



Tourism North Public Meeting Minutes January 28th, 2013 1:30 – 3:00 pm The Pas, MB / Conference Call

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 1:37 pm by Chairperson Betty Landego.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Betty Landego, TN chairperson, rep Thompson Unlimited, (cc)
Charlene Grant, TN coordinator, CF North Central Dev. (cc)
Shawn McKinney, TN board, rep Town of The Pas
Bunny Burke, TN board, rep CF Greenstone (cc)
Clem Jones, TN board alternate, rep Town of The Pas
Doug Genaille, TN board, rep CF Cedar Lake
Joe Cote, TN board alternate, rep CF Cedar Lake
Mark Clarke, Travel MB (cc)
Colin Ferguson, Travel MB (cc)
Paul Turenne, Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters (cc)
Shane Cripps, Thompson's Northern Experience (cc)
Bradley Karp, CJ1240
Ken Kobelka, Evergreen Resort
Sharain Jones, Sam Waller Museum/The Pas Renewal Corp.
Paul Nevaskshoff, Aberdeen Lodge
Herb Jacques, Super 8
Remi Rheault, Rotary / Christ Church
Sharon Lidbetter, MB Education, Training & Trades

Regrets: John Friess, Calm Air

3. TOURISM NORTH OVERVIEW

Betty Landego provided a brief overview of Tourism North:

- Tourism North began in 1999 and was founded by the five Community Futures offices in northern MB (North Central Development, Cedar Lake, Greenstone, Kitayan, Northwest), Norman Regional Development Corp. and the Town of The Pas.
- To date board is comprised of Thompson Unlimited (Thompson's economic development agency), CF North Central Development, CF Greenstone, CF Cedar Lake and the Town of The Pas.
- Goal is to position northern Manitoba as a priority tourist destination.
- Tourism North contracts North Central Development to coordinate Tourism North efforts.

- An operating grant is received on an annual basis, it must be matched with in-kind contributions from the board partners.

4. FINANCIAL REPORT

Bunny Burke, Treasurer for Tourism North and board rep for Community Futures Greenstone, provided a financial report:

- \$35,000 is received in annual operating funds from the Province (Manitoba Tourism Secretariat), has remained status quo since inception.
- A minimum of \$35,000 must be matched by partner contribution annually in order to qualify for grant.
- Main expenses include: coordinator, marketing & promotions, legal and accounting and projects.
- To date, \$26,635 has been received from the Province. A holdback will be received once interim reporting is provided. \$38,539 has been disbursed. The cost of the regional tourism guide was \$16,000 and coordinator to date has been \$13,000, not leaving a lot of dollars to be used for advertising or projects. Currently Tourism North has \$3,300 in the bank.

ACTION: Charlene Grant to circulate financials to meeting participants (Balance Sheet as at 12/31/2012, Income Statement 04/01/2012 to 12/31/2012 and General Ledger Report 04/01/2012 to 12/31/2012).

5. TOURISM NORTH ACTIVITIES

ONGOING MARKETING

5.1 Tourism North Website

Tourism North manages the website www.visitnorthernmanitoba.ca. The website is becoming a database for all-things tourism in northern Manitoba. Business listings, feature notices & articles, attractions and recreation information, event listings, etc are all free for upload. To get your business, event, attraction, etc listed on the website contact the coordinator at cgrant@northcentraldevelopment.ca.

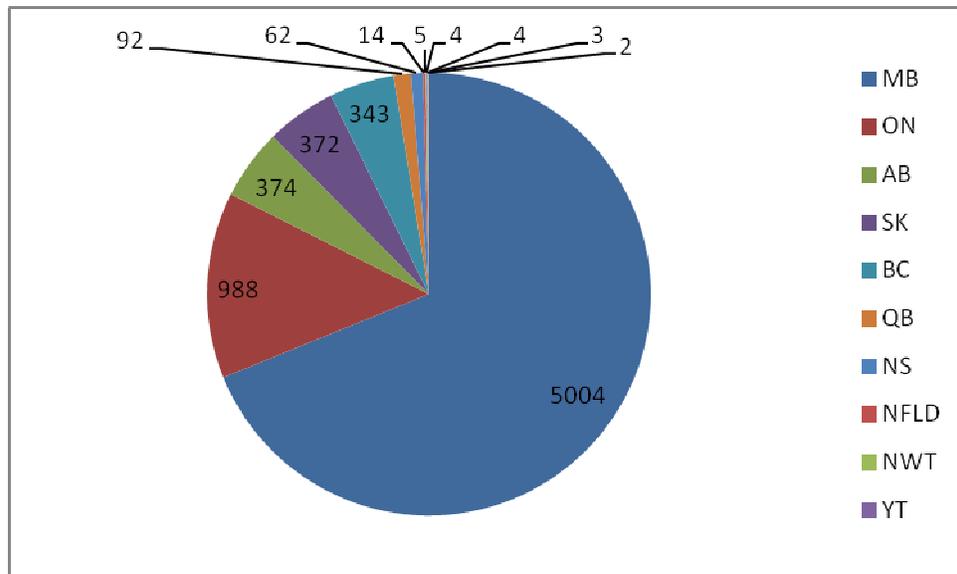
The regional tourism guide published by Tourism North and Frank Fieber and RV detailed itineraries are available for download from the website home page.

Tourism North created a QR Code that is now used on all printed material to drive traffic to the website. Google Analytics are used to gather website stats.

The most popular pages visited within the website are Camping, Outfitters & Tours, Events, Our Communities, Fishing, Bed & Breakfasts and Waterfalls.

- Over 9,500 visitors to the TN website last year (up 3,000 from previous year).
- 26,500 page views

- Traffic came to site from 82 different countries. Top countries visiting the website were from Canada (7,500), USA (1,500) and United Kingdom (75).
- Within Canada, most visitors were from Manitoba (5004), Ontario (988), Alberta (374) and Saskatchewan (372)



5.2 Trade Shows

Tourism North participates in trade shows during the year when timing and funding permits. TN participated in the Winnipeg RV Show the last three years. It was estimated that booth volunteers spoke to approx. 1,200 attendees about planning a trip to northern MB. For the 2012 RV Show, TN put together RV itineraries, handouts were given to interested RV'ers that encouraged them to visit the website. The TN website was revamped to include the itineraries in a downloadable format.

Tourism North partners participate in other trade shows from time to time, for example Community Futures Greenstone has participated in the Snow Birds Show in Florida and this year will participate in the Sportsmans Show in Fargo. Whenever TN or a partner participates in a trade show, volunteers are willing to bring information on specific communities, attractions, businesses, etc with them for distribution to show attendees.

ACTION: Anyone wanting information distributed at the Sportsmans Show in Fargo, contact Bunny Burke at CF Greenstone – 204-687-6967 or bunny.greencom@mymts.net.

5.3 Tourism Packages

Tourism North gets requests for further information on northern Manitoba from the website throughout the year. Included in the package is a personal letter, Nexstop, Northern Manitoba

Adventure Map and Tourism North luggage tag, packaged in a Tourism North envelope (printed with images of northern MB).

This year, about 50 packages have been mailed out (April 1, 2012 – today). Requests come from all over the world (Canada, USA, Russia, Ukraine, Italy, Pakistan, India).

5.4 Advertising

Tourism North has allocated approximately \$4,000 annually on advertising. Last fiscal year advertising was focused locally to go along with direct mail campaign and increase awareness of the RTA itself. Summer advertising focused on golf in northern MB to build upon the Northern MB Golf Adventure Passport project.

Tourism North partners will do advertising and allocate costs to in-kind. An example was shown where CF North Central Development placed an ad highlighting annual festivals in the region.

PAST PROJECTS

5.5 Cinnamon Bun Trail

From time to time Tourism North partners with other RTAs on projects. The Cinnamon Bun Trail was one such partnership. Parkland Tourism took the lead in coordinating a brochure noting all the places across the province to get homemade cinnamon buns. Tourism North was pleased to have partnered with: Fat Boy Restaurant (The Pas), Flin Flon Aboriginal Friendship Centre, Gypsy's Bakery (Churchill), Chicken Chef (Thompson) and the Grub Box (The Pas) on this project.

5.6 RV Itineraries

See item 5.2.

5.7 Highway Signs

Tourism North installed two highway billboard signs over the past two years to entice traffic to the website and ultimately to northern Manitoba. Signs are located near the Canada/USA border on HWY #75 and near the entrance to Riding Mountain National Park.

The signs depict water images as our most common requests for more information are around water tourism (waterfalls, fishing, adventure travel, etc).

Signs are very large and made of metal, 12' X 40'. Signs are insured and lease agreements are made with the land owners for a period of 5-years.

5.8 Northern MB Golf Adventure Passport

In the summer of 2012, Tourism North coordinated a project that partnered two communities – Thompson and The Pas by way of a golf passport and contest. TN designed and printed passports that

could be purchased at participating golf courses. Information on all 5 northern MB golf courses was included in the passports. When golfing at a participating course, golfers were given a stamp for their book. Completed books were entered into grand prize draws at the end of the season.

The purpose of the contest was to promote travel throughout the north and to promote our courses in southern Manitoba.

Prizes were donated by contest sponsors/partners: Calm Air, Nickel City Motors, Thompson Golf Club, Halcrow Lake Golf & Country Club and Tourism North.

CURRENT PROJECTS

5.9 Winter Passport

Tourism North has plans to build on the passport pilot project by continuing into a 2nd year, with the focus of the passport being winter. TN would like to include snowmobile & ski clubs and trails, winter festivals, dog sled races, ice fishing derbies and general winter recreation North of 53.

An ad-hoc committee is currently being set up, a draft timeline and action plan have been put together. Initial discussions have taken place with the Thompson Trailbreakers snowmobile club, Thompson ski club and Kelsey Trail Sno-Riders. An anticipated project launch is the fall of 2013.

ACTION: Anyone interested in being involved in the ad-hoc committee for the winter passport project is invited to contact the coordinator at cgrant@northcentraldevelopment.ca

5.10 Nextstop

Tourism North published the first northern Manitoba tourism guide in 2009. "Nextstop" was created as a km-by-km guide to rubber tire tourism, modeled after the Alaskan *Milepost*. This project is a partnership with Frank Fieber. Frank researches and designs the guide with direction from Tourism North. Frank receives ad revenue in exchange for his work. The guide is distributed at Travel MB Visitor Centres, is shipped world-wide in response to requests for information from our website.

Each year the guide has been published, it has built on the previous year, including more communities, more attractions, etc each time, for example: the 2nd edition included communities that weren't road accessible and an index in the back, the 3rd edition included snowmobile club information, 24 hour gas stations and a cell phone coverage map.

Our 4th edition agreement will be negotiated in the near future with hopes of printing for the summer of 2013.

ACTION: If you know of something in your community that should be included in Nextstop, please contact the coordinator at cgrant@northcentraldevelopment.ca

5.11 Boat Launch

Tourism North is looking at including all boat launches in northern Manitoba in the next edition of Nexstop. Some project funding has been secured from the Tourism Secretariat to create map graphics to use in marketing (print and web). A second phase of this project could be inventorying the launch amenities, prioritizing needed upgrades, fund development and project coordination on the upgrades.

5.12 Things to Do

Tourism North has partnered with 3 communities to date to create “Things to Do” posters: Thompson, Flin Flon and The Pas. TN will create the poster for any community wishing to participate (at no cost), communities need to provide: a list of the top things to do while visiting the community, 4-5 high quality images, community website, address and logo.

TN would like to create public area displays with all the community posters side by side for a regional display. Communities wanting to participate would need to cover the cost of their poster printed and mounted on wood.

ACTION: Communities interested in creating a Things to Do poster or participating in the public area regional display can contact the Tourism North coordinator at cgrant@northcentraldevelopment.ca

TRAINING

5.13 Training Opportunities with Travel MB

Tourism North members have stayed up-to-date on Travel MB training initiatives including the Cutting Edge Experiential Tourism workshops and recent Explorer Quotient introduction. EQ profiles travelers into 9 different explorer types. The idea behind EQ is you can identify who may be travelling to your attraction or community and do some very targeted marketing. Colin Ferguson, CEO Travel MB elaborated on EQ:

- EQ is the most comprehensive research tool he has ever seen. It allows users to determine who their best audience is, locate them and directly target them (ie which media tools to use, what are travel patters, social patterns, etc.).
- EQ was developed by the Canadian Tourism Commission, other provincial tourism bodies have adopted EQ, Travel MB is the latest addition and will use in upcoming branding strategy.
- Colin encouraged everyone to go online and take the survey to find out which type of explorer they are and who they might be targeting to their business.

- Right now, Travel MB is targeting Authentic Experiencers (folks who like the Arctic Safari, Hunting & Fishing) and Cultural Explorers (folks who would immerse themselves in local culture, events, attractions).

5.14 Other

MB Tourism Awards: Each year Tourism North likes to put forward nominations for the awards, there are several different categories and recently we have had some finalists and winners coming out of the north. If you know of someone in the tourism industry that should be recognized and would like further information on the award program, please contact Charlene at 204-677-1494 or cgrant@northcentraldevelopment.ca. Travel MB coordinates the awards on behalf of the Minister of Culture, Heritage & Tourism.

Public Meetings: Tourism North holds public meetings throughout the year and invites anyone interested in tourism to attend and share their thoughts.

Partnerships: Thompson Tourism Committee, Travel MB, Manitoba Regional Tourism Network, Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters, etc.

Volunteers / Ad-Hocs: if you would like to get more involved with Tourism North, you're welcome to join an ad-hoc committee to work on any of the projects outlined today. Contact the coordinator for more information – cgrant@northcentraldevelopment.ca

6. ROUNDTABLE

Paul Nevaskshoff, Aberdeen Lodge

Noted that guided fishing trips are down. Travel MB used to provide a list of leads from the website, would like to see that again. Aberdeen would like to do some website development.

- *Mark Clarke indicated that Travel MB can no longer pass on information due to privacy act.*
- *Paul Turenne suggested that there could be a box to be checked by the visitor requesting information from Travel MB if they are ok with their information being shared.*
- *Charlene Grant indicated that when a specific request comes into the Tourism North website the visitor is directed to the list of all operators providing the requested service (within the TN website). Tourism North could ask the question when information is requested whether the visitor would like their email address shared with potential guides, etc.*

Ken Kobelka, Evergreen Lodge

Highway signage needs improving. There is an issue with dust from gravel road at covering buildings and signs. Also indicated there is talk of removing fish cleaning stations in his area, this is a concern.

- *Paul Turenne indicated that from the last MLOA AGM and event, a meeting between Colin Ferguson, Travel MB CEO and Gord McIntosh,*

Minister of Conservation & Water Stewardship. Suggested that more cross-departmental communication is needed.

Sharain Jones, Sam Waller Museum

Noted tourism numbers to the museum were good this year, could have been related to The Pas' 100th anniversary celebrations. Sharain is director of the museum as well as chair of The Pas Renewal Corp. The Renewal Corp has taken on the Visitor Centre and is interested to understand how other visitor centres are sustaining themselves.

Remi Rheault, Rotary/Christ Church

Feels there is work to be done (researched and promoted) with historical significance of the north and Quebec connection. Some work is being done by the Christ Church with Cree panels. This is a trend with genealogical websites and ancestry tracing.

This year The Pas Rotary Club celebrates 85 years, there will be a large event in The Pas May 30th, 31st, June 1st, 2nd.

- *Tourism North can provide Nextstop books for May/June event and put event information on the TN website.*

ACTION: Shawn McKinney to work with Rayme to see that Nextstops are provided for the Rotary event and that information gets posted on the TN website.

Herb Jacques, Super 8

Feeling that The Pas is lost and has no focus when it comes to tourism. There is a Destination Marketing Organization, but has a lack of direction. No one from DMO beside Shawn in attendance today. Unsure if Sonny Lavallee was still a rep with Travel MB.

- *Betty Landego questioned whether a future Tourism North public meeting in The Pas should be held in the evening to try to attract more participants.*

Sharon Lidbetter, Employment Training & Trade (The Pas)

Attending to keep abreast of tourism initiatives in the area. Will share information with her colleagues.

Clem Jones, Town of The Pas alternate rep for TN

Has been with Tourism North since inception, it was started to with the objective of creating Fam Tours for travel writers to promote northern MB as a destination. Feels that Tourism North and industry need to liaise more. Packages need to be created and ready to sell. The Pas has a lot of work ahead of them, feeling that tourism doesn't really belong anywhere right now, need to find it's place. There was a tourism body for The Pas called *The Pas and District Tourism Association*, it failed miserably. Tourism North is a tool that The Pas can use. Each individual community needs to take responsibility for tourism and then the collaborative work will come.

Doug Genaille, CF Cedar Lake rep for TN

Would like to see focus on bird watching. The Pas & area is in a migratory path.

Shane Cripps, Thompson's Northern Experience

Started a company called Thompson's Northern Experience to bridge the gap between visitors & tour guides. Has a tour bus and coordinates tours, fishing, etc. Business is expanding to include a lodge and eco tourism centre that will be open next summer.

Would like to see tourism industry utilize more high def video for messaging, referenced the Newfoundland tourism campaign.

Asked if there has been lobbying for marketing dollars, noted \$35,000 status quo since Tourism North inception.

Suggested exit surveys with visitors (online and in person before they leave northern MB).

Asked about updates to Tourism North website, is there a process for annual updates. Shane's information has a mistake in it.

Likes the idea of EQ and targeting different types of tourists. Had an idea for a welcome centre in Thompson that didn't pan out, shared Sharain's challenge.

- *Charlene Grant indicated the RTAs have been working with MB Tourism Secretariat on reviewing the Rural Regional Tourism Initiative (TN funding program). There is a conference call tomorrow with Darryl & Michelle from the Secretariat, as they roll out the first bit of information on changes/plans for next few years.*
- *Betty Landego noted that currently the City of Thompson has an accommodation tax, Council allocates the revenue to safety, housing and infrastructure. A case has been made to Council that a portion of those dollars should go directly to tourism.*
- *Charlene Grant noted that there is no formal process for TN web updates, done on an ongoing basis. Annually CFNCD tries to touch base with operators to ensure listings are up-to-date (typically done by phone). Charlene does updates, any corrections can be sent to her at cgrant@northcentraldevelopment.ca*
- *Betty Landego indicated there may be an opportunity include an exit survey on the Tourism North website. This idea could be discussed at the Tourism North strategic planning session.*

ACTION: Tourism North will look at exit strategy at strategic planning session.

Mark Clarke, Travel MB

Travel MB has been putting most of their effort into EQ, will be sharing with regions, entire roll out will be over a couple years. EQ is detailed market research that will ensure TMB's marketing dollars are well spent. TMB is currently working on the 2013 high volume campaign (Spring & Summer). TMB will be undergoing a rebranding (currently *It's Manitoba Time*), 2014/2015 a shift in marketing messages will reflect rebranding inline with Canadian Tourism Commission and EQ. Rebranding will be done in consultation with industry, regions, etc.

Bunny Burke, TN rep CF Greenstone

Thanked The Pas for hosting, commended on their DMO and accommodation tax as an example for others. This year Flin Flon will be celebrating 80 years with several events.

CF Greenstone will be travelling to Fargo for the Sportsmans Show in March, is able to take any material from hotels, outfitters, communities, etc.

ACTION: Anyone wishing to send brochures or other promotional material with CF Greenstone for display and distribution at the Sportsmans Show in Fargo can get in touch with Bunny at 204-687-6967 or bunny.greencom@mymts.net

Paul Turenne, Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters

MLOA is a political advocacy group, lobbies for the lodging industry re: border issues, transportation, airports. MLOA does not do marketing but consults on it. Attending this meeting to stay abreast of what is going on. Will do some internal MB marketing re: an ad was placed by MLOA in the 2013 Angling Guide.

The MLOA website has links to all members, Tourism North is an allied member (2012).

7. NEXT MEETING

The next public Tourism North meeting will take place in June. Exact date and location to be determined.

8. ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 3:11 pm.