

# BAY OF QUINTE REGIONAL MARKETING BOARD

## Case Study

**Trevor Norris, Senior Manager, the Bay of Quinte  
Regional Marketing Board**

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*From left to right - Jack McAvoy, Anna Fraiberg, Jen Achilles, Dug Stevenson, Trevor Norris*

Written by [Celes Davar](#), President and Owner, Earth Rhythms



Luke Jeffries from the Kenhte:ke Seed Sanctuary and Learning Centre leads the group through the experience

This case study is featured in the [Destination Dialogues 2024](#) Online Workshop Report: *Crafting Legendary Visitor Experiences* by [Celes Davar](#). The report delves into the key concepts and learnings presented in the online workshop, a virtual event organized by Destination Canada, to inspire, inform and empower rural destination development professionals. While Celes facilitated the virtual event, [Trevor Norris](#), Senior Manager, Destination Development for the Bay of Quinte Regional Marketing Board, was featured as a speaker.

The Bay of Quinte region comprises a number of communities located on the north shore of the Bay of Quinte and Lake Ontario in south eastern Ontario. It is here that the Bay of Quinte Regional Marketing Board has been engaging with four municipalities - Brighton, Quinte West, Belleville, Greater Napanee and a First Nations partner, the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte - to support a shift in how tourism takes place, emphasizing regenerative practices through experience development. First as Business and Program Development Manager and now as Senior Manager of Destination Development, Trevor Norris has been with Bay of Quinte for over 8 years now and has worked with

his community partners to champion a year-over-year investment resulting in an inspiring suite of new experiences sharing the stories, culture and experiences of the Mohawk Peoples, local growers, artisans, toymakers, agricultural producers and many more.

Prior to this investment, in 2016, Trevor identified that the Bay of Quinte was faced with an identity crisis. The team knew their destination was special, but realized they were looking at it through the wrong lens. They were concerned with having to compare themselves to other destinations within an outdated tourism paradigm. As a smaller rural destination, they also felt they lacked the traditional anchor assets like Niagara Falls, the CN Tower, or other iconic landmarks that historically drew guests to visit a region.

The Bay of Quinte team realized they needed to start asking the right questions. They wanted to help their regional partners grow tourism in a positive way, but did not know where to start. They also realized their partners had different ideas about tourism, what changes were needed, or even the concepts of experiential and regenerative tourism.

# EMBRACING A NEW MINDSET



*Chloe Maracle showing guests the garden at the Kenhte:ke Seed Sanctuary and Learning Centre*



Trevor finally recognised the power of experiences to shape a region's identity after participating in a transformative experiential tourism training program called Edge of the Wedge, offered by the Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism



Through a careful adjustment of the annual budget, the Bay of Quinte team began investing in experience development training in the region. They intentionally ended unsustainable partnerships with coach and travel trade, committed to exiting the discount economy—and realized their real assets were actually stories and the people who live in the Bay of Quinte.

Embracing a new mindset towards their relationships with tourism stakeholders, the Bay of Quinte team began to think about tourism as being relationship driven, not transactional, and wondered what needed to change. Shifting to collaboration over competition, they began to invest in capacity-building training to develop Bay of Quinte experiences, aiming to become the driver and catalyst that would shape tourism as a force for good.

Finding their regional story involved looking within to find their own community storytellers and champions, slowly nurturing personal relationships, and building trust and confidence that their stories were worth sharing and developing as experiences. Realizing they had overlooked what was in their own backyard, the Bay of Quinte team invested heavily in telling these stories as a major organizational shift. In the process, they also realized they needed new tools to support non-traditional community hosts including brand design, marketing plans, costing and pricing projections, and new funding strategies.

# LIVING, LEARNING AND SEEDING



*New experience partners taking part in the Bay of Quinte Experience Crafting Workshop*

A year-long training and coaching process began to emerge. The Bay of Quinte co-developed a three-day lived-learning workshop designed as a total experience itself. Five experience partners (non-traditional community hosts) were each provided \$5,000 seed funding for experience development and an additional \$10,000 for high resolution video and photography of the actual experiences that were being placed inmarket.

The crafting of the experiences reflected zero waste, with catering and transportation that showcased local partnerships and an intentional effort to reduce the carbon footprint of the entire workshop. Municipal coaches were trained, and new experience hosts learned together, as they built capacity in the language, tools and methods to design these new experiences.

A focus was placed on diversity and inclusion, and involving Indigenous and new Canadian business owners, as part of the structure of the training workshop. The entire Bay of Quinte team provided full support for this process from ideation to market launch.

“ One of the truly inspiring aspects of this initiative is that the training was intended to help Trevor become an experiential and regenerative tourism coach, to directly work one-on-one with each of the new experience hosts. ”

# BEE OUR GUEST



*Francis McParland showing her hives to guests as part of her Bee Our Guest experience*

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Bee Our Guest, with Frances McParland, has been developed as a new apiary experience at the Just Bee Cuz Honey Farm, established by Frances and Thomas McParland in 2019.

Frances, now a regenerative tourism leader in the region, facilitates this new honey bee experience, including fully suited investigation of hives, honey

tasting and wildflower education. Guests make a reusable beeswax wrapper to take home and a portion of the ticket price goes to Quinte Conservation programs. Frances' passion for beekeeping, sustainability and reducing single use plastics is at the heart of this experience.

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# RECONNECTING ONE SEED AT A TIME



*Chloe Maracle explaining the importance of food sovereignty during the Reconnecting One Seed At A Time*

Reconnecting One Seed at a Time has been developed as an inspiring new experience at the Kenhte:ke Seed Sanctuary and Learning Centre in the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. Chloe Maracle, who is on the team that facilitates the experience, left her community to go to school but returned when she realized she could relearn her language and reconnect to her culture through working at the Seed Sanctuary.

Reconnecting One Seed at a Time is a three-hour experience where guests are invited to learn about the Rotinonhsyón:ni practice of growing crop for seed. Guests learn a regenerative approach to farming, Mohawk teachings and the importance of food sovereignty for Indigenous communities. They are invited to see reconciliation through a new lens and are given heirloom seeds to take home.

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This new experience has been an important step for the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte to own their own story and begin to undo the commodification of their culture. Relationship building in action is one step in reconciliation.

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# LESSONS LEARNED



As the Bay of Quinte builds toward a regenerative tourism mandate through the development of regional experiences, the team has identified some important learnings:

1. Mandatory regenerative elements are baked into every experience developed.
2. The development of new experiences has helped strengthen and evolve the regional circular economy.
3. Experiences offer a catalyst for positive behaviour modification for new and returning guests.
4. Experiences allow the Bay of Quinte Regional Marketing Board and its tourism partners to own their own stories and control how they grow tourism sustainably, supporting the community.
5. Experiences allow for non-traditional community hosts to now share their stories within the tourism economy.
6. A new inclusive and positive relationship is now being nurtured between residents and tourism businesses and operators.



## Trevor's tips for "Tending Your Own Garden"

Trevor and his team at the Bay of Quinte Regional Marketing Board have definitely put into practice many of the things they have been learning. He offers these tips for "tending your own garden" of experiential tourism within your own communities:

- Have patience and celebrate the small wins. Developing successful sustainable experiences takes time.
- Find your storytellers and adapt to them, their constraints and realities.
- Re-examine funding barriers, such as old paradigms and bylaws that exclude capital expenses.
- Always be inclusive and lead by example with your community partners. Always be open to sharing your vision and ideas, if asked. But listen to your partners first.
- Don't underestimate your community. They will surprise you if they are inspired and challenged to do better.
- Know that within the new regenerative framework, the rural regions in Canada can also be leaders.

# CONTACT INFORMATION

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