



The Tourist Offer of the Whiteley Museum and its Surrounding Area on the Lower North Shore

A Quality Improvement Report

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For the Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network
(QUESCREN)

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Introduction

This report analyzes the tourist offer in the eastern part of Quebec's Lower North Shore, particularly the municipality of Bonne-Espérance, a region where English speakers make up the majority of the population. It focuses specifically on an institution in one of these municipalities, the Whiteley Museum. The report provides the authors' suggestions to improve tourism development as a means to diversify the economy, potentially help reverse demographic decline, and build community vitality.

The Lower North Shore (Basse-Côte-Nord) borders Labrador on the northeastern edge of the province of Quebec. It is a sub-region of the provincial Côte-Nord administrative region. It consists of fifteen villages grouped into five municipalities and two First Nations communities. All settlements are located on or near the approximately 500 km of coastline along the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Most of the villages have English-speaking populations, but there are also French-speaking and Innu communities in this sub-region.

The present report focuses on the six easternmost villages of the Lower North Shore, which we will refer to as the **Eastern Sector**. These six villages are grouped into two municipalities:

- Blanc-Sablon, which is composed of the villages of Bradore, Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon, and the village of Blanc-Sablon proper, and
- Bonne-Espérance, which is composed of the villages of Old Fort Bay, St. Paul's River, and Middle Bay.¹



All these villages are overwhelmingly English-speaking, with the exception of Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon, which is bilingual. Unlike most villages along the Lower North Shore, the Eastern Sector is connected by road (Route 138).

Not only do the Eastern Sector villages enjoy road connections, they abound with enough natural beauty, culture, and heritage to rival many well-trodden tourist destinations in the country. However, despite the accessibility and attractions, few tourists visit the Eastern Sector. In contrast, quite a few tourists visit nearby Labrador. The situation is all the more striking when one considers the typical visitor itinerary. Most tourists to the area arrive via the Newfoundland ferry that lands in the Eastern Sector village of Blanc Sablon. However, rather than spending much, if any, time there, they generally turn right and drive immediately to Labrador, just to the east. In 2019, for instance,

¹ Some of these villages have different official names in French (Bradore > Brador; St. Paul's River > Rivière-Saint-Paul; Old Fort Bay > Vieux-Fort). Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon is occasionally known in English as Long Point. This report uses the names most commonly used by locals.

a record-breaking 12,000 tourists visited the Red Bay UNESCO World Heritage Site in Labrador, up from 7,662 a decade earlier. Most of them arrived by car or tour bus via the ferry.² The Whiteley Museum, located in the Eastern Sector village of St. Paul's River, receives about 500 to 600 visitors most years.³ This is only 4% or 5% of Red Bay visits.

Planning documents attest to how Lower North Shore stakeholders have long identified tourism as a priority avenue to diversify the local economy. It may also help halt or reverse population decline, which intensified after a 1992 federal moratorium on cod fishing. Sustainable tourism development also has the potential of raising awareness within the communities themselves of their history, heritage, and cultural practices, thereby building “vitality of memory,” a feature of community vitality.⁴ It can help strengthen social bonds, which also encourages population retention.

In light of this situation, our report addresses the following question: **How can regional authorities encourage visitors to extend their coastal Labrador trip and drive to the end of Route 138 on the Lower North Shore?**

Context of Report

In December 2019, William Floch of the Quebec government’s Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d’expression anglaise (SRQEA) presented this question to the report authors, both staff members of the Quebec English-speaking Communities Research Network (QUESCREN). He was relaying the question from Garland Nadeau of the Whiteley Museum. Mr. Floch suggested that the report authors explore it as part of their work, supported by SRQEA funding, to help sustain communities through knowledge development.

The report authors have academic and professional backgrounds as historians with experience in managing heritage sites and projects.⁵ We agreed to look into this question with a particular focus on the Whiteley Museum and cultural/heritage tourism. Our work for the report was delayed until 2021 because of COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions.

² PAR, “Feasibility study for a rapid maritime link for passengers of the Lower-North-Shore,” Report, May 2013.

³ Information from directors of the Whiteley Museum, August 27, 2021.

⁴ Alain Roy, *From vitality to vitality of memory: Conceptual foundations of the role of memory and heritage in the vitality of official language minority communities*, (Ottawa, Library and Archives Canada, 2021).

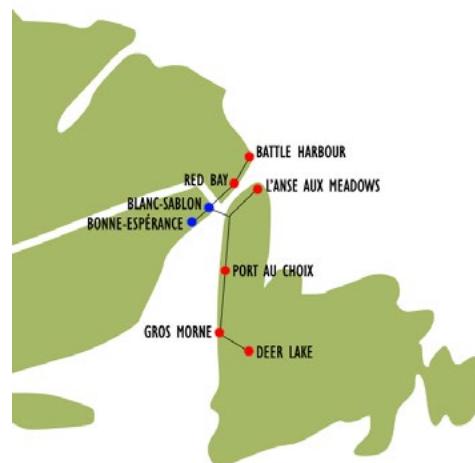
⁵ See Lorraine O’Donnell’s professional profile [here](#), and Patrick Donovan’s professional profile [here](#).

Sources of Information

We gathered information for this quality improvement report in three ways. First, we examined relevant statistics and documentation on the region's history and past tourist development efforts. Second, we carried out a field visit in August 2021. This involved flying to Deer Lake, Newfoundland, and following a typical cultural tourism itinerary for the region. We first visited the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Gros Morne, L'Anse-aux-Meadows, and Red Bay, all in Newfoundland and Labrador. We chose this route because this is how most visitors currently access the Eastern Sector, and it is also the most affordable way to get there from Quebec or Montreal. We then visited tourist sites and the Coasters Association office in the Eastern Sector, obtaining historical and tourism information from workers in these places. Third, we received additional information through emails and calls to tourism and development offices. We are grateful to people who shared this public information, some of which tends to be difficult to identify and access.⁶

In the following sections, we provide thematic summaries of our notes. We also compile key points into two **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats** (SWOT) analysis tables, one for the Eastern Sector and one for the Whiteley Museum. A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool. The technique was developed in the 1960s for business applications,⁷ but other sectors now use it as a "comprehensive way of assessing the positive and negative forces within and without" an organization or project, including community-based ones.⁸

Finally, working from the SWOT analysis, we propose a series of recommendations with a suggested timeline and possible sources of funding.



Limitations and Disclaimer

This is a modest study. Our efforts at information gathering, and our suggestions below, are not at all comprehensive. A more complete report would have compared the Lower North Shore situation with successful development stories from other coastal regions which operate in the same Quebec context, such as the Gaspé. Such a project was beyond the scope of the activities we could conduct to produce this document.

The interpretations and conclusions expressed here are the authors' and we wish to be clear that they are not necessarily those of any stakeholders or the report funder.

⁶ See list in Appendix 1.

⁷ Kuang-Cheng Wang, "A Process View of SWOT Analysis," *Proceedings of the 51st Annual Meeting of the ISSS - 2007, Tokyo, Japan* 51, no. 2 (July 31, 2007), <https://journals.issss.org/index.php/proceedings51st/article/view/470>.

⁸ Val Renault, contributor, and Jerry Schultz, editor, "SWOT Analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats," Part B, Chapter 3, Section 14 in the University of Kansas, "Community Tool Box," an online resource available at http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/section_1049.htm.

Historical Overview

The Eastern Sector of the Lower North Shore has been continuously inhabited for the past 9,000 years. **Early Indigenous communities** were drawn to its coastal resources, particularly for seal hunting in the Blanc-Sablon area. Successive Indigenous groups passed through the area, including Maritime Archaic (9000-3500 B.C.E.), Post-Archaic (3500-400 B.C.E.), Dorset (500 B.C.E.-1500 A.D.), and later the Innu and Inuit peoples.⁹

Early contacts with Europeans began long before the arrival of Jacques Cartier and the establishment of New France. Indigenous peoples in the sector may have interacted with Norse settlers in the 11th century, who established a base for exploration around 100 km east of the Eastern Sector at L'Anse-aux-Meadows, Newfoundland.¹⁰ From the early 1500s on, or perhaps earlier, thousands of Basque whalers and Breton fishermen summered along the shore. The settlement of Brest, which may have been on the site of the Eastern Sector village of Old Fort Bay, is rumoured to have been the first year-round European settlement in North America.¹¹ In addition to fishing and hunting for cod, herring, salmon, seals, and whales, the Europeans traded metal goods for furs with the Indigenous population. The Basque, whose main whaling port was in what is now called Red Bay, Labrador, also practised whaling in the Eastern Sector. Archeological traces of Basque whaling have been found at Middle Bay, on Bonne-Espérance Island, and further west. Basque whaling declined as a result of wars between European powers, conflicts with the Inuit, overfishing, and the growing territorial ambitions of New France.¹²

9 "Blanc-Sablon National Historic Site of Canada," Parks Canada Directory of Federal Heritage Designations, https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=11842.

10 No archeological evidence of interaction with the Norse has yet been found on the Lower North Shore. Birgitta Wallace, "L'Anse aux Meadows," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last modified March 2, 2018, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/lanse-aux-meadows>.

11 Many documentary sources from the period attest to the existence of Brest, some more reliable than others, but no archeological evidence has yet been found confirming its precise location. See: Josiane Gueguen, "De Brest à Brest (Québec), bientôt un film," *Ouest-France*, April 12, 2008; "La petite histoire du village de Brest, en Basse-Côte-Nord" [radio broadcast], *Radio-Canada*, January 12, 2021.

12 Érik Phaneuf, "Underwater Archaeological Assessment of the Lower North Shore: A Portrait of Basque and Shipwreck Heritage in Bonne Espérance," AECOM project 60626982, Report presented to the Association pour le développement du tourisme (ADT), January 2021, 16; Daniel Weiss, "When the Inuit met the Basques," *Archaeology* 71, No. 5 (September/October 2018), 40; Mary Richardson, *Community Portrait of Bonne-Espérance* ([Quebec]: Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), September 2012), 11-12.

The **New France** period began formally with the 1534 voyage of Jacques Cartier from France. He dismissed the arid Lower North Shore as the “land God gave to Cain.”¹³ From the 1650s, the French divided the territory into concessions—or trading monopolies—dedicated to sealing, fishing, and the fur trade.¹⁴ The French concessionaires were present only in the summer, if at all, and often delegated the work to contract employees. The French had generally harmonious relationships with the Innu but had frequent conflicts with the Inuit. Fort Pontchartrain, established in 1704 by Augustin Legardeur de Courtemanche, was the closest thing to a settlement during the New France period. It had an enclosed fort, a dozen buildings, and seasonal Innu encampments. Courtemanche, who lived there year-round with his family, became commandant for the king with military authority over the whole coast. He employed about thirty Innu families in his concession.¹⁵

After the **British conquest of 1760**, British and Channel Islands merchants and companies replaced French concessionaires.

Permanent settlement in the area began in earnest in the 1820s. This occurred with the bankruptcy of the Labrador New Concern, which owned many posts along the coast. Company holdings were subdivided and sold to seasonal employees, who established themselves on the coast year-round. Most of these settlers were English-speaking, but there were also some French speakers, and intermarriage took place with Indigenous peoples. Many families from Newfoundland migrated to the region from the 1870s and 1880s on, and this had a significant influence on the spoken language and culture that endures to this day.¹⁶

A unique lifestyle developed along the coast. The permanent settlers owned both summer and winter dwellings, the former close to the sea for fishing and the latter further inland where wood, game, and shelter from the cold were more easily obtained. They migrated each year between their summer waterfront establishments and their cold-season homes. This practice, known as “**transhumance**,” was probably borrowed from the Innu. Residents fished, hunted, trapped, gathered eggs, picked berries, and grew root vegetables. They got around by boat and dog sled (komatik). This lifestyle continued well into the 1960s.¹⁷

13 “Land God Gave to Cain,” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last modified March 7, 2014, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/land-god-gave-to-cain>.

14 There was also one seigneurie amidst the concessions in the Eastern Sector: the Saint-Paul's River seigneurie was named after its first seigneur Amador Godefroy de Saint-Paul in 1706. Paul Charest, “Les Nord-Côtiers: peuplement de la partie orientale de la Côte-Nord du golfe du Saint-Laurent” in *Atlas Historique du Québec : Le Nord*, ed. Gérard Duhaime (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001), 26 <https://atlas.cieq.ca/lenord/les-nord-cotiers-peuplement-de-la-partie-orientale-de-la-cote-nord-du-golfe-du-saintlaurent.pdf>.

15 Amanda Crompton, “They Have Gone Back to Their Country”: French landscapes and Inuit encounters in 18th century southern Labrador,” *Études/Inuit/Studies* 39, no. 1 (2015): 119-120, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1036080ar>; “Le Site archéologique de la concession de Brador (EiBh-34),” Archéo Topo, undated, <http://www.archeotopo.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/BradorREVU.pdf>; Bill Rompkey, *The Story of Labrador* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 24.

16 Cleophas Belvin, *The Forgotten Labrador: Kegashka to Blanc-Sablon* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 67-72; Charest, “Les nord-côtiers,” op. cit., 31.

17 Belvin, *The Forgotten Labrador*, *ibid*.

William Henry “Bossy” Whiteley owned an important fishing post in the Eastern Sector. It was on Bonne-Espérance Island, which is known locally as “Bony Island,” or simply “Bony.” Born in Boston in 1834, Whiteley moved to the coast as a child, and started his fishing enterprise in 1855. After inheriting money from a great uncle, he invested considerable sums into expanding his facilities, which came to employ 156 people. Around 1866, Whiteley also invented the **cod trap**. This was a large box-shaped net of twine that could be anchored to the bottom of the sea at its four corners. It revolutionized the cod fishing industry worldwide. Whiteley’s descendants continued to manage the business until 1945, when they sold it to the Standard Fish Company of Montreal. It closed shortly after and all the buildings were lost in a fire.¹⁸

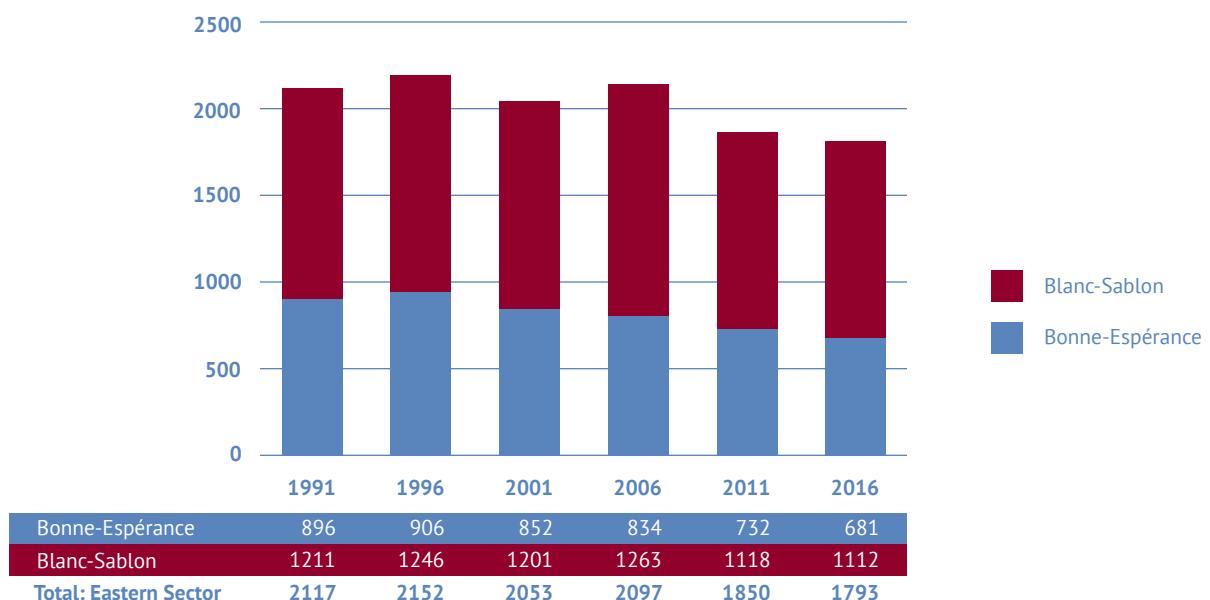
Many changes to traditional lifestyles occurred in the latter half of the **20th century**. The practice of transhumance gradually declined between the 1930s and the 1970s. Permanent, year-round communities, such as the village of St. Paul’s River, began to appear. There was also a forced relocation of the Innu in the 1960s, who previously had seasonal camps along St. Paul’s River. Snowmobiles replaced dog sleds in the 1960s. Electricity, telephones, and television came soon after. Schools were built along the coast, and provincial programs set up to allow people to complete their high school education off the coast. The road in the Eastern Sector, Route 138, was begun in the 1950s, reaching St. Paul’s River in 1977 and Old Fort Bay in 1985.¹⁹

A crucial event leading to even more change was the **1990s collapse of Atlantic codfish stocks**. This led the federal government to impose a series of **moratoria** on fishing, starting in 1992. Since then, locals estimate, half the region’s adult population leaves the coast at some time during the year to obtain seasonal employment elsewhere. Among the many negative effects of this change is young people growing up with limited parental supervision.²⁰

- 18 Shannon Ryan, “Whiteley, William Henry,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/whiteley_william_henry_13E.html; “The Whiteleys,” Whiteley Museum [archived website], <http://web.archive.org/web/20140426150632/http://www.whiteleymuseum.com/whiteleys.asp?id=2>; Belvin, *The Forgotten Labrador*, *op. cit.*, 92; Conversation with Garland Nadeau, August 31, 2021.
- 19 Louise Abbott, *The Coast Way* (Montreal and Kingston: Mc-Gill Queen’s University Press, 1988), 12; Charest, “Les nord-côtiers,” *op. cit.*, 33; Randy Jones, “Mémoire présenté au comité permanent des transports, de l’infrastructure et des collectivités de la chambre des communes,” May 14, 2019, <https://www.noscommunes.ca/Content/Committee/421/TRAN/Brief/BR10518460/br-external/MunicipalityOfGrosMecatina-f.pdf>; Conversation with Garland Nadeau, August 29, 2021, and August 31, 2021.
- 20 Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, “The English-Speaking Community of Lower North Shore,” produced during the action-research on: Vitality Indicators for Official Language Minority Communities 2: Three English-Speaking Communities in Quebec, Ottawa, 2008, 3.

Many other people leave but never come back. The fishery collapse triggered an alarming **population decline** along the Lower North Shore. In the Eastern Sector, the decline was 15% between 1991 and 2016. The municipality of Bonne-Espérance, which has fewer service economy and public sector jobs than Blanc-Sablon, was hit especially hard, losing 24% of its population (Figure 1). The youngest and most educated people are more likely to leave, and they leave behind a population that is increasingly elderly and vulnerable.²¹

**Figure 1 - Population Change in the Eastern Sector,
Lower North Shore, Quebec, 1991-2016**



Source: Census of Canada, 1991-2016

²¹ Charest, "Les nord-côtiers," *op. cit.*, 36.

Tourism Development in the Eastern Sector

Fluctuating prices for sea products always created uncertainty around the fishing industry, but since the 1990s fishery collapse, the need to diversify the region's economy has become obvious. From that point forward, tourism has been identified as one way to do so in the Eastern Sector. It is also seen as a potential means of stemming the population decline.

The tourism potential of the Eastern Sector is clear. This is the result of several opportunities and strengths, including its unique culture and history, beautiful landscapes, and proximity to major attractions in Newfoundland and Labrador. However, weaknesses and challenges also exist. Positive and negative factors are presented below.

Location: Advantages and disadvantages

The Eastern Sector is **difficult and expensive to reach from most of Quebec** and **therefore seems formidably remote**. Return flights from Montreal to Blanc-Sablon ranged between \$1,400 and \$3,000 in 2021²² and involved multiple stopovers and potential weather delays. It is easier and cheaper for tourists to fly to many other, more far-flung destinations. By car, Blanc-Sablon is a 2,450-km drive from Montreal via Labrador's Trans-Labrador highway, with some sections along bumpy gravel roads. It is therefore suited for adventurous travellers with lots of time at their disposal. There is a more direct route via the Bella Desgagnés cargo ferry that travels the St. Lawrence River along the Lower North Shore. This weekly ferry is infrequent, expensive,²³ and slow, has short stopovers, and still requires a 1,300-km drive from Montreal. Most tourists take this ferry as a two-way return trip. The stopover in Blanc Sablon is only five hours, allowing little time for excursions in the Eastern Sector. Access from the rest of Quebec to the Eastern Sector is facilitated in winter with the **Route Blanche snowmobile trail**, which links all Lower North Shore communities and attracts tourists. However, most of the cultural/heritage attractions are closed at this time of year, and **global warming appears to have reduced the required snow cover for the Route Blanche in recent years**.²⁴ In short, the Lower North Shore quite likely strikes many Quebecers as formidably remote and unrealistic to visit (or develop) as a tourist destination.

On the other hand, the Eastern Sector villages are **linked to each other via Route 138, and to Labrador by highways**. This is a significant advantage. For much of the rest of the coast, no roads connect villages to each other or the rest of Canada. This is the case for eight of the nine westernmost villages and the two First Nations communities of the Lower North Shore.

22 Information obtained from Google Flights in August 2021, <https://www.google.com/travel/flights>.

23 Packages ranged from \$701 to \$1,056 return from Natashquan in 2021. See Relais Nordik, <http://relaisnordik.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Rate-card-for-PACKAGES-2021-EN.pdf>.

24 Alexandre Cantin, "Changements climatiques: pas de route blanche," Journal de Quebec, January 27, 2021, <https://www.journaldequebec.com/2021/01/27/changements-climatiques-pas-de-route-blanche-1>.

The villages lacking connecting roads have to be reached instead by watercraft, including privately owned boats or infrequent and expensive cargo boats, by plane, and by snowmobile in winter.

Thus, the Eastern Sector is **connected to a well-visited tourist route in Newfoundland and Labrador**. The roads from Newfoundland are well paved, and the car ferry between Newfoundland and Labrador is inexpensive. Moreover, a more convenient tunnel under the Strait of Belle Isle may eventually replace it.²⁵ The Eastern Sector is an easy detour off a Newfoundland and Labrador tourist trail that includes three well-visited UNESCO World Heritage sites: Gros Morne, L'Anse-aux-Meadows, and Red Bay. It is therefore positioned to benefit immediately from an existing and growing influx of tourists to nearby areas. Indeed, most visitors to the Lower North Shore arrive through Newfoundland, coming from Quebec, Canada, and beyond. As shown in Table 1 below, some 200,000 visitors start off in Gros Morne National Park. Going north, numbers drop to around 35,000 at L'Anse aux Meadows, and 10,000 to 12,000 make it across the strait to Red Bay in Labrador. There is also Battle Harbour, a privately managed site with a federal designation as a national historic site. It is an island located further northeast along the Labrador coast. Battle Harbour measures its visitors in person/nights, and it recorded 1,600 visitor/nights in recent years. While sites managed by Parks Canada receive more visitors, tourists going to Battle Harbour spend considerably more money onsite. Tour packages are mandatory to access the Battle Harbour island, and each visitor spends a per-night average of \$400-\$500, most of which stays in the community or is invested in site preservation.

While this may not seem like a huge market in global tourism terms—for instance, Montreal attracted 11.1 million tourists in 2019²⁶—a few thousand visitors can make a significant impact in the context of communities with only a few hundred residents.

Table 1: Approximate Number of Annual Visitors in Recent Years (pre-COVID-19)

| Site | Province | Visitors |
|---|----------|---|
| Gros Morne National Park (2017/18-2019/20 average) | NL | 236,257 |
| Port au Choix National Historic Site (2017/18-2019/20 average)* | NL | 15,780 |
| L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site (2017/18-2019/20 average) | NL | 35,450 |
| Blanc Sablon tourist information centre | QC | 2,000-3,000 |
| Whiteley Museum | QC | 800-1,500 local visits, 500-600 non-local tourists |
| Red Bay National Historic Site (2017/18-2019/20 average) | NL | 10,990 |
| Battle Harbour Historic District National Historic Site | NL | 1,600 person/nights |

Source: Statista, www.statista.com; Information from Garland Nadeau (Whiteley Museum) and Peter Bull (Battle Harbour Historic District National Historic Site of Canada).

²⁵ Geoff Bartlett, "Build the Tunnel: It's Time for Newfoundland to Dig Itself out of Food Insecurity," *CBC News*, April 5, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/pov-fixed-link-food-security-1.5520172>.

²⁶ Tourisme Montréal, "Bilan touristique annuel 2019 à Montréal," <https://toolkit.mtl.org/bynder/media/AD5A7131-00D8-463E-A7F5FFB28D104588/download?filename=Bilan-annuel-2019&extension=pdf>.

What is more, while the province of Newfoundland and Labrador was once considered “off the beaten track,” there has been a significant increase in visitor numbers at all these sites in the past ten years. Table 2 shows visitor increases ranging from 28% to 74% at the Parks Canada sites. **This visitor increase to the neighbouring province bodes well for tourism development in the Eastern Sector of Quebec’s Lower North Shore.**²⁷

Table 2: Percentage Increase in Annual Visitors, 2010-2020

| Site | % increase |
|--|------------|
| Gros Morne National Park | 29% |
| Port au Choix National Historic Site | 74% |
| L’Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site | 28% |
| Red Bay National Historic Site (2017/18-2019/20 average) | 50% |

Source: Statista, www.statista.com, 2010/11-2012/13 average compared to 2017/18-2019/20 average

Visitor numbers from Quebec may also increase in the medium term if infrastructure development makes the region more accessible. **Completing Route 138, which already connects the Eastern Sector villages, would facilitate access to the rest of the province.** Several gaps in Route 138 are currently being bridged.²⁸ The Quebec government’s goal is to eventually link all the communities, but there are no firm plans or a timetable. In 2013, PAR Conseils & Stratégies pour l’Avenir des régions completed a feasibility study for a **rapid maritime link** along the Lower North Shore; however, their proposed project allowed for the transportation of only 24 passengers per day, which would have a minor impact on tourist numbers.²⁹ The **recent arrival of low-cost airlines in Canada** like Swoop and Flair may eventually make the Lower North Shore a more affordable destination to get to in the medium-term. However, this is not currently the case and will not be so until the infrastructure is in place to welcome larger visitor numbers. Neither of these airlines currently flies to Newfoundland, Labrador or eastern Quebec.³⁰

Improved access must be developed in tandem with improved local infrastructure. This issue is discussed further below.

27 Statista, <http://www.statista.com>.

28 “De nouveaux tronçons de la route 138 devraient être achevés en 2025,” *Radio-Canada*, June 10, 2021, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1800530/route138-village-voie-pavage-economie>.

29 PAR, “Feasibility Study for a rapid maritime link for passengers of the Lower-North-Shore,” Report, May 2013, 26.

30 A new twice-weekly low-cost route on Flair will begin in June 2022. “Deer Lake Airport Secures New Twice-Weekly Flight to Ontario,” *CBC News*, December 3, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/deer-lake-flair-1.6273093>.

Stunning Landscapes: A natural starting point

The road connecting the villages of the Eastern Sector of the Lower North Shore is arguably **the most scenic drive for miles around**, and it struck us as the sector's greatest tourism asset. It boasts a dramatic coastline with steep rounded mountains, views stretching out along bays with thousands of islands, sandy white beaches, curving roads with thrilling ups and downs, and multicoloured tundra mosses interspersed with coloured patches of wild berries. The stunning views along the road are reason enough to justify a detour for those disembarking from the Newfoundland ferry. Comparable in beauty is Gros Morne National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site on the island of Newfoundland. It draws over 130,000 visitors per year.³¹ In comparison, from our perspective, the drive through much of the rest of northern Newfoundland as well as coastal Labrador is less dramatic. For some 300 km north of Gros Morne, the coast of Newfoundland's northern peninsula is relatively flat, boglike, windswept, and covered in patches of dwarf evergreen trees. The southern coast of Labrador has more variations in elevation and scenery, but its mountains tend to be long and flat.



View from Granny's Hill trail at the end of the road in Old Fort Bay, Quebec. Credit: Patrick Donovan

31 Information from Garland Nadeau and Eileen Schofield (Whiteley Museum).



View from Granny's Hill trail at the end of the road in Old Fort Bay, Quebec. Credit: Patrick Donovan

In our view, there is **enough scenery in the Eastern Sector to consider the creation of a provincial or a federal national park**. Such a park would inject the necessary resources to develop and maintain trails, campgrounds, sea kayaking facilities, access to outlying islands, and other modern infrastructure, while also providing jobs for local people. In fact, a feasibility study for a national park is part of the tourism action plan for the Lower North Shore developed by the Coasters Association in 2017.³² However, the question needs to be asked: **do residents have reservations about the development of national parks**, for instance out of concern about protecting access to land resources (the traditional hunting, fishing, and berry-picking grounds)? Clearly, residents would need to remain vigilant and engaged in any process to create a park and would do well to consider a co-creation model³³ for park development. This would ensure that land resource access is protected and that profits and jobs stay in communities.

32 Lower North Shore Tourism Plan 2017, Coasters Association.

33 For information on co-creation models, see Monique St. Pierre, "An Architectural Toolkit for Complex Sites: Exploring Co-Creation with Community Stakeholders," (Master diss., Carleton University, Ottawa, 2016), 93, <https://curve.carleton.ca/71e91fb0-0fe1-44ac-b74b-bfbfb0c79c07>.

Heritage Assets

The Eastern Sector has **unique heritage assets and archeological sites**. There is also **a considerable knowledge base on this heritage to draw from**, both locally and beyond the region.

Archeological Sites

The Sector's Breton and New France heritage is interesting. Existing documentary evidence attests that the more important 16th- to 18th-century French settlements were on the Quebec side of the current border with Labrador. Vestiges from the 16th-century Breton fishing port of Brest may be located within this sector. Nothing of Brest has yet been found, and its importance was likely exaggerated in documentary sources,³⁴ but even the story of this exaggeration is interesting in itself, and warrants public interpretation. The 18th-century settlement around Fort Pontchartrain has been partially excavated, though further excavation has been impossible because of private dwellings built atop it.³⁵ Clearly, **more work is needed to develop interpretation** around these two historical settlements.

That said, **most of the existing major historic sites in the broader region are elsewhere**, in Newfoundland and Labrador. Parks Canada built elaborate interpretation centres to house artefacts at three designated National Historic Sites along the Gulf of St. Lawrence, with tourism-related businesses and coastal walking trails around each site:

- Port au Choix National Historic Site of Canada was designated primarily for its **pre-contact** archeological interest, notably its Maritime Archaic cemetery from 3,300-4,400 years ago and a later Palaeo-Eskimo habitation site.³⁶
- L'Anse-aux-Meadows National Historic Site of Canada / UNESCO World Heritage Site is the only known **Norse** site in the Americas, and the earliest evidence of European habitation on the continent.³⁷
- Red Bay National Historic Site of Canada / UNESCO World Heritage Site was the main 16th-century **Basque** whaling port in North America. The interpretation centre displays impressive remains of whaling boats and a wealth of 16th-century archeological artefacts unrivalled along the shore.³⁸

34 "La petite histoire du village de Brest, en Basse-Côte-Nord," Radio-Canada, January 25, 2021, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/ohdio/premiere/emissions/boreale-138/segments/chronique/340657/histoire-supercherie-brest-basse-cote-nord-jesuites>.

35 "Le Site archéologique de la concession de Brador (EiBh-34)," Archeotopo, <http://www.archeotopo.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/BradorREVU.pdf>.

36 "Port au Choix National Historic Site of Canada," Canadian Register of Historic Places, <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=11464&pid=0>.

37 "L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site of Canada," Canadian Register of Historic Places, <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=4219&pid=0>.

38 "Red Bay National Historic Site of Canada," Canadian Register of Historic Places, <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=14409&pid=0>.



Reconstructed Norse dwelling at L'Anse aux Meadows. Credit: Patrick Donovan



16th-century Basque chalupa at Red Bay. Credit: Patrick Donovan

The Eastern Sector of the Lower North Shore has many archeological sites, but most are more modest than those of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The only national historic site in the Eastern Sector is the Blanc-Sablon National Historic Site of Canada. It is designated primarily for its pre-contact archeological vestiges.³⁹ Do these vestiges differ significantly enough from those at Port au Choix to justify the creation of another Parks Canada site about pre-contact civilizations? Perhaps, though someone needs to make that case. The Eastern Sector's early post-contact sites are more modest in scope than those of Newfoundland and Labrador. Terracotta tiles and other artefacts from smaller Basque whaling stations were found there, along with Indigenous dwellings from the post-contact period. However, in our understanding, they do not outrank those of Red Bay, with its UNESCO-endorsed claim to be “the earliest, most complete and best preserved testimony of the European whaling tradition.”⁴⁰

Built Heritage

In our view, the built heritage of the entire region of the northern Gulf of St. Lawrence has only limited tourist appeal. The tendency has been to rebuild rather than restore. Most buildings are either recent or have lost their historic integrity over the years. There are occasional examples of interesting coastal architecture (lighthouses, fishing stages), but these are in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly the complex around Point Amour Lighthouse National Historic Site.⁴¹ There are also well-preserved buildings associated with Sir Wilfred Grenfell.⁴² However, the villages themselves generally have no historic walkable core and tend to sprawl. The one notable exception to all this is Battle Harbour, but again, this is in Labrador, two hours northeast of the Eastern Sector. Battle Harbour is known as the “Capital of Labrador.” A National Historic District, it is a stunningly beautiful and well-preserved 19th- and early 20th century fishing outport. The Eastern Sector has nothing to rival it. That said, the three villages of Bonne-Espérance boast attractive walkable cultural landscapes around the bays with seaside boardwalks and some older buildings. There are also some interesting older buildings on the outlying islands and on Salmon Bay that serve as a reminder of the special culture of transhumance.

39 “Blanc-Sablon National Historic Site of Canada,” Canadian Register of Historic Places, <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=15814&pid=0”; “Port au Choix National Historic Site of Canada,” Canadian Register of Historic Places, https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=11464&pid=0.>

40 “Red Bay Basque Whaling Station,” UNESCO, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1412/>.

41 “Point Amour Lighthouse,” Canadian Register of Historic Places, <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=20377&pid=0>.

42 “Louie A. Hall,” Canadian Register of Historic Places, <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=2193&pid=0”; “Grenfell House,” Canadian Register of Historic Places, https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=2324&pid=0; “Grenfell Shed and Wharf Municipal Heritage Site,” Canadian Register of Historic Places, https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=5747&pid=0.>



Fishing stages in Middle Bay, Quebec. Credit: Patrick Donovan



Battle Harbour, Labrador. Credit: Patrick Donovan



Point Amour Lighthouse and Battle Harbour, Labrador. Credit: Patrick Donovan

Intangible Heritage

Again in our view, in the Eastern Sector, and indeed the whole Lower North Shore, **the greatest heritage asset is the intangible living heritage: people and their lived traditions.** The Lower North Shore is very culturally rich.

Remarkably, a technology-free life of transhumance and dog sleds remains within living memory. Each Lower North Shore community has its tradition-bearers and storytellers wanting to share their knowledge. Moreover, they do so with unique voices. It is said that “each community has its own accent and terminology” blending French, English and Innu.⁴³ This makes the Lower North Shore similar to Newfoundland and Labrador, identified as having “the most dialects per capita of any region in the world.”⁴⁴

43 Serena Etheridge, editor, “Expressions of Coastal Culture: A Collection of Words and Sayings That Reflect the Unique Way of Life Along Quebec’s Lower North Shore” ([Montreal]: Quebec Labrador Foundation, 2016).

44 Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism, “Exploring the Complexity of Language and Dialects on The Rock,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/adv/article-the-complexity-of-language-and-dialects-on-the-rock/>.

Tourism Infrastructure in the Eastern Sector

Overview

The tourism **infrastructure in the Eastern Sector has improved** in recent decades, but **not at the same pace or with the same level of investment as in Newfoundland and Labrador.**

Today, the tourist offer of the Eastern Sector has the following elements, many of which did not exist prior to the 1992 cod moratorium:

- A modest welcome centre near the crossroads from the Labrador ferry
- A network of natural trails and boardwalks highlighting the magnificent landscape, and a few roadside pullovers beside natural attractions (L'Anse aux Dunes beach, Bradore Falls, St. Paul's River overlook, Baie de Brador Migratory Bird Sanctuary overlook)
- Interpretative trails with panels near the more important archeological sites (Indigenous sites in Blanc-Sablon, Basque sites in Middle Bay)
- An outdoor Roman Catholic shrine in Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon with a mariners' rosary walk, Stations of the Cross, and a hilltop shrine area with good views. It is attractive to pilgrims and members of the public interested in the traditional religious culture of Roman Catholics.
- Three interpretation centres focusing on history: the Monseigneur Scheffer Museum, the Middle Bay Interpretation Centre, and the Whiteley Museum
- Several agrotourism initiatives selling products from the sea,⁴⁵ including the well-organized Aqua Labadie scallop farm offering tastings and pontoon tours
- Informal boat excursions to nearby bays and islands to observe birds and sea mammals, enjoy the scenery, discover the built heritage (lighthouses, fishing stages, etc.), or hike, fish, hunt, dig clams, and pick berries
- Five small hotels/bed-and-breakfast establishments representing fewer than 50 units, and one free 9-unit public campground
- A handful of restaurants offering casual dining options
- Wintertime opportunities for cross-country skiing, ice fishing, snowmobiling, and a carnival



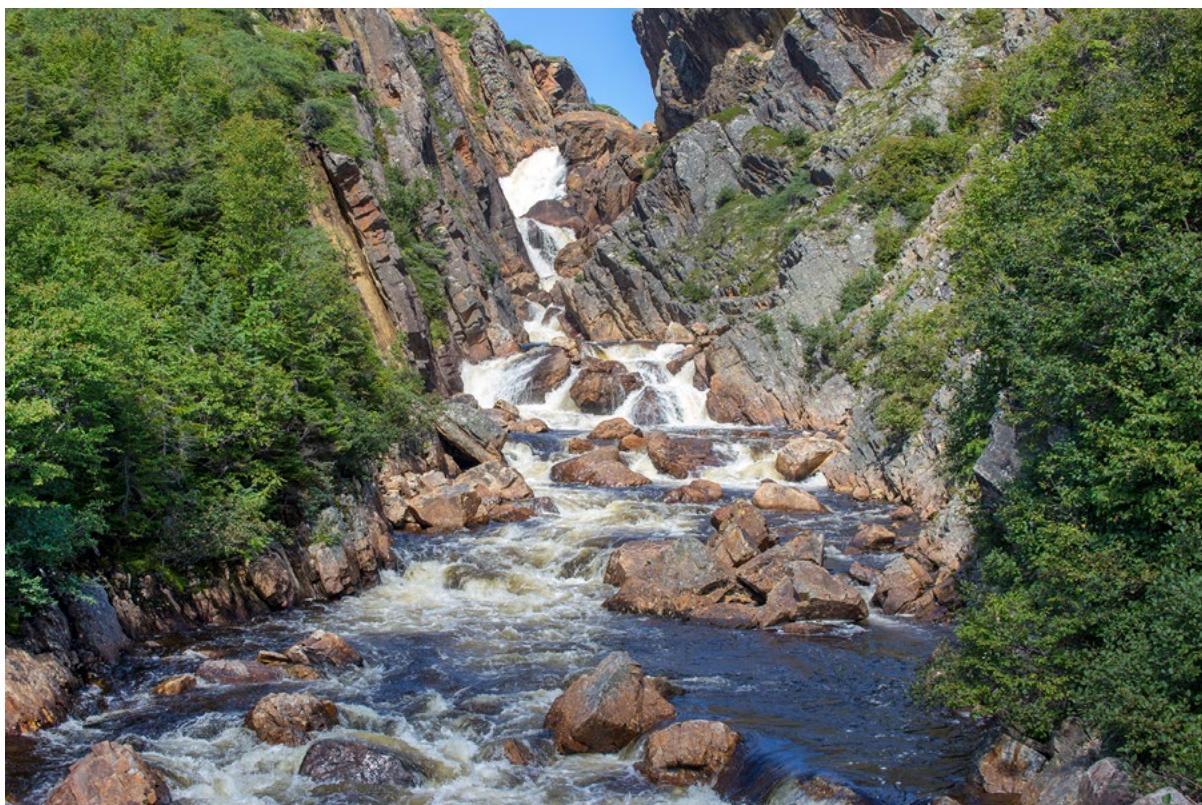
Welcome Centre, Blanc-Sablon and L'Anse aux Dunes beach. Credit: Patrick Donovan

⁴⁵ There is also potential for agrotourism related to berries, but the Lower North Shore Bioproducts Solidarity Cooperative seems currently focused largely on exporting for the more lucrative cosmetics trade.



Tourism Development in the Eastern Sector

Shrine, Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon. Credit: Patrick Donovan



Bradore Falls. Credit: Patrick Donovan

Overall, the **current lodging capacity in the Eastern Sector, particularly in Bonne-Espérance, is limited**. Can existing infrastructure (water capacity, septic tanks/fields, etc.) accommodate the building of more lodging? We lacked such information in preparing this report; clearly it would be needed for comprehensive development planning. Such elements would have to be built simultaneously with the transport infrastructure.

A cautionary tale to many along the coast is the case of Kegaska, located at the end of Route 138 in the western section of the Lower North Shore. When the road was extended there in 2013, it was not accompanied by enough corresponding improvements of the municipality's water and lodging infrastructure, or by the addition of public washrooms or a parking lot at the

end of the road for winter snowmobilers. The visitors leave behind problems (trash, overburdened septic fields, roads clogged with parked cars), not just money. Has this affected the perception of tourism as a way forward on the coast?⁴⁶

Heritage Corridors: From the Jacques Cartier Trail to the Chicoutai Trail

There have been several projects to create **a heritage corridor that would link all these elements and brand the Eastern Sector**, but **recent efforts have not always built on excellent work done in the past**. What is more, **the projects all cover the same path with different names and themes, creating a confusing message to tourists**.

Heritage corridors aim to link “natural, cultural and recreational resources to form a cohesive and distinctive landscape.”⁴⁷ Heritage corridors have been used elsewhere to encourage tourism, build linkages locally and develop local knowledge of a region’s assets.

The first and most ambitious attempt along the Eastern Sector was the creation of **the Jacques Cartier Trail** spearheaded by the Quebec Labrador Foundation (QLF). The QLF was founded in 1961 to support the rural communities and environment of eastern Canada, but has since shifted its mandate to focus elsewhere. The QLF was involved in more than 60 heritage-related projects from the 1990s until 2018. These aimed to ensure that people could preserve local knowledge, promote regional cultural heritage, and develop heritage tourism and local employment. In 1999, the municipalities of the Eastern Sector worked with the QLF to develop a heritage corridor. The project aimed to create a visitor’s centre near the ferry terminal in Blanc-Sablon, and 15 sites with interpretative panels along Route 138. Despite the name of the trail, the content of the panels went beyond the 16th-century French explorer to cover the region’s multiple identities and natural heritage. A survey conducted at the time showed 94% local support for the project, and many local residents were involved in the creation of the content. By 2001, \$395,000 had been obtained from public and private sources to develop this corridor.⁴⁸

46 “Kegaska Connection: Preparing for Tourists,” *CBC Radio One*, 2016, audio, <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2686124236>

47 Quoted in John Hull, “The Role of Heritage Corridor Development in Canada’s Sub-Arctic, Promoting Identity Networks and Innovation on the Lower North Shore of Quebec,” in *Transforming the Local: Coping Strategies and Regional Policies*, ed. Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt and Nils Aarsæther (Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, 2001), 163.

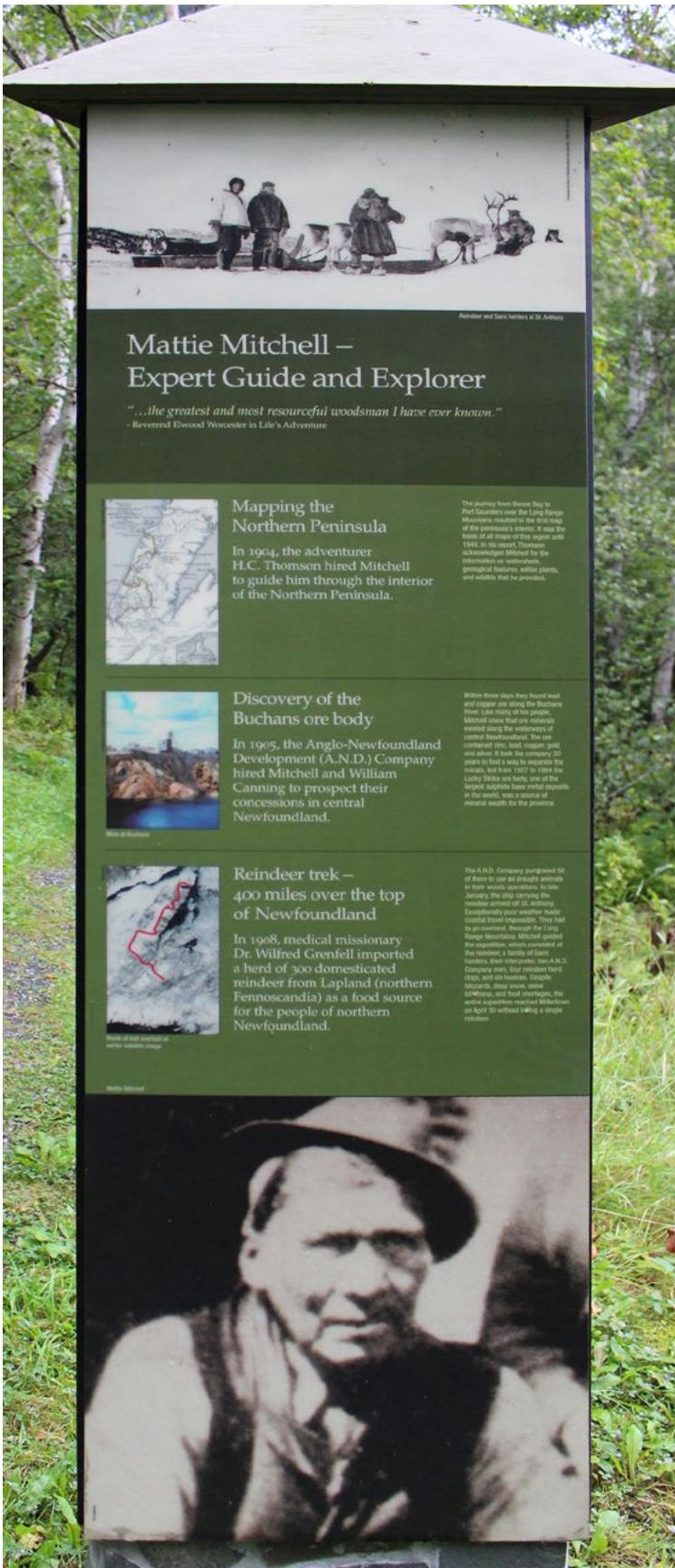
48 Hull, “The Role of Heritage Corridor Development in Canada’s Sub-Arctic,” *op. cit.*, 161-174.

The Jacques Cartier Trail project evolved over time. Panels were eventually produced and installed. Fifteen additional new panels were added in 2008 along the rest of the Lower North Shore.⁴⁹ A map was eventually produced (see below).



In our view, the panels themselves are very informative, if a bit too wordy judging by recent interpretation trends. More modern interpretation panels use features like QR codes linked to websites with more information for those wanting it, and font/color hierarchies for visitors seeking just the headlines (see example below from Gros Morne National Park). The limited color contrasts also hinder accessibility for people with visual impairments.

⁴⁹ Pointing Northeast (Spring 2008), 3, https://www qlf org/publication_files/qlf_canada/pointing_north-east_2008.pdf.

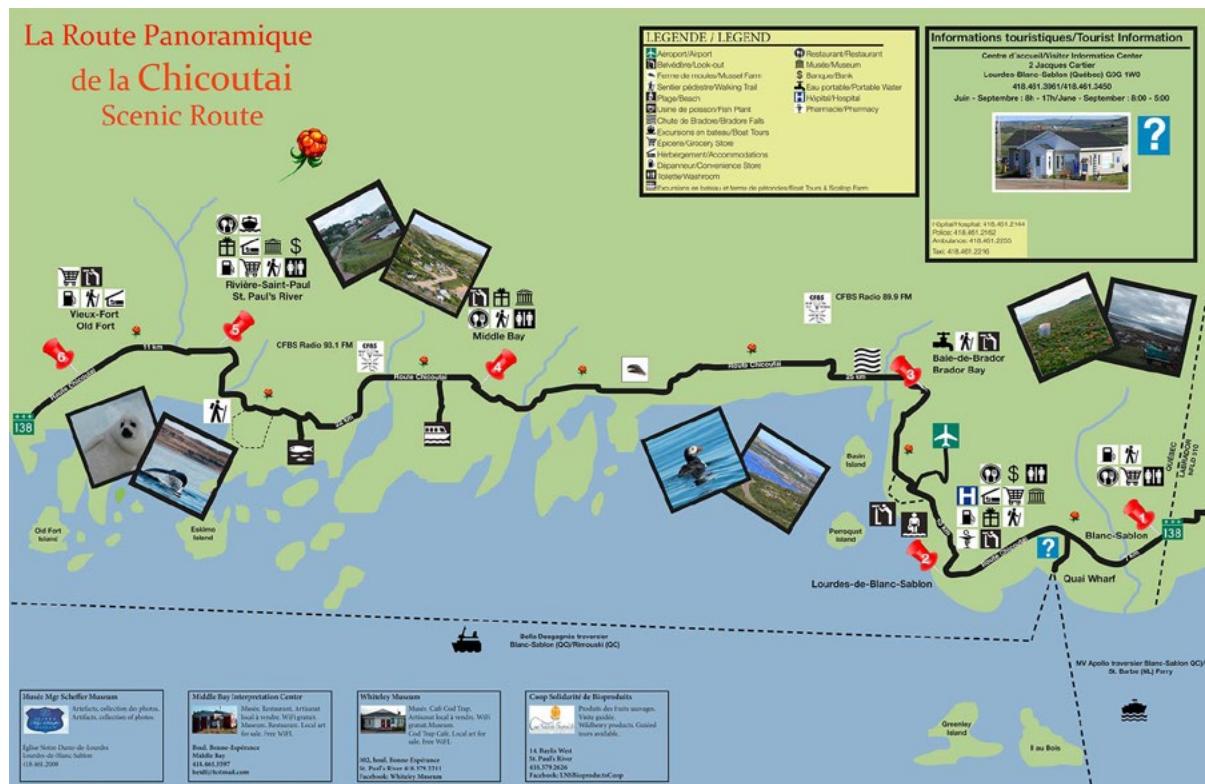


The Tourist Offer of the Whiteley Museum and its Surrounding Area on the Lower North Shore

Example of a panel at Gros Morne National Park that makes use of font hierarchies for readers with different attention spans. Separate panels in English, French, and Mi'kmaq on the same triangular post limits wordiness on each panel. Credit: Patrick Donovan

Although many of the project's panels are still present, their locations are a mystery to visitors, since we found that **the trail map is no longer being actively promoted and cannot easily be obtained** (it is “buried” on the Internet). Some panel locations are difficult to access and overgrown by weeds.

Local stakeholders created a Lower North Shore Tourism Ad Hoc Table in the past decade and sought to rebrand the heritage corridor. In their proposal, the trail would no longer be based on the 16th-century French explorer who, as previously mentioned, had dismissed the Lower North Shore as “the land God gave to Cain.” They instead proposed renaming the trail after a local berry: the **Chicoutai Scenic Route**. The new initiative did not rebrand the existing Jacques Cartier Trail panels with this new name or build on the years of work it took to create them. Instead, it produced a new map that does not show the location of the Jacques Cartier Trail interpretative panels. In our view, this map has shortcomings in graphic design and tourism-related content.



Adding to the layers of trails (and, in our view, to the potential confusion of tourists), the signage at the Blanc Sablon ferry crossroads refers to Route 138 as the **Route des Baleines** (see picture). This is the official name of the tourist route designated by the provincial Ministère du Tourisme.⁵⁰ However, the provincial tourism website promotes this route as beginning in Tadoussac (970 km west of Blanc-Sablon) and ending in Natashquan (350 km west of Blanc-Sablon);⁵¹ in other words, as not including the Eastern Sector at all! This may signal a **disconnect between provincial authorities and the Lower North Shore over the Route des Baleines.**



Crossroads at the exit of the Blanc Sablon ferry terminus. Credit: Patrick Donovan

What is more, one website also describes a **Flavour Route**: “a gourmet adventure that will entertain your palate while allowing you to discover local culture first-hand,” but no details of this adventure were found elsewhere.⁵² In our opinion, there do not seem to be enough active agrotourism initiatives along this route to justify such branding, though there is certainly potential to better feature local ingredients and traditions.

50 “Signalisation touristique,” Gouvernement du Québec, <https://www.quebec.ca/transportes/signalisation/signalisation-touristique/routes-circuits>.

51 “La Route des Baleines,” Bonjour Quebec, <https://www.bonjourquebec.com/fr-ca/ou-aller/itineraires-et-routes/la-route-des-baleines>.

52 “Suggested Routes,” Discover the Lower North Shore, Tourism Lower North Shore, <http://lowernorthshore.ca/routes.aspx#east>.

Finally, there has been a recent attempt to include the Chicoutai Scenic Route as part of **Expedition 51°, a joint promotional initiative by tourism authorities in Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador.**⁵³ This is an epic highway route of over 1,700 km from Baie-Comeau, Quebec, over the entire Trans-Labrador highway, to the end of the road in Bonne-Espérance, Quebec. Many sectors of this road remain unpaved. While some hardy travellers currently attempt this long journey, we heard that the overwhelming majority of tourists at the moment come up via the ferry from Newfoundland.

In our opinion there are **so many branded routes that the marketing of the region looks incoherent. Ideally, all initiatives would be branded under one name**, and existing work produced for the Jacques Cartier Trail would be repurposed and brought up to date under this new label.

More should also be done to develop the end of the trail as a destination, which would benefit all the stops along the route. There is **a certain mystique for travellers in driving to the end of a road**, a sense of having accomplished a pilgrimage of sorts. For instance, people will drive thousands of kilometres to Kegaska to take a picture of themselves by the end-of-the-road sign at the western edge of the Lower North Shore.⁵⁴ Currently, the end of the road, Route 138, in the Eastern Sector is the westernmost village of Old Fort Bay. However, **nothing is currently being done to draw travellers all the way to the last Eastern Sector village and to develop this end-of-the-road mystique**. There had been an end-of-the-road sign in Old Fort Bay, but it was removed and never replaced. The end currently comes as a bit of a puzzling anticlimax as local village roads branch off in all directions. The village's bay or dock would be great places for an "end-of-the-road café" with a waterside patio. There is also the Granny's Hill hike that is accessed at the end of the road. It could be promoted as the "jewel in the crown" of the Eastern Sector, since it features an invigorating walk and stunning views. However, it would benefit from an improved trail pathway with clear signage from the main road and boardwalks over the marshy areas.

Moreover, **complementary smartphone apps or online content could be developed for the trail route**. They could provide additional interpretation and images, audio recordings from local storytellers, dramatic recordings from actors, augmented reality, and/or walking trail guides. They should not replace the physical interpretation panels, since not everyone likes to use apps. However, some of the content could be accessed on the panels themselves, via QR codes. The interpretation at Battle Harbour, Labrador, is headed in this direction. This site will be reducing information on its panels and adding more complementary audiovisual content via apps like **Battle Harbour Voices**.⁵⁵

53 "Expedition 51°," Tourisme Côte-Nord, <https://www.tourismecote-nord.com/en/cote-nord/tourist-routes/expedition-51/>.

54 Josh Grant, "End of the Road – Literally: Why This Quebec Sign Got Replaced After Tourists Left Their Mark," *CBC News*, January 20, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/end-of-the-road-highway-sign-1.6320415>.

55 Information from Peter Bull (Battle Harbour Historic District National Historic Site of Canada); BatteryRadio, "Battle Harbour Voices" [App], <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.toursphere.battleharbourvoices&hl=en&gl=US>. The app is also available for Apple devices: <https://apps.apple.com/ca/app/battle-harbour-voices/id1568690891>.

Online Promotion of the Eastern Sector

Many Eastern Sector tourism initiatives have little to no online presence. Many existing websites are outdated. In short, there is very little evocative online material to entice potential visitors to the Eastern Sector.

Online booking for accommodations is a problem. Only one of the five hotels in the region offers instant online booking through commonly used sites like booking.com or Expedia. Some places we tried contacting did not reply to emails or calls promptly, if at all. One hotel emailed us that they would respond within 24 hours but “if you do not receive a call within 24 hours, please call” (we called; they did not return the call). In other cases, the email addresses listed online were no longer active. In terms of camping, there is one “no-fee non-serviced” campground with nine sites that operates on a first-come-first-served basis without online booking. There are no serviced campgrounds with online booking.

Tourist attractions also have a weak online presence. None of the sector’s three interpretation centres has an active website of its own. Only one has a Facebook page, which has not been updated in over two years. Booking a boat tour to outlying islands from a distance remains a challenge. There are only a few names of enterprises and phone numbers to be found online after extensive searching, and little information on what there is to do or see on these tours. The agrotourism companies have more of an online presence, but the tourism offer remains unclear for some, such as the Lower North Shore Bio Products Solidarity Coop, the website of which focuses on products rather than visits and provides old newsletters on its media page.⁵⁶

The most comprehensive online resource is the **Discover Lower North Shore portal** (<http://lowernorthshore.ca/>). It is useful, though perhaps **overly descriptive at times** and lacking the succinct, image-heavy evocative appeal of the Newfoundland and Labrador tourism websites.

From our perspective, digital literacy in the region is relatively low compared with that of other Quebec regions. Oral culture seems to prevail. It is important to note that the Lower North Shore received digital infrastructure relatively late compared with other Quebec regions. The past few years have seen **the arrival of telecommunications infrastructure to facilitate tourism development**, from high-speed Internet to cellphone coverage, which will hopefully lead to improvements to the region’s online presence.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ See Lower North Shore Bio Products Solidarity Coop, <http://bioproducts.weebly.com/>.

⁵⁷ Julia Page, “Quebec’s Lower North Shore to Get Cellphone, High-Speed Internet Service, At Last,” *CBC News*, May 23, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-s-lower-north-shore-to-get-cellphone-high-speed-internet-service-at-last-1.4675043>.

Onsite Challenges: An unreliable and inconsistent service offer

There are also many challenges regarding the tourist infrastructure once visitors arrive.

There is **little to encourage visitors to go to the Lower North Shore when disembarking from the ferry**. At the exit of the debarkation area, there is a barely visible plaque sign for the Jacques Cartier Trail surrounded by overgrown vegetation. There is nothing to indicate this plaque is intended for visitors, and visitors from the ferry are likely to realize too late that they could have stopped in a tiny parking lot to look at it. Further up the road, the modest visitor's centre was closed for the entire duration of our visit during prime tourist season in August, had no posted opening hours, no indication it was closed for the season, no information on who to contact, and no outdoor map or information on the region accessible for those visiting outside opening hours. This problem was not limited to the visitor's centre: **many tourist accommodations and attractions have inadequate onsite signage, unposted opening hours, and inconsistent and unreliable service**.

Most trails and roadside pullovers/lookouts are poorly signposted from the main road, some are poorly maintained with limited parking, and interpretative panels are sometimes deteriorated or absent (see photo below). This is in stark contrast with the excellent signage we saw in Newfoundland and Labrador (see the two photos on the next page). At the moment, there does not appear to be a single brochure or website that explains the exact location of trails with maps, duration and distances of walks, difficulty levels, and evocative descriptions of what each trail offers (see example of a useful fiche [here](#)).⁵⁸



Missing panel at the Basque archeological site trail in Middle Bay, Quebec. Credit: Patrick Donovan

58 "Tristaina Lakes," Visit Andorra, <https://visitandorra.com/en/content/download/8283/file/30-tristaina-lakes-eng.pdf>.



Example of an usefully informative panel at a Gros Morne National Park trailhead indicating distance, time and elevation, and including a map of the trail and a large photo of what is expected at the destination. Credit: Patrick Donovan

Although we lack verified information on the topic, our assumption is that this **lack of consistency in the tourism offer has a direct negative impact on attracting tour buses**. Informants told us that some 150 tour buses per year ply the Labrador side. On the Eastern Sector side, Aqua Labadie, the scallop farm in Bonne Espérance, attracts some 70 buses per year.⁵⁹ A few people mentioned that it is one of the few attractions with a consistent and reliable tourist offer in the Eastern Sector that respects the time period allotted by tour bus drivers. According to anecdotal comments, only a handful of tourist buses visit other Eastern Sector tourist sites.

The **weather can also play against boat excursions in the open sea**. This makes planning difficult, and discourages longer stays.

59 Information from Garland Nadeau and Eileen Schofield (Whitely Museum) and Coasters Association staff.

It is clear to us that there are significant **tourism human resource issues** that affect the onsite service offer. There are evidently tourism plans, but not many people paid to be able to implement them. Also, the **summer tourist season coincides with some of the fishing and berry picking seasons**. Does this reduce the available labour pool to staff and develop tourist sites?

We also wonder about possible **language barriers in dealing with an officially unilingual French province**. If they exist, they would hinder building rapport with Ministère du Tourisme and Tourisme Côte Nord public servants, who officially operate in French. The perennial issue of underrepresentation of English speakers in the Quebec public service⁶⁰ adds to the problem. There are few such people who could work as bridge-builders in these departments.

Despite all this, tourism is developing. There is **considerable community mobilization around the issue of tourism, and many stakeholders building productive relationships both within and beyond the region to look for solutions**. In addition to local business people, there are tourist development players on the Lower North Shore such as the Coasters Association and Voyages Coste, among others. Groups operating beyond the region such as the Quebec Community Groups Network, the Regional Development Network, CEDEC, and the Steel River Group have lent time and resources over the years. The challenge remains moving beyond planning to implementing strategies, and this requires more resources.

While some of the tourism-related issues noted above may have been due to travel disruptions we encountered that were caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, local online evidence⁶¹ suggests that they are part of a broader longstanding problem. This point is supported by a comparison with the situation in neighbouring Newfoundland and Labrador.

60 Celine Cooper with Patrick Donovan and Lorraine O'Donnell, "Employment of English Speakers in Quebec's Public Service," QUESCREN Working Paper no. 1, October 2019, https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/artsci/scpa/quescren/docs/Quescren_QPSRPTEnglish.pdf.

61 See for instance: Jim Stone, "Labrador or Bust, Part 3: Promised Land," *Medium*, September 27, 2015, <https://medium.com/@jimble/labrador-or-bust-part-3-promised-land-b054c884cdf4>.

Comparisons with Newfoundland and Labrador

From our point of view, the tourism infrastructure was more functional on the Newfoundland and Labrador side. COVID-19 disruptions led to tougher border restrictions, but things were mostly up and running by the end of the summer when we visited. Newfoundland and Labrador tourism sites have many online booking options and reliable opening hours. As federally- or provincially-managed attractions, many receive consistent and regular funding from the public sector to guarantee jobs in the tourist sector. This leads to consistency and quality in the service offer. Moreover, attractions can count on support from Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism, the provincial department whose evocative ads have won multiple national and international awards.⁶² Overall, the Newfoundland and Labrador online promotional material is exemplary.⁶³

Labrador also has an advantage because it is more evocative in the popular imagination. Put simply, the “lure of Labrador” is a thing, whereas the “lure of the Lower North Shore” isn’t.

On a positive note, **people in Labrador may be interested in seeing the tourist offer improve on the Quebec side of the border**. This would help further position the region as a whole as an interesting destination.

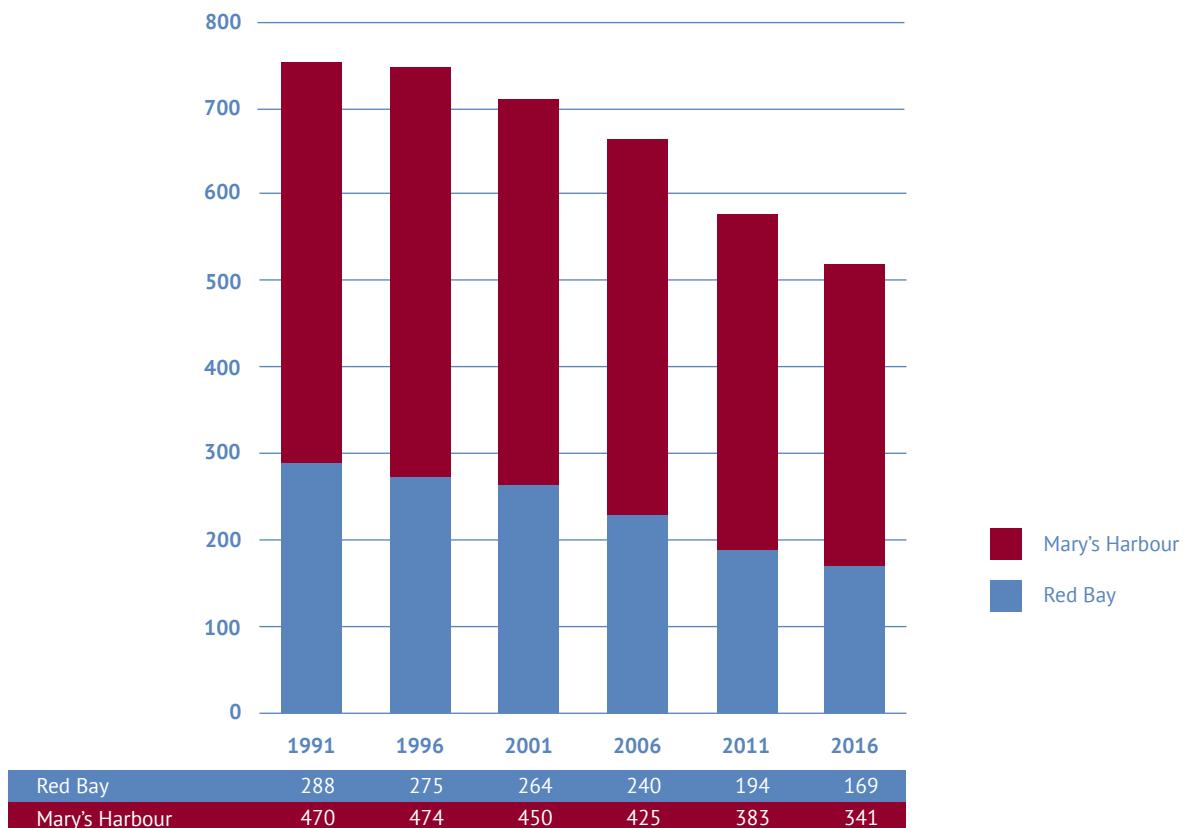
Limitations of Tourism Development

Often touted along the Lower North Shore as a success story, the Labrador development situation also shows that tourism alone cannot reverse population decline. Red Bay and Mary’s Harbour (the port for Battle Harbour) attract a significant summer tourist influx relative to their size, and the infrastructure is often exemplary. However, this has not put an end to population decline, which for both these communities has been greater than in the two Eastern Sector municipalities since 1991 (see Figure 2). Red Bay declined by 41%, and Mary’s Harbour declined by 27%. However, it is likely that this decline would have been even greater had there been no tourism development at all. In our view, the tourism industry is likely to grow only slowly, and **short- and medium-term potential benefits of tourism to the Eastern Sector should not be exaggerated**.

⁶² Lindsay Jones, “1-800 Call Kate: Is There A Real Person Behind That Newfoundland Tourism Ad?”, *Maclean’s*, October 6, 2021, <https://www.macleans.ca/society/1-800-call-kate-is-there-a-real-person-behind-that-newfoundland-tourism-ad/>.

⁶³ See, for instance, the [Battle Harbour website](#) and the material produced by the Newfoundland and Labrador [Provincial Tourism Board](#).

Figure 2 - Population change in coastal Labrador tourist destinations, 1991-2016



Source: Census of Canada, 1991-2016

Many studies likewise caution that the **economic benefits of tourism can be limited, particularly for communities.** Too often, tourism in remote regions provides revenue to externally operated tour operators and transportation companies, or to seasonal employees who do not lay roots in the communities. Tourism must be developed so that it also benefits the local communities themselves.⁶⁴ This is true of the Eastern Sector, where many if not most of the local tourist products are free, such as drives and walks. There are **few fee-based Eastern Sector tourist products generating income and jobs.**

Clearly, tourism development is a long-haul effort on the Lower North Shore. Public funding bodies need to understand that its benefits will take time to appear. To put it another way, sporadic short-term project funding will not reap short-term rewards. As a 2004 report on the Côte Nord prepared for the Quebec government makes clear, **none of these communities are viable without**

64 Richard Shearmur, "Profils socioéconomiques et perspectives de développement de sept petites communautés de la Côte-Nord," Document prepared for the Ministère des Affaires municipales, du Sport et du Loisir (Montreal: Institut national de la recherche scientifique Urbanisation, Culture et Société, 2004), 7.

sustained and long-term government intervention.⁶⁵ This is a threat in the current climate, but could be transformed into an opportunity if governments are responsive.

However, the cultural benefits of tourism are undeniable. Tourism development at Red Bay and Battle Harbour has injected money into the communities, and preserved and highlighted cultural and natural assets. This not only **builds “vitality of memory”⁶⁶ locally**, but also strengthens our heritage capital nationally.

Possible development models include:

- The **Battle Harbour Historic Trust**, which provides a good model of engaging local communities in tourist-oriented heritage preservation,⁶⁷ although some question the trade-off of commodifying culture for economic gain⁶⁸
- The Community Health and Social Services Network’s **Networking and Partnership Initiative (NPI)**,⁶⁹ a good model that Lower North Shore English-speaking community stakeholders are familiar with and may be interested in adapting to the tourism industry. NPI uses an intersectoral networking and partnership approach and provides accompaniment and training to network members.
- The **RAVEN (Rural Action and Voices for the Environment) research project**,⁷⁰ which works with and supports champions for sustainable rural communities and the environment in New Brunswick and could serve as a model.

65 Shearmur, “Profils socioéconomiques et perspectives de développement de sept petites communautés de la Côte-Nord,” *ibid*, 35.

66 Alain Roy, *From Vitality to Vitality of Memory: Conceptual Foundations of the Role of Memory and Heritage in the Vitality of Official Language Minority Communities*, Concept Paper (Ottawa: Library and Archives Canada, 2021), <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.896163/publication.html>

67 Mark Toddart, Howard Ramos, and David Chafe, *The Intangible Impacts of Tourism: The Battle Harbour National Historic District as a Tourism Anchor*, Research Report (St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador: Memorial University of Newfoundland, October 2014), https://research.library.mun.ca/11585/1/Stoddart_13_14_ARF_Final.pdf.

68 Mark Toddart, Howard Ramos, and David Chafe, “Assessing the tangible and intangible benefits of tourism: Perceptions of economic, social, and cultural impacts in Labrador’s Battle Harbour Historic District,” *Island Studies Journal*, 11, no. 1 (2016): 209-226, http://howardramos.ca/index.htm_files/ISJ-11-1-M-Ramos%20et%20al%202016.pdf.

69 “Networking and Partnership Initiative (NPI),” CHSSN, <https://chssn.org/chssn-programs-and-projects/networking-and-partnership-initiative/>.

70 RAVEN, <https://raven-research.org/>.

The Interpretation Centres in Bonne-Espérance

While our mandate initially focused on the Whiteley Museum, we soon saw it had to be examined in conjunction with the Middle Bay Interpretation Centre. This is another museum within the same municipality and with a broadly similar mandate. In our opinion, both museums need to work and brand themselves in tandem as a multi-site institution to ensure a complementary heritage tourism offer in the municipality. Details for this point are provided below.

Whiteley Museum

Signs and digital presence

The Whiteley Museum is **well located** along Route 138. While there are **several signs along the route advertising the museum**, there are **no signs within 100 m of the museum**, making it easy for travellers to miss. **Existing signs are small and visually “busy,” making them somewhat hard to read** while in a moving vehicle.

The Whiteley Museum **no longer has an active website**, since it has stopped paying annual web hosting fees, and **the website that did exist until recently was over a decade old⁷¹** and quite wordy by contemporary promotional design standards. The Whiteley Museum’s **Facebook page⁷² has not been updated in two years**. While there is some minimal online presence through provincial tourism pages, it is unclear to potential visitors surfing the web whether the museum still operates at all. This situation severely limits the Whiteley’s visibility and accessibility.

Mandate and exhibits

The Whiteley Museum was the first museum to be created in Bonne-Espérance. Opened in 1997, it initially focused on the story of the Whiteley family, its fishing premises, and William Henry “Bossy” Whiteley’s invention of the cod trap. The museum centrepiece was and remains a scale model diorama of the Whiteley fishing establishment in its heyday. The Quebec Labrador Foundation (QLF) took charge of improvements over the years, notably through a 2006 project to develop a brochure, website, new exhibit panels, and a standardized catalogue.⁷³

Since 2006, residents and ADT have made many additions to the collections. They have expanded the museum’s focus to cover diverse aspects of the Lower North Shore’s history and heritage, particularly archeological finds. The most visible addition is a wall-height panel on “Smithsonian Archeology on the Lower North Shore.” A television set also plays on a loop the excellent 1963 NFB documentary *Winter Sealing at La Tabatière*, co-directed by cinema-direct pioneer Pierre Perrault. There are also various artefacts, some with no stated direct relation to

⁷¹ Whiteley Museum, Internet Archive, https://web.archive.org/web/2007050100000*/whiteleymuseum.com.

⁷² Whiteley Museum, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/whiteleymuseum/>.

⁷³ *Pointing Northeast* (Fall 2005), https://www qlf.org/publication_files/qlf_canada/Pointing%20Northeast%202005.pdf; *Pointing Northeast* (Winter 2007), https://www qlf.org/publication_files/qlf_canada/QLF%20Newsletter2007english.pdf.

the Whiteley story: animal pelts, dog chains, tools, an old organ and a Victrola, and various archeological finds, giving a “community attic” feel to the place. Some artefacts are in display cases and some are not. QLF panels were designed and printed professionally, but there are also handwritten museum labels on loose-leaf sheets. All these additions over the years have led to an overall **lack of unity in the presentation and protection of artefacts.**

Additions over the years also mean the museum’s **mandate is not clear** to visitors: is it about the Whiteleys? traditional lifestyles? archeological finds? Ideally, interpretation centres have specific and unique mandates to distinguish them from others, especially those close by. Much of the Whiteley’s **exhibit content overlaps** with that of other history and heritage places in the Lower North Shore-Newfoundland-Labrador region. Most importantly, the more recent Middle Bay Interpretation Centre, 20 km east in the same municipality, covers the broader history of the Lower North Shore in a more professional and comprehensive way, and with what we feel are better presentation and protection of associated artefacts.

Narrowing the focus of the permanent exhibit in the Whiteley Museum would prevent duplication. It would also **free up space in the museum for small temporary exhibits, a possible route to access year-round project funding for eventual museum staff that could also be used as community-building projects.**

Updated or temporary exhibits that receive little attention in other regional museums could **make the Whiteley Museum unique**. Potential **new themes** include:

- Conflicts between Indigenous and European peoples; local story of the Inuit vs. Innu battle
- The Lower North Shore since 1950s: stories of survival and resilience, drawing on existing oral history projects conducted by the QLF
- 1992 moratorium: what it was like, how people coped
- People today – feature life-size photos of 5-10 people with quotes/recordings
- Life as a language minority in Quebec (Official Language Minority Community) (this could be attractive to the Official Languages Branch of Canadian Heritage)
- Traditional knowledge, such as the use of bioproducts for cooking, medicines, and cosmetics (an oral history project could be developed in partnership with the Lower North Shore Bio Products Solidarity Coop)

A further potential source of confusion in regard to the current facility is that the Whiteley Museum is **more of an interpretation centre than a museum**. Museums are typically larger institutions with significant artefact collections in storage, and to our knowledge the Whiteley does not have more than what is on display.

At the same time, the Whiteley Museum is a **place for community engagement**. The majority of the visitors are local. Older posts on the Whiteley’s Facebook page indicate that the museum has served as a place for the community to gather to share stories, experiences, and knowledge. It is also a place to raise funds (e.g. through Chase the Ace games, brunches, etc.) and sell locally made crafts.

People, networks, and knowledge

Like many volunteer-run institutions with no recurrent funding, the Whiteley Museum has had a chequered history. It has changed hands several times over the years, and there was also a long period when it was abandoned and closed.

The Whiteley Museum is currently managed by the Association pour le développement du tourisme (ADT). This is a local volunteer-run non-profit organization founded in 1993 that also maintains walking trails and encourages tourism initiatives in Bonne-Espérance.⁷⁴ **This knowledgeable volunteer base is definitely a strength** moving forward. Garland Nadeau and Eileen Schofield are the two most active ADT volunteers. They devote many hours to administering and running the Whiteley. Mr. Nadeau is a passionate and affable storyteller who focuses on museum content and live tours. He is well known for his unique and lively interpretation of the artefacts and region. These **stories could be recorded and shared** via a smartphone app, since Mr. Nadeau cannot always be present to tell his stories in person. Ms. Schofield focuses on museum administration. She is an active community volunteer with a strong collaborative approach.

These **volunteers are also well connected with key local players involved in community development and tourism**, which amplifies the knowledge and resources available to ADT. Ms. Schofield is currently president of the Coasters Association. ADT members also serve on an ad-hoc regional tourism table and work in collaboration with Voyages Coste. There is also a strong personal knowledge of and connection to the many local tourism enterprises and players.

The Whiteley volunteers also have **strong links with knowledge producers from across the province and beyond**. Developing connections with the research community has kept ADT abreast of the latest discoveries. These connections enhance the Whiteley's exhibit offer. Most of the links are with archeologists and anthropologists interested in the area's pre-20th-century history, namely Érik Phaneuf (AECOM),⁷⁵ Brad Loewen (Université de Montréal),⁷⁶ and William Fitzhugh (Smithsonian).⁷⁷ They also know researchers Manek Kolhatkar (Archéo-Mamu and Université de Montréal) and Diane Martin-Moya (Université de Montréal), who have recently worked with the local school board on archeological digitization projects and training along the coast. Additionally, now that the present report authors have visited the Whiteley, the ADT can explore with the authors **possible opportunities for expertise or other support within the networks of QUESCREN and Concordia University**.

The **connections and knowledge are not as strong for players who operate away from the coast, particularly those who operate in French**. ADT may benefit by developing closer ties with the **Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN)**⁷⁸

74 Foundation date listed in the Registre des entreprises du Québec.

75 See Érik Phaneuf, "Underwater Archaeological Assessment of the Lower North Shore: A Portrait of Basque and Shipwreck Heritage in Bonne Espérance," AECOM project 60626982, Report presented to the Association pour le développement du tourisme (ADT), January 2021.

76 Brad Loewen," Université de Montréal, <https://anthropo.umontreal.ca/repertoire-departement/professeurs/professeur/in/in14625/sg/Brad%20Loewen/>.

77 "Fitzhugh, William," Smithsonian Profiles, <https://profiles.si.edu/display/nFitzhugh752005>.

78 Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, <http://www.qahn.org>.

and having a bilingual board member link up with the **Société des musées du Québec**.⁷⁹ **National Trust Canada**⁸⁰ offers a vast heritage network and resources, including its **Regeneration Works site**⁸¹ for tools, training, coaching, and funding information. The federal government has many funding programs for museums, including the **Museums Assistance Program**⁸² and **Digital Museums Canada**,⁸³ the latter being useful as a means to build on the digital archeology initiatives described above. There are also many **Canadian Heritage Official Language Support programs** that could be relevant given that English speakers along the coast are part of Quebec's official language minority community.⁸⁴ There are **Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada** programs relevant to the remote/vulnerable nature of these coastal communities.⁸⁵ Finally, the **Secretariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise** serves as a useful entry point to access funding and other opportunities within the Quebec government, such as **Plan Nord funding to develop the tourism sector**.⁸⁶ There is also potential to build relationships with Quebec's English-language colleges and universities. They could collaborate in fields such as communications, web design, business development, etc. The **Consortium of English-language CEGEPs, Colleges and Universities of Quebec** or a continuing **relationship with QUESCREN** would facilitate this link.

While all this volunteer and external engagement is an asset, **there are no full-time paid staff members** to handle day-to-day management. This severely limits capacity to raise funds, plan, develop the museum and carry out the many routine tasks needed to run a museum.

The museum received modest funding for **summer student employees** through Emploi Québec in some years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; while this has been useful to staff the museum and for routine tasks, it is not enough to take it much beyond its current level. The Whiteley also receives **minimal support through a tourism development agent** who works for the regional county municipality. However, her mandate covers all the tourism-related enterprises along the Lower North Shore, limiting her time for the Whiteley. In our opinion, one person is simply not enough to oversee tourism development on the entire Lower North Shore.

79 "The Museums of Quebec," Société des Musées du Québec, <https://www.musees.qc.ca/en/museums/>.

80 National Trust for Canada, <https://nationaltrustcanada.ca/>.

81 Regeneration Works, National Trust for Canada, <https://regenerationworks.ca/>.

82 Museums Assistance Program, Government of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/museums-assistance.html>.

83 Digital Museums Canada, <https://www.digitalmuseums.ca/>.

84 Official Languages Support Programs, Government of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/official-languages.html>.

85 Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, Government of Canada, <http://www.ic.gc.ca/>.

86 Société du Plan Nord, "Living in the North: Northern action plan 2020-2023" ([Québec]: Gouvernement du Québec, 2021), 21, Measure 2.1.1, https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/adm/org/spn/Publications/Action_plans_EN/A_Northern-Action-Plan-2020-2023.pdf?1633459202.

The result, in our view, is that **too much depends on the ADT volunteers**. They cannot always be available and lack some of the specialized skills required for museum development. This could lead to “board burnout.” Also, the active volunteers are few in number. There is a **risk of individualistic approaches prevailing**, which could work against building a collaborative climate necessary to creating a cohesive Eastern Sector tourism offer.

Likewise, the current volunteers **have limited familiarity with digital communications and marketing**, which negatively affects their capacity to develop and promote the Whiteley.

The ADT volunteers also seem to have **limited French**. This is a significant barrier for working with some of the visiting public, and with government and partners to access funds and other resources.

The space

The Whiteley is in a **recently renovated facility**. Since 2014, the building also includes **a restaurant that is in a fruitful partnership with the museum**. In 2019, a dividing wall was built when Patty’s Diner replaced the former Cod Trap Café. The wall created more **cramped premises for the museum collections** but **better protection of its collections**. The café pays the building’s electricity, Internet and insurance, and its own renovations in exchange for free rent. This arrangement is informal and could possibly benefit from **more formal incorporation as a social enterprise**, which could be explored with social economy officer Olivia Champagne at the **Regional Development Network**.⁸⁷



View of the Whiteley Museum prior to the addition of a dividing wall separating the restaurant from the exhibits. Source: Whiteley Museum Facebook page

Financial resources

Without the restaurant partnership, the museum would not be able to afford its costs with its **current modest revenue stream**. It **does not receive any municipal assistance**. For now, its volunteer base and its modest programming lead to **low operating costs that enable the museum to remain resilient**. This allowed it to weather the COVID-19 pandemic.

87 “Meet the RDN Team,” Regional Development Network, <https://regdevnet.ca/team/>.

Middle Bay Interpretation Centre

The Middle Bay Interpretation Centre opened in 2009 in the former village school in Middle Bay, located halfway along the Eastern Sector.⁸⁸

The name of the **centre is misleading and potentially off-putting to visitors** uninterested in the story of the small village of Middle Bay. In reality, this centre covers far more. The main exhibit, entitled *Crossroads: The Five Cultures of Bonne-Espérance*, Quebec, treats the entire Lower North Shore history of Innu, Inuit, Basque, French, and English cultural exchanges. The QLF created the exhibit. It is more **coherent** than the interpretation at the Whiteley Museum, perhaps because it is newer and has had fewer additions over the years. **The execution is a notch above** many exhibits featured in small-town historical society museums. Also, its artefacts are preserved in secure cabinets and in a spacious room. Its panels are a bit **wordier than current interpretation guidelines recommend**. This is compounded by French and English being on the same panels in the same colour. However, we still found it very good, and the crossroads theme functions well as a unifying thread.

In addition to the main *Crossroads* exhibit, half the exhibit space in this Centre is devoted to another exhibit that is more visual, evocative, and less word-heavy. It presents 20th-century coastal artefacts and photos. This half of the exhibition space has the **potential to be repurposed for temporary exhibits financed by periodic one-off project funding**. This is an advantage the Whiteley does not currently have because of its smaller and more cramped facilities.

Like the Whiteley Museum, the Middle Bay Interpretation Centre also fruitfully shares space with a restaurant, the Crossroads Café, in addition to a small craft shop. The restaurant appeared to us to be the main source of revenue, and where the staff focuses most of its energy. There was **no dedicated museum staff** at the time of our visit. The visitor centre in the museum part of the building was unstaffed because all hands were busy in the kitchen.

88 Pointing Northeast (May 2009), https://www qlf org/publication_files/qlf_canada/pointNE2009_Eng_SC.pdf.

Moving Beyond Duplication

The Whiteley and the Middle Bay Interpretation Centre **are managed by separate groups of volunteers who do not formally share visions or approaches.**

The Middle Bay Interpretation Centre is managed by the Fondation de développement de tourisme en Bonne Espérance,⁸⁹ not to be confused with l'Association pour le développement du tourisme described above in relation to the Whiteley.

In our opinion, the municipality of Bonne-Espérance is too small for such differences. The initial rationale behind having two museums in the same municipality was that they told complementary stories. This seems less the case since the Whiteley Museum expanded its focus. There is now **considerable duplication in the stories told by the two spaces**, particularly with regard to the older archeological findings.

We see **potential for both attractions to collaborate on a complementary approach that builds on their strengths and makes more efficient use of scarce resources.** This would involve determining different and clear mandates for each site. For instance, the Whiteley Museum could go back to its original narrow focus on the Whiteley family and fisheries, or new mandates for both attractions could be targeted and divided by date (pre-1850 / post-1850), by type of tradition (life on the land / life on the sea), by breadth of focus (broad Lower North Shore history / Bony Island history), or by geography (Middle Bay and points east / St. Paul's River and points west).

A **single unifying title with subtitles for each branch could help unify and clarify the interpretation offer.** For instance, the title could be *Museum of the Lower North Shore* or *Centre for Lower North Shore Traditions*. The subtitles could be: Whiteley Branch / Crossroads Branch.

Other museums along the Lower North Shore could eventually be integrated once a sustainable structure is set up, or other buildings could be used to explore different themes. Ideally, the two (or more) entities would also join forces around heritage initiatives in Bonne-Espérance, including the Jacques Cartier Trail panels.

A **single brochure, combination ticket, and website promoting both institutions under one banner would minimize costs and ensure a higher likelihood of tourists visiting both.** Doing this efficiently would require a full-time year-round manager covering both institutions, with seasonal bilingual coordinators at each site present on a fixed regular schedule.

⁸⁹ See Registre des entreprises du Québec. See also Bonne Espérance Tourism Development Foundation, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/339742058554/about>.

SWOT Analysis Summary Charts

SWOT Analysis for the Eastern Sector

| Strengths (internal) | Weaknesses (internal) |
|--|---|
| <p>Villages linked via Route 138 + Route Blanche snowmobile trail</p> <p>Stunning landscapes</p> <p>Unique heritage assets and archeological sites + knowledge about them, e.g. transhumance</p> <p>Attractive walkable cultural landscapes around the bays</p> <p>Great intangible heritage: people and traditions</p> <p>Many efforts at a heritage corridor (trail)</p> <p>Availability of telecommunications infrastructure</p> <p>Considerable community mobilization and networking for tourism</p> <p>Potential to adopt technological means of improving interpretation: smartphone apps, online content for trail route accessible by QR codes</p> <p>Potential to develop “end of the road” promotions (west end of Route 138 in Old Fort Bay)</p> | <p>Few tourists</p> <p>Few fee-based Eastern Sector tourist products generating income and jobs</p> <p>Limited built heritage</p> <p>Human resource issues: scarcity, lack of interest</p> <p>Inadequacies in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site interpretation • Lodging capacity • Online presence including booking options for accommodations • Signage at ferry terminal <p>Tourist accommodations and attractions have inadequate onsite signage, unposted opening hours, and inconsistent and unreliable service</p> <p>Inconsistent tourism offer means few tour buses are attracted</p> <p>Heritage corridor trail has several competing versions versions and inadequate signage/interpretation</p> <p>No exploitation of the “end of the road” (west end of Route 138 in Old Fort Bay)</p> <p>Underfunding for tourist development</p> <p>Some language barriers in dealing with Quebec government</p> |
| Opportunities (from the outside) | Threats (from the outside) |
| <p>Connected to a well-visited tourist route in Newfoundland and Labrador, where visitor numbers are increasing</p> <p>Plans for increased accessibility by water, air, and road, including Expedition 51°</p> <p>Potential for a state-funded park</p> <p>Cultural tourism builds local “vitality of memory”</p> <p>Many possible development models to be inspired by</p> | <p>Area is difficult and expensive to reach and this is worsened by global warming (less snow cover for the Route Blanche)</p> <p>Weather variations challenge maritime excursion operations</p> <p>Newfoundland and Labrador draws away tourists with its more numerous and important historic sites</p> <p>Short- and medium-term potential benefits of tourism have limits, including economically</p> <p>Community viability is dependent on sustained government intervention</p> |

SWOT Analysis for the Whiteley Museum

| Strengths (internal) | Weaknesses (internal) |
|---|--|
| <p>Good location Road signage is present People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Museum is hub for an engaged community Volunteer base is strong, knowledgeable, very well connected to local and larger players and research community Summer student employees Support of a tourism development agent <p>Space recently renovated Good partnership with adjacent restaurant Low operating costs = resilience Narrowing museum focus would free up space for temporary exhibits New mandate/exhibit themes could make the Whiteley unique and attractive to tourists and funders Stories could be recorded and shared via a smartphone app Possibility of incorporating as a social enterprise Potential to collaborate with Middle Bay Interpretation Centre on branding, activities, marketing, etc., to amplify strengths, resources</p> | <p>Road signs for museum are too far from the site and hard to read Inadequate/outdated web presence (website, Facebook) Lack of unity in the presentation and protection of artefacts Mandate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear Incoherent and more of an interpretation centre than museum (no extensive collections) Overlaps with other museums' mandates, limiting the Whiteley's uniqueness, and thus its interest to tourists and funders <p>People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No full-time paid staff members Overreliance on volunteers; this magnifies their limits, e.g. in tech, French, and connections to / knowledge of players beyond the Lower North Shore <p>Space is cramped Revenue is modest; no municipal assistance Relationship with Middle Bay Interpretation Centre is weak:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of shared vision and resources Duplication of content |
| Opportunities (from the outside) | Threats (from the outside) |
| <p>Many potential partners in community and government sector Many funding opportunities</p> | <p>Possibility of tensions or loss of community support due to diverse visions for tourism development</p> |

Proposed Next Steps

Lower North Shore Eastern Sector

Assess local attitudes for tourism development: Survey the population to uncover support, concerns for tourism development. This would help determine directions and issues to be aware of.

Improve branding and communications: Work with regional partners and provincial tourism authorities⁹⁰ to ensure that branding of the Eastern Sector is consistent and that there is broad agreement on using a single name for the trail,⁹¹ then address weaknesses in onsite signage, promotional material and web presence outlined above. Online material accessed through QR codes could be used to complement panels along the trail.

Develop local expertise: Increase support for partners (e.g. Centre de services scolaire du Littoral and Institut de tourisme et d'hôtellerie du Québec) working to develop courses in hospitality for Eastern Sector tourist service providers.⁹²

Develop the “end of the road” as a destination with lookout spots along the way: Developing and promoting a clear draw for travellers at the “end of the road” (signage/photo spot, seaside café, or well-maintained and signposted Granny’s Hill trail) would benefit all stops along the route. Municipalities should ensure maintenance and clear signposting of lookout spots along the route in a way that reflects the overall branding of the route.

Develop more locally managed fee-based tourism activities: There are currently few places for tourists to spend money that would flow directly to local communities along the route. A clearer and more formal offer for sea-based excursions, for instance, could be developed in tandem with the growth of a locally managed hotel/glamping/camping sector. Regular boat or sea kayaking tours could include options in sheltered bays for windier days, but also clear offers to the bird sanctuary of Perroquet and Greenly Islands. Other active options could include stand up paddleboard (SUP) and snow paragliding lessons and rentals. Land-based activities could include geocaching, escape rooms, etc.

Encourage research and tourism development around Breton and French heritage: Whereas Newfoundland and Labrador have more evocative archeological sites with regard to Indigenous, Norse and Basque heritage, there is unrivaled and untapped archeological potential in the Eastern Sector with regard to the Breton and New France heritage of Brest and Fort Pontchartrain. This could be a draw to the French-language majority of Quebec, but should be developed in partnership with Francophones.

Develop agrotourism: Expand the food offer to include more health-conscious, vegetarian and vegan options and to better feature local products.

90 For example, Tourisme Québec and Tourisme Côte-Nord (Director General: Paul Lavoie).

91 Possibilities to consider that emphasize a romantic remoteness and the qualities of the local landscape include: Quebec's Faraway Coast, Quebec's Forgotten Coast, Coastal Tundra Route, Peak View Route.

92 Information from Ana Osborne.

Develop a consistent and reliable tourist offer for bus tours: Research the demographics and details of those taking bus tours to Labrador (age, types of tours, fitness levels) and orient Lower North Shore tourist products accordingly.

Consider adopting a **co-creation approach** and work with provincial and federal governments to study the feasibility of creating a provincial or federal park.

Learn about socially and economically **sustainable development models** as outlined on page 32 above.

And finally

Work with Concordia and other universities and colleges in Quebec: Invite QUESCREN's report authors to collaborate on further research initiatives, on other projects, to work with Littoral on its history committees, or with local museums in bringing interpretation up to date. We can also coordinate with Concordia's senior administration to arrange a virtual meeting with stakeholders on the Lower North Shore about facilitating links with researchers and centres. The Consortium of English-language CEGEPs, Colleges and Universities of Quebec can help facilitate links with other universities and colleges in the province.

Whiteley Museum

Proposal for priority next steps

Reactivate online presence: The most pressing first step is to recruit a tech-savvy person to reactivate the museum website, regularly update social media pages, and ensure that contact details / opening hours are up to date. An active website is not only useful to attract visitors, but necessary to build credibility in the eyes of potential funders, particularly those from outside the region.

Consolidate initiatives with overlapping mandates, especially with the Middle Bay Interpretation Centre: Since the current Whiteley exhibit overlaps with that of other heritage sites in the immediate region and goes beyond the Whiteley story, it would be useful for the Whiteley to approach Middle Bay Interpretation Centre for collaboration, as outlined in the previous section.

Increase revenue to hire a full-time year-round manager: Seeking out recurring government support (program funding) and private funding is the best route to long-term sustainability in the short term. Project funding for short-term initiatives could also help build capacity/credibility toward obtaining recurring program funding (see pages 33-34 for examples). Finally, developing the craft shop and setting up/charging modest admission fees could bring in modest supplementary “matching” funds for grant applications.

Work with other tourism enterprises and community groups toward promotion and branding of the Eastern Sector: Determine next steps for the partnership with Coasters (Phase I of its work with ADT) and Voyages Coste.

Explore the possibility of creating a social enterprise: Work with the Regional Development Network to explore the possibility of creating a social enterprise through collaboration with profit-driven tourism initiatives (motels/beds-and-breakfast establishments, cafés, etc.), thereby allowing the museum to apply for a wider range of funding programs.

Proposed mid-to-long-term next steps

In the mid- to long-term, ideally once some funding for full-time management has been obtained for heritage interpretation centres in Bonne-Espérance, we recommend the following steps:

Build capacity in communications: Develop and implement a communications plan outlining a year-round strategy for the website, social media, media outreach and engagement, and other online products (apps, virtual exhibits).

Update the physical exhibit: Review and consider rewriting exhibit panels using fewer words, clearer font hierarchies for different audiences, better colour contrast, and a unified professional design, etc., as outlined in the previous section.

Build projects around capturing community voices using digital media/apps: Given the emphasis in the local population on talking and storytelling, more oral histories could be recorded and promoted either onsite, online, or via custom-made apps for travellers inside the museums when no local storytellers are present. The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network⁹³ and Concordia University's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling⁹⁴ can provide support.

⁹³ Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, <https://qahn.org/>.

⁹⁴ Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, Concordia University, <https://storytelling.concordia.ca/>.

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Appendix A

Individuals who supplied tourism and historical information

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