



NATURE's HEARTLAND

BRITISH COLUMBIA 

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

SUMMER 2026



DESTINATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA



TS'IL'OS PROVINCIAL PARK
Photo: Destination BC/Kari Medig

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Destination British Columbia acknowledges with gratitude the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Skwx̱ wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh Nation) on whose shared territories we operate our main office.

We respectfully recognize that we carry out our work on the territories of First Nations throughout BC. We honour our ongoing and developing relationships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. We are on a path of learning and are committed to working together.

As an organization, we are committed to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People's Act, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, the BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, and the Declaration Act Action Plan. We are working with the Government of BC, Indigenous Tourism BC, and the tourism industry to develop and implement actions of reconciliation. This work is guided by [*Our Commitments Towards Truth and Reconciliation*](#), an Indigenous-led, organization-wide plan that reflects our ongoing journey to thoughtfully weave Indigenous perspectives, voices, and values into our organization and our work.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all the tourism partners who contributed to the co-creation of this destination development strategy through workshops, feedback, and follow-up insights.

We also extend our sincere thanks to the First Nations knowledge keepers, Elders, youth, community leaders, and Indigenous tourism operators who generously gave their time and lived experience through *Listening to Learn: Nature's Heartland*. The insights shared have meaningfully shaped this strategy.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 WHY A STRATEGY?

1.2 HOW IT ALIGNS

1.3 WHO IT'S FOR

1.4 HOW IT WAS DEVELOPED

2. REALIZING THE POTENTIAL OF NATURE'S HEARTLAND

2.1 THE NATURE'S HEARTLAND PROPOSITION

2.2 OUR VALUES

2.3 OUR VISION FOR NATURE'S HEARTLAND

2.4 VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND THE IDEAL TRAVELLER

3. DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT FOR NATURE'S HEARTLAND

3.1 OUR OBJECTIVES

3.2 ICONICS DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: AREAS OF FOCUS

4. NAVIGATING NATURE'S HEARTLAND

4.1 DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT AREAS

4.2 KEY CHALLENGES

4.3 OPPORTUNITIES

5. THE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.2 STORY AS A MECHANISM FOR CONNECTING VISITORS TO PLACE

5.3 EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

5.4 PROVIDING REASSURANCE: ENHANCING TOUCHPOINTS

6. DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

6.1 OVERALL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES FOR NATURE'S HEARTLAND

6.2 DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES BY AREA

7. GEARING UP FOR DELIVERY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

7.2 INTEGRATION

7.3 PARTNERSHIP

7.4 INVESTMENT

8. APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: LIST OF ACRONYMS





NIMPO LAKE
Photo: Destination BC/Kari Medig

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 WHY A STRATEGY?

The [Invest in Iconics Strategy](#) is a long-term strategy to responsibly and sustainably increase tourism revenue to British Columbia, in more places and in all seasons. It focuses on marketing and supporting the development of globally compelling area and route brands. The Invest in Iconics Strategy is reflected within the “three pathways to growth” identified in [Destination BC's 2026-2028 Corporate Strategy](#):

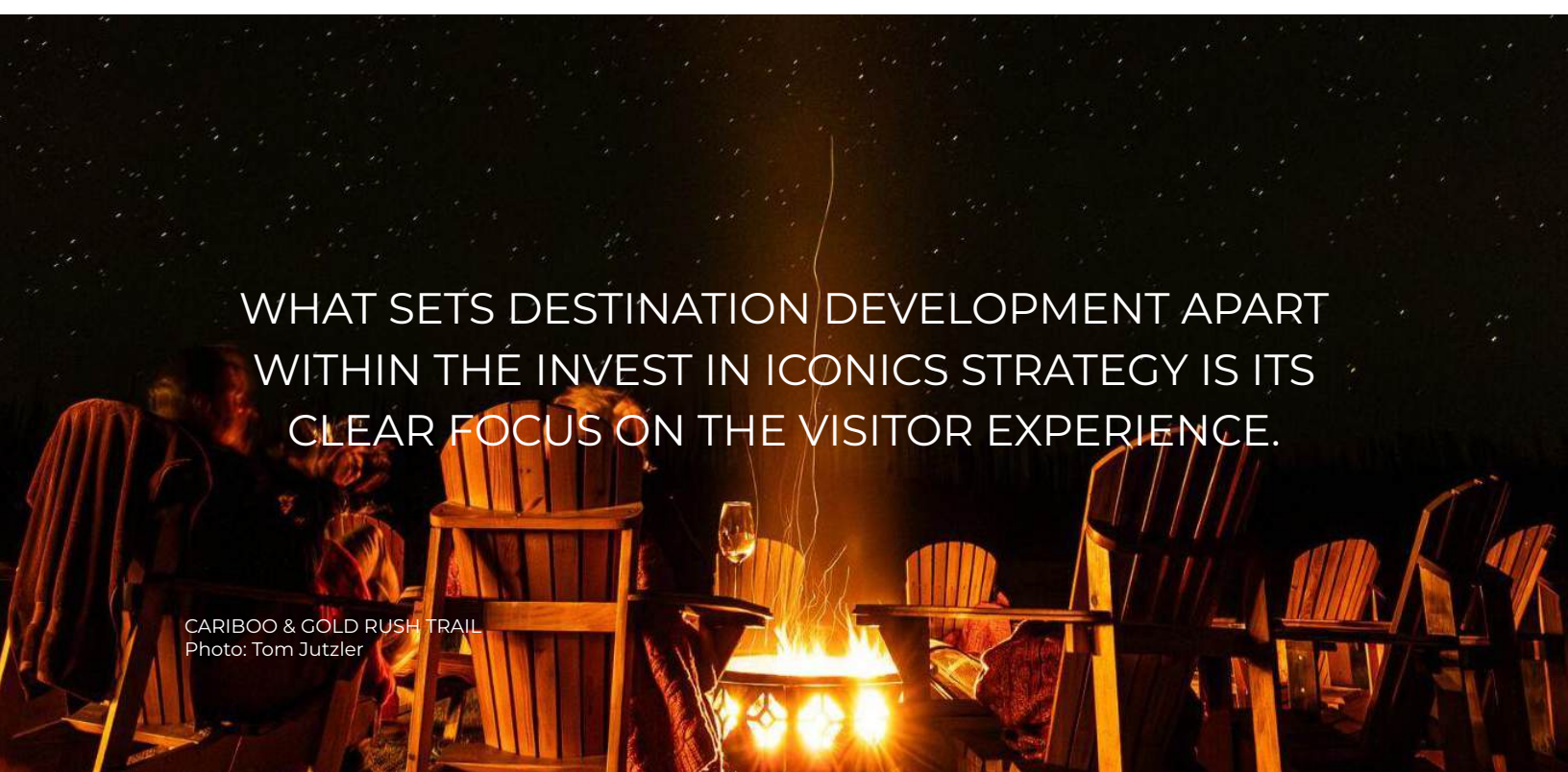
- Strengthen BC's tourism brand through a refreshed Super, Natural British Columbia® brand family
- Enable the development of Iconic brand-aligned experiences
- Unite BC's tourism sector for shared success

Together, the brand family of six iconic travel routes and areas, along with Destination Ski and Vancouver and Area, will differentiate BC on the world stage and grow the benefits of tourism across the province. Each new destination brand will be recognizable as part of the Super, Natural British Columbia® brand family. To help guide aligned and strategic implementation of the Invest in Iconics Strategy on the ground, a destination development strategy for each Iconic identifies high-potential opportunities for tourism partners, businesses, and operators to develop brand-aligned experiences for visitors.

The *Nature's Heartland* Destination Development Strategy outlines how the [Nature's Heartland brand](#) will be brought to life on the ground for visitors, the tourism industry, and communities. With emphasis on the three focus areas identified in the [Iconics Destination Development Framework](#), *encounters*, *experiences*, and *touchpoints*, it serves to help the brand succeed on the ground through guiding the development of an enhanced visitor experience. It identifies experience development opportunities to deliver on the brand promise and sets out key priorities to make that happen.

1.2 HOW IT ALIGNS

Considerable work is already underway at different levels and locations across the province as part of the development and implementation of the regional and planning area destination development strategies that were co-created by various partners throughout BC. These strategies and plans focus on progressing transportation, workforce development, infrastructure, product development, and visitor services, all of which remain important for destination development.



WHAT SETS DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT APART
WITHIN THE INVEST IN ICONICS STRATEGY IS ITS
CLEAR FOCUS ON THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE.

CARIBOO & GOLD RUSH TRAIL
Photo: Tom Jutzler

Building on years' long destination development work already underway, and on the foundational documents such as the [Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Regional Destination Development Strategy](#), [Thompson Okanagan Regional Destination Development Strategy](#), and the [Vancouver, Coast & Mountains Regional Destination Development Strategy](#), this strategy recognizes progress to date and identifies opportunities to elevate, support, and, where needed, recalibrate destination development activities to better align with *Nature's Heartland*.

1.3 WHO IT'S FOR

The *Nature's Heartland* Destination Development Strategy is intended primarily for partners involved in destination development, experience planning, visitor servicing, and destination management, including Destination BC, Indigenous Tourism BC (ITBC), the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association (CCCTA), Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA), Vancouver, Coast and Mountains Tourism Region (VCM), and the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport (TACS).

Beyond these core partners, the goal is for the opportunities presented in the *Nature's Heartland* Destination Development Strategy to support the broader tourism landscape, including government leaders, in adopting a consistent approach to experience development throughout the destination. This could include First Nations communities, tourism businesses, local governments, Community Destination Management Organizations (CDMOs), Sector associations, development corporations, non-profits, community groups, and others. Sustaining healthy relationships across these partners, particularly with First Nations who hold deep intergenerational knowledge of these lands, will be essential to navigating tourism development with care and respect over time.

1.4 HOW IT WAS DEVELOPED

As part of the development of the *Nature's Heartland* Destination Development Strategy, Destination BC collaborated with ITBC, CCCTA, TOTA, VCM, and TACS to host a series of co-facilitated workshops involving a range of participants from across the tourism sector. This included First Nations communities and Indigenous representatives throughout *Nature's Heartland*, as well as participants from a wide range of communities, organizations, businesses, local chambers of commerce, community DMOs, non-profit groups focused on culture and outdoor recreation, and local governments across the area. Strategic follow-up sessions with ITBC, CCCTA, TOTA, and VCM partners helped to validate engagement outcomes and refine development priorities.

One-to-one interviews were also conducted with Sector associations and tourism operators located in *Nature's Heartland*. These conversations provided deeper insights into local priorities, the challenges affecting their businesses, and opportunities and ideas to guide sustainable tourism growth.

As part of the development process, ITBC led a focused Indigenous engagement process titled *Listening to Learn: Nature's Heartland*. This work was grounded in the understanding that conversations with Secwépemc, Tsilhqot'in, Dakelh, Nlaka'pamux, St'át'imc, Stó'lō, and Syilx Peoples were essential as the inherent

rights-bearing Nations whose territories are represented within *Nature's Heartland*. This process was designed as relational engagement rooted in humility, responsibility, and reciprocity.

Through the Listening to Learn engagement process, interviews were conducted with Indigenous tourism operators, and local First Nations Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Community Leaders. This engagement helped build understanding that asking for stories is a commitment to listening. Listening creates a responsibility to act. The Invest in Iconics Strategy is guided by stewardship and reconciliation, with a commitment to working in ways that respect lands and waters, support Indigenous voices and perspectives, and consider the well-being of present and future generations of Indigenous Peoples in BC.

It is acknowledged that not every community, tourism operator, and First Nation were part of this process. The individual voices shared and expressed may not represent the full range of nuances and experiences across these communities. As engagement is ongoing, additional perspectives and further insights will continue to guide the evolution and implementation of the strategy.

In total, over 140 participants were engaged through the in-person sessions and one-to-one interviews. Together, these inputs offered valuable local perspectives that helped shape the *Nature's Heartland* Destination Development Strategy.

Throughout this collaborative and iterative strategy development process, insights were gathered on:

- Compelling story themes that will resonate with visitors in the global marketplace
- Experience development opportunities that will bring these story themes to life across the area
- Touchpoints that will help visitors navigate their way around *Nature's Heartland*, enticing them to explore and connect more deeply with the stories of the place

As engagement is ongoing, we continue to hold space in this strategy for the inclusion of Indigenous community perspectives and further insights, guided by ITBC.



2. REALIZING THE POTENTIAL OF NATURE'S HEARTLAND

2.1 THE NATURE'S HEARTLAND PROPOSITION

"A rugged, soul-stirring landscape, where layers of nature and living history meet hands-on adventure."

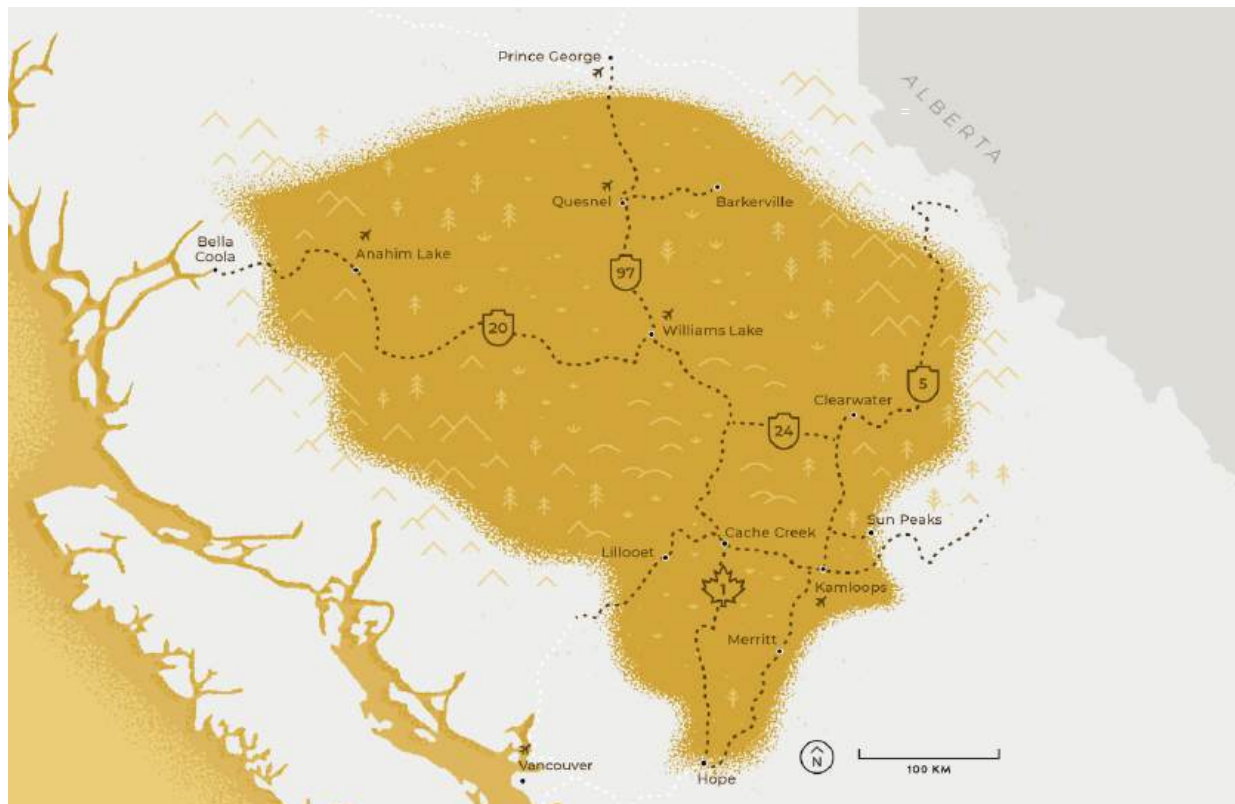


FIGURE 1: NATURE'S HEARTLAND AREA MAP



CANIM LAKE
Photo: Destination BC/Andrew Strain

The Place

Nature's Heartland is a vast area in the centre of British Columbia shaped by the expansive [Fraser River Basin](#), which covers 220,000 square kilometers and includes 12 major watersheds containing numerous lakes and tributaries. Running through the heart of the area is the Fraser River, designated a Canadian Heritage River in 1998 and recognized as the longest river to hold this designation. The Fraser River, along with major corridors and confluences, sustains one of the world's greatest salmon runs and has long influenced the area's geography, travel patterns, and human connections.

This place holds layers of time and meaning, shaped by living cultures and the enduring presence of Indigenous Peoples, alongside the histories and ongoing traditions of settler communities, all rooted in landscapes defined by water, land, and movement.

Across *Nature's Heartland*, the geography shifts dramatically from alpine tundra and glaciated environments to grasslands and desert-like canyons in the rain shadow of the Coast Mountains, as well as forested valleys and rare interior rainforests. River canyons, plateaus, mountain ranges, and lake systems create a diversity of landscapes and ecosystems that support rich biodiversity. Together, these landscapes shape how people live, work, and travel through *Nature's Heartland* today.

Communities

Nature's Heartland is located on the traditional and unceded territories of the Dakelh, Tsilhqot'in, Secwépemc, Nlaka'pamux, St'át'imc, Stó'lō, and Syilx Nations. The area includes more than 40 First Nations, with distinct cultures, languages, perspectives, and ways of life.

Nature's Heartland also includes 15 incorporated municipalities and several unincorporated communities across multiple regional districts, including the Fraser Valley Regional District, Thompson-Nicola Regional District, Squamish-Lillooet Regional District, and the Cariboo Regional District. Together, these communities vary in size and setting, from an urban hub to small towns and working landscapes.

Access and Travel Routes

Access to *Nature's Heartland* is primarily by air and road. Direct and scheduled passenger air access is available to Kamloops, Williams Lake, Quesnel, and Anahim Lake, each offering commercial flight options. Some regional, municipal, and private airstrips also service resorts and lodges throughout the area.

Visitors travelling by car and RV can enter *Nature's Heartland* through several entrance points:

- From the Lower Mainland, Highway 1 via Hope or Highway 99 via Lillooet provide access to the Fraser Canyon and the Cariboo, while entering through Highway 5 via Hope takes visitors to Merritt, Kamloops, and beyond.
- From the Canadian Rockies, Highway 5 enters the area near Blue River and Wells Gray Provincial Park.

- From *The Great Wilderness*, Highway 97 south of Prince George connects to Quesnel, with Highway 26 providing access to Wells and Barkerville.
- Via the Great Bear Rainforest loop, visitors may travel by BC Ferries from Vancouver Island to Bella Coola along *The Infinite Coast*, before continuing east on Highway 20 into the Chilcotin and *Nature's Heartland*.
- From the east via *Rainforest to Rockies*, visitors enter Kamloops on Highway 1.
- From the east via *Valleys & Vineyards*, visitors enter Kamloops on Highway 97, Merritt on Highway 97C, or Hope on Highway 3.

Rail travel also connects the area. The Rocky Mountaineer currently offers three routes that travel through *Nature's Heartland: Rainforest to Gold Rush* with an overnight stop in Quesnel, and *Journey Through the Clouds* and *First Passage to the West* with overnight stops in Kamloops. Each route provides limited time for passengers in the communities.

VIA Rail Canada also offers travel through *Nature's Heartland* with stops in Kamloops, Clearwater, and Blue River, connecting the area to long distance rail travel between Vancouver and eastern Canada.

Culture and Living History

Nature's Heartland is shaped by deep cultural roots and living histories tied closely to the land, water, and movement across the landscapes. First Nations have stewarded these lands and waters since time immemorial with diverse languages, cultural practices, and artistic traditions continuing to shape the area today.

The Fraser River and its tributaries have long provided sustenance and food sources as well as supported travel and trade routes. The waterways continue to influence how people live and experience the landscape today.

Indigenous travel routes, the fur trade, and the Fraser River and Cariboo Gold Rushes each influenced settlement patterns. Agriculture and ranching later became defining features of many communities, shaping rural traditions and landscapes that remain part of life in the area. Places such as Barkerville Historic Town and Park

allow visitors to step back in time, while the Ck'ultenellcw Cultural Centre celebrates and shares Northern Secwépemc history and cultural traditions. Rodeos and fall fairs also showcase the area's ranching heritage and cowboy culture.

From purpose-built cultural centres (new and proposed) to decolonized museum exhibits and interpretive signage, visitors can learn through stories, interpretation, and guided experiences about culture, stewardship, and history. These opportunities add depth and meaning to the journey and are globally distinct and unique to the First Nations whose territories shape *Nature's Heartland*.

The landscape has inspired generations of artists, writers, and performers. Galleries, theatres, murals, and festivals across *Nature's Heartland* provide opportunities for visitors to connect with local stories, people, and places.



WILLIAMS LAKE
Photo: Destination BC/Blake Jorgenson

Parks and Protected Areas

Nature's Heartland includes a high concentration of provincial parks and protected areas that safeguard diverse ecosystems, from alpine landscapes and forests to river corridors, lakes, and grasslands. Some parks offer camping and visitor facilities, while others are managed primarily for conservation and low-impact day use.

Several parks and protected areas stand out as key travel motivators. Wells Gray Provincial Park is one of the most prominent, spanning more than 5,250 square kilometres and known for its waterfalls, volcanic features, and forested wilderness, including a rare inland temperate rainforest. Lac du Bois Grasslands Protected Area and Junction Sheep Range Provincial Park protect important grassland landscapes, with the latter supporting one of BC's largest California bighorn sheep populations. Cariboo Mountains Provincial Park protects important habitat for threatened mountain caribou within extensive old-growth forests.

Ongoing engagement with First Nations is important to ensure tourism respects and supports long-term care of parks, protected areas, and the diverse ecosystems of the area.

Biologically Diverse Area

The Chilcotin Ark is a biodiverse area located in the rain shadow of the Coast Mountains, between Lillooet and Tweedsmuir Park. The Ark contains 12 of the 16 biogeoclimatic zones in BC,

supporting a wide range of ecosystems and habitats. Some of the wildlife found here include woodland caribou, grizzly bears, wolves, and numerous bird species, reflecting the ecological importance of the area. Four major river systems also support one of the largest water storage areas in North America. This biodiversity contributes to opportunities for wildlife viewing and nature-based experiences that are central to the *Nature's Heartland* visitor experience.

Geological Features

Nature's Heartland includes distinctive geological features shaped by volcanic activity and powerful river systems, creating a landscape where layers of time are visible on the land. Notable examples include the McAbee Fossil Beds, the dramatic canyon landscapes at Farwell Canyon, and Chasm Provincial Park, often called BC's "mini-Grand Canyon." The area also includes the hoodoos around Kamloops, limestone formations at Marble Canyon, as well as Pavilion Lake, known for rare coral-like freshwater microbialite formations estimated to have started forming about 11,000 years ago. *Nature's Heartland* lies within a significant volcanic belt, with features such as the basalt columns near Eliguk Lake and Alix Falls. Volcanic plateaus and mountain ranges such as the Cariboo Mountains, Rainbow Range, and Itcha and Ilgachuz ranges, add to the area's rugged terrain and natural beauty.

Lakes and Rivers

Nature's Heartland has an abundance of accessible rivers and lakes, making it a renowned destination for fishing and water-based recreation, including boating, swimming, and paddling. The Fraser River watershed, the largest in BC, provides critical habitat for numerous fish species and an abundance of experiences, ranging from whitewater rafting and jetboating to stunning viewpoints at the Hell's Gate Airstrip, where the river narrows through a steep canyon.

Quesnel Lake is considered the world's deepest fjord lake and is home to notably large rainbow trout. The Interlakes area along Highway 24 provides anglers with some of BC's best fishing opportunities, while Kamloops Lake provides boating, swimming, and fishing close to the city.

Unique Trails

Nature's Heartland has a long history of trails. The Nuxalk-Carrier Grease Trail, which connects Nuxalk territory in the Bella Coola Valley to Carrier (Dakelh) territory north of Quesnel, is over 6,000 years old and was historically used by First Nations to trade valuable oolichan grease. Shaped by the Fraser River and surrounding landscapes, the Gold Rush Trail traces the route of the 1858 Fraser River Gold Rush from Hope through the Fraser Canyon into the Cariboo. Today, it serves as a travel route through *Nature's Heartland*, connecting communities and

highlighting the area's stories and history. The Bowron Lakes Circuit is a 116-kilometre route that provides a multi-day canoe experience across 10 lakes, with wilderness camping opportunities.

Outdoor Adventure

Outdoor adventure is a defining part of the *Nature's Heartland* experience, shaped by vast landscapes and diverse terrain. The area offers a wide range of water, land, and air-based activities, with both guided and self-guided options.

Rivers and canyon corridors support whitewater rafting and jet boating experiences in the Fraser Canyon and the Cariboo. Trail networks across *Nature's Heartland* offer hiking, mountain biking, and gravel riding through grasslands, forests, canyons, and alpine landscapes. Riders and hikers can experience expansive views, bike park experiences, and guided, multi-day packaged trips, including flight-assisted excursions into the high country. Kamloops is widely recognized as one of the birthplaces of freeride mountain biking and is home to North America's largest municipal bike park, the Kamloops Bike Ranch. In 2025, Hope added a new black diamond trail with shuttle service, the first major build in the developing Hope Mountain Trail Network. Sun Peaks offers year-round adventure with hiking and lift-access mountain biking and is recognized as Canada's second largest ski resort by skiable terrain.

Horseback riding trips offer a distinctive way to experience the landscape, and flightseeing offers a dramatic perspective of the area's scale. Wildlife viewing is also a sought-after experience for visitors to *Nature's Heartland*. Guided bear viewing opportunities exist at several lodges, and the area's sparsely populated landscapes provide opportunities for wildlife viewing throughout nature centres, wetlands, and forests.

Agritourism

Agriculture and ranching are foundational to *Nature's Heartland* and continue to shape both community life and visitor experiences. The BC Farmers' Market Trail highlights markets throughout *Nature's Heartland*, where visitors can meet local producers and enjoy locally grown food. In the Thompson Valley and Lillooet, wineries and cideries offer on-farm experiences to taste and purchase locally produced products. Several farms across the area welcome visitors for seasonal events, agricultural experiences, and on-site accommodations. Fall fairs and rodeos

reflect *Nature's Heartland's* agricultural roots and offer visitors authentic community-based experiences.

Resorts, Guest Ranches, and Wilderness/Backcountry Lodges

Nature's Heartland offers a range of unique accommodations, including guest ranches, lakeside resorts, and remote wilderness and backcountry lodges. These properties offer visitors a chance to relax, connect with nature, and experience the character of the area.

Guest ranches, ranging from rustic to high-end, are particularly noteworthy for international visitors. They offer opportunities for horseback riding, wellness-focused stays, and learning about sustainability and conservation, while connecting with the local owners/operators.

Lakeside resorts provide opportunities for fishing, paddling, swimming and time on the water, while wilderness and backcountry lodges offer access to remote landscapes through fly-in experiences, summer hiking, and winter activities such as heli-skiing.



CACHE CREEK
Photo: Destination BC/Hubert Kang

2.2 OUR VALUES

This strategy is about building strong relationships. This includes relationships with Indigenous Peoples, who are the first and ongoing stewards of these lands; tourism businesses and non-profit organizations that deliver memorable visitor experiences; regional and community destination management partners; and all levels of government that play a role in enabling tourism to support the well-being of communities across BC.

This strategy is focused on the following values:

- Respectful sharing and celebration of Indigenous cultures, traditions, and languages, which must be Indigenous-led
- Maintenance and restoration of the ecological integrity of natural systems
- Profitability of tourism businesses and the prosperity of the region
- Enriching visitor experiences for those who value and respect what the destination offers
- Well-being of communities and the support of residents

Acknowledging and respecting community aspirations and residents' attitudes toward visitors in host communities is essential, as destination development can be challenging without local support.

71% agree tourism contributes positively to the quality of life of their community



74% agree the positive impacts of tourism in their community outweigh the negative impacts



Residents Recognize the Economic Importance of Tourism

Residents are highly likely to recognize that local businesses in their community benefit from tourism, and that visitors make a valuable contribution to the local economy.



81% agree the tourism industry supports local businesses in their community

80% value the contribution visitors make to their local economy

FIGURE 2: 2025 SNAPSHOT OF BC RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF BC'S TOURISM INDUSTRY.

Download the full 2025 [Residents' Perceptions of British Columbia's Tourism Industry Survey Findings Report](#)

Sustainability has long been a core value in *Nature's Heartland*, beginning with the First Nations' stewardship of the land, waters, and ecosystems. This ethos has since influenced agriculture, industry, and tourism, culminating in TOTA's leadership in the [Biosphere Certification Program](#). This certification affirms the area's commitment to the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations, ensuring that tourism development aligns with environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

British Columbia's leadership in sustainable tourism continued, with CCCTA becoming just the second region in North America to earn this [internationally-recognized designation](#). In addition, there are several CDMOs and tourism businesses across *Nature's Heartland* demonstrating a commitment to sustainability by achieving Biosphere Certification.

The Vancouver, Coast and Mountains Tourism Region leads a [Sustainability Council](#) focused on enhancing resident and community engagement and prosperity through tourism and the visitor economy, improving industry adoption of sustainable and responsible practices, and promoting respectful and sustainable visitor practices within communities, natural spaces, and cultural sites.

2.3 OUR VISION FOR NATURE'S HEARTLAND

A vision provides a clear and compelling picture of the preferred future for the destination and considers how values and the visitor experience connect to the brand positioning. For *Nature's Heartland*, this vision reflects a destination experienced through movement across a working, lived-in landscape shaped by rivers, routes, and communities. It aligns with the destination brand strategy's three core pillars of *Nature*, *Culture*, and *Adventure*:

- **Nature | Layers of Time:** Expresses the depth and scale of landscapes shaped by water, geology, and biodiversity, anchored by the mighty Fraser River and its tributaries. Invites travellers to experience layers of time through rivers, canyons, grasslands, and plateaus that continue to shape movement and life across the region.
- **Culture | True Grit:** Celebrates living cultures shaped by the land, where hard work, resilience, and knowledge passed through generations continue to define daily life. Invite travellers to learn through Indigenous traditions, work rooted in the land, and community celebrations that reflect a strong sense of kinship, resourcefulness, and respect for the land.
- **Adventure | Hands on the Land:** Encourages immersive, hands-on experiences that invite participation rather than observation. Through rivers, routes, and trails, travellers engage directly with the land through journeys shaped by place and season.

Based on these pillars, a vision statement was developed to reflect the future potential of *Nature's Heartland* as a destination:

“TO GROW VISITATION AND BE INTERNATIONALLY
RECOGNIZED AS A PREFERRED DESTINATION FOR
NATURAL LANDSCAPES, OUTDOOR ADVENTURE,
AND MEANINGFUL ENCOUNTERS THAT REFLECT
INDIGENOUS HISTORIES AND THE CONTEMPORARY
NARRATIVES OF *NATURE'S HEARTLAND*.”

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES WELCOME RESPECTFUL
TRAVELLERS THROUGH AN EXTENDED VISITOR
SEASON, SUPPORTING A RESILIENT VISITOR
ECONOMY, COMMUNITY WELL-BEING, AND
STEWARDSHIP OF THE LAND AND WATERS THAT
DEFINE THE AREA.”

WELLS GRAY PROVINCIAL PARK
Photo: Tourism Wells Gray/Stephanie Devereaux Pacific Peaks Media



SUN PEAKS

Photo: Destination BC/Reuben Krabbe

2.4 VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND THE IDEAL TRAVELLER

Ideal travellers for *Nature's Heartland* are:

OUTDOOR EXPLORERS,

defined by Destination Canada's traveller segmentation program as:

"...daring explorers who crave the thrill of unknown landscapes and overcoming challenges. Adventure travel allows us to grow, learn new skills, and establish personal traditions. We often seek adrenaline through physical activities, engaging with locals, and ensuring a positive impact. We embrace both short getaways and longer holidays, relishing in nature-related experiences."

Key characteristics of Outdoor Explorers include:

- an openness to travelling to destinations with limited tourist infrastructure
- an interest in getting to know places that are off the beaten path and less visited
- a desire to learn about the history of the destinations
- a willingness to put in the effort while travelling in order to see the lesser known places

For more information, refer to the [**full traveller segment information for the Outdoor Explorer.**](#)

Engagement with First Nations knowledge keepers, Elders, youth, community leaders, and Indigenous tourism operators highlighted key qualities that align with the Outdoor Explorer traveller segment, including a sense of wonder and desire to learn, socially and environmentally conscious behaviour, respect for cultural protocols, land and waters, and a willingness to contribute to local economies by investing in locally made goods and experiences. Together, these qualities reflect the type of visitor *Nature's Heartland* seeks to attract.





3. DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT FOR *NATURE'S HEARTLAND*

3.1 OUR OBJECTIVES

Sustainable tourism growth is at the core of destination development work for *Nature's Heartland*, guided by the following strategic objectives that were developed to enable progress.

- Key visitor touchpoints across *Nature's Heartland* provide a welcoming presence and support orientation, wayfinding, and learning throughout the visitor journey.
- Authentic stories of *Nature's Heartland* deepen connection to place and create meaningful encounters with the land and its communities.
- Market- and export-ready anchor experiences connect people to place, encouraging longer stays and touring throughout *Nature's Heartland*.
- The visitor season is extended incrementally in step with community readiness and capacity to remain open longer.
- Kamloops becomes a hub and gateway community, serving as a welcoming entry and connector for travel to and through *Nature's Heartland*.
- Indigenous-led tourism reflects community priorities and supports the integration of intergenerational knowledge and teachings, where appropriate and guided by First Nations.
- Tourism development protects the lands and waters, respects community values, and contributes to community well-being.
- An enabling policy and regulatory environment for communities, businesses, and tourism operators strengthens and further develops visitor experiences.

3.2 ICONICS DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: AREAS OF FOCUS

To achieve the objectives, the *Nature's Heartland* Destination Development Strategy considers many aspects of the visitor experience. These are broadly defined as **experiences**, **touchpoints**, and **encounters** in the Iconics Destination Development Framework. Destination BC, ITBC, and the Regional Destination Management Organizations (RDMOs) co-created the framework to guide the

implementation of the Invest in Iconics Strategy through destination development. This supports a consistent, coherent, and cohesive approach to destination development for the Iconic destination brands by integrating experience development efforts with work already underway at the regional level.

EXPERIENCES

Experiences include all the ways visitors can enjoy, explore, engage with, learn about, and develop a deeper appreciation of the area they are travelling through. The tangible aspects of experiences include products and activities such as guided tours, wildlife viewing, fishing, and events, which alone or in combination can motivate travel and provide value for visitors. Equally important are the intangible aspects, including the thoughts, feelings, and emotions that are awakened through the experience, and the lasting impact it creates through memories, impressions, and personal transformation.

TOUCHPOINTS

Touchpoints are the places of arrival, welcome, orientation, and decision making experienced by visitors when in the destination. They raise awareness of what a place has to offer while providing reassurance to visitors that they are on the right track and know where to explore next. They can provide a physical manifestation of the brand on the ground, and include the physical elements of signage, interpretation (storytelling), and other navigational tools. Touchpoints also include key sites and facilities such as museums, interpretive centres, and Visitor Centres, which provide learning opportunities as well as points of orientation to the story of place and the people who live there.

ENCOUNTERS

Encounters are the ways the stories of places are authentically and respectfully shared with visitors, with approval from the story owners. This can happen through the interactions visitors have with local people, the tourism experiences they participate in, or the interpretive materials they encounter. The stories we choose to tell can change the way visitors experience a place and enable them to reach a deeper understanding of the significance of the places they visit.





BARKERVILLE
Photo: Destination BC/Steve Ogle

4. NAVIGATING NATURE'S HEARTLAND

4.1 DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Nature's Heartland is organized into four destination development areas that reflect primary access points, travel routes, and concentrations of infrastructure and experiences that shape the visitor journey.

This structure provides a clear framework to guide coordination across *Nature's Heartland* while acknowledging the unique characteristics and priorities within each area.

The four key areas are:

- **Kamloops:** a primary air access point and urban centre, functioning as both a gateway and hub for travel throughout *Nature's Heartland*.
- **Southern Area:** encompasses the southern entry into *Nature's Heartland*, extending from Hope through the Fraser Canyon and east into the Nicola Valley.
- **Cariboo-North Thompson:** includes the Cariboo communities and the North Thompson Valley, forming central travel routes through *Nature's Heartland*.
- **Chilcotin:** extends along Highway 20 through the Chilcotin, forming an east-west travel route connecting *Nature's Heartland* with *The Infinite Coast* and the Great Bear Rainforest.



FIGURE 3:
NATURE'S HEARTLAND
HIGHWAY AND ACCESS
POINT MAP



4.2 KEY CHALLENGES

CATEGORY	KEY CHALLENGES
ACCESS, TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY	Transportation to and within <i>Nature's Heartland</i> is impacted by distance from key markets and the associated convenience and cost of travel. Limited air and rail service, infrequent flight schedules, and weather-related disruptions in some communities reduce reliability and visitor confidence in air travel to the area. There is also the potential for the loss of the Rocky Mountaineer route through Quesnel due to discontinuation of the CN rail lease.
	Mobility within the area is constrained, as public and alternative transportation options are limited, and vehicle rental availability and affordability remain challenging. Limited one-way rentals, high costs, and insufficient inventory of vehicles equipped with winter tires restrict fly-drive itineraries and rental-supported experiences.
	Touring infrastructure requires continued investment to support safe, comfortable travel. In some areas, road conditions, rest stops, signage, washrooms, sani-dump facilities, full-service campgrounds, and e-charging infrastructure are limited, in disrepair, or undersized, particularly for RV travellers. Also, <i>Nature's Heartland</i> often functions as a pass-through destination for RV travellers on long-distance touring routes, with itineraries structured around long travel days with established stopovers elsewhere, limiting opportunities for deeper engagement with <i>Nature's Heartland</i> communities and experiences.
	Cellular, Wi-Fi, and broadband connectivity gaps exist across many communities and travel corridors, affecting visitor safety, trip planning, wayfinding, business operations, and the use of digital visitor touchpoints and real-time information.

CATEGORY	KEY CHALLENGES
EXPERIENCES AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	Awareness of <i>Nature's Heartland</i> assets, travel options, and available experiences is low in many markets, which limits its potential to grow as a destination.
	There are limited market- and export-ready experiences across much of the area.
	Demand exists for guided hiking, adventure, and water-based experiences, and there are opportunities to expand the number of operators and equipment rental options.
	International visitors seek out authentic Indigenous experiences, and there are opportunities to further develop and expand these offerings across <i>Nature's Heartland</i>.
	<i>Nature's Heartland</i> has strong farming, ranching, and cultural roots, with opportunities to further develop market- and export-ready experiences that align with growing visitor demand.
	Infrastructure damage and deferred maintenance in some BC Parks and backcountry locations are limiting visitor access to natural spaces and the ability to leverage and promote these assets.
	Many barriers to experience development exist across <i>Nature's Heartland</i>, including limited staff, financial capacity, succession planning, seasonality, land tenure, and liability. Many operators also lack the time or expertise needed to create market-ready experiences, which makes it harder to move forward with new or expanded offerings.
ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD & BEVERAGE	The supply, diversity, and quality of accommodations that appeal to international visitors and support longer stays is limited in many areas of <i>Nature's Heartland</i>. In some communities, operators report that higher-quality accommodations are often occupied by business and resource-based travellers. As visitation grows, this may further limit availability for leisure visitors.

CATEGORY	KEY CHALLENGES
	Investment in accommodations is constrained across <i>Nature's Heartland</i>, with limited participation from accommodation investment groups and, in some cases, absentee ownership, reducing industry engagement. In some areas, access to financing and a shortage of construction/trades people impact expansion and upgrades to existing properties.
	Food and beverage options are limited or inconsistent in some areas, with a lack of diversity and variable operating hours and seasons.
	Regulations and policy governing the harvesting and serving of wild and locally grown foods are complex and can be difficult to navigate in BC, creating barriers for some tourism operators seeking to offer authentic culinary experiences and products.
INDIGENOUS COLLABORATION AND REPRESENTATION	Indigenous cultures and histories are not always represented in ways that reflect the distinct identities and perspectives of each Nation.
	Visitors and residents are not always aware of cultural protocols and are contributing to trespassing, vandalism, and impacts on culturally significant places. First Nations have expressed interest in sharing their culture with visitors, where appropriate and welcomed.
	Ongoing relationship building and early collaboration with First Nations is needed to ensure tourism development reflects community priorities and readiness.
ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY AND LAND USE MANAGEMENT	The health of the natural environment is fundamental to the visitor experience and long-term success of <i>Nature's Heartland</i> as a tourism destination. Building awareness of climate change, adapting to climate-related events, and managing the impacts of visitation within ecological limits are key considerations in supporting a sustainable visitor economy.

CATEGORY	KEY CHALLENGES
	Wildlife and intact wilderness habitat are central to <i>Nature's Heartland's</i> appeal, particularly for international visitors. Ongoing pressures on wildlife, combined with limited conservation officer capacity, may negatively impact wildlife.
	Given the importance of outdoor adventure and nature-based experiences in <i>Nature's Heartland</i> as core travel motivators, there is a need for all levels of government to better understand local circumstances and strengthen coordination across ministries and departments involved in land, wildlife, and resource planning and management.
	Wildfires, smoke, flooding, and related closures and disruptions can negatively affect travel confidence and trip planning. Visitors may assume large parts of <i>Nature's Heartland</i> are inaccessible, even when impacts are localized, creating challenges for visitor communications and destination perception.



KAMLOOPS
Photo: Destination BC/Andrew Strain



CLINTON
Photo: Destination BC/Andrew Strain

4.3 OPPORTUNITIES

In line with the destination development objectives, key opportunities for *Nature's Heartland* include:

1. **Enhance Visitor Touchpoints, Orientation, and Sense of Place**
2. **Grow Market- and Export-Ready Experiences**
3. **Support Touring and Longer Stays through *Nature's Heartland***
4. **Strengthen Kamloops as a Gateway and Hub**
5. **Support Indigenous-Led Tourism Experiences**
6. **Advance Business Development and Capacity Building**

1. Enhance Visitor Touchpoints, Orientation, and Sense of Place

Nature's Heartland is accessed through a range of entry points by air, ferry, rail, and road. These arrival points present opportunities to create welcoming and informative touchpoints that support orientation, wayfinding, and learning throughout the visitor journey. Airports, key travel routes, visitor centres, and community gateways can help visitors navigate *Nature's Heartland*, build a stronger sense of place, and share guidance on respectful visitation and cultural protocols.

Engagement sessions and interviews identified several stories and themes that help define *Nature's Heartland*, including Indigenous cultures, sustainability, natural history, settlement, and rural life. These stories provide opportunities to deepen visitors' connection to *Nature's Heartland* and create more meaningful encounters with its landscapes and communities. Visitor touchpoints can play an important role in sharing these stories throughout the visitor journey. Where appropriate, and with permission, strengthening the inclusion of First Nations cultures, stories, histories, and languages can support respectful and authentic representation.

2. Grow Market- and Export-Ready Experiences

Nature's Heartland offers a strong foundation of outdoor recreation, wildlife viewing, cultural experiences, and heritage assets. There is an opportunity to expand the range and diversity of bookable guided activities and experiences that add depth to itineraries and strengthen appeal to international visitors, while supporting stewardship and community well-being. There are also opportunities to further invest in and elevate existing festivals and events and destination assets, such as the Gold Rush Trail and geological features, to create more compelling experience-led offerings that connect visitors to the landscapes, cultures, and ways of life of *Nature's Heartland*.

Greater diversity and quality of accommodation options present an opportunity to better meet the expectations of international travellers and support longer stays. Food and beverage offerings that highlight local and traditional foods can further enhance the visitor experience.



3. Support Touring and Longer Stays through *Nature's Heartland*

Exploring by rental vehicle and RV is a common way for international visitors to experience *Nature's Heartland*. The main touring routes include Highway 20 from Bella Coola (via BC Ferries Route 28A from Vancouver Island), Highway 5 from Alberta past Blue River and Wells Gray Provincial Park, Highway 1 at Hope and through the Fraser Canyon, and north along Highway 97 through the Cariboo. There are opportunities to enhance the services and facilities along these routes, supporting more seamless travel and encouraging visitors to extend their stays in local communities across the area, including during the shoulder seasons in step with community readiness.

4. Strengthen Kamloops as a Gateway and Hub

Kamloops serves as a primary gateway into *Nature's Heartland*, welcoming visitors arriving by air, road, and rail and acting as a hub for exploring the surrounding area. As a well-serviced centre with established tourism infrastructure, Kamloops plays an important role in introducing visitors to the broader area and supporting access to nearby communities through day trips and side excursions. There is an opportunity to further strengthen Kamloops' role as both a point of arrival and a hub. Efforts to enhance air access and advance a new anchor attraction reflect this direction and support increased international visitation across *Nature's Heartland*.

5. Support Indigenous-Led Tourism Experiences

Nature's Heartland is shaped by First Nations whose cultures, histories, and relationships to the land and waters continue to define the area. Indigenous-led tourism experiences present opportunities to meet growing visitor demand for learning about culture, stewardship, and place through authentic experiences led by First Nations, where visitors are welcomed to participate where appropriate and invited.

Through engagement, participating First Nations confirmed interest in developing tourism experiences that reflect their distinct cultures and priorities. Engagement also reinforced that authenticity and cultural integrity must come before economic growth, with tourism advancing in step with community capacity and readiness. Some heritage attractions in *Nature's Heartland* now have First Nations ownership/management, enabling more complete and authentic sharing of culture, stories, and history. First Nations cultural centres and Indigenous events provide meaningful opportunities for learning and visitor experiences that may benefit from partnerships and support to become fully export-ready.

Opportunities also exist to strengthen collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous tourism partners. Early and ongoing relationship building is essential to ensure tourism development reflects community priorities and levels of participation.

6. Advance Business Development and Capacity Building

Nature's Heartland is home to many small, owner-operator tourism businesses that play a key role in delivering authentic and sustainable visitor experiences. Opportunities exist to provide hands-on flexible support through training, partnerships, practical tools, and a supportive business environment. These efforts can strengthen experience quality, industry engagement, and succession planning, helping operators better meet the expectations of international travellers seeking authentic experiences and resulting in more export-ready offerings.



NAHATLATCH PROVINCIAL PARK
Photo: Destination BC/Michael Bednar



5. THE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Every story shared, every experience offered, and every touchpoint introduced across *Nature's Heartland* contributes to both localized expression of place and to the cohesiveness of the larger destination experience. The ability to meaningfully deepen connection to place through sharing the stories of *Nature's Heartland* (Section 5.2) is essential. These kinds of investments bring the journey to life for visitors and add meaning to the overall travel experience.

Destination development priorities should be assessed by considering the anticipated contribution an investment will make to both the local community and the wider area. Another key consideration is how an investment contributes to creating a compelling depth, density, and clustering of experiences for travellers across *Nature's Heartland*.

Connecting the touring and road trip experience is also important. This includes providing reassurance to travellers through physical touchpoints such as branded signage and interpretive wayfinding.

5.2 STORY AS A MECHANISM FOR CONNECTING VISITORS TO PLACE

The brand promise and brand pillars identified for *Nature's Heartland* manifest on the ground through the experiences available in the destination. Compelling experiences draw inspiration from both the essence and multifaceted nature of *Nature's Heartland*, as well as the local stories that communities, First Nations, and tourism operators want to share with visitors.

Stories and themes emerging from engagement sessions for the *Nature's Heartland* brand were supported by additional insights gathered through recent conversations and workshops shaping this Destination Development strategy.

The focus was on “root stories”, the unique, foundational narratives of people and place that matter to communities, are distinctive, and add depth to the visitor experience. Engagement participants noted that visitors want to hear stories from Canadian experience providers who call *Nature’s Heartland* home – how they got started, what their lifestyle is like, and how they thrive. Through ITBC’s *Listening to Learn* engagement process, some First Nations Elders and Knowledge Keepers who were interviewed expressed a desire for visitors to have a basic understanding of Indigenous Peoples prior to their visit, including an awareness that many First Nations exist in these Territories and have distinct identities, languages, and cultures. Engagement also reinforced that stories shared through tourism must be guided by communities and cultural protocols.

These themes and stories were organized using the *Nature’s Heartland* brand pillars to identify those that best support the brand positioning.

NATURE'S HEARTLAND		
BRAND POSITIONING		
A RUGGED SOUL-STIRRING LANDSCAPE, WHERE LAYERS OF NATURE AND LIVING HISTORY MEET HANDS-ON ADVENTURE.		
BRAND PILLARS		
NATURE LAYERS OF TIME	CULTURE TRUE GRIT	ADVENTURE HANDS ON THE LAND
DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STORY THEMES AND EXPERIENCES		
Historic lands Journey through landscapes shaped by time: canyons carved by rivers, expansive grasslands, and rugged plateaus where earth’s history is written in stone, rustic colours, and striking formations. For example: Basalt columns in the Chilcotin formed by the slow cooling of lava flows millions of years ago.	Guided by the land Life here follows the deep cycles and steady pace of the land, each season signaling the next. Through hard work, dedication, and knowledge passed down through generations, the harvests come to life. For example: Teaching of First Nations stories such as Coyote and how these stories guide harvesting, relationship building, and ceremony.	Trails through time Follow trade routes travelled by Indigenous Peoples along road, land, and waters for millennia and used later by settlers during the Gold Rush. These pathways connect landscapes, history, and adventure. For example: Historic routes/trails – Grease Trail which pre-dates the Silk Road, 6,000+ years of walkers on a 450 kilometre trail, Oolichan/Eulachon fish which were traded along this trail.

NATURE LAYERS OF TIME	CULTURE TRUE GRIT	ADVENTURE HANDS ON THE LAND
DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STORY THEMES AND EXPERIENCES		
The hoodoos in Kamloops formed through the erosion of volcanic rock and glacial deposits. The Fraser Canyon was carved by the powerful flows of the Fraser River over thousands of years, creating steep canyon walls and dramatic landscapes, such as Hell's Gate. Dynamic waterways The Mighty Fraser and its tributaries, like the Thompson River, are connecting lifelines, carving through the land. These essential waters sustain salmon, ecosystems, and stories of wisdom and resilience. For example: Sharing stories of Fraser River salmon so abundant that one could walk across it. Helping visitors understand the four species of salmon and providing interpretation at salmon spawning viewing locations. Ecological sanctuary Home to remarkable biodiversity, from the inland icefield of the ecologically distinct area known as the Chilcotin Ark, to the native grasslands in Kamloops. Rich ecosystems provide a haven for diverse wildlife, such as caribou, bears, eagles, and elusive wild horses.	Family-owned resorts and ranches, such as the third-generation owner of Stewart's Lodge in the West Chilcotin. Tradition & celebration Generational skills are celebrated through the competitive spirit of rodeos and powwows, where living history is brought to life. The distinctive character of this place is reflected in its unique events, craftsmanship, and community celebrations. For example: Sharing stories with visitors about First Nations stewardship and land protocols, current lifestyle and culture, the role of stewards and elders, and welcoming guests to powwows, cultural centres, and sweat lodges. The high concentration of artisans in small communities, such as Wells, helps define the sense of place and amplifies diverse voices and experiences. Country kinship A self-reliant people who have forged community alongside the challenges and opportunities of this place. Always a hat tip, head nod, or helping hand, this community honours the humanity of living in this land. For example: Festivals, powwows, farmers' markets, and fall fairs bring locals together and provide	The fur trade, the Gold Rush, and then the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and how Indigenous knowledge helped settlers and workers survive. River rushes Rivers here are both sources of adventure and storytellers of history. Ride the rapids, fish the life-giving waters, and explore the powerful waterways that connect this region. For example: Whitewater rafting through Hell's Gate in the Fraser Canyon or jetboating on the Fraser River. Rugged pursuits Whether exploring by horseback on a ranch, hiking through canyons, or paddling waterways, travellers forge their own path in a rugged land. For example: Taking the road less travelled to experience lodges, wilderness retreats, and outdoor adventure. Horseback riding experiences at guest ranches that allow visitors to travel through grasslands, forests, and alpine landscapes.

NATURE LAYERS OF TIME	CULTURE TRUE GRIT	ADVENTURE HANDS ON THE LAND
DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STORY THEMES AND EXPERIENCES		
For example: Conservation efforts of endangered species Black Swifts in Wells Gray Provincial Park. Lac du Bois Grasslands Protected Area near Kamloops protects important grassland landscapes. Junction Sheep Range Provincial Park in the Cariboo supports one of BC's largest California bighorn sheep populations. Cariboo Mountains Provincial Park protects important habitat for threatened mountain caribou within extensive old-growth forests.	welcoming experiences for visitors. Community and business-led wildfire recovery efforts that demonstrate resilience in action. Resourceful & bold The modern cowboy spirit endures in a land where effort is valued over convenience. For example: Buffalo ranching in Clinton. Rodeo culture that reflects a deep connection to its ranching roots and offers a blend of competition, community, and celebration.	

5.3 EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

Nature's Heartland has both an extensive human and natural history. Visitors seek out the scenic beauty and outdoor adventure offerings, while also wanting to learn about the people who call this place home.

Key areas of focus for experience development are outlined in the table below.

EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT FOCUS	DESCRIPTION
GUIDED ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES	Expanding guided and bookable experiences, including the strengthening of key experiences that motivate travel, could support longer stays and deepen engagement with <i>Nature's Heartland</i> . Opportunities exist to cluster and package experiences along touring routes to create more seamless, multi-day itineraries.

EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT FOCUS	DESCRIPTION
ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD & BEVERAGE	Further enhancing lodges, resorts, and accommodations as experience-led, export-ready offerings presents opportunities to strengthen the visitor experience and support longer stays. Some areas of <i>Nature's Heartland</i> have limited food and beverage options. Flexible non-traditional options (e.g. seasonal dining, food trucks) may be better suited to the rural and seasonal nature of visitation.
HISTORY AND HERITAGE	Further development and stewardship of the Gold Rush Trail's heritage assets, while supporting First Nations engagement, management, and storytelling. This presents opportunities to enrich the visitor experience and support more complete and authentic sharing of history.
FESTIVALS & EVENTS	Supporting existing festivals and events while encouraging the development of new events that attract international visitors to <i>Nature's Heartland</i>. This provides opportunities for visitors to engage with locals and experience the area's culture and traditions.
PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS	Parks, protected areas, and nature are key travel motivators for visitors to <i>Nature's Heartland</i>. Continued stewardship, maintenance, and interpretation can enhance visitor experiences, support responsible use, and enable the expansion of guided opportunities.
DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING	<i>Nature's Heartland</i> is a large and predominantly rural area with many small, seasonal, and owner-operator tourism businesses. Many of these operators may benefit from flexible one-to-one support across a range of services, such as experience development and enhancement, business expansion, marketing, and succession planning. There is a need for economic development capacity building and opportunities that bring together First Nations and non-Indigenous communities in support of collaborative tourism growth.



BOWRON LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK
Photo: Destination BC/Adam Wells

5.4 PROVIDING REASSURANCE: ENHANCING TOUCHPOINTS

Tangible connections to place can be offered through physical touchpoints, like signage that provides comfort and assurance that the traveller is in the right place and heading in the right direction, as well as through a consistent and frequent brand presence. The *Nature's Heartland* brand presence can occur in many forms throughout the area, such as signage at Visitor Centres, static signs at interpretive kiosks, trailhead signage, and digital applications. Destination BC has developed an Iconics Signage Opportunity Strategy to provide guidelines, specifications, and recommendations to support partners in bringing the Iconic brands to life on the ground through physical signage. It identifies opportunities to align with existing signage systems and possibilities for co-branding with partner organizations.

Interpretive signage, public art and murals, and exhibits in local museums, cultural centres, and Visitor Centres help connect visitors to place, both physically and through the stories shared in these spaces. The identification of touchpoint development opportunities emerged through community engagement sessions. Engagement through ITBC also identified gaps where Indigenous stories and languages could be more meaningfully shared through tourism infrastructure, including entry signage and interpretive touchpoints, in ways that are accurate and guided by First Nations.

In addition to cultural storytelling, *Nature's Heartland* also has many natural assets that could benefit from interpretive signage to help visitors better understand the area's rich geological, ecological, and scenic features. This includes highlighting assets that may not be easily visible yet are globally significant.



ALEXANDRA BRIDGE PROVINCIAL PARK
Photo: Destination BC/Michael Bednar

6. DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

6.1 OVERALL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES FOR *NATURE'S HEARTLAND*

Well-considered destination development priorities can support a destination's future while helping deliver on the brand promise to visitors.

Building on the development opportunities outlined in Section 4, this section outlines broader experience development priorities for *Nature's Heartland*.

These priorities were identified by partners during the engagement process and are not intended to assign responsibility for delivery to any one partner.

ENHANCE VISITOR TOUCHPOINTS, ORIENTATION, AND SENSE OF PLACE	★ Consider signage at entry points to <i>Nature's Heartland</i>, to welcome and orient visitors. Locations could include: ○ Entering <i>Nature's Heartland</i> from the north on Highway 97 from <i>The Great Wilderness</i> ○ Entering <i>Nature's Heartland</i> from the west on Highway 20 from <i>The Infinite Coast</i> ○ Entering <i>Nature's Heartland</i> via Highway 5 from the Robson Valley/Valemount ○ Entering <i>Nature's Heartland</i> through Lillooet (Highway 99) ○ Entering <i>Nature's Heartland</i> from the south via Hope through the Fraser Canyon (Highway 1) and Coquihalla (Highway 5) ○ Entering <i>Nature's Heartland</i> on Highway 1 from the east (approaching Kamloops) ○ Working with local communities to explore opportunities to invest in co-branded community gateway signage
	★ Encourage the inclusion of Indigenous languages on signage, where supported by and in collaboration with First Nations
	★ Support community destination wayfinding initiatives, drawing on Quesnel as an example of a unified wayfinding

	approach, including consistent design, colour schemes, and coordinated sign families (directional, trail, interpretive, etc.)
	★ Ensure all visitor centres have QR codes/information available when closed to enable visitors to access information anytime
	★ Encourage the maintenance of existing public art , such as murals, and support the creation of new pieces that share local stories throughout <i>Nature's Heartland</i>
SUPPORT TOURING AND LONGER STAYS THROUGH NATURE'S HEARTLAND	★ Ensure adequate RV amenities , such as ample parking at visitor centres, sani-dumps, full-service campgrounds, and charging for hybrid RVs as they become more popular
	★ Work with RV rental companies to create and adapt itineraries that showcase <i>Nature's Heartland</i>
	★ Support the improvement of car rental options , including increased availability at airport locations, one-way rentals, and vehicles equipped with winter tires, outdoor recreation equipment racks, etc.
	★ Support the improvement of rest stops with visitor information, multilingual interpretation, EV charging, restrooms, etc.
	★ Support the improvement of Google Maps accuracy and Wi-Fi and cellular coverage in critical corridors and rural areas to support operators, visitor planning, and export-readiness
	★ Support the development of self-guided walking/driving/audio tours to provide more options for visitors where guided experiences are limited
	★ Support the development and sharing of training resources for frontline staff, business storefronts, community ambassadors, and visitor centres to share place-based stories and connect visitors to authentic experiences across <i>Nature's Heartland</i>
	★ Encourage collaborations between businesses, communities, and visitor centres for outdoor recreation equipment rentals in rural areas lacking access to rental services
GROW MARKET- AND EXPORT-READY EXPERIENCES	★ Provide industry support for existing guided experiences to move toward export-ready status
	★ Provide industry support for the development of new, brand-aligned guided experiences , such as fishing, hiking,

	dark sky viewing, agritourism, horseback riding, ranching, behind-the-scenes rodeo tours, wildlife viewing, etc.
	★ Encourage clustering and packaging of market- and export-ready experiences to support multi-day itineraries and encourage travel between communities (e.g., cultural and heritage sites, mountain bike trails, and parks)
	★ Encourage wilderness lodges, ranch stays, and small-scale boutique accommodations to further develop export-ready experiences to enhance the <i>Nature's Heartland</i> brand experience (e.g., dark sky viewing, guided outdoor adventure activities, local encounters with artisans)
	★ Many of the export-ready wilderness lodges and resorts in <i>Nature's Heartland</i> provide guests with exceptional food experiences; there is an opportunity to encourage the development of place-based culinary and agritourism experiences in other parts of <i>Nature's Heartland</i> that reflect the land, ranching traditions, and seasonal harvest cycles
	★ Work with the Province and other government and funding agencies to provide funding for large and small festivals and events that attract international visitors and increase overnight stays in <i>Nature's Heartland</i>
	★ Support the creation of a Rodeo/Fall Fair Trail that links the many events (e.g., Williams Lake Stampede, North Thompson Fall Fair and Rodeo, Clinton May Ball and Rodeo) located throughout <i>Nature's Heartland</i> for those seeking authentic experiences that reflect the area's agriculture and ranching culture
SUPPORT INDIGENOUS-LED TOURISM EXPERIENCES	★ Support ITBC and product sector groups in working together more closely to enhance existing Indigenous experiences and to collaborate on potential new experiences related to outdoor adventure, accommodations, etc.
	★ Make it easier for international visitors to purchase and ship home authentic art and local goods from Indigenous artisans, potentially utilizing visitor centres and local businesses
	★ Provide support related to buying, starting, or expanding tourism businesses , including access to training, mentorship, and partnership opportunities
	★ Support the continuation of training programs for front-line staff, owner/operators, and managers; support partnerships that include training to transfer skills to younger generations

	★ Develop and share existing cultural awareness training, visitor codes of conduct, and educational materials to support respectful visitation and increase understanding among visitors and non-Indigenous communities. (e.g., TOTA's Z Generations Pledge)
	★ Support ITBC in the continued development of The First Welcome Trail, an initiative that helps visitors understand whose lands they are on before visiting destinations in British Columbia, and assess opportunities to implement the initiative within <i>Nature's Heartland</i>
	★ Support the Secwépemc Landmarks Project, which features a series of landmark sculptures highlighting Secwépemc oral histories and place names
	★ Support the creation of an Indigenous Cultural Trail that links the area's powwows and cultural centres to create a cluster of opportunities that can drive visitation for those seeking authentic Indigenous cultural experiences. Examples include the Williams Lake Powwow, Lhtako Dene Nation Powwow near Quesnel, Secwépemc Museum and Heritage Park in Kamloops, the Xat'sūll Heritage Village in Soda Creek, the Ck'ultenellcw Cultural Centre at 108 Mile Ranch, and proposed future experiences in development
ADVANCE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING	★ Build operator capacity through flexible one-to-one training, mentoring, and partnership opportunities, focusing on enhancing the visitor experience and improving how visitors find, plan, and book experiences (i.e., marketing, websites, travel trade, etc.)
	★ Invest in providing support/welcome kits to new owners/foreign investors to fast-track industry integration
	★ Showcase opportunities for tourism business investment to domestic and international audiences
	★ Share succession planning resources with existing tourism businesses as they plan for retirement and/or seek new operators to learn the business and take over
ENABLING BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT	★ Balance tourism development with stewardship by addressing land tenure and management issues to enable new guided tours, Indigenous tourism, and outdoor experiences, ensuring that culturally significant and sensitive areas are accessed and interpreted in line with First Nations' direction
	★ Explore opportunities to expand staffing resources for Recreation Sites and Trails BC and Conservation Officers to

	ensure sustainability of wildlife populations, visitor safety, and enhanced visitor experience
	★ Encourage the development of supportive agritourism and wild food foraging regulations and policies to enable experience development and enhancement
	★ Work with partners to help reduce the cost and risk of insurance for tourism operators, including event organizers and rental car insurance and pricing in BC, through advocacy, collective solutions, pilot insurance programs, and support for seasonal rentals



BRIDGE LAKE
Photo: Cariboo Chilcotin Coast/Michael Bednar



6.2 DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES BY AREA

This section identifies development priorities specific to individual areas within *Nature's Heartland*, recognizing that opportunities and needs vary across communities and landscapes.

- Kamloops
- Southern Area (Hope, Fraser Canyon, and Nicola Valley)
- Cariboo-North Thompson
- Chilcotin (Highway 20)

While not an exhaustive list, the following priorities were identified through partner engagement. They represent shared areas of focus but do not bind any specific organization or partner to their delivery.

KAMLOOPS
<i>Priorities for experience development and enhancement:</i>
★ Support the Kamloops Room to Invest campaign – a collaborative effort to create a landmark attraction and reinforce Kamloops as a key anchor and service hub
★ Develop guided experiences such as: - o desert sunset experiences with local food, wine, beer, and storytelling - o cattle drive / “City Slicker” ranch experiences - o guided Indigenous cultural experiences
★ Support the Tkemplúps te Secwépemc Tourism Strategic Plan , including enhancements in programming for visitors to the Kamloopa Powwow and the Secwépemc Museum & Heritage Park, development of the RV park, and other initiatives led by Tkemplúps te Secwépemc
★ Showcase the Kamloops Heritage Railway Society restored steam-powered train once reactivated as a visitor experience
★ Improve the visitor experience at Kamloops VIA Rail station for travellers visiting Kamloops and the North Thompson by enhancing station safety, aesthetic appeal, and ground transportation connectivity to accommodations and rental vehicles
★ Work with partners to offer beginner angling experiences in lakes and rivers, such as the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC’s Rod Loan Program
★ Support the maintenance and promotion of renowned bike trails that offer a diversity of riding experiences, including downhill, mountain/cross-country, and enduro, through initiatives like the Tourism Kamloops Freeride Fund
★ Support the development, enhancement, and promotion of nearby bookable experiences that encourage visitation to rural areas, with Kamloops as a hub, and coordinate with <i>Rainforest to Rockies</i> to draw visitors into <i>Nature's Heartland</i>

KAMLOOPS

Touchpoint investment priorities:

- ★ Support **YKA LINK** (Leveraging Investment, Networking, and Knowledge), a tourism and air service development initiative designed to position Kamloops Airport (YKA) as the central gateway to Nature's Heartland
- ★ Enhance **YKA Airport signage recognizing traditional territory** (in collaboration with First Nations) and providing a warm welcome to *Nature's Heartland*
- ★ Enhance the **Kamloops community entrance sign** to acknowledge entry into the gateway of *Nature's Heartland*
- ★ **Interpretive signage enhancements** at key stops of interest, such as the **Kamloops Lake Rest Area**, where existing signage infrastructure is in place

SOUTHERN AREA (HOPE, FRASER CANYON, AND NICOLA VALLEY)

Priorities for experience development and enhancement:

- ★ Support the continued development of phase 2 of **signature mountain bike trails** in Hope
- ★ Support Chawathil First Nation's tourism development opportunities as outlined in the [Comprehensive Community Plan](#) and [Active Transportation Plan](#), such as the **Experience the Fraser Initiative Coast to Canyon Trail** and other visitor amenities/attractions
- ★ Support decolonization and development of additional interactive visitor programming at **Yale Historic Site** (Provincial Heritage Site)
- ★ Follow the development of the **Spuzzum First Nation**-proposed **South Anderson Mountain Resort**, which is set to include an alpine ski resort, golf, and hiking trails
- ★ Support the **Spuzzum First Nation's new RV park** opening in 2027 and the First Nations Cultural Centre project once completed
- ★ Support the **Alexandra Bridge** restoration project as a key attraction
- ★ Support **tourism-related recovery/re-development** efforts in the Town of Lytton
- ★ Encourage continued Indigenous storytelling engagement in the **Lytton River Festival**
- ★ Support the **Lytton Chinese History Museum** to enhance storytelling and sharing of the history of Chinese people in the area related to the railway and gold rush
- ★ Repair infrastructure and restore access to BC Parks damaged by floods, including **Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park**, where hiking opportunities have been impacted, and **Nahatlatch Park**, where rafting companies can no longer access launch sites for guided experiences

SOUTHERN AREA (HOPE, FRASER CANYON, AND NICOLA VALLEY)

- ★ Support the **Fraser Canyon Tourism Master Plan** to assist in the revitalization of the Fraser Canyon route
- ★ Encourage roadside cleanup to address abandoned structures and equipment in the Fraser Canyon
- ★ Support existing Indigenous cultural experiences at **Tuckkwiowhum Village** near Boston Bar and **Skawahlook Adventure Park** near Hope
- ★ Encourage **boutique accommodation** and **destination trail development**, including hut-to-hut experiences in the Nicola Valley
- ★ Support efforts to expand the **Rail Trail** networks in the Nicola Valley and Kamloops area

Touchpoint investment priorities:

- ★ Support the restoration of the CNR Hope Train Station to be developed as the **new Hope Visitor Centre, Hope Museum, and restaurant**
- ★ Support **signage repair and maintenance** on Highway 1 approaching Hope
- ★ Support **investment in interpretive signage and visitor amenity improvements** at key story locations and rest stops in the Fraser Canyon
- ★ **Gateway 286** initiative – opportunity for *Nature's Heartland* signage and potential partnership with the five Nicola Valley First Nations on Indigenous cultural experiences and interpretive signage

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Priorities for experience development and enhancement:

- ★ Determine viability of/support for **new Lillooet experiences** that could extend stays for leisure and tour bus groups, such as:
 - Seton Lake Lookout trail
 - Train to Seton Portage as sightseeing/interpretive experience
 - Enhanced Jade Trail
 - Upper St'at'imc Cultural Centre
- ★ Address the need for **public washrooms** in Lillooet for large tour bus groups that stop in the community
- ★ Support a potential new **summer music festival** at Sun Peaks
- ★ Work with BC Parks to enhance infrastructure and access to attractions in **Wells Gray Provincial Park** for shoulder season expansion

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- ★ Gather **Google Trekker** footage and showcase fully accessible viewing platforms and other nature-based experiences in Wells Gray Provincial Park
- ★ Support continued investments in new experiences in Blue River, including expanding the trail network, as outlined in the **Blue River Trails and Active Transportation Plan** and other nature-based experiences
- ★ Support the **Simpcw Mountain Bike Trails initiative** and other tourism-related priorities resulting from the 2026 Community Planning sessions
- ★ Work with *The Great Wilderness* on activities that **support Prince George as an entry hub**, providing options for *Nature's Heartland* exploration
- ★ Identify **the transportation product gaps in the North Thompson and Interlakes** that provide both access to and throughout *Nature's Heartland*
- ★ **Expand the quantity of full-service RV sites** to meet the demand of touring visitors, as some existing spaces are occupied by permanent residents
- ★ Support key existing **Gold Rush Trail heritage attractions** such as Barkerville Historic Town & Park, 108 Mile Heritage Site, and Historic Hat Creek Ranch, and expand and diversify cultural activities and storytelling opportunities, including First Nations interpretation
- ★ Support existing Indigenous cultural experiences at the **Xwisten Experience Tours** in Lillooet, **Xatsūll Heritage Village** in Soda Creek, and the **Ck'ultenellcw Cultural Centre** at 108 Mile Ranch
- ★ Advance the Bonaparte First Nation's **McAbee Fossil Fields Development Plan**, an internationally recognized fossil site
- ★ Develop export-ready trail(s) once key location(s) are identified through the **Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Trail Framework**
- ★ Repair infrastructure needs in **Quesnel Canyon** to enable access after flooding damage

Touchpoint investment priorities:

- ★ Improve **visitor signage** to highlight tourism-related businesses on Highway 5 heading north towards Clearwater
- ★ Improve **wayfinding for public access to lakes/beaches**; create interpretive signage to showcase historic points of interest
- ★ Encourage development of **Quesnel and Williams Lake airports as gateways/service centres** for key markets (i.e., establish agreements with European air carriers to land at YVR and utilize local airlines to reach Cariboo airports)
- ★ Enhance **airport signage recognizing traditional territory** (in collaboration with First Nations) and providing a warm welcome to *Nature's Heartland*

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- ★ Develop **interpretive signs at key geological sites**, such as Chasm Provincial Park and the unique freshwater dive site in Pavilion Lake containing freshwater coral-like microbialite structures
- ★ Support **community wayfinding initiatives** that are in progress (e.g., Clearwater, 100 Mile House)
- ★ Support **investment in interpretive signage and visitor amenity improvements** at key story locations and rest stops, such as the Old Bridge and Seton Lake/dam history in Lillooet, Fountain Flats/Fraser River viewing locations, bighorn sheep wildlife viewing areas, Cayoosh Creek Campground river access, boat launches, etc.)

CHILCOTIN (HIGHWAY 20)

Priorities for experience development and enhancement:

- ★ Expand the **quantity and diversity of food and beverage options**; consider non-traditional options such as food trucks, seasonal dining, and pop-ups
- ★ Address land tenure constraints that limit guided experience development, including non-motorized activities, and enable more **flexible tenure approaches** while maintaining limits on group sizes and motorized use to ensure sustainable backcountry usage

Touchpoint investment priorities:

- ★ Signage update/enhancement to **Welcome to West Chilcotin roadside sign**
- ★ Encourage development of **Anahim Lake Airport as gateway for key markets** (i.e., establish agreements with European air carriers to land at YVR and utilize local airlines to reach regional airport)
- ★ **Anahim Lake Airport signage recognizing traditional territory** (in collaboration with First Nations) and providing a warm welcome to *Nature's Heartland*



HOPE
Photo: Destination BC/Hubert Kang

7. GEARING UP FOR DELIVERY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

A key consideration for the *Nature's Heartland* Destination Development Strategy is finding the right mechanisms for supporting its delivery and implementation. Key themes relating to delivery were identified in the [Iconics Destination Development Framework](#) and remain relevant for the *Nature's Heartland* Destination Development Strategy. These include the importance of adopting an integrated approach, building on existing partnerships while creating new alliances, and finding ways to secure the necessary investment to support and advance the vision, objectives, and experience development priorities outlined in the *Nature's Heartland* Destination Development Strategy.

7.2 INTEGRATION

The Invest in Iconics Strategy marks a key shift towards a new approach to marketing BC. This approach focuses on integrating place branding and destination development, aligning marketing for each Iconic with the creation of immersive, memorable visitor experiences.

There are four levels of integration to consider:

1. Integration between place branding and experience development with a focus on the power of storytelling to amplify the distinctiveness and appeal of places and connect more deeply with visitors.

This will be achieved through more focused storytelling that highlights what makes places and communities within *Nature's Heartland* distinctive, alongside experience development that strengthens their appeal as compelling destinations.

2. Integration between the destination development priorities identified in previous plans and the opportunities presented by the *Nature's Heartland* brand to strengthen and build on existing initiatives.

In terms of destination development planning, this integrated approach will continue to elevate, support, and, where necessary, accelerate the experience development and enhancement activities already being pursued by partners through their destination development plans. It will enable communities within *Nature's Heartland* to benefit from aligning with the *Nature's Heartland* brand.

3. Integration across Destination BC at the program level.

Destination BC has begun aligning its programs and resources with the Invest in Iconics Strategy. In fall 2023, a pilot grant program was launched to help visitor centres enhance the visitor experience within their centres and across their communities by focusing on key experiences, encounters, and touchpoints.

Other initiatives that present opportunities for further alignment with the Iconics vision include upcoming experience development programs, the Community Tourism Planning Program, and the Co-operative Marketing Partnerships Program. The *Provincial Signage Opportunity Strategy* has identified recommendations for a refreshed, cohesive roadside signage system that will help bring the Iconic brands to life across BC.

4. Integration across and between the core partners in supporting the implementation of the *Nature's Heartland* Destination Development Strategy within their respective mandates.

- The **Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport (TACS)** is focused on creating healthy, inclusive, and resilient communities in BC through tourism-related programs, policies, and investments that support the sustainable growth of the tourism sector. To support the creation of Iconic, inspirational routes and places that will strengthen travel appeal in all regions of BC, TACS is committed to raising awareness of the needs of the visitor economy across government, as well as working to ensure policy enables destination development throughout BC. TACS will mobilize support for provincial destination development priorities that emerge through the Iconics Destination Development Strategies through cross-government engagement and collaboration.
- **Destination BC** is committed to improving the quality of life for all people living in British Columbia through tourism. The organization does this by sharing the transformative power of BC's experiences with the world, in a socially, culturally, environmentally, and economically sustainable way. Working as part of a large and diverse tourism landscape, and in collaboration

with industry partners, Destination BC's mandate is rooted in the principles of diversity, inclusivity, reconciliation, and partnership.

- **Indigenous Tourism BC (ITBC)** prioritizes First Nations decision-making and Indigenous inclusion within the Invest in Iconics Strategy. It ensures that there is no prejudice against First Nations interests, safeguarding Title and Rights, and respecting self-government agreements. The team is dedicated to providing support through community engagement with Indigenous groups and organizations. It focuses on growing human and economic capacity. The Indigenous Tourism Training Initiative, comprising three programs, offers training and educational opportunities for ITBC stakeholders. ITBC extends further assistance through the Capacity Building and Resiliency Program, including mentorship and funding opportunities.
- **Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association (CCCTA), Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA), and Vancouver, Coast & Mountains Tourism Region (VCM)** all work to develop, support, and sustain the tourism sector across *Nature's Heartland*. These Regional DMOs will continue to champion the strategy and work collaboratively with the provincial government, Destination BC, ITBC, and local partners to carefully and respectfully steward the development of tourism in ways that will benefit communities throughout *Nature's Heartland*.

7.3 PARTNERSHIP

As the strategy moves into the delivery and implementation phase, it will be essential to maintain a coordinated approach across *Nature's Heartland*, build new relationships, involve the right partners with the necessary expertise or authority at the right time, and remain flexible throughout the process. Key partnerships will include:

- Working closer with **BC Parks** and **Recreation Sites and Trails BC** to progress experience development priorities, visitor management initiatives, signage, and other touchpoint enhancements.
- Working with the **Ministry of Transportation and Transit (TT)** to progress the *Provincial Signage Opportunity Strategy*, which aims to bring the Iconic brands to life in destination through a refreshed and cohesive branded roadside signage system, as well as enhancements at key rest stops.



- Working with the **Ministry of Jobs and Economic Growth (JEG)**, Regional Economic Operations branch, to champion innovation and support economic development and tourism investment attraction.
- Leveraging Destination BC's partnership with the **British Columbia Economic Development Association (BCEDA)** to reach and engage more of the economic development community and increase awareness of experience development investment opportunities.
- Leveraging Destination BC's partnership with the **Local Government Leadership Academy (LGLA)** to continue raising awareness about the value of tourism and the opportunities for municipalities to participate in tourism and align their investments with larger provincial efforts.

Each core partner is expected to take the lead in building and maintaining key partnerships at the appropriate level and time.

For example, the RDMOs, including CCCTA, TOTA, and VCM, may work at the district level with BC Parks, TT, JEG, and municipalities to advance locally relevant experience development and touchpoint enhancement priorities outlined in this strategy.

Local tourism partners such as CDMOs, local governments, tourism businesses, business associations, Visitor Centres, and non-profit groups have a critical role to play in the success of the tourism economy in BC. These partners can use this strategy to inform their own planning and create alignment with the broader vision. Partners can also use this strategy to elevate and gather support for those local projects positioned as key priorities in the provincial context, in addition to providing benefits locally and supporting local aspirations.

CCCTA, TOTA, VCM, and ITBC serve as key points of contact for local tourism partners. They can provide guidance on aligning with strategic priorities for the Iconics, support connections with potential project partners, and offer access to best practices and case studies from BC and beyond. They can assist in developing project plans, identifying funding opportunities, and delivering a wide range of programs and resources available to local tourism organizations and businesses.

7.4 INVESTMENT

The Destination Development program in BC has seen a lot of success supporting new public investments and recognizes that consistent destination development funding enables the planning and implementation phases that over time ensure the sustainability of initiatives. There is an opportunity to further position tourism as a priority sector for attracting private investment.

The Province's [Tourism Sector Action Plan](#) outlines the development of an investment attraction plan to support increased private sector investment in tourism and outdoor recreation. TACS and cross-ministry partners will work with communities to connect private capital investment with tourism opportunities, supported by compelling investment pitches and a clear pipeline of ready-to-go projects that showcase tourism's position as a priority growth sector. Some investment-ready projects are highlighted in the [Tourism Investment Opportunity Deal Book](#) on the Trade & Invest BC website.

Through partnerships, Destination BC will aim to support both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities within *Nature's Heartland* in building awareness around tourism investment readiness. This includes helping communities understand the steps needed to enhance their appeal to tourism investors and promoting investment opportunities at regional, provincial, national, and international levels. A [Tourism Investment Attraction Guide for Communities](#) was developed as a tourism investment readiness resource.

Continued collaboration with community groups will also be essential to identify suitable funding sources for specific projects and to explore opportunities such as angel investors and non-collateral-based start-up funds, along with other financing mechanisms that improve access to capital for tourism operators seeking to invest in and expand their business.



MERRITT
Photo: Thompson Okanagan/Darren Robinson

8. APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: LIST OF ACRONYMS

BCEDA: British Columbia Economic Development Association
CDMO: Community Destination Management Organization
ITBC: Indigenous Tourism BC
RDMO: Regional Destination Management Organization

Regional Destination Management Organization Acronyms

CCC/CCCTA: Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association
TOTA/TO: Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
VCM: Vancouver, Coast & Mountains Tourism Region

Government of BC Ministry Acronyms

JEG: Ministry of Jobs and Economic Growth
LGLA: Local Government Leadership Academy
TACS: Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport
TT: Ministry of Transportation and Transit



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