

“Bay of Islands” Coastal Heritage Destination Area



A proposal by the Lake Charlotte Area Heritage Society to develop
a sustainable tourism industry
in eastern Halifax Regional Municipality and western Guysborough County/District of St. Marys
that will capitalize on the “Bay of Islands”
- a unique, essentially undisturbed and distinct 90 kilometre coastal ecosystem on the Eastern Shore,
between Jeddore and Liscomb,
that has almost four times more islands per kilometre of coastline
than *any* other stretch of Nova Scotia’s Atlantic coastline.

(January 16, 2013)

CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary

2. Background

2a Situation Analysis

2b Strategic Considerations

3. Five-year Plan

3a Research

3b Planning

3c Development

3d Marketing

3c Schedule and Budget

4. Organizational Approach

5. Outcomes

6. Appendix

1. Executive Summary

Since the days of the first French explorers in the early 1600s, the 70 kilometre stretch of Nova Scotia coastline from Jeddore to Liscomb has been recognized for its numerous (approximately 300) islands, so much so that Champlain named it “Bay of Islands”.

More recently (1997), the Nova Scotia Museum’s two-volume landmark document “The Natural History of Nova Scotia – Topics & Habitats and Theme Regions ”¹, used the same title in recognition of area’s unique near-shore-islands ecology. This unique islands ecology was even more recently documented by

1 ISBN 1-55109-236-0 (v.1) and ISBN 1-55109-238-7 (v.2)

the Nova Scotia Nature Trust in its 2012 “Eastern Shore Archipelago: Conservation and Scientific Assessment”² which notes that the density of islands in the western part of the area is “some three times greater (1.4 islands per km of mainland shoreline) than is found along any other stretch of Nova Scotia’s Atlantic coastline”.

Historically, the forest ecosystem of the mainland area has been significantly altered due to clearcutting, whereas the forest landscape of the islands has remained virtually undisturbed by human impacts (although some islands were inhabited year round).

Within the last few years the essentially pristine nature of the Bay of Islands, both the islands themselves and their surrounding waters, has led to an interest in utilizing the area for a number of purposes.

These purposes include a proposal to establish three new open-pen fin-fish aquaculture farms, and what may be a contradictory proposal by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Maritime Region, to use the coastal zone of the Bay of Islands as a test case³ for assessing human impacts in the coastal zone using its Ecosystem Approach to Management framework.

2 Eastern Shore Archipelago: Conservation and Scientific Assessment – Field Studies of a Range of Sea Islands on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia from Clam Harbour to Taylor Head. March 5, 2012

³ A. G. Gromack, K. Allard, D. Fenton, S. Johnston, J. Ford: Ecological and Human Use Information for Twenty Areas on the Atlantic Coast of Nova Scotia in Support of Conservation Planning, Canadian Technical Report of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences 2880, 2010.

In addition, the Department of Natural resources is exploring the possibility of extending the existing Eastern Shore Islands Wildlife Management Area (currently Ecum Secum to Sheet Harbour Passage) to include many of the other crown land islands within the Bay of Islands. This crown land initiative is being supplemented by a Nova Scotia Nature Trust initiative to

foundation for a sustainable, minimal impact tourism industry for the area.

This proposal, by the Lake Charlotte Area Heritage Society, outlines how the development of a sustainable “Bay of Islands Coastal Heritage Destination Area” could proceed in a



Nova Scotia Nature Trust Photo

protect a number of ecologically significant but privately owned islands and coastal areas within the western portion of the Bay of Islands.

Thus there is now a realistic possibility that the unique coastal ecosystem of the entire Bay of Islands could be preserved in perpetuity, and, together with the partially completed Eastern Shore Seaside Park System⁴, form a solid

planned manner over a five-year period. It is important to note that such a development would build on the area’s existing tourism “bright spots”, such as kayaking and island boat tours, without negatively impacting existing commercial ventures such as lobster fishing, and mussel and oyster aquaculture, which utilize the pristine coastal waters.

⁴ The Eastern Shore Seaside Park system was commenced in the mid 1970s by the Province of Nova Scotia following its decision to not proceed with the proposed Ship Harbour National Park. Some components of the system, such as the Clam Harbour Beach Provincial Park and Taylors Head Provincial Park

were established. Others, for example a wilderness campground at Lake Charlotte were not established although land (750 hectares) for this purpose was acquired and is currently identified by the Department of Natural Resources as having protection value (old red spruce and tolerant hardwoods) as well as educational value (possible Mi’kmaq archeological sites as well as trade routes and settlements).

The proposed five-year development plan, with a targeted outcome of increasing the size of the area's tourism industry by 50%, is divided into four essentially sequential steps:

- 1) Research,
- 2) Planning,
- 3) Development
- 4) Marketing

The research step is divided into two components: heritage research (natural and cultural) and a strategic destination assessment. The natural heritage research is significantly more advanced with much work having already been carried out by a variety of government agencies as well as the Nova Scotia Nature Trust.

The cultural heritage research would be carried out through the creation of a Coastal Heritage Centre as a function of the Eastern Shore Archives located at Memory Lane Heritage Village (www.heritagevillage.ca). The strategic destination assessment would be carried out by Destination Development International (www.destinationdevelopment.com), a firm with previous experience assessing Nova Scotia tourism destinations as well as similar developments around the world.

The planning step is divided into five components (Marketing Theme, Interpretation, Visitor Services, Product Development, and Marketing) to create a comprehensive Destination Development Plan.

The remaining two steps, development and marketing, are not yet well defined as they cannot effectively commence

until the first two steps (research and planning) are underway and/or complete.

Research and planning is estimated to take two years and require a public sector investment of \$100k in the first year and \$150k in the second year.

2. Background

2a Situation Analysis

Nova Scotia is divided into seven tourism regions for provincial tourism marketing purposes. One of these regions is the Eastern Shore, stretching from the outskirts of Dartmouth to the Strait of Canso. Eastern HRM comprises approximately half of the geographic area of the Eastern Shore Tourism Region with more than three-quarters of its population.

Historically, the Eastern Shore Tourism Region has comprised less than 1% of Nova Scotia's tourism business⁵ the smallest of any tourism region. Despite many efforts to grow the tourism industry on the Eastern Shore, through a variety of initiatives, this statistic remains essentially unchanged. And, with the recent closure and/or pending sale/closure of some of the Eastern Shore's accommodation and food service providers, together with declining attendance at most of the area's heritage attractions⁶, and the closing of some local VICs, the

⁵ Based on official provincial tourism statistics for accommodation room nights sold, the Eastern Shore Region had .79% of the total in 2011 and .88% in 2007. See appendix.

⁶ Between 2000 and 2010 attendance at Sherbrooke Village and Fisherman's Life Museum declined from a combined total of 66,800 to 33,000 while Memory Lane Heritage Village doubled its attendance. See appendix.

overall prognosis for the area's tourism industry is not promising.

Nevertheless, there is a widespread perception that the Eastern Shore, because of its pristine and rugged shoreline, numerous offshore islands, spectacular beaches, small traditional coastal communities and friendly people, is a coastal

key aspects of both Canada, Atlantic Canada, and Nova Scotia's tourism branding, messaging and product development. A compounding problem is that such a major task is beyond the limited capacity of the area's small tourism industry without significant organizational support and assistance.

Additionally, over the last decade or so, the industry



gem waiting to be discovered - to the economic benefit of the area's residents. And yet, this has not happened and the question is why?

2b Strategic Considerations

The fundamental strategic problem is that the development efforts to date have never involved a comprehensive, coordinated and sustained multi-year development effort with a clear, measurable, strategic goal that builds on the area's coastal assets, assets that directly align with

organizations tasked with developing and marketing the area have experienced a variety of organizational, mandate and geographic changes. Fortunately, a new era is underway with a new industry organization, DEANS⁷ (www.visitdeans.com) that has a clear Eastern Shore tourism mandate.

⁷ Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores (DEANS) mission is to "facilitate sustainable and economic tourism growth throughout the Eastern and Northumberland Shores for its members in partnership with the community and stakeholders".

The proposed strategic goal is to increase the size of the industry by 50% in five to seven years. While this goal may seem somewhat arbitrary, it is achievable given the small size of the existing industry and the proximity of the Bay of Islands to metropolitan Halifax/Dartmouth – a market that is more than 50% of the entire Nova Scotia resident and visitor market. Additionally, the unique ecological character of the Bay of Islands, and its essentially pristine nature, lends itself well to small scale, high return, international marketing.



The proposed strategic plan is to develop a Bay of Islands Coastal Heritage Destination Area that can be marketed, both nationally and internationally, using tourism product development consultants working with the area’s tourism industry partners. Strategically located in the centre of the Eastern Shore tourism region, the Bay of Islands already has three visitor service centres that can respond to both vehicular

and marine traffic increases. One of these centres, Sherbrooke, includes Liscomb Lodge Resort and Conference Centre, one of Nova Scotia’s three signature resorts.

While the unique aspect of the Bay of Islands⁸ is the number of islands and their ecology, the cultural heritage of the area is equally important as a testament to the way in which the area’s coastal communities have developed in response to their environment. Thus the development of a Bay of Islands Coastal Heritage Destination Area would be achieved through an integrated focus on both the natural and cultural coastal heritage of the area to create a unique “coastal-heritage visitor experience” that capitalizes on the area’s unique coastal heritage.

Achieving this strategic goal will not happen overnight and the development needs to proceed in the right order - first research and planning, then product development (of both natural and cultural heritage), then marketing, and finally, private sector response to market demand in the form of incremental growth by tourism service-providers.

⁸ While the term “Bay of Islands” goes back four hundred years it has been used much more recently, in particular the landmark “Natural History Theme Regions of Nova Scotia” designates theme region 834 as “Bay of Islands” in recognition of its distinct multi-island ecology.

3. Five-year Plan

The development plan outlined below is preliminary and has been prepared with the goal of outlining the necessary steps, together with an initial schedule and order of magnitude budget.

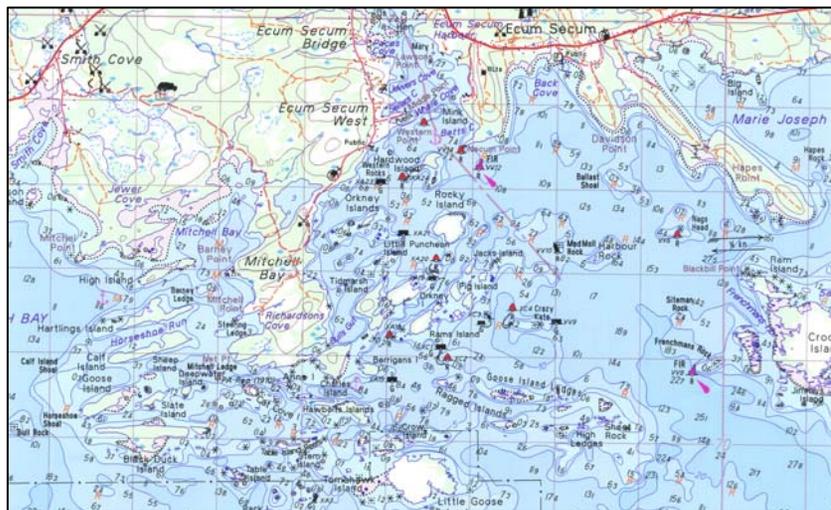
3a Research

Natural and cultural coastal heritage applied research, as well as a strategic destination assessment, is needed to both inform the planning process as well as fulfilling the needs of the product development process, and is thus logically the first step.

Natural Heritage Research

With respect to natural heritage research much information is already available through the “Natural History of Nova Scotia, Theme Regions and Topics & Habitats”, and likely through research related to the seven provincial parks, four wilderness areas and the Eastern Shore Islands Wildlife Management Area, all within the Bay of Islands area. As well, in 2012 the Nova Scotia Nature Trust documented the western section of the area’s unique island-ecology in their “Eastern Shore Archipelago Conservation and Scientific Assessment”.

It should be noted that the Province is currently considering expanding the area of the existing Eastern Shore Islands Wildlife Management Area to approximately Jeddore, as part of its goal of 12% public ownership of the Province’s landmass. If this expansion does take place then the Eastern Shore Islands Wildlife Management Area would essentially encompass the Bay of Islands. With a simple name change to the Bay of Islands Wildlife Management Area, together with



additional levels of protection, a major natural history attraction would be created.

Cultural Heritage Research

With respect to cultural heritage research, Nova Scotia’s 2009 Interpretive Master Plan identifies a number of interpretive gaps in the Province’s overall interpretive coverage. These include “Coastal Towns and Villages”, “Life at Home and Work”, and 20th century heritage in general.

Recognizing that this interpretive gap is covered by the interpretive mandate of the Lake Charlotte Area Heritage Society, the Society has initiated discussions with the Department of Communities Culture and Heritage to establish a Coastal Heritage Centre at Memory Lane Heritage Village. Establishing this centre would utilize the existing archives at Memory Lane Heritage Village and is planned as a two-year pilot project with a primary focus on organizing, documenting and preserving the area’s cultural coastal heritage. Much oral history

related to coastal living before 1950, when major social/community changes took place, is in serious danger of being lost forever and needs to be collected immediately. This oral history includes the recollections of people who lived and/or worked on some of the larger islands of the Bay of Islands.

Thus the creation of a Coastal Heritage Centre would



address a number of gaps in Nova Scotia's Interpretive Master Plan while also addressing the need for cultural heritage research as part of the development of a Bay of Islands Coastal Heritage Destination Area.

Strategic Destination Assessment

While the Lake Charlotte Area Heritage Society believes that the Bay of Islands has the potential to become a national/international destination/attraction, for the

process/project to move forward it will be necessary for this to be established objectively. In the recent past, Nova Scotia has utilized the services of Destination Development International to assist in this process. After reviewing the DDI website (www.destinationdevelopment.com) the Society believes that this company has the knowledge, experience and approach to carry out a comprehensive destination assessment.

3b Planning

Based on the results of the research, particularly the strategic destination assessment, an integrated natural and cultural Destination Development Plan needs to be prepared.

This plan is essentially a regional heritage tourism business development plan where the product to be developed is both the natural and cultural heritage of the Bay of Islands area, essentially Jeddore to Sherbrooke. The customers are visitors to Nova Scotia as well as residents of the Province, especially those living within Greater Halifax because of their large numbers in close proximity to the Bay of Islands.

The Destination Development Plan needs to include the following components:

Component 1: Marketing Theme Planning

Based on the best information available, combined with community consultation, develop themes and sub-themes that are both authentic and attractive within the national and international heritage tourism marketplace.

With respect to the international marketplace the Canada Tourism Commission (CTC) has five unique selling propositions:

1. Vibrant cities on the edge of nature
2. Personal journeys by land, water and air
3. Active adventure among awe-inspiring natural wonders
4. Award-winning Canadian local cuisine
5. Connecting with Canadians

The CTC is also heavily promoting its “Signature Experience Collection” that relies heavily on natural and cultural heritage experiences. In this regard Memory Lane Heritage Village is already developing four signature experiences (Coastal Clamming Safari, Coastal Churches Safari, Coastal Geography Safari, and Coastal Culinary Experience).

Canada is made up of four distinct provinces, each with its own set of charms, getaways and coastal adventures”; “The region boasts Canada’s most spectacular coastline – more than 43,000 kilometers”.

With respect to Nova Scotia’s tourism marketing, its position statement is: “Nova Scotia is North America’s original maritime culture where visitors will be captivated by our culture of old world charm with a new world pulse, shaped by the sea and the spirit of our people.”

Its strategy is built around five core experiences:

- History: built attractions, living traditions, genealogy, founding settlers
- Urban: Halifax, Sydney, towns



On a regional basis the coordinated marketing of Atlantic Canada predominantly focuses on the regions’ coastline – “You’re so close to an enchanting Seacoast Holiday”; “A Coast of Discoveries”; “Awaken to the Rhythms of the Sea”; “Atlantic

- Seacoast: coastal parks and beaches, tides and Bay of Fundy, lighthouses, seaside communities
- Culture: music, fine art and craft, festivals and events
- Outdoors: adventure activities, charter tours Cuisine: food (dining) and wine

On a local level, a thematic workshop was organized in 2009 to develop interpretive/marketing themes for eastern HRM based on what a wide cross section of businesses thought the area had to offer. The result of this workshop was a main theme of “Close to the Shore” and sub themes of “Encounters Close to Nature”; “Encounters Close to Community”; “Encounters Close to Home”.

Thus within the Bay of Islands area there is a significant thematic alignment, from the national to the local level, with what a Bay of Islands Coastal Heritage Destination Area can authentically offer.

Component 2: Interpretive Planning

In consultation with the existing heritage attractions, organizations and agencies within the Bay of Islands area, prepare an integrated natural and cultural interpretive development plan together with implementation costs.

For the natural heritage attractions the planning would primarily involve the Department of Natural Resources. For the existing cultural heritage sites their potential⁹ role would be:

- *Coastal Agriculture*: Acadian House Museum, West Chezzetcook
- *Coastal Transportation*: Musquodoboit Railway Museum
- *Coastal Family*: Fisherman’s Life Museum, Oyster Pond
- *Coastal Villages*: Memory Lane, Lake Charlotte

⁹ The term “potential role” is used as an indication of the way in which individual cultural heritage sites could be integrated into an overall interpretive plan. The actual roles would be determined as part of the consultation process with all sites.

- *Coastal Gold*: Prince Alfred Arch, Tangier, Goldmine Interpretive Centre, Goldenville
- *Coastal Churches*: St James Church, Spry Bay
- *Coastal Industry*: McPhee House Museum, Sheet Harbour
- *Coastal Environment*: McMann House, Moser River
- *Coastal Mi’kmaq*:¹⁰ To be determined, several options exist
- *Coastal Commerce*: Sherbrooke Village

Component 3: Visitor Services Planning

Identify what visitor services already exist and how they can be integrated, developed and added-to so as to provide the necessary services for the development of the area. Note that this assessment should recognize that the nucleus for such a development exists with a cluster of services, both land and ocean accessed, at Jeddore on the western end of the Bay of Islands, at Sheet Harbour in the centre, and at Sherbrooke on the eastern end.

Component 4: Product Planning

Identify stand-alone and combination tourism packages that can be developed and marketed to local, national and international markets. In this regard a workshop was held in late 2011 in eastern HRM to commence the planning of experiential tourism packages, most of which are focused on a coastal experience.

¹⁰ The Lake Charlotte Area Heritage Society has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Millbrook First Nation to explore and possibly develop the Mi’kmaq heritage of the area between Musquodoboit Harbour and Sheet Harbour.

Component 5: Marketing Planning

Prepare a marketing strategy summary designed to capitalize on the previous four tasks and to guide the creation and implementation of a multi-year marketing plan.

3c Development

Development in the context of the Five-year Plan essentially involves the implementation of the integrated natural and cultural interpretive development plan prepared under Component 2: Interpretive Planning, outlined above.

3d Marketing

A long-range marketing plan will need to be prepared based on the five components of section 3b Planning, outlined above. Marketing can commence at the completion of section 3b and be modified to reflect improvements as the development plan is implemented. The marketing plan should be fully informed by, and complement, the overall marketing strategy for the Eastern Shore.

3d Schedule and Budget

The schedule and budget outlined below is preliminary and has been prepared as a guide to order of magnitude costs by year.

Year 1:	Cultural Heritage Research	\$ 50k
	Strategic Destination Assessment	\$ 50k
	Total	\$100k

Year 2:	Cultural Heritage Research	\$ 50k
	Destination Development Plan	\$100k
	Total	\$150k
Year 3:	Development Plan Implementation	\$250k
	Destination Marketing	\$ 25k
	Total	\$275k
Year 4:	Development Plan Implementation	\$200k
	Destination Marketing	\$ 25k
	Total	\$225k
Year 5:	Development Plan Implementation	\$ 50k
	Destination Marketing	\$ 50k
	Total	\$100k
	Five-year total	\$850k

4. Organizational Approach

Given the recent proposal to change the organization of the Regional Development Authorities within Nova Scotia into Regional Enterprise Networks (RENs), and given that the Eastern Shore tourism region would be split between RENs 4 and 5, with the dividing line between the two regions on the Atlantic coast bisecting the Bay of Islands, it difficult to foresee a leadership role for one or the other, or both RENs within the near future.

Thus the logical lead organization, especially given the tourism focus of this proposal, is Destination Northumberland and Eastern Shore (DEANS) whose mission is the “facilitate sustainable and economic tourism growth throughout the

Eastern and Northumberland Shores for its members in partnership with the community and stakeholders”.

With respect to stakeholder organizations to partner with DEANS these include:

- Seaside Tourism and Business Association
- Sheet Harbour Chamber of Commerce
- Eastern Shore Heritage Network
- Destination Halifax
- Tourism Development Officer from ERD&T responsible for the Eastern Shore
- HRM and Guysborough municipal representation (to be determined pending REN review process)

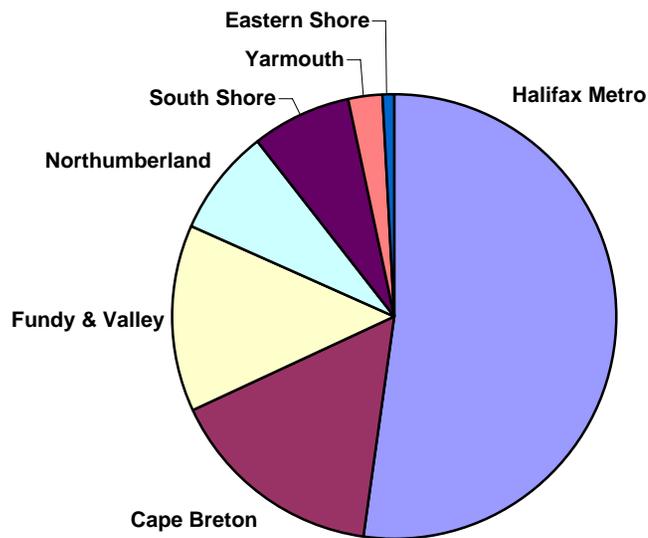
5. Outcomes

The overall goal is to increase the size of the tourism industry in eastern HRM by 50% in five to seven years, using as a measure of success a 50% increase in fixed roof accommodation room nights sold annually, from less than 25,000 now to 38,000 by 2019. Ideally, this increase will occur through a significant increase in the occupancy rate from about 35% now to at least 50% by 2017. The other measurement of success will be an increase of 50% in paid attendance at Memory Lane Heritage Village and Sherbrooke Village.

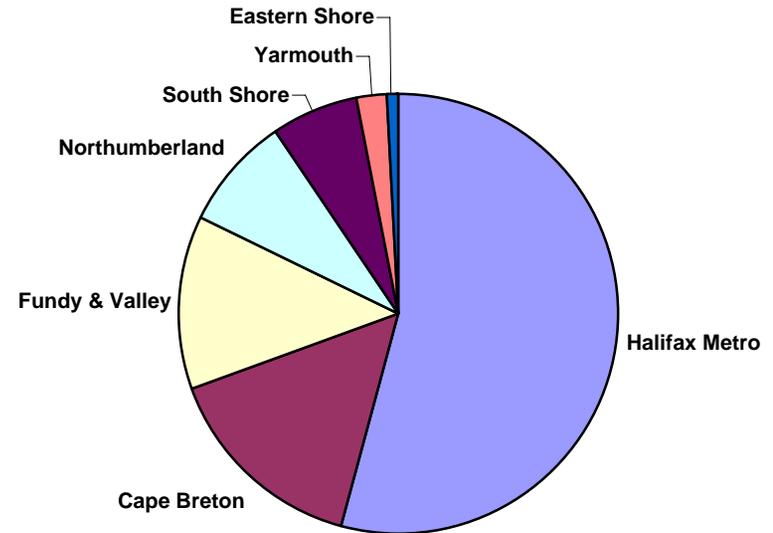
Appendix A: 2007 / 2011 Comparison of Room Nights Sold in Nova Scotia

Tourism Region	2011 Room Nights Sold	2011 Occupancy Rate	2011 Regional Percentage	2007 Room Nights Sold	2007 Occupancy Rate	2007 Regional Percentage
Halifax Metro	1,357,000	59%	54.17%	1,350,000	58%	52.14%
Cape Breton	380,000	42%	15.17%	413,000	45%	15.95%
Fundy & Valley	325,000	36%	12.97%	351,000	38%	13.56%
Northumberland	205,000	44%	8.18%	200,000	44%	7.72%
South Shore	164,000	36%	6.55%	187,000	41%	7.22%
Yarmouth	54,000	33%	2.16%	65,000	33%	2.51%
Eastern Shore	20,000	28%	0.80%	23,000	34%	0.89%
Total All Regions	2,505,000			2,589,000		

2007 Room Nights



2011 Room Nights



Visitor Numbers Trend 2000 - 2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Fisherman's Life Museum	8,700	6,100	6,000	4,200	3,600	3,400	3,900	4,100	4,100	3,600	4,500
Sherbrooke Village	58,000	55,300	54,800	51,400	43,200	37,500	35,900	40,700	30,200	31,800	28,500
Memory Lane Heritage Village	na	na	2,639	1,857	1,999	2,565	3,422	3,958	4,261	3,590	4,613