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Look to the East: Acadia Offers Cultural Wayfinding Tactics for Francophone Tourism

By: Myfannwy Pope

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Introduction

The Northern Ontario Growth Plan for 2011 released by the then Ministry of Infrastructure and Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, and Forestry highlights Francophone tourism as an opportunity for increased sector growth through “encouraging regions and communities to undertake cultural planning that identifies opportunities for promoting tourism, ... building on the presence of a strong Francophone community to tap into French-speaking markets” (Ontario Ministry of Infrastructure et al, 2011). The task of increasing Francophone tourism is being undertaken across Canada with the development of the Canada-wide Corridor route of French-Canadian cultural tourism products,¹ and in Ontario with Route Champlain² and the Lake Temiskaming Tour.³ Additionally, key organizations such as Destination Northern Ontario, in partnership with the Société Économique de l’Ontario (SÉO) and the Association des francophones du Nord-Ouest de l’Ontario, are taking an inventory of Francophone tourism products in communities across Northern Ontario.

For the purpose of this commentary, Francophone tourism refers to the celebration and promotion of historical and contemporary Franco-Ontarian culture, as defined by the host community,⁴ and the related development of a tourism destination based on culture and location. This definition was chosen because of its potential to strengthen pride in identity by developing the social and economic value of the French language and Francophone identity in Ontario.

The history of French-speaking populations in Ontario is marked by a series of struggles for existence, autonomy, and recognition (Dupuis and Savard 2016; Ontario Heritage Trust 2012). Although Franco-Ontarian culture has similarities with other French-Canadian heritage groups — particularly Quebec, due to its proximity — it presents distinct characteristics shaped by its unique territory and heritage. Quebec’s Révolution tranquille caused a fragmentation of the French-Canadian identity and forced Franco-Ontarians to differentiate themselves from those who now called themselves Québécois. This changed the two founding elements of Franco-Canadian identity, from shared language and the Catholic religion to language and territory (Medeiros and Fournier, n.d.). Language protectionism in Ontario grew around bilingualism, giving Franco-Ontarians limited space to be Francophone. Therefore, among Franco-Ontarians, the French language has become the key element of identity. The struggle for French-language rights has grown to be a defining aspect of Franco-Ontarian culture, as can

be seen through the Crise scolaire, and constitutional negotiations (Dupuis and Savard 2016; Ontario Heritage Trust 2012). The Serene Revolution, which grew out of Sudbury, was a reaction to such struggles, and brought Franco-Ontarian arts and theatre to the forefront (Ontario Heritage Trust 2012). The pride and distinct culture that has grown from this history warrants celebration. Tourism provides a mechanism by which that celebration can be an economic engine for francophone communities.

Attacks on the social and economic value of the French language and its associated culture in Ontario have resulted in negative outcomes for Franco-Ontarians, such as lower employment numbers and higher poverty rates than among the general Ontario population (Ontario Heritage Trust 2012). Furthermore, internal conflicts exist. For example, the devaluation of Franco-Ontarian dialects by other French Canadians and political tensions between heritage- and language-based identities in the face of Francophone immigration are points of controversy (Dupuis and Savard 2016; Ontario Heritage Trust 2012). These conflicts have reduced the use of the French language among Francophones in Ontario.

Northern Ontario, home to some of Ontario’s highest-density Francophone communities, represents a microcosm of this historical oppression (Heller 1994). As recently as 1990, English-language protectionist parties in Sault Ste Marie lobbied and successfully passed a resolution making English the official language of the city. The resolution included a clause that stated: “And whereas the preferred common language of commerce, business, trade, science and normal everyday activities is English” (Heller 1994). This was not the only resolution of its kind in Ontario at the time. The result of these and similar policies has been the reduction of the use of French in public spaces by self-identified Francophones (see Figure 1) and the movement of Franco-Ontarians away from Sault Ste Marie (Heller 1994).

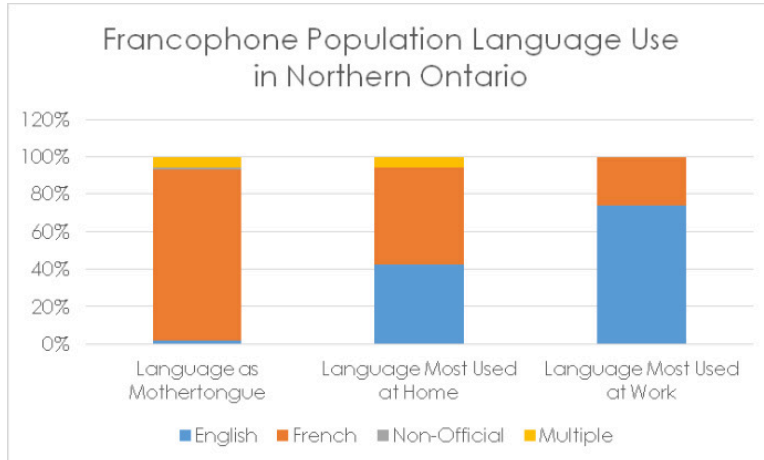
¹See the website at <https://corridorcanada.ca/?lang=en>.

²See the website at <https://routechamplain.ca/en/>.

³See the website at <https://www.laketemiskaming.com/>.

⁴Franc-Ontarian can be a divisive term and can hold definitions based on heritage or on language and citizenship. This commentary uses Francophone and Franco-Ontarian interchangeably to mean Francophones living in Ontario. For the purposes of tourism, however, a community may choose how to define Franco-Ontarian to best reflect its own needs.

Figure 1: Language Use by Francophone Population, Northern Ontario, 2016

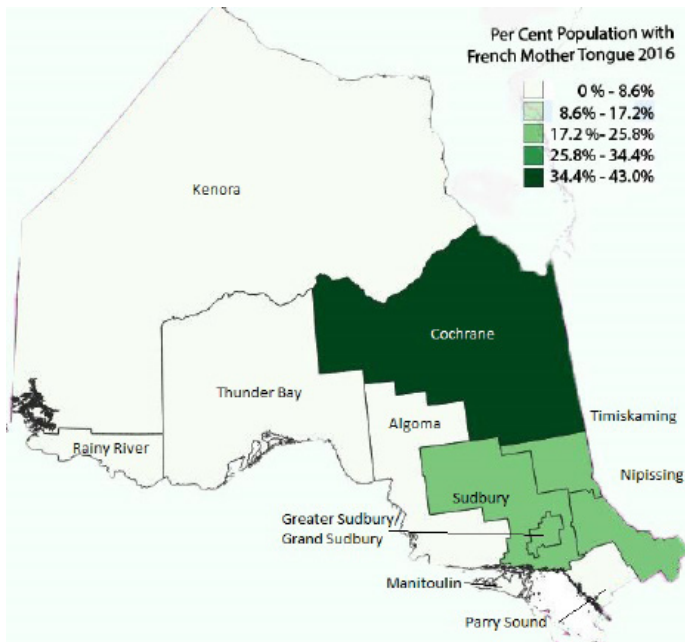


Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, custom tabulation

Cultural tourism should play a role in elevating the economic and social value of French language and its related culture. This form of tourism also has potential in accessing both French-speaking and Francophile markets, as well as those generally interested in cultural tourism.

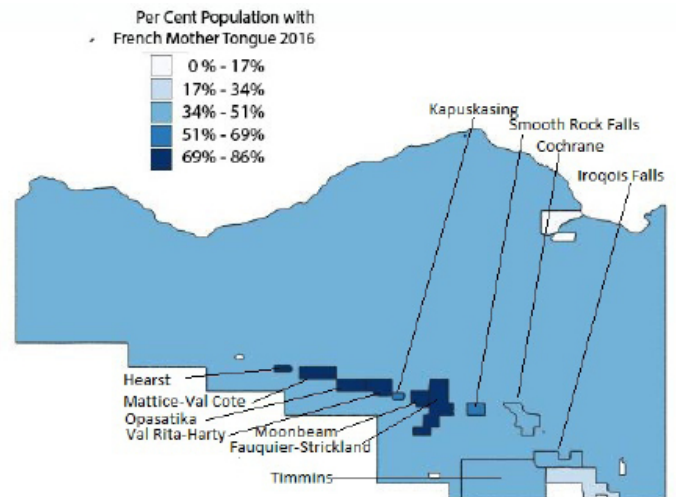
As demonstrated in Figures 2 and 3, Northern Ontario's Francophone population is concentrated in the eastern census districts and is highest in the Cochrane District. As Figure 3 shows, the blue spectrum darkens as the percentage of French speakers among the total population increases. The series of small and large towns along Highway 11 suggests that these areas could be excellent resources of modern Franco-Ontarian culture. Furthermore, the larger cities in Northeastern Ontario, such as Sudbury and Timmins, have demonstrated the cultural capacity to host events such as La Nuit sur l'étang and St-Jean-Baptiste Day celebrations.

Figure 2: Percentage of Population with French as Mother Tongue, by Northern Ontario Census Division, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 census.

Figure 3: Percentage of Population with French as Mother Tongue, by Subdivisions of Cochrane District, 2016



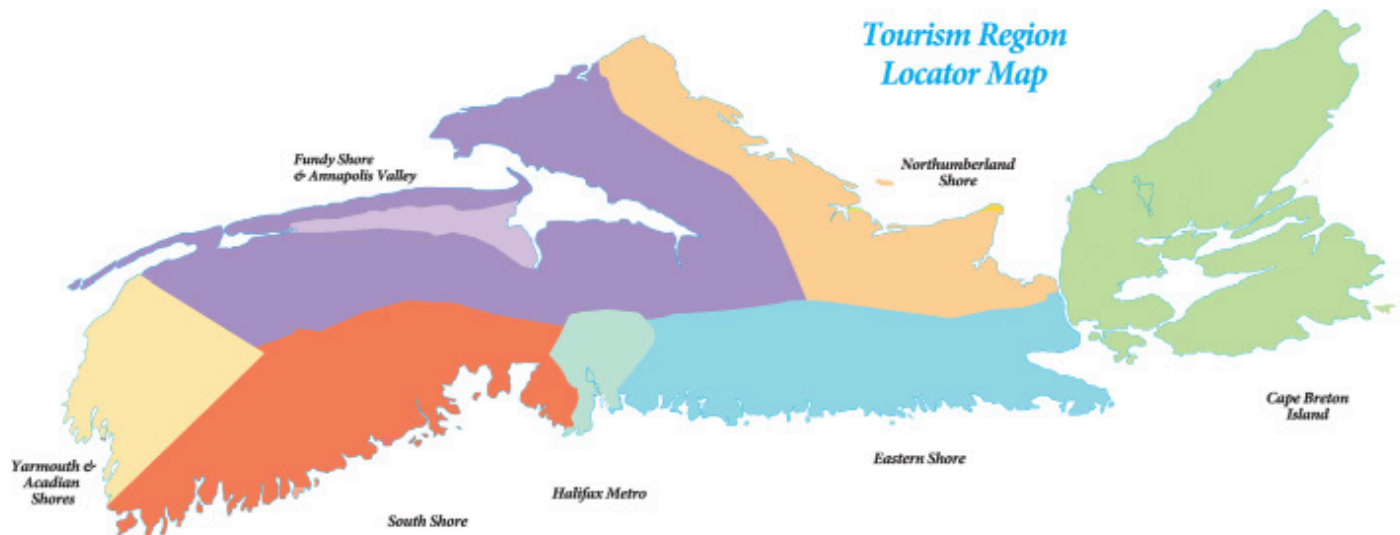
Note: Darker blue communities are located along Highway 11.
 Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 census.

Best practices in destination management, including coordinated wayfinding efforts, are important to consider when developing Francophone tourism. In the tourism industry, tourism information centres (TICs) play a significant role. Destination Northern Ontario has found that visitors to the region overwhelmingly prefer the presence of TICs, valuing face-to-face interaction over online platforms (Destination Ontario 2018). These centres also offer key opportunities to advertise cultural products, thereby encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more money in the area.

Thus, to enhance Francophone cultural tourism in Northern Ontario, particularly in the dense Franco-Ontarian areas of Northeastern Ontario and the Cochrane District, integrated cultural TICs could be part of tourism strategies for the region. Cultural centres could also play a moderating role in visitors' perceptions of a location's minority culture (see Zeng 2017). Developing a TIC model that both highlights and incorporates Franco-Ontarian culture in Francophone-majority communities could facilitate the export of Franco-Ontarian cultural products as well as improve perceptions of, and pride and value in, Franco-Ontarian culture. Furthermore, leveraging the distinct Franco-Ontarian presence in Northeastern Ontario within the TIC structure could help maintain TICs in the area by incorporating an element that cannot be accessed through technology.

A model of how Northern Ontario might proceed in highlighting and promoting Francophone tourism exists in Nova Scotia. The census division of Cochrane closely parallels the Clare region of Nova Scotia, which uses the culturally integrated TIC model in its Acadian tourism strategy. Francophones make up approximately 4 percent of Nova Scotia's population, similar to that of Ontario (Statistics Canada 2016). The Municipality of Clare, however, has a 60 percent Francophone population, and several smaller largely Francophone communities exist nearby (Statistics Canada 2016). Clare is part of the tourist region of the Acadian Shores (see Figure 4). The emphasis on the Acadian presence in the area exemplifies destination branding around the regional French-Canadian identity (Leblanc & Boudreau, 2016).

Figure 4: Designated Tourism Regions, Nova Scotia



Source: Wally Hayes. "PHOTOLOGS." Available online at: <https://wallyhayes.smugmug.com/Galleries/Site-Pages/BLOGS>

The parallels between Franco-Ontarians and Acadians in Nova Scotia are numerous. Both cultures exist among Francophone populations living in Anglophone-majority provinces. They share historical colonial ties and struggles against linguistic and cultural oppression, as well as contemporary tensions regarding changing identity in the face of immigration and recognition on a global scale (Leblanc & Boudreau, 2016; Dupuis and Savard 2016; Heller 2007; Moïse and Roy 2009; St-Aubin 1993). The fight for French-language education, a weakly enforced *Lois sur les services en français*, and devaluation of the local dialect, *Acadjeune*, were struggles Nova Scotia Acadians faced when the region's tourism strategy was developed (LeBlanc 2012). Clare and its surrounding areas therefore have prioritized regionalism, authenticity, and the construction of a global image in their tourism brand through distinctions in language, history, and culture. Additionally, Acadians in the Clare region have used the development of a cultural destination as an opportunity to self-define and reinvigorate pride in regional identity (Leblanc & Boudreau, 2016; LeBlanc 2012; McLaughlin and LeBlanc 2009).

Along with other initiatives, the Municipality of Clare has established a cultural visitor centre called *Rendez-vous de la Baie*⁵, encompassing an interpretive centre, theatre, nature tour, outdoor stage, public meeting room, historical monument, coffee shop, art gallery, and boutique, the need for which was recognized in consultations with local communities. To host the centre, a designated steering committee identified an underused space in Université Sainte-Anne, in Pointe-de-l'Église

⁵See the website at <https://rendezvousdelabaie.ca/en/>.

(LeBlanc 2012). The centre emphasizes local Acadian history, folklore, and modern Acadian culture through bilingual interpretive panels, displays, videos, and other interactive elements.

The development of cultural tourism in the area has also had the advantage of extending the tourism season, which now does not rely on favourable weather conditions (LeBlanc 2012). As the centre contains both indoor and outdoor activities, only those located outdoors are limited by the seasons. The space is also a community hub, as the theatre, outside stage, and public meeting room can be used by visitors, students, businesses, and the public. The interaction of these groups provides the authenticity that was prioritized in the development of the area of Baie Sainte-Marie (LeBlanc 2012). The interactional and participatory nature of the interpretive centre appeals to visitors seeking more than basic information on the area, and allows the centre to call itself a combined cultural centre and tourist information centre (Zeng 2017).

As demonstrated by Rendez-vous de la Baie, combining elements of cultural centres and TICs in Francophone-majority communities could provide a sustainable way to increase both the visibility of and positive sentiments toward Franco-Ontarian cultural activities, promote cultural products among visitors through wayfinding mechanisms and the functions of a visiting centre, and use current assets to sustain and optimize the use of ancillary tourism businesses. Philip Pearce's Four Plus model for TICs (Pearce 2004) provides a framework to explain how Rendez-vous de la Baie has used partnerships between TICs and public and private Francophone organizations and businesses to increase Francophone cultural offers for tourists. In this model, a TIC has four roles to fulfill: marketing, enhancement, control, and substitution, in addition to that of community integration, examined in turn below.

Marketing

As Pearce defines the role, marketing "refers to the active promotion of the city, area or region. It involves a forceful agenda of what to do in the area and where to stay. Essentially this role is about stimulating tourist demand and often seeks to increase visitor expenditure in a defined area" (2004, 9). Since marketing and promotion can increase the visibility of cultural products, a focus on Francophone cultural products consequently could increase the visibility of Franco-Ontarian culture in the area.

Given the development of different Francophone group identities centred around language and territory, rather than language and heritage, Acadian destination

development chose to prioritize regional language as a key cultural element (Leblanc & Boudreau, 2016; LeBlanc 2012). For example, Rendez-vous de la Baie offers its services in both French and English and hosts plays and events in the regional dialect, Acadjonne. The centre also advertises local bilingual businesses through corporate partnerships and highlights French or bilingual tourism services in the area.

Language is a carrier of identity. The use of language in visible spaces ties all implications of that identity to the place the language occupies, and is therefore both instrumental and symbolic (Cormier 2015; Coupland 2012; Dupuis 2014; Le Squère 2005). In the context of a TIC as part of a wayfinding strategy, a French-language presence in marketing can manipulate both the physical and linguistic landscape. It can also create a space in which the historical and contemporary identity to which language is tied can exist and have value, as it highlights both local businesses and heritage landmarks. For French-speaking markets, the use and emphasis of language creates familiarity, as the producers and consumers of the information that is provided connect through the language used. In this way, language is a symbol of collective identity (Cormier 2015; Coupland 2012; Le Squère 2005; Gorter et al, 2012; Sloboda et al. 2012). Additionally, as TICs fill the role of gateway to the tourism destination, marketing in French as well as English can indicate the presence or ownership of a language group or culture in a space. In particular, it can demonstrate respect for a minority group with a large population or heritage in the area (Coupland 2012; Dupuis 2014; Le Squère 2005; Sloboda et al. 2012).

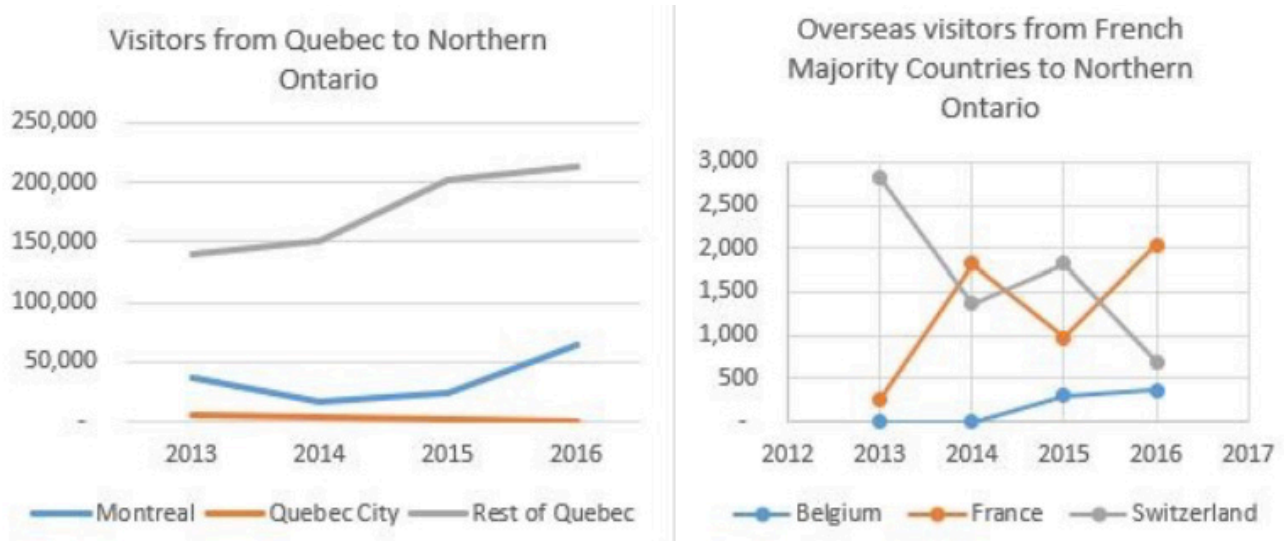
These conditions hold in many communities in Northern Ontario. Accordingly, the incorporation of bilingual marketing — through translated brochures, online media, and staff, as well as specific indication of services that are offered in French or by Franco-Ontarians — can serve the double purpose of increasing the length of stay and spending by visitors and promote the Francophone identity as an area asset both economically and socially. Marketing can play an especially important function in Northern Ontario, as cultural activities such as festivals, attractions, and events generally engage travellers who are visiting for other purposes. For example, approximately 40 percent of travellers to Northern Ontario were there visiting friends and family, while another 40 percent cited leisure or recreation as the main purpose of their trip.⁶ Further, leisure tourism that motivates visits to Northern Ontario is strongly concentrated in the domain of adventure tourism (Morrison et al. 1996).⁷ Therefore, if a TIC offers permitting and accommodation booking services in both French and English for these activities, promotional activity for other Franco-Ontarian cultural offers may have a strong influence on visitors stopping in to access these services (Pagnucco, S, 2017).

⁶Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Sport (2016) "Copy of RTO13 2016 - TSRC and International Travel Survey Data," Retrieved from <http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/research/rtp/rtp.shtml>.

⁷Ontario Ministry of Tourism. 2006. "Canadian Travellers who visited Northern Ontario: Profile for Marketing Implications". Prepared by Tourism Research Unit for Travel Activity and Motivation Survey

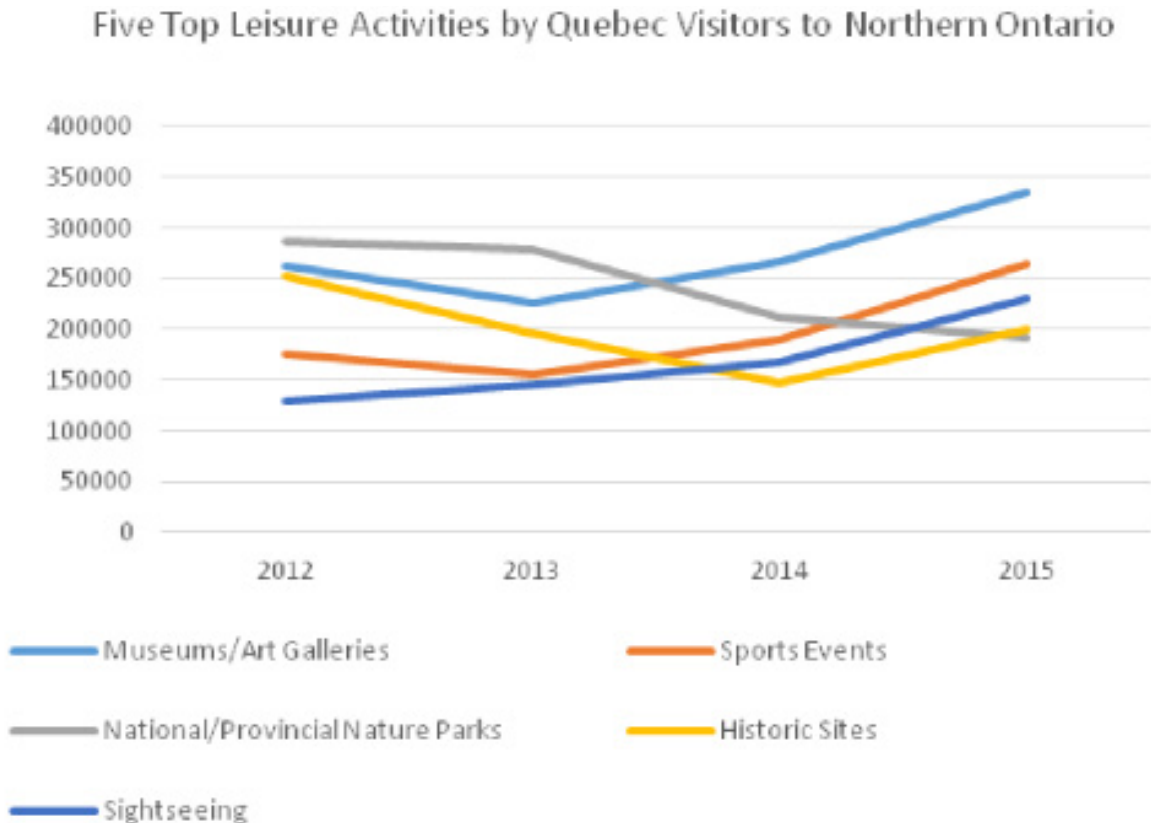
The largest French-speaking tourism market for Northern Ontario is Quebec (see Figures 5 and 6). Visitors from that province tend to be proximity travellers, to enjoy leisure activities typical of Northern Ontario, and to prefer familiarity in their tourism experience (Statistics Canada 2018; Ontario Ministry of Tourism et al, 2006). Bilingual marketing, in conjunction with the relative similarity between much of rural Franco-Ontarian and Québécois cultures, potentially could increase the pull of Northern Ontario for this market. Such a strategy would capitalize on collective identity while simultaneously emphasizing the distinctiveness of the territory.

Figure 5: Francophone Visitors to Northern Ontario, by Place of Origin, 2013–16



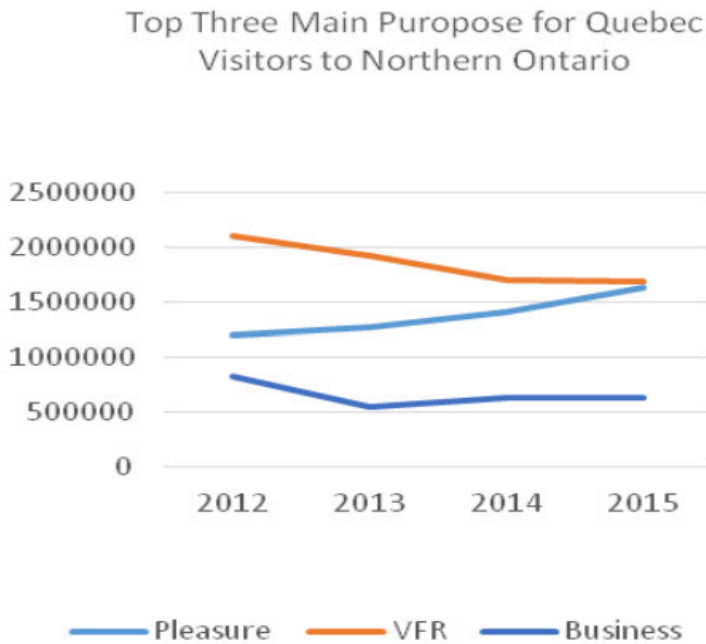
Source: Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Copyright (c) Statistics Canada

Figure 6: Leisure Activities and Purpose of Trip by Quebec Visitors to Northern Ontario, 2012–15



Source: Statistics Canada, Travel Survey of Residents of Canada & International Travel Survey, prepared by Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport

Figure 7: Leisure Activities and Purpose of Trip by Quebec Visitors to Northern Ontario, 2012–15



Source: Statistics Canada, Travel Survey of Residents of Canada & International Travel Survey, prepared by Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport

Control

As Pearce defines control, “[in] this role, visitor centres seek to control the flow of visitors so that resources and settings come under less pressure. Typically such centres act as gateways and central points for visitor use of an area” (2004, 10). The potential for advertising-designated services that offer French and English or Franco-Ontarian-themed experiences ties into this second feature of TICs. Partnerships with Francophone cultural centres or combined visitor-cultural centres would provide incentives to direct visitor flows to bilingual and bicultural tourism products — for example, by encouraging visitors to attend bilingual events, prioritizing sending French speakers to bilingual services, and maximizing flows to cultural offers on culturally relevant holidays such as St-Jean-Baptiste Day.

Enhancement

Pearce’s third role for a TIC is enhancement: “to provide displays, suggest new locations and generally inform visitors about features of the region to promote responsible behaviour (2004, 9).” The term “promote responsible behaviour” is often applied to eco-tourism. However, it is also important in the context of cultural tourism to shape positive perceptions and encourage authenticity in experiencing a culture, rather than commodifying it (Pearce 2004; Zeng 2017). Rendez-vous de la Baie provides a space for contemporary and heritage cultural learning

that shapes visitors’ experience within the nearby Acadian communities. It does this by incorporating regional Acadian heritage displays and interpretations of history from pre-Deportation to the present (LeBlanc 2012). Through the interpretive centre, visitors are encouraged to learn about Acadia by forging emotional and intellectual connections through first-hand experience of cultural objects, rather than superficially receiving information (Piacente 2014). The opportunity to engage in the culture in this way at the gateway to the community further helps to create positive associations for visitors (Zeng 2017).

As Rendez-vous de la Baie shows, TICs’ partnerships with or incorporation of cultural centres can display the community’s cultural offers and provide a contextual framework to appreciate them. An Australian study found that a perceived lack of cultural sense was associated with negative perceptions of the area (Zeng 2017). In addition to accessing Francophone markets, by displaying cultural elements, Rendez-vous de la Baie is taking advantage of a specific asset — its large Acadian population — that distinguishes the area from others in Nova Scotia. TICs in Northern Ontario similarly could play a role in enhancing the economic and social value of Franco-Ontarian culture by tying it to an economic advantage (Cormier 2015). Approximately 85 percent of Northern Ontario TICs surveyed by Destination Northern Ontario (2018) already included interpretive displays, while 30 percent had rental spaces. These responses suggest a willingness and capacity for hosting interpretive or cultural centres on the part of many TICs.

Substitution

For Pearce, “[a] fourth function of visitor centres is to be a substitute for the tourist attraction or at least to be a substantial attraction in its own right” (2004, 10). The advantages of partnerships between tourist and cultural centres are keenly highlighted by this substitution function of TICs. Visitor centres are often present in museums or other stand-alone attractions, which can help visitors engage with this wayfinding element and direct them to further attractions. Pairing or partnering with a cultural centre can fulfill a similar role, while amplifying cultural aspects of other tourism products.

Rendez-vous de la Baie pairs the visitor centre with an interpretive centre, boutique, and coffee shop. These elements serve the role of a “learning attraction,” similar to that of a museum, as visitors are drawn to displays and interpretations. Moreover, it is a “consumer attraction,” meaning that it enables elements of the culture to be brought home. Finally, it is also a “food attraction,” tempting visitors to stop and eat, and consequently to stay longer — food is almost always the number one activity for tourists (Destination Northern Ontario 2018). Although the “food attraction” for Rendez-vous de la Baie is only a coffee shop, a TIC could provide distinctive cultural or

locally grown food.

Among TICs surveyed by Destination Northern Ontario (2018), the most often requested information was for recommendations for activities to do, places to eat, directions, accommodation, and services. The proportion of TICs offering the purchase of tickets, permits, or accommodation booking was under 15 percent. Although just under half had gift shops or boutiques and picnic areas, none of the interviewed TICs had on-site food other than vending machines, limiting the attraction of TICs for visitors. Changing Northern Ontario TICs to become providers of attractions and services, not just of directions — particularly those that advertise the region's distinct Franco-Ontarian identity — could help to draw Francophone visitors. This is particularly important when the Internet can also give directions and recommend places to eat. The collaborations that enable these services also make tracking the economic effect of TICs more measurable through records of the sale of tickets or permits, printed or electronic guest books, and receipts of food or products bought on-site. This is particularly relevant to Northern Ontario, where TIC visitation is hard to tie to the use of other tourist attractions (Destination Northern Ontario 2018).

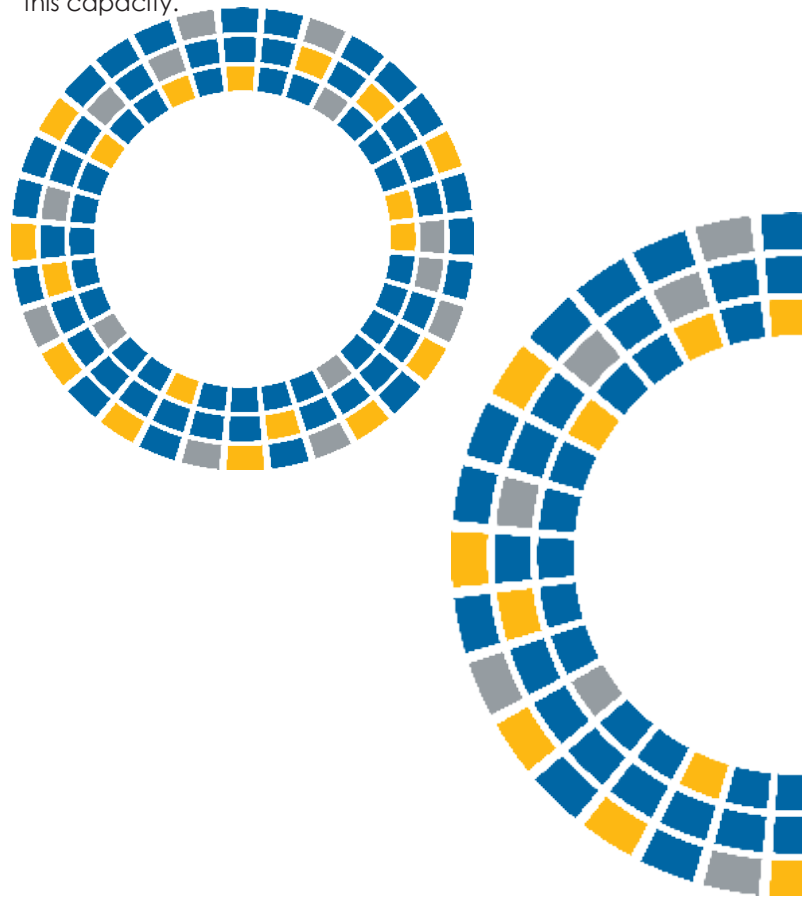
Community Integration

In addition to the four roles assigned to TICs in Pearce's Four Plus model, they can also "act as community facilities for a range of local cultural and social events, particularly where the space contains a theatre or meeting room. Further, it can be argued that the more symbolic function of a visitor centre is to signal the importance and significance of a town or site for tourism" (Pearce 2004, 10). Collaboration between TICs and other attractions through such means as remote booking mechanisms or the sharing of physical space is a means for TICs to incorporate this role. A Franco-Ontarian community that wants to use tourism as a way to show off its culture should value such a symbolic gateway.

In addition, community integration adds the value of authenticity in opportunities to interact with locals in celebration of contemporary or heritage culture (Leblanc & Boudreau, 2016; LeBlanc 2012). Authenticity requires that language is not removed from its living context (Sloboda et al. 2012). Therefore, the provision and representation of services in both languages might not be enough in itself; rather, actual participation and integration of community members might be necessary for visitors' satisfaction (Deery et al. 1997; Destination Northern Ontario 2018; Heath and Vom Lehn 2010; Zeng 2017). Rendez-vous de la Baie demonstrates this value through its incorporation of a meeting room, outdoor pavilion, trail system, and theatre that can all be rented out to the public. The comprehensive cultural representation is provided by placing cultural elements — the art gallery, theatre,

interpretive centre, and community events — in the same physical space, giving a succinct preview of the Acadian culture in both contemporary and historical perspectives.

Northern Ontario Francophone tourism strategies have focused on heritage-based tourism, as well as French-language services and cultural, and Francophone tourism experiences (Moïse and Roy 2009). The majority of visitors to Northern Ontario are from Ontario, and in the 2016 Culture Talks survey, Ontarians identified participatory tourism opportunities as key elements for experiencing culture (Ontario 2016). Community integration in TICs could help increase the authentic participatory nature of tourism activity for this market. Additionally, the 40 percent of travellers in Northern Ontario whose main trip purpose is visiting friends and family might be more likely to visit TICs in their function as community centres.⁸ Destination Northern Ontario's best practices research echoes lessons from Rendez-vous de la Baie in terms of hosting community events such as local farmers' markets and art shows (Destination Northern Ontario 2018). These steps could be taken through a whole-community lens, although communities that boast large populations of Franco-Ontarians might wish to prioritize representation in this capacity.

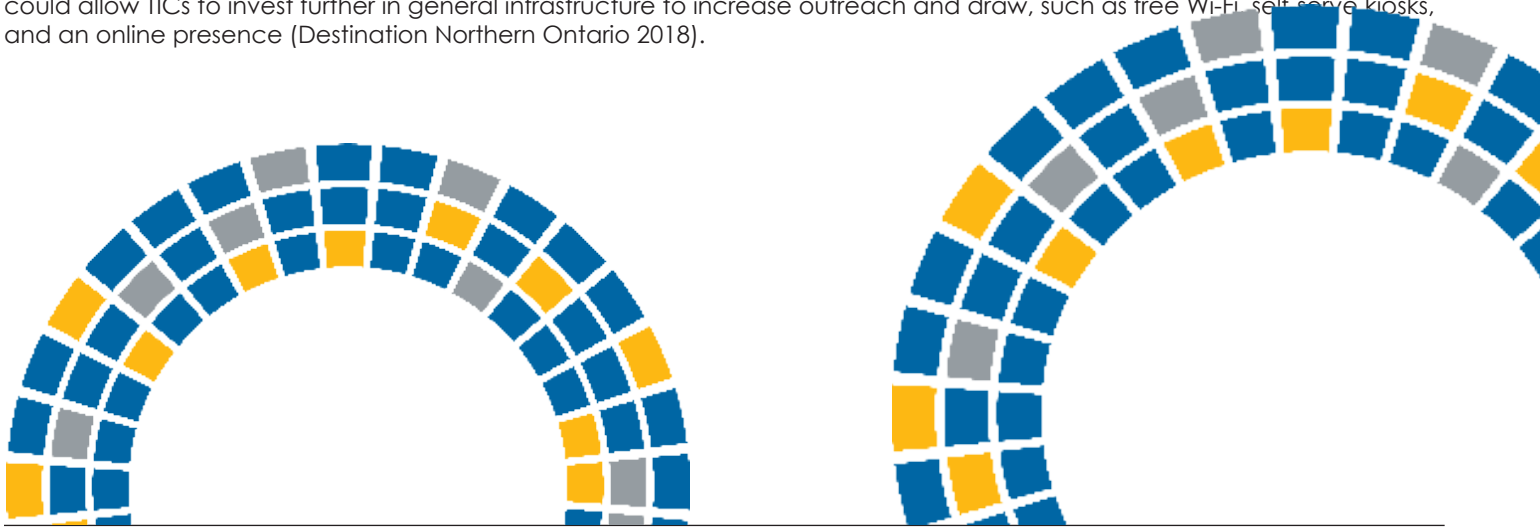


⁸Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Sport (2016) "Copy of RTO13 2016 - TSRC and International Travel Survey Data," Retrieved from <http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/research/rtp/rtp.shtml>.

Finally, through collaborative or integrative roles as information centres, cultural centres, and tools to attract tourism, TICs might have more funding opportunities. Rendez-vous de la Baie lists its corporate sponsor partners and major funding sources on its website. These sources encompass local and national economic development agencies and arts and heritage institutions concerned with tourism and Acadian community development — among them Université Sainte-Anne, the Caisse populaire de Clare, the Municipality of Clare, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism, Heritage Canada, the National film Board of Canada, Nova Scotia Acadian Affaires, and Le Conseil des arts de la Baie. The unique integration of tourism support and cultural community centre that Rendez-vous de la Baie provides is in the economic and social interest of the whole community, as it recognizes and promotes value in diversity (Boudreau n.d.). It supports a population whose resilience of identity makes the community unique, and consequently creates income that ripples out through the whole district. The support from multiple levels of government indicates the benefits these inter-sectoral collaborations can bring not only to a local community, but also to the larger identity, and their implications for national and provincial heritage and development.

Consequently, if Franco-Ontarian communities were to adopt a community-integrated model of TICs, particularly with a focus on Francophone community pride, funding opportunities might increase considerably. In a recent survey of TICs in Northern Ontario, funding was identified as a major gap in employee-to-customer ratios and employee training (Destination Northern Ontario, 2018). Additionally, further funding would allow for the implementation of infrastructure that supports collaboration between TICs and other tourism businesses through booking and display development, and community integration through site upgrades. A cultural community collaborative model, or the incorporation of some collaboration that promotes Francophone experiences and businesses in the community, might be eligible for local funding through local credit agencies, corporate sponsorships, and municipal grants. For example, the cultural focus of TICs might qualify for regional investment from FedNor's economic development initiative.⁹ On the provincial level, funding opportunities might exist through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and the Ministry of Francophone Affairs.¹⁰ For example, cultural collaboration might provide eligibility for grants from Celebrate Ontario¹¹ for broadening tourist audiences to a Francophone market and from the Partnership Grant Program¹² for intersectoral non-profit partnering. These structures might even be eligible for the Francophone Community Grants¹³ Program for the ripple effects of increasing the economic value of the French language in terms of service provision. Finally, as Rendez-vous de la Baie demonstrates, national grants exist to support French language and heritage development.

Operating costs also might be reduced through asset-based partnerships. For example, many Francophone-majority communities already have Francophone cultural centres, and therefore partnership or amalgamation with these centres would provide the same benefits to this TIC model without additional capital investments, similar to how Rendez-vous de la Baie identified space in a local university. Additionally, community integration through cross-promotion, leasing of space for community events, and providing platforms for local vendors to sell their wares could supplement operating costs. This could allow TICs to invest further in general infrastructure to increase outreach and draw, such as free Wi-Fi, self-serve kiosks, and an online presence (Destination Northern Ontario 2018).



⁹Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Sport (2016) "Copy of RTO13 2016 - TSRC and International Travel Survey Data," Retrieved from <http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/research/rtp/rtp.shtml>.

⁹See the website at http://fednor.gc.ca/eic/site/fednor-fednor.nsf/eng/h_fn03152.html.

¹⁰See the website at <http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/GrantsPortal/en/OntarioGrants/GrantOpportunities/GrantsbyMinistry/index.htm>.

¹¹See the website at <http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/GrantsPortal/en/OntarioGrants/GrantOpportunities/OSAPQA005140>.

¹²See the website at <http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/GrantsPortal/en/OntarioGrants/GrantOpportunities/OSAPQA005155>.

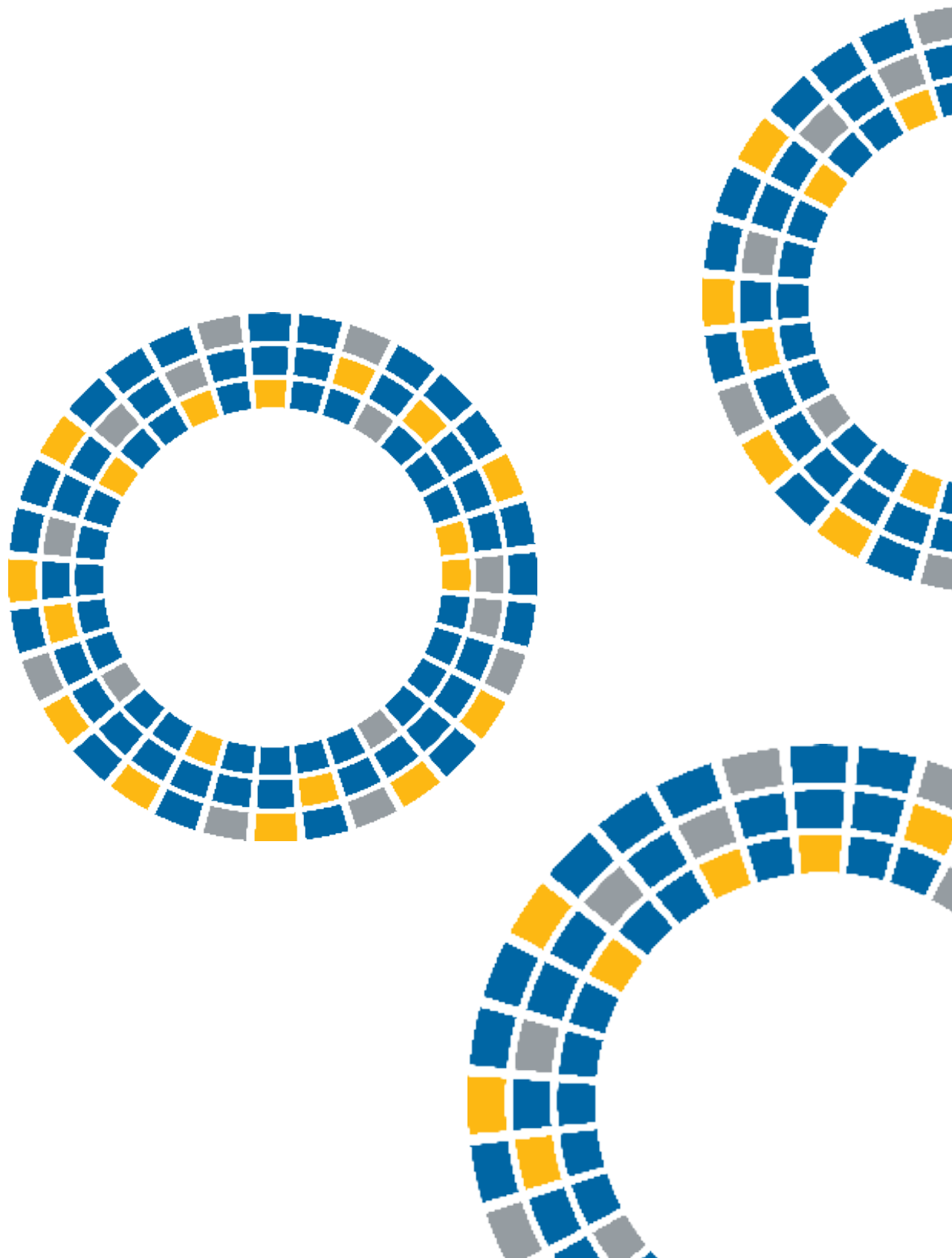
¹³See the website at <http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/GrantsPortal/en/OntarioGrants/GrantOpportunities/PRDR017763.html>.

Conclusion

The Clare region of Nova Scotia offers key insights into creating a Francophone destination. This includes community needs and asset-based development and emphasis on participatory and contemporary experiences, paired with traditional heritage tourism. The creation of Rendez-vous de la Baie through this asset-based community planning framework demonstrates a collaborative model of a tourist information centre that could be beneficial for Francophone-majority communities in Northern Ontario.

Actors and municipalities participating in product development processes for Francophone tourism in Northern Ontario might wish to consider Pearce's Four Plus model. This model provides a general structure for TICs that could be adjusted to promote, support, and invigorate Francophone identity in communities that might not be taking advantage of this culture as an economic and social asset. The incorporation of local Franco-Ontarian heritage and contemporary culture into the visitor "gateway" of communities and the overall wayfinding strategy in Northern Ontario hinges on the "Plus" factor of the Four Plus model. This element would transform TICs into community-integrated organizations that authentically represent the community's distinctiveness to visitors. Done right, this could open the tourist market — particularly in Northeastern Ontario and the Cochrane District — to French-speaking and Francophile markets that are otherwise hard to penetrate, and could increase funding opportunities for the local businesses and organizations involved.





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