

# Staff/Rynic Communications Report - McBride Tourism Summit – September 26, 2024

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As part of the Activate Tourism McBride Project, the Village of McBride held a day-long Tourism Summit on Thursday September 26, that included over 50 attendees and partners working together to learn about destination marketing, branding, and ways to drive increased tourism visitation to McBride. Jointly hosted by the Village of McBride and Rynic Communications, the summit featured keynote speakers Chris Field and Joe Pavelka, PhD in adventure tourism at Mount Royal University. A number of partners and supporters were in attendance including:

- Village of McBride Tourism Committee members, elected officials and staff
- Kimbo Design – McBride Tourism Website Developer (presenter)
- Northern BC Tourism Association (presenter)
- Rec, Sites and Trails BC
- Tourism Valemount
- Community Futures Fraser-Fort George (presenter, sponsored post-event appetizers)
- Chamber of Commerce / Visitor Centre
- McBride Big Country Snowmobile Association (presenter)
- McBride Community Forest Corporation (sponsored catering)
- Regional District of Fraser-Fort George
- Stirl and Rae Media Haus (mountain bike film trailer)
- Lheidli T'enneh First Nation
- Robson Valley Backcountry Horsemen's Association
- Robson Valley Mountain Bike Association
- Ozalenka Hiking Club
- Fraser Headwaters Alliance
- Yellowhead Ski Club
- Gigglin' Grizzly Pub
- A number of local tourism businesses



 <b>Activate Tourism McBride Tourism Summit</b> <b>Enhancing Adventure Tourism in McBride</b> <b>Date: Thursday, September 26, 2024 Time: Doors open at 8:30am – 4:30 pm</b> <b>Location: Robson Valley Community Centre</b>		
<b>AGENDA FOR THE DAY</b>		
Call to Order & Welcome Remarks	Tourism Committee, Lheidli T'enneh and Simpcw First Nation traditional acknowledgment	9:00 am
Event Housekeeping	General flow of day and sessions	9:15 am
Spotlight on Partners – Kimbo Design – McBride Tourism Website	Introduction Martin Guinto, Business Developer at KIMBO, Via Zoom <i>Key themes and focus.</i>	9:25 – 9:45 am
Session #1 Joe Pavelka	<i>"Why we travel"</i> – Can small communities take advantage of overcrowding in tourism (Global to Local) to grow their outdoor adventure experiences - with Q&A	9:45 – 11:00 am
Health Break	Networking and visit the partner booths	11:00 – 11:30 am
Spotlight on Partners Northern BC Tourism	<i>NBCTA's April Mai, Destination Development Manager for Northern BC Tourism Association - tourism supports to companies/wildfires emergency management and resilience / Media messaging challenges to tourism economies.</i>	11:30 – 11:45 am
Spotlight on Partners #2 Community Futures Fraser Fort George	<i>Anna Duff, General Manager</i>	11:45 – 12:00 pm
Lunch Break	Lunch provided by Phillips Fillups and sponsored by McBride Community Forest Corporation.	12:00 – 1:00 pm
Session #2 Chris Fields, Rynic Consulting Group Interactive Product Development Workshop:	<b>Part 1 – Presentation, Chris Fields</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Current State of Tourism in McBride, Robson Valley and the work of the Activate McBride Tourism Committee.</li> </ul>	1:00 – 2:00 pm
Health Break & Networking	Networking and visit the partner booths	2:00 – 2:15 pm
Session # 3 Interactive Workshop	<b>Part 2 – Action Planning Workshop Village McBride Tourism Product Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Table Exercise - product development pathways – deep drive</li> </ul>	2:15 – 3:45 pm
Final Wrap Up and Reporting out	Each table provides a short summary of table results and any further ideas	3:45 – 4:30 pm
Mountain Bike Video Trailer Presentation	Mathew Clark Filmmaker - Cory Wallace is a five-time World 24HR MTB Champion	4:30 pm
Thank you / Event wrap up	Please join us at the networking reception at the Giggling Grizzly Pub, with apples sponsored by Community Futures Fraser Fort George.	4:35 pm

### Information gathered during the summit:

In addition to tourism-themed presentations from throughout the day, the summit saw several targeted workshops, discussions, survey polling, Q&A sessions and word-cloud generation to gather attendee input:

#### 1. Trip Length - Short Haul Visitor Experiences and Activities Scan

Attendees were invited to consider “trip length” based experiences and provide summer and winter ideas that would fit to how long the visitor might have to spend in the community. It is important to ensure that different types and lengths of experiences are clearly mapped and promoted to specific visitors that not only have the interest in a particular activity, but also that it fits the visitors travel schedule.

Not all of the experience fits into these three options, however the input will help Tourism McBride in the future to consider and create specific experiences based strictly on short and longer trip visitation. One of the most important outputs of the summit was to build support for pulling additional visitors off Highway 16. There are many options for building digital campaigns to support the following experiences.

1 – 2 Hour Visitor Experience	1- Day Experience -No overnight	2-3 Days Including Overnight
Whistle Stop Gallery – Grab Lunch	Take Via to Dunster or Tete Juane	Snowmobile
Walk trail to Bear Falls – find the 10 kinds of trees	Gold Panning History Tour	River Rafting , Salmon viewing
Have a Picnic by the Fraser River	Ice Fishing	Mountain Bike Trails Station tour , and lunch
Drive the Back Road through Dunster to Tete Juane	Snowshoe – Trails to McIntosh Falls	Dog sledding
Walk , wheel pedi cab or cycle around the village to find the model solar system , painted hydrants, murals and history plaques	Cross Country Ski	Wildlife viewing
Walk, cycle or drive to Horseshoe Lake Gazebo	Hike McBride Peak	X country Ski
Drive to Dunster Store & scenic bridge	River Raft or Float	McIntosh equestrian Rec Site 42 k trail network
Go to McBride Peak – halfway look out	Berry Picking	Camp and Explore at Mount Washington
Cycle the paved traffic side roads around McBride and Dore River	Ancient Forest	Avalanche valley trail
Hit the Mountain Bike Trails	Train Station Visitor Centre & Coffee Shop	Stay in a back country cabin
Mainstreet walking	Walking Tour on Mainstreet	Moose River Route – out through Begg Pass (10 days)
Go to visitor centre – craft store	Museum	Backcountry hike /ride to the continental divide - access Blueberry Creek trail
Walk the Fraser		Hike Eagle Valley Trail
Go to Koeneman Park		

## 2. Strengths and Weaknesses themes identified throughout the day

- **Mainstreet Improvements** - More fully decorating with flowers; more benches; encouraging outdoor eateries and food trucks; encouraging businesses and school to decorate Main Street for different seasons e.g. cornstalks/ pumpkins scarecrows at every lamp post (might need fake pumpkins to discourage deer), buskers.
  - Better signage for visitor center from highway.
  - The highway has to be more pleasing to promote people to turn off the highway i.e. more focus on flowering shrubs along the highway median and baskets on the light standards along the highway.
  - Visitors need to have the first impression of McBride being a vibrant and active town. i.e. a paved interpretive trail around town for pedestrians, wheel chairs, walkers, and baby carriages and a separate paved lane for bicycles.
  - A dirt trail beside the paved trail that could facilitate horses. This trail should provide access to other longer trails, east and west of town.
  - Sidewalk cafes would also add to the active town theme.
  - We also need a bold and precise theme to the buildings along the highway and Main Street i.e. a frontier town theme.
- **Area Trails** - Digital and paper maps/ pamphlets with all the area trails. Make the Belle mtn parking lot larger
  - Renshaw has existing snowmobile, hiking and horseback trails. These trails just need more maintenance and a long-term plan to keep them accessible.
  - There's also ability to grow this network of trails by adding a campground on the McKale river/ Renshaw or even an ATV trail tour thru existing deactivated logging roads/ skid trails.
- **Equestrian** - We can offer more laid back and natural experiences than the hustle in Jasper. Start Discussions with local equine adventure operators:
  - CowgirlUp in Spittal Creek and Gunner Ireland in Jasper etc. (build one on one relationships with tour companies) and focus on tourism companies marketing our McBride and area unique experiences.
  - The opportunity to stay in a rustic equine camp with or without their horse or a slide shoe of local horse adventures i.e. along the divide. The speaker can talk about the history of horses in the valley and the possibilities of interpretive programs long distance backcountry adventures. Interpretive programs on horse packing and backcountry travel
- **Fraser River Access** - More boat launches and a guide/ map of the launch locations
  - River access to surrounding rivers, not just for rafting and kayaking. Improved boat launch access. Possible river float operator from Dunster to Beaver River, or Beaver River to McBride
  - We need pleasure boat operators and naturalists to facilitate and enhance this unique relaxing experience i.e. floats along the lower Beaver and Fraser River day trips including Tete-Jeune, Dunster and McBride.
  - Naturalists can talk regarding the wildlife viewing, salmon in the local tributaries, and history of the Fraser as the initial mode of travel for pioneers and explorers.
  - Local and visitor hunters also hunt using boats along the Fraser in the fall.

- **Nordic Skiing, snowshoeing and Winter programs** - More cabins - current facility is booked up every weekend. More administrative and grooming support for the volunteer organization that manages all the outdoor adventure facilities that attract tourists
  - Snowshoeing: marketing of the great horse trails on Belle but again it is volunteers who are keeping them packed down after every snowstorm
  - More marketing and product development (Education program development Igloo Making, Winter Survival Training)
  
- **Biggest challenges** - Forest Service and licensee closure of resource roads and lack of road maintenance.
  - The role for guided tours and operators with rental services is critical but need the infrastructure and operators to grow what we have.
  
- **General Tourism Opportunities** - Focus on German, Swiss, Dutch populations - create the relationships with tour companies (i.e. Sun Dog Holidays) and get the tour companies to market our unique equine experiences.
  - We need a dedicated tourism promotion person to keep the momentum and relationships moving forward.
  - Once our local equine guiding companies are busy, other companies may come forward
  
- **Favorite Hike, Trail Walk or Bike:** Summit Attendee's were asked to recommend key "locals know" trails that could be promoted to visitors
  - Bike trail to halfway cabin
  - Little Lost Lake Hike & Swim (warm water)
  - Blueberry Creek
  - Bluff trails
  - Paradise Trail
  - Moose River & Belle Mtn
  - Horseshoe Lake
  - McBride Peak Look out Tower
  - Goat River to Cable Car
  - Belle Mountain Alpine
  - Castle Creek past the hydro bridge
  - Blueberry Lake
  - Avalanche to Kristi

### 3. "As Long As" – Table exercise # 1

When communities engage in planning for tourism growth it is not only important to consider the type of tourism focus and key experiences to market, but also to understand the impact of tourism. "Over-tourism" is a growing trend throughout BC and around the world (Vencie, Rome, Paris, Barcelona). Closer to home, we see Banff and Tofino struggle with overtourism and the negative impacts it can cause such as loss of housing, increased demand on municipal services, destruction of natural assets, crime and more.

As communities plan for tourism, it is critical to consider how much tourism and at what cost? Following the opening session with Dr. Joe Pavelka, Adventure Tourism Professor at Mount Royal

University, Summit attendees were asked at what length they would support tourism growth and its impacts by discussing the following statement *“I am in support of future tourism growth “as long as..”* Tourism growth and its inevitable impacts can change the community of any size and impact their residents. Attendees worked in groups to capture the limit to which they would embrace and encourage tourism by defining their “as long as”:

<b>McBride Supports Tourism Growth as Long as....</b>		
<b>We Protect Natural Assets</b>	<b>Ensuring our History &amp; Culture is Valued</b>	<b>Keep our Community Appeal and Improve Economy</b>
Maintain relaxed & unregulated outdoor experiences	Build in story telling venues / purposeful interactions	Keep McBride Wild and Small
Maintain environmental integrity & sustainability	Don't lose our history - bring it forward and valued	No box stores
Don't sanitize our experiences - keep them unplugged	Respect the Community and ensure visitors an learn and contribute to the McBride Culture	Protect the safety of the community and citizens
Ensure our outdoor experiences are kept accessible	Maintain our lifestyle and make incremental changes slowly	Generate community profit through economic and social impacts
Honor and Respect the Wild Areas/ be aware of caribou closure areas and wildlife habitat	Respecting local people, their cultures and their customs	Avoid land grabs and large corporations
Keep our outback clean with strong pack in /pack out signage and promotion	Tourism should authentic - not “corporate” in McBride and the Valley	Ensure traffic is safe and well managed with increased tourism
Tourists leave no trace (no garbage) Manage garbage in recreation areas	No Over-crowng Trail use is sustainable	Locals benefit with more resources and revenues going back into community projects
Increase our work and partnership with forest services groups	Builds and grows experiences for local residents that provide “meaningful” legacies	Ensure sustainability, Holistic approach and capacity for tourism

#### **4. Defining our Tourism Experiences – Table Action Planning Workshop Exercise # 2**

Reviewing Tourism Plans and specifically the status of tourism experiences enables communities to take stock of what is working, what might need to be updated, and make changes to experiences requiring marketing attention or be removed from the suite of tourism products all together. Critical to the exercise groups were formed into subject matter experts to review and assess each of McBride’s main experiences to support future product and destination development efforts. This process should be repeated annual with in the McBride Tourism planning cycle and aligned to the Municipal Regional District Tax (MRDT)

A table facilitator was assigned to support group ideas, discussions, and ideas for future growth and success. Experiences Reviewed and discussed included:

1. Winter – (Ski, Snowshoe, dog sledding, etc.)
2. Winter – Snowmobile
3. Main Street
4. Water based pursuits (Rivers, Lakes etc.)
5. Hiking / Trails
6. Biking
7. Equestrian

# ACTION PLANNING WORKSHOP – MCBRIDE TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

EXPERIENCES	Future Vision	Top 3 Priorities	Biggest Obstacle to Growth	Solution – to remove the obstacle	Champion	Target Audience	Making it more Unique & Compelling
Winter– (Ski, Snowshoe, dog sledding, etc.)	Guided Tours, warming shelters on Belle, Trail Building, overnight cabins	Cabins, warming huts access to ski shop rentals and gear, guided tours	Weather/climate change, trail access /infrastructure, need for more young families & Job Creation	Paid Tourism Representative – drive steer support	Paid person that understands marketing, passionate and solution focused	Jasper & Prince George	Upgrade warming cabins, welcome dogs on ski trails, have fewer rules than jasper, market in PG
Winter – Snowmobile	Be the largest maintained area in BC& the first destination in BC for new sledders, guides /tours	Accomodation/cabins Additional designated areas, larger parking lots, Geo ref maps	Lack of Volunteers, Permanent access to trails, no paid local employee i.e. to help with grant writing	Whole community – McBride’s biggest tourism experience, Village, RD working with local groups	Local Club, Tourism Committee chamber of Commerce	All Alberta, Northern Alberta/Saskatchewan all levels of skill, 80% adult males, and families	Start with creating day trip – all inclusive, build larger and more unique events - snow cross, hill climes etc.
Main Street	Bustling, entertainment, food, friendly people, 7 days a week, arty signs & horses	Rail Station town facing seating, buskers, wayfinding, self guiding tours	Curmudgeons & getting people to collaborate	Curmudgeons	Tourism Committee to include beautification	Village people, Regional People, Passers by	Arty Signs, Artists at work, dark skies, car shows
Water based pursuits (Rivers, Lakes etc.)	To have multiple water based/themed experiences	Infrastructure – Boardwalks, docks, signage boat to waterside gas station, signage	Governments as it relates to permitting	Village of McBride to advocate for water-based infrastructure and community groups of all kinds	Individual operators, Chamber, EDO and the community at large	Domestic and foreign tour operators	Water based experience mapping for sale, rafting on river overnight tour, with stops in Dunster, McBride, Crescent Spur.
Hiking / Trails	Rail Based Access to Hiking Trails from rail heads that are unique from PG & Jasper	Short easy trails possibly linked to campsites near village/train stop at trail heads ala Europe/trail mapping	Maintaining trails and campsites / increasing via rail passenger rates /cell & internet access	Community Forest Board to help funding for maintaining outdoor activity along with Village and RD support, parks sites and trails	A New Trail based Non profit that all trail users can support	16 – 55, non-family, priority young couples, international travelers that seek outback trails	Use Rail as a new experience – drop offs along route only from Jasper to PG
Biking	Develop a multi-level mountain bike park to draw in wider user base & return riders	Multi-level trails, different levels of riders, mountain bike service, repairs, gear) package stay & ride	Maintaining trails and roads, bike rentals,	Community support, community forest support as they maintain roads	Visit McBride, Mountain Bike Club(s)	Alberta/BC, 20-30s Gen z, Gen X with outdoor adventure experiences and free sprints	Add Themed Art Trail Head pop up vendors, named trail as poker references, fun social events
equestrian	Increased & well traveled back and front country riders	Public Consultation on growing Equestrian experience, Intown horse infrastructure, Koeneman park horse capacity clinics	Insurance difficulties, volunteer support, vet services in McBride	Horse Council, Insurance Company collaboration. Equine educational programs with road safe aty rules	BCHBC and the Village of McBride and Northern BC Tourism	55+older, horse trailer owners, weekend warriors, families, higher incomes seeking experiences	Carvan Theater, add more western theme to McBride, Guided hunting, staged cattle drives,

**Next Steps Include:**

1. Build out small, specific itineraries based on 1-2 hours, a day/partial day and 1-2 nights. Having the ability to quickly present and update short trails, river-based parks and Main Street, etc.
2. Research and understand specific personas for experiences so that it is easy to tailor marketing of the itineraries – for example – who are the target users for the scale solar system programming and how can you attach things to it that those that want to do more can extend their time in town? Same for trails, and close-in things to see and do in and around McBride.
3. Main Street improvements / beautification programming etc., – this will help (longer term) in activating McBride's Main Street (i.e. buskers, festivals, streetlights to the highway, etc.) and, by extension, can foster incentives and buy in to encourage businesses along Main to extend hours. Longer hours and more days open to the public will elevate the consistency of McBride's tourism opportunities, benefiting residents and visitors.
4. Grow tourism infrastructure such as trailhead signage, trail maintenance and improvements, water access infrastructure (docks, ramps, signage), mobile and internet access improvements, public infrastructure such as accessible washrooms and other amenities that both draw tourists off the highway and improve quality of life for residents.



## Appendix - McBride Summit Keynote Feedback

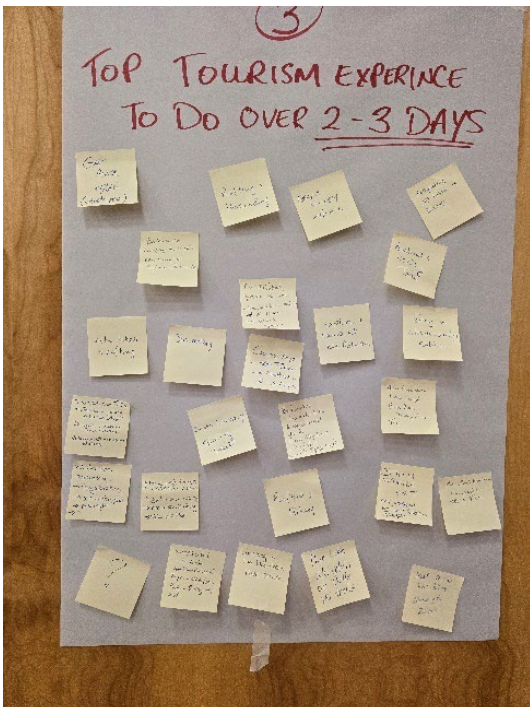
Dr. Joe Pavelka – Morning Keynote Session



Chris Fields, Rynic– Afternoon Keynote and Workshop



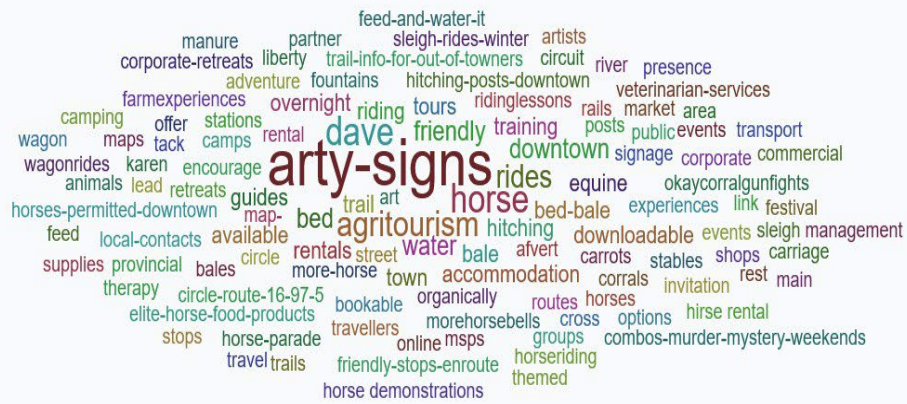
Workshop Images & Word clouds







## How can we grow our EQUESTRIAN product?



98 Responses

## How can we grow our SNOWMOBILE product?



139 Responses

## How can we grow our SUMMER TRAILS product? (hike, ATV, etc.)



190 Responses