

**Annapolis Valley Tourism Development Strategy  
Findings and Implications Sessions  
Summary Report – October, 2022**

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### **Land Acknowledgement**

We are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship." We are all Treaty people, and we must respect and honour our rights as such.

### **Background**

On Sept. 12-14, the STAR Working Committee, in partnership with the Valley REN and Tourism Atlantic, held three in-person and three virtual consultation sessions. The purpose was three-fold:

- Continue an iterative process of community-based tourism development
- Share preliminary findings and implications for the discovery work done to date
- Secure input, feedback, validation of the findings and implications presented

After this process, the Working Committee and staff ascertained that participants understood and embraced the preliminary findings, implications, and path for responsible tourism development in the Annapolis Valley.

### **Preliminary Findings**

***From a tourism development perspective, the Annapolis Valley holds the most potential of any region I have ever worked in.*** Richard Innes, BRAIN TRUST (STAR Tourism Consultant)

Based on 25+ one-on-one interviews, 19 industry sessions, a stakeholder survey (150 responses), 15+ days of on-the-ground site visits, and ongoing dialogue with the working group and Valley REN staff, several overarching findings were identified:

- Proud and Passionate People - Residents, Operators, Community Leaders, Elected Officials
- High Interest in Community-Driven Tourism Development
- A Long List of Developed, Underdeveloped, and Underperforming Tourism Assets are Present:
  - Bay of Fundy, Heritage, Culture, Rural Landscapes Towns and Villages, Outdoor Recreation, Wine and Culinary
- An Understanding and Respect for Responsible Regional Tourism Development

When asked, survey respondents indicated that in ten years, they want the Valley to be known for:

- Vibrant, engaging, curated experiences in towns, villages, and rural landscapes
- The year-round winery, cidery, craft brewery, Agri and culinary experiences
- History – Mi'kmaq heritage, 400+ years of French, British, and Black History
- Outdoor recreation – hiking, biking, paddling, angling, skiing etc.
- Bay of Fundy experiences

When asked what one thing was most needed, most suggested the following:

- Long-term collaborative, unified regional strategy
- Leadership; a strong tourism organization
- More quality accommodations
- Improved infrastructure – washrooms, cycle-friendly roads, EV charging stations, visitor signage
- More community-based visitor-friendly experiences

### Emerging Themes and Visitor Touchpoints

Bay of Fundy	Valley Heritage, Culture, Arts	Valley Outdoor Recreation	Culinary	Rural Landscapes, Small Towns and Villages
Highest Tides, Provincial Parks, Coastal Communities, Geology, Heritage, Lighthouses, Paddling, Beaches, Angling, Hiking, Wildlife	First Nations, Acadian, French, British, Black History, UNESCO, National, and Provincial Historic Sites, Local Museums, Events, Theatres, Artisan Galleries, Studios, Shops	Hiking/Biking/ATV Trails, Skiing, Paddling, Angling, Spectator Sports Venues	Wineries, Tidal Bay - Nova Scotia Signature Wine (appellation), Breweries, Cideries, Distilleries, Farmers Markets, Eateries, Seafood, Taste of NS, Chowder & Lobster Trail, Good Cheer Trail	Coastal / Farm Communities, Events, Retailers, Restaurants, Scenic Routes, Lookouts, On-Farm Experiences

The emerging themes align with Destination Canada (DC) and Tourism Nova Scotia's travel motivators and market segments - Authentic Experiencers, Cultural Explorers, and Free Spirits. Furthermore, the themes align with DC's definition of High-Value Guests (HVG) who appreciate slow travel, are learners, and will make the Canadian tourism ecosystem thrive.

### New Realities

Globally, the hiatus from travel has forced new conversations. Industry, and community leaders, have identified a shift to more responsible travel, supporting a greater interest in the well-being of communities and residents as well as visitation growth and profits.

Many destinations are adopting a regenerative tourism approach that energizes strong economic growth, thriving operations, sociocultural vibrancy, healthy people, and a natural environment for generations to come. Regenerative tourism is guiding and supporting tourism development with an equal focus on economics and the well-being of people and places to measure success.

More dialogue is required to support a greater understanding of regenerative tourism principles; however, there was consensus that the Annapolis Valley STAR Plan should embrace the new realities.

## Opportunities in the Pipeline

During the discovery phase, tourism-related development projects were identified that were either in process, being considered, or had been shelved for consideration at a future date. While not representative of every potential project, the identified list contained several that had potential merit related to the overall tourism development plans for the regions.

A high-level review of the projects was conducted. Consideration should be given to these specific projects as part of the development process. More specifically:

- Identify and quantify all projects that align with emerging themes and visitor touchpoints
- Engage proponents of projects to measure project viability and interest in proceeding
- Identify those where work has begun, or initial feasibility activity has been undertaken
- Prioritize those that engage communities and support regenerative tourism principles
- Prioritize those that support future experience development opportunities

## Implications

Preliminary findings led to high-level implications related to Strategy Implementation and Strategy Opportunities. Strategy Implementation addressed facilitation and funding. Strategy Opportunities identified specific strategic actions for proactive tourism destination development over the next three to five years.

## Strategy Opportunities

- Initiate a Valley Tourism Strategy communications plan
  - Develop a Valley Tourism Strategy website
  - Utilize municipal websites, social media, etc.
  - To relay details of the strategy
- Mobilize municipalities, and First Nations at every level
  - Engage elected officials and staff in ongoing dialogue related to strategy recommendations
  - Encourage municipalities to relay information to community champions, organizations, and residents
- Ground tourism development in regenerative tourism principles
  - Facilitate regenerative tourism training
  - Identify new performance metrics using regenerative principles
- Prioritize Opportunities in the Pipeline – recognizing those that align with destination themes, customer motivations, destination differentiation
- Inventory/map existing theme-aligned products and experiences
  - Prioritize those that are tourism market-ready
  - Implement market-readiness capacity-building sessions
  - Secure product/experience development support from TNS, Destination Canada
  - Once products and experiences are identified and market-ready, work with TNS and DC to take experiences to market
- Build new tourism experience providers network aligned with themes
  - Utilize learning expertise from community partner projects such as the Wolfville Market/Earth Rhythms/Blomidon Naturalists Society experience development model.

## **Conclusion**

The Working Group, in partnership with the Valley REN, will continue to move forward and complete the Annapolis Valley STAR plan. It is anticipated the plan will be completed by year-end.

In the next phase, stakeholders will be able to provide feedback on the plan, when a series of feedback sessions will be facilitated. Details to be confirmed.