

T O U R I S M P L A N

M E R R I T T / N I C O L A V A L L E Y , B C

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COMMUNITY TOURISM FOUNDATIONS

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1 PLAN SUMMARY AND PRIORITIES

This **Summary Tourism Plan** is a quick reference to the full tourism plan developed for tourism stakeholders in the Merritt/Nicola Valley area. A Tourism Plan for the Gold Country region has also been completed in 2013. The City of Merritt is a participant in the Gold Country alliance and the plans cross-reference each other.

This Tourism Plan is prepared for Merritt and the Nicola Valley through the [Community Tourism Foundations](#) program (CTF) of [Destination BC](#).

Thompson Okanagan Tourism initiated a [regional strategy](#) process in 2011 and completed the first 10-year Regional Tourism Strategy for the Thompson Okanagan region in November 2012. The launch of this strategy has provided a framework for communities and stakeholders that integrate with the national and provincial tourism strategies, while reflecting and building on what is unique and distinctive to the Thompson Okanagan region.

Taking the concept of integration one step further, this tourism plan uses the framework as the context for local tourism planning and serves as a pilot project for regional strategy integration at the community level.

Stakeholder consultation consisted of one-day workshop held February 6, 2013 in Merritt to identify goals, strategies and actions as part of a valley-wide, short term tourism development plan. A follow up meeting was held with the City of Merritt, Tourism Nicola Valley and Gold Country Tourism on, Feb 18th and between TOTA and Tourism Nicola Valley, May 9, 2013.

Workshop participants indicated a strong desire to cooperate on building an effective valley-wide tourism development effort, beginning with the implementation of this short term plan. There was general agreement that the previous Tourism Development Plan (2007) had not gained much traction and that future initiatives should be based on a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities by participating organizations and that any destination marketing/management function demonstrate industry Best Practice.

In addition to community groups, the City of Merritt, Tourism Nicola Valley and Gold Country are all participating in destination tourism activities for the area. The new tourism management model would need to reflect the partnerships required by each party to realize efficiencies utilizing limited resources. To implement this tourism plan, formalization of the working relationship between the City of Merritt, Tourism Nicola Valley and Gold Country is required.

Key objectives of the plan include increased visitation, more high-yield products and experiences, greater awareness for the Nicola Valley as a destination and a marketing program based on clear target markets.

This plan is a working document, therefore it will evolve as potential partnerships and alliances are formed and resources are leveraged during the implementation stage.

A summary of goals and objectives can be found in Appendix A.

The table on the following pages outline the key priorities and actions to move the plan forward.

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Strategic Priorities	Actions
BUILDING CAPACITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building capacity to implement the regional plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalize the working relationship between the City of Merritt, Tourism Nicola Valley and Gold Country to implement the tourism plan. Liaise with TOTA to develop the work plan, budget and to assign tasks and responsibilities for priority projects for 2013/14. Liaise with TOTA to demonstrate industry best practice in destination marketing organization operations management. Liaise with TOTA to monitor and evaluate implementation of this tourism plan annually. Liaise with TOTA to create an industry development program utilizing existing resources in partnership with Gold Country EQ sub-license. Align visitor services with destination marketing activities
POSITIONING & MARKETING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positioning the Nicola Valley, preparing for promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a task force for the brand “positioning” of the Nicola Valley. Update the brand positioning with guiding documents; graphic standards and brand book. Develop content for the implementation of the brand re-positioning (design, copy, imagery) through cooperative funding from the <i>Community Tourism Opportunities</i> program of Destination BC to implement this initiative as a pilot project with TOTA (Funding approved for 2013/14, City of Merritt). Complete phase I of the new imagery inventory pilot project between the City of Merritt and TOTA for seasonal photo shoots of the Nicola Valley (In progress). Re-develop the official tourism destination website that reflects the brand positioning with responsive design and utilizing market research and Explorer Quotient (EQ) principles. Plan for the development of the official tourism destination visitor guide for 2014 that reflects the brand positioning utilizing market research and EQ principles (City of Merritt, Tourism Nicola Valley, Gold County, TOTA). Develop a Nicola Valley cooperative marketing plan and identify promotional tactics for 2014 (City of Merritt, Tourism Nicola Valley, Gold County, TOTA).
DESTINATION EXPERIENCES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an inventory of products and organizations that would be integrated with TOTA’s experiences inventory. A regular maintenance routine would ensure the inventory is kept updated and useful as a benchmarking, tracking and planning tool. Partner with Gold Country to explore market research through Environics/Prizm to profile local visitors. (New research program - fall 2013 by TOTA).

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Strategic Priorities	Actions
DESTINATION EXPERIENCES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flagship initiative – the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Thompson Okanagan regional tourism strategy has identified the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame as a regional flagship initiative with the capability for significant tourism performance. A Business Case analysis is required to put the facility on a solid, sustainable footing so it is able to support repositioning and marketing activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance event coordination through the creation of a comprehensive event listing, followed by a host's workshop that would explore opportunities for best practices and shared resources and the eventual production of a local resource manual. Review and apply event planning best practices to identify a short list of opportunities for the expansion of existing festivals or new festival development, with an emphasis on supporting the Music Capital theme. Increase utilization of the Civic Centre during weekdays by identifying and promoting the facility to regional markets for small meetings, conferences and conventions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with TOTA and Aboriginal Tourism BC (AtBC) in the development of a regional Aboriginal Cultural tourism plan and the development of more Aboriginal experiences in the Nicola Valley.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure Signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Valley-wide Task Force that could work with the City's Signage Committee on documenting, auditing and prioritizing signage improvements. Incorporate the "re-positioning framework" within the development of a signage policy and program

2 INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction and Background

This Tourism Plan is prepared for Merritt and the Nicola Valley through the [Community Tourism Foundations](#) program (CTF) of Destination BC. Stakeholder consultation consisted of one-day workshop held February 6, 2013 in Merritt to identify goals, strategies and actions as part of a valley-wide, short term tourism development plan. A follow up meeting was held with the City of Merritt, Tourism Nicola Valley and Gold Country Tourism on, Feb 18th and between TOTA and Tourism Nicola Valley, May 9, 2013.

Thompson Okanagan Tourism initiated a [regional strategy](#) process in 2011 and completed the first 10-year Regional Tourism Strategy for the Thompson Okanagan region in November 2012. The launch of this strategy has provided a framework for communities and stakeholders that integrate with the national and provincial tourism strategies, while reflecting and building on what is unique and distinctive to the Thompson Okanagan region. Taking the concept of integration one step further, this tourism plan uses that framework as the context for local tourism planning and serves as a pilot project for regional strategy integration at the community level.

Workshop participants indicated a strong desire to cooperate on building an effective valley-wide tourism development effort, beginning with the implementation of this short term plan. There was general agreement that the previous Tourism Development Plan (2007) had not gained much traction and that future initiatives should be based on a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities by participating organizations and that any destination marketing/management function demonstrate industry Best Practice.

2.2 Provincial Context

On October 25, 2011, the [provincial tourism strategy, Gaining the Edge](#) was released as part of Canada Starts Here: The BC Jobs Plan. That five-year plan maps out key areas of focus that will help tourism fulfill its true potential, stimulating sector growth with increasing visitation, revenue and employment. Resources for communities and tourism operators can be found on the [Destination BC](#) corporate website.

2.2.1 Community Tourism Foundations Program

The [Community Tourism Foundations](#) (CTF) program provides research, customized destination and marketing assistance and dedicated resources to communities for strengthening their tourism economy. The basis of the program is a one-day workshop designed for communities that are at a relatively early stage in their tourism development. The workshop provides an opportunity for tourism stakeholders to become involved in shaping the direction of future growth and to gain a fuller appreciation of the potential role in strengthening regional tourism. While all aspects of the planning cycle are engaged, **the primary output from the workshop is an action plan that focuses on initiatives the community can pursue over the next 12 to 18 months.**

2.2.2 Community Tourism Opportunities Program

Access to marketing resources for implementing the plan is available through the [Community Tourism Opportunities](#) (CTO) program, also offered by Destination BC. Launched in 2008, the

program provides co-operative funding for eligible tourism activities. The Regional Destination Management Organization, [Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association](#), works with communities to apply for Community Tourism Opportunities support.

2.2.3 Tourism Partners Program

A separate but related program, the [Tourism Partners](#) program, gives local operators and communities the opportunity to reach a wider audience by enabling them to participate in BC branded cooperative marketing campaigns managed by their Regional Destination Management Organization.

2.3 Thompson Okanagan Regional Strategy

At the regional level, the new Thompson Okanagan ten-year [regional tourism strategy](#) (*Embracing Our Potential*, November 2012) provides the strategic framework for the development of sub-regional and community tourism plans within the region. The work in the Nicola Valley represents a pilot in developing methodology for using this framework to create alignment at the sub-regional level and community level.

The work undertaken in developing the strategy was completed by TOTA on behalf of the regional tourism industry. The following sub-sections outline elements of the strategy that are critical to the tourism planning process in the Nicola Valley.

2.3.1 A new perspective on target markets

Traditionally our markets have been looked at largely in terms of their demographic and geographic characteristics, and their activity participation. TOTA's decision to license the Canadian Tourism Commission's Explorer Quotient® (EQ) tool will assist the region's stakeholders in understanding the social and travel values that drive demand and the corresponding need to develop and position tourism product as "experiences" rather than commodities. The strategy identifies three EQ [market segments](#) with a high propensity for travel that are particularly relevant to the Thompson Okanagan: **Free Spirits**, **Cultural Explorers**, and **Authentic Experiencers**. Further details on the customer profiles – their social and travel values and what activities appeal to the different traveller types are included in **Appendix D**.

The emphasis on understanding visitors from a values perspective and the CTC's corresponding focus on developing experiences¹ permeates the Thompson Okanagan strategy and is key to strengthening the tourism industry within the Nicola Valley.

2.3.2 Thompson Okanagan's regional experience based themes

The strategy has identified five experience-based themes that are now shaping priorities and actions moving forward and are core to positioning the Thompson Okanagan as *a region of iconic and authentic quality experiences – destinations for passion, fulfillment and adventure*.

- **Identifying the iconic** – profiling and developing those truly outstanding experiences and activities associated with iconic landscapes will differentiate the region and set it apart from its competitors.

¹ See CTC, October 2011, [Experiences](#): A Toolkit for Partners of the CTC

- **Enriching local flavours** – strengthening the region’s growing emphasis on local flavours and building recognition for its culinary attributes.
- **Revealing the story** – highlighting the local and regional stories in a way that will allow visitors to make a strong emotional connection with the destination.
- **Expanding personal horizons** – identifying unique learning experiences and opportunities for self-development, recognising that learners constitute 35% of the global travel market.
- **Building authenticity** – focusing on creating a strong sense of place and opportunities for travellers to engage in immersive experiences with local communities and enjoy the sense of being where things are real and original.

These themes are illustrated in the strategy’s summary framework. This demonstrates how these themes will impact the strategic marketing and development of tourism in the coming ten years, and the implementation of associated tactics.

An emphasis on these themes will not only strengthen the concept of a regional destination, but it will also enhance the distinctiveness of sub-regions and corridors, including the Nicola Valley. The planning discussions used these themes in the workshop discussion to assist in gaining direction on regional initiatives and market positioning.

2.3.3 Planning strategically for unique growth opportunities

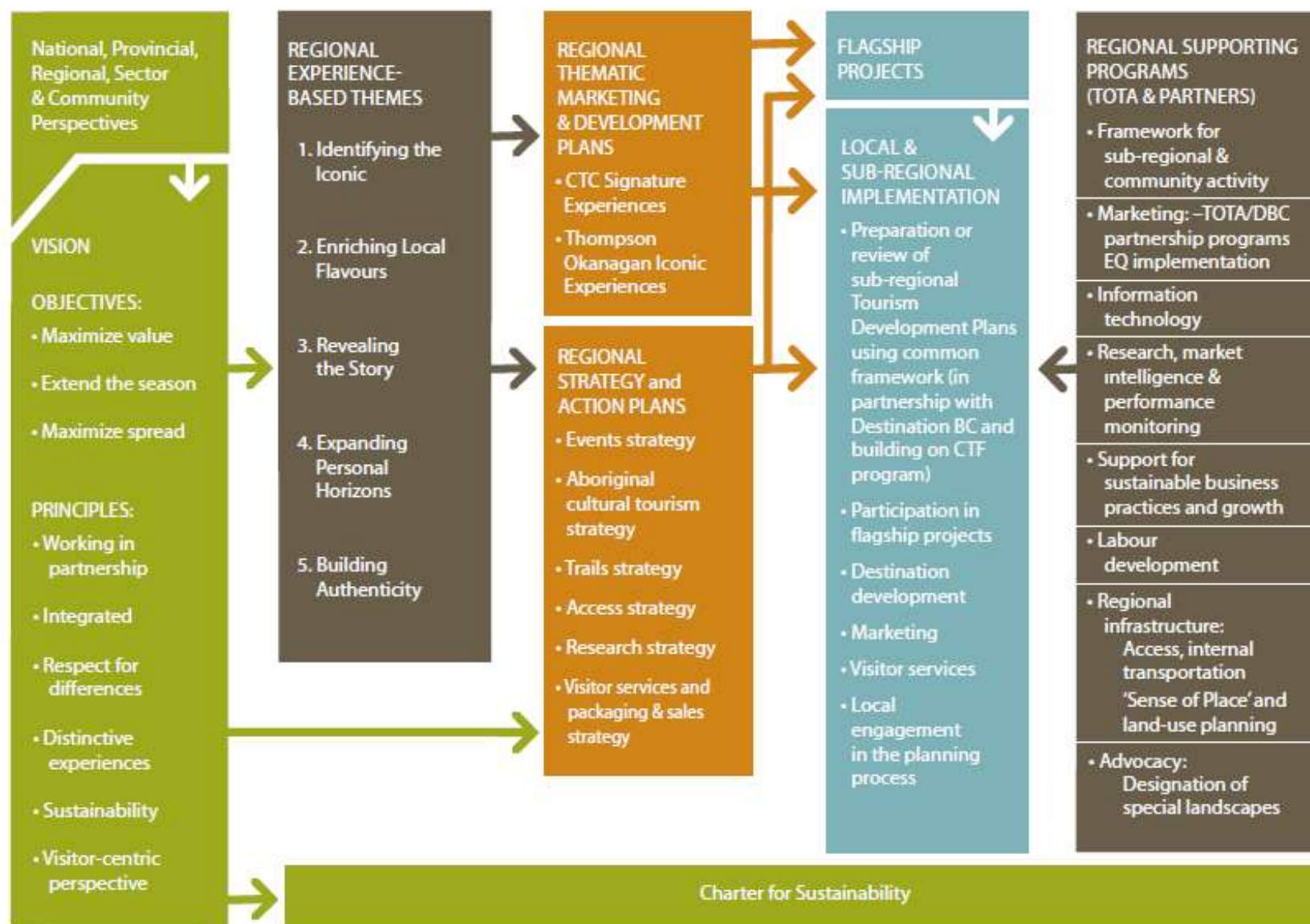
In addition to the five underlying themes and the value of using them to build a distinctive destination, the regional strategy has identified a number of other areas where the industry will benefit from further strategic planning. Local and sub-regional planning processes provide an opportunity to advance the dialogue in these areas and to ultimately contribute to the development of a series of regional strategic planning initiatives.

The areas identified include:

- Events
- Aboriginal cultural tourism
- Trails
- Access
- Research
- Visitor services / packaging and sales

The Nicola Valley workshop discussion provided an opportunity to look at a number of these areas in a preliminary manner. Given this emphasis on further strategic planning at the regional level and the work that TOTA anticipates completing in the strategy implementation phases, this plan should be regarded as a working document – one that can be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect progress and new regional initiatives.

TEN-YEAR TOURISM REGIONAL STRATEGY



3 DEVELOPING THE PLAN

3.1 The rationale

A tourism plan for the Nicola Valley can benefit stakeholders through the following:

- **Relevance and leverage** – by giving local plans a greater degree of traction by raising the profile of initiatives that have relevance to the entire valley and building a stronger association between individual products and partners.
- **Efficiency** – by improving the strategic allocation of scarce resources.
- **Competitive positioning** – by focusing on a sub-region from a visitor perspective rather than concentrating on ‘destinations’ defined by administrative or local communities that may have limited presence in the tourism marketplace.

3.2 Applying the regional strategy’s five themes to the Valley

The regional strategy’s five core experience-based themes provide a framework for further assessing the Nicola Valley and for identifying those attributes that have potential to be used as the basis of product development and positioning in the marketplace. Through assessing the Valley from the context of the strategy framework, stakeholders have identified a wide range of themes and characteristics that are reflected in the strategic priorities of this plan and have the potential to shape subsequent product development initiatives and market positioning. The assessment was based on a consideration of the following questions:

Identifying the iconic – what is unique and/or well known for your area?

Enriching local flavours – how does agriculture, local flavours and cuisine contribute to making the Nicola Valley distinctive?

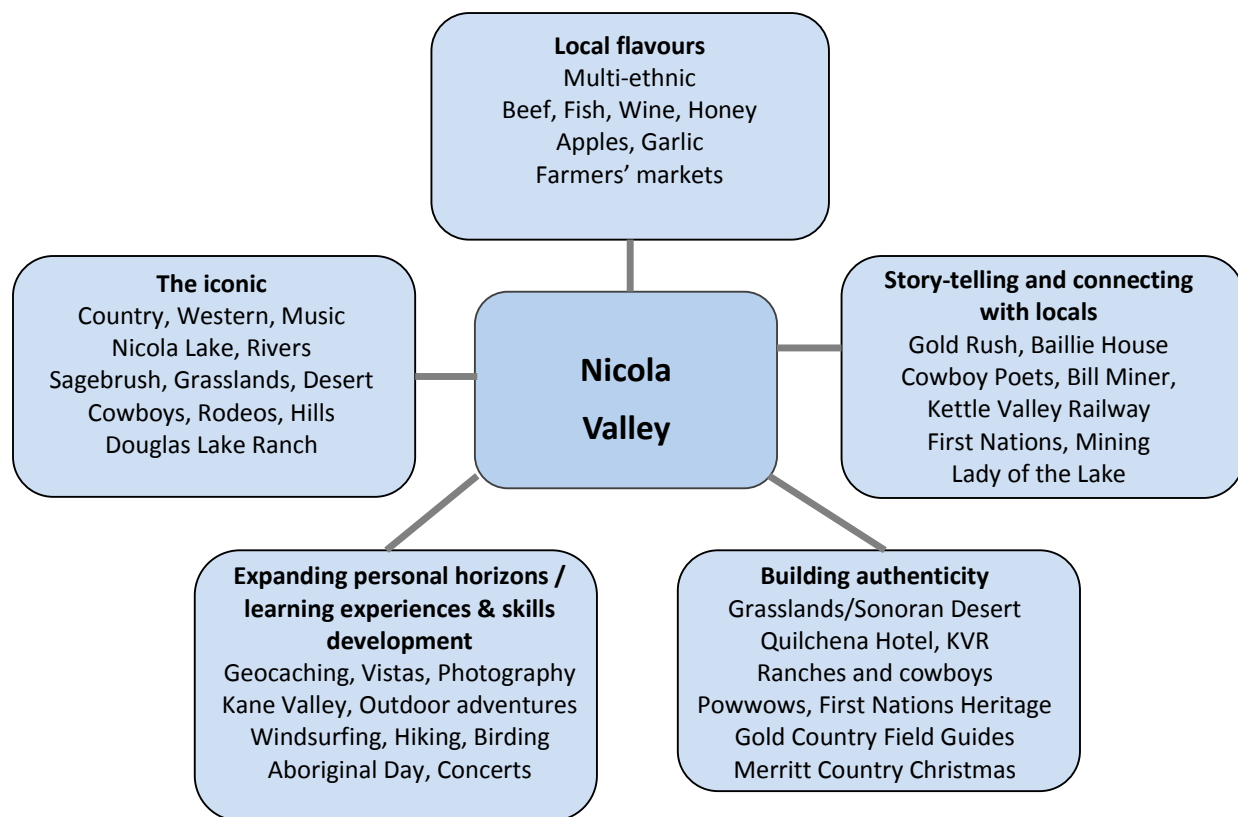
Revealing the story – what are the key stories of the Valley and who are the characters who make up your story? What is unique about the Valley’s history and modern culture?

Expanding personal horizons – what experiences can people have that provide opportunities for learning or personal fulfillment?

Building authenticity – what are those elements that make the NTV particularly distinctive and unique, and what is authentic to your history and culture?

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The key elements are presented in the following diagram. (For further detail – see **Appendix B**).



3.3 Defining areas of focus

To increase the likelihood of a collaborative approach to developing tourism within the Valley, this plan is focusing on select opportunities and constraints that are considered to have the greatest level of potential to make a difference in the shorter term and the ability to attract interest from all parties.

In identifying these areas, attention was given to opportunities that had been highlighted in earlier plans, strategies and discussions, and to thematic elements of the regional tourism strategy. These included issues and opportunities related to:

- The capacity to implement a regional tourism plan and related initiatives.

- The market positioning of the Valley in the marketplace.

- The stories and underlying physical and cultural themes associated with the Valley.

- The iconic landscapes, particularly those associated with country, western and ranch themes.

The remainder of this document outlines a strategic approach to moving forward with these focal areas, with a series of shorter-term tactics for the next 18 to 24 months. As already noted, this is a working document that should be reviewed and updated on a similar timeline. A process of regular review will allow stakeholders to identify progress, reassess priorities, and determine new tactics on the basis of progress and emerging opportunities.

3.4 Critical success factors

While identifying regional priorities and potential areas of action are essential in setting a sense of direction, collaboration amongst stakeholders is vital as many groups, organizations, businesses and government have a role in tourism. Working in a collaborative manner requires developing new approaches to dialogue, strategic decision-making, and use of resources, and will need to be nurtured in the initial phase of implementation.

While communities will continue to focus on local priorities, the development of a common planning framework and methodology that encourages intra-regional dialogue and focuses on shared objectives and strategies relating to flagship projects, destination development, marketing, and visitor services will foster a new level of cohesion. This in turn has the potential to give the Thompson Okanagan region a distinct competitive advantage to other regional destinations.

Given that this CTF planning process has been conducted within the context of a pilot project to roll out the regional strategy, Merritt and Nicola Valley have an opportunity to work closely with Thompson Okanagan Tourism to develop resources that will support this plan while contributing to the overall support of other communities in the region as they move through their planning and implementation processes.

3.5 The need for tourism planning

The local tourism industry within any community is diverse in its nature and is comprised of a range of sectors. It is essential that there be a common understanding of the characteristics and needs of these sectors.

- The process creates an increased awareness of the benefits of tourism to the community – its local economy, culture and environment.
- It should ensure that tourism development is in keeping with the character of the region.
- It allows for a longer-term focus in planning and policy implementation regardless of local political changes.
- It facilitates economic development and should be positioned as an important driver for economic growth.
- It increases the likelihood of collaboration between potential partners.
- It assists in determining the need for developing/improving community infrastructure and in planning and developing new tourism facilities.
- It creates an enhanced understanding of target markets and a greater appreciation of the need for integrated marketing communications.
- It assists in identifying the financial requirements associated with delivering tourism services effectively.

The process guiding the preparation of this plan is depicted in Figure 3-1. Tourism development in any destination requires four critical building blocks. There should be an agent ready and able to implement initiatives and be responsible for delivering on strategic objectives. It may be a single organization such as a DMO or it may be a virtual organization of partners who have

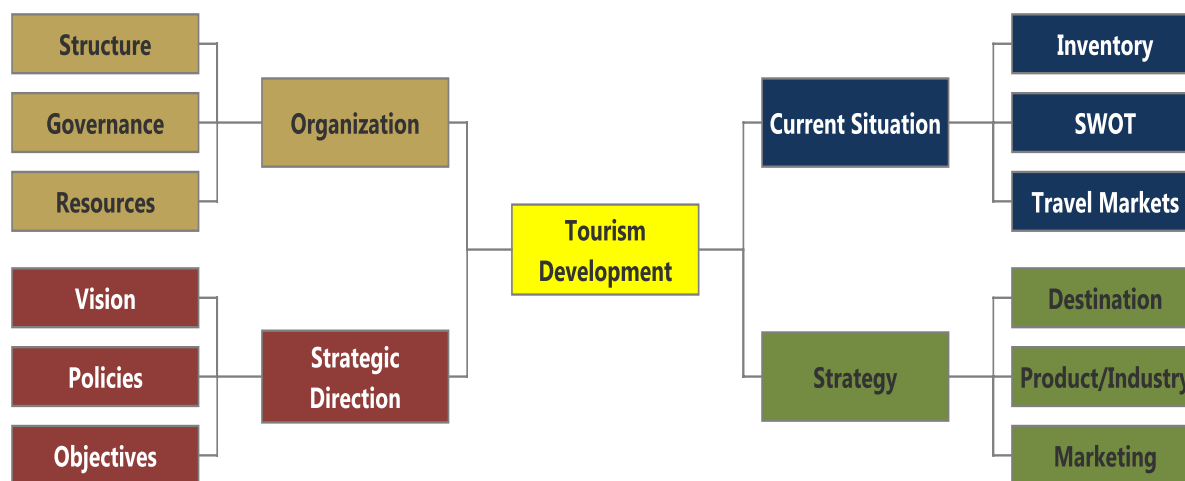
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mutually agreed to take responsibility for destination management and marketing activities. The City is an obvious participant but other organizations should also be involved.

Secondly, there must be a clear strategic direction that maps out where the organization/community wants to go. This applies to the entire destination continuum from product, industry and infrastructure elements to dealing with the marketplace. These end points then become the targets that bind all subsequent activities into a cohesive set of mutually supporting initiatives known as the strategic plan. Typical plan horizons in the tourism sector range from three to five years but the broader planning framework presumes a continuous cycle of change and adaptation that is focused well into the future. As early-stage plans are implemented, subsequent plans evolve, becoming more ambitious due to the achievements and legacies of previous plans. Without that long term perspective, the tourism development process is susceptible to failure and lack of commitment from the community and key stakeholders.

Lastly, tourism development is unlikely to succeed at all unless the community understands itself as a destination and the competitive marketplace representing all potential visitors. Documenting the “current situation” is fundamental to comprehending the competitive standing of the destination and who its primary markets are, or should be. Current situations are out of date the minute they are produced so ongoing research is required to make informed and intelligent decisions. Awareness of future trends, opportunities and challenges are equally important since we know from our own travel experiences that the nature of travel is changing rapidly. The way we plan, engage and enjoy our own holidays has changed significantly in the last two decades and for many smaller destinations this requires a complete reorientation about how they fit and compete in the marketplace. Attention to research and its use in making sound resource decisions provide an important closing link in the strategic planning cycle.

Figure 3-1 The Strategic Planning Process



3.6 A New Way of Viewing Tourism Markets

Tourism markets are not defined solely by their geographic and or demographic profiles but the combination of these with psychographics and how they use technology. Technology has changed the way destinations must communicate with potential visitors and actual visitors.

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Market segments defined by the CTC's EQ Profiles that are a fit for Merritt and the Nicola Valley include two primary explorer types Cultural Explorers and Authentic Experiencers.

	CULTURAL EXPLORERS	AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCERS
Social Values – <u>top</u> defining values	<p>Importance of Spontaneity: They enjoy an element of surprise and welcome unexpected circumstances that enrich their lives.</p> <p>Cultural Sampling: They believe that other cultures have a lot to teach them.</p> <p>Adaptability to Complexity: They are not threatened by the changes and complexities of society. In fact, they embrace complexity as a learning experience and a source of opportunity.</p> <p>Pursuit of Novelty: Trying out new things is thrilling!</p> <p>Personal Control: They feel in control of their lives and not afraid to take on moderate risk if it means they can learn something new.</p> <p>Personal Escape: They long for that which is beyond the practical and they want to be transported from their everyday life.</p> <p>Personal Challenge: They set difficult personal goals for themselves at work and at play and will finish what they start.</p>	<p>Personal Control: They focus on maintaining a sense of autonomy and self-direction in their lives. Many are retired, with time to do the things they want to do.</p> <p>Importance of Spontaneity: They enjoy surprises and the unexpected – they will welcome those that help them learn more about themselves and the world.</p> <p>Culture Sampling: They show a tendency to incorporate foreign cultures into their lives, like going to an Inuit art gallery or dining at a Thai restaurant.</p> <p>Everyday Ethics: They feel it's important to be responsible, upstanding citizens.</p> <p>Skepticism towards Advertising: Their tendency to question authority extends to commercials trying to sell something. They believe that individuals are responsible for their own decisions.</p> <p>Ecological Concern: They are concerned about the health of the planet and what that means to future generations.</p>
Social Values – <u>bottom</u> defining values	<p>Confidence in Big Business: Their tendency to reject authority leads them to question those in leadership positions, including big businesses which they do not believe have better quality simply because they are larger/better known.</p> <p>Conformity to Norms: They like to be unique, different from others and love to share their ideas and creativity.</p> <p>Ostentatious Consumption: They are not highly materialistic and are offended by ostentatious consumption.</p>	<p>Joy of Consumption: Although they are relatively affluent and confident financially, they are not avid consumers.</p> <p>Living Virtually: They want to connect with the real world authentically and are not content to do so by way of TV, computers or the internet.</p> <p>Importance of Brand: They care little about brands – but they're not afraid to pay for quality if it matches their values.</p>
Travel Values – <u>will seek</u>	<p>Constant Travel: Always excited about the next trip.</p> <p>Living History/Culture: Love to learn about and absorb themselves in the ancient history, as well as the modern cultures of the places they visit.</p> <p>The Beauty of Nature: Will choose destinations that provide opportunities to experience natural beauty.</p> <p>Fun, Shared Experiences: Travel is a journey, not the destination, and is best experienced with like-minded companions who like to have fun while learning.</p> <p>Going with the Flow: Prefer a free and spontaneous approach to seeing the sights.</p>	<p>Living History/Culture: Love to learn about and absorb themselves in the ancient history, as well as the modern cultures, of the places they visit.</p> <p>To Understand Cultural Differences: While they are not high on the trend Comparison Travel, they love to observe the difference between destinations.</p>

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	CULTURAL EXPLORERS	AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCERS
Travel Values – <u>will avoid</u>	<p>Luxury/Comfort-seeking: This EQ type seeks an authentic experience and doesn't need to be pampered in commercial hotels and have experiences just like home.</p> <p>Group/Checklist Travel: Prefer not to be constrained to “tourist” schedules or destinations, and will chart their own courses.</p>	<p>Hedonistic Rejuvenation/Comfort-seeking: This EQ type does not shy away from living like the locals do. They like to be in control while they vacation, and don't need to be pampered and have everything taken care of for them.</p> <p>Escape: These travelers do not feel overwhelmed by life. Travel is not about escape for them, but about personal development and learning instead.</p>
Top 10 most appealing activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marine life viewing – 81% 2. Wildlife viewing – land-based animals & bird watching – 78% 3. Dining at restaurants offering local ingredients – 78% 4. Visiting national, provincial/state parks to view wildlife etc. – 77% 5. Visiting well-known natural wonders – 76% 6. Visiting small towns and villages – 76% 7. Visiting national, provincial/state parks to visit interpretive centres etc. – 75% 8. Visiting well-known historic sites and buildings – 73% 9. Interacting with locals – 73% 10. Visiting world heritage sites – 72% 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marine life viewing – 80% 2. Wildlife viewing – land-based animals & bird watching – 78% 3. Dining at restaurants offering local ingredients – 74% 4. Seeing beautiful coastlines, beaches – 74% 5. Visiting well-known historic sites and buildings – 73% 6. Visiting national, provincial/state parks to view wildlife etc. – 72% 7. Visiting small towns and villages – 72% 8. Visiting well-known natural wonders – 72% 9. Visiting national, provincial/state parks to visit interpretive centres etc. – 71% 10. Viewing Northern and Southern lights – 67%
Experience Appeal	<p>Cultural Explorers are more likely than other travellers to be interested in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nature Observation Activities 2. Exhibits, Architecture, Historic Sites/Buildings, Museums 3. Sightseeing Activities 4. Accommodation-related Activities 5. Water-based Outdoor Activities 6. Hands-on Learning Activities 7. Festivals, Events & Spectator Sports 8. Outdoor/Nature Sports & Activities 9. Winter Outdoor Activities <p>Cultural Explorers are also interested in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shopping, Dining and Other Food-related Activities 2. Entertainment, Performing Arts and Amusement Parks 3. Cruises & Touring 	<p>Authentic Experiencers are more likely than other travellers to be interested in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exhibits, Architecture, Historic Sites/Buildings, Museums <p>Authentic Experiencers are also interested in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nature Observation Activities 2. Sightseeing Activities 3. Shopping, Dining and Other Food-related Activities 4. Entertainment, Performing Arts and Amusement Parks 5. Accommodation-related Activities 6. Cruises & Touring 7. Water-based Outdoor Activities 8. Hands-on Learning Activities 9. Festivals, Events & Spectator Sports 10. Outdoor/Nature Sports & Activities 11. Winter Outdoor Activities

For further details on country-specific profiles – see: CTC, 2013, *EQ Profiles*. This document summarizes the 2012 series profiles for the three segments in Canada and Canada's core international markets – Australia, France, Germany, UK and USA. 2009 profile material is available for Mexico, China, Japan and South Korea.

3.7 Planning process / methodology

The content of this report was based primarily on a literature review, including web-based resources as well as tourism trend and market research provided by Destination BC. Plan direction and content was based on the results of the February planning workshop and integration of the Thompson Okanagan Regional Strategy, the first of its kind in BC.

Key content covered at the workshop included:

- Brief overview of Destination BC and the Community Tourism Foundations program, including the role of Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA)
- Review opportunities to work with Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association as a representative of Destination BC
- Review current market trends, including characteristics of existing visitor markets
- Local tourism planning context in the Nicola Valley and review existing tourism planning materials and initiatives
- Review strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of tourism in the Nicola Valley
- Discuss the tourism vision and objectives for the next year to 18 months
- Determine appropriate next steps in the Nicola Valley's tourism development
- Discuss roles and responsibilities for tourism activities within the community

The workshop itself was divided into three phases:

- Destination BC and TOTA presentation
- A review of the Nicola Valley's current tourism situation was undertaken to set the context for further discussion of planning opportunities and priorities.
- The remainder of the workshop was dedicated to sessions for identifying vision/goals, strategies, action planning and roles/responsibilities for implementation. Participants worked in breakout groups and then reported back in a facilitated group discussion. The feedback was summarized and recorded and all session notes retained.

4 DESTINATION OVERVIEW

4.1 Study Area and Destination Setting

The Nicola Valley is roughly contiguous with the boundaries of the Merritt Local Health Area, as shown in 4-1. It is located in the southern interior of British Columbia, extending from Douglas Lake Ranch in the east to the Coldwater River headwaters in the west. Primary access is along the Highway 5 and 5A, the Coquihalla and Coquihalla Connector, respectively. Merritt and the Nicola Valley is the gateway to the southern interior for the large majority of highway travellers in the Lower Mainland. In 2011, the population of the City of Merritt was 7,113. The population for the Nicola Valley is approximately 15,000.

Figure 4-1 Nicola Valley



The main access to the Nicola Valley is via the Coquihalla Highway between Hope and Kamloops. Other access routes include Highway 8 from Spence's Bridge, Highway 97C from

Ashcroft, Logan Lake and Kelowna, and Highway 5A from Princeton. Driving time from Vancouver is 3 hours, 90 minutes from Kelowna, and less than an hour from Kamloops.

The geographic area for the purposes of marketing and promoting Nicola Valley include the City of Merritt and Areas M and N of the Thompson Nicola Regional District. Communities and hamlets include Merritt, Aspen Grove, Brookmere, Lower Nicola, Quilchena, Douglas Plateau, Coldwater Indian Band, Nooaitch Indian Band, Upper Nicola Indian Band, Lower Nicola Indian Band, and Shackan Indian Band.

Recognizing that visitors do not distinguish a destination by political boundaries but rather the attraction base in the area, the tourism marketing boundaries are:

- North to: Logan Lake and Copper Desert Country
- South to: Okanagan Similkameen
- East to: Central Okanagan
- West to: Logan Lake and Algate

Merritt and Nicola Valley are included in the [Gold Country](#) brand which includes the geographic areas of: 70 Mile House, Ashcroft, Aspen Grove, Brookmere, Cache Creek, Clinton, Copper Creek, Deadman Valley, Douglas Lake, Green Lake, Hat Creek Ranch, Jesmond, Lillooet, Logan Lake, Loon Lake, Lower Nicola, Lytton, Merritt, Nicola, Quilchena, Savona, Spences Bridge, Tunkwa Lake and Walhachin.

The Nicola Valley and surrounding areas comprise a diversity of ecosystems, including moist and dry forests, grasslands, sagebrush, alpine meadows and many types of wetlands. The range of wildlife and vegetation in the valley varies with terrain and elevation, and the entire Nicola Valley is filled with natural attractions including 200 lakes. The surrounding Merritt Forest District supports stands of Engelmann spruce, lodgepole pine, and subalpine fir at higher elevations; Douglas fir and ponderosa pine are found on the lower benchlands. Extensive grasslands also occur at low-elevation areas, particularly toward Merritt. Moose, mule deer, bears, and grouse are the main wildlife species while small numbers of elk and mountain goats find refuge in the south.

Wind erosion has created unique formations in the walls of Windy Canyon near Merritt, and ancient Glacial Shore Lines of 10,000-year-old glacial lakes are visible in the grasslands, particularly along Highway 5A north of Merritt. Ancient volcanic Lava Cliffs can be viewed along the hiking trail at Monck Provincial Park, Hoodoos can be found along Highway 8, west of Merritt towards Spence's Bridge.

4.2 Current Situation

The Current Situation Analysis is provided in **Appendix B**. A summary of key elements of the analysis are provided in the following paragraphs.

Tourism will continue to grow as an industry, but changing conditions, including demographic and activity trends and the value of the dollar, are benefiting some regions but not others. Even in the Thompson Okanagan region, some communities are experiencing increased visitor spending while others are stable or declining.

COMMUNITY TOURISM FOUNDATIONS

Between 2004 and 2012 Provincial Visitor Centre at Merritt attendance has increased, but visitation is highly seasonal and considerable volumes of highway traffic bypass the area.

From a competitive standpoint, the Nicola Valley greatest strengths are its strategic location linking the Lower Mainland to the interior of BC, its country and western heritage and outdoor adventures. However, the lack of cooperation among key stakeholders, ongoing funding challenges, low levels of brand awareness and the lack of shopping and services are hindering industry expansion. The major opportunities include tour product that would increase visitor levels and spending, greater engagement of regional partnerships with organizations like Gold Country and TOTA, development of authentic experiences that reinforce the country and western brand and expansion of events that bring in a greater share of highway traffic than is now the case.

The lack of cooperation among stakeholders is the leading threat to future tourism development. There are important issues of organizational leadership and collaboration that will have to be resolved if the Nicola Valley is to increase its tourism economy. This will be all the more important as travel markets change and competition increases from other communities for scarce travel expenditures.

From an organization and funding perspective, there is considerable uncertainty in the Nicola Valley at this time. There are at least 15 organizations involved directly or indirectly in development, from local government and First Nations to destination attractions and destination marketing organizations (DMO) such as Tourism Nicola Valley and Gold Country. The City of Merritt funds several tourism initiatives that include infrastructure, non-profit societies, Baillie House visitor services and some marketing promotion. The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) works with the City of Merritt and Gold Country on tourism marketing partnerships.

Key plans/strategies to support tourism management in 2013/14 include the following:

- CTF Merritt/Nicola Valley Community Tourism Plan 2013/14 (i.e., this plan)
- City of Merritt – economic development strategy – in progress
- Tourism Nicola Valley – annual action plan – to be developed
- Gold Country Tourism – Community Tourism Plan 2013/14 (Workshop scheduled Aug 12, 2013 Community Tourism Foundations program)
- Thompson Okanagan Regional Strategy – Embracing Our Potential^[2]
- Province of BC, Destination BC tourism strategy, [Gaining the Edge](#).

Perhaps the greatest need is cooperation toward a unified approach to delivery of services. This does not necessarily mean the creation of a single organization or centrally-run DMO. But there should be a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities, commitment to best practices, and coordination dedication of resources toward implementation.

^[2] <http://www.totabc.org/corporateSite/information-about/our-latest-projects/regional-strategy/>

5 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Participants in the planning workshop were asked to consider high level initiatives that might be considered for this plan in accordance with the guidelines provided in the Regional Strategy. The full results are presented in **Appendix C**.

All strategies are considered candidates for implementation in the future, but because of the focus of this plan on the next 12 to 18 months, priority is given to initiatives that are considered foundational for effective destination development and management.

5.1 Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this plan is threefold:

- Produce a short term action plan that will maximize partnerships and marketing funds available from TOTA
- Create better awareness and understanding of best practices in destination management
- Reach a common understanding among key stakeholders on the best way forward for long term planning and development.

This is not a long term plan and the expectation is that the Nicola Valley will continue to engage in the strategic planning process by monitoring and evaluating activities, and then refining, resourcing and implementing a longer term plan that is able to follow through on the vision and objectives in this plan.

5.2 Vision

The vision statement from the 2007 Merritt Tourism Plan was as follows:

Tourism Merritt will grow tourism by building on Merritt's strengths as a country/western themed destination within the context of a small and sustainable community.

This statement was reviewed and discussed at the workshop and the following observations made:

- Tourism Merritt does not exist
- Refers to Merritt and not the Nicola Valley
- Country/western may appear to be referring to music rather than to other cultural aspects
- Does not resonate as authentic
- Does not address First Nations
- Does not address the outdoors
- Should be more inclusive not exclusive
- Should refer to unique location
- Should refer to what the region should be not how it will be done

Based on this feedback the following vision is proposed. It stresses a future state that inspires and provides direction for all levels of tourism development.

The Nicola Valley is a thriving visitor destination offering authentic country, western and outdoor experiences. Visitors enjoy a full range of quality hospitality services and are exposed to the allure of the valley's fascinating history, heritage and culture. The millions of highway travellers that pass through the region annually have greater awareness of what makes the region special and are venturing off the beaten path. A welcoming atmosphere and convenient access to tours and events encourage a greater sense of exploration and discovery, leading to longer stays. Tourism planning and development is coordinated, collaborative and focused on realizing the Nicola Valley's potential as a visitor destination.

5.3 Goals and Objectives

The following goals were identified at the workshop:

1. *Increased visitation* (Number of visitors, Overnight stays)
2. *More high-yield products and experiences*
3. *Greater awareness for the Nicola Valley as a destination*
4. *Marketing program based on clear target markets*
5. *A Best Practice destination management organization (DMO)*

The objectives can be found in the following sections and are summarized in Appendix A.

5.4 Prominent Themes and Stories

Participants at the February 6 planning workshop were asked to identify local themes that aligned with the five regional themes set out in the Thompson Okanagan Regional Strategy:

- Identifying the iconic – what is unique and or well known for your area?
- Enriching local flavours – how does agriculture, local flavours and cuisine contribute to making the region distinctive?
- Revealing the story – what are the key stories of the Nicola Valley and who are the characters who make up your story? What is unique about the Valley's history and modern culture?
- Expanding personal horizons – what experiences can people have that provide opportunities for learning or personal fulfillment?
- Building authenticity – what are those elements that make the Nicola Valley particularly distinctive and unique, and what is authentic to your history and culture?

The results of this exercise are presented in Appendix C Workshop Results, Table 7. The following themes provide a very high level summary of that content:

Valley sagebrush to mountain lakes; Western heritage, living Cowboys and First Nations communities; Music – Country Music Capital of Canada

6 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES - TOURISM MANAGEMENT

6.1 Building Capacity: Tourism Management for the City of Merritt and the Nicola Valley

Objective: Establish a tourism management model that defines the role of the City of Merritt in tourism; and in partnership with Tourism Nicola Valley and Gold Country, both regional organizations.

Rationale: Building capacity in small communities is an ongoing challenge as resources are limited, both financial and human. Tourism management requires partnerships to be successful, however tourism champions and community groups may come and go over the years resulting in inconsistency of tourism service delivery. By identifying the key tourism functions, a framework for partnerships can be developed. From this process annual plans and allocation of resources (human and financial) can then be considered.

Strategies:

1. Summarize the current key tourism activities by the City of Merritt, Tourism Nicola Valley, Gold Country, Thompson Okanagan Tourism and Destination BC. Refer to Appendix B for a start to this list.
2. Identify key partnerships by function and or projects.
3. Develop a work plan and budget for key initiatives and identify who will take the lead.
4. Determine an evaluation and reporting mechanism.

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- Led by City of Merritt, with assistance by TOTA. Consult with Tourism Nicola Valley, Gold Country and community groups.
- TOTA to facilitate process and draft tourism management framework document in preparation for adoption by partners
- Moderate time commitment

Tourism Functions

The following table outlines the functions of community tourism development and the roles of governments and organizations in the delivery of tourism services. Management models vary by community and change over time due to a variety of circumstances. A key trend in the past decade in British Columbia is the tourism function forming part of economic development and for destinations with adequate resources, establishment of stand-alone destination marketing organization (DMO). Sometimes the DMOs expand their mandate to include destination development functions known as Destination *Management* Organizations.

COMMUNITY TOURISM FOUNDATIONS

Table: Tourism Management Functions

Service	Primary function	Typical Delivery Agencies
Visitor Services	Operations of Visitor Centres (or information booths) and responding to visitor inquiries. Also known as “internal marketing” focuses on local initiatives within the community. Could include marketing materials.	Chambers of commerce, destination marketing organizations, economic development organizations, local government. Typically by Fee-for-service agreements.
Destination Marketing/Management	Marketing the area as a visitor destination is the primary activity, expanded mandates of product and industry development which classify the “DMO” as a management role. This primarily involves promoting and partnering with industry to promote the area “outside” of the community. Community and or destination branding.	Dedicated destination marketing/management organizations, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, local/regional government. Local/regional government/DMO/
Product and Industry Development	Identification, creation, expansion and attraction of activities, events and attractions (i.e. tourism products). Also includes services to businesses to improve their competitiveness (quality assurance programs, training, networking, packaging, disseminating information, etc.).	Economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, government agencies, education institutions, destination marketing/management organizations, private sector
Destination and Infrastructure Development	Infrastructure and community development; includes, transportation and municipal services, facilities, designated tourism areas, parks, trail systems, as well as funding, policy, strategic plans, Official Community Plans, supporting bylaws and community plans that identify tourism as a growth opportunity.	Local, regional, provincial and federal government

Current Tourism Function Delivery in the Merritt Nicola Valley Area

Visitor Services	Destination Marketing	Product and Industry Development	Destination and Infrastructure Development
Baillie House, Fee for Service Agreement by the City of Merritt Provincial Visitor Centre – Destination BC	City of Merritt Tourism Nicola Valley Gold Country Communities	Not addressed	City of Merritt and Thompson Nicola Regional District Areas M, N First Nations

Tourism Nicola Valley formed as a non-profit society in 2012 to manage a voluntarily collection of funds from a select group of accommodation providers. Currently Tourism Nicola Valley has established a board of directors comprised of the hotels contributing to the funding. A Marketing Advisory Committee (MAC) of tourism stakeholders has been established of which a City of Merritt council liaison position is available for appointment. Prior to this, the [Municipal and Regional District Tax](#) was collected but ceased in 2012.

The Tourism Nicola Valley situation is uncommon in that Tourism Nicola Valley is funded by a volunteer marketing group who desire to work under a community stakeholder tourism model, which implies inclusiveness of the community tourism stakeholders and a formal commitment to industry best practices.

Tourism Nicola Valley is seeking clarity of roles with tourism service delivery and this tourism plan is intended to provide a framework for discussion for the City of Merritt, Tourism Nicola Valley and Gold Country Communities, who all have a direct role in tourism marketing in the region.

The City of Merritt is a member of the Gold Country Communities Society whose mandate is to market the Gold Country area. The City contributes financially to the alliance and they hold a seat on the board of directors. Further the City of Merritt has been working with Destination BC through the regional representative Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association with pilot projects for image bank and the roll out of the regional strategy in tourism planning, which includes this Plan. Gold Country is also working with Destination BC through TOTA, who will be developing the first Tourism Plan for the area commencing with a stakeholder workshop scheduled for August 12, 2013.

6.2 Tourism Management Best Practices – Destination Marketing/Management Organizations

Objective: Establish a destination marketing/management best practice guide appropriate for a small community.

Rationale: There is a trend toward greater professionalism with regard to destination management in North America. Accountability by the agencies that represent community stakeholders is being demonstrated through the adoption of “best practices” in the tourism industry. While accreditation programs are geared toward larger organizations (DMOs), the

principles apply to any entity that is accountable to stakeholders. Adoption of best practice will result in efficiency and effectiveness of operations management for organizations.

Strategies:

5. Adopt best practice for tourism management using international guidelines as a resource
6. Develop a localized version of international best practice appropriate for small communities in the British Columbia context
7. Determine a monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanism

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- Led by TOTA in partnership with the City of Merritt and Tourism Nicola Valley as a pilot project for communities in British Columbia
- TOTA to facilitate the process and draft documentation for adoption by partners
- Moderate time commitment

Tourism Nicola Valley has committed to developing a destination marketing organization model that demonstrates best practices.

On January 08, 2013, the City of Merritt passed a council resolution to draft a policy... “That the City of Merritt acknowledge the importance of a cooperative, regional approach to tourism marketing and work with Tourism Nicola Valley to form a Best Practice DMO, supporting both Merritt tourism stakeholders and those within the Nicola Valley.

Currently there is no provincial or national accreditation program in BC, or Canada, however there is an international accreditation program through [Destination Marketing Association International](#) (DMAI). The [Destination Marketing Accreditation Program](#) (DMAP) is geared toward larger DMOs therefore the program is not recommended for smaller communities. Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association holds this designation and through a pilot project with Merritt/Nicola Valley will assist in supplying resources to support those who aspire to achieve DMO best practice standards.

The DMAP resource document [Domains, Standards & Essential Elements](#), January 2011 provides a check list of sixteen categories of standards to voluntarily comply with. They include: governance, finance, human resources, technology, marketing, visitor services, group services, sales, communications, membership, management and facilities, brand management, destination development, research/market intelligence, innovation and stakeholder relationships.

Grant Thorton produced, *Best Practices for the Effective Use of Additional Hotel Room Tax Revenue in British Columbia*, in 2007, which offers some insights into how BC DMOs are operating. The report lists best practices by the following categories and could be used as a resource: Mandate/primary purpose, organizational structure, funding model, financial management, information technology, research and market intelligence, planning, stakeholder relationships; performance monitoring, evaluation & reporting; governance and human resource management.

6.3 Industry and Professional Development

Objective: Establish an industry development program that supports the needs of local tourism business operators and organizations.

Rationale: A more diverse, competitive and innovative tourism sector will benefit from the promotion and facilitation of quality, service and professional standards. It is through tourism operators themselves that the benefits expected from the implementation of this tourism plan will be realized. More visitors, longer stays and higher spending will translate directly into increased occupancies and yields, employment, and capital investment among operators. Creating this positive cycle requires that industry meet standards in service quality, marketing and overall business development so the visitor experience is truly enriched and leads to a more sustainable base. Most communities in BC are experiencing some form of skill and/or labour shortage. As the area develops, the need for skill development and labour supply will have to be addressed. Promoting product will not be effective unless the product meets or exceeds the expectations of the target market. The brand promise that is made through marketing communications must be in line with the products and services being offered. As Merritt/Nicola Valley develops its tourism opportunities, both individual businesses and the collective industry will require professional development.

8. Collect and disseminate existing resources to assist operators with accessible information via the Internet
9. Host a workshop on resources and samples of best practice

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- Led TOTA in partnership with the City of Merritt and Tourism Nicola Valley as a pilot project for communities in British Columbia
- TOTA to supply content for website content
- Minimal time commitment
- Costs: Workshop to be determined

7 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES - DESTINATION EXPERIENCES

This chapter addresses destination development, which refers to the community itself and the causal linkages it has with the tourism economy in terms of public policy, land use, resource management, physical development, infrastructure, business climate, human resources and other programs. Product development (destination experiences) primarily involves the private sector and its investment and contributions to goods and services consumed by visitor markets.

7.1 Research

Tourism management requires current information about the tourism industry at the local, regional, provincial, national and international level. Ongoing research is vital to success, as markets and situations are constantly changing. Compiling research through the regional, provincial and national destination marketing organizations, government at all levels, sector associations and other sources is an ongoing requirement. The proliferation of information sources on the Internet makes this accessibility convenient; however, time constraints and information overload can often interfere with the use of that information. A useful and easily deliverable service is the tourism information clearinghouse that provides a central access point for consumer, industry, visitor and market research.

Key sources for information includes the Canadian Tourism Commission, Destination BC and TOTA. Partnering in new research opportunities will be possible with TOTA through Gold Country as an EQ sub-licensee which will be announced in the fall of 2013.

7.1.1 Inventory of Destination, Products, Events and Stakeholders

Objective: Develop and maintain a local destination inventory of unique features, experiences, tourism products, events and stakeholders that can serve as a research base.

Rationale: In order to quantify, track and evaluate the tourism industry for trend and gap analysis, communications, industry composition, packaging and marketing, an inventory of tourism businesses and features is required.

In the 2007 Merritt Tourism Plan a tourism product inventory was initiated but has not been subsequently maintained. The February 6 planning workshop identified a need for compiling and maintaining an inventory of stakeholders, products and events. Existing information sources of tourism operators, facilities, attractions and amenities, including chamber listings, should be consolidated into a central repository of data that could be shared among stakeholders to improve awareness and encourage more communications.

TOTA is currently piloting an online database project that will create a destination features inventory that can be viewed and shared with community tourism representatives. Data can be exported for the communities' use. The draft inventory of destination features for Merritt and Nicola Valley was completed in July 2013 in Excel format and will be available for online view in the fall of 2013. TOTA is working with Destination BC to adhere to a standard classification of the industry which will also be used in database driven consumer website applications. This has been piloted in the Thompson Okanagan Region.

Strategies:

10. Compile data to create a master inventory of destination and operator information

11. Incorporate completed inventory into the official consumer website for the Nicola Valley
12. Create an additional component that would include all organizations directly or indirectly involved in tourism development and marketing. This would include government, community clubs, industry groups and individual operators.
13. Develop a maintenance schedule for the tourism inventory. Ensure the inventory is web-accessible so it can be maintained and updated as a real time snapshot of the industry. (Web access through security codes allows various users to access back-end systems remotely).

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- Led by TOTA as a pilot project with the City of Merritt with assistance of Baillie House visitor services, consult with Tourism Nicola Valley, Gold Country and other community groups as appropriate
- To be maintained by the City of Merritt through visitor services delivery agency in partnership with TOTA
- Moderate time commitment

7.2 Flagship Initiatives

Objective: Collaborate on a flagship project that is supported by the community and will enhance destination appeal.

Rationale: Flagship projects are ones that are likely to have significant regional and area impact and will play an important role in shaping the positioning of the Thompson Okanagan. The identification of such projects will be an output of the ongoing regional tourism planning process and related local initiatives. It is anticipated that these projects will play a key role in meeting the underlying objectives of the strategy and its thematic focus. They are likely to involve multiple partners and will require a significant degree of collaboration to maximize the benefits to the wider region.

The recent agreement between the Canadian Country Music Association, the Merritt Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame and the National Music Centre in Calgary has the potential to enhance the profile of the region nationally. Encouraging the implementation of the longer-term plan to build a new Hall of Fame with a performance venue and exploring opportunities to expand this visitor attraction concept provide a significant opportunity to build on the western theme and to further differentiate the Nicola Valley within the Thompson Okanagan region.

Strategies:

14. Align the current vision of the Hall of Fame with the regional strategy as a flagship initiative.
15. Create a business case analysis to ensure that the development concept viable and sustainable over the long-term

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- Led by the Merritt Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame, with support from the City of Merritt, economic development

- Long term time commitment
- Minimal \$15,000 - \$20,000 Business case

7.3 Events

7.3.1 Event Coordination

Objective: Share information and planning resources as a way of increasing the efficiency of the Valley's events schedule.

Rationale: At the February 6 workshop, it was evident from the discussion among participants that better communications between event coordinators would generate some efficiencies and lead to overall improved results. Of particular note were the difficulties in recruiting and keeping volunteers and how this might be facilitated if different events were able to share resources, as well as best practices and lessons learned.

Strategies:

16. Create an event listing as part of the product inventory
17. Organize a one-day meeting of event organizers for the purpose of brain-storming how to coordinate efforts and resources. The meeting could be co-facilitated by TOTA and have the objective of producing two outputs, an event calendar and a community event resourcing manual.

The manual would identify opportunities for joint planning and sharing in the following areas:

- Sponsorship
- Facilities
- Marketing and Advertising
- Vendors
- Entertainment
- Arts and Crafts
- Gate and Security
- Hospitality
- Volunteer Coordination

The calendar would form part of the Marketing and Advertising campaign and would include coordination with the RTown TVs, visitor guides and websites.

18. Using the output of the workshop, produce the manual and distribute to all coordinators.

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- Led by the City of Merritt, economic development with event owners
- Moderate time commitment

7.3.2 Event Development

Objective: Increase the number of event days in the Valley, either through new or expanded events.

Rationale: Festivals and events are a major element of destination development, drawing in visitors who might not normally come to the area, and providing an opportunity for bringing together residents and visitors in a festive setting. Festivals and events are an effective way of broadening both visitor markets and seasons. However, festivals can be complex, time consuming and require considerable volunteer effort. Many are driven by dedicated individuals or small groups without whom the event would not exist.

For the Nicola Valley, and specifically Merritt, there is the added issue of how to keep authentic the existing positioning statement as the “Country Music Capital of Canada”. Music is a performing art and without regular or at least periodic country music performances, the branding is inconsistent. This situation was created with the cancellation of Musicfest.

Strategies:

19. Assemble research on best practices in festival planning and development.

Refer to: Destination BC [resources for events](#); Tourism Alberta [Events guide](#) and a US planning [example](#).

20. Review other communities in BC that have successful festivals. For reference, see Hello BC's [festival and events listings](#).

21. Using this research, identify one or two existing events that would be good candidates for development or expansion. Special consideration should be given to a music festival that provides the press and awareness that used to be associated with Musicfest and that would directly support Merritt's Country Music Capital of Canada position statement.

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- Event organizers, City of Merritt, Tourism Nicola Valley, Gold Country
- Moderate to major time commitment

7.3.3 Small Meetings and Conventions

Objective: Increase mid-week utilization of Civic Centre capacity.

Rationale: The Merritt Civic Centre is a prime location for hosting meetings, small conferences and special events. The Centre's two auditoriums, commercial kitchen and meeting rooms have enough versatility to host functions for as many as 450 guests. The Centre is also home to City leisure services programs and special events. At this time, the facility operates at a high capacity on weekends but is underutilized during the week. A facility upgrade is in progress, which will improve capacity for event and meeting hosting.

Strategies:

22. Prepare an inventory of regional meetings, conventions and events held annually or periodically by government, business, sporting, cultural and non-profit organizations.
23. Build a database of individuals and organizations that can be targeted for ongoing communications and promotions. This would include meeting and event planners, major public organizations such as Interior Health and school district and major companies such as Highland Valley Copper.

24. Enhance partnerships with the accommodation properties in the Nicola Valley to increase multiple day events that will increase overnight stays for leisure and business purposes.
25. Ensure up-to date- information and imagery is available online on the City of Merritt website for rental information

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- City of Merritt with Tourism Nicola Valley, Gold Country, event owners
- Moderate time commitment

7.4 Aboriginal Experiences

Objective: Develop an integrated First Nations' strategy with the full participation of local area First Nations.

Rationale: Research conducted by the Canadian Tourism Commission, Destination BC and the Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC (AtBC) indicates significant interest among travellers for aboriginal tourism experiences. This interest does not appear to act as a primary trip motivator (i.e. the main reason for going on a trip in the first place) but it is an activity of interest once a visitor is at a destination in BC. The CTC EQ research does clearly indicate that two key market segments for the Nicola Valley (i.e. Cultural Explorers and the Authentic Experiencers) both have a strong interest in Living History/Culture (and) love to learn about and absorb themselves in the ancient history, as well as the modern cultures, of the places they visit. Building on this interest through the development of authentic and quality Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences will enhance the destination experience for these segments. Anecdotal evidence provided at the planning workshops suggested good potential among Nicola Valley visitors, but the opportunities for engagement are limited.

Strategies:

26. Work with TOTA and Aboriginal Tourism BC (AtBC) in the development of a regional Aboriginal Cultural tourism plan. AtBC is currently working towards establishing regional plans in each of the six BC regions. This work is expected to move forward in the Thompson Okanagan in 2014.
27. Develop a protocol agreement between local governments and First Nations that establishes a cooperative framework for addressing specific tourism issues of mutual interest or concern.
28. Develop a working relationship with the AtBC regional coordinator on local delivery of their programs and assistance in creating more Aboriginal visitor experiences. Areas of opportunity include:
 - Exploration and documentation of Aboriginal oral history that can be retold and interpreted as part of the visitor experience in the Nicola Valley; and
 - Development of a Nicola Valley itinerary that could be promoted on the AtBC website – of the sixteen [itineraries](#) currently promoted by AtBC, none include the Nicola Valley.
29. Explore partnership opportunities with the local area First Nations in developing themed experiences and events, or expanding existing events.

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- First Nations with City of Merritt economic development, Tourism Nicola Valley, Gold Country, TOTA
- Moderate time commitment

7.5 Outdoor Recreation

Objective: Build more market-ready visitor experiences.

Rationale: Outdoor recreation is the number one activity visitors come to the region for. The 2007 Tourism Development Plan prioritized outdoor adventures, including fishing, hiking, horseback riding and cycling tours, as stand-alone activities and as part of an accommodation package. The Valley was seen as ideal for the type of outdoor adventures that appeal to a wide range of visitors, but that availability of those experiences was limited. The February 6, 2013 workshop also identified hard adventures such as kiting, wind surfing and sailing as emerging activities that could be better packaged and promoted.

Strategies:

30. Once the inventory and repositioning are complete, identify, evaluate and prioritize a short list of experience packages.
31. Work with interested operators to identify gaps and enhance existing or create new packages.
32. Promote the packages on the destination website as part of the EQ market positioning.

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- City of Merritt economic development, tourism operators and accommodators. TOTA for online inventory.
- Moderate time commitment.

7.6 Infrastructure

7.6.1 Signage

Objective: Create a consistent and uniformly applied signage policy for the Valley.

Rationale: A coordinated regional approach to signage is needed if the Nicola Valley is going to present its brand as a destination to the travelling public and increase visitation among the important highway market. At present, there are several different signage initiatives that should be coordinated to make better use of the available resources, and create a consistent theme/message. The City of Merritt has resumed a Committee of Council tasked with developing a signage policy for the community. Priorities include repair and upgrade of the three “Welcome to Merritt” teepee signs that greet visitors as they drive into town on highways 5 (Kamloops, Coldwater) and 97c (Kelowna). The signs are on crown land and do not conform to current provincial highway signage policy. The Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure has stated that it would allow improvements to the signs but that if removed could not be replaced. It is therefore important to upgrade the signs to acceptable standards and maintain them as gateway greetings. The other priority for the committee is to improve way-finding signage so that once

drivers leave the highways they have safe and convenient guidance to the town centre and key destinations.

Strategies:

33. Establish a signage Task Force tasked with documenting, auditing and prioritizing signage in the Valley.
34. Develop a guideline or policy for signage to regulate the program.
 - a. Obtain and review the [Community Signage Manual](#) published by the Tourism Resource Innovation Project (TRIP). This resource will provide a step by step guide to developing a community signage program.
 - b. Establish a cooperative signage process for local government, tourism and community service operators
 - c. Identify priorities for facility, community and directional signage, focusing on off-highway uses or on private property
 - d. Establish design standards
 - e. Outline procedures for funding, producing and erecting the signs
35. Prioritize improvements to the “Welcome to Merritt” highway signs. This would start with an update the 2008 Inspection Report and follow with a new cost estimate for upgrading the foundations and signs.

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- City of Merritt, Walk of Fame, Sign Owners, TOTA
- Moderate time commitment, approximately \$5,000 for producing manual; design and signage costs are to be determined.

8 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES - MARKETING

8.1 Target Markets

Using the Canadian Tourism Commission EQ program explorer types for the Nicola Valley include: Cultural Explorer's and Authentic Experiencers.

Geographic targets: BC (primarily lower mainland); Alberta and Washington state.

International visitors that frequent the region include: United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, Australia.

Key visitor types for Merritt and Nicola Valley include:

- Primarily leisure travellers (Free Independent Travellers (FIT) and small groups)
- Visiting friends and relatives
- Touring (circle tours, routes, corridors)
- Outdoor recreation (hiking, biking, fishing)
- Regional destination products (country music, western culture, ranching)
- Business travellers (small meetings, conferences and events)

8.2 Positioning and Marketing

Destination Positioning and Marketing

Objective: Align the destination market positioning to appeal to current market profiles.

Rationale: Market analysis matched with the existing product/experience (product/market matching) is essential for effective positioning and communications. Market analysis that includes detailed psychographic research has changed the tourism landscape in terms of how destinations understand markets and how they “position” themselves to appeal to those markets. Destinations change over time with product and experiences offerings and markets change as evidenced through demographic, social and economic shifts that occur in cycles. In addition with the “conversation” created by social media, monitoring the online reputation is now an essential component to brand positioning. What messages the destination pushes out must be consistent with what the experience is. Recognizing this is subjective, psychographic research becomes even more vital for planning.

Gold Country has purchased the Canadian Tourism Commission EQ sub-licence through the Thompson Okanagan Tourism [program](#) which provides the latest psychographic market research to its community partners.

Review of the current destination branding with this new research is essential for destinations to be in alignment with market demands. A brand is not a logo, or a tag line; it is the promise the community makes to deliver a visitor experience. One element of a destination brand is to create a unique identity that clearly distinguishes the destination from other areas. Consistently using the logo treatment and supporting visuals and copy (written in an appropriate style throughout all marketing communication) develops brand equity, commencing with awareness, recognition and ultimately loyalty, creating a place in the mind of the consumer that represents the positive aspects of the visitor experience. Brands consider the current strengths of the community, environment (setting), activities, attractions, characteristics, services and history through storytelling.

Effective destination marketing can only be achieved through a collaborative and cooperative approach, as the entity responsible for the community and or destination brand is not in control or ownership of all the components that impact the visitor experience.

The system to generate visitor interest must include key messaging and appropriate promotional tools to distribute throughout the purchase cycle, with adequate means to get the message out.

This includes:

- promoting awareness of the destination and its attributes;
- generating interest in the destination as a travel choice;
- be convincing as the choice over other destinations;
- indicate convenience to purchase; and
- provide an option to receive more information in the future.

Strategies:

36. Undertake a re-positioning exercise to support the destination brand. TOTA offers a free re-positioning workshop that leads stakeholders through a series of exercises that reveal the underlying story behind each experience theme as identified in the regional strategy. Outputs from this session summarize the key images, messages and story ideas that communicate the experiences of the region. This market positioning will drive the focus of effort for marketing communications and builds on the existing strengths of the destination matched to market appeal.

37. Develop an image bank that appeals to the EQ explorer types for the Valley. Imagery is a key component for an effective marketing, and the style of imagery defined by the EQ explorer types is very specific. Building an inventory of images that portrays the destination by its setting and travel experiences by season will provide the foundation for visual communications.

Currently the City of Merritt is participating in a pilot project with TOTA through photo shoots throughout the Valley. Phase I of the project will conclude after the final image list is identified as a result of the repositioning workshop noted above.

38. Develop a graphic standards manual and brand book that reflects the destination brand. As a result of the repositioning exercise creative materials will need to be developed with guidance from a graphic standards manual and brand book. These documents guide the creative team for graphic design, imagery, copy writing and use of the brand tool kit for consistent marketing communications. Building from the existing brand history, re-fresh the brand using current research and EQ design principles.

39. Develop initial content for the implementation of the brand re-positioning. Marketing requires content to be written in a specific style that appeals to each explorer type with corresponding imagery. Working from the brand book guidelines, develop graphic designs for website application, print media including visitor guide cover and page layouts, sample print advertisement, copy writing for web application and print media. This is defined by research that precisely targets the composition of imagery and style of writing.

40. **Develop a destination website utilizing responsive design techniques and EQ principles.** Technological change drives marketing communications and in the tourism industry the ability to reach markets by all devices is essential for effective communications throughout the purchase cycle. Responsive design allows one single source of information to be displayed appropriately on smart phones, Ipads and traditional desk top computers. In addition to this feature the website would need to be designed to reflect the refreshed brand and utilize new imagery and a writing style that appeals to the “EQ explorer types”.
41. **Plan for the development of the official tourism destination visitor guide and corresponding map for 2014.** While online resources dominate marketing communications, there is still demand for print materials. Establish one official visitor guide that does not create a competing environment serving both the community and the visitor. Incorporate a map outlining the key features and attributes of the destination that reflects the brand positioning and utilizing market research and EQ principles. Consider an overrun of the map for a pad map option.
42. **Expand product packaging and itinerary development.** Travellers are increasingly seeking experiences as a collection of specific products and services. It reflects the growing preference among aging travellers, especially for the bundling of the entire visitor experience into a simple, single purchase decision. This requires the provision of a coordinated range of products and services, preferably in a seamless fashion. The objective of packaging is to offer an integrated, interesting product to encourage visitors to increase their stay within the region. Include packaged experiences in marketing.

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- Partnerships to be determined: City of Merritt, Tourism Nicola Valley, Gold Country Tourism, TOTA (pilot project with TOTA, see [Similkameen Valley case study](#))
- Timeframe: September 2013-March 2014 through pilot project with TOTA for items #34, 35, 36, 37.
- Costs: \$17,200 City of Merritt with 50% shared costs, net of GST through Community Tourism Opportunities funding (CTO funding approved for timeframe above)

8.3 Integrated Promotional Mix

Objective: Establish an integrated promotional mix of marketing activities that raise awareness of the Merritt and Nicola Valley area as a travel destination with its current experience appeal based on EQ principles in key markets.

Rationale: Destination marketing is highly competitive and today’s market demands information that cuts through the “noise” of multiple sources and provides factual information. Information must coincide with the purchase cycle and segmentation of market profiles will provide the information needed to develop appropriate messaging for each traveller type.

Integrated marketing communications is the process of developing and implementing various forms of persuasive communication programs for customers and prospects over time. The goal is

to influence or directly affect the behaviour of the selected communication audience.²
Communicating the right message about the destination is required.

Strategies:

43. **Develop a Nicola Valley cooperative marketing plan for 2014.** Identify promotional tactics (City of Merritt, Tourism Nicola Valley, Gold County, TOTA).

- a. **Packaging** – Develop experience based packaging for promotion by themed campaigns with dedicated landing pages or build out special sections on the destination website (supported by advertising; print, radio and social media, contesting, etc.)
- b. **Travel shows** (currently represented through Gold Country, co-op opportunities available through TOTA)

Social media – Establish and maintain a social media program that engages the local operators that includes Facebook, Twitter and Trip Advisor for destinations. Developing a social media program that monitors and manages the destination online reputation is main stream now and requires set up and maintenance of all appropriate accounts. As part of the [Tourism Business Essentials](#) series, Destination BC offers an Online Reputation Management guide, introductory and advanced workshops and webinars for operators and destinations.

- c. **Internet Marketing** – Establish and maintain a website optimization and web marketing program. With countless studies and references indicating continued growth in Internet use for information gathering, travel planning and bookings, a responsive design website is the number one investment a community can make in marketing its destination. Through a variety of text content throughout the site itself, rankings on Google can be in the top ten without any effort. Having the local tourism businesses link to the community site will increase rankings with Google. In addition to strategically planning for content and structure for responsive design and EQ principles, allow for search engine optimization. An effective website will need to be marketed to drive traffic to the site. Web marketing is specialized and ever changing and can consist of press releases, paid and non-paid links, listing ads and banner ads where appropriate, by experience type. It is recommended the Internet marketing plan be developed by either the website design team producing the site or a specialized web marketing firm that understands tourism. As part of the Tourism Business Essentials series, Destination BC provides an [Internet Marketing guide](#).
- d. **Media Relations** – Establish a media relations program. Editorial coverage is worth thousands of dollars in equivalent advertising space and readers have more confidence in editorial copy versus advertising claims, therefore media relations is a key strategy. Media relations include responding to media requests for information, hosting familiarization (FAM) tours and generating the interest of media in order to have stories written and published. Hosting media requires cooperation amongst transportation, accommodation, food services and tour

² Source: Don Schulz, *Marketing*

businesses in order to be successful. Typically, Destination BC and the regional DMO will coordinate media trips and contact the community and operators directly, however, having support materials for these organizations or dealing with media directly is required. Targeting non-accredited media will be one opportunity. In order to serve the needs for media the following tactics are recommended.

- i. Establish a media web page. A media web page is critical to display the soft copy version key contents, which may include: quick facts, pre-written stories, story ideas, suggested itineraries, press releases, contacts, web links and availability of high-resolution digital photography for print use and B-roll for broadcast, if available.
 - ii. Hire a public relations firm. Contracting services to a public relations firm with a proven track record in tourism can be beneficial to supplement media activities.
 - iii. Utilize Destination BC media programs. Travel media relations play an integral role in maximizing consumer and trade awareness of British Columbia as a top travel destination through unpaid media coverage in key markets. Travel media include freelance journalists, travel editors, broadcasters, producers and travel trade media. The Destination BC Travel Media Relations program includes activities such as attending key media events, initiating and organizing trips for qualified media, building relationships with key media, and positioning unique story ideas with media. In addition, this division develops press kits and image bank materials for distribution to appropriate travel media.
 1. The Destination BC Visiting Journalist Program provides support of eligible costs to bring media to communities, primarily by air or ground transportation. Industry is expected to provide media with accommodations, meals and activities.
 2. Destination BC distributes a monthly email communication to their media database. Story ideas and press releases can be sent to the media department. New product information should always be forwarded for story ideas.
 - iv. Host Media FAM Tours. Media FAM tours are coordinated by TOTA with Destination BC, having a key contact at the community level working with operators and these organizations is an efficient way to utilize the programs of Destination BC.
 - v. As part of the Tourism Business Essentials series, Destination BC provides a [Travel Media Relations guide](#). Having local business understand the needs of media will increase the opportunities for media coverage.
- e. **Advertising** – Define the advertising program by target markets. While advertising can be effective by targeting key publications or websites, costs can be prohibitive and, without an integrated marketing strategy, advertising alone can

be ineffective. For the tactical marketing plan, define the advertising plan by product/market match and develop the website to coincide with the supporting information and a landing page.

- f. Types of advertising typical of community marketing:
 - i. Place marketing, using the banner “Merritt, Nicola Valley, BC” - (selling the destination; no specific businesses identified).
 - ii. Cooperative advertising using the banner “Merritt, Nicola Valley, BC” identification and sharing space and costs with tourism businesses and/or neighbouring communities in local or regional identities, sometimes with editorial content as well as display ads.
 - iii. Cooperative Banner Advertising – Supply banner artwork for the area with the call to action to the official tourism website to be partnered with a tourism business that advertises directly on its own, cooperatively promoting the destination.
- g. Promotions – Establish a promotional trip giveaways program. Promotions would be developed in cooperation with those independent businesses that want to participate in a trip giveaway program. Banded merchandise (clothing) and retail items such as books about the area could be used for small prizes. A grand prize of a trip to Merritt/Nicola Valley can be used as a motivator for people to enter the draw. Promotion of the contest could include any of the promotional mix noted above including social media. Trips can also be used for incentive-based visitor research as well.

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- Tourism Nicola Valley with partnerships to be determined
- Minimal time, fall annual planning cycle for TNV
- Costs: As budget permits

8.4 Visitor Services

Objective: Align visitor services programming with destination marketing activity and maintain the industry inventory.

Rationale: Visitor services refer to those services that directly assist visitors as they move through the purchase cycle (Awareness, Interest, Evaluation, Purchase, Experience, Loyalty). This includes fulfillment (responding to visitor inquiries). Effective visitor services programming will extend visitor stays and create a positive experience, resulting in favourable word-of-mouth referrals to others, which is one of the most common ways visitors hear about destinations. The visitor services program ensures the community has collectively contributed to creating a positive experience for the visitor.

Note: The following strategies would be developed as resources become available and are noted for further discussion.

Strategies:

44. Establish a Community Visitor Ambassador program.
45. Conduct a product FAM tour program.
46. Utilize and track the official marketing communications materials for visitor enquiries.
47. Report visitor statistics.

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- City of Merritt fee for service agreement, Baillie House; Inventory pilot project with TOTA
- Minimal time commitment
- Costs: To be determined

9 PLAN TRACKING AND COMMUNICATIONS

9.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

Objective: Establish a tracking and evaluation program that is directly associated with the goals and objectives of the tourism plan.

Rationale: Tourism development programming should be monitored and evaluated so community stakeholders, local government, funders and other partners can assess plan progress and refine the plan as circumstances change over time. This will assist with managing and allocating resources, partnership development and building a better relationship with the community by communicating expectations, outcomes and benefits.

Strategies:

48. **Maintain the strategic planning process.** Tourism development initiatives are long-term and may take years before implementation can occur. This tourism plan refers to strategies that will require further planning and is subject to resources being available. Tourism plans require updating every three years with annual action plans to move the strategies toward implementation. Each objective requires priority setting and a champion organization or group to spearhead the process. Developing an annual planning process to coincide with fiscal year-end deadlines and policy and funding cycles is required. By having an annual plan with a focus each month, the strategy can be implemented without being overwhelming. A year-in-review process provides valuable insight for future planning.
49. **Produce an annual tourism report.** A simple one page summary of key accomplishments annually to all stakeholders will provide an update of the progress of the plan implementation. New opportunities will arise during the implementation stage; the annual report provides a mechanism to record accomplishments and opportunities that were not known at the time of the tourism plan production. A sample report is available from TOTA.
50. **Track the marketing program.** Marketing activities that are meant to increase visitation, spending and visitor satisfaction all imply measurement. The essence of marketing is dynamic so standards and conventions are frequently broken, but what is important are the measurable results. The following are basic measures for key elements of the marketing program, which can be monitored and included in the year-end report:
 - Visitation and spending – activity measures used in the Situation Analysis (visitor centre statistics, room revenues)
 - Inquiries – website analytics, dedicated landing pages
 - Program effectiveness – participation rates and industry online survey.
 - Media – Calculate the advertising cost of equivalent unpaid media space.
 - Communication Tools – Track all distribution of the guides and demand for print materials
 - Social media – statistics from social media activities
 - Industry Feedback – Information and general feedback from marketing partners.

9.2 Communications

Objective: Establish a communications system and protocol to keep stakeholders informed and connected.

Rationale:

Tourism involves many stakeholders in a community and communications need to be two-way to ensure cross pollination of ideas, creating awareness of issues and challenges, collaboration and cooperation of stakeholders, involvement of policy makers, funders, etc. Technology provides effective methods for communication which will improve greater stakeholder involvement in plan implementation.

A communications program that targets all stakeholders in the community and keeps them informed about the progress of initiatives and overall plan progress is recommended. Communicating the value of the tourism industry to government and residents will be important in sustaining their support for future investment of this key economic sector. Communicating with local industry is critical for gaining momentum and creating a positive business climate needed to nurture product and destination development and program uptake.

Strategies:

51. Use the tourism inventory as a communications contact database. Utilize for broadcast email communications.
52. Create an industry section on the City of Merritt website with news, inventory information, industry and market intelligence and business advisory resources for the local industry. (TOTA is developing an online resource for each community/sub-region for access by community tourism representatives).
53. Conduct online surveys to industry. Utilize Survey Monkey cloud system for quick surveys.
54. Conduct annual tourism planning meeting: Work with TOTA to conduct an annual planning workshop.
55. Send joint press releases to local media: At appropriate intervals, draft joint press releases with tourism partners.

Roles, Resources and Risks:

- City of Merritt and Tourism Nicola Valley, with assistance from TOTA
- Minimal time commitment

10 APPENDIX A – SUMMARY OF GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Goals

The following goals were identified at the workshop:

- *Increased visitation (Number of visitors, overnight stays)*
- *More high-yield products and experiences*
- *Greater awareness for the Nicola Valley as a destination*
- *Marketing program based on clear target markets*
- *A Best Practice destination management organization (DMO)*

Objectives

Establish a tourism management model that defines the role of the City of Merritt in tourism; and in partnership with Tourism Nicola Valley and Gold Country, both regional organizations.
Establish a destination marketing/management best practice guide appropriate for a small community.
Establish an industry development program that supports the needs of local tourism business operators and organizations.
Develop and maintain a local destination inventory of unique features, experiences, tourism products, events and stakeholders that can serve as a research base.
Collaborate on a flagship project that is supported by the community and will enhance destination appeal.
Share information and planning resources as a way of increasing the efficiency of the Valley's events schedule.
Increase the number of event days in the Valley, either through new or expanded events.
Increase mid-week utilization of Civic Centre capacity.
Develop an integrated First Nations' strategy with the full participation of local area First Nations.
Build more market-ready visitor experiences.
Create a consistent and uniformly applied signage policy for the Valley.
Align the destination market positioning to appeal to current market profiles.
Establish an integrated promotional mix of marketing activities that raise awareness of the Merritt and Nicola Valley area as a travel destination with its current experience appeal based on EQ principles in key markets.
Align visitor services programming with destination marketing activity and maintain the industry inventory.
Establish a tracking and evaluation program that is directly associated with the goals and objectives of the tourism plan.
Establish a communications system and protocol to keep stakeholders informed and connected.

11 APPENDIX B – SITUATION ANALYSIS

This section provides an overview of tourism indicators globally and in BC, discusses key macro trends affecting tourism activity and profiles the tourism baseline in the Nicola Valley.

11.1 Global Tourism

The world-wide recession which commenced in late 2008 had a profound impact on global tourism activity. In 2011, 983 million international tourist arrivals were recorded by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), an increase of 4.6% or an increment of 43 million international tourist arrivals from 2010. International tourism receipts amounted to \$1,030 billion, an increase of \$102 billion over 2010. Growth was maintained in international tourism throughout 2010 after 14 months of decline that ended in the last quarter of 2009. WTO has an optimistic long term outlook for the industry, forecasting international arrivals to reach over 1.8 billion by the year 2030.³

The worldwide tourism market is very competitive. In 2011, Canada ranked #17 in international tourism arrivals a decline from the number 10 position it held in the late 2000s. Arrivals to Canada have continued to slide due to factors which include a poor exchange rate, stricter travel restrictions to/from the USA, and reduced airline capacity from important source markets in Europe and Japan.

11.2 Key Travel Trends

11.2.1 Changing Demographics

Baby boomers (born 1946 to 1964) are expected to continue to be the single largest demographic group among Canadian and American travellers while the baby bust or Generation X (born 1965 to 1980) is the second largest group, although the baby bust/Generation X group has been growing faster. Those older than the baby boomers continue to be a significant group of travellers but the numbers are stagnant. Tourism growth is expected to continue to be driven by the baby boomers and the baby bust/Generation X groups.

11.2.2 Value of the Canadian Dollar

The rising value of the Canadian dollar versus the US dollar has significantly hurt the Canadian tourism receipts over the last 10 years. The effect is two-fold in that it discourages US entries and it encourages Canadian outbound travel. Whereas Canada is now 14th globally in terms of inbound tourist arrivals it is 6th in outbound travel, giving the country a major travel deficit.⁴

11.2.3 Cost of Energy

Gasoline prices are said to be a major influence on North American auto travel behaviour, but since prices tend to move equally for competing jurisdictions, it is difficult to determine how the run-up in prices till mid-2008 and the subsequent drop since that time have affected travel patterns.

³ United Nations World Trade Organization, *Tourism Highlights 2012 Edition*, 2012.

⁴ United Nations World Trade Organization, *Tourism Highlights 2011 Edition*, 2011.

11.2.4 Internet Usage Important in Travel Planning

Over the last 10 years, the Internet has created new and important communication and distribution channels (mobile technology, websites, blogs, pod casts, etc) for the tourism industry. The Internet is now a first choice as a source for trip planning information among most travel markets.

11.2.5 Activity Trends Among Canadians and Americans

With the aging of the Canadian and American populations, activities that are physically demanding, such as outdoor adventure (summer and winter) or alpine skiing are expected to grow at lower rates than the population of travellers as a whole.⁵ Activities that require low levels physical activity, such as wine/culinary and cultural activities, are expected to increase at higher rates than the population of travellers.

11.3 Tourism in BC

11.3.1 Visitors Volumes and Expenditures

In 2010, there were almost 16.0 million visitors in BC, over half of which were BC residents, another 19% from other parts of Canada and almost one third international. The distribution of spending among these market segments is much different than the visitor volumes—in 2010, international visitors accounted for nearly 41% of visitor expenditures, with BC residents accounting for 32% and visitors from other parts of Canada 29%.

Figure 11-1 Visitor Volume (Overnight) and Expenditures by Market Origin, 2010



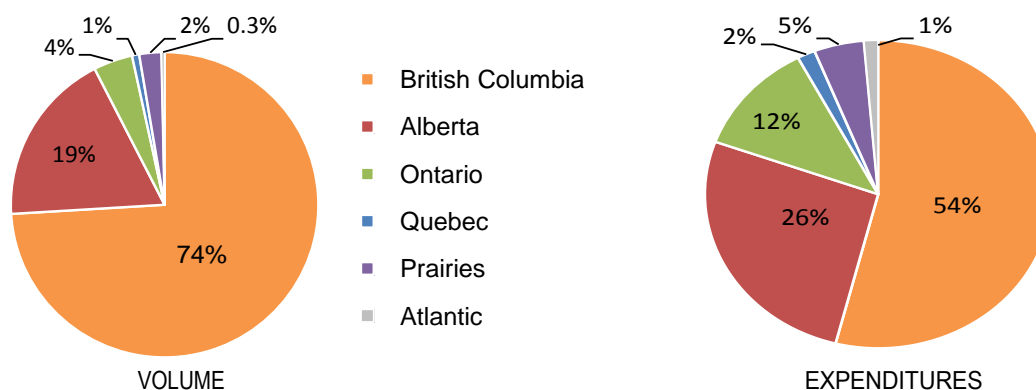
Source: Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation, *The Value of Tourism in British Columbia Trends from 2001 to 2011*, 2012.

Alberta represents the largest domestic market of overnight visitors to BC in 2010 (after BC). Visitors from other parts of Canada account for only 7% of the total domestic market, with the bulk of that coming from Ontario and the Prairies. Ontario and the Prairies account for a much

⁵ *Opportunities for British Columbia: Activity-Based Tourists in Canada*, prepared by Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd. for Tourism British Columbia, August 2004, a special analysis of the Travel Activities and Motivation Survey (TAMS) conducted from September 1999 and April 2000.

higher proportion of spending than they do volume. In 2010 of the domestic market, Ontario represented 12% of spending (versus only 4% of volume), while the Prairies accounted for 5% of spending. Combined, Alberta and BC represent over 90% of the Canadian visitor volume to British Columbia and 80% of revenues in 2010.

Figure 11-2 Share of Domestic Visitor Volume and Expenditures, 2010



Source: Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation, DRAFT *The Value of Tourism in British Columbia Trends from 2001 to 2011*, 2012.

In 2010, over 4 million international visitors came to BC, an increase of about 5% from 2009 and a cumulative decrease of 5% since 2005. The key international market is the US, which accounts for over two-thirds of international visitor volume and nearly half of expenditures. Figure 11-3 However, the number of US visitors has been steadily declining this decade, dropping 16% since 2005. This has precipitated a decline in spending of 12% over the same period.

Within the US, Washington and California are the largest markets, representing nearly half of US visitor volume and 43% of expenditures in 2010.

The number of visitors from the Asia/Pacific grew 17 per cent in 2010, and from Europe, 8%. Since 2005, there has been a decrease in visitor volume from the Asia/Pacific 6%, and a slight increase Europe 1%). Between 2005 and 2010, visitor expenditures from Asia/Pacific posted an increase of 4%, while the expenditures from European visitors increased by 3%.

The leading international markets for visitor volumes and expenditures in 2010 were US, United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Germany and China.

Figure 11-3 International Visitor Volume and Expenditures by Market Origin, 2010



Source: Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation, DRAFT *The Value of Tourism in British Columbia Trends from 2001 to 2011*, 2012.

11.4 Tourism in the Region

The following paragraphs present tourism indicators and a discussion of the barriers and challenges facing tourism development in the region.

11.4.1 Industry Composition

In order to summarize the industry composition for the Nicola Valley a tourism inventory is required. An overview of the accommodation sector is noted below. Recommendations for the inventory project are addressed in this Plan. There are approximately 400 camping/RV sites and 450+ fixed roof rooms in the Nicola Valley. Note: This includes Tulameen which may not form part of the Nicola Valley study area.

Accommodation Merritt and Nicola Valley - July 2013

Note: Based on BC Accommodation Guide and Internet Search

TYPE	No of units/sites	Location	Destination BC Approved
Bed & Breakfasts			
JJ Gillis House B&B		Merritt	0
Running Waters Country Estate	3	Merritt	1
Campgrounds & RV			
Chataway Lakes Resort		Merritt	0
Claybanks RV Park & Campground	54	Merritt	1
DLR Lakeside Yurts	5	Douglas Lake	0

COMMUNITY TOURISM FOUNDATIONS

Kentucky-Alleyne Provincial Park	58	Merritt	1
Monck Provincial Park	120	Merritt	1
Moonshadows RV Park & Campground	57	Merritt	1
Otter Lake Provincial Park	45	Tulameen	1
Paradise Lake Resort	28	Merritt	0
Quilchena on the Lake Golf & RV Park	25	Quilchena	1
Salmon Lake Resort	10	Douglas Lake	1

Hotels, Motels, Cottages & Resorts

Alger's Tulameen Cottage	1	Tulameen	0
All Season's Motel		Merritt	0
AP Guest Ranch	12	Merritt	0
Best Western Nicola Inn	56	Merritt	1
Carnello's Otter Lake Vacation House	1	Tulameen	0
Coldwater Motel		Merritt	0
Copper Valley Motel	17	Merritt	1
Coquihalla Lakes Lodge	8	Merritt	1
Corbett Lake Country Inn		Merritt	0
Cottage at Otter Lake	1	Tulameen	0
Dancing J Guest House	1	Merritt	0
Days Hotel		Merritt	0
Double D Inn		Merritt	0
Front Porch Vacation Home	1	Tulameen	0
Hachbrown Cabin	1	Tulameen	0
Intown Inn & Suites	44	Merritt	0
Kellett Tulameen Cabin	1	Tulameen	0
Knights Inn Merritt	20	Merritt	1
Merritt Desert Inn	24	Merritt	1
Merritt Lodge Motel		Merritt	0
Merritt Travelodge	35	Merritt	1
Minnie Lake Ranch House	1	Douglas Lake	0
Nicola Inn		Merritt	0
Nicola Ranch	5	Merritt	0
Otter Lake Cabins	4	Tulameen	1
Otter Lake Lodge	1	Tulameen	0
Otter Sleep Inn Motel	6	Tulameen	0
Paradise Lake Resort		Merritt	0
Ponderosa on Otter Lake	1	Tulameen	0
Prince Motel		Merritt	0
Quality Inn (Merritt)	56	Merritt	1
Quilchena Hotel & Resort	16	Quilchena	1
Ramada Limited	50	Merritt	1
Ranchland Villa Motel	16	Merritt	1
Road Runner Motel	14	Merritt	0
Rob's Retreat	1	Tulameen	0
Schubert Hunter McLeod	1	Tulameen	0
Sportsman's Motel	29	Merritt	0
Stoney Lake Lodge	7	Douglas Lake	1

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Super 8 (Merritt)	32	Merritt	1
The White House	1	Tulameen	0
Tulameen Rental Cabin	1	Tulameen	0
Tulameen Retreat	1	Tulameen	0
Tulameen River Retreat	1	Tulameen	0
Tullis Cabin	1	Tulameen	0
Twiggs Place	1	Douglas Lake	0
Uncle Timmy's Cabin	1	Tulameen	0
Vermillion Lodge	2	Tulameen	1
Totals	877		14

11.4.2 Tourism Indicators – Thompson Okanagan Region (TO)

Room revenues and Provincial Visitor Centre attendance for the TO region is presented in Table 1 for the years 2005 to 2011. Room revenues grew approximately 16% between 2005 and 2010, although there was a dip of 10.8% in 2009 as a result of the recession. Visitor Centre attendance declined about 13%, although year to year changes are mixed.

Traffic volumes for the Coquihalla Highway between Merritt and Hope are also shown, but only since 2008 when tolls were eliminated. In 2011, monthly average daily traffic was 128,461, a 14% increase over the first year of recorded traffic in 2009.

Table 1 Thompson Okanagan Region Indicators, 2005-2011

Indicator	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Room Revenues (\$000)	226,056	244,472	273,959	272,833	243,274	262,296	n/a
% change	9.7%	8.1%	12.0%	2.1%	(10.8%)	7.8%	
Visitor Info Centre Attendance	356,408	339,971	347,050	331,922	319,639	334,217	311,817
% change	4.5%	(4.6%)	2.1%	(4.4%)	(3.7%)	4.6%	(6.7%)
Highway Traffic Volume, MADT Route 5 North of Hope, Coquihalla	n/a	n/a	n/a	112,894	110,975	130,000	128,461
% change	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.2%	(1.7%)	17.1%	(1.2%)

Source: Destination BC, Research, Planning and Evaluation, *Tourism Indicators – Data Tables*. April edition for years 2005 to 2011

Notes: n/a – not available

MADT – Monthly Average Daily Traffic

Due to changes in the hotel tax, room revenues in BC are no longer tracked for accommodation properties, except for those participating in the Community and Municipal and Regional District Tax. As seen in Table 2, the change in revenue varied by community with Kamloops, Osoyoos, Vernon and Valemount increased slightly, while Kelowna, Penticton, Sun Peaks and Merritt declined. Aggregated revenue in 2011 was up 2.7% over 2010.

Table 2 Room Revenues in \$000, 2010-2011

Thompson Okanagan	2010	2011
Kamloops	42,613	46,889
Kelowna	67,561	66,472
Osoyoos	13,651	14,403
Penticton	21,840	21,451
Sun Peaks Mountain Resort Area	10,641	10,111
Vernon	16,289	17,692
Valemount	5,194	5,791
Clearwater & area (gaps in data from 2010 to 2011)	-	-
Merritt (ended June 2012)	3,857	3,775

Source: BC Stats, *Room Revenues in Selected Areas, by Community Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT)*, 2012

11.4.3 Traditional Visitor Markets

- A profile of travellers in Nicola Valley is not available but a 2004 Destination BC survey produced some insights into Okanagan Valley visitors.⁶ Key findings of the study were as follows:
- BC residents comprised 42% of all visitors, with Canadian from outside BC making up another 39%. Visitors from overseas countries made up 11%, while US visitation was responsible for the remaining 8%.
- The majority of visitors (71%) were travelling for leisure, another 19% were visiting friends and relatives.
- Over two-thirds (71%) of travellers planned their trips 3 or more weeks in advance.
- The Internet (40%) was the most frequently cited source of information used by travellers planning their trip to the Okanagan. Word of mouth (35%) and brochures and books (23%) were other information sources frequently used.
- Popular activities included swim/other water based activities (75%), visiting a farm/farmers market/orchard/food processor (75%), shopping (66%) and nature-based activities (64%).
- Activities rated as important or very important in trip planning included swimming/other water based activities (67%), nature-based activities (60%), sporting events other than golf (59%), wine festivals (56%), a farm/farmers market/orchard/food processor (52%) or golf (52%).
- Activities that were rated as important but not participated in as much included sporting events, visiting a wine festival, visiting a heritage festival/event and visiting a First Nations attraction.
- The two most frequently cited positive images visitors had of the Okanagan Valley were the beautiful landscape/scenery (68%) and the good climate (65%). Almost three-fifths (56%) of all travellers mentioned the landscape/scenery as the region's most unique characteristic.
- The negative image of the Okanagan Valley that was most frequently cited by over a third (36%) of all travellers was the amount of traffic.
- On average, travelers spent \$167 per day.

⁶ *A Profile of Visitors to BRITISH COLUMBIA's Okanagan Valley: Focus on cultural tourists*. Research Services, Tourism British Columbia. January 2004.

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A 2008 study of Okanagan Valley wine consumers produced similar results:⁷

- BC residents comprised 50% of independent, leisure visitors, Alberta 26%, other Canada 13%, US 5% and international 5%.
- The majority of visitors (72%) were travelling for leisure, another 27% were visiting friends and relatives.
- The majority of travellers (77%) planned their trips 3 or more weeks in advance.
- Advice from family and friends (60%), past experience visiting wineries in the Okanagan Valley (55%) and tourism/travel/visitor guides or books (49%) were among the top information sources used before travel. Also important information sources used prior to leaving home included maps (48%), prior experience at winery (44%) and a local or regional tourism website (44%). Maps (53%), tourism/travel/visitor guides or books (53%), and advice received from friends and relatives (44%) were the top information sources used during travel. Also important, but less frequently used, information sources during trip included Visitor Centres (41%), past experience visiting wineries in the Okanagan Valley (35%), winery business brochures (34%) and prior experience visiting particular winery (34%).
- Of those travellers who did not indicate wine as the primary trip purpose, 25% indicated they had no specific leisure activity, 20% indicated a nature-based activity and 15% named lake activities.
- Over three quarters (79%) were very satisfied with their overall wine touring experience in the Okanagan Valley. Less than a tenth (8%) of respondents indicated that they were somewhat or very dissatisfied. Reasons provided by these respondents were related to a service or amenities that was lacking, poor accommodation, expensive wine or lack of information. Those highly satisfied gave reasons of high level of service, high quality of wine/food and relaxed atmosphere as some of the contributors to their satisfaction.
- On average, travelers spent \$305 per party, per day.

In late 2008, Tourism British Columbia commissioned research to determine the perceptions visitors from regional markets (BC, Alberta and Washington) have of BC's six tourism regions. (Kettle Valley Research 2008) The following points summarize the attributes of the Thompson-Okanagan (TO) region as perceived by visitors:

- When asked about their familiarity with BC's tourism regions, the TO region was the ranked third of the six regions. Two-thirds were familiar with TO, but one-third was not at all familiar. The farther away the markets, the less familiar they were with TO.
- The TO was also the third-most visited region, with 32.3% of respondents having visited in the last two years, with Alberta, the Lower Mainland, Other BC and eastern Washington state having the highest visitation rates.
- When asked about their overall impressions of each region, just over fifty percent of respondents (56%) stated they were very or highly favourable.
- Top activities associated with the TO were camping, hiking, boating, skiing and water sports.

⁷ *Okanagan Valley Wine Consumer Research Study 2008 Results*. Research and Planning, Tourism British Columbia. Summer 2009.

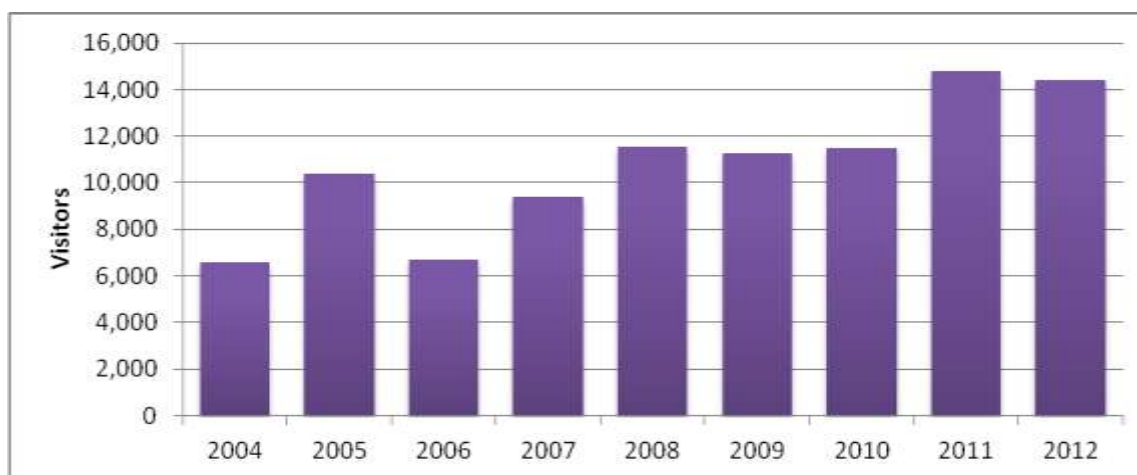
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- The likelihoods of day trips and full vacations (six nights or more) to the TO was relatively low, but respondents were much more likely to consider short getaways (one or two nights) or mini vacations (three to five nights).
- Latent strengths (strong performance but low importance to travel markets) included parks and family activities.
- Critical strengths included a place to relax and unwind, good getaway, safe and clean, outdoor activities, hot and sunny, quality of amenities and accessible (easy to get to).
- Latent weaknesses (poor performance but also low importance to travel markets) included familiarity, unique local cuisine, romantic, heritage sites, cultural events and restaurants/shopping/nightlife.
- Critical weaknesses included unique and different and exciting place to be.

11.4.4 Tourism Indicators – Nicola Valley

Visitor Centre (VC) attendance at the provincial centre between 2004 and 2012 is shown in Figure 11-4. In 2012, 14,414 visitors were hosted versus 6,558 in 2004. The average attendance for the nine year period ending in 2012 was 10,725. The peak attendance year was 2011.

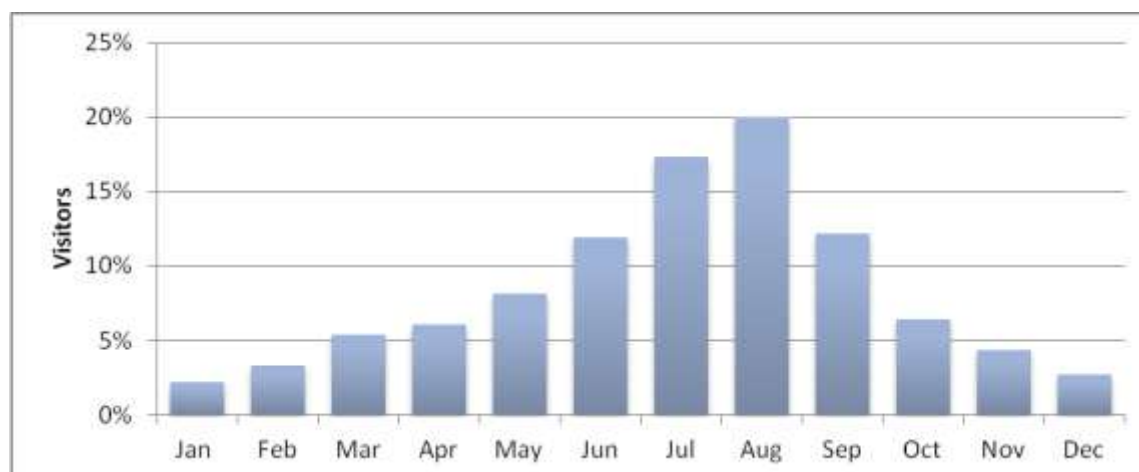
Figure 11-4 Merritt Visitor Centre Annual Attendance, 2004-2012



Source: Tourism British Columbia March 2012

As with most regions of the province, VC attendance occurs mainly in the late spring and summer seasons (May to September) when more than three quarters of all visitors are travelling (Figure 11-5).

Figure 11-5 Merritt Provincial Visitor Centre Monthly Share of Attendance, 2004-2012



Source: Tourism British Columbia, March 2012

BC's official consumer website HelloBC.com provides information for the province and provides statistics by community. For the Nicola Valley, Merritt has the only community section: <http://www.hellobc.com/merritt.aspx>

There were 18,165 organically-searched page-views of Merritt's content on HelloBC.com during 2012, an increase of 48% over the previous year. During the same period the Thompson Okanagan Regional-level pages on HelloBC.com received 191,039 views, an increase of 12% over the previous year.

HelloBC.com and local destination marketing organizations (DMOs) provide online resources and travel assistance. Still, many services, which cannot be provided over the Internet, including personal interaction with on-site travel counsellors, will continue to be an important service function for VCs. The value of visitor centre studies conducted by Destination BC show that the presence of qualified travel counsellors does have a positive impact on local visitor behaviour. For example, the study of the Kelowna Visitor Centre found that over forty percent of travellers learned about new activities/places/attractions, 13% would stay at least on additional night and 34% would make another trip as a direct result of the information they obtained at the VC.⁸

Traffic volumes for highway count stations leading into Merritt and shown in Table 3. The highest traffic volumes are on Route 5 between Hope and Merritt, followed by Merritt and Kamloops. Route 97c (the Okanagan Connector) is third in volume, but it has registered the strongest growth, 3.8% annually, during the 2001-2012 period.. The exact number of vehicles passing by Merritt is unknown but a minimum of 4 million are travelling to and from Hope alone.

⁸ Value of The Kelowna Visitor Info Centre Study Results Research Services, Tourism British Columbia. May 2003.

Table 3 Annual Average Daily Traffic for Coquihalla Highway Count Stations

Count Station	Hope P-17-8NS ^a	Westbank P-25-7EW ^b	Kamloops P-21-3NS ^c
	Number of Vehicles		
2012	10,569	5,717	8,968
2011	10,705	5,780	8,794
2010	10,833	5,804	9,022
2009	10,089	4,409	8,504
2008	9,408	4,758	8,795
2007	10,144	4,886	8,285
2006	9,850	4,325	15,511
2005	9,085	4,654	7,641
2004	9,109	3,323	5,154
2003	8,748	3,890	6,851
2002	8,384	3,873	6,994
2001	8,122	3,795	6,565
Average Annual Change	2.4%	3.8%	2.9%
2001-2012 Change	30.1%	50.6%	36.6%

Source: BC Ministry of Transportation, Traffic Data Program, for years 2001 to 2012

Notes: ^a route 5, 12 km north of route 3, north of Hope

^b route 97C 0.1 km west of Drought Hill Interchange south of Westbank

^c route 5, just south of Afton Interchange, west of Kamloops

11.5 Tourism Management

11.5.1 Higher Level Plans

Tourism planning in the Nicola Valley should be integrated with higher level plans to take advantage of research, expertise and programs available from senior governments. The national, provincial and regional context is outlined in the following paragraphs.

Within the federal government the Ministry of Industry has the lead responsibility for tourism. The Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism) has specific responsibility to promote tourism and small business development. The Canadian Tourism Commission is Canada's national tourism marketing organization; it is a Crown corporation that reports to Parliament through the Ministry of Industry. A number of federal government departments and agencies provide significant support for tourism through funded programs and through the direct control and operation of tourism attractions. The Federal Tourism Strategy can be accessed [online](#).⁹

At the provincial level the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training has the lead responsibility for tourism. The Destination BC mandate is to support and promote the business of tourism throughout the province. As a destination marketing organization, Destination BC is structured to develop and deliver programs and services that attract visitors to B.C. and help ensure that the quality of their vacation experience keeps them coming back for more. A number

⁹ www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/dsib-tour.nsf/eng/Home

of other provincial government ministries address tourism-related topics such as Highways, BC Parks and others. The Provincial Tourism Strategy can be accessed online.¹⁰

Destination BC works with regional, community and industry partners on multiple programs designed to support the growth of the industry through cooperative marketing and development initiatives. In most cases, tourism stakeholders will work with a designated representative from their Regional Destination Marketing Organization (RDMO) to determine the options that are best suited to their particular situation ranging from consumer marketing, community programs, travel trade and travel media relations activities. The Nicola Valley is part of the Thompson Okanagan region.

At the regional level, TOTA has completed an industry-led regional strategy planning process for the region's tourism industry - *Embracing our Future: a ten-year tourism strategy for the Thompson Okanagan Region*.

11.5.2 Local Planning and Policy Context

As noted in Table 4, the City has led or participated in three planning initiatives over the last seven years, although there are many other plans such as the Official Community Plan, that indirectly address tourism development. The Tourism Management Model Workshop and Merritt Tourism Plan were TOTA/Destination BC-led initiatives that have explored important issues around the Nicola Valley as a visitor destination, but have yet to gain traction or commitment from all stakeholders.

Not included in Table 4 is the City of Merritt's economic development strategy and Tourism Nicola Valley's marketing plan, both of which are in progress. It is hoped that both strategies will provide a framework for a renewed commitment to tourism management and development in the valley.

¹⁰ www.jti.gov.bc.ca/tourismstrategy/

Table 4 Regional and Local Plans

Title	Description
Tourism Management Model Workshop (2010)	<p>Focus on improving the delivery of tourism services in the Nicola Valley</p> <p>Key functions for community development include planning, infrastructure, product development, industry development, destination marketing and visitor services. All aspects should be considered in the planning framework.</p> <p>Typical Tourism Management Models were discussed and included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Government (in-house) ▶ Contract out to independent firms by function ▶ Visitor Centre (some with expanded mandate) ▶ Destination Marketing Organization (Promotion only) ▶ Destination Management Organization (Development & Promotion) ▶ Economic Development “Umbrella” that includes tourism <p>The major deficiencies with the current system was lack of coordination, organization silos, lack of overall vision and a lack of trust among interest groups.</p>
Merritt Tourism Plan (2007)	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Match BC visitor growth between 2008-2010 ▶ Exceed BC visitor growth by 2% between 2010-2015 <p>Target Markets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lower Mainland ▶ Mountainfest attendees ▶ Nicola Valley residents (as influencers) <p>Products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Country/western themed product (festivals, events, “cowboy culture”) ▶ Heritage arts and cultural product (Baillie House, Nicola Valley Museum) ▶ Outdoor adventures (fishing, hiking, horseback riding, cycling tours) <p>Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ (\$200,000 annually)
Community Attitudes Survey (2006)	<p>150 residents surveyed on their attitudes toward tourism</p> <p>Resident attitudes generally favourable</p> <p>Residents support all types of development</p> <p>Some concern about water supply</p> <p>Portrayed image was favourable</p> <p>Least favoured image was Merritt Mountain Music Festival</p>

11.5.3 Tourism Development Activities

The following organizations are involved directly or indirectly in tourism in the Nicola Valley but there is no clearly identified lead:

- BC Parks
- Cattlemen's Association
- City of Merritt
- Community Futures Nicola Valley
- Country Music Hall of Fame
- First Nations
- Gold Country
- Merritt and District Chamber of Commerce
- Merritt Civic Centre
- Nicola Valley Arts & Culture Association
- Nicola Valley Heritage Society
- Nicola Valley Museum and Archives
- TNRD (N, M)
- Tourism Nicola Valley
- Visitor Centres: Merritt Tourist/Information Booth(Baillie House) and British Columbia Visitor Centre at Merritt

11.5.4 Funding

Typically funding for tourism consists of direct funding through budget allocation, grant programs, or fee-for-service agreements from all levels of government. In BC, the Municipal and Regional District Hotel Room Tax (MRDT)^[3] program allows municipalities, regional districts and other eligible entities in promoting tourism in their area and financing new tourist facilities or programs. The tax is collected on fixed roof accommodation with four or more units and must be approved by 51% of the accommodation providers that control 51% of the units in a given area. Tourism funding can also be generated through programs, events and other sources and varies by community.

- The City of Merritt funds several tourism initiatives that include infrastructure, non-profit societies, Baillie House visitor services and marketing promotion.
- The MRDT ceased to be collected in the Merritt area as of midnight June 30, 2012. The hotel association who managed the funds has now disbanded.
- A consortium of hotel operators established Tourism Nicola Valley in 2012, a non-profit society who voluntarily collects 2% of room sales to pool resources to fund Tourism Nicola Valley activities.
- Destination BC provides cooperative funding through two programs; for communities; the Community Tourism Opportunities program, which provides matching funds up to a set amount, typically \$8,600 (e.g. Merritt) for communities and \$21,000 (e.g. Gold Country) for regions. For tourism operators or communities that represent a partnership of three

^[3] <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=F5511BE075B646D0AB69196679037D08>

participants, cooperative funding may be available for eligible projects to promote the area and region through the Tourism Partners program.

The City funds the visitor booth in downtown Merritt (Baillie House), which participates in the provincial Visitor Centre Network program. In addition, digital screens at Baillie House, the Civic Centre and the Aquatic Centre and participation in the Tourism Partners program (Travel Experiences Guide, Van Dop Arts Guide, Go Riding TV) have been undertaken.

The Gold Country Communities Society is a non-profit organization founded in 1991, promoting tourism in twelve areas of the southern interior of British Columbia. Participating communities include Ashcroft, Cache Creek, Lillooet, Lytton, Spences Bridge, Hat Creek, Walhachin, Savona, Clinton, Logan Lake, Merritt, Bonaparte Plateau and areas M and N of the TNRD. Gold Country has developed a very successful geotourism program that allows participants to use GPS coordinates or a compass and clues to seek out geocaches hidden at each of the many sites scattered throughout the region. Visitors earn prizes at each site and can earn additional prizes by visiting multiple locations. There are 12 caches in Merritt alone. Other Gold Country initiatives include print and radio, Visitor Guide, Trail Guide, HD videos and b-roll, still imagery, highway signage, Fam tours, consumer shows and a social media program.

Tourism Nicola Valley (TNV) was formed in 2012 by a select group of hotel operators who developed a Summary of Operational Intent in March 2013. Activity to date includes event sponsorships with the Pacific Forest Rally, Great Canadian Bike Rally and sports tourism (e.g. hockey tournaments). Advertising is placed in the provincial hunting and fishing synopses that is distributed through the Fish and Wildlife Branch website. TNV has purchased ownership of the tourismmerritt.com website.

Figure 11-6 Gold Country and Nicola Valley Websites

Gold Country

<http://exploregoldcountry.com>

<http://www.goldtrail.com/>

Tourism Nicola Valley

<http://www.tourismmerritt.com/>

City of Merritt

<http://www.merritt.ca/discover-merritt>

Destination BC supported the creation of content for [Merritt](#) on the HelloBC website, most recent statistics had 18,165 page-views in 2012 – an increase of 48% over the previous year.

11.5.5 Tourism and Economic Development

Community tourism management and marketing is part of a much larger place marketing framework as illustrated in Figure 11-7

It is therefore important that tourism planning be coordinated amongst organizations involved directly in tourism but also general community development.

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Figure 11-7 Place Marketing Framework



The City of Merritt's direct contribution to tourist markets include the following:

- Merritt Visitor Guide (contributor)
- TOTA Experience Guide
- YellowheadIt Visitor's Guide and Community Profile
- Gold Country Membership
- Information and Baillie House Funding
- Merritt Herald Advertising and Supplements
- Leisure Services Guide

Other aspects of place marketing and economic development include:

- How To Mag
- Invest BC
- EDABC Community Promotion
- City of Merritt Trade Show Booth
- City of Merritt Tent
- City of Merritt Table Cloth
- City of Merritt Banner
- RTown Screens

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- Community Videos
- City of Merritt Website

Contributions of infrastructure include:

- Aquatics Centre
- Baillie House Property
- Central Park
- Civic Centre
- Claybanks RV Park
- Memorial Arena
- Nicola Valley Museum & Archives
- Rotary Park
- Voght Park

Table 5 Destination BC Funded Projects in Nicola Valley, 2011-2013

The City of Merritt has participated in the [Community Tourism Opportunities program](#) for cooperative marketing funding since 2009.

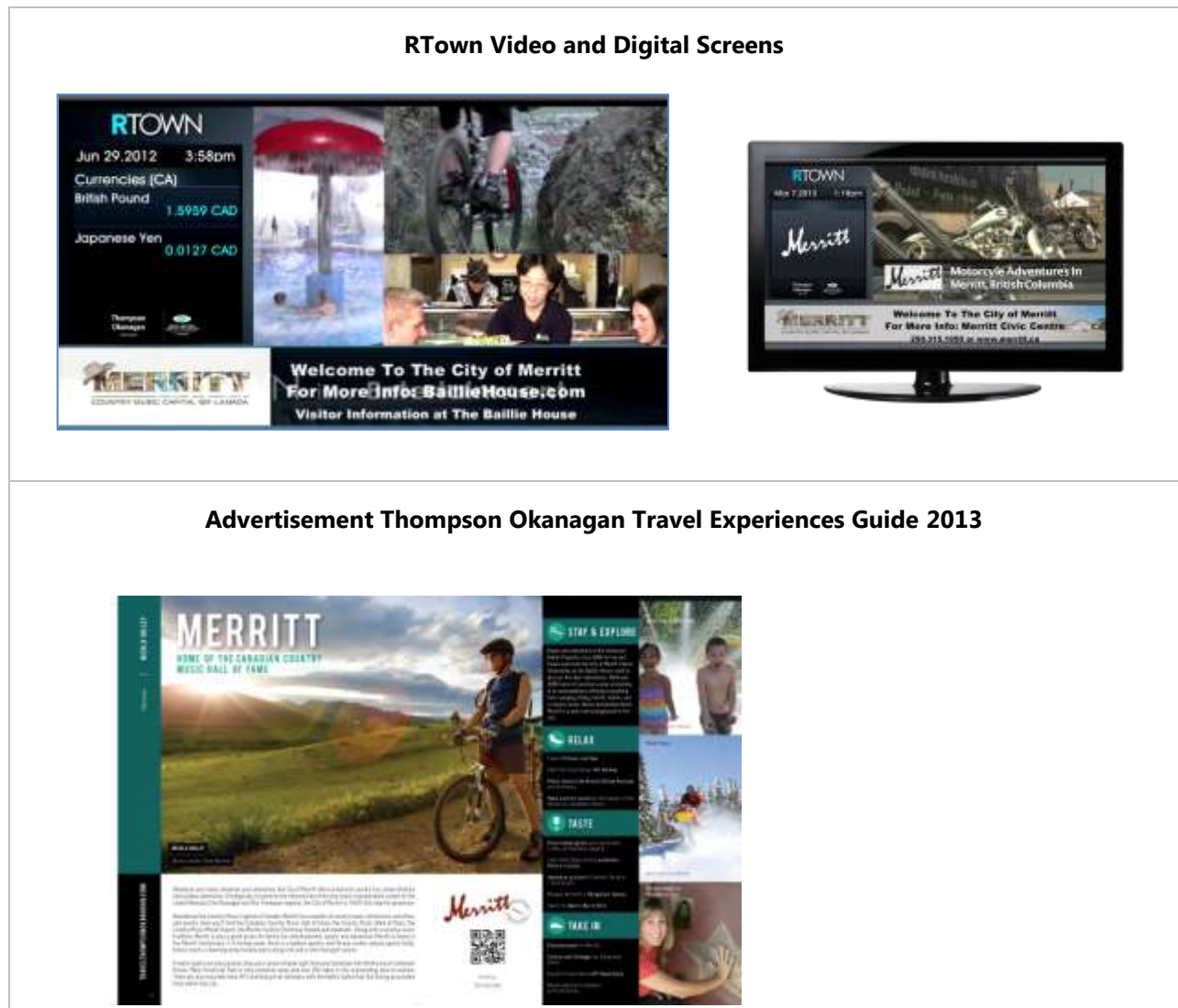
Program/Project – Destination BC \$ Contributions	Amount	FY 2013/14
CTO FY 2013/14 Pilot Project with TOTA for brand re-positioning and development of marketing communications content (see priority recommendations)		\$8,600 Approved
CTO FY 2012/13 Professional Imagery: Professional photography, custom photo shoots seasonally demonstrating integration of the Thompson Okanagan regional strategy, using principles of the Canadian Tourism Commission Explorer Quotient program. Images to be utilized by the marketing partners with the City of Merritt.	\$9,200	
TPP FY 2012/13 Advertisement: Display advertisement promoting the Merritt area in the official regional guide for Destination BC Thompson Okanagan Region.	\$2,569	
CTO FY 2011/12 RTOWN Video: Video of community events for internet use (YouTube), website and digital screens throughout City of Merritt. Traffic statistics in local RTown screen locations Baillie House (15,000), Civic Centre (70,000) and Aquatic Centre (100,000).	\$9,200	
CTF FY 2007 and 2012/13 In February 2013, Merritt participated in a tourism planning program for the Nicola Valley. Additionally, Merritt completed the Community Tourism Foundations tourism planning program in 2007. The comparable market value of these services would exceed \$30,000.	\$30,000	

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Refer to the **Tourism Activities Summary** issued annually by Destination BC for a summary of key activities for Merritt and Gold Country.

A sample of materials purchased or produced by communities working with Destination BC programs is shown in Figure 11-8.

Figure 11-8 Sample Projects City of Merritt



11.6 SWOT Analysis

An overview of Nicola Valley's tourism strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are shown in Table 6. The strengths include the community's strategic location linking the Lower Mainland to the interior of BC, the country and western heritage and theme, the climate and outdoor adventures. Weaknesses relate to the lack of cooperation among key stakeholders, funding challenges, low levels of brand awareness and the lack of shopping and services that would entice more travellers off the highways.

The major opportunities include more market-ready tour product that would increase visitor levels and spending, greater engagement of regional partnerships with organizations like Gold Country and TOTA, development of authentic experiences that can back up the country and western brand and finally greater attention to destination and event development that brings in a greater share of highway traffic than is now the case.

Cooperation among stakeholders needs to be addressed for future tourism development to be effective. This will be all the more important as travel markets change and competition increases from other communities for scarce travel expenditures.

Table 6 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

<p>Strengths</p> <p>S</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Location ◆ Climate ◆ Country/western theme ◆ Outdoor assets 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>W</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Organization ◆ Funding ◆ Branding/recognition ◆ Shopping/services
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>O</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Tour products ◆ Inter-regional relationships ◆ Authentic experiences ◆ Attract highway traffic 	<p>Threats</p> <p>T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Lack of cooperation ◆ Competing communities ◆ Travel markets ⇒ change

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12 APPENDIX C – WORKSHOP RESULTS

Table 7 Nicola Valley Themes

Theme Elements				
Identifying the iconic	Country and western Music Music Fest Walk of Stars Murals First Nations	Lakes, rivers Camping Fishing Trails Hiking Biking Skiing ATVing Geocaching	Valley views Nicola Lake Hills Sagebrush Grasslands Desert Ranches Pro rodeo Star gazing	Quilchena Hotel Baillie House Douglas Lake Ranch Cowboys Location Climate Dusty, windy, blue collar
Enriching local flavours	Farmers' Market Multi-ethnic	Garlic Wine	Beef Fish	Apples Nicola Valley Honey
Revealing the story	Baillie House Gold Rush Kettle Valley Railway First Nations	Cowboy Poets and Story- tellers Bill Miner Quilchena Hotel (bullet holes)	Settlement history, homesteaders Mining history, tours	Species at risk Douglas Lake Ranch Lady of the Lake (native legend)
Expanding personal horizons	Gold Country Geocaches Kane Valley Vistas, photography	Windsurfing, birding, hiking, trail riding, snowshoeing, camping	Outdoor adventures Heritage walks and trails Saddlemaking	Music concerts Aboriginal Day
Building authenticity	Gold Country Field Guides Merritt Country Christmas First Nations' Heritage Pow wows Music Fest	Wide open grasslands Interact with nature Sonoran desert	Quilchena Hotel & Golf Kettle Valley Railway Baillie House	Forestry Mining Real ranches and real cowboys

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Table 8 Nicola Valley Pillars

	Description
Trails	<p>Destination packages and tours</p> <p>Connect to geocaching</p> <p>KVR thru to Spences Bridge</p> <p>Kane Valley trails (hiking, biking, camping)</p> <p>Windy Canyon (cleanup and enhancement)</p> <p>All local websites link to www.sitesandtrailsbc.ca</p> <p>Trail system and green belt around the city</p>
Events	<p>Coordinate non-profits who sponsor events</p> <p>Have events make greater use of local geography</p> <p>Merritt Country Run</p> <p>“Kiting Capital of Canada” (merge or adapt to Lighter Than Air Festival)</p> <p>Motorized events (mud bogging, rallies)</p> <p>Country Christmas (expand)</p> <p>Music Events (e.g. in the Park)</p> <p>Sporting events on Nicola Lake (windsurfing, sailing, kiting)</p>
Aboriginal	<p>Greater awareness and promotion of Aboriginal events (Pow Wow, Aboriginal Days)</p> <p>Aboriginal Cultural Centre (history, stories, medicine, arts)</p> <p>Connect KVR to Spences Bridge thru reserves</p> <p>Aboriginal/local foods</p> <p>Moccasin Hockey Tournament</p>
Research	<p>How to effectively link trails into a system</p> <p>Develop historical copy (e.g. Bill Miner) for advertising and promotion</p> <p>Potential for more geocaching sites</p>
Access	<p>Dispel the myth that the Coquihalla is “the highway through hell”</p> <p>Coordinated signage, especially on Coquihalla Highway</p> <p>Trail signage (e.g. Windy Canyon and Gody Creek)</p> <p>Cabin rentals on lease land</p>
Other	<p>Civic Centre use</p> <p>Small conventions (mines, forestry, municipalities, etc.)</p> <p>Astrology Centre</p> <p>Local foods in restaurants</p> <p>Expand murals</p> <p>Move, live theatre performances</p> <p>Downtown revitalization, e.g. Coldwater Hotel</p>

COMMUNITY TOURISM FOUNDATIONS

Table 9 Nicola Valley Initiatives

Initiative	Objective	Tasks	Partners
Pacific Car Rally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase success • Make user-friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase marketing and cobranding • Consider festival to expand participation • Mitigate and manage for potential liability, dust and noise issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rally organizers • City • DMO
Community Events Calendar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate and promote events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish calendar • Promote existence and gain participation • Coordinate with RTown TVs, guides and websites • Potential for resident and visitor versions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City • Visitor Centre • Event organizers
Music Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a new festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-July, downtown, spirit square, outdoor malls, kids activities, Merritt Desert • Participation by community businesses • Development concept and business plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scope (big, small?) ○ Genres? ○ Event promotion and management? • Funding and management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce • Canadian Country Music Heritage Society • Community • Canadian Country Music Hall
Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved directional and wayfinding signage • Increased capture of highway traffic volumes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee or task force to oversee • Signage program for highways and trails • Need for gateway presence on Coquihalla • Include Highway 8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City • Chamber of Commerce • Ministry of Highways
Country Run	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand participation and visitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing 3-event road race • Promote beyond community – healthy, family • Participate in Canadian Tire Jump Start Program • Study best practices for expanding awareness • Volunteer recruitment is key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merritt Country Run Society
Country Christmas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand participation and visitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lengthen the event, Thurs-Sat • New activities, community concert, parade, craft fair, music, Christmas tree • Consider packaging with other activities and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merritt Country Christmas • Chamber of Commerce

COMMUNITY TOURISM FOUNDATIONS

Initiative	Objective	Tasks	Partners
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> operators Coordinate with Merritt Centennials 	
Kiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop kiting as a destination activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate into Family Day (Arts Council) Research Chinese kiting destinations to determine potential, best practices and next steps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts Council
Wind Surfing-Sailing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand Kamloops Sailing Club Regatta to increase visitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Club to determine potential for greater participation, and complementary activities/events Conduct research on feasibility of other areas such as Monck Park for wind sailing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kamloops Sailing Club Hotels, motels
Tour Packages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase visitor access to guided tours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop inventory of resources (cultural, heritage, etc.), services and attractions Create and market packages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism Nicola Valley
Regional Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase awareness and use of regional trails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine preferred uses and management practices Coordinate provincial kiosks and signage Promote in visitor guides and rack cards in the Visitor Centre Investigate potential for intensive use motorized area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism Nicola Valley City Province (Min of Forests, Lands and Nat Resource Operations)
City Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a green belt around the City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term plan to create a greenbelt of connected trails and park space Management considerations include private property trespass and liability Promotion through information access on the website and maps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exporsers' Club City (Parks and Recreation) Merritt Mountain Biking Association Rotary Club
Myth of the Coquihalla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dispel the myth about the level of danger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link City website to Ministry of Highways road conditions page Investigate feasibility of a "Cruise the Coq" ad campaign with Kamloops, Kelowna and other communities Improve weather signage on the highway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Other communities Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure
Pow Wow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase awareness of number 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with First Nations to scope out how the pow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pow wow committees

COMMUNITY TOURISM FOUNDATIONS

Initiative	Objective	Tasks	Partners
	of visitors	wows could be promoted within the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Band leaders
Downtown revitalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve look and ambiance downtown with a focus on recognized heritage buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write proposal for designation as a Jump Start Program (Canadian Tire) • Paint and repair program • Model after a Business Improvement Area (BIA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City • Merchants
Geocaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand geocaching sites and tours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact geo.caching.com about minimum distances between caches • Inventory potential site in historical buildings downtown • Consider repositioning of existing caches if appropriate • Establish a task force to oversee new development • Develop signage that region is a geocaching community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task Force (new) • Gold Country • Existing and potential cache owners

13 APPENDIX D- UNDERSTANDING THE MARKET SEGMENTS

The following **global** profiles of the three target segments are reproduced from the CTC's *EQ Profiles* (2013).

- The **FREE SPIRIT** – *is the traveller's traveller...they seem to love everything about travel and as in life, they embrace the experiences it offers with arms wide open.*
- The **CULTURAL EXPLORER** – *is an avid traveller who values learning and discovery while travelling. They don't want to feel like a "tourist," preferring just to blend in and have the most authentic experience possible rather than being confined to group tours and schedules.*
- The **AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCER** – *is a more learned, understated traveller. Travel is not their only interest in life, but they certainly appreciate it when they go. They prefer to do their own thing while at a destination, having control over what they see and when they see it.*

	FREE SPIRITS	CULTURAL EXPLORERS	AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCERS
Social Values – top defining values	<p>Joy of Consumption: Find shopping highly gratifying. A brand name on a product or service is an indicator of quality, style and status.</p> <p>Social Mobility: Possessing the skills and education to make it happen, FSs are highly motivated to advance in life and work.</p> <p>Attraction for Crowds: FSs are one of the most social of all EQ types. Adept at networking, they enjoy large group atmospheres (as well as one-on-one conversations). Interacting with others gives them the chance to learn about themselves.</p> <p>Penchant for Risk: They are confident risk-takers, secure in their ability to reach their goals no matter what obstacles they may face.</p> <p>Happiness: Free Spirits consider themselves happy and full of vitality for life.</p> <p>Need for Status Recognition: They want to show their success off to the world.</p>	<p>Importance of Spontaneity: They enjoy an element of surprise and welcome unexpected circumstances that enrich their lives.</p> <p>Cultural Sampling: They believe that other cultures have a lot to teach them.</p> <p>Adaptability to Complexity: They are not threatened by the changes and complexities of society. In fact, they embrace complexity as a learning experience and a source of opportunity.</p> <p>Pursuit of Novelty: Trying out new things is thrilling!</p> <p>Personal Control: They feel in control of their lives and not afraid to take on moderate risk if it means they can learn something new.</p> <p>Personal Escape: They long for that which is beyond the practical and they want to be transported from their everyday life.</p> <p>Personal Challenge: They set difficult personal goals for themselves at work and at play and will finish what they start.</p>	<p>Personal Control: They focus on maintaining a sense of autonomy and self-direction in their lives. Many are retired, with time to do the things they want to do.</p> <p>Importance of Spontaneity: They enjoy surprises and the unexpected – they will welcome those that help them learn more about themselves and the world.</p> <p>Culture Sampling: They show a tendency to incorporate foreign cultures into their lives, like going to an Inuit art gallery or dining at a Thai restaurant.</p> <p>Everyday Ethics: They feel it's important to be responsible, upstanding citizens.</p> <p>Skepticism towards Advertising: Their tendency to question authority extends to commercials trying to sell something. They believe that individuals are responsible for their own decisions.</p> <p>Ecological Concern: They are concerned about the health of the planet and what that means to future generations.</p>

COMMUNITY TOURISM FOUNDATIONS

	FREE SPIRITS	CULTURAL EXPLORERS	AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCERS
Social Values – <u>bottom</u> defining values	<p>Buying on Impulse: They love to shop but they are not impulsive - they'll shop around to get exactly what they're looking for.</p> <p>Skepticism Towards Advertising: Free Spirits have confidence in advertising and will entrust professionals to help them with major purchases or planning.</p> <p>Aversion to Complexity: Free Spirits have a zest for life and are not intimidated by changes or complexities in society. Being spontaneous is thrilling and fun for them.</p>	<p>Confidence in Big Business: Their tendency to reject authority leads them to question those in leadership positions, including big businesses which they do not believe have better quality simply because they are larger/better known.</p> <p>Conformity to Norms: They like to be unique, different from others and love to share their ideas and creativity.</p> <p>Ostentatious Consumption: They are not highly materialistic and are offended by ostentatious consumption.</p>	<p>Joy of Consumption: Although they are relatively affluent and confident financially, they are not avid consumers.</p> <p>Living Virtually: They want to connect with the real world authentically and are not content to do so by way of TV, computers or the internet.</p> <p>Importance of Brand: They care little about brands – but they're not afraid to pay for quality if it matches their values.</p>
Travel Values – <u>will seek</u>	<p>Constant Comparison Travel: Love to travel – and brag about the superiority of the places they have visited</p> <p>Luxury: Often aspire to stay in the most luxurious accommodations and venues.</p> <p>Hedonistic Rejuvenation: Vacation is a time to be carefree and indulge – they will enjoy spa, nightlife and great cuisine and other opportunities for a little pampering.</p> <p>Checklist Samplers: Want to see all the main attractions, but not in depth – they will employ detailed itineraries, ensuring that they don't miss anything!</p> <p>Shared Experiences: Attracted to groups where they can socialize and share the experience with others – using social media for sharing during and after the trip.</p>	<p>Constant Travel: Always excited about the next trip.</p> <p>Living History/Culture: Love to learn about and absorb themselves in the ancient history, as well as the modern cultures of the places they visit.</p> <p>The Beauty of Nature: Will choose destinations that provide opportunities to experience natural beauty.</p> <p>Fun, Shared Experiences: Travel is a journey, not the destination, and is best experienced with like-minded companions who like to have fun while learning.</p> <p>Going with the Flow: Prefer a free and spontaneous approach to seeing the sights.</p>	<p>Living History/Culture: Love to learn about and absorb themselves in the ancient history, as well as the modern cultures, of the places they visit.</p> <p>To Understand Cultural Differences: While they are not high on the trend Comparison Travel, they love to observe the difference between destinations.</p>
Travel Values – <u>will avoid</u>	<p>Comfort-Seeking: Free Spirits have a higher penchant for risk, so they are not afraid to try something new or have an adventure</p> <p>Reluctant travel: Not content to experience the world through the Internet or TV.</p>	<p>Luxury/Comfort-seeking: This EQ type seeks an authentic experience and doesn't need to be pampered in commercial hotels and have experiences just like home.</p> <p>Group/Checklist Travel: Prefer not to be constrained to "tourist" schedules or destinations, and will chart their own courses.</p>	<p>Hedonistic Rejuvenation/Comfort-seeking: This EQ type does not shy away from living like the locals do. They like to be in control while they vacation, and don't need to be pampered and have everything taken care of for them.</p> <p>Escape: These travelers do not feel overwhelmed by life. Travel is not about escape for them, but about personal development and learning instead.</p>
Top 10 most appealing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marine life viewing – 76% 2. Seeing beautiful coastlines, beaches – 71% 3. Dining at restaurants offering local ingredients – 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marine life viewing – 81% 2. Wildlife viewing – land-based animals & bird watching – 78% 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marine life viewing – 80% 2. Wildlife viewing – land-based animals & bird watching – 78%

COMMUNITY TOURISM FOUNDATIONS

	FREE SPIRITS	CULTURAL EXPLORERS	AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCERS
activities	71% 4. Visiting national, provincial/state parks to view wildlife etc. – 70% 5. Wildlife viewing – land-based animals & bird watching – 69% 6. Visiting aquariums and zoos – 67% 7. Visiting national, provincial/state parks to visit interpretive centres etc. – 66% 8. Visiting well-known natural wonders – 66% 9. Staying at a waterfront resort – 65% 10. Mountain and glacier viewing – 65%	3. Dining at restaurants offering local ingredients – 78% 4. Visiting national, provincial/state parks to view wildlife etc. – 77% 5. Visiting well-known natural wonders – 76% 6. Visiting small towns and villages – 76% 7. Visiting national, provincial/state parks to visit interpretive centres etc. – 75% 8. Visiting well-known historic sites and buildings – 73% 9. Interacting with locals – 73% 10. Visiting world heritage sites – 72%	3. Dining at restaurants offering local ingredients – 74% 4. Seeing beautiful coastlines, beaches – 74% 5. Visiting well-known historic sites and buildings – 73% 6. Visiting national, provincial/state parks to view wildlife etc. – 72% 7. Visiting small towns and villages – 72% 8. Visiting well-known natural wonders – 72% 9. Visiting national, provincial/state parks to visit interpretive centres etc. – 71% 10. Viewing Northern and Southern lights – 67%
Experience Appeal	Free Spirits are more likely than other travellers to be interested in: 1. Shopping, Dining and Other Food-related Activities 2. Entertainment, Performing Arts and Amusement Parks 3. Accommodation-related Activities 4. Water-based Outdoor Activities 5. Festivals, Events & Spectator Sports 6. Outdoor/Nature Sports & Activities 7. Winter Outdoor Activities Free Spirits are also interested in: 1. Nature Observation Activities 2. Exhibits, Architecture, Historic Sites/Buildings, Museums 3. Sightseeing Activities 4. Cruises & Touring 5. Hands-on Learning Activities	Cultural Explorers are more likely than other travellers to be interested in: 1. Nature Observation Activities 2. Exhibits, Architecture, Historic Sites/Buildings, Museums 3. Sightseeing Activities 4. Accommodation-related Activities 5. Water-based Outdoor Activities 6. Hands-on Learning Activities 7. Festivals, Events & Spectator Sports 8. Outdoor/Nature Sports & Activities 9. Winter Outdoor Activities Cultural Explorers are also interested in: 1. Shopping, Dining and Other Food-related Activities 2. Entertainment, Performing Arts and Amusement Parks 3. Cruises & Touring	Authentic Experiencers are more likely than other travellers to be interested in: 1. Exhibits, Architecture, Historic Sites/Buildings, Museums Authentic Experiencers are also interested in: 1. Nature Observation Activities 2. Sightseeing Activities 3. Shopping, Dining and Other Food-related Activities 4. Entertainment, Performing Arts and Amusement Parks 5. Accommodation-related Activities 6. Cruises & Touring 7. Water-based Outdoor Activities 8. Hands-on Learning Activities 9. Festivals, Events & Spectator Sports 10. Outdoor/Nature Sports & Activities 11. Winter Outdoor Activities

For further details on country-specific profiles – see: CTC, 2013, *EQ Profiles*. This document summarizes the 2012 series profiles for the three segments in Canada and Canada's core international markets – Australia, France, Germany, UK and USA. 2009 profile material is available for Mexico, China, Japan and South Korea.

COMMUNITY TOURISM FOUNDATIONS

14 APPENDIX E – WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Nicola Valley Representatives			
Abels, Ed	Ministry of Natural Resource Operation	Lee, Jeffrey	Husky/Greyhound
Aljam, Harold	Coldwater Indian Band	Madryga, Carol	Merritt Geocaching
Beverley, Nicki	Pacific Forest Car Rally Oct 4&5, 2013	Madryga, Jack	Merritt Geocaching
Brodie, Robin	Quilchena General Store	Miller, Rob	Community Futures - Nicola Valley
Chauvet, Ula-Erin	Nicola Valley Arts Council	Noble, Matt	City of Merritt
Christopherson, Kurt	City of Merritt	Plotnikoff, Larry	City of Merritt
Curnow, Sandy	Merritt Tourist/Visitor Info Booth /Baillie House	Polmans, Jack	Nicola Valley Museum Archives
Don Harvey	Sagebrush Golf and Sporting Club	Polmans, Mavis	Nicola Valley Museum Archives
Donavin, Cameron	Q101, News Director	Raymond, Terry	Siska Traditions Society (Siska Indian Band)
Egan, Dana	Grand Pub & Grill	Reynolds, Tom	Nicola Watershed Community Roundtable
Etchart, J'amime	Merritt Civic Centre	Rice, Steve	TNRD
Fairfield, Paul	Great Canadian Bike Rally	Roline, Susan	City of Merritt
Flanagan, Patrick		Rose, Jill	Quilchena Hotel and Resort
Flanagan, Ruth		Rose, Paul	Quilchena Hotel and Resort
Hadwin, Terri	Gold Country Communities Society	Sanders, Ron	Country Music Hall of Fame
Isbister, Rick	B&B @ Running Waters Country Estate	Saunders, Alisa	Merritt & District Chamber of Commerce
Joe, Jordan	Spayum Developments	Sekhon, Anoop	Tourism Nicola Valley
Ketter, Mae	Community Futures - Nicola Valley	Umpherson, James	City of Merritt
Kinasewich, Kathleen	Sage Hills Herbals	Vizi-Carmen, Kim	Pinerock Ridge Graphic Art & Design
Klassen, Adel		Wall, Frederick	Baillie House
Knihnitski, Tracy	TK Consulting	Watson, Terry	Open Door Group
Kroeker, Harry	City of Merritt	White, Melvina	Merritt Desert Inn
Facilitators			
Simone Carlysle-Smith	Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association		
Kim Cameron	Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association		
Steve Nicol	Destination BC Facilitator - Lions Gate Consulting		

15 APPENDIX F - ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

AtBC – Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia

CTF – **Community Tourism Foundations**: Destination British Columbia works with the province's six Regional Destination Marketing and Management Organizations (RDMOs) and communities throughout the province on tourism development initiatives. Two community-based programs work closely with groups looking to develop tourism in their area for both the long and short-term.

The [Community Tourism Foundations](#) program is designed for communities seeking assistance in long-term destination planning. By providing a range of tools, proven resources and customized destination and market development assistance, the program accommodates the needs of communities in various stages of tourism development. The [Community Tourism Opportunities](#) program provides implementation-level cooperative marketing support for communities that have identified specific tactics for moving their local tourism industry forward. (Source: Destination BC Corporate website).

CTC – **Canadian Tourism Commission**: the CTC is Canada's national tourism marketing organization. It is a federal Crown corporation that has been mandated to sustain a vibrant and profitable tourism industry by supporting a cooperative relationship between the private sector and the governments of Canada, the provinces and the territories. The CTC works with its partners to promote Canada's *extraordinary experiences* in eleven countries around the world: the Americas (Mexico and Brazil), Europe (the United Kingdom (UK), Germany and France), Asia (China, India, Japan and South Korea) and Australia. The CTC also conduct business events sales activities in the United States.

CTO – **Community Tourism Opportunities** (see CTF)

DMO – Destination management and/or marketing organization

EQ – **Explorer Quotient®**: the CTC's market segmentation system based on the science of psychographics. Market segmentation is a marketing analysis technique that allows businesses to group customers into "segments" based on given criteria such as demographics, geography or even psychological factors (attitudes, beliefs and values). This approach allows tourism businesses to identify and understand those segments that are most likely to buy their products, to then better align their marketing and product development efforts accordingly.

Psychographics is an evolution of the traditional field of demographics. Instead of just breaking travellers into groups based on age, income, gender, family status or education level – all of which is useful information – psychographics looks deeper at people's social values and views of the world.

EQ breaks each geographic market down into different psychographic groups, called Explorer Types. Each type is identified by particular characteristics stemming from social and travel values, travel motivations and behaviours. The CTC selected Canada's best Explorer Type prospects based on their affinity for the **Canada. Keep Exploring** brand, as well as love of travel, potential for being high-yield customers and propensity for word-of-mouth advocacy. This resulted in the selection of target types in each of the CTC's primary geographic markets. (Source: CTC, December 2012, *EQ Profiles*)

COMMUNITY TOURISM FOUNDATIONS

MJTST – Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training

MOTI – Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

MRDT – Municipal and Regional District Tax

NV – Nicola Valley

TNRD - Thompson Nicola Regional District

TOTA – **Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association**: an industry-led Regional Destination Management Organization that represents and supports all business and community tourism interests throughout the Thompson Okanagan region, and acts as the representative of Destination BC.

TNV – Tourism Nicola Valley