



COWICHAN LAKE REGION

HIKING & CYCLING TOURISM ACTION PLAN

2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Consulting Team extends its heartfelt appreciation to Community Futures Cowichan for its leadership, direction and commitment to community development. In undertaking this project, Community Futures Cowichan has empowered Cowichan Lake Region community members to secure a more socially and economically prosperous future through thoughtful tourism development. This Action Plan would not be possible without the support of Cowichan Economic Development, the Town of Lake Cowichan, Lake Cowichan First Nation, and the many active community members who contributed their time, energy and ideas to the project.

Last but not least, we thank the BC Rural Dividend Fund, the Island Coastal Economic Trust, Cowichan Economic Development and Community Futures Cowichan for their generous financial contributions to this initiative.

Thank you,



LAKE COWICHAN
FIRST NATION



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cowichan Lake Region, which includes the Town of Lake Cowichan, the Lake Cowichan First Nation, and Cowichan Valley Regional District Electoral Areas I and F, is uniquely positioned to increase local economic activity and quality of life through well-planned tourism experience development. Although the Region is a popular summer destination for lake-based activities, community members have identified the need for economic development and the opportunity to build a higher-yield and year-round visitor economy through hiking and cycling experience development.

This Plan was developed in partnership with Community Futures Cowichan, the Cowichan Valley Regional District, Lake Cowichan First Nation, the Town of Lake Cowichan, and a diverse group of community leaders.

The Cowichan Lake Region Hiking and Cycling Action Plan is a call to action co-created by lakeside businesses, elected officials, and happy citizens. The Plan provides these community leaders and supporting agencies with the framework necessary to build the Cowichan Lake Region into a remarkable and sustainable hiking and cycling destination. By working together, the Cowichan Lake Region will create market ready trails, increase trail use, increase visitation and visitor spending, grow a strong base of community support for tourism, and nurture a vibrant local trail culture.

Moving forward, there is a strong case to be made for the active and ongoing involvement of local government, the business community and community groups to ensure cycling development continues. The Call to Action outlined in the next chapter is important for each of these key partners, but particularly so for tourism operators and businesses who will need to step up to the plate and demonstrate commitment and innovation in developing experiences that have marketability. This will require investment, but in creating new packages and services that will encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more locally, businesses will have the opportunity to improve their returns and contribute to a stronger position for the Cowichan Lake area as a trail destination.

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The four focus areas and the associated strategies are shown below. It will be important to pursue all focus areas simultaneously to ensure an overall coordinated effort and also prioritize organizational tasks that will provide support for the other three focus areas.

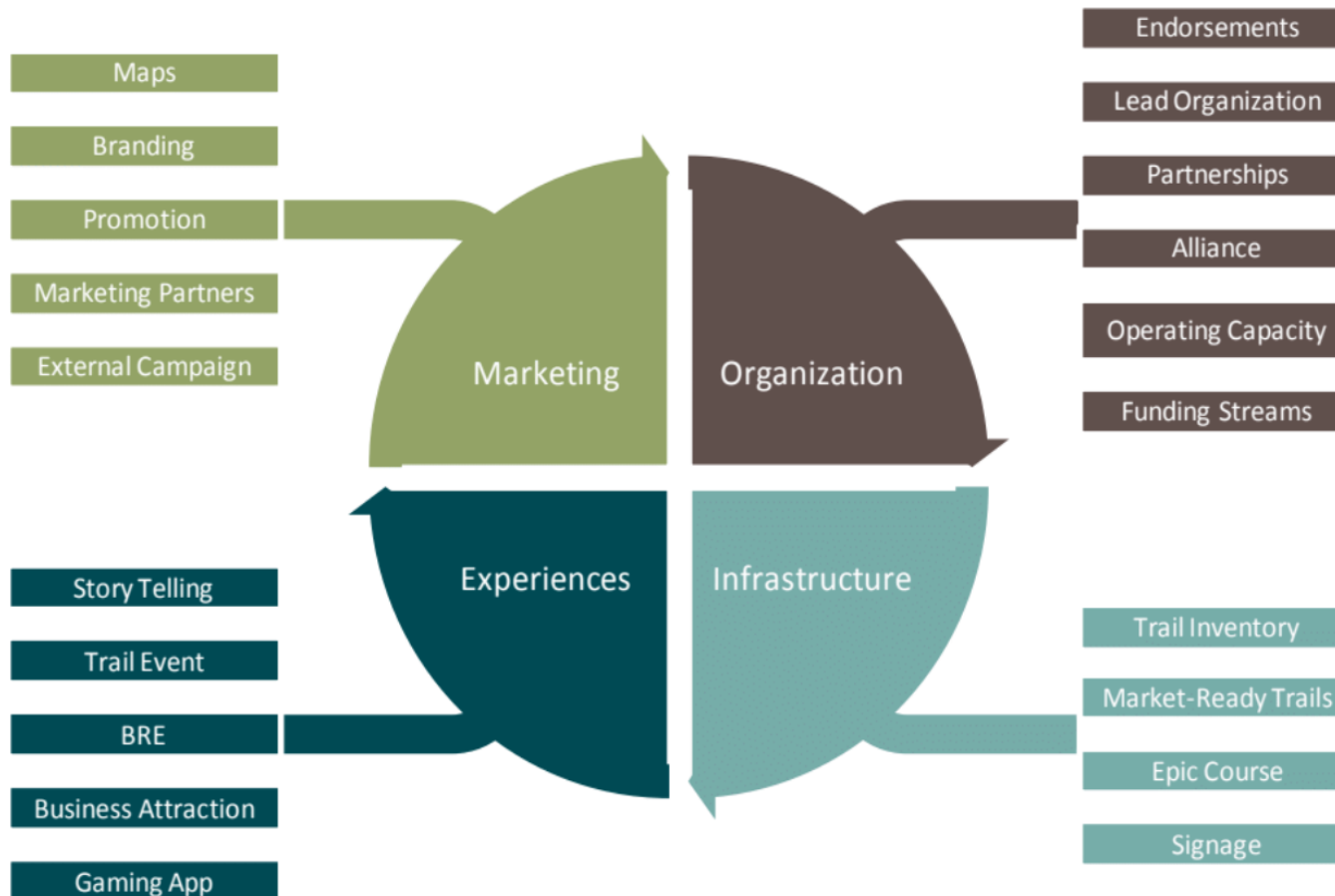


Figure 1. The Plan at a glance

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	LCFN	CVRD	TLC	TVI	CTSS	TCS	CLDCC	Prov	Assn
Endorsement	•	•	•	•			•	•	•
Lead organization		•	•						
Partnerships		•		•	•	•	•	•	•
Alliance	•			•		•			
Operating capacity					•				•
Funding streams			•					•	•
Trail inventory	•	•			•				
Market-ready trails	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•
Epic trail	•	•	•	•	•				•
Signage	•	•	•	•	•				•
Story telling	•	•	•	•		•			•
Trail event		•	•	•		•	•		
Business development				•		•	•	•	
Investment attraction	•	•	•			•	•	•	
Gaming application				•		•	•	•	
Maps	•	•			•				
Branding		•			•				
Promotions		•			•				
Marketing partners	•	•	•		•				
External campaign		•	•		•				

Legend

LCFN - Lake Cowichan First Nation

CVRD - Cowichan Valley Regional District

CLDCC - Cowichan Lake District Chamber of Commerce

TVI - Tourism Vancouver Island

TCS - Tourism Cowichan Society

TLC - Tourism Leadership Committee

CTSS - Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society

Figure 2. Overview of Initiatives by Key Organization

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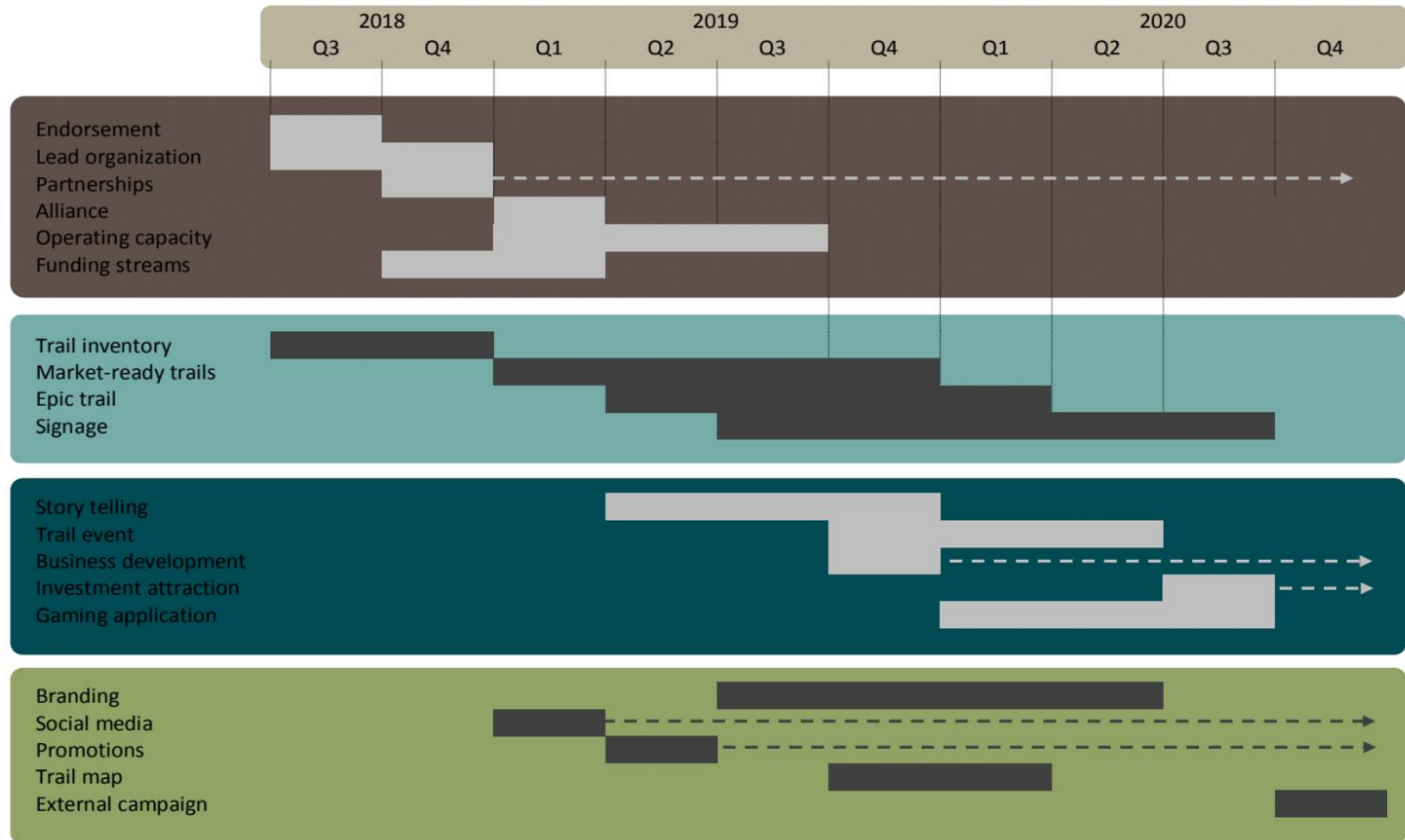


Figure 3. Overview of Initiatives Timeline

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What We Were Asked to Do

Community Futures Cowichan Region, the Cowichan Valley Regional District and other project partners have commissioned this Tourism Action Plan (the Plan) focused on hiking and cycling for the Cowichan Lake Region. This Plan will guide the development of tourism by fostering a more collaborative business community, cultivating a more robust tourism identity based around the region's assets and clearly articulating a path for increasing the economic and social benefits of tourism.

Specifically, the Action Plan includes:

- An inventory and analysis of the study area's tourism assets
- An assessment of hiking, cycling, and touring & exploring target markets
- Best practice examples of tourism trail experiences locally and internationally
- An experience gap analysis
- Recommendations and analysis of potential infrastructure investments
- Business development and industry engagement recommendations,
- Marketing recommendations
- Comprehensive Action Plan for hiking and cycling tourism development

This Plan is accompanied by a previously-prepared Current Situation report, which outlined tourism demand, supply and competitive conditions in the Cowichan Lake Region and summarized stakeholder and community outreach feedback on how best to develop trail tourism in the future.

1.2 How We Approached the Work

The work undertaken in compiling this Plan included primary and secondary research as well as a comprehensive engagement process. A leadership team brought together to oversee the work program, collaborated with local stakeholders and key informants familiar with tourism and trails destination development.

The major work phases are shown in Figure 1.

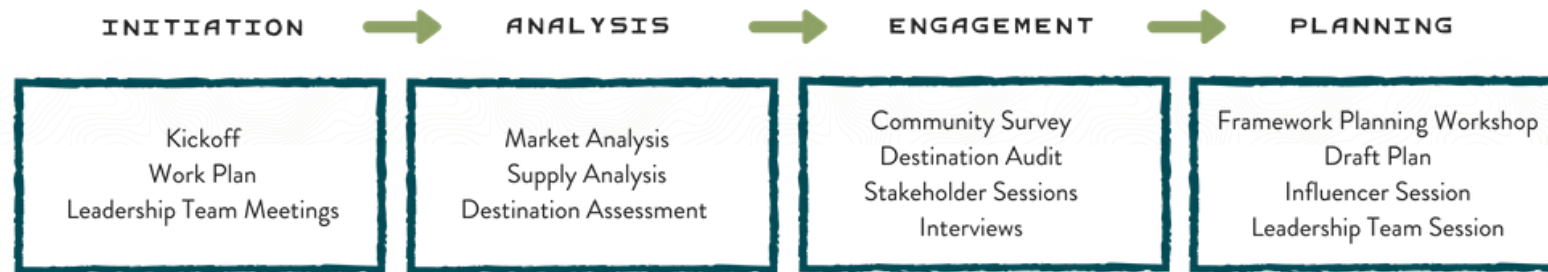


Figure 4. Cowichan Lake Region Hiking and Cycling Tourism Action Plan Work Program

The kickoff meeting at Community Futures offices in Duncan was followed by the preparation of a work plan and one-on-one interviews with the Leadership Team a diverse mix of local stakeholders who provided oversight and feedback to the consulting team during the course of the project. The analysis phase entailed research on tourism supply and demand-side conditions in the Cowichan Lake Region as well as an evaluation of competitiveness and service/product gaps. The engagement program included: a community survey answered by 200 respondents; a destination audit of another 95 respondents; three stakeholder sessions involved over 60 participants; and a community drop in session that drew over 100 people.

1.3 The Reference Area

This Action Plan provides the Cowichan Lake Region with a focused destination development plan for growing the economic and social benefits of tourism through the hiking and cycling sub-sectors. The Cowichan Lake Region is comprised of the Town of Lake Cowichan, Electoral Area I, Electoral Area F, and the Lake Cowichan First Nation Indian Reserve. The Region includes municipal land, First Nations land, Regional Parks, Provincial Park, and a significant amount of private land owned predominantly by TimberWest, Island Timberlands, and the Hancock Timber Resource Group.



Figure 5. Map of the Reference Area – Town of Lake Cowichan, CVRD Electoral Area I and CVRD Electoral Area F, Lake Cowichan First Nation

1.4 Operating Context

1.4.1 Tourism and Economic Development

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world. In British Columbia, tourism generates \$17 billion in revenue and contributed \$7.9 billion of value to the BC economy. Tourism contributed more to GDP than almost any other primary resource industry including mining at \$4.1 billion, forestry and logging at \$2.0 billion, and agriculture and fish at \$1.5 billion. The only exception is the oil and gas extraction industry at \$8.2 billion. With tourism's growth expected to continue, communities across the province are recognizing tourism's potential to positively impact local economies and quality of life.

The Cowichan Lake Region is uniquely positioned to increase local economic activity and quality of life through well-planned tourism experience development. As identified by residents, the Region's greatest assets are its lakes, rivers, mountains, forests and other natural assets. While existing tourism experiences draw visitors during peak summer months, the coordinated development of trail experiences is an opportunity to increase the inventory of remarkable experiences and increase visitation in the shoulder seasons.

TOURISM'S VALUE IN BC



1.4.2 An Overview of Demand Factors

Hiking Market

The hiking tourism market is comprised of destination hikers and the touring & exploring market. Destination hikers visit destinations with hiking as their primary trip motivator. Touring & exploring visitors enjoy hiking as a complementary activity while in a destination, but hiking is not their primary trip motivator. The development of exceptional hiking experiences in the Cowichan Lake Region will draw both destination hikers and touring & exploring visitors.

The following table shows three hiking target markets and their characteristics. These market segments were identified through PRIZM, a segmentation tool that categorizes households into specific consumer segments based on postal codes. PRIZM allows for focused and evidence-based consumer marketing efforts.

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Hiking Market Segments	Size	Characteristics
Elite Hikers	94,131 BC households (5%) Highest concentration in North Vancouver	Wealthy, upper class couples and families 45-64 years old Destination hikers Moderate media & socials media users Motivated by wildlife viewing, local cultures, small towns and places less travelled Typically avoid luxury accommodations – prefer hotels, motels and camping
Suburban Outdoor Enthusiasts	223,844 BC households (11.8%) Highest concentration in Kelowna and Maple Ridge	Middle class couples and families 45-54 years old Moderate media & social media users Enjoy exploring natural environments and urban areas Often take shorter trips that are closer to home and allow personal flexibility Enjoy camping, staying with family, homestays and reasonably priced hotels and motels
Rustic Adventurers	172,235 BC households (9.1%) Highest concentration in Revelstoke and Chilliwack	Couples and families with older children Destination hikers Light media users, below average mobile users and moderate social media users Travel to gain a better understanding of their own culture and heritage Seek comfort, safety and style while traveling, often staying in branded

Hiking Experience Typologies

Strolls- Easy & short distance beginner coastal or inland, agricultural day hikes on well- marked trail heads and groomed paths. This may be combined with cultural or historic attractions or nature guided or organized tours. Easy access from urban centres or small towns with accommodations such as resorts, hotel, B&B's. Modest or no elevation gain. No special skills or equipment needed. Appeals to a broad range of visitors new to an area. Cultural Explorers would be an important target, by combining cultural elements on these strolls with other cultural experiences in the regions. This group is less interested in the physical challenge, and more focused on understanding the social environment.

Excursions- Intermediate day or multi-day coastal or inland forested hikes with some amenities often combined with cultural/historic/natural interpretive experiences. Usually self-guided and could be along some semi-rugged terrain with challenging aspects (higher elevation gain or rock scrambling, repelling requiring some fitness. Tours and accommodations available such as cabins, organized camping, or B&B's. Authentic Experiencers would be an important target for these trails, which allow these travelers to explore and experience nature farther from the influence of people. Some physical challenges are expected, allowing them to better connect with nature.

Epic Adventures- Strenuous back country or epic adventure hikes in remote areas or places requiring coordinated transportation access. Often multi-day or long-distance treks on rugged terrain or with high elevation gain, requiring special gear and physical fitness for the experienced hiker. Trails may be guided or self-guided but not always well- marked and with few or no amenities. Backpacking or camping in full nature immersion or remote wilderness lodges and fly-in. Free Spirits would be an important target group, looking for the grand experience that is worthy of sharing with friends. Physical challenges add to the value of the 'story' they will relate when they are done.

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Cycling Market

Cycling tourism is an emerging sub-sector that has a demonstrated potential to support economic and social development in rural communities. Perhaps even more so than hiking, cycling attracts a high yield, diverse range of visitors who visit communities longer and bring fresh dollars into the communities they visit.⁷ The Vancouver Island Region is already recognized as a premier cycling destination known for world class mountain biking, touring, and road cycling. As Vancouver Island's cycling experiences continue to grow in popularity, there are opportunities for the Cowichan Lake Region to develop new visitor experiences around cycling for the benefit of residents and businesses.

The following table shows three hiking target markets and their characteristics. These market segments were identified through PRIZM, a segmentation tool that categorizes households into specific consumer segments based on postal codes. PRIZM allows for focused and evidence-based consumer marketing efforts.

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Cycling Market Segments	Size	Characteristics
Elite Bikers	213,132 BC households (11.2%) Highest concentration in North Vancouver and Surrey	Wealthy, upper class couples and families 45-64 years old Will travel to cycle Moderate media & social media users Motivated by wildlife viewing, local cultures, small towns and places less travelled Typically avoid luxury accommodations – prefer hotels, motels and camping
Outdoor Enthusiasts	176,899 BC households (9.3%) Highest concentration in Kelowna and Nanaimo	Middle class couples and families; younger individuals 25-34 and 45-54 years old Moderate media & social media users Enjoy traveling to visit the same destination on multiple trips, enjoy familiar surroundings, but willing explore new areas of note Prefer luxury experiences and branded accommodations
Diverse Cyclists	317,602 BC households (16.8%) Highest concentration in Surrey and Vancouver	Middle aged affluent couples and families; higher minority status Average media users, mobile phone users and social media users Thrill-seekers who seek the best and most remarkable experiences that they can afford Often stay in luxury hotels, but willing to camp especially if at a unique campsite

Cycling Experience Typologies

There are five primary cycling experience typologies that could be well suited to the Cowichan Lake Region. While there is certainly overlap in users across these typologies, the typologies can be used to guide the planning, design and marketing of trail experiences.

Road Biking- Road based biking is typically an endurance activity through which riders travel long-distances on all-day or multi-day trips. Commercial touring companies are emerging to meet the growing demand for organized experiences. Quiet country roads in excellent condition are highly desired among road bikers. The Comox Valley is becoming known as an excellent road biking destination because of its abundance of quiet roads, beautiful scenery and unique, supporting food tourism businesses.

Recreational Riding- Recreational Riding is a general experience typology that involves low intensity cycling activities near urban centers. Recreational Riders may not actively seek out cycling experiences, but consider cycling as an easy way to explore an area. Bike rental businesses are needed to support this experience typology and complementary elements may be integrated into Recreational Riding experiences. Cycling vineyard tours in the Okanagan is a popular example of a Recreational Riding experience.

Downhill- Downhill mountain biking is a higher-risk, gravity powered cycling experience that typically caters to more risk-tolerant, higher-skilled riders. A downhill trail will test the rider's skill with jumps, berms, drops, steep declines and other features over 1-2km long trails. Downhill mountain biking may involve the use of chairlifts or vehicle shuttles to get riders to the top of trails. Mount Prevost in the Cowichan Valley offers excellent Downhill mountain biking. There are many competitive events focused on downhill cycling.

Cross Country- Single track trails and narrow backcountry roads over long and continuous routes of 10-80km long test the endurance and skill of cross-country cyclists. This is the most popular mountain biking experience typology in the US and Europe. Cross Country trails may incorporate some of the same technical features as downhill trails. Cumberland is a popular Vancouver Island cross-country cycling destination. There are many competitive Cross Country cycling events, including the popular BC Bike Race.

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Freeride- Freerideing was born in the forests of British Columbia and combines various elements of both downhill and cross-country disciplines. Freeriders navigate natural and human-made technical trail features that challenge the technical skill and endurance of riders. North Vancouver is perhaps the best-known Freeriding destination in BC. Freeriding is mostly a non-competitive discipline.

Dirt Jump- Dirt Jumping is a youth driven and popular discipline that typically occurs in confined areas and bike parks. Dirt Jump parks cater to beginner to expert riders with a progression of jump lines ranging from easy to advanced. Pump tracks are a complementary and closely related discipline that is growing in popularity as they are highly accessible to beginner riders. Dirt Jump and pump track parks can help communities to build a culture of cycling by offering youth an accessible and social way to enter the sport. Nanaimo recently opened the Stevie Smith Bike Park that offers world class dirt jumps and pump tracks.

All Mountain- All Mountain is a recently developed cycling experience typology that grew from advances in mountain bikes. All Mountain trails requires riders to navigate technical and physically demanding trails over long distances. There is a growing interest among All Mountain riders for long-distance epic trails though the backcountry. BC's Chilcotin Mountains have recently become an internationally recognized All Mountain destination.

Rails-to-Trails & Touring- Mountain bike touring is an accessible and popular activity that often involves traveling from one community to another on backcountry roads, trails and abandoned/re-purposed railways. This experience typology caters to a variety of skill and fitness levels and is popular among families. The Okanagan's Kettle Valley Rail Trail is an excellent local example of this experience typology.

Emerging Experience Technologies- New technologies are supporting new types of cycling experience typologies. Battery-assisted e-Bikes are becoming increasingly popular with older demographic cohorts as they offer an opportunity for users to travel significant distances with ease. Fatbiking is another growing experience typology that uses bikes with exceptionally wide tires to travel over snow, ice, sand and other low-traction surfaces.

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1.4.3 An Overview of Supply Conditions

A trail destination audit was carried out during the engagement process. It involved 47 questions grouped into seven main elements, asking respondents to rate each question on a 1 to 5 basis with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree. The higher the score, the more positive respondents feel about a particular element. A total of 73 people from the Cowichan Lake area responded to the audit survey.

- Transportation/access, tourism support services, the state of the local tourism industry and cultural/heritage assets were ranked high.
- The state of the trails themselves was given a slightly lower score, mainly due to a lack of consistent maintenance, signage and amenities.
- The lowest score was accorded to Natural Assets, not because they don't exist, but because they are not protected and free and open access is not ensured. This of course refers to the fact that most trails and the majority of the surrounding forested land base is private property, which presents unique challenges in the province BC where the majority of trail systems are on the Crown land base.

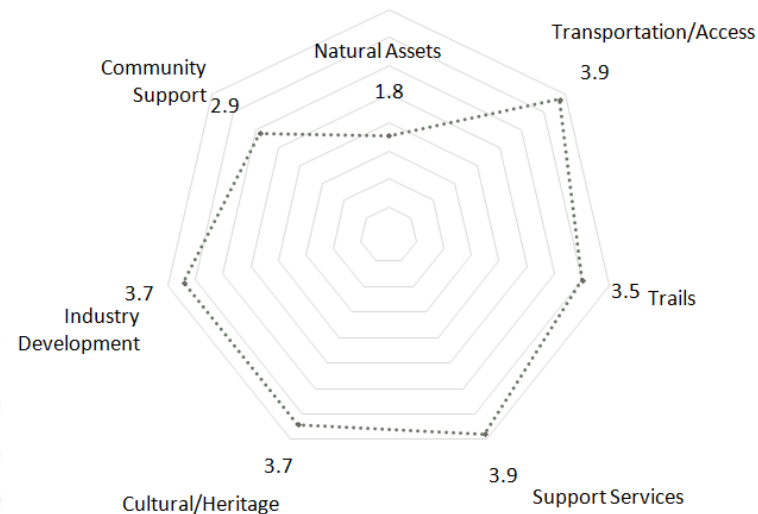


Figure 6. Community Audit Results

1.4.4 The Competitive Position of Cowichan Lake Region

The key strengths of the Lake Cowichan Region are its natural assets, and its tourism services clustered around camping, lake activities and river activities in the summer months. In terms of weaknesses, the trails are not managed or promoted to a consistent set of standards and there is a lack of exceptional visitor experiences. Exceptional refers to experiences that stand apart, that visitors will promote and brag about to their friends, on social media and through online platforms like Trip Advisor. The West Coast Trail, Juan de Fuca Provincial Park and Pacific Marine Circle Route can all be considered exceptional based on customers reviews.

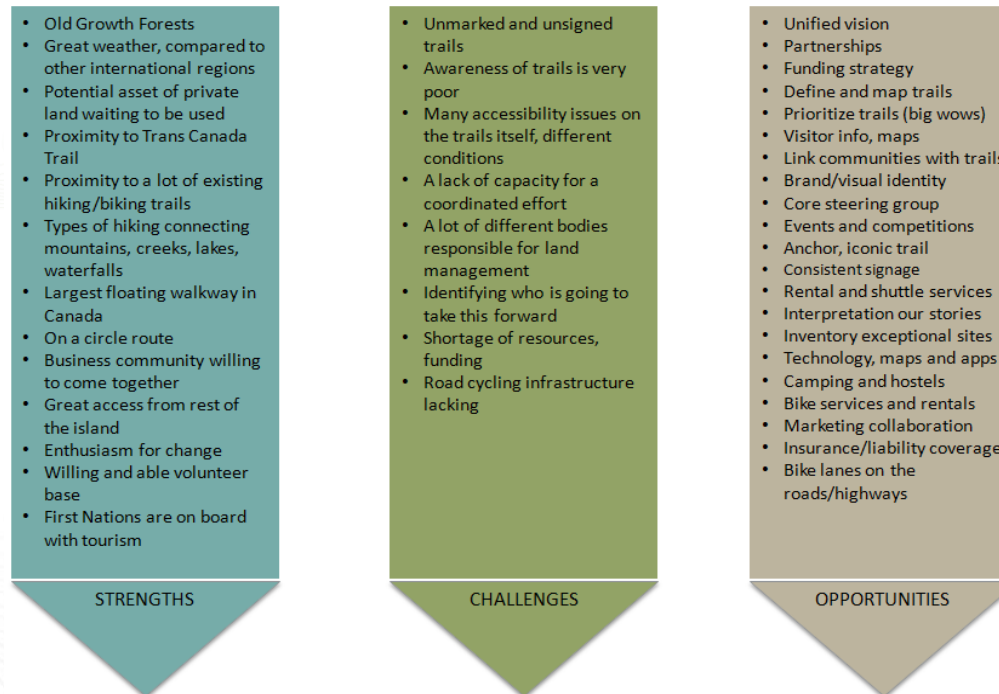


Figure 7. Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

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The preponderance of private land also presents trail management issues. The opportunities are really about shaping the trails, features and services that already exist into a cohesive, consistent and accessible set of trail experiences by adopting best practices in trail management, infrastructure placement and enhanced visitor services.



Figure 8. The Unique Attributes of the Cowichan Lake Area

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The Cowichan Lake Region has the opportunity to develop a unique selling proposition (USP) to differentiate itself as a destination by going beyond the provision of mere physical trails to include a story-based brand that takes advantage of its cultural heritage values. Differentiation is a very important strategic direction because there is an expanding list of trail destinations around the developed world that are all competing for similar markets and similar types of visitors. This is not to say that the physical nature of trails and the surrounding landscape are not important, but that the challenge of standing out from the crowd will require some forethought about how the region can be positioned differently from the average. The destination brand should describe this uniqueness for the marketplace and create a sense of interest and anticipation that induces trip decisions. As discussed in the engagement sessions, the wildlife, rainforest, wilderness and sustainability are not special to this region; in fact, they can be claimed by many other competing areas inside and outside BC. However, very few trail destinations are weaving local stories, characters, traditions and flavours into trail activities to create more extraordinary experiences. Perhaps the most successful in the BC context are the several wine and food trails in the Okanagan. The Living Forestry and Indigenous stories are perhaps the most compelling for a USP. As this project progresses and new experiences are developed, project partners will need to re-evaluate the Cowichan Lake Region's USP and promise to visitors on an ongoing basis.

1.5 Why Trail Tourism Makes Sense

As an economic base sector that creates community wealth (just like forestry, manufacturing and other export activities), tourism is critical to the region's economy. Over the last three decades, manufacturing and other goods production have fallen significantly in the local area. Tourism occupies a smaller role than forestry does, but it has exceptional growth prospects. Moreover, it is highly amenable to local control, contributes to local quality of life, benefits from and contributes to environmental and sustainability objectives, aligns with heritage and cultural values and will continue to remain viable as an economic target over the long term.



Figure 9. How Tourism Supports Community and Economic Development

1.6 Why Trail Tourism is Right for Cowichan Lake Area

As shown in Figure 7, there is a good fit between trail tourism as an economic development focus and the Cowichan Lake Area, from an economic as well as a community benefits standpoint. The Region's economic base is changing, with forestry and manufacturing activity being replaced by knowledge-led and tourism services. In order to tap into these growth sectors, the Cowichan Lake Area will have to take advantage of its strategic assets, many of which favour trail tourism. The case studies demonstrate that this can be done in small communities and that the benefits can be wide ranging. It is not just tourism that generates the economic impacts, either. Growing destinations like Squamish and Fernie have fledgling high-tech sectors where young entrepreneurs are attracted by recreational and cultural amenities that provide a well-rounded quality of life. Affordable real estate makes the destination more attractive. The Cowichan Lake Area offers all these advantages and would greatly benefit from the diversification potential of trail tourism, providing it leverages its assets with compelling experiences.

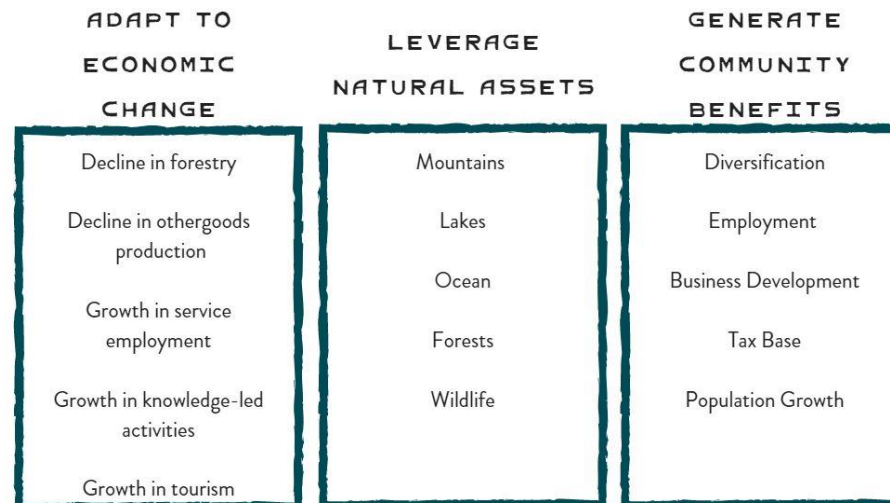


Figure 10. The Economic Dimensions of Trail Tourism in the Cowichan Lake Area

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1.7 What the Cowichan Lake Area has to do to Create Experiences

The Cowichan Lake area has the attributes on which to build a trail product. It has the setting, visitor activities and many of the services and amenities that visitors are seeking. In order to generate more benefits, it must fill in the service gaps and then create packages and experiences that are going to make it a go-to destination.

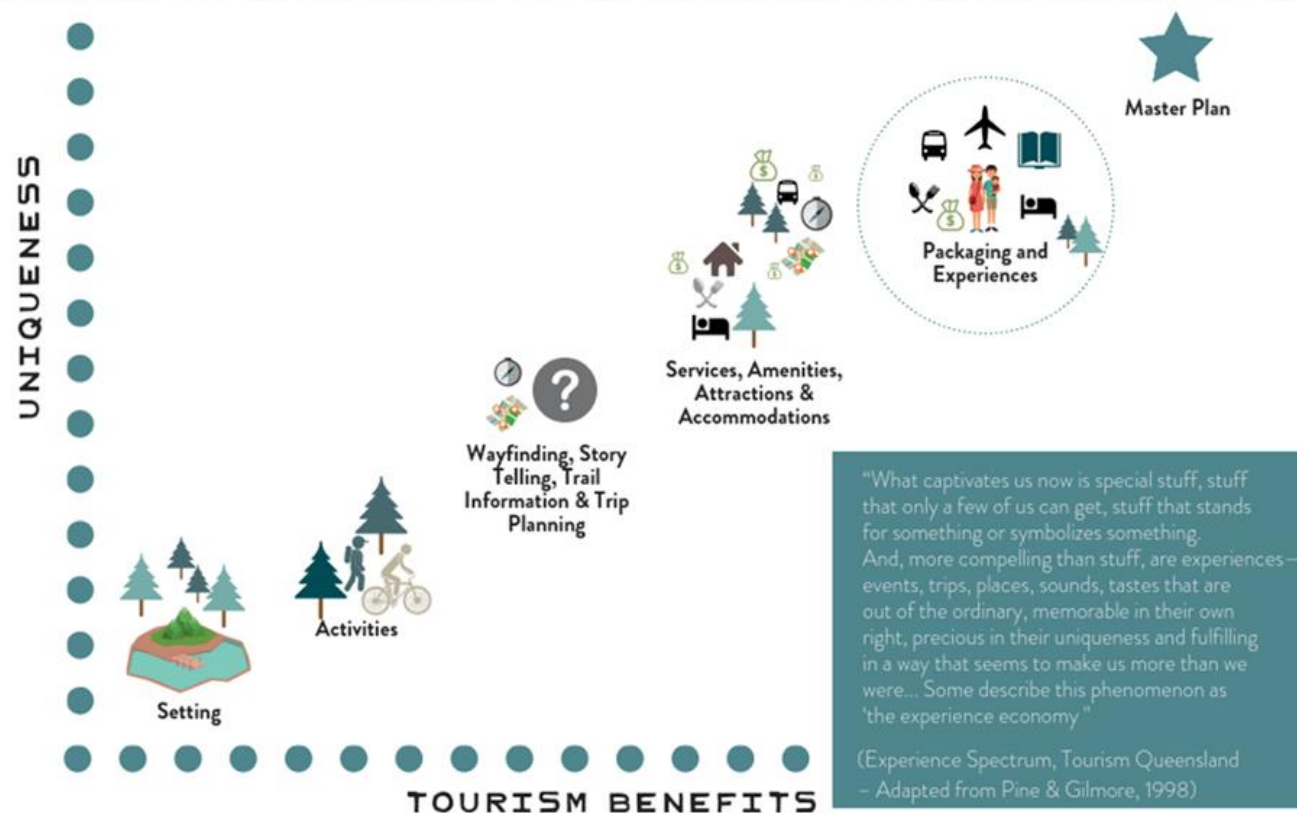


Figure 11. Developing world-class trails destination is a process of leveraging natural assets and creating remarkable experiences

2. PLAN DIRECTION

Vision

The Cowichan Lake region has a thriving and robust trail culture built upon community, industry and government collaboration and productive partnerships. Trail groups have successfully adopted best practices to ensure resources are efficiently used and benefit residents as well as visitors.

The trail system accommodates all users and successfully links communities, natural assets and history in interesting and entertaining ways. The trail network is unique because it brings users closer to nature while at the same time experiencing the historical and culture roots through interpretive signage and sites. The trails are well marked, maintained and safe for multiple uses. Users have access to real-time information about the trails and the experience that can be expected.

Together with the diverse selection of visitor services, accommodation, culinary options and entertainment, the trails have contributed to the region's new-found vibrancy as a visitor destination. Visitor awareness and participation in trail activities has been buoyed by signature hiking and cycling events.

2.1 Guidelines

The guidelines for this Plan have been drawn from the feedback provided in the engagement sessions. The following statements will guide how actions can be structured through Plan implementation. They capture good practices in tourism planning and strive to link trail initiatives to the broader economic development and tourism context in the Cowichan Lake Region. They can also serve as common ground for the many partners who will be involved in strategic initiatives, leading to more consistent, predictable and effective results for the community.

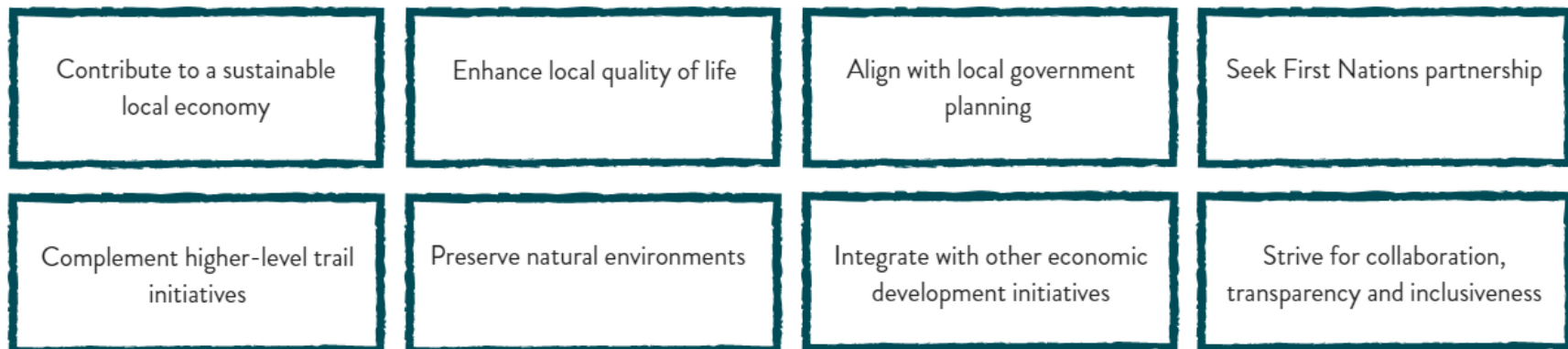


Figure 12. Guidelines for a Cowichan Lake Trail Strategy

2.2 Focus Areas and Goals

If the Cowichan Lake Region is to develop as a trails destination as described in the vision statement, then it is important to articulate goals that can act as the guideposts for strategic action.

The five goals, identified during the community engagement process, include:

- the creation of market-ready trails;
- increased trail use (by residents and visitors);
- increased visitation and visitor spending;
- a strong base of community support; and
- a vibrant local trail culture.



The four focus areas, Organization, Infrastructure and Support, Experiences and Marketing, represent functional areas into which strategies are clustered.



Figure 13. Focus Area and Goals

3. THE PLAN IN FULL

3.1 Layout of the Plan

Focus Area	<i>One of the four development themes in the plan</i>		
Strategy	<i>Strategy statement</i>		
Actions	<i>Initiatives that will contribute to achievement of the strategy</i>		
Priority	<i>High – top priority, critical impact</i>		
	<i>Medium – moderate priority and impact</i>		
	<i>Flex – strategy important but may require repositioning as time, resources and partnerships allow</i>		
Start-End	<i>Beginning Quarter and Year – Completion Quarter and Year</i>		
Resources			\$
	Major Time Commitment	Minor Time Commitment	Cash Costs Applicable

3.2 Organizing for Implementation


A strategy or action plan should be firmly set in the context of implementation, that is, with clear reference to roles, responsibilities, timing, resource requirements and other aspects required to induce action and ensure follow-through. This Plan is being sponsored by Community Futures Cowichan, the Cowichan Valley Regional District and other partner agencies and while each has a role to play in implementation and oversight, none are equipped or resourced to lead the Plan as a whole. But there are many other players, among them First Nations, local and provincial government, trail stewards and private landowners, who could and should be involved in trail development if it, and the Plan, is to realize their full potential. Most importantly, the community itself must be involved, engaged and supportive.

In other jurisdictions around the world, the legal, land use and planning context for trails can differ dramatically, but the one common bond of successful trail destinations is a cohesive, coherent organizational plan that is able to bring together the players in a coordinated fashion. Importantly, local government is more likely to provide their support if community support is evident.

Managing and supporting multiple courses of action among many different organizations who have a stake in trail development can be complex and sometimes frustrating. Partners will not be bound to implement initiatives contained in this Plan, but of course will be strongly encouraged to be involved. Their commitment, participation and, ideally, ownership will depend on a lead organization that is positioned for success.



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1. OBTAIN PLAN ENDORSEMENTS FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate the Plan's Executive Summary to local government, including Lake Cowichan First Nation. • Clarify the “ask”: active support and participation in Plan implementation. • Request an appearance before the respective councils/boards to present the Plan. • Seek motions to receive and file the information and refer, if necessary, to administration. 	Priority:	High	
	Partners:	TLC, LCFN, CVRD, CLDCC, SD 79	
	Start-end:	Q3 18 – Q3 18	
	Resources:		--


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2. CREATE A LEAD ORGANIZATION	Priority:	High
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm the consensus at the planning workshop that a legal society is the preferred entity to undertake Plan implementation. The society can be established under the BC Society Act, something that is administratively simple, low cost and amenable to achieving community buy-in and acceptance. A non-profit society has flexibility and scalability in retaining surpluses for future trail programs without risk of tax implications, as would be the case of a for-profit company. Form an Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC) from the Leadership Team, which can serve as the interim Board of Directors of the Society. Prepare necessary documentation prior to filing for incorporation. This includes verifying the availability of the legal name, selecting a legal address, specifying the terms and conditions of membership, preparing the constitution and bylaws, and outlining board structure. Directors must also be elected. Once the incorporation is completed, the Society should prepare a Policies and Procedures manual and a Resource Guide for the Board of Directors that outlines the legal context (e.g. articles of incorporation, constitution, bylaws), organizational details (e.g. list of directors, employees if any, meeting calendar) and financial terms. Implement a leadership training program for the IAC and the Board so they are equipped to undertake their executive responsibilities and guide and support the Plan. 	Partners:	CFC, CVRD, TLC
	Start-end:	Q3 18 – Q4 18
	Resources:	 

HIKING & CYCLING TOURISM ACTION PLAN

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3. CULTIVATE PARTNERSHIPS THAT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY, ADOPTION OF GOOD PRACTICES AND COMMUNITY/STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT	Priority:	High
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and nurture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic alliances are core partnerships that are trail or user based, which have a strong alignment of values, interests, visions and goals. Examples of potential alliance partners would be Trails BC, the Trans Canada Trail Society, the Vancouver Island Spine Trail Association (VISTA) and local clubs and stewards. All forms of trail use should be represented if possible, including motorized and equestrian. Partnerships based on broader shared interests in tourism, recreation, economic and community development. Partnerships based on access to and use of land, including private land owners. Build a relationship with Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society (CTVSS) and learn from their expertise. Prepare a membership dossier that outlines partners' motivations and interests, their strengths and weaknesses and the potential for future joint action. Specifically identify where partnership initiatives can be leveraged in the Cowichan Lake region. Scope out the guidelines and expected outcomes for a partnership with TimberWest with the intention of signing an MOU for the development of trails on its land. The company was involved in the engagement sessions for this project and has acknowledged the potential for trail use. The next step would be to propose changes and improvements to specific trails and use areas. 	Partners:	CVRD, TW, CLDCC, BC Parks, CTSS, VISTA, Trails BC, TVI, TCS, DBC
	Start-end:	Q4 18 – Ongoing
	Resources:	<div>  </div> <div>--</div>

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Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A partner for: liaising with provincial government and private land owners, establishing a positive business climate, promoting flexible land use, and coordinating parks, recreation and transit planning
Cowichan Lake District Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A partner for: enterprise facilitation (retaining, expanding, attracting investment), community marketing, local event coordination, visitor servicing and business incentive programs
Community Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A partner for: developing stories and content to help interpret the trails and for building overall community support
Lake Cowichan First Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A partner for: coordinating land use issues and tourism development initiatives, identifying appropriate Indigenous experiences, leveraged funding for priority projects
Tourism Cowichan Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A partner for: aligning the Plan with higher level plans, ensuring creative content is brand aligned, resource for marketing and branding, fee-for-service marketing campaign development and execution
Tourism Vancouver Island and Destination BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A partner for: aligning the Plan with higher level plans, accessing industry, marketing and destination development resources, encouraging operators to develop trail experiences
TimberWest	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A partner for: increasing access to private lands for public recreation in a safe and appropriate way, creating shared opportunities for industry and Cowichan Lake Region Residents
Trail Organizations (e.g. Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A partner for: accessing resources and best practices that have already benefited other trail destinations

Figure 14. Potential Partnership Roles


HIKING & CYCLING TOURISM ACTION PLAN

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4. BUILD AN ALLIANCE WITH LAKE COWICHAN FIRST NATION	Priority:	Medium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present Plan to Council, focusing on the building of Indigenous trail experiences and other Plan initiatives where Indigenous partnerships are important. The presentation should also include how other First Nations in BC have become closely involved in trail initiatives. The Songhees and Esquimalt Nations involvement in the E&N rail trail and the Splatshin Nation's purchase (along with local government) of the former CP Rail line between Sicamous and Armstrong, the Sinixt Nation's collaboration with the Slocan Valley Rail Trail Society and the partnership between the Squamish Nation and the District of North Vancouver on the North Shore Spirit Trail are all examples. • Invite band staff to join Society membership and potentially the Board. • Invite ITBC to give a presentation to the community on building relationships and how the Plan can be sensitive to Indigenous values and interests, including cultural interpretation and how it might become part of the trail experience. • Invite the negotiation and signing of an MOU that sets out guidelines for future collaboration and cooperation. The agreement could reference trail development, land use, business development and heritage and cultural interpretation. 	Partners:	LCFN, ITBC, TVI, TCS
	Start-end:	Q1 19 – Q1 19
	Resources:	 --


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5. CREATE THE OPERATIONAL CAPACITY THAT WILL ALLOW IMPLEMENTATION OF TRAIL AND INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVES	Priority:	Medium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a volunteer program. Without trail maintenance funding built into a formal management agreement, volunteers will be needed to develop and maintain whatever trail network is established. • Form a trail stewardship group of trained volunteers capable of effective development and maintenance in priority areas. It was noted at the engagement sessions that trail building in many BC communities is not necessarily undertaken by those who plan to use the trails, but by citizens who have the skills and interest in clearing, setting and maintaining them. A stewardship group could recruit these interested individuals and foster support to get involved. It's all about building a trail culture. • Work with Trails BC and other trail organizations to develop a training program based on a classroom/field work model. This will be necessary for skilled activities like mechanized clearing, brushing and pruning, surveying and surface maintenance. • Acquire the necessary insurance to protect landowners and facilitate agreements and partnerships. 	Partners:	CTSS, clubs, interested individuals
	Start-end:	Q1 19 – Q3 19
	Resources:	<div data-bbox="1717 837 1770 883"></div> <div data-bbox="1856 850 1890 870">--</div>

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6. DEVELOP A FUNDING STRATEGY	Priority:	Medium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a three-year capital and operating plan. This would require preliminary identification of an epic downhill trail development as well as infrastructure investments such as trail heads, parking and amenities. RSTBC, Trails BC and other trail destinations such as Powell River and Cumberland can be contacted to obtain unit cost level estimates. • Meet with the CVRD, TLC and LCFN to share planning information and develop partnerships to maximize the contribution potential for funding applications. Applications from partnerships that provide diverse benefits are typically more successful than specialized asks from single organizations. • Prepare funding applications to the Rural Dividend program (fifth intake) and BikeBC for trail building and development. Ensure that projects are set in the context of the <i>Trails Strategy for British Columbia</i> to reinforce alignment with provincial goals. • Alongside tourism and economic development partners, monitor other funding application opportunities. The Trans Canada Trail Society, National Trails Coalition and federal infrastructure programs such as the New Building Canada Fund are all potential funding sources. • Consider hiring a temporary grant writer to help with funding applications. • Create a self-directed Friends of Lake Cowichan Trails program for raising local funds, improving trails and helping with trail building and maintenance including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An Adopt-a-trail program as a way of raising funds targeted at specific trails. ○ A public fund-raising campaign, perhaps through a crowd-funding campaign similar to the Nanaimo Regional Rail Trail partnership setup in 2014 to support the E&N rail trail. A similar and highly successful campaign by the Okanagan Rail Trail Initiative is worth emulating. ○ Hosting or co-hosting charity events. 	Partners:	Rural Dividend Fund, BikeBC, ICET, CFC, TLC, RSTBC, Trails BC, TCTS, National Trails Coalition
	Start-end:	Q4 18 – Q1 19
	Resources:	
		\$

3.3 Infrastructure

Trail experiences are built around the trail itself in combination with the surrounding environment, human interactions, visitor services and quality infrastructure. Creating market-ready trails requires trail surfaces, staging areas and trail heads, signage and basic amenities that make the use experience safe and enjoyable, and in line with what destination hikers, bikers and other trail users expect. Infrastructure deficiencies can deter trail use and create added risk for visitors and locals use the trails but are not adequately informed or prepared for the conditions they will encounter.

The prevalence of private land in the region means the context for infrastructure placement is much different than in other areas of the province where Crown land predominates. Provincial and local government agencies will not be responsible for the trails that are developed and used on private land, thus due consideration must be given to both capital and ongoing operating/maintenance needs. Interconnections of trails that cross ownership boundaries will mean that any improvements in the trail system will have to be carefully considered. If trails are going to be used as viable transportation corridors or to leverage the health benefits of physical activity among residents and visitors, then it is important that integration with roads, highways and protected areas strive for safe access for bicyclists, hikers, equestrians, off road vehicle (ORV) users and motorists alike.

Public or shared-use infrastructure also underlies the goal of attracting more destination visitors to the Cowichan Lake region, since it can serve to leverage greater private sector investment in trail experiences.

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WHAT INFRASTRUCTURE?

The basic physical and organizational structures and facilities (e.g. buildings, roads, power supplies) needed for the operation of a society or enterprise.

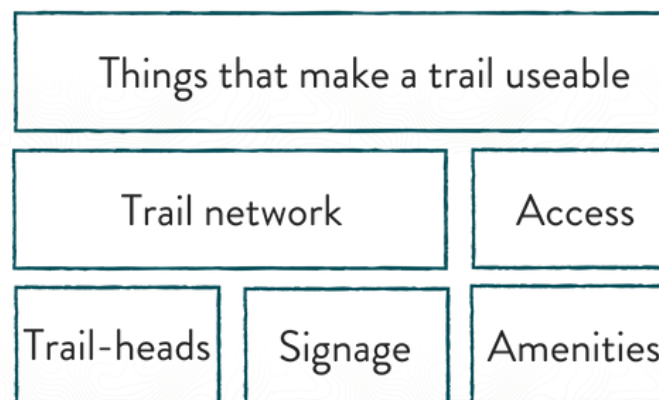
-Oxford English Dictionary



IMPACTS OF TRAIL TOURISM

Average Spend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overnight Trip \$100 Day Trip \$37
Revenue per 1,000 Trail Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vancouver Island \$235,000 Cowichan Lake \$176,000
Economic Impact per 1,000 Trail Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobs (direct + indirect) 1.6 Income (direct + indirect) \$66,000

WHAT IS TRAIL INFRASTRUCTURE?




COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Better Quality of Life	Revitalized Shopping Core	Increased Tourism
Local Recreation	New Businesses	Improved Transit Options
Higher Property Values	Improved Health & Wellness	Diversified Tax Base

Figure 15. Infrastructure investment and trails infrastructure.


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7. CREATE A DIGITAL INVENTORY OF EXISTING AND POTENTIAL TRAILS	Priority:	Medium	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemble trail guidelines and best practices manuals, which are widely available on the Internet from trail organizations in North America. The Whistler Trail Standards handbook is the model adopted by many Vancouver Island Cycling Clubs, including the Nanaimo Mountain Bike Club. • Investigate and leverage most appropriate existing trail apps such as Trailforks, MapMyHike, ViewRanger and others. • Form a Trail Task Force that would, over the course of the next six months undertake trail mapping. Interested citizens could be recruited through social media and TimberWest notified where there is going to be access on their land. • Create a short, trail mapping toolkit with an approved typology and instructions on documenting trail conditions, natural and cultural features of interest, and infrastructure to guide task force members. • Host a training workshop on trail mapping prior to any field work. • Using the baseline provided in this Plan, map priority trails as identified in the engagement sessions: those being Beaver Lake, Robertson River, Bald Mountain, Cowichan River Foot Path, Trans Canada Trail, Christopher Rock, Mesachie Mountain, Copper Creek and Cottonwood. • Develop an on-line trail wiki to encourage ongoing community involvement and feedback. This could be done through the wikimapping.com site, ideally in cooperation with local government. 	Partners:	CVRD, TLC, LCFN	
	Funding Sources:	Town of Lake Cowichan, CVRD, BC Rural Dividend Fund, ICET, WED, local businesses	
	Start-end:	Q3 18 – Q4 18	
	Resources:		\$\$


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8. DEVELOP AT LEAST TWO MARKET-READY TRAILS TO ATTRACT VISITORS AND ENCOURAGE NEW PRODUCT	Priority:	Medium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once the inventory is completed and priority trails are digitally mapped, select at least one hiking and one cycling trail for development as market ready. A market-ready trail has parking, trail head signage, intersection signs and good trail markings, clearly defined and maintained, basic amenities such as washrooms and printed or online maps usable on a smartphone. The emphasis should be on potentially iconic or exceptional trails, as well as linkages with existing trails in parks and protected areas. Meet with TimberWest and scope out the opportunity for development of the Christopher Rock trail. Youbou residents, riders and hikers should be represented. There may be an opportunity for full public access and use of the trail. Develop and fund a construction work plan and budget. Investigate the opportunity for a pump track, dirt jump or freeride park in partnership with a local government or private land owner with the necessary land requirements. As noted in the Current Situation Report, Dirt Jumping is a youth-oriented and popular discipline that typically occurs in confined areas and bike parks. A park could be patterned after the Stevie Smith Bike Park in Nanaimo. This would have the added advantage of bringing more local youth into trail activities and culture. Investigate making the CLR an “accessible” destination, focusing on front-country trails and routes. Additional funding would be available if projects align with the Province’s Accessibility 2024 strategy. 	Partners:	CTSS, CVRD, TLC, TW, RSTBC, BC Parks, Trails Cycling Coalition, IMBA Canada, MBTA
	Funding Sources:	Town of Lake Cowichan, CVRD, BC Rural Div. Fund, ICET, Trans Canada Trail Soc.
	Start-end:	Q1 19 – Q4 19
	Resources:	<div>  <div>\$\$\$</div> </div>


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9. DEVELOP AN EPIC MOUNTAIN BIKE COURSE	Priority:	High
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gather resources from mountain biking organizations to help with laying out a plan for the course, trail or park. IMBA Canada has numerous resources for guiding this initiative, which should be led by the Trails Task Force. ● Involve TimberWest if the preferred location is on their land and seek an agreement on development. ● Invite leading trail builders to the community for a presentation on trail building best practices. ● Identify and hire a rider consultant to assist with plan preparation and construction. ● Clearly identify the target market for the course, whether downhill, cross country or free riding. ● Determine trail placement, balancing vertical drop, interesting terrain, flowing and open sections, grade reversals and other terrain considerations that will have strong appeal for riders, with logistical requirements of access, parking and trail services. A short-list of trails should be identified and evaluated for rider appeal, durability, cost of development and maintenance and impacts on residents. ● Develop and fund a construction work plan and budget. 	Partners:	IMBA Canada, MBTA, TW, CVRD, LCFN, TCL, CTSS, TVI
	Funding Sources:	Town of Lake Cowichan, CVRD, BC Rural Dividend Fund, ICET, WED, Bike BC, local businesses
	Start-end:	Q2 19 – Q1 20
	Resources:	 <div>\$\$\$</div>

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10. CREATE A SIGNAGE PROGRAM	Priority:	Medium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage is critical to encouraging more trail use, keeping users safe and ensuring a positive visitor experience. Clear and consistent way finding relies on accurate location, directional, distance and safety information. Coordinated trail-head signage and interpretive displays will give users a sense of a true, integrated network. Signage also is an opportunity to promote the Lake Cowichan Region brand and drive users to the website and web apps. This strategy must be preceded by the brand strategy. • Compile a sign inventory and audit to determine a local baseline, what works, what does not and where improvements can be made. • Use RSTBC signage standards as a baseline while working with local government, trail groups and BC Parks to ensure local trails can be effectively and efficiently signed. • Prepare a graphics standards manual that describes how the brand is to be used for signage. • Develop a simple signage hierarchy (e.g. entry points, trail markets, information kiosk, interpretation). • Develop a phasing program that is fully coordinated with local government signage. 	Partners:	IM Canada, MBTA, TW, CVRD, TLC, LCFN
	Funding Sources:	Town of Lake Cowichan, CVRD, ICET, WED, MAH, Bike BC, local businesses
	Start-end:	Q3 19 – Q3 20
	Resources:	
		\$\$


3.4 Experiences

In Section 2.4, the trail development pathway included experiences and tour packaging to complement services and infrastructure that are necessary to create visitor demand. On true destination trails like the Kettle Valley Railway in the Okanagan Boundary region, guiding guests represents the pinnacle of tourism activity because it tends to incorporate multiple overnight stays at a high yield. Even if guests are self-guided there will be demand for services provided by accommodators, food and beverage establishments, rental services, and more. Building those experiences can be challenging because they require capital, competent marketing and operational capabilities that not all operators are able to provide. A narrow operating season and limited opportunities for positive cash flow play a role as well.

In order to move the needle on tourism development, market-ready services and experiences will have to complement and leverage the public investment in a market-ready trail. The private sector needs encouragement to compete, innovate and create experiences that visitors perceive as more than just the use of the trail as a physical corridor. Once the resident and visitor demand emerges and the awareness of the Cowichan Lake region as a trail destination grows, then the economic benefits, in terms of overnight stays, hospitality spending, employment and further industry investment, will follow. A virtuous circle of business and investment then set in and growth in other areas of tourism and economic development become possible. This growth path is not a theoretical concept, but has occurred in countless communities, some on Vancouver Island.


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<p>11. UNDERTAKE A STORY PROJECT THAT CURATES AND BRINGS TO LIFE THROUGH COPY AND AUDIO-VISUAL CONTENT THE UNIQUE STORIES AND CHARACTERS OF THE LAKE COWICHAN AREA</p>	<p>Priority:</p>	<p>High</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a story project work plan that brings to life the Lake Cowichan region’s cultural, historical and industrial resources into trail-related narratives. This would have very strong appeal for US and overseas markets especially and could potentially be a USP as a trail destination. Animating local stories, characters and sites would enrich the trail experience and add some punch to marketing. Ideas brought up at the engagement sessions included First Nations, logging/forestry, rainforest ecology and its links to wildlife and water, copper mining, forestry “today” and gateway to the Carmanah/Walbran and Nit Nat Lake. • Work with the Kaatza Historical Society and other partners to put together a work group and work plan for this initiative. In addition to curated content, available audio-visual materials should be identified. • Work with TVI and DBC to adapt all copy and visual materials to EQ standards if possible for use in marketing and promotion. 	<p>Partners:</p>	<p>Kaatza Historical Society, Cowichan Valley Museum and Archives, Vancouver Island Regional Library, DBC, TVI, Timber West, CVRD, TLC, SD 79, LCFN</p>
	<p>Start-end:</p>	<p>G2 19 – Q4 19</p>
	<p>Resources:</p>	<div>  <div>\$</div> </div>


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12. DEVELOP AT LEAST ONE DESTINATION TRAIL EVENT	Priority:	Flex
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a signature annual event that could be cohosted with local partners. For cycling, Cycling Canada has an annual calendar for road, cyclo-cross, mountain bike, track, BMX and para events. Most of these are sanctioned by the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI). A hiking event is also possible and this could follow best practices of European countries like Austria. It could be on a course that links together scenic areas, heritage sites, culinary stops or any site of visitor interest. Industry and indigenous experiences are also possibilities. Alternatively, the initial focus may be on a simpler local event, cohosted with local trail groups. An event could be targeted at women, youth, para/accessible or First Nations. Identify a signature annual festival that would appeal to the casual and leisure cyclist rather than racers. This could be based on Calgary's successful Cyclepalooza, Toronto's Bicycle Music Festival or Snoqualmie Washington's Gigantic Bicycle Festival (also a music festival). Regularly scan and seek out opportunities to host AGMs and symposia of trail organizations. 	Partners:	TCS, TVI, TLC, CVRD, LCDCC
	Funding Sources:	Local businesses, Chamber of Commerce, Town of Lake Cowichan, CVRD, Destination BC Events Fund, Canadian Heritage
	Start-end:	Q4 19 – Q2 20
	Resources:	

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13. PROVIDE BUSINESS EXPANSION AND RETENTION SERVICES	Priority:	Flex	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote trail related business opportunities to local operators, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rentals, storage, bike share, shuttles and other trail-related services. Foods services and accommodation to encourage more overnight stays. Itineraries and tours that operators could be involved in and marketed through the Chamber, Visitor Centre and Cowichan Valley Tourism. Provide training opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A webinar(s) on creating trail services, products and experiences. A webinar(s) or seminar on how to be bike-friendly (washing facilities, bike hose, GPS/smartphone charging). A trail-related remarkable experiences workshop. This could be targeted at the Cowichan Valley or even the South Island to ensure there is enough uptake. Conduct a tourism business visitation program, based on the Business Walks program. Share market and export ready criteria so operators have the expertise and tools to attract visitors. Design a Cowichan Lake trails kit with accessories such as Cowichan Lake hiking/cycling jersey, sports pack, water bottle and trail map that could be merchandised by participating retailers and operators. Create an operator certification program that can be used to promote the brand. Quebec's Route Verte uses the <i>Bienvenue cyclistes!</i> certification for accommodation establishments and campgrounds that meet a consistent set of standards. 	Partners:	CLDCC, TVI, TCS, DBC	
	Start-end:	Q4 19 – Ongoing	
	Resources:		\$


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14. COORDINATE TOURISM BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT ATTRACTION EFFORTS WITH PARTNER AGENCIES	Priority:	Flex
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Undertake an evaluation of community investment readiness using the Province’s Investment Readiness Assessment Checklist, and be prepared to follow up with improvements to local preparedness. Areas that could be addressed include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Incorporating a trails vision, policies and management directions in local government planning;Adopting flexible zoning bylaws that encourage new investment;Striving to improve the local business climate through a quick and low-cost permit process;Providing business, retention and expansion and other economic development services;Having updated, accurate information and community profile information; andHosting a best practices website that promotes the community and region.Work with local government to develop a region-wide plan to lobby for and improve wifi and cell coverage in the region. Ongoing provincial and federal cell and broadband initiatives that set universal service targets and appropriated funding should be monitored. Innovative solutions such as select wifi hotspots on high use trails, rather than cell coverage, should be explored for remote areas.	Partners:	LCFN, CVRD, TLC, LCDCC, TCS, TCA, JTT
	Start-end:	Q3 18 – Q4 18
	Resources:	

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15. CREATE A GAMING APPLICATION	Priority:	Medium	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a storyline and game concept that is linked to the natural, cultural and/or industrial heritage of the region. Gamification is a proven method for digitally engaging visitors through the use of their smartphones, tablets or other digital devices. It can change people's motivation and behaviour in a playful and fun way and feature pre-, during- or post-trip themes that are destination-based or service-based. It can incorporate scores, puzzles, leaderboards or rewards to keep visitors engaged. • Assemble content and preliminary sketch work to minimize the costs of app development. • Seek out potential partners to share the costs of app development and distribution. • Gaming to contribute to charity partners such as stewardship or environmental groups. 	Partners:	TCS, TVI, CLDCC, DBC	
	Funding Sources:	ICET, WED, local businesses, game developers, Innova te BC, Telus	
	Start-end:	Q1 2020 – Q3 2020	
	Resources:		\$\$\$


3.5 Marketing

In order to generate a return on future trail investments through increased trail use and visitation, it will be necessary to strategically market the trails, ensuring alignment with other tourism and community marketing activities. Limited marketing resources necessitate partnerships with DMOs, local government, First Nations and tourism operators. In the early phases, marketing will have to focus on creating visitor awareness, promoting the brand and the core trail experiences through low-cost digital channels. It may take several years before travel planning today is predominantly through the internet and digital media so conventional print forms of advertising and supporting collateral will be minimized and kept to material that has a proven financial return.

Marketing can ramp up much more quickly than can the infrastructure and experience development initiatives in the previous chapters, a concerted effort must be made to ensure that the services travellers can expect are not over-promised and underdelivered. As the trail network expands and exceptional experiences are added, then more opportunities for investing in marketing activities will drive new visitor levels. Travel trade and travel media strategies can specialize, and the targeting of market intermediaries such as tour wholesalers can expand. Before this can happen, however, the trails and tourism operators must achieve market and export-ready status. Fully guided tours and experiences can be created to appeal to a broad spectrum of visitors.


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16. CREATE A BRAND IDENTITY FOR THE COWICHAN LAKE REGION THAT CAN BE USED FOR MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS AND SIGNAGE ACTIVITIES	Priority:	Medium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a task force to lead the brand initiative. • Assemble and audit existing brands. • Develop the brand, brand rationale, core values, application standards and graphic standards. Align with Destination BC Brand. • Leverage the Cowichan Lake Region's current unique selling proposition (USP) and reevaluate the USP as infrastructure investments are made and the experience is enhanced. • Develop a local signage program based on the Whistler Trail Standards handbook. 	Partners:	TVI, DBC, CVRD, CLDCC, LCFN
	Funding Sources:	Town of Lake Cowichan, CVRD, TVI, DBC, local businesses
	Start-end:	Q3 19 – Q2 20
	Resources:	
		<div> <div></div> <div>\$\$</div> </div>


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17. REGISTER THE COWICHAN TRAILBLAZERS SOCIETY AS A STAKEHOLDER OF TOURISM COWICHAN AND TOURISM VANCOUVER ISLAND	Priority:	Flex
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage collaborative marketing opportunities. • Work with Tourism Cowichan to create a presence for Cowichan Lake Region trail experiences. • Leverage relationship with Tourism Vancouver Island to amplify the presence of the trails. • Secure funding to secure a “premium” online marketing packages. 	Partners:	TVI, CVRD, LCDCC
	Start-end:	Q1 19 - Ongoing
	Resources:	<div>  </div> <div> \$ </div>


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18. DEVELOP A MARKETING PROGRAM.	Priority:	High
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using the unique selling proposition and the target audience of the trails, build a marketing plan based on funding and priority. Example tactics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host Media FAM Tours. Media Press Trips coordinated by Tourism Vancouver Island with Destination BC; having a key contact at the community level working with operators and these organizations is an efficient way to utilize Destination BC programs. Offer activity options so guests have the opportunity to engage in learning or outdoor adventures while cycling or hiking. Examples of these include swimming, sun-bathing, picnicking and nature observation, along with recommendations for key stopovers. Collaborate with local partners to prepare route maps with stops of interest, local and railway history, and information about visitor and emergency services. Host an opening day festival for new trails. Work with community and regional DMOs to prepare an inventory of tourism assets and resources that could be incorporated into guided and unguided tours. Prepare themed itineraries that will appeal to target demographics. 	Partners:	Tourism operators, accommodators, TVI, CVRD, LCDCC.
	Funding Sources:	Town of Lake Cowichan, CVRD, TVI, DBC, local businesses
	Start-end:	Q2 19 – Ongoing
	Resources:	 \$


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19. TRAIL MAP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce hardcopy trail maps for local use, to be sold or made available by local business. • Use content and artwork generated for digital materials. • Produce a 24"x36" map printed on 'stone paper', folding to rack size 4"x9". • Promote use of the map for framing and window display by local business. 	Priority:	High	
	Partners:	Tourism Cowichan, CVED	
	Start-end:	Q4 19 – Q1 20	
	Resources:		\$


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20. LEVERAGE EXISTING WEBSITES, PORTALS AND APPS	Priority:	High	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Tourism Cowichan Society to ensure CLR trails are included in their online (and printable) hiking and cycling map. • Establish a strong local presence on major trail apps such as Trailforks, MapMyHike, ViewRanger and AllTrails. • Incentivize local trail users to digitally map trails on major apps. • Monitor potential development of CVRD hiking and cycling brochure and ensure market ready trails in the CLR are included. 	Partners:	Local business community, Chamber of Commerce	
	Start-end:	Q4 19 – Q3 20	
	Resources:		\$

HIKING & CYCLING TOURISM ACTION PLAN

COWICHAN LAKE REGION

21. INCREASE LOCAL CAPACITY RELATING TO SOCIAL MEDIA.	Priority:	High	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Work with Tourism Vancouver Island to host a complementary social media workshop to increase the effective use of paid and unpaid social media locally.● Evaluate effectiveness of paid and organic social media efforts.● A social listening study was conducted in the spring of 2018. This study informed marketing recommendations in this strategy and will serve as a baseline from which to compare future studies.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Work with Tourism Vancouver Island to conduct a complementary social listening study to measure the effectiveness of social media efforts to increase awareness of the Cowichan Lake Region as a trails destination.	Partners:	Local business community, Chamber of Commerce,	
	Start-end:	Q4 19 – Q3 20	
	Resources:		\$

4. PERFORMANCE MONITORING & MEASUREMENT

A simple logic model for measuring organizational performance is shown in the following graphic. The non-profit society will provide resources for undertaking core activities such as trail development, maintenance and marketing. Key outputs will be oriented around the trails and tourism development and building a strong and sustainable organization. All these are intended to generate outcomes, or effects, that benefit the community through a destination trail network, catering to both residents and visitors, and ultimately a robust and sustainable tourism economy.

It will also be important to communicate trail activities to the community, keeping them informed and ensuring a transparent, affecting decision-making process.

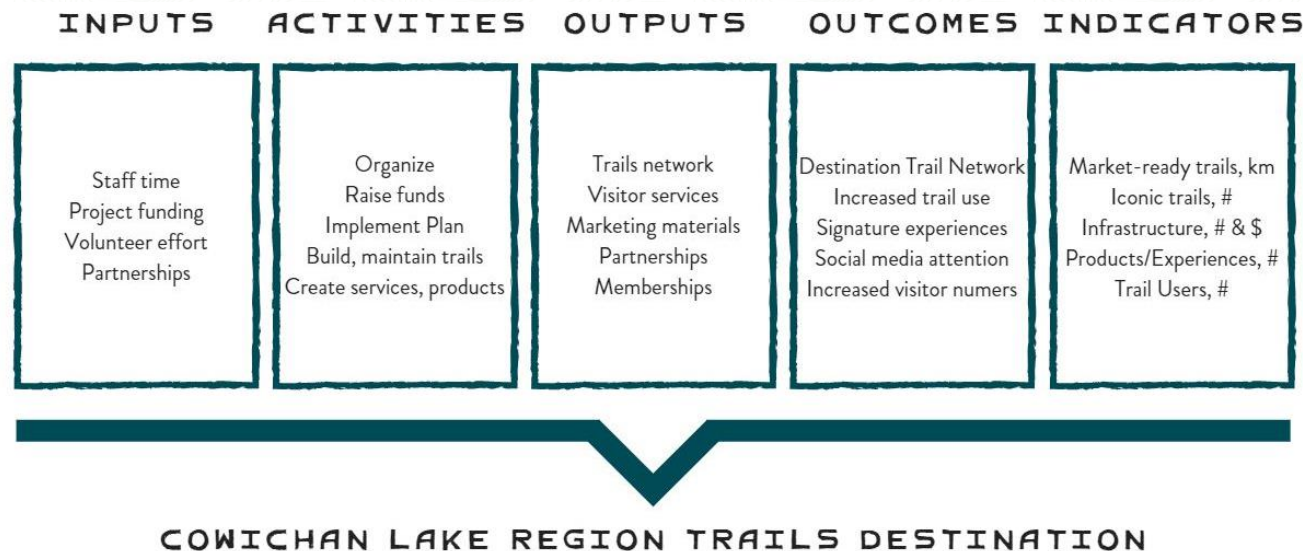



Figure 16. Destination trail development process.

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1. PREPARE ANNUAL WORKPLAN AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK	Priority:	High	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop an annual work plan to be implemented and monitored by the society.• Establish a quarterly reporting period, with an annual report summary.• Present annual report summary to local and regional government.	Partners:	Local government	
	Start-end:	Ongoing	
	Resources:		--

5. ASSET MAPPING AND INVENTORY

The following maps identify the Cowichan Lake Region's key tourism assets. All maps below are screen grabs of an interactive digital map that contains additional data points specific to each asset. Data for this inventory was primarily retrieved from a TripAdvisor scrape. TripAdvisor was used as it is one of the world's largest travel-related websites and forums. Any business involved in the tourism industry should have a well maintained TripAdvisor presence. This inventory of tourism related assets has been designed to support project partners with the implementation.

5.1 Accommodation Assets

The Cowichan Lake Region has a very limited inventory of market ready fixed roof accommodation properties. The majority of current visitors to the Region stay in local campgrounds which are at capacity during peak summer months and very quiet during the shoulder and off seasons. While the Region's ability to attract the identified hiking and cycling markets is not entirely dependent on brand name hotels and luxury properties, additional inventory is required. Recognizing the challenges in attracting large accommodation property investment, the Region may be well suited to focusing on attracting smaller, more unique accommodations such as hostels, glamping and vacation rentals. As an example, Cumberland's vibrant cycling-based visitor economy is based around hostels, vacation rentals and day trip visitors. As this Plan is implemented, there will be opportunity for existing accommodation properties to better attract and cater to hiking and cycling visitors. This can be achieved by re-branding, offering bike wash stations, equipment storage and more. There may also be opportunity for accommodation properties to partner and to offer package deals with local food and beverage establishments. Quebec's Route Verte uses the *Bienvenue cyclistes!* Certification to link related product together.

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Beyond fixed roof accommodation properties, there is potential for enhanced camping and glamping experiences to be developed in existing campgrounds. Although campgrounds are at capacity during the summer months, the development of yurts, canvas cabins and other unique glamping structures would help to attract a higher yield visitor while bringing greater recognition to the area. Moreover, existing campsites can evaluate the potential of partnering with local environmental stewardship groups and/or the Kaatza Station Museum to offer campers guided tours or themed presentations. This will help to connect the popular campsite with other existing product.

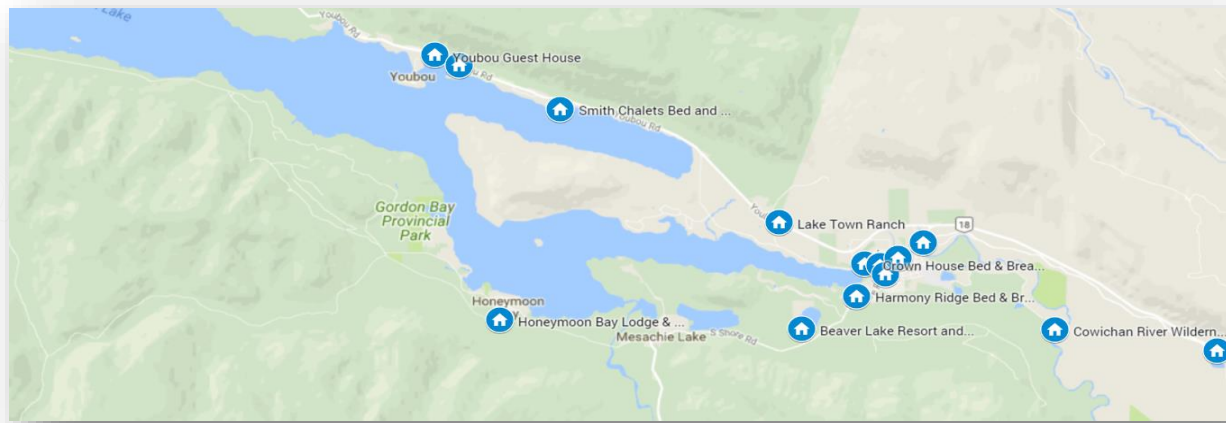


Figure 17. Accommodation Asset Map

5.2 Food and Beverage Assets

The Cowichan Lake Region has approximately 18 visitor-ready food and beverage establishments. The majority of these businesses are clustered in the Town of Lake Cowichan, which makes this the natural service hub in the Cowichan Lake Region. Given the Region's small population and short summer tourism season, there are an enviable number of quality food and beverages offerings in the Town of Lake Cowichan. Similar to accommodation properties, food and beverage establishments can better cater to cycling and hiking visitors through re-branding and offering a safe place to park bicycles. Moreover, there is significant opportunity for these businesses to position themselves as 'hiker and rider' friendly establishments through adopt a trail programs and collaborative marketing.

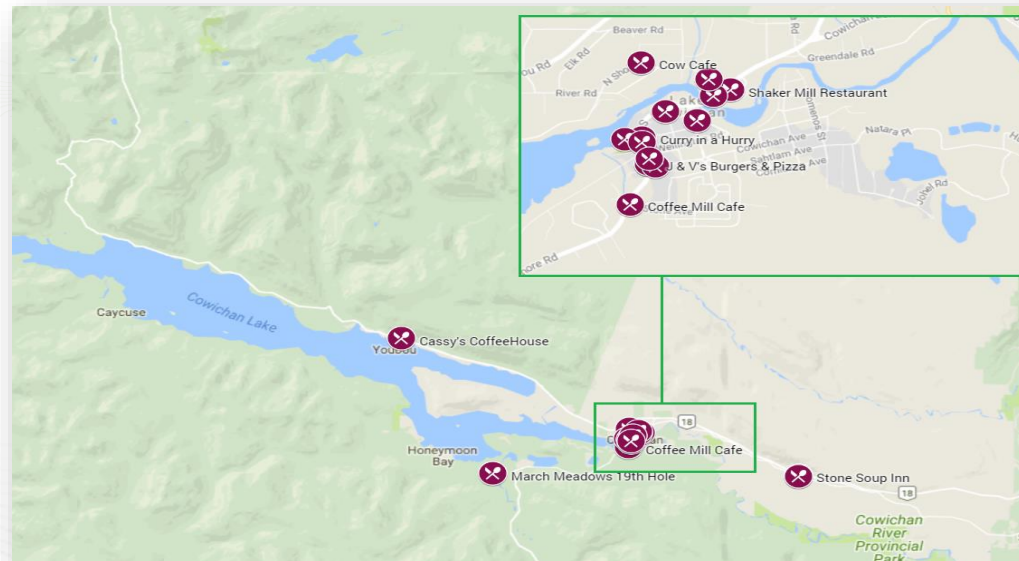


Figure 18. Food and Beverage Asset Map

5.3 Activity and Park Assets

The Cowichan Lake Region has an abundance of park areas and natural attractions, but very few businesses leverage the Region's natural assets. These parks and attractions are distributed around Cowichan Lake, with the three attraction-based businesses being located within the Town of Lake Cowichan. Marketing initiatives should link these natural assets and attractions together, while development initiatives should focus on creating compelling experiences at these natural assets and attractions.

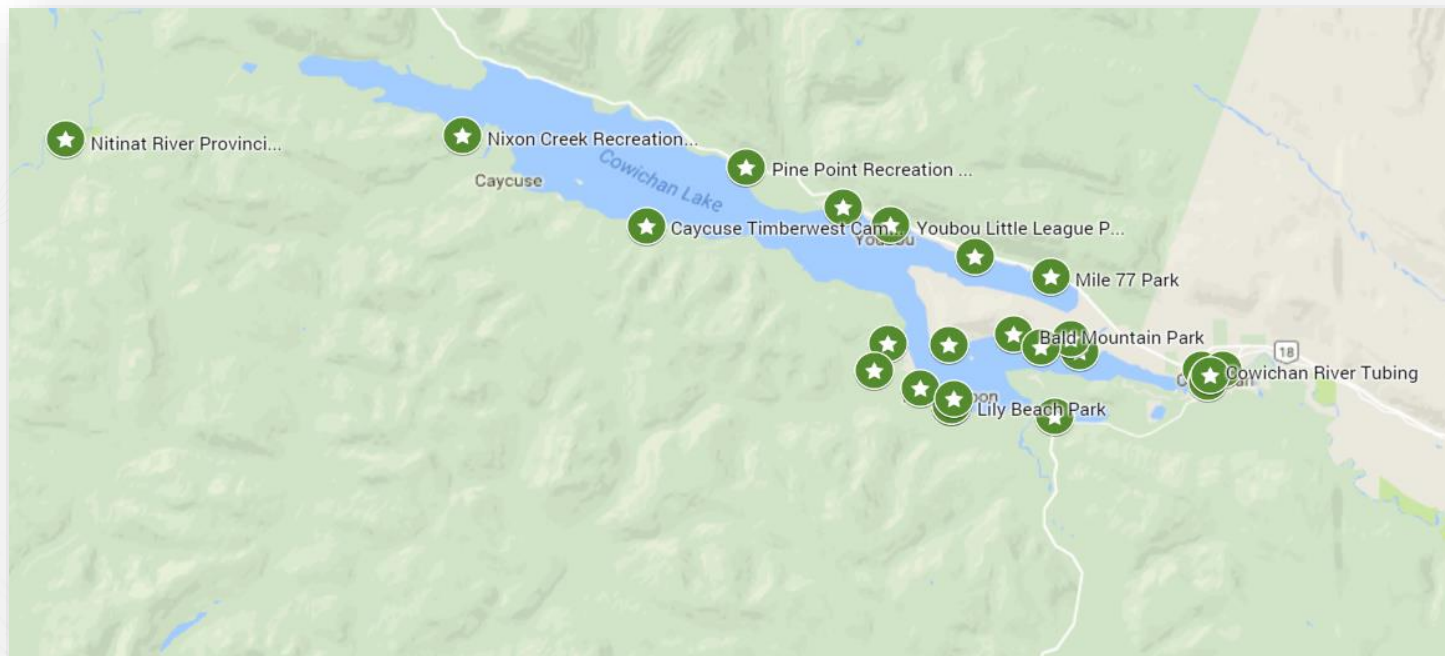


Figure 19. Activity and Park Asset Map

5.4 Hiking and Cycling Trails

The Cowichan Lake Region has more than 26 hiking and cycling trails that showcase the area's unique natural features. As identified in the trail destination audit, the majority of these trails are not visitor ready as they are located on private land or because they fail to meet other basic requirements (signage, regular maintenance, etc.). Figure 3 identifies the hiking tourism assets that, according to residents, have the greatest potential. Cycling trail development has been focused on the Beaver Lake Area to date, although private land owners have expressed interest in developing cycling trails on the north side of Cowichan Lake.

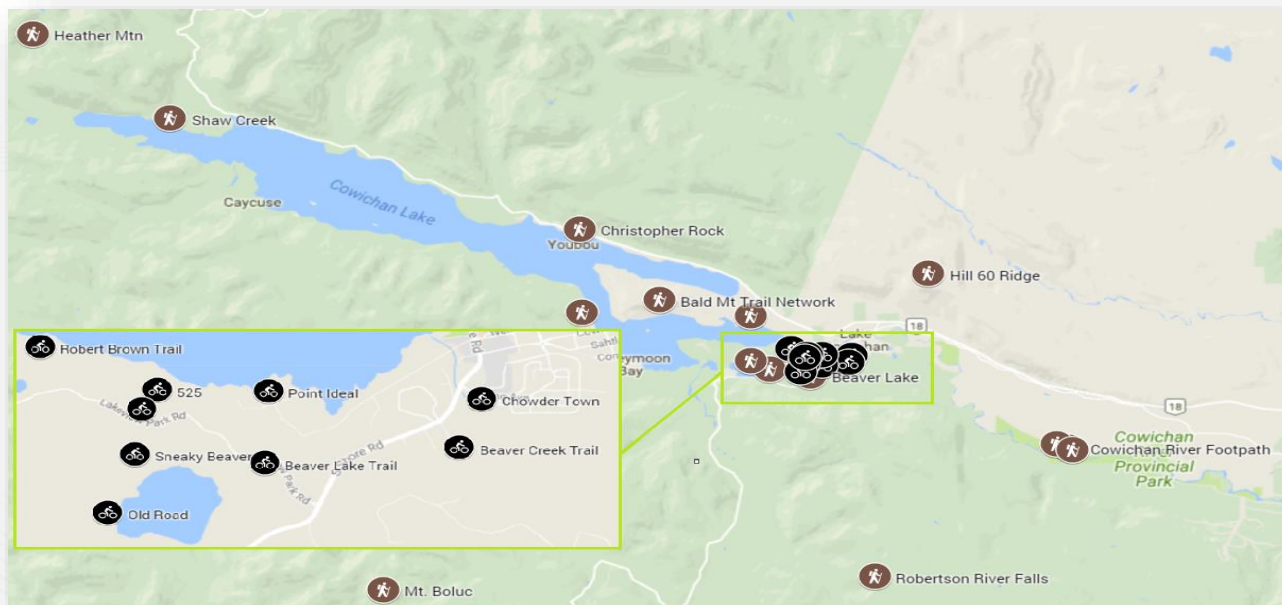


Figure 20. Hiking and Cycling Asset Map

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