

Economic Development Activities:

RRFDC ACTIVITY REPORT

September 2020

The RRFDC continued to move forward with the enhanced economic development project and “The Path Forward” action plan.

- Supported the Fort Frances Economic Development Office (FFEDO) with Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) meetings and numerous projects.

General

The RRFDC leverages funds to support economic development working with NOHFC, FedNor and other government agencies.

In the first two quarters of 2020 we applied for funds from:

Summer Experience Grant:	(APPROVED)
Canada Summer Jobs Grant:	(APPROVED)
Celebrate Ontario:	(APPROVED)
Northern Ontario Tourism	(NOT APPROVED)
FedNor (municipal planning phase one)	(APPROVED)
FedNor (tourism planning)	(APPROVED)
FedNor (tourism implementation phase one)	(APPROVED)
NOHFC (forestry phase one)	(APPROVED)

Forestry

Boundary Waters Forest Management Corp.

The Forest:

Crossroute and Sapawe Forests were amalgamated into the Boundary Waters Forest on April 1, 2020. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has transferred the Sustainable Forest Licence to BWPMC. The SFL is currently being amended and updated to reflect the BWPMC business plan.

The Company:

- BWPMC was incorporated in December of 2019 with 17 shareholders.
- A Board of Directors of 12 has been created:
 - 2 representing independent loggers: Don McCool, Blaine Degagne.
 - 1 representing Rainy Lake Tribal Resource Management Inc.: Gary Both.
 - 3 First Nation Representatives: Chief Brian Perrault (Couchiching), Glen Smith (Northwest Bay), Chief Will Windego (Red Gut).
 - 1 representing the Metis Nation: Brian Gouliquer.
 - 1 representing the white pine mills: Dale Kaemingh (Manitou Forest Products).
 - 2 representing the large consuming mills: Martin Kaiser (Resolute), Rick Ksiezopolski (Norbord).
 - 2 representing regional economic development agencies: Garry Mckinnon (AEDC), Mike Willick (RRFDC).
- M. Willick is the President and Chair
- All Board members have equal voting rights, except if there is a disagreement regarding financial matters, then the consuming mills (i.e. those who pay the bills) decide.
- Scot Rubin was hired in May as General Manager.
- BWPMC is now fully responsible for the management of the Boundary Waters Forest.

Boundary Waters Forest Management Corp. Cont...

Service Contracts:

- It is envisioned that BWFMC will eventually have a small staff of about 3 people, largely to provide oversight and management. Most work will be done through a series of contracts. 2020 is a transition year.
- BWFMC has entered into a service contract with Resolute whereby Resolute will provide forest management and road administrative services to BWFMC.
- BWFMC has entered into a service contract with RLTRMI whereby RLTRMI will provide basic field monitoring work on the Forest.
- BDO Canada in Fort Frances has been hired as the accounting firm.
- Clare Brunetta has been retained as legal counsel.
- The Fort Frances Royal Bank has been selected as the bank.
- Boundary Waters Financial Services has been contracted to provide bookkeeping services.

New Manufacturing/Wood Supply Inquiries

We have three inquiries in 2020 regarding small manufacturing opportunities tied to forest product development. We continue to work with any interested party as we endeavour to grow and diversify our economy.

Mining – Supply and Services

We continue to work closely with New Gold's material procurement manager in order to identify potential companies for locating in the District.

Planning

Fort Frances Shevlin Yard and Entry Planning Study

Hilderman, Thomas, Frank, Cram continued their work facilitating the planning of a "new" asset for the Town of Fort Frances with the Shevlin Woodyard. This study also includes a reimagining of the entry way to Fort Frances.

The RRFDC worked with HTFC and the Town to assist with the study. This assistance included providing reports and lists, providing staff for workshop registrations, attending meetings, helping to facilitate input to HTFC and working with funding agencies.

Council should receive their recommendations in the near future.

Mill Property Planning Project

In June 2020, Aazhogan Renewal and the Town of Fort Frances have agreed to work together to address anticipated planning and development requirements associated with the mill properties, most notably with amendments that may be required with the Town of Fort Frances Official Plan and the ambitions of Aazhogan Renewal.

The Town of Fort Frances and Aazhogan Renewal agreed to work together through a newly formed Fort Frances/ Aazhogan Renewal Planning Committee.

The Committee has been established to provide a forum to align with priorities and to develop recommendations for amending Town planning documents relevant to ongoing renewal efforts within the Town limits.

The Committee is an advisory committee and has no official authorities.

Tourism

Tourism Center

The Fort Frances Tourism Center was closed for the 2020 season. After many years of receiving partial support for the rental of the building, the Province withdrew their funding. At the same time the building was placed for sale. The lease expired in the fall of 2020.

Closing the center entailed work over several weeks removing and finding new space for assets, recycling or returning brochures and displays.

MAT

Council and the RRFDC signed an agreement to transfer 50% of the MAT funds earlier this year. From there, based on Council's advice the Board of Directors of the RRFDC sent invitations to Fort Frances hotels, stakeholder organizations, festivals and events.

The RRFDC working with MAT hired a consulting firm to work with the committee to develop a three-year marketing strategy that was completed in the Spring of 2020. Most of the cost of this plan was covered by a successful grant application.

Some activities have been "on hold" pending a stabilization of COVID.

Projects are outlined below:

(KRA = Key Result Area, KPI = Key Performance Indicator)

Project 1 – Angling Product Packaging Workshop

KRA	Strategies & Objectives	Specific Tactics	Timing/Who	Budget	KPIs
Angling Product Packaging Workshop	<p>Develop buyable packages for consumers visiting Fort Frances</p> <p>Develop cooperative working group between MAT partners and other community businesses and organizations</p>	<p>Coordinate local packaging workshop with partners</p> <p>Each partner builds similarly structured packages for listing on the website</p> <p><i>Note: this can be conducted online while restrictions are in place...in context of desire to place some packaging on a destination website at launch</i></p>	Immediate	\$5,000	<p>Number of “Book Now” packages developed at workshop & available to consumers on destination website at plan launch</p> <p>Number of packages sold in Year 1</p> <p>A coordinated packaging effort amongst partners ensures Fort Frances delivers on its brand promise</p> <p>Ultimate measure of plan success</p>

Project 2 – Learn-To Product Entrepreneur Training

KRA	Strategies & Objectives	Specific Tactics	Timing/Who	Budget	KPIs
Learn To Product Entrepreneur Training Workshop	Develop capacity for individuals to develop a guided learn-to product in Fort Frances, offer it online, and convert to visits and revenue	<p>Indicated in the notes below</p> <p><i>Note: preference is in-person workshop. Can be done in an online format, or designed to consider an online/in-person mix depending on pandemic circumstances / desire and ability to undertake this initiative while restrictions are in place.</i></p>	<p>Be a Better Guide Consultants</p> <p>RRFDC to issue call for interest for guiding entrepreneurs</p>	<p>\$20,000</p> <p>Includes 2-day workshop plus travel expenses (2 people) plus 50 hrs one-on-one mentorship (online)</p>	5 entrepreneurs offering guided services by Dec. 2020

Be a Better Guide (BABG) Three-day In-Person Guide Training Program

To better suit the training for the group, a detailed profile is established (i.e. who they are and any ideal or expected outcomes).

1. Shortlist of Potential Training Topics (for in-person)

- **Legendary Customer Service**
 - Your Role in Delivering an Amazing Guest Experience
 - Standing Out from the Competition
 - 6 Core Elements of Outstanding Customer Service
 - Why and How to be Completely Guest Focused
 - Amazing Guides are...
- **Delivering a Great Tour Experience**
 - First Impressions
 - Understanding, Managing, and Exceeding Guest Expectations
 - What Guests Really Want to Know (but never tell you)
 - Managing Supplier and Subcontractor Relationships
 - Delivering a Great Closing Speech
- **When Things Go Wrong**
 - Dealing with Late or Lost Guest
 - Managing Upset and Difficult Guests
 - Managing Your Environment
- **The Art of People Skills**
 - How to be an Effective Conversationalist
 - How to be More Likeable as a Guide or Host
 - Bringing Humour into your Tour Experience
 - Recognizing Non-Verbal Cues and Body Language
 - Empathy and Cultural Differences
 - Managing Group Dynamics
- **How to Make Your Tour Experience More Engaging**
 - An introduction to Extraordinary Storytelling
 - Using Props, Visual Aids and the 5 Senses
 - Leveraging Locals and Knowledge Experts
 - Public Speaking Skills
 - Getting and Holding the Attention of a Group
 - Using Effective Hand Gestures
- **OTAs (Online Travel Agencies, Platforms & Marketplaces)**
 - Why, How and Where to List Your Tour or Experience Online
 - Distribution Channels
 - Building a Captivating Guide Profile
 - Creating a UVP and Amazing Tour Description that Sells
- **Managing your Online Reputation**
 - Understanding Online Reviews
 - Managing Positive and Negative Reviews
 - Guest Feedback Essentials

2. Ongoing Coaching/Mentorship

- Delivered after the in-person guide training program.
- All of the following are optional and we're usually flexible with the amount or length of time depending on the client's needs and desired outcomes.
 - Live Group Coaching Calls (AMA style - ask me anything). Usually we offer 6 one-hour sessions all done online via video conference call.
 - Always Be Learning package - We have a 6 month and 12 month option. These are a series of biweekly emails which include real life guide stories, [practical videos](#) and actionable tips for creating an amazing guest experience.
 - Life-time access to 1 or more of our premium online training programs available at the [Online Tourism Academy](#) (checkout each program for full details)
 - Private Facebook Group to communicate and share ideas, challenges and success stories among the group

3. Additional Resources:

BABG has significant training content related to growing a tour business (i.e. marketing, operations, finances, etc.) that we can train in-person or online. To access this material it's important to know more about the group of individuals and how they function (e.g. are they individuals working for a company or running their own small tour business).

Pandemic Recovery Initiative 1

KRA	Strategies & Objectives	Specific Tactics	Timing/Who	Budget	KPIs
Hotel Occupancy Rates	<p>Deliver a campaign that will accelerate recovery of hotel occupancy rates once public health orders have been eased (estimated June).</p> <p>Incentivize an appeal to past customers for a return visit.</p>	<p>Build text promo with custom content/brand block for each accommodator. Email format or one page (branded) print output.</p> <p>Electronic or mail house option (accommodator choice).</p> <p>Promo code used for hotel bookings.</p> <p>CTA to new website/products incl. "weekend wellness" coupons / packaging with other participating businesses.</p>	<p>May – content writing and design</p> <p>May – secure participating businesses</p> <p>June – email send / mail out (hotels)</p>	<p>\$20,000</p> <p>\$1 from MAT / mail out subsidy</p>	200 bookings

Pandemic Recovery Initiative 2

KRA	Strategies & Objectives	Specific Tactics	Timing/Who	Budget	KPIs
Geo-Targeted Shop, Eat, Stay Campaign – Border Crossing	Create a focused advertising campaign that targets those in the immediate vicinity of Fort Frances to shop/eat/stay.	Using a third party vendor with experience in this space, deliver an incentivized shop and stay campaign that geo-targets cars crossing the border, which then triggers ad push when phones in the car open Facebook / Instagram.	May third party arrangement to push out June (anticipation of a border opening)- September	\$25,000	# vehicles # clicks on ads # claimed incentivized offerings 200 bookings

Brand Cornerstones

KRA	Strategies & Objectives	Specific Tactics	Timing/Who	Budget	KPIs
Brand Development	Secure domain names that elevate and link the Fort Frances tourism brand experience.	Purchase domains: destinationfortfrances.ca, destinationfortfrances.com fishthefort.ca	Immediate –	\$1,000	Domain purchases complete Trademark application submitted Trademark registered (1 year)

Website

KRA	Strategies & Objectives	Specific Tactics	Timing/Who	Budget	KPIs
Digital Presence (Destination Website)	<p>Establish an effective digital website presence to anchor / support all promotional tactics</p> <p>Design focus on the mobile experience</p> <p>Ensure strong CTA to packages</p> <p>Ensure good SEO</p> <p>Active Blogging</p>	Build destinationfortfrances.ca website (fishrainylake.ca redirect to destination site). Mobile-friendly	<p>Immediate – 45 day completion timing</p> <p>Website design firm</p>	<p>\$10,000</p> <p><i>Note: this is a 50% budget that establishes website basics, which will be enhanced with story / experiences content / visuals/ packaging in Year 2</i></p>	<p>Fully functional website built within 45 days of project launch destinationfortfrances.ca</p> <p>Key Content:</p> <p>Product 1 and Product 2 summary/click-throughs on main page</p> <p>-Accom. Partners -Hospitality Bus. -Town Map -Initial Buyable Packages</p> <p>-Fishing -Signature Experiences -Analytics integration</p>

Project 5 – Social Media Presence

KRA	Strategies and Objectives	Specific Tactics	Timing/Who	Budget	KPIs
Social Media Presence	<p>Establish effective/active social media presence on key platforms</p> <p>Use social media as key advertising medium and to support overall content marketing</p>	Create Destination Fort Frances pages for: Facebook, Instagram	<p>May – creation of pages</p> <p>June to December – 1-2 posts per week</p>	\$1,500	<p>Facebook page established</p> <p>Instagram page established</p> <p>100 social media posts across three accounts.</p> <p>Baseline likes, follows, shares metrics established</p>

Digital Content Acquisition and Development

This activity is important in year one given summer season photo/video shooting for promotion in following year in addition to photo inclusion to enhance 2020 marketing foundations (website).

Video production is capable of acquiring 50% cost-share in return for inclusion in video output.

KRA	Strategies and Objectives	Specific Tactics	Timing/Who	Budget	KPIs
Content Acquisition and Development	Develop a digital library of community marketing assets related to the angling experience for destination website and social media channels	<p>Acquire image and video for tactical via RFQ</p> <p>Identify content writers to develop stories and articles that convey the two core Fort Frances product experiences for publishing on destination website/social media channels</p> <p>Create a content marketing calendar</p>	Immediate	<p>\$15,000</p> <p>Video (2 - each of Product 1 and 2) - \$7,000</p> <p>Photography - \$3,000</p> <p>Stories / blog / articles / social media content - \$5,000</p>	image, video and story content will be available for use in the tactical plan advertising

We have phase one approvals for an application to the Federal Government to leverage MAT funds in years 1 and 2 to a 25/75 local/federal split.

www.FishingRainyLake.ca Promotion



Campaign AD Results to date:

Impressions: 673,921

Clicks: 3,613

Clickthrough rate: .54%

We hired BigClic a digital engagement agency with specific expertise in Northern Ontario and the fishing marketplace. The ads targeted “near Northwest” – Thunder Bay to Dryden and Kenora as well as the City of Winnipeg and near-by rural markets. Specific targeting was used to connect with visitors to larger fishing and hunting retailers.

Big Clic tracked mobile device IDs of our video/ AD audiences if they visited the conversion zones – all hotels, motels, marinas, boat launches in Fort Frances:

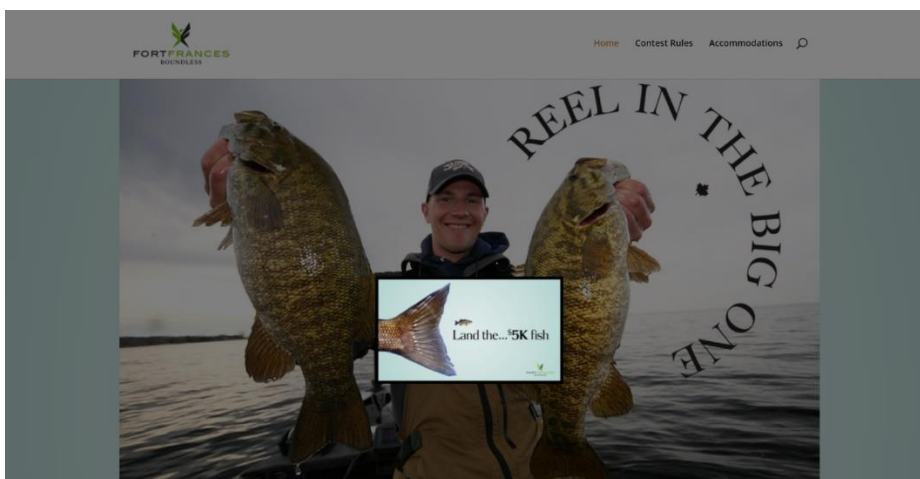
They have tracked 1,165 unique mobile device IDs in these locations to date – 875 of which are accommodation entries

Total referrals from campaign to date:

Site referrals – 20

Conversion zone entries – 875

895 accommodation referrals



Rainy Lake Market

The Rainy Lake Market in 2020 was certainly unlike any other in previous years. The RRFDC worked with the Northwestern Health Unit to create a “safe opening” for the market.

Thankfully, due to our eager vendors and the support from locals it has been a phenomenally successful summer regardless. The year started off modestly with only three vendors and now we regularly boast 18 vendors, occasionally having to turn vendors away because of spacing requirements.

Our 2020 vendors range from children's lemonade stands to seasoned growers and talented artists. Conceivably, the relationships we have established with them will continue on into future years, increasing the scale and diversity of our market.

Apart from being able to buy homemade and locally grown goods the market has also provided great live entertainment.

The potential for future markets once restrictions have lifted appears even greater as vendors noted their volume of customers and product turnover has drastically increased this year. One fortunate vendor even managed to sell his entire seasons inventory in a single day.

For the remainder of the season we will continue to provide hand sanitizer to our customers upon entry, encourage masks, monitor proper social distancing, and observe the amount of visitors who enter the market.

Shared Space

The Rainy Lake Square also became a shared space for local restaurants to use during a mid stage of COVID recovery.

Go Local

As COVID closed in the Spring of 2020, Go Local created a thank you card program to thank the frontline workers who kept essential services open and running. During this time Go Local also expanded marketing past the member base and assisted with maintaining information on openings and closings.



In August 2020, Go Local to encourage and promote mask use in a positive way in Fort Frances. Thirty gift cards were distributed among our Go Local stores to any customers spotted adhering to proper COVID-19 guidelines. In return they received a \$5 Go Local gift card in the hopes that it will motivate others to shop safely, as well as thanking Go Local customers who follow store procedures and keep our community safe.



Project Petunia

Thank you for those that have sponsored Project Petunia in 2020. New baskets were purchased to replace the 15-year-old ones originally bought by the Chamber of Commerce. An Ad thanking all donors was put in the Fort Frances Times this Spring.

Canada Day

With no opportunity to host the traditional Canada Day celebrations the RRFDC undertook to Celebrate Canada day through a lawn sign campaign and a video message from residents and dignitaries linking and bringing us together on July 1.



Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Support COVID

The RRFDC continues to support small and medium sized businesses in the District and a report of those activities is outlined in our annual report which can be found at www.rrfdc.on.ca. This support includes one on one counselling and a loans fund to help existing and start-up ventures.

Loans

The last quarter of 2019/2020 saw the Covid-19 pandemic arrive. The RRFDC responded immediately once it was known that the government would be locking down area businesses. The RRFDC initiated Covid-19 loans of up to \$20,000 with repayments and interest suspended.

In May FedNor supported the region with \$882,373 in Regional Relief and Recovery Funding (RRRF) for loans of up to \$40,000 interest free until December 31, 2022 with 25% forgiveness if repaid by that date.

The RRFDC has approved 49 loans related to the Covid-19 crisis, 23 at \$20,000 from our Investment Fund and 26 at \$40,000 from the RRRF. In total 88 loans are in progress. 53 of these loans were to Fort Frances business owners. 38 businesses are tourism related, 62 are women led, 5 indigenous and 19 youth.

Programs

During this period, the RRFDC also maintained (and maintains) a list of programs and services available to small and medium sized businesses to assist with COVID recovery.

Branding/Digital Marketing

The RRFDC continued social media work to represent the Town of Fort Frances on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. This was particularly important this Spring as we assisted in pushing out messages related to public safety measures.

Social and Digital Media Training

As we work internally to improve the digital and social footprint of our community, we have provided a number of training sessions for local small businesses to gain skills and develop their marketing on various social platforms.

Industrial Lot Sales

The RRFDC continues to work with administration assisting with lot sales. We had little activity on lots in the last two quarters and remind those interested in growing a business in Fort Frances that we have a limited amount of properties available to develop.

We did have a surprising number of inquires for other industrial and commercial properties a number of which transferred for future development.

Agriculture

Land Clearing and Tile Drainage Projects

The RRFDC has facilitated the following tile drainage and land clearing projects with area producers and the NOHFC. These projects represent significant financial investments by the producers and the NOHFC.

- Land Clearing #1 - \$1,800,000 (100% Complete)
- Land Clearing #2 - \$1,700,000 (Ongoing)
- Tile Drainage #1 - \$1,971,300 (Completed)
- Tile Drainage #2 - \$1,971,310 (Completed)
- Tile Drainage #3 - \$1,971,880 (Completed)
- Tile Drainage #4 - \$1,962,000 (Complete)
- Tile Drainage #5 - \$1,962,000 (Approved)
- Tile Drainage #6 - \$1,962,000 (Approved)
- Tile Drainage #7 – In the application process

Land Clearing

The land clearing projects are a direct benefit to the District as all producer and NOHFC investment dollars will go to local contractors who undertake the land clearing. These contractors hire employees, maintain and purchase much of their equipment locally.

Tile Drainage

Once all the tile projects have been completed the District will have approximately 11,618 acres of tiled cropland. The projects have significantly diversified the area's agricultural economy through the growing of canola, soybeans, wheat, and oats which has dramatically increased the economic benefits of the sector to Fort Frances and the District.

- Total investment in tiling:
- $11,618 \times \$1,300/\text{acre cost Average} = \$15,103,400$
- NOHFC Investment $11,618 \times \$500/\text{acre} = \$5,908,000$
- **Producer** investment = \$9,195,400
- Plus additional **producer** investments in buildings, storage bins, machinery and employees. (Estimated Investment of \$5,000,000)