



Bella Coola Valley
Experience the Adventure!

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy

Report 2 of 2

Marketing Strategy

Bella Coola Valley Tourism



Lions Gate Consulting
Simone Carlisle-Smith
Terra Firma Digital Arts

July 1, 2006



The Coast Sustainability Trust



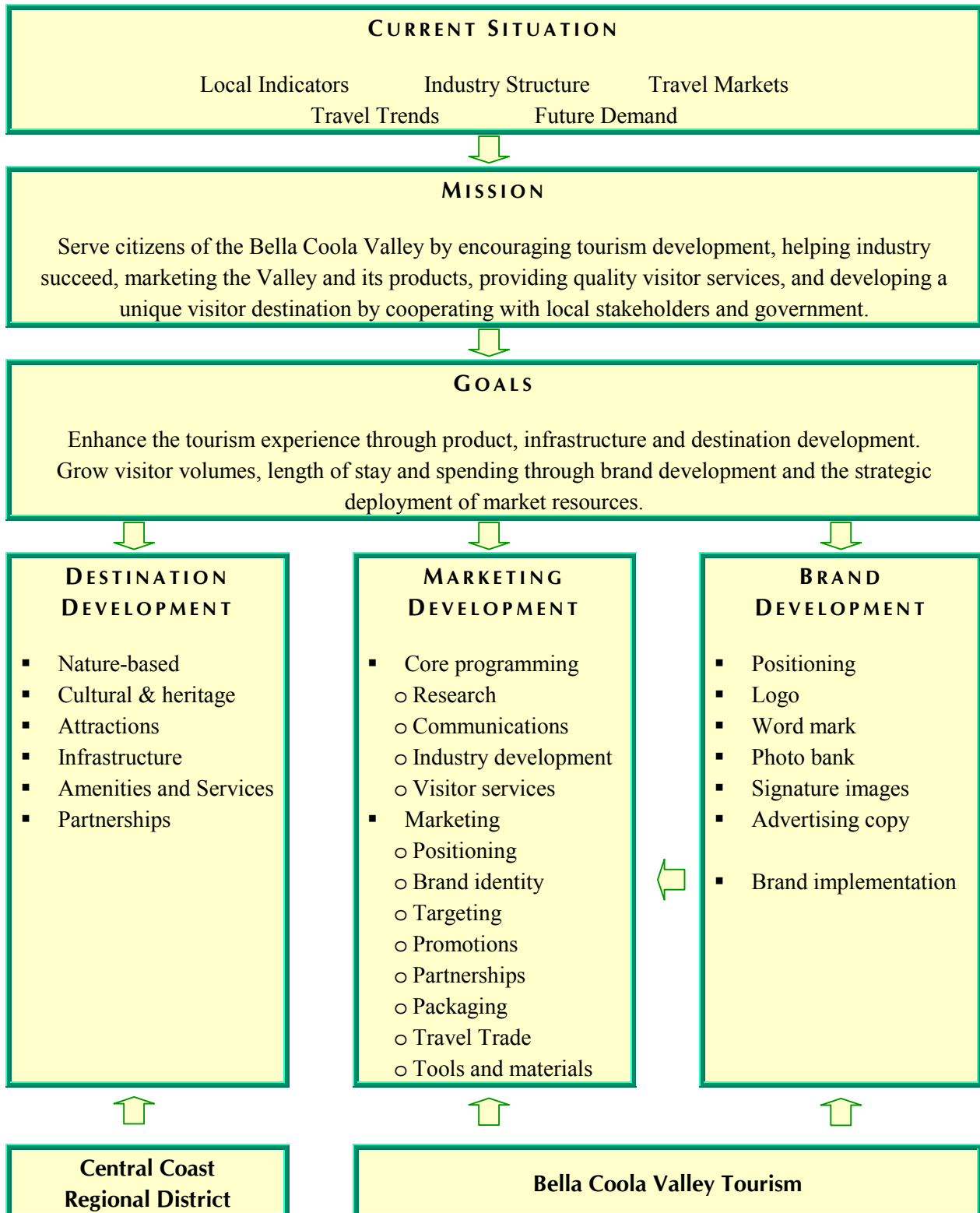
Cariboo Chilcotin CFDC



Canada 

Executive Summary

Figure 1: Strategy Overview



Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Bella Coola Valley Tourism (BCVT) in association with the Central Coast Regional District (CCRD) has commissioned a consulting team led by Lions Gate Consulting to produce a Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy consisting of three major components: branding, development plan and marketing strategy.

As seen in Figure 1, the strategy comprises three main components, the development plan, marketing strategy and branding. The branding and the marketing strategy are closely associated and will be integrated in the final promotional plan.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The development plan (volume 1 of 2) is oriented toward developing the Valley as a visitor destination, building more tourism product and planning for new or expanded infrastructure. Strategy recommendations include the following:

Nature-base products

1. Meet with existing operators to identify opportunities, constraints and possible next steps.
2. Investigate opportunities relative to Management Plan review for Tweedsmuir Park (South).
3. Assist with preparing a bear viewing strategy on the Atnarko River.
4. Prepare a landscape plan that identifies locations and opportunities for new tourism activities.
5. Promote an expanded selection of rental vehicle availability.
6. Create more opportunities for sport fishing.

Cultural & Heritage

7. Assist the coordination of culturally themes tours.
8. Create a Day Pass that packages together several cultural attractions.

Attractions Development

9. Commence preparation for a waterfront/estuary plan
10. Conduct a feasibility assessment of a First Crossing of North America Interpretive Centre.

Infrastructure

11. Work on optimizing commercial usage of broadband services.
12. Continue to pursue the continuance and expansion of the Discovery Coast Passage service.
13. Provide planning and facilitation assistance for trails and recreation sites availability.
14. Determine the feasibility of expanded transit services for visitors.

Amenities and Services

15. Develop a beautification plan for implementing public and private upgrades in the town.
16. Create more riverfront recreation access.
17. Improve destination and directional signage.
18. Undertake the Bella Coola Valley entrances project.

Partnerships

19. Encourage more linkages among aboriginal and non-aboriginal tourism organizations.
20. Work with existing tour operators to ensure petroglyph features are managed and protected.

MARKETING STRATEGY

The purpose of the marketing strategy (volume 2 of 2, *this report*) is to provide the Bella Coola Valley Tourism association with a plan that can be implemented to strengthen the market position and promotion of the Bella Coola Valley. The focus of this strategy is to build a foundation to ensure the Valley can compete with other communities. Strategy recommendations include the following:

Core Programming

Core programming refers to those activities that provide a context for marketing and promotion, which remain the key element of this strategy. Recommended programs include:

1. Maintain research on an annual basis based on sources provided.
2. Establish and maintain a resource library for industry in both hard copy and web versions where possible.
3. Establish and maintain a comprehensive inventory as part of the web strategy with support through the Service Canada agency for an administrative assistant for the first year.
4. Establish and maintain an online database of tourism products, businesses, area features and media as part of the web strategy.
5. Establish and maintain a communications program with industry and the community.
6. Establish and maintain a tracking and evaluation system that balances the current resources of BCVT and requirements for occupancy tracking for the CCRD
7. Establish an industry development program. Launch with the Media Relations workshop from TBC; Encourage adoption of industry and government standards by tourism operators; Promote the delivery of viable entrepreneurship and skill development programs to encourage more First Nations tourism businesses; Facilitate access to enterprise facilities offered in the region; Optimize benefits and opportunities from emerging tourism development clusters such as heli-skiing.

Marketing and Promotion

Marketing and promotion deals primarily with positioning, targeting, selling and delivering the Bella Coola Valley brand to market. The promotional strategy will be integrated to serve the visitor effectively throughout the purchase cycle (awareness, interest, evaluation, purchase, loyalty). Recommended steps include:

1. Establish and maintain an annual planning process, commence with the production of the Marketing Plan for 2006/07.
2. Establish and maintain a core partnership strategy with the Western Chilcotin Tourism Association, Williams Lake Central Cariboo Tourism and the CCCTA for further expansion with other partners.
3. Make application for government grants and tourism programs that will assist in the implementation of the integrated marketing strategy, which includes building a foundation for marketing and communications including a new website, inventory, marketing materials and equipment in preparation for promoting the Valley.

Branding

Branding and other marketing tools and materials will be presented and integrated into the strategy. Key components include branding deliverables, image bank, facts and editorial bank, display equipment, digital still and video camera, stationery, kit folder, press kit, visitor guide, maps, merchandise and website.

1. The branding project is currently in production with initial designs for the logo treatment.
2. The initial image bank for the BCVT will be completed with 80 images and is currently in production as part of the branding strategy.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	I
Development Plan	ii
Marketing Strategy	iii
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Preamble	1
Background	1
Project Objectives	2
Purpose of This Report.....	2
2 CORE PROGRAMMING	3
Research.....	3
Resource Library.....	7
Product Inventory and Online Database	7
Communications with local industry and the community	9
Industry & Professional Development.....	9
Visitor Services	14
Tracking and Evaluation.....	16
3 MARKETING STRATEGY	18
Introduction.....	18
Marketing Goals	19
Strategy Focus.....	19
Study Area – Promotional Boundaries.....	20
Destination Evaluation.....	21
Product Market Match	22
Positioning for Bella Coola Valley.....	22
Branding & Image Bank.....	23
Target Markets for Bella Coola Valley	24
Integrated Promotional Strategy	25
Partnerships and Alliances	25
Packaging Products.....	31
Travel Trade	31
Building a Foundation for Effective Marketing and Promotional Activities.....	32
Promotional Tools & Materials.....	35
4 INTEGRATED PROMOTIONAL MIX	44
5 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	47
Introduction.....	47
Annual Planning Process	48
Tourism Industry Annual Planning Cycle	49

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Core Budget 50
Tourism BC Community Tourism Foundations Program..... 51
Product Inventory and Strategy Implementation – Administrative Assistance 51
Leveraging..... 52
Strategy Summary Timeline 54

APPENDIX 1 - SITUATION ANALYSIS **63**
Activity Analysis 63
Industry Profile 68
Market and Demand Analysis 75
Conclusions..... 82

APPENDIX 2 – LIST OF CONTACTS **84**

1 INTRODUCTION

PREAMBLE

Bella Coola Valley Tourism (BCVT) in association with the Central Coast Regional District (CCRD) has commissioned a consulting team led by Lions Gate Consulting to produce a Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy consisting of three major components: branding, development plan and marketing strategy.

BCVT is a BC-registered society and voting member of the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association. In the 1980's Tourism Bella Coola was founded to address the unique tourism issues and concerns in the Valley. Its successor organization, BCVT, was formalized in 1992 and now lists in excess of 60 members with a common interest in promoting the Bella Coola Valley. BCVT's mission is to:

“Work together to promote tourism development in the Bella Coola Valley by marketing, organizing tourist information services, lobbying government on behalf of tourism stakeholders and encouraging local business to succeed and grow.”

BCVT has delivered a limited, annual marketing program for the past two years, but has yet to undertake a comprehensive planning exercise. BCVT now wishes to move forward with strategic marketing and development to ensure growth; linkages and consistencies are included in all product and service areas. With the plan in place, the community anticipates entrepreneurial investments will be made in the strategic areas.

BACKGROUND

B.C.'s Central Coast has experienced negative socio-economic challenges in the past few years. Internal and external factors continue to impact the community, requiring innovative strategies for both the public and private sectors. The economy has traditionally been based on natural resource extraction, which, unfortunately, has declined in recent years and left the community with limited long-term benefits.

Tourism remains one of the few economic base sectors (i.e. export-oriented and wealth creating) that can be developed and controlled at the local level, by stakeholders, leaders and businesses. The fact that tourism is largely small business-based and consists of operators who must to a greater or lesser degree cooperate in creating the visitor experience (i.e. the product) is further reason for seeking development solutions from within the community. The exceptional natural and heritage attributes of the Valley have yet to reach their potential for drawing in visitors and creating the employment and income the community needs. The goal of this planning process is the incorporation of branding, marketing and product development elements into a cohesive plan that provides direction and purpose for tourism development and growth in the Bella Coola Valley over the next three years.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The following objectives have been established for this study:

- Branding
 - Work with the BCVT Planning Committee and other interested sector representatives to devise, produce and deliver a complete branding package and implementation plan to include Word mark, artwork, ad copy and design and web page layout.
 - Create a photo bank with a minimum of 80 digital images.
 - Recommend implementation steps for the brand.
- Tourism Development Plan
 - Create an inventory of existing tourism products and assets/attractions.
 - Make recommendations for establishing Bella Coola Valley as a more recognized destination.
 - Identify strategies and action priorities to optimize local resources and private and/or public investment attraction.
 - Prepare a three-year tourism plan to guide development activities.
- Tourism Marketing Strategy
 - Identify appropriate target markets.
 - Devise strategies to attract identified target markets.
 - Prepare an annual budget.
 - Recommend mechanisms, indicators and measures for monitoring marketing activities.
 - Prepare a three-year, tourism-marketing strategy.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Three reports are being prepared for this project, a current situation report (included as Appendix 1), a Development Plan (volume 1 of 2) and a Marketing Strategy (volume 2 of 2, *this report*). The purpose of this strategy is to provide the Bella Coola Valley Tourism association with a plan that can be implemented to strengthen the market position and promotion of the Bella Coola Valley. The implementation, budget and annual marketing plan will focus on the tactics over the coming year, which are provided by separate cover. The strategy is to build a foundation to ensure the Valley can compete with other communities. It outlines how the BCVT can approach tourism marketing and promotion and is intended to be a guide for future activities. Although resources are not available for all activities at this time, it is imperative the community have a strong vision of what it is they would like to achieve in the strategy so that when resources become available, they are in a position to respond appropriately.

The content and direction of this report was based primarily on past planning documentation, the results of the focus groups that took place in Bella Coola in November 2005, follow-up stakeholder interviews conducted from January-March, and an online survey distributed to all members of the BCVT association in March 2006.

2 CORE PROGRAMMING

Core programming refers to those activities that provide a context for marketing and promotion, which remain the key element of this strategy. Whereas the marketing and promotion plan presented in the following sections deals primarily with positioning, targeting, selling and delivering the Bella Coola Valley brand to market, this section outlines some of the programs the Bella Coola Valley Tourism association, in partnership with the community, will have to undertake in order to support the marketing goals and build a legacy of success. Communications, market intelligence, visitor services, industry development, tracking and evaluation are core programs that must be in place if the strategy is to be effective. Product and destination development are being addressed in the tourism development strategy, which forms a different component of the plan.

Each of the following seven program areas is vital for the strategy to be effective.

- Research
- Resource Library
- Database Management
- Communications with Local Industry and the Community
- Industry Development
- Visitor Services
- Tracking and Evaluation

RESEARCH

Both the tourism organization and tourism businesses require information about the tourism industry, markets and promotional opportunities. On-going research is vital to success, as markets and situations are constantly changing. As part of the marketing strategy, compiling research through the regional, provincial and national destination marketing organizations (DMO), government ministries, sector associations and other sources will assist the community marketing function by providing information in order to evaluate programs and services for potential participation and to monitor changes in market demands. Tourism BC currently has plans to compile existing research information from multiple sources and make that information available through their industry website <http://www.tourismbc.com/template.asp?id=2>. In addition to collecting secondary research (existing information), primary research fills the information gap by providing specific information relevant to the current situation.

Key Research

Market research is essential in order to determine marketing strategies for tourism development and marketing development planning. For this project the following research was reviewed and target market profiles for the Bella Coola Valley are noted within the strategy. Sources include the *Travel Activities and Motivations Study (TAMS)*, which was led by the province of Ontario with partner agencies across the country including Tourism British Columbia for Alpine skiers (includes heli-skiing), Winter Outdoor Tourists and Outdoor Adventurers. In addition to formal research projects, the visitor services program in Bella Coola, at the Visitor Info Booth (VIB), collects information that profiles the visitor market during the peak summer season.

Refer to Appendix 1 – *Situation Analysis* for an overview of the VIB market profile completed as phase one of this project.

Primary Visitor Research, Bella Coola Valley

In the summer of 2005, the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), Resource Recreation and Tourism Program conducted primary research on visitors to the Bella Coola Valley. The study consisted of a self-administered visitor survey (130 responses), five focus groups and in-depth interviews (40 responses). The purpose of the study was to assess the driving tourists' preferences and motivations for visiting the Bella Coola area. Released in January 2006, *Assessing Drive Tourists' Preferences and Motivations: A Case Study of Bella Coola, British Columbia*, provided relevant and valuable information, which was utilized for this strategy.

An excerpt of the key findings from the UNBC Research Study released in January 2006 is noted.

Key highlights of the Bella Coola drive market:

- Majority of visitors (67%) drove their own vehicle whether owned or rented (e.g. RV)
- A small percent drove motorcycles: 4%
- Gender is fairly evenly divided 54% female, 46% male
- Majority of visitors were well educated: (68%)
- Most were employed 59% vs. 36% retired
- Annual household income \$60,000 or above
- Age: 36% between 55-64, 24% between 45-54 and 16% between 65-74
- 76% travel without children, mostly as couples
- Majority of visitors were from Canada 73%, followed by US 20%, Europe 8%, Australia 1%, of those the majority of Canadians were from BC 84%, Alberta 12%, Ontario 4%
- The majority stay for 54% 1-2 nights, 16% 3 nights, 15% 4-7 nights, 8% 7 nights or more
- Length of total vacation 27% 2-4 weeks, 22% 4-7 nights, 22% 7-13 nights, 15% more than a month
- The majority or 77% had not visited Bella Coola before
- Favourite things about Bella Coola: natural beauty, scenery, wildlife, wilderness of the area
- Least favourite things: road conditions including access to the Hill, potholes; lack of and quality of services, signage, rainy day activities, ferry, gas and accommodation costs, mosquitoes and aesthetics (dirty houses, township of Bella Coola and garbage)

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

- How visitors heard of Bella Coola: word of mouth, by living in BC, school education, history books, maps, travel resources (magazines, Internet and TV)
- Planning habits: 40% some planning with lots of flexibility, 22% mostly planned with some flexibility, 18% planned their own journey
- Top information sources by type (not defined by usage during the purchase cycle): Road maps, tourist info centres, www.bellacoola.ca, word of mouth, travel guide book, previous knowledge and other websites
- Most useful information sources: Internet and websites, information centres, AAA and travel agents, brochures, guides and maps, word of mouth and previous knowledge
- Activities: hiking, visiting museums and art galleries, outdoor adventure, freshwater fishing, viewing historical and cultural sites
- BC Ferries experience: majority rated as satisfied to very satisfied with crew and service being what they liked best followed by the scenery, whale watching, food and atmosphere
- BC Ferries experience: dislikes included comfort (or lack of), food and length of trip

Regional Destination Marketing Organization

The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association (CCCTA) historically has not conducted primary visitor research or conversion studies from inquiries. Currently plans are underway to determine research projects through the Flexible Funds program and potential partnerships are being explored with UNBC. Primary research projects are available through the Tourism BC, Community Tourism Foundations Development program for those communities that qualify for the program. Research for the region is limited to the Visitor Centre Network statistics by community, the regional profile from Tourism BC and aged data from the *British Columbia Visitor Survey* noted in the next section.

Provincial Destination Marketing Organization

Tourism BC (TBC) released the *Regional Profile for the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast, October 2005*. This research summarizes regional data and compares it to provincial statistics when possible. Type of information presented includes visitor volume indicators from Visitor Centres, accommodation type and capacity, room revenue, transportation statistics, an overview of regional tourism products and local demographic information. The product profile summary revealed that no heli-skiing operators were noted for the region, yet the Bella Coola Valley has three operators in the area.

http://www.tourismbc.com/regional_profiles.asp?id=4865

Tourism BC provides visitor and sector profiles at <http://www.tourismbc.com/template.asp?id=2>
The *British Columbia Visitor Study*, conducted in 1995/96, provided profiles of visitors throughout all regions in BC. Although the data is now dated, it was a primary source of information for many years and can still be used for historical analysis and survey design.

Refer to Appendix 1 – *Situation Analysis* for an overview of the Tourism BC *British Columbia Visitor Survey*, completed as phase one of this project.

Research Resolutions & Consulting was commissioned to examine characteristics of British Columbia's

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

key North American urban markets by activity group. Summaries of current and projected market size (to 2025) and demographic characteristics are reported for each major urban market and activity group. The reports are based on the *Travel Activities and Motivations Study (TAMS)* which was led by the province of Ontario with partner agencies across the country including Tourism British Columbia. There are two full reports: one for Canada and one for the United States. For each, there is access to the full report, the executive summary or the individual activity groups. Relevant market profiles for the Bella Coola Valley include Alpine skiers (includes heli-skiing), Winter Outdoor Tourists and Outdoor Adventurers.¹ A summary of these market profiles forms part of the *Current Situation Report* as part of this project.
http://www.tourismbc.com/sector_reports.asp?id=2067

Provincial Government

The Province of BC conducted a series of **Tourism Opportunity Studies (TOS)**, which are an information tool that can be used to identify, develop and promote appropriate, sustainable tourism development opportunities for a region. The studies are useful tools for business people, governments and local communities. Market and community profile information is included in the studies.

<http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/cis/initiatives/tourism/tos/>

For any particular study area (typically a forest district), a TOS contains the following information:

- a set of maps showing a ‘snapshot’ of the area’s current tourism industry and which resources they are using;
- maps and text analyzing what kinds of tourism activities could be conducted in areas that are not currently being used in tourism operations;
- a short summary of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT Analysis) facing the development of designated tourism products in the area as a whole; and
- a concise overview of the best opportunities for development for each of several designated communities within the study area (Community Tourism Development Profiles).

For the Bella Coola area the study completed in 2001 can be found at:

http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/cis/initiatives/tourism/tos/MidCoast/final%20pdf%20files/html_table_of_contents.htm

Other provincial sources for tourism information include:

Ministry of Tourism, Sports and the Arts <http://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/tourism/>

BC Stats http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/pubs/pr_tour.asp

¹ Tourism BC

National Destination Marketing Organization

The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) provides various national reports by market and sector, which can be found at <http://www.canadatourism.com/ctx/app/en/ca/statsfigures.do> Overseas consumer market research, led by the Canadian Tourism Commission, is an on-going initiative of several Canadian tourism-related associations - including Tourism British Columbia. Consumer market research examines the characteristics, motivations and planning habits of the long-haul pleasure travelers of an international market through interviews with that market segment. The research also examines the awareness of Canada, potential of the market, and Canada's competitive analysis as a destination.

Other Sources for Research and Information

BC Centre for Tourism Leadership and Innovation <http://www.bctli.ca/>

BC Wilderness Tourism Association <http://www.wilderness-tourism.bc.ca/>

Council of Tourism Associations (COTA) <http://www.cotabc.com/>

Statistics Canada <http://www.statcan.ca/start.html>

Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) <http://www.tiac-aitc.ca/english/welcome.asp>

Website statistics <http://www.etcnewmedia.com/review/default.asp?SectionID=10&CountryID=41>

RESOURCE LIBRARY

As both the business community and the tourism organization require current information about market trends, cooperative marketing opportunities and resources, it is recommended that BCVT establish an electronic version of a resource library. By having one source in the community gather this information and post it to the industry resource section of the BCVT website, stakeholders can share in supplying information to that one source for the benefit of all. Key research projects that provide insight into the Bella Coola visitor or potential visitor should form part of the resource library. The research information provided in the above section would be the start of the resource library, where PDF files of key reports can be posted on the website with links to the original source for further information.

The resource library would not be limited to market research but rather, would have sections for all aspects of tourism development and planning and could include, link sections to various industry websites, program information, local tourism organization information etc.

The Tourism BC Business Essentials workbook series is one example for the resource library. Refer to the Industry Development section for more information.

PRODUCT INVENTORY AND ONLINE DATABASE

Rationale

In order to understand what the Bella Coola Valley product is and how it's evolving over time, it's imperative that a comprehensive inventory be completed for both the tourism businesses and the feature areas of the Valley. This data will need to be kept current, with annual reports that summarize the

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

composition of the tourism industry providing a baseline for trend analysis over time. Maintaining the product inventory of local businesses and key area features will be essential for effective marketing, partnerships, product development, communications, packaging, product/market matching, product gap analysis and planning.

With today's technology, small communities can embark on an inventory project that can be maintained either in spreadsheet format or ideally on an online website system that integrates with communications, marketing, and a product availability matrix or central reservation system.

The database forms part of the web strategy, which provides the most efficient and effective solution for the collection, storing and dissemination of information. Web access through security codes allows various users to access the system remotely. The contact list of operators supports the internal broadcast email communication system as well as allowing the tourism organization to conduct primary research of the local industry. Online surveys can be conducted through an informal "Forum" function or simply surveys can be produced and administered through online services for little or no cost from suppliers such as Survey Monkey. <http://www.surveymonkey.com/>

In addition, media and industry contacts could also form part of the database. E-marketing and direct mail (for potential repeat visitors) requires collection and management of information. The database would be able to sort prospective visitors by their interests, thus providing the opportunity to send permission-based customized information via email or by mail. Tourism BC is currently in the process of developing a province-wide product inventory with potential for on-line booking capability on their consumer website. <http://www.hellobc.com/en-CA/default.htm> The collection and retention of personal information is subject to the Privacy Act and a privacy policy would be required by the society.

Initiatives

1. **Database** - Coordinate database development within the web strategy or through spreadsheets using Tourism BC industry standards.
2. **Master Lists** - Build master lists:
 - ▶ Businesses classified by the eight main tourism sectors (sub-classified by product features)
 - ▶ Area features and natural resources
 - ▶ Event and meeting facilities
 - ▶ Sports venues
 - ▶ Artists' inventory
 - ▶ Media contacts
 - ▶ Tourism organizations (local and regional community DMOs, select BC community DMOs, Tourism BC and Canadian Tourism Commission)
 - ▶ Local government
 - ▶ Key associations as they pertain to the product mix
 - ▶ Visitor inquiries for permission-based marketing or market analysis in compliance with the Privacy Act

COMMUNICATIONS WITH LOCAL INDUSTRY AND THE COMMUNITY

Rationale

Ongoing communications with the local tourism industry and the community will be important to sustaining interest and participation levels, and for conveying the sense of accomplishment needed to raise participation in marketing programs. The industry contact list and online database will be valuable tools for assisting with communications.

As tourism development occurs in the Valley, residents will be directly and indirectly affected over the short and long term. The tourism organization and the regional district will need to communicate the progress and plans for the community, and gather input from the residents at large to ensure the vision for development is in balance with the values of the residents.

Initiatives

1. **Communication System** – Establish a broadcast email and fax system that can be used to maintain ongoing communications with industry partners via the website and database.
2. **Meeting Schedule** – Maintain monthly meetings of the tourism association board. Host a semi-annual marketing meeting open to all tourism industry stakeholders regardless of membership status. Outcomes from the meeting can be distributed through email and fax newsletter. Host an annual industry event, which includes the unveiling of the annual plan, and include an industry workshop session and/or familiarization tour of local product.
3. **E-newsletter** – A quarterly e-newsletter can be prepared with industry news, current events, tourism trends and statistics, new investments and business developments and infrastructure developments for distribution to all tourism stakeholders. Marketing opportunities would be distributed on an as required basis.
4. **Print Materials** – A hard copy version of the e-newsletter could be available at select businesses and the regional district office for those who do not have access to email. (Output with a laser printer as required.)
5. **Advertising** – A small ad in the local paper every four months could alert the community to activities and progress while directing them to the tourism website for more information.
6. **Press Releases** – Monthly press releases to the local newspaper would communicate the activities of the initiatives as they move forward.

INDUSTRY & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Rationale:

A more diverse, competitive and innovative tourism sector will benefit through the promotion and facilitation of quality, service and professional standards. It is through tourism operators themselves that the benefits expected through the implementation of this tourism plan will be realized. More visitors, longer stays and higher spending will translate directly into increased occupancies and yields, employment and capital investment among operators. Creating this positive cycle requires that industry raise its standards in line with marketing, infrastructure and other development efforts so the visitor experience is truly enriched and leads to a more sustainable base. Promoting the product for the Valley

will not be effective unless the product meets or exceeds the expectations of the target market. As the Valley develops its tourism opportunities, both individual businesses and the collective industry will require development.

Professional Development / COTA Conference / CCCTA AGM

Professional development is essential for both tourism business owners and organization leaders. The annual conference for the tourism industry is sponsored by the Council of Tourism Associations of BC (COTA) and is held annually in February. www.bctourismindustryconference.ca. The Chair or a representative of BCVT should attend the conference and bring information back to the tourism board. The conference provides a great opportunity for networking as well as professional development.

The regional destination marketing organization annual general meeting provides professional development opportunities in the form of guest speakers or workshops. It is recommended the BCVT board attend the CCCTA AGM and communicate information back to the membership.

Industry Development

Tourism BC is introducing a new program for **sector development**, known as **Experiences BC**. British Columbia is renowned for its exceptionally diverse selection of tourism experiences. By encouraging these businesses to form alliances in the form of industry sectors, Tourism British Columbia is able to facilitate the pooling of resources and expertise. As viable sectors, Tourism British Columbia is able to work directly to assist them in becoming market-ready.²

In addition to Tourism BC resources, the **Canadian Tourism Commission** provides a resource section on their industry website. Sections include Tourism Stats & Figures, Business Directory and Image Gallery. <http://www.canadatourism.com/ctx/app/en/ca/resource.do>

Initiatives

- 1. Workshop Series** – The tourism organization can work with Tourism BC to host operator workshops to improve local understanding of land use, regulations, product, marketing, service excellence, financial and human resource development issues. Workshops are an alternative to certification or classroom training because they are more convenient and less time consuming for operators who might not otherwise be able to participate in formal programs. In addition to the TBC programs, a customized program can be initiated by BCVT to bring the local industry together once or twice a year to understand the current product available in the area, network with each other and develop a team approach to community marketing.
 - ▶ Tourism BC provides an industry development program that consists of a series of workshops, training sessions, resource guides, one-on-one counselling, and information. Information guide books, some with corresponding workshops, include: *How to Work with Travel Trade; Tourism Packaging and Distribution; Environmentally Responsible Tourism; Travel Media Relations; Ads and Brochures that Sell; Internet Marketing; Tourism Business Essentials; Hospitality Law Guide; Starting a Tourism Business Guide and Sport Tourism*
http://www.tourismbc.com/business_development.asp?id=1252

² Tourism BC

- ▶ The Tourism BC SuperHost Business Program recognizes those businesses that are committed to providing excellent customer service. There are eight SuperHost customer service workshops to choose from: Fundamentals, Japanese Service Expectations, Service Across Cultures, Customers with Disabilities, Service in Health Care, Solving Problems Through Service, Sales Powered By Service and Frontline Management Solutions.
http://www.tourismbc.com/training_services_backgrounders.asp?id=1233

2. Best Practices – Promote awareness of best practices in product management, marketing and packaging. All of the following resources can be maintained by the tourism organization within the reference library.

- ▶ The Canadian Tourism Commission has produced several reports in recent years on best practices in commercial outdoor recreation. Local operators can use these best practices and case studies to upgrade their own companies.
- ▶ *Business of Adventure: Developing a Business in Adventure Tourism* is a guide for developing a new adventure tourism business or purchasing an existing one. A sample business plan is included.³
- ▶ A step-by-step guide for dealing with the regulatory process, and particularly land use issues, in tourism development was prepared by Tourism BC. It would be helpful in navigating through various licensing and permitting processes.
- ▶ Information on commercial recreation tenures from the former Land and Water BC offices (now part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Land) should be distributed in case a proposed operation wishes to make use of Crown land. It is not necessary to distribute the entire policy document but “frequently asked questions” information can be obtained from MAL and distributed.⁴
- ▶ Encourage adoption of industry and government standards by tourism operators. This should include the following:

3. Industry standards - Optimizing participation in Tourism BC’s inspection and registration program for accommodation properties that allows them for inclusion in the BC Approved Accommodation Guide and can also apply for “approved accommodation” signage - Tourism Product Services is also responsible for designating artisans, attractions and accommodations for the purpose of highway signage.

http://www.tourismbc.com/prod_mgmt.asp?id=1248

- ▶ Promoting the adoption of Tourism BC’s Export-Ready Criteria for tourism operators - Based on the input of overseas travel trade, tourism product suppliers and receptive tour operators, TBC has developed an export-ready guide to facilitate best possible representation of British Columbia’s tourism industry in international markets. Recommendations for minimum standards are made for product development, packaging with tour operators and marketing through the travel trade.
- ▶ Promote the uptake of professional certification and training programs. The tourism industry

³ Published by Bhudak Consultants – ISBN: 0-0682474-0-0.

⁴ <http://lwbc.bc.ca/02land/tenuring/index.html>

is dominated by small businesses that must juggle seasonal business fluctuations, with restricted cash flow, limited labour force availability and thin operating margins. In this environment, it is difficult to promote the idea of certification and training programs that may be perceived more as costs than investments. However, some operators have made commitments. Dream Catcher Heli-skiing is working with the Nuxalk and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada on a variety of labour market training projects that will allow the company to place more First Nations' employees in front-line positions. Logging and site preparation skills (for development of landing sites and managed ski-runs), hospitality and cultural interpretation skills are all in demand.

The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC) administers certification of the National Occupational Standards for the tourism industry and works with provincial agencies for delivery of training tools and professional certification services. These standards are rooted in the hospitality sector and are broadly based. In addition to striking associations with provincial and territorial partners, CTHRC works closely with the business, labour and educational representatives from all sectors of Canada's tourism industry. Core objectives include raising the level of professionalism and attracting the labour force needed to ensure a profitable and sustainable tourism industry. The Council's programs have been brought under the umbrella of its emerit brand.⁵ The designated agency in BC is go2, **go2** <http://www.go2hr.ca> an independent organization that supports tourism employers, managers and entrepreneurs in attracting and retaining a sufficient number of skilled individuals into the tourism workforce in order to meet their business needs. *SuperHost*, hunting and fishing guides, heritage interpretation and outdoor adventure guides are some of the accreditations offered.

- ▶ Promoting awareness of best practices in business planning, product management, packaging and marketing - The Canadian Tourism Commission has produced several reports in recent years on product development and enhancement in areas such as spa and wellness, adventure recreation, cuisine, cultural/heritage and winter products.⁶ Local operators can use these best practices and case studies to upgrade their own companies and resolve critical business issues such as financing and insurance. Guides for tourism funding, risk management and insurance for outdoor operators, database of insurance providers and insurance tutorials are available on CTC's website.

4. **Skill development** - Promote the delivery of viable entrepreneurship and skill development programs to encourage more First Nations tourism businesses. Examples include CESO Aboriginal Services⁷ is a volunteer organization, which promotes and extends the economic and social growth and well-being of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. They are extensively involved in skills transfer programs and have a tourism and hospitality program shaped around a series of workshops that can be delivered locally. The Nuxalk have been a client of CESO in the past.

⁵ http://www.emerit.ca/eng/page.aspx?id=about_us.htm

⁶ <http://www.canadatourism.com/ctx/app/en/ca/publication.do?catId=home.catalog.publications.productDevelopment>

⁷ <http://www.ceso-saco.com/english/national/aboriginal/index.php>

The Native Education Centre in Vancouver has several college level training programs in tourism uniquely designed for aboriginal people interested in pursuing a career in the industry.⁸

Both Aboriginal Business Canada⁹ and Aboriginal Tourism Canada¹⁰ have a variety of programs and resources for tourism entrepreneur development.

The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has several economic development programs that could be delivered locally. The Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative seeks to promote the participation of all Aboriginal peoples in the labour market.¹¹

5. **Enterprise services** - Facilitate access to enterprise services offered in the region, for example through Community Futures Development Corporation of Cariboo-Chilcotin, and the province, for example resources through Small Business BC, the successor to the Canada-BC Service Centre. This could complement any business coaching programming that may arise out of the Economic Development Strategy.
6. **Local business spending** - Optimize benefits and opportunities from emerging tourism development clusters such as heli-skiing. Existing operators appear to be sourcing the majority of their purchases (e.g. labour and materials) from outside the Valley. While this is partly attributable to the small base of local suppliers it may also stem from a lack of awareness about local capabilities. A brokering role aimed at getting more engagement between suppliers and operators would be a first step in identifying where the realistic opportunities are.

⁸ <http://www.necvancouver.org/old/programs/>

⁹ <http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/internet/inabc-eac.nsf/en/home>

¹⁰ <http://www.attc.ca/>

¹¹ http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/awpi/index_e.html

VISITOR SERVICES

Rationale

Visitor services refers to those services that directly assist visitors as they move through the purchase cycle. Visitor services provide information through various programs (e.g. Tourism BC's Visitor Centre Network); fulfillment (responding to visitor inquiries); signage in the community; collateral materials (print materials such as visitor guides or maps) and reservation systems. Regardless of the size of the community or the resources the tourism association has, some form of visitor services is required to ensure the marketing effort will be effective. Ensuring that visitors have a positive experience results in positive word of mouth referrals to friends, which is the most common way in which visitors first heard about Bella Coola according to the UNBC visitor survey released in January 2006. The visitor services program ensures the community has collectively contributed to creating a positive position (or perception) in the mind of the consumer, thus creating loyalty to the destination.

Initiatives

1. **Signage and facilities**– Signage and other services form part of the tourism development plan for the Bella Coola Valley.
2. **Visitor Info Booth (VIB)** – The Bella Coola Valley Tourism association operates the Visitor Info Booth during peak summer season with assistance from Service Canada's HRSDC summer students program. Extending this service in 2006 to coincide with the extended ferry schedule is recommended if funding can support it. As part of the travel-show strategy, it is recommended, that the booth proposed for the shows doubles as the Visitor Info Booth, providing a flexible solution to showcase the VIB in a variety of locations and to communicate the new brand.
3. **Daily Activity Notices** – Some operators in the Bella Coola Valley operate other businesses and cannot commit to a set schedule for tours. Cell phone service and hi-speed Internet access is not available in all areas of the Valley but plans are underway to expand the service, therefore it is recommended that the VIB staff coordinate the availability of tours and activities via an online web system, where the information is forwarded via the Internet by the operators and one page of activities can be downloaded and printed daily by the VIB staff. In addition, accommodators and operators could utilize the same information for their guests and assist them in planning their activities while in the Valley. Daily activity sheets could be made available in the lobby of accommodation providers. Alternatively, things to do "by the week" can also be produced.
4. **Community Visitor Ambassador Program** – Through training of the retailers, accommodation providers and front-line workers who have the greatest opportunity to encounter visitors throughout the community, The Valley could establish an ambassador program that provides key information about things to do, places to go and daily tours, etc. By spreading the knowledge base outside of the VIB, the community becomes host to more visitors, thus reaching more people.
5. **BC Ferries / Discovery Coast Route Visitor Services Program** – BCVT has been hosting a visitor services program on the BC Ferries route from Bella Coola to Port Hardy for the past few years. Volunteers from the summer VIB program are on hand at the travel desk when possible throughout the summer months. The program is beneficial to the two gateway communities that must be accessed to reach Bella Coola: Port Hardy and Williams Lake. The visitor services

program should be revitalized as a regional partnership between the major benefactors of this route. Partners could include BC Ferries, City of Williams Lake, North Island/Port Hardy community marketing association, both regional DMOs –Tourism Vancouver Island and Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association – and BCVT. Secondary partners may include Tourism Comox Valley and Tourism Nanaimo.

- 6. Reservation System / Accommodation Availability** – Tourism BC offers a reservation system program, however many visitors to The Valley are not planning for their accommodation in advance, causing uncertainty on ferry days when the capacity is full for both incoming and outgoing ferry travellers. Although a phone-tree concept has worked in the past, an availability matrix could be set up through the website to check accommodation availability without having to make several phone calls. This program would form part of the website strategy and would require cooperation of the accommodation and tour operators to update the information.
- 7. Toll-free phone number** – BCVT currently operates a toll-free number service, which tends to be quiet in the off-season. The VIB staff respond to the inquiries and refer people to the website or mail information as requested. It is recommended that there be a voicemail message that directs people to the website while they are waiting to have their call returned.
- 8. Mail Packages** – BCVT has a limited budget, but does mail out information upon request. Key recommendations are to send materials that best match the interest of the visitor and include a cover letter, website information, a map and visitor guide. Specific brochures on types of tours or activities should also be included where appropriate.
- 9. Email requests** – Email requests should be responded to in a timely manner as they likely originate from the BCVT website. Rather than an email link that presents a blank message frame, email forms can be created to collect the contact information, tracking information (e.g. How did you hear of Bella Coola?), special areas of interest and permission to add their name to a database for future follow-up via permission-based direct email campaigns. Collection of personal information is subject to the Privacy Act and all regulations must be met when retaining someone's personal information.
- 10. Email addresses** – Generic email addresses can be set up based on the domain name and then forwarded to those individuals who will respond to them (e.g. info@bellacoola.ca gets forwarded to the VIB staff person during peak season and someone else during the off-season). The published email address remains the same but the forwarding of the email can change.

Fulfillment Services and Call to Action

Fulfillment refers to the activity of responding to visitor inquiries. In addition to providing service to the potential visitor, this plan incorporates tracking as part of the fulfillment strategy so that marketing efforts can be evaluated and adjusted.

The toll-free number will appear in as many publications and websites possible produced by BCVT, this number could be used on other materials as appropriate. The web address will be used on all materials and it is recommended that an email series be set up using the domain name e.g. info@bellacoola.ca, adventure@bellacoola.ca etc. to track various promotions.

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

The call to action will be the website address www.bellacoola.ca and the toll-free number prompting the end user to ask for the visitor guide and the local map. BCVT will track what marketing activities are being responded to by asking anyone who calls in how they got the phone number, for email requests for information, the question could be asked on the email form.

What information gets sent in a mail package needs to be determined based on the request and budget for postage etc. Tourism businesses with brochures should have equal opportunity to have their materials included in mail-out packages.

TRACKING AND EVALUATION

Rationale

In order to evaluate the progress of the programs and services and adjust plans to reflect changing market conditions and local industry needs it is recommended that a tracking and evaluation strategy be implemented. As part of an annual planning process, lessons learned from the previous year will assist in the planning of activities in the following year. Tracking all visitor inquiries in the database can provide a source to support conversion studies and to evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing programs. This type of research may be partially sponsored through a partnership with the regional DMO, or undertaken with an education institution. Some regional DMOs conduct conversion studies to determine if the inquiries received from their marketing effort actually resulted in visitation to the region. In essence the research seeks to determine whether an inquiry “converted” to an actual purchase.

Initiatives

- 1. Annual Planning Process** – It is recommended that BCVT develop an annual planning process to coincide with fiscal year-end deadlines of major government grant funders (March 31) and the tourism marketing cycle. As the organization grows over time and takes on more projects as identified in this strategy, the balance between limited resources and the ability to be effective at marketing must be considered. By having an annual plan with a focus each month, the strategy can be implemented without being overwhelming. A year-in-review process provides valuable insight for future planning.
- 2. Benchmarking** – Comparative benchmarking against other communities could be undertaken to give a better understanding of performance. The process of benchmarking includes gathering data to see how well the community performs against others, and is also a way of identifying new ideas. It is important to understand the cost and time issues of benchmarking – measurement tasks that cannot be reasonably undertaken either because of data gaps or time constraints should not be undertaken. Information needed to fulfill a benchmark analysis should be readily available or relatively easy to obtain. VIC statistics, room revenues (BC Stats), visitor exit surveys (Tourism BC), changes in accommodation inventories (BC Stats) and tourism labour force (Statistics Canada) are among the more easily identified and assembled benchmarks.
- 3. Market Program Evaluation** – Marketing activities that are meant to increase visitation, spending and visitor satisfaction all imply measurement. The essence of marketing is dynamic so standards and conventions are frequently broken, but what is important are the measurable

results. The following are basic measures for key elements of the marketing program, which can be monitored and reported in the year-end report:

- ▶ **Participation rates** – growth in volume and program spending by local industry and partners.
- ▶ **Visitation and spending** – activity measures used in this report (VIB visitation, room revenues) as well as primary research (i.e. visitor survey).
- ▶ **Inquiries** – website hits, domain addresses pointed at a particular web section, toll-free number calls, determine how the person heard of the toll-free number or website through the call to action by asking how the caller got the number or request information through an email form. Maintain a list of marketing initiatives and record the number of inquiries by type. Customize email addresses and domain names for promotional purposes. E.g. adventure@bellacoola.ca (dedicated address can point at any page on the website or email address can be forwarded to the general mail box and tracked by unique address.)
- ▶ **Program effectiveness** – local industry survey, monthly meetings.
- ▶ **Occupancy data** – As required by the Central Coast Regional District grant requirements, the Bella Coola Valley accommodation operators will supply occupancy rates starting with 2005 for the next decade. It is unknown what methodology will be used by the CCRD, Tourism BC offers occupancy tracking by the month and produces aggregated seasonal reports when a minimum of five operators voluntarily participate.
- ▶ **Media clippings** – “tear sheets” or copies of printed articles or e-news items
- ▶ **Website statistics reports** can be used to monitor the way in which sections of the website are performing, and to track the growth of traffic to the site as a whole. This information is useful when considering additions and renovations to the site. Tracking will also include email requests for the visitor guide and general requests for information. The visitor inquiry database will also serve as the base data for conversion studies to determine whether the inquiry actually resulted in a visit to the Valley and whether the information visitors found on the web or received by mail influenced their decision to visit.

3 MARKETING STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this strategy is to provide the Bella Coola Valley Tourism association with a plan that can be implemented to strengthen the market position and promotion of the Bella Coola Valley. The implementation, budget and annual marketing plan are provided by separate cover, which will focus on the tactics over the coming year. The focus of this strategy is to build a foundation to ensure the Valley can compete with other communities. The plan includes a community-branding strategy that would be applied to all communication tools and promotional materials for tourism. Although most of the marketing materials are developed for the tourism sector, other business sectors benefit from the tourism marketing efforts, as most business investors would be visitors to the community at some point in the investment process. Quality of life attributes, such as recreation and cultural activities, appeal to both residents and visitors. As well, the tourism industry is the most visible sector in community marketing.

The strategy outlines how BCVT can approach tourism marketing and promotion and is intended to be a guide for future activities. Although resources are not available for all activities at this time, it's imperative the community have a strong vision of what it is they would like to achieve in the strategy so that when resources become available, they are in a position of readiness to respond, thus avoiding missed opportunities. Effective community marketing can only be achieved through a collaborative and cooperative approach, as the tourism organization does not have control or ownership of the components that impact the visitor experience. This plan is a working document, therefore it will evolve as potential partnerships and alliances are formed and resources are secured during the implementation stage.

According to the American Marketing Association marketing can be defined as, “The process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives.” Marketing's ultimate goal is to discover and satisfy customer's needs and desires. A marketing strategy is the means by which marketing goals and objectives are to be achieved. Marketing strategy is characterized by determining what to do, who will be the focus of the strategy (target market) and how to do it (sustainable competitive advantage and positioning).¹² The position that the destination holds in the mind of the consumer varies according to the destination appeal by a particular market segment. The essence of the Valley experience is captured through the branding process and communicated through the marketing strategy. The new brand for the Bella Coola Valley will deliver that positioning message through the marketing strategy by building on the strengths of the destination matched to target markets.

It's important to understand that the marketing strategy does not deal with just the promotional side of marketing but rather the broader context that takes into account all stages in the purchase cycle (awareness, interest, evaluation, purchase, experience and loyalty). Regional DMOs primarily focus on promoting an area as a visitor destination, community DMOs (or local tourism associations), must take

¹² Marketing: Berkowitz, et all.

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

into account all aspects of tourism marketing, as the impacts are at the community level where jobs, capital investment and quality of life are factors for stakeholders. Promoting a product would not be effective (result in a sale and satisfied customer experience) if the messaging is not a match at each stage of the purchase cycle or the product did not meet the target market's expectations. Therefore the marketing strategy for Valley includes both internal marketing (within the community/visitor services) and external marketing (outside the community/destination marketing).

Partnerships are critical for the success of the strategy. Without the cooperation of local businesses, First Nations, organizations, the community at large and local government, the Bella Coola Valley will not be effective in meeting the tourism development or marketing goals and objectives. BCVT resources are scarce, and without adequate core funding volunteers face the possibility of burnout. If grants can be secured to build the foundation plan as outlined in this strategy, the Bella Coola Valley will be able to compete with other destinations, and costs to maintain the projects will be within their capacity. However, in another three years when a new strategy is required the cycle would start over.

MARKETING GOALS

- Develop a community brand for the Bella Coola Valley that can be utilized for the various needs of tourism, economic development, and the community of the Bella Coola Valley
- Increase visitor volume
- Extend market reach
- Increase awareness of the community of the Bella Coola Valley in key leisure travel markets
- Increase overall length of stay by visitors
- Increase length of stay by visitors pre and post BC Ferries arrival and departure days
- Increase visitation outside of peak summer and ferry traffic season
- Increase spending amounts by visitors
- Provide a “seamless” service for the visitor throughout the purchase cycle

STRATEGY FOCUS

The strategy focuses on tourism marketing and promotion with the understanding that it's imperative to improve the experience for existing visitors as well as those intending to travel to the Valley (current markets), and potential visitors in new markets (market development). Product development initiatives will allow the Valley to develop new products and attract new markets. The product development plan is presented separately. The promotional strategy will be integrated to serve the visitor effectively throughout the purchase cycle (awareness, interest, evaluation, purchase, loyalty).

Recommended guiding principles:

- Be inclusive of all tourism stakeholders and consider a “stakeholder model” for the tourism association; re-package membership fees as marketing partnerships and include all tourism businesses in communications, inventory and listings for no fee
- Ensure the community at large is involved in the process and is supportive of the tourism plans
- Build on the strengths of existing efforts within the community

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

- Develop partnerships and strategic alliances with stakeholders both in and out of the defined study area (to leverage resources and extend market reach)
- Create partnerships amongst all community stakeholders: tourism industry, First Nations, local government, local and regional organizations and residents
- Identify visitor needs and seek to satisfy those needs while balancing the values of the residents of the community

STUDY AREA – PROMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES

The study area for the purposes of marketing and promoting the Bella Coola Valley, also referred to as the Valley, include the Central Coast Regional District areas of Bella Coola, Hagensborg, and Highway 20 east to the South entrance of Tweedsmuir Park including “the Hill.” Recognizing that visitors do not distinguish a destination by political boundaries, but rather the attraction base of an area, the tourism marketing boundaries are:

- North to Dean Channel
- South to Monarch Ice Fields
- East boundary of Tweedsmuir Park
- West to King Island including Mackenzie Rock

Community areas include:

- Bella Coola
- Fourmile
- Firvale
- Hagensborg
- Stuie

Feature areas include:

- Tweedsmuir Provincial Park South including Rainbow Mountains, Hunlen Falls and the Turner Lake Chain
- North and south Bentinck Arm
- The Bella Coola, Dean, Talchako and Atnarko Rivers
- The Hill

Neighbouring areas to be featured in regional partnerships may include:

- Bella Bella
- Highway 20 to Williams Lake (Anahim Lake)
- North Island/Port Hardy, Vancouver Island
- Various communities along multiple circle tour routes

DESTINATION EVALUATION

The Bella Coola Valley is at the beginning stage of destination development and although it now caters to primarily leisure markets, historically visitors have been from the corporate sector due to the forestry and fishing economy of the past. The Bella Coola Valley is not unique, in that it is embarking on a tourism development process to diversify its economy. Many communities in BC can boast their unique history and natural setting, therefore the uniqueness of the Bella Coola Valley must be told in an effective way to position it as a visitor destination and not just a community to pass through along a circle tour.

As a visitor destination, the Bella Coola Valley area offers limited but marketable product in the form of natural attractions and historical significance in a wilderness environment. Current destination product includes heli-skiing and river fishing. This remote but accessible area has neighbourly charm in a spectacular natural setting with its steep mountain valley nestled along a coastal inlet. Although not an oceanfront community the proximity to the ocean provides critical access as a touring route as a result of the summer ferry service and a diversity of experiences for the touring market, which can include the “Hill” and the ferry to access the region. Close proximity to Tweedsmuir Park is a strength, and bear viewing in the park boundaries provides a great opportunity to experience wildlife viewing. However the close proximity of resident grizzly bears that populate the area are both a unique feature and potential for danger to the public.

Current positioning is primarily associated with outdoor recreation, namely fishing on the Bella Coola and Dean Rivers, grizzly bear viewing and, more recently, heli-skiing. Historical significance that has not been exploited includes, a rich history of the Nuxalk culture, Alexander Mackenzie’s crossing of Canada in 1793, canneries, Hudson’s Bay trading post, settlement of the Norwegians, the building of the Hill and Kopas Store. Key natural features include Tweedsmuir Provincial Park South including Rainbow Mountains and Hunlen Falls and salmon fishing the Atnarko River.

There is minimal tourism infrastructure in the Bella Coola Valley and the tourism economy is somewhat dependent on the BC Ferries summer run from June to September. The waterfront access is minimal but a marina does serve the boating public and the historic cannery and Inn is an attraction. Marketing, communications and signage will be key to position the Valley as more than just a place to pass through.

PRODUCT MARKET MATCH

Product in these categories have been identified from the perspective of what is marketable now and ready for promotion and how they might be profiled in a destination’s marketing materials. Quantity of available product is limited within most categories, which will require niche cooperative marketing opportunities with select operators.

A snapshot of the composition of tourism suppliers and natural resources in the Bella Coola Valley indicate ten marketable product categories.

Heritage Arts & Culture	Winter Sports / Heli-skiing - Snowmobiling
Nature Observation	Wildlife Viewing
Freshwater / Saltwater Fishing	Air Tours
Land-based Recreation / Hiking / Mountaineering	Touring/Scenic Driving
Aboriginal Tourism	Water-based Recreation – Kayaking / Canoeing / Marine Cruising / River Drifting

POSITIONING FOR BELLA COOLA VALLEY

The Bella Coola Valley (population 900) can be defined as a rural environment providing basic modern conveniences, with both authentic First Nations and early European settlement history and culture, coupled with outdoor vacation experiences with strengths in fishing, heli-skiing, nature and wildlife viewing and hiking. The resident grizzly bear population is apparent throughout the valley. The remote wilderness area is accessible through very deliberate means, via the ferry in summer, driving “The Hill,” or flying. The friendly people of the Bella Coola Valley extend hospitality that will remind urban folk of days gone by. Visiting the Valley is like being amongst friends, where the atmosphere is casual.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE BELLA COOLA VALLEY

As part of the communications strategy, information needs to be conveyed to offset current misconceptions about the Valley. Through the focus groups and the online industry survey of operators the following key issues were identified:

- Bella Coola has high precipitation because it is a coastal community / Bella’s Coola location inland provides a moderate climate, gardening zone 6/7
- Bella Coola is accessed by the ocean, therefore it must be a coastal community / The tourism infrastructure is disbursed throughout the area and into Hagensborg. The town area of Bella Coola does not have ocean views or direct access to the ocean; it is a river community.
- The relationship between Hagensborg and Bella Coola is confusing, they are very close in proximity but there is no central focal point in Hagensborg such as the cluster of retail shops like the hotel area in the town area of Bella Coola itself.
- The Hill is dangerous / The Hill can be travelled by all vehicle types
- Once you come down the Hill into the valley you are in Bella Coola / Distances and services from the Hill to Hagensborg and Bella Coola are not clear

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

- Kayaking is safe on the inlet and rivers / Waters can be rough, and ragged or non-existing shoreline can make it dangerous
- Arrival at the BC Ferries dock is the town of Bella Coola / Town is a mile away
- The estuary is public property / The estuary is private property
- Cell service is available / cell service is not available and high speed broadband is limited
- Remote and isolated means lack of medical services / Good hospital
- Nothing to do / Plenty to do, mostly outdoor activities
- Remote and “North” means extreme winters, lack of modern amenities, lack of technological progress / remote and isolated means authentic, basic and ideal conditions for heli-skiing

BRANDING & IMAGE BANK

The objective of a community brand is to create a unique identity that clearly distinguishes your community from that of your competition. An effective brand evokes a positive first impression. By consistently using the brand throughout all communication applications, you develop brand equity starting with awareness, recognition and ultimately loyalty, creating a place in the mind of the consumer that represents the positive aspects of the community. A destination brand needs to be versatile, allowing incorporation of thematic designs throughout various applications. Brands are developed from a review of the strengths of the community, environment, current activities, attractions, characteristics, history and the ability to attract visitors to the area (market demand).

The branding strategy for the Bella Coola Valley is to create a community brand that can be utilized by the community tourism organization for marketing and the business community as well. Effective branding works only if the designs are utilized by as many businesses and organizations as possible throughout the community, so everyone is promoting the same image of the Valley. The branding message will be flexible, appealing to different markets by product interest and visitor experience. The branding promise that the community makes to a potential visitor must be well defined in the positioning statement of the community; this serves as a basis when communicating what the Valley experience is.

In addition to a graphic icon that will accompany the word mark – The Bella Coola Valley, British Columbia Canada – key photographic images (signature series) will be used consistently to demonstrate visually the attributes that make up the brand for the Valley. High-resolution scans for print production are required and all images should be digitized so they may be distributed via the Internet or by CD/DVD. Electronic artwork and CD-ROMS will be available to the community to incorporate the branding into their marketing materials.

The image bank of photography will be used for all types of media; website, print, posters, travel show booth equipment, visitor info booth, BC Ferries wall displays, media relations and many other purposes. The image bank will be compiled from purchasing usage rights of existing images from professional sources (for high resolution needs and the signature series), partnerships with local operators for use of their images, image banks through the regional, provincial and national sources and archival images can

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

be purchased through BC Museum and Archives and commercial image banks if required. Primary sources will also be considered if gaps exist in the image inventory from existing sources.

After the initial image bank is compiled, ongoing updating of images will be required. Through the efficiency of digital cameras, high-resolution quality images, low-resolution standard images and video clips (suitable for website use) can be captured more readily. A combination of both professional and amateur sources will maintain the image bank over time.

Branding designs are currently in progress with the image bank project, they form a separate deliverable from this report.

TARGET MARKETS FOR BELLA COOLA VALLEY

Market segments for the Bella Coola Valley include fully independent travellers (FIT) and small groups seeking destination leisure pursuits with interests in heli-hiking, river fishing and for the touring market outdoor recreation and sightseeing.

Focus of effort: Touring Market

The rubber-tire touring market seek multiple activities, multiple destinations and a variety of accommodation preferences. Peak travel period is during the ferry season summer run.

- Primarily adult couples aged 35-64; secondary adult couples 65-74 (seniors); 55 + retired or self-employed couples
- Interests are in outdoor recreation, sight-seeing and cultural pursuits
- Recreational vehicles

Geographic focus for the touring market:

- Western Canada, US Pacific northwest
- Overseas markets via the Internet

Focus of effort: Outdoor Adventurers

The Outdoor Adventure (non-winter) market segment includes travellers who engage in fair-weather outdoor activities. Canadians in this segment are particularly likely to include hiking and backpacking, wildlife viewing, cycling, kayaking or canoeing and fishing among their trip activities. Approximately half of these tourists participate in these activities when travelling. About two-fifths go motor boating and approximately one-third view wildflowers and flora, go wilderness camping or golf when they travel. This segment includes many non-outdoor activities such as cultural activities, and attractions include shopping for local arts, crafts and antiques and general history museums. At least two-fifths of the Canadian Outdoor Adventurers include these activities on their travels.

Canadian Outdoor Adventurers (to any destination) are somewhat more likely to be men (53%) than women (47%). On average, they are about 37 years of age. Close to half of them are in the 18 to 34-year age bracket and over one-quarter are between the ages of 35 and 44 years. Vancouver's Outdoor Adventurers are relatively evenly spread among those who are 18 to 34 years, 35 to 44 years and 45 to 54 years of age.

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Outdoor Adventurers from across the U.S.A. who have travelled to British Columbia are appreciably older than the U.S. average, likely because those who cross international borders for holidays tend to be more affluent, sophisticated and seasoned tourists than those in this market segment who restrict their travels to their “home” country. The average age of Outdoor Adventurers who have taken recent leisure trips to British Columbia is almost 45 years, compared to about 39 years for the segment as a whole.

Geographic focus for the outdoor adventurers market:

- Western Canada, US Pacific northwest
- Overseas markets via the Internet

Full profiles of the Outdoor Adventurer market segments are available through the Tourism BC TAMS reports for Activity Based Tourists for Canada and the United States¹³

http://www.tourismbc.com/sector_reports.asp?id=2067

INTEGRATED PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY

Effective place marketing streamlines the fragmented efforts of various stakeholders and develops a unified or integrated approach in the tourism marketplace. An integrated promotional strategy for a destination distributes the various communication tools through several communication channels in order to get the message to the visitor throughout the purchase cycle. Tourism is a “market driven” industry and marketing activities must be based on the motivations, needs and expectations of existing and potential visitors. The focus of the strategy is to promote the Bella Coola Valley as a visitor destination. Each market segment will have a targeted message relating to their primary area of interest in the Valley while cross-promoting all other aspects of the area. Recognizing that resources are limited for BCVT, the strategy will focus on efficiency by refining current tactics and introducing new ones that will support the community in its endeavour to establish the Bella Coola Valley as a visitor destination.

PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES

Place marketing has become highly competitive with the emergence of community-based destination marketing organizations on the rise in the last decade. Communities are striving to be visible in an already saturated marketplace. An effective approach is a partnership strategy, which allows stakeholders to pool resources, extend market reach, and present a unified image to the world. This strategy benefits the tourism organization, tourism businesses and other sector stakeholders when communication materials displaying a consistent brand are used. By pooling resources, partnerships can support the programs and services that were previously unachievable and government programs can be leveraged when more partners are involved.

Potential partners for the Bella Coola Valley include but are not limited to: local businesses, First Nations, sector organizations, business organizations, regional government, BC Ferries, Pacific Coastal Airlines, Community Futures Development Corporation, event organizations, neighbouring community

¹³ Tourism BC

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

DMOs (Western Chilcotin Tourism Association; Central Cariboo, Williams Lake; North Island/Port Hardy, Vancouver Island), the regional DMO Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association, Tourism BC and the Canadian Tourism Commission.

All cooperative partnerships will need to be developed during the implementation stage of the strategy, as multiple partners will be involved. It is recommended that a formal alliance of BCVT and the community DMOs along Highway 20, North Island/Port Hardy and Williams Lake be formed in order to establish a marketing partnership strategy. In partnership with BC Ferries, Pacific Coastal Airlines and the CCCTA, consider marketing partnerships that could be leveraged through the various marketing programs of Tourism BC, the CCCTA, Northern BC Tourism Association and BC Ferries alliance. By expanding to North Island/Port Hardy and other parts of Vancouver Island, Tourism Vancouver Island and the community DMOs could also be partners. E.g. Tourism Comox Valley, Tourism Nanaimo, North Central Island Tourism etc., for the mainland access to the region and other partnerships could be explored with Vancouver Coast and Mountains or local DMOs on the broader access routes.

Projects for exploration include the following:

- Regional geographic information systems (GIS) mapping project (base map data for web and print media). This would be initiated by the CCCTA as a regional project with community partnerships.
- Visitor Centre volunteer and staff FAM tours throughout the region (pre-season)
- Regional Visitor Services Program on BC Ferries Discovery Route (refer to Visitor Services and BC Ferries)
- Co-branding and promotion of the Discovery Coast Circle Tour route and other circle tour routes
- Product clustering and themed itineraries for marketing
- Distribution of the Chilcotin Coast Tourism 100 Things to Do Along Highway 20 guide
- Circle tour profiles and cross-promoting of each destination on each partner's website and visitor guide
- Travel show partnership promoting multiple destinations on the circle tour route
- Promotional partnerships / trip give-aways
- Media relations and FAM tours
- Cooperative advertising
- The Chilcotin Coast Tourism 100 Things to Do Along Highway 20 guide initiated by BCVT is being planned by the CCCTA, which could expand sections for the circle tour partners. With the CCCTA distribution channels, the new publication will have more impact in reaching new markets.
- Image bank
- Representation at the new visitor services Discovery Centre opening June 2006

Key Partnerships

Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association (CCCTA)

The regional destination marketing organization (RDMO) holds the greatest potential for marketing partnerships and leveraging of resources. The RDMOs purchase media space at reduced rates due to both volume purchases and partnership programs with Tourism BC, their primary funding source. With the addition of the \$2,000,000 one time grant from the province of BC, the Bella Coola Valley has more opportunity under the Flexible Funds Program to leverage funds, however, many communities will also

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

be preparing to access programs as well so it's essential a strategy be developed as soon as the programs have been finalized by the CCCTA. In addition to cooperative marketing programs, partnerships for research, media relations, industry development, website presence and mapping should be explored.

Refer to the Leveraging section for programs from Tourism BC and the Union of BC Municipalities.

Community Advisory Committee to the CCCTA

With continued development of community destination marketing organizations (CDMOs) in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast region, it is recommended the community organizations request a community committee be formed for the CCCTA. Representatives from each community area that have community tourism associations would form the committee. By determining regional projects that the CDMOs can participate in for their communities, partnered marketing efforts will leverage resources and provide more effective ways of serving visitor needs.

Regional Mapping Project

The following project is intended to be directed by CCCTA as a regional project with community partners. As important as the web is to attracting visitors, the objective of the map is to get visitors to stay another day, or stop in the area even though they may have intended to just drive through. A comprehensive map is the number one communication tool that will serve the needs of a tourist in transit. Geographical information systems (GIS) maps, provide accurate representation of features of an area. If the CCCTA undertakes the GIS mapping project, the communities in the region could share files and a multitude of maps by product cluster can be produced from the one set of data. This project may be eligible for Tourism British Columbia partnership funding with the inclusion of TBC branding and the Hello BC ad panel.

Sources for geographical information systems (GIS) map data can be found as part of the Tourism Opportunity Studies conducted by the provincial government in 2001.

http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/cis/initiatives/tourism/tos/MidCoast/final%20pdf%20files/html_table_of_contents.htm

Topography data must be purchased through a license agreement from the government of Canada.

http://maps.nrcan.gc.ca/topo_e.php

Recreation and Activity Map

This map concept features major highway and secondary road information combined with key editorial content such as attractions, recreation features, circle tours and inset maps. The recreation and activity map format is 24x36" that folds to rack size 4x9". Topographic in design the map showcases recreation areas and key points of interest with icons and major access routes in and around the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast region. Regional inset maps would show key communities as well as the province. It is recommended the map be produced to industry standards, professionally designed in full four color, printed on minimum 50 lb. matte stock. Shelf life is subject to demand, estimated at two years. The map can be sold through retail outlets, providing both a revenue stream for the CCCTA and the retailers. Promotional copies would be used for travel shows, FAM tours, CDMOs, advertisers and media.

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Web Maps

Potential visitors can download web versions of the printed maps. In addition, the web version of the map series can be uploaded to the businesses and organizations in the region for use on their own websites. File formats would be in both Jpeg and PDF for compatibility for all users. Depending on the database capability of the communities, the web maps can be linked to their business inventory.

Samples

Printed samples of regional mapping projects done by the consultants can be supplied for reference and web versions can be found at: <http://www.sunshinecoastcanada.com/sunshine-coast/map.php> or <http://www.gibsonsbcc.ca/maps.php>

Chilcotin Coast Tourism 100 Things to Do Along Highway 20 Guide

The magazine style guide that has been produced by BCVT (and partners) requires a distribution strategy for 2006/07. Certified Folded Display offers distribution programs throughout Canada and the United States. Refer to the Visitor Guide section for more information and visit <http://www.certifiedfolder.ca>

The CCCTA has indicated in their current marketing plan that they will produce a Highway 20 guide in the future. With the branding and distribution channels of the CCCTA it is recommended this publication be produced by the regional DMO with input from the proposed community advisory committee. It is further recommended it open with an introduction of the region, add a welcome section and include more maps. A PDF version of the guide could be made available on the website.

Multi-panel Rack Brochure

The following project is intended to be directed by the CCCTA. This project is eligible for Tourism British Columbia partnership funding up to 50% with the inclusion of TBC branding and the Hello BC ad panel. In partnership with the Community DMOs in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast region a lure brochure could be produced in rack format 24 x9” folded to 4x9” containing 12 panels. The design is in template format in order to keep each panel consistent in presentation. Each community DMO has one panel to promote their area with their own branding and a call to action for their Visitor Guide, website, toll free number and Visitor Info service. Four panels would be dedicated to include the regional map, circle tours to the region and CCCTA regional profile. Print samples of a similar project done by the consultants for Tourism Vancouver Island can be supplied.

Print Run: 100,000 Shelf Life: 3 years, subject to demand.

Distribution would be determined by the proposed partners BCVT, Western Chilcotin Tourism Association, Central Cariboo, North Cariboo and South Cariboo community DMOs and the CCCTA.

Suggestions for discussion follow:

- DIRECT MAIL: Canadian Tourism Commission, BC list (30,000)
- RACKING VIA CERTIFIED FOLDER DISPLAY: BC Ferries Route Port Hardy to Bella Coola, other routes to be determined e.g. Vancouver to Nanaimo etc.; Airport & Cruise Ship Terminal Vancouver (5,000); Supercities - Vancouver and Lower Mainland (20,000), PNW (20,000), etc.
- OTHER: Campaign for visiting friends and relatives, cross-promoting with festivals & events mail outs, travel shows, fulfillment, others to be determined.

BC Ferries

Public Relations and Marketing Re: Sinking of the Queen of the North

Just as this project was concluding, the tragic event of the sinking of the *Queen of the North* dominated the air waves and other broadcast media. With the loss of life of two passengers and a history of accidents and problems with BC Ferries equipment, the impact on the markets are unknown at this time. Although the ship was not the Discovery Coast Passage vessel, it is of the same type and shares part of the same route. It will be imperative for all stakeholders affected by this situation to stay abreast of the direction BC Ferries will take both in public relations, marketing and product changes for all routes along the north and central Coast.

CCCTA Flexible Funding Program

As identified in the draft Flexible Funding program discussion paper prepared by the CCCTA, BC Ferries, the Northern BC Tourism Association and CCCTA identified a partnership strategy to promote the Discovery Coast and Freedom Highway. No details are available at this time about the proposed partnership.

Route 40 September 6-15, 2006¹⁴

BC Ferries has announced extended service to the September 2006 season for September 1, 5, 9, 13, 15, 19, 23, 27 and 29 departing Port Hardy 8:00 a.m. arriving Bella Coola the same day at 9:00 p.m. for the 13 and 27th and departing Bella Coola September 4, 8, 10, 14, 18, 22, 24 and 28 at 8:00 a.m. arriving Port Hardy the same day at 9:00 p.m. except the 10th and 24th departs 6:00 a.m. arrives 2:15 a.m. next day. This extended season is an important opportunity for the Bella Coola Valley, Port Hardy, Williams Lake and the Highway 20 stakeholders to test market this time period. Immediate plans need to get underway to promote this extended service as well as to identify product that will be available during the period and to create a special section on the Bella Coola websites and all partners' websites. Press releases and cooperative advertising should be developed as soon as products available for that time period are identified.

Regional Visitor Services Program on the Discovery Passage Route

For the past four seasons BCVT has provided a tourism councillor onboard select sailings. The first two years volunteers were onboard; the past two years utilized Visitor Info Booth summer students. Some financial sponsorship was received for two seasons by the CCCTA. BC Ferries is supportive of a visitor services program and will provide the space at the service counter. A formal visitor services program is required for the route, however, this is a regional initiative as both Port Hardy and Vancouver Island in general will benefit as will the Bella Coola Valley, Highway 20 and the Central Cariboo. It is recommended that BCVT initiate discussions with Central Cariboo Tourism (City of Williams Lake), the CCCTA and Tourism Vancouver Island to determine how a program could be funded. After a familiarization tour of the *Queen of Chilliwack*, it was determined there are various wall space areas that could be used for display of large format photo images and key messages promoting the attributes of the various destinations along the route. BC Ferries is investigating whether images can be installed for the season directly through BC Ferries or whether the wall space must be booked through a third party

¹⁴ <http://www.bcferreries.com/schedules/calendar/sch06080601.html>

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

contractor. BCVT could sell their branded merchandise on board, provided BC Ferries approves the program. Large format posters using brilliant photography and key text could replace the small photo display frames currently being used. Refer to the Bella Coola Valley Poster Series section, this could be expanded to a regional project.

Pacific Coastal Airlines

Pacific Coastal Airlines provides complimentary flights to non-profit organizations to assist with the promotional effort of the community. Immediate opportunities this year could include hosting media for initiatives generated by BCVT. News articles can be posted on the Pacific Coast website, which could tie into events or the start of outdoor recreation activities, e.g. bear viewing, heli-skiing, etc. Cooperative advertising is also an option. Destination markets such as fishing, heli-skiing and the corporate markets as noted by the local travel agency primarily utilize air-service.

Western Chilcotin Tourism

The Western Chilcotin Tourism Association <http://www.visitthewestchilcotin.com/> is currently considering options to undertake a tourism development plan and are supportive of a regional partnership strategy with the Bella Coola Valley.

City of Williams Lake and the Central Cariboo

The City of Williams Lake under the brand of the Central Cariboo embarked on their tourism marketing strategy in 2003. The marketing strategy identified partners along the Highway 20 corridor for potential partnerships. With the opening of the new 8,000 sq. foot Discovery Centre in June 2006, the Bella Coola Valley could have a presence there. In addition to sharing the Highway 20 route, Williams Lake is a gateway community to the circle tour route to Bella Coola. The Discovery Centre could become a key booking agent location for accommodation and or tours through a reservation system. As part of the circle tour program a display for the route would be ideal for the centre. As noted in the travel show strategy, North Island/Port Hardy, Williams Lake and Bella Coola could consider a circle tour partnership inclusive of cooperative advertising, web presence, travel shows and visitor guides. Final plans are not yet finalized for the centre but they are currently in progress. Options for the Valley may include: selling of branded merchandise; photo slide show and or video for the interactive computer terminals; partnerships to produce video with the Central Cariboo; racking of business brochures; community brochures and guides; and links to the Central Cariboo website.

North Island / Port Hardy, BC

The local Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) office is currently undertaking the leadership for community tourism, as the long-standing community organization VINVA has ceased operations. They are currently making application to Tourism BC under the Tourism Community Foundations Development program. Tourism marketing is being supported by an independent operator www.northislandtours.com and the VINVA website <http://www.vinva.bc.ca/> is being maintained by CFDC. It is recommended that BCVT introduce itself to the CFDC office and determine what partnerships may be possible especially in consideration of the impacts of the sinking of the *Queen of the North*.

Circle Tour Partners

There are a multitude of circle tour routes that can be showcased on each of the partners' websites with corresponding links to each of the community websites. Co-branding these routes and partnering in cooperative advertising, travel shows and website designs will communicate a consistent message while providing shared costs for programs which will result in extended market reach.

PACKAGING PRODUCTS

Packaging in the tourism industry refers to the bundling of multiple tourism experiences into a “package” that is marketed and offered to the consumer at one price. This type of product reflects the habits of travellers who tend to need accommodation and meals and something to do while on vacation. Packages simplify the purchasing decisions for the traveller and may consist of nearly any combination of a traveller's needs. Packaging is a way for individual suppliers to increase their visibility in the marketplace and to capture additional business. There is potential for development of packages for the Bella Coola Valley tourism product. Although this concept was test marketed with the travel agency in Bella Coola it may be more effective to initially focus on presenting itineraries for promotion direct to the consumer. By promoting a variety of things to do and see in the Valley and presenting them first as itineraries, market demands can be determined. Packaging and pricing packages for sale through the local travel agent direct to the consumer would be a starting point. As tourism develops, future opportunities could include packaging for wholesale trade. Having an in-bound operator in the area is strength and an opportunity. Tips on packaging can be found on the CCCTA website at <http://www.landwithoutlimits.com/members/index.html?p=171>

Product and industry development programs through Tourism BC can assist with this process. It's imperative that when product is being packaged and sold with an accommodation component that is not owned by the company packaging the product, that the operator adhere to the regulations of the BC travel registrar. Refer to Travel Trade in the next section.

Tourism BC delivered the *Tourism Packaging and Product Distribution* workshop in 2005 in Bella Coola.

TRAVEL TRADE

Tourism British Columbia coordinates many international programs that require British Columbia tourism suppliers to meet specific criteria to be considered for participation. These conditions are based on the input of overseas travel trade, tourism product suppliers and receptive tour operators; and have been developed in order to ensure the best possible representation of British Columbia's tourism industry in international markets.¹⁵ With limited resources of BCVT at this time and limited export-ready product in the Bella Coola Valley (with the exception of heli-skiing), any companies seeking to work with travel trade are recommended to consult with the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association and Tourism BC. The CCCTA is about to launch a new travel trade program, details are unavailable at this time.

¹⁵ Tourism BC

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Packaging is a key component to working with trade, and as noted in the above section, packaging is recommended at a later phase of development. Industry development programs are available through Tourism BC, and the resource guide *How to Work with Travel Trade* is recommended to understand the requirements of working with trade. Trade programs and trade show opportunities are posted on the Tourism BC business website.

Programs for North America http://www.tourismbc.com/marketing_sales.asp?id=1236#cp

Programs for Overseas http://www.tourismbc.com/marketing_sales.asp?id=1237

Trade Shows http://www.tourismbc.com/marketing_sales.asp?id=1238

Working with travel trade information can be found on the CCCTA website

<http://www.landwithoutlimits.com/members/index.html?p=172>

Export ready criteria can be found on the CCCTA website

<http://www.landwithoutlimits.com/members/index.html?p=171>

BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR EFFECTIVE MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Many communities embarking on their initial formal marketing strategy require refinement to reach a point where they can compete with other destinations. *How* things are done is as equally important, if not more important, as *what* is being done. The following section will outline key strategies that will support BCVT to be more effective with its tourism marketing while building a legacy that will benefit the entire tourism community.

The system to respond to visitor inquiries must be in place with promotional tools to distribute throughout the purchase cycle and adequate means to get the message out. What that means is for every stage in the purchase cycle the target audience requires appropriate information.

This includes:

- promoting awareness of the destination and its attributes;
- generating interest in the destination as a travel choice;
- be convincing as the choice over other destinations and
- indicate convenience to purchase the experience.

By ensuring expectations are met (or exceeded during the actual experience) you are creating loyalty to the destination, which is demonstrated by the target markets willingness to share that information with others or to return.

In order to be effective in marketing and promoting a destination, the following elements make up an integrated system that will create mutual benefit for both the visitor and the tourism community.

Key elements required in an integrated marketing system include:

- Research
- Resource library
- Product inventory
- Database
- Communications with industry
- Industry development
- Visitor services, fulfillment services and call to action
- Tracking and evaluation
- Branding (in progress)
- Image bank (in progress)
- Facts and editorial bank
- Display equipment
- Digital still and video camera
- Stationery
- Kit Folder/Press Kit
- Visitor Guide
- Maps
- Merchandise
- Website and industry resource system

The research, resource library, product inventory, database, internal communications, industry development and visitor services are covered in the core programming section; the branding and image bank projects are underway and descriptions of both are noted as part of the marketing strategy.

The next section deals with the promotional materials that are required to effectively market and promote the Bella Coola Valley throughout the visitor purchase cycle.

Applying the Brand to Promotional Materials

Further to the initial brand developed for the community, the application of that brand needs to be incorporated on all promotional materials developed for the Valley. The designs need to be consistent with the community brand, while customized for the communication objective of the materials being developed. Corresponding photography, colours and font selection will enhance the brand design and create the visual identity to be recognized as the Bella Coola Valley. The website address www.bellacoola.ca must appear on all materials; the toll-free number would appear where appropriate.

PREPARING FOR PROMOTION

In order to produce promotional materials, the brand designs will need to incorporate graphic images, photography, video clips, text and map data.

Facts and editorial bank

A fact sheet or “list of facts” needs to be compiled into one reference source, where information about the Bella Coola Valley can be easily accessed. Whether used as a “quick facts” section on the website, a resource for media to understand the area to write stories, for researchers writing copy for the website, for feature stories or press releases or for businesses needing information, maintaining a quick reference of

key facts will be more efficient than having everyone do their own research from multiple sources. Web links to this information should be sent to any businesses or organizations that are writing about the Valley, whether that be third party websites, travel guides, media, etc.

In addition to a fact list, any text written for BCVT (under contract or by agreement) where possible, should remain under copyright to the association and should be shared with other stakeholders to ensure the information is utilized. Editorial written for media press releases or feature stories should also be posted on the website and made available for any businesses that need information for promotional purposes. Editorial copy produced by the CCCTA for their new media relations program could be utilized by BCVT. Check the copyright before using any material.

Fact checking third party sources for accurate editorial representation of the Valley should be an ongoing process and where websites or publications do not have adequate or accurate information, corrections or additions should be forwarded to these sources with links back to the Bella Coola Valley website. It was observed on both the CCCTA and Tourism BC websites that the community profile of Bella Coola is meager at best, it's important to ensure all the main websites that profile communities have adequate information. An example of good editorial information about Bella Coola was found at british columbia.com <http://www.britishcolumbia.com/regions/towns/index.asp?townID=3587> Another good source is BC Adventure Network. <http://www.bcadventure.com/adventure/explore/cariboo/cities/bella.htm>

Display equipment

Display equipment can be used for travel and trade-show purposes, local meetings and events and a portable Visitor Info Booth. With portable systems topping seven feet in height, display equipment can be used by local businesses and organizations for presentations, displays, workshops, etc. within standard ceiling heights. It is recommended that BCVT purchase display equipment with multiple uses in mind. By utilizing the new brand for the Valley and developing a solution that allows full flexibility, standard booth displays can be designed to allow the changing of panels in order to customize the message for multiple audiences at different shows, events or visitors at the Visitor Info Booth in Bella Coola. The new brand would be incorporated into the design with striking images and a map of the area with room for other panels to be exchanged. The newest trend is the pop-up display model, which should also be considered. This may be a suitable option for the circle tour partners or other product sector groups that may wish to share the costs and the benefits of this type of display. This equipment would become a community asset and could be used by businesses and organizations when not in use by BCVT. In addition to the booth or display equipment, accessories must also be considered, such as tables, lighting, brochure rack holders, podium, dolly and audio or video equipment.

Digital still and video camera

As noted in the image bank section, maintenance of the image bank will be through ongoing acquisition of usage rights of existing photography supplemented with images taken by BCVT. Modern digital technology today allows high-resolution quality images to be captured for use in print media (magazines for media use or posters, etc.). All-in-one cameras now double as video recorders. The website will require fresh images by season, and as new products are developed in the Valley images can be compiled.

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

In addition to marketing purposes the camera will be an asset to the community and could be loaned to businesses to take images for their websites, etc. The organization can capture images of industry events and FAM tours as well.

PROMOTIONAL TOOLS & MATERIALS

With the fully integrated suite of promotional materials, the Valley will be more effective in raising awareness of the destination and persuading potential visitors from just being interested in visiting to making a purchase decision. In addition to attracting new visitors, it is equally important to effectively serve the visitors that are already intending on coming to the area. The following are recommendations for priority projects for the first two years of the strategy.

Stationery and Bella Coola Valley Postage Stamps

The new community branding will be applied to the design of the stationery suite being developed as electronic files for tourism for letterhead and a fax cover sheet. The e-stationery is used for electronic correspondence and the artwork can be output in hard copy as required. A preprinted stationery suite would consist of letterhead, second page matching paper stock, #10 business envelopes, 9x12” envelopes, 10x13” envelopes and business cards. Alternatives to pre-printed stationery include the purchase of a black and white or color laser printer to output the stationery as required. Letters distributed with promotional materials, as part of the fulfillment process, would use the branded stationery.

In addition to standard stationery for correspondence, a flat sheet design can be used as a shell for customized information to be output in-house on an as-needed basis for information about a product (event, trails, etc.), or when any information is to be presented in a handout format by the Visitor Info Booth. Electronic flat sheet designs would be produced in both horizontal and vertical orientation 8.5x11”. Flat sheets can be used for output for the daily activity sheet, list of accommodations in the Valley or administrative purposes for the organization (e.g. meeting agenda, minutes, etc.)

Canada Post now offers a custom-made stamp program. To launch the new brand and the stationery suite, BCVT could order a select number of customized stamps using the new brand artwork and website address for the stamp. These postage stamps could be sold as souvenir stamps through the local post office or through retail outlets. www.canadapost.ca/picturepostage

Kit Folder/Press Kit

With print technology today, small print run through digital output provide professional quality products without the need for volume print runs, alternatively generic kit folders could be enhanced through tastefully designed large format stickers that can be output through color laser printers. Standard kit folders with double pockets will hold a variety of materials, visitor guide, brochures, maps etc. as well as CDs. The community website address would be included on the kit folder www.bellacoola.ca. The kit folder would be used for various purposes; e.g. welcome kit for a new business in the community, attraction kit for new businesses, press kit for media relations, FAM tour kit, folder for BCVT marketing programs, industry development training materials etc.

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Press Kit for Media Relations

A press kit for media relations is an essential tool for any community that intends to embark on a media relations program. Both print and web versions of the materials are required. Press kits can be sent to media prior to their arrival or upon their arrival. Press kits need to contain: quick facts about the area, story ideas, CD of hi-resolution images suitable for print media, maps, visitor guide, key contact list, detailed itinerary of FAM tours planned during their stay in the community with all inclusions noted. Pre-written stories along with all other information noted above must be available on CD with links to corresponding websites and the media section of the CDMO website. Additional tips for press kits and working with media can be found as part of the Tourism BC Travel Media Relations workshop and Tourism Business Essentials workbook. *Refer to the Media Relations section for more information.*

Visitor Guide

The visitor guide will be the primary promotional brochure to both attract visitors and serve visitors once they have arrived in the community. BCVT has produced a digest-size publication *Bella Coola Visitor's Guide*, which has adequate stock levels for the next season.

Key recommendations for the next print run include:

- Incorporate the new brand into the design
- Produce in an 8x9" format (folds out to 16x9") which can be soft folded to 4x9" for racking distribution purposes and mailing in a standard business size envelope
- Re-structure the content of the guide to open with a welcome and summary of the attributes of the Valley
- Present the information in both the "lure" context as well as for visitors who will use the guide to experience the Valley once they have arrived
- Upgrade the maps
- Ensure the call to action for the website and toll-free number are on the footer of every page

A two-year shelf life for the publication will keep costs down and create value for the advertisers. Along with the pad map, the visitor guide is the primary fulfillment piece for inquiries, and distribution and should be in every accommodation room in the Valley, rental cars and rack displays throughout the community. Distribution also includes local events and festivals, travel shows, Visitor Centres throughout the province and Pacific Coastal Airlines (where possible). A web version in PDF format can be posted on the website. If budget permits, a call to action on the website should promote mailing of the guide.

With the rack-size option, placement within the racking system managed by **Certified Folder Display Service Canada, Inc.** provides racking services for over 19,000 locations throughout western Canada and the US including programs on BC Ferries such as the Discovery Coast, Nanaimo to Vancouver and or Comox/Powell River routes. In addition to BC Ferries, racking programs include Auto Clubs and various hotels, corporate headquarters and geographically specific areas. The airport distribution package for both terminals in Vancouver can also be targeted. A new program is being developed for Visitor Centre's throughout the province. In addition to racking services, display and advertising opportunities are also an option.

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Due to the current formats of the *Bella Coola Visitor's Guide* and the *Chilcotin Coast Tourism 100 Things to Do Along Highway 20* guide, magazine rates apply to distribute these guides which can cost up to five times more to display in the same location as items that can rack in a standard 4x9" rack space. The magazine racks do have greater exposure as there are less publications in this format and therefore they do not get lost in the clutter of multiple racks.

For more information and pricing contact Kira Howard (604) 572-9203 or visit the website.

<http://www.certifiedfolder.ca/>

Tourism BC

Tourism BC has just launched a new community guide-racking program in partnership with Certified Folder Display. The official visitor guide for the Valley can be racked for a fee at the six provincial Visitor Info Centres (Vancouver Airport, Peach Arch border crossing, Merritt, Mt. Robson, Golden and Osoyoos). For those visitor centres that form part of the TBC Provincial VC Network, they will receive this service at no cost (except for shipping the guides to the warehouse). The program also includes distribution in the new BC Presentation Centre at Tourism Vancouver's main Visitor Centre on Burrard Street in Vancouver. This new section of the VC will house the official publications of the regional DMOs and those communities that are part of the Tourism BC VC program.

Organization Memberships for Racking

Membership benefits with some tourism organizations include racking services, website links, market research information and advertising opportunities. Sometimes the membership fee is worth just the racking exposure where there is high traffic in the Visitor Centre and or website links from high traffic sites.

Tourism Vancouver <http://www.tourismvancouver.com>

Targeting tourists in transit in Vancouver, member benefits of Tourism Vancouver include racking services for communities at their main Visitor Centre on Burrard Street in Vancouver. There are strict guidelines on the content of the publication and it must be pre-approved. Membership fees are required for two-years in advance with annual renewals thereafter. In addition to racking, members receive a business listing in the *Official Visitor Guide* and a website listing, (a live link is an additional \$250 per year), market research information, event opportunities, etc. <http://www.tourismvancouver.com/members/>

Seattle Convention and Visitors Bureau www.seeseattle.org

Targeting tourists in transit in Seattle, membership benefits of the Seattle Convention and Visitors Bureau include a website link; listings in their travel publications; free distribution of brochures in the Citywide Concierge Centre and Washington State Convention and Trade Centre and marketing opportunities. Membership fees are \$400 US per year. For more information visit the member benefits section of the website. <http://www.seeseattle.org/membership/joining/benefits.asp>

Maps

Every community needs some form of map to assist visitors in understanding the context of where the location of the area is and how to find access to locations once they have arrived. Both print and web

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

maps are important as web research is on the rise for trip planning. Large format print maps are especially helpful for a regional area and smaller version maps are ideal for a local area. Maps will vary in scale and can be costly to produce if geographical information systems (GIS) technology is used. Maps can range from basic give away pad maps to large format 2x3' recreation feature maps which could be sold. As noted in the Partnerships and Alliances section a regional mapping project could be undertaken as a partnership with the CCCTA, alternatively a large format map could be produced through the cooperation of the local businesses and BCVT.

A hybrid map/visitor guide will assist in getting visitors to stay another day, or stop in the area even though they may have intended to just drive through. A comprehensive map is the number one promotional tool that will serve the needs of a tourist in transit. The map concept needs to feature road information coupled with a legend, photos, brand and call to action, key visitor information such as attractions, recreation features, trails, inset maps (township and the region), distance charts, key intersections or road access points, editorial content, safety warnings, emergency information and directions.

BCVT has just completed an 11x17" format pad map.

Key recommendations for the next print run include:

- Incorporate the new brand into the design
- Utilize the space with editorial features with photos, distances and directions to key places to visit
- Print on thin weight stock, matte finish to minimize costs

The map is the companion piece to the visitor guide and distribution of the map would include every accommodation room in the Valley, all accommodation lobbies, rental cars and counter tops throughout the community. Distribution also includes local events and festivals, local operators, retail stores, travel shows, VC centres within the region and Pacific Coastal Airlines (where possible, perhaps the airport). A web version in PDF format can be posted on the website.

Large format maps can double as posters for framing or window display to businesses and organizations throughout the community.

Examples of web maps created by the consultants include:

<http://www.sunshinecoastcanada.com/sunshine-coast/map.php> and <http://www.gibsonsbcc.ca/maps.php>

Sources for geographical information system map data can be found as part of the Tourism Opportunity Studies conducted by the provincial government in 2001.

http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/cis/initiatives/tourism/tos/MidCoast/final%20pdf%20files/html_table_of_contents.htm

Topography data must be purchased through a license agreement from the government of Canada.

http://maps.nrcan.gc.ca/topo_e.php

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Bella Coola Valley Branded Merchandise

Merchandise serves as both a promotional tool and a revenue generator while offering value to the consumer in the form of a souvenir. High quality functional items are recommended such as travel mugs, coffee mugs, pins, fleece vests and jackets, shirts, etc. The logo from the brand of the Bella Coola Valley will form the artwork with the website www.bellacoola.ca

Distribution of merchandise would be through all local businesses that want to participate in the program, and the BC Ferries gift shop on the Discovery Coast route if approved. These items could be sold at local festivals and events as a fundraiser. Creating large stocks of items are not required. Retailers can pre-pay with their order so only those goods pre-sold will be created. Depending on the product type, both silk screening and stitching methods would be used which would be subject to a one-time set-up cost for the artwork.

Bella Coola Valley Poster Series

Through stunning photography and key phrases the secrets of the Bella Coola Valley experience can be captured through a poster series that can be displayed in the accommodation lobbies and various locations. Showcasing key products and scenic settings, visitors will be prompted to ask for more information about these opportunities to visit special places or take guided tours. In addition, wall displays for BC Ferries and other locations can be custom designed and large format colour laser outputs can be produced as required.

Comprehensive Website www.bellacoola.ca

In the tourism sector, an effective website is the most important asset a business or community can invest in for attracting new customers or servicing existing ones. With today's technology features that were limited to large corporations are now available for small organizations and options continue to improve year to year. The objective of the website is to promote the destination as a desirable place to visit, provide information that will influence the purchase decision and provide a sales mechanism. The website is both a communication tool and a distribution channel for communications, it is intended to support the visitor throughout the purchase cycle, including fulfillment (responding to visitor inquiries.)

The site will house a multi-functional online database and internal communication system. The website can be developed by modules and or by sections, as resources become available. Capability includes a central reservation system for online real time bookings.

The website is not just for visitors, it will also serve BCVT by providing utility for the association, that includes a broadcast email communication system and email forwarding system through the database. Any BCVT records that can be uploaded as PDF files can be stored on the site and pages can be set-up where visibility is controlled by categories e.g. board members vs. the general public serving both the local tourism industry as well as consumers. The database forms part of the web strategy, which means it's integrated into the online web system, which provides the most efficient and effective solution for the storing and dissemination of information. Maintaining the product inventory of local businesses will be essential in assisting with marketing, partnerships, product development, communications and packaging. The contact list of operators supports the internal communication system that distributes information, as

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

well as allowing BCVT the ability to conduct primary research of the local industry. In addition, media, suppliers and industry contacts would also form part of the database. *Refer to the Product Inventory and Online Database section for more information.*

The system resides over the Internet allowing access by any number of people, managed through security access codes, which can be controlled by each section of the site. This avoids the need for one person to be responsible for the site maintenance allowing assignment of different sections of the site to be managed by as many individuals as required. Each page in the system has a date and time feature, which will allow pages to be created for reoccurring or one-time events that can be set up to be visible for a set period. The page remains on the system so it can be updated when needed again, rather than rebuilt.

The system can be developed to support an online availability matrix for accommodation and tour availability or an online central reservation system, which will automatically update inventory when bookings are confirmed.

Structural Outline

The site will be designed to provide information to visitors in a way that makes it easy for them to plan their stay. Visitors whose destination is the region itself will most likely want to view information by activity, however incidental visitors who are transiting through the region are more likely to be interested in information that is grouped geographically by specific service centres along the main highway or ferry route. Interlinking between the two sections will provide convenience.

Content

Information will need to tell the stories about the Valley experience, understanding that the experience will be different for each market segment. The information must guide people through the planning process. Seventy-seven percent of those respondents surveyed in the summer of 2005, reported that they were visiting the Valley for the first time. The website must always present information at the introductory level and take the guess work out, it must lead into more detail. In addition to great story telling, the copy must be accompanied by appropriate photography. Before linking to third party websites, summarize the key information on the main site for the Valley, then if more detail is required link to the appropriate part of the external website not necessarily the home page.

The Bella Coola Valley is rich in history, instead of presenting just historical information, tie those stories to relevant activities and tours that are available today on a page with live links of the operators who can be of service directly.

As noted in visitor services, operators will be able to upload their tour schedules on a daily basis, so by every morning the VIB staff will have the information they need to assist visitors in planning their tours or activities for the day. Accommodation providers will be able to use this information to assist their guests. Hard copy outputs can be left on the lobby desks for guests to take with them.

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

A special section on the site is the “Bella Coola Valley by the Month.” The current month is the main page with options to click to any of the other months of the year. Each month will have highlights of things to do and see, and whether someone is planning to visit during a certain time of year or has arrived during a certain month, all relevant information is showcased with live links to those operators who can be of service directly.

Itineraries and circle tours will be a major section of the site, from one day to two weeks of things to do and see in the Valley. Each page will have live links to those operators who can be of service directly. A sample of the type of content that would make up the site is listed as a guide.

Consumer Website Sections

Getting Here / Getting Around the Bella Coola Valley	Services
Attractions	Maps
Accommodations	FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions
Food & Beverage	Itineraries & Circle Tours
Festivals and Events	Send a postcard to a friend
History, Arts & Culture	Business Directory
Outdoor Recreation (list sub-heading of key types)	Tours
Contact Us	Links
Photo Gallery	Parks and Trails
Planning your trip / Visitor Services	Special Places
Events calendar	What happening in the Valley (today, by the month)
Media	Others to be determined

The industry section of the website will provide a resource area for industry as well as serve the needs of BCVT. A sample of the type of content that would make up the site is listed as a guide.

Industry Website Sections

Resource Centre (Downloadable maps)	Society Business / Finance / Meetings
Research / Reports	Privacy Policy
About BCVT	Industry Events
Industry News (newsletter)	Marketing Opportunities
Industry Links	Industry Development Programs
Business directory / Inventory – composition of the Industry	Others to be determined

Maintenance

Maintenance of the site would include content updates (refreshing editorial and updating photos). Updates to the dynamic sections such as the Events Calendar will be required on an ongoing basis. A schedule for

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

updates by section will be developed during the production phase of the project. Testing of links is required monthly to ensure third party websites are current.

Revenue Generation

As the site performs over time, BCVT may incorporate fee systems to businesses to generate revenue for maintaining the site. Fees could be charged for enhance pages or links to the database of operators at key sections of the site. Until web hits reach a suitable level, fees are not recommended. Advertising can be sold on the site, house ads can be used for placement and design purposes until such time as they are replaced with paid advertising. For those businesses who do not have their own website, a series of pages can be developed on the community site and fees charged accordingly.

Send a Post Card to A Friend

Sending post cards to a friend is a popular feature and fits with the high concentration of word of mouth referrals from visitors to the Bella Coola Valley. Utilization of the image bank will supply a range of photos that can be used for postcard designs.

Samples of send a post card website features can be found at:

<http://www.tourismvancouver.com/visitors/slides.php>

<http://www.tourismvictoria.com/Content/EN/445.asp>

Web Usage Statistics

Internet Use for Travel is Growing - The Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) is reporting that while the number of Americans using the Internet appears to have reached a plateau, a growing number of US consumers are using the net to plan and book trips online. TIA outlined its findings in its recently released “Travelers’ Use of the Internet, 2005 Edition.” Working with USDM.net – a co-sponsor and contributor to the report – the TIA discovered that a majority of online travelers, 78% or 79 million Americans, used the Internet for travel or destination information in 2005. That’s significantly higher than the 65 % of travellers using the Internet for such purposes in 2004. The study also shows that 82% of travellers who plan their trips online now also book reservations online. In raw numbers, that means that over 64 million Americans bought or reserved an airline ticket, hotel room, rental car or package tour online this past year – up from 70% in 2004.

The TIA’s study details a number of trends, including:

- More than nine out of 10 online travel planners said they used the Internet to plan a personal trip last year, while a quarter planned business trips online.
- The most popular types of websites used for travel planning are online travel agency sites such as Expedia, Travelocity and Priceline (67%); search engine websites such as Google or Yahoo! (64%); and company-owned websites for airlines and hotels (54%).
- Almost half of online travel planners also use destination websites – such as those maintained by convention and visitor bureaus – to plan trips. In addition, one in three online travel planners checks one or more websites and then calls a toll-free number for more information.

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

- With the increases in online travel planning, other planning sources have declined, such as traditional travel agents – down to 31% consulting a travel agent for travel plans in the past year from 39% last year.
- Today, 34% of online travel bookers claim to make all of their travel purchases online. Importantly, nearly eight in 10 online bookers (78%) use the Internet to do at least half of all their travel booking.
- Airline tickets, lodging and rental cars continue to be the top three travel items booked online. However, there was significant growth in online bookings for cultural event tickets, theme/amusement park tickets, travel packages and tickets for sporting events.
- Leisure travellers spent an average of \$1,288 when booking their most recent trip online in 2005; business travellers spent an average of \$1,357 when booking their most recent trip on the Internet.
- When it comes to leisure travel, women are more likely to be online travel planners (56%) and bookers (55%).

The growth in online planning and booking by Americans led TIA and USDM.net to expand the 2005 survey in order to better understand how these consumers respond to a variety of forms of Internet-based marketing communications. What they discovered was the most effective online marketing techniques that trigger a consumer response are:

- Unsponsored search engine results – 36%
- E-mail recommendations by friends or colleagues – 34%
- Links on websites – 26%
- Opt-in e-mails or e-newsletters – 21%

4 INTEGRATED PROMOTIONAL MIX

Once promotional materials are developed, communicating the message about the destination is required. Integrated marketing communications is the process of developing and implementing various forms of persuasive communication programs for customers and prospects over time. The goal is to influence or directly affect the behaviour of the selected communication audience.¹⁶ The following promotional mix is recommended.

Internet Marketing

In addition to creating a comprehensive web presence for the Bella Coola Valley, marketing the website is as important as the level of quality of the content. With continued increases in Internet use for information gathering and bookings, the website is the number one investment a community can make in marketing their destination. Through a variety of content within the site itself, rankings on Google can be in the top ten without any additional effort. Having all the businesses link to the community site will increase rankings with Google. In addition to search engine optimization, Internet marketing will consist of paid and non-paid links, listing ads, and banner ads, where appropriate, by product cluster and destination. It is recommended the internet marketing plan be developed with the new website, so the two projects work together.

Media Relations

Editorial coverage is worth thousands of dollars in equivalent advertising space and readers have more confidence in editorial copy versus advertising claims, therefore, media relations is a key strategy. Media relations include responding to media requests for information, hosting familiarization tours and generating the interest of media in order to have stories written and published. Hosting media requires cooperation amongst transportation, accommodation, food services and tour businesses in order to be successful. Broadcast distribution of stories to travel media and all daily and weekly newspapers across Canada can be purchased through online services at www.baxter.net (Travel Alert) www.travelpress.com/travel_alert

A media web page is critical to support the media relations campaign and would include pre-written stories, story ideas, suggested itineraries, press releases, contacts, web links and high-resolution scans of photography for print use. Media FAM tours are typically coordinated by the regional DMO with Tourism BC however BCVT can generate their own media program, working with operators to host media. *Refer to the Kit Folder/Press Kit section for more information.*

The CCCTA is currently developing their new media program, it is recommended BCVT determine how they can participate in a cooperative initiative as soon as program details are available. To launch the media relations program for the Valley, it is recommended BCVT coordinate the *Travel Media Relations* workshop with Tourism BC.

¹⁶ Source: Don Schulz, *Marketing*

Tourism BC

Tourism BC distributes a monthly email communication to their media database. Story ideas and press releases can be sent to the media department. TBC is currently introducing the Visiting Journalist Program, which provides support for media visits. Criteria for the partnered program is now available, the program primarily assists with transportation costs.

Tourism BC typically works the regional DMO for media relations. With the new media relations program being developed by the CCCTA it is unknown at this time what partnerships are possible. New product information should always be forwarded to both organizations for story ideas.

Travel media relations play an integral role in maximizing consumer and trade awareness of British Columbia as a top travel destination through unpaid media coverage in key markets. Travel media include freelance journalists, travel editors, broadcasters, producers and travel trade media. The Tourism BC Travel Media Relations Program includes activities such as attending key media events, initiating and organizing trips for qualified media, building relationships with key media, and positioning unique story ideas with media. In addition, this division develops press kits and image bank materials for distribution to appropriate travel media. Worldwide-unpaid media coverage for 2002/2003 fiscal year was valued at over \$200 million.¹⁷ http://www.tourismbc.com/marketing_sales.asp?id=1240

Advertising

Advertising has no value if there isn't an action one can take as a result of being exposed to the message. The call to action would be the website and toll-free number for the visitor guide. As important as the call to action, the marketing materials must be effective in order to evoke the desired response of influencing the target audience to make a decision to visit the area. Not all advertising would evoke an immediate response, but advertising increases awareness of the destination — the first step in the purchase cycle. The advertising program is dependent, in part, on the local businesses that want to increase their exposure and leverage their budget in the form of cooperative advertising.

The following is a guide for opportunities to be developed.

- Place marketing (selling the destination; no specific businesses identified)
- Cooperative advertising using the Bella Coola Valley banner (brand and call to action) sharing space and costs with tourism businesses and/or neighbouring DMOs (Note: Always include some editorial content with this type of cooperative.)
- Partnered advertising through the regional DMO (ad buys for CCCTA programs, which should include the newly branded Bella Coola Valley banner and cooperative advertising with local businesses)

¹⁷ Tourism BC

The type of print publications would be tourism publications that are the primary fulfillment piece, product sector publications and newspapers.

Familiarization Tours

Regional and provincial DMOs initiate and organize familiarization (FAM) tours for travel trade and media. BCVT can support FAM tour requests by encouraging businesses to participate in hosting guests, making presentations, supplying information, and coordinating transportation or tours. Press kits would be developed according to the specific interests of the participants of the FAM (see media relations). Internal FAM tours showcasing the Valley product, targeted to businesses, organizations, regional visitor services staff, RDMO staff and Tourism BC call centre staff should be scheduled annually.

Travel and Consumer Shows

Travel and consumer shows provide an opportunity to create awareness of the destination, distribute information, and collect information directly from potential visitors through promotions. Key consumer shows are recommended through the CCCTA partners program, which provides discounted bulk purchase rates and a proven track record. Partnerships with businesses, community DMOs, and circle route partners could expand the representation at shows and expand market reach.

Promotions

Promotions would be developed in cooperation with those independent businesses that want to participate in a trip give-away program. For travel shows, Bella Coola Valley branded merchandise and retail items such as books and clothing would be used for small prizes. A grand prize of a trip to the Valley will motivate people to enter the draw. Packaged tours corresponding to the theme of the show is ideal. Other promotions could include contests to win an all-inclusive trip to the Valley with a variety of sponsors via web promotions (trivia contests), or radio or newspaper promotions.

5 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

Implementation of the strategy will be undertaken as resources become available. A framework for the annual marketing plan and budget will be supplied to BCVT for next steps, however the programs that will be utilized for this strategy from the CCCTA are not currently defined in order to complete a marketing plan. The marketing plan document is intended to provide BCVT with a framework that can be updated on an annual basis and will work in conjunction with the annual planning process documents, which, are expected to be developed by BCVT with guidance from Lions Gate Consulting. An annual budget template has been supplied for BCVT to utilize for their annual planning. The following committee's are recommended to carry out the work noted in the strategy.

- Finance / Operations
- Research
- Communications
- Marketing
- Product & Destination Development
- Industry Development
- Visitor Services

As projects from each section of the strategy are identified as action items in the annual action plan, committee's can undertake the tasks one project at a time.

In order for the strategy to be successful, the entire tourism industry in the Valley needs to receive information about the plans, in addition to the print copies that will be supplied, an email broadcast with a link to the website that will house the plans should be sent to all members of BCVT. An industry input session should be conducted as soon as possible to develop an action plan to finalize the marketing plan for 2006/07 and determine partnerships with other communities.

Increased services by BCVT will require additional resources. It is recommended BCVT review their current membership policy and consider a stakeholder model with a new pricing structure for marketing partnerships.

Professional contractors will undertake several of the projects identified in the strategy. It is imperative they familiarize themselves with this integrated approach. If projects are undertaken in isolation of the full understanding of the strategy they will not be effective. For example, producing a visitor guide based on the costs of production when the content, format and distribution have not been taken into account will not be effective in making an impact in the market. The marketing tools and materials projects will typically require the following consideration: concept development, content and editorial outline, design, production, distribution, evaluation and planning. When developing any communication materials be sure to consider what stage the target audience is in, in the purchase cycle and what action you want the person

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

take as a consequence of being exposed to the message. The DMO can only communicate information; it is up to the operators to ensure the products markets are seeking are meeting expectations, ultimately resulting in a positive visitor experience and referrals to the destination.

Partnerships can only be determined as the strategy is implemented. Leveraging funds with the CCCTA programs are a vital component of the strategy but due to lack of information about these programs the BCVT association marketing plan for 2006/07 cannot be completed at this time, as noted earlier the consultants will provide the framework for BCVT to work with the CCCTA in the near future.

ANNUAL PLANNING PROCESS

It is recommended that BCVT develop an annual planning process to coincide with fiscal year-end deadlines of major government grant funders (March 31) and the tourism marketing cycle. As the organization grows over time and takes on more projects as identified in this strategy, the balance between limited resources and the ability to be effective at marketing must be considered. By having an annual plan with a focus each month, the strategy can be implemented without being overwhelming. A year-in-review process provides valuable insight for future planning. The annual action plan would include a cash flow, planning cycle calendar and summary of activities to be completed annually and monthly. As a volunteer group, it's important that a central place for all reports, plans and bookkeeping records be maintained by the executive committee of the organization and the webmaster, who can post information onto a private section of the proposed website for viewing and access by the organization only. In the short term, the BCVT laptop computer could serve as the master source for storing information.

TOURISM INDUSTRY ANNUAL PLANNING CYCLE

NATIONAL	Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) www.canadatourism.com											
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Road Show – CTC Plan Release					←→							
Strategy planning for following year							←→					
PROVINCIAL	Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts www.gov.bc.ca http://www.gov.bc.ca/bvprd/bc/channel.do?action=ministry&channelID=-536895936&navId=NAV_ID_province											
	Tourism British Columbia (TBC) http://www.tourismbc.com/ Tourism Industry Conference http://www.bctourismindustryconference.ca/											
BC Tourism Industry Conference COTA – TBC Service Plan updates: February annually												
REGIONAL	Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association (CCCTA) www.landwithoutlimits.com											
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
AGM					↔							
Input Sessions					↔							
Marketing Plan Launch Website										↔		
Show Schedule Available								←→				
TBC Plan Submission											01	
SUB-REGIONAL	Bella Coola Valley Tourism (BCVT) www.bellacoola.ca											
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Product Inventory	←→											
Industry Input Sessions			↔							↔		
Marketing Plan				←→								
Workshop Series										←→		
FAM tours (local)			←→									
Book Advertising and Travel Shows						←→						
Attend Travel Shows	←→											
Visitor Guide								←→				↔
Maps/Posters									←→			↔
Website Updates	←→								←→			↔
Media Relations							↔		↔		↔	
Merchandise			↔									

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

CORE BUDGET

The core annual marketing budget will need to be leveraged to extend market reach and create new opportunities for BCVT, businesses in the study area, organizations and neighbouring DMOs. The core budget for the Bella Coola Valley Tourism association is \$6,300.00 from membership dues. BCVT has been very successful at leveraging these funds with multiple programs. Partnerships and grants to achieve the goals of the strategy will need to be developed over time; therefore the core activities that can be achieved in the short term (one year or less) will form the basis for the annual action plan. As resources become available BCVT can select a project from the strategy and incorporate it into the current year planning cycle. A summary budget for the strategies set out in this plan will be supplied as part of the implementation plan that the consultants will develop with BCVT. A grant application to the Northern Trust Development Initiative Fund on behalf of BCVT (through the Central Coast Regional District) was submitted during this project. Acceptance of the grant proposal has been confirmed.

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Annual Budget For Year 2006

DESCRIPTION	Jan-Dec 2006 Total Value	BCVT Membership Revenues	Cooperative Marketing Income BCVT	CCCTA - Partners Program (Co-op \$ in)	CCCTA - Flexible Fund Program	CCCTA - TBC Community Foundations Marketing Program	UBCM	NDI	HR Services Canada	Western Economic Diversification	Regional Partners (CDMOs; BC Ferries; Pacific Coastal etc.)	CCRD	Other:
Total Revenue Projection for the Year	\$ 6,300.00	6,300.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
EXPENSES													
Research													
Primary research	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Secondary research (purchased data)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Conversion study for enquiries	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Tracking marketing programs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other:	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Sub-total Research	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Promotional Tools & Materials													
Image bank	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Quick Facts and Editorial bank	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Stationery/flat sheets/ kit folder/press kit	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Poster series	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Visitor Guide: Bella Coola Valley	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Pad map: Bella Coola Valley	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Regional Recreation Map	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Website www.bellacoola.ca (development, maintenance and database)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Merchandise (branded)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other:	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Sub-total Tools	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Capital Costs													
Travel Show/Visitor Info Booth	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Digital camera/video recorder combo	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Computer software	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Computer hardware	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other:	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Sub-total Capital Costs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Visitor Services													
Visitor Info Booth - Summer season	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fulfillment (toll-free/ mailing)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Community Visitor Ambassador Program	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Regional Partnership BC Ferries Discovery Coast	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Signage	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other:	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Sub-total Visitor Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Industry Development													
Resource Library - Tourism BC, etc.	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Workshops - Tourism BC & custom internal	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Training: VIC Staff	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Tourism Conference COTA/TBC	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other:	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Sub-total Industry Development	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Destination and Cooperative Marketing													
Advertising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Media Relations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Travel Shows	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Web marketing	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fam tours (media and other)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Contests and Promotions	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other:	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Sub-total Marketing	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Bella Coola Valley Society Administration													
Sub-total Administration	\$ 1,500.00	1,500.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
TOTAL COSTS	\$ 1,500.00	1,500.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Reconciliation of Revenue / Expenses Source													
Jan-Dec 2006 Total Value	\$ 6,300.00	6,300.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Revenue Projection for the Year	\$ 6,300.00	6,300.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Costs	\$ 1,500.00	1,500.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Balance remaining by source to be allocated	\$ 4,800.00	4,800.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Percentage of total value by source	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

TOURISM BC COMMUNITY TOURISM FOUNDATIONS PROGRAM

http://www.tourismbc.com/business_development.asp?id=4566

BCVT has applied for assistance through Tourism BC's new **Community Tourism Foundations Development** program. The program assists communities by providing long-term support through professional facilitators assigned to a community to produce, in cooperation with community resources, a tourism development plan. Alternatively, if the community has embarked on the planning process, as in the case of Bella Coola, then assistance may be in the form of guidance to implement an existing plan or depending on the market readiness of the community, acceptance into the **Community Tourism Foundations Marketing Program**.

The **Community Tourism Foundations Development Program** is designed for communities just starting out in the business of tourism, while the **Community Tourism Foundations Marketing Program** provides later-stage information and support for communities that have already laid the groundwork for outreach activities. A separate but related program, the **Tourism Partners Program**, gives local operators the chance to reach a wider audience by allowing them to participate in sophisticated, Tourism BC-branded, cooperative marketing campaigns managed by their Regional Destination Marketing Organization (RDMO).¹⁸

Refer to the Leveraging section for more information.

PRODUCT INVENTORY AND STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION – ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE

For the purposes of this strategy the consultants quantified the tourism industry for an overview of the composition of the tourism product and key area features, however for the community to maintain a data file for the product inventory more work will be required. Under the TBC Community Tourism Foundations program, TBC will provide spreadsheet templates for communities to undertake their inventory projects. Community DMOs have typically approached a more comprehensive inventory project (online database) through sponsorship from Human Resource Development & Skills Canada (HRDSC) under the **Job Creation Partnerships Program**, which provides labour costs and additional support for up to a maximum of \$413 per week in wages for a maximum of 52 weeks. Tourism BC could supply guidance for the inventory projects for either approach. In addition to the inventory project, an administrative assistant could supply valuable support to BCVT for a period of one year during which time the strategy implementation would be taking place. The start-up of many of the projects identified in the strategy would justify the need for full time work for one year.

<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/cgi-bin/search/eforms/index.cgi?app=profile&form=emp5209&lang=e>

¹⁸ Tourism BC

LEVERAGING

Leveraging resources can be in the form of human resources, information and financial resources. Partnerships are critical for the success of this strategy and opportunities for the Bella Coola Valley can also apply to other communities. The BCVT association will need to determine what core programs they will undertake on their own and which ones will be partnerships.

Primary Tourism Programs

Various sources exist for leveraging resources; it's important to match program criteria to the strategy as some programs are for planning and development projects and others are for marketing and promotions.

Union of BC Municipalities Community Tourism Program

In June 2005 the UBCM Community Tourism Program was launched through an entitlement program, which released one half of the \$25 million dollar one-time grant from the Province of BC to all local governments in the province of BC. The program for phase II has not been determined until review of phase I is complete. The UBCM Community Tourism Program funding could assist in the development of a website, brochures, maps, signage, visitor information centre improvements, festivals and events, and capital projects, as these are all activities that are not covered under the other programs. The funding provided through the UBCM Community Tourism Program can be used as seed money to cost-share initiatives under the TBC Community Tourism Foundations Cooperative Marketing Program and/or to participate in the Tourism Partners Program or used on its own.

<http://www.civinet.bc.ca/siteengine/activepage.asp?PageID=264&bhcp=1>

TBC Community Tourism Foundations Cooperative Marketing Program

The Community Tourism Foundations Cooperative Marketing Program provides cost-shared funding (50%) for marketing initiatives to close-in markets. The Program includes consumer promotion activities such as broadcast or print advertising, direct marketing, promotions, research and tracking. This program was designed to specifically help communities stretch their promotional budgets and provide flexibility in that these promotional initiatives can be unique to a particular community. The program is managed through the regional DMO CCCTA and is subject to acceptance by Tourism BC. The Community Tourism Foundations Development program may form phase one of the process if a community requires a tourism development plan in preparation for marketing.

There are no details from the CCCTA about this program at this time, however plans are expected to be released soon.

Tourism Partners Program and Partners Plus

The Tourism Partners Program and Partners Plus is a cooperative marketing program that the regional destination marketing organizations (RDMOs) manage on behalf of Tourism British Columbia. With this program, the RDMOs typically design cooperative marketing initiatives into which private sector tourism operators and communities purchase participation at leveraged rates. These marketing initiatives would take place within BC or in nearby provinces and states (Partners Program) and longer-haul markets for

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Partners Plus. These initiatives could include consumer promotion activities such as print and broadcast advertising, direct marketing, promotions, regional vacation planners and publications, consumer shows, research and tracking, and proactive media relations.¹⁹

The CCCTA Marketing Plan 2005/06

The CCCTA Tourism Partners Program is profiled in the Marketing Opportunities Guide 2005/06 <http://www.landwithoutlimits.com/members/index.html?p=140> which will be used as a guide for the development of the BCVT 2006/07 marketing plan. The next marketing plan for the CCCTA is scheduled for release in October 2006 with input sessions expected to commence in May 2006.

The CCCTA \$2,000,000 Flexible Funds Program

The Province of BC provided two million dollars each to all six of the regional destination marketing organizations in BC for program development at the discretion of the RDMO. The CCCTA has identified some programs under this initiative, however no details are available at this time.

¹⁹ Tourism BC

STRATEGY SUMMARY TIMELINE

The implementation plan will identify key strategies for 2006/07 and list activity items so each committee can lead a project. The following table outlines the key areas of the strategy by timeline and priority.

Strategies	Priority	Partners	Timelines		
			2006	2007	2008
Core Programming					
1. Maintain research on an annual basis based on resources provided.	High	BCVT:		▶	▶ :
2. Resource Library: Collect print versions of resource materials, upload e-versions to new website when possible	Med	BCVT	▶	▶	▶
3. Establish and maintain a comprehensive inventory as part of the web strategy with support through the Service Canada agency for an administrative assistant for the first year.	Med	BCVT	▶		
4. Establish and maintain an online database of tourism products, businesses, area features and media as part of the web strategy.	Med	BCVT	▶		
5. Establish and maintain a communications program with industry and community	High	BCVT CCRD	▶		
6. Establish and maintain a tracking and evaluation system that balances the current resources of BCVT and requirements for occupancy tracking for the CCRD	High	BCVT CCRD	▶		
Branding & Image Bank					
7. Branding designs are in progress and the image bank will contain 80 images, both projects are in production.	High	BCVT CCRD Operators	▶		
Implementation Strategy					
8. Establish and maintain an annual planning process and produce the Marketing Plan for 2006/07.	High	BCVT	▶	▶	▶
9. Establish and maintain a core partnership strategy with the Western Chilcotin Tourism Association, Williams Lake Central Cariboo Tourism and the CCCTA for further expansion with other partners.	High	BCVT	▶		
10. Make application for government grants and tourism programs that will assist in the implementation of the integrated marketing strategy, which includes building a foundation for marketing and communications	High	BCVT CCRD	▶		

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Strategies	Priority	Partners	Timelines		
			2006	2007	2008
including a new website, inventory, marketing materials and equipment in preparation for promoting the Valley.					
Industry Development					
11. Industry Development: Launch with Media Relations TBC workshop / determine other priorities	Med	BCVT Operators	▶		
12. Encourage adoption of industry and government standards by tourism operators.	High	Operators	▶	▶	▶
13. Promote the delivery of viable entrepreneurship and skill development programs to encourage more First Nations tourism businesses.	Medium	NFN	▶	▶	▶
14. Facilitate access to enterprise facilities services offered in the region, for example through Community Futures Development Corporation of Cariboo-Chilcotin, and the province, for example resources through Small Business BC, the successor to the Canada-BC Service Centre.	Low	Operators	▶	▶	▶
15. Optimize benefits and opportunities from emerging tourism development clusters such as heli-skiing.	Medium	Operators	▶	▶	▶

Key	BCF	BC Ferries	DM	Downtown Merchants
	BCGH	Bella Coola General Hospital	MAL	Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
	BCVT	Bella Coola Valley Tourism	NFN	Nuxalk First Nation
	CCRD	Central Coast Regional District	WEST	Waterfront Estuary Steering Committee

NDI GRANT APPLICATION

The following projects and timeline was submitted for a grant application to the Northern Trust Development Initiative Fund on behalf of BCVT (through the Central Coast Regional District) during the project. It is presented here as a reference only in order to develop the implementation plan as the grant has been approved. The following tables have been extracted from the full grant proposal.

Phase 1

The initial phase provides the tools and equipment required to utilize the new brand for the Valley while increasing services to enhance the visitor experience and attract new visitors to the region. In addition to promoting the Valley as a visitor destination, the strategy includes industry development to ensure visitor needs are being met and enhanced visitor services programs to ensure the needs of the visitor are considered throughout the purchase cycle from creating awareness and interest in the destination to actual visitation; thereby increasing the economic activity within the community.

Promotional Tools	Timing
<p><u><i>New website www.bellacoola.ca</i></u></p> <p>To meet industry standards for both a tourism destination consumer website, media centre and industry resource centre, the website will utilize the new brand for the Bella Coola Valley. Key components include consumer targeted information, a detailed online inventory of the Bella Coola Valley business community and natural resource attraction areas and a broadcast email communication system; all accessible though internet access.</p> <p>Milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Determine suppliers / develop work plan ● Develop content outline by website section ● Set-up industry resource centre ● Create web sections / copy writing / inventory ● Test site offline ● Launch site 	<p>April – September 2006</p> <p>April May June June – August mid September end September</p>
<p><u><i>Flat sheets / Press kit</i></u></p> <p>Utilizing the new brand identity for the Bella Coola Valley, develop printed stationery to be used for visitor services and media relations. Develop press kit to support various media to write stories about the Bella Coola Valley.</p>	<p>April: Stationery August: Press Kit</p>
Capital Projects	Timing
<p><u><i>Display Equipment</i></u></p> <p>Serving both destination marketing and visitor services booth equipment will provide a flexible solution to ensure the Bella Coola Valley brand is communicated effectively, while</p>	<p>April – May 2006</p>

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

<p>providing base equipment that can be used for multi-purposes.</p> <p>Milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Determine suppliers / develop work plan ● Develop concepts for designs and equipment selection ● Complete designs to launch visitor services program ● Develop designs for travel show and industry use 	<p>April May May June</p>
<p>Visitor Services Program</p>	<p>Timing</p>
<p>The visitor service program will support the destination marketing and industry development programs by providing visitors with information throughout the purchase cycle. This program integrates with the new website, display equipment, existing promotional materials and provides opportunities for tour bookings etc. The program works in conjunction with the Human Resource Skills and Development Program.</p> <p>Merchandizing: Utilizing the new Bella Coola Valley brand, a line of quality products will be launched to provide a revenue stream to the organization creating a self-sustaining project.</p>	<p>April – September (primary activity) October – December (follow up activity)</p> <p>May</p>
<p>Industry Development</p>	<p>Timing</p>
<p>Working with local industry, the industry development program will provide information and training for local businesses and volunteers resulting in superior service levels. Tourism BC provides support for workshops. In addition the industry resource centre online system through the new website will provide resource materials, which will be accessible by local industry.</p> <p>Milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resource library ● Determine workshop series ● Set-up industry resource centre 	<p>April May June – August</p>
<p>Destination Marketing</p>	<p>Timing</p>
<p>The Bella Coola Valley will undertake an integrated promotional campaign that will utilize the new brand and position the Valley as a visitor destination as well as desirable location. A base program will be leveraged with local businesses and regional partners along the access routes to the area. Primary activities include media advertising, web marketing and media relations, which build on the presence of Valley from the preceding activities in preparation for phase 2 of the plan.</p> <p>Milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Media advertising ● Web marketing 	<p>June – December September – December</p>

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media relations 	September – December
---------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------

Phase 2

Phase 2 of the project will build on the newly created foundation formed from phase one by expanding the promotional activity to a broader range of markets. Promotional tools incorporating the new brand will continue to be developed and an increase in new activities will increase the exposure of the Bella Coola Valley to new markets.

Promotional Tools	Timing
<p><u>Enhance website www.bellacoola.ca</u></p> <p>Updates to the website will be ongoing as new partnerships are created. Updating the image bank for both web use and media will be required.</p>	January – December 2007
<p><u>Bella Coola Valley Visitor Guide</u></p> <p>Utilizing the new brand identity for the Bella Coola Valley by creating a new visitor guide in 8x9" format to expand distribution channels to include racking opportunities as well as fulfillment, destination marketing and media relations. Content will serve the visitor throughout the purchase cycle expanding the effectiveness of the guide.</p> <p>Milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine suppliers / develop work plan • Develop content outline by section • Design and copy writing • Production • Initial distribution launch 	<p>January 2007</p> <p>February</p> <p>March – April</p> <p>May</p> <p>Early June</p>
Capital Projects	Timing
<p><u>Equipment</u></p> <p>In order to maintain the digital library (image bank) a digital camera (with video ability and hi-res capability) is required for capturing year-round images that are suitable for web use and media relations.</p> <p>Software upgrades to existing computer equipment owned by the organization will be required.</p>	<p>January 2007</p> <p>June 2007</p>
Visitor Services Program	Timing
<p>Building on phase one, the visitor service program will expand due to the increase from marketing and communications as a result of the activities of the last year. The program works in</p>	<p>April – September (primary activity)</p> <p>October – December (follow up activity)</p>

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

conjunction with the Human Resource Skills and Development Program.	
Industry Development	Timing
<p>Building on phase one, the industry development program will provide new information and training for local businesses and volunteers. Attendance at the annual Tourism Industry Conference is added.</p> <p>Milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tourism Industry Conference ● Update resource library ● Determine workshop series ● Update industry resource centre 	<p>February April May June – August</p>
Destination Marketing	Timing
<p>Building on phase one of the marketing plan for 2006/07 the base program will be leveraged with local businesses and regional partners with the addition of a series of travel shows and media familiarization tours.</p> <p>Milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Travel Shows ● Media advertising ● Web marketing ● Media relations 	<p>February – May June – May January– December January– December</p>

Phase 3

Phase 3 of the project will start to demonstrate a typical annual cycle providing the organization with the foundation it requires to carry on the activities in the future and to determine sustainability for the organization.

Promotional Tools	Timing
<p><u>Enhance website www.bellacoola.ca</u></p> <p>Updates to the website will be ongoing as new partnerships are created. Updating the image bank for both web use and media will be required.</p>	<p>January – December 2008</p>
<p><u>Bella Coola Valley Map</u></p> <p>Utilizing the new brand identity for the Bella Coola Valley by creating a new pad map encouraging them to stay another day.</p> <p>Milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine suppliers / develop work plan • Develop content outline by section • Design and copy writing • Production • Initial distribution launch 	<p>January 2008 February March- April May</p>
Capital Projects	Timing
<p><u>Equipment</u></p> <p>Booth equipment upgrades will be required based on new products available in the Valley.</p> <p>Hardware and software will require new equipment due to advances in technology.</p>	<p>January 2008</p> <p>December 2008</p>
Visitor Services Program	Timing
<p>Building on phase two of the visitor service program the final phase will provide the Valley with the consistency required to build the tourism interest in the area. The program works in conjunction with the Human Resource Skills and Development Program.</p>	<p>April – September (primary activity) October – December (follow up activity)</p>

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Industry Development	Timing
<p>Building on phase two, the industry development program will provide standardized service levels in the community and provide a basis for continuing the program.</p> <p>Milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism Industry Conference • Update resource library • Determine workshop series • Update industry resource centre 	<p>February April May June – August</p>
Destination Marketing	Timing
<p>The final phase of the marketing strategy will demonstrate an annual level of activity that will provide additional partnerships and leveraging opportunities.</p> <p>Milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel Shows • Media advertising • Web marketing • Media relations 	<p>February – May June – May January– December January– December</p>

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

The following budget was submitted as part of the grant application to the Northern Trust Development Initiative Fund on behalf of BCVT through the Central Coast Regional District. This budget only represents part of the projects that are identified in the strategy. A final budget will form part of the implementation plan for 2006/07.

Bella Coola Valley Marketing Strategy Implementation Project DRAFT ONLY NDI GRANT

DESCRIPTION	PHASE 1 YR 1 April 01-Dec 31/06	PHASE 2 YR 2 Jan 01-Dec 31/07	PHASE 3 YR 3 Jan 01-Dec 31/08	TOTAL
Promotional Tools / Resources				
Image bank	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Stationery / flatsheets / media kit	\$ 2,500.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,500.00
Visitor Guide: Bella Coola Valley	\$ -	\$ 15,000.00	\$ -	\$ 15,000.00
Pad map: Bella Coola Valley	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
Website www.bellacoola.ca	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 26,000.00
Sub-total Tools & Resources	\$ 22,500.00	\$ 19,000.00	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 49,500.00
Capital Costs				
Travel Show/Visitor Info Booth	\$ 15,000.00	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 16,000.00
Digital camera/video recorder combo		\$ 1,000.00		\$ 1,000.00
Computer software upgrades		\$ 500.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,500.00
Computer hardware upgrades			\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
Sub-total Capital Costs	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 24,500.00
Visitor Services				
*Visitor Info Booth - Summer season	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 6,000.00
Fulfillment (toll-free/ mailing)	\$ 2,400.00	\$ 2,600.00	\$ 2,800.00	\$ 7,800.00
Merchandising	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00
Sub-total Visitor Services	\$ 5,400.00	\$ 4,600.00	\$ 4,800.00	\$ 14,800.00
* Partnered: HRSDC & others to be determined				
Industry Development				
Resource Library - Tourism BC, etc.	\$ 500.00	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00	\$ 900.00
Workshops - Tourism BC & custom internal	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,500.00
Training: VIC Staff	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,500.00
Tourism Conference COTA/TBC	\$ -	\$ 1,350.00	\$ 1,350.00	\$ 2,700.00
Tracking and evaluation of programs	\$ -	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,000.00
Sub-total Industry Development	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 3,050.00	\$ 3,050.00	\$ 7,600.00
Destination and Cooperative Marketing				
Advertising	\$ 4,700.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 15,700.00
Media Relations	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 3,500.00
Travel Shows	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
Web marketing	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 4,500.00
Sub-total Marketing	\$ 6,700.00	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 19,000.00	\$ 43,700.00
Bella Coola Valley Society Administration				
Sub-total Project Administration	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 3,700.00	\$ 3,700.00	\$ 11,100.00
TOTAL COSTS	\$ 53,600.00	\$ 49,850.00	\$ 46,550.00	\$ 150,000.00

Appendix 1 - Situation Analysis

This appendix was presented as the initial report to launch the project in November 2005. It presents information on current tourism activity as measured by travel indicators, a profile of industry operators and a discussion of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for market and product development in the Valley.

ACTIVITY ANALYSIS

Tourism is a major economic force within the Central Coast Regional District. Historically, most visitors have been attracted by sports fishing – both fresh water and salt water. A large number are destined for the outer coastal sport fishing lodges, while others enjoy the Dean River area, world renowned for its steelhead fishery. Most fishing activity is concentrated in the June to September period, with a short extended season into October for river Coho fishing.

The community hosts many privately-owned boats that travel the Central Coast each summer with as many as 400 vessels tying up marinas and wharves each year.²⁰

The region also receives a significant number of visitors during the summer months that are travelling on circle tours. The Discovery Coast Passage and Highway 20 are an integral part of the province's signed Cariboo Coast highway tour that links the Central Coast, Cariboo-Chilcotin, Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island.²¹ ...

While the tourism season tends to be short, there are signs it is beginning to expand and the local industry is starting to diversify. In the past there was little or no winter tourism, but recently the opportunity to undertake extreme winter sports such as snowboarding at the Rainbow Range of Tweedsmuir Park have proven to be successful. In 2003, Bella Coola Heli-skiing and Dreamcatcher Heli-skiing were awarded heli-skiing tenures on Crown land in the area.

Tourism activity in the Valley has ebbed and flowed over the last decade in response to domestic and international events. The decline of local commercial fishing and forestry jobs has led to a population decline and negatively impacted some tourism operators (e.g. accommodation providers). Uncertainty over ferry services, a general lack of awareness of Bella Coola as a destination and poor road conditions on Highway 20 have, to a greater or lesser degree, affected travel markets and visitation in the Valley.

The following paragraphs provide a snapshot of local and regional tourism trends and some context for how this important sector contributes to the regional economy.

²⁰ Marlyn Chisholm and Associates, 2001.

²¹ Lions Gate Consulting, 2005.

Economic dependencies

Tourism makes an important contribution to the economy of the Bella Coola Valley, directly employing more than six percent of the CCRD labour force and generating approximately five percent of total community income in 2001 (a decline from 10 percent in 1996). There has been significant change in the structure of the economy since 2001, and it is believed that with the continued decline of the commercial fishery and forestry activity, tourism has increased its share of total activity.

Highway traffic

Highway 20 is a 450 km, six-hour drive from Williams Lake through the Cariboo, Chilcotin and Coast Mountains into Bella Coola. When last counted in 1997, two-way vehicle traffic at the base of the Hill was about 30,000 annually, with over half of these in the 100-day summer period. Since that time, the Ministry of Transportation has not taken counts. In December, 2005, the CCRD board passed a resolution requesting the Ministry of Transportation to re-install the traffic counter at the base of the hill. Average annual and annual summer daily traffic in Anahim Lake has remained virtually unchanged since 1994.²²

Ferry traffic

The Discovery Coast Passage Ferry is a critical transportation service that is responsible for handling much of the visitor traffic during the summer high season when the route is operational. The Discovery Coast is the southern section of the Inside Passage and stretches from Port Hardy to Bella Coola on the Central Coast, and includes the communities of, Bella Bella (McLoughlin Bay), Denny Island (Shearwater), Klemtu and Ocean Falls. Until the Discovery Passage service was launched in the summer of 1996, the Central Coast was also largely inaccessible by water.

The route is served by the *Queen of Chilliwack*, a former freight boat lacking in the type of amenities (e.g. sleeper accommodation) that would appeal to older travel markets (i.e. the type of market that appears to be attracted to Bella Coola Valley in increasing numbers). It is due for replacement but there are no firm timelines for this to happen.

Table 1: BC Ferries Route 40 Traffic Data, 2003-05

	Bus		Personal Vehicles		Total Vehicles		Total Passengers	
	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep
Bella Coola								
2005	5	12	894	994	937	1068	2790	3116
2004	6	10	852	853	908	916	2733	2803
2003	11	7	860	891	912	917	2782	2969
Port Hardy								
2005	12	6	1194	1123	1325	1232	4204	3903
2004	10	6	1088	1111	1217	1235	4171	4106
2003	7	11	1077	1102	1236	1257	4281	4218

Source: BC Ferries.

²² Ministry of Transportation, 2005.

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

As seen in Table 1, ferry traffic in and out of Bella Coola has been trending upward since 2003, despite the fact that traffic in and out of the main port of Port Hardy has declined slightly. Overall, there are more vehicles and passengers departing than arriving in Bella Coola.

Scheduled service for the 2005 season ran from June 8 to September 4, with arrival days on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, departures on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. BC Ferries has announced its service will extend to September 29 for the 2006 season. In the winter, BC Ferries serves Central Coast communities such as Bella Bella, Ocean Falls and Klemtu as part of the Inland Passage Route 10 between Port Hardy and Prince Rupert. This service does not include Bella Coola.

The ferry service has become a critical element of the Valley's summer tourism season because of the circle tours and connections it allows between adjacent destinations. Cyclists, RVers, kayakers, backpackers and campers can experience some of the province's most beautiful terrain and choose from multiple options for departing from and arriving back in the Lower Mainland and southern Vancouver Island. A negative aspect of this service, however, are the arrival and departure times in Bella Coola (6:30 am and 7:00 am on Mondays and Wednesdays, respectively) which may be acting as a disincentive for travellers to remain in the community and explore more.

Other initiatives that would encourage longer stays and more spending include improved signage, coordinating store openings and ensuring travellers have more pre-arrival information.

Airport Traffic

Airport passenger traffic has climbed over the last three years and could rise by as much as nine percent in 2005 based on the first 10 months of performance. Rising passenger volumes are a sign of a recovering economy and improved conditions for travel into the region.

Table 2: Bella Coola Airport Passenger Volumes, 2003-2005

	<u>J</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
2003	218	196	264	265	247	236	222	355	287	271	213	175	2,949
2004	199	209	270	271	223	237	256	333	263	320	243	215	3,039
2005	240	214	313	274	219	276	277	389	347	266	265 ^e	234 ^e	3,315 ^e

Source: Pacific Coastal Airlines
e estimated by Lions Gate Consulting Inc.

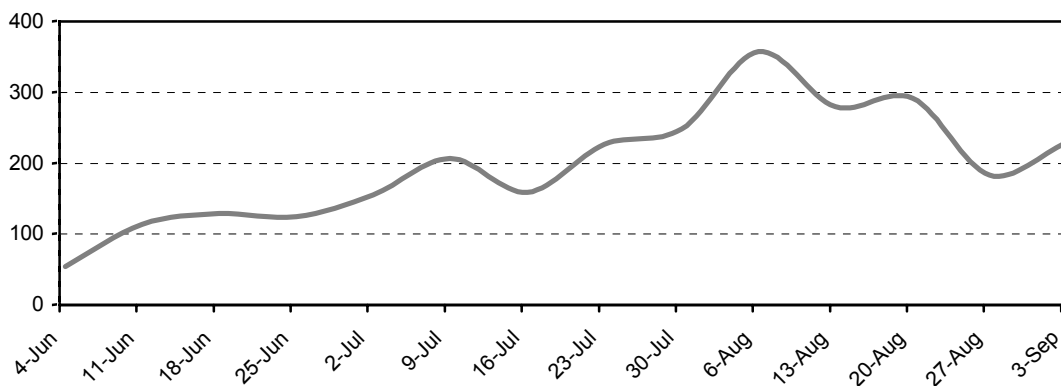
Visitor Information Booth

BCVT maintains a visitor information booth (VIB) at the Co-op store during the ferry season and coordinates a travel counsellor on the Discovery Coast Passage ferry.²³

The VIB allows the Valley to provide a visitor information service to the degree it is able and has the resources. The visitor volumes do not qualify Bella Coola for a full-service or associate Visitor Information Centre (VIC) as sanctioned by Tourism BC; as a result the VIB is not permitted to use TBC’s Visitor InfoNetwork corporate identification.

The VIB tends to attract some visitor types more than others (e.g. more international travellers and fewer BC residents). The data collected should not be viewed as representing the “average” traveller to the Bella Coola Valley, but it does provide some insights into traveller trends and behaviour.

Figure 2: Bella Coola Visitor Information Booth Visitors, 2005



Source: Bella Coola Valley Tourism

As seen in Figure 2, the peak period for visitors to the VIB is August, followed by July. Other VIB data shows the typical visitor to be middle-aged (between 36 to 65), just as likely to be single, couple or family, living in BC or Europe and staying less than two nights. The most popular information requests are for hiking trails, attractions such as museums and transportation.

²³ Outbound on Wednesdays inbound on Thursdays to/from Port Hardy.

Room Revenues

Room revenues are a general tourism indicator for as much as one third of total visitor expenditures can be for accommodation. As seen in Table 3, CCRD room revenues have more than tripled over the past fourteen years due to a combination of increased room inventory and price inflation. Over the nine-year period ending in 2004, revenues per room rose 80%. Most properties are believed to be in the Bella Coola Valley, although some remote coastal lodges (e.g. Namu) and at least one Bella Bella facility (Fisherman’s Inn/Shearwater Marine) are included.

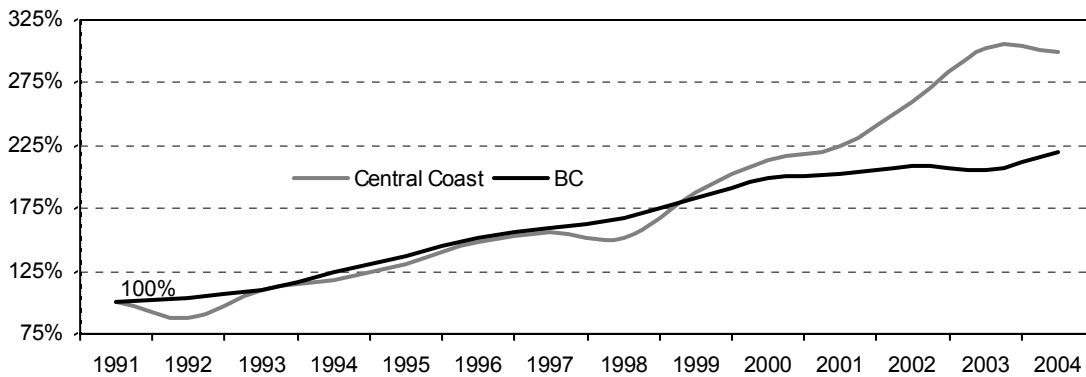
Table 3: Central Coast Annual Room Revenues, 1992-2004

	Number of Properties	Number of Rooms	(\$ 000's)	Revenue per Room
1992	-	-	\$562	-
1993	-	-	\$700	-
1994	-	-	\$745	-
1995	12	172	\$832	\$4,837
1996	12	141	\$946	\$6,709
1997	11	139	\$988	\$7,108
1998	11	139	\$959	\$6,899
1999	14	173	\$1,194	\$6,902
2000	13	170	\$1,357	\$7,982
2001	13	170	\$1,432	\$8,424
2002	14	178	\$1,644	\$9,236
2003	17	211	\$1,923	\$9,114
2004	17	218	\$1,897	\$8,702

Source: BC STATS, BC Tourism Room Revenue, Annual Series.

The room revenue trends shown in Figure 3 illustrate that the CCRD has performed above the provincial benchmark since 1999, and despite cresting in 2003, may be able to regain some strength when the Discovery Passage ferry season is extended into the critical September period.

Figure 3: Change in Room Revenues for Central Coast and BC (1991 to 2004)



Source: BC STATS, BC Tourism Room Revenue, Annual Series.

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Reviewing monthly revenues, it is clear that growth is occurring during the late-spring and summer season but that winter activity remains flat. Strong growth in the important shoulder seasons of May, June, and September is a good indication that some travel markets are not being deterred by the lack of ferry service.

Table 4: Room Revenues for Central Coast – Month By Month (1996 and 2004)

\$000s	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1996	21	30	38	53	63	127	153	172	110	104	39	43
2004	20	31	56	57	251	274	292	399	344	93	40	42
% Change	0%	0%	47%	8%	298%	116%	91%	132%	213%	-11%	0%	0%

Source: BC Stats

INDUSTRY PROFILE

The area has approximately 128 businesses that cater to tourists, directly or indirectly. The composition of the industry differs from most other areas of the province due to its orientation to nature-based products and activities. A list of operators appears in Table 5.

Table 5: Bella Coola Valley Tourism Operators

Operator Class	# Facilities/ Operators
Accommodations	26
Food & Beverage	4
Adventure Tourism & Recreation	31
Attractions	17
Events and Festivals	4
Other Tourism Services	11
Retail Services	25
Transportation	7
Travel Trade	3
Total Operators	128

Accommodation

There are 26 accommodation businesses in the Valley, including two hotels, two motels, four RV/camp operators, nine B&Bs (4 units and under), as well as Inns (7-10+ units) and a number of other businesses offering everything from resort accommodations (e.g. Tweedsmuir Lodge) to rustic cabins. There are an estimated 122 rooms, 69 campsites and 51 RV units available to visitors.

The composition of the accommodation sector could be characterized as rustic and generally in keeping with the Valley’s historical ties to fishing and nature-based activities. Visitor markets and volumes have not justified the development of higher-end facilities, although growing awareness of the region may eventually lead to specialized destination resort and lodge development.

Strengths

- Scenic locations
- Access to nature-based tourism products
- Adequate room supply
- Quality personal service

Weaknesses

- No-vacancies during some ferry runs
- Lack of marine locations and access
- Limited telecommunications services
- Limited group travel capacity
- Limited conference capacity
- Aging facilities

Opportunities

- Crown land available for resort development
- High-end lodges
- Expanded First Nations’ involvement
- Marine-based lodges

Threats

- Low profitability and liquidity
- Uncertainty over ferry services
- Larger resort operators may bypass local industry

Food & Beverage

There are four licensed food & beverage providers with approximately 350 seats, providing a mix of Asian and North American fare. The dining experiences are affordable and cater mainly to the budget-conscious visitor, as well as to residents. Facilities are clustered in Bella Coola and Hagensborg. The B&Bs, distributed along Highway 20 from Bella Coola to Stuie, also offer dining services to their guests. Licensed facilities are open year-round.

Strengths

- Good selection for a small base
- Affordable
- Good quality

Weaknesses

- Lack of seafood options
- Limited late-night hours of operation
- Lack of access to waterfront

Opportunities

- Waterfront restaurant
- High profile location for capturing ferry traffic
- Specialty shop (deli, coffee, local food products)

Threats

- Labour supply
- Service levels

Adventure & Recreation

The selection of adventure and nature-based products is limited, but growing. Hiking/backpacking, mountaineering, kayaking, canoeing, marine cruising, mountain biking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, nature tours, cultural tours, air tours, heli-skiing, snowmobiling, photography and general sightseeing are all possible within very short distance. The inventory lists 31 adventure operators offering land-based and water-based activities, but the majority are part-time businesses, while others are based outside the region.

Strengths

- Exceptional resource features
- Exceptional scenic features
- Convenient access to the backcountry
- Mix of marine and land based potential

Weaknesses

- Lack of hospitality infrastructure
- High business turnover rates
- Visitor uncertainty over hours of operation and operator availability
- Visitor volumes still too low to justify full-time commitments by operators
- Lack of marine and river access
- Lack of marine products and experiences
- Deteriorating trail infrastructure
- Visitor perception of an “unsafe” mid and backcountry due to bear-human conflicts

Opportunities

- Product packaging with accommodation providers
- Available Crown tenure for most activities
- Heli activities
- Cat-skiing
- Develop more weather-independent adventure and recreational pursuits.
- Canoeing/kayaking the Bella Coola estuary

Threats

- Bear-human interactions and conflicts
- Costs of liability insurance are restricting operator capacity and business development

Transportation

Highway 20 and BC Ferries Route 40 are the two main modes of transportation in and out of the Valley.

Bella Coola Airport has a 4200 foot paved runway suitable for small private jets. Visual flight rules are in effect. Fuel and storage facilities are available.

Bella Coola has a public wharf²⁴ managed by the Bella Coola Harbour Authority, a public boat launch, a marina, a ro-ro²⁵ ferry dock and several charter operations. Between 40 and 50 boats tie up in the harbour each summer.²⁶ Many owners are believed to be resident in Williams Lake.

Pacific Coastal Airlines has regularly scheduled air service from Vancouver Airport’s south terminal to Bella Coola. There is one scheduled flight per day from the late fall to mid-May, and two flights per day during the summer months. Bella Coola Air conducts amphibious service out of the Bella Coola airport, while West Coast Helicopters provides helicopter services. Air charter services from Williams Lake or Port Hardy to Bella Coola are available.

There is no public transit available, nor taxi or bus services. Rental vehicles are available for travellers at most accommodation providers who will arrange pick-up and drop-off terminal service.

Fixed-wing charter services are available from one company in Bella Coola serving tourism as well as other sectors of the economy.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Only coastal community between Kitimat and Squamish with highway access▪ Expanding BC Ferries service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Limited capacity for tourism business▪ Lack of taxi service▪ Unreliable weather conditions creates uncertainty for air services▪ No sleepers on the Queen of Chilliwack▪ No bus service▪ Condition of Highway 20
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pocket and small vessel cruises▪ Marine tours▪ Land and air sightseeing tours▪ Cooperation with Port Hardy and Williams Lake on year-round ferry service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Continued uncertainty over BC Ferries service▪ Decommissioning of logging roads

²⁴ Owned by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Small Craft Harbours.

²⁵ Roll-on, roll-off.

²⁶ Marlyn Chisholm and Associates, 2001.

Tourism Services

There are 42 businesses listed in the inventory offering a wide variety of services from professional (photography, tourism information, business consulting) to retail (groceries, supplies, gifts, arts and crafts) to personal services (engine and boat repair).

There is one visitor information booth (VIB) in Bella Coola (Co-op Store) that operates during the ferry season. BCVT also sponsors a travel counsellor on some of the outbound and inbound ferries to assist travellers arrange their activities while in the Valley and plan for future trips. The VIB has a 1-800 number, which is marketed off-coast. The visitor volumes do not qualify Bella Coola for a full-service or associate Visitor Centre (VC) as sanctioned by Tourism BC.

Signage is a passive form of visitor servicing as it provides key directional and location information to travellers. Feedback obtained during the focus groups generally acknowledged a lack of suitable signage throughout the community and lost opportunities related to ferry traffic.

Visitor services in Williams Lake is thought to have a significant impact on traveller decisions regarding the use of Highway 20 and the experiences they can expect from a Chilcotin-Coast adventure. Historically, the Williams Lake VC has not actively marketed Highway 20 and has been criticized for misrepresenting road conditions. New opportunities exist with the opening of the new Discovery Centre with management by Williams Lake Central Cariboo Tourism.

Strengths

- Wide variety of skills
- Small number of operators should allow for close cooperation

Weaknesses

- Funding constraints for visitor services
- Limited operating season for the VIB
- Poor signage
- Low uptake of Superhost training

Opportunities

- Private sector cooperation on coordinated visitor service delivery
- Superhost training
- Extended VIB operating hours to match new ferry services

Threats

- Leakage of ferry travellers/spending
- Lack of awareness of the Valley

Tour/Travel Agencies (licensed)

There is one travel agency in Bella Coola and at least two provincially licensed inbound tour operators. These operators specialize in circle tours though they are not based locally.

Strengths

- Available industry capacity for inbound tours

Weaknesses

- Few inbound tour operators, and none specializing in foreign markets

Opportunities

- Packaging potential between adventure providers and accommodation facilities

Threats

Festivals & Events

Cultural events and festivals are popular among travellers, with the majority having attended a cultural activity or event while on a trip in the past year. This translates into a huge North American market. The BC Visitor Study for the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast region showed that 11% of all visitors participated in a festival while in the area.

The Discovery Coast Music Festival, which showcases musical talent from around the world and features music, dancing, storytelling, a range of family activities, regional handmade crafts and food, has recently completed its seventh successful operating season. Each July long weekend Bella Coola welcomes horses, bulls and cowboys to the Bella Coola rodeo. The Fall Fair is primarily a local event but does attract visitors across the region. The Farmers’ Market caters mainly to resident shoppers but is also of interest to visitors interested in an agri-tourism experience.

Almost all events & festivals take place between May and September with the majority occurring in the months of July and August. There are few facilities to support large group festivals, events or conferences.

Strengths

- Strong core of volunteers

Weaknesses

- Limited volunteer base
- All festivals occur in peak summer months

Opportunities

- Packaging of festivals with outdoor activities

Threats

- Volunteer burnout

Heritage, Arts/Culture & Attractions

The cultural heritage potential of the region is exceptional. The petroglyphs, pictographs, trade routes and cultural heritage of First Nations is virtually unexplored and uninterpreted. Alexander Mackenzie Provincial Marine Park, abandoned coastal communities and canneries and the heritage of the original Norwegian settlers have equally strong tourism potential. Some of these stories are exhibited in existing facilities, including the Bella Coola Valley Museum, Central Coast Archives and the Norwegian Heritage House. There are many artists and crafters in the community offering clothing carvings, Native art, pottery, giftware, jewellery, photography and paintings. In all, there are seventeen attractions listed in the inventory.

Strengths

- Exceptional pre and post-contact heritage sites
- High marketability
- Capacity for further cultural interpretation
- Low impact, non-consumptive activity
- Cluster of artists and studios
- Thorsen Creek Petroglyphs
- Heritage classifications for Atnarko and Bella Coola rivers

Weaknesses

- Overall lack of interpretive opportunities
- Little participation by First Nations
- Poor signage
- Support services are low
- Growing competition from neighbouring regions

Opportunities

- First Nations interpretation
- Mackenzie trail interpretation
- Education and interpretive centre
- Activity based experiences, spas, cuisine, learning adventures
- Cultural tours
- Art alliances
- Cooperative exhibition and retail facilities

Threats

- Concerns about carrying capacity on some sites

MARKET AND DEMAND ANALYSIS

Tourism operators in the Bella Coola Valley cater to international markets and, despite the small size of the regional tourism base, must understand and be prepared to respond to changing market and demand forces. The following paragraphs provide an overview of tourism markets, trends and demand conditions that are shaping global tourism now and in the future.

Global and North American Markets

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries and continues to grow. In 2005, total demand of US \$6.2 trillion was responsible for generating 222 million jobs, US\$918 billion in capital investment and 3.8% of global GDP.²⁷

The outlook for international tourism remains positive, due to a combination of demographic, economic and industry developments. Current international tourist arrivals continue their post 9/11 recovery, registering a 5.9% increase in the first six months of 2005, following a bumper year in 2004. The long-term growth forecast for visitor travel is 4%.²⁸

Leisure tourism has been stimulated by low fares for short-haul travel and by pent-up demand still being released for long-haul destinations. Business tourism has not performed as well but has recovered led by the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) sectors. Cruise tourism has also recorded above-average growth this year so far.²⁹

International events such as the Indian Ocean seaquake and tsunami, recent bomb attacks in London, Turkey and Egypt, and hurricanes have somewhat undermined traveller confidence but so far the impact has been negligible outside of the affected areas.

Uncertainty over oil prices and airfares is prevalent, but competitive pressures have prevented airlines and tourism companies from passing on full energy price rises to consumers. In the long term, sustained high oil prices could slow economic growth and lead to declines in disposable income.³⁰

North America has enjoyed 7% growth this year showing sustained recovery from the 2002-03 period when travel markets declined sharply. There appear to be relatively few limitations on tourism expansion in the near term, although exchange rates and gas prices have the potential to affect product pricing and final demand. Europe and Asia continue to be growth markets for Canada, while the Approved Destination Status agreement with China is likely to lead to a new influx of visitors from that country, though not for another year or two.³¹

²⁷ WTTC, 2005. (World)

²⁸ Koumelis, October 6, 2005.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Canadian Tourism Commission, 2005. "WTO Confirms Positive Results."

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Travel intentions and bookings to Canada from the US, although recovering from their 2002 and 2003 slump, continue to fall below expectations due to a rising Canadian dollar, perceived barriers at the international border and escalating fuel prices. These factors are also largely responsible for Canada's continued decline among the WTO's top tourism destinations (by international receipts), falling to 12th position with US\$ 12.84 billion.³²

BC Markets

In 2004, 22.5 million vacationed in BC, including six million Americans, who represent close to three quarters of all overnight customs entries. BC's share of total US visitor entries to Canada has grown substantially over the last four years. Another 600,000 international travellers visited, representing a 3.7 percent increase over 2003. Tourism was responsible for generating 266,000 jobs (almost one out of every eight jobs) and \$9.5 billion in revenues in the province. With a GDP of \$5.0 billion, this sector is bigger than mining, agriculture and fishing.³³

Table 6: BC Overnight Visitor Volume and Revenue, 2001-04

	Overnight Visitor Revenue (\$millions)	% change from previous year	Overnight visitor Volume (thousands)	% change from previous year
2004	2,602	3.0%	11,032	1.5%
2003	2,526	1.0%	10,869	0.0%
2002	2,501	2.0%	10,869	1.0%
2001	2,452	-1.0%	10,761	0.0%

Source: Tourism BC

Tourism BC has estimated increased visitation of 2.3% during 2005 to 23.0 million overnight visitors, generating \$9.9 billion in revenue. Overseas markets will grow more rapidly than North American markets as overseas air seat capacity rises, travel from the Asia/Pacific region continues to rebound from the impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and as Europeans take advantage of the strengthened Euro. The growth in business travel during 2004 is expected to continue through 2005. Increased marketing funds will also be a positive factor, but should have more of an impact in 2006 and onwards.³⁴

Growth in the domestic BC market during 2005 is expected to under-perform due to the lure of the weak American dollar, higher fuel prices which inhibited touring, and poor weather in late August and September. The perception of increased border security may mitigate the US effect. Some segments of the British Columbia market are sensitive to fuel prices, thus high gas prices will also act to moderate growth in resident travel. Growth in the important Canadian and US markets are projected to be 2% in 2005.

³² Canadian Tourism Commission, 2005. Annual Report 2004 The Power of Attraction.

³³ COTA, 2005.

³⁴ Tourism British Columbia, 2005.

Alberta and Ontario will remain key markets. The negative impacts associated with the depreciating US dollar is expected to be minimal because American visitors to British Columbia tend to be older, wealthier and less price sensitive than American travellers in general.³⁵

Cariboo-Chilcotin Coast Region

The most reliable visitor profile for the study area is from the *BC Visitor Study*, which unfortunately is now eight years old. There is a separate Cariboo-Chilcotin-Coast tourism region report providing details on visitor markets and their characteristics. The following paragraphs provide a synopsis of key results as they affect the market plan and strategy.

Visitor Volume and Value - 1.7 million visitors travelled to the Cariboo-Chilcotin-Coast region for a day or overnight trip in 1995/96, representing 6% of all BC visitors. Of these, 60% were BC residents and 40% non-residents. The total tourism revenue of \$198 million represented 2% of all BC tourism revenue. Non-residents generated 33% of regional tourism revenue and residents 67%. Resident visitors spend an average of \$40 per day and \$128 per stay in the region, while non-residents spend \$36 per day and \$95 per stay.

Visitor Origins – Major geographic markets include the Greater Vancouver Regional District (22%), South BC (20%), Canada regional (12%), US regional (11%) and North BC (11%). Long haul markets, whether from the US or overseas, are a minor source of business for local industry.

Socio-demographics – The average Cariboo-Chilcotin-Coast region visitor was 44 years of age, had some post-secondary education, and was in the middle or upper income bracket. Non-resident visitors tended to be a bit older and more educated than resident visitors.

Average Length of Stay – Resident visitors spent an average of 3.6 days in the region, while non-resident visitors stayed 2.6 days.

Seasonality – The majority of BC residents travelling in the Cariboo-Chilcotin-Coast favour summer travel, but about one in five travel in the winter. Summer travel is even more popular among non-resident visitors.

Travel Party – Average party size among resident visitors was 3.2 people. For non-residents it was 2.3. Approximately three quarters of all visitors do not travel with children.

Trip Purpose – Visiting friends/relatives, outdoor/wilderness activities, general sightseeing and business were the top-ranked trip purposes.

Activities – Land-based outdoor activities, sightseeing, fishing, boating, photography and visiting historic sites were popular activities.

Sources of Information – Among resident visitors, most did not use any information sources either before or during their trip in BC. For those who did, the most popular sources of information were the recommendations of friends, relatives and others, followed by brochures/books.

³⁵ Ibid.

The Bella Coola Valley

In the summer of 2005, the University of Northern BC's Resource Recreation and Tourism Program conducted primary research on visitors to the Bella Coola Valley. The study consisted of a self-administered visitor survey (130 responses), focus groups (five groups) and in-depth interviews (40 responses). UNBC is still compiling the data and writing their analysis, which is tentatively scheduled for release in January, 2006.

We have had an opportunity to analyze some of the survey and focus group results and although detailed findings cannot be included in this report, we are able to draw some preliminary insights into traveller perceptions of the Bella Coola Valley.

- Respondents tended to be from older age groups, be relatively well educated and have above-average incomes. They travelled by personal motor vehicle and were on a circle tour that included the Discovery Passage ferry. US, Dutch and German visitors were well represented.
- The major activity represented was fishing.
- Respondents tended to use multiple accommodation types, for example mixing camping with a hotel/motel stay depending on weather conditions.
- Travellers staying at hotels and B&Bs were more interested in participating in cultural heritage activities, while RVers were more likely to pursue outdoor adventure.
- Bella Coola has a very strong sense of place for travellers, but beyond that they have few details or understanding about what they are going to experience.
- Travellers do not conduct much pre-planning before coming to Bella Coola.
- The distinction between Bella Coola and Hagensborg, especially in the BC Accommodation Guide, creates confusion for many travellers who do not understand the proximity of the two communities or the availability of other services and products.
- The lack of highway signage is creating safety concerns and in some cases fear among travellers about what to expect ahead. In particular, many west-bound travellers on Highway 20 have apparently little idea about the distances between services.
- The Queen of Chilliwack, despite its rustic condition, is an attraction for some travellers. Apparently, many are taking this route because they could not book passage on the Inland Passage.
- There is a very strong desire to experience native culture, but the vast majority of these are going unfulfilled.

Long-Term Demand Trends

Expansion of the older demographic – In Canada, by the year 2011, the age group of 44-64 year olds will number 10.2 million, up from 6.4 million today. Another group with significant potential during the next decade will be the 75+ age group. The same trends are affecting all industrialized countries. As the average age of the travelling public increases, the effects will be expressed through increased demand for safer, interpreted and package tourism products. As older travellers are also more likely to travel in groups, products and services catering to this segment are also expected to increase.

Activities that are the most physically demanding (including outdoor adventure, winter outdoors and alpine skiing) can be expected to grow at lower rates than the population of travellers as a whole. Conversely, those that require the lowest level of physical exertion (wine and culinary, aboriginal culture, heritage interpretation) can be expected to increase at higher rates than the total domestic tourism market.

Changing ethnic makeup – In North America, the proportion of immigrants is gradually shifting away from Europe to other regions, notably Asia and Latin America. While these travel markets may over time adopt the same tourist interests as those born in Canada, they also exhibit distinct travel behaviours and preferences. The Asian immigrant market in the Lower Mainland, for example, is believed to have a much lower propensity to travel within the province than native British Columbians. Communities will have to adapt both their marketing and product development in order to cater more to these markets.

Fundamental shift in visitor profile and behaviour – The travelling consumer is very different from any other time in history, seeking a much more rewarding experience with aspects of learning and education. The most successful businesses in the travel industry are those that are able to respond to this new demand through the use of technology, innovative marketing programs, better training of staff and by developing a closeness and understanding of their customers/guests. The differences in travel patterns in this new century will be related more to what consumers are seeking in a travel experience than to how they travel.

Emergence of new markets – Travel is no longer a novelty to the new tourist. Studies support what industry executives have been noticing for the last few years. People expect more out of their vacations than they used to and they are more adventuresome.

Surveys done by the Canadian Tourism Research Institute indicate a high degree of interest in getaway vacations, ecotourism, cultural tourism and combining a business trip with a pleasure trip. Specific market opportunities include:

- motor coach bookings on the rise
- incentive and conference planners
- interpretive and escorted tours
- resorts
- ecotourism

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

- fly/drive packages
- minority populations

Narrower decision-making window – The trend toward a more full-service experience where the visitor does not have to make a series of purchase decisions once they have arrived will impact the types of packaging and partnering initiatives that can be presented to tourists in order to strategically capture the market. As an example, there is a dramatic increase in short, getaway trips, which means that people are trying to pack more activities into more frequent trips of shorter duration. These travellers are more likely to have higher educations and incomes, and lack time. So convenience and quality is key. The idea of packaging hiking, cultural/heritage and candlelight dinners at the same time was unheard of a decade ago, but travellers are expecting this sort of value for the time and money they spend on their holidays.

Safety – The events of September 11, 2001 have had a significant impact on British Columbia’s tourism industry, evidenced by a drop in visitation and revenue for the first time in a decade. But the decline has been among overseas visitors, while US visits have continued to increase. Concerns about air travel safety are expected to contribute to sustained demand for North American holidays and motor coach touring among domestic markets.

Technology - Technological innovation is impacting the tourism industry in several ways: access/transportation, comfort, safety, communication, and information. It has lowered the risk associated with many outdoor activities in particular, enhancing participation and opening up new opportunities for business and market development.

Future Demand

The World Tourism Organization has forecast average annual growth of 3.8% in North American tourism through to 2020 based on an estimate of 282 million tourist arrivals. While this will not match overall world-wide growth of 4.1%, North America will manage to maintain roughly one-fifth of total world tourist arrivals. The underlying structural trends in which periods of faster and slower growth alternate is not expected to change in the future.³⁶

The Canadian tourism industry is expected to far better than the North American average. It is forecast to generate \$223 billion of economic activity in 2005, growing to \$413 billion by 2015. Tourism Demand is expected to grow by 4.4% per annum, in real terms, between 2006 and 2015. This will lead to an estimated 2.5 million jobs (1 in every 7.2 jobs versus 1 in 8 jobs today), \$162 billion in total exports (14.6% of total Canadian exports), \$38 billion in total investment (8% of total), and \$18 billion in government spending (4.3% of total) by 2015.³⁷ By almost all measures, tourism will increase its share of economic activity over the next ten years in Canada.

³⁶ WTO, 2005.

³⁷ WTTC, 2005. (Canada)

Bella Coola Valley Tourism Strategy – Marketing Strategy

Over the long-term, the BC industry appears to have excellent growth prospects. It remains the second leading tourism destination in Canada, after Ontario, and leads the nation in certain categories, including international tourist visits. The Canadian Tourism Commission has projected that six million Canadians will be making an overnight trip in British Columbia by 2026 (versus four million in 2000). The rate of growth will be higher than Canadian population growth, higher than growth in other provinces and higher than the expected growth in Canadians travelling to all destinations.³⁸ The CTC has pointed out that British Columbians travelling within this province British Columbia continue to be a critical market. Ontario and Alberta are the other two provinces that will provide the bulk of domestic travel.

³⁸ Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd., August, 2004.

CONCLUSIONS

Our conclusions, based on the preceding analysis of industry, markets, and trends are as follows:

1. The Bella Coola Valley has an exceptional mix of natural, heritage and cultural resources that have excellent potential for further development. However, many of these features have yet to be turned into market-ready products and services that are matched and delivered to current visitors. This includes activities related to Tweedsmuir Provincial Park.
2. One of the attractions of the Valley is its low crime rate and the high level of personal safety it can offer visitors. These attributes could be incorporated into marketing messages, particularly those aimed at older age groups, for whom the concept of safety is an important part of the travel experience.
3. The operator base is relatively small and limited in its capacity to respond to new market opportunities because of a combination of a short peak travel season, short visitor stays and low visitor spending. These factors limit business profitability and restricts the flow of new investment capital into the industry. Small operators must be willing to bear above-average business and financial risk if they wish to create or expand new products for market.
4. In spite of these risks, new investment activity is occurring, mostly for the expansion of outdoor adventure products, particularly in heli-skiing. One of the trade-offs that may emerge in the future is the in-flow of major investment capital for backcountry resort developments that are independent of the local tourism base. The community may end up benefiting from employment generated from these projects, but if operators bypass local businesses for labour, supplies and services, then the majority of impacts will have been lost.
5. The region's tourism infrastructure ranges from severely lacking to suitable, with notable areas of need being food and beverage, signage, marine access and backcountry access. The overall lack of infrastructure has two separate but compounding effects on visitation: it limits the activities available to self-guided and independent travellers, and it significantly restricts the investment of private operator capital in complementary products and services. The net result is limitations on the types of visitors that can be attracted, the length of time they will stay and the amount of money they will spend.
6. The tourism industry is highly dependent on BC Ferries services and reliable access along Highway 20. Without these, the community becomes an effective dead-end without the capability of marketing circle routes and tours and loses much of its appeal for visitors seeking the combined water-land experience of the coast.
7. Activity measures such as room revenues, ferry traffic, road traffic and airport traffic show regional tourism to be on an uptrend, but it is unclear as to why visitation levels are not higher in the Valley. The BCV is currently accessible to approximately 1.7 million visitors who come to the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast region every year. Many of these travellers are bound for Alaska but there is clearly potential for Highway 20 communities to grab a larger share of this market. Many visitor information requests made at the Williams Lake VC are for Highway 20.

8. National and international tourism trends show that visitor markets and the industry are evolving rapidly. Visitor motives for travel are becoming more attraction-oriented and fundamentally different from the socially-oriented free independent traveller of the past. Visitors are also seeking more convenience, more learning and educational experiences and safer outdoor recreation activities. All these trends point to the need in the BCV for more advanced and coordinated product development.
9. The long-term outlook for tourism in BC and the region is very positive and will, over time, lead to new investment and product/service development. In the short-term, the best opportunities are in the regional and short-haul markets, including US touring travellers. The BCV has convenient access to some outstanding nature-based tourism resources (e.g. fishing, mountains, rivers) that have strong appeal for these markets. However, the visitors most likely to be attracted to the region (older-aged, wealthy touring travellers) are looking for amenities and soft-adventures that are either not currently available or in short supply in the Valley. Operators can respond to these gaps by pursuing opportunities for packaging or investing more capital in new development. Government can stimulate and complement private sector spending by making strategic investments in infrastructure, particularly in transportation and community-based attractions such as interpretive facilities. Although there are a few First Nations business people involved in tourism in the region, a greater level of participation by the Nuxalk community is essential for optimizing the Valley's exceptional potential in heritage/cultural interpretation.

Appendix 2 – List of Contacts

Contact Name	Business/Organization	Contact Name	Business/Organization
David Anderson	CCRD - EDO	Rene Morton	Museum
Jim Anderson	Pacific Coastal Airlines	Jim Newkirk	Tallheo Cannery
Doug Baker	Doug On The Trail	Kathy Nysten	Sinclair House
Steve Battensby	White Surf Ocean Adventures	Kevin O'Neill	CCRD
Mark Bradt	Petroglyph Gallery	Karl Osmers	Gnomes Home Campgrounds & RV Site
Charles Bryfogle	BC Fall Fair	Ed Robson	Nuxalk Nation - EDO
Jason Bowman	BC Ferries, Mgr. Terminal Operations, North Coast	Ulli Richards	BCVT Treasurer
Kim Burgoyne	CCCTA	Wendy Rockafellow	Dreamcatcher Heliskiing
Lori Campbell	BCVT, VIC	Brian Roe	The Bay Motor Hotel
Sarah Curtiss	Pacific Coastal Airlines	Heather Ross	BCV Rodeo
Cathy Denham	CFDC Port Hardy / North Island	Joan Sawicki	Waterfront and Estuary Committee
Lorna Dishkin	Bella Coola Archives	Joan Saugstad	Valley Artist
Terry Dong	BCV Inn	Wayne Sissons	Bella Coola Air
Ken Dunsworth	BC Env	Jim Smart	Bella Coola's Eagle Lodge
Hans Granander	BC Resource Society	Rosemary Smart	Bella Coola's Eagle Lodge
Anne Hardy	University of Northern BC	Beat Steiner	Bella Coola Heli-Sports
Lizabeth Hall	Nuxalk	Lucille Thompson	Valley Artist
Lorant Hegedus	Salt Chuck Charters	Dianne Tuck	Williams Lake & District Credit Union
Tracy Hegedus	Salt Chuck Charters	Monica Tutt	Discovery Coast Music Festival
Alan Hobler	BC Parks	Sundance Topham	CCCTA
Christine Hyde	Tweedsmuir Travel	Doug Treleaven	BC Ferries
Donn Irwin	Western Chilcotin Tourism Association	Judy Ratcliff	Valley Artist
Fraser Koroluk	Brockton Place Guest House & Inn	Rick Ratcliff	Rick's Re: Cycling
Jones Leung	Palm Garden Restaurant	Laurie Walters	CCCTA
Sandie MacLaurin	DFO	Steve Waugh	Suntree Guest Cottage
Joanne McLeod	BC Parks	Cheryl Waugh	Suntree Guest Cottage
Kathy Moore	Moore's Organic Market & Nursery	Mike Wigle	Jumping Mouse Studio
John Morton	Kopas Store	Jill Zimonick	Williams Lake, Central Cariboo Tourism