

# ANNUAL REPORT 2018

A summary report of the activities of the Tourism Golden Association  
January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018

Key Reporting areas include Operations, Marketing, Visitor Services and Financials



PO Box 20181  
Golden  
BC V0A 1H0  
Phone: 250-439-1111  
E-Mail: [manager@tourismgolden.com](mailto:manager@tourismgolden.com)

Submitted by: Joanne Sweeting, Executive Director  
Date: May 2019



#GOLDENRULES  
#GOLDENBC

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## Message from President, Mr. Rav Soomal

Dear Stakeholders, welcome to the 2018 Annual Report.

Tourism visitation and revenues in 2018 continued to show substantial growth, reflecting the substantial marketing efforts of the Tourism Golden Association and under-pinning the value that a destination marketing organisation, which is committed to its mandate and objectives and focussed on achieving results, can bring.

As well as continuing to grow MRDT tax and other tourism revenues, Tourism Golden also took a leadership position in advocating on pertinent issues on behalf of our stakeholders at every level of government. We are pleased to note that the provincial government responded to industry concerns by legislating for short term vacation rentals and online accommodation platforms. Although there is still some work to be done, this was an important and substantial step. We welcome the many new tourism stakeholders that this brings to the industry and the organisation, whilst at the same time we will continue to advocate at local and provincial level to ensure that that, through legislation and enforcement, competition in the accommodation sector is fair and equitable for all.

The critical issue of labour shortages was another key area of advocacy and Tourism Golden lobbied at provincial and federal levels and will continue to work on this important issue in 2019 by undertaking an important piece of research on the economic impact of the labour market shortages.

Whilst the mandate of Tourism Golden is focussed on marketing the destination, we understand that destination development is important in providing an exceptional visitor experience and therefore to reaching our potential as a destination, as a region and as a province. We are proud to have collaborated with other communities in the Destination Development program facilitated by Destination BC and urge all our tourism stakeholders to review the final report available on the website.

We take our role as the lead organisation for tourism seriously and prioritise providing opportunities for our stakeholders; whether it be professional development workshops, subsidised marketing opportunities or undertaking and sharing our visitor research, or simply hosting networking events. We love to hear from you, our tourism stakeholders, to ensure that we can continue to serve the tourism industry to the best of our ability. We encourage you to attend our semi-annual meetings and read the monthly newsletter to stay informed on those opportunities and to provide us with relevant insights into our performance and that of the industry.

As the destination marketing organisation it is taken for granted that Tourism Golden continues to implement exceptional marketing campaigns, content creation and media hosting, informed by research and results and with consistent brand messaging, but it is important to recognise the results of that activity that benefit our tourism industry. Digital and social campaigns and earned media of all types generate more awareness than ever before resulting in a momentum of growth in visitor numbers and length of stay. The team at Tourism Golden are committed to staying ahead of social trends and technology tools to ensure we maximise the potential of the market.

As a board member and stakeholder, I am excited to be a part of such a progressive and innovative team. We are so lucky as a community to have some of the most exceptional staff driving this organization.

Rav Soomal

President

## About Tourism Golden

- ❑ Incorporated in 2006, Tourism Golden Association is a non-profit society mandated as the DMO and eligible entity until July 2022.
- ❑ The DMO area contains the Town of Golden and CSRD Area A, not including Yoho National Park.
- ❑ Representing 163 tourism stakeholders (accommodations, activity operators and attractions).
- ❑ Primarily funded by a 2% tax on eligible accommodation room nights, known as the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) leveraged with grant and 'pay to play' stakeholder co-op advertising sales.
- ❑ Governed by a board of 11 directors representing accommodations and tourism operators within the boundary and an seat for the Chamber of Commerce. The board establishes the vision, mission, and objectives of the organisation and approves the annual marketing plan and budgets. It ensures fiscal responsibility and fulfilment of the organisation's mission.

### Mandate

Tourism Golden Association will lead, direct, and manage destination marketing activities and support tourism development initiatives on behalf of Golden and Kicking Horse Country by maintaining a collaborative and inclusive industry driven organization, and by providing opportunities for stakeholders to increase revenues. We will provide a consistent voice for Golden and Kicking Horse Country in the tourism marketplace.

### Directors, Officers, Committees & Staff

#### Board of Directors at April 2019

##### Elected

*Representing Town of Golden Accommodators*

Rav Soomal Best Western Mountainview

Atma Sandher Ponderosa Motor Inn

Treena Coney Prestige Inn Golden

*Representing General Accommodators (all locations)*

Brandy Beliveau Bellstar Hotels & Resort

*Representing Area A Accommodators*

John Lush Lush Mountain Accommodations

Lucille Hayward Moberly Lodge

Joanne Best Mount 7 Lodges

*Representing Tourism Operators*

Graeme Kreiner Golden Golf Club

Magi Scallion Golden Snowmobile Club

Toby Barrett Kicking Horse Mountain Resort

##### Appointed

Shawn Bethune Kicking Horse Chamber of Commerce

##### Officers

Rav Soomal President

John Lush Vice President

Treasurer Toby Barrett

Secretary Magi Scallion

##### Committees

###### Finance Committee

*Magi Scallion, Toby Barrett – Treasurer*

###### HR Committee

*Rav Soomal, Brandy Beliveau, Magi Scallion*

###### Stakeholder Committee

*Atma Sandher, John Lush*

###### Governance (Constitution and Bylaw) Committee

*Rav Soomal, John Lush, Atma Sandher*

###### Visitor Services

*Rav Soomal, John Lush, Toby Barrett, Treena Coney*

###### RMI Committee - All board directors

##### Staff

Executive Director Joanne Sweeting

Marketing & Administration Rachel Wilde

Communications & Social Media Andy Brown

Visitor Services Manager Alycia Weir

## **DMO Business Objective,**

*“In a manner that is admired by all in the Canadian tourism industry, we will increase the economic impact of tourism in Golden and the surrounding area by growing revenues for businesses that serve tourists by 30% by 2021”*

### **Tourism Vision**

“We will inspire target visitors to explore and experience Golden”

### **Tourism Mission**

“We will market Golden as a destination of choice. By delivering innovative marketing initiatives we will increase economic benefits for all our stakeholders and for the community.

We will provide tools and guidance to assist our stakeholders in delivering remarkable visitor experiences.

We will provide information and education to inform and guide destination development.”

### **Values & Guiding Principles**

These are the principles by which Tourism Golden will operate:

- Balance resident values with visitor demand.
- Maintain a positive, respectful relationship with residents of Golden and Area A.
- Recognize the community as a blend of diverse unique resources working together to become a healthy, vibrant community in which to live and work.
- Advocate a social, environmental, and economic balance within the tourism industry and the community at large.
- Work collectively with the community to develop services to meet the needs of our visitors.
- Foster open and honest communication with all community stakeholders through a comprehensive communication plan.
- Be inclusive and transparent to the stakeholders and the community.
- Partner with existing organizations and stakeholders that contribute to tourism marketing and destination development.
- Leverage resources and maximize partnership potential.
- Be fiscally responsible and accountable to stakeholders.
- Advocate on behalf of the local tourism industry.

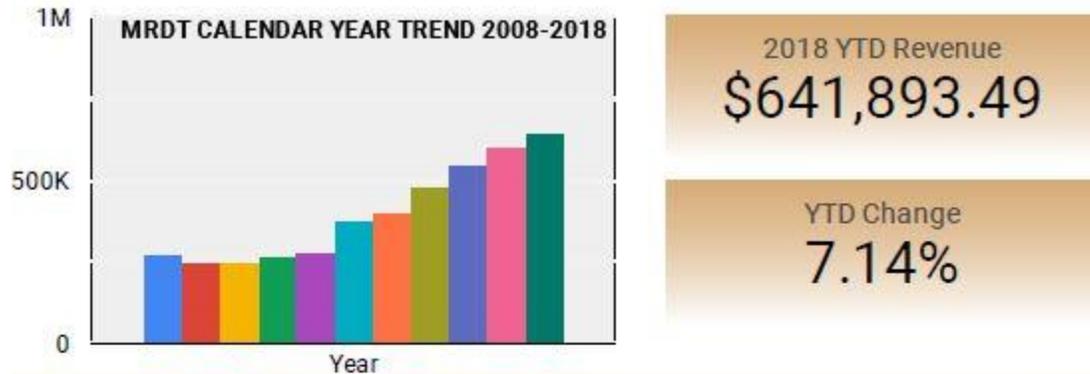
### **Strategic Objectives 2017 - 2021**

As identified in the 2017-2021 Strategic Business Plan, the Strategic Objectives of the organisation are to:

- Increase target market awareness of Golden as a great destination to visit
- Establish perceptions of Golden consistent with our brand positioning – brand positioning is known and embraced by target markets and residents.
- Encourage target visitors to make Golden a positive choice of destination in their vacation
- Encourage day visitors/passing traffic to stay longer and return later as an overnight visitor
- Increase length of stay
- Increase number of overnight visitors
- Encourage repeat visitation
- Increase shoulder season visitation and revenues
- Establish a baseline and show annual improvements in Net Promoter Score
- Increase funding for Tourism Golden
- Maintain position as lead organization in tourism and continuously learn and improve
- Build strong stakeholder and local support for Tourism Golden and for the overall importance of the tourism industry

## Key Performance Indicators 2018

### MRDT REVENUES



#### Average Length of Stay (Nights)

Winter 2018	Summer 2018
3.2	2.8
% CHANGE 6.67%	% CHANGE 0.00%

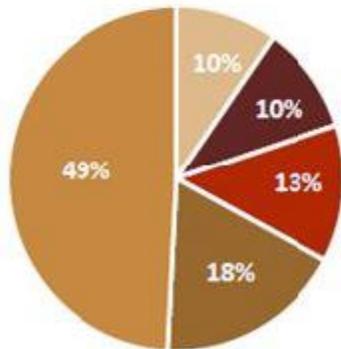
#### Awareness

Winter 2018	Summer 2018
79.0%	48.00%
% CHANGE 9.72%	% CHANGE -7.69%

### TARGET MARKET PENETRATION

#### Winter 2017

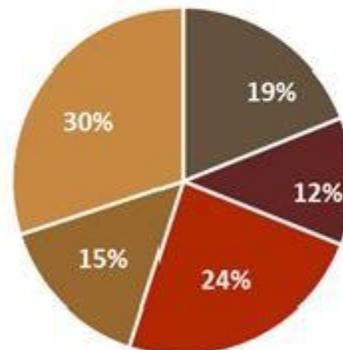
**Market Origin**  
Percentage of Visitors



- BC
- USA
- Overseas
- Other Canada
- Alberta

#### Summer 2017

**Market Origin**  
Percentage of Visitors



- BC
- USA
- Overseas
- Other Canada
- Alberta

### PUBLIC & MEDIA RELATIONS



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Impressions 2018

2,296,009

  
Instagram Engagement  
92,000

  
Facebook Engagement  
86,512  
Facebook Total Reach  
1,922,126

  
Twitter Impressions  
181,057

  
Youtube Views  
14,314

## WEBSITE ANALYTICS

Jan 1, 2018 - Dec 31, 2018



Unique Users  
204,360  
↑ 16.4%

Organic Searches  
119,445  
↑ 1.0%

Digital Campaigns  
63,485  
↑ 74.7%

Web Visits:  
267,739  
↑ 15.4%



All Activities Page Views  
283,612  
↑ 5.8%

### Top 5 Country of Origin by Visit

Country	Sessions	% Δ
Canada	192,657	14.7% ↑
United States	46,032	37.8% ↑
United Kingdom	6,935	6.5% ↑
Australia	4,373	20.1% ↑
Germany	3,017	-19.0% ↓

### Content Drill down/Page views

Activity	Page Views	% Δ
Biking	19,456	50.8% ↑
Fishing	11,971	15.4% ↑
Heli & Cat Skiing	2,790	6.2% ↑
Hiking	16,155	5.0% ↑
Other	11,573	85.4% ↑
Parks	22,017	-1.7% ↓
Rafting	10,279	-6.4% ↓

## Executive Summary

*Tourism in Golden experienced another record-setting year for accommodation revenues;* performing substantially against our strategic goals of increasing tourism visitation and revenues and continuing the upward trend that Golden has enjoyed since 2012.

Importantly, our research also confirms the value that tourism provides by being a substantial driver of a positive overall image of Golden as demonstrated in Figure 1 below.

We take our fiscal responsibilities seriously and are pleased to note that most expenses were incurred in direct marketing activities with 71% of spend (excluding staff wages) being directed to tactical implementation of marketing activities.

Negative media focus on the BC wildfires, “BC is burning” headlines and cross-provincial trade and business relations, coupled with an unusually cold September resulted in obvious decreases in occupancy from late July and into September. Despite that, accommodators were able to hold strong on rates and revenues. Importantly, the strategic focus on marketing of the shoulder season and winter resulted in continued growth in those months, diminishing Golden’s reliance on the high season summer months and reducing the overall impact of these disrupters.

Figure 1

## Highlights

- ↑ 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of growth
- ↑ 7% increase in total operational revenues
- ↑ 7% increase in MRDT & accommodation revenues
- ↑ Occupancy increased in shoulder & winter
- ↑ 6.2% increase in ADR
- ↑ 6.7% increase in RevPAR
- ↑ Average length of stay summer 2.8 nights
- ↑ Average length of stay winter 3.2 nights
- ↑ FWT event marketing value of \$1 million+

## Tourism’s Contribution

### How does tourism contribute?

#### Tourism Sentiment Score™

Tourism Sentiment Score is a measure of a Golden’s ability to generate positive word of mouth about its tourism offering. It is an aggregate score that focuses solely on online conversations that reference or affect a potential traveler’s perceptions of a destination’s tourism offering.



#### Place Sentiment Score

Place Sentiment Score is an aggregate value of all conversations around Golden, whether or not the individual conversations have a direct impact on perceptions of the tourism offering. It captures opinions of all aspects of the destination from politics to real estate.



#### Key Takeaway:

The gap between these two scores is representative of the impact your destination’s tourism industry is having on the brand of the destination as a whole. Tourism is a substantial driver of a positive overall brand image.

In those moments, real-time communication is key to reassuring the consumer and supporting the 'Golden is open' messaging. In response, we developed a consumer alert messaging system for the website and ensured that our visitors were informed not only through the traditional face-to-face service at the visitor centre and social media channels, but also made more aware of other information resources featured in DBC's "Know Before You Go" messaging.

Investment in User Generated Content became even more important as we strove to ensure that our website galleries and social media pages were filled with inspiring and engaging real-time content throughout the year, and particularly during the most challenging wildfire conditions.

With the approval of our application for the Google Search Grant for \$100,000, we were able to exponentially increase our connection with consumers at a key point in their path to purchase.

The Tourism Golden team once again delivered successfully against the primary goals determined in the 2018 annual marketing plan with continuing positive results for tourism stakeholders and the community. *MRDT revenues increased by 7%*, signalling increased revenues for our accommodations.

We continued to develop our role as the lead organisation for tourism in Golden from a solely marketing focussed entity to one which advocates on matters of primary importance to our tourism industry and which plays a role in local and regional destination development. We were pleased to be able to collaborate and contribute to the Highway 1 and Kootenay Rockies Regional *Destination Development Strategies*.

Collaboration with Destination BC, Kootenay Rockies Tourism, Parks Canada (primarily Yoho and Glacier National Parks), activity sector organisations, and community DMO counterparts in multiple integrated marketing campaigns, asset production, media and travel trade relations, and professional development continued to grow. These relationships and activities were critical to leveraging our funds, amplifying our voice, creating compelling content and ultimately raising awareness of Golden as a year-round multi-activity destination offering world-class experiences.

RCR and Tourism Golden collaborated to confirm Kicking Horse Mountain Resort and Golden as the *host for the*

*Freeride World Tour* in February 2018. A marketing equivalency report identifies over *\$1 million of marketing value* delivered by the event to a highly qualified audience.

As always, we continued to engage with our own tourism stakeholders to offer print and digital co-op marketing opportunities and were grateful for the support of our stakeholders in hosting media visits which resulted in an astounding *34 earned media features* in target publications and media channels.

We recognize these primary factors that make our success possible:

1. The *MRDT program* which provides reliable multi-year funding for tourism marketing and projects.
2. The focus of Tourism Golden staff and board on *strategic planning and forward-thinking approach informed by research and data*.
3. Tourism Golden stakeholders who invest and innovate in products and experiences, engage with us in collectively promoting Golden through our co-op marketing opportunities and support our efforts in content creation and media relations.
4. The Town of Golden and CSRD Area A who support our position and efforts as the eligible entity and lead organisation for tourism.
5. Destination BC and Destination Canada who continue to *innovate in tourism marketing and industry programs*, opportunities and partnerships as well as delivering successful provincial marketing campaigns.
6. Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture's *Tourism Events Program* which provided funding for the Freeride World Tour.

## Situational Context

### Tourism Trends & Influences

UNWTO reported a 6% increase in international tourist arrivals, proving 2018 to be the strongest since 2010.

*“2018 was the best year ever for international arrivals to Canada with 21.13 million tourists, breaking the 21 million mark for the first time.”<sup>1</sup>*

International arrivals to Canada grew marginally by 1.2%, but still reached record-breaking numbers, British Columbia saw a more favourable growth of 6.4% in international arrivals with European markets increasing by 3.3% and overnight arrivals from the US by 7.1%.<sup>2</sup>

In comparison, as measured by visits to the Tourism Golden website, we saw interest from our primary markets increase as follows:

- Canada +15%
- USA +38%
- UK +6.5%
- Australia +20%

Visits from Germany, however, decreased by 19%.

In October 2018, introduced changes to the PST and MRDT legislation to formally include short term rentals and online accommodation platforms, particularly Airbnb, levelling the playing field for all accommodations.

### Economic & Political Influences

*“...we will not be coming out to BC for our golf trip this year. Some of our group do not want to spend their money in BC .....”<sup>3</sup>*

The pipeline dispute between the AB and BC governments played a role in affecting visitation from our primary market.

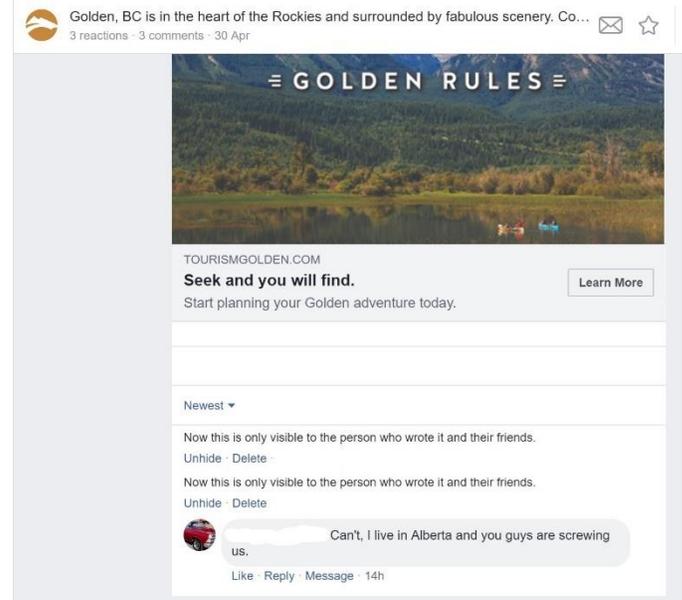
The strength of the US Dollar still supported increased interest from the US to Canada.

### Social & Consumer Trends

The [Golden Visitor Study](#) undertaken in winter and summer 2017 both demonstrate large increases in the demand for STRs. Vacation home rentals in summer 2017 increased from 6% of paid roofed accommodation stays in 2016 to 23% in

<sup>1</sup> Source: [DestinationCanada.com](#)

<sup>2</sup> Source: [DestinationBC.ca](#)



2017, with use of Airbnb increasing by 25%. In response to the question “How important was ... private home rental... in your decision to visit Golden” responses of ‘extremely important’ grew by 13% in summer.

The 31% growth in the use of mobile devices to access the Tourism Golden website continued to outstrip the 5% growth in desktop use, under-pinning the decision to begin work on the ‘mobile first’ website in the late fall for launch in 2019.

### Disrupters

Wildfires in BC and the sustained focus of negative media coverage, particularly in our primary Alberta market had a noticeable impact on visitation in August. Additionally, the smoky conditions hampered our plans for asset development, forcing cancellation of a planned video shoot in Kootenay National Park.

The wildfire season was quickly followed by an exceptionally cold September with a cross-over in the campfire ban initiated during the wildfire season and unseasonably cold temperatures in early September, and snowfall in late September also impacting visitation numbers and revenues.

Labour shortages affected customer experience as local businesses struggled to recruit enough staff to operate at maximum capacity and service excellence.

As previously noted, the political battles affected visitation and motivation of Albertans to spend their vacation in BC.

<sup>3</sup> Actual feedback from TG member repeat customer and TG social media post comment

## Operational Summary

### Stakeholder and Industry Relations

We maintained strong stakeholder relations with two hosted events, a monthly newsletter and ad-hoc eblasts communicating important industry information or co-op marketing opportunities.

At the AGM in May, stakeholders were given insight into the market segmentation study undertaken in 2017 in collaboration with DBC with a presentation by Ryan Staley of the DBC research team and Align Consulting.

As usual, the annual report was presented to the Golden Town Council and at the Columbia Shuswap Regional District board meeting.

At the December stakeholder gathering, aside from an update on Tourism Golden's activities, and the opportunity to network with their tourism peers, stakeholders received an update from MoTI on the Kicking Horse Canyon Phase 4 project; a multi-year project of great interest and importance to the tourism industry and the community as a whole.

For the first time we were able to connect and collaborate with indigenous nations to incorporate their stories and recognise their presence in history and modern day. As a result, both our 2019 Golden Travel Planner and website include this important content. We will continue that collaboration as we move to create interactive story boards at the Golden Visitor Centre and in the downtown as part of an RMI project in 2019 and beyond.

We are a member of the RMI committee which worked with the Town of Golden to inform the 2019 -2022 Resort Development Strategy and are excited to see those projects roll out that will positively impact visitor experience in Golden.

Tourism Golden annually sponsors the Hospitality Award at the Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards gala and I am an active member of their board.

We were pleased to support the Golden Snowmobile Club in their Economic Impact Study as well as providing them and other volunteer activity clubs with letters of support for grant funded projects. We are grateful for these societies whose tireless volunteer efforts continue to expand and enhance the visitor experience in mountain biking, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing.

Relationships and collaboration with other community, regional and provincial DMOs and tourism stakeholders developed through participation in the DBC Co-op Marketing Program and Destination Development working groups. I highly value the opportunities for networking, collaboration and professional development afforded by engagement with TIABC, the industry conference and the BCDMOA meetings as well as the DBC Visitor Services Network. An example of this was collaboration with Tourism Revelstoke and support provided by Destination BC on a Go Media official fam trip that brought qualified international media to our region.

As an enthusiastic advocate for the MRDT program, I appreciated the opportunity to present to Sicamous Council on the value of the program and the positive impact on the tourism industry in Golden since 2007.

### Advocacy

The organisation represents the interests of the tourism industry and local tourism stakeholders, and was active in the following matters:

#### Short Term Rentals

Whilst appreciating the increased consumer demand for short-term vacation rentals, and the importance of having that product available to drive incremental visitation, the fact that these properties are not held to the same requirements in collecting provincial accommodation taxes or adhering to the municipal bylaws presented an unfair competition that threatens to undermine the traditional accommodators who provide professional, quality experiences and who support the local tourism economy and destination marketing. In 2018, Tourism Golden continued to advocate for change to municipal bylaws, and to provincial accommodation PST legislation by lobbying the BC government directly as well as supporting the advocacy efforts of the BC Hotel Association, TIABC and the BCDMOA.

We are pleased that both the provincial government and the Town of Golden have responded with positive action that will be implemented in 2018.

#### Affordable Housing

Whilst acknowledging that affordable housing is an issue in Golden that influences labour shortages, our eligible accommodator stakeholders were clear in informing us that they see this as a social concern across all industries and throughout the community and therefore did not feel it fair or relevant to re-direct MRDT funds from tourism marketing

into affordable housing projects. We supported the BCDMOA who advocated for that proposed change to legislation. Whilst we weren't entirely successful, the new legislation does allow only for the incremental online MRDT revenues to be used for affordable housing projects, thereby protecting the core MRDT funds for destination marketing.

### Labour Shortages

The impact of labour shortages intensified as businesses recruited for the summer season and Tourism Golden responded to feedback from our stakeholder businesses by writing directly to the federal government and participating in a meeting with MP Wayne Stetski and other concerned community organisations.

Being able to fully understand the impact of labour shortages is essential to developing a strategic plan to address the issue and so we applied for funding for a grant to undertake a study. Whilst we ultimately received approval for funding, we were not able to implement that in 2018 and will proceed in 2019 in a community wide study on the impact of labour shortages, done in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and funded by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction with additional contribution from Columbia Basin Trust. We anticipate the final report to be available in early 2020.

### Kicking Horse Canyon Phase 4 Community Liaison

With the impending project, we were pleased to be actively involved in the Community Liaison Committee to represent the tourism sector and to strongly advocate for traffic management planning that would have the least amount of impact on our stakeholder businesses.

### Visitor Information Services

2018 saw the first full year of visitor services operations managed by Tourism Golden.



[tourismgolden.com/visitors](http://tourismgolden.com/visitors) | 250-439-7290



The official opening of the *Golden Visitor Centre* was celebrated with an open house on May 18 which featured cultural presentations from the Golden chapter of the Columbia Valley Metis Nation, a BBQ provided by the Golden Rotary Club, face painting and musical entertainment. With speeches from local dignitaries and DBC, the event was popular with both community members and visitors alike.

Supported by a service agreement with Destination BC and land lease and maintenance agreement with the Town of Golden we continued to make capital investments in adding a wi-fi hot spot at the Golden Civic Centre, improved signage at the visitor centre site and a branded tent for use at the weekly summer farmers markets and other sporting events.

Whilst the centre was valuable in assisting visitors already in destination and on route during the wildfire season, it also supported our strategic objectives of increasing awareness of Golden as a vacation destination and encouraging day visitors and passing traffic to stay longer and return as an overnight visitor. 33% of visitors stated that they were very likely to plan a future overnight trip and 26% participated in additional activities as a result of information obtained at the visitor centre with an estimated *incremental economic benefit of \$5.5 million.*<sup>4</sup>

The full visitor services report for 2018 can be found in APPENDIX B

Site-specific research revealed *a 97% satisfaction* with overall experience at the site.

<sup>4</sup> Source: [Golden Visitor Centre Incremental Economic Benefits Study 2018](#)



## Content & Asset Creation

We continued to build assets and campaigns for the “Heart of the Parks” campaign launched in 2017 as well as for our core ‘Authentic Adventure’ destination and activity specific campaigns. Unfortunately, smoky conditions and wildfires restricted the completion of some projects that we had planned. These have been incorporated into the 2019 tactical plan.

We were able to complete two photo shoots in Glacier National Park; one with a family focus, the other a unique hiking experience. We also supported the Loam Ranger Pink Bike video series as part of the Kootenay Dirt collaboration.

User generated Content (UGC) continues to play a large role in giving access to inspirational content for our social media platforms and quality images for other marketing activity. Using the Crowdriff User Generated Content platform gave us access to *159,000 social assets* and *330 rights approved assets*; an invaluable addition to our social media and marketing activity.

## Social Media

We implemented a series of Instastories, based on the FOMO trend, reprising the previous week’s content shared by followers which saw great traction. We continued to engage with identified (and affordable) influencers to tap into their audiences and, where possible, create additional assets and content for our own use. Working with a local snowmobiling ambassador, we were also able to amplify that reach by collaborating with his sponsors on content creation and cross posting.

## Advertising

Our paid advertising strategy is a multi-channel approach across print, digital, search, social media and, on occasion where incorporated into a multi-channel package, other mediums such as large format video screens. Where possible we utilised our advertising spend to leverage earned media as evidenced in the following activity in 2018:

- Horizon Magazine (large format video in Toronto & Times Square NY plus print inserts into Toronto Star and Wall Street Journal California issue)
- Toronto International Film Festival large video screens

The winter 2018/19 large format video campaign launched at TIFF was particularly successful as we noted an 85% increase in website visits from Toronto during the 10-day event and a 33% increase in visits to the skiing web page from Toronto

between Sept 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and Jan 31, 2019. Both exceed the number of sessions recorded for the Canadian market as a whole; 25% and 20% respectively.

Digital campaigns and the Google Search grant resulted in a 75% increase in website visits generated through paid campaigns.

## Consumer Relations & Shows

Our consumer database was 11,429 at December 31<sup>st</sup> and the monthly consumer news delivered an above industry average open rate of 13%. We continue to engage and converse with consumers through social platforms and digital channels such as Google Business.

With the ability to connect with consumers at many more digital and social touchpoints (and those activities make it easier for us to accurately measure return on investment) we have reduced the number of consumer shows that we attend. However, we do continue to attend the two shows that are aimed at our primary audiences and help us achieve our objectives.

In collaboration with the Golden Snowmobile Club and supported by the BCSF, we attended the snowmobile show in Edmonton in October. In spring, supported by KRT, we attended the Calgary Outdoor Adventure Show.

## Marketing Collateral

In addition to the annual publications of the Golden Travel Planner, Hiking and Biking Maps, we identified and initiated implementation the 'mobile first' website refresh and a complete overhaul of the Golden Outdoor Discovery Map, last printed in 2012.

The objective of the website project was to acknowledge that most users access the Tourism Golden website using a mobile device and to make their experience, and that of desktop and tablet users, a more rewarding, immersive and inspirational experience. Whilst the launch of the new website occurred in February 2019, it is rewarding to see that the number of new users accessing on a mobile device has increased by 8% and the bounce rate has reduced by 13%. Within the website project we also incorporated an SEO review.

Both were large projects that begin in fall 2018 and were completed in early 2019.

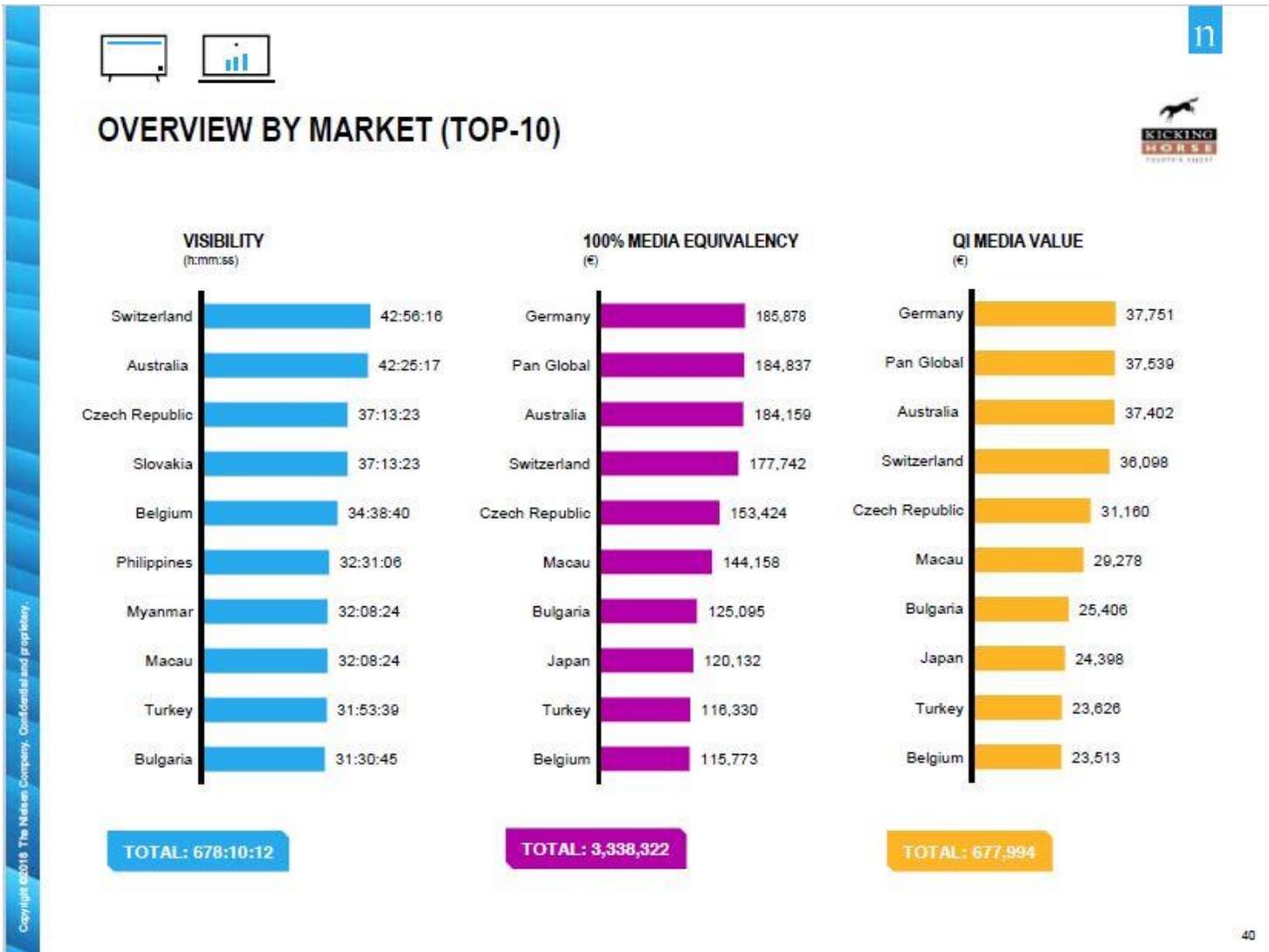
## Events

The Golden 24 Mountain Bike race operated by Transrockies successfully held the event for the third year with strong participant numbers.



2018 was the first Freeride World Tour event. A collaboration with RCR to confirm Kicking Horse Mountain Resort as the location for the Freeride World Tour in 2018.

A Media Evaluation report produced by Nielsen for the event indicated a *media value of in excess of \$1 million* in international markets.



The Destination Marketing Performance tables pages 19 and 20 summarise strategic performance against specific targets outlined in the 2018 Marketing Plan.

## Research

We are committed to informing and measuring our activity with research and proven data by regularly undertaking visitor and other data research.

In 2018, the first full year of visitor services operations, we focussed our research budget and activity on a study specific to the Golden Visitor Centre and visitor services that built on the small research study undertaken in the short 2017 season. The objective of the 2018 study was:

- to provide insight into the Golden visitor,
- to understand the opportunity available to us for educating day visitors and passing highway traffic
- and the value of providing visitor information services that change visitor impression of Golden as a vacation destination and behaviour whilst in destination.
- to ensure that the tools and services we offer are of benefit in improving the visitor experience.

The study revealed an estimated *incremental economic benefit of \$5.5 million* and *a 97% satisfaction* with overall experience at the site.

In addition, we were able to provide financial support to the Golden Snowmobile Club for an economic assessment study; the first since 2009. Snowmobiling contributes \$10.5 million to the local economy. Snowmobilers, whether annual or day pass purchasers stay an average of 2.6 nights; slightly less than the average 3.2 nights of all winter visitors and visitors spent an estimated \$3 million while in Golden; double that recorded in the 2008/9 study.<sup>5</sup>

In response to feedback from tourism and other business stakeholders, we applied to the Rural Dividend Fund for grant monies to undertake a study on the economic impact of labour shortages in Golden. After many months our application was referred to, and approved by, the Ministry of Social Services and Poverty Reduction. That study will begin in fall 2019 with a final report in early 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Source: [The Value of Snowmobiling in Golden 2017/2018](#)

The *Tourism Sentiment Index* by Destination Think! is an index that measures the online sentiment of a destination and *what people really feel and find worthy of sharing* about a destination through capturing word of mouth and peer to peer conversations. We see this as a complement to our traditional face-to-face intercept studies and the work of the Destination Development groups led by DBC, and one which captures a source of information that we may otherwise miss. In 2018 we entered a multi-year agreement that will allow us to benchmark the online sentiment about Golden, both as a tourism destination and a community, and identify opportunities for our strategic approach to marketing and destination development. The timing of this activity will be particularly valuable in measuring the impact of the Kicking Horse Canyon Phase 4 construction.



The initial report captures *8,172,615 online conversations* around the world between Jan and December 2017 and sets the benchmark for two future annual reports. The report is available to view online, but highlights include:

- *30,000+ online conversations actively promoting Golden*
- Golden's tourism products *perform above the median of the comparative destination set.*
- Above average score for Outdoor Activities

- ❑ Skiing, snowmobiling and biking score high above the comparative set
- ❑ Food producers, farmers markets, wedding services perform above the comparative set
- ❑ Opportunity for focus and development exists across the board but particularly for:
  - Music & Performance Art
  - Museums & Galleries
  - Festivals & events
  - Shopping
  - Restaurant, breweries & pubs

## Summary

This report provides Golden with a view of how it is perceived and discussed among consumers as a travel destination. Everyone in your destination can influence the levels of positive and negative sentiments about its tourism experiences. Based on our analysis of word of mouth about Golden, we recommend the following actions for your organization.

### Core Conversation Drivers

Volume is a good indicator of overall awareness. The more people are talking about a specific experience, the more awareness that drives. It is important to ensure that your top awareness generators remain competitive and make positive impressions. The top drivers of conversation for Golden are:

- Nature Viewing
- Hiking + Rock Climbing
- Skiing + Snowboarding

### Potential Growth Opportunities

While these tourism assets may not generate the most volume, they are generating a high level of sentiment. Because of this, these categories potentially present potential for future growth. Among Golden's tourism assets, the following stood out as potential growth opportunities.

- Cycling + Biking
- Skiing + Snowboarding
- Weddings

### Under Performing Assets

Not every aspect of your destination needs to be at the top. However, the following assets within Golden fell below the competition for both volume and sentiment.

- Restaurants
- Breweries + Pubs

## Economic Benefit

The 2017 visitor surveys reveal healthy length of stay and average spend per party. Winter stay and spend both increased substantially. Using the average known number of available fixed roof accommodations and extrapolating average monthly occupancies from the STR Destination report, *we estimate the economic benefit of tourism to Golden to be more than \$100 million annually.*

Visitor Studies will be repeated in 2019.

## Success in Target Markets

Success in reaching the identified markets with our marketing efforts can be seen in the KPI report on pages 6 & 7 which support the primary geographic origin and travel motivation of visitors as per our identified markets and audiences.

Canadian visitors originate primarily from Alberta, BC, and Ontario. International visitors are primarily from the USA states of California, Texas and Oregon, and European countries UK, Germany, and Switzerland.

Summer research showed an increase in visitors from B.C. and overseas, with a decrease in visitors from Alberta.

## GOLDEN - WINTER 2017



**\$1,481** on average, was spent in Golden by each visitor party

### Golden Length of Stay



## GOLDEN - SUMMER 2017



**\$596** on average, was spent in Golden by each visitor party

### Length of Stay



Primary motivators for visit, aside being a convenient place to stop, were family vacation, sightseeing, nature and wildlife, visiting national parks, mountain biking, and VFR.

Winter Alberta market visitation matched the previous winter. 72% cited resort skiing at KHMR as their primary reason for visit. Winter activities, VFR and relaxation were also primary motivators.

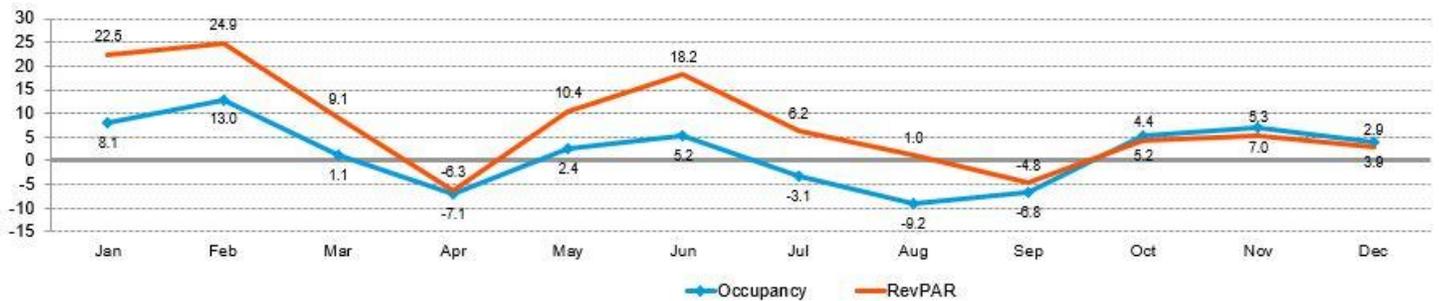


## Destination Marketing Performance

### Strategic Objectives Performance Indicators

2017 MARKETING OBJECTIVE	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	TARGET	OUTCOME
Establish perceptions of Golden consistent with our brand positioning	Net Promoter Score as determined by winter & summer visitor studies	Winter increase by 3% to 50 Summer increase by 3% to 36	Winter 45.9 Summer 31.8
Increase target market awareness of Golden as a great destination to visit	Awareness level as determined by the percentage of positive responses in visitor studies to "Were you aware of Golden before planning this visit?"	Winter increase by 5% to 75% Summer increase by 5% to 57%	Winter 79% + 9% Summer 48% - 4%
	Awareness and intent to visits from key target markets as determined by website visits	Canada increase by 5% to 160,000 USA increase by 5% to 27,675 UK increase by 5% to 9,800 Germany increase by 5% to 4,100 Australia increase by 5% to 2,400	Canada 192,657 +15% USA 46,000 +38% UK 6,935 6.5% Germany 3,017 -19% Australia 4,373 +20%
Increase nightly visits and length of stay	Growth in visitation as indicated by accommodation revenues and determined by gross MRDT revenues	Increase by 5% to \$538,000	\$656,893 +8%
	Average length of stay as determined by winter & summer visitor studies	Increase by 5% to 3 nights	Winter 3.2 Summer 2.8

**Monthly Percent Change - 2018**



## Marketing Strategy Performance Indicators

STRATEGY	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	OUTCOME
	Visits to website video pages	Increase by 5%	+15%
	Website visits	Increase by 5%	+15%
	Visits to website activity pages	Increase by 5%	+6%
	Stakeholder co-op-marketing support	\$71,000	\$77,812
Digital Media	Website visits generated by trackable paid campaigns	Increase by 5%	75%
	Social media engagement & reach as demonstrated by Facebook organic reach	Increase to 2.7 million	2.3 million
Public & Media Relations	Achieve earned media in influential travel or activity media	30 features	34
	Consumer newsletter open rate	Maintain 14%	13%
Travel Trade	Visits to new website Travel Trade section	Determine benchmark	tbc
Events	New sporting event held or planned to be held in 2018 or after	1 new event confirmed	Freeride Word Tour Feb 2018
Visitor Information	% response to Visitor Study question "The Visitor Information I Obtained in Golden Resulted in Me or My Travel Party... "as "Improving the Overall Quality of My Experience in Golden"	Maintain or increase 55%	78%

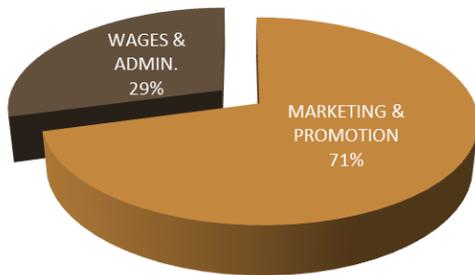
## Financial Summary

The primary source of revenue for Tourism Golden is the 2% Municipal and Regional District tax (MRDT) which provided 88% of the organisation’s funding in 2018. This was leveraged with co-operative advertising sales to tourism stakeholders on a ‘pay-to-play’ basis, and by grant or partner funds for projects.

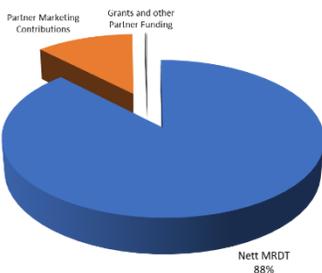
Although MRDT revenues increased by 7%, co-op marketing revenues decreased due in part to the cessation of our digital co-op program and a reduction in advertising in 3<sup>rd</sup> party print publications and a small decrease in Travel Planner advertising sales. The overall revenue for the organisation (excluding visitor services) grew by 7% growth due to grant funding and sponsorships and a significant increase in project-specific partner funding.

Marketing and Promotion tactical activity spend was \$527,228, which represents 72% of expenditures. As measured by the Ministry of Finance, staff wages directly related to the delivery of marketing and tourism projects are deemed a marketing expense, and in that determination Marketing and Promotion spend would represent 94% of total expenses.

### 2018 FY ORGANISATIONAL BUDGET



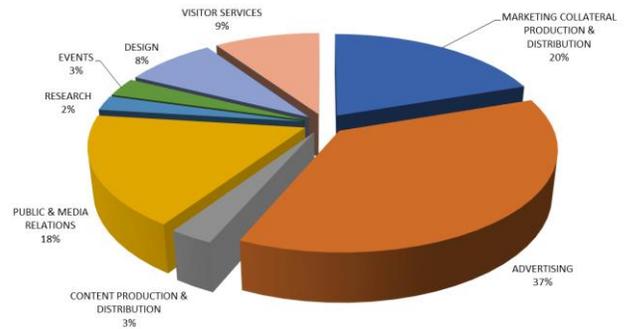
### 2018 FY Revenue Sources



## Highlights

- ↑ 7% increase in total revenues
- ↑ 7% increase in MRDT tax revenues
- ↑ 72% of spend on tactical marketing activity

### 2018 FY MARKETING BUDGET ALLOCATION BY STRATEGY



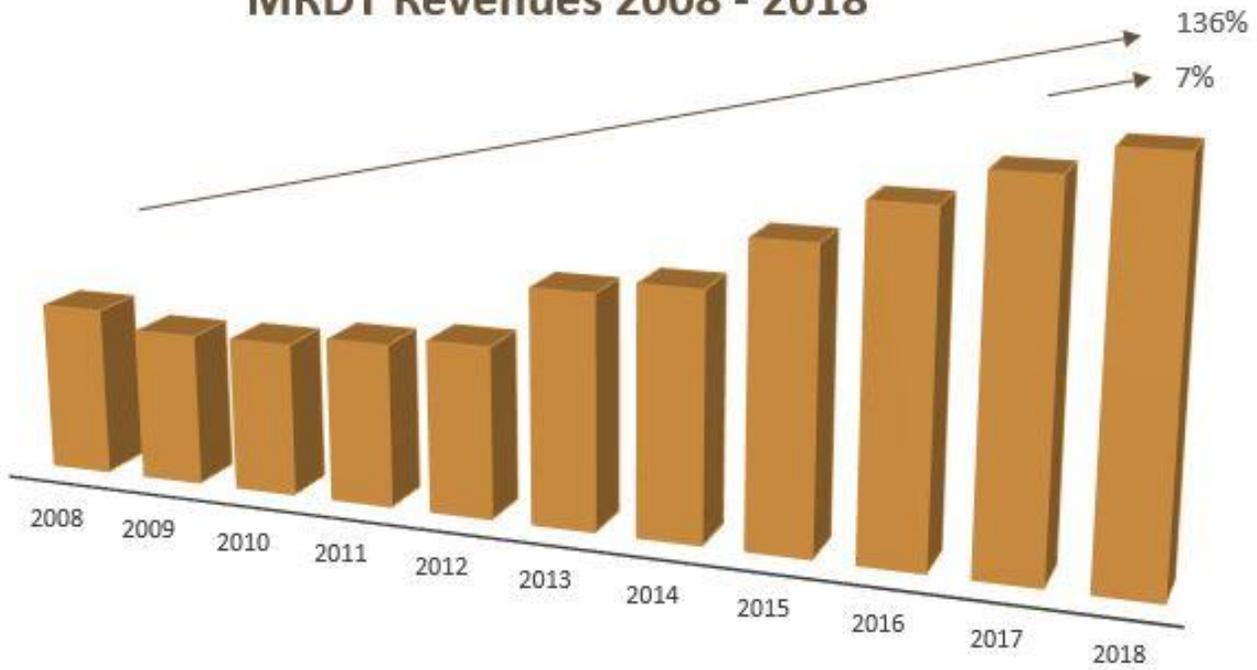
Financial statements produced by Cox & Co. and approved by the Tourism Golden Finance Committee and Board of Directors are available on request to Tourism Golden members.

## Visitor Services

For clarity, the visitor services accounts and operational budget are reported separately. The 5-year service agreement with Destination BC, includes annual funding. In 2018, year 2 of the agreement, Destination BC and Tourism Golden both contributed \$50,000.

## APPENDIX A

### MRDT Revenues 2008 - 2018



2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
\$271,790	\$244,632	\$246,621	\$262,247	\$275,700	\$373,994	\$394,722	\$476,925	\$544,210	\$599,102	\$641,893

APPENDIX B



Golden Visitor Centre

1000 Trans Canada Highway, Golden

Alycia Weir | Visitor Information Services Manager

250-939-8464 | [visitorservices@tourismgolden.com](mailto:visitorservices@tourismgolden.com)

February 15, 2019



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### **Executive Summary**

Generally, the 2018 operating season of the Golden Visitor Centre, also referred to as the VISAH (Visitor Information Services and Amenity Hub) was very successful. We exceeded the key deliverables as per the service agreement with Destination BC and were able to provide a multi-channel approach to visitor services in Golden.

Diversifying services available at the Visitor Centre, including a new tenant in the vendor kiosk, on-site rafting bookings, and the sales of Park Passes and backcountry maps attracted visitors and locals alike to the site. We created further opportunities by hosting a Community Open House to commemorate the launch of our first full season and a regular Saturday Showcase event which hosts local organizations and community experts to teach site users about various topics including nature, the environment, wildlife, culture and history of the area.

With the colder temperatures, rain and then heavy forest fires and a state of emergency we saw significantly reduced visitation early and late in the summer season. The construction on the highways resulting in altered traffic patterns also made it challenging for staff to accurately track visitors as there would often be large clumps of visitors instead of a steady flow as seen in the previous year.

We also encountered several challenges with the site and infrastructure, particularly of bathrooms which resulted in long lines and unhappy visitors. We worked with the Town of Golden and Kardash Plumbing to resolve these issues however with ever increasing demands on bathroom facilities, alternative solutions may be required in future years.

Despite these challenges and negative experience, our customer service continues to excel and is proven by our high ratings on TripAdvisor (4.5), Google Business (4.2) and our high Net Promoter Score of 53.3. In the "2018 Incremental Economic Benefits of the Golden Visitor Centre" study, respondents rated their overall experience at the Visitor Centre as a 4.9 out of 5.

We look forward to another successful year of service and improvements based on our learnings in 2018.

### Key Deliverables

The following key deliverables were outlined to be completed by March 31, 2019 as per the VISAH business plan and service agreement with Destination BC.

<p><b>Delivery of Visitor Information Services:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Face-to-face</li> <li>b) Digital/Technology solutions</li> <li>c) Signage and Collateral</li> </ul>	<p><b>Completed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Face-to-face services were administered at the Golden Visitor Centre from late May through to the end of September 2018. Additional face-to-face services are available at the Chamber of Commerce in the off season.</li> <li>b) Visitors can e-mail and call the Visitor Services Manager for information at any time of the year and can also use social media channels to ask questions and share their visitor experience. An upgraded mobile first website launched in February 2019 has also given visitors more digital trip planning resources.</li> <li>c) Site signage was installed in June and October 2018. Messaging promoting the Visitor Centre was included in print marketing materials. Tent cards, movie theater advertisements and social media ads were also created promoting the services available at the VISAH.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Execute on other elements of plan:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Initiate Phase II of Wi-Fi Hotspots</li> <li>b) Initiate Phase II of Digital Kiosks</li> <li>c) Grow Revenue Model</li> </ul>	<p><b>Completed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) An additional Wi-Fi hotspot was installed at the Golden Civic Centre. Further messaging to include details of the Wi-Fi available and benefits for paid upgrades were also added to the hotspot landing pages.</li> <li>b) Two additional digital kiosks were installed at the Ramada and Best Western hotels.</li> <li>c) Our revenue model was increased and diversified this year with the addition of the sales counter leased to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party activity operator and retail sales of Park Canada Passes and Backroads maps and map books. There was also an increase in brochure racking sales.</li> </ul>

### **Staff Recruitment**

The Visitor Information Counsellor and Data Collector positions were posted to Go2HR and EK Employment in late February with a closing date in mid-March. We found this timing worked well as it seemed to be around the start of when summer positions were posted.

We attended the Golden Employment Services Centre Job Fair on February 28 at the Golden Senior's Centre. I spoke to about 25 job seekers, some with interest in working at the Visitor Centre while others were just looking for any job. If we have several openings to fill this may be worth attending in the future however with only a couple of positions to fill, it is likely worth spreading through existing staff networks and promoting through job boards and community Facebook pages.



We are fortunate to have many returning staff season upon season who reduce the strain on recruitment efforts.

We experienced significant challenges with Data Collection staff and the collection follow up emails required for the study to be successful. As a result, we hired an additional staff in August to provide support and take over some of the hours of lower performing data collectors. It is recommended that there be designated staff specifically for Data Collection and Visitor Counselling as staff tend to default counselling when not heavily supervised.

It is important to note that minimum wage is scheduled to increase on June 1, 2019 to \$13.85.

### **Going Digital**

With Tourism Golden's migration to Google Suite, many of the processes were able to go paperless and become digital. Staff began recording their hours through a Google form, with a space for comments to the Manager. This went directly into a Data Studio report which simplified the payroll process. Staff were also given a digital checklist to complete on each shift. This served as a reminder of all the tasks required to complete in a shift while holding staff accountable for these duties.

One of the biggest transitions was moving the daily stats form required by the Visitor Services Network to a Google Form. This simplified the process of having to manually enter the stats each day and then re-enter them into the network statistics form. Staff were keen to try out the new system and had very positive feedback. One big challenge was accurately recording all the data. As there was significant construction on Highway 1, visitor traffic was much more concentrated this year. Large volumes of visitors would arrive at once instead of a constant flow as was typical in 2017. As a result, counsellors had challenges when there were long lines of visitors remembering details of their conversation and therefore not all data was collected and tracked on extremely busy days. When it was noticed that reported numbers were lower than they should be, a conversation was had with staff stressing the importance of statistics and providing them with tips and tools to help capture as much information as possible during peak periods. As highway construction will continue in 2019, it is recommended that staff be briefed and provided with these tools at the beginning of the season and to test them during quieter times in the early season.

### **Grants**

#### **Non-Profit Technology Grant**

In January 2018, we applied to the Columbia Basin Trust Non-Profit Technology Grant and received our full ask of \$6,967 to be shared between Visitor Services and Tourism Golden. We were able to purchase iPads, a card reader, two computers for digital kiosk expansion and a new telephone for the VISAH. The application process was smooth and simple and was able to be adaptable when we

wanted to make a change in our initial application. If any technology requires upgrading in the future, this was an excellent opportunity however it is unclear if this program will be available again in 2019.

### **Student Works**

We received a student wage subsidy from Columbia Basin Trust in the sum of \$15,054 over three consecutive years to offset the cost of hiring one to two students each summer. The amount received from CBT is contingent on the number of hours the student(s) work and therefore it is of greater benefit for them to work more hours.

### **Canada Summer Jobs**

We applied to Canada Summer Jobs to hire a student however did not receive notification of funding until May 1 at which point staff had been fully hired. The delay in response coupled with receiving funding from CBT meant that we had to decline the Canada Summer Jobs funding. Unless the application process changes, it is not worth the effort to apply for critical staffing positions however it is worth applying for special projects or additional support that won't be hindered if the funding is not received or is confirmed late in the spring. For 2019 we applied for a Special Projects Assistant to support the Ambassador Program and other projects.

### **Vendor Kiosk**

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was distributed through our stakeholder newsletter and advertised on the members section of the Tourism Golden website between January 11, 2018 and February 2, 2018. We received three proposals with additional interest from parties who decided against submitting a proposal for various reasons. Double Black Cafe was chosen based on their clear responses to the RFP, the quality of their product and aligned vision for the visitor experience. The agreement was signed March 7, 2018. Double Black Cafe was a success not only amongst visitors, but also attracting a strong contingent of locals daily for their espresso-based beverages, bagels, baked goods and gelato. There was a feature article in the Golden Star promoting their new/additional location. Double Black has committed to returning for a second season in 2019 which will be of continued benefit to the visitor experience.



### **Sales Counter**

Glacier Rafting leased one of the Sales Counters in the Visitor Centre for June and July, then extended their contract until the end of August. They were offered the spot until the end of rafting season however did not have the staffing to accommodate it. While this was a great opportunity and service to visitors to be able to offer on-site ticketing for whitewater rafting and kayak rentals, it also came with several challenges. As Glacier took the table closest to the garage door entrance, their staff person was the first person many visitors would see. Not all visitors would recognize that they were there as a representative of a rafting company and assumed that they were there to provide visitor information. This became a challenge as the staff would not always pass the visitor along to Information Counsellors and occasionally would not have all or would have mis-information. Counsellors tried to jump in where possible however did not want to be perceived as rude or cutting in and therefore expressed challenges with this set up. I had a few conversations with Glacier Rafting about these challenges and we were able to mitigate some of them and when things were busy it worked well passing visitors off to Information Counsellors to provide opportunity to direct book rafting however when it was quiet it often seemed like all the staff were vying to speak to one visitor.

If this approach is to be continued again next year, it is recommended to rearrange the open space to make it clear that the sales counter staff is exclusively making bookings and not an Information Counsellor or to have them stationed at one of the ticket windows. It is also important to have this conversation with the vendor and the staff at the time they sign the contract to try and mitigate these issues from the beginning. As this was the first year, there were several growing pains, but was well communicated and worked out between both parties.

## Sales



### Parks Canada Passes

This season we collaborated with Parks Canada to sell Parks Canada daily and annual park passes for visitors. While it generates significant revenue, the sales make little profit however it fills a need and provides a service for our visitors. Many residents also took advantage of the opportunity to purchase a pass locally without having to drive to the park. As is standard with third party sales, we were offered 10% commission on daily passes and 3% commission on annual passes. With the cost of merchant sales, we requested a re-evaluation of this commission as annual passes were costing us more to sell. We were awarded 10% commission on annual passes and received backdated commission for the year. We sold a total of 1,260 Park Passes (318 annual, 942 daily) for a net commission of \$4,566. We will continue to sell the passes in 2019 with a targeted social media campaign and have incorporated messaging in print materials such as the Travel Planner, Hiking and Biking Maps.

### Backroads Maps

This year we started to sell Backroads maps and map books at the Visitor Centre. As it required Tourism Golden registering for PST, we were not able to start sales until part way through the summer. We started selling them at the end of July and sold 24 products by the end of September. The West Kootenay Waterproof Maps were the most popular, averaging two sales per week. There will be a new East Kootenay Map available in 2019 and it is expected that these two products will continue to be popular. It is recommended that they be ordered as soon as they are available to ensure full stock for opening. It is also recommended that there be a daily or weekly reconciliation of inventory to manage supplies.

### BC Road Map

While many people were satisfied with the various maps that were available to them at the Visitor Centre, 83 visitors were upset or disappointed that they could not obtain a full provincial road map. Many of the visitors indicated that they would be willing to pay for the resource. As we are now registered for PST, it is recommended that the Visitor Centre stock and sell BC provincial road maps.

### Service Promotion

The Visitor Centre participated in the following service promotion activities:

- Golden Star print advertisement for the Open House
- Golden Cinema Showtime Advertising (June-September)
- Social Media ad campaigns
- Park Pass Sales Sandwich board
- RMV BC Rockies Map advertisement
- Backroads Waterproof Maps advertisement
- Tent cards for hotels, restaurants, cafes etc.

While it is hard to measure the impact of some of these activities (tent cards, map advertisement, cinema advertisements etc.) others are more concrete. Upon the arrival of the Park Pass sandwich board, we noticed a significant increase in the number of visitors looking to purchase a pass or ask for further information about whether they needed a pass for their travels. This was set outside the Visitor Centre each day and positioned so that it could be seen from the parking lot and the bathrooms as well as the entrance to the Visitor Centre itself. Each service window also had a park information sign displayed to increase awareness of these sales.

Our social media advertisements were also quite successful and measurable.

Campaign	Reach	Impressions	Unique Link Clicks
VISAH General Awareness	8,225	150,274	389
Summer Sani Dump Awareness	16,698	781,541	155
September Sani Dump Awareness	127,103	185,765	225
June Park Pass Sales	4,231	14,949	103

### Digital Kiosk Expansion

With the support of the Columbia Basin Trust Technology Grant and as per the Visitor Services Business Plan, we expanded the offering of digital kiosks in town. Both the Ramada and the Best Western were chosen to be new homes to the digital kiosks. The Prestige Hotel was originally selected as a potential host location however their corporate office wanted the kiosk to navigate to the Prestige Hotels booking engine. As there was no way to have a single kiosk navigate differently the decision was made to place the kiosk at another location.

The kiosks used all in one touch screen computers (instead of mini PCs as the existing kiosks did) to reduce the required size of the frame and cost.

The Best Western agreed to host a kiosk however they wanted the design to fit into the style and branding of their lobby. We worked closely with International Timberframes to create a unique kiosk frame specific to their style. This was a bit of a challenging experience to meet the design desires of the hotel and would not be recommended for future expansion.

### Signage

To help visitors understand the full range of services available at the VISAH in addition to navigating through the site, on-brand signage was created expanding on the already established service icons. Small signs were designed to remind people to pick up after their dog, indicate potable water, Wi-Fi and release risk from play on rock landscaping. The small signs were installed early in the summer by Olson Construction however the remaining signs were not able to be installed until mid-October. Unfortunately, the icons are challenging to see from a distance along the highway. We are currently exploring options for alterations or changes that could be made however plan to gauge effectiveness and feedback throughout the 2019 season.

### Events

#### Community Open House



On Friday, May 18 we hosted a Community Open House to commemorate the official opening of the Visitor Centre for the season. The event included music by Krista & the Krybabies, face painting, song and dance by the Métis Nation Columbia River Society and a BBQ hosted by the Rotary Club. Kathleen Harvey and Colette Metz from Destination BC were in attendance.

We received \$750 from the Town of Golden Mayor's Sponsorship fund, \$500 from Columbia Valley Credit Union and \$650 from Columbia Basin Trust for this event. An advertisement was run in the Golden Star, social media targeted ads (19,465 impressions and 182 unique link clicks), the EZ Rock online calendar and mentioned a couple of times over the radio.

Overall the event was very successful with many members of the community attending, particularly to watch the children jig with the Métis Society. The greatest challenge with the event was that it was a Friday before a long weekend. Many people had plans to go away for the weekend and children were in school for most of the day. If this event were to run again, it is recommended that it be on a Saturday and to work around other community events and holidays.

### Saturday Showcase

In the spring, Columbia Basin Trust notified Tourism Golden that we had been pre-approved for \$750 in event sponsorship for the Golden Mountain Festival. As this festival is no longer running, we wanted to find a way to repurpose these funds and so, Saturday Showcase was born. An opportunity for visitors to learn more about the local history, wildlife, culture and how to best interact with nature without having to leave the Visitor Centre. Knowing the characteristics of our visitor EQ types, we know that they want to engage with locals and learn more about history and culture. Saturday Showcase was also created as an opportunity to invite locals to the Visitor Centre to learn more about what exists in their backyard.

Saturday Showcase received a feature in the Golden Star and was also shared through Facebook events and in the Tourism Golden events calendar. There were varying levels of success, strongly dependent on the number of visitors on site, however we received positive feedback from all facilitators who indicated they appreciated the opportunity for outreach. As this was a last-minute project, many of the facilitators were only confirmed a week or two in advance. Having a confirmed schedule to start the summer and promote in advance will likely help increase awareness and attendance.



Attendees included:

- Kicking Horse Mountain Resort; Grizzly Bear Refuge and Via Ferrate
- WildSafe BC
- WildSight Golden; Waterbirds, Columbia Wetlands and Beaver research
- Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society

When polled, Visitor Information Counsellors either recommended or highly recommended continuing Saturday Showcase again in 2019. This year, Saturday Showcase ran in July through to the Labour Day weekend from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

While soliciting community participation, some organizations found it challenging to staff on a Saturday (including Parks Canada and Golden Museum) however it is recommended to keep it on Saturdays due to the volume of traffic in peak summer months.

### Outreach Events

As per the strategy, Visitor Centre staff participated in several outreach opportunities to bring visitor services to the visitor at various locations around town. Staff attended the following events:

- Golden 24 Registration Evening (June 15)
- ST3 Registration (July 27)
- Golden Sound Festival (July 28 at Keith King Memorial Park)
- Golden Ultra Day 2 (September 22)

Engagement at the events was quite low with a maximum of 20 people engaging at a single event. People mostly engaged to see what the tent was or to ask for a hiking or biking map depending on the event. Most event participants seemed focused on the event and not engaging outside of that. The Golden Sound Festival had mostly locals in attendance and having the tent there alone as branding and a shade structure would have been more useful than staff.

In addition to special events, we also piloted having a staff work Saturdays at Kicking Horse Mountain Resort. This pilot was created based off feedback from data collectors in 2017 who indicated that visitors they spoke to at the resort had questions about tourist

attractions and activities in the area. Counsellors were sent with a satchel of resources and the information flag with instructions to set up in the courtyard. This saw very little return with less than 5 interactions per occurrence, therefore we stopped this for the month of August. It is not recommended to provide staffing there again.

### Farmer's Market

Building on the success of last year's Farmers Market attendance, we attended 10 Farmers Markets throughout July, August and on the Labour Day long weekend. We participated in a combination of Wednesday and Saturday markets. The Wednesday market volume seemed consistent whereas traffic at the Saturday markets were heavily dependent on weather and saw much lower attendance during rain and smoke periods. Our table saw between 40 and 80 visitors each week. In 2018 the Golden Farmers Market regulations changed, and non-profits were no longer given a free table and instead were asked to pay \$20 per week. We arranged with the Farmer's Market to pay a lump sum at the beginning of the season instead of paying our fee on a weekly basis. Our participation in 10 markets was going to balance out with their purchase of brochure racking however they opted not to rack with us. It is recommended to once again attend Farmers Markets as it is a good opportunity to engage with visitors and locals alike.

### Site Challenges

We experienced several issues with the toilets in the women's washroom over the summer. The first couple of issues might have been due to misuse of the facilities however subsequent issues were related to the toilets themselves and their installation. The toilet in the accessible stall of the women's washroom was regularly leaking and then cracked in July. After speaking with Kardash Plumbing and Heating it was determined that the toilets were installed on a pedestal as the piping was not at the right height for them at the time of installation. Therefore, any movement of the toilet can cause the seal to break which can lead to small leaks each time the toilet is flushed. As the bowl was cracked the toilet bowl was replaced in late July. This replacement helped immediately however within the next month small leaks continued to be present. There were also multiple times over the summer where the toilets wouldn't flush, would get clogged or the handle had fallen off. We learned how to do all these small fixes and will provide basic training to a few key staff in 2019. It is also recommended that the bathrooms continue to be monitored closely over the summer and potentially have additional solutions available onsite.

During the first couple of issues, plumbers were called however we were unable to get a hold of anyone who was open and/or willing to work on a weekend. The Town of Golden has since provided after hours phone numbers for their preferred plumbers which have been kept on file for future reference.

Men's Urinal - the cartridge on the men's urinal was replaced twice over the summer months. As there are very few men on staff, it was typically visitors reporting that the change needed to be made. It is recommended that this be asked of the janitorial staff or that staff are tasked with checking it after hours on a regular basis. It is expected to use 2-3 cartridges per year.

Over the weekend of July 21-22, there were issues with the temperature gauge and the heater in the mechanical room. We were notified by NexGen on their afternoon clean that the room was unusually hot. The thermostat was turned down and the room was left open to cool down. The room continued to be monitored and got upwards of 50 degrees Celsius. An electrician was able to fix the issue with no further incidents throughout the summer. It is recommended that this room be checked three times per day (opening, closing and mid-day). A similar issue was noted again on November 16 although the temperature was not as significantly high. The Town of Golden was notified and an electrician was called to fix the issue.

Garbage disposal - Through the agreement with the Town of Golden, town staff empty the garbage at the Visitor Centre once per day Monday-Saturday and excluding statutory holidays. At the beginning and the end of the season this is adequate however from mid-July to late August Visitor Information Counsellors were required to empty garbage an additional time each day as they would often get too full to close and cause risk of wildlife conflict. The smaller bin by the sani-dump would often need to be changed multiple times per day in addition to service provided by the town as many people would empty garbage from their RV while dumping.

VP Waste provided garbage removal service with a 3-yard bin emptied once per week during peak season and once every two weeks in times of lower traffic. It was emptied at the end of the week to be empty for the weekend. The same is recommended again for next year.

Starting in October and through the winter months, it was noted that there was a person who was sleeping on the front porch of the Visitor Centre on a regular basis. There was no noted damage to the site however is good justification for security cameras to be installed. The proposal for security cameras was put before Town council in late 2018 for budget consideration and was declined funding. At the recommendation of Tourism Golden, the Town of Golden installed a porta potty for the site during the winter months to prevent spread of human waste as the bathrooms are closed during this period. Mouse traps have also been installed in the mechanical room as there was a mouse spotted in early 2019. The Town of Golden has confirmed that these will stay in place to prevent further breeding.