

REGIONAL TOURISM PROFILE

Battle River Alliance for Economic Development

Submitted to

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By

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Structure of Tourism in the BRAED Region

The tourism industry in the BRAED Region is comprised of many interdependent sectors (**see Figure 1.0**) including private operators, municipal and provincial government departments responsible for the provision of parks, information centres, museums, campsites and related facilities. From a tourism view-point, BRAED is part of the Alberta Central Tourism Destination Region, administered from Red Deer.

BRAED's greatest tourism strength is its close-knit rural municipalities, which are linked by geography, economic commonalities, and the will to work as a team for the betterment of the entire region.

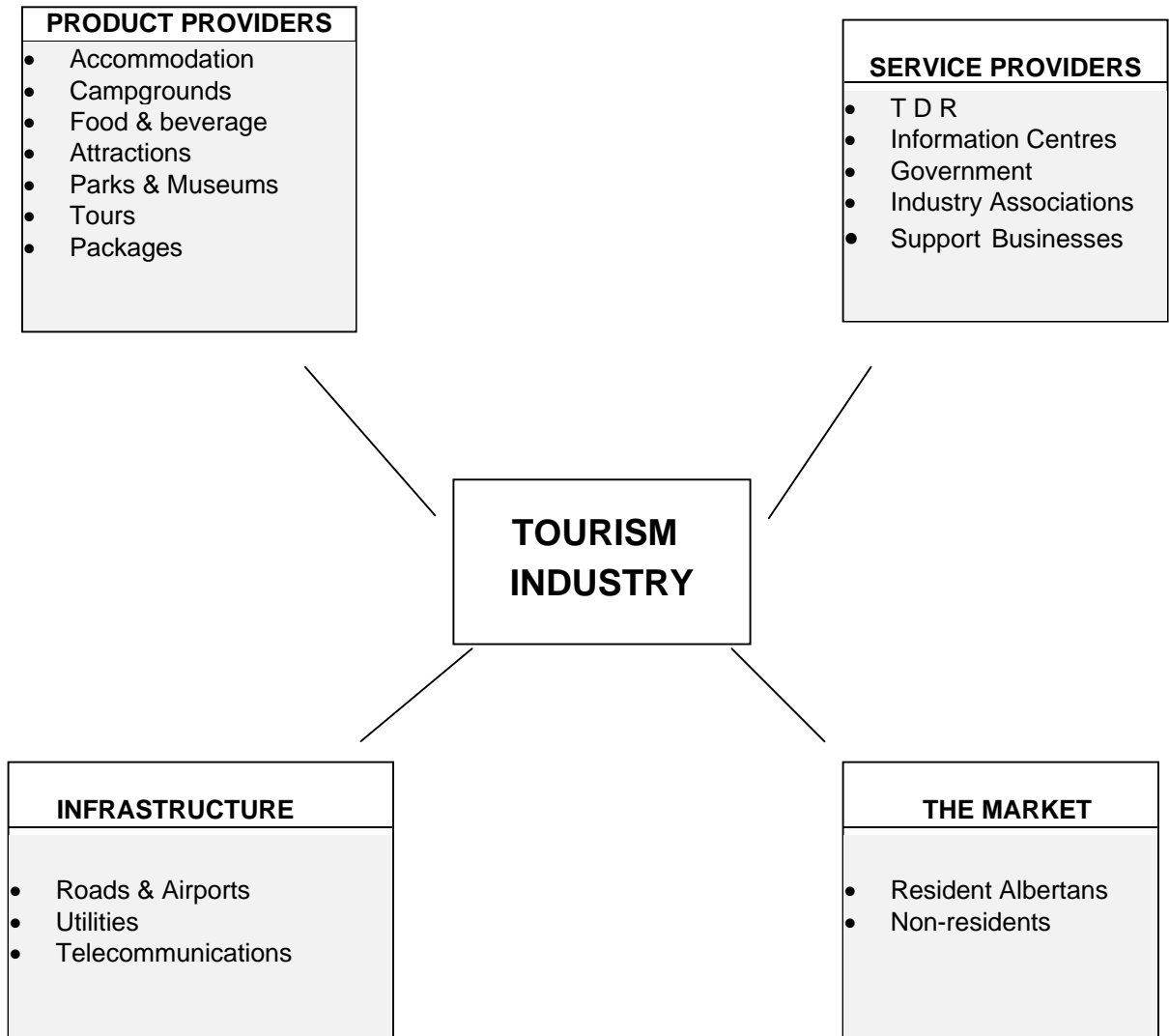
BRAED was established "to pursue opportunities for growth and development through regional cooperation and collaboration". For the tourism sector to be viable and prosper, the need for *bending over backwards to co-operate* among the various provider organizations is paramount. Secondly, tourism has a history of gaining popularity as an economic alternative, when primary industries weaken. When the economic cycle rebounds and traditional activities strengthen, tourism initiatives often falter because sponsorship interest wanes. A benchmark guideline for tourism viability, whether it be a business or public/private consortia, suggests that a range of 5 -7 years is required before success can be measured.

Defining the Problems

The BRAED area is part of the former Battle River Tourist Association zone, which until its dissolution in 2000, was the oldest operating tourism destination in Alberta. The demise of the Association, brought with it opportunities for new initiatives, by a number of regional interest groups. Individually, these groups are exhibiting stable, progressive movement toward definition, and marketing of saleable products. However, no overall umbrella initiative exists to provide a common theme (or brand) that defines the BRAED region.

Essentially, BRAED is without a consistent, co-ordinated effort to define, develop and package tourism services, products and attractions. For potential tourism visitors, the problem becomes one of 'identity' or lack thereof, when considering the BRAED region as a destination. Is it realistic to consider the region within the BRAED boundaries as having potential for a cohesive 'brand' or theme? In the short-term, the probable answer is 'no'! Taking into account the type of products that are being conceived and developed within BRAED, the future landscape suggests a variety of small to large scale attractions connected by linear corridors exhibiting separate themes.

FIGURE 1.0 TOURISM STRUCTURE PROFILE



The BRAED Tourism Landscape

As indicated, the BRAED tourism landscape is being populated by a number of new tourism-related initiatives since the demise of the Battle River Tourism Association. Others in the following selected listing had already emerged.

Trail of the Buffalo Tourism Marketing Group

The Trail of the Buffalo Tourism Marketing Group was formed in 2001 by a concerned group of citizens in east-central Alberta that did not want to see tourism marketing activities for this region fall by the wayside following the dissolution of the Battle River Tourist Association. The group has been gaining momentum and membership with the development of a Tourism Marketing Plan, two tourism attraction brochures and a web site. The Trail of the Buffalo represents communities along and east of Highway 21, north of Highway 9, south of Highway 14 and west to the Saskatchewan border. The group has a current membership of twenty-two municipalities and twenty-one private-sector businesses and organizations.

As of February 23, 2004, the Trail of the Buffalo Tourism Marketing Group hired a Tourism Marketing Co-ordinator (press release). The co-ordinator will work in a part-time capacity, providing coordination and advisory support.

Kalyna Country Ecomuseum

The Kalyna Country Ecomuseum Trust Society was established in 1992. The mission of this volunteer organization was to oversee the development of a 30 year development strategy. This initiative commemorated the 1991-92 centennial of Ukrainian settlement in Canada with a living legacy. The project launched an innovative heritage conservation initiative that occupies a portion of the BRAED region along Highway 14. This highway is also known as the Poundmaker Trail and named after Chief Poundmaker who, during his lifetime, led his Cree band in search of buffalo over the vast territory which stretched from the Battlefords in Saskatchewan west into Alberta toward Edmonton. Highway 14 is signed with the Poundmaker logo.

In its totality, Kalyna Country covers 20,000 square kilometers and is the world's largest outdoor ecomuseum (Kalyna Country 2002 Visitor's & Events Guide). Kalyna Country is also recognized as Destination Marketing Organization, by Travel Alberta.

The Trust Society markets a strongly branded geographical area that produces and distributes 20,000 Visitor's & Events Guides (100 pages), from provincial and local visitor centres and through direct mail. The Kalyna Country web site attracts over 100 unique visitors per day (CANtravel web trends reports). The Society has

an Executive Director and contracts a marketing company that aggressively promotes the product.

The Waskahegan Trail Association

The Waskahegan Trail Association (1969) is an example of a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to building and maintaining a public hiking trail that relies largely on access to private lands. The Waskahegan Trail is a 235 km long volunteer managed trail allowing excellent day hiking, backpacking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing in a western portion of the BRAED area. The trail begins in Edmonton and goes south along the Whitemud and Blackmud Creeks, Saunders Lake and Coal Lake to the Wetaskiwin area, then east along the Battle River from Gwynne to Camrose. The trail continues north from Miquelon Lake Provincial Park through Ministik Lake Bird Sanctuary, Hastings Lake area, and the Cooking Lake - Blackfoot Recreation Area to Elk Island National Park. It then goes west along Ross Creek to Fort Saskatchewan. Monthly guided day-hikes are organized in Edmonton. (The Waskahegan Trail Association web site www.boreal.net/wta).

The Boomtown Trail – Highway 21

In the north of the BRAED region, the BoomTown Trail begins at the City of Camrose. In the south, the BoomTown Trail begins just 40 km (24.7 miles) east of Calgary at the Town of Strathmore. The BoomTown Trail is 251 km (156 miles) long from Strathmore to Camrose along Highway 21. There are 41 communities along the trail of which three (Camrose, New Norway, Bashaw) reside within BRAED. The Highway 21 Community Initiatives Society coordinates trail promotion activities.

Enroute there are grandly designed clapboard facades masking humble buildings, as though they were mere movie sets. Many of these buildings sprang up in the early 1900s when towns were mushrooming along the railroad, and over time the style became known as “boomtown architecture.”

The BoomTown Trail initiative was developed through the Alberta Municipal Affairs Regional Partnerships Initiative in 2003. The long term plan and intention is to continue to develop the BoomTown Trail as a grassroots tourism initiative (Boom Town Trail, press release, Vol. 1, Issue 4 - Jan/15/2004).

Community Initiatives

The following communities are indicative of a number of locations that individually are emerging with various degrees of tourism development.

Collectively these attractions, are beginning to build a modest critical mass of emerging tourist appeal.

Alliance: An active member of the Trail of the Buffalo Tourism Marketing Group. The village has become noted for local artists include painting, metal sculpture and signs, quilting, sewers, woodworking. A "Day at the Gallery" held every 2 yrs – artists display and sell work (about 40 exhibitors in Fall 2003 – ½ were local).

Increased tourism opportunities exist for an expanded role for the village as an Arts & Heritage Destination. This theme and it's potential could be enhanced through the recent hiring of a Tourism Marketing Coordinator by the Trail of the Buffalo Tourism Marketing Group.

Forestburg: The Diplomat Mine Interpretive Site offers North America's oldest stripping shovel – "the Marion 360" – Canada's only surface coal mining museum. The outdoor equipment display interprets coal mining on the prairies from the early "gopher hole" mines to present day mining and reclamation. A 10 minute drive south brings you to the monster drag lines working today.

Unique Canadian industrial tour of historic prairie coal mining facilities coupled with existing drag-line operation adds substance and variety to the Trail of the Buffalo project.

Provost: The Bodo Bison Skull and Bodo Overlook sites; initial findings indicate the existence of aboriginal encampments dating to 3000 - 5000 years, as well as a more recent habitation of about 500 years. Significant numbers of arrowheads, buffalo bone fragments and remnants of pottery have been excavated by University of Alberta Archaeological Field School students during the summers of 2002 and 2003. This vast historical discovery was made in approximately 1995 and confirmed by Archaeologist and Anthropologist, Terry Gibson, PhD of *Alberta Western Heritage Inc.* of St. Albert, Alberta.

The community is exploring the possibility of developing a public archaeological program, walking trails and eventually an interpretative centre on-site.

Wainwright: The Bud Cotton Buffalo Paddock, a reminder of the original 240 square mile Buffalo National Park, created in 1908 just south of Wainwright. This endangered species project established a flourishing herd. Buffalo have since been relocated throughout the world.

The site was used as a World War II prisoner-of-war facility. The Department of National Defense continues to operate Camp Wainwright as the Western Area Training Center, one of North America's primary international military training facilities. A reconstructed guard tower just inside the camp gates is a stark reminder of the camp's war-time history.

The Wainwright Main Street Project is a five year joint partnership between the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation's Alberta Main Street Programme, and the Town of Wainwright. The historic Main Street footprint includes approximately forty buildings considered historically significant. The initial group of nine rehabilitation and enhancement projects have reached completion, with the remainder slated for completion by 2005.

Camrose: The Camrose Main Street Project: under the auspices of the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, the historic buildings in Downtown Camrose are being restored to an earlier time. By the end of 2003, nearly a dozen building facades had been restored.

The City of Camrose has been a major sponsor and host site for the **Growing Rural Tourism Conference**. The fourth annual, locally hosted Conference (February 9-11, 2004) was an initiative of the Camrose Regional Exhibition, Alberta Economic Development, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Travel Alberta In Province. Other major contributors to the event have been Reynolds-Alberta Museum, Calgary Stampede, Canada-Alberta Farm Business Management Program, Big Valley Jamboree, and the City of Camrose.

The conference focused on "creating the experience" for rural tourism operators, rural municipalities, chambers of commerce, agricultural societies, event coordinators, economic development officers among others. Each year, the majority of the close to 300 delegates come from across Alberta, with a few also from BC, Saskatchewan and Ontario.

The jury is still out as to whether significant impact in regional tourism growth can be measured as a result of the Growing Rural Tourism Conferences. However, this major industry conference, should not be discounted as a generator of future tourism initiatives within BRAED.

In addition, the City of Camrose also hosts the annual **Viking Cup, Stage 13 and the Big Valley Jamboree**. Collectively, these three major events point to the City as a key catalyst for attracting visitors to the BRAED region.

Bashaw: The Majestic Theatre, a rural, wood frame "Boomtown" style of theatre, Bashaw's Majestic Theatre was not the first of its kind to be built in Alberta, but is now believed to be the last remaining theatre of its kind in western Canada. Never a "grand theatre" by any means, the Majestic is nonetheless, of historical and architectural significance as part of the overall history of theatre development in Alberta. Built in 1915, the Majestic serves as one indicator of Alberta's early settlement history and has been home to magic lantern shows, local theatre productions, silent movies, and early "talkies". Serving as Bashaw's first Catholic Church for a time, the theatre resumed its role as modern movie theatre in the 1940's when it was renamed the 'Dixy'.

Founded in 1998, the Friends of the Majestic Theatre Society is a registered non profit organization whose goal is to preserve and restore the old Majestic Theatre as a self sustaining working theatre museum. As part of this endeavor, the Majestic Players, an amateur theatre group came into being to assist in fundraising efforts. Acquired from the Town of Bashaw in 1998, by 2000, the Majestic was designated an Alberta Registered Historical Resource as well as a Government of Canada Millennium Bureau of Canada Project. Bashaw is part of the Highway 21 "Boom Town Trail".

Viking: The Ribstones - On a rise overlooking plains once thick with buffalo rests the ribstones, the mysterious markers of a long forgotten religious rite. The large stones, some weighing over a ton, are carved to resemble the rib cage of an animal. Historians believe that the ribstones were part of religious ceremonies performed in connection with the buffalo hunt over one thousand years ago. The Aboriginal communities in the Viking area had referred to the three stones at this location as "The Bull," "The Cow," and the Calf." Only two stones remain today, however. These stones are now marked by a Government of Alberta cairn identifying them as a historical site.

BRAED TOURISM – THE NEAR FUTURE

Along with the noted 'new' tourism organizations and 'hot spots' for tourism growth as typified by communities with products at various levels of maturity, there are *near future* trends that may impact BRAED.

Growing Rural Tourism in BRAED

Over the past five to six years Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AAFRD) has been stimulating initiatives to take advantage of a trend by mostly residents from larger urban centers. Agri-Tourism in Alberta is an emerging industry, responding to a growing demand, by largely urban dwellers, for access to farm and ranch lifestyles and products. It is defined as "the economic activity that occurs when people link travel with agricultural products, services or experiences" (AAFRD). There is current interest by farm and ranch operators in Alberta to consider diversifying their economic base – one of these options is agri-tourism.

The BRAED region and in particular the City of Camrose has been a major sponsor and host site for the Growing Rural Tourism Conference. The conference location alone is testament to the fact that agri-tourism is considered to be a near future opportunity within the region. Also, the BRAED region appears to have the potential for growing rural tourism opportunities due to the predominance of a second and third generation agriculture base – the experience would be real. In addition, proximity to the City of Edmonton lends itself to a relatively close-in urban market.

In 2002 Criterion Research Corp., was commissioned by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to do some market research that would assess Albertans reaction to agri-tourism activities. The consultants found that positioning agri-tourism as a regional attraction required that experiences be featured as special, interesting, unique, exciting and perhaps most of all, fun. In an omnibus survey (*Connections*) conducted by Criterion in January 2003, results indicate that 47% of Albertans had engaged in an agri-tourism activity in the 12 months prior (January to December 2002). On average Albertans took part in two to three agri-tourism activities during that period.

In the 2002 Criterion Research study, 97% of respondents would like to do something different on their vacation than they do everyday and 88% prefer a slow paced and stress free vacation.

These findings are consistent with other research that tells us people want rest and relaxation on their vacation/getaway.

But respondents indicated that they also want to include other things in their vacation: Education components (90%), physical activity (90%), and being able to sit back and relax (87%). While other respondents stated that they would like to visit Alberta's farm and ranch heritage (70%), horses and riding (63%), or gardening (67%). By offering either directly or through partnerships (packages) a variety of activities this will greatly improve the potential for increased visitation.

Respondents were proud of what Alberta has to offer in terms of agri-tourism activities (92%). Indicating that they like the idea of getting back to their roots, reliving the country lifestyle, western romance, and talking to a farm or ranch family.

When making other travel decisions, recommendations from friends and family members are important. 62% of respondents also indicated that they plan their vacations and outings around activities their children would enjoy.

When Albertans travel, whether to engage in agri-tourism activities or not, they look for a variety of activities that meet the needs of all family members, that have an educational component that is fun, and opportunities to rest and relax and spend quality time together as a family.

(Tourism Insights, Alberta Economic Development, January 30, 2004, Volume 2, Issue 1).

Vacations or outings are seldom taken alone. So when a family or a group is considering a destination, one of the pivotal questions is "Is there something here that will interest or meet the needs of all members of our travel group?" Communications about agri-tourism experiences need to be very clear in framing what they may find of value or of interest in these types of experiences.

Agri-tourism experiences form part of the tourism appeal and are found in various degrees of sophistication and development in the BRAED region:

- Shopping at a farmers market stands out as the agri-tourism experience that respondents are most likely (88% somewhat or very likely including 61% very likely) to take part in. Other event related activities that involve people gathering at a certain place, such as attending country fairs (74% somewhat or very likely including 38% very likely) and rodeos (65% somewhat or very likely including 36% very likely) are also popular with the majority.
- Food related activities such as sampling regional foods (77% somewhat or very likely including 38% very likely), visiting a market garden (72% somewhat or very likely including 38% very likely) or attending fall country suppers (73% somewhat or very likely including 36% very likely) enjoy high levels of popularity.
- Horse related activities such as experiencing a cowboy lifestyle (64% somewhat or very likely including 32% very likely), horseback riding in the foothills (64% somewhat or very likely including 37% very likely) and horseback riding in the prairies (59% somewhat or very likely including 31% very likely) are also popular with the majority of respondents.
- Other Activities to take part in are visiting a provincial park or a bird sanctuary, go hiking, go on a sight seeing trip, ride a bicycle or visit a museum if these were available along with agri-tourism activities.

Agri-tourism specialists with Alberta Agriculture Food & Rural Development have indicated that they are somewhat surprised that limited spin-off has occurred within the region from the Camrose Rural Tourism Conferences. AAFRD is available for consultation, but needs to see initiative taken by grass roots partners. In the last year, AAFRD has assisted in the organization of three Agri-tourism Cluster Development pilot projects - Edmonton ring counties, Pincher Creek/Porcupine Hills, and Calgary Southwest (personal communication, Sharon Stollery).

Coming Home – Back to the Future

Alberta's 2005 Centennial provides another significant opportunity that coupled with the appeal of agri-tourism could lead to a longer term trend within BRAED. Alberta In-province may assist in this initiative through what is termed "Positioning Memories in Advance How, What, Why, Where and When" (Growing Rural Tourism Conference, February 09-11, 2004).

Alberta's Centennial provides a unique tourism opportunity, particularly for In-

province and near-in markets. Numerous individuals, families and groups will be interested in returning to BRAED to re-discover their roots.

Travel Alberta is now conducting research to identify opportunities for Centennial celebrations and events across the province. The results of this research will be shared at the upcoming industry workshops to be held throughout the province in 14 locations this April (Wednesday, April 21, Red Deer, Black Knight Inn). There will be opportunities to celebrate everything from local centennials to regional cuisine, with initiatives required to stretch Centennial budgets with partnerships and sponsorships.

Who Comes to BRAED for Tourism?

Recent data for the BRAED region needs to be extrapolated from the Alberta Central Tourism Destination (TDR) as a whole. However, historical data indicates that the BRAED region can be safely considered to be most significantly impacted by Edmonton visitors and Alberta Central residents traveling within their own region and therefore, the statistical information that follows can be considered representative.

The following information is sourced from the recent Alberta Economic Development, Alberta Resident Winter Travel Intentions Survey, December 2003. The survey is intended to include a six-month period commencing in November 2003 to April 2004 for trips of 80 km or more, for at least one night for the purpose of leisure. This most recent data is similar to statistical surveys from other seasons.

Intentions

Visitors to Alberta Central:

- 32% are from Edmonton & Area
- 22% are from Alberta Central
- 19% from Calgary & Area
- 12% from Alberta South
- 10% from the Rockies

67% of visitors to the region will make the same number of trips as last year; 18% plan to take more trips than they did last year, and 20% will take less trips than last year.

The two tourism areas that have the highest number of people planning trips within their own area are **Alberta Central** and Alberta South.

Who goes to Alberta Central?

- 54% are between 35 and 54 years of age
- 43% have 2 adults with children in the family while 35% have 2 adults with no children

Alberta Central has the highest number of visiting travel groups of 2 adults without children among all the Alberta TDRs.

Actual (2002 data)

Overnight trips to Alberta Central: 2,346,000

The top three visitor origins to Alberta Central including BRAED was Edmonton & Area, Alberta Central, and Calgary & Area.

Alberta Expenditures

Alberta Economic Development's Tourism Insights newsletter for October, 2003 outlines the tourism indicators for the most recent summer season. Residents of Alberta constitute the largest tourism market for the province, generating \$2.278 billion in 2002 (down from \$2.324 in 2001). Alberta was thought of first by 61% of Albertans as a day, weekend or longer pleasure trip. The climb to this level of acceptance began in 1998 (45%). Research also shows that adult Albertans now average more trips within their province (3.8) than their counterparts in the provinces of Saskatchewan (3.1) and British Columbia (2.9).

The average expenditure per trip in 2002 by Albertans in Alberta was \$138.00 (the average spending per person per night is \$81.00). The number of trips 80 km. or more during the summer of 2003 increased by 650,000. Therefore the value of the incremental increase over the summer campaign period (June 3 to August 31) was in excess of \$90 million.

Also of importance are those trips by Albertans in Alberta of 4 days or more. The actual increased by over 25% over their intention in June of 2003. Albertans currently view the province as an opportunity to take short getaways (75% of all trips). On the other hand, about 75% of trips 4 days or more are taken by Albertans outside of Alberta. New strategies are required to influence decisions by Albertans to make Alberta a "holiday" destination for trips of this duration.

Pin Pointing the Target Market

Target Marketing has been defined as "the process of marketing to a specific market segment or multiple segments". In order to directly benefit tourism marketing efforts within BRAED, it is necessary to know who is most likely to visit. The 2003 Alberta Resident Market Travel Behaviour Study helps to shed light on this question.

For this Regional Tourism Profile two market segment in particular have been selected as the primary target markets;

FREE TO GO – Cost-Conscious, Empty Nester

Opportunities to travel come easily to this cluster. They are the oldest of all clusters, have average household incomes and the second fewest number of children living at home. They are influenced to travel by visits to family and friends (VFR), the cost and value they get for their money, feeling safe and secure in their travels and by the weather. They like to know what to expect. They travel for rest and relaxation, and for visiting, but they also look for outdoor recreation and summer activities. They enjoy sight-seeing and scenery, but also look for activities and new places to go. They rely on past travel experiences and word of mouth from people they know as sources of information on where to go. TV and the Internet are also moderately effective ways to communicate with this cluster. They are the second highest cluster to feel they are not well informed about travel options in Alberta.

- Represents 19% of Alberta's travel market
- Average age 45, married, male-skewed, fewer children
- Primarily urban (59% Calgary and Edmonton)
- Average income
- Flexible schedules
- Least likely to participate in activities, especially indoors
- Least likely to actually stay in friends' and relatives' homes
- Short-term planners

AFFLUENT / CAREER-MINDED – Mobile Family

The youngest of all clusters (it includes adult students), this group lists many factors that influence their travel decisions. School holidays, budget, safe and secure, weather, VFR, quality of accommodation and variety of activities available at the destination – as well as job schedules – come into play. If they aren't planning a trip, it's because they're too busy with work, have no time or not enough money for travel. This group is oriented to relaxing, VFR and outdoor activities when they do take trips. They're the most likely cluster to feel they are not well informed about travel opportunities within Alberta.

- Represents 21% of the Alberta market
- Average age 39, female skewed, married, fewer children, students
- Primarily urban (57% Edmonton, Calgary, North)
- Higher income
- Job focused
- Influenced by school holidays and a large number of factors including work schedules
- Like to escape daily routine, eat well and spend time with family
- Longest planning and scheduling cycle of all clusters

Competitive Advantage Report and Key Messages

Alberta cities and mountain tourism facilities are developed and some to the point of capacity. We see the best opportunities to attract more visitors from all our markets – from Albertans to international travellers – to be rural tourism. We see opportunities for our smaller operators to be more market ready, to take on the world, maybe even the solar system! Martians – leave that dry dustbowl planet of yours and spend a week on working ranch ... (The Changing Face of Rural Tourism, Derek Coke-Kerr Managing Director, Travel Alberta, Speaking notes: Powered by People, Growing Rural Tourism Conference Camrose, Alberta Feb. 10, 2004).

1. A necessary BRAED tourism brand or theme may evolve as local and regional products mature over the next 5- 7 years. In order for this to occur, existing organizational structures need to be realigned or modified and possibly new structures need to be built. As well, part of the success model would include financial co-operation and the *will* to create a competitive tourism product.
2. In the interim, there are positive steps being taken. There are a number of organizations that are seizing rural tourism opportunities within their sphere of influence and beginning to offer 'branded' (albeit immature) initiatives.
3. There are a number of organizations such as Agriculture Food and Rural Development and Travel Alberta-Province that are available with on-going consultation and advisory services. In some cases matching funds are available for start-up marketing activities. An example of the latter, is the Trail of the Buffalo Tourism Marketing Group (Travel Alberta In-Province).
4. The City of Camrose and other communities are aware of the potential for 'welcoming home' former residents and visitors for the Alberta 2005 Centennial. This is a very significant opportunity from which to influence long term behaviour patterns for the buying public. It is not an opportunity to be considered as a one-time local event.

TACTICS - What Alberta Agriculture did to Develop Agri-tourism Clusters

The following process guidelines are what Alberta Agriculture would use to initiate cluster development within BRAED.

- Choose 3 pilot regions for ag tourism cluster development based on the following criteria:
 - i. Proximity to major markets
 - ii. Critical mass of market-ready ag tourism product

iii. Interest, commitment and time available of local stakeholders

- Meet with stakeholders for each region. Discuss opportunities and challenges facing ag tourism in the area
- Allow time for networking and building rapport. Gauge support and interest in working together.
- Discuss and agree on the basic premise of ag tourism cluster development and a common, overarching goal (see below).
- Pull together an ag tourism operator inventory for the area and list of other potential stakeholders.
- Determine next steps, ie. Set operator meeting date, solicit offer for meeting venue and lunch, identify someone to send invitations and take RSVPs.

Keys to Success

- Suggested stakeholder invitees:
Municipal Economic Development staff, Community Futures staff, Ag Fieldmen Travel Alberta In-province regional rep., TDR (Tourism Destination Region) DMO (Destination Marketing Org.), Chambers of Commerce, Local colleges, Alberta Agriculture Ag Tourism Initiative staff
- Stakeholder support is a major key to success.
They provide:
 1. Knowledge of the local area and the ag sector
 2. Knowledge and expertise in the tourism industry
 3. Knowledge and access to local resources (ie. mapping, graphics, P.R., access to networks, places to meet, administrative support etc.)
 4. The ability to help pull people together and keep a project progressing
 5. Marketing dollars for group initiatives
- Discuss and agree on the basic premise “there is profit to be made through partnerships”.
- Discuss and agree on the overarching common goal that “Ag Tourism operators need to work together cooperatively to access new markets, boost profile and awareness, and increase their appeal/draw”.
- Allow time to build rapport and excitement among stakeholders.

TACTICS - Agri-tourism Product Development

For agri-tourism interested travellers, the top 5 sources of information consulted to plan short vacations are listed below.

Return visit/been there before	77%
Advice of friends/relatives	72%
Internet	44%
Articles in Newspapers/magazines	43%
Travel Agent	40%
Ads in Newspapers/magazines	36%
Travel Info Offices (VICs)	35%
Travel info via Mail	34%
Airline Reservation System	32%
Auto Club	31%

(Source: Growing Rural Tourism Conference, February 2004, Ag Tourism Research Family Feud)

TACTICS - Communications Content for Agri-tourism Promotions

When deciding on content for communications, whether it is in the form of your website or brochures remember some of the following items. These are things that respondents indicated they would like additional information on when they plan a trip.

- 20% want information on **facilities** that are available
- 17% want information regarding **activities**
- 13% want information on **accommodations** available
- 16% want information regarding **costs**
- 9% want information regarding **distance** or location
- Other: information related to animals, general safety and first aid information, and availability of food and types of food available.

Source: Alberta Economic Development, Tourism Insights, January 30, 2004, Volume 2, Issue 1.

TACTICS - Travel Alberta In-Province Marketing Assistance

The Trail of the Buffalo Tourism Marketing Group is a good example of a recent success story within BRAED. The overall process for positioning the Trail of the Buffalo product was facilitated by Travel Alberta In-Province (Bill Ozard). The following Marketing Plan Template was utilized to build the marketing plan and would be similar for other groups within BRAED.

- ❑ **Situational Analysis** (brief description of background, area, personnel)
- ❑ **Goals and Objectives** (qualify if possible: market share, increase visits, increase awareness, improved distribution, conversion, return on investment)
- ❑ **Description of Product Service** (target markets, marketing aspects of product service, partners, suppliers, competition, etc.)
- ❑ **Strategies** (positioning, communication plan, pricing, if applicable, branding or design elements, promotion, distribution)
- ❑ **Tactical Plan** (the “how-to” portion of the strategies, who will be responsible, completion dates of the tasks)
- ❑ **Performance measure** (participating partners, leveraging of funds, other measures such as response, attendance, web site hits, etc. Should also include time frames)
- ❑ **Budget** (planned expenditures for each of the tactical activities)

Each project must be evaluated upon completion, showing how actual activities and spending compared to planned activities and spending. Summary should also have recommendation for next year. (Travel Alberta, July 2001).

CONCLUSIONS

BRAED's tourism challenge is one of aligning regional priorities among the various providers and business organizations to enable a collaborative approach to dedicate scarce financial resources to a common goal – increased tourism activity. The BRAED advantage includes a Travel Alberta observation that rural tourism is the best area for future growth in the province. Local and regional 'hot spots' are emerging within BRAED that require a necessary amount of hand-holding, until the idea either grows or is set aside.

Organizational help is available from Travel Alberta (Edmonton) and Alberta Agriculture AAFRD) to assist in growing rural tourism. The AAFRD initiative for Growing Rural Tourism is timely for the BRAED region as traditional agriculture practices continue to face an uncertain future. The 2005 Centennial celebrations offer another stepping stone that could be used to influence behaviour patterns of the travelling public for the long term.

Attached is the 2002-03 report from the Alberta Central Tourism Destination Region office outlining marketing expenditures for the overall TDR region. Expenditures from the TDR for tourism marketing within BRAED are not available for this report. However, the Alberta Central Tourism Destination Region as a whole spends a significant amount on a variety of programs, most which impact BRAED.

Appendix Item:

Marketing Expenditures For Tourism Within the Alberta Central Region

(see separate document)