



Alaska Highway Heritage Project: Northeast Heritage Strategy

Project Description (12 April 2016)

Contents

Introduction	2
Current Heritage Initiatives in the Northeast	2
Value of a Heritage Strategy	3
Sustaining Heritage Programs and Places in the Northeast	4
Draft Project Plan for the Northeast Heritage Strategy.....	5
Introduction	5
Work Plan and Schedule (DRAFT)	6
Roles and Responsibilities for the Team, Working Group and Advisory Committee	7
Community Input	8

Introduction

The Alaska Highway Community Society (AHCS) in collaboration with representatives from other organizations in northeast British Columbia is undertaking the development of a Northeast Heritage Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy will set out a roadmap to create a viable future for community heritage in the Northeast. The project will build upon work undertaken for the nomination of the Alaska Highway Corridor, related initiatives such as the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark (TRGG) and Destination BC's destination development and marketing programs. A project that provides a template for the work is the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) Heritage Strategic Plan (RHSP) available online at: www.rdos.bc.ca/departments/community-services/heritage/regional-heritage-strategic-plan/.

Funding and Support

Funding for the Strategy comes from existing Alaska Highway nomination funding supplemented by a grant in March 2016 from the Peace River Regional District (PRRD). The BC Heritage Branch will provide in-kind support in planning for and preparing the Strategy as required, building on extensive input from communities in the Northeast. Branch staff will also facilitate connections to the AHCS and the project with their relevant established networks in BC Provincial and Local Governments and related agencies.

Geographical Scope

The Strategy will focus on the Northeast, an area that covers about half of northern British Columbia. For the purposes of the Strategy, the area is deemed to include all communities in the PRRD and the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality (NRRM), as well as those that are part of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area (MKMA), including McLeod Lake, Mackenzie, Fort Ware and Dease Lake.

Current Heritage Initiatives in the Northeast

Alaska Highway Corridor

The nomination of the Alaska Highway's cultural landscape as a National Historic Site of Canada demonstrates the extent to which culture and nature are intertwined in the heritage of the Northeast. Following community and First Nations discussions and study, the nomination highlighted six sites along the Alaska Highway. Two of the sites – the Kiskatinaw Bridge and the Northern Alberta Railway Station – are human works with historic and creative values. The other sites in BC have a more complicated story to tell. The Charlie Lake Cave (Tse'K'wa) speaks to Indigenous and scientific (archaeology and geology) values. Old Fort Nelson (Tthe'k'eneh Kúe) Warden's Cabin and its landscape have Indigenous and historic values in telling a story about the impact of the fur trade, the disruption of First Nations traditions and the continuing connection between the community and the land. The Old Alaska Highway Trail near Muncho Lake carries historic and scientific value in showcasing the challenges of bringing infrastructure into the region. The sixth site, the Liard River Hot Springs, has Indigenous, aesthetic and historic values that cannot be disconnected from natural values. For all six sites, an understanding of the natural context, First Nations history, and the relationship between resource wealth and human occupancy in the corridor makes it possible to appreciate the significance of individual sites and the connections between them.

Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark and the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area

Two major initiatives within the Northeast, namely, the TRGG and the MKMA, were outside the scope of the Alaska Highway nomination, but are very relevant to the Northeast Heritage Strategy and to the conservation and interpretations of the region's cultural and natural heritage.

Treaty 8 Projects

Treaty 8 communities are involved in three projects of direct relevance to the Strategy and regional tourism: Tse'K'wa (the Charlie Lake Cave site), Treaty 8 Cultural Employment Strategy, and the Williston Lake Dinosaur Trackway. Treaty 8 (as well as Fort Nelson First Nation) is also represented on the board of the AHCS.

Provincial and Local Parks

For the Alaska Highway Corridor nomination, three sites (Historic Kiskatinaw Bridge, Liard River Hot Springs, and Old Alaska Highway Trail at Muncho Lake) are located within the boundaries of provincial parks. Other provincial parks and local parks, such as the park at Charlie Lake, have heritage value that will be considered in the Strategy.

Cultural and Art Programs

Heritage and the arts are mutually supportive. Museums, art galleries, craftspeople, writers and musicians help create a sense place in the Northeast and attract community involvement.

Trails

Trails in the Northeast allow access to important heritage places and provide memorable heritage experiences. Trail development and management involves several jurisdictions; almost all trails intersect with Indigenous places and stories. While various groups have plans to expand trail programs, the identification of destination-quality trails could be one of the outcomes of the Strategy.

Value of a Heritage Strategy

Heritage strategies describe the stories, traditions, culture and places that authentically represent a place (heritage assets) and link the assets to actions in various realms – cultural activities, land-use planning, recreation, economic development, inter-governmental relations and community enterprises – that can leverage the largest number of benefits. An effective strategy must match the actions with the capacity and desire of the communities to implement each part of the plan.

Heritage strategies take many forms, depending on their sponsoring organization and their physical scope. In cities, for example, a heritage district designation or plans derived from cultural mapping projects can be a form of heritage strategy. In Canada, the National Trust operates the Main Street Program, which creates heritage strategies for small- and medium-sized towns and rural areas. A very recent example of a heritage strategy in BC is the [Regional Heritage Strategic Plan – Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen](#) completed in 2015. While the Okanagan-Similkameen plan focuses on the lands and activities within the scope of a single regional government, its format and scope are useful models for the Northeast.

The Northeast is ready for a heritage strategy. Several initiatives are underway that could work together to promote the Northeast as a destination, and collaborate on projects of mutual benefit. These four initiatives are:

- **The Alaska Highway Corridor nomination** will likely lead to the national recognition of the history of the area, but planning is required to ensure that it can serve as a platform for telling the full story of the cultural landscape, including elements that are best told by First Nations themselves with support from other groups.
- **Tse’K’wa (Charlie Lake Cave)** has potential as the focus of a cultural heritage program, but support will likely be dependent on a clear demonstration of the project’s broader impact and links in the Northeast.
- **The Muskwa-Kechika Management Area** has been well-served by BC Parks and other partners, but it remains all but unknown to most visitors to the Northeast.
- **The Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark** has made amazing strides in a few years, but its success depends on the promotion of its attractions as a Northeast destination.

Destination BC Destination Development Planning Program

Destination BC recognizes that a strategic approach to destination development is critical to ensure that all regions and communities of the province are able to take full advantage of the opportunities that tourism offers them today and in the future. In 2016/17, in consultation with other parts of government and regional and community organizations, Destination BC will lead the development of destination development strategies across the province to enhance tourism experiences, businesses and jobs in British Columbia. These tourism strategies will consider the unique opportunities and needs of each region, including those that will be identified through the Northeast Heritage Strategy, and will align with the provincial tourism strategy.

The Northeast Heritage Strategy is critical to ensuring that heritage-related tourism opportunities and needs, including capital requirement, are identified.

Sustaining Heritage Programs and Places in the Northeast

Tourism

Tourism is a natural fit with heritage. Authentic experiences enjoyed and supported by local communities are the foundation of a successful tourism destination. Tourism is a growing industry, with cultural heritage tourists being among the biggest spenders. Tourism can attract new investment and more grants, create new jobs, build community pride and educate communities and visitors about the region.

Indigenous communities in the Northeast are anxious to develop opportunities around heritage and tourism. Further, economic diversification and encouraging more people to make the Northeast their permanent home can benefit from activities that combine heritage, recreation and tourism goals.

To ensure that economic benefits can be realized, increased tourism around the needs of cultural, recreation, Indigenous, and nature/ecological tourism and heritage will be a key consideration in establishing priorities for the strategy.

The Northeast Heritage Strategy will use stakeholder input, economic development plans and research undertaken for tourism and heritage workshops, including community tourism plans and the Aboriginal Tourism BC workshop, to identify core themes that will be helpful for Destination BC's development planning program.

Community Involvement

Community involvement is key to garnering buy-in to advance heritage conservation, access and interpretation goals. The quality of a tourism destination depends in part on the local enthusiasm, talent and professionalism of tourism operators, services and attractions, local community organizations and the volunteers who support heritage places and activities while presenting a positive image that helps draw interest in the area.¹

The Northeast Heritage Strategy will also be able to rely on information and ideas collected during community heritage workshops, tourism workshops, the Aboriginal Tourism BC workshop and other community meetings and planning documents related to heritage, tourism, recreation and culture.

Financial Support

Financial support comes in many guises, including direct capital and operational investments in assets as well as grants and increased general revenues. The Strategy is likely to make recommendations for capital and operational investments, but it will also provide broad cost projections and options concerning funding.

Governance

An organization is needed to coordinate heritage and tourism activities in the Northeast that cuts across jurisdictions. The Strategy will include recommendations concerning an organizational framework that may replace or be an addition to an existing board.

Draft Project Plan for the Northeast Heritage Strategy

Introduction

Background

Recognizing the value of work undertaken to date in association with the nomination of the Alaska Highway Corridor, and the importance that communities place on heritage and cultural places and activities, an opportunity exists to develop a heritage strategy for Northeast British Columbia. Such a strategy will help set out a roadmap to create a viable future and sustainable foundation for community heritage in the region.²

¹ See: Philip Kotler, Donald H. Haider, and Irving J. Rein, *Marketing Places: Attracting Investment, Industry, and Tourism to Cities, States, and Nations* (New York: Free Press, 1993) and Bill Baker, *Destination Branding for Small Cities: The Essentials for Successful Place Branding* (Portland, Ore: Creative Leap Books, 2007).

² Three documents were of particular importance in formulating this background: [Cultural and Heritage Tourism: A Handbook for Community Champions](#) produced by the Federal Provincial Territorial Ministers of Culture and Heritage, 2012; [Cultural Mapping Toolkit](#), Province of British Columbia, 2010; and the [Regional Heritage Strategic Plan – Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen](#) completed in the summer of 2015.

Purpose

The Northeast Heritage Strategy (“Strategy”) will position heritage as a platform on which to build authentic visitor experiences and conserve significant heritage resources in the Northeast. Further, the Strategy will set out a series of recommendations for the establishment of a governance framework required to coordinate heritage and tourism activities in the Northeast.

Objectives

In addition to the above, the Strategy further aims to:

- Raise awareness about places and experiences that residents can access for learning and recreation;
- Organize existing programs and plans for historic sites, trails, special events and cultural services, such as museums and art programs, into a thematic framework that aligns with Destination BC’s destination and experience development and marketing programs;
- Identify priorities for conserving, interpreting, and making heritage places accessible to the public;
- Identify roles for community champions, local governments, First Nations, BC Parks and the boards of the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark and the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area; and
- Support related initiatives, such as the Treaty 8’s Cultural Employment Strategy.

Constraints

- The project’s budget, including consulting fees, travel, honorariums, graphics, mapping, printing, and room rentals and hospitality is \$65,000.
- Additional funding will be required to engage a Business Case Consultant to complete the Strategy.
- The quality and completeness of the Strategy will depend on timely reviews of draft documents and requests for information.
- To complete the project by 15 March 2017, the full draft of the Strategy must be completed by 1 November 2016. This date allows time for reviews by local government, provincial agencies, community groups and First Nations.
- The Strategy is very ambitious in geographical scope since it will include all communities in the Peace River Regional District and the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality, as well as those that are part of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area, including McLeod Lake, Mackenzie, Fort Ware and Dease Lake.
- Due to funding constraints, most of the discussions will need to be done via teleconference.

Work Plan and Schedule (DRAFT)

Date	Milestone Description
12 April 2016	Kick-off Meeting by teleconference
19 April 2016	Confirmation of Working Group and Advisory Committee members.
23 May 2016	Circulation of the Outline and Strategy; Vision; and identification of information gaps.

31 May 2016	Working Group teleconference to review the Vision, and outline and provide input for addressing information gaps.
2 June 2016	Advisory Committee teleconference concerning information gaps.
20-24 June 2016	Julie Harris in Fort St. John and Tumbler Ridge; Natascha Morrison in Whitehorse and Lower Post.
22 July 2016	Draft recommendations.
9 August 2016	Working Group teleconference to review recommendations.
16 August 2016	Revise recommendations for Advisory Committee review.
23 August 2016	Advisory Committee teleconference for review of recommendations.
9 September 2016	Complete first full Draft Strategy.
16-17 September 2016	Working Group teleconference to review Draft Strategy.
27-29 September 2016	Public meetings in Fort Nelson and Dawson Creek to present the Draft Strategy and seek public input.
1 October 2016	Finalize Draft Strategy released for public review and comment.
November 2016 – January 2017	Local presentations to councils.
31 January 2017	Revise Draft Strategy
10 February 2017	Final review of Draft Strategy by the Working Group and Advisory Committee.
10 March 2017	Prepare Final Strategy

Existing Knowledge, Community Input and Gaps

The project will have three key entry points for community input.

1. The Working Group and Advisory Committee
2. Previous work and information to be validated in public forums and through the Working Group and Advisory Committee.
3. Presentations to local governments and First Nations.

Honorariums

The project budget includes honorariums for First Nations involvement in the Working Group, Advisory Committee or other forums. Options concerning the distribution of the honorarium budget will be discussed with First Nation representatives on the Working Group and Advisory Committee.

Roles and Responsibilities for the Team, Working Group and Advisory Committee

Authority/Project Lead

The Alaska Highway Community Society (AHCS) will serve as the Authority/Project Lead and will work closely in collaboration with the Working Group as set out below.

Heritage Strategy Team and Consultants

- **Project Lead:** April Moi, AHCS

- **Principal Consultant:** Julie Harris, Contentworks Inc.
- **Researcher and Co-Writer:** Natascha Morrison, Contentworks Inc.
- **Indigenous Cultural Heritage Specialist:** Karen Aird
- **Tourism Specialist:** April Moi and a consultant to be confirmed

Working Group

A Working Group of 5-6 individuals representing a range of communities and areas of interests and knowledge (e.g. trails, Fort St. John, First Nations, etc.) is required. At a minimum, the Working Group should include an individual representative from: the AHCS; the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark (TRGG); Treaty 8 Tribal Association (T8TA); and the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area (MKMA).

Members of the Working Group will:

- Contribute information and ideas for the Strategy
- Review and comment on draft documents and meeting minutes
- Participate in monthly teleconferences and send a delegate when necessary
- Research answers to targeted questions relevant to their area of expertise and interest
- Consult with others, especially Advisory Committee members, on specific issues

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee of 10-12 individuals will be kept fully informed of the project and provide direction on specific issues as they arise. As a whole, the Advisory Committee will be as broadly representative as possible of individual local governments and First Nations, the tourism sector, the cultural, arts and recreation sectors, provincial agencies, and economic development organizations.

Members of the Advisory Committee will:

- Participate in four teleconferences through the course of the project (dates to be determined)
- Review and comment on draft documents and meeting minutes to the greatest extent possible
- Participate in in-person meetings whenever possible
- Use whatever methods they prefer to keep their organization informed and involved in the project

Community Input

The Heritage Strategy Team will use materials collected during tourism and community heritage meetings between 2013 and 2015 in addition to new information and ideas generated during discussions with the Working Group, the Advisory Committee and meetings in June and September in various communities. Additional materials and ideas will be collected directly from key groups that were not part of the Alaska Highway Corridor nomination, such as the MKMA, through exchanges of documents, teleconferences and meetings. The Our Alaska Highway website and mailing list will also be used to seek input from the general public on document drafts in advance of general public meetings to be held in September 2016.

The following organizations are stakeholders for the Strategy, but others will likely be identified as the project proceeds.

Stakeholders (Draft List)

Heritage Initiatives	Local Councils	Provincial Agencies	Community Organizations
Alaska Highway Community Society	Peace River Regional District	BC Parks	North Peace Economic Development Commission
Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark	City of Dawson Creek	BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations – BC Heritage Branch and BC Recreation Sites and Trails	South Peace Economic Development Commission
Muskwa-Kechika Management Area	Village of Pouce Coupe		North East Native Advancing Society
Tse’K’wa Heritage Society	District of Tumbler Ridge	Ministry Jobs Tourism Skills Training	Northern Development Initiative Trust
	District of Chetwynd		South Peace Historical Society
	District of Hudson’s Hope		South Peace Community Arts Council
	District of Taylor		Northern Trails Historical Society
	City of Fort St. John		Tourism Dawson Creek
	Electoral Areas, B, C, D and E		Tourism Fort St John
	Northern Rockies Regional Municipality (Fort Nelson)		Mile 0 Park and Walter Wright Pioneer Village
	Tetsa River		Pouce Coupe Museum and Historical Society
	Toad River		Hudson’s Hope Museum
	Treaty 8 Tribal Association		Peace Liard Regional Arts Council
	West Moberly First Nations		Fort St. John North Peace Museum
	Saulteau First Nations		North Peace Cultural Centre
	Halfway River First Nation		Fort Nelson Heritage Museum
	Blueberry River First Nations		Northeast Community Visitor Centres
	Doig River First Nation		Trail organizations
	Prophet River First Nation		
	Fort Nelson First Nation		
	McLeod Lake First nations		
	Daylu Dena Council		