



Destination Northern Ontario

A Francophone Tourism Plan for Northern Ontario



destinationnorthernontario.ca

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Destination Northern Ontario

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Vision

Northern Ontario will be a unique and distinctive tourism destination wherein high-quality products and experiences resonate with consumers, entrepreneurship is valued, and tourism provides local, regional and global connections for the entire region.

Mission Statement

In partnership with industry, Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) seeks to increase tourism, build capacity and advocate on behalf of Northern Ontario tourism.

Values

Destination Northern Ontario's Board is committed to focusing on the vision in an "innovative, results-based, effective and fiscally responsible manner, with a foundation of strong governance and management leadership." Destination Northern Ontario's Board also recognizes the following values as important aspects of the strategic plan:

- **Accountability**
- **Leadership**
- **Collaboration**
- **Integrity**
- **Transparency**
- **Innovation**
- **Teamwork**

Goals for Northern Ontario Tourism Sector

- Innovation and entrepreneurship are supported by research/educational tools
- Critical mass of high quality products/ experiences are brought to market
- Realistic/sustainable tourism development (i.e. product-market match) is underway
- Streamlined services for operators are available

Destination Northern Ontario's Roles in achieving Sector Goals

- Leadership
- Communication
- Strategy
- Relationship-building
- Champion for industry growth (bringing the operator perspective to government)
- Professionalism (setting a standard of high quality for the industry)

Background

Close to 10 million people in Canada alone are able to conduct a conversation in French. The large majority of these individuals are not aware that there exists such a large concentration of francophones in Northern Ontario.

This presents an excellent opportunity to build on our francophone tourism product to position the region to new domestic and global markets and/or re-position it to existing markets seeking new experiences. It also presents an opportunity to attract French speaking immigrants to the region as part of

existing immigration attraction efforts. This will however take more than simply marketing and promotion, it will take a real investment of time and resources dedicated towards developing, enhancing, and connecting the region's francophone tourism communities and product.

The French Language Services Act in Ontario (FLSA)

There are currently 25 designated areas under the Ontario's French Language Services Act. For an area to obtain designation under the Act, Francophones must make up at least 10% of its population; urban centres must have at least 5,000 Francophones.

RTO 13a

City of Greater Sudbury: *all*
 District of Cochrane: *all*
 District of Nipissing: *all*
 District of Sudbury: *all*
 District of Timiskaming: *all*
 District of Parry Sound: *Municipality of Callander*

RTO 13b

District of Algoma: *all*

RTO 13c

District of Kenora: *Township of Ignace*
 District of Thunder Bay: *Towns of Geraldton, Longlac and Marathon; Townships of Manitouwadge, Beardmore, Nakina and Terrace Bay*



Francophone Tourism – the Current Context & Research Findings

CASE STUDIES FROM ONTARIO, ACROSS CANADA & ABROAD

01 Villes et Pays d'Art et d'Histoire - France

Since 1985, the Villes et Pays d'Art et d'Histoire has been the official French "label" attributed by France's Ministry of Culture and Communication to a network of 190 French towns and communities with a focus on art and history tied to the development, preservation and promotion of French heritage be it natural, built, industrial, cultural, or architectural. To join the network, member communities must commit to a training program to meet the following criteria:

Showcasing cultural heritage in all its forms;

- Attracting and welcoming tourists;
- Creating awareness about cultural heritage among youth and the general public;
- Promotion of cultural heritage;
- Customer service training with a specific focus on developing in-depth knowledge of cultural heritage within the community (for guided tours; education; expos; etc.)

www.vpah.culture.fr



02 Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie (RVF) - Canada

Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie (RVF) is part of the events surrounding the Journée Internationale de la Francophonie (March 20), which is organized every year to promote the French language and its numerous cultural expressions. An initiative of the Canadian Foundation for Cross-Cultural Dialogue, the RVF celebrates Canada's Francophonie through more than 3000 activities which take place across Canada: community gatherings, ceremonies, shows, singing, theatre, poetry, film viewings, word games, contests, educational activities—in short, a whole series of events that provide an excuse for celebrating. By bringing together and listing the hundreds of activities organized by Francophones and Francophiles across the country, the RVF conveys the tremendous energy of the communities and regions, inviting partners and stakeholders to join the party by promoting these celebrations through the pan-Canadian event calendar.

<https://rvf.ca/en>



03 Réseau des villes francophones et francophiles d'Amérique

This consists of a network of over 140 francophone and Francophile cities and towns throughout North, Central and South America. The Réseau provide its members with a platform via a website and annual conference to connect and develop economic development and tourism partnership projects.

<http://villesfrancoamerique.com/circuits/index.aspx>



Réseau des villes
francophones
et francophiles

04 **Le Corridor du patrimoine, culture et tourisme francophone - Canada**

Le Corridor is a select range of Francophone heritage, cultural and tourism products in Canada that offer visitor services in French. The points of interest, cities, towns and tourism products that make up the corridor are linked to Francophonie through history, culture and language. The Corridor was launched in 2017 and consists primarily of an online trip planning tool to assist visitors in identifying quality francophone products that can be linked to develop travel itineraries.

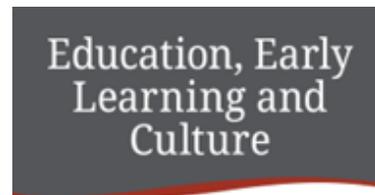
<http://corridorcanada.ca/?lang=en>



05 **Acadian and Francophone Cultural Tourism Product Services Fund - PEI**

Financial assistance available to non-profits to develop or promote a unique and innovative cultural tourism product that will attract Francophone visitors to PEI (e.g. service, festival or cultural experience). This fund supports up to 60 percent of a project or activity that has a strong Francophone component and will draw out-of-province visitors and encourage them to stay longer. Assistance towards marketing and product development projects such as festivals and cultural tourism products/experiences.

www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/education-early-learning-and-culture/acadian-and-francophone-cultural-tourism-product



06 **Aventure Nord - Ontario**

In 2016, the communities of Cochrane, Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing, Hearst and Dubreuilville embarked on an initiative aimed at targeting the Quebecois power sports riding market, which included developing a brand: Aventure Nord Ontario, and developing an off-road/off-trail power sports touring map available in print and online in GPS download format. The partnership has also initiated a training program to educate operators on catering to this particular niche market.

<https://aventurenord.ca>



Current Provincial Focus on Francophone Tourism

MINISTRY OF TOURISM, CULTURE AND SPORT & DESTINATION ONTARIO

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's Ontario Tourism Action Plan (2016) outlines 12 initial steps /actions the government will take to support the growth of tourism across their five priority areas, one of which refers specifically to Francophone Tourism.

Action Item #8 – Explore Opportunities for Multicultural, Francophone and Indigenous-led Tourism

Indigenous and Francophone tourism experiences represent important opportunities for Ontario in a competitive global tourism environment. Along with offering authentic tourism offerings, cultural tourism also provides an opportunity to promote and celebrate the province's rich diversity. The 2013 Ontario Travel Intentions Survey indicated that Aboriginal attractions were among the top 10 type of attractions that would increase visitor interest to Ontario. In addition, as home to the largest Francophone community in Canada outside of Quebec, there is significant opportunity for the province to benefit from an increase in Francophone tourism experiences.

The ministry will collaborate across government and with industry partners to identify opportunities to advance multicultural, Francophone and Indigenous-led tourism in Ontario. This will include evaluating options that assess market readiness, capacity building and an authentic promotion of both past and current cultural connections, including development on the Route Champlain and supporting the next phase of the Aboriginal Tourism 2020 strategy.

The Ministry has since supported the Société Économique de l'Ontario (SÉO) with all three phases of a project focusing on the development and implementation of various francophone tourism initiatives including:

- The Ontario Champlain Scenic Route
- ÉcorismoMD
- The Francophone Heritage, Cultural and Tourism Corridor
- National classification for services in French

The SÉO recently submitted their proposal for Phase 3 which includes reference to development in Northern Ontario in partnership with DNO. Specifically, said references are centered around:

- Supporting the development of a francophone tourism working group;
- further connecting the Circuit Champlain to the North;
- partnering on marketing campaigns;
- supporting the Nord de l'Ontario.ca portal;
- participating and supporting TEN activities and programs; and
- partnering on product development initiatives and strategies.

Northern Ontario's Current Francophone Tourism Situation

Northern Ontario is home to many bilingual and francophone communities that are well positioned to enhance their product and brand image to attract French speaking and culture seeking visitors.

Many efforts are currently underway to improve Northern Ontario's tourism product such as projects to develop better wayfinding, francophone routes, snowmobile offerings, and culinary tourism. While these are all worthwhile initiatives that will undoubtedly result in increasing visitation, little is being done to focus on promoting and developing

product with an emphasis on our francophone people and culture. Traditionally, the North's people have been consistently cited as motivating factors for tourists choosing to visit and for subsequently enjoying their holiday experience in the region, and placing further emphasis on this should be a priority.



Although the Northern Ontario Product Development Strategy does not list “francophone” as a focus item, francophone tourism touches each of the priority areas in different ways, be it through the availability of French language services, to cultural opportunities, to francophone communities.

Francophone Tourism experiences and products in Northern Ontario range in focus and include:

- Accommodations
- Agritourism
- Angling
- Art
- Culture & Heritage
- Cities & Towns
- Culinary
- Festivals & Events
- Hunting
- Motorsports
- Retail
- Touring Routes



Francophone Tourism Work Plan for Northern Ontario

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The objective is to **develop and grow** francophone tourism in Northern Ontario. With a focus on increasing operator and stakeholder capacity, the overall goal is to enhance the region's francophone tourism offer in order to attract culture seeking visitors, French speaking tourists and immigrants to the North. This can be accomplished by:

- Establishing a Francophone tourism working group;
- Identifying, assessing, and communicating the availability of French language tourism business and services;
- Focusing francophone tourism development efforts in partnership with SÉO;
- Focusing on francophone culture as the key product and attractor including culinary, music, heritage/history, arts, and language; and
- Ensuring integration with relevant DNO product development priorities.

There are several steps that can be undertaken to further develop francophone tourism in Northern Ontario, with three key areas of focus:

- Assessing, identifying, and communicating the availability of French language services
- Focusing francophone tourism development efforts on the region's cultural assets; and
- Ensuring integration with all DNO product development priorities.

Six steps to further develop Francophone Tourism in Northern Ontario:

01

02

03

04

05

06



STEP 01:

Timeline: Short term

Establish Francophone Tourism Working Group.

Ensure representation from relevant businesses, communities, partners, and organizations from throughout Northern Ontario seeking to develop and promote francophone culture as a key component of their tourism offer.

This working group may also include representation from relevant government agencies, programs and groups such as the Northern Policy Institute, MTCS, Destination Ontario, MNMD and FedNor.



STEP 02:

Timeline: Short to medium term

Balado-Découvertes is a free application for smartphone and tablet users that provides multimedia tours and offers information that allow visitors to “travel through time and place”, be it on foot, by car, bicycle, and soon on horseback, based on interest. This platform guides visitors, proposes them paths to take during their journey and shows their position at that point throughout the tour. They can have access to old 8 mm films, commented archival photographs, texts, and audio tapes – no internet required! This platform is an ideal way to showcase Northern Ontario’s francophone culture, language, history, and cuisine on a regional or community level.

It is recommended that DNO work with communities and regions in the development of itineraries for integration within the Balado-Découvertes platform. Each community and regional project selected for development will require support in the form of human and financial resources. Available funding opportunities should be assessed, and applications made to secure and leverage funding.

Potential partner communities / regions / organizations include:

- Thunder Bay
- Temiskaming Circle Tour
- Sudbury / Georgian Bay Circle Tour
- French River
- Hearst
- West Nipissing
- SÉO Route Champlain + extensions



STEP 03:

⌋ **Timeline:** Short to medium term

Undertake Francophone Service Inventory and Market Readiness Assessments.

- Partner with SÉO and AFNOO to implement the National classification for services in French throughout the North to ensure consistency and to provide an additional branding
- Update existing AFO asset inventory
- Ensure that ALL asset inventories being undertaken for DNO include an evaluation of francophone service
- Ensure information regarding level of francophone service is related to DNO marketing leads for inclusion in all materials
- Include the “Affichez-vous” video as part of TEN and DNO communications to encourage operators and communities to promote the fact that they have the capacity to provide French language service



STEP 04:

⌋ **Timeline:** Short to medium term

Advocate for Francophone Tourism Development Training.

- Working with SÉO and Tourism Excellence North (TEN) to develop a ½ day francophone tourism workshop to be launched and offered as part of DNO’s summit agenda
- Work with TEN group training and BPM specific to experiential tourism with a focus on francophone culture
- Encourage and support operators and communities to take part in the TEN self-assessment, Fast Track to Success, group learning, and best practice missions will help to ensure a focus on quality experiences for travellers



STEP 05:

Francophone Tourism Marketing Plan.

Once product development has been completed, the experiences can be marketed. Collateral such as photography and videography may be needed.

A marketing plan for each product / initiative should outline the tactics to

⌋ **Timeline:** Long term

be used to push the cultural aspect of francophone tourism, with a focus on targeting relevant target markets.

Efforts to include high quality francophone culture offers should be included in itineraries for group tour and promoted at Rendez-vous Canada.



STEP 06:

Capitalize on National Programs.

Build and strengthen relationships with RDÉE Canada, Destination Canada and Le Réseau des villes francophones et francophiles d'Amérique to capitalize on their programs and generate visibility for Northern Ontario's francophone tourism products.

⌋ **Timeline:** Medium to long term

DNO'S Francophone Tourism Product Development Team

For all of its product development priorities, DNO created advisory groups or product development teams. For the francophone tourism team, the terms of reference are as follows:

The Destination Northern Ontario Francophone Tourism Product Team will provide assistance and advice to Destination Northern Ontario's staff as they develop annual business plans and implement initiatives for francophone tourism. Destination Northern Ontario recognizes the development currently happening in francophone tourism and intend to provide appropriate support to ensure the continued development and enhancement of francophone tourism across all three sub-regions.

Purpose of the Francophone Tourism Product Team

The purpose of the Francophone Tourism Product Team is to provide advice to DNO through a process of discussion and analysis of the available research and ongoing development in francophone tourism across Northern Ontario. DNO will capitalize on members' knowledge of francophone culture as a tourism product in Northern Ontario and utilize the feedback and advice to action this product niche. The team will focus on how to:

- Define "Francophone Tourism" to help guide development initiatives, training, and future marketing programs
- Monitor the development of francophone tourism with the perspective that community stakeholders and operators are needed for francophone tourism.
- Use the current developments in francophone tourism as models to recommend future undertakings that complement existing products.

Role

- The team members will share their collective wisdom on how to best approach francophone tourism in the context outlined in the purpose above.
- Encourage activities that support francophone culture as a tourism product that is complimentary and coordinates well with other product niches in a sustainable way.
- Input will flow from the working group to the DNO staff in the form of information, feedback, and recommendations which will be used to map the implementation of initiatives.
- Additionally, the Francophone Tourism Product Team will be instrumental in advising the DNO staff on the best avenues for focused community engagement and communication of critical information.
- Final decision-making authority rests with the DNO Board of Directors.

Skills & Attributes

In the interest of putting together the best possible team of individuals, identification, selection and appointment of team members will center on the following attributes:

- An above average understanding of the tourism landscape of Northern Ontario.
- A very good understanding of unique natural, cultural and heritage attractions that will make excellent experiential offerings to the francophone tourism niche.
- Good knowledge of federal, provincial and municipal policies and regulations that impact Francophone development.
- Track record of being involved in innovative and sustainable tourism product development.

Francophone Tourism Product Development Committee Members:

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Isabelle de Bruyn	SÉO
Sylvie Fontaine	Town of Hearst
Elodie Grunerud	AFNOO
Claude Aumont	Destination Ontario
Greg Heroux	Sail Superior
Mitch Deschatlets	Leisure Farms
Ghislan Jacques	Villa Inn and Suites



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