



CANADA'S GROUP OF SEVEN TOURISM PRODUCT

"A MASTER PLAN TO DEVELOP AND LAUNCH GROUP OF SEVEN TOURISM EXPERIENCES IN NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO"

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1 CONTEXT FOR THE MASTER PLAN

The national and international reputation of Canada's Group of Seven artists represents an asset of great and growing value. The Group of Seven's association in selected areas across Northeastern Ontario provides the foundation for a range of tourism offers to attract visitors.

A consulting team led by ^{the} Tourism Company and including Bray Heritage and BC Hughes completed this project on behalf of Tourism Northern Ontario (TNO) under the leadership and guidance of a steering committee that included a range of stakeholders. It builds on the lessons and experience from the pilot project completed in the Algoma region, Sault Ste. Marie and the North Shore of Lake Superior.

There are three documents to refer to as each plays a distinct role in understanding the opportunity.

- The '*Foundations*' document completed extensive research to answer questions and provide information to understand the nature of the assets as a whole, to identify any limitations and to provide parameters for what is possible.
- This *Master Plan for Group of Seven Tourism Product Development* assesses the potential of a range of experiences, identifies actions and investments to support and facilitate the development and execution/delivery of a critical mass of Group of Seven offers across Northeastern Ontario that generate sustainable economic activity.
- A *Handbook to Design and Deliver Group of Seven Tourism Experiences in Northeastern Ontario* is customized for the region and is designed to be used as a reference by municipalities, public sector and private sector operators and tourism stakeholders. It provides inspiration and market intelligence to support development of new products and experiences.

Collectively these documents provide a combination of practical information and inspiration to support and facilitate the development of a set of new tourism experiences that ultimately contribute to the economic health and prosperity of the region. These are also living documents and as such require updating and refining as new information becomes available, market and economic conditions shift and experiences get introduced.

2 PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Highlights from analysis of the opportunity, detailed in the Foundations document under separate cover and the implications for product development are outlined below.

NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO MUST DIFFERENTIATE ITS GROUP OF SEVEN STORY AND RELATED TOURISM EXPERIENCES FROM OTHER REGIONS IN ONTARIO AND CANADA. Group of Seven offers in Northeastern Ontario must be compelling and different than those offered elsewhere. To do this, efforts should focus only on Group of Seven artists that worked in and created work specific to the region, as not all of the Group was active in the region. Franklin Carmichael and A. Y. Jackson have the strongest presence with Carmichael as the most prolific artist in this region in particular. By building a Group of Seven story distinct to the region, visitors will be compelled to travel to Northeastern Ontario to get another element of the overall story.

USE GROUP OF SEVEN EXPERIENCES TO ACT AS CATALYST TO LINK NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSETS THROUGHOUT THE REGION. In addition to the tourism opportunities generated by the Group of Seven, the landscapes and vistas that captivated and inspired the Group of Seven continue to capture the imagination of other artists that include artists Bruno Cavallo, John Hartman and Edward Bartram as well as First Nations artists Blair Debassige and Leland Bell. In addition, a strong arts community is active in the region, with numerous art galleries in Sudbury or area including La Galerie du Nouvel-Ontario and The Four Direction Arts and Crafts and the Temiskaming Art Gallery. Museums throughout the area tell many stories as well. Linking current artists to historical assets and resources builds a strong foundation for a rich arts and cultural experience in Northeastern Ontario.

LINK AND SHOWCASE GROUP OF SEVEN STORIES THROUGH TOURING PRODUCTS AND EXPERIENCES. Linking the stories in Killarney/La Cloche and Cobalt, supplemented by stories in the French River area and Mattawa, provide the region with the foundation for a range of touring opportunities. Sudbury and in particular the Art Gallery can play a key role as an urban gateway to rural itineraries and experiences.

FEATURES OF GROUP OF SEVEN TOURISM EXPERIENCES IN NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO....

1. Primary focus on offers ‘inspired by’ rather than experiences ‘in-situ’.
2. Delivered by operators committed to quality and authenticity.
3. Experiences centred on the artists, the landscapes and their works specific to the region.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT WILL BE SHAPED BY ACCESS AND PROXIMITY TO SPECIFIC SITE LOCATIONS. A vast majority of specific sites that were painted in the region, particularly in the La Cloche and Killarney Park areas, are accessible through a combination of water-access/hiking, which limits both the number and type of participant. The views that are easily accessible are in the Cobalt area and outside of Sudbury. Willisville is also a big part of the story and is easily accessible by road. This reality means that product development will likely focus primarily on 'inspired by' rather than 'in-situ' offers.

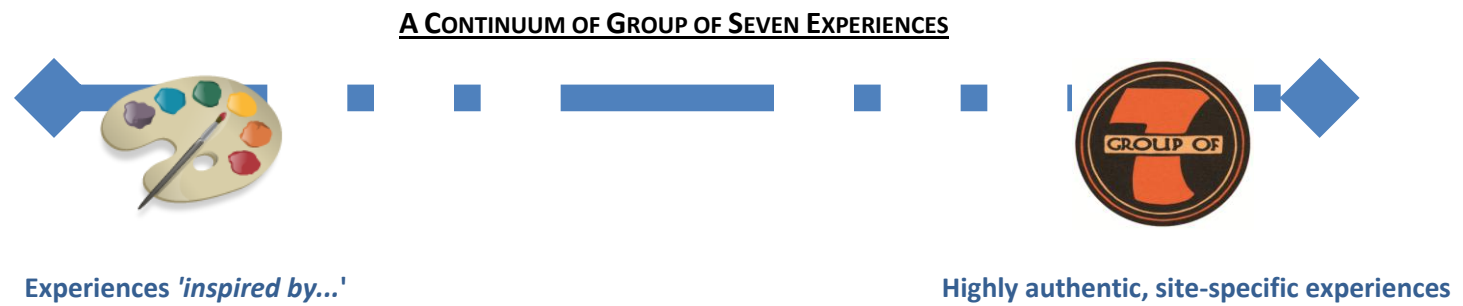
NEW OPPORTUNITIES WILL EMERGE AS THE DESTINATION AS A WHOLE EVOLVES. Changes to communities, parks, transportation options, accommodation and new development in general will impact the opportunities and may support new, upgraded or refreshed experiences. In particular, the planned re-development by The Art Gallery of Sudbury to expand and re-name it the *Franklin Carmichael Art Gallery* with an anticipated opening in late 2016 and the celebration of its 50th anniversary in 2017 provides milestones and can act as catalyst for new offers. The maturing and expansion of the *Festival of Seven* and the maturing of the broader cultural offer will enhance the overall experience.

EACH STAKEHOLDER, COMMUNITY AND OPERATOR WILL PROCEED AT THEIR OWN PACE. Overall development and progress will not be under any one party's control and as a result may be uneven. It will be important to keep momentum going with an overall coordination function to pull pieces together as they become available.

Benefits from the development of Group of Seven Experiences

- Opportunity is year round.
- Provides an integrated rural and urban experience which is attractive to visitors.
- Economic impact to both urban and rural economies.
- Little to no capital investment required.
- Natural resources are used in a sustainable manner.
- Attracts higher yield visitor.
- Contributes to and enhances 'sense of place' to the benefit of local economy at large.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AT A DESTINATION LEVEL IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN VISITORS ARE PROVIDED WITH A CONTINUUM OF OFFERS. The range of Group of Seven tourism possibilities includes intense, highly authentic experiences that will appeal to those avid about the Group of Seven and the arts in general to less intense offers that have a more passive interaction with the Group of Seven. Both ends of the continuum are important contributors to building a sustainable offer that provides a good balance to visitors and contributes to new or increased economic activity. As noted earlier, while in-situ offers may be somewhat limited, there are still opportunities for highly authentic offers in Northeastern Ontario.



SUCCESSFUL PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES REQUIRE DEDICATED RESOURCES AND SPECIALIZED EXPERTISE. Experience in supporting countless attempts to develop new tourism experiences reinforces the reality that an undertaking of this scope requires dedicated resources. These resources include volunteer time from engaged stakeholders, contracted specialized expertise at various stages as well as an overall coordination function to keep momentum going and to coordinate the many moving parts.

INVESTMENT INTO PRODUCT AND EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT IS EXPECTED TO ATTRACT VISITORS WHO SPEND MORE AND STAY LONGER. Investment into product and experience development of this nature is expected to drive new visits, extend stays and attract a different type of visitor to the region who spends more and stays longer. As noted in the table below, target markets for Group of Seven tourism experiences that include *Up & Coming Explorers*, *Connected Explorers* and *Overnight Arts and Culture visitors*, spend 3 to 4 times more per visitor per trip than the average overnight visitor to the area now. As a result, the area is expected to benefit from new and more economic activity.

AVERAGE SPENDING PER PERSON PER TRIP	
<i>Up & Coming Explorers</i> ³	\$947
<i>Connected Explorers</i> ³	\$862
<i>Average Overnight Arts and Culture Trip Spending</i> ²	\$667
<i>Average Overnight Trip Spending All Visits to Ontario</i> ²	\$374
<i>RTO13B 2010</i> ¹	\$244

Sources: 1: Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture, 2010; 2: Ontario Arts and Culture Tourism Profile, Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd. November 2012; 3: Consumer Insight Research 13B, TNS Canada, December 4, 2012

The Master Plan that follows acknowledges and responds to these product development considerations.

2.2 EXPERIENCE ASSESSMENT

An assessment of potential Group of Seven experiences in Northeastern Ontario is presented on the following pages, outlining the general concept, target markets, thoughts on who is most likely to develop/deliver as well as identification of resources that may be required. Examples of similar offers elsewhere are included throughout to provide inspiration. Additional details and examples are provided in the *Handbook*, designed for use by industry.

2.2.1 GROUP OF SEVEN EXHIBITS AND SHOWS

GENERAL CONCEPT

Art shows and exhibits with a connection to the Group of Seven can:

- motivate visits;
- extend stay themselves as part of a broader offer; and
- reinforce the region as a destination that inspired Group of Seven members and colleagues.

The two geographic areas with the most direct links to the Group of Seven in Northeastern Ontario are also areas that also have a history of art exhibits and shows as well as a limited number of original works of the Group and/or their contemporaries. Important milestones are also on the horizon:

- The Art Gallery of Temiskaming marks its 35th anniversary in 2015;
- The Art Gallery of Sudbury celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2017; and
- The La Cloche Art Show marks its 40th anniversary in 2018.

The McMichael Canadian Art Collection marks its 50th in 2016 and The Robert McLaughlin Art Gallery in Oshawa (Isabel McLaughlin, a contemporary of the Group of Seven was active in and around Cobalt) celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2017, additional milestones that can act as a focal point for shows, exhibits, partnerships and experiences offered in Northeastern Ontario.

Art shows and exhibits can be a catalyst for contemporary artists that might include for example, photography, sketching, painting with various media, as well as sculptors, musicians and actors. Exhibits can be curated shows hosted at traditional settings such as art galleries or exhibits in less traditional settings such as alternate venues, parks and other wilderness settings.

INSPIRATION

Vancouver Hotels Offer Special Packages for Art Lovers offers visitors a range of distinctive packages, created by each participating hotel, with special pricing, complimentary offers, and free express– admission passes to visit the Vancouver Art Gallery. Each of the hotels is located within walking distance of the Gallery. The same concept, linking the core gallery or show experience to a range of type and quality of accommodations can be applied in communities of all sizes.

TARGET MARKETS

- Connected Explorers
- Cultural Explorers

WHO WOULD DEVELOP AND DELIVER?

- Art galleries, art show organizers.
- Accommodation providers.
- Other package partners such as specialty retail, local cuisine providers, attractions, museums, and transportation companies.

RESOURCES REQUIRED TO SUPPORT

- Access and partnerships to Group of Seven works, stories and experts.

2.2.2 ACCOMMODATION-BASED HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES 'INSPIRED BY'....

GENERAL CONCEPT

Scheduled small group experiences at quality market-ready lodges, resorts, B &Bs and other character accommodations in a wilderness or non-urban setting, with a hands-on component focused on Group of Seven that might include:

- Photography, art in many forms; etc.
- Painting and sketching day trips;
- Re-interpretation of paintings using different sketching media; and
- Capturing exact painting locations.

Essentially, the accommodation becomes the venue for learning more about or actively participating in art-based experiences directly tied to and inspired by Canada's Group of Seven and their time in Northeastern Ontario.

INSPIRATION

Road Scholar offers a number of trips such as *Watercolor Workshop: The Story of Yellowstone Through the Eyes of Thomas Moran*, a six night experience where participants sketch along the trail of Thomas Moran.

TARGET MARKETS

- Connected Explorers
- Cultural Explorers
- Small meetings hosted at wilderness lodges.

WHO WOULD DEVELOP AND DELIVER?

- Accommodation owners/operators in partnership with local experts.

RESOURCES REQUIRED TO SUPPORT

- Local experts.
 - 'Speaking notes' specific to the artists and their stories in and around each accommodation location.
 - Site infrastructure conducive to painting/sketching at lodges.
-

2.2.3 GUIDED WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES

Review of the locations most frequented by Carmichael, A.Y. Jackson and others as they sketched and painted, concludes that a vast majority of them are accessible primarily through a combination of hiking, portaging and canoeing. This is particularly true in the La Cloche Mountains/Killarney area. Small group experiences, led by experienced guides familiar with Group of Seven painting sites and relevant stories will provide visitors with a unique perspective. These can easily be based at area lodges and resorts or be one part of a longer experience. A number are already offered in the region.

GENERAL CONCEPT

- Scheduled and custom guided wilderness experiences to see the actual sites of works produced by the Group of Seven.
- Guided wilderness trips themed as painting and sketching trips.
- Limited access trail experience to sites that inspired Group of Seven. There is a category of sites that will not be easily accessible by the general public but that would support small group visits, many of which already exist in Killarney Provincial Park. Trips to these sites should be led by guides who are trained to ‘travel lightly’ but also who have the knowledge and passion for the Group of Seven stories. These guides may be employees of established outdoor experience providers or independent interpreters hired by outfitters who want to add the Group of Seven heritage component to itineraries. Limited access makes the tourism experience attractive as the opportunity is perceived as a more ‘exclusive’ one that requires planning and commitment. Visitors are willing to pay a premium for these experiences and often join waiting lists, a feature that adds to the allure of a more exclusive experience. This type of experience becomes a draw and often an icon for international travellers.

INSPIRATION

Tom Thomson Experience – Backcountry Canoe Camping Trip offered by Treks in the Wild is a two-day, small group experience with maximum of 6 per trip, takes participants to areas associated with Tom Thomson in Algonquin Park including Canoe Lake where he painted and where there is a cairn erected by his friends. The overnight stay is on Tom Thomson Lake, named in his honour.

TARGET MARKETS

- Connected Explorers
- Parks ‘Adventurers’

WHO WOULD DEVELOP AND DELIVER?

- Wilderness outfitters.
- Provincial and/or national parks.
- First Nations communities.

RESOURCES REQUIRED TO SUPPORT

- Local experts/knowledge.
 - Exact location of sites.
-

2.2.4 GROUP OF SEVEN TOURING ROUTE AND OPPORTUNITIES

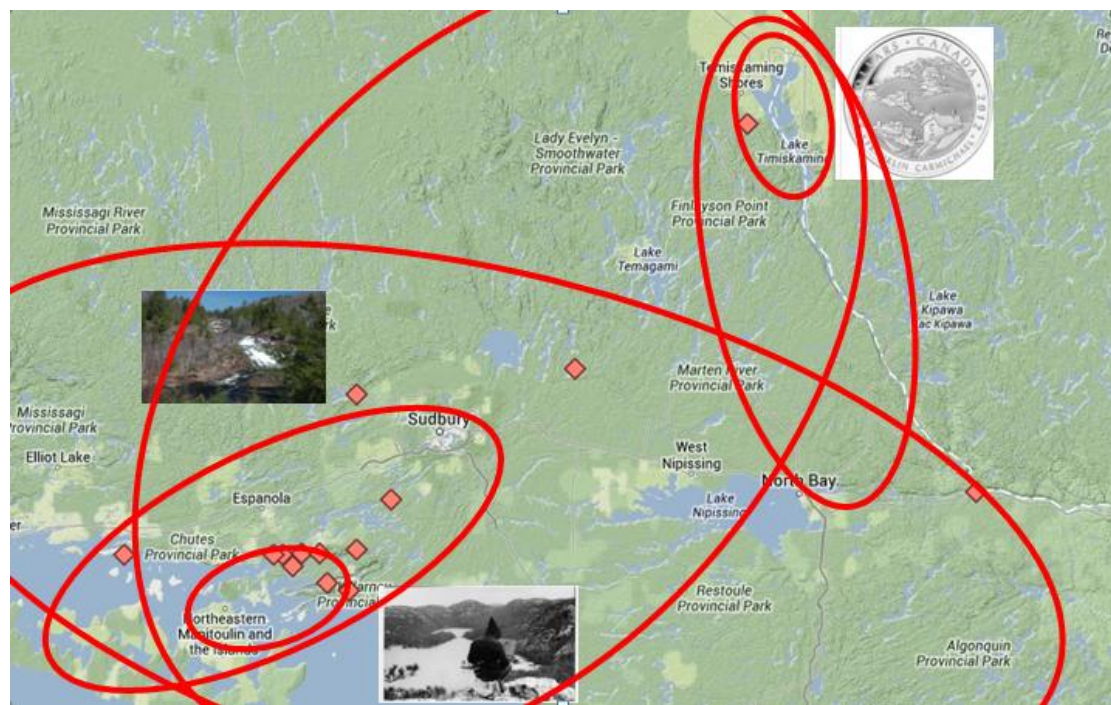
As noted, many of the sites in the La Cloche area are accessible only through a combination of water-access/hiking which mirrors how the artists themselves visited the area. While this limits the number and type of visitor to specific sites in that particular area, some views can be easily accessible by highway including those in and around Cobalt and the A.Y. Jackson Lookout outside Sudbury. Linking the stories in Killarney/La Cloche and Cobalt, supplemented by stories in the French River area and Mattawa, provide the region with touring opportunities and the means to engage more visitors in the Group of Seven in Northeastern Ontario.

GENERAL CONCEPT

For touring enthusiasts in Northeastern Ontario, the Group of Seven story represents a significant piece of history that adds value to the overall touring experience along a number of established routes including Georgian Bay Coastal Route, Lake Temiskaming Circle Tour and Great Legends Tour. Touring opportunities can be targeted to auto, motorcycle, and RV touring markets, broken down further to avid and non-avid art enthusiasts. The main criterion for assessing these experiences is that they must be easily accessible from major highway corridors with good road access and parking facilities.

A number of potential routes of various lengths have been identified for further examination, illustrated conceptually on the map to the right and include:

- La Cloche/Killarney/Willisville offering land and water-based routes on the mainland and Manitoulin Island.
- Sudbury as start or end to a route that includes Onaping Falls as well as the La Cloche/Willisville and Killarney loop.
- Temiskaming Loop encompassing the Temiskaming Art Gallery and the Cobalt story.
- North Bay to the Temiskaming experience.
- A Northern Ontario Group of Seven route that starts in Algonquin Park, moves to Mattawa, the French River to La Cloche, leading to the Algoma and North Shore of Lake Superior Group of Seven stories.



INSPIRATION

The *Hudson River Art School Trail* located in New York State is a multi-phased, multi-partner initiative that includes driving and hiking components is described as follows: *"The Hudson River School Art Trail takes you to the sites that inspired America's first great landscape painters, enabling you to walk in the footsteps of Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, Asher B. Duran, Jasper Cropsey, Sanford Gifford and other pioneering American artists, and to see the landscapes that launched the Hudson River School of Art."* This trail, located over a wide geographic area and developed in two phases over 8 years, provides visitors with a range of activities that include visiting the historic homes/work spaces of artists, seeing art exhibitions, hiking in the Catskill Forrest Preserve, access to one of the highest waterfalls in New York State, shopping at historic gift shops and eating at a restaurant overlooking one of the historic landscapes captured by these artists.

TARGET MARKETS

- Touring by car, RV or motorcycle
- Connected Explorers
- Cultural Explorers

WHO WOULD DEVELOP AND DELIVER?

- TNO.
- Northeastern Ontario Tourism.
- communities throughout the region.
- Parks Canada.
- Ontario Parks.
- Ministry of Transportation as it upgrades highways and rest stops.

RESOURCES REQUIRED TO SUPPORT

- Group of Seven Northeastern Ontario Touring Map Guide.
 - Standardized design for roadside signage.
 - Support from communities along the route to embrace the concept and customize to their location.
 - Scripts for local and step-on guides for group tour market.
-

2.2.4.1 MOTORCYCLE TOURING

Northeastern Ontario is a well-defined motorcycle destination with a number of routes throughout the region attracting riders from across Ontario, Quebec, and the upper US. The major appeal for riders is the landscape, the same landscape that drew the Group of Seven to the region. For motorcycle tourists, it's not just about the landscape and the roads enjoyed while on the bike. Motorcycle touring enthusiasts are always looking for that next place to pull over to share stories, take pictures, learn about the region, eat and drink and stretch their legs. The Group of Seven story is one that riders can relate to, as riding a motorcycle is all about adventure and becoming immersed in magnificent landscapes.

Motorcycle Visitor Experiences

- *Group of Seven Ride through Northeastern Ontario*
- Strategic, easily accessible, road side interpretive stories with motorcycle specific photo opportunities.

2.2.4.2 AUTO TOURING

Like motorcycle enthusiasts, visitors taking part in driving tours like to stop at scenic overlooks and points of interest to learn and capture memories of their trip. The Group of Seven story becomes another layer in the rich history of some specific areas within Northeastern Ontario.

Auto Touring Visitor Experiences

- Strategic, easily accessible, road side interpretive stories with auto specific photo opportunities
- A themed driving tour from site to site
- Vintage Group of Seven Car Rally

2.2.4.3 RV

RVers are drawn to the landscape and to parking their unit within it. RV owner groups with an interest in history and RV lifestyle such as Tin Can Tourist, Vintage Airstream and Bolorama would be intrigued by a Group of Seven RV experience.

RV Visitor Experiences

- Strategic, easily accessible, road side interpretive stories
- A themed driving tour from site to site
- Paint your RV within a Group of Seven Landscape
- Historical RV Rally

2.2.5 OFFERS TARGETING SPECIAL INTEREST VISITORS

Many of the experiences identified above will appeal to a range of general interest visitors who participate as an add-on to a trip or as the primary reason for their trip. There is also opportunity to narrow the focus of some offers to target special interest visitors. This sharp focus helps to narrow and define the elements of an ideal offer. It also narrows the marketing as special interest visitors are often easier to reach than the general travelling public through networks and clubs and influence. There are three areas of focus for special interest visitors - practicing artists, art 'auids' seeking an immersive experience and those interested in the academic side of the Group of Seven.

2.2.5.1 IMMERSIVE WORKSHOPS AND EXPERIENCES FOR PRACTICING ARTISTS

GENERAL CONCEPT

Northeastern Ontario can build on the legacy of the region as host of annual meetings of the Ontario Society of Artists and the Cobalt Artist Colony by adding more offers specific to the needs of practicing artists. Typically small group in nature, these types of offers can use a variety of venues that might include for example, a resort as home base with daily field trips or stay at an area hotel, with daily outings that combine wilderness and urban settings. The length and nature of the workshop can also range from weekend offers to more intensive retreats of longer periods and be designed to appeal to artists using a range of styles, materials and media, reflecting Carmichael's use of a variety of sketching methods that included oils, black conte chalk, Chinese brush and ink, felt or fountain pens and a reed pen he designed from knotwood. These offers can be hosted in the region by pursuing established events or by creating events specific to a community or theme.

INSPIRATION

The Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour (CSPW) '*Watercolour Canada Symposiums*' for participants of all levels. Workshops last from a weekend to five days and include presentations, demonstrations, hands-on workshops, slide shows and critiques. Participants travel to a number of 'spectacular surroundings' for on-site painting. *Healing Art Journeys* in Andalucia, Spain offers both 'personal retreats' and 'guided retreats' with a minimum recommended stay of 5 days. Guided retreats include one daily session with the host artist. The '*Artist, Writers, Musicians Retreat*' is a week-long session that starts with storyboarding to kick-start the creative process.

TARGET MARKETS	WHO WOULD DEVELOP AND DELIVER?	RESOURCES REQUIRED TO SUPPORT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized art clubs and organizations, art schools. Social groups seeking instruction or 'introduction to' workshops. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation providers. Experts with established brand. Formal and informal leaders of art clubs and organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Venue suitable for working artists including weather-proofed working space, clean-up and preparation areas, easels to display/share, etc. Located at or with easy access to inspiring vistas.

2.2.5.2 MULTI-DAY, IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES LINKING GALLERY AND IN-THE FIELD EXPERIENCES

GENERAL CONCEPT

A number of themes lend themselves to topics to be covered in enrichment programs and immersive experiences such as those led by Road Scholar and University Alumni travel groups. Group of Seven-specific lectures could be part of a program that is part lecture, part in-situ hosted at area lodges/resorts/B&Bs, be the foundation of symposia or be delivered as part of a broader program for local residents through the Art Gallery of Sudbury, Laurentian University, Temiskaming Art Gallery and/or other university, college and gallery partners throughout the region. Potential itineraries to link an art gallery experience with 'in the field' experiences as described below.

- Start at Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) with tour of Canadian Gallery's Group of Seven collection; alternatively or in addition tour the McMichael Canadian Art Collection; fly into Sudbury for evening reception at Art Gallery of Sudbury or other local venue(s) and overnight stay; travel to La Cloche/Killarney area for guided experience. Alternatively or on another day, travel to Cobalt and area, with a specially-designed visit/tour at the Temiskaming Art Gallery as well as touring area sites and culture.
- A group of art gallery members (AGO, National Art Gallery or other) participate in a lecture series that has an added option to travel to Sudbury, Killarney and/or Cobalt as part of a multi-day offer; led by established expert/curator/academic.

INSPIRATION

'*Art on the Edge: Newfoundland Arts and Crafts*' 10 day trip led by Jonathan Smith, Permanent Collector Curator at the Burlington Art Centre; offered by Worldwide Quest, a Canadian company. The 9 day *Aboriginal Art & Culture of Australia*, offered by Artisans of Leisure, begins in Sydney with private tours of top museums and art galleries that specialize in Aboriginal art prior to flying too Uluru (Ayers Rock) for immersion into Aboriginal culture and rock art. This tour includes an exclusive private helicopter excursion to see remote ancient cave paintings on traditional lands.

TARGET MARKETS	WHO WOULD DEVELOP AND DELIVER?	RESOURCES REQUIRED TO SUPPORT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High value domestic, international visitors. • Member groups from art galleries and museums. • Alumni groups from Universities with arts-based tourism offers and/or arts faculties. • Adult learning tour operators such as Road Scholar and Adventure operators such as G-Adventures, Worldwide Quest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple partners including art galleries, hotels, restaurants, marina operators, parks, airlines, local experts, make it complex; may need third party coordinator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exact locations of sites to be visited in region. • Experts on the Group of Seven in the area. • New or enhanced trails. • Art kit as part of experience.

3 A FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE DEVELOPMENT OF GROUP OF SEVEN EXPERIENCES IN NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO

3.1 VISION

The tourism sector in Northeastern Ontario will work together to design and deliver a range of new and enhanced tourism opportunities inspired by the Group of Seven's presence in the region to attract new visitors, extend stays and increase spending in the region.

3.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Northeastern Ontario Tourism will do this by:

- focusing first efforts in three areas – La Cloche, Sudbury and Cobalt – to generate a critical mass of offers for out of region visitors.
- leveraging the *Festival of Seven* concept and event, initiated by the Art Gallery of Sudbury in 2013 as the umbrella to showcase relevant experiences;
- taking a long term view and phased approach to building sustainable products and experiences that showcase the area's Group of Seven assets: this approach includes regular updating and refreshing of available offers;
- working in close partnership with intra-and inter-regional partners to design, deliver and market these experiences;
- adopting a 'portfolio approach' to product development that recognizes the value of investing into a mix of mainstream and specialized experiences;
- investing in tools and resources common to all; and
- developing and launching an overarching marketing campaign tying the various offers together.



3.3 PRODUCT PRIORITIES

Northeastern Ontario Tourism will focus initial Group of Seven product development efforts on highest priority opportunities based on yield and ability to deliver as follows:

1. Building on and expanding ***Group of Seven exhibits and shows in both formal/traditional and informal/non-traditional settings.***
2. ***Accommodation -based and guided wilderness experiences*** to showcase and experience the wilderness that inspired the artists in the region.
3. Self-guided ***touring routes and itineraries*** of varying lengths in both urban and rural settings that connect and highlight the region's Group of Seven artists, stories and sites that were painted.
4. ***Offers targeting special interest visitors*** that include:
 - immersive workshops and experiences for practicing artists that build on the legacy of the region hosting annual meetings of the Ontario Society of Artists and the historic links to the Cobalt Artist Colony;
 - 'Group of Seven avids' seeking an immersive experience linking gallery and in-situ experiences; and
 - academic, learning and enrichment offers that might include curriculum-based courses, symposia or academic-based meetings/seminars.

Detailed recommendations for product development and marketing follow.

4 FOUNDATIONS FOR THE PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN

As specific action plans around the highest priority tourism experiences advance, it will be important to invest into and support a number of foundations as outlined below.

4.1 KEEP THE GROUP OF SEVEN STORY AND ASSETS AS THE CENTRE OF ALL EFFORTS

Northeastern Ontario Tourism and its partners must remain firmly focused on experiences and stories that are not only specific to the region but that also have a direct link the Group of Seven story and artists specific to the region. Otherwise, the offer loses the opportunity to leverage the story in an effective and sustainable manner.

It is easy to embrace a new opportunity in tourism and try to fit any and all related offers in. With a subject as iconic as Canada's Group of Seven and with its deep history not only in Northeastern Ontario but across Canada, it will be important not to dilute the offer by adding in anything remotely connected to art and artists. By keeping the Group of Seven story and assets at the centre of efforts and designing experiences and offers that are true to their story specific to Northeastern Ontario, this initiative will act as a catalyst for new visitors who will engage in other activities, eat in restaurants, buy local cuisine and goods and stay in a range of accommodation.

The Group of Seven tourism product in Northeastern Ontario has four basic elements – the landscapes and towns that were the subject of the paintings and sketches, the paintings and sketches, the painters and the natural assets unique to Northeastern Ontario. The range of mainstream and more specialized offers that will be the focus of product development efforts will be strengthened by association with and endorsement of the official art institution in the area, the Art Gallery of Sudbury (AGS). As the local 'keepers of the academically correct stories', the institution should be positioned as a key stakeholder and advisor as product and experience development evolves. The AGS can also provide links to art and art history faculties across the country, other galleries and curators and local art students who in turn may be trained to act as guides for some experiences.

The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is another interested party that is keen to play an advisory or support role as products and experiences are developed, as much of their mandate, expertise and collections are based on the Group of Seven. Association with, or endorsement by, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection will increase credibility and reach in many areas.

1. **Engage and reach out to art galleries as advisors, influencers, and facilitators** to make connections or as partners in the delivery of some experiences. With their active and regular involvement, the four elements of the core product - the landscapes and towns that were the subject of the paintings and sketches, the paintings and sketches, the painters and the natural assets unique to Northeastern Ontario – will remain at the centre of all efforts.
2. **Screen all offers that are showcased under the Group of Seven brand to ensure there is a direct link to the Group of Seven story in Northeastern Ontario.**

4.2 INVEST IN PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT TOOLS & RESOURCES COMMON TO ALL EXPERIENCES

The standalone *Handbook to Develop and Deliver Group of Seven Tourism Experiences* provides a wealth of practical and useful information for adoption and use by individuals as well as communities. There are also a number of other tools, common to all, that should be developed and updated on a regular basis as detailed below. These tools should be made available to any interested parties.

1. **List of local Group of Seven experts/resources to support a number of specialty, authentic offers to bring the stories to life.** Some of these will be more formal and include curators, historians, authors and university professors, while others will be local residents scattered throughout the region who have a personal connection to the Group. While the *Handbook* will provide a starting point, it is important that this resource remain as up to date as possible.
2. **List of Group of Seven experts/resources from outside the region.** In addition to in-region resources, some experiences will benefit from the involvement of credible and endorsed experts from outside the region. The involvement of national and international curators and subject-experts will play a key role in attracting some affinity markets in particular, as these travellers will be motivated to travel to spend time with such these experts.
3. **List of other experts to support delivery of experiences.** Many of the identified experiences would benefit from expertise in other areas that include for example photographers, artists of various media, historians and amateur theatre groups to bring characters to life.
4. **Oral histories from local residents.** Collection and organization of these stories can be done using students from a local high school, college or university studying video production. A call-out to residents to be a part of this initiative and how they can be involved is recommended. The *Handbook* provides guidelines on how oral histories can be gathered.

5. **Catalogue of 'speaking notes' and scripts customized by sub-area of region for local use and knowledge.** This type of tool will be useful when considering product and experiences to be developed, training and orientation for seasonal front line staff at lodges, hotels, restaurants, retail outlets and outfitters and for communities hosting group tours.
6. **Adapt design guidelines that have been completed for the Algoma Group of Seven story for interpretive and identification signage to be used at designated scenic lookouts in Northeastern Ontario.** Designation of a limited number of sites along roadways, around Cobalt and in related parks in particular, will play a role in establishing a Group of Seven Tour Route across Northeastern Ontario. In order to build a brand, a common design should be developed and implemented. Ideally, these design guidelines should share some common elements or tie into Group of Seven interpretive panels planned for the Algoma and North Shore Lake Superior region, customized to the stories and brand of Northeastern Ontario. This approach would further expand the offer for the visitor and provide a larger footprint to showcase and sell.
7. **Build image bank to be featured in marketing materials.** As new experiences are introduced, it will be important to collect professional-level images and video footage to be used in marketing efforts that reflect visitors engaged in activities and experiences.

4.3 ADOPT AN INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION MODEL TO GUIDE PARTICIPATION

In order to be sustainable and build a critical mass of quality offers and experiences, it is important to work with industry and community partners who are able to commit to this initiative over a number of years. Clarity around who does what will be an important factor to gaining support and participation.

1. **Screen interested suppliers for tourism market-readiness.** By using a self-assessment screening tool, interested suppliers will understand what expectations are for their involvement in designing and delivering Group of Seven tourism experiences. If they meet minimum requirements of the screening criteria they should then invest into gaining endorsement as a *Group of Seven Knowledge* expert. If they do not meet minimum screening criteria and are interested in delivering Group of Seven experiences, they should address any gaps in a timely manner prior to undertaking development of Group of Seven offers.

2. **Encourage operators to become an “endorsed Northeastern Ontario Group of Seven Knowledge Expert”.** Designation as an ‘endorsed Northeastern Ontario Group of Seven Knowledge expert’ will elevate the range of experiences offered and also add credibility in the eyes of those visitors that seek a highly authentic and academically correct experience. While the process to become designated as an ‘endorsed Northeastern Ontario Group of Seven Knowledge expert’ requires development, it is an important element to ensure authenticity and commitment to the artists and their work specific to Northeastern Ontario.

3. **Implement a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for signature by Northeastern Ontario Tourism and participating industry partners to guide efforts.** Some investment has already taken place to support this initiative and ideally will continue with support and investment of time and financial resources by a number of partners. Development of an MOU that outlines responsibilities of both NEONT Tourism and individual industry partners whether it is a community or individual operator should address such items as financial commitments, product development initiatives, marketing support and timelines. This MOU can be multi-year, with annual review and renewal based on agreed-to criteria and considerations. Specific requirements for market readiness and Group of Seven knowledge should be included in the MOU as one means of building authentic and credible experiences. A suggested approach is included in an Appendix.

Sample of Market Readiness Screening Criteria

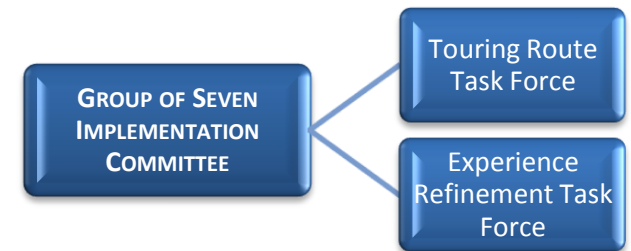
1. Do you have a history of at least three (3) years of successful operation?
2. Do you maintain good standing of all applicable business licenses, insurance, legislative requirements, health and safety certification standards?
3. Can you take advanced registrations?
4. Do you accept credit cards or on-line payments?
5. Do you respond to consumer inquiries within 24 to 48 hours by phone or email?
6. Do you provide confirmation of bookings within 24 hours?
7. Are there satisfactory on-line reviews by customers?
8. Do you have a customer complaints process in place?
9. Do you have a cancellation policy in place?
10. Do you maintain a current web presence through a dedicated website and/or social media?

Source: ^{the} Tourism Company

4.4 PROVIDE LEADERSHIP AND DEDICATED RESOURCES

This is a multi-layered initiative that requires leadership and dedicated resources to bring the vision to fruition. More specifically, the development and launching of a range of Group of Seven tourism experiences in Northeastern Ontario requires oversight through designated champions to advance experience development on a regular basis and paid professionals to advance specific initiatives. Both will be most active and relevant in the next three years.

1. **Establish a *Northeastern Ontario Group of Seven Implementation Committee* and related Task Forces.** This committee will be made up of volunteers that act as community and stakeholder champions to keep momentum on this project going. Their role would be to continue to coordinate and share relevant initiatives as well as acting as a sounding board for individual initiatives. Members should bring a range of skills to the table as well as good geographic diversity. There should be representation from Festival of Seven decision-makers to ensure there is a direct and on-going link between experience development and the Festival. While time commitment does not need to be (nor should it be) onerous, participants should have some knowledge of and commitment to implementation of this plan as presented and the priorities identified. This is not intended to create a new organization but rather is an action-oriented committee that should be wound down once momentum has been established and results are being seen.



Two Task Forces should also be established to support specific initiatives that could include for example:

- *Touring Route Task Force* leading initiatives to identify, support and develop touring route itineraries and offers; and
 - *Experience Refinement Task Force* to provide oversight to all initiatives including screening to ensure that there is a direct link to the area's Group of Seven story.
2. **Invest in specialized and dedicated skill-sets to advance product development priorities.** The most successful product development initiatives are a result of many one-on-one meetings, support, cajoling and mentoring with front line operators and other stakeholders. This level of effort acts a catalyst, making action a priority. To be effective, it is recommended that NEONT Tourism:
 - Engage a contracted experience facilitator to work with operators to design and deliver accommodation-based, wilderness offers and experiences for special interest visitors; and
 - Engage a contracted touring development expert to work with stakeholders/operators to support, guide and coordinate the touring route and related itineraries.

4.5 FACILITATE CONNECTIONS

Current and future Group of Seven tourism products and experiences across Northeastern Ontario are positioned throughout a broad geographic region. In order to build a stronger set of experiences, it will be important to ensure that 'connections' are nurtured and facilitated as follows:

- Connecting Sudbury in particular, but also North Bay, as urban gateways to wilderness and rural experiences in order to generate overnight stays both before and after visits to the region;
- Connecting arts and cultural offers with Group of Seven offers, to extend stays in communities;
- Connecting the broader tourism sector (accommodation, restaurants, parks, attractions, marinas for example), with Group of Seven in Northeastern Ontario offers, to assist the visitor in building multi-day experiences in the region, as part of packages or as independent travellers; and
- Connecting opportunities to leverage partner priorities and funding programs.

These connections should happen at two levels – product development and sales. The connections for product development should be the responsibility of the Implementation Committee. Building connections for the sales function is well-suited to the on-line booking capacity of Sudbury Tourism and the planned reservation system being implemented across Northern Ontario.

5 PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

Review of market interests and priorities, aligned with the possibilities in Sudbury, Killarney/La Cloche, and the Cobalt area identified a number of high priority experiences for development. Each of the priority experiences requires some degree of product development – some more than others and will be somewhat dependent upon the interest and engagement of the tourism stakeholder offering the experience. The sales and marketing cycle differs by priority experience as well, influenced by the nature of the offer (general interest or niche) and lead time required to be effective.

A Product Development Action plan follows.

5.1 KICKSTART LOCAL INTEREST, KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION AMONG THE REGION'S TOURISM SECTOR

The first step to generating action is to inform and educate key stakeholders on the opportunity and to share the broader Group of Seven connection particularly in the Cobalt area.

- **Host two (2) invitation-only 'Engagement and Opportunity Identification Workshops' directed at industry partners most likely to take a leadership role in highest priority opportunities.** These full-day workshops, building on information from this initiative, will inform the tourism sector and community leaders about the highest priority opportunities, the Group of Seven assets in and around their immediate area and the broader region, target markets, their needs and how to reach them. These invitation-only workshops for market-ready partners should include the Group of Seven story specific to the region, working sessions around each of the priority areas in order to kick-start partnerships and planning and also provide an opportunity to gather insights on what experiences are currently being offered that can be positioned under the Group of Seven in Northeastern Ontario Tourism banner.

The design and facilitation of these workshops will result in individual action plans for experiences to be developed as well as who will be involved and next steps.

These workshops should be held in early Fall 2014, one in Sudbury and one in Cobalt area to build relationships and synergies around specific types of offers.

5.2 ESTABLISH ART EXHIBITS AND SHOWS AS CATALYSTS

- Compile a master calendar of existing and planned annual and special art exhibits and shows for a three year horizon, identifying those with a direct link to the Group of Seven. Review annually and update to reflect a three-year window.
- Identify any overlaps or gaps in Group of Seven-related offers for consideration by organizers of exhibits and shows.
- Share this calendar with tourism partners (accommodation operators, marinas, parks, municipalities, artists, etc.) on a regular basis, highlighting those art exhibits and shows aligned with Group of Seven in order to act as catalyst to build Group of Seven-related packages to attract out of market visitors as the main reason for travel or as another reason to travel. Ideally, offers would be overnight.

5.3 CREATE AND ALIGN EXPERIENCES TO EXPAND AND ENRICH THE FESTIVAL OF SEVEN

The *Festival of Seven* launched in 2013, provides a flexible foundation and umbrella under which a number of experiences can be developed and marketed. The underlying philosophy for the Festival of Seven is to encourage people to 'get out and experience the landscape' that inspired and is reflected in the works produced by the Group of Seven.

- Reach out to area partners to identify offers that fit under the *Festival of Seven* philosophy and expectations at key points of planning.
- Share annual themes, timeframes, gaps in offers the Festival wishes to fill and marketing timelines.



5.4 IGNITE DEVELOPMENT OF ACCOMMODATION-BASED & GUIDED WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES

- Host regular networking opportunities, specific to Group of Seven offers, to connect those interested in collaborating to deliver experiences and to share front-line experiences and intelligence as offers are enhanced and added.
- Share the master calendar of exhibits and shows, discussed above, as many of these may be tied into or be a feature of a broader offer.
- Offer '*how to develop authentic experience*' workshops. The CTC continues to position their Signature Experiences Collection as the premier way to sell Canada. Ontario's Signature Experiences (OSE) program has also been initiated as a means to identify and showcase truly compelling and unique visitor experiences. When a critical mass of Group of Seven experiences are developed, a workshop should be hosted for selected lodge and wilderness operators to enhance and enrich experiences under development. Ideally, a number of Group of Seven tourism experiences will join Ontario's Signature Experience program and CTC's Signature Experiences Collection.

5.5 DEVELOP GROUP OF SEVEN TOURING ROUTES AND ITINERARIES

The development and integration of Group of Seven touring routes and itineraries in Northeastern Ontario will take time and a coordinated effort.

- Work with communities and stakeholders to identify Group of Seven itineraries of lengths that vary from 1 to 2 hours, half-day, full-day and multi-day suitable to various modes of travel (car, motorcycle, RV, hiking, water-based, etc) and from various staging/starting points.
- Integrate into existing hard copy and on-line maps and storylines of existing routes already established in the region.
- Align touring routes with market-ready demand generators such as Great Spirit Circle Trail, Science North and Killarney Provincial Park.

5.6 BUILD EXPERIENCES FOR SPECIAL INTEREST VISITORS

Immersive workshops and experiences for practicing artists and multi-day immersive art gallery/in-the-field experiences each have established experts or skills at the centre of the offer. Northeastern Ontario has a number of resources at hand:

- residents in and around Willisville, La Cloche and Ontario Parks who are knowledgeable and passionate about the Group of Seven;
- endorsement and participation of Carmichael family members;
- the deep knowledge and credentials of Tom Smart, previous Executive Director, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, who is working with the Art Gallery of Sudbury on their development plans; and

- the knowledge, passion and following of Jim and Sue Waddington in their lifelong journey discovering, documenting and sharing "*In the Footsteps of the Group of Seven*".

Immersive workshops and experiences for practicing artists will benefit from connecting established artists from both inside and outside the region who have their own brand and following with unique venues and commitment in Northeastern Ontario.

- Showcase the opportunities and potential partners through area art galleries.

Multi-day immersive art gallery/in-the-field experiences are the most complex to organize and deliver due to the number of suppliers that should be involved to deliver a high quality, academically-endorsed offer. Ideally the experience should combine a gallery experience with in-situ experiences. It is also one of the most lucrative.

- Develop and host a pilot experience in close cooperation with hand-picked partners to be tested with an affinity group such as an Art Gallery outside of the region. Once refined, the offer can be marketed to a variety of affinity groups at various times of the year, with a particular focus on Art Gallery patrons and members and Canadian University Alumni travel groups. The development of this offer requires a particular skills-set and dedicated resources to coordinate the experience.

6 MARKETING NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO'S GROUP OF SEVEN TOURISM EXPERIENCES

When fully developed, the Group of Seven tourism experiences in Northeastern Ontario will appeal to a wide range of types of visitors, many of which will be a new type of visitor for Northeastern Ontario Tourism, Sudbury Tourism, Temiskaming Shores and other marketing partners. Marketing and selling to this new type of visitor will require investments into refined tactics, visuals, copy and messaging that appeal to them. Recommendations for marketing Northeastern Ontario's Group of Seven tourism experiences follow.

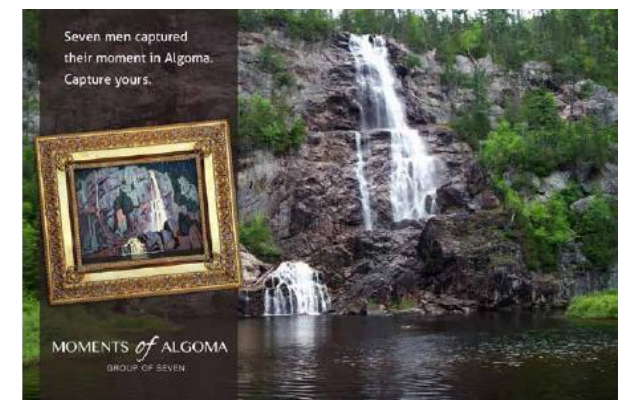
6.1 ADAPT AND ADOPT THE 'MOMENTS OF' GROUP OF SEVEN TOURISM BRANDING, CUSTOMIZED TO NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO

Northeastern Ontario experiences are currently positioned under the *Legends* theme. Group of Seven offers align well within this brand but in order to achieve maximum exposure and credibility with the consumer, it is recommended that Northeastern Ontario adopt the '*Moments of*' positioning. It is anticipated that all Northern Ontario Group of Seven products will be aligned within this consistent approach designed to:

- Create a larger consumer offer that encourages progressive visitation to multiple destinations;
- Connect all Group of Seven product under one unified brand positioning;
- Create a 'seal' of approval and demonstrate commitment to quality and consistency;
- Leverage existing original Group of Seven geographic icons under the 'Moments' theme i.e. Moments of La Cloche, Moments of Cobalt etc.;
- Allow regions to cross promote each other's experiences with consistent messaging;
- Create a scalable product that can be expanded to other like minded regions with significant Group of Seven experiences;
- Provide opportunity for a unified sales and marketing strategy;
- Provide greater reach in travel trade markets; and
- Create collective partnership opportunities with other stakeholders that might include for example McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario and the National Art Gallery.

A Brand Toolkit, customized to reflect the Group of Seven offers and stories specific to Northeastern Ontario must be completed and distributed to industry partners to ensure consistency in the market place. This toolkit would also illustrate how a Group of Seven brand would be integrated into other brands that include Northeastern Ontario Tourism and the Festival of Seven.

MOMENTS *of* ALGOMA
GROUP OF SEVEN 



6.2 OBTAIN RIGHTS TO USE A SELECT NUMBER OF GROUP OF SEVEN IMAGES

As part of the naming and branding the collection of offers, it is also recommended that NEONT Tourism adopt one or two iconic Group of Seven images in all marketing materials to position the Group of Seven experience in the marketplace. The use of a limited number of images, reflective of the stories and artists specific to the region, will play a role in establishing Northeastern Ontario as home to these types of landscapes and works.

Given the close association with Carmichael in particular and the iconic nature of Casson's *White Pine*, it is suggested that consideration be given to the iconic works presented below for use in marketing the region's Group of Seven tourism experiences. Paintings selected for inclusion in marketing and branding should ideally be located on protected public lands in order that visitors will have access to these sites in perpetuity.

Images from paintings or sketches associated with Carmichael are in the public realm while images from works associated with Lismer (2019) and Jackson (2022) entering the public realm in the next few years. Therefore, permission would need to be secured for use of Lismer and Jackson images, but not for Carmichael.

ICONIC PAINTINGS, LA CLOCHE



White Pine, A.J. Casson 1957
McMichael Canadian Art Collection

ICONIC PAINTING, COBALT



A Northern Silver Mine, Franklin Carmichael, 1930
McMichael Canadian Art Collection



Light and Shadow, Franklin Carmichael, 1937
Art Gallery of Ontario

6.3 INTEGRATE THE GROUP OF SEVEN STORY INTO EXISTING MARKETING TACTICS AND TOOLS

In order to build awareness of the Group of Seven connections in Northeastern Ontario, relevant marketing partners should add copy, visuals and maps specific to the Group of Seven. The La Cloche region and Cobalt should showcase the stories and characters unique to their immediate areas. This general awareness will lay the foundation and context for specific offers.

6.4 ADOPT MARKETING TACTICS TO REACH TARGET VISITORS

Due to the number and diversity of offers and types of visitor they will appeal to, a multi-pronged approach is required that will get the right message to the right audience using the right medium at the right time for each market segment. Much of this can be done working in partnership with OTMPC Northern Partnerships, OTMPC Corporate and CTC. Operators, Parks, Sudbury Tourism and other communities must all embrace the commitment to marketing these experiences. General marketing considerations are outlined below and should be considered as more detailed marketing plans are developed and implemented for each experience. Efforts to market Group of Seven experiences in Northeastern Ontario will be further strengthened when cooperating with other regions with Group of Seven offers including Algoma and Algonquin Park.

6.4.1 EXPANDING THE MARKETING REACH OF THE FESTIVAL OF SEVEN

As the *Festival of Seven* grows and matures, the tourism sector has the opportunity to work together to reach more and new types of visitors.

- Work with organizers of the *Festival of Seven* to develop a marketing framework for all parties to support and follow. This framework would outline, for example, expectations for offers included under the *Festival of Seven* brand to share hyper-links on gallery, operator, community and DMO websites as well as sharing offers with existing email databases and past guests/visitors.
- NEONT Tourism should add an 'arts and culture' email sign-up option as well as establish links with arts-related websites and blogs.

6.4.2 MARKETING THE TOURING ROUTE AND RELATED EXPERIENCES

- Integrate Group of Seven experiences, interpretation and vistas into motorcycling, cycling and water touring routes as appropriate.
- Coordinate efforts with Ontario Parks and 'Friends of Killarney' to continue to showcase and tell the story of the Group of Seven.
- Once the touring route is more fully developed:

- showcase on all area DMO sites that include Sudbury Tourism, Temiskaming Shores and Manitoulin Tourism for example;
- showcase the Group of Seven Touring Route on interactive maps on Provincial tourism website, the GoTourOntario.ca web-based mapping system and others relevant to the offer and target markets.

6.4.3 PRODUCE A GROUP OF SEVEN 'MAP GUIDE'.

The intent of this visitor's guide as map guide is to highlight self-guided touring routes to accessible and known sites or areas visited by the Group of Seven which in turn will support independent exploration of Group of Seven sites. Ideally, the map guide would not have commercial advertising to use limited space for listing and some lure content. There may be the opportunity to have the map done in partnership with private sector partners, but any partnership must keep the 'visitor first' lens in place. The physical size of the map guide should be pocket-sized for use while exploring the area. The type of paper should be heavy enough that it can withstand multiple uses. Once designed and produced, these map guides should be made available for download as well to be viewed on tablets and other mobile devices used by visitors and travel counselors alike.

The sign of a well-designed 'map guide' is one that has lots of wrinkles, some personal notes on it and is kept as a souvenir to share with family and friends back home.

6.4.4 MARKETING IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

- Build awareness through on-line tools (blogs, posts, videos, etc.) and traditional media targeting the arts and cultural traveller, using search terms, images and content that will appeal to them;
- Integrate a dedicated Group of Seven theme into NEONT Tourism digital strategy and tools;
- Leverage relevant OTMPC marketing tactics to reach arts and cultural travellers;
- Build an email database of parties interested in new offers by adding 'arts or Group of Seven' as a sign up option;
- Develop tour operator and media contacts that reach adult learning groups and organizations, affinity groups and art galleries/museums;
- Join newsletters for art groups, art galleries and related organizations to gain insights into partnership opportunities; and
- Submit media releases to newsletters for art groups, members of art galleries, etc.

6.4.5 MARKETING SPECIAL INTEREST EXPERIENCES

- Fully integrate into existing marketing tools and tactics, highlighting what is new annually; and
- Work with OTMPC media relations to submit stories and blog posts to general interest publications and websites, matching offer to readership such as those interested in Canadian art, industrial tourism, auto touring, etc.

6.5 DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS WITH THIRD PARTY PARTNERS SERVING TARGET SECTORS

In order to attract long haul travellers and the tour operators that sell to them, Northeastern Ontario must position the destination and experiences so they resonate with visitors who typically have a closer affinity with and knowledge of the key tourism focal points of Toronto and Niagara Falls. This will require a complete destination sell and showcasing of only the very best suppliers and experiences, particularly in initial years. This will also require developing relationships with new third party sellers and working closely with them to increase their knowledge and awareness of the collective offer.

Travel trade is more than motor coach tours. Travel trade, defined as third party sellers of travel experiences, includes tour operators, travel agents, wholesalers and in-bound tour operators. These travel trade partners sell destinations and itineraries to pre-formed groups, individuals who buy group travel and fully independent travellers (FIT) who may be on a fly/drive type of vacation in either a car or RV. Tour operators serving the RV and car rental market often provide itineraries and maps for both domestic and international travellers and, so, are important links to the independent traveller.

Group leaders can be formal or informal. Group organizers work with social, affinity and special interest groups or organizations that may have special interest in Group of Seven experiences in Northeastern Ontario due to the nature of their work. Marketing to affinity and special interest groups requires direct sales/contact and messaging as well as programming specific to that sector.

Due to the fact that group and travel trade sales are through third parties, the decision-making cycle can be as high as 18 months, particularly for overseas and long haul travel. There are, however, groups and some trade partners with shorter decision-making cycles who sell day trips to shorter haul travellers.

SELECT UNIVERSITY ALUMNI TRAVEL PROGRAMS CANADA

- Alumni Travel Program University of Toronto
- Alumni Travel Program, Concordia University
- McGill Alumni Friends and Travel Program
- Alumni Western – Discover the World Travel
- McMaster Alumni Travel Program
- Queen's Alumni Travel

- Work only with TICO licensed tour operators.
- Build relationships with major art galleries to customize travel programs for members and patrons.
- Build relationships with Canadian Alumni travel organizations using direct sales activities to build relationships. Within this university community, those institutions in a city with an art gallery with Group of Seven works are a higher priority and include University of Toronto, McMaster University and Western University for example.

Work with tour operators servicing the alumni travel market in Canada that include:

- Alumni Holidays (AHI)
 - Gohagan & Company
 - Worldwide Quest International
- Explore the US Educational Travel Conference as a means to build relationships that will generate business. This is a crowded market place with a focus on the US alumni market in particular. Efforts in the US market will be more successful if working with a group with particular affinity to and interest in Canada's Group of Seven.

6.6 EDUCATE AND ENGAGE VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES ON THE FRONT LINE

As Group of Seven experiences and products become more available, it will be important to keep tourism information centre staff at local, regional, provincial and national levels informed. Make a concentrated effort to invite travel counselors and other influencers to experience as many offers as they can so that they can speak about them from personal experience when responding to inquiries from visitors.

7 PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Successful implementation of this master plan requires commitment to the long term vision, as well as action in the short term to establish momentum.

7.1 THE LONG TERM VIEW

The timelines on the chart to the right provides a snapshot of when product development is most active, when sales and marketing is initiated and when the experience should be ready for visitors provides the long term plan. Ultimately, the timing will respond to resources and interest of the many parties involved and is not set in stone. Expanded and enriched Festival of Seven is an overarching theme.

Group of Seven Master Plan Implementation Plan for Northeastern Ontario							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
ART EXHIBITS AND SHOWS							
<i>product development</i>	█						
<i>sales and marketing initiated</i>		█	█	█	█	█	█
<i>available to consumers</i>			█	█	█	█	█
ACCOMMODATION-BASED & GUIDED WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES							
<i>product development</i>	█						
<i>sales and marketing initiated</i>		█	█	█	█	█	█
<i>available to consumers</i>			█	█	█	█	█
TOURING ROUTES and ITINERARIES							
<i>product development</i>		█	█	█			
<i>sales and marketing initiated</i>				█	█	█	█
<i>available to consumers</i>				█	█	█	█
OFFERS TARGETING SPECIAL INTERESTS							
<i>product development</i>		█	█	█	█		
<i>sales and marketing initiated</i>				█	█	█	█
<i>available to consumers</i>						█	█

7.2 ACTION PLAN FOR JUNE TO DECEMBER 2014

It will be important to initiate work on this opportunity in the next 6 to 9 months in order to capitalize on the interest, show momentum, but most importantly to support the development of buyable product for the visitor. A recommended action plan and initiatives required is outlined below.

	RECOMMENDED TIMING	RATIONALE
<i>Establish Group of Seven Implementation Committee</i>	As soon as possible.	This Committee is needed to direct all future initiatives recommended in this Master Plan.
<i>Engage a contract Experience Facilitator focused on development of touring route and itineraries</i>	As soon as possible	Specialized skills are required to support the development of touring routes and itineraries; design and delivery of <i>Engagement and Opportunity Identification Workshops</i> .
<i>Engage a contract Experience Facilitator focused on intensive, authentic and niche experiences</i>	As soon as possible	Dedicated to supporting development of multi-day, intensive experiences delivered by accommodation –providers, outfitters, art galleries and other cultural partners; design and delivery of <i>Engagement and Opportunity Identification Workshops</i> .
<i>Complete catalogues, inventories and story development tools.</i>	June to October	Completion of these tools will enhance all other product development efforts.
<i>Host two 'Engagement and Opportunity' Workshops</i>	Early Fall 2014	These workshops initiate all future planning by providing invited participants with the tools and knowledge they need to match to their own capacity and interest.
<i>Adapt and Customize Brand Toolkit</i>	For completion by September 2014	Customization of the Brand Toolkit can be shared with industry and stakeholders in workshops in Fall 2014, illustrating the potential, building buy-in and support over the long term.

7.3 OTHER INVESTMENTS

A number of other costs and new investments to be assumed by NEONT Tourism, TNO and or partners have been identified throughout this Master Plan. In order to facilitate implementation and planning, order of magnitude costs for common items are included in this section by broad level of cost. Please note: these are order of magnitude only and are based on the consulting team's experience. It is anticipated that members of the Steering Committee and other stakeholders will add their knowledge and experience to further refine cost estimates.

	<i>Less than \$20,000</i>	<i>\$20,000 to \$50,000</i>
Design and Produce Map Guide Note: size, format and materials used will influence the design and production costs.		■
Customize Guidelines for Interpretive and Identification Signage	■	
Install Interpretive Panels		■

7.4 INVESTMENTS BY OPERATORS, MUNICIPALITIES AND LANDOWNERS

It is anticipated that investments of varying order of magnitude may be made by a range of tourism partners that include Ontario Parks, municipalities and individual tourism operators. Investments will be into such initiatives as development or enhancement of trails and related infrastructure, development of experiences to be hosted at/by their operation or building of new structures to support experiences. Each stakeholder is advised to include estimates and plans in strategic plans to ensure they get implemented in a timely manner.

8 APPENDICES

8.1.1 SAMPLE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Group of Seven Product/Experience Development in Northeastern Ontario

'GUIDELINES FOR PARTNER ENGAGEMENT'

NAME OF TOURISM OPERATION OR COMMUNITY: _____

NAME OF MAIN CONTACT: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

'Product development' is one of four pillars in the Ontario Tourism Strategy that is now being implemented. The Northeastern Ontario Tourism Group of Seven Steering Committee (NEONT Tourism GSSC), is committed to working with you in the development of high quality, new or enhanced experiences that will drive new visits and spending to the region. These experiences must be available beyond one year and overnight stays are a higher priority than day visits.

We want to make sure that you understand both the benefits and expectations we have as we work together, so we thought it best if we wrote a few things down.

Commitment from Northeastern Ontario Tourism GSSC to you

1. **NEONT Tourism GSSC WILL WORK WITH YOU IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ONE NEW VISITOR EXPERIENCE FOR A MAXIMUM OF THREE YEARS.** Year One will focus on development and launching of the new experience. At the end of Year One, we will work closely with you to evaluate the efforts and make adjustments as required. Years Two and Three will continue with coaching as appropriate. We anticipate that the time required in each year will decrease and that by the end of this support your new experience will be well-established. Annual reviews are expected to include an evaluation from the customer perspective through on-line reviews they may post, a feedback form provided by you as well as conversations with you.

2. **NEONT Tourism GSSC WILL PROVIDE EXPERTISE AND SUPPORT TO YOU AS THE EXPERIENCE IS BEING DEVELOPED, AT NO COST TO YOUR OPERATION.** In other words, there is no cash involved – just time and expertise. This expertise, sometimes in person, other times by phone or email, will support you as required, providing support that may include assistance in development of a detailed operational plan for the new experience, assisting with detailed pricing, reviewing competitive prices and shaping marketing messages and tools. Support will be provided by an independent consultant retained by TNO or TNO staff.
3. **TNO MARKETING LEADS WILL DEVELOP MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES TO PROFILE YOUR NEW EXPERIENCE.** Your new experience will be profiled by TNO Marketing Leads to consumers and if appropriate travel trade through a variety of means that may include web, media releases, familiarization tours and travel trade. Algoma GSSC will provide an *Algoma Group of Seven Brand Toolkit* at no cost for use by you in marketing approved experiences.
4. **NEONT Tourism GSSC IN CONSULTATION WITH TNO HAS THE RIGHT TO DISCONTINUE THIS SUPPORT.** We hope it doesn't happen, but Algoma GSSC and TNO are obligated to invest into those new experiences that resonate with our target markets. If the experience we are working on with you does not come to fruition for whatever reason or the market does not respond, we will re-evaluate our investment with you and determine next steps.

Your Commitment to NEONT Tourism GSSC

By agreeing to continue to access support for the development of Group of Seven experiences through Algoma GSSC, here is what we would like you to commit to:

1. You will maintain all relevant licenses, safety accreditation and insurance coverage appropriate to your business.
2. You will please respond to consumer inquiries within 24 to 48 hours of request.
3. You will please resolve any and all customer complaints related to this experience. *NEONT Tourism GSSC* or its partners will not play any role in resolving customer complaints.
4. You will please designate one point of contact between your operation and *NEONT Tourism GSSC* (provide name and contact information in the space provided on page 1).
5. In addition to cooperating with *NEONT Tourism GSSC* and TNO Marketing Leads, you will market the new experience through your own networks and databases and incorporate into your ongoing marketing activities.
6. You will develop and post a landing page specific to this Group of Seven experience on your own website and include a call to action.
7. You will include the designated Group of Seven logo/image as outlined in the Brand Toolkit provided to you by *NEONT Tourism GSSC* on all marketing materials for this new experience, both print and on-line.
8. You will provide tracking or measurement reports and other insights specific to this experience to *NEONT Tourism GSSC* on a scheduled basis, to be agreed to in consultation with you and appropriate to the experience offered. Appropriate tracking will be determined in consultation with you but at a minimum is expected to include referrals from web pages developed by marketing leads and OTMPC (if appropriate) to your landing page, clicks on relevant landing page on your website, number of inquiries, number of bookings and media coverage.
9. You will respond to *NEONT Tourism GSSC* and/or relevant marketing lead requests for photographs, copy and other materials in a timely manner.

If you are in agreement with these '*Guidelines for Partner Engagement*' please sign this form below and return to:

NEONT Tourism

Please keep a copy for your file.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

8.1.2 BRAND TOOLKIT

The purpose of a brand toolkit is to create a Group of Seven tourism product logo and brand guidelines for use in all future Group of Seven tourism experiences developed and delivered in the Northeastern Ontario. This logo and brand would have the flexibility to be customized to other areas in Northern Ontario to provide a unified theme, customized by area of interest.

A process to develop a brand toolkit typically follows a number of steps as outlined below:

- Survey steering committee and up to five key art community connections for input into development of Group of Seven tourism product brand through a 5 to 10 question survey to determine the elements that should guide the brand development;
- Outline creative brief for logo & brand development;
- Adapt the 'Moments of' Group of Seven tourism product logo specific to Northeastern Ontario; and
- If required, refine Group of Seven tourism product logo and tagline in conjunction with discussion with Steering Committee & key art community connections.

The brand toolkit is then written and designed for use by a variety of parties as they market Group of Seven Northeastern Ontario experiences and includes

- Logo and tagline;
- Colour schemes; how and when they are used;
- Font; and
- Collateral design for up to five concepts.



8.1.3 INTERPRETIVE PANELS

Estimate: \$4,000 per panel

- 2' x 3' interpretive panel
- Assumes bulk purchase of interpretive panels (10-20 panels)

Includes:

- Interpretive planning (site visit, research and write interpretive text for panel)
- Panel design
- Panel photography (research, source and pay licensing for photography)
- Coordinate approvals and permissions with land manager
- Panel fabrication
- Panel installation

Note: panels require ongoing maintenance/repair to address the effects of weathering, vandalism and accidental damage. Responsibility for maintenance will need to be confirmed and a maintenance budget and schedule determined.

