



Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area

August 2017

Visitor Experience Strategy



Parks
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Parks Canada would like to thank all of the community stakeholders that contributed their time and input to help formulate this Visitor Experience Strategy.

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Introduction

The Visitor Experience Strategy (VES) is a nine step process (figure 1) designed by Parks Canada to ensure that National Parks, National Historic Sites, and National Marine Conservation Areas (NMCAs) visitor experiences connect with Canadians.

“ The purpose of the Visitor Experience Strategy is to build compelling visitor experiences that connect the visitors’ hearts and minds with a deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada. The overarching goal is to facilitate unforgettable visitor experiences for the target audiences. ”

*Parks Canada, Visitor Experience Strategy
– Getting Started*

Formulating a VES for Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area (LSNMCA) is an opportunity to shape the tourism direction of not only this newly created Parks Canada site, but also to develop core experiences that contribute to the tourism direction of the communities along the surrounding north shore of Lake Superior.

The strategy will act as a three to five year planning investment tool, to guide Parks Canada how to best reach and connect with visitors. It is not intended that Parks Canada will be responsible for the full and complete implementation of this strategy, rather the strategy identifies opportunities for the private sector, communities, First Nations and partnerships to engage in delivering visitor experiences to travellers.

The LSMCA Visitor Experience Strategy is being written during an opportune time; one in which Parks Canada is a leader in formulating experience development processes and in implementing industry leading visitor experiences. These developments, coupled with current environmental factors have resulted in a renewed interest in connecting with Parks Canada places and their offer from a visitor perspective.

Exciting times are ahead. As one of Parks Canada’s newest protected areas, the soon to be established LSMCA is a blank slate with immense tourism development potential, reinforced by engaged and supportive community stakeholders that welcome the NMCA’s development and the positive impact it will have on the surrounding area.



Figure 1 - Parks Canada Visitor Experience Strategy 9 Step Process

Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area

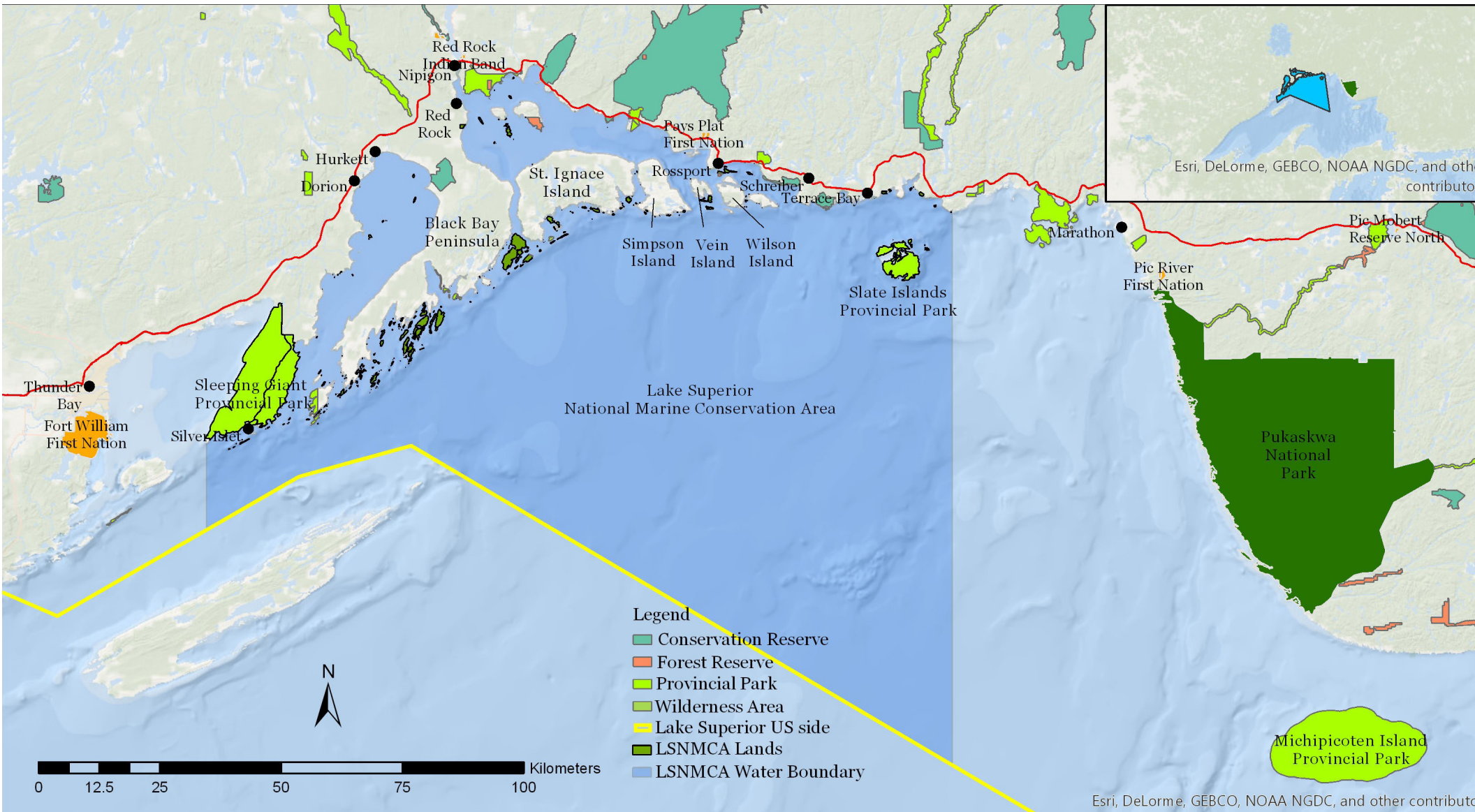
Located on the north shore of Lake Superior in Northern Ontario, Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area is one of Parks Canada's newest sites. Numerous studies have been done surrounding the site and the nearby communities in the effort to attain official establishment of the NMCA .

A water-based site, LSMCA is the largest freshwater protected area in the world. Bound by the northern shoreline of Lake Superior, the Canada/US border, Thunder Cape to the west and Bottle Point to the east, the NMCA encompasses 10,880 square kilometres and over 600 islands. Encompassing 13% of Lake Superior (the largest freshwater lake in the world by surface area), all islands within the site measuring 100 hectares or less fall under the management of the NMCA as well as 9 larger islands.

Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area is comprised of a rich, natural and cultural heritage and encompasses remarkable features including: the connection between Indigenous Peoples and the lands, waters, and resources spanning thousands of years. The

cultural heritage of First Nations, Métis, and Euro-Canadians; amazing biodiversity with over 70 fish species and rare arctic-alpine plants; dramatic terraced landscapes, Superior Shoals, and some of the world's oldest known rocks and unique geological features such as columnar basalts, shatter cones and sea caves; and 70 known archaeological sites varying from pictographs, to grave sites, shipwrecks, and more.

As a National Marine Conservation Area, LSMCA is governed by the NMCA Act and must adhere to the Parks Canada mandate which seeks to protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure the ecological and commemorative integrity of these places for present and future generations.



Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Area tourism stakeholders were asked to outline the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) with respect to the visitor experience in and surrounding Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area (appendix 1). The SWOT exercise helped to build a foundation for determining the Essence of Place and started to percolate thinking surrounding the visitor experiences that could be developed for the NMCA. Areas of focus were around LSNMCA and the surrounding shoreline's attractions, facilities, interpretation, visitor services, amenities and other areas related to the visitor experience.

After compiling the SWOT, stakeholders were asked to consider the list of attractions, and indicate which ones had the potential to assist in the development of a best in class experience that is able to compete on a national scale with other tourism experiences. The resulting list included many of the assets that make LSNMCA unique including: lighthouses, beaches, key trails (such as the Casque Isle Trail, Mazukama Falls and the Top of the Giant Trail), shipwrecks and the Lake Superior Circle Tour.

Goals

Establishing goals helps to direct future activities and define what LSNMCA is trying to accomplish with respect to the visitor experience. Goals are actions or initiatives designed to capitalize on LSNMCA visitor experience strengths, minimize the weaknesses, seize opportunities and counter threats with the purpose of heightening the visitor experience to increase revenue, attendance, visitor satisfaction and connection to place. The goals include:

- Capitalize upon the existing high volume of traffic on the Trans Canada Highway and the appeal of the Lake Superior Circle Tour with its dramatic scenery as the catalyst to entice visitors to stop and spend time exploring the area.
- Seek out partnerships to ensure the history and culture of the region is maintained, embraced and communicated, as a way to enhance the visitor experience.
- Celebrate the remote nature and solitude of LSNMCA as a defining feature of the visitor experience.
- Ensure traveller information is complete and easily obtained.
- Increase the number of visitors to the region and the corresponding tourism dollars spent by capitalizing on visitor experiences that support the Essence of Place as defining iconic or unique features.
- Encourage private business development of amenities that support visitor experience development in the region.
- Upgrade visitor's access to Lake Superior and LSNMCA through infrastructure upgrades, operator expansion and development of new tourism experiences.
- Support the upgrade of the infrastructure needed to support tourism in the region, paying special attention to the items needed to support the experiences to be developed as part of the VES.
- Embrace tourism as an economic driver for the region and work in partnership with local tourism stakeholders to deliver quality visitor experiences.
- Enhance the tourism offer to ensure visitor satisfaction, repeat visitation and positive word of mouth promotion.

Essence of Place

The Essence of Place for a Parks Canada site captures its spirit, its reason for being, the ‘why’ people would choose to visit, and what makes the location unique and special. It’s the site’s joie de vivre, depicting the mood, the emotion and the very sense of being.

Much like a well-developed brand, a well-articulated Essence of Place provides a framework behind which everything else follows: target markets, promotion and most importantly, development of visitor experiences. Developing experiences that fit the Essence of Place have the potential to boost the NMCA’s brand and its visitor attraction factor. Developing experiences that do not fit the Essence of Place is much harder, takes longer, can cause confusion with visitors and does not support the brand of the site.

The Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area’s Essence of Place (appendix 2) defines the unique recreational, aesthetic, educational and experiential qualities of the NMCA and how this place is distinct from other Parks Canada sites. It culminates with a statement, that defines the Essence of Place in a descriptive paragraph.

Essence of Place Statement

Beyond the ribbon of the TransCanada highway, in the heart of Northern Ontario lies an inland freshwater sea of many moods. Here, your adventures will take you from the top of towering cliffs to the shipwrecks that rest deep on the lake floor. Cruise an archipelago of islands, behold enchanting lighthouses, hike the rugged routes left by glaciers or paddle in the wake of the voyageurs. Ancient pictographs overlook the pristine waters and are reminders of the area's rich history and the connection between Indigenous people and Gitchigaming, the Big Lake. By day, feel the thunderous crash of the waves as they continuously sculpt this majestic seascape. At sunset, the haunting call of the loon ushers in the night sky with its bright stars and wondrous northern lights. Friendly communities nestled along the north shore welcome you to consider this your home away from home.

This is a place to immerse yourself in solitude, or embark on grand adventures. Lose yourself, and find yourself in Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area.



Target Market

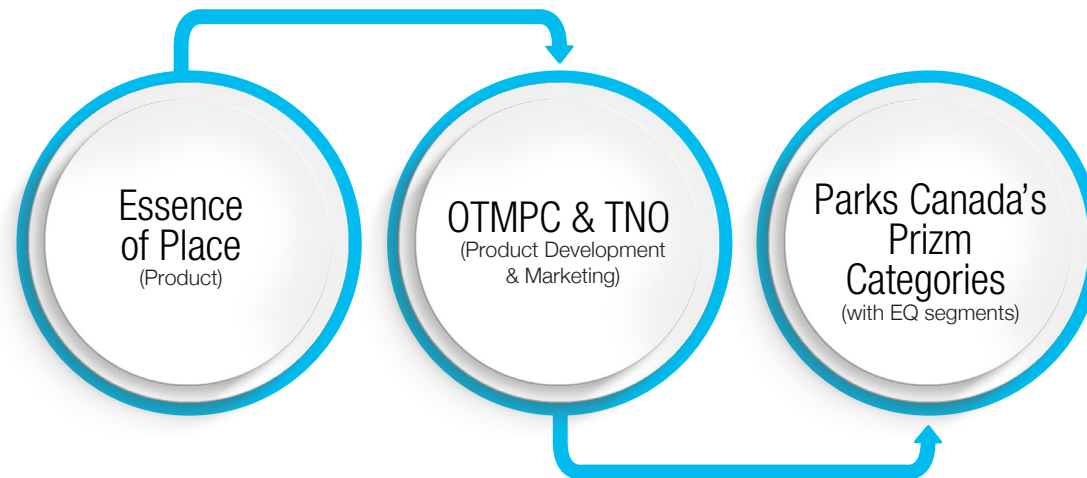
Today's visitors have the world at their fingertips. Images of the next top destination are shared across Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and Trip Advisor inspiring future visitors and landing on their bucket travel list.

To be a desirable destination, visitor experiences must be innovative and offer a best in class wow-factor that other areas are not offering or cannot be replicated. To be truly effective, the experiences must speak directly to the audiences they are trying to attract.

A three stage approach to determining target market focus will ensure LSMCA's investments are not only well targeted but also well aligned to allow for collaboration and a cascading approach. First, using a product market match approach. This ensures that visitor experience investments and the future marketing approach align with the Essence of Place and target markets that are attracted to these defining

features. Secondly, aligning with tourism investments being made by the province through the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Organization and Tourism Northern Ontario (TNO), the provincially funded regional tourism organization. Thirdly, aligned markets will be further defined by the Parks Canada Prizm customer segmentation categories and their corresponding applicable Explorer Quotient (EQ) psychographic market segments.

Using a product-market match approach to defining LSMCA's visitor target market will allow the NMCA as well as the region to ensure its visitor experience investments are well placed. Looking at the visitor experiences and natural resources of the area (the Essence of Place) and pairing those with target markets that are aligned with these experiences will allow LSMCA to place its visitor experience investments on the initiatives that will have the most impact for the region.

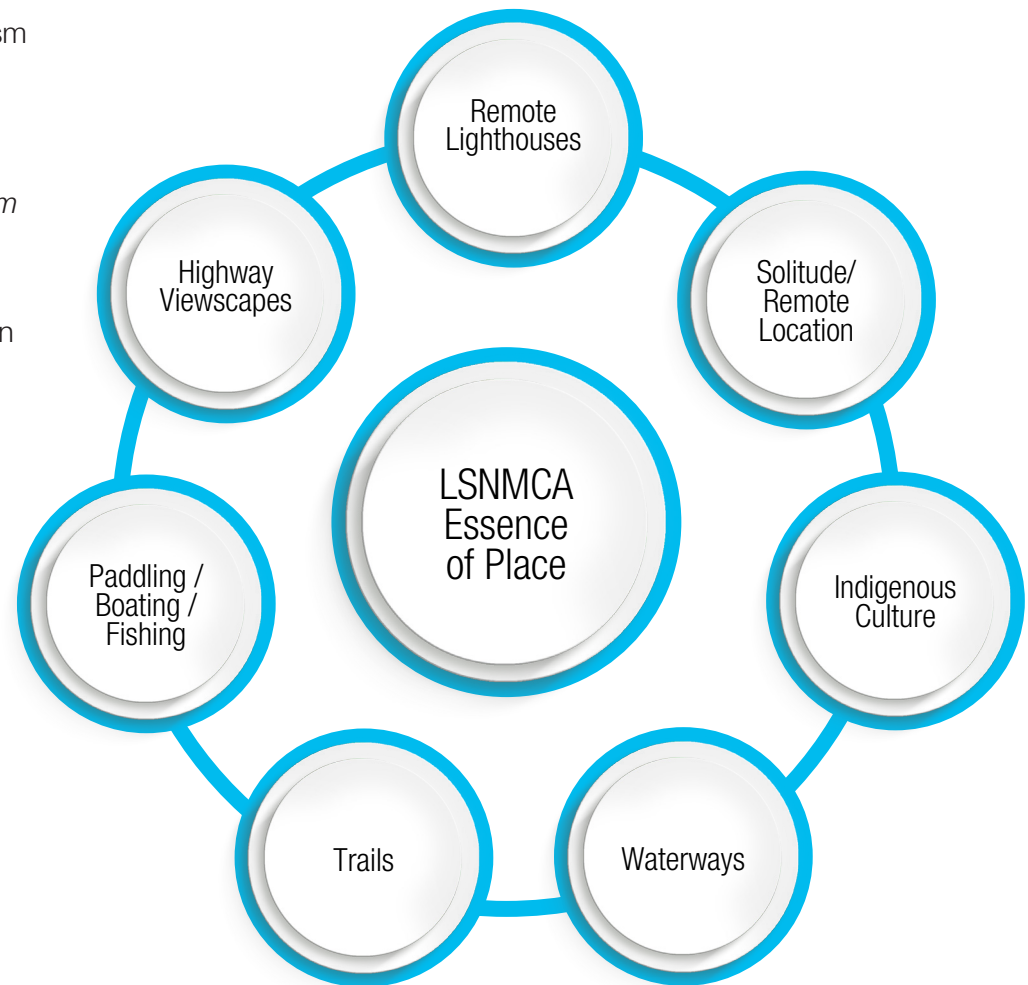


The Essence of Place as well as the strengths of the region focus on the solitude, remote location and natural beauty enjoyed through the Trans Canada highway viewsapes, area trails and waterways with their lighthouses, fishing and paddling. These are the assets that define the essence of the area and have the potential to set this area apart from other areas. These are the assets that visitor experiences should be built upon, and aligned with target markets that are attracted to these assets.

Further, ensuring market choices are aligned with the marketing approach that is being taken by the province, the regional tourism organization (Tourism Northern Ontario), will allow LSNMCA to capitalize on provincial and regional product development and marketing initiatives and resources, furthering their efforts exponentially. OTMPC's *Strategic Direction for Marketing Tourism in Northern Ontario 2017 -2020* stresses the importance of collaboration and alignment and was prepared in collaboration with TNO in light of extensive research that has been undertaken in recent years in both tourism product development and marketing.

“ The goal of working in collaboration and partnership is to ensure effective use of marketing resources and, when realistic and appropriate, to align and coordinate strategies and operational plans. Through an increased emphasis on shared planning and communication, Northern Ontario will maximize the impact of marketing efforts, resulting in increased visitation, overnight stays and visitor expenditures.”

*Strategic Direction for Marketing Tourism in Northern Ontario
 2017 -2020 (OTMPC)*







Analyzing the focus of product development and marketing initiatives of TNO and OTMPC’s provides a further look at potential markets that may align with the tourism experiences that LSMCA has to offer. The *Strategic Direction* strives to focus on factors that are ‘unique to the north’ offering the region a competitive advantage based on accessible outdoors and wilderness as well as Northern Ontario’s pristine environment, clean water and fresh air. These features ring true with LSMCA’s Essence of Place focus on solitude and remote location.

OTMPC and TNO are also focused on growing Northern Ontario’s consumer base through the attraction of niche or avid visitors who

are travelling to find a specific type of experience. “Avid or niche travellers are consumers who have a passion for and commitment to a specific Northern Ontario or outdoor adventure activity and who travel specifically to engage in that activity.”¹

The Northern Ontario *Strategic Direction* defines six northern Ontario tourism products and experiences for focus by Tourism Northern Ontario and northern DMO’s, which will in turn be supported by OTMPC & TNO’s marketing efforts. Details of each of the six areas follow, with analysis of the opportunity surrounding LSMCA visitor experiences and target market.

¹OTMPC, Strategic Direction for Marketing Tourism in Northern Ontario 2017 – 2020.

Northern Ontario Tourism Product Focus ²	Alignment with LSNMCA	LSNMCA Target Market / Experience Focus
<p>1 Nature & Adventure</p> <p>Promoting outdoor adventure products that address demand for wilderness experiences.</p>	<p>A key focus area for Northern Ontario and OTMPC, the <i>Overview of Tourism Opportunities for Northern Ontario</i> recognizes the outdoors as the core element in the lure of Northern Ontario for tourists in each focus segment. It further states that Ontario attracts more nature-based tourists than any other province.</p> <p><i>The Northern Ontario Product Development Strategy</i> articulates adventure tourism as a major growth area with focus on ‘off the beaten path’ authentic experiences with meaningful connections to local people and culture. Further, the strategy states that Northern Ontario can capitalize on this growth market by making investments in high yield nature and adventure experiences supported by local and regional heritage offers, including Indigenous tourism.</p> <p>The essence of LSNMCA hinges on its outdoor adventure and natural assets and its remote location and solitude. This is a natural focus area for both experience development and target markets for LSNMCA. Outdoor adventure activities such as paddling and hiking should form the foundation for current visitor experience developments, and down the road key niche winter activities such as ice fishing, snowshoeing and fat biking could be explored as a way to attract nearby markets.</p>	 <p>Outdoor Adventure Market (niche market)</p>
<p>2 Fishing</p> <p>Maintain current experiences and develop new experiences and capacity to address changing market and consumer expectations.</p>	<p>Northern Ontario has an abundance of fishing experiences. While this is a priority niche market for TNO and OTMPC, based on the number of Northern Ontario angling experiences available, the number of visitors and the amount of revenue currently generated for the north, this is a market that is in transition. The traditional market for fishing experiences is aging. The challenge is in attracting a younger market which is currently less interested in the sport, or to re-think the traditional fishing experience. The niche fishing market aligns very well with LSNMCA’s assets given the area’s geography and native species. Given the high level of competition to attract a decreasing number of traditional anglers, the niche fishing market is recommended for LSNMCA only if positioned in a new and exciting way to a non-traditional market, focusing on high dollar, niche experiences.</p>	 <p>The niche fishing market is recommended for LSNMCA’s new experience development only if the product is a niche experience and targets a non-traditional market.</p>

²OTMPC, Strategic Direction for Marketing Tourism in Northern Ontario 2017 – 2020.

Northern Ontario Tourism Product Focus ²	Alignment with LSMCA	LSNMCA Target Market / Experience Focus
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3 Touring

Support year round power sports touring and new products as they become available:

- Motorcycle
- Auto & RV
- Snowmobile & ATV Trail Touring
- Boating & Great Lakes Cruising

Tourism Northern Ontario is investing in product development related to key touring routes throughout Northern Ontario. One of these routes, which is currently in redevelopment, is the Lake Superior Circle Tour. OTMPC and the regional tourism sub-regions of Thunder Bay and Algoma have invested heavily in the development of this route for niche motorcycle tourism in the last 5 years, with funds invested in both experience development and marketing. Additionally, TNO is currently investing in redeveloping the Circle Tour for auto and RV touring, and will invest in marketing this route once product development has been completed. Touring related visitor experiences align well with LSMCA's assets and the unique feature of spectacular highway views. This coupled with a large amount of traffic driving through the region on the Trans Canada Highway, with limited traffic stopping³, make visitor experiences that can serve the touring market a priority for LSMCA and the drive by traffic a target. Further alignment with the boating and Great Lakes Cruising markets support both the niche outdoor adventure and fishing markets.



Drive by Traffic
 (niche market auto, RV & motorcycle touring)

4 Gateway & Urban

Promote as destinations and as gateways to outdoor and wilderness experiences and capitalize on opportunities in:



- Festivals & events
- Attractions
- Sport tourism
- Meetings & incentive travel

Thunder Bay is not only a nearby urban market for LSMCA, it also acts as a gateway to wilderness and outdoor experiences offered by the NMCA. OTMPC and TNO are invested in supporting and promoting attractions related to these gateway Northern Ontario cities and as such should back the development and marketing of outdoor adventure activities that support Thunder Bay's positioning as a gateway.



Thunder Bay Market
 (target Thunder Bay consumers now, and also consider Thunder Bay as a gateway for outdoor adventure niche market travellers to the region)

³Tunnock Consulting's *Township of Terrace Bay Official Plan*, November 30,2015 reports that the Trans Canada Highway annual daily traffic volume through the centre of Terrace Bay is 3,400 vehicles. Estimates are that only 14% of the traffic stops in the community.

Northern Ontario Tourism Product Focus ²	Alignment with LSMCA	LSNMCA Target Market / Experience Focus
<p>5 Culture & Heritage</p> <p>Enhance as a primary product experience addressing a board range of experiences including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group of Seven • Indigenous Culture • Francophone Culture • Food/Culinary Tourism 	<p>OTMPC and TNO are supporting cultural and heritage tourism investments and marketing. Indigenous culture is an iconic feature of LSMCA, as identified in the <i>Essence of Place</i>. Based on its alignment with the Northern Ontario <i>Strategic Direction</i>, investments should be made in developing visitor experiences with this focus and targeting travellers interested in these experiences.</p> <p>While LSMCA is currently just outside of the area in which Group of Seven product development has been occurring, with further research into possible painting sites in the area, this may be an area for future experience development.</p>	<p></p> <p>Develop Indigenous Experiences (with an outdoors element, and positioned to the drive by and Thunder Bay market as a starting point)</p>
<p>6 Hunting</p> <p>Identify niche consumer segments (ie. spring bear hunt) and promote accordingly.</p>	<p>Similar to the fishing market, the hunting market is aging and is requiring reinvention. The competition from traditional fish and hunt lodges in Northern Ontario is high with many experiences already existing, and therefore while important for existing operations, investments in developing new experiences related to hunting is not recommended for LSMCA.</p>	<p></p> <p>The niche hunting market is not recommended for LSMCA's new experience development</p>

Finally, aligning these market choices with Parks Canada's Prizm target classification system will provide in depth information about the market and its habits and allow tailoring of both experience and promotion to speak directly to these potential visitors. Examining the Prizm categories, it's important to choose markets that align with the product LSNMCA has or will have available. As an NMCA located in a remote location, it is important to keep in mind that LSNMCA has limited ability to attract traditional large urban, medium to long distance Prizm markets unless targeting directly to niche markets.

Outdoor Adventure Market

The outdoor adventure market is an example of a niche market that LSNMCA experiences will speak to. Activities such as kayaking, hiking and boating attract a defined niche or avid consumer. Many activity- specific outdoor adventure activities that could be developed by the NMCA will be most attractive to niche or avid consumers since many of the new experiences will be located on big water or in the backcountry due to LSNMCA's water and island-based nature. It is difficult to define these niche consumers using the Parks Canada Prizm data. For example, an avid kayaker could be any age, and located anywhere. They travel by definition of their love of paddling.

Drive by Traffic

The large amount of drive by traffic along the Trans Canada highway makes this a natural market to target. The Ministry of Transportation has limited information on who is travelling in non-commercial vehicles. The region as well as Northern Ontario could benefit from further research surrounding travellers along the Trans Canada highway, which would ultimately be helpful with further classification of this market.

While the Prizm categories do not specifically define markets of travellers that enjoy taking road trips, it is possible to assume that this category of travellers is one that enjoys taking longer trips, away from home. Focusing on Prizm categories that enjoy the outdoors will align with touring traffic that may have the propensity to stop when they are travelling by, and experience the activities that LSNMCA has to offer. It is important to remember that drive by consumers may also be niche based, including motorcycle tourists and RVers, who could fit several Prizm categories.

Prizm life stage details follow and their corresponding Explorer Quotient targets. (For more information on Prizm categories, see Parks Canada's *Prizm Life Stage Segments* data and *On Target* details. For more information on Explorer Quotient, see the Canadian Tourism Commission's EQ Profiles).

DRIVE BY TRAFFIC

Middle Age Achievers (the Naturals)	Fledgling Families	Family Traditions (Group 1 Late Starters- Family)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halfway through their lifecycle with teenaged and adult aged children • Located in wealthier urban sectors to rural areas • Nature is important to them, to recharge • Have income to pursue an active and comfortable lifestyle, travel when they like and do what they want • Pursue outdoor and cultural activities that enrich their lives and afford them quality time with their children. • Spend extensive family time in the outdoors with their recreational toys all year round. • Very active during travel, they do a plethora of activities, such as sightseeing, attending sporting events, golfing, hunting/fishing, going to a beach, visiting nature parks or hiking/adventures. • Try all types of accommodations at higher rates and pull out RV/camper on a regular basis. • Discriminating consumers – gather info before making a decision to purchase - price and brand are factors • Involved in community engagement • Average users of most media and hesitate to embrace mobile/ social media • Embrace loyalty programs, but less travel apps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle income family with children under age 15 • Live in exurban and suburban areas • Pursue active outdoorsy lifestyle • Youthful impulses, try to seek something new/opportunities for fun • Less interested in cultural activities • Own outdoor equipment and like to camp with RV, camper, fish, boat and partake in winter activities • Very active, visit national/provincial parks, theme parks/zoos, go to the beach, pursue multiple outdoor and nature-related activities • Travel frequently in Canada • Stay in hotels, resorts, family and friend's homes and their RV/camper • Not fond of loyalty programs or apps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle income, started family a bit later • Middle aged, primary kids • Exurban and rural neighbourhoods • Outdoorsy and buy all kinds of recreational toys for utilitarian means to pursue their outdoor lifestyle • Pursue outdoor activities with their children such as visiting national and provincial parks, camping with their RV or enjoying their favourite nature setting for a fishing or hunting trip • Active in all kinds of activities and pursue multiple outdoor and nature related activities • Enjoying going with their RV/ camper into the heart of nature • Not fans of cultural events
<p>EQ: Cultural Explorers Authentic Experiencers</p>	<p>EQ: Personal History Explorers</p>	<p>EQ: Free Spirits</p>

Thunder Bay Market

Potential lies in aligning this data with the markets that may be found in the nearby Thunder Bay urban markets, and later, once product development efforts have been completed and marketing traction is starting to happen (outside of the five year timeline of this strategy), looking to slightly further urban markets such as Duluth, Minnesota and to gateway tourism through arrivals through the Thunder Bay airport. Examining life stage data by urban area shows the percentage of households in Thunder Bay in the Prizm categories. While Thunder Bay does not have a large percentage of households in the categories that Parks Canada is traditionally investing in, the Middle Age Achievers and Empty Nests do align with LSNMCA's Essence of Place offerings and make up 26% and 21% of the Thunder Bay households respectively.

Prism life stage information related to these categories follows as well as corresponding Explorer Quotient targets. (For more information on Prism categories, see Parks Canada's *Prizm* Life Stage Segments data and On Target details. For more information on Explorer Quotient, see the Canadian Tourism Commission's *EQ Profiles*).

THUNDER BAY MARKET	
Middle Age Achievers (the Naturals)	Empty Nests (Mature)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halfway through their lifecycle with teenaged and adult aged children • Located in wealthier urban sectors to rural areas • Nature is important to them, to recharge • Have income to pursue an active and comfortable lifestyle, travel when they like and do what they want • Pursue outdoor and cultural activities that enrich their lives and afford them quality time with their children. • Spend extensive family time in the outdoors with their recreational toys all year round. • Very active during travel, they do a plethora of activities, such as sightseeing, attending sporting events, golfing, hunting/fishing, going to a beach, visiting nature parks or hiking/adventures. • Try all types of accommodations at higher rates and pull out RV/camper on a regular basis. • Discriminating consumers – gather info before making a decision to purchase - price and brand are factors • Involved in community engagement • Average users of most media and hesitate to embrace mobile/ social media • Embrace loyalty programs, but less travel apps <p>EQ: Cultural Explorers Authentic Experiencers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy going older couples with teenage or adult aged children • Suburban location • Enjoy the outdoors – often escaping to the cottage or travelling to recharge • Have time to attend dinner theatre, meet friends for coffee, attend shows and read magazines to keep up with news and trends • Pursue outdoor activities that they can do at the cottage, in their local green spaces or abroad. • Like camping, boating, golfing and going to the beach • The will visit national/provincial parks with their camper trailer in tow • Comfortable income, but price and brand is important as they transition to retirement. • Like hotels, homes of friends and family, time shares and camping • Above average users of most media, but anxious towards new technology related to social media, but are internet savvy • Embrace loyalty programs, but less travel apps <p>EQ: Authentic Experiencers</p>

Visitor Experience Development

LSNMCA is a new National Marine Conservation Area being created in a location of immense beauty and relatively untapped opportunity.

The main challenge in creating visitor experiences for LSNMCA is the fact that the NMCA is a water based site. This makes accessing the natural beauty more challenging than it is for traditional land based parks. As a water based site, with Lake Superior and islands for exploring, it is important that LSNMCA work with the communities that surround it, to create tourism experiences that will enhance the region, not only the NMCA. Direct access to the NMCA is made available through these communities which additionally offer supporting visitor amenities (accommodations etc.). It is important to consider experiences that may be located in and beneficial for the region. LSNMCA will benefit from regional product development as well as an

expanded Parks Canada presence in key gateway communities as per the thematic approach outlined in the 2002 *Superior Vision* document as well as the 2016 *Interim Management Plan*.

The largest opportunity here lies in the fact that limited tourism experiences currently exist in the NMCA. As such, there is a clean slate for creating 'something spectacular' in an area that is still relatively unknown. This is the opportunity to gain the attention of travellers, by developing signature experiences that resonate with loyal Parks Canada visitors, and target markets. This exercise is not about quantity, but rather quality, on-trend or ahead-of-trend experience development that adds value to an already existing powerful Parks Canada brand. *One exceptional experience could easily place LSNMCA on a traveller's MUST DO list.*

When assessing visitor experiences for development, LSNMCA should ensure that each experience:

1. Fulfills a VES goal;
2. Meets the needs of one more of the target markets;
3. Touches, creates an awareness of or shows appreciation for LSNMCA; and
4. Fits with the Parks Canada and National Marine Conservation Area mandates.

Visitor Experience Concepts for LSNMCA

The following visitor experiences concepts for LSNMCA were derived from input received during a two day workshop with Parks Canada staff (LSNMCA and national office) and regional tourism stakeholders. Ideas were generated keeping in mind the VES goals and the Essence of Place, local tourism assets, Parks Canada and NMCA mandates, knowledge of tourism trends and local and regional tourism focus. Workshop ideas were refined and expanded as necessary and are meant to provide several options for future development by LSNMCA

and regional tourism stakeholders over the coming years. Throughout the concepts estimates of the level of investment required surrounding the project budget, ongoing costs, time to develop and Parks Canada’s level of involvement required to implement the experiences are provided. These amounts are purely estimates and should be refined and solidified as the experience concepts are further explored and developed.

LEGEND		
\$	+	small investment required
\$\$	++	small to medium investment
\$\$\$	+++	medium investment required
\$\$\$\$	++++	medium to large investment
\$\$\$\$\$	+++++	large investment required

Further, as experiences are defined and developed, considerations surrounding accessibility will need to be included in the planning.

Recommendation: Support the development of visitor experiences that fit with LSNMCA Essence of Place as well as the target market, and provide an opportunity to increase tourism in the region.

On the Edge of Superior Cliff Walk

Experience Vision: Via Ferrata

You arrive on site, with the cliff face in front of you and the crash of the waves below you. You stare at the rope walkway dangling far above and the rugged wall that you need to climb with only a 4 inch long bar, a rope and a tether to secure your ascent. Can you do it? Do you have what it takes to brave the climb and traverse the obstacles far above the thunderous lake below?

Experience Details:

- Via Ferrata = iron path
- Visitors navigate a rugged route of steel cables, ladders, suspended pathways
- A group adventure climbing and hiking experience with guide along cliff face and between rock outcroppings, overlooking Lake Superior

Market:

- Drive by (Fledgling Families, Middle Age Achievers, Family Traditions)
- Thunder Bay (Middle Age Achievers)
- Outdoor Adventure travellers to the region

Alignment:

- TNO and OTMPC – Nature & Adventure and Touring product development and marketing as well as attractions related to Thunder Bay as a gateway community for Northern Ontario
- Ability to become a major attraction on the Lake Superior Circle Tour being redeveloped by TNO

Considerations When Choosing Locations:

- Rugged, majestic and powerful scenic location with cliffs and Lake Superior
- Safety considerations
- Mainland location to reach a larger audience
- Accessible to drive by traffic

Inspiration

- [Norquay, Banff](#)
- [7 Exhilarating Via Ferrata Experiences in Canada, Explore Magazine](#)



Parc national du Fjord-du-Saguenay



Actions:

- Brainstorm potential locations overlooking Lake Superior with consideration for scenic wow factor, access, traffic and safety elements
- Brainstorm potential third party operator for experience
- Facilitate a meeting with potential third party owner/land owner
- Case study and potential site visit to other via ferratta location
- Participate in development steering committee

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible environmental impact related to building site and placement of features in natural environment – can be mitigated by choosing features and their location based on environment effects and locating features in areas where environmental impact will be minor

Training Needs: High ropes training and rescue capable staff

Potential Partners: LSMCA, Ontario Parks, municipality, private operator

Business Opportunities: Private attraction business operator

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: + to +++++

Timeline to Start Development: Medium Term

Length of Time for Development: +++

Budget for Experience Development: \$\$\$

Revenue Potential: Entrance fees

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: \$\$ (staff, building operation, ongoing maintenance to features)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Number of visits
- Revenue generated
- Visitor satisfaction (i.e. customer feedback, trip advisor reviews)

Steamy Superior – Sea Kayaking Superior’s Saunas

Experience Vision: Backcountry Sauna & Lighthouse Paddle

You hoist your rental kayak from the shuttle trailer and head for the access point where you are set to launch for a 4-day paddle of LSNMCA. After stowing your camping gear and food, you and your partner head out onto the lake, looking forward to the solitude of the next few days of island hopping. A while later, as you round the corner of your first overnight stop, you gaze up at the majestic lighthouse in the distance. Definitely an opportunity for exploring later; but first to set up camp at your designated camping spot.

Day two dawns full of magical morning light perfect for catching the best images. As you emerge from your tent you notice that your muscles are aching from the previous day’s exertion and from sleeping on the ground. You begin to daydream about your next overnight location and the Parks Canada sauna that graces the island’s shores. In fact, saunas dot the islands along the route, originally built by fellow seamen looking for a refuge from cold and wet weather. Maybe you could fit in a paddle to the nearby floating sauna for a quick steam after you catch the sunrise. You’re glad you booked the Parks Canada floating cabin as a treat for the third and final night of your trip. That bed is going to feel really good to crawl into.

Experience Details:

- Self-guided daytrip or multi day kayaking tours with itinerary
- Kayaking itineraries suitable for a range of ability and experience levels
- Mainland docking access point
- Formalized, pre-booked backcountry campsites with tent platform or alternative accommodations
- Outhouse facilities
- Formalized trails leading to lighthouses, saunas and other key island viewpoints
- Saunas at various locations along the route
- Alternative accommodations
- Lighthouse/sauna/access point infrastructure could be used to support guided and self-guided kayaking daytrips
- There is a further opportunity to position this trip to outfitters guiding trips throughout Ontario
- Trip planning and safety details are needed to ensure a safe experience



Market: Outdoor Adventure - niche market - paddling

Alignment:

- TNO Nature & Adventure product development and marketing
- OTMPC Northern Office Nature & Adventure marketing

Considerations When Choosing Locations:

- Island locations with key features like lighthouse, sauna, caribou, scenic viewpoints etc.
- Safe harbors for safe kayak access
- Currently popular overnight areas, to be upgraded to designated and more formalized campsites

Inspiration

- [Saguenay Fjord, Quebec](#)
- [Apostle Islands, Wisconsin - Kayak Route](#)
- [Apostle Islands, Wisconsin - Safety Guide](#)



Actions:

- Plot campsite locations and undertake upgrades
- Build outhouses
- Determine trails needed and implement development and upgrades
- Outline multi day kayak itineraries as well as daytrip itineraries
- Set up campsite and accommodation booking system
- Obtain, upgrade and maintain or build new saunas at various locations along the route
- Upgrade/build other infrastructure (lighthouses, docks, outhouses) to support the experience (see “Supporting Infrastructure” section below)

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible environmental impact related to campsite, outhouse, trail and accommodation locations and human traffic associated with these developments – should be located appropriately to mitigate these factors. When needed and possible, campsites and outhouses can be moved on a rotating basis to limit these effects.
- Positive environmental impact is possible by formalizing campsites, privies, firepits and access areas to limit current unplanned use and associated negative effects.

Training Needs: Water rescue training, backcountry rescue, visitor centre staff knowledgeable about kayaking itineraries

Potential Partners: LSNMCA, private outfitters/guides, lighthouse stewards

Business Opportunities: Private guides, private outfitters/equipment rental

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: ++++

Timeline to Start Development: Short Term

Length of Time for Development: ++

Budget for Experience Development: \$\$ (not including other infrastructure upgrades)

Revenue Potential: Campsite booking fees, accommodation booking fees, outfitter guiding service fees, outfitter rental fees

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: \$ (campsite maintenance, accommodation repairs & maintenance)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Number of bookings
- Revenue generated
- Length of stay (i.e. number of nights booked)
- Website visits to review itinerary information
- Visitor satisfaction (i.e. customer feedback, trip advisor reviews)

Guiding Light Boat Tour

Experience Vision: Boat Tours of Islands and Lighthouses

You pull up to the dock in a quaint little village reminiscent of somewhere you've visited on a previous east coast vacation. Your tour boat awaits your arrival, the fog magically lifting off the water in the mid-morning sun. As you board, you're greeted with a cheery good morning and as you head onto the water, you listen to stories of the quaint village's past and the local Indigenous culture. Thankful that the day is calm and warm, you dive into the water at your first stop, and swim under the "Sea Lion" carved out of the rock in Sleeping Giant Provincial Park as others that choose to stay onboard listen to the guide's interpretation of the interesting geology. Once back on the boat you make your way to three lighthouses, listening to the first mate's stories of bygone days spent tending these massive beacons. You stop for a picnic lunch and some time to explore the site at the final light station, before making your way back to the dock.

Experience Details:

- There is currently an excellent boat tour based out of Rosspoint that visits the Rosspoint and Slate Islands. This tour can be customized and takes visitors to a lighthouse and tells the local history. This experience should continue to be supported with upgraded docking facilities, washrooms, island trails for exploring and lighthouse maintenance. Tour options could be expanded to include trips to Group of Seven sites and on-site painting, caribou viewing, sauna and splash, shatter cones, among other options.

- Guided day trip
- Mainland docking upgrades needed as well as island docking facilities
- Formalized trails leading to lighthouses and other key island viewpoints
- Washroom facilities are needed at docking sites and outhouse facilities are required at islands being accessed
- Supporting amenities such as food and convenience items are needed in the docking town, and may be an opportunity for a third party supplier.
- Marketing can ensure visitors book in advance.

Market:

- Drive by (Middle Age Achievers, Fledgling Families, Family Traditions)
- Thunder Bay (Middle Age Achievers, Empty Nests)
- Outdoor Adventure travellers in the region for other experiences

Alignment:

- TNO's focus on Nature & Adventure and Touring product development and marketing
- Algoma Country and Thunder Bay investments in Ride Lake Superior motorcycle tour
- TNO's investment in the Lake Superior Circle Tour for auto & RV touring

Considerations When Choosing Locations:

- Location of assets that boat tour can visit
- Investment needed in the village that the tour will be based out of – willingness of community and potential operators to make investments.

Inspiration

- [Chantry Island Lighthouse Tour, Southampton, ON](#)
- [Blue Heron Company - Flowerpot Island Lighthouse Tour, Fathom Five National Marine Park, Tobermory, ON](#)

Actions:

- Explore options with third party tour operators
- Work with tour operator to plot sites to visit and docking/trail upgrades needed
- Work with existing tour operator to determine docking/trail upgrades needed
- Implement required infrastructure upgrades
- Ongoing support of lighthouse groups to ensure maintenance and upkeep (see lighthouse recommendation below)
- Parks Canada to work with operators to assist with interpretation and storytelling to support consistency and quality of product



[Long Point Adventures, Long Point Provincial Park, ON](#)



Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible environmental impact related to increased traffic on the islands – can be mitigated by planning the location of tour stops and required infrastructure based on environment effects and building infrastructure in a manner and with materials that will limit the environmental impact
- Possible positive cultural and natural impact obtained by creating an opportunity to tell the story of the cultural and natural environment.

Training Needs: Water rescue training, backcountry rescue, boat captain and support staff, storytelling

Potential Partners: LSNMCA, Ontario Parks, local community, third party operator

Business Opportunities: Boat tour operator, lighthouse group canteen/gifts, mainland restaurants and accommodations

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: ++

Timeline to Start Development: Medium Term

Length of Time for Development: +++++

Budget for Experience Development: \$\$\$\$\$

Revenue Potential: Boat tour fees, possible island docking fee for commercial watercraft

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: \$\$ (staff, building and boat operating costs, ongoing upkeep and maintenance of boats, docks, trails and other infrastructure)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Number of visits
- Revenue generated
- Attraction website traffic
- Visitor satisfaction (i.e. customer feedback, trip advisor reviews)

Soul of Superior Retreat

Experience Vision: Lighthouse Inspirational Retreat

You wake up early for the best light. The paint always seems to flow much freer on the canvas in the fresh lake air. You think back to the power of the boat ride to the island yesterday and how far away that feels now that you're caught up in the tranquility of Lake Superior. You creep out the door of the lighthouse keeper's cabin, careful not to wake the rest of your group, many of whom stayed up to sauna and splash and then capture the northern lights late last night. The lighthouse looms in the distance, a glowing beacon in the sunrise. You take your time capturing the essence of the moment, and then head back to join the others for breakfast before the morning yoga session that salutes the spirit of Lake Superior.

Experience Details:

- Lighthouse themed inspirational retreats for groups or multiple people at one time
- Retreats could be themed with or without an instructor (i.e. artists retreat, Group of Seven exploration, yoga retreat, writers workshop etc.)
- Accommodation could be provided in the lighthouse, in the lightkeeper's house or in an alternative accommodation built nearby (designed to house groups or multiple people at one time)
- Accommodations should be market ready and high quality with investments made in redecorating, furniture, quality bedding, etc.
- Trails to allow exploring the site



Market: Outdoor Adventure, Thunder Bay (niche interest groups)

Alignment:

- TNO's focus on Nature & Adventure product development and marketing
- OTMPC, TNO and Algoma investment in Group of Seven tourism product and marketing

Considerations When Choosing Locations:

- Location must have a scenic island lighthouse and other scenic lookout areas
- Lighthouse keeper's residence must be available and suitable for renovating to house groups or there must be a location to build alternative accommodations
- A nearby sauna would add to the experience

Inspiration

- [Northern Edge Algonquin Yoga Retreats](#)
- [Phorphyry Island Lighthouse Accommodation & Artist in Residence](#)
- [Artists Workshops in France](#)

Actions:

- Consider location for experience
- Discussions with lighthouse landowner to explore opportunity
- Determine accommodation option and implement upgrades or build space
- Determine other infrastructure needs (docks, trails, washrooms etc.) and implement (see recommendations surrounding lighthouses, docking and trails below)

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible environmental and cultural impact related to increased traffic on the islands and around the lighthouses – can be mitigated by planning the location and infrastructure based on environment effects and building infrastructure in a manner and with materials that will limit the environmental and cultural impact
- Possible positive cultural impact obtained by creating an opportunity to tell the story of the lighthouses and the history associated with them, thereby increasing awareness.

Training Needs: Lighthouse volunteers, water rescue, backcountry rescue

Potential Partners: LSNMCA, lighthouse owners, third party retreat operator

Business Opportunities: Lighthouse group accommodation provider, water shuttle transportation, artist/yoga (etc) instructor, caterer

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: ++

Timeline to Start Development: Medium Term

Length of Time for Development: +++++

Budget for Experience Development: \$\$\$ - \$\$\$\$

Revenue Potential: Accommodation fees, instructor fees, shuttle fee

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: \$\$ (staff, accommodation operating costs, ongoing upkeep and maintenance of accommodation, docks, trails and other infrastructure)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Number of visitors
- Number of nights booked
- Revenue generated
- Visitor satisfaction (i.e. customer feedback, trip advisor reviews)

Discovery Centre

Experience Vision:

You follow the signs from the highway, eager to visit another Parks Canada Discovery Centre. You've visited several Parks Canada Discovery Centres in the past and find them to be an excellent way to learn more about the area through interactive hands on learning. The entrance is unique the marine theme is omnipresent throughout. The attendant at the front greets you and explains what you will find in the Discovery Centre, then gives you some more information about the boat tours of islands and lighthouses that you can book for later that afternoon. You explore, learning about Lake Superior, conservation and preservation as well as the local Indigenous culture. On your way out, you sample some bannock roasted over a fire, while you enjoy an Indigenous storyteller's engaging tale.

Experience Details:

- The Discovery Centre presents an opportunity to educate, excite and engage visitors about the NMCA, and to showcase the region and all of the unique attractions it has to offer. With education at its core, this is a place for visitors to learn about the NMCA and to be inspired to venture out into the NMCA and explore. As a gateway for the region, it should be positioned as a means to get the drive by vacationing traffic to stop and to enjoy the area.
- A launching point for the NMCA and a living showcase for the Essence of Place, the Discovery Centre should educate by providing information designed to increase awareness and encourage protection. It represents an opportunity to tell the story of Lake Superior and to garner respect for the water and the land.
- The Discovery Centre represents a place to celebrate the local and Indigenous culture, the community, its people and their connection to the lake.
- The site should exemplify the core values of protection, environmental sustainability and resource conservation.
- Thought should be given to inclusivity as well as collaboration. The Centre should accommodate all visitors, regardless of their age, gender, mobility, ethnicity, culture or circumstances.
- Simplicity in design, using a hands-on approach and incorporating elements from the NMCA will go a long way to engaging visitors and inspiring them to explore the NMCA further. Ensuring that the Discovery Centre is a demonstration area with interaction instead of just an area to tell a story is key.

- When designing the Discovery Centre it is important that:
 - it encourages visitation to other communities and or community assets;
 - it includes a large interactive map that can be used by various groups of visitors at the same time;
 - digital display kiosks are installed in key locations and capable of answering common visitor questions;
 - educational information should be kept succinct;
 - exterior landscaping sets the stage and builds positive expectations surrounding what will be found inside and allows for a seamless transition between the outdoor and the indoor and vice versa;
 - the program includes multi-purpose spaces for Indigenous/cultural demonstration and various activities;
 - the building is unique and themed around the NMCA natural and cultural heritage;
 - the building could feature large scale local public art by local artists to complement the overall design and themes;
 - Discovery Centre should provide an exhibit that is able to entertain all age groups; and
 - Incorporating these items will provide a wow moment and memorable experience for visitors.
- The amenities of the building are selected to fulfill the visitors needs and are connected to the visitor experiences available within the NMCA. Consider including some 'unique to LSNMCA' elements to make the connection and build the excitement for visitors. As an example, the LSNMCA Discovery Centre could include interactive features such as:

- Development of an outdoor activity area (working sauna, mini via ferrata etc.) with supporting infrastructure as required (i.e. a change area, outdoor shower, campfire etc.);
- To-scale reproduction lighthouse;
- Recreated shipwreck;
- Wave table/tank;
- Glass floor over water feature
- Indigenous outdoor demonstration area
- Hands on train pump car

Market:

- Thunder Bay (Middle Age Achievers, Empty Nests)
- Outdoor Adventure travellers in the area for other activities
- Drive by (Middle Age Achievers, Fledgling Families, Family Traditions and niche RV and motorcycle touring)

Alignment:

- Aligns well to attract the drive by market, but also supports the Thunder Bay and outdoor adventure travellers
- TNO touring route product development and marketing
- TNO Lake Superior Circle Tour auto & RV tour
- Algoma & Thunder Bay Ride Lake Superior motorcycle tour

Inspiration:

- Exterior and interior inspirational design images were selected by the group during the Discovery Centre workshop and are summarized in the internal document *Discovery Centre Images Chosen by Group*
- [Science North](#) – hands on learning

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible environmental impact related to the building site which can be mitigated by selecting a site that minimizes the environmental impact, choosing a design that is informed by the bioregion's characteristics and is ecologically responsible and designing a building that will operate efficiently and minimize emissions and environmental impacts from operations.
- Possible positive natural impact obtained by creating an opportunity to tell the story of the marine environment, to educate visitors and raise awareness about the importance of the NMCA ecosystems
- Possible positive cultural impact obtained by creating an opportunity to tell the Indigenous story of the region and by providing demonstration/shared space for this purpose
- Possible positive cultural impact obtained by creating an opportunity to tell story surrounding the history of the region.

Training Needs: Volunteer training, customer service training, training related to digital interpretation operation

Potential Partners: LSMCA, Parks Canada National Office, community representatives, First Nations communities

Business Opportunities: Catering, gift shop

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: +++++

Timeline to Start Development: Short Term

Length of Time for Development: +++++

Budget for Experience Development: \$\$\$\$\$

Revenue Potential: Entrance fees, equipment rental fees, canteen sales, gift shop sales, common space rental fees

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: \$\$\$ (staff, building operating costs, ongoing upkeep and maintenance of building, and interpretation and other infrastructure)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Number of visitors
- Revenue generated
- Number of experiences booked
- Visitor satisfaction (i.e. customer feedback, trip advisor reviews)

Supporting Infrastructure & Product Development Activities

Roadside Scenic Vista Development

Recommendation: Invest in upgraded roadside scenic vista pull-offs at two Trans Canada highway sites.

The north shore of Lake Superior is a bucket list drive for many. It's proclaimed as a Top 10 Drive in Canada by the Globe and Mail, featured as a significant motorcycle route and forms the backbone for coast to coast adventures. Sweeping views of Lake Superior and dramatic rock cuts reward travellers within LSNMCA boundaries yet people have very few creative ways to engage with it. Similar scenic drives around the world have significant infrastructure in place to celebrate the natural environment and reap the economic benefits associated with these driving route developments.

Multiple Ministry of Transportation (MTO) pull-offs dot the highway in the area of LSNMCA, several showcasing the spectacular views that the area has to offer. Yet, the experience at these frequented tourist stops does little to capitalize on the view, or the needs of those stopping to enjoy it.

The July 2017 *Draft 2041 Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy* recommends the expansion and improvement of rest areas,

laybys and roadside pull-offs in Northern Ontario. While the report recommends the upgrade of three specific Northern Ontario rest areas to start (none of which are in LSNMCA region), the recommendations highlight the need for some changes in the infrastructure at MTO rest stops.

There is a definite opportunity to increase the rest stop offer along the north shore by providing visitors with facilities to picnic, use upgraded, clean and safe washrooms and to provide educational and informative interpretation (i.e. Indigenous culture, LSNMCA statistics etc.) or promotional information about community assets (such as the Red Rock Marina Interpretive Centre) to create awareness of the region.

An additional opportunity exists to create a must see attraction, by providing a Lake Superior viewing experience in the form of a platform. The addition of a viewing platform could range from a simple cantilever outcropping like the one found at the Thunder Bay Lookout at nearby Sleeping Giant Provincial Park to a more dramatic glass floor viewing platform.

Further opportunity exists to choose a site that would allow for an over the highway attraction such as a pedestrian suspension bridge that leads to the lookout. A highway attraction would be a natural way to pique the interest of drive by traffic, and could be a key opportunity to promote other visitor experiences such as the Edge of Superior Cliff Walk which would have a natural tie to the scenic vista attraction.

The extended stop combined with learning, promo and viewing activities will provide visitors with additional incentive to get off of the highway and become engaged with LSNMCA.

Market: Drive by (Middle Age Achievers, Fledgling Families, Family Traditions and niche motorcycle & RV touring)

Alignment:

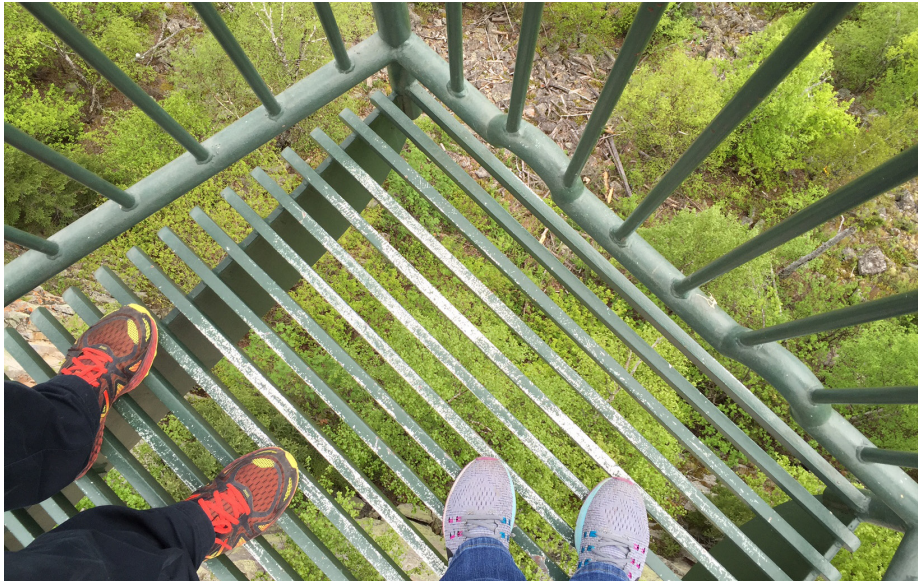
- There is a large drive by market, with limited places to easily pull off and experience the outdoors
- Tourism Northern Ontario focus on product development and marketing surrounding the touring market with current focus on developing the Lake Superior Circle Tour for the auto and RV touring market
- Algoma Country and Thunder Bay Tourism product development and marketing focus on the Ride Lake Superior motorcycle market has greatly increased motorcycle traffic driving through the region
- MTO/MNDM *Multimodal Transportation Strategy* recommendation
- Ministry of Tourism representative indicated interest in upgrading the offer at existing area pull-offs with partners interest

Considerations When Choosing Locations:

- Scenic opportunity
- Ease of access for Trans Canada traffic (potentially in both directions)
- Space available for development of infrastructure
- Consider the development of at least one “wow factor” vista (i.e. a pulloff such as Kama Lookout could provide an opportunity to build a viewing platform) and upgrading the experience at other sites

Inspiration:

- Grand Pacific Drive, Sydney Australia – Sea Cliff Bridge
- Roadside Washroom – design example
- Bear Lake – pull off scenic overview example
- Texas roadside pull off example
- Highline 179 Suspension Bridge, Ruelle, Austria



Thunder Bay Lookout, Sleeping Giant Provincial Park – Photo: BC Hughes



Glacier Skywalk, Jasper National Park – photo: Mike Landry



*Thunder Bay Lookout, Sleeping Giant Provincial Park
– Photo: BC Hughes*



Glacier Skywalk, Jasper National Park – photo: Mike Landry

Actions:

- LSMCA and community representative discussion(s) with MTO representatives surrounding the potential for investment and development of two upgraded pull-offs along the Trans Canada highway. If discussions are fruitful:
 - Choose sites to be upgraded
 - Partner discussions to investigate the opportunity for development of an overlook attraction.
 - Partnership discussions to investigate maintenance opportunities
 - Development of architectural plans and budgets for upgrades
 - Implement upgrades

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible environmental impact related to expansion of infrastructure at pull off sites – can be mitigated based on architectural design and by choosing a location that will mitigate the environment effects
- Possible positive natural impact obtained by creating an opportunity to tell the story of the marine environment through interpretation
- Possible positive cultural impact obtained by creating an opportunity to tell the Indigenous story and historical background of the region through on site interpretation

Training Needs: Aerial rescue

Potential Partners: MTO, MNMCA, FedNOR, LSMCA, municipality, private operator

Business Opportunities: Possible third party attraction operator

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: +++

Timeline to Start Development: Short Term (discussions)

Length of Time for Development: +++++

Budget for Development: \$\$\$\$\$

Revenue Potential: Possible entrance fees (dependent on type of viewing platform)

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: \$ - \$\$ (dependent on type of viewing platform) (possible staff, maintenance of site, ongoing upkeep and maintenance of interpretation, infrastructure)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Traffic counts
- Revenue generated

Indigenous Tourism Opportunities

Recommendation: Work with local First Nations communities and Métis groups to explore options for Indigenous visitor experience opportunities.

The culture and heritage of the region is very strong. There is an opportunity to develop tourism experiences surrounding the local Indigenous culture, a top ten iconic feature for the region as defined by the Essence of Place. Further work with the First Nations communities and Métis groups should explore this opportunity, and their interest as well as the options for tourism product development.

A series of Indigenous tourism experience development workshops should be held, with participants from the region's First Nations communities and Métis groups. The information shared during the day's workshops should include the tourism opportunity surrounding LSNMCA, the Essence of Place, the target markets and the developments that will be taking place. Participants should explore tourism opportunities that could be developed by their community with attention to market and Essence of Place fit to ensure the development of best in class market ready experiences. Workshops could be delivered by LSNMCA staff or third party contractor. Follow up coaching with interested participants should be used to see ideas with the most potential through to implementation.

Market: Experiences developed should align with an outdoors element and should target the markets that LSNMCA is focusing on as a starting point (Drive by (Middle Age Achievers, Fledgling Families, Family Traditions) and Thunder Bay (Middle Age Achievers, Empty Nests)). Opportunities to target a different Prizm market that may travel specifically for the Indigenous experiences may arise as experiences are explored.

Alignment:

- Ontario's 2016 *Tourism Action Plan* recommended actions to advance the tourism sector including a recommendation to "Explore multicultural, Francophone and Indigenous-led tourism".
- The Indigenous Affairs Branch of Parks Canada objective of facilitating the participation of Indigenous people in Canada's natural and cultural heritage, with the priority of strengthening relationships, encouraging economic partnerships and opportunities and enhancing employment opportunities with Indigenous peoples.
- Local Indigenous art and artists may represent an opportunity for alignment with Group of Seven products being developed in Algoma and along the North Shore of Lake Superior.

Inspiration:

- [Aboriginal Training Workshop](#)
- [Ontario Travel Aboriginal Experiences](#)
- [GMIST](#)

Actions:

- Apply for funding to support the workshop delivery
- Schedule and deliver workshops with First Nations and Métis groups
- Provide after workshop coaching to nurture experiences with the most potential through to implementation

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible positive cultural impact obtained by creating an opportunity to work with Indigenous community and by encouraging them to tell their story and educate visitors

Training Needs: Dependent on experience developed

Potential Partners: LSMCA, First Nations communities, Métis groups, Indigenous Cultural Fund (<http://www.arts.on.ca/grants/activity/indigenous-culture-fund>)

Business Opportunities: Indigenous tourism experience operators

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: +++

Timeline to Start Development: Short Term

Length of Time for Development: +++

Budget for Experience Development: \$

Revenue Potential: potential future revenue related to visitor fees paid for new experiences developed

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: n/a defined time period of workshops

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Number of workshops held
- Number of workshop participants
- Number of experiences developed



Recommendation: Best Practices Mission to learn about Indigenous tourism offers.

A Best Practices Mission should be the second step in developing Indigenous tourism products for the region. Local First Nations and Métis representatives that have shown an interest in developing Indigenous tourism experiences should participate in the trip. During this learning excursion, the participants will travel to another tourism region(s) and First Nation or Métis community that is currently delivering best in class Indigenous tourism offers and is willing to share their knowledge with the group. Participants will gain valuable insider knowledge that they can take back to their community and apply when developing their own unique Indigenous tourism experiences or when working with Parks Canada to deliver experiences.

One option for organizing this trip is through the Tourism Excellence North program, a Tourism Northern Ontario initiative that seeks to increase the quality of tourism experiences offered in Northern Ontario. The TEN Best Practices Mission (BPM) program engages Northern Ontario tourism operators by emerging them in other communities for a hands-on learning workshop featuring best in class tourism experiences offered there. A trip with an Indigenous focus could be negotiated with TEN, who would provide funding as well as trip planning and a guide.

Market: Experiences developed should align with an outdoors element and should target the markets that LSNMCA is focusing on as a starting point (Drive by (Middle Age Achievers, Fledgling Families, Family Traditions) and Thunder Bay (Middle Age Achievers, Empty Nests)). Opportunities, may arise as experiences are explored, to target a different Prizm market that may travel specifically for the Indigenous experiences.

Alignment:

- Ontario's 2016 *Tourism Action Plan* recommended actions to advance the tourism sector includes a recommendation to "Explore multicultural, Francophone and Indigenous-led tourism".
- Indigenous Affairs Branch of Parks Canada objective of facilitating the participation of Indigenous people in Canada's natural and cultural heritage, with the priority of strengthening relationships, encouraging economic partnerships and opportunities and enhancing employment opportunities with Indigenous peoples.

Inspiration:

- [Tourism Excellence North](#)
- [Tourism Wendake, Quebec](#)
- [Tsleil-Waututh First Nation, BC – Takaya Tours](#)
- [Great Spirit Circle Trail , ON](#)
- [Wiwemikong Tourism , ON](#)

Actions:

- Determine format for Best Practices Mission
- Plan location and itinerary as well as learning opportunities
- Undertake the trip with First Nations and Métis representatives interested in developing Indigenous tourism experiences
- Provide follow up after the trip to provide support for any Indigenous visitor experience ideas that have been generated.



Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible positive cultural impact obtained by creating an opportunity to work with Indigenous community and by encouraging them to tell their story and educate visitors

Training Needs: Dependent on experience developed

Potential Partners: LSMCA, First Nations communities, Métis groups, TNO (TEN program)

Business Opportunities: Indigenous tourism experience operators

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: +++

Timeline to Start Development: Short Term

Length of Time for Development: ++

Budget for Development: \$\$

Revenue Potential: potential future revenue related to visitor fees paid for new experiences developed

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: n/a (one time event)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Number of workshops held
- Number of workshop participants
- Number of experiences developed

Island Inventory & Location of Visitor Experiences

Recommendation: Undertake an inventory of LSNMCA island assets available to support the visitor experience and plot experience locations.

Proposed visitor experiences within LSNMCA largely hinge upon visits to the islands of the NMCA. Upgraded and new infrastructure is needed to support these visitors. Before work can be undertaken and the location of infrastructure can be plotted, it is necessary to understand the resources that each of the islands possesses and what condition they are in. GIS mapping is currently available, and basic attractions are known but this in depth inventory would identify key areas to highlight from a visitor perspective and allow experiences to begin to be plotted in relation to each other.

An island inventory should consider the following assets that support the visitor experience, their location, condition, ownership details, maintenance and upgrades needed as well as their location in relation to the rest of the island assets:

- Lighthouses
- Docks/boat launches
- Saunas
- Trails
- Scenic lookouts
- Beaches
- Safe harbours
- Other assets that may exist (wildlife, unique geology, cultural resources etc)

Once an understanding of existing assets has been obtained, visitor experiences can begin to be plotted throughout the region. Determining the location of visitor experiences will allow LSNMCA to recognize the importance of key communities as gateways to these experiences and will support decisions regarding the location of infrastructure, location awareness and interpretation upgrades and installations in these key gateways.

Market: supports visitor experiences related to all markets

Alignment: supports visitor experience developments

Considerations when choosing Location:

- Inventory land that is owned by LSNMCA

Actions:

- Consider staffing resources vs third party contractor approach and assign task accordingly
- Undertake inventory from a visitor asset/ experience perspective
- Use inventory to map assets and experiences in relation to each other
- Use inventory and location of experiences to determine key gateway communities
- Consider infrastructure, interpretation and location awareness needs of these key communities (see recommendations to follow)

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

Possible positive natural impact obtained through furthering understanding of visitor experience assets available on the islands and in plotting developments in relation to each other and the environment.

Training Needs: n/a

Potential Partners: LSNMCA with potential third party contractor.

Business Opportunities: Third party contractor

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: +++

Timeline to Start Development: Short Term

Length of Time for Development: +

Budget for Development: \$

Revenue Potential: n/a

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: n/a

Performance Indicator Measurables: n/a



Alternative Accommodations

Recommendation: Invest in alternative accommodations as a resource to develop tourism opportunities around the islands found within LSNMCA.

Scenic vistas are plentiful on the islands located within LSNMCA but the current tourism opportunity is limited by the lack of infrastructure to support tourism experiences. Currently the islands located within LSNMCA only offer very limited accommodations for tourists.

Parks Canada is currently a leader in developing, sourcing and investing in alternative accommodation options for both tent and more permanent cabin structures. Parks Canada resources, research and staff should be used to determine the best format for accommodation at various island sites throughout the NMCA.

Based on the list of potential experiences to be developed, several new island or water based accommodations should be developed to support the visitor experience and the need for waterfront accommodation in the area. Developing accommodations to support visitor experiences that are proposed will allow more visitors to explore LSNMCA, engaging in longer stays and resulting in further tourism dollars invested in the community. These structures will lend support to the following experiences that have been proposed:

- Steamy Superior – Sea Kayaking Superior’s Saunas – defined and developed backcountry campsites, paddle in waterfront cabins
- Soul of Superior Retreat – lighthouse, lightkeeper’s station or waterfront themed cabins

Market: Outdoor Adventure

Considerations when choosing Locations:

- Waterfront locations
- Locate in safe harbours or ensure docking/access point is in a safe harbor nearby
- Locate on or near Islands that will be owned by LSNMCA
- Locate near current or development sites for saunas
- Locate on or near islands that have trail development or support accommodation location by developing trails to support the accommodation experience and/or exploring

Alignment:

- TNO’s Nature & Adventure tourism and angling product development and marketing
- OTMPC’s outdoor adventure and fishing marketing
- Proposed visitor experiences to be developed

Inspiration:

- Parks Canada, *Accommodation Catalogue – Visitor Experience Team, Camping and Accommodation*, March 2017

Actions:

- Island inventory (as indicated in previous recommendation)
- Consider alternative accommodations in relation to the experiences that they will support and inventory details.
 - Plot tentative accommodation locations.
 - Work with Parks Canada national office architects on location details and accommodation design details.
 - Consider the option to establish floating accommodations (anchored in a safe harbor) suitable for attracting the outdoor adventure market as well as a new/younger market of fishing enthusiasts. The accommodations could be used in the winter for ice fishing.
- Consider establishing an accommodation reservation system
- Outline a risk management plan and consider safety issues related to accommodations



Riding Mountain National Park – Micro-Cube

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible environmental impact related to building site in natural and marine environment – can be mitigated based on architectural design and by choosing a location that will mitigate environment effects

Training Needs: Water rescue, backcountry rescue

Potential Partners: LSMCA, Parks Canada National Office

Business Opportunities: Mainland restaurants, grocery and other supply stores, equipment rentals

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: +++++

Timeline to Start Development: Medium Term

Length of Time for Development: +++++

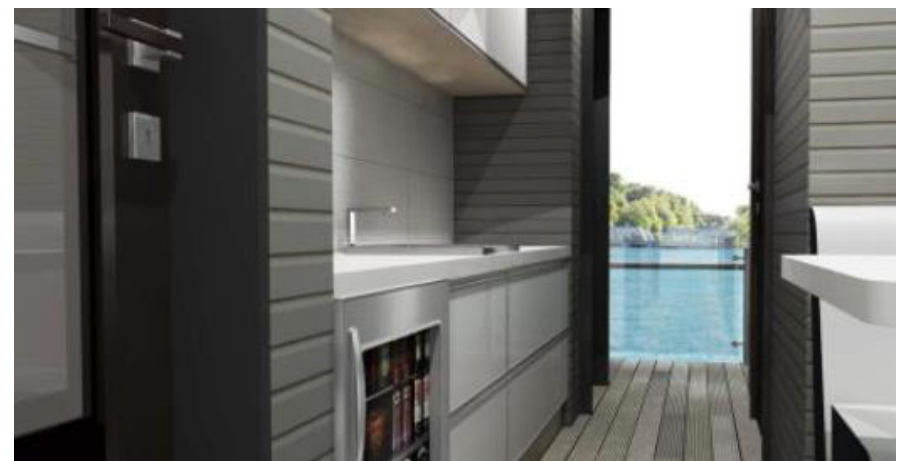
Budget for Development: \$\$\$\$

Revenue Potential: Accommodation booking fees

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: \$\$ (staff, accommodation operating costs, ongoing maintenance of accommodations and supporting infrastructure)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Number of accommodations developed
- Number of bookings
- Number of nights stayed
- Revenue generated
- Visitor satisfaction (i.e. customer feedback, trip advisor reviews)



Georgian Bay Islands National Park – Floating Accommodation Concept

Waterfront Accommodation & Dining

Recommendation: Encourage the development of quality waterfront accommodation and dining opportunities.

Accommodation options on the mainland are limited and many rooms are currently occupied by seasonal workers. During shoulder season and summer months, there is little to no availability at local hotels and roadside motels.

Waterfront accommodations, campgrounds and dining are often sought-after amenities for tourists, however there are very limited waterfront operators of these important supporting amenities available in the area.

An opportunity exists for a private business to invest in these types of developments to support the growth of tourism in the region. Encouraging private development of waterfront accommodation and dining infrastructure will solidify the current tourism offer and will support potential new offers.

Market: Outdoor Adventure, Thunder Bay, Drive by

Alignment:

- TNO's Nature & Adventure tourism product development and marketing
- TNO's touring route product development and marketing initiatives
- OTMPC's outdoor adventure and touring route marketing
- Algoma & Thunder Bay's motorcycle touring product development and marketing initiatives

Considerations when choosing Locations:

- Scenic, waterfront locations
- Locate within easy access of visitor experiences to be developed and existing local tourism assets
- Location and design should respect the natural environment and fit with visitor and local needs

Inspiration:

- Angry Trout - Grand Marais, Minnesota
- Bight, Thunder Bay, Ontario
- Harbourfront accommodations, dining, microbrewery and retail in downtown in Tobermory, Ontario
- The Best Floating Hotels in Canada, Cottage Life Magazine

Actions:

- Encourage private investment in developing waterfront accommodations and dining

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible environmental impact related to building site in natural and marine environment – can be mitigated based on architectural design and by choosing a location that will mitigate environment effects

Training Needs: Customer service

Potential Partners: Private business

Business Opportunities: Private accommodation operator, mainland restaurants, grocery and other supply stores

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: +

Timeline to Start Development: Medium Term

Length of Time for Development: +++++

Budget for Development: \$\$\$

Revenue Potential: Booking fees, service fees

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: \$\$ (staff, operating costs, ongoing maintenance of infrastructure, cost of good sold)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Number of bookings
- Number of nights stayed
- Number of visitors
- Revenue generated
- Visitor satisfaction (i.e. customer feedback, trip advisor reviews)



Island Lighthouses

Recommendation: Support the future existence and maintenance of island lighthouses.

It's no secret that lighthouses attract tourists. Toward these stately beacons we flock, like moths to a light.

As the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) divests itself of the operation and ownership of these assets, many of them struggle to survive. Often plagued by ownership/organizational issues, contamination and lack of funding for maintenance, many lighthouses end up continuing to deteriorate as not for profit organizations with limited resources are typically responsible for the cultural assets.

As an iconic feature of LSNMCA, the existence of lighthouse assets, several of whom the visitor experiences will be built around, should be sustained. LSNMCA can support the lighthouses by:

- Engaging with lighthouse groups to ensure that maintenance is undertaken;
- Supporting the visitor experiences at these assets by supporting infrastructure projects such as washrooms, walkways, trails, docks, picnic facilities, alternative accommodations etc.

Lighthouse infrastructure supports the following proposed visitor experiences:

- Steamy Superior – Sea Kayaking Superior's Saunas – defined and developed backcountry campsites, paddle in waterfront cabins

- Soul of Superior Retreat – lighthouse, lightkeeper's station or waterfront themed cabins
- Guiding Light Boat Tour

Market: Supports visitor experience related to all markets

Alignment:

- supports proposed visitor experience developments

Considerations when choosing Location:

- Third party lighthouse group(s) that are interested in working with Parks Canada on developing an experience.

Inspiration:

- [Bruce Coast Lighthouse Tour](#)
- [Nova Scotia Lighthouse Tour](#)

Actions:

- Island inventory (as indicated in previous recommendation)
- Consider lighthouses in relation to the experiences that they will support and inventory details and determine the best assets to be supported.
- Work with landowner to secure public access, determine maintenance schedule and supporting upgrades to be implemented

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible environmental and cultural impact related to increased traffic around the lighthouses – can be mitigated by planning the location and infrastructure based on environment effects and building infrastructure in a manner and with materials that will limit the environmental and cultural impact
- Possible positive cultural impact obtained by creating an opportunity to tell the story of the lighthouses and the history associated with them, thereby increasing awareness.
- Possible positive cultural impact obtained by encouraging the preservation of cultural assets

Training Needs: Lighthouse volunteers, backcountry rescue, water rescue

Potential Partners: LSNMCA staff, lighthouse groups/owners, private donors

Business Opportunities: Lighthouse group accommodation operator, gift shop/canteen

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: +

Timeline to Start Development: Short Term

Length of Time for Development: ongoing

Budget for Development: \$\$\$\$\$

Revenue Potential: possible accommodation booking fees in relation to Soul of Superior Retreat, otherwise n/a

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: \$\$ (staff, accommodation operating costs, ongoing maintenance of lighthouses, accommodations and supporting infrastructure)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Number of partnerships developed
- Number of lighthouses saved/maintained



Island Saunas

Recommendation: Ensure the future operation of island saunas throughout LSNMCA by preserving and upgrading sauna offerings for visitors.

Saunas are a Finnish tradition that are found in pockets of Northern Ontario. While second nature to locals, many of whom have their own personal sauna that they enjoy daily, visitors often do not understand the culture behind the Finnish sauna.

With several backcountry saunas located within LSNMCA's jurisdiction and its immediate surrounding area, saunas have potential as a unique experience within LSNMCA.

While these assets are currently used by private owners as well as the boating and paddling public during their travels, LSNMCA should invest time and resources to capitalize on this asset that sets it apart from other tourism attractions in Canada by:

- Securing sauna assets that are on islands that are part of the NMCA, and either negotiating for their transfer in ownership or negotiating their upkeep and continued public access; and
- Developing additional saunas within the NMCA at locations that support the visitor experiences to be developed.
- Ensure the sauna story is woven into all aspects of the interpretive story

Investing in sauna assets supports the following proposed experiences as well as experiences that already exist:

- Steamy Superior – Sea Kayaking Superior's Saunas
- Soul of Superior Retreat
- Guiding Light Boat Tour

Market: Supports experience development

Alignment:

- Supports the outdoor adventure experiences that already exist and that are proposed for development

Considerations when choosing Location:

- Existing locations of saunas to be preserved/upgraded
- New saunas should be located for access purposes and in relation to the experiences that will use them.
- Consider locations that offer plunge opportunities by locating along the shoreline in area with swimming capability

Inspiration:

- [Ruka Safaris Sauna Tour, Finland](#)
- [Bike Tours Helsinki, Finland - Sunset Sauna Tour](#)





Voyageur Quest Floating Sauna in Algonquin Park

Actions:

- Island inventory (as indicated in previous recommendation)
- Consider saunas in relation to the experiences that they will support and inventory details and determine saunas to be targeted for upgrades. Consider if additional saunas should be built in key locations to support boat tour, near campsites and other experiences such as potential shoulder season/winter activities.
 - Negotiate transfer of ownership for saunas not owned by LSNMCA but on LSNMCA land or continued public access and upgrade of saunas owned by third parties
 - Undertake upgrades to saunas owned by LSNMCA
 - Build new sauna(s) in targeted locations or where maintenance needs render upgrades infeasible
- Consider establishing a sauna reservation system
- Outline a risk management plan and consider safety issues related to sauna operations (i.e. CSA approved sauna stoves etc.)

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible environmental impact related to increased traffic around the saunas – can be mitigated by planning the location of new structures and upgrade of infrastructure surrounding existing sites based on environment effects and using materials that will limit the environmental impact
- Possible positive cultural impact obtained by creating an opportunity to tell the story of the saunas and their cultural connection to the region.
- Possible positive cultural impact obtained by encouraging the preservation of these assets

Training Needs: Sauna operation, maintenance and cleaning, backcountry rescue, water rescue

Potential Partners: LSMCA, current sauna owners/stewards

Business Opportunities: Water shuttle operator

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: ++++

Timeline to Start Development: Short Term (discussions), Medium Term (upgrades started)

Length of Time for Development: ++++

Budget for Development: \$\$\$\$

Revenue Potential: User fees or donations

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: \$\$ (staff, operating costs, ongoing maintenance of saunas and supporting infrastructure)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Number of saunas maintained/developed
- Number of visits (user fees or guest book)

Water Access Facilities

Recommendation: Upgrade and maintain docking and boat launch facilities required in relation to the LSNMCA visitor experiences being developed.

LSNMCA is a water-based National Marine Conservation Area. Access to the water is needed to not only engage in conservation activities but also to allow visitors to enjoy the NMCA. Properly maintained docking and boat launch facilities are needed to support this access, both on the mainland and to access the island assets of the NMCA. There is currently a lack of privately run commercial marine facilities in the area and many municipal locations would benefit from upgrades.

Water access docks and boat launches are needed to support the following visitor experiences that will be developed:

- Steamy Superior – Sea Kayaking Superior’s Saunas
- Soul of Superior Retreat
- Guiding Light Boat Tour

Water access facilities located in key LSNMCA gateway communities can act as important launch sites for both the LSNMCA visitor experiences and for local community experiences. The development of these key gateway sites should be supported. Their ability to provide important location awareness and education about the NMCA and its experiences should be embraced with interpretation or possible onsite staff guidance. To be fully market ready, mainland docking areas should also include a sustainability plan, onsite washroom, adequate parking, and in many cases, fuel, benches and picnic areas.

Market: Supports visitor experience related to all markets

Alignment: Supports visitor experience developments

Considerations when choosing Location:

- Investment in dock and launch upgrades should be planned in accordance with the NMCA experiences that are being developed.
- Consider distance between refueling stations and current use patterns.
- Consider locations that support daytrips, 1-2 day trips and longer multi-day excursions

Actions:

- Island inventory (as indicated in previous recommendation)
- Inventory of mainland docking and launching facilities
- Consider dock/launch assets in relation to the NMCA experiences that they will support and inventory details and determine docks/launch assets to be targeted for upgrades.
- Determine docks/launch assets to be built on islands to support visitor experiences to be developed.

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible environmental impact related to building site in natural and marine environment – can be mitigated based on architectural design and by choosing materials and methods that will mitigate environment effects

Training Needs: Water rescue

Potential Partners: LSNMCA, local communities, NOHFC, FedNOR

Business Opportunities: Water shuttle operators, guides, outfitters/equipment rental

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: ++

Timeline to Start Development: Short Term (discussions), Medium Term (upgrades started)

Length of Time for Development: +++++

Budget for Development: \$\$\$\$

Revenue Potential: Potential docking fees

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: \$ (ongoing maintenance of access points and their supporting infrastructure)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Docking fees generated
- Boat/vehicular traffic counts

Island Trails

Recommendation: Build and maintain trails to support the visitor experiences being developed.

Trails are essential components of any outdoors visitor experience. They are an important connector to access significant sites and infrastructure. They transport visitors from one place to another, often allowing them to experience attractions and scenery that would otherwise go un-enjoyed.

The 2014 *Trail Inventory – Master Plan for the Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area* and its corresponding 2017 update, documents a myriad of trails in the mainland region surrounding the NMCA, but does not indicate the existence of trails on the islands.

With the development of experiences that will have visitors exploring the islands, comes the need for infrastructure to support these experiences. Trails are a natural way for visitors to get from one place to the next, moving from docking facilities to accommodations and campsites and to attractions like lighthouses, saunas, scenic vistas and beaches. They also support hiking as a stand-alone experience.

Any existing island trails should be inventoried as part of the island inventory. Consideration should then be given to upgrading or developing and maintaining trails corresponding to the visitor experiences that are developed.

The following experiences require trails development to support the visitor's use and should include trails from access points/docking facilities to alternative accommodations/campsites, outhouses,

saunas, scenic lookouts and lighthouses etc.:

- Via ferrata
- Steamy Superior – Sea Kayaking Superior's Saunas
- Soul of Superior Retreat
- Guiding Light Boat Tour

Market: Supports visitor experience related to all markets

Alignment: Supports visitor experience developments

Considerations when choosing Location:

- Investment in trails infrastructure and upgrades should be planned in accordance with the experiences that are being developed.

Actions:

- Island inventory (as indicated in previous recommendation)
- Consider island trails in relation to the experiences that they will support and inventory details and use this information to determine trails to be upgraded and developed.
- Determine trail maintenance plan.

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible environmental impact related to building site in natural and marine environment – can be mitigated based on architectural design and by choosing materials and methods that will mitigate environment effects

Training Needs: Water rescue, backcountry rescue

Potential Partners: LSNMCA, lighthouse owners

Business Opportunities: Water shuttle operators, guides, outfitters/equipment rental

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: +++

Timeline to Start Development: Short Term (planning), Medium Term (upgrades started)

Length of Time for Development: +++

Budget for Development: \$\$

Revenue Potential: n/a

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: \$ (ongoing maintenance of trails and supporting infrastructure)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Trail traffic counts



Communities Activities & Events

Recommendation: Support community based initiatives.

Effective visitor experiences for LSNMCA will require the support of surrounding communities and First Nations in delivering supporting events and activities for tourists. Key events and activities, such as the popular annual Dorion Canyon Country Birding Festival, are important visitor attractors for the region.

LSNMCA should provide support for community initiatives that meet the Parks Canada mandate and NMCA priorities as these events provide an opportunity to build partnerships and showcase the communities and their connection with the NMCA.

Market: Supports visitor experience related to all markets

Alignment: Supports partnership development and community tourism initiatives

Actions:

- Determine an annual budget amount to support these types of initiatives
- Consider community and First Nations events and activities for possible support, ensuring alignment with Parks Canada mandate and NMCA priorities
- Allocate annual budget between initiatives

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible positive natural and cultural impact obtained by creating an opportunity to work with community activities and events that fit the mandate of Parks Canada and National Marine Conservation Areas

Training Needs: n/a

Potential Partners: LSNMCA, community, First Nations and event partners

Business Opportunities: n/a

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: +

Timeline to Start Development: Ongoing

Length of Time for Development: +

Budget for Development: \$

Revenue Potential: Event/activity entrance fees

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: annual event/activity operating costs

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Number of event visitors
- Event revenue generated

Ancillary Information, Infrastructure and Services

Recommendation: Recognize that ancillary information, infrastructure and services will be needed to support visitor experience developments in the area.

To fully support tourism developments in the region, there are many information, infrastructure and services upgrades that will need to be implemented as the visitor experience developments take place.

LSNMCA staff reviewed these needs in relation to the region’s tourism product focus areas and compiled a list (appendix 3) of developments that could take place as experiences surrounding these tourism products are developed.

The implementation of these items could be undertaken by LSMCA and local tourism stakeholders with opportunities for private businesses as applicable, or any combination of partnerships between these entities.

Market: Supports visitor experience related to all markets

Alignment: Supports visitor experiences to be developed

Actions:

- Determine ancillary information, infrastructure and services needed as visitor experiences are developed
- Where applicable, implement the needed changes internally or advocate for local stakeholder or private business to undertake the task

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible positive natural and cultural impact by creating an opportunity to educate visitors and upgrade infrastructure and information available

Training Needs: as related to services and infrastructure being implemented

Potential Partners: LSMCA, community, and private businesses

Business Opportunities: as related to services being implemented

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: ++

Timeline to Start Development: Ongoing

Length of Time for Development: +

Budget for Development: \$

Revenue Potential: n/a

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: dependent on item

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Dependent on the infrastructure/service being implemented
- Number of website visits for information purposes

Location Awareness

Recommendation: Invest in location awareness infrastructure.

Identification that a visitor is within Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area is challenging, due to the water-based format of the NMCA. LSNMCA benefits from a major highway that follows its shoreline. Using this asset to provide location awareness cues to visitors is an opportunity. The difficulty lies in avoiding confusion between the highway location (which is not a part of the NMCA) and the NMCA's water-based location and official status as a National Marine Conservation Area.

Informing people that they are alongside a National Park will require a multi-faceted approach, with eight possible ways to inform visitors. Using several different tactics will be more impactful, and assist with not only locating, but educating.

- *Boundary Gateway Identifiers* – People recognize the Parks Canada brand and the branded Parks Canada highway identification signs. Locate two standard Parks Canada highway ID's on Highway 17 at each entry point of the NMCA region, as close to the official boundaries as possible. Simple design elements from the Discovery Centre could be included in the mounting structure to enhance the appearance. The cost savings derived by implementing a more simplistic highway gateway sign will allow the utilization of other supporting communication methods.



Photo Credit: @bacon_biker

- *Educational Billboards* – To support the need to educate people that they are alongside a National Marine Conservation Area, design and install a series of billboards, in both directions along Highways 17, featuring “Fun Facts” about the NMCA within the branded Parks Canada style. Billboards are relatively inexpensive and people will read the content if it is creative. Potential billboard content would provide marketing and educational opportunities. Positioning concepts:

- “Ahhhhhhhhhhh – Parks Canada Discovery Centre, Nipigon” (image of sauna)
- “Live life on the Edge – Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area” (image of Via Ferrata)
- “And on Your Left... – Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area” (image of a tour guide)
- “Beside you is 10% of the world’s fresh water – Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area”
- “There are 350 shipwrecks in this Great Lake – Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area” (image of a shipwreck)
- “Largest Lake Superior Wave (9.45 metres) – Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area” – create billboard the same size
- “Our deep end is 405 metres (1,333 feet) – Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area”
- “On your left - Gitchi Gummi or “The Big Lake” – Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area



- *Locational Interpretive Identifiers at all Access Points* –Water access points are extremely important as they allow people to access LSNMCA and represent the closest possible locations to the edge of the NMCA. Install branded Parks Canada identifier signs at all water access points. Ensure the importance of location awareness information is displayed on the sign by including mapping and you are here information. ID’s can be part of an installation that also includes interpretive information. Consideration should be given to existing information provided as part of the Water Trail kiosks. Recognize the importance of key gateways (as defined by the Island Inventory & Experience Location) and consider more elaborate installations at these sites.
- *Digital Reminders* – Visitors travel with their phones and use them to find out about local tourism opportunities. Ensure the LSNMCA content is up-to-date on the Parks Canada app, and encourage visitors to download the app at all points of contact. Also ensure the LSNMCA website, and partner Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) and community websites have up to date NMCA information and are mobile friendly.
- *Social Media GeoTagging* – Visitors are social media savvy. Use them to promote the NMCA and the region by geotagging their images. Ensure that all sites visitors access have the appropriate geo tag available to allow visitors to add LSNMCA to the description of their location. (ie. Terrace Bay Beach - Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area).
- *Printed Navigational Mapping* – Ensure LSNMCA is accurately reflected on all navigational print maps. Work with DMOs and communities as they redesign print pieces. Consider adding interpretive information in those pieces.
- *GPS Mapping* – The majority of travellers use GPS navigation. Ensure all third party GPS providers have LSNMCA accurately reflected on navigation systems. Also ensure all important attractions and significant sites are marked.
- *Visitor Centre Reminders* – Several visitor centres are located throughout the region, and each offers the opportunity to educate guests about LSNMCA’s nearby existence. A template display should be created and installed at each of the region’s visitor centres, indicating the location of the NMCA and interesting facts about it.

Market: Supports visitor education for all markets

Alignment:

- TNO Wayfinding Strategy

Considerations when choosing Location:

- Highway 17 boundaries
- LSNMCA access points
- Visitor centres

Actions:

- Source locations for boundary gateway identifiers, educational billboards and access point identifiers. Negotiate placement with land owner
- Source and install boundary gateway identifiers
- Design and install access point identifiers
- Design and install educational billboards
- Ensure Parks Canada app and website are up to date with most current LSNMCA information and visitor experiences
- Work with local communities to ensure LSNMCA is mentioned and linked on their website and their sites are mobile friendly. Also discuss negotiate mention in print materials as they are renewed
- Ensure geotagging and GPS details are up to date
- Contact visitor centres to negotiate display details. Design visitor centre display, fabricate and install at various sites

Potential Impact on Natural & Cultural Resources:

- Possible positive natural and cultural impact by creating an opportunity to educate visitors and upgrade infrastructure and information available

Training Needs: n/a

Potential Partners: LSNMCA, Parks Canada, Tourism Northern Ontario

Business Opportunities: n/a

Parks Canada Level of Involvement Required: +++

Timeline to Start Development: upon official designation

Length of Time for Development: ++

Budget for Development: \$\$

Revenue Potential: n/a

Estimated Cost to Sustain Experience: \$ (ongoing maintenance of signage and displays, digital updates and map reprints)

Performance Indicator Measurables:

- Website/app traffic
- Number of maps distributed
- Visitor centre traffic

Promotion of Experiences

Innovation is the greatest promotional tool. LSNMCA will have many new stories to tell, and exciting new experiences that the identified target audiences will be interested in, once the visitor experience development has been completed.

If the new visitor experiences are truly unique and on trend, a lot of the heavy 'marketing' lifting will be done. Savvy consumers that take part in best in class, market ready visitor experiences will want to share what they have experienced. Stunning images and stories will be shared on your behalf and leveraged by the National Park presence.

When market-ready visitor experiences are ready to launch, a few tactics can be used to help get the message out to potential visitors.

Outdoor Adventure Market

Parks Canada Marketing Channels

As a new Parks Canada site, LSNMCA will benefit immensely from being part of the innovative National Parks brand and marketing. LSNMCA should capitalize on Parks Canada's marketing opportunities.

Tactics:

- Advocate for LSNMCA to be shared via images and content on the Parks Canada social media channels: Instagram, Twitter, Youtube and Facebook.
- Ensure LSNMCA is included in Parks Canada content and stories <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/voyage-travel/region/ontario>.
- Confirm inclusion in content in the Parks Canada Visitor's Guide for Ontario;
- Make sure there is up to date visitor experience, trip planning as well as safety information surrounding LSNMCA on the Parks Canada website before the launch of new outdoor adventure experiences.
- Provide up to date details on the Parks Canada app.

Northern Ontario Social Media and Digital Channels

The Northern Portal represents another opportunity to share content about LSMCA with a large audience of followers. The portal, a content marketing tool, is essentially a blog filled with travel information for Northern Ontario. Further, local DMO and communities' websites represent an opportunity to spread the word about LSMCA and the area's visitor experiences.

Tactics:

- Contacting the local Regional Tourism Subregion representative to express interest in providing stories for the site will provide you with a conduit to getting content about LSMCA posted. Stories can be written and supplied by staff, or independent contractors can be hired to provide content.
- Ensure that LSMCA is represented and information surrounding visitor experiences is up to date on regional DMO and community partner websites including Superior Country, municipal tourism website, and regional tourism websites.

Media Relations

Since individual Parks Canada sites do not have large marketing budgets, they often piggy back on national efforts and heavily use unpaid media to get the message out. Since the LSMCA is new and as innovative experiences are developed, a large part of the overall

marketing plan will rely on attracting paid and unpaid media attention through travel bloggers, magazine writers, outdoor influencers (Instagrammers, Youtubers) and community media outlets.

Reaching out to and coordinating media familiarization tours or trips for these groups will generate a lot of content about LSMCA. Trips are provided free of charge, relying on partnerships between operators, local communities and LSMCA to undertake the tour. Media are contracted to provide predetermined deliverables after the trip. The content generated will be positioned through the various media channels associated with each influencer.

The outdoor adventure market is full of travel junkies that love an adventure. They pay attention to influencers and media who create content about pushing limits, finding undiscovered secrets, and outdoor gear reviews.

Tactics:

- Pursue familiarization tours with outdoor adventure media and influencers such as:
 - Print media *Mountain Life Magazine* or *Explore Magazine* staff writers or freelancers,
 - Outdoor adventure bloggers such as Dave & Deb of *Planet D* or Kevin Callan of the *Happy Camper*, and
 - Social media influencers such as Cal Snape or @kayakontario.
- Positioning Concepts: Place to Yourself, Rugged Beauty, Worth the Effort to Get Here, Powerful Landscapes, One of A Kind, Undiscovered, Bragging Rights

Outfitter Familiarization Tours

Many outfitters offer guided trips to outdoors enthusiasts that are not comfortable exploring new and unfamiliar destinations on their own. A couple of local outfitters are currently offering guided trips in LSNMCA, and a handful of outfitters from outside the area are also guiding here. Attracting additional outfitters would be beneficial to increase the number of visitors to the region.

Tactics:

- Plan familiarization tours to showcase kayaking, fishing or inspirational retreats to:
 - Current outfitters selling the region, to show them what is new, once experience development has taken place; and
 - Potential new outfitters to educate them about trip opportunities in the area.

Thunder Bay Market

Media Relations

Attracting the attention of the Thunder Bay market's Middle Age Achievers and Empty Nests is important to get these nearby travellers out of the city and exploring the NMCA. Media relations tactics can also be used to reach the Thunder Bay market.

Tactics:

- Pursue familiarization tours with local Thunder Bay media and influencers (ie. Michael Dick - CBC's Regional Manager, Ian Pattison from the Chronicle Journal, Dorothy Christie of Bayview Magazine).

- Include local DMO representatives on fam tours to ensure they are aware of LSNMCA visitor experiences and will keep them top of mind when planning regional media and marketing related initiatives.
- Thunder Bay outdoor adventure enthusiasts will also be reached by the tactics above aimed at the outdoor adventure market.

Local Community Initiatives

Another outreach initiative designed to reach the Thunder Bay market focuses on the importance of becoming a part of the community.

Tactics:

- Ensure LSNMCA is visible at key Thunder Bay events, providing educational as well as promotional information designed to entice Thunder Bay residents to explore the NMCA. For example, events could include:
 - The Banff Mountain Film Festival,
 - Fort William Historical Park events,
 - School events based around conservation, nature or water, and
 - Community events.
- Local messaging can also be broadcast through local media and by making LSNMCA staff available for frequent comment and by issuing frequent media releases, the local press will communicate your messages effectively, driving awareness of the NMCA.
- Positioning: Did you know?, Close to you, In Your Backyard

Drive by Market

The goal in attracting the drive by market's Middle Age Achievers, Fledgling Families and Family Traditions as well as niche RV and motorcycle traffic is in making them interested enough to stop and spend some time exploring the area, and ensuring they know about LSNMCA experiences that are designed for them before they reach the area so that they can plan.

Billboards

Billboards are a relatively inexpensive way to create awareness and channel drive by traffic to local attractions that are able to handle walk in traffic.

Tactics:

- Install a series of billboards on Highway 17 (in both directions) before traffic reaches the LSNMCA area, advertising the Discovery Centre, boat tour, via ferrata, scenic lookouts viewing area and other LSNMCA targeted drive by attractions.
- Location awareness billboards along Highway 17 will also educate and pique the interest of drive by traffic.

Parks Canada App

Outdoors savvy travellers may already have the Parks Canada app loaded on their cell phones as they are driving into the area. Billboards spanning the highway before the NMCA will provide them with advanced warning that a National Park is ahead, allowing time to access the app and research visitor experiences.

Tactics:

- Ensure LSNMCA details are up to date on the Parks Canada app and provide as much visitor experience information as possible.
- Advocate for consistent cellular coverage along the route from Sault Ste. Marie to Thunder Bay.
- Encourage communities and businesses along the north shore to offer free wifi hotspots for U.S. and other travellers whose roaming cellular access and data charges may be prohibitively expensive.

Wayfinding

Wayfinding signage is a visually oriented information system(s) that acts as a communication tool to both educate visitors and provide directional information on how to access nearby assets and items of interest. Wayfinding signage to drive by attractions will reinforce the visitor experience by reassuring visitors they are correctly navigating access points and points of interest. Additionally, it can inform drive by markets of tourism opportunities they did not know about prior to travel.

Tactics:

- Ensure proper (CTODs) wayfinding to drive by attractions is installed

Discovery Centre

The Discovery Centre is an important means to getting people out and exploring LSNMCA. It can provide inspiration related to visitor experiences that guests can enjoy on this trip or future trips through the area.

Tactics:

- Provide hands on learning activities that inspire visitors to learn more about the region and its visitor attractions.
- Discovery Centre staff should be fully aware of visitor experiences throughout the community and should encourage guests to discover the sites outside of the Discovery Centre walls.
- Maps and brochures depicting regional visitor experiences will reinforce the message that the LSNMCA is a place to explore.

Interpretive Content at Pull offs

Highway pull offs and lookouts are often the only conduit to the drive by market enjoying the region and its scenic beauty. These stops offer an opportunity to educate travellers on the activities that are available just beyond the Trans Canada Highway.

Tactics:

- Install innovative interpretive panels at Highway 17 scenic rest areas to educate drive by travellers about the LSNMCA and the visitor attractions that it offers. Design of interpretive elements should be on brand and fit the design them elements used at the LSNMCA Discovery Centre.

Visitor Information Centres

Visitor Information Centres (VICs) are a good way to talk to the travelling public, as they're often a stop enroute to a destination. Ensuring that visitor centres have details about LSNMCA and its visitor experiences will put information into the hands of this captive audience.

Tactics:

- Ensure local VIC staff are fully aware of LSNMCA and its visitor experiences
- Install a creative and eye-catching LSNMCA display in each of the VICs in the region
- Provide brochures and maps that portray visitor experiences, at local VICs as well as Ontario Travel Information Centres at key entry points to northern Ontario (ie. Pigeon River, Sault Ste. Marie).
- Nearby Provincial and State Parks can act as information distribution sources. Provide brochures and maps at these locations, where visitors are likely to spend the night prior to reaching LSNMCA.



*Concept example: Innovative interpretive panel design in line with brand –
Group of Seven Interpretation Algoma & North Shore of Lake Superior*

Market		Parks Canada Level of Involvement	Timeline to Start Development	Time to Develop	Budget to Develop	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
On the Edge of Superior Cliff Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive by (Fledgling Families, Middle Age Achievers) • Thunder Bay (Middle Age Achievers) • Outdoor Adventure travellers to the region 	+ / +++++	Medium Term	+++	\$\$\$					
Steamy Superior – Sea Kayaking Superior’s Saunas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Adventure - niche market - paddling 	++++	Short Term	++	\$					
Guiding Light Boat Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive by (Middle Age Achievers, Fledgling Families, Family Traditions) • Thunder Bay (Middle Age Achievers, Empty Nests) • Outdoor Adventure travellers in the region for other experiences 	++	Medium Term	+++++	\$\$\$\$\$					
Soul of Superior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Adventure, Thunder Bay (niche interest groups) 	++	Medium Term	++++	\$\$\$ - \$\$\$\$					
Discovery Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thunder Bay (Middle Age Achievers, Empty Nests) • Outdoor Adventure travellers in the area for other activities • Drive by (Middle Age Achievers, Fledgling Families, Family Traditions and niche RV and motorcycle touring) 	+++++	Short Term	++++	\$\$\$\$\$					
Roadside Scenic Vista Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive by (Middle Age Achievers, Fledgling Families, Family Traditions and niche motorcycle & RV touring) 	+++	Short Term	+++++	\$\$\$\$\$					
Indigenous Tourism Opportunities - Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences developed should align with an outdoors element and should target the markets that LSMCA is focusing on as a starting point (Drive by (Middle Age Achievers, Fledgling Families, Family Traditions and Thunder Bay (Middle Age Achievers, Empty Nests) 	+++	Short Term	+++	\$					

Market		Parks Canada Level of Involvement	Timeline to Start Development	Time to Develop	Budget to Develop	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Indigenous Tourism Opportunities – BPM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences developed should align with an outdoors element and should target the markets that LSNMCA is focusing on as a starting point (Drive by (Middle Age Achievers, Fledgling Families, Family Traditions and Thunder Bay (Middle Age Achievers, Empty Nests) 	+++	Short Term	++	\$\$					
Island Inventory & Location of Visitor Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports experience development 	+++	Short Term	+	\$					
Alternative Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports Outdoor Adventure niche markets 	++++	Medium Term	++++	\$\$\$\$					
Waterfront Accommodation & Dining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports Outdoor Adventure, Thunder Bay & Drive by 	+	Medium Term	++++	\$\$\$\$					
Island Lighthouses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports experience development 	+	Short Term	Ongoing	\$\$\$\$					
Island Saunas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports experience development 	++++	Short – Medium Term	++++	\$\$\$\$					
Water Access Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports experience development 	++++	Short - Medium Term	++++	\$\$\$\$					
Island Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports experience development 	+++	Short – Medium Term	+++	\$\$					
Communities Activities & Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports experience development 	+	Ongoing	+	\$					
Ancillary Information, Infrastructure & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports experience development 	++	Ongoing	+	\$	In line with the development of the experiences they support				
Location Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports visitor education 	+++	Upon official designation	++	\$\$	Upon official designation				
Promotion of Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports experience development 		As experiences are developed	Ongoing	Ongoing	In line with complete development of experiences				

Appendix 1: SWOT

Strengths with Respect to LSNMCA's Visitor Experience

Strengths are internal and ongoing factors. The following is the list of strengths outlined by workshop participants with respect to the visitor experience in the LSNMCA region. Participants listed the items highlighted grey as having the most ability to compete with experiences being offered in other areas and a highly competitive tourism environment

Attractions	Facilities	Interpretation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Superior (largest freshwater lake in the world) • Lighthouses • Trails (Casque Isle, Mazukama Falls, Top of the Giant Trail, Nipigon Recreation Trail, TransCanada Trail, Lake Superior Water Trail) • Islands (unique, scenic, undeveloped) • Saunas • Ride Lake Superior • Lake Superior Circle Tour • Boating, paddling, kayaking • Beaches (Terrace Bay, Schreiber) • Aguasabon Falls & Gorge • Shipwrecks • Trainwreck • Nipigon River Bridge • Town of Rosport • Discovery Charters • Ouimet Canyon • Eagle Canyon (zipline, suspension bridge) • Rainbow Falls • Hurkett Cove Birding Festival • Red Rock Folk Festival • Red Rock Interpretive Centre • Nipigon museum • Pow wows • Paddle to the Sea park, splash pads • Rosport Park • Golf course • Climbing (ice, rock) • Fish hatchery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marinas (Nipigon, Red Rock, Rosport) • Ontario Parks • TransCanada highway • No chain hotels • Lots of rest areas with scenic vistas • Water access/public access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums • Festival & events • Red Rock Interpretive Centre • Group of Seven locations • Parks Canada interpretation • Ontario Parks interpretation

Visitor Services	Amenities	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism Information Centres (Nipigon, Pigeon River, Red Rock, Rosspoint, Schreiber, Terrace Bay, Thunder Bay) • Parks Canada (presence, capacity) • Outfitters, guiding services • Thunder Bay (as gateway city) • LSNMCA is a new National Park with limited current visitor experiences within its boundaries (ability and resources to create something new and exciting) • Parks Canada Discovery Centre to be developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airport (nearby) • Tim Horton's • Hotels (expanding, increasing quality) • B&Bs • RV campgrounds • Cafés • Small towns • Groceries, LCBO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solitude • Clean & safe • Partnerships (community, stakeholder & agency collaboration) • Embracing tourism as an economic driver • History/culture (mining, logging, Indigenous, marine)

Weaknesses with Respect to LSNMCA’s Visitor Experience

Weaknesses are internal and ongoing factors. The following is the list of weaknesses outlined by workshop participants with respect to the visitor experience in the LSNMCA region.

Attractions	Facilities	Interpretation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of ongoing cultural experiences • Lack of cycling infrastructure • Lack of available water transportation for visitors • Market readiness of attractions/operators • Few organized day trip offers • Lack of packaging of attractions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aging Ontario Parks infrastructure • Some Ontario Parks with no infrastructure • Lack of wayfinding (route, attraction) • Lack of transient dockage • Lack of private campgrounds • Lack of high end accommodations • Lack of high end restaurants • Lack of waterfront accommodation • Lack of waterfront dining • Limited development of water access points • DFO docks could use infrastructure upgrades • Limited development of rest area infrastructure for tourism travellers (washrooms, picnic areas, adequate parking etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of cautionary education regarding Lake Superior and its dangers • No interpretation at rest areas • Prohibitive rules surrounding interpretation design and high costs • Lack of local knowledge, awareness • Education and interpretation needed (living landscape, First Nations)

Visitor Services	Amenities	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of year-round and aging visitor information centres• Lack of shuttle services• Lack of qualified outfitters• Lack of guides• Limited locally sourced culinary experiences• Lack of customer service skills• Lack of consistency in experience delivered• Lack of souvenir shops• Lack of services available for other cultures/lack of ethnic diversification of the offer• Attractions not on trip advisor• Volunteer and recruitment training needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of, seasonality and inaccessible washroom facilities• No consumer rail services• Limited Wi-Fi available• Fuel limitations (unavailable at marinas, other, no 24 hour gas available)• Limited capacity available at quality accommodations and dining• Lack of retailers providing outdoors specific gear and repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited partnerships• Limited partnerships with First Nations• Seasonality• Limited hours of operation• Some communities don't want visitors• Lack of awareness of competition• Remote geographic location• High potential cost of site remediation/ infrastructure upgrades

Opportunities with Respect to LSNMCA's Visitor Experience

Opportunities are external factors. The following is the list of opportunities outlined by workshop participants with respect to the visitor experience in the LSNMCA region.

- High volume of traffic on the TransCanada highway
- Great Lakes Cruising
- Rest areas are scenic and have potential
- Digital culture
- Ability to capitalize on new tourism trends
- Ability to enhance the experience with customer service training
- Potential to market the region more visitor friendly
- Regional branding potential
- Untapped provincial & federal funding is available
- Foreign exchange rate
- American governmental changes may mean more Americans may be travelling out of the country/ more foreign travelers may opt to come to Canada vs the US.
- Good dollar value of visitor experiences in the region
- Global warming effects (seasonal/weather changes, water temperature)
- Green initiatives

Threats with Respect to LSNMCA's Visitor Experience

Threats are external factors. The following is the list of threats outlined by workshop participants with respect to the visitor experience in the LSNMCA region.

- Divestment of Department of Fisheries & Oceans infrastructure
- Technology dependency of travellers
- Cellular dependency of travellers
- Lack of consumer backcountry/ outdoors skills
- Tourism is a competitive global market
- Restrictive government policies (public sector investment, insurance, hydro, liability, lack of consistency)
- Minimum wage increase
- Increased cost of goods & services due to remote location
- Aging population
- Youth out-migration
- Preconceived notions about the north
- Wildlife & insects
- Invasive species
- Climate change
- Social media's potential negative effects
- Lack of financial resources
- Restrictive guidelines surrounding financial resources/ funding
- US instability and policy changes (environment, security etc.)
- Lack of emergency services
- Lack of knowledge about Northern Ontario as a tourist destination
- Cyclical resources (mining, tourism)

Appendix 2: Essence of Place



Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area

Visitor Experience Strategy

June 2017

Essence of Place

Essence of Place

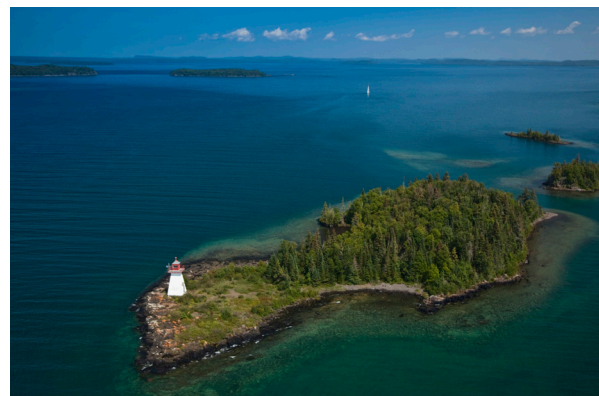
The essence of place defines the unique recreational, aesthetic, educational and experiential qualities of Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area. It defines how this place is or will be distinct from other places and helps to provide context for assessing new experiences to be implemented.

Discovering

*Through the mine shaft, history bound
So much to see and do
Neath the surface shipwrecks lie
The fish, they swim right through
To the east, Slate Islands formed
A home to caribou
On the cliff a stately light
A beacon of hope for whom?*

Essence in Images

These images encapsulate the visitor experience at Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area.



Essence of Iconic Features

The top 10 must see, must do or must experience iconic features of Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area will include:

1. Lake Superior
2. Indigenous & Cultural Experiences
3. Trails & Water Routes
4. Sky
5. Sleeping Giant
6. Fishing
7. Diversity of Landscape
8. Lighthouses
9. Highway Viewscapes
10. Solitude

Essence of Differentiation

Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area can differentiate itself from the following Parks Canada sites based on what it has to offer visitors.

PARKS CANADA SITE	DIFFERENTIATING FEATURE
Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park, Quebec http://parcmarin.qc.ca/home	Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area has a larger size and is on a larger body of water than Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park, which provides LSMCA with a sense of solitude and the immensity of an inland sea.
Gros Morne National Park, Newfoundland http://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/nl/grosmorne	Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area can differentiate itself from Gros Morne National Park based on its diverse landscapes, nearby urban area, its lighthouses and Indigenous presence.
Cape Breton Highlands National Park, Nova Scotia http://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/ns/cbreton	Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area offers freshwater access and activities such as freshwater fishing which are not available at the more congested and crowded Cape Breton Highlands National Park.
Fathom Five National Marine Park, Tobermory, Ontario http://www.pc.gc.ca/en/amnc-nmca/on/fathomfive	Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area offers scenic highway views and a remote solitude that cannot easily be found at Fathom Five National Marine Park in Tobermory, Ontario.

Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area has attributes that allow it to differentiate itself from the nearby tourist offerings.

COMPARABLE REGIONAL EXPERIENCES	DIFFERENTIATING FEATURE
Lake of the Woods, Ontario	Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area offers solitude and a relatively undeveloped shoreline for visitors to explore.
Lake Superior Provincial Park, Ontario	Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area has lighthouses and all of the marine history that goes along with them as well as unique geological features.
Grand Marais, Minnesota	Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area provides more solitude than Grand Marais as well as a Canadian experience.
Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Superior National Forest, Minnesota	Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area has dramatic cliff scenery that differentiates it from Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

COMPARABLE REGIONAL EXPERIENCES	DIFFERENTIATING FEATURE
Fort William Historical Park, Thunder Bay, Ontario	Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area has an on-going Indigenous presence dating back 10 000 years through to present time with opportunities for cultural interpretation and activities spanning a much wider timeframe.
Pukaskwa National Park, Ontario	Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area offers water-based experiences to visitors to the region including aquatic features and islands to explore by boat and can be accessed via several different communities which enhances the overall offer.
Greenstone, Ontario	Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area is different from Greenstone as it is located on Lake Superior with easy TransCanada highway access.

Unique things you will experience at Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area that you can't find anywhere else in Canada include:

- Lake Superior – provides protection of the largest Great Lake
- Waterway and TransCanada highway scenic views of Lake Superior and Sleeping Giant Provincial Park
- Islands and their geology including columnar basalts and shatter cone
- Sleeping Giant Provincial Park
- Most northern freshwater port
- Rustic island saunas

Essence of Brand

Things that evoke moments of **awe** for visitors to Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area.

- Brilliant Northern lights
- The lonely call of a loon
- Spectacular sunsets
- Chinook salmon fishing
- Dramatic scenery
- Fierce winter storms
- The curve of the earth on the horizon of the water

Things to evoke moments of **connection** for visitors to Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area.

- Experiencing solitude
- Meeting locals
- Camping with family and friends
- Stargazing
- The tactile nature of the lake and landscape
- Lake Superior evokes a connection to Mother Earth

Things to evoke moments of **discovery** for visitors to Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area.

- Learning the culture through a guide or interpretation
- Experiencing a trail for the first time
- Visiting the Slate Islands
- Diving to shipwrecks
- Wildlife viewing

Moments of Awe

Haunting call of loons
Serene sunsets paint the sky gold
Northern lights dance above

Things that evoke moments of **delight** for visitors to Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area.

- Catching a fish
- Enjoying a backcountry sauna
- Reaching the peak during a hike
- Hiking along the shore from beach to beach
- Experiencing the local community's pride
- Feeling the waves crashing
- Sharing a moment with wildlife

Things to evoke moments of **appreciation** for visitors to Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area.

- Solitude
- Pristine nature
- Fresh air
- Clean water
- Lighthouses with crashing waves
- Dramatic scenery
- Sea kayaking, canoeing & boating
- Pictographs

Connections

*Head lay down on Mother Earth,
I dream
of the day I had.
Gazing at the crackling sky,
I see
the fish so strong and silvery
burst from the water
clean and cold.
This my heart will forever hold.*

Essence in Words

POWERFUL SUNSET Wild SUPERIOR
Waves MYSTERIOUS Awe-inspiring CLIFFS
Majestic ADVENTURE
Mystical CALM Lighthouses PADDLING Enchanting EXPANSIVE
Rugged Discovery Solitude Cultural
Tranquil NATURE Wildlife PURE BEACH Magical Pristine
SAILING Historical Bold Big Unpredictable HIKING
Thunderous NORTHERN HORIZON Rejuvenating ENLIGHTENING SKY
INSPIRING Wilderness Invigorating PICTOGRAPHS

Essence in a Statement

“What I want people to understand about this place is ____.”

- ...that it is worth taking the time to slow down between Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay.
- ...that its pristine beauty is unparalleled.
- ...that it's a living landscape.
- ...the vast beauty.
- ...it is my home and visitors are welcome to experience it.
- ...it is a magical, natural, historical and unforgettable living landscape.
- ...it is magical and rejuvenating.
- ...the Indigenous peoples and their cultures as they connect to the land.
- ...the vast rugged beauty of this natural place.
- ...that although solitude is bliss, more people need to enjoy it.
- ...that there is much more than rocks and trees here.
- ...how it can touch your soul.
- ...its home, come for a visit.
- ...its natural beauty.
- ...to expect the unexpected.
- ...the vast superior experiences available.
- ...that it is superior.
- ...unique on this planet.
- ...the natural beauty.

Essence of Place Statement

Beyond the ribbon of the TransCanada highway, in the heart of Northern Ontario lies an inland freshwater sea of many moods. Here, your adventures will take you from the top of towering cliffs to the shipwrecks that rest deep on the lake floor. Cruise an archipelago of islands, behold enchanting lighthouses, hike the rugged routes left by glaciers or paddle in the wake of the voyageurs. Ancient pictographs overlook the pristine waters and are reminders of the area's rich history and the connection between Indigenous people and Gitchigaming, the Big Lake. By day, feel the thunderous crash of the waves as they continuously sculpt this majestic seascape. At sunset, the haunting call of the loon ushers in the night sky with its bright stars and wondrous northern lights. Friendly communities nestled along the north shore welcome you to consider this your home away from home.

This is a place to immerse yourself in solitude, or embark on grand adventures. Lose yourself, and find yourself in Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area.



Appendix 3: Ancillary Information, Infrastructure and Services

Activity	Item	Must Have	Nice to Have
Canoeing/ Kayaking	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Suggested itineraries including routes and difficulty classification • Safe harbors • Weather, marine forecast • Cold water awareness • Currents/wind affect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maps (digital or printed) or region • Bathymetry maps • Safety signage • Seiche information • Rental, guide, lesson information • Launch site information and accessibility • Drinking water information • Number of campsites, their location and distance between them • Wood transportation boundaries
	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campsite development (single family, groups, overflow, accessibility from shore) • Privies • Cell service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainland shoreline campsites • Saunas • Cleaning stations • Communication system
	Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rentals, guides and lessons • Learn to paddle Superior • Aid station/safe harbor shelter • Campsite monitoring and maintenance • Search & rescue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route registration system • Safety equipment rental • Campsite booking & reporting system (conditions) • Info box/orientation sign • Fire rescue/reporting • Wardens

Activity	Item	Must Have	Nice to Have
Boating	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amenities, supplies • Safe harbors • Info regarding where you should not go 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Conservation information available • Closest hospital • Attractions • Distance between locations/destinations • Disclaimer re shoals, banks
	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Docks • Infrastructure to provide educational info (varied based on location) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camping • Cell tower
	Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boat charters & rentals with guiding services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online booking of campsites
Fishing	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishing regulation awareness • Sustainable practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishing guidelines • Good catch and release practices (education) • Bait shop locations & hours • Info re invasive species • Launching, mooring facilities • Different map at each launch site with MNR info and sanctuaries marked • Resource conservation education • Campsites, accommodations, amenities (food, gas, alcohol) • Fishing hotspots by month (hashtag sharing of info) • Basic info re what's available and gear needed • Citizen science program
	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Docks • Amenities • Sanctuaries • Boat washes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine radio (safety info) • Fish cleaning stations • Marine access development with infrastructure, information and bathrooms available
	Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guides & outfitters offering different levels of experiences and education re how to, type of bait, invasive species, catch and release etc. • Boat and gear rentals • Satellite phone rentals

Activity	Item	Must Have	Nice to Have
Hiking	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wayfinding (TODS, trailhead, on trail) • More info and staff awareness at VICs • Detailed maps • Safety information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency information • Multi-use trail etiquette • GPS tracks • Coordination/review of the information that is already out there • Difficulty classification • Videos and social media • Trail closure system
	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater variety of difficulty level of trails (more blue/green needed) • Designated campsites for overnight • Parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible trail(s) • Amenities – garbage cans, dog bag dispensers, bear boxes, washrooms, firepits, firewood, lookouts, platforms, interpretive signage • Grey water solution • Island trails with stacked loops • First aid kits • Cell service • Interpretive signage
	Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection/maintenance schedule • Rescue services • Shuttle service • Conditions reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided hikes • Rentals (spots, first aid kits & other safety equipment, poles, snowshoes, fat bikes) • Info on campsites – what is at site, emergency info, closest water, privy • Site reservation system • Prepacked lunches/picnics • Superior hiker passport program • Token system at lookouts providing discounts in the region

Activity	Item	Must Have	Nice to Have
Diving	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of interest • Info/history on the site • Level of difficulty classification • Insurance • Safety and emergency contact information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalogue of shipwrecks and their pertinent details and a monitoring program to ensure the information remains up to date • Access to sites of interest • Depth of water • Recommended routes • Closure, safety and danger information • Safe itineraries
	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch/access • Mooring buoy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cell tower • Roofed accommodations and campsites • Air filling station
	Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter boats • Dive shops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decompression chamber
Biking	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence with local trail groups re multi use trails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road biking information
	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain bike trails • Inventory of trails that have potential for mountain biking • Trail work required to upgrade select trails for mountain biking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biking trails next to the highway • Bike racks at information centers • Fat biking - on the lake, festival, event or expedition (groomers needed)
	Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain bike, fat bike and safety equipment rentals and repair shops • Learn to bike programs • Designated bike routes • Cycling without age opportunity

Activity	Item	Must Have	Nice to Have
Winter Activities	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ice safety & conditions reporting system • Cold water awareness • Winter activity brochure • Protocol network • Protected/non-accessible areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather reports via marine radios • Closure maps • Tributaries and currents • Where to go/where not to go • Where to buy/rent equipment • Parks Canada app for regional information
	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated ice routes • Ice trails (convert summer trails to winter trails) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grooming • Snowmobile trails • Ice huts • Premade quinzhees • Parking
	Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ice safety program • Ice monitoring & protocols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary commercial ice booths • Ice safety kit rentals, and safety stations • Flagging/marking trails • Maintenance • Guided experience • Themed experiences or events (i.e. northern lights, ice huts) • Big event to get people out onto lake • Fat bike, ski or snowmobile to ice huts • Dogsledding • Learn to ice fish, snowshoe, ski • Connection with private land/business owners • Hut, sled, pop up, snowshoe, ski, ice fishing equipment rentals • Mechanics/towing



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