



# Bonnechere Valley Three-Year Strategic Tourism Plan

DRAFT II  
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**BRAIN TRUST**

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## Appreciation

Many individuals were interviewed as part of the development process. They included business owners, community leaders, volunteers, and residents. Their collaborative spirit and willingness to provide direct input and observations contributed significantly to helping inform the recommendations and strategies. We want to acknowledge the Bonnechere Valley Tourism Strategy Working Group for their input and feedback.

We would also like to acknowledge the Township of Bonnechere Valley staff who provided invaluable insight and guidance throughout the planning process, namely Annette Gilchrist and Dana Barkley.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the financial contributions made by the Government of Canada. Their interest and commitment to enhancing Canada's tourism offering from coast to coast to coast, including in Bonnechere Valley, is appreciated.

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## Land Acknowledgment



"We have become accustomed to acknowledging Bonnechere Valley as the territory of the Algonquin people. However, this acknowledgement feels somewhat empty with increasing awareness of the past.

We are fortunate to have built a good relationship with Pikwakanagan. Building on the good foundation, we can now consider actions that will make this acknowledgement more meaningful and impactful for everyone in the territory.

We have a lot to learn and unlearn about our history. There may be some uncomfortable conversations ahead. We will not shy away from these conversations; instead, we will face them with courage and respect for our neighbours in Pikwakanagan and Indigenous people everywhere."

## Introduction

Before March of 2020, tourism was one of the fastest-growing economic sectors in the world.

In Canada, prior to 2020, annual total tourism spending had been consistently growing year over year, even outpacing the annual growth rate of the economy overall. Going into 2020, total tourism spending hit an all-time high of \$105 billion. At the end of 2019, tourism in Canada accounted for 748,000 direct jobs and supported just over 2 million in total. One out of every ten workers had a job related to tourism. Additionally, Statistics Canada calculated total government revenue attributable to tourism to be \$28.4 billion in 2019.

However, one year later, tourism spending dropped by half, down to just over \$53 billion. Domestic expenditures decreased by 40%, and international spending dropped by 87%. Direct jobs fell by close to 30%, a decline of 533,000, and all related jobs dropped by 23% to 1.6 million.

In Ontario, the tourism sector is vital to the province's health, well-being, and economic landscape, including the Bonnechere Valley. In 2018 the industry directly employed 400,000 Ontarians across a range of sub-sectors, including culture and heritage, recreation, entertainment, food and beverage, attractions, transportation, travel services and accommodation. The sector also contributed over \$5 billion in annual tax revenues for the province and in-direct benefits numerous supporting industries.

Tourism has seen drastic changes in the past two-plus years because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and there are several key shifts and challenges that will impact the tourism industry through its recovery from the pandemic. These include limitations in air access and reduced transport connectivity, labour and skills shortage, higher travel costs associated with consumer demand and reduced supply and capacity, reduced business travel and events, product degradation, and reduced access to capital and limited liquidity.

The tourism sector has a long way to go in rebuilding Canada's and Ontario's travel economy to its former glory. The latest forecasts released by Destination Canada (DC) in its Tourism Outlook Fall 2022 report (released in November 2022) estimate that under its "expected" scenario, tourism spending is expected to recover to pre-pandemic levels as follows:

- Domestic spending will fully recover in 2023 – Canadians travelling in Canada are expected to reach 92% of 2019 levels in 2022 and fully recover (in nominal terms) in 2023
- US spending will reach 2019 levels in 2024 – US market is poised to accelerate in 2023, with expenditures reaching 91% of 2019 levels; visits from the US will get 82% of 2019 levels in 2023 and fully recover in 2024
- Overseas international will recover in 2025 – Travel to Canada from DC target markets in Asia Pacific and Europe will recover modestly to 65% of 2019 in 2023 and will approach recovery in 2024 with 92% of 2019 volumes, full recovery of overseas visits to Canada will occur in 2026

## Bonnechere Valley's Strategic Tourism Plan

Over the years, Bonnechere Valley continues to benefit from tourism-related activity. Located on a significant travel corridor through Renfrew County, visitors from far and wide stop to enjoy what the Village of Eganville and the surrounding area has to offer. Bonnechere Valley was fortunate to have a significant tourism attraction, the Bonnechere Caves, located minutes from Eganville's village centre. The caves attract thousands of visitors annually who travel for a cave experience. While in the area, many of these same visitors also experience other attractions, including the Bonnechere Museum and the Recreation Geological Trail. The benefit of tourism is seen by many who live and work in this attractive Ontario destination.

However, business and community leaders, including members of the Eganville & Area Community Development Group (EACDG), identified that more could be done to leverage the potential of the enhanced tourism-related activity.

Therefore, late in 2021, having identified tourism as a potential contributor to enhance the vibrancy and prosperity of the community, the Township of Bonnechere Valley embarked on a process to develop a Strategic Tourism Plan. After securing funding from the Government of Canada, township staff sought the expertise of a third-party tourism consultant to facilitate a strategy development process. In March 2022, the Township retained the services of BRAIN TRUST, a tourism consultancy firm with extensive experience in tourism destination development. Over the following nine months, township staff, in partnership with community stakeholders and the consultant, undertook a comprehensive process to identify recommendations and actions to enhance the hosting economy of the Bonnechere Valley.

**The goal: to identify strategies and actions to collaboratively enhance the attractiveness, appeal, and competitiveness and to responsibly grow the hosting economy of the Bonnechere Valley.**

The results of the consultative and collaborative tourism destination development process are contained in this report. Recommendations and a series of prioritized actions will guide tourism development for Bonnechere Valley over the next three years. Implementing the actions will require a commitment from many, including the Township, its elected officials and staff, community, business, First Nations leaders and the residents who call Bonnechere Valley home.



## Planning Context

Recognizing that effective and responsible tourism destination development is a continuous process of understanding, coordinating, investing, developing, and marketing the tourism potential of a destination in ways that provides value to communities, visitors and businesses, the planning process embraced four guiding principles:

1. **Destination Alignment** – Industry, community and government alignment drives destination brand, responsible visitation, and revenues
2. **Connection to Community** – Destinations belong to the people who call them home; a locals-first approach is destination development with sustainable goals, filtered through a lens of resident quality of life, economic prosperity, sociocultural vibrancy, inclusiveness, and environmental thrive-ability
3. **Connection to the Visitor** – Being Visitor Friendly through the visitor's journey ensures visitors feel welcome and can access information and services that make their visit a positive experience
4. **A Bias for Action** – Don't just plan; plan to do!

Effective tourism destination development in Bonnechere Valley identifies near-term opportunities and challenges while laying the foundation for mid to long-term initiatives to ensure responsible tourism success for the Township, its citizens, tourism, and other businesses.

Priority is given to strategic, collaborative, community-based development, recognizing that success comes when those involved collaborate to identify opportunities and strategies to enhance the hosting economy of Bonnechere Valley responsibly.

## The Visitor

Tourism development must embrace the visitor journey. Therefore, as stakeholders within the Bonnechere Valley who will collaborate to implement the recommendations in this plan, it will be essential to understand the characteristics of the customer we want to attract.

The customer has changed. Travel behaviour and motivations have been dramatically altered post-pandemic. Destination Canada predicts a desire among visitors for more frictionless travel supported by enhanced use of technology, more domestic travel as some remain uneasy about traveling far from home, and a shift to more responsible travel with a socio-environmental focus. They suggest a renewed interest in Indigenous tourism, outdoors and nature-based destinations, health and well-being tourism, an increase in affluent and retiree travel, and opportunities to work remotely are key tourism shifts to understand.



Additionally, Destination Canada has identified two critical factors when understanding our potential visitors and attracting them to specific destinations, like Bonnechere Valley.

- **High-Value Guests (HVGs)** – Travellers with a higher-than-average income, travel more frequently and show intentions of travelling within the next two years. HVGs also have a greater lifetime value as guests to Canada because they return often. These guests leave a destination better than they found it. People who appreciate Canada's culture and contribute to the host community's economy. Who visit and interact with places and people respectfully. Travellers who make travel choices based on extraordinary experiences and a sense of life enrichment. HVGs display the following characteristics:
  - Naturally Curious - They want to feel inspired by their surroundings, to know more about the history of the place they're staying, and the stories of the people around them.
  - Actively Seeks Culture - They want to get out and experience exciting and life-enriching things.
  - Engages With Locals - They want to try the local dishes and immerse themselves in the local customs. In many ways, they want to feel like they're one of the locals.
  - Experience Over Price - For these travellers, extraordinary experiences are priceless. Price always plays a role but is not as crucial to high-value guests.
  - Loves What Canada Offers - These travellers respect our people, communities, and lands with genuine affection. Their admiration often translates into rave reviews about our country.

Striving to develop Bonnechere Valley through the lens of this type of guest will ensure the community achieves success over the long-term

- **Legendary Experiences** – In the near term, successful tourism development in Bonnechere Valley will be based not on significant investments in tourism-related infrastructure but on leveraging the power of existing assets.

Over the past five years, investments have been made in enhancing the destination's appeal. For example, enhancements made at McRae Park, the Geological Trail's development, the fishing dock's construction, and the establishment of the Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation Garden. These are significant in terms of adding to the appeal of the community. However, as is detailed in the supporting recommendations, leveraging the infrastructure enhancements mentioned above and others that already exist will be made easier through the development of curated, visitor-friendly tourism experiences.



Taking the lead, once again, from Destination Canada will be of value to tourism and community stakeholders in Bonnechere Valley. To attract high-value guests to Bonnechere Valley, visitors need exceptional, inimitable travel experiences reflecting our country's essence and its diverse destinations. Legendary experiences are unforgettable travel experiences reflecting Bonnechere Valley's nature. They preserve and celebrate the heritage, local cultures and traditions, natural surroundings, and rural landscapes.

Through effective engagement, ongoing training, and capacity building with a broad base of stakeholders, new or enhanced legendary visitor experiences will be developed. This is an important goal of the Strategic Tourism Strategy.

That process began when the consultant delivered an Experiential Tourism Development Workshop as part of the consultation process. Participants at the workshop were enthusiastic about the possibilities associated with the effective development of new experiences, and several expressed a desire to pursue the opportunity.

## A New Reality

The hiatus from travel over the past two-plus years has forced new conversations. Globally, tourism management organizations and community leaders have identified the need for a shift to more responsible travel and travel with a greater focus on socio-environmental factors. Supporting a greater interest in the well-being of communities and residents vs. visitation growth and profits has become a goal for many destinations. For example, Destination Next, in their 2021 Future Study, said this:

*"Prioritizing profit over the health of the planet and well-being of people is not a legacy that the global visitor industry can continue."*

As a result of the global reset related to future travel, many destinations, including several in Canada, are adopting a regenerative tourism approach, where opportunities to create an ecosystem of innovation, collaboration, and adaptation are the goal. This new approach to tourism destination development is believed to energize strong economic growth, thriving operations, sociocultural vibrancy, healthy people, and a natural environment for generations to come. Regenerative tourism is about guiding and supporting tourism development with an equal focus on economics and the well-being of people and places to measure success.

Destination Canada, in its July 2022 report entitled Canada's Tourism Renaissance, Our Strategy for Recovery, stated this about Canada's recommended regenerative approach to tourism development:

*"The hosting economy is finally being seen for its power as a community-builder, a job generator, a path to reconciliation, a protector of natural assets, and as an enabler of Canada's identity and broader global ambitions. We want a sector that produces prosperous business growth and net benefits for our communities from a thriving, regenerative tourism ecosystem."*

The Strategic Tourism Plan for Bonnechere Valley will be guided and grounded in regenerative tourism principles. Those implementing the strategy are encouraged to ensure business benefits by building deeper connections and respecting the unique people and places on which tourism is based. This notion should become the objective, not a growth of profit and extraction of resources. It will translate into taking a whole systems approach, where giving back more than is taken becomes a foundational goal.



## Planning Process

A comprehensive tourism destination development planning process was implemented. The planning process included a five-phased approach:

1. Project Start-Up Meeting, Site Visit #1, Review Research Reports, Plans, Studies
2. Community Introduction to Project Process and Site Visit # 2
3. Stakeholder Consultation and Community Visioning Sessions and Site Visit # 3
4. Presentation of Preliminary Findings, Observation, Implications and Capacity Building Session
5. Strategic Tourism Plan Development and Approval

More specifically, the following activities were undertaken:

- Project Briefing Meeting with Township Staff, as well as an initial community-wide site visit
- Briefing session with Ottawa Valley Tourism Association
- Orientation launch session with the Eganville & Area Community Development Group
- One-On-One interviews – nine interviews and several impromptu conversations with business and community leaders
- Industry Consultation Sessions – Participants included residents, business owners, community leaders, elected officials
  - Three Launch Sessions
  - Three Vision Planning Sessions
  - One Experiential Tourism Training/Capacity Building Sessions
  - Working Group Meeting – Presented preliminary findings, observations, and implications; received feedback and validation
  - Three Findings, Observation Implication Sessions
- Ontario Highlands Tourism Organization (Regional Tourism Org.) strategy alignment dialogue

**Vision Sessions** – It is worth noting the context and overarching outcomes from the stakeholder vision sessions held in October. They were instrumental in informing the recommendations and actions contained in the plan.

- Good representation from residents, operators, elected officials
- Contrary to perceptions that the pool of committed volunteers was evaporating, there are new people in the community who attended a session and demonstrated a desire to be involved
- Participants recognized and appreciated the Townships leadership in embarking on the strategy development process and were eager to understand the opportunities to support the implementation
- While most were not aware of the new realities facing the tourism sector and the introduction of responsible and regenerative tourism practices, all are willing to learn and understand their role in responsible tourism development



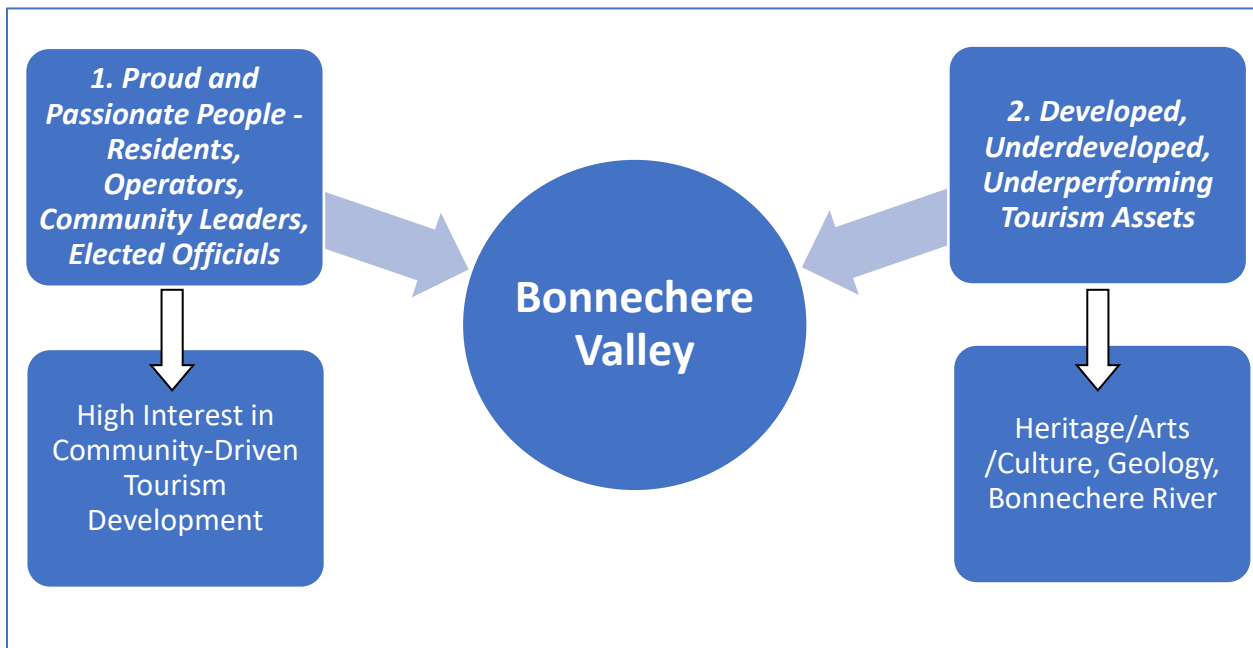
- There was consistency around the identified elements related to the destination vision, the things that desired visitors see, feel, and learn when in Bonnechere Valley; these attributes are grounded in the destination's core developed and underdeveloped tourism assets

The outcomes of the planning process have helped inform the development of the recommendations and actions contained in the strategy.



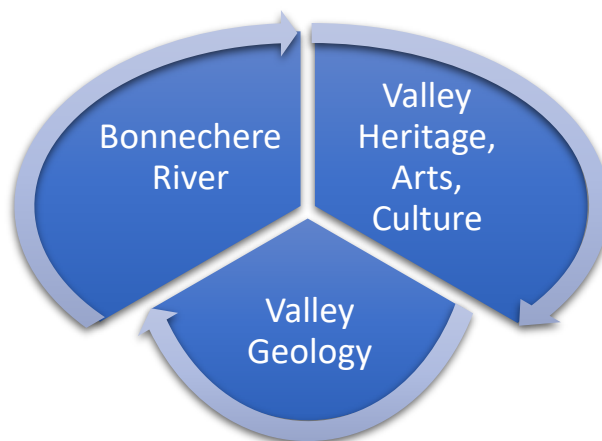
## Findings, Observations

Two overarching findings from the cornerstone of the implications which informed the plans, recommendations, and actions. These findings, reached through the collaborative and consultative development process, support the implementation of the Strategic Tourism Plan.



### **Bonnechere Valley Unique Differentiators – Destination Themes**

The development process revealed three destination themes that, when fully developed, serve to differentiate Bonnechere Valley from other tourism destinations. These themes are supported through a variety of visitor touch points which may be fully developed, developed but underperforming or underdeveloped. These visitor touchpoints form the basis for FUTURE tourism destination development opportunities in the Bonnechere Valley.



## Theme-Related Visitor Touchpoints

### Valley Heritage, Arts, Culture – Underdeveloped, Underperforming Experiences

- BV Museum
- Walking Tours
- Artisan Galleries
- Authors Festival
- Union Public Library
- Music in the Park
- Farmers Market
- Other Events

### Valley Geology – Developed, Underdeveloped, Underperforming Experiences

- Bonnechere Caves
- GEO Trail
- Museum
- GEO Walks
- McRae Park

### Bonnechere River – Underdeveloped Experiences

- Paddling
- Fishing
- Swimming, Beach
- Parks, Lookouts
- Picnic Areas
- On, Off River Events

## Alignment With Visitor Travel Motivators and Behaviour

These destination themes and supporting visitor touchpoints appeal to High Value Guests, specifically the Authentic Experiencer, Culture Explorer, and Free Spirit EQ market segments.

EQ (Experience Quotient) is a market segmentation profile tool used by Destination Canada, Destination Ontario, Ontario Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO) and Ottawa Valley Tourism Association (OVTA). The identified market segments listed above align with Bonnechere Valley's themes and tourism assets and the market segments the listed organizations target in their tourism development and marketing efforts.

## Overnight Accommodations

Responsibly maximizing the hosting economy of any destination depends on the availability of overnight accommodations. Destinations with a sufficient supply of roofed and non-roofed commercial accommodation options, such as hotels, motels, inns, B&Bs, resorts, lodges, RV parks, and campgrounds derive economic benefit when visitors stay overnight, spending more time and money in the destination. In addition to the traditional roofed accommodations, the growing presence of sharing economy platforms like Airbnb and VRBO has added additional overnight accommodation options for guests who prefer this type of service. Post-pandemic, the supply and demand for these accommodations have grown significantly.

Bonnechere Valley has limited accommodation options for guests. There are six traditional commercial roofed accommodations with approximately 43 units. Four of the six properties are B&B or resort accommodations located beyond the borders of Eganville. There are no branded hotels or motels in the destination.

More than 40+ cottage or cabin properties are listed on Airbnb and VRBO as of December 2022. Most of these properties are located outside Eganville in lakeside (Golden, Clear Lake) or rural settings. In addition, there are four RV parks and campgrounds; 3 of the four properties are located on resort properties mentioned above.

## Downtown Eganville

In many parts of the country, small-town downtowns have seen a decline in the number of businesses, resulting in high vacancy levels and deteriorating storefronts and streetscapes.

Unfortunately, Eganville's downtown has not been immune to this trend and has experienced an unfortunate decline in its

attractiveness and appeal. While several owners have taken steps to enhance their properties, witness recent investment made at the RIO Grill; many storefronts need renovations and repairs.



Roger Brooks, and his Destination Development Association, have worked in hundreds of communities across North America. In his Twenty Ingredients for an Outstanding Destination report, he sites the following:

*"In Canada, there are more than 8,000 cities, towns, and villages, of which more than 7,500 have smaller populations. Most of these cities and towns have struggling downtowns. We are in an age when people want to spend time in vibrant downtowns more than ever before. Yet because many downtowns have property owners who do not work together with a common vision, many of whom are absentee owners, or they have regulations that stifle successful retail or other dysfunctional qualities, developers are now building new "downtowns" – lifestyle retail centers. These are designed to mimic the traditional downtown of yesteryear."*

The same report suggests the following requirements are key to downtown sustainability:

- Downtowns have at least a 97% or higher occupancy rate in the core district or area
- Lease rates are "market rate" or higher compared to similar cities and towns
- Turnover is 5% or less per year; revolving door downtowns are not sustainable in the long run
- Downtowns or districts are seen as the lifeblood of the community, full of activity and life

There is an opportunity to take proactive steps to begin a process for Eganville's downtown revitalization.



## Implications

Stemming from the findings and observations, fifteen implications were identified. These implications serve to support the recommendations and action plan.

1. To support strategy recommendations and implementation, the Township, represented by its elected officials and staff, has embraced, and is engaged in exploring and acting on opportunities for tourism development
2. Additional resources to support the implementation of the Strategic Tourism Plan will be required if tourism development is to occur
3. The Eganville and Area Economic Development Group is a catalyst for a wide range of initiatives designed to stimulate the economic well-being of the community; one of those activities is tourism; however, given the opportunities identified through the tourism strategy planning process and the list of specific actions, the responsibility to oversee tourism development within Bonnechere Valley may be best served with a tourism centric working committee
4. The visitor does not recognize municipal boundaries, and several Bonnechere Valley tourism assets are located outside the Township of Bonnechere (North Algona Wilberforce, Killaloe, Pikwakanagan First Nation), including traditional and non-traditional accommodation options, therefore, leveraging the combined municipal and First Nation resources beyond the Township of Bonnechere through a tourism partnership agreement, would maximize the effectiveness of tourism development for the broader region
5. While there is no indication that the current Bonnechere Valley branding impedes tourism-related positioning, it may make sense to support the brand with language that provides a geographic identity; for example, including *Eganville and Area* in all tourism-related communications
6. Creating legendary experiences is a strategy endorsed by Destination Canada, Destination Ontario, OHTO, and OVTA; therefore, Bonnechere Valley tourism asset themes must be better leveraged through the creation and delivery of curated, visitor-friendly experiences
7. In the past (pre-COVID), community stakeholders were active in the development and staging of community-based events, encouraging this activity to, once again, become a priority, mainly if past events and new events supported the destination themes, extended the tourism season to include winter, and managed visitor traffic responsibly, would be beneficial in helping the Bonnechere Valley hosting economy
8. Beyond experiential tourism development training and capacity building, there are opportunities to enhance tourism operator performance through additional capacity-building opportunities, including online presence maximization, itinerary development, tourism market readiness, and customer satisfaction enhancement
9. Given the importance of our Indigenous past and heightened awareness of Canada's First Nation people and the injustices that have taken and continue to take place, many people are expressing a desire to learn or unlearn, and be part of the vital reconciliation journey; Indigenous Tourism Canada and Indigenous Tourism Ontario are supporting the development of Indigenous tourism experiences – by having the Pikwakanagan First Nation in proximity to the Bonnechere Valley, there may be the opportunity for future tourism-related dialogue

10. The Eganville Senior Centre has expanded its wellness programming for its residents and community members through investments in programming and equipment to facilitate elder trekking, kayaking, E-biking, and kick-sledding; there is a willingness to expand this programming to visitors
11. The Bonnechere Fly Fishing Club represents an opportunity to provide fly fishing training for visitors to the region
12. An Eganville tourism website exists (developed by the EACDG), and while not fully developed, represents an opportunity to have an online presence that includes destination lure and supporting tourist information
13. The EACDG also developed Discover Eganville and Area visitor materials, including downloadable and printed tourism attraction, infrastructure, and services map, which with updating, could serve the needs of future visitors
14. It is unlikely that Bonnechere Valley will have sufficient resources to go to the market beyond a web and social media presence; therefore, developing market-ready tourism experiences that can be taken to market and promoted by OVTA, OHTO, Destination Ontario and destination Canada is necessary
15. Eganville's downtown was once an attractive and thriving community centre. In recent years the downtown has lost its attractiveness. If tourism is to be a catalyst for community health and well-being, attention must be directed at improving the appearance of the downtown
16. With limited accommodation options within Bonnechere Valley, an emphasis on extending the four-season day trip length of stay (from 1-2 hours to five to six hours, including time for one or more meals) will be critical to enhance the hosting economy in the destination



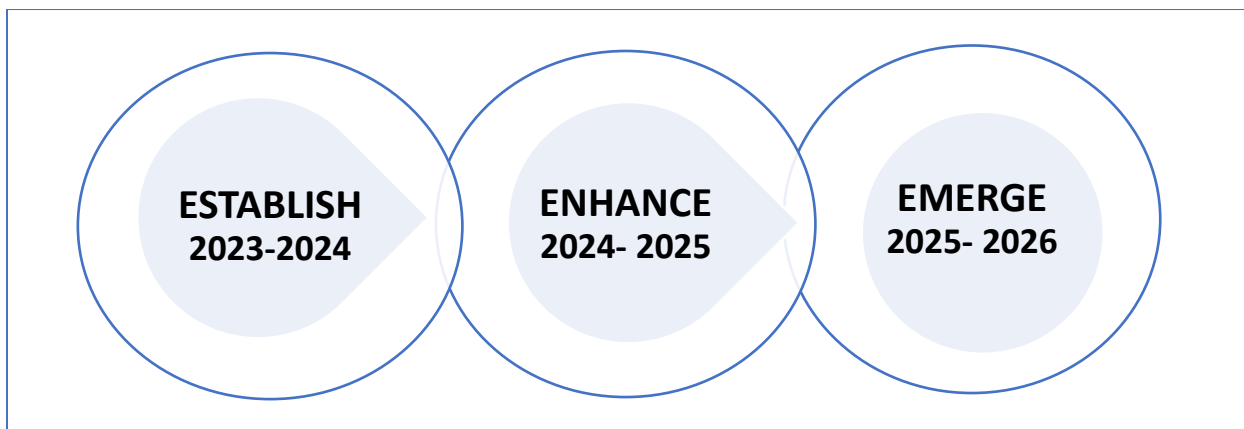
## Recommendations and Action Plan

The tourism development planning process allows the community to explore, discuss, and discover a wide range of opportunities that, when implemented, should responsibly enhance the hosting economy of that community. That has been the case in Bonnechere Valley. A long list of development opportunities were discussed; however, to move forward logically and productively, realistic recommendations and actions must be identified if effective tourism development is to happen.

The Bonnechere Valley Strategic Tourism Plan recognizes the opportunities and limitations to implementing the identified recommendations and actions. Therefore, a three-phased development approach is recommended from April 2023 to March 2026.

At present, some actions must be implemented first to **Establish** a framework to support ongoing tourism development. Second, several prioritized actions have been identified that, when implemented, will **Enhance** the competitiveness and appeal of Bonnechere Valley as a tourism destination. Finally, the plan identifies activities that will serve to see Bonnechere Valley **Emerge** as a flourishing tourism destination with a hosting economy that will deliver responsible, sustainable, and regenerative tourism growth for years to come.

Recommendations and actions include those responsible for implementation and the completion timeline for the specific activities. The identified timing also speaks to tactic accomplishment goals, which is a realistic way to track accountability. Timing is suggested and recognizes there may be a need for flexibility depending on the circumstances in play at the time.





## Year-One Recommendations

Recommendation	Action, Responsibility, Timing (Task Completed)
<p><b>Establish April 2023 – March 2024</b></p> <p>Council approve the Bonnechere Valley Three-Year Tourism Strategic Plan committing to serve as an enabler that ensures tourism development is a priority for the next three years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council identify and dedicate resources to support the implementation of the Strategic Tourism Plan – determine a staff position(s) whose responsibility is devoted to tourism plan implementation <b>May 2023</b></li> <li>• Council establish a Bonnechere Valley Tourism Development Committee (BVTDC), whose mandate is to support, guide, and oversee the implementation of the Strategic Tourism Plan <b>May 2023</b></li> <li>• Council, through staff, explore forming collaborative partnerships with neighbouring municipalities and Pikwakanagan First Nation that maximizes resources for tourism plan implementation; ad hoc collaboration is already happening; this step ensures that intentional and strategic alliances are formed, and resources (staff and dollars) are combined for more effective plan implementation <b>September 2023</b></li> <li>• Staff to work with OVTA to understand opportunities associated with the development and implementation of the Provincial legislation for a Township of Bonnechere Valley Municipal Accommodation Tax (a MAT is a legislation that permits municipalities to ask accommodators to collect a tax, typically 3 to 5%, on the room rate charged to visitors, funds raised are passed on to the municipality for tourism-related activities) – work began in 2019 by OVTA to understand how a MAT might benefit tourism stakeholders in Renfrew County <b>Ongoing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All single-tier and lower-tier municipalities have the authority to put a municipal accommodation tax in place. A transient accommodation tax is not a requirement for local municipalities—instead, they can decide if they want to put the tax in place. Upper-tier municipalities (regional or county governments) do not have the authority to implement a tax</li> <li>○ Preliminary work done by OVTA in 2019 suggested a MAT in Bonnechere Valley could generate \$64,000 +/-for tourism-related activity</li> <li>○ This is not a priority for year one unless OVTA is advocating for the implementation of a MAT</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Take steps to solidify Bonnechere Valley as a thriving tourism destination through strategic communications and partnership activities that supports the destinations plan for intentional regenerative tourism development and promotion

Regenerative tourism principles:

- Greater interest in the well-being of communities and residents vs. visitation growth and profits
- Equal focus on economics and the well-being of people and places to measure success
- Encourages community-builders, job generators, paths to reconciliation, and protectors of natural assets (Destination Canada, 2022)

Throughout the planning process, there was consensus that the Bonnechere Valley Strategic Tourism Plan should embrace regenerative tourism principles; however, ongoing dialogue is required to support a greater understanding of turning regenerative tourism knowledge into action

- Staff to create a communications plan designed to inform and engage a broad group of stakeholders, in and outside the Bonnechere Valley, communications will include the launch of the Strategic Tourism Plan and updates on the ongoing activities related to plan implementation; communications will target Bonnechere Valley residents and businesses, other tourism and economic development partners (OVTA, OHTO, Destination Ontario, Destination Canada, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario etc.)
  - Develop a stakeholder/partner website to house strategy-related materials and to relay details of strategy implementation
  - Create a bi-monthly stakeholder/partner e-newsletter

**June 2023**

The Bonnechere Valley brand has been established and positions the destination well; however, the lack of connection to a specific geography is problematic for a tourism audience, therefore staff to take steps to enhance the current brand by adding recognized communities as part of brand identification **June 2023**, for example:

**Bonnechere Valley**

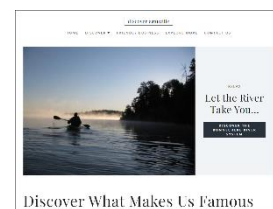
Eganville and Area

or


**Bonnechere Valley**


Eganville, Pikwakanagan First Nation, North Algona  
Wilberforce, Killaloe, etc.

- The EACDG created a Bonnechere Valley tourism website, which is currently live but unfinished, staff to take steps to finalize and update content on the current website, which, until a more robust marketing strategy can be developed, will serve as an information resource for prospective visitors **May 2023**



- Council, staff and the BVTDC take proactive steps to engage a broad range of organizations, groups, and individuals to secure understanding and support for identified tourism development opportunities – establish strategic alliances and partnerships with, for example, the Bonnechere Museum and Heritage Society, Pikwakanagan First Nation, Eganville Senior Centre, the Eganville Union Library, Bonnechere Fly Fishing Club, Eganville service clubs and community groups; through this activity tourism development will be a community-led and community supported endeavour, which is fundamental to successful regenerative tourism development **Ongoing**

<p>Encourage the development and staging of community-based events, make this a priority, especially if past and potential new events support the destination themes, extend the tourism season to include winter, and managed visitor traffic responsibly</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff and the BVTDG to solicit interest/proposals from community stakeholders to a.) enhance the delivery of current events, b.) consider resurrecting and delivering past community events (river paddle races, geo walks), c.) create new theme-related community events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Give event development focus to those events that will stimulate visitation outside the popular summer months</li> <li>○ Where possible, provide funding for event implementation along with a fundraising component that gives back to the community (regenerative tourism principle)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Take proactive steps to leverage the power of the three unique and appealing product themes* through the promotion, development, and delivery of four-season, purchasable, curated visitor-friendly tourism experiences *(Heritage/Arts/Culture, Geology, Bonnechere River)</p> <p>This is a three-step process</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Optimize the potential of <u>existing</u> theme-related experiences through enhancement and partner promotion (OVTA, OHTO)</li> <li>2. Fill gaps in themed-related visitor experiences using them as destination attractors</li> <li>3. Recruit, train, and empower a network of theme-related experience providers</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff, in partnership with community stakeholders and OHTO to facilitate the creation of four-season tourism experiences:</li> <li>• <b>Optimize Potential</b> – By theme, staff to inventory existing visitor experiences – opportunities where high-value guests <u>can currently purchase and experience compelling articulations of the featured theme</u> – ensure these experiences are featured on OVTA, and OHTO websites and that the respective operators have them prominently featured on their website and social media channels <b>May 2023</b></li> <li>• <b>Fill Gaps</b> – By theme, staff identify gaps in curated, purchasable experiences that celebrate identified themes; <u>gaps identify where the creation of new visitor experiences are needed</u> – opportunities where high-value guests purchase a compelling experience which animates the featured theme, thus enhancing the ROE (return of engagement) for the guest and ROI (return of investment) for the experience provider and the broader community <b>August 2023, Ongoing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New experiences embrace regenerative tourism principles; for example, they enhance local economies using local products and services, are frictionless, minimize the carbon footprint on the landscape, present cultures and traditions of the host communities through connections with local people, are inclusive taking into consideration of the visitor's needs, and where possible contribute to restoring ecosystems and community infrastructure</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Recruit, Train, Empower</b> – Staff, in partnership with funding from OHTO, identify then equip new experience providers in delivering compelling visitor experiences, with assistance of a third-party consultant <b>March 2024, Ongoing</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prioritize experiential development opportunities by theme with those potential experiences that are near market-ready to be fostered first, then secure project development funding; for example, developing Bonnechere River experiences may be necessary over the long term, but if curated heritage experiences through the Bonnechere Museum are near market-ready put those at the top of the experiential tourism development list</li> </ul>
<p>Bonnechere Valley Museum - Review the list of initiatives identified in the museum's submission to the Federal government for Relief Funding – the ideas contained in the proposal are worthwhile and valuable strategies to showcase Bonnechere Valley's rich and unique heritage</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff to partner with the museum board to identify tactics and activities that have been already identified but not implemented; these tactics are articulated in the relief fund application dated Nov 28, 2022; more specific activities include*: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Modernizing operations, attractions, greening initiatives, and online sales services</li> <li>○ Supporting businesses with the local promotion of tourism products, including digital and virtual reality experiences, developing capacity for more inclusive tourism experiences</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Destination development: projects that would position communities to take advantage of post-pandemic opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Supporting destinations to implement tourism plans that create or improve local assets, facilities, and planning for critical infrastructure</li> <li>○ Implementing strategies to re-activate and animate downtown cores, main streets and business districts through activities, public art, and mixed-use spaces</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>June 2023</b></p> <p>*Bonnechere Valley Museum Revitalization Plan, Dec 2022; see the proposal summary for specific programming recommendations</p>
<p>Take proactive steps to initiate a Council led Eganville downtown revitalization initiative</p> <p>"Main streets are important economic, social and cultural centres integral to the success and character of communities, but many have faced challenges in recent years – even</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Council to facilitate a process whereby actions are taken to enhance the appeal of Eganville's downtown by following the procedures outlined in the recently published Main Streets Reimagined Through a Visitor Economy Lens Regeneration Handbook* This is an excellent resource that provides a rich context in which to enhance the appeal of Eganville's downtown/main street <b>June 2023</b></li> <li>● This handbook also provides links to webinars</li> </ul>

before the pandemic – including changing retail habits, increasing tax rates and rents, low-profit margins, social issues and more."

\* Hospitality and Tourism Management Research Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University

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[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RYFKh6uL4\\_8sIOCFx8J8yEOMxIjwKlmk/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RYFKh6uL4_8sIOCFx8J8yEOMxIjwKlmk/view)



## Year Two Recommendations

Recommendation	Action, Responsibility, Timing (Task Completed)
<b>Enhance April 2024 – March 2025</b>	
Enhance tourism operator performance through capacity building/training opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff, in partnership with OHTO, deliver training that addresses gaps in tourism operator effectiveness beyond experiential tourism training; this could include training provided by third-party specialists to assist operators in enhancing their online presence, in better use of social media, in how to develop and regenerative tourism operations, improving tourism market-readiness, service excellence, itinerary planning, identifying/understanding how to attract and appeal to high-value guests <b>Ongoing, June 2024</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Training to utilize a variety of learning techniques, including online and in-person workshops, certification programs delivered online by tourism training specialists, and best practice missions to successful businesses or destinations</li> <li>○ Develop and promote a Training Calendar to enable operators to leverage training opportunities for themselves and their staff annually</li> <li>○ Secure partnership funding for training from OHTO</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Identify infrastructure and service gaps that impede the visitor journey, including visitor wayfinding and signage, digital connectivity, business hours of operation, workforce development/labour challenges, service standards etc., then identify steps to eliminate these gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on reported infrastructure and service gaps noted in the consultation process of the strategy development process as well as those identified by others, staff to identify and develop a prioritized list of gaps, then identify strategies to work with partner organizations to eliminate the gaps <b>May 2024</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ For issues of significant magnitude, liaise with TIAO, OHTO, OVTA and other industry and public organizations to define solutions to identified gaps; for example, collaborate with TIAO to identify solutions to address hospitality labour shortages and shortcomings in service delivery, work with local, regional, and provincial government departments to address wayfinding gaps and connectivity challenges</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Initiate dialogue with Pikwakanagan First Nation to understand if Indigenous tourism development is an opportunity the First Nation is interested in pursuing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff to connect with Indigenous Tourism Canada and Ontario to better understand opportunities that First Nations are exploring to develop tourism-related programming that enhances appreciation and understanding linked to our Indigenous past (Indigenous tourism leaders like Keith Henry, Indigenous Tourism Canada, suggest that tourism is a potential path to</li> </ul>

	<p>reconciliation among First Nation people and non-Indigenous Canadians) <b>May 2024</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff to investigate opportunities to understand if the Council of Pikwakanagan First Nation has an interest in exploring collaborative opportunities for tourism development, and if so, partner to support the development of Indigenous-led tourism experiences <b>May 2024</b></li> </ul>
<p>Develop Bonnechere Valley promotional materials that assist in trip planning for potential visitors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff to investigate options for materials that service the trip planning needs of visitors – consider updating Discover Eganville materials that exist, but are not being used, like the attraction maps, trip itineraries, website etc. <b>June 2024</b></li> </ul>
<p>Given the limited number of overnight accommodations give focus to extending the length of day-trip visitation by providing opportunities for visitors to participate in a variety of visitor experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff to identify strategies to extend four-season day trip length of stay (from one - two hours to five to six hours, including time for one or more meals)</li> <li>• Consider staging events, tours, and curated experiences throughout the day including evenings to ensure visitors arrive early and stay late while in the community</li> <li>• Consider partnering with food and beverage outlets to create partner packages that include a visit to an attraction and event along with a meal <b>June 2024</b></li> </ul>
<p>Continue to develop new curated visitor experiences connected to destination themes</p> <p>Continue to develop new four-season events and activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See recommendations in Establish phase <b>June 2024</b></li> </ul>



## Year Three Recommendations

Recommendation	Action, Responsibility, Timing (Task Completed)
<b>Emerge April 2025 – March 2026</b>	
By working with partners, take proactive steps to market the reasons to visit the Bonnechere Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capitalize on the partnership with OVTA and OHTO as they market Ontario Highlands and Renfrew County – rather than allocate Bonnechere Valley resources to marketing, provide Bonnechere Valley tourism itineraries and visitor experiences that will attract visitors to your marketing partners</li> </ul>
<p>Continue to develop new curated visitor experiences connected to destination themes</p> <p>Continue to develop new four-season events and activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See recommendations in Establish, and Enhance phase <b>April 2024</b></li> </ul>
Continue efforts to implement the initiatives identified in the Bonnechere Valley Museum submission to the Federal government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff to work with the museum board to support the implementation of ideas* not yet implemented, that support:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The richness of our indigenous history and acknowledgement of this sacred, ancestral and unceded lands of the Algonquins Pikwakanagan Nation</li> <li>○ The geological uniqueness of the area as the Ordovician Fossil Capital of Canada</li> <li>○ The historical significance of the Bonnechere River and the effects of the timber trade that shaped the social, cultural, and industrial development of this region</li> <li>○ The Bonnechere Valley, as a top tourist destination in Ontario through cultural festivals and the promotion of outdoor activities for all ages, in all seasons</li> <li>○ Revitalization of the museum to create a hub for cultural activities, such as movie screenings, vendor markets, wedding and corporate space rental, fundraising programs, local artisan exhibits</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>*Bonnechere Valley Museum Revitalization Plan, Dec 2022</p>
Continue to refresh the Three-Year Strategic Tourism Plan based on progress made in years one and two and on potential changes in market dynamics and visitor motivations and behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff and BVTDG to conduct a review of year one and two strategy activity and adjust strategies and tactics based on community and industry consultation <b>April 2025</b></li> <li>• Staff to continue to implement the tourism strategy <b>Ongoing</b></li> </ul>
Other activities to be determined	



## Conclusion

The stated goal of the Three-Year Strategic Tourism Plan is to identify strategies and actions to collaboratively enhance the attractiveness, appeal, and competitiveness and to responsibly grow the hosting economy of the Bonnechere Valley. Successful implementation of the recommendations and actions will go a long way to ensure the identified goal is accomplished.

However, as global dynamics evolve there is no doubt the tourism and travel landscape will evolve as well. Therefore, those responsible for plan implementation will need to be engaged in ongoing learning and understanding and demonstrate an ability to adapt plan implementation to meet the changing dynamics of the tourism landscape.

You are not in this alone. National, provincial, regional, and local tourism organizations will travel a journey of understanding and adapting as well. Since March of 2020 the travel and hospitality sector has shown tremendous determination and resiliency. While many destinations suffered significant setbacks most have rebuilt better, recognizing that the tourism sector needed to change to experience new levels of success.

It is the hope that the those who live and work in Bonnechere Valley will rally behind this collaborative and forward-thinking tourism development strategy to enhance the health, well being and long-term sustainability of the community they call home.