

# DAWSON CREEK COMMUNITY TOURISM PLAN

March 31, 2024



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## Acknowledgements

The Community Tourism Planning program was made available by:



### With the support of:



Many community stakeholders supported the City of Dawson Creek in the preparation of this Community Tourism Plan. The input provided by these stakeholders during workshops and interviews was essential to the development of the Community Tourism Plan. Participants are listed in Appendix A.

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

Dawson Creek was selected as one of several communities in British Columbia to participate in the Community Tourism Planning program for 2023 - 2024. The program is provided by Destination BC with support from Pacific Economic Development Canada. The planning process spanned from September 2023 to March 2024. This Executive Summary presents highlights from the Tourism Plan, and should be read in conjunction with the full report.

### Planning Considerations

The following planning considerations are based on the planning process's research, analysis and stakeholder input.

**Touring – motivated primarily by the draw of the Alaska Highway – has been the primary draw for leisure visitors.**

- Touring by RV, car, motorcycle and bicycle is the mainstay for leisure tourism in Northeastern BC and in Dawson Creek.
- The Alaska Highway – including its history, spectacular scenery, natural attributes, and community assets – is the primary trip motivator for touring visitors in the area.
- The location of Mile “0” of the Alaska Highway is a key advantage for Dawson Creek from a destination awareness and marketing perspective.

**Dawson Creek’s location presents key opportunities.**

- Related to the above point, Dawson Creek’s location at Mile “0” of the Alaska Highway is foundational for the area’s tourism industry. This presents key opportunities to further develop tourism and encourage visitors to stay longer in the area.
- Dawson Creek’s location positions it as a regional gateway for:
  - Tumbler Ridge;
  - Chetwynd;
  - Hudson’s Hope;
  - Pouce Coupe;
  - Taylor; and,
  - Many regional attractions.

This presents opportunities to collaborate to provide a collection of regional experiences, with Dawson Creek serving as the “base camp”.

**Dawson Creek’s location presents challenges.**

- The drawback of Dawson Creek’s location is its distance from major urban markets. This presents considerable transportation challenges.

**The length-of-stay for leisure visitors is short.**

- The majority of leisure visitors stay for less than one night. In 2023, just over 70% of visitors were same-day visitors, while 22% of visitors stayed for one night.
- While this is not positive, the fact that these visitors are travelling through the area presents an opportunity to encourage them to stay longer and spend more money in the community and broader area.

**Historical and current visitor activities are primarily informal and unguided.**

- Related to the above opportunity to increase the length-of-stay of existing visitors, there is a need to increase the number and types of engaging tourism activities in the area to keep people in the community longer.
- Currently, the majority of activities are informal and unguided. There are opportunities to develop more guided activities and packages for visitors to encourage them to stay longer.

**Business travel – motivated primarily by resource extraction and development projects – is a major visitor segment for Dawson Creek.**

- Business travel is a key sector for the area's travel industry. Many hotels cater to this market.
- These visitors spend money in the community, generating economic and employment impacts. There are opportunities to encourage these visitors to participate in more activities in and around Dawson Creek.
- It should be noted that resource-based sectors can be cyclical. There are periods when business travel related to the resource sector declines, which results in lower occupancy levels at hotels that focus on this sector.

**Dawson Creek's facilities and hosting capabilities present key opportunities.**

- Dawson Creek has several good community facilities that are used to host concerts, meetings, conferences, events and sporting events.
- This is important to generate economic and employment benefits for Dawson Creek and to help support the annual operating costs of these facilities.

**The current planning context in BC and Northern BC presents opportunities for tourism growth in Dawson Creek.**

- There is now an established culture and mindset that encourages collaborative, regional destination development supported by Destination BC, Indigenous Tourism BC and Northern BC Tourism.
- This presents great opportunities for Dawson Creek to benefit from regional planning processes, and related activities and programs.

**Focused development of tourism in Dawson Creek would present opportunities to contribute more to local economic growth and diversification.**

- Value of Tourism studies conducted historically at the local level and, more recently, at the Northern BC regional level, demonstrate that leisure and business travel can contribute significantly to economic and employment diversification and growth.
- Dawson Creek has opportunities to grow and diversify its economy through tourism development and marketing.

**Tourism in Dawson Creek would benefit from a stabilized model for tourism leadership and funding.**

- While the City has supported tourism over the years, the model for tourism leadership and management has changed several times.
- Positive and sustainable growth in tourism in Dawson Creek requires a stable leadership, management and funding model.

**Destination Vision for Dawson Creek**

The vision for Dawson Creek provides a picture of what success looks like in five to ten years, and was developed together with workshop participants.



**Dawson Creek  
Tourism Vision**

*Dawson Creek -- Mile "0" of the iconic Alaska Highway journey -- is the year-round event and service centre of the Northeast.*

*Here, travelers can discover the wonders of the Peace Region – big skies, wildlife, Northern Lights, epic outdoor adventure, diverse heritage and rich Indigenous culture.*

*The journey is complemented by a vibrant downtown offering Northern hospitality, local cuisine and craft breweries, unique shops and entertainment to create lasting memories.*

## Priority Goals and Projects

The following goals and projects were developed with input from workshop participants to help address the planning considerations noted earlier and achieve the destination vision.

<b>GOAL A</b>	<b>STABLE GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING ARE PROVIDED FOR TOURISM</b> Provide stable and effective management, governance and funding to enable tourism to grow and contribute further to economic diversity and the overall quality of life in Dawson Creek.
Project A-1	Establish a sustainable funding model.
Project A-2	Establish an effective governance model.
Project A-3	Establish an effective and stable management structure.
Project A-4	Develop and use a simple dashboard to monitor and communicate tourism performance.

<b>GOAL B</b>	<b>DAWSON CREEK'S DOWNTOWN CORE IS A HUB AND A "MUST SEE" ATTRACTION</b> Improve access, parking and the overall aesthetic of Dawson Creek's downtown core, contributing to a more enriching visitor experience that will keep visitors in the area longer.
Project B-1	Provide parking options to ensure visitors have easy access to key services, businesses, attractions and facilities.
Project B-2:	Create and implement a signage strategy for the City of Dawson Creek.
Project B-3	Continually improve services, facilities and amenities of the downtown core to entice visitors to spend more time in the community.
Project B-4	Continually upgrade the accessibility of facilities and infrastructure.
Project B-5	Revitalize the Heritage Walking Tour (featuring heritage sites, refreshed murals and the art walk).
Project B-6	Provide ongoing incentives and/or support to encourage hosting of events, festivals and activities in the downtown core to draw visitors and residents.



**GOAL C VISITORS ARE ENTICED TO STAY TWO OR MORE NIGHTS IN DAWSON CREEK**

Increase Dawson Creek's tourism draw and visitor length-of-stay through experience development.

Project C-1 Establish a working group to collectively develop tourism experiences.

Project C-2 Identify potential programs and experience development services to provide expertise and guidance to the working group.

**GOAL D DAWSON CREEK BENEFITS FROM COLLABORATION WITH REGIONAL DESTINATIONS AND ATTRACTIONS**

Collaborate with regional communities, destinations and attractions to develop clusters and routes that feature a range of tourism experiences.

Project D-1 Work with Northern BC Tourism and Destination BC to ensure that Dawson Creek is involved in initiatives related to enhancing the Great Northern Circle Route, including the Alaska Highway.

Project D-2 Work with Northern BC Tourism and the BC Snowmobile Federation to ensure that Dawson Creek has opportunities to be part of future, regional snowmobile route development initiatives.

Project D-3 Collaborate with regional communities to identify tourism experiences that are connected and that could be featured as "The Best of the Peace".

**GOAL E DAWSON CREEK ELEVATES ITSELF AS THE EVENT-HOSTING HUB OF THE NORTHEAST**

Capitalize on opportunities to host high-profile sporting events, sport tourism events, conferences and conventions, and entertainment events.

Project E-1 Establish a dedicated sport tourism, events and conference/convention office within the City of Dawson Creek or within any future new organization that is responsible for tourism.

Project E-2 Establish a portfolio of pre- and post-event tours and tourism experiences.

Project E-3 Optimize opportunities to attract high-profile entertainment and events.

Project E-4 Optimize opportunities to grow sport tourism by creating an annual plan for hosting targeted events.

Project E-5 Optimize opportunities to attract regional conferences and meetings by creating an annual plan for bidding on targeted events.

Project E-6 Monitor and report on the results of hosting sport tourism events, conferences/conventions and entertainment events.

**GOAL F      AN ANNUAL MARKETING AND VISITOR SERVICING PLAN GUIDES MARKETING AND VISITOR CENTRE INVESTMENTS**

Disciplined and strategic marketing and visitor servicing that is guided by an annual Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan is needed to help build awareness about Dawson Creek, increase visitation and increase visitor length-of-stay.

**Project F-1      Prepare and implement an Annual Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan.**

**Project F-2      Monitor the results of the Annual Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan.**

## 1. Introduction

### Background

Dawson Creek was selected as one of several communities in British Columbia (BC) to participate in the Community Tourism Planning program for 2023 - 2024. The program is provided by Destination British Columbia with support from Pacific Economic Development Canada.

### The Planning Process

The planning process for the Dawson Creek Community Tourism Plan spanned from September 2023 to March 2024. An outline of the process is shown below.

#### Dawson Creek Community Tourism Plan Process (September 2023 – March 2024)



### Consultation and Engagement

Consultation and engagement with local and regional stakeholders was foundational for the development of the Community Tourism Plan.

- Two in-person workshops were hosted to support the process, one in September 2023 (**28 participants**) and one in January 2024 (**35 participants**).
- The facilitator also conducted interviews with **17 stakeholders**, focusing mainly on those who were unable to attend one or both of the workshops.
- In addition, **50 people** responded to an online survey to provide additional input regarding a destination vision for Dawson Creek.

Lists showing workshop participants and interviewees are provided in Appendix A.

### Dawson Creek Community Tourism Plan Engagement



### Planning Context

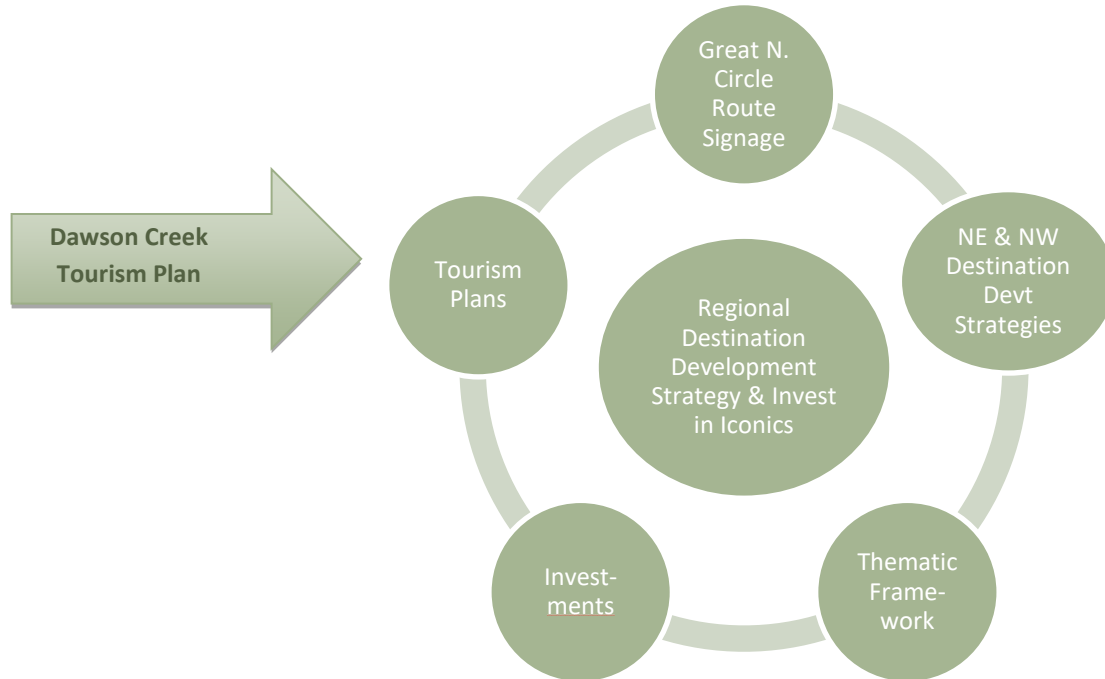
The timing for developing a new Community Tourism Plan in Dawson Creek is very good, from both a local and regional perspective.

Looking locally, the City of Dawson Creek has defined five strategic priorities for 2022 – 2026 that are very compatible with tourism development and growth. Tourism is seen as a priority with regard to encouraging economic diversity and improving the quality of life for residents. The strategic priorities are shown in the diagram below.

### City of Dawson Creek Strategic Priorities 2022 - 2026



Looking at the regional context, the timing for developing this Community Tourism Plan is also very good. Several high-priority tourism initiatives for Northern BC include: The Great Northern Circle Route Signage Master Plan (2022), the Northeastern and Northwestern Destination Development Strategies (2019), government investments in Northern BC (over \$140 million since 2019), the Northern BC Thematic Framework, community tourism plans, and, in the centre of the diagram below, the Northern BC Regional Destination Development and Invest in Iconics Strategy (2024).

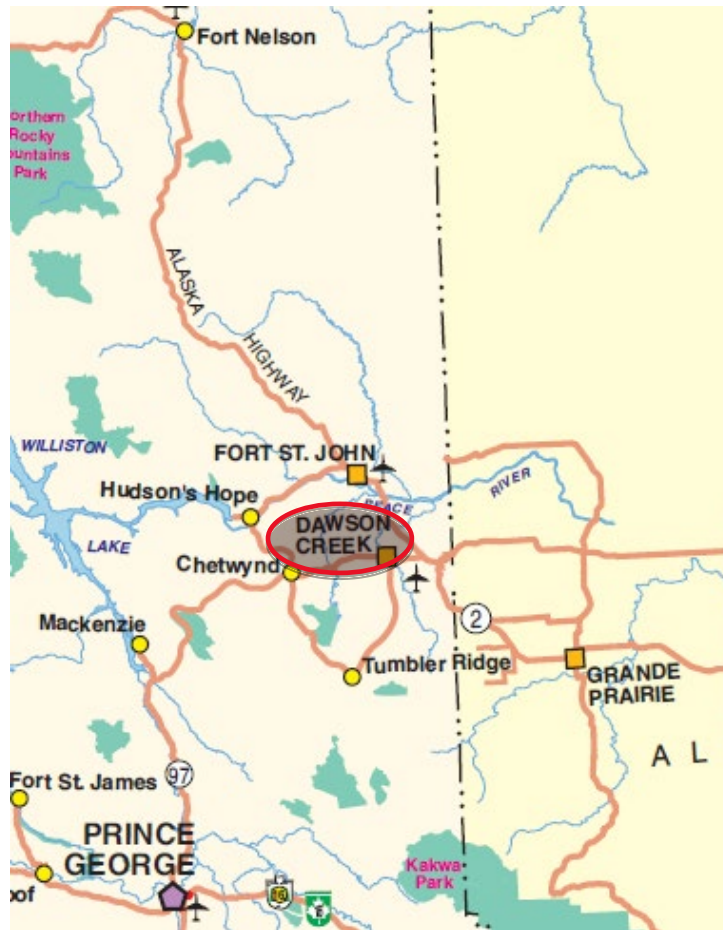


## 2. Dawson Creek Destination Overview

### Location

Incorporated in 1936, Dawson Creek has a total land area of 22.32 square kilometers and a population of approximately 13,194<sup>1</sup> (2024). Dawson Creek is located in the Peace River Regional District. It is the point of origin of the historic Alaska Highway, which stretches 2,400 kilometers north to Fairbanks in Alaska. Dawson Creek by highway is 65 km southeast of Fort St. John, 412 km northeast of Prince George, 1,198 km north of Vancouver, and 125 km west of Grande Prairie, Alberta.

The location of Dawson Creek relative to nearby communities in BC and Alberta is shown below.



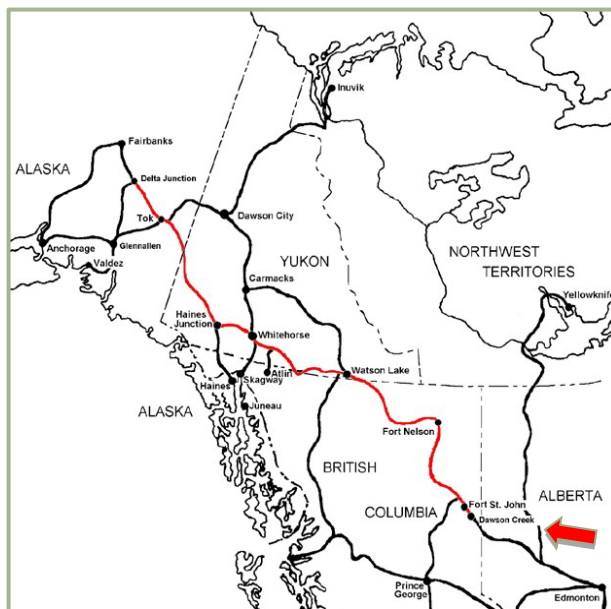
<sup>1</sup> <https://worldpopulationreview.com/canadian-cities/dawson-creek-population>

## The Alaska Highway – A Defining Feature

The Alaska Highway is a prominent, defining feature for the area and is identified as one of Northeastern BC's five Iconic Features in the Northern BC 10-Year Destination Development Strategy<sup>2</sup>. The Alaska Highway is a 2,237-kilometre (1,390-mile) roadway that stretches from Dawson Creek located in the northeastern section of British Columbia (BC), through the southwest section of the Yukon, to Delta Junction in Alaska. It was built by the United States (US) Army Corp of Engineers in 1942 to provide a supply route between the southern US states and Alaska, to support the US in its World War II efforts.

The BC portion of the Alaska Highway now serves as the major transportation corridor in the Peace River Regional District and the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality. It is also a tourism draw for the region for visitors who come to experience the heritage and cultural features, natural features, scenery and communities that are associated with touring on the Alaska Highway. Given the significance of the Alaska Highway, there have been several initiatives aimed at officially recognizing its significance, coordinating the stakeholders who are involved in aspects of the route's heritage, and coordinating marketing efforts. The Alaska Highway has been designated:

- An event of National Historical Significance by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (1954); and,
- An International Historic Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers and Canadian Society for Civil Engineering (1996).



**Dawson Creek is situated at Mile "0" of the Alaska Highway**

The highway runs 2,237 km from Dawson Creek to Delta Junction in Alaska

<sup>2</sup> Northeastern BC 10-Year Destination Development Strategy, Destination BC, 2019.

## Key Attractions and Activities

Key attractions and activities are listed below. At this time, all activities are self-guided, with the exception of some hunting provided by guide outfitters.

Key Attractions	
Mile “O” Post	Grain Elevator Art Gallery
Surveyor Statue	Farmer’s Market
Walter Wright Pioneer Village	Bear Mountain Ski Hill
Northern Alberta Railway Park	Nordic Trails
Mile “O” Rotary Lake Park	McQueen’s Slough
Bear Mountain Wind Park/Radar Lake	Swan Lake and One Island Lake provincial parks
Kiskatinaw Curved Wooden Bridge*	Casino
Railway Station Museum	Downtown Mural Project
Walking Tour	Ovintiv Event Centre
Waterfalls, alpine meadows and mountain ridges (Tumbler Ridge)	South Peace Community Multiplex

\* The bridge is currently not open due to disrepair

Key Activities	
Summer, Spring, Fall	Winter
Touring (car, RV, motorcycle, bicycle)	Downhill Skiing
Camping	Nordic Skiing
Hiking	Snow Shoeing
Fishing	Hunting
Hunting	Sporting Events/Sport Tourism
Festivals and Events	Snowmobiling
Farmers’ Market	Curling
Bird Watching	Hockey
Sporting Events/Sport Tourism	Skating
Golfing	
Walking Tour	
ATVing	



## Accommodation

Dawson Creek has a good supply of accommodation properties, including 18 commercial hotel/motel properties with a complement of 986 rooms, two bed and breakfast properties and several camping and RV facilities with a total of 350 sites.

Hotels, Motels and Lodges	# Rooms
Airport Inn	40
Aurora Inn	45
Midtown Motel (also has RV sites noted below)	6
Comfort Inn	63
Days Inn	85
George Dawson Inn	80
Holiday Inn	97
The Lodge Motor Inn	20
Peace Villa	48
Pomeroy Inn and Suites	94
DC Lodge	41
Stonebridge	100
Super 8	66
The Lodge	40
Travellers Inn	28
Voyageur Inn	5
Travelodge	48
Staybridge	80
<b>Total</b>	<b>986</b>

Bed & Breakfast Properties
Sunset Ranch B&B
Dawson Creek Coach House

Campgrounds and RV Parks	Sites
Northern Lights RV Park	92
Mile "0" Campsite	80
Tubby's RV Park & Car Wash	96
Alahart Apartments & RV Park	20
Farmington Fairways RV Resort	62
RV Sites at Midtown Motel	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>

## Event Facilities

The South Peace Multiplex opened in the spring of 2008 and houses three separate unique facilities. The multiplex is the largest entertainment and sports facility in northeastern BC and northwestern Alberta.

South Peace Community Multiplex Facilities			
	Ovintiv Events Centre	Ken Borek Aquatic Centre	Lakota Agriplex
<b>Location</b>	Dawson Creek	Dawson Creek	Dawson Creek
<b>Facility Focus</b>	Live Events/Hockey Conferences & Meetings	Aquatic Centre Swimming & Swim Meets	Equestrian Centre Rodeo
<b>Capacity/Size</b>	4,500 Permanent Seats 6,500 for Concerts	8-Lane 25m Competition Pool with Leisure and Toddler Pool	110 Indoor Stalls 76 Tack Lockers 100 x 240 ft. Riding Area
<b>Ownership</b>	City of Dawson Creek	City of Dawson Creek	City of Dawson Creek
<b>Management</b>	OVG360	Dawson Creek Community Services	Dawson Creek & District Stables and Arena Association

## Annual Festivals and Events

There are 15 events hosted in Dawson Creek annually, of which two are signature events that attract visitors from within and outside the region.

Festivals and Events	Month
<b><i>Signature Events</i></b>	
Mile "0" Cruisers Annual Summer Cruise/Show and Shine	July
Dawson Creek Annual Exhibition, Stampede and Parade	August
<b><i>Community/Regional Events</i></b>	
Family Day Events	February
Spring Breakup Rodeo and Dance	April
Dawson Creek Annual South Peace Oilmen's Association Lobster Fest	May
South Peace Art Society Auction Gala	May
Peace Art Festival	June
Indigenous People Day Celebrations	June
Annual Pioneer Village Jamboree	June
Participation Summer Solstice Park and Play Event	June
Multicultural Fusion Fest	June
Canada Day Parade and BBQ and Celebration (Pouce Coupe)	July
Dare to Dream Music Festival	July
Oktoberfest (Encana Events Centre)	October
<b>Total Dawson Creek Festivals &amp; Events</b>	<b>15</b>

## Conclusions

Dawson Creek is located in the northeastern corner of BC in the Peace River Regional District. The town has a total land area of 22.32 square kilometers and a population of approximately 13,063<sup>4</sup> (2023).

Dawson Creek is the point of origin of the historic Alaska Highway, which stretches 2,400 kilometers north to Fairbanks in Alaska. A key defining feature of Dawson Creek is its location at Mile “0” of the Alaska Highway.

In addition to heritage attractions related to the Alaska Highway, the area is also popular for outdoor recreation, including fishing, hiking, hunting and skiing/snowboarding at Bear Mountain. The majority of tourism activities are unguided. Dawson Creek hosts several annual festivals and events, two of which are signature events that attract visitors from within and outside the region.

The area has good infrastructure to support tourism. The facilities in the South Peace Municipal Multiplex enable Dawson Creek to host sporting events and major concerts, which draw out-of-town visitors. With regard to overnight accommodation, the area offers over 986 hotel/motel rooms, two B&Bs, and five campground/RV parks.

### 3. Dawson Creek Visitor Insights

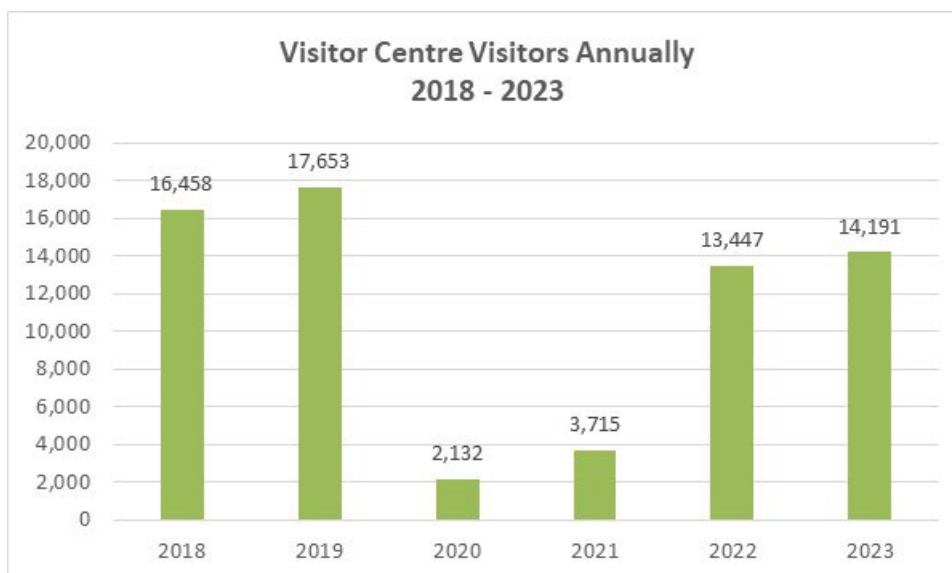
The information presented in this section was sourced from Visitor Centre data, Ovinitiv Event Centre impact data, and input from workshop participants.

#### Visitor Centre Statistics

Visitor Centre statistics are useful to review as they provide year-over-year trends. However, the reader should be aware that, as not all visitors to and through Dawson Creek will stop at the Visitor Centre, the statistics do not represent all visitors to and through the area. A large market – the resource and business market – will likely be under-represented in these statistics, as these visitors likely do not use the Visitor Centre to the extent that the leisure market does.

#### Overall Visitation

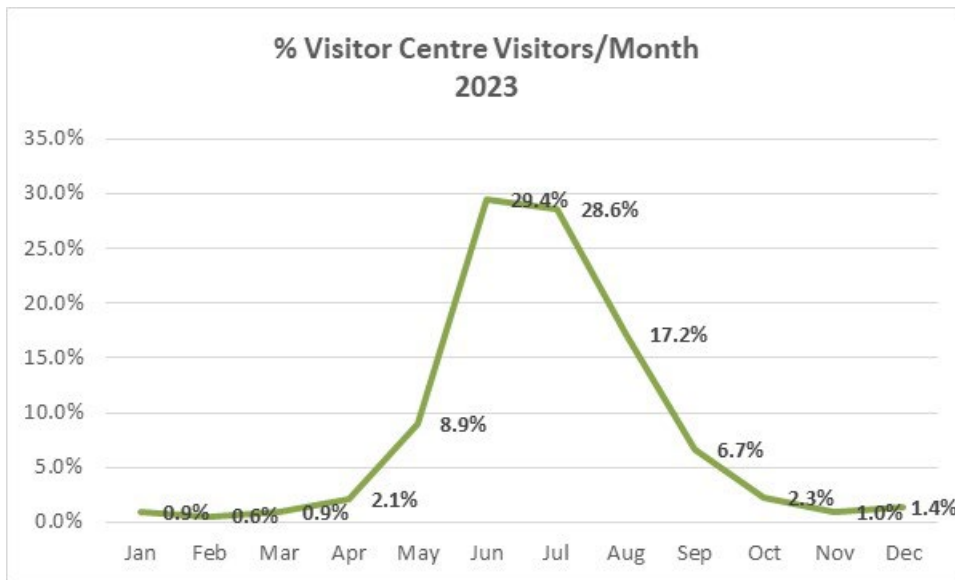
The graph below demonstrates that overall visitation to the Visitor Centre declined considerably in 2020 and 2021 as a result of the Covid 19 Pandemic. Visitation started to rebound in 2022 and 2023, a trend that other areas of BC and destinations worldwide experienced.



Source: Destination BC

#### Seasonality

As shown in the graph below, June to August represent the peak season for Dawson Creek. Visitation during the winter and shoulder seasons may actually be higher than what is shown here as these months do attract resource-based travelers, particularly when the resource sector is active. Resource-based travelers tend to be less likely to use Visitor Centre, and, therefore, the statistics do not capture these travelers.



Source: Destination BC

### Market Origin

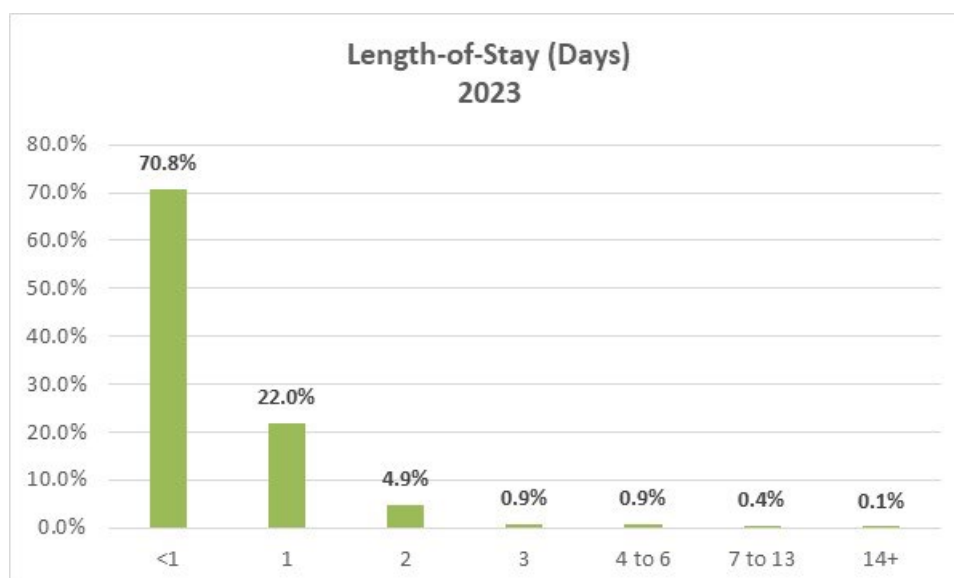
The graph below shows market origin data for 2018 and 2022. The largest source market for visitors to the Visitor Centre is Other US/Mexico, followed by Other Canada (2018), Local Residents, BC, Alberta and Europe. The predominance of the US market is likely a result of the popularity of the Alaska Highway with this market segment.



Source: Destination BC

### Visitor Length-of-Stay

As shown below, the majority of visitors to the Visitor Centre are “same day” visitors. In 2023, just over 70% of visitors were same-day visitors, while 22% of visitors stayed for one night. This presents an opportunity to increase the time that visitors stay in the Dawson Creek area.



Source: Destination BC

### Visitation Impacts Resulting from Special Events

The Ovintiv Event Centre (the “Centre”) (formerly the Encana Event Centre) is a key venue for event hosting in Northeastern BC. Statistics available regarding the Centre provide further information regarding visitation trends and the types of visitors that come to Dawson Creek.

#### Event Statistics (2016 – 2022)

The Ovintiv Event Centre has recovered well since the dip in attendance experienced during the height of Covid. In 2023, the centre hosted 90 events with 45,179 attendees.

#### Ovintiv Event Centre Events and Attendees

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total # of Events	38	81	74	82	30	14	56	90
Total # of Attendees	61,610	103,095	69,277	71,690	9,989	23,020	33,578	45,179

Source: Ovintiv Events Centre

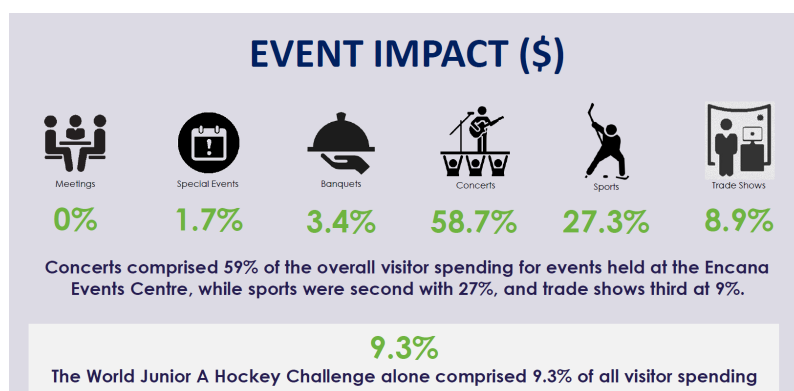
### Typical Attendee Origin

While the origin of attendees will vary depending on the artist or type of event, an approximate typical breakdown is:

- 1/3 from Dawson Creek/South Peace
- 1/3 from Fort St. John/North Peace
- 1/3 from Alberta (primarily Grande Prairie)

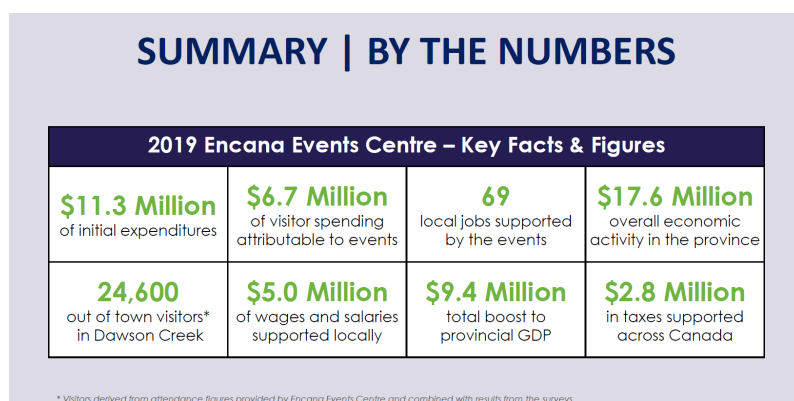
### Event Impacts (2019)

In 2020, an Economic Impact Study<sup>3</sup> (EIA Study) that focused on the 2019 impact of events hosted at the former Encana Event Centre (now the Ovintiv Event Centre) was completed. While meetings and special events generated the largest number of events in 2019, the EIA Study revealed that concerts generated an estimated 59% and sporting events generated an estimated 27% of overall visitor spending.



Source: Encana Event Centre 2019 Economic Impact Assessment, October 2020

The overall impacts generated by events hosted at the Encana Event Centre in 2019 were large, as shown in the following graphic.



Source: Encana Event Centre 2019 Economic Impact Assessment, October 2020

<sup>3</sup> Encana Event Centre 2019 Economic Impact Assessment, Derek Mager, STC EI Consultant, October 2020

## Market Characteristics

Experience Category	Experience Characteristics	Visitor Characteristics
<b>Heritage &amp; Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Museum, art gallery; walking tour of downtown, Pioneer Village</li> <li>• The area has a very vibrant arts culture</li> <li>• Self-guided, no guided tours</li> <li>• Need for more accessible parking (people park at VC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US visitors</li> <li>• Younger families doing the Alaska Highway</li> <li>• Older groups/retired; those who have the time</li> <li>• Couples/RV-ers who stay two nights + shopping, golfing</li> </ul>
<b>Hunting &amp; Fishing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Niche experience</li> <li>• Many camps or stay in RVs</li> <li>• Some stay in hotels, if in the area for longer period</li> <li>• Do not tend to spend a lot of time in town</li> <li>• In addition to hunting and fishing, some of these visitors may dine in town after long days</li> <li>• Some may also visit with family/friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many don't go into VC</li> <li>• Canadians; BC and Southern residents; middle-aged; younger, more male; from urban areas; also, locals</li> <li>• Stay one to two weeks</li> </ul>
<b>Touring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compatible with heritage and culture</li> <li>• More likely to visit Tumbler Ridge and take circle tours</li> <li>• Looking for wildlife; windmills</li> <li>• RVs usually</li> <li>• Stay locally to do other hiking in area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US, but also Europeans</li> <li>• May stay one to two nights</li> <li>• Active, younger (e-bikes)</li> <li>• Retirees</li> </ul>
<b>Sport Tourism: National/ International</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large, international sporting events:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e.g., U-18 hockey</li> <li>• Short duration</li> <li>• Strong economic impact</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use local hotels and restaurants</li> <li>• Shopping, museum, art gallery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer haul visitors</li> <li>• International athletes/competitors</li> <li>• Typically, 20-35 visitors, including families and coaching staff</li> </ul>
<b>Sport Tourism: Regional/ Local</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing sport tourism tournaments               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volleyball</li> <li>• Golf</li> <li>• Swimming</li> <li>• Figure skating</li> <li>• Swimming</li> <li>• Hockey</li> <li>• Curling</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use local hotels and restaurants</li> <li>• Shopping, museum, art gallery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional market</li> <li>• Often on weekends</li> </ul>
<b>Business Meetings/ Conferences and Resource Sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typically related to resource sector: mining, forestry, oil and gas</li> <li>• Some related to capital projects</li> <li>• Very important sector for short-term rentals and hotel stays</li> <li>• Positive impact on shopping and restaurants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dominated by male population</li> <li>• Wide age range: 20 – 60 years old</li> </ul>



Experience Category	Experience Characteristics	Visitor Characteristics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active at gyms, pools</li> <li>Good support for local economy</li> </ul>	
<b>Indigenous Cultural Experiences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good potential, but not yet well-developed – this is a “sunrise” opportunity</li> <li>Will take five to 10 years to develop more market-ready experiences</li> <li>Friendship Centre to build profile in the community: art, culture, Indigenous experiences</li> <li>Opportunities to develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ecotourism</li> <li>Interpretive tours</li> <li>Education: connection to the land</li> <li>Build on the positive development of Tse'k'wa National Historic Site (Charlie Lake Caves), which have recently been showcased through new interpretive signage, pathways, displays and programming</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest from several markets domestically and globally</li> </ul>
<b>Entertainment &amp; Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ovintiv Event Centre is a great venue for concerts, other events</li> <li>Other events outside Ovintiv, such as the car show, are significant</li> <li>Some attendees will stay in RVs or hotels, eat in restaurants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draw visitors from regional market</li> <li>Car show attracts multigenerational market</li> </ul>
<b>Outdoor Adventure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer: hiking, camping, mountain biking</li> <li>Winter increasing: skiing (downhill and cross-country), snowshoeing</li> <li>Primarily self-guided</li> <li>Female-led guiding is growing trend, but not yet established in the Dawson Creek area</li> <li>Currently, visitors must bring their own equipment – there is an opportunity and a need to develop equipment rental businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low awareness about these activities</li> <li>Summer Alaska Highway visitors may participate in some outdoor adventure</li> <li>Winter Powder King visitors may come from broader region</li> </ul>
<b>Visiting Friends &amp; Family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Important attractions and activities for VFR market: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wind Park (however signage and overall experience is not well developed)</li> <li>Pool, casino, Ovintiv</li> <li>Corlanes Sporting Goods and related history: #1 gun-building facility in Canada, taxidermy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visiting friends and relatives (VFR), mainly from BC</li> <li>However, VFR visitors who come to hunt may be from more distant markets</li> </ul>
<b>Agritourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This area has strong agricultural roots.</li> <li>The Farmers’ Market is a current, seasonal attraction.</li> <li>There are additional opportunities to expand experiences related to agritourism and farm-to-table dining.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VFR</li> <li>Regional visitors</li> <li>Touring visitors</li> </ul>

## Conclusions

Key conclusions regarding visitor data and trends are as follows.

- Visitation to the Dawson Creek Visitor Centre declined considerably in 2020 and 2021 as a result of the Covid 19 Pandemic. Visitation rebounded in 2022 and 2023, and is getting closer to pre-pandemic levels.
- June to August represents the peak season for leisure travel for Dawson Creek.
- The majority (of visitors to the Visitor Centre stayed in the area for less than one night. This presents an opportunity to provide reasons for visitors to extend their stay.
- The number of events hosted at the Oviniv Event Centre declined considerably in 2020 and 2021, and then rebounded in 2022 and 2023.
- An Economic Impact Study conducted in 2020 demonstrated that the Oviniv Event Centre generates considerable visitation and visitor spending impacts for the Dawson Creek economy.

## 4. Dawson Creek Tourism Leadership and Management

This section provides an overview of leadership and support for tourism in the Dawson Creek.

### National, Provincial, Regional and Local Organizational Structure

The following diagram shows the structure for tourism leadership within which Dawson Creek operates. Destination Canada and Destination British Columbia respectively are the national and provincial lead organizations for tourism destination management and marketing. NBCTA is the regional destination management and marketing organization (RDMO), while Tourism Dawson Creek is the local destination management and marketing organization (DMO). Each of these organizations offers leadership, opportunities for collaboration, various programs and, in some cases, funding programs, that help local DMOs, such as Tourism Dawson Creek, develop and market their tourism destination.



### History of Tourism Dawson Creek

Tourism Dawson Creek was established in 2001. Over the years, different models have been used to manage tourism. Entities that have managed tourism in the past include: the South Peace Historical Society, the Northern Rockies-Alaska Highway Tourism Association, the Chamber of Commerce, the Northern BC Tourism Association, and the City of Dawson Creek. The City is currently managing tourism in-house.

Note that, while the City has funded Tourism Dawson Creek over the years, the option of establishing the Municipal Regional District Tax (MRDT) to provide a sustainable funding source for tourism development and marketing has been considered. To date, the MRDT has not been established as a funding mechanism for tourism in Dawson Creek.

### Marketing and Advertising Activities

Tourism Dawson Creek conducts a range of marketing activities. These include print advertising, the maintenance of a website, radio advertising, social media activities, attendance at priority conferences and consumer shows, involvement in Destination BC programs, and involvement with

media writers and travel bloggers to increase awareness in key markets about the area's products and experiences.

## Marketing and Advertising Activities

Tourism Dawson Creek conducts a range of marketing activities. These include print advertising, the maintenance of a website, radio advertising, social media activities, attendance at priority conferences and consumer shows, involvement in Destination BC programs, and involvement with media writers and travel bloggers to increase awareness in key markets about the area's products and experiences.

The following table provides publication advertising budget information for 2019 and 2023. Key observations about these investments include:

- The total budget for this expenditure has been consistent over recent years.
- The focus on touring evident with investments in publications that target the touring market.

### Tourism Dawson Creek Advertising Investments (2019 and 2023)

Publication	Investment	
	2019	2023
Alaska Highway Historic Journey for 2023 Edition	\$ 2,000	\$ 3,150
Bell's Guide mapbook, and Yukon Map	\$ 1,500	\$ 5,816
Community Printers map 2023 Edition		\$ 735
Backroads map community feature (3 years)	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,987
MilePost 2024 Edition ad	\$ 5,500	\$ 4,500
Alaska Highway Business Guide (promo: free)		\$ -
Northern BC Travel Guide	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
RV West	\$ 3,000	
BC Lodging and Campgrounds	\$ 1,500	
Other	\$ 2,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 22,500</b>	<b>\$ 22,188</b>

Source: City of Dawson Creek

## Conclusions

Tourism Dawson Creek operates within a broader network of tourism destination management and marketing organizations, including Destination Canada, Destination BC, Indigenous Tourism BC and the Northern BC Tourism Association. Each of these organizations offers leadership, opportunities for collaboration, various programs and, in some cases, funding programs, that help local DMOs, such as Tourism Dawson Creek, thrive.

Tourism Dawson Creek has existed for over two decades. During this time, its leadership and management model has shifted: sometimes operated by an external organization on contract to the City; sometimes operated by the City in-house. At this time, Tourism Dawson Creek is operated by the City.

The City has provided funding to operate Tourism Dawson Creek, including the Visitor Centre, for many years. There has been discussion about establishing the MRDT as a sustainable funding source for tourism in Dawson Creek in previous years; however, the MRDT has not been adopted to date.

Tourism Dawson Creek invests in a range of advertising and marketing activities annually. The main focus of these investments has been in the touring market, suggesting the importance of this market segment to tourism in the Dawson Creek area.

## 5. Planning Considerations

**Touring – motivated primarily by the draw of the Alaska Highway – has been the primary draw for leisure visitors.**

- Touring by RV, car, motorcycle and bicycle is the mainstay for leisure tourism in Northeastern BC and in Dawson Creek.
- The Alaska Highway – including its history, spectacular scenery, natural attributes, and community assets – is the primary trip motivator for touring visitors in the area.
- The location of Mile “0” of the Alaska Highway is a key advantage for Dawson Creek from a destination awareness and marketing perspective.

**Dawson Creek’s location presents key opportunities.**

- Related to the above point, Dawson Creek’s location at Mile “0” of the Alaska Highway is foundational for the area’s tourism industry. This presents key opportunities to further develop tourism and encourage visitors to stay longer in the area.
- Dawson Creek’s location positions it as a regional gateway for:
  - Tumbler Ridge;
  - Chetwynd;
  - Hudson’s Hope;
  - Pouce Coupe;
  - Taylor; and,
  - Many regional attractions.

This presents opportunities to collaborate to provide a collection of regional experiences, with Dawson Creek serving as the “base camp”.

**Dawson Creek’s location presents challenges.**

- The drawback of Dawson Creek’s location is its distance from major urban markets. This presents major transportation challenges.

**The length-of-stay for leisure visitors is short.**

- The majority of leisure visitors stay for less than one night. In 2023, just over 70% of visitors were same-day visitors, while 22% of visitors stayed for one night.
- While this is not positive, the fact that these visitors are travelling through the area presents an opportunity to encourage them to stay longer and spend more money in the community and broader area.

**Historical and current visitor activities are primarily informal and unguided.**

- Related to the above opportunity to increase the length-of-stay of existing visitors, there is a need to increase the number and types of engaging tourism activities in the area to keep people in the community longer.
- Currently, the majority of activities are informal and unguided. There are opportunities to develop more guided activities and packages for visitors to encourage them to stay longer.

**Business travel – motivated primarily by resource extraction and development projects – is a major visitor segment for Dawson Creek.**

- Business travel is a key sector for the area’s travel industry. Many hotels cater to this market.
- These visitors spend money in the community, generating economic and employment impacts. There are opportunities to encourage these visitors to participate in more activities in the community.
- It should be noted that resource-based sectors can be cyclical. There are periods when business travel related to the resource sector declines, which results in lower occupancy levels at hotels that focus on this sector.

**Dawson Creek’s facilities and hosting capabilities present key opportunities.**

- Dawson Creek has several good community facilities that are used to host concerts, meetings, conferences, events and sporting events.
- This is important to generate economic and employment benefits for Dawson Creek and to help support the annual operating costs of these facilities.

**The current planning context in BC and Northern BC presents opportunities for tourism growth in Dawson Creek.**

- There is now an established culture and mindset that encourages collaborative, regional destination development supported by Destination BC, Indigenous Tourism BC and Northern BC Tourism.
- This presents great opportunities for Dawson Creek to benefit from regional planning processes, and related activities and programs.

**Focused development of tourism in Dawson Creek would present opportunities to contribute more to local economic growth and diversification.**

- Value of Tourism studies conducted historically at the local level and, more recently, at the Northern BC regional level, demonstrate that leisure and business travel can contribute significantly to economic and employment diversification and growth.
- Dawson Creek has opportunities to grow and diversify its economy through tourism development and marketing.

**Tourism in Dawson Creek would benefit from a stabilized model for tourism leadership and funding.**

- While the City has supported tourism over the years, the model for tourism leadership and management has changed several times.
- Positive and sustainable growth in tourism in Dawson Creek requires a stable leadership, management and funding model.

## 6. Vision, Goals and Projects

### Vision

A destination vision provides a **clear, compelling, and bold picture** of the **preferred future** for the destination.

#### Characteristics of a Vision



This vision was developed with input from participants at the January 2024 tourism planning workshop.



### Dawson Creek Tourism Vision

*Dawson Creek -- Mile "0" of the iconic Alaska Highway journey -- is the year-round event and service centre of the Northeast.*

*Here, travelers can discover the wonders of the Peace Region – big skies, wildlife, Northern Lights, epic outdoor adventure, diverse heritage and rich Indigenous culture.*

*The journey is complemented by a vibrant downtown offering Northern hospitality, local cuisine and craft breweries, unique shops and entertainment to create lasting memories.*



## GOAL A: Stable Governance and Funding

A stable and sustainable management, governance and funding model is a competitive advantage for a destination. While the City has supported tourism over the years, the model for tourism leadership and management has changed several times. This goal and supporting projects are provided to address the need for a stable model.

GOAL A	STABLE GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING ARE PROVIDED FOR TOURISM
	Provide stable and effective management, governance and funding to enable tourism to grow and contribute further to economic diversity and the overall quality of life in Dawson Creek.
<b>Project A-1</b>	<p><b>Establish a sustainable funding model.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the possibility of establishing the Municipal Regional District Tax (MRDT) as a source of annual funding to support tourism marketing and related activities that are permitted within the parameters of the MRDT program</li> <li>Establish the MRDT if deemed feasible.</li> <li>In addition to MRDT funding, it will be important for the City of Dawson Creek to continue to fund certain functions related to tourism management.</li> <li>Once the funding model is established:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the activities funded by the City and the MRDT are clearly delineated;</li> <li>Ensure that expectations relative to each funding source are clearly delineated; and,</li> <li>Ensure tourism expenditures are monitored and measured to report out on effectiveness.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Project A-2</b>	<p><b>Establish an effective governance model.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tied in with establishing a sustainable funding model, establish an effective governance model that ensures the diverse interests of travel and tourism stakeholders are well-represented with regard to tourism development and marketing decisions.</li> </ul>
<b>Project A-3</b>	<p><b>Establish an effective and stable management structure.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define the most effective and stable structure for managing tourism development and marketing (e.g., City Department, Destination Management and Marketing Organization, contracted out to another related organization)</li> <li>This may tie in with the outcomes of Projects 1 and 2 above.</li> </ul>
<b>Project A-4</b>	<p><b>Develop and use a dashboard to monitor and communicate tourism performance.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a simple and easy-to-use dashboard to monitor and report out on agreed-upon measures on a quarterly basis.</li> </ul>

## GOAL B: Downtown Core

A vibrant, aesthetically-pleasing, accessible and “easy-to-navigate” downtown core is vital to a community’s appeal as a tourism destination. Participants at the tourism workshops emphasized the importance of improving ease of access, signage, parking, vibrancy and downtown aesthetics to support the growth of a sustainable tourism industry in Dawson Creek.

In addition to the above-noted input, many involved in the City’s Official Community Plan (OCP) processes expressed similar sentiments, as reflected in the following excerpts.

*Participants repeatedly indicated that they wanted to see greater diversity in the City’s economic base and activities. Participants voiced their aversion to the cyclical nature of the natural resource economy in Dawson Creek, and expressed their desire for investment in and the support of small businesses and the creative sector, especially in the downtown core....<sup>4</sup>*

*...participants felt that tourism in the area should be enhanced, as visitors come to Dawson Creek from all over the world to experience the Alaska Highway. It was felt that advertising, signage and directions along the highway and in town could be improved, as well as increased amenities for tourists.<sup>5</sup>*

*Increase advertising and signage of being “Mile Zero” on the Alaska Highway and consider having more directional signage along the highway and in the city.<sup>6</sup>*

The OCP includes the following policies and action items.

*Develop wayfinding signage throughout the City:*

- a. Identifying different neighbourhoods/areas in the City*
- b. Wayfinding between neighbourhoods, parks and public spaces*
- c. Identifying key community gateways, including entrances into Dawson Creek and the downtown<sup>7</sup>*

*Wayfinding infrastructure such as interpretative signage shall be provided to assist in navigation, and to educate trail-users...<sup>8</sup>*

The following goal and supporting projects are in response to the above-noted input from workshop participants and residents.

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<sup>4</sup> Dawson Creek Official Community Plan, p. 23

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 23

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 43

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 53

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 55

<b>GOAL B</b>	<p><b>DAWSON CREEK'S DOWNTOWN CORE IS A HUB AND A "MUST SEE" ATTRACTION</b></p> <p>Improve access, parking and the overall aesthetic of Dawson Creek's downtown core, contributing to a more enriching visitor experience that will keep visitors in the area longer.</p>
<b>Project B-1</b>	<p><b>Provide parking options to ensure visitors have easy access to key services, businesses, attractions and facilities.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the upcoming parking analysis that the City is undertaking includes input from Visitor Centre staff, tourism stakeholders and business-owners who understand visitor needs and travel patterns.</li> </ul>
<b>Project B-2:</b>	<p><b>Create and implement a signage strategy for the City of Dawson Creek.<sup>9</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that tourism stakeholders and others who understand the importance of wayfinding and interpretive signage to the overall tourism experience provide input for the signage strategy.</li> <li>Ensure that improved and/or new signage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enables visitors to easily find their way to key sites, services and attractions, ultimately contributing to an enjoyable visitor experience;</li> <li>Tells stories that reflect the heritage of Dawson Creek and enrich the visitor experience; and,</li> <li>Amplify the iconic qualities of Mile "0" of the Alaska Highway and other key attractions in and around Dawson Creek.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Work with NBCTA and Destination BC to coordinate the City's signage strategy with the Great Northern Circle Route Signage Master Plan and the Provincial Signage Strategy.</li> </ul>
<b>Project B-3</b>	<p><b>Continually improve services, facilities and amenities of the downtown core to entice visitors to spend more time in the community and area.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Downtown Development Action Plan:</b> Build on relevant initiatives of the recently-developed Downtown Development Action Plan to make the downtown core a "must-see" attraction, with complementary services and amenities that appeal to both visitors and residents.<sup>10</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> City of Dawson Creek OCP, p. 55

<sup>10</sup> The program components are intended as a package of incentives, significant enough in their breadth of potential support to see levels of uptake that lead to meaningful improvements in the form of development, building upgrades, business expansion, and new business openings. Making a downtown incentives program multi-layered and robust in terms of grant amounts, rebates and types of investment targeted is particularly important at the beginning of the revitalization process, as this sends a clear signal to the development and business community that the City is prioritizing its downtown. This in turn helps to build confidence for private investment, seeing that the area's success is a City priority. Once a few catalyst projects are moving forward (developments, renovations, new businesses etc.), this can create momentum that entices other businesses to look at opportunities where they may not have otherwise done so. Each element of a downtown incentives program will require concerted effort on the parts of the City and the business community. With clear direction, leadership, and close collaboration between the City, property owners, business owners and other entities (e.g., Chamber of Commerce), downtown Dawson Creek can become an exciting hub of the community.

<b>GOAL B</b>	<p><b>DAWSON CREEK’S DOWNTOWN CORE IS A HUB AND A “MUST SEE” ATTRACTION</b></p> <p>Improve access, parking and the overall aesthetic of Dawson Creek’s downtown core, contributing to a more enriching visitor experience that will keep visitors in the area longer.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure tourism-related businesses are aware of incentive programs available through the Downtown Development Action Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Project B-4</b>	<p><b>Continually upgrade the accessibility of facilities and infrastructure.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade key facilities and infrastructure to ensure they are accessible.</li> <li>• Ensure that accessibility to tourism attractions and supporting facilities and infrastructure is included in the meetings and resulting initiatives of the Northeast Regional Accessibility Committee.</li> <li>• Build on initiatives of the OCP that emphasize a “healthy and vibrant” community and inclusive neighborhoods, as these types of initiatives can help make the community more accessible for visitors.</li> <li>• Work with NBCTA's Access and Inclusion Specialist to encourage businesses to enhance their listings on HelloBC by updating the DBC Accessibility Checklist.</li> </ul>
<b>Project B-5</b>	<p><b>Revitalize the Heritage Walking Tour (featuring heritage sites, refreshed murals and the art walk).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in the Heritage Walking Tour to make this a “must do” experience that amplifies and celebrates the unique heritage and arts community of Dawson Creek. Key actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Updating and refreshing the murals;</li> <li>○ Creating an “art walk”, based on the area’s vibrant arts community;<sup>11</sup></li> <li>○ Revising print and web-based walking tour materials;</li> <li>○ Creating new touchpoints (signage), as part of the signage strategy; and,</li> <li>○ Tying the Heritage Walking Tour in with the Great Northern Circle Route Signage Master Plan and regional initiatives to profile “the Best of the Peace” experiences.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Project B-6</b>	<p><b>Provide ongoing incentives and/or support to encourage hosting of events, festivals and activities in the downtown core to draw visitors and residents.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The types of events and activities that would help the downtown core “come to</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> Dawson Creek's arts community is extremely vibrant and foundational in developing and amplifying stories that support experiences.

**GOAL B****DAWSON CREEK'S DOWNTOWN CORE IS A HUB AND A "MUST SEE" ATTRACTION**

Improve access, parking and the overall aesthetic of Dawson Creek's downtown core, contributing to a more enriching visitor experience that will keep visitors in the area longer.

life" include:

- The Farmers' Market (to relocate from its current area);
- Certain festivals and events;
- Culinary tourism, farm-to-table, and "ale trail" types of events.

## GOAL C: Visitor Length-of-Stay

The majority of leisure visitors stay in Dawson Creek for less than one night. Given the strong draw of the Alaska Highway, and the resulting numbers of visitors who travel through Dawson Creek, there is a great opportunity to entice these visitors to stay longer in the community. There is also a great opportunity to encourage resource-based and business travellers to spend time enjoying local attractions, events and restaurants. Enhancing the appeal of the downtown core (see Goal B) will help encourage visitors to stay longer. In addition to this, there is an opportunity to develop more organized, guided experiences. Currently, the majority of activities available are informal and self-guided. Offering more well-developed experiences and packages will help:

- Encourage the touring visitor to stay longer and experience Dawson Creek;
- Encourage resource-based and business travellers to enjoy attractions, activities (e.g., golf) and events; and,
- Attract certain markets (primarily regional markets) to visit and experience Dawson Creek.

Workshop participants indicated several types of winter and non-winter experiences that could encourage visitors to stay longer. However, expertise and guidance need to be provided to enable this to happen. The following goal and supporting projects are intended to guide Dawson Creek and its stakeholders to increase the number of more organized, guided experiences and packages.

GOAL C	VISITORS ARE ENTICED TO STAY TWO OR MORE NIGHTS IN DAWSON CREEK Increase Dawson Creek's tourism draw and visitor length-of-stay through experience development.
<b>Project C-1</b>	<b>Establish a working group to collectively develop tourism experiences.</b> The working group should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A representative from the organization leading destination management and marketing in Dawson Creek (to be determined when a new governance and management structure is established as per Goal A); and,</li> <li>• Community members, organizations and business owners who are passionate about developing more formalized experiences that amplify the stories of Dawson Creek.<sup>12</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Project C-2</b>	<b>Identify potential programs and experience development services to provide expertise and guidance to the working group.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize programs that are suitable for the purposes of experience development.</li> </ul>

<sup>12</sup> Possible organizations to draw upon: Northern Trails Heritage Society, South Peace Historical Society, Mile "0" Cruisers, Nawichan Friendship Centre, Northern Lights College, Community Futures, hoteliers, RV parks/campground operators, Kiwanis Performing Arts Centre (KPAC)/SP Arts Council, Pioneer Village, Dawson Creek Art Gallery, Chamber of Commerce, NLC Rodeo, restaurants and brew pubs, and others.

**GOAL C****VISITORS ARE ENTICED TO STAY TWO OR MORE NIGHTS IN DAWSON CREEK**

Increase Dawson Creek's tourism draw and visitor length-of-stay through experience development.

- Focus on packages and experience that feature activities and attractions such as:
  - Birding;
  - Fishing;
  - Hiking;
  - Golf;
  - Pickleball;
  - Swimming;
  - Snowmobiling;
  - Culinary experiences;
  - Heritage walking tour; and,
  - Festivals and events.
- Leverage the resources available in [Destination BC's Learning Centre](#) and stay informed about new experience development learning opportunities and programming available in Northern BC that can help implement this project.

## GOAL D: Regional Collaboration

The current planning context in BC and Northern BC presents good opportunities for destination and experience development in the region. There is now an established culture and mindset that encourages collaborative, regional destination development supported by Destination BC, Indigenous Tourism BC and Northern BC Tourism.

This presents great opportunities for Dawson Creek to benefit from regional planning processes, and related activities and programs.

The Peace Region (as featured in the Northern BC Thematic Framework) is shown below. Several of these communities are interested in destination and experience development, including Tumbler Ridge, Chetwynd, Hudson's Hope, Taylor and Fort St. John.



Given this context, the timing is right for enhanced collaboration between Dawson Creek and neighboring communities to further develop regional experiences that will help draw visitors, enrich their visitor experience and keep them in the region longer.



### Summer Tour Option (example only)

Participants suggested the following type of regional itinerary, that could be offered as a self-guided or guided (charter bus) tour. Note that this is an example only.



### Summer ATV and Winter Sledding Tour Options (example only)

Participants also suggested a camping and ATV trek from Dawson Creek to Tumbler Ridge, using a trail system. A similar winter tour option could be planned, which would entail developing a hut-to-hut sledding system, possibly in collaboration with the Province of BC and the BC Snowmobile Federation.

## Presentation of Itineraries

A good example of how local and regional itineraries can be presented to visitors is provided below. This features “The Infinity Loop”, located in the Mt. Hood and Columbia Gorge Region of Oregon. The web-based versions of these graphics are interactive, allowing the user to click on an image or route to obtain further travel information and stories.



Source: [The Infinity Loop](https://www.hood-gorge.com)

The following goal and supporting projects are related to capitalizing on the current, positive, collaborative destination development environment in Northern BC.

<b>GOAL D</b>	<b>DAWSON CREEK BENEFITS FROM COLLABORATION WITH REGIONAL DESTINATIONS AND ATTRACTIONS</b> Collaborate with regional communities, destinations and attractions to develop clusters and routes that feature a range of tourism experiences.
<b>Project D-1</b>	<p><b>Work with Northern BC Tourism and Destination BC to ensure that Dawson Creek is involved in initiatives related to enhancing the Great Northern Circle Route, including the Alaska Highway.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designate one individual to collaborate with Northern BC Tourism, Destination BC and other stakeholders regarding:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of the Great Northern Circle Route Signage Master Plan; and,</li> <li>Priority initiatives related to the Alaska Highway from the Northern BC Regional Destination Development and Iconics Strategy.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Work with Northern BC Tourism and neighboring communities to elevate the Alaska Highway journey, as described in the Northern BC Destination Development and Iconics Strategy.</li> </ul>
<b>Project D-2</b>	<p><b>Work with Northern BC Tourism and the BC Snowmobile Federation to ensure that Dawson Creek has opportunities to be part of future, regional snowmobile route development initiatives.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the South Peace Snowmobile Management Plan.</li> <li>If considered a priority to Dawson Creek and relevant stakeholders, participate in related initiatives to implement this plan within the Peace region.</li> </ul>
<b>Project D-3</b>	<p><b>Collaborate with regional communities to identify tourism experiences that are connected and that could be featured as “The Best of the Peace”.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold an initial meeting with tourism leaders/representatives from Pouce Coupe, Taylor, Fort St. John, Tumbler Ridge, Chetwynd, Hudson’s Hope and Grand Prairie to discuss the feasibility of this type of initiative.</li> <li>If there is strong interest, hold regular (possibly quarterly) meetings to develop and implement a “Best of the Peace” action plan, which should delineate:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Best of the Peace” experiences that are or could be visitor-ready or market-ready within one year;                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Stay and Play” packages (hotel or camping combined with ski, snowmobile, heritage attractions, hiking, birding, and more),</li> <li>Guided hiking with regional hiking companies;</li> <li>Northern trails,</li> <li>Attractions and experiences along the Alaska Highway,</li> <li>Indigenous cultural experiences,</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**GOAL D****DAWSON CREEK BENEFITS FROM COLLABORATION WITH REGIONAL DESTINATIONS AND ATTRACTIONS**

Collaborate with regional communities, destinations and attractions to develop clusters and routes that feature a range of tourism experiences.

- Agritourism and culinary experiences, and,
- Tours and circle tours that showcase regional attractions;
- Visitor information that features these experiences (this information could be included on websites and in relevant guides);
- Collaboration between the visitor centres;
- Collaborative marketing; and,
- How to measure results (e.g., level of visitor interest).

## GOAL E: Event Hosting Hub of the Northeast

Dawson Creek's facilities and hosting capabilities present very good opportunities to further develop the community as a Northeastern hub for event and sport hosting.

The community has a strong track record for hosting larger, high-profile events in addition to smaller, sporting and entertainment events. Such events have been proven to generate considerable economic and employment benefits for the community. They also provide opportunities to profile Dawson Creek as a tourism destination, which can encourage visitors to come back to experience more of the area.

The following goal and supporting projects are intended to help achieve the following:

- Further enable Dawson Creek to attract and successfully host:
  - Major, high-profile sporting events;
  - Smaller, regional sport tourism events (hockey, swimming, curling, etc.);
  - Small conferences and conventions; and,
  - Concerts and other forms of entertainment that draw overnight visitors (regional market).
- Enhance the ability of Dawson Creek to use such events to showcase the area with pre- and post-tours that keep participants and spectators in the area longer and encourage them to return.

<b>GOAL E</b>	<b>DAWSON CREEK ELEVATES ITSELF AS THE EVENT-HOSTING HUB OF THE NORTHEAST</b> Capitalize on opportunities to host high-profile sporting events, sport tourism events, conferences and conventions, and entertainment events.
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<b>Project E-1</b>	<p><b>Establish a dedicated sport tourism, events and conference/convention office within the City of Dawson Creek or within any future new organization that is responsible for tourism.</b> This office would require approximately two FTEs<sup>13</sup> to effectively conduct this work. The suggested scope of work could include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain an inventory of venues, including their event hosting attributes (capacity, amenities, services, parking, etc.);</li> <li>• Actively search for and bid on sport and convention/conference events that would be suitable for Dawson Creek to host;</li> <li>• Attend the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance Congress;</li> <li>• Attend other relevant conferences to network and promote Dawson Creek as an event-hosting hub;</li> <li>• Monitor local, regional and federal grant programs related to event hosting;</li> <li>• Lead the preparation of bids in collaboration with relevant facility managers and support facilities (e.g., accommodation and food and beverage providers);</li> </ul>
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<sup>13</sup> Full time equivalent employees

<b>GOAL E</b>	<b>DAWSON CREEK ELEVATES ITSELF AS THE EVENT-HOSTING HUB OF THE NORTHEAST</b> Capitalize on opportunities to host high-profile sporting events, sport tourism events, conferences and conventions, and entertainment events.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the City’s Communications Department to effectively market upcoming sporting events to encourage attendance; and,</li> <li>• Work with facility managers, support facilities/services and visiting event contacts to coordinate the hosting of events, conferences and conventions.</li> </ul>
<b>Project E-2</b>	<b>Establish a portfolio of pre- and post-event tours and tourism experiences.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This could be led by the City of Dawson Creek or any future new organization that is responsible for tourism.</li> <li>• Key steps to develop this portfolio include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reviewing similar pre- and post- tourism programs provided by small-to-medium communities;</li> <li>○ Coordination with key services and attractions that would provide pre- and post- experiences in the Dawson Creek area and in the broader North Peace area; and,</li> <li>○ Coordination with experience development work that may be conducted through Goals C and D.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Project E-3</b>	<b>Optimize opportunities to attract high-profile entertainment and events.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note that the Oviniv Event Centre is professionally managed, and successfully attracts and hosts entertainment events.</li> <li>• Continue to capitalize on the facility and reputation of the Oviniv Event Centre to attract high-profile entertainment and events that can serve as a draw for overnight visitors from the regional market.</li> </ul>
<b>Project E-4</b>	<b>Optimize opportunities to grow sport tourism by creating an annual plan for hosting targeted events.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hosting regional sport tourism competitions and events can generate significant visitor spending and raise the profile of Dawson Creek as a destination.</li> <li>• The plan should be created by the dedicated office (see E-1) in concert with the school district, sports clubs, and other, relevant not-for-profit organizations.</li> <li>• Types of competition and events include: curling, hockey, swimming, and others.</li> </ul>
<b>Project E-5</b>	<b>Optimize opportunities to attract regional conferences and meetings by creating an annual plan for bidding on targeted events.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hosting regional conferences and meetings can generate significant visitor spending and raise the profile of Dawson Creek as a destination.</li> <li>• The plan should be created by the dedicated office (see E-1) in concert with the relevant associations and hosting facilities.</li> </ul>

<b>GOAL E</b>	<b>DAWSON CREEK ELEVATES ITSELF AS THE EVENT-HOSTING HUB OF THE NORTHEAST</b> Capitalize on opportunities to host high-profile sporting events, sport tourism events, conferences and conventions, and entertainment events.
<b>Project E-6</b>	<b>Monitor and report on the results of hosting sport tourism events, conferences/conventions and entertainment events.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This will require setting up a simple reporting framework with:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Easy-to-obtain metrics for each type of event;</li><li>○ A succinct and easy-to-read reporting framework (one page); and</li><li>○ A reporting schedule (this could be quarterly or semi-annually).</li></ul></li><li>• Ensure these measures are included in the Tourism Performance Dashboard (see Project A-4).</li></ul>

## GOAL F: Strategic Marketing and Visitor Servicing

Annual investments in marketing and advertising for Dawson Creek are shown earlier in Section 4. It is essential for Dawson Creek to continue investing in targeted activities to help increase awareness amongst and attract target markets. Complementing this is the need for continued, effective visitor servicing offered through the Dawson Creek Visitor Centre.

This Community Tourism Plan outlines several proposed enhancements to the destination and to experiences (see Goals B, C, D and E). Future marketing investments need to reflect efforts to build awareness about enhanced and new experiences. Some of these experiences may be regional in nature, such as *The Best of the Peace* and circuits featuring regional attractions. Collaborative marketing will be important to help build awareness about these regional experiences. The Visitor Centre will continue to play a key role in building awareness about these enhanced and new experiences, encouraging visitors to stay longer.

The following goal and supporting projects are focused on ensuring that Dawson Creek conducts disciplined and targeted marketing and visitor servicing guided by an annual marketing and visitor servicing plan.

### GOAL F AN ANNUAL MARKETING AND VISITOR SERVICING PLAN GUIDES MARKETING AND VISITOR CENTRE INVESTMENTS

Disciplined and strategic marketing and visitor servicing that is guided by an annual Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan is needed to help build awareness about Dawson Creek, increase visitation and increase visitor length-of-stay.

#### Project F-1 Prepare and implement an Annual Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan.

- This should be developed by the organization leading tourism development and management for Dawson Creek, with input from relevant tourism partners and stakeholders. If the MRDT is established, there may be parameters for the development of this plan.
- Key sections of the Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan could include:
  - Introduction
  - Target markets
  - Previous year's investments and results
  - Upcoming marketing and advertising activities and intended results: local, regional, cooperative
  - Visitor centre activities and intended results
  - Implementation plan and key measurables
  - Budget

#### Project F-2 Monitor the results of the Annual Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan.

- This should be coordinated with Project A-4: develop a dashboard to monitor and communicate tourism performance.



## 7. Action Plan

The following Action Plan is intended to provide guidance to the City of Dawson Creek and tourism stakeholders regarding implementation of the Community Tourism Plan. This may be modified based on further input from the City and others at a later date.

GOAL A: STABLE GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING ARE PROVIDED FOR TOURISM	LEAD & PARTNERS	IDEAL TIMING
A-1: Establish a sustainable funding model.	City of DC Input from industry	By Jan 2025
A-2: Establish an effective governance model.	City of DC Input from industry	By Jan 2025
A-3: Establish an effective and stable management structure.	City of DC Input from industry	By Jan 2025
A-4: Develop a simple tourism performance dashboard.	City of DC Input from industry	By Jan 2025

GOAL B: DAWSON CREEK'S DOWNTOWN CORE IS A HUB AND A "MUST SEE" ATTRACTION	LEAD & PARTNERS	IDEAL TIMING
B-1: Provide parking options to ensure visitors have easy access to key services, businesses, attractions and facilities.	City of DC Input from businesses	TBD
B-2: Create and implement a signage strategy for the City of Dawson Creek.	City of DC Input from industry	TBD
B-3: Continually improve services, facilities and amenities of the downtown core to entice visitors to spend more time in the community and area.	City of DC Input from industry & businesses	Ongoing
B-4: Continually upgrade the accessibility of facilities and infrastructure.	City of DC Input from businesses	Ongoing
B-5: Revitalize the Heritage Walking Tour (featuring heritage sites, refreshed murals and the art walk).	City of DC Input from the arts community and other relevant stakeholders	2024
B-6: Provide ongoing incentives and/or support to encourage hosting of events, festivals and activities in the downtown core to draw visitors and residents.	City of DC Input relevant stakeholders	2024 and ongoing

GOAL C: VISITORS ARE ENTICED TO STAY TWO OR MORE NIGHTS IN DAWSON CREEK		LEAD & PARTNERS	IDEAL TIMING
C-1:	Establish a working group to collectively develop tourism experiences.	New Lead Tourism Organization Input from interested businesses and attractions	2025
C-2:	Identify potential programs and experience development services to provide expertise and guidance to the working group.	Working Group (as defined above)	2025

GOAL D: DAWSON CREEK BENEFITS FROM COLLABORATION WITH REGIONAL DESTINATIONS AND ATTRACTIONS		LEAD & PARTNERS	IDEAL TIMING
D-1:	Work with Northern BC Tourism to ensure that Dawson Creek is involved in initiatives related to enhancing the Great Northern Circle Route, including the Alaska Highway.	New Lead Tourism Organization NBCTA ITBC Other North Peace communities	2025
D-2:	Work with Northern BC Tourism and the BC Snowmobile Federation to ensure that Dawson Creek has opportunities to be part of future, regional snowmobile route development initiatives.	New Lead Tourism Organization Input from BC Snowmobile Federation	2025
D-3:	Collaborate with regional communities to identify tourism experiences that are connected and that could be featured as “The Best of the Peace”.	New Lead Tourism Organization Working Group (see Goal C) Representatives from other communities/ attractions	2025

GOAL E: DAWSON CREEK ELEVATES ITSELF AS THE EVENT-HOSTING HUB OF THE NORTHEAST		LEAD & PARTNERS	IDEAL TIMING
E-1:	Establish a dedicated sport tourism and conference/convention coordination office within the City of Dawson Creek or within any future new organization that is responsible for tourism.	City of DC Input from facility managers	2024/2025
E-2:	Establish a portfolio of pre- and post-event tours and tourism experiences.	New Lead Tourism Organization Working Group (see Goal C)	2025 & ongoing
E-3:	Optimize opportunities to attract high-profile entertainment and events.	Ovintiv Event Centre	2024 & ongoing
E-4:	Optimize opportunities to grow sport tourism by creating an annual plan for hosting targeted events.	City of DC Input from facility managers, School District, not-for-profit sport organizations	2024/2025 & ongoing
E-5:	Optimize opportunities to attract regional conferences and meetings by creating an annual plan for bidding on targeted events.	City of DC Input from facility managers	2024/2025 & ongoing
E-6:	Monitor and report on the results of hosting sport tourism events, conferences/conventions and entertainment events.	City of DC & Coordinator Input from facility managers	2024 & ongoing

GOAL F: AN ANNUAL MARKETING AND VISITOR SERVICING PLAN GUIDES MARKETING AND VISITOR CENTRE INVESTMENTS		LEAD & PARTNERS	IDEAL TIMING
F-1:	Prepare and implement an Annual Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan.	New Lead Tourism Organization Input from partners and stakeholder	Annually
F-2:	Monitor the results of the Annual Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan.	New Lead Tourism Organization	Quarterly

## 8. Next Steps

The most important next steps for the Dawson Creek Community Tourism Planning process are to:

- Review the Community Tourism Plan with tourism stakeholders and City Council;
- Establish a process for addressing Goal A regarding a Stable Governance and Funding model for tourism, as the outcome of this initiative will impact how the other goals and projects are implemented;
- Review and revise the Action Plan, confirming that the right lead organizations and partners are noted and the suggested timing is reasonable given local circumstances; and,
- Create more detailed action plans for selected priority projects to ensure the Community Tourism Plan gains traction during 2024.

## APPENDIX A: Participants in the Planning Process

### Workshop #1: September 26, 2023

#### 28 Attendees (including facilitator)

Name	Organization
Dale Bumstead	Scion Strategies Consulting Services
Duncan Malkinson	Chamber of Commerce
Bert Goulet	Mile 0 RV Park (MOPS)
Lyn Washington	South Peace Historical Society
Candace Goldade	South Peace Historical Society
Jamie Maxwell	Triathlon
Kurtis Nguyen	Multicultural Fusion Fest (South Peace Community Arts Council)
Robin Haggerty	Dawson Creek Farmers Market
Melissa Love	City of Dawson Creek
Tiffany Hetenyi	City of Dawson Creek
Sarah Falys	City of Dawson Creek
Ryan McIvor	City of Dawson Creek
Darcy Dober	Mayor, City of Dawson Creek
Kevin Henderson	CAO, City of Dawson Creek
Pine Cormier	Farmers' Market
Robin Haggerty	Farmers' Market
Tim Schilds	New Spirit Rotary
Sheldon Batt	Mile "0" Park and Campground
Alex Reschny	South Peace Mile "0"
Robin Holstein	RG Strategies
Jeannette Ferrer	Flavours 8
Victor Giyani	Chances Casino
Merina Shearing	Dawson Creek Golf Course
Angela Keech	Indigenous Tourism BC
Visnja Milidragovic	Destination BC
Amber Harding	Northern BC Tourism
Chelsea Mottishaw	City of Dawson Creek
Jennifer Nichol	Facilitator

**Workshop #2: January 24, 2024****35 Attendees (including facilitator)**

Name	Organization
Johanna Martens	Kiwanis Performing Arts Centre (KPAC)
Stella Barredo	Center Cinema
Danielle Roscher	BC Snowmobile Federation/Untamed Tours
Alex Reschney	Mile 0 RV Park (MOPS)
Jeanette Ferrel	Flavours 8
Kurtis Nguyen	Kiwanis Performing Arts Centre (KPAC)/SP Arts Council
Sheldon Batte	Mile 0 RV Park (MOPS)
Jamie Maxwell	DC Triathlon
Sue Kenny	Community Futures Peace Liard
Nicole Parfy	Mile 0 Cruisers
Lynn Washington	Historical Society
Candace Goldade	South Peace Historical Society
Jesse Drew	Northern Lights College
Mary Ross	Northern Lights College
Lisa Ward	MLA
Robin Holstein	AK Highway Touring Guide
Chante Patterson Elden	Northern Lights College
Amy Kaempf	City of DC Councillor
Duncan Malkinson	Art Gallery
Lisa Minchau	Nawican Friendship Center
Victor Gyan	Chances Casino
Pat O'Reilly	Bear Mountain Nordic
Greg Apolonis	City of DC Councillor
Cherry Ann Shark	Dawson Creek
Marielle	Dawson Creek
Maria Parrento	Dawson Creek
Chelsey Yaremichuk	City of DC
Sarah Falys	City of DC
Melissa Love	City of DC
Angela Keech	Indigenous Tourism BC
Ryan MacIvor	City of DC
Chelsea Mottishaw	City of DC
Melissa Klassen	City of DC - Visitor Centre
Jennifer Moore	Northern BC Tourism Association
Jennifer Nichol	Facilitator

**Interviewees (October – December 2023)**

Name	Organization
Jesse Drew	Northern Lights College
Reid Leer	Dawson Creek Exhibition Association
Connie Patterson	Dawson Creek Exhibition Association
Mark Perry	Staybridge Hotel
Charlie Parslow	Councillor, City of Dawson Creek
Alex Reschny	Mile 0 RV Park (MOPS)
Darcy Dober	Mayor, City of Dawson Creek
Amy Kaempf	Councillor, City of Dawson Creek
MacDonald	Councillor, City of Dawson Creek
Greg Apolona	Councillor, City of Dawson Creek
Sue Kenny	Community Futures
Janice Reyes	Comfort Inn
Randy Haviland-Janzen	Resident
John Rigsby	Farmington Golf & RV
Aaron Mathias	Corlane Sporting Goods
June Torero	Super 8
Jessica Kula	Our Social Collective