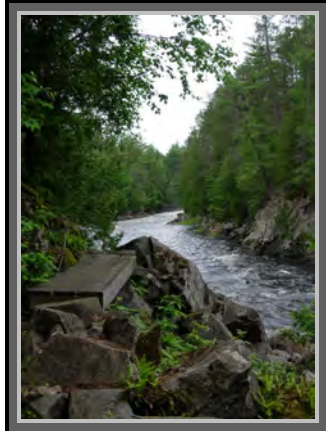




Tourism Destination Development Action Plan

September 17, 2013



*“To become a centre for excellence in recreation, culture
and tourism”*

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Background

In the Town of Petawawa's 2011 Strategic Plan a goal to become "*a centre for excellence in recreation, culture and tourism*" was identified. As a result of this stated goal in 2012 the town undertook, among other things the development of a comprehensive tourism strategy. In August of 2012 the tourism strategy was completed, presented and endorsed by both tourism stakeholders within Petawawa and by the town council. That strategy identified a series of tactics that needed to be implemented in both the near and short term in order for the town to move closer to the fulfillment of its stated goal.

Five objectives were identified in the 2012 Tourism Strategy; each helped focus the specific strategies required to position Petawawa as a competitive tourism destination:

1. Formalize Petawawa's Tourism Destination Development Committee and populate it with a minimum of 8 - 10 tourism industry leaders by October 2012;
2. Rally tourism industry stakeholders around identified tourism strategies and engage them at a high level in the implementation plan – specifically sign up 35 businesses in Petawawa's *Tourism Industry Collaborative* by January 2013;
3. Garner endorsement for the strategies from the majority of tourism industry stakeholders and the Town of Petawawa Council;
4. Secure positive media attention with the launch of the Tourism Strategy, and
5. Begin the implementation of a minimum of 4 strategies identified in the plan and have them completed by December 2013.

The Tourism Strategy also identified a number of strategies; however the most significant strategy identified was the need to begin a process for the creation of a formal Tourism Destination Development Action Plan (TDDAP). This plan was to serve as a road map to guide both the town and its tourism stakeholders in an assessment of the current tourism assets, in order to identify strengths and areas where improvements and enhancements were required and the specific steps needed to be taken to become a successful tourism destination. Success in the context of this strategy is defined as generating increases to tourism visitation and revenues, as well as providing enhancements to the overall quality of life for the residents of Petawawa.

Having retained the services of Brain Trust Marketing & Communications (BT) in 2012 to facilitate the development of the Tourism Strategy, BT was engaged to facilitate the creation of the Tourism Destination Development Action Plan. That process began in the spring of 2013.

The objectives of the destination development process are as follows:

- Affirm the accuracy of the tourism asset inventory completed by Town staff
- Understand the desires of the Destination Development Committee related to tourism destination development within Petawawa
- In partnership with Town staff identify the primary and secondary tourism destination development opportunities for the Town of Petawawa
- Create a Tourism Destination Development Action Plan that builds on the current tourism strategy, leverages activities currently underway within the town and identifies immediate and longer term tourism development initiatives

Tourism Destination Development Process

In order to undertake an effective tourism destination development process a destination must first understand where it is at in terms of tourism market readiness, appeal and competitiveness. Therefore a tourism asset inventory must be completed. The inventory is designed to quantify the tourism assets that exist; things tourists look for in a destination like attractions, as well as assets that may not exist; basic tourism infrastructure like commercial roofed accommodations.

In the mid-nineties the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport created a tourism asset inventory process. The Premier-Ranked Tourism Destination Framework (PRTDF) process was designed to assist destinations to fully assess and understand the competitiveness of their destination from a tourism perspective. In 2011 the Ontario Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO) in partnership with the Ottawa Valley Tourist Association (OVTA) implemented a PRTDF process for the region. As part of that work Petawawa, at a macro level was included in that assessment and therefore going into their own development process had a high level understanding of aspects of their tourism assets.

However, as a first step to ensure the most comprehensive tourism assessment was completed, town staff in partnership with tourism industry stakeholders undertook a more detailed asset inventory using the basis of the PRTDF process. Coincidentally BT completed the PRTDF assessments on behalf of OHTO and OVTA and therefore was able to provide guidance to the Petawawa town staff as they began their work.

The tourism asset inventory was reviewed in detail once completed (see Tourism Asset Inventory Summary below). Using the information contained in the inventory BT made numerous observations, which in turn led to the identification of a series of key findings and implications. This information was then presented, reviewed and discussed with town staff. Based on those discussions and validation of the observations, findings and implications, staff convened a meeting of the Tourism Destination Development Steering Committee¹ (formed as a result of a recommendation in the 2012 Tourism Strategy). In addition BT facilitated a discussion between town staff and representatives from OHTO and OVTA. The purpose of this discussion was to seek input into Petawawa's destination development process and to ensure these two partners were in sync with what was happening in each of their respective tourism sub-regions.

A summary of the process, asset inventory, findings, observations and implications were presented in each meeting. BT facilitated a discussion among the committee members to ensure complete understanding of all content presented and to validate the implications identified.

¹ Tourism Destination Development Steering Committee membership included in Appendix I

With feedback and comments received from OHTO, OVTA and the committee the findings, observations and implications were validated. This paved the way for the creation of the DRAFT Tourism Destination Development Action Plan.

TDDAP Process Summary

Steps/Action	Participants	Date Complete
Tourism Asset Inventory	Town Staff	June 2013
Review Asset Inventory	Brain Trust	July 2013
Meet OHTO, OVTA for input	BT, Staff,	July 2013
Discuss, Validate Inventory	BT, Town Staff	July 2013
Present, Validate Findings	BT, Staff, TDDSC	Aug. 8, 2013
Review, Distribute DRAFT TDDAP	BT, Staff	Sept. 6, 2013
Discuss, Validate DRAFT TDDAP	BT, Staff, TDDSC	Sept. 10, 2013
Deliver Final TDDAP	BT	Sept. 18, 2013

Tourism Asset Inventory Summary

As recommended in the 2012 Tourism Strategy a comprehensive tourism asset inventory² was completed by town staff. Staff, with the help of a number of industry representatives, is to be complimented for compiling such a detailed tourism asset inventory and data base. This will serve the destination well as it undertakes its tourism destination development process.

Inventory Overview

The inventory provided a detailed overview of the tourism assets present within the Town of Petawawa as well as those assets within 21 – 50 kms, 51 – 80 kms, 81 – 100 kms, and more than 100 kms from the Petawawa town centre. The tourism asset inventory also provided a backdrop for destination development by identifying areas of opportunity; it identified where critical mass and/or underperforming tourism assets exist and where gaps in tourism services and infrastructure exist that may affect future tourism growth potential.

Here is a synopsis of the primary findings:

- While there is tourism assets within the town itself the numbers of tourism assets grow significantly when the broader geographic area is included in the inventory.
- There are apparent gaps in both tourism services and infrastructure within Petawawa, the most glaring gap is in commercial roofed accommodation, there are only 117 rooms/cabins available in 2 hotels, 1 motel, 1 B&B and 2 campgrounds. There are however an additional 381 rooms available within 20 kms of the town centre.
- While there are a variety of food and beverage options there are a limited number of establishments that tourists would frequent; offer a variety of menu items, heart healthy, vegetarian, options, wine list of more than 5 labels, locally grown and sourced F&B and name recognition beyond the local region. Less than 6 restaurants could potentially offer visitors these options.
- In terms of things to see and do like “tourist attractions” there is a limited number of options within the Town of Petawawa; the Heritage Village would be considered the only true market ready tourist attraction and it is only open in the fair weather months of the year. There are a number of additional attractions such as museums within 21 – 50 kms of the town centre but they have limited appeal for tourists.

² The Asset Inventory is available from town staff upon request and as an attachment to this report.

- There are limited tourist centric retail experiences; shops that offer interesting items such as locally produced or sourced arts and crafts, souvenirs, clothing and such and that have name recognition beyond the local region. There are additional retail options available within 21 – 50 kms of the town centre but these offer similar appeal to the retail found in Petawawa.
- Land and water based outdoor recreational opportunities are plentiful within the broader region with a number of core activities available within the town; these leverage the natural geography, topography and waterways of the area and provide a backdrop to a number of four season outdoor recreational pursuits.
- The region's trail systems are its most attractive tourism visitor asset. The trails are the foundation for a number of four season land based recreational opportunities and while many are developed there is still room for enhancements and expansion especially when it comes to creating sport specific trail based facilities and venues.
- The area's waterways are also attractive visitor assets. The Petawawa and Ottawa Rivers as well as a number of surrounding lakes, rivers and streams provide a long list of water based recreational pursuits.
- Petawawa's proximity to Algonquin Park and the white water operators on the Ottawa River are "near by" tourism assets that help position the destination as an ideal outdoor recreational destination.
- Within Petawawa and the 21 – 50 km zone there are a number of outfitters who provide equipment rental, training and guiding services that afford those who want to experience an outdoor adventure the opportunity to do so without substantial investment and with expert training and advice.

Findings and Observations

Since the launch of the Tourism Strategy in 2012 the Town of Petawawa, its Council and staff and many tourism operators have undertaken to implement the specific strategies detailed in the plan. All are to be congratulated for the progress made to date.

The following is a summary of the strategies; a star indicates the work has been completed, a check mark indicates activity is currently in the works:

1. Rally Petawawa's tourism industry stakeholders around the strategies to grow tourism visitation and revenues over the long term
 - • Communicate and engage
 - Form a Tourism Destination Development Steering Committee
 - Form Petawawa's *Tourism Industry Collaborative*


2. Focus first on undertaking a formal tourism destination development process
 - • Undertake a tourism asset assessment in order to understand Petawawa's tourism competitiveness
 - Identify gaps, opportunities, underdeveloped and underperforming assets associated with current tourism offering
 - Collaborate with OHTO / OVTA similar assessments have been completed regionally and County-wide

3. Destination Development Committee to prioritize action items from assessment / and begin proactive destination development
 - 

4. Clarification of the roles / responsibilities of the entities involved in tourism development, marketing and servicing
 - • Destination development should be a shared role of industry and municipality
 - Tourism marketing should be a shared role of industry, OVTA and OHTO
 - Servicing visitors *while in town* should be the responsibility of the Town

5. Visitor Information Centre – consider using the Civic Centre library as a VIC
 - • TDDC to drive implementation Prepare a VIC operations plan

6. Explore the opportunities associated with the development of a sports tourism strategy
 - • Parks and Recreation Plan as a core resource to determine facilities' capacity
 - Engage sports community to test the ideas

-  7. Garrison Petawawa represents an underdeveloped tourism asset; discussions should take place to explore opportunities associated with leveraging the base for the benefit of visitors and tourism industry

A series of “Next Steps” were identified as action items in the 2012 Tourism Strategy. All steps have been completed or are underway:

- Formalize Tourism Destination Development Committee and populate it with 8 - 10 tourism industry leaders – completed October 2012
- Rally tourism industry stakeholders around the identified tourism strategies through communications plan – completed Fall 2012
- Garner endorsement of strategies from Town Council and tourism industry stakeholders – completed November 2012
- 35 businesses in the *Tourism Industry Collaborative* – completed Jan. 2013
- Begin the implementation of a minimum of 5 strategies identified in the plan and have them complete by December 2013 – this work is currently underway

Specific Findings and Observations

Petawawa’s Tourism Destination Development Committee has embraced the destination development process. Through staff facilitation (economic development and parks and recreation staff) the group made great progress at implementing the identified strategies from the 2012 tourism strategy.

The Town of Petawawa on its own offers limited tourism development potential. However in the context of tourism development the Greater Petawawa Area (GPA) has significant potential. By leveraging the tourism assets found in and around Petawawa, the GPA; the towns businesses will better realize increased levels of tourist visitation and revenues.

The single most significant tourism asset in the GPA is its 4-season outdoor land and water based recreation assets.

- Of those assets the GPA’s land based trail network is the most significant underdeveloped and underperforming tourism asset
- The GPA’s trails offer opportunities for:
 - Mountain and road biking
 - Hiking, running, walking
 - Snow shoeing, cross country skiing, snow biking
 - Snowmobiling, ATV
- There is an engaged group of stakeholders who are advocating for the ongoing development of single track mountain bike trails throughout the GPA. This group have made a number of research based observations that supports a focused approach to trail development and maintenance.

- What follows is a summary³ of their observations:
 - Forest Lea Mountain Bike Trails
 - 30 km single track stacked loops
 - Bike specific, maintained
 - Signed and mapped
 - MNR land
 - Insured
 - Beachburg Trails
 - 50 km trails and back roads
 - Bike specific, multi-use
 - Signage 2013
 - Private / County land
 - Insured
 - Factors for Success
 - 60+ km of single track (2 days riding)
 - Mapped and signed
 - Focal point / information centre
 - Bike shop
 - Small towns, food, beer, bed
 - Ride from town
 - Welcoming and informed local communities
 - Petawawa Challenges
 - Topography vs. skill level
 - Bugs, weather, short season
 - Ride from town
 - No regional approach / strategy
 - ATV and land use issues
 - Leadership and volunteerism on the ground
 - Mountain biking events and competitions attract a significant number of participants and spectators and represents an excellent opportunity to position a destination as a hot spot for mountain biking.
- Water based activities also offer potential and include:
 - Flat water activity (priority and greatest growth potential); canoe, stand up paddle boarding (SUP), fishing, kayaking
 - White water activity; kayaking, rafting

³ Mountain Bike Tourism in the Ottawa Valley, PPT, Jeff Jackson, Algonquin College, 2013

- The 2012 Tourism strategy included a recommendation to “Explore the opportunities associated with the development of a sports tourism strategy”. Staff began that process; however after review the creation of a traditional sports tourism strategy may not be as beneficial as first thought. The goal of attracting traditional regional, provincial or national sports tournaments (hockey, soccer, baseball, softball, basketball, figure skating etc.) may not be achievable for a number of reasons:
 - Limited roofed commercial accommodations to accommodate participants and spectators
 - Limited volunteer base to support tournament activity and implementation
 - Sport facilities and venues where tournaments take place are close to or at capacity with local resident use
 - Highly competitive market with numerous Ontario destinations that are not restricted by the above limitations
- While the successful implementation of a *traditional* sports tourism strategy may not be feasible there remain opportunities to attract spectators and visitors to the GPA for sports related activities that take advantage of the non-traditional sports assets found in the GPA, this approach may be more desirable for a number of reasons:
 - Given the wealth of land and water based outdoor recreation assets found in the GPA, specifically the trails and waterways, there is an opportunity to attract and host “events and competitions” that utilize these specific assets
 - Competitions and events of this nature already take place within the GPA on a limited basis, Mud, Sweat and Tears, and the Garrison Petawawa Ironman Competition for example



The 2 CMBG 2013, IRONMAN competition will be held on 11-12 Sept. This year’s competition will mark the 30th Anniversary of the IRONMAN competition. The IRONMAN competition represents an outstanding opportunity for soldiers to undertake a significant personal challenge and continue to develop their mental and physical toughness. Participants will cover a total distance of 50 km to include: a 32 km forced march; a 4 km canoe portage; an 8 km paddle down the OTTAWA RIVER; followed by a 6 km forced march to the finish line at Dundonald Hall.⁴

- The Town is currently exploring the possibilities of securing a water based event in 2014 and have visited other destinations to observe and learn from their counterparts and peers, these entities are already executing successful competitions and events within their communities

⁴ Source: <http://www.cg.cfpsa.ca/cg-pc/Petawawa>

- Successfully hosting events of this nature do two things that go far beyond attracting and hosting traditional sports tournaments and events
- Events of this nature:
 1. Effectively offer potential to position Petawawa and the GPA as an ideal location to enjoy activities associated with the specific event or competition during other times of the year. For example if a mountain biking event can be successfully hosted in the GPA it is logical to assume the GPA has great mountain biking trails to be experienced at other times of the year by individuals/tourists.
 2. Attracts significant numbers of participants and spectators who will spend time and money within the GPA associated with the specific event or competition therefore contributing to the economic well being of the town and its tourism operators
- Garrison Petawawa remains a core underdeveloped tourism asset. Its role in the town's heritage is significant and while that story is being told to a certain extent at the Heritage Museum there remains opportunities to create on-base activities designed to engage, enlighten and inform those who take time to visit.
 - On base and consumer web sites the museums are promoted as attractive and interesting places to see and visitation by both military personnel and the general public is welcomed and encouraged



- Based on a recommendation from the 2012 Tourism Strategy, town staff, the OVTA and others began operating a visitor information centre (VIC) in June 2013 as a pilot project. Located in the Petawawa Civic Centre the manned VIC was set up in the public space between the Parks and Recreation offices and the Public Library. The goal of the Visitor Centre operations was to service residents and tourists alike by providing information about the many tourism attractions and activities in Petawawa and the surrounding area, as well as to gather statistical information regarding the viability and delivery of this service.

- A review of the pilot VIC project must be undertaken in order to assess its value in terms of enhancing the visitor experience and extending the length of stay of guests through the provision of relevant tourist information
- Based on the review recommendations will be made by staff to the TDDC and Council pertaining to the future operations of the VIC

Destination Development Recommendations

1. It is recommended that Petawawa's future tourism destination development take into account the underdeveloped and underperforming tourism assets that exist in the Greater Petawawa Area or the GPA, in addition to those found within the Town of Petawawa. Therefore those involved in Petawawa's tourism destination development consider the task in a broader context by embracing development with the GPA in mind.
 - All those involved in tourism development must embrace it in a GPA context and begin to use this terminology when describing Petawawa's tourism development
 - While tourism infrastructure gaps have been identified in the Town of Petawawa, (roofed commercial accommodations, tourist attractions, restaurants and retail) services found in the GPA fill the gaps to a certain extent by providing additional options in these specific tourism sectors
 - Tourism growth within Petawawa over the long term should support future private sector tourism investment in areas where infrastructure gaps currently exist, economic development staff should, where feasible proactively pursue investment in roofed accommodations, food service and visitor attractions
 - **Timeline – Immediate and ongoing through 2015**

2. It is recommended the Town of Petawawa in partnership with the Tourism Destination Development Committee (TDCC) establish and formalize a GPA Mountain Bike Tourism Working Group to proactively explore the opportunities and challenges associated with on-going mountain bike trail development within the GPA.
 - Primary deliverable of the working group is to quantify the opportunity and identify the elements required to establish the GPA as a competitive and appealing mountain bike destination
 - Based on the outcomes of the working groups activity and their ultimate recommendations related to development, the Town of Petawawa consider as appropriate, its role in advancing the opportunity either directly or in partnership with other entities
 - Seek to develop a sustainable business model for trail development, one that does not rely solely on volunteers but takes into account ongoing needs related to day to day trail maintenance, enhancement and expansion
 - **Timeline – June 2014**

3. It is recommended that town staff and the TDCC *revise its understanding* of tactics associated with the development and implementation of a sports tourism strategy as identified in the 2012 Tourism Strategy. Future efforts should give focus and attention to attracting *specific competitions and events* that strategically position the GPA as a destination that has trail and flat water based assets and infrastructure that are available not only for specific competitions and events but available throughout the calendar year for all to enjoy at their leisure.
 - A reorientation is required by all involved that moves understanding of sports tourism from the goal of attracting traditional sporting events like hockey, soccer, baseball etc. to attracting and hosting competitions and events that are in line with leading land and water based assets found in the GPA.
 - **Timeline – Immediate**
4. It is recommended town staff, in partnership with local host committees proactively pursue attracting trail and flat water based competitions and events designed to first; position the GPA as an ideal location for year-round outdoor recreation activity, and second; to attract participants and spectators from outside the region that positively impact tourism visitation and revenues.
 - Direct emphasis on securing a kayak or SUP competition in 2014
 - Identify tactics to attract relevant “drop and play” events and competitions that have potential to be hosted in the GPA, including outdoor based events for example Spartan Sports events
 - Continue to support existing events that already deliver quantifiable returns and have capacity and potential to grow, for example Hell or High Water (this event grew from 50 participants in 2009 to more than 600 in 2012)
 - Identify mountain biking competitions or events that could be staged in the GPA and identify the steps to be taken to secure a major competition or event within the next 2 years
 - Consider opportunities for competitions or exhibitions that utilize the new bike and skate park located at the Civic Centre
 - Set the stage for long-term local business development by establishing parameters and creating opportunities for local entrepreneurs to get involved in developing and staging “drop and play” or stand alone type events as described above
 - **Timeline – Immediate, ongoing through 2015**
5. It is recommended the TDCC in partnership with Garrison Petawawa and town staff continues to pursue the development of a series year-round tourism related activities at Garrison Petawawa.
 - Better leverage the visitor centric features of the base such as the museums, the Memorial Forest, Home Fires Park, the Military Vehicle Park as well as the monuments located throughout the base by making these features better known and accessible to the travelling public

- Create a self-guided walking/driving tour of the base directing visitors to the features identified above; initially prepare a printed touring map (there is a need to map the various monuments)
- Explore the specifics of taking the printed touring map to a digital or smart phone based application
- Tap into a potential volunteer group who periodically could provide scheduled on-site tours of the base as well as act as story tellers and hosts
- **Timeline – May 2014**

6. It is recommended that the Town of Petawawa continue the operation of the Petawawa Civic Centre Visitor Information Centre (VIC) in 2014. After the launch of the pilot project in June of 2013 town staff monitored aspects of the centre's performance based on the following objectives:

- To determine the number of tourist users of this service in this location;
- To document the statistical information that can only be provided from one-on-one interaction with the tourists;
- To gather information for OVTA and Town of Petawawa that will help determine operational potential 2014 and beyond;
- To determine one or more satellite VICs are needed/warranted; and
- To offer summer student employment.

Town staff and the TDDC reached this recommendation after completing these steps:

- Reviewed activity reports created through the pilot project
- Reviewed visitors statistics gathered during the pilot project
- Consulted with OVTA to seek their perspective pertaining to ongoing operation of the VIC
- Prepared a VIC Pilot Project Wrap Up Report (see Appendix B)

Staff identified a number of modifications to the operation of the VIC in 2014 and these specifics are contained in the action plan

- **Timeline – Immediate through fall 2014**

Action Plan

Recommendation	Actions/Tactics	Responsibility	Date Due
1. Petawawa's tourism development be done in a broader context by embracing a GPA mind set	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embrace GPA context and terminology 	All involved	On-going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic development address infrastructure gaps by pursuing investment in roofed accommodations, food service and visitor attractions 	Staff	On-going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fill gaps in Petawawa's tourism infrastructure by leveraging the services found in the GPA 	All involved	On-going
2. Establish a GPA Mountain Bike Tourism Working Group (MBWG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop mandate, composition/skill set, TDCC approval of above 	Staff, TDCC	Nov 2013
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Populate group 		Dec 2013
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct best practices study then Identify priorities and agree on tactical activities 	MBWG	Apr 2014
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify/quantify trail maintenance, volunteer challenges/solutions 	MBWG	June 2014
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare trails development/enhancement recos/report 	Staff	June 2014
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider all grant options and prepare applications 	Staff	Sept 2014
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate trails development activities 	MBWG	Jan 2015
3. Revise understanding of sports tourism strategy; give focus to attracting competitions that position the GPA as a destination with trail/flat water assets, available for competitions but also for year-round visitor participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move understanding from attracting traditional sporting events to attracting competitions in line with land and water based assets 	All involved	Immediate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council, staff, TDCC adopt this refocus and support all tactics associated with the re-think 	Council, staff, TDCC	On-going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate primary objectives of the revised sports tourism strategy 		On-going
4. Proactively pursue attracting trail and flat water competitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct emphasis on securing a kayak or SUP competition in 2014 	Staff	Nov 2014
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support and build success of Hell High Water event; focus on growing out-of-town participants 	TDCC, staff, council	On-going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage the opening of the bike park, identify potential events to host 	Staff, TDCC	On-going

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify “drop & play” competitions that could be staged in the GPA, develop proactive tactics to get one or more events in 2014 • Identify mountain biking competitions that could be staged in the GPA, identify steps to secure competitions in 2 years • Foster opportunities to encourage local businesses to create and stage competitions, consider offering investment incentives 	Staff	Jan 2015
		MBWG, staff	Mar 2015
		Staff	On-going
5. Continue to pursue the development of tourism related activities at Garrison Petawawa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better leverage the visitor centric features of the base by detailing available tour based activity • Create experience-based activities for visitors, use experiential tourism imperatives (see Appendix D) • Build on the walking tour map already created and add other base features • Map monuments located on the base and include them on the tour map • Explore possibility of using smart phone technology to deliver the map/info • Mobilize locals and retired military personnel to act as base hosts delivering tour experiences and telling their stories 	TDDC, base staff, town staff	Feb 2014
		Base staff	Feb 2014
		Base staff	Feb 2014
		Base staff	Feb 2014
		Town staff	Feb 2014
		Base staff	Feb 2014
6. Continue the operation of the Petawawa Civic Centre Visitor Information Centre (VIC) in 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with OVTA and OHTO to facilitate customer service training and site support facilitation • Add VIC directional signage on County roads, ensure they accompanied with signs for the Civic Centre • Request a student grant under the Canadian Summer Student Program • Identify a means to effectively track if sharing information enhanced visitor experience and extended stay • Modify VIC hours of operation for maximum effectiveness based on 2013 experience • Identify mechanisms to provide information on a year-round basis 	Staff	Mar 2014
		Staff, town	Mar 2014
		Staff	Nov 2013
		Staff, TDCC	May 2014
		Staff	May 2014
		Staff, TDCC	May 2014

Appendix A – Tourism Destination Development Committee

Name	Organization	Sector
Theresa Sabourin	Councillor, Town of Petawawa	
Frank Cirella	Councillor, Town of Petawawa	
Jessica Schmidt	Petawawa Quality Inn & Suites	Accommodation
Ann McIntyre	Petawawa Heritage Society	Heritage/Culture/ Museum
Kelly Thompson	Petawawa Public Library	Heritage/Culture/ Museum
Natalie Granter	Pembroke & Area Airport	Industry
Damien McCarthy	Gearheads	Retail/Sport Tourism
Cheryl Jordan	Country Cupboard	Retail
Byron & Jean Ostrom	Portage Place B&B	Accommodation
Kelly Williams	Parks and Recreation	Recreation/Sport Tourism
Karen Donovan	Community Recreational Director – PSP	Military/Recreation
Tim Weeks (Deceased)	13th Monkey Paintball	Sport Tourism
Christine Mitchell	Town of Petawawa	

Appendix B – Vic Pilot Report

Prepared by: Christine Mitchell	Report No. ED-09-13
Subject: VIC operations 2013 – pilot project review	
<p>Discussion:</p> <p>Council approved at the February 11, 2013 meeting that municipal staff, in accordance with the strategies outlined in the Tourism Strategy and with collaboration from the Tourism Destination Development committee, be authorized to facilitate, co-ordinate and operate a pilot Visitor Information Centre in the corridor of the Petawawa Public Library and the Parks and Recreation Offices. Council further authorized reserve funding in the amount of \$6,500 for the human resource expense for this project.</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To determine the viability and number of tourist users of this service in this location. • To further document the statistical information that can only be provided from one on one interaction with the tourists. • To gather/diffuse information to the OVTA and Town of Petawawa that will determine the 2014 operational potential. • Determine if satellite VIC's is needed/warranted? • To offer summer student employment opportunity. <p>Key Duties of the Tourism Ambassador:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop knowledge of the local and regional attractions, business, services and products. • Welcome visitors to the VIC in a warm and friendly manner and distribute and diffuse relevant information. • Encourage visitors to experience events and activities in our region thus extending their stay or making their overall experience more enjoyable. • Assist guests in planning their travel itinerary. • Set up the VIC area and maintain the area in the highest standard of presentation and cleanliness. • Update events listings for the OVTA and town website. • Use social media formats to diffuse relevant and professional messages. • Collect statistical information, write documents, and correspond with supervisor on a consistent and regular basis. • Promote and sell merchandise and perform other tasks and duties as assigned. <p>Parameters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program was administered by the Economic Development Department • Pilot project was to be 15 weeks between end of May and first week of September. • 5 days per week at seven hours per day – one human resource • Infrastructure and area display will be facilitated with existing materials such as trade show displays, TV, videos, laptop and iPad. • Work in collaboration with OVTA and OHTO regarding training and for site support. <p>Timelines:</p> <p>May 22 – Obtained funding from the Service Canada Summer Jobs program in the amount of \$1,231.20 towards hiring a Tourism Ambassador.</p> <p>May 31 - Kyle McLaren, a Petawawa resident began as the Tourism Ambassador for the VIC project</p> <p>May 31 & June 3 – Kyle participated in orientation and training with Christine.</p> <p>June 6 – 36 x 24 ? sign was installed on Civic Centre kiosk and on the glass window above the entrance to the Petawawa Public Library.</p> <p>June 7 – Media Launch of Visitor Information Centre with a number of Press in attendance.</p> <p>June 26 – MTO granted temporary permission to install signage at Doran entrance of Hwy 17.</p>	

June 26, 27 & 28 – Kyle participated in the OVTA FAM tour and customer service workshop.
July 12 – MTO installed permanent signage at Doran entrance in both directions.
July 24 – County of Renfrew granted temporary permission for a sign at the corner of Doran and Murphy Road on existing Civic Centre directional sign.
Aug 25 – Staffed contract for the VIC came to an end.

Outcomes:

- VIC was staffed 12 weeks from June to 25th of August.
- Wednesday to Sunday schedule – 10 am to 5pm- 7 hrs per day, 35 hrs per week, for a total of 57 days of staffed time or 399 hours. (HR expense 4,593.68 + 528.83 MERCS)
- Total of 294 parties stopped to speak with a representative at the VIC - for a total of 523 recorded visitors to the VIC during staffed operations.
- 243 of the recorded parties originated from the Ottawa Valley and 51 were from outside the area, including origins such as Vancouver, Banff, Calgary, Cape Breton, North Carolina, Europe, South America, Lebanon, Jordan, and areas of Quebec.
- The main reasons people cited for visiting Petawawa specifically were to attend events, use recreational infrastructure/resources, and visit with family and friends, general pleasure vacation to the area, in the process of relocating to the area.
- The main topics discussed with VIC staff (ranked) events/programs, sites & attractions, I love Petawawa t-shirts/merchandise, directions & obtain maps, library operations/services, restrooms, general discussion on VIC operations, bike park, splash pad, mini putt, children’s programs, seniors programs, book tree, internet access, community market, general discussion on Town of Petawawa developments, interested in watching the video, Petawawa beach, summer camp programs, inquiries about aid after the storm, geo-caching information, minor sports clubs and accommodation.
- Our VIC achieved a score of 98% through the OHTO mystery shop program. The program considered elements such as the physical environment of the VIC, the service delivery process, the regional tourism knowledge as well as employee attitudes and presentation. The Petawawa VIC was the second highest scoring VIC in the Ottawa Valley (only to Calabogie who scored 99%). A great accomplishment considering the project was a pilot initiative.

Reflections:

- The event boards, that we updated weekly, created an initial point of conversation through which additional information could be obtained and distributed to the guests. The event boards also served to clearly identify the area as a resource for information.
- Merchandise – the “I love Petawawa” t-shirts and campaign also created a point of conversation. They were well priced and well received by the public. (Guests would come in at random and purchase the t-shirt as a souvenir or others came in with the intent to purchase the t-shirt as they had heard about it from other residents or through the social media network)
- Access to WIFI and internet services – the events/program spreadsheets were all electronically stored in a spreadsheet. This resource allowed the VIC staff to pull up site specific information to show to the guests as well as allowed the VIC staff to work on uploading data to our partner resources (OVTA and social media).
- The location of the VIC was integral for the volume and access that we achieved, as the location serves as a focal point for the municipalities’ recreational infrastructure and services. The use of internal resources such as trade show material, banners, pictures, and TV worked well. We ended up creating unique brochure display racks that mimic the Book Tree and further enhanced our DYNAMIC by NATURE tag line. The idea of creating a “sense of place” is integral to the marketing and promotion of the service and to generate consistent visitation and/or garner guest feedback. The more interactive the resource the more effective it will be. A sense of place was definitely created each Friday with the addition of the community markets in the adjacent corridor. There remain additional opportunities to explore along this vein.
- Our immediate tourism resources (land and water) suffered this year as a direct result of the July 19th storm. For the remainder of our summer tourism season we had restricted and no access to some of our valuable resources (Petawawa Point, Millennium trail, Petawawa Terrace) and had to

- close the Centennial Park pool due to high levels of e-coli.
- The addition of the bike park, splash pad, paddling programs and book tree compliment our outdoor recreational infrastructure.
- We had no means to effectively track whether or not the use or the information shared at the VIC, extended the visitors stay to the area or resulted in additional economic return. We do know however that those who used the VIC resource had a better quality of experience as most expressed that they were not aware of the information that they obtained through the VIC resource. In essence the dedicated human factor created the opportunity to share data specific information targeted to each of the visitors to the resource.
- The hours of the VIC operation would need to be reviewed for full effectiveness. The location lends itself to the operational hours of the resources offered there. A 10am to 5pm schedule seemingly worked well, however, Sunday was the slowest day of each week. This could be attributed to the fact that the Library and the Parks and Recreation offices were also closed or to the fact that visitors predominately travel on Sundays. Perhaps a more Tuesday to Saturday schedule would work. Overall, maintaining consistent operational hours is essential. A further consideration of additional HR resources during events to track and promote the VIC service and possibly sell merchandise would greatly improve the effectiveness and traffic to the VIC.
- A review of additional permanent signage would also need to be established. MTO did install directional signage at the HWY 17 and Doran entrance; however there may be other entrances into town where we could also request signage to be place. Renfrew County granted us temporary signage on an existing post. There is a 5 year signage agreement with the County that could be entered into that would increase the volume of signage on County roads that directly link Hwy 17 into the Town of Petawawa. Staff has all the documentation and fees associated with making this request ready should it be required. In addition, the signage whenever possible is located on signage also indicating the Civic Centre.
- To facilitate a 4-season destination there needs to be 4-season opportunity to obtain information when in the area. While there may only be staff resource during the exceptional times (summer) the location of the VIC is important to being able to respond to the customer's inquiries and maximizing the use of other available resources such as the staff of the Library or Parks and Recreation offices.
- Staff of both offices indicated that the process of having the VIC and the wealth of information in the various formats also improved their knowledge of the area and they were in a much better position to assist any guests who had inquiries.
- We had an exceptional summer student who did a wonderful job and was well suited and keen to represent Petawawa.

Recommendations:

- 1) That Council continues to operate a VIC located in the corridor between the Civic Centre and the Public Library.
- 2) That the VIC operations be supported by saleable merchandise that can aid in the funding of the resource. Merchandise can be sourced as an Ottawa Valley wide program or designed, purchased and promoted through a TDDC initiative. (sold \$2000 worth of merchandise and had a grant for another \$1200 making the overall expense to the Town of Petawawa less than ¼ of the cost of the program once operational).
- 3) That the VIC continues to partner with OVTA and OHTO to facilitate customer service training and site support facilitation.
- 4) That additional directional signage along County roads is added.
- 5) That Council authorizes staff to make a request for a student grant under the Canadian Summer Student Program closing Jan 10, 2014. As well as requesting a \$2 summer incentive grant through the Rural Summer jobs program.

Appendix C – Rethinking Visitor Information Centres

Dr. Nancy Arsenault, Tourism Café Blog, Posted: 03 Sep 2013 06:15 AM PDT

Last year I mystery shopped 20 Visitor Information Centres (VICs) in British Columbia, and then took my curiosity to Northern Ireland and other places where I was working and vacationing. There were some striking similarities that confirmed to me we require a rethink of the role of VICs and the type of staff/volunteers engaged, and their training. I'll state right out that I am a fan of VICs as I believe they serve an important travel function, especially to those who are not wired, prefer to disconnect on holidays, and for travellers that really would like to speak with a local to learn about the area and ways to enjoy their travels that aren't in the printed/online materials.

A few days ago an article was published in the Globe and Mail titled BC Communities Rethink Visitors Centres as Tourist Switch to Smart Phones. As I reflected on my experience and this article, I came to these top level observations:

- Staff/volunteers share information on their community and most, in my experience, didn't know the region or other communities that travellers would be touring through, hence continual references to 'stop at the next VIC. I would have preferred they knew about the area so I didn't have to stop at VICs and could focus on visiting the community.
- When I asked the visitor counsellors about how to enjoy the area, most fell short of being helpful. So what do you do – turn to technology and look yourself. Solution: Train the counsellors to *Think like a Traveller*, understand the touring patterns and try to add value to print material with 'locals know' insights.
- When I would ask 'what is there to do in the area? The answers I received were typically shallow and just a regurgitation of what was in the printed visitor guide – which if you are travelling by car, you likely already had, or read online. The 'info' provided did little to add local area insights and required prodding on my part, rather than the counsellor seeking to understand my travel needs and interests.
- The quality of staff/volunteers was as vast as night and day. Some times, the response was terrific. In fact, in the Similikmeen Valley (British Columbia), the gal was so terrific she up-sold me on the region and we are now planning to return for several days – a place I had never considered is now on my local area travel bucket list. In contrast, in another VIC when I asked what there was to do in the local area I was told "Absolutely nothing, people just get info and drive through." I assumed she was joking so I asked the question again to which she said "No, I've lived here all my life so I know there is really not much of interest for tourist." The tourist in me was wondering – well if there is nothing to do, why have a VIC. The tourism professional in me just about died and thought – I can't believe someone is paying this women's to give out that kind of information!

- Counsellors in general were great at listing ‘things to do’ but only one VIC (Taylor BC) did the two gals stop and ask really good questions beyond ‘what do you like to do’. They listened carefully, were curious about HOW we travel and what we enjoy and engaged us in a conversation. After they provided a ton of information about the entire region and how their community fits into the North Peace region.
- As we are wired travellers, I like to upload photos straight away, take care of my TripAdvisor posts, and look for special places ‘off the beaten track’, access to Wifi is important. Some VICs had a sign saying ‘free Wifi’, others made you come in and get pass code. When I asked why the code was necessary, I learned it was for ‘their tourism statistics’. It was a frustrating response, for rather than it ‘encouraging me to come in, have a conversation and the Counsellor to help me with my travels (their job), it was about getting stats. This is compounded when these centres are open limited hours – and amazingly so, sometimes not on weekends. I personally don’t understand the Monday to Friday, 9 – 5 mentality with a VIC.

I could go on but what I felt after visiting so many was that these centres were promoting what they offer you to do in their community, rather than exploring with me how I can best enjoy my vacation. A flip in thinking has to occur. Relative to gaining helpful advice on social media sites of relevance to me while travelling, there was everything from A to Z. Some people were very helpful, and others who outright told me they tweet, do Facebook or engage online. Well my friends – I believe those VICs will be out of business, for they don’t bring value to the visitor, handing out brochures is a waste of human resources when they could be trained to create a relationship, a conversation – albeit it brief – with the traveller.

It’s time to go beyond rethinking the strategy. It’s time to clean the slate and revisit their business model from the traveller’s lens. There is a role for VICs especially since travelling does involve a desire to connect, talk, learn ... so why not look at the scope of what VIC could offer the traveller, and then define the knowledge based and skills related to the needs of today’s travellers. It’s matter of choice.

Appendix D – Experiential Tourism Imperatives

1. **Meet a Local:**

- Learn something by doing something with someone who lives here.

2. **Authenticity:**

- Ensure it is real?

3. **Touching the Senses:**

- Sight, smell, hearing, feel and taste.

4. **Uniqueness:**

- What do you have to offer that is different.

5. **Exclusive Access:**

- Going behind the scenes.

6. **Take-Away:**

- The visitor takes something away with them.