# Ingonish STEP

Recommendations
&
Actions

# Recommendation #1

- *Secure broad-based endorsement of the tourism strategy throughout Ingonish and area reinforcing the underlying theme:  "A great place to live is a great place to visit."*

- *Take proactive steps to communicate, inform, and engage a broad base of individuals on the specifics of the STEP.*

- *Underpin development goals and actions by reinforcing tourism's benefits and importance to the community's future viability.*

# Actions

| Actions #1 | Role | Timing |
|---|:---:|:---:|
| IDS leads all communications with facilitation and support from Victoria County tourism staff. | VC, IDS | Nov. 2024 |
| IDS and Victoria County have a dedicated STEP Implementation Progress page on their websites for all to see. | VC, IDS | Nov. 2024 |
| Utilize IDS, County, and other social media to extend the reach of strategy implementation details. | VC, IDS | Nov. 2024 |
| STEP community launch sessions: Rally support by holding a public strategy session to introduce the STEP Recommendations and Action Plan. | VC, IDS | Nov. 2024 |
| Identify a community GIVE BACK project where visitors are invited to support a local social or community initiative – tourism. Proceeds could support: | VC, IDS | Mar. 2025 |
| Create a bi-monthly stakeholder/partner e-newsletter to keep constituents up to date on tourism-related actions and activities. | VC, IDS | Jan. 2025 |

# Recommendation #2

*Clarify roles and responsibilities for the implementation of the plan.*

| Actions #2 | Role | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| Victoria County, IDS and DCB to determine roles and responsibilities. | VC, IDS, DCB | Nov. 2024 |
| Identify VC staff lead to facilitate initial strategy implementation. | VC, IDS, DCB, ACOA | Feb. 2025 |
| Establish a sustainable funding model to support development initiatives through 2027 | VC, IDS, DCB | Nov. 2024 |

# Recommendation #3

*Foster the creation of new legendary visitor experiences through connections with local people*

- *Facilitate planning sessions and skills mapping to understand passions, interests, skills, and talents, which could be developed into authentic visitor experiences.*

- *Take proactive steps to leverage the power of the themes (Four Season Outdoor Recreation and Heritage, Culture. Arts) by developing purchasable, curated, visitor-friendly tourism experiences.*

*This is a four-step process:*

1. *Optimize the potential of existing theme-related experiences through enhancement and partner promotion (DCB, TNS).*

2. *Fill gaps in themed-related experiences using them as four-season destination attractors.*

3. *Recruit, train, and empower a network of theme-related experience providers (residents).*

4. *Provide seed funding to help individuals get their experiences to market.*

| Actions #3 | Role | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| Inventory existing visitor experiences where high-value guests can purchase and experience compelling articulations of the featured themes. | VC | Feb. 2025 |
| Identify gaps in four-season on-theme, curated, purchasable experiences. Gaps identify where the creation of new visitor experiences is needed—opportunities for high-value guests to purchase compelling experiences to attract them to the community for extended stays at times of the year when there is capacity (non-peak season). | VC | April 2025 |
| Mobilize residents and access the wealth of local knowledge and skills that is present. | VC, IDS, Res | May 2025 |
| Tap into the skills of DCB, TNS, and PC staff to help facilitate learning opportunities for potential Ingonish experience providers. | VC, IDS, DCB, TNS,OP, RES | May 2024 |
| New year-round experiences must embrace regenerative tourism principles. They must enhance local economies using local products and services, be frictionless, minimize carbon footprint on the landscape, present the cultures and traditions of host communities through connections with local people, be inclusive and welcoming to all, consider visitor needs, and restore ecosystems and community infrastructure. | VC, IDS | Mar. 2025 |
| Organize a best practice mission to Wolfville, NS, to meet with organizers and participants in the FoodArtNature program; use their experience to encourage potential Ingonish individuals to create their own visitor experiences | VC, IDS | Sept. 2025 |

# Recommendation #4

- *Use existing events to stimulate overnight visitation in Fall and Winter.*

| Actions #4 | Role | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| Prioritize the development of events that are "on-theme" to attract locals and visitors. | VC, IDS, DCB, TNS | May 2025 |
| Identify event gaps in the annual calendar of activities, then consider developing a new event using the Shoulder Season/Winter DCB Incubator Fund. | VC | May 2025 |
| Leveraged the planned Cape Smokey Race Team-sanctioned Alpine Ski Race. The event includes: | CS, IDS, VC | Dec. 2024 |

# Recommendation #5

- *Ensure the "Linger Longer" proposition drives development and promotional activity. (Not necessarily more visitors but visitors who spend more time in the region.)*

| Actions #5 | Role | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| Dispel the "Do the Trail" positioning and reinforce everything to experience in the area <u>when potential visitors are in the trip planning phase (online)</u>. | VC, IDS, DCB, TNS | May 2025 |
| Create year-round multi-day itineraries designed around visitor segments and our themes. Prioritize itineraries to stimulate business in June, September and October when there are accommodation options with capacity. | VC, IDS, DCB, TNS | May 2025 |
| Equip front-line staff with timely "Things to See and Do" info they can share with customers. | IDS, VC | April 2025 |
| Identify and develop the Ingonish community hub at Cop's Cove - the hub becomes the community gathering, celebration, and meeting place, supporting visitor services and infrastructure. | VC, IDS, PC | Dec 2024 |

# Recommendation #6

- *Take proactive steps to maximize the community's online presence, utilizing the learning from the Digital Footprint Analysis.*

| Actions #6 | Role | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| The TNS website (novascotia.com) is the primary link for "from away" visitors considering a trip to the province. Therefore, DCB, IDS, VC, and lead operators (Keltic Lodge, Cape Smokey, Parks Canada) must ensure that TNS has relevant Ingonish content for visitors in the trip-planning phase. | VC, DCB, TNS | Feb 2025 |
| The DCB website (cbisland.com) is the go-to site for prospective visitors considering a trip to Cape Breton. Therefore, consolidating other Ingonish websites (Victoria County, IDS, Ingonish Arts, Culture Society) is needed to reduce redundancy and streamline the path to purchase for potential visitors planning a trip to Cape Breton Island. | VC, IDS, DCB, IACS | Mar 2025 |
| Work with DCB to complete this consolidation utilizing DCBs new Listing System and the newly created DCB/VC Content Hub | VC, DCB | Mar 2025 |
| Implement capacity-building/training sessions for operators to enhance their websites and social media presence, utilizing training expertise from DCB and TNS. | VC, DCB, TNS | Apr 2025 |
| Develop and feature more Ingonish travel packages and experiences on novascotia.com; the free listings can be developed in partnership with TNS guidance. | VC, DBC, OP | Apr 2025 |

# Recommendation #7

*Ground tourism development in regenerative tourism practices.*

*Throughout the planning process, there was consensus that the strategy should embrace regenerative tourism principles. Ongoing dialogue is required to support a greater understanding that turns knowledge into action.*

*A regenerative approach to tourism development involves several elements:*

1. *Connecting people and their place in a deep, purposeful, and meaningful relationship.*
2. *Putting that shared purpose into action by developing hosting experiences and infrastructure enlivened by local stories, learning, and care.*
3. *Working in a manner that grows capacity for flourishing and resilience among people, businesses, communities, and ecologies.*

# Actions # 7

| Actions #7 | Role | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| All development efforts must be guided by an equal focus on economics and the well-being of Ingonish people and places to measure future tourism sector success. | VC, IDS | Apr 2025 |
| Ingonish businesses become certified sustainable – explore programs offered by GMIST and others as DCB develops a Sustainable Tourism Program/Plan.<br>(Priority – set a goal for the number of Ingonish businesses that become certified sustainable.) | VC, IDS, DCB, OP | Dec 2025 |
| Reinforce the need to source locally – set up a community-centric buying directory or platform to help operators identify and source local goods and services. | VC, IDS, OP | Oct 2025 |
| Identify and communicate our community expectations and standards to create meaningful connections in safe and supportive settings for all; for example, DCB has subscribed to the Rainbow Registered program and is encouraging businesses to register to become participating members. | VC, IDS | Nov 2025 |
| DCB is also creating a program to ensure compliance with accessibility standards at all businesses. | VC, IDS, DCB | Nov 2025 |
| Send Ingonish delegates, through a co-funded program, to annual Impact Conferences in communities nationwide. | IDS | Nov 2025 |

# Recommendation #8

*Identify and, where possible, address service and infrastructure gaps in collaboration with others.*

*Address infrastructure and service gaps that are detrimental to the visitor journey. This includes, but is not limited to:*

- *Ongoing infrastructure challenges and gaps at Keltic Lodge, for example, the current condition of the main lodge (currently closed due to safety concerns), the condition of the access road to the main lodge due to erosion issues*
- *Frequency cost of air access to Sydney*
- *Poor road conditions throughout the area*
- *Poor broadband/cell connectivity throughout the area*
- *Wayfinding signage throughout the region – quality, frequency, etc. (outside of CBNP)*
- *EV charging stations*
- *Consistent business operating hours, especially food and beverage operations*
- *Enhanced food and beverage outlets and options*
- *Workforce development and labour shortages, including affordable housing for hospitality workers*
- *Consistent service standards at all tourism operations*

| Actions #8 | Role | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| Prioritize the extended infrastructure and service gaps and identify specific actions and accountabilities to address the most pressing issues.<br>• Work with government, industry and private sector partners to identify lead entities to address gaps<br>• Work with industry to address service, hours of operation gaps, as well as F&B options and availability | VC, IDS, DCB, TNS, ACOA, CBP, OP | Nov 2024 |
| Lend support to the ongoing discussions between Parks Canada and Golf North/Keltic Lodge regarding critical infrastructure gaps. A fully functional operation at Keltic Lodge is vital to Ingonish's future success. | VC, IDS, DCB, PC, Keltic | Ongoing |
| Take necessary steps to ensure a sustainable workforce through dialogue and partnership with operators, DCB and TIANS. | VC, DCB, TIANS | Ongoing |
| Continue to address affordable hospitality staff housing shortages.<br>Ensure the DCB/VC Housing project becomes a reality<br>Take steps to transfer management and operations to a community group like the IDS. | VC, DCB, IDS | Ongoing |
| Continue to lobby for removing seasonal business tax incentives (Bill 191), which is counterintuitive to extend the season. | VC, DCB, TIANS | ASAP |
| WayFinding Signage | IDS, VC | ASAP |

# Thank You

Questions?