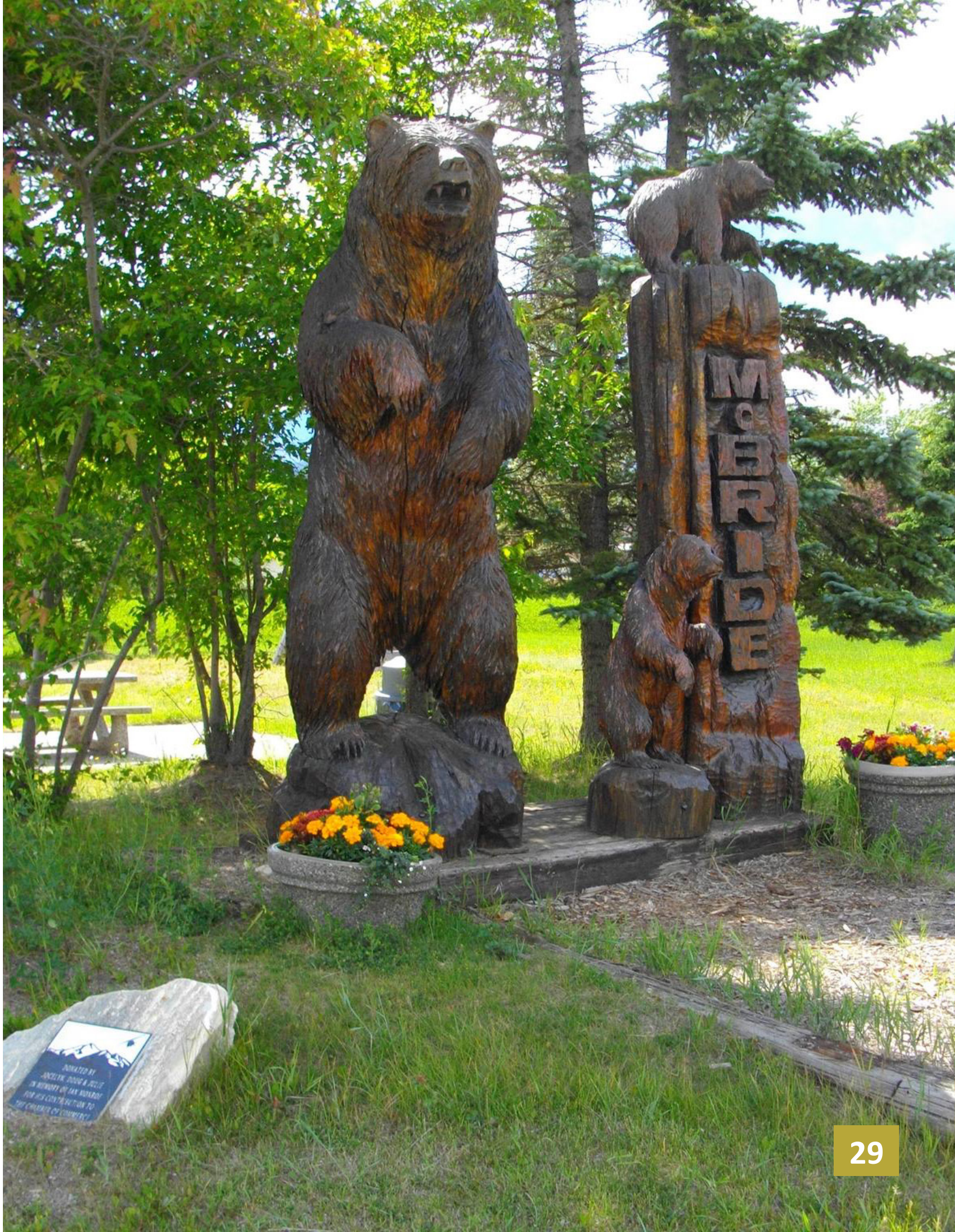
Economic Benefits of Tourism

There are many economic benefits of tourism as tourism brings visitor dollars into the McBride region. Visitor spending is "new" money that then circulates throughout the local economy, multiplying its benefit. Additionally, tourism can expose the region to potential investors and homeowners. In some cases, tourists enjoy their visit so much that they choose to stay.

The tourism industry is already a significant economic driver throughout the Province. In 2018, the tourism industry in British Columbia:[5]

Generated $20.5 billion total tourism revenues

Supported 19,329 tourism-related businesses

Provided employment for 161,500 people

Paid $6.0 billion in wages and salaries

Generated billions in total tax revenue for municipalities, the province, and the federal government

The Visitor Economy

The visitor economy refers to the widespread and often unseen benefits McBride receives from money spent by travellers. Tourism is more than just a business sector; it is an economic driver that crosses multiple industries and supports growth in multiple ways. Here is an illustration.[6]

A family from Europe travels to a British Columbia to participate in heli-skiing. They take a flight, rent a car, stay in a local accommodation, and rent or buy equipment. This is the "direct" impact of the visitor economy: local businesses receive money from tourism spending.

As a result of this spending, the business offering the heli-skiing experience is able to make a profit and hire more staff. This "indirect" impact of tourism spending produces a multiplying effect as an economic driver by increasing wages, salaries, profits, and other business costs. Also, as more visitors come to participate in the experience, more work is generated in the supply chain, as wholesalers, food and beverage suppliers, tour planners, retailers, manufacturers, etc., are called upon to meet customers' needs.

The new employees hired by the heli-skiing operation now have money to spend on clothes, food, transportation, etc., and to pay taxes. This is the "induced" impact of the visitor economy.

The ripple or spillover effects of this induced impact is felt as income and taxes are spent throughout the province on housing, education, transportation, infrastructure, energy, communication, heath care and other personal expenditures.

The end result is that tourism dollars circulate throughout the economy, amplifying their impact along the way, and resulting in support for community building and economic well-being.
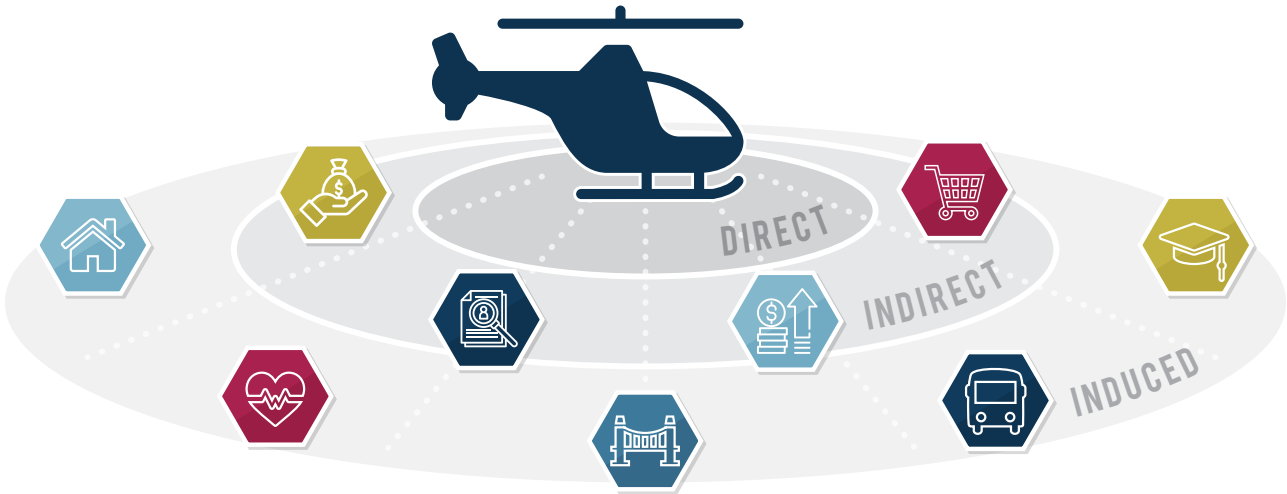
Community Benefits of Tourism

Tourism has the potential to provide compelling community benefits for the McBride region, as well. While the benefits are multiple and varied, tourism can provide the following community benefits:[7]

Enhancements to the Quality of Life for Residents

Communities that embrace tourism can often justify enhancements to infrastructure, events, and activities well beyond what could be achieved without a stable source of external revenue flowing into the community. Local community members benefit from enhanced amenities.

A Source of Community Pride

Celebrating local culture and sharing it with the world can be a significant source of pride for communities, individuals, and cultures.

Capacity to Encourage Community Engagement

Tourism can provide opportunities for individuals within the community to become engaged through business, volunteerism, event/activity execution and interpretation of local culture.

Preservation and Enhancement of Built and Natural Environments

The tourism industry can also contribute to the preservation and revitalization of built and natural environments in the McBride region. When a destination's unique characteristics (e.g. special landscapes, authentic culture, history, etc.) are leveraged as tourism products, they acquire an enhanced value that goes beyond the economic considerations. Travellers experience an emotional connection to the places they visit, while residents find a newfound significance for things that they may have taken for granted before. The addition of such values provides the motivation to further protect significant community assets and, in some cases, enhance them.
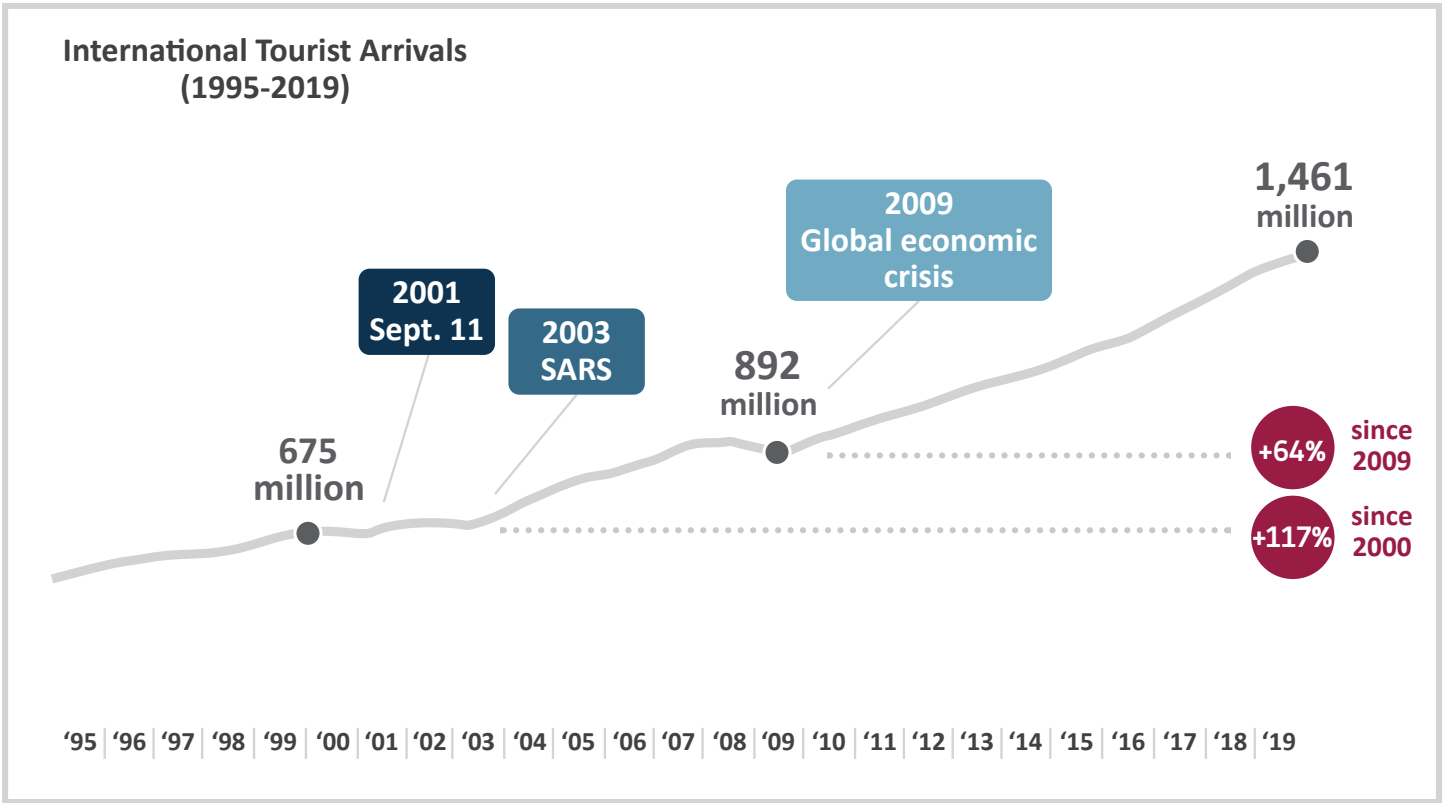
Resiliency of Tourism

The COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented and tourism has been one of the most negatively affected sectors.[8] The full impacts of the crisis cannot be known at this time, although, it is clear that significant recovery efforts will be needed. As the world responds to and recovers from this global health emergency, it is likely that the tourism sector will need to evolve.
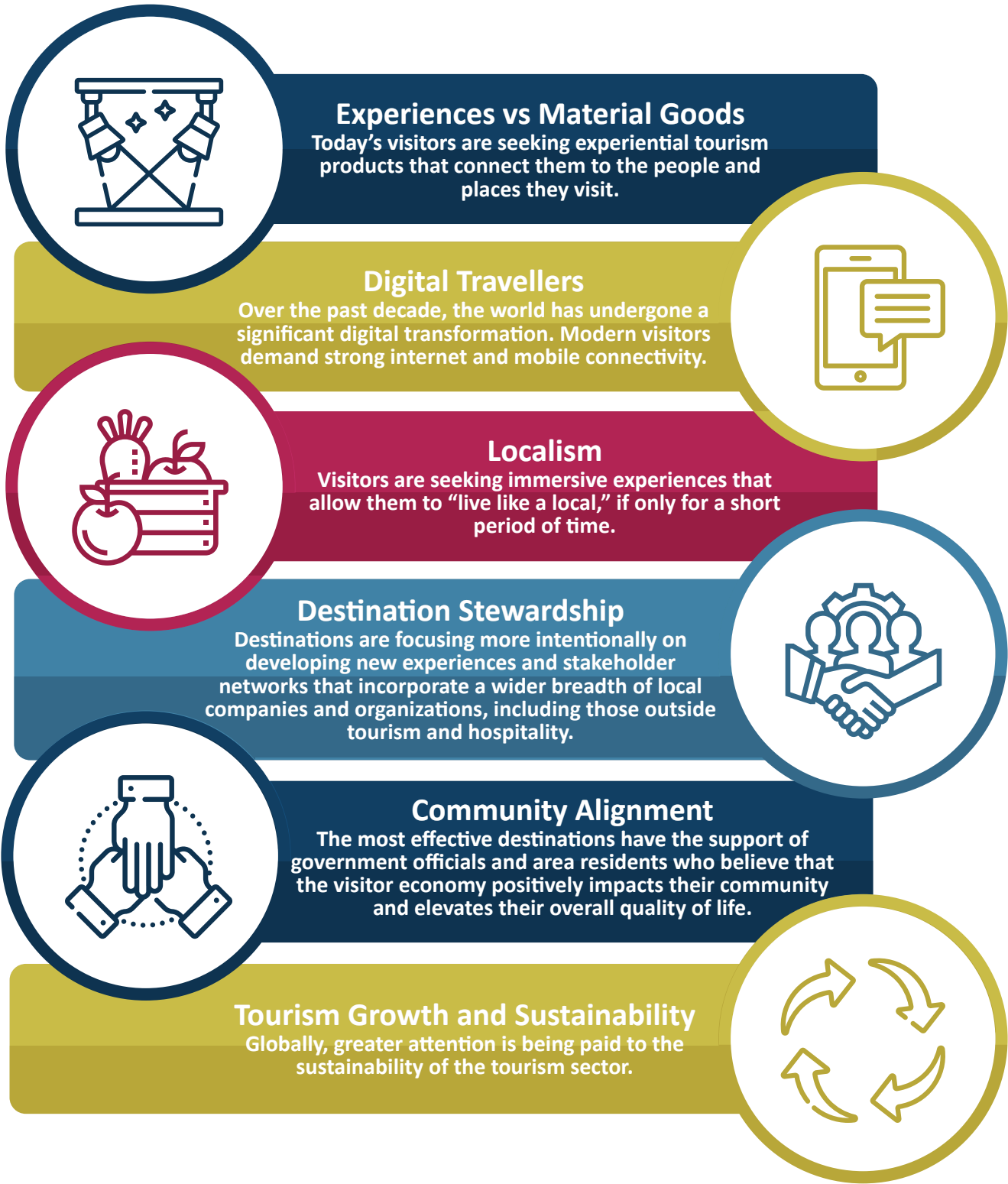
It is important to note that as a global industry, tourism has a strong history of growth and has been proven to be resilient through significant crises and events. International tourism has seen continued expansion over the past few decades, despite occasional shocks. In the past 20 years, international tourist arrivals have risen from 675 million in 2000 to 1.5 billion in 2019. This dramatic growth demonstrates the sector's strength and resilience (see Figure 1).[9]

Figure 1. Global Tourism Growth and Resiliency Through Economic Shocks

International Tourist Arrivals (1995-2019)

- 675 million
- **2001 Sept. 11**
- **2003 SARS**
- 892 million
- **2009 Global economic crisis**
- **1,461 million**
- +64% since 2009
- +117% since 2000

'95 | '96 | '97 | '98 | '99 | '00 | '01 | '02 | '03 | '04 | '05 | '06 | '07 | '08 | '09 | '10 | '11 | '12 | '13 | '14 | '15 | '16 | '17 | '18 | '19

Tourism Trends

Broad tourism trends are considered next and were used to inform the master planning process overall. For an expanded description of each trend, please see Appendix B.

Experiences vs Material Goods
Today's visitors are seeking experiential tourism products that connect them to the people and places they visit.

Digital Travellers
Over the past decade, the world has undergone a significant digital transformation. Modern visitors demand strong internet and mobile connectivity.

Localism
Visitors are seeking immersive experiences that allow them to "live like a local," if only for a short period of time.

Destination Stewardship
Destinations are focusing more intentionally on developing new experiences and stakeholder networks that incorporate a wider breadth of local companies and organizations, including those outside tourism and hospitality.

Community Alignment
The most effective destinations have the support of government officials and area residents who believe that the visitor economy positively impacts their community and elevates their overall quality of life.

Tourism Growth and Sustainability
Globally, greater attention is being paid to the sustainability of the tourism sector.

Why Invest?

The tourism industry presents an opportunity for the McBride region to diversify and grow its economic base, create jobs, enhance the quality of life for residents, and benefit other sectors of the local economy. A strategic investment now will help tourism flourish into a significant industry in the region. This will result in sustainable economic and social benefits for the community over the long term.

The tourism industry presents an opportunity for the McBride region to diversify and grow its economic base and enhance the quality of life for residents.

03 Destination Analysis
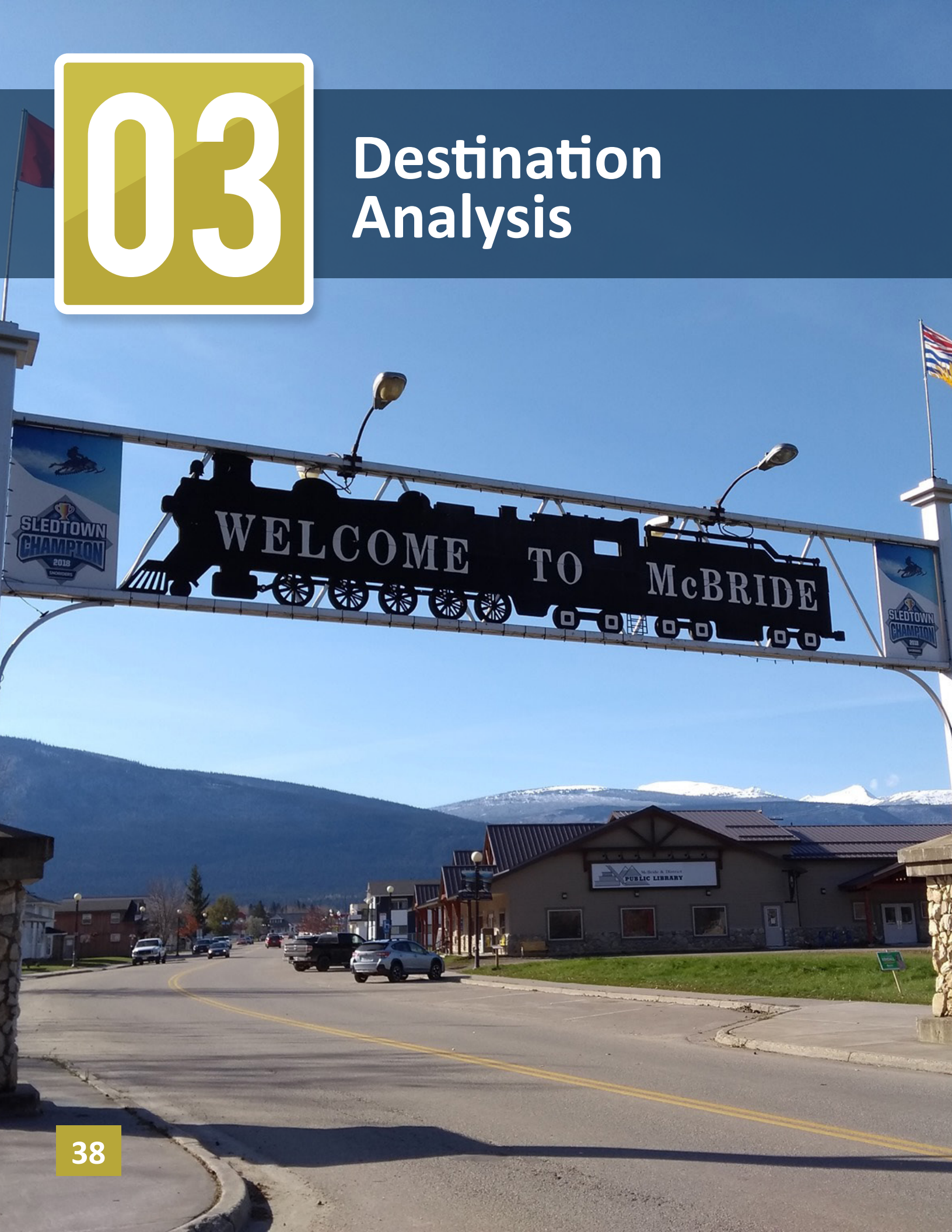
This section provides the findings from the Destination Analysis, including the results from the tourism asset inventory, visit and photograph tour, community engagement results, SWOT analysis, strategic alignment analysis, tourism marketing analysis, visitor analysis, and competitor analysis.

Tourism Asset Inventory

The tourism asset inventory recorded 151 assets across 11 tourism product categories. For each asset, the inventory identified the following information (where available):

- Asset Name
- Location (address or in relation to the Village of McBride)
- Description of the Product Offering
- Market Readiness (see Appendix C for a description of market ready standards)

The number of assets recorded for each category is shown in Figure 2. To view the full asset inventory in Excel format, please follow this link.

Figure 2. Number of Assets per Category

Asset Inventory Category	Number of Assets Identified
Natural Attractions	45+
Outdoor Recreation Activities	27
Agricultural Attractions	7
Cultural and Heritage Attractions	8
Culinary Attractions	12
Festivals and Events	Small/Local (8) Large/Regional (3)
Tour Operators	6
Specialty Shops	7
Facilities and Public Spaces	9
Accommodations	15 (164 rooms)
Campgrounds	4 (133 sites)
Total Number of Assets	**151**

As a result of the asset inventory process, we have identified strengths and gaps in the tourism product offering that is currently available to visitors and residents.

Tourism Product Strengths:

Natural Attractions

The McBride region provides access to outstanding natural assets that can provide a compelling nature-based tourism offering. The region is home to an abundance of front-country and back-country areas that showcase mountains, lakes, rivers, creeks, glaciers, waterfalls, and trails. The Mount Robson and Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Provincial Parks are both within an hour drive of the Village of McBride. These assets make the McBride region an excellent destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

Chun T'oh Whudujut/Ancient Forest Park Infrastructure Upgrades

The Lheidli T'enneh has successfully secured $8.7M in funding to upgrade the Chun T'oh Whudujut/Ancient Forest Park.[10] Funding was provided by the Lheidli T'enneh and the federal and provincial governments. The project includes new riparian wetland hiking trails, an interpretive center, sweat lodge, pit house, gazebo, improved boardwalks, pathways, washrooms, access roads, parking, and signage. The upgrades are expected to take three years to complete.

Outdoor Recreation

The region's abundance of natural attractions offers a significant number of opportunities for outdoor recreation. A wealth of seasonal and year-round activities are available from hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking to snowmobiling and heli-skiing. Many of the available recreation activities are supported by local organizations and businesses that can offer support, guidance, rentals, lessons, tours, and equipment sales.

Cultural Attractions, Festivals, and Events

The McBride region has several cultural and heritage attractions that showcase the unique history of the area, including the McBride Heritage Railway Station, Whistle Stop Gallery, Dunster Station Museum, and Roundhouse Theatre. The region also hosts several festivals and events that show potential for tourism growth, including the Robson Valley Music Festival, Art in the Park, Pioneer Days, and more. These offerings present an opportunity to differentiate McBride from its competitors and attract more visitors.

Agritourism Assets

The McBride region has a variety of agricultural businesses that could be further developed to create an agritourism asset cluster in the area. Local farms and ranches could offer experiences for visitors and/or supply locally produced products to other businesses in the Robson Valley and Jasper. It is important to note that Jasper does not offer this opportunity to its visitors, which represents a product gap that McBride could capitalize on.

Specialty Shops

Unique establishments and specialty shops in the region such as the Historic McKale House, House of Jasper, and the Dunster Store offer opportunities for further tourism experience development.

Tourism Product Gaps:

Visitor and Market Ready Tourism Product

Although there are some visitor and market ready tourism products available in the region today, there is an overall lack of consumable experiences for visitors. Additional product development is needed to achieve a critical mass of experiences that will consistently attract visitors.

Tourism-Related Programming and Experiences

The region currently lacks tourism-related programming and experiences. There is an opportunity to develop packages, itineraries, and other tourism-related programming that will leverage existing assets in the areas of natural attractions, outdoor recreation, agritourism, culture and heritage, and specialty accommodations.

Tour Operators

While there are some local businesses and individuals who provide tours, there is currently a lack of established tours. Existing tours are typically conducted on an ad hoc basis, rather than following set schedules and pricing.

Campgrounds

There is a lack of RV and camping opportunities in the region. An opportunity likely exists to develop new camping opportunities, while attracting more visitors to established sites.

Facilities and Public Spaces

The McBride region is lacking high-quality facilities and public spaces that can be further leveraged to attract visitors. Additional attractions with broad-based appeal are needed. A gap is the limited number of boat launches providing access to the Fraser River (there is currently only one formal boat launch).

Accommodations

There may be opportunity to enhance the quality and diversity of room offerings to make them more attractive to modern visitors.

Culinary Attractions

The study area has a few unique restaurants, cafés, and markets. However, an opportunity exists to further develop these into culinary attractions and experiences that will promote visitation and add to the overall visitor experience. Another gap is the lack of breakfast options for sledders in the winter.

Main Street McBride

McBride's Main Street has potential to become an attraction in its own right and a focal point for tourism in the region. Investments have been made into this area by businesses and governments; however, more is needed to reach this asset's true potential.

The working train station at the far end of the street is the primary focal point and a key node of activity. This building houses the McBride Visitor Centre and Whistle Stop Gallery, which serve tourists. Other well-designed buildings, murals, and lamppost signage give the street a distinct frontier town aesthetic and connect the community to its railway heritage. Pedestrian experiences are enhanced by wide sidewalks and excellent views of the mountains all along Main Street.

The characteristics described above provide a strong foundation upon which to build experiences that would be attractive to visitors. However, Main Street is being held back by a few key challenges. Firstly, the presence of vacant buildings detracts from the visual appeal of the street. Secondly, the street has an inconsistent theme, which results in a disjointed experience for the visitor. Lastly, the Main Street is lacking activity and animation that would bring the street to life and make it more enjoyable for visitors.

Visit and Photograph Tour

From August 28 – 29, 2020, an assessment team from Expedition Management Consulting Ltd. toured the McBride region. The purpose of the tour was to experience the destination from a visitor's point of view in order to help identify strengths and growth areas in the visitor experience.

The team navigated its way through the region, visited local attractions, shopped at local restaurants and stores, and took in the sights and sounds of the beautiful Robson Valley. During the tour, the team recorded what they observed through photographs and notes.

Overall, the tour was a very enjoyable one. Highlights of the team's experience include walking among 1,000-year-old trees in the Ancient Forest, viewing the mighty Fraser River, visiting the McBride Visitor Centre and Whistle Stop Galley, chatting with locals, and staying at the Beaver Creek Lodge. A summary of our observations is provided in Appendix D.

Photos from the Visit and Photograph Tour

Source: Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.

Community Engagement Results

As an input into the process, McBride region residents, stakeholder groups and Village Council were engaged through a variety of consultation activities, including online and hard copy surveys, one-on-one interviews, and facilitated workshops. To view the summary results from the resident and stakeholder surveys, please see Appendix E.

Key Themes from all Engagement Inputs

Six key themes were synthesized from all of the engagement inputs received. They are as follows.

1 — Maintaining Quality of Life

A top priority for many stakeholder groups and respondents to the surveys was maintaining the quality of life that is currently enjoyed in the McBride region. Stakeholders and residents do not want their community overrun with tourists that may detract from their lifestyles. Rather, they would prefer to attract visitors who will experience the destination in a manner that is respectful, low impact, and contributes to the community characteristics that drew them to the region in the first place.

2 — Strong Support for Tourism Development

There is strong support among multiple stakeholder groups to further develop tourism in the McBride region. These stakeholder groups include local businesses, community organizations, government representatives and residents. These groups recognize that McBride must develop new industries to sustain the community's economy and quality of life. The tourism sector is viewed by these groups as a high priority industry for development.

3 — Building Capacity for Tourism Development

Capacity for tourism development is viewed as a major challenge by stakeholders. Respondents said volunteers are leading many tourism initiatives, but they are getting tapped out and are limited by a lack of funding. Stakeholders spoke of a need to establish an organization with sustainable funding that will take the lead on tourism development and organize the community under a framework that will deploy the destination's resources, expertise, and passion in an efficient and coordinated way.

4 — Developing More Experiences

Stakeholders and residents recognize that the McBride region needs to develop more experiences to transition from a stop-over destination to a sought-after destination. These groups would like to see new experiences developed that will attract visitors, extend stays, and increase local spending. One area of focus was downtown McBride. There is strong interest in enhancing the offerings here to pull visitors off the highway.

5 — Enhancing Tourism Marketing

Stakeholders said they would like to see enhanced tourism marketing in the McBride region. They believed the region could be doing a better job of sharing their offerings to receptive markets. There is interest from stakeholders to look regionally and provincially to amplify the region's messaging by becoming involved in broader tourism marketing campaigns that have significantly greater reach.

6 — Improving Collaboration and Partnerships

There is a desire among stakeholder groups to work together to achieve tourism objectives. There is also support from these groups to collaborate with regional partners, such as Tourism Valemount, Tourism Prince George and Tourism Jasper.

SWOT Analysis

A high-level analysis of the McBride region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) was completed to support the master planning process. The key findings from this analysis are provided in Appendix F.

Strategic Alignment Analysis

Investment has been made by the Village of McBride, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, local stakeholder groups, and other levels of government in plans and policies that can impact tourism development in the McBride region. The development of a McBride Tourism Master Plan was found to be in alignment with several existing strategies and plans. Appendix G provides a summary of key linkages related to the tourism master planning project.

Tourism Marketing Analysis

The McBride region's tourism offerings are promoted through a variety of digital and traditional (hard copy) channels. However, there are important gaps and unnecessary redundancies between some of these channels. There are improvements to be made to ensure the region is marketing itself in a more coordinated and easily consumable way that reinforces a clear tourism brand.

Digital Marketing

In terms of digital marketing, the McBride region's tourism offerings are primarily promoted through the www.visitmcbride.ca and www.mcbride.ca websites. These sources both provide a large amount of visitor information. However, it should be noted that the Village's website (mcbride.ca) has a much higher ranking on Google's search engine, which means visitors are likely to discover this website first when seeking information about the McBride region. Tourism is also promoted through www.discoverrvr. ca; although, this website is focused on attracting new businesses and residents to the Robson Valley. It does not appear to be a visitor-facing website.

It is not immediately clear for visitors which of the three tourism-related websites is the main tourism website for the area. This can lead to confusion among visitors and detracts from their overall experience. A single tourism-focused website that speaks directly to visitors and has strong search engine optimization is needed.

A Google search volume analysis was conducted using the Google Ads Keyword Planner tool to assess and compare search trends between McBride, Valemount, and the Robson Valley. Data was collected from existing market areas, including Prince George, BC's lower mainland and Alberta cities. Over the past year, Valemount received 70% of total search volume, whereas McBride received 27% and the Robson Valley received 3%. These findings demonstrate two important findings. First, Valemount is top of mind for potential travellers interested in visiting the area. Second, the Robson Valley is not a well-known name among potential travellers.

In general, digital marketing for the McBride region is in need of enhancement. Website layouts, content, and images could all be improved to better engage visitors and ensure important information is being shared at the right time. For a detailed assessment of the www.visitmcbride.ca website, please see Appendix H. Examples of well designed tourism websites include Tourism Revelstoke (https://seerevelstoke.com/), Tourism Jasper (https://www.jasper.travel/), and Tourism Fernie (https://tourismfernie.com/). Linkages to broader tourism websites (e.g. www.hellobc.com), other local websites (e.g. www.mcbridechamber. ca, www.mcbridetrails.ca, www.mbcsa-bcsf.silkstart.com, etc.), and social media platforms could also be improved.

Traditional Marketing

McBride has several hard copy materials that contain information for visitors, including the Red Guide, Green Guide, Historic Walking Tour pamphlet, and the Solar System Walk. These materials tend to have a dated, text-heavy presentation. Additionally, the different styles of the materials do not reinforce a cohesive brand for the destination. Enhancements are needed to ensure these materials contain up to date information and engage visitors to a greater degree.

Visitor Analysis

Market data on visitors to the McBride region and northern BC was collected and analyzed to support the tourism master plan. The main findings are summarized next.

McBride Visitor Centre Statistics

The McBride Visitor Centre welcomes over 20,000 visitors each year. In the past five years, the visitor centre has seen a slight decline in visitation, from a high of 22,698 in 2015 to 20,413 in 2019 (see Figure 3). VIC operators are expecting a significant decline in visitors in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 3. Annual Visitation to the McBride Visitor Centre (2015 – 2019)*
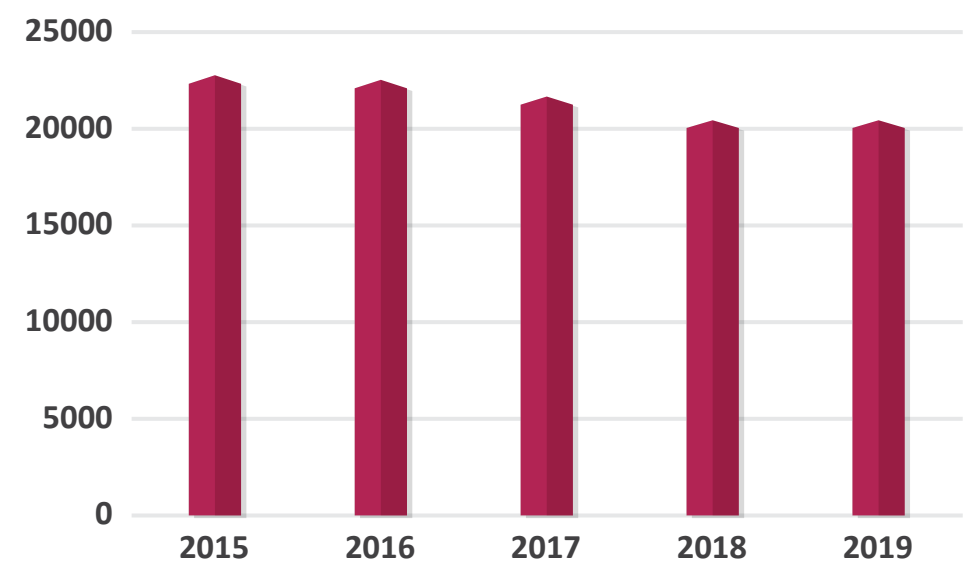
*Local residents are included in these visitation statistics. Residents are estimated to represent 20% of annual visits to the McBride Visitor Centre.

Visitors to the centre primarily originate from within BC (28%). This is followed by local residents (21%), Alberta (17%), Europe (17%), the US and Mexico (8%), other Canada (6%) and Asia/Australia (3%). In terms of seasonality, 49% of these visits occur during the summer, 26% occur during the spring, 15% in the fall, and 10% over the winter. On average, 61% of visitors to the visitor centre are same day travellers, 30% stay one night, and 5% stay two nights. Visitors often requested tourism-related information from staff. The top queries included topics such as parks, transportation, events, attractions, adventure recreation, First Nations, shopping, and accommodations.
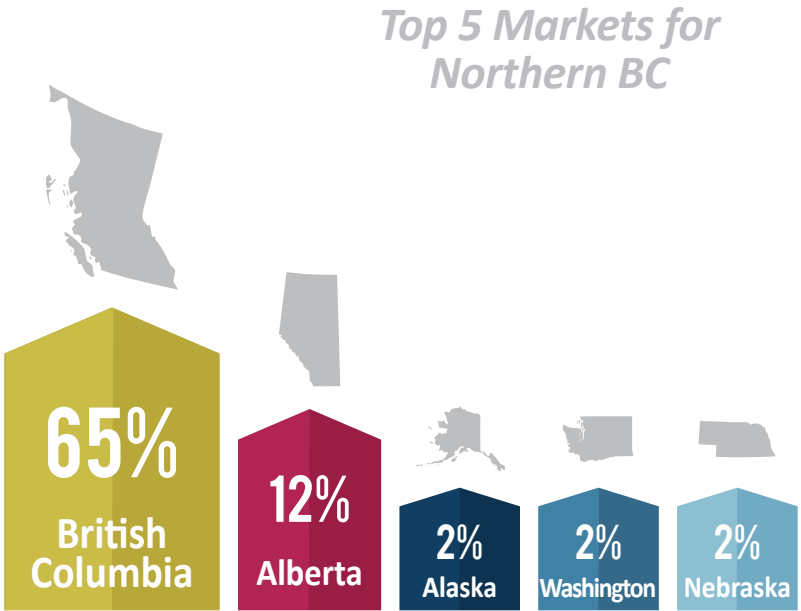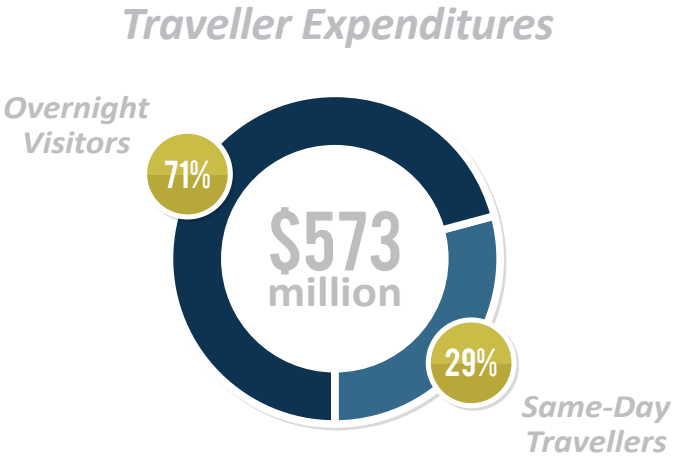
Tourism in Northern BC (2014)[11]

In 2014, 2.6 million visits were made to the Northern BC Tourism Region. Same-day travellers represented 1.7 million (64%) of these visits and overnight travellers represented 936,000 visits (36%). Traveller expenditures totaled $573 million, of which $407 million (71%) was spent by overnight visitors and $166 million (29%) was spent by same-day travellers.

In terms of overnight visits, domestic travellers accounted for 80% of total visitation, whereas international travellers accounted for 20%. Of domestic visitors, BC residents accounted for 604,000 visits (65% of total visitation), with 141,000 visits (15% of total visitation) originating from other parts of Canada. Of international visitors, US residents accounted for 149,000 visits (16% of total visitation), with 72,000 visits (8% of total visitation) originating from other countries.* The top five markets for Northern BC included British Columbia (65%), Alberta (12%), Alaska (2%), Washington (2%), and Nebraska (2%). Overall, visits to the Northern BC tourism region represented 5% of total overnight visitation in BC.

*The individual visitation figures add up to 966,000. This discrepancy is present in the original source.

The main purpose of overnight visits to Northern BC was for leisure (38%), visiting friends and relatives (32%), business (13%), and other (16%). Overnight travellers frequently took part in outdoor activities during their trip (e.g. camping, hiking, wildlife viewing, visiting national/provincial parks, etc.). Cultural activities also ranked among the top trip activities among international travellers (e.g. visiting historic sites, museums, and art galleries).

Key findings from the available visitor data is provided in the infographics on the next page. For an expanded discussion on the visitor data, please see Appendix I.

Visits to Northern BC Tourism Region (2014)

2.6 million visits

Traveller Expenditures

$573 million

Overnight Visitors 71%

Same-Day Travellers 29%

Origin of Overnight Visitors

International 20%

Domestic 80%

Top 5 Markets for Northern BC

65% British Columbia
12% Alberta
2% Alaska
2% Washington
2% Nebraska

Main Purpose of Visit

38% Leisure
32% Visiting Friends & Relatives
13% Business
16% Other

Avg. Length of Stay

4.4 Nights

Competitor Analysis

Destinations with similar product offerings to the McBride region compete to attract visitors. Several of these destinations were analyzed to identify best practices, as well as what makes the McBride region unique in relation to them. The competitor destinations included Revelstoke, Valemount, and Blue River. For an expanded description of these competitors, please see Appendix J.

Best Practices

Best practices from these competitive destinations and other successful tourism communities are provided below:

- Clearly identified tourism offering and core market focus.
- The destination has dedicated resources (human and/or financial) to manage tourism development.
- Collaborative relationships exist between multiple stakeholder groups to create new products, market the destination, and leverage resources to access greater amounts of funding. These relationships often span the private, not-for-profit, and public sectors.
- Sophisticated online presence with appropriate visitor information and trip planning supports.
- The destination invests in infrastructure that makes the community appealing to residents, visitors, vacation property owners, and investors (e.g. trails, parks, washrooms, etc.).
- The destination commits to supporting tourism-related entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Vision for the Future

Case for Change

The McBride region is faced by several challenges. The downturn in the forestry sector, an aging population, stagnant growth, and the loss of government offices and employment opportunities have had significant adverse effects on the community.[12] Many have been left wondering how the quality of life that they enjoy will be sustained. This situation has led businesses, community leaders, and residents to look to other industries for opportunity.

One industry that shows strong economic potential is tourism. Tourism has long been viewed as an opportunity in the region; however, the region has not yet reached its full tourism potential. More needs to be done to transform the McBride region into a compelling destination that reaps the sustainable benefits that tourism can produce.

What Needs to Change?

What is needed now is the courage and will to take action. The region can no longer wait for tourism to develop organically. Collective buy-in and commitment to action is needed from private, public, and non-profit sector organizations that have a stake in tourism development in the McBride region. These stakeholders must work collaboratively and embrace a philosophy of managing tourism growth in a way that will give everyone the chance to benefit.

Vision Statement

Through tourism, the region has an exciting opportunity to invite visitors to discover and celebrate the natural landscapes and unique cultures that make the community so special.

10 Year Vision

By 2031, the McBride region will be known as the home base for outdoor adventure and cultural connection in the Robson Valley.

The region will be recognized as the place to be to access iconic natural attractions, including the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut, Mount Robson, and the Fraser River. Visitors will enthusiastically engage in opportunities to learn about the histories of the people who call this amazing place home.

5 Year Outcomes (i.e. what will be different in 5 years?)

- McBride will have a well functioning tourism committee up and running.
- The region will see new investment to support tourism development and visitation.
- The region will have developed and implemented at least three highly engaging tourism packages that link McBride with iconic outdoor attractions, such as the Ancient Forest, Mount Robson, and the Fraser River.
- The McBride Visitor Centre will be known as the "go to" place to get visitor information and engage in high quality interpretation of the region's natural and human history.
- Compelling, on-brand tourism messages will be well received by high value tourism markets.
- Tourism businesses will report increased revenues as a result of tourism development activities.
- Residents will report a high level of satisfaction with tourism development in the region.

10 Year Outcomes (i.e. what will be different in 10 years?)

- Tourism will be widely recognized as a key contributor to the economic and social prosperity of the community.
- McBride will have expanded its market reach. It will be very well known for outdoor adventure regionally and will have made significant inroads nationally and internationally.
- The identity of the region will be maintained and the quality of life of residents will be enhanced.
- The region will be poised for future sustainable tourism development.

Market Strategy and Target Markets

Strategy for Tourism Development

When developing the McBride region's strategy for tourism development, Ansoff's Product/Mission Mix was utilized (see Figure 4). This model helps to frame what direction tourism development should take. Ansoff's Matrix identifies four different strategies, which can be described as follows:

Market Penetration (existing products in existing markets)
- Expanded provision of existing product for existing markets.

Market Development (existing products in new markets)
- Focus on existing products promoted to market segments currently not highly engaged.

Product Development (developing new products for existing markets)
- Expansion of current products or addition of new products for existing markets.

Diversification (developing new products for new markets)
- Develop new products specifically designed to attract and engage new markets.

Figure 4. Ansoff's Product/Mission Mix

	Existing Products	New Products
Existing Markets	Market Penetration	Product Development
New Markets	Market Development	Diversification
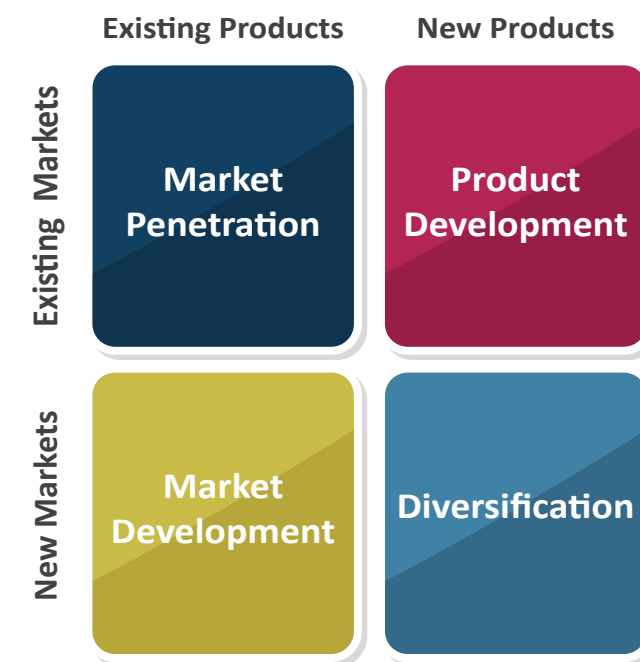
Strategic Focus

The McBride region will employ a product development strategy as its primary strategic focus. The following points support this focus.

Product Development

A. **Strong Need for New Product** – There is a strong need to further develop tourism product offerings in the McBride region. There is currently a lack of visitor and market ready products that are easily consumable for visitors. New, attractive products will need to be developed and packaged together to provide compelling reasons to visit the McBride region.

B. **Strong Asset Base to Build From** – The McBride region has many assets that can be readily developed to attract visitors looking for nature-based, outdoor adventure, agritourism, and cultural experiences. These assets provide a strong base from which to build visitor and market ready tourism products.

C. **Strong Existing Markets** – British Columbia and Alberta represent a significant number of potential visitors, and visitors from these areas are actively seeking the experiences that the McBride region can offer. Additionally, international visitors from Europe, the United States, and Asia pass through the region on a regular basis. There is a significant opportunity to create a stronger connection with this customer base in order to expand market share.

The destination must be responsive to the needs of both visitors and residents. This will ensure that product development is consumer focused, while still gaining the support of local people.

Important Note

Product development is the primary strategic focus and the majority of implementation activities should generally fall within this focus. However, it is important to note that the McBride region does not need to limit itself exclusively to this approach. If attractive opportunities within the focus areas of market penetration, market development or diversification present themselves, they should be considered on a case by case basis.

Photo Credit: Stephen Shelesky

Target Markets for the McBride Region

Considering existing visitor data, and taking into account what inspires travel to the McBride region, the following target markets have been identified for the strategy.

Target Markets:

1. *Overnight visitors from British Columbia and Alberta travelling to the McBride region to participate in outdoor adventures, explore area attractions, and enjoy an authentic, frontier town experience.*

2. *Stop-over visitors travelling through the McBride region who are seeking to immerse themselves in natural landscapes, agritourism and culinary offerings, and cultural experiences.*

3. *International visitors seeking niche-based experiences, such as dark sky/northern lights viewing, eco-tourism, agritourism, and mechanized recreational pursuits. Particular attention should be given to high yield Fully Independent Travellers (FIT) from Europe and the United States who are seeking experiences that are "off the beaten track."*

4. *Visiting friends and relatives travelling to the McBride region or neighbouring communities who are looking to connect with their hosts through authentic experiences.*

Competitive Advantage of the McBride Region

The McBride region has several characteristics which are the source of its competitive advantage as a destination. The region offers access to pristine, uncrowded wilderness areas and iconic attractions that are highly attractive to visitors seeking to enjoy a broad range of outdoor activities in mountainous settings. Communities in the area also have strong links to a distinct and authentic culture, including Indigenous histories and interesting frontier towns situated along a historic railway. Additionally, the region's agriculture sector offers fertile ground for future agritourism and culinary tourism development that could connect visitors to the land and the local community. It is the **combination** of these characteristics that set the McBride region apart from other destinations.

> *What makes the McBride region unique is that it offers the combination of uncrowded wilderness, proximity to iconic attractions, and authentic local history.*

- Uncrowded Wilderness
- Authentic History
- Iconic Attractions
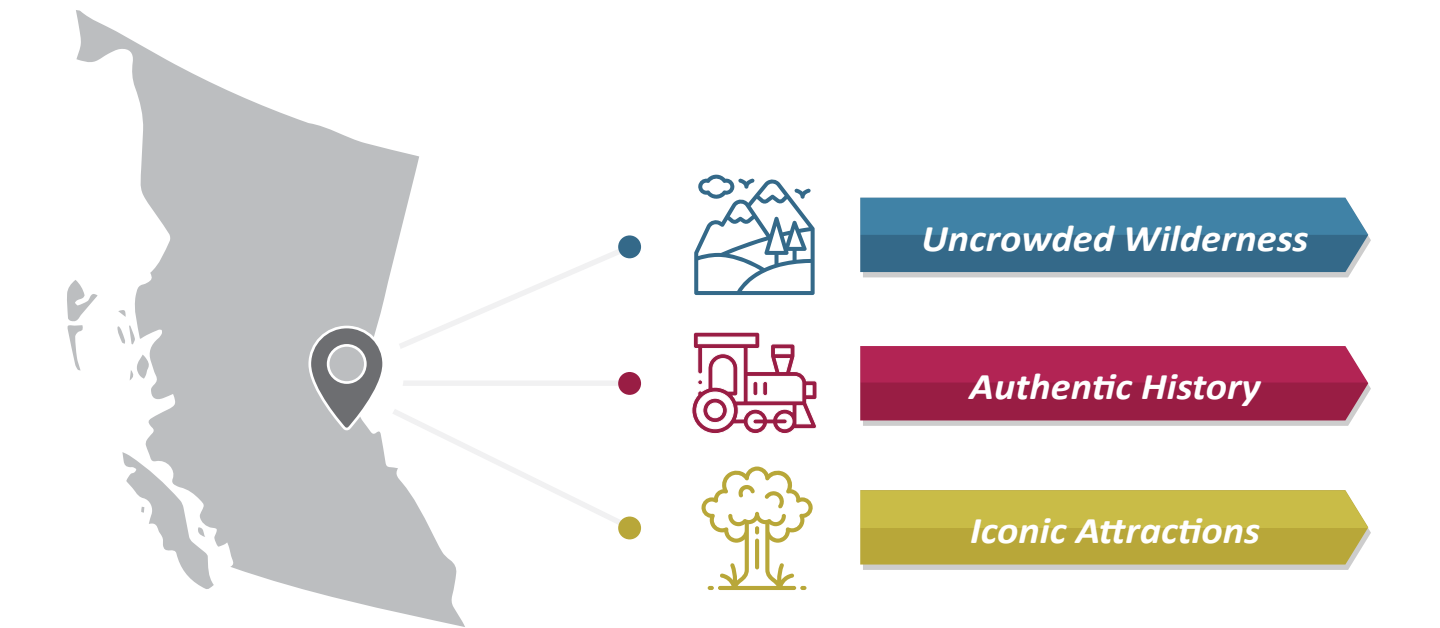
06

Focus Areas and Goals

Four overarching focus areas with accompanying goals have been developed to guide the tourism master plan. Detailed action items to support the achievement of these goals are provided in Section 8 – Action Plan.

Focus Areas and Goals

Organizational Development **1**	**2** Product Development
Marketing & Promotional Development **3**	**4** Destination Development

Focus Area 1.   Organizational Development

Goal: *Build organizational and funding capacity to ensure tourism development is sustainable in the McBride region.*

The first step toward tourism development in the McBride region will be to establish a sustainable tourism service delivery system. Multiple partner organizations from a variety of sectors will need to come together through collaborative efforts to organize themselves for tourism growth.

Focus Area 2.   Product Development

Goal: *Develop compelling tourism experiences to attract visitors to the McBride region.*

In order to attract more visitors to the McBride region, compelling tourism experiences will need to be developed. Four product development streams have been identified through the master planning process which show the greatest potential for development in the McBride region. These streams include:

1. Nature-Based and Outdoor Adventure Experiences
2. Cultural Tourism/Festivals and Events
3. Agritourism and Culinary Experiences
4. Visiting Friends and Relatives Tourism

In the near-term, it will be important for the region to develop new experiences to offer to visitors. Four experience opportunities have been proposed for development (see Appendix K). It is envisioned that these experiences would be developed collaboratively by key tourism stakeholders and be available for visitors in the short term.

Focus Area 3.   Marketing and Promotional Development

Goal: *Establish a compelling tourism brand and entice travellers to visit by promoting the region's experiences to key target markets.*

The McBride region does not have a clear tourism brand and current marketing activities are somewhat fragmented and limited. This has resulted in a lack of recognition of the region as a destination for tourism by key visitor markets. The McBride region will need to establish a clear and compelling tourism brand, as well as organize and expand its tourism marketing activities in order to grow as a destination. The region's tourism brand should incorporate both the natural and human history of the area, while focusing on anchor attractions, including:

1. Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Provincial Park
2. Mount Robson
3. McBride's Heritage Railway Station
4. Fraser River

Focus Area 4.   Destination Development

Goal: *Enhance the capacity of local businesses and stakeholders to develop the McBride region into an attractive, high-performing destination.*

The community will need to undertake key capacity enhancing initiatives that will support stakeholders in their efforts to transform the McBride region into an attractive, high-performing destination. Responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic will be important, as will enhancing the attractiveness of the destination for visitors and tourism businesses, and linking into broader tourism networks.

Tourism Master Plan Implementation Framework

This section describes an implementation framework for the Tourism Master Plan. The framework identifies a guiding principle for implementation, an organizational structure (see Figure 5), roles each organization will play, and funding mechanisms to support the master plan.

Guiding Principle for Implementation

> We will work together collaboratively with a strong preference for cooperation. We recognize that by working together we can realize our shared vision for tourism in the McBride region.

Figure 5. Tourism Master Plan Implementation Framework

Tourism Development Coordinator (proposed new position)

Host Organization (Village of McBride)

New Committee of Council (Tourism McBride)

Organizational Development Action Team

Product Development Action Team

Market Development Action Team

Destination Development Action Team

Host Organization (Village of McBride)

It is recommended that the Village of McBride takes on the role of "Host Organization" for the Tourism Master Plan. As the Host Organization, the Village will provide oversight to ensure the Tourism Master Plan is moving forward in the most effective and cohesive manner. It is possible that as the master plan evolves, it may become appropriate for another organization to take over the role of Host Organization. Table 1 describes a set of criteria that can be used to assist in selecting future Host Organizations.

> *The role of the host organization is that of facilitator, trainer, organizer and champion.*

Table 1. Criteria for Selecting a Host Organization

Criteria	Description
Goal Alignment	The extent to which the goals of the organization align with those of the master plan.
Organizational Capacity	The extent to which the organization has the capacity to add value. Do they have the business infrastructure, experience, management capacity and financial resources to be an active leader for the master plan?
Collaboration	The extent to which the organization encourages and supports collaboration between stakeholders.
Knowledge	The extent to which the organization understands tourism development.
Resource Requirements	The extent to which the organization will need additional resources to fulfill its mandate and action the plan.
Entrepreneurial Mindset	The extent to which the organization has the ability to be innovative and entrepreneurial in order to generate revenue to be reinvested in implementation of the master plan.
Growth Potential	The extent to which the organization will have the potential to achieve year over year growth in terms of visitation, visitor expenditures, and new products.
Evaluation and Performance	The extent to which the organization can be clearly evaluated and have its performance measured.
Complementary Skills	The extent to which the organization will bring to the arrangement a complementary skill set and/or other resources that will add value.
Past Success	The extent to which the organization has been successful elsewhere in similar projects.

Implementation Approach

In order to effectively implement the master plan, it will be important to diversify the workload to those that have the most to gain by building the tourism industry. Tourism development activities will primarily be executed by engaged stakeholders. However, overall success will not occur without adequate support from the Host Organization.

The role of the Host Organization is as follows:

Role:
- Facilitator, trainer, organizer, and champion.
- Oversees the "big picture" to ensure the master plan's action items are moving forward in the most effective and cohesive manner in the next 10 year period.
- Secures partnerships and leverage funds.
- Invests in tourism development initiatives where appropriate.

Committee of Council (Tourism McBride)

It is recommended that the Village of McBride establish a Committee of Council who will provide input into the implementation of the Tourism Master Plan and advise Council on matters relating to tourism development.

The role of the Committee of Council is as follows:

Role:
- Collaborative input into implementation of the Tourism Master Plan.
- The main forum for Action Teams to report on progress.
- A forum for the promotion and development of tourism initiatives.

Proposed Composition:*
- Accommodations Sector (up to 5)
- Village of McBride (1)
- McBride & District Chamber of Commerce (1)
- Tourism Experience Sector (2) (e.g. attractions, tour operators, restaurants, retail, festivals and events, agritourism)
- Member at Large (1)
- Tourism Development Coordinator (non-voting, administrative support)

*The composition of the Committee of Council may change depending on the results of further engagement with MRDT eligible accommodations in McBride.

Other important partners of this Committee would include the Trails Stewardship Group, Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, the local forestry sector, Tourism Valemount, and others as applicable.

Action Teams

Action Teams implement key projects in each of the areas of focus. Action Team representatives will report on their initiatives periodically at Committee of Council meetings.

Role:
- Implement key projects in each of the areas of focus.

Composition:
- Members of the Committee of Council as required.
- Members of other community organizations/businesses as required.
- Residents as required.

Tourism Development Coordinator

The Tourism Development Coordinator is a proposed new employee of the Village of McBride whose sole focus would be to develop the region's tourism sector. The staff member would work closely with the Committee of Council to implement tourism development initiatives. This role will be essential in furthering tourism growth in the region. It is envisioned the position would start as a 0.4 FTE (2 days per week).

Role:
- Implement tourism development initiatives from the Tourism Master Plan.
- Support the Committee of Council and Action Teams in their tourism development efforts.

Partner Roles and Responsibilities

The implementation of this master plan will require the cultivation of partnerships to collaboratively accomplish initiatives. The following identifies key partners for the master plan and describes their role.

Organization	Role
Village of McBride	• Takes the lead role in ensuring the master plan is moving forward in the most effective and cohesive manner. • Houses the Tourism Development Coordinator and provides support as appropriate.
Committee of Council (Tourism McBride)	• A multi-stakeholder group that acts as a forum for consistent communication, collaboration and idea sharing related to the implementation of the master plan.
Businesses and Entrepreneurs	• Provides many of the front-line services to visitors, such as accommodations, food and beverage, and experiences. • Local businesses will play a key role in growing tourism in the McBride region through the development and delivery of high-quality experiences. • Businesses must be actively engaged in implementing the master plan.
Local Associations	• Passionate individuals from local associations will play key roles in implementing the master plan and ensuring tourism develops in a way that maintains quality of life for residents. Examples of local associations include, but are not limited to, the Big Country Snowmobile Association, Robson Valley Mountain Bike Association, Ozalenka Alpine Club, Robson Valley Chapter of Horsemen of BC.
Residents	• Dedicated community champions will need to be inspired to help implement the master plan and generate buy-in within the community. Making the opportunity to participate in the Committee of Council and Action Teams will be important.
McBride & District Chamber of Commerce	• The Chamber is a key link to the business community and should become involved in the implementation of the master plan and encourage its members to participate as well.
Trails Stewardship Group	• The Trails Stewardship Group is a local, multi-stakeholder effort to better manage, maintain, and develop trails in the region. This group is in the process of forming.
Lheidli T'enneh First Nation	• The Lheidli T'enneh First Nation is the government of the Lheidli T'enneh. The First Nation's traditional territory encompasses the Prince George area and extends east to the Alberta border. • The Lheidli T'enneh First Nation is currently leading the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Enhancement Project. Future opportunities to develop Indigenous tourism experiences could be explored with this group.
McBride Community Forest Corporation	• The McBride Community Forest Corporation (MCFC) manages several recreation sites in the Robson Valley for the enjoyment of residents and visitors.[13] • MCFC can play an important role in tourism development initiatives relating to outdoor pursuits.
Regional District of Fraser-Fort George	• The Regional District of Fraser-Fort George (RDFFG) is a municipal government consisting of a federation of municipalities and electoral areas in northeastern BC. • The RDFFG promotes tourism investment in the Robson Valley.
Neighbouring DMO's and Municipalities	• There is potential to partner with neighbouring DMO's and municipalities on initiatives that support tourism development in the region (e.g. product development, experience packaging, collaborative marketing). The nearest partners would include the Village of Valemount / Tourism Valemount, City of Prince George / Tourism Prince George, and Municipality of Jasper / Tourism Jasper.
Northern BC Tourism	• Northern BC Tourism (NBCT) is a regional destination management organization representing Destination BC in the province's northern tourism region. The non-profit association promotes and develops tourism activity in the region through its programs which are undertaken collaboratively with its stakeholders and partners. • The McBride region must strengthen its relationship with NBCT and fully leverage this association's programs and expertise.
Destination BC	• Destination BC (DBC) is a provincial Crown corporation that leads the marketing of British Columbia as a tourist destination and promotes the development and growth of the provincial tourism industry. • DBC provides a host of tourism marketing, destination development, research, education, and funding supports to BC-based destinations.

BC Parks	• BC Parks is responsible for the designation, management and conservation of British Columbia's system of ecological reserves, provincial parks, conservancies, protected areas and recreation areas. • BC Parks manages outdoor recreational assets in the McBride region and is a potential partner in developing tourism product.
Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture	• This Ministry integrates the tourism sector with the vibrant arts, culture and sport sector to promote British Columbia for residents, visitors, and investors. • The Ministry provides a variety of supports, funding programs, and links to partner websites to assist destinations develop.
Indigenous Tourism BC	• Indigenous Tourism BC (ITBC) is a non-profit, Stakeholder-based organization committed to the continued growth of a sustainable, authentic, and culturally rich Indigenous tourism industry in British Columbia. ITBC could be a future partner in the development of Indigenous tourism offerings in the McBride region.
Tourism Industry Association of BC	• The Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC) is a member-driven, not-for-profit association that advocates for the interests of British Columbia's visitor economy.
British Columbia Regional Tourism Secretariat	• The BCRTS is a collaboration among five regional DMO's (including Northern BC Tourism). • The BCRTS leads the BC Tourism Resiliency Network which is a long-term resiliency program providing BC tourism businesses with meaningful, one-on-one support to navigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, adapt and work towards eventual recovery.
BC Destination Marketing Organization Association	• The BCDMOA works to improve organization and industry performance in communities that have active DMO's. Membership is open to all municipal DMO's.

Organizing for Tourism Development

Typical Role of a Destination Management Organization (DMO)

DMO's play a key role in the long-term development of a destination. For visitors, DMO's are often the first point of contact they have with a destination. Therefore, DMO's formulate campaigns to attract target markets and serve as the primary source for tourist information (e.g. attractions, experiences, packages, accommodations, restaurants, etc.). They also take a lead role in advocating for and developing the tourism industry in their community. For further information regarding the functions of a DMO, see Figure 6.

Figure 6. Typical Functions of a DMO

Destination Development	Marketing and Communications	Finance and Operations
• Business engagement • Community engagement • Tourism strategy • Product development • Partnership development • Grant acquisition • Sponsorship • Education • New business creation and lead generation • Advocacy • VIC management	• Develop/execute marketing strategy including collaborative marketing campaigns • Social media engagement and content management • Website management • Media relations • Trade shows • Member events (e.g. AGM, member mixers)	• Financial management • Office management • HR management • Policy development • IT management • Data analytics and reporting • Contract and grant administration • Sales administration (e.g. operator buy-in opportunities for campaigns)

DMO Development in the McBride Region

It is recommended that the Village of McBride expands its involvement in tourism development and takes on responsibility for some of the important functions of a DMO.

Opportunity for Regional Collaboration in Destination Development

The McBride region stands to benefit by cooperating with regional partners, such as Valemount, Prince George, and Jasper to attract visitors. Although communities may compete at the local level for visitors, it is important to cooperate to draw visitors to the region in the first place. This cooperation can take many forms including joint marketing initiatives, product development, infrastructure development, and more.

Through the engagement process, Tourism Valemount has expressed openness to providing some of the services of a typical DMO to the McBride region on a fee for service basis (e.g. trade show representation). The McBride region should consider partnering with Tourism Valemount as such a partnership has the potential to fast track destination development activities.

Funding Opportunities for Tourism Development

Developing tourism requires investments of time, energy, and resources. Therefore, a resourcing structure is needed to ensure initiatives move forward and momentum is maintained. The following outlines some of the funding opportunities available to support tourism development in the McBride region.

Municipal and Regional District Tax

The Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) is a funding mechanism introduced by the Provincial Government to provide funding for local tourism marketing, programs, and projects. The intent of the MRDT is to help jurisdictions grow their tourism-related revenues, visitation, and jobs. The MRDT is a two or three percent tax applied to sales of short-term accommodation provided in participating areas of British Columbia on behalf of municipalities, regional districts, and eligible entities. Currently, there are 61 separate jurisdictions that participate in the MRDT program across British Columbia.[14] The MRDT is jointly administered by the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, and Destination BC.[15]

MRDT Revenue Analysis for the Village of McBride

In the Village of McBride there are 112 MRDT eligible rooms. Average daily rates (ADR) were estimated to be $100/per night based on an online search of accommodation prices. Occupancy rates were estimated at 50%. Assuming a 2% MRDT is implemented in the Village, it is estimated that $40,880 would be collected annually (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. MRDT Revenue Estimate

# of Rooms	Occupancy Rate	# Days	ADR	Room Revenue/yr.	Participation Rate	MRDT %	Total for MRDT/yr.
112	50%	365	$100	$2,044,000	100%	0.02	$40,880

The Power of Collaborative Marketing Through an MRDT

Funds generated through an MRDT can be pooled together to achieve much greater leverage through collaborative marketing. This larger pool of marketing dollars can then be even further leveraged through cooperative marketing campaigns offered through Destination BC and neighbouring DMO's or through other grant funding programs. Ultimately, these highly leveraged marketing investments will create enhanced value by generating economies of scale that will enable an expanded market reach for businesses in the McBride region (see Figure 8 on the next page). An example of a highly successful MRDT-supported collaborative marketing campaign is provided in Appendix L.

Destination Management Fund

Destination Management Funds (DMF) are a proven method to provide core funds for tourism development and marketing. DMF's involve voluntary participation by operators who agree to charge an extra fee on their services (usually 2-3%). This extra charge is then contributed to the DMF for collective marketing and destination development purposes. The advantage of this model over the MRDT is that it is not limited to contributions from accommodation providers. It can include other tourism businesses, such as restaurants, retail, and experience providers. In order for a DMF to achieve a sustainable scale it must reach a critical mass of participants. DMF's can be challenging to develop and maintain, but there are many examples of successful organizations that utilize DMF's across Canada. In McBride's case, a voluntary DMF could be implemented in conjunction with an MRDT to achieve greater leverage of tourism development resources.

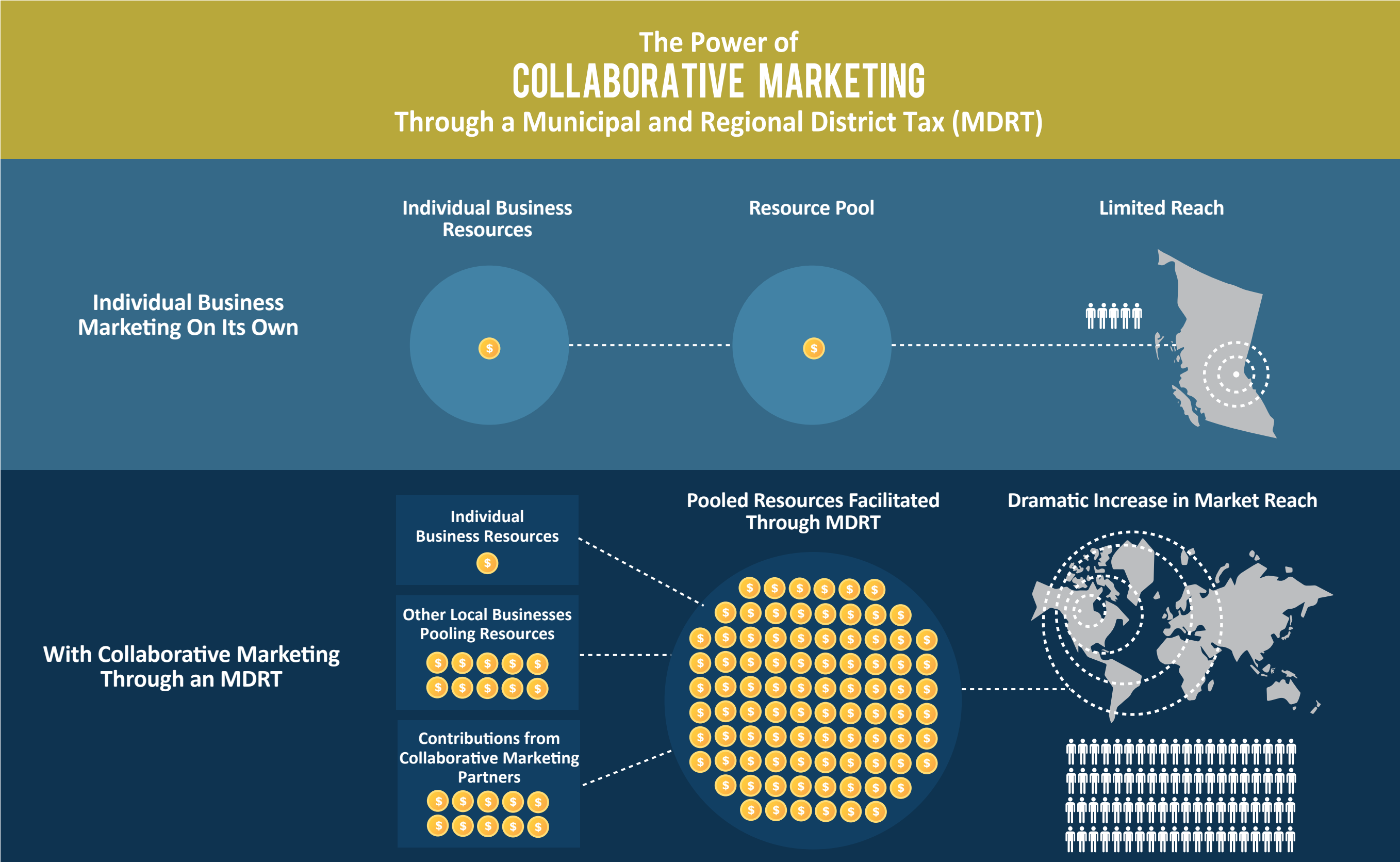## Increase in Business Activity and Tax Base

One of the objectives of the master plan is to develop tourism initiatives that will result in increased economic activity that will result from spending by tourists who come from outside the region. If businesses and governments see a return on investment, it is expected that further investment will be warranted from a range of stakeholders.

Fee for Service

Fee for service is a "pay to play" option for tourism organizations to meet specific industry needs and generate revenue. Charging a fee for a website listing or for trade show representation are both examples of fee-for-service offerings. Providing a-la-carte products and services (vs. an all-inclusive membership fee) provides more choice for potential participants and allows them to invest in customized services. Conversely, this approach has the potential to significantly increase the number of sales transactions per year, therefore this risk must be managed through the development of efficient administrative processes.

Figure 8. The Power of Collaborative Marketing

The Power of
COLLABORATIVE MARKETING
Through a Municipal and Regional District Tax (MDRT)

Individual Business Marketing On Its Own

Individual Business Resources

Resource Pool

Limited Reach

With Collaborative Marketing Through an MDRT

Individual Business Resources

Other Local Businesses Pooling Resources

Contributions from Collaborative Marketing Partners

Pooled Resources Facilitated Through MDRT

Dramatic Increase in Market Reach

Membership Fees

Membership fees are a traditional revenue stream, providing revenue on an annual basis. These fees can be structured as a flat rate for all members, or in a scaled fashion whereby smaller organization pay less. In return, members receive a package of services. Many tourism organizations in British Columbia and across the globe utilize membership fees for a portion of their budgets.

Stakeholder Contributions

This document identifies several stakeholder groups that could be contributors to the master plan as it moves forward into the implementation stage. These organizations may choose to fund various initiatives based on the mandate of their organization. It is expected that some organizations will participate to a greater degree (financially) than others. It should be noted, however, that gifts in kind and other forms of collaborative support are also valuable contributions during implementation. It will be critical to have all stakeholders participate in the development of key initiatives in the master plan regardless of their financial contribution.

Corporate Partnerships

International research indicates that tourism organizations look to sponsorships and partnerships as key to building revenue. Building new partnerships is about creating value by connecting destination and partner brands, customers, and networks. Once the master plan begins to take shape it will be important to identify companies and organizations that identify with, or have branded themselves along similar lines to, the region's tourism offering.

Provincial Funding

The Province of British Columbia, Destination BC, and the Northern Development Initiative Trust invest significant funds in provincial, regional, and local tourism initiatives through various programs as described in Figure 9. Many of these programs can be leveraged to fund initiatives identified in this Tourism Master Plan.

Figure 9. Provincial Funding Programs

Organization	Program	Available Funding
Provincial Government	Municipal and Regional District Tax	Dependent upon eligible local accommodation revenues
Provincial Government	Resort Municipality Initiative	Dependent upon MRDT performance. **This program is not accepting new entrants at this time.**
Provincial Government	COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan and related programs.	Varies depending on program.
Destination BC	Co-operative Marketing Partnerships Program	$20,000 - $250,000
Provincial Government	Tourism Events Program	$10,000 - $250,000 (depending on size of event)
Provincial Government	Economic Infrastructure Program	$300,000 maximum
Provincial Government	Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage Legacy Fund	$500,000 maximum
Provincial Government	Rural Dividend Program	$10,000 - $500,000
Northern Development Initiative Trust	Various programs, see website: https://www.northerndevelopment.bc.ca/funding-programs/community-development/	Dependent upon program
Indigenous Tourism BC	Push for Market-Readiness Program	$100,000 available for eligible applicants.

Municipal Funding

Includes allocation of resources from general tax revenue. Examples of municipal funding support include staffing, service contracts, special project funding, and ongoing operational funding.
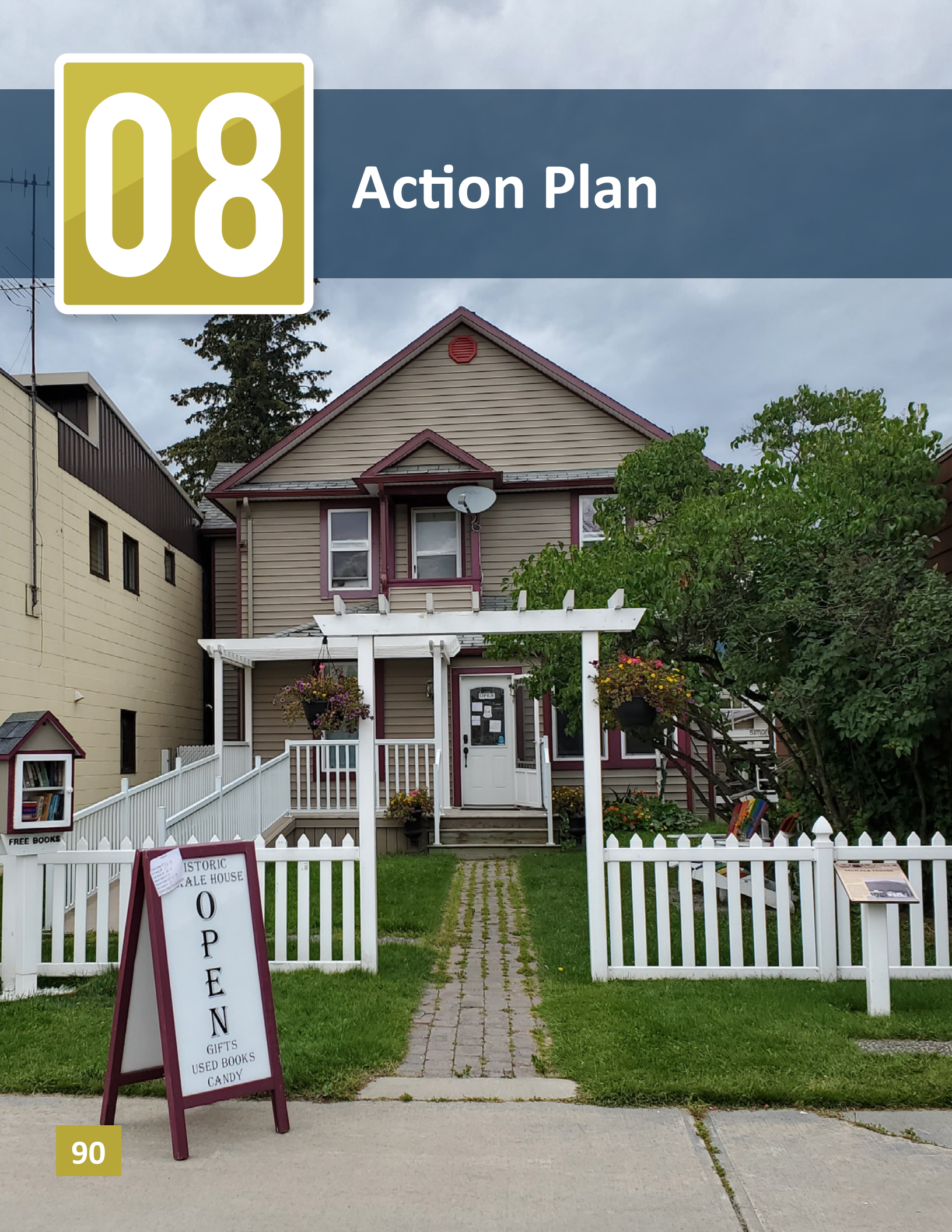
08 Action Plan

The action plan is divided into seven sub-sections, which include:

Each action item has been assigned a suggested priority rating, estimated cost, organizational lead, and anticipated timeline for implementation.

Priority Criteria

Low Priority (L) There is considerable benefit to tourism, however; because of phasing considerations, cost, organizational readiness, or relative importance in relation to other initiatives, these initiatives are deemed a lower priority **at this time**.

Medium Priority (M) There is a considerable benefit to tourism, however; because of phasing considerations, cost, organizational readiness, or relative importance in relation to other initiatives, these initiatives are deemed a lower priority than high priority items **at this time**.

High Priority (H) There is a strong benefit to tourism, and because of phasing considerations, cost, organizational readiness, or relative importance in relation to other initiatives, these initiatives are deemed a high priority **at this time**.

Cost Criteria

Low Cost (L) Less than $10,000

Medium Cost (M) $10,000 - $50,000

High Cost (H) More than $50,000

Organizational Lead

The action plan identifies organizations responsible for leading action items. It is expected that lead organizations will provide the resources necessary to implement their action items. Where appropriate, they are encouraged to seek partnerships with stakeholder groups, neighbouring municipalities, provincial ministries, the private sector, and other applicable groups wherever possible to leverage available resources.

Abbreviation	Organization
VM	Village of McBride (Host Organization)
CoC	Committee of Council (Tourism McBride)
DBC/NBCT/TAC/BCP	Provincial Organizations (Destination BC, Northern BC Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, BC Parks)

Implementation Timeline

Short Term (S)   Less than 2 years

Medium Term (M)   2 – 5 years

Long Term (L)   More than 5 years

Quick Wins

★ A blue star indicates that an action item is a "Quick Win." Quick wins are actions that can be implemented within a year or two, have a high probability of success and have a relatively low cost.

Highest Priority Items

! An exclamation mark identifies items that should be considered the highest priority in the short term.

Future Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting

A key component of the success of this master plan will be the evaluation of its initiatives. The action plan should be reviewed bi-annually, at which time priorities should be re-evaluated and a discussion of any variances should occur in reference to key performance indicators (KPI's). If new projects are added (or old projects removed) as the plan progresses, this should be done by weighing the relative priority of all projects in the plan. The action plan should be updated on a yearly basis; therefore, the third quarter evaluation period will set the stage for the updated version of the plan. In the fourth quarter, the updated plan should be formalized and a draft approved by the end of the year.

Implementation Considerations

The action plan identifies several initiatives and action items. Attempting to complete all of them concurrently will stretch the resources and limit the focus of the Host Organization as it implements the plan. Therefore, it is recommended that implementation of the plan begin with the highest priority items (!) .

1. Organizational Development

Priority Initiatives			Action Items	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline
A. Organize for Tourism Development	‼★	1.A.1 –	Obtain formal commitment from the Village of McBride to implement the Tourism Master Plan.	H/L	VM/S
	‼★	1.A.2 –	Establish a Host Organization (Village of McBride) and Committee of Council who will be primarily responsible for implementing the Tourism Master Plan.	H/L	VM/S
	★	1.A.3 –	Establish the Village of McBride as the "go-to point of contact" for destination development, tourism marketing, and visitor experience in the McBride region.	H/L	VM/S
B. Allocate Resources to Tourism Development	‼	1.B.1 –	Allocate resources to implement the Tourism Master Plan. Wherever feasible, resources should be leveraged between partner organizations to build collaboration between stakeholders.	H/H	All/S
	‼	1.B.2 –	Work with eligible accommodation providers to determine the feasibility of establishing a 2% Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) within the Village of McBride to support tourism development. Should an MRDT be deemed feasible, complete required documentation and submit an MRDT Application.	H/L	VM/S
	‼	1.B.3 –	Increase the capacity of the Host Organization to support tourism development through the addition of a Tourism Development Coordinator.	H/H	VM/S
		1.B.4 –	Consider implementing a voluntary destination management fund (DMF) in the McBride region. Participation in the DMF should be open to all tourism-related businesses.	M/L	CoC/M
C. Collaborate with Key Partners	‼★	1.C.1 –	Deliver presentations to the Boards and leadership teams of key stakeholder organizations to encourage collaboration on the implementation of the Tourism Master Plan.	H/L	CoC/S
	‼★	1.C.2 –	Host an annual multi-stakeholder tourism development forum. The main purpose of the forum would be to report on successes, describe upcoming initiatives, and serve to increase communication and collaboration in the local tourism sector. Opportunities to enhance the program of the forum should also be considered (e.g. presentations from successful tourism communities, speaker series on tourism topics, workshops with external partners, etc.). The first forum should occur within six months of approval of the Tourism Master Plan.	H/L	CoC/S
	★	1.C.3 –	Schedule bi-annual meetings with regional partners to share tourism-related plans and build new product.	H/L	CoC/Ongoing
		1.C.4 –	Seek partnerships with Tourism Valemount to deliver certain DMO services (e.g. trade show representation).	H/L – H	VM/S
	★	1.C.5 –	Designate the Tourism Development Coordinator to liaise with Northern BC Tourism. The coordinator should attend NBCT's regular industry calls, identify emerging opportunities, and ensure alignments are maintained and fully leveraged.	H/L	VM/Ongoing
		1.C.6 –	Commit to formal communication and reporting processes to keep stakeholders and the community apprised of tourism developments.	H/L	VM/Ongoing

2. Product Development

Priority Initiatives		Action Items	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline
A. Expand and Enhance Tourism Offerings in the McBride region	❗ 2.A.1 –	In the near term, focus efforts on developing the experience opportunities as described in Appendix K. Note that there are a series of action items in Appendix K related specifically to the experience opportunities, including: 1. Travel Through Time Package 2. Explore the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut 3. Experience the Frontier on Main Street McBride 4. Sled the Backcountry in McBride	H/L - H	VM + CoC/S
	❗☆ 2.A.2 –	Provide tourism experience and package development training to existing and potential new tourism operators. Consider offering training workshops on an annual or bi-annual basis and collaborating with regional partners to increase participation and share associated costs.	H/L - H	CoC/Ongoing
	2.A.3 –	Develop and enhance tourism experiences and assets under each of the four product development streams in the McBride region. Some example initiatives are provided next.	H/L - H	VM + CoC/S - L
B. Nature-Based and Outdoor Adventure Experiences	2.B.1 –	Position the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Provincial Park, Mount Robson, and the Fraser River as anchor attractions for the McBride region. Encourage local operators to build experiences around these attractions.		
	2.B.2 –	Encourage participation in the Trails Stewardship Group. This group is a multi-stakeholder initiative led by the local chapter of the BC Backcountry Horsemen Association.		
	2.B.3 –	Develop a Trails and Recreation Areas Management Plan for the McBride region. The plan should be a multistakeholder effort and explore opportunities to address the challenges of maintaining and developing existing and new outdoor trail and recreation assets. The plan should consider the opportunity to designate use for non-mechanized and mechanized activities.	To be determined by the Committee of Council and assigned Action Teams.	
	2.B.4 –	Encourage the development of outdoor tourism assets and experiences in the region (e.g. guided outdoor tours, mountain biking trails, equipment rentals for outdoor adventures, dark sky/northern lights viewing, trails, boat launches, etc.). • Look to leverage grant funding from multiple sources to fund development (e.g. Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, Northern Development Initiative Trust, Province of British Columbia, etc.). The Outdoor Recreation Council of BC maintains an extensive list of funding opportunities, which could be leveraged. • Access and leverage educational resources related to outdoor tourism product development (e.g. Destination BC's Mountain Bike Tourism Development Guide).		
	2.B.5 –	Ensure strong accessibility to nature-based and outdoor experiences for everyone. Identify barriers to accessibility and take action to remove them.		
	2.B.6 –	Encourage local stakeholder groups to become involved in the BC Caribou Management Plan development process.		
	2.B.7 –	Seek opportunities to attract vacation property developments (e.g. cabins) and/or long term RV camping offerings in the McBride region.		
	2.B.8 –	Develop investment prospectuses to encourage the development of niche, nature-based accommodation offerings and attractions in the region (e.g. nature lodges, glamping, wilderness retreats).		

2. Product Development

PRIORITY/COST	LEAD	TIMELINE	QUICK WIN ☆
L (low)	VM - Village of McBride	S (less than 2 years)	
M (medium)	CoC - Committee of Council	M (2 - 5 years)	HIGHEST PRIORITY ITEMS !
H (high)	DBC/NBCT/TAC/BCP - Provincial Organizations	L (more than 5 years)	

Priority Initiatives	Action Items		Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline
C. Cultural Tourism/Festivals and Events	2.C.1 –	Develop tourism focused programming around existing cultural assets, such as the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut, McBride Heritage Railway Station, Dunster Station Museum, Valley Museum and Archives and others.		
	2.C.2 –	Work with the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation and Indigenous Tourism BC to explore opportunities to support the development of Indigenous tourism experiences in the region, particularly relating to the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut.		
	2.C.3 –	Animate key areas of the destination, such as main street McBride, during the peak summer months with informal activities to draw visitors in (e.g. art installations, street performances, markets, etc.).		
	2.C.4 –	Work with cultural groups to develop unique cultural tourism programs (e.g. interpretive tours of historic sites, Indigenous programming, art showcases, cultural demonstrations, self-directed walking tours, etc.).	To be determined by the Committee of Council and assigned Action Teams.	
	2.C.5 –	Seek opportunities for product clustering with neighbouring communities and their cultural attractions through complementary programming (e.g. Valemount, Jasper).		
	2.C.6 –	Assess the potential to enhance existing festivals and events to increase their tourism draw.		
	2.C.7 –	Leverage the Province's Tourism Events Program to enhance the promotion of tourism-focused events in the McBride Region.		
	2.C.8 –	Lobby railway passenger carriers to maintain existing stops and add new stops in McBride.		
D. Agritourism and Culinary Experiences	2.D.1 –	Encourage local agricultural operators to explore tourism opportunities (e.g. farm stays, u-picks, tours, long-table meals, etc.). For more information on how to develop agritourism, please see British Columbia's Farm Diversification Through Agritourism Guidebook.		
	2.D.2 –	Host familiarization tours with Jasper, Valemount, Prince George, and McBride restaurants to introduce them to agricultural products produced in the Robson Valley. Work with restauranteurs to get Robson Valley products on their menu.		
	2.D.3 –	Incorporate culinary experiences into visitor and market ready experiences in all other product categories.		
E. Visiting Friends and Relatives Tourism Product	2.E.1 –	Develop a Tourism Ambassador Program.		
	2.E.2 –	Provide resources, training, and other supports to encourage residents to host VFR (e.g. trip planning tools, ambassador programs, VFR packages, how-to-host tip sheets, etc.).		
	2.E.3 –	Encourage experience providers to offer host incentives, such as discounts when residents bring visitors with them.		

Priority Initiatives	Action Items	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline

A. Enhance Visitor Information ❗	3.A.1 – Develop enhanced visitor information resources, including digital and traditional sources. The VisitMcBride.ca website should be redeveloped and positioned as the main tourism website for the region. Recommended improvements to the website include:
	  a. Shift the focus of the website from promoting the Robson Valley to promoting McBride as a tourism destination.
	  b. Redevelop the landing pages and website navigation to better engage potential visitors, as well as showcase the region's anchor attractions to a greater degree.
	  c. Add a Search function.
	  d. Add links to social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.).
	  e. Optimize the website to be viewed on multiple devices (i.e. desktop, mobile, tablet).
	  f. Perform content and search engine optimization to remedy the errors found in the site audit.
	  g. Develop enhanced visual assets (i.e. photographs and videos) to engage potential visitors.
	  h. Obtain improved website analytics and set up possible future marketing initiatives through installing Google Tag Manager | Google Analytics | Goals, Event Tracking and Reporting | Install Facebook Pixel.
	  i. Seek website linking opportunities with https://visitvalemount.ca/, https://tourismpg.com/ and https://www.jasper.travel/.
	  j. Consider applying for Google Ad Grants to support website advertising (https://www.google.ca/grants/).
		H/H	VM + CoC/S

	⭐ 3.A.2 – Work with NBCT to coordinate marketing content generation and leverage their expertise to assist with creative development.	M/L	CoC/Ongoing
	3.A.3 – Develop a tourism-focused signage and wayfinding strategy. As part of the strategy, consider the development of compelling tourism signage at the Highway 5 and 16 juncture near Tête Jaune Cache along the south and east entryways. Also consider a roadside pull out with visitor information at this location.	M/H	VM/M
B. Tourism Branding	3.B.1 – Establish a clear and compelling tourism brand for the McBride region. The brand should take into consideration the direction put forward in the tourism master plan and be grounded in what makes the destination special (see Vision and Competitive Advantage sections).	H/L	CoC/S
	3.B.2 – Develop supporting materials and marketing collateral to bring the McBride region's tourism brand to life.	H/L - H	VM + CoC/S
	3.B.3 – Communicate the brand to local tourism operators and stakeholders and encourage them to align with the positioning.	M/L	CoC/S
	3.B.4 – Work to ensure consistent implementation of the brand throughout all tourism marketing activities and materials related to the McBride region.	M/L	CoC/Ongoing
C. Improve Tourism Marketing	3.C.1 – Develop and implement an annual tourism marketing action plan for the McBride region that will focus marketing efforts on high value target markets.	H/H	VM/S
	3.C.2 – Promote existing anchor attractions and link them to McBride as the home base for these activities.	H/L	VM/Ongoing
	3.C.3 – Expand the use of social media and digital platforms in tourism promotions. For example, ensure the region's visitor and market ready tourism products are listed on HelloBC and other relevant consumer-facing tourism website.	M/L - M	VM/M
	3.C.4 – Inquire with sector-specific organizations regarding opportunities for the McBride region to be included in their promotions (e.g. Mountain Bike BC, SnoRiders, Horse Council British Columbia, Camping and RVing British Columbia Coalition, Northern Routes Cultural Experiences, Backcountry Lodges of British Columbia Association, etc.).	M/L - M	VM/M

3. Marketing and Promotional Development

PRIORITY/COST	LEAD	TIMELINE	QUICK WIN ☆
L (low)	VM - Village of McBride	S (less than 2 years)	
M (medium)	CoC - Committee of Council	M (2 - 5 years)	HIGHEST PRIORITY ITEMS ❗
H (high)	DBC/NBCT/TAC/BCP - Provincial Organizations	L (more than 5 years)	

Priority Initiatives		Action Items	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline
	3.C.5 –	Work with partners to leverage Destination BC's Co-op Marketing Program to achieve a higher leverage on tourism marketing resources.	M/M - H	VM/M
	3.C.6 –	After developing high-quality, market-ready tourism products, consider offering familiarization tours to media outlets, travel influencers and the travel trade to attract increased visitation. Support may be available through Destination BC's Visiting Journalist Program.	L/L - M	VM/M - L
	3.C.7 –	Send delegations of local tourism champions to important tourism conferences and trade shows to capitalize on emerging opportunities, build capacity and drive visitation to the destination.	L/L - M	CoC/M - L
D. Understand the Visitor	★ 3.D.1 –	Conduct research to better understand existing and potential future visitor markets (e.g. visitor surveys, PRIZM analysis, data collection, etc.). Note that Destination BC can provide support to organizations looking to undertake a PRIZM analysis.	H/L	CoC/Ongoing
	3.D.2 –	Develop and maintain target market profiles for the region's best customers.	M/L	CoC/Ongoing
E. Collaborate Regionally	★ 3.E.1 –	Begin discussions with other DMO's in the region to review opportunities for collaborative marketing, cross promotions, website linking, destination development initiatives, or fee for service provision (e.g. Tourism Valemount, Tourism Prince George, Tourism Jasper).	M/L	VM + CoC/S
	3.E.2 –	Engage with the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation to explore opportunities for collaboration and alignment to achieve mutually beneficial objectives.	M/L	VM + CoC/S - M
F. Educate the Community on the Benefits of Tourism	3.F.1 –	Communicate and promote the benefits of tourism to the community through a coordinated public relations campaign.	M/L	CoC/Ongoing
	3.F.2 –	On an annual basis, formally share "good news" stories related to tourism with the community (e.g. new business openings, business success stories, economic impact of tourism, etc.).	M/L	CoC/Ongoing

PRIORITY/COST	LEAD	TIMELINE	QUICK WIN ☆
L (low)	**VM** - Village of McBride	**S** (less than 2 years)	
M (medium)	**CoC** - Committee of Council	**M** (2 - 5 years)	**HIGHEST PRIORITY**
H (high)	**DBC/NBCT/TAC/BCP** - Provincial Organizations	**L** (more than 5 years)	**ITEMS** !

Priority Initiatives		Action Items	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline
A. COVID-19 Crisis Management	! ★ 4.A.1 –	Encourage local tourism businesses that are struggling due to the COVID-19 pandemic to participate in the BC Tourism Resiliency Network. The primary contact for the program is Northern BC Tourism.	H/L	CoC/S
	★ 4.A.2 –	Share best practices and guidelines for re-opening and recovering from COVID-19 with local businesses. Examples include The BC Hotel Association's Health and Safety Best Practices Guidelines, go2HR's Tourism and Hospitality COVID-19 Best Practice Guide, and Destination BC's Road to Recovery Webinars.	H/L	CoC/S
	4.A.3 –	Contact Northern BC Tourism about participating in the Safe Travels designation program and seek to implement the World Tourism and Travel Council's protocols.	M/L	VM + CoC/S
B. Increase the Capacity of Local Operators	! ★ 4.B.1 –	Support local tourism operators (existing and potential new ones) through provision of educational opportunities. There are many excellent training opportunities that could be offered, including Destination BC's Learning Centre and Remarkable Experiences Program, Community Futures Fraser Fort George Entrepreneurial Workshops, Small Business BC's education seminars, go2HR's WorldHost Training Services, etc. Many of these opportunities are free of charge. Funding support may be available from provincial sources for those that have a cost.	H/L - H	VM + CoC in cooperation with partner organizations
C. Support Development of the Tourism Sector	★ 4.C.1 –	Develop an "industry" portal on the VisitMcBride.ca website where businesses and stakeholders can learn about tourism supports, engage with each other, and share information/resources/ideas.	M/L	VM/M
	4.C.2 –	Develop and launch a Tourism Business Retention and Expansion Program.	M/M - H	VM/M
	4.C.3 –	Explore the feasibility of developing a multi-faceted Tourism Development Incentive Program that will encourage the creation of new tourism businesses, expansion of existing tourism businesses, and attraction of regional tourism operators.	M/M - H	VM/M
	★ 4.C.4 –	Work with regional tourism operators from Jasper and Prince George to expand their operations into the McBride region.	H/L	VM/M
	4.C.5 –	Review municipal bylaws, policies, and procedures to ensure a strong foundation and favourable regulatory framework is in place to support tourism development.	M/L	VM/M
	4.C.6 –	Identify barriers for local and regional tourism operators and work to reduce and/or remove them wherever feasible.	M/L	VM + CoC/Ongoing
D. Develop Tourism Sustainably	4.D.1 –	Encourage the sustainable development of tourism in the McBride region. This could be accomplished through: • Developing policies and programs to protect critical natural and social assets of the community. • Developing education programs targeted at visitors and residents on how to enjoy the region's tourism offerings in a sustainable way. • Encouraging businesses to implement sustainability standards and practices. • Establishing a visitor management system. • Implementing various monitoring programs. • Developing a sustainability pledge (see the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association's Regional Pledge). • Become a signatory of the Future of Tourism movement (see: https://www.futureoftourism.org/).	M/L - H	VM + CoC/Ongoing

4. Destination Development

PRIORITY/COST	LEAD	TIMELINE	QUICK WIN ☆
L (low)	VM - Village of McBride	S (less than 2 years)	
M (medium)	CoC - Committee of Council	M (2 - 5 years)	HIGHEST PRIORITY ITEMS !
H (high)	DBC/NBCT/TAC/BCP - Provincial Organizations	L (more than 5 years)	

Priority Initiatives	Action Items	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline
E. Ensure Tourism is Considered in all Future Long-Term Planning ★	4.E.1 – Plan proactively for tourism infrastructure and prominently consider long term tourism development opportunities in all future community planning. As part of this proactive planning, the needs of the region's tourism sector should be brought to the attention of planners during the development of long term strategies across all functional areas, including infrastructure, planning and development, recreation, parks and culture, economic development, social plans, etc.	H/L	VM/Ongoing
	4.E.2 – Advocate for the enhancement of internet and cell phone services in the region. Funding for improvements may be available through the Province's Connecting British Columbia program (https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/connectivity-in-bc).	H/L	VM + CoC/S
F. Measure Performance	4.F.1 – Utilize the attached performance metrics and other measures as appropriate to measure performance of the local tourism industry on an annual basis (e.g. visitor survey, accommodation survey, etc.). Use the data collected during the first year of measurement as a benchmark to compare future results to.	H/L	VM + CoC/ Ongoing
	4.F.2 – Complete an economic impact analysis to benchmark the local tourism industry for future comparison. Consider utilizing Destination BC's Value of Tourism Model, which is free of charge once there is an appropriate sample collected.	M/M - H	VM/S
	4.F.3 – Commit to formal communication and reporting processes to keep stakeholders and the community apprised of tourism developments.	M/L	VM + CoC/ Ongoing

Top 10 Action Items

The following action items have been identified as the top short-term priorities to advance the destination toward its vision. The top 10 list has been organized in order of priority.

1   Obtain formal commitment from the Village of McBride to implement the Tourism Master Plan.

2   Establish a Host Organization (Village of McBride) and Committee of Council who will be primarily responsible for implementing the Tourism Master Plan.

3   Work with eligible accommodation providers to determine the feasibility of establishing a Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT).

4   Allocate resources to implement the Tourism Master Plan. Wherever feasible, resources should be leveraged between partner organizations to build collaboration between stakeholders.

5   Encourage local tourism businesses that are struggling due to the COVID-19 pandemic to participate in the BC Tourism Resiliency Network.

6   Increase the capacity of the Village of McBride to support tourism development through the addition of a Tourism Development Coordinator.

7   Host a tourism development forum to encourage collaboration and kick off the implementation of the Tourism Master Plan.

8   Focus efforts on developing highly engaging tourism packages (as identified in Appendix K). Experiences will tell the story of the region and highlight important regional attractions.

9   Provide tourism experience and package development training to existing and potential new tourism operators.
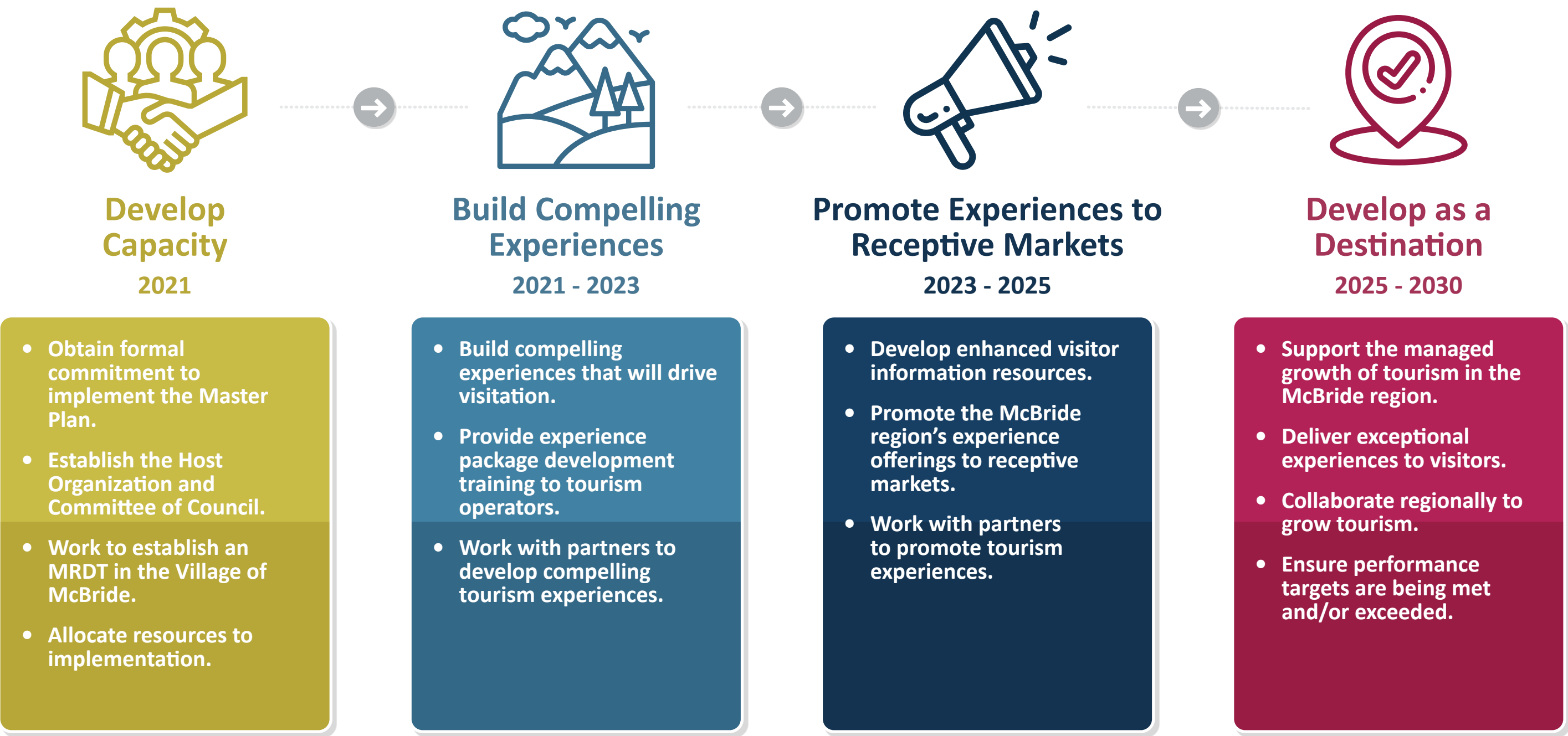
10   Develop enhanced visitor information resources, including digital and traditional sources. The VisitMcBride.ca website should be redeveloped and positioned as the main tourism website for the region.

Implementation Timeline

The timeline below provides a high-level overview of how the master plan will be implemented.

Develop Capacity
2021

- Obtain formal commitment to implement the Master Plan.
- Establish the Host Organization and Committee of Council.
- Work to establish an MRDT in the Village of McBride.
- Allocate resources to implementation.

Build Compelling Experiences
2021 - 2023

- Build compelling experiences that will drive visitation.
- Provide experience package development training to tourism operators.
- Work with partners to develop compelling tourism experiences.

Promote Experiences to Receptive Markets
2023 - 2025

- Develop enhanced visitor information resources.
- Promote the McBride region's experience offerings to receptive markets.
- Work with partners to promote tourism experiences.

Develop as a Destination
2025 - 2030

- Support the managed growth of tourism in the McBride region.
- Deliver exceptional experiences to visitors.
- Collaborate regionally to grow tourism.
- Ensure performance targets are being met and/or exceeded.

Annual Implementation Budget

The following budget provides a high-level description of the anticipated annual revenues and expenses needed to implement the master plan in the first few years. Core funding from an MRDT or DMF will be crucial to ensuring sufficient revenue is generated to support key activities.

Proposed Annual Implementation Budget

Revenues	
MRDT/DMF Funding	$41,000
Cooperative Marketing Grants	$9,000
Project-Based Funding (Village)	$10,000
Project-Based Funding (Grants)	$10,000
Total Revenue	**$70,000**

Expenses	
Tourism Development Coordinator[1]	$32,000
Annual Marketing Campaign	$18,000
Project-Based Expenses (Master Plan Initiatives)	$20,000
Total Expense[2]	**$70,000**

Notes:

[1] It is envisioned that the Tourism Development Coordinator would start as a 0.4 FTE. As revenues for implementation grow, this position could expand its scope. The role of the Tourism Development Coordinator could also be fulfilled by a suitable contract firm.

[2] The Village of McBride would provide several in-kind supports for implementation, including housing the Tourism Development Coordinator, managing the MRDT and/or DMF, grant application support, and general administration.

Performance Measures

19 key performance indicators (KPI's) have been developed for the master plan. It is suggested that the KPI's are measured and evaluated on an annual basis.

Focus Area for Growth	KPI	Measurement Tool
1. Increased Experiences	1.1 25% annual growth in experiential programming on a destination-wide basis (years 1-5).	Quarterly/annual reports
	1.2 65% of all businesses that are related to tourism trained in identified workshops (by year 5).	Quarterly/annual reports
2. Increased Awareness	2.1 10% annual growth in digital engagement with visitors (year 2 on).	Website Metrics
	2.2 10% annual growth in new product awareness by visitors (year 2 on).	Visitor Survey
	2.3 10% annual growth in new product awareness by residents (year 2 on).	Resident Survey
3. Increased Revenue	3.1 10% annual growth in new tourism businesses and associated increase in municipal business tax revenue (year 2 on).	Operational budgets
	3.2 10% annual growth in operational revenue at visitor attractions (year 2 on).	Operator Survey
	3.3 10% annual growth in leisure traveller accommodation receipts (year 2 on).	Operator Survey
	3.4 10% annual growth in tour operator receipts (year 2 on).	Operator Survey
	3.5 10% annual growth in retail and restaurant receipts during peak tourism periods (year 2 on).	Operator Survey
4. Increased Visitation	4.1 10% annual growth in number of visitors to attractions each year (year 2 on).	Visitor statistics from attractions
	4.2 10% annual growth in number of leisure traveller overnight stays each year (year 2 on).	Operator Survey
	4.3 10% annual growth in tour operator visitation (year 2 on).	Operator Survey
	4.4 10% annual growth in tourism event visitation (year 2 on).	Operator Survey
5. Increased Satisfaction	5.1 85% great rating at attractions (by year 5).	Visitor survey
	5.2 85% great rating with the quality of visitor amenities (by year 5).	Visitor survey
	5.3 85% great rating of overall experience in the McBride region (by year 5).	Visitor survey
	5.4 Achieve a Net Promoter Score of 50 (by year 5).	Visitor survey
	5.5 20% increase in number of return visitors (by year 5).	Visitor survey

09 Conclusion

The McBride Tourism Master Plan offers a strategic direction that will advance the McBride region toward its vision to become known as the home base for outdoor adventure and cultural connection in the Robson Valley. The region is in the early stages of development, but there are strong indicators signalling an opportunity for tourism growth.

The master plan will require a high degree of collaboration and significant investment from multiple stakeholders to be successful. It is only through cooperation that the community will achieve its shared vision and build a competitive destination in the long-term. Now is the time to invest in tourism and forge a future that includes a high quality of life for residents, strong income for businesses, and the preservation of the natural environments and cultures that make the McBride region a special place.

> *The McBride Tourism Master Plan offers a strategic direction that will advance the McBride region toward its vision to become known as the home base for outdoor adventure and cultural connection in the Robson Valley.*

Appendices

Appendix A: Overview of Research

Surveys Administered

- McBride Resident Survey (213 responses)
- McBride Stakeholder Survey (21 responses)

Meetings Conducted

- Project Team Meetings (7)
- Resident and Stakeholder Input Workshops (2)
- Council Input Workshop (1)
- Resident and Stakeholder Draft Plan Feedback Opportunity (1)
- Council Feedback Opportunity (1)

Documents Reviewed

- Strategies, plans and other documents from The Village of McBride
- Strategies, plans and other documents from comparative destinations
- Tourism research and visitation statistics from Destination BC, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, and national sources
- Planning documents from stakeholders

See Appendix M for a detailed list of resources.

Stakeholders Consulted (through interviews, surveys, or workshops)

Governments:
1. Village of McBride Council
2. Village of McBride Administration
3. Regional District of Fraser-Fort George
4. Lheidli T'enneh First Nation
5. Ministry of Rural Economic Development (Province)
6. Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (Province)

Local Stakeholder Groups:
7. McBride Big Country Snowmobile Association
8. Backcountry Horseman of BC (Robson Valley Chapter)
9. Ozalenka Alpine Club
10. McBride Community Forest Corporation
11. McBride and District Chamber of Commerce
12. McBride Visitor Centre
13. Fraser Headwaters Alliance
14. McBride and District Public Library
15. McBride Scale Model Solar System
16. Community Futures
17. McBride Evangelical Free Church

Local Businesses:
18. Beaver Creek Lodge & Cabins
19. Kakwa Eco Village
20. Beaverview RV Park
21. At Home B&B
22. Gigglin' Grizzly Neighbourhood Pub
23. Grizzly Gulch
24. Husky/Esso McBride
25. Caribou Grill Restaurant (Valemount)
26. Stacks Ventures Inc.

External Stakeholder Groups:
27. Tourism Valemount
28. Valemount and Area Recreation Development Association (VARDA)
29. Tourism Prince George
30. Tourism Jasper
31. Northern BC Tourism Association
32. Outdoor Recreation Council of BC

Appendix B: Expanded Tourism Trends

Dramatic Growth in Tourism World-Wide

The world has experienced dramatic growth in terms of travel and tourism. Tourism is currently one of the largest industries in the world. For example, in 2016, travel and tourism accounted for 10% of the world's GDP ($2.3 trillion).[16] Tourism's contribution to global GDP was higher than banking, mining, agriculture or construction. When the indirect and induced impacts of the visitor economy are considered, tourism generated $7.6 trillion and accounted for 1 in 10 jobs on a world-wide basis.

> *Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world.*

Experiences vs Material Goods

Today's visitors are seeking experiential tourism products that connect them to the people and places they visit. One of the biggest recent shifts in consumer behaviour has been the prioritization of experiences over material goods. According to a 2015 study published in Forbes magazine, 78% of people between the ages of 25-40 prefer to spend money on an experience over a material possession.[17] This growth in experiences is aligned with an increased desire to share experiences with others. In a Forbes survey, 69% of respondents said they believe attending live experiences helps them connect better with their friends, their community and people around the world, while 72% indicated they would like to spend more on experiences in coming years.[18]

> *Visitors are seeking experiential tourism products that connect them to the people and places they visit.*

Digital Travellers

Over the past decade, the world has undergone a significant digital transformation. According to some estimates, by 2021, more than 26% of leisure travellers and 20% of business travellers globally will be "mobile only," operating with smartphones and tablets, rather than laptop or desktop computers.[19] These digitally connected travellers can research and purchase travel 24/7 through the internet, and they demand strong connectivity, even in rural or remote places. Destinations will need to have the infrastructure in place to ensure strong connectivity in order to attract the visitors of the future.
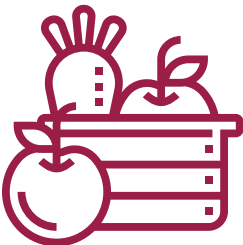
Localism

Consumers are embracing products that have local credentials or claims as they consider these products to be better quality, healthier, more sustainable, and more authentic.[20] Examples of these products include craft beer, farm-to-table offerings, and local festivals that highlight community values. Visitors are seeking immersive experiences that allow them to "live like a local," if only for a short period of time.

Destination Stewardship

According to Destinations International's 2019 Futures Study, the most significant shift overall for destination organizations worldwide is the expanding role from solely destination marketing to destination management.[21] Today, destination organizations are focusing more intentionally on developing new destination experiences and stakeholder networks that incorporate a wider breadth of local companies and organizations, including those outside tourism and hospitality.

> *"Destination management addresses the interactions between visitors, the industry that serves them, the community that hosts them, and the environment (natural, built and cultural)."*
>
> *- UNWTO, 2019*

Community Alignment

The most effective destinations have the support of government officials and area residents who believe that the visitor economy positively impacts their community and elevates their overall quality of life. Building coalitions between the public and private sectors to move a destination toward a common goal can be challenging due to the variety of audiences and agendas. However, the powerful benefits of community alignment are well worth the effort. When government, businesses and residents agree on the value of the visitor economy, then it is much easier to build support for new initiatives that will grow tourism.[22]

> *When government, businesses and residents agree on the value of the visitor economy, then it is much easier to build support for new initiatives that will grow tourism.*
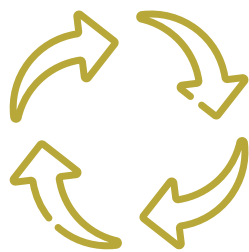
Tourism Growth and Sustainability

Globally, greater attention is being paid to the sustainability of the tourism sector. In this case, sustainability refers to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development. A suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to promote long-term sustainability. Increasingly, destinations are realizing that their efforts to grow tourism must be pursued within the wider context of the economic, social, and environmental needs of their communities. According to UNWTO, sustainable tourism should:[23]

1. Make optimal use of environmental resources while maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
2. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to intercultural understanding and tolerance.
3. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed.

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building.

Appendix C: Market Ready Standards

Market Ready Standards are broken down into three categories of "readiness" to assist tourism-related businesses in progressively increasing the quality and professionalism of their operation.[24]

Visitor Ready

These criteria are used to determine if a tourism supplier is ready to offer "visitor ready" product to consumers.

Visitor Ready: Refers to a business which has all of their licenses, permits and insurance in place in order to operate legally.

Criteria
The following criteria must be met if a business is to be classified as "visitor ready". The business must:

- Maintain good standing of all applicable business licenses, insurance, and legislative requirements.
- Maintain a staffed business location with a set schedule of operating hours.
- Provide a contact telephone number or email contact year-round. If closed for season, provide automated response through voicemail and or email.
- Have branded on-site signage.

Market Ready

These criteria are used to determine if a tourism supplier is ready to offer "market ready" product to consumers.

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

Criteria
The following criteria must be met if a business is to be classified as "market ready". The business must meet visitor ready criteria plus:

- Provide a published pricing policy.
- Have a published consumer billing, payment, and cancellation policy.
- Have marketing materials such as brochure, rack card or website.
- Have site based parking in close proximity.
- During operating season, maintain a 24-48 hour response time; or less, to inquiries and a 24 hour response time to reservation/booking requests.

- Be prepared to communicate and accept reservations by telephone, fax and/or e-mail and provide same day confirmation of booking arrangements.
- Have high resolution images and video footage for promotional and training purposes.
- Have frontline staff who are trained in customer service (such as WorldHost® or equivalent customer training program)
- Be an active stakeholder or eligible to become a stakeholder of your local tourism association.

Export Ready

These criteria are used to determine if a tourism supplier is ready to offer "export ready" product to international markets.

Export Ready: Refers to a business that markets to and through travel trade distribution sales channels, understands commission or net rate pricing, agrees to trade bookings and a cancellation policy.

Criteria

The following criteria must be met if a business is to be classified as "export ready". The business must meet "visitor and market ready" criteria plus:

- Be in business at least one year, with a proven track record for safe and professional operation.
- Demonstrate an adequate budget and marketing plan that includes international tourism operators.
- Understand the roles played by receptive tour operators, tour operators, travel wholesalers, and retail travel agents and understand rack or retail pricing, agent commissions and wholesale net rates at each level.
- Be willing to include receptive tour operators in your marketing and sales plan and provide contracted wholesale net rates to receptive tour operators.
- Provide detailed pricing and program information to tour operators and wholesalers at least one year in advance of selling season.
- Be prepared to set up billing arrangements with the tour operator, wholesale agency or receptive tour operator.
- If you plan to pursue group business, ensure you are able to accommodate and adapt to the needs of the market (e.g. tour bus access and parking, washroom facilities, maximum group size, group pricing, and frontline staff that speak the language of your target markets).
- Carry adequate insurance (discuss this with your receptive operator as sometimes they can add suppliers to their existing policies at nominal cost).
- Provide support (free or reduced rates) for international media and travel trade familiarization tours.
- Offer currency exchange rates consistent with industry norms.

Appendix D: Visit and Photograph Tour Findings

Key Strengths:

1. Business owners and local residents were friendly and helpful. Several demonstrated a keen interest in the tourism sector.
2. The ancient forest visit was a highlight of the trip. This attraction has significant potential for tourism and brand development for the McBride region.
3. VIC staff were helpful and knowledgeable.
4. The VIC is well connected to downtown, has great food and has an interesting gift shop.
5. Downtown has a historic mountain town feel. We appreciated the historic walking tour and oversized images on buildings depicting area history. More of this can be done.
6. Accommodations supported our goal of experiencing the outdoors. The property offered excellent views and a welcoming vibe.
7. Historic McKale House was an interesting stop.
8. There are strong highway connections for visitors to enter the McBride region and access key attractions (e.g. Ancient Forest, Mount Robson, Main Street McBride).

Main Growth Areas:

1. There was a significant gap in terms of the quantity and quality of tourism-related signage.
2. The boil water advisory detracted from the visitor experience.
3. Hard copy visitor information was lacking at the VIC and at key attractions/businesses.
4. There is a lack of organized tours, programs, restaurants, entertainment, and animation along McBride's main street and in the region as a whole.
5. There is limited natural and human history interpretation at the VIC and elsewhere in the region.
6. There is limited promotion of main attractions at the VIC (e.g. Ancient Forest, Fraser River, Mount Robson, lakes etc.)
7. The museum, campground and some businesses were closed (on a Saturday in summer) and foot traffic was sparse.
8. McBride's main street has several boarded-up buildings, which reduced the visual appeal.
9. The accessibility of roads to trail heads could be improved. Trailhead amenities can also be improved (e.g. washrooms).
10. Limited river access.

Appendix E: Resident and Stakeholder Survey Results

Resident Survey

Residents were surveyed between May 20, 2020 and June 14, 2020. The Village of McBride posted the online version of the survey on their website and collected hard copy surveys through mail outs. In total, 213 responses were received. Key findings from the resident surveys are provided next:

1. The majority of respondents were likely to recommend the McBride region as a place for others to visit (78%).

2. Respondents felt confident answering basic visitor questions about the McBride region (84% very or somewhat confident).

3. Respondents were able to identify many tourism assets in the region, including natural attractions such as mountains, rivers, wildlife viewing, and access to the back country; trails for snowmobiling, hiking, biking, and horseback riding; and the friendly, welcoming nature of residents.

4. Visitor amenities rated highly by respondents included safety and security (52% Great! and 39% OK), parking (46% Great! and 46% OK), visitor information centre (45% Great! and 45% OK), cleanliness of public spaces (39% Great! and 53% OK), and customer service (39% Great! and 52% OK).

5. Visitor amenities rated poorly by respondents included public washrooms (59% poor), business hours (28% poor), online information (24% poor), directional signage (23% poor), accommodations (21% poor), access to business services (21% poor), and restaurants (20% poor).

6. 84% of respondents were likely or very likely to invite their friends and family to visit the McBride region within the next two years.

7. The top three activities respondents enjoy doing with their friends and family were spending time with friends and family (76%), nature-based activities (69%), and festivals and events (31%).*

8. The biggest barriers to participation in activities with family and friends included activity not offered (14%), distance to activities (6%) scheduling/timing of activities (5%), and health issues/limited mobility (5%). 18% of respondents to this question identified other barriers to participation. These were primarily related to limited access to and quality of trails in the region, and inclement weather. Notably, 39% of respondents said they have not encountered any barriers.*

9. In order to encourage more visitation to the McBride region, respondents felt the community could most improve on things to do (68%), public facilities and spaces (48%), and visitor amenities (42%).

10. The top activities respondents thought had the greatest potential to be developed to encourage visitation were nature-based activities (69%), festivals and events (43%), mechanized activities (32%), and organized tours (29%).*

11. The top 3 issues respondents said the community should focus on during the development of its Tourism Master Plan included, promoting the McBride region as a tourism destination (37%), improving visitor amenities (34%), and expanding visitor amenities (33%). Respondents also valued enhancing quality of life for residents (33%), ensuring affordable housing for residents (28%), reducing the potential negative impacts of tourism (25%) and creating a shared vision for the future of tourism (25%).

12. Assuming normal economic conditions (i.e. pre-COVID-19), more than half of respondents would support some level of increase in property taxes to enhance local tourism amenities and encourage increased visitation (54%).

*Multiple responses were accepted for these questions, which is why the totals add up to more than 100%.

> *In order to encourage more visitation, respondents felt the community could improve on things to do, public facilities and spaces, and visitor amenities.*

Stakeholder Survey

An online survey of tourism stakeholders in the McBride region was conducted between May 20, 2020 and June 14, 2020. The Village of McBride posted the online survey on their website. In total, 21 responses were received. Key findings from the stakeholder survey are provided next:

1. The top three issues respondents identified to focus on during the development of the Tourism Master Plan included promoting the McBride region as a tourism destination (67%), expanding visitor experiences (58%), and clarifying organizational roles to achieve tourism development (42%).*

2. Visitor amenities rated highly by respondents included safety and security (55% very good and 36% good), cleanliness of public spaces (55% very good and 36% good) and visitor information (45% very good and 45% good).

3. Visitor amenities rated poorly by respondents included online information (50% poor), public washrooms (36%), restaurants (36%), accommodations (27%), and business hours (27%).

4. In order to encourage more visitation to the region, respondents said their community could most improve on things to do (89%), places to stay (56%), and places to eat (56%).*

5. The top activities respondents thought had the greatest potential to be developed to encourage visitation were nature-based activities (60%), mechanized activities (50%), and cultural attractions and programs (30%).*

6. In terms of destination development services, respondents were most supportive of tourism advertising and promotions (58%), tourism product development (42%), stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and communication (42%), and building the McBride region tourism brand (33%).*

7. Assuming normal economic conditions (i.e. pre-COVID-19), the majority of respondents would support some level of increase in property taxes to enhance local tourism amenities and encourage increased visitation (67%).

*Multiple responses were accepted for these questions, which is why the totals add up to more than 100%. Key Themes from all Engagement Inputs

> *Stakeholders would like to see more tourism advertising, product development, collaboration, and brand building.*
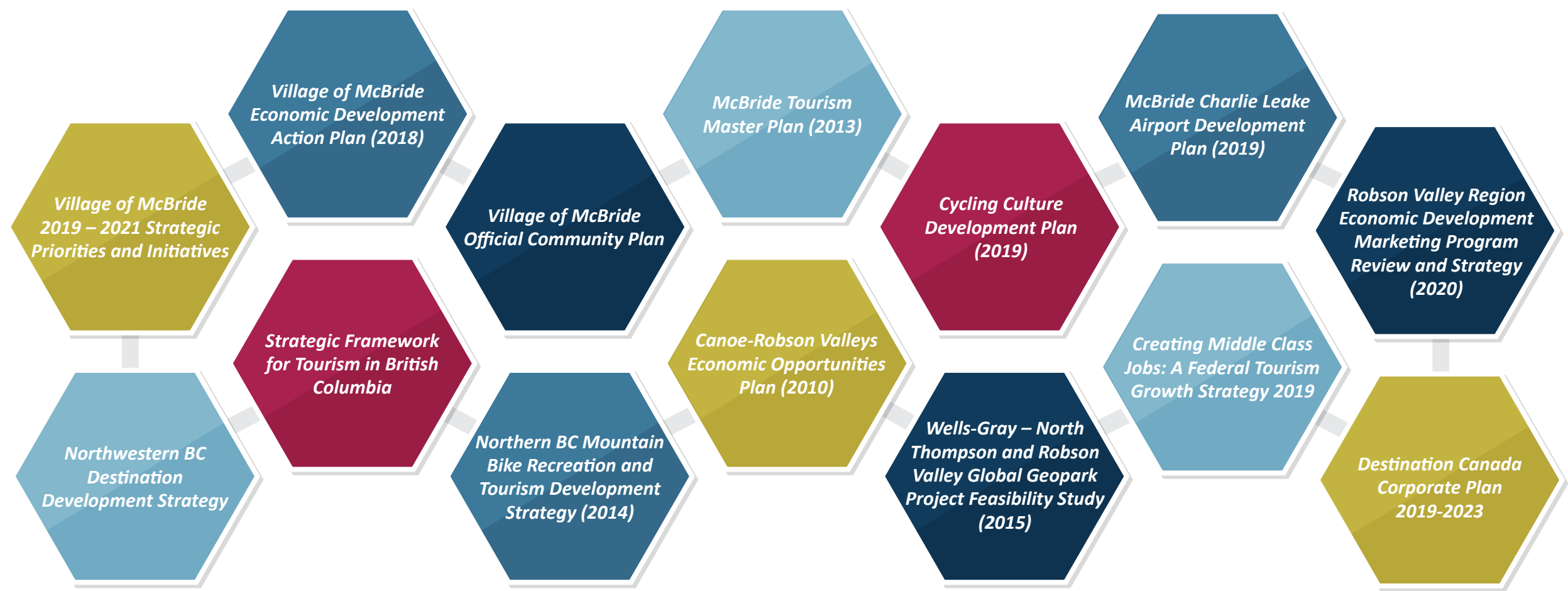
Appendix F: Expanded SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Community is welcoming to visitors. Residents embody the qualities of great hosts. - Strong ground access to the region through Highway 16 and rail service. - Strong supply of natural attractions and outdoor recreation opportunities. - Strong interest from local businesses, stakeholder groups and residents to develop tourism. - Authentic, small mountain town atmosphere. - Established agricultural businesses. - Active community of artists and artisans. - Limited light pollution allows for stunning views of the night sky. - Safe community with low crime.	- Underdeveloped tourism management system. - Lack of funding for tourism development. - Lack of visitor and market-ready tourism products. - Lack of market awareness of what the region has to offer to visitors. - Fragmented visitor information and tourism promotion system. - Lack of a defined tourism brand. - Lack of accommodation options for visitors. - The attractiveness of McBride's main street could be improved. - Limited cell phone and internet connectivity. - Limited accessibility to some nature-based assets (e.g. trails, backcountry, Fraser River). - Limited air access. Prince George Airport (YXS) is over 2 hours away by road.
Opportunities	**Threats**
- Maintaining and enhancing the quality of life that currently exists in the McBride region. - Organizing and aligning key stakeholders for tourism development. - Establishing a sustainable funding model for tourism development. - Developing key assets into visitor and market-ready tourism products. - The Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut, Mount Robson and the Fraser River have potential to become anchor attractions for the region. The Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut recently received $8.7M in funding for upgrades and enhancements. - Collaborating regionally with neighbouring DMO's and communities to drive visitation to the Robson Valley. - Attracting regional tourism operators to deliver experiences in the McBride region. - Capturing overflow from more established destinations (e.g. Jasper, Valemount, Prince George). - Leveraging available grant funding for destination development and tourism marketing. - Supporting the region's core economic sectors through tourism. - Leveraging community and tourism assets to benefits residents and visitors alike.	- Threat of COVID-19 and potential future pandemics to the health of residents and visitors. - Economic crisis as a result of COVID-19. - Environmental threats, including degradation of natural areas from overuse, wildlife displacement, natural disasters, and climate change impacts. - Competition for limited investment and development resources (locally and provincially). - Conflict between stakeholder groups could lead to reduced collaboration (particularly regarding land use). - Decline of accessibility to the backcountry as resource roads are deactivated. - Reduced access to skilled labour with training in the tourism industry. - Competition for visitors from other destinations.

Appendix G: Expanded Strategic Alignment Analysis

Figure 10. Strategic Alignment of Tourism Development in the McBride Region

Village of McBride 2019 – 2021 Strategic Priorities and Initiatives

Village of McBride Economic Development Action Plan (2018)

Village of McBride Official Community Plan

McBride Tourism Master Plan (2013)

Cycling Culture Development Plan (2019)

McBride Charlie Leake Airport Development Plan (2019)

Robson Valley Region Economic Development Marketing Program Review and Strategy (2020)

Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy

Strategic Framework for Tourism in British Columbia

Northern BC Mountain Bike Recreation and Tourism Development Strategy (2014)

Canoe-Robson Valleys Economic Opportunities Plan (2010)

Wells-Gray – North Thompson and Robson Valley Global Geopark Project Feasibility Study (2015)

Creating Middle Class Jobs: A Federal Tourism Growth Strategy 2019

Destination Canada Corporate Plan 2019-2023

Village of McBride 2019 – 2021 Strategic Priorities and Initiatives[25]

- Strategic priority to increase economic capacity and community development.
- Supports tourism-related initiatives, including:
  – Implementation of an MRDT.
  – Coordinating with recreation stakeholders to collaboratively develop projects.
  – Creating a positive atmosphere for business development and investment.
  – Researching high speed broadband services.

Village of McBride Economic Development Action Plan (2018)[26]

- Envisions sustainable economic development to foster a healthy and growing community.
- Tourism, agriculture, and food are seen as targets for growth.
- Recommended the establishment of an MRDT in McBride.
- Recommended additional tourism product development.

Wells-Gray – North Thompson and Robson Valley Global Geopark Project Feasibility Study 2015)[33]

- Recommended the Geopark project moves forward to the next stages of development.
- Supports an overall goal to strengthen the regional economy through increased visitation.

Northern BC Mountain Bike Recreation and Tourism Development Strategy (2014)[34]

- Identifies the potential for Northern BC to become a significant destination for mountain bike recreation and tourism.
- Supports the growth of mountain bike recreation.

Village of McBride Official Community Plan[27]

- Objective to promote a health tourism economy through land designations that allow tourist accommodations and tourist services.

McBride Tourism Master Plan (2013)[28]

- Put forward a vision to develop McBride into a tourism destination.
- Objectives included increasing visitor volumes, length of stay, spending, and overall economic revenues to McBride through tourism.

Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy[35]

- Establishes a 10-year vision for the destination that is rooted in community, sustainability, and accessibility.
- Puts forward three overarching goals, including:
  – Increase the net promoter score year-over-year.
  – Increase the overall value of tourism.
  – Increase the overall market readiness of the destination.

Strategic Framework for Tourism in British Columbia[36]

- Recognizes tourism as a vital part of B.C.'s economy.
- Vision to build a strong, sustainable tourism sector that benefits all British Columbians.

Cycling Culture Development Plan (2019)[29]

- Aims to educate community leaders, staff, and business community members in the development of a cycling culture in McBride.
- Supports the development of McBride into a unique and desirable riding destination.

McBride Charlie Leake Airport Development Plan (2019)[30]

- Puts forward a vision and recommendations to develop the McBride Charlie Leake Airport.
- Goal for the airport to function as an economic generator to attract tourism.
- Supports the development of a Tourism Master Plan.

Creating Middle Class Jobs: A Federal Tourism Growth Strategy 2019[37]

- Support three pillars, including: building tourism in Canada's communities, attracting investment to the visitor economy, and a renewed focus on public-private collaboration.

Destination Canada Corporate Plan 2019-2023[38]

- Focus on increasing demand for Canada with innovative marketing for leisure tourism.

Robson Valley Region Economic Development Marketing Program Review and Strategy (2020)[31]

- Builds positive awareness of and interest in the Robson Valley Region as a place to live, work and invest in.
- Specifically targets tourism investors.

Canoe-Robson Valleys Economic Opportunities Plan (2010)[32]

- Tourism was identified as a significant economic generator with tremendous growth potential in the region.

Provincial COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan

In September of 2020, the Province of BC announced a COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan. The plan includes a funding package of $1.19 billion, of which more than $100 million will be invested to support tourism-related businesses, communities, and infrastructure.[39] There is opportunity for the McBride region to support the implementation of its Tourism Master Plan through this initiative.

Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Park Management Plan

BC Parks is in the process of development a management plan for the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Park in partnership with the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation. A draft management plan is currently being developed and this plan will be available for public review and comment. Tourism stakeholders in the McBride region have an opportunity to become involved in this project through providing feedback on the draft management plan.

Lheidli T'enneh Tourism Strategy

The Lheidli T'enneh First Nation is currently developing a tourism strategy for their Nation. Opportunities for future collaboration and alignment between McBride's Tourism Master Plan and the Lheidli T'enneh Tourism Strategy should be explored.

Provincial Trail Strategy

In 2019, the British Columbia Government began a formal review of the Provincial Trail Strategy.[40] The review is meant to ensure the continued relevance and importance of the Trails Strategy to recreationists, communities, First Nations, tourism proponents and the province as a whole. Targeted engagement is ongoing, with final recommendations expected by late Fall 2020.

Trails play a significant role in local recreation and tourism attraction in the McBride region. Therefore, the renewed Provincial Trails Strategy will be an important document to review and align to once it is made available.

Provincial Caribou Recovery Plan

The Government of British Columbia is in the process of developing a recovery plan for threatened caribou herds in the northeast portion of the province.[41] The Province recognizes that backcountry recreational activity can disturb or displace caribou from their preferred habitat, and that in some cases controlled and limited access to sensitive habitats is the most effective way to reduce disturbances from tourism and recreational activities. The Province also recognizes that public and stakeholder education is vital to raise awareness, to boost a stewardship culture, and encourage desired behaviour in tourism and recreational user groups.

Backcountry areas are a primary tourism draw for the McBride region and the Caribou Recovery Plan has the potential to result in reduced access to the backcountry. Therefore, it will be important for local stakeholders to become engaged in this process to ensure a satisfactory outcome is achieved.

Appendix H: VisitMcBride Website Assessment

This appendix contains the findings from a detailed assessment of the www.visitmcbride.ca website.

Assessment Findings:

- The website appears to be the primary digital tourism information resource for visitors.
- Good to see there are links to some higher traffic tourism marketing sites (e.g. https://www.hellobc.com/).
- The website is ranked very low in the Google search engine. In some cases, it does not even appear on the first page when searching for "McBride".
- Overall, the site has a dated appearance and is not very enticing to current internet savvy consumers. The website pages tend to be low impact with unsatisfying mixes of images and text.
- Images are present throughout the website, which is good to see. However, many images could be improved to showcase the experiences available in the region better.
- Site presentation is not ideal for viewing on all devices (e.g. cell phone, tablet).
- Home page content is too long, and it is written in a blog format. Much of this content could be separated into blog posts or stories. This would keep the Home Page focused on navigation and seasonal calls to action.
- Content is out of date in some places (e.g. references to past events).
- Content is incorrectly worded in some places (e.g. Ancient Cedar Forest vs. Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut).
- There is too much focus on the Robson Valley. This term receives low search volume and it is unclear if the website is promoting McBride or the whole Robson Valley.
- The meta data of the site could be improved. For example, the main header on the Home Page (The Robson Valley, B.C. | Explore with us!) does not include a reference to McBride. Many pages lack descriptive headers and text.
- In terms of navigation, some category pages are blank (e.g. https://visitmcbride.ca/attractions/; https://visitmcbride.ca/events/festivals/), and some are populated (e.g. https://visitmcbride.ca/staying-here/). Enhanced consistency is needed.
- The second row of primary navigation in red on the home page indicating maps and Hwy 16 locations could use a better map for an immediate frame of reference. The Where on Earth image is interesting but too large. There should be a map of the Robson Valley with McBride in large font.

- Missing Google Maps integration.
- Secondary category pages (e.g. https://visitmcbride.ca/staying-here/) are missing navigation links and calls to action. The third level category pages should be database fed, rather than content.
- There is duplicated content between some category pages and stakeholder pages (e.g. https://visitmcbride.ca/playing-here/arts-culture/ and https://visitmcbride.ca/playing-here/arts-culture/mcbride-district-public-library/)
- URLs don't consistently link out to stakeholders/businesses (e.g. tours page and https://visitmcbride.ca/staying-here/cabins/). Some of these contain deadlinks, such as on https://visitmcbride.ca/playing-here/summer-activities/ancient-cedar-forest/.
- All external links should be programmed to open in a new window, as opposed to those from the links section which actually close the website.
- Contact Us page should have a gravity form integration or at least have the email link programmed.
- It is unclear who the manager of the site is. It is best practice for visitor-facing sites to contain clear links to a tourism organization that manages the site.
- Consider a Facebook content feed with an invitation to "Like".
- There is no internal "Search" feature.

To complement the website assessment, a detailed site audit was performed by The Web Advisors for www.visitmcbride.ca. To access the results of this audit, please see the following link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qt_PgJxpaRFHyRC7DhvH7935X0ySnmHB/view?usp=sharing

Appendix I: Additional Visitor Analysis

Most overnight visitors travelled in Northern BC during the summer months, as shown in Figure 11. Almost half of US residents and a quarter of other international travellers visited the region during the spring. BC residents and other Canadians showed a higher propensity to travel to Northern BC during the winter.

Figure 11. Seasonality

Season of Travel	BC Residents	Other Canadians	US Residents	Other International*
January to March	20%	24%	2%	4%
April to June	20%	21%	48%	26%
July to September	36%	47%	43%	66%
October to December	24%	8%	8%	3%

Due to small unweighted sample size, please use extreme caution when interpreting.

Staying with friends and family was the most frequent accommodation choice for overnight visitors originating from BC, other Canada, and other international markets (see Figure 12). Camping/RVing was another popular choice, followed by hotels, other commercial fixed roof, and motels.

Figure 12. Accommodation

Primary Accommodation*	BC Residents	Other Canadians	US Residents	Other International**
Friends and family	44%	50%	11%	39%
Hotel	9%	14%	16%	12%
Motel	1%	1%	17%	1%
Other commercial fixed roof***	16%	5%	7%	8%
Camping/RV parks	19%	15%	39%	16%

Please note the sum will not equal 100% for each market as other accommodation is not included in the table.

**Due to small unweighted sample size, please use extreme caution when interpreting.*

***Other commercial fixed roof could include B&B's, wilderness lodges, or commercial vacation rentals.*

On average, travellers in Northern BC stayed 4.4 nights and spent $100 per night during their trip. This resulted in an average spend of $441 per visitor (see Figure 13). BC residents tended to stay the fewest number of nights (3.8) and spend the least per trip ($319). Other Canadian residents stayed longer (5.0 nights) and spent more during their trip ($517). Other international residents stayed the longest (9.3 nights) and tied US residents for the most spending ($771). Although, US residents only stayed 4.7 nights on average, which indicates that this is a high yield market in relation to the duration of their stay.

Figure 13. Trip Characteristics By Origin

	Average Spending per Visitor	Average Nights	Average Spending Per Visitor Per Night
All Travellers in Northern BC	$441	4.4	$100
BC Residents	$319	3.8	$83
Northern Canadian residents	$517	5.0	$104
US Residents*	$771	4.7	$163
Other international*	$771	9.3	$83

Due to small unweighted sample size, please use extreme caution when interpreting.

Traveling to visit family and friends is a significant driver for travel to Northern BC. In fact, visiting friends and relatives (VFR) represents a considerable share of all tourism in British Columbia. Research on the VFR market indicates that residents use their personal experience to determine what to do when friends and family visit from out of town. Planning is typically a joint effort between the hosting resident and their guests. While most hosts are involved in trip planning (80%), very few hosts plan activities in advance of their guests' arrival (15%). More often plans are made once guests arrive (23%) or both before and after guests arrive (41%).[42] Given that planning happens in the destination and is relatively spontaneous, *resident hosts rely on personal experience* to inform decisions on where to go and what to do with guests.[43]

Appendix J: Expanded Competitor Analysis

Revelstoke, BC

The City of Revelstoke (pop. 7,547) is a well-known destination that seeks to attract visitors looking for big mountain adventures in an authentic and charming small-town setting. The community is located in southeastern British Columbia and has positioned itself as a base for outdoor adventure activities, such as snowmobiling, mountain biking, hiking, downhill skiing, river rafting and more. The area boasts two national parks, three provincial parks, several municipal parks, hot spring developments, and an abundance of camping opportunities.[44] The Revelstoke Mountain Resort is a four-season resort just minutes from the downtown core. This anchor attraction features over 5,600 of vertical feet, which makes it one of longest vertical ski runs in North America. The nearest passenger air service is located in Kelowna, BC (2.5 hours away).

Valemount, BC*

Valemount is a small village municipality (pop. 1,018) that has branded itself as a wonderland for outdoor enthusiasts, nature lovers and explorers of all types.[45] The community is located in east central British Columbia along Highway 5 and is only a one-hour drive east from the Village of McBride. Valemount offers its visitors numerous opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, including mountain biking, white water rafting, fishing, snowmobiling, and much more. The destination's proximity to the iconic Mount Robson allows it to leverage this asset as an anchor attraction. The nearest passenger air service is located in Prince George, BC (3 hours away).

*Valemount is listed as a competitor in this analysis; however, there are attractive opportunities for mutually beneficial partnerships between the McBride region and Valemount in the future. These are discussed later on in the report.

Blue River, BC

Blue River is a small community (pop. 260) that is actively pursuing visitors who crave outdoor adventure. The community is located in southeastern British Columbia along Highway 5 at the confluence of the Blue and North Thompson Rivers. Known as the "Jewel of the Yellowhead" Blue River is set amidst the pristine landscapes of the Upper North Thompson Valley. Abundant wildlife, access to backcountry areas, and a host of summer and winter activities draw visitors into this community. Blue River has positioned itself well as a stop-over destination along Highway 5, and has made inroads in establishing itself as a staging ground for mechanized and non-mechanized activities in the mountains. The nearest passenger air service is located in Kamloops, BC (2.5 hours away).

Comparison of Distance to Major Population Centres

The following chart shows the distance and travel time by road of McBride, Revelstoke, Valemount, and Blue River to the major population centres of Vancouver, Edmonton, and Calgary. McBride is the furthest destination away from Vancouver, but is close to the nearest destination from Edmonton. Revelstoke has a significant advantage over the comparators in terms of its shorter distance to Calgary.

Figure 14. Proximity to Major Population Centres

Destination	Vancouver, BC		Edmonton, AB		Calgary, AB	
	Distance (km)	Travel Time (hrs)	Distance (km)	Travel Time (hrs)	Distance (km)	Travel Time (hrs)
McBride	756	8	531	5.5	575	6.5
Revelstoke	565	6	697	7	407	4.5
Valemount	674	7	488	5	534	6
Blue River	584	6	577	6	622	7

Appendix K: Experience Opportunities

Experience Opportunity #1: Travel Through Time Package

Description:

From a tourism perspective, packaging refers to the linking of several individual products/services into a single experience, typically for a single price. A package is a saleable item, with a set price for a set period of time. The clear advantage of packaging is that new products do not necessarily need to be created. Instead, value will be added to the visitor experience by combining existing products into new and innovative packages that will attract and excite visitors. There is a broad range of products and services that can be linked in a package, including:

- Food and beverage
- Accommodation
- Built attraction – museum, art gallery, theme park, etc.
- Natural attraction – water access, scenic vistas, etc.
- Transportation
- Programming – gourmet cooking, wine tasting, wood carving, etc.

- Guided tour
- Entertainment – theatre performance, stage show, concert
- Event/festival
- Shopping
- Activity – hiking, kayaking, skiing, snowmobiling
- Ability to experience local culture

Packages can be linked in many ways and have varying durations (e.g. from a half day to multi-day packages). One idea for a package that could be developed for the McBride region today is described next.

Travel Through Time Package

This package would take visitors on a journey through multiple time periods within the McBride region. The experience would begin with a guided trip to the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut. Here visitors would learn about the park and be amazed by the venerable old growth forest. Many of the trees have stood for over a 1,000 years. Experiencing such majesty would give visitors an appreciation for deep time, far beyond the timescales that humans are accustomed to.

Following the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut experience, visitors could be treated to cultural programming to learn about the history and traditions of local Indigenous Peoples.

From there, visitors would be transported 100 years into the past with a visit to McBride's Heritage Railway Station and Main Street. Interpretation and storytelling would connect visitors to the community's past as a frontier town on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. Era-appropriate activities would entertain visitors, while lunch is prepared and served at a nearby café or restaurant.

Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut - Destinaton BC/Jongsun Park

Accommodation, dinner, and evening activity options could be readily built into packages to encourage overnight stays in McBride. A train ride from or into Jasper could be added to enhance the experience and expand market draw. Many more opportunities for customization could present themselves depending on the stakeholders who become involved and market demand.

As packages like this are developed, consideration should be paid to the region's tourism brand to ensure alignment in the product offerings. In the short term, it is recommended that interested stakeholders in the region undertake a full day packaging workshop where operators can come together to create new packages and begin to map out logistics.

McBride Heritage Railway Station – Destination BC

Development Tactics:

1.A – Host a tourism packaging workshop to increase operators' package development capacities.

1.B – Develop compelling new tourism packages from existing experiences and offerings in the region. The initial packages should be focused on the region's main product development streams.

1.C – Promote the packages to target markets using effective marketing channels.

1.D – Consider adding new experiences to the packages as they are developed to provide further value and fill any gaps.

Experience Opportunity #2: Explore the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut

Description:

The Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Provincial Park is a unique and compelling attraction that could be leveraged to a much greater degree to develop experiences for visitors. There is significant opportunity to develop enhanced programming that would activate this attraction to encourage visitation to the region (e.g. interpretation, activities, packaged experiences, events, etc.). There is further opportunity in that the Park is not promoted to the extent it could be. For example, the Park is listed on the websites of Tourism Prince George and the McBride Visitor Centre, but neither has positioned the Ancient Forest as an anchor attraction. This gap presents an opportunity for the McBride region to consistently align itself with this attraction and leverage it to drive visitation to the area.

Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut – Ancient Forest Alliance

Development Tactics:

2.A – Contact BC Parks and the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation to explore future opportunities to leverage this attraction for tourism growth in the region.

2.B – Contribute to the Enhancement Project by assigning a representative to the Lheidli T'enneh's external stakeholder advisory group.

2.C – Encourage local tourism stakeholders to contribute to the Park Management Planning process by providing feedback on the draft plan when it becomes available.

2.D – Develop regular programming to activate the park as a tourism attraction (e.g. regular interpretation, fun activities, packaged experiences, etc.).

2.E – Create an Ancient Forest Festival on a busy summer weekend. Develop complementary programming in McBride, at regional parks, and at the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Park.

2.F – Develop a business plan to leverage opportunities created from the $8.7M expansion plan.

2.G – Position the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Provincial Park as an anchor attraction for the McBride region. This would involve:
1. Incorporating the park as a central part of the McBride region's tourism brand.
2. Focusing tourism advertising and promotions on the Park.
3. Developing visitor information on the park and widely distributing it to the visitor centre, local businesses, and partners.

Description:

McBride's Main Street has a distinct frontier town aesthetic and excellent views of the surrounding mountains. Located just off Highway 16 and adjacent to a working train station, Main Street McBride has strong potential to be further developed into a compelling tourist attraction and hub of visitor activity. The street could become a historic precinct that shares the storied history of the community. Interpretation and animation would bring this story to life and capture the attention of visitors.

Golden Main Street – David Coleman

Revelstoke Main Street - Mapio

Other communities, such as Golden, Revelstoke, and Fernie have seen great success in developing their main streets and downtown areas into hubs of visitor activity. Visitors are drawn to these areas because of the vibrant retail, restaurant, and experience options, as well as their attractive aesthetics. These results can be achieved by actively developing and promoting a consistent theme, façade beautification, tourism-focused signage and wayfinding, destination animation, business retention and attraction, among other tactics. McBride could achieve similar success, although it would require concerted effort and significant investment from both the public and private sector.

Development Tactics:

3.A – Establish a *Visit Main Street McBride* Planning Committee who will lead tourism development initiatives in this area. The Committee should include representation from local businesses, tourism operators and municipal partners.

3.B – Through the Planning Committee, host a full-day Visit Main Street McBride planning forum that would engage businesses and other partner organizations. The planning forum would have the following objectives:
1. Share the vision for Main Street McBride.
2. Brainstorm ideas for enhanced programming, capital developments, and linkages to other area attractions.
3. Begin to develop experiences collaboratively.

3.C – Host compelling, on-brand events along main street to attract visitors to the area.

3.D – Develop complementary programming along main street during other events in the region (e.g. Pioneer Days, Robson Valley Music Festival, Ancient Forest Events).

3.E – Develop an ongoing destination animation program.

3.F – Enhance interpretation of the historical and cultural aspects of McBride's Main Street.

3.G – Increase and enhance the visitor information available along Main Street. This should include information related to the main street, as well as other attractions in the region.

3.H – Attract seasonal food trucks and merchant markets to Main Street to further enhance the visitor experience.

Description:

Backcountry areas in the McBride region offer world-class terrain for snowmobiling in the winter season. The three maintained sledding areas of Bell Mountain, Lucille Mountain and Renshaw offer an extensive territory for sledders to explore. However, there is currently a gap in terms of tourism-related experiences and packaging to fully activate this significant asset. As an example, comparable snowmobile destinations such as Valemount, Revelstoke, and Golden offer sellable tours and customizable, multi-night packages to their visitors. There is opportunity for McBride to offer similar experiences with a relatively small investment of time and resources.

Snowmobiling in the McBride region – SnoRiders

Development Tactics:

4.A – Develop saleable packages to "Sled the Backcountry in McBride". These packages could include any combination of the trail access fee, a tour guide, accommodation, rentals, food and beverage, or other experiences that visitors may be interested in.

4.B – Encourage local operators to develop and offer guided snowmobile experiences to visitors.

4.C – Consider the development of an educational advertising campaign directed at visiting snowmobilers to reinforce responsible and safe use of backcountry areas and trails.

Appendix L: MRDT Supported Marketing Campaign Example

The following is an example of a highly successful MRDT-supported collaborative marketing campaign.

**CAMPAIGN NAME: STRIKE GOLD, STRIKE AWE, STRIKE WONDER
ORGANIZATION: CARIBOO CHILCOTIN COAST TOURISM ASSOCIATION**

Campaign Summary

In 2018, the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association worked with marketing consultancy The Web Advisors to develop the Strike Gold, Strike Awe, Strike Wonder multimedia tourism marketing campaign. The campaign included television, print and digital advertising, as well as upgrades to the destination's main tourism website. 120 tourism stakeholders were onboarded to the campaign, 18 written content pieces were developed, and new photography and videography were generated. The results of this campaign were 81.4 million advertising impressions, 3.4 million video views, 2.74 million Facebook engagements, 252,000 website sessions, and most importantly, 29,700 referral links to stakeholders websites.

MRDT Investment

Effective MRDT investment in this innovative direct-to-consumer marketing campaign yielded significant tourism lift for the Caribou Chilcotin Coast on a year-over-year basis.

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