

Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke STEP Strategic Plan



Source: Proptonic



Source: Proptonic



Source: Proptonic

Final plan April 2016

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The coastal area between Musquodoboit Harbour and Sherbrooke, Nova Scotia was identified as a suitable candidate community for the ACOA Strategic Tourism Expansion Program (STEP) in 2014. The Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke region features hundreds of coastal islands that have been largely undisturbed for more than 10,000 years. This archipelago offers pristine white sand beaches, sheltered coves, dramatic windswept headlands and unique boreal forests, bogs and barrens, as well as a rich diversity of seabirds, songbirds and shorebirds. This grouping of uninhabited islands and associated headlands has been identified as the last remaining intact and ecologically rich island group of its size in North America, and is being protected through a combination of provincial legislation and private land conservation efforts.

These coastal conservation lands include:

- Eastern Shore Islands Wilderness Area
- Eastern Shore Islands Wildlife Management Area
- Clam Harbour, Owls Head, Taylor Head and Liscombe Point provincial parks
- and a collection of private islands protected by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust through their highly successful 100 Wild Islands campaign.

Through the coordination of DEANS, and the funding support of ACOA, seventeen local businesses and organizations, and two municipal units, STEP was initiated in early 2015. The STEP process has focused the community at large as well as the municipality, business owners, and organizations on strategic planning, building tourism capacity and experiential product development.

The STEP working group consulted with community members, which has led to the development of four strategic priorities. These priorities will guide the community toward the following vision:

Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke is internationally recognized as a sustainable one-of-a-kind Canadian coastal nature-based destination offering outstanding touring, outdoor, cultural and culinary experiences.

The Four Strategic Priorities

- **Capitalize on the Nature-based Opportunity** - Define and build the destination area based on its unique selling proposition (USP) and positioning that focuses on the wild islands and outstanding nature-based tourism opportunities.
- **Build Success Through Engagement** - Engage community members, key influencers, and partners to broaden support for developing the area as a world-class tourism destination.
- **Advance Experiential Tourism Development** - Enhance and generate tourism products and experiences that align with the USP, brand positioning of the region, and the Nova Scotia brand.
- **Enrich Quality of Life** - Enrich the quality of life for residents of the destination area.

Twenty-two outcomes have been identified, with each outcome linked to one of the four strategic priorities. The Working Group will continue working to achieve these outcomes in the next phase of this tourism initiative.

The Working Group recognized that a set of guiding principles would help ensure alignment of decisions, and therefore used community input to develop eight guiding principles, which will be applied to all future actions and decisions.

The Eight Guiding Principles

1. **Community Driven** - build success through a community-driven and focused approach, taking advantage of professional expertise and creative partnerships
2. **Responsible** – ensure that development does not compromise the natural or cultural integrity of the conservation lands, surrounding region, and communities
3. **Sustainable** – focus on initiatives that support long-term benefits and are self-sustaining
4. **Research based** - use tourism market research to drive product development and marketing
5. **Experiential Focus** - develop tourism opportunities using the travel demand generator model & focus on experiential product development
6. **Build on success** - apply existing tourism product development tools (e.g. Tourism NS, Destination Canada, ACOA, etc.), and leverage best practices from other jurisdictions to accelerate product development
7. **Inclusive tourism development** - ensure the approach and destination achieves a balance between tangible (physical infrastructure) and intangible (e.g. learning opportunities, hands-on experiences, etc.) tourism development
8. **Clear communication** - ensure that process documentation and communications are simple, clear, and widely available

The overall management of the Musquodoboit Harbour to Sherbrooke STEP project was undertaken through the efforts of the STEP Working Group with Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores (DEANS) leading as the project manager. DEANS has received approval from their board to continue managing this project and the Working Group has agreed to support this arrangement. The representatives who comprised of the STEP Working Group need not remain the same moving forward. New representatives will be sought through a community engagement process to serve alongside those members of the first group who wish to continue on an active and participatory basis. As the project manager, DEANS will ensure that the Working Group representatives continue to accurately represent the community and consist of a variety of individuals, businesses and organizations.

The STEP process ends on April 7th, 2016 with the Funder's Presentation, whereby this report and its findings are presented to ACOA, local funders and the public. However, this tourism initiative is still in its early stages. Along with the community's input and support, the working group will continue to position and advance Musquodoboit Harbour to Sherbrooke as a dynamic new in-demand destination offering the best-designed touring, outdoor and nature infrastructure and experiences in Nova Scotia.

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2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The coastal area between Musquodoboit Harbour and Sherbrooke, Nova Scotia was identified as a suitable candidate community for the ACOA Strategic Tourism Expansion Program. STEP is an innovative, comprehensive process that guides communities through a series of well-tested strategic 'steps' aimed at creating a sustainable strategic tourism plan that incorporates products, services and experiences.

The Strategic Tourism Expansion Program (STEP), offered by Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) – Tourism Atlantic provides communities (and entrepreneurs) with an understanding of destination development, industry trends, and experiential tourism development. It engages community leaders and other stakeholders in the design and execution of actionable, sustainable tourism development plans.



Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores (DEANS) is a not-for-profit destination marketing organization with 16 Directors representing the Northumberland and Eastern Shore regions of Nova Scotia. DEANS represents the tourism industry in Antigonish, Guysborough, Eastern HRM and Pictou County. Through the coordination of DEANS, and the funding support of ACOA, seventeen local businesses and organizations, and two municipal units, STEP was initiated. It has been introduced to assist stakeholder communities in becoming a sustainable tourism destination by exposing local entrepreneurs and influencers to varied techniques and formulas required for sustainability. The STEP process has focused the community at large as well as the municipality, business owners, and organizations on strategic planning, building tourism capacity and experiential product development.

The Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke STEP region features hundreds of coastal islands that have been largely undisturbed for more than 10,000 years. This archipelago offers pristine white sand beaches, sheltered coves, dramatic windswept headlands and unique boreal forests, bogs and barrens, as well as a rich diversity of seabirds, songbirds and shorebirds. This grouping of uninhabited islands and associated headlands has been identified as the last remaining intact and ecologically-rich island group of its size in North America, and is being protected through a combination of provincial legislation and private land conservation efforts.”

These coastal conservation lands include:

- Eastern Shore Islands Wilderness Area (Wilderness Areas Protection Act – Nova Scotia Environment);
- Eastern Shore Islands Wildlife Management Area (Wildlife Act – NS Department of Natural Resources);
- Clam Harbour, Owls Head, Taylor Head and Liscomb Point provincial parks (Provincial Parks Act - NS Department of Natural Resources);
- And a collection of private islands protected by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust through their highly successful 100 Wild Islands campaign.

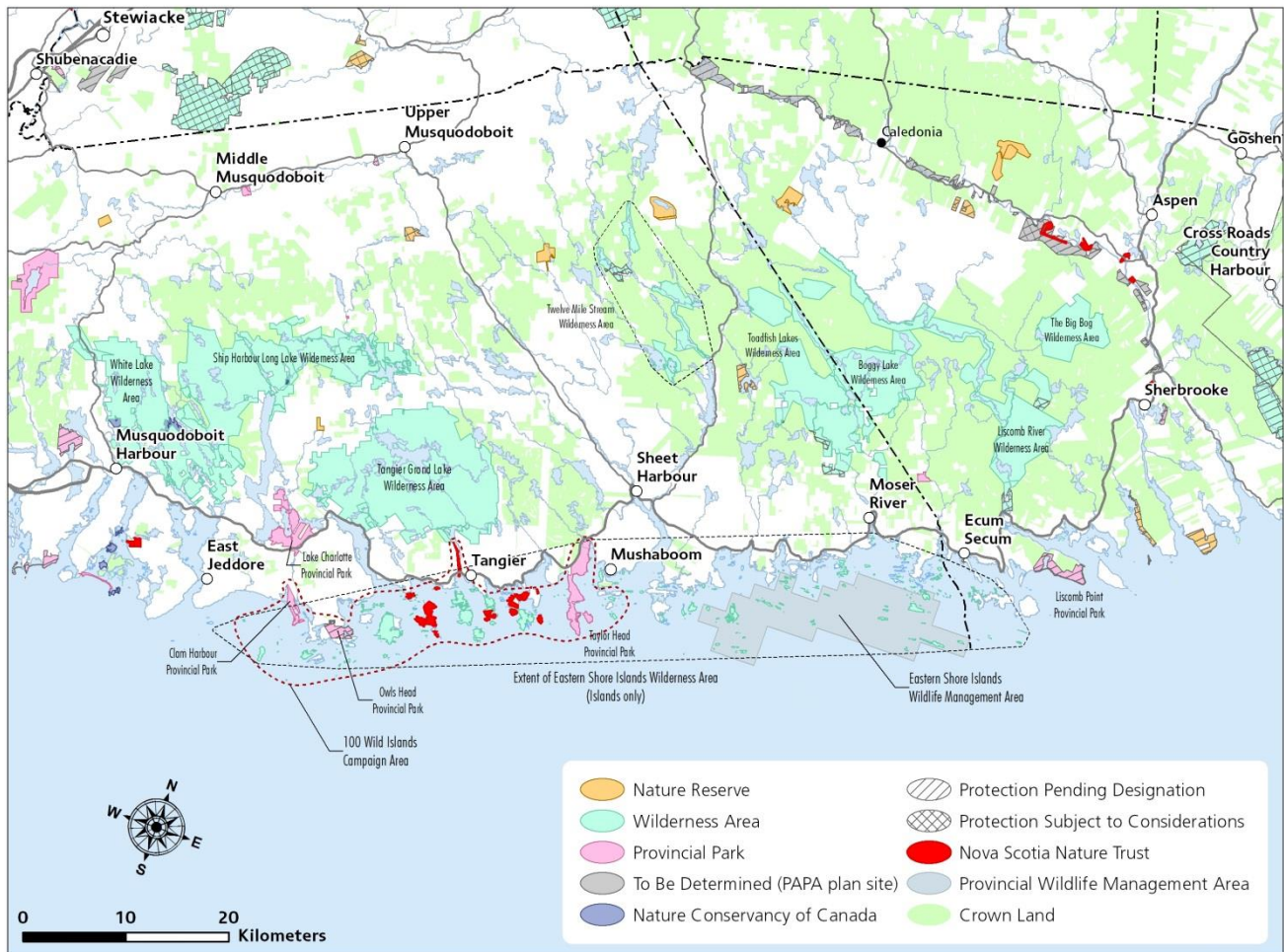


Source: Ariel of Borgles/ Bob Guscott

The coastal conservation lands are complimented by a variety of inland conservation properties north of Highway 7 that provide access to interior lakes and rivers with outdoor recreational and nature tourism potential.

The region already offers a number of iconic natural, outdoor, cultural and historic assets and experiences, including: surfing and swimming at Martinique Beach, swimming at Clam Harbour Beach Provincial Park; beachcombing and birding at Martinique Beach Provincial Park (the longest sandy beach in Nova Scotia); the coastal trail systems of Taylor Head Provincial Park; cycling along the Musquodoboit Harbour Trailway; hiking at Gibraltar Rock; paddling on the Musquodoboit River; hiking the Liscombe River Trail; venturing the suspension bridge overlooking a waterfall at Liscombe Lodge Resort; endless opportunities for independent or guided coastal kayaking; charter scenic boat touring; Nova Scotia's largest living history museum, the 1800s-themed Sherbrooke Village; the Fisherman's Life Museum; a 1940's restored village at Memory Lane Heritage Village; MacPhee House Museum, the Atlantic Salmon at the St. Mary's River Salmon Museum and more.

2.2 MAP OF THE STEP PROJECT AREA



Source: Eastern Shore Islands Step Report Graphic/ Nova Scotia Environment

2.3 MUSQUODOBOIT HARBOUR-SHERBROOKE STEP PROJECT GOAL AND OPPORTUNITY

The goal of the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke STEP initiative is to provide a proven *Step-by-Step* process to help guide stakeholders and communities in building and executing a successful Sustainable Tourism Community Plan.

2.3.1 An Ecologically-Driven Brand Opportunity

To capitalize on the product and experiential development ideas presented in this plan, the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke destination area needs to be seen and appreciated in a fresh new product-supporting light. This can only come from creating new product and experiences that support the brand and are able to compete with other tourism products and experiences currently found in Nova Scotia, in Atlantic Canada, in

Canada, in North American and overseas.

The Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke destination area must identify its Unique Selling Proposition (USP), that is, what sets the area “apart as a travel destination”. Destination Canada has five USPs:

1. Vibrant cities on the edge of nature
2. Personal journeys by land water and air
3. Active adventure among awe-inspiring natural wonders
4. Award-winning Canadian local cuisine
5. Connecting with Canadians

(Source: <http://en.destinationcanada.com/resources-industry/canada%E2%80%99s-tourism-brand#uniqueSellingPoints> March 16, 2016)

Nova Scotia positions itself as “The spirit of the perfect road trip”, as per the *2015 Tourism Brand Guidelines*, and states, “an effective positioning is one that occupies a place in the mind of our potential traveller, that is not offered by competitive destinations”.

The Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke destination area needs to find ways to align with Canada's USPs and Tourism Nova Scotia's Positioning, and evolve with them. In addition, the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke destination area should seek to identify its own Unique Selling Proposition (USP) or Positioning, and use it to guide product development and marketing efforts.



Source: Proptonics

Recognizing the value of the unique geography, ecology, and natural attributes of the destination area (including cultural attributes that can be substantiated as part of an overall tourism sell) will help to identify the destination area's USP, or positioning. It points primarily to the phenomenon of the scores of uninhabited islands massing the destination area's shoreline and forming a dynamic archipelago, the likes of which are rare in Canada or North America. Added to the uniqueness of the coast is the fact that scenic viewing of the islands and coastline are both outstanding and accessible.

In Canadian and North American touristic terminology, the ideas of positioning the destination area as an archipelago or as 'wild islands', is unusual. It is generally unfamiliar tourism language.

This poses at once both a brand, marketing and communications complexity as well as a brand, marketing and communications opportunity worth exploring. By example, when Gros Morne National Park earned its UNESCO standing and began bragging about its 'Tablelands', there was a troubling unfamiliarity to the



Source: Camping on Ship Rock islands/NSNT

terminology and many questions about what the Tablelands meant to a touristic value or experience.

Today, Gros Morne's reputation is staked on the Tablelands as a place representing half a billion years in the making – the result of a brilliant coming together of two ancient continents -- the Earth's inner soul: the mantle - exposed to you the way few have seen it. The power of the Tablelands message overcame the unfamiliarity of language and of the threat of science entering the tourism fray. Another nearby example is the Bay of Fundy. For decades, the place has been marketed as home to the world's highest tides. When science intervened, however, new ideas and descriptors came into play. Consumers were introduced to a Bay of Fundy narrative that positions it in scientific terms as a 'marine wonder of the world' where people can 'walk on the ocean floor'.

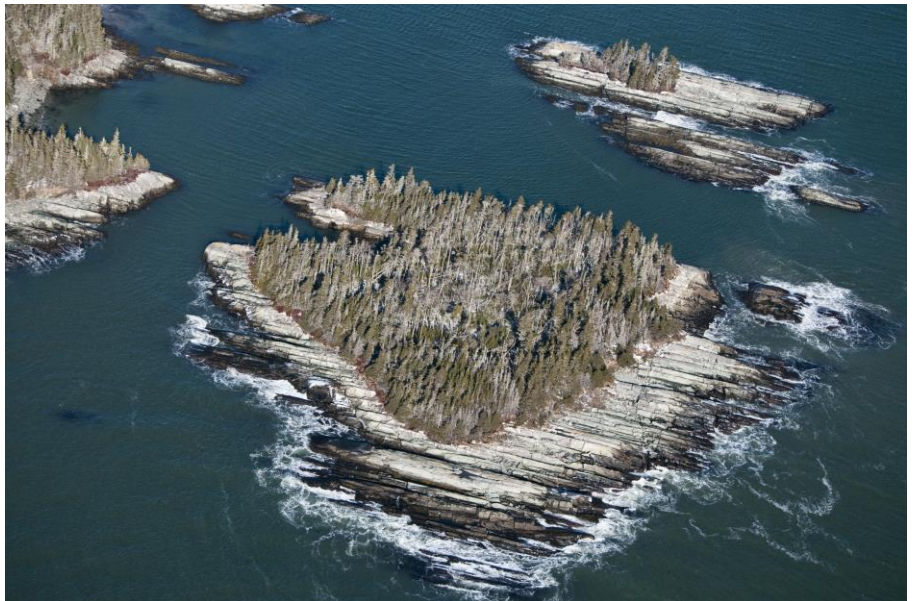
So similarly, the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke destination area needs to take on and not shy away from this challenge of changing the predictability of tourism language....to not shy away from allowing the science and unfamiliar terminology to take the helm of the touristic message and product development direction. If the destination area is legitimately predicated on being a rare archipelago or as a series of 'wild islands', then the world needs to know. A best practice in destination branding emerges in the form of Western Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way. Analysis concerning this best practice and how it relates to the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke destination area can be found in this plan's Appendix E.

2.3.2 Thematic and Brand Directions

The following phrases represent a mere sampling of thematic / brand directions which deserve to be considered (in addition to other concepts provided through public consultations) by the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke STEP Working Group in collaboration with their partners in the development of the destination area's Brand Positioning or Unique Selling Proposition (USP):

- Canada's Wild Islands
- Atlantic Canada Archipelago
- Nova Scotia Archipelago
- Canadian Archipelago
- Canada's Wild Archipelago
- The Wild Island Coast
- Nova Scotia's Wild Islands
- The Sanctuary Islands
- Eastern Shore Archipelago

NOTE: The STEP working Group is committed to ensuring that these and other positioning, thematic and brand concepts, together with imagery and artistic renderings be subjected to a fully separate



Source: Ariel Shelter Cove/NSNT

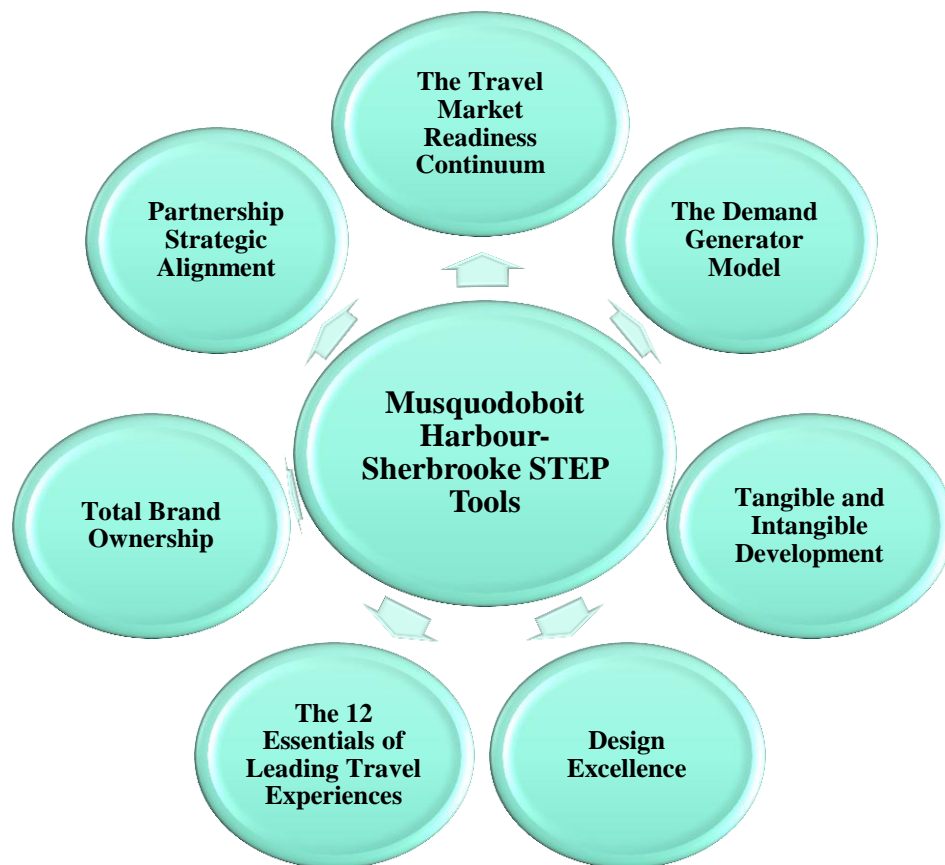
comprehensive independent consumer research initiative (not merely melded into other research initiatives) as part of the effort to arrive at a competitive brand conclusion for the destination area. Information gathered from this work will also be critical to develop an array of products and experiences for

entrepreneurs to consider building.

Building on the resulting brand conclusion, the destination will be supported by a comprehensive brand and communication package, which enhances the destination and its extraordinary values

2.4 TOOLS OF TOURISM PRODUCT/EXPERIENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

There are several key tools of tourism product and experiential development that the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke STEP initiative will recognize and practice.



2.4.1 The Tourism Market Readiness Continuum

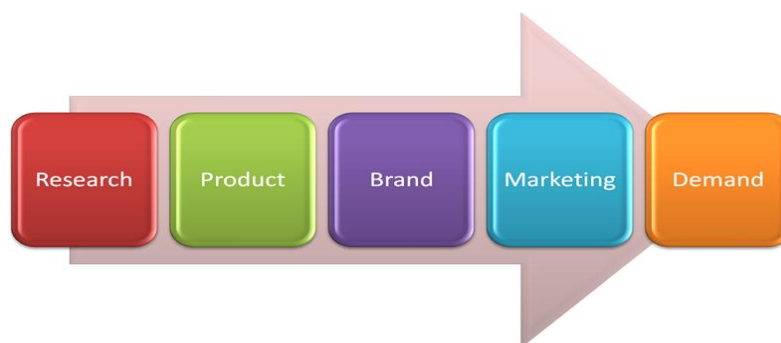
In-demand products and experiences to be developed for Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke will be the result of strong research, spending quality time in the 'laboratory' for product and experience building and ultimately the creation of a brand, which rewards the destination area with total ownership.



Source: ilmagine/Harvey Sawler

2.4.2 The Travel Demand Generator Model

Research drives the Product, which drives the Brand, which drives the Marketing which, Drives Demand.



Source: ilmagine/Harvey Sawler

2.4.3 Product Development Types

The Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke STEP Working Group strategy will pursue both essential streams of product/experiential development – the Tangible and the Intangible.

Tangible Development	Intangible Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation infrastructure • Destination community infrastructure • Fixed roof accommodations • Foodservice facilities • Alternative accommodations • Retail facilities • Heritage and cultural facilities • Outdoor adventure infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resource education and training • Best Practices missions • Operator mentorship • Experiential enhancement • Creation of themed organized activities • Cultural performance development • Story and interpretation development • Package theming and construction

Source: ilmanage/Harvey Sawler

2.4.4 Design Excellence

Every physical element involving the business plan has been predicated on the philosophy of engaging skilled accredited design professionals in such areas as graphic design, spatial design, signage, etc.

The 12 Essentials of Leading Travel Experiences



Source: ilmanage/Harvey Sawler

2.4.5 The 12 Essentials of Successful Travel Products

The 12 Essentials experiential development model will be instrumental in helping to build new tourism products and experiences for the destination area. *The 12 Essentials* include:

- Well-Themed – the destination area’s theme and brand will guide the product development direction linked to the *100 Wild Islands* initiative and Tourism Nova Scotia’s strategic segments as described in section 2.5 Understanding the Travel Customer.
- The Essence of the destination – the destination area will strongly evoke the finest natural and cultural attributes of Nova Scotia.
- Authentic – the most authentic experiences will rise to the top of the destination area’s promotional inventory.
- Accessible – the destination area’s experience will be more accessible to more customers.
- The Emotional Trigger – the destination area will offer experiences which captivate and capture the customer.
- Sense of Place – the destination area’s culture and history will drive consumer interest.
- Educational – the destination area will set new standards in Nova Scotia for educational tourism products and experiences.
- Entertaining – the destination area will evoke joy and laughter through the cultural and nature experiences.
- Enriching/Accomplishment – nature and outdoor experiences will drive the destination area’s personally enriching products and experiences.
- Hands-on – visitors to the destination area will directly experience nature and cultural products and experiences.
- Value-Added – the destination area will become known for providing value-added products and experiences to visitors.
- Exceed Expectations – the STEP Working Group will challenge destination area operators and communities to exceed the competitive norm in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada.

2.4.6 Total Brand Ownership

The plan will pursue total brand ownership for the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke destination area. Total Brand Ownership is a concept based upon exclusivity or a Unique Selling Proposition (USP). As illustrated in the following model, ownership, exclusivity and establishing of one or more USP’s (essentially these mean the same thing) derive from uniquely strategic partnerships, uniquely strategic positioning, uniquely strong products and experiences and a unique sense of place. The reverse can be considered as ‘me-too’ propositions that have little or no value; these are brand propositions, which can be easily adopted by competitors or pretenders (the more generic the concept, the lesser the value). Once established, ownership, exclusivity and the USP are intended to overwhelm competitors by attracting customers to the most dynamic, exclusive and

appealing choices for travel experiences. One of STEP facilitator ilMagine's mantras is – 'if you can't own the brand, you don't want it'.



USP Model



2.5 UNDERSTANDING THE TRAVEL CUSTOMER

Prior to mid-2015, Tourism Nova Scotia primarily segmented its target market based on results from the 2010 Nova Scotia Visitor Exit Survey:

(https://tourismns.ca/sites/default/files/2010_nova_scotia_visitor_exit_survey_final_report-revised_june_22-2015.pdf).

By analyzing the results of this survey, Tourism Nova Scotia was able to gain new insights on visitors to Nova Scotia. A series of Market Profile Bulletins were created which segmented the market based on either their demographics or activities. Initially using this segmentation approach, 'The Outdoor Enthusiast' was identified by the STEP Working Group as a key target market for the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke destination area. More details can be found in Appendix C: Tourism Nova Scotia Visitor Statistics on the Outdoor Enthusiast and at: http://tourismns.ca/sites/default/files/page_documents/outdoor_enthusiasts.pdf.



In the second half of 2015, Tourism Nova Scotia evolved organizationally and in terms of its target market tactics. While the activity-based segmentation is useful in describing Nova Scotia's target markets, Tourism Nova Scotia wanted to go further, to define target markets based on the motivations that drive travel decisions. Employing Destination Canada's Explorer Quotient (EQ) segmentation tool has highlighted this evolution:

(<http://en.destinationcanada.com/resources-industry/explorer-quotient>).

Tourism Nova Scotia is currently focusing on three EQ types: Authentic Experiencers, Cultural Explorers and Free Spirits. According to the Research, Planning and Support division of Tourism Nova Scotia, the Explorer Quotient *"replace the activities-based segments that were developed from 2010 Visitor Exit Survey (Cultural Enthusiasts, Outdoor Enthusiasts, Culinary Enthusiasts), however, the Explorer Quotient segments align very well with the activities-based segments, and most development work that has been completed against the activities-based segments will transition well to the Explorer Quotient segmentation model... all three segments have a great appreciation for natural landscapes and coastal sightseeing, and enjoy activities that allow them to engage in nature observation. Authentic Experiencers are less likely to be attracted to more rugged or active activities, while Cultural Explorers and Free Spirits would enjoy a wide range of outdoor activities. Free Spirits are more likely than the other two segments to be attracted to more extreme outdoor adventure activities."*

The three EQ types now aligned with Tourism Nova Scotia are detailed as:

Authentic Experiencers (Marketing priority for Tourism Nova Scotia)

- More learned, understated travelers – they appreciate travel
- Prefer to do their own thing at a destination
- Have a keen interest in historical travel
- Actively seek the most authentic cultural experiences
- Have lower interest in more active, adventurous experiences
- Love trips that: teach them about history; take them away from the crowds of tourists; aren't a whirlwind tour of the "must-sees"

Cultural Explorers (Marketing priority for Tourism Nova Scotia)

- Avid travelers who value learning and discovery
- Don't want to feel like a tourist, want to "blend in"
- Prefer a free and spontaneous approach to seeing the sights
- Love to share their experiences – it is part of the fun of travel
- Love trips that: take them "off the beaten track"; allow them to connect with the locals and fellow travelers
- Are fun but teach them something as well

Free Spirits (Development priority for Tourism Nova Scotia. Will become a marketing priority in the mid-term)

- Free spirits are the traveler's traveler
- Enjoy authentic local experiences – look for the highlights

- Travel is a time to escape their lives back home
- Love luxury and high-end experiences
- Love to share
- Love trips that: offer fun, exciting experiences with some learning on the side; make them feel pampered through luxuries; allow them to see all the main attractions

The Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke STEP initiative is focused on alignment with the primary attributes which guide tourism planning and development through ACOA (defined as Primary Travel Motivators) and identifying, developing and enhancing tourism product and experiences which will align with Tourism Nova Scotia's priority EQ types. An analysis of the current and potential alignment is illustrated in the following table:

Travel Motivator/Traveler Segments	Destination Area Status Quo	Destination Area Potential
Coastal Experiences	Medium	High
Sightseeing and Tours	Medium	High
Culture, Recreation and Heritage	Medium	High
Outdoor Experiences	Low-Medium	High
Culinary Experiences	Low	High
Experiential Accommodations	Low	Medium-High
Major and International Events	Low	High
Products/Destination Attributes Appealing to Authentic Experiencers (EQ)	Low	Medium
Products/Destination Attributes Appealing to Cultural Explorers (EQ)	Low	Medium
Products/Destination Attributes Appealing to Free Spirits (EQ)	Low	Medium

Source: ilmagine/Harvey Sawler

3 STRATEGIC APPROACH

3.1 THE 2015-16 STEP INITIATIVE

3.1.1 STEP Working Group Tourism Mission

To position and advance Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke as a dynamic new in-demand destination offering the best-designed touring, outdoor and nature infrastructure and experiences in Nova Scotia.

3.1.2 Partnership Strategic Alignment

The plan will ensure strategic alignment with key partners:

- The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- The Province of Nova Scotia
- Halifax Regional Municipality
- Municipality of the District of St. Mary's
- Tourism Nova Scotia
- Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores
- Nova Scotia Nature Trust

3.1.3 Research and Related Activities

There were a number of activities completed by the STEP working group to ensure a complete final report and action plan. The purpose of these activities was to better educate ourselves with the STEP process, learn from past experiences and develop a vision for the future. The following is a comprehensive list of research and related activities which have enabled us to produce a comprehensive final report for the STEP process and will be the anchor of our future action plan. The following was completed between January 2015 and March 2016.

Summary of STEP Process:

(Please see appendix D for a detailed list of activities in chronological order)

- Public Meeting to Launch STEP Process
- 8 Working Group Meetings
- Best Practices Mission to Alma, NB
- 2 Drive Abouts (preliminary asset assessment)
- 2 Public Consultations
- 3 Town Hall Meetings
- Experiential Tourism Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism (GMIST) Workshop
- Presentations from Community Members
- One-on-one Business Consultations
- Final Public Presentation to Community Members and Funding Partners

Literature Research:

- STEP process information
- Eastern Shore Nature Tour Report (1997)
- Roger Brooks Assessment (2013)
- Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland (2013)

3.1.4 Community Involvement

The STEP process is routed first and foremost in community involvement. Seventeen businesses and organizations, and two municipal units (Municipality of the District of St Mary's and Halifax Municipality) provided community funding needed to secure ACOA's financial support of the project. The STEP working group is made up of 16 community leaders and organizations who aim to propel the initiative and area forward. In order to ensure complete transparency and maximum community involvement, the working group has lead multiple public consultations (which ensured the community had direct impact on the final report and process), town hall meetings, one on one business consultations, training and skill development workshops and public meetings. Going forward, this will continue to be one of the guiding principles as we develop a community driven action plan grounded in collaboration.



Source: Cindy Mackinnon

3.2 MOVING THE STEP INITIATIVE FORWARD

The STEP process ends on April 7th, 2016 with the Funder's Presentation, whereby this report and its findings are presented to ACOA, local funders and the public. However, this tourism initiative is still in its early stages. Plans for future project leadership and funding have been developed and are described in the sub-sections below. All future efforts of this tourism initiative must align with the Unique Selling Proposition (USP), Vision Statement, and Positioning statement listed below. Guiding principles have been developed which shall help further clarify future decisions.

3.2.1 Leadership

The overall management of the Musquodoboit Harbour to Sherbrooke STEP project was undertaken through the efforts of the STEP Working Group with Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores (DEANS) leading as the project manager. DEANS has received approval from their board to continue managing this

project and the Working Group has agreed to support this arrangement. The representatives who comprised of the STEP Working Group need not remain the same moving forward. STEP Working Group representatives wishing to continue their role must express their interest. New representatives will be sought through a community engagement process to serve alongside those members of the first group who wish to continue on an active and participatory basis. As the project manager, DEANS will ensure that the Working Group representatives continue to accurately represent the community and consist of a variety of individuals, businesses and organizations.



Source: Sandbar Borgles/ NSNT

3.2.2 Funding

- AquaPrime Mussel Ranch
- DEANS
- Halifax Regional Municipality
- Henley House
- Hook Me Up - Rug Supplies
- Lake Charlotte Area Heritage Society
- MacDonald, Chisholm, Trask Insurance
- Municipality of District of St. Mary's
- Murphy's Campground
- Northern Fibre
- Salmon River Country Inn
- Seaside Tourism and Business Development Association
- Sheet Harbour Chamber of Commerce
- Tangier Lobster
- Spry Bay Campground and Cabins
- Sober Island Oysters
- Upper Lakeville Campground

3.2.3 Guiding Principles

1. **Community Driven** - build success through a community-driven and focused approach, taking advantage of professional expertise and creative partnerships
2. **Responsible** – ensure that development does not compromise the natural or cultural integrity of the conservation lands, surrounding region, and communities
3. **Sustainable** – focus on initiatives that support long-term benefits and are self-sustaining
4. **Research based** - use tourism market research to drive product development and marketing
5. **Experiential Focus** - develop tourism opportunities using the travel demand generator model & focus on experiential product development
6. **Build on success** - apply existing tourism product development tools (e.g. Tourism NS, Destination Canada, ACOA, etc.), and leverage best practices from other jurisdictions to accelerate product development
7. **Inclusive tourism development** - ensure the approach and destination achieves a balance between tangible (physical infrastructure) and intangible (e.g. learning opportunities, hands-on experiences, etc.) tourism development
8. **Clear communication** - ensure that process documentation and communications are simple, clear, and widely available

3.2.4 Tourism Vision

Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke is internationally recognized as a sustainable one-of-a-kind Canadian coastal nature-based destination offering outstanding touring, outdoor, cultural and culinary experiences.

3.2.5 Tourism Positioning

Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke will be competitively positioned for the domestic and international tourism markets as a unique network of 'wild islands' forming a one-of-a-kind Canadian coastal touring and activity-engaging experience.

3.2.6 Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

While the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke destination area seeks to position itself in the minds of the visitor as "a one-of-a-kind Canadian coastal touring and activity-engaging experience", the Unique Selling Proposition may be that the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke destination area is "A unique network of 'wild islands' and coastal headlands". The ultimate positioning and USP will be finalized through a branding exercise, to be carried out in a future phase of the initiative (see plan section 1.4.6 Total Brand Ownership).

4 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

4.1 THE FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. **Capitalize on the Nature-based Opportunity** - Define and build the destination area based on its unique selling proposition (USP) and positioning that focuses on the wild islands and outstanding nature-based tourism opportunities.
2. **Build Success Through Engagement** - Engage community members, key influencers, and partners to broaden support for developing the area as a world-class tourism destination.
3. **Advance Experiential Tourism Development** - Enhance and generate tourism products and experiences that align with the USP, brand positioning of the region, and the Nova Scotia brand.
4. **Enrich Quality of Life** - Enrich the quality of life for residents of the destination area.

4.2 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES

4.2.1 Priority 1: Capitalize on the Nature-based Opportunity

Define and build the destination area based on its unique selling proposition (USP) and positioning that focuses on the coastal islands and headlands, complimented by regional nature-based tourism opportunities.



Source: Proptonics



Source: Cove at Wolfes Island/NSNT

Outcomes

- 1) There is a comprehensive inventory and analysis of the natural and cultural heritage values and assets associated with the conservation lands that: a) informs use of protected lands (i.e. what needs to be protected/what is available for use); and b) identifies natural and cultural attributes that contribute to product development
- 2) There is an up-to-date and well organized inventory and assessment of recreation opportunities and tourism assets (tangible and intangible) for the region.
- 3) A clearly understood and coordinated management approach for the conservation lands administered by NSE, DNR, and NSNT is in place to guide the appropriate protection and use of these lands.

- 4) The area is characterized by a professionally developed and market-tested brand and concept.
- 5) A sustainable tourism development plan is in place that identifies opportunities and gaps, and prioritizes actions for strategic tourism development, using a structured and transparent evaluation criteria.
- 6) Tourism infrastructure is in place that supports increased visitation to the area.
- 7) Visitor-focused information about the nature-based opportunity is readily available and accessible.

4.2.2 Priority 2: Build Success through Engagement

Continually engage community members, key influencers, and partners to advance the area as a world-class tourism destination.

Outcomes

- 8) Well-linked and cohesive collateral materials are available to help promote the region, attract investment, and advance the tourism development process.
- 9) There is an ongoing process in place to track, monitor, and evaluate performance.
- 10) Best practices from within and beyond the destination area are considered and integrated as a means of continuous improvement.
- 11) Key influencers, communities, residents, and investors are participating in a range of ways to support tourism development in the region.
- 12) Effective communication tools and processes are in place to ensure ongoing awareness of the region and progress on strategic tourism development.
- 13) Tourism operators and organizations are communicating and collaborating with conservation land managers including Nova Scotia Nature Trust, Nova Scotia departments of Environment and Natural Resources, to advance experiential nature-based tourism opportunities.

4.2.3 Priority 3: Advance Experiential Tourism Development

Enhance and generate experiential tourism products that align with the unique selling proposition (USP), brand positioning of the region, and the Nova Scotia brand.



Source: West Beach Shelter Cove/ NSNT

Outcomes

- 14) Tourism operators have the knowledge and capacity to offer high-quality experiential tourism opportunities.
- 15) There are an increased number of monetized experiential tourism products available in the region.
- 16) Workshops and training opportunities are in place to help build capacity, entrepreneurial skills, and financial success of local tourism businesses and organizations.

4.2.4 Priority 4: Enrich Quality of Life

Enrich the quality of life for residents of the destination area.

Outcomes

- 17) Local business are benefiting from increased tourism visitation and spending.
- 18) There are more local employment opportunities connected to tourism and supporting industries.
- 19) An enhanced range and number of quality outdoor recreational opportunities and related facilities and services are available for local residents and communities.
- 20) Tangible (capital/infrastructure) tourism developments are benefitting local residents in their daily lives.
- 21) Local residents feel connected to the tourism initiative and feel that it is an authentic reflection of their lives and sense of place.
- 22) Processes and structures are in place to help encourage and support cooperation across the region.



Source: Robert Moser

5 APPENDICES

5.1 APPENDIX A – THE MUSQUODOBOIT HARBOUR-SHERBROOKE STEP WORKING GROUP

A Results-Driven STEP Working Group

Since the earliest point in its mandate, the members of the Working Group has acted professionally and inclusively in an effort to produce tangible results for the communities and interests they represent.

The Working Group is comprised of the following individuals:

Cindy MacKinnon, DEANS, STEP Project Manager

Sandy Moser, Sheer Harbour and Area Chamber of Commerce and Civic Affairs Board Member, Co-Chair

Ryan Murphy, Bread and Better Small Business Solutions, Co-Chair

Meryl Atkinson, Henley House Pub and Restaurant

Shannon Chambers, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

Jane Churchill-Smith, Dalhousie University Intern

Molly Connor, Halifax Partnership

Carrie Drake, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

Debbie Findlay, Municipality of the District of St Mary's

Erin Hume / Jennifer McKeane, Tourism Nova Scotia

Peter Labor, Nova Scotia Department of Environment

Karen Mitchell, Musquodoboit Harbour Chamber of Commerce

Dale Smith, Nova Scotia Nature Trust

Karen Traversy/Dolores Wilmhurst, Lake Charlotte Area Heritage Society (Memory Lane Heritage Village)

Karen Wenaus, Liscombe Lodge

Gayle Wilson, Coastal Adventures.

Harvey Sawler, ilmagine.ca, STEP Consultant.

5.2 APPENDIX B – SWOT ANALYSIS

Following are the results of the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke STEP Working Group's SWOT analysis process:

Strengths

- The existence of the vast network of coastal islands.
- Beaches.
- Scenic, rugged headlands.
- Significant emphasis placed on the destination area by the Nova Scotia departments of environment and natural resources, the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, etc.
- Proximity to Halifax and Robert Stanfield Halifax International Airport.
- Ready access via Highway 7 and other local roads.
- Fresh air.
- Sense of wilderness.
- Heritage attractions and venues.
- Provincial parks.
- Nature Trust initiative.
- Pure and pristine.
- Few if any fast food operations

Weaknesses

- Road conditions.
- Lack of critical mass of tourism services.
- GPS gap.
- Lack of scenic pull-offs.
- Lack of public WiFi and cellular telephone services
- Lack of experiences.
- Lack of awareness and recognition.
- Lack of facilities and services

Opportunities

- Several good parallel initiatives are in order (e.g. 100 Wild Islands initiative, Nova Scotia Nature Trust, etc.).
- Capitalize on the Eastern Shore Islands Wilderness and associated coastal provincial lands.
- Capitalize on the Eastern Shore Islands Wildlife Management Area.
- Unencumbered fresh start on defining the product and the brand.
- Strong chance to compete within Nova Scotia Tourism's Outdoor Enthusiasts value segment.
- Strong chance to compete against tired Nova Scotia products and travel patterns.
- Outstanding freshwater and tidal coastal paddling.
- Recognize and fulfill premise that the Archipelago (apart from the north) is the last undeveloped, wild coastline in North America.
- 'See' the coastline *through Champlain's eyes*.

- Rainforest context.
- The territory is secured due to parks, protected areas, abundance of crown land, etc.
- River systems leading to the coast are important factors in what Outdoor Enthusiasts are looking for.
- Chance to create new loops and in-out access points to the coast.
- Chance to emulate the 'best-of' the Fundy Trail Parkway.

Threats

- A general lack of capacity.
- A tendency for some stakeholders to be parochial rather than thinking big and building on what is truly unique.
- Nova Scotia is focused on other shinier coins.
- Highly competitive environment.
- Potential for the loss of quality opportunities for public recreation and nature-based tourism due to unplanned and/or incompatible development.

5.3 APPENDIX C – TOURISM NOVA SCOTIA VISITOR STATISTICS

The highest potential travel customers are characterized as the classic touring vacationer of Atlantic Canada who by far represent the largest volume of visitors to the region, including, of course, Nova Scotia. The classic touring vacationer can be considered as visitors in the mainstream (not fixated on one particular niche (e.g. birding, surfing, genealogy) who are travelling via rubber tire (e.g. private automobile, escorted motor coach, private touring vehicles). The Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke destination area has never truly enjoyed the benefit of volumes of classic touring vacationers at levels experienced historically by destination areas such as the City of Halifax, the South Shore, the Annapolis Valley, the Bay of Fundy region and the Cabot Trail. Source: ilmagine/Harvey Sawler according to historical visitor travel patterns provided by Nova Scotia Tourism.

The classic touring vacationer, in one form or another, exemplified here through the following attributes (combined with their points of origin – all figures provided by Tourism Nova Scotia’s 2010 Visitor Exit Survey):

What Most Attracted All Visitors to Nova Scotia	Percentage
Natural Beauty and scenery	26.9%
Beach and Seacoast	25.9%
Outdoor Activities	6.1%
Golf	5%
Culinary	3.4%

What Did Visitors Do While in Nova Scotia	Percentage
Sightseeing and driving tours	67%
Visited a beach *	61.4
Shopping for crafts, etc.	50.3
Visiting friends and relatives	49.9%
Visited national or provincial parks*	48.4%
Experienced historical or culture	42.6%
Enjoyed lobster dinner or a meal	28.5%

Note: * Several of the destination area’s most popular beaches are situated in park jurisdictions.

Point of Origin	Percentage
New Brunswick	17.3%
Nova Scotia	31.6%
Newfoundland and Labrador	1%
Quebec	11.8%
Ontario	18%
Other Canada	6%
New England	5%
Other U.S.	7.4%
International	1.9%

Travel Motivators/Traveler Segments

The Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke STEP Strategic Plan was originally formulated based on Nova Scotia's established and publicized targeted Highest Value Visitor Segments which pointed to particular emphasis on the 'outdoor enthusiast' as one of the four top segment contenders, which included:

- Cultural Enthusiasts
(http://tourismns.ca/sites/default/files/page_documents/cultural_enthusiasts.pdf)
- Culinary Enthusiasts
(http://tourismns.ca/sites/default/files/page_documents/culinary_enthusiasts.pdf)
- Outdoor Enthusiasts
(http://tourismns.ca/sites/default/files/page_documents/outdoor_enthusiasts.pdf)
- Big Spenders
(http://tourismns.ca/sites/default/files/page_documents/big_spenders.pdf)



Outdoor Experiences/Outdoor Enthusiasts

This direction was further supported by the strong evidence that visitors seeking outdoor experiences already have or are likely to have an interest in the existing and potential products and experiences of the destination area. This evidence is illustrated through the following statistics from Tourism Nova Scotia's 2010 Visitor Exit Survey:

- 39% of visitors to all of NS enjoyed outdoor activities versus 63% for the destination area.
- Outdoor enthusiasts are defined as pleasure visitors who are highly motivated by outdoor experiences and are engaged in outdoor activities, including visitors who participated in at least 3 outdoor activities, and ranked natural landscapes and wildlife at least an 8 out of 10 in importance in their decision to visit Nova Scotia. However there are nuances to be addressed in understanding the outdoor enthusiast within the context of the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke STEP strategy. For example, the beach explorer who participates in a half-day guided kayak tour and enjoys talking to a local fisher when buying lobster off the wharf is a candidate as an outdoor enthusiast for the current experiential offering for the destination area; however there exists the opportunity, linked to the dramatic natural attributes of the area and the potential for greater entrepreneurial leadership to create exciting and enriching experiences which can compete and generate demand from more determined outdoor enthusiasts (e.g. elite marine excursions, nature and culinary experiences, island-visiting experiences, etc.).
- Outdoor Enthusiasts as described in Tourism Nova Scotia's visitor profile are primarily comprised of:
 - Couples (46%) and families (22%).
 - Higher levels of education and higher incomes.
 - Typically come from farther away.
 - 14% of from the Atlantic Region
 - One-third of from Ontario (34%)
 - 12% from Western Canada.
 - 21% are American.
 - 12% are from overseas.
- Outdoor Enthusiasts are environmentally oriented and are willing to pay premiums for sustainable products.
- Outdoor Enthusiasts have an average party spend of \$1,960 compared to \$1,280 for all pleasure visitors, making them one of the most prized segments in Nova Scotia's tourism economy

The following table illustrates types of outdoor activities at participation rates in all of Nova Scotia versus within the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke destination area.

Activity	All NS	Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke Destination Area
Coastal Sightseeing	17%	36%
Hiking	16%	36%
Beach Exploring	16%	36%
Swimming	12%	24%
Nature	11%	23%
Whale Watching	4%	13%

Source: 2010 Nova Scotia Visitor Exit Survey and Tourism Nova Scotia

5.4 APPENDIX D – TIMELINE OF STEP WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

2015

- Jan 24: STEP Launch and public meeting, Sheet Harbour
- Mar 5: Working Group (WG) meeting, Sheet Harbour
- Apr 13: WG meeting, Salmon River
- May 20: Drive-Abouts (preliminary assessment of tourism assets)
- June 2: WG meeting, Liscombe
- Oct 1: WG meeting, Sheet Harbour
- Oct 20/21: WG Best practices Mission – Alma, New Brunswick
- Oct 27: Public Consultation, Sheet Harbour
- Nov 25: WG meeting Musquodoboit Harbour
- Dec 7,8,9: Public Info Sessions

2016

- Jan 19: WG meeting and Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism (GMIST) workshop
- Feb 25: Public Consultation, Oyster Pond
- Mar 3: WG meeting, Ship Harbour
- Mar 10: WG Meeting, Halifax
- April 7: Final Presentation to Community and Funding Partners
- Various: Presentations from Community members

5.5 APPENDIX E - COMMUNITY CONSULTATION #1 INPUTS

The first in a series of community open houses was conducted during the afternoon and evening of October 27, 2015 (the second series scheduled for February, 2016). The open houses consisted of a plenary presentation summarizing the draft strategic plan and a mixer which provided opportunities for attendees to visit a series of information stations to discuss the plan with working group members. The stations were themed on the plan's Vision, Mission, seven Strategic Objectives and positioning and brand ideas.

Following are the results of the inputs received from attendees.

Community Inputs to STEP Draft Mission Statement

To position and advance Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke as a dynamic new in-demand destination offering the best-designed touring, outdoor and nature infrastructure and experiences in Nova Scotia.

- Need to label the shore and brand it
- Engage the aboriginal people of Nova Scotia in this process for their input and ancient skills
- Look-out info stops – history
- Rest stops – Look outs, winter there are no stops between Jeddore and Sheet Harbour for any washroom facilities, roads, information areas
- Be sure you have what you are selling – don't create expectations that are unrealistic
- Our tourist's biggest comment is fix the roads
- People, tour busses, cruises are tired of seeing Nova Scotia the same way over and over. The Eastern Shore offers a new product that is waiting to be discovered

Community Inputs to STEP Draft Vision Statement

(Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke is internationally recognized as a sustainable one-of-a-kind Canadian coastal nature-based destination offering outstanding touring, outdoor, cultural and culinary experiences.)

- Too long, should be two sentences – less adjectives and more direct – eco, tourism, adventure
- Recreational fishing – tuna and shark
- Nature based culinary experiences, local products, and wild islands – eat wild meat, deer, moose, pheasant, etc
- Support local art and artisan, historical artisans
- Nature based destination
- Needs to be in line with other economic activities – will be some conflict
- More boat tours

- Tourism is activities-driven –target 30 something eco-tourist
- Canadian, coastal, engaging, touring experience
- Lobster/Clam/Mussel Boil on the beach – getting clams/mussels themselves

Community Inputs to Draft Strategic Objective # 1

(To adopt and adhere to a set of strategic guiding principles)

- Jobs – Spinoffs – Year Round jobs
- We all need to be promoters of our products on the Eastern Shore when someone visits our businesses, we need to encourage them to also visit one another in the area
- This seems more like a principle than a strategic outcome
- Objective seems vague
- Chicken before Egg – if we only have accommodations for one bus tour, how do we promote ourselves as a destination, we need infrastructure and entrepreneurial initiatives
- Keep our people making a decent living in our own community, do something exciting and different as opposed to a call centre for example
- Infrastructure, branding, capacity building (new jobs, new businesses), collaboration
- New jobs that work for the communities

Community Inputs to Draft Strategic Objective # 2

(To lead a strategic planning process that is reasonable, functional and effective and is based on a clear set of priorities)

- Add that it is area realistic
- Plan yearly – what and where will this be in 1 year, 5 years, etc
- Don't pit one industry/resource /community against another
- Need to set out priorities to fit everyone
- This seems more like a principle than a strategic outcome; the plan done in this way will be the outcome
- What are the priorities
- What are the 5, 10, 20 year goals

Community Inputs to Draft Strategic Objective #3

(To define the destination area based on an unequivocal unique selling proposition (USP) which enhances the destination's profile within NSTA and by extension the international marketplace)

- The Islands and their history: People, fishing, etc
- Home – friendly and serene
- We have cottage crafts and a diverse artistic community long the Eastern shore, for example the old Anderson House Craft Shop & Art Gallery and the Old School Art Gallery in Musquodoboit Harbour
- Marine Aquariums – Aquariums draw people – the most popular attraction in cities that have them
- Be careful about overselling the Eastern Shore - It is nice here, I love it but that is personal. Sell what we have
- The area from Spry Bay to Bickerton has a very active arts/crafts association with a board of directors who meet on a monthly basis with a mandate to promote the work of local artists. An annual bursary is awarded to a graduating student pursuing a career in the arts.
- Islands, Ocean, Nature
- The beaches, the islands, the history
- Don't forget fresh water assets, great canoeing in Tangier, no marked access!
- Considered best tasting fish due to the Labrador off shore current

Community Inputs to Draft Strategic Objective # 4

(To convince key influencers, communities, residents and investors that the destination area has outstanding destination potential)

- To develop a culture of sharing and openness with our knowledge, talents, history, vision, accomplishments, not viewing tourists as an inconvenience or nuisance
- Pristine coastline, uninhabited island, hiking, canoeing, wilderness like you have never seen
- Have the communities involved in the process (what is our brand?)
- Provide funding for key buildings to be converted to B&Bs as close to island destination as possible
- Perfect
- Artists – Accommodations – Food – Boat tours – kayaking – birders
- Liability Insurance for B&Bs and Boat Tours
- Aquarium – display local flora and fauna – clean water supply for marine life
- “Off season” Local fisherman have the skills to transport tourist on the boats to the off shore islands – for example Murphy's Campsite boat tours, this resource needs to be utilized as an extra source of revenue for the fishermen on their 'down time' Liability insurance could be investigated
- Engage key influencers

Community Inputs to Draft Strategic Objective #5

(To *capitalize* on the remarkable achievements of the *100 Wild Islands* and other initiatives relating to the region's protected islands and associated headlands)

- Develop purchasable tourism product that gives people access to the islands
- Partnerships between the nature trust and communities to build an interpretive centre
- Yes! Marine Parks Network
- I am afraid this has limitations for winter, older folks and people with disabilities, etc. Suggest the islands are important but don't stand alone
- Love the brand "Road to the Isles" – Archipelago is not a known item
- Working with school children in protecting our future environment
- Develop historic skills: Build a log cabin, build a boat (canoe), build a stone chimney, learn to be a black smith and make tools (ancient skills/art like Vikings)
- Keep residents aware of the steps, we don't want any surprises, opportunities available like boating, hiking but make opportunities available to start a venture not a select few
- Highlights of islands – history, hiking, camping, sailing, kayaking

Community Inputs to Draft Strategic Objective #6

(To *generate* a new generation of experiences that are linked to the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke, 100 Wild Islands and Nova Scotia brands)

- Cook/Boil periwinkle – escargot
- offer wilderness survival skills courses – live in underdeveloped wood area with a guide, go for short hikes through wild woods with a machete to clear branches
- Yes it is unique
- Even without assistance from government the Eastern Shore could immediately enhance tourism by developing interesting "experiences for tourists to purchase
- Company retreats in a pristine setting, revitalize your work force with artist led workshops (lots of artists/crafts people) on Easter Shore along with healthy recreational activities, walking at Taylor Head, kayaking the Islands
- What are our outdoor experiences – kayaking, mussel picking, fishing, hiking, treasure hunting, pirate's moonshine

- Lobster dinner – lesson on how to cook and eat the fixings, mussel boil, island drop offs
- Kids love crab fishing, parents like kids, like crab fishing
- Change generate to develop
- More than just outdoor experiences are needed, need to consider seniors and people with disabilities
- People want to experience the ocean in whatever aspect their interest lies, sometimes just to look at and touch or feel the ocean water

Community Inputs to Draft Strategic Objective #7

(To enrich the quality of life for residents of the destination area)

- Increase employment to maintain a community
- Increased visitation equals increased revenue which helps local businesses
- Weight loss, health and well-being at forefront
- Provide increased access points or service points for the residents as well as tourists – “this is my back yard”
- Fund employees for businesses that are struggling
- This will have to be managed during implementation – There will be resistance – demonstrate or build positive over time
- Governments are destroying small towns/villages re: centralizing in cities needs rethinking
- Trains or buses would help!
- Employment opportunities, promote local businesses especially B&Bs and Motels
- Establishing a marina in the area can only help/encourage growth in a positive way

Theme and Branding Directions

- The sanctuary islands
- The wild sanctuary islands
- Eastern Shore Atlantic Archipelago
- Need Eastern Shore in title
- Atlantic Canada’s/Nova Scotia’s Wild Islands – creates a feeling of mystery/adventure that we are trying to convey = Eastern Shore doesn’t have the same appeal/allure
- The Wild Island Coast
- Nova Scotia or Eastern Shore Ragged Island Coast

- Wild Islands Shore
- Nova Scotia Eastern Shore Archipelago
- Wake up to the Eastern Shore
- Awaken on the Eastern Shore
- The Eastern Shore is awake or has awoken
- Visit Nova Scotia's Wild Side
- Survive the Wild Islands
- I don't like Archipelago from a promotion perspective
- Wild Islands differentiated Eastern Shore's islands from other island in Nova Scotia
- Awakening of the Eastern Shore Experience
- Jewel of Nova Scotia
- Hidden Secret of Nova Scotia Unearthed

5.6 APPENDIX F – WILD ATLANTIC WAY POSITIONING/BRAND BEST PRACTICE

The Wild Atlantic Way in Western Ireland emerged during the STEP process as an excellent best practices model for the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke destination area, both in terms of product development and branding. The STEP Working Group struck a sub-committee (the Wild Atlantic Way Review Committee) to examine the relevance of the Irish destination as related to the STEP destination area.

Colliers International Wild Atlantic Way Development of Proposition and Brand

This Colliers International proposition and brand study for Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way is an essential best practice document for the consideration of the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke STEP Strategic Plan Working Group primarily because the brand proposition associated with the Wild Atlantic Way is acutely tuned into a segment recognized as 'experience-seeking drive travelers'. Please note that the Colliers study essentially opens with the recognition that: *'Early market testing shows a strong appetite for the Wild Atlantic Way in Ireland's main source markets. There is strong fit in target markets identified by Tourism Ireland/Fáilte Ireland in a major recent study and the core market identified in this project – experience seeking drive travelers'*. In other words, it is important that the Wild Atlantic Way concept – with all of its many inclusions and potential for being an internationally appealing destination – is very strategically aligned with Tourism Ireland.

There are numerous outstanding lessons for the STEP Working Group emanating from the Colliers work – especially relating to future brand propositions.

The STEP sub-committee set out to examine the relevance of the Wild Atlantic Way as per the following table:

THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY FINAL REPORT - COMPARATIVE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee Mandate

"The Wild Atlantic Way Final Report Review Committee is an ad hoc committee of the STEP Working Group, reporting to the Working Group, tasked with reviewing in detail the report in question and applying the approach and methodology of the report to the Bay of Islands area and proposing to the Working Group a summary of its findings with recommendations for review by the Working Group as a whole.

THE WEST (ATLANTIC) COAST OF IRELAND

Geographical Description

The Wild Atlantic Way runs 2,500km in length along the West coast of Ireland. The Wild Atlantic Way is the longest designated coastal route in the world. It begins in the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal and ends in Kinsale, County Cork.

Fundamental Attraction

The Wild Atlantic Way is fundamentally a coastal touring route targeted at experience-seeking drive travellers with interest in landscapes, culture & the outdoors.

Target Markets

The target market for the Wild Atlantic Way is the "experience-seeking-drive-travellers".

THE EASTERN (ATLANTIC) SHORE OF NOVA SCOTIA

Geographical Description

The area stretches 100 km as the crow flies from Musquodoboit Harbour to Sherbrooke and is comprised of roughly four hundred wild and pristine islands easily accessed from the 135km of the #7 coastal highway **and its 100 kms of side roads**. The area can also be accessed directly from the Atlantic Ocean and has a number of inland wilderness areas accessible by river from the coast.

Fundamental Attraction

The area is fundamentally a coastal destination of increasing potential primarily targeted at travellers seeking to comfortably view and/or physically experience the numerous pristine wild islands and their surrounding waters, that together create a unique ecosystem, while also exploring the area's existing and emerging authentic heritage, culture and cuisine experiences.

Target Markets

Tourism Nova Scotia (TNS) has recently adopted the "Explorer Quotient" market segmentation approach of Destination Canada

and identified "Authentic Experiencers", "Cultural Explorers", and "Free Spirits" as its priority market b. Given the central role that TNS

“Drive-travellers” are typically people who:

- Drive to capture a sense of freedom or independence
- Regard themselves as travellers rather than tourists
- Undertake a specific type of travelling at distinct stages of their lives
- Put a lot of thought and planning into the creation of their travels

“Experience seekers” can be characterized as people who:

- Are regular international travellers
- Seek out and enjoy a range of personal experiences of a type they particularly enjoy and like to talk about
- Involve themselves in active and participatory holidays, are sociable in personality and like socializing with local people
- Are naturally active and like to do and learn new things
- Are adventurous and enjoy a variety of experiences on each single trip
- Place high importance on value for money and critically balance benefits with costs
- Place a high value on experience that contrast with their day-to-day lives

Although they were not able to authoritatively document the market the WAW consultants believe that all of the evidence world-wide is that the experience-seeking drive-tourism market is growing and will continue to do so but for growth to happen in a specific place/region a strong brand needs to be developed and managed and that there needs to be a sound understanding of the demand/supply and

plays in the development, growth and funding of Nova Scotia’s tourism industry we recommend that the STEP Working Group seriously consider adopting the Tourism Nova Scotia market segmentation priorities in the development of its own Action Plan. This would mean a change from the previously adopted “Outdoor Enthusiast” segmentation but the STEP area does align very well with two (“Authentic Explorers” and “Cultural Explorers”) of the three TNS priorities with respect to the area’s fundamental attraction-potential for future product development.

“Authentic Experiencers” are:

- More learned, understated travellers who appreciate travel
- Prefer to do their own thing at a destination
- Have a keen interest in historical travel
- Actively seek the most authentic cultural experiences
- Have a lower interest in more active, adventurous experiences
- Love trips that teach them about history, take them away from the crowds of tourists and aren’t a whirlwind tour of “must-sees”

“Cultural Explorers” are:

- Avid travelers who value learning and discovery
- Don’t feel like a tourist, want to “blend in”
- Prefer a free and spontaneous approach to seeing the sights
- Love to share their experiences, it’s part of the fun of travel

push/pull factors which will influence the development of the market.

Demand/supply factors are things like the availability of rental vehicles of all kinds; the extent frequency and cost of ferry, rail and air access services; the level of knowledge and awareness of the market; and the growth in the target population eg. Baby Boomer retirees.

Push/Pull factors are things like the quality of the landscape; quality and extent of support facilities such as toilets, cafes, parking and accommodation; availability of attractions, events, travel itineraries, range of accommodations, police and emergency services, and insurance coverage.

Brand Proposition

The Brand Proposition for the Wild Atlantic Way is based on the unique selling point of "**Wild**" and five value propositions:

- Seeing and exploring the **WILD** landscape and seascape
- Driving roads on the edge of the **WILD** seascapes
- Exploring settlements along the **WAY**
- Exploring and experiencing the culture of the people
- Experiencing and participating in events

- Love trips that take them "off the beaten track", allow them to connect with the locals and fellow travelers, are fun but teach them something as well.

More detailed information about these two EQ market segmentations is provided at the end of this review.

Note that while the Wild Atlantic Way market segmentation and EQ market segmentation are not identical they are very similar and in particular it is important that the Demand/Supply and Push/Pull factors be considered for the Wild Islands

Brand Proposition

The Brand Proposition for the area is based on the unique selling point of "**Wild Islands**" as a minimum with the strong consideration(subject to consumer testing) of the addition of "**Archipelago**" as this adjective evokes the exotic and informs potential visitors that there are a lot of islands or it would not be called an archipelago. As well, the idea of an archipelago is unowned market territory in Atlantic Canada if not in Canada. The area's value propositions are:

- Driving and coastal highway and its side roads to see the **WILD ISLANDS** archipelago
- Exploring by water the **WILD ISLANDS** archipelago
- Exploring settlements along the **WAY**
- Exploring and experiencing the culture of the area's people
- Experiencing and participating in events

Unique Selling Proposition

The core USP is the wild Atlantic coastline and the meeting of its landscapes and seascapes together with the history, heritage and culture of the places and people where the roads pass through and the land meets the sea.

Unique Value Propositions

There are five specific value propositions embodied in the brand proposition:

- **Driving**, cycling and walking the roads/routes on the **edge** of the wild land and seascapes
- **Seeing** and exploring the **wild landscapes and seascapes**
- **Exploring** the settlements along the Wild Atlantic Way
- **Experiencing** the culture of the people and places along the Wild Atlantic Way
- **Participating** in events and activities along the Wild Atlantic Way

These value propositions focus on the roads where the land meets the sea and not on their hinterlands. This focus is what will attract experience-seeking drive travelers, the target market.

Brand Development Strategy

Brands and their value propositions need to be carefully and constantly managed if they are to be successful. For the development and management of the brand a Strategic Brand Development Partnership is needed, modeled on similar approaches that have been developed in

Unique Selling Proposition

The core USP's are the very idea of introducing the word 'Archipelago' into the Atlantic Canada tourism vernacular, and the unique-to-Nova Scotia pristine wild islands archipelago that is easily accessible from the coastal highway and its side roads, as well as directly from the Atlantic Ocean, an area where ocean, islands and land meet to create an enduring natural and cultural heritage.

Unique Value Propositions

The value propositions listed below are based on the profile of the Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers outlined above but with an inclusion of visitor who have a higher interest in more active and adventurous experiences.

- **Driving, cycling and walking** on coastal roads/trails from where the **wild islands** can be easily seen and learned about
- **Seeing** and learning about the **wild islands** close-up and in comfort from the deck of a hired tour boat
- **Exploring** the **wild islands** by a personally owned or rented kayak, or other watercraft
- **Exploring** the coastal settlements in the area
- **Experiencing and participating in** the culture and events of the people and places within the area

Brand Development Strategy

The STEP Working Group needs to commence the development of a brand. We suggest that:

1. A decision needs to be made about whether or not to adopt the new EQ market segmentation now used by TNS.

Norway and using the America's Byways as a best practice example.

2. Based on this decision the area needs to have a name that will appeal to the target market. Assuming the target markets are

Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers then we suggest the name should be "Nova Scotia's Wild Islands (something)" We feel the geographic delineator of Nova Scotia is better than "Canada's Wild Islands (something)" as it suggest an importance that could be lost if potential visitors were looking at Canada as a whole while giving the area more gravitas than "Halifax's Wild Islands (something)". The name must have "Wild Islands" in it and possibly a final adjective such as "Archipelago", "Coastline", "Coast" or "Way" etc. The final decision, if possible, should wait until after the GMIST meeting and, ideally, a testing of the name targeted at the target market and their methods of travel research and planning. The STEP initiative could importantly be the first such initiative in Atlantic Canada to insist on carrying out a comprehensive consumer test, thereby setting a new standard for sustainable tourism community planning within the region if not in Canada.

3. Secure the websites for whatever name is chosen (www.wildislandsarchipelago.ca has already been secured just in case this is chosen) and secure funding for two years to continually update it as services and products are developed. Note that we envisage an iterative approach to the physical development of the area, its products/services and marketing. This will allow for an incremental approach that can commence quickly and build over time minimizing unmet expectations by visitors and imprudent investment by the private sector.

Product Development Strategy

The proposed basic strategy is to form a partnership organization with representation from key stakeholders such as the Departments of Environment, Transport and Finance; the national tourism agency; the

Product Development Strategy

Create a prioritized list of free-to-use public-sector-funded base-level enhancements and private sector product developments that will quickly provide an increase in the way visitors are able to experience

national and local road authorities; and core private sector players including car rental agencies, event organizers, heritage/cultural attraction owners and managers. The partnership organization would be an integrated destination development, improvement and management organization that isn't a lead organization using existing resources with a **Lead, Champion and Broker**. The partnership would be responsible for:

- Allocating national funding to road development and the creation of new viewpoints and associated facilities
- The integrity of the brand
- Its marketing and promotion
- Market research to keep abreast of trends in the experience-seeker market segment
- The long-term development of the strategic value propositions (Driving, Seeing, Exploring, Experiencing, Participating)
- Monitor performance against established targets

Traveller Services Strategy

See Product Development Strategy immediately above

the islands, subject to detailed, professional advice and design based on consumer experiential demands. Such enhancements might, for example, include:

1. Design and build a critical mass of "Wild Islands" look offs that become hallmark moments representative of the destination, featuring state-of-the art viewing and interpretive aids Note that each warranted site needs to really connect people to the islands and should be located to maximize a "wild islands" view. The locations should be approximately equal distance so as to provide view-points along the entire #7 highway and its main side roads. This development would be a baseline attraction for Cultural Explorers.
2. Establish a working committee with the Eastern Shore Fisherman's Protective Association to investigate the opportunities and barriers to develop an area-wide capacity for visitors to explore the islands on authentic marine vessels with real economically diversified fishers. This strategy maximizes authenticity, accessibility, geographic service provision and passenger safety. Barriers will likely be regulatory, insurance and marketing/customer handling. This development would be a baseline attraction for Authentic Explorers.

Traveller Services Strategy

Create a prioritized list of basic services the targeted visitors will need and then implement them as funds for initial and ongoing costs become available. Initially we suggest:

1. The creation of a dynamic, interactive web site which creates a home for the destination and its services, experiences, social media activity, a YouTube channel and Trip Advisor interactive response.
2. The creation of a new state of the art signage and way-finding strategy that works in accordance with Provincial standards,

regulations and the existing scenic drive touring network.

3. Establish year-round, accessible, public washrooms, in each of the three primary access communities, clearly identified as a public washroom, that have potable water available. Critically, these washrooms must be spotlessly clean at all times and thus likely should be municipally operated. However, consideration should be given to locating these washrooms in association with existing year-round businesses such as gas stations, banks or motels, where at least a minimum of security/monitoring can be provided. Location of washrooms should be clearly signed and identified on-line.

4. Ensure there is cell phone and high-speed internet coverage a minimum of 5kms either side of the #7 highway and its coastal side roads.

5.7 APPENDIX G – THE TOURISM NOVA SCOTIA TOOLBOX

Tourism Nova Scotia has created a comprehensive toolbox consisting of programs, guides, kits, and other elements designed to help Nova Scotia tourism operators grow current business and develop new business opportunities. The contents focus on such topics as:

- Marketing Your Business
- Building Your Business
- Destination Development
- Experience Development
- Funding Programs
- Festivals and Events
- Product Knowledge and Fam Tours
- Industry Communications

More information can be found at: <http://www.tourismns.ca/toolbox>

5.8 APPENDIX H – BRAND CREATIVE BRIEF

The following Brand Creative Brief is not intended to choose toward or conclude on any positioning, thematic or brand proposition for the destination area. Rather it serves as an example or a model of questions and analysis which the ultimate positioning, thematic and brand choice should be subjected to.

Brand Creative Brief – *Canada's Wild Islands Archipelago (example only)*

SOURCE: imagine/Harvey Sawler

Purpose of the Theme/Brand Proposition

The purpose of the theme/brand proposition is to stimulate awareness, excitement and interest surrounding the Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke touring and outdoor adventure experience.

What do we not want to say?

We do not want to say what anyone else is saying. We do not want to say what has previously been said and which has not worked previously to generate sufficient awareness, excitement and interest involving the destination area as a competitive travel destination. The status quo is presented first and foremost as Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore as part of the Marine Drive or as a combined touring offering of Halifax and the Eastern Shore. What is most important is that this region has evolved to be a forgotten cousin within the family of in-demand Nova Scotia travel destinations.

What do we want to say?

We want to say something very fresh, dynamic, specific and authentic in a manner that will inspire tourism development and investment and generate competitive customer demand for the future: that the destination area is highlighted by a natural archipelago which according to the science, is a highly visible, rare geological feature in North America which can be sustained in accordance with responsible tourism development practices

What do we want to primarily illustrate and demonstrate?

We want to primarily illustrate and demonstrate how the classic Atlantic Canada touring vacation can be enjoyed in the destination area.

What do we want to secondarily illustrate and demonstrate?

We want to secondarily illustrate and demonstrate how outdoor experiences (e.g. marine excursions, experiential accommodations, culinary outings, paddling adventures, etc.) can be enjoyed in the destination area through exposure to a selection of customized quality, signature experiences.

Who are we primarily talking to?

We are ***primarily*** talking to the classic touring vacationers from Atlantic Canada and other markets that are first and foremost in pursuit of sightseeing for beauty and settings by the seacoast. From research, we know that the Explorer Quotient Segments (ref. Destination Canada): Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers are currently well represented in Nova Scotia's Visitors.

Who are we secondarily talking to?

We are ***secondarily*** talking to well-defined sub-segments of outdoor enthusiasts (ref: Appendix C) at three levels of potential: casuals (explorer-type touring vacationers), semi-enthusiasts and enthusiasts. As the appropriate products and experiences develop in the mid-term, we will be talking to Free Spirits (Explorer Quotient travel segment – ref: Destination Canada) to entice them to visit the destination area.

Who else are we talking to?

We are also talking to tourism influencers in Nova Scotia, to potential entrepreneurs and investors who are candidates for expanding touring development within the destination area.

What reactions do you want to evoke from the target audiences?

We want the target audiences to become emotionally swept away by the idea of visiting and experiencing the destination area.

We want the target audiences to unequivocally remember what is being presented to them.

We want the influencer target audience to make tourism-related investments in the destination area.

What do we want the target audiences to do?

We want the target audiences to be compelled to immediately inquire about and then book experiences within the destination area.

What messages have they received in the past?

Messages have been varied and mixed, typically focusing on a series of niche interests such as surfing or on stereotype experiences which can be found virtually everywhere in Nova Scotia.

What is the new Primary Message?

The primary message needs to be that *Canada's Wild Islands Archipelago* is a one-of-a-kind nature-based, dynamic coastal destination offering a selection of signature experiences.

What is the new Secondary Message?

The secondary message needs to be that *Canada's Wild Islands Archipelago* can build the capacity, the facilities, services and experiences to serve the needs of the touring vacationer and varying sub-segments of outdoor enthusiasts.

What are the barriers audiences may encounter?

Barriers the audiences may encounter might include:

- Being unaccepting of the fact that Musquodoboit Harbour-Sherbrooke and environs can be a dynamic, memorable place to visit.
- The belief/perception that the destination area is inconvenient to get to and is like a dead end road.
- The belief/perception that the destination area is boring.
- The belief/perception that they can enjoy better experiences elsewhere.
- Transitioning from a lack of immediate understanding of the word 'archipelago' toward a level of mystique and curiosity about this exotic destination idea.

The *Canada's Wild Island Archipelago* theme and brand concept will be packaged and marketed to combat these barriers and – over time – cast a halo of the destination area.

5.9 APPENDIX I – REFERENCE DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Eastern HRM Strategic Planning Report, April 14, 2014

<http://www.halifaxpartnership.com/en/home/get-connected/community-economic-development/eastern-hrm.aspx>

"HRM Green Network Report: An Open Space and Greenbelting Priorities Plan for the Region" and follow-up study, " State of the Landscape - Issues and Opportunities" and NS Environment's Parks and Protected Areas Plan

www.novascotia.ca/parksandprotectedareas/pdf

STEP Musquodoboit Harbour to Sherbrooke Working Group, Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/groups/733379900104173/?notif_t=group_r2j_approved¬if_id=1459789320615120