

***Akwesasne Cultural Tourism
Strategic Plan***

June 2014

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INTRODUCTION

During the past several years there has been growing interest among many Akwesasne community members, business owners, artisans, and not-for-profit organizations for the development of Cultural Tourism as a means for economic development, resulting in the creation of jobs, business diversification, and increased sales opportunities for small businesses.

Cultural Tourism initiatives and inclusion of language and culture as living traditions were identified as priorities throughout the Akwesasne Comprehensive Community Development Plan Framework Report, (CCDP), March 2009, based on an extensive participatory process of community members. One of the outcomes of that report was a private-public partnership that developed *Sharing the Spirit, An Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Strategy*.

Community Vision Statement

In 2029, Akwesasne is a prosperous and thriving community located along the St. Lawrence River. Akwesasne is known for its vibrant People whose Mohawk language and culture encompass all areas of community life. Akwesasne is a welcoming place for visitors from near and far with many cultural tourism opportunities that are renowned throughout the world.

*Akwesasne Comprehensive
Community Development Plan, March 2009*

This Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan being developed in 2014 will be referred to throughout this document as CTSP to distinguish it from the many other plans referenced. The CTSP is a tool to help the Akwesasne community successfully consider, identify and make decisions about the priorities and possibilities it wants to achieve as the Cultural Tourism sector is developed. It is also “formulated to assist in identifying actions and policies to be carried out and supported by leadership when making decisions about public investment and community development...” as stated in the CCDP.

The CTSP does not replace, override, or sideline any existing plans, strategies, efforts, initiatives or activities. The community will choose the ways it would like to move forward.

ABOUT CULTURAL TOURISM

Cultural Tourism is traveling to a destination to experience places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past **and** the present. It includes historic, cultural, and natural events, educational opportunities, and attractions; depending on the destination, it may also include traditional heritage life-style recreation activities.

The ‘traveler’ to the destination may be someone from another country, a nearby state or community, a school group, and *especially* someone from the destination community itself. It’s amazing how many residents of a place have never visited or experienced a nearby event or attraction.

One of the most significant aspects of Cultural Tourism is that the events, attractions, and initiatives are all meant to improve the quality of life of the community’s residents, and help preserve or improve traditional resources.

Benefits of Cultural Tourism

- Projects are environmentally sustainable, culturally appropriate, and take into consideration the impact on all who will be touched by them
- For existing businesses, new income generated by Cultural Tourism visitors may add sufficient revenues for them to become more profitable, helping them to grow
- Creates jobs and opportunities for new businesses – artisans and crafts people; performers and entertainers; lodgings; dining establishments; crafts supply stores; tour operators
- Diversifies local economy - jobs for recreation: guides, sports outfitters, more retail, etc. crafts teachers, tourism packages; transportation options, web and graphics designers
- Helps diminish ‘leakage’ i.e. travel of community residents to a neighboring community to purchase goods and services not available in their own community
- Attracts visitors with interests in cultural heritage and traditions, history, and preservation – these are respectful visitors
- Attracts older visitors – often people with expendable income, who travel on
- Creates opportunities for partnerships – artisan cooperatives, local foods/farmers markets
- Increases revenues at historic attraction and events – helps sustain them
- Preserves and strengthens local traditions
- Generates opportunities for local investment in historic and community resources
- Builds community pride and perception/image of the site or area’s significance
- Helps improve property values
- Creates need for and creation of quality promotional materials, websites, etc., which all project positive impressions of the community
- Requires well-planned, attractively designed, consistent way-finding materials, including Gateway Signage, well positioned directional signage throughout the community, and maps, audio tours, etc.
- Attracts investors (banks, foundations) interested in sustainable economies
- Non-local arts audience spend more than twice as much as local audiences (www.AmericansForTheArts.org)

About Cultural Tourism Travellers

Culture and heritage were not recognized as U.S. “travel activities” until 1995, although destinations have focused on these assets for centuries. New definitions, principles, and efforts to integrate and distinguish cultural, heritage and natural assets were launched twenty years ago as an alternative to mass-market, manufactured tourism.

Characteristics of Cultural Heritage Travelers:

- Older
- More Affluent
- Educated
- Often Married

- Frequent travelers – 5.01 leisure trips vs. 3.98
- Spend more – \$994 vs. \$611
- 78% of all U.S. leisure travelers = 118.3 million adults annually
- Prefer leisure travel that is educational
- Spend more money on cultural and heritage activities
- Want to engage with locals; “do” something, “learn” something
- Will travel farther to get the experience

Source: Mandala Research 2009

Interests of Cultural Travelers:

In a survey of cultural travelers, these numbers reflect their top levels of interest in the following activities (i.e. of the total, 66% would be interested in visiting historic sites, of that same group 41% would also be interested in visiting national parks):

1. Visiting historic sites (66%)
2. Participating in historical re-enactments (64%)
3. Visiting art museums/galleries (54%)
4. Attending an art/craft fair or festival (45%)
5. Attending a professional dance performance (44%)
6. Visiting state/national parks (41%)
7. Shopping in museum stores (32%)
8. Exploring urban neighborhoods (30%)

*Adopted from Cultural Heritage Tourism: A Sustainable Strategy
(Presentation by Cheryl Hargrove,
President of HTC Partners, Heritage Tourism Consultants)*

AKWESASNE CULTURAL TOURISM TODAY

Advisors, boards, staff, professionals, not-for-profit organizations, independent groups, and community members have spent many hours developing well thought-out, well-planned strategies and activities that relate to culture and tourism. These include, but are not limited to CCDP; *Sharing the Spirit*; the Museum/Library/Archives; the Onkwehón:we Arts Council Business Plan (OAC); Native North American Travelling College; The Freedom School.

- Many government programs already offer, are planning, or have the potential to plan activities, events, and initiatives related to Cultural Tourism, for example: Economic Development, Education, Environment, Health, Traditional Support, Cultural Restoration;
- All organizations have the potential to collaborate and coordinate activities and initiatives that support cultural tourism. At a recent meeting, representatives of government agencies of Akwesasne described planned programs that will support Cultural Tourism and will demonstrate the potential for, and benefits of collaboration and coordination on projects.

Why is there a need for the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan?

While research reports and planning documents related to Akwesasne Cultural Tourism exist, no resources were available to bring them all together, and to move from strategies – ideas and goals – to a Strategic Plan – a coordinated long-range action plan for achieving those ideas and goals. The CTSP includes recommendations, suggestions, and specific activities for Cultural Tourism that were identified by advisor groups and community members during plan development, and expressed in meetings and one-on-one conversations. Many of these are in support of recommendations in already-existing documents, such as the work that has been done for the planning of the new Museum, and the OAC Business Plan.

- Community members and stakeholders of Cultural Tourism for Akwesasne need to identify a clear, shared long-range vision of the ways the community will – and will not-- use its cultural assets to foster economic development and cultural prosperity and achieve the community's desired growth and sustainability.
- The CTSP is the first phase of a process that will be evergreen, i.e.– constantly changing, growing, bringing in new resources as the goals and action items of the CTSP are accomplished, and as the Akwesasne community and key groups identify new, or reprioritize, needs.
- Specific recommendations, based on input from community members, will help foster communications, collaboration, and cooperation between Akwesasne entities, as well as potential regional partners. Regional partnerships are becoming increasingly important in evaluation of projects for grants and funding.
- The CTSP can serve as a call to action for community members to rethink, prioritize, and further develop initiatives identified in *Sharing the Spirit*.
- Recommendations, and, or suggestions in the CTSP will help maximize the effectiveness of planning and project development, identify gaps and new opportunities, and avoid overlaps and duplication of efforts for Cultural Tourism and the arts.
- The CTSP includes extensive appendices with information about funding sources, potential regional partners, previously published relevant resources, existing websites, and successful First People's culture and heritage tourism museums and complexes.

PLAN METHODOLOGY – KEY PROJECT RESOURCES

The Objectives, Goals, and Action Items in this draft of the CTSP are derived from a wide range of resources, including previous and ongoing Akwesasne research and initiatives relevant to Cultural Tourism. Many successful Cultural Tourism initiatives undertaken by Native groups in the U.S. and Aboriginal groups in Canada were identified as model projects with ideas to be considered by community members for Akwesasne. This CTSP also reflects comments and suggestions, and addresses cultural sensitivity concerns expressed in group meetings, and conversations with community members and key advisors.

The following documents, referenced earlier, were used extensively as the foundation for development of the CTSP:

- *Akwesasne Comprehensive Community Development Plan Report*, "Building a Better Tomorrow," March 2009 prepared by the SRMT Office Economic Development (OED) based on an extensive process of community meetings and surveys.
- *Artisans Survey*, December 2008, conducted by the SRMT OED
- *Sharing the Spirit*, October 2009, prepared by a community-working group including St Regis Mohawk Tribe Office of Economic Development, Tribal Chiefs, and supported by all three Mohawk governments – SRMT, MCA, and Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs (MNCC)

Sharing the Spirit recommended very specific initiatives for Cultural Tourism:

- o New Museum Cultural Center
- o Establishment of a Welcome Center
- o Construction of an Eco-Resort
- o Construction of a new Akwesasne Library/Museum/Archives
- o Construction of an Art Park
- o Enhancements of the Native North American Travelling College
- o Enhancements to Akwesasne Destination Experience (Route 37)
- o Development of Promotional Materials for Cultural Tourism\Promote Artists and Artisans

To access a copy of *Sharing the Spirit*, see Appendix B

- *Onkwehón:we Arts Council Business Plan*, in development with participation from the Arts Councils Board of Directors
- *Ionkwaio'te Senha Aioianerenhakie, We are working toward better things to come*, A new home for the material culture and documents of the Akwesasne Mohawk People, September 2011
- Akwesasne, A Cultural Portrait*, 2 volumes, prepared by the MCA and NNATC, 2013

As has been mentioned, Cultural Tourism experiences are as much, or perhaps more for the enjoyment of community members, as visitors. The missions and goals of various tribal government divisions will be supported through implementation of the CTSP.

These include: Akwesasne Cultural Restoration (ACR) program's Goal: Seek to promote the restoration of land-based cultural practices and traditional economic activities within the community and preservation of Mohawk language and Its focus on four areas of traditional cultural practice:

- Water, fishing, use of river
- Medicine plants and healing
- Hunting and trapping
- Horticulture and basket making

SRMT Environment Division aims to prevent disease and injury while at the same time promoting lifestyles that respect, protect and enhance the environment for the next seven generations at Akwesasne. Numerous Outreach and Education activities offered by Environment, for example, such as those focusing on fishing and natural resource appreciation could be core components of Cultural Tourism activities to be enjoyed by both community members and visitors.

MOVING FORWARD WITH AKWESASNE CULTURAL TOURISM

While committed to the concept and potential of Cultural Tourism, individuals in programs and divisions and staff in not-for-profit organizations, in fulfilling their stated roles and responsibilities, have limited time available that would be needed to bring all these project outcomes together to develop a comprehensive Strategic Plan for Akwesasne Cultural Tourism. All are in need of stronger communication links and infrastructure between the many, varied arts and culture organization within Akwesasne. Advisors agree the task at hand is too large and too important to be undertaken by individuals and organizations operating in isolation.

Late in 2013, Chief Ron LaFrance, Chief Paul Thompson, and Chief Beverly Cook signed a Project Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Workforce Development Institute (WDI) in support of Strategic Planning for the Cultural Tourism and artists sector of Akwesasne. In the MOA, the outcome of the project is “the creation of a Strategic Plan to benefit tourism, with a goal of increasing awareness of, and participation in, area arts and culture, advancing the health of the community as a whole.” SRMT OED used the funding to hire a consultant for a five-month contract to achieve the MOA objectives.

Early in 2014, In addition to hiring the consultant, SRMT OED convened the Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan Working Group to act as advisors for the development of the plan. Active participants in this Working Group include representatives from the Akwesasne Museum/Archives and Library, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, the Native North American Travelling College, the Onkwehón:we Arts Council, the Akwesasne Cultural Restoration Program, SRMT Environment, SRMT Planning and Infrastructure, the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, and representatives for Mohawk language and culture. According to Lindsay Tarbell, this collaborative, cooperative approach, and demonstration of commitment for the development of the CTSP, are promising critical indicators for the success of the implementation of the CTSP.

The Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan will help achieve many of the recommendations that were “formulated to assist in identifying actions and policies to be carried out and supported by leadership when making decisions about public investment and community development...and facilitate the establishment of a community driven strategic direction that will provide leadership with direction from Akwesasró:non about their priorities for the future development of Akwesasne.”

*Akwesasne Comprehensive
Community Development Plan March 2009*

The consultant met directly with many of these groups and had one-on-one discussions with community members to acquire details needed for some aspects of CTSP development, such as the status of some properties community residents had suggested as potential locations for Cultural Tourism sites

The degree of participation in these meetings and enthusiasm of participants are indications that these entities are recognizing and understanding the need for, and value of, collaboration and cooperation to develop the Cultural Tourism capacity of Akwesasne, and for enhancement of the “Sense of Place” of Akwesasne, i.e. destination beautification.

In addition to connecting the dots, incorporating goals and activities of organizations, businesses, and artisans that have already been defined, the consultant was responsible for identifying connections, opening communications, and encouraging cooperation and collaboration between Akwesasne, regional, and national Cultural Tourism organizations, government entities, and private enterprises. Information about those organizations is in *Appendix D*.

PLAN OVERVIEW -- Recommended Objectives, Goals, and Actions of Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan

The CTSP focuses on major Objectives for Economic Development, Culture and Language, and Support of Artists. Each Objective is a statement of a desired future and includes specific recommended Goals, and recommended Actions that will help achieve those Goals. While presented in separate sections in the CTSP, some activities need to occur sequentially, while others can occur concurrently. Each will help support and ensure achievement of others.

Details of these Objectives, Goals, and Actions are presented in following sections of the CTSP.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVE: Cultural Tourism is a key sector of Akwesasne economic development

Goal: *Ensure Implementation of Akwesasne CTSP*

Actions:

- Create Akwesasne Cultural Tourism steering committee
- Create a Common Vision for Akwesasne Cultural Tourism
- Build community support for Cultural Tourism
- Create Division of Cultural Tourism
- Create positions for Cultural Tourism Coordinator and Clerk
- Create the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Partnership

Goal: *Bring New Visitors, More Visitors, Have Them Spend More, Stay Longer, Come Back, and Become Tourism “Messengers”*

Actions:

- Conduct Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Readiness Audit and Assessment
- Help existing Akwesasne businesses and organizations maximize their potential from Cultural Tourism
- Create Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Strategic Marketing Plan
- Identify training needs and develop resources to maximize cultural tourism experiences for both community members and visitors

Goal: *Enhance Travel and Wayfinding Experiences in Both the U.S. and Canadian Sections of Akwesasne*

Actions:

- Conduct Visual Audits of all areas where visitors are/will be welcome
- Establish Welcome Centers Working Group(s)
- Create Plan for Attractive Gateways, Signage, Interpretive Signage, and Wayfinding Materials

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

OBJECTIVE: Kanien'ké:ha Culture and Language remain a strong and vibrant foundation of the Akwesasne community today and for generations to come.

Goal: *Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Focuses on Past, Present, and Future Aspects of Our Community's Cultural Heritage*

Actions:

- Complete Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Intrinsic Values Audit and Assessment
- Maximize the effectiveness of governance of the Akwesasne Cultural Center
- Finalize conceptual visitor experiences of New Akwesasne Cultural Complex (and Archive Facility)
- Finalize consensus on most favorable type of physical location (Site Selection) for desired Cultural Complex experiences
- Create the Akwesasne Center for the Performing Arts
- Create an Outdoor Art Park

Goal: *Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Offerings Benefit all Members of Our Community*

Action:

- Plan Cultural Tourism initiatives that will provide opportunities, rewards, and incentives for Akwesasne Youth and Elders

Goal: *The Kanien'ké:ha Language is Part of the Core Akwesasne Cultural Experience*

Actions:

- Create a Plan for attractive gateways, signage, interpretive signage, and wayfinding Materials that include the Kanien'ké:ha Language
- Use the Kanien'ké:ha in Marketing Materials
- Provide Language Support and Incentives for Use of the Kanien'ké:ha in Tourism-related Businesses and Cultural Entities

SUPPORT FOR ARTISTS

OBJECTIVE: Akwesasne is the hub of Native visual and performing arts activities for people living in, and visiting, the St. Lawrence Seaway Valley Corridor

(Actions in Development)

Goal: *Maximize the potential for success of Akwesasne Artists/Artisans and Crafters*

Goal: *The Onkwehón:we Arts Council provides leadership for the success of Akwesasne's Creative Economy and its First Nations Art and Artists*

Goal: *Create Onkwehón:we Center(s) for the Visual and Performing Arts*

THE TIME IS RIGHT FOR AKWESASNE CULTURAL TOURISM

During the plan development process for this Akwesasne CTSP community members, advisors, business owners, the artisan community, representatives of key cultural assets, and staff of divisions of Akwesasne government have strongly expressed their belief that Cultural Tourism, when developed while carefully addressing cultural sensitivity concerns, is a positive direction for economic development and community revitalization. Community members and representatives of governments are showing commitments to collaborative approaches to economic development and community revitalization through Cultural Tourism.

This commitment and collaborative approach is especially timely given the increasing importance of Cultural Tourism throughout the region, new potential partners, and funding opportunities.

Tourism is a key focus of economic development for the North Country's Regional Economic Development Council (NCREDC), created in 2011 by Governor Cuomo as one of ten regional councils in New York State to develop long-term strategic plans for economic growth for their regions. Priority projects include those that enhance the region's quality of life; attract more visitors or residents to the region; and serve as leverage for attracting private investment into the region. NCREDC's Consolidated Funding Awards (CFAs) give priority consideration to projects that strongly support collaborative, regional approaches to tourism initiatives.

The Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) has several initiatives that support Cultural Tourism, including North Country Scenic Byways projects. ANCA's Annual Buyers Days is an important venue that creates opportunities for local artists, crafters, and producers of value-added foods to promote and sell to retail buyers for resale in shops throughout the region. Adirondack Regional Arts Trail (working name) will connect the region's arts organizations, galleries, theaters, artists and craftspeople through an online platform, and help foster a unified identity for arts and artisan businesses across Northern New York.

The Raquette River Blueway Corridor (RRBC) Project promotes economic development and tourism as well as a sense of unity and cooperation among the communities along the Raquette River. Goals include enhancing riverside assets and recreation, protecting the natural resources of the corridor and impacted communities, and respecting public and private lands. Municipalities, local and regional groups, businesses and individuals are promoting scenic and recreational resources, which in turn strengthens the ability of each to set their specific priorities while participating in the overall corridor plan. Representatives of Akwesasne have been active with RRBC for several years. The RRBC is actively moving forward with a destination enhancement and marketing initiative that will include Tribal lands in the corridor.

Recently, the coordinator of FishCap, an award-winning tourism initiative that promotes and brings anglers and their families to the St. Lawrence River Valley for tours and tournaments, met with representatives of SRMT cultural tourism and economic development. Together, they began to explore opportunities that might bring visitors, including people from overseas, to enjoy Akwesasne's special recreational and cultural attributes. FishCap has significant partnerships with regional communities, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and

development agencies. These connections could provide significant opportunities for Akwesasne Cultural Tourism.

“I Love New York,” the state’s official tourism marketing and public relations campaign, is increasingly focusing on North Country experiences, as well as targeting Canadian markets. Both are opportunities from which Akwesasne could benefit.

U.S. government programs recognize the value and benefits of tourism. “We’re trying to diversity from gaming and agriculture and other industries, and tourism is a huge part of diversification,” says Ed Hall, a Federal Representative of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. “Tourism is an avenue for economic development, but also to educate people and share our culture and history on our own terms, from our own voices.”

Numerous U.S. Federal Agencies have community development programs that could help Akwesasne Cultural Tourism advocates plan and develop resources and programs.

Location, Location, Location

While some visitors choose a single destination, most plan travel experiences that take them to several destinations where they can pursue their specific areas of interest. Akwesasne’s physical location makes it an ideal destination for cultural visitors. Being less than a day’s drive from where there are large populations of potential visitors who have strong interests in learning about and experiencing authentic First Nations cultures, and to tourists who enjoy “geo-tourism experiences,” is an unrealized opportunity.

- 4.4 million vehicles travel State Route 37 every year
- Up to 120 million prospective visitors within one day’s drive

Strong Potential Target Markets

An additional benefit of this proximity to Cultural Tourism venues is that Akwesasne can collaborate with them for events, exhibits, and cross-marketing. Following are just a few; more will be added as the Strategic Plan is implemented.

Montreal – strong support of arts and culture

Ottawa - First People’s Hall Museum of Canadian Civilization

Toronto - Royal Ontario Museum

Robert Moses State Park, Nature Center, New York Power Authority

The VIC (Visitors Interpretive Center) Paul Smith’s College

Adirondack Park

Thousand Islands Region

Three Scenic Byways:

- Great Lakes Seaway Trail National Byway
- North Country Scenic Byway (NYS)
- Adirondack Trail Scenic Byway (NYS)

Colleges and Universities –professors, students, and families have cultural interests:

- SUNY Canton
- SUNY Potsdam
- St. Lawrence University,
- Clarkson University

- SUNY North Country Community College Malone and Saranac Lake Campuses
- Paul Smiths College

Major regional visitor attractions with related focus:

- Akwesasne Museum – Akwesasne N.Y.
- Six Nations Indian Museum – Onchiota N.Y.
- Wild Center (Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks Tupper Lake
More than 60,000 people, including 5,000 students, visit the Wild Center every year. In 2011, 85% came from outside the North Country Region, representing 4,612 zip codes.
(Driving time from – to Hogansburg 1.5 hours)
- Adirondack Museum – Human and community histories, Blue Mountain Lake, N.Y.
The Real Story of the Adirondacks, Yesterday and Today, 50,000 annual visitors Driving time from - to Hogansburg 2.5 hours
- View – Old Forge N.Y. – *a multi-arts center that includes the Henry M. Kashiwa Eco Gallery that celebrates the wonders of nature and the arts inspired by them, Kashiwa’s love of the Adirondacks, and his respect and admiration of Native American cultures and their reverence for the earth.*
- Potsdam Children’s Museum (in development), includes Longhouse exhibit—Potsdam, N.Y.
- St. Lawrence County Arts Council – Potsdam, NY
- Frederic Remington Art Museum—Ogdensburg, NY
- Antique Boat Museum – Canton, NY
- Thousand Islands Arts Center (Home of the Handweaving Museum) — Clayton, N.Y.
- Iroquois Indian Museum — Albany, N.Y.
Includes work on display from many Akwesasne artists
- Seneca – Iroquois National Museum <https://www.senecamuseum.org>
Salamanca NY
*Iroquois Indian Museum <http://www.iroquoismuseum.org/index.html>
Howe’s Cave. Nature Park. The Museum offers a 45 acre Nature Park. Short and long trails. Guided and self-informed tours. Stream and River. Shagbark hickory stands. Fields of wildflowers, deer, raccoon, occasional beaver, woodchucks, squirrels, birds. All nature as kin -- alive, possible medicines, a realm of the spirit co-existing with humans.*
- National Kateri Shrine, Fonda

Major regional attractions with arts and crafts classes

- Adirondack Folk School – Lucerne, N.Y.
Classes and multi-day courses in traditional Adirondack, North Country and Native American crafts
- TAUNY) Traditional Arts of the North Country -- Canton, N.Y.
Changing exhibits, audio visual programs, classes
- Antique Boat Museum – Clayton, N.Y.

- Thousand Islands Arts Center (Home of the Handweaving Museum) — Clayton N.Y.
Exhibits, classes focusing on fiber arts

Opportunities created by Akwesasne’s shared geography with Ontario and Quebec:

“Canada is predicting huge potential for “Aboriginal” Tourism. In 2007, Aboriginal Tourism produced \$750 million in direct expenditures across Canada and economic impact projections completed by the former Aboriginal Tourism Canada (ATC) indicate a realistic potential of over 4.9 billion annually within the following ten years. With the growing global interest in Cultural Tourism, urban Aboriginal communities located in gateway destinations across Canada have a tremendous opportunity to capture their share of this market with both employment and economic development initiatives.” (Draft Aboriginal Tourism Report, by Turtle Island Tourism (Aboriginal Experiences in the Heart of Ottawa)

“Each year, Quebec Aboriginal Tourism welcomes over 800,000 visitors, sustains 3,500 jobs and generates an estimated \$169 million in economic benefits. “We are very pleased to present the achievements of our organization, highlighted by a 60% increase in membership over the last three years and the establishment of strategic partnerships with the Québec Outfitters Federation (QOF), Aventure Écotourisme Québec (AEQ), Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (SÉPAQ), Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) and Parks Canada. Aboriginal tourism is booming and we are proud to contribute while working closely with the other key players in the industry for the greater benefit of our communities”, said Dave Laveau, Québec Aboriginal Tourism Executive Director since 2010 at the Quebec Aboriginal Tourism Annual General Meeting, November 2013.

“Ontario, and in particular the northern boreal region, has globally significant land, water, and culture. It is in an excellent position to provide travelers, including residents, with a world-class wilderness tourism experience. Research in Ontario has shown that in resource-based tourism (RBT) remoteness sells”. (Remoteness Sells, A Report on Resource-Based Tourism in Northwestern Ontario)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE

Cultural Tourism is a key sector of Akwesasne Economic Development

As has been noted, there are frequent and significant references to Cultural Tourism as a key economic development initiative for Akwesasne in a number of planning initiatives.

During the CTSP development process, advisors and community members expressed strong support of Cultural Tourism as an important initiative for the future generations of Akwesasne. Participants also agreed that keys to successful Cultural Tourism are Commitment, Communication, Cooperation, and Collaboration between all stakeholders.

Economy Vision Statement

Create a balanced, planned, and sustainable economy on our terms, respecting our traditional and cultural values.

***Akwesasne Comprehensive
Community Development Plan, 2009***

Implementation of the CTSP will increase tourism-related revenues (lodging, meals, purchases of goods), which in turn will:

- Provide Increased Opportunities for Existing Businesses
- Create Jobs
- Diversify the Economy
- Create Opportunities for Entrepreneurs
- Create Additional Customers for Small Business Owners
- Improve Quality of Life for Akwesasne Residents
- Build Community Assets
- Increase Property Values

Economic Development findings from project advisors and community members support the first stage of the SRMT Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan:

- High priority to improving Akwesasne image
- Developing arts and Cultural Tourism, and developing related independent businesses as priorities for business and commercial development
- Infrastructure improvements and improving the overall cleanliness of the area are high priorities. In addition to roads, shorelines need clean up
- Recreation-type businesses are considered very important
 - Cultural Tourism visitors enjoy traditional experiences such as guided canoeing and kayaking trips
- Importance of maintaining the uniqueness of Akwesasne ...by supporting more family-oriented businesses, recreational businesses, smaller retail stores, and marketplaces that satisfy community members' needs.
 - Cultural visitors prefer small-locally owned businesses to chain stores, want to meet and connect with community members such as business owners
- High priorities include recreation facility initiatives including parks, athletic fields, bicycle paths, outdoor activities such as fishing and bicycle trails
 - Cultural visitors enjoy "soft" and traditional recreation activities, rather than extreme sports

All Goals and Actions are proposed, based on ideas from advisors and community members, and identified in key previously created research studies and documents, and are provided to help guide discussions and consensus building by community members.

Goal: *Ensure Implementation of Akwesasne CTSP*

Based on observations, recommendations, and experiences shared by advisors and community members during the Strategic Plan development process, there need to be unchanging dedicated, on-going resources to coordinate and help achieve Cultural Tourism initiatives.

ACTION: Create Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Steering Committee

Sharing the Spirit identified the need for a management team, based on the skills and experience of the individuals to move the plan forward. That management team was never formed. In 2014, based on discussions with key Akwesasne Cultural Tourism stakeholders, Lindsay Tarbell, SRMT OED, convened the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan Working Group. Meetings of that group led to the development process for this Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan.

Benefits: The Cultural Tourism Steering Committee will be a dedicated resource committed to ensuring the beginning of the implementation of the Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan. One of their key tasks will be to define expectations for cultural tourism for Akwesasne – what experiences for visitors, numbers and types of visitors, and a common vision for Akwesasne tourism. As plan development moves forward, they will continue to act as advisors. The proposed Cultural Tourism Partnership (see page xx) will assume responsibilities once it is in place.

Who: Potential Tourism Steering Committee representatives: Mohawk governments, Akwesasne Museum, Onkwehón:we Arts Council, Mohawk Culture and Language Advisor, Akwesasne Cultural Restoration Program, Environment, Chamber of Commerce, St. Regis Mohawk Casino, Architect, Attorney, Land Use Planner

Potential Partners: business community, others to be determined

Time Frame: Immediate; short term

Cost: Minimal

ACTION: Create a Common Vision for Akwesasne Cultural Tourism

In meetings with key advisors/stakeholders, and conversations with community members during the CTSP development process, there was much support for Cultural Tourism, discussion of the benefits, and what is needed to make it successful. Participants also spoke about the importance of Cultural Sensitivity to what should and should not be shared, and in what ways, and the importance of clearly communicating that. Some people in the community, however, have expressed great concerns about the appropriateness of Akwesasne Cultural Tourism, which might result in inappropriate sharing of sacred knowledge, allowing non-Natives access to spiritual and sacred sites, and exploitation of sacred traditions. Creating a common vision will clarify for community members the aspects of culture that are appropriate to share – Training for people who will present cultural activities to the public will ensure that the common vision is what is shared.

Benefits: The Common Vision will define:

- Types of visitors we wish to attract (for example: “geo-tourists;” travelers from Haudenosaunee Nations and other Onkwehón:we nations; international travelers)
- Places we want, and do not want, to be open to visitors
- Numbers of visitors we want to attract (for example, would mini-busses be acceptable, but not large group-tour busses)
- Activities that will be appropriate in which visitors are welcome to participate; which are not
- How we will communicate expectations for appropriate behavior and cultural respect (i.e. poster, a page in a visitors guide, on the website)
- How we will manage visitor access to places in Akwesasne (signage, maps, directed audio-phone tours)
- Types of jobs we want to create
- Ways cultural arts and craft will be sold/protected
- If we want to offer tour and/or themed experiences, and if so, what types?

Who: Cultural Tourism Steering Committee

Potential Partners/Stakeholders: All members of Akwesasne Community

Time Frame: Immediate and ongoing

Cost: Initially, fees to hire consultant with skills and experience in “Traditional Knowledge,” to facilitate Natives only session with community members to address these issues

ACTION: Build Community Support for Cultural Tourism and the Artists Sector

Presentations should be scheduled at community sessions and meetings with groups and clubs to inform members about the Cultural Tourism Initiative benefits, what it is, and is not. Addressing cultural sensitivity concerns are critical to building support for, and success of Cultural Tourism. Programs to encourage Akwesasne business owners to include Akwesasne Art in decorating their building exteriors and interiors, as gifts to customers, and having performing artists at customer events will help support the artisan sector, and help the community learn more about its rich resources.

Benefits: Community supports Cultural Tourism, ensuring visitors feel welcome and have positive experiences while in Akwesasne. Artists have opportunities to display, and potentially sell, their work.

Who: Cultural Tourism Steering Committee

Potential Partners: Successful tourism stakeholders; Cultural Tourism advocates, Onkwehón:we Arts Council, Akwesasne Museum, Native North American Travelling College

Time Frame: Immediate; short term

Cost: Minimal

ACTION: Create Division of Cultural Tourism

Given the desired focus on Cultural Tourism as an economic development strategy, this initiative needs additional dedicated resources, especially as potential collaborative regional initiatives develop.

Benefit: dedicated resource for coordination of administrative, funding, training, grant applications, promotion, and commitment to Cultural Tourism as Akwesasne economic development strategy.

Who: Offices of Economic Development

Potential Partners: see Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Partnership
Time Frame: Immediate; long term
Cost: to be determined

ACTION: Create dedicated positions for Akwesasne Cultural Tourism

While much of the plan can be implemented with representatives of existing governments, not-for-profit organizations, businesses, and volunteers, an individual or individuals with professional experience and a passion for Akwesasne Cultural Tourism whose time is dedicated to, and compensated for, is key to the success of the implementation of this Strategic Plan for the benefit of all residents – and visitors to Akwesasne. The Akwesasne Area Management Development Board could be a model organization for this initiative

Benefits: dedicated position to coordinate Akwesasne Cultural Tourism initiatives. Helps foster communication, collaboration, and cooperation between Akwesasne, regional, and state Cultural Tourism entities for event planning and marketing. Provides administrative support for Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Partnership.

Who: Offices and divisions, including economic development

Potential Partners: see Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Partnership below

Time Frame: Immediate; long term

Cost: to be determined

ACTION: Create the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Partnership

A broad forum for information sharing, networking, exploring ways to strengthen the Akwesasne Tourism industry and promoting it partners in the delivery of Cultural Tourism experiences.

Benefits: a regular forum for communication, cooperation, and collaboration about Akwesasne Cultural Tourism initiatives between all stakeholders will increase the effectiveness of the various efforts. Creation of the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Partnership will be the strategic action that will incorporate the goals of institutions, businesses, and artisans in a way that minimizes duplicative efforts, while taking advantage of the strength within each institution, business, and artisan.

During the destination review process of the CTSP, advisors, stakeholders, and community members noted that there were many public and private events, initiatives, and activities that are underway in the community to “keep the Mohawk Culture alive,” however, there is often lack of cross communication. A forum for communication, cooperation, and collaboration about these initiatives, events, and classes, for example, will increase the effectiveness of the various efforts. Creation of the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Partnership will be the strategic action that will incorporate the goals of institutions, businesses, and artisans in a way that minimizes duplicative efforts, while taking advantage of the strength within each institution, business and artisan. Following the *Experience Akwesasne!* event in August 2014, the Tourism Partnership will help guide the implementation of the CTSP.

The Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Partnership will serve as the voice and resource for the Akwesasne community in advancing authentic, appropriate Cultural Tourism, and supporting and promoting the talents of Akwesasne crafts people. The Partnership will assist in identifying infrastructure, capacity, technical assistance, training, funding, and educational needs. It will foster the ability for existing Tribal agencies, offices, and cultural institutions to plan and deliver

needed infrastructure, training, and business development skills. The Partnership will advance appropriate, authentic Akwesasne Cultural Tourism, and support and promote the talents of Akwesasne crafts people through coordinated activities and marketing. Objective-specific Working Groups will focus on specific outcomes.

Activities of the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Partnership

- Develops Vision and Mission Statements
- Defines Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Experience; Destination “Brand”
- Promotes Cultural Tourism and the Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan to the community
Example: *The Experience Akwesasne!* event
- Oversees creation and integrity of tourism-related graphic Identity
- Defines Visitor Strategies to prevent possible negative impacts on community
- Develops an effective Marketing Campaign to Support Akwesasne Cultural Tourism
- Specifically committed to Akwesasne economic development, economic diversity, community enhancement, and job creation through Cultural Tourism and the artisans sector
- Assesses transportation needs related to Cultural Tourism
- Assesses potential tourism products such as packaged tours and experiential learning
- Helps the Akwesasne community build for the future while sustaining and strengthening their cultural legacy
- Promotes cultural and historical authenticity
- A dedicated resource committed to ensuring continuation of tribal traditions and values through responsible Cultural Tourism
- Addresses cultural sensitivity issues related to Cultural Tourism
- Specifically committed to defining, growing, and sustaining authentic Akwesasne Cultural Tourism, including the Artisans sector
- An established forum, with regularly scheduled meetings, to share information, collaborate on planning Cultural Tourism related events and ideas with people and agencies that are interested
- Develops and benefits from strong alliances with other Tribes and regional partners in the Cultural Tourism industry
- Ensures systematic, coordinated approaches to Akwesasne Cultural Tourism
- Enables communication, coordination, collaboration of Cultural Tourism initiatives, both in Akwesasne and throughout the region, including attractions, events, and marketing
- Provides support for North Country and Canadian regional Cultural Tourism initiatives that enhance Akwesasne

ACTIONS:

- Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Partnership meets together formally 4 times per year to communicate, cooperate, and collaborate on activities that will advance the objectives of the Cultural Tourism Partnership and the initiatives identified in *Sharing the Spirit*
- Project -focused working groups of representatives and volunteers meet as needed to achieve specific objectives
- Recommended project to collaborate on is development of an annual special event, i.e. Santa Fe Indian Market-style event (See Akwesasne Heritage Festival page xx)

Possible Areas of Focus for Working Groups

Facilities – discussing options and coming to consensus on best way to move forward to achieve the needs identified by community members, and during plan development, including:

- Welcome Center(s)
- New Museum
- Museum Cultural Complex
- Center for the Performing Arts
- Art Space – facility for working studios, displays, events, sales

Destination Beautification and Image Improvement – needs and means to improve visual appearance of community, especially along Route 37 corridor.

Timeline:

< 6 MONTHS and ongoing

Resources:

Staff: Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Coordinator, Cultural Tourism Clerk, and Volunteers

Representatives from:

- St. Regis Mohawk Tribe
- Mohawk Council of Akwesasne
- Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs
- SRMT Office of Economic Development
- MCA Office of Economic Development
- Akwesasne Museum
- Mohawk Language Representative
- Native North American Travelling College
- SRMT Planning and Infrastructure
- SRMT Environment Division
- Akwesasne Cultural Restoration
- Onkwehón:we Arts Council
- Akwesasne Mohawk Casino Palace
- Comfort Inn
- Akwesasne Chamber of Commerce
- Liaisons with Quebec and Ontario
- Recreation Representative
- Youth Representative
 - Youth are the means to the continuation of Akwesasne culture
 - Participation in planning processes can inspire youth to come back to their culture
- Elder Representative
 - Elders bring wisdom, authenticity, and integrity
 - Elders can help insure perpetuation and sharing of traditional techniques, knowledge
- Tribal Historic Preservation Officer

Organizational model:

To be determined

Memberships:

- American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association
<http://www.aianta.org/> Costs: Annual dues \$500.00
- Also Aboriginal Tourism Organizations in Canada
- New York Cultural Tourism Network
- Traditional Arts of the North Country (TAUNY)
- Others to be determined (possibly Quebec and Ontario)
- North Country Chamber of Commerce

Funding Requirements:

To be determined

Goal: Bring New Visitors, More Visitors, Have them Spend More, Stay Longer, Come Back, and Become Akwesasne Tourism Messengers

Cultural Tourism destinations are successful when they implement their Strategic Plans from the perspectives of the visitors who represent their desired target travellers. What will draw these people to the destination? Are there enough appropriate accommodations and places to eat, and are their hours convenient? Are there good varieties of interesting places to visit and authentic engaging activities that will bring them back? Are there enough places to shop for a variety of locally produced goods? Will they be great “word –of-mouth” advertisers for their Akwesasne Experience when the talk with family and friends?

ACTION: Conduct Akwesasne Tourism Readiness Audit and Assessment

In previous projects, and during development of this CTSP, community members have identified places to visit, memorable experiences, annual and special events, and community resources where visitors – as well as community members -- can best experience authentic Akwesasne culture.

One of the findings of the research phase of the development of the CTSP is that several SRMT Divisions have activities, events, and educational sessions that are consistent with interests of cultural visitors.

There are likely many additional resources that should be included in this database, including historic attractions, natural attractions, cultural attractions, and opportunities to meet and learn from the many artisans and crafts people in the community. Listings are currently available in several printed documents (*Sharing the Spirit, An Akwesasne Cultural Portrait (2 volumes)*). The Audit could include resources such as places to buy local art and crafts, lodging, dining establishments, public restrooms, and opportunities for traditional recreation. The Audit should also indicate which resources could be shared with all, which are appropriate for Akwesasne tribal members only, and which are appropriate for all First Nations people.

Benefits: This information will be an important component of the Cultural Tourism website, attracting visitors to Akwesasne and helping them know about things to see and do when they are here. A dedicated resource (Cultural Tourism Division) needs to be responsible for

keeping the information up-to-date, for example, to include new resources, insure dates of annual events are accurate, and contact information is correct.

The Assessment will:

- Identify what it is these resources need to maximize them as memorable, authentic experiences
- Identify gaps and underserved areas
- Help establish priorities for resource development
- Be used for future planning by governments, not for profit organizations, and private business enterprises.

Who: Tourism Division, businesses and organizations

Potential Partner: all Stakeholders

Time Frame: Immediate and ongoing

Cost: Minimal

ACTION: Help Existing Akwesasne Businesses and Organizations Maximize Cultural Tourism Potential

Identify places, services where cultural visitors will be welcome. Include:

- Retail establishments
- Restaurants
- Local foods (smoothies, jerky, etc.)
- Gift shops offering authentic, locally or regional native-made crafts
- Guide services
- Outfitters
- Craft lessons
- Experiential learning packages
- Guided or self-guided tour packages

Benefit: Increased promotion and business may lead to job opportunities, new business development, and business diversification

Who: Akwesasne Chamber of Commerce

When: immediate and ongoing

Partners: Economic Development, service organizations, clubs

Cost: Minimal

ACTION: Identify Training Needs to Maximize Cultural Tourism Experiences for Staff, Community Members and Visitors

Develop resources and programs to address needs including:

- Customer service
- Destination awareness and promotion – what there is to do, where to go in the community, special events to experience the Akwesasne culture
- How to communicate appropriate behavior;
- How to address inappropriate behavior
- Spoken language issues with international visitors
- Include all community members (youth, elders, service workers)

Benefits: helps employees/staff feel more comfortable; provide better customer service; employees, staff can be tourism ambassadors for all opportunities in the community. Visitor

satisfaction increases length of stay, amounts spent, return visits, and word of mouth promotion.

Who: Offices of Economic Development, AAMB, SBA

Partners: Education divisions, Chamber of Commerce, Akwesasne Employment Center, Border Patrol

When: < 6 months

Funding: Workforce Development Institute, Small Business Administration

ACTION: Create Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Marketing Strategy and Plan

To be a successful destination, Akwesasne needs a professionally created, well-thought-out, strategic, coordinated and well-funded marketing plan that attracts visitors by communicating the memorable authentic experiences they will enjoy. The plan should include brochures, websites, advertising, public relations and social media. It should be coordinated with regional, state, and provincial tourism marketing initiatives. (The Tribal Tourism Toolkit National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers – NATHPO is an important resource: in CULTURAL TOURISM PLANNING RESOURCES Dropbox folder)

Who: Tourism Division, Offices of Economic Development

Partners: Chambers of Commerce, businesses, regional tourism marketing agencies

When: one year

Funding: Council for the Arts, I Love New York, community contributions, USDA

Benefits: Once a good basic selection of experiences for visitors is established (events, activities, places to connect with Akwesasne people,) a good marketing plan, with target markets identified (ages, areas of interests, types of visitors, etc.) will use the most effective methods to attract those visitors (print, advertising – and where, social media, co-marketing, etc.) will ensure the greatest opportunities for success in attracting visitors, and the maximum return on investment in dollars spent on marketing.

Goal: Enhance Travel and Wayfinding Experiences in Akwesasne

Community members agreed that an attractive Akwesasne Welcome Center on Route 37 will be a very important factor in the success of Cultural Tourism and had many ideas for what could be included. A Welcome Center is also one of the initiatives recommended in *Sharing the Spirit*. Observations of, and recommendations from community members during the Strategic Plan development process also focused on the need for a more attractive, visually appealing appearance of the Route 37 corridor. This was also a major priority in the Comprehensive Community Development Plan, and in *Sharing the Spirit*. Community members also identified the need for distinctive welcoming gateways to the Akwesasne Community and additional, more attractive wayfinding, directional, and interpretive signage. Suggestions include creation of metal sculptures like those outside the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino. Coordinated Welcome Centers on the Canadian side would give visitors a better sense of the connections between the portions of Akwesasne that are located on both the U.S. and Canadian sides

ACTION: Conduct a Visual Audit of Route 37 Corridor

Create a group of interested tourism stakeholders, business owners and ‘visitors’ from outside the community, with fresh perspectives who will travel together along Route 37 to conduct a visual audit, including documentation with pictures where appropriate. They will identify areas in the corridor that need improvement, places where roadside litter and unsightly debris could be removed, signage that is obsolete or could be improved, etc.

Benefit: A documented visual assessment that can be used to work with SRMT Planning and Infrastructure to determine ways to clean up and improve road shoulders, etc. Because of the New York State Scenic Byway designation (pending) of Route 37 there may be access to Transportation Enhancement Funds to pay for work needed.

Who: Offices of Economic Development, Environment

When: immediate and ongoing

Partners: Private businesses that would benefit from corridor improvement

Costs: To be determined

ACTION: Establish A Welcome Center Development Working Group

Community members agreed that possibly the first area of focus for development of physical resources for cultural tourism will be a Welcome Center or Centers. These will provide centralized points of contact for visitors to learn about places of interest, events, get an introduction to Mohawk culture, and be able to speak with an informed staff person from Akwesasne. There are a number of vacant or available properties that might be appropriate sites. The Welcome Center(s) could include:

- A well informed staff person and/or trained volunteers to interact with visitors
- Samples and Interpretive exhibits of Akwesasne arts and crafts
- Printed cards and exhibits explaining culturally appropriate and inappropriate behavior and reasons
- Interactive exhibits featuring Akwesasne culture and history
- Exhibits showing Akwesasne connections to nature
- During peak travel times, demonstrations of crafts, live performances
- During peak times a mini Farmers Market
- Rack displays of marketing materials of Akwesasne attractions, businesses, events, etc.
- Interactive Maps
- Visitor amenities such as public restrooms, ATM, public phone, vending machines

Benefits: Creation and implementation of Welcome Center action plan demonstrates to community that CTSP implementation is moving forward; a good first project with achievable scope, costs, and significant benefits; opportunities for cooperation, collaboration and communication between various agencies, governments, not-for-profits, artists; benefits for both community members and visitors. The An easily accessible, comfortable location will encourage travellers who might otherwise be concerned about stopping in “Indian Country” to visit Akwesasne cultural attractions, attend events, and shop; to orient themselves to places that are open to non-Natives and those that are considered to be for the community only; to enjoy authentic “living” showcases of Akwesasne crafts, art, and performing arts.

Who: Economic Development agencies and divisions, Cultural Tourism Division, museum, artists

When: Working group within 6 months

Partners: Akwesasne Museum; Onkwehón:we Arts Council; Rowena General, General Real Estate; SRMT Planning and Infrastructure, Raquette River Blueway Corridor

Costs: To be determined

ACTION: Create Plan for Attractive Gateways, Signage, Interpretive Signage, Wayfinding Materials

These types of materials, that are consistent with the visual identity and destination branding for Akwesasne, can create a distinct “Sense of Place” for the Akwesasne destination. By educating visitors, interpretive signage for historic locations, wildlife viewing, and other cultural attractions encourages them to spend more time in a destination. Whenever possible and practical these materials will be in the Kanien’ké:ha language, as well as English. French translations should also be included when practical.

Benefit: Attractive signage helps created positive impressions of a destination for visitors and also builds community pride. It will help visitors feel welcome, help them find cultural attractions and events and feel comfortable they are traveling in appropriate areas of Akwesasne. Signage can also help manage traffic movement to avoid travel in inappropriate areas.

Who: Akwesasne Economic Development Offices and related programs

When: immediate and ongoing

Partners: Onkwehón:we Arts Council, Mohawk language consultant, Raquette River Blueway Corridor (has a kiosk for Akwesasne in the current planning)

Costs: To be determined

Note: N.Y. State Bilingual Signage Regulations

Because Route 37 is a New York State Highway, New York State Department of Transportation regulations on certain aspects of signage will apply. A good precedent is the bilingual signage document TSMI 13-05. A copy of this document is in *Appendix F*. Once the North Country Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan, which includes NYS Route 37 is approved, it contains information on signage, as well.

FOR CONSIDERATION

ACTION: Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Coalition (NGO)

Among the greatest challenges identified by advisors and community members for the future success of Cultural Tourism for Akwesasne are issues created by the multinational and multi-provincial boundaries within the Akwesasne Territory, and the impacts of changing Tribal leadership.

One of the outcomes of this Strategic Planning process has been an increase in cooperation between entities interested in maximizing the economic potential of Cultural Tourism for Akwesasne. Exploration of the formation of an independent non-government organization (NGO) or some other type of regional partnership with representatives from the Akwesasne Economic Development organizations and programs as well as the Museum and other key partners, could help ensure the long-term coordinated, collaborative sustainably of Akwesasne

Cultural Tourism. Identification of resources for dedicated and ongoing funding will also be important.

FOR CONSIDERATION

ACTION: Akwesasne Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI)

See Establishing A Creative Economy, Art as An Economic Engine in Native Communities, July 2013 (pdf in Creative Economies Resources.)

Four Directions Corporation in Maine is a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) formed in 2001 with housing and business development programs – and most recently the addition of a Cultural Tourism program. In 2009, The Four Directions Development Corporation set out to make Cultural Tourism an important part of the 'tribes' economy.

Cultural Tourism plans focus on two key areas: development of the Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Center and creation of the Wabanaki Trail. **In 2009, with a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Four Directions began a two-year planning process for the center.** "The Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Center will be a world class resort and training center with a mission to assist Maine tribes in creating tourism and hospitality infrastructures within their communities," says Loring.

The concept includes a resort hotel and cultural center that will provide training in business development, hospitality and culinary arts. The resort will be designed to attract high-end customers and international visitors who plan their vacations around learning experiences. To develop the cultural center, organizers will document stories from each community and create exhibits and shops representing each tribe in the center

The center will serve as a location where visitors can learn about each tribe's tradition and culture and then be encouraged to visit the tribes' communities. Communities would be eligible for loans and technical assistance from Four Directions to help develop their tourism business.

"This training will allow Native people to start sustainable and successful businesses," says Loring. "The end result will be a solid infrastructure to capture more community and tourists dollars. Native artists and crafts people who make baskets, create works of art in various mediums such as wood, beads, drawing, photography and jewelry will have outlets for their work."

As the planning process wraps up in 2010, an advisory task force, including experts from the tribes, banking, the hotel industry and others, are reviewing the studies' recommendations. The next step will be to develop a timeline for implementation.

For more information, visit www.fourdirectionsmaine.org; contact Donna Loring, Wabanaki Tourism Coordinator, dloring@fourdirectionsmaine.org; 207-866-6576.

The formation of the Akwesasne Community Development Financial Institution might be an important option for the community and community leaders to assess.

CULTURE and LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE

Kanien'ké:ha Culture and Language remain a strong and vibrant foundation of the Akwesasne community today and for generations to come.

Throughout this Strategic Planning process, advisors and community members very clearly communicated their belief that Cultural Tourism experiences in Akwesasne need to be inclusive -- respecting traditions and knowledge as living traditions that future generations of Akwesasne will continue to learn and enjoy, and where new expressions of culture and art are also valued and shared. They were also clear in their conviction that all people, including nonNatives, should have opportunities, when culturally appropriate, to experience and appreciate the community's rich authentic legacy.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation describes cultural heritage travel as "travelling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural attractions."

There are two key aspects of Cultural Tourism. First is that it focuses on past, present, and future aspects of a community's cultural heritage, not just a community frozen in some time in the past. The second is that Cultural Tourism benefits all members of the community, bringing new events, additional programs and places, more opportunities to experience their community's song, dance, and oral traditions, to acquire time-honored community values, and meet and learn from today's artisans and craftspeople, so treasured knowledge and customs can continue to be shared with future generations.

As far as could be determined during the development of this Strategic Plan, a proposed comprehensive Kanien'ké:ha Language and Cultural strategy has not yet been undertaken. Implementation of the CTSP will help achieve many of those Language and Culture recommendations that were formulated to assist in identifying actions and policies to be carried out and supported by leadership when making decisions about public investment and community development...and facilitate the establishment of a community driven strategic direction that will provide leadership with direction from Akwesasró:non about their priorities for the future development of Akwesasne.

Actions to support the Language and Culture Objective:

Develop and implement a comprehensive Kanien'ké:ha Language and Cultural strategy as a community wide effort. Ensure that multiple opportunities are available to Akwesasró:non to learn and use our language and cultural practices. This strategy includes, but is not limited to all leadership, government administration, business,

Language and Culture Vision Statement

The Kanien'khé:ha language and culture is the core of who we are as Kanien'kéha:ka People. We envision a future when all Akwesasró:non are speakers of the language. The voices we hear from the young children, the parents, the grandparents are Kanien'ké:ha voices. Everywhere we go, we hear our Mohawk voices - 'Kwatsiknónwe enionkwátonte'ne ne Kanien'khé:ha."

Akwesasró:non envision an enduring pride in being Kanien'kéha:ka - this pride based on the language, the beliefs, the customs, the values, and daily way of life in Akwesasne. This is what culture is – the way we live and how we identify ourselves as being Kanien'kéha:ka.

*Akwesasne Comprehensive
Community Development Plan, March 2009*

education and cultural institutions, and community organizations. Potential Actions include:

- Implement a signage campaign throughout the community with bi-lingual signs that include the Kanien'ké:ha language.
- Identify and engage committed Kanien'ké:ha original speakers in the territory to participate in the language and cultural strategy.
- Utilize, facilitate and support access to modern telecommunications technology for the use and promotion of the Kanien'ké:ha language and culture through radio, website/internet, television and any other available media.
- Implement a signage campaign throughout the community with signs written in the Kanien'ké:ha Language.
- Promote use of the Kanien'ké:ha language in every Kanien'ké:ha home; Develop mechanisms and tools to be made available to families enabling them to take a proactive approach to acquire and develop Mohawk language skills and cultural practices exposing their children to our language and culture early in life.
- Ensure that traditional culture and practices are not forgotten, those that are inclined have the opportunity to carry on the traditions and practices.
- Opportunities for every Akwesasró:non to access information on Kanien'ké:ha:ka cultural traditions and practices are available, enabling and facilitating individual choices.

Goal: Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Focuses on Past, Present, and Future Aspects of Our Community's Cultural Heritage

As stated in the Economic Development Section, an audit and assessment of a first-time visitor's experience is essential.

ACTION: Complete Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Intrinsic Values Audit

In previous projects, and during development of the CTSP, community members have identified places to visit, memorable experiences, annual and special events, and community resources where visitors – as well as community members -- can best experience authentic Akwesasne culture. There are likely many additional resources that should be included in this database.

Similar to the Audit and Assessment for Tourism Readiness that is an Action Item in Economic Development, the Intrinsic Values Audit includes the community's existing intrinsic historic, cultural, educational, and natural assets that currently have, or may have Cultural Tourism potential. Once identified, these assets need to be realistically evaluated for their readiness to be positive, authentic, memorable cultural experiences for visitors. When the assessment is complete, the caretakers, owners, not-for-profits, and organizations responsible for these assets can make informed plans to address those issues. The audit should also indicate which resources could be shared with all, which are appropriate for Akwesasne tribal members only, and which are appropriate for all First Nations people. Visitor surveys would also help identify existing resources and those that would be assets.

The Audit and Assessment can be conducted in a five-step process that becomes the basis for determining not only “Where are we now?” but also, “Where do we go from here?”

Step 1. **Assess “First Time Visitor” Experiences**

Step 2. **Evaluate Findings**

Step 3. **Identify Gaps and Potential Opportunities**

Step 4. **Develop Recommendations**

Step 5. **Set Priorities for Action**

Benefits: This process generates information that can be used to:

- Create a comprehensive objective record of the current status of Akwesasne as a destination experience from the ‘first time visitor’ perspective
- Document and review all visitor-based experiences of significance and evaluate the extent of their tourism market readiness. (Is it truly noteworthy; accessibility; customer service readiness, etc.)
- Identify and isolate key visitor readiness gap areas and identify destination opportunity areas. (Longer hours open, extended seasonality, additional staff)
- Determine priorities and logical steps and create checklists of action recommendations
- Highlight top needs and identify/suggest most effective implementation priorities to successfully address those needs

Who: Tourism stakeholders

Potential Partner: community members, visitor

Time Frame: Immediate and ongoing

Cost: Minimal

ACTION: Maximize the Effectiveness of Governance of the Akwesasne Cultural Center

Because of organizational priorities in Advisory Board and Committee Members and lack of funding, the museum has had difficulty finalizing decisions about the planned new facility. The Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan is likely to be a catalyst for renewed interest in, and action on, the new Cultural Center as a critical element in experiences for visitors to the Akwesasne destination, and as a cultural resource for members of the community.

Benefits: Membership in an organization such as the American Alliance of Museum provides access to the Museum Assessment Program (MAP), which helps small and mid-sized museums strengthen operations, plan for the future, and meet national standards through self-study and a site visit from a peer reviewer. A Governance Assessment will help the Cultural Center maximize the effectiveness of its operations, including management and advisory structures.

Who: Museum Staff and Advisory Board

Potential Partners: see Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Partnership

Time Frame: Immediate; short term

Cost: Annual Dues: \$150.00, Assessment: free to \$750

ACTION: Finalize Conceptual Visitor Experiences of New Akwesasne Cultural Complex (and Archive Facility)

Sharing the Spirit proposed that a new Akwesasne Museum/Archival Facility be designed and constructed to preserve the history and culture of the Mohawk People. According to *Sharing the Spirit*, the new Akwesasne Museum facility will “protect,

preserve, and make accessible the cultural heritage and patrimony of the Mohawk people to members of the community, area residents and to visitors from across the country and the world.”

Over the past two and a half years significant amounts of time, research, discussions, planning, and documentation for the design of new Akwesasne Museum and Archives have been invested by Akwesasne Museum and Library staff, board members, community leaders, community members, and professional architects, tribal museum planners, and consultants.

This work is documented in:

- *Sharing the Spirit, an Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Strategy*
- *lonkwaio'te Senha Aioianerenhakie We are working toward better things to come A New Home for the Material Culture & Documents of the Akwesasne Mohawk People September 2011*
- *Recommendations from Akwesasne Museum Advisory Committee (2013)*

Museum advisors, other project advisors and community members made a number of suggestions for the new Cultural Center during the development process for the Strategic Plan:

- The Museum should be part of heritage complex, including a main building, such as a longhouse, with additional buildings with different areas of focus – living arts, with demonstrations, etc. Visitors would be able to move from experiences to experience.
- During three different meetings with advisors, representing three different groups, participants sketched their ideas for the cultural complex. Similarities are remarkable. Philip White-Cree also provided a copy of his Thesis Paper for his degree in Architecture from Syracuse University.
- Grounds surrounding the Museum could include environmental experiences such as gardens with traditional foods and native plants, pathways that highlight aspects of nature (birds, flowers, etc.) Ideally, the location would also include access to a waterfront and wetlands, as so much of the Akwesasne culture is related to water, wetlands environments – flora and fauna, as well as water-focused and supported activities.
- The complex could also meet a number of other community needs, including providing meeting space, and conference facilities, including an auditorium, to complement existing structures such as the Senior Center and the Casino.
- Museum and Culture Center could eventually expand its area of focus and become a cultural center for the Eastern Woodlands Indians, or for the Six Nations of the *Haudenosaunee*.
- One of the museum galleries could present each of the elements of Ohenten Kariwatekwen, Thanksgiving Address, with multi-media, multi-sensory experiences, created by local artists.
- Consider an Akwesasne name or other representative term for the complex. Local examples: The Wild Center (Museum of Natural History of the Adirondacks- Tupper Lake); View (Visual and performing arts- Old Forge)

- The Library should be in a very accessible location in the community for easy access by community members, and therefore may not be co-located with the new Cultural Center, depending on its location.
- Planning team should identify existing facilities in other museums and cultural heritage complexes that might serve as models and arrange field trips for first hand observation and consultation

Benefit: Once the Conceptual Experience is defined, site selection, and architectural designs can be finalized.

- *Who:* Museum Staff and Advisory Board
- *Potential Partners:* see Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Partnership
- *Time Frame:* Immediate; short term
- *Cost:* Travel to visit potential models

ACTION: Determine Most Favorable Type of Physical Location (Site Selection) for Cultural Complex Conceptual Experience

Sharing the Spirit proposed that the new facility be located within the 609-acre tract of land that the Tribe purchased and that the facility specifically be sited on State Route 37 to take advantage of the 4.4 million vehicles that travel past every year. During Strategic Plan development community members and advisors agreed to determine availability and potential for re-use of the former IGA Building. Research determined that the asking price for the facility, fees and costs of utilities for maintaining the building would be prohibitive

There were extensive discussions about options for the physical location of the complex

- A pastoral setting may be preferable to a highly trafficked location, to more effectively present the Akwesasne heritage and connections with nature
- Tsionkwanati:io, the riverfront Heritage Center on Route 37C, currently used for a number of Akwesasne cultural activities, was identified as a possible location
- A 128-acre undeveloped property on Route 131 and Robinson Bay Road, adjacent to Barnhart Island, with spectacular views, water access, and high traffic volume was identified by Rowena General of General Real Estate
- For details see *Appendix C, Cultural Complex Location Assessments*

To move forward:

- Convene a Cultural Complex Working Group (short term) to Finalize Location Assessment
- Include previous Museum planning participants, new participants
- Review Museum planning work-to-date in the context of the May 2014 Akwesasne Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan
- Use modified **Vision to Action** tool to facilitate consensus building. Participants will be asked to draw and then share their ideas to weave all of the submitted ideas into a shared community vision. No art skills are needed. (Julia Jacobs of SRMT Environment has experience with this process.)

Benefit: Site Selection and design of complex can be finalized

Who: Museum Staff and Advisory Board, community members, artisans, and facilitator, Bernice Lazore (Tsionkwanati:io)

Potential Partners: SRMT Environment (Julia Jacobs)

Time Frame: Immediate; short term
Cost: Minimal

ACTION: Create the Akwesasne Center for the Performing Arts

Community members identified the critical need for a centralized location for teaching and sharing traditions of music, dance and story telling.

Benefit: The Akwesasne Center for the Performing Arts would be a vibrant showcase for dance, music, and storytelling for both professionals and amateurs, especially as a place to involve the community's youth. See plan section *Supporting Akwesasne Artisans* for details.

ACTION: Create an Outdoor Art Park

An Outdoor Art Park is one of the initiatives described in *Sharing the Spirit*. The Onkwehón:we Business Plan also includes ideas for outdoor art spaces.

Benefit: A highly visible, easily accessible venue to showcase Akwesasne arts and crafts. See plan section *Supporting Akwesasne Artisans* for details.

FOR CONSIDERATION

ACTION: Akwesasne Heritage Festival

The Akwesasne Heritage Festival could be an annual festival that offers a balance of traditional and modern cultural presentations, performances, and activities— providing community members and visitors a deeper insight into the Haudenosaunee culture in the Mohawk territory of Akwesasne, situated on the border between the United States and Canada. *The theme: Meet the families who are keeping their Native art forms and customs alive: learn the cultural significance behind their work.*

The Heritage Festival could also be a showcase for youth artists and performers, and for community organizations focused on health living.

Benefits of the Akwesasne Heritage Festival

The festival addresses desires and concerns expressed by community members for a major annual event that would bring visitors from throughout the region to experience Mohawk culture, minimizing concerns about cultural sensitivities.

- Event planned for community and visitors held in public park– diminishes concerns about respect, inappropriate visitor access to private ceremonies
- Focused opportunity to share Akwesasne culture and traditions with guests and friends outside Akwesasne
- Brings St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, Akwesasne Museum, Native North American Travelling College, Onkwehón:we Arts Council together in support of Cultural Tourism
- Could become major regional showcase event
- Opportunities for youth performances – Mohawk Freedom School, Salmon River School
- As an annual event, community and visitors can plan ahead
- Opportunity for community artists to display works, demonstrate skills, sell, meet potential customers
- Provides excellent opportunity for SRMT divisions (environment, health service, etc.) to present educational demonstrations, distribute materials

- Opportunities for groups such as the Akwesasne Coalition for Community Empowerment, Let's Get Healthy, Drug, Alcohol and Chemical Dependency Programs
- Opportunities for Fire Department, Police Services
- Helps to create and promote informed Cultural Tourism that reinforces the cultural strengths of the community, while
- Helps community youth better understand their rich history and celebrate the role it plays in their lives
- Helps ensure that the history of the community and interpretation of its culture are accurate, authentic, and complete and told from the community's perspective to both community members and visitors
- Festival would be organized by professional Event Planner directing volunteer resources
- Could be held in alternating years on U.S. side and Canadian side

Date: Fall 2015

Location – possibly Nature Center in Robert Moses State Park

Responsibilities of Event Planner for Akwesasne Heritage Festival Development:

Researches successful models

<http://www.musnaz.org/hp/heritage-program.shtml>

Coordinates volunteers

Manages all advertising and public relations

Secures all needed permits

Plans logistical elements

Issues applications and agreements (crafts jurying and restrictions, etc.)

Coordinates:

Participation of SRMT and MCA

Events

Children's activities: learning and doing

Demonstrations: (examples)

Basket making, traditional clothing, beads, jewelry, pottery, ironworking, carvings

Traditional Foods – preparation, samples (ex. smoked salmon)

Medicinal plants and traditional wellness

Food/ farmers market (accepts nutrition program coupons)

Vendor recruitment and authorization – authentic traditional and contemporary artisans, crafts people

Entertainment

Music, dancing, oral traditions

Sponsorships

Akwesasne Heritage Festival Coordinator

Contractor position: preference to experienced event planner

Contract term: September 1, 2014 -- October 31, 2015

Fees: to be determined

Budget: supplies, advertising, signage, tent/canopy rentals, venue fees

Reports to: tbd

FOR CONSIDERATION

ACTION: Akwesasne Nature Based Journeys & Living & Learning Experiences

Action: Expand the Tentsitewaiena experiences on the Canadian side to the U.S. side, or identify similar experiences to include activities in the section of Akwesasne that is located on the U.S. side.

Benefits: Opportunities for new business, job creation, connections with traditional culture for all people in Akwesasne

ACTION: Offer authentic Akwesasne experiences that feature the culture and traditions of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, similar to those offered by the Great Spirit Circle Trail.

<http://circletrail.com/portfolios/our-packages>.

These experiences could be as simple as one or two hour classes to learn about and taste the foods of the Three Sisters; guided medicine walks through different areas of the outdoors while being shown a variety of different plants, tree, herbs, and shrubs with medicinal, practical, edible or spiritual uses; multi-day eco-tourism paddling, camping and arts and crafts adventures.

Goal: Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Offerings Benefit all Members of Our Community

The economic benefits of Cultural Tourism for the community and community members are detailed in *The Time is Right* and *Economic Development* sections of this plan. One of the most significant aspects of Cultural Tourism is that the events, attractions, and initiatives are all meant to improve the quality of life of the community's residents, and help preserve or improve traditional resources.

Initiatives, ideas, and actions for consideration in this Strategic Plan will all benefit all members of the Akwesasne Community. Cultural Tourism can be of significant value in meeting some of the especially important needs of the community's youth and elders. These have identified and are presented in the Akwesasne Comprehensive Community Development Plan. Every project undertaken for Cultural Tourism should include components that specifically include youth, from the youngest members of the community to the young women and men who will be leading the community in generations to come.

ACTION: Ensure Cultural Tourism Benefit Akwesasne Youth and Elders

Our Youth

- The youth want to see a clean community to call home.
 - *The CTSP includes actions for beautification of the community – cleanup of Route 37 and shorelines; Welcoming Gateways and attractive wayfinding and directional signage (see Economic Development)*
- They want youth leadership and community leadership who will make a difference. Youth want to see a unified government and community.

- *New initiatives in Cultural Tourism will provide opportunities for Akwesasne youth to play key roles in bringing other Mohawk and First Nations youth into the community. Cooperation between the governing councils of Akwesasne on Cultural Tourism initiatives may be critical first steps to help create a unified government and community.*
- Cultural programs including art and dance were used by about one in four youth and swimming programs and the community hall were used even less frequently. It is not clear whether these latter programs were infrequently used because of a lack of interest or a lack of availability.
 - *Venues and events that are developed as part of the CTSP will provide new and more frequent opportunities for all members of the community, including the youth, to enjoy Mohawk traditions, including art and dance, storytelling and crafts*
 - *Youth Programs, similar to those offered by the Oregon College of Art and Craft, could be fun, memorable ways to engage youth from the very young to late teens in traditional as well as contemporary visual and performing arts. <https://ocac.edu/community-programs/youth-programs#journeys>*
- Education is also very important to the youth. In addition to having opportunities to learn our language outside of school, the youth want their education to include language and cultural curriculum.
 - *Additional activities and programs developed as part of the Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan will be coordinated with curriculum inside the schools*
- Youth want a wide variety of opportunities available to participate in learning Kanien'kéha:ka language, culture and traditions.
- Youth want to be part of positive and healthy lifestyles, live in a clean community and a healthy environment, and are proud of their community.
- Provide extensive opportunities for the realization of the academic, vocational, athletic, performing arts, employment, self-employment, and other plans and desires for our youth.
- In addition to arts opportunities, Cultural Tourism may provide opportunities for Cultural Tourism related employment and self-employment to achieve needs identified in the Audits and Assessments.
- Ensure that our youth have consistent and accessible means to participate in Kanien'kéha:ka language and traditional teaching programs, and interaction with those who have linguistic and cultural knowledge and capacities that can be shared with the youth.
- Develop intergenerational opportunities to encourage more access to, and sharing of, traditional knowledge, language and culture. Opportunities to learn Mohawk language and culture needs to be a priority – therefore, the youth and youth organization need to be engaged in community and formal education efforts for the retention, and regeneration of Mohawk language and culture. Community based language and cultural projects should be fluid and flexible to make it fun for youth to want to learn.
 - Cultural Tourism achieves this.
- Implement a role model or “ratiksati:io” program to recognize outstanding youth for volunteerism, talent in sports, academia, performing arts, and leadership.

OUR YOUTH VISION

Akwesasne is a clean and healthy community with educational and economic opportunity enabling youth the freedom to choose to live and prosper in their own community. Our youth have many recreational, social, and sporting options available to maintain healthy lifestyles.

Akwesasne Comprehensive Community Development Plan, 2009

- As the Cultural Tourism strategy is implemented, youth should be recruited to participate in Working Groups to achieve Actions. Leadership skills can be developed as well, as they participate in these activities that will impact the future of their community.

Our Elders

CCDP Elder Summary Findings

- Elders see it important to keep alive traditional skills like basket-making and making lacrosse sticks. For many of them this is the way they survived both activities were significant and important elements of our culture and traditional economy.
 - *Cultural Tourism will create additional opportunities for Elders to keep traditional skills alive, and to share them with new generations*
- Many of the elders prefer traditional medicines
 - *Traditional medicines and well being, shared in appropriate ways, are core components of the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism experience*

Elder Goals

- Alternative and traditional medicines programs are accessible to all Akwesasró:non.
- Traditional practices such as lacrosse stick or basket making is taught to younger generations.

Elder Recommendations

- (The construction of a high school in our community.) In the mean time focus on the language and culture and ensure cultural sensitivity training to non-Kanien'kéha:ka educators of our children.
- Ensure that traditional practices such as basket weaving and traditional lacrosse stick manufacturing are maintained and kept alive and are reflected in cultural and economic institutions. By example, these activities need focus and attention in the cultural and tourism strategy.

St. Regis Mohawk Tribe Youth and Elders should be encouraged to experience the Tsiionhiakwatha Archeological Site and tour packages, the Lake St. Francis Wildlife Reserve, and The Thompson Island Youth and Elders Camp.

Goal: The Kanien'ké:ha language is Fundamental to the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Experience

Throughout research previous research activities and during the development of the CTSP, keeping Mohawk language alive was a high priority. Community members identified maintaining Mohawk traditions and practices alive and teaching Mohawk language and culture in schools as high priorities. Increased language and culture in schools, as well as increasing learning opportunities for all members are considered very important priorities to maintain our Kanien'kéha:ka identity. Increased use of the spoken and written Mohawk language also distinguishes experiences in the community for visitors.

OUR ELDERS VISION

The vision of our elders is to have a safe, clean, community that their children and grandchildren can inherit. The quality of life and living in Akwesasne is improved with greater opportunities for life experiences. Our children and grandchildren respect their Totas, one another, their families, other community members, their community and land and overall appreciate what the Creator has provided for us.

*Akwesasne Comprehensive
Community Development Plan, 2009*

ACTION: Create a Plan for Attractive Gateways, Signage, Interpretive Signage, Wayfinding Materials that include the Mohawk Language

These types of materials, that are consistent with the visual identity and destination branding for Akwesasne, can create a distinct “Sense of Place” for the Akwesasne experience.

Benefit: The Kanien’ké:ha language is highly visible in public places, on roadsides, at recreation sites, on maps, integrating it into everyday life of people in the community.

Who: economic development divisions and agencies

Partners: Mohawk language specialist, SRMT Planning and Infrastructure, NYS DOT, Onkwehón:we Arts Council

When: Immediate and ongoing

Costs: To be determined

ACTION: Use the Kanien’ké:ha language in Marketing Materials Advisors and community members who participated in the development of the Strategic Plan commented that visitors often express delight when seeing arts and crafts items, and souvenirs such as mugs, that include the Kanien’ké:ha language. They suggested using hangtags and merchandise stickers/labels on locally made arts and crafts, value-added food products. Support this with signage at Farmers Markets and other events.

Benefit: Artisans are proud, and see benefits of including the Kanien’ké:ha language in their crafts that are for sale; more everyday community exposure to the Kanien’ké:ha language.

Who: SRMT communications specialists

Partners: Mohawk language specialist, Onkwehón:we Arts Council

When: Immediate and ongoing

Costs: To be determined

ACTION: Provide language support and incentives for use of the Kanien’ké:ha language in tourism related businesses

Businesses and artisans may not have access to translators, or funds available to incorporate the Kanien’ké:ha language. Access to translators and monetary incentives could encourage more businesses to use The Kanien’ké:ha language.

Benefits: Enhances destination experience for visitors and increases exposure for community members; helps build language skills and relevance.

Who: SRMT Mohawk Language Specialists

Partners: Mohawk Freedom School, Workforce Development Institute

When: immediate and ongoing *Costs:* to be determined

SUPPORTING AKWESASNE ARTISTS

OBJECTIVE: Akwesasne is the hub of Native visual and performing arts activities for people living in, and visiting the St. Lawrence Seaway Valley Corridor.

Among the greatest strengths of the community of Akwesasne are the resourcefulness, talents, and skills of its people. In 2008, an Artisan Survey found that there are more than 300 individuals in the community who are artisans and crafts people. Their talents include beadwork, quilting, pottery, painting, poetry, drum making, cradleboards, clothing, music, storytelling, dance, illustrations and drawing, iron working, quillwork, and photography. The recently published and widely distributed Akwesasne Business Directory by the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe and the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne includes a comprehensive catalogue/directory listing of Akwesasne artists, how to contact them, and places where their work can be purchased.

Many artists and crafts people spend creative time in more than one area of interest. Some are just beginning to learn their crafts; others are emerging as professional artists, still others are world-renown, highly trained, skilled artisans. Some use ancient, and time-honored traditions passed from generation to generation. Others are exploring new directions with contemporary interpretations of themes, or are blending traditional and contemporary. All Akwesasne artists and crafts persons, whatever their age and level of skill, should be able to achieve their aspirations for the role they want arts to play in their lives.

The art tourism industry is a marketable venue/product for residents, visitors and future conventioners. Encouraging art tourism will help the community stimulate its economy by redefining image, providing a return on investment in cultural attractions, promoting Onkwehón:we and Akwesasne's historic character as an asset, and generating new revenues to support services to artists.

*Onkwehón:we Arts
Council Business Plan*

Goal: Maximize potential for success of Akwesasne Artists

According to the Artisan's Survey, research conducted by the Onkwehón:we Arts Council, and corroborated by research in other Native communities, Native artist's needs are:

- Space – to work, to display, to sell
- Access to Physical and Electronic Markets
- Access to Supplies
- Access to Credit and Capital
- Increased Business Knowledge
- Access to Informal Social Networks

ACTION: Through a Working Group, engage many artists in the community to identify solutions to each of these needs.

Benefits: A coordinated, planned approach to delivering programs that meet the needs of artists will help ensure that the entire spectrum of their needs are being met, rather than just one area or another, creating much more likelihood for success.

Who: Onkwehón:we Arts Council, artists

Partners: Akwesasne Museum, SRMT, MCA, NNATC

When: immediate and ongoing
Costs: to be determined

Goal: The Onkwehón:we Arts Council provides leadership for the success of Akwesasne’s Creative Economy and its First Nations Art and Artists

Volunteer members of the Akwesasne arts community have put tremendous effort, thought, and time into creating the Onkwehón:we Arts Council with a comprehensive plan to achieve its vision to take a leadership role in empowering visual and performing artists in the Akwesasne community to successfully create and market their art and to enhance community development through art based tourism.

For an important support document see: [Establishing a Creative Economy: Art as an Economic Engine in Native Communities](#)

ACTION: Onkwehón:we Arts Council Board of Directors finalizes its Business Plan, which includes detailed strategies to help meet each of the six areas of needs identified. OAC shares Business Plan with the Akwesasne community at large

Benefits: Artists and crafters, community members, partner organizations, business owners, and tribal leadership will have a clear understanding of the Scope of Work needed to establish Akwesasne as a vibrant, progressive First Nations community by focusing on the creative sector, and the roles each can play in achieving that success.

Who: Onkwehón:we Arts Council

Partners: Akwesasne Museum, SRMT, MCA, NNATC

When: immediate and ongoing

Costs: to be determined

Goal: Create the Onkwehón:we Center for the Arts

A physical presence for the Onkwehón:we Arts Council is essential to its ability to move forward in achieving its objectives.

ACTION: The Onkwehón:we Arts Council work with Cultural Tourism partners (Museum, SRMT, MCA, NNATC) through a facilitated Working Group Process to finalize consensus on what physical facilities (i.e. separate venues, co-location, etc.) will best achieve the Objectives, Goals, and Actions in the Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan.

Benefits: All groups, organizations, stakeholders for Cultural Tourism will be working collaboratively on a project with a specific desired outcome.

Who: Onkwehón:we Arts Council

Partners: Akwesasne Museum, SRMT, MCA, NNATC

When: immediate and ongoing

Costs: to be determined

Goal: Create the Akwesasne Center for the Performing Arts

Community members identified the critical need for a centralized location for classes, demonstrations, and special events focused on the performing arts. This venue could be part of the Museum and Cultural Center or as a stand-alone entity with collaboration with other Cultural Tourism venues.

ACTION: Determine whether a separate center for the performing arts is needed, or if it should be part of the Onkwehón:we Center for the Arts.

Benefits: The Akwesasne Center for the Performing Arts would be a vibrant showcase for dance, music, and storytelling for both professionals and amateurs, especially as a place to involve the community's youth. Classes and demonstrations in both traditional and contemporary arts, some presented in Mohawk, would help strengthen language as well as culture. The Center could also be the location for major seasonal events for members of the community and visitors, and where Native performers from throughout North America could come to share their performing arts traditions.

One location that has been suggested as a site for the Center for the Performing Arts is the former St. Patrick's Church on Church Street in Hogansburg. Advisors who took a tour of the building with Rowena General of General Real Estate remarked that repurposing of the building, which has amazing architectural features and acoustics, would be in keeping with Akwesasne traditions of sustainable lifestyles. The site, which is in a prime location just off Route 37, includes considerable vacant land along the banks of the St. Regis River, which could be used for outdoor festivals and cultural events. The property is currently listed at \$125,000.00. Investments to rehabilitate the property would be needed. *Appendix C* has details regarding Real Estate options.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Project Sponsor

The Workforce Development Institute (WDI) provided funding to the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (SRMT) for the strategic planning for cultural tourism and artists sector of Akwesasne. The outcome of this work is the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan. WDI North Country Regional Director Greg Hart worked closely with SRMT and project consultant Fuller Communications during plan development.

Supporting Organizations

The Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan is the result of active involvement by representatives of the following Akwesasne government divisions, offices, and agencies; not for profit organizations; regional and national resources; businesses; and community groups.

- Akwesasne Museum/Library
- SRMT Economic Development
- SRMT Environment
- Mohawk Council of Akwesasne
- Onkwehón:we Arts Council
- Akwesasne Cultural Restoration
- Native North American Traveling College
- Indian Time
- Akwesasne Mohawk Casino
- Onake Corporation
- General Real Estate
- FishCap/Azure River Group
- New York Cultural Heritage Tourism Network
- Cornell Cooperative Extension - Franklin County
- American Indian Alaskan Native Tourism Assn.
- Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA)
- TAUNY (Traditional Arts of Upstate New York)
- St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce
- Paul Smith's College
- FootHills Art Society
- U.S. D.A. Rural Development
- U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs Tourism & Transportation
- North Country Children's Museum
- Workforce Development Institute

About the Project Consultant

Susan Day Fuller, president of Fuller Communications, based in Mountain View, New York, was selected as the consultant to SRMT, to provide services resulting in the creation of the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan

Successful cultural tourism Strategic Plans include goals, objectives, and implementation steps to attract visitors who want to travel to a community, visit with the local craftspeople, and learn more about the history and culture of the community. These plans build on the intrinsic values of the community, the existing strengths, identify areas of potential, and opportunities for success. They include shared goals that will benefit cultural tourism stakeholders, the artisan sector, and the community in general.

In the Adirondack North Country, successful tourism communities and artisan organizations understand that among the most important keys to success are local and regional cooperation, collaboration, and partnerships among the various entities committed to cultural tourism and the artist sector. To achieve these objectives, Susan Day Fuller of Fuller Communications, brings a combination of qualifications, experiences, and approach to consulting and strategic plan development that are unmatched among consultants in the Adirondack North Country and Akwesasne.

Cultural Tourism & Economic Development Experience

Fuller has:

- More than 30 years experience in direct employment and as a consultant in projects in tourism, in general and cultural tourism strategic planning and program development in New Brunswick, Alberta.
- Fuller was appointed by Governor Howard Dean to be Vermont's first Deputy Commissioner of Vermont of Tourism and Marketing; in that role, Fuller was responsible for the creation of the State's Strategy for coordinated marketing of all state agencies and divisions, ensuring passage of the legislation that enacted the Strategy, and adoption and implementation of the Strategy throughout the agencies and divisions, in partnership with private and not-for-profit tourism sectors
- More than 10 years in the Adirondack North Country, including numerous projects with Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA): Adirondack Trail, Olympic, Central Adirondack Trail Scenic Byways Branding and Marketing Strategies; Arts, Crafts & Foods along the Scenic Byways of the Adirondack North Country; North Country Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan, (Clinton, Franklin, St. Lawrence Counties and Akwesasne); Adirondack North Country Region Traditions Interpretive Guide (14 counties and Akwesasne).

Adirondack North Country Regional Connections

A most critical element in the successful Akwesasne Strategic Plan for Cultural Tourism and Artists Sector will be the collaboration and cooperation of key Akwesasne stakeholders with potential regional partners in communities, cultural tourism entities and organizations, and the artisan sectors throughout the Adirondack North Country Region. (and in Canada.) As a result of all of the Adirondack North Country assignments noted above, as well as numerous other projects and affiliations, Fuller has established effective working and collegial relationships with key cultural tourism and artisan stakeholders in communities and organizations throughout the region.

Beginning in 2011, all private, not-for-profit, and governments program applications for funding from New York State must be done through an annual Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process. One of the greatest factors in the success of grant applications is the degree to which the project involves partnerships with other entities in the region. For this reason, cultural and artisan organizations look for ways to bring that partnership perspective to

projects for which they seek funding. This will, in turn, benefit cultural tourism and the artist sector for SRMT. Fuller's connections and experience will streamline the development of those connections and the regional perspective of the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism and Artisan Sector Strategic Plan.

Another key measure in the evaluation of a proposed project in a CFA is the degree to which it will help achieve the Vision and Mission of the North Country Regional Economic Development Council's Regional Sustainability Strategic Plan. As a volunteer consultant to ANCA, Fuller provided guidance in the development of this Strategic Plan.

History of Fuller Communications Affiliation with SRMT

Fuller has more than five years of affiliation with key members of the SRMT:

- **2009:** Fuller met and began a working relationship with Steven Cook and other representatives of SRMT as appointed advisors to the CBN Connect Community Broadband Initiative for the Adirondack North Country and Akwesasne.
- **October 2010** Fuller began discussions with Steven Cook & Lindsay Tarbell on ways to move the *SRMT Cultural Tourism Strategy*, created by Lindsay Tarbell, forward and to coordinate with the development of the North Country Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (CMP).
- **November 1, 2010** Fuller met with Steven Cook & Lindsay Tarbell at the Tribal Economic Development Office to introduce the development of the Corridor Management Plan for the North Country Scenic Byway, which includes Route 27 through Akwesasne. Cook and Tarbell shared contact information for the many activities that the SRMT had underway, and Identified specific partner initiatives
- **Jan 15, 2011** Akwesasne Senior Center. Scenic Byway SRMT Community Public Workshop. Participants learned how the Adirondack North Country's Corridor Management Plan process, funded by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) Scenic Byways program, would result in a regional, grass roots developed plan, bringing together and building on initiatives that were already underway including "Sharing the Spirit, an Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Strategy. Participants worked together to identify significant scenic, memorable experiences, places, and events that should be sustained or enhanced for current and future generations of resident and visitors/travelers in the Akwesasne area of the Byway. Fuller included recommendations based on this meeting the official North Country Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (CMP). (ANCA submitted the plan to NYS DOT in 2014 and is waiting notice of adoption of the CMP.)
- **June 21, 2011** Akwesasne Senior Center. Meeting of St. Lawrence Valley/Adirondack Foothills Regional Advisory Team ANCA Traditions Guide.

Fuller Approach to Strategic Plan Development

Highlights of Fuller's approach to Strategic Plan Development:

- Active involvement of community stakeholders – those who will benefit, and those who can direct or acquire the resources, and take action in implementing the strategic plan.
- Respecting and integrating strategies and action plans that have already been created by stakeholder organizations. Commitment to fostering collaboration and cooperation among diverse groups, helping them understand the opportunities and benefits.