

# Building Tourism

## *A Resource for Development*

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### *Developing Heritage Tourism*

## Bringing Heritage to Life

Travellers are increasingly looking for meaningful, authentic, and memorable experiences that connect them to a particular place.

Cultural heritage tourism is a natural fit to this growing demand. It is a way to connect culture and heritage, and make it meaningful to today. It is based on the natural landscapes that shape who we are, and the diversity of cultures and traditions that make our communities vibrant. It is not only an opportunity to share local heritage with visitors, but also creates awareness for residents and a sense of community pride.

Cultural heritage tourism brings heritage to life through the 'bricks and mortar' attractions—museums, historic sites, historic main streets, and outdoor murals—and festivals, events, and interpretive programs.

Local and ethnic foods, traditional arts and crafts, oral traditions, historical events and celebrating past ways of life all enhance the richness of the experience for the visitor.

“Use your imagination and creativity to make history and culture come alive,” says Donna Poon, Tourism Coordinator with the Tourism Product Development Branch.

Communicating the stories of the past can range from the simple to more complex: story telling by elders or seniors at a local museum, guided interpretive tours, role playing by costumed interpreters, hands-on demonstrations and reenactments.

“People want to connect, they want that emotional connection,” Donna reminds us. “Try and engage the five senses—the more the senses are engaged, the more the visitor will remember.”



*Northern Shadow Dancers, Peace River*

Some things to keep in mind:

- quality and authenticity are key
- make the experience engaging, relevant and of value to residents and visitors
- balance the needs of visitors and residents to ensure both benefit
- collaborate with others involved in culture, heritage and tourism
- ensure heritage resources are protected

## *Heritage Partnerships*

Are you looking to take your heritage attraction or festival to the next level? Consider who you can partner with.

The Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) is doing just that as they develop heritage experiences in Central Alberta, in particular at Tail Creek and in Big Valley.

At a local level, the MNA partnered with the County of Stettler and Village of Big Valley to develop camping sites with cultural exchange experiences, and to enhance interpretive information for visitors. This partnership was fostered by small land transfers from the County to the MNA for heritage projects, and with assistance from the Tourism Product Development Branch.

Regionally, the MNA has joined the Boomtown Trail and Canadian Badlands. These partnerships ensure that regional and local operators support each other in development and marketing initiatives.

“Find partners who you can collaborate with at a local and regional level to maximize success,” suggests Craig Olmstead, Aboriginal Tourism Advisor with the Tourism Product Development Branch. “Multi-level collaborations are an excellent means to focus development authentically and in context.”

For more information, contact Craig Olmstead at 780.427.0590 or [craig.olmstead@gov.ab.ca](mailto:craig.olmstead@gov.ab.ca)

## Did you know...?

Information on the US and Canadian markets for cultural tourism in Alberta is available at [tpr.alberta.ca/tourism/research/tamsalberta.aspx](http://tpr.alberta.ca/tourism/research/tamsalberta.aspx)

*Alberta* 

## Athabasca Landing Trail



May 14, 2010 marked a milestone for the Athabasca Landing Trail (ALT) with the opening of the new Redwater Bridge in Westlock County.

The bridge marks Phase One of the ALT Master Plan to develop a continuous, non-motorized recreational trail that follows a 150 km historic route between Fort Saskatchewan and Athabasca.

The Government of Alberta, five municipalities, trail operator groups, and the Alberta TrailNet Society worked together on the ALT Master Plan to help develop tourism and economic growth in the region.

“The plan is a working tool for the ALT Steering Committee and

municipalities to guide efforts in trail planning, design, construction and management,” says Paul Radchenko, Tourism Planner with the Tourism Product Development Branch. “The trail has many champions who participated in the development of the plan. Local support has been tremendous.”

Support for the trail comes from the desire to preserve and showcase the natural and cultural heritage of the original route.

The original trail was constructed in 1876 by the Hudson’s Bay Company, following a traditional First Nations route. Settlers, North-West Mounted Police and missionaries soon followed the fur traders, and stopping houses,

schools, churches and homesteads were built along the trail.

When the railway came through in 1912, communities new and old along the route thrived. With the building of Highway 2, traffic shifted away from the trail. Some parts of the historic route are no more; others are in use as rural roads and recreational trails.

“There is no shortage of history along the trail,” says Paul. “One of the primary goals of ALT—and trail-based tourism, in general—is to celebrate and share the natural and cultural history of an area.”

For more information, contact Paul Radchenko at 780.415.8743 or paul.radchenko@gov.ab.ca.



Left: New Redwater Bridge; Centre: ALT Steering Committee; Right: Wagon train at opening ceremony

## New Northern Rockies Trails Map

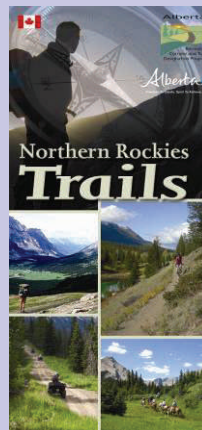
Alberta TrailNet is pleased to announce the new Northern Rockies Trails Map is now available.

The trail map highlights motorized, non-motorized and mixed-use trails from Grande Cache to White Goat Wilderness Area, and from the Alberta/BC border to Highway 40. The map also profiles historic points of interest, natural history, and wildlife and recreation opportunities.

“This is the second map in a set of provincial trail maps we are planning for Alberta,” said Linda Strong-Watson, Executive Director of Alberta TrailNet. “One of the questions we often hear is: How do I find trails for my particular activity? Providing information is an important step in helping Albertans make responsible choices.”

Alberta TrailNet produced the map in partnership with the Government of Alberta, the Alberta Snowmobile Association and the Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association. Jasper National Park, the Grande Alberta Economic Region, and

local groups and businesses provided input and support for the project.



“Projects like this contribute to the environmental, economic and social well-being of Alberta’s rural communities,” says Paul Radchenko, with the Tourism Product Development Branch. “From a planning perspective, information in the trail map—from trails to tourism attractions—helps us to identify valuable tourism and recreation areas in the province, as part of our involvement in the Land-Use Framework. We’re pleased to be part of a project with multiple benefits.”

For more information, contact Paul Radchenko at 780.415.8743 or paul.radchenko@gov.ab.ca.

## Lessons from the Crowsnest Heritage Route



Last summer, the Crowsnest Pass unveiled its Crowsnest Heritage Route – a driving and walking tour of the historic resources within the five communities of the Crowsnest Pass.

We asked Sacha Anderson, Community Futures Crowsnest Pass Coordinator, to explain how the route came to be.

**Q: Why did Crowsnest Pass develop a heritage route?**

A: Upgrades to Highway 3 resulted in traffic bypassing the historic downtowns of Crowsnest Pass communities. There was a desire to increase heritage awareness, promote historic preservation of these unique mainstreets, and to use the heritage route to divert traffic off of Highway 3 into the historic downtowns to promote tourism and increase revenues for local businesses.

**Q: Who was involved in the project?**

A: The concept for a heritage route came out of the Crowsnest Heritage Initiative (CHI). The CHI has representation from the municipality of Crowsnest Pass, the Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures, Frank Slide Interpretive Centre, community societies, special interest groups, heritage attractions and interested citizens.

**Q: How was the route developed?**

The CHI Signage Committee, chaired by Mr. Fred Bradley, took a key role. The committee has over 20 individuals and organizations and contributed over 1,900 hours to the project, including: identifying the route, promoting the concept and receiving endorsement from local and senior levels of government, developing partnerships, raising funds and finding sponsors, drafting text and reviewing interpretive sign panels, and installing route signage and interpretive panels.

**Q: How was the project funded?**

Funding came from a variety of sources, generally from grants accessed by one of

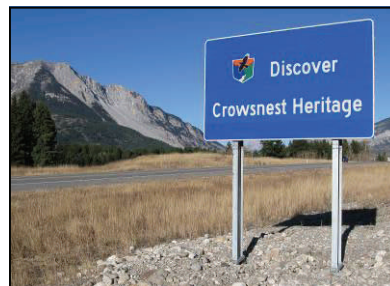
the partner societies or organizations. Individual community societies, organizations and heritage attractions have also sponsored specific initiatives within the project.

**Q: How was the route determined?**

A: The concept for the route was to follow “Old Highway Three” through the historic communities of Bellevue, Hillcrest, Blairmore and Coleman. We anchored the route around our key heritage attractions.

**Q: What was developed to create and enhance the route?**

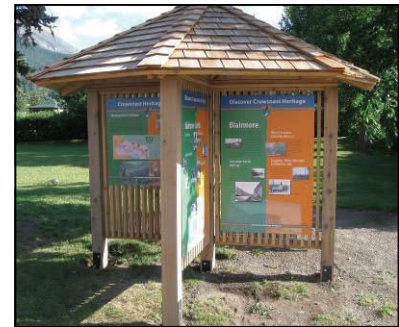
A: Gateway signs were installed at both entrances along Highway 3 to identify opportunities to “Discover Crowsnest Heritage”.



There is directional signage to show the way, as well as signs for significant points of interest off the route. All signs have the same design and theme.

We developed a tear-away map outlining the route, a full-glossy brochure to profile the route and its attractions, and launched [CrowsnestHeritage.ca](http://CrowsnestHeritage.ca) as a start of a community history theme website.

There are large in-town kiosks along the route that explain important points of history, buildings, stories and individuals.



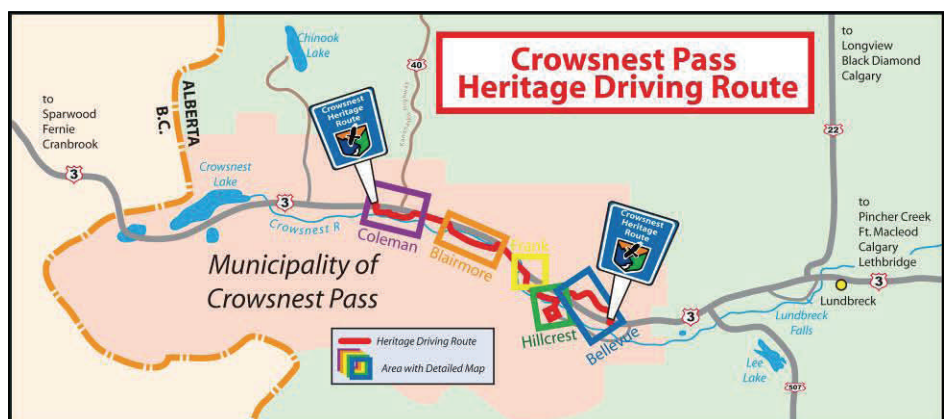
**Q: Would you consider the route a success?**

A: Overall, the route has been a success. We were pleased to receive the Chinook Country Tourist Association’s “New Idea Program Award” in 2008 for this project.

The route provided a way for us to identify all heritage components under one program, and allowed us to develop a coordinated heritage signage strategy, with a common visual identifier. This makes it easier for the travellers to recognize historical events, landmarks, stories, etc. in Crowsnest Pass.

We received positive comments from the community and the travelling public. Locals have enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about the history of their own town. The ability to more readily share our heritage has increased community pride and knowledge in our own identity. It has also helped to increase traffic through some of our downtown cores.

The CHI Signage Committee has plans to expand upon what has been currently completed. Future initiatives include in-town walking tours, walking tour brochures, heritage building plaques and a heritage book.



Photos and graphics above provided by the Crowsnest Heritage Initiative

# Showcase your heritage with a festival or event

Every year, communities across Alberta host heritage-themed festivals ranging from cowboy poetry and pioneer days to powwows and multi-cultural events. What can you do to make sure your community receives its share of festival goers?

“Tell them the unique story of your community, of its history and culture, and tell it in a unique way,” says Jennifer Starrett, Tourism Coordinator with the Tourism Product Development Branch.

The Vegreville Pysanka Festival has been doing just that for 37 years.

Traditional and contemporary Ukrainian heritage takes centre stage at this three-day event hosted by the Vegreville Cultural Association. Local, national and international artists perform at the festival’s grandstand and cultural talent shows, as well as host music and dance workshops.

“It has to be more than a show,” advises Orest Olineck, Festival Coordinator. “It has to be hands-on.”

Festival goers are invited to decorate pysanka eggs, weave rope, and make wedding bread doves that are then baked in a pich outdoor oven. Visitors can stroll the “yarmarok” market and shop for Ukrainian folk art, crafts and foods, and those of



Ukrainian ancestry can trace their roots with local historians. Even the petting zoo is tied into the heritage, featuring animals that early settlers had on their farms when first arriving in Alberta.

The Zabava evening dance is ever popular. “People come from all over to experience the evenings at the festival,” says Orest. “Many even camp overnight at our tent city or the RV park so that they don’t miss a night.”

Where does all this passion for Ukrainian heritage come from? “It’s the volunteers,” says Orest. “They make the festival possible. Everyone’s heart has to be in it.”

Coordinating volunteers is just one of the topics featured in *Setting the Stage – A Community-Based Festival and Events Planning Manual*, produced by the Tourism Product Development Branch.

The manual guides the organizing committee through the process of growing or starting a new event. Workshops based on the manual are also available and provide great opportunities for networking and shared learning.

Download the manual at [http://tpr.alberta.ca/tourism/festival\\_event\\_manual.aspx](http://tpr.alberta.ca/tourism/festival_event_manual.aspx). For more information contact Jennifer Starrett at 780.422.0957 or [jennifer.starrett@gov.ab.ca](mailto:jennifer.starrett@gov.ab.ca).

## Hello HeRMIS

**Pop Quiz:** How do you find out which buildings in your town are designated historic resources and why?

Let me introduce HeRMIS, the Heritage Management Resource Information System managed by Alberta Culture and Community Spirit.

HeRMIS is your gateway to visit Alberta’s heritage and cultural collections online ([Hermis.Alberta.ca](http://Hermis.Alberta.ca)). It houses the Alberta Register of Historic Places, a database of all the historic places designated under the province’s *Historic Resources Act*.

You can also access the collections of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Royal Alberta Museum, Royal Tyrrell Museum, Provincial Art Collections, and the Alberta Heritage Survey.

**Quiz Answer:** Go to Hermis’ Alberta Register of Historic Places. Click advanced search and enter your municipality.

For more information on Hermis, contact Matthew Wangler at 780.438.8503 or [matthew.wangler@gov.ab.ca](mailto:matthew.wangler@gov.ab.ca).

## Doing your homework

Solid research is key to a quality heritage tourism product. Here are a few sources to help you with your homework:

### People

Interview long-time residents, elders and local historians. Personal and family stories bring local history to life.

### Libraries and Archives

Visit your library and archives to access history books and archival documents. Still looking for more? The Alberta Library online ([talonline.ca](http://talonline.ca)) lets you search the catalogues of public and post-secondary libraries across Alberta.

### Heritage Organizations

Contact your local historical society or your regional chapter of the Historical Society of Alberta ([AlbertaHistory.org](http://AlbertaHistory.org)). See [AlbertaHeritage.net](http://AlbertaHeritage.net) for a directory of heritage organizations and foundations.

### Digitized Collections

Access digitized materials from museums, archives, public and private collections online. Try: Alberta’s Online Encyclopedia [AlbertaSource.ca](http://AlbertaSource.ca)

Peel’s Prairie Provinces [Peel.Library.Ualberta.ca](http://Peel.Library.Ualberta.ca)

Glenbow Museum [www.glenbow.org](http://www.glenbow.org)