

INTERLAKES

# DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



DESTINATION  
BRITISH COLUMBIA®

HELMCKEN FALLS  
Photo: Max Zeddler

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FRONT COVER PHOTO: FAWN LAKE RESORT, Blake Jorgenson

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## A. DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION FOR THE INTERLAKES

The Interlakes planning area is a place of lakes, rivers, ranchlands, and mountains that provide a rich backdrop for outdoor recreation and nature-based pursuits. Wells Gray Provincial Park is the flagship demand generator in the planning area, along with over 1,000 lakes that make this area a dreamland for anglers, paddlers, and families looking to enjoy a vacation together in nature.

This planning area encompasses the main corridor of Highway 24 and its junction with Highways 97 and 5. It also stretches across the Bonaparte Plateau to the North Thompson Valley, including Wells Gray Provincial Park and the communities of Barriere and Clearwater. The western side of the planning area is bounded by a portion of Highway 97 to include the area between 70 Mile House

and 100 Mile House. To the south, the planning area includes Bonaparte Lake, and to the north, the planning area is bounded by Canim-Hendrix Rd, Canim Lake, Crooked Lake, and Azure Lake. With Highway 24 bisecting the planning area east to west, the Interlakes sees visitors who are on a touring journey from Whistler to Jasper and want to take the road less travelled.

While the most prominent assets in the planning area are its natural wonders, for those interested in culture and history the area also offers a glimpse into the region's past, as it traces part of the old Hudson Bay Fur Brigade Trail, and features western heritage, and cowboy culture. In addition, the area is home to the Simpcw, Tsq'escenemc (Canim Lake), and Stswecem'c Xgat'tem (Canoe/Dog Creek) First Nations.

WITH THE GROWING INTEREST IN INDIGENOUS TOURISM THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR DEVELOPMENT TO SHOWCASE THE CULTURE AND HERITAGE OF THE AREA'S FIRST NATIONS.

Beyond fishing, outdoor recreation opportunities available throughout the planning area include horseback riding, hiking, paddling, snowmobiling, boating, cross country skiing, wildlife viewing, mountain biking, hut-to-hut backcountry hiking (in Wells Gray Provincial Park), and scenic touring, to enjoy the numerous waterfalls found cascading over volcanic cliffs. To draw visitors to the area, the Interlakes Economic Association is developing events that can be grown into demand generators over time.

For travellers interested in self-discovery by personal vehicle, the Interlakes is ideal as air transportation and rental car availability is limited, and there are relatively few market and export-ready tourism operators providing equipment rental services and delivering paid activities and experiences. Within the main corridor of Wells Gray Provincial Park, north of Clearwater, exclusive park permits for guided hiking and canoeing operations limit new entrants from providing these specific activities. However, opportunities exist for new businesses to explore other types of activities, and to expand the range of guided activities on the western side of the park.

Various issues have contributed to creating a challenging tourism business environment and declining tourism business and marketing investment in the planning area. These include:

- land use conflicts and access
- viewscape degradation due to logging
- deterioration of trails
- insufficient maintenance on backroads to popular recreation destinations
- policies that create a difficult operating environment for small businesses

The challenges experienced by businesses are compounded by the devastating 2017 and 2018 wildfire seasons, of which the effects are still yet to be fully known.

## B. DISTINCTIVE DIRECTION FOR THE INTERLAKES



### VISION:

This planning area is an affordable, family-oriented destination that is recognized for its year-round outdoor recreation, fishing, touring, and guest ranch opportunities, and is sought out by visitors who appreciate getting away from crowds to enjoy the area's beautiful natural landscapes. The broad diversity of accessible backcountry adventures and front country resorts, outdoor activities, cultural, heritage, and Indigenous experiences support a thriving tourism industry, while being managed to preserve the natural assets and way of life valued by residents.

There are visitation differences between the east and west portions of this planning area. Wells Gray country, on the eastern side, is one of BC's most popular provincial parks, seeing over 250,000 visitors annually<sup>1</sup>. With Highway 5 being the primary driving route from the Lower Mainland to Jasper, visitor traffic on the eastern boundary of the planning area is significantly higher than across Highway 24, and as such it is more developed, with more visitor services and amenities. Despite this diversity, stakeholders were unified in their vision for the planning area.

#### Four destination development goals were identified to support the planning area's vision:

1. Demonstrate leadership through strategic, collaborative planning, targeted development, and investment to optimize the planning area's assets and strengthen business viability.
2. Amplify awareness amongst visitors, businesses, and residents alike of the distinct experiences this planning area has to offer.
3. Incrementally grow the benefits from tourism while respecting the limited carrying capacity of the land and residents' desire to retain the area's unique character and culture.
4. Maintain a keen awareness and understanding of the customer, adapting to the changing needs of the market, and develop visitor opportunities that enhance the visitor experience, attract more travellers, increase length of stay, and spending throughout the year.

<sup>1</sup>Tourism Wells Gray. (2016). Five year strategic business plan 2017-2022. Retrieved from [www.wellsgray.ca/media/documents/pdf/revise-nov-2016-twg-2017-2022-5-yr-strategic-plan.pdf](http://www.wellsgray.ca/media/documents/pdf/revise-nov-2016-twg-2017-2022-5-yr-strategic-plan.pdf)

The current and future experiences that will motivate travel and differentiate the Interlakes as a place with a compelling, sustainable visitor experience include:

1. Independent touring by car and RV
2. Camping and RVing in the area's parks, resorts, and recreation sites
3. Wells Gray Provincial Park — hiking, paddling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, touring to see waterfalls, and unique geological features
4. Year-round fishing opportunities
5. Quaint lakeside resort vacations
6. Front and backcountry outdoor recreation — fishing, paddling, snowmobiling, boating, whitewater rafting, backcountry hiking, swimming
7. Guest ranch vacations

Thirty-eight development objectives, aligned within six themes, are described within this strategy, along with the organizations involved and the success network suggested to realize implementation. The first five themes relate to the 10-year opportunities identified. The sixth theme acknowledges and responds to the wildfire and flood realities that emerged during the research process. Those realities will have a long-term impact on the planning area.

## INTERLAKES DEVELOPMENT THEMES

However, opportunities exist to support natural disaster recovery success in various short-term initiatives.

**THEME 1:** Strategically invest in targeted infrastructure upgrades that will support tourism growth

**THEME 2:** Lead strategic growth through continued collaboration

**THEME 3:** Diversify and expand the visitor experience

**THEME 4:** Enable tourism business viability and success

**THEME 5:** Balance economic growth while protecting the environmental assets upon which tourism relies

**THEME 6:** Support natural disaster recovery success

The composite nature of tourism necessitates collaboration in order to succeed. Stakeholders in the Interlakes expressed a strong desire to strengthen collaboration throughout the planning area and influence decisions on major initiatives impacting tourism. If done well, the appeal of the area will grow, new travellers will be attracted to visit, and some of the trends negatively impacting tourism business sustainability and destination appeal could be reversed to create a thriving industry in the future.

## II. ACRONYMS

**BCFROA** BC Fishing Resorts and Outfitters Association

**BCLCA** BC Lodging and Camping Association

**CCCTA** Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association

**CF** Community Futures

**CMBC** Cariboo Mountain Bike Consortium

**CRD** Cariboo Regional District

**DBC** Destination BC

**DDP** Destination Development Program

**DMO** Destination Management Organization

**EDO** Economic Development Offices

**EMBC** Emergency Management BC

**IEA** Interlakes Economic Association

**MRDT** Municipal and Regional District Tax (commonly referred to as the Hotel Tax)

**NDIT** Northern Development Initiative Trust

**NPTG** New Pathways to Gold

**RD** Regional District

**RDMO** Regional Destination Management Organization

**SWOT** Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis

**TNG** Tsilhqot'in National Government

**TNRD** Thompson Nicola Regional District

**TOTA** Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association

**UNWTO** UN World Tourism Organization

## PROVINCIAL MINISTRIES AND ENTITIES

**AEST** Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training

**AGRI** Ministry of Agriculture

**MCS** Ministry of Citizens' Services

**EDUC** Ministry of Education

**EMPR** Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources

**ENV** Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

**FIN** Ministry of Finance

**FLNR** Ministry of Forest, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

**go2HR** The British Columbia human resource organization for tourism

**JTT** Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology

**IRR** Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

**ITBC** Indigenous Tourism BC

**LBR** Ministry of Labour

**MAH** Ministry of Municipal  
Affairs and Housing

**PSSG** Ministry of Public  
Safety and Solicitor  
General

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

**TIABC** Tourism Industry  
Association of British  
Columbia

**TRAN** Ministry of  
Transportation and  
Infrastructure

## FEDERAL MINISTRIES AND ENTITIES

**DC** Destination Canada

**DFO** Department of  
Fisheries and Oceans  
Canada

**INAC** Indigenous and  
Northern Affairs Canada

**ITAC** Indigenous Tourism  
Association of Canada

**MIC** Ministry of  
Immigration and Citizenship

**TIAC** Tourism Industry  
Association of Canada

**THRC** Tourism HR Canada

**WED** Western Economic  
Diversification

# 1

# FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**FOREWORD** This Destination Development Strategy is the final report resulting from a 16-month iterative process of gathering, synthesizing, and validating information with tourism partners about the current state of tourism in the Interlakes planning area of British Columbia.

The report synthesizes primary and secondary research gathered from multiple stakeholder conversations, documents, plans, studies, and captures input from the project working group.

As one of 20 planning area strategies to be produced between 2016 and 2019, the Interlakes strategy contributes to the tapestry of long-term regional and provincial planning that supports the development of British Columbia as a world-class tourism destination, offering remarkable, authentic experiences that exceed expectations and align with the provincial brand. The participation of

our partners throughout the process was invaluable, but it is important to note that no endorsement of this strategy or any action listed within was obtained.

The Interlakes planning area includes portions of the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Region and the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Region. In identifying development priorities for the Interlakes planning area, consideration was given to building on the *Embracing Our Potential* strategic framework. *Embracing Our Potential* is the Thompson Okanagan's 10-year regional tourism strategy.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Destination British Columbia's (DBC) Destination Development team, the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association (CCCTA), and the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) wish to thank the many tourism partners in multiple communities who contributed to informing this strategy.

## Opportunities to contribute included:

- attending community meetings
- participating in surveys and/or interviews
- contributing to and validating the asset inventory
- providing relevant documents

We extend our sincere thanks to the Indigenous peoples on whose traditional territories we gathered for our community meetings including: Barriere, Roe Lake, Lone Butte, Sheridan Lake, 100 Mile House — home of the Simpcw, Tsq'escenemc (Canim Lake), and Stswecem'c Xgat'tem (Canoe/Dog Creek) First Nations.

## Additionally, special thanks are offered to the facilitators of the Interlakes destination development process:

Lesley Anderson (Project Lead) and Nancy Arsenault of the Tourism Café Canada.

## Special thanks are offered to members of the working group:

- Dawn Rueckl, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture
- Emily Colombo, Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development and Regional Lead for Wildlife Recovery
- Stephanie Molina, Tourism Wells Gray
- Manuela Betschart, Loon Bay Resort
- Lorne Richardson, Lower North Thompson Tourism Association
- Steve Brown, Interlakes Economic Association
- Jude Stirling, BC Parks
- Myles Bruns, Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development and Regional Lead for Wildlife Recovery
- Daniel Eberle, Kayanara Resort
- France Robert, Ruth Lake Lodge
- Deborah Young, Wildman's Family Restaurant
- Julie Gilmore, South Cariboo Visitor Centre

## BRITISH COLUMBIA'S WILDFIRE SEASONS

The wildfires of 2017 and 2018 were some of the most significant in British Columbia's history. The impacts of these wildfires led to periods of devastation for many who lost homes and businesses. It was also a time of coming together, as communities and people reached out to help each other in time of need. The direct, indirect, and induced impacts of the 2017 and

2018 wildfires will be felt significantly in 2018 and beyond. Gratitude is extended to everyone who contributed to emergency services, firefighting, communication, evacuation, and supporting those in need in a multitude of ways. These events demonstrated both the tourism industry's fragility and resilience, and the strength of the human spirit to endure adversity.



2

# INTRODUCING THE STRATEGY

DAWSON FALLS  
Photo: Andrew Strain

The Interlakes Destination Development Strategy was developed to enhance the competitiveness of this tourism destination over the next 10 years and beyond.

The strategy was developed as part of Destination BC's Destination Development Program. The Program is a critical part of Destination BC's corporate strategy, and facilitates the collaboration of local, regional, and provincial agencies, Indigenous bands, destination marketing organizations (DMOs), tourism operators, and other community interests to guide the long-term growth of tourism in the Interlakes region.

## A. PROGRAM VISION AND GOALS

**The provincial vision for the Destination Development Program is:**

- BC is a world-class tourism destination that offers remarkable products and experiences that are authentic, driven by visitor demand, exceed expectations, and align with BC's brand.

**The provincial vision is supported by three goals:**

- Make BC the most highly recommended destination in North America.
- Create strategic 10-year plans for tourism destination development and improve return-on-investment for government and private sector investments in tourism assets.
- Elevate BC's ability to compete as a premium destination while making the province more attractive for investment.

FIGURE 1:  
Tourism Revenue  
Drivers



Destination development brings together planning, policy, and capacity building efforts to:

- Ensure that a destination is well positioned to make future strategic decisions.
- Address impediments to growth and capitalize on opportunities.
- Outline key assets of a destination including the main product themes/ experiences available.
- Outline key priorities for new product, infrastructure, and amenity development.
- Identify impediments to development and tourism growth (e.g., potential policy or capacity issues, available funding, access to funding, etc.).

## B. PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

This strategy not only supports provincial goals but also:

- Provides strategic direction for the region and guidance for local and regional planning.
- Enhances the Interlake’s ability to leverage their resources and programs.
- Fosters joint action and intercommunity dialogue.

The Interlakes Destination Development Strategy is intended to serve as a guide for tourism partners as they proceed with implementation. This strategy should be reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect changing tourism objectives, priorities, and market conditions. Additionally, results should be tracked regularly to ensure future implementation activities become more effective in increasing economic, social, and cultural benefits to the Interlakes.

## C. A FOCUS ON THE SUPPLY AND EXPERIENCE

Destination development is the mechanism whereby the natural life cycle of tourism (e.g., development, stagnation, decline, and rejuvenation) is managed, evolves, and remains desirable for the ever-changing consumer and hence, competitive in its target markets. Destination development happens when industry and government plan and work together to enhance the quality of visitors’ experiences by ensuring tourism products, services, amenities, and practices meet and exceed visitors’ expectations over the long term.

Tourism has two primary revenue drivers — supply and demand (Figure 1). Creative marketing efforts strive to generate short-term demand for a destination and create immediate urgency for people to want to visit. Destination development focuses on the supply side of tourism by creating a compelling visitor experience to attract new visitors and entice repeat visitation. Sharing, via social networks, like Facebook, Twitter, and TripAdvisor, allows travellers to review their experiences and the quality of the destination making social media an essential element of the marketing toolbox.

There are multiple dimensions to supply that are considered in destination development planning to enhance the visitor experience:

- The setting in which our experiences take place, and how to access them.
- Policies that establish and maintain opportunities and growth barriers.
- The investment enhancement framework.
- Products and experiences matched to consumer interests, including infrastructure and amenities (which are all often public in nature and used by residents as well as visitors).
- Visitor servicing programs that meet and exceed guest expectations.
- Capability, skills, and training our industry needs so that we all can excel at what we do. These dimensions are highlighted in Figure 2.

## D. METHODOLOGY

The Interlakes Destination Development Strategy was developed based on extensive, collaborative effort during a 16-month process that culminated in the creation of a Situation Analysis report, and this Destination Development Strategy.

The destination development planning approach was iterative and allowed multiple opportunities for stakeholder input and validation. Project completion was delayed due to the 2017 wildfires and subsequent priority recovery activities (Figure 3).

The process followed a semi-structured strategic approach, created by Destination BC, that allowed for flexibility to ensure the considerations of each planning area were assessed and respected. A volunteer working group contributed their expertise to review and discuss the key findings from the Situation Analysis and helped develop the goals and supporting objectives and actions contained herein.

FIGURE 2: Five Dimensions of Supply – the Visitor Experience



**NOTE** The research methodology for the Interlakes planning area was amended and the process lengthened, as a result of the 2017 wildfire season. The initial community consultation sessions originally scheduled for September 2017 were delayed until November. They were also modified from a full-day format to a series of smaller three-hour informal conversations in four communities: Barriere, Roe Lake, Lone Butte, and

100 Mile House. Additionally, changes were made to the second in-community consultation by scheduling this meeting and the working group session back-to-back, to minimize the impact on stakeholders being away from their businesses. See Appendix 1 for descriptive details of the process.

## FIGURE 3: Key Project Timelines

ACTIVITY	DATES
Pre-project staging and document gathering, asset inventory research	July–September 2017
Project pause on stakeholder input activities due to the 2017 wildfire crises in BC	July–September 2017
Preliminary research, data gathering, preliminary findings, begin drafting situation analysis	September 2017– November 2017
Initial stakeholder survey	October–November 2017
First informal in-community stakeholder consultations in Barriere, Roe Lake, Lone Butte, and 100 Mile House	November 2017
Seven formal key stakeholder interviews	December 2017–January 2018
Post consultation stakeholder survey: validation of preliminary opportunities and constraints, vision, and priority setting	January–February 2018
Draft situation analysis written	January–April 2018
Second in-community consultation and subsequent working group meeting in Sheridan Lake	April 2018
Complete situation analysis	June 2018
Draft destination development strategy written	May–June 2018
Review of the Destination Development Strategy by government, working group, and RDMOs	June–November 2018
Finalize the strategy, with consideration of the wildfire and flood impacts on priorities and catalyst projects	December 2018

## E. KEY OUTPUTS

The three key outputs from this project include:

1. An asset inventory of accommodations, tourism businesses and attractions, tourism organizations, food and beverage establishments, parks and recreation sites, sports and arts facilities, meeting facilities, transportation, and visitor services.
2. A Situation Analysis that provides detailed insights of the industry and Interlakes context, the planning area assessment, and considerations.
3. The Interlakes Destination Development Strategy.

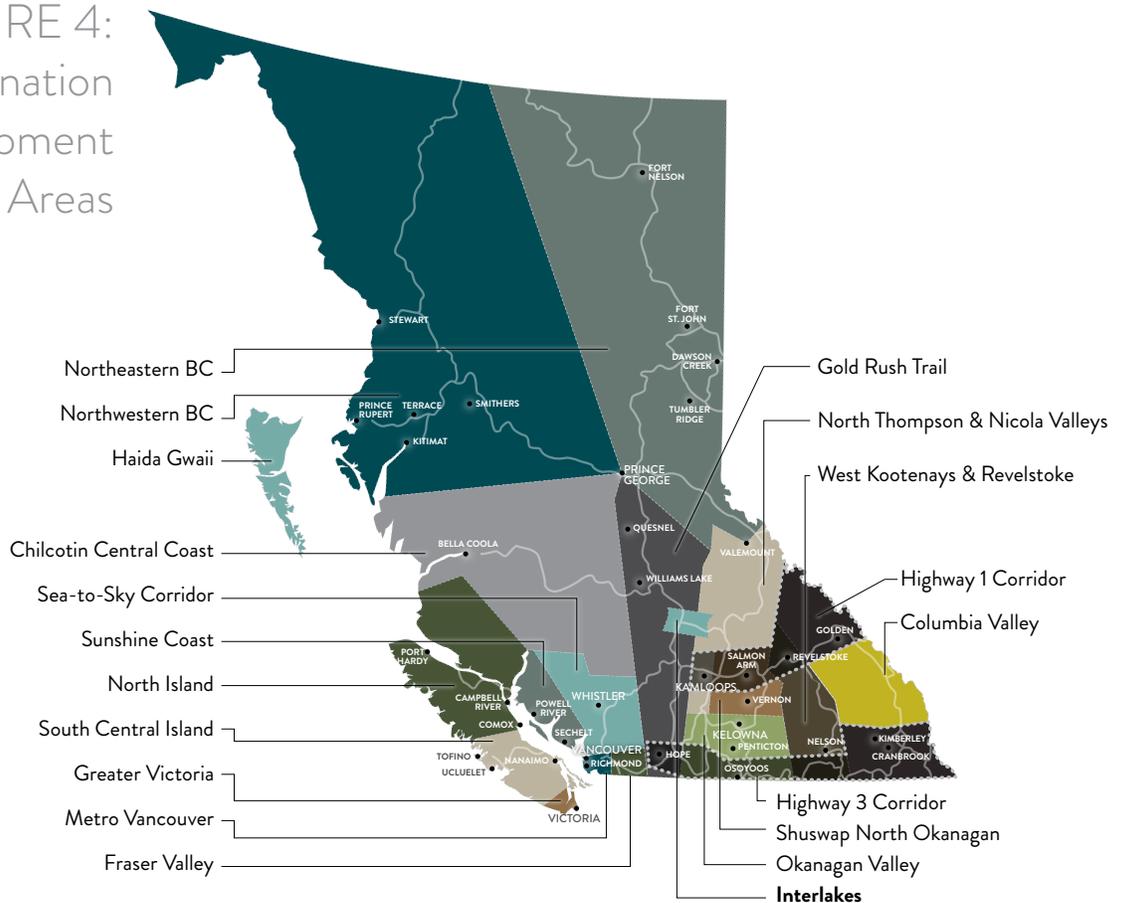
# 3

# ALIGNMENT

HORSEFLY  
Photo: Michael Bednar

The Destination Development Strategy for Interlakes is one of three strategies that will be prepared for the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Region, and one of seven for the Thompson Okanagan Region. The Interlakes is one of 20 planning areas within the province (Figure 4).

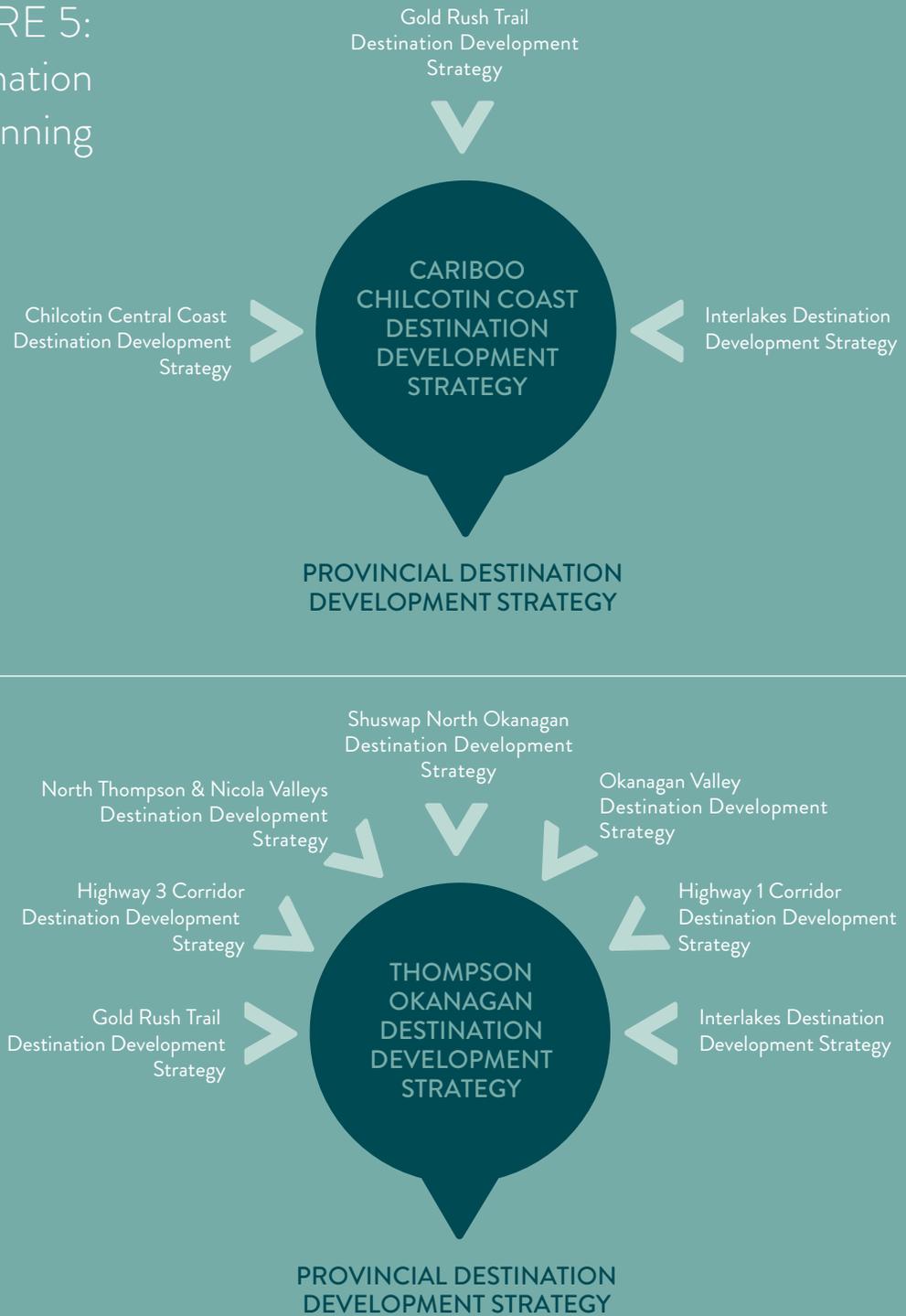
FIGURE 4:  
Twenty Destination  
Development  
Planning Areas



Over the course of Destination BC's Destination Development Program, each of the province's six tourism regions will integrate their planning area strategies into one Regional Destination

Development Strategy which, in turn, will be used to inform a Provincial Destination Development Strategy, together with all 20 planning area strategies (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5:  
Levels of Destination  
Development Planning





The destination development strategies themselves will be influenced by, and where appropriate reflect and complement, other planning initiatives. Additionally, as this planning area overlaps with the Thompson Okanagan region, the Interlakes destination development strategy will appear and be referenced into these regional roll ups.

In addition to government planning processes related to tourism, other layers of planning that are relevant to the destination development strategy process include:

**1. ASSOCIATIONS AND AGENCIES REPRESENTING DIFFERENT TOURISM SUB-SECTORS** (e.g., culinary, sport

fishing, kayaking, boating) and services (e.g., advocacy, human resources, marketing): These organizations play an important role in many aspects of the demand-side of tourism sector development, specifically in relation to the involvement and interests of the private sector.

**2. DESTINATION MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS (DMOS):** The marketing and promotional

(and, in some cases, destination development) efforts of community DMOs are relevant to the destination development strategy process, as these efforts are typically focused on the supply-side of a community's tourism sector (e.g., marketing the community's tourism assets).

**3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL STRATEGIES:** These

strategies can have direct or indirect implications for tourism destination development and the marketing of these assets (e.g., trail development, zoning for commercial short-term accommodation, protection of visual/scenic assets, commercial property tax frameworks, regulation of the sharing economy, etc.).

**4. INDIGENOUS BANDS, TRIBAL COUNCILS, AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:** The planning area,

regional, and provincial destination development strategies will impact First Nations communities, as well as the provincial and national associations working to advance their interests, to varying degrees.



# 4

# SUCCESS NETWORKS

THE FLYING U RANCH  
Photo: Michael Bednar

Successful destination development implementation recognizes that “we all have a role to play”. The Interlakes Destination Development Strategy is not intended to work in isolation or disregard existing policy and planning frameworks. Rather, the planning process has brought tourism to the table in a coordinated fashion that will work with wider policies and planning efforts.

Success networks represent the clusters of businesses and organizations (private sector, government, and not-for-profit) who are encouraged to collaborate, bring the opportunity to fruition, and implement the strategy. As such, these strategies have been built on a foundation of utilizing federal, provincial, regional, and local organizations, and available resources for implementation. It is only by working collaboratively in the continued planning and implementation of destination development that the true potential of the Interlakes can be realized.

Tourism partners involved throughout the development of this strategy have articulated their desire to work cooperatively on key aspects of

implementation. Organizations identified within each tactical success network will be in a position to review, locally, regionally, and provincially, the potential for growing tourism, by leading, or supporting implementation, and action. It does not imply the organizations have committed to or endorsed the tactics. This strategy is intended to inform conversations that may lead to future investments and actions, or that will contribute to growing this planning area’s and British Columbia’s visitor economy.

The regional representatives (Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Thompson Okanagan) have important roles to play as regional destination development champions. As this planning process is not intended to duplicate ongoing efforts or create new organizational or administrative structures, the implementation of this strategy should first be executed through existing organizations, where possible.

The following partners (Figure 6) have been identified as likely playing a role in moving a potential objective or action forward.

FIGURE 6: Organizations Informing, Enabling, Influencing the Interlakes

FEDERAL	PROVINCIAL	REGIONAL	LOCAL	INDIGENOUS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Canada</li> <li>• Department of Fisheries and Oceans</li> <li>• Canadian Heritage</li> <li>• Environment and Climate Change</li> <li>• Indigenous and Northern Affairs</li> <li>• Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada</li> <li>• Small Business and Tourism</li> <li>• Western Economic Diversification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination BC (DBC)</li> <li>• Indigenous Tourism Association of BC</li> <li>• BC Parks</li> <li>• Ministries                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Advanced Education, Skills &amp; Training</li> <li>-Agriculture</li> <li>-Energy, Mines &amp; Petroleum Resources</li> <li>-Environment &amp; Climate Change Strategy</li> <li>-Finance</li> <li>-Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations &amp; Rural Development</li> <li>-Indigenous Relations &amp; Reconciliation</li> <li>-Jobs, Trade &amp; Technology</li> <li>-Municipal Affairs &amp; Housing Public Safety &amp; Solicitor General &amp; Emergency BC</li> <li>-Tourism, Arts &amp; Culture</li> <li>-Transportation &amp; Infrastructure</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cariboo Regional District – Areas L, H</li> <li>• Thompson Nicola Regional District – Areas A, E, O</li> <li>• Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association</li> <li>• Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District of 100 Mile House</li> <li>• District of Clearwater</li> <li>• District of Barriere</li> <li>• Local Tourism Associations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canim Lake First Nation</li> <li>• Simpcw First Nation</li> <li>• Stswecem’c Xgat’tem (Canoe/Dog Creek) First Nation</li> </ul>



5

# A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION

70 MILE HOUSE  
Photo: Michael Bednar

## OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING AREA

### A. GEOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The Interlakes planning area includes the main corridor of Highway 24 and its junction with Highways 97 and 5, stretching across the Bonaparte Plateau to the North Thompson Valley, including Wells Gray Provincial Park and the communities of Barriere and Clearwater (Appendix 2).

The western side of the planning area is bounded by a portion of Highway 97 to include the area between 70 Mile House and 100 Mile House. The southern area includes Bonaparte Lake, and the northern area is bounded by Canim-Hendrix Rd, Canim Lake, Crooked Lake, and Azure Lake.

### B. DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION BASE, COMMUNITIES INCLUDED, AND FIRST NATION BANDS

The geographic boundaries of the planning area cross two regional districts: the Cariboo Regional District (CRD), and the Thompson Nicola Regional District (TNRD).

The boundaries demarcating electoral areas vary from the geographic boundaries identified for Destination BC's Interlakes planning area.

Portions of five electoral areas fall within the Interlakes geographic planning area definition. Population figures for the planning area have been estimated using 2016 BC Stats<sup>2</sup> census figures for

the Municipalities of 100 Mile House, Clearwater, and Barriere, and regional district electoral areas: CRD Areas H and L; TNRD Areas A, E, and O. The population of the planning area is estimated at approximately 14,000.

Destination BC and Indigenous Tourism BC (ITBC) identified, using the BC Economic Atlas, that there are three First Nations whose traditional territories lie within this planning area; the Tsq'escenemc (Canim Lake Band), the Simpcw Band<sup>3</sup>, and Stswecem'c Xgat'tem (Canoe/Dog Creek).

<sup>2</sup>[www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/Census/2016Census/PopulationHousing/MunicipalitiesByRegionalDistrict.aspx](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/Census/2016Census/PopulationHousing/MunicipalitiesByRegionalDistrict.aspx)

<sup>3</sup>[www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/plan-and-measure/bc-economic-atlas](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/plan-and-measure/bc-economic-atlas)

# INTERLAKES

- Towns and Indigenous Communities
- Highways
- Lakes and Rivers
- Provincial Parks and Protected Areas

1. Wells Gray Park
2. Donnelly Lake Park
3. Taweel Park
4. Roe Lake
5. Bridge Lake Park
6. Emar Lakes Park
7. Dunn Peak Protected Area
8. High Lakes Basin Park
9. Green Lake Park
10. Crater Lake Park
11. Bonaparte Park



## SIMPCW FIRST NATION

The Simpcw are part of the Secwepemc, or Shuswap, Nation, one of 12 Bands who historically (and currently) lived in the Thompson River Valley. Simpcw First Nation has nearly 700 members, many of whom live in Chu Chua<sup>4</sup>.

## TSQ'ESCENEMC (CANIM LAKE FIRST NATION)

The Tsq'escenemc (Canim Lake Band) are members of the Shuswap Nation. As people of the Northern Shuswap, they rely on the abundant lakes in the region for their livelihood. Their vision is "Canim Lake Band: A politically and financially independent, healthy community, rich in Shuswap tradition and culture."<sup>5</sup>

## STSWECM'C XGAT'TEM FIRST NATION (CANOE/DOG CREEK)

A part of the Secwepmec nation, Stswecem'c Xgat'tem were once two separate bands: Canoe Creek and Dog Creek. With a population of 745, they have a shared vision "of becoming an economically and politically self-sustaining community living Secwepemc culture, language and traditions in a healthy and safe environment"<sup>6</sup>.

## C. ECONOMY BASE — HISTORICAL AND CURRENT

Economic development planning is active within each of the regional districts and communities, primarily supported by economic development departments or human resources within municipalities, Regional District offices, and First Nations administrations.

Strategies are focused on diversifying the economy in response to changing environmental and global market conditions, as well as increasing collaboration with First Nations. First Nations economic development highlights the need for capacity building to support economic opportunity and employment for its people.

Traditionally, the economies in the Interlakes planning area have been highly reliant on the land and resource-based sectors. Logging continues to be a major economic generator within the planning area and was identified by stakeholders as the primary economic sector competing with tourism for the land base.

Logging has been, and continues to be, detrimental to tourism due to viewscape degradation, noise pollution from logging operations, and the destruction of trails that could be used to attract visitors to the area. More recently, mining has also been impacting tourism potential with several fishing camps and resorts being sold to mining exploration companies. These property transfers reduced the already limited accommodation base within the region and, according to stakeholders, has resulted in land access restrictions to trails that were previously available for various tourism uses.

With the pine beetle infestation devastating the logging industry, regional districts are looking to broaden their economies beyond resources. While forestry still contributes significantly to the economy, other industries such as cattle ranching, agriculture, tourism, and retirement sectors play a role in the planning area's economy. The Interlakes Economic Association (IEA) is the primary economic development organization with initiatives aimed at economic diversification that will sustainably support the quality of life for residents and visitors.

The IEA is a collaborative organization that works with all levels of government and other organizations to improve the Interlakes economic future, by promoting and supporting the creation of economic opportunities that foster job creation and business in a sustainable manner<sup>7</sup>. The IEA coordinates a variety of events to attract visitors to the Interlakes area and not only encourages visitors to experience the many outdoor adventure activities available but also to return regularly.<sup>8</sup>

The Simpcw First Nation's economic development plan focuses on activities that will create financial independence for the band, enhance quality of life for its band members, and foster economic development by supporting community members' initiatives, businesses, and investment. The plan also focuses on leveraging its land base, both on reserve and throughout the entire Traditional Territory, to support economic development

<sup>4</sup>[www.simpcw.com/our-people.htm](http://www.simpcw.com/our-people.htm)

<sup>5</sup><https://canimlakeband.com/about/our-people/>

<sup>6</sup><https://canoecreekband.ca/>

<sup>7</sup>[www.ieabc.ca/about.html](http://www.ieabc.ca/about.html)

<sup>8</sup>Lawson, D. (2015, March 3). Interlakes economic association events marketing plan.

while protecting environmentally and culturally significant lands and resources. Cultural and recreational tourism development, as well as the provision of tourism services, are identified within the plan as opportunities to be advanced<sup>9,10</sup>.

The New Pathways to Gold Society (NPGS) supports economic development through heritage tourism, First Nations reconciliation, community projects and heritage events along the Hope to Barkerville corridor, which touches the Interlakes

planning area from 70 Mile House to 100 Mile House. Specific NPGS projects impacting the potential for tourism in the Interlakes planning area include contributions to the Ice Caves at Bridge Lake, building bridges and railings at the site for safe access, and working in partnership with the District of 100 Mile House to restore the Gold Rush Snowmobile Trail, which runs from 70 Mile House to Likely. A list of completed projects is available on their website<sup>11</sup>.

## D. OVERVIEW OF TOURISM PERFORMANCE

The Interlakes planning area traverses through two of British Columbia's six destination management regions: The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and the Thompson Okanagan, making it challenging to ascertain tourism performance for the planning area. Chapter four in the Situation Analysis provides a high-level snapshot of tourism performance in these two

regions, with the greater level of detail in the region managed by the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association (CCCTA), as more of the Interlakes planning area lies within this tourism region. However, with little data available for the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast region, and even less at planning area level, it is challenging to report on tourism performance.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

Detailed accommodation revenue data is available for most regions in BC, and can be found in the Provincial Tourism Indicators, 2017 Year in Review report<sup>12</sup>. As the collection of the new MRDT only began in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast (CCC) region on May 1, 2018, there are no statistics available to report for the CCC region. In 2015, the Thompson Okanagan (TOTA) region generated \$257 million in room revenue, or 13% of the provincial total<sup>13</sup>.

- One-third to one-half of BC residents spent nights in the residences of friends and family, depending on the region – the higher proportion of visiting friends and family for BC residents is in the Thompson Okanagan region.

- The CCC and Thompson Okanagan regions are both popular for camping.
- The most popular accommodation for US residents and other international travellers was hotels, followed by camping/RV Parks. US residents most often stayed in camping/RV Parks or with friends and family (Figure 8).

<sup>9</sup>Urban Systems. (2017). Simpcw First Nation economic development plan draft report. Retrieved from [www.simpcw.com/docs/2017-06-12\\_cedp\\_draft636384679045049161.pdf?LanguageID=EN-US](http://www.simpcw.com/docs/2017-06-12_cedp_draft636384679045049161.pdf?LanguageID=EN-US)

<sup>10</sup>No economic development plan was provided in the call for documents by the Canim Lake First Nation (Tsq'escenemc) or the Stsweccem'c Xgat'tem First Nation (Canoe/Dog Creek).

<sup>11</sup>[newpathwaystogold.ca/projects/](http://newpathwaystogold.ca/projects/)

<sup>12</sup>Destination BC. (2018, May). Provincial Tourism Indicators: 2017 Year-in-Review.

<sup>13</sup>Data tables and information in this section are from Destination BC's 2017 Regional Tourism Profiles for the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Thompson Okanagan regions.

FIGURE 8:  
Regional  
Accommodation by  
Visitor Origin

### Cariboo Chilcotin Coast

PRIMARY ACCOMMODATION*	BC RESIDENTS	OTHER CANADIANS**	US RESIDENTS**	OTHER INTERNATIONAL**
Friends and family	36%	27%	17%	5%
Hotel	10%	5%	5%	37%
Motel	2%	8%	15%	6%
Other commercial fixed roof***	5%	8%	6%	15%
Camping/RV parks	17%	13%	19%	25%

### Thompson Okanagan

PRIMARY ACCOMMODATION*	BC RESIDENTS	OTHER CANADIANS**	US RESIDENTS**	OTHER INTERNATIONAL**
Friends and family	50%	37%	39%	44%
Hotel	14%	17%	20%	28%
Motel	3%	5%	8%	8%
Other commercial fixed roof***	6%	8%	1%	10%
Camping/RV parks	18%	21%	8%	8%

\*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, use extreme caution when interpreting.

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

FIGURE 9:  
Regional Seasonality  
by Visitor Origin

## SEASONALITY

The majority of visitation in both regions occurs primarily during the summer season, from July through September (Figure 9). BC residents and other Canadians are more likely to travel during the winter and spring months, possibly to ski. The TOTA region is home to many ski resorts and the CCC is

home to world-famous heli-skiing. Visitor traffic related to winter skiing is most likely not relevant to the Interlakes. Visitation by US and International travellers rises in the CCC in spring, which again, may be attributable to heli-skiing in the Chilcotin Coast planning area, and is not relevant to the Interlakes.

### Cariboo Chilcotin Coast

SEASON OF TRAVEL	BC RESIDENTS	OTHER CANADIANS*	US RESIDENTS*	OTHER INTERNATIONAL*
January to March	15%	27%	0%	1%
April to June	22%	14%	45%	36%
July to September	54%	53%	51%	57%
October to December	9%	5%	4%	5%

### Thompson Okanagan

SEASON OF TRAVEL	BC RESIDENTS	OTHER CANADIANS*	US RESIDENTS*	OTHER INTERNATIONAL*
January to March	14%	8%	16%	7%
April to June	24%	18%	19%	37%
July to September	45%	61%	54%	51%
October to December	18%	12%	11%	5%

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

FIGURE 10:  
Top Markets  
for Visitation  
and Spending

## KEY VISITOR MARKETS AND THE PRIMARY VISITOR PROFILES

- British Columbia residents make up the largest share of overnight visitation in both regions, but they are not spending as much as visitors from farther away (Figure 10).
- Interestingly, in the Thompson Okanagan, Albertans only represent 19% of visitation but 28% of spending, indicating that they are high yield travellers to that region. In the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast they represent 15% of visitation and 27% of spending.
- In the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast, Californian visitors are the highest yield representing only 2% of visitation, but 12% of spending.

### Cariboo Chilcotin Coast

TOP 5 MARKETS OF ORIGIN (2014)	SHARE IN CARIBOO CHILCOTIN COAST	
	VISITATION	SPENDING
1. British Columbia	73%	61%
2. Alberta	15%	27%
3. Washington	22%	14%
4. Germany	54%	53%
5. California	9%	5%

### Thompson Okanagan

TOP 5 MARKETS OF ORIGIN (2014)	SHARE IN THOMPSON OKANAGAN	
	VISITATION	SPENDING
1. British Columbia	61%	44%
2. Alberta	19%	28%
3. United Kingdom	2%	3%
4. Australia	2%	4%
5. Ontario	2%	3%

## FIGURE 11: Regional Trip Characteristic Comparison

(2014 DATA, % CHANGE OVER 2013)

According to the 2017 Regional Tourism Profiles, in the TOTA region in 2014, domestic overnight travellers accounted for 85% of visitation and 83% of related spending. International and US travellers accounted for 16% and 18%, respectively. The average spent per visitor, over all travellers, domestic, US, and international, is \$378, with an average length of stay of 3.6 nights. BC travellers in the Thompson Okanagan stayed 3 nights and spent \$90, with other Canadian travellers staying 4.9 nights and spending \$114.

In the CCC, domestic overnight travellers account for 85% of visitation and 70% of related spending. International and US travellers accounted for 16% and 31%, respectively. On average, travellers in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast stayed 3.3 nights and spent \$99 per night during their trip (Figure 11). BC travellers in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast stayed 3.5 nights and spent \$77 per night during their trip. Other Canadian travellers stayed 2.8 nights and spent \$86 per night.

	CARIBOO CHILCOTIN COAST	THOMPSON OKANAGAN
Average spending for all travellers	\$321 (24% increase)	\$378 (2% decrease)
Average number of nights	3.3 (2% increase)	3.6 (3% decrease)
Average spending per visitor per night	\$99	\$105

## E. KEY VISITOR MARKETS

### PRIMARY VISITOR PROFILES

Success in the Interlakes will be based on attracting niche markets — visitors with a certain profile. There are nine primary EQ types<sup>14</sup> for Canada, three of which Destination BC is targeting: Authentic Experiencers, Culture Explorers, and Free Spirits.

The 2017 fall stakeholder engagement sessions determined that Authentic Experiencers, Cultural Explorers, and Free Spirits are the primary target segments, as they best align with the types of visitors currently visiting the planning area and the natural

<sup>14</sup>Destination Canada. (2012). EQ profiles. Unpublished market research obtained from Destination Canada

assets of the region (Figure 12). These targets are consistent with the EQ types identified through the Community Tourism Foundations consultation<sup>15</sup>. Personal History Explorers align well with the outdoor recreation and activity-based pursuits available in this planning area and represent a potential secondary market.

The Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers are independent travellers who enjoy multi-day touring by car, and who tend to stay away from organized tours and want to get off the beaten path. They enjoy a mix of self-discovery and paid, guided activities and experiences.

Free Spirits are more structured travellers who enjoy lodges and resorts, but they also have a higher propensity to camp. As the more adventurous travellers of the three target segments, Free Spirits enjoy winter activities including snowshoeing, snowmobiling, dogsledding, as well as many of the other outdoor recreational opportunities available in the Interlakes including fishing, canoeing, kayaking, hunting, mountain biking, horseback riding, swimming, and geocaching.

<sup>15</sup>Nicol, S. & Houillebecq, J. (2013, July). Community tourism foundations: North Thompson Valley tourism plan – 2013–14.

FIGURE 12: Interlakes Target EQ Profiles



## F. SUMMARY OF KEY STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

From a tourism destination perspective, the Interlakes benefits from a range of distinct strengths. However, it also faces numerous destination development challenges, some of which have the potential to impact the future growth and sustainability of the tourism sector.

Figure 13 summarizes, in no specific order, the key strengths, challenges, and opportunities for the planning area. A detailed list is located in Chapter Five of the Situation Analysis.

FIGURE 13: High Level Summary



## G. EXPERIENCE POTENTIAL

### UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITIONS

The unique selling propositions (USPs) that define the Interlakes include:

1. Plentiful parks and recreation sites providing an opportunity to disconnect in nature:
  - a. Wells Gray Provincial Park, home to 39 named waterfalls, 22 volcanoes, unique geological features not found anywhere else in BC, and Murtle Lake, the largest non-motorized lake in North America; this park attracts over 250,000 visitors annually.
  - b. Green Lake, the second most visited park in the planning area, is popular for families, boating, and fishing due to the variety of visitor amenities it offers.
  - c. Numerous, lesser-visited recreation sites and parks that are available to visit at times of year, when others are fully reserved and booked.
2. Accessible back and front country outdoor adventure in wilderness environments:
  - a. This area epitomizes Super, Natural British Columbia® offering hundreds of accessible front and backcountry lakes and natural areas for outdoor motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities.
  - b. Already known as Fishing Highway 24, the area is recognized for its plentiful, year-round, freshwater fishing opportunities and offers visitors an array of lakeside, front and backcountry resorts, and recreation sites in which to enjoy nature in rustic settings.
  - c. One of the few places in the province where it's possible to enjoy hut-to-hut hiking and ski touring opportunities year-round.
3. Quaint, off-the-beaten-path touring, and resort and guest ranch experiences away from crowds, that allow for exploration of lesser-visited areas of BC:
  - a. Highway 24 bisects the planning area allowing visitors travelling from Jasper to Whistler or the Lower Mainland to enjoy a less crowded touring experience away from Highway 1.
  - b. Home to a wide variety of backcountry and rural roads, there are numerous opportunities for accessible backcountry circle touring routes.
  - c. Numerous quiet, lakeside resorts ideal for getaway vacations for visitors who want to disconnect from the hustle of everyday life, and enjoy an off-the-grid experience.
4. A rich cultural heritage with diverse stories to share:
  - a. Home to the Simpcw, Tsq'escenemc (Canim Lake), and Stswecem'c Xgat'tem (Canoe/Dog Creek) First Nations, with both the Simpcw and Tsq'escenemc working to develop and offer experiences that can connect visitors with their heritage and culture.
  - b. Opportunities to connect with cowboy culture through ranch and horseback riding vacations.
  - c. Numerous European residents and business owners who offer opportunities to connect with their settlement stories and cultural backgrounds.
  - d. Local festivals and events such as rodeos, pow wows, fishing derbies, and fairs showcase the area's distinct culture and heritage.
  - e. Sections of the old Hudson's Bay Brigade Trail are found within the planning area, connecting visitors to this aspect of Canada's and BC's heritage.

### SPECIFIC PRODUCT EXPERIENCES

The specific experiences identified that have potential as iconic products for growth.

1. Wells Gray Provincial Park
2. Independent touring and circle routes
3. Year-round fishing
4. Front and backcountry outdoor recreation
5. Cultural experiences
6. Quiet lakeside resort and guest ranch vacations



6

# A DISTINCTIVE DIRECTION

EUREKA  
Photo: Michael Bednar

## STRATEGY DIRECTION

### A. VISION

The Interlakes is an area that offers off-the-beaten path experiences. It is an outdoor recreation paradise for nature lovers; and, there is a desire to manage growth in a thoughtful, strategic way that leaves the natural beauty of the area intact while maintaining the rustic character of the destination.

Many in the planning area associate the area primarily as a fishing and outdoor recreation destination. Appealing to families and the touring

market is an important opportunity for the future and stakeholders felt it was important that this be expressed as part of the vision.



## VISION:

The Interlakes is an affordable, family-oriented destination recognized for its year-round outdoor recreation, fishing, touring, and guest ranch opportunities, and is sought out by visitors who appreciate getting away from crowds to enjoy the area's beautiful natural landscapes. The broad diversity of accessible backcountry adventures and front country resorts, outdoor activities, cultural, heritage, and Indigenous experiences support a thriving tourism industry, while being managed to preserve the natural assets and way of life valued by residents.

## B. GOALS

Four destination development goals were identified to support the vision for the Interlakes:

1. Demonstrate leadership through strategic, collaborative planning, targeted development, and investment to optimize the planning area's assets and strengthen business viability.
2. Amplify awareness amongst visitors, businesses, and residents alike of the distinct experiences this planning area has to offer.
3. Incrementally grow the benefits from tourism while respecting the limited carrying capacity of the land and residents' desire to retain the area's unique character and culture.
4. Maintain a keen awareness and understanding of the customer adapting to the changing needs of the market, and develop visitor opportunities that enhance the visitor experience, attract more travellers, increase length of stay, and spend throughout the year.

## C. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Five key principles emerged during the planning process and served as filters for establishing priorities for the Interlakes:

1. Recognize, respect, and maintain our values, cultures, assets, environment, and way of life while being responsive to the needs of today's travellers.
2. Generate sustainable financial results for businesses to thrive in the long-term.
3. Prioritize support and enhancement of existing assets before investing to create new.
4. Strengthen collaboration and coalesce stakeholders around a common recognition of the value of tourism.
5. Broaden the visitor base, grow revenue, and extend the length of stay and season.

## D. MOTIVATING EXPERIENCES

To entice more people to visit the region there is a need to focus attention on developing experiences that will motivate travel by creating additional compelling, sustainable visitor experiences.

### The primary motivating experiences identified for this area are:

1. Independent touring by car or RV
2. Camping or RVing in the area's parks, resorts, and recreation sites
3. Wells Gray Provincial Park — hiking, paddling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, touring to see waterfalls and unique geological features, and hut-to-hut backcountry adventures
4. Year-round fishing opportunities
5. Quaint lakeside resort vacations
6. Front and backcountry outdoor recreation — fishing, paddling, snowmobiling, boating, whitewater rafting, backcountry hiking, swimming
7. Guest ranch vacations

This table provides some high-level context for each motivating experience.

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#### INDEPENDENT TOURING BY CAR/RV

Highway 24 is an important east-west corridor that connects BC's interior to the Rockies. Its positioning between two existing touring corridors (Highways 5 and 97) results in the Interlakes receiving many touring visitors passing through on their way to other locations. The area's extensive network of backcountry and forest service roads are often used by visitors to explore areas of the province that are less-visited. Opportunity exists to leverage these roads to develop new, marketable touring routes to attract more visitors.

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#### CAMPING OR RVING IN THE AREA'S PARKS AND RECREATION SITES

Home to 29 provincial parks and 53 recreation sites, the Interlakes is attractive to visitors who want to get away from crowds and venture into nature. Wells Gray Provincial Park, Green Lake Provincial Park, and Bridge Lake Provincial Park are particularly popular with visitors. One of the primary advantages for visitors is that while many popular parks in other parts of the province are fully booked, the Interlakes has parks and recreation sites that are available on short notice, without reservations.

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**WELLS GRAY  
PROVINCIAL  
PARK**

Wells Gray Provincial Park is an important primary demand generator in the Interlakes; seeing over 250,000 visitors annually, it's the most visited park within the Thompson Okanagan and Cariboo regions. The park is home to a variety of natural assets including 39 named waterfalls, 22 volcanoes, North America's largest non-motorized lake, 200 lakes, hundreds of kilometres of hiking, biking, and groomed cross-country ski trails, as well as significant geological features.

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**YEAR-ROUND  
FISHING  
OPPORTUNITIES**

Highway 24, known as the Fishing Highway for its plentiful lakes, is a dreamland for anglers and outdoor enthusiasts. Derbies attract visitors and increase awareness of the destination as a fishing haven. Beyond Highway 24, other parts of the Interlakes are home to lakes and rivers that provide additional year-round fishing opportunities.

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**QUAINT LAKESIDE  
RESORT VACATIONS**

Known for its numerous, small, lakeside resorts and lodges, this planning area draws visitors who are looking for an opportunity to escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and unwind the remoteness and solitude that nature provides. Its relative proximity to the Lower Mainland offers an opportunity for a quick, off-the-beaten-path, weekend getaway.

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**FRONT AND  
BACKCOUNTRY  
OUTDOOR  
RECREATION**

The area's plentiful lakes, rivers, and wilderness areas provide a backdrop for abundant outdoor recreation including horseback riding, hiking, paddling, snowmobiling, boating, cross country skiing, swimming, river rafting, fishing, ATVing, and more.

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**GUEST RANCH  
VACATIONS**

With its rich history of cattle ranching in the Cariboo and a variety of guest ranches that offer horseback riding, visitors have the opportunity to experience western cowboy heritage.

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## E. DEVELOPMENT THEMES

Six destination development themes emerged through the planning process, under which priority activities are clustered, and focused investment can occur.

### THEME 1: STRATEGICALLY INVEST IN TARGETED INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES THAT WILL SUPPORT TOURISM GROWTH

Touring and/or road trips is one of the province's five key positioning themes. With Highway 24 bisecting the planning area, and a key east-west corridor for touring visitors travelling from the Rockies to the West Coast who want to get off the beaten path and busier highways, the Interlakes is aligned with this key theme. The area has an extensive network of backcountry and forest service roads that are often used by visitors. The opportunity exists to identify the most popular circle touring routes and natural attractions, and strategically invest in infrastructure upgrades to leverage the existing assets to create new touring opportunities that the province could market to strengthen itself as a touring destination.

A leadership opportunity exists to demonstrate how integrated, collaborative, cross-government planning, development, and maintenance of touring corridors can support the visitor appeal of a destination, while simultaneously improving services for local citizens. Between provincial, regional, and municipal governments this applies to ground communication, signage, transportation needs (particularly pull-outs, washrooms, and signage), forest road identification, and road maintenance for those most commonly travelled by visitors.

Relative to the private sector, there is a need to invest in upgrading existing accommodations that have become tired, don't meet modern standards (i.e., for accessibility), and to consider tapping into the appeal of new, contemporary types of accommodation which are sought by today's travellers, such as yurts, oTENTiks, comfort camping, and other unique sleeping accommodations.

Camping and RVing is very popular within this area, with the most popular campgrounds and backcountry recreation sites often full during the peak season. BC Parks and Recreation, Sites and Trails BC are working to increase amenities, such as lake access points, but the planning area could benefit from

additional camping and RV sites to support the existing demand and grow into the future.

The need for improved cell and Wi-Fi connectivity was identified as important. While communication and technology services are available along the main Highway 97 and 5 corridors, service across Highway 24 has gaps, or no service, depending on a visitor's cell carrier network. Once off of the main roads, and within Wells Gray Provincial Park, cell service is generally not available. Wi-Fi hot spots and Wi-Fi service is also not readily available, and in areas where it is, it is often slow and lacks the capacity to support high demand during peak season.

## THEME 2: LEAD STRATEGIC GROWTH THROUGH CONTINUED COLLABORATION

There is a need for increased collaboration to realize the full potential of the Interlakes. This was a strong theme that emerged during the consultation process. Several key issues arose that will require multi-partner collaboration to advance and resolve. The Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNR), BC Parks, Recreation Sites and Trails, other government ministries, agencies, and tourism stakeholders need to discuss a harmonious approach to viewscape management, trail and road development and maintenance, user conflicts on the land base, and the erosion of land access for tourism purposes due to extractive industries.

The economy of the Interlakes is still heavily resource-based. There is a strong need to improve the understanding of the value of tourism with local citizens, politicians, and businesses. Educating everyone in the local area on the elements of the visitor journey and the opportunities for guests is critical. Stakeholders indicated that tourism is not recognized relative to its actual economic impacts. Collectively, tourism stakeholders must continue to communicate the value that the tourism industry provides to the economy.

Collaboratively addressing the potential for shoulder and/or winter season growth (depending on where within the planning area) represents a strong opportunity for development. While there are businesses that stay open throughout the year and opportunities for winter activities — particularly in Wells Gray country, stakeholders indicated that the current level of business makes it challenging to stay open year-round. Accordingly, a slow approach to strategically growing shoulder season businesses or embracing a cluster approach to winter season tourism development may prove to be the most beneficial.

Encouraging collaboration, both within communities as well as across multiple communities, to increase referrals, unify competing consumer messaging, and provide better visitor information is also needed. Doing so will provide a significant opportunity to strengthen awareness of all tourism opportunities within the planning area, while simultaneously enhancing the visitor experience.

## THEME 3: DIVERSIFY AND EXPAND THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Increasing the diversity of the visitor experience to broaden destination appeal was identified as a key development opportunity. To generate sustainable benefits for visitors, businesses, and First Nations it is imperative that a variety of both paid and unpaid visitor experiences be developed.

Currently the visitor offer primarily consists of self-discovery and self-guided opportunities, particularly in the central and western portions of the planning area. Wells Gray Provincial Park has more purchasable experiences available but could still benefit from additional visitor offers.

GUIDED OUTDOOR  
RECREATION ACTIVITIES  
AND EXPERIENCES THAT  
CONNECT VISITORS TO  
THE AREA'S INDIGENOUS  
PEOPLE AND CULTURES  
WERE IDENTIFIED AS  
MAJOR GAPS.

It was also acknowledged that the local First Nations bands must lead these development efforts, otherwise advancements in this area cannot be made. All product development efforts need to respond to the ideal visitor profiles (i.e., Authentic Experiencers, Cultural Explorers, and Free Spirits) identified for the Interlakes.

The popularity of water-based activities, such as kayaking, canoeing, and stand-up paddle boarding, and the growing popularity of mountain biking is providing new, alternative ways for visitors to enjoy themselves in nature and be active at the same time. However, the appropriate services needed to support the growth of these types of niche activities is currently lacking.

The breadth of food and dining establishments available is limited. Seasonal closures, multiple restaurants closing on the same day of the week, regulations limiting the ability of B&Bs to serve food and alcohol to visitors, and staffing challenges were identified as key issues that impact the dining experience for visitors.

## THEME 4: ENABLE TOURISM BUSINESS VIABILITY AND SUCCESS

The Interlakes is rich with natural assets, quality highway infrastructure, and geographic accessibility. It should be buzzing with visitors yet is underperforming relative to its potential. There is sense of fatigue and frustration expressed by stakeholders about the challenging regulatory environment that impedes business viability and success. Government processes, timeframes, regulations, and costs (i.e., for backcountry commercial permits, Crown land use permits and tenure agreements, complexity and cost of fishing licenses, and food provisioning for visitors in B&Bs), where possible, need to be streamlined and optimized to support tourism business success.

Staffing shortages, resulting from the lack of housing availability and housing affordability, is a major challenge faced by tourism business in the Interlakes. This challenge

appears to be more acute in the Clearwater/Wells Gray area where visitation is higher than in the other parts of the planning area. There was a sentiment expressed that while potential for tourism development exists, and ideas are unlimited, the reality of staffing shortages is the single-most important factor limiting growth. Tourism business succession planning is becoming increasingly difficult in the current environment where operational costs are rising, and the price of land is increasing. Stakeholders indicated that children of business owners are either moving away to larger centres where better job opportunities exist, or they cannot afford to purchase the family business and operate it sustainably. Additionally, new, foreign ownership of tourism businesses is on the rise. It will be imperative to discuss the issues, challenges, opportunities, and solutions together in response to this changing business dynamic.

## THEME 5: BALANCE ECONOMIC GROWTH WHILE PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS UPON WHICH TOURISM RELIES

The Interlakes is an area that relies on its beautiful landscapes, lakes, rivers, and mountains for its primary visitor activities and experiences. The quality of the viewsapes and natural environment are critical to the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry. Presently, there are competing demands for land use between tourism businesses and the extractive industries of logging and mining. There was a sentiment expressed that tourism is losing this battle and the value of tourism is not understood. It was felt that the short-term gains from extractive industry are outweighing the longer-term benefits of a sustainable tourism industry that sees the

environment remain intact. Logging in the area has been detrimental to viewscape quality, and noise from logging operations negatively impacts the visitor experience for those who have come here for years to unwind and enjoy the quiet wilderness of this destination.

Given the importance of the natural environment to tourism and the devastation experienced during the 2017 and 2018 wildfires, monitoring climate change, mitigating potential risks, and proactively planning for emergency response and communication will be critical going forward.

## THEME 6: SUPPORT NATURAL DISASTER RECOVERY

The 2017 and 2018 wildfires devastated parts of this planning area, putting some businesses at physical and long-term financial risk due to the loss of business and destination reputation. All businesses and communities

must engage with the appropriate government partners and band councils to ensure emergency preparedness initiatives are in place to ensure resident and visitor safety.

# OVER-ARCHING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The Impacts of The Northern Secwepemc to Qelmu'cw Agreement-in-Principle. At the time of writing this report, a draft agreement-in-principle was negotiated by the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council (Northern Secwepemc to Qelmu'cw – NStQ) First Nations, the government of British Columbia and the government of Canada (Figure 14)<sup>16</sup>. The NStQ is negotiating with British Columbia and Canada in the treaty process on behalf of four-member bands, two of which are in the Interlakes tourism destination development planning area: Tsq'escenemc (Canim Lake First

Nation) plus the Stswecem'c/Xgat'tem (Canoe/Dog Creek First Nation). The Xat's'ull (Soda Creek First Nation) and the T'exelc (Williams Lake First Nation) are represented in the Gold Rush Trail planning area. The agreement-in-principle is not a legally binding agreement but forms the basis for the next stage of negotiations, which are aimed at reaching a legally binding final agreement. Once reached, this agreement will represent a major milestone between the governments of Canada and British Columbia and NStQ First Nations.

<sup>16</sup>Government of British Columbia, Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. (n.d.). NStQ draft agreement-in-principle: Overview. Retrieved from [www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/agreements/other-docs/nstq\\_draft\\_ainp\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/agreements/other-docs/nstq_draft_ainp_factsheet.pdf)

FIGURE 14:  
Territory Being  
Negotiated  
Under the NStQ  
Agreement





## F. INTERACTION OF DEVELOPMENT THEMES AND MOTIVATING EXPERIENCES

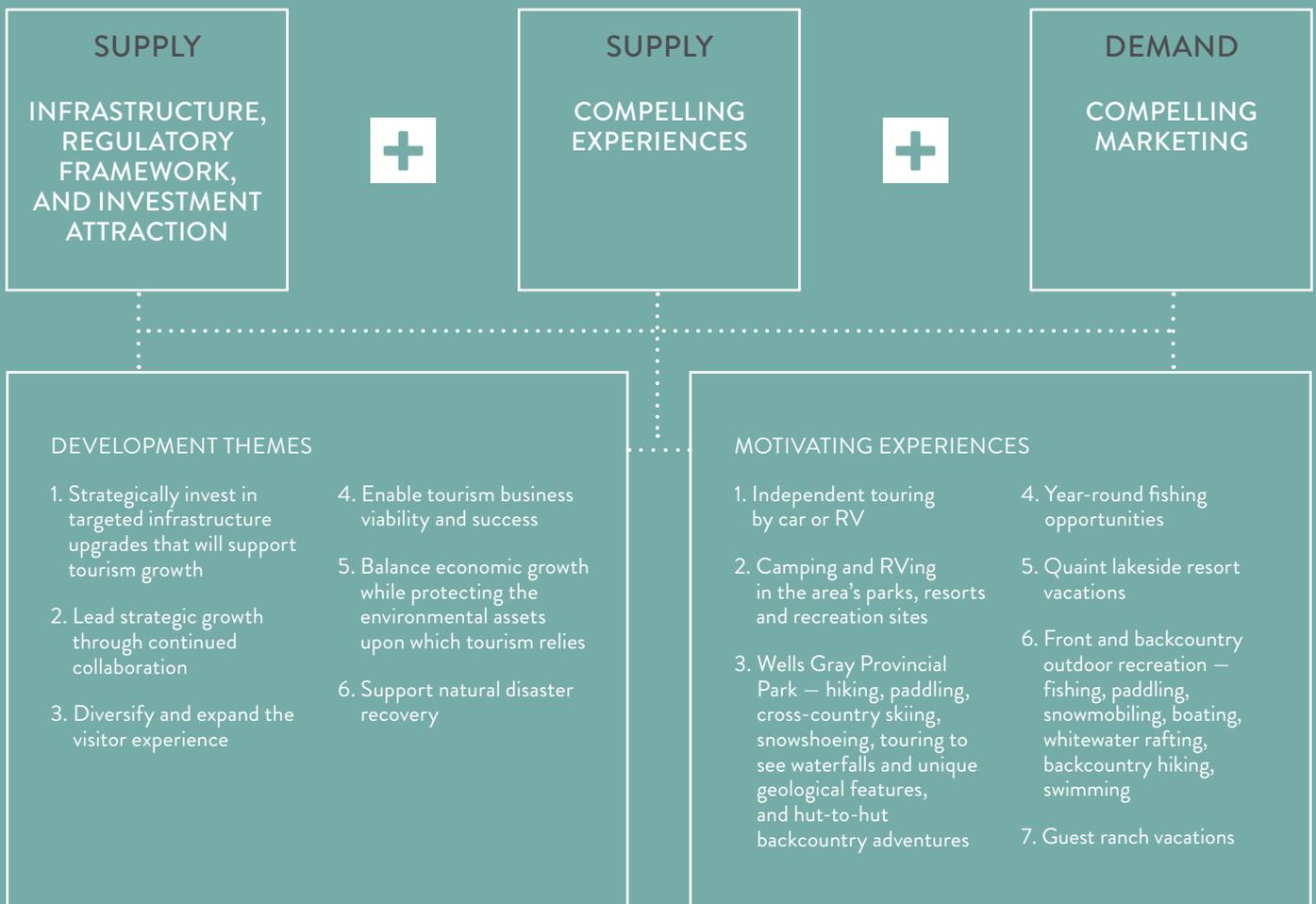
For any destination development strategy to achieve its goals, there must be coordinated interaction with the other components of the tourism development process.

As mentioned in section 2c, tourism has two primary revenue drivers – supply and demand. Destination development focuses on the supply side of tourism by providing the setting, access, policy framework, investment attraction, experiences, and visitor services to attract new visitors and entice repeat visitation. Demand side marketing efforts strive to create urgency for people to want to visit. While this strategy focuses on the supply side, it is important to connect the defined destination themes to the motivating experiences that lead to purchase decisions and result in visitation.

The interaction of supply, demand, development themes, and motivating experiences is cyclical. The process of developing supply drivers such as transportation, policy frameworks, and investment attraction support the development of compelling experiences – the supply drivers of products and services. These are then able to be marketed to potential visitors to generate demand. The marketing demand drivers lead to purchase decisions which result in visitation. Then, a new cycle of supply-side management and investment is set in motion to encourage competitiveness, sustainability, and tourism-driven benefits over the long term.

EACH OF THE SIX DEVELOPMENT THEMES WILL CONTRIBUTE TO EACH OF THE SEVEN MOTIVATING EXPERIENCES THAT HAVE BEEN DETERMINED FOR THE INTERLAKES, ALTHOUGH THEY WILL DO SO AT DIFFERENT LEVELS, BASED ON THE ACTUAL OBJECTIVES RECOMMENDED (FIGURE 15).

FIGURE 15: Interaction of Development Themes and Motivating Experiences



# 7

# STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

70 MILE HOUSE  
Photo: Michael Bednar

## INTERLAKES: A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION

VISION	<p>The Interlakes is an affordable, family-oriented destination recognized for its year-round outdoor recreation, fishing, touring and guest ranch opportunities, and is sought out by visitors who appreciate getting away from crowds to enjoy the area’s beautiful natural landscapes. The broad diversity of accessible backcountry adventures and front country resorts, outdoor activities, cultural, heritage, and Indigenous experiences support a thriving tourism industry, while being managed to preserve the natural assets and way of life valued by residents.</p>			
GOALS	<p>1. Demonstrate leadership through strategic, collaborative planning, targeted development, and investment to optimize the planning area’s assets and strengthen business viability.</p>	<p>2. Amplify awareness amongst visitors, businesses, and residents alike of the distinct experiences this planning area has to offer.</p>	<p>3. Incrementally grow the benefits from tourism while respecting the limited carrying capacity of the land and residents’ desire to retain the area’s unique character and culture.</p>	<p>4. Maintain a keen awareness and understanding of the customer adapting to the changing needs of the market, and develop visitor opportunities that enhance the visitor experience, attract more travellers, increase length of stay, and spend throughout the year.</p>
USP	<p>1. Plentiful parks and recreation sites providing an opportunity to disconnect in nature</p>	<p>2. Accessible back and front country outdoor adventure in wilderness environments</p>	<p>3. Quaint, off-the-beaten-path touring, and resort and guest ranch experiences away from crowds, that allow for exploration of lesser-visited areas of BC</p>	<p>4. A rich cultural heritage with diverse stories to share</p>
MOTIVATING EXPERIENCES	<p>1. Independent touring by car or RV 2. Camping and RVing in the area’s parks, resorts and recreation sites</p>	<p>3. Wells Gray Provincial Park 4. Year-round fishing opportunities 5. Quaint lakeside resort vacations</p>		<p>6. Front and backcountry outdoor recreation 7. Guest ranch vacations</p>
DEVELOPMENT THEMES	<p>Theme 1: Strategically invest in targeted infrastructure upgrades that will support tourism growth  Theme 2: Lead strategic growth through continued collaboration</p>	<p>Theme 3: Diversify and expand the visitor experience  Theme 4: Enable tourism business viability and success</p>		<p>Theme 5: Balance economic growth while protecting the environmental assets upon which tourism relies  Theme 6: Support natural disaster recovery</p>



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

KAYANARA GUEST RANCH & RESORT  
Photo: Blake Jorgenson

The Interlakes embodies our province's Super, Natural British Columbia<sup>®</sup> off-the-beaten path experiences. It is an outdoor recreation paradise for nature lovers and those who want to get away from the hustle of everyday life. Being located two to five hours from larger metropolitan centres like Kamloops, Kelowna, and the Lower Mainland, the Interlakes is within reach for shorter getaways, as well as being popular for longer vacation stays in the area's wilderness lodges, lakeside fishing resorts, guest ranches, and backcountry recreation sites.

Highway 24, which bisects the planning area, is an east-west crossroad that provides an alternative, less-travelled

option for visitors touring from Vancouver and Whistler to Jasper, and an option those heading north to the Alaska Highway.

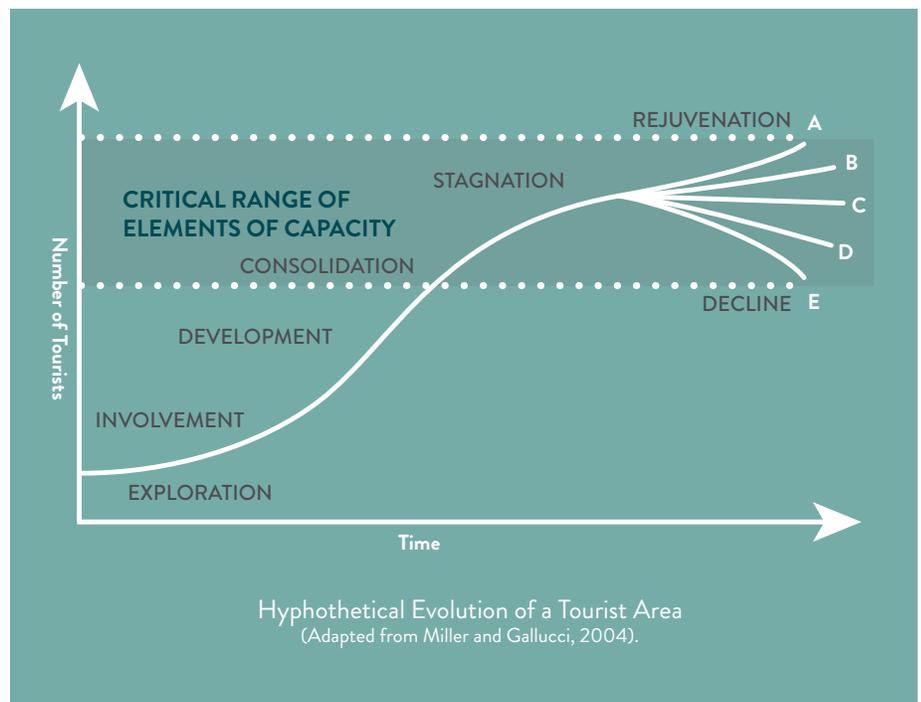
FIGURE 16:  
The Planning  
Area Lifecycle

The region is home to Wells Gray Provincial Park. This park houses distinct geological features that are remnants of the most spectacular of all the geological events that gave rise to the North American continent<sup>17</sup>. These features include waterfalls, cinder cones of former volcanoes, examples of volcanism from two million years ago, and landscape features resulting from floods and scouring during the last ice age.

The portion of the planning area along Highway 24 is in a stagnation phase of its lifecycle (Figure 16), where declining visitation is impacting the ability of businesses to invest in needed upgrades. With operational costs, as well as land and lease costs rising, accommodation

providers are selling to non-tourism businesses, subsequently eroding visitor choice and reducing access to land formerly used for trails and backcountry pursuits.

Simultaneously, Wells Gray Provincial Park, on the east side of the planning area, is in a growth stage that stakeholders report is beginning to exceed the capacity of the existing infrastructure, particularly accommodation, staff housing, and internet bandwidth, during the summer season. While the lifecycle stage and visitation numbers differ from the eastern border of the planning area versus the central and western portions, many of the development challenges identified during the research process were similar.



<sup>17</sup>Tourism Planning Group & Lions Gate Consulting. (2015, May). Wells Gray — North Thompson and Robson Valley Global Geopark project feasibility study. A document provided by Destination British Columbia.

## THE FRAMEWORK

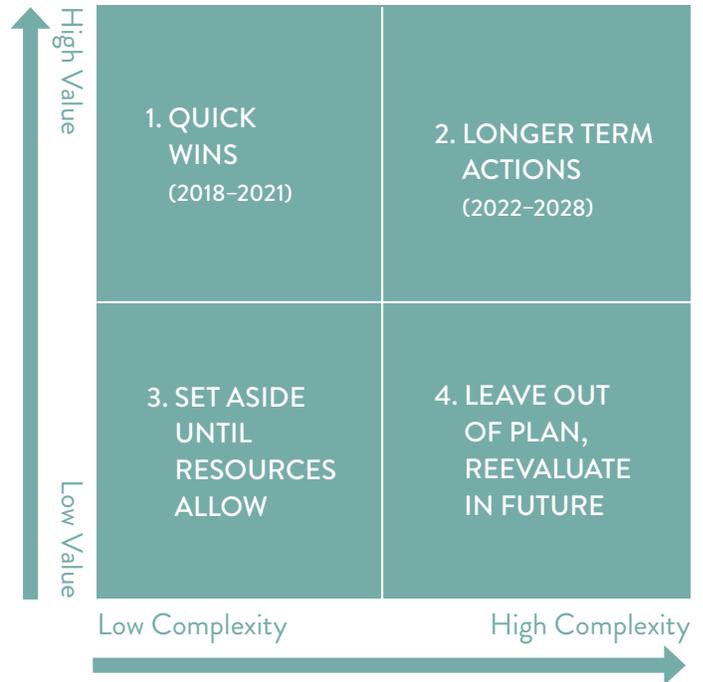
Destination BC provided a priority setting framework for all 20 planning areas to organize and align their objectives and actions in ways that allows for regional and provincial strategies to be developed with consistency.

Presenting the destination development strategies with a consistent framework will allow the province, the CCCTA, and TOTA to examine the various priorities across all planning areas to identify those which could inform the regional or provincial strategy.

**The working group used this framework to discuss the priorities of each strategy and the relative timing for implementation:**

1. **QUICK WINS** high value tactics with low complexity and can be achieved within three years (2018–2021).
2. **LONGER TERM ACTIONS** high value, high complexity that require four to ten years to achieve the result (2022–2028) albeit activities can begin immediately to achieve the outcome.
3. **SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW** low complexity and low value, address when time and resources exist.
4. **LEAVE OUT OF STRATEGY, RE-EVALUATE IN FUTURE** high complexity and low value, not realistically achieved in the 10-year time frame of this strategy.

The success networks are identified<sup>18</sup>, and where the proposed objective has provincial or regional scope beyond this planning area, it is noted. The objectives listed within the themes do not represent all the opportunities that emerged during the planning process, but those that emerged as a higher priority for tourism destination development.



<sup>18</sup>Organizations and partners listed under the success networks have been identified collectively through the strategy development process as likely playing a role in moving a potential objective or action forward. It does not imply they have endorsed the objective or action, nor committed to action.

# THEME 1: Strategically invest in targeted infrastructure upgrades that will support tourism growth

Infrastructure enhancement will be critical to growing the tourism potential for all stakeholders and in contributing to the future of tourism business viability in this planning area.

THEME 1: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>1. Circle routes: Develop the potential for new circle touring routes.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work collaboratively with FLNR on a tourism road inventory that will support the creation of new potential touring routes. The most commonly cited for development potential by stakeholders included:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bonaparte Plateau from Vidette Lake to 70 Mile or Bridge Lake</li> <li>- Jamieson Creek FSR</li> <li>- Wells Gray connector</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Measure existing use and prioritize options.</li> <li>• Inventory and assess needs relative to touring route signage and visitor amenities.</li> <li>• Develop a touring route development and maintenance plan.</li> <li>• Resolve traffic count discrepancy issues in Clearwater.</li> <li>• Work to develop accurate Google mapping as routes are created.</li> <li>• Connect to relevant wildfire and/or natural disaster planning taskforces looking at future road options, and any other relevant road development initiatives.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (TRAN), FLNR, Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources (EMPR), Visitor Centres, Regional Destination Management Organization (RDMOs), DMOs, DBC, First Nations, BC Parks, Regional Districts (RDs), Communities, Elected officials</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>2. Park Infrastructure: Improve access and infrastructure to key visitor attractions in Wells Gray Provincial Park.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and prioritize needed upgrades to road access, signage, parking, and visitor amenities in Wells Gray Provincial Park to enhance the visitor attractions of Canim, Mahood, and Deception Falls.</li> <li>• Work with Park maintenance contractor to develop and implement a maintenance plan for the visitor attraction sites on the west side of Wells Gray Provincial Park to the Canim, Mahood, and Deception Falls sites.</li> <li>• Explore enhanced maintenance options — particularly in winter — for popular visitor routes and attractions including Clearwater River Rd, Spahats Falls, and Moul Falls.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> FLNR, TRAN, Visitor Centres, RDMOs, DMOs, First Nations, BC Parks, RDs, Rec Sites and Trails, Tourism Wells Gray</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

THEME 1: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>3. Short-term Road Improvements: Execute short-term initiatives to enhance the existing touring experience on the key main and secondary roads used by visitors.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an Interlakes transportation and signage committee to address and support efforts to improve the visitor experience.</li> <li>• Work collaboratively with TRAN and key stakeholders to identify and address main highway signage improvements including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improving signage to indicate tourism-related businesses.</li> <li>- Improving way-finding signage directing visitors onto Highway 24 at the east and west ends from Highways 97 and 5.</li> <li>- Improve way-finding signage directing visitors to public access points for lakes and/or beaches.</li> <li>- Improving signage for blind turns on Highway 24.</li> <li>- Removing ranch lands and rivers signage along Highway 24.</li> <li>- Improving existing rest stops on Highway 24.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Identify historic points of interest and create interpretive signage.</li> <li>• Improving available information on Forest Service Road conditions for visitors.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> TRAN, FLNR, RDMOs, DMOs, First Nations, RDs, Recreation Sites and Trails BC, BC Parks, tourism businesses</p>	<p><b>1. QUICK WINS</b></p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>4. Longer-term Road Improvements: Prioritize and undertake longer-term initiatives to enhance the visitor touring experience on the main and secondary roads.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work collaboratively with TRAN, FLNR, and key stakeholders involved to identify and address infrastructure improvements including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improving acceleration and deceleration lanes onto, and off of, Highway 24 at the east end intersection with Highway 5.</li> <li>- Improving acceleration and deceleration lanes along Highway 24.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Collaborate to develop a long-term maintenance plan for key secondary and forest service roads used by tourists, and the decommissioning and deactivation of Forest Service Roads (FSRs).</li> <li>• Add public washroom facilities at the east and west ends of Highway 24.</li> <li>• Add a new rest stop between Lac de Roche and Highway 97.</li> <li>• Develop plug-in stations for electric vehicles.</li> <li>• Work collaboratively with FLNR and TRAN in the Cariboo region to identify secondary roads requiring increased maintenance. Roads identified through the stakeholder consultation included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hendrix Falls</li> <li>- West Sheridan</li> <li>- Tawheel</li> <li>- Watch Lake / North Green Lake Rd</li> <li>- Ruth Lake Rd</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> TRAN, FLNR, RDMOs, DMOs, First Nations, RDs, Communities, Community Associations, Recreation Sites and Trails BC, resource companies, tourism businesses</p>	<p><b>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</b></p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

THEME 1: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>5. Land access: Improve access and options for visitors to public lands and lakes.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and prioritize access roads needing improved maintenance and/or upgrades to existing Rec Sites and Trails BC locations.</li> <li>Identify backcountry lakes where visitors are going but recreation sites are needed.</li> <li>Expand the access points and amenities (parking, boat launch, garbage cans, washrooms, etc.) on the following lakes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bridge Lake</li> <li>Sheridan Lake</li> <li>Fawn Lake</li> </ul> </li> <li>Support and promote existing upgrading projects underway at Deka and Sulphurous Lakes.</li> <li>Complete the trail system at Bridge Lake Ice Caves.</li> <li>Develop more traditional campgrounds, campsites, and sites for RVs.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> TRAN, FLNR, RDMOs, DMOs, First Nations, RDs, Recreation Sites and Trails BC, tourism businesses</p>	<p><b>1. QUICK WINS</b></p>
<p><b>6. Water access: Develop new lake access points and visitor amenities.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand the access points and amenities (parking, boat launch, garbage cans, washrooms, etc.) on the following lakes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hathaway Lake</li> <li>Irish Lake</li> <li>Lac de Roche</li> <li>Horse Lake</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> TRAN, FLNR, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV), Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Recreation Sites and Trails BC, RDMOs, DMOs, First Nations, RDs, tourism businesses</p>	<p><b>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</b></p>
<p><b>7. Public and shared transportation: Address the shortage of public and shared transportation options.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore stakeholder interest in developing a business case for expanding public and private transportation services such as shuttle services, public bus services, ride-sharing, and car-sharing services.</li> <li>Address the need for car rental companies in cities such as Kamloops, Kelowna, and Williams Lake to ensure rental car options with appropriate tires and clearance are available for visitors planning to travel through the region who will be using the forest service and back roads.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> RDs, RDMOs, car rental companies, ride share companies, car share companies, BC Transit, TRAN</p>	<p><b>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</b></p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>8. Rail Access: Secure passenger rail service to Prince George.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strike a special taskforce of interested businesses and communities to develop a plan and meet with Via Rail.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> RVIA Rail, DMOs, RDMOs, businesses, municipalities, TRAN</p>	<p><b>3. SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW</b></p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

THEME 1: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>9. Connectivity Improvements: Identify key locations for infrastructure investments in cell service, increased bandwidth and Wi-Fi in the planning area.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a communications committee to identify locations and needed technology and/or communication services upgrades. Areas identified in the consultation included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Little Fort</li> <li>- Barriere</li> <li>- Clearwater</li> <li>- Wells Gray Provincial Park</li> <li>- Along Highway 97 at Begbie Summit to the turn off at Highway 24 all the way to Lac Des Roche</li> <li>- Canim-Hendrix Rd</li> <li>- Canim Lake area</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Meet with TRAN and industry to confirm the priority locations.</li> <li>• RDMOs and DBC to ensure businesses and the visitor service network is aware of where, and what, connectivity is available throughout the Interlakes and communicate this information to visitors.</li> <li>• Establish improved bandwidth or business internet service in the planning area.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> TRAN, municipalities, RDs, First Nations, Telecom companies, RDMOs, Network BC, tourism businesses, Trusts that offer funding opportunities</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>10. Connectivity Improvements: Increase the accuracy of Google mapping for key roads used by visitors in the Interlakes.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate this priority in the RDMO google partnership.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> RDMOs, DMOs, DBC, tourism businesses, FLNR, Google, TRAN</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

## THEME 2: Lead strategic growth through continued collaboration

The need for increased collaboration to realize the full potential of the Interlakes was a strong theme throughout the planning area. It was felt that the tourism is not valued as the economic generator that is relative to the traditional resource industries that have driven the economy in this area. A variety of collaborative opportunities were raised over the course of the discussions.

THEME 2: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>11. Improve the understanding with government, local citizens, and businesses of the tourism eco-system and the value of tourism.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the understanding of the value of tourism on an ongoing basis at all levels of government with elected officials, staff, policy, and program-makers.</li> <li>• Encourage incorporating tourism development interests and activities in Official Community Plans and/or strategic planning documents and/or band council documents. This includes any land use interests, evolutions, environmental/cultural/heritage protection and allowed/encouraged visitor activities.</li> <li>• Actively, and continually, invite new partners into local, regional, and provincial tourism conversations to garner diverse input and create advocates who can speak on behalf of the industry.</li> <li>• Promote and continue to educate communities, politicians, and citizens about the value of tourism and the benefits of a robust visitor economy.</li> <li>• Consider the creation of a Tourism Ambassador program that fits the needs of this planning area.</li> <li>• Increase visitor referrals between businesses and communities.</li> <li>• Enhance training for Visitor Centre staff about the planning area and all it has to offer.</li> <li>• Support tourism business and Visitor Centre staff familiarization trips and/or familiarization training to grow awareness and understanding of what's available in the planning area.</li> <li>• Encourage and support training on tourism career options in high schools.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC), DBC, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (TAC), RDMOs, DBC, DMOs, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development organizations, Business Improvement Areas, Community Futures (CF), First Nations, municipalities, RDs, FLNR, ENV, EMPR, Visitor Centres, school districts</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>12. Optimize the benefits from MRDT status for the 3% tax to support tourism growth in the CCCTA.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the key projects to be supported, relative to destination development, from these funds. (Note: MRDT approved during the term of the planning process).</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> CCCTA, DBC, Ministry of Finance (FIN), MRDT Marketing Committee</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>13. Strategically approach lengthening the tourism season.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a committee of interested stakeholders who are willing to work in a cluster to invest in staying open and offering products and experiences to draw visitors at a new time of year.</li> <li>• Explore the opportunity for the IEA to invest in one or two events that will support drawing visitors at the new time of year.</li> <li>• Develop packages and suggested itineraries to promote the seasonal development with the cluster of businesses involved.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> RDMOs, DMOs, tourism businesses, IEA, RDs, BC Parks, user groups, EDOs, Chambers of Commerce, Community Futures (CF)</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

THEME 2: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>14. Build relationships with local forest service management companies and government representatives to establish improved communication related to key issues impacting tourism's success in this planning area including:</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewscape management and degradation.</li> <li>• Increased communication on land sales or transfers to logging and mining companies.</li> <li>• Elimination of access to trails and backcountry lands currently or formerly used for tourism purposes.</li> <li>• Timing and location of logging salvage operations.</li> <li>• Communication related to Forest Service Road decommissioning and deactivation.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> FLNR, EMPR, resource companies, RDs, ENV, RDMOs, DMOs, tourism businesses, communities, First Nations</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>15. Continue to grow the potential of Wells Gray Provincial Park by collaborating on development initiatives.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address communication protocols with tourism stakeholders related to park closures.</li> <li>• Identify and enhance needed winter maintenance for assets that could increase the potential for shoulder season and winter business.</li> <li>• Encourage the development of new, non-motorized, winter activities in the park, and in lesser-used areas of the park on the west side.</li> <li>• Undertake a feasibility study for the potential to grow snowmobile tourism in the park.</li> <li>• Encourage the development of new, paid visitor experiences other than canoe and hiking guiding in the main park corridor.</li> <li>• Advocate for a review of tourism supplier exclusivity agreements within the park, based on current needs for paid activities and services.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> BC Parks, RDs, RDMOs, DMOs, TRAN, FLNR, tourism operators</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>16. Support the development of a renewed stakeholder engagement process to determine the collective will to reapply for UN World Heritage Site status for Wells Gray Provincial Park, or garner support for a Geopark designation.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate the benefits and costs of the various designation programs relative to the interests of increasing the protection and promotion of Wells Gray Provincial Park.</li> <li>• Revisit if the communities wish to process a second application for World Heritage Status or Geopark status.</li> <li>• If yes, create a working group to champion the process and do the work necessary.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Residents, BC Parks, Tourism Wells Gray, RDs, RDMOs, First Nations</p>	<p>3. SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

## THEME 3: Diversify and expand the visitor experience

To broaden the destination appeal, new and enhanced tourism products, services, and experiences are needed to encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more while travelling. This area has a lot of natural assets, but opportunities for visitors to enjoy these assets are limited unless they bring their own equipment or are staying at a resort. The area could benefit from increased visitor opportunities for both paid and unpaid activities, services, and experiences to increase visitor spending and length of stay. This theme describes the product development initiatives that emerged with the greatest need and priority for the region, presented in no specific order.

THEME 3: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>17. Activity and experience development: Increase the availability of paid visitor activities and experiences that allow for greater engagement with the area’s natural assets, distinct characters, heritage, and history.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop new, purchasable, guided visitor experiences that display the area’s culture and heritage.</li> <li>• Develop new, purchasable, guided outdoor recreation activities that utilize the existing natural assets. Specific examples cited:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fishing</li> <li>- Paddling</li> <li>- Hiking</li> <li>- Waterfalls and geological features in west Wells Gray Provincial Park</li> <li>- Winter activities in Wells Gray Provincial Park</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop packages and itineraries that promote and sell what is already available.</li> <li>• Develop food-based tourism experiences with farms and ranches.</li> <li>• Develop dark skies experiences.</li> <li>• Enhance existing festivals and events to drive more overnight visitation.</li> <li>• Accelerate product development by providing training such as Remarkable Experiences.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> First Nations, tourism businesses, ITBC, CCCTA, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), CFs, RDMOs, DBC, DMOs, New Pathways to Gold, TRAN, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, RDs with agri focus, Ministry of Agriculture (AGRI), ENV, BC Parks, communities</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>18. Indigenous tourism development: Work with the Simpcw, Tsq’escenemc (Canim Lake), and Stswecem’c Xgat’tem (Canoe/Dog Creek) First Nations to identify and support new Indigenous tourism development opportunities for more purchasable tours and products that support their economic development, and bring the culture, traditions, and heritage to life.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and promote existing Indigenous tourism activities and experiences, including the mountain bike trails at ChuChua.</li> <li>• Build capacity for Indigenous tourism growth by funding an Indigenous tourism liaison for the CCCTA.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities to align product development support between DBC, ITBC, ITAC, Economic Development, and Community Futures.</li> <li>• Establish a framework for collaborative action between CCCTA, ITBC, and ITAC to leverage development opportunities for the best interests of businesses and visitor outcomes.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> First Nations, TAC, Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology (JTT), RDs, BC Parks, CF, ITAC, ITBC, DBC, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (IRR), RDMOs, DMOs, Economic Development Offices (EDO)</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

THEME 3: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>19. Trail planning: Create a local area trail strategy to guide strategic investment.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventory existing trails and visitor amenities.</li> <li>• Identify gaps.</li> <li>• Strike a taskforce of committed individuals with a vested interest in enhancing the trails system and supporting amenities as part of a land strategy. The trail strategy should address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secure maintenance planning for existing trail</li> <li>- Tourism trail assets vs community assets</li> <li>- Areas of motorized vs non-motorized activities</li> <li>- Areas of multi-user conflict in the backcountry</li> <li>- Legal vs unauthorized trail</li> <li>- Long-term land access issues related to existing trails</li> <li>- Identify and inventory the basic amenities at trails needed in order to be promoted for visitors; this includes parking, washrooms, maps, emergency information, garbage cans, Wi-Fi hotspots</li> <li>- Current marketing and promotion of existing trails</li> <li>- Sources of sustainable funding for trail development and maintenance and develop an emergency management plan for trails</li> <li>- Current trail projects in the works and funded for new development</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> FLNR, BC Parks, Rec Sites and Trails, First Nations, CCCTA, RDs, TRAN, operators, EMPR, AGRI, Agricultural Land Commission, sector associations, user groups, municipalities</p>	<p><b>1. QUICK WINS</b></p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>20. Trail development: Invest in the development of new trails that will diversify opportunities for various visitor markets in the long-term.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop low-mobility trails.</li> <li>• Develop trail networks for motorized activities in the TNRD.</li> <li>• Explore the opportunity to connect Little Fort to 100 Mile House via motorized trail.</li> <li>• Connect snowmobile trails from Clearwater to the Gold Rush Snowmobile Trail.</li> <li>• Develop iconic trails such as the Hudson Bay Brigade Trail.</li> <li>• Explore the opportunity to expand the hut-to-hut trail network in Wells Gray Provincial Park.</li> <li>• Adapt existing trails and create new, shorter trails for families.</li> <li>• Secure trail maintenance funding for new trail development.</li> <li>• Invest in signage upgrades for existing trail networks.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> BC Rec Sites and Trails, BC Parks, FLNR, user and/or community groups, RDs, RDMOs, DMOs, sector associations, First Nations</p>	<p><b>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</b></p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>21. Outdoor recreation development: Support the growing interest in diversifying the outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the Interlakes.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventory and increase awareness of existing equipment rental services available within the Interlakes.</li> <li>• Identify gaps and explore opportunities for new recreational equipment rental options aligned with popular activities in different areas within the Interlakes – e.g., snowshoes, mountain bikes, paddling equipment.</li> <li>• Increase access and infrastructure for fishing on the most popular lakes.</li> <li>• Support the completion and promotion of existing projects including the 100 Mile water park, the BMX skills track in Centennial Park, and Barriere’s Splash in the Past park.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Tourism businesses, FLNR, ENV, DFO, RDs, RDMOs, municipalities, service clubs</p>	<p><b>1. QUICK WINS</b></p>

THEME 3: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>22. Food and Beverage: Encourage the growth and diversity of food and beverage opportunities, particularly along Highway 24.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a forum for business owners to discuss solutions to staff challenges and business hours.</li> <li>• Expand the diversity of food options, responding to visitors’ interests in local, traditional foods as part of their travel experience.</li> <li>• Provide support to entrepreneurs to access investment and start-up services.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to connect operators to programs such as BuyBC and Buy Eat Drink Local.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Operators, RDs, AGRI, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, CF, JTT, entrepreneurs, RDMOs, DMOs, banks, EDO, Chambers of Commerce</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>23. Accommodation: Support the upgrading of existing accommodations that have become tired and/or don’t meet modern standards for accessibility and today’s visitor expectations.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work with CCCTA and TOTA to be included in the accessible BC program.</li> <li>- Create a no-interest or low interest capital investment fund or loan guarantee and/or financing programs that tourism operators could access to invest in their property.</li> <li>- Address policies related to building codes for seasonal accommodation operators to increase the opportunity for upgrading and/or investment.</li> <li>- Communicate existing public programs available that could support tourism business investment for upgrades.</li> <li>- Renovate and/or improve existing accommodation for enhanced accessibility for visitors with disabilities and mobility issues.</li> <li>- Explore opportunities to connect travellers to accommodation availability through new technologies (e.g., Campnab).</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> : Private and/or public-sector accommodators, First Nations, EDOs, municipalities, RDs, BC Lodging and Camping Association (BCLCA), BC Hotel Association, RDMOs, Access BC, Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT), RDs, Spinal Cord Injury BC</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>24. New accommodation development: Increase the availability of camping and recreational vehicle services throughout the planning area.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify where there is capacity, on private, municipal, provincial or federal lands to add campground capacity and new RV sites and services, then prioritize the development opportunities.</li> <li>• Encourage private operators to develop new RV sites and camping sites.</li> <li>• Improve provincial campground reservation efficiency.</li> <li>• Encourage operators to explore new niche and non-traditional accommodation options (e.g., yurts, huts, heritage accommodation, hostels, etc.), adding additional unique accommodations that reflect the character of the region.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Municipalities, tourism businesses, First Nations, BCLCA, RD, ENV, FLNR, BC Parks, Rec Sites and Trails BC, RDMOs, DMOs, DBC</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p>

THEME 3: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>25. Explore opportunities to expand the visitor appeal of the planning area in order to attract new markets.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop new restaurants.</li> <li>• Develop new trails for mountain biking.</li> <li>• Develop new hut-to-hut-hiking options along Highway 24.</li> <li>• Develop new, higher-end accommodation options.</li> <li>• Develop new family-friendly activities.</li> <li>• Develop new backcountry adventure activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> entrepreneurs, tourism businesses, International Mountain Bike Association Canada, CMBC, local mountain bike and hiking clubs, trail societies, RDs, RDMOs, CF, First Nations, ITBC</p>	<p>3. SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW</p>

## THEME 4: Enable tourism business viability and success

Tourism business viability is being impacted by a variety of issues, the most prominent of which were the ability to attract and retain labour, business succession challenges, and the need for streamlined policy that supports long-term business success.

THEME 4: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>26. Improve visitor information services and develop a public safety plan that addresses the lack of connectivity in some parts of the planning area.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore options for visitor information services in Little Fort.</li> <li>• Identify options for visitor information Wi-Fi hot spots in areas where cell service is not available within the planning area.</li> <li>• Investigate a mobile visitor servicing option to allow support services to move to where visitors congregate at rodeos, festivals, and special events in different communities.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> TRAN, RDMOS, DMOs, First Nations, RDs, BC Parks, IEA, Network BC, DBC</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>27. Address the need for business succession planning.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a working group for the communities and businesses most impacted, to identify the list of issues, needs, and opportunities.</li> <li>• Identify commonalities across planning areas and regions. Raise awareness with TIABC about key issues common throughout the province and develop a position and approach to address the issues.</li> <li>• Identify issues, needs and opportunities common to the region, and those relevant only to the planning area. Prioritize which issues can be addressed and develop a regional and local approach to address them.</li> <li>• Grow awareness amongst tourism businesses of succession planning programs such as PASS (Planning a Successful Succession) and the Sauder School of Business – Business for Families Centre.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for a tax credit bridge program that would support tourism businesses in selling to a family member, or to someone who wants to continue running the business as a tourism operation.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> TIABC, JTT, tourism businesses, EDOs, municipalities, go2HR, CFs, Tourism HR Canada (THRC), Ventures Connect</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

THEME 4: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>28. Address the availability and affordability of tourism staff housing.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strike a regional or multi-stakeholder taskforce to brainstorm short-term solutions that can be implemented, such as alternative options like tiny houses, yurts, etc.</li> <li>• Engage with TAC to address the mounting tourism housing challenges.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> TAC, Municipalities, RDs, MAH, tourism businesses, RDMOs, DBC, TIABC, FIN</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>29. Support quick actions to help businesses cope with labour challenges.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training on adapting to new workforce realities and changing demographics and provide businesses with the knowledge and skills to attract and retain new types of workers.</li> <li>• Create a local, collaborative forum for discussing and solving labour issues related to housing, staffing, training, etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> RDMOs, go2HR, THRC, TAC, ITAC, ITBC, Ministry of Labour (LBR), First Nations, NDIT, CF, operators</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>30. Develop a long-term labour market and/or business development and human resource training strategy, that addresses growth and challenges from increased tourism activities and marketing. Include barriers to growth, access to staff training, business development resources, and volunteer burnout.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go2HR to conduct research, supported and informed by the RDMOs and businesses, to determine the key challenges and range of solutions businesses have considered. The goal would be to produce a list of options and ideas to support the labour market limitations, identify new government incentive programs, and other solutions that may help the situation.</li> <li>• Address the consistency, timing, and availability of Canada Summer Jobs grant funding that better support tourism businesses in long-term planning for staffing.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> RDMOs, go2HR, TAC, ITAC, ITBC, First Nations, LBR, NDIT, CF, IRR, operators, CTHRC</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

THEME 4: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>31. Invest in providing support and training to new foreign investors, foreign business owners, and their staff to fast-track their understanding of and integration into the Canadian tourism eco-system.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the types of support needed to support new, foreign business owners integrating into the tourism community.</li> <li>Explore opportunities to create a condensed course for tourism businesses and business owners looking to expand to BC.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> JTT, TAC, DBC, RDMOs, EDOs, go2HR, THRC, municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, go2HR, tourism businesses, ITAC, Small Business BC</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>32. Support efforts by TIABC and tourism operators to improve and streamline government processes that impede business viability and success including.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Costs, timelines, and processes for Crown land leases and renewals.</li> <li>- Policies inhibiting B&amp;Bs from cooking and serving meals to guests.</li> <li>- Policies related to agritourism operations.</li> <li>- Canada Summer Jobs Grant program reliability.</li> <li>- Building code restrictions for seasonal accommodators.</li> <li>- Cost of liability insurance to operate.</li> <li>- Costs and difficulties of policies related to fishing licenses</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify key policy issues common to the planning area that are aligned to regional challenges and bring them forward to TIABC.</li> <li>Meet with TIABC for updates on policy changes that will positively impact challenges and reduce red tape with government</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> RDMOs, DMOs, RDs, TIABC, elected officials, tourism businesses</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>CATALYST</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>33. Increase awareness of the availability of business interruption insurance for tourism business operators.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a communication plan to let businesses know about the options.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> Insurance companies, Municipalities, RDs, RDMOs, Chambers of Commerce</p>	<p>1. QUICK WINS</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

# THEME 5: Balance economic growth while protecting the environmental assets upon which tourism relies

THEME 5: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>34. Establish a framework for the discussion and approach to decision making related to land use, and the land value of extractive industries versus tourism in the planning area.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce the economic value and impact of tourism in the planning area with local and provincial land-use decision makers.</li> <li>• Increase collaboration and communication about tourism’s needs with land-use decision makers and resource companies.</li> <li>• Work to secure easements and long-term land access to trails and Forest Service Roads used by visitors.</li> <li>• Communicate the impacts of decisions that negatively impact the land base and viability of the tourism industry.</li> <li>• Invest in economic impact research to communicate tourism’s importance compared to extraction industries</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> RDMOs, TIABC, DBC, TAC, EMPR, FLNR, resource companies, communities, First Nations, EDOs</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>
<p><b>35. Safeguard the natural environments upon which tourism relies, while managing strategic growth within the capacity of the land and communities to sustain investments, and the local way of life.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with Recreation Sites and Trails BC and private land owners to educate user groups about the preservation and conservation of natural environments, and work to reduce public and private property damage from trespassing and unauthorized entry.</li> <li>• Work collaboratively with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy to provide tourism perspectives to the development of wildlife, land use and park management plans, to ensure tourism activities and development, and future visitor growth, do not negatively affect the natural environment, displace wildlife or impede fish stocks.</li> <li>• Continue to gather resident, tourism business, and First Nations input on destination and tourism development activities to ensure their perspective is heard, and their desire to hold on to their existing way of life is respected, while working to grow tourism.</li> <li>• Establish environmental monitoring and evaluate carrying capacity at key tourism assets within the planning area.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> RDMOs, FLNR, BC Parks, Recreation Sites and Trails BC, ENV, tourism businesses, First Nations, residents, RDs, Chambers of Commerce, tourism sector associations, user groups</p>	<p>2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS</p> <p>PROVINCIAL SCOPE</p> <p>REGIONAL SCOPE</p>

## THEME 6: Support Natural Disaster Recovery Success

The economic and social impacts of the 2017 and 2018 wildfires and floods continue to be studied by various governments, along with the multi-pronged support that will be needed to assist businesses and communities who were impacted in one of three ways:

1. Direct impacts (initial expenditures (or losses) minus consumption taxes) – 100% of which are incurred by the destination itself.
2. Indirect impacts (income losses by suppliers of the expenditure-related businesses – e.g., a construction or warehousing businesses supplying hotels and restaurants).

3. Induced impacts (income losses by businesses serving resident employees of tourism businesses – e.g., recirculated salaries of hotel and restaurant employees in local grocery stores).

A whole of government approach is required in times of natural disaster to draw on local area expertise to ensure impacted businesses and communities can recovery as quickly as possible and receive the support needed.

THEME 6: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<p><b>36. Secure temporary tax relief and operating permit relief (2018–2021) for tourism businesses impacted by the 2017 and 2018 wildfires.</b></p> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the province to provide a three-year, temporary property tax, business tax relief and/or deferral for 2019–2021.</li> <li>• Work with the province to provide temporary operating permit relief (e.g., tenures, park use permits) 2019–2021.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> FIN, FLNR, municipalities, BC Parks, RDs</p>	1. QUICK WINS
	CATALYST
	PROVINCIAL SCOPE
	REGIONAL SCOPE
<p><b>37. In light of the 2017 and 2018 wildfires, and potential future risk, develop tourism focused natural disaster plans that include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (i) a climate change mitigation and adaption plan for tourism operators</li> <li>- (ii) a regional tourism emergency preparedness, response, and recovery plan.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with municipalities and RDMOs to strike a taskforce to identify the key elements that must be addressed by government over the long-term.</li> </ul> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> ENV, FLNR, EMBC, TRAN, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (PSSG), insurance companies, tourism businesses, BC Parks, municipalities, TAC, RDs, RDMOs, First Nations, DBC</p>	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
	PROVINCIAL SCOPE
<p><b>38. Share consistent messages with all businesses in the impacted wildfire areas that can be used in their visitor communications.</b></p> <p><b>SUCCESS NETWORK</b> ENV, FLNR, EMBC, TRAN, PSSG, insurance companies, tourism businesses, BC Parks, municipalities, TAC, RDs, RDMOs, First Nations, DBC</p>	1. QUICK WINS
	PROVINCIAL SCOPE
	REGIONAL SCOPE



# IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

FLYING U GUEST RANCH  
Photo: Michael Bednar

## A. CATALYST PROJECTS

The following 16 actions were identified as catalyst projects for immediately moving the Interlakes Development Strategy into implementation:

1. Work collaboratively with FLNR on a tourism road inventory that will support the creation of new potential tourism routes including measuring existing use, prioritizing options, and assessing the needs relative to touring route signage and visitor amenities (Objective 1).
2. Improve access and infrastructure to key visitor attractions in Wells Gray Provincial Park. Identify and prioritize needed upgrades to road access, signage, parking and visitor amenities, and establish a long-term maintenance plan for key visitor attractions on the west side of the Park (Objective 2).
3. Create an Interlakes communications committee to identify locations and needed technology and communication service upgrades (Objective 9).
4. Increase the accuracy of Google mapping for key roads used by visitors in the Interlakes (Objective 10).
5. Improve the understanding with government, local citizens, and businesses of the tourism eco-system and the value of tourism (Objective 11).
6. Create a committee of interested stakeholders who are willing to work in a cluster to invest in staying open and offering products and experiences at a new time of year to lengthen the tourism season or stimulate a new season — e.g., winter (Objective 13).
7. Build relationships with local forest service management and companies, government representatives to establish improved communication related to key issues impacting tourism's success including viewscape management, communication on land transfers to logging or mining companies and Forest Service Road deactivation (Objective 14).

8. Continue to grow the potential Wells Gray Provincial Park by collaborating on key development initiatives (Objective 15).

9. Work with the Simpcw, Tsq'escenemc (Canim Lake), and Stswecem'c Xgat'tem (Canoe/Dog Creek) First Nations to identify and support new Indigenous tourism development opportunities for more purchasable tours and products that support their economic development and bring the culture, traditions, and heritage to life (Objective 18).

10. Encourage the growth and diversity of food and beverage opportunities in the planning area, particularly along Highway 24 (Objective 22).

11. Create a no-interest or low interest capital investment fund or loan guarantee and/or financing programs that tourism operators could access to invest in and upgrade their properties (Objective 23).

12. Improve visitor information services and develop a public safety plan that addresses the lack of connectivity in some parts of the planning area (Objective 26).

13. Strike a regional or multi-stakeholder taskforce to brainstorm short-term solutions that can be implemented to address the availability and affordability of tourism staff housing (Objective 28).

14. Support quick actions to help businesses cope with labour challenges (Objective 29).

15. Support efforts by TIABC and tourism operators to improve and streamline government processes that impede business viability and success (Objective 32).

16. Secure temporary tax relief and operating permit relief (2018–2021) for tourism businesses impacted by the 2017 and 2018 wildfires. (Objective 36).

## B. PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES

A key deliverable of the Destination BC Destination Development Program is the creation of regional and provincial strategies. Objectives and actions commonly shared in the Interlakes may become regional priorities within the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Thomson Okanagan regional destination development strategies.

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

Objectives identified as provincial in scope most often involve multiple provincial government organizations, including Destination BC, TAC, ITBC, go2HR, and TIABC.

It is recommended the following Interlakes priority 1 and 2 level objectives and actions become provincial initiatives within the Provincial Destination Development Strategy.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<b>THEME 1: Strategically invest in targeted infrastructure upgrades that will support tourism growth</b>	
9. Connectivity Improvements: Identify key locations for infrastructure investments in cell service, increased bandwidth and Wi-Fi in the planning area.	1
<b>THEME 2: Lead strategic growth through continued collaboration</b>	
11. Improve the understanding with government, local citizens, and businesses of the tourism eco-system and the value of tourism.	1
14. Build relationships with local forest service management and companies and government representatives to establish improved communication related to key issues impacting tourism's success in this planning area.	1
15. Continue to grow the potential of Wells Gray Provincial Park by collaborating on development initiatives.	1
<b>THEME 3: Diversify and Expand the Visitor Experience</b>	
23. Accommodation: Support the upgrading of existing accommodations that have become tired and/or don't meet modern standards for accessibility and today's visitor expectations.	1
<b>THEME 4: Enable Tourism Business Success and Viability</b>	
27. Address need for business succession planning.	2
28. Address the availability and affordability of tourism staff housing.	1
30. Develop a long-term labour market and/or business development and human resource training strategy that addresses growth and challenges from increased tourism activities and marketing.	2
31. Invest in providing support and training to new foreign investors, foreign business owners, and their staff to fast-track their understanding of, and integration into, the Canadian tourism eco-system.	2
<b>THEME 5: Balance economic growth while protecting the environmental assets upon which tourism relies</b>	
34. Establish a framework for discussion and the approach to decisions related to land use and land value of extractive industries versus tourism in the planning area.	2
35. Safeguard the natural environments upon which tourism relies while managing strategic growth within the capacity of the land and communities to sustain investments and the local way of life.	2
<b>THEME 6: Support natural disaster recovery success</b>	
36. Secure temporary tax relief and operating permit relief (2018–2021) for tourism businesses impacted by the 2017 and 2018 wildfires.	1
37. In light of the 2017 and 2018 wildfires and potential future risk develop tourism-focused natural disaster plans.	2
38. Share consistent messages with all businesses in the impacted wildfire areas that be used in their visitor communications.	1

It is recommended the following Interlakes objectives and actions become regional initiatives within the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Thompson Okanagan Regional Destination Development Strategies. It is acknowledged that all provincial initiatives identified be relevant to the regional strategy. Additional objectives, just to be included in the regional strategy, are identified in the table that follows.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
<b>THEME 1: Strategically invest in targeted infrastructure upgrades that will support tourism growth</b>	
1. Develop the potential for new circle touring routes.	2
2. Improve access and infrastructure for key visitor attractions in Wells Gray Provincial Park.	2
3. Short-term road improvements: Execute short-term initiatives to enhance the existing touring experience on the key main and secondary roads used by visitors.	1
4. Longer-term road improvements: Prioritize and undertake longer-term initiatives to enhance the visitor touring experience on the main and secondary roads.	2
7. Public and shared transportation: Address the shortage of public and shared transportation options within the planning area.	2
10. Connectivity Improvements: Increase the accuracy of Google mapping for key roads used by visitors in the Interlakes.	1
<b>THEME 2: Lead Strategic Growth Through Continued Collaboration</b>	
12. Optimize the benefits from MRDT status for the 3% tax to support tourism growth in the CCCTA.	1
13. Strategically approach lengthening the tourism season.	1
<b>THEME 3: Diversify and Expand the Visitor Experience</b>	
17. Activity and experience development: Increase the availability of paid visitor activities and experiences that allow for greater engagement with the area’s natural assets, distinct characters, heritage, and history.	1
18. Indigenous tourism development: Work with the Simpcw, Tsq’escenemc (Canim Lake), and Stswecem’c Xgat’tem (Canoe/Dog Creek) First Nations to identify and support new Indigenous tourism development opportunities for more purchasable tours and products that support their economic development, and bring the culture, traditions, and heritage to life.	1
19. Trail planning: Create a local area trail strategy to guide strategic investment.	1
20. Trail development: Invest in the development of new trails that will diversify opportunities for various visitor markets in the long-term.	2
22. Food and Beverage: Encourage the growth and diversity of food and beverage opportunities, particularly along Highway 24.	1

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS		PRIORITY
THEME 4: Enable Tourism Business Viability and Success		
26.	Improve visitor information services and public safety plan that addresses the lack of connectivity in some parts of the planning area.	1
29.	Support quick actions to help businesses cope with business labour challenges.	1
32.	Support efforts by TIABC and tourism operators to improve and streamline government processes that impede business viability and success.	1
33.	Increase awareness of the availability of business interruption insurance for tourism business operators.	1

## C. FUNDING PROGRAMS

To assist the Interlakes with their implementation efforts Destination BC has compiled a list of funding programs as part of the provincial situation analysis.

The different funding options highlighted include: Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT), Destination BC Programs, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD), Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Programs, community gaming grants, community trusts, municipal funding, and business levies.

Contact Destination BC for a copy of this information sheet.

The provincial government also has an online tool on their website to find economic development funding and grants.

### Funding options also include:

- Continuation of the annual \$25 million in funding for the Rural Dividend Program, to 2019–2020.
- \$40 million in additional funding for the Connecting British Columbia program, which extends high-speed internet access to rural and remote communities. Applications are reviewed as received.

- Northern Development offers a range of funding programs suited to a diverse set of economic and development priorities in central and northern BC, with \$20 million available in the Cariboo-Chilcotin-Lillooet region.
- 2017 TAC ministerial mandate letter includes to “Double the Province’s investment in the BC Arts Council over four years.” Once established, this will have positive impacts for communities across the province with increased opportunities to engage in the arts.
- 2017 TAC ministerial mandate letter includes to “Establish an arts infrastructure fund to help provide space for BC artists.” Once established, the new infrastructure fund should improve and increase art spaces across the province.
- Various Indigenous tourism and business development initiatives federally and provincially.
- Wildlife recovery programs.

# 10

# MEASURING AND MONITORING SUCCESS

MEADOW LAKE LOCATED  
NORTHWEST OF LITTLE FORT  
Photo: Jeremy Koreski

The key measures of success for monitoring progress within the Interlakes planning are summarized in Figure 17.

FIGURE 17:  
Goals and  
Performance  
Measures

GOAL	RECOMMENDED MEASUREMENT
1. Demonstrate leadership through strategic, collaborative planning and targeted development and investment to optimize the planning area's assets and strengthen business viability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish research measures</li> <li>• # shared use/collaboration agreements</li> <li>• # strategic, collaborative project outcomes</li> </ul>
2. Amplify awareness amongst visitors, businesses, and residents alike of the distinct experiences this planning area has to offer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in visitor spend</li> <li>• Increase in length of stay</li> <li>• Increase in overnight stays</li> <li>• Increase in # authentic Indigenous experiences</li> <li>• Net Promoter Score<sup>19</sup></li> </ul>
3. Incrementally grow the benefits from tourism, while respecting the limited carrying capacity of the land and residents' desire to retain the area's distinct character and culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of education/training opportunities</li> <li>• # participants in professional training</li> <li>• Various measures for consumer marketing<sup>20</sup></li> </ul>
4. Maintain a keen awareness and understanding of the customer, adapt to the changing needs of the market, develop visitor opportunities that enhance the visitor experience, attract more travellers, increase length of stay, and spend throughout the year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitor surveys</li> <li>• MRDT data</li> </ul>

The Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology provides a community economic development measurement tool that may be useful in tracking progress: [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/plan-and-measure/performance-measurement-toolkit?keyword=economic&keyword=development&keyword=measurement&keyword=tool](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/plan-and-measure/performance-measurement-toolkit?keyword=economic&keyword=development&keyword=measurement&keyword=tool)

<sup>19</sup>Net Promoter Score calculation: [www.destinationbc.ca/Resources/Monitoring-and-Evaluation/Net-Promoter-Score.aspx](http://www.destinationbc.ca/Resources/Monitoring-and-Evaluation/Net-Promoter-Score.aspx)

<sup>20</sup>Marketing is not part of BC's destination development planning program, measures of marketing success can be secured from Destination BC's marketing department.

# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX 1: Overview of the Planning Process

The following planning process ensured this strategy was developed thoughtfully and with consistent participation from a diverse group of industry partners who impact tourism either directly or indirectly. The process followed a semi-structured design by Destination BC that was customized specifically for the Interlakes.

The Interlakes utilized a truncated process due to the impacts of the 2017 wildfires, and a desire to begin as quickly as possible prior to operators closing for the season.

### 1. PROJECT STAGING AND PRELIMINARY DOCUMENT REVIEW

- a. Designed to set the stage for the Destination Development Planning process by launching project communications with stakeholders
- b. Review area documentation to familiarize the consulting team with the DBC and regional plans, studies, and reports provided, plus the draft asset inventory

### 2. STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

- a. Completed an online stakeholder survey to gather preliminary information into the priorities of stakeholders

### 3. FIRST IN-COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

- a. Introduced the program, engaged tourism partners, launched discussions on the vision, visitor profile, destination development opportunities and challenges, and invited additional input to help inform the context for the Interlakes
- b. Hosted four in-person sessions in Barriere, Roe Lake, Lone Butte, and 100 Mile House

#### 4. DOCUMENT REVIEW, ASSET INVENTORY AND STAKEHOLDER INVENTORIES

- a. Complete review of 133 plans, studies, and reports
- b. Completed a review of various documents provided by Destination BC including: 10 Macro Trend Reports, 11 Consumer Trends Reports, six Tourism Industry Reports, one Tourism Funding Report, 16 Industry Performance Reports, and eight Key Products and Potential Reports. Appendix 5 provides the bibliographic references
- c. Conducted seven formal interviews

#### 5. STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

- a. Completed a second online stakeholder survey to broaden the stakeholder input after incorporating the inputs from the second in-community consultations, working group meeting, draft situation analysis, and asset inventory

#### 6. COMPLETED THE ASSET INVENTORY

- a. This is a vital document that provides base line information on the: Planning area description, accommodations, provincial parks and recreation sites, food and beverage, key tourism features, area administration and tourism organizations, tourism businesses and attractions, access and transportation, sport and meeting facilities, festival and events, and visitor services
- b. Incorporated First Nations asset information (provided by ITBC) regarding products in market and under development, and First Nation Bands active in tourism
- c. Merged the asset Destination BC and First Nations inventories, then invited the RDMOs to review for accuracy, and to make any additions or eliminations
- d. Each community then received their pertinent section of the inventory to review for accuracy, and to make any additions or eliminations

- e. All feedback incorporated and a final verification by CCCTA prior to using the data in the Situation Analysis and future stakeholder conversations

#### 7. WORKING GROUP MEETING

- a. Hosted a two-day meeting to discuss the opportunities emerging from the situation analysis, set priorities, affirm short-term and long-term actions, those that should be set aside until resources are found and elements that should not be included in the final strategy
- b. Finalized the vision, success networks, monitor, and evaluation elements

#### 8. COMPLETED THE SITUATION ANALYSIS

#### 9. DRAFTED AND FINALIZED THE DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### APPENDIX 2: Communities and First Nations in the Planning Area

#### Incorporated entities within the Interlakes Destination Development planning area

- Barriere
- Clearwater
- 100 Mile House

#### Unincorporated entities within the Interlakes

- Bridge Lake
- Canim Lake
- Forest Grove
- Little Fort
- Lone Butte
- 70 Mile House
- Roe Lake
- Sheridan Lake
- Green Lake
- Horse Lake
- Watch Lake

#### First Nations within the Interlakes Destination Development planning area

- Tsq'escenemc (Canim Lake) First Nation
- Simpcw First Nation
- Stswecem'c Xgat'tem (Canoe/Dog Creek) First Nation



## VISION STATEMENT #2:

The Interlakes is a highly-recognized fishing, family, and touring destination sought out by adventurous visitors who appreciate getting away from crowds to enjoy recreation in beautiful, natural landscapes. The region offers a broad diversity of accessible backcountry opportunities, as well as front country resorts, outdoor activities, cultural and Indigenous experiences that attract visitors in summer and winter to generate sustainable benefits for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

The survey feedback, as of 12 Feb 2018 revealed 22% in favor of the first statement and 78% preferred statement #2. The vision statement was further refined based on input from the April 2018 in-community consultation and working group sessions:

The Interlakes is an affordable, family-oriented destination recognized for its year-round outdoor recreation, fishing, touring and guest ranch opportunities, and is sought out by visitors who appreciate getting away from crowds to enjoy the area's beautiful natural landscapes. The broad diversity of accessible backcountry adventures and front country resorts, outdoor activities, cultural, heritage, and Indigenous experiences support a thriving tourism industry, while being managed to preserve the natural assets and way of life valued by residents.

## APPENDIX 4: Planning Area Considerations

A series of filters — key principles through which to run development decisions emerged from stakeholder consultation. Initiatives put forward in this plan should exemplify many of the following:

- Recognize, respect and maintain our values, cultures, assets, environment, and way of life while being responsive to the needs of today's travellers
- Generate sustainable financial results for businesses to thrive in the long-term
- Prioritize support and enhancement of existing assets before investing to create new assets
- Strengthen collaboration and coalesce stakeholders around a common recognition of the value of tourism
- Broaden the visitor base, grow revenue, length of stay, and extend season

## GROW THE POTENTIAL FOR CIRCLE TOURING

Touring and road trips are one of the province's five key positioning themes. Highway 24 is a key east-west corridor that connects BC's interior to the Rockies. Its positioning between two existing touring corridors (Highways 5 and 97) results in the Interlakes receiving many touring visitors passing through on their way to other locations. There is opportunity to develop new touring routes within the planning area by leveraging the assets that already exist.

The area has an extensive network of backcountry and forest service roads that are often used by visitors, however, roads are reported to be in poorly maintained condition. Additionally, a lack of signage and inaccurate Google mapping contributes to visitors ending up in places where they should not be, as they seek out ways to explore these backroads on their own. Identifying backroad routes that are most popular with visitors and can be maintained by the appropriate authorities, with which to create a circle route, is an opportunity that was strongly supported by stakeholders throughout the planning area.

As overtourism increasingly becomes an issue that needs to be strategically planned for, and managed by the province and regions, the Interlakes represents an ideal location for development that could entice Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers, off the primary driving routes. This development benefits visitors by creating new bucket list trips; benefits the destination by alleviating some of the pressure on the more popular sites; and, benefits businesses by providing new reasons for visitors to stay longer in the region and spend more.

Exploiting the potential of this opportunity requires increased and ongoing collaboration between Regional Districts, municipalities and the various ministries responsible for land use, road, and communication infrastructure, signage, marketing and promotion, and decision-making that considers the needs and desires of visitors. Affirming the progressive, strategic investments required between ministries that will benefit travellers and citizens alike will require a commitment to an integrated planning, development, and maintenance process. Done well in the Interlakes, this development could create new demand drivers that would grow awareness and attract visitors to the region.

## OPTIMIZE THE ASSETS OF WELLS GRAY PROVINCIAL PARK

It is recognized that Wells Gray Provincial Park is unique, and there are opportunities to better optimize the potential for the park. This has led to efforts to seek a global GeoPark or World Heritage Site designation that would help raise awareness about what the park has to offer and support the protection of these assets for the future, while increasing the economic impacts from tourism. The needed public awareness, support, and understanding of a designation's value still lags in the area, suggesting that committed human and financial resources will be required should the desire exist to move a designation forward. While a designation could contribute to growing tourism's economic impact and potential for Wells Gray Provincial Park, regardless of whether this is achieved, there are a variety of development opportunities that can be pursued in the interim to optimize the park's potential.

Wells Gray Provincial Park is an important primary demand generator in the Interlakes; seeing over 250,000 visitors annually, it's the most visited park within the Thompson Okanagan and Cariboo regions. The park is home to a variety of natural assets including 39 named waterfalls, 22 volcanoes, North America's largest non-motorized lake, over 200 lakes, hundreds of kilometres of hiking, biking, and groomed cross-country ski trails, as well as significant geological features. Despite the popularity of this park investment in cell service, road access, signage, road, and trail access improvements on the west side of the park, plus winter road maintenance would be instrumental to growing winter tourism.

Wells Gray Provincial Park is one of the few parks within BC where a limited number (six) of exclusive permits for peak season hiking and canoeing operations are issued. BC Parks is open to accepting applications for new guiding permits for summer and winter activities other than hiking, canoeing, and guided fishing. However, few companies have come forward expressing interest. One permit for new winter operations is currently being explored.<sup>21</sup>

Optimizing tourism's potential for the park necessitates infrastructure investment in key visitor access routes, viewpoints, amenities, cell and/or Wi-Fi service, and trails, as well as exploring opportunities to increase the availability of guided and paid activities within the park. Wells Gray Provincial Park

<sup>21</sup>T. Haughton, personal communication, April 4, 2018.

has an abundance of terrain for winter pursuits that could be developed for tourism to extend the season and entice new visitors to the planning area at a new time of year. Development must be done collaboratively between community members, tourism businesses, and BC Parks to optimize the opportunity, as many of the businesses currently close in winter, and investments in additional road and trail access maintenance would be needed.

## DIVERSIFY THE VISITOR OFFER AND POSITIONING

Stakeholders indicated that awareness of the breadth of opportunities in the Interlakes planning area is low. The situation analysis research revealed that the brand messaging of 11 different organizations promoting the area makes it challenging to construct a vision of what the area has to offer. There is a desire amongst stakeholders and an opportunity to diversify the visitor offer, strengthen the positioning of the area with desired target markets, and broaden the appeal of the area to attract new visitor markets.

Fishing is the predominant positioning of the planning area, with many of its assets and products being oriented toward fishing and lake-based pursuits. Stakeholders along Highway 24 confirmed that the visitor offer lacks diversity, and that the Fishing Highway branding potentially narrows the appeal of the area to a niche audience. A desire was expressed to remain a well-known fishing destination while expanding the appeal of the area as an affordable, family-friendly place to vacation, and a touring destination worthy of spending time in instead of passing through.

Outdoor recreation is a strong secondary theme, especially on the eastern side of the planning area in the North Thompson Valley and Wells Gray Provincial Park. The diversity of activities available, both self-guided and guided, is more varied in this part of the planning area, but activities are primarily oriented to outdoor, nature-based pursuits. The area is rich in human and geological history but there is currently limited opportunity for visitors to experience and engage with these stories, particularly on the western side of the park.

In addition to fishing and outdoor recreation, there are a few experiences that provide visitors with an opportunity to engage with the heritage and culture of the area, its cuisine, and Indigenous people. The planning area has a variety of guest ranches that welcome visitors for horseback riding and a chance to experience western cowboy culture. Culinary opportunities, while currently limited, include farmers markets and a small variety of eateries. The development of the local food economy and culinary tourism experiences aligns with TOTA's strategic pillar of Enriching Local Flavours<sup>22</sup>, as well as efforts being made by the Interlakes Economic Association to support local ranchers and farmers<sup>23</sup>.

The Simpcw and Tsq'escenemc (Canim Lake) have cultural stories, performances, and activities they share with visitors on an ad hoc basis, and through events such as pow wows.

The diversity of experiences available within the region can be clustered under four experience themes: outdoor recreation and trails, Indigenous tourism, heritage and stories, and culinary. These themes can help shape future development initiatives to diversify the visitor offer and align messaging across the various organizations responsible for promoting their portions of the planning area, making it easier for visitors to understand what is available. Additionally, working within this framework could have a secondary benefit of supporting alignment with recommendations from the Gold Rush Trail destination development strategy in a way that entices visitors to, and through, both planning areas.

Against the backdrop of the identified themes, the common concern for more visitor activities to supplement the outdoor and fishing experience can be addressed. To strengthen the visitor experience, activities and offers aligned with the priority targets — Authentic Experiencers, Cultural Explorers, and Free Spirits — are needed. Focused development of activities and experiences that appeal to these visitor profiles would entice visitors to stay longer and spend more.

<sup>22</sup>Nicol, S. & Houillebecq, J. (2013, July). Community tourism foundations: North Thompson Valley tourism plan 2013-14. A document provided by Destination British Columbia.

<sup>23</sup>Lawson, D. (n.d.). Interlakes economic association farmers' market strategic plan May 2014-2017. A document provided by the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association.

## VISITOR ECONOMY EDUCATION

As an area that relies on beautiful landscapes, lakes, rivers, and mountains for its primary visitor activities and experiences, the quality of the viewscapes and natural environment are critical to the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry. There are competing demands for land use in the planning area between tourism and the extractive industries of logging and mining. Common sentiment expressed that tourism is losing this battle, and that the value of tourism is not understood. It was felt that the short-term gains from extractive industries are outweighing the longer-term benefits of a sustainable tourism industry that sees the environment remain intact. Logging in the area has been detrimental to viewcape quality, and noise from logging operations negatively impacts the visitor experience for those who have come to unwind and enjoy the quiet wilderness of this destination.

A desire was expressed for stronger collaboration between tourism, logging, and mining to reinforce the value of tourism, and to help people understand the benefits of the visitor economy and explore opportunities for better planning that would mitigate negative visitor and economic impacts. Resort operators in or near logging areas would like to see better communication around land sales or transfers to logging and mining companies, as well as around the decommissioning of roads that are used by visitors, the elimination of access to trails and backcountry lands, the timing and location of logging salvage operations, and generally to have the value of the tourism industry's needs be taken into consideration as decisions are made.

An opportunity exists for tourism to benefit from the road network that is created as extractive companies enter new areas. Collaborative planning to inventory and identify popular forest service roads for tourism development, before they are decommissioned, could support the creation of new circle routes and increase access to backcountry areas that would be beneficial to visitors and tourism development in the planning area.

## INFRASTRUCTURE ENHANCEMENTS

Essential to success in increasing destination appeal for independent travellers is a mix of foundational infrastructure. Variances in accommodations, food and beverage, trails, and amenities would benefit from a strategic development focus.

### Accommodation

Many accommodations in this area can be considered quaint or rustic. There is a need for investment to upgrade some of the existing accommodation inventory that is becoming tired, however the short tourism season makes it challenging for operators to achieve the profitability needed to reinvest in infrastructure enhancements and upgrades. Stakeholders indicated that supportive financing options, such as tax incentives, government loan guarantees, or investment grant programs are needed to incentivize operators to make these needed infrastructure investments and upgrades.

Given the high capital costs for traditional fixed-roof accommodation infrastructure, consideration should be given to the evolving visitor interest in unique sleeping experiences beyond a traditional hotel or inn, as a lower cost capital investment option. With the seasonal nature of tourism in the planning area lower capital cost accommodation options may prove to be advantageous for owners, while at the same time diversifying the available options for visitors.

Emerging non-traditional accommodation options being seen in the market include yurts, comfort camping, oTENTik-style furnished canvas tents, and sleeping spheres that provide a mid to higher-range distinct offering and different price points. These types of accommodations could be helpful in better meeting the demands of today's travellers and alleviating accommodation shortages at the peak of the busy high season.

The limited availability of short-term accommodation options, including hotels and motels, for one to two-night stays was cited to be challenge for visitors, as many of the resorts require longer stays. Private, short-term rentals such as Airbnb are available throughout the planning area, however

<sup>24</sup>[www.clearwatertimes.com/news/tncrd-looks-at-controls-for-short-term-rentals/](http://www.clearwatertimes.com/news/tncrd-looks-at-controls-for-short-term-rentals/)

the future of private, short-term rentals is uncertain given that the CRD has a bylaw in place limiting this option, and the TNRD is currently assessing its position on this issue. With stakeholders identifying that the availability and affordability of staff housing is already an issue, communities need to consider the policies that will work best for them to balance the demand between the need for longer-term staff housing, and the demand for shorter tourism stays. The integration of short-term rentals such as Airbnb can add to the diversity and availability of the accommodation pool – and this type of accommodation is quite popular with the target visitor profiles. Depending on the community, however, they may or may not be the right answer to accommodation shortages.

Camping and RVing is very popular within this area, with the more popular campgrounds at Green Lake and in the Wells Gray Provincial Park area sold out during the peak season. New services such as Hipcamp, an evolving platform described as the Airbnb of camping, and Campnab are emerging to facilitate connections between users and the available supply of campsites. It was suggested that visitors could benefit from private RV and campground operators being able to list and sell their inventory through the same platforms as provincial campgrounds, given that many of the provincial sites book out months in advance.

### **Food and Beverage**

The breadth of food and dining establishments available in the planning area is limited. Seasonal closures, multiple restaurants closing on the same day of the week, regulations limiting the ability of B&Bs to serve food and alcohol to visitors, and staffing challenges were identified as key issues that impact the dining experience for visitors. Staffing shortages in the Clearwater area are resulting in restaurants having to be closed more than they might like to be.

Much like the accommodation sector, food and beverage options are rapidly evolving as well. Food trucks, brown bag lunches and picnics, and increased variety and availability of higher quality, local pre-made takeaway food and meal options at retail stores could provide lower cost solutions to challenges being experienced in the food and beverage sector. Along with requiring lower capital costs, these options have the added advantage of being easily transportable to

move where there are festivals, sporting events, pow wows, rodeos, and other special occasions where people are gathered. Support to entrepreneurs in the form of tax incentives, wage grant programs, services to write business plans, and secure start-up funding would help kick-start these types of initiatives.

### **Trails, Trailheads, and Amenities**

Stakeholder consultation confirmed that the Interlakes has an abundance of trails, and the development of new trails and outdoor recreation assets is needed only on a limited basis; primarily to support the development of family-oriented opportunities and potential iconic demand generators. The more urgent need identified is funding for upgrading, and the ongoing maintenance of, existing assets, addressing illegal trails (e.g., mountain biking trails), mapping existing trails, and the need for easements and guaranteed access to land as transfers to non-tourism interests takes place. The need for maintenance extends to both summer trails as well as winter snowmobiling trails.

The planning area would benefit from an inventory of existing assets, identifying which trails connect to other trails or networks, and which should be prioritized for development and/or maintenance, and to address a plan for multi-user development. Multi-user conflicts are occurring as the Interlakes is popular for both non-motorized and motorized outdoor recreation. Opinions differed on the desire to further develop motorized trail networks, partly due to issues being experienced along the Highway 24 corridor where some motorized users ignore land or trail restrictions, occasionally going as far as destroying private property to enter areas that they have historically been able to use. The area was described as a wild west, where some users make their own rules. Valemount was cited as an example of a destination that strategically planned for and is successfully managing multiple user needs within its trail networks.

Trail maintenance in the North Thompson Valley is a growing issue. The provincial government invested \$2.5 million in trail development and the creation of the North Thompson Valley Trail Guide as part of the 2003 wildfire recovery initiatives. However, trail maintenance was funded through a Services BC program that has now come to an end. A solution is being explored but had not yet been confirmed at the time of writing.

As trail development occurs, it is important to ensure it is accompanied by investments in trailheads, directional and interpretive signage, parking, washrooms, maintenance, facilities, mapping to ensure that these trails can be used by visitors in the long-term, and not just locals who know where they are and where to go. Trail maintenance and a funding plan is also equally important. In addition, attempts should be made to connect or loop-in routes to local communities where businesses provide retail, food and beverage, and other needed services to trail users. When done successfully, this can generate local business ownership in trail maintenance as the trail is seen as an asset and economic driver.

### Activities and Services

The popularity of water-based activities, such as kayaking, canoeing and stand-up paddle (SUP) boarding, and the rising popularity of mountain biking and road cycling are providing new, alternative ways for visitors to enjoy themselves in nature and be active at the same time. However, appropriate services are needed to support the growth of these types of niche activities. These services are lacking in the planning area.

Enthusiasts who pursue any sport have specific needs. They may want to purchase gear, need secure storage and transportation to trails or lakes, require repairs or rentals, and other specific requirements. Destinations need to develop support services for these active travel/soft adventure segments to thrive and grow. It is sometimes assumed that these travellers will bring their own gear and equipment, but to attract higher-yield, fly-in/long-haul visitors, the need for support services will be critical for success.

Fishing is a popular activity in the planning area, and stakeholders indicated that some retail and rental services for fishing gear are available. The planning area could benefit from additional fishing guides, and guided fishing activities and experiences.

Horseback riding, ranch vacations, hunting, and motorized sports such as ATVing are also popular activities in the area. The debate on hunting as a tourism demand generator is ongoing and will need to be carefully managed as it has an impact on the wildlife, existing businesses, and visitors' perceptions of the region. The development of motorized activities has mixed support — some feel it is a development

opportunity and others are not in favour. Any development of motorized activities will need to be planned, managed carefully in consideration of the overall visitor experience that these activities impact, and accompanied by educational programming and monitoring that addresses the infringement and destruction of private property by motorized users on private land.

Agritourism development — which includes activities such as farm visits, farmers markets, and local culinary experiences — is small within the planning area but growing in certain destinations. Experiencing local food and cuisine appeals highly to the Interlake's target travellers, and culinary experiences are becoming an increasingly important influencer on destination choice. Supporting the development of food-tourism experiences and incorporating local culinary choices into promotion and itineraries will increase the availability of agritourism a secondary demand generator, thus enhancing the appeal of the planning area.

### People and Program Experiences

A variety of paid and unpaid experiences are necessary to deliver a good destination visitor experience in the Interlakes. Currently the visitor offer primarily consists of self-discovery and self-guided opportunities, particularly in the central and western portions of the planning area. Wells Gray Provincial Park has more purchasable experiences but could still benefit from additional visitor offers.

A major gap was identified for guided activities, experiences, and connections to Indigenous people, culture, and heritage. Local First Nations bands must lead these development efforts, otherwise advancements in this area cannot be made. To ensure safe, responsible, and culturally appropriate access to the land and the people, while simultaneously responding to travellers' desires for more authentic, meaningful experiences, and the growing demand for Indigenous tourism experiences, an opportunity exists to:

- Increase the availability of guided services for purchasable activities and experiences throughout the planning area, particularly for wildlife viewing which is in demand by the target travellers but for which there are few guides and tours available.

<sup>25</sup>[www.travelmarketreport.com/articles/Travelers-Increasingly-Influenced-By-Culinary-Pursuits#.WRQpFA3v-BA.linkedin](http://www.travelmarketreport.com/articles/Travelers-Increasingly-Influenced-By-Culinary-Pursuits#.WRQpFA3v-BA.linkedin)

- Increase the availability of guided activities to explore the western side of Wells Gray Provincial Park with its distinctive geological features.
- Support the Simpcw, Tsq'escenemc (Canim Lake), and Stswecem'c Xgat'tem (Canoe/Dog Creek) First Nations to develop and offer Indigenous experiences that feature storytellers.
- Diversify the availability of cultural experiences by identifying storytellers who could bring to life the stories about the people who have contributed to the development of the region and bring the area's cowboy culture to life.
- Develop culinary experiences where visitors could enjoy locally-grown foods, engage in farm and/or ranch activities, learn about, and cook using, traditional methods of the First Nations, etc.
- Develop dark skies experiences for visitors to enjoy the absence of light pollution.
- Examine which festivals and events might be appropriate to offer visitors an opportunity for a behind the scenes VIP experience that could include meeting, or spending time with, and/or dining with, a featured personality associated with the event such as a rodeo rider, musician, or elder.

### Communication and Ground Transportation Improvements

The primary highway infrastructure in the Interlakes is excellent and stakeholders indicated that visitors are often surprised by the quality of the infrastructure and road maintenance on the main arteries. Due to the absence of airports in the planning area, limited car, RV, and truck rentals exist. And, there is a concern that car rentals aren't appropriate for the road conditions in the area and aren't equipped with appropriate tires in winter. However, most visitors travel to the planning area in private vehicles.

The major highways are in good condition and well paved. The section from Lone Butte to Bridge Lake was repaved in 2017, as was Clearwater Valley Road, the main access road into Wells Gray Provincial Park. A paving project for Dunn Lake Road to ChuChua is in the planning process with work being done to lobby support from the surrounding communities.

Priority ground transportation improvements suggested for the main roads were as follows.

### SIGNAGE

- Improved directional signage getting onto Highway 24 from Highways 5 and 97.
- Improved directional signage along Highway 97 indicating the resorts located along Canim Hendrix Road, including an indication of the distance to each resort and updated distance signage along Canim Hendrix Road.
- Better signage for:
  - resorts, accommodations and attractions
  - blind turns along Highway 24
  - boat launches along Sheridan and Deka Lakes
  - recreation sites on backcountry lakes
- Improved directional signage around the Canim, Mahood, and Deception Falls areas.
- Remove the signage along Highway 24 from ranchlands and rivers.

### WASHROOMS, VISITOR AMENITIES, AND SERVICES

- Improved maintenance of existing washroom facilities and rest stops.
- Public washroom facilities at the east and west ends of Highway 24.
- Electric vehicle charging stations along the main highway corridors.
- Public transit and/or taxi or shuttle service across Highway 24.
- Ride-share service to connect visitors with locals who are driving to/from the larger communities.

### CELL / WI-FI SERVICE

- Cell service between Little Fort and Lac de Roche.
- Cell service, Wi-Fi hot spots and/or an emergency phone, along Clearwater Valley Road in Wells Gray Provincial Park.
- Strengthen the cell signal in Forest Grove.

## ROAD MAINTENANCE, ROAD ENHANCEMENTS, AND CHANGES

- Acceleration, deceleration, and turning lanes on Highway 5 at Little Fort, and on Highway 24 at the entry/exit to the community of Bridge Lake.
- Speed limit reduction between the east and west ends of Sheridan Lake.
- Improved maintenance and road quality upgrades on Mahood Lake Road to Wells Gray Provincial Park, Canim Lake Falls and Deception Falls.
- Gravel on North Bonaparte Road.
- Development of an east/west road through Wells Gray Provincial Park.

Road maintenance and access was raised as an issue for many of the secondary roads and forest service roads that are used by visitors. Access roads to popular visitor viewpoints and attractions such as Canim, Mahood, and Deception Falls, as well as some of the backroads that are popular circle routes for travellers, are in poor condition. In Clearwater, maintenance that is based on Ministry of Transportation traffic was indicated to be insufficient for the number of vehicles travelling through. There is a 50% discrepancy between traffic counts from the municipality — which indicate traffic is higher — versus the measurements from TRAN.

Other areas where tourism could benefit from improved road maintenance that were listed include:

- Hendrix Falls
- West Sheridan
- Tawheel
- Watch Lake/North Green Lake Road
- Ruth Lake Road
- Bridge Lake Road

Enhanced road maintenance and development, with the needs of the motorcycle touring market in mind, represents an opportunity to attract a new type of visitor to the area. There was also a strong desire expressed to ensure that road development, maintenance, enhancements, and upgrades looks towards the future with consideration for evolving vehicles — particularly electric vehicles — and providing the supporting infrastructure to support long-term transportation evolutions. To this end, the very long term (10–30-year timeframe) transportation vision for the Interlakes includes high speed rail service from the Lower Mainland, north to Prince George, including 100 Mile House.

Collaboration between tourism stakeholders and TRAN is taking place in the planning area, and desire to strengthen this collaboration appeared strong. Both tourism planners and local TRAN representatives could benefit from a better understanding of each other's needs, priorities, and planning cycles. Better knowledge of the ministry's annual investment planning and decision cycle would be helpful to ensure discussions around tourism's interests and needs are heard prior to infrastructure investment prioritization and funding.

Forest service roads play an important part of the touring infrastructure in this planning area, both in providing access to more off-the-beaten-track backcountry lakes, wilderness areas, campgrounds, fishing camps, and cabins, etc., but also as ways to create circle routes — versus back-tracking — that deliver a more interesting visitor experience. Stakeholders indicated that unsuspecting visitors head down these roads in vehicles and RVs not suitable for gravel and rough conditions. There was a strong desire for strengthened collaboration with FLNR, who maintains these forest service roads, to identify the roads most commonly travelled by visitors and earmark them for regular maintenance and upkeep, and to provide better communication and information on forest service road conditions where tourists commonly drive, and to have a Forest Service Road mapping and classification system to direct visitors to roads suitable for touring and visitor use.

## VISITOR CENTRES

Visitor Centres are available in the larger communities of 100 Mile House year-round, and seasonally in Clearwater, and Barriere. Visitors who enter the Highway 24 corridor from the south, or coming in outside of peak season, have limited ability to connect with someone at a Visitor Centre for information on what is available in the area. Stakeholders suggested that an information kiosk in Little Fort would benefit visitors and businesses alike, as would enhanced collaboration amongst Interlakes tourism stakeholders to refer visitors to/from each other's businesses. Additionally, increased local citizen knowledge about tourism activities would also assist visitors.

## SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS TOURISM CAPACITY BUILDING

Developing Indigenous tourism would benefit from a niche/personalized method versus a more traditional large group approach that covers generic content in a workshop format. To this end, the planning considerations identified to date for supporting Indigenous tourism capacity building include:

1. Refreshing the 2013 Cariboo Chilcotin Coast regional Indigenous tourism strategy, to reflect new regional developments, designations, land agreements, recent funding announcements by ITBC and the recently-released five-year 2016–2021 strategic plan from the Indigenous tourism Association of Canada and including the Simpcw band within the refreshed strategy given their prominence within the Interlakes area.
2. Securing funding to implement the key recommendations relevant to this planning area from a refreshed ITBC Cariboo Chilcotin Coast regional strategy; ITBC confirmed that little progress had been made toward implementing the core recommendations.
3. Increasing the support role that ITBC can play in this region.

4. Securing funding for an Indigenous staff member to join the CCCTA, to complement the counterpart role in TOTA, and provide a liaison function between the CCCTA, TOTA and the Indigenous bands in the region and provide mentoring and support for tourism business development, product development, and marketing to those bands who wish to advance tourism initiatives.

In the Chilcotin Central Coast and Gold Rush Trail destination development strategies completed in June 2017 and March 2018 respectively, the need for a full-time Indigenous tourism liaison officer to support tourism development in the CCCTA was recommended. These three planning areas encompass 71 (35%) of the First Nations bands in the province. 48% of stakeholders responded in the survey that they felt funding should be provided for a full-time Indigenous liaison or development person for the CCCTA.

## COLLABORATE TO COMPETE

Increased collaboration to realize the full potential of the Interlakes was a strong theme throughout the planning area. Several collaborative opportunities were raised over the course of the planning process.

1. Increasing collaboration both within communities, as well as across multiple communities, both inside and outside the planning area, to increase referrals and provide better visitor information about what's available around the entire planning area is key. There was a desire expressed amongst stakeholders to have greater knowledge of what's available and what is going on within the planning area. Opportunities such as hosting multi-community familiarization trips for visitor information and front-line staff to grow their knowledge base, sharing materials from other businesses, accommodations, restaurants from other parts of the region (brochure swap events), might contribute to growing the knowledge base and cross-business collaboration, as well as provide an opportunity to discuss and develop solutions to small business challenges such as staffing shortages or rotating opening hours and/or days.

2. Collaboratively address whether there is potential to grow the shoulder or winter season. Across Highway 24 the shoulder seasons represent limited opportunity for outdoor activities due to muddy conditions, although fishing can be excellent at this time of year, and certain types of travellers prefer to travel in quieter periods. Along Highways 97 and 5, as well as within Wells Gray Provincial Park the shoulder season represents a strong opportunity for development. While there are businesses that stay open throughout the year, and opportunities for winter activities, stakeholders indicated there is not enough business to stay open year-round. If this is the case, is there an approach to slowly and strategically growing shoulder seasons or clusters of winter season business using a holistic approach with tourism stakeholders working together? Having hotels open without guest activities available, or trails that people want to use without any hotels or dining options available, is at cross purposes and a lose-lose situation for visitors and businesses alike.

3. FLNR, BC Parks, Recreation Sites and Trails, other government program areas and tourism stakeholders need to discuss a harmonious approach to viewscape management, trail and road development and maintenance, multi vs single-use trail designations, etc., as visitors don't realize that different government departments are responsible for different trails and roads. If trail development, enhancement, and maintenance is a planning area priority, these discussions need to broadly include the multiple jurisdictions that comprise the Interlakes to discuss issues such as:

- Who can invest in ongoing trail maintenance and enhancement?
- Who can invest in developing networks hiking trails, mountain biking trails or longer, iconic trails such as the Hudson Bay Brigade Trail?
- Are either of the First Nations interested in co-investing?
- How should multi-purpose uses be managed to avoid conflicts between motorized vs non-motorized pursuits?
- Which roads should be prioritized for viewscape maintenance, access, and road maintenance to more remote locations and visitor attractions, or to develop new circle routes?
- Who will manage the increased asset base once developed?

It is important to note that any new trail development on Crown land outside of parks must be authorized by Recreation Sites and Trails first, which includes stakeholder referrals and First Nations consultations.

4. Invest in region-specific research. The MRDT will provide much needed hotel statistics in the CCCTA that can then be analyzed with hotel data from the Thompson Okanagan region. There is very little economic impact and consumer research specific to this planning area, which makes it difficult for businesses to know where to invest. Due to the nature of the planning area, which crosses two provincial sub-regions, the number of visitors will always be small, and regional sample sizes, broken out from the provincial research, will likely never be large enough for the research to be statistically significant or relevant.

5. As the economy of the Interlakes is still heavily resource-based, improving the understanding of local citizens, politicians, and businesses as to the value of tourism, the importance of each element of the visitor journey, and the local area opportunities for guests will be critical. Stakeholders consistently indicated that tourism is not recognized relative to its actual economic impacts. Collectively, tourism stakeholders must continue to communicate the value that the industry provides to the economy.

6. Government processes, regulations, and costs (i.e., for permits and tenure agreements), where possible, need to be streamlined and optimized to support tourism business success. Stakeholders reported a variety of challenges that are expensive, complex, out of date, and negatively impact the visitor experience. Specific policies cited as challenges in this planning area include:

- The cost of backcountry commercial use permits
- Cost of Crown land use permits
- The complexity and cost of fishing licenses
- Food provisioning for visitors in B&Bs

7. Monitor and mitigate climate change and human use impacts on the natural landscapes. Given the importance of the natural environment to tourism and the devastation experienced during the 2017 and 2018 wildfires seasons within this planning area, mitigating potential risks, and proactively planning for emergency response and communication, will be critical going forward.

Stakeholder identified several key topics that were included in the industry survey regarding collaboration, ranked on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being not important, and 5 as absolutely critical. The percentage represents respondents who indicated this development opportunity to be absolutely critical (5) or critical (4).

- 96% Collaborate on short-term fire recovery plan and assistance
- 88% Address the cost of liability insurance to operate
- 88% Support more collaboration amongst businesses within Interlakes communities
- 88% Enhance cross-ministry collaboration on tourism development issues
- 80% Complexity of government permits to operate
- 64% Address costs for tenure and/or access to Crown land
- 58% Identify climate change policies and plans
- 58% Invest in planning area specific research
- 53% Address policies that inhibit B&B properties from cooking and serving meals and/or alcohol to guests
- 44% Address the difficulties in getting fishing licenses

## APPENDIX 5: Objectives by Priority and Implementation Timing

OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY
<b>PRIORITY 1</b>	
3. Short-term Road Improvements: Execute short-term initiatives to enhance the existing touring experience on the key main and secondary roads used by visitors.	1
5. Land access: Improve access and options for visitors to public lands and lakes.	1
9. Connectivity Improvements: Identify key locations for infrastructure investments in cell service, increased bandwidth and Wi-Fi in the planning area.	1
10. Connectivity Improvements: Increase the accuracy of Google mapping for key roads used by visitors in the Interlakes.	1
11. Improve the understanding with government, local citizens, and businesses of the tourism eco-system and the value of tourism.	1
12. Optimize the benefits from MRDT status for the 3% tax to support tourism growth in the CCCTA.	1
13. Strategically approach lengthening the tourism season.	1
14. Build relationships with local forest service management, companies, and government representatives to establish improved communication related to key issues impacting tourism's success.	1
15. Continue to grow the potential of Wells Gray Provincial Park by collaborating on development initiatives.	1
17. Activity and experience development: Increase the availability of paid visitor activities and experiences that allow for greater engagement with the area's natural assets, unique characters, heritage, and history.	1

OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY
<b>PRIORITY 1 CONTINUED</b>	
18. Indigenous tourism development: Work with the Simpcw, Tsq'escenemc (Canim Lake), and Stswecem'c Xgat'tem (Canoe/Dog Creek) First Nations to identify and support new Indigenous tourism development opportunities for more purchasable tours and products that support their economic development and bring the culture, traditions, and heritage to life.	1
19. Trail planning: Create a local area trail strategy to guide strategic investment.	1
21. Outdoor recreation development: Support the growing interest in diversifying the outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the Interlakes.	1
22. Food and Beverage: Encourage the growth and diversity of food and beverage opportunities, particularly along Highway 24.	1
23. Accommodation: Support the upgrading of existing accommodations that have become tired and/or don't meet modern standards for accessibility and today's visitor expectations.	1
26. Improve visitor information services and public safety plan that addresses the lack of connectivity in some parts within the Interlakes.	1
28. Address the availability and affordability of tourism staff housing.	1
29. Support quick actions to help businesses cope with business labour challenges.	1
32. Support efforts by TIABC and tourism operators to improve and streamline government processes that impede business viability and success	1
33. Increase awareness of the availability of business interruption insurance for tourism business operators.	1
36. Secure temporary tax relief and operating permit relief (2018–2021) for tourism businesses impacted by the 2017 and 2018 wildfires.	1
38. Share consistent messages with all businesses in the impacted wildfire areas that be used in their visitor communications.	1
<b>PRIORITY 2</b>	
1. Circle routes: Develop the potential for new circle touring routes.	2
2. Park Infrastructure: Improve access and infrastructure to key visitor attractions in Wells Gray Provincial Park.	2
4. Longer-term Road Improvements: Prioritize and undertake longer-term initiatives to enhance the visitor touring experience on the main and secondary roads.	2
6. Water access: Develop new lake access points and visitor amenities.	2
7. Public and shared transportation: Address the shortage of public and shared transportation options.	2
20. Trail development: Invest in developing new trails that will diversify opportunities for various visitor markets.	2
24. New accommodation development: Increase the availability of camping and recreational vehicle services along throughout the planning area.	

OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY
<b>PRIORITY 2 CONTINUED</b>	
27. Address the need for business succession planning.	2
30. Develop a long-term labour market and/or business development and human resource training strategy that addresses growth and challenges from increased tourism activities and marketing. Include barriers to growth, access to staff training, business development resources, and volunteer burnout.	2
31. Invest in providing support and training to new foreign investors, foreign business owners, and their staff to fast-track their understanding of and integration into the Canadian tourism eco-system.	2
34. Establish a framework for discussion and the approach to decisions related to land use and land value of extractive industries versus tourism in the planning area.	2
35. Safeguard the natural environments upon which tourism relies while managing strategic growth within the capacity of the land and communities to sustain investments and the local way of life.	2
37. In light of the 2017 and 2018 wildfires and potential future risk develop tourism focused natural disaster plans.	2
<b>PRIORITY 3</b>	
8. Rail Access: Secure passenger rail service to Prince George.	3
16. Support the development of a renewed stakeholder engagement process to determine the collective will to reapply UNWHS status for Wells Gray Provincial Park or garner support for a Geopark designation	3
25. Explore opportunities to expand the visitor appeal of the planning area to attract new markets.	3

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5.16 Ontario at a Glance, February 2016.

**List of Key Products and Potential Reports by Destination British Columbia**

6.1 Overview of Key Products/Sectors, March 2016.

6.2 Downhill Skiing/Snowboarding, March 2016.

6.3 Aboriginal Cultural Tourism, March 2016.

6.4 Outdoor Adventure Tourism, March 2016.

6.5 Touring, March 2016.

6.6 City Stays, May 2016.

6.7 Sport Tourism, December 2015.

6.8 Meeting, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions, March 2016.

**Other data provided by Destination British Columbia**

Williams Lake Visitor Service Centre, visitor statistics 2010–2015.

Indigenous Business Development Inventory from Indigenous Tourism Association Canada

