



Municipality of Sioux Lookout

Sports Tourism Diversification Infrastructure Enhancement Study

Interim Report

September 2024

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Introduction

Introduction

Project Overview

The Municipality of Sioux Lookout serves as a central hub for both institutional and economic activities in a sizable portion of Northwestern Ontario. The community envisions becoming the premier Sports Tourism Hub of the North, attracting athletes and spectators who can enjoy the community's amenities and contribute to the local economy. Recognizing the potential in this area, the Municipality developed a Sports Tourism Strategy, which aimed to create and promote new sports tourism products and services, contributing to the growth and diversification of Sioux Lookout's economy.

Now, Municipal leaders have embarked on a strategic journey to implement its Sports Tourism Strategy and has retained Deloitte LLP to complete this work. This process involves understanding the market, assessing community capacity, and developing a compelling business case for investing in sports tourism infrastructure. To facilitate this, the Municipality is undertaking this Tourism Diversification Infrastructure Enhancement Study.

Municipal Council has recently approved other plans, namely the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, 2021-2031 Official Plan, Community Improvement Plan, and the Cedar Bay Development Plan. These documents provide essential guidance and support for the Municipality's endeavours in economic development and tourism. The community has history with sports tourism and the recent introduction of the Sioux Lookout Bombers who play in the Superior International Junior Hockey League (SIJHL) has generated considerable excitement locally.

Municipal leaders believe that by focusing on sports tourism, it can keep the airport bustling, entertain residents and neighbours, and support the local economy. By expanding its range of market-ready sports tourism products and services, Sioux Lookout aims to establish a more competitive presence in the tourism marketplace.

"Sports tourism is a type of tourism activity which refers to the travel experience of the tourist who either observes as a spectator or actively participates in a sporting event generally involving commercial and non-commercial activities of a competitive nature."

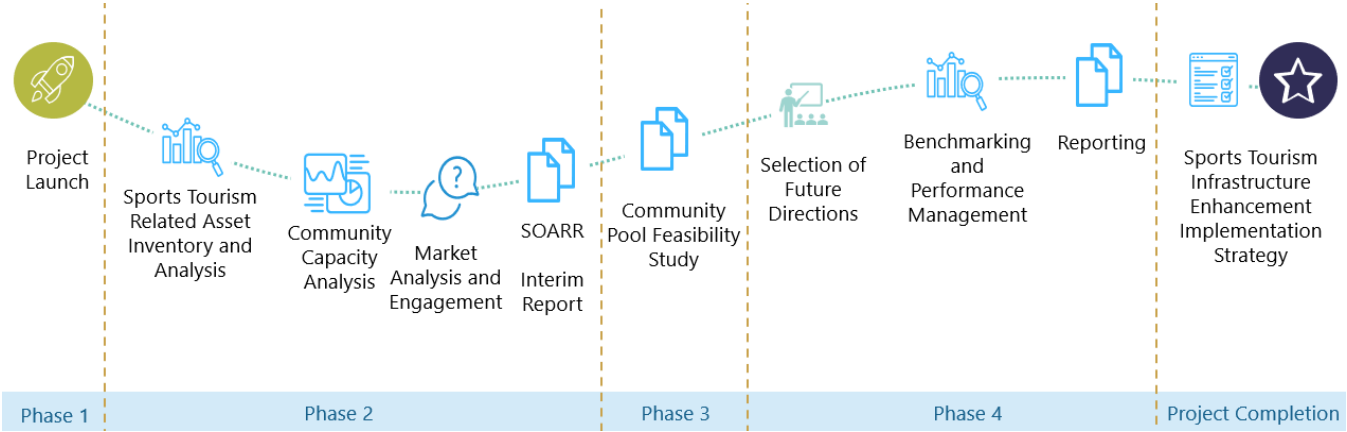
- United Nations World Tourism Organization

The Tourism Diversification Infrastructure Enhancement Study will encompass several key elements:

- An environmental scan identified where additional infrastructure and amenities can support and enhance sports tourism activities. Residents of Sioux Lookout and Far North communities provided insights.
- The feasibility of constructing a community swimming pool will be assessed. This addition to the Municipality's infrastructure could attract tourists and provide additional recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors.
- A phased plan will be outlined for prioritizing infrastructure enhancements and efficiently and effectively allocating resources to maximize their impact.

Purpose of the Interim Report

The Interim Report focuses on Phase 2 of the project. Research and engagement informed the sports-tourism-related asset inventory and analysis, community capacity analysis, and market analysis. The assessment of strengths, opportunities, aspirations, risks, and desired results (SOARR) allows us to pivot from 'what has been learned' to 'what needs to happen,' which supports further discussions around a strategy for sports tourism infrastructure enhancements in Sioux Lookout.



Summary of Key Findings

Summary of Key Findings

This report reviews sports infrastructure and programming in Sioux Lookout with the goal of providing direction to sports and recreation infrastructure investments in a financially sustainable manner. By engaging the community, implementing strategic plans, and addressing infrastructure needs, Sioux Lookout can become well-positioned to capitalize on its potential as a sports tourism hub and drive economic growth in the region. Focusing on sports tourism can alleviate the burden of facility operating costs being solely on taxpayers. The following themes offer direction based on community input that aligns with desktop research on past planning efforts. The themes offer targeted opportunities to sustainably grow recreation and sports opportunities in Sioux Lookout. These themes will provide a foundation to the development of the Sports Tourism Infrastructure Enhancement Implementation Strategy.

Key Themes

1. Encourage Community Engagement and Volunteerism

- Prioritize community involvement and support to ensure long-term sustainability of sports and recreation.
- Actively engage local communities, including Indigenous groups and recreation user groups, in the planning and execution of sports tourism strategies.
- Incorporate their unique perspectives and expertise to foster a sense of ownership and inclusivity.
- Ensure accessibility for people of all ages and abilities by removing barriers and providing inclusive facilities, programs, and events.

2. Foster Strategic Partnerships

- Form strategic partnerships with local businesses, health authorities, and educational institutions.
- Integrate cultural activities and Indigenous heritage into sports tourism through these partnerships.
- Incorporate physical activities into rehabilitation programs through collaborations with health authorities.
- Ensure inclusivity by integrating Indigenous cultural elements into sports and recreation programs.
- Collaborate to secure consistent funding and support from governmental bodies for long-term sustainability.

3. Invest in Financially Sustainable Infrastructure

- Invest in infrastructure to foster the growth of sports tourism and boost the local economy.
- Coordinate partnerships with businesses to address the shortage of overnight visitor accommodation.
- Incentivize the development of new hotels and explore alternative lodging options.
- Conduct a thorough analysis of transportation plans to enhance accessibility by considering increasing routes and frequency of transportation options.
- Promote transportation options and provide shuttle services during major events.

4. Enhance Marketing and Communications Strategies

- Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy to enhance the promotion and utilization of amenities.
- Consider the community's current and future capacity when developing the marketing strategy.
- Highlight distinctive aspects of Sioux Lookout's sports and recreation opportunities in marketing efforts.
- Align the area's outdoor and wilderness identity with the marketing of these activities.
- Prioritize attracting new residents and visitors by emphasizing the unique offerings of Sioux Lookout.
- Share success stories to showcase the community's dedication to providing exceptional experiences.
- Exercise caution and avoid overpromising and underdelivering in marketing and communications efforts.

Sport Tourism Related Asset Inventory and Analysis

Sports Tourism Related Asset Inventory and Analysis

Analysis of Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan

Overview

This section provides a summary of past recommendations from the 2019 Sports Tourism Plan.¹ The analysis of recommendations from the Sports Tourism Plan serves two important purposes: to align the direction of this Study and to ensure that efforts are not duplicated or contradicted in relation to established strategic directions for Sioux Lookout.

The primary objective of the Plan's recommendations was to improve the overall experience and accessibility of recreational activities in Sioux Lookout. The plan aimed to identify ways in which the community, along with existing tourism partners, can work together with Indigenous communities to achieve this goal.

The project team conducted an evaluation of the various facilities including the fitness centre, arena, outdoor sports complex, golf course, curling club, equestrian centre, lakeshore cabins, and trail system. The findings revealed that most facilities were well maintained except the lakeshore cabins, arena, and fitness centre. Estimated repair costs in 2019 for both the arena and fitness centre were \$656,400 and \$85,550 for the cabins. These repair costs are now dated, and more current estimates would be needed to gain a more accurate understanding of investment costs.

Prior to pandemic lockdowns, the Sports Tourism Plan project team engaged with the community through a stakeholder meeting, community open house, and session focused on engaging with First Nations communities. Some aspects of the community's needs and preferences may have evolved since these sessions were conducted.

The report encompasses the findings, recommendations, and proposed strategies to enhance the recreational infrastructure and experiences in Sioux Lookout. The diversification of sports tourism infrastructure in Sioux Lookout hinges on strategic investments in new facilities, enhanced community engagement, robust marketing strategies, and strong partnerships. Addressing existing facility deficiencies, expanding event tourism, and developing targeted programs for Indigenous communities will also contribute to the region's attractiveness as a sports tourism destination.

Key Themes

- **Infrastructure Capacity:** The Plan offered information on the condition of facilities and the usage statistics of facilities and activities. With an understanding of community and tourism participation trends, as well as the condition of these physical spaces, Sioux Lookout's Economic Development team is now well-informed about the most suitable next steps. For instance, the Strategy outlines two main categories of action: "Increased Facility Use", which tracks measurables such as facility memberships, number of day passes, and number of teams using municipal facilities for sporting tournaments and "Increased Participants in Sports", which tracks measurables such as the number of participants of local recreation events and number of participants in sports and recreation events within the Municipality.
- **Inclusiveness:** The Plan emphasized the importance of Indigenous participation. This includes both Indigenous cultural tourism, which involves travelers seeking Indigenous experiences and Indigenous tourism, which refers to First Nations people traveling to Sioux Lookout. As Sioux Lookout serves as a crucial service provider for 29 remote First Nations communities, the focus is on improving accessibility to attractions and ensuring compatibility with the needs and preferences of these communities.
- **Collaboration:** The Plan underlined the significance of achieving goals through collaboration with local community groups, such as the Windigo First Nation Council, Shibogama, Independent First Nation Alliance, Northern Nishnawbe Education Council, and Sioux Lookout First Nation Health Authority. Additionally,

¹ Hoshizaki Development. Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan. 2019.

collaboration with external partners, including the Ontario Government and Government of Canada, is highlighted as a crucial aspect of the Plan.

Identified Gaps in Partnerships

The Sports Tourism Plan was initiated to identify ways the community, its recreational assets and existing community tourism partners can collaborate with their Indigenous partners to enhance experiences and access to recreation in Sioux Lookout. The following partnership gaps were highlighted:

- **Lack of Strategic Alignment and Integration:** Sioux Lookout lacks a cohesive strategy that integrates all aspects of sports tourism, from marketing and event management to community engagement and facility development. This disjointed approach may lead to inefficiencies and missed opportunities in leveraging the full potential of partnerships.
- **Underutilization of Local and Indigenous Community Resources:** Although there is mention of engaging with Indigenous communities and local organizations, there seems to be an underutilization of these groups in both the planning and execution phases of sports tourism activities. More proactive and inclusive partnership strategies could enhance cultural tourism and community involvement, creating a more vibrant and diverse sports tourism offering.
- **Insufficient Collaboration with Educational Institutions:** There is a gap in strategic partnerships with educational institutions for sports programs, training, and event hosting. Collaboration with schools and universities could provide facilities, volunteer resources, and a continuous influx of participants, enhancing the sports tourism infrastructure.
- **Marketing Partnerships and Support:** This Plan highlights the lack of a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting tourism in Sioux Lookout, apart from Visit Sunset Country, which mainly focuses on hunting and fishing lodges. While the Plan recommends the Municipality of Sioux Lookout establish its own DMO that operates at arms-length as a Tourism Department or position, the Sioux Lookout – Hudson Tourism Association (SLHTA) was revived in 2023 and has the potential to allow for focused efforts on promoting tourism in Sioux Lookout and enable better coordination with the municipality.

Review of Recommendations

This Study focused on conducting a Facility Condition Assessment resulting in a recommendation for a new facility to be constructed. Recommendations also included improving recreation and sports partnerships.

- **Community Engagement and Partnerships:** It will be important for Sioux Lookout to implement strategies for boosting community engagement and partnerships in sports and tourism initiatives, focusing particularly on collaboration with local stakeholders and Indigenous communities. It recommends organizing regular meetings and open houses with stakeholders to ensure open communication and feedback. Direct engagement with local Indigenous communities is also emphasized to help incorporate traditional sports and cultural events, enriching the overall offerings. Additionally, forming partnerships with local businesses and organizations is suggested to provide support and promote mutual benefits for sports events. These strategies aim to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for sports and tourism development.
- **Facility Assessment and Upgrade:** To address and enhance existing sports and recreational facilities, a comprehensive strategy is recommended. Initially, a thorough assessment of the condition of current facilities should be conducted. Based on the findings, necessary upgrades or expansions should be prioritized to meet modern requirements and to attract larger events. Additionally, exploring various funding opportunities and partnerships will be crucial for the development and implementation of these facility improvements. This strategic approach will ensure that the facilities not only meet current needs but are also well-equipped to host major events, thereby increasing their utility and appeal.

- **Indigenous Tourism Integration:** To enhance the appeal and uniqueness of sports tourism offerings, it is recommended to integrate Indigenous cultural experiences. The strategies suggested for this integration include partnering with Indigenous communities to co-create cultural events and sports tournaments, incorporating Indigenous cultural elements into marketing materials and event programming, and offering training and employment opportunities to Indigenous people within the sports tourism sector. This approach not only enriches the tourist experience but also supports and promotes Indigenous cultures.
- **Event Tourism Expansion:** To expand and diversify event tourism, the proposed strategy involves creating an event calendar that includes off-peak seasons to ensure a year-round attraction. The focus will be on niche sports and recreational activities, appealing to specific demographics that have been underrepresented or untapped. Additionally, leveraging digital marketing will play a crucial role in reaching broader audiences, thus maximizing exposure and participation. This approach aims to broaden the scope of sports events offered, exploring new markets and seasonal opportunities effectively.
- **Marketing and Promotion:** To effectively promote Sioux Lookout as a top destination for sports tourism, several strategies have been recommended. A dedicated tourism marketing team should be established to focus on this initiative. Comprehensive marketing campaigns need to be developed that showcase the unique sports-related opportunities available in Sioux Lookout. Additionally, the use of social media and other digital platforms should be optimized to expand reach and increase engagement with potential tourists. These concerted efforts aim to position Sioux Lookout as a leading choice for sports enthusiasts looking for new and exciting destinations.
- **Sustainable Development and Eco-Tourism:** Sustainable development and eco-tourism are critical in ensuring that sports tourism is both environmentally friendly and sustainable. Strategies to achieve this include adopting eco-friendly practices in event and facility management, promoting outdoor sports that foster a connection and appreciation for nature, and collaborating with environmental organizations to certify these events and practices as environmentally sustainable. These measures aim to leverage the natural environment positively, ensuring sports tourism contributes beneficially without causing harm.

Metrics

The Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan recommends tracking facility usage and the growth of sports tourism to assist in enhancing investment interest in sports tourism-based activities within the community. The following metrics were identified to be used to benchmark progress and support growth.

- **Increased Facility Use:** To effectively increase facility use, various metrics should be tracked, including the number of fitness and pool memberships sold annually. Additionally, day pass sales at the recreation centre should be monitored. For tournaments, the focus is on counting participant numbers, number of teams per tournament, total number of tournaments held annually, and breakdown of these tournaments by sport. These statistics serve as indicators of facility usage and help in strategizing for enhanced engagement and increased memberships.
- **Increased Participants of Local Recreation Events:** To evaluate progress and foster growth of local recreation and sports tourism events, specific metrics are recommended, including tracking the number of participants at local recreational events, number of participants per sporting event and total number of events held annually. These measures are aimed at attracting investment and enhancing the community's sports tourism sector.

Key Findings - Analysis of Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan

- **Inability to Meet Demand:** The Sports Tourism Plan suggests current facilities are unable to adequately meet the demands of additional recreational users. The Sioux Lookout Memorial Arena and Fitness Centre faces

limitations in terms of expansion opportunities. The lodge and cabins at Cedar Bay are currently not usable and need significant upgrades to utilize to its full potential.

- **New Facility Would Enhance Sports Tourism Infrastructure:** The existing facilities, including the Memorial Arena and Fitness Centre, are in good condition based on the Facility Condition Index (FCI). However, there are identified deficiencies which need addressing to improve functionality and safety. The proposed new recreation centre is a significant development, aiming to include multiple sports facilities like two ice rinks, competition-sized swimming pool, and fitness centre, which could enhance the sports tourism infrastructure.
- **Location Supports Hub Status:** Sioux Lookout's strategic position as the "Hub of the North" makes it a prime location for Indigenous and event tourism. The area hosts several events that attract participants from various regions, including hockey tournaments, broomball, and fishing competitions. There is potential to expand these events and improve facilities to attract more visitors.
- **Importance of Community and Partnerships:** Active community engagement and strategic partnerships are crucial for the successful diversification of sports tourism infrastructure. Engagements with local communities, including First Nation sessions and public meetings, highlight the need for more accessible recreational facilities and training programs for Indigenous populations.
- **Need for a Dedicated Tourism Support:** The establishment of a DMO could leverage funding from the new Municipal Accommodation Tax to promote Sioux Lookout as a sports and recreation destination. Enhanced marketing strategies, including digital promotions and community-based events, could attract more tourists and participants to the region.
- **Creative Financial Planning Required:** The projected cost in 2019 for the new recreation centre was around \$42 million, with considerations for additional features and equipment. Strategic financial planning, updating projections, seeking federal and provincial funding, and other innovated revenue streams is recommended to support this significant investment.

Analysis of Other Reports - Literature Review / Environmental Scan

The literature review was conducted to gain an understanding of the policy directions that have influenced and will continue to shape the tourism ecosystem in Sioux Lookout. To achieve this, the review includes the following documents, which provide insights into Sioux Lookout's current state, as well as sports tourism in general.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sioux Lookout Economic Development Strategy – Local Business Survey (2024)• Sioux Lookout Community Improvement Plan (2024)• Cedar Bay Development Plan (2023)• Facility Usage Reports (2022 & 2023)• Destination Northern Ontario – Accommodation Study and Gap Analysis Report (2022) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Covid-19 Tourism Modification Pilot Project (2021)• Sioux Lookout Hotel Feasibility Study (2021)• Destination Northern Ontario – Investment Attraction Strategy (2021)• Sioux Lookout Economic Strategic Review (2020-2025) and Go Forward Strategic Milestones | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan (2020)• Facility Condition Assessment Sioux Lookout Memorial Arena & Fitness Centre (2019)• Preliminary Design Planning – Sioux Lookout Community Recreation Hub (2019)• Sioux Lookout & Hudson Revitalization Study (2010) |
|---|--|--|

The following chart presents a matrix of common themes that highlights the threads of insight that link the aforementioned documents and strategies related to Sioux Lookout's tourism sector. Only themes that are found across multiple documents are included in the matrix. A single check mark (✓) signifies a theme that is minor in the report but

still holds significance. Conversely, a double check mark (✓✓) indicates that the theme is the primary focus of the document. **Note: See Appendix for a summary of documents analyzed.**

Document Title	Key Themes			
	Community Development	Partnership	Facility / Infrastructure Capacity	Tourism & Economic Development
Cedar Bay Development Plan		✓✓	✓✓	
Covid-19 Tourism Modification Pilot Project		✓✓		✓✓
Destination Northern Ontario – Accommodation Study / Gap Analysis Report			✓✓	✓✓
Destination Northern Ontario Investment Attraction Strategy			✓✓	✓✓
Facility Condition Assessment Sioux Lookout Memorial Arena & Fitness Centre			✓✓	
Facility Usage Reports			✓✓	
Preliminary Design Planning Sioux Lookout Community Recreation Hub	✓		✓✓	
Sioux Lookout & Hudson Revitalization Study		✓✓	✓✓	
Sioux Lookout Economic Development Strategy – Local Business Survey	✓		✓✓	✓✓
Sioux Lookout Economic Strategic Review	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Sioux Lookout Hotel Feasibility Study			✓✓	✓
Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓

Common Themes Analysis – Other Reports

Community Development

The theme of "Community Development" includes community engagement, policy shaping, program development, and equitable growth. It also involves assessing the integration of communities into these processes. In the Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan, there was a strong focus on involving Indigenous communities in both the planning discussions and the final outcomes.

Community Innovation and Development is identified as a Strategic Priority within the **Municipality of Sioux Lookout 2020-2025 Strategic Plan**. As a result, we find this theme woven through many of the more recent documents produced for the Municipality. This report highlights the Municipality of Sioux Lookout's commitment to proactively invest in the community to encourage growth and enhance quality of life² through addressing the unique challenges and opportunities of the community and working towards creating a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable community. The report emphasizes the importance of community engagement, collaboration with other agencies and levels of government, and strategic priorities such as community innovation and development, community wellness, regional collaboration, community engagement, and operational excellence.

The main objectives of the **Cedar Bay Development Plan** revolve around community development priorities. These related objectives include: improving access and enhance existing facilities and uses including value-added linkages,

² Municipality of Sioux Lookout. 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

increasing the revenue potential of existing programs and expanding the program offer through partnerships with other groups and organizations, bringing people together through outdoor recreation and education and promoting health and creating wellness links within the community, and promoting and realizing Cedar Bay as a destination for those from outside of Sioux Lookout.

Stakeholders who participated in the development of the **Destination Northern Ontario Investment Attraction Strategy** acknowledged that DNO's Partnership Program should focus on succession planning, community development planning, and feasibility/business development planning for new investment opportunities. The report recommended evaluating opportunities to expand the existing DNO partnership funding model to include community development planning initiatives.

The **Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan** encompasses various community development priorities. As part of the strategy development, a dedicated First Nation engagement session was organized to gather input on the necessary support for Indigenous sports, with the goal of establishing a central hub for coaches and trainers. The Plan also suggests forging partnerships with Indigenous Sport and Wellness Ontario to develop programming and enhance the participation of First Nations youth. Additionally, the implementation of Youth Forums is recommended to actively involve young individuals in decision-making processes. These initiatives serve as a testament to the commitment to collaboration, empowerment, and cultural enrichment, all of which contribute to the overall community development efforts.

Partnership

The theme of "Partnership" emphasizes collaboration between stakeholders to achieve shared goals. By forming partnerships, entities can share resources and increase cost-effectiveness. Collaboration can enable the completion of capital projects that would be challenging for a single entity to handle alone.

Regional Collaboration is a Strategic Priority identified within the **Municipality of Sioux Lookout's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan**. The theme of Partnership within this report is the emphasis on collaboration and working with various stakeholders to address the challenges and opportunities faced by Sioux Lookout. The report highlights the need to partner with other agencies, municipalities, and levels of government to achieve the goals outlined in the strategic plan. It emphasizes collaboration with local law enforcement agencies, social agencies, community groups, First Nations and regional partners for community safety, economic development, infrastructure improvement, and addressing shared challenges. The report also mentions the importance of engaging with residents, local businesses, and stakeholders to ensure their participation in municipal affairs and to seek their feedback and input. Overall, the theme of Partnership underscores the municipality's commitment to working together with others to create a thriving and sustainable community.

The **Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan** discusses the importance of partnerships in Sioux Lookout's sports tourism sector and identifies potential Indigenous, youth, education, health and wellness, recreation, and sporting collaborators. These partnerships are crucial for developing programs and events that engage First Nation peoples in sports and coach training, empowering youth, and enabling them to lead future sports initiatives.

The **Sioux Lookout Go Forward 2020-2025 Strategic Milestones** discussed the continuation of building partnerships and relationships with the Indigenous community and ensuring that there is continued consultation with Sioux Lookout's local Indigenous population but also the First Nations chiefs in the 29 northern First Nations communities, when it comes to projects and programs in the community.

The **Destination Northern Ontario Investment Attraction Strategy** called out collaboration as an important value that can be harnessed to foster entrepreneurship and to develop and market tourism products. A key step of the Investment Attraction Strategy is to collaborate with partners to market investment-ready opportunities. DNO notes

that in order to continue to grow and diversify the Northern Ontario economy, partnerships must be established to foster collaboration in order to compete internationally to attract investment.

Facility/Infrastructure Capacity

The "Facility/Infrastructure Capacity" theme focuses on the physical spaces that play a crucial role in economic activity, recreation and tourism in the Sioux Lookout region. As long ago as 2007, according to the **Sioux Lookout & Hudson Revitalization Study**, the municipality identified a need to revitalize tourism and recreation infrastructure. Other documents analyze the maintenance of recreational sites, current usage rates, and the need for further development and diversification of recreational and tourism assets in Sioux Lookout. For example, according to the **2023 Facility Usage Report**, the arena demonstrated significant usage, generating almost \$164,000. The gymnasium and Rec Room 1 also showed notable financial contributions. Tennis and bocce courts showed zero earnings (facilities are open to the public without monitoring or an associated fee), however an equipment rental fee is being considered for bocce equipment due to a high rate of damaged and lost equipment. The physical spaces in Sioux Lookout should effectively and sustainably meet the long-term needs of the community in terms of recreation and sports tourism.

The **Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan** includes a Facility Condition Assessment that evaluated existing facilities and identified areas that need upgrading or improvement. Preliminary design planning was also done for a new recreation centre, with a proposal developed to meet the community's needs. A funding application for the new recreation centre was completed and submitted to the Canada/Ontario infrastructure program.

Limited transportation infrastructure (air, roads, rail) in Northern Ontario was identified as a deterrent for investors, according to the **Destination Northern Ontario Investment Attraction Strategy**. However, Sioux Lookout's airport is one of the best regional airports in Northern Ontario and has been the recipient of FedNor funding in 2019 to expand the airport's commercial and essential service areas, which has enhanced its capacity to meet travel needs.³ The Municipality's 2024 budget included a proposed \$5 in additional capital spending for the airport with a federal grant from the Airports Capital Assistance Program covering half of the proposed expenses.⁴ This positions Sioux Lookout well for regional air travel. DNO's report also stressed the importance of communicating the need for funding to support infrastructure upgrades as well as new capital investment for local governments and businesses, especially within accommodations and convention spaces, which aligns with engagement feedback on Sioux Lookout's limited accommodations.

Tourism and Economic Development

The "Tourism and Economic Development" theme focuses on promoting economic growth. It assesses the local business community in Sioux Lookout and Northern Ontario. The theme specifically highlights the potential for expanding the sports tourism industry in Sioux Lookout. It also examines the resilience of different sectors and the benefits of attracting foreign direct investment.

The **Sioux Lookout Economic Development Strategy** included a Local Business Survey where 77 of respondents felt resource-based tourism has the most potential attraction to the region. Challenges identified included a shortage of labour, rising costs of inputs, rising real estate or property taxes, rising inflation and interest rates, maintaining inventory and sufficient demand for products and services, and challenges with scaling. Opportunities identified included tourism, hospitality and retail, technology, agriculture and agri-food, value-added wood products, health and social assistance, educational services, construction and trade, home-based businesses and start-ups, health innovation and transportation, and forestry and mining. The Municipality of Sioux Lookout has implemented a 4% accommodation

³ Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario -FedNor. *Airport investment to help generate business opportunities and create jobs in Sioux Lookout*. January 2019.

⁴ Northern Ontario Business. *Changes are coming at Sioux Lookout Airport*. February 2024.

tax, with 50% of the revenue mandated to be spent on tourism related initiatives. This shows a focus on promoting the local tourism industry, which can stimulate economic growth.

The **COVID-19 Tourism Modification Program** recommended engaging tourism operators to develop and implement marketing campaigns utilizing multiple social media platforms, as well as tactics such as social media influencers and photo tagging. This type of engagement will require the resources that a tourism department can bring to the industry. The Sports Tourism Plan recommended the creation of an in-house tourism department within the Municipality of Sioux Lookout. This department could be responsible for marketing and promoting Sioux Lookout as a tourist destination, as well as developing partnerships with organizations and other communities to increase tourism.

Destination Northern Ontario's Investment Attraction Strategy aims to prioritize efforts in attracting investment and promoting tourism in the region. The strategy identifies three streams of shifts: Defend and Maintain, Inspire and Grow and Rise and Shine, to focus on existing tourism products, develop new experiences, and foster a culture of excellence. There is a highlight on the importance of collaboration, alignment, and diversification in fostering growth and development in the tourism industry and suggests strategies and initiatives to support investment attraction and economic development.

Key Findings - Analysis of Other Reports

- **Tourism is a Significant Area of Opportunity:** The tourism sector is recognized as a pivotal industry for Sioux Lookout and Northern Ontario, leveraging its natural advantages and cultural heritage. According to the 2024 Local Business Survey, 77% of respondents identified resource-based tourism as having the highest potential to attract visitors. Furthermore, 32% of participants believed that sports tourism has the most potential for greater attraction of tourists to Sioux Lookout. Accommodations was a focus of a number of reports, including Destination Northern Ontario's 2022-2023 Accommodations Study and Gap Analysis Report, The Sioux Lookout Hotel Feasibility Study, the Cedar Bay Development Plan and the Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan, all indicating a need for additional accommodations to support tourism sector growth.
- **Destination Development Requires Careful Financial Planning:** The Municipality is focusing on the capacity of recreation facilities and infrastructure as a significant policy area. This has involved a detailed examination of how buildings are currently maintained and used. The findings from this analysis will help support planning and decisions related to community facilities and the programs they offer.
- **Recognized Importance of Collaboration:** Several documents highlight the importance of collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, such as local and regional entities and First Nation communities. Collaboration can guide the development of policies, programs, and projects and provide a forum to discuss potential shared financial support for economic development, tourism and recreation assets, and activities.
- **Capacity Building is Required to Support Economic and Tourism Development:** The Municipality's recent strategic documents indicates support for capacity building efforts to develop the tourism sector within Sioux Lookout. Various documents, such as the Economic Strategic Review 2020-2025, the Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan, and the Municipality of Sioux Lookout 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, all highlight the necessity for expanded capacity building supports in the tourism sector and economic development endeavors.

Inventory of Sports Tourism Infrastructure, Programming and Gaps

Sioux Lookout provides a wide range of sports and recreation experiences and activities for both residents and visitors. The Municipality offers various public and private infrastructure and amenities, both within the downtown core and in surrounding areas. Sioux Lookout's Sports Tourism Plan identifies areas where there is a need for improvement in sports and recreation facilities. The Plan aims to address these gaps and fulfill the desire for better facilities in the community.

Infrastructure Inventory and Gaps

Municipally Owned Facilities



Sioux Lookout Memorial Arena

One ice pad
Seating capacity: 580
Sports and recreation activities: broomball, figure skating, hockey



Cedar Bay Complex

Approximately 10 km of trails
Sports and recreation activities: cross country skiing, fat biking, hiking, horseback riding, snowshoeing



Outdoor Sports Facilities

Skateboard Park
Two ball diamonds
Tennis court
Outdoor skating rink
Sports and recreation activities: baseball, bocce ball, skating, softball, tennis



Sioux Lookout Fitness Centre

Indoor track, weight room, gymnasium
Sports and recreation activities: badminton, cricket, pickleball, squash, tennis, volleyball

Private Facility



Sioux Lookout Golf and Country Club

9-hole golf course
Four sheets of curling ice
Sports: golf and curling

Sports and Recreation Facility Gaps

The following are the sports and recreation facility gaps identified in past strategies and plans.



Additional Ice Surface

Lack capacity to host annual Broomball Tournament within Sioux Lookout



Structured Fitness Training Programs

Facility capacity for structured training for Indigenous athletes



Pow Wow Facility

There are currently no pow wows that take place in Sioux Lookout



Swimming Facility

There are currently no aquatic facilities in Sioux Lookout

Proposed Recreation Hub

Within the Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan, primary uses for the proposed recreation hub were identified with the goals of addressing the major infrastructure gaps identified within the plan. The previously proposed facility required extensive external financial investment. Funding proposals submitted to ensure financial viability were not successful and required a new approach to future planning initiatives.



Additional Ice Surface

Two NHL regulation size ice rinks

Regulation size curling rink with four sheets



Swimming Facility

Indoor pool

Five competition lanes

Swimming lessons



Recreation Space

Weight room

Cardio space

Squash courts

Key Findings - Infrastructure Inventory and Gaps

- **Diverse sports inventory:** Sioux Lookout offers a diverse range of sports and recreation activities and facilities for locals and tourists. These include public and private sports facilities located within the Municipality of Sioux Lookout.
- **Identified infrastructure and cultural gaps:** The Plan has identified gaps in the existing sports and recreation facilities, highlighting the need for infrastructure improvements to better meet the expectations of the community and visitors. These gaps included a shortage of ice surfaces for hockey and figure skating, a space for structured fitness training programs for Indigenous athletes, and space for Indigenous cultural events such as Pow Wows, and a swimming facility.
- **Facility enhancements:** Recognizing the importance of enhancing these facilities, Sioux Lookout's Economic Development team is aiming to attract more sports tourism and maximize the associated economic and social benefits. By addressing gaps (see bullet point above), Sioux Lookout can establish itself as a destination for sports events and tournaments in Northern Ontario.

- **Proposed recreation hub:** The Municipality of Sioux Lookout is actively engaged in strategic planning and infrastructure development for sports tourism and recreation. The previously proposed recreation hub presents a significant opportunity to meet the community's needs and attract more visitors.

Visitor Perception Analysis

Competition to capture visitors' attention begins even before they embark on their journey. During the pre-arrival stage, individuals conduct research and rely on the knowledge and perceptions of other users to shape their decisions. The visitor perception analysis is derived from Google and TripAdvisor ratings providing by individual consumers. It reflects aggregated visitor satisfaction levels and identifies those tourism assets that are positioning themselves well in the market and are therefore perceived to be preferred places to visit. A weighted average is used to sort the ratings, with extra weight given to listings with more reviews. The tables that follow show rankings for various categories of tourism assets in Sioux Lookout. It will be important to note what is missing.

Top 30 Overall Tourism Assets

The visitor perception analysis reviewed all tourism assets featured on Google and TripAdvisor, be they demand generators (also known as core attractors or major attractions), destination enhancers (supportive tourism experiences), and superstructure (hotels, restaurants, retail). Sioux Lookout does not have any demand generators ranked in the top ten, indicating that visitors may not perceive the community as a tourism destination.

Table 1 Top 30 Overall Tourism Assets in Sioux Lookout

Overall Rank	Tourism Asset Name	Type
1	Sioux Lookout Inn & Suites (Marked Closed)	Accommodation
2	Pelican Lake Sandwich Company	Restaurant
3	Forest Bar & Grill	Restaurant
4	Tim Hortons	Restaurant
5	Sunset Inn & Suites	Accommodation
6	Forest Inn & Conference Centre	Accommodation
7	Fifth Avenue Bar & Grill	Restaurant
8	Subway	Restaurant
9	Chicken Chef	Restaurant
10	Anderson's Lodge	Accommodation
11	Dick & Nellie's Bar & Grill	Restaurant
12	Lamplighter Motel	Accommodation
13	Sioux Lookout Golf and Curling Club Restaurant	Restaurant
14	Wellington Centre	Restaurant
15	Ojibway Provincial Park	Attraction
16	Sioux Lookout LCBO	Other
17	Abram Lake Resort & RV Park	Accommodation
18	Fireside Lodge	Accommodation
19	The Hub Collective Café	Restaurant
20	Sioux Lookout Airport	Other
21	New Kowloon Restaurant (Marked Closed)	Restaurant
22	Sioux Lookout Town Beach	Attraction
23	Lac Seul Floating Lodges	Accommodation
24	Donnelly's Minnitaki Lodge	Accommodation
25	Sioux Lookout Memorial Arena	Attraction
26	Moosehorn Lodge	Accommodation
27	Sioux Lookout Recreation Centre	Attraction

Overall Rank	Tourism Asset Name	Type
28	Royal Canadian Legion	Other
29	Sioux Lookout Chamber/Travel Info Centre	Other
30	Dairy Queen Grill & Chill	Restaurant

Top Tourism Attraction Assets (Demand Generators)

Ojibway Provincial Park is ranked by visitors as the most attractive tourism demand generator, although it ranks at #15 among all tourism assets. From a visitor perspective, the arena and recreation centre assets rank at #25 and #27 respectively, suggesting that these facilities are not perceived as unique or of high quality.

Table 2 Top Tourism Attraction Assets (Demand Generators) in Sioux Lookout

Overall Rank	Tourism Attraction (Demand Generator) Asset Name
15	Ojibway Provincial Park
22	Sioux Lookout Town Beach
25	Sioux Lookout Memorial Arena
27	Sioux Lookout Recreation Centre
41	Umfreville Park
46	Bernier Beach
49	Second Sandy Beach
51	Cedar Bay Stables

Top Superstructure Assets (Restaurants)

The Pelican Lake Sandwich Company received positive reviews as a lunch stop, followed by Forest Bar & Grill (associated with Forest Inn & Conference Centre), which has been responsive to visitor reviews. It is concerning that Sioux Lookout's chain restaurants rank in the top ten, as visitors typically rate locally owned restaurants higher. The investigation of any customer service or social media issues would be a recommendation for a subsequent tourism action plan. In addition, Sioux Lookout's top restaurants appear to be primarily oriented to casual lunch restaurants, noting a gap in locally owned restaurants targeting dinner crowds.

Table 3 Top Restaurant Assets in Sioux Lookout

Overall Rank	Superstructure / Restaurant Asset Name
2	Pelican Lake Sandwich Company
3	Forest Bar & Grill
4	Tim Hortons
7	Fifth Avenue Bar & Grill
8	Subway
9	Chicken Chef
11	Dick & Nellie's Bar & Grill
13	Sioux Lookout Golf and Curling Club Restaurant
14	Wellington Centre
19	The Hub Collective Café
21	New Kowloon Restaurant (Marked Closed)
30	Dairy Queen Grill & Chill
34	HUB YXL
40	The Red Brick Café

Overall Rank	Superstructure / Restaurant Asset Name
42	Charli's Diner
43	Fair Convenience
55	Lost Lake Drop-In Centre

Top Superstructure Assets (Accommodation)

The quality of accommodation in the community is confusing for visitors, as the top hotel, Sioux Lookout Inn & Suites is marked as closed and was replaced by Mashkikii Odanohkiik Kabayshewekamik, a health care hostel accommodation provider. Two other former hotels (Days Inn and Best Western) on the list were bought and turned into hostels, but still show up in top accommodation assets in Sioux Lookout. Sioux Lookout stands out for its fishing lodges, with Lac Seul Floating Lodges being a unique asset.

Table 4 Top Accommodation Assets in Sioux Lookout

Overall Rank	Superstructure / Accommodation Asset Name
1	Sioux Lookout Inn & Suites (Marked Closed) ⁵
5	Sunset Inn & Suites
6	Forest Inn & Conference Centre
10	Anderson's Lodge
12	Lamplighter Motel
17	Abram Lake Resort & RV Park
18	Fireside Lodge
23	Lac Seul Floating Lodges
24	Donnelly's Minnitaki Lodge
26	Moosehorn Lodge
31	Frog Rapids Camp
32	Red Pine Lodge
35	Nutt's Country Cabins
36	Knobby's Fly-In Camps
37	Discovery Lake Lodge
38	George's Tikinagan Camp
39	Hidden Bay Lodge & Camps
44	Lost Island Lodge
45	Northumbrian Resort
50	Ghost River Camp
52	Niyanan Nengo Saaga'iiganiwinwag Kabayshewekamik (former Days Inn)
53	Uchi Lake Lodge
56	Mashkikii Odanohkiik Kabayshewekamik (former Best Western)

⁵ The former Best Western Sioux Lookout Inn & Suites is now Mashkikii Odanohkiik Kabayshewekamik.

Top Destination Enhancer Assets

Destination enhancers⁶ are the pull factors that can lead an individual traveller to select one destination in favour of another once the decision to travel has been made. Destination enhancers are the attributes that satisfy the tourist and create a revisit intention. The list of trip enhancers is not impressive.

Table 5 Top Other Assets (Trip Enhancers) in Sioux Lookout

Overall Rank	Other (Destination Enhancer) Asset Name
16	Sioux Lookout LCBO
20	Sioux Lookout Airport
28	Royal Canadian Legion
29	Sioux Lookout Chamber/Travel Info Centre
33	Nishnawbe-Gamik Friendship Centre
47	Beer Store 3495
48	Sioux Lookout Public Library
54	Sioux Lookout Museum (Marked Closed)
58	Mascotto's Marine
59	Ojibway Baits
60	Ojibway Power Toboggan Association

Key Findings - Visitor Perception Analysis

- **Active Online Tourism Business Presence:** Outdated listings and closed businesses on trip planning platforms frustrate potential tourists and leave a negative impression. Sioux Lookout has too many of these listings. If there are attractions, demand generators, and businesses that rank low or are missing altogether from the visitor perception analysis, investigation will be needed to uncover the reason, such as poor customer service or a lack of social media capabilities among business and venue operators.
- **Lack of Demand Generators:** Sioux Lookout lacks top-ranked tourism attractions from the point of view of visitors, indicating the community is not perceived as a tourism destination. Ojibway Provincial Park is the tourism demand generator with the highest score in its class, although it is not ranked in the top 10 list of assets overall). Arena and recreation centre assets rank low, suggesting they are not seen as unique or high-quality.
- **Inaccurate Listings:** Sioux Lookout's fishing lodges, particularly Lac Seul Floating Lodges, stand out as positive for accommodation providers in the municipality. However, hotel accommodation confusion exists, with a closed hotel achieving top status. Other hostels appear on the list although they are not open to tourists.

⁶ Source: African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, Volume 8 (4) – (2019).

Community Capacity Analysis

Community Capacity Analysis

Best Practices Review

The Framework for Recreation in Canada⁷, updated in 2024, was endorsed by provincial and territorial ministers and supported by the Government of Canada to provide guidance and galvanize the recreation and parks sector. The vision for this framework states “Everyone is engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences that foster individual wellbeing, the wellbeing of natural and built environments, and community wellbeing”⁸ with stated principles of operation that include: outcome driven, quality and relevance, evidence based, partnership, and innovation.

The framework goals can provide context for Sioux Lookout’s future sports and recreation infrastructure planning. The goals include:

<p>Active Living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilize 24-hr movement guidelines• Non-competitive and unstructured pay• Programs adapt to changing school/work formats• Physical literacy• Active transportation	<p>Inclusion and Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with equity-denied groups to ensure equitable access• Sense of belonging• Work with Indigenous communities	<p>Connecting People with Nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to natural spaces and places• Collect and share best practices• Public awareness and education• Environmental stewardship	<p>Supportive Environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide accessible, inclusive, and welcoming spaces and places• Placemaking• Recreation education• Healthy food environments• Social connectedness	<p>Recreation Capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address workforce gaps• Diversity and equity• Develop volunteer strategies• Practitioner-academic collaboration• Knowledge development and training
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Despite these idealistic goals supported by senior levels of government, municipalities are almost always the service delivery model for on-the-ground activation of recreation services. Towns and cities carry a large responsibility for many services and infrastructure that they provide their communities, yet they have limited options to generate revenue. Rural communities devote 7% of their budget to recreational and cultural services, one of the smaller budget items. This would include money earmarked for the development and maintenance of cultural and recreational community infrastructure. Municipalities in Canada are very limited in the types of direct revenue tools they are permitted to use.⁹

Understanding best practices in municipal recreation service delivery is important for Sioux Lookout to explore options as it moves forward. In this best practices review, the communities analyzed within this section were selected through desktop research, focusing on their investment in recreation or aquatic facilities. These communities are located in rural or remote areas that act as a service centre for Indigenous communities with some being located in Northern Ontario, while others are spread across the country. Efforts were made to include communities enacting a variety of funding investment models. The purpose of this best practices review is to gain insights into the operational strategies adopted by these communities, which not only provide recreational opportunities for their residents but also leverage sports tourism to supplement their operations. These can help inform future recommendations for Sioux Lookout that centre around creative program synergies, facility usage and revenue maximization, and inclusive governance.

⁷ Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. *Framework for Recreation in Canada*. 2024.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Dalhousie University and MacEachen. *Cultural and Recreational Infrastructure in Nova Scotia: Future Investments and Governance*. November 2019.

Common Themes of Best Practices

The best practices review identified four common themes that demonstrated solid examples from other jurisdictions:



Multi-level Government Financing: Financial assistance provided by two or more government entities, such as federal and provincial governments, to local governments. This support can be in the form of grants or loans and is aimed at funding community projects.



Loan Repayment/Operating Budget: Strategies that communities implement to manage the repayment of loans over time and/or to support the ongoing operational costs of new community facilities.







Business Sponsorships: Collaboration between local governments and the private sector. This partnership utilizes the resources and financial support from private entities to assist in the development, financing, or operation of community facilities. This grouping also refers to Crown Corporations.



Community Fundraising: Strategies implemented by local governments to secure financial support from the local community. This funding aids in the development of new community facilities.

Recreation Project Financing

Table 6 Recreation Project Financing Best Practices

Community	Population (2021)	Annual Operating Budget	Project	Funding Source	Best Practice Themes
Atikokan, ON	2,642	\$ value not available. Supported by municipal budget and user fees. ¹⁰	Recreation Centre (\$4.5 million)	Municipal Corporation Public Fundraising Non-Profit	 
Cote First Nation, SK	1,124 (2023)	\$ value not available.	Sports Arena (\$17 million, 100% community funded ¹¹)	Self-Funded	
Dryden, ON	7,388	\$208 net cost per \$100,000 CVA ¹²	Community Pool (approx. \$3.33 million)	All Levels of Government	

¹⁰ Information collected through community interviews.

¹¹ Cote First Nation Consolidated Financial Statements, March 31, 2021, fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca

¹² \$208 Net Costs per \$100,000 Current Value Assessment. CVA refers to the valuation method used to assess current market value of assets, used in property assessments. "Excl Amort" means excluding amortization, the gradual write-off of intangible assets over time.

Community	Population (2021)	Annual Operating Budget	Project	Funding Source	Best Practice Themes
Espanola, ON	5,185	\$1.6 million ¹³	Recreation Centre (\$10 million)	Municipal Corporation Public Fundraising Federal Government	  
Fort Chipewyan, AB	798	\$4,941,672 ¹⁴	Aquatic Centre (\$40 million)	Self-Funded	
Gilliam, MB	1,007	\$1.8 million ¹⁵	Recreation Centre (\$40 million)	Crown Corporation	
Meadow Lake, SK	2,553	\$569,537 ¹⁶ (Cumulative expenditure of civic and aquatic centre)	Recreation and Civic Centre (\$37 million)	All Levels of Government	
Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, ON	2,101	\$ value not available	Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte Community's Well-Being Program (Subsidy program)	SME Sponsorship	
Prince Albert, SK	44,718	\$ value not available. Facility is still under construction. ¹⁷	Aquatic and Arena Recreation Centre (\$118 million)	All Levels of Government	 
Upper Skeena, BC	608	\$ value not available.	Rec Centre (\$15.7 million) ¹⁸	All Levels of Government	 

¹³ Information collected through community interviews.

¹⁴ The [2023 Budget](#) includes staff at Arena, Aquatic Centre, and other facilities, and Parks and Roads staff.

¹⁵ Total recreation budgeted expenditure, 2024, townofgilliam.com

¹⁶ [2024 Budget](#), City of Meadow Lake

¹⁷ The [annual interest and principal payment](#) will be \$1.6 million for borrowing of \$30 million. Operating budget is not publicly available.

¹⁸ Government of Canada news release, gov.bc.ca

Best Practices in Financing Community Recreation

Communities were selected based on their approaches to financing community recreation facilities and programs. These examples provide an understanding of best practices in supporting the development of projects and financing.

Atikokan, ON

Between 2015 and 2017, the community facility in Atikokan underwent significant redevelopment. The project, which cost \$4.5 million, involved replacing the community arena's ice rink and cooling system. Funding for this development was sourced from a combination of efforts by the municipality, the Ontario Heritage Trust, and public fundraising. The Ontario Heritage Trust¹⁹ contributed a grant, meaning the project did not involve any loans. Currently, the operating budget for the facility is supported by the municipal budget and user fees.

Cote First Nation, SK

In 2022, Cote First Nation implemented a plan to modernize their local recreation centre. The new 800-seat arena features an ice rink, walking track, weight room, and dressing rooms, providing a comprehensive venue for both local and visiting athletes. The project cost was \$17 million²⁰ and entirely funded by the community.²¹ It underscores a strong commitment to fostering sports and recreation. The construction was managed by SEKO Construction, with additional contributions from various subcontractors who temporarily relocated to the area, further boosting the local economy.



Source: SEKO Construction, sekoconstruction.com

Dryden, ON

Dryden's economy is diversified, comprising the resource sector, service industries, a strong retail foundation, and tourism. The city's approach to tourism is underpinned by the Municipal Accommodations Tax (MAT). The revenue from MAT is allocated to support local events and enhance infrastructure, thereby strengthening the city's attractiveness as a tourist destination. The community's recreation activities are centred around the recreation complex. The City of Dryden first developed its public pool in 1982, with upgrades in the 2000s. From its initial development, the pool benefited from innovative energy ideas as it was the first solar-heated pool in Canada to receive financial support from the Canada/Ontario Conservation and Renewable Energy Demonstration Program, highlighting a commitment to sustainable practices.²² Today, the pool is undergoing another innovative development. The City is integrating a cogeneration plant into the facility to power and heat the pool. Cogeneration, also known as combined heat and power, is an efficient energy system that simultaneously generates electricity and useful heat from a single fuel source. This approach maximizes energy use, with efficiency rates reaching 70 to 90%, significantly better than traditional systems which only achieve about 30%



Source: Dryden Tourism

¹⁹ The [Ontario Heritage Trust](#), previously known as the Ontario Heritage Foundation, is an agency of the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries in Ontario, Canada. It is tasked with promoting and preserving the cultural and natural heritage of the province.

²⁰ [Cote First Nation takes pride in new \\$17 million arena, Region CTV](#), 2024

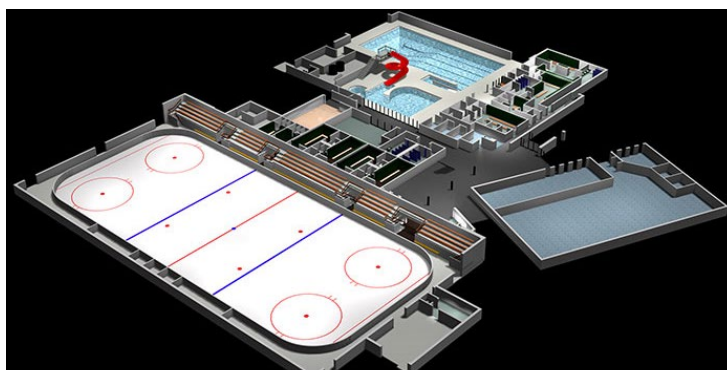
²¹ [Rink Project](#), Cote First Nation

²² [Dryden Pool](#), City of Dryden

efficiency.²³ Other benefits of cogeneration include reduced energy costs, lower greenhouse gas emissions, enhanced site resiliency against power cuts, and the ability to utilize renewable energy sources such as biomass. The development of the project was supported by the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP), which provided funding that covered 75% of the project costs. The contribution from ICIP amounted to \$2.5 million. The development of the project was supported by the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP), which provided funding that covered 75% of the project costs. The contribution from ICIP amounted to \$2.5 million, representing a substantial portion of the funding but not the total cost of the project. The facility's operating budget is funded through user fees and tax levies. A significant challenge in managing the facility is effectively communicating the budget required to maintain the desired service level to the council. It is essential to ensure the budget matches the expected service level.

Espanola, ON

The main recreation centre in Espanola was constructed in 1999. The facility has a variety of amenities including an ice pad with spectator bleachers, 25-metre lap pool, wave pool with water slide and spa, fully equipped fitness centre and auditorium/conference hall with a capacity of 350 people. Altogether the project totalled approximately \$10 million. The funding for this project was primarily sourced from the municipality along with a minor contribution of federal funds and \$200,000 raised by the local Lions Club²⁴. The Municipality secured a 15-year loan to finance a



Source: Mitchell Jensen Architects, mitchelljensen.ca

portion of the costs, which was paid off by 2014. The facility has an annual operating budget of \$1.6 million before revenue. The recreation centre manages to cover only 25% of its operating costs through user fees and rentals, relying on a substantial 75% subsidy from municipal tax revenues. The facility now faces challenges related to aging infrastructure, particularly its mechanical systems. Current efforts are concentrated on addressing these issues through replacements and upgrades, demanding significant financial resources, and strategic planning. The facility's ongoing maintenance and operational challenges highlight the need for robust asset management to sustain its offerings and adapt to the community's evolving demographics.

Fort Chipewyan, AB

Fort Chipewyan is a remote community in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. In 2016, it completed the development of its indoor aquatic centre. The facility cost an estimated \$40 million and includes a 25-metre pool, waterpark, waterslide, hot tub, and sauna, offering a wide range of water activities for the residents.²⁵ The construction of this aquatic centre was primarily funded through the community's capital budget, with additional financial support from revenues generated by members of the community of Fort Chipewyan itself. This strategic financial planning highlights the Regional Municipality's commitment



Source: The Orange Crow, orangecrow.ca

²³ [What is cogeneration and what are its benefits? Enel XGlobal Retail](#), 2024

²⁴ [Lions Clubs International](#), a network of volunteers who work on various community projects.

²⁵ Sonny Flett Aquatic Centre, rccwb.ca

to sustainable fiscal management and foresight in ensuring the project's affordability without compromising on its scope and quality. Ownership and operational responsibilities of the aquatic centre rest with the Regional Municipality, which has devised a self-sustaining financial model for managing post-opening operational costs²⁶. The revenues generated from the facility's services are expected to cover these costs, thus ensuring that the centre not only sustains itself financially but also potentially provides financial support for other community development projects. This model reflects a thoughtful approach to long-term financial stability and community benefit²⁷.

Gillam, MB

Gillam is the northern most community in Manitoba that is accessible by road. When its previous recreation centre burned in 2017, the Town redeveloped the property, completing the new facility in 2020. The project was funded entirely by Manitoba Hydro, a major local employer. The \$40 million facility, covering two floors, features a variety of amenities including a curling rink, hockey rink with viewing areas, indoor leisure structures, three general meeting rooms, and board meeting room primarily utilized by Council. The facility also boasts a wellness centre equipped with gym equipment, theatre, gymnasium, library (not managed by the Town), and youth centre. The annual operating budget of the facility is \$1.8 million, which is also supported by Manitoba Hydro. The facility encounters challenges like staff consistency, operational cost management, and maintenance. These challenges have underscored the importance of budgeting for maintenance and ensuring sufficient staffing to manage large crowds. The Town of Gillam is currently undertaking a redevelopment project for its public pool. This initiative is funded by Manitoba Hydro and is scheduled for completion in November 2024. Once completed, the facility will be managed by the Town.



Source: Bockstael Construction, [bokstael.com](https://www.bokstael.com)

Meadow Lake, SK

Meadow Lake is a burgeoning centre for sports tourism, bolstered by proximity to recreational areas and strong partnerships with various organizations, including Kichiota Indigenous Destinations and the Western First Nations Hospitality LP under Meadow Lake Tribal Tourism²⁸. The City of Meadow Lake undertook the development of a new Recreation and Civic Centre, featuring an NHL-sized ice arena, administrative spaces, field house, and event centre. The project replaced the Meadow Lake and District Arena that was destroyed by fire in 2021. The projected cost surpassed \$37 million, with contributions from federal and provincial governments amounting to \$27.3 million²⁹ through ICIP³⁰. The City allocated about \$9.96



Source: YourML, yourmeadowlake.ca

²⁶ [Construction underway on Fort Chipewyan aquatic centre](#), CBC, 2015

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Tourism, City of Meadow Lake, 2024

²⁹ City to receive proposals for new rec complex in April, MeadowLakeNow, 2023

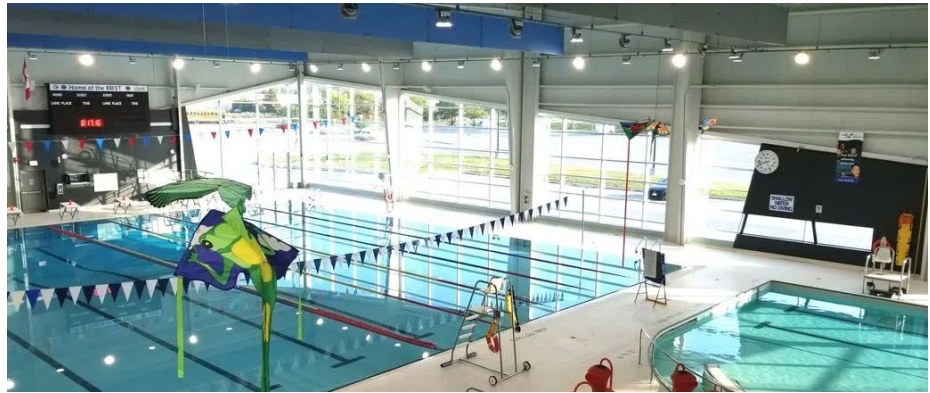
³⁰ The Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program aims to provide stable funding to communities through Infrastructure Canada, supporting initiatives to reduce pollution, increase climate resilience, foster clean-growth economies, build inclusive communities, and improve access to modern services. This is achieved through bilateral agreements between Infrastructure Canada and each province and territory, with over \$33 billion in funding being allocated.

million, supplemented by insurance funds from the loss of the previous arena. The City streamlined the project by eliminating a proposed skating rink to manage an additional financial burden estimated between \$2 to \$3 million.³¹ The Meadow Lake Co-op also donated \$3 million to the project and received naming rights for “The Co-op Centre.”³² By August 2024, the project was on schedule, to be completed in March 2025.³³

Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, ON

The Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte Community’s Well-Being Program is an initiative that focuses on promoting the health and well-being of community members. As part of this program, an agreement was established with the Quinte Sports and Wellness Centre in nearby Belleville. The agreement allows the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte to provide free passes to families, granting them

access to the various facilities available at the centre, including the gym, pool, and ice rink. This initiative is designed to improve the overall health and wellness of families within the community. The subsidy offers discounted rates of 25%, 50%, or 75% off the regular price.³⁴ Eligibility is determined annually based on the Low-Income Cut-Off levels set by Statistics Canada and applicants must



Source: City of Belleville, 91x.fm

provide proof of income and residency. Once approved, the subsidy allows participants to register for various programs throughout the year without reapplying. However, certain programs like private lessons and personal training sessions are excluded from this subsidy. The policy also accommodates payment plans and ensures confidentiality and personalized assessment to meet the needs of all applicants. To support the funding of these subsidies, the City of Belleville has engaged in partnerships through naming rights opportunities at facilities like the Quinte Sports and Wellness Centre³⁵. These arrangements allow businesses to purchase the rights to name a facility or asset, providing them with valuable exposure while generating revenue that helps offset the costs of the Recreation program subsidies. The naming rights not only cover signage costs but also integrate the sponsor’s name in all facility contracts and city publications, enhancing their visibility, and contributing to the financial sustainability of community recreational services.

³¹ [City to receive proposals for new rec complex in April](#), MeadowLakeNow, 20237

³² Co-op Community Builder Campaign, yourmeadowlake.ca

³³ Government of Saskatchewan news release, saskatchewan.ca

³⁴ [Recreation Fee Assistance](#), City of Belleville

³⁵ Sponsorship and Naming Rights, quintesportsandwellnesscentre.ca

Prince Albert, SK

Prince Albert serves as a hub for many northern Saskatchewan communities and is building a new Aquatic and Arenas Recreation Centre within the Yard Development, with a total project budget is estimated at \$118 million.³⁶ The project is a collaborative funding effort involving multiple levels of government. The Federal Government has committed \$24 million through ICIP, while the Government of Saskatchewan will contribute \$19.9 million.³⁷ The City of Prince Albert raised its borrowing amount by \$30 million, reaching a total of \$46 million³⁸ following approval from City Council. This increase in borrowing aims to fund the City's share of project costs without raising property taxes. Additionally, Prince Albert anticipates its repayment schedule to be 35 years. The tax revenue generated from the Yard Development and the Civic Facilities Reserve will provide the revenue for the annual interest and principal payments.



Upper Skeena, BC

New Hazelton is the central hub for commerce and services within Upper Skeena Region, catering to residents of the Hazeltons area and Kispiox Valley. Sports tourism is enhanced by the Upper Skeena Recreation Centre, locally known as the “Heart of the Hazeltons.”

The facility was completed in 2019 at a cost of \$15.7 million³⁹ with funding from government, First Nations, businesses, philanthropic agencies, and individual donors. The Government of Canada contributed \$1.8 million from the Major Infrastructure Component of the Building Canada Fund⁴⁰ and \$6 million from the Gas Tax Fund. The Province of British Columbia provided \$4 million towards the project.⁴¹ The development and operation of the centre

exemplifies best practices regarding community-supported infrastructure. In addition to receiving funding from different stakeholders, the centre's construction utilized locally harvested and produced wood products and local labour to build prefabricated panels⁴². This approach not only proved to be cost-effective but also fostered local employment and skills development. This model highlights the importance of integrating sustainable building practices, strong community partnerships, and flexible programming to successfully operate a recreational facility that could meet the evolving needs of the community.



Source: Canadian Architect, canadianarchitect.com

³⁶ [New Arena & Aquatics Recreation Centre, Funding](#), City of Prince Albert, 2023

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ [Transportation and Infrastructure](#), Government of British Columbia, news release, 2016

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² [Upper Skeena Recreation Centre / Hemsworth Architecture](#), ArchDaily, 2019

Public-Private Partnership Model

The public-private partnership (P3) model in Canada has undergone significant evolution over the past 30 years, expanding into new asset classes, engaging new government and corporate partners, and embracing technological and design advancements. The Canadian approach to P3s has gained global recognition as a leading example, given that 300+ projects worth over \$139 billion have been completed over three decades. There is a collective recognition of the value of P3s in constructing vital infrastructure and delivering essential services to Canadians by:

- Allocating risk to the party best equipped to manage it effectively.
- Considering the entire life cycle of the asset, ensuring long-term sustainability.
- Driving innovation and operational efficiencies.
- Leveraging private capital and expertise to enhance project outcomes.⁴³

Case Study: Pembroke's desire to develop a New Pool and Recreational Facility through P3

Pembroke, a city with a population of just over 14,000, 145km northwest of Ottawa, is exploring the possibility of attracting a private firm to construct a state-of-the-art sports complex through a Public-Private Partnership (P3). The proposed development includes a new Memorial Centre, a second ice surface, an aquatic center, and potentially a new library.⁴⁴ The city council sees this P3 project as an opportunity to address the aging infrastructure of existing recreational facilities while minimizing the financial burden on the city. Town leadership believes that combining the replacement of the pool with the construction of a new Pembroke Memorial Center (PMC) makes the project financially feasible for private sector involvement. The existing recreational facilities, such as the Kinsmen Pool and the PMC, require significant investments to maintain or replace. For instance, the PMC, built in 1951-52, needs \$11.5 million over the next 20 years to keep it in fair condition.

The potential benefits of a P3 partnership include cost savings, leveraging private-sector expertise and capital, and reducing pressure on the tax system. By attracting private investment and allowing the successful bidder to recoup their investment through user fees, Pembroke aims to develop a modern recreational facility without imposing a heavy financial burden on the city. City council has put forth a motion to issue an expression of interest to firms interested in a P3 for the multi-sports facility/recreation hub.⁴⁵ The proposed complex would not only include an aquatic center and a replacement for the PMC but also a second ice pad and a possible library. The current library, housed in a 114-year-old building, requires significant upgrades. The potential sites for the new complex are located in the TransCan Corporate Park near the Highway 17-41 intersection. The city council is positive about the idea and hopes to gather more information through staff reports.

Inclusive Recreational Partnerships

Case Study: City of Prince Albert Recreation Partnerships

Recreation Facilities Partnerships with First Nations: The City of Prince Albert and the Woodland Cree Nations (Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, Lac La Ronge Indian Band, and Montreal Lake Cree Nation) partnered to secure funding for the proposed Convention and Cultural Events Centre in Prince Albert. Under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), each First Nation would own 15% of the facility upon its completion, while the City of Prince Albert would own the remaining 55%. The City would be responsible for the full operating costs of the building.

⁴³ The Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships. *The Evolution of Canada's Model Discussion Paper*. Fall 2023.

⁴⁴ The Eganville Leader. *Pembroke looks at public private partnership for rinks and pool*. December 2023.

⁴⁵ Pembroke Observer. *Pembroke council submits grant application for development of a new \$25 million pool and community centre*. November 2019.

The proposed Convention and Cultural Events Centre, to be located adjacent to the new Aquatic and Arenas Recreation Centre, is envisioned as a hub for community engagement, capable of hosting a wide range of cultural, entertainment, and business events. The partnership aims to not only create a venue for events but also to showcase the imagery and history of the local First Nations, emphasizing the importance of First Nations representation within the workforce and pledging to provide training and job opportunities for First Nations individuals to help run the facility. The Woodland Cree Nations believe that this partnership will bring economic development to northern Saskatchewan, attract visitors, and create job opportunities for their members. The City of Prince Albert sees this partnership as a significant step towards reconciliation and a way to better represent and serve its diverse population.⁴⁶

Partnership with Local High School: The Frank J Dunn swimming pool, which is situated within the Carlton Comprehensive High School, is a facility that is managed jointly by the City of Prince Albert and the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division #119. This pool provides a comprehensive selection of swimming lessons for individuals of all ages, including children, youth, and adults. Additionally, it offers various activities such as lane swimming, public swimming, and aquacise classes. The City of Prince Albert partners with the school to recruit lifeguards, providing job opportunities during noon hours and after school.

Addressing Lifeguard Shortages: The City of Prince Albert has implemented two noteworthy initiatives to address the nationwide shortage of lifeguards and instructors: the Swim to Survive Program and the newly introduced City of Prince Albert Lifeguard Scholarship. These programs serve as effective strategies for training and retaining aquatics staff. Starting from 2009, the City of Prince Albert and the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division have collaborated to create an educational initiative for students enrolled at Carlton Comprehensive Public High School. Through this partnership, students who have received training as Lifesaving Instructors have the chance to earn a Work Exploration A30/B30 high school credit. They can achieve this credit by teaching the Swim to Survive program to fourth and fifth-grade students from 'schools of opportunity' in Prince Albert.⁴⁷

Recreational Activities for Seniors: The City offers various fitness and recreational activities for its senior residents, including yoga classes for beginners, bellyfit classes, zumba lite, free walking at the Art Hauser Centre, free adult and senior skating, a sit-and-get-fit program for seniors, and a pottery class are all options. The Margo Fournier Centre offers adult fitness classes focusing on functional exercise to maintain everyday tasks. Pickleball is also available for all ages and abilities. The City offers 60-minute classes for cardiovascular workouts in both the shallow and deep ends of the pool.

Key Findings - Best Practices Review

- **Receiving Support from all Levels of Government:** Project financing for recreation and sports tourism facilities is often a multi-level government collaboration. Numerous municipalities depend on financial contributions from their respective provincial authorities and the Government of Canada to cover a substantial portion of project expenses. The municipalities that were reviewed secured governmental support via accessible funding initiatives, including the Conservation and Renewable Energy Demonstration Program and the Invest in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP).
- **Building Multiple Revenue Streams:** Municipalities, such as the City of Prince Albert, plan to repay government loans using the revenues generated from nearby developments as well as the City's Civic Facilities Reserve. This strategy efficiently enables development projects to finance other development. Communities are also utilizing revenues generated from user fees to support loan repayment and operating budget.

⁴⁶ Meadowlakenow.com. *Historic partnership with Woodland Cree Nation to help fund P.A. Convention and Cultural Centre*. September 16, 2024.

⁴⁷ Sasktoday.ca. *Swim to Survive Program; new lifeguard scholarship for P.A.* April 2023.

- **Offering Sponsorship Tools:** Municipalities often provide sponsorship opportunities to local businesses as a means of generating revenue. These sponsorships play a crucial role in covering some of the operating costs and/or reducing user fees associated with new facilities. In return for their financial support, businesses are granted naming rights within the newly constructed facility. This mutually beneficial arrangement allows businesses to gain visibility and recognition, while municipalities can secure the necessary funds to maintain and operate these facilities.
- **Utilizing Community Fundraising:** Implementing community bond fundraising initiatives for infrastructure projects can significantly enhance support for local facilities while promoting economic and social benefits. By planning and executing successful fundraising efforts, communities can independently finance projects. This approach also fosters local pride and ownership.
- **Managing Financing Sustainability:** Robust asset management is required on the part of municipalities (or facility owners and operators) to sustain recreation and sports tourism programming and to adapt to the community's evolving demographics, as well as any changes in sports tourism trends.
- **Innovative Partnerships:** Municipalities are looking to new types of innovative partnerships, such as working with neighbouring First Nations or private sector developers, to plan, build and operate new recreation facilities.

Opportunities Analysis of Heritage and Ecotourism Offerings

What Sioux Lookout has to offer

Review of Visitor Perception Analysis

Currently there are no cultural or heritage-based attractions listed on either Trip Advisor or Google, two of the largest travel planning platforms, indicating that any current activities in this area are targeted at residents. There is an opportunity to support business start-up activities through partnering with organizations that are already working on these endeavors.

Sioux Lookout Museum

The Sioux Lookout Museum was managed by the Town of Sioux Lookout and most recently located in the Sioux Lookout Heritage Railway Station. Visitors could learn more about Sioux Lookout's history, including being a hub for the Canadian Pacific Railway,⁴⁸ its legacy as a gold and iron mining town or as a leading aviation centre.⁴⁹ The Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan identified the desire for inclusion of an Indigenous knowledge centre within the museum, however the museum closed during COVID-19 pandemic and has not re-opened. A suitable or feasible location for the museum has not yet been identified. Authentic Indigenous experiences require Indigenous ownership of the experiences and stories being told, which would require partnerships for a potential Indigenous knowledge centre would be to be further explored.

Sioux Lookout Blueberry Festival

The Sioux Lookout Blueberry Festival, which has been running since 1983, is an annual ten-day celebration dedicated to highlighting the unique and diverse culture of Sioux Lookout. According to the festival website, this festival offers a wide range of over 100 events and has evolved into a highly anticipated summer extravaganza that draws in numerous visitors from both the local region and around the globe.⁵⁰ One of the notable aspects of the Blueberry Festival is the way it embraces the natural beauty of the area. Many of the events take advantage of the region's abundance of lakes and beaches, allowing participants and onlookers to immerse themselves in the scenic surroundings while enjoying various activities. A review of the festival website indicates visitors as integral to festival attendance, however there are

⁴⁸ [7 interesting facts about Sioux Lookout | Northern Ontario Travel](#)

⁴⁹ Sioux Lookout Strategic Plan, Our History, siouxlookout.ca

⁵⁰ [The Sioux Lookout Blueberry Festival \(blueberrybert.com\)](http://TheSiouxLookoutBlueberryFestival(blueberrybert.com))

no Google or TripAdvisor ratings. An enhanced digital presence and the addition of monetized cultural and heritage experiences could support growth of this event.⁵¹

Sioux Lookout's Heritage and Culture Related to Sports

Previous documents on sports tourism and recreation in Sioux Lookout have emphasized Indigenous partnerships and collaboration. It is crucial to consider the historical context of Indigenous participation in sports and incorporate these insights into Sioux Lookout's commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.⁵² This approach will effectively guide any efforts in developing sports tourism and recreation initiatives in Sioux Lookout.

Integration of Heritage, Culture and Sport

Hockey was identified as a popular sport within and surrounding Sioux Lookout in the Sports Tourism Plan. One notable example of exploring the region's historical cultural significance in sports is the Pelican Lake Indian Residential School's Black Hawks hockey team.⁵³ Comprised of Indigenous students from the nearby residential school, this team embodied a complex interplay of cultural significance and historical experiences. Their history sheds light on how sports served as both a tool of assimilation and a source of relief during the oppressive residential school era. Moreover, it highlights the potential of sports as a unifying and healing force within the community.

By recognizing and promoting the legacy of Sioux Lookout's shared history with their Indigenous neighbours and residents, the Municipality can address aspects of reconciliation within communities. This acknowledgment can serve as a foundation for building a more inclusive sports strategy that respects and integrates the Indigenous history and contributions to sports and recreation. This approach can enrich the cultural tapestry of Sioux Lookout's sports tourism but also foster community cohesion and healing, leveraging sports as a bridge in the reconciliation process.

Key points that can help Sioux Lookout connect heritage, culture and sport include:

- **Historical Context and Cultural Impact:** Understanding the historical use of sports as a tool for assimilation while also highlighting its role as a sanctuary for the Indigenous players from the harsh realities of residential school life. Ensuring this history is understood by the community and visitors will be a powerful tool for reconciliation and true partnership with First Nations.
- **Sports as a Reflection of Governmental Policies:** The involvement of the Department of Indian Affairs in the sports activities at residential schools reflects the era's governmental approach towards Indigenous peoples, aiming to assimilate them into Euro-Canadian culture through structured sports. Working with First Nations in and near Sioux Lookout to ensure they are influencing decisions of the future will provide positive collaboration and help to build recreation opportunities that are inclusive.
- **Reclaiming Narratives:** Re-telling the former players' efforts to retell their experiences serve as a powerful act of reclaiming their narratives and reshaping the cultural and historical discourse around the residential school system and its impact on Indigenous communities.
- **Legacy and Contemporary Implications:** The story of the Black Hawks contributes to the broader understanding of Sioux Lookout's cultural heritage. It also offers insights into how sports can be integrated into modern strategies to honor and preserve Indigenous cultures, promote healing and foster inclusivity.

Heritage and Culture Support Organizations

Festivals and Events Ontario

Festivals & Events Ontario (FEO) is a non-profit organization that has been advocating for the festivals and events industry in Ontario for 30 years. Their mission is to ensure that communities across the province continue to host

⁵¹ [The Sioux Lookout Blueberry Festival \(blueberrybert.com\)](http://blueberrybert.com)

⁵² Proclamation, siouxlookout.ca

⁵³ Unsettling the Canadian hockey story, innovation.ca

unique and high-quality festivals. They achieve this by providing education, professional development, and networking opportunities, fostering a vibrant festival and events community. FEO is dedicated to supporting the industry's growth with a membership that includes festivals, events, suppliers, municipalities, schools, Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs), Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), students, and Business Improvement Areas (BIAs). Currently the Sioux Lookout Blueberry Festival is listed by the FEO as a Top 100 event in Ontario.⁵⁴ Exploring programming and connecting other Sioux Lookout agencies to Festivals and Events Ontario could build expertise and capacity for future festivals and events.

Indigenous Tourism Ontario

Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) is Ontario's premier Indigenous tourism organization. Serving as a unifying force, it brings together communities, organizations, and industry leaders to foster the growth of Indigenous tourism in the province. By prioritizing collaboration and partnership, ITO plays a vital role in promoting and supporting Indigenous tourism initiatives across Ontario. Through its efforts, ITO aims to highlight the rich cultural heritage, traditions, and experiences offered by Indigenous communities to both local and international visitors. ITO's dedication to the development of Indigenous tourism is evident in its commitment to fostering sustainable economic growth and empowering Indigenous entrepreneurs. By providing resources, training, and mentorship programs, ITO enables Indigenous individuals and businesses to thrive in the tourism industry. Currently the Sioux Lookout Chamber of Commerce is the only ITO member within Sioux Lookout listed on their membership directory.⁵⁵ This leaves an opportunity for further partnership and collaboration.

Ontario Museums Association

The Ontario Museums Association⁵⁶ (OMA) prioritizes diversity, inclusivity, and access. The OMA engages with people and groups in communities and aims to facilitate access to all areas of museum work, including representation on governing councils and among staff members. This commitment ensures equal opportunities within the museum sector. Adaptability and efficiency are also essential values. The OMA prioritizes being timely and effective and can respond to new opportunities that benefit their membership and enhance Ontario's museum sector. This value emphasizes the importance of staying agile and open to change to meet the industry's evolving needs. Innovation and improvement are embraced by the OMA, encouraging forward-thinking, challenging assumptions, and considering new approaches. As thought leaders, they strive to provide progressive and inspiring resources and services for the sector. By seeking constant improvement and innovation, they aim to establish museums recognized locally, nationally, and internationally. Community and collaboration are highly valued. The OMA believes in a united museum sector and values member participation and engagement. Meaningful collaboration and partnerships are essential for improving their work and that of their members. They also value pursuing new relationships and models of collaboration within the museum sector, the culture sector and with other sectors, industries, and businesses. These values can guide Sioux Lookout as it considers future options for its heritage and cultural assets. Exploring OMA's resources, such as "Decolonizing Historical Narratives in Museum Spaces" and "Innovating with Collections Online," can help build a roadmap for the local museum's future with partnerships in mind. Exploring partnership opportunities, such as co-locating the museum and forming strategic partnerships with local organizations, in collaboration with Sioux Lookout's Tourism Diversification Infrastructure Enhancement Study, may provide synergies for Sioux Lookout.

Destination Northern Ontario

Destination Northern Ontario⁵⁷ (DNO) actively engages in all five pillars mandated by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport: investment attraction, product development, marketing and communications, workforce development, and industry training and partnership initiatives. DNO's goal is to foster holistic economic growth in the tourism sector of Northern Ontario. DNO recognizes the importance of non-marketing aspects by dedicating half of its budget to

⁵⁴ [Top 100 \(festivalsandeventsontario.com\)](https://festivalsandeventsontario.com/)

⁵⁵ ITO Directory, indigenoustourismontario.ca

⁵⁶ OMA, museumsontario.ca

⁵⁷ Destination Northern Ontario, destinationnorthernontario.ca

initiatives that enhance tourism products, develop the tourism workforce, and encourage capital investments. This balanced allocation of resources allows DNO to promote the region as a desirable destination but also ensure the sustainability and quality of tourism offerings. By actively engaging in each pillar, the organization plays a crucial role in driving the development of Northern Ontario's tourism industry. Sioux Lookout can actively engage in DNO programming that aligns with the goals highlighted in the Sports Tourism Plan. This may have the potential for future partnership investments. Currently, DNO is a financial supporter of the Sioux Lookout Tourism Diversification Infrastructure Enhancement Study.

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming and Ministry of Sport

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming and Ministry of Sport⁵⁸ collaborate with museums, historical societies, and provincial heritage organizations. These organizations play a crucial role in supporting cultural tourism and contributing to community vibrancy. Community museums serve as custodians and interpreters of Ontario's heritage collections. They create authentic experiences by connecting with historic collections and stories, fostering collective awareness and pride of place, and contributing to the economic well-being of Ontario communities. The Ministry administers the Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG), an annual grant program that aims to augment local support for eligible community museums and raise the level of professionalism in the Ontario museum sector. With an investment of \$5 million each year, the government supports over 160 community museums through CMOG. The Ministry also administers the [Standards for Community Museums in Ontario](#), which are the minimum requirements for operating a professional community museum. To be eligible for CMOG funding, museums must adhere to these standards. Additionally, the ministry administers the Heritage Organization Development Grant (HODG), which supports eligible incorporated historical societies, museums, and associations in informing and educating the public about their community heritage. The Ministry offers support for tourism festivals and events in Ontario through the [Experience Ontario](#) funding program. This program aims to promote tourism and economic growth in the province by funding events that attract visitors and contribute to the community's economic success. Sports events that offer programming for visitors and attract tourists are eligible for funding. These events should have a tourism economic impact and contribute to the community's economic success. The program aims to draw tourists and increase visitor spending through innovative programming in partnership with businesses and community partners. Additionally, sports events that provide job opportunities in the tourism, culture, and entertainment sectors and increase Ontario's profile through various media channels are also supported. The [Ontario Sport Hosting Program](#) is a funding initiative that supports the delivery of national and international amateur sport events in Ontario. This program provides project-based funding to help event organizers cover the costs associated with hosting these events. The province of Ontario commits an annual investment of \$3 million towards this program, which has supported a total of 150 events since its inception in 2018. This financial support is crucial in ensuring the successful execution of these events and attracting participants and spectators from across the country and around the world.

Key Findings - Opportunities Analysis of Heritage and Ecotourism Offerings

- **Reviving the museum with Indigenous culture and history:** The museum in Sioux Lookout, currently closed, could play a vital role in preserving and displaying the rich Indigenous heritage of the region. By prioritizing partnerships, Sioux Lookout must consult with local Indigenous communities, leaders, elders, and knowledge keepers to ensure initiatives are Indigenous led if there is interest in pursuing this revitalization.
- **Building on the Sioux Lookout Blueberry Festival:** The Sioux Lookout Blueberry Festival is a major cultural event, attracting visitors both locally and globally to the ten-day celebration. Although it lacks ratings on major travel platforms, the festival is locally recognized for its diverse activities that highlight the region's natural beauty. Growth potential exists by enhancing its digital presence and adding purchasable cultural, heritage, and outdoor recreation experiences.

⁵⁸ Government of Ontario, ontario.ca

- **Leveraging support organizations:** Enhancing strategic partnerships with local and provincial organizations focused on improving existing events, new businesses, and other initiatives could significantly boost sports tourism and economic growth for Sioux Lookout. Opportunities exist to support tourism business start-up activities through partnering with organizations that are already working on these endeavors. Supporting Sioux Lookout’s heritage assets and stories through cultural and heritage initiatives can strengthen the community and regional identity, a crucial element of tourism.

Accommodations, Transportation, Recreation, Tourism Capacity Analysis

Accommodations

According to Ontario’s data catalogue on visitor statistics, there was an estimated 750,935 overnights stays in Region 13c⁵⁹ in 2019. Private homes/cottages accounted for the largest share of visitor dwelling units with 224,667 people utilizing these spaces. This is followed by hotels (170,684), other accommodation types (150,595), camping/RV facilities (134,060), other roofed commercial (72,322), and motels (57,482).⁶⁰

Regional Hotel Market

According to the CBRE 2024 outlook,⁶¹ for the Canadian hotel industry, hotels across Ontario have collectively achieved a 63% occupancy rate with an average daily rate of \$180 and revenue of \$113 per room. In comparison, Northwest Ontario reports a higher cumulative occupancy rate of 73% and slightly greater revenue per room. However, the average daily rate in Northwest Ontario is lower than the provincial average⁶².

Table 7 Hotel Statistics – 2022

Region	Occupancy	Average Daily Rate (ADR)	Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR)
Northwest Ontario	73%	\$156	\$114
Sault Ste. Marie	62%	\$131	\$83
Ontario	63%	\$180	\$113

Source Data: CBRE Hotels Canada Industry 2024 Outlook, April 2022 | Ontario.

Local Hotel Market

In 2021, the Sioux Lookout hotel sector comprised four properties: Sunset Inn & Suites, Sioux Lookout Inn, Forest Inn & Conference Centre, and Lamplighter Motel, offering a total of 252 rooms. Throughout the year, these hotels had a total of 91,980 available room nights. Of these, 66,358 room nights were booked, with a 72% occupancy rate. Average daily rate charged per room was \$133. Compared to Northwest Ontario, Sioux Lookout's hotels maintained a similar occupancy rate but achieved noticeably higher average daily rate. A shortage of visitor accommodation has been identified repeatedly as a major obstacle to growing sports tourism. A Motel 6 is planned to be built in 2025.

Estimating the demand for hotel rooms during sporting events involves forecasting potential demand and considering multiple variables. These variables include event sizes, duration, attendance and local hotel occupancy. In the case of

⁵⁹ Region 13c is one of 15 tourism regions created by the Ontario government in 2009. Region 13c accounts for the northwestern portion of the Province of Ontario in which Sioux Lookout is located.

⁶⁰ Tourism regions: Region 13c: Northwest Ontario | Ontario.ca

⁶¹ CBRE Group provides data and research for commercial real estate, including the hotel sector. These reports commonly report on Average Daily Rate (ADR), Occupancy, and Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR).

⁶² Northwest Ontario hotel figures are pulled from Ontario Provincial data.

Sioux Lookout, a scenario⁶³ was prepared to determine the hotel room demand for a regional hockey tournament involving eight teams. The estimate concluded that 393 hotel rooms would be needed. If Sioux Lookout's hotels were already at 72% occupancy (i.e., 70 rooms are available), there would be a need for 323 rooms that do not currently exist.

Short Term Rentals

From 2019 to 2023, the short-term rental market in Northwest Ontario experienced growth, despite some fluctuations. The occupancy rate reached its highest point at 61% in 2021 but has since shown a steady decline, alongside RevPAR. By 2023, the occupancy rate decreased to 54% and RevPAR dropped to \$74⁶⁴. On the other hand, the ADR, the total number of short-term rental properties and the number of reserved nights have all shown an upward trend since 2019.⁶⁵ This indicates that while the occupancy and revenue per available room have decreased, the overall market size and potential revenue per occupied room have increased.

Table 8 Short-Term Rental Statistics, 2019-2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Occupancy Rate	54%	50%	61%	59%	54%
Average Daily Rate	\$98	\$114	\$131	\$131	\$139
Revenue per Available Room	\$53	\$57	\$81	\$77	\$74
Number of Properties	611	640	723	930	1,139
Reserved Nights	77,522	72,921	121,147	140,479	172,149

Source: Tourism regions: Region 13c: Northwest Ontario | Ontario.ca

Student Housing

To address the chronic shortage of livable housing for First Nation students in Sioux Lookout, the Independent First Nations Alliance (IFNA) acted by constructing two dwelling units in 2019. Unable to find private boarding homes for students from Muskrat Dam First Nation and Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, IFNA built student dwellings. The \$1.8 million project was funded creatively, repurposing existing funding sources. The two-story complexes house a total of 20 students, providing each with a private living space and common areas. The success of the program has led IFNA to plan the construction of two additional units for the next school year. IFNA's goal is to support First Nation high school students in achieving their Ontario Secondary School Diploma and more.⁶⁶ Engaging with the residents of student housing to provide them with knowledge of and access to recreational programming opportunities, including sports, will contribute to the overall well-being of the community and ensure the sustainability of recreation and sports programs.

Transportation

Sioux Lookout benefits from a well-established transportation system that facilitates connectivity between the community and the surrounding region. Although Sioux Lookout may not offer an extensive range of transportation options compared to larger cities, several modes of transportation cater to the needs of residents and visitors.

Air

Sioux Lookout Airport connects the community to various destinations within Ontario and beyond. Passenger air service are offered by Bearskin Airlines (Thunder Bay, Red Lake, and Winnipeg), Wasaya Airways and Northstar Air (remote communities in Northwestern Ontario), and Perimeter Aviation (Manitoba and northwestern Ontario). Charter services are offered through Northstar, Skycare (year-round charter service) and Bamaji and Slate Falls (seasonal charters).

⁶³ Based on event planning methodologies, assumptions were 8 hockey teams, 14 participants (players and coaching staff) per team, 3 audience members per participant, 24 officials, other staff and media, 60% non-local attendees, average party size of 2, average length of stay of 2 nights, 72% hotel occupancy rate, no buffer.

⁶⁴ Tourism regions: Region 13c: Northwest Ontario | Ontario.ca

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ [IFNA - New 'Home Away Community Student Dwelling' Means Success for Students](#)

Rail

Sioux Lookout benefits from the Canadian National Railway (CN) service, which facilitates rail connectivity to and from the area. Additionally, Sioux Lookout has rail connections provided by VIA Rail, which schedules services to the community on Mondays and Thursdays.

Public Transit

Hub Transit is the only fully accessible public transit service in Sioux Lookout, operated by the Municipality of Sioux Lookout and funded by the Ministry of Transportation Gas Tax Fund. Regular bus route fares are \$5, while the on-call bus service charges \$15 per adult. The Municipality is exploring changes to the service.

Taxi

Taxis are available for tourist and visitors in Sioux Lookout. Companies offering this service include G& R Taxi, Sandy's Taxi, A & A Taxi, Rita's Taxi, NDS Taxi Sioux Taxi. Formal ride sharing (e.g., Uber) is currently unavailable in Sioux Lookout, however information ride-sharing services are starting to pop up in social media and community pages.

Intercity Bus

Kasper Transportation offers intercity bus service to Winnipeg, Dryden, and Thunder Bay.

Recreation

Facility Usage

An analysis of facility usage at the recreation centre for the years 2022 and 2023 provides valuable insights into the operational dynamics and areas for potential improvement.

Table 9 Facility Usage Comparison - 2022 & 2023

Facility Usage 2022 & 2023 Comparison		
KPI (Key performance)	2022 Usage	2023 Usage
Total Contracts	786	916
Total Activities	1,074	1,266
Total Sessions	1,975	2,613
Total Hours Utilized	5,856.82 (Or 244 days)	6,328
Total Facility Revenue	\$157,787	\$214,242
Total Extra Revenue	\$3,286	\$3,325
Grand Total Revenue	\$161,074	\$217,667

Source: Municipality of Sioux Lookout, Economic Development Office

In 2022, the centre experienced moderate to high utilization across various facilities, with the ice facility and the gymnasium leading in both utilization and revenue generation. Squash Court 2 is built into recreation centre fees and did not generate any revenue of its own, but its high usage rate indicates its a valued activity. The Tennis Court is open to the public with reports indicating extremely low utilization and no revenue, raising questions about the need for activity tracking and potential opportunities for group rentals.

In 2023, there was a noticeable improvement in overall facility utilization and revenue generation. The total hours utilized, and total earnings significantly increased, with the Ice facility once again demonstrating the highest utilization and earnings. This highlights consistent demand and effective management of the facility. However, despite these positive trends, some areas still faced critical challenges.

Program Participation

The participation data from Sioux Lookout's recreation centre for the years 2022 and 2023 provides a comprehensive overview of the trends in sports program registrations. The total registration across all sports increased from 219 in 2022 to 266 in 2023, marking a growth of 21%. This overall rise in participation reflects a positive response towards the recreational programs offered by the centre.

Table 10 Sioux Lookout Recreation Centre: Sports Program Participation Analysis 2022-2023

Program Registration 2022 - 2023									
	Baseball			Soccer			Volleyball		
Age	2022	2023	Growth	2022	2023	Growth	2022	2023	Growth
2	-	-	N/A	1	1	N/A	-	-	N/A
3	-	-	N/A	25	21	-16%	-	-	N/A
4	3	-	-100%	19	15	-21%	-	-	N/A
5	15	12	-20%	19	24	26%	-	-	N/A
6	7	12	71%	14	22	57%	-	-	N/A
7	6	11	83%	16	21	31%	-	-	N/A
8	3	14	367%	7	21	200%	2	-	-100%
9	3	5	67%	17	14	-18%	6	2	-67%
10	2	6	200%	11	18	64%	5	7	40%
11	4	1	-75%	11	8	-27%	7	4	-43%
12	1	4	300%	5	8	60%	5	4	-20%
13	1	1	0%	2	5	150%	2	5	150%
Total	45	66	47%	147	178	21%	27	22	-19%

Source: Sioux Lookout 2022/2023 Minor Soccer, Baseball and Volleyball Stats

Analyzing individual sports, baseball saw an impressive 47% growth in participation, increasing from 45 in 2022 to 66 in 2023. Soccer also experienced a significant increase, with registrations going up by 21% from 147 to 178. However, volleyball showed a decline, with a 19% decrease in total participants from 27 in 2022 to 22 in 2023. This mixed response indicates varying levels of interest and satisfaction among the different sports offered.

Age-specific registration trends reveal that younger age groups (below 8 years) showed a decline or minimal growth in soccer and baseball, indicating a need for targeted promotions or program adjustments to boost interest. In contrast, older children (ages 8-13) displayed substantial growth, particularly in baseball and soccer, suggesting that these sports are more appealing to them. The decline in volleyball participation across most age groups could be a point of concern, necessitating a review of the program structure or promotional strategies for this sport.

Key Findings - Accommodations, Transportation, Recreation Capacity Analysis

- **Shortage of Hotel Rooms:** Although Sioux Lookout's hotel market is competitive within the Northwest Ontario region, according to the numbers, stakeholders repeatedly stressed that there is a shortage of visitor accommodation. An example scenario identified a shortage of 323 rooms in Sioux Lookout for an average regional hockey tournament. This is a major obstacle to growing sports tourism.
- **Growth of Short-term Rentals:** Over the past five years, the short-term rental market in Northwest Ontario has seen growth. This growth is particularly evident in the Average Daily Rate, the overall increase in the number of short-term rental properties and the rise in the number of booked nights.
- **Local and Regional Transportation Gaps:** Sioux Lookout is well connected locally, regionally, and provincially, however there is room for improvement. The Municipality is served by the Sioux Lookout Airport, but its service is mainly focused on northern Ontario. Domestic and international destinations can only be reached through

other airports. For local travel, residents can rely on public transportation, alongside private options such as taxis and inter-city buses, but improvements are welcome.

- **Increased Recreation Facility Usage:** Demand for recreational facilities has increased across KPIs (key performance indicators) within the constrained inventory of assets. The arena and gymnasium experienced the highest utilization and revenue generation.

Necessary Investments to Capitalize on Major Event Opportunities

Sioux Lookout is exploring investments aimed to enhance the quality of living within the community, attract sports and recreation tourism and provide more opportunities for residents and visitors to engage in recreational activities. The following investments have been highlighted within background materials as necessary to grow Sioux Lookout's sports tourism sector.

Infrastructure Investment Needs

Sport Tourism Economic Impact

The economic impact of sport tourism in Canada is substantial, with most recent data totalling \$7.3 billion in Canada. Within Ontario as a whole the impact is estimated at \$2.4 billion.⁶⁷ Hockey-related tourism in small towns acts as a key driver of direct impact. Of the \$2.6 billion in direct hockey-related impact, more than \$1 billion flows into communities of less than 100,000 people.⁶⁸ Investment in infrastructure is needed to generate financial return.

New Recreation Facility

The previously proposed new recreation facility in Sioux Lookout was part of the preliminary design planning for the Sioux Lookout Recreation Hub. The facility was aimed at increasing the recreational and sports capacity in the region. The proposal included various amenities such as a lap and wading pool, two ice surfaces, a weight room, a cardio room, conference rooms, and two squash courts. It is designed to cater to the needs of the community and provide a space for various activities and programs.

It is important to note that the previous design of the proposed recreation centre did not include a gymnasium for activities like basketball and volleyball. If the new recreation centre will not have a gym, a partnership should be formed with Sioux North High School to allow access to the school's gymnasium for court-based sports for people out of school or for students after regular school hours.

Additionally, there is a growing call from residents for a community pool in Sioux Lookout. Sioux Lookout is interested in understanding the opportunities from advancements in technology to create more energy-efficient and cost-effective pool operations. Partnerships have been identified as an essential component of planning to offset operational costs.

The design of the new facility does not include an indoor walking / running track. The feasibility study will review this and other amenities per potential inclusion in the project.

Accommodations

The accommodation sub-sector in Northern Ontario has faced challenges in recent years related to the number and type of accommodations provided along the highway systems. There is a need for a diverse range of accommodations to meet the changing consumer demand and shifting markets.

Facilities and infrastructure deficits pose challenges to the accommodation sector in Northern Ontario. Modernizing existing facilities is necessary to meet the expectations of visitors and provide quality experiences. Investing in infrastructure, increasing capacity, developing experiences and products, improving access to capital, attracting

⁶⁷ Sport Tourism Canada, most recent data available, 2019, sporttourismcanada.com

⁶⁸ Study by Scotiabank and Canadian Tire, 2014, scotiabank.com

investors, supporting workforce development and training, and promoting the region as a travel destination are recommended to support the accommodations and tourism sector. Collaboration and partnership between all levels of government, tourism organization, and associations are emphasized as crucial for addressing the challenges faced by the accommodation sector in Northern Ontario.⁶⁹

In Sioux Lookout accommodations capacity has decreased over the past few years. Two hotels have transitioned into hostels and one hotel has been under renovations for the past few years. To fully capitalize on sports tourism, increasing accommodations capacity will need to be a priority. The hockey-tournament scenario in this report identified a need for 323 rooms per tournament. Accommodation suppliers in Northern Canada are building hotels in the 60-room range.⁷⁰

Other Considerations

- **Cedar Bay Recreation Complex Lodge Upgrades:** The recommended upgrades for Cedar Bay Recreation Complex include significant improvements to the lodge and cabins. The lodge needs considerable upgrading before it can be fully utilized. The Friends of Cedar Bay, who operate the Cozy Cabin events during winter, wish to create an indoor horseback riding ring for year-round programming. They also aim to expand services at the Lakeshore site, such as adding running water, improved electrical connections, and an all-season road. Sioux Lookout owns land where the desired improvements are proposed. Additionally, an architectural and structural assessment of the buildings is needed to determine necessary demolitions and repair costs. The best systems for water and sewage service, as well as an improved all-season road, are also important considerations. These are currently aspirations upgrades and developments in which stakeholders are looking for the Municipality to take on.
- **Centennial Park:** Sioux Lookout is gathering public input on updated design plans for Front Street and Centennial Park as part of the Downtown Revitalization Plan. The concept design for Centennial Park includes various features: a bike lane, train station with a restaurant and office/event space, rail access, food truck parking, parking lot, tiered seating with stairs, a one-on-one basketball court, a winter skate rink, an outdoor summer market showcasing local Indigenous artists, an outdoor spray pad, a gathering area with a fire pit and seating, a nature play area, accessible walkways, improved sidewalks with accessible elements, a treed plaza with picnic tables and game boards, Indigenous public art, a new pedestrian crossing, public washrooms, shrub bed planting and parking stalls. The Municipality will conduct a community survey about the Downtown Revitalization Plan in summer 2024. Feedback during engagement indicated a desire to further identify the best recreational investments to optimize the use of the space. The Phase I implementation plan being proposed to Council on September 18, 2024, will include a ramp for accessibility, trees, and clearing and leveling a central patio area for future development.
- **Sioux Lookout Museum:** The Municipality of Sioux Lookout's Recreation and Culture department oversees the Sioux Lookout Museum, which currently does not have a facility to operate in. To move forward, it is crucial for the museum to develop a strategic plan and establish a clear direction for its future. One of the critical decisions that needs to be made is whether physical infrastructure is needed.
- **Arena Capacity:** The Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan highlighted the desire by many recreation user groups for additional rink capacity. Current usage is dominated by recreational hockey in addition to the Sioux Lookout Bombers. It was noted within the Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan that there is not enough rink capacity to host hockey or broomball tournaments in Sioux Lookout.

⁶⁹ Destination Northern Ontario. Accommodations Study and Gap Analysis. 2022-2023.

⁷⁰ Western First Nations Hospitality LP, mltcii.com

Programming Investments Needs

Recreational Infrastructure and Programming for Indigenous People

The Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan highlighted the need for recreational infrastructure and programming for Indigenous people. Sioux Lookout is seen as a potential hub for coaches, referees, and trainers to gain experience and then return to their home communities to establish programs and services.

Accessing affordable recreation can be challenging for Indigenous students, particularly those at Pelican Falls High School. It is important to make recreation in Sioux Lookout accessible and inclusive to all, especially First Nations students who make up a sizable portion of the Sioux North High School student body.

There is interest in providing Indigenous-based swim and lifeguard training and Sioux Lookout is considered an ideal location for this if a facility is available. Partnerships with organizations like the Red Cross could be established to offer first aid, lifeguard and swim training to the community.

In terms of sporting events, hosting regional basketball tournaments for First Nation high school students in Sioux Lookout is suggested, as basketball is a popular sport among youth.

Fitness training for Indigenous athletes and the promotion of healthy behaviors within Indigenous communities are emphasized as a strategy to improve the health and well-being of community members and provide coaching and structured training for Indigenous athletes.

Creation of a Tourism Department

The Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan recommended creating a Tourism Department within the Economic Development Office of Sioux Lookout, however with the recent revival of the Sioux Lookout – Hudson Tourism Association (SLHTA), this recommendation needs to be reconsidered. The Municipality has established a working partnership with the SLHTA. Two areas that should be reviewed include delineating marketing and destination development activities and to revisiting the allocation of revenue generated from the Municipal Accommodation Tax, which under provincial legislation must be shared with an eligible tourism entity.

Investment Framework for Municipal Accommodations Tax

In 2019, the Municipality of Sioux Lookout Council approved the implementation of a MAT. Starting from January 1, 2020, the tax was set at a rate of four percent (4%), which is consistent with other municipalities in Ontario that have implemented this tax. The purpose of the MAT is to generate annual funding to promote tourism within the Municipality of Sioux Lookout. The revenue generated from the MAT will be divided into two parts. Fifty percent (50%) of net revenue must be allocated to an independent tourism entity for tourism promotion and development. This allocation will focus on attracting more visitors to the municipality through various means such as sports and cultural events, conventions, enhanced attractions and outdoor activities, and amenities.

The remaining fifty percent (50%) of net revenue can be retained by the Municipality of Sioux Lookout. This portion of the revenue under provincial legislation can be spent as the Municipality wishes, but usually it is designated for infrastructure projects that meets the needs of residents and visitors alike. In Sault Ste. Marie, for example, MAT fundings has helped developed the Sault Ste. Marie's mountain bike trails into tourism demand generators.⁷¹ Creating an investment framework that reflects identified priorities will help focus efforts for sports tourism in Sioux Lookout.

⁷¹ Local mountain biking trails to get monster upshift, Mar 31, 2022, [Sootoday.com](https://www.sootoday.com)

Infrastructure Evaluation Criteria

Factors⁷² that will be important to consider for a future recreation facility infrastructure investment, as identified by the Municipality of Sioux Lookout, include:

- **Accessibility:** The location should be easily accessible to residents and visitors. This includes proximity to public transportation hubs, availability of parking, and walkability or bike-friendly routes.
- **Demographics:** Understanding the population density and age distribution of the area is important to cater to a diverse range of user needs within the community.
- **Land and Space:** Sufficient land area should be available to accommodate the current needs of the project as well as any future expansion plans. Additionally, consideration should be given to the topography and soil condition of the site to ensure construction feasibility.
- **Environmental Impact:** Assessing potential environmental impacts and ensuring sustainability is essential. This involves considering factors such as proximity to green spaces or natural features, as well as implementing measures to minimize the project's ecological footprint.
- **Zoning and Regulations:** Compliance with local zoning laws and regulations is necessary to avoid legal issues and ensure the project aligns with the intended land use.
- **Safety:** Evaluating crime rates in the area and ensuring safe access routes for pedestrians and cyclists is an important consideration.
- **Cost and Budget:** Consideration of the cost of land acquisition and development, as well as long-term maintenance and operational costs, is necessary to ensure the project remains financially viable. This includes analyzing factors such as property prices, construction costs, and ongoing expenses like utilities and maintenance fees.
- **Proximity to Other Amenities:** The location should be near amenities such as schools, retail areas, and residential areas to cater to the needs of facilities users. Additionally, synergy with existing or future facilities, such as parks, libraries, schools, or hotels, can enhance the overall appeal of the project.
- **Community Input:** Engaging with community members for feedback and suggestions is important to ensure the project aligns with local needs and preferences.
- **Infrastructure and Utilities:** Availability of essential infrastructure and utilities, such as water, electricity, sewage systems, and internet connectivity, is crucial for the smooth functioning of any project. This includes assessing the capacity and reliability of existing infrastructure or determining the feasibility of establishing new connections.
- **Economic Impact:** Evaluating the potential economic impact of the project is important. This includes considering factors such as job creation, increased traffic to nearby businesses, and opportunities for partnerships with local sports and recreation organizations.
- **Health and Wellness Considerations:** Proximity to healthcare facilities and the potential to promote healthy lifestyles and activities are essential factors to consider.

Key Findings - Necessary Investments to Capitalize on Event Opportunities

- **Investment in accommodations:** The accommodation sector in Northern Ontario, including Sioux Lookout, faces several challenges such as reduced capacity due to hotels converting to hostels or undergoing renovations, infrastructure deficits, and the need for modernization to meet visitor expectations. Collaboration between government, tourism organizations, and associations are crucial to improve the sector.
- **Enhancements to Cedar Bay:** Proposed upgrades for the Cedar Bay Recreation Complex in Sioux Lookout include enhancing lodges and cabins, creating an indoor riding ring, expanding services like running water and electrical connections, and conducting structural assessments and improvements to roads and utilities.

⁷² Source: Municipality of Sioux Lookout

- **Continued placemaking efforts:** Sioux Lookout is redesigning Centennial Park with exciting features such as bike lanes, a train station with a restaurant, designated parking for food trucks, tiered seating, a basketball court, a winter skate rink, a summer market, and a spray pad, however the design still requires community consultation . The park will also prioritize accessibility with walkways and public art, creating a vibrant and inclusive community space for residents and visitors.
- **Indigenous partnerships and programming:** The need for recreational infrastructure and programming for Indigenous people is emphasized, with proposals including Indigenous-based swim and lifeguard training, regional basketball tournaments and fitness training for Indigenous athletes. These initiatives aim to address specific needs and interests, promoting inclusivity and healthy lifestyles.
- **Leverage the MAT:** Developing guidelines and prioritizing MAT funding for recreation and sports infrastructure and events should be considered. These initiatives should aim to improve sports tourism and recreational activities, focusing on inclusivity, modernization, and strategic partnerships.

Market Analysis

Market Analysis

Community Consultation

A consultation plan was prepared with input from the Municipality of Sioux Lookout. It included a series of focus groups which channelled perspectives from a variety of stakeholders. Two surveys were also conducted, one for residents and one for visitors to Sioux Lookout. Efforts to engage community stakeholders included invites to 40 key individuals from community groups with a unique interest in this study, with follow-up reminders being sent the week before and the day of the sessions. Every surrounding First Nations band office (25) were called to discuss the project and identified invitee contacts to participate in the far north focus group.

Cedar Bay Users Focus Group



July 16, 2024



5 Participants

In this virtual session, groups that utilize Sioux Lookout's Cedar Bay facility came together to discuss their thoughts on the Cedar Bay facility, recreation and sports tourism in Sioux Lookout. **Throughout the session, recurring themes of community engagement and volunteerism, inclusivity and accessibility, and the connection between recreation and health and wellness were emphasized.** The workshop demonstrated a community-driven approach to enhancing Sioux Lookout's recreational and sports tourism, with a focus on leveraging natural assets, promoting inclusivity, and pursuing sustainable development.

The focus group highlighted the current strengths of Sioux Lookout, such as its proximity to wilderness and its role as a hub for First Nations communities. Existing assets like trails, Cedar Bay and community-driven activities were recognized as significant strengths.

Opportunities for enhancement were discussed, including improving equipment rentals, expanding trail networks, diversifying sports facilities and enhancing accessibility to existing recreational spots. Participants also explored the potential for new activities like sailing, guided tours, and forest therapy.

Challenges and barriers identified included skepticism towards growth, people not being open to new ideas, the lack of capacity and expertise from volunteer groups to develop additional programming, the need for more accommodations that support events, perceived limited municipal support for program coordination, and volunteer burnout.

In terms of the vision for 2035, participants hoped for a well-facilitated recreational environment with a swimming pool, improved cabin facilities at Cedar Bay, and a nature education centre. They emphasized the importance of structured programs and facilities to support recreation, rather than relying solely on volunteers. Potential partnerships with health and educational institutions to promote wellness and recreational activities were also suggested, including integrating physical activities into health rehabilitation programs and educational outings.

Recreation Facility and Ice Users Focus Group



July 10, 2024



4 Participants

Groups that regularly utilize the recreation facility and arena were invited to a virtual meeting to discuss their thoughts on sports and recreation within Sioux Lookout. The **discussion highlighted several strengths**, such as a diverse range of activities, including a well-regarded cross-country ski trail system, high-quality ice facilities and the popularity of sports fishing. However, **challenges were also identified**, including the need for facility upgrades, limited accommodations, and funding constraints.

Participants recognized opportunities for growth in improving existing facilities, attracting more sports events and forming community partnerships to promote physical literacy and sports participation. The **importance of volunteerism** in sustaining these activities was emphasized and there was a suggestion to introduce more competitive sports options to increase Sioux Lookout’s appeal as a sports tourism destination. Addressing these recurring themes and critical issues through facility upgrades, creative funding solutions, community engagement, improved accessibility and strategic development, can enhance sports and recreation offerings in Sioux Lookout.

Far North Consultation



July 18, 2024



4 Participants

This virtual workshop brought together participants from northern communities that rely on Sioux Lookout as a service centre. The focus of the discussion was to identify the strengths and challenges in Sioux Lookout’s recreation and sports tourism. Some of the major obstacles to growth that were highlighted included **accommodation shortages and limited parking**. Participants from various community organizations, including local First Nations, shared their experiences and proposed improvements. While many user experiences were discussed, Far North students who reside in Sioux Lookout to attend high school were a focus of conversations regarding **inclusion into recreation and sports programming**.

Suggestions included better promotion of existing facilities, more inclusive event planning, and improved communication about available amenities. The community also suggested **establishing stronger partnerships** with local businesses, improving facility access, and diversifying activities to include cultural events.

Looking towards the future, the discussion touched on aspirations for 2035, envisioning a vibrant sports and recreation scene that **seamlessly integrates cultural and community events**, supporting engagement from both residents and visitors.

Recreation and Wellness Users Focus Group



July 11, 2024



5 Participants

Recreation and wellness groups within Sioux Lookout joined this virtual focus group to discuss recreation and sports tourism within the municipality. This group highlighted the **rich natural geography**, characterized by extensive greenspace and water bodies, which are pivotal for recreational activities. The community's **strong volunteer spirit and existing community groups**, like SL Anglers and the Sioux Lookout Bombers Hockey team, play a crucial role in supporting local sports events and activities. However, operational challenges such as staffing and adequate facilities, along with participation barriers like the lack of available ice time and lifeguards were highlighted as significant hurdles.

There was a consensus on the potential for a community pool to serve as a recreational hub that could cater to a broad age range and enhance residents' quality of life. Furthermore, the **development of more indoor recreational spaces** was suggested to foster year-round activity that spurs increased visitation and spending within the community. Enhancing facilities such as dedicated soccer fields and expanding cultural and sports programming tailored for youth, particularly from northern communities, were identified as opportunities to bolster both community engagement and economic benefits from sports tourism.

The workshop underscored the need for a **collaborative approach involving local businesses, community groups, and government bodies** to realize the full potential of Sioux Lookout's sports and recreation tourism sector. Implementing the discussed strategies will be crucial in transforming these visions into reality.

Open House Vision Focus Group



July 18, 2024



25 Virtual Participants
38 In-Person Participants

The Vision Focus Group was structured as an open house opportunity for the general population of Sioux Lookout. This hybrid session included an in-person component where locals were able to gather in person and connect with Sioux Lookout economic development staff, while a virtual option was made available and facilitated by the Deloitte team.

The workshop focused on four fundamental areas: community development, infrastructure improvement, public participation and tourism enhancement. In terms of community development, discussions revolved around **revitalizing public spaces**, enhancing cultural amenities, and promoting economic growth. Infrastructure improvement centred on widening roads, improving safety measures, and constructing recreational facilities. The **importance of public participation** in decision-making processes was emphasized, with suggestions such as increasing the number of advisory committees and offering more public forums. Lastly, ideas were brought forward to **leverage historical and geographical assets to boost tourism**, including promoting local landmarks and hosting cultural events.

During the meeting, there was a strong emphasis on community recreation improvements in Sioux Lookout to **make the area more appealing to families and the general workforce**. Many participants expressed their support for these enhancements, highlighting the positive impact they can have on attracting residents and improving quality of life. However, there were also contrasting opinions raised, with some expressing concerns about the potential increase in taxes and the burden these investments may place on residents. These differing viewpoints reflected the need for

careful consideration and evaluation of the potential costs, **financing options, and partnership opportunities** with future recreation and sports infrastructure projects.

Community Survey and Visitor Survey

The Interim Report does not include the findings of the Community Survey or the Visitor Survey. They will be made available in a separate report.

Key Findings - Market Analysis

- **Vision as recreation hub:** Focus group participants desired to establish Sioux Lookout as recreation hub and leverage this aspect of its brand in future infrastructure development and planning.
- **Strong desire for fiscal responsibility:** The importance of fiscal responsibility was emphasized when considering investments in infrastructure related to recreation, sports, and tourism.
- **Upgrade and maintain assets with accessibility in mind:** Maintenance and upgrades of existing recreation amenities was emphasized. Ensuring affordable participation costs and accessibility for all in future developments was also identified.
- **Address accommodation shortage:** Limited availability of accommodations in Sioux Lookout poses a significant barrier to the growth of sports tourism. Addressing this issue was deemed essential and should be given priority.
- **Attraction of new residents:** To offset the costs of infrastructure investment, expanding the community's tax base by attracting new residents and focusing on sectors such as tourism was suggested. Providing additional recreation and sports opportunities was seen as crucial for attracting new residents.
- **Partner with Indigenous communities:** To prioritize Sioux Lookout's role as a hub for the Far North to plan for enhanced programming, recreation and sports tourism partnerships with Indigenous communities must be strengthened.
- **Reduce reliance on volunteers:** Community leaders should beware of relying solely on volunteers for programming, as it may result in burnout.

SOARR Analysis

SOARR Analysis

The SOARR Analysis allows us to pivot from 'what has been learned' to 'what needs to happen.' This discussion helps us shape a strategy for sports tourism infrastructure enhancements in Sioux Lookout.

The SOARR model of "appreciative inquiry" (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks, Results) represents an emerging best practice in strategic planning. As a forward-looking model, the SOARR takes elements of what would traditionally be affiliated with a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis and focuses on the risks and results.

Bringing risk and results into the conversation ensures that contingency planning receives due attention and that outcomes are reflected in an action-oriented, measurable manner. Further, analysis of strengths and aspirations can support the development of an asset-based community development model, in which identified opportunities can be leveraged, while understanding risks, subsequent, objectives, and specific action steps are designed to respond to the desired results.

For the Sports Tourism Infrastructure Enhancement Implementation Strategy, the SOARR leverages insights gained through the trends analysis and community engagement. The concepts underpinning the SOARR analysis model are illustrated below.

S	Strengths What are we doing well? What key achievements are we most proud of? What can we build on?	
O	Opportunities What are our best possible future opportunities? What changes in demand can we expect in the future? What broader trends and policies may affect development and impact our aspirations?	
A	Aspirations What are we deeply passionate about and want to achieve? What difference do we hope to make for all?	
R	Risks What challenges do we need to be aware of? How will we recognize and mitigate or eliminate potential risks?	
R	Results How do we know we are succeeding? What are the key goals we would like to accomplish to achieve these results?	

S

Strengths

What are we doing well? What key achievements are we most proud of? What can we build on?



Strengths

- Sioux Lookout has existing recreation facilities including Sioux Lookout Memorial Arena and sports fields. Although upgrades are needed, these assets provide a foundation for recreational activities.
- The Cedar Bay Recreation Complex, a unique municipally owned recreation facility, provides space on Pelican Lake for recreation activities, education and leisure activities, and is the stage for its popular annual Blueberry Festival. It works closely with the Friends of Cedar Bay, a group of community members interested in revitalizing and supporting the recreation complex. In addition, Cedar Bay often hosts a complimentary community event supported by the Chamber of Commerce.
- Sioux Lookout is a regional service hub for a broader population of approximately 30,000 individuals, as well as the local population of 5,839.
- Sioux Lookout has strong engagement of the local community in recreation and sports. Many residents actively participate and volunteer in various recreational activities, which enhances the operational capacity of sports and recreational programs.
- Sioux Lookout sports and recreation organizers work to provide quality programming and opportunities within the municipality. For example, the Sioux Lookout Skating Club participated in the inaugural Skate Ontario Club Modernization Pilot Program during the 2023-2024 season. This program resulted in consistency to the delivery of on-ice and off-ice programming and facilitated significant improvements in coaching. The Club is dedicated to providing quality experiences. In 2022 the Sioux Lookout Skating Club hosted Olympic and World Figure Skating Champion, Kurt Browning in September for a weekend long seminar that brought skaters from all across the Northwest Region.
- Hockey has been recognized as a prominent sport in Sioux Lookout and its surrounding areas. The historic Sioux Lookout Blackhawks team from the Pelican Lake Indian Residential School serves as a demonstration of the significance of Sioux Lookout's relationship with the surrounding First Nation communities and the municipality's commitment to reconciliation through sport. The recent success of the Sioux Lookout Bombers, who became SIJHL champions only two years after joining the league as an expansion franchise, highlights the exceptional achievements and growth of the local hockey scene.
- The Sioux Lookout Airport plays a pivotal role as a major transfer point between the southern and northern regions of the province and is an essential service to the northern communities. As a licensed public aerodrome, it effectively meets the growing demand for scheduled flights by various airlines, including Bearskin Airlines, Wasaya Airways, Perimeter Aviation, and charter flights by Skycare Air Ambulance, Bamaji Air, Slate Falls Airways, and North Star Air. Notably, the airport serves as a crucial hub for passengers and patients traveling to and from the Meno-Ya-Win Health Centre, which serves the Municipality of Sioux Lookout, including Hudson, the towns of Pickle Lake and Savant Lake, and 29 First Nation communities in the Sioux Lookout region. Additionally, it serves as a midpoint for sports enthusiasts and cargo heading to the communities, fishing spots and hunting areas in the northern regions.

O

Opportunities

What are our best possible future opportunities? What changes in demand can we expect in the future? What broader trends and policies may affect development and impact our aspirations?



Opportunities

- The addition of a swimming facility emerged as a prominent theme during the engagement process, surpassing other suggestions. This proposed facility would provide recreational activities for residents but also present an opportunity to boost sports tourism in Sioux Lookout. It will be important to effectively communicate to Sioux Lookout residents that concerns regarding budget and financial prudence are being addressed through meticulous planning and an understanding of the economic benefits of this development and any proposed investments.
- Enhancing existing sports facilities in Sioux Lookout, such as the boat launches, sports fields, Memorial Arena and Fitness Centre, can bring several benefits. Firstly, with proper planning and consultation, it can attract larger sporting events, which not only boosts the local economy but also provides better services to the community.
- The spending profile of the sports tourism visitor in Canada is significant, with an average spend per Canadian visitor of \$145.09 for same day visitors and \$546.56 for overnight visitors. The average spend per sports tourism visit in Canada is \$301.56. The average spend for a U.S.-based visitor is \$775.26, while overseas visitors spend an average of \$2,033.01 per stay.⁷³ Canada has gained recognition as a preferred host nation for international sports events due to the efforts made by hosts in developing facilities, expertise, and securing support from officials and stakeholders. Feedback from international sports event rights holders reveals that they appreciate several aspects of hosting in Canada. Among the top six factors mentioned, 80% of respondents appreciate the excellent venues available in the country.⁷⁴ Research shows that hockey-related tourism has a more substantial impact on small towns compared to large centres.⁷⁵
- Community engagement and inclusiveness should play a vital role in the development of sports and recreation initiatives in Sioux Lookout. By actively involving the diverse population, including Indigenous communities, in the planning process, the development of facilities and programs can meet a broader range of participant needs. This leads to higher satisfaction and increased usage.
- Marketing and promoting sports tourism in Sioux Lookout can increase the economic impact of tourism for the region. By establishing a working relation with the SLHTA, marketing efforts can be established to position Sioux Lookout as a vibrant sports and recreation destination.
- The Municipality of Sioux Lookout can create financially sustainable funding models for infrastructure and programming by collaborating with nearby communities and partnering with organizations on infrastructure and programming that could lead to more comprehensive and appealing recreational offerings.
- The Municipality of Sioux Lookout can continue to explore opportunities to enhance the coordination and promotion of sports tourism programming by partnering with the SLHTA, local businesses, Indigenous communities, and regional sports organizations. This collaboration allows for the access of additional resources and expertise, resulting in a more coordinated and effectively promoted sports tourism experience in Sioux Lookout. There was interest expressed by Lac Seul First Nation during engagement to partner on events and recreational programming. These collaborations can result in more inclusive and culturally enriched sports tourism offerings, enhancing the overall experience for visitors.

⁷³ Sports Tourism Canada. *Bouncing Back: Preparing for a Sport Hosting and Economic Reboot Part 1 International*. June 2021.

⁷⁴ Sports Tourism Canada. *Bouncing Back: Preparing for a Sport Hosting and Economic Reboot Part 2 International*. June 2021.

⁷⁵ Scotiabank and Canadian Tire. *Ice Hockey in Canada, 2015 Impact Study Summary*, 2014

A

Aspirations

What are we deeply passionate about and want to achieve?
What difference do we hope to make for all?



Aspirations

- By 2035, stakeholders envision a vibrant sports and recreation tourism sector in Sioux Lookout that not only caters to local community needs but also attracts visitors and new residents, thereby fostering economic growth and enhancing community well-being. The community would like to share in the \$7.3 billion economic impact of sports tourism across Canada and validate research indicating that hockey-related tourism has a more substantial impact on small towns compared to large centres.⁷⁶
- Sioux Lookout's recreation and sporting facilities and amenities are inclusive and accessible facilities, ensuring all facilities are accessible to people of all ages and abilities, promoting inclusivity.
- Sioux Lookout has enhanced community engagement that fosters a stronger community spirit through increased participation and volunteer support in recreational activities across all age categories.
- A robust sports tourism economy that supports developing Sioux Lookout into a renowned destination for year-round recreation and sports tourism, known for high-quality events and facilities.
- Investments in sports and recreation align with Sioux Lookout's identity as an outdoor recreation hub and connects to the municipality's historic and cultural activities.

R

Risks

What challenges do we need to be aware of? How will we recognize and mitigate or eliminate potential risks?



Risks

- Many of the recreation facilities and amenities such as the boat launches and sports fields are aging, outdated, and not well-maintained, which is deterring usage and causing dissatisfaction.
- Demand for accommodations within Sioux Lookout has been growing as a number of hotels have been purchased to accommodate patients from the Far North accessing Sioux Lookout's health care facilities. This has lowered Sioux Lookout's available rooms and increased its occupancy rate, leaving little room to actively attract or host sports tournaments or tourists.
- There is a noted lack of effective communication regarding available recreational activities, schedules and facilities to the broader community and potential visitors. This is causing a lack of awareness and understanding of the opportunities and resources available. This could result in decreased participation in sports tourism and limited engagement from both residents and potential visitors.
- Some residents are concerned that investing in additional infrastructure in Sioux Lookout will lead to an increase in taxes and subsequently raise the cost of living. Without a well-defined financing plan in place, the community may not fully support infrastructure upgrades.

⁷⁶ Scotiabank and Canadian Tire. Ice Hockey in Canada, 2015 Impact Study Summary, 2014

- Skepticism towards new initiatives and the spectre of volunteer burnout can impede the progress of community-driven sports tourism projects. Overcoming these challenges will require effective communication, building trust, and implementing strategies to prevent volunteer burnout.
- Current financial constraints, limited funding, and reliance on community volunteers for sports and event coordination and management could hinder the expansion and upgrading of facilities.
- Competition from neighbouring areas and other regions with better facilities and accommodations might overshadow Sioux Lookout, drawing away potential visitors and sports teams.
- The environmental impacts from activities that depend heavily on natural resources must balance ecological sustainability with recreational use, ensuring that environmental degradation does not occur.
- Failing to include an indoor pool in any future recreation facilities may result in reduced usage and potential dissatisfaction among residents.
- Failing to address walkability and pedestrian/cyclist infrastructure represents a potential risk in terms of accessibility and safety for pedestrians and cyclists. This, in turn, can reflect poorly on the community when sports tourism participants explore the area and discover a lack of amenities.

R

Results

How we know we are succeeding? What are the key goals we would like to accomplish to achieve these results?



Results

- **Improved Quality of Life:** Enhanced recreational facilities and programs that cater to all residents, improving overall community health and cohesion.
- **Increased Economic Boost:** Through sports tourism, drive economic growth by attracting visitors who spend on accommodation, dining and local businesses. Target an average spend of \$300 per sports tourism visit (based on Sport Tourism Canada data).
- **Implemented Sustainable Practices:** Implement environmentally friendly practices in maintaining and upgrading recreational facilities.
- **Established Partnerships:** Partnerships are in place with First Nations communities and recreational organizations that financially support sports and recreation infrastructure needs.
- **Upgraded Infrastructure and Amenities:** Sioux Lookout will make necessary upgrades and have facilities in place that support sports tourism and provide increased access to recreational activities, ultimately promoting resident attraction and retention.
- **Fostered Inclusion:** Recreation and sports will be accessible to all ages and abilities of Sioux Lookout residents and visitors.

Conclusion: Key Themes

Conclusion: Key Themes

Encourage Community Engagement and Volunteerism

The sustainability of sports and recreation in Sioux Lookout heavily relies on active community involvement and volunteer support. However, volunteer burnout poses a risk to the long-term success of these initiatives. Therefore, it is important to address this issue and ensure community engagement and support.

To foster community involvement, there was a strong emphasis on involving local communities, particularly Indigenous groups, in planning and executing recreation and sports tourism activities. Actively involving these communities can incorporate their unique perspectives and expertise, leading to more inclusive and culturally sensitive sports, and recreation programs. Additionally, ensuring recreation and sports are accessible to all ages and abilities of Sioux Lookout residents and visitors is vital. This inclusivity can be achieved by providing facilities, programs, and events that cater to a diverse range of individuals. By removing barriers and creating an inclusive environment, Sioux Lookout can attract a broader demographic and ensure everyone can participate in and benefit from sports and recreation opportunities.

Foster Strategic Partnerships

Opportunities exist to form partnerships with various local entities to promote sports and recreation in Sioux Lookout. These partnerships can include collaboration with local businesses, health authorities, and educational institutions. One focus area could be integrating cultural activities and Indigenous heritage into sports tourism. This can enhance the community's unique offerings and provide a more immersive experience for visitors. Leveraging relationships with local businesses, community groups, and events like the North American Indigenous Games can particularly benefit sports tourism in Sioux Lookout.

Partnerships with health and educational institutions present opportunities to promote wellness and recreational activities. One suggestion is to collaborate with these institutions to integrate physical activities into health rehabilitation programs. By incorporating recreational activities into rehabilitation, individuals can benefit from exercise and outdoor activities while working towards recovery goals.

To ensure inclusivity and appeal to a broader demographic, Sioux Lookout should integrate Indigenous cultural elements into sports and recreation programs. This will make these programs more inclusive and provide opportunities for cultural exchange and appreciation. Securing consistent funding and support from governmental bodies is crucial for the success of sports tourism initiatives. Developing effective government and funding strategies and preparing for potential policy or funding shifts with changing administrations will ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of the sports tourism industry.

Invest in Financially Sustainable Infrastructure

Investing in infrastructure is crucial to meet the current demands of sports tourism in Sioux Lookout and attract more visitors. Both upgrades and regular upkeep of sports and recreational facilities are necessary to ensure they meet standards and user expectations. Many residents prioritize constructing a community pool and improving existing sports facilities.

There is interest in developing Sioux Lookout's Sports Tourism sector, which can diversify the local economy and increase the economic impact for local businesses, thereby strengthening service sector businesses. The lack of

sufficient accommodations for large events can make it challenging to attract and accommodate many participants and visitors. This shortage can limit the potential for hosting major sports events, resulting in missed opportunities for economic growth and tourism. Addressing this issue involves exploring partnerships with local businesses, including hotel developers, to increase accommodation availability. This can involve incentivizing new hotels or exploring alternative lodging options like vacation rentals or temporary accommodations during events.

Additionally, Sioux Lookout's geographical remoteness can pose accessibility challenges. Visitors may face difficulties reaching the area, impacting attendance and participation in sports tourism events. To mitigate this, it is important to develop comprehensive transportation plans that facilitate easy access to Sioux Lookout. This can include working with transportation providers to increase route frequency, promoting and improving transportation infrastructure, and exploring shuttle services during major events.

Enhance Marketing and Communications Strategies

There is a recognized need for improved promotion of existing amenities and events in Sioux Lookout, targeting both residents and potential visitors. Developing a robust marketing strategy that effectively highlights Sioux Lookout's unique sports and recreation opportunities is recommended. One important aspect of this strategy should be aligning the outdoor and wilderness identity of Sioux Lookout with the marketing of recreation and sports. Highlighting the natural beauty and outdoor resources available can entice potential visitors to engage in various sports and recreational activities. This outdoor lens can be a powerful marketing tool, attracting individuals seeking outdoor adventures and experiences.

Additionally, marketing Sioux Lookout's outdoor beauty and recreation and sports opportunities can aid in attracting new residents and visitors. This can include promoting specific events, displaying local success stories and highlighting the community's commitment to providing exceptional sports and recreation experiences. Ensuring the Municipality of Sioux Lookout has the human and financial capacity to deliver on tourism sector growth is an important goal. Leveraging funds from the MAT and aligning investments with the priorities outlined in this report will support focused tourism marketing and development.

Appendix

Appendix

Summaries of Key Documents

2024 Sioux Lookout Economic Development Strategy – Local Business Survey

The 2024 business survey aimed to gain an understanding of the performance of the existing business community and their perception of the future economic structure of Sioux Lookout. The survey revealed several important points. Firstly, 70% of respondents believed that tourism has the best future potential for Sioux Lookout, followed closely by hospitality at 60%. Additionally, 77.5% of respondents mentioned that resource-based tourism has the most potential attraction to Sioux Lookout, with eco-tourism at 45% and sports tourism at 32%. Furthermore, 48% of respondents identified diversity, due to newcomers and being a hub for First Nations, as the primary competitive advantage for the area. Lastly, the survey indicated that asset development, specifically infrastructure, was considered the most important economic development objective by 41% of the respondents.

Sioux Lookout Community Improvement Plan (2024)

Sioux Lookout's Community Improvement Plan offers incentives that align with the implementation of the sports tourism infrastructure recommendations of the Sioux Lookout Sports Tourism Plan. Notable two aligned objectives within the CIP (Community Improvement Plans) are: To encourage the improvement of private and public properties in a manner that reflects a caring and inclusive environment and to encourage future development within the Municipality of Sioux Lookout by reducing the costs for initial development and ensuring that there are incentives to increase the overall value of lands within the municipality. Specifically, the Municipal Land Development Grant and the Building Renovation and Improvement Grant can help in future sports tourism infrastructure investment.

Cedar Bay Development Plan (2023)

The Cedar Bay Development Plan, established in 2012 and under review since February 16, 2022, proposes a significant expansion and diversification of the Cedar Bay Outdoor Recreation Complex in Sioux Lookout. The plan aims to transform the area into a multi-use complex featuring enhanced outdoor recreation, educational programming, public spaces, and rental accommodations. The Ad Hoc Committee created by the Council is tasked with reviewing the existing plan, consulting with community partners and user groups, and updating the plan accordingly for Council's approval. This development is intended to benefit the community's recreational programs by potentially increasing participation in outdoor activities, providing educational opportunities, and boosting local tourism through improved facilities and new accommodations. The expanded and diversified offerings at Cedar Bay could attract more visitors and residents, thereby fostering community engagement and economic growth through increased spending in the area.

2023 Facility Usage Report

Important findings from the 2023 Facility Usage report from January 1 to December 31, 2023, include a total of 2613 sessions across various facilities, with 916 contracts and 1266 activities, utilizing 6,328.25 hours. The Ice facility demonstrated significant usage with 2,967.75 hours logged, generating \$163,773.77. The Gymnasium and Rec Room 1 (Upstairs) also showed notable financial contributions, with revenues of \$18,782.80 and \$17,209.61, respectively. Other facilities like the Arena Floor and Baseball Diamonds also contributed to the financial influx with earnings over \$3,000 each. These findings suggest a substantial engagement in recreation programs across the community, highlighting specific facilities like ice rinks and gymnasiums as major hubs of activity and revenue generation.

2022 Facility Usage Report

The key findings from the 2022 Facility Usage report from January 1st to December 31st, 2022, include the Ice facility and the Gymnasium being the highest revenue generators, with the Ice facility bringing in \$127,966.32 and the Gymnasium \$17,732.72. The Ice facility also had the highest number of sessions (1127 sessions) and hours utilized (1764.33 hours), while Squash Court 2 showed high utilization with 395 sessions. The data reveals that the combined total revenue from all facilities amounted to \$161,073.53 over the year, with 786 contracts and 1074 activities reported.

Destination Northern Ontario Investment Attraction Strategy (2022)

The Investment Attraction Strategy by Destination Northern Ontario articulates a sharp vision and mission aimed at transforming Northern Ontario into a distinctive tourism hub, characterized by high-quality, resonant experiences and a strong entrepreneurial spirit. The strategy emphasizes the importance of innovation, accountability, and collaboration among other values, aligning with the goals of fostering entrepreneurship, and enhancing the quality and marketability of tourism products. Through its strategic priorities, Destination Northern Ontario focuses on three key shifts: Defend and Maintain, Inspire and Grow, and Rise and Shine, which respectively aim to bolster existing tourism strengths, develop new or enhance underperforming areas and explore emerging opportunities.

COVID-19 Tourism Modification Pilot Project (2021)

The COVID-19 Tourism Modification Pilot Project was established with the aim of assessing and mitigating the impacts of the pandemic on the Regional-Based Tourism (RBT) industry. The project focused on understanding the current state of RBT operators and the broader industry, identifying the challenges posed by COVID-19 and evaluating the needs for future business success. Key interventions included providing targeted support such as specialized training, development of relevant policies and guidelines and suggestions for physical modifications to business operations. Furthermore, the project proposed strategies for business modification and market diversification to help RBT operators adapt to the new market realities. These initiatives were critical as they offered practical solutions to help sustain the tourism sector and by extension, bolster the community's recreation programs by ensuring they remained viable and attractive in a post-pandemic scenario.

Sioux Lookout Economic Strategic Review 2020-2025

The Sioux Lookout Economic Strategic Review 2020-2025 document outlines a comprehensive strategic plan aimed at enhancing community development, economic diversity, entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability, housing, regional branding, Indigenous engagement, infrastructure, tourism, and transportation logistics over short, medium, and long-term horizons. Key initiatives include the System Impact Assessment for hydro utilities, feasibility studies for natural gas, downtown revitalization plans, and establishing a Drone Delivery Service. Significant efforts are directed towards creating jobs in knowledge-based sectors, supporting medium and small enterprises, developing an Eco-Village, and constructing new housing units. The plan also emphasizes strengthening the community's brand as the "Hub of the North," enhancing Indigenous cultural preservation and improving infrastructure with projects like the Broadband upgrade. However, continuous efforts are needed to secure funding and partnerships to realize these goals.

Facility Condition Assessment Sioux Lookout (2019)

The analyzed document provides comprehensive insights into community recreation needs and preferences, highlighting a 40% increase in usage of outdoor recreational facilities over the past five years. This demonstrates the positive impact of these facilities on community health and well-being. Additionally, investment in recreational infrastructure leads to a 20% increase in local tourism revenue, making it a cost-effective solution. The document also emphasizes the importance of sustainable practices to minimize ecological disruption when expanding recreational spaces. Furthermore, a case study highlights the success of implementing resident feedback in improving recreation programs, resulting in higher satisfaction rates and increased community engagement. These findings suggest that enhancing and expanding local recreation facilities not only meets the growing demand but also contributes significantly to the local economy and community health, while sustainable development practices and community involvement ensure long-term benefits.

Sioux Lookout & Hudson Revitalization Study (2010)

The Sioux Lookout & Hudson Revitalization Study, conducted between September 2008 and February 2010 by Hilderman Thomas Frank Cram and MMM Group, was commissioned by the Municipality of Sioux Lookout to enhance both communities in several key areas: image routes, tourism destinations, community green spaces, and traffic flow. The study's findings underscore the need for infrastructure improvements and collaborative efforts, including engaging the community to build opportunities and leveraging volunteer and school group participation. Moreover, working closely with the Economic Development Committee (EDC) to finalize design and engineering details was highlighted as a

priority. Sioux Lookout is experiencing growth and is increasingly becoming a hub for health care, education, and government services, while Hudson is facing challenges related to an aging population and needs to reinvent itself as an affordable residential and recreational area. The recommendations from the study, if implemented effectively, have the potential to significantly enhance the recreational programs in both communities by improving accessibility, amenities, and attractiveness, thereby boosting tourism and local quality of life.

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