GOLD RUSH TRAIL

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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BRITISH COLUMBIA

FRASER CANYON
Photo: Chris Harris

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION FOR THE GOLD RUSH TRAIL

The Gold Rush Trail (GRT) is a stunning 750km corridor following the Fraser River and Fraser Canyon that follows traditional Indigenous trading routes utilized during the fur trade and expanded through the gold rushes of 1858–1862. As the only major, stand-alone, branded touring corridor in BC that is intimately tied to the confederation of British Columbia and the development that followed the Cariboo Gold Rush, this planning area delivers a distinct, scenic, heritage experience that can't be found anywhere else in the province.

The planning area is comprised of 47 diverse communities and 58 First Nations, spanning five regional districts and three of BC's tourism regions: the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast, the Thompson Okanagan, and the Vancouver, Coast & Mountains (Appendix 1). This diversity provides a rich tapestry of stories, culture, and heritage within the region. Along its 750km length, the climate, geography, and ecology are diverse, ranging from wet, mild weather in the Fraser Valley, to the mountainous regions of the Cariboo, to the semi-arid grasslands around Cache Creek and Ashcroft.

Touring and outdoor recreation are the primary demand generators in the planning area. Key heritage attractions that draw visitors include the national historic sites of Barkerville and Fort Langley, along with an array of smaller historic, cultural, and Indigenous attractions scattered throughout the corridor.

Beyond its gold rush history, this corridor also represents the significant stories of the Fraser River, Indigenous history, Chinese history, and other stories that have contributed to the region's development like the Sasquatch, the miracle of the salmon and the sturgeon, the Hudson's Bay Company, the railway, and more.

The Fraser River and Fraser Canyon, as well as the stunning landscapes throughout the planning area, provide a backdrop for numerous outdoor recreational activities that draw visitors to the region such as river rafting, winter sports, hiking, mountain biking, ATV/off-roading, swimming, and paddling. The planning area is home to several highly popular provincial parks that attract visitors. There is the Bowron Lake Provincial Park for canoeing/kayaking, the Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park, and South Chilcotin Mountain Park for backcountry pursuits including horseback riding, hiking, and mountain biking. Activity-based attractors include fishing, river rafting, wildlife viewing, horseback riding and guest ranch vacations, hiking, rodeos, hunting, canoeing and kayaking, camping, off-roading, heli-skiing, and snowmobiling.

People have been drawn to the GRT for centuries to harvest the riches of the area. As the natural riches that have sustained residents and the corridor's economy diminish new sustainable economic opportunities (including tourism) are being sought. These opportunities are accompanied by challenges. Changes in transportation patterns as a result of the Coquihalla Highway which diverts much of the eastbound traffic away from Highways 1 and 97. Additionally, the cancellation of the Port Hardy to Bella Coola ferry has in part, contributed to altered travel patterns which stakeholders report has stunted tourism growth. And, tragically, the wildfires of 2017 and 2018 along with the 2018 floods have left long-lasting direct, indirect, and induced impacts for the tourism businesses and communities that will require targeted investments to lay the foundation for the future.

GOLD RUSH TRAIL :

HISTORY SHAPED BY NATURE

Long-term success in the GRT will be based on attracting niche markets. This is a region that appeals to the travel interests and motivations of Authentic Experiencers, Cultural Explorers, and Cultural History Buffs, as these segments have a higher propensity for independent travel, getting off the beaten path, and seeking authentic interactions with local people to learn about the culture and ways of life. Despite the alignment of the target visitors' interests with the natural assets of the planning area, visitation is highly seasonal. There is an identified need for enhanced infrastructure to support the touring experience including more purchasable products, guided experiences, as well as self-discovery activities, to entice visitors to stay longer and spend more.

Over the past seven years the Gold Rush Trail Management Committee has been working collaboratively to enhance branding, product development, and capacity building throughout the corridor in an effort to rejuvenate tourism and attract more target visitors.

WHILE MANY POSITIVE STRIDES HAVE BEEN MADE, OPPORTUNITIES EXIST TO CONTINUE STRENGTHENING THE AWARENESS AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE ALONG THE CORRIDOR.

The return of the direct Port Hardy to Bella Coola ferry in 2018 and the designation of the Great Bear Rainforest as a protected area, which is bringing increased notoriety to BC, are major initiatives in the adjacent planning area that can be leveraged to grow visitation along this heritage corridor. As these initiatives evolve and expand, there is an opportunity for visitors to stay longer and experience the GRT as part of their journey.

B. DISTINCTIVE DIRECTION FOR THE GOLD RUSH TRAIL

The Gold Rush Trail is a highly recognized, iconic touring route that is renowned for its vibrant, connected communities, heritage preservation, cultural and Indigenous experiences, natural landscapes, and outdoor adventures. The diversity of experiences attracts visitors year-round and generates ongoing, sustainable benefits for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

As British Columbia's longest, most historical route, the GRT is diverse with distinctions between the opportunities from New Westminster to Hope and Hope through to Barkerville. Yet despite this diversity, stakeholders were unified in their vision for the planning area:

Four destination development goals were identified to support the vision for this planning area:

1. Demonstrate leadership through strategic, collaborative planning, development, and investment in touring routes.

2. Amplify awareness of the GRT along the entire corridor amongst visitors, businesses, and residents alike.

3. Incrementally grow the benefits from tourism while respecting the limited carrying capacity of the land, people, cultural, and heritage assets.

4. Maintain a keen awareness and understanding of the customer, adapt to the changing needs of the market, and develop experiences that enhance the visitor journey to attract more travellers, increase length of stay and spend throughout the year.

The current and future experiences that will motivate travel and differentiate the planning area include:

1. Independent touring by car/RV

2. The Gold Rush story with anchor historic sites of Fort Langley National Historic Site and Barkerville Historic Town and Park

3. The Fraser River and Fraser Canyon

4. Back and frontcountry adventure — river rafting, horseback riding, hiking, mountain biking, etc.

5. Salmon, sturgeon, and freshwater fishing.

6. Well known parks including Bowron Lake, Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park, and South Chilcotin Mountains

7. Indigenous Tourism

8. A variety of festivals and events

9. McAbee Fossil Beds

THIRTY-SIX DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES, ALIGNED WITHIN SIX THEMES, AND 16 CATALYST PROJECTS ARE DESCRIBED WITHIN THIS STRATEGY, ALONG WITH THE IDENTIFIED ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE SUCCESS NETWORKS NEEDED TO REALIZE IMPLEMENTATION.

The first five themes are directly related to the 10-year destination development opportunities identified. The sixth theme acknowledges and responds to the wildfire and flood realities that emerged during the planning process and will have a long-term impact on the planning area, yet there is an opportunity to engage in various short-term initiatives.

THEME 1: Strategically invest in targeted infrastructure upgrades that support this unique heritage touring corridor

THEME 2: Lead strategic growth through continued collaboration to strengthen the corridor's end-to-end visitor experience

THEME 3: Diversify and expand the visitor experience

THEME 4: Enable tourism business viability and success

THEME 5: Protect the environment while managing tourism growth

THEME 6: Support natural disaster recovery

The composite nature of tourism necessitates collaboration to succeed. Stakeholders along the GRT have demonstrated their ability to collaborate, stand behind a distinct visitor brand and support the initiatives led by the Gold Rush Trail Management Committee and cross-regional stakeholders. Done well along the GRT, this process could forge a new model for tourism development of key touring corridors and circle routes and demonstrate leadership that supports BC's overarching visitor experience goals.

II. ACRONYMS

BCFROA BC Fishing Resorts and Outfitters Association

BCLCA BC Lodging & Camping Association

BCHA BC Hotel Association

CCCTA Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association

CF Community Futures

CRD Cariboo Regional District

DBC Destination BC

DDP Destination Development Program

DMO Destination Management Organization

EDO Economic Development Offices

EMBC Emergency Management BC

GRT Gold Rush Trail

GRTMC Gold Rush Trail Management Committee

FFGRD Fraser Fort George Regional District

FN First Nations

FVRD Fraser Valley Regional District

go2HR The British Columbia Human Resource Organization for Tourism

ICBC Insurance Company of British Columbia

ITBC Indigenous Tourism British Columbia

MLA Member of the Legislative Assembly

MRDT Municipal Regional District Tax (referred to as the "Hotel Tax")

NPTG New Pathways to Gold

NDIT Northern Development Initiative Trust

OCP Official Community Plan

RD Regional District

RDMO Regional Destination Management Organization

SLRD Squamish-Lillooet Regional District

TIABC Tourism Industry Association of British Columbia

TOTA Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association

TNG Tsilhqot'in National Government

TNRD Thompson Nicola Regional District

VCM Vancouver, Coast & Mountains

UNWTO UN World Tourism Organization

PROVINCIAL MINISTRIES

AEST Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training

AGRI Ministry of Agriculture

MCS Ministry of Citizen Services

EDUC Ministry of Education

EMPR Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources

ENV Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

FIN Ministry of Finance

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

JTT Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology

IRR Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

LBR Ministry of Labour

MAH Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

MPSSG Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General

TAC Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture

TRAN Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

FEDERAL MINISTRIES/ ENTITIES

DC Destination Canada

INAC Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada

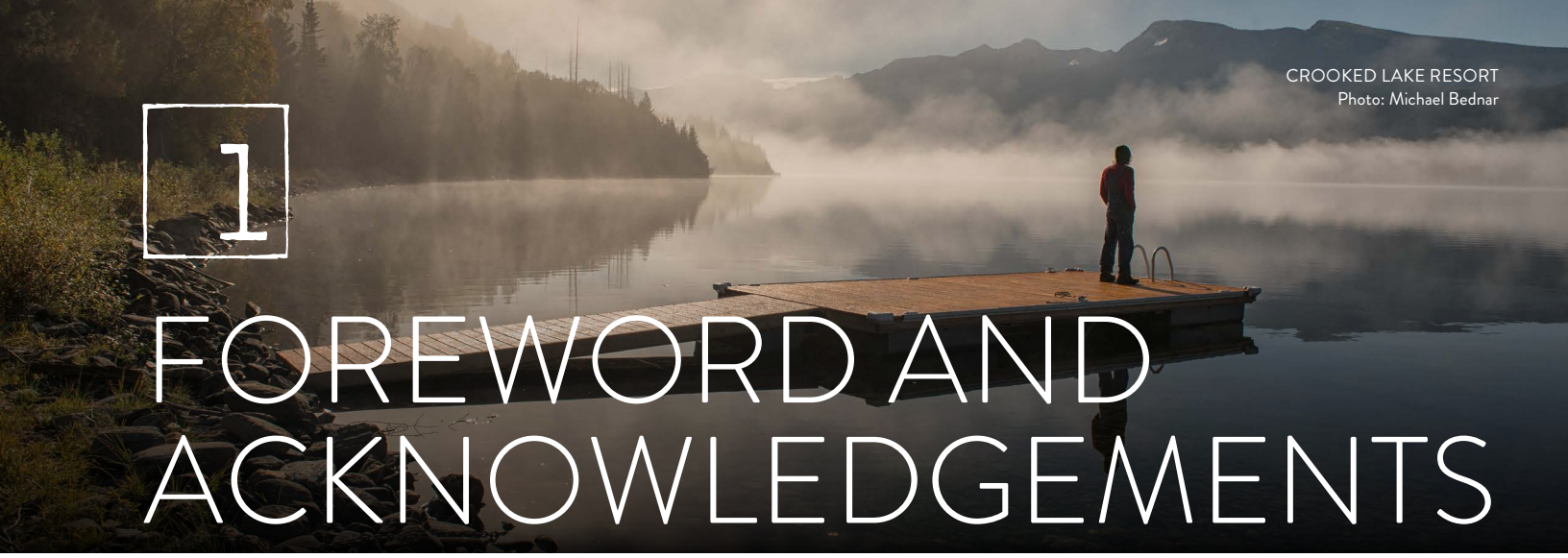
ITAC Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada

MIC Ministry of Immigration and Citizenship

TIAC Tourism Industry Association of Canada

THRC Tourism HR Canada

WED Western Economic Diversification



CROOKED LAKE RESORT
Photo: Michael Bednar

1 FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOREWORD

This Destination Development Strategy is the final report resulting from an 18-month, iterative process of gathering, synthesizing, and validating information with stakeholders about the current status of tourism along the Gold Rush Trail (GRT) tourism area of British Columbia. This strategy synthesizes primary and secondary research gathered from multiple stakeholder conversations, documents, plans, studies, and input from the project working group.

As one of 20 planning area strategies, the Gold Rush Trail strategy contributes to the tapestry of long-term regional and provincial planning that supports the development of British Columbia as a world-class tourism destination. The participation of our partners throughout the process was invaluable; however, this does not represent endorsement of this strategy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Destination British Columbia's Destination Development team, the Vancouver, Coast & Mountains (VCM) representative, the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association (CCCTA), and the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) wish to thank the many stakeholders in multiple communities who contributed to informing this strategy.

Opportunities to contribute included:

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

We extend our sincere thanks to the Indigenous people on whose traditional territories we gathered for our community meetings including:

Quesnel home of the Southern Dekal Nations Alliance, 100 Mile House and Williams Lake home of the Secwepemc, Ashcroft home of the Nlaka'pamux, Hope home of the Sto:lo and Lillooet home of the St'at'imc.

With 58 Indigenous bands identified within the planning area, we further acknowledge that many land agreements are currently in varying stages of negotiations, resulting from successful cooperation between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, the private sector, government, non-for-profit organizations and passionate volunteers.

Special thanks are offered to members of the working group:

- Angela Bissat, Lillooet Agriculture and Food Society, District of Tourism for Chamber
- Dawn Rueckl, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture
- Deb Arnott, General Manager, Community Futures Sun Country
- Emily Colombo, FLNR and Regional Lead for Wildlife Recovery
- James Douglas, Manager Visitor Experiences, and Public Relations, Barkerville National Historic Site
- Jason Ryll, Councillor, City of Williams Lake
- Kate Rottluff, FLNR, Tenure Authorizations
- Kevan Bracewell, Chilcotin Holidays
- Lynn-Ann Cheverie, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
- Mark Shane, Horsting Farm Market
- Patrick Earl, Advantage Hope
- Peggy Zorn, Ecotours BC and Pynateeah Lodge
- Steve Rice, Packing House

Restaurant, TNRD, GC Community Society Board

- Sue Baerg, Fraser River Rafting
- Shawna Leung, Vancouver, Coast & Mountains representative

Special thanks are also offered to members of the Gold Rush Trail Management Committee:

- Brent Rutherford, Cariboo Regional District Heritage Steering Committee (Lac La Hache)
- Florence Jack, Xwisten Indian Band and Xwisten Experience Tours (Lillooet)
- James Douglas, Barkerville Historic Town & Park and Cottonwood Historic Site (Wells)
- Julie Dinsdale, Big Canyon Rafting (Quesnel)
- John Massier, Cariboo Regional District (elected official)
- Paula Cranmer Underhill, Spapium "Little Prairie" Farm (Lytton)
- Sue Baerg, Fraser River Rafting and Fraser Canyon corridor (Yale)
- Terry Raymond, Siska First Nations, Tuckkwiowhum Heritage Village, and Fraser Valley Regional District (elected official — Boston Bar)
- Ursula Pfahler, Province of BC Heritage Branch
- Dana Schoahs, Indigenous Tourism Association of BC
- Simone Carlysle-Smith, Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA)
- Shawna Leung, Vancouver, Coast & Mountains representative
- Amy Thacker, Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association (CCCTA)

Additionally, special thanks are offered to the facilitators of the Gold Rush Trail destination development process:

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

British Colombia's Devastating Wildfire and Floods

The wildfires of 2017 and 2018 were the two most significant years in British Columbia's history. It was a period of devastation for many who lost homes, businesses, and tourism revenues. It was also a time of coming together as communities and citizens reached out to help each other in time of need. The spring of 2018 brought flooding in multiple communities along the Gold Rush Trail, which like the wildfires, impacted and destroyed some businesses.

The direct, indirect, and induced impacts of these natural disasters impacting communities will be felt significantly in 2018 and beyond as the recovery activities continue. Gratitude is extended to everyone who contributed to emergency services, firefighting, communication, evacuation, and supporting those in need in a multitude of ways. Events such as these demonstrate the tourism industry's fragility and resilience and the strength of the human spirit to endure adversity.

SPROUT LAKE, TEN-EE-AH WILDERNESS LODGE
Photo: Jonny Bierman

2 INTRODUCING THE STRATEGY

The Gold Rush Trail Destination Development Strategy is designed to enhance the competitiveness of the Gold Rush Trail over the next 10 years and beyond. The strategy is part of Destination BC's Destination Development Program. The program is a critical part of Destination BC's corporate strategy and facilitates the collaboration of local, regional and provincial agencies, First Nations bands, destination marketing organizations (DMOs), tourism operators, and other community interests to guide the long-term growth of tourism along the Gold Rush Trail.

A. PROGRAM VISION AND GOALS

The provincial vision for the Destination Development Program is as follows:

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

FIGURE 1:
Tourism Revenue Drivers

The provincial vision is supported by three goals:

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

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

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

B. PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

The strategy not only supports provincial goals of the Destination Development Program but also:

- Provides strategic direction for the region and guidance for local and regional planning.
- Enhances the planning area's ability to leverage their resources and programs.
- Fosters joint action and inter-community dialogue.

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

C. A FOCUS ON THE SUPPLY AND EXPERIENCE

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

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

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

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

FIGURE 2: Five Dimensions of Supply — the Visitor Experience

D. METHODOLOGY

This strategy was developed based on extensive, collaborative effort during a 18-month process. The destination development planning approach was highly iterative, allowing for multiple opportunities for stakeholder input and validation and the anticipated time frame for project completion was delayed due to the 2017 wildfires and subsequent priority recovery activities (Figure 3).

The process followed a semi-structured strategic approach, created by Destination BC, that allowed for flexibility to ensure the considerations of each planning area were assessed and respected. A volunteer Working Committee, plus the Gold Rush Trail Management Committee, contributed their expertise to reviewing and discussing the key findings from the Situation Analysis and helped develop the goals, supporting objectives and strategies contained in this strategy.

FIGURE 3: Key Project Timelines

ACTIVITY	DATES
Pre-project staging and document review	March 2017
1st in-community consultations in Hope, Ashcroft, 100 Mile House, Quesnel and an online session	March–April 2017
Interviews asset inventory research and stakeholder interview	April–July 2017
2nd in-community consultation in Hope, Lillooet, Williams Lake and an online session	May 2017
Project pause due to the 2017 wildfire crises in British Columbia	*July–October 2017*
Draft the situation analysis	July–September, 2017
Working Group meeting in Cache Creek to review key findings and set priorities to inform the draft strategy	October 2017
Project delays for wildfire recovery activities with government and stakeholders plus conducting research on the wildfire impacts to the region.[1]	*October 2017–April 2018*
Industry survey	October–November 2017
Situation analysis completed, draft the Destination Development Strategy	December 2017–February 2018
Review of the Destination Development Strategy by government, the GRT working group and the GRT Management Committee	March–August 2018
Finalize the strategy with consideration of the wildfire and flood impacts on priorities and catalyst projects	September 2018

[1]Larose Research and Strategy (2018, March). Impacts of the 2017 Wildfires on the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism. A research report prepared for the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association.

NAHATLATCH RIVER
Photo: Reo Rafting Resort/Ryan Robinson

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E. PROJECT OUTPUTS

The three key outputs from this project include:

(1) An asset inventory of accommodation, tourism businesses and attractions, tourism organizations, food and beverage establishments, parks and recreation sites, sports and arts facilities, meeting facilities, transportation, and visitor services.

(2) A Situation Analysis that provides detailed insights of the industry and Gold Rush Trail context and the planning area assessment and considerations.

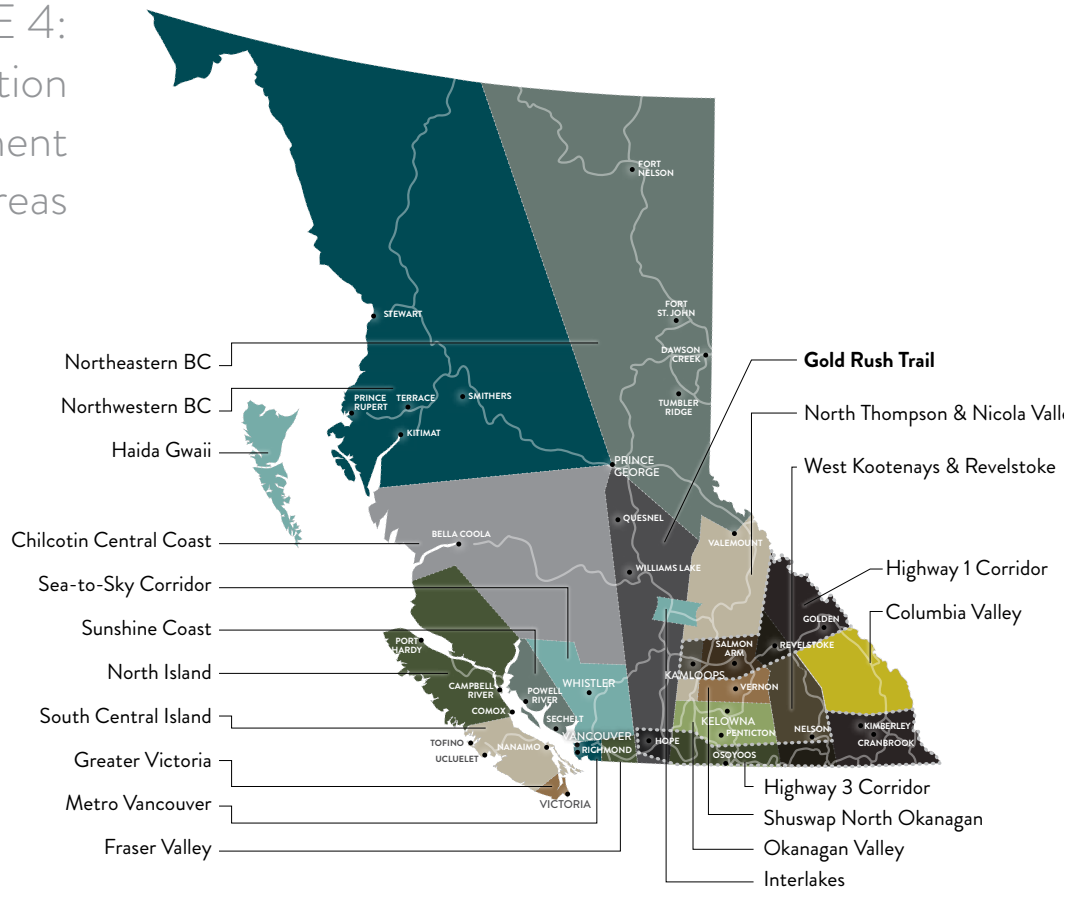
(3) The Gold Rush Trail Destination Development Strategy.

CROOKED LAKE RESORT
Photo: Michael Bednar

3 ALIGNMENT

The Destination Development Strategy for the Gold Rush Trail is one of 20 within the province (Figure 4). Over the course of Destination BC's Destination Development Program, each of the province's six tourism regions will integrate their planning area strategies into six Regional Destination Development Strategies which, in turn, will be used to inform an overarching Provincial Destination Development Strategy (Figure 5). The destination development

FIGURE 4: Twenty Destination Development Planning Areas



strategies themselves will be influenced by, and where appropriate reflect and complement, other planning initiatives. Additionally, as this planning area overlaps with the Vancouver, Coast & Mountains and Thompson Okanagan regions, the Gold Rush Trail Destination Development Strategy will be referenced in these regional strategies.

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

1. ASSOCIATIONS AND AGENCIES REPRESENTING DIFFERENT TOURISM SUB-SECTORS **(e.g., culinary, sport fishing, kayaking, boating) AND SERVICES (e.g., advocacy, human resources, marketing)**: These organizations play an important role in many aspects of the demand-side of tourism sector development, specifically in relation to the involvement and interests of the private sector.

2. DESTINATION MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS (DMOS): The marketing and promotional (and, in some cases, destination development) efforts of community DMOs are relevant to the destination development strategy process as these efforts are typically focused on the supply-side of a community's tourism sector (e.g., marketing the community's tourism assets).

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

4. FIRST NATIONS BANDS, TRIBAL COUNCILS, AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: The planning area, regional, and provincial destination development strategies will impact Indigenous Nations communities to varying degrees, as well as the provincial and national associations working to advance their interests.

FIGURE 5:
Levels of Destination Development Planning

QUESNEL RIVER, LIKELY
Photo: Jonny Bierman

4 SUCCESS NETWORKS

Success networks represent the clusters of businesses and organizations (private sector, government, and not-for-profit) who are encouraged to collaborate and work in harmony to bring the opportunity to fruition. Successful destination development implementation recognizes that "we all have a role to play".

The recommendations contained within this Destination Development Strategy form the foundation for additional focused and aligned discussions regarding implementation locally, regionally, and provincially. Organizations identified within each tactical success network will be in a position to review, locally, regionally, and provincially, the potential for growing tourism, by leading, or supporting implementation, and action. It does not imply the organizations have committed or endorsed the tactic. This strategy is intended to inform conversations that may lead to future investments and actions, or that will contribute to growing this planning area's and British Columbia's visitor economy.

It is important to note that the development opportunities are not mutually exclusive.

The stakeholders demonstrated a desire to work together throughout the community consultations. The complexity of the tourism opportunity is understood along the Gold Rush Trail. It is believed that only by working collaboratively that the true potential of the Gold Rush Trail can be realized.

FIGURE 6: Key Governmental and Management Organizations

FEDERAL

- Destination Canada
- Department of Fisheries & Oceans
- Canadian Heritage
- Environment & Climate Change
- Indigenous and Northern Affairs
- Small Business & Tourism
- Western Economic Diversification
- Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada

PROVINCIAL

- Destination BC (DBC)
- BC Parks
- Ministries:
  - -Advanced Education, Skills & Training
  - -Agriculture
  - -Environment & Climate Change Strategy
  - -Finance
  - -Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development
  - -Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation
  - -Jobs, Trade & Technology
  - -Municipal Affairs & Housing
  - -Public Safety and Solicitor General
  - -Tourism, Arts & Culture
  - -Transportation & Infrastructure
- Indigenous Tourism Association of BC

REGIONAL

- Cariboo Regional District
- Thompson Nicola Regional District
- Fraser Fort George Regional District
- Squamish Lillooet Regional District
- Fraser Valley Regional District
- Gold Rush Trail Management Committee
- Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association
- Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
- Community Futures
- Northern Development Initiative Trust
- Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust
- Gold Country Communities Society

LOCAL

- City of Abbotsford
- City of Chilliwack
- City of Quesnel
- City of New Westminster
- City of Williams Lake
- District of 100 Mile House
- District of Hope
- District of Lillooet
- District of Mission
- District of Wells
- 58 Indigenous Bands
- Village of Ashcroft
- Village of Cache Creek
- Village of Clinton
- Village of Lytton

HELL'S GATE
Photo: Albert Normandin

The following partners have been identified collectively through the strategy development process as likely playing a role in moving a potential objective or action forward:

This strategy is intended to inform actions for the future, which over time may be embedded in the local, regional, and provincial decision making. The result will be an integrated system of priorities that will achieve better development decisions, drive greater tourism revenues, and realize benefits for businesses and communities along the Gold Rush Trail.

ALL THIS WILL CONTRIBUTE TO A THRIVING, VIBRANT, AND GROWING ECONOMY.

Joint strategy ownership among all planning area tourism partners is a critical component of this program's success. The planning process identifies a suggested success networks of tourism partners to champion and move actions within each objective forward. However, during implementation, leads and involved parties would need to be verified. In many instances, executing on an initiative may require sharing responsibilities and entities listed will be responsible to lead their own areas.

The regional representatives (Vancouver, Coast & Mountains, Thompson Okanagan, and the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast) have important roles to play as regional destination development champions in addition to the Gold Rush Trail Management Committee. As this planning processis not intended to duplicate ongoing efforts or create new organizational or administrative structures, the implementation of this strategy should first be executed through existing organizations, where possible.

CHASM PROVINCIAL PARK
Photo: Michael Bednar

5 A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION

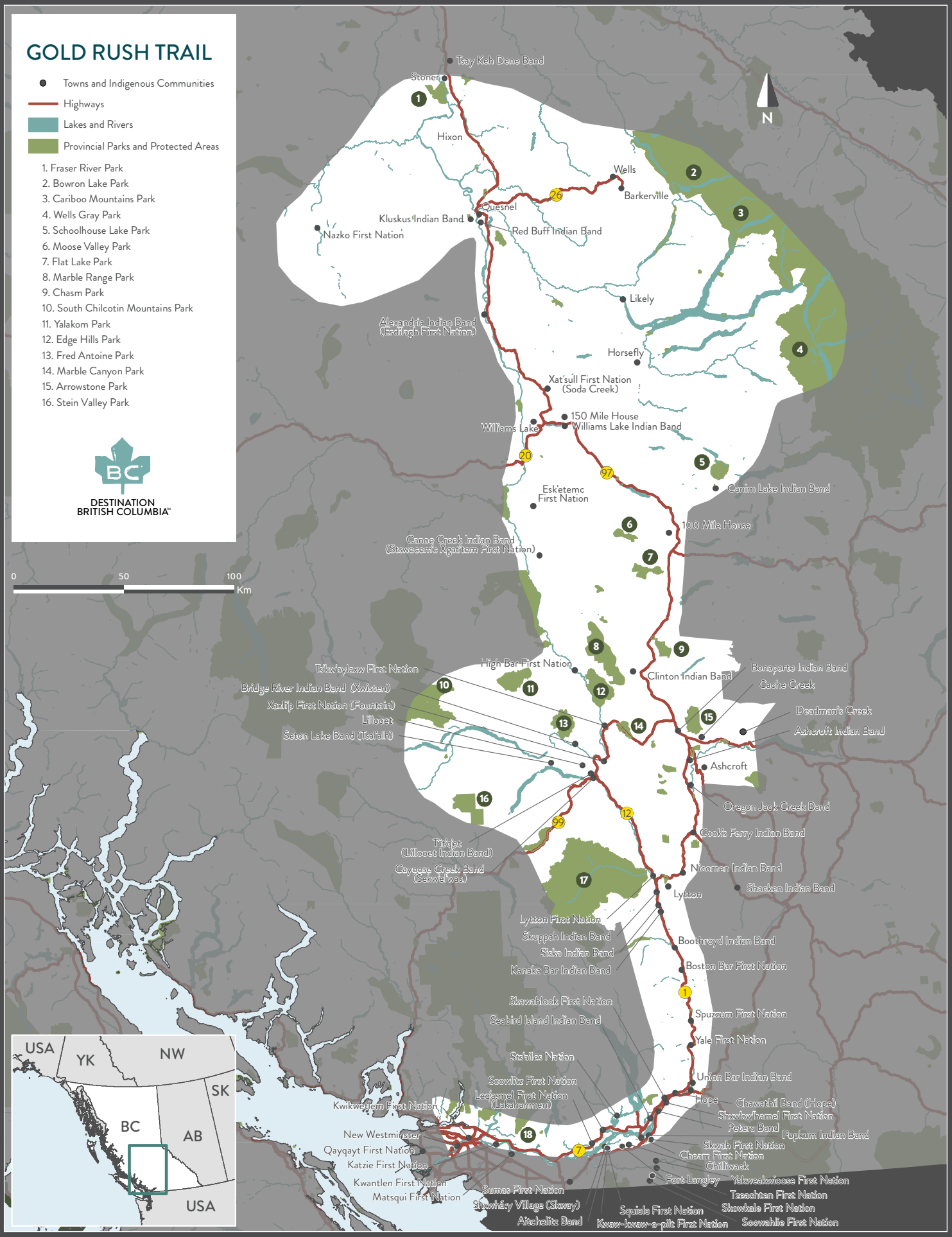
A. OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING AREA

The GRT planning area encompasses a 750km corridor stretching from New Westminster to Barkerville and north to Stone Creek, following the traditional Indigenous peoples' trading routes utilized during the fur trade and expanded during the gold rushes of 1858–1862 (Figure 7).

The list of communities in the GRT planning area is located in Appendix 1.

The northern geographic boundary includes West Twin, Bowron Lake, and Fraser River Provincial Parks and stretches to the town of Stoner on Highway 97. The western portion of the planning area is bounded primarily by, and includes, the Fraser River, but stretches west of the Fraser River to include Nazko and Blackwater in the north, Riske Creek and Churn Creek Protected Area in the central area and Gold Bridge, Seton Portage, Stein Valley / Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park, and Harrison Lake in the southern area of the corridor. The southern portion of the planning area extends along Highway 1 from Hope to New Westminster. The eastern border is bounded by Highway 1 to Cache Creek and includes Logan Lake, Ashcroft and Walhachin. It also includes Highway 97 from Cache Creek to 150 Mile house, at which point the border moves east to include Crooked Lake, Quesnel Lake, and West Twin.

FIGURE 7: GRT Planning Area Map



B. DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION BASE, COMMUNITIES INCLUDED, AND FIRST NATIONS

Geographic boundaries demarcating electoral areas vary from the boundaries identified for Destination BC's GRT planning area.

The planning area population has been estimated using regional district electoral areas: CRD Areas A–G, FFGRD Areas D and E, TNRD Areas E and I, SLRD Areas A and B, FVRD Area A, B, D, and E and the six municipalities of Abbotsford, Mission, Chilliwack, Kent, Harrison Hot Springs, and Hope. The population of the entire planning area is estimated at approximately 572, 400; it does not include New Westminster.

The northern portion represents about 13% of the total corridor population, with 75,800 residents, and the southern portion of the GRT the other 87% of the population, with 496,600 residents.

Destination BC and Indigenous Tourism BC identified, using the BC Economic Atlas, that there are 58 First Nation communities in this planning area (Figure 7). British Columbia has 203 First Nation Bands, this single planning area represents 29% of the province's Indigenous communities. When combined with the 11 First Nations in the Chilcotin Central Coast planning area and two in the Interlakes planning area, this brings the total to 71 First Nations in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast tourism region, or 35% of the province's Indigenous communities.

C. DESCRIPTION OF ECONOMY BASE – HISTORICAL AND CURRENT

Historically the communities along the northern portion of the GRT relied on natural resources with a strong emphasis on forestry and secondarily on mining, agriculture, and tourism.

With the forest industry in decline, particularly due to the mountain pine beetle and market-driven forestry decline over the last five to ten years, regional districts within the planning area — the Cariboo, Fraser Valley, and Squamish-Lillooet Regional Districts — have been looking to reinvigorate and diversify their economies[3]. While the forestry industry is anticipated to continue to be strong and vibrant, but on a smaller scale and with fewer jobs, tourism represents an opportunity for economic growth and diversification throughout the planning area.

The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) is already known for its outdoor recreation and this reputation now extends east along the Highway 99 corridor towards Lillooet driving new tourism opportunities. In addition to tourism, agriculture is a focus for economic development. The Lillooet region has a long history of cattle ranching, farming, and fruit production. Recent ventures into hops, grape-growing, wine-making, and value-added processing are fueling excitement about the area's agricultural potential[4]. In this area construction, forestry, renewable energy, and mining add to the diverse mix of economic opportunities.

[3] www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/Census/2016Census/PopulationHousing/MunicipalitiesByRegionalDistrict.aspx

FLY-FISHING FLIES, NORTHERN LIGHTS LODGE
Photo: Blake Jorgenson

The economy in the Fraser Valley is more diverse than the Cariboo Regional District and the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District as it is impacted by its larger population and closer proximity to the Metro Vancouver area. Traditionally, the economy relied on agriculture and the resource industry sectors. While these sectors are still present and represent an important ongoing source of jobs, the employment base has diversified and now includes a variety of manufacturing, aerospace, service, and high-tech fields[5]. Within the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD), the larger communities are Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and Mission have a higher share of manufacturing, retail, trade, and construction and often act as suppliers of commercial services to smaller communities such as the District of Kent or the Electoral Areas. Recreation and tourism represent opportunities for growth throughout the entire FVRD and its communities.

[3]The Fraser Fort George and Thompson Nicola Regional Districts do not provide specific information on economic development initiatives or programs on their websites.

[4]http://lillooetbc.ca/Business-Investment/Economic-Development.aspx

[5]Fraser Valley Regional District. (2014). Fraser Valley 2014–2041. Fraser Valley regional growth strategy draft — July 2014. Retrieved from www.fvrd.ca/assets/Government/Documents/Bylaws/Planning~and~Land~Use/RGS%202014%20draft%201%20Portrait%20Board%20Workshop%20July%2022%20LOW%20RES%20.pdf.

KWANTLEN FIRST NATION, FORT LANGLEY
Photo: Jonny Bierman

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D. OVERVIEW OF TOURISM PERFORMANCE

The 750 km Gold Rush Trail traverses through three of British Columbia's six destination management regions:

The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast, Vancouver, Coast & Mountains, and the Thompson Okanagan, making it challenging to ascertain tourism performance for the planning area. Chapter four in the Situation Analysis provides a high-level snapshot of tourism performance in these three regions with the greatest level of detail in the region managed by the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association (CCCTA) and the Vancouver, Coast & Mountains (VCM) as most of the GRT is in these two regions. However, with little data available for the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast region and even less at planning area level, it is challenging to report on tourism performance. At the time of this research there was no Municipal Regional District Tax (MRDT) being collected by the CCCTA to provide accommodation occupancy and rate statistics, although the application has been approved and implementation began in May 2018[6].

ACCOMMODATIONS

Detailed accommodation revenue data available for most regions is provided in the Provincial Tourism Indicators, 2015 Year in Review report[7] except in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast where there is no MRDT. In 2015, Vancouver, Coast & Mountains generated 58% of BC's room revenue ($1.3 billion) and the Thompson Okanagan region generated 13% ($256 million).

1. One-third to one-half of BC residents spent nights in the residences of friends and family, depending on the region — the highest proportion of visiting friends and family for BC residents is in the Thompson Okanagan region and for other Canadians is in the Vancouver, Coast & Mountains region.

2. The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Thompson Okanagan regions are more popular for camping.

3. The most popular paid accommodation for US residents and other international travellers was hotel, followed by camping/RV Parks. US residents most often stayed in camping/RV Parks or with friends and family in the CCC area (Figure 8).

[6]Note: The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association has been actively advancing the community engagement and application requirements to request the MRDT be approved in the region and administered through their organization.

[7]Destination B.C. (2016, April). Provincial Tourism Indicators: 2015 Year-in-Review.

FIGURE 8:
Regional Accommodation by Visitor Origin (2015)

Vancouver, Coast & Mountains

PRIMARY ACCOMMODATION*	BC RESIDENTS	OTHER CANADIANS	US RESIDENTS	OTHER INTERNATIONAL
Friends and Family	48%	56%	27%	50%
Hotel	20%	33%	48%	20%
Motel	1%	2%	3%	1%
Other Commercial Fixed Roof**	8%	6%	19%	27%
Camping / RV Parks	11%	2%	1%	1%

Cariboo Chilcotin Coast

PRIMARY ACCOMMODATION*	BC RESIDENTS	OTHER CANADIANS**	US RESIDENTS**	OTHER INTERNATIONAL**
Friends and Family	36%	27%	17%	5%
Hotel	10%	5%	5%	37%
Motel	2%	8%	15%	6%
Other Commercial Fixed Roof**	5%	8%	6%	15%
Camping / RV Parks	17%	13%	19%	25%

Thompson Okanagan

PRIMARY ACCOMMODATION*	BC RESIDENTS	OTHER CANADIANS	US RESIDENTS**	OTHER INTERNATIONAL**
Friends and Family	50%	37%	39%	44%
Hotel	14%	17%	20%	28%
Motel	3%	5%	8%	8%
Other Commercial Fixed Roof**	6%	8%	1%	10%
Camping / RV Parks	18%	21%	8%	8%

*Please note the sum will not equal 100% for each market as other accommodation is not included in the table.
**Due to small unweighted sample size, use extreme caution when interpreting.
***Other commercial fixed roof could include B&Bs, wilderness lodges or commercial vacation rentals.

E. KEY VISITOR MARKETS

PRIMARY VISITOR PROFILES

Success along the Gold Rush Trail will be based on attracting niche markets — visitors with a certain profile. There are nine primary Explorer Quotient types for Canada, three of which Destination BC is targeting: Authentic Experiencers, Cultural Explorers, and Free Spirits.

Through a series of stakeholder engagement sessions in 2015 and 2016, it was determined that the Authentic Experiencers (AE), Cultural Explorers (CE) and Cultural History Buffs (CHB) were best aligned with the types of visitors currently visiting the GRT (Figure 9). These were then re-validated with stakeholders as part of the destination development planning process.

FIGURE 9: Gold Rush Trail Target EQ Profiles

AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCER

Understated travellers looking for authentic engagement. Most appealing activities in BC: walking, wildlife viewing, experiencing nature and local culture, local food and experience, connecting with others. Less interested in relaxation and shopping.

- Spontaneous travellers
- Enjoy sampling cultures
- Not out to impress others
- Not big consumers when travelling
- Don't need luxury food/accommodations
- Visit places where important historical events took place
- Believe the best way to experience a culture is to interact as deeply as possible
- Enjoy being places where most tourists don't go
- OK stepping out of their comfort zone

CULTURAL EXPLORER

Defined by their love constant travel and continuous opportunities to embrace, discover, and immerse in the culture of people, and settings of places they visit.

- Spontaneous
- Enjoy learning about diverse cultures
- Concerned for the environment
- Don't need to impress others
- Not big consumers when travelling
- Constant travellers
- Seek cultural immersion
- Independent, unstructured travel
- Appreciation for nature travel
- Visit places where important historical events occured
- Don't require luxury

CULTURAL HISTORY BUFF

Similar to cultural explorers, cultural history buffs travel to further research their hobbies and interests. Discovering culture and history are their main motivations for travelling.

- Spontaneous
- Enjoy learning about diverse cultures
- Interested in the history of places they visit
- Not big consumers when travelling
- Choose destinations to experience natural beauty
- Appreciation for cultural interaction
- Constant travellers
- Don't require luxury or pampering
- Want to travel with like-minded people

These EQ segments are all independent travellers who enjoy multi-day touring by car, and who tend to stay away from organized tours. They enjoy a mix of self-discovery and paid, guided activities and experiences — having these experiences available is important to enhance the overall visitor experience for these types of travellers.

Additionally, these EQ types[8] have a high interest in Indigenous events and attractions. The GRT corridor would benefit from increased availability of Indigenous products and experiences to draw people to the planning area and provide more activities of high appeal to increase stay length and spend.

KEY VISITOR MARKETS AND THE PRIMARY VISITOR PROFILES

- British Columbia residents make up the largest share of overnight visitation in all three regions, but they are not spending as much as visitors from farther away (Figure 10).
- Interestingly, in the Thompson Okanagan, Albertans only represent 19% of visitation but 28% of spending, indicating that they are high yield travellers to that region. Likewise, but to a lesser extent, Albertans represent 6% of visitation in Vancouver, Coast & Mountains and 8% of spending. In the CCC they represent 11% of visitation and only 8% of spending.
- Californian visitors are the highest yield visitors in the CCC representing 2% of visitation, but 12% of spending (Figure 11).

FIGURE 10: Top Markets Visitation and Spending

TOP 5 MARKETS OF ORIGIN (2014)	Vancouver, Coast, & Mountains
1. British Columbia	4%
2. Washington	8%
3. Alberta	6%
4. Ontario	5%
5. California	4%

TOP 5 MARKETS OF ORIGIN (2014)	Cariboo Chilcotin Coast
1. British Columbia	7%
2. Alberta	1%
3. Washington	3%
4. Germany	2%
5. California	2%

TOP 5 MARKETS OF ORIGIN (2014)	Thompson Okanagan
1. British Columbia	6%
2. Alberta	1%
3. United Kingdom	2%
4. Australia	2%
5. Ontario	2%

FIGURE 11: Regional Trip Characteristic Comparison (2014 data, % change over 2013)

	VANCOUVER, COAST, & MOUNTAINS	CARIBOO CHILCOTIN COAST	THOMPSON OKANAGAN
Average spending for all travellers	$522 (4% increase)	$321 (24% increase)	$378 (2% decrease)
Average number of nights	4.7 (9% increase)	3.3 (2% increase)	3.6 (3% decrease)
Average spending per visitor per night	$111	$99	$105

[8]Destination Canada. (2012). EQ profiles. Retrieved from www.destinationcanada.com/en/tools

FIGURE 12: Regional Seasonality by Visitor Origin (2015)

SEASONALITY

The majority of visitation in all regions occurs during the spring/summer season from April through September. With its milder climate, Vancouver, Coast & Mountains sees more visitors throughout the year, including winter. BC residents and other Canadians are more likely to visit the Vancouver, Coast & Mountains region during the fall and winter months than US residents and overseas visitors (Figure 12).

Vancouver, Coast & Mountains

SEASON OF TRAVEL	BC RESIDENTS	OTHER CANADIANS	US RESIDENTS	OTHER INTERNATIONAL
January to March	21%	18%	15%	12%
April to June	19%	29%	27%	28%
July to September	36%	33%	40%	46%
October to December	24%	20%	17%	14%

Cariboo Chilcotin Coast

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

Thompson Okanagan

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

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

OVER-ARCHING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: THE IMPACTS OF ABORIGINAL TITLE LAND AGREEMENTS

Specific within the opportunity for leadership through collaboration, Aboriginal Title Lands will continue to influence decisions regarding the tourism future for much of the planning area. The Supreme Court of Canada declared Aboriginal title to approximately 1750 square kilometres of land in the central part of the Chilcotin Central Coast planning area in 2014 (Figure 13). The title area lies primarily within the Xeni Gwet'in traditional territory.

The Supreme Court of Canada declaration of Aboriginal title granted the Tsilhqot'in Nation "the right to decide how the land will be used, the right of enjoyment and occupancy of the land, the right to possess the land, the right to the economic benefits of the land, and the right to pro-actively use and manage the land."[9]

The Nenqay Deni Accord is a five-year agreement between the Tsilhqot'in Nation and the Provincial Government aimed at establishing a shared vision, principles and structures to negotiate one or more agreements related to the management and control of land, including the right to enact laws and decide land uses, within the claimed Tsilhqot'in traditional territory.[10]

The Nemiah Declaration is a separate agreement from both the Aboriginal title lands ruling and the Nenqay Deni Accord and creates a framework for agreement amongst the six Tsilhqot'in member bands on land use within the title and rights areas.

FIGURE 13: Tsilhqot'in Land Title and Rights

Disclaimer: This map is potentially subject to minor revisions.

[9]Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia, 2014 SCC 44, at para. 73.

[10]Source: www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/agreements/other-docs/nenqay_deni_accord.pdf#ScheduleA_Revised

F. SUMMARY OF KEY STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

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

In no specific order, the key strengths, challenges, and opportunities are identified in Figure 14. A full SWOT analysis is located in the Situation Analysis (available upon request).

FIGURE 14: Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

KEY STRENGTHS

- One of only two major heritage touring corridors in BC
- Plentiful historic and cultural assets
- The Fraser Canyon and the heritage significance of the Fraser River
- Stunning diverse landscapes that support abundant flora, fauna, and recreation
- Opportunities for uncrowded, remote adventure in nature
- 58 First Nations
- Committed, passionate stakeholders and leaders with seven years of collaborative development work in place

KEY CHALLENGES

- Business recovery after 2017 wildfires and environmental disasters impacting the destination reputation
- Lack of specific infrastructure to support the touring experience
- Limited cell and Wi-Fi service
- Lack of purchasable tourism and guided experiences
- Highly seasonal destination
- Limited public and alternative transportation options
- Carrying capacity of pristine wilderness
- Conflicting land use desires
- Uncertainty of First Nations treaty negotiations
- Human and financial resource limitations

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- McAbee Fossil beds — one of the richest beds in the world
- Leverage return of the Port Hardy — Bella Coola ferry service and circle route
- Strengthen awareness of the Gold Rush Trail amongst stakeholders and visitors
- Develop best practices in multi-modal touring corridor development
- Strengthen Indigenous capacity for tourism development
- Invest in the development and maintenance of Gold Rush Trail's heritage assets

SENTINEL PRINTING PRESS, BARKERVILLE HISTORIC TOWN AND PARK
Photo: Jonny Bierman

G. EXPERIENCE POTENTIAL

UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITIONS

The unique selling propositions (USPs) that define the Gold Rush Trail include:

1. A unique, scenic, heritage touring route offering visitors an opportunity to connect with British Columbia's history and the heritage of its people.

a. This touring route is anchored by two significant historic sites including Fort Langley National Historic Site — the "Birthplace of BC" — and Barkerville Historic Town and Park — the largest historic site in western North America.

b. Traces or sections of the historic Cariboo Wagon Road that was used by more than 10,000 gold rush prospectors during the 1860s.

c. Offers an array of historic and heritage sites, as well as attractions, to enhance the visitor journey.

2. The Fraser River — BC's longest river — and the stunning Fraser Canyon.

a. The river represents a major historic transportation route for the Indigenous people of British Columbia, explorers and settlers to British Columbia, and is designated a Canadian Heritage River for its natural and human heritage values.

b. Home to one of the first recorded settlements of Indigenous people.

c. Known for its world-class fishing as it hosts all six species of Pacific salmon and one of only three rivers in BC where the prehistoric white sturgeon thrive and spawn.

d. An essential transportation route between the interior and southern coast and the primary route for prospectors during the gold rush.

3. Backcountry and frontcountry outdoor adventure in expansive wilderness environments.

a. This area epitomizes Super, Natural British Columbia™ offering some of BC's most diverse landscapes and geoclimatic zones.

b. An area that is known and recognized for its thrilling white water rafting adventures.

c. Offers winter adventure on the Goldrush Snowmobile Trail that has been legally established from 70 Mile House to Horsefly as well as skiing at Sasquatch, Timothy and Troll mountains, and many nordic options.

d. Home to several highly popular provincial parks that draw visitors including Bowron Lake, Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park, and the South Chilcotin Mountains Park.

BOWRON LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK
Photo: Adam Wells

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4. A rich cultural heritage with diverse stories to share:

a. Home to 58 diverse First Nations, offering 17 market-ready Indigenous tourism experiences, along with others that wish to develop additional tourism opportunities to share their stories.

b. Opportunities to connect with cowboy culture through ranch and horseback riding vacations.

c. Opportunities to connect with the stories of the Chinese and other nationalities that contributed to the planning area's settlement. Connected to Hudson's Bay Company trading routes, some of which can be retraced on hikes and walks in the planning area.

SPECIFIC PRODUCT EXPERIENCES

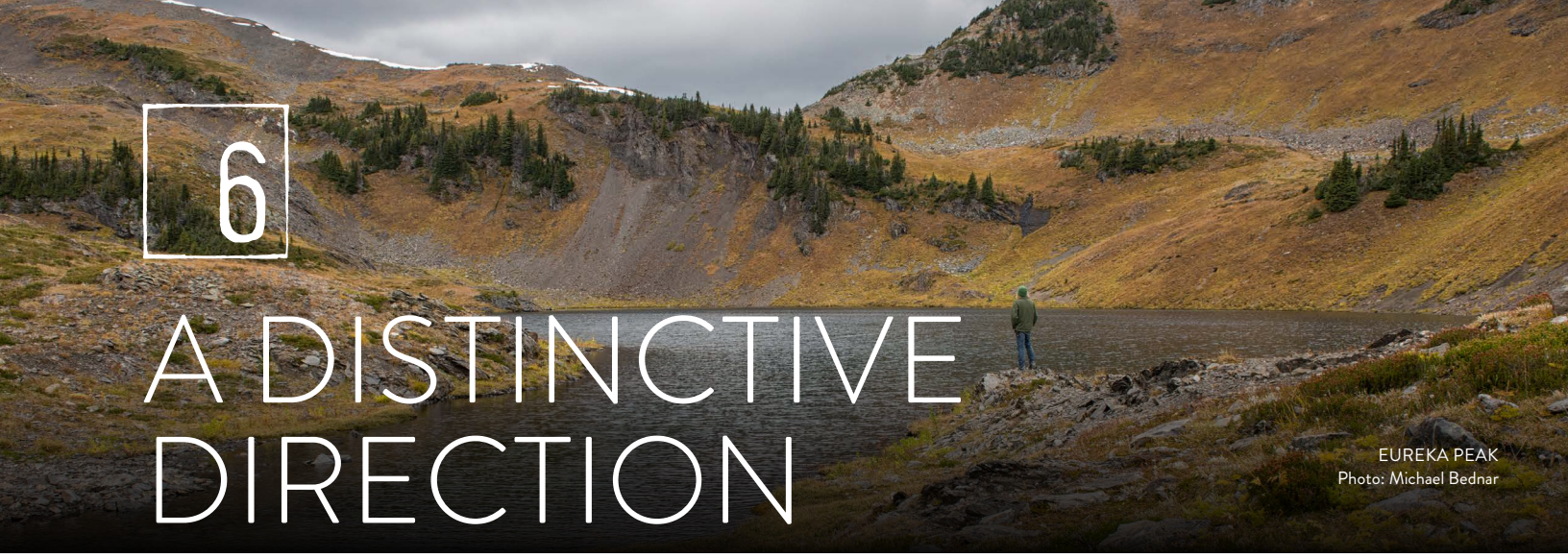
The specific experiences identified that have potential as iconic products for growth.

1. A unique, scenic, heritage touring route connecting visitors to BC's history.

2. The Fraser River and Fraser Canyon.

3. Backcountry and frontcountry outdoor adventure in expansive wilderness.

4. A rich cultural heritage with diverse stories to share related to the Indigenous people of the region, the Chinese immigants, and the Cariboo Gold Rush.



EUREKA PEAK
Photo: Michael Bednar

6 A DISTINCTIVE DIRECTION

STRATEGY DIRECTION

A. VISION

The reasons travellers come to and enjoy this corridor is a combination of the stunning natural landscapes that provide a beautiful backdrop for the historic communities located along the corridor, combined with the opportunity to connect with the heritage stories of British Columbia and its people. There is a strong sense of place along the corridor — one that was described by several stakeholders as spiritual.

Based on the input from seven community meetings, two online consultation sessions, working group discussions, and an online survey for government, operators, and not-for-profits, the vision for this planning area is defined as:

THE GOLD RUSH TRAIL IS A HIGHLY RECOGNIZED, ICONIC TOURING ROUTE THAT IS RENOWNED FOR ITS VIBRANT CONNECTED COMMUNITIES, HERITAGE PRESERVATION, CULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCES, NATURAL LANDSCAPES, AND OUTDOOR ADVENTURES. THE DIVERSITY OF EXPERIENCES ATTRACTS VISITORS YEAR-ROUND AND GENERATES ONGOING, SUSTAINABLE BENEFITS FOR RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, AND VISITORS ALIKE.

MISS FLORENCE WILSON,
BARKERVILLE HISTORIC TOWN AND PARK
Photo: Jonny Bierman

DESTINATION BRITISH COLUMBIA

B. GOALS

Four destination development goals were identified to support the vision for this planning area:

1. Demonstrate leadership provincially through strategic collaborative planning, development, and investment in touring routes.

2. Amplify awareness of the GRT along the entire corridor amongst visitors, businesses, and residents alike.

3. Incrementally grow the benefits from tourism while respecting the limited carrying capacity of the land, people, cultural, and heritage assets.

4. Maintain a keen awareness and understanding of the customer, adapt to the changing needs of the market, develop experiences that enhance the visitor journey to attract more travellers, increase length of stay, and spend throughout the year.

C. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Six key principles, developed with stakeholders participating in the destination planning sessions, served as filters for establishing the priorities for this planning area:

1. Recognize and respect our people, culture, tradition, heritage, and environment as well as our travellers.

2. Generate new and strengthen existing economic opportunities for the long-term benefit of businesses and communities.

3. Prioritizes support and enhancement of existing assets before investing to create new.

4. Strengthen collaboration and coalesce around a common stakeholder language.

5. Be authentic to the Gold Rush Trail and its Indigenous history.

6. Grow revenue, length of stay, and lengthen season along the entire corridor.

BOWRON LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK
Photo: Adam Wells

DESTINATION BRITISH COLUMBIA

D. MOTIVATING EXPERIENCES

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

1. Independent touring by car/RV

2. The Gold Rush story with anchor historic sites of Fort Langley National Historic Site and Barkerville Historic Town and Park

3. The Fraser River and Fraser Canyon

4. Back and frontcountry adventure — river rafting, horseback riding, hiking, mountain biking, etc.

5. Salmon, sturgeon, and freshwater fishing

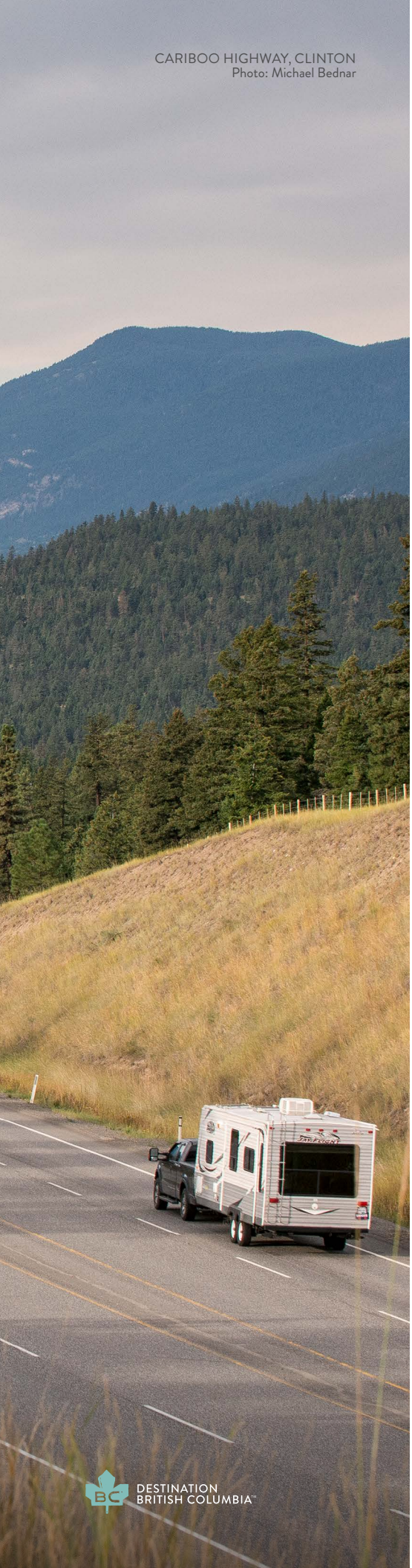
6. Well known parks including Bowron Lake, Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Parks and South Chilcotin Mountains

7. Indigenous tourism

8. A wide variety of festivals and events

9. McAbee Fossil Beds

INDEPENDENT TOURING BY CAR/RV	As a stand-alone touring corridor encompassing 750km of stunning natural scenery, combined with heritage that is tied to First Nations, the confederation of British Columbia and the Cariboo Gold Rush, this route offers a diversity of nature, culture, and heritage opportunities for the independent touring visitor. The GRT's connection as part of the Discovery Coast Circle Tour and the 2018 commencement of the direct ferry service from Port Hardy to Bella Coola will re-establish the opportunity for visitors to experience some of BC's most distinct natural landscapes and history.
THE GOLD RUSH STORY with anchor historic sites of Fort Langley National Historic Site (NHS) and Barkerville Historic Town and Park	This corridor is tied intimately to the story of the development that followed the Cariboo Gold Rush along the Fraser River, delivering a heritage experience not offered elsewhere in Canada. It is bookended by two of BC's most significant national historic sites. Fort Langley NHS is the Birthplace of BC and the starting point for the historic journey north. Barkerville Historic Town and Park is considered the "El Dorado" of the gold rush trail and is the largest historic site in western North America where visitors can experience life when Billy Barker struck gold in 1862.
THE FRASER RIVER AND FRASER CANYON	Stretching over 1,375km, the Fraser River is the longest river in BC. Designated a Canadian Heritage River for its natural and human heritage values, much of BC's provincial history is bound to this river. Its stunning natural landscapes make a beautiful backdrop for touring visitors travelling north and south along Highways 1 and 97.
BACK AND FRONTCOUNTRY ADVENTURE	The extensive waterways and wilderness make the GRT an ideal location for back and frontcountry adventure. Outdoor recreation opportunities are plentiful and visitors are drawn to enjoy some of BC's most thrilling river rafting, paddling, hiking, mountain biking, ATV/off-roading, horseback riding, and winter adventure. The northern portion of the corridor is home to a multitude of guest ranches that provide visitors an opportunity to learn about western culture and ranching life, and with the planning area home to the long-distance Gold Rush Snowmobile Trail, snowmobiling draws visitors through the winter months.
SALMON, STURGEON AND FRESH WATER FISHING	BC is an anglers' paradise. The planning area is home to numerous freshwater lakes. The Fraser River hosts all six species of Pacific salmon and is one of only three rivers in BC where the prehistoric white that sturgeon thrive and spawn.
VISITING WELL KNOWN PARKS	The GRT is home to three of BC's highly popular parks including Bowron Lake, Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park, and the South Chilcotin Mountains. Bowron Lake is a renowned canoe circuit encompassing 116km of lakes, waterways, and connecting portages. Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux has been an extremely important location for the Nlaka'pamux people for thousands of years and visitors come to experience the spectacular scenery and outstanding historical, cultural, and spiritual values of the park. The South Chilcotin Mountains is famous for its stunning scenery, remote wilderness, and network of backcountry trails for mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding.
MCABEE FOSSIL BEDS	The McAbee Fossil Beds are part of an old lake bed that was deposited 50 million years ago. There is an incredible abundance, diversity, and high quality of fossils at the site, and is known in BC for its plants and insects from the Eocene Epoch.
INDIGENOUS TOURISM	With 58 First Nations in the planning area, visitors have the opportunity to learn about Canada's First People at a variety of sites including Xwisten, Tuckkwiowhum and Xat'sull Heritage Sites and Villages. While there are currently 17 market-ready, Indigenous tourism experiences offered, the interest in Indigenous tourism will serve to grow the availability of offers in the future.
FESTIVALS AND EVENTS	The planning area is home to an assortment of festivals and events that draw visitors including the Abbottsford Air Show, Abbottsford Agrifair, Chilliwack Air Show, Fraser River Gold Panning Days, Hope Brigade Days, Williams Lake Stampede, First Nations Powwows, Billy Barker Days, and more.



CARIBOO HIGHWAY, CLINTON
Photo: Michael Bednar

DESTINATION BRITISH COLUMBIA™

E. DEVELOPMENT THEMES

Through the planning process six destination development themes emerged:

THEME 1: Strategically invest in targeted infrastructure upgrades that support this unique heritage touring corridor

Touring/road trips is one of the province's five key positioning themes. As a touring corridor, the GRT is aligned with this key theme and stands to strengthen its tourism visitation and revenues as the province markets itself as a touring destination. The GRT is the only, 100% BC-based, provincially brand aligned, touring corridor that celebrates the confederation of the province. It is a terrific complement to the well-known Alaska Highway that sees hundreds of thousands of visitors annually travelling through northern BC en-route to the Yukon and Alaska.

A LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY EXISTS TO DEMONSTRATE HOW INTEGRATED, COLLABORATIVE, CROSS-GOVERNMENT PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND MAINTENANCE OF TOURING CORRIDORS SUPPORT THE VISITOR APPEAL OF A DESTINATION WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY IMPROVING SERVICES FOR LOCAL CITIZENS.

Between provincial, regional, and municipal governments this applies to ground communication, signage, transportation needs, (particularly pull-outs, washrooms, and signage) forest road identification, and maintenance for roads most commonly travelled by visitors. Relative to the private sector there is a need for investments to upgrade existing accommodations that have become tired, don't meet modern standards (i.e., for accessibility) and to invest in new, contemporary types of accommodation sought by today's travellers. Consideration should be given to the evolving visitor interest in sleeping experiences beyond a traditional hotel/inn. Camping/RV'ing is very popular within this area, with many campgrounds sold out during the peak season. BC Parks and BC Recreation, Sites and Trails are working to increase the number of campsites available within BC, and some new sites will be added in the GRT planning area.

HISTORIC HAT CREEK
Photo: Blake Jorgenson

DESTINATION BRITISH COLUMBIA™

THEME 2: Lead strategic growth through continued collaboration to strengthen the corridor's end-to-end visitor experience

Recognizing that significant work has been completed to date with limited resources, stakeholder input confirmed there is still much to do to grow awareness and engagement amongst businesses, residents, and consumers along the length of the corridor.

The in-community stakeholder sessions revealed a north-south divide along the corridor. Distinct differences in infrastructure, the availability of visitor activities and services, and tourism development needs exist in the northern GRT planning area from Hope to Stoner versus the southern portion of the GRT from New Westminster to Hope. Awareness and engagement in the GRT initiative was significantly stronger in the north than in the south, except for the key historic sites at Fort Langley and Kilby, as these sites are strongly tied to the heritage theme of the GRT corridor and share similar target visitor profiles. Stakeholders expressed a desire to engage but require support to understand the opportunities and how they can be aligned.

Increasing collaboration, both within communities as well as across multiple communities, to increase referrals and provide better visitor information about what's available up and down the entire length of the corridor was raised as a significant opportunity to strengthen the brand and visitor experience. Working together to identify stories that can be told in each community and weaving them together to entice visitors to move through the corridor and stop in each community to broaden their overall understanding of the GRT, is one way to foster increased collaboration.

THEME 3: Diversify and expand the visitor experience

Increasing the diversity of the visitor experience to broaden the appeal was identified as a key opportunity. Areas of focus include expanding the types of experiences linked to the Gold Rush theme along the Fraser River with broader stories from the province's Indigenous past and bring the "history" element of the "history shaped by nature" brand to life.

THE RICH TAPESTRY OF INDIGENOUS HISTORY IN THIS AREA LENDS ITSELF TO GROWTH OF PURCHASABLE INDIGENOUS CULTURAL EXPERIENCES, AN AREA OF GROWING INTEREST AND DEMAND AMONGST TRAVELLERS.

Outdoor recreation and trails represent the "nature" part of the "history shaped by nature" brand. This is strongly evidenced in the Fraser Valley, where stakeholders have demonstrated a collective interest in working together between municipalities to grow their potential in this area. This theme stretches all the way to Quesnel, where this city is positioning itself as a place to experience nature, with heritage being a secondary theme.

The breadth of food and dining establishments available in the planning area is good. However, operating hours and staffing challenges were identified as key issues that impact the dining experience for visitors.

HORSEFLY
Photo: Michael Bednar

THEME 4: Enable tourism business viability and success

Three key areas emerged relative to business viability that will impact long-term sustainable development along the GRT and inspire investment:

(1) Building the tourism human resource capacity as it relates to tourism staffing. Traditional approaches to recruiting, training, development, and capacity building no longer suffice in the current environment. Attracting new talent into the tourism industry requires innovative thinking — it's no longer possible to recruit staff using the methods of the past.

(2) Foreign ownership of tourism businesses is on the rise in the GRT. Many of these new owners arrive with limited knowledge of doing business in Canada and little, or no experience in tourism. Suggestions for specialty training programs in the owners' languages could expedite their learning curve and benefit both visitors and other businesses. Collaboration to support and integrate these businesses into the GRT network and the tourism system is critical for the success of the region.

(3) Government support is needed to leverage investment in a variety of areas for tourism businesses to thrive and grow in the future, particularly in light of the 2017 and 2018 wildfires wildfires that devastated much of this planning area. Prior to the fires, stakeholder consultation indicated that insurance costs, government complexity, policy and regulations, funding, and investment were areas that created barriers for the small and medium-sized businesses that comprise the majority of the tourism industry.

THEME 5: Protect the environment while managing tourism growth

The reasons travellers come to and enjoy this corridor is a combination of the stunning natural landscapes that provide a beautiful backdrop for the historic communities located along the corridor, combined with the opportunity to connect with the heritage stories of British Columbia and its people.

There are a host of conflicts that exist related to land management — extractive industries vs. tourism, user conflicts such as motorized vs. non-motorized pursuits — along with capacity management requirements to ensure the long-term sustainability of the natural and cultural assets upon which tourism relies. While not an issue in this area today, over-tourism is better planned for in advance than once it becomes an issue.

THEME 6: Support natural disaster recovery

The 2017 and 2018 wildfires and 2018 spring floods devastated parts of this planning area and places businesses and livelihoods at physical and long-term financial risk due to the loss of business and destination reputation. All businesses and communities must engage with all governments, including their band council's emergency preparedness initiatives, to ensure resident and visitor safety, as well as access to, and influence, regarding recovery programs.

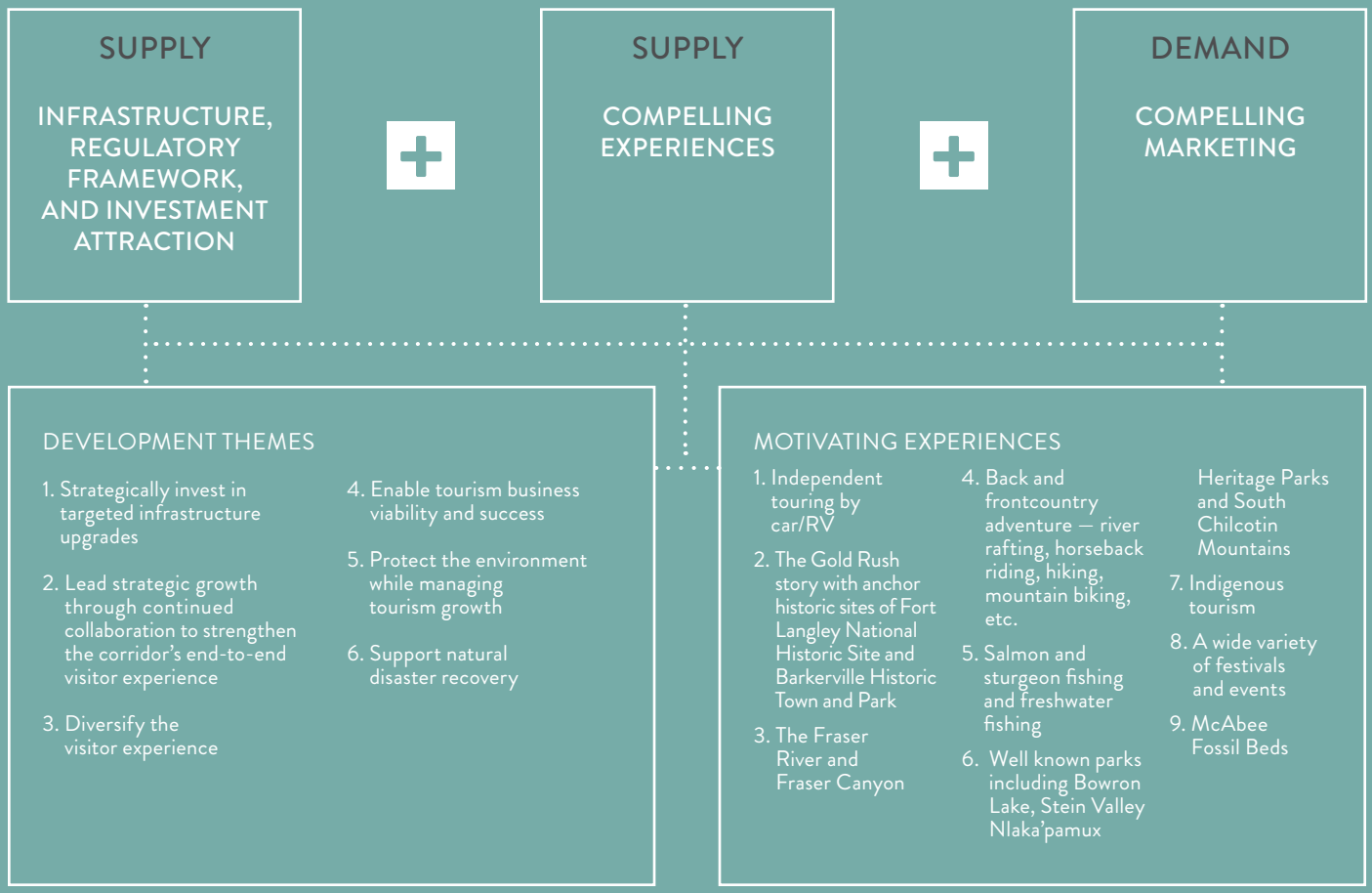
DESTINATION BRITISH COLUMBIA™

F. INTERACTION OF DEVELOPMENT THEMES AND MOTIVATING EXPERIENCES

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

Tourism has two primary revenue drivers — supply and demand. Destination development focuses on the supply side of tourism by providing the setting, access, policy framework, investment attraction, experiences, and visitor services to attract new visitors and entice repeat visitation. Demand side marketing efforts strive to create urgency for people to want

FIGURE 15: Interaction of Development Themes and Experiences Themes for the Gold Rush Trail



BARKERVILLE HISTORIC TOWN AND PARK
Photo: Thomas Drasdauskis

to visit. While this strategy focuses on the supply side, it is important to connect the defined destination themes to the motivating experiences that lead to purchase decisions and result in visitation.

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

Each of the six development themes contribute to each of the ten motivating experiences identified for the Gold Rush Trail, although they will do so at different levels, based on the actual objectives recommended (Figure 15).

7

STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

TEN-EE-AH LODGE
Photo: Jonny Bierman

GOLD RUSH TRAIL: A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION

VISION

The Gold Rush Trail is a highly recognized, iconic touring route that is renowned for its vibrant connected communities, heritage preservation, cultural and Indigenous experiences, natural landscapes, and outdoor adventures. The diversity of experiences attracts visitors year-round and generates ongoing, sustainable benefits for residents, businesses and visitors alike.

GOALS

1. Demonstrate leadership provincially through strategic, collaborative planning, development, and investment in touring routes.
2. Amplify awareness of the Gold Rush Trail along the entire corridor amongst visitors, businesses, and residents alike.
3. Incrementally grow the benefits from tourism while respecting the limited carrying capacity of the land, people, cultural, and heritage assets.
4. Maintain a keen awareness and understanding of the customer, adapt to the changing needs of the market and develop experiences that enhance the visitor journey to attract more travellers, increase length of stay, and spend throughout the year.

USPs

1. A unique, scenic, heritage touring route connecting visitors to BC's history.
2. The Fraser River and Fraser Canyon.
3. Backcountry and frontcountry outdoor adventure in expansive wilderness.
4. A rich cultural heritage with diverse stories to share.

MOTIVATING EXPERIENCES

1. Independent touring by car/RV
2. The Gold Rush story with bookend anchor sites Fort Langley National Historic Site and Barkerville Historic Town and Park National Historic Site
3. The Fraser River and Fraser Canyon
4. Back and frontcountry adventure — river rafting, horseback riding, hiking, mountain biking, etc.
5. Salmon and sturgeon fishing, as well as freshwater fishing
6. Well known parks including Bowron Lake, Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park and South Chilcotin Mountain
7. Indigenous tourism
8. A wide variety of festivals and event
9. McAbee Fossil Beds

DEVELOPMENT THEMES

THEME 1: Strategically invest in targeted infrastructure upgrades that support this unique heritage touring corridor

THEME 2: Continue to grow awareness and engagement throughout the GRT amongst businesses and communities to strengthening the corridor's brand and end-to-end visitor experience

THEME 3: Diversify and expand the visitor experience to increase the destination appeal

THEME 4: Enable business viability and success

THEME 5: Protect the environment while managing growth

THEME 6: Support natural disaster recovery

BARKERVILLE HISTORIC TOWN AND PARK
Photo: Jonny Bierman

8 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The story of British Columbia can be found along the Gold Rush Trail. It is "history shaped by nature" that reaches back centuries, long before British Columbia became a province of Canada.[11]

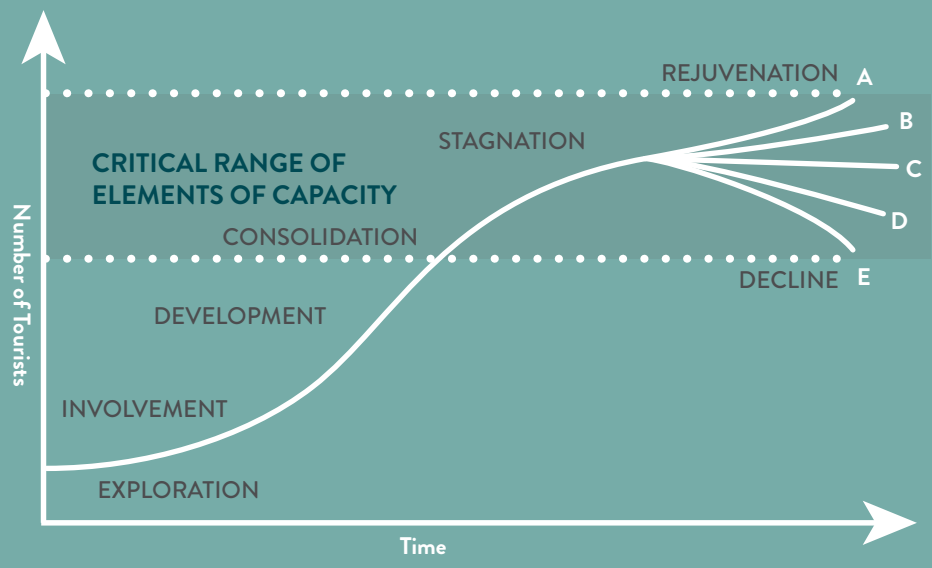
People have been drawn here for centuries to harvest the riches of the planning area. But as the natural riches that have sustained residents and the corridor's economy decline, new economic opportunities are being sought through tourism.

The wildfires of 2017 and 2018, and the 2018 floods will leave a long-lasting impact for the tourism businesses directly and indirectly affected, for the communities, and rebuilding the perception of the destination will take time.

Other negative tourism impacts identified along the corridor are related to changes in transportation patterns resulting from the construction of the Coquihalla Highway that now diverts much of the eastbound traffic away from Highways 1 and 97. Fewer visitors results in less investment by private sector which has led to stagnation (Figure 16). With the support of the Gold Rush Trail Management Committee, significant and on-going efforts over the past seven years are aimed at rejuvenating the planning area through enhanced branding, product development, and capacity building to generate demand. Destination development now targets the supply side of building the areas tourism potential.

[11] From the GRT brand story and video narrative. Provided by the CCCTA.

FIGURE 16:
The Planning
Area Lifecycle



Hyphothetical Evolution of a Tourist Area
(Adapted from Miller and Gallucci, 2004).

THE FRAMEWORK

Destination BC provided a priority setting framework for all 20-planning areas to organize and align their objectives and actions in ways that allow for regional and provincial plans to be developed with consistency (Figure 17).

Presenting the destination development strategies with a consistent framework will allow the province and the tourism regions to examine priorities across all planning areas to confirm which belong within the regional or provincial strategies.

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

1. QUICK WINS high value tactics with low complexity and can be achieved within 3 years (2018–2021).

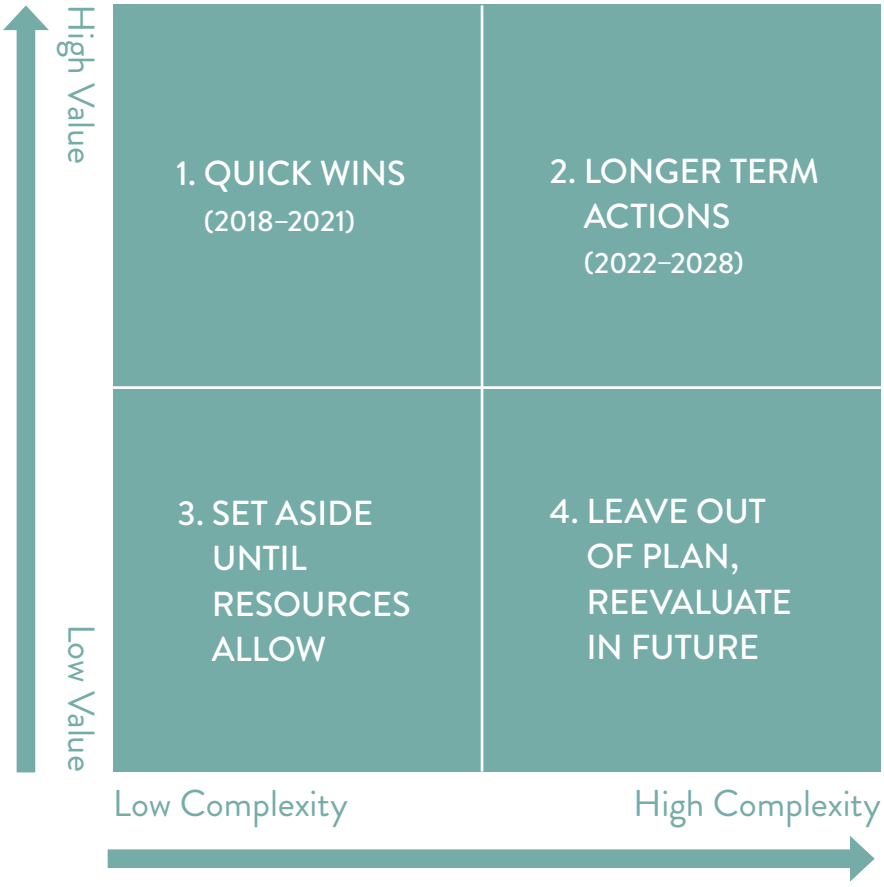
2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS high value, high complexity that require 4 to 10 years to achieve the result (2022–2028) albeit activities can begin immediately to achieve the outcome.

3. SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW low complexity and low value, address when time/resources exist.

4. LEAVE OUT OF STRATEGY, RE-EVALUATE IN FUTURE high complexity and low value, not realistically achieved in the 10-year time frame of this strategy.

The success network is identified[12], and where the proposed objective has provincial implications, it is noted. As this strategy impacts three tourism regions, where a proposed objective impacts a region (CCCTA, TOTA, VCM), it is noted. The objectives listed within the themes do not represent all the opportunities that emerged during the planning process, but those that emerged as a higher priority for tourism destination development.

FIGURE 17: Priority Setting Framework



[12]Organizations and partners listed under the success networks have been identified collectively through the strategy development process as likely playing a role in moving a potential objective or action forward. In no way is this meant to suggest any form of commitment or endorsement of the objective or action.

THEME 1: Strategically Invest In Targeted Infrastructure Upgrades That Support This Unique Touring Corridor

Improved ground transportation and forest service roads emerged as the two most important needs to accommodate present and future visitor growth along the Gold Rush Trail.

Strong multi-government collaboration will be required to secure commitment and investment.

THEME 1: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
1. Land Access Improvements: Enhance existing and develop new rest stops with washrooms and e-charging stations along Highways 1 & 97. **ACTIONS** • Obtain an inventory of existing stops from TRAN and the available amenities. • Work with TRAN to rank sites in order of priority. • Identify and prioritize new investments needed, then secure funding. • Secure a commitment for progressive investment. • Create a joint communication for industry. **SUCCESS NETWORK** TRAN, municipalities, RDs, MLAs, FIN, TAC, GRTMC, First Nations, BC Hydro, Visitor Information Centres, DBC	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS CATALYST PROVINCIAL SCOPE REGIONAL SCOPE
2. Land Access Improvements: Build public washroom facilities in Lillooet to service buses during peak season. **ACTIONS** • Prepare and present the rationale for town council and the SLRD. • Secure an investment commitment and communicate this to the travel trade. **SUCCESS NETWORK** SLRD, Town of Lillooet, bus tour operators	1. QUICK WINS CATALYST
3. Land Access Improvements: Improve emergency services and safety for visitors and citizens alike, travelling by road along the Gold Rush Trail. **ACTIONS** • Work collaboratively with the TRAN to improve emergency services along the GRT: - Meet with partners to determine any imminent improvements as a result of the 2017 wildfire learning. - Enhance the wildfire/emergency exits along the circle route. - Determine individuals from each success network that could form a short-term working group to identify next step priorities and serve as a champion for change within their organization. • Upgrade road infrastructure in slide-prone areas. • Inventory key forest service roads used for tourism and wildfire access, escape. **SUCCESS NETWORK** RDs, municipalities, First Nations, BC Ambulance, MCS, MPSSG, Fire Service, FLNR, TRAN, RDs, ENV, RDMO, MLAs, DBC	1. QUICK WINS CATALYST PROVINCIAL SCOPE REGIONAL SCOPE

THEME 1: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
4. Land Access Improvements: Work collaboratively with FLNR on a tourism road inventory that will identify the FLNR road infrastructure that supports tourism operators, and lobby for the retention and maintenance of those roads which are important for tourism access. **ACTIONS** • CCCTA secure resources to be the catalyst that can lead the project. • Vancouver, Coast & Mountains and TOTA provide input support and contribute to engaging stakeholders. **SUCCESS NETWORK** FLNR, CCCTA, First Nations, tourism operators, and other land interest groups/organizations	3. SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW PROVINCIAL SCOPE REGIONAL SCOPE
5. Land Access Improvements: Work with tourism and community stakeholders to provide the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure with clear local guidance on regional directional and interpretive signage opportunities. **ACTIONS** • Meet with TRAN and industry to confirm the priority locations. • Incorporate First Nations language and English. • Consider a 'common look and feel' for the area (similar to the Gold Rush Trail signage). **SUCCESS NETWORK** CCCTA, DBC, TOTA, TRAN, municipalities, RD, First Nations, businesses	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS CATALYST REGIONAL SCOPE
6. Public and Shared Transportation: Address the shortage of public and shared transportation options. **ACTIONS** • Explore stakeholder interest in developing the business case for expansion of public and private transportation services for affordable public and shared transportation options including expanded car rentals, one-way rental/drop off service, taxis, ride-sharing and/or car-sharing services, and shuttle services. • Establish a committee to examine airport car rental service in all regional airports that addresses growth as visitation increases and to ensure the vehicles are properly equipped for the GRT road conditions. **SUCCESS NETWORK** Municipalities, BC Transit, RDs, businesses, First Nations, Car rental companies, ride-share companies, ICBC	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
7. Rail Access: Secure the return of passenger rail service to the GRT. **ACTIONS** • Strike a special taskforce of interested businesses and communities to develop a plan and meet with Via Rail. **SUCCESS NETWORK** Via Rail, businesses, municipalities, TRAN	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS PROVINCIAL SCOPE REGIONAL SCOPE

THEME 1: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
8. Connectivity Improvements: Identify key locations for cell coverage and wi-fi hotspots along highways 1, 97 north of Hope and ensure all businesses are aware of these and they are promoted to travellers. **ACTIONS** • Meet with TRAN and industry to confirm the priority locations. • RDMOs and DBC ensure businesses and the visitor service network is aware of where and what connectivity is available along the GRT. **SUCCESS NETWORK** TRAN, municipalities, RDs, First Nations, cell carriers, SHAW, DBC, RDMOs	1. QUICK WINS CATALYST PROVINCIAL SCOPE REGIONAL SCOPE
9. Connectivity Improvements: Increase the accuracy of Google mapping along the GRT. **ACTIONS** • Incorporate this priority in the RDMO google partnership. **SUCCESS NETWORK** RDMOs, DMOs, DBC, tourism businesses, Google	1. QUICK WINS CATALYST REGIONAL SCOPE
10. Air Access Improvements: Advance targeted air improvement initiatives. **ACTIONS** • Attract a major carrier (one with interline connections to international flights/airlines) to provide service into the GRT. • Enhance scheduled service and capacity into Williams Lake on existing carriers. **SUCCESS NETWORK** Airport authorities, airlines, municipalities, TAC, TIABC, RDs, CCCTA	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS REGIONAL SCOPE

THEME 2: Continue to Grow Awareness and Engagement Throughout the GRT Amongst Businesses and Communities to Strengthen the Corridor's Brand and End-to-End Visitor Experience

Recognizing that significant work has been done to date with limited resources, stakeholder input confirmed that there is still much to do to grow awareness and engagement amongst businesses, residents, and consumers along the length of the corridor (recognizing the north-south divide distinction regarding tourism development needs from Hope to Stoner versus New Westminster to Hope).

THEME 2: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
11. Improve the understanding with local citizens and businesses of the tourism eco-system, the value of tourism and the importance of working collaboratively under the GRT Destination BC approved brand. **ACTIONS** • Support and encourage incorporating tourism development interests and activities in Official Community Plans and/or strategic planningdocuments/ band council documents. This includes any land use interests, evolutions, environmental/cultural protection and allowed/encouraged visitor activities. • Actively, and continually, invite new players into local, regional, and provincial tourism conversations to garner diverse input and create advocates who can speak on behalf of the industry. • Promote and continue to educate communities, politicians, and citizens about the value of tourism and the benefits of a robust visitor economy. • Consider the creation of a Tourism Ambassador program that fits the needs of this travel corridor. • Increase visitor referrals between businesses and communities. • Enhance training for visitor info centre staff on GRT along the entire corridor. **SUCCESS NETWORK** TIABC, DBC, TAC, RDMOs, DMOs, Chambers of Commerce, BIAs, CF, First Nations, municipalities, VICs, GRTMC	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS CATALYST REGIONAL SCOPE
12. Optimize the benefits from MRDT status for the 3% tax to support tourism growth in the CCCTA. **ACTIONS** • Finalize and submit the application for a 3% MRDT tax across CCCTA (MRTD approved during the term of the study). • Identify the key projects to be supported, relative to destination development from these funds. **SUCCESS NETWORK** CCCTA, DBC, GRTMC	1. QUICK WINS REGIONAL SCOPE

THEME 3: Diversify and Expand the Visitor Experience

In broadening the destination appeal, new and enhanced tourism products, services, and experiences are needed to encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more while travelling. This theme describes the product development initiatives that emerged with the greatest need and priority for the region, presented in no specific order or priority.

THEME 3: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
13. Continue to invest in current and future primary heritage demand generators. **ACTIONS** • Advance the McAbee Fossil Beds Development plan. • Diversify the cultural activity and story development for Indigenous interpretation at Barkerville Historic Town and Park. • Invest in more technology-enabled self-guided driving tours that incorporate multiple stories and communities. • Complete the Alexandra bridge upgrade and expansion. • Invest in the Kilby Heritage Site campground expansion. **SUCCESS NETWORK** Communities (Cache Creek/Ashcroft), CF Sun Country, Bonaparte First Nations, FLNR, GRTMC, Barkerville, Skeetchestn First Nation, Heritage BC, Entrepreneurs, ITBC	1. QUICK WINS CATALYST
14. Invest in product development that broadens the breadth of visitor experiences and stories along the GRT to capture the full richness of the heritage and history of the corridor. **ACTIONS** • Expand the Kaoham Shuttle. • Add historic transportation tours on the Fraser River. • Advance the Stein Valley Interpretive Centre Plan. • Create more travel packages. • Identify specific Indigenous tourism development opportunities and work with Indigenous communities to communicate and support Indigenous business development opportunities for more purchasable tours/products that bring the cultural, traditions and Indigenous heritage to life. • Develop new agritourism experiences. **SUCCESS NETWORK** First Nations, tourism businesses, ITBC, CCCTA, ITAC, CFs, RDMOs, DBC, DMOs, NPTG, Spuzzum First Nation, TRAN, CN, Lillooet, INAC, RDs with agriculture focus, AGRI, Lytton, ENV, BC Parks	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS

THEME 3: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
15. Strike a taskforce with provincial government and First Nations to create a local area trail strategy to guide strategic investment. **ACTIONS** • Complete the GRT trails review, looking at the potential from a tourism demand driver perspective. • Strike a taskforce of committed individuals with a vested interest in enhancing the trails system and supporting amenities as part of a land strategy. - Address tourism vs. non-tourism activities. - Address motorized vs. non-motorized activities. - Address multi-user conflicts in the backcountry. - Investigate the use of a harmonized trail head strategy for those to be aligned and promoted by the GRT. - Address ongoing maintenance issues relative to trails promoted and accessible by travellers. - Improve the basic amenities at trails that will be promoted for visitors; this includes parking, washrooms, maps, emergency information, garbage cans, wi-fi hotspots. - Seek funding to create a single user- friendly place where visitors can find trail information with consistent maps information regardless if it is owned/managed by different entities including a digital map project (complete with PDFs for off-the-grid reference). - Identify sources of sustainable funding for trail development and maintenance and develop an emergency management plan for trails. **SUCCESS NETWORK** FLNR, BC Parks, Rec Sites & Trails, First Nations, CCCTA, RDs, TRAN, operators, CF, EMPR, IRR, sector associations, user groups, municipalities, GRTMC	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS CATALYST REGIONAL SCOPE
16. Build on the collective interest in diversifying the outdoor recreation opportunities along the GRT. **ACTIONS** • Increase the number of boat access points on the Fraser River and Quesnel River, complete with identification and amenities. • Increase access and infrastructure for fishing on lakes – particularly in the north. • Encourage the development of more winter product/experiences. • Enhance support services for outdoor recreation activities (e.g., retail to purchase gear, secure/access transportation, storage, repairs, rentals, etc.). **SUCCESS NETWORK** Tourism businesses, FLNR, ENV, DFO, RDs, RDMOs, municipalities, service clubs, GRTMC	3. SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW
17. Encourage the growth and diversity of food and beverage opportunities, particularly north of Hope. **ACTIONS** • Develop a forum for business owners to discuss solutions to staff challenges and business hours. • Expand the diversity of food options, responding to visitors' interests in local, traditional foods as part of their travel experience. • Provide support to entrepreneurs to access investment and start-up funds. **SUCCESS NETWORK** Operators, RDMOs, RDs, AGRI, CFIA, CF, FIN, Entrepreneurs, DMOs, Banks, EDOs, Chambers of Commerce	1. QUICK WINS

THEME 3: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
18. Upgrade existing accommodations that have become tired and/or don't meet modern standards for accessibility and today's visitor expectations. **ACTIONS** • Work with CCCTA to include in the accessible BC program. • Create a no-interest or low interest capital investment fund that tourism operators could access to invest in their property. • Renovate/improve existing accommodation for enhanced accessibility for visitors with disabilities and mobility issues. • Encourage operators to new niche accommodation options (yurts, huts, heritage accommodation, hostels, etc.) • Encourage operators to consider additional higher-end accommodations north of Hope. • Explore non-traditional accommodation opportunities (i.e., Airbnb, etc.) through adding additional unique accommodation that reflect the character of the region and remote guest experience. **SUCCESS NETWORK** Private /public sector accommodators, First Nations, EDOs, municipalities, RDs, BCLCA, BCHA, RDMOs, Access BC, NDIT, Spinal Cord BC	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS CATALYST REGIONAL SCOPE
19. Camping/RVing Accommodations: Increase the availability of recreational vehicle services along Highways 1 & 97 and more traditional campgrounds/campsites. **ACTIONS** • Identify where there is capacity, municipal or provincial will to add campground capacity, and prioritize opportunities. • Explore opportunities to connect travellers to accommodation availability through new technologies (e.g., Campnab). **SUCCESS NETWORK** Municipalities, tourism businesses, First Nations, BCLCA, RD,ENV, FLNR, BC Parks, Recreation Sites and Trails BC, RDMOs, DMOs, DBC	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS CATALYST PROVINCIAL SCOPE REGIONAL SCOPE

THEME 4: Enable Tourism Business Success and Viability

Three primary areas of long-term strategic development emerged along the Gold Rush Trail including building the human resource capacity, foreign ownership, and training and inter-governmental collaboration.

THEME 4: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
20. Support efforts by TIABC and tourism operators to improve government processes including the time/ process to secure tenure, permits and development approvals to decrease risk and uncertainty. **ACTIONS** • Meet with TIABC for an update on any policy changes that would positively impact the challenges and reduce the red tape issues with government. • Continue to support TIABCs actions, currently underway on these matters. **SUCCESS NETWORK** TIABC, RDMOs, RD, First Nations, Operators, DBC, BC Sector Associations such as Guide Outfitters, River Outfitters, Fishing Resorts & Outfitters, Helicat Canada, etc. TRAN, FLNR, ENV, IRR, MAH, EMPR, FIN, AGRI, municipalities	1. QUICK WINS PROVINCIAL SCOPE
21. Address need for business succession planning and foreign ownership policies. **ACTIONS** • Create a working group for communities and businesses most impacted to identify the list of issues, needs, and opportunities. **SUCCESS NETWORK** Tourism businesses, RDs, Chambers of Commerce, EDOs, municipalities, go2HR, CFs, THRC, Ventures Connect	1. QUICK WINS PROVINCIAL SCOPE
22. Invest in providing support and training to new foreign investors and their staff to fast-track their understanding of the Canadian tourism eco-system, laws, opportunities, and limitations. **ACTIONS** • Identify the types of support needed to support new, foreign business owners integrating into the tourism community. • Provide training on adapting to new workforce realities **SUCCESS NETWORK** JTT, TAC, DBC, RDMOs, EDOs, go2HR, THRC, municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, go2HR, tourism businesses, ITAC	1. QUICK WINS CATALYST PROVINCIAL SCOPE
23. Address the need for affordable tourism staff housing. **ACTIONS** • Strike a regional or multi-stakeholder taskforce to brainstorm short-term solutions that can be implemented. • Engage TAC to address the mounting tourism housing challenges. **SUCCESS NETWORK** TAC, Municipalities, RDs, MAH, tourism businesses, RDMOs, DBC	1. QUICK WINS CATALYST PROVINCIAL SCOPE

THEME 4: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
24. Improve sustainable funding to not-for-profit heritage organizations in ways that allows them to strategically invest in product development, long-term asset maintenance, and maintain operations. **ACTIONS** • Engage the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture to revisit the current approach to funding heritage and determine if there are new, alternative, incentive, and performance-based ways to increase investment. **SUCCESS NETWORK** NDIT, Heritage BC, Heritage Canada, TAC, CF, RDs, municipalities, FLNR, Barkerville, Hat Creek, Yale Historic Sites	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS PROVINCIAL SCOPE
25. Create a consolidated list of training programs that are available to Indigenous and non-Indigenous operators (front-line to owner/operator/manager) needed and the organizations that can support delivery. **ACTIONS** • Launch a research project to create a central area for tourism industry development programs to make it easier for operators to locate. • Address need for Indigenous tourism business training including cultural understanding, authentic activities, wellness. • Collaboratively identify and invest in training that responds to the First Nations training topic areas identified for learning associated with: First Nations business, product development, entrepreneurship, guiding, market vs. export readiness, World/First Host, small business coaching, business succession planning, and customer service training. • Collaboratively invest in non-Indigenous training topic areas identified: customer service, World/First Host, small business entrepreneurship in tourism, product development, succession planning, First Nations cultural sensitivity training. **SUCCESS NETWORK** go2HR, ITBC, First Nations, RDMOS, Cariboo Chilcotin Aboriginal Training Employment Centre, DBC, ITAC, CF	3. SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW PROVINCIAL SCOPE
26. Establish a framework for collaborative action between CCCTA, ITBC, and ITAC to leverage the long-term destination development opportunities for the best interest of business opportunities and visitor outcomes. **ACTIONS** • Align the relationship building and the destination development goals between ITBC, CCCTA, and ITAC to build on past strengths and build new bridges and relationships. • Secure funding for a full-time Indigenous liaison staff person within the CCCTA to build relationships with Indigenous communities, train and support tourism development, align and manage development opportunities. • Secure funding to update the 2013 Cariboo Chilcotin Coast regional Indigenous tourism strategy to reflect new regional developments and align with ITBC's and ITAC's 5-year strategies. **SUCCESS NETWORK** NETWORK, CCCTA, ITBC, ITAC	1. QUICK WINS CATALYST REGIONAL SCOPE
27. Develop a long-term labour market/business development and human resource training strategy that addresses growth and challenges from increased tourism activities and marketing. Include barriers to growth, access to staff training, business development resources, and address volunteer burnout. **ACTIONS** • Go2HR to conduct research, supported, and informed by the RDMOs and businesses to determine the key challenges and range of solutions businesses have considered. The goal would be to produce a list of options and ideas to support the labour market limitations, identify new government incentive programs, and other solutions. **SUCCESS NETWORK** RDMOs, go2HR, TAC, ITAC, ITBC, First Nations, NDIT, CF, IRR, operators	3. SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW

THEME 4: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
28. Support product development through training such as Remarkable Experiences. **ACTIONS** • Launch the Remarkable Experiences program in the CCCTA region. • Identify opportunities to align product development support between DBC Remarkable Experiences program, ITBC, ITAC, Economic Development, and Community Futures. **SUCCESS NETWORK** CCCTA, DBC, tourism businesses, CFs, Economic Development Offices	1. QUICK WINS CATALYST REGIONAL SCOPE
29. Investigate the cost of liability insurance for small operators who only need seasonal insurance. Compare to co-op models in other sectors. **ACTIONS** • Identify other planning areas with a similar need, host a meeting to discuss needs, focus and challenges, then set forth a course of action. **SUCCESS NETWORK** TIABC, Tourism Operators, Sector Associations, RDMOs, DBC, EDOs, insurance companies	3. SET ASIDE UNTIL RESOURCES ALLOW PROVINCIAL SCOPE REGIONAL SCOPE
30. Foster tourism strategic investment. **ACTIONS** • Create accessible incentive programs that leverage government and private sector to enhance co-investment in tourism business growth, infrastructure enhancements, new product/service development. • Ensure tourism is addressed within OCPs and community plans. • Invest in planning-area specific research to help inform investment. **SUCCESS NETWORK** DBC, TAC, NDIT, IRR, ITBC, FLNR, RDMOs, ITAC, WD, rural districts, municipalities, First Nations, RDs, tourism businesses	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS PROVINCIAL SCOPE

THEME 5: Protect The Environment While Managing Tourism Growth

THEME 5: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
31. Safeguard the natural environment while managing strategic growth of the land and waters. **ACTIONS** • Assess the opportunity to create a sustainability charter for the entire GRT planning area including reviewing the TOTA charter for key learnings. • Proactively review wildlife management plans for hunting, fishing, and other key wildlife corridors balancing traditional ways of life with commercial tourism opportunities. • Improve environmental monitoring. **SUCCESS NETWORK** NDIT, Heritage Canada, TAC, CF, RDs, municipalities, ENV, First Nations, FLNR, BC Parks, Recreation Sites and Trails, GRTMC	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS REGIONAL SCOPE
32. Safeguard the natural environments while managing strategic growth within the capacity of the land and communities to sustain the investments. **ACTIONS** • Advance the Hemlock Valley Master Plan. • Advance the Stave West Master Plan. • Continue to invest in the Experience the Fraser Project. **SUCCESS NETWORK** GRTMC, ENV, BC Parks, Hemlock Resort, Sts'ailes First Nations, FVRD, RDMO, DBC, DMOs, FLNR, municipalities	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS
33. Harmonize land use management between government departments. **ACTIONS** • Address the need and opportunity in the provincial destination development plan. **SUCCESS NETWORK** TAC, TRAN, FLNR, ENV, IRR, EMPR, RD	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS PROVINCIAL SCOPE

THEME 6: Support Natural Disaster Recovery

The economic and social impacts of the 2017 wildfire and 2018 flood tragedies continue to be studied by various governments. Multi-pronged support will be needed to assist businesses and communities who were impacted in one of three ways:

1. Direct impacts (initial expenditures (or losses) minus consumption taxes) — 100% of which are incurred by the destination, itself.

2. Indirect impacts (income losses by suppliers of the expenditure-related businesses — e.g., a construction or warehousing businesses supplying hotels and restaurants).

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

A whole of government approach is required at times of natural disasters combined with the necessity to draw on local area expertise to ensuring impacted business and communities can recovery as quickly as possible and receive the supported needed.

THEME 6: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	PRIORITY
34. Secure temporary tax relief and operating permit relief (2018–2021) for tourism businesses impacted by the 2017 wildfire and 2018 flood tragedies. **ACTIONS** • Province to provide a 3-year, temporary property tax, business tax relief and/or deferral for 2019–2021. • Province to provide temporary operating permit relief (e.g., tenures, park use permits) 2019–2021. **SUCCESS NETWORK** FIN, FLNR, BC Parks, municipalities, RDs, GRTMC	1. QUICK WINS CATALYST PROVINCIAL SCOPE REGIONAL SCOPE
35. In light of the 2017 wildfires 2018 floods, develop tourism focused natural disaster plans that includes: **(i) a climate change mitigation and adaption plan for tourism operators, and** **(ii) a regional tourism emergency preparedness, response, and recovery plan.** **ACTIONS** • Municipalities and RDMOs to strike a taskforce to identify the key elements that must be addressed by government over the long-term. **SUCCESS NETWORK** ENV, FLNR, EMBC, TRAN, MPSSG, insurance companies, tourism businesses, BC Parks, municipalities, TAC, RDs, RDMOs, GRTMC, First Nations, DBC	2. LONGER TERM ACTIONS PROVINCIAL SCOPE
36. Share consistent messages with all businesses in the impacted wildfire areas that can be used in their visitor communications. **SUCCESS NETWORK** ENV, FLNR, EMBC, TRAN, MPSSG, TIABC, sector associations, tourism businesses, BC Parks, municipalities, TAC, RDs, RDMOs, GRTMC, First Nations, DBC	1. QUICK WINS PROVINCIAL SCOPE REGIONAL SCOPE

HISTORIC HAT CREEK
Photo: Blake Jorgenson

9 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

A. CATALYST PROJECTS

The following 16 actions were identified as catalyst projects for immediately moving the Gold Rush Trail Destination Development Strategy into implementation:

1. **ENHANCE** existing and develop new rest stops with washrooms and e-charging stations along Highways 1 & 97 starting with an inventory of existing stops from TRAN and the available amenities then ranking them in order or priority to identify investment needs (Objective 1).

2. **BUILD** public washroom facilities in Lillooet to service buses during peak season (Objective 2).

3. **IMPROVE** emergency services and safety for visitors and citizens alike, travelling by road along the Gold Rush Trail (Objective 3).

4. **WORK** with tourism and community stakeholders to provide the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure with clear local guidance on regional directional and interpretive signage opportunities (Objective 5).

5. **IDENTIFY** key locations for cell coverage and wi-fi hotspots along highways 1, 97, and north of Hope, and ensure all businesses are aware of these and they are promoted to travellers (Objective 8).

6. **INCREASE** the accuracy of Google mapping along the GRT (Objective 9).

7. **IMPROVE** the understanding with local citizens and businesses of the tourism eco-system, the value of tourism, and work collaboratively under the GRT Destination BC approved brand (Objective 11).

8. **CONTINUE** to invest in current and future primary heritage demand generators, with a priority on the McAbee Fossil Beds and the Alexandra Bridge projects currently underway. (Objective 13).

FORT LANGLEY
Photo: Destination BCr

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9. STRIKE a taskforce with provincial government and First Nations to create a local area trail strategy to guide strategic investment (Objective 15).

10. UPGRADE existing accommodations that have become tired and/or don't meet modern standards for accessibility and today's visitor expectations (Objective 18).

11. INCREASE the availability of recreational vehicle services along Highways 1 & 97 and more traditional campgrounds/campsites (Objective 19).

12. INVEST in providing support and training to new foreign investors and their staff to fast-track their understanding of the Canadian tourism eco-system, laws, opportunities, and limitations (Objective 22).

13. ADDRESS the need for affordable tourism staff housing (Objective 23).

14. ESTABLISH a framework for collaborative action between CCCTA, ITBC, and ITAC to leverage the long-term destination development opportunities for the best interest of business opportunities and visitor outcomes (Objective 26).

15. SUPPORT product development through training such as Remarkable Experiences (Objective 28).

16. SECURE temporary tax relief and operating permit relief (2018–2021) for tourism businesses impacted by the 2017 wildfire and 2018 flood tragedies (Objective 34).

B. PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES

A key deliverable of the Destination BC Destination Development Program is the creation of regional and provincial strategies.

Objectives and actions that are commonly shared along the Gold Rush Trail may become regional priorities within the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast, Thomson Okanagan, and Vancouver, Coast & Mountains tourism regional destination development strategies.

This strategy, along with 19 other planning area strategies in British Columbia will inform the creation of a provincial destination development strategy. Objectives identified as provincial in scope, often involve multiple provincial government organizations including Destination BC, TAC, ITBC, go2HR, and TIABC.

It is recommended the following Gold Rush Trail priority 1 and 2 level objectives and actions become provincial initiatives within the provincial destination development strategy.

	OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY
	THEME 1: Strategically Invest in Targeted Infrastructure Upgrades that Support this Unique Touring Corridor	
1	Land Access Improvements: Enhance existing and develop new rest stops with washrooms and e-charging stations along Highways 1 & 97.	2
3	Land Access Improvements: Improve emergency services and safety for visitors and citizens alike, travelling by road along the Gold Rush Trail.	1
8	Connectivity Improvements: Identify key locations for cell coverage and wi-fi hotspots along highways 1, 97, and north of Hope, and ensure all businesses are aware of these and they are promoted to travellers.	1
10	Through the Nenqay Deni Accord, and working in partnership with the Province and the Tsilhqot'in Nation, advance tourism management and communications activities between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous tourism stakeholders.	1
	THEME 3: Diversify and Expand the Visitor Experience	
19	Camping/RVing Accommodations: With many campgrounds sold out during the peak season BC Parks and BC Recreation, Sites and Trails are working to increase the number of campsites available within BC, and some new sites will be added.	2

OBJECTIVES		PRIORITY
THEME 4: Enable Tourism Business Success and Viability		
20	Support efforts by TIABC and tourism operators to improve government processes including the time/process to secure tenure, permits, and development approvals to decrease risk and uncertainty.	1
21	Address need for business succession planning and foreign ownership policies.	1
22	Invest in providing support and training to new foreign investors and their staff to fast-track their understanding of the Canadian tourism eco-system, laws, opportunities, and limitations.	1
23	Address the need for affordable tourism staff housing.	1
24	Improve sustainable funding to not-for-profit heritage organizations in ways that allows them to strategically invest in product development, long-term asset maintenance, and maintain operations.	2
30	Foster tourism strategic tourism investment.	2
THEME 5: Protect the environment while managing tourism growth		
23	Harmonize land use management between government departments.	1
THEME 6: Support natural disaster recovery		
34	Secure temporary tax relief and operating permit relief (2018–2021) for tourism businesses impacted by the 2017 wildfire and 2018 flood tragedies.	1
35	In light of the 2017 wildfires 2018 floods, and potential future risk, develop tourism focused natural disaster plans.	1
36	Share consistent messages with all businesses in the impacted wildfire and flood areas that be used in their visitor communications.	1

It is recommended the following Gold Rush Trail objectives and actions become regional initiatives with the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Regional Destination Development Strategy. It is acknowledged that all provincial initiatives identified will impact and be relevant to the regional strategy. Additional objectives to be included in the regional strategy are identified in the table that follows.

	OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY		
		CCCTA	VCM	TOTA
THEME 1: Strategically Invest in Targeted Infrastructure Upgrades that Support this Unique Touring Corridor				
5	Land Access Improvements: Work with tourism and community stakeholders to provide the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure with clear local guidance on regional signage opportunities.	2	2	2
9	Connectivity Improvements: Increase the accuracy of Google mapping along the GRT.	1	1	–
10	Air Access Improvements: Advance targeted air improvement initiatives.	2	–	–
THEME 2: Continue to Grow Awareness and Engagement Throughout the GRT Amongst Businesses and Communities to Strengthen the Corridor's Brand and End-to-End Visitor Experience				
11	Improve the understanding with local citizens and businesses of the tourism eco-system, the value of tourism, and the benefits of working collaboratively under the GRT Destination BC approved brand.	2	2	2
12	Optimize the benefits from MRDT status for the 3% tax to support tourism growth in the CCCTA.	1	–	–
THEME 3: Diversify and Expand the Visitor Experience				
15	Strike a taskforce with provincial government and First Nations to create a local area trail strategy to ensure the strategic investment and integration of trail expansions along the GRT.	2	2	2
18	Upgrade existing accommodations that have become tired and/or don't meet modern standards for accessibility and today's visitor expectations.	2	2	2
THEME 4: Enable Tourism Business Success and Viability				
25	Establish a framework for collaborative action between CCCTA, ITBC, and ITAC to leverage the long-term destination development opportunities for the best interest of business opportunities and visitor outcomes.	1	–	–
28	Support product development through training such as Remarkable Experiences.	1	1	1
THEME 6: Support Natural Disaster Recovery				
31	Safeguard the natural environment while managing strategic growth of the land and waters.	2	2	2

HORSEFLY ROAD
Photo: Michael Bednar

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C. FUNDING PROGRAMS

To support the Gold Rush Trail with their implementation efforts, Destination BC has compiled a list of funding programs.

The different funding options highlighted in the planning area's situation analysis report include: Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT), Destination BC programs, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD), Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure programs, Community Gaming Grants, Community Trusts, Municipal Funding and Business Levies.

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

Funding options also include:

- Continuation of the annual $25 million in funding for the Rural Dividend Program, to 2019/20.
- $40 million in additional funding for the Connecting British Columbia program, which extends high-speed internet access to rural and remote communities. Applications are reviewed as received.
- Northern Development offers a range of funding programs suited to a diverse set of economic and development priorities in central and northern BC, with $20 million available in the Cariboo-Chilcotin-Lillooet region.
- 2017 TAC ministerial mandate letter includes to "Double the Province's investment in the BC Arts Council over four years." Once established, this will have positive impacts for communities across the province with increased opportunities to engage in the arts.
- 2017 TAC ministerial mandate letter includes to "Establish an arts infrastructure fund to help provide space for BC artists." Once established, the new infrastructure fund should improve and increase art spaces across the province.
- Various Indigenous tourism and business development initiatives federally and provincially.
- Wildfire and flood recovery programs.

XATŚÜLL HERITAGE VILLAGE
Photo: Blake Jorgenson

10 MEASURING AND MONITORING SUCCESS

The key measures of success for monitoring progress within the GRT planning are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Goals and Performance Measures

GOAL	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
1. Lead the province in local area strategic, systematic growth, collaboration, and communication to achieve mutually beneficial tourism development outcomes for all businesses in the planning area.	• Establish research measures • # shared use/collaboration agreements • # strategic, collaborative project outcomes
2. Incrementally increase the benefits from tourism while respecting the limited capacity of the land and its people in this region; and, develop memorable visitor experiences without sacrificing authenticity and the lifestyle of the people living in the GRT.	• Increase in visitor spend • Increase in length of stay • Increase in overnight stays • Increase in # authentic Indigenous experiences • Net Promoter Score[13]
3. Amplify awareness through developing cultural experiences that allow the sharing of traditional cultures while teaching and preserving the way of life.	• # of education/training opportunities • # participants in professional training • Various measures for consumer marketing[14]
4. Maintain a keen awareness and understanding of the customer and adapt to the changing needs of the market to attract travellers who value and appreciate what the planning area offers.	• Visitor surveys • MRDT data

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

[13] Net Promoter Score calculation: www.destinationbc.ca/Resources/Monitoring-and-Evaluation/Net-Promoter-Score.aspx

[14] Marketing is not part of BC's destination development planning program, measures of marketing success can be secured from Destination BC's marketing department.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: COMMUNITIES AND FIRST NATIONS IN THE PLANNING AREA

GRT SOUTH (New Westminster to Hope)

1. Abbotsford
2. Agassiz
3. Chilliwack
4. Fort Langley
5. Harrison Mills
6. Harrison Hot Springs
7. Hope
8. Langley
9. Mission
10. New Westminster

GRT NORTH (Haig to Stone Creek)

11. Alkali Lake
12. Ashcroft
13. Barkerville
14. Boston Bar
15. Bouchie Creek
16. Bowron Lake
17. Bralorne
18. Cache Creek
19. Canim Lake
20. Clinton
21. Forest Grove
22. Gold Bridge
23. Hixon
24. Horsefly
25. Kersley
26. Lac La Hache
27. Likely
28. Lillooet
29. Logan Lake
30. Loon Lake
31. Lytton
32. McLeese Lake
33. Pavilion
34. Quesnel
35. Savona
36. Seton Portage
37. Springhouse
38. Spence's Bridge
39. Spuzzum
40. Stone Creek
41. Wells
42. Williams Lake
43. Yale
44. 70 Mile House
45. 108 Mile Ranch
46. 100 Mile House
47. 150 Mile House

FIRST NATIONS WITHIN THE GOLD RUSH TRAIL DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AREA

1. ?Esdilagh (Alexandria) Indian Band
2. Aitchelitz Band
3. Ashcroft Indian Band
4. Bonaparte Indian Band
5. Boothroyd Indian Band
6. Boston Bar First Nation
7. Canim Lake Indian Band
8. Cayoose Creek (Sekw'el'was) Band
9. Chawathil Indian Band
10. Cheam First Nation
11. Clinton Indian Band
12. Cook's Ferry Indian Band
13. Esk'etemc First Nation
14. High Bar First Nation
15. Kanaka Bar Indian Band
16. Katzie First Nation
17. Kluskus Indian Band
18. Kwantlen First Nation
19. Kwaw-kwaw-apilt First Nation
20. Kwikwetlem First Nation
21. Leq'a:mel First Nation
22. Lytton First Nation
23. Matsqui First Nation
24. Nazko First Nation
25. Nicomen Indian Band
26. Oregon Jack Creek Band
27. Pavillion (Ts'kw'aylaxw) Band
28. Peters Band
29. Popkum Indian Band
30. Qayqayt First Nation
31. Red Bluff Indian Band
32. Scowlitz First Nation
33. Seabird Island Band
34. Seton Lake Band
35. Shackan Indian Band
36. Shx'wha:y Village
37. Shxw'OwHamel First Nation
38. Siska Indian Band
39. Skawahlook First Nation
40. Skowkale First Nation
41. Skuppah Indian Band 42. Skwah First Nation
43. Soowahlie First Nation
44. Spuzzum Indian Band
45. Squiala First Nation
46. Sts'ailes First Nation
47. Stswecem'c Xgat'tem (Canoe Creek) First Nation
48. Sumas First Nation
49. T'it'q'et (Lillooet Indian Band)
50. Tsay Keh Dene Band
51. Tzeachten First Nation
52. Union Bar Band
53. Williams Lake Indian Band
54. Xat'sull (Soda Creek) First Nation
55. Xaxli'p First Nation (Fountain)
56. Xwisten First Nation (Bridge River Indian Band)
57. Yakweakwioosse First Nation
58. Yale First Nation

APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

Designed by Destination BC, the following planning process was followed to ensure this strategy was developed in the same manner as the other 19 destination development planning areas. This was a semi-structured, yet customized process for the Gold Rush Trail.

1. PROJECT STAGING AND PRELIMINARY DOCUMENT REVIEW

a. Designed to set the stage for the process with launching project communications with stakeholders.

b. Reviewed area documentation to familiarize the consulting team with the DBC and regional plans, studies, and reports provided, plus the draft asset inventory.

2. FIRST IN-COMMUNITY AND ONLINE CONSULTATION

a. Introduced the program, engaged tourism partners, launched discussions on the vision, visitor profile, destination development opportunities and challenges and invited additional to help inform the context for the GRT.

b. Hosted five sessions, four in-person (Hope, Ashcroft, 100 Mile House, Quesnel) and one online.

3. DOCUMENT REVIEW, ASSET INVENTORY, AND STAKEHOLDER INVENTORIES

a. Completed review of 169 plans, studies, and reports.

b. Completed a review of various documents provided by Destination BC including: 10 Macro Trend Reports, 11 Consumer Trends Reports, 6 Tourism Industry Reports, 1 Tourism Funding Report, 16 Industry Performance Reports, and 8 Key Products and Potential Reports. Appendix 5 provides the bibliographic references.

c. Conducted 15 formal and 5 informal stakeholder interviews.

4. ASSET INVENTORY

a. This is a vital document that provided base line information on the: Planning area description, accommodations, provincial parks and recreation sites, food and beverage, key tourism features, area administration and tourism organizations, tourism businesses and attractions, access and transportation, sport and meeting facilities, festival and events, visitor services.

b. Incorporated First Nations asset information (provided by ITBC) regarding products in market and under development, First Nation Bands active in tourism.

c. Merged the asset Destination BC and First Nations inventories, then invited the RDMOs to review for accuracy and make any additions or eliminations.

d. Each community then received their element of the inventory to review for accuracy and make any additions or eliminations.

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

5. SECOND IN-COMMUNITY AND ONLINE CONSULTATION

a. Reviewed the information revealed in the draft situation analysis.

b. Hosted four sessions, three in-person (Hope, Lillooet, and Williams Lake) and one online.

6. WORKING GROUP MEETING

a. Hosted a 2-day meeting to discuss the opportunities emerging from the situation analysis, set priorities, affirm short-term and long-term actions, those that should be set aside until resources are found and elements that should not be included in the final strategy.

b. Finalized the vision, success networks, monitor, and evaluation elements.

7. STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

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

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

8. COMPLETED THE SITUATION ANALYSIS

9. DRAFTED AND FINALIZED THE DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

APPENDIX 3: DEFINING THE VISION

Several Explorer Quotient sessions were held in the GRT area since 2014, providing opportunities for input from stakeholders on their ideal visitor. This led to strong consensus during the in-community sessions regarding the type of visitors to whom this region appeals — Cultural Explorers, Authentic Experiencers, and Cultural History Buffs.

The reasons travellers come to and enjoy this corridor is a combination of the stunning natural landscapes that provide a beautiful backdrop for the historic communities located along the corridor, combined with the opportunity to connect with the heritage stories of British Columbia and its people. There is a strong sense of place along the corridor — one that was described by several stakeholders as spiritual.

Through progressive discussions and refinement, a vision for the area was narrowed to two statements that were tested with stakeholders through the online survey conducted Oct–Nov 2017.

VISION STATEMENT #1:

The Gold Rush Trail is one of the most recognized, iconic routes in North America where history and nature come alive. World-class cultural and Indigenous experiences showcase the corridor's diverse stories, engage travellers in the past and present, and attract visitors year-round to bring sustainable benefits to the communities, residents, and businesses.

VISION STATEMENT #2:

The Gold Rush Trail is an accessible, iconic driving route that is renowned for its vibrant connected communities, heritage preservation, cultural and Indigenous experiences, natural landscapes, and outdoor adventures. The diversity of experiences attracts visitors year-round and generates sustainable benefits for residents, businesses and visitors alike.

The final survey feedback, as of 20 Nov 17 revealed 28% in favor of the first statement and 72% preferred statement #2.

Slight refinements based on input from the online survey and advisory committee resulted in the following, final version of the vision statement for the GRT:

THE GOLD RUSH TRAIL IS A HIGHLY RECOGNIZED, ICONIC TOURING ROUTE THAT IS RENOWNED FOR ITS VIBRANT CONNECTED COMMUNITIES, HERITAGE PRESERVATION, CULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCES, NATURAL LANDSCAPES, AND OUTDOOR ADVENTURES.

The diversity of experiences attracts visitors year-round, and generates ongoing, sustainable benefits for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

Additionally, filters — key principles emerged from stakeholder discussions establishing that for the GRT planning area initiatives in this play must exemplify the following principles:

- Recognizes and respects our people, culture, tradition, heritage, and environment as well as our travellers.
- Sustainably invests in economic opportunities that generate benefits for businesses and communities for sustainable development generate economic opportunity for communities.
- Prioritizes support and enhancement of existing assets before investing to create new.
- Strengthens collaboration and coalesces around common language goals and terminology.
- Be authentic to the Gold Rush Trail.
- Grow revenue, length of stay, and lengthen season along the entire corridor.

APPENDIX 4: PLANNING AREA CONSIDERATIONS

This appendix provides highlights of key planning considerations important to developing tourism along the Gold Rush Trail.

THE GRT TOURING CORRIDOR: A LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Touring/road trips is one of the province's five key positioning themes. As a touring corridor, the GRT is aligned with this key theme and stands to strengthen its tourism visitation and revenues as the province markets itself as a touring destination. The GRT is the only major, stand-alone, branded, touring corridor in BC and is a terrific complement to the well-known Alaska Highway that sees hundreds of thousands of visitors annually travelling through northern BC.

The "Gold Rush" theme links it to both the Cariboo Gold Rush, that was through BC's interior, as well as the Klondike Gold Rush in the Yukon, which is tied to the Alaska Highway experience. These links, combined with the importance of Barkerville as one of BC's first national historic sites (1924), and one of only two historic towns in Canada with full interpretation and immersion into the past, create an opportunity to leverage the visitor experience planning, development, and maintenance of touring corridors in BC.

Growing the touring market will require continued and increased collaboration between municipalities and the various ministries responsible for land use, road/communication infrastructure, signage, marketing and promotion, and decision-making that considers the needs and desires of visitors. Affirming the progressive, strategic investments required between ministries that will benefit travellers and citizens alike will require a commitment to an integrated planning, development, and maintenance process. Done well along the GRT, this process could forge a new model for tourism development of key touring corridors and circle routes and demonstrate leadership that supports BC's overarching visitor experience goals.

The North/South Divide

The in-community stakeholder sessions revealed distinct differences in infrastructure, the availability of visitor activities and services and tourism development needs in the northern GRT planning area (north of Hope) versus the southern portion (New Westminster to Hope). Awareness and engagement in the GRT initiative was significantly stronger in the north than in the south, except for the key historic sites at Fort Langley and Kilby, as they tie strongly to the heritage theme of the GRT corridor and share similar target visitor profiles.

The urban nature of the Fraser Valley and its communities, and its proximity to Vancouver, lends itself to attracting a broader visitor audience that does not necessarily align fully with the target visitor profiles for the GRT. The primary visitor experience in the northern portion of the trail centers around the rural towns, stunning natural landscapes, the Fraser Canyon, and the cultural and heritage stories of the people, whereas the visitor experience in the south is more focused on outdoor recreation, agritourism, culinary and urban experiences, with heritage playing a secondary role as a demand generator.

There is opportunity to strengthen engagement in the southern part of the corridor and the demonstrated interest amongst stakeholders in attending the DDP consultation sessions sparked new interest and awareness. The Fraser River is the common natural, geographic feature that ties the north and the south together. The development needs are different in each of these areas of the corridor and both government and private industry play an integral role in responding to these needs. But by advancing opportunities for visitors to connect with the river and its stories, the overall experience of the GRT corridor can be enhanced from end to end.

DEVELOPING A HERITAGE CORRIDOR REQUIRES SUPPORT FOR HERITAGE

The GRT represents a key part of BC's history, beginning with the Indigenous people who have lived on the land dating back at least 8,000 years. Europeans arrived, following James Cook's mapping expedition in 1778.

In 1858, 30,000 gold seekers raced to the Fraser River Gold Rush, securing a license in Victoria and gathering their wares at Fort Langley before proceeding up the Fraser River to seek their fortune in the Cariboo Gold Rush. To benefit from extracting the "soft yellow stone" the Indigenous people knew of but were not commercializing, settlers from China, the USA, and other nationalities came to BC. In 1870, British Columbia became a province, and by 1924, Barkerville was recognized as a National Historic Site.

History abounds in this region, but a visible heritage comes at a cost. Preservation and education, which makes heritage accessible to modern audiences and whose costs fall to governments or not-for-profit organizations, has become a challenge. In 2009, the BC government severed funding to heritage sites and Heritage BC.[15] By 2011, pleas for citizens to write to their MLAs were initiated by Heritage BC.[16]

To date, pockets of funding can be found through various organizations including the BC Arts Council, Community Gaming Grants, Creative BC[17], and Canadian Heritage, but for many small historic sites and museums that rely on volunteers, small or seasonal staff, keeping abreast of all the potential funding sources and having the time and skill to write multiple funding proposals can be beyond the reach of those who could most benefit.

The funding challenge further extends to the various private businesses that are working to preserve heritage assets that they own, but for which they are unable to secure insurance and ineligible for public heritage funding. Whether public or private, these heritage assets contribute to the visitor experience and visitor motivation for coming to the GRT. If the GRT is to succeed and the visitor experience is to be enhanced to grow visitation in this heritage corridor, ways to address these funding gaps must be identified.

[15]Heritage BC. (2009, October 26). Cuts hit heritage organizations. Retrieved from: http://www.heritagebc.ca/blog/cuts-hit-heritage-organizations.

[16]Heritage BC (2001, January 4). A public letter to Minister Margaret MacDermid, from Larry Foster, President of Heritage Canada asking for a renewal of BC's heritage program. Retrieved from: http://www.prrd.bc.ca/board/agendas/2011/2011-03-8946331578/pages/documents/08-C-4HeritageBC.pdf

[17]http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/arts-culture/funding

The diversity of the visitor experience along the GRT has four distinct thematic anchor, two of which represent substantial bookends. The first relates to the heritage and the Gold Rush story which, while represented throughout the corridor, is most prominent from Yale to Barkerville. The second major experience anchor is outdoor recreation and trails, which are found from the Fraser Valley through to the City of Quesnel. Investment in trail development for mountain biking, ATVing, cross-country skiing, and hiking is evident throughout the GRT region. Both the Fraser Valley Regional District and Quesnel are actively working to develop their brand positioning around trails and outdoor enjoyment to encourage visitors to come and stay.

Indigenous and culinary experiences are the third and fourth thematic anchors, and are found in pockets along the GRT, with areas such as the Fraser Valley, Lillooet, and the North Cariboo working actively to develop culinary and agri-tourism opportunities. Both these thematic anchors represent potential to enhance the tourism offer.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE THEMES

Against the backdrop of the identified themes, a common concern related to the need for more visitor activities to supplement the driving experience emerged during stakeholder conversations. To strengthen the visitor experience, activities and offers aligned with the priority targets — Authentic Experiencers, Cultural History Buffs, and Cultural Explorers who primarily travel independently and have a strong desire for authentic engagement and learning when they travel — are needed. While there are a variety of historic sites along the route, it was felt that expansion in both the volume and diversity of available activities would entice visitors to stay longer and spend more.

To strategically build the visitor experience in a way that establishes a strong identity for the GRT requires focus and a commitment to invest in a strategic and overarching suite of development opportunities.

Highlights the four development themes that emerged from discussions with stakeholders. Within the heritage and story theme, the prominent Cariboo Gold Rush story is central to the corridor. The Gold Rush story is evidenced throughout the GRT but is more prominent from Yale to Barkerville. Stakeholder input indicated that the breadth and richness of stories goes well beyond the gold rush and showcasing these broader stories would increase the appeal and diversity of the GRT for the visitor. The heritage and story theme bring to life the "history" element of the "history shaped by nature" brand.

Outdoor recreation and trails are the second major theme, representing the "nature" part of the "history shaped by nature" brand. This is strongly evidenced in the Fraser Valley, where stakeholders have demonstrated a collective interest in working together between municipalities to grow their potential in this area. This theme stretches all the way to Quesnel, where this city is positioning itself as a place to experience nature, with heritage being a secondary theme.

Indigenous and culinary experiences can be found in nodes along the 750-km corridor and represent overarching development areas. Culinary has been included as it is touches all travellers. There are opportunities to create culinary hubs along the trail to encourage people to experience everything from local fare, to a traditional Indigenous meal, to dining like a miner. For existing restaurants, it was identified that service issues such as opening hours, seasonality, and menu diversity could all be improved to deliver better consistency in the culinary offer and enhance the visitor experience throughout the corridor.

Festivals, events, and sporting functions emerged often as local area drivers, versus long-term tourism demand generators for the GRT and its target travellers. There are a a host of events that attract significant visitors, and while they make an important contribution to visitation and revenue, many of these events lack ties relative to the four thematic anchors, to strengthen the GRT "history shaped by nature" brand. There is an opportunity to inventory existing, or develop new, events that align with the thematic anchors, but this did not emerge as a priority at this stage in the research process.

[18]http://globalnews.ca/news/2004575/fort-langley-otentik-tents-appeal-to-new-generation-of-campers/

Infrastructure Enhancements

Essential to success in increasing destination appeal for independent and group travellers is a mix of foundational infrastructure. This situation analysis identified variances in accommodations, food and beverage, trails, and amenities that would benefit from a strategic development focus.

Infrastructure — Accommodation

There is an investment need to upgrade existing accommodation that have become tired and aren't as responsive to the new, contemporary types of accommodation sought by today's travellers. Consideration should be given to the evolving visitor interest in sleeping experiences beyond a traditional hotel/inn. These accommodation options typically require less capital investment than traditional fixed-roof accommodation. With the seasonal nature of tourism in the corridor, lower capital cost accommodation options may prove to be advantageous for owners, while at the same time diversifying the available options for visitors. Fort Langley, as a Parks Canada National Historic Site, has invested in O'tentiks and reported a 150% increase in demand in 2017.[18]

Emerging non-traditional accommodation options continue to grow in the market include yurts, comfort camping/ oTENTik-style (furnished canvas tents) and sleeping spheres that provide a mid to higher-range unique offering and different price points. This type of accommodation could be helpful in alleviating shortages of cabins on fishing lakes in the north which are also very popular as a form of accommodation and are in short supply compared to demand.

Camping and RV'ing is very popular within this area, with many campgrounds sold out during the peak season. BC Parks and Rec Sites and Trails BC are working to increase the number of campsites available within BC, new sites which will be added in the GRT planning area, but demand will continue to outstrip supply.

The stakeholder survey queried the importance of seven accommodation options emerging from the stakeholder consultation. The number in brackets represents the percentage of respondents who indicated it was absolutely critical or very important to address these accommodation options.

- Renovate/improve existing accommodation (68%)
- New niche accommodation options (yurts, huts, heritage accommodation, etc.) (59%)
- More handicap accessible accommodation (57%)
- New RV sites (55%)
- More traditional campgrounds/campsites (50%)
- More higher-end accommodation (47%)
- More hostel accommodation (28%)

INFRASTRUCTURE — FOOD AND BEVERAGE.

The breadth of food and dining establishments available in the planning area is good. There is a wide variety of restaurants that deliver interesting, authentic dining experiences. Anecdotally, stakeholders suggested this diversity may not align with the visitor, plus communities north of Hope could benefit from more dining options. More research would be required to understand whether this is perception or reality.

Operating hours and staffing challenges were identified as key issues that impact the dining experience for visitors. Staffing shortages in certain areas result in restaurants having to be closed more than they might like to be. The few restaurants that are open are sometimes overwhelmed with the traffic (both business and leisure) and are inundated to the point that they cannot provide good customer service, and run out of food. This was an issue that was particularly acute in Lillooet, where there is a high concentration of construction, hydro, and mining crews working in the area.

The food and beverage options to meet demand are diversifying to meet traveller demands. Food trucks, brown bag lunches and picnics, and the increased variety and availability of higher quality, local pre-made takeaway food and meal options at retail stores, could provide lower cost solutions to the challenges experienced in the food and beverage sector. Along with requiring lower capital costs, these options have the added advantage of being easily transportable to move where there are festivals, sporting events, pow wows, rodeos, and other special occasions where people are gathered. Support to entrepreneurs to write business plans and secure start-up funding would help kick-start these types of initiatives.

[19] www.travelmarketreport.com/articles/Travelers-Increasingly-Influenced-By-Culinary-Pursuits#.WRQpFA3v-BA.linkedin

Infrastructure — Trails, Trailheads, and Amenities

Many of the communities within the GRT are developing or already have trail master plans that address the growing desire for trails as part of creating appealing communities in which to live, work, visit, and play. In most instances, these trails cater to residents and can benefit visitors, but are not primary tourism demand generators until they are connected in networks, or include multi-day, iconic routes.

The research suggests that few hiking trails are networked, with the exception of mountain biking trails in the Abbottsford/Chilliwack region, 108 Mile House, Williams Lake, and Gold Bridge/South Chilcotin Mountains. A few iconic hiking trails exist in the Hope and Stein Valley areas currently, with good potential for future development in these areas and others, such as Quesnel.

The asset inventory indicated that there are a wide variety of trails in the northern portion of the GRT that exist but that lack signage, mapping and maintenance, making them unappealing to visitors and therefore unlikely to attract increased tourism to the planning area.

ACTIVITIES/SERVICES — WATER, NATURE, AND AGRICULTURE-BASED

The popularity of water-based activities, such as kayaking, canoeing and stand-up paddle (SUP) boarding, and the rising popularity of cycling, are providing new, alternative ways for visitors to enjoy themselves in nature and be active at the same time. However, appropriate services are needed to support the growth of these types of niche activities. Enthusiasts who pursue any sport have specific needs. They may want to purchase gear, secure/access transportation, storage, repairs, rentals, etc. Destinations need to develop support services for these active travel/soft adventure segments to thrive and grow. It is sometimes assumed that these travellers will bring their own gear and equipment, but to attract higher-yield, fly-in visitors, the need for support services is/will be critical for success.

Fishing is a popular activity in the planning area — particularly for popular species like sturgeon and salmon. In the southern portion of the GRT, stakeholders have identified the need for more access points along the Fraser River for both fishing and boating. In the north, fishing needs to be supported by better access to fishing lakes and an adequate number of camping/RV sites and accommodation (e.g., cabins) to support the visitors who come to pursue this passion. Responses from the online survey indicated that 54% of respondents felt it was critical or very important to increase access and infrastructure for fishing on lakes and 38% responded that the number of boat access points on the Fraser River should be increased.

Agritourism development — which includes activities such as farm visits, winery visits, and local culinary experiences — is an opportunity that is being pursued in several communities within the region including the Fraser Valley, Lillooet, and the Northern Cariboo. Experiencing local food and cuisine appeals highly to the GRT's target travellers and culinary experiences are becoming an increasingly important influencer on destination choice. Supporting the development of agritourism experiences and incorporating local culinary choices into GRT promotion and itineraries will increase the availability of a secondary demand generator, thus enhancing the appeal of the GRT.

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

PEOPLE AND PROGRAM EXPERIENCES

A variety of paid and unpaid experiences are necessary to deliver a good destination visitor experience along the GRT corridor. The primary gap identified in the stakeholder consultations in the GRT was in purchasable, guided activities and experiences, and connections to Indigenous people, culture, arts, and crafts.

To ensure safe, responsible, and culturally appropriate access to the land and the people, while simultaneously responding to travellers desires for more authentic, meaningful experiences, and the growing demand for Indigenous tourism experiences, an opportunity exists to:

- Increase the availability of guided services for purchasable activities and experiences throughout the GRT, particularly for wildlife viewing, which stakeholders indicated was in demand but for which there were fewer guides and tours available.
- Explore if there is a willingness and interest amongst some of the 58 First Nations bands within the planning area to partner with small group tour operators, or individual experience providers, to develop and offer Indigenous experiences that feature storytellers.
- Diversify the availability of cultural experiences by identifying storytellers who could bring to life the multitude of stories about the different people who have contributed to the development of the region including Chinese, Japanese, Indigenous, European peoples as well as prospectors.
- Develop culinary experiences where visitors could learn to forage for locally-grown foods, learn about, and cook using traditional methods of the Indigenous people and early settlers.
- Examine which festivals and events might be appropriate to offer visitors an opportunity for a behind the scenes, VIP experience that could include meeting or spending time with and/or dining with a featured personality associated with the event such as a rodeo rider, musician or elder.

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS TOURISM CAPACITY BUILDING

Given the composition of this region, the large geographic area over which it is spread and the diversity of 58 First Nations bands, the approach to developing tourism would benefit from a niche/personalized approach versus a more traditional large group approach that covers generic content in a workshop format.

TOTA and NBCTA recently added Aboriginal Tourism Specialists to their staff who are responsible for providing direct support to Indigenous tourism development. In the Chilcotin Central Coast Destination Development Strategy, completed in June 2017, the need for a full-time Indigenous tourism liaison officer to support tourism development was recommended.

SUPPORT NEAR-TERM WINS AND KEY PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

Stakeholder interviews and community sessions revealed that there are many significant projects in the pipeline currently underway within the planning area, several of which have existing funding secured (these are in addition to initiatives listed in the Indigenous section.

Prioritizing support for these projects and identifying connections to the GRT (where they may not already exist) will be important to enhance the breadth and depth of visitor experiences available along the corridor from a story and product perspective.

These projects include:

- Alexandra bridge upgrade and expansion
- McAbee Fossil Site development plan
- Stein Valley Interpretive Centre plan
- Hemlock Valley Master Plan
- Stave West Master Plan
- Experience the Fraser Project
- Barkerville cultural activity and story development for Indigenous interpretation
- Lillooet heritage train excursion

EVOLVE THE GRT BRAND STORY

Since the GRT Committee launched its first efforts six years ago to benefit communities, tourism businesses and travellers alike, significant effort has been directed at developing the GRT brand and visitor communications. Amongst stakeholders, varying levels of awareness and engagement in GRT activities was evident. North of Hope there was a stronger understanding of the GRT program and a deeper sense of connection to the GRT story. In the south, awareness and engagement was lower.

Recognizing that significant work has been done to date with limited resources, stakeholder interviews and community sessions confirmed that distinguishing this trail and increasing its appeal will need to ensure the perceived visitor experience matches product realities. There is much more investment needed in energy and resources to close the gap between a potential GRT brand promise and the on-the-ground visitor experience.

It is not uncommon when a destination is branded and marketed (e.g., Great Bear Rainforest, Tumbler Ridge Geopark, Gold Rush Trail), for marketing to get ahead of product development and for community readiness to meet visitor expectations and international service standards.

The 2013 GRT *Brand Awareness and Perceptions and Consumer Survey*[20] remains aligned with the core story themes emerging from this situation analysis.

This can serve to harmonize the stories of current visitor experiences related to the grand narrative — the Cariboo Gold Rush — and the significant sub-narratives that more fully convey the richness of the opportunity.

As development occurs throughout the corridor, it must be kept in mind that while growth is desired, stakeholders expressed that any growth strategy must also look to carrying capacity management of the natural resources in the area to ensure that growth happens at a pace that can be sustained in the long-term.

Steady, Progressive Transportation, Infrastructure, and Communication Investment

AS A MAJOR TOURING CORRIDOR, transportation and communication gaps exist. Stakeholders identified that urgent attention/investment is needed to benefit visitors and locals alike. Visitors' information needs while touring, are higher than those who are getting from point A to B. The journey is just as important as the destination and therefore needs to be supported by a variety of services and amenities that contribute to the overall experience.

Ground Transportation and Washrooms

The need for improved ground transportation options was identified as important. Where the current ground infrastructure is oriented towards the cars we see on the roads today, a strong sentiment was expressed to look toward the future and developing options that respond to shifting demand (e.g., electric bikes, bike sharing, car share programs, ride sharing, etc.) as well as developing affordable public transportation options. It was also evident from stakeholder input that RV traffic is significant and growing, but the infrastructure to support the RV experience is lacking.

The need for more pull-outs at scenic viewpoints, rest stops with washrooms, RV services, and better cell service were cited by stakeholders as needed to enhance the GRT experience. Stakeholder consultations confirmed there is a desire towards investments and solutions that support long-term growth and examine future transportation needs versus what has been done in the past. This was defined by stakeholders as responding proactively to evolving modes of transportation (e.g., electric vehicles) and the changing transportation desires of tomorrow's travellers (e.g., sharing economy, low carbon footprint, etc.).

More washrooms were identified as a major priority by stakeholders in the community session. Specifically:

- Public washroom facilities in Lillooet to service the hundreds of buses arriving during peak season.
- Public market in Lillooet, or short activities of 1 hour, that bus visitors could visit quickly as they pass through town.

FOREST SERVICE ROADS play an important part of the touring infrastructure in this planning area both in providing access to more off-the-beaten-track towns, wilderness areas, campgrounds, lakes, guest ranches/fishing lodges, etc. but also as ways to create circle routes — versus back-tracking – that deliver a more interesting visitor experience. Stakeholders indicated that unsuspecting visitors head down these roads in vehicles and RVs not suitable for gravel and rough conditions. There was an expressed desire for strengthened collaboration with Ministry of Forest, Lands, Natural Resource (FLNR), who maintains these forest service roads, to identify the roads most commonly travelled by visitors and earmark them for regular maintenance and upkeep, and to provide better communication/information on forest service road conditions where tourists routinely drive.

Air Transportation

The GRT is relatively well-served by three airports in Abbottsford (international), Williams Lake, and Quesnel (domestic). However, air access still proves to be an issue on a variety of fronts.

Stakeholders identified three limitations impacting the ability to attract visitors:

- HIGH FARES, LIMITED SCHEDULE, AND CAPACITY: Fares to fly into the GRT via Williams Lake or Quesnel are high, as competition is limited. Only Central Mountain Air and Pacific Coastal fly into Williams Lake. Quesnel is only serviced by Central Mountain Air. Scheduled service is limited to one to three flights per day in each direction, depending on the day of week, on small aircraft.
- NO MAJOR CARRIERS: With the exception of Abbotsford, neither Air Canada nor WestJet have scheduled service into the GRT. Visitors arriving from other parts of Canada on a major Canadian carrier, those who wish to vacation for shorter periods of time, or those who may be heading to a destination resort/ranch vacation in the northern part of the planning area, have limited options for getting to the north other than a long drive. Forty percent (40%) of respondents to the online survey indicated that it was either critical or very important to attract a major carrier to service this planning area.
- CONNECTING FLIGHTS: Interline connections to domestic and international flights are only available through Central Mountain Air's partnership with Air Canada for flights connecting in Vancouver. Travellers (domestic or international) flying on non-Star Alliance carriers would have to purchase a separate ticket to Williams Lake or Quesnel, meaning that they are unable to take advantage of lower through-fares versus a stand-alone ticket. Passengers arriving at Vancouver International Airport and flying onward via Pacific Coastal must also change terminals to YVR South, incurring further inconvenience, and the possibility of a missed connection that is not protected as a through-ticket would be.

Visitor Servicing

The need for improved communication and signage was identified as important. While communication and technology services are plentiful in the southern portion of the planning area, from Hope north cell service diminishes the farther north one travels. Recent investments in new cell towers in the Clinton and Hell's Gate areas have improved coverage, but there are still many parts of the planning area that lack cell coverage.

With cell service limited along the main highways 1 & 97 going north, visitor centres/kiosks and print communication remains important. This is further heightened given that Highway 20, the main road connecting the GRT to the Discovery Coast Circle Trail, has little to no cell service and print materials are the only way to communicate offerings to travellers as they pass through this region and into the GRT.

As Destination BC and DMOs move increasingly towards digital communication, it is important to remember that not all regions have access to some basic connective services taken for granted in urban centres. Compound this with no regional budget within the CCCTA for print communications, efforts to establish a balance between print and online communications is needed over the next few years, then a reassessment done. Given the rapid nature of change in technology and communication, this will require review every two to three years to see if visitor needs and communication infrastructure have changed.

Human Resources, Evolutions, and Staffing Challenges

Adequate tourism staffing, new foreign ownership, and capacity building were identified as issues in this planning area.

STAFF SHORTAGES related to the availability of affordable housing, lack of potential employees with the needed skills in all areas from frontline staff, to product development, to destination management were all challenges faced by tourism stakeholders in the GRT. Tourism stakeholders in the GRT indicated while they have often attracted younger workers to fill seasonal and part-time positions, they now need to look to a variety of demographics to attract the needed staff to operate. Additionally, managers and owners said they are faced with evolving demands to attract and retain staff that need accommodation. There was a sentiment expressed that while potential for development exists and ideas are unlimited, the reality of staffing shortages is the single-most important factor limiting growth.

The need for staff — be they seasonal or year-round — is, and will remain, one of the greatest challenges for the tourism industry. Traditional approaches to recruiting, training, development, and capacity building no longer suffice in the current environment. Attracting new talent into the tourism industry requires innovative thinking — it's no longer possible to recruit staff using the methods of the past. Education about tourism careers needs to start earlier in school, new partnerships with educational institutions are needed to develop sources of skilled human resources, and recruitment efforts need to look to attracting a variety of age groups.

New, foreign ownership of tourism related businesses in the Fraser Valley was also flagged as a trend that could have benefits. Helping new owners and general managers fast-track their knowledge of the Canadian and BC tourism industry, its practices, standards, visitor markets, HR procedures, and packaging with non-foreign owned operators, would be advantageous.

Collaborate to Compete

Increasing collaboration both within communities as well as across multiple communities to increase referrals and provide better visitor information about what's available along the entire length of the corridor is key. Initiatives include:

- multi-community fam trips for visitor information and front-line staff
- working together to identify distinct stories that can be told in each community but woven together with complementarity to develop and enhance the visitor journey
- collaboratively addressing whether there is potential to grow the shoulder or winter season
- developing a harmonious approach to view-scape management
- trail and road development/ maintenance and multi vs. single-use trail designations, etc.
- investing in region-specific research

APPENDIX 5: OBJECTIVES BY PRIORITY AND IMPLEMENTATION TIMING

OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY
PRIORITY 1	
2. Land Access Improvements: Build public washroom facilities in Lillooet to service buses during peak season.	1
3. Land Access Improvements: Improve emergency services and safety for visitors and citizens alike, travelling by road along the Gold Rush Trail	1
8. Connectivity Improvements: Identify key locations for cell coverage and wi-fi hotspots along highways 1, 97, and north of Hope and ensure all businesses are aware of these and they are promoted to travellers.	1
9. Connectivity Improvements: Increase the accuracy of Google mapping along the GRT.	1
12. Optimize the benefits from MRDT status for the 3% tax to support tourism growth in the CCCTA.	1
13. Continue to invest in current and future primary heritage demand generators.	1
17. Encourage the growth and diversity of food and beverage opportunities, particularly north of Hope.	1
20. Support efforts by TIABC and tourism operators to improve government processes including the time/process to secure tenure, permits, and development approvals to decrease risk and uncertainty.	1
21. Address need for business succession planning and foreign ownership policies.	1
22. Invest in providing support and training to new foreign investors and their staff to fast-track their understanding of the Canadian tourism eco-system, laws, opportunities, and limitations.	1
23. Address the need for affordable tourism staff housing.	1
26. Establish a framework for collaborative action between CCCTA, ITBC, and ITAC to leverage the long-term destination development opportunities for the best interest of business opportunities and visitor outcomes.	1
28. Support product development through training such as Remarkable Experiences.	1
36. Share consistent messages with all businesses in the impacted wildfire areas that be used in their visitor communications.	1

OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY
PRIORITY 2	
1. Land Access Improvements: Enhance existing and develop new rest stops with washrooms and electric charging stations along Highway 1 & 97.	2
5. Land Access Improvements: Work with tourism and community stakeholders to provide the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure with clear local guidance on regional directional and interpretive signage opportunities	2
6. Public and Shared Transportation: Address the shortage of public and shared transportation options.	2
7. Rail Access: Secure the return of passenger rail service to the GRT.	2
10. Air Access Improvements: Advance targeted air improvement initiatives.	2
11. Improve the understanding with local citizens and businesses of the tourism eco-system, the value of tourism, and work collaboratively under the GRT Destination BC approved brand.	2
14. Invest in product development that broadens the breadth of visitor experiences and stories along the GRT to capture the full richness of the heritage and history of the corridor.	2
15. Strike a taskforce with provincial government and First Nations to create a local area trail strategy to guide strategic investment.	2
18. Upgrade existing accommodations that have become tired and/or don't meet modern standards for accessibility and today's visitor expectations.	2
19. Camping/RVing Accommodations: Increase the availability of recreational vehicle services along Highways 1 & 97 and more traditional campgrounds/campsites	2
24. Improve sustainable funding to not-for-profit heritage organizations in ways that allows them to strategically invest in product development, long-term asset maintenance, and maintain operations.	2
30. Foster tourism strategic tourism investment.	2
31. Safeguard the natural environment while managing strategic growth of the land and waters.	2
32. Safeguard the natural environments while managing strategic growth within the capacity of the land and communities to sustain the investments.	2
33. Harmonize land use management between government departments.	2
35. In light of the 2017 wildfires 2018 floods, and potential future risk, develop tourism focused natural disaster plans.	2

OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY
PRIORITY 3	
4. Land Access Improvements: Work collaboratively with FLNR on a tourism road inventory that will identify the FLNR road infrastructure that supports tourism operators, and lobby for the retention of those roads which are important for tourism access.	3
16. Build on the collective interest in diversifying the outdoor recreation opportunities along the GRT.	3
25. Create a consolidated list of training programs that are available to Indigenous and non-Indigenous operators (front-line to owner/operator/manager) needed and the organizations that can support delivery.	3
29. Investigate the cost of liability insurance for small operators who only need seasonal insurance. Compare to co-op models in other sectors.	3

APPENDIX 6: BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography provides a list of documents received and reviewed in creating the Situation Analysis Report that provided the foundation, along with industry input, to create this Destination Development Strategy.

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Indigenous Business Development Inventory from Indigenous Tourism Association Canada

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