

Community Cultural Tourism Boundary/Grand Forks Planning Workshop

Jan. 13, 2010

The Community Futures Development Corporation - Boundary and the Ministry of Community and Rural Development (MCRD) convened about 24 stakeholders from tourism, local government and the arts, culture and heritage sectors Jan. 13 in Grand Forks to explore ways the community can use cultural tourism as a vehicle for economic and community development.

Jennifer Wetmore, Community Economic Development Coordinator for Community Futures Boundary welcomed the workshop participants, and Patricia Summers of MCRD outlined how this workshop is part of overarching community transition and economic development work her ministry is conducting in the local area. A recent community transition strategy suggests cultural tourism is a sector which offers great potential to the local economy, and the workshop was convened to seek out specific actions to improve the benefits tourism brings to the community, and to the arts, culture and heritage sectors.

Cultural tourism advisor Bruce Whyte of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts facilitated the workshop, providing background on community-based cultural tourism, and proposing a planning approach that will address the three key aspects of preparing our community to receive visitors:

- Preparing people to be welcoming hosts;
- Preparing our places to be attractive destinations; and
- Preparing lots of fun things for both locals and visitors to do.

To achieve these goals, the workshop began to address the basic planning questions:

- Why are we doing this?
- When must we be finished?
- Where can we do this?
- What can we do?
- Who will have roles in doing this?
- In the end, How will we do this?

The workshop consisted of discussion to answer these questions, starting by defining the values (what we consider to be important) that drive our culture, then noting the stories that let us express our culture, mapping the places where we can enjoy or express our culture, and finally defining what commercial products could be shaped around these and assigning

roles to stakeholders to 'make it so.' Broader discussion which included points important to further work is also noted.

Workshop Outcomes

Why: Need for economic development (jobs, business revenues), need to support arts, culture and heritage; need to respond to direction from Councils and Provincial agencies.

When: The group agreed to move as quickly as possible, and to link the deadline for recommendations to move forward to broader community economic development planning now in progress.

Who: The exact roles and responsibilities for stakeholders will depend on the specific actions which are recommended. The group agreed that local governments have the lead role in community and economic development, with support from Provincial agencies, including Community Futures. Tourism business operators are responsible for building, operating and marketing their businesses. The arts, culture and heritage groups are the stewards and care-takers of the community's culture, with responsibility for protecting and sharing that culture responsibly.

While this workshop did not have time to address this point in detail, in order for cultural tourism to succeed in the community, it is expected all of these partners will have roles to play.

Where, What and How: The planning workshop exercises into the values, stories, places and product proposals is the first step toward answering these questions. Please see the table below for a summary of the workshop participants' explorations.

Next Steps

While the workshop group was not able to address this item in the available time, the cultural tourism advisor has provided the following suggestions for consideration:

1. Create an organizational vehicle to continue discussion and planning of cultural tourism development opportunities. This could be as simple as an ad-hoc committee, or could be a formal group established under the authority of a sponsoring agency such as the Regional District, Community Futures or the regional Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO, as noted in next point).
2. Form a DMO to pull together regional resources and spearhead efforts to market and promote tourism in the Boundary region.

3. Engage the services and expertise available to the local communities through the Regional DMO (Thompson-Okanagan Tourism Association) and through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts as Provincial DMO (Community Tourism Foundations, Community Tourism Opportunities).
4. Engage the funding and facilitation support available through Legacies2010Now for cultural mapping, planning and cultural tourism planning.
5. Incorporate cultural tourism as a key aspect of community economic and social development planning, through on-going work with MCRD, and through other economic development initiatives as they arise.

Value	Stories	Places	Products	Partners
Agriculture	History (eg. WW2 bulbs), organics, orchards, flour mill, 100-km diet	Old orchard, farmer's market, flour mill, farms	Farm tours, farm-gate sales, festival of (produce), working farm holidays, interpretive signage	The workshop did not have time to address this item
Mining	Granby smelter, Phoenix, Union, Rock Candy, Lynch Cr., Volcanic Cr.	Minesites, smelter, slag	Mine tours, feature displays in museum, theatre, rec gold panning, interpretive signage	
Doukhobor culture	Hand-crafts, spiritual strength, architecture, veggie food	Artisan's markets, galleries, farmer's market, joybilee farms, museums, libraries	Special museum displays, theatre, art exhibitions, street theatre, cuisine (food), interpretive signage, guided tours	
Riverside community life	Friendly people, clean water, good climate	Riverfront, trestles, trails	Fishing and derbys, fishing supply shop, river tubing (guides, rentals, transport, maps)	
Natural history/outdoor rec	Wildlife, birds, wilderness rivers, lakes, mountains, vallies	EVERYWHERE! Especially rivers, lakes, forests	Photo safaris, fishing tours, equipment rentals, hike/bike tours, horseback tours, snomo/ATV tours, interpretive signage	
Creative artisans, artists and performers	Heritage and contemporary approaches to food, clothing, arts, music, theatre and local hand-crafts	Galleries, artisans' market, farmers' market, artists' workshops, retail outlets	Artisan's market, artists' workshop space, artisan tours, directional signage	
Rails & Trails	Transportation history, early railroads, early roads	Kettle Valley RR, TCT, Observation Mtn, Parks	Interpretive signage, guide maps, trail services, guiding services	

Workshop Comments

During the course of the workshop several important points were raised. These points mainly relate to the structure and readiness of the local tourism organisations, and are issues which should be addressed to lay the foundations for successful community cultural tourism development.

Key points raised include:

There is no Boundary community destination management organisation (DMO) for tourism (eg. Tourism Kelowna, Tourism Kamloops). Local governments and Chambers of Commerce operate Visitor Information Centres, but there is not group with the mandate to develop, support and market tourism in the region. Such a group is seen as a critical element in developing a sustainable approach to tourism for the area.

Related to this, the communities in the region have not instituted the Additional Hotel Room Tax (AHRT). The AHRT is levied through local hotels, adding 2 percent to visitors' hotel bills. This funding is returned to local governments from the Province, for use in marketing local tourism. This step is seen as essential to fund a local DMO. Local hoteliers, whose approval is mandatory, have to date not been receptive to the idea. Local council members and members of the hotel-owners group will re-open discussion and seek to garner approval of a majority of hotel owners for the proposal.

There is a lack of cooperation among the communities of the Boundary, which inhibits the local area's ability to attract and hold visitors. The handful of communities in the Boundary cannot expect to make a 'big splash' in the minds of world-wide tourism consumers individually, due to the enormous cost of advertising. However, together there is a chance of getting noticed. If a DMO is created, it might be best to do so on a regional basis, rather than in each individual community.

The City of Grand Forks, now in the midst of a major economic development process, is expecting to begin work this year on a major riverfront walkway development which will provide enormous amenity values to the community, and which opens up a number of opportunities to explore ways to use arts, culture and heritage to support local tourism business.

Christina Lake is in the process of developing a major arts and culture centre. Construction has begun on a major facility, which may serve as a key 'anchor tenant' for any 'shopping mall' of cultural tourism products in the region.

Partnerships with external agencies, such as the Visitor Information Centre in Osoyoos, the Thompson-Okanagan Tourism Association, and

provincial agencies, should be cultivated to make sure the Boundary is getting the fullest possible support.

- *Minutes prepared by Bruce Whyte and Patricia Summers*