

LIVING HISTORY AND CULTURAL TOURISM
SEPTEMBER 13 – 17, 2009

BEST PRACTICE MISSION SUMMARY REPORT

Submitted to:

The Nova Scotia Department of
Tourism, Culture and Heritage



Tourism, Culture and Heritage

Atlantic Canada
Opportunities
Agency



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NSTHRC/TIANS

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

In September of 2009 the Nova Scotia Tourism Human Resource Council (NSTHRC) in partnership with the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage, and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), facilitated a Living History and Culture Tourism Best Practice Mission to Newfoundland.

Modeled after the *Tourism Atlantic* best practice series, this mission provided an opportunity for Nova Scotia tourism industry representatives to visit the St. John's and Bonavista regions of Newfoundland to identify best practices to assist in their own core development areas.

Participants selected for the mission were expected to identify opportunities to improve their own business operations, and also to share lessons learned with colleagues in the tourism industry upon their return.

The mission began and ended in St. John's where the participants met with representatives from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to learn how the province has included the preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) as a key initiative in its Strategic Culture Plan. Participants then visited local communities along the Bonavista Peninsula to learn first hand from industry peers, volunteer groups and stakeholders. Discussion and presentations focused on product development to enhance their destination region and ensure high end quality experiences for visitors. Meal locations were selected whenever possible to include genuine Heritage Inns and locations that have been restored and provide local cuisine.

The following report outlines best practice findings and information that will be shared with the Nova Scotia Industry.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Best Practice Mission were to provide professional and educational development for Nova Scotia's tourism industry by:

- Viewing the successes of other small communities on how living history can enhance the visitor experience through a variety of methodologies.
- Learning from other destinations about successful paths and potential pitfalls to avoid in community development.
- Identifying effective ways of developing tourism product by partnering with other tourism infrastructure and private sector operations.

- Providing an opportunity for participants to establish new business contacts, networks and develop reciprocal partnerships where appropriate.
- Stakeholders will learn how to effectively position their experiential product for tourism growth and strategic development.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The Trinity Bay area of Newfoundland is an ideal example of a remote region that has created a truly unique and authentic living history destination. Its success will demonstrate the possibilities that could be recreated in many regions of Nova Scotia.

- Business owners will develop the skills and negotiation techniques to identify unique partnering opportunities to better meet consumer's interests and needs.
- Participants will begin to re-examine their current model for packaging that will result in new offerings.
- Participants will learn how living history can enhance the visitor experience through a variety of methodologies.
- Participants will learn how to maximize their cultural resources to develop as a destination of choice.
- Stakeholders will learn how to effectively position their experiential product for tourism growth and strategic development.
- Community leaders will learn from other destinations successful paths and potential pitfalls to avoid in community development.
- Participants will discover ideas for enhancement of present product development efforts.
- Opportunities for professional development seminars for Nova Scotia operators will be identified.

PARTICIPANTS

Guidelines and an application process were established for potential applicants for the Best Practice Mission. Recruitment was primarily facilitated through membership in the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia. The following applicants were selected:

- **Shirley Brinkhurst** - Director, Creamery Square Association
- **Rhonda Claes** - Partnership & Program Officer, Glooscap Heritage Centre
- **Roger d'Entremont** - Executive Director, Le Village historique acadien
- **Brenda LaGrandeur** - Tourism Development Officer, Municipality of Argyle
- **Darlene MacDonald*** - Manager, Strategic Initiatives, Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage
- **Lloydette MacDonald** - Development Manager, Economic Development/Environmental Society
- **Sandra MacDonald** - Program Manager, Fortress Louisbourg Association
- **Jennifer MacIntyre*** - Tourism Development Officer, Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage
- **John McKay*** - Account Manager, Enterprise Development, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- **Doug Phelan*** - Manager Trade Tourism & Investment, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- **Joy O'Neill** - Economic Development Officer, Annapolis Digby Economic Development Agency
- **Linda Power** - Innkeeper, Boscawen Inn
- **Jeff Ransome** - President, Hotel Association of Nova Scotia, and General Manager, Halifax Marriott Harbourfront
- **Hal Theriault** - Board Member, Digby Area Theatre Society
- **Susan Tilley-Russell** - STR Consulting Inc. and Group Leader for Mission

*Expenses covered separately



ITINERARY / SCHEDULE HIGHLIGHTS

Sunday, September 13, 2009

- Visit to The Rooms Provincial Museum and presentation. The Rooms blends Newfoundland's history, heritage and artistic expression and unites the Provincial Museum, Art Gallery and Archives.
- Presentation by Juanita Keel-Ryan, Director, Tourism Product Development, Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, and Jerry Dick, Director of Heritage with the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland (HFNL) on the Role of governments in creating cultural destinations followed by visit to the Provincial Historic Site of Newman Wine Vaults.

Monday, September 14, 2009

- Visit to Johnson Geo Centre, a geological interpretation centre in St. John's, en route to Trinity, a town that has a heritage preservation district that covers two-thirds of its area. Tour with Jim Miller, Mayor and Project Coordinator for Trinity Historical Society Inc. Evening entertainment with Rising Tide Theatre.

Tuesday, September 15, 2009

- Meeting with Rising Tide Theatre Artistic Director and Executive Producer, Donna Butt, to learn the major role of the theatrical and cultural life of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Interpretive visit of Historic Port Union and meeting with Coaker Foundation representatives.
- Dinner with the owner of Fishers Loft Inn for overview of how the unique Inn was developed.

Wednesday, September 16, 2009

- Meeting with Bonavista Institute for Cultural Tourism (BICT) and field trip to the town of Elliston, known for its root cellars and puffin colony. Presentation focused on the living history product, and how it is created through community involvement.
- Ryan Premises, Parks Canada National Historic Site of Canada Interpretative visit and presentation on the commercial fishery and its influence on the settlement, culture and economic development. Field trips to Cape Bonavista Lighthouse, the Mockbeggar Plantation, and Matthew Legacy Site followed by local musical entertainment.
- Presentation by Jerry Dick, Director of Heritage, Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland (HFNL) followed by an optional tour of Memorial University of Newfoundland Botanical and independent departures.

SITE VISIT BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

1. **The Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation Newfoundland**
Juanita Keel-Ryan, Director Tourism Product Development, and Jerry Dick, Director of Heritage with the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador presented their strategy relating to tourism and the role of the provincial government in creating cultural destinations. The Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation's vision for Newfoundland and Labrador tourism can be found on line at www.tcr.gov.nl.ca/tcr/publications/2009/Vision_2020.pdf

Communities and people in Newfoundland and Labrador recognize that tangible artifacts and building are only a part of what makes up their heritage, and that intangible ideas, customs and knowledge are equally important for cultural identity.

Best Practices:

- Newfoundland encourages compiling lists of traditions and customs in communities. The Cultural division works with Archives and historical societies for theatre stories and events that could be used to inform and entertain in local theatre productions.
- Communities should identify their local “tradition-bearers” and elders in the area who can play a vital role in sharing and passing on their knowledge and folklore.
- Regions are encouraged to celebrate and include Intangible and Cultural Heritage at a local festival or gathering.
- The Tourism Department has partnered with local community colleges to offer “You, Your Town & Tourism Program.” This program teaches interested individuals how they can fit in the tourism puzzle and is a good opportunity for a local tourism initiative and could be easily modified to fit Nova Scotia.
- Newfoundland version of “Doers and Dreamers” a more compact size than most guides (6”X 8” with 416 pages). It can easily be tucked in a glove compartment in a vehicle or fit into a purse.

2. The Johnson Geo Centre and The Rooms

The Johnson Geo Centre and The Rooms are two facilities in St. John’s that are anchor attractions for the province.

The Rooms unites the Provincial Museum, Art Gallery and Archives under one roof. This combination of the three former sites resulted in an increase in overall visitation by 75%. Operations were amalgamated to one board of directors, approximately 100 employees and an annual budget of \$6 million.

The Johnson Geo Centre is a world-class geological interpretative centre built underground with the walls being exposed natural rock, and heated by the Earth. The Geo Centre, as with some other attractions in Newfoundland, demonstrates how the private sector has become involved in the Tourism Sector.

Best Practices:

- The Johnson Geo Centre and the Rooms both demonstrate how Nova Scotia needs to investigate private partnerships for not only the cost of constructing the facility, but also how to remain operationally sustainable. The Rooms has a partnership with the BMO Financial Group and the Department of Education to produce Travelling Culture kits that are sent out to classrooms all throughout Newfoundland.
- In Nova Scotia we also have similar scatters of museums, archives and galleries struggling, maybe it is time to look at how to come together. The results for The Rooms have been increased visitation for all three formerly separate institutions and a more efficient administrative structure.
- The Rooms displays are regularly changing. They have a “Doors Open program” with the goal of getting local visitors to visit the site. Doors Open is a unique opportunity for the citizens and visitors of Newfoundland and Labrador to celebrate our architecture and heritage through the exploration of some of the provinces’ hidden historical, architectural and cultural gems. Buildings that are normally closed to the public or charge an entrance fee welcome visitors to look around for free.
- The Rooms has an excellent component for children’s education that was expanded in 2008 with Chevron Canada Resources contributing \$375,000 over three years to launch the Chevron Open Minds Program. This internationally recognized educational initiative advances student learning by moving classrooms into enriching environments for a full one-week period. Students learn their province’s rich history and culture and have access to important collections that tell the story of the people, the land, the art and the natural history. More details can be found at www.chevronopenminds.ca.
- Work with local museums to upgrade displays. The Museums Assistance Program (MAP) provides funding to Canadian museums and related institutions for projects that support federal objectives for museums to ensure that Canadians have access to and experience Canada's diverse cultural heritage.

3. The Town of Trinity

The town of Trinity is the focal point for tourism on the Bonavista Peninsula, and is often referred to as “the jewel of Newfoundland’s heritage tourism”. Jim Miller, Mayor of Trinity and Project Coordinator for the Trinity Historical Society guided the group through Trinity’s heritage district which covers two-thirds of the town. The town has historic connections to the province’s fishery, the significant number of quality museums in the area, and the Rising Tide Theatre performances in the community resulted in a significant growth of the number of visitors. The Town has worked together to balance the tourism growth with residential demands.

Best Practices:

- The Town of Trinity welcomes 25,000-35,000 visitors a year to a town with a year round population of 50.
- The town has undertaken enhancements to the community and related tourism infrastructure such as expanding available parking, constructing designated walkways, public washroom facilities, and the placement of directional signage throughout the community.
- The Trinity Historical Society has been very instrumental in ensuring that the buildings that are being redeveloped keep the same footprint as the original historic structures.
- Demonstrates how a community has used assets it already has, as opposed to creating something new.



4. Rising Tide Theatre

The Rising Tide Theatre entertained the group with the one woman show, *Terese's Creed* which was a moving one woman dialogue of Terese reminiscing and telling stories about her upbringing, marriage, family, finances, community and more performed by Donna Butt, Artistic Director and General Manager of the Rising Tide Theatre Association. Donna Butt presented the process of building the Rising Tide Theatre which was originally located in St. John's before moving to Trinity. The theatrical highlight in Trinity is the *New Founde Lande Trinity Pageant* which is an outdoor production where spectators follow along with the actors. The Rising Tide Theatre has helped to create and foster a great appreciation for Newfoundland's talent, culture, history and the arts community.

Best Practices:

- Not only is the *New Founde Lande Trinity Pageant* a very successful tourism product, but it is also an event which locals come back to see each year. The format of the evening attraction provides a reason to come and stay longer.
- The Rising Tide Theatre's economic impact goes beyond the small town of Trinity to the entire province.

5. The Coaker Foundation and Port Union

A presentation was provided by the Coaker Foundation on their efforts to restore the town and preserve the history, followed by a visit to Coaker's Bungalow, Museum, Church and restored factory building with local artifacts. Port Union is located along Trinity Bay, and is the only "union-built town" in North America.

Best Practices:

- Port Union is an example of holistic community involvement to promote tourism after the demise of the fishing industry.
- The group met ladies who were part of an Elder Skills program, which is a subsidized program that trains mature workers in different traditional crafting skills, such as hooking rugs, etc.
- Lessons learned stressed the importance for ensuring that a town itself has a preservation strategy and succession planning. This is crucial to ensure the progress made by dedicated individuals who are currently involved in restoration, is not lost in the future.

- Additional learnings focused on the need to develop retail components such as local crafts, as well as more ‘living history’ to make local history engaging and experiential, rather than typical dates and historical events alone.

6. Fisher’s Loft Inn

John Fisher, owner and operator of the Fisher’s Loft Inn, provided a presentation on the development of his inn and best practices. The Fishers presentation told of their very accidental beginnings into tourism. A Bed & Breakfast owner in Trinity was turning away business and wanted to provide visitors in the area with accommodation that was of the same quality as their B&B. The Fishers who were not involved in the tourism industry, but had a beautiful home in nearby Port Rexton, were approached to provide accommodations for the overflow. The Fishers then went forward and did major renovations to their home to add rooms to accommodate visitors. With their focus on quality experiences and attention to detail, they were soon outbooking the original B&B!

Best Practices:

- Small touches like pre-stamped postcards with images of the Inn; wrapped granola bars with the recipe attached to a small card welcoming you to the Inn; binoculars in each room encouraging visitors to take them and enjoy the local scenery but to please leave them for others to enjoy when they leave; and, umbrellas in each room inviting guests to go out and enjoy even if it is a little damp.
- Artwork in all rooms to develop an ‘art gallery’ through partnerships with local artists in exchange for accommodation/meals.
- Innovative ways of involving staff and making them part of the business, by giving autonomy and asking for input.
- The Fisher Loft Inn stressed partnerships and working together, not competing, as working together will benefit everybody. They are located very close to a basic no frills motel. Both owners realize that they cater to very different markets but instead of working against each other, they have partnered on something as simple as laundry service. The motel looks after all the laundry for the Fisher’s Loft Inn- a contract that gives them \$20,000 per year.
- Sourcing locally for quality products. Some of the furniture in the rooms was built by a local craftsmen and his business has been given a huge boost.

- The inn is an example of starting at a reasonable scale and then growing based on solid market data and financially sustainable practices.
- The inn demonstrates the importance of being integrated into the local community and local tourism associations.

7. Bonavista Institute for Cultural Tourism (BICT)

The BICT is a leading-edge centre for professional development in the Cultural Tourism sector in Atlantic Canada focused on assisting tourism operators and cultural providers in delivering world-class experiences. Training courses are listed at www.bonavistainstitute.ca. A presentation was delivered to the participants focused on the living history product, and how it is created through community involvement. A field trip followed which included a visit to the Garrick Theatre one of the sites that was being restored for live theatre, and a visit to the community of Elliston, “Root Cellar Capital of the World.”

Best Practices:

- The centre provides executive level tourism training opportunities, similar to the Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism (GMIST).
- Elliston Root Cellars demonstrate the value of finding “something” unique to your community, owning the concept, and marketing it.
- Lesson learned, is that there are unique challenges when offering pan-Atlantic programs in remote areas.



8. Ryan Premises, Parks Canada National Historic Site of Canada

This site focuses on the commercial fishery and its influence on the settlement, culture and economic development www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/nl/ryan/index.aspz. The Ryan Premises was a salt fish site and a place for the community to purchase goods. An orientation to the premises was provided by Clyde Hayley, Guide Supervisor, followed by presentations by interpretive staff.

Best Practices:

- Many of the staff at Ryan Premises worked in the fishery prior to the moratorium in 1992 and bring their personal experience into their interpretation. A couple of talented individuals can really improve the quality of a visitor experience at a minimum extra cost.

- Use of authentic costumes, music and food enhanced the experience. Guides tell interesting stories, rather than simply showing the artifacts. Raw materials and props (the “tear-apart” cod) were used to tell the story, for example filleting a cod during discussions about the cod fishery.
- Portrayals of the lives of women brought another perspective to the role women played in the fishery and the specific hardships women faced in the outport communities.

9. Provincial Historical Sites

(Cape Bonavista Lighthouse, Mockbeggar Plantation, Bradley House)

Visits to these provincial sites included a presentation by Don Carroll on using built heritage and natural history as a setting to present aspects of intangible cultural heritage.

Best Practices:

- The use of costumes and a family story of living at Cape Bonavista Lighthouse made the visitor relate more to what it would have been like living at the light. One staff member brought her own baby on site with her, asleep in a period cradle and wearing period type clothing.
- Interesting lessons as to ways to celebrate the past, preserve history and create a tourist attraction out of the process and result.

10. Matthew Legacy Incorporated

The site features a locally built replica of John Cabot's ship, “*Matthew*” that sailed from Bristol in 1497. The group had a tour of the premises followed by an informal fun evening delivering authentic traditional Newfoundland music.

Best Practices:

- Demonstrated first hand how music can enhance the experience.
- Some lessons learned as to the major challenges of sustaining an asset long term. Also, the challenges of securing the admission fee required in an environment where federal and provincial sites have lowered the average attraction price level.
- Could consider opportunities to Tall Ships events in Nova Scotia and evening musical entertainment below deck.

SHARING OF INFORMATION WITH INDUSTRY

The ultimate success of the Best Practice Mission will be sharing the information with the Industry at Large and potential opportunities that will benefit Nova Scotia's cultural tourism development.

- A number of participants prepared reports for their RDAs, local municipal counselors, and board members to share lessons learned.
- Brenda LaGrandeur, Tourism Development Officer for the Municipality of Argyle/Yarmouth and Acadian Shores prepared a report for local municipal counselors as well as RDA colleagues and sent a copy to TIANS.
- Joy O'Neill, Officer, Annapolis Digby Economic Development Agency will prepare a report for her sponsor, and will be posting on the www.annapolisdigby.com blog forum "The Artful Blogger", which was successfully employed in educating the local industry about what was learned in Manitoba.
- Rhonda Claes will prepare a summary report for The Glooscap Heritage Board, staff and Millbrook Band Counsel, and information will be posted on the Millbrook Community Bulletin Board.
- Jeff Ransome will lobby within The Hotel Association of Nova Scotia to find interest in supporting future cultural and heritage missions.
- TIANS will post this summary report and supplementary materials on the TIANS web site, and facilitate follow up with participants for networking.

FURTHER POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES:

- The Fundy Interpretive Centre in Digby could enhance its product offering by following up with the Johnson Geo Centre. Information pertaining to corporate sponsorships and partnerships among science/nature-oriented facilities in Atlantic Canada would all be helpful to the Digby Centre.

- Nova Scotia should be featuring more about the unique geological areas, such as fishing grounds, which are not visible but are important aspects of the provincial history and culture. One example could be to showcase Nova Scotia's ocean depths, shoals, effect of tides, and their impact on the fishery in relevant areas.
- Opportunities for public/private partnerships for tourism development, such as preserving the Opera House in Lunenburg should be explored.
- Communities should consider combining cultural activities with "scenic" sights, such as lighthouse picnics and author readings.
- Partnerships need to be fostered with local historical societies to document various communities' historic buildings and information resources which are an integral link for culture tourism. In some areas, opportunities exist for development of story telling experiences such as haunted house tours.
- The Department of Tourism's Product Development Day should feature a session with Rising Tide Theatre, to perform a play and presentation.
- Niche markets abound in Nova Scotia. Research should be conducted to explore programs which would showcase local history and culture. Several areas have indicated interest in theatre, combinations such as the Municipality of Argyle with an Acadian theme, Glooscap and Aboriginal stories, and a Good Cheer theme dinner theatre in Annapolis Royal.
- The Department of Education should be lobbied to focus on cultural "Road Trips" to engage the hearts and minds of students and develop future volunteers.
- John Fisher from Fisher's Loft Inn, should be invited to Nova Scotia to work with accommodation owners for a Masterclass workshop.
- Information should be sent out to Nova Scotia stakeholders about the Bonavista Institute for Cultural Tourism (BICT) and their programs. Look into the possibility of group registration from the same region so that lessons learned in the program can be implemented as a team effort.
- Attractions should consider using authentic costumed guides, music and food to enhance the experience.

- Operators and communities should partner with NSTHRC to deliver living history animation training for local actors and volunteers.
- Elder Skills could be approached to fund hiring local people with the life experiences necessary to convey history and culture in a community, such as former fishermen, etc.

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION SUMMARY

Please see “**Appendix A**” for a summary of participant evaluations from the Best Practice Mission.

APPENDIX "A"

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION SUMMARY

- 1. Did the Best Practice Mission meet your goals / expectations?**
Twelve participants completed a program evaluation of the best practice mission, and 100% said that the Best Practice Mission met their goals/expectations.
- 2. Which presentations, or site visits, did you think were the best? Why?**
The Rising Tide Theatre presentation with Donna Butt and Fishers' Loft Inn presentation by John Fisher were most popular among participants. There were also many positive comments regarding the Mockbeggar Plantation for the interpreters and living history.
- 3. Were there any presentations, or site visits, not of value to you? Why?**
The Rooms was mentioned as being interesting, but that it didn't specifically provide information on best practices to take away and apply.
- 4. As a result of participating in this Best Practice Mission, have you identified any opportunities you can begin doing both short term and long term.**
Some of the themes identified were partnerships, more work with schools, drama groups, and community groups. One participant gained relatively easy to implement ideas to operate her inn more profitably. Further specific suggestions for potential opportunities are listed in the summary notes.
- 5. What do you feel should be done (by you, or by others) to make the Best Practice Mission more valuable to others in the industry.**
Follow up at the 2009 Tourism Summit was suggested, as well as surveying the industry for areas of future mission interest. It was felt that the sharing of information with others in the industry was important.
- 6. Will you be attending the Tourism Summit in Halifax from November 29-December 1 on The Evolution of Tourism?**
Seven participants indicated that they were planning to attend the Tourism Summit, and three were unsure.
- 7. For your purposes, would you evaluate the Best Practice Mission as excellent, good, fair or unsatisfactory?**
Twelve participants completed a program evaluation of the best practice mission, and seven rated the mission as 'excellent' and the remaining three rated it 'very good.'

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION SUMMARY (CONT.)

8. Do you have recommendations for future Best Practice Missions?

Surveying the industry for areas of future mission interest was suggested, as well as ensuring a 50/50 mix of private enterprise and government.

9. Are you interested in attending a follow up session later in the year to network and share in lessons learned from the best practice mission?

All of the respondents replied that they were interested in a follow up session.

10. Other recommendations/comments?

- “I felt the best practices mission was extremely well organized, we saw a tremendous amount of sites and experiences in a very short period, there was no wasted time - each presentation was well organized on a local front. I was very impressed.”
- “Was very impressed with how the NL government supported non-profits and the benefits this creates in small communities.”
- “Parts of this mission were excellent, parts were very good. None were disappointing.”
- “Trinity and Bonavista demonstrated that local leadership and community buy-in are essential components to producing an excellent tourism experience, and that government funding cannot do it all, private invested is needed.”
- “Future missions should focus on the delivery of the story through live animations, first person presentations, and vignettes.”
- “More opportunity to network with fellow attendees.”
- “Better for admissions to be paid to sites was taken care of by the coordinator, as it was time consuming to process individually.”