



Easy? Right...  
Challenges to Sustainable Tourism in the North

Facilitator:  
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GreenStep Solutions



# Before we start...

- Destination Northern Ontario
  - **GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Certification**

# GOLD!



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# Agenda

- 01 | Sustainable Tourism 101 - Key Definitions & Terms
- 02 | Core Sustainable Tourism Concepts
- 03 | Northern Challenges
- 04 | Taking Action
- 05 | Starting Your Journey - Vision



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# Introduction

- Business Development Executive with GreenStep since January 2024
- From 2015 to 2023, Account Manager - Travel Trade, International & Emerging Markets (sustainable tourism) with Destination Sherbrooke
  - GSTC Professional Certificate - Summer 2021
  - Sustainable Tourism Policy - February 2022
  - Strategy and Action Plan - February 2023
  - Eastern Townships sustainable tourism steering committee member
  - Destination Certification - Fall 2023
  - Co-created sustainable business cohort in Townships - Summer 2023

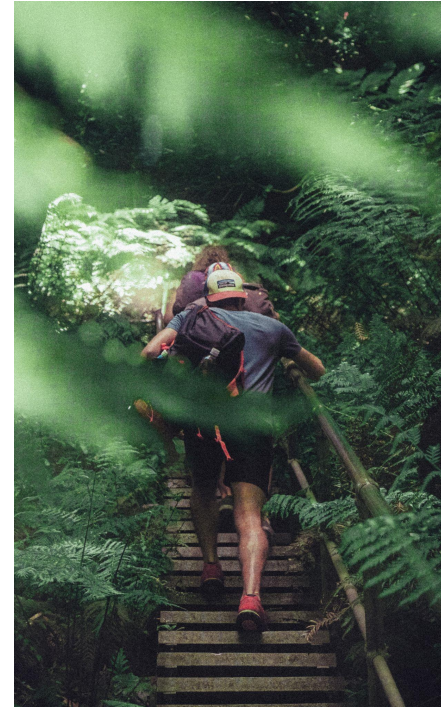




# Let's change the world...

## GreenStep Overview

- Founded in 2008 to help businesses and organizations measure and improve sustainability performance
- GreenStep provides industry-specific assessments, certifications, tools, and consulting support to help organizations measure and improve their sustainability performance.
- GreenStep is the only **Canadian-owned** company offering tourism business and destination certifications with criteria recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)



# Our Partners

GreenStep has worked with thousands of businesses across Canada and internationally with a focus on the tourism and hospitality industry



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**How familiar are you with the concept of sustainable tourism, and how to integrate sustainability into your business or organization?**

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# Introduction to Sustainable Tourism







*"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."*

**- Bruntland Report, 1987**



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS





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# What is Sustainable Tourism?

“Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.”





# Why sustainable tourism?

- Climate crisis caused by GHGs
- Tourism is responsible for +/- 10% of global emissions
- Client demand
- Staff demand
- Operational costs
- Regulatory/fiscal requirements
- The desire to do better





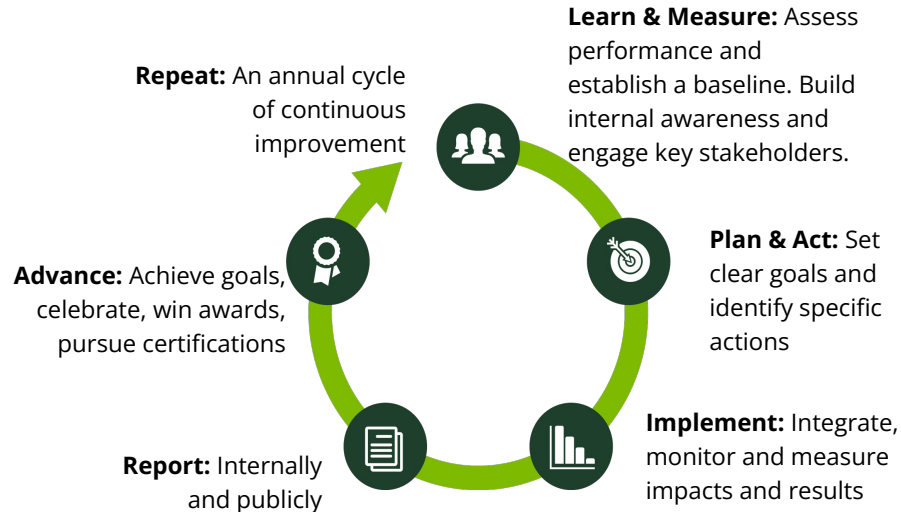
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# Core Sustainable Tourism Concepts



# GreenStep's Sustainability Framework

## The Sustainability "Cycle of Life"



# GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Criteria



**Management**



**Social &  
Economic**



**Natural &  
Cultural**



**Environmental**

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# How structured is your organization's approach to sustainability?

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# Management

*Effective sustainability planning and management.*

## Criteria:

- Action plan, measurable goals and tracking
- Employee engagement – sustainability team or lead
- Visitor engagement
- Marketing and communications





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## Social & Economic

*Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, and socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, contributing to poverty alleviation.*

### Criteria:

- Supporting social development
- Employment, training, equal opportunity
- Sustainable purchasing policy
- Accessible facilities and marketing





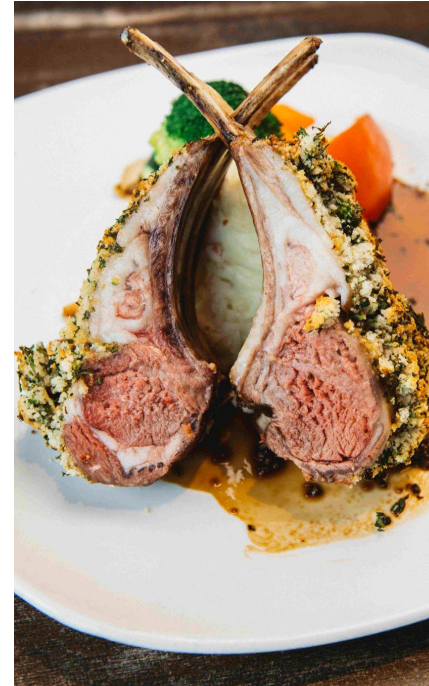
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# Cultural

*Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.*

## Criteria:

- Protecting cultural heritage, artefacts and living cultures
- Managing visitor interactions
- Interpretation and education
- Featuring local guides, arts and crafts





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# Environmental

*Maintain essential ecological processes and help to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.*

## Criteria:

- Resource consumption and conservation (energy and water)
- Solid waste and wastewater management
- Carbon emissions and transportation (fuel)
- Protecting sensitive ecosystems, biodiversity, landscapes
- Managing visitor interactions



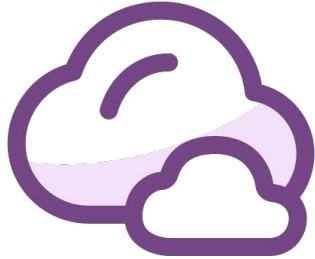


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# Challenges in the North



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**In a word or two, what do you see as the biggest challenge(s) to sustainability in the North?**

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# Sustainability Challenges in the North

- Environmental Impacts + Climate Resilience
  - Biodiversity threats
  - Climate Change
  - Natural Resource Dependence

**Quick! How many of you have had your operations impacted by climate change?**



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# Sustainability Challenges in the North

- Infrastructure + Accessibility
  - Limited Infrastructure
  - Costly Access to Renewable Energy
  - **Transportation Challenges**

**Quick! Do you operate on 100% renewable energy?**





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# Sustainability Challenges in the North

- Cultural + Community Engagement
  - Respect for Indigenous Communities
  - Local Buy-in and Education
  - Franco-Ontarian Tourism Development
  - Seasonality + Economic Dependence

**Quick! How many here operate year-round?**



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# Sustainability Challenges in the North

- Economic Challenges
  - Balancing Growth with Conservation
  - Funding for Sustainable Practices
  - Labour Challenges + Training

**Quick! Do you have the resources to improve sustainability in your operations? The time?**



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# Sustainability Challenges in the North

- Waste Management + Pollution
  - Waste Disposal Challenges
  - Water Quality + Usage
  - Lack of Standardized Regulations
  - Disparities - North vs. South

**Quick! Do you have access to recycling, composting, waste removal, or an eco-centre?**



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# Taking Action





# Management

A woman with long blonde hair is seen from behind, looking out over a vast mountain valley. The landscape is filled with snow-capped peaks, dense evergreen forests, and a winding river. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. The woman is wearing a red jacket.



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## Section 1: Management

- We have a vision or mission statement related to sustainability.
- Staff are trained on our sustainability practices and policies, as it relates to their job responsibilities.
- We have documented policies and procedures in place to reduce our energy and water consumption by staff and guests.





# Social & Economic

A woman with long blonde hair is seen from behind, looking out over a vast mountain valley. The landscape is filled with snow-capped peaks, dense evergreen forests, and a winding river in the distance. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. The woman is wearing a red jacket.



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## Section 2: Social & Economic

- We encourage guests to visit, and purchase goods and services, from other local businesses and entrepreneurs. (We do this too.)
- We take efforts to improve the accessibility (i.e. digital, physical, cognitive, sensory, etc.) of our business to those with diverse needs.
- We participate in community projects and support local initiatives (e.g. volunteering, in-kind donations, monetary donations, collaboration with Indigenous partners and the Francophone community).







# Natural & Cultural

A scenic mountain landscape with a person's hair in the foreground. The image shows a vast valley with snow-dusted mountains, dense forests, and a winding river. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. In the bottom right corner, the back of a person's head with long, light-colored hair blowing in the wind is visible, looking out over the landscape.



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## Section 3: Natural & Cultural

- We are actively learning about the Indigenous history and culture of the land on which we live and work.
- We provide information to guests about the local culture and heritage, ecosystem, as well as visitor etiquette.
- We plant native species or xeriscape in landscaping.





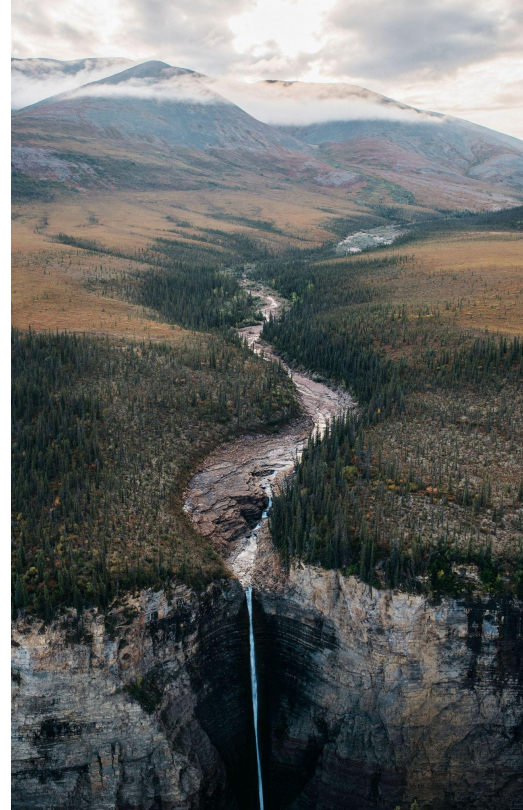
# Environmental

A woman with long blonde hair is seen from behind, looking out over a vast mountain valley. The landscape is filled with snow-capped peaks, dense evergreen forests, and a winding river. The sky is overcast with heavy grey clouds. The woman is wearing a red jacket, and her hair is blowing in the wind.

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## Section 4: Environmental

- Interior and exterior lighting is LED.
- Equipment and appliances are Energy Star Certified (or similar) models
- Water consuming equipment is EPA WaterSense or low-flow
- We have replaced or eliminated one or more single-use plastic items, amenities, or supplies.
- We reuse or recycle at least one waste type.





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# Starting your Journey - Vision



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# Quick!

## What aspect of sustainability impassions you the most?

**A** | Sustainable Management - I love me a good action plan!

**B** | Social & Economic - I'm close to my community and want to make sure it benefits from my operations.

**C** | Nature & Culture - Northern Ontario is beautiful both naturally and culturally, and I want to share it!

**D** | Environment - We are in a climate crisis caused by GHGs - that's my focus!



**TAKE THE** Sustainable  
**Tourism2030**  
Pledge



## How the Sustainable Tourism 2030 Pledge Works

**Step 1:** Make a public commitment to measure your sustainability performance

**Step 2:** Be recognized as a Pledge signatory and join the community

**Step 3:** Access the free GreenStep Sustainable Tourism assessment tool



TAKE THE Sustainable  
**Tourism2030**  
Pledge

 GreenStep

  
Tourism Industry  
Association of Ontario





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## Make a Commitment

- Formal, public statement
- On your website and cascade to other areas of your operations
- Internally to your teams



Northern Lights Resort & SPA has signed the [Sustainable Tourism 2030 Pledge](#), to demonstrate our commitment to improving the sustainability performance of our business between now and 2030.

The UN World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.”

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## 2030 Visioning

For your Pledge, picture a future where your business is celebrated as an industry leader in sustainability in Northern Ontario by **2030**. As a result of your ongoing initiatives, your team has set a new standard for sustainability excellence and is actively driving meaningful change.

**USE YOUR MAGIC WAND!**

## Example - Sustainability Vision

Guests engage in our sustainability initiatives and bring them home to their own community	We exceed Ontario energy efficiency standards	We are a carbon neutral property and have started working towards Net Zero
When tourists come, all their spending stays in the local community	Our property is recognized as a leader in sustainability in the industry, province and country	We establish and use metrics to regularly measure sustainability performance, track improvement, and quantify cost savings.



# Worksheet - Pledge Sustainability Vision


# Choose your own adventure!





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# Final Point: Sharing Your Sustainability Story

- Prominently on website
- Social media channels
- Briefing upon guest arrival
- Pledge for guests to sign
- Information posted in common area
- Engage your staff

**AND NO GREENWASHING/HUSHING!!!**



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# Questions?

## **Contact Information:**

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