

# FORERUNNER



Vision Becomes Reality



## FINAL REPORT

# Destination Inverness County

Municipality of Inverness County 2014-2017 Tourism Strategy

*Product Driving Brand Driving Marketing Driving Demand*

March – 2014

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	i
1. Background .....	1
2. The Assignment .....	7
3. Situation Analysis .....	8
4. Vision, Mission, Positioning and Brand .....	28
5. The 12 Essentials of Cape Breton Travel Experiences .....	36
5. Recommendations .....	36
Appendix A – Action Plans to Achieve Strategic Objectives.....	41
Appendix B – Communications and Marketing .....	42
Appendix C – High Level Investment Scenario .....	43

## Executive Summary

### The Wave

A wave of tourism analysis, mentoring and planning has occurred on Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island during the past two years, providing a higher state of strategic product and experiential readiness for destination areas and individual tourism operations than has ever been witnessed before. This planning has occurred throughout Richmond County, the community of Louisbourg, the community of Baddeck and at key attractions such as Fortress of Louisbourg, the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre, the Highland Village, Les Trois Pignons, Sydney Cruiseport, Le Centre de la Mi-carême, the Glenora Distillery, and a host of others. These activities followed on the strategic planning and destination development activities of Destination Cape Breton Association (DCBA), the Regional Tourism Industry Association (RTIA) for Cape Breton Island, which has thrust forward in the past four years as arguably Atlantic Canada's most progressive destination management organization. This wave is resulting in the healthy competitive pursuit of partnership resources from the Province of Nova Scotia and Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation (ECBC) for the renewal of existing and the creation of new tourism infrastructure and experiences. The Municipality of the County of Inverness, active as an economic development catalyst on several key fronts, set out in October of 2013 to catch this wave by initiating its own tourism strategy, a process of analysis, documentation review, desk-top research and community-level consultation which has resulted in this report. Forerunner Creative and Tourism Strategies, involved or instrumental in nearly all of the foregoing activities, was engaged by the municipality to assist in undertaking this strategy. The assignment has been to create a comprehensive, competitive tourism strategy for the Municipality of the County of Inverness, including but not limited to the following functions:

- Undertaking a situation analysis by assessing the market ready travel product/experiential inventory of Inverness County;
- Identifying new travel product/experiential opportunities for Inverness County;
- Ensuring total strategic alignment with key stakeholders and influencers;
- Examining the role and cultural significance of the five main arts and cultural centres of Inverness County, including the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre, Strathspey Place, the Inverness County Centre of the Arts, Le Centre de la Mi-carême and the Pere Anselme Place des Arts; and
- Other elements to be discovered during the strategic planning process.

During the study process, Forerunner Creative and the project steering committee embarked on several other frontiers focusing on products and experiences, positioning and brand development and preliminary marketing elements. What follows is the result of the collaboration between Forerunner Creative, the Project Steering Committee and all of the individuals engaged in consultation.

In undertaking this strategic planning process, it is important to first appreciate and understand the tourism context of Cape Breton Island and then to appreciate the value of creating a renewed

product and experiential base, together with a new touristic image for Inverness County. Cape Breton Island has, of course, a history as a leading Canadian travel destination, internationally regarded for its breathtaking coastal and inland scenic touring, Parks Canada properties, historic attractions, natural hospitality, heritage and culture, excellent foodservice and outstanding golf – all led by a longstanding tradition of tourism entrepreneurship. Tourism has impacted the Island’s physical, social and economic development with several industry sub-sectors which are dependent, either directly or indirectly, on tourism revenue.

## **DCBA**

In the past, Cape Breton Island has, of course, played a role as a clear leader in Atlantic Canada tourism in terms of visitation to the region. During the early part of the Millennium, however, the Island’s tourism industry suffered from declining tourist visitations, declining tourist spending, and declining tourism revenues which resulted in a call to action, resulting in the formation of DCBA. In 2008, DCBA and its partners called for an Island-wide strategy to reposition and re-enter the global marketplace. The Destination Marketing Strategy provides the framework for DCBA, the industry at large and all public and private sector partners to carry forward their investment in and implementation of marketing initiatives that will first stabilize and subsequently grow tourism in the region.

In order to move forward and fulfill the mandate as the new destination marketing organization for Cape Breton Island, a marketing plan has been developed based on the continuum that research drives product development which in turn drives marketing. DCBA is working closely with partners from Tourism Atlantic /ACOA, Nova Scotia Tourism and ECBC to capitalize on research completed to date which can answer the valuable question “Why are visitors coming to Cape Breton Island?” DCBA and partners decided that Cape Breton Island not only has to keep pace with its competitors; it has to stake out its own leading position, its own place in the tourism world and it has to clearly define its product and sell it to the world.

In 2011, DCBA began new initiatives to provide support to its planned marketing initiatives. In association with the Province of Nova Scotia tourism directorate, ECBC, Tourism Atlantic, a unique sectoral division of ACOA, together with municipal partners throughout Cape Breton Island, conducted a study inventorying market ready and market-potential experiential travel products on Cape Breton Island. The analysis conducted was primarily based on the key consumer travel motivators identified by the Province of Nova Scotia and ECBC/ACOA and assessment tools and formulas used by ECBC/ACOA in enhancing and creating in-demand travel experiences. One of the key results of the study was the creation and introduction of The 12 Essentials of Cape Breton Travel Experiences, an assessment model created by Forerunner Creative which challenges operators to examine their brands and every characteristic/value of the tourism experience they offer.

## **The Strategy Process**

The Inverness County tourism strategic planning process has involved a number of key parties in an inter-active community-level consultation process, all of which have been planned and designed to genuinely garner ideas and feedback. Those parties have included:

- The Project Steering Committee;

- DCBA;
- One-on-one discussions with engaged and knowledgeable individuals;
- The staging of six consecutive community-based workshops;
- A Festivals and Events community meeting;
- Interfaces with Municipal Council;
- A closing April 12 public presentation in Inverness; and
- Follow-up to feedback from the public presentation and other inputs.

### **The Primary Travel Motivators**

Central to most of the aforementioned strategies is the collection of Primary Travel Motivators which emerge from an extensive parcel of research undertaken with specific regard to consumers' potential interest in Atlantic Canada as a desired travel destination. Meshed from the strategies of ECBC/ACOA and the Province of Nova Scotia, the Primary Travel Motivators include:

- Coastal Experiences
- Sightseeing and Touring;
- Culture, Entertainment and Heritage;
- Culinary experiences;
- Outdoor Activities;
- Major and International Events; and
- Experiential Accommodations.

Inverness County has the potential to meet virtually all of these primary travel motivators head on and its brand should reflect this fact.

### **Tangible and Intangible Development**

The concept and design for the proposed tourism facilities will be predicated on both the tangible and intangible elements of tourism product development. The tangible elements skew toward natural attributes and infrastructure while the intangible elements skew toward the experiential.

### **Harbours and Wharves**

Inverness County is rich with harbours, wharves and ports of call. The harbours and wharves are natural 100% Points (natural gathering points) of virtually all of the communities they serve, providing strong economic, traditional and emotional connections. However, because they are so strategically situated in prime seacoast locations and because they represent an authentic Cape Breton Island cultural backdrop, they can also serve as natural 100% points for visitors. In Forerunner Creative's words, the harbours are the potential 'ladies in waiting' of modest but strategic tourism development in Inverness County.

## **Beaches**

Given the overarching need to focus on seacoast and access to the sea, any tourism strategy for Inverness County must focus in part on beaches and beach accesses. There are dozens of beaches in Inverness County which could be factored into such a strategy, which would call for the execution of a spatial planning exercise focused on uniform lure and directional signage and in some cases, the introduction of limited-scale infrastructure.

## **Culinary Development (The Creation of AFMR)**

As noted throughout consultations and as referenced repeatedly in this report, the state of foodservice (or culinary) offerings in Inverness County is below acceptable levels of in-demand market readiness. One way to help remedy this weakness is through direct intervention at the operator level. As this is an endemic problem across Atlantic Canada, Destination Inverness County could serve as a model (a pilot program) for the introduction of a modified form of the successfully demonstrated Accelerated Market Readiness (AMR) program created at Tourism Atlantic (ACOA) and which has been adopted in several jurisdictions, especially including Cape Breton Island through DCBA and ECBC. The Accelerated Foodservice Market Readiness (AFMR) initiative would follow the principles of traditional AMR in aligning the skills and expertise of qualified foodservice development professionals with Inverness County foodservice operators who are keen to enhance their products and experiences.

## **The Romance of Waterfalls**

Waterfalls are known to be valued and important assets to visitors, providing focal points connecting to waterways, nature, wilderness, hiking, adventure, interpretation, photo opportunities and romance. There are dozens of waterfalls in Inverness County, some of which could be suitable for inclusion in a spatial planning exercise focused on uniform lure and directional signage and in some cases, the introduction of limited-scale infrastructure.

## **The Margaree Canadian Heritage River System**

The Margaree, Cape Breton Island's one and only Canadian Heritage River, has been identified as an important touristic asset to which few visitors actually connect to. There is evidence from other destinations that the introduction of uniform lure and directional signage focused on even a few locations, could connect visitors to the Margaree for the purposes of scenic viewing, rest and relaxation and in some cases, access for small watercraft.

## **Fiddling, Music and Dance**

It is essential that this study recognize the depth and wealth of music throughout Inverness County, but also to understand its uniqueness. Although to many the Inverness County association with music tends to be Celtic in its orientation, the fact is that the primary cultures of Scottish, Acadian and Aboriginal abound through music...in other words they share the stage.

While in Mabou the Red Shoe Pub enjoys local fame, the Doryman Pub in Cheticamp is equally reputable in terms of providing the public with local, authentic, live music from the heart. The same can be said in Cheticamp with regard to the AMAC (Acadian Music Assoc of Cheticamp)

which hosts the Amateur Musical Circle at the Kinsman Hall together with traditional Acadian music and dance.

While the foregoing tends to focus on Celtic dance hall and ceilidh locations, that is simply because the most accessible research and information tends to focus on those elements. However, with certainty, similar traditions and associated assets are abundant in both the Acadian and Aboriginal areas of Inverness County. These traditions and assets need to be documented and included in any effort to magnify the tourism potential of halls, music and dance and the cultural traditions they can provide for residents and showcase for visitors.

## **Golf**

Clearly the advent of Cabot Links, together with that company's intended golf facilities expansion and assets such as Le Portage Golf Course in Cheticamp, has resulted in a game-changer for the golf sector on Cape Breton Island.



The Destination Inverness County strategy need not intervene on the natural course of business and investment by the corporate interests which have demonstrated that they know exactly what to do, at what level of quality and service in the marketplace, etc. Rather, Destination Inverness County should concentrate on enriching and enhancing those elements which surround the new golf product, including but not limited to:

- Advocating for and facilitating the enhanced market readiness of the municipal airport at Margaree;
- The enhancement of existing and the pursuit of new touring, cultural and adventure experiences which can serve as ancillary to the golf product – and vice versa;
- Continuing to support travel media sponsorship as recommended in Section 6 of this report; and
- Other to be determined in close dialogue and collaboration with the management of Inverness County's leading golf products.

**Recommendation #1 – Guiding Principles and Tools**

It is recommended that Destination Inverness County adopt the following Guiding Principles:

**Recommendation #2 – Destination Inverness County**

The Municipality of the County of Inverness should assume ownership of the concept of

**Destination Inverness County** as an institutional trade name, backed by all of the organizational elements normally associated with destination development and management (e.g. research, product and marketing resources).

**Recommendation #3 – Vision**

Inverness County is Canada's authentic coastal/musical/culinary destination.

**Recommendation #4 – Mission**

Destination Inverness County will lead in the development of tourism experiences, branding and marketing for the tourism sector within the Municipality of the County of Inverness.

**Recommendation #5 – Positioning**



Destination Inverness County will be competitively positioned as the destination in Canada providing the great diversity of accessible, authentic coastal, musical and culinary experiences.

### **Recommendation #6 – Strategic Objectives**

Destination Inverness should adopt the following Strategic Objectives:

1. To create a destination entity which has the capacity to mobilize and advance product.
2. To introduce a dynamic new experiential brand which exhibits absolute destination ownership and goes on to expose consumers to the true and pure cultural attributes of Inverness County.
3. To create new alliances which will marry the tourism sector with the fishery sector.
4. To fix the inadequacies of Inverness County's coastal touring network.
5. To stimulate entrepreneurship/investment and create jobs.

### **Recommendation #7 – Brand**

Destination Inverness County will support its destination operators and experiences with a new competitive brand approach focusing on “Canada’s Musical Coast/ La côte musicale du Canada” and the supporting signature line “Dance, Dance, Wherever You May Be/Entrez...entrez dans la danse” to be supported by traditional and trending media and promotional initiatives and an associated brand apparel initiative to serve as a profit centre in aid of tourism marketing funding. The brand will have any number of applications, from traditional print, to traditional broadcast media, to the web and social media to promotional opportunities. Visually, it is designed to create an exclusive claim for Inverness County and to create a cross-cultural sense of celebration. When heard (e.g. live, web and broadcast applications), the brand will ring familiar with millions of consumers and introduce an irresistible melody to which others will grow familiar. While the idea is rooted in a traditional hymn, it can easily cross cultural boundaries to envelope Inverness County's Acadian and Aboriginal cultures – this cross-cultural linkage is all about execution and the employment of techniques in sound production which can provide clear evidence of variable cultural values (e.g. the hint of an Acadian fiddle, the echo of an Aboriginal drum). The brand is the front-end of a continuous consumer communication process which reveals ‘The Brand’s Fine Print’ through traditional media forms (e.g. print and broadcast) electronic media forms (e.g. a dynamic new Destination Inverness County web site and YouTube) and dynamic, well-managed social media forms (e.g. Destination Inverness County Facebook, Twitter). This continuous consumer communications process is essentially a staging exercise of: 1) Capturing consumer interest with an irresistible brand hook; 2) Engaging consumers in order that they can see themselves within proposed cultural experiences; 3) Enriching consumers by exposing them to the pure foundational elements of the cultures (see report Figure 13 – The Brand’s Fine Print).

### **Recommendation #8 – Capacity**

Destination Inverness County should be provided with the necessary human and financial resources required to mobilize the building new products and experiences and to professionally market those products and experiences under the proposed new destination brand. The region is large and diverse enough to require at least one if not two full time tourism development experts (or the equivalent) for a period of at least three years.

### **Recommendation #9 – Tourism/Harbours Alliance**

Destination Inverness County should pursue the creation of a new Tourism-Harbours Alliance which will create new visitor experiences while introducing new incubator tourism business opportunities linked to the harbour authorities and like entities.

**Recommendation #10 – Culinary Development (AFMR)**

Destination Inverness County should work in close alliance with DCBA in ensuring that the Association's culinary strategy provides a direct effect on the advancement of more quality culinary offerings. The County should also propose serving as the Atlantic Canada pilot program for a new Accelerated Foodservice Market Readiness (AFMR) initiative which would see qualified foodservice experts working directly in mentoring and assisting foodservice operators. The recommended number of AFMR candidates for the pilot period (year one) would be 10, with a total of 25 over the three-year life of this strategy.

**Recommendation #11 – Waterfalls**

Destination Inverness County should identify and enhance the identity, signage and in some cases low-scale supporting infrastructure for touristic-potential waterfalls.

**Recommendation #12 – Margaree Canadian Heritage River**

Destination Inverness County should identify and enhance the identity, signage, access-ways and comforts in support of the Margaree – a Canadian Heritage River, as well as other Inverness County waterways (TBD).

**Recommendation #13 – Festivals and Events**

Destination Inverness County should pursue a new initiative aimed at identifying and promoting the 'Best of Festival Brands' (e.g. Broad Cove and Kintyre Farm) and should create a new Festivals and Events 'mother-ship' sub-brand.

**Recommendation #14 – Ceilidh Coastal Trail**

Destination Inverness County should formally seek a name change of the Ceilidh Trail to the *Ceilidh Coastal Trail* together with the fixing of the route's introductory and confirmation signage.

**Recommendation #15 – Cabot Trail**

Destination Inverness County should spearhead a renewed effort to institute one form of imagery and signage in support of the Cabot Trail

**Recommendation #16 – Destination Trails**

Destination Inverness County should support the continuing development and promotion of destination coastal trails, winter trails and other trail types in alignment with community-based trail development volunteers and their networks, including the development of a comprehensive trail development strategy to include such considerations as:

- Inverness County being positioned as Nova Scotia's Trails Destination Region.
- Inverness County offering an awesome trail experience for every weekend of the year.
- Inverness County's existing four Atlantic Canadian Destination Trail Brands (The Skyline Trail, Celtic Shores Coastal Trail, Cabot Trail & Ceilidh Trail).

- Inverness County being unique in that two internationally renowned trail brand Icons pass through: the Trans Canada Trail & the International Appalachian Trail.

**Recommendation #17 – Cape Breton Island Gateway**

Destination Inverness County should play a role in rallying all of Cape Breton Island's municipal leadership to revisit the 2006 Sperry and Associates report toward the creation of a dynamic new point of entry for Cape Breton Island.

**Recommendation #18 – Accelerated Market Readiness (AMR)**

Destination Inverness County should seek continuing funding to provide Accelerated Market Readiness (AMR) assistance to its resident tourism operators.

**Recommendation #19 – New Destination Inverness County Experiences**

Emanating from this AMR initiative, Destination Inverness County should build a new generation of in-demand packages and experiences.

**Recommendation #20 – Nova Scotia Competitive Edge Program**

As one step in its capacity-building effort, Destination Inverness County should vigorously pursue the Nova Scotia Tourism Development Initiative Competitive Edge Program with the aim of building new products and experiences throughout the municipality.

**Recommendation #21 – Workshop Series**

Destination Inverness County should institute a well packaged series of tourism development workshops in an effort to mobilize product and experiential change (e.g. Fishers Diversification, Festival Branding, Yield Management, etc.).

**Recommendation #22 – Gros Morne Institute of Sustainable Tourism**

Destination Inverness County should drive area tourism operators to the *Edge of the Wedge* program at GMIST and invite GMIST into Inverness County to stage locally relevant experiential demos.

**Recommendation #23 – Best Practices Missions**

Destination Inverness County should drive area tourism operators to participate in thematically relevant Best Practices missions.

**Recommendation #24 – Status Quo Programming**

Destination Inverness County should continue to pursue its current endeavours including the Hidden Gems initiative, Top 10 on the CBisland website, creation of a "best of" brochure for the Ceilidh Trail, itineraries, the introduction of QR code usage and community enhancement projects (e.g. Communities in Bloom as well as façade and streetscape programs).

**Recommendation #25 – CTC Signature Experience Collection**

In alignment with Nova Scotia Tourism Agency, Tourism Atlantic, and the CTC Destination Inverness County should target the identification of three potential new entrants to the Canadian Signature Experience Collection (e.g. Glenora Distillery, Celtic Music Interpretive Centre).

**Recommendation #26 – Cultural Performance Spaces**

Destination Inverness County should repackage its excellent performance spaces and associated organizations into one parcel on the proviso that each of the parts has an outstanding experience and brand in its own right and is a contributor to, not a detractor from, the whole. This will require a wholly separate Cultural Performance Spaces development initiative aimed at building capacity, products and experiences at all five key locations.

**Recommendation #27 – Communications and Marketing**

Destination Inverness County should focus on a four-pronged marketing and communications approach to include: riding on the coattails of DCBA and Nova Scotia Tourism; a New Media Strategy; a Public Relations and Promotional Strategy; and the use of Brand-Driven Apparel and Merchandise (see the four-pronged approach as illustrated in Appendix B)

# 1. Background

## The Wave

A wave of tourism analysis, mentoring and planning has occurred on Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island during the past two years, providing a higher state of strategic product and experiential readiness for destination areas and individual tourism operations than has ever been witnessed before. This planning has occurred throughout Richmond County, the community of Louisbourg, the community of Baddeck and at key attractions such as Fortress of Louisbourg, the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre, the Highland Village, Les Trois Pignons, Sydney Cruiseport, Le Centre de la Mi-carême, the Glenora Distillery, and a host of others. These activities followed on the strategic planning and destination development activities of Destination Cape Breton Association (DCBA), the Regional Tourism Industry Association (RTIA) for Cape Breton Island, which has thrust forward in the past four years as arguably Atlantic Canada's most progressive destination management organization. This wave is resulting in the healthy competitive pursuit of partnership resources from the Province of Nova Scotia and Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation (ECBC) for the renewal of existing and the creation of new tourism infrastructure and experiences. The Municipality of the County of Inverness, active as an economic development catalyst on several key fronts, set out in October of 2013 to catch this wave by initiating its own tourism strategy, a process of analysis, documentation review, desk-top research and community-level consultation which has resulted in this report. Forerunner Creative and Tourism Strategies, involved or instrumental in nearly all of the foregoing activities, was engaged by the municipality to assist in undertaking this strategy. What follows is the result of the collaboration between Forerunner Creative, the Project Steering Committee and all of the individuals engaged in consultation.

As stated in Forerunner Creative's original project proposal, Inverness County strikes one as the dichotomy of Cape Breton Island tourism: it is an area which possesses what are arguably the most prized assets and wonders of the Cape Breton Island (if not Nova Scotia), yet it has yet to meet its full tourism potential. Situated on the western side of Cape Breton Island, Inverness County's boundaries embrace the lay of the land from Port Hastings to Meat Cove. The southern boundary of the county includes portions of the saltwater Bras d'Or Lakes with picturesque villages like Whycocomagh, Orangedale, Marble Mountain and West Bay. Inverness County boasts every imaginable facet of Nova Scotia's big sell – the drama of Cape Breton Island – a wide range of landscapes which change from rolling farmlands to rugged coastlines to breathtaking highlands to coastal fishing villages. Two scenic routes highlight the Inverness County experience – the Ceilidh Trail and the world famous Cabot Trail. Along the way, Inverness County's list of communities ring familiar with anyone who has ever considered the idea of travelling to Cape Breton Island, with such unforgettable names as Creignish, Judique, Port Hood, Mabou, Inverness, Margaree, Pleasant Bay and Cheticamp.

In undertaking this strategic planning process, it is important to first appreciate and understand the tourism context of Cape Breton Island and then to appreciate the value of creating a renewed product and experiential base, together with a new touristic image for Inverness County. Cape Breton Island has, of course, a history as a leading Canadian travel destination, internationally regarded for its breathtaking coastal and inland scenic touring, Parks Canada properties, historic attractions, natural hospitality, heritage and culture, excellent foodservice and outstanding golf – all led by a longstanding tradition of tourism entrepreneurship. Tourism has impacted the

Island's physical, social and economic development with several industry sub-sectors which are dependent, either directly or indirectly, on tourism revenue.

## **DCBA**

In the past, Cape Breton Island has, of course, played a role as a clear leader in Atlantic Canada tourism in terms of visitation to the region. During the early part of the Millennium, however, the Island's tourism industry suffered from declining tourist visitations, declining tourist spending, and declining tourism revenues which resulted in a call to action, resulting in the formation of DCBA. In 2008, DCBA and its partners called for an Island-wide strategy to reposition and re-enter the global marketplace. The Destination Marketing Strategy provides the framework for DCBA, the industry at large and all public and private sector partners to carry forward their investment in and implementation of marketing initiatives that will first stabilize and subsequently grow tourism in the region.

In order to move forward and fulfill the mandate as the new destination marketing organization for Cape Breton Island, a marketing plan has been developed based on the continuum that research drives product development which in turn drives marketing. DCBA is working closely with partners from Tourism Atlantic /ACOA, Nova Scotia Tourism and ECBC to capitalize on research completed to date which can answer the valuable question "Why are visitors coming to Cape Breton Island?" DCBA and partners decided that Cape Breton Island not only has to keep pace with its competitors; it has to stake out its own leading position, its own place in the tourism world and it has to clearly define its product and sell it to the world.

In 2011, DCBA began new initiatives to provide support to its planned marketing initiatives. In association with the Province of Nova Scotia tourism directorate, ECBC, Tourism Atlantic, a unique sectoral division of ACOA, together with municipal partners throughout Cape Breton Island, conducted a study inventorying market ready and market-potential experiential travel products on Cape Breton Island. The analysis conducted was primarily based on the key consumer travel motivators identified by the Province of Nova Scotia and ECBC/ACOA and assessment tools and formulas used by ECBC/ACOA in enhancing and creating in-demand travel experiences. One of the key results of the study was the creation and introduction of *The 12 Essentials of Cape Breton Travel Experiences*, an assessment model created by Forerunner Creative which challenges operators to examine their brands and every characteristic/value of the tourism experience they offer.

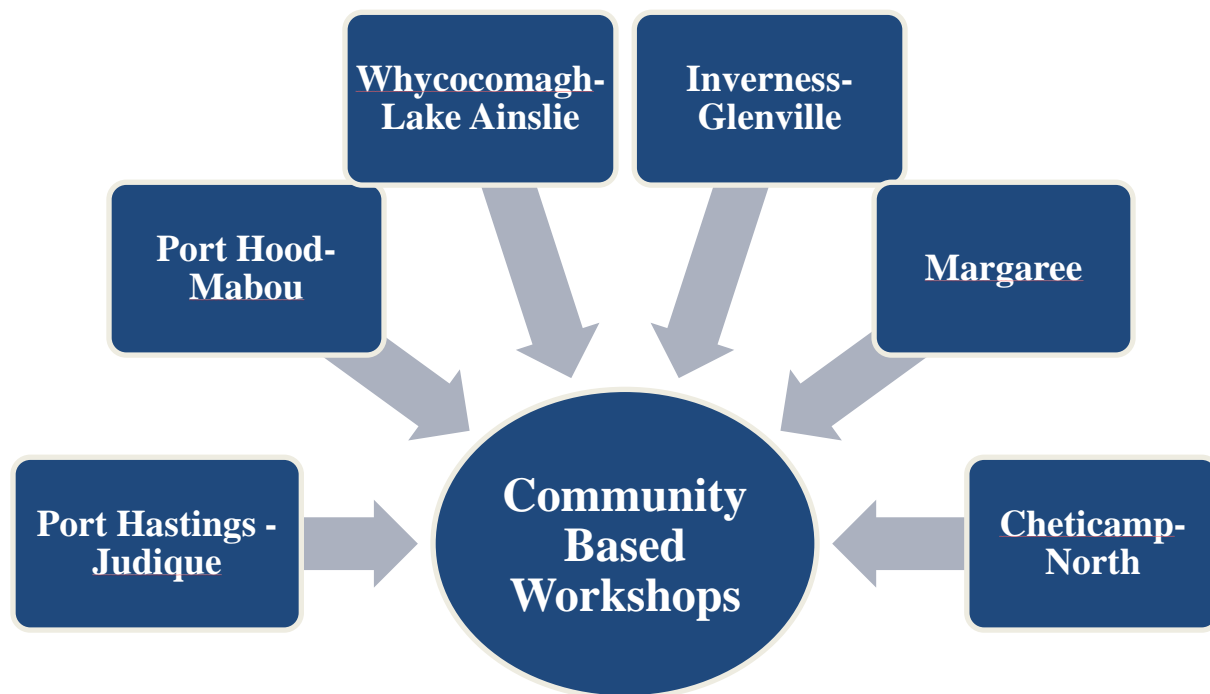
## **The Strategy Process**

The Inverness County tourism strategic planning process has involved a number of key parties in an inter-active community-level consultation process, all of which have been planned and designed to genuinely garner ideas and feedback. Those parties have included:

- The Project Steering Committee;
- DCBA;
- One-on-one discussions with engaged and knowledgeable individuals;
- The staging of six consecutive community-based workshops;

- A Festivals and Events community meeting;
- Interfaces with Municipal Council; and
- A closing April 12 public presentation in Inverness; and
- Follow-up to feedback from the public presentation and other inputs.

**Figure 1 – Community-Based Workshop Locations**



The above-referenced workshops were conducted as follows:

DATE & TIME:	LOCATION:
JANUARY 14, 2014	
<b>10 AM</b>	Cheticamp – Club des Retraites Building
<b>2 PM</b>	Margaree Forks – Margaree Forks Firehall
JANUARY 15, 2014	
<b>10 AM</b>	Inverness – Inverness Firehall
<b>2 PM</b>	Whycocomagh – Waterfront Centre

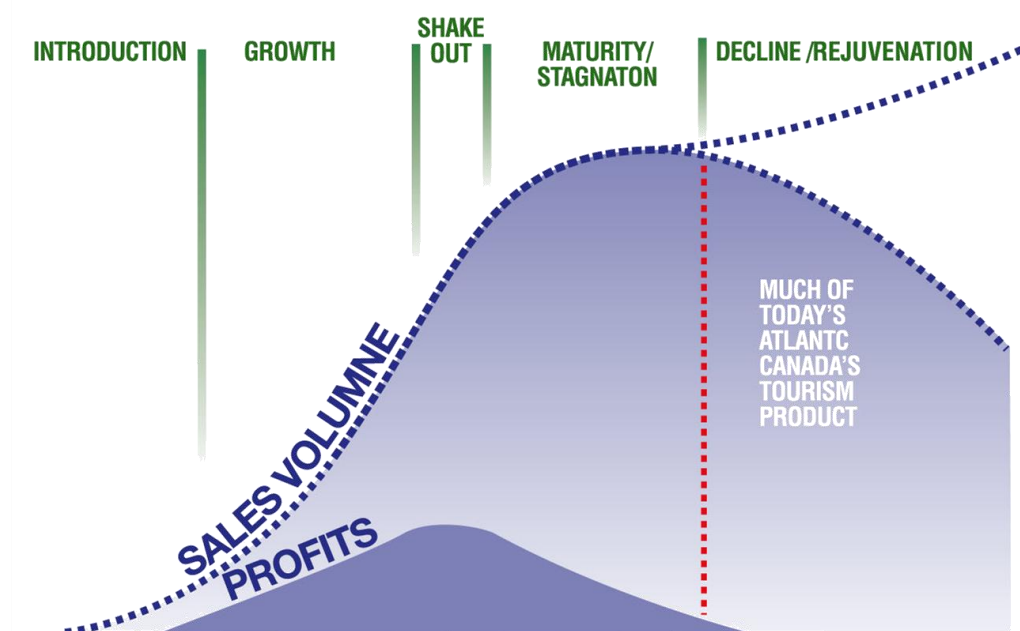
JANUARY 16, 2014	
10 AM	Port Hood – St. Peter’s Parish Hall
2 PM	Port Hastings - Port Hastings Firehall

## The Product Life Cycle

Tourism community development strategies must first recognize one of the most important things at play in determining the future: the Product Life Cycle. This cycle is a phenomenon which impacts all consumer products, services and experiences, an occurrence that is actually ‘supposed to happen’ as the result of the following factors:

- The passage of time
- The natural attrition of business enterprises
- The arrival of competitors
- Increasingly sophisticated and demanding consumers
- Emerging media forms
- New technologies
- Partial displacement by alternative and new destinations, products and experiences
- Other internal and external factors depending on local, national and international conditions

**Figure 2 – The Product Life Cycle**



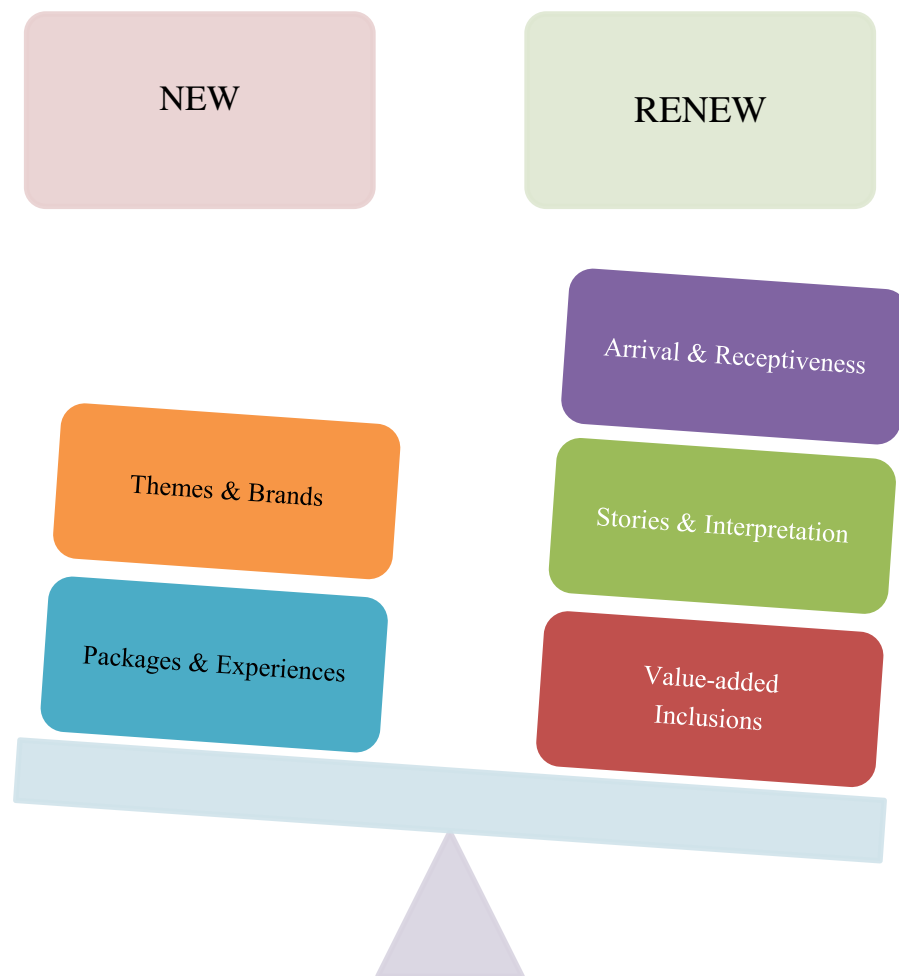


Inverness County, like all other destination areas, has been impacted by this cycle. There are two ways to mitigate the perils of the Product Life Cycle: to renew or reinvigorate the product, service or experience, to create a return the cycle's Introduction phase in an effort to stave off the ever-encroaching Decline phase; or to create wholly new experiences. This strategic planning process has determinedly attacked both frontiers – renewal and new – the objective being of striking the right balance.

## Balance

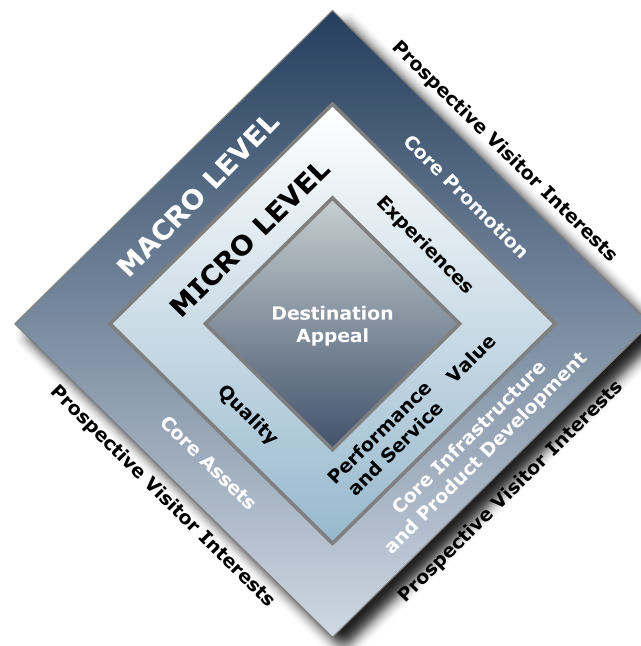
As Inverness County's tourism interests build up their product and experiences, it is important that a balance is achieved (see Figure ) between the invention/introduction of new products and the enhancement of existing products. Both have a place within the product/experiential matrix, however it is known that enhancement is typically more attainable and efficient than creating everything anew. *The 12 Essentials of Cape Breton Travel Experiences* model can play a key role in helping operators enhance their existing products and in helping entrants create their product/experiential offer.

**Figure 4 – Product/Experiential Balance**



The overall product life cycle of Inverness County and its businesses can definitely be returned to the Introduction phase. Forerunner Creative's Macro/Micro development model helps illustrate how. The Micro element of the local economy – the individual products, services, businesses all contribute to the greater whole – the Macro outcome. In other words, as goes the health of the individual Micro elements of the community and the economy, so goes the health of the Macro community and economy. And the reverse is true. The same principle applies in a wider Nova Scotia context: the healthier Inverness County is touristically and economically, the healthier Nova Scotia will be socially, economically and environmentally.

**Figure 3 – Macro and Micro Tourism Development**



### **The Primary Travel Motivators**

Central to most of the aforementioned strategies is the collection of Primary Travel Motivators which emerge from an extensive parcel of research undertaken with specific regard to consumers' potential interest in Atlantic Canada as a desired travel destination. Meshed from the strategies of ECBC/ACOA and the Province of Nova Scotia, the Primary Travel Motivators include:

- Coastal Experiences
- Sightseeing and Touring;
- Culture, Entertainment and Heritage;
- Culinary experiences;
- Outdoor Activities;
- Major and International Events; and

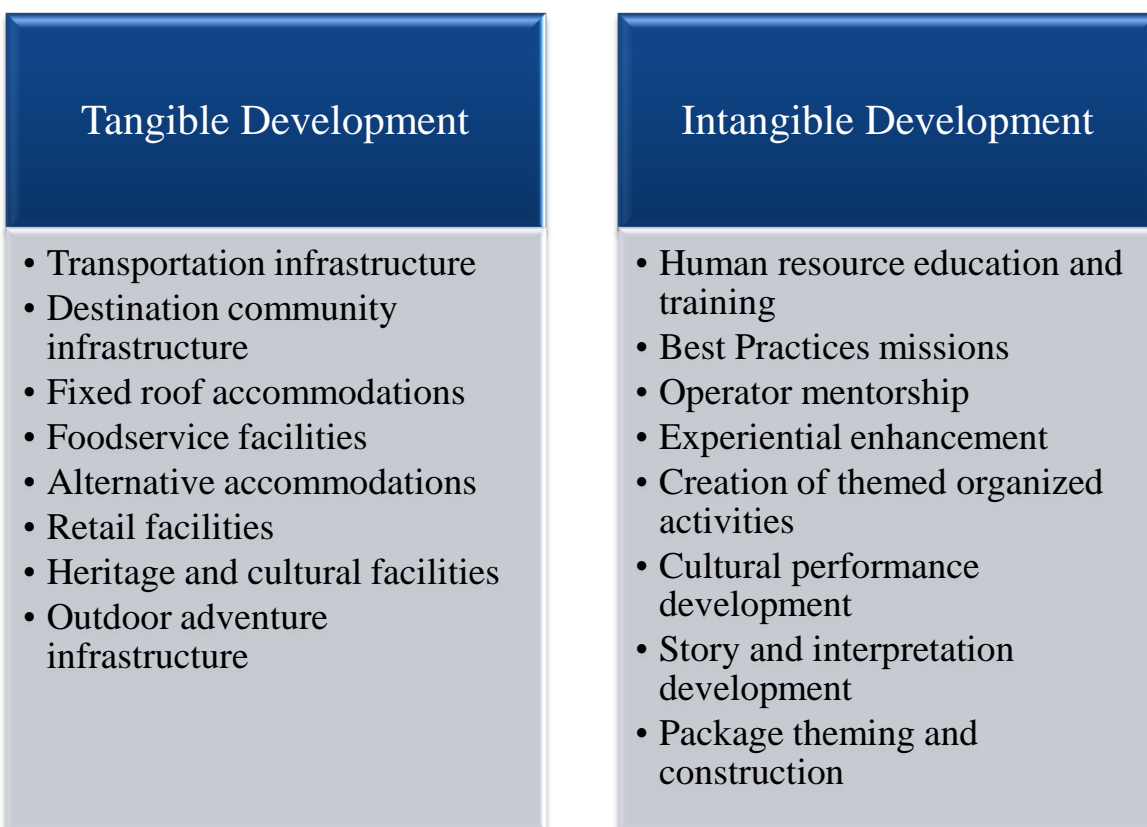
- Experiential Accommodations.

Inverness County has the potential to meet virtually all of these primary travel motivators head on and its brand should reflect this fact.

### **Tangible and Intangible Development**

The concept and design for the proposed tourism facilities will be predicated on both the tangible and intangible elements of tourism product development as illustrated through Figure 4. The tangible elements skew toward natural attributes and infrastructure while the intangible elements skew toward the experiential.

**Figure 4 – The Dual Approach to Tourism Product Development**



## **2. The Assignment**

The proposed assignment has been to create a comprehensive, competitive tourism strategy for the Municipality of the County of Inverness, including but not limited to the following functions:

- Undertaking a situation analysis by assessing the market ready travel product/experiential inventory of Inverness County;
- Identifying new travel product/experiential opportunities for Inverness County;

- Ensuring total strategic alignment with key stakeholders and influencers;
- Examining the role and cultural significance of the five main arts and cultural centres of Inverness County, including the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre, Strathspey Place, the Inverness County Centre of the Arts, Le Centre de la Mi-carême and the Pere Anseime Place des Arts; and
- Other elements to be discovered during the strategic planning process.

During the study process, Forerunner Creative and the project steering committee embarked on several other frontiers focusing on products and experiences, positioning and brand development and preliminary marketing elements.

### 3. Situation Analysis

#### Definitions

To begin it will help for readers to share in a mutual understanding of certain terms and concepts used or referred to in the authorship of this report.

- Accelerated Market Readiness (AMR) is a process for mentoring tourism operators with the aim of increasing operational effectiveness, productivity, profitability and prosperity.
- This report refers frequently to USP's. A USP (unique selling proposition) is a marketing concept in which brands make new and unique selling propositions to customers in order to convince them to switch brands. A primary focus during this study process has been to identify a USP – a theme and a brand approach – that no other organizational entity is using.
- A true tourism economy exists where public and private sector capacity exists for the delivery of quality, sustainable travel experiences. There is essentially no true tourism economy occurring within the immediate study area. Embarking on the recommendations contained within this report is designed to alter that situation.

#### Previous Studies

A series of earlier tourism sector studies and analysis have taken place having a direct regard for Inverness County, including:

- The 2003 Plan for Community Based Development;
- The 2010 Integrated Community Sustainable Plan;
- Consultant Roger Brooks' 2012 Cabot and Ceilidh Trail Assessments; and
- The 2013 Cabot Trail Planning Session and Report.

One of the key points of this report involves Forerunner Creative's underscoring of the limited capacity of Inverness County to react to these previous studies. For the most part (while there are some exceptions), the recommendations and directions provided in these studies went unfulfilled. As noted in report Section 6 (Recommendations), the capacity of the municipality must be heightened if any benefit is to accrue from the effort behind this additional report.

## Economic Vitality

Tourism, of course, impacts communities and the people of Cape Breton Island in many ways. Tourism accounts for those employees using their wages to purchase goods and services, including housing, transportation, food, clothing, healthcare and entertainment. The money invested into our local economy by tourists circulates throughout our economy several times over, providing an ongoing economic impact that would disappear entirely without tourism.

Tourists also pay taxes. Transaction taxes collected from tourists include sales tax, hospitality fees, fuel tax, accommodations tax and education tax. Some tourists decide to relocate here, and purchase a home. Other tourists invest in investment properties and/or second homes. In short, tourism is one of the strongest contributors – and one of the few truly renewable resources – which Cape Breton Island has.

- An authentic, prosperous and resilient tourism sector is built on the foundation of a healthy social, economic, cultural and environmental community and region (the county);
- This foundation includes affordable quality housing, a well-supported and connected volunteer network, a vibrant and coordinated local food network, accessible early child development services and programs, healthy ecosystems;
- With such complexity the dynamic necessary to be able to identify the real priorities to improve the health and prosperity of communities and ensure a resilient tourism economy, is through an integrated and ongoing approach to governance;
- The process of governance would make sense to be municipally led, inclusive, well facilitated and ongoing - not episodic;
- The practice of coming together to build relationships, understand the complexity of where we are at, and to plan and invest on where we are going would rely on an updated and informed data base; and
- The challenge and opportunity is to translate this practice so that all sectors are involved locally and regionally so we can address the complexity of issues, ideas and concerns that for too long have been dealt with in isolation from each other.

## Inverness County Analysis

Data provided by the Nova Scotia Tourism Agency through its 2012 Visitor Exit Survey provides insight into a number of key visitor trends and characteristics:

- Two in ten visitors to Nova Scotia included Cape Breton Island in their trip, suggesting that an even smaller fraction included parts of Inverness County and the probability that an even smaller fraction visited places other than the Cabot Trail: **Noteworthy – Cape Breton Island needs more market share.**
- 29% came from Atlantic Canada (significantly below the Nova Scotia average), 28% from Ontario, 13% from Western Canada, 8% from Overseas, 6% from Quebec, 5% from New England, 3% Mid-Atlantic and 10% Other US: **Noteworthy – Cape Breton Island appears to lack competitiveness within the Maritimes.**
- Cape Breton Island visitors had a slightly older age profile compared with all visitors to the province: **Noteworthy – Cape Breton Island may not be attracting enough of a diverse customer base.**

- Travellers who included Cape Breton Island in their visit spent more nights in the province compared with all visitors to Nova Scotia (8.2 compared with 5.1 amongst all visitors): **Noteworthy – visitors to Cape Breton Island have time and money.**
- Total party expenditures among Cape Breton Island visitors were higher compared with all visitors to Nova Scotia (\$1,747 versus \$1,052) with expenditures being higher in every category of expenditure with the most dramatic impact seen in roofed accommodations and transportation costs: **Noteworthy – visitors to Cape Breton Island have a propensity to spend above the Nova Scotia visitor average.**
- Participation in outdoor activities was higher among Cape Breton Island visitors (62%, compared with 39% for all NS visitors)...also more likely to have visited art galleries/craft shops/studios, museums/historic sites, local farms/food producers, live music performances, nature parks, fossil/geology sites and festivals/outdoor events/community fairs: **Noteworthy– the ‘places-to-go’ and ‘things to-do’ list should be a key point of Inverness County’s tourism development strategy.**
- Those who included Cape Breton Island in their trip were more than twice as likely as all visitors to Nova Scotia to be first time visitors to the province: **Noteworthy – repeat business base may not be where it should be, a factor which could be linked to a real or perceived lack of product freshness (the Product Life Cycle).**
- Customer satisfaction with exposure to seacoast, natural landscapes, culture and people and heritage and history was higher in Cape Breton Island than for visitors elsewhere to Nova Scotia: **Noteworthy – seacoast, natural landscapes and people deserve primary focus within the Inverness County tourism strategy.**

In summary, there are no critical surprises or nothing all that much that is new within the visitor exit survey data. In response to the data, Inverness County should develop and maintain a product and experiential thrust which is focused simply on its primary attributes: seacoast and other natural landscapes and music and other cultural elements which combine to provide for a strong USP.

## Explorer Quotient

The Explorer Quotient (EQ) is a market segmentation tool which comes from the science of psychographics – an evolution of the traditional field of demographics. Instead of defining people based on age, income, gender, family status or education level – all of which is valuable information – psychographics look deeper at people's personal beliefs, social values and view of the world. These factors are what drive real people to seek out certain types of experiences.

From all of the variable EQ types, DCBA is in pursuit of two: the Cultural Explorer and the Authentic Experienter. Inverness County is very well positioned to align itself with both of these EQ types; typified as:

- **Cultural Explorer:** Ecologically concerned, globally aware, spontaneous, learns through experience, not rules bound, social, independent, self-reliant, natural landscape wanderer, at ease with nature, road less traveled, knowledge seeker, full immersion, avoids group tours.

- **Authentic Experienter:** Ecologically sensitive, globally aware, explorers of the unique, engages in new cultures, devises own itinerary, seeks comfort, embraces and immerses in new experiences, converses with locals, freedom from norms, goes off the beaten track.

As mentioned in this report's Background (Section 1), the Inverness County tourism strategy must address the collection of Primary Travel Motivators which emerge from an extensive parcel of research undertaken with specific regard to consumers' potential interest in travel to Atlantic Canada. Meshed from the strategies of ECBC/ACOA and the Province of Nova Scotia, the Primary Travel Motivators, which include:

- Coastal Experiences;
- Sightseeing and Touring;
- Culture, Entertainment and Heritage;
- Culinary experiences;
- Outdoor Activities;
- Major and International Events; and
- Experiential Accommodations.

Forerunner Creative has developed a base-level viewpoint to illustrate how Inverness County currently (status quo) and potentially relates to the primary travel motivators:

**Figure 5 – Inverness County and the Primary Travel Motivators**

Primary Travel Motivator	Inverness County Status Quo	Inverness County Potential
Coastal Experiences	Medium (Coast in powerful evidence but access to experiences limited)	High
Sightseeing and Tours	Medium-High (Traditional emphasis on the Cabot Trail needs to be expanded)	High
Culture, Entertainment and Heritage	Medium-High (Outstanding base to build upon with particular emphasis on Inverness County's heritage involving musical origins and evolution, halls, museums and dance)	High

<b>Culinary</b>	Low-Medium (Remarkable culinary experiences few and far between)	High
<b>Outdoor Activities</b>	Low-Medium (Outstanding assets but limited access to experiences)	High
<b>Experiential Accommodations</b>	Low (Few if any known experiential accommodations offerings)	Medium-High
<b>International Events</b>	Low (Inverness County does not have an international event to call its own)	Medium-High

## SWOT

Inverness County's tourism sector Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) have been assembled through consultations and from Forerunner Creative's analysis and observations:

### STRENGTHS

Inverness County has a dynamic seacoast offering, which is the number one thing visitors to Atlantic Canada dream of.



Music and culture are what visitors to Atlantic Canada also dream of being immersed in and Inverness County wins the day with its authentic, community-based musical and cultural offerings. This strength needs to be better explored to present the heritage of musical origins and evolution, the value of community halls and other built heritage including the county's museums.





Celtic Music Interpretive Centre, Strathspey Place, Inverness County Centre of the Arts, Le Centre de la Mi-carême and Pere AnselmePlace des Arts represent significant tourism performance space infrastructure.

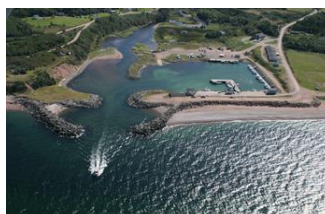


Cheticamp has for years boasted a stronger-than-average tourism culture on Cape Breton Island and has been instrumental in generating tourism visitation as a vital aspect of the Cabot Trail experiences.



=

Inverness County is rich with harbours, wharves and ports of call which have strong traditional emotional connections to communities and which serve as natural 100% Points (natural gathering points) of virtually all of the communities they serve and relate to.



Inverness County has a diverse offering of beaches which can be categorized into recreational and natural experiences depending on the desires of differing customers (e.g. from families to adult beachcombers).

Inverness County is becoming increasingly recognized as a quality trails destination boasting two market ready coastal destination trails – Skyline and Celtic Shores - and multiple trail experiences throughout the county that are well used and can be ramped up to be destination

market ready. Although it still requires a fresh new strategy the Inverness County trails approach aligns with the strategies of the Nova Scotia Tourism Agency, Tourism Atlantic, & DCBA. Trail experiences can work hand in hand with other Destination Inverness County directions including accessing and linking harbours, wharfs, beaches, waterfalls, waterways, communities and other tourism experiences.



The Margaree – a Canadian Heritage River – leads the way in terms of a waterway which is visible and has good tourism potential.



Golf is unquestionably emerging as a strong new selling point for Inverness County.



There exists a wealth of waterfalls in Inverness County.



Community-based festivals and events are important assets to the Inverness County tourism product.



Efforts to create an airport in Inverness County would pay strong dividends in attracting select types of customers.

## WEAKNESSES

Capacity and the ability to mobilize tourism is lacking in Inverness County.

Apart from the Cabot Trail (and increasingly Cabot Links), Inverness County does not have an indelible tourism brand or unique tourism selling proposition (USP).

Inverness County does not own any legitimate brand territory, it does not promise anything or put people inside the brand or capture people emotionally.

Tourism in Inverness County is currently being sold in too many envelopes.

Cape Breton Island's point of arrival is a letdown, with no sense of anticipation or arrival and having a direct negative effect on Inverness County's image and tourism potential.

While it has dramatic and photogenic seacoast in spades, Inverness County does not do enough to deliver its customers to the coast.

Three of Inverness County's primary cultural institutions – Strathspey Place, Inverness County Centre of the Arts and Pere Anseime Place des Arts – while representing valuable tourism performance space infrastructure, are not necessarily well connected to the tourism sector and may be viewed by visitors as being inaccessible.

Great food, especially seafood, is what visitors to Atlantic Canada dream of socializing over. However, with few exceptions, Inverness County is not winning the day with culinary offerings.

Amongst Nova Scotia's scenic travel-ways, the Ceilidh Trail is arguably a second rate citizen in the minds of consumers (poor signage, out-of-date imagery, etc.)



Even though it remains Nova Scotia's premiere icon, the Cabot Trail is in need of a signage and image clean-up as well as product and experiential freshening.



Welcome and gateway level signage in general at potential entry points to Inverness County is lacking.

There is a gap in focusing on the quintessential culinary offerings or signature foods which Inverness County could strongly associate with.



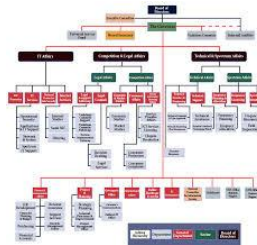
Compared to some other Atlantic destinations, Inverness County would be considered under-exposed to capacity-building programs such as the Gros Morne Institute of Sustainable Tourism (GMIST) and its *Edge of the Wedge* experience.



Compared to some other Atlantic destinations, Inverness County would be considered under-exposed to first-hand product and experiential best practices.



There seems to be an exhausting pre-occupation with organizational and structural approaches to tourism. Inverness County can break this cycle by simply focusing on creating new products and experiences which support a new positioning and brand proposition.



## OPPORTUNITIES

The 2006 Sperry and Associates concept analysis report on the development of a new Cape Breton Island Welcome Centre illustrates ways in which to resolve this arrival let-down.



Inverness County can focus on waterfalls as a strong USP for building tourism.



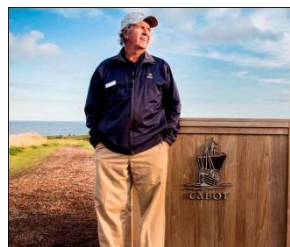
Inverness County's vast network of harbours and wharves can serve as natural 100% points for visitors.



Development of the Margaree Airport could be a transportation and image game-changer for Inverness County.



The advent and arrival of Cabot Links teaches many lessons regarding dynamic investment, vision, quality, the value of talent and expertise and understanding of marketing.



Cabot Links has demonstrated that Inverness County, with the right experiences, can create travel sector news and publicity that will appeal to potential visitors.





There exists the opportunity to create at least one international festival or event associated exclusively with the study area which could serve as a true travel motivator. The municipality would need to ensure that any such international event which not duplicate, encumber or cannibalize Cape Breton's famed Celtic Colours festival in terms of theme, content, existing resources and the event's staging period.



## THREATS

DCBA's theme and brand approach (Nova Scotia's Masterpiece) appears to be shifting, which means that Inverness County's tourism theme (Magic in the Masterpiece) may no longer have direct strategic relevance to the Cape Breton Island theme.



Other jurisdictions on Cape Breton Island are aggressively competing for tourism community development dollars.

## Harbours and Wharves

Inverness County is rich with harbours, wharves and ports of call. The harbours and wharves are natural 100% Points (natural gathering points) of virtually all of the communities they serve, providing strong economic, traditional and emotional connections. However, because they are so strategically situated in prime seacoast locations and because they represent an authentic Cape Breton Island cultural backdrop, they can also serve as natural 100% points for visitors. In Forerunner Creative's words, the harbours are the potential 'ladies in waiting' of modest but strategic tourism development in Inverness County. The potential is clear for the development of a series of harbor destinations featuring small-scale seafood, retail craft and adventure experiences, to be augmented by the creation and installation of interpretation focusing on the heritage and traditions of fishers, their family and their way of life. Any new focus on harbours and wharves would require the support of incremental uniform lure and directional signage which would highlight the name of each location and identify the touristic assets offered at each site. Inverness County harbours and waterfront properties include but are not limited to:

- Little Judique Ponds;
- Little Judique Harbour;

- Judique (Baxter Cove);
- Whycocomagh Waterfront;
- Broad Cove;
- Grand Digue;
- Finlay Point;
- Grant Etang;
- Inverness;
- Pleasant Bay;
- Lake Ainslie;
- Marble Mountain;
- Margaree;
- Murphy's Pond;
- Cheticamp Town and other wharves; and
- Other to be determined should this project proceed.

Strategy consultations pointed squarely toward this idea of Inverness County's harbours, ports and wharves being partially transitioned toward key places of tourism interest. Each of the consultation workshops spent considerable time discussing the potential of capitalizing on this network of community-based infrastructure because of its natural ability to connect visitors to:

- Seacoast;
- Community;
- People and their cultures;
- History and heritage of the Inverness County fisheries;
- The retained natural economies and way of life;
- Marine adventures;
- Fresh and prepared seafood ; and
- Other linked cultural elements to be determined.

For the most part, access to these assets would be through the development of newfound relationships with local harbor authorities and like community-based entities. The strategy consultations revealed that several of the harbor authorities and entities such as the Whycocomagh Development Corporation are excellent candidates for a new realm of tourism partnerships, loosely referred to as the potential Tourism-Harbours Alliance. The idea emerged that the Municipality of the County of Inverness should approach the collective of harbor alliances (and like community-based entities) with the aim of staging a one-day Inverness County Tourism-Harbours Alliance symposium. Such a symposium could pose the hypothesis of such new partnerships, with participants engaged together to begin sorting out the conceptual details.

## **Beaches**

Given the overarching need to focus on seacoast and access to the sea, any tourism strategy for Inverness County must focus in part on beaches and beach accesses. There are dozens of beaches in Inverness County which could be factored into such a strategy, which would call for the execution of a spatial planning exercise focused on uniform lure and directional signage and in some cases, the introduction of limited-scale infrastructure. The beaches of Inverness County include but are not limited to:

- Baxter's Cove, Judique;
- Little Judique Harbour;
- Lawrence's Beach;
- Boardwalk Park Beach;
- Marble Mountain Beach;
- Courthouse Beach;
- West Mabou Beach;
- Mabou Coal Mines Beach;
- Inverness Beach;
- Chimney Corner Beach;
- Whale Cove Beach;
- Margaree Harbour Beach;
- Belle Cote Beach;
- Grand Etang Harbour Beach;
- Plage St. Pierre Beach;
- Pleasant Bay Harbour;
- Meat Cove; and
- Other to be determined should this project proceed.

## **Culinary Development (The Birth of AFMR)**

As noted throughout consultations and as referenced repeatedly in this report, the state of foodservice (or culinary) offerings in Inverness County is below acceptable levels of in-demand market readiness. One way to help remedy this weakness is through direct intervention at the operator level. As this is an endemic problem across Atlantic Canada, Destination Inverness County could serve as a model (a pilot program) for the introduction of a modified form of the successfully demonstrated Accelerated Market Readiness (AMR) program created at Tourism Atlantic (ACOA) and which has been adopted in several jurisdictions, especially including Cape Breton Island through DCBA and ECBC. The Accelerated Foodservice Market Readiness (AFMR) initiative would follow the principles of traditional AMR in aligning the skills and expertise of qualified foodservice development professionals with Inverness County foodservice operators who are keen to enhance their products and experiences.



## **The Romance of Waterfalls**

Waterfalls are known to be valued and important assets to visitors, providing focal points connecting to waterways, nature, wilderness, hiking, adventure, interpretation, photo opportunities and romance. There are dozens of waterfalls in Inverness County, some of which could be suitable for inclusion in a spatial planning exercise focused on uniform lure and directional signage and in some cases, the introduction of limited-scale infrastructure. The list of waterfalls within Inverness County includes but is not limited to:

- Myles Doyle;
- Valley Mills;
- Glenora;
- Maple Brook Falls;
- Blue Mountain;
- Will Brook Cascades;
- Archway;
- Logan's Glen;
- MacIntosh Mountain;
- Egypt; and
- Other to be identified should this project proceed.

## **The Margaree Canadian Heritage River System**

The Margaree, Cape Breton Island's one and only Canadian Heritage River, has been identified as an important touristic asset to which few visitors actually connect to. There is evidence from other destinations that the introduction of uniform lure and directional signage focused on even a few locations, could connect visitors to the Margaree for the purposes of scenic viewing, rest and relaxation and in some cases, access for small watercraft.

## **Fiddling, Music and Dance**

It is essential that this study recognize the depth and wealth of music throughout Inverness County, but also to understand the genre's origins, evolution, uniquenesses and foundational ties to communities, community halls and other common gathering places, their parishes and the people. Although to many the Inverness County association with music tends to be Celtic-centric in its orientation, the fact is that the primary cultures of Scottish, Acadian and Aboriginal abound through music...in other words they share the stage.

While in Mabou, the Red Shoe Pub enjoys local fame, the Doryman Pub in Cheticamp is equally reputable in terms of providing the public with local, authentic, live music from the heart. The same can be said in Cheticamp with regard to the AMAC (Acadian Music Assoc of Cheticamp) which hosts the Amateur Musical Circle at the Kinsman Hall together with traditional Acadian music and dance. Meanwhile, at the foothills of Skye Mountain is Waycobah First Nation, where Aboriginal Cape Bretoners host an annual Mi'kmaq traditional Powwow, the most important aspect of all Mi'kmaq gatherings. Although there are cultural happenings throughout the year, the three-day Powwow provides the Mi'kmaq community with a focused opportunity to proudly

demonstrate their culture and traditional background, including of course music and dance, food and the exhibiting and sale of crafts.

One of the sought-after outcomes of this strategy is to find a common ground of cultural activity which everyone locally – and visiting – can share in, regardless of where they are in Inverness County. That common ground has been identified as dance.

### **Dance**

Even the rudimentary narrative of Wikipedia provides us with an understandable, universal, appreciable outlook on the cultural phenomena of dance:

*Dance is a type of art that generally involves movement of the body, often rhythmic and to music. It is performed in many cultures as a form of emotional expression, social interaction, or exercise, in a spiritual or performance setting, and is sometimes used to express ideas or tell a story. Dance may also be regarded as a form of nonverbal communication between humans or other animals, as in bee dances and behaviour patterns such as a mating dances. Definitions of what constitutes dance can depend on social and cultural norms and aesthetic, artistic and moral sensibilities. Definitions may range from functional movement (such as folk dance) to virtuoso techniques such as ballet. Martial arts kata are often compared to dances, and sports such as gymnastics, figure skating and synchronized swimming are generally thought to incorporate dance.*

*There are many styles and genres of dance. African dance is interpretative. Ballet, ballroom and tango are classical dance styles. Square dance and electric slide are forms of step dance, and breakdancing is a type of street dance. Dance can be participatory, social, or performed for an audience. It can also be ceremonial, competitive or erotic. Dance movements may be without significance in themselves, as in ballet or European folk dance, or have a gestural vocabulary or symbolic meaning as in some Asian dances.*

This simplistic Wikipedia perspective should not be too readily dismissed as a guidepost to understanding dance, its infinite diversity and its connectivity to most living, breathing people.

Notably, the music of Inverness County presents itself in unique stylings which drive this innate human need to dance. As documented in the Smithsonian Folkways Recordings document *The Heart of Fiddle Music Recorded Live Along the Ceilidh Trail*, tourism developers need to take note of the uniqueness of Inverness County fiddling, accompaniment and dance as one model of uniqueness for retaining existing and building new Cape Breton tourism experiences:

“Travel along route 19 in the short season that is summer on Cape Breton Island and fiddle music seems to be everywhere....there’s a drive and an energy in these recordings that comes from playing for people, not for microphones...the essence...includes a distinctive repertoire of music forms – strathspeys, reels, jigs, airs, marches, hornpipes, clogs and other genres. The repertoire includes tunes with a notion of tonality distinctive in fiddle traditions, many of which derive from old Scottish and pipe tunes...the music’s

core values include a premium on a musician's ability to "drive 'er" to play hard-driving dance music with remarkable focus, energy and ....drive...the bow pushes the music with the fiddle rarely taking more than one note per stroke...there is a lot of what some fiddlers call "dirt"...it's not a pure, sweet sound that people like so much as it's a complex sound with drones, bow cuts (sometimes called triplets or trebles in other traditions) many sorts of trills, rasps and other techniques, carefully practiced and developed, that add texture and dimension to the music."

The Smithsonian Folkways Recordings narrative goes to great lengths to explain why and how music in Inverness County is unique and culturally remarkable. The point is: Inverness County music is globally unique, including in the manner in which it prompts or promotes the phenomenon of dance. Investigative work should be undertaken to build on the Celtic focus to include Acadian and Aboriginal music and dance stylings, thereby ensuring that any cultural tourism thrust ties to these attributes is all-inclusive throughout the municipality.

### **A Dance Hall and Ceilidh Revival**

The strategy consultations revealed the potential for tourism to play a role in helping to revive the events long-held at community-based dance and ceilidh halls, some of which are said to be operating marginally – and others which have or about to fall by the wayside, an outcome which result in the loss of precious, irreplaceable community and touristic assets.

The Cape Breton Island square dance and some of the step-dance traditions were brought over from Scotland by the early Scots settlers and are intrinsic to Cape Breton Island culture. An evening spent at any of Inverness County's regular square dances is sure to be an unforgettable experience. Visitors are made welcome, and they will hear the music of some of Cape Breton Island's best known musicians.

#### **West Mabour Square Dance, West Mabou Sports Club Hall**

Family (all ages) dances Saturday nights throughout the year, famous for its indoor and outdoor dance floors and the ever-growing collection of framed photographs donated by musicians over the years.

#### **Brook Village Square Dance, Brook Village Parish Hall**

Adult (age 19+) dances each Monday from the end of June through Labour Day weekend, running since Buddy MacMaster first started playing at dances.

#### **Scotsville Square Dance, Lake Ainslie VFD Community Hall**

Adult (age 19+) dances each Wednesdays through July and August. Bar & canteen; Adm: \$7

#### **The Barn at the Normaway Inn, Margaree Valley**

Three-fiddler concert/ceilidh/dances (all ages) Fridays mid to end of June, and September through late October; Wednesdays through July and August.

#### **The Glencoe Mills Square Dance, Glencoe Mills**

Family (all ages) dances each Thursday in July through Labour Day weekend, running for decades, and for many years was Buddy MacMaster's regular Thursday gig.

**South West Margaree Square Dance, St. Joseph's Park Hall, South West Margaree**

Adult (age 19+) dances each Friday from end of June through Labour Day weekend, featuring some of the legendary Cape Breton Island fiddlers such as Angus Chisholm have played at this long running dance.

The most commonly known and popular ceilidh locations in Inverness County include but are not limited to: The Celtic Music Interpretive Centre, Judique; Mabou Community Hall, Mabou; Judique Community Centre, Judique; Father John A. Rankin Cultural Centre; Inverness Fire Hall; Chestico Museum; Creignish Recreation Centre.

While the foregoing tends to focus on Celtic dance hall and ceilidh locations, that is simply because the most accessible research and information tends to focus on those elements. However, with certainty, similar traditions and associated assets are abundant in both the Acadian and Aboriginal areas of Inverness County. These traditions and assets need to be documented and included in any effort to magnify the tourism potential of halls, music and dance and traditions across all of the primary cultural genres – Celtic, Acadian and Aboriginal – and the interest such information can generate for residents and showcase for visitors.

**Golf**

Clearly the advent of Cabot Links, together with that company's intended golf facilities expansion and assets such as Le Portage Golf Course in Cheticamp, has resulted in a game-changer for the golf sector on Cape Breton Island.



The Destination Inverness County strategy need not intervene on the natural course of business and investment by corporate interests which have demonstrated that they know exactly what to do, at what level of quality and service in the marketplace, etc. Rather, Destination Inverness County should concentrate on enriching and enhancing those elements which surround the new golf product, including but not limited to:

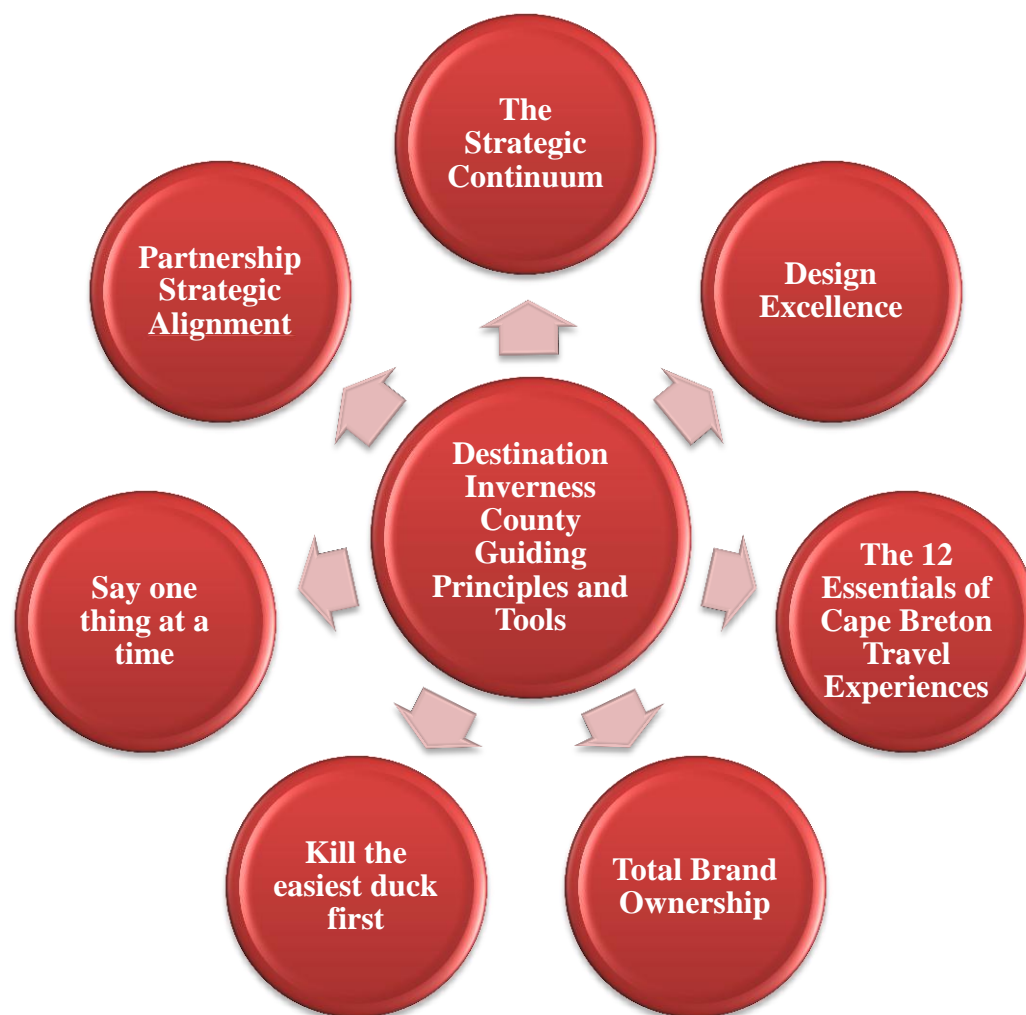
- Advocating for and facilitating the enhanced market readiness of the municipal airport at Margaree;
- The enhancement of existing and the pursuit of new touring, cultural and adventure experiences which can serve as ancillary to the golf product – and vice versa;

- Continuing to support travel media sponsorship as recommended in Section 5 of this report; and
- Other to be determined in close dialogue and collaboration with the management of Inverness County's leading golf products.

### Guiding Principles and Tools

Inverness County has the opportunity to adopt of series of guiding principles and tools which will can help guide the municipality's tourism practitioners in their future work.

**Figure 7 – Inverness County Tourism Development Guiding Principles and Tools**



### The Strategic Continuum

The consultant is known for introducing The Strategic Continuum to strategies involving DCBA, New Brunswick Tourism, P.E.I. Tourism, ACOA/ECBC and dozens of other clients. The

Continuum is a disciplined approach to tourism planning. Far too often, communities, tourism SMEs and destination organizations leap from research to marketing without giving due consideration to product challenges and the reality that product – not marketing, is the origin of consumer demand. The Continuum illustrates how research leads to new or renewed products, which lead to unique selling propositions (or brands), which lead to the opportunity to execute effective marketing campaigns, which ultimately leads to generating consumer demand. The Continuum concept was adhered to throughout the study process by seeking out sources of local intelligence, best practices information, data, consumer research and trends.

**Figure 8 – The Strategic Continuum**



Another key Forerunner Creative tool – The Demand Generation Model (see Figure 9) – elaborates on the Continuum model by:

- Illustrating how new and enhanced demand-generating products and experiences fit into the tourism planning cycle,
- Illustrating that brand development occurs after the product is created, and
- Illustrating that marketing is the last step toward created consumer demand.

**Figure 9 – The Demand Generation Model**



## Design Excellence

Every physical element of the project will be subjected to the ideal of achieving design excellence. This principle will be achieved by:

- Calling upon the resources of qualified consultants who are highly experienced in tourism planning and development;
- Regard for local heritage and traditions;
- The examination of comparable design best practices wherever they may exist; and
- The examination of consumer research which will lead to defining the desired products and experiences to be created within and associated with Inverness County.

All of the potential experiences discussed in this report have been considered within the context and values of *The 12 Essentials* model.

**Figure 10 – The 12 Essentials of Cape Breton Travel Experiences**



## Total Brand Ownership

This process begins with Inverness County assuming a strong brand position within the Atlantic Canada and Canadian tourism communities. As well, Inverness County can assist tourism entrepreneurs and those enterprises to be associated with Inverness County in the pursuit of total brand ownership and their individual ability to build more exclusive brand ownership and equity.

**Know your customer intimately**

The tourism practitioners of Inverness County should use every source at their disposal in the ongoing effort to understand who are the target audiences for tourism development and what are those customers' tangible and intangible desires for travel experiences to be found within Inverness County.

**Partnership Strategic Alignment**

Forerunner Creative advises all of its clients to pursue strategic alignment with key partners and influencers. The natural partners for tourism development in Inverness County include but are not limited to:

- Destination Cape Breton Association (DCBA);
- Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation (ECBC), Tourism Atlantic and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA);
- The Province of Nova Scotia; and
- Others which may be identified.

The tourism practitioners of Inverness County should ensure that their plans and proposals for tourism development within the study area are strategically aligned with the aforementioned partners.

## 4. Vision, Mission, Positioning and Brand

**What is Inverness County Saying?**

The vision, mission, positioning and brand detailed herein are predicated on a new creative brief (see Figure 11). The Inverness County strategic tourism plan begins by visioning, by articulating the mission, by setting out the positioning and by imagining a dynamic new brand approach.

**Vision**

Inverness County is Canada's leading combined coastal/musical/culinary destination.

**Mission**

To lead in the development of tourism experiences, branding and marketing for the tourism sector within the Municipality of the County of Inverness.

**Positioning**

Destination Inverness County will be competitively positioned as the destination in Canada providing the great diversity of accessible, authentic coastal, musical and culinary experiences.

**Brand Creative Brief**

Forerunner Creative has written a brand creative brief as one tool in helping to explain the rationale behind this strategy's primary brand recommendation.



**Figure 11 – Brand Creative Brief**

## Brand Creative Brief

### ***Purpose of the Theme/Brand Proposition***

The purpose of the theme/brand proposition is to stimulate awareness, interest, excitement and an overall *sense of joy* surrounding Inverness County in its vital role within the Nova Scotia tourism destination and experiential offer and as a dynamic contributor to the overall Nova Scotia economy.

### ***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, interest and excitement surrounding Inverness County as a travel destination.

### ***What do we want to say?***

We want to **primarily** say that Inverness County is a breathtaking coastal destination unlike any other in Canada, where culture – led by the excitement and joy of music and dance – engages and entertains visitors, both figuratively and literally, wherever they may be. This will be achieved through the use of “Canada’s Musical Coast/ La côte musicale du Canada” and the signature line “Dance, Dance, Wherever You May Be/ Entrez...entrez dans la danse” capitalizing on the tried and true effectiveness of using melodic familiarity in marketing through the use one of the most familiar hooks or melodies ever to be associated with music in Atlantic Canada.



In delivering this mainstream cultural proposition, we want to ensure that the pure foundational elements of the Celtic, Acadian and Aboriginal cultures are not lost in the commercialization of Inverness County as a tourism destination. This is essentially a staging exercise of: 1) Drawing consumer interest; 2) Engaging consumers in order that

they can see themselves within proposed cultural experiences; 3) Enriching consumers by exposing them to the pure foundational elements of the cultures.

While we focus on coast and culture as the underpinnings of tourism in Inverness County, we want to **secondarily** say that the County boasts a wide diversity of adventures, arts and artisans, built and experiential heritage and outstanding culinary and retail experiences.

***What do we want to primarily illustrate and show?***

We want to **primarily** illustrate and show seacoast and people *joyously* absorbed in music and dance. We want to **secondarily** illustrate and show coastal scenery hotspots and people engaged in the aforementioned diversity of adventures, arts and artisans, built and experiential heritage and outstanding culinary and retail experiences.

***Who are we talking to?***

We are talking **primarily** to touring vacationers to Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island who align with the Explorer Quotient (EQ) characteristics of Cultural Explorers and Authentic Experiencers. We are talking **secondarily** to visitors having specific interests in select niches associated with culture, heritage, culinary and adventure experiences.

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

We want the target audiences to become emotionally swept away by the imagery of the Cape Breton Island coast and emotionally immersed with the *joy* of music and dance.

***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 in Inverness County.

***What messages have they received in the past?***

Messages have been various, including *Discover the Magic in the Masterpiece* and those focused on the Cabot Trail, the Ceilidh Trail and Celtic cultural experiences.

***What is the new Primary Message?***

The primary message is that Inverness County offers coastal/musical experiences unlike anything else in Canada.

***What is the new Secondary Message?***

The secondary message is that Inverness County offers an abundance of quality adventure, cultural/heritage, culinary and retail experiences.

***What are the barriers audiences may encounter?***

Barriers the audiences may encounter might include:

- Confusion over which is the best way and pattern by which to tour Cape Breton Island and the Cabot Trail in particular.
- Understanding or believing in the touring and cultural values of the Ceilidh Trail.
- Truly believing that they can actually be immersed in the culture of Inverness County.

## Brand

As per the creative brief, the brand elements are:



Figure 12 – Abstract Creative (English) for Discussion Only



Figure 12 – Abstract Creative (French) for Discussion Only





The brand of course will have any number of applications, from traditional print, to traditional broadcast media, to the web and social media to promotional opportunities. Visually, it is designed to create an exclusive claim for Inverness County and to create a cross-cultural sense of celebration. When heard (e.g. live, web and broadcast applications), the brand will ring familiar with millions of consumers and introduce an irresistible melody to which others will grow familiar. While the idea is rooted in a traditional hymn, it can easily cross cultural boundaries to envelope Inverness County's Acadian and Aboriginal cultures – this cross-cultural linkage is all about execution and the employment of techniques in sound production which can provide clear evidence of variable cultural values (e.g. the hint of an Acadian fiddle, the echo of an Aboriginal drum).

The brand is the front-end of a continuous consumer communication process which begins with the primary slogan, signature line and supporting graphics. Not everything can be said at once. However, the brand's supporting messages emerge in the form of 'The Brand's Fine Print', through traditional media forms (e.g. print and broadcast) electronic media forms (e.g. a dynamic new Destination Inverness County web site and YouTube) and dynamic, well-managed social media forms (e.g. Destination Inverness County Facebook, Twitter).

This continuous consumer communications process is essentially a staging exercise of: 1) **Capturing** consumer interest with an irresistible brand hook; 2) **Engaging** consumers in order that they can see themselves within proposed cultural experiences; 3) **Enriching** consumers by exposing them to the pure foundational elements of the cultures (see Figure 13 – The Brand's Fine Print).

## 1. Capture

Lure the consumer with an overarching message which captivates and breaks through the clutter of competitors (e.g. staking a large, irrefutable, one-and-only claim, attaching the destination to something highly familiar to consumers).

## 2. Engage

The more involved consumers are, the more emotional they are about the destination (e.g. creating the real or abstract notion that everyone can dance when they visit Inverness County, inviting consumers into the destination's harbours, providing intelligence and means for enjoying destination-quality trails).

## 3. Enrich

There are unique destination attributes which must be expressed sequentially in the hierarchy of the marketing environment (e.g. unique fiddling and dance styles, the heritage of Acadian rug-hooking, Aboriginal heritage and traditions).

**Figure 13 – The Brand's Fine Print**

## 5. The 12 Essentials of Cape Breton Travel Experiences

Forerunner Creative's most diversified experiential planning tools is the customized-for-Cape Breton *12 Essentials of Cape Breton Travel Experiences* (see Figure 10), a simple model which breaks down the specific, individual elements of the travel experience, helping operators and organizations see on a step-by-step basis how they can enhance their offerings. *The 12 Essentials* have been exposed to a variety of products and experiences as the result of a product/experiential inventory analysis process carried out by DCBA in 2011. For the purposes of this strategy, *The 12 Essentials* play a role in articulating how both the brand and the brand's supporting experiences can help Destination Inverness County succeed in tourism:

- Well-Themed – the recommended theme and brand elements are not being used by any other known destination – this provides Destination Inverness County with an unequivocal brand ownership proposition.

- The Essence of Cape Breton Island – the theme, the brand and the experiences proposed in this strategy – from coastal to music and culture to cuisine to harbours to waterfalls to waterways, etc. – are inherently Cape Breton.
- Authentic – the recommendations presented in this strategy are focused on physical cultural attributes predicated on authenticity – the natural seacoast, community way-of-life, cultural origins and evolutions and the people of Inverness County.
- Accessible – this strategy is focused on creating greater consumer access to information, to touring experiences, to the coast, to cultural experiences, to communities and the people of Inverness County.
- The Emotional Trigger – the recommended theme and brand proposition are wholly predicated on capturing the emotions of potential visitors to Destination Inverness County.
- Sense of Place – this strategy focuses on Inverness County's unique physical spaces, its unique place in Nova Scotia, Canadian and world history and on developments and events which shaped its people and communities.
- Educational – this strategy longs for Destination Inverness County to create authentic, dynamic experiences which entertainingly inform and provide interpretation for consumers.
- Entertaining – the very essence of this strategy is hinged on **joy**, music, dance and laughter.
- Enriching/Accomplishment – consumers who become engaged in future Destination Inverness County experiences will leave feeling enriched through their exposure to and involvement in the culture and in doing things they have never done before.
- Hands-on – consumers will be drawn into and directly involved in cultural experiences of all types, led by the **joyful** idea of dance!
- Value-Added – one by one, individual tourism operators will be mentored to provide every one of their guests with outstanding value-added propositions.
- Exceed Expectations – Destination Inverness County will set the stage for individual tourism operators to exceed the expectations of every one of their guests through the provision of superior products/experiences and high quality customer service.

## 6. Recommendations

Forerunner Creative is pleased to make the following recommendations to the County of Inverness Municipal Council.

### **Recommendation #1 – Guiding Principles and Tools**

It is recommended that Destination Inverness County adopt the following Guiding Principles:



### **Recommendation #2 – Destination Inverness County**

The Municipality of the County of Inverness should assume ownership of the concept of

**Destination Inverness County** as an institutional trade name, backed by all of the organizational elements normally associated with destination development and management (e.g. research, product and marketing resources).

### **Recommendation #3 – Vision**

Inverness County is Canada's authentic coastal/musical/culinary destination.

### **Recommendation #4 – Mission**



Destination Inverness County will lead in the development of tourism experiences, branding and marketing for the tourism sector within the Municipality of the County of Inverness.

**Recommendation #5 – Positioning**

Destination Inverness County will be competitively positioned as the destination in Canada providing the great diversity of accessible, authentic coastal, musical and culinary experiences.

**Recommendation #6 – Strategic Objectives**

Destination Inverness should adopt the following Strategic Objectives:

6. To create a destination entity which has the capacity to mobilize and advance product.
7. To introduce a dynamic new experiential brand which exhibits absolute destination ownership and goes on to expose consumers to the true and pure cultural attributes of Inverness County.
8. To create new alliances which will marry the tourism sector with the fishery sector.
9. To fix the inadequacies of Inverness County's coastal touring network.
10. To stimulate entrepreneurship/investment and create jobs.

**Recommendation #7 – Brand**

Destination Inverness County will support its destination operators and experiences with a new competitive brand approach focusing on “Canada’s Musical Coast/ La côte musicale du Canada” and the supporting signature line “Dance, Dance, Wherever You May Be/Entrez...entrez dans la danse” to be supported by traditional and trending media and promotional initiatives and an associated brand apparel initiative to serve as a profit centre in aid of tourism marketing funding. The brand will have any number of applications, from traditional print, to traditional broadcast media, to the web and social media to promotional opportunities. Visually, it is designed to create an exclusive claim for Inverness County and to create a cross-cultural sense of celebration. When heard (e.g. live, web and broadcast applications), the brand will ring familiar with millions of consumers and introduce an irresistible melody to which others will grow familiar. While the idea is rooted in a traditional hymn, it can easily cross cultural boundaries to envelope Inverness County's Acadian and Aboriginal cultures – this cross-cultural linkage is all about execution and the employment of techniques in sound production which can provide clear evidence of variable cultural values (e.g. the hint of an Acadian fiddle, the echo of an Aboriginal drum). The brand is the front-end of a continuous consumer communication process which reveals ‘The Brand’s Fine Print’ through traditional media forms (e.g. print and broadcast) electronic media forms (e.g. a dynamic new Destination Inverness County web site and YouTube) and dynamic, well-managed social media forms (e.g. Destination Inverness County Facebook, Twitter). This continuous consumer communications process is essentially a staging exercise of: 1) Capturing consumer interest with an irresistible brand hook; 2) Engaging consumers in order that they can see themselves within proposed cultural experiences; 3) Enriching consumers by exposing them to the pure foundational elements of the cultures (see report Figure 13 – The Brand’s Fine Print).

**Recommendation #8 – Capacity**

Destination Inverness County should be provided with the necessary human and financial resources required to mobilize the building new products and experiences and to professionally market those products and experiences under the proposed new destination brand. The region is

large and diverse enough to require at least one if not two full time tourism development experts (or the equivalent) for a period of at least three years.

**Recommendation #9 – Tourism/Harbours Alliance**

Destination Inverness County should pursue the creation of a new Tourism-Harbours Alliance which will create new visitor experiences while introducing new incubator tourism business opportunities linked to the harbour authorities and like entities.

**Recommendation #10 – Culinary Development (AFMR)**

Destination Inverness County should work in close alliance with DCBA in ensuring that the Association's culinary strategy provides a direct effect on the advancement of more quality culinary offerings. The County should also propose serving as the Atlantic Canada pilot program for a new Accelerated Foodservice Market Readiness (AFMR) initiative which would see qualified foodservice experts working directly in mentoring and assisting foodservice operators. The recommended number of AFMR candidates for the pilot period (year one) would be 10, with a total of 25 over the three-year life of this strategy.

**Recommendation #11 – Waterfalls**

Destination Inverness County should identify and enhance the identity, signage and in some cases low-scale supporting infrastructure for touristic-potential waterfalls.

**Recommendation #12 – Margaree Canadian Heritage River**

Destination Inverness County should identify and enhance the identity, signage, access-ways and comforts in support of the Margaree – a Canadian Heritage River, as well as other Inverness County waterways (TBD).

**Recommendation #13 – Festivals and Events**

Destination Inverness County should pursue a new initiative aimed at identifying and promoting the 'Best of Festival Brands' (e.g. Broad Cove and Kintyre Farm) and should create a new Festivals and Events 'mother-ship' sub-brand.

**Recommendation #14 – Ceilidh Coastal Trail**

Destination Inverness County should formally seek a name change of the Ceilidh Trail to the *Ceilidh Coastal Trail* together with the fixing of the route's introductory and confirmation signage.

**Recommendation #15 – Cabot Trail**

Destination Inverness County should spearhead a renewed effort to institute one form of imagery and signage in support of the Cabot Trail

**Recommendation #16 – Destination Trails**

Destination Inverness County should support the continuing development and promotion of destination coastal trails, winter trails and other trail types in alignment with community-based trail development volunteers and their networks, including the development of a comprehensive trail development strategy to include such considerations as:

- Inverness County being positioned as Nova Scotia's Trails Destination Region.

- Inverness County offering an awesome trail experience for every weekend of the year.
- Inverness County's existing four Atlantic Canadian Destination Trail Brands (The Skyline Trail, Celtic Shores Coastal Trail, Cabot Trail & Ceilidh Trail).
- Inverness County being unique in that two internationally renowned trail brand Icons pass through: the Trans Canada Trail & the International Appalachian Trail.

**Recommendation #17 – Cape Breton Island Gateway**

Destination Inverness County should play a role in rallying all of Cape Breton Island's municipal leadership to revisit the 2006 Sperry and Associates report toward the creation of a dynamic new point of entry for Cape Breton Island.

**Recommendation #18 – Accelerated Market Readiness (AMR)**

Destination Inverness County should seek continuing funding to provide Accelerated Market Readiness (AMR) assistance to its resident tourism operators.

**Recommendation #19 – New Destination Inverness County Experiences**

Emanating from this AMR initiative, Destination Inverness County should build a new generation of in-demand packages and experiences.

**Recommendation #20 – Nova Scotia Competitive Edge Program**

As one step in its capacity-building effort, Destination Inverness County should vigorously pursue the Nova Scotia Tourism Development Initiative Competitive Edge Program with the aim of building new products and experiences throughout the municipality.

**Recommendation #21 – Workshop Series**

Destination Inverness County should institute a well packaged series of tourism development workshops in an effort to mobilize product and experiential change (e.g. Fishers Diversification, Festival Branding, Yield Management, etc.).

**Recommendation #22 – Gros Morne Institute of Sustainable Tourism**

Destination Inverness County should drive area tourism operators to the *Edge of the Wedge* program at GMIST and invite GMIST into Inverness County to stage locally relevant experiential demos.

**Recommendation #23 – Best Practices Missions**

Destination Inverness County should drive area tourism operators to participate in thematically relevant Best Practices missions.

**Recommendation #24 – Status Quo Programming**

Destination Inverness County should continue to pursue its current endeavours including the Hidden Gems initiative, Top 10 on the CBisland website, creation of a "best of" brochure for the Ceilidh Trail, itineraries, the introduction of QR code usage and community enhancement projects (e.g. Communities in Bloom as well as façade and streetscape programs).

**Recommendation #25 – CTC Signature Experience Collection**

In alignment with Nova Scotia Tourism Agency, Tourism Atlantic, and the CTC Destination Inverness County should target the identification of three potential new entrants to the Canadian Signature Experience Collection (e.g. Glenora Distillery, Celtic Music Interpretive Centre).

**Recommendation #26 – Cultural Performance Spaces**

Destination Inverness County should repackaging its excellent performance spaces and associated organizations into one parcel on the proviso that each of the parts has an outstanding experience and brand in its own right and is a contributor to, not a detractor from, the whole. This will require a wholly separate Cultural Performance Spaces development initiative aimed at building capacity, products and experiences at all five key locations.

**Recommendation #27 – Communications and Marketing**

Destination Inverness County should focus on a four-pronged marketing and communications approach to include: riding on the coattails of DCBA and Nova Scotia Tourism; a New Media Strategy; a Public Relations and Promotional Strategy; and the use of Brand-Driven Apparel and Merchandise (see the four-pronged approach as illustrated in Appendix B)

## Appendix A – Action Plans to Achieve Strategic Objectives

ACTION PLANS TO ACHIEVE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	
1. To create a destination entity which has the capacity to mobilize and advance product.	
Establish the industry trade name Destination Inverness County.	
Engage the services of 2 tourism industry professionals to assist in mobilizing product development recommendations contained in this report.	
Expose internal and external tourism industry people to the Gros Morne Institute of Sustainable Tourism and Best Practices Missions.	
Other to be determined.	
1. To introduce a dynamic new experiential brand which exhibits absolute destination ownership and goes on to expose consumers to the true and pure cultural attributes of Inverness County.	
Execute the Brand's Fine Print which ensures the true and pure fulfillment of the cultural attributes of Inverness County.	
Execute completion of the preliminary brand elements contained in this report through the acquisition of a comprehensive brand identity guide.	
Transition the brand to become the mother-ship image of the municipality's overall web site – let tourism drive the image of the municipality.	
Identify a clear and unequivocal brand manager to oversee the brand in all of its potential applications.	
Other to be determined.	
2. To create new alliances which will marry the tourism sector with the fishery sector.	
Lead in the exploration of a tourism/harbor alliances initiative beginning with a one-day introductory symposium.	
Expand on this report's thinking toward the details which would support and rationalize such an alliance.	
Other to be determined.	
3. To fix the inadequacies of Inverness County's coastal touring network.	
Work with provincial tourism and transportation interests to redress the Ceilidh Trail and Cabot Trail in accordance with the recommendations contained in this report.	
Other to be determined.	
4. To stimulate entrepreneurship/investment and create jobs.	
Connect entrepreneurs to existing federal and provincial programs.	
Initiate tourism workshop series themed on various subjects of use to aspiring and existing tourism entrepreneurs and community leaders.	
Other to be determined.	

## Appendix B – Communications and Marketing



### Coattails Strategy

Ride with the strategies of DCBA and Nova Scotia Tourism.



### New Media Strategy

Create an outstanding inter-active web site and well-managed social media.



### Public Relations and Promotional Strategy

Rely more on public relations and travel media editorial.



### Brand-driven Apparel and Merchandise

Introduce a cool line of for-profit brand-associated apparel and merchandise.

## Appendix C – High Level Investment Scenario

The following table provides a high level, prioritized investment scenario for consideration by the Municipality of Inverness County Council. This scenario is intended simply to provide a context for discussion and is not in any manner intended to represent actual cost projections.

GREEN SHADING – IMMEDIATE-SHORT-TERM

YELLOW SHADING – INTERMEDIATE TERM

RED SHADING – LONG TERM

ITEM	INVESTMENT SCENARIO (2014-2017)
Brand identity completion	\$10,000
Human resource capacity building – 2 persons x 3 years	\$275,000
Web renewal	\$10,000
Harbours tourism infrastructure (10 harbours)	\$1,000,000
Waterfalls and waterways (Margaree) signage and human needs infrastructure	\$150,000
Tourism Workshop Series (6-8 themed workshops)	\$15,000
Gros Morne Institute on the ground	\$10,000
Best Practices Missions	\$10,000
Marketing (3 year partnership campaign) and social media strategy	\$300,000
Travel Media assistance (75 journalists over 24-36 months)	\$25,000
Accelerated Market Readiness (AMR) operator mentoring (40 operators over 24-36 months)	\$75,000
New brand gateway signage	\$100,000
Cultural Performance Spaces experiential intervention	\$50,000
Canadian Tourism Commission Signature Collection experiential development (3 over 18 months)	\$5,000
Other signage applications (e.g. beach identification, dance hall identification)	\$150,000
<b>TOTAL (over three fiscal years)</b>	<b>\$2,185,000</b>

