

5-Year Strategic Business Plan

Designated Recipient: Regional District of Mount Waddington

Community Name: Vancouver Island North

Date Prepared: June 2021

MRDT Term Expiry Date:

Five Year Period: 2022 - 2027

Section 1: 5-Year Strategic Overview

Vision and Mission

Vision Statement

“Vancouver Island North is recognized as a world-class tourism destination.”

Mission

“To increase the benefits of tourism to the Vancouver Island North region.”

Strategic Context

Global Context

Until the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic early in 2020, tourism was one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Despite tourism outpacing the global economy for several years prior to 2020, tourism was the first hit and hardest hit sector by the pandemic. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates that the COVID-19 Pandemic resulted in a loss of nearly \$1T in global export revenue and resulted in more than 100M lost jobs globally. These impacts have been felt particularly strongly in vulnerable populations and developing countries.

As with any global event of this scale, COVID-19 has exposed inequities and is inspiring a desire to build tourism back better. The UNWTO has identified 5 priorities to guide tourism’s restart:

- Mitigate socio-economic impacts on livelihoods, particularly women’s employment and economic security.
- Boost competitiveness and build resilience, including through economic diversification, with promotion of domestic and regional tourism where possible, and facilitation of a conducive business environment for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).
- Advance innovation and digital transformation of tourism, including promotion of innovation and investment in digital skills, particularly for workers temporarily without jobs and for job seekers.

- Foster sustainability and green growth to shift towards a resilient, competitive, resource efficient and carbon-neutral tourism sector. Green investments for recovery could target protected areas, renewable energy, smart buildings and the circular economy, among other opportunities.
- Coordination and partnerships to restart and transform the sector towards achieving SDGs, ensuring tourism's restart and recovery puts people first and working together to ease and lift travel restrictions in a responsible and coordinated manner.

The UNWTO's guiding principles provide inspiration for destinations across the world as they try to reimagine the way that tourism can help communities, people and natural environments to thrive.

Canadian Context

The Canadian tourism industry is continuing to reel from the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector. With Canada's borders closed to non-essential travel and interprovincial travel discouraged, Canada's tourism industry felt unprecedented losses in 2020 and into 2021. The Tourism Industry Association of Canada predicts that tourism will not return to pre pandemic levels until 2024 as a result of reduced flight connections and capacity, consumer confidence and more. Destination Canada forecasts that tourism overall will increase 28% relative to 2020 or 35% below 2019 levels, while domestic tourism demand will reach \$64.5 billion, which is 30.7% higher than 2020, yet 21.3% less than 2019 levels.

Tourism sector recovery timelines will be influenced by several key factors including vaccine rates, resident sentiment, shifting traveller behaviours, aviation, events and cruise. Each of these factors will directly impact the way in which tourism recovers across Canada and these impacts will differ from one community to another. Some communities are highly dependent on cruise ships, conferences and business travel, while others are dependent on long-haul source markets.

British Columbia Context

British Columbia, just like the rest of Canada, observed significant disruptions in tourism business as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the first wave of the pandemic, domestic overnight visitation in BC plummeted to approximately 20% of pre-pandemic levels. Although there were brief periods where communities were able to welcome travellers, such as the summer of 2020, hotel occupancies remained low and businesses struggled to remain solvent.

In April 2021, a random sample of BC tourism businesses reported that only 15% of businesses are operating 'business as usual', that 93% of businesses were forced to take on significant new debt to stay solvent and that 33% of businesses did not qualify for any provincial or federal relief programs.

With the provincial government announcing their phased recovery plan which outlines the province's phased approach to reopening, there is a new sense of optimum among businesses and communities. It is expected that domestic travel will be encouraged during the summer of 2021 and that by the fall of 2021 large indoor events may be possible. Although this is welcomed news, it is clear that tourism's recovery in BC will take years.

Vancouver Island Context

The Vancouver Island Region has also faced unprecedented challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. As an island destination, consumer confidence in travelling on ferries and planes has resulted in a greater decline in overnight visitation in the Vancouver Island Region than what has been observed in other communities. The impact of the pandemic was particularly severe in Victoria, where the cancellation of business travel, conference events and sporting events resulted in hotel occupancy rates below 10%.

Vancouver Island's rural and resort destinations observed a surprisingly strong summer of 2020 and expectations for summer 2021 are high. This strength was the result of high rates of domestic visitation, led by British Columbian and Alberntan travellers. That said, while occupancy rates may have been high in many rural and resort destinations in the region, many operators struggled to fill their tours and operators who rely on long haul travellers had a particularly challenging season.

Vancouver Island North Tourism

Vancouver Island North is a resilient destination that has successfully weathered the past year of the pandemic. In the summer of 2020, many Canadians visited Vancouver Island North for the first time as they were drawn to the region's "open spaces and few faces." Campgrounds, recreation sites, RV parks and other tourism operators with lower price points reported an excellent season, while operators who rely on long haul travellers struggled.

As the North Island industry plans for its recovery, a key objective is to retain new market share of domestic travellers who first visited during the pandemic, while also welcoming international travellers. Vancouver Island North Tourism is well positioned to support continued visitation among domestic travellers through targeted digital marketing campaigns and partnerships with Tourism Vancouver Island, Destination BC and others will support the return of important long haul travellers.

Vancouver Island North SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Natural, wild landscapes • Coastal mainland peaks, glaciers, rivers • Islands and inlets • Giant trees • Remote but accessible • Inside passage ferry routes • Caves • Sport fishing • Whales • Cultural and Indigenous tourism • Remote, iconic lodges • Authentic indigenous experiences • Diversity of people and lifestyles • Homesteading history • Wildlife	• Reliance on long-haul travellers • Market awareness • Labour market • Seasonality • Transportation • Cellular and broadband services • Operator sophistication • Signage • Online trip planning • High business costs • Air services • Lifestyle oriented operators • Lack of recognition of the value of tourism
Opportunities	Threats
• Advance sustainable travel priorities • Promote health recommendations among travellers • Greater collaboration among communities • More opportunity for businesses to be engaged with DMOs • Expand shoulder season product • Package experiences and work with airline partners • Generate return visits among BC and AB visitors	• Ecosystem health • Traditional resource-based industries • Ferry services • Implementation resources for existing plans • Volunteer burnout • Gas prices • COVID-19 impact and uncertainty • Tourism business solvency • Lack of labour and housing • Loss of long haul source markets • Policy implications for marine mammal viewing • Visitors damaging natural spaces

Key Learnings

The continued collection of the Municipal and Regional District Tax in the Regional District of Mount Waddington is an important initiative that will support the recovery of the tourism industry in the region, the growth of Vancouver Island North as a leisure and getaway destination and as a better place to live and do business. The following key learnings have been identified following more than a decade of successful MRDT management:

1. Many Vancouver Island North tourism businesses are highly reliant on long haul travellers.
2. Short haul travellers typically spend less money when visiting Vancouver Island North and increased numbers of these travellers has resulted in environmental challenges in sensitive park ecosystems. Short haul travellers are, however; easier to reach with marketing content and are more likely to make return visits.
3. Vancouver Island North's brand continues to strengthen and travel trade and media are very interested in the area as an emerging destination.
4. Many Vancouver Island North tourism business operators continue to lack the digital readiness to fully leverage digital marketing opportunities.
5. Vancouver Island North businesses are impacted by BC Ferries schedules and services. Continuing to develop the North Island as a destination will reduce the impact of unexpected BC Ferries schedule changes on businesses.
6. Many British Columbians visited Vancouver Island North for the first time during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a significant opportunity for the region to encourage return travel and grow Vancouver Island North's share of the BC market.
7. Indigenous cultural tourism continues to increase in demand with customers spending more than \$705 M on business operated by First Nations across the province. Indigenous cultural tourism is a key pillar of Vancouver Island North's tourism experiences.

8. Lack of export ready accommodations to meet travel trade expectations.

Overall Goals, Objectives and Targets

Vancouver Island North is a well established and strategy-driven organization focused on increasing visitation to the Regional District of Mount Waddington and growing tourism for the benefit of residents, visitors and businesses alike. The following goals, objectives and tactics were developed in concert with the North Island's tourism industry and a diverse range of other tourism partners.

Vancouver Island North Tourism's 6 goals and corresponding strategies are as follows:

1. To increase tourism revenues in the Regional District of Mount Waddington

Goal 1	Objective	Target	Notes
Increase Revenues	Increase number of overnight stays	+10% by 2026	Grow off-peak visitation to increase number of overnight stays annually

2. To increase consumer awareness of the Regional Districts of Mount Waddington's cultural and natural visitor experiences

Goal 2	Objective	Target	Notes
Increase Consumer Awareness of Cultural and Natural Assets	To increase awareness and desirability of the RDMW as a destination for nature-based and wildlife viewing activities	Maintain awareness and desirability levels in key markets (+/-4.9%) by 2026	Awareness in key markets is already high. The key is to create urgency to visit, especially during off-peak season.

3. To increase off-peak visitation to the Regional District of Mount Waddington

Goal 3	Objective	Target	Notes
Increase Off-Peak Visitation	Increase overnight visits during off-peak season (peak season defined as July,	+15% MRDT revenues collected outside of July, August and September by 2026	May and June will be the focus for driving increased off-peak season visitation. During these months,

	August and September)		wildlife is in abundance and the weather is fair.
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4. To increase inventory of market ready and export ready product

Goal 4	Objective	Target	Notes
Destination Development	Leverage existing programs, resources and tools to enhance the visitor experiences	+8 Net Promoter Score by 2026	Partner with Tourism VI, DBC, Community Futures and other agencies.

5. To increase resident and local government awareness of the value of tourism and of the value of Vancouver Island North Tourism

Goal 5	Objective	Target	Notes
Value of Tourism to the Region	Increase resident and local government awareness of tourism's value to the region and of Vancouver Island North Tourism's role	Maintain awareness of tourism's value by 2026 at 79% +10% awareness of VINT by 2026	Increase connection with residents to maintain tourism social licence and to increase awareness of Vancouver Island North Tourism

6. For Vancouver Island North Tourism to be a financially sustainable and unifying organization

Goal 6	Objective	Target	Notes
Financial Sustainability and Unification	To increase MRDT revenues and to unify the Vancouver Island North tourism industry a	+10% MRDT revenues by 2026; increase number of stakeholder participants in marketing programs +10% by 2026	Generating increased off-peak overnight visits will be critical to increasing MRDT revenues. Stakeholder investment demonstrates industry

			commitment to VINT programming and projects.
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Strategies

Vancouver Island North's strategy aligns with planning priorities at local, regional and provincial levels. While leveraging and working in alignment with the "Super, Natural British Columbia" Brand, Vancouver Island North Tourism has identified the following strategic directions for the industry:

1. Vancouver Island North Tourism is a collaborative initiative for the Regional District of Mount Waddington that seeks to coordinate tourism marketing in a collaborative way across the Regional District.
2. VINT will inspire a more responsible tourism ethic encouraging visitors, businesses, residents and communities to reduce their impact on natural spaces.
3. VINT will lead focused digital marketing campaigns that promote the Regional District of Mount Waddington and its communities to core target markets on Vancouver Island and in British Columbia.
4. VINT will generate consumer demand and advance consumers along the path to purchase by focusing on Vancouver Island North's natural and cultural assets.
5. VINT will increase market readiness of tourism operators in concert with partner organizations including business associations, local government and special event committees.
6. VINT will increase overnight visitation during off-peak months (outside of July, August and September) with a particular focus on June as weather is favourable and wildlife is easily viewable.
7. VINT's primary focus is on marketing the Vancouver Island North region as a destination. While it is recognized that there are opportunities for industry services and development activities in the region, destination marketing has been identified by the Vancouver Island North Tourism Advisory Committee as the priority due to the limits of project resources.

Target Markets

Vancouver Island North Tourism's key target markets include Vancouver Island and mainland British Columbia.

Season	Demography/Activity Segment.	Location
Summer (July, August, September)	Primary • Couples/small groups • 40+ years of age • \$80,000 annual HHI • Post secondary Ed. Secondary • Adventure enthusiasts • Under 40 years of age	Primary • Vancouver Island • BC Secondary • Alberta • Other: SK, WA, OR, CA & Europe
Spring (May, June)	Primary • Whale watchers • Bear viewers Secondary • Ferry Passengers	• Central and Southern Vancouver Island • Lower Mainland
Off-Season (October – April)	Primary • Skiing • Fishing • Culture • Storm Watching • Art Enthusiasts • Remote workers	• Central and Southern Vancouver Island • Lower Mainland

Brand Positioning

Vancouver Island North Tourism is Tier 1 compliant with the Super, Natural British Columbia Brand. Vancouver Island North's brand position is focused on showcasing the region's cultural and natural assets through storytelling that differentiates Vancouver Island North from competitor destinations. The "Get Lost. Find Yourself." campaign seeks to create an emotional connection with prospective visitors and it recognizes that we are all made up of a collection of experiences. The brand reflects Vancouver Island North's abundance of outdoor and cultural visitor experiences that are truly transformational.

The campaign's intention is to deliver compelling content to target audiences to increase the awareness and desirability of the region through a digital first marketing approach.

Demand Generators

The following activities are key demand generators for Vancouver Island North:

- Culture
 - First Nations history and culture
 - Settlement history and culture
- Outdoor Recreation
 - Sport fishing
 - Hiking and walking
 - Skiing
 - Diving
 - Camping
 - Tours
 -
- Wildlife & Nature
 - Whales
 - Humpback Whales
 - Orca Whales
 - Salmon
 - Bears

Management, Governance and Administration

The Municipal and Regional District Tax is collected in the Regional District of Mount Waddington and distributed within the Regional District based on a unique funding formula. All Designated Recipients within the Vancouver Island North region are basing their plans on a 3% collection rate for this renewal application. A total of 80% of the first 2% of MRDT revenues collected in the District of Port Hardy, the Town of Port McNeill, the Village of Alert Bay, and the Regional District of Mount Waddington Electoral Areas A, B, C, D and the Village of Port Alice will be invested into the Vancouver Island North Tourism Project for regional promotion (53.33% of total MRDT disbursement). The remaining 20%, plus the additional 1% of MRDT revenues collected, will stay within the municipalities and the Regional District for local tourism promotion (46.67% of total MRDT disbursement). All applicants have indicated their commitment to this regional funding formula in separate resolutions. These resolutions are included in this application.

The management and administration of MRDT occurs on a two-tiered basis:

Tier 1 – Regional Management Structure

Tier 1 of the management structure pertains to the 53.33% of MRDT revenues invested in Vancouver Island North Tourism. These funds are the responsibility of Vancouver Island North Tourism to utilize in the delivery of regional tourism services. In performing this role, Vancouver Island North Tourism will manage and administer the funds under the guidance and with the support of the Vancouver Island North Tourism Advisory Committee and the approval of the Regional District Board. Vancouver Island North Tourism will provide the Regional District of Mount Waddington with monthly tourism project reporting, annual marketing plans, strategic business plans, annual marketing activity reports, and annual financial statements. All MRDT funds remitted to Vancouver Island North Tourism will be held in a separate account at the Regional District of Mount Waddington to assist in maintaining transparency.

The Regional District of Mount Waddington has contracted Tourism Vancouver Island to manage Vancouver Island North Tourism and oversee all activities of the organization since MRDT was first collected in 2010. This contract will continue and Tourism Vancouver Island will work directly with the Vancouver Island North Tourism Advisory Committee to set priorities and monitor project deliverables. This contract has been renewed until 2025 to align with MRDT renewal requirements. Moreover, the Advisory Committee will approve the annual marketing budget prior to its submission to the Regional District for final approval.

Tourism Vancouver Island will maintain a consistent staff presence in the Vancouver Island North region, while leveraging efficiencies and additional expertise from TVI's primary office in Nanaimo.

Regional District of Mount Waddington Electoral Areas A, B, C, D, and the Village of Port Alice, the Village of Alert Bay, and the Town of Port McNeill

The Vancouver Island North Tourism structure and all responsibilities of the contract manager, the advisory committee, and the Regional District for the 53.33% regional portion of the MRDT has been included as Appendix 1.

Tier 2 – Local Municipal Management Structure

Tier 2 of the management structure pertains to the 46.67% of MRDT revenues that will flow to the Town of Port McNeill, the Village of Alert Bay, and the Regional District of Mount Waddington on behalf of Electoral Areas A, B, C, D and the Village of Port Alice. These funds will be used for incremental tourism development and marketing within the Electoral Areas and municipalities, and as such cannot replace existing community funds for tourism.

In each of these communities, a local tourism committee will assist with determining spending priorities and allocating funds. In a manner similar to the regional structure, these local committees will work with the municipalities to approve and review annual budgets and year-end financial reports associated with the funds. In the RDMW, applications will be accepted from within their jurisdiction for projects requesting tourism marketing support. A committee of regional directors will approve and review annual budgets and year-end financial reports associated with the funds. The municipalities will assume responsibility for submitting reports on the use of the funds to the Destination BC and maintaining all records associated with these funds.

Sources of Funding

In addition to MRDT, Vancouver Island North Tourism is supported on an annual basis by the Regional District of Mount Waddington which will contribute \$8,000 per year to marketing Vancouver Island North.

Affordable Housing

The Regional District of Mount Waddington currently has no plans to use MRDT revenues, including Online Accommodation Platforms, to fund affordable housing initiatives. Any changes relating to the use of OAP funds for affordable housing initiatives will be indicated and detailed in an annual tactical plan.

Section 2: Tactical Plan with Performance Measures

Major Category: Marketing
Activity Title: Media Advertising and Production
Tactics: • Search Engine Marketing • Social Media Advertising • Email Marketing • Digital Advertising • Print Advertising • Fishing BC • Broadcast Advertising
Implementation Plan: • Description: Vancouver Island North offers unique nature-based and cultural travel experiences, and this particular market positioning, informed through extensive stakeholder and resident engagement, will define advertising messages, mediums and timing. Advertising will serve to increase brand awareness, and capture interest, through inspirational storytelling. Advertising will serve to increase bookings with direct calls to action. Digital and social marketing, that also incorporates re-targeting for the most effective reach, will enable Vancouver Island North to continue to exercise fiscal prudence while maximizing effect. Sustainable and mindful travel messages will remind visitors that an expectation of safe and respectful travel behaviours is expected of them; and indigenous tourism experiences will be supported through advertisements as storytelling is directed by First Nations themselves. • Objectives: ○ Capture consumer interest in the region ○ Increase consumer awareness of the region ○ Increase traffic to VINT and partner websites ○ Increase traffic to social media platforms

- Encourage consumers to advance along the path to purchase
- Drive traffic to stakeholder businesses
- Increase size of email subscriber database
- Maintain regular contact with email subscribers and develop targeted calls to action
- Re-target individuals who have visited the websites with a Travel Now call to action
- Assist with trip planning in market
- Encourage responsible visitation and adherence to health recommendations
- Push visitation interest outside of high season, toward the development of a shoulder season for Vancouver Island North.
- **Rational:**
Paid advertising enables VINT to generate website visits from target audiences, through controlled and consistent brand positioning. Through this we will advance consumers along the path to purchase while ensuring that responsible travel is top of mind.
- Action Steps:**
 - Stakeholder and resident engagement will continue to define the identity of Vancouver Island North, and target markets;
 - Compelling messages and content will be created to present the value proposition;
 - Advertisements will run, and be continually tested and optimized.
- **Potential Partnerships:** stakeholders, writers, community storytellers, FishingBC, community tourism advisory committees and Visitor Centres in the Vancouver Island North Region, Village of Alert Bay, Town of Port McNeill
- **Resources:** Tourism staff, Tourism Vancouver Island, contractors, stakeholders, publications/ad networks, creative agency
- **Funding:** MRDT, Cooperative Marketing Partnerships Open Pool, stakeholder
- **Timeframe:**
 - Search engine optimization: Always on
 - Social media advertising: February to November
 - Email marketing: Ongoing
 - Digital advertising: April to June
 - Print advertising: May to June
 - Fishing BC: April to March
 - Broadcast advertising: Spring
- **Budget: \$90187.24**

Performance Measures: Impressions; Click-thru rate; Cost per click; Bounce rate; Time on site; Pages per visit; Cost per action; Conversion rate; Resource downloads; eNewsletter subscriptions; Referrals to stakeholders.

Major Category: Marketing

Activity Title: Website

Tactics:

- Website Development

Implementation Plan:

- **Description:** Build the strength of the regional tourism website VancouverIslandNorth.ca as a tool for trip planning and conversion. Continue content development and enhance the user experience. Build on the foundation of the new Port McNeill community tourism website VisitPortMcNeill.ca. Expand visual and editorial content promoting the community's tourism assets and stakeholders.
- **Objectives:**
 - Increase visitor volume to websites
 - Increase click-through rates to and engagement with feature content
 - Increase downloads of trip planning resources
 - Grow the email subscription list
 - Increase click-through rates to stakeholder websites
 - Increase the relevancy of the VancouverIslandNorth.ca website
 - Increase the stickiness of the VancouverIslandNorth.ca website
 - Increase the relevancy of the VisitPortMcNeill.ca (Port McNeill Only)
- **Rational:** VancouverIslandNorth.ca is a digital portal to planning a Vancouver Island North vacation. It must be continually refined for optimal usability, tracking and the inclusion of relevant and inspirational content that encourages conversion. Websites have been a critical part of the marketing mix for many years, but with new limits to our physical interactions at Visitor Centres and travel information outlets due to COVID-19 restrictions websites are increasingly important today. In-market visitor servicing has also shifted to a hybrid of in-person and online delivery so a robust web presence will service consumers no matter where they are in the journey.
- **Action Steps:**
 - Develop a plan for user-experience and content improvements and action items from this list
 - Manage and maintain website through ongoing content development and refinement, including:

▪ Develop messaging around key content themes – Hidden Gems, Locals Know, shoulder season experiences, sustainability and inter-community travel ▪ Build new landing pages to facilitate better search engine results – Wildlife, Great Bear Rainforest, Hiking ○ Continued staff training to ensure skills are upgraded and optimal ○ Monitor third party websites to ensure accurate online representation ○ Further develop digital resources for marketing campaigns (image bank) ○ Continue and expand blog content ○ Work cooperatively with tourism industry leaders (DBC) to ensure branding alignment ○ Maintain an active presence on social media platforms promoting community highlights, local points of interests, tourism-based experiences and safe travel messaging, drive traffic back to website ○ Coordinate partnership opportunities as they arise ● Potential Partnerships: Stakeholders, writers, community storytellers, Fishing BC, community tourism advisory committees and Visitor Centres in the Vancouver Island North region ● Resources Tourism staff, Tourism Vancouver Island, contractors, creative agency. ● Funding: MRDT revenue, Destination BC Co-op ● Budget: \$24,052.00
Performance Measures: Number of sessions, Number of unique visitors, Number of page views, Number of referrals (conversions) Sources, Device, Geography

Major Category: Marketing
Activity Title: Social Media
Tactics: • Organic Social Media • Crowdriff
Implementation Plan: • Description: Build upon past organic social media efforts towards curating feeds that are filled with user-generated and on-brand images, videos and messages. Curate user-generated content and refine messaging to maximize engagement and traction through organic content and calls-to-action. Develop compelling reasons - through content - for visitors to click through to the Vancouver Island North website. • Objectives: ○ Increase traffic and user engagement on social channels ○ Increase click-through rate to VancouverIslandNorth.ca ○ Grow the Vancouver Island North social community ○ Increase the reach of social messaging ○ Use #exploreBC to amplify provincial tourism messaging on social media platforms ○ Use the #gonorthisland hashtags to connect with users and brand ambassadors ○ Reinforce the brand authenticity by posting user-generated content to tell the story of the region ○ Reinforce Sustainability messaging throughout social channels • Rational: The collection and sharing of user-generated and aspirational content grows social-proof and builds consumer trust. The use of images, stories and content will enforce the strategic pillars of inter-community, hidden gems and local stories, and off-season experiences. Social platforms will be used as a source of inspiration and a pathway to travel planning tools and stakeholder conversions from the VancouverIslandNorth.ca website • Action Steps: ○ Utilize Crowdriff (software) to source user-generated content ○ Post regularly to social platforms with important and compelling reasons to visit Vancouver Island North from the visitor's perspective for maximum impact ○ Monitor and respond to social conversations involving Vancouver Island North tourism ○ Align organic social messaging and paid advertising ○ Promote resident engagement and support for social media platforms ○ Develop messages of responsible tourism to educate travellers ○ Use social platforms to keep consumers informed of the latest travel advisories affecting the region

● Potential Partnerships: Stakeholders, writers, community storytellers, local resident influencers with strong social channels and/or photography skills, past visitors and influencers, community tourism advisory committees and Visitor Centres in the Vancouver Island North region ● Resources: Tourism staff, Tourism Vancouver Island, contractors, stakeholders, influencers, residents ● Funding: MRDT revenue, Destination BC Co-op ● Timeframe: Ongoing ● Budget: \$23,670.00
Performance Measures: Total Followers, Engagement rate, Reach, Number of uses of #ExploreBC hashtag, Number of uses of the #GoNorthIsland hashtag

Major Category: Marketing
Activity Title: Co-Op Marketing Projects
Tactics: Regional Brochure, Recreation Map
Implementation Plan: ● Description: Design, production and distribution of print collateral will assist visitors when in-market; and encourage increased spending through trip planning/itinerary tools and offers; ● Objectives: ○ Efficient and effective distribution of print material through established channels ○ Increase traffic to travel planning tools available at VancouverIslandNorth.ca ● Rational: The brochures and maps will be tools for visitor service staff to assist in-market travellers in trip-planning that may extend their stay and encourage inter-community travel during their visit. Key online resources will be listed on the publications so visitors have an easy reference that will lead them to further trip planning tools and to stakeholder listings. ● Action Steps: ○ Develop a project brief for print collateral production ○ Work with a creative agency to develop the design ○ Coordinate printing ○ Distribute via BC Ferries and in-market and close-to-market Visitor Centres ● Potential Partnerships: Stakeholders, community tourism advisory committees and Visitor Centres in the Vancouver Island North region ● Funding: MRDT revenue, Destination BC Co-op ● Timeframe: Fall/Winter ● Budget: \$25,000.00

Performance Measures: Number of brochures distributed
Major Category: Marketing
Activity Title: Print Collateral Production & Distribution
Tactics: Regional Brochure, Recreation Map
Implementation Plan: • Description: Design, production and distribution of print collateral will assist visitors when in-market; and encourage increased spending through trip planning/itinerary tools and offers; • Objectives: - o Efficient and effective distribution of print material through established channels - o Increase traffic to travel planning tools available at VancouverIslandNorth.ca • Rational: The brochures and maps will be tools for visitor service staff to assist in-market travellers in trip-planning that may extend their stay and encourage inter-community travel during their visit. Key online resources will be listed on the publications so visitors have an easy reference that will lead them to further trip planning tools and to stakeholder listings. • Action Steps: - o Develop a project brief for print collateral production - o Work with a creative agency to develop the design - o Coordinate printing - o Distribute via BC Ferries and in-market and close-to-market Visitor Centres • Potential Partnerships: Stakeholders, community tourism advisory committees and Visitor Centres in the Vancouver Island North region • Funding: MRDT revenue, Destination BC Co-op • Timeframe: Fall/Winter • Budget: \$40,000 (\$25,000.00+ 15,000 stakeholder investment)
Performance Measures: Number of brochures distributed

Major Category: Marketing
Activity Title: Travel Trade & Media Relations
Tactics: Trade & Media Familiarization
Implementation Plan: • Description: Support the initiatives of Tourism Vancouver Island and Destination BC to rebuild the trade and travel media market, including supporting stakeholders

who may wish to learn about trade and hosting trade personnel and travel journalists at the request of Destination BC and Tourism Vancouver Island.

- **Objectives:**
 - Communication of story ideas to Tourism Vancouver Island and Destination BC
 - Communication of experiences available for trade and media familiarization tours to Tourism Vancouver Island and Destination BC
- **Rational:** Prior to COVID-19 travel restrictions, Vancouver Island North had experienced a surge in travel trade and media interest. Journalists, travel agents and tour operators were looking for new experiences on Vancouver Island and the North picked up on growing interest in wildlife viewing, wild experiences, the Great Bear Rainforest and Indigenous cultural experiences. Earned media and travel trade will once again present an opportunity to engage in new markets, and to tap into an existing network of activity and support created and run by Destination BC and Tourism Vancouver Island. Vancouver Island North Tourism will work with these organizations to showcase the region's hidden gems through local media outlets to Vancouver Island and BC residents
- **Action Steps:**
 - Generate story ideas and share product updates with Tourism Vancouver Island and Destination BC
 - Assist Tourism Vancouver Island and Destination BC with hosting trade and media familiarization tours
 - Evaluate stakeholder requests for support of trade and media tours
 - Fulfill requests for regional information from trade and media representatives
 - Work with local operators to encourage support of media visits and overall knowledge of travel trade and media markets
- **Potential Partnerships:** Stakeholders, Destination BC, Tourism Vancouver Island, community storytellers, community tourism advisory committees and Visitor Centres in the Vancouver Island North region
- **Resources:** Tourism staff, Tourism Vancouver Island, Destination BC, media outlets, travel agents and tour operators
- **Funding:** MRDT Revenue
- **Timeframe:** Ongoing, as opportunities present
- **Budget:** \$500.00

Performance Measures: As identified by the opportunity.

Major Category: Marketing

Activity Title: Consumer Faced Asset Development

Tactics:

- Photography

- **Video**
- **Written Content**
- **Trail App**

Implementation Plan:

- **Description:** Build inventory of brand-aligned assets that are truly reflective of diversity in the activities and experiences in the region for use across all marketing campaigns. Ensure third-party rights are acquired for images so they can become part of the Destination BC content commonwealth and accessible for stakeholder use. Use existing and new videography to communicate local stories and messages of welcome, sustainable and mindful travel ethics. Use keywords identified in the Search Marketing strategy to develop website content that can be used on the website and social media. Continue to develop the web and mobile application featuring parks, trails, recreation sites and tourism businesses in the region.
- **Objectives:**
 - Increase the inventory of brand-aligned images
 - Increase the inventory of brand-aligned video content
 - Build trip planning and community editorial content
 - Increase awareness and downloads of the North Island Trail Guide app
- **Rational:** Photos, video and written content are critical components of all marketing campaigns. Investment into asset development is crucial to all marketing efforts. Image acquisition will pay particular attention to current gaps in imagery within the database. Welcome messaging will build consumer confidence and help visitors understand the expectations of local communities. The app promotes the diversity of hiking and camping options available in the region, giving incentive to inter-community travel and encouraging visitors to discover hidden gems.
- **Action Steps:**
 - Develop a shot list based on content needs
 - Contract a photographer and/or review photographer portfolios for appropriate stock images
 - Acquire images with third-party rights when purchasing photos
 - Share photos with Tourism Vancouver Island and industry partners
 - Contract a videographer to produce videos
 - Obtain written content for use online and in print publications
 - Build app functionality to enhance the user-experience and provide expanded content
 - Work with a technical agency to complete the programming
- **Potential Partnerships:** Stakeholders, photographers, videographers, writers
- **Resources:** Tourism staff, Tourism Vancouver Island, technical agency, photographers, videographers, writers

• Funding: MRDT Revenue, Destination BC Co-op • Timeframe: Ongoing • Budget: \$23,000.00
Performance Measures: Number of Images, Number of videos, Cost per video, Video completion rate, Video view quartiles, Cost per engagement. Number of page views, Time on page, number of impressions, google play rating, app installations, app sessions (apple only; opt-in only)

Major Category: Destination & Product Experience Management
Activity Title: Industry Development and Training
Tactics: Industry Engagement and Support
Implementation Plan: • Description: Support North Island tourism businesses in developing new experiences and opportunities, in particular in the off-season. Facilitate tourism businesses working together for packaging and cross-referral • Objectives: ○ Grow availability of packaged tourism experiences in the region ○ Increase the number of workshops and networking opportunities focused on experience development • Rational: Having experience packages available for consumers can help convert the sale by making it a simple one-step process to book and can also help consumers visualize what a multi-day stay in the region could look like even if the package isn't exactly what they are looking for. Facilitating networking opportunities (virtual if necessary) is a way to connect tourism businesses and get stakeholders thinking about creative ways to collaborate. • Action Steps: ○ Coordinate workshops and networking opportunities (online if necessary) for experience development • Potential Partnerships: Stakeholders, Destination BC, Tourism Vancouver Island, community tourism advisory committees • Resources: Tourism staff, Tourism Vancouver Island, contractor • Funding: MRDT Revenue • Timeframe: Ongoing • Budget: \$7000.00
Performance Measures: Participation, other metrics to be defined.

Major Category: Destination & Product Experience Management
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Activity Title: Research and Evaluation
Tactics: ● Stakeholder Survey ● Resident Survey
Implementation Plan: ● Description: Survey work for tourism stakeholder and Vancouver Island North resident populations ● Objectives: ○ Increase the recognition of the value of the Vancouver Island North Tourism amongst stakeholders ○ Increase the recognition of the value of tourism in residents of Vancouver Island North ● Rational: To learn how tourism stakeholders rate their awareness and satisfaction of Vancouver Island North regional tourism projects and to gather feedback on challenges and opportunities for the local tourism industry. To learn how Vancouver Island North residents feel about the tourism industry in their communities. The stakeholder survey will be distributed through the email database. The resident survey will be promoted through local Facebook groups and local media ● Action Steps: ○ Develop an online stakeholder survey, using the Destination BC MRDT stakeholder survey guidebook to assist in survey development ○ Deliver the stakeholder survey through the email database ○ Develop an online resident survey ○ Promote participation in the resident survey through local Facebook groups, local media and local business organizations ● Potential Partnerships: ● Resources: Tourism staff Destination BC, Tourism Vancouver Island, community tourism advisory committees, Chambers of Commerce, local media ● ● Funding: MRDT Revenue ● Timeframe: Ongoing ● Budget: \$500.00
Performance Measures: Number of Surveys completed

Major Category: Destination & Product Experience Management
Activity Title: Other
Tactics: Rural Tourism Action Grant Program (Regional District Areas A,B,C,D & Port Alice only)
Implementation Plan: ● Description: A percentage of the MRDT tax levy from Electoral Areas A, B, C, D and the Village of Port Alice, within the Regional District of Mount Waddington, is retained for community tourism destination marketing purposes in the RDMW bylaw area. This modest sum of annual revenue is made available to community and not-for-profit organizations through an application process that is reviewed by the five RDMW Directors representing the bylaw area. ● Objectives: ○ Increase tourism activity in rural communities ○ Improve visitor information on trails ○ Leverage private sector resources to secure community tourism goals ○ Improve the visitor experience ○ Increase attendance numbers at local events and festivals through promotion outside the local area ● Rational: With a modest sum of revenue retained for tourism investment to rural communities within the bylaw area, it was determined that developing a matching grant application process would be the best way to leverage funds and ensure investments were being made in the most appropriate places. Alignment with the broader goals of the Vancouver Island North regional tourism project is evaluated through the application process where applicants must describe how the project will incrementally enhance tourism potential in the rural areas or add value region wide, evidence of support from a valid community entity, and how they intend to involve Vancouver Island North Tourism in their project by way of consultation, invitation or collaboration. ● Action Steps: ○ Open call by the Regional District of Mount Waddington for applications to the Rural Tourism Action Grant Program through local media and on the Regional District website, www.rdmw.bc.ca ○ Evaluation of complete application packages submitted against the mandatory criteria by the five Regional District of Mount Waddington Directors representing the bylaw area ○ Notification of successful proponents ○ Reimbursement of \$0.50 on every eligible dollar spent, up to the approved amount, on completion of project ● Potential Partnerships: Eligible community and not-for-profit organizations ● Funding: MRDT revenue, investment from successful proponents ● Timeframe: Ongoing ● Budget: \$ 34,070.17 Performance Measures: Number of community/non profit applications

Section 3: MRDT Budget for Year One		
Revenues		Budget \$
	Carry-forward from previous calendar year	
	MRDT	\$242,950.42
	MRDT from online accommodation platforms	\$5094.12
	MRDT Subtotal	\$248,044.63
	Local government contribution	\$8,000
	Stakeholder contributions (i.e. Membership dues)	\$15,000.00
	Co-op funds received	\$99,000
	Grants – Federal	
	Grants – Provincial	
	Grants / Fee for service – Municipal	
	Retail Sales	
	Interest	
	Other	
	Total Revenues	\$370,044.63
Expenses		Budget \$
	Marketing	
	Marketing staff – wages and benefits	\$76,800.00
	Media advertising and production	\$90,187.24
	Website – hosting, development, maintenance	\$24,052.00
	Social media	\$23,670.00
	Consumer shows, events	-
	Collateral production, and distribution	\$40,000.00
	Travel media relations	\$250.00
	Travel trade	\$250.00
	Consumer-focused asset development (imagery, video, written content)	\$23,000.00
	Other (please describe)	
	Subtotal	\$ 278,209.24
	Destination & Product Experience Management	
	Destination & Product Experience Management Staff – wage and benefits	\$9,255.00
	Industry Development and Training	\$7,000.00
	Product experience enhancement and training	-
	Research, evaluation and analytics	\$500.00

Regional District of Mount Waddington Electoral Areas A, B, C, D, and the Village of Port Alice, the Village of Alert Bay, and the Town of Port McNeill

	Other (please describe) RTAG Program	\$34,070.17
	Subtotal	\$50,825.17
	Visitor Services	
	Visitor Services activities	
	Other (please describe)	
	Subtotal	\$0.00
	Meetings, Conventions, Events & Sport	
	Meetings, conventions, conferences, events, sport, grant programs, etc.	\$10,047.00
	Subtotal	\$10,047.00
	Administration	
	Management and staff unrelated to program implementation -wages and benefits	\$22,523.00
	Finance staff -wages and benefits	
	Human Resource Staff – wages and benefits	
	Board of Directors costs	
	Information technology costs – workstation related costs	\$840.00
	Office lease/rent	\$6,600.00
	General office expenses	\$1,000.00
	Subtotal	\$30,963.00
	Affordable Housing	
	General MRDT Revenues	
	Revenues from online accommodation platforms	
	Subtotal	-
	Other	
	All other wages and benefits not include above	
	Other activities not included above (please describe)	
	Subtotal	-
	Total Expenses:	370,044.41
	Balance or Carry Forward	-

Regional District of Mount Waddington Electoral Areas A, B, C, D, and the Village of Port Alice, the Village of Alert Bay, and the Town of Port McNeill

Appendix 3 – Town of Port McNeill

The Town of Port McNeill continues to be committed to the funding formula specified in this Business Plan – with 80% of all funds collected from the first 2% being remitted to the Regional District of Mount Waddington to fund the delivery of regional tourism services as outlined in this Plan. These funds will be remitted to the Regional District upon receipt from the Ministry of Finance. The remaining funds (20% of those collected from the first 2% and the incremental 1%, referred to as ‘local’ funds) will remain with the Town and shall be applied exclusively to tourism projects, programs and marketing.

Management and Administration of the 3% MRDT

The Town of Port McNeill retains responsibility for managing and administering the ‘local’ funds. The Port McNeill Tourism Steering Committee will assist the Town in determining spending priorities and will work with Town to approve and review annual budgets and year-end financial reports associated with the funds. The Town of Port McNeill will maintain all necessary administrative records relating to the use of ‘local’ funds. These records and year-end reports on the 3% MRDT will be submitted to the Regional District of Mount Waddington.

Port McNeill Tourism Committee

The newly appointed 2019 Port McNeill Tourism Committee includes Bruce McMorran, Kristie Eccleston, Jonna Dixon, Liza Furney, Cheryl Jorgenson, Bill McQuarrie and Boni Sharpe. This Committee will work in collaboration with the Vancouver Island North Tourism Advisory Committee to develop and implement tourism related initiatives using the ‘local’ funds in the Town of Port McNeill.

Port McNeill Tourism Marketing and Project Alignment

The MRDT ‘local’ funds are considered incremental tourism funds and will be used in conjunction with existing tourism funds and alternative sources of funding to undertake local initiatives designed to raise Port McNeill’s profile as a destination within the region and to enhance the overall visitor experiences in Port McNeill.

Port McNeill works collaboratively with the Regional District of Mount Waddington to realize the vision, mission and goals that have been established for Vancouver Island North in their Strategic Business Plan that forms the basis of this MRDT renewal proposal. Port McNeill’s Tourism Advisory Committee will work to maximize return on investment of ‘local’ funds while also supporting Regional District led initiatives.

Port McNeill will use ‘local’ funds to support the promotion and development of local tourism through an enhanced web presence and content that promotes Port McNeill as a basecamp for North Island adventures. The town of Port McNeill will retain \$35,349.89 to be allocated by the PMTAC and that these are reflected in the marketing tactics in section 2.

Appendix 4 – Village of Alert Bay

Recognizing that a strong regional tourism economy is important to Alert Bay’s local tourism economy, Council continues to be committed to the funding formula specified in this Business Plan – with 80% of all funds collected from the first 2% of MRDT being remitted to the Regional District of Mount Waddington to fund the delivery of regional tourism services as outlined in this Plan. These funds will be

Regional District of Mount Waddington Electoral Areas A, B, C, D, and the Village of Port Alice, the Village of Alert Bay, and the Town of Port McNeill

remitted to the Regional District of Mount Waddington upon receipt from the Ministry of Finance. The remaining funds (20% of those collected from the first 2% as well as the incremental 1%, referred to as 'local' funds) will remain with the Village and shall be applied exclusively to tourism related projects, programs and marketing initiatives. Village of Alert Bay will retain \$6513.03 to be allocated by the Village of Alert Bay and are reflected in the marketing tactics in section 2.

Management and Administration of the 3% MRDT

The Village of Alert Bay retains responsibility for managing and administering the 'local' funds. The Cormorant Island Joint Tourism Committee will assist the Village in determining spending priorities and will work with the Village to approve and review annual budgets and year-end financial reports associated with the funds. The Village of Alert Bay will maintain all necessary administrative records relating to the use of 'local' funds. These records and year-end reports on the 3% MRDT will be submitted to the Regional District.

Cormorant Island Joint Tourism Committee

The Cormorant Island Joint Tourism Committee has representation from the 'Namgis First Nation, the U'mista Cultural Centre, the Village Council and the hospitality industry. The Committee makes recommendations to both the Village of Alert Bay and 'Namgis First Nation Councils involving the expenditure of tourism marketing dollars. Marketing costs are shared equally between the First Nation, the Village and U'mista Cultural Centre. Comprised of seven members, the Committee is made up of two representatives from the Village, the First Nation and the Cultural Centre. In addition, the Committee will include a representative from the hospitality sector. At least one member of the Cormorant Island Joint Tourism Committee will also be a member of the Vancouver Island North Tourism Advisory Committee. This will assist in promoting a more integrated approach to developing tourism and in identifying opportunities to leverage 'local' funds.

Alert Bay Tourism Marketing and Project Alignment

The 3% MRDT funds are incremental tourism funds and will be used in conjunction with other funding sources to undertake local initiatives designed to raise Alert Bay's profile as a destination within the Regional District of Mount Waddington and to enhance the local visitor experience. Funds will be directed towards producing local promotional brochures, maps and other promotional content focused on Alert Bay. These initiatives will be aligned with marketing and development activities undertaken by Vancouver Island North Tourism and Alert Bay will work collaboratively to advance Vancouver Island North Tourism's Vision and Mission. Engaging in Regional initiatives with Vancouver Island North Tourism, the contracted service provider, will enable Alert Bay to realize a more significant return on its investment and it will support the development of Alert Bay and the entire North Island as a destination.

Regional District of Mount Waddington Electoral Areas A, B, C, D, and the Village of Port Alice, the Village of Alert Bay, and the Town of Port McNeill

Appendix 5 – Regional District of Mount Waddington Electoral Areas A, B, C, D and the Village of Port Alice

Recognizing that a strong regional tourism economy is important to Regional District's local tourism economy, the Board continues to be committed to the funding formula specified in this Business Plan – with 80% of all funds collected from the first 2% of MRDT being remitted to the Regional District of Mount Waddington to fund the delivery of regional tourism services as outlined in this Plan. These funds will be remitted to the Regional District of Mount Waddington upon receipt from the Ministry of Finance. The remaining funds (20% of those collected from the first 2% as well as the incremental 1%, referred to as 'local' funds) will remain with the Village of Port Alice and Electoral Areas A, B, C and D, and shall be applied exclusively to tourism related projects, programs and marketing initiatives.

Management and Administration of the 3% MRDT

The Regional District retains responsibility for managing and administering the 'local' funds. The Regional District of Mount Waddington will determine spending priorities and will work with representatives from the Village of Port Alice and Electoral Areas A, B, C and D to approve and review annual budgets and year-end financial reports associated with the funds. The Regional District will maintain all necessary administrative records relating to the use of 'local' funds. These records and year-end reports on the 3% MRDT will be held by the Regional District.

Electoral Area and Municipal Regional District Tax Director's Committee

The Electoral Area and Municipal Regional District Tax Director's Committee has representation from the Village of Port Alice and Electoral Areas A, B, C and D. The Committee makes decisions involving the expenditure of tourism marketing dollars in the Village of Port Alice and Electoral Areas A, B, C and D.

Village of Port Alice and Electoral Areas A, B, C and D Marketing and Project Alignment

The 3% MRDT funds are incremental tourism funds and will be used in conjunction with other funding sources to undertake local initiatives designed to raise the profile of the Village of Port Alice and Electoral Areas A, B, C and D as destinations within the Regional District of Mount Waddington and to enhance the local visitor experience. Funds will be directed towards supporting community based tourism initiatives and projects.