

RISING TIDES

A Regenerative Tourism Strategy for the Atlantic Canada UNESCO Tourism Corridor

Summary

April 2024

@Stonehammer | UNESCO Global Geopark



Parcs Canada

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Table of Contents** 2
- Acknowledgements** 3
- Project Background** 4
- Introduction** 5
 - The 13 UNESCO Sites 6
 - Approach 8
- Key Findings** 9
- Case Studies** 12
- Strategy** 13
 - Vision 13
 - Mission 13
 - Values 13
 - Goals 13
 - Themes & Initiatives 16
- Target Markets** 20
- Investment Opportunities and Financial Implications** 21
- Summary of Investment Opportunities** 22
- Acronyms** 24
- Contacts** 25

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge the ancestral and unceded territories of the Beothuk, Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, Peskotomuhkati, Innu and Inuit Peoples. We respectfully acknowledge the diverse heritage, cultures and ways of knowing of the first peoples of Northeast Turtle Island which is now known as Atlantic Canada.

The crafting of *Rising Tides, a Regenerative Tourism Strategy for the Atlantic Canada UNESCO Tourism Corridor* involved collaboration between partners, including Indigenous Peoples, national organizations, and the federal, provincial and local levels of government—across boundaries, knowledge systems and expertise—and we are grateful to everyone who informed and influenced this work, including those that participated in the surveys, workshops, interviews and advisory groups.

Key partners included:

Erica D'Souza, Destination Canada

Zoe Compton, Canadian Commission for UNESCO

Vanessa Poulin-Gladu, Canadian Commission for UNESCO

Jennifer Dingman, Fundy Biosphere Region & Stonehammer UNESCO Global Geopark

Heather MacDonald, Parks Canada

Allison McIsaac, Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Region

Sacha Brake, Cliffs of Fundy UNESCO Global Geopark

Rebecca Rolf, Discovery UNESCO Global Geopark

Maddison Hulan, Gros Morne National Park and World Heritage Site

Jordan LeBlanc, Joggins Fossil Cliffs World Heritage Site

Loretta Decker, L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site and World Heritage Site

Claude DeGrace, Landscape of Grand Pré World Heritage Site

Mark King, Mistaken Point World Heritage Site

Hilary Grant, Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site

Philip Bridle, Red Bay Basque Whaling Station National Historic Site and World Heritage Site

David Sollows, Southwest Nova Biosphere Region

Shelley Pisegna, New Brunswick Tourism, Heritage and Culture

Heather Yule, Tourism Nova Scotia, Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage

Anna Moran, Tourism Nova Scotia, Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage

John Angelopolous, Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism, Culture, Arts and Heritage

We are grateful for the guidance of:

Tara Saunders, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada

Samantha Rullins, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada

Karen Narvey, Indigenous Tourism Association of New Brunswick

Robert Bernard, Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network

Caroline Swan, Newfoundland and Labrador Indigenous Tourism Association

Janice Ployer, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

Johanna Egan, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

Whitney Hooper, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

Community members, operators and organizations

Tourism consultancy firm Vardo Creative guided the project and co-created the key deliverables in collaboration with the corridor partners.

PROJECT BACKGROUND



©Sheldon Stone @Gros Morne National Park and World Heritage Site

Rising Tides, a Regenerative Tourism Strategy for the Atlantic Canada UNESCO Tourism Corridor was developed through Destination Canada's [Tourism Corridor Strategy Program](#), which was created to enhance the resilience of the tourism industry by developing multiple corridors across Canada. The approach emphasizes collaboration between community partners, especially across provinces and territories, and encourages investments that benefit Canadians. This project defined a vision for partners and stakeholders, set out an implementation plan to execute the Strategy, and identified investment needs and economic potential for sites and stakeholders. The Corridor is being developed alongside two other 2023 corridors: Sustainable Journeys from Prairies to Pacific, and Northern Indigenous Tourism Lodge Network.

INTRODUCTION

This document provides a summary of *Rising Tides, a Regenerative Tourism Strategy for the Atlantic Canada UNESCO Tourism Corridor* (the Strategy) that was completed in 2023. It celebrates the strengths, reflects the potential and identifies priorities of the 13 UNESCO sites in Atlantic Canada. The Strategy is based on the results of a comprehensive engagement process, which was undertaken within the context of a 10-year vision and implementation plan. As part of the implementation, the Partners will continue to refine the Strategy and determine shared priorities and how to move forward together.

The Strategy aligns with many guiding lights, including: UNESCO operational guidelines for Biosphere Regions, Global Geoparks and World Heritage Sites; United Nations Sustainable Development Goals; United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Calls to Action; federal, provincial, regional, local and site specific strategies and plans. It also incorporates frameworks and principles provided by Destination Canada, including a regenerative approach to tourism, Wealth & Wellbeing framework, and a focus on high value(s) guests (HVGs).

These sites contribute to and support celebration, preservation and restoration of cultural, ecological, and intangible heritage at the local, regional, national and international levels. Each UNESCO-designated site is managed as multi-stakeholder partnerships involving communities (place-based (e.g., municipalities) and non-place-based (e.g., 2SLGBTQ+)) non-profit organizations, Indigenous Peoples, academia, government and industry partners. At their core, these sites are recognized by UNESCO because of their ability to foster local sustainable development by ensuring the vitality of local people, businesses, community, and the environment.

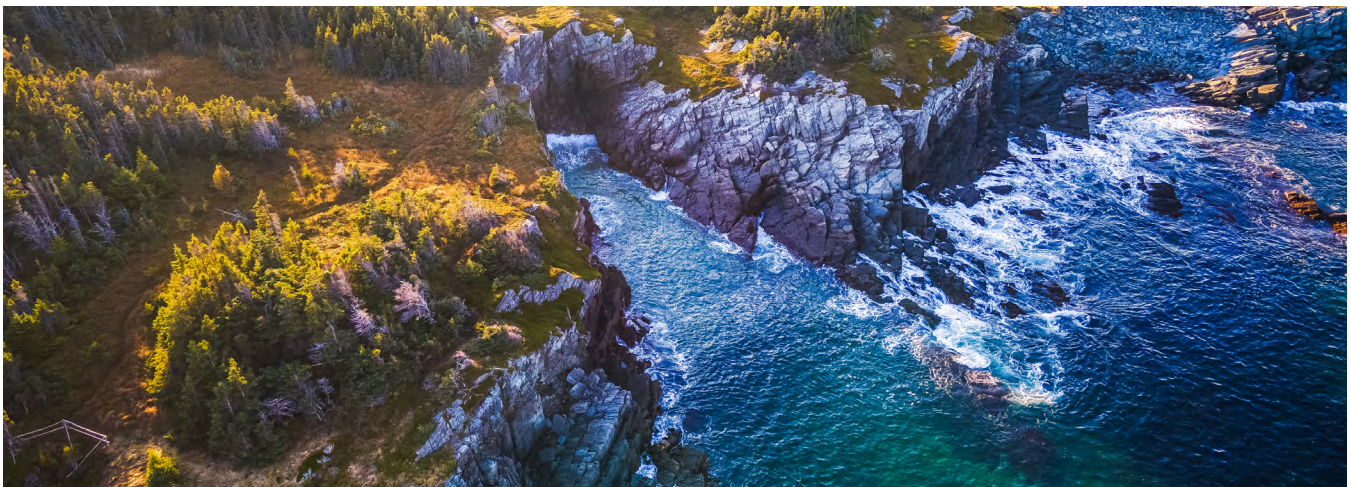
The Strategy recognizes that tourism opportunities, market-readiness, and the ability to host visitors varies throughout the 13 UNESCO sites in Atlantic Canada. Building capacity and enhancing foundational elements at each site will help the Corridor to thrive. Through well-invested Corridor initiatives, the sites can increase the value of tourism and create a positive impact for peace, prosperity and the planet.

Implementation will be championed through a governance structure that merges the expertise and capacity of UNESCO site managers and tourism leadership, working together with local communities to implement the Strategy.

At the core of this Strategy lies the understanding that the Atlantic Canada UNESCO Tourism Corridor will be built on, with, and through meaningful relationships while recognizing the true history of the Indigenous Peoples that have occupied these ancestral lands since time immemorial. Every initiative and action undertaken includes the intention to foster genuine connections and partnerships between project partners, sites, communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and people, businesses, and other partners.

Like the ripples in a pond that emanate from a dropped stone, this Strategy is about realizing the fullest potential of the Atlantic Canada UNESCO Tourism Corridor and Destination Canada's Tourism Corridor Strategy Program. By building on efforts in 13 UNESCO sites, the Strategy aims to create a rippling effect that extends far beyond these sites to support thriving human and environmental communities.

©Stuart White @Discovery UNESCO Global Geopark



The 13 UNESCO Sites

The prestigious UNESCO brand and site designations attract high-values visitors and contribute to pride of place and local economies. In Atlantic Canada, 13 UNESCO sites are characterized by critical ecosystems, pristine landscapes and cultural sites and areas of worldwide significance. They are Biosphere Regions, Global Geoparks, and World Heritage Sites:

Biosphere Regions: Biosphere Regions are learning places for sustainable development, promoting healthy relationships between people and nature. The sites test interdisciplinary approaches to understand and manage changes and interactions between social and ecological systems. Biospheres in Canada are non-profit, grass-roots organizations supported by local communities.

Global Geoparks: Sites of global geological significance that support education, preservation of geoheritage, regenerative tourism and sustainable development are designated as Global Geoparks. They are community-led and stewarded by residents, communities, businesses and other organizations.

World Heritage Sites (WHS): World Heritage Sites are places of outstanding universal value to humanity that have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List to be protected for future generations to appreciate and enjoy. These sites represent some of humanity's most outstanding achievements and nature's most inspiring creations. In Atlantic Canada, each WHS is governed by a management authority such as Parks Canada.

@Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Region

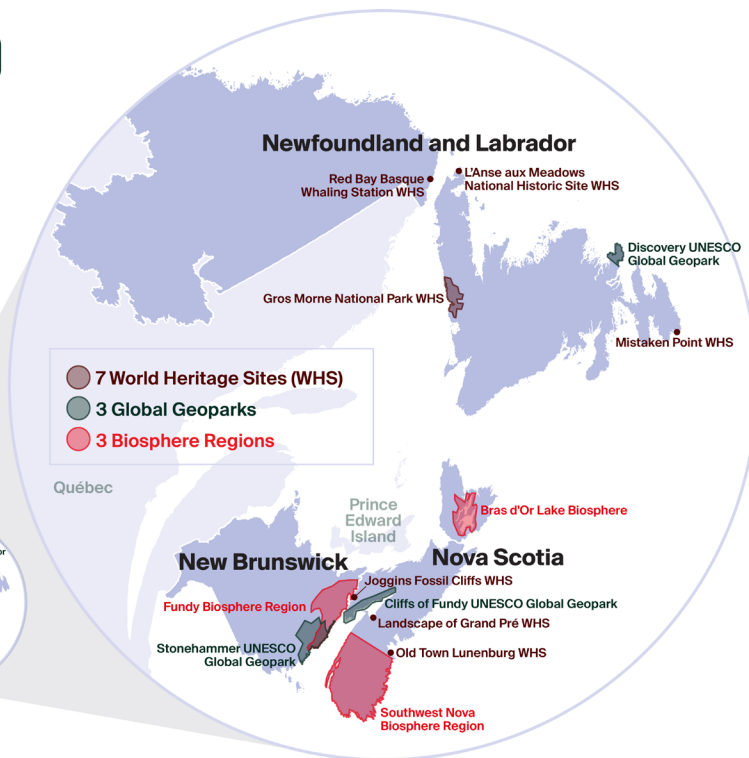


ATLANTIC CANADA UNESCO TOURISM CORRIDOR

The Atlantic Canada UNESCO Tourism Corridor currently comprises the 13 UNESCO sites and the associated communities in the Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador.



Atlantic Canada's 13 UNESCO Sites



The 13 UNESCO Sites and year of designation:

[Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Region](#) (Nova Scotia, 2011)

[Cliffs of Fundy UNESCO Global Geopark](#) (Nova Scotia, 2020)

[Discovery UNESCO Global Geopark](#) (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2020)

[Fundy Biosphere Region](#) (New Brunswick, 2007)

[Gros Morne National Park and World Heritage Site](#) (Newfoundland and Labrador, 1987)

[Joggins Fossil Cliffs World Heritage Site](#) (Nova Scotia, 2008)

[L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site and World Heritage Site](#) (Newfoundland and Labrador, 1978)

[Landscape of Grand Pré World Heritage Site](#) (Nova Scotia, 2012)

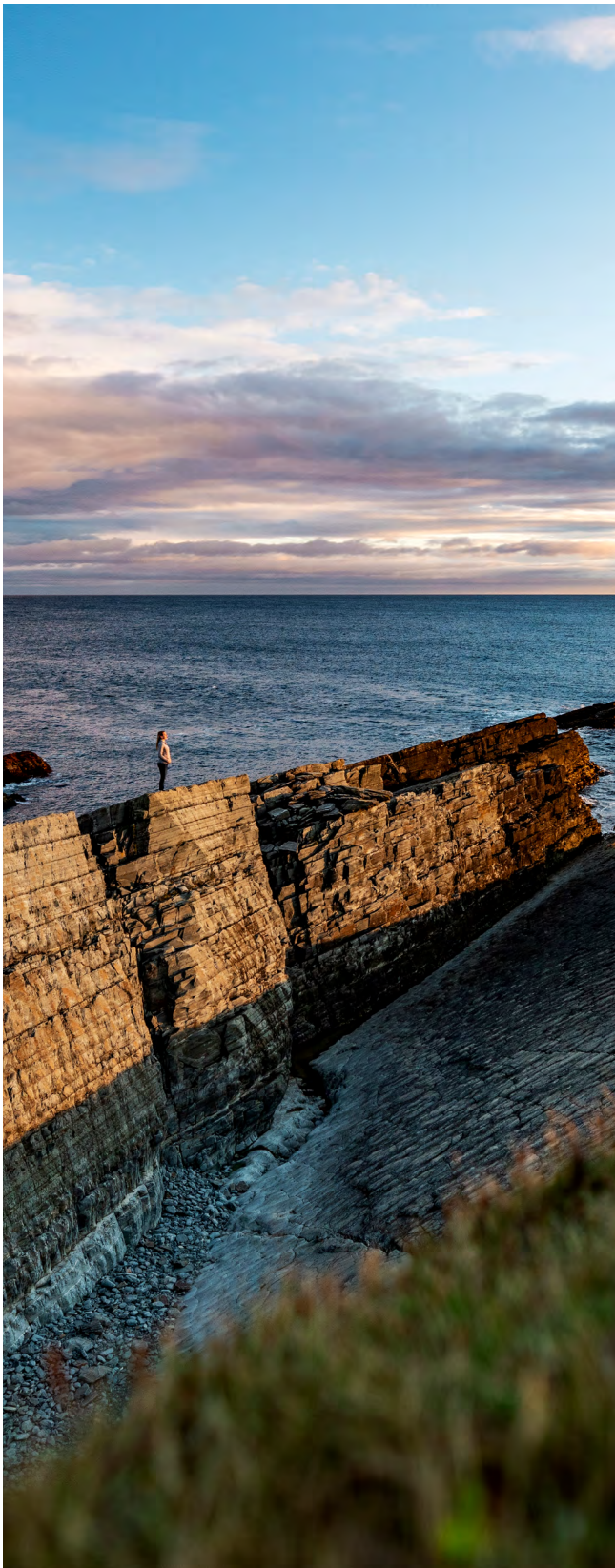
[Mistaken Point World Heritage Site](#) (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2016)

[Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site](#) (Nova Scotia, 1995)

[Red Bay Basque Whaling Station National Historic Site and World Heritage Site](#) (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2013)

[Southwest Nova Biosphere Region](#) (Nova Scotia, 2001)

[Stonehammer UNESCO Global Geopark](#) (New Brunswick, 2015)



©Dru Kennedy @Mistaken Point World Heritage Site

Approach

The Strategy was developed between June and December 2023 using an inclusive approach to community engagement, ensuring the final strategy is built on the needs of the communities and potential of each UNESCO site, and decisions were grounded in evidence-based information. The approach for development of the Strategy and Implementation & Financial Plan included:

1 Destination assessment and context gathering

- a. 13 site briefings
 - b. 13 site visits over a total of 28 days
 - c. 3 global case studies
 - d. 125+ documents and online resources reviewed
-

2 Partner and community engagement

- a. 80+ interviews
 - b. 474 Community Engagement Survey responses
 - c. 4,113 Online Visitor Panel Survey responses
 - d. 5 Canadian national organization survey responses
 - e. 127 participants at five planning workshops
-

3 Creation of the strategic framework

- a. Partner meetings
- b. 60+ participants in six thematic Advisory Group meetings

KEY FINDINGS

An important first step in strategy development is understanding relevant contextual factors that will support the ability to achieve desired tourism development objectives. Demand and supply side considerations were used to understand the potential, inform the strategy development and highlight numerous opportunities for growth and development within the Corridor:

Demand-Side Considerations

- **Rising Global Travel:** Global traveller volumes and revenues are forecasted to grow significantly over the next 10 years but there is, and will continue to be, fierce global competition for these visitors. According to Oxford Economics, across the entire globe, tourism spending is projected to grow at a compound annual rate of 7.1% to 2030¹.
- **High Value(s) Guests:** Many destinations around the world are refocusing on the same segment of 'high values' travellers whose values align with those of their local residents. The Corridor must elevate its collective market profile and the consistency of quality and depth of experiences to compete effectively.
- **Enhancing Overall Appeal:** There is significant potential in the development of compelling, authentic experiences that are bookable and revenue-generating, both at the UNESCO sites and throughout the entirety of the Corridor. Addressing experiential gaps and inconsistencies will enhance the overall appeal and visitor impact.
- **Curating Unique Experiences:** While the Corridor includes many highly desired travel experiences, there is room to create curated itineraries and authentic cultural experiences that can be customized based on traveller preferences. There is an opportunity to increase the number of travel trade ready product, which will increase opportunities to market the UNESCO sites and increase awareness as an outcome.
- **Generating Awareness of UNESCO sites:** UNESCO sites are valued as sites of excellence, places of sustainable development that align tourism growth with meaningful intentions towards community, Indigenous Peoples and local solutions to global problems. There are substantial opportunities to elevate traveller, travel trade, business and resident awareness of UNESCO sites and the benefits this designation provides relative to responsible and a regenerative approach to travel, alignment with a shared set of traveller and community values, economic generation and Indigenous reconciliation opportunities.
- **Year-round Opportunities:** Opportunities exist to increase the values from visitors during the peak season (e.g., fall colours, cruise travel). The travel trade has indicated that a seasonal extension of only a few more weeks into October could yield significant opportunities for most sites. Further, many HVGs from Canada's domestic and key international markets have a higher-than-average inclination to travel in the fall, winter and spring.
- **Cultural Stories and Experiences:** Visitor interest for experiences that offer authentic Indigenous cultural sharing continues to grow quickly, often outpacing increases in available opportunities, which are at the choice of Indigenous Peoples to share or not.

©katsteele86 @Cliffs of Fundy UNESCO Global Geopark



¹Source: *Tourism Outlook: Unlocking Opportunities for the Sector, Fall 2023, Destination Canada*

Supply-Side Considerations



@Southwest Nova Biosphere Region

- **Leveraging Collaboration:** There are meaningful opportunities to collaborate and leverage efforts amongst Atlantic Canada communities, destinations, and experiences for the benefit of all. Collaboration can leverage existing resources within the ecosystem and is essential for Atlantic Canada to compete globally to secure a share of the desired traveller segments.
- **Capacity Enhancement:** The 13 UNESCO sites within the Corridor have differing governance models and levels of financial capacity with many heavily reliant on time-limited project-based grant funding. There is significant potential when UNESCO sites can operate with full staff capacity and allocate time to development opportunities that generate additional benefits of tourism.
- **Transportation and Infrastructure:** There are many challenges to travel to and within sites and throughout the Corridor, such as: convenience and reliability of air access; cost and availability of rental cars; reliance on private vehicles; poor road conditions to and within sites; lack of public transportation and shuttles; and limited capacity with some ferry routes that can discourage travel to some sites (e.g., sold out months in advance or not able to secure a return reservation), such as the ferry from Newfoundland to Labrador. Transportation access and environmentally-friendly options to get around are clear priorities for development that will require multiple jurisdictions and levels of government to influence opportunities for sustainable travel.
- **Accommodation Experiences:** Enhancing the quality and availability of accommodations, particularly small, unique options that add to the sense of place and support regenerative tourism practices², can enrich the visitor experience.
- **Culinary Attraction:** Culinary experiences are of significant importance to travellers and offer an untapped opportunity. Unique foods such as lobster, scallops and other seafood as well as place-based traditions can be motivators for visiting Atlantic Canada. Culinary offerings can enhance the visitor experience and increase desire to visit these sites.
- **Indigenous Engagement and Development:** The UNESCO sites are working to engage with Indigenous communities through their governance models (seats at the Board table), staffing and site interpretation (e.g. amplifying Indigenous voices and stories, use of Indigenous languages and place names). However, more capacity resources are needed within the entire ecosystem to build relationships that support Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs to explore tourism potential, respectful and appropriate

² *A Guide to Supporting Sustainability Practices in Tourist Accommodation Facilities*, Canadian Commission for UNESCO



©UG Barrett and MacKay @Mistaken Point World Heritage Site

sharing and to work together in meaningful ways, while addressing multi-generational socio-economic barriers. The Provincial Indigenous Tourism Organizations can act as an important 'bridge builder' if their own internal capacity is supplemented with additional resources.

- **Experience Development:** New experience development undertaken by small and medium sized enterprises would benefit from guidance and support (training, networking, funding, mentoring, marketing, etc.) to help spark innovation and bring their product to market. The focus of development efforts throughout the Corridor should be on experiences that can be monetized for local economic benefit rather than offered for free.
- **Resident Sentiment and Engagement:** As tourism is enabled through the acceptance of hosting visitors, it is important for residents to understand the benefits of the UNESCO designations and the benefits of sustainable tourism in their communities, as well as be engaged with how tourism develops within their communities.
- **Workforce Challenges:** The UNESCO sites and many businesses are struggling with lack of staffing and affordable housing for their workers. Addressing workforce challenges within the industry are areas for strategic focus. Capacity building to support the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples (elders, adults, youth) is needed at UNESCO sites.
- **Investment Attraction and Policies:** The Corridor can drive investment attraction and entrepreneurship. Alignment of public funding increases the potential for attracting private sector investment, fostering community support, and increasing return on investment.

CASE STUDIES

Many countries around the world are bringing UNESCO sites to the forefront and developing UNESCO trails, routes, or corridors. Three examples were explored that showcased the value of collaborations—the Scotland UNESCO Trail, the Coral Triangle and Rutas UNESCO Uruguay.

Key Findings:

1

Development and implementation of plans have brought UNESCO sites together that previously had not worked together, which has yielded positive results through government support, educational outreach and significant investments from private and public sources.

2

Collaborative efforts are making a positive difference in advancing regenerative tourism, protecting natural and cultural values, and generating strong community involvement at the local level.

3

Sustainable tourism can be a powerful tool for both economic growth and environmental preservation.

4

The trails play an important role in educating visitors on the value of UNESCO designated sites and sustainable travel and the importance of preserving cultural and natural heritage while contributing to the local economy and community well-being.



©Destination Canada @Old Town Lunenburg World Heritage Site

STRATEGY

VISION

The Atlantic Canada UNESCO Tourism Corridor is internationally celebrated for connecting people to meaningful stories of our shared humanity, protecting and regenerating natural and cultural values and strengthening Indigenous, local and regional ways of being.

MISSION

To collaborate in protection, conservation and stewardship of the UNESCO designated sites and their universal values through tourism.

VALUES

The following statement of values was developed by planning participants to be used as touchstones for decision-making:

Responsibility... towards the sites, communities, Atlantic Canada, and the planet; a serious commitment is held to ensure protection, long-term stewardship and historical Indigenous connection to the land, while creating value for visitors.

Perspective... is respected, embracing Etuaptmumk³ (Two-Eyed Seeing) by weaving knowledges through an Indigenous lens in one eye and a Western lens in the other.

Inclusivity... by welcoming people of all genders, cultures, and religions, and striving to provide a safe and inclusive environment for every visitor in alignment with [UNESCO core values](#).

Inspiration... as the Corridor engages visitors with meaningful, locally authentic stories and experiences that showcase the significance of each site, highlight Atlantic Canada's uniqueness and create positive memories.

Creativity... is championed in all forms, valuing the creative ways that surround the Corridor and emerge from collaborations.

Education... as a lifelong journey of discovery and learning, offering engaging ways to create understanding that supports a better world.

Collaboration & Involvement... achieving more by working together and reaching new heights and economic viability by involving others.

GOALS

Additional steps are recommended as part of the implementation for the Partners to further discuss and determine the key measures to evaluate the six goals and determine ability to collect, manage, and share the resulting data. Key measures are provided for consideration.

³ Etuaptmumk is a concept created by respected Mi'kmaw Elder Dr. Albert Marshall of Eskasoni in Unama'ki, part of the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Region.



©Chris Reardon @Red Bay Basque Whaling Station National Historic Site and World Heritage Site

GOAL

KEY MEASURES

1. Increase capacity to maximize tourism opportunities and the ability to protect, manage, and create resiliency for all UNESCO sites and the greater tourism sector in Atlantic Canada

UNESCO staff feel there is organizational capacity to dedicate to improving tourism opportunities

Funding for UNESCO sites has increased

Framework for intentional regenerative, tourism practices is in place and being utilized

Number of people who have been trained or engaged in environmental integrity activities has increased

Etuptmumk (Two-Eyed Seeing) principles are implemented at the operation and governance levels at all UNESCO sites

UNESCO staff feel they are better able to protect, manage and create resiliency for the site

Indigenous tourism development resources are increased to match growth and interest levels

2. Nurture the relationships, support and collaboration between the sites and the connected communities, residents, business engagements and partners

Awareness of UNESCO site and values has increased by residents, communities, businesses and economic development agencies

All UNESCO sites have meaningful relationships with local Indigenous communities that are valued by both

3. Increase in seasonal visitation based on site capacity and community alignment

Volume of visitors to UNESCO sites between September 15 and June 15, where capacity exists

GOAL

KEY MEASURES

4. Increase the values that peak-season visitors bring to the region

Average visitor spend per day has increased at UNESCO sites and within each identified hub community
Contributions of visitors to environmental stewardship

5. Build compelling, cohesive and complete storytelling and visitor experiences that align with UNESCO priorities

Number of visitor experiences that have been enhanced or created
New opportunities for sharing the true Indigenous history of the land
Revenue generated from bookable experiences has increased

6. Create greater benefits for local and regional wealth and wellbeing attributable to tourism that supports economic prosperity, cultural vibrancy, and environmental resiliency in communities

Average rating of how much residents value the contribution of UNESCO sites to their community has increased
Average rating of how much residents value the contribution of travellers to their local community has increased
Number of inclusive initiatives aimed at multi-cultural sharing has increased

©River Hebert @Joggins Fossil Cliffs World Heritage Site



Themes & Initiatives

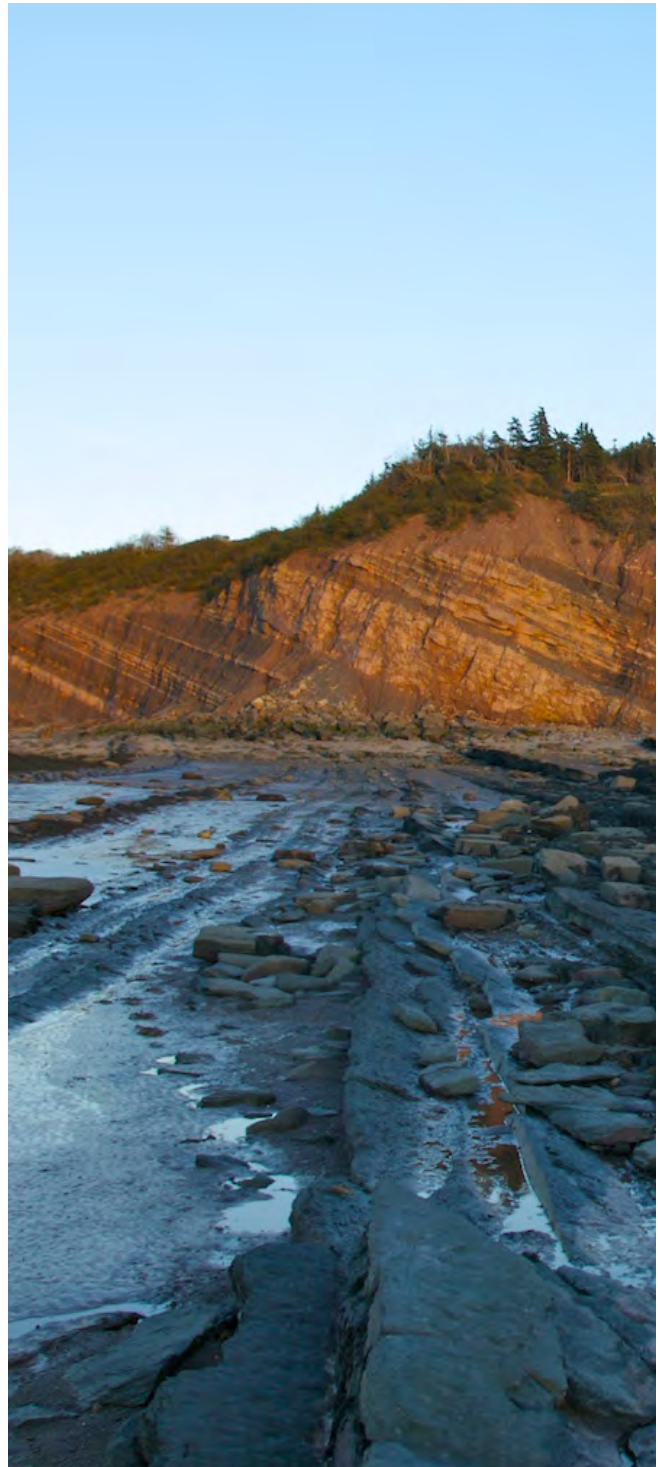
This strategy was developed using Destination Canada's destination development framework: Environmental Integrity, Infrastructure, Access & Amenities, Collaboration, Experience Development, and Tourism Workforce. Additionally, Community is a common theme that permeates throughout all initiatives.

31 initiatives were identified under the five theme areas, which will be undertaken in accordance with a prioritization framework:

1. Environmental Integrity

While each of the UNESCO sites is focused on environmental integrity now, these initiatives bring the Corridor together to make a bigger impact with a regenerative tourism lens, progressing in a unified way around climate change actions, aligning with Indigenous values, creating opportunities for local and visitor contribution, and encouraging bigger change through government policy, actions and investment.

1. Establish a framework for intentional regenerative tourism practices based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that all UNESCO sites and their supportive communities can understand and participate in.
2. Unite and build on climate change monitoring and adaptation plans and work to protect biodiversity at each UNESCO site.
3. Learn from and incorporate Indigenous knowledges and values to help ensure meaningful land and water stewardship over the long term.
4. Create opportunities for residents, communities and visitors to contribute to stewardship and preservation efforts for environmental and cultural integrity.
5. Encourage governments at all levels to adjust policy, actions, and investment to meet UNESCO standards and make decisions for the protection of the environment.



©Wally Hayes @Joggins Fossil Cliffs World Heritage Site



©Destination Canada @Cliffs of Fundy UNESCO Global Geopark

2. Infrastructure, Access & Amenities

These initiatives address the barriers to growth and make those needed investments in infrastructure, access, transportation, accommodations, and digital communications that enhance the Corridor and are critical for tourism to thrive.

1. Secure sustainable core funding for all UNESCO sites and identify site capacity needs to maximize tourism and ensure mandatory investments are prioritized and made to UNESCO sites.
2. Collaborate with government and partners to improve transportation infrastructure and services for better access and mobility to UNESCO sites and throughout the Corridor.
3. Celebrate the UNESCO designations with branded signage and interpretation in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples for the Corridor at key gateways that provide a sense of arrival, and directional signage between UNESCO sites and at sites of significance within Biosphere Regions and Global Geoparks.
4. Provide an educational platform regarding the long history of Indigenous living and vibrant culture of the Beothuk, Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, Peskotomuhkati, Innu and Inuit Peoples including multi-lingual interpretive signage, exhibits and displays developed, approved and delivered by local Indigenous communities.
5. Develop or expand interpretation centres at UNESCO sites to enable improved access, interpretation, experience and regional benefits.
6. Work with local, regional and provincial public and private partners to fill gaps in services and amenities in the identified 'hub community' for each UNESCO site and throughout the Corridor.
7. Explore the opportunity to collaborate for small ship/ expedition cruise development that attract HVGs.



©Matthieu Paley @Fundy Biosphere Region

3. Collaboration

Initiatives within this theme focus on setting up ways to collaborate and build ties between UNESCO sites, other organizations and tourism leadership.

1. Create an inclusive and diverse governance structure that enables the implementation of the Strategy through leadership and funding guidance.
2. Create networking structures and meeting schedules for UNESCO sites to share lessons learned in relation to funding, governance, Indigenous engagement, community engagement, education, etc.
3. Strengthen relationships between UNESCO sites and federal, provincial, and regional tourism organizations, multi-level Indigenous tourism organizations, funding agencies, regional and community organizations and local businesses where appropriate.
4. Collaborate on outreach programming with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and UNESCO.
5. Maximize the UNESCO brand at each site, in surrounding communities, throughout the provinces and at gateway/entry locations to Atlantic Canada to showcase and celebrate the depth and density of UNESCO experiences.
6. Work with local, regional, provincial, and federal economic development agencies to showcase the tourism business opportunities in/around UNESCO sites and educate on the value of the UNESCO brand as a lure to business and capital attraction.
7. Collaborate with Parks Canada and others to leverage existing programs, standards and templates to ensure consistency across sites where helpful.
8. Build knowledge and insights on visitors and UNESCO site participation in tourism through research, data collection, analysis and sharing.

4. Experience Development

In support of federal and provincial tourism growth strategies, these initiatives focus on leveraging existing experience development programs and creating new bookable, revenue generating experiences associated with UNESCO sites and the Corridor.

1. Increase capacity to support the creation and improvement of compelling, inclusive and accessible experiences.
2. Develop themes relevant to visitors to showcase experiences at UNESCO sites and itineraries that enable visitors to experience portions of the journey based on interest and time.
3. Bring people and businesses together to collaborate on new authentic, transformational and regenerative experience development in connection with the UNESCO sites.
4. Enable UNESCO sites and tourism businesses to improve online booking abilities to increase ease of planning.
5. Update and evolve the interpretation at UNESCO sites.

5. Tourism Workforce

This theme includes initiatives to build capacity at each UNESCO site for regenerative tourism development, including staff and industry training, building capacity for hiring Indigenous People, and supporting the need for staff housing.

1. Provide training for UNESCO site staff, guides, and industry at large, to ensure they can successfully work in alignment with the values of the Corridor.
2. Develop a capacity building action plan to hire Indigenous People to work at UNESCO sites.
3. Develop a Corridor-wide approach to finding, attracting, training and retaining staff in alignment with the SDGs, UNDRIP and TRC Calls to Action.
4. Develop more trained and experienced tour guides to support site visits and to educate visitors at UNESCO sites.
5. Work with partners to increase available staff housing where needed.
6. Explore opportunities to connect UNESCO sites to culinary experiences and training programs.



©Acorn Art & Photography @Southwest Nova Biosphere Region

TARGET MARKETS

1. Atlantic Canada Visitors:

For every visitor to Atlantic Canada, the UNESCO sites enrich their trip experience and provides a compelling reason to stay longer, spend more, travel in more rural areas, learn about the way of being and living in Atlantic Canada, and bring additional economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits to the community. This market represents the greatest opportunity for the UNESCO sites to maximize the value of visitors.

2. High Value(s) Guests:

The Atlantic Canada UNESCO Tourism Corridor will target HVGs. HVGs immerse themselves in a destination, embrace heritage and culture, and genuinely seek to leave the destination better than they found it. While there are differences in the priorities, motivators and drivers for HVGs in each key market, they tend to be more affluent and educated than the average traveller and are driven to improve their wealth and standard of living. They share a curiosity for deeper, richer experiences. They also typically enjoy culinary experiences and embrace the local culture and arts scene wherever they visit around the world.

3. UNESCO Enthusiasts:

UNESCO enthusiasts are travellers that intentionally plan their trips around visiting UNESCO sites. While avid enthusiasts are a niche market, almost half of respondents to a Visitor Online Survey (2023) stated that they sometimes, often or very often plan their travels to include a visit to UNESCO site (in general, globally).

4. Geographic Markets:

Based on Destination Canada's HVG research and market information from the provincial governments, these are the key markets who will consider Atlantic Canada and the UNESCO sites: Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, USA - East Coast and Louisiana, Germany, UK, and France. Additional research and insights are needed to determine long-term potential for these markets: Rest of Canada, Australia, China, Japan, Mexico and South Korea.



©Destination Canada @Fundy Biosphere Region

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Strategy has a 10-year horizon for implementation, with some early quick wins as priorities as well as longer term investment opportunities.

Investing in UNESCO sites is a demonstrated commitment to preserving the culture and natural heritage that each site holds for the benefit of present and future generations. Together the 13 UNESCO sites represent sustainable development, traditional and contemporary Indigenous stewardship, history, biodiversity, geology and human achievement that contribute significantly to the Atlantic regional identity and Canada's global heritage.



©Julia Endicot @L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site and World Heritage Site

UNESCO sites in Atlantic Canada encompass places of incredible biodiversity and ecological sensitivity, geological wonders and fossils up to a billion years old, historical landmarks, architectural wonders, cultural traditions that have endured for centuries, and address climate change and biodiversity loss. Investing in preservation protects and celebrates the stories, traditions, and contributions of ancestors, maintains natural beauty and biodiversity, and upholds the value of the natural world by safeguarding the environment for future generations.

The 13 sites have the potential to maximize the benefits of tourism and promote sustainable economic development within its respective region. However, investment in the Corridor offers an opportunity to have a multiplier effect that generates economic vitality at the provincial and regional Atlantic level for many years to come. Investment directly impacts local economies, creates jobs, supports small businesses, enhances the quality of life for residents, and supports investment attraction and retention.

The sites are living laboratories, allowing people of all ages to connect with history, culture, and the natural world. Investing in them encourages lifelong learning, cultural exchange, and cross-cultural understanding. Further, investment demonstrates a commitment to international collaboration, fostering partnerships with other countries to protect shared cultural and natural treasures and improving recognition of Indigenous rights and historical connection to the land, waters and resources.

UNESCO sites attract visitors from around the world, help to define and promote regional identity, inspire a sense of pride and belonging among local communities, and instills a sense of responsibility for stewardship and contributing to overall wealth and wellbeing. Together the 13 sites offer the possibility to act as vital indicators of resilience and sustainable practices. Investment is needed to address global challenges and find innovative solutions to protect the environment including these sites for generations to come.

Some sites are well staffed and have reliable core financial support, while others have minimal ongoing funds. Many sites have effectively leveraged their funds through partnerships, funding agreements and community support, among others, to create greater impact with available resources. Through the Corridor, there are opportunities to leverage these funds at individual sites to create additional resources that when pooled can make a greater impact.

Each of the 13 sites operates within its own governance structure, management and operational budgets. There are opportunities for achieving economies of scale, efficiencies, and creating greater financial capacity through the implementation of this strategy. Alignment of operational budgets can create greater collaboration between the sites, identifying funding gaps and investment and resourcing opportunities. Specific examples of shared resources include technologies, education and training, and communications.

SUMMARY OF INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The following table summarizes six key project opportunities for the Corridor over the 10-year horizon. These projects align with the Corridor goals and are included within the 31 initiatives. A prioritization framework was developed to assess levels of priority; however, further exploration and confirmation will be undertaken throughout the lifetime of the Strategy.

PRIORITY	Urgent	Creates Momentum	High Value Actions	Longer Term Gamechangers
TIMING	Year 1 2024	Year 1 – 2 2024 to 2026	Year 2 – 4 2025 to 2028	Year 5+ 2025 to 2030



©Claude DeGrâce @Landscape of Grand Pré World Heritage Site

PROJECTS	OVERVIEW	RATIONALE	BENEFITS	ESTIMATED COST	PRIORITY	TIMING
Training on UNESCO Values	Training for UNESCO site staff, guides, and industry at large, to successfully work in alignment with the values of UNESCO.	Promotes and educates staff and community on UNESCO values.	Increase awareness, engagement, and support for Corridor. Increases visitor interest in visiting UNESCO sites.	\$800,000	Urgent	Year 1 Ongoing
Education on Indigenous Living and Culture	Platform for education of visitors regarding the living and vibrant culture of the Beothuk, Mi'kmaw, Wolastoqiyik, Peskotomuhkati, Innu and Inuit Peoples.	Takes steps to build lasting, meaningful relationships. Sparks Indigenous entrepreneurship and new experiences.	Increases Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, action for TRC Calls to Action, correct inaccurate interpretation and storytelling.	\$15,000,000	Urgent	Year 1 Ongoing
Community and Resident Engagement	Coordinated Corridor approach to developing resident and community engagement.	Builds awareness, understanding and support for the Corridor sites and the collective value.	Increases likelihood to engage, invest and support Strategy implementation. Builds positive resident sentiment for tourism.	\$600,000	Creates Momentum	Year 1 - 2 Ongoing
Hub Community Service and Amenities	Identify gaps in services and amenities in the identified 'hub community' for each UNESCO site.	Identifies specific needs to strengthen site offerings and ability to attract visitors.	Provide quality overall experience. Fill gaps. Increase capacity at community level	\$800,000	High Value Actions	Year 2 - 4 Ongoing
Experience Development - Ecotourism	Ecotourism experience development in association with the UNESCO sites and values.	Builds momentum for Corridor collaboration - experience development and regenerative principles.	New values-aligned experiences to attract high value visitors. Framework for other experience development themes.	\$700,000	High Value Actions	Year 2 - 4 Ongoing
Interpretation Centres	Develop or expand interpretation centres that can enable improved access, interpretation, experience, and regional benefits.	Helps visitors discover why each UNESCO site is important.	Mandatory physical presence. Place for year-round experiences, education. Regional draw. Improved access.	\$9,000,000	Longer Term Gamechangers	Year 5+

ACRONYMS

HVG

High Value(s) Guest

TRC

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

SDGs

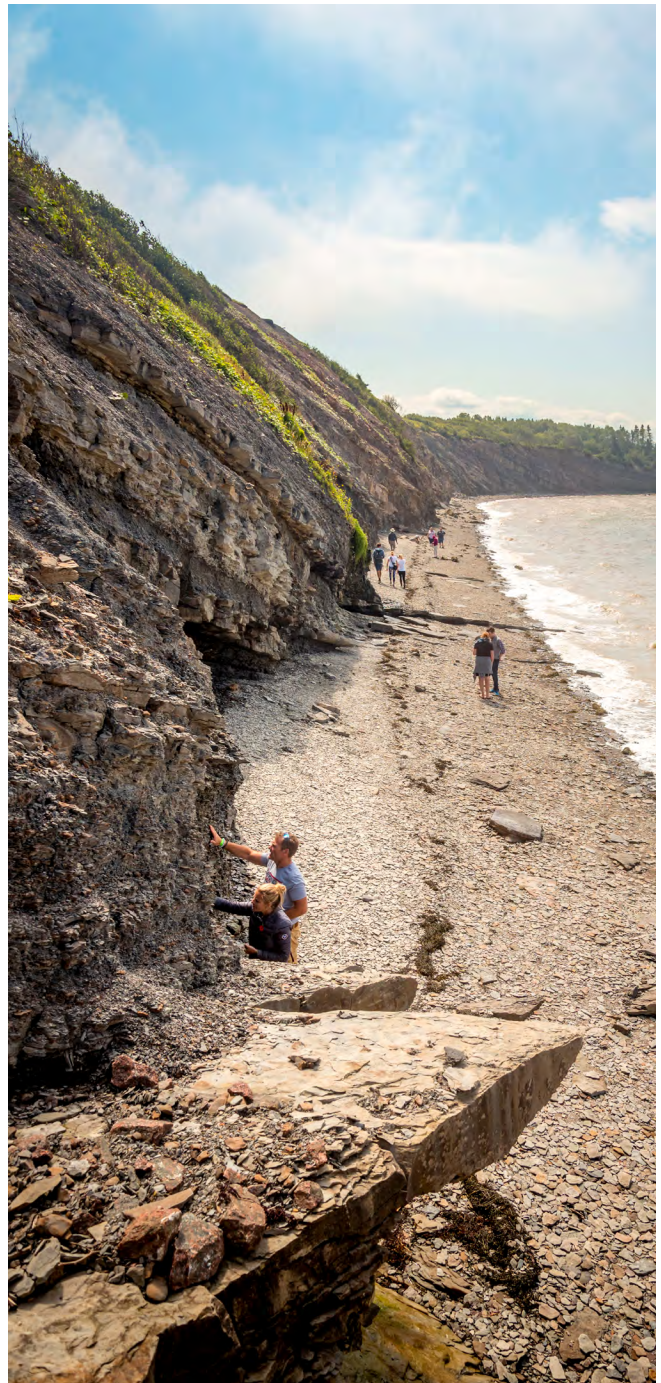
Sustainable Development Goals

UNDRIP

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

WHS

World Heritage Sites



@Joggins Fossil Cliffs World Heritage Site

CONTACTS



@Stonehammer UNESCO Global Geopark

There are opportunities to support the implementation of this strategy, including through building meaningful relationships and finding ways for the UNESCO sites to provide additional benefits to residents, businesses and communities. To better understand how to engage with and contribute to this work, please contact:

Jennifer Dingman

Executive Director
Fundy Biosphere Region
jennifer.dingman@fundy-biosphere.ca

Executive Director
Stonehammer UNESCO Global Geopark
jennifer@stonehammergeopark.com

Erica D'Souza

Senior Program Manager, Destination Development
Destination Canada
dsouza.eric@destinationcanada.com

Zoe Compton

Natural Sciences Programme Officer
Canadian Commission for UNESCO
zoe.compton@ccunesco.ca