

NORTHWESTERN BC

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Including Highways 16 and 37

HIGHLIGHTS



DESTINATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA®

THANK YOU

The Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy is the outcome of an 18-month, iterative process of gathering, synthesizing, and validating information with tourism partners about the status and future direction of tourism in the Northwestern BC planning area.

We thank the First Nations on whose traditional territories we gathered and traveled through for our community meetings including: Cheslatta Carrier Nation, Dease River, Gingolx, Gitanmaax, Gitanyow, Gitga'at, Gitlaxt'aamiks (New Aiyansh), Gitsegukla, Gitwangak, Gitwinksihlkw, Gitxaala, Glen Vowell, Hagwilget, Haisla, Iskut Band, Kispiox, Kitselas, Kitsumkalum, Lake Babine, Lax Kw'alaams,

Laxgalts'ap, Lheidli T'enneh, Liard, Metlakatla, Nadleh Whut'en, Nak'azdli Whut'en, Nee Tahi Buhn, Saik'uz First Nation, Skin Tyee, Stellat'en First Nations, Tahltan, Takla First Nation, Taku Tlingit, Tl'azt'en Nation, Ts'il Kaz Koh (Burns Lake Indian Band), Wet'suwet'en, Witset, and Yekooche.

Thank you to our tourism partners who participated in the process by attending community meetings, participating in surveys and interviews, engaging in follow-up conversations and forwarding relevant documents and insights. Special thanks to the members of the Northwestern BC Working Committee as well as the facilitator of the destination development process.

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1 INTRODUCTION

WHY A STRATEGY?

The Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy was developed to enhance the competitiveness of the Northwestern BC planning area over the next 10 years and beyond. The strategy was developed as part of Destination BC's Destination Development Program to support and guide the long-term growth of tourism in British Columbia. This document presents some of the key highlights of the Northwestern BC strategy.

WHO IS IT FOR?

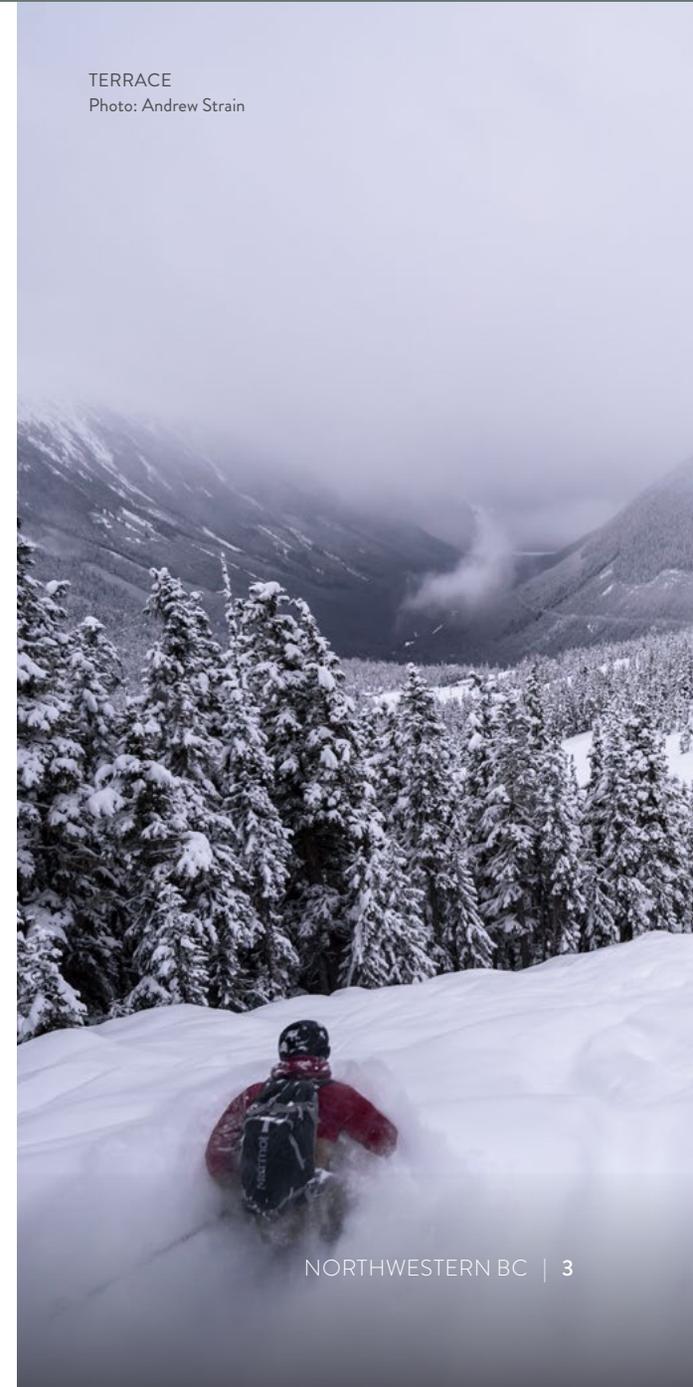
The Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy is a guide for tourism partners as they work collaboratively to grow the visitor economy. The strategy will be reviewed and updated to reflect changing tourism objectives, priorities, and market conditions. Results will be tracked and learning outcomes will inform future implementation activities thereby optimizing their effectiveness in increasing economic, environmental, social, and cultural benefits for the entire Northwestern BC planning area.

WHERE IS IT FOR?

While the planning area is entitled "Northwestern BC", it also encompasses the east-west travel corridor, Highway 16, known as the Yellowhead Highway, which extends from the Alberta border to the Pacific Ocean. The planning area also encompasses the north-south travel corridor, Highway 37, known as the Stewart-Cassiar Highway. Given the location of Prince George on Highway 16 and Highway 97, it is included in both the Northeastern BC and Northwestern BC planning areas. The area extends from Mount Robson and Valemount in the east to Prince Rupert and Stewart in the west and from North Tweedsmuir Park, Kitlope Heritage Conservancy, Prince George, McBride and Valemount in the south to the Yukon/Alaska border in the north.

TERRACE

Photo: Andrew Strain



1 INTRODUCTION

WHERE DOES IT FIT?

Northwestern BC is one of 20 planning areas across BC for which destination development strategies are being developed. Each planning area represents a logical destination for visitors in and around the province. As planning areas span across multiple jurisdictions, the importance of adopting an integrated approach with a shared vision and coordinated investment is critical. The Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy is one of three Destination Development Strategies being prepared for the Northern BC Tourism region. The two other planning areas include Northeastern BC and Haida Gwaii. In time, informed by the outcomes of all relevant planning area destination development strategies, regional tourism strategies will be developed. These will, in turn, inform the creation of a provincial strategy thereby ensuring a truly integrated and cohesive combination of bottom-up and top-down destination planning.

A KEY IMPERATIVE

The recommendations contained within the Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy form the foundation for additional, focused, and aligned discussions regarding implementation. It will be important to ensure that the strategy becomes embedded in local, regional, provincial, and federal decision making processes. It is only by working collaboratively in an integrated way with a shared agenda that the full potential of the Northwestern BC planning area will be realized.

AT A GLANCE

In what follows, the distinctiveness of the destination is summarized and its vision for tourism introduced. While acknowledging the challenges the sector faces, its potential for growth is set out in terms of key opportunities and experience development potential. A consideration of each development priority and associated actions then follow. While further detail on each of these elements is available in the full strategy, they are brought together “At A Glance” to demonstrate the scope of the integrated nature of the approach being taken

PRINCE RUPERT
Photo: Mike Seehagel



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REALIZING THE POTENTIAL

A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION

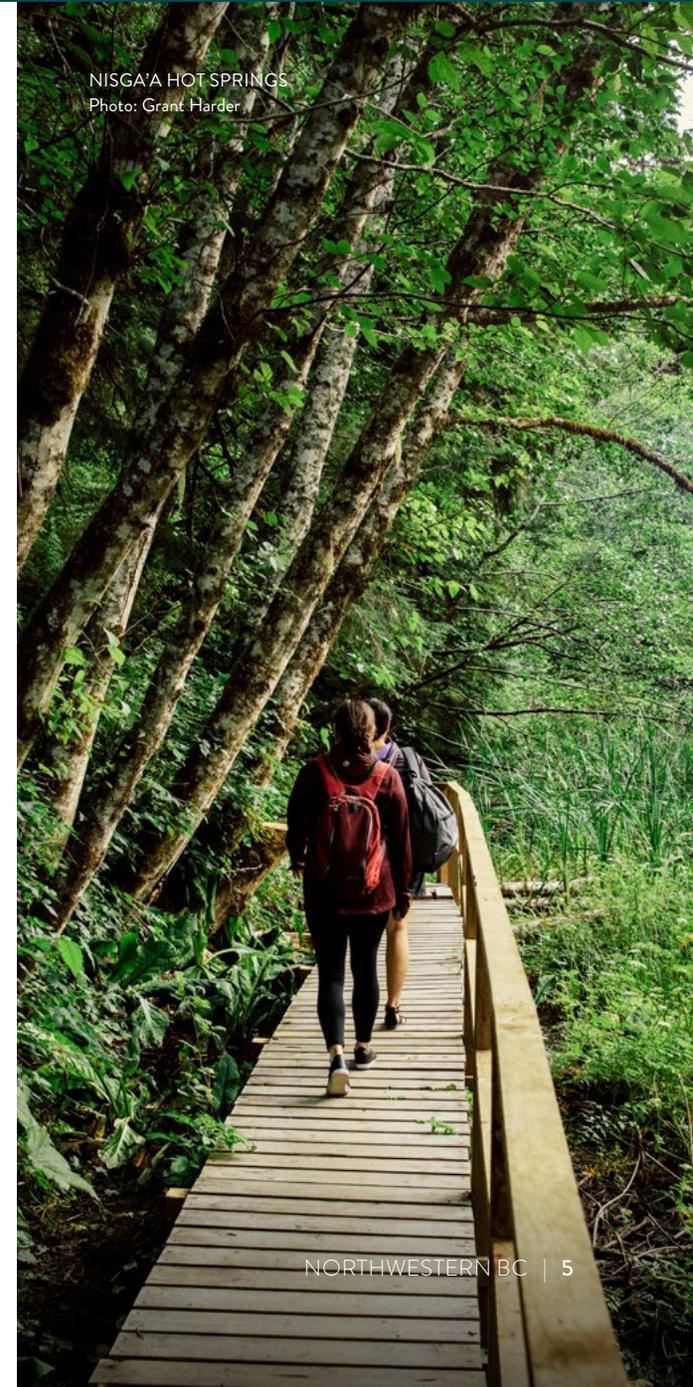
With its diverse geography of mist-shrouded coastal areas, towering mountains, significant headwaters, sweeping glaciers, rivers, lakes, hot springs and valleys, Northwestern BC is the largest of the 20 BC planning areas.

Its parks and protected areas draw visitors for a range of outdoor activities with some, to name but a few, garnering widespread attention such as Khutzeymateen Park — protected specifically for grizzly bears and their habitat; the Great Bear Rainforest — the largest coastal temperate rainforest in the world; Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park — one of the youngest and most accessible volcanic features in the province, Atlin Park and Tatshenshini-Alesk Provincial Wilderness Park — a UNESCO Designated World Heritage Site — as well as the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Park — which protects a portion of the only inland temperate rainforest in the world.

These stunning natural assets support or could support a range of adventure, eco-tourism, cultural and Indigenous tourism experiences. The area is home to thirty-eight Indigenous communities that are as diverse in their cultural traditions as they are in their respective ways of life. While several of these communities offer rich tourism experiences, there is untapped potential to develop authentic, Indigenous tourism experiences by those communities that wish to pursue these opportunities.

Touring is a long-standing experience available in Northwestern BC. The primary touring routes are BC Ferries Route 10 (Port Hardy to/from Prince Rupert), Highway 16 (also known as the Yellowhead Highway), and Highway 37 (also known as the Stewart-Cassiar Highway). Efforts are underway to create additional circle tours and travel routes in the area, including the Nisga'a Lisims Government's Circle Tour Project which proposes several circle tours that will be tested in due course. Another important initiative is the collaborative effort of several local governments and tourism industry representatives to re-brand Highway 16 which presents opportunities to further develop touring experiences related to this corridor.

Coastal activities include fishing, boating, non-mechanized marine recreation, coastal wildlife viewing, cruise ships and coastal hiking. Unique trails open up all sorts of possibilities for exploration and adventure right across the destination from hiking to mountain biking to horseback riding as well as all manner of opportunities for downhill, cross country, backcountry, heli and cat skiing.



NISGA'A HOT SPRINGS
Photo: Grant Harder

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REALIZING THE POTENTIAL

A SHARED VISION

The vision for tourism development in the next 10 years reflects the distinctiveness of the destination and the ambition of its communities:



NORTHWESTERN BC IS A FOUR-SEASON DESTINATION THAT INSPIRES DISCOVERY,

WHERE WILD DIVERSE LANDSCAPES CONNECT VIBRANT COMMUNITIES FULL OF ENTHUSIASTIC AND WELCOMING HOSTS. HERE YOU ARE INVITED TO EXPLORE VIBRANT INDIGENOUS CULTURES, RICH HISTORY, ABUNDANT WILDLIFE, WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES AND ADVENTURES FOR ALL ABILITIES.

BOWRON LAKE
Photo: Adam Wells



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REALIZING THE POTENTIAL

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

The planning area faces a number of challenges including declining wildlife and fishery resources; transportation barriers to, from, and within the region; a low level of awareness about the area; a lack of sufficient roadside services and facilities; the high cost of operations in remote areas and the challenge of staff attraction and retention. However, key opportunities include:

- The development of thematic and circle routes
- Building experiences around iconic attractions and areas
- Clarifying the identity of Northwestern BC
- The development and delivery of authentic Indigenous experiences
- The development of ecotourism and adventure tourism
- The prospect of enhancing industry and government collaboration and communication to support destination development

EXPERIENCE POTENTIAL

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

- **SUPERB OUTDOOR ADVENTURE AND ECO-TOURISM BASED ON WILDERNESS, DIVERSE OUTDOOR SETTINGS AND WORLD-RENOWNED PARKS OF NORTHWESTERN BC** Northwestern BC features ocean and coastline, rivers, lakes, glaciers, hot springs, mountains, valleys and forested areas. It

has a large number of designated provincial parks and protected areas, some of which are garnering international attention (the Great Bear Rainforest, the Kluane National Park, Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park, Mount Edziza, Spatsizi Wilderness Park, to name a few). Wild and untouched or lightly-touched areas are becoming increasingly rare worldwide, which reinforces what is special about Northwestern BC. Looking out 10 years and beyond, there is tremendous potential to further develop outdoor adventure and eco-tourism experiences in these wild outdoor settings, while, at the same time, maintaining their integrity.

- **SPORTFISHING** Northwestern BC has long been known for its sport fisheries, both salt and freshwater. The wide variety of pristine and scenic lakes, rivers, alpine, meadows, trails, and old industry roads make the area a prime destination for angling. Freshwater angling guides and lodges in the area, provide visitors with opportunities to catch Steelhead fish, as well as Chinook and Coho salmon and other species. Even today, when fisheries and fish habitat face pressures throughout many areas of BC, including the Skeena watershed, the area is still considered one of the best fishing destinations in the province.
- **OUTSTANDING THEMATIC TOURING/CIRCLE ROUTES** diverse landscapes, natural features, wildlife, heritage and cultural experiences, outdoor adventure experiences and Indigenous culture all serve to enrich the touring experience. While this unique selling proposition is anchored by Highway 16 and Highway 37, there are many additional routes with tremendous thematic potential. If further developed, these routes, in combination with those in Northeastern BC could transform the area into a top touring destination.

- **RICH INDIGENOUS CULTURE** Indigenous culture represents a key attribute for Northwestern BC. With 38 Indigenous communities, many of whom are embracing the development of authentic tourism experiences, Indigenous tourism has the potential to grow considerably. Coupled with growing demand for these experiences in markets worldwide, this presents a considerable opportunity for Northwestern BC.
- **CULTURAL AND HERITAGE TOURISM** Northwestern BC has rich and diverse cultural and heritage assets. There is a growing interest to develop cultural and heritage tourism as a way to enable travellers to better understand the people, place, cultural identity, and diversity of an area. The development of cultural or thematic routes, attractions, museum programs, guided tours, or an individual business can provide the ideal mechanism for linking together the Indigenous, Euro-Canadian history, rural and natural environments, food or agricultural offerings of the destination. While stimulating community pride and relationships, cultural and heritage tourism can also serve as a platform from which to tell the story of shared history. Ultimately, an expanded variety of experiences offers visitors more things to do thus increasing length of stay and driving associated economic benefits for businesses and the community. With appropriate planning and collaboration, there are many opportunities to build experiences around the culture and heritage of the Northwestern BC planning area.

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AT A GLANCE

VISION STATEMENT Northwestern BC is a four-season destination that inspires discovery, where wild diverse landscapes connect vibrant communities full of enthusiastic and welcoming hosts. Here you are invited to explore vibrant Indigenous cultures, rich history, abundant wildlife, wilderness experiences and adventures for all abilities.

THEME 1	KEEP IT SPECIAL: ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY		
	<p>NATURE FIRST</p> <p>Work with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV), the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNR), the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), First Nations and relevant associations to identify the challenges, improve the health and safeguard the integrity of the area's wildlife, including its fisheries populations.</p>	<p>VITAL RESOURCES</p> <p>Work with provincial and federal ministries to maintain and enhance natural assets critical to the tourism experience. Identify those which are potentially at risk and work with the tourism sector and relevant partners to agree and act upon respective responsibilities for restoring and maintaining the integrity of key natural resources.</p>	<p>SIGN UP</p> <p>Within the context of creating a Northern BC tourism code of conduct, support the tourism industry in developing and adopting common environmental sustainability practices. Enable Northern BC Tourism Association (NBCTA) to lead on this initiative with support from tourism operators, relevant associations and community representatives.</p>
THEME 2	ON THE MOVE: INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESS AND AMENITIES		
	<p>ON THE ROAD</p> <p>Work with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (TRAN) to ensure existing routes and potential new routes/ themed circle tours are equipped with roadside amenities and strategically located pull-outs. In planning roadside amenities, facilities and services include consideration of washrooms, baby change tables, picnic amenities, signage, accessibility, and stage implementation.</p>	<p>STAY SAFE</p> <p>In light of the need to maintain visitor safety, work with provincial government ministries to assess the current situation relative to provision of emergency services at key locations across the destination. Identify gaps in provision and work with relevant partners to remedy deficiencies and improve emergency service provision on the highways.</p>	<p>BE PREPARED</p> <p>Identify alternative travel routes — current or historical logging roads, backcountry roads, marine routes — in key locations to support emergency preparedness. Work with relevant partners to provide training, develop communication protocols, and support other activities designed to facilitate more proactive emergency preparedness and related crisis management.</p>

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AT A GLANCE

THEME 2 CONTINUED

PUSH THE BOUNDARIES: ELEVATING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

STAY CONNECTED

Work with the federal government, the government of BC, other authorities and the private sector to provide reliable Wi-Fi and cell service in Northwestern BC. Identify priority areas for network enhancement and ensure visitors are well-informed as to the availability/non-availability of Wi-Fi and cell services throughout the area.

WELL-SIGNED

In recognition of the importance of increasing and improving signage along travel routes throughout the planning area, work with TRAN to improve existing signage and develop new signage for thematic corridors and circle routes. Include consideration of routes which are key to the touring visitor such as BC Ferries' Route 10 and 11.

GREAT PARKS

Continue to work with BC Parks and private sector operators to ensure that provincial parks are geared up to meet the needs and interests of visitors over a 10-year time horizon. Monitor the capacity of selected parks and recreation sites to accommodate growing visitor numbers and work with relevant partners to revisit operating hours, prepare revitalization plans and, where appropriate, develop expansion plans.

GREAT TRAILS

Informed by the needs and interests of existing and future visitors, work collaboratively with key partners to continue to invest in, coordinate, prioritize and improve the network of trails. Include consideration of public access to rivers, lakes, and other sites of visitor interest that accessible trails can facilitate.

A DISTINCTIVE VOICE

Audit, assess, and support the development of signage specifically related to Indigenous communities, tourism features, and welcome signs referencing traditional territory in key locations. Work with First Nations to identify priorities for signage, establish the costs of provision and maintenance, and submit proposals to the relevant authorities.

ACCESS FOR ALL

Build on the work of Spinal Cord Injury BC (SCIBC) to establish a coordinated approach to the development of accessible travel and tourism experiences in the destination. Ensure facilities, infrastructure, and services adopt the principles of universal design and work with the Rick Hansen Foundation in encouraging the industry to become, where appropriate, accessibility certified.

RESPONSIVE SCHEDULING

Work with BC Ferries to ensure that their scheduling and reservations system is responsive to the needs of the touring market and supports the growth of tourism, particularly in the shoulder seasons. Where possible ensure alignment with the Alaska Marine Highway schedule to provide visitors with a seamless travel experience.

ON TRACK

Continue to work with VIA Rail to optimize schedules and develop packages to support tourism growth. Consider the possibility of adding one passenger train service per week in certain locations.

GO GREEN

Working in partnership with organizations such as the Community Energy Association, support initiatives to develop travel infrastructure that will decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

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AT A GLANCE

THEME 3	A SHARED AGENDA: COLLABORATION		
	<p>MAINTAIN MOMENTUM</p> <p>Sustain collaboration between tourism partners across the destination in supporting the implementation of the Destination Development Strategy. Ensure progress against targets is communicated to all those involved in the strategy development/delivery process and ensure that partners in more remote locations are kept in the loop.</p>	<p>FOCUS ON DELIVERY</p> <p>Consider hosting events/forums featuring guest speakers, professional development insights, and best practice initiatives to help coordinate the implementation of the Strategy. Where possible use existing forums such as the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), Northern BC Tourism Association's (NBCT) AGM and the BC Tourism Industry Confederation to assist with this.</p>	<p>A TAILORED APPROACH</p> <p>Ensure collaboration and engagement with Indigenous communities and operators on destination development initiatives is meaningful, relevant, and takes their unique characteristics and circumstances into account.</p>
	<p>UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT</p> <p>Given the growing interest of Indigenous Peoples, non-Indigenous people and operators in providing rich, authentic experiences that blend outdoor adventure and Indigenous culture, ensure mutually respectful relationships among all concerned are nurtured. Adopt a cross-government approach to Indigenous outreach, training, the development of protocols, and intercultural understanding.</p>	<p>MONITOR AND RESOURCE</p> <p>Coordinate and monitor the implementation of destination development priorities. Source funding for priority destination development initiatives and coordinate the identification of priorities for relevant provincial ministries to assist with their funding decisions.</p>	
THEME 4	EXCEED EXPECTATIONS: EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT		
	<p>FOCUS ON INDIGENOUS TOURISM</p> <p>In light of current initiatives being developed by Indigenous communities and in line with established protocols, increase the presence of authentic, market-ready Indigenous tourism experiences including products for touring visitors and destination visitors.</p>	<p>PROVIDE INDIGENOUS SUPPORT</p> <p>Provide economic support, capacity-building, education, research, and guidance to Indigenous communities/entrepreneurs who are interested in enhancing an existing or starting a new tourism business. Include 'exposure tours' of successful Indigenous tourism initiatives elsewhere in BC and encourage the clustering of authentic, dynamic, and participatory experiences for visitors.</p>	<p>BE MARKET-READY</p> <p>Within the context of developing the visitor experience, compile an inventory of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous visitor, market, and export-ready products and experiences. Update this inventory annually to gauge the growth of tourism products/experiences and track the 'market readiness' of the destination over the 10-year implementation period of the plan.</p>

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AT A GLANCE

THEME 4 CONTINUED

A SHARED AGENDA: COLLABORATION

BE THE FIRST TO KNOW

Working closely with DBC and provincial ministries, invest in market and consumer research to help guide product and experience development thereby ensuring that experiences meet current and future market demand. In prioritizing research needs, devise a cost-efficient research agenda that will deliver relevant, timely, and reliable insights.

SPREAD THE WORD

Through the mechanism of an annual product/experience development forum, communicate — both in-person or as a webinar event — key research outcomes. Provide access to inspirational guest speakers; new tools and services for developing experiences; policy updates; professional development insights and opportunities to network.

SHOWCASE AND SHINE

Develop high-quality, special interest niche tours/packages/experiences that showcase the natural and cultural features of Northwestern BC to the best effect. Focus on existing and potential remarkable experiences developed around iconic features and supported by thematic signage, interpretive programming, and niche package development.

CORRIDORS AND CIRCLE ROUTES

Building on current initiatives, develop thematic corridors and circle routes as core experiences for Northwestern BC with the capacity to connect into neighbouring destinations. In planning each route, ensure that infrastructure and signage is thematically aligned and that more remote areas are engaged in this process.

WONDERFUL IN WINTER

Prepare an inventory and assessment of current winter tourism assets, products, services, and festivals. Establish the gaps in provision and building on existing locations, facilities and opportunities, develop more market-ready winter tourism experiences.

ON YOUR BIKE

Within the context of the Northern BC Mountain Bike Strategy, continue to develop the mountain biking experience in those locations which have what it takes to provide a competitive offer. Ensure that work underway with the Aboriginal Youth Mountain Bike Program and Trail Weavers is taken into account along with the potential to provide longer-distance mountain biking routes.

AT YOUR SERVICE

Work collaboratively to continually improve visitor services throughout the destination. Raise awareness amongst local businesses of the importance of keeping consistent business hours, delivering great service and providing visitors with helpful information — particularly with regard to visitor safety and security. Facilitate investment in rental equipment businesses and explore the scope to develop a province — wide liability insurance program.

CONSUMER FOCUSED

Informed by robust research and visitor insights, ensure that Northwestern BC can provide products, experiences and services that will meet the needs of international visitors from both existing and emerging markets. Share this intelligence with the private sector and strategic partners through training and educational programs to better inform investment decisions.

GLOBAL RECOGNITION

In building awareness about Northwestern BC, explore opportunities to secure UNESCO Global Geopark designations, additional UNESCO World Heritage Site designations, sustainability designations and/or another high-profile designation. Link high-profile designations with compatible existing and potential tourism experiences.

THE URBAN OFFER

Encourage relevant partners to collaborate in the development of an urban destination strategy. Include consideration of heritage and cultural experiences; conference and meeting facilities; key festivals and events; downtown enhancement schemes, and the promotion of local and regional cuisine. Explore and apply best practice in sustaining community museums as both community and visitor attractions.

SHIP TO SHORE

Enhance and expand the range of coastal boating and cruising experiences in a manner that is respectful of the environment and of Indigenous communities. In collaboration with key partners, include consideration of sustainable shore excursions for the cruise ship sector; guided and unguided kayaking as well as boutique cruises.

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AT A GLANCE

THEME 5	FIT FOR PURPOSE: WORKFORCE		
	<p>RECRUIT, RETAIN, AND RECOGNIZE</p> <p>Work with relevant partners to develop a Northwestern BC tourism labour market strategy to address recruitment and retention issues and skill gaps. Develop initiatives to attract and retain staff and fill key skill gaps. Enhance the experience of volunteering, through initiatives such as recognition and training programs that build volunteer capacity, particularly among the student population.</p>	<p>ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENEURS</p> <p>Identify, raise awareness, and promote programs that provide entrepreneurial training and guidance, including those provided by Community Futures, Small Business BC, Aboriginal Business Development, and colleges. Ensure economic development managers are fully in the picture and, where appropriate, connect such programs into secondary school curricula.</p>	
THEME 6	AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT GOVERNMENT COORDINATION AND SUPPORT		
	<p>VALUE, PROFILE AND SUPPORT</p> <p>Increase awareness of the value of tourism and raise the profile of the sector with targeted audiences including local and regional governments and local residents. Ensure tourism values (economic, cultural, and social) are understood and tourism's role in enhancing the quality of life for all is supported.</p>	<p>RECOGNIZE AND REFLECT</p> <p>Work with local, regional, and First Nation governments to ensure that the interests of tourism are clearly reflected in all Community Plans, economic development strategies, parks, recreation and culture plans as well as transportation master plans. Encourage input from tourism industry representatives when such plans are being updated.</p>	<p>STREAMLINE AND FACILITATE</p> <p>Work with FLNR, BC Parks, and Northern Health to make the process of obtaining tenure, permits and development approvals more efficient. Encourage First Nations to seek advice from TRAN relative in expediting access to First Nations land to facilitate development opportunities.</p>

4 GEARING UP

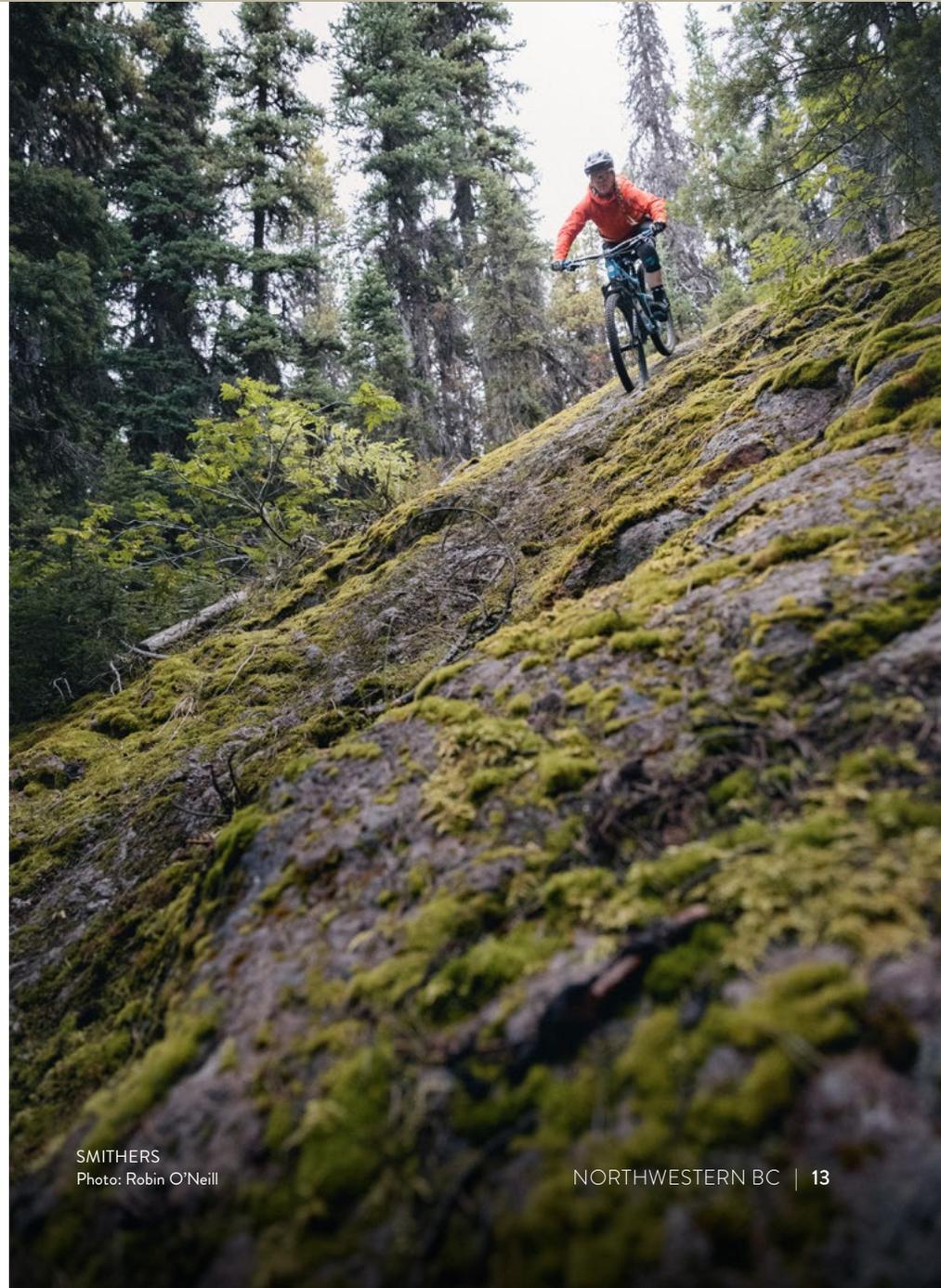
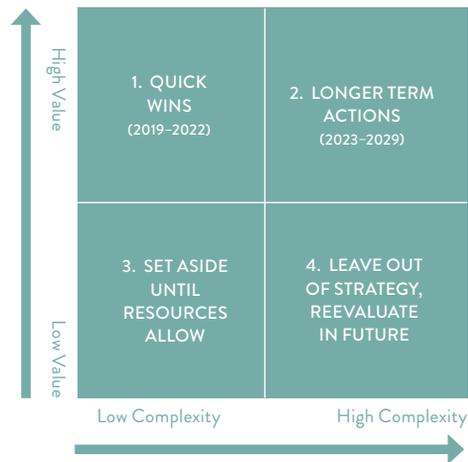
SUCCESS NETWORKS

This strategy is intended to inform actions for the future, which over time may be embedded in the local, regional, and provincial decision making. The result will be an integrated system of priorities to achieve better development decisions, drive greater tourism revenues, and realize benefits for businesses and communities in the Northwestern BC planning area. All of this will contribute to a thriving, vibrant, and growing economy.

Joint strategy ownership among all planning area tourism partners is a critical component of this program's success. The strategy identifies a suggested success network of tourism partners to champion and move actions within each objective forward.

FRAMEWORK

The strategy presents the destination development objectives using a consistent framework to determine the prioritization of each objective and the relative timing for implementation. Objectives with a provincial or regional scope are identified as well and will inform the regional and provincial destination development strategies.



4 GEARING UP

CATALYST PROJECTS

The following 19 actions were identified as catalyst projects for immediately moving the strategy into implementation.

Keep It Special: Environmental Integrity

- Develop and communicate a Northern BC tourism code of conduct to support environmental sustainability practices within the tourism industry.

On the Move: Infrastructure, Access, and Amenities

- Support First Nation governments' and Indigenous communities' efforts to identify and work with the appropriate authorities to improve signage related to Indigenous communities, tourism features and welcome signs referencing traditional territory in key locations
- Build on the ongoing work of SCIBC to establish a coordinated approach to the development of accessible travel and tourism experiences and services in the Northern BC tourism region. Support the adoption, development and promotion of accessible tourism industry practices. Also, work with the Rick Hansen Foundation, and use their Accessibility Certification, where appropriate.

- Support initiatives to decrease greenhouse gas emissions. This should involve working in partnership with like-minded organizations, such as the Community Energy Association.

A Shared Agenda: Collaboration

- Develop and use communications tools to ensure that progress regarding destination development and the implementation of the 10-Year Destination Development Strategy is communicated regularly. Include the organizations noted in each success network, in addition to those who participated in the strategy development process, as targets for this communication.
- Host events/forums featuring relevant and inspirational guest speakers, professional development, and initiatives that will help coordinate implementation of the 10-Year Destination Development Strategy. Piggy-back on existing events, where feasible.
- Work with interested Indigenous communities on destination development strategies and initiatives.

AIYANSH HOT SPRINGS

Photo: Mike Seehagel



4 GEARING UP

- Conduct initiatives to encourage positive and respectful relationships between Indigenous operators, Indigenous communities, non-Indigenous operators and relevant ministries.
- Coordinate and monitor the implementation of destination development priorities.
- Source funding for priority destination development initiatives and coordinate the identification of priorities for relevant provincial ministries to assist with their funding decisions.

Exceed Expectations: Experience Development

- Proactively connect with First Nations to determine levels of interest in developing authentic tourism experiences.
- Drawing on support from provincial ministries, local governments and First Nation governments, provide economic support, capacity-building, education, research, and guidance to Indigenous communities/entrepreneurs who are interested in enhancing an existing business or starting a new tourism business.
- Develop an inventory of visitor, market, and export-ready tourism products and experiences (both non-Indigenous and Indigenous experiences). Update this inventory annually to gauge the growth of tourism products/experiences and their associated maturity level (visitor, market, or export-ready).
- Work with DBC and provincial ministries to invest in updated research to guide product and experience development to help ensure that experiences meet current and future market demand.
- Develop a clear understanding of existing winter tourism experiences. To do this, prepare an inventory and assessment of current winter tourism assets, products, services, and festivals.

- Build on the provincial mountain biking sector work and the Northern BC Mountain Bike Strategy that have been completed to further develop mountain biking in areas of Northwestern BC that have the attributes that would make them competitive. This should also tie in with the work that is underway with the Aboriginal Youth Mountain Bike Program and Trail Weavers.
- Given the longer-term outlook of the Destination Development Strategy, there is a need to monitor research related to international markets, including both existing and emerging markets, to ensure that Northwestern BC can enhance existing products/experiences and develop new products and services that will meet and exceed these visitors' expectations. This should help determine characteristics that will help ensure that products/experiences are market-ready and export-ready.

Fit for Purpose: Tourism Workforce

- Develop a Northwestern BC tourism labour market strategy to address recruitment and retention issues and skill gaps. This will entail working with go2HR, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture and Indigenous Tourism BC regarding initiatives to attract and retain staff and fill key skill gaps needed to sustain a thriving tourism industry.

An Enabling Environment: Government Coordination and Support

- Conduct initiatives to increase awareness about the value of tourism and raise the profile of tourism with targeted audiences including local and regional governments and local residents. This will entail conducting research and analysis to enable the estimation of the value of tourism.

TESLA LAKE LODGE

Photo: Taylor Burk



LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

Read the Northwestern BC Destination Development Strategy or reach us at:

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FRONT COVER PHOTO: MOUNT EDZIZA PROVINCIAL PARK, JF Bergeron.



TWEEDSMUIR GLACIER LAKE
Photo: Taylor Burk