



# Land of Ancient Footprints Land of New Discoveries

Tumbler Ridge Tourism Strategy

2020





TUMBLER RIDGE  
**GLOBAL  
GEO  PARK**



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# Executive Summary

## Background

The District of Tumbler Ridge is seeking to strengthen the contribution of tourism to the community and build a sustainable tourist destination. To that end, the District's economic development office has commissioned this strategy to identify target markets, strengthen the destination, attract visitors and encourage investment and employment. The strategy will leverage Tumbler Ridge's UNESCO Global Geopark designation to further the community's ambition as a destination of international significance.

The planning process used in the development of this Strategy was based on destination development and strategic planning principles that place community outreach and engagement at the core as a means of aligning the needs of all tourism stakeholders. Secondary research consisting of a review of all relevant community and regional reports and related policies and an assessment of best practices was supplemented with primary research involving key informant interviews, group meetings and planning sessions. A week-long visit in August 2019 provided the consulting team an opportunity to meet with stakeholders, experience Tumbler Ridge as a community, and gain a further appreciation of the assets, sites, products and services that define Tumbler Ridge as a visitor destination.

## Current Situation

The strengths of Tumbler Ridge as a visitor destination include its outstanding natural landscapes, waterfalls, trails, palaeontology resources and a successful record of event hosting. The Geopark initiative and the UNESCO branding represent a platform for both marketing and destination development. Tumbler Ridge is a designed town with infrastructure well beyond what similar-sized communities can boast. Significant growth could be accommodated without sacrificing sustainability and local quality of life. The fact that local government has been a strong advocate of tourism as part of a diverse economic base is an additional positive.

Major challenges include the limited hospitality and tour services, and a volunteer base that is feeling increasingly stretched. Inconsistent operating hours by service businesses and a limited spectrum of basic services means that many visitors forego local spending on tourism-related purchases. Reaching out to visitor markets and drawing in more leisure travellers will be tremendously challenging, especially in the context of a constantly fluctuating local population that is responding to resource industry cycles.

Tumbler Ridge has many opportunities to build upon its intrinsic natural and built assets. Nature-based tourism associated with UNESCO TRGG is first and foremost. More guided services, including in the winter season, could be offered. A downtown visitor cluster could enhance and animate the original town centre concept by leveraging private sector investment in hospitality services with public buildings and visitor services. Accommodators could tap into the small meeting and conference market that is bolstered by the leisure tourism offer, in all four seasons.

Tumbler Ridge is a distinctive destination, captured by its UNESCO Global Geopark status

## ***Land of ancient footprints – Land of new discoveries***

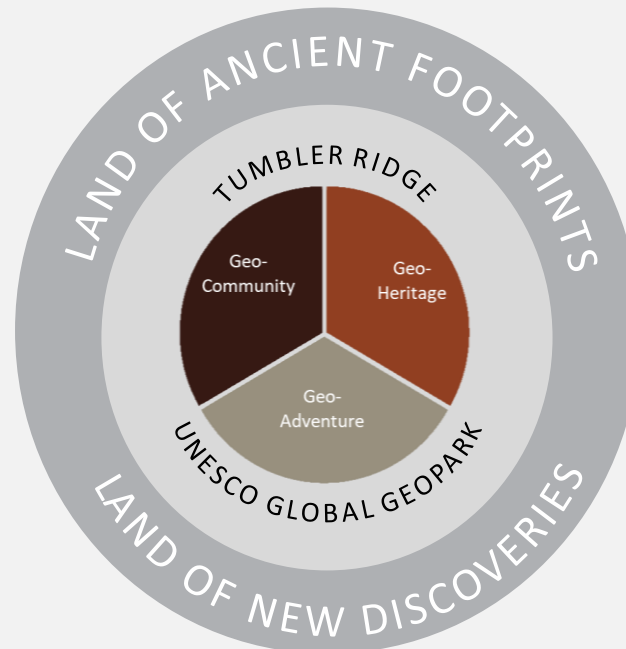
***Imbibing the essence of the Tumbler Ridge wilderness is a transforming experience, one that is potentially life altering ....***

### The brand pillars

- **Geo-heritage**, a place with exceptional ‘cool rocks’, palaeontology, wildlife, and cultural heritage. The footprints of dinosaurs, the ancient pathways of Indigenous peoples, and the footsteps of early European explorers and trail blazers provide exciting insights into a globally unique landscape.
- **Geo-adventure**, a remarkably diverse trail network provides an exciting spectrum of year-round opportunities for geo-adventure. The solitude of the mountains, the discovery of cascading waterfalls, the proximity of wildlife, and the adrenalin of the climb and descent create a sense of exhilaration, awe and personal achievement.
- **Geo-community**, a community economy inextricably linked to new discoveries of coal, wind and geo-tourism potential that can co-exist and thrive. Residents that share a value system that celebrates our geology and geography for our wealth, health and well-being.

### The goals

- Compelling visitor destination with marketable geo-experiences that support the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark brand
- Sustainable tourism growth that supports community quality of life
- Effective destination management with community and industry support
- Brand awareness and incremental tourism spend



### The focus

The strategy is built around two integral dimensions designed to give TR strategic direction in moving forward as a UNESCO Global Geopark destination. A development pathway charts mutually supporting **keystone projects** and **groundwork initiatives** that can drive change.

The direction is predicated on the belief that it will be the bold ventures of the keystone projects that will empower that momentum and galvanize ongoing support from the broader stakeholder community. By thinking big and targeting enduring projects the TRGG brand promise can be energized and will bring forward the measurable change in visitation required to elevate tourism as an equal partner in the community's economic base.

The little things matter as well, so a series of process-oriented groundwork initiatives are recommended but done so within the context of supporting keystone projects. This will allow Tumbler Ridge to allocate its resources efficiently and effectively, working smarter while encouraging greater private sector leadership and investment.



## Keystone Projects

will play a fundamental role in catalyzing development. They have the potential to transform the destination by adding major infrastructure and visitor services capacity that are demand generators, while contributing to quality of life for residents. The five projects are all based on bold thinking and represent substantial capital investment with the potential to drive tourism and economic development moving forward.

### Museum

1. If current fundraising targets are reached, a master plan with broad community and industry input should be prepared so the museum is configured and managed to deliver a superior visitor experience.
2. If current fundraising targets are not reached, the Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation and its partners should pursue small-scale capital projects that enable continued incremental growth of visitor-focused exhibits and programs.
3. Continue advocating for support from the provincial government and to focus on raising awareness of the provincial and national significance of the Tumbler Ridge paleontological assets.

### Bike Park

4. Support the master plan recommendations for a phased pump track facility by assisting with fundraising, infrastructure placement and event development.
5. Work with local service providers to establish a stronger understanding of the needs and expectations of this market and encourage the development and/or enhancement of new services and supporting facilities.

### Tourism Precinct

6. Stimulate organic growth of a tourism precinct in the town centre by establishing a public gathering space and connecting it to the Visitor Centre and adjacent properties via a pedestrian corridor.

### Snowmobile Tour

7. Package and deliver a quality tour product that showcases Tumbler Ridge's winter outdoor potential.

### Gamification

8. Conduct a pilot project that would conceptualize and scope a mobile game that Tumbler Ridge could develop to drive digital communications and social media engagement.



## Groundwork Initiatives

are the everyday programs and services that represent the operating environment that will be expected to nurture and get the most out of the keystone projects. The following five projects cover the main elements of destination development, namely organizational, experience, sustainability, marketing and community development.

### Tourism Leadership

9. Target District investment in tourism planning, marketing and destination development to drive best practices and maximize the return on investment.
10. Pursue partnerships that will leverage private sector contributions to destination and market development.
11. Coordinate volunteer efforts amongst all tourism and community partners to optimize resources, prevent burnout and create a more satisfying environment of reward and success.

### Experience Development

12. Provide access to resources that will encourage the private sector to develop more market-ready experiences.
13. Emphasize product development that complements the geo-heritage theme.
14. Assist local First Nations and partners to develop authentic Indigenous content for visitor experiences.
15. Develop a coordinated event strategy that can sustain current successful events and add at least one additional festival targeted at destination visitor markets (leisure and business travel).
16. Identify international and national geopark and palaeontology events that could be hosted in Tumbler Ridge.
17. Pursue a focused sports tourism strategy that targets the shoulder and off seasons.

### Sustainability

18. Adopt a set of community sustainability goals that align with District planning while reinforcing differentiation and branding around the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark.
19. Consider applying for International Dark Sky Reserve accreditation from the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA).
20. Develop a Health in Geoparks program for Tumbler Ridge that aligns with UNESCO's mandate for geosciences in the service of society.
21. Leverage Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation research and education activities as tourism products.

### Marketing and Communications

22. Develop and curate content that will enrich and enliven the geo-tourism story, making it more accessible and compelling for visitors and operators.
23. Promote the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark brand within and outside the community.
24. Expand awareness of Tumbler Ridge by moving resources to a targeted social media strategy.
25. Work with Destination BC and NBCT to address the significant gap in tourism research at the regional and local levels.





## Community Infrastructure

26. Attract infill retail and hospitality services to complement a tourism precinct in the central shopping area.
27. Prioritize high value trails and use areas for improvements in conjunctions with sustainable resourcing and support.
28. Work with local First Nations to develop future municipal land with tourism potential.
29. Promote high quality accommodation potential for Tumbler Ridge.



## Performance Measurement

There are four components to a performance management framework, inputs, activities and outputs, which are all measures of efficiency and execution.

The fourth component, outcomes, is the most important as it is a measure of effectiveness and change.

Data sources, frequency and collection procedures can be prepared as the framework is operationalized.

The 'performance management framework' can be used to conduct reporting and communications activities.

Reporting is targeted at the District, key partners and stakeholders.

Communications involves reporting on Strategy progress, as well as broader tourism metrics, through websites, social media, digital media and conventional media.



# 1 Introduction



## Background

The District of Tumbler Ridge is seeking to strengthen the contribution of tourism to the community and build a sustainable tourist destination. Tumbler Ridge has earned a reputation as a single industry, 'boom and bust' town tied to the fortunes of commodity coal. Mines have regularly opened and closed over recent decades, resulting in marked economic and social disruption. A more diversified economic base with growth in other industries would bring a measure of stability, health and well-being that the community and its residents would welcome.

To this end, the vision of the economic development office is to grow the tourism sector and encourage tourism business development and employment opportunities that will help to diversify the local economy and sustain the community through future resource downturns. Tumbler Ridge has experienced substantial growth as a tourist destination since 2014 when the community and the surrounding area was awarded the internationally recognized and prestigious UNESCO Global Geopark designation. Tumbler Ridge is the second of three such designations in Canada; the second of five in North America and the only one in western North America. Tourism associated with the geopark and other tourism assets provides Tumbler Ridge with one of its greatest economic diversification opportunities, and one that still remains largely unfulfilled.

The purpose of the strategy is to identify target markets, strengthen the tourism sector and products, attract visitors (including future residents), encourage investment and employment and provide a realistic schedule for

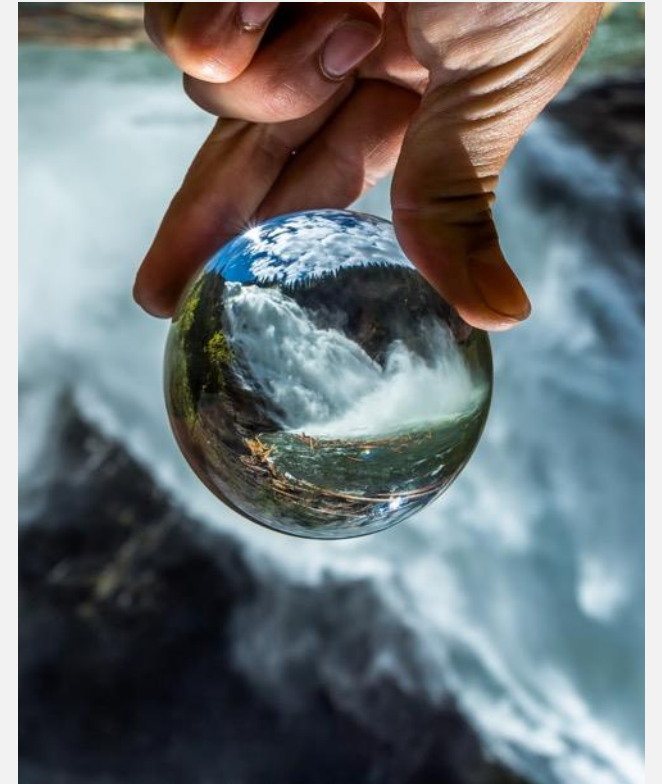
implementation and performance measurement. The strategy will leverage Tumbler Ridge's UNESCO Global Geopark designation to further increase the community's profile as a destination of international significance.

It is important that all major stakeholders actively contribute to destination development. The community already has a solid foundation of participation through First Nations, Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark, Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation, Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society, Tumbler Ridge Mountain Bike Association, Tumbler Ridge Ridge Rider Snowmobile Association, Tumbler Ridge ATV Club, tour providers, hoteliers and supporting service providers.

## The Planning Process

The planning process used in the development of this Strategy was based on destination development and strategic planning principles that place community outreach and engagement at the core as a means of aligning the needs of all tourism stakeholders. Secondary research consisting of a review of all relevant community and regional reports and related policies and an assessment of best practices was supplemented with primary research involving key informant interviews, group meetings and planning sessions. A week-long visit in August 2019 provided the consulting team an opportunity to meet with stakeholders, experience Tumbler Ridge as a community, and gain a further appreciation of the assets, sites, products and services that define Tumbler Ridge as a visitor destination.

A complete list of information sources and personal communications is provided in Chapter 5.





## 2 Current Situation



# The Destination

Tumbler Ridge has an exceptional natural resource base with wilderness areas, provincial parks, campgrounds, trails, scenic vistas, wildlife and outdoor activities that appeal to both residents and visitors. Opportunities for outdoor adventure and other nature-based activities are now being developed and promoted under the aegis of the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark (TRGG), which was designated in 2014 as the second global geopark in North America. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recognized Tumbler Ridge as having internationally significant geological heritage with fascinating stories connecting people to the earth. Global geoparks are grassroots, community-driven initiatives that promote economic and tourism development of the geological resource and highlight how this geological heritage has played a role in shaping today's sense of place. The palaeontology treasures include dinosaur trackways and fossils of dinosaurs, trilobites and corals and marine reptiles from the Precambrian to Cretaceous, with mammoth tusks and bison skulls from the Pleistocene.

This distinctive heritage of Tumbler Ridge includes both natural and human or cultural resources. A network of hiking trails leads to numerous geosites, spectacular waterfalls, dinosaur tracks, mountain summits, sedimentary rock formations, caves and canyons (DTR no date). The region offers a range of summer and winter experiences, primarily centred on outdoor recreation and opportunities to discover the geological significance of the area. Guided outdoor adventure tours are available from local tour operators. Events like the Emperor's Challenge have been highly successful.

The palaeontological resources of the region, discovered and researched only in the last 20 years, have already put Tumbler Ridge on the world map given their abundance and distinctiveness. World-class dinosaur trackways, the world's first Tyrannosaurid trackway and a recently discovered fossilized tyrannosaur skull are notable. The Dinosaur Discovery Gallery is a major attraction that showcases the fossil heritage of British Columbia. It has been brought to light by a dedicated corps of palaeontologists, community volunteers and even the mining sector and other industries over the years since initial discovery.

Cultural and heritage activities, sports activities and year-round festivals and events provide diversity to the visitor experience in Tumbler Ridge. The District operates a year-round Visitor Centre to support visitor services. There are three major accommodation properties and three recreational vehicle camp sites in town and seven regionally. Tumbler Ridge has a large community recreation centre, a golf course, a small number of meeting venues, and a range of retail shops and restaurants. (DTR 2017)



# Performance

Tumbler Ridge is part of the Northern BC tourism region. In 2014 the region hosted 936,000 overnight visitors and generated approximately \$412 million on tourism-related services. Same-day visitors numbered 1.7 million, with spending estimated at a further \$161 million. Northern BC has the lowest proportion of overnight visitors of all BC's six tourism regions.

BC residents accounted for two thirds of the visits but only 47% of spending. US and other international visitors tend to outspend their BC and Canadian counterparts. When length of stay is factored in, US residents have the highest daily spend at \$163 with BC and other international visitors at the low end with \$83 per day. However, other international visitors tend to stay the longest in the region, averaging 9.3 nights which is approximately double that of other markets.

In terms of accommodation, a very high proportion of BC, Canadian and non-US international visitors stay with friends and relatives. US visitors tend to stay in motels and campgrounds or RV parks.

The season of travel is surprisingly diversified for BC visitors, with an expected concentration in summer but with significant volumes in the other three seasons. International visitors, including those from the US, are almost exclusively an April to September market, with practically no fall or winter presence.

BC and Canadian residents are primarily engaged in outdoor activities, whereas international visitors tend to desire historic, museum and art gallery experiences in addition to national park and wildlife viewing.

Visitor Centre attendance in Northern BC has been relatively static since 2009, with a low point reached in 2013. Tumbler Ridge, on the other hand, has experienced impressive growth, expanding five-fold from 2,000 to now over 11,000. Visitation to Tumbler Ridge is concentrated in the summer months although fall and winter visitation is proportionately higher than Northern BC.

## Northern BC Tourism Region (2014)



Visitors 936,000

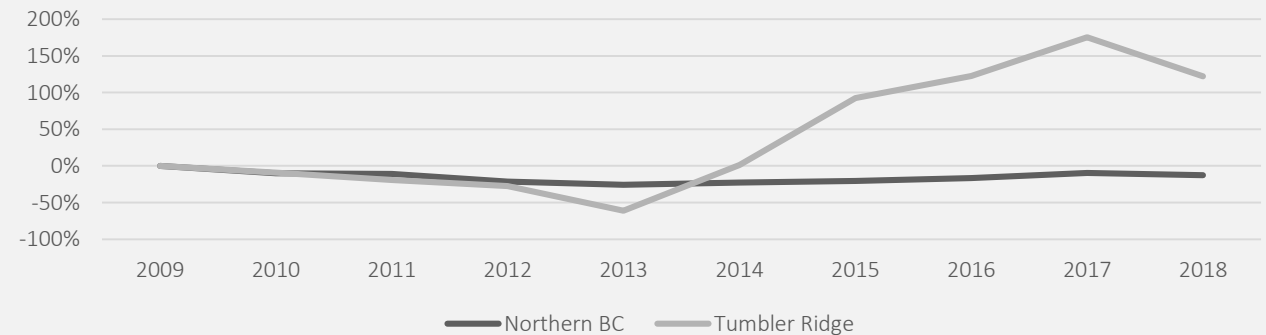


Spending \$412 million



Markets BC, USA, Other Canada

## Visitor Centre Attendance



Source: BC Stats (2019)



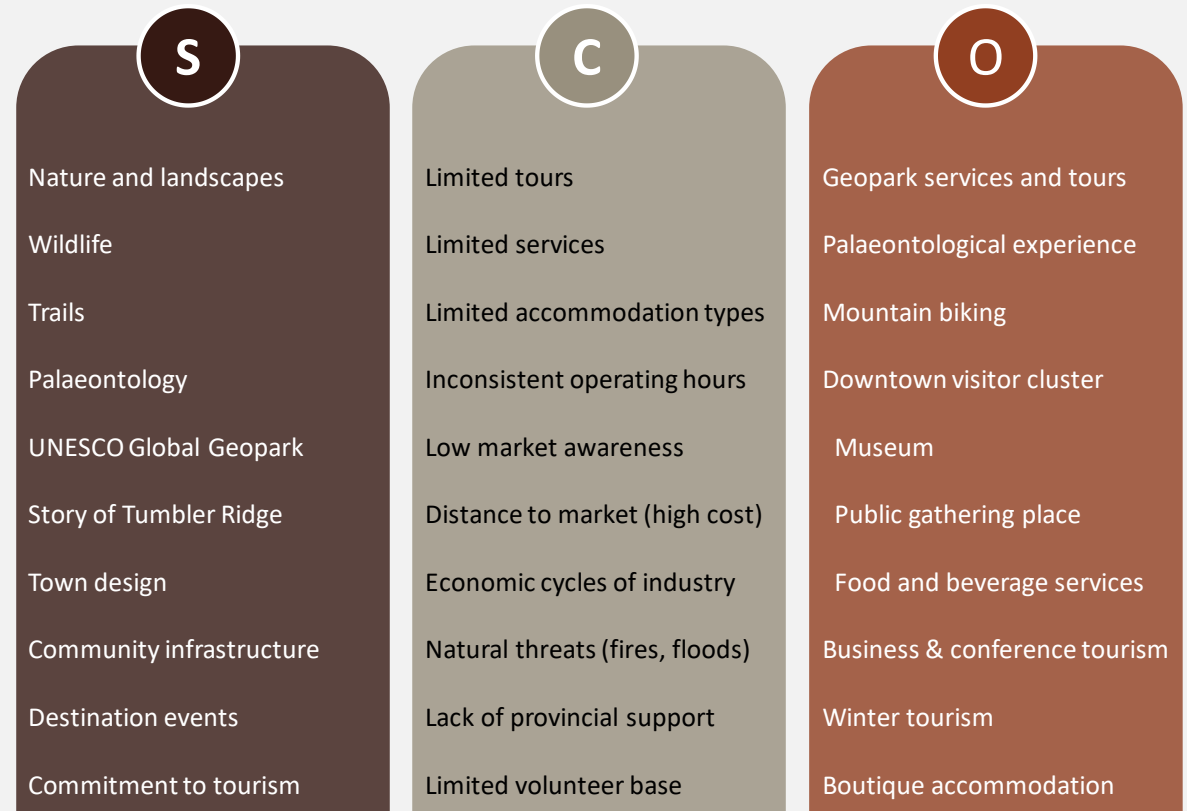
# Trends

- **Changing demographics.** While the large Baby-Boom cohort (born between the mid 1940s to mid 1960s) continue to take the most trips, the Millennials (born between the early 1980s to early 1990s) are driving demand for short getaways, weekend trips and add-on leisure trips to business travel. It is the Millennials that are redefining the concept of adventure travel, how visitors connect with locals, and the role of technology in travel.
- **Solo travel.** The conventional view of family and couple dominated leisure travel is still valid, but it is slowly evolving to include a new class of solo traveller, who are comfortable striking out on their own. They represent a range of age cohorts so their needs can be diverse, from social activities for younger singles to up-market accommodation and services for the longer-stay elders' market. In either case, the demand for singles travel is set to grow.
- **Local experiences.** Tourists today are increasingly seeking an engaging, participatory and authentic experience rooted in the destination's sense of place. They would prefer to avoid insulated activities that take place within a visitor bubble. From culture and cuisine to outdoor adventure, the more connected the visitor is to a local community the more opportunities there are to be immersed in traditional activities and local culture.
- **Personalization.** Programmatic marketing that targets consumers as they browse social media and websites is an example of personalization. It is also an emerging phenomenon in destination development as travellers seek out destinations that closely match their personal preferences for services like accommodation and recreational activities. The more closely an experience can be customized to a traveller's desires and expectations, the more likely they are to be a return customer and a net promoter for the destination.
- **Bleisure travel.** The combination of business and leisure travel (bleisure travel) has been recognized for decades, especially in resort communities that meld convention with leisure activity markets. For destinations with an existing business travel component, there will be increasing opportunities to extend and diversify stays for leisure purposes.
- **Culinary tourism.** The growth in culinary tourism has been exceptional in the last decade. The demand for excellent cuisine with better nutrition is being driven by an overall heightened interest in the food we eat, how it is produced and where it comes from. This represents an opportunity to express a destination's food profile, terroir and creativity in using the land to deliver exceptional and unique culinary experiences.
- **Adventure tourism** is undergoing similar growth as its definition shifts to be less about activity associated with risk and more towards learning, fulfilment and being in a natural environment. Developing an experience that combines activity, nature and culture while delivering on challenge, achievement and transformation, authenticity and novelty, and wellness is what is increasingly being sought by the market. Interest in "microadventures" – small and affordable getaways – is seeing marked growth.
- **Winter tourism** is becoming a new peak season according to Intrepid – and it is now about much more than simply the traditional winter resort tourism. Rather, it is about experiencing winter festivals and elements of ordinary life in the winter season within the context of innovative packages and distinctive hotel and resort offerings.
- **Technology.** From concierge robots and artificial intelligence to recognition technology and the Internet of Things, the seeming endless advances in technology are transforming travel at all points in the consumer engagement cycle. Travel disrupters such as Airbnb and Uber are changing the travel landscape and are creating more choice for accommodation, transportation and experience components of a trip. Similarly, new advances in Artificial Intelligence have implications for many areas of tourism from gaming to augmented reality experiences. The latter can allow tourists to "visit" destinations and sites considered too fragile for physical tours.
- **Responsible tourism.** As iconic destinations face visitor management challenges and issues of sustainability rise to the fore; the concept of responsible tourism has become front and centre of global discussions on growth. Destinations that can combine intriguing experiences within serene landscapes and pleasant bustling urbanscapes have a growing distinctive advantage.

# Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

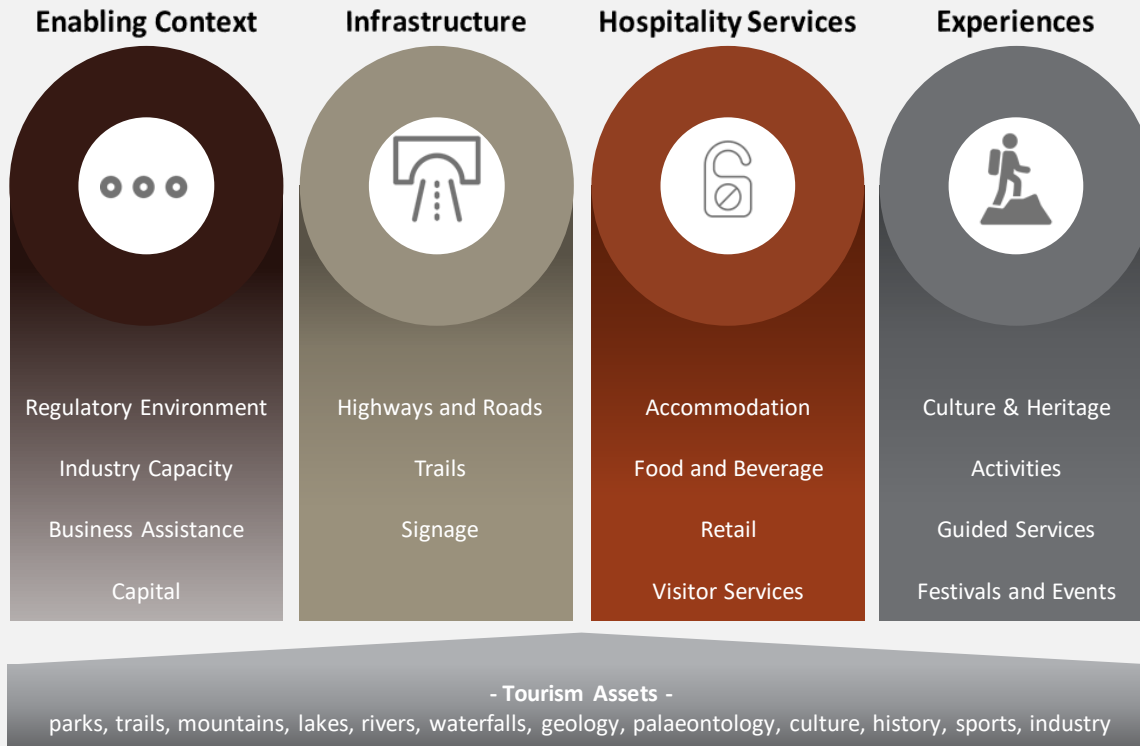
- The strengths of Tumbler Ridge as a visitor destination are obvious—the outstanding natural landscapes, waterfalls, trails, palaeontology resources and a successful record of event hosting are the foundations of the Geopark initiative and the UNESCO branding for the area. These are the experiences that draw the interest of leisure visitors and motivate them to come to the community in the first place. It also helps that Tumbler Ridge is a designed town with infrastructure well beyond what similar-sized communities can boast. Significant growth could be accommodated without sacrificing sustainability and local quality of life. The fact that local government has been a strong advocate of tourism as part of a diverse economic base and has been a contributor to downtown development and the service sector, has made for a positive investment climate.
- The challenges facing the community, however, are equally evident. Tumbler Ridge is a small, rural community with limited hospitality services (including accommodation) and tour services, and a volunteer base that is feeling increasingly stretched. Inconsistent operating hours by service businesses and a limited spectrum of services means that many visitors forego local spending on tourism-related purchases. Furthermore, reaching out to visitor markets and drawing in more leisure travelers is tremendously challenging due to limited market awareness not just of Tumbler Ridge, but of Northeast BC and Northern BC as well. A local population that is constantly shifting up and down because of resource industry cycles makes for an unstable baseline for tourism development. A substantial portion of visitor spending is linked to visiting friends and relatives so when the local population declines there will be a natural downtrend in tourism activity. Conversely, when the population grows tourism should benefit as well. A virtuous cycle of investment in tourism is more likely when the rest of the regional economy is doing well, and vice versa, a significant challenge when growth is lagging.

- Tumbler Ridge has many opportunities to build upon its intrinsic natural and built assets. Nature-based tourism associated with UNESCO TRGG is first and foremost. More guided services, including in the winter season, could be offered. A downtown visitor cluster could enhance and animate the original town centre concept by leveraging private sector investment in hospitality services with public buildings and visitor services. Accommodators could tap into the small meeting and conference market that is bolstered by the leisure tourism offer, in all four seasons.





# What Needs to Change?



Tumbler Ridge will have to work from the ground up in all areas if it is to increase visitor spending and broaden the local economic base. Its exceptional natural resources, scenic qualities and recreational opportunities are not enough to overcome weaknesses, without a concerted focus on attracting destination visitors. Most importantly, Tumbler Ridge must develop new demand generators to move the needle on visitor numbers, length of stay and spending.

Destination BC research suggests that existing travel markets in the north have high interest levels in visiting parks, experiencing the outdoors and participating in cultural activities. Northern BC's Experience Quotient (EQ) targets potentially have a strong interest in participating in the activities Tumbler Ridge could deliver, providing they can be matched with quality accommodation, food and beverage services and guided services. Market trends suggest that the opportunity to engage, experience and learn about the landscape and its geological heritage is needed to drive more interest and demand. Targeting the existing Alaska Highway traveller does hold some future growth potential, but the community's unique profile as a mountain resort in a predominantly regional prairie setting means that new visitors will have to be enticed by experiences and services that take full advantage of its natural endowments and internationally recognized global geopark branding.

Excellent progress has been made in Tumbler Ridge in building the foundations for tourism growth. The trail system built by local volunteers is significant and continues to expand, wayfinding signage is best-in-class and ongoing investments in palaeontology interpretation have elevated the community as a geo-tourism destination. Other elements of the value chain will have to evolve by improving hospitality services and providing experiences that are special in the regional, provincial and national contexts.

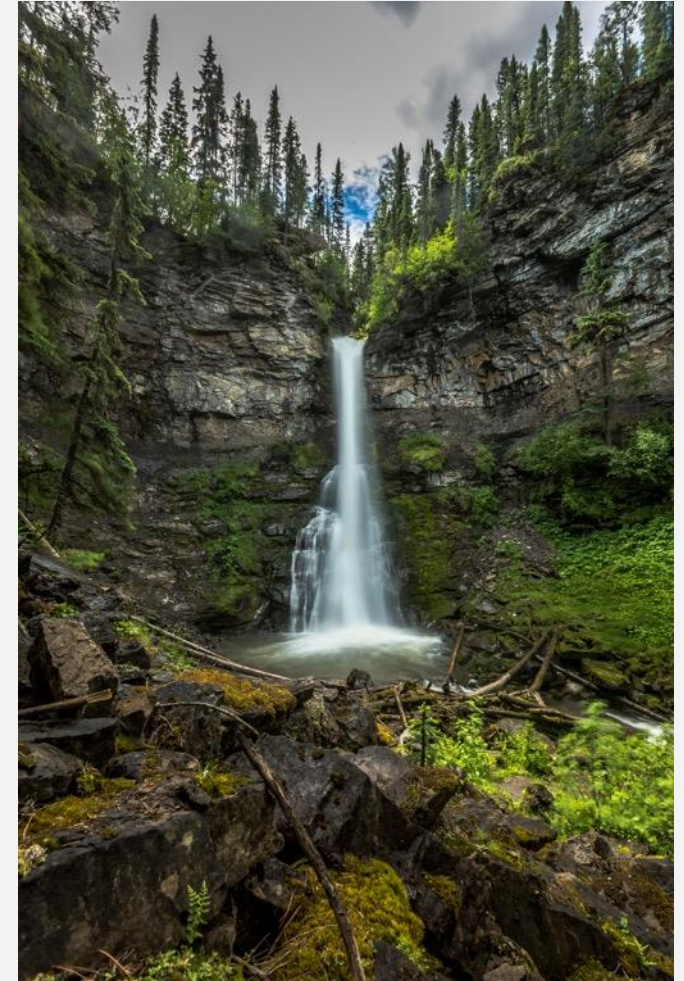


# 3 Strategic Direction



# Understanding the Essence of the Destination

Tumbler Ridge is a distinctive destination. Its UNESCO Global Geopark status reflects its unique attributes. The following section seeks to capture the underlying essence of Tumbler Ridge – its story and what makes it stand out as a destination. This creative framework has been developed to assist in positioning the geopark and to provide a context for the creation of new experiences. It highlights three inter-related experience pillars that tie the geopark visitor experience together – to the landscape and its geological heritage, to the adventure it offers, and to the community itself.





# Land of ancient footprints – Land of new discoveries

Imbibing the essence of the Tumbler Ridge wilderness is a transforming experience, one that is potentially life altering ....

This is a land of ancient footprints, staggering waterfalls, and 'cool rocks'; a land of world-changing discoveries; a land that creates mystery and intrigue.

Footprints connect us to our past – to ancient times 130 million years ago. Footprints lead us to a life that seems like it lies in our imagination. The world's only Tyrannosaurid trackway; dinosaur fauna spanning almost sixty million years; large, medium and small fantastical creatures – our geo-heritage and shared past.

With the collision of land masses, heat and pressure on sediments, the sculpting effect of glaciation, and catastrophic floods, a new landscape emerges – one that has exciting and breath-taking structural exposures that tell the story of dramatic change. A tapestry of topographical features – bizarre patterns of rocks, glacial erratics, sand dunes, ghost valleys, pothole lakes, awe-inspiring waterfalls and ancient footprints that entered the mythology of Indigenous peoples migrating westwards into the prairie-edged mountains looking for new opportunities and new hope.

Today the land continues to inspire footprints, migrations and resilience. Coal discoveries....and a new town evolves. One that uncovers its ancient past. One where footprints through the millennia are leading to new possibilities – a future that has the capacity to intrigue the world; a future that continues to be built on new discoveries, and to see new opportunities in our shared geo-heritage. Today we capture the power of the wind, we unearth the rich deposits of our ancient past, we embrace the challenge of mountain marathons, and we work together to celebrate our internationally distinctive legacy, our UNESCO Global Geopark, with our friends and guests from around the world.



## Geo-Heritage



Our UNESCO Global Geopark is a place with exceptional 'cool rocks', palaeontology, wildlife, and cultural heritage. Whether it is tracing the footprints of dinosaurs, the Ancient Pathways of Indigenous peoples, or the footsteps of early European explorers and trail blazers, our geosites and numerous trails provide exciting insights into a globally unique landscape. Our museum, our interpretive trails, our guided activities and our ongoing new discoveries take our visitors back in time – back many millennia to contemplate ancient mysteries.

## Geo-Adventure



The landscape and its remarkably diverse trail network provide an exciting spectrum of year-round opportunities for geo-adventure. The solitude of the mountains, the discovery of cascading waterfalls, the proximity of wildlife, and the adrenalin of the climb and descent create a sense of exhilaration, awe and personal achievement. An understanding of the dramatic evolution of the landscape and an appreciation of following ancient footprints add a unique and humbling quality to the experience.

## Geo-Community



Tumbler Ridge is a community that owes its very existence to its geo-heritage. Our economy is inextricably linked to this heritage – to our new discoveries. Our coal, energy, forestry and geo-tourism co-exist in a mutually supportive manner. Our residents share a value system that celebrates our geo-heritage and derives our health and well-being from our wilderness setting. Our volunteers dedicate themselves tirelessly to creating new opportunities to embrace our geo-heritage. Our artists seek to capture its tantalising mysteries. And, our businesses are proud to welcome guests seeking to enjoy our landscape, our footprints, our adventure and our lifestyle.

# What are Our Goals?

Our overarching vision is to bring this narrative to life for the visitor and the community in such a way as to put Tumbler Ridge firmly on the map as a destination for BC and Alberta residents, other Canadians, and international visitors. Ensuring sustainability and working effectively with partners to develop an industry that is of benefit to the entire community involves pursuing the following objectives :



Compelling visitor destination with marketable geo-experiences that support the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark brand



Sustainable tourism growth that supports community quality of life



Effective destination management with community and industry support



Brand awareness and incremental tourism spend





# What do we Need to Focus on?

The strategy is built around two integral dimensions designed to give TR strategic direction in moving forward as a UNESCO Global Geopark destination. Small, rural communities find it tremendously challenging to generate new tourism activity as the probability of standing out in the context of the regional tourism offer is low. A considerable proportion of leisure tourism in the north is associated with visiting friends and relatives, while in the Peace region, the core Alaska Highway visitor from the US is destined for Alaska and has little to no interest in local travel. This means the opportunities within the existing travel markets are marginal at best, evidence for which can be found in the mid-2000s value of visitor centre studies conducted by Tourism BC that indicated only 10% to 14% of all travellers could be influenced to change their travel plans while in the area. One implication of this is that strategies that try to attract existing markets from other communities in the north are unlikely to be successful to the extent they will make a measurable difference in regional tourism performance. It will be necessary, therefore, to create incremental visitation to the north, preferably through increased overnight stays, that is predicated on Tumbler Ridge as a primary visitor destination.

With the designation of the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark, the community is now firmly committed to developing geotourism. This strategy sets out a development pathway with mutually supporting **keystone projects** and **groundwork initiatives** that can drive change. In some cases efforts are already in progress and the focus moving forward needs to be on maintaining momentum. The direction is predicated on the belief that it will be the bold ventures of the keystone projects that will empower that momentum and galvanize ongoing support from the broader stakeholder community. By thinking big and targeting enduring projects the TRGG brand promise can be energized and will bring forward the measurable change in visitation required to elevate tourism as an equal partner in the community's economic base.

The little things matter as well, so a series of process-oriented groundwork initiatives are recommended but done so within the context of supporting keystone projects. This will allow Tumbler Ridge to allocate its resources efficiently and effectively, working smarter while encouraging greater private sector leadership and investment.



# Who are our Target Markets?

The Global Geopark experience is highly aligned with Northern BC's targeted EQ market segments.

## AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCERS

(PRIMARY)

Older and highly educated, they relish experiencing all their travel destination has to offer in an authentic, reserved, non-exorbitant way. They like the freedom of doing their own thing and connecting with the locals, and have a particular interest in history.

## CULTURAL EXPLORERS

(PRIMARY)

Avid, open-minded and socially engaged travellers, they embrace, discover and immerse themselves in all aspects of the travel experience. They seek spontaneous and authentic experiences on their own terms.

## FREE SPIRITS

(SECONDARY)

Younger, adventurous thrill seekers, they are highly social and open-minded. They are committed travellers who indulge in high-end experiences that are shared with others.





Tumbler Ridge has a special experience to offer. It is critical to fully understand the psyche of the target markets and how to truly motivate them to visit. The research that underlies Destination Canada's Explorer Quotient (EQ) psychographic segmentation model allows us to more deeply understand the motivations, dreams and passions of our target consumers.

Destination BC and Northern BC Tourism target three of the twelve North American EQ segmentation types - Authentic Experiencers, Cultural Explorers and Free Spirits.

Other dimensions can be added to modify targets. While the key geographic markets are regional ( BC and Alberta residents), European markets also have a deep desire to engage in the experiences Tumbler Ridge has to offer – particularly the German market. In addition, the Chinese market has a strong interest in Global Geoparks (with the greatest number of designations in the world) and over time, this market should be encouraged to consider visiting Tumbler Ridge. The EQ segments have demographic characteristics that include both baby boomers and millennials, and couples, singles and families. They are interested in participating in outdoor adventure and visiting historic sites and museums. When the business travel segment is considered, there is considerable potential to explore ways of extending the stay through short add-on micro-adventures that would appeal to segments of the market with similar personal interests.



### Psychographic

Authentic Experiencers

Gentle Explorers

Free SpiritsV



### Geographic

BC

Alberta

Europe



### Demographic

Boomers

Millenials

Families/Couples

Singles



### Activity

Outdoor Adventure

Historic Sites/Museums

Small Meeting &  
Convention

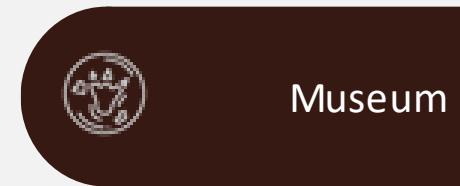
The image is a presentation slide with a nature-themed background. It features several overlapping hexagonal shapes, some containing photos of waterfalls and forests. A large black hexagonal shape is positioned on the left side. In the center, a black rounded rectangle contains the text '4 Strategies and Actions' in white. On the right, a white-outlined hexagon contains a photo of a waterfall. At the bottom right, a person is sitting on a large rock next to a waterfall. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, using geometric shapes to frame natural imagery.

# 4 Strategies and Actions

# Keystone Projects

Keystone projects are an important element of this Strategy. It is anticipated that they will play a fundamental role in catalyzing development. They have the potential to transform the destination by adding major infrastructure and visitor services capacity that are demand generators, while also contributing to quality of life for residents. There is a regeneration potential that will strengthen broader community development objectives of downtown revitalization, a healthy retail and commercial sector and overall economic diversification.

The following five projects are all based on bold thinking and represent substantial capital investment with the potential to drive tourism and economic development moving forward. They are public or publicly led initiatives that will add to the community's core attractions. They are expected to be transformative as they encourage greater private sector investment in other aspects of destination that fall outside the public realm such as accommodation, food and beverage services and guiding services.



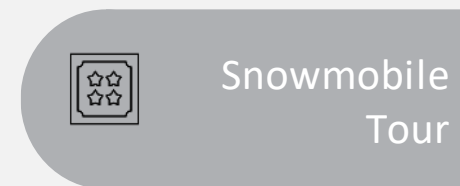
Museum



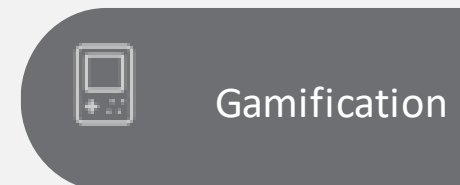
Bike Park



Tourism  
Precinct



Snowmobile  
Tour



Gamification



# Keystone Projects

## Museum

The Peace River Palaeontology Research Centre (PRPRC) and Dinosaur Discovery Gallery have been an essential part of the visitor offer in Tumbler Ridge for the last 15 years and were key factors in achieving the UNESCO Global Geopark designation. The current Master Plan positions the Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation (TRMF) as a co-anchor of the Geopark with new education programming planned to complement existing programs and services. The Master Plan states the TRMF and PRPRC will continue to research ways to fund a larger scale museum that can handle additional displays and serve the Peace Region in an enhanced way. Plans call for new galleries focused on palaeontology, geography and biodiversity to be developed alongside a public theatre and rotating exhibition space. The location of the proposed facility is adjacent to the Visitor Centre. The proposed museum is a joint project between the DTR, TRGGS and TRMF, with a funding application submitted by the DTR to the Investing in Canada Infrastructure program. The new facility would be a Geopark Discovery Centre, putting the public aspect of both the TRGG and TRMF under one roof.

One of the core objectives of the proposed new museum is to raise attendance from the current level of 5,000 annually to 10,000. This could not be achieved via local demand because the community is too small, but will require increased visitation from external education, leisure and business travel markets. Well designed and positioned small museums are known to generate visitor demand, and the key target segments, Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers, are more likely than other travellers to visit exhibits, architecture, historic sites/buildings and museums and it is anticipated that the right type of museum experience could have the potential to boost visitor volumes to the community.

### Targets

- Authentic Experiencers, Cultural Explorers
- BC, AB, Europe
- 55+ couples, young families
- MICE market
- Education market
- Visiting friends and family market (VFR)
- Leisure visitors

### Action

**1. If current fundraising targets are reached, a master plan with broad community and industry input should be prepared so the museum is configured and managed to deliver a superior visitor experience.**

If a new facility is to be built, it would represent a major development project and significant community investment contribution with implications for the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark, tourism and overall community development. The use of the current gallery would presumably be determined in conjunction with a new facility and could become a satellite facility. The needs of research and tourism will have to be carefully balanced as there will be potentially conflicting demands for each. In order to leverage the capital into an ongoing tourism legacy, it will be necessary to deliver the exhibits and programming that will bring more visitors into the community for overnight stays. Outside of Royal Tyrell, dinosaur museums in Western Canada have had challenges attracting anticipated visitation levels. Perhaps the most important lesson learned from these facilities is the need to generate interactive and immersive experiences that will excite visitors and get them talking about Tumbler Ridge as a special destination. The need for a cohesive project manager through a partnership between DTR, TRGGS and TRMF is imperative.

**2. If current fundraising targets are not reached, the Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation and its partners should pursue small-scale capital projects that enable continued incremental growth of visitor-focused exhibits and programs.**

What differentiates Tumbler Ridge's palaeontology resources from its competitors is that they were found in the region and are too numerous to be shown in the current Dinosaur Discovery Gallery space. There are fossil collections that are unique in Canada and North America, and a growing list of objects are being collected annually. Many of these could be developed as touring exhibits, perhaps in support of a Western Canada dino-tour.

**3. Future geopark validation is based in part on continued research in palaeontology, geology and geography. There will be a need to continue advocating for support from the provincial government and to focus on raising awareness of the provincial and national significance of the Tumbler Ridge paleontological assets.**

# Keystone Projects

## Comparable

The Bainbridge Island Museum of Art (BIMA) opened in 2013 across Puget Sound from Seattle with a key objective of driving tourism to Bainbridge Island. The curators focused on attracting visitors to contemporary fine arts and crafts exhibitions from the smaller regional markets. The glass-dominated building sports a rooftop garden, recycled-denim insulation, solar panels, geothermal wells, and sustainable tigerwood siding that reflects the community's eco-friendly spirit.

BIMA quickly established itself as part of the vibrant cultural landscape of Washington State and beyond. Within three years, attendance had climbed to over 100,000 with a significant number of visitors taking the ferry from across Puget Sound to stay overnight. They have attracted visitors from 46 US states and 36 countries around the world. The BIMA is now one of the most popular sites on the island. They remain the number two attraction as rated by Trip Advisor.



Source: <http://www.biartmuseum.org>

# Keystone Projects

## Mountain Biking

Mountain Biking has good potential in Tumbler Ridge if a planned pump track facility within proximity to downtown is developed. The topography is ideal, and the potential for a more active and dynamic downtown core would have very strong appeal to the Free Spirits market, which has generated a vibrant visitor experience in places like Squamish and Fernie.

The Tumbler Ridge Mountain Biking Association (TRMBA) is finalizing a Mountain Biking Trail Master Plan that will outline a trail development plan and pump track and skills park designs. One-third of funding for a pump track has been secured and negotiations are under way with government for the necessary tenures for Crown land access. Assuming funding can be secured, the track would be built to Red Bull track specifications and thus eligible for competitions. In addition, there are ongoing discussions with the Wolverine Nordic Mountain Society (WNMS) and development of cycling access to multi-use trails in the area, which will complement the pump track project.

As it stands, Tumbler Ridge has the attributes for a viable cycling product but will need to fill in the service gaps and provide access to packages and experiences that are going to make it a go-to destination. Tourism operators will need to step up their service levels and leverage future downtown improvements to create more of a “vibe” in the town centre. The pump track would draw an entirely new visitor to the community, one that is going to be younger than average and more interested in social engagement with like-minded visitors and locals. It is not just mountain bike tourism that has the potential to generate economic impacts in Tumbler Ridge. Young entrepreneurs and families attracted by recreational and cultural amenities that provide a higher quality of life can bring new job creation opportunities to the community. In the case of Tumbler Ridge, affordable real estate and housing is a bonus.

### Targets

- Free Spirits, Authentic Experiencers
- Elite Bikers & Diverse Cyclists (45-64)
- Outdoor Adventurers (25-34, 55-64)

### Action

**4. Support the master plan recommendations for a phased pump track facility by assisting with fundraising, infrastructure placement and event development.**

**5. Work with local service providers to establish a stronger understanding of the needs and expectations of this market and encourage the development and/or enhancement of new services and supporting facilities.**

### Comparables

**Riding Fool Hostel** – Cumberland, BC. Located in historic downtown Cumberland, the Riding Fool Hostel occupies an 1895 heritage building which served as the Village hardware store prior to being tastefully restored and converted into a hostel, bike shop and café.

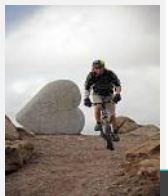
Source: <http://www.mountainbikingbc.ca>

**Wandering Wheels**, Revelstoke, BC. Wandering Wheels offers local shuttle service to the top of Revelstoke’s world class downhill trails as well as drop off at the Frisby Ridge XC trail. Three-hour evening shuttles offer unlimited riding at local DH trails while cross country shuttles drop off riders at the Frisby Ridge Trailhead providing an epic high alpine experience followed by a thrilling ride back to town.

Source: <http://www.kootenayrockies.com>

**7stones Art Project**, Scotland. Southern Scotland’s myths and legends are reflected in seven stone sculptures in place across the 7stones mountain bike centres. These sculptures are now being used to drive business to the sites with competitions to encourage visitors to the 7stones forests.

Source: <http://www.forestryandland.gov.scot>





# Keystone Projects

## Tourism Precinct

Tourism precincts have long been a development target in urban areas around the world. Their presence in rural areas is less apparent other than in resort communities, but they can equally be effective as a focus of tourism planning and a catalyst for tourism growth. Precincts are set apart from surrounding areas by their alignment with some form of thematic consistency. If this can be matched with an aggregation of visitor attractions and services, then it can set the stage for a tourism cluster and drive emerging best practices in sustainability.

In Tumbler Ridge, the overarching goal of a tourism precinct would be more mixed-use downtown development that concentrates visitor services and public amenities, while leveraging private sector investment in hospitality services and visitor experiences. The concentration of visitor activity in the downtown core would contribute to a sense of vibrancy while providing greater opportunities to have visitors explore the adventures that await in the backcountry. As noted in the discussion of market potential in Tumbler Ridge, the EQ Free Spirits market places a high premium on social interaction and feeling part of a stimulating experience. Rural BC communities like Port Alberni, Nelson, Fernie and Kaslo have high concentrations of Millennial visitors attracted by their combination of outdoor adventure and “main street” gathering places.

Tumbler Ridge is already a master planned community that has infill and densification opportunities in downtown. If efforts to develop a new palaeontology museum and geo interpretive centre are successful, then there would be a natural cluster emerge in the vicinity of the Visitor Centre. The District could leverage this new infrastructure by planning for amenities and development guidelines that embrace a gathering and staging area for visitors and residents. By encouraging visitors to congregate in a given area, a tourism precinct will encourage tourism operators to expand and diversify their services, contributing to infill and creating a virtuous investment climate in the community.

### Targets

- All EQ segments, notably Free Spirits
- Families
- Leisure visitors
- Visiting friends and family market (VFR)

### Action

#### **6. Stimulate organic growth of a tourism precinct in the town centre by establishing a public gathering space and connecting it to the Visitor Centre and adjacent properties via a pedestrian corridor.**

- Select and develop a public gathering space in the town centre that will be within easy walking distance between shops/services and the Visitor Centre.
- Consider moving the historical place name signage beside town hall to this new public gathering place in order to animate the site and encourage visitors to explore.
- Develop a self-guided, signed walking tour (with geopark branding) connecting the community centre, Visitor Centre and adjacent interpretive trail, District office and other future potential tourism facilities such as a Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark interpretive centre and a museum. The existing Downtown Walking Tour booklet could be integrated into this initiative.
- Strategically place public amenities such as picnic tables, trash receptacles, information kiosks and washroom facilities along the route.
- Develop a signed walk/bike walkway/pathway to the Dinosaur Discovery Gallery and connectors to the Tumbler Point and Tumbler Ridge trails.
- Prioritize tenancy in properties and storefronts in the precinct by incentivizing landlords and encouraging adaptive reuse of underutilized properties.
- Encourage public and community events at the gathering place.
- Align all the above with the pending development of the Geo Interpretive Centre will add a centre-piece to the downtown area.

# Keystone Projects

## Comparable

Situated in Southwestern Ontario, Bruce Peninsula includes part of the 900-kilometre Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve and the Bruce Trail that runs from the Ontario/US border to Tobermory. Two national parks, eight Ontario provincial parks, and four Ontario Nature reserves are located there. Tourism is an important economic driver, and the county is intent on promoting a four-season industry that includes both private and public facilities. Although nature-based tourism is the core offer in the Bruce Peninsula, local government has prioritized tourism development in municipal core areas to raise property values, tax revenues and improvements to infrastructure.

The Spruce the Bruce (STB) program was launched to assist municipalities using a variety of programs aimed at supporting and enhancing the economic health of downtown areas, including community branding, streamlined policy development, and a grant program to directly fund capital investments. These initiatives paid off with increased visitor use of its extensive trail system and greater levels of overnight visitation. There were several valuable lessons learned through the implementation of this program, three of which are noteworthy:

- The county found that greater success was achieved where there was a clear vision and targeted organizational capacity to support revitalization efforts.
- Successful development of downtowns is enhanced by their linkage with dispersed rural products, excellent wayfinding and collaboration among community groups.
- **The natural assets and trails are what bring visitors to Bruce County, but it is the commercial downtown cores that are playing a vital role in encouraging visitor length of stay and spending.**



Source: <http://www.outhere.com>

# Keystone Projects

## Destination Snowmobile Tour

An iconic snowmobile tour that builds on existing trails and play areas could be developed as a regional experience targeted at the Alberta and BC sledder, but eventually expanding internationally if suitable accommodation were available. Tumbler Ridge is already known in Alberta and Northern BC as a snowmobile destination given its six-month season, good snow conditions, 300 kilometres of trails, and a variety of terrain to accommodate the novice to the advanced rider. There are more than a dozen other sledding areas in the vicinity that are only a short drive away.

Snowmobilers visiting Tumbler Ridge tend to be self-guided and self-supported with lodging and food services being the major local expenditures if there is an overnight stay involved. The Tumbler Ridge Riders Association serve an important role in monitoring and reporting trail conditions and facilities, grooming trails when possible and providing guidance for visitors wishing to access the mainly unmarked trail system

However, at present most visiting sledders are not staying overnight and the community is not sufficiently benefitting from this sector. This project aims to counteract this trend and generate new return from snowmobiling.

The tour concept would offer a packaged, guided tour that would link to other winter activities and provide the option of higher-end accommodation. It would generate new market interest and demand, particularly among longer-haul markets that cannot bring their own equipment.

Advancing the concept will require consideration of preferred trails and play areas, packaging and marketing, development of complementary winter activities and related infrastructure, and addressing the need for increased accommodation options.

### Targets

- Free Spirits, Cultural Explorers
- Leisure and outdoor adventure markets
- Long-haul visitors, including Europe

### Action

#### **7. Package and deliver a quality tour product that showcases Tumbler Ridge's winter outdoor potential. This could be an important global differentiator for the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark because most geoparks cannot deliver a true winter product.**

- Work with the Tumbler Ridge Riders to conduct a small survey of visiting sledders in 2020 to find out potential gaps and opportunities for generating more overnight stays.
- Conduct market research with receptive tour operators to scope target market, demand, potential tour activities, pricing and commissions as well as determining interest in marketing. Consideration for complementary activities such as cross-country skiing and ice climbing should be made to diversify and enrich the experience.
- Assist with development of a pilot tour for the 2021 winter season that would package a multi-day snowmobile tour, transportation, accommodation, food services and ancillary activities through a receptive tour operator.
- Evaluate the 2021 pilot with the intent of launching a full-scale tour from 2022 onward.
- Emulate best practices of successful sledding destinations like Revelstoke and Whistler to create more experiences for beginning and novice riders, high-end accommodation options, and extension into other winter tourism activities such as ice climbing.
- Explore ways of integrating the geopark message and geo-tourism focus into the tours
- Consider using Game of Thrones theming to build on the notoriety established through the HBO world-wide contest in 2019 to customize and differentiate the tour.



# Keystone Projects

## Comparables

- **The St. Lawrence Tour, Quebec** – 5 days over 680 kms. This is a self-guided itinerary with accommodation recommendations, eating places and activities suggested for each day. The full trip involves a ferry ride through the ice floes.



Source: <https://www.quebecmaritime.ca>

- **Algonquin Park Snowmobile Safari, Ontario** – 850 km circular expedition exploring the park on an extensive network of trails and logging roads. Includes motel accommodation, partial board, winter clothing, snowmobile and services of a guide.



Source: <https://www.callofthewild.ca>

- **Snowmobiling in Lapland** – a series of themed packaged and partially guided tours for both beginners and experienced riders with all details and planning sorted out for the visitor. Tours can include the northern lights together with activities such as learning how to drive a dog sled, visiting a traditional Sami reindeer farm, staying in the ICEHOTEL, exploring local communities, gourmet local cuisine, or even a Santa adventure.



Source: <https://www.laplandsafaris.com>

- **Harriniva Safari Tours, Finland** – a five-day snowmobile adventure. Includes air fares, winter clothing, accommodation, full-board, snow mobiles and a wilderness guide. The tour traverses 640 kms of trails. The Harriniva area offers a range of winter adventures that are distinctive including winter glamping to view the northern lights.



Source: <https://harriniva.fi>

# Keystone Projects

## Gamification

The global video and mobile game markets are worth billions of dollars and attracts millions of users annually. Over the last decade, that technology has been applied in non-gaming contexts, known as gamification. The idea of gamification in tourism is to alter the motivation and behaviour of potential visitors while developing new skills and driving innovation of the destination. It can lead to more rewarding interactions and higher level of visitor satisfaction. It goes a step beyond social media strategies to engage and create a culture of fun and participation, thereby increasing brand awareness and loyalty to the destination. Importantly, gamification encourages co-creation by the visitor as well as the destination.

This initiative entails development of a web and mobile app with the capacity for a game that engages visitors and heightens interest in Tumbler Ridge. Mobile games are a rapidly growing gaming segment and they have attracted a diverse audience well beyond the public image of young male gamers. Depending on the themes developed, there would be widespread interest across all market segments. It can incorporate elements for engagement before, during and after the trip experience. Potentially, virtual reality, augmented reality and technology mediated experiences could be incorporated, bringing alive some the Tumbler Ridge's core tourism assets and creating a more participatory and learning experience. Potential themes for Tumbler Ridge include:

- A self-guided tour of local waterfalls by local characters.
- A palaeontology tour that would incorporate the Dinosaur Discovery Gallery and local trackways, hosted by local researchers.
- Local Game of Thrones tour.
- Industrial tour that tells stories of coal mining and wind energy.
- Gaming to contribute to charity partners such as stewardship or environmental groups.

### Targets

- All EQ segments
- Leisure markets



### Action

#### 8. Conduct a pilot project that would conceptualize and scope a mobile game that Tumbler Ridge could develop to drive digital communications and social media engagement.

- Review other game initiatives in BC so budgeting and funding can be secured.
- Identify the desired outcome of the game, for example location-based augmented reality (e.g. an interactive trip through a Dinosaur trackway), a themed adventure on local trails perhaps with a Game of Thrones accent, or a cultural/heritage or industrial tour that provides an enriching, learning experience to the visitor.
- Prepare a game concept and prepare a terms of reference for development.
- Continue to improve and expand high-speed internet coverage and capacity that facilitates gaming and online activities.

### Comparable

The Magma Geopark in Norway has developed two apps, one adventure-based and the other educational. The adventure app allows leisure visitors to play treasure hunt games in the geopark using their device with GPS and maps. They can discover treasure locations, solve challenges and earn scores. They can play solo or compete in a multiplayer game. The game can be downloaded for iOS or Android.

The Magma Geopark uses TeachOut, an educational game developed as a tool for improving teaching and enabling teachers to create and publish outdoor science games for smartphones to engage their students on a deeper learning experience on their field trips. It can be used by anyone working in the field of education. Users can position GPS locations and enter the introductory descriptions with defined challenges in a content management system (CMS) creator. They can consider different learning styles as well as teaching and learning through all the senses. The app gives students the opportunity to experience practical learning with a lot of independence, outdoor adventure and physical activity.

Source: <https://locatify.com/magma/>



# Groundwork Initiatives

Groundwork initiatives are the everyday programs and services that will provide a solid foundation for excellence in Tumbler Ridge's destination and market development. They are important because they represent the operating environment that will be expected to nurture and get the most out of the keystone projects. Without this added level of leverage and support there is a risk that the keystone projects will be disconnected and unable to raise the cumulative capacity and performance of the local tourism economy.

The following five projects cover the main elements of destination development, namely organizational, experience, sustainability, marketing and community development. The groundwork initiatives are not limited to the tourism realm, in fact that have a close association with the District's economic development mandate and function. This means they require alignment and rationalization with broader community objectives such as downtown revitalization and the expansion of the commercial and retail sectors. The underlying geo-experience direction of this strategy also envisions more prominent roles for First Nations, resource industries and community groups that will require new dimensions of outreach and engagement.



Tourism  
Leadership



Experience  
Development



Sustainability



Marketing &  
Communications



Community  
Investment



# Groundwork Initiatives

## Tourism Leadership

### What is our rationale?

- Effective destination management with community and industry support
  - United leadership
  - Broad adoption of the brand vision
  - Efficient use of community resources
  - Engaged partners

### Context

The first group of strategies centre on partnerships that will galvanize the community toward implementation and action. Tumbler Ridge has already demonstrated leadership in palaeontology research and interpretation, trail building and geopark designation which is now being leveraged in destination branding. A continuing commitment to building local leadership is important to the success of the Strategy given that implementation will require access to resources well beyond what the community itself can provide. The Strategy aligns well with the Northeast BC and Northern BC destination tourism strategies that will be implemented over the next decade by Destination BC and its partners, so it is important efforts are made to engage early and often so policy, program and financial support is available and accessed.

Community groups will play a pivotal role in moving strategic initiatives forward particularly as much of the existing tourism economy revolves around their past efforts and investments. Many of the local trails, wayfinding and staging areas simply would not be in existence without their ongoing commitment. If tourism is to be an accepted beneficiary of these assets, then strong local acceptance, buy-in and leadership will be essential.

A potential opportunity in building a more compelling tourism offer in Tumbler Ridge is Indigenous tourism. The Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark could significantly differentiate itself as a global geopark if the Indigenous community participated in building a unique and authentic visitor experience. Their connection to the land is a multi-dimensional geo-experience that is waiting to be told, but at the same time it is one that can only unfold with their active leadership and participation.

Importantly, achieving sustainable tourism growth and development requires industry initiative. Tumbler Ridge is a small community so an infusion of new entrepreneurs and investment would be welcomed, but it is equally critical to work with existing (and prospective) businesses. It is worth noting that of all the economic base industries in the economy, tourism is the one that relies most heavily on intra-industry cooperation and partnerships, the role of packaged visitor services being a prime example. The future is increasingly about collaboration – it is about bringing together businesses to improve overall capacity to offer more connected, seamless experiences. It is about understanding the convergence that has taken place within the tourism ecosystem and the need for co-creation of value in meeting the needs and expectations of today's travellers.

### Tasks

#### **9. Target District investment in tourism planning, marketing and destination development to drive best practices and maximize the return on investment.**

- Compile and distribute to all tourism partners UNESCO best practices in geopark management.
- Leverage funding, staffing, marketing and programming through a more coordinated approach to destination development – particularly between the Visitor Centre, Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark, Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation and the Economic Development office of the DTR.
- Recruit more private sector participation onto boards and committees.
- Investigate, and if appropriate, encourage amalgamation of Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark, Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation and potentially WNMS so that that fundraising becomes more sustainable and volunteer board/committee resources are streamlined.
- Reexamine core funding and develop a five-year budgeting and capital program that can reliably support geopark tourism development. The Appendix provides an estimate of capital costs to implement this Strategy.

# Groundwork Initiatives

## Tourism Leadership

### **10. Pursue partnerships that will leverage private sector contributions to destination and market development.**

- Encourage and where advisable provide resources to establish a Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) in Tumbler Ridge.  
The community is small as is the accommodation base so the collected fees would be modest, but an MRDT is a good way to have accommodators take a more active role in both marketing and destination development. There are over 60 MRDT communities in the province, charging between 2% and 3% of the room price, and there has been no evidence that the tax has had a negative impact on visitation either to individual communities or the province. The District would be the designation recipient of the MRDT. Some preliminary discussions have taken place in the community among the accommodators and an initiative to establish the tax could be successful.
- Establish a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) via a non-profit society if the MRDT is successful. Without the MRDT the resources do not exist for an independent DMO.
- Investigate resort municipality status for the District.  
The Resort Municipality Initiative (RMI) program is managed by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture. The program is intended to support small, tourism-based municipalities to build and diversify their tourism infrastructure, deliver exceptional visitor experiences and incorporate sustainable tourism practices and products. The RMI is not accepting new applicants at this time, but may do so in the future.
  - Proceed with MRDT designation, which is a minimum requirement for the program
  - Identify the preferred resort municipality option under the *Local Government Act*
  - Maintain contact with the Ministry regarding the District's interest in resort status

### **11. Coordinate volunteer efforts amongst all tourism and community partners to optimize resources, prevent burnout and create a more satisfying environment of reward and success.**

- Describe and quantify the annual demand for tourism volunteers according to job type, for example board/committee, construction and maintenance of infrastructure and event hosting
- Use [Volunteer BC resources](#) to develop a volunteer program in tourism

## Experience Development

### **What is our rationale?**

- Marketable geo-experiences that support the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark brand and reflect the positioning or the essence of Tumbler Ridge
  - Consistent use of the geopark brand
  - Year-round, brand-aligned compelling experiences
  - Innovative, competitive operators
  - Overnight stays, higher yields

### **Context**

The development of compelling and marketable visitor experiences that will increase visitation and visitor spending is an underlying directive of the Strategy. The keystone projects have an important role to play in this regard, but the creation and delivery of new guided products and tours that reinforce the geopark story is a core need as well. It is fundamental to strengthening the market appeal of Tumbler Ridge, creating additional opportunities on which to base the marketing call to action and social media engagement. Tumbler Ridge has exceptional natural attributes that draw interest from those visitors who are comfortable in the outdoors, willing to explore and relatively self-reliant. But they also represent a small part of the total travel market—a much bigger portion is looking to engage in activities and access services that are packaged, affordable, accessible and safe. An expanded, competitive base of operators would help, especially if it provides access to investment, innovation and visitor offers that are in line with best practices.



# Groundwork Initiatives

## Experience Development

### **12. Provide access to resources that will encourage the private sector to develop more market-ready experiences.**

- Setup and deliver a SuperHost program, in cooperation with go2HR, for targeted operators who would become part of the Tourism Precinct. This program has been delivered in the past and it may be difficult to attract uptake in a general form, but it could attract interest if it was connected to Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark development and involved a core of like-minded operators who would participate in the precinct concept.
- Develop a set of six self/semi-guided themed itineraries, two for each geo-tourism theme that would be promoted through the Visitor Centre, visitor guide, website and travel trade. The itineraries would be initially targeted at independent travelers but over time additional guided activities could be built in as operators became more comfortable working together. The VC could play a lead role in featuring and promoting the itineraries and could be the go-to sales pitch to prospective visitors.
- Prepare a short pre-feasibility assessment of rentals, shuttling services and other adventure services that could attract new operators.
- Encourage existing and new operators to be export-ready in accordance with Destination BC criteria (e.g. work with travel trade, ticketable, commissionable).
- Encourage greater uptake by local operators of Destination BC's Co-operative Marketing Partnerships Program.
- Work with NBCT and interested local operators on generating interest among small-scale, boutique tour operators such as Lotus Travel to connect with long-haul and international markets that have a specific interest in global geopark experiences.

### **13. Emphasize product development that complements the geo-heritage theme.** There are some excellent opportunities to develop modern-day geo-heritage experiences to complement the already strong geo-adventure products.

- Develop more interpretation and tours of present-day use of geological resources, such as coal mining, oil and gas and wind energy. Coal mining also has a very strong connection to the growing fossil collections in Tumbler Ridge with many fascinating stories about the unearthing and preservation of important fossils.

- Pursue networking with other global geoparks and palaeontology organizations. There are many global geoparks, for example in Norway, Italy and South Africa, that host active mining operations. The Yimengshan geopark in China has an active diamond mine within its boundaries that features prominently in its promotional materials. Similarly, the Geopark Ore of the Alps hosts mine tours to complement its geotrail products. There are many such examples that could bring a much more expansive experience to the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark visitor.

### **14. Assist local First Nations and partners to develop authentic Indigenous content for visitor experiences.** This could be a strong differentiator for the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark, as other global geoparks have not taken advantage of market interest in Indigenous tourism.

- Invite ITAC and local First Nations to collaborate on Strategy implementation, where relevant and appropriate.
- Use the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark as the opportunity to improve communications and protocols to show Indigenous culture and traditions. These do not need to be recreated but can be based on the work already undertaken by Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark Society.
- Work with NBC, ITAC and local First Nations' partners to create more Indigenous experiences (as part of the geo-community theme). This could include an entire Indigenous itinerary or indigenous stories and content for one or more other itineraries.
- Work toward developing a stronger understanding of the concept of Indigenous 'territory' among visitors, through appropriate forms of cultural interpretation. This can and should include introducing visitors to First Nations language and sayings. The new Community Forest Interpretive Trail has First Nations information and text on the many signs along the trail: this approach should be expanded so the Indigenous component of the park's offer is reinforced.

# Groundwork Initiatives

## Experience Development

### 15. Develop a coordinated event strategy that can sustain current successful events and add at least one additional festival targeted at destination visitor markets (leisure and business travel).

- Prepare an audit of recent, past events outlining lessons learned and recommendations for moving forward with a coordinated event strategy. Success with the Emperors Challenge has been offset with the loss of this year's Grizfest and before that the hill climb and snowmobile drag races. Rather than proceeding to a new event at this time, it would be beneficial to stabilize and perhaps expand existing events.
- Prioritize the upselling of existing events such as the Emperor's Challenge. This is an event with a successful history, dedicated following and excellent tie-in to the geopark and many other potential experiences.
- Revisit and incorporate recommendations made in 2018 Economic Development Strategy that could support event development:
  - incentivizing local companies to conduct local meetings and education/training sessions
  - golf tournaments
- Golfing could prove a lucrative visitor activity in Tumbler Ridge if it can be connected to the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark through the geo-tourism lens. The Tumbler Ridge Golf and Country Club has event hosting, food and beverage service and RV capacity and one of the better courses in Northern BC. Certainly, it can be easily linked to Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark event strategies and multi-activity packaging that could help generate more overnight stays.

### 16. Identify geopark and palaeontology events that could be hosted in Tumbler Ridge.

- Prepare a 5-year in-house events strategy that specifically identifies an event niche linked to the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark and targeted at destination visitors.
- Incorporate sporting events that have future market potential
- Engage an events coordinator who will work with the local tourism industry on implementing the events strategy.
- Meet with local accommodators and other operators to gauge support for a cost-shared coordinator position. One option is to fund this capacity through MRDT monies.



- Prepare a terms-of-reference for the position, which would be a defined-term contract with options to extend based on satisfactory performance reviews.
- Establish policies for the development, delivery and pricing of visitor experiences that fully monetize the opportunities and encourages more private sector investment in product development.

### Comparable - Osoyoos Indian Band Partnerships

The Osoyoos Indian Band (OIB) is a First Nations government located in the town of Osoyoos in the Okanagan Valley. It controls about 32,000 acres of land that is dedicated to agriculture and ecotourism as well as commercial, industrial, and residential uses in the vicinity of Osoyoos.

The OIB Development Corporation employs over 1,200 people and contributes about \$100 million annually to the local economy. This has been accomplished through leases and joint ventures with non-native businesses that have created social and employment opportunities for both natives and non-natives in the South Okanagan. Established leases include Vincor International, Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa, Sonora Dunes Golf Course, and Cherry Grove Modular Home Park, as well as agricultural leases in excess of 1,000 acres in partnership with Vincor International (Winery), Mission Hill Winery, and Burrowing Owl Vineyards.

Land owned by the OIB is among the most desirable urban industrial commercial land in the South Okanagan. Since reserve lands are not subject to municipal bylaws or provincial legislation, the OIB does not face the restrictions surrounding landowners encounter when undertaking development. Their tax authority and tax planning has allowed the OIB to take partial ownership positions in several important tourism projects such as the Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa. They also levy the MRDT tax that generates a sizeable marketing budget of over \$100,000 to support marketing initiatives and partnerships.

OIB's significant economic development has been based on forming strong partnerships with leading corporations in the areas of winemaking, hotel and restaurant development and management, and golf, ski, and residential development.

Source: <http://oib.ca/>

# Groundwork Initiatives

## Experience Development

### 17. Pursue a focused sports tourism strategy that targets the shoulder and off seasons.

- Work with local sports clubs to identify ongoing opportunities for tournament and event hosting.
- Use DBC resources for scoping a sports tourism strategy. The Tourism Business Essentials [Sport Tourism guide](#) is essential reading.
- Evaluate Tumbler Ridge's market base, sporting history, organizational capacity and sporting facilities so there is an evidence-based record of development potential. Sport tourism is a highly competitive field, with almost every town and city in Canada pursuing tournaments, events and festivals. Yet most municipalities do not have a cohesive framework for targeting, marketing and hosting sports tourism. In order for sport tourism to work for Tumbler Ridge, a niche strategy, ideally linked to geo-tourism themes could be developed and kept within the modest resources of the community. Potential niches include:
  - Ice-based sports such as hockey , curling, figure skating and ringette
  - Trail-based sports
  - Outdoor sports that are not limited by built infrastructure (e.g. orienteering)
  - Indigenous sports and tournaments
  - Any non-traditional sport that will bring in visitors and business outside summer.
- Create a hosting policy that will allow DTR to effectively assist growth of the sport tourism.
- Develop a hosting template that the District and its partners can use to guide decision making. The template would basically outline how a target or opportunity could be evaluated for implementation. The Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance has resources for this purpose.
- If the MRDT is enacted, sports tourism could be a target marketing program, something that would be actively supported by accommodators because it can produce overnight stays, sometimes multi-day.





# Groundwork Initiatives

## Sustainability

### What is our rationale?

- Sustainable tourism growth that supports community quality of life
  - Expanded tourism share of the local economy
  - Growth of tourism jobs and household incomes
  - Adoption and promotion of sustainability standards

### Context

Sustainability has environmental, economic and social dimensions that have implications for tourism development in Tumbler Ridge. Admittedly, the environmental effects of tourism in Tumbler Ridge are minor at the landscape level, but there is still a need to be aware of what visitor markets are expecting in terms of sustainability practices, whether that's from an overall community perspective or right down to the individual operator level.

The socio-economic sustainability of tourism is important because a community and its residents should be the major beneficiaries of growth and development. Ideally, tourism's economic benefits of jobs and household income are complemented by local amenities and services that might not be available without visitor spending.

Sustainability is also a hallmark of the UNESCO brand and something that some designated destinations have adopted as a competitive advantage. For example, the **Joggins Fossil Cliffs** World Heritage Site in Nova Scotia has developed a unique community management system while building a LEED Gold visitor centre on a reclaimed mine site. **Long Point Biosphere Reserve** in Norfolk County, Ontario is a visitor attraction but also a conservation initiative with elements of sustainable transportation, turtle poaching and related research. The **Tofino Cedar Corner** development was built from 100% recycled timber and equipped with the latest water-saving, energy efficient and power alternative features. It also has LEED certification.

The District has embarked on sustainability planning in the past, including a Community Energy Plan (2010) and a Community Sustainability Plan (2014) that focused on socio-economic sustainability targets. These documents provide a baseline for incorporating sustainability into the community's destination development.

### Tasks

#### 18. Adopt a set of community sustainability goals that align with District planning while reinforcing differentiation and branding around the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark.

- Define a set of community sustainability goals based on the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and UNESCO's refined goal set for global geoparks (UNESCO 2017).
  - **Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
  - **Goal 8:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
  - **Goal 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
  - **Goal 12:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Incorporate the sustainability goals into future Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark and District plans. Both the 2012 OCP and the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark Master Plan outline sustainability measures that can be expanded and coordinated so there is a mutually supporting sustainability framework. Alignment should strengthen future status reviews and renewals.
- Continue to lobby the provincial government for stronger legislation for the protection of fossils.

#### 19. Consider applying for International Dark Sky Reserve accreditation from the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA). There are 14 reserves internationally, one of which is in Quebec. Night sky reserves are a growing international trend and would provide marketing and product leverage with the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark. An "astro-tourism" product would provide additional opportunities for product development for which there is strong emerging demand.

- Obtain and review the IDA [guidelines](#) and determine if there is enough community support and partner buy-in to warrant an application for accreditation.
- Conduct a [night sky quality survey](#).
- Prepare an application for the 2020 intake.

# Groundwork Initiatives

## Sustainability

**20. Develop a Health in Geoparks program for Tumbler Ridge that aligns with UNESCO's mandate for geosciences in the service of society.** Other geopark conferences have studied the role of geoparks in health and there is emerging research into the role of human health in sustainable development. Tumbler Ridge could be at the forefront of geoparks and human health outcomes in a rural context.

- Dr. Charles Helm has created a draft set of four modules that define *Health and Wellness in the Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Global Geopark*. This content can be refined and developed into a program that can be tested in Tumbler Ridge and then rolled out to other geoparks. Organizations like the BC Alliance for Health Living have expressed support for such an initiative.
- Use the program to promote and develop a core set of health, wellness and education experiences in Tumbler Ridge linked to the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark. The community's ambitions to develop a small meetings and convention market could be structured around health and wellness opportunities.
- Promote a community focus on healthy food options for visitors, something that is lacking in Tumbler Ridge at this time.

**21. Leverage Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation research and education activities as tourism products.**

- Partner with universities and the Royal BC Museum to generate more student visits and a deeper commitment to paleontological research.
- Partner with other palaeontology facilities in Western Canada on a potential dinosaur trail.
- Prepare a digital flat sheet that can be distributed to potential research and education partners outlining the community's resources, capacity, amenities and recreation potential.

### Comparable - Ontario Trails Council, Trails Health Events

The Trails Health initiative of the Ontario Trails Council encouraged the health community to hold events on trails throughout the province during a designated week each May-June. Local health authorities organized events on trails to increase public awareness and use of trails as a means of staying healthy. The events were promoted through a marketing campaign with a theme "Ontario Trails: Yours to Explore", brochures, posters and web site. This initiative encourages all trail enthusiasts to contact their local health unit for more information on how they can work with the Healthy Heart Programs to increase public awareness of trails and trails-health.



Source: <https://ontariotrails.ca>

# Groundwork Initiatives

## Marketing and Communications

### What is our rationale?

- Brand awareness and incremental tourism spend
  - Competitive net promoter score
  - Media and social media mentions and recognition of the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark
  - Visitation and spending in line with provincial benchmarks

### Context

Tourism marketing involves positioning, branding, promoting and selling a destination to tourists. It typically involves the private sector operating in partnership with government. The federal government supports the marketing of Canada as an international destination abroad through Destination Canada. Destination BC sells the province to Canadians and internationally through the Super, Natural British Columbia© brand and its associated natural landscapes. It deploys a combination of media relations, travel trade, consumer-direct and co-operative marketing worldwide to drive demand, increase provincial tourism revenues and encourage the geographic and seasonal distribution of visitors to and within B.C. Activities are integrated and strategically targeted to increase demand for B.C. as a preferred travel destination and the most recommended destination in North America. Psychographic research, demographic, social and economic trends and social media programs are directed to keeping B.C. competitive and top of mind among global visitor markets.

The marketing role of small communities is to leverage the efforts of federal, provincial and regional tourism organizations by focusing on short-haul, close-in markets that can be influenced to visit the community. This is also true of Tumbler Ridge. However, an additional marketing opportunity can be exploited by leveraging the global geopark network as a platform for reaching a much broader international audience.

It is also worth noting that for local government, tourism marketing is a subset of community marketing, that is directed at potential residents, entrepreneurs and outside businesses, as well as visitors. They are marketing to attract investment in much the same way tourism marketers are trying to attract visitors. Interestingly, almost all new investors and residents in a community will have started out as tourists, thus reinforcing the inter-connectedness of tourism and community marketing.

### Tasks

#### **22. Develop and curate content that will enrich and enliven the geo-tourism story, making it more accessible and compelling for visitors and operators.**

- Create a living, organic repository of curated content that will resonate with key visitor segments, while supporting the three geo-tourism themes. It can be developed to Destination Canada's [EQ standards](#) and become a catalyst for promoting delivery through social media engagement and strategic partnerships with operators.
  - Geo-heritage: cool rocks, palaeontology, landscape, waterfalls, natural resources
  - Geo-community: history, culture, industry, resilience, migration, 'Wild Women of the Geopark'
  - Geo-adventure: trails, hiking, biking, sightseeing, museum, Game of Thrones
- Expand audio-visual resources, including the image bank, to align with EQ guidelines and target segments.
- Work with DBC and NBCT to:
  - expand user-generated content (UGC) that will promote experiences
  - deliver content through strategic private sector marketing partnerships
- Develop at least one content project with local First Nations that will leverage Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark's position as having the world's first Geopark Indigenous Advisory Council. Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark is already working on the early stages of this initiative, which, if successful, could be a true destination differentiator.



# Groundwork Initiatives

## Marketing and Communications

### **23. Promote the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark brand within and outside the community.**

Many visitors who come to Tumbler Ridge are not aware of the UNESCO Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark destination as it is a new concept in Western Canada.

- Develop and promote a Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark story/messaging toolkit that local business can use to develop compatible products and services. The toolkit would involve much more than promotion of the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark logo and colours, it would encompass the underlying stories that define Tumbler Ridge as a geo-tourism destination.
- Work with DBC and NBCT to help them understand the geopark concept and how it aligns with their branding.
- Seek out partnerships with other global geoparks to raise international awareness of the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark.
- Implement an internal and external awareness program (familiarization tours, workshops and/or webinars) to promote the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark story.



### **24. Expand awareness of Tumbler Ridge by moving resources to a targeted social media strategy.**

- Develop a set of key messages that defines the existing visitor experience in Tumbler Ridge and can be used to engage in online discussions. Messages can be tailored for target EQ segments. One of the comments heard during the interview program for this Strategy was that Tumbler Ridge provided a national park-type experience without the national park. Likewise, visitors should not be led to expect the availability of Banff or Jasper amenities. Truthful, consistent and constant messaging will reinforce the authenticity of the tourism offer and get markets to focus on exceptional experiences rather than urban-like amenities.
- Monitor social media channels for mention of Tumbler Ridge and especially the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark. Respond and engage to create ongoing online conversations.
- Leverage the visual media resources on YouTube to drive more views and enquiries across all social media.
- Optimize content, design, and placement for all four stages of the buying journey (dreaming, planning, booking, experiencing), particularly for smartphone use, which is growing.
- Be proactive in providing review sites with high-quality audio-visual resources that show off the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark brand and products.
- Always respond to media mention of the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark.
- Consider incentivizing positive feedback and testimonials.
- Conduct search engine optimization (SEO) research to inform tactics for greater online exposure.

# Groundwork Initiatives

## Comparables - Geopark Partnerships

The **European Atlantic Geo-tourism Route** is supported by nine European geoparks along with two aspiring Geoparks and the University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro. The concept is to create an awe-inspiring trail of destinations along the Atlantic frontier. It winds a transnational path from Ireland and the UK, to France, Portugal and Spain over to the Atlantic Islands of Lanzarote and down to the Azores. It links 12 dramatic landscapes that host vibrant communities, rich local cultures and unforgettable visitor experiences.

Through a series of work packages, the project has developed management toolkits, supports for aspiring geoparks, a geodiversity conservation charter, geo-tourism monitoring system, an online presence with social networking, innovative ICT tools, and a community engagement program.

Source: <http://www.burrengeopark.ie/atlantic-geoparks/>



**Drifting Apart** is a multi-geopark partnership formed around the interconnected geological heritage of the Northern Periphery and Arctic region, and its many links to natural, built and cultural heritage. The project supports the development of new and aspiring global geoparks, the promotion of innovative products and services for social and economic prosperity and builds a strong network of geo-heritage destinations in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Norway, Iceland, Canada and Russia.

Stonehammer UNESCO Global Geopark is Canada's main partner in the Drifting Apart project and is leading development of a best practice in geopark development and management toolkit within the partnership. The management model will be tested on the partners during the life of the project for a final assessment towards the end of the project. Tailored guidelines for aspiring geoparks will be developed through data collection.

In addition, Stonehammer has chosen four geosites to focus on to tell the Drifting Apart story in southern New Brunswick and Cabox Aspiring Geopark has also chosen four geosites to tell the story on the west coast of Newfoundland & Labrador. Drifting Apart provides an opportunity to build capacity in local communities boosting economic sustainability and providing useful resources which will be valuable for years to come.

Source: <http://driftingapart.ccght.org>



# Groundwork Initiatives

## Marketing and Communications

**25. Work with Destination BC and NBCT to address the significant gap in tourism research at the regional and local levels.** Experience development in Tumbler Ridge is hampered by a lack of basic market data, such as visitor volumes, activities and spending habits. The information that is available through Destination BC's regional profiles is dated and insufficient to assist with local market research.

- In cooperation with NBCT:
  - request that DBC provide more up-to-date regional profiles, specifically for Northern BC
  - provide access to pooled Stats Can domestic and international visitor survey statistics for more localized profiles (e.g. Northeast BC).
- Collect visitor data from local use sites to better understand trends and opportunities.
  - In partnership with MOTI, BC Parks and RSTBC, investigate the best options for generating robust use counts for roads, sites and trails
  - In partnership with NBCT, explore the feasibility of using big data solutions to improve market intelligence. For example, the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association has partnered with Telus Insights to develop Hiking and Mountain Biking studies that have considerably improved destination and marketing decision making in the region. Smartphone data was de-identified and aggregated to provide use information on major trails in the Okanagan, The data were then matched with demographic, psychographic and travel values to develop well defined hiker profiles with household counts by location, media usage, social media usage and transportation modes.
- Prepare a dashboard of available tourism statistics to assist the community with monitoring and measuring performance, to be displayed on the [tumbleridge.ca](http://tumbleridge.ca) website.



## Community Infrastructure

### What is our rationale?

- Compelling visitor destination
  - Attractive, compact, walkable community
  - Quality community tourism infrastructure
  - Private sector investment in infrastructure

### Context

Tourism development is fundamentally based on the availability of infrastructure to move and host travellers to and within a destination. Tourism infrastructure includes transportation, hospitality and community services that meets the needs of tourists and increase satisfaction during their stay at the destination. Investment in infrastructure and its modernization is a critical factor in expanding the tourism economy, even in small rural communities.

The highways, roads, sidewalks, signage, buildings, neighbourhoods, greenspaces, visitor services, accommodation and food and beverage offerings collectively contribute to the visitor experience, no less in Tumbler Ridge than in larger communities. The challenge is how to generate more tourism infrastructure in an environment of overall low capital investment. All Canadian communities are constrained by limited access to funding for public infrastructure and market inefficiencies that inhibit private sector contributions. Clearly, a select few strategic investments make more sense than a broad-brush attempt to improve infrastructure capacity and quality across the board.

Tumbler Ridge was a master plan community when it was built in 1981, with a designed layout that was atypical of rural communities of the day. The central shopping area is clustered with public services and amenities that are pedestrian-friendly and therefore visitor-friendly. Investments over the years in visitor services, museums, public art and signage have contributed to the original vision of the town planners of building a vibrant, active town centre. This continues to provide a good opportunity to focus infrastructure investment in the town centre in such a way as to benefit the visitor economy as well as resident needs. Beyond the town centre, the community has invested considerable resources in creating access to outdoor recreation trails and play areas that are logical targets for investment to connect visitors with the exceptional outdoor activities in the community, while encouraging the private sector to leverage this infrastructure into more compelling experiences and overnight stays.



# Groundwork Initiatives

## Community Infrastructure

### **26. Attract infill retail and hospitality services to complement a tourism precinct in the central shopping area.**

- Re-assess strategies from the 2018 Economic Development Strategy that could still be implemented, specifically:
  - 2.7 modernize revitalization tax incentive program
  - 3.5 encourage a partnership to establish an Urban Reserve
  - 3.7 pursue a partnership with Futurpreneur to encourage entrepreneurship
  - 4.1 establish the “Tumbler Ridge Co-working/Entrepreneurship Centre” (with a recommendation to purchase and adaptively reuse the former Royal Bank site).
  - 4.2 establish a retail incubator/pop up shop program
  - 7.3 invest in broadband internet
- Incorporate the above recommendations into a two-year work plan to be implemented by District staff, with the following suggested additions:
  - identify priority infill development parcels and vacant properties
  - expedite the development review process to encourage private investor interest
  - hold public events and festivals in in-fill locations to increase pedestrian traffic
  - work with local farmers and food processors to create an expanded farmers’ market
  - scope the District’s involvement in the BC Provincial Nominee Program Entrepreneur Immigration (PNP EI) Regional Pilot that contributes to infill objectives
- It is suggested the work plan be kept simple and readily implementable without the need to enact new bylaws. The overarching objective would be to increase retail occupancy and public use of the central shopping area.

**27. Prioritize high value trails and use areas for improvements in conjunctions with sustainable resourcing and support.** Trails are a critical piece of public infrastructure in Tumbler Ridge for both residents and visitors. They generate health benefits by encouraging an active lifestyle, serve as an alternative mode of transportation, and provide access and linkages to areas of natural and cultural interest. Trails are inexpensive to use and readily accessible to most. The flipside is that trails cost money to develop and maintain, something that most communities find difficult to manage.

- Consider commissioning a park, recreation and multi-use trail master plan for the District that would formalize baseline conditions and map out future capital and operating needs and funding options in a coordinated fashion.
- In lieu of a master plan, or until one can be commissioned, the District, in cooperation with the PRRD, local recreation groups, tourism operators and the provincial government, should:
  - pull together a master plan task force that would work on a transition plan until such time as a master plan can be prepared
  - identify exceptional trails and use areas with potential for high value visitor experiences
  - prioritize geosites and develop signage options so there is more interpretive potential for these resources
  - develop a simplified cost/benefit model to prioritize trail and site potential, seeking the best return on investment for the community
  - identify concerns and mitigation for those sites that may be near to or have exceeded their carrying capacity (e.g. Moose Lake, Windfall Lake, Quality Lake)
  - develop spatial/GIS functionality for a digital recreation sites and trails atlas, that could be used to facilitate planning and marketing
  - augment funding sources perhaps through a fee-for-service or paid use model
- Prepare a policy paper, signed by local and regional partners, asking for road improvements to Kinuseo Falls, as well as Highway 52 to the Alberta border, that would be used for lobbying provincial agencies. In-park camping facilities at Monkman would also have to expand if the road is improved. The falls are a major destination attraction and generates overnight stays. Similarly, better Heritage Highway conditions would draw more visitors from Alberta and specifically the Grand Prairie area.

# Groundwork Initiatives

## Community Infrastructure

### **28. Work with local First Nations to develop future municipal land with tourism potential.**

The Province of B.C. and Treaty 8 First Nations are in negotiations for Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) lands in Northeast BC, including inside the municipality of Tumbler Ridge. Some of these land transfers will likely have potential for tourism uses, which could be leveraged if the associated band government has identified tourism as a community and economic development target.

- Once all TLEs are negotiated, approach government and First Nations regarding comprehensive planning.
- Identify those parcels that have tourism use potential and work with First Nations on development opportunities and process.

**29. Promote high quality accommodation potential for Tumbler Ridge.** The current fixed-roof accommodation inventory is limited and if new mines were to open, availability to leisure visitors would likely be constrained further. The engagement program identified remote lodge/cabins, glamping and an in-town resort as potential opportunities. There are many requests at the Visitor Centre for resort-style, higher-end facilities that do not exist currently.

- Prepare a prefeasibility study that outlines the local potential for high-end or iconic accommodation.
- Examine distinctive accommodation styles that blend in with the geo-tourism themes, for example tree houses, glamping tents, glass-roof pods.
- Use the study to identify and recruit immigrant entrepreneurs eligible under the District's PNP EI Regional Pilot.

### **Comparable - Earth Adventures - 25 Nature Trails for Fun and Discover**

The Adventure Earth Centre in Halifax produced a trail guidebook with a twist. The book combines trail information and exciting environmental education activities for kids. It is aimed at providing information and guidance to any leader wanting to provide an outdoor experience for children. Activity markers have been included on all the trails so that kids can search for and collect symbols as they complete the trails. There is a central website that encourages families to register and track their progress. This concept has also been implemented in Moncton, NB. It has been adopted in other areas and while focused on urban areas it can be adapted for rural settings quite easily. It combines environmental education and trail use. It also has an interactive website that encourages children to try more than just one hike.

Source: <https://earthrootsns.ca>



# Groundwork Initiatives

## Comparables

### Cooperative hotel concept

An innovative solution to addressing a gap in accommodation and developing a hotel have been successfully pursued in Carrot River, Saskatchewan. No one investor or hotel chain was interested in the opportunity to develop a 24-room facility, given the likely low return on investment. However, the community recognized that without such a facility, further development of tourism was going to be a challenge. In 2013 one hundred local investors came together to purchase shares and provide the capital required to develop the facility and a restaurant. An investors group has been established to oversee the operations of the \$2.4 million development and the Council provided tax breaks and incentives for its first three years. Challenges remain, including maintaining the economic viability of the restaurant, but the model has interesting learnings about non-traditional tourism development in rural communities.



Source: <https://www.quebecmaritime.ca>

### Albergo Diffuso concept

An alternative model is based on the concept of a “scattered hotel”. Originating in Italy, the concept is an innovative approach to providing hotel rooms and revitalizing smaller rural towns where attracting investment capital for hotel development was unrealistic. Empty rooms in vacant or under-used buildings within the town are repurposed as “hotel rooms” and decorated in a consistent and authentic local style. The rooms are scattered throughout different buildings but overseen by one manager. A traditional breakfast may be served at a local café or in a nearby home. Reception services for the visitor and may be in a shop or restaurant. The concept provides the accommodation that is needed to build a tourism economy while also allowing visitors to truly immerse themselves in local life. The Italian projects act as drivers of economic development and managers are encouraged to source all products and food from local producers.



Source: <https://ecobnb.com>





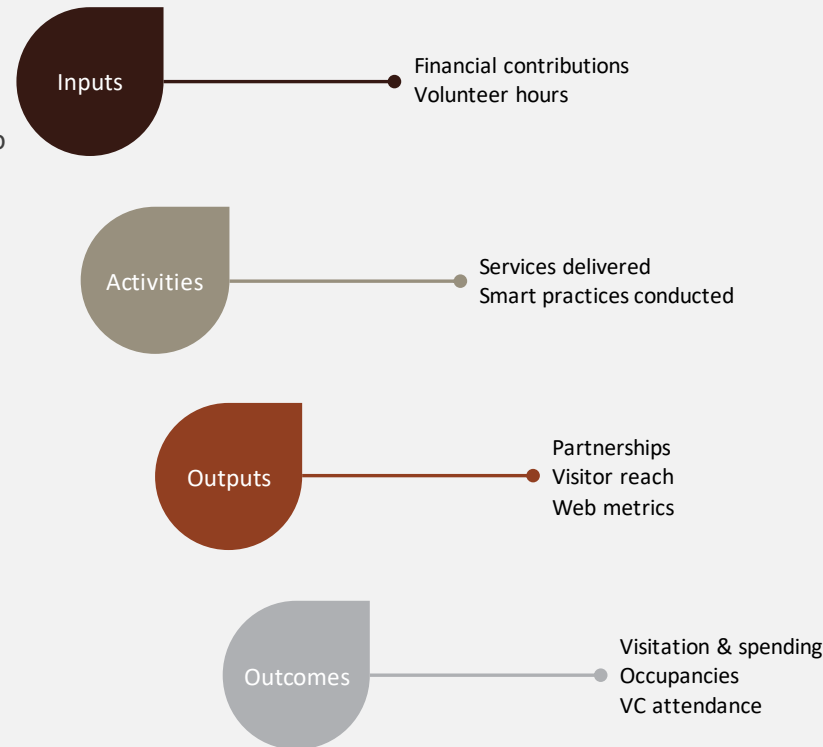
# 5 Measuring Performance

*Performance measurement underpins the commitment to evidence-based decision-making by demonstrating how actions produce results*

*Indicators are selected to reflect inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes as measures of change*

There are four components to a performance management framework:

- **Inputs** – The financial and human resources that are contributed to the Strategy or initiative.
- **Activities** – The actions the community is taking to enact change.
- **Outputs** – The immediate results of the actions taken by the community.
- **Outcomes** – The contributions to strategic goals made by the actions of the community.



Intended outcomes and how they contribute to goal achievement is the primary focus.

Input, activity and output are measures of efficiency and execution.

Outcomes are measures of effectiveness and change.

Data sources, frequency and collection procedures can be prepared as the framework is operationalized.

The 'performance management framework' can be used to conduct reporting and communications activities.

**Internal reporting** – detailed reporting for District and partner use.

**External reporting** – reporting of key indicators and measures for release to stakeholders and public.

**Communications** – reporting of Strategy implementation progress, as well as broader tourism metrics, through websites, social media, digital media and conventional media.

Explicit recognition should be made for issues of **attribution**. A preferred approach is to interpret change from a contributory perspective rather than implying it occurred solely because of Strategy implementation. This will help build credibility in the reporting process with partners, stakeholders and the public.



The image features a central dark olive-green rectangular box with the text "6 References" in white. This box is overlaid on a collage of autumn landscape photographs. The photos are arranged in a way that some are framed by white hexagonal outlines, while others are partially obscured by a large, light blue-grey geometric shape on the left side. The background photos show rolling hills with trees in shades of yellow, orange, and green, under a cloudy sky. In the bottom foreground, a deer is visible grazing on a hillside.

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- Cutler, Sandra. District of Tumbler Ridge Chamber. Personal meeting, August 20, 2019.
- Danshin, Tamara. Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, Regional Economic Operations, Regional Manager, Northeast Region. Telephone meeting, August 21, 2019.
- Drever, Cameron. Tumbler Ridge Geopark. Personal meeting, August 21, 2019.
- Gamble, Sarah. Tumbler Ridge Geopark. Personal meeting, August 21, 2019.
- Gulick, Roxanne. Wild River Adventure Tours. Personal meeting, August 19, 2019.
- Helm, Charles. Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation. Personal meeting, August 22, 2019.
- Hurley, Jessi. Trend Mountain Hotel and Conference Centre. Personal meeting, August 21, 2019.
- Kenney, Sue. Community Futures Peace Liard. Personal meeting, August 21, 2019.
- Kirby, Joanne. District of Tumbler Ridge Councillor. Personal meeting, August 19, 2019.
- Lehmann, Bernie. District of Tumbler Ridge Councillor. Personal meeting, August 19, 2019.
- McQueen, Jenna. Tumbler Ridge Geopark. Personal meeting, August 21, 2019.
- Miedzinski, Curtis. District of Tumbler Ridge Councillor. Personal meeting, August 19, 2019.
- Moi, April. Northern BC Tourism. Telephone meeting, August 21, 2019.
- Olsen, Jessie. District of Tumbler Ridge, Economic Development. Personal meeting, August 20, 2019.
- Powell, John. District of Tumbler Ridge, Economic Development. Personal meetings, August 20 and 23, 2019.
- Rowe, Stephanie. District of Tumbler Ridge Chamber. Personal meeting, August 20, 2019.
- Schembri, Jerrilyn, Tumbler Ridge Chamber of Commerce. Personal meeting, August 21, 2019.
- Sharman, Birgit. Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society. Personal meeting, August 21, 2019.
- Tonnesen, Charisa. Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation. Personal meeting, August 21, 2019.
- Tory, Steve. Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation. Personal meeting, August 21, 2019.
- Wall, Jordan. District of Tumbler Ridge, CAO. Personal meeting, August 20, 2019.





# 7 Implementation



| Work Steps   | Who Is Involved?  | Timing    | Estimated Cost                |
|--|---|-----------|-------------------------------|
| 1. If current fundraising targets are reached, a master plan with broad community and industry input should be prepared so the museum is configured and managed to deliver a superior visitor experience.  | TRMF<br>District of Tumbler Ridge<br>TRGGS                                  | 2020      | 0.5%-1.0% of capital invested |
| 2. If current fundraising targets are not reached, the Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation and its partners should pursue small-scale capital projects that enable continued incremental growth of visitor-focused exhibits and programs.  | TRMF<br>District of Tumbler Ridge<br>TRGGS                                  | 2020      | \$30,000                      |
| 3. Future geopark validation is based in part on continued palaeontology research. There will be a need to continue advocating for support from the provincial government and to focus on raising awareness of the provincial and national significance of the Tumbler Ridge paleontological assets. | TRMF<br>TRGGS   | Ongoing   | OB                            |
| 4. Support the master plan recommendations for a phased pump track facility by assisting with fundraising, infrastructure placement and event development.   | Tumbler Ridge Mtn. Bike Assn.<br>District of Tumbler Ridge                  | 2020-2021 | OB                            |
| 5. Work with local service providers to establish a stronger understanding of the needs and expectations of this market and encourage the development and/or enhancement of new services and supporting facilities.  | Tumbler Ridge Mtn. Bike Assn.<br>District of Tumbler Ridge                  | 2020-2021 | OB                            |
| 6. Stimulate organic growth of a tourism precinct in the town centre by establishing a public gathering space and connecting it to the Visitor Centre and adjacent properties via a pedestrian corridor.   | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>Landlords, tenants, merchants                  | Ongoing   | OB                            |
| 7. Package and deliver a quality tour product that showcases Tumbler Ridge's winter outdoor potential.   | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>Operators<br>Wolverine Nordic and Mtn. Society | 2021      | \$15,000                      |
| 8. Conduct a pilot project that would conceptualize and scope a mobile game that Tumbler Ridge could develop to drive digital communications and social media engagement.  | TRGGS<br>TRMF<br>District of Tumbler Ridge                                  | 2021      | \$20,000<br>\$4,000 ongoing   |
| 9. Target District investment in tourism planning, marketing and destination development to drive best practices and maximize the return on investment.  | TRGGS<br>TRMF   | 2020      | OB                            |

| Work Steps  | Who Is Involved?  | Timing        | Estimated Cost                         |
|---|---|---------------|--|
| 10. Pursue partnerships that will leverage private sector contributions to destination and market development.  | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>Tumbler Ridge Chamber of Commerce<br>TRGGS, TRMF<br>Northern BC Tourism, Destination BC<br>Min of Transport. and Infrastructure<br>Recreation Sites and Trails BC<br>First Nations | Ongoing       | OB                                     |
| 11. Coordinate volunteer efforts amongst all tourism and community partners to optimize resources, prevent burnout and create a more satisfying environment of reward and success.                  | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>Tumbler Ridge Chamber of Commerce<br>TRGGS<br>TRMF<br>Volunteer BC   | 2021-2022     | OB                                     |
| 12. Provide access to resources that will encourage the private sector to develop more market-ready experiences.  | Destination BC<br>Northern BC Tourism<br>Tourism operators  | Ongoing       | OB                                     |
| 13. Emphasize product development that complements the geo-heritage theme.  | Global Geopark network<br>Major industry  | 2021-2022     | OB                                     |
| 14. Assist local First Nations and partners to develop authentic Indigenous content for visitor experiences.  | First Nations<br>Indigenous Tourism BC<br>Indigenous Tourism Assn. of Canada  | Ongoing       | OB                                     |
| 15. Develop a coordinated event strategy that can sustain current successful events and add at least one additional festival targeted at destination visitor markets (leisure and business travel). | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>Tumbler Ridge Chamber of Commerce<br>TRGGS<br>TRMF<br>Northern BC Tourism  | 2022          | \$20,000                               |
| 16. Identify international and national geopark and palaeontology events that could be hosted in Tumbler Ridge.   | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>TRMF<br>TRGGS<br>Hoteliers   | 2021- Ongoing | \$5,000 event attendance and marketing |

| Work Steps  | Who Is Involved?  | Timing    | Estimated Cost |
|---|---|-----------|----------------|
| 17. Pursue a focused sports tourism strategy that targets the shoulder and off seasons.   | District of Tumbler Ridge   | 2021      | \$9,000        |
| 18. Adopt a set of community sustainability goals that align with District planning while reinforcing differentiation and branding around the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark. | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>TRGGS  | 2021      | OB             |
| 19. Consider applying for International Dark Sky Reserve accreditation from the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA).   | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>TRGGS<br>Tourism operators<br>Northern BC Tourism                                      | 2022      | \$5,000        |
| 20. Develop a Health in Geoparks program for Tumbler Ridge that aligns with UNESCO's mandate for geosciences in the service of society.                                     | Global Geopark network<br>TRGGS<br>Northern Health  | 2020-2021 | \$10,000       |
| 21. Leverage Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation research and education activities as tourism products.   | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>TRGGS<br>TRMF<br>Royal BC Museum   | 2021-2022 | OB             |
| 22. Develop and curate content that will enrich and enliven the geo-tourism story, making it more accessible and compelling for visitors and operators.                     | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>TRGGS<br>TRMF<br>Northern BC Tourism<br>Destination BC                                 | 2020-2022 | \$25,000       |
| 23. Promote the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark brand within and outside the community.  | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>TRGGS<br>Tumbler Ridge Chamber of<br>Commerce<br>Northern BC Tourism<br>Destination BC | Ongoing   | \$5,000        |



| Work Steps   | Who Is Involved?   | Timing         | Estimated Cost |
|--|--|----------------|----------------|
| 24. Expand awareness of Tumbler Ridge by moving resources to a targeted social media strategy.                             | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>TRGGS<br>TRMF<br>Northern BC Tourism  | Ongoing        | \$15,000       |
| 25. Work with Destination BC and NBCT to address the significant gap in tourism research at the regional and local levels. | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>Northern BC Tourism<br>Destination BC<br>Recreation Sites and Trails BC<br>BC Parks<br>Ministry of Transportation and Infr. | 2021 - Ongoing | \$12,500       |
| 26. Attract infill retail and hospitality services to complement a tourism precinct in the central shopping area.          | District of Tumbler Ridge  | 2020-2021      | OB             |
| 27. Prioritize high value trails and use areas for improvements in conjunctions with sustainable resourcing and support.   | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>TRGGS<br>Wolverine Nordic and Mtn. Society<br>Min of Transport. and Infrastructure<br>Recreation Sites and Trails BC        | 2021-2022      | TBD            |
| 28. Work with local First Nations to develop future municipal land with tourism potential.                                 | First Nations<br>Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation   | Ongoing        | OB             |
| 29. Promote high quality accommodation potential for Tumbler Ridge.  | District of Tumbler Ridge<br>Tumbler Ridge Chamber of Commerce<br>Min of Transport. and Infrastructure<br>First Nations                                  | 2021-2022      | \$15,000       |

Note: OB work steps would be supported through the baseline Operating Budget, nominal cash costs involved  
TBD to be determined



# Prepared by:

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Tourism Planning Group

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