

# The Township of Ear Falls, Perrault Falls & Red Lake

## Tourism Sector and Marketing Strategic Plan Final Report

Submitted by Forrest Consulting Team  
Pat Forrest & Eva Gutsche

Prepared for:

**Michelle Hiscox** – Economic Development Officer – Township of Ear Falls

**Cathy Quesnel - Loessl** – Manager - Chukuni Communities Development Corporation

**Brenda Gignac** - Community Development & Communications Manager - Municipality of Red Lake

This project was funded by

The Government of Ontario, the Township of Ear Falls, Chukuni Communities Development Corporation and the Municipality of Red Lake.



## Table of Contents

**Acknowledgements 4**

**Executive Summary 7**

**Strategy Snapshot 10**

**Research Overview 13**

Research – Ontario Consumer Sentiment

Destination Northern Ontario Impacts of COVID-19 on  
Northern Ontario Accommodations and  
Recommendations for Future Planning –  
A Summary 15

**Research – Current Marketing  
in the Region 19**

Short Haul Forecasts 20

Long Haul Forecasts 23

**Tourism Operator Survey –Key findings 26**

In-depth Interviews – Overview &  
Key Findings 29

**Case Study Overview 31**

**SWOT Analysis – Regional Approach 32**

**Asset Inventory 35**

**Competitor Analysis 49**

**Unique Differentiators 50**

**Gap Analysis 53**

**Strategy 54**

Tourism Leadership 54

**Short-haul Markets (COVID recovery) 56**

Marketing longer-term beyond 2021 56

Marketing – Short-term and Longer-term 57

Marketing - Regional Focus – Regional Brand 57

Diversify Markets 58

**Product development Recommendations Summary 60**

Create Experiences 61

**Time-lined Action Plan 63**

**Budget Framework 69**

**Funding Opportunities 70**

**Addendum Research 71**

Impact of COVID-19 on Tourism Business in RT013 71

Key Takeaways from Path to Prosperity, Destination Northern Ontario's  
COVID Recovery Plan 2020 72

**Domestic Markets 75**

**US Markets 76**

**Global Impact 78**

**TripAdvisor COVID-19 White Paper May 2020 79**

**Addendum - Best Practices 81**

**Addendum – Resources and References 88**

## Acknowledgements

Over 100 stakeholders contributed to this Tourism Sector and Marketing Strategic Plan for Ear Falls, Perrault Falls and Red Lake, participating in surveys, stakeholder interviews, virtual meetings and follow up conversations and providing relevant documents.

**Special thanks are offered to the members of the steering committee:**

Brenda Gignac, Community Development and Communications Manager, Municipality of Red Lake  
Michelle Hiscox, Economic Development Officer, Township of Ear Falls  
Cathy Quesnel-Loessl, Manager, Chukuni Communities Development Corporation

**Appreciation is extended as well to the members of the local municipal governments who participated in the discussions:**

Kimberly Ballance, Clerk Treasurer Administrator, Township of Ear Falls  
Dale Butterfield, Councillor, Municipality of Red Lake  
Janet Hager, Councillor, Municipality of Red Lake  
Kevin Kahoot, Mayor, Township of Ear Falls  
Mark Vermette, CAO, Municipality of Red Lake

**We also wish to thank the Government of Ontario's Tourism Economic Development and Recovery Fund for the financial support received for the project.**

**The innovation and determination of those who took the time to share their COVID-19 success stories to inspire the process was an important contribution to this initiative. Thanks to:**

Heather Bot, Executive Director, Algoma Kinniwabi Travel  
Eric Lund, Esnagami Wilderness Lodge, Nakina  
Matt Rydberg, Crawford's Camp, Sioux Narrows

**Special thanks to the tourism operators and other leaders who were consulted and who provided information that was valuable to the process of developing this tourism plan.**

The tourism stakeholders who participated in in-depth discussion sessions were:

Gerry Cariou, Executive Director, Ontario's Sunset Country  
Jennifer Findlay, NW Ontario Tourism Advisor, Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Cultural Industries  
Tess Hayward, General Manager, Nature's Inn



Brent Lundy, Initiatives Officer, FedNor

David MacLachlan, Executive Director, Destination Northern Ontario

Laurie Marcil, Executive Director, NOTO

Charlie Mattina, Northern Development Advisor, Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines

Trevor Osmond, Director, Red Lake Heritage Centre

Allyson Pele, Manager, Northwest Business Centre

Duane Riddell, Red Lake Airport Manager, Highway 105 Marketing Group, Norseman Festival

Kathy Robinson, Trout Forest Music Festival

Donna Williams, Kaaren Stevens, Marissa Melanson, Leslie King, Red Lake Anishinaape Pow Wow Circle

**Seventy-five tourism operators in the region provided input anonymously into an operator survey; their participation was integral and greatly valued.**







## Executive Summary

The overall goal of the project was to identify appropriate strategies, initiatives and tourism products and experiences required to diversify the tourism sector on the Highway 105 corridor to facilitate regional recovery due to the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the tourism sector. A key deliverable is a comprehensive approach and overall plan to support the Ear Falls, Perrault Falls, Red Lake corridor as a whole as well as specific recommendations and strategic goals for the individual communities to meet their unique needs and challenges.

Highway 105 is one of the most northerly highways in Ontario. The route begins at a junction with Highway 17 on the west side of Vermilion Bay, approximately 100 km. east of Kenora and 40 km. west of Dryden. It progresses through a large region of uninhabited lakes, swamplands, forests and rocks for 103 km. to Ear Falls, with Red Lake Road and Perrault Falls being the only communities between the two. Perrault Falls, located 65 km. north of Highway 17, features its namesake waterfall.

Ear Falls (population of about 1,000) offers “small town life with unparalleled beauty”. Located on the shores of Lac Seul, English River, Wenasasga Lake and Pakwash Lake, the town and surrounding area offer residents and visitors a playground that can be enjoyed year-round. Ear Falls and neighbouring Perrault Falls are known for their world-class fishing and hunting. Red Lake is a town of about 4,500 people with a vibrant arts community, strong ties to nature, association with sports and a profitable mining sector. It is also a prominent tourist destination for those who enjoy nature and adventure and, in particular, fishing.

Historically, the region has relied on its mining industry and prior to that, the fur trade. More recently, tourism and recreation opportunities began to shift the region from resource-based industry to a more diversified portfolio, mostly focused on fishing and hunting, attracting a mainly American market from the U.S. Midwest.

Tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting economies and livelihoods worldwide. All parts of its vast value-chain have been affected. With the closure of the U.S./Canada border, communities such as those in this region that rely almost exclusively on U.S. markets have been especially adversely impacted. Extensive surveys of the region’s tourism operators have revealed that, while many are not currently looking at diversifying their product offering to attract a domestic market, others would consider other options.

Tourism assets in the region skew heavily towards nature and adventure. There are at least 15 categories of nature and adventure assets in the region. Fishing, hunting, lakes and rivers, beaches, parks, wildlife, trails, golfing, winter sports, camping and scenic nature such as waterfalls and vistas are included. This represents a considerable opportunity to elevate the tourism readiness of the nature and adventure assets in the region. The assets are in varying degrees of readiness, but many are visitor- market- and export-ready or near-ready.

The region has several arts, culture and heritage assets including museums, an art gallery, a pow wow, and a music festival. These assets enable visitors to enjoy and deepen their appreciation of the culture of the region. Events and attractions are spread across the region, allowing the opportunity for collaboration.

Existing Indigenous tourism assets in the region are limited with opportunities to strengthen this asset across the region. There is a rich Indigenous history in the region; however, only four Indigenous tourism assets have been identified.

The region has some popular food and beverage establishments along with a vibrant arts culture, quality gift and souvenir shops, festivals and a range of accommodations offerings.

During stakeholder interviews conducted as part of the strategy process, Kenora and Sioux Lookout were identified as key competitors.

Kenora, 91 km. west of Vermillion Bay and 197 km. from Ear Falls, visually brands itself as the gateway to Lake of the Woods. Kenora's range of urban experiences and its proximity to Lake of the Woods are its greatest competitive advantages. These advantages are distinct from what the Ear Falls, Perrault Falls, Red Lake region offer.

Sioux Lookout is 232 km. northeast of Kenora. It brands itself as the "Hub of the North", halfway between Thunder Bay and Winnipeg. It offers a range of experiences such as arts and culture, festivals and events, farmers' markets, a library, on the water activities, parks, trails and green spaces, sports and recreation and vacation packages with fishing as its key tourism attraction.

Surveys and discussions identified the following unique differentiators for the region:

- Fishing
- Hunting
- Pimachiowin Aki UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Woodland Caribou Provincial Park
- Culture and heritage including floatplane culture, Indigenous, mining etc.
- Nature and Adventure

A wide range of supporting experiences were also identified including Indigenous tourism product development, festivals and events, trails, activities, packages, and food tourism.

The strategy process has revealed the marketing of the region to be fragmented, with a variety of organizations and municipal departments undertaking promotional efforts. A united marketing effort that is focused on branding and differentiating the region, supported by a marketing plan and calendar that encompass the entire offering of the region and broadening the mix of customers so that the dependence on the U.S. market decreases and demands from other markets increases is recommended.

The product development goals will be to increase the number of designed tourism experiences, create product themes and touring routes, enhance the Highway 105 drive, assist lodge operators in diversifying their products and markets and make recommendations for shoulder season and winter product development. In the short term, the goal will be to increase the number of market-ready experiences for summer 2021 to address COVID-19 Canadian, U.S. and international border closures and travel bans.







## Strategy Snapshot

### Overall Goal

Development of a Tourism Sector and Marketing Strategic Plan for the Ear Falls, Perrault Falls and Red Lake area to identify appropriate strategies, initiatives and tourism products and experiences required to diversify the tourism sector on the Highway 105 corridor.

### Scope of Work

A comprehensive short-term and longer-term strategic tourism plan for Ear Falls, Perrault Falls and Red Lake to facilitate regional recovery due to the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the tourism sector.

### Key Deliverable

Development of a comprehensive approach and overall plan to support the Ear Falls, Perrault Falls, Red Lake corridor as a whole as well as specific recommendations and strategic goals for the individual communities to meet their unique needs and challenges.

### Project Goals

- Increase the total contribution of tourism to the regional economy
- Diversify the tourism offering to attract new geographic and demographic markets
- Enhance the overall visitor experience of the Highway 105 corridor and its communities
- A unified Ear Falls, Perrault Falls, Red Lake tourism industry, working together as a whole on marketing, product development and visitor services
- Increase the number of market-ready experiences for summer 2021 to address COVID-19 Canadian, U.S. and international border closures and travel bans.

### Unique Differentiators

**Fishing:** Canada's premier fishing destination

**Hunting:** A key Canadian hunting destination

**Pimachiowin Aki UNESCO Heritage Site:** Canada's first mixed World Heritage property

**Woodland Caribou Provincial Park:** Almost 2,000 km. of maintained canoe routes on a myriad of rivers and lakes and home to one of the largest groups of woodland caribou south of Hudson Bay

**Floatplane Culture:** A long and continuous history of floatplane transportation and the Norseman Festival which attracts enthusiasts from around the world

**Culture and Heritage:** Indigenous, mining, Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre and more

**Nature and Adventure:** Five hundred miles of shoreline; abundant wildlife; excellent fishing; hiking trails, snowmobile trails; cross-country skiing; and other activities ensures a rich outdoor experience. The nature and adventure offering provides wide open spaces and access to nature without volume of visitor traffic

### Supporting Experiences

- Indigenous tourism products
- Festivals and Events
- Trails
- Touring and packages
- Water-based activities
- Natural asset utilization
- Culinary experiences
- Health and wellness tourism
- Sport tourism
- Winter tourism products

### Strategy themes

- Short-term COVID-19 product/experience offering 2021 for immediate impact
- Diversification of products and markets, reducing reliance on traditional markets
- Product development and experience enhancement that cultivate a unique sense of place
- Development of touring routes and itineraries
- Manage and market the products and experiences collaboratively
- Enhance the quality of services and experiences





## Research Overview

The research conducted for this project was extensive and included a variety of sources and expertise. Based on COVID-19, numbers from 2020 were highly skewed and not reflective of usual travel cycles and demand. These 2020 numbers, with the exception of short-haul, domestic and local demand, were not used for understanding trends.

The research input was a combination of operator surveying and one-on-one tourism operator interviews, reports from national, provincial, and regional tourism sources, studies measuring the impact of COVID-19, media sources and other desk research.

The research looks at short-term demand and impact considering the changing situation of the pandemic and historical data to understand post COVID-19 recovery and longer-term travel forecasted travel demand.

The research guided the overall strategy and suggested approach for tourism management, product development and marketing. The ever-changing situation with the pandemic has a significant impact on determining the customer base for summer 2021 and longer-term travel impact.

### Research – Ontario Consumer Sentiment

Below are the findings from According to Destination Canada's Sentiment Towards Visitors Survey Report, updated February 16, 2021. The findings are encouraging for driving short-term travel to the Ear Falls, Perrault Falls and Red Lake region in summer 2021. Ontarians responded favourably to travelling to other communities (71%) and more than 50% feel safe when thinking about inter-provincial travel. When considering advertising provincially, the overall receptivity of community and provincial travel grew. Positive US market signals indicate a desire to travel within North America.

The findings also highlight the need to reassure potential visitors that measures are in place to ensure their safety. More Ontarians expressed a willingness to welcome visitors, but a greater percentage are still unlikely to want to have visitors back in the community. Efforts to reassure locals that it is safe to welcome visitors to the region need to be made, explaining the safety measures that are in place.

Ontario's overall sentiment towards visitors from other parts of the province improved over the last month:

- 38% of Ontarians would welcome visitors from nearby communities
- 31% of Ontarians would welcome visitors from other parts of Ontario
- 25% of Ontarians would welcome visitors from other parts of Canada
- 11% of Ontarians would welcome visitors from the US and 11% from other international destinations

Ontarians' perception of travel safety increased towards all domestic destinations over the last month

- 71% of Ontarians feel safe when thinking about travelling to nearby communities
- 55% of Ontarians feel safe when thinking of travelling within Ontario
- 38% of Ontarians feel safe when thinking of travelling to other parts of Canada
- 13% of Ontarians perceived safety as much lower when thinking about travelling to the US and 14% to other international destinations

According to Destination Canada's Sentiment Toward Tourism Advertisement Survey Report, updated February 23, 2021:

- Ontario's overall receptivity of promoting nearby communities as a travel destination increased to be net positive of +12; therefore, timely and relevant hyperlocal travel will be well received
- Ontario's overall receptivity of promoting communities as a travel destination in other parts of Ontario has improved to net neutral of +3; suggesting caution in promoting pan-Ontario travel
- Overall Ontario receptivity of promoting communities as a travel destination in other parts of Canada continues to be net negative at -5; suggesting caution in promoting to other provinces

Google Travel Intent Canada survey online poll results ending February 12 reported:

- 6% of Canadians are looking at booking a domestic trip in the next three months, increased from 4% reported in the previous January 8 report
- 11% of Canadians are looking at booking a domestic trip in the next three to six months, remaining stable from 10% reported in the previous January 8 report
- 23% of Canadians are looking at booking a domestic trip after February 12, 2022, increased from 21% reported in the previous January 8 report
- 7% of Canadians are interested in a travel destination anywhere in their region in the next three months, increased from 5% reported on January 8 report
- 15% of Canadians are interested in a small-town travel destination, increased from 10% reported in the previous January 8 report
- 18% of Canadians are interested in a rural travel location, remaining stable at 18% reported in the previous January 8 report

### **U.S. Travel Outlook**

Destination Analysts' U.S. Coronavirus Travel Index results ending February 23, 2021 reported:

- 60% of survey respondents currently feel at least somewhat ready to travel, an almost +10% increase since December 2020
- 16% of respondents feel currently ready to travel with no hesitation
- 28% of respondents feel currently ready to travel, but with some hesitation
- Optimism about the pandemic improving in America has reached record highs since March 2020
- 44% of Americans believe the pandemic situation will improve in the next month, the highest this metric has been since March 2020, and up +5% since the previous week.
- 18% of Americans believe the pandemic situation will worsen in the next month, the lowest this metric has been since March 2020, and down -5% since the previous week.
- Openness to travel inspiration through learning of new destinations and experiences was indicated by 56% of survey respondents, a +39% increase since November 2020.
- When asked to summarize their current feelings about travel in one word, most respondents indicated "Excited", as opposed to March 2020 - May 2020 where they indicated "Scared".

## **Destination Northern Ontario Impacts of Covid-19 on Northern Ontario Accommodations and Recommendations for Future Planning – A Summary**

Destination Northern Ontario commissioned a study by CBRE Tourism and Leisure to determine the impacts of COVID-19 on accommodations in Northern Ontario and, ultimately, make recommendations for future planning. The field survey took place November 9-December 14, 2020 with 84 out of 185 respondents completing the survey (45%) being from this region. Northwestern Ontario (sub-region) had by far the most respondents at 68 (82%). By property type, 51 (61%) were hunting and fishing lodges, 10 were remote outposts (12%), 14 were housekeeping cottages/cabin resort (14%) and 9 were hotel/motel/resorts.

### **Operating Results**

Of the available fixed roof accommodation supply in Northern Ontario, 30% of hunting and fishing lodges and remote outposts in 13C were closed in 2020. Guest demand decline in 13C was -61% and guest decline by property type was -84% for housekeeping cottage/cabin resort, -47% for hotel/motel/resort, -89% for hunting and fishing lodges and -97% for remote outposts. Revenue decline for 13C was -81% and that decline was by far the highest for hunting and fishing lodges (96%) and remote outposts (-97%).

While 13C revenues declined by -84%, expenses declined by -59%. By property type the revenue/expense ratio was -96%/-64% for hunting and fishing lodges and -97%/-66% for remote outposts. Salaries and wages declined by -77% overall for 13C, with a -87% decline in salaries and wages for hunting and fishing lodges and -42% for remote outposts.

### **Funding Programs**

COVID-19 relief funding programs accessed include/included the following:

- CEBA Canada Emergency Business Account interest-free loans
- CEWS Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (75%)
- NORP Northern Ontario Recovery Program
- CERS Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy
- CERB Canada Emergency Response Benefit
- RRRF Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (CFDC and/or FedNor)
- CUSBRF Canadian United Small Business Relief Fund (OCC)
- BCAP Business Credit Availability Program (EDC)
- GST/HSTS Remittance Deferral to June 2020
- Forgiveness of MNRF land use, permit fees

In 13C, the average relief funding received was \$197,800. By property type, it was \$198,500 for hunting and fishing lodges and \$102,500 for remote outposts. The most utilized programs were CEBA (78%), CEWS (62%), CERB (33%) and MNRF (35%).

## **Expenses**

93% of all respondents said that they made attempts to reduce operating expenses. Most mentioned were:

- Closed property for all or a portion of the year
- Reduced unit capacity and operating hours
- Reduced staffing
- Closed or reduced retail operations
- Made no major purchases/limited capital improvements

Barriers against cost reduction included the fact that COVID-19 cleaning protocols are time consuming, largest capital expenses had been made just prior to COVID and the fixed core costs such as taxes, insurance, hydro and loans. Other notable measures included:

- Reduced flights
- Ran smaller generator during off-times
- Put advertising, marketing, shows, unnecessary expenses on hold
- Re-evaluated insurance
- Shut down fridges and freezers, changed to LED lights, reduced boiler temperatures, closed pool
- Asked lender to reduce interest
- Made interest only payments
- Kept vehicles parked and removed insurance
- Installed solar power
- Cut phone lines and memberships to all Canadian organizations

Capital improvements due to COVID-19 ranged from \$2,000 to \$145,000/property with the average being \$36,000/property. Most frequently made changes were to allow for social distancing and outdoor dining such as deck and dock enhancements and additions.

80% of respondents stated that they moved 2020 deposits to 2021 while 5% were planning to hold them indefinitely. 5% refunded, 5% stated they were not holding any and there were 5% "Other" responses. It was acknowledged that if there is no 2021 season, "all bookings will request refunds".

By geographic origin, guest decline from 2019-2020 was -41% Ontario, -13% other Canada, -99% U.S. and -89% international for a total decline of -58% for all of Northern Ontario.

## Product Development/Diversification

Answer choices for this section were as follows:

• Provided PPE to staff and guests	54%
• Provided more information online	34%
• Closed dining	28%
• Stopped guiding	28%
• Removed guest-facing staff positions	20%
• Began offering room service	15%
• Digital check in	11%
• Closed retail	6%
• Stopped daily maid service	2%
• Had to cater to different guests	2%

“Other” responses included offered alternative modes of transportation, greeted guests outside, didn’t offer full activities, created outdoor dining experience, offered more of a “do it yourself” vacation, installed BBQs, reduced stay times to allow cleaning, changed to disposable mattress covers, only rented outpost cabins and lost “family” atmosphere.

Additional changes in product development cited included:

- Catered to new markets (i.e., inexperienced anglers)
- Offered staycation opportunities to local and regional visitors
- Added packages in U.S. dollars
- Significant discounts for Canadians

When asked if they had undertaken a product-market match process, 48% said that they did not as they did not know about this tool. 28% said that they were busy enough, 19% said that they had but they did not learn anything. 5% said that they had, and it had improved business.

## Marketing

Key marketing tactics used in 2020 were social media (83%), word of mouth (60%), emailing past and existing guests (51%), print media ads (35%) and advertising with DMO (20%). Ten percent said that they did not advertise in 2020.

Key changes to marketing in 2020 included:

- Targeting domestic market
- Mentioned what doing to keep people safe
- More digital with focus on COVID-19 protocols
- Used more third-party booking sites
- Created new website
- More social media to Canadians
- Marketing in Manitoba press
- Canadian currency on website
- Emails to Southern Ontario guests/potential visitors

## Successes and Challenges

### Successes

- Government funding and programs in 2020 44%
- Location (by highway) – excellent year 20%
- Viewed as safe place 15%
- Able to attract more domestic 4%

### Challenges

- Lack of inventory due to advance bookings 90%
- Border restrictions 80%
- Not able to attract domestic 59%
- Location (remote) – bad year 39%
- Fear of COVID 39%
- Uncertainty re: border opening 34%

The report outlined key consumer trends that will affect travel in 2021 for accommodators in Northern Ontario as follows:

Trend	Recommendation
Pent up demand	Instead of discounting prices, offer packages and complementary add-ons
Shorter trips	Providing flexibility in booking will be crucial
Researching in advance	Ensure that websites are up to date especially with respect to offerings, photos, operating season
Repeat customers (familiarity with product)	Focus marketing on previous domestic guests as they may be more likely to return
Communications	It is important for operators to be transparent i.e., educating guests about arrival process etc
Sustainability and wellness	As consumers are more conscious about their social and environmental impact than ever before, communicate how business is caring for employees and the planet

As additional future planning considerations, the report suggested exploring alternative revenue streams such as offering fishing lessons or equipment rentals to non-guests during slower months. It also suggested making use of third-party platforms such as TripAdvisor, Expedia and Airbnb to drive additional visitors to websites/booking platforms. It also recommended:

- Pursuing and earning the Safe Travels Stamp, administered through TIAO
- Offering pricing in Canadian dollars to signal that Canadians are welcome
- Consider undergoing a product-visitor gap analysis through Destination Northern Ontario

## Research – Current Marketing in the Region

While product diversification to attract new markets is a key focus of this strategy, it will be vitally important that the proponents have the ability to respond quickly to changing market origins and demands due to the pandemic in their marketing efforts. There is little lead time signalling when a region's COVID-19 status is about to change so marketing plans will likely have to be adjusted repeatedly over time. Working together, aligning marketing initiatives and being clear on who plays what role in marketing the region will help keep the process flexible and nimble.

Various entities have been involved in marketing the region over the years. It is important to understand their roles to help to determine the best means of marketing the region.

### Highway 105 Tourism and Marketing Board (formerly Red Lake District Publicity Board)

- Run by a volunteer board with the support of a part-time administration assistant (10 hours/week). Increasing staffing is a goal of the board.
- Responsible for marketing the region and applying for grants as well as operating the Norseman Festival.
- New branding (new name) went into effect in 2016; the look remained the same. The name change opened opportunities to get Ear Falls involved as well as possibly other communities.
- Membership among camps is declining but more businesses are joining.
- Marketing plan in place. They participate in 3-5 sports shows/year in Winnipeg and U.S. Midwest, advertise in Winnipeg Free Press and have 10 billboards in the region.
- Has been membership based. Will assume management role for MAT. Ear Falls not going ahead with MAT. Operators excluded from having to collect MAT in Red Lake.
- Highway 105 group and Sunset Country have reciprocal memberships. Most operators advertise with both.
- Strengths: Recipient of MAT tax, strong track record in accessing grants, track record of marketing both fish/hunt and other products, manage Norseman Festival.
- Weaknesses: Volunteer run, no full-time staff, traditionally membership based.

### Ontario's Sunset Country

- Recognized as a sub-regional DMO by Destination Northern Ontario, one of two in the Regional Tourism Organization region 13C. Promotes region as Canada's premier fishing destination and devotes majority of marketing efforts at the fish/hunt market. Membership-based and also receives funding from Destination Northern Ontario based on a tactical marketing plan and funding request. Produces a travel guide and fishing map as well as a monthly newsletter. Almost solely focused on U.S. Midwest market.
- Strengths: Strong record of marketing fish/hunt, good track record with social media marketing.
- Weaknesses: Membership based, strongly focused on fish/hunt, very little domestic marketing undertaken.

### **Perrault Falls Adventure Area**

- Perrault Falls Adventure Area is a coalition of 25 Cedar Lake watershed lodges, formed some time ago because they felt they were underrepresented. Has 11 members posted on website. Website promotes fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing, lists some services and amenities and highlights the group's conservation efforts.
- Strengths: Good knowledge of area and fish/hunt products.
- Weaknesses: Very few members, little focus on products other than fishing and hunting.

### **Patricia Region Tourism Council**

- The Patricia Region Tourism Council is not believed to be active. The council used to produce a free fishing map that a print company, Mac Print in Dryden, now produces. The map is endorsed by Patricia Region board.

### **Chukuni Communities Development Corporation (CCDC)**

- The Corporation's catchment area includes the Municipality of Red Lake and the Township of Ear Falls (including Perrault Falls). Its main activities include business services and support for access to capital, community/economic development and strategic planning.
- In 2008, when the Municipality of Red Lake chose to undertake the role of economic development, the Chukuni Communities Development Corporation (CCDC) made the decision to dedicate its efforts towards community development under the guidance of a Community Development Committee. It has a community development strategy 2020-24.
- Strategy #1 of the document highlights the need to "market the community as a great place to live, work, play and stay". Included in the actions is to develop an "Ultimate Guide" to the Red Lake/Ear Falls District, update the MyRedLake website and continue development of the MyEarFalls website.
- In the early 2000's the CCDC had tourism staff and were engaged in domestic and international marketing.

### **Municipalities of Red Lake and Ear Falls**

- The Municipality of Red Lake has a Community Development and Communications Manager and the Township of Ear Falls has an Economic Development officer whose roles include working with the committee to implement the strategy's recommendations. Tourism products and services are promoted on both websites.

### **Short Haul Forecasts**

The uncertainty of travel in 2021 based on COVID-19 variants, vaccine levels, border restrictions and the overall desire to travel, makes it difficult for operators to forecast demand. The continuation of the US border closure has many tourism operators in the region juggling the decision of holding out for the US border re-opening or shifting their focus, to recoup some revenues, by marketing domestically and provincially. The return of international markets is not expected for full recovery until 2024.

The US border status is in a different situation compared to other international markets, as the re-opening could result in immediate return of some travellers though 2019 business levels are not predicted to be realized until 2023 and beyond.

The impact of tourism after the border closures in March 2020 suggests a drop of tourism revenue of 62% in 2020, on the heels of five years of consecutive growth.



*“After five consecutive years of growth, we are forecasting that the tourism sector will not recover to 2019 levels until 2024 at the earliest....According to our estimates, the decline in tourism in 2020 resulted in a loss of up to 440,000 jobs directly involved in servicing visitors. In addition, Statistics Canada estimated a loss of at least 133,000-143,000 jobs in other sectors delivering goods and services to tourism industries...”*

**(Destination Canada)**

The following information was reported by the Conference Board of Canada on February 18, 2021. The report looked at all the provinces and the following is specific to Ontario.

- A rising number of new cases of COVID-19 in December 2020 continue to plague the Ontario tourism market along with the broader provincial economy. Stricter lockdowns will weigh heavily on both interprovincial and international tourism.
- Total expenditures will recover slightly faster than will visits as tourism prices are likely to increase in the wake of the pandemic. In many cases, these price increases will be essential to the survival of many firms as the tourism industry was heavily impacted by the pandemic.
- Tourism’s recovery in the province faces a long road ahead but wide distribution of vaccines will allow traveller confidence to recover. Pent-up demand for travel may manifest itself in increased travel activity in the latter half of 2021. The first requirement was the development of a safe, trusted, and widely available vaccine.
- Some of the changes in travel patterns brought about by the pandemic, including a preference for local visits, could be long-lasting. U.S. and overseas travel to the province will not reach pre-pandemic levels even by 2024.

**Destination Canada’s scenarios show the possibility of return to 2019 levels by next year from intra-provincial and inter-provincial tourism**

## Border re-opening scenarios

Markets will recover at different rates depending on when Canada can start easing travel restrictions assumed to begin in 2021

- Shorter haul markets will recover faster
  - With border restrictions lifted, travel should return to 2019 levels earlier for short/medium haul origins.
- Added travel costs will slow recovery
  - Lifting of travel restriction will be conditional on meeting Health and Safety conditions.
    - e.g. proof of immunity, Covid-19 testing
  - Health and Safety conditions will impose additional costs on international travel, which together with travel uncertainties, will slow the pace of recovery.

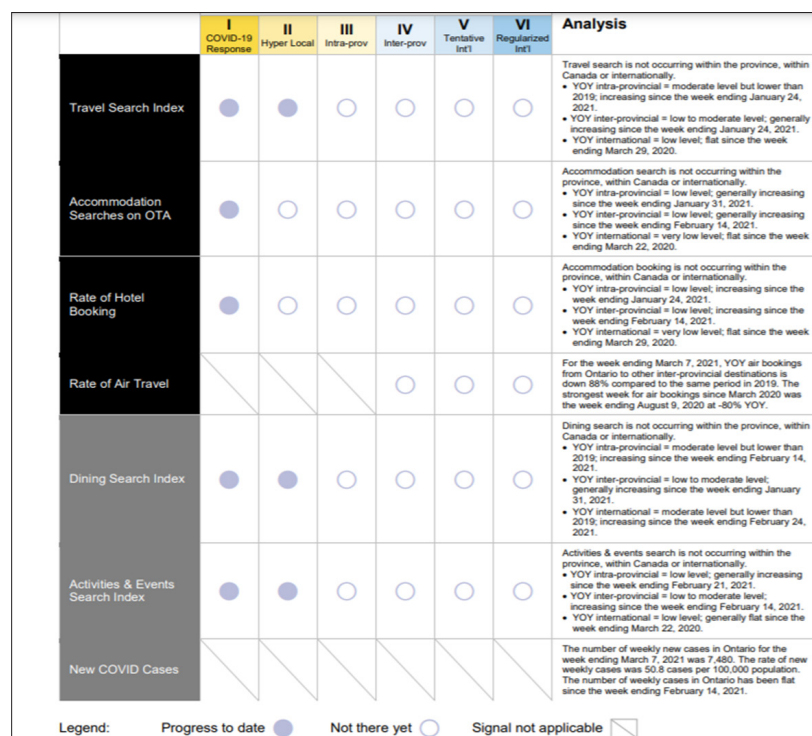
Scenario	Border Re-opening Month	Month of Return to 2019 Trip Level	
		Intra-provincial	Inter-provincial
1	Jan-2021	Mar-22	Dec-22
2	Apr-2021	May-22	Mar-23
3	Oct-2021	Dec-21	Sep-23

### Current Situation in Ontario as reported by Destination Canada – March 9, 2021

The current situation for Ontario in relation to travel and tourist services is indicating a hyper-local situation. With increased vaccination numbers and a decline in daily cases, Ontario will hopefully be in at least an intra-provincial state and with easing restrictions, and possibly an inter-provincial situation.

Manitoba could be a short-term recovery market once the mandatory 14-day requirement for arriving travellers is lifted.

The following graph shows tourism activity from a travel search perspective.  
The “hyper-local” market is showing the most immediate impact.



## Long Haul Forecasts

The business recovery levels for US and international travel are hugely dependant on border openings, quarantine restrictions and other measures currently in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The research below is based on tourism recovering to 2019 levels and some forecasts, particularly for the US and international markets are predicting 2025 and beyond.

The following reflects the tourism losses from international markets in Canada in 2020

ESTIMATED CHANGE IN TOURISM EXPORT REVENUE COMPARED TO 2019 BY PROVINCE (IN \$M)												
	CAN	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PEI	NL	NORTH
Australia	-\$632.8	-\$302.7	-\$118.0	-\$8.2	-\$10.1	-\$102.0	-\$52.4	-\$5.8	-\$10.5	-\$5.3	-\$6.2	-\$11.7
China	-\$1,555.6	-\$632.4	-\$123.7	-\$13.2	-\$24.9	-\$539.7	-\$153.3	-\$176	-\$24.7	-\$9.7	-\$4.9	-\$11.5
France	-\$715.3	-\$55.1	-\$34.1	-\$8.6	-\$4.9	-\$118.3	-\$455.8	-\$7.9	-\$9.3	-\$4.2	-\$8.1	-\$9.1
Germany	-\$573.4	-\$188.2	-\$85.9	-\$5.7	-\$7.1	-\$148.2	-\$78.9	-\$7.5	-\$22.6	-\$5.8	-\$7.4	-\$16.2
India	-\$316.1	-\$36.3	-\$47.7	-\$5.3	-\$5.6	-\$150.9	-\$47.9	-\$4.2	-\$4.7	-\$3.5	-\$3.7	-\$6.2
Japan	-\$408.1	-\$153.6	-\$51.3	-\$4.9	-\$6.1	-\$116.3	-\$34.0	-\$4.4	-\$5.6	-\$5.7	-\$4.0	-\$22.2
Mexico	-\$568.7	-\$236.5	-\$29.9	-\$4.6	-\$7.3	-\$153.0	-\$111.3	-\$4.1	-\$5.4	-\$3.3	-\$3.5	-\$9.7
South Korea	-\$305.8	-\$109.8	-\$44.7	-\$4.6	-\$5.0	-\$87.7	-\$29.7	-\$4.3	-\$5.1	-\$3.0	-\$3.2	-\$8.6
United Kingdom	-\$1,113.3	-\$359.3	-\$182.5	-\$12.4	-\$12.1	-\$352.8	-\$115.4	-\$12.5	-\$29.7	-\$8.9	-\$10.9	-\$16.8
United States	-\$9,533.0	-\$2,500.9	-\$848.4	-\$86.5	-\$130.2	-\$3,470.6	-\$1,536.5	-\$190.9	-\$342.4	-\$117.3	-\$57.5	-\$251.8
Total DC Markets	-\$15,722.1	-\$4,574.8	-\$1,566.1	-\$153.9	-\$213.3	-\$5,239.5	-\$2,615.1	-\$259.4	-\$459.9	-\$166.7	-\$109.5	-\$363.7

Source: Destination Canada Estimates (data as of December 25 for US, December 27 for all other markets)

## Long-haul International Potential

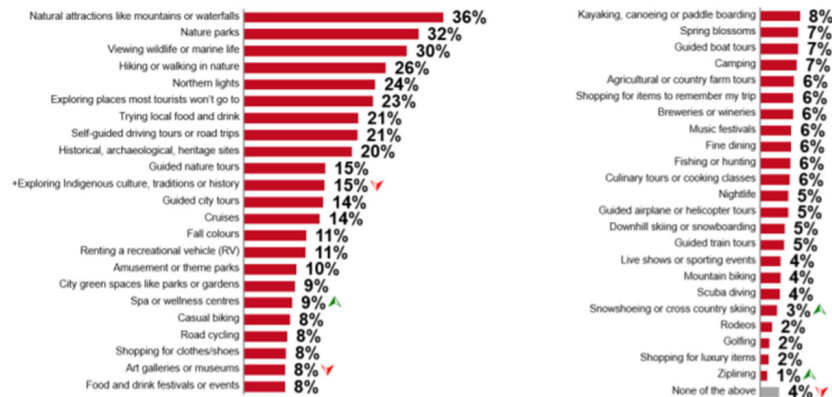
Some work has been done and continues to take place to attract international visitors to the region. The highest potential market has been identified as the German-speaking market. The product offering of this region fits well into the visitor profile of the German traveller.

The German market uses travel trade to book their travel - "60% of German travellers consulted a travel agent/tour operator when planning or booking a long-haul trip, a significant increase from 2017. Germany is the only market to see an increase in travel trade use year-over-year." (Destination Canada)

The region had focussed on the German market and had contracted with Receptive Tour Operators selling the region. These initiatives drifted with changes in funding, though still show high potential.

Based on Global Tourism Watch research the motivators of the German market align precisely with the product offering of the Ear Falls, Red Lake and Perrault Falls.

### Trip Anchor Activities



\* Aboriginal was changed to Indigenous in 2018 – review trending with caution.  
Base: Long-haul pleasure travellers (past 3 years or next 2 years) answering (n=1480)  
MP12: Among these activities, are there any that are important enough that you would base an entire trip around that activity?

▲ / ✓ Significantly higher/lower than 2017 GTW wave

The long-haul markets require time and sales and marketing consistency. These markets are expected to take longer to recover than short haul markets.

### Border re-opening scenarios

Markets will recover at different rates depending on when Canada can start easing travel restrictions assumed to begin in 2021

- Shorter haul markets will recover faster
  - With border restrictions lifted, travel should return to 2019 levels earlier for short/medium haul origins.
- Added travel costs will slow recovery
  - Lifting of travel restriction will be conditional on meeting Health and Safety conditions.
    - e.g. proof of immunity, Covid-19 testing
  - Health and Safety conditions will impose additional costs on international travel, which together with travel uncertainties, will slow the pace of recovery.

Scenario	Border Re-opening Month	Month of Return to 2019 Trip Level	
		United States Arrival	Overseas Arrivals
1	Jan-2021	Sep-23	Sep-24
2	Apr-2021	Jun-24	Jun-25
3	Oct-2021	Mar-25	Mar-26







## Tourism Operator Survey –Key Findings

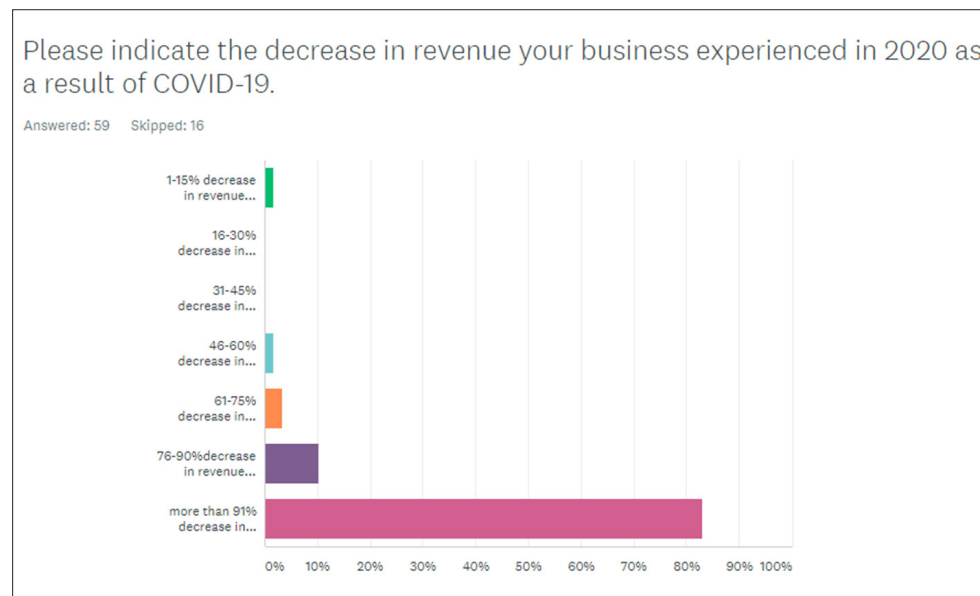
The tourism operator survey has resulted in 75 responses over the course of the project.

Most responded to pricing, demand shifts, new experience opportunities, marketing approaches and information needed to access funding and information.

The impact of COVID-19 on overall revenue has been devastating. While some businesses were able to shift and look at corporate travel, family travel and cottage rentals, the overall financial impact was significant.

Many operators skipped the questions relating to the Canadian market with the exception of those that had experienced past business from the domestic market.

The following provides a snapshot of the financial impact of COVID-19 on the businesses that responded to the survey. With the heavy reliance on the US markets, most experienced more than a 91% decrease in revenues in 2020.



**This image reinforces the heavy dependency and impact of the US market.**

What had been your overall percentage of your business (based on booking nights and/or packages sold/purchased) from various markets pre-COVID-19? Consider an overall average based on the 5 years prior to the pandemic.

	1-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	MORE THAN 80%	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
US Market	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 53	53	5.00
Ontario Market - Northern (starts at North Bay including North Bay)	91.67% 22	4.17% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	4.17% 1	24	1.21
Ontario Market - Southern (south of North Bay)	95.83% 23	0.00% 0	4.17% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	24	1.08
Manitoba	96.15% 25	3.85% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	26	1.04
Other Canada	100.00% 21	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	21	1.00
International Europe	100.00% 18	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	18	1.00
International Other	84.21% 16	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	15.79% 3	19	1.63

Comments (19)

The following shows some market diversification though the majority is from the US as cited earlier.

What was your percentage of your business (based on booking nights and/or packages sold) that came from the following markets in summer 2020?

Answered: 41

Skipped: 34

About half the respondents answered this question and the markets that were identified are as follows:

	1-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	MORE THAN 80%	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Northern Ontario (starts at North Bay - including North Bay)	70.00% 21	6.67% 2	6.67% 2	3.33% 1	13.33% 4	30	1.83
Southern Ontario (south of North Bay)	86.21% 25	6.90% 2	3.45% 1	3.45% 1	0.00% 0	29	1.24
Manitoba	86.21% 25	10.34% 3	3.45% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	29	1.17
Quebec	100.00% 19	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	19	1.00
Other Canada	95.65% 22	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	4.35% 1	23	1.17

**The following reflects comments in relation to potential markets that can be explored to assist with market diversification for the region.**

The opportunities that currently exist and can be promoted:

- Hiking, boating, ATV riding
- Nature Viewing, group gatherings (Weddings/reunions)
- Hiking, wildlife viewing
- Wildlife viewing, nature immersion
- ATV trips
- Flights for sightseeing
- Eco tourism packages and outdoor adventure
- Trapping
- Kayaking, paddle boating, blueberry picking, beach days, potlucks
- Lodging for contract workers in the area
- Walking trails, bird watching, wildlife discovery, golf, local attractions
- Accommodations for contractors and area family visitors
- Ear Falls local activities and sites
- Fine dining, beautiful locations, water sport equipment (kayaks, canoes, paddle boards). We also offer scenic tourism flights.
- The experience of a floatplane ride (flying), the great outdoors, nature, beautiful sand beach and solitude
- Beach, golf, wildlife viewing
- Nature appreciation, peace and quiet
- Remote relaxation
- Aviation services

#### New Experience/Product Ideas

- Seasonal cabin rentals, ice fishing (would require winter water lines and heating to cabins, insulated and heated ice shacks etc.), cabin rental and snowshoeing/cross country ski maps (would have to develop the trails myself, because there aren't any around here)
- We are trying to bring in ice fishermen
- Long term rentals, seasonal RV sites
- Purchasing kayaks
- Shorter packages. More weekend packages
- Working on the website. Simplifying packages. Promoting community activities
- Shifting our cabin rentals to contractors
- Pontoon tours, kayaking, paddle boards gearing towards family trips
- Fishing tournaments, workshops, contractors

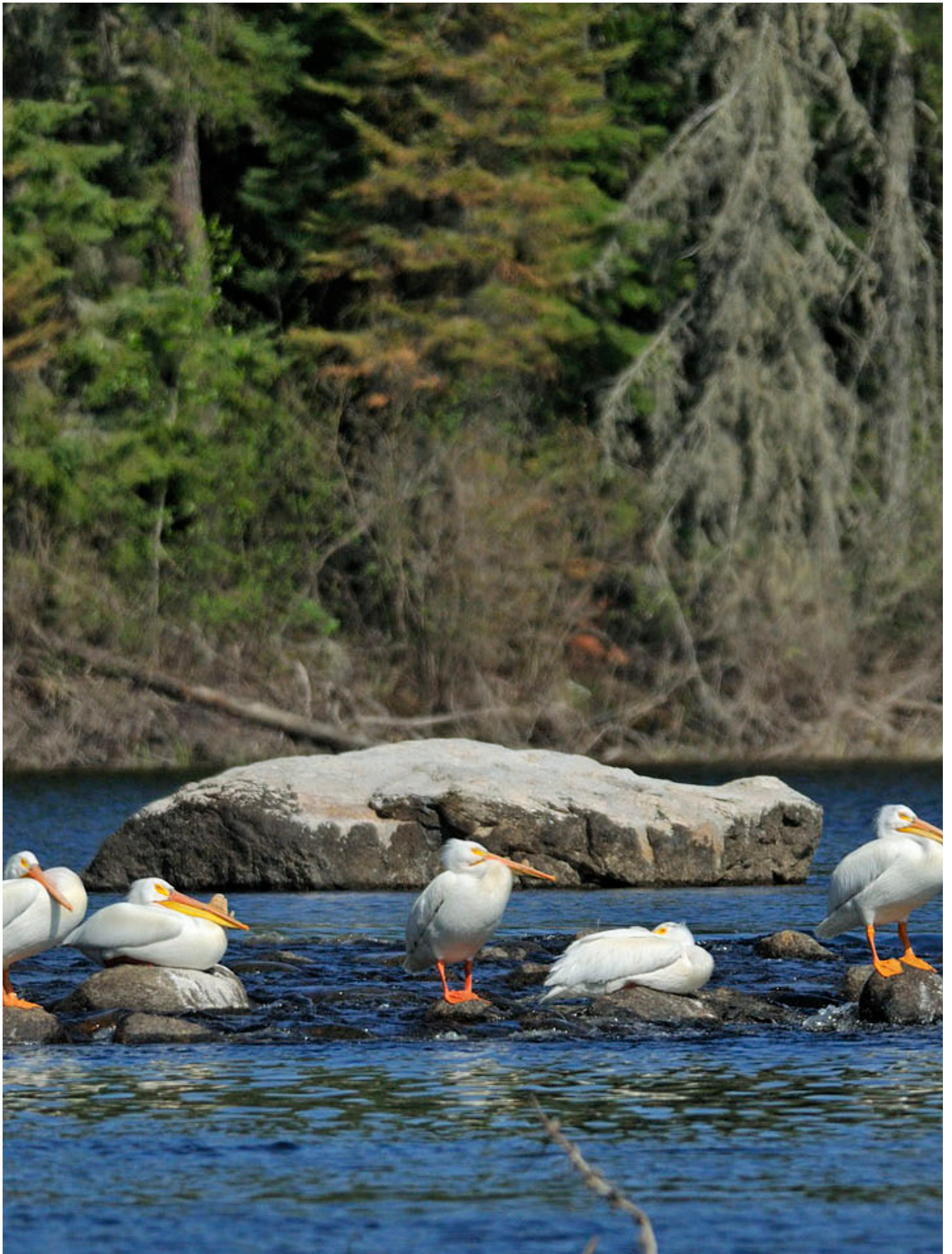


### **In-depth Interviews (one-on-one) – Overview & Key Findings**

12 interviews were conducted with 15 key tourism stakeholders. Findings were as follows:

#### **Key Findings**

- Red Lake is booming due to mining activity which is resulting in limited hotel capacity:
  - Some lodges are benefiting from this increased demand
  - Accommodation is limited and in high demand
- Need for tourism leadership and tourism marketing for all operators – a non-membership-based approach
- Training and guidance are needed in the area of experience and product development
- Financial struggles impact product innovation
- There has been some international focus for the region though the commitment was not consistent (a need for international travel trade buyers)
- There is a reluctance to shift markets for about 50% of the operators. The approach is to wait for the US border to re-open. The appetite from this group for market diversification is low
- Kenora has a very strong summer market from Manitoba and there is a congestion issue. This might be an opportunity for the Ear Falls, Red Lake and Perrault Falls region as the area is much less congested in the summer and there is ample access to the outdoors
- Festivals and events are a strong draw for regional tourism and inter-provincial (Manitoba)
- There are limited market-ready Indigenous tourism products but opportunities to create these experiences and share Indigenous art and culture



## Case Study Overview

Numerous operator websites were reviewed, and case study interviews were conducted with operators who had achieved some degree of success in developing new products beyond hunting and fishing and offering those products to a domestic market. From one operator we heard:

*“Exhaust yourself of every possible option, even going through all the government funding programs and don’t be scared to pick up the phone and call people for advice, to see if there is something out there you missed. And communicate with friends and acquaintances in the industry, share ideas and bounce suggestions off each other. Talking things out always seems to help. Together we can get through this and together we can get stronger for ALL OF US”.*

Another operator offered:

*“It takes time, creativity, and effort to diversify your product and attract new markets, but it is worth it. Whether it is health-related or a financial or other situation that negatively impacts the tourism industry, it will be important not to have all your eggs in one basket.*

*The temporary closure of sport shows provided a good opportunity to reflect on their value, freeing up funds and time to rethink how we market including increasing social media and undertaking a television advertising campaign in Northern Ontario, both of which have been attracting attention.*

*We should view the pandemic as an opportunity. The industry will get stronger and smarter, bolstered by those who want to innovate. The Southern Ontario and other Canadian markets have started to view Northern Ontario as a very appealing destination given its wide-open spaces and abundant nature and this will likely continue to grow. The New Canadian market should be explored. We need to change our mentality and open our eyes to the potential.*

*It took time and research to build our trophy fishery and fly-fishing product, but both have proven to be beneficial for business.*

*When exploring who was following COVID protocols in the nearby community, Nakina, we encountered negative attitudes about having visitors from outside the region visit. It took a lot of reassurance that our visitors would not be stopping at any point on the trip. This attitude needs to be addressed”.*

For additional detail on the case studies, see the Addendum.



## SWOT Analysis – Regional Approach

From a tourism perspective, the Ear Falls, Perrault Falls, Red Lake region benefits from a range of strengths. However, there are number of challenges, some of which have the potential to impact the future growth and sustainability of the tourism sector. To build on these strengths and address these challenges, a list of key opportunities has been identified that form the foundation of the Tourism Sector and Marketing Strategic Plan for Ear Falls, Perrault Falls and Red Lake. Key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are summarized as follows:

### Strengths

- Region's offerings align well current traveller interests: uncrowded, natural areas (lakes, nature and adventure, wilderness), regional and local destinations are expected to drive the recovery
- Range of fishing/hunting lodge offerings
- Strong U.S. market loyalty
- Complementary tourism experiences such as strong festivals and events
- Some regional cooperation
- Some success with targeted Manitoba advertising in 2020
- Shortage of supply for cottage rentals in-province and in Manitoba

### Weaknesses

- Closed U.S. border and no international travel
- Financial uncertainty/hardship (current situation based on COVID-19)
- Challenging location for drive market (off main corridor)
- Existing competition located closer to key market(s)
- Limited hotel capacity in Red Lake due to current mining projects
- Lack of awareness of the region
- Mindset that US market is the only market to pursue, resistance to change
- Individual and smaller marketing efforts – not having enough impact for the region
- Lack of dedicated personnel solely focussed on tourism development for the region
- Perception of limited experiences outside of fishing and hunting
- Drive along the 105 corridor has limited appeal and what is available is not well advertised

### Opportunities

- Rentals to contractors, miners, workers in the area
- Domestic market: Winnipeg (including New Canadians), "Staycation", "Roam at Home", local/NW Ontario, Saskatchewan
- Millennials (adventure travel)
- Longer-term – Overseas markets with a focus on Germany
- Packages in Canadian dollars – include other dining and entertainment experiences
- Weekend/weekly packages for families
- Monthly/all summer rentals – capitalizing on the demand and shortage of supply in cottage and cabin rentals
- Experience Fishing program

- RV touring market
- Potential for ice fishing
- New experience/product development with a focus on kayaking, ATVs, hiking, wildlife viewing and other nature-based tourism experiences
- Retreats (health and wellness, professional, crafts, etc.)
- Virtual experiences
- Overlanding trails
- New products through experience development
- Marketing, social media
- Rebranding – consolidated image
- Consumer reassurance with clear instructions and information highlighting the ease of travel and health safety precautions and products/experiences available for travel during COVID-19 and the recovery period.
- Building more resilient, sustainable tourism through diversification of product and aligned marketing
- Designations: Safe Travel, LGBTQ+ Friendly, etc.
- Indigenous tourism development with pow wow group, Red Lake and Ear Falls Indian Friendship Centres and heritage centre
- Nearby and more distant Indigenous markets
- Development of opportunities around World Heritage Site
- OnThisSpot app to help tourists connect with the tourism assets in region.

### **Threats**

- Competition from nearby markets: Lake of the Woods/Kenora, Lac Seul/Sioux Lookout etc.
- Resistance to change
- Financial hardship
- COVID-19 restrictions relating to travel
- Impact of new COVID-19 variants and increased restrictions
- Vaccine roll-out delays – Canada and US
- Consumer travel concerns, changing travel intentions and desires
- Weakened consumer spending levels
- Tourism industry may be last to recover
- Domestic tourists are often more price-sensitive and tend to have lower spending patterns.
- Shifts in currency valuation of US dollar
- “Turf wars”, lack of regional cooperation





## Asset Inventory

### Ear Falls, Perrault Falls, Red Lake Tourism Asset Inventory

Ear Falls features “small town life with unparalleled beauty”. Located on the shores of Lac Seul, English River, Wenasasga Lake and Pakwash Lake, the town and surrounding area offer residents and visitors a playground that can be enjoyed year-round. Ear Falls and neighbouring Perrault Falls are known for their world-class fishing and hunting. Red Lake is a town of about 4500 people with a vibrant arts community, strong ties to nature, association with sports and a profitable mining sector. It is also a prominent tourist destination for those who enjoy nature and adventure and, in particular, fishing.

This asset inventory comprises a comprehensive inventory of tourism assets within the Ear Falls, Perrault Falls and Red Lake region to help to inform the strategy.

Tourism assets in the region skew heavily towards nature and adventure. There are at least 15 categories of nature and adventure assets in the region. Fishing, hunting, lakes and rivers, beaches, parks, wildlife, trails, golfing, winter sports, camping and scenic nature such as waterfalls and vistas are included. This represents a considerable opportunity to elevate the tourism readiness of the nature and adventure assets in the region. The assets are in varying degrees of readiness, some at a high level.

Asset	Description	Assessment	Market	Readiness
<b>Fishing/Ice Fishing</b>	Walleye, northern pike, and lake trout, but also smallmouth and largemouth bass, muskie, black crappie, perch, brook trout, sauger, and whitefish	Northern Ontario Canada’s premier fishing destination, with Northwestern Ontario including the Red Lake, Ear Falls, Perrault Falls region, attracting the most anglers	Mostly American	High state of readiness for all markets
<b>Red Lake Fall Classic</b>	Yearly on Labour Day Weekend at the Government Dock in Red Lake. 2 days, top prize of over \$10,000. There is also a junior championship	This is a highly successful catch and release event that attracts a repeat audience and has a wait list. Almost all money raised goes back into prize money. Caps at 135 boats	Mostly local, regional	Visitor-ready, limited space
<b>Lac Seul Walleye Cup</b>	Annual event held the 2nd last weekend in July. \$15,000 prize for the top boat over the two-day tournament. Entertainment and public fish-fry at the Waterfront Park on Saturday evening	Very successful event. Almost all money raised goes back into prize money. Dedicated volunteers. Caps at 100 boats	Local, regional, Manitoba/Saskatchewan and US anglers	Visitor-ready, limited space

Asset	Description	Assessment	Market	Readiness
<b>Hunting</b>	Healthy wildlife populations, extreme wilderness, tailored trips, guided tours, hunting camps	Described on local website as “best hunting in Canada”	Mostly American for bear. Southern Ontario, regional, Manitoba for other game	Visitor- and export-ready
<b>Hiking/Trails</b>	Some of the trails used for hiking are multipurpose trails and are used for ATVing, snowshoeing, cross country skiing	Mostly in Ear Falls area. Good variety of types from easy to more challenging, about 15 km of trails	Local, regional	Visitor-ready. Map available
<b>Camping</b>	Tenting - Multiple sites available in C Woodland Caribou Provincial Park, Pakwash Provincial Park, Pimachiowin Aki, can camp on Crown Land. RV sites – Pakwash Provincial Park, multiple outfitters provide access for RVs with full hook-ups. Dumping stations in Ear Falls and Pakwash. Chukuni RV Park	Multiple opportunities	Local/regional	Good potential for touring market. RV services available
<b>Snowmobiling</b>	OFSC District 17 Red Lake Trail Masters – many miles of groomed trails  Ear Falls doesn't have an active OFSC associated club but has many actively used local trails to great ice fishing lakes.  There is a Red Lake-Ear Falls-Perrault Falls-Dryden trail	Good product, lots of trails, link to Dryden market	Mostly local, regional Local, regional	Trail Masters have interest in developing packages, ice fishing, hotels, etc



Asset	Description	Assessment	Market	Readiness
<b>Lakes and waterways</b>	Throughout the region you will find the scenic beauty of uncountable lakes	Well used for variety of water sports	Local, regional	As good as Lake of the Woods but not as busy. No rentals
<b>Woodland Caribou Provincial Park</b>	Provincial park with almost 2,000 km of maintained canoe routes on a myriad of rivers and lakes. Home to one of the largest groups of woodland caribou south of Hudson Bay. Two major river systems – the Gammon and Bloodvein flow through the park; Bloodvein River is designated as a Canadian Heritage River. Excellent fishing. Pictographs (rock paintings). Open year-round. Park is part of Pimachiowin Aki World UNESCO Heritage Site, recognized for both its cultural and natural significance. Pimachiowin Aki can be accessed through Woodland Caribou Park	5/5 on TripAdvisor “This a great place to get away from it all. Having now done 8 trips, we go to not see anyone else. Pristine lakes, wildlife, fishing, Northern lights are all great parts of as WCPP visit”	American. Many local, regional as well – also attracts international visitors	Ready for all markets. Limited capacity due to need for park pass. Numbers monitored

Asset	Description	Assessment	Market	Readiness
<b>Red Lake Beaches</b>	<p>Rahill Beach - well-maintained beach, tennis court, beach volleyball area, playground, picnic area and washroom facilities. Kinsmen Beach -long clean beach with playground, picnic area and washrooms. Keesic Beach – traditional gathering place of Anishinaape people. Boasts a permanent pow wow arbour used to celebrate and honour the traditional practices of the Anishinaape people, washrooms. Cochenour Beach – natural beach with a shelter Sandy Point Beach – natural beach</p>	<p>Most ready are Rahill and Kinsmen and Keesic which are adjacent to each other and can be accessed by land or water. Cochenour is looked after by locals. Sandy Point popular with boaters</p>	<p>Mostly local. Keesic Beach Pow Wow brings in regional visitors</p>	<p>First three ready for all markets</p>
<b>Float Plane Operations</b>	<p>Visitors enjoy the sights and sounds of the float planes taking off and landing on the local waterways. Some float plane ride options are available</p>	<p>Watch/listen on government docks or on the benches provided overlooking Howey Bay. Iconic. Excellent Adventures offers sunset float plane rides and dinner – very well received. Float plane rides available during Norseman Festival</p>	<p>Existing visitors, Ontario, other Canada, U.S., international</p>	<p>Ready at all levels</p>

Asset	Description	Assessment	Market	Readiness
<b>Cross country skiing</b>	<p>Across the water from Cochenour, McKenzie Island boasts a close-knit unique community surrounded by wilderness and with excellent groomed cross country ski trails. The Miss McKenzie Ferry transports people and goods in the summer. Once the water freezes people drive or walk across.</p> <p>The Municipality of Red Lake maintains the ice road between Cochenour and McKenzie Island</p> <p>Cross country skiing also available on the groomed trails in Phillip Thomas Vinet Centennial Park and at the Red Lake Golf Course</p>	<p>Numerous opportunities to cross country ski. Loppets used to be popular</p>	<p>Mostly local but loppets attracted outside visitors</p>	<p>Winter event potential. Visitor-ready. No rentals</p>
<b>Red Lake Area Golf and Country Club</b>	<p>18 challenging holes offer an excellent mix of long holes, open and wooded fairways, elevation changes and water in wilderness setting</p>	<p>The most northerly 18-hole golf course overlooking Red Lake. Includes a fully serviced club house and pro shop. Has won awards for groundskeeping. Low price point, great restaurant, licenced</p> <p>Beautiful setting, quiet, low price point, great restaurant, licenced</p>	<p>Local. Tournaments used to attract visitors</p>	<p>Potential for a golf tour vacation</p>

Asset	Description	Assessment	Market	Readiness
<b>Ear Falls Golf and Country Club</b>	9-hole golf course with a mix of terrain set in a beautiful wilderness setting. Full service, licenced clubhouse with power cart and equipment rentals	Beautiful setting, quiet, low price point, great restaurant, licenced	Local	See above
<b>Wildlife</b>	Wide variety of wildlife – including moose, deer, caribou, coyotes, fox, wolves, lynx and variety of birds. Ear Falls is home to the largest returning nesting population of bald eagles in North America	Excellent bird watching opportunities all around the area. A bird watching deck has been constructed at Cochenour lagoon site	Local	Birdwatching well kept secret
<b>Berry and mushroom picking</b>	Lots of variety of berries and mushrooms	Potential for guided foraging tours	Unknown	Product needs to be developed.
<b>Pakwash Provincial Park</b>	19 km north of Ear Falls, home to a 1.5-kilometre-long sand beach, campgrounds, nature trails, Aboriginal rock paintings and over 65 species of birds	Wildlife, fishing	Local, Regional, Provincial	Visitor- and Market-ready

Asset	Description	Assessment	Market	Readiness
<b>Ear Falls Beaches</b>	<p>Ear Falls Waterfront Park - Picturesque pit-stop with large beach, boat dock, beach volleyball court, playing field, a covered picnic area, large restroom, change room and showers. "The Patricia" a freight boat that was built in the 1930s and has been fully restored is on display.</p> <p>Wenesaga Beach - Shallow and warm, this sandy beach is perfect for families with small children, no washrooms</p> <p>Goldpines Beach - this sandy beach is a popular spot for families to seadoo, tube and hang out. Ample parking for boats and trailers, no washrooms</p>	Waterfront park is popular stop for visitors	Mostly local but visitors drop in	EFWP visitor-ready Visitor-ready
<b>Norseman Park – Red Lake</b>	<p>Features an authentic Noorduyn Norseman static display and scenic lookout over Red Lake's historic Howey Bay. At one time Canada's business Aerodrome. The Aerodrome is still quite active and daily you can watch the arrival and departure of flights to fly-in destinations</p>	See "Floatplane culture"	An add-on to a visit for many	Visitor-ready

Asset	Description	Assessment	Market	Readiness
<b>Phillip Thomas Vinet Centennial Park</b>	Located in central Red Lake, this park features a skate park, splash pad, baseball diamond with lights, play structures, accessible walking trails and a pavilion which covers outdoor rink and events space	Planned as a venue for markets, concerts, etc. pre-COVID	Local, regional post-COVID when activities increase. Good add on to a visit	Visitor-ready
<b>Downtown Red Lake splash pad</b>	New washrooms, adding play area	Underutilized due to COVID	Local, regional. Good add on to a visit	Visitor-ready
<b>Ear Falls Cross-Country Skiing</b>	Multiple kilometres of mapped trails for snow-shoeing and cross-country skiing	Local and bush trails, opportunities for wildlife encounters and observing nature	Local.	Ready for all markets
<b>Winterfest</b>	Late March/Early April. Full weekend of events including dog-sled rides, pie contests, chilli bake-off, curling bonspiel, horse rides, sledding, box-sled races, costume contests, etc		Local	Possibly Regional
<b>Winter Carnival</b>	Held annually on Family Day weekend in February. Many activities are held on the ice in Howey Bay on Red Lake. Activities for all ages include pond hockey tournament, curling, dog sled rides, snowmobile races, ice fishing tournament, snow machine poker derby, cross country ski loppet, food vendors, family entertainment		Local	Local, Regional

The region has several arts, culture and heritage assets including museums, an art gallery, a pow wow, and a music festival. These assets enable visitors to enjoy and deepen their appreciation of the culture of the region. Events and attractions are spread across the region, allowing the opportunity for collaboration.

Asset	Description	Assessment	Market	Readiness
<b>Norseman Festival</b>	July 16-18, 2021 (tentative). Events include the Norseman Fly-by, float Pumping and floatplane loading competitions	Held annually third weekend in July at the Phillip Thomas Vinet Centennial Park. Activities include sightseeing flights, concerts, family activities and entertainment, softball tournament, fireworks, artisans and vendor market, dog agility competitions, food booths, craft beer	Local, regional, international (U.S. Germany, Britain)	Visitor-ready, export-ready
<b>Red Lake Anishinaabe Pow Wow Circle</b> <b>Red Lake Community Pow Wow</b>	Community event held annually in June at Keesic Beach (a traditional gathering place of the Anishinaabe people). Events include traditional dancing, drumming, teachings of local First Nations culture, food, community feast. This is a free event, open to everyone	Needs washrooms, would like additional amenities such as bleachers, steel picnic tables, fire pit	Would be interest from Northern reserves, Manitoba, region	Day visitor-ready.
<b>Galleries</b>	Outdoor Art Gallery (50 banners in downtown Red Lake)	Interesting asset for visitors	N/A	Visitor-ready

Asset	Description	Assessment	Market	Readiness
<b>Trout Forest Music Festival</b>	Every August the Trout Forest Music Festival is staged at the Ear Falls Waterfront Park. Camping on the shores of the English River, part of the Historic Red Lake Gold Rush Trail, and the late-night jam sessions around the bonfires make for a memorable experience of Music in the Woods. The “Trout” features workshops, creative arts selection, great food, and the best in Northern hospitality with the beautiful Trout Lake Forest as a backdrop	Very popular and highly rated event	Draws thousands, regional and other provinces	Visitor- and export-ready
<b>Party in the Park</b>	Free night of music at the Ear Falls Waterfront Park. 19+ Held annually on the last day of June	Popular local event. Nice add on for visitors	Local	Visitor-ready
<b>Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre</b>	Attractive historical museum: First Nations, mining, prospecting, aviation, fur trading, immigration history. Exhibit and event space (community hub). Gift shop. Includes interactive exhibits and activity programming for all ages	5/5 TripAdvisor (Excellent or Very Good)	About 5,000 (2017), from TripAdvisor, out-of-town visitors are mostly Canadian	Ready, all levels



Asset	Description	Assessment	Market	Readiness
<b>West Red Lake Mining Museum</b>	The west end of Red Lake was once the locations of hundreds of gold rush pioneers, this site boasts a restored log building with many historic photos and displays. Can only be accessed by boat on Red Lake. Docking available. Free		Local	Visitor-ready
<b>Crull Rock &amp; Mineral Collection</b>	More than 2,400 rock and mineral specimens, part of the Red Lake District Museum and Archives collection. Year round, Monday -Friday, free	Very popular stop off for a mix of visitors	Mixed	Visitor-ready. Free admission
<b>Ear Falls Museum</b>	Exhibits include artifacts from the area's Indigenous peoples, local gold mining and lumbering industries and transportation activities. Interpretive tours are available		Regional	Visitor-ready
<b>Red Lake Triathlon</b>	Held annually in August. Adult and Youth competitions	Popular event.	Local, regional	Visitor-ready
<b>Red Lake Wilderness Entertainment Series</b>	Offers live quality entertainment to Red Lake and its surrounding area		Local, regional (Ear Falls)	Visitor-ready
<b>Red Lake Family Entertainment Series</b>	Offers live quality entertainment to families		Local, regional (Ear Falls)	Visitor-ready

Existing Indigenous tourism assets in the region are limited with opportunities to strengthen this asset across the region. There is a rich Indigenous history in the region; however, only three Indigenous tourism assets have been identified.

Asset	Description	Assessment	Market	Readiness
<b>Red Lake Anishinaabe Pow Wow Circle</b> <b>Red Lake Community Pow Wow</b>	Held annually in June (postponed in 2020 due to COVID-19)	See above	See above	See above
<b>Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre</b>	See above (Cultural and Heritage Tourism Assets)	See above	See above	See above
<b>Ear Falls Museum</b>	See above (Cultural and Heritage Tourism Assets)	See above	See above	See above
<b>Red Lake Indian Friendship Centre</b>	Have offered programming that may be of interest to visitors such as mitten making, other crafts etc	To be explored	TBD	TBD

Increasingly, visitors are looking for memorable dining experiences that reflect the culture and/or heritage of an area and/or showcase local food and drink. The region has some highly rated food and beverage establishments along with a vibrant arts culture, quality gift and souvenir shops and a range of accommodations offerings.

Asset	Description	Assessment	Market	Readiness
<b>Gift Shops and Boutiques</b>	The area has a variety of gift and souvenir shops	The area has a variety of gift and souvenir shops		
<b>Dining</b>	Good variety of restaurants	Red Lake: Thirsty Moose Bar and Grill (5/5 Facebook), local craft beer, entertainment (closed, re-opening); Antonio's (4.5/5 TripAdvisor); The Howey Bay 4.5/5 TripAdvisor) Lakeview Restaurant (5.5 Facebook); Balmer Motor Hotel (3.5/5 TripAdvisor), entertainment and dancing; Lakeview Restaurant (4/5 TripAdvisor); Jade Restaurant (Chinese and Canadian); Perrault Falls: Whiskey Jack Restaurant and Tavern (4.5/5 TripAdvisor, entertainment); Ear Falls: Trillium Motel and Restaurant (4.5/5 TripAdvisor, Canadian); Hotel 105 Bar and Grill (4.5, TripAdvisor, Canadian), Papes (4.5/5 TripAdvisor Pizza); Leslie's Pizza Kitchen (5/5 Facebook, variety); Hole-In-One (Golf Course Restaurant)		
<b>Accommodations</b>	106 camps, lodges, outposts and resorts; 5 motels (1 branded – Super 8; 1 hotel			





## Competitor Analysis

In-depth survey respondents identified Kenora and Sioux Lookout as their key competitors. Lake of the Woods, Quetico, East Manitoba, Thunder Bay and Dryden were also mentioned but with less frequency.

**Kenora**, 91 km. west of Vermillion Bay and 197 km. west of Ear Falls. visually brands itself as the gateway to Lake of the Woods. Its “Visit and Play” section of the City of Kenora ([www.kenora.ca](http://www.kenora.ca)) website lists beaches, trails and parks, boating, community events, outdoor adventure (boating, cycling, fishing, golf, hunting, paddle sports, rock climbing) tours (boat, cruise ship, yacht, float plane, murals, cemetery, historic house, museum brewery), and winter activities). It promotes a range of dining options and accommodations, including lodges (4 accessible by boat, 4 “close to Kenora”, 3 “under 30 minutes from Kenora” and 5 “under one hour”.

In-depth survey respondents felt that Kenora’s range of urban experiences were its greatest competitive advantage with respect to Ear Falls, Perrault Falls and Red Lake.

Wikipedia states that tourism represents 4% of Sioux Lookout’s economy and says, “The population explodes during the spring and summer months when seasonal residents arrive. Most of Sioux Lookout’s tourism comes from people wanting to experience outdoor activities. Fishing is the main tourist attraction during the summer months due to the access to numerous lakes, such as Lac Seul and Minnitaki Lake”.

**Sioux Lookout** is 232 km. northeast of Kenora. It brands itself as the “Hub of the North”, halfway between Thunder Bay and Winnipeg. Tourism products and services are listed under the “Discover the Hub” section of the Sioux Lookout ([www.siouxlookout.ca](http://www.siouxlookout.ca)) website. This section lists arts and culture, festivals and events, farmers’ markets, a library, on the water activities, parks, trails and green spaces, sports and recreation, vacation packages and accommodations.

Its number one tourism generator, fishing, is not prominently featured on the website (it is listed under On the Water). When found, there is a brief description as follows: “Sioux Lookout is a fisherman’s paradise. With beautiful lakes, quiet bays and sandy beaches, we offer something for everyone interested in a great fishing experience. Offering campgrounds, cabins, full-service lodges and fly-in fishing, there are many options to choose from. Just bring yourself, we’ll do the rest”. There is no link from this description to lodges and outfitters. Searching the “Where to Stay” section, there are no lodges or outfitters listed. Three options exist: Hotels and Motels in Sioux Lookout, Sioux Lookout Chamber of Commerce and Sioux Lookout Hudson Tourism Association. The association, reachable only by telephone in the listing, is the source of information on lodges and outfitters.

## Unique Differentiators

Domestic searches of Destination Northern Ontario's travel information portal, [northernontario.travel](http://northernontario.travel), have risen dramatically since the start of the pandemic. What has risen significantly as well has been interest in outdoors activities and locations. Among the site visitors' top five interests were hiking/walking in nature, natural attractions, nature parks, fall colours, assets that the Ear Falls, Perrault Falls, Red Lake region have in great supply. The fifth area of interest is experiencing local food and drink. From the research, adventure stands out as the leading recovery segment.

### Fishing

Northwestern Ontario is Canada's number one fishing destination with over 70,000 fishable lakes and no crowds out on the water. The region also offers the most diverse fishing in Canada with walleye, northern pike, lake trout, smallmouth and large-mouth bass, muskie, black crappie, perch, brook trout, sauger, and whitefish. Accommodations include lodges, resorts, drive-in cabins, remote fly-in lodges or outposts, and remote boat-in camps. The region's traditional market for fishing experiences has been almost exclusively the U.S. Midwest and other U.S. states.

### Pimachiowin Aki UNESCO World Heritage Site

One of only 39 World Heritage sites that are mixed cultural and natural sites and Canada's first and only mixed site, Pimachiowin Aki Heritage site, at 29,040 square kilometres, is the largest protected area in the North American Boreal Shield. It was established in 2018 in partnership with its resident four First Nations and the Ontario and Manitoba governments. This linked network of protected areas has been recognized for both its cultural and natural significance.

Home to 3,200 lakes, 5,000 freshwater marshes and pools, seven million acres of forests and wetlands and 32,000 km. of shoreline wetlands, Pimachiowin hosts some 6,000-9,000 adventure travellers annually. This vast area is renowned for its 30+ pictograph locations, with the Bloodvein River having the largest collection of pictographs in Canada.

There are 700+ cabin and camp sites in the area, along with 40 species of mammals, 200 species of birds and 90 species of fish. Woodland Caribou Provincial Park is located within the site.

### Woodland Caribou Provincial Park

This wilderness park is a paddler's paradise offering almost 2,000 km of maintained canoe routes on a myriad of rivers and lakes. Its visitors enjoy solitude and commune with nature as Woodland Caribou welcomes fewer than 1,000 paddlers per season. This undisturbed boreal forest is home to one of the largest groups of woodland caribou south of Hudson Bay.

Two major river systems – the Gammon and Bloodvein flow through the park; Bloodvein River is designated as a Canadian Heritage River. The rivers offer excellent fishing for walleye, Northern Pike and Lake Trout and there are areas with Smallmouth Bass and muskellunge. Pictographs (rock paintings).

### **Floatplane Culture**

Though the world is changing, Red Lake is still a town where working and recreational aircraft are in high demand. Together they form a critical mass for the ongoing celebration of small aircraft – and the annual Norseman Festival.

And although Beavers, Beech 18's, Otters, Cessnas, Cubs and others have joined it in filling the skies, the Norseman is still a fixture in Red Lake. People looked around and realized that there were more Noorduyn Norsemans flying there than anywhere else – and Red Lake became known as the Norseman Capital of the World.

Visitors to the area can often be seen down at the harbour in Red Lake, watching and photographing the comings and goings of the Norsemans.

### **Culture and Heritage**

The Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre features exhibits of First Nations history, relics of the world's last great gold rush and many displays relating to the history of Red Lake. The centre also offers various year-round programs suitable for all ages and interests. In nearby Balmertown, the Erle Crull Rock and Mineral Collection features 2,600 specimens of rock and minerals from around the world. There is also a well attended annual Indigenous pow wow.





## Gap Analysis

The following are gaps that have come out of the research to date. These gaps will help guide the recommendations for enhancing tourism in the region.

### Overall

- High dependency on the US market – lack of diversification in the customer mix
- Awareness of region could be broadened
- Highway 105 Tourism and Marketing Board is membership based – restricts exposure for non-members

### Product:

- Lack of availability of accommodation for leisure travellers. Heavy focus on corporate travel and limited availability in Red Lake. This has presented some opportunity for drive in lodges
- Market-ready experiences – lack of market-ready experiences and ways for the visitor to easily access what is currently available in a central spot
- Information for leisure travellers on what to see and do – some resources exist but appears fragmented and not as cohesive as it could be. Currently pay to play or going into each destination's online resources
- Accessing nature – information on resources to access nature – i.e., boat rentals etc., trails, touring routes – information exists – a more themed and structure approach could help the visitor understand the offering and make access easier
- Market-ready versus export-ready – some export-ready product exists – a clear identification of emerging or potential export-ready product would build a path for future growth in the international market
- Lack of indigenous market-ready product and experiences
- Themed experiences and product by market segment – i.e., family experiences, culinary, nature – some exist though more is needed

### Marketing Awareness

- Kenora and area has high visibility and demand
- The EFPFRL region is relatively unknown with the exception of hyper-local or regional
- Marketing initiatives should be more streamlined to ensure consistency and exposure to key markets
- A united social media presence is needed

### Access

- Drive market – 2.5 hours with limited experiences on route

### Marketing

- Focus has been on fish and hunt
- Limited marketing towards the domestic market (some marketing in 2020 to address the closed US border)



## Strategy

### Tourism Leadership

There is a clear need for greater alignment in tourism management for the region.

There are numerous websites, maps and guides promoting the individual communities, making it difficult for a potential visitor to get a clear sense of what the region offers as a whole. A united effort last summer to promote the region and its operators through a print campaign in Winnipeg met with some success and should bode well for working together in the future to attract new markets. The fact that this initiative to develop a regional tourism plan had the support of three communities is also a sign of renewed recognition that working together offers the highest possibility of success.

A united front among the three regions would allow for strengths in product/experience development, marketing, public relations, itinerary development, advocacy and overall showcasing the region as an appealing destination for both the domestic and international markets.

For an example of a united approach to marketing a region, see [www.hastings.ca](http://www.hastings.ca). Hastings County encompasses 14 municipalities. It markets all of its tourism offerings on the one site under the banner, "Wildly Authentic Hastings". Closer to home, the Lake Superior North Shore Tourism Development project is directed by 13 communities and First Nations who recognized the benefits of collaboration to build tourism in the region.

There are two key tourism marketing organizations already active in the region, Sunset Country and the Highway 105 Marketing Group. Both associations are membership-based, excluding non-members. Lake receives the MAT tax and it is administered through the Highway 105 Marketing Group. There is also a marketing group for Perrault Falls, the Perrault Falls Adventure Group which also appears to be membership-based. The Patricia Region Tourist Council appears to be inactive though its fishing and hunting map is still produced by a private sector printer. The Economic Development department in Ear Falls, the Community Development and Communications department in Red Lake and the local CFDC, Chukuni Communities Development Corporation also have tourism roles.

### Recommendation

An overview and evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the various organizations involved in tourism marketing and development for the region is contained in this plan. Of the various organizations, it seems that Sunset Country is best positioned to lead efforts in attracting the U.S. fishing/hunting market once the border opens.

This could leave the domestic and international marketing role as well as a product development focus to the 105 Marketing Group. The tourism management role would need to be clearly defined and should include the following functions:

- Experience development in partnership with Destination Northern Ontario and others
- Package and itinerary development
- Travel trade representation at shows representing all export-ready products and experiences in the region
- Marketing – broadly for the region with some buy-in opportunities for stakeholders
- Public, media and community relations
- Advocacy
- Develop an annual tourism plan and calendar with opportunities for businesses to participate and align
- Ensure wide industry representation on board to guide the direction of tourism in the region.

Moving through and emerging from COVID-19, there are programs that provide internship funding, product development funding and other funding support for tourism that would look favourably on and be beneficial to a regional approach, no matter which organizational model is chosen. These programs are detailed in the Addendum.

## Short-haul Markets (COVID-19 recovery)

### Summer 2021 Potential

The Ontario market will be the dominant travel market for Ontario businesses this summer, based on the US border not opening in 2021 or not until late in the season. The Ontario market cannot fully replace the US market though it can provide some tourism revenues for businesses willing to shift their focus to try to attract this market. Demand for cottage rentals is extremely high. RV sales in 2020 hit record levels so the demand for campgrounds with RV sites will also continue to be strong. Summer 2020 showed high increases in both campground and roofed accommodation rentals.

The Manitoba market, based on the quarantine situation lifting, is a high short-term target market for Ear Falls, Perrault Falls and Red Lake. Other destinations in the north attract strong numbers from Manitoba and even pre-COVID-19 were at close to maximum capacity. With the need and desire to maintain physical distancing continuing in 2021, the appeal of wide-open spaces will be higher than usual. Research has also shown that the willingness to drive further distances will impact travel this summer.

There are gaps in available campsites and cottage rentals. This shortage in supply could be an opportunity for hunting and fishing lodges to adapt and attract some of the local Ontario market.

With ongoing fluctuations in COVID-19 regulations, it is imperative to consider changing travel restrictions when planning short-term summer 2021 campaigns. With limited lead time social media presents a strong opportunity to respond quickly.

### Marketing longer-term beyond 2021

The longer-term marketing approach will be very dependant on the market strategy. There are mixed feelings amongst tourism operators on the topic of market diversification. Many would prefer to continue to focus on the lucrative U.S. market and not look at domestic and other international options.

From an international perspective, the region has appeal for international markets, particularly the German market. There has been work done in the past in relation to working with Receptive Tour Operators and attending key international travel-trade shows.

A longer-term plan with defined target markets needs to be created. The product development and experience design aspects will support and feed the marketing initiatives.

## Marketing – Short-term and Longer-term

### *Marketing Recommendations Summary*

- Plan a campaign for summer 2021 targeted at Ontario and Manitoba (pending the lifting of the current quarantine regulations)
- Differentiate the region
- Brand the region
- Move visitors within the region
- Develop marketing plan that encompasses the entire offering of the region
- Broaden the mix of customers so the dependence of the US market decreases and demand from other regions increases
- Consider trade shows for international markets – RendezVous Canada in particular
- Develop a marketing calendar which lays out the products, marketing tools and messaging for each target market along with timelines. Use targeted social media plus other media that have proven successful during COVID such as Winnipeg New Canadian neighbourhood mail drops and Winnipeg country music station.
- Continue to work with Sunset Country to pursue U.S. fish/hunt market and provide input into its marketing of non-fish/hunt products in the Ear Falls/Perrault Falls/Red Lake corridor on an ongoing basis.

### Marketing - Regional Focus - Regional Brand

---

The Municipality of Red Lake is branded as:



---

The Township of Ear Falls is branded as:



---

The Highway 105 experience is branded as:



---

Perrault Falls Adventure Area is branded as:



“Adventure North on Highway 105” is its tagline.

It of course makes sense for individual municipalities to have their own distinct brand as they are responsible for much more than tourism. A link from these sites to the regional tourism site would be the most helpful to visitors. In summary, for potential visitors trying to get a sense of what there is to see and do in the region though, reducing brand confusion would be beneficial.

### Diversify Markets

The COVID-19 crisis has been a huge shock to the tourism economy. As the pandemic continues to evolve, the full consequences are not yet clear. However, a return to 'business as usual' is unlikely. Policy makers will need to learn from the crisis to build a stronger, more resilient tourism economy for the future.

One of the challenges that many tourism operators in Ear Falls and Perrault Falls faced in 2020 and 2021 was the almost total dependency on the U.S. market. Red Lake is experiencing high demand for accommodation and tourist services based on major mining activity.

To build some resiliency for future challenges which could impact the US travel market, it is recommended that some market diversification take place.

*Crisis is a once in a lifetime opportunity to move toward fairer, more sustainable and resilient models of tourism development. The pandemic has once again exposed structural shortcomings in the tourism system and the vulnerability to external shocks. There is an urgent need to diversify and strengthen the resilience of the tourism economy, to better prepare for future shocks, to address long standing structural weaknesses, and encourage the digital, low carbon transformations that will be essential to shift to stronger, fairer and more sustainable models of tourism development.*

**Source - OECD Rebuilding Tourism for the Future: COVID-19 Policy Responses and Recovery -  
Drawing initial lessons and charting a way forward for tourism policy**

### Case for Resiliency and Diversification

*...boost competitiveness and build resilience, including through economic diversification, with promotion of domestic and regional tourism where possible...*

**-UNTWO**

*"We want to tell people that from now on, if you want to be better prepared for a situation like this again, these are some major things you need to look at," Liu-Lastres said. "They need to be creative and be adaptive...."*

**Research Impact July 2020, Becky Liu-Liastres**





## Product development Recommendations Summary

### Highway 105 Experience

Visitors to the Highway 105 website are encouraged to “Adventure North on Highway 105”. A common theme in the stakeholder survey responses was, however, that the 175-kilometer drive experience is unexciting and needs to be enhanced. This could be achieved through the development of pull off areas for scenic vistas or interpretive signs or kiosks advising drivers of the experiences that they can experience ahead such as the World Heritage site, the heritage centre, birds and wildlife, outdoor adventure and other highlights of the communities and region. Incorporating an app such as OnThisSpot would also enhance the visitor experience along the drive.

### Expand on market-ready Indigenous experiences

The region has a pow wow that is well attended and is quite open and interested in attracting non-Indigenous visitors. The organizing group is looking for more volunteers but would be open to organizing other Indigenous events in the region with help. To take the event to the next level, they require bleachers, washrooms, steel picnic tables and a fire pit. The pow wow group built their own arbour at Keesic Beach and the arbour is open to all to use. Group members felt that a gathering spot for Indigenous people to meet and have feasts in Red Lake would be a tourism enhancement.

Pimachiowin Aki is the homeland and lifeblood of the four Anishinaabe First Nation communities who care for the land. The Pimachiowin Aki UNESCO Heritage Site is Canada’s first mixed World Heritage property, but it is a relatively unknown attraction, promoted more by Manitoba than Ontario. It is accessible by plane any time of the year, as a drive to location on winter roads and via the Bloodvein River any time of the year using the all-season road. Its role in developing tourism in the region needs to be further explored. The website promotes sharing the land and highlights of the 29,040 sq. km. site which receives between 6,000-9,000 tourists each year.

### Expand on market-ready nature and adventure experiences

According to Destination Northern Ontario research, the outdoors is a salient if not core element in the lure of Northern Ontario for tourists. Northern Ontario was a destination for almost one million of the overnight nature-based tourists travelling in Canada over the year (3%) according to a 2015 study commissioned by Destination Northern Ontario.

The top activities for nature-based tourists to Northern Ontario include camping, hiking, visiting nature parks, beaches, boating, and wildlife viewing. Each of these activities attracts 1-in-4 nature-based tourists. 1/4 of nature-based tourists also engage in cultural or entertainment activities while on their overnight trip with the most common being visiting a historic site (14%) followed by going to a museum or art gallery (10%). Nature and adventure packaging to include culture and entertainment options and developing nature- and culture- or entertainment-based itineraries could serve to draw more nature and adventure travellers during the region and would be of particular interest during COVID-19 as well as beyond.

### **Expand on Success of Festivals and Events**

A situational analysis commissioned by Destination Northern Ontario in 2012 regarding festivals and events stated that, “Festivals promote community pride by celebrating things that make a town special...Festivals developed by townspeople and scaled to their tastes seem to be successful. It is important to listen to the local people and pay attention to the real spirit of the place”. The analysis suggested that events in Northern Ontario should “capitalize on the lure of Northern Ontario’s outdoors”.

The Norseman Festival and the Trout Forest Music Festival are both highly popular events that offer authentic regional experiences, with the Norseman attracting an international market and the music festival drawing in numerous visitors. Other events that could attract more visitors with some support include the pow wow, Red Lake Pride events, the winter carnivals, and the music events. Incorporating more local and/or traditional food offerings would enhance the appeal of all events.

### **Enhance winter season products**

A situational analysis on snowmobiling tourism commissioned by Destination Northern Ontario in 2014 outlined that snowmobile tourists in RTO13 (Northern Ontario) are drawn to other outdoor activities, and especially to fishing on their trip. In fact, many appear to use snowmobiles to reach ice fishing locations in a region. Other popular outdoor activities include wildlife viewing or bird watching, hiking and visiting a nature park. The Red Lake Trail Masters Club is a dedicated group of volunteers who work to offer snowmobiling opportunities in the Red Lake area. Club members have expressed interest in developing snowmobiling packages. A representative(s) of the club should be invited to participate in any experience development and packaging training sessions offered.

Other options include adding an outdoor fire pit, cross country skiing, snowshoeing and/or skating to a winter lodge retreat package and promoting the winter carnivals to a broader market.

### **Create Experiences**

Market-ready experience development provides several benefits to the communities in the region. The unique offering of each community can be combined to offer experience themes which can be incorporated into the development of experiences.

Experience design naturally brings like minded partners together and usually enhances the overall collaboration in the destination.

With the high demand for provincial product this summer the region is in a strong position to attract from Ontario. Having market-ready experiences available will assist in promoting the region.

### **Increase the number of designed tourism experiences**

As part of the deliverables of this project an experience design workshop will be delivered, free of charge, to interested operators in Ear Falls, Perrault Falls and Red Lake. This session will run virtually in early May 2021 with a focus on experiences for summer 2021. There is an opportunity for 12 operators to participate.

### **Partner with key assets**

There is an opportunity to work closer with existing tourism assets to create market-ready experiences. The product or asset is difficult for tourists to access without defined programming and guided experiences. The tourism lead would ideally take on a product development role and help bring operators together as assist in developing the tourism asset into a market-ready experience.

### **Product planning to fill product gaps**

Product gaps and opportunities have been identified. There are opportunities, particularly through the experience design phase to consider product gaps when working with tourism operators to create new experiences. If operators consider gaps and fill these gaps with market-ready experiences, it will provide them with a unique product offering and a competitive advantage.

From the asset inventory and tourism operator feedback, it is clear that there is a need for more market-ready experiences.

### **Product themes and product clusters**

Further explore potential product themes and product clusters – can be used for experience development and touring routes.

### **Create itineraries and touring routes**

In the short term travellers cannot assume that their usual stops will be open and ready to serve them so mapping out itineraries and touring routes will provide reassurance. If they are driving enough of a distance that they will need services along the way, it will save a lot of stress to identify some stops in advance including where food is available, what physical distancing measures are in place, and restrooms that will be open to the public. Consider incorporating curbside picnic meals and identify where touchless payment is an option.

## Time-lined Action Plan

Action Plan	Short term	Longer term	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022	2023	Beyond 2023
<b>Action – Tourism Leadership</b>								
Discussions with Sunset Country and the Highway 105 Marketing Group and others to identify tourism management roles.								
Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Sunset Country and the Highway 105 Marketing Group and other organizations to determine the viability of one of these organizations taking the tourism leadership role for the region.								
Meet with councils to present the model of one entity managing the tourism management and marketing for the region.								
Based on selecting an organization to take on the tourism leadership role and each community council approving the initiative, define the various aspects of this new role, financial model, communication and plan development.								
Ongoing communication with tourism leader entity.								
Annual sales and marketing plan with tourism leader entity.								
<b>Short-haul Markets (COVID recovery)</b>								
Monitor COVID-19 border situation, inter-provincial regulations and Ontario and Manitoba status regularly.								
Develop a short-term marketing strategy built on various scenarios of re-opening and have those plans in a ready to implement stage.								



Short-haul Markets (COVID recovery)	Short term	Longer term	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022	2023	Beyond 2023
Have a plan in place for Manitoba once the mandatory quarantine for returning residents and incoming visitors is lifted.								
From the TEN Tourism Experience workshop (outlined in the plan) have a consumer communication plan in place to promote the new experiences and respond to provincial and local short-term demand.								

#### Product Development Recommendations

<b>Highway 105 Experience</b> Development of pull off areas for scenic vistas or interpretive signs or kiosks advising drivers of the experiences that they can experience ahead such as the World Heritage site, the heritage centre, birds and wildlife, outdoor adventure and other highlights of the area.								
<b>Expand on market-ready experiences for Pimacchiowin Aki UNESCO Heritage site.</b> Explore the possibility of programming and further development of tourism for Pimacchiowin Aki UNESCO Heritage Site. This would require collaboration with Manitoba. The uniqueness of the site has both short-term and long-term potential. Experiences and products will have a nature, adventure and Indigenous focus.								
<b>Expand on market-ready Indigenous experiences</b> Work with the Friendship Centres and the Heritage Centre to identify and build market-ready Indigenous experiences for the visitor markets.								

Action Plan	Short term	Longer term	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022	2023	Beyond 2023
<b>Expand on market-ready nature and adventure experiences</b> Develop nature and adventure packages and experiences for the regions, linking themed experiences.								
<b>Expand on success of Festivals and Events</b> Other events that could attract more visitors with some support include the pow wow, Red Lake Pride events, the winter carnivals, and the music events. Incorporating more local and/or traditional food offerings would enhance the appeal of all events.								
<b>Enhance winter season products</b> Work with The Red Lake Trail Masters Club to develop snowmobiling packages. A representative(s) of the club should be invited to participate in any experience development and packaging training sessions offered. Other options include adding an outdoor fire pit, cross country skiing, snowshoeing and/or skating to a winter lodge retreat package and promoting the winter carnivals to a broader market.								

Create experiences	Short term	Longer term	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022	2023	Beyond 2023
<b>Increase the number of designed tourism experiences</b> Deliver the TEN Experience workshop for tourism operators in the region in early May 2021 with a focus on experiences for Summer 2021 – 12 operators.								
<b>Partner with key assets</b> Work with existing tourism assets to create market-ready experiences.								
<b>Product planning to fill gaps</b> Consider product gaps when working with tourism operators to create new experiences. Have operators consider gaps to give themselves a competitive advantage and the region more needed product/experiences.								
<b>Product themes and product clusters</b> Further explore potential product themes and product clusters – can be used for experience development and touring routes.								
<b>Export/Travel-trade Ready</b> Expand market-ready experiences to become export or trade-ready.								
<b>Itineraries</b> Develop itineraries for the region to guide visitors and to encourage visitation and exploration – support with market-ready product and experiences.								

Marketing - Short-term (2021)	Short term	Longer term	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022	2023	Beyond 2023
<b>Ad Campaign - Ontario</b> Develop an ad campaign targeted at the Northern Ontario market for summer 2021.								
<b>Ad Campaign - Manitoba</b> Develop an ad campaign targeted at the Manitoba market for summer 2021 (pending lifting of quarantine requirement in Manitoba).								
<b>Marketing</b>								
<b>Marketing Longer-term</b>								
<b>Tradeshows</b> Consider trade shows for international markets - RendezVous Canada in particular.								
<b>Sunset Country</b> Continue to work with Sunset Country to pursue U.S. fish/hunt market and provide input into its marketing of non-fish/hunt products in the Ear Falls/Perrault Falls/Red Lake corridor on an ongoing basis.								
<b>Calendar</b> Develop a marketing calendar plan (and update annually) which lays out the products, marketing tools and messaging for each target market along with timelines. Use targeted social media plus other media that have proven successful during COVID such as Winnipeg New Canadian neighbourhood mail drops and Winnipeg country music station.								
<b>Marketing Plan</b> Developing a marketing plan (and update annually) that encompasses the entire offering of the region and targets a mix of customers thereby diversifying the current mix.								

**Marketing - Regional Focus -  
Regional Brand**

Short  
term

Longer  
term

Q2

Q3

Q4

2022

2023

Beyond  
2023

**Branding**

Review current branding of region and make recommendations on how to best brand the region as a tourism destination.

**Funding**

**Funding Opportunities**

Monitor funding and grant opportunities including COVID-19 funding as well as other opportunities on an ongoing basis. See Addendum for funding and grant opportunities Procure professional services to review current branding of region and make recommendations to best brand the region as a tourism destination.



## Budget Framework

	Amount	Funding	Net Amount	Funding Notes
Tourism Management				
Leadership Management fee				Partially offset by MAT tax
Tourism Management				
Product Development				
Festival and Events				
Experience Design for Operators	\$1,200	\$6,000+	0	In partnership with TEN /DNO TEN covers approx. \$6000 plus staff/ Forrest Consulting covering the \$1,200
Fast Track to Success	\$1,500	\$20,000	\$1,500	Often paid by the tourism operator
Tourism Management				
Intern	\$40,000	\$35,000	\$5,000	NOHC - up to 90% - capped at 35K
Marketing Plan Development				
Marketing - Traditional				
Digital Marketing				
Social Media				
Website				
Branding				
Ad agency				
Membership fees				
Brochure distribution			\$ 600	Thunder Bay Media Distributors
Infrastructure Initiatives:				
Highway 105 - Kiosks, signage	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	Possible Destination Northern Ontario partnership
Community and trails wayfinding	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	Possible Destination Northern Ontario partnership
Pow wow site enhancements	TBA			

## Funding Opportunities

### Ontario Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries Grants and Awards

Funding Programs | Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (gov.on.ca)

#### Ontario COVID Support Programs

[https://www.ontario.ca/page/available-funding-opportunities-ontario-government?\\_ga=2.119162762.2041209196.1594037556-948267709.1560454035](https://www.ontario.ca/page/available-funding-opportunities-ontario-government?_ga=2.119162762.2041209196.1594037556-948267709.1560454035)

#### NOHFC Internship Programs

Workforce Development Stream | NOHFC

<https://nohfc.ca/en/pages/programs/people-talent-program/indigenous-workforce-development-stream>

### Ontario 2021 Budget (media report)

As part of the 2021 Ontario budget, the government is introducing a few new, targeted incentives aimed at providing support to the province's hospitality and tourism sectors in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The most notable new program is the Ontario tourism and hospitality small business support grant. The \$100-million program will provide one-time payments between \$10,000 and \$20,000 to hospitality-related businesses that don't qualify for the Ontario small business support grant.

To access the hospitality support grant, business owners will need to show they had a minimum 20% decline in revenue and have less than 100 employees.

The program is aimed at hotels, motels, travel agencies, amusement parks, hunting and fishing camps, overnight summer camps, and other recreational and vacation camps.

Although previously announced, officials said the government will be moving forward with legislation to enact a tax credit for people who travel within the province when it is safe to do so. The \$150-million program is expected to provide a tax credit to residents for up to 20 per cent of "eligible Ontario tourism expenses."

### Canada's COVID Support Programs

Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan - Canada.ca

#### FedNor Funding Programs

[https://fednor.gc.ca/eic/site/fednor-fednor.nsf/eng/h\\_fn03899.html](https://fednor.gc.ca/eic/site/fednor-fednor.nsf/eng/h_fn03899.html)

#### FedNor Internship Program

<https://fednor.gc.ca/eic/site/fednor-fednor.nsf/eng/fn03445.html>

### Ontario Trillium Foundation Grants

<https://otf.ca/our-grants>

### Destination Northern Ontario Programs and Support

Partnership program for strategic planning, wayfinding – 50% funding; possible marketing partnerships especially for itineraries, [www.northernontario.travel](http://www.northernontario.travel): training in storytelling, publication of stories

## Addendum Research

### Impact of COVID-19 on Tourism Business in RT013

The ability of the many tourism businesses, communities and organizations across Northern Ontario to adapt and respond to COVID-19 has differed, based on each unique profile, market and financial capacity as noted above and has been uneven to date. While there are many bright spots and successes, some challenges remain.

Current status of your business	Value	%
Partially open/ limited operations/ reduced capacity	251	37.24%
Temporarily closed	171	25.37%
Re-opened after closing	86	12.76%
Open/Never Closed	74	10.98%
Other	51	7.57%
Preparing to re-open for Stage 3 Friday, July 17, 2020	32	4.75%
Permanently closed	8	1.19%
Re-opened and then required to close again due to regulations	1	0.15%

#### Insights from [www.northernontario.travel](http://www.northernontario.travel)

- Searches by domestic residents on NorthernOntario.travel is up 122% in the first six months of 2020 with 1.75 million visits.
- Top five interests for domestic visitors:
  - Hiking or Walking in Nature (47%)
  - Natural attractions like mountains or waterfalls (44%)
  - Trying local food and drink (42%)
  - Nature parks (41%)
  - Fall colours (36%).

Source: [northernontario.travel](http://northernontario.travel)

#### Ontario Regional Tourism Organizations Covid-19 Survey 7 Results July 17-31, 2020

Throughout the pandemic, a number of new visitor patterns and interests have emerged that include:

- Parks and waterways busy, some oversubscribed.
- Campgrounds full.
- Marinas busy.
- Operations of all types along or near established, mainstream travel corridors that include Highways 17 and 11 benefitting from strong demand, new guests. Operations off main corridors, in remote locations or a great distance from major urban markets are typically struggling.
- Communities and their economies suffering due to loss of festivals, meetings, conferences, sporting events.
- Spikes in participation, equipment rental and sales for canoeing, kayaking, cycling, hiking, RVing, snowmobiling, camping, motorized recreational vehicles.
- High yield, remote access and fly-in fishing lodges and camps under significant pressure, many with little to no business in 2020 due to border closures. With many relying on reservations that got transferred from the 2020 season to 2021, an open border is by no means a sure thing. Open borders are a top priority for Northern Ontario as a whole and are critical to resource-based operators in Northwestern Ontario in particular, whose market is 80%- 95% U.S. guests.
- Strong demand for snowmobile trails and access to snowmobile product.

### **Trends and Visitor Patterns through COVID-19**

A number of new visitor patterns and interests impacting travel and tourism, detailed in a significant body of COVID-specific consumer research, are emerging that will influence the experiences and products delivered by the tourism sector not only in Northern Ontario but around the world in both the near term and the longer term.

- Interest in out-of-the-way destinations. Traffic to DNO's website has soared during March to January 2021 with high levels of interests in soft outdoors product across the region.
- Visitors seeking 'isolation' experiences, to travel and take part in activities with their own social bubbles.
- Visitors embracing the outdoors, wilderness and related activities.
- Architecture and design as well as new ideas and concepts in community planning (expanded patio space, dedicated cycle and walking corridors, slow streets) have emerged as key tools and factors in positioning experiences to support safe spaces that in turn provide opportunities for businesses to operate
- Current research indicates that younger travellers are most likely to travel farther first.
- WTTC's Travel Demand Recovery Dashboard indicates that 'adventure stands out as the leading recovering segment'. This bodes well for Northern Ontario.

### **Key Takeaways from Path to Prosperity, Destination Northern Ontario's COVID Recovery Plan 2020**

High yield, remote access and fly-in fishing lodges and camps under significant pressure, many with little to no business in 2020 due to border closures. With many relying on reservations that got transferred from the 2020 season to 2021, an open border is by no means a sure thing. Open borders are a top priority for Northern Ontario as a whole and are critical to resource-based operators in Northwestern Ontario in particular, whose market is 80%- 95% U.S. guests. This reality needs attention and a plan to address.

#### **Key Priority:**

Implementing experience development, marketing and sales strategies in anticipation of closed U.S. and international borders into peak summer season of 2021:

- a. Identification of target market(s) and related, laser-focused and timely pan-Northern marketing and sales strategy to position fly-in and remote camps and lodges as a unique and desirable option to domestic residents for 2021.
- b. A strategy and action plan to develop and showcase experiences to entice travel off established travel corridors for the 2021 peak summer season.
- c. A strategy and action plan to showcase experiences to generate inter-regional travel throughout the North.

### **Borders Open to U.S. and Long-Haul Visitors**

Visitors from the United States make up over 80% of guests at many remote camps and lodges. Their very livelihood depends on open borders in 2021. The development of a safe border re-opening plan that welcomes U.S. visitors in particular as well as long-haul domestic and international visitors remains a top priority. Ideally the safe border re-opening plan will provide reasonable lead time so that operators and destinations can plan accordingly.

- DNO will take the lead to immediately form a 'Border Task Force' that includes operators and industry associations, to examine border issues, share the devastating impact of closed borders on the resource-based sector in particular, and to provide solutions and advice to decision-makers.

### **Leveraging New Visitor Patterns and Interests**

#### **Interest in out-of-the-way destinations.**

A number of new visitor patterns and interests impacting travel and tourism, detailed in a significant body of COVID-specific consumer research, are emerging that will influence the experiences and products delivered by the tourism sector not only in Northern Ontario but around the world in both the near term and the longer term.

Traffic to DNO's website has soared during March to August 2020. What tourism experiences and marketing tactics will convert interest to buyers? How can this interest be used to the advantage of Northern Ontario tourism operators and communities?

- Visitors seeking 'isolation' experiences, to travel and take part in activities with their own social bubbles.
- Visitors embracing the outdoors, wilderness, and related activities. This new interest has put increased pressure on Crown lands, parks, waterways, with many new to outdoors experiences. How can this increased pressure and potential negative impacts on natural resources and the experience itself be managed?
- Architecture and design as well as new ideas and concepts in community planning (expanded patio space, dedicated cycle and walking corridors, slow streets) have emerged as key tools and factors in positioning experiences to support safe spaces that in turn provide opportunities for businesses to operate. How are communities incorporating these factors into planning?
- Current research indicates that younger travellers are most likely to travel farther first. Is the industry aware of this? What is the impact on marketing channels and messages at operator, community, regional and pan-regional levels?
- WTTC's Travel Demand Recovery Dashboard indicates that 'adventure stands out as the leading recovering segment'. This bodes well for Northern Ontario.

### **Looking Beyond the Immediate**

Emergence of 'travel corridors' or 'travel bridges' between destinations with little to no active COVID cases. Established to control the spread and also to increase confidence for travellers, these partnerships are expected to play a role in building international travel between Canadian provinces as well as between countries (such as New Zealand and Cook Islands; Singapore and Vietnam). What are the implications for visitor travel patterns, marketing, and product development across Northern Ontario?



### **Keeping an Eye on Trends**

- Emergence of Generation Z (oldest are 25 years old in 2020) and their influence on travel.
- The rise of wellness tourism and solo travel.
- WFH (work from home) transition to WFA (work from anywhere).
- Increase in private travel.
- Pent up demand in luxury travel.
- General embracing of a slowdown in daily pace.

Operators, communities and destinations would benefit from reflection on opportunities that these trends may present.

## Domestic Markets

With closed US and international borders and restricted and discouraged travel domestically the US, International and domestic passenger numbers dropped significantly.

The approach for summer 2020 was a three-tiered approach of hyper-local, local and then provincial. With the uncertainty of the US border, Canada's vaccine roll-out delays and fear of the impact of the new variants in all of Canada and Ontario, the likelihood of another summer of domestic travel is high.

Based on research conducted by Destination Canada in February of 2020 consumer sentiment for travel is still low, though shifts are being detected. The trend is still hyper-local, local and the Ontario market. With the proximity of the Manitoba border the consumer sentiment would likely resemble a more local sentiment versus the national and provincial statistics cited.

According to Destination Canada's Resident Sentiment Survey Report, Updated January 26, 2021:

- Ontarians' perception of travel safety decreases the further away their potential destination is from home
  - 67% of Ontarians feel safe when thinking about travelling to nearby communities
  - 53% of Ontarians feel safe when thinking of travelling within Ontario
  - 34% of Ontarians feel safe when thinking of traveling to other parts of Canada
  - 11% of Ontarians perceived safety as much lower when thinking about travelling to the US and 14% to other international destinations

## Consumer Sentiment – Destination Canada

This research reflects the shifts in consumer travel sentiment and receptiveness to advertising compared to the previous study.

# Summary

	I Feel Safe to Travel		Receptivity of Advertising	
BC	▲	Compared to the previous week, feelings of safety have increased significantly towards other parts of Canada and international destinations outside of the US.	■	Compared to the previous week tracked, receptivity of promoting their community as a destination has remained stable towards all regions.
Alberta	■	Compared to the previous week, feelings of safety towards all travel destinations has remained stable.	▼	Compared to the previous week tracked, receptivity of promoting their community as a destination has decreased towards the US and other countries outside of the US.
Saskatchewan*	■	Compared to the previous week, feelings of safety towards all travel destinations has remained stable.	▼	Compared to the previous week tracked, receptivity of promoting their community as a destination has decreased towards all domestic destinations and towards other countries outside of the US. Notably, promoting to other parts of the province has moved from positive to neutral.
Manitoba	■	Compared to the previous week, feelings of safety towards all travel destinations has remained stable.	▼	Compared to the previous week tracked, receptivity of promoting their community as a destination has decreased towards all domestic destinations and towards the US.
Ontario	▲	Compared to the previous week, feelings of safety have increased significantly towards all domestic destinations. After significant decreases the previous week for all destinations, feelings of safety have reverted to levels seen the week prior.	■	Compared to the previous week tracked, receptivity of promoting their community as a destination has remained stable towards all regions.
Quebec	▲	Compared to the previous week, feelings of safety have increased significantly towards all destinations. After significant decreases the previous week for all destinations, feelings of safety have reverted to levels seen the week prior. Feelings of safety have been fluctuating for domestic destinations since the beginning of December and international destinations since the beginning of January.	▼	Compared to the previous week tracked, receptivity of promoting their community as a destination has decreased towards other countries outside of the US, reverting to levels seen the week prior.
Atlantic Canada	■	Compared to the previous week, feelings of safety towards all travel destinations has remained stable.	▼	Compared to the previous week tracked, receptivity of promoting their community as a destination has decreased towards other countries outside of the US.

\* Small base size (<100). Interpret with caution.

2 ▲ positive compared to previous week ▼ negative compared to previous week ■ no change compared to previous week

## US Markets

There is a strong desire for US residents to travel to Canada and this is showing up in online search research. The status is “stable activity” though a large decrease from the pre-COVID-19 stage.

The issue is the ongoing border closure taking place, month to month.

The uncertainty of the border opening in 2021 is a huge threat to the operators in the EFPRL region.

U.S. Travel Related Recovery Signals<sup>5</sup> (As of December 20, 2020):

Google’s recovery signal dashboard based on search queries grouped into three categories: 1. dining out searches, 2. travel activity searches and 3. travel (flight, hotel/accommodations) searches reported:

- Overall trend line is stable activity but below 2019 level in U.S. searches pertaining to Canadian travel search down 61% same period March 1, 2019 – January 26, 2020 search level
- Overall trend line is stable activity but below 2019 in U.S. searches pertaining to Ontario travel search queries down 64% same period March 1, 2019 – January 26, 2020 search level

**Source – Destination Ontario Impact Of Covid-19 On The Canadian Economy And Tourism Recovery From The Us & Overseas Travel Based On Border Restrictions**

The following estimates are from Destination Canada, as of January 26, 2021. Based on restart timeframes, recovery based on 2019 tourism levels could take until 2024 or beyond.

	Scenario	Assumptions	Recover to 2019 levels by...	Tourism Impact
April / May	Virus Contained	Travel resumes in June	2022	-35%
	Virus Not Contained	Uneven travel resumption	2024	-59%
July	1. September Restart	Borders re-open at end of August/start of September	2023	-54%
	2. Borders closed to 2021 (upper bound)	Borders closed to 2021	2023	-43%
	3. Borders closed to 2021 (lower bound)	Borders closed to 2021	2024	-61%

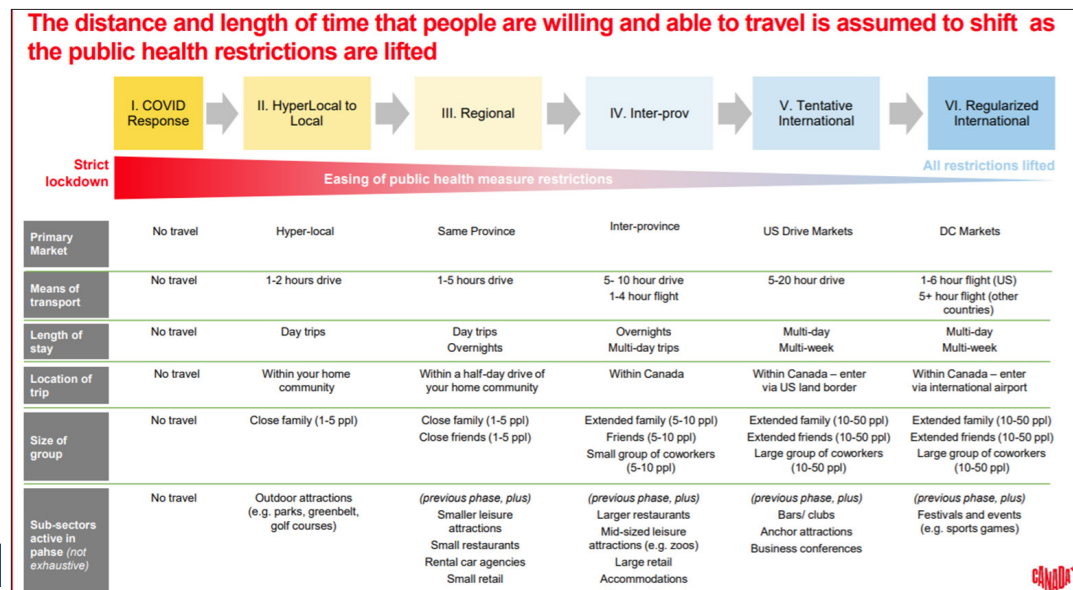
## Outlook

Destination Analysts' U.S. Coronavirus Travel Index results ending January 25, 2021 reported6:

- New coronavirus variants have heightened American anxieties about the pandemic to record highs:
  - 74% of Americans are concerned about contracting the virus, 80% are concerned about family or friends becoming sick with COVID.
  - 58% of Americans are concerned about how pandemic will impact their personal finances, and 87% are concerned about the impact to the U.S. economy.
- Conversely, Americans are more optimistic about the pandemic improving:
  - 35% of Americans believe the pandemic situation will improve in the next month, the highest this metric has been since June 2020, and up +13. % since March 2020.
  - 60% of Americans believe that vaccination will improve the pandemic situation in the next 6 months and make travel possible within that timeframe.
  - 66% of American travelers want to receive a vaccine, and 1/3rd aim to have taken it by March 2021.
- Americans are excited to return to travel soon:
  - 22% of travelers who had plans impacted by COVID-19 plan to make up for lost time by traveling more in 2021 (a +3.0% increase from the preceding week).
  - 27% of travelers researched travel ideas online, and 30.3% have talked about travel with friends or relatives.
  - Survey respondents currently rank their openness to travel inspiration at 6/10 on average, an increase from 5/10 at the start of the pandemic.

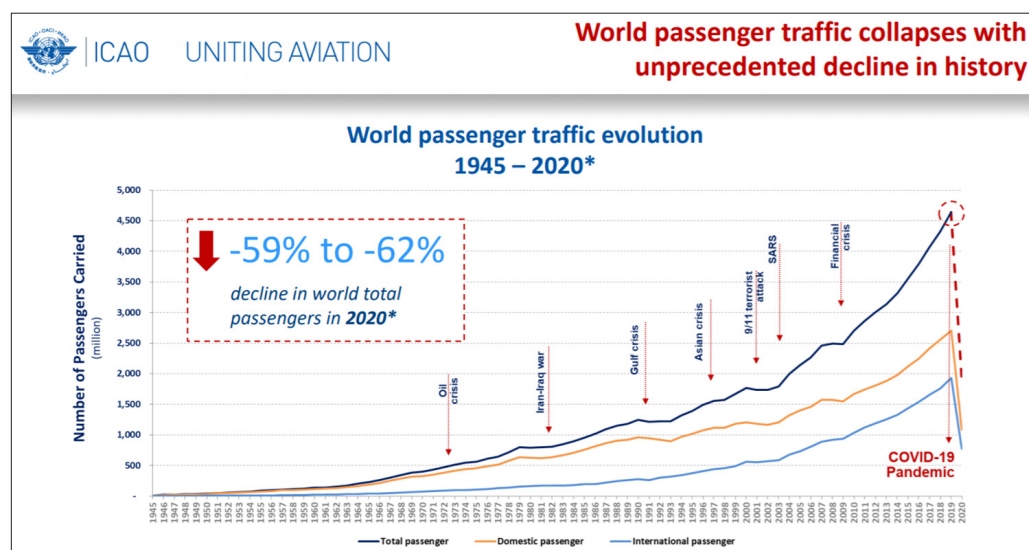
## Travel Distance and Length of Time People will be Willing to Travel

Destination Canada has conducted research on travel distances, during and post COVID-19. The drive time will likely increase. This will impact the existing and potentially new markets for the Ear Falls, Red Lake and Perrault Falls region. Marketing plans should reflect the travel modes and distances consumers are willing to travel.



## Global Impact

The following information was sourced from a report on the Effects of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) on Civil Aviation: Economic Impact Analysis - Montréal, Canada October 8, 2020 - Air Transport Bureau



- Air passenger traffic: An overall reduction of air passengers (both international and domestic) ranging from 59% to 62% in 2020 compared to 2019 by - The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
- Airports: An estimated loss of approximately 60% of passenger traffic and 61% or over USD 104.5 billion airport revenues in 2020 compared to business as usual by Airports Council International (ACI)
- Airlines: A 54.7% decline of revenue passenger kilometres (RPKs), both international and domestic) in 2020 compared to 2019 by International Air Transport Association (IATA)
- Tourism: A decline in international tourism receipts of between USD 910 to 1,170 billion in 2020, compared to the USD 1.5 trillion generated in 2019, with 100% of worldwide destinations having travel restrictions by World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)
- Global economy: A projected -4.9% to -5.2% contraction in world GDP in 2020, far worse than during the 2008-09 financial crisis by International Monetary Fund and World Bank)



## **TripAdvisor COVID-19 White Paper May 2020**

### **Covid 19 - Research (tripadvisor.com)**

#### **Shifts in Consumer Sentiment**

##### **Emerge Stage:**

Analysis of consumer sentiment indicates a significant shift in consumer attitudes that are a defining characteristic of the Emerge stage. As confidence returns, it will be initially tempered by concerns about cleanliness and safety.

Less than half (42%) of consumers say they will dine-in at restaurants just as they did prior to the pandemic, but others are more cautious. More than a third of consumers (35%) say they will put an emphasis on dining at restaurants that keep customers safe. Around one in six (16%) will avoid dine-in experiences altogether in favor of delivery or take-out.

The same is true in both the hotels and experiences sector.

Nearly nine in ten (86%) consumers say cleanliness will be very important when selecting an accommodation after COVID-19, with the provision of hand sanitizers and sealed amenities, the frequency with which rooms are disinfected, and the use of temperature checks for employees and guests all now cited as top considerations.

Four in five (82%) say that the disinfecting of high-contact surfaces will be a very important consideration when deciding to book tours, activities and attractions.

Clearly, those hospitality businesses that can rise to the challenge of new consumer expectations around cleanliness and hygiene stand to benefit most from early increases in travel and hospitality spending during the Emerge stage.

The extent to which the industry will need to adopt and lean into new practices also depends on how long the Emerge stage will last. Again, analysis of both consumer sentiment and search behavior helps provide some level of forecasting for this.

Even assuming efforts to contain the virus and flatten the curve continue to prove effective in most markets, it remains likely that the travel industry will stay in the Emerge stage for a significant period of time.

This is not only due to initial changes in consumer attitudes, but also changes in their spending power. Two in five (40%) consumers report their household will be worse off financially in the next 12 months, around the same number (43%) expect their financial position to be about the same as it is now, while only one in six (17%) expect to be better off.

These differences mean that changes in travel behavior won't be universal, even once restrictions are lifted. While nearly two thirds of consumers (59%) are likely to take fewer trips in the next twelve months than in the year previous, around two in five (41%) are optimistic that they will take the same or more trips than last year.

The underlying economic conditions, and their inevitable impact on consumer spending power, will crossover into the next stage of recovery too: Domestic.

**Domestic Stage:**

Shorter trips to destinations closer to home are a recurring theme, with nearly half (44%) of consumers saying they are more likely to take a road trip, and two thirds (61%) saying they are most comfortable taking a road trip for 3-5 days, possibly due to perceptions that such trips are less risky, since they typically involve contact with fewer people than other forms of travel.

These same concerns, coupled with a strong desire to reconnect with friends and family as restrictions ease, may also explain changes in who people want to travel with in future. More than three quarters (80%) of consumers say they are more likely to travel with family after COVID-19, and nearly two thirds (60%) are more likely to travel with only one or two friends.

The risk factor is also evident in the types of destinations domestic travelers are planning to visit, with a preference emerging for destinations where they feel they can relax and be around fewer people. Consumers are 218% more likely to want to take a trip where they can relax compared to before the pandemic, and nearly two thirds (59%) report they would prefer to go somewhere off the beaten path versus a popular destination post COVID-19.

Accommodation search trends confirm this. In North and Latin America, for example, there has been a spike in traffic researching Campgrounds, Ranches and Beach Motels, as well as lodgings featuring Boating, Skiing, Canoeing or Horseback Riding.

## Addendum

### Best Practices - Five best practices/case studies/lessons learned have been completed.

#### Algoma Country

##### Contact - Heather Bot, Executive Director, Algoma Country

Algoma Country, a region that typically attracts significant traffic from the U.S. (from 90 – 100% for some operators) adjusted their planned summer and fall marketing campaign to focus on hyper-local, regional, and Southern Ontario with a goal to drive bookings and build brand awareness.

Highlights and observations from summer and fall campaigns include:

- Bookings: \$256,130 up 32% from \$192,785 (Algoma Country) and \$373,740 up 67% from \$222,476 (total 13 A, B, C)
- Web traffic: up 115% from 108,823 to 234,993
- Social traffic: 40,750 engagements up 39% from 29,294; Algoma's Facebook and Instagram did exceptionally well with an increase in the use of hashtag #algomacountry and tagging Algoma Country in posts.
- The region's campgrounds, both private and in provincial parks, were inundated with campers.
- There was a rise in a younger demographic, which is not Algoma's traditional target market.
- Motorcycle enthusiasts were traveling the roadways this summer, looking to get away and enjoy the open road.

Other tactics included a small awareness campaign to ensure Algoma is top of mind in traditional U.S. markets, using #DreamON and a domestic summer/fall Moments of Algoma campaign that aligned with Destination Ontario's Group of Seven Continues fall campaign to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Group of Seven's first exhibition. This campaign did exceptionally well and exceeded expectations.

The hardest hit sectors of tourism in Algoma Country are remote-based tourism, especially the fly-in and train-in businesses. Drive-in businesses fared better, but it was by no means an easy summer. These markets are imperative to the survival of our tourism businesses as we move into recovery stages.

There is concern around winter product as well. Looking to the future, surveys on travel intentions and data from current campaigns will be used to refine winter marketing campaigns in Q4.

Future plans will incorporate safe travels messaging into digital and print media to assist in rebuilding consumer confidence in travel.

## **Esnagami Wilderness Lodge, Nakina**

### **Eric and Sue Lund**

Eric and Sue Lund recognized in February 2020 that the U.S. border was not going to open anytime soon due to COVID-19 and that a new strategy was required.

When the Lunds bought the lodge 30 years ago, it catered to a strictly U.S. market. Realizing the risks of that strategy, the couple began working to build up their Canadian clientele to the point that their customers are now about 40% Canadian. Are fees at Esnagami are in Canadian funds, as well which the Lunds say is much simpler for bookkeeping and, bottom line, only fair. As Eric says, “Canadians hate paying in U.S. funds to vacation in their own country”. Thus, they had a base to work from when developing their pandemic product development and marketing strategies.

The key was to ensure that they were taking all the precautions necessary and ensuring that their visitors and the surrounding community knew That they were. The following message from their website, details the steps that they took to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for their Canadian clientele during the summer of 2020:

“Dear Guests,

We know that there are a lot of uncertainties right now in the world and our current way of life has been disrupted. The purpose of this update is to help answer some of your questions regarding a fly-in trip to Esnagami Lodge this summer.

We can’t underestimate the power of social responsibility in drastically reducing the spread of COVID-19, and we need everyone on board for it to work.

To ensure we are providing a safe environment for our staff and guests, we will be implementing the following procedures and protocols:

First of all, we are entrusting everyone to be “socially responsible.” This means if you are feeling unwell or having any symptoms of COVID-19 such as: a dry cough, fever, difficulty breathing, or fatigue we ask that you do not make the trip. In addition, it is important to practice social distancing and frequent hand washing.

From the moment our guests arrive at Esnagami Wilderness Lodge, we want you to feel safe. This year, when flying with Nakina Air Service, there will be a Plexiglas wall between the cockpit and passenger area. No one will be allowed to sit in the front with the pilot. All planes will be sanitized before boarding. The pilot will be wearing a mask and all passengers will be required to bring their own mask to wear on the flight into and out of the lodge. NAS will only be flying with their larger aircraft, such as the Otter and Cessna Caravan.

**FLIGHT:** When you arrive on Esnagami’s main dock, we will kindly ask you to use hand sanitizer that will be provided. As per usual, our staff will assist you in transporting your gear to your cabin. In order to reduce traffic to the main lodge on the “incoming day”, we will have one of the Esnagami staff come to your cabin to take lunch orders for those on the American Plan Package, as well as provide a camp orientation. This is also a good time to let us know any special requests that your group may have.

**HAND SANITIZER:** Hand sanitizer stations will be provided inside every cabin, inside all of the entries into the main lodge (dining room, service kitchen, back kitchen door for staff and lounge door). There will also be hand sanitizer bottles around the dock area and in every one of our cedar-strip boats.

**AMERICAN PLAN PACKAGE** (which also means the plan where the meals are provided) We are excited to have Chef Troy back in the kitchen for his 4th season. For meals, guests can choose from the 2 options below:

**Option # 1** If we are given the go-ahead by the government to offer dining room service, we will be implementing required social distancing between tables and or staggering breakfast/dinner times. The meals will be served family-style (food will be on platters for guests to serve themselves)

**Option # 2** Staff will deliver meals to cabins. (think “Uber Eats” or “Skip the Dishes”) Staff would wear masks and gloves to deliver meals to the front door of the cabin. There will be a tote bin located outside on the cabin deck to put used dishes and garbage in for the staff to pick up later.

Troy will be preparing delicious meals no matter which of the two options are selected.

**LUNCH ORDERS:** The lunch orders will be taken the night before. Shore lunch bins or box lunches will be delivered to your boat in the morning.

For groups that decide that they would prefer to do their own meals (HOUSEKEEPING PLAN), we would be happy to pre-order your groceries and have them in your cabin for your arrival. All you would need to do is send us your grocery order 2 weeks prior to your trip date. These cabins will come with a fully equipped kitchen.

**CABIN CLEANING:** All cabins will be cleaned and sanitized upon your arrival. There will not be daily cabin cleaning for those on the American Plan this year. Staff will come by after breakfast to replace used towels and pickup garbage. There will be bins available on the decks for this purpose. Prices will be adjusted for the change in services.

**LINENS/TOWELS:** All of our sheets and towels are commercially cleaned. Bedding & blankets will be washed in between cabin changes. Clean pillows are provided but we suggest that you bring your own this year. Guests that would feel more comfortable bringing their own linens or a sleeping bag are welcome to do so.

**BOATS:** Boats will be thoroughly cleaned, and surfaces disinfected before each new group starts their trip. Additional cleaning will be done as needed on a daily basis.

**BEVERAGE / STORE ITEMS / FISHING TACKLE / BAIT / ICE:** will be available for purchase and will be delivered to your cabin by our staff.

**GUIDE SERVICE:** We are still planning on offering a full guide service. Our 18-foot cedar strip boats offer more than adequate space for social distancing between the guests and guide.

**FISH CLEANING:** There will be bins provided outside of the fish cleaning cabin for each group to place their catch in. Guests will not be permitted to enter the fish cleaning cabin this year.

**PAYING YOUR BILL:** We ask that trip balances be paid prior to your trip. Incidentals and additional charges can be paid at a designated check out time.



**WHAT HAPPENS IF A GUEST EXHIBITS SIGNS OF COVID-19?** Esnagami Lodge has the right to ask any guest to leave the camp if they display any COVID-19 symptoms. This would also include the rest of the party members that share the same cabin. Be sure to advise us ahead of time if you suffer from Spring allergies.

Please note that these procedures are maybe subject to change to meet any new requirements issued from the District Health Unit.

We hope that this information has answered some of your questions. Please let us know if you have any other concerns.

Looking forward to seeing you at Esnagami this summer!

**Eric & Sue Lund”**

The Lunds had a successful 2020 season with no health issues and guests enjoying a highly relaxing experience. They are already 10% ahead in bookings for the summer of 2021. If the border stays closed, which they expect, they are already 40% booked. If it did open, they would count themselves 80% booked.

Some key takeaways from Eric:

- It takes time, creativity and effort to diversify your product and attract new markets, but it is worth it. Whether it is health-related or a financial or other situation that negatively impacts the tourism industry, it will be important not to have all your eggs in one basket.
- The temporary closure of sport shows provided a good opportunity to reflect on their value, freeing up funds and time to rethink how they market including increasing social media and undertaking a television advertising campaign in Northern Ontario, both of which have been attracting attention.
- We should view the pandemic as an opportunity. The industry will get stronger and smarter, bolstered by those who want to innovate. The Southern Ontario and other Canadian markets have started to view Northern Ontario as a very appealing destination given its wide-open spaces and abundant nature and this will likely continue to grow. The New Canadian market should be explored. “We need to change our mentality and open our eyes to the potential”.
- It took time and research to build their trophy fishery and fly-fishing product, but both have proven to be beneficial for business.
- When exploring who was following COVID protocols in the nearby community, Nakina, Lund encountered negative attitudes about having visitors from outside the region visit. It took a lot of reassurance that the Esnagami visitors would not be stopping at any point on the trip. This attitude needs to be addressed.

Best Practices and Lessons Learned for 2021 (CBRE Fixed-Roof Accommodation Study, N. Ontario)

- It may be easier to stay shut in this environment but it's best for our community to stay open
- Set up an online booking system
- Keep up to speed with the regional way for implementing restrictions based on advice of district health units
- Cater to different markets, i.e., evacuees
- Stay safe yourself; protect those around you
- Follow approved guidelines
- The domestic market may not be able to support businesses that rely on the U.S.
- Keep a positive attitude
- Be proactive and go after any business you can get
- Take advantage of down time to complete overdue projects
- Stay flexible with how and to whom you market
- Membership local/regional marketing organizations and follow their updates
- Invest money into cabin/unit upgrades and winterizing cabins
- Maintain good customer relations
- Focus on outdoor venues for social distancing

## **DNO Impacts of COVID-19 on Northern Ontario Accommodations and Recommendations for Future Planning, CBRE, December 2020**

### **Crawford's Camp, Sioux Narrows**

The Rydberg family has run the Crawford's Camp resort since 1978 and it is currently operated by Matt and Karly Rydberg. The Rydbergs have a young son, Bodhi. Matt and Karly have a mission to "offer the best hunting and fishing experience to all their clients near and far". Crawford's Camp has excellent reviews on TripAdvisor, scoring 5/5.

Crawford's Camp is a year-round resort, offering 13 modern summer cabins and seven modern year-round cabins. Cabins are offered for both relaxing getaways and "true die-hard fishermen". They also offer boat and snow machine rentals and other items to get users out fishing as well as guided hunting trips.

When you call the resort, the voice message comes from Karly who promises to make available up to date information on COVID-19 and the border closing situation when she can. In the meantime, you are invited to text or email them as an alternative to phoning.

Matt Rydberg was featured on Destination Northern Ontario's Adapt 2000 training webinars which were developed to help the Northern Ontario tourism industry adapt during and after COVID-19. Matt recounted that the season started off a little rough with everything closing down in March during the high point of ice fishing. As the summer went on, with Provincial regulations on border crossings their traditional Manitoba market wasn't an option. Hyper local clients within a couple of hours became their market to enjoy being on the dock or on the beach instead of being in the boats fishing. Because of this they were able to bring in enough clients to keep the bills paid. Things could have been much worse, he said.

As it slowly played out, a lot of people were calling in June to book but there was no information available on the border re-opening. Matt said it was challenging trying to figure it all out. "If we double booked, with repeat customers that were booked for those days, we felt obligated to make sure that those loyal customers were a priority. We had to allow for if the border did open, we wouldn't be in a huge ordeal with double booking, even though you knew it was kind of a pipe dream for the border opening. Manitoba at the time seemed a little bit more open and many of the neighbouring province travellers were booking their vacations quickly within their own province to avoid any surprising issues.

People are now realizing, hey, we can't rely on the border opening. So, we need to be open and operating to everyone that is available. Our economies are based on tourism, period. So, when it came to accepting people from inside the region, people had to kind of be a little bit more open minded. Not just push the traditional fishing vacation that was so easy to portray for our US clientele but think more into what a family from the area would be looking for. Vacation on the lake to swim and relax, or peace and quiet from the city, or nature viewing, or ATVing, or mountain biking and hiking, or camping, the list goes on. But finding that new niche was important. AND cutting down unnecessary costs for sure helped. The "We really wanted to do this in 2020" was put on the back burner and what we viewed as important was only done.

It's just a tough go. To get business requires almost a daily social media campaign and other marketing and trying to just play with rates. But to try and get into a new market, you can't just do over a one-month period by month period, it takes continual work and communication.

But the hardest part of this whole pandemic and the border closing is the uncertainty. If we know that the border is not opening until 2021, OK, now we can make our own destiny. Now, we can market to something and try and bring in more clients or close the doors. I'd rather be able to say, hey, we can offer to some of the construction crews, or something long term rentals till January if we knew what is happening".

Some advice from Matt:

"Besides operating the resort, we had to look outside the box for additional revenue to stay alive and that came in the form of construction. With our staff still employed, because they have families too, we worked with cottage owners and locals to be able to offer construction work and that drastically helped keeping us afloat. It's not something everyone can do but each person is different, and each business is different. We can do construction. Maybe the next owner has an uncanny knack at websites and can offer to create some websites for people, or house painting or cabin cleaning or something but DON'T give up.

Exhaust yourself of every possible option, even going through all the government funding options and don't be scared to pick up the phone and call people like Allyson Pele or Jenn Myshrrall or Brent Lundy, to see if there is something out there you missed. And communicate with friends and acquaintances in the industry, share ideas and bounce suggestions off each other. Talking things out always seems to help. Together we can get through this and together we can get stronger for ALL OF US".

### **Wilderness Air Escapes, Vermillion Bay**

A prominent (and humorous) COVID-19 update on their website that emphasizes the appeal of the location as a safe place to get away from it all:

#### **COVID 19 Update**

"In light of all of the recent events surrounding the COVID 19 virus, we would like to assure people that we are optimistic that our season will continue as planned. As of right now the schools and establishments with public gatherings of 50 or more, have closed down operations until April 3rd and reopening after that. There has been a lot of media speculation and articles floating around, we have been following the guidelines on the government of Ontario web link <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>. We will take every precaution necessary to ensure the cabins, office, aircraft etc. will be sanitized and cleaned. Just think, a remote lake and private cabin with no one else around is the perfect place to be to relax and get away from it all.

We will keep you updated as things happen. Always feel free to call us at 807-227-5473 or email us at info@great-fishing.com if you have any questions.

On a lighter note, we have lots of birch bark around if we run out of toilet paper."

- Lots of family-oriented photos and testimonials
- Family fishing packages and American Plan packages
- Canadian and U.S. rates
- info@great-fishing.com

## Addendum – Resources and References

### Safe Travel Stamp for Ontario businesses

<https://www.tiaontario.ca/cpages/safetravelstamp>

### Cottage demand Summer 2021

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7614910/ontario-cottage-rentals-high-demand-spring-and-summer/>

### Resources for tourism operators

<https://destinationnorthernontario.ca/provincial-resources/>

### COVID-19 Impact and Recovery Report: Travel-Related Measures Updated: March 17, 2021

[https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/1346-Travel%20Related%20Measures%20-%20March%2017%2C%202021/COVID-19%20Canada%20Travel%20Related%20Measures\\_Mar%2017\\_EN\\_FOR%20PUBLICATION.pdf](https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/1346-Travel%20Related%20Measures%20-%20March%2017%2C%202021/COVID-19%20Canada%20Travel%20Related%20Measures_Mar%2017_EN_FOR%20PUBLICATION.pdf)

### Aligning our Voices to Support Tourism's Recovery: Destination Canada - KEY MESSAGES AND PROOF POINTS Updated January 7, 2021

[https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/1284-Aligning%20our%20Voices%20to%20Support%20Tourism%27s%20Recovery%3A%20Destination%20Canada%27s%20Key%20Messages/DC%20industry%20Key%20Messages%20-%20Jan%202021%20update\\_EN.pdf](https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/1284-Aligning%20our%20Voices%20to%20Support%20Tourism%27s%20Recovery%3A%20Destination%20Canada%27s%20Key%20Messages/DC%20industry%20Key%20Messages%20-%20Jan%202021%20update_EN.pdf)

### Visitor Resources for Inbound and Intra-provincial Travel

[https://caen-keepexploring.canada.travel/canada-nice?utm\\_source=canadanice.ca&utm\\_medium=vanity\\_url&utm\\_campaign=ca%7ccampaign%7cdc%7cna%7c2020-q3&utm\\_content=canada+nice\\_](https://caen-keepexploring.canada.travel/canada-nice?utm_source=canadanice.ca&utm_medium=vanity_url&utm_campaign=ca%7ccampaign%7cdc%7cna%7c2020-q3&utm_content=canada+nice_)