



**Community Tourism Foundations® Program**

# **NORTH VANCOUVER ISLAND**

## **Regional Tourism Plan**

### **FINAL**

**Updated  
June 2008**

Tourism BC Representative:  
Caterina Papadacos  
(604) 660-3754  
[caterina.papadacos@tourismbc.com](mailto:caterina.papadacos@tourismbc.com)

Facilitator:  
Jimmy Young  
604-929-2199  
[jimyoung@tourismplanninggroup.com](mailto:jimmyoung@tourismplanninggroup.com)

**Table of Contents**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....4**

**1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND .....14**

1.1 BACKGROUND ..... 14

1.2 NORTH VANCOUVER ISLAND REGION ..... 15

1.3 PLAN STRUCTURE ..... 16

**2. SITUATION ANALYSIS .....17**

2.1 THE ROLE OF TOURISM.....17

    2.1.1 *Industry Profile*.....17

2.2 MARKET POTENTIAL AND TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES .....22

    2.2.1 *Fit with Global Trends*.....22

    2.2.2 *Niche Tourism*.....23

    2.2.3 *Provincial and Regional Planning Context* .....25

**3. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES .....27**

**4. TOURISM VISION AND KEY EXPERIENCES .....29**

4.1 TOURISM VISION .....29

4.2 CORE GUIDING PRINCIPALS.....29

4.3 DEFINING THE KEY EXPERIENCES .....30

**5. DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING STRATEGIES .....31**

5.1 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE .....31

    5.1.1 *Tourism Vancouver Island* .....32

    5.1.2 *North Island Tourism Advisory Committee (NITAC)* .....33

    5.1.3 *Regional District of Mount Waddington*.....36

    5.1.4 *Tourism North Vancouver Island Coordinator*.....36

    5.1.5 *North Vancouver Island Visitor Centres and Chambers of Commerce*.....37

    5.1.6 *First Nations* .....38

5.2 FUNDING REGIONAL TOURISM .....39

    5.2.1 *Regional Tourism Funding Requirements*.....40

    5.2.2 *Phase 1: ICET and CST Funding Applications*.....41

    5.2.3 *Phase 2: Private Sector & Visitor Funding* .....42

    5.2.4 *Phase 2: Public Sector Funding*.....43

    5.2.5 *Phase 2: Tourism BC Funding* .....44

    5.2.6 *Proposed Funding Summary*.....44

5.3 MANAGEMENT OF TOURISM .....45

    5.3.1 *Tourism Awareness* .....45

    5.3.2 *Quality Assurance* .....46

    5.3.3 *Training and Development*.....47

    5.3.4 *Cooperative Partnerships*.....49

    5.3.5 *Green Initiatives*.....49

    5.3.6 *Transportation Infrastructure* .....50

    5.3.7 *Investment Promotion*.....50

    5.3.8 *Research-based Initiatives*.....51

5.4 PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT .....51

    5.4.1 *Fixed Roof Accommodations*.....51

    5.4.2 *Nature-based Attractions* .....52

5.4.3 Packaging.....	53
5.5 MARKETING .....	54
5.5.1 Key Marketing Initiatives 2008-2011 .....	55
<b>6. ORGANIZING FOR IMPLEMENTATION.....</b>	<b>56</b>
6.1 IMPLEMENTING THE TOURISM PLAN .....	56
6.2 REVIEWING, MONITORING & MEASURING PROGRESS .....	57
6.2.1 Overall Objectives for Tourism.....	57
6.3 CONCLUSION.....	58
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>59</b>
NORTH VANCOUVER ISLAND TOURISM WORKING GROUP .....	60
VISIONING WORKSHOP.....	62

### **June 2008 Plan Update – A note to the reader**

The updates made to the September 2007 Tourism Plan reflect the current timelines for the implementation of the structure and funding in the North Island. These updates have also affected the funding tables and in some cases the annual allocations have changed slightly. However, the vast majority of this document and the core development and marketing strategies remain unchanged.

# Executive Summary

---

## **Background**

Tourism BC received a total of three separate Expressions of Interest (EOI) for the *Community Tourism Foundations*® program from the North Vancouver Island. The applications were from the District of Port Hardy, the Village of Alert Bay and the North Vancouver Island Tourism Alliance (NVITA) representing the broader industry.

Based on the close clustering of these communities and discussions with the communities and the regional tourism association (Tourism Vancouver Island) the decision was made to coordinate efforts towards a regional tourism plan for the North Vancouver Island. Furthermore, the geographic location of product in the North Vancouver Island is very regional with Cape Scott Provincial Park, the Broughton Archipelago and tourism-based communities like Telegraph Cove spread throughout the North Vancouver Island. Many of the operators based in Port Hardy and Port McNeill operate in other parts of the region and consumers perceive the area as a regional destination.

The *Community Tourism Foundations* program provides the services of a professional facilitator to assist in the planning process. Tourism Planning Group was given the assignment to prepare a tourism plan for the North Vancouver Island that addresses organizational structure, funding, destination development and marketing initiatives.

## **The Potential**

The Provincial government has set a target of doubling tourism revenues by 2015. This is a very aggressive forecast that is not without risk as all market conditions need to be positive to achieve it. The average annual increase in tourism revenues from 1995 to 2005 was only 1.9%, while the current forecast for tourism revenue for 2007/08 is 4.5%, increasing to 4.8% for 2008/09.

North Vancouver Island has the potential to growth tourism's contribution to the local economy over the duration of this 5 year plan, but firstly it must establish the funding and organizational framework needed to effectively implement a regional tourism plan.

## **Issues and Challenges**

The key issues and challenges for developing tourism in North Vancouver Island include: fixed roof accommodations, changing the visitor dynamic, access and infrastructure, organizational structure and a low awareness in the marketplace.

- Upgrading of existing fixed roof accommodation within the region is a significant issue. Many properties have not seen the level of investment needed over the last 10 years to meet current consumer expectations. This in part can be attributed to a reliance on the BC Ferries traffic that has provided a steady stream of regular customers.
- Another significant challenge is the dilemma facing the industry to increase visitor length of stay. During the summer season the fixed roof properties in Port Hardy and Port McNeill are at capacity every second night with BC Ferries traffic.

- The region's fairly remote location is a challenge for attracting shorter getaway type vacations, which emphasises the need to develop packages and products that motivate visitors to come and stay longer.
- The large geographic area and the number of communities involved in this regional tourism plan creates a challenge for implementation and the creation of a structure that will be sustainable, inclusive and effective in promoting the region over the long term.
- A recent regional market awareness and perceptions study highlighted the relatively low awareness of North Vancouver Island among regional tourism markets (i.e. GVRD, Alberta and Washington State). Only 8% of people interviewed (that had already indicated they were familiar with Vancouver Island) in the GVRD were at least "somewhat familiar" with Port Hardy, Alert Bay and Port McNeill. In Washington the figure was 5.3% in the west of the state and 2.5% in the east, however in Alberta the percentage was 0%.

### ***Tourism Vision and Objectives***

The following vision statement for North Vancouver Island was developed from the visioning elements identified by the tourism stakeholders. The vision seeks to reflect the character of the region, its cultural and natural features and the opportunity that tourism presents for ongoing economic activity rather than being solely focused on the organizational goals of the lead tourism agency.

#### ***Tourism Vision:***

*"To create an accessible and attractive year round destination, with world class tourism experiences highlighting the regions natural and cultural resources through quality tourism products and services.*

*Tourism will be supported by the local municipalities, industry operators, First Nations and managed through a sustainable structure that collectively promotes the North Vancouver Island region for the benefit of all."*

The success of this plan and the achievement of the objectives contained within will require a coordinated effort from a number of organizations within the region and the ongoing support of the municipalities to implement all of the strategies contained in this document. The overall objectives are as follows:

- Increase tourism **revenue** to the region by **5%** annually from 2009-2011
- Increase the **number of visitors** to the region by **3%** annually from 2009-2011

The objectives reflect a preference towards growing revenues as opposed to just the number of visitors. This can only be achieved by continuing to address product development, packaging and destination management initiatives. North Vancouver Island needs to provide visitors with a reason to stay longer and spend more money within the region.

### ***Defining the Key Experiences***

As part of the visioning session on January 11, 2007 the tourism working group identified key experiences, products and themes that will shape the current and future development of tourism in the Northern Vancouver Island. The key product sectors identified were:

- Cultural Tourism
- Adventure Tourism
- Nature-based tourism

Core to the tourism experience and message for North Vancouver Island is its **natural environment and culture** these components will be integral to the development of the industry and its promotional activities.

### ***Organizational Structure***

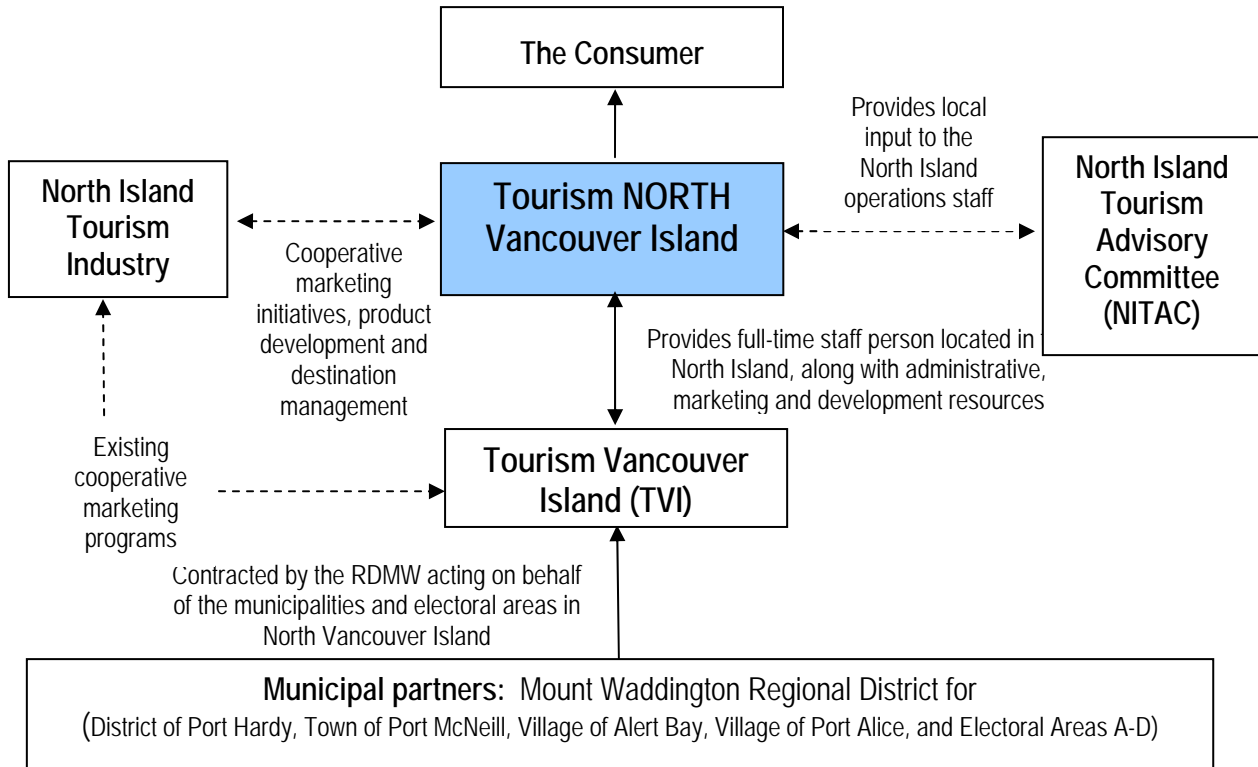
North Vancouver Island currently does not undertake any marketing or tourism development initiatives at the regional level. The “go north island” campaign is one exception as it promoted the region as a whole however it was funded through a one-off grant from the province following the sinking of the Queen of the North in 2006. The communities of Port Hardy, Alert Bay and Port McNeill invest in limited marketing and support visitor services, however no regionally coordinated tourism marketing and development exists.

Organizational Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To create a regional and representative tourism structure that will lead to improved communication and more effective promotion and management of the tourism industry in the North Vancouver Island.</li> <li>▪ To establish a sustainable funding structure for regional tourism that includes long term contributions and commitment from all key partners both private and public.</li> </ul>

Given the geographical distribution of tourism product and the number of communities offering tourism related services and experiences a regional approach is logical. Furthermore, by amalgamating resources and funding at the region level the North Vancouver Island will be able to accomplish more through enhanced coordination for product development and packaging and a significantly larger marketing budget for promoting the region.

The following diagram provides an overview of the recommended structure for managing and promoting tourism in North Vancouver Island.

## NORTH Vancouver Island - Tourism Organizational Structure



**Tourism Vancouver Island (TVI)** - the key component of the proposed structure for tourism in North Vancouver Island is the role of the regional destination marketing organization TVI. This proposed model is a unique and innovative approach that would see TVI contracted by the RDMW as the regional representative to coordinate and implement tourism management, development and marketing for North Vancouver Island.

This structure would include a staff member physically located in the region and dedicated to promoting and working with the local industry to develop and promote tourism in the North. Although the North Vancouver Island Tourism Coordinator would be an employee of and report directly to the Industry Services Manager at Tourism Vancouver Island, optically the office would be branded “Tourism North Vancouver Island”.

This structure would provide the dedicated full time paid staff necessary to implement this Regional Tourism Plan and coordinate regional marketing initiatives, while also providing the experience and resources of TVI to ensure its ongoing success.

**The North Island Tourism Advisory Committee (NITAC)** is a key component of the proposed tourism structure is the development of a mechanism for obtaining local input and direction for Tourism North Vancouver Island (TNVI). This would be achieved by establishing a representative group of local tourism industry stakeholders and funding partners to advise the contractor Tourism Vancouver Island. The initial structure of the local advisory committee would be as follows:

<b>Organization/tourism sector</b>	<b>Positions</b>
1. Regional District of Mount Waddington	1
2. District of Port Hardy	1
3. Town of Port McNeill	1
4. Tourism Port Hardy	1
5. Accommodations ( <i>at least 1 from Port Hardy</i> )	3
6. First Nations	1
7. Chamber of Commerce ( <i>alternating position</i> )	1
8. Adventure & Ecotourism	1
9. Attractions	1
10. At Large – Strategic Appointment*	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>

\* *This position could be filled as needed and should reflect the current strategic direction of the North Vancouver Island tourism industry, see section below.*

### **Key Points**

- A considerable amount of consultation was undertaken with the various stakeholders and the Tourism Working Group to develop the committee structure presented above.
- The structure is a reflection of the need to represent multiple interests, a public/private balance and the financial contributions of the various parties. It presents a starting point for developing a regional tourism industry and structure that could change over time as the industry matures.
- All parties need to embrace the ultimate goal of working together for the benefit of the entire North Vancouver Island tourism industry and economy.

**NEW Tourism North Vancouver Island Coordinator** - establishing a full time paid position dedicated to coordinating and implementing the Regional Tourism Plan and the annual marketing tactics is critical to the North Vancouver Island tourism industry’s success.

This structure proposes a full time tourism coordinator provided through Tourism Vancouver Island (“the contractor”) and reporting directly to the Industry Services Manager in the TVI Nanaimo head office. The tourism coordinator will work closely with the local tourism stakeholders and NITAC to develop and promote tourism in the North Vancouver Island.

**Regional District of Mount Waddington** – under the proposed structure for regional tourism would act as a conduit for implementing the funding model for regional tourism in North Vancouver Island and has the regional mandate for contracting the services of TVI on behalf of the electoral areas and municipalities.



The RDMW will also serve as the proponent for the funding applications to ICET and CST to obtain the necessary startup funding for the project. As part of the proposed contract between the RDMW and TVI there would be a requirement to submit annual marketing and business plan to the RDMW board for approval.

### ***Funding Regional Tourism***

Sustainable funding is key to establishing and maintaining the recommended organizational structure and developing tourism in a strategic manner within North Vancouver Island. A substantial amount of work is required to secure the proposed funding model outlined in this plan. Ongoing commitment and buy-in from the local tourism industry and municipalities is critical to the proposed structure.

The approach to funding will be phased with the initial focus on completing successful applications to the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) and Coastal Sustainability Trust (CST) to obtain resources/funding to get the structure up and running and the long term funding agreements in place.

To appropriately fund a tourism function in North Vancouver Island through the proposed structure an annual investment of approximately \$225,000 to \$250,000 is required. By way of comparison the successful Go North Island campaign implemented in 2006 had a marketing budget of \$350,000<sup>1</sup>.

The funding for the regional tourism plan long term will come from three key sources, but it will also be supplemented initially by Tourism BC matching marketing funds:

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Approx % of Overall Budget 2011</b>
1. Private sector ( <i>tourism businesses</i> )	29%
2. Visitors ( <i>2% additional hotel room tax</i> )	48%
3. Local municipalities.	18%
4. Tourism BC Marketing Program	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

The vast majority of tourism funding will be provided through private sector investment and a proposed regional additional hotel tax initiative. The municipal contribution while very important will constitute approximately 18% of the overall regional tourism budget by 2011.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Go North Island campaign was funded by a one off provincial government grant of \$350,000, designed to provide assistance to the tourism industry following the sinking of the Queen of the North in early 2006.

The key funding objectives are as follows:

Funding Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To obtain start up and implementation funding through the ICET and CST programs</li> <li>▪ To obtain ongoing local tourism industry support and financial buy in to the regional tourism plan and subsequent marketing initiatives</li> <li>▪ To implement a 2% additional hotel room tax for the region through the Mount Waddington Regional District, Town of Port McNeill, Village of Port Alice and Village of Alert Bay.</li> <li>▪ To apply the majority of the existing and proposed 2% additional hotel room tax to the regional tourism function</li> <li>▪ To fully leverage Tourism BC <i>Community Tourism Foundations</i> Marketing funding</li> <li>▪ To obtain longer term commitment and funding from the municipalities to support the regional tourism structure</li> <li>▪ To apply a portion of the Phase 2 UBCM funding to the implementation of the Regional Tourism Plan</li> </ul>

The following table provides an overall picture of the funding requirements to implement the recommended strategies contained within Section 5 of this regional tourism plan.

---

### Estimated Funding Requirements for Tourism North Vancouver Island

---

Expenses	2008*	2009	2010	2011
TVI Management Fees (includes Coordinator)	45,000	67,000	72,000	65,000
Operating Expenses**	20,000	24,000	25,000	26,000
Consulting Services***	65,000			
Product Development		15,000	17,000	5,000
Destination Management		15,000	17,000	5,000
Marketing		115,000	128,000	106,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>130,000</b>	<b>236,000</b>	<b>259,000</b>	<b>207,000</b>

\* 2008 is the startup year to prepare the structure and funding sources to start operations in 2009.

\*\* Operating expenses includes items such office rent, utilities, phone, web-hosting and office equipment. Some of these maybe provided by the successful host community (i.e. the community where the office is located) as in-kind services.

\*\*\* Consulting Services include a full-time consultant(s) to assist with implementing and obtaining support for the funding structure and the brand development project.

### ***Destination Management***

The key focuses for North Vancouver Island with regard to the management of tourism are: building awareness of the value of tourism; addressing product quality issues; and continuing to provide training and educational opportunities to the industry.

The destination management strategies will require significant partnering between the Tourism North Vancouver Island, Tourism Vancouver Island, local municipalities, the Regional District and other organizations such as the Chambers of Commerce, Community Futures and Tourism BC.

Destination Management Strategies	Objectives
1. Tourism Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Raise the level of awareness of the value of tourism to the economy within the region's communities and municipalities</li> <li>▪ Raise the awareness of tourism among local businesses</li> <li>▪ Implement <i>Community Tourism Foundations</i> "Value of Tourism" model to generate baseline estimates of tourism's contribution to the region</li> <li>▪ Campaign for a tourism industry column in the local newspapers</li> </ul>
2. Quality Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that product quality meets marketplace expectations</li> <li>▪ Ensure tourism operators are aware of and encouraged to participate in quality assurance programs (criteria for participation in TNVI programs)</li> </ul>
3. Training and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide information and resources to ensure people and organizations in tourism have access to the appropriate training and professional development programs</li> </ul>
4. Cooperative Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tourism North Vancouver Island coordinator to work closely with other key local organizations to achieve the tourism objectives outlined in this Plan</li> <li>▪ Build strategic alliances with other key businesses, operators and providers that provide links to the region.</li> </ul>
5. Green Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To support private and public sector initiatives to conserve energy and protect the environment</li> </ul>
6. Transportation Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support initiatives to improve transportation infrastructure and services</li> <li>▪ Support marina development in the region</li> </ul>
7. Investment Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitate investment by existing tourism operators</li> <li>▪ Attract investment to the City either for joint ventures with local operators or for new investments.</li> <li>▪ Support development of RDMW's Regional Profile of Investment Attraction and the update of the Regional Economic Development Strategy</li> </ul>
8. Research-based Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Utilize existing research and tourism publications to stay informed of new developments and current market information</li> <li>▪ Create a research program in cooperation with the private sector to measure growth and the effectiveness of marketing initiatives</li> </ul>

## ***Product Development***

The product development initiatives identified focus on enhancing the cultural and nature based experiences in North Vancouver Island and the supporting product (i.e. fixed roof accommodation).

<b>Product Development Strategies</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
1. Fixed Roof Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Support the use of quality assurance standards and programs within the industry</li><li>▪ Identify resources, finance and funding programs to assist properties in upgrading their facilities</li><li>▪ Provide presentations to owners on current marketplace expectations and the opportunities</li></ul>
2. Nature-based Attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Support the development of the new Quatse River Hatchery Interpretive Centre</li><li>▪ Support the development of the North Coast Trail.</li><li>▪ Support the development of wildlife viewing products and packages</li></ul>
3. Packaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Increase visitor length of stay in the region</li><li>▪ Support the development of new regional and community packages that highlight the core experiences of culture and nature</li><li>▪ Host an Tourism BC Tourism Business Essentials "Advanced Packaging and Product Distribution" workshop for the regional industry that focus on the cultural and natural attributes of the region</li></ul>

## ***Destination Marketing***

The marketing initiatives will focus on promoting North Vancouver Island at the destination level. The marketing tactics will communicate the region's key attributes of nature and culture. The messages will be supported by high quality images and a consistent theme that runs through all media and promotional materials.

TVI and the TNVI coordinator with input from the North Vancouver Island Tourism Advisory Committee will prepare, within the context of this Regional Tourism Plan, the annual marketing and business plan for the North Vancouver Island to commence in summer 2008 once the structure is near completion and the majority of the funding is in place.

The opportunity to partner with Tourism BC and access the \$50,000 in matching marketing funding will be a core component of the marketing tactics and specific initiatives undertaken in the initial 3 years.

### **Key Marketing Initiatives 2009-2011**

The following bullet points outline some of the marketing initiatives that would likely be included as the detailed annual marketing plans are developed by the Tourism Vancouver Island in conjunction with the local advisory group.

1. Development of a Tourism North Vancouver Island brand (in-house process) that is consistent with the vision and key experiences identified in the Regional Tourism Plan

2. Identify *Community Tourism Foundations* partner funding budget and projects for 2009-2011 based on Tourism BC criteria
3. Development of marketing collateral
  - North Vancouver Island Visitor Guide
  - North Vancouver Island maps
  - Website
  - Image bank
  - Themed rackcards (Ecotourism, culture and adventure) with associated packaging
4. Develop specific marketing tactics/plans around:
  - Print advertising
  - On-line advertising
  - Consumer shows
  - Media relations

### **Conclusion**

The North Vancouver Island region has a wealth of resources and product, which appeals not only to key local and regional markets but also international visitors. However, the challenge of sustaining the resources (i.e. funding and human resources) to effectively manage and market the region as a whole has led to a fragmented approach and limited growth.

The success of this Regional Tourism Plan focuses primarily on the funding and organization structure proposed for implementing a regional tourism function in the North Vancouver Island. Sustainable funding supported principally through the private sector and a regional visitor tax (i.e. 2% hotel tax) with additional resources provided by local municipalities and Tourism BC, will enable a full time staff person managed by TVI to focus solely on developing and promoting tourism in the region.

This approach will enable private sector dollars to be leveraged with visitor taxes and municipal finances to create a significant tourism budget that can be used to develop and grow the tourism industry for the benefit of the entire region.

# 1. Introduction and Background

---

This tourism plan for North Vancouver Island presents a vision and guiding principles for developing tourism in the region. It also contains specific strategies under destination management, product development, marketing and organizational structure that collectively work towards realizing the vision for tourism in North Vancouver Island.

## 1.1 Background

Tourism BC received a total of three separate Expressions of Interest (EOI) for the *Community Tourism Foundations* program from the North Vancouver Island. The applications were from the District of Port Hardy, the Village of Alert Bay and the North Vancouver Island Tourism Alliance (NVITA) representing the broader industry.

Based on the close clustering of these communities and discussions with the communities and the regional tourism association (TVI) the decision was made to coordinate efforts towards a regional tourism plan for the North Vancouver Island.

Furthermore, the nature and location of product in the North Vancouver Island is very regional with Cape Scott Provincial Park, the Broughton Archipelago and tourism-based communities like Telegraph Cove spread throughout the North Vancouver Island. For example, many of the operators based in Port Hardy and Port McNeill operate in other parts of the region and consumers perceive the area as a regional destination.

The *Community Tourism Foundations* program provides the services of a professional facilitator to assist in the planning process. Tourism Planning Group was given the assignment to prepare a tourism plan for the North Vancouver Island that addresses destination development, marketing initiatives and the desired outcomes outlined by the community in their original Expression of Interest.

Key milestones and meetings in the planning process are:

- Initial Stakeholder Meeting on August 29, 2006
- Trends, situation analysis and visioning session held on January 11, 2007
- Organization and Funding workshop on April 5, 2007
- Presentation and discussion of the Draft Regional Tourism Plan May 29, 2007

Jimmy Young from the Tourism Planning Group with the assistance of Tourism British Columbia managed this project that included guidance and assistance from a local Tourism Working Group<sup>2</sup> comprised of stakeholders from the local community, the municipality, and Tourism Vancouver Island (TVI).

The participation and guidance provided by the local Tourism Working Group in developing this tourism plan will be key to its ultimate success. The insight and knowledge that the local stakeholders bring to the process will ensure that the tourism plan truly reflects the communities'

---

<sup>2</sup> A list of all participants involved during the process is provided in the Appendix.

aspirations, goals and objectives for developing a sustainable tourism industry in the North Vancouver Island.

While the tourism plan articulates a clear vision and objectives for tourism, it should also remain flexible enough to take new, unexpected opportunities and challenges into consideration during implementation.

## 1.2 North Vancouver Island Region

The North Vancouver Island region is located at the northern end of Vancouver Island and for the purposes of this regional tourism plan includes the communities located within the Mount Waddington Regional District and the municipalities of Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Alert Bay and Port Alice.

Northern Vancouver Island has a regional population of approximately 11,600<sup>3</sup> within the boundaries of the Regional District of Mount Waddington. The largest community is Port Hardy (3,822) and the smaller municipalities include Alert Bay (556) Port Alice (861) and Port McNeill (2,623). Overall the region has experienced a significant decline in population since 2001, with the regional population dropping by 11.1% from 2001 to 2006.

---

### Northern Vancouver Island Region

---



North Vancouver Island has a fairly diversified regional economy, but still relies heavily on forestry with other strengths in aquaculture, manufacturing and tourism. The trading area serviced from Port Hardy includes numerous small coastal communities both on Vancouver Island and the Mainland coast.

---

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada - new population data from the 2006 Census for the RDMW including the municipalities of Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Alert Bay and Port Alice.

## **1.3 Plan Structure**

Section 2 sets the context for the region's tourism plan and provides an overview on the current status of tourism, a summary of market potential and tourism opportunities, and Section 3 presents the issues and challenges facing the tourism sector in the North Vancouver Island. A more in-depth presentation of the material found in Sections 2 and 3 is contained in the Situation Analysis Report (May 2007) that supports this document. The North Vancouver Island tourism vision and guiding principles followed by the strategies are then presented in Sections 4 through 5 of this document. The final Section 6 details implementation steps and how the plan will be monitored.



## 2. Situation Analysis

---

This section provides a high level summary of the key information contained within the Situation Analysis Report dated May, 2007.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1 The Role of Tourism

Tourism is one of several key industries that support the local economy in the North Vancouver Island. Although some of the communities in the north island mainly rely on resource industries (e.g. forestry), tourism is widely acknowledged as a significant economic contributor and an industry that has strong potential for growth in the future.

#### 2.1.1 Industry Profile

##### *Key Tourism Products*

The region has a number of noteworthy tourism features, products and activities that focus on the natural and cultural landscape of the North Vancouver Island. A brief summary of some of the North Vancouver Island's key tourism sectors and products are listed in the following table.

---

#### Key Tourism Attractions and Products

---

Sectors	Some of the Key Attractions and Products
Natural	Cape Scott Provincial Park, Robson Bight, God's Pocket Marine Park, Echo Bay Marine Park
Culture/Heritage	U'mista Cultural Centre, Telegraph Cove, Community Museums, Copper Maker Gallery, Ronning Gardens, festivals and events
Activities	Whale Watching, Bear Watching, Birding, Sport Fishing, Hiking, Camping, Caving, Scuba Diving, Touring, alpine skiing, sea kayaking, canoeing, salmon Viewing, golf

##### *Accommodation*

North Vancouver Island has a significant commercial accommodation inventory of approximately 91 properties offering 725 fixed roof accommodation units and 636 camp or RV sites. However, only 38% of these properties are currently Tourism BC Approved accommodations.

---

<sup>4</sup> Please refer to the Situation Analysis Report for more detail on the information presented in this section.

---

## North Vancouver Island Commercial Accommodation

---

Type of Property	# of properties	# units	Tourism BC Approved	# Canada Select
B&B	42	101	11	
Cottage/Guest House	12	54	3	
Hostel	1	8	0	
Hotel	10	355	6	
Lodges	8	39		
Motel	6	168	5	2
Campgrounds	12	636	10	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>1,361</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>2</b>

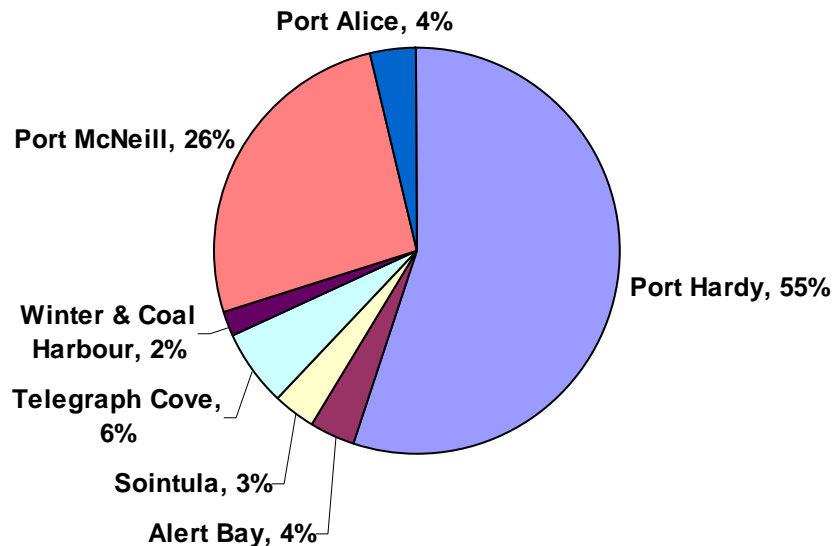
Source: North Vancouver Island Accommodation Inventory 2007, prepared by Port Hardy & District Chamber of Commerce, Tourism BC Approved Accommodation Guide 2007

The geographic distribution of these accommodation properties is skewed towards the major urban centres in the region, with the District of Port Hardy containing just over 50% of the fixed roof units and 45% of campsites in the region.

---

## North Vancouver Island Fixed Roof Accommodation by Community (n=725)

---

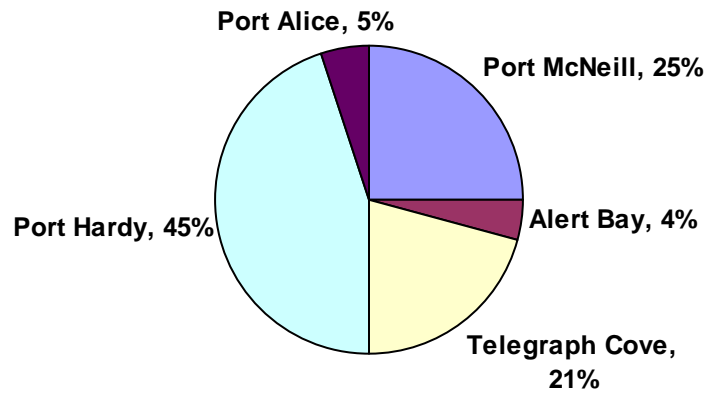


Source: North Vancouver Island Accommodation Inventory 2007, prepared by Port Hardy & District Chamber of Commerce

---

**North Vancouver Island Campground/RV Sites by Community (n=636)**

---



Source: *North Vancouver Island Accommodation Inventory 2007*, prepared by Port Hardy & District Chamber of Commerce

The small community of Telegraph Cove has almost one-quarter of the regions RV/campsites located in two large properties with a total of 132 sites.

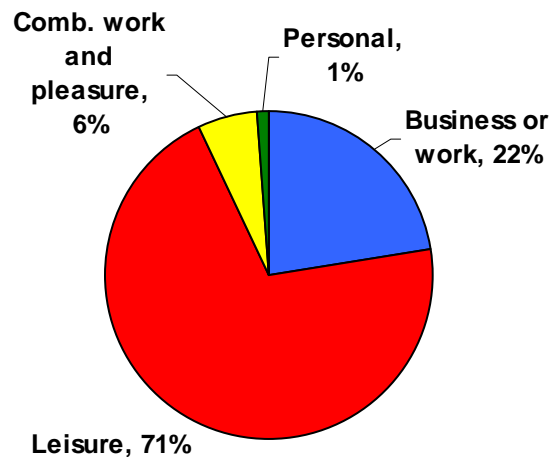
**Visitor Characteristics**

The tables and information presented in this sub-section are derived from a Special North Vancouver Island data analysis of the Tourism Labour Market Research Project 2002-2003, prepared by Malaspina University-College in 2007. The original study was organized by Malaspina University-College Recreation, Tourism Research Institute and Tourism Vancouver Island, and funded in part by HRDC to study the tourism labour market in the Vancouver Island region.

---

**North Vancouver Island Travellers – Trip Purpose**

---



Source: *Tourism Labour Market Research Project, 2002-2003, Special Analysis of the North Vancouver Island Visitor Data*

Nearly three-quarters of all visitors to North Vancouver Island are visiting for leisure purposes and 22% for business or work.

The demographics highlight the regional nature of the North Vancouver Island visitor market with nearly 50% of the visitors coming from Vancouver Island or BC. The next most significant market is international visitors who accounted for 19% of all visits. Two thirds of visitors were either travelling alone or with a spouse only.

---

### North Vancouver Island Traveller Demographics

---

<b>Location of Residence by Region</b>	
Vancouver Island	21%
Other BC	26%
Canada	18%
United States	16%
International	19%
<b>Annual Household Income</b>	
Less than 39,999	20%
\$40,000 - 59,999	19%
\$60,000 - 79,999	19%
\$80,000 - 99,999	15%
\$100,000 and over	27%
<b>North Vancouver Island Visitor Group Size</b>	
Travelling alone	24%
Spouse or equivalent	44%
Friends or family	18%
Children or parents	12%
Organized tour	5%

*Source: Tourism Labour Market Research Project, 2002-2003, Special Analysis of the North Vancouver Island Visitor Data*

### Key Tourism Organizations

Reviewing the organizational structure for managing and developing tourism in North Vancouver Island was identified as a priority in the expressions of interest and by those attending the initial *Community Tourism Foundations* meeting. Due to the regional nature of this tourism plan there are a number of organizations involved in tourism, which emphasizes the need for a structure that will enable them to communicate clearly and openly.

The **District of Port Hardy** has been a key player in moving tourism forward in the region, by implementing the 2% hotel tax, establishing a tourism business levy and providing core funding to the Port Hardy Chamber of Commerce for their operation of the visitor centre. The District is also currently undertaking a branding initiative for the municipality and also addressing the issue of community signage. The District participates in economic development through the RDMW Economic Development Commission.

**Port Hardy & District Chamber of Commerce** - currently operates the visitor centre and performs some advertising on behalf of its tourism membership. They also coordinated the 2006 Ramp Up event for tourism operators. The 2006 and more recent 2007 Spring Tourism Ramp Up events have been a huge success and an excellent venue for industry networking.

**Tourism Port Hardy** was established to represent the 2% hotel tax applicants and liaise with council during the application process. Tourism Port Hardy is currently in the process of formalizing its structure and preparing a plan for the 2% funding. To date the 2% hotel tax monies for Port Hardy have not been spent. The 2% additional hotel tax was implemented on June 1, 2006.

**Village of Alert Bay** - the municipality has no paid tourism staff, but does have a councillor with a tourism portfolio and financially supports the operation of the Visitor Centre. The Village works in close partnership with the Namgis First Nation and U'mista Cultural Centre to promote and manage tourism on the island and participates in regional economic development through the RDMW Economic Development Commission.

The **Namgis First Nation** is a key player in the tourism industry in the North Vancouver Island and considers tourism as one of the key economic drivers for diversifying and sustaining their community. The Nation works closely with the Village of Alert Bay through the *Alert Bay Accord* on a number of initiatives including tourism. Future Treaty outcomes will likely include land settlements, leases and management contracts that will increase the Namgis potential to expand its current tourism products and experiences.

**Town of Port McNeill** - the municipality has no paid tourism or economic development staff and is focused primarily on forestry. However, the Town does participate in regional economic development through the RDMW Economic Development Commission and their OCP does clearly acknowledge tourism as a growth sector and one that the town should continue to pursue.

**Port McNeill Chamber of Commerce** – receives funding from the Town of Port McNeill to operate the Port McNeill visitor centre located in the same building as the local museum. The Chamber also does some marketing of the community in partnership with the town and local tourism operators.

**Regional District Mount Waddington (RDMW)** is involved in tourism through its regional economic development function that recognizes tourism as one of the regions key economic drivers. The RDMW also has a Regional Economic Development Commission, which for the first time in the 40 year history of the RDMW now has full participation from all Districts and Electoral Areas in the RDMW. The Commission has identified tourism as one of its key sectors as highlighted in their 2004 Regional Economic Development Strategy (see Section 3.1.2).

The RDMW also promotes tourism through its regional campsites that contain many of the regions key natural features like Mt Cain (ski hill) and Little Huson Cave. There are also 7 regional parks located within the RDMW including: Mount Cain Alpine Park, Quatse Park Campsite, Little Huson Cave Park, Kwaksistah Park, Bere Point Park, Link River Park and Broughton Strait Park. The RDMW has also been involved in tourism product development with creation of the Shepherd's Way Industrial Tourism Site near Telegraph Cove in 2006.

**Village of Port Alice** – is a small municipality located on the western side of the island that also relies heavily on the forestry industry and has no paid tourism or economic development staff. Their role in region tourism to date has been very limited. The Village also participates in

regional economic development through the RDMW Economic Development Commission.

## **2.2 Market Potential and Tourism Opportunities**

### **2.2.1 Fit with Global Trends**

Tourism is a worldwide industry and British Columbia is a small player. Due to worldwide competition, the dependence on personal disposable income, consumer confidence, and world events that are not within our control (such as war and disease outbreaks), and international tourism growth is volatile in the short term.

However, in the last two years tourism has begun to make a recovery in despite of the war in Iraq, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), and a weak U.S. economy. Tourism has proven to be resilient and as a result is expected to grow at a healthy rate over the long term.

For communities in BC, domestic visitors are likely to show less volatility and would be expected to make up the vast majority of visitors.

Other key general consumer and travel trends that are relevant to BC communities include:

- Going Green – increasing consumer and organizational awareness of carbon offset programs, energy conservation techniques and the use of environmentally friendly products
- Approved Destination Status for Canada in China
- U.S. Passport Requirements
- Gasoline Prices
- Travel Interest on the Rise
- Baby Boomers continue to be most influential traveller group
- Internet Usage Important in Travel Planning
- Lead Times for Travel Planning – travellers beginning to plan further ahead again in 2006
- The aging population indicates higher growth rates in tourism activities that are less physically demanding
- Automobile key mode of transportation for domestic trips
- International visitors, especially those from Europe and Asia, tend to stay longer and spend more
- Frequent travellers are higher income, higher education, older, and less likely to have children in their households
- Families with children tend to travel during school holidays
- Adults without children travel throughout the year
- Most trips made by Canadians are made in their province of residence

Canadian and American travellers present the largest potential volume of visitors to BC communities. The U.S. market is expected to continue to be an important international market but the number of visitors is not expected to grow in the short term, with challenges such as new passport requirements, border and security issues, and the lower spending power of the U.S.

dollar in Canada, currently at a 30 year high<sup>5</sup> (i.e. 92.8 cents US).

Leisure travel in Canada and the U.S. makes up a larger number of trips and are growing faster than business travel. Baby boomers continue to be the largest demographic segment, with Generation X the second largest segment with a higher growth rate. Having an Internet presence is important as the majority of American and Canadian travellers use the Internet for vacation planning and about half book online.

## 2.2.2 Niche Tourism

Visitors to a destination are increasingly seeking to be an active participant in the experience. They are looking to be emotionally involved, educated, challenged, entertained or surprised. Decisions to travel now owe less to the geographic location of the destination and its physical attributes, and more to the delivery of “experiences”<sup>6</sup>.

Understanding this fundamental change in the dynamics of much of today’s demand also helps to explain the rapid growth that has been taking place in a wide range of niche sectors. Whether it is culture and heritage tourism, ecotourism or culinary tourism, visitors are looking for that engaging experience that goes beyond traditional goods and services offered in the travel industry.

The wide arrays of niche tourism products that have emerged demonstrate this increasing demand for creative and compelling experiences. The growing interest in these various sectors has been furthered by internet technology which is enabling the tourism industry and destinations to provide differentiated product to specific market segments in ways that was never before possible.

### Adventure and Ecotourism

Interest in adventure and ecotourism related product continues to be strong in the market place, with an emphasis on soft adventure due to the aging population. The growing interest in experimental travel and sustainability illustrates the need for operators to offer experiences that give visitors an insight into local culture, peoples and the natural environment.

A database of BC nature-based tourism businesses indicated that there are approximately 2,250 businesses offering nature-based activities in the province of British Columbia.

In 2001, approximately 966,000 tourists spent a total of \$908.9 million dollars while at nature based tourism businesses in British Columbia<sup>7</sup>.

The following points provide a very brief summary of some of the data and research presented in the North Vancouver Island Situation Analysis Report, May 2007.

- Canada attracts 28% of all **American Sea Kayakers**, compared to only about 13% of general U.S. pleasure tourists.<sup>8</sup>
- 14 million American travellers participated in **whale watching** and other marine life this

---

<sup>5</sup> CBC News Article May 25, 2007

<sup>6</sup> This is often referred to as “experiential tourism”

<sup>7</sup> Economic Value of the Commercial Nature-based Tourism Industry in British Columbia, 2004 prepared by Pacific Analytics in cooperation with the Wildreness Tourism Association.

<sup>8</sup> Travel Activities and Motivations of U.S. Residents, January 2007 – Special Report on Sea Kayakers

accounts for 8.0% of the 176.4 million American travellers during this period.

- Data from the latest TAMS<sup>9</sup> Study for U.S. travellers indicates that 18.2 million American travellers participated in **hiking** during an overnight trip in 2004-2005.
- About 24,400 **scuba divers** were estimated to have used the services of British Columbia dive charter operators in 2003 and the recreational dive charter market was valued at \$2,700,000 gross revenues per year.<sup>10</sup>
- The Vancouver Island region was the strongest of the five BC tourism regions among **Sport Fishing** enthusiasts with 63% of respondents saying they had previously visited Vancouver Island and 52% planned a visit in 2006.<sup>11</sup>
- Fisheries Oceans Canada confirms that **fishing in Canada** is on the increase, with year-to-date 2006 purchases of resident licenses increasing by 11.6% in comparison to 2005. However, non-resident licenses have increased by a massive 65%.<sup>12</sup>

### Aboriginal Tourism

With the growth of cultural and heritage tourism, First Nations in Canada and particularly in British Columbia have become increasingly interested in the tourism industry, and its potential to assist in both economic development and with the preservation and revitalization of cultural traditions.

However, while there is indeed a growth in cultural and heritage tourism, Aboriginal tourism accounts for a comparatively low fraction of the overall tourism market. Statistics in 1995 showed that this sector accounted for \$270 million, which represented only 0.5% of the entire Canadian tourism industry<sup>13</sup>.

Clearly the growth rate of the sector has been slow, and while this may partly reflect problems associated with compiling data on Aboriginal tourism, it does indicate that Aboriginal tourism product is still largely under-developed and offers potential for growth and expansion.

The potential for growth in this sector in BC is strong. The completion of the Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Blueprint Strategy in 2005 was a significant step forward, though the challenge of implementation remains.

The strategy forecast growth of 10% per year for the sector if the plan is implemented. It is projected that the Aboriginal tourism sector in BC will generate approximately \$50 million in tourism expenditures by 2010, up from approximately \$30 million today. The following bullets demonstrate the value that the Aboriginal tourism sector has within the BC industry, particularly in its ability to appeal to specific geographic markets (i.e. the European visitor).

- Unlike general visitor origin trends in which about half of visitors in BC are BC residents, the largest single group of visitors to Aboriginal tourism sites (ATS) in BC, were from Overseas, at 29%.
- Almost half (47%) of those visiting Aboriginal sites were not at all familiar with BC Aboriginal

---

<sup>9</sup> Travel Activities and Motivations of U.S. Residents, January 2007

<sup>10</sup> A Report in 2004 by the Dive Industry Association of British Columbia in partnership with Tourism British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, the Underwater Council of British Columbia and Scuba Schools International Canada

<sup>11</sup> BC Sports Fishing Marketing Alliance - Consumer shows Survey January & March 2006 (Tourism Vancouver Island Research Newsletter August 2006)

<sup>12</sup> Tourism Vancouver Island Industry Research Newsletter August 2006

<sup>13</sup> Aboriginal Tourism Canada, 2003, *Growing Canada's Aboriginal Tourism*, Aboriginal Tourism Canada Strategic Plan 2003 – 2010



tourism opportunities in BC. With visitors surveyed at Visitor Centres, this unfamiliarity was even more pronounced (66%).<sup>14</sup>

## **2.2.3 Provincial and Regional Planning Context**

### ***Tourism in BC***

Total tourism to BC experienced steady growth until 2000, with a decline in 2001 due to the September 11, 2001 events. While a rebound occurred in 2002, further setbacks were experienced in 2003 due to the war in Iraq, SARS, and the forest fires in BC. Tourism grew again in 2004 and 2005, achieving record visits in 2005.

2006 year to date customs entries from Statistics Canada indicate a 1.5% drop in international overnight visits to the province compared to 2005, however Canada overall was down by 3.2%.<sup>15</sup>

The largest market remains BC residents that make up almost half of all visits to BC. The Rest of Canada and the U.S. markets are both around 21% to 22% of total visits. Asia Pacific makes up less than 4% and Europe makes up less than 3%.

The Provincial government has set a target of doubling tourism revenues by 2015. This is a very aggressive forecast that is not without risk as all market conditions need to be positive to achieve it. The average annual increase in tourism revenues from 1995 to 2005 was only 1.9%, while the current forecast for tourism revenue for 2007/08 is 4.5%:

- 3.7% for 2006/07
- 4.5% for 2007/08
- 4.8% for 2008/09.<sup>16</sup>

While these growth rates represent a significant increase from recent years, the industry requires revenue growth in excess of 7.0% per annum over the next 8 years to deliver on the Premier's pledge of doubling tourism revenues (\$18 billion) by 2015.

### ***North Vancouver Island Tourism Planning***

No current tourism plan or strategy exists at the regional level for the North Vancouver Island, however there have been a number of studies conducted in the past that have assisted in this process of developing a regional tourism plan, such as the 1997 Northern Vancouver Island Forest Recreation and Tourism Opportunities Study and the more recent 2004 Economic Development Strategy for the Regional District of Mount Waddington that identifies tourism as a key economic sector (see below).

### **A Regional Economic Development Strategy, March 2004**

The purpose of the strategy is to develop a set of priorities and implementation actions that will be the focus for the RDMW over the next 3-5 years. Tourism is one of thirteen economic development sectors and one that is identified as short term strategic (1 year) in the implementation schedule.

The tourism objective of the strategy is: to increase North Vancouver Island visitor numbers,

---

<sup>14</sup> Blueprint Strategy: Consumer Intercept Survey, Final Report, January 2004

<sup>15</sup> Tourism BC Backgrounder (Customs Entries to BC) #73 December 2006

<sup>16</sup> 2006/07 to 2008/09 Service Plan, Tourism British Columbia, January 2006.

expand “shoulder season” opportunities, and expand the number of tourism related businesses and employment.

Under key strategies the following were identified:

1. an implementation strategy for the previous tourism studies and reports that includes roles and responsibilities for tourism promotion and development, funding methods, and a product opportunity review
2. use results of the Coastal Planning processes to evaluate applications for land tenures
3. support the North Vancouver Island Trails Society
4. develop a strategy to attract investors, businesses and early retirees to the North Vancouver Island

Actions included:

1. applying for grants to help implement tourism initiatives identified
2. providing financial, advocacy and administrative support to the regional tourism organization
3. review of crown tenure application process
4. providing financial, advocacy and administrative support to the North Vancouver Island Trails Society

The RDMW is currently finalizing funding to enable a review and update of the 2004 Regional Economic Development Strategy.

### ***Consistency with Official Community Plans***

The Official Community Plans in the North Vancouver Island communities all acknowledge tourism to some extent as a key economic driver and more importantly one that has strong potential to grow and support the region in the future. The challenge is demonstrating this value to municipalities and residents, when other industries like forestry have more tangible and direct benefits and have been the key economic driver in the region for many decades.

Other key documents and initiatives<sup>17</sup> were also reviewed in developing the Tourism Plan and include the following:

- AtBC Aboriginal Blue Print Strategy 2005
- The Alert Bay Accord
- Wi’la’mola Project – “we are all travelling together”
- Tourism Port Hardy Marketing Strategy & Plan 2005-2006
- The District of Port Hardy Strategic Plan 2002-2007

---

<sup>17</sup> The Situation Analysis Report May 2007 contains more details and brief summarizes of these documents and initiatives.

### 3. Issues and Challenges

---

The topics presented in this section are a combination of the Situation Analysis Report (May 2007) prepared by the facilitator, meetings with stakeholders and subsequent observations made throughout the process. The key issues and challenges will be addressed where possible by the strategies presented in this tourism plan. However in some instances they relate to public and private sector initiatives that require a more coordinated approach that would include tourism as a component of a larger initiative.

**Fixed Roof Accommodation** - upgrading of existing fixed roof accommodation within the region is a significant issue. Many properties have not seen the level of investment needed over the last 10 years to meet current consumer expectations. This in part can be attributed to a reliance on the BC Ferries traffic that has provided a steady stream of regular customers.

Although, Port Hardy has a significant room stock (approx 390 rooms), the actual number of beds that meet current tour operator standards or that could cater to the increasing mid to high end FIT market is considerably smaller. There is a lack of quality 3.5+ star accommodations that will enable the region to accommodate new visitors who are genuinely interested in the natural and cultural activities the North Vancouver Island has to offer.

**Changing the Visitor Dynamic** - a more significant issue is the dilemma facing the industry to increase the visitor's length of stay. During the summer season the fixed roof properties in Port Hardy and Port McNeill are at capacity every second night with BC Ferries northern routes traffic.

This usage pattern presents an issue for attracting other visitors during the summer that may wish to stay longer but have limited accommodation options. The opportunity to shift from a reliance on high volume one-night stays to a potentially more valuable longer stay and higher yield client exists<sup>18</sup>, but it will take a concerted effort to change the current use pattern. Longer visitor stays will support other operators, services and infrastructure in the region and ultimately assist accommodation properties with higher annual occupancy rates and attracting business in the shoulder seasons.

**Access and Infrastructure** – the region's fairly remote location is a challenge for attracting shorter getaway type vacations, which emphasises the need to develop packages and products that motivate visitors to come and stay longer.

**Organizational Structure** - the large geographic area and the number of communities involved in this regional tourism plan creates a challenge for implementation and the creation of a structure that will be sustainable, inclusive and effective in promoting the region over the long term.

Developing a structure and funding model for North Vancouver Island has been a core focus of this process and Tourism Vancouver Island has been instrumental in developing the initial concept presented in Section 5.1.

---

<sup>18</sup> The Go North Island campaign demonstrated this to an extent. With BC Ferries sailings down 50% in summer 2006 the room revenue in North Vancouver Island increased, largely due to the marketing initiatives of the Go North Island campaign that brought new regional BC visitors to the area.

**Low Awareness in the Marketplace** – the regional market awareness and perceptions study<sup>19</sup> highlighted the relatively low awareness of North Vancouver Island among regional tourism markets (i.e. GVRD, Alberta and Washington State). Only 8% of people interviewed (that had already indicated they were familiar with Vancouver Island) in the GVRD were at least “somewhat familiar” with Port Hardy, Alert Bay and Port McNeill. In Washington the figure was 5.3% in the west of the state and 2.5% in the east, however in Alberta the percentage was 0%.

The good news from this research project was the high response rates from these regional markets when asked if they would consider a trip to North Vancouver Island: GVRD 100%, Washington West 19% and Washington East 35%.

---

<sup>19</sup> Tourism BC/Roger Barnes Marketing 2006 Regional Market Studies: British Columbia, Alberta & Washington

## 4. Tourism Vision and Key Experiences

---

### 4.1 Tourism Vision

A key component in developing this Tourism Plan was the visioning exercise conducted with the North Vancouver Island tourism stakeholders on January 11, 2007. The vision has helped to establish a direction and focus for the process and the subsequent development of this plan. The tourism stakeholders participated in a visioning exercise for the region in which they considered what they wanted tourism to look like in North Vancouver Island in five years time. A summary table of the visioning workshop is contained in the appendix.

The following vision statement for North Vancouver Island was developed from the visioning elements identified by the tourism stakeholders. The vision seeks to reflect the character of the region, its cultural and natural features and the opportunity that tourism presents for ongoing economic activity rather than being solely focused on the organizational goals of the lead tourism agency.

#### ***Tourism Vision:***

*“To create an accessible and attractive year round destination, with world class tourism experiences highlighting the regions natural and cultural resources through quality tourism products and services.*

*Tourism will be supported by the local municipalities, industry operators, First Nations and managed through a sustainable structure that collectively promotes the North Vancouver Island region for the benefit of all.”*

Several guiding principles are also recommended based on the results of the situation analysis and planning workshops to guide how tourism is developed and managed to achieve North Vancouver Island’s vision.

### 4.2 Core Guiding Principals

The following guiding principles have been integral to the process and are consistent with the goals outlined in the plan.

1. The community will pursue sustainable tourism that provides for meaningful destination experiences while respecting the city’s natural heritage, cultural resources and social character; improving the **quality of life** enjoyed by citizens; and, enhancing the economic health of the community.
2. The tourism plan will be **yield driven** and emphasize the need to concentrate on increasing visitor spending, as opposed to focusing solely on increasing visitor numbers.
3. The destination marketing and management function of Tourism within North Vancouver Island will be driven by a **business perspective** that treats tourism as a major business within the city. Adopting a business model also includes ensuring an **inclusive approach** to tourism planning with community and industry partners; destination marketing in collaboration with industry to "build the business"; and, facilitation of product development to ensure a competitive tourism product.

4. The destination must be responsive to visitor needs and ensure that the plan is **consumer focused**. The tourism industry needs to understand the visitor first, develop tourism experiences to meet those needs, and then market the appropriate tourism experience to the appropriate type of visitor.
5. Local government will **foster a positive environment** for the tourism sector and recognize the significant of tourism to the local economy.

### 4.3 Defining the Key Experiences

As part of the visioning session on January 11, 2007 the group began to identify key experiences, products and themes that will shape the current and future development of tourism in the Northern Vancouver Island. The key product sectors identified were:

- Cultural Tourism
- Adventure Tourism
- Nature-based tourism

Core to the tourism experience and message for North Vancouver Island is its **natural environment and culture** these components will be integral to the development of the industry and its promotional activities.

Product development that focuses on these key experiences will be an important part of this tourism plan, but perhaps more importantly the region needs to address organizational structure and destination management. These two attributes will ensure that the framework is in place to implement the tourism plan and that the experience is managed and maintained to marketplace expectations.

## 5. Development and Marketing Strategies

---

The five key program areas for managing, developing and promoting tourism in North Vancouver Island include: organizational structure, regional tourism funding, tourism management, product development and marketing.

This section highlights specific strategic initiatives under each of the five program areas and identifies the objectives, a rationale and background for each. The action steps for physically implementing the strategic directions are contained in the detailed action plan in the appendix.

### 5.1 Organizational Structure

**Objective:**

- To create a regional and representative tourism structure that will lead to improved communication and more effective promotion and management of the tourism industry in the North Vancouver Island.
- To establish a sustainable funding structure for regional tourism that includes long term contributions and commitment from all key partners both private and public.

**Rationale:**

North Vancouver Island currently does not undertake any marketing or tourism development initiatives at the regional level<sup>20</sup>. The “go north island” campaign is one exception as it promoted the region as a whole however it was funded through a one-off grant from the province following the sinking of the Queen of the North in 2006. The communities of Port Hardy, Alert Bay and Port McNeill invest in limited marketing and support visitor services, however no regionally coordinated tourism marketing and development exists.

Given the geographical distribution of tourism product and the number of communities offering tourism related services and experiences a regional approach is logical. Also the consumer does not acknowledge municipal boundaries or generally go to the region just to experience one product or community.

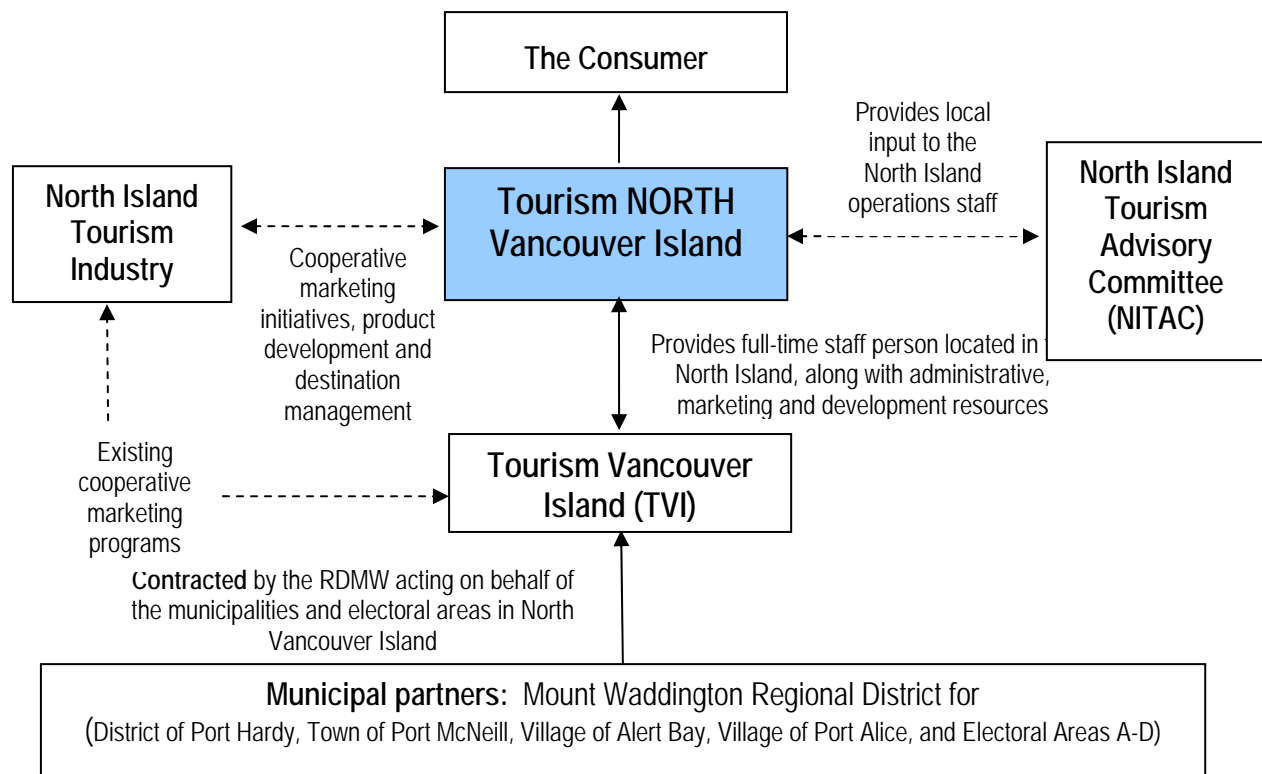
Furthermore, by amalgamating resources and funding at the region level the North Vancouver Island will be able to accomplish significantly more through enhanced coordination for product development and packaging and an increased marketing budget for promoting the region.

The following diagram provides an overview of the recommended structure for managing and promoting tourism in North Vancouver Island.

---

<sup>20</sup> The Vancouver Island North Visitors Association after some initial success ceased operations in 2005.

## NORTH Vancouver Island - Tourism Organizational Structure



### 5.1.1 Tourism Vancouver Island

The key component of the proposed structure for tourism in North Vancouver Island is the role of the regional destination marketing organization Tourism Vancouver Island (TVI). TVI fully supports the concept of sub-regional tourism associations on Vancouver Island as a key component of effectively communicating with and representing the island's tourism industry. However, the ongoing success and sustainable funding of sub-region tourism organizations has always been a challenge for regions and participating communities.

This proposed regional organizational structure for North Vancouver Island is a unique and innovative approach that would see TVI contracted by the RDMW as the regional representative to coordinate and implement tourism management, development and marketing for North Vancouver Island. This would include a staff member physically located in the region and dedicated to promoting and working with the local industry to develop and promote tourism in the North.

Although the North Vancouver Island Tourism Coordinator would remain an employee of and report directly to the Industry Services Manager at Tourism Vancouver Island, optically the office would be branded "Tourism North Vancouver Island".

This structure would provide the dedicated full time paid staff necessary to implement this Regional Tourism Plan and coordinate regional marketing initiatives, while also providing the experience and resources of TVI to ensure its ongoing success.



### Specific Responsibilities of Tourism Vancouver Island:

1. Supervise and manage the Tourism North Vancouver Island Coordinator position
2. Ensure the tourism coordinator receives the appropriate training and resources to effectively implement the tourism plan and the subsequent marketing tactics.
3. Support local involvement in the tourism planning process and the development of annual marketing tactics
4. Ensure the Tourism North Vancouver Island office and staff maintains its identity and a separate budget
5. Oversee the development of the annual product development and marketing plans and an annual budget by the Tourism coordinator
6. Review the expenditure of funds within budget guidelines and according to the directions established by the annual work-plan and budget.
7. Ensure that performance related to the achievement of the tourism plan vision, goals and objectives of the tourism plan are presented in a strong and positive manner to all stakeholders and the community alike.
8. Assist the coordinator in building awareness of the value of tourism in the region and communities.

### 5.1.2 North Island Tourism Advisory Committee (NITAC)

A key component of the proposed tourism structure is the development of a mechanism for obtaining local input and direction for Tourism North Vancouver Island (TNVI). This would be achieved by establishing a representative group of local tourism industry stakeholders and funding partners to advise the contractor Tourism Vancouver Island. The initial structure of the local advisory committee would be as follows:

Organization/tourism sector	Positions
1. Regional District of Mount Waddington	1
2. District of Port Hardy	1
3. Town of Port McNeill	1
4. Tourism Port Hardy	1
5. Accommodations ( <i>at least 1 from Port Hardy</i> )	3
6. First Nations	1
7. Chamber of Commerce ( <i>alternating position</i> )	1
8. Adventure & Ecotourism	1
9. Attractions	1
10. At Large – Strategic Appointment*	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>

\* This position could be filled as needed and should reflect the current strategic direction of the North Vancouver Island tourism industry, see section below.

The Committee would also include ad hoc non-voting representation from the TVI North Island board members to ensure further continuity between TVI and Tourism North Vancouver Island.

### **Rationale**

- A considerable amount of consultation was undertaken with the various stakeholders and the Tourism Working Group to develop the committee structure presented above.
- The structure is a reflection of the need to represent multiple interests, a public/private balance and the financial contributions of the various parties. It presents a starting point for developing a regional tourism industry and structure that could change over time as the industry matures.
- All parties need to embrace the ultimate goal of working together for the benefit of the entire North Vancouver Island tourism industry and economy.

### **Committee Composition**

The following are other key considerations in the development of the Tourism Advisory Committee structure:

1. The two largest municipalities with the most developed tourism infrastructure (i.e. Port Hardy and Port McNeill) would both be represented along with the Region District of Mount Waddington. The RDMW seat will represent the electoral areas and the municipalities not directly represented on the board (i.e. Port Alice and Alert Bay)
2. Based on recent trends<sup>21</sup> it is recommended that the municipal positions on the committee be filled by municipal staff, with a councillor/mayor appointed as an alternate.
3. This model is primarily private sector and hotel tax driven and as such the reliance on and size of the municipal contributions have been minimized
4. Not every group can be directly represented on the committee if the size is to remain manageable. However, those stakeholders on the committee have an obligation to disseminate information and represent their sectors or communities at the table.
5. The RDMW voting structure, based on assessed value, was examined as a potential model for this committee. However, the a mix of funding partners and unknown contribution amounts from the private sector make it difficult to fully emulate a municipal voting structure like that of the RDMW board.
6. The goal for the operation of this committee should be consensus based decision making. This builds a more cohesive regional industry and moves away from the number of seats any one community may have.
7. Tourism Port Hardy as a major contributor through the 2% hotel tax collection will have 1 seat on the board as well as representation through the accommodation sector seats.
8. The Committee should be kept to a manageable (approximately 12 members) size, while also ensuring that the key tourism sectors and funding partners are represented.

---

<sup>21</sup> Many of the new tourism committees and boards within BC are moving towards specifying municipal staff positions. Staff are full-time paid employees of the municipality that are directly involved with the hands on application of tourism related initiatives, with Councils guidance. Mayor and councillor are still able to provide direction and input through their existing processes.

### *At Large – Strategic Appointment*

The strategic appointment is offered as an option and could be used in numerous ways depending on the focus for any given year. Future at large strategic appointments could include:

- a. BC Ferries;
- b. Forestry Industry;
- c. BC Parks; or
- d. Neighbouring tourism associations in Campbell River, Prince Rupert, Bella Coola, etc.

### **Specific Responsibilities of the NITAC:**

1. Champion the Regional Tourism Plan and evaluate its ongoing implementation;
2. Provide support and direction to Tourism Vancouver Island in the implementation of the Regional Tourism Plan and in the development of the annual work plans and budgets;
3. Provide advice on the annual work plan that prioritizes TNVI's initiatives, programs, services, and resource allocations in accordance with the Regional Tourism Plan and available funds;
4. Maintain effective ongoing communication and consultation with other community stakeholders;
5. Assist the Tourism Coordinator in representing Tourism North Vancouver Island (TNVI) at various forums, networks and partnerships as and where relevant;

### **Establishing the Inaugural NITAC**

The initial positions on the committee would be terminated by the *Community Tourism Foundations* Tourism Working Group. This group has been actively engaged in the development of this tourism plan and represents a broad cross section of the region and tourism industry. The length of the initial appointments would be as specified below.

### **NITAC Terms**

Length of term will be staggered for the initial committee members representing tourism sectors (i.e. accommodations, adventure/ecotourism and attractions) and strategic interests. Three of these six committee members would stand for a one year period and three would stand for a two year period. This will ensure ongoing continuity on the Committee.

A maximum period of service of two consecutive terms in office will apply to elected or appointed committee members, with the exception of the at large strategic appointment which will be for a one year term. Following this maximum period, Committee members would stand down for at least one term (i.e. two years).

Following the initial term, it is anticipated that there will be elections for the accommodation, tourism sectors and at large positions. Voting rights would be restricted to North Vancouver Island tourism stakeholders that participate in a Tourism North Vancouver Island partnership program (i.e. make a financial contribution to a marketing or other program) during the current year. This is a similar methodology to that used by TVI to elect their board members.

The number of representatives on the NITAC from any one community in any given year should not exceed five (5).

### **Meeting Schedule and Meetings**

NITAC will meet a minimum of four (4) times annually. Additional meetings could be scheduled as necessary. The quorum of the Committee shall consist of seven (7) committee members present in person. Questions or issues arising at any meetings of the Committee shall be decided by a majority of votes of those present.

### **5.1.3 Regional District of Mount Waddington**

The Regional District of Mount Waddington under the proposed structure for regional tourism would act as a conduit for implementing the funding model for regional tourism in North Vancouver Island and has the regional mandate for contracting the services of TVI on behalf of the electoral areas and municipalities. The RDMW will also be the proponent for the funding applications to ICET and CST to obtain the necessary startup funding for the project.

The existing RDMW Economic Development function and contribution model is based on assessed property value in the region. The RDMW economic development budget of approximately \$80,000 pa is funded through a contribution of approximately \$0.80 per \$1,000 of assessed property. Currently, only a very small percentage of this budget is devoted to tourism initiatives in the region. An assessed property value or population model would also be used to determine the annual contribution amounts from each of the participating municipalities in the region.

As part of the proposed contract between the RDMW and TVI there would be a requirement to submit annual marketing and business plan to the RDMW board for approval.

### **5.1.4 Tourism North Vancouver Island Coordinator**

Establishing a dedicated resource for coordinating and implementing the Regional Tourism Plan and the annual marketing tactics is critical to the North Vancouver Island tourism industry's success.

This structure proposes “the contractor” Tourism Vancouver Island provide a full time tourism coordinator that would remain an employee of TVI and report directly to the Industry Services Manager in the TVI Nanaimo head office. The tourism coordinator will have a number of roles as specified below that will be accomplished by working closely with the local tourism stakeholders and NITAC to develop and promote tourism in the North Vancouver Island.

#### **The Role of the Tourism North Vancouver Island Coordinator:**

1. Coordinates the operations of Tourism North Vancouver Island on a day-to-day basis in accordance with the Regional Tourism Plan.
2. Oversees the implementation of the Regional Tourism Plan and undertakes the tactical execution of the marketing plan.
3. Works with local tourism industry to develop and partner promotional campaigns for the region (i.e. obtains private sector buy-in to regional marketing programs).

4. Facilitates product development and destination management through working with appropriate regional partners.
5. Maintains open communication with North Island Tourism Advisory Committee and attends all NITAC meetings.
6. Obtains input from NITAC when developing annual plans and an annual budget.
7. Prepares annual product development, tourism management and marketing plans and an annual budget with Tourism Vancouver Island Industry Services Manager.
8. Prudently manages the expenditure of funds within budget guidelines and according to the directions established by the annual work-plan and budget.
9. Presents quarterly monitoring of budgetary performance to Tourism Vancouver Island Industry Services Manager.
10. Supports operations and deliberations of NITAC by providing the Committee with the information it needs to make informed recommendations.
11. Acts as the point of contact for internal and external tourism stakeholders.
12. Ensures that performance related to the achievement of the tourism plan vision, goals and objectives of the tourism plan are presented in a strong and positive manner to all stakeholders and the community alike.
13. Builds awareness of the value of tourism in the region and communities.
14. Facilitates communication between stakeholders.

### **Tourism North Vancouver Island Office**

The physical location of the new Tourism North Vancouver Island Coordinator is yet to be determined. However, to make this process and the selection of the office location as fair and transparent as possible a request of proposal (RFP) for the office will likely be issued by TVI to the municipalities in North Vancouver Island. The final office location would be made based on a set of established criteria and requirements contained within the RFP.

## **5.1.5 North Vancouver Island Visitor Centres and Chambers of Commerce**

### **Visitor Centres**

The region has three well established visitor centres located in Port Hardy, Alert Bay and Port McNeill. The Village of Alert Bay operates their visitor centre, while the other two centres are operated by the local chambers of commerce with operational grants from their respective municipalities. All three centres are part of Tourism BC's visitor network and participate in SuperHost training and other Tourism BC programs.

This tourism plan addresses the broader organizational structure for the region and the visitor centres will continue to play an important role in the overall tourism experience. All three of the centres are well managed and provide a high level of customer service to visitors, which is critical to word of mouth marketing.

The effective implementation of this tourism plan will require the visitor centres and chamber's of commerce to play a greater role in communicating with tourism industry stakeholders and

assisting the North Vancouver Island tourism coordinator with the implementation of the regional plan and management of tourism, particularly in the areas related to training and education.

### **Chambers of Commerce**

The Port Hardy and Port McNeill chambers of commerce will continue to play a key role in tourism at the local level through the operation of the visitor centres, coordinating with the municipality for community tourism marketing and providing training and development opportunities for the tourism industry. They will also play a critical role in communicating and disseminating information to the tourism industry.

### **5.1.6 First Nations**

The Namgis First Nation has been directly involved in this process from the outset. Steps should also be taken to see how other First Nations communities in the region could more formally participate in the process and in the organizational structure and contribution model.

A structure and system similar to that used by the Federal Government for contributions to community services (e.g. libraries) on behalf of a local First Nations population could also be considered for tourism in the region in the future.

The RDMW contains the following First Nation communities:

- Kwakiutl (Fort Rupert)
- Quatsino First Nations
- Tlatlasikwala (Hope Island)
- Namgis
- Gwa'Sala 'Nakwaxda'xw (Tsulquate)
- Tsawataineuk (Kingcome)
- Gwawaenuk
- Kwicksutaineuk/Ah-Kwa-mish
- Mamallilikulla-Qwe'Qwa'Sot'Em
- Tlowitsis

### **AtBC Blueprint Strategy**

Furthermore, AtBC as part of their Blueprint Strategy is looking to provide funding (likely in the form of training programs) to First Nations communities for tourism based on population statistics that will be administrated in partnership with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and coordinated through local community champions. Identifying and leveraging these investments with other tourism funding opportunities presented in this regional tourism plan will benefit the entire North Vancouver Island community and create a more integrated and inclusive tourism industry.

## 5.2 Funding Regional Tourism

Sustainable funding is key to establishing and maintaining the recommended organizational structure and developing tourism in a strategic manner within North Vancouver Island. A substantial amount of work is required to secure the proposed funding model outlined in this plan. Ongoing commitment and buy-in from the local tourism industry and municipalities is critical to the proposed structure.

The approach to funding will be phased with the initial focus on completing successful applications to the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) and Coastal Sustainability Trust (CST) to obtain resources/funding to get the structure up and running and the long term funding agreements in place.

To appropriately fund a tourism function in North Vancouver Island through the proposed structure an annual investment of approximately \$225,000 to \$250,000 is required. By way of comparison the successful Go North Island campaign implemented in 2006 had a marketing budget of \$350,000<sup>22</sup>.

The funding for the regional tourism plan long term will come from three key sources, but it will also be supplemented initially by Tourism BC matching marketing funds:

Funding Source	Approx % of Overall Budget 2011
1. Private sector ( <i>tourism businesses</i> )	29%
2. Visitors ( <i>2% additional hotel room tax</i> )	48%
3. Local municipalities.	18%
4. Tourism BC Marketing Program	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

The vast majority of tourism funding will be provided through private sector investment and a proposed regional 2% additional hotel room tax initiative. The municipal contribution while very important will constitute approximately 18% of the overall regional tourism budget by 2011.

### **Objectives:**

The overall objective is to create a sustainable long term funding source for managing and promoting North Vancouver Island as a tourism destination. Other more specific objectives include:

- To obtain start up and implementation funding through the ICET and CST programs
- To obtain ongoing local tourism industry support and financial buy in to the regional tourism plan and subsequent marketing initiatives

---

<sup>22</sup> The Go North Island campaign was funded by a one off provincial government grant of \$350,000, designed to provide assistance to the tourism industry following the sinking of the Queen of the North in early 2006.

- To implement a 2% additional hotel room tax for the region through the Mount Waddington Regional District (Electoral Areas), Town of Port McNeill, Village of Port Alice and Village of Alert Bay.
- To apply the majority of the existing and proposed 2% additional hotel room tax to the regional tourism function
- To fully leverage Tourism BC *Community Tourism Foundations* Marketing funding
- To obtain longer term commitment and funding from the municipalities to support the regional tourism structure
- To apply a portion of the Phase 2 UBCM funding to the implementation of the Regional Tourism Plan

***Rational:***

Effective implementation of the Regional Tourism Plan requires ongoing coordination by a paid full time person dedicated to tourism with a regional mandate. To support a full time salaried position, ongoing management of the tourism industry, and consistent promotion of the region sustainable long term funding sources are required specifically for tourism.

The majority of the funding for the regional tourism model will come from private sector and the visitor in the form of the 2% hotel tax, with a smaller but very important contribution from the municipalities within the region.

Many of the communities already have a tourism budget and promote their products and services to a limited extent. Focusing all or some of this existing investment into a regional tourism model to promote the entire North Vancouver Island would provide the opportunity to undertake more significant marketing and development initiatives that would benefit all of the communities in the North.

## **5.2.1 Regional Tourism Funding Requirements**

This sub section provides an outline of the proposed funding requirements to implement the recommended strategies contained within this plan (i.e. all of the destination management, product development, organizational and marketing initiatives).

To appropriately fund a tourism function in North Vancouver Island through the proposed structure an annual investment of approximately \$225,000 to \$250,000 is required.

### **Start up**

The remainder of 2008 will be devoted to organizing the structure, establish the funding sources for Tourism North Vancouver Island and undertake business planning. The initial funding to cover start-up costs until the other funding sources (i.e. a regional 2% AHRT) are established is anticipated to come from the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) and Coastal Sustainability Trust (CST), see Section 5.2.2.

The focus for the remainder of 2008 will be on:

- Retaining a consultant to facilitate brand development
- Coordinate the creation of a regional 2% hotel tax and begin generating private sector interest and commitment for 2009
- Obtaining agreement in principal from the four municipal councils for dedicated tourism



funding through the RDMW Economic Development function.

The budget for 2008 allows for the services of a consultant/contractor and TVI to assist with implementation tasks. The first year of operations for the new Tourism North Vancouver Island organization would be 2009.

### **Tourism Vancouver Island – Management Fee**

As mentioned in Section 5.1 Tourism Vancouver Island (TVI) will be instrumental to the operation of the new Tourism North Vancouver Island organization. The TVI management fee would cover a full time North Vancouver Island Tourism Coordinator and the administrative costs associated with supporting this position.

Cooperative marketing programs through Regional DMO's in BC generally include an administration fee of approximately 20% of the total project revenue. This model differs somewhat as TVI would be supplying a staff person dedicated to coordinating, promoting and developing tourism in the North Vancouver Island and directly supporting this position with the resources and experience from its head office in Nanaimo. The funding requirement to provide the full time dedicated staff person located in North Vancouver Island and additional support would be approximately 28% of annual revenues or \$65,000pa.

---

### **Estimated Funding Requirements for Tourism North Vancouver Island**

---

Expenses	2008*	2009	2010	2011
TVI Management Fees (includes Coordinator)	45,000	67,000	72,000	65,000
Operating Expenses**	20,000	24,000	25,000	26,000
Consulting Services***	65,000			
Product Development		15,000	17,000	5,000
Destination Management		15,000	17,000	5,000
Marketing		115,000	128,000	106,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>130,000</b>	<b>236,000</b>	<b>259,000</b>	<b>207,000</b>

\* 2008 is the startup year to prepare the structure and funding sources to start operations in 2009.

\*\* Operating expenses includes items such office rent, utilities, phone, web-hosting and office equipment. Some of these maybe provided by the successful host community (i.e. the community where the office is located) as in-kind services.

\*\*\* Consulting Services include a full-time consultant(s) to assist with implementing and obtaining support for the funding structure and the brand development project.

### **5.2.2 Phase 1: ICET and CST Funding Applications**

Start-up funding for the implementation of the Regional Tourism Plan is key, as the proposed structure and funding model will require time to establish. A joint application to both the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) and Coastal Sustainability Trust (CST) for funding during the first three years of the plan will enable TVI and North Vancouver Island stakeholder's time to generate awareness and support for the tourism plan and obtain the necessary commitment from the accommodation industry, local business and local government.

The application process was initiated in 2007 with the submission of phase 1 applications by the RDMW with support from Community Futures Mount Waddington and the Tourism BC *Community Tourism Foundations*® facilitator.

### 5.2.3 Phase 2: Private Sector & Visitor Funding

#### *Private Sector*

The new regional structure provides an opportunity for tourism businesses to invest in a more coordinated and strategic manner to promote the entire North Vancouver Island region. This will ultimately lead to more visitors and longer stays in the communities. The Tourism North Vancouver Island coordinator will be responsible for generating private sector investment in the programs developed by TNVI. The level of investment is anticipated to double from around \$30,000 in 2009 to \$60,000 by 2011. TVI has an excellent track record when it comes to generating private sector buy-in to tourism programs<sup>23</sup>.

#### *Visitor Funding (2% Hotel Tax)*

Visitor funding would be in the form of an additional 2% hotel room tax (AHRT). Implementing this across the entire region would be critical to the overall success of this plan and to create a level playing field for communities and industry to participate. An AHRT represents the only significant long term non-government funding source available to communities to fund tourism management and promotion. It is important to note that a 2% AHRT is not intended to replace existing tourism funding, but to supplement it.

This initiative would be championed by a consultant with support from the Economic Development Officer for the Regional District, Tourism Vancouver Island and the District of Port Hardy, given their experiencing in implementing the tax in the district (established June 1, 2006).

A total of 31 municipalities in BC as at February 1, 2007 have implemented an AHRT. There is no reason to believe that implementing an AHRT within the Mount Waddington Regional District would place properties at a competitive disadvantage given the wide spread application of the AHRT throughout Vancouver Island (i.e. Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot, Regional District of Nanaimo, District of Oak Bay, Parksville and Qualicum Beach, District of Saanich and City of Victoria).

Implementation of an AHRT requires 51% of the commercial fixed roof accommodation properties (with 4 units or more) and 51% of the total room base to agree to the proposal. Once the support from the local industry has been secured the municipality drafts a bylaw to establish the tax and then forwards the proposal, bylaw and a Tourism Plan to the provincial government for approval.

#### *Revenue Estimates*

An estimate of the total annual revenue from a regional AHRT using purely anecdotal information would be approximately **\$120,000** based on **34 properties** with a total of **633 rooms**. A significant portion of this funding would need to be directed towards go towards the

---

<sup>23</sup> TVI is currently responsible for generating over \$1.5 million in private sector investment in its tourism program initiatives.

regional model. The regional percentage as been estimated to start at around 50% in 2009 and increase to 80% by 2011, once the regional structure has had an opportunity to prove itself. The reminder would be used within the specific communities to promote their towns at the local level.

The following table provides an initial estimate of the potential revenue that could be generated through a regional 2% hotel tax.

---

**2007 North Vancouver Island Fixed Roof Commercial Accommodation – 4 units or more**

---

Properties	# Properties	# Units	2% Revenue Estimate
District of Port Hardy	15	351	\$62,000
Town of Port McNeill	8	173	\$34,000
Village of Alert Bay	4	23	\$5,000
Town of Port Alice	1	23	\$5,000
Mount Waddington Regional District	6	63	\$14,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>

*Source: North Vancouver Island Tourism Inventory 2007, prepared by Port Hardy and District Chamber of Commerce. Note: More research is required to confirm the figures and calculations used in this estimate.*

## 5.2.4 Phase 2: Public Sector Funding

### Municipal Funding through RDMW

Municipal funding and participation is key to the success of the regional tourism structure. Tourism is a key economic sector for the communities in North Vancouver Island and as a result municipal investment and support for the tourism industry is critical.

It is important to note that municipal funding is only one component of the funding formula and that by 2011 would only equate to only 18% of the total funding budget, with the majority coming from the hotel tax and private sector investment.

The proposed local government funding contribution would be modeled on the current economic development function funding at the RDMW. Namely, determining a contribution amount for each municipality and electoral area based on their property assessment value.

In order to generate a total annual contribution of around \$37,000 an assessment amount of \$0.37 per \$1,000 would be required or based on population an amount of approximately \$3.75 per resident. It is important to note that this is not necessarily new tourism funding, as the municipalities currently spend money on tourism initiatives outside of visitor centre operations that could be rationalized and perhaps better leveraged through a regional structure.

### UBCM Phase 2 Funding

The second round of UBCM funding was announced June 29, 2007 and “after consulting the members and reviewing a number of other considerations the Executive have ratified the

direction to replicate the Phase 1 Community Tourism Funding. The allocations and application process remain the same”<sup>24</sup>.

The actual funding amounts that municipalities in the North Vancouver Island will receive under phase 2 will almost identical to phase 1. This accounts for a combined region total of approximately \$120,000.

The recommendation for UBCM Phase 2 funding is that a portion be applied to the implementation of this Regional Tourism Plan. The phase 2 funding will be key in the short term for addressing product development and destination management (e.g. training and education) initiatives within the specific communities that have participated in developing this Tourism Plan.

This may include projects that municipalities or community stakeholders have already identified and joint projects like *Wings Over Canada* that partner resources between several communities. The exact allocation of the funds to projects within the plan should be determined once the criteria and budget are officially released.

### 5.2.5 Phase 2: Tourism BC Funding

As part of the Tourism BC *Community Tourism Foundations* program, communities once they have completed a tourism plan are eligible to access **up to \$50,000** over three years in matching (50/50) marketing dollars through Tourism BC.

The eligible activities and requirements will be prepared by TVI in consultation with the Tourism Advisory Committee in fall 2008.

### 5.2.6 Proposed Funding Summary

The table below highlights the potential funding sources for a regional tourism function in the North Vancouver Island and the implementation of this Tourism Plan. Some of the funding sources identified are new while others involve realigning existing tourism promotion and investment to support a regional initiative (i.e. communities that are currently investing in tourism can reallocate some or all that funding to the regional model).

---

#### Proposed & Existing Funding Sources for Tourism North Vancouver Island Region

---

Regional Funding Sources	2008	2009	2010	2011
CST Funding	53,750	46,250	37,500	
ICET Funding	45,000	55,000	37,500	
UBCM Phase 2 contribution – RDMW, DPH, VAB, TPMN, TPA	31,250	28,750		
Local Government Funding through RDMW Eco Dev			37,000	37,000

---

<sup>24</sup> UBCM Phasing 2 Community Tourism Funding Memo to Members June 29, 2007

<b>Regional Funding Sources</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Tourism BC <i>Community Tourism Foundations</i> Marketing		20,000	20,000	10,000
Tourism Industry – private sector partnerships		30,000	50,000	60,000
2% AHRT Port Hardy <i>existing</i>		31,000	43,000	56,000
2% AHRT Port McNeill <i>proposed</i>		15,000	20,000	26,000
2% AHRT RDMW <i>proposed</i>		10,000	14,000	18,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>130,000</b>	<b>236,000</b>	<b>259,000</b>	<b>207,000</b>

Notes:

- UBCM Phase 2 funding has been estimated at 50% of the total combined entitlement (e.g. \$120,000) spread over 2 years.
- The 2% Hotel Tax allocations are best guess estimates based on the current inventory. The revenue is increased by 5% pa and the percentage contribution to the regional function increased from 50% in 2009 to 80% by 2011.
- The RDMW 2% revenue estimate includes the 5 properties (with 4 rooms or more) located in Port Alice and Alert Bay
- The regional tourism contribution from municipalities would be calculated using the RDMW's economic development contribution model. This would likely not be all new monies as some of the existing tourism budget and initiatives at the local level could be redistributed to regional tourism marketing programs.. The figure of \$37,000 was calculated by using 2006 community population figures and multiplying these by a figure of \$3.75 per resident.

## 5.3 Management of Tourism

While not a new concept within the industry, tourism management is certainly an area that has been neglected or largely overlooked by communities and destinations. Many of the components of a tourism management strategy are undertaken in partnership with supporting organizations that provide the resources for communities to accomplish their overall tourism objectives.

The key focuses for North Vancouver Island with regard to the management of tourism are:

- building awareness of the value of tourism;
- addressing product quality issues; and
- continuing to provide training and educational opportunities to the industry.

The strategies and actions outlined in the tourism management section of this plan require significant partnering between the new Tourism North Vancouver Island coordinator and other organizations like the Chambers of Commerce as well as external partners like Tourism Vancouver Island, Tourism BC and Retail BC.

### 5.3.1 Tourism Awareness

**Key Objectives:**

- Raise the level of awareness of the value of tourism to the economy within the region's communities and municipalities
- Raise the awareness of tourism among local businesses
- Implement *Community Tourism Foundations* "Value of Tourism" model to generate baseline estimates of tourism's contribution to the region
- Campaign for a tourism industry column in the local newspapers

**Rationale:**

Tourism awareness programs are key to raising the profile of the industry and creating a stronger tourism economy in ways that do not compromise traditional quality of life enjoyed by residents. Part of this can be achieved by circulating the final tourism plan to organizations and tourism businesses in the region and outside to ensure everyone is aware of the opportunities the plan presents.

Developing an understanding of tourism and also demonstrating its value to a community or local economy is one of the first steps towards developing partnerships and support for tourism initiatives. The challenge in the past has been doing this without hard data or statistics to back up the claims.

The Value of Tourism Model provides a tool for calculating estimates of tourism's size and value that can be used to help educate private and public sector organizations.

**Background:**

**Community Tourism Foundations Value of Tourism Model** – this model was developed by the Tourism Planning Group and Tourism BC's Research and Planning Department for the *Community Tourism Foundations*® program. It provides facilitators with a framework for estimating of the size and value of the tourism industry for a community. The information generated can be used as a tool to help qualify tourism's contribution to other potential partners. The success of this model depends largely on obtaining base data from a representative number of commercial accommodation operators in the region.

### 5.3.2 Quality Assurance

**Key Objectives:**

- Ensure that product quality meets marketplace expectations
- Ensure tourism operators are aware of and encouraged to participate in quality assurance programs (*criteria for participation in TNVI programs*)

**Rationale:**

Quality assurance is an increasingly important consideration for destinations, particularly given the growing competitiveness of the wider market. Products that are well-matched to market needs and expectations will prevail. The role at the destination level is to help the tourism industry adopt and maintain the necessary standards to ensure a competitive product market match.

The accommodation sector in North Vancouver Island (as highlighted in Section 3 and 5.4.1) needs to ensure that its product matches marketplace expectations and gives customers the confidence to know exactly what they are purchasing.

Currently **only 35** (41%) of the 85 properties identified in the regional tourism accommodation inventory are Tourism BC approved, and only two have a Canada Select rating.

The criteria for participation in TNVI programs will be modelled on the stakeholder criteria developed by TVI's. The criteria will state that only those properties that are Tourism BC or Canada Select approved and all municipal, regional district, provincial and federal regulations and bylaws are able to participate in TNVI tourism programs. This will help ensure that the

accommodation product North Vancouver Island offers visitors meets minimum requirements and provides an experience that closely matches marketplace expectations.

**Background:**

**Tourism BC Approved Accommodation** - Tourism British Columbia's inspection program grants Approved Accommodation status to accommodation properties that meet established standards. This is a requirement for accommodation businesses wishing to participate in Tourism BC's accommodation programs, including the HelloBC Listings Program, the Reservation Program and the BC Escapes® promotional campaign. In addition, Approved Accommodation businesses can also apply for "Approved Accommodation" highway signage.

**Canada Select** (for fixed roof properties) and Camping Select, (for campground/RV properties) is an industry driven, consumer sensitive rating program. It provides visitors with a nationally consistent standard of quality within categories of roofed accommodation. Canada Select uses a recognized star rating system, awarding from 1 to 5 stars for modest to luxurious properties.

The Canada Select Program is administered by industry representatives from the BC Lodging & Campgrounds Association (BCLCA) and the BC & Yukon Hotels' Association (BCYHA) and is delivered by Tourism BC. As a prerequisite a property must be registered and participating in Tourism BC's Approved Accommodation Program before it can receive a Canada Select rating in BC.

**Access Canada** is a voluntary program to improve physical access and service for seniors and people with disabilities who use public accommodation in British Columbia. These two market segments have grown substantially over the last decade and will continue to grow in the future. The purpose of Access Canada is to provide owners and managers with clearly defined standards to make their properties more accessible in order to attract more customers from this rapidly developing market.<sup>25</sup>

**Export Ready Policy** - Tourism BC has developed an export ready policy for tourism products, reflecting the fact that the tourism sector is essentially an export sector. In Tourism BC's terminology, "export ready" for tourism includes not only product standards based on market expectations (e.g. Canada Select standards for accommodation), but also includes "requirements" for doing business with the travel trade and tour operators. Export ready products are equipped to engage in packaging arrangements with tour operators and able to do business both nationally and internationally.

### 5.3.3 Training and Development

**Key Objectives:**

- Provide information and resources to ensure people and organizations in tourism have access to the appropriate training and professional development programs

**Rationale:**

Standards of customer service vary greatly within the tourism industry. Human resource issues are also compounded by the seasonality of the industry and the limited availability of staff particularly if the job is only part time. As an initial step customer service training should be encouraged throughout the industry to establish a base-line understanding of standards and to complement any quality assurance programs. A sample of the key resources and programs available are mentioned below

---

<sup>25</sup> Guide to Tourism BC's Inspection and Approval Process, 2006

**Background:**

**Port Hardy Tourism Ambassador Project 2007** - This program was created by the Chamber's Tourism & Marketing Committee to help employees, especially those who don't necessarily think of themselves as frontline tourism workers (gas station attendants, retail clerks, etc.) to become more familiar with tourist facilities/activities and better able to meet the needs of visitors.

Each package contains a letter to the owner/manager explaining what it is and why they are receiving the package. A two-page hand-out for employees on how to provide great service, a small package about development of the North Coast Trail, several directories (local Bed & Breakfast Directory, local hotels/cottages and restaurants directory, the North Vancouver Island Business Directory), the Northern Vancouver Island Visitor Guide and other relevant brochures. To date about 50 packages have been distributed.

**SuperHost** - developed and administered by Tourism BC is a series of eight interactive customer service based training workshops to support people working in service industries. Content ranges from enhancing core communication skills to dealing with irate customers, understanding and exceeding expectations across cultures, providing excellent service for customers with disabilities, empowering and coaching employees, being an effective problem solver.

**Tourism BC – Business Essentials Series** - developed and administered by Tourism BC provides tourism operators with valuable information on key aspects of running a successful tourism business. Developed in partnership with the tourism industry, these informative how-to guides are easy to read, easy to understand, and are must-haves for any business competing in today's dynamic tourism market. *Employees First* is Tourism British Columbia's newest Tourism Business Essentials guide released in February, 2007.

There are also four Tourism Business Essentials® Workshops currently on offer they include: Travel Media Relations, Ads and Brochures That Sell, Tourism Packaging & Product Distribution and Sport Tourism. These workshops are each 3 hours in length and are led by industry professionals.

**Retail BC** -Retail BC launched Canada's first comprehensive retail skills development program in March 2006 to train front-line retailers in British Columbia. The retail PEAK program was developed to help management and staff enhance retail 'performance, empowerment, attitude and knowledge' (PEAK). The program offers nine skills-training courses: three in customer service, three in sales and three focused on management and staff development.

The training programs are delivered by locally-based organizations throughout BC, including Advanced Corporate Training, JobWave, WCG International, BC Community Futures Development Corporations, Business Improvement Associations, Chambers of Commerce and other organizations interested in the delivery of quality retail training. Interested retail businesses need to register on the retail PEAK website ([www.retailpeak.com](http://www.retailpeak.com)) to find courses available in their community or to invite a trainer in-house.



**emerit** - while there is potential to work with Colleges in the region in the delivery of relevant tourism training there are also established on-line resources that will be helpful and perhaps more accessible to many tourism industry workers. Emerit promoted by Go2, offers all the necessary training resources, including self-study tools and work books, and can be used by an individual to track their professional development.

### 5.3.4 Cooperative Partnerships

**Key Objectives:**

- Tourism North Vancouver Island coordinator to work closely with other key local organizations to achieve the tourism objectives outlined in this Plan
- Build strategic alliances with other key businesses, operators and providers that provide links to the region.

**Rationale:**

The concept of cooperative partnerships focuses on leveraging resources and funds to achieve the objectives outlined in this plan. While the Tourism North Vancouver Island coordinator will be the lead tourism person for the region, they will require the support of other agencies like the municipalities and Chambers of Commerce particularly in relation to tourism management and product development initiatives identified in the plan.

Creating and building strategic alliances with transportation providers that provide key links either directly to the region or to nearby Vancouver Island communities will increase awareness of what the North Vancouver Island has to offer and create opportunities for joint advertising, packaging and product development. The two best prospects are that should be pursued initially are Greyhound Canada Transportation Corp and Comox Valley Airport.

### 5.3.5 Green Initiatives

**Key Objectives:**

- To support private and public sector initiatives to conserve energy and protect the environment

**Rationale:**

The tourism experience in North Vancouver Island relies heavily on the natural environment, so initiatives to minimize the impact on it and conserve energy should be supported. Investigating the use of carbon offset programs to counter the affects of transportation and supporting municipal and business efforts to minimize waste, recycle and conserve energy will not only provide benefits for the residents and businesses but also appeals to consumers who also value these initiatives.

Green initiatives are a way to differentiate products or services in a crowded marketplace and increase market share. These initiatives can also increase brand loyalty, and build goodwill with customers, suppliers, communities, and other stakeholders<sup>26</sup>.

**Background:**

**Conserving energy** - BC Hydro's *Power Smart* program provide a wealth of information for business on how to reduce energy consumption. Energy efficient technologies provide the opportunity to: save money, improve the work environment, contribute to environmental sustainability and businesses could also receive financial incentives through BC Hydro. The BC

---

<sup>26</sup> David Suzuki Foundation – website “How Top Companies are Reducing and Offsetting their Emissions”

Hydro website contains information by industry for hospitality, restaurants and retail.

**Minimizing Environmental Impacts** – the most obvious practices for minimizing impacts is the use of biodegradable products, recycling systems and purchasing products and services locally.

**Carbon Offsets** - these can be purchased (e.g. TerraPass) for some or all of a businesses emissions after efforts have been made to reduce energy consumption. By offsetting emissions in this way, a business can claim that its product, service or operations are carbon neutral. The money to purchase a carbon offset is used to fund renewable energy projects such as wind farms or plant trees.

### 5.3.6 Transportation Infrastructure

**Key Objectives:**

- Support initiatives to improve transportation infrastructure and services
- Support marina development in the region

**Rationale:**

Transportation infrastructure initiatives have the ability to significantly enhance the tourism industry and improve access both within and to North Vancouver Island. Tourism industry efforts to support initiatives related to BC Ferries, increased marina capacity, bus services from Comox, improved scheduled air service and links to rail services in Campbell River should be encouraged.

Supporting the RDMW Economic Development Manager and Commission and highlighting tourism objectives on regional issues will be a key role under transportation.

### 5.3.7 Investment Promotion

**Key Objectives:**

- Facilitate investment by existing tourism operators
- Attract investment to the City either for joint ventures with local operators or for new investments.
- Support development of RDMW's Regional Profile of Investment Attraction and the update of the Regional Economic Development Strategy

**Rationale:**

Investment promotion within a community is often the responsibility of an economic development agency or the local municipality in collaboration with a tourism agency. In many communities the management of and commitment to tourism is a key factor in attracting investment.

Through the development of this Regional Tourism Plan and a commitment to ongoing funding the municipalities and the private sector are demonstrating their commitment to tourism which provides a very positive climate for future tourism investment.

Supporting the RDMW Economic Development Manager and Commission and highlighting tourism objectives for regional development will be critical to attracting strategic investment.

**Background:**

Key considerations for prospective tourism investors and their financing sources include not only the business case for the project itself under consideration, but also:

- The commitment of the region to the tourism sector (business climate for tourism);
- A long-term, sustainable commitment to tourism marketing;
- The availability of product development/training programs for the tourism sector; and
- The investment in infrastructure that will benefit tourism sector growth.

### 5.3.8 Research-based Initiatives

#### ***Key Objectives:***

- Utilize existing research and tourism publications to stay informed of new developments and current market information
- Create a research program in cooperation with the private sector to measure growth and the effectiveness of marketing initiatives

#### ***Rationale:***

Tourism and research related publications and newsletters provide a wealth of knowledge for local tourism agencies. These should be regularly reviewed to enable the Tourism North Vancouver Island coordinator to respond to opportunities.

Research initiatives and performance monitoring are an essential part of managing the tourism sector. Effective implementation requires the cooperation of the private sector and awareness on the part of the private sector that the provision of performance data under confidentiality rules will ultimately help the sector demonstrate the value of tourism to local government and other agencies.

This would include implementing the Value of Tourism model (Section 5.3.1) and establishing an ongoing accommodation tracking program. Commercial accommodation tracking is also a key component for measuring the success of the plan, better managing the industry and guiding future marketing initiatives.

## 5.4 Product Development

The product development initiatives identified below focus on enhancing the cultural and nature based experiences in North Vancouver Island and the supporting product (i.e. fixed roof accommodation), rather than creating a long list of capital development projects.

### 5.4.1 Fixed Roof Accommodations

#### ***Key Objectives:***

- Support the use of quality assurance standards and programs within the industry (see Section 5.3.1)
- Identify resources, finance and funding programs to assist properties in upgrading their facilities
- Provide presentations to owners on current marketplace expectations and the opportunities

#### ***Rationale:***

Quality tourism product is crucial to attracting new visitors and increasing the length of stay of existing visitors within the North Vancouver Island region. Initiatives to make industry more aware of these program and the benefits of participating in them is critical to establishing a quality tourism experience for the visitor.

As stated earlier many properties have not seen the level of investment over the last 10 years to meet current consumer expectations. This in part can be attributed to a reliance on the BC Ferries traffic that has provided a steady stream of regular customers.

There is a lack of quality 3.5+ star accommodations that will enable the region to accommodate new visitors who are genuinely interested in the natural and cultural activities the North Vancouver Island has to offer.

### **Background:**

**Local Government Upgrading and Development Incentives** - under the Community Charter (Section 226) Councils may to encourage revitalization of an area of the municipality, designate a revitalization area in either the annual financial plan under section 165 or in the official community plan. Within a revitalization area council may through a bylaw establish a revitalization tax exemption program. This program only applies to the construction of a new improvement or the alteration of an existing improvement for a period of up to five years, with a single renewal of up to five years.

**Fixed Roof Accommodation - Owner Presentations** – Tourism Vancouver Island will lead presentations to property owners on the changing nature of the tourism industry, current marketplace expectations, product quality and standards. The presentations will also illustrate the opportunities for businesses to become more environmentally and financially sustainable and explore options for obtaining financing.

## **5.4.2 Nature-based Attractions**

### **Key Objectives:**

- Support the development of the new Quatse River Hatchery Interpretive Centre
- Support the development of the North Coast Trail.
- Support the development of wildlife viewing products and packages

### **Rationale:**

Nature based activities are one of the primary travel motivators for visitors coming to North Vancouver Island and its core product. Projects that can enhance the visitor experience and their appreciation of nature will benefit the entire tourism industry.

### **Background:**

**Quatse River Hatchery Interpretive Centre** – the Northern Vancouver Island Salmon Enhancement Association (NVISEA) is a non-profit organization that operates the Quatse River Hatchery and campground located at Quatse River Regional Park in Port Hardy. The NVISEA has a proposal to upgrade its facilities, add classroom space for training, research labs and build an interpretive center on the site. The project cost is estimated at around \$850,000 for the proposed 4,300sq.ft interpretive centre. To date over one-third of the funds have been raised through grants and donations.

**Cape Scott Provincial Park** – North Coast Trail is a 46 km wilderness hiking trail under construction in Cape Scott Provincial Park. The trail runs along beaches and through forest around the northern tip of Vancouver Island from Shushartie Bay to Nissen Bight. At Nissen Bight it will link up with an existing 15 km trail in which leads to the trailhead at San Josef River

The North Coast Trail should be ready for hikers in September, according to North Coast Trail Society chair Al Huddleston<sup>27</sup>. The Society recently received \$200,000 from the Ministry of Environment and also funding from BC Hydro. The North Coast Trail Society is projecting conservatively 4,000 hikers on the trail in the first year and based on the experience of the West Coast Trail an annual increase of 15 percent per year.

**Wildlife Viewing** - The North Vancouver Island Wildlife Viewing Network is a pilot project whose focus is to identify and promote publicly accessible, low impact eco-tourism opportunities. The Network profiles some of the region's key wildlife viewing areas. Further efforts to create itineraries/maps/brochures to help visitors identify wildlife viewing areas and learn about the region rich flora and fauna would also create opportunities for more guided ecotourism products and services.

### 5.4.3 Packaging

**Key Objectives:**

- Increase visitor length of stay in the region
- Support the development of new regional and community packages that highlight the core experiences of culture and nature
- Host an Tourism BC Tourism Business Essentials “Advanced”<sup>28</sup> Packaging and Product Distribution” workshop for the regional industry that focus on the cultural and natural attributes of the region

**Rationale:**

Many of the visitors travelling through the region are primarily using the BC Ferries Northern route and often stay only 1 night prior to departing. Packaging will help create more activities and products to entice visitors to stay long and catch the next ferry.

Why package? A customer may not be aware of a specific product until it is seen as part of a package, or they may not have known enough about a product to stop and experience it without having it included as part of a larger package. Also, packaging gives customers a sense of value and security, making it easier to travel to a destination<sup>29</sup>, it also gives the businesses the opportunity to pool resources and promote their services and products jointly. .

North Vancouver Island has a wealth of resources and an established tourism product however the industry lacks a coordinated approach to packaging. The *Go North Island* campaign in 2006 highlighted the potential for packaging experiences and provides a good example of the type of experiences that the North Vancouver Island can begin to offer visitors.

Providing one-stop shopping for wholesalers as well as independent travellers by bundling products and services can bring a product to life and make the decision to purchase an easier one.

The “007 Time to Bond” spring 2007 tourism conference for the North Vancouver Island tourism industry included a Tourism BC Tourism Business Essentials “Packaging and Product Distribution” workshop. The next step would be the newly developed advanced packaging

---

<sup>27</sup> North Island Gazette – “North Coast Trail Funds Flowing Again”, 31 May 2007

<sup>28</sup> The initial Packaging and Product Distribution Workshop was held at the Spring 2007 Conference.

<sup>29</sup> Tourism BC – Tourism packaging and Product Distribution – Tourism Business Essentials

workshop.

**Background:**

The packaging activities with the most potential are those which North Vancouver Island already has a competitive advantage, namely culture and nature. For example, sea kayaking, hiking, caving, cultural interpretation and also scuba diving, there are numerous locations to stage these activities that can be done as 1 - 4 hour excursions or multiple day trips to different locations in the North Vancouver Island.

Other packages that focus on the marine environment such as Quatsino Sound Marine Tours crabbing trips in Holberg Inlet, or other activities that tour the beaches of the North Vancouver Island to experience the scenery and learn about the marine ecology are also key features.

**Minimum 2 night stays** – as the strength of the product in the region increases and the tourism industry realizes the value of what it has to offer initiatives such as two night minimum stays can become the norm. There is at least one property in the region that is already accepting only two night minimum stays in July and August and has received favourable feedback from its guests who still catch the ferry, but now spend 1-2 days in the region prior to departing.

## 5.5 Marketing

A destination (in this case regional) approach to marketing and sales does not eliminate the need for continued investment in strategic marketing and sales by individual businesses or at the community level. Rather, it creates a hierarchy of marketing that begins with enticing the potential visitor to the destination first, and then showcasing the range of communities, activities, attractions and accommodations available.

The vision and key experiences identified as part of the process for developing this Tourism Plan will form the structure for developing the specific marketing tactics to be undertaken by TNVI under the guidance of TVI.

The marketing initiatives will focus on promoting North Vancouver Island at the destination level. The marketing tactics will communicate the region's key attributes of nature and culture. The messages will be supported by high quality images and a consistent theme that runs through all media and promotional materials.

The product development strategies in the previous section will ensure new products and services are also developed.

The two key components of the marketing strategy will be:

- Regional Stakeholder Communications
- External Marketing Tactics

TVI and the TNVI coordinator with input from the North Vancouver Island Tourism Advisory Committee will finalize the marketing plan for the North Vancouver Island to commence in 2008 after the structure is completed and funding in place.

The funding table presented in Section 5.2.6 outlines the *Community Tourism Foundations* Marketing program matching (50/50) funding allocations that would commence in 2009 with \$20,000, followed by \$20,000 in 2010 and conclude in 2011 with \$10,000.

## 5.5.1 Key Marketing Initiatives 2009-2011

The following bullet points outline some of the marketing initiatives that would likely be included over the next 3 years (2009-2011) as the detailed annual marketing plans are developed by the Tourism North Vancouver Island coordinator in conjunction with North Island Tourism Advisory Committee (NITAC).

1. Development of a Tourism North Vancouver Island brand (in-house process) that is consistent with the vision and key experiences identified in the Regional Tourism Plan
2. Identify *Community Tourism Foundations* partner funding budget and projects for 2009-2011 based on Tourism BC criteria
3. Development of marketing collateral
  - North Vancouver Island Visitor Guide
  - North Vancouver Island maps
  - Website
  - Image bank
  - Themed rackcards (Ecotourism, culture and adventure) with associated packaging
4. Develop specific marketing tactics/plans around:
  - Print advertising
  - On-line advertising
  - Consumer shows
  - Media relations

## 6. Organizing for Implementation

---

### 6.1 Implementing the Tourism Plan

The implementation of the tourism plan once the funding and organizational structure are in place will be coordinated through the new Tourism North Vancouver Island Coordinator position with support from the municipalities, Mount Waddington Regional District and other key organizations.

However, prior to undertaking any of the product development, management and marketing initiatives outlined in this Tourism Plan, considerable effort needs to be focused on securing the funding and establishing the organizational structure to enable tourism coordination in the region.

Establishing buy-in among the North Vancouver Island stakeholders and operators (involved in development of plan) for the regional tourism plan is the first step. The next step is gaining municipal and Regional District support for the initiative.

The bullet points below highlight the updated steps for completion by December 2008, at which time the North Vancouver Island Tourism function will be up and running:

#	Action Plan Tasks 2008	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	Finalize CST and ICET funding commitments	X					
2	Prepare Business Plan 2008.	X	X				
3	Recruit and hire a Tourism Coordinator for the North Vancouver Island Tourism Office.	X	X	X			
4	Prepare and issue a Request for Proposal for a North Vancouver Island Tourism Office Space.		X	X			
5	Retain a consultant to coordinate establishing a regional and community 2% AHRT.		X				
6	Initiate Regional 2% AHRT campaign through RDMW, Town of Port McNeill, Village of Alert Bay and the Village of Port Alice.			X	X	X	
7	Establish the North Vancouver Island Tourism Advisory Committee (NVITAC)			X			
8	Retain Consultant to facilitate brand development			X			
9	Prepare Marketing Plan for 2009.			X	X		
10	Complete a consultant led Brand Development process.				X	X	



#	Action Plan Tasks 2008	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
11	Establish a North Vancouver Island Tourism office.				X		
12	Prepare a Tourism Product Development plan.					X	X
13	Prepare a 2009 work plan and budget.					X	X
14	Initiate Value of Tourism Project to demonstrate value and contribution of tourism to regional economy on a community by community basis						X

## 6.2 Reviewing, Monitoring & Measuring Progress

Critical to reviewing and measuring the progress of the tourism plan is establishing the systems and programs to gather the data necessary.

### 6.2.1 Overall Objectives for Tourism

The success of this plan and the achievement of the objectives outlined in this section will require a coordinated effort by a number of organizations within the region and the ongoing support of the municipalities to implement all of the strategies contained in this document. The objectives are as follows:

- Increase tourism **revenue** to the region by **5%** annually from 2009-2011
- Increase the **number of visitors** to the region by **3%** annually from 2009-2011

The objectives are conservative and reflect a preference towards growing revenues as opposed to just the number of visitors. This can only be achieved by continuing to address product development, packaging and destination management initiatives. North Vancouver Island needs to provide visitors with a reason to stay longer and spend more money within the region.

To measure tourism growth and the success in achieving the objectives outlined above the region will use a number of tourism indicators including:

#### Accommodations Data<sup>30</sup>

- Fixed roof accommodations room revenue
- Occupancy data will also be used to determine the success in expanding shoulder season visitation
- Packages sold
- Length of stay at fixed roof accommodations can be used to gauge the success of diversifying into the regional longer stay market

#### Other Supporting Data

<sup>30</sup> All fixed roof accommodation should be encouraged to participate in Tourism BC's Accommodation Tracking Program on an on-going basis

- Number of visitors to the visitor centres
- Number of visitors to key attractions (e.g. Museums, U'mista Cultural Centre, festivals and events)
- Operators – number of client days (e.g. hiking, kayaking, whale watching)
- The website will also be key to tracking and measuring the success of marketing initiatives and gathering consumer information that can be used to market and promote the destination.

The growth objectives stated above have been developed using the Tourism BC revenue growth projections for the province as a base (i.e. 4.5% for 2007/08 and 4.8% for 2008/09.<sup>31</sup>).

## 6.3 Conclusion

The North Vancouver Island region has a wealth of resources and product, which appeals not only to key local and regional markets but also international visitors. However, the challenge of sustaining the resources (i.e. funding and human resources) to effectively manage and market the region as a whole has led to a fragmented approach and limited growth.

The success of this Regional Tourism Plan focuses primarily on the funding and organization structure proposed for implementing a regional tourism function in the North Vancouver Island. Sustainable funding supported principally through the private sector and a regional visitor tax (i.e. 2% hotel tax) with additional resources provided by local municipalities and Tourism BC, will enable a full time staff person managed by TVI to focus solely on developing and promoting tourism in the region.

This approach will enable private sector dollars to be leveraged with visitor taxes and municipal finances to create a significant tourism budget that can be used to develop and grow the tourism industry for the benefit of the entire region.

---

<sup>31</sup> 2006/07 to 2008/09 Service Plan, Tourism British Columbia, January 2006.

# Appendices

---

- List of the Community Tourism Foundation Working Group members
- Summary of the January 11, 2007 Visioning Workshop

## **North Vancouver Island Tourism Working Group**

Lillian Hunt	Village of Alert Bay
Doug Aberley	Namgis First Nation
Rick Davidge	District of Port Hardy
Bev Parnham	District of Port Hardy – Councillor
Treena Smith	Port Hardy Chamber of Commerce
Marilyn MacArthur	Regional District of Mount Waddington
Evelyn Clark	Community Futures Mount Waddington
Donna Gault	The Inn People
Sam Kirsch	Port Hardy Chamber of Commerce
Don Orr	Black Bear Resort
Barb Bonnell	Town of Port McNeill
Jodi Watkins	Port McNeill Chamber and Visitor Centre
Cathy Denham	Island Daytrippers
Norine Charlie	Alert Bay Visitor Centre
Jane Hutton	Port Hardy Museum
Randy Bell	Namgis First Nation
Laura Taylor	Village of Alert Bay
Pat Kervin	Odyssey Kayaking
Mary Borrowman	Stubbs Island Whale Watching, Telegraph Cove
David Hudson	West Coast Community Craft Shop
Greg Smithson	District of Port Hardy – Councillor
Riccardo Marrara	Port Hardy Chamber of Commerce
Iv Villani	Tourism Port Hardy & Quarter Deck Marina
Wade Dayley	Bear Cove Cottages
John Tidbury	District of Port Hardy
Candy Nomeland	Seagate Hotel

Rita Medeiros	Tourism British Columbia
Dave Petryk	Tourism Vancouver Island
Bobbi-Jean Goldy	Tourism Vancouver Island
Jimmy Young	Tourism BC Facilitator & Tourism Planning Group Inc.

The above attended all or a least one of the *Community Tourism Foundations* meetings held in the North Vancouver Island.

## Visioning Workshop

“What do we want the North Vancouver Island tourism industry to look like in 5 years?”

Relevant, Positive and Sustainable Human Resource Base	An Effective Sustainable Destination Management System	Enhancing the Access and Attraction of the Region	Exhibiting a Strong, Authentic Regional Brand	Diversity of World Class Products, Events & Experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinated regionally relevant tourism training</li> <li>• Welcoming attitude (greeting)</li> <li>• Stories told on the Streets (culture, history, unique)</li> <li>• Training (college, apts, educate the visitors)</li> <li>• Hospitality education and training</li> <li>• 200% population increase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional support completed – investment in tourism</li> <li>• Work as a region</li> <li>• Effective advisory group to local government</li> <li>• Greater community awareness of tourism value</li> <li>• Improve quality control of accommodations</li> <li>• More regional tourism planning</li> <li>• Increase capacity for admin. &amp; marketing tourism</li> <li>• Tourism funding embedded in municipal culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation to all areas – ease, consistent, professional</li> <li>• Regional transit</li> <li>• Increase harbour visitor capacity</li> <li>• First class marina facilities</li> <li>• Timeshare condos</li> <li>• Maximize transportation – air, water, hwy</li> <li>• Increase frequency of transportation providers</li> <li>• Town beautification (less industrial looking) – upgrade seawalk</li> <li>• Town beautification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinated signage</li> <li>• Strong regional identity – develop, promote, defend</li> <li>• 2 regional gateway travel info centres</li> <li>• Regional tourism website</li> <li>• Visitor Services – internet, benches &amp; gazebos, comfort stops</li> <li>• Targeted regional “high end” marketing</li> <li>• No Disneyland! Yes to authenticity</li> <li>• Good regional maps</li> <li>• Buy – in to Brand Culture</li> <li>• Service Maps – trails, facilities, logging roads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase day visitor attractions</li> <li>• Fort Rupert reproduction</li> <li>• Packaging available – ease, consistent, professional</li> <li>• Increase market ready First Nations product</li> <li>• North Coast Trail completed</li> <li>• Higher yield visitor</li> <li>• Artisans tours, Fish farms, Orca sand gravel</li> <li>• Daily scheduled tours – diving, caving, kayaking, hiking</li> <li>• All season visitation</li> <li>• One event nightly within the region</li> <li>• Events &amp; festivals (one per month)</li> <li>• Regional packages for tourists</li> <li>• Summer Fest</li> <li>• Become a regional world class hiking destination</li> <li>• Convention destination</li> <li>• Develop Pocket/Barefoot cruises</li> </ul>