

CAPE BRETON ISLAND

Tourism Training Network

2022-2025



Unama'ki espi-kina'matno'kuom etek
Mi'kma'ki, wla na no'kamanaq aq
maqamikewminu mena'qiknmuetuk.

Cape Breton University is located in
Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded
territory of the Mi'kmaw People.

Project Identification

Organization: World Tourism Institute, Cape Breton University

Project Title: Cape Breton Island Tourism Training Network

Project Number: #18674697

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WORLD TOURISM INSTITUTE TEAM



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cape Breton Island's Tourism Training Network was a strategic, co-ordinated, partnership-based research and training response for post-Covid 19 recovery funded by the Government of Canada through Economic and Social Development Canada (ESDC) funding. Using a collaborative model, the World Tourism Institute at Cape Breton University, together with its industry partners, successfully launched the Cape Breton Island Tourism Training Network (CBITTN) to address specific workforce needs in support of economic recovery for rural tourism and related sectors including arts, culture and Mi'kmaw tourism.

Cape Breton University (CBU) has delivered quality tourism and hospitality training for decades and is a leader in the field of such undergraduate training in Canada and is a member of the Canadian University Tourism Coalition (CUTC) whose collective vision is to promote the professionalism and credibility of a highly qualified Canadian workforce, in Canada and beyond. The World Tourism Institute (WTI) at CBU is perfectly positioned and timed to leverage, support and enhance, a growing industry at home and globally.

While the project exceeded its quantitative targets, some project timelines and locations were adjusted from the original proposal in order to align with the following key strategic plans for Unama'ki-Cape Breton Island:

- Destination Cape Breton's Rise Again 2030 Strategy
- Cape Breton University's Strategic Plan
- Forward. Together. Unama'ki – Cape Breton Economic Development & Population Growth Plan
- Unama'ki – Cape Breton Economic Impact and Growth Potential of Year-Round Tourism Sector Operations, the Cape Breton Partnership
- Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network 2024 - 2029 Five Year Mi'kmaw Sustainable Cultural Development Strategy "Walking Forward Together"

In a collaborative approach, our success rests on a strong foundation of co-operation between key influencers across the tourism and related sectors of Unama'ki-Cape Breton Island. For the first time, a robust research agenda meant that Cape Breton led primary research was conducted and shared with tourism operators across Unama'ki-Cape Breton Island. The power of accurate, relevant and timely data is not to be underestimated. The industry response has been overwhelmingly positive with 2797 participants receiving tourism training across Unama'ki-Cape Breton.

CBITTN staff with David C. Dingwall, President and Vice-Chancellor of Cape Breton University












PROJECT OBJECTIVES & SCOPE

Cape Breton University partnered with Destination Cape Breton and the Cape Breton Partnership to engage with the tourism sector of Unama'ki Cape Breton Island to provide post-pandemic recovery training, research the nature of chronic labour shortages and ensure broad understanding of Mi'kmaw culture in support of Truth and Reconciliation.

The project's specific objectives included:

- Develop an educational program for tourism industry operators and staff on the history and culture of the Mi'kmaw people.
- Develop a foundation of accessible research and tools, which will support industry decision-making to foster innovation and entrepreneurialism in tourism.
- Identify training gaps and develop micro-credential programs in sectors such as cultural tourism, outdoor adventure, culinary tourism, and managerial skills training in the arts and culture sector.
- Grow the opportunities for Cape Breton Island's tourism sector and address the tourism workforce shortages in rural communities: Membertou First Nation, St. Ann's Gaelic College, Ingonish, Chéticamp, Baddeck, Isle Madame, Port Hawkesbury, Eskasoni First Nation and Sydney.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

TARGETS		
2022	2023	2024
 50 Participants in Truth & Reconciliation Awareness	 550 Participants in Truth & Reconciliation Awareness	 450 Participants in Truth & Reconciliation Awareness
 30 Participants in Micro-Credentials	 270 Participants in Micro-Credentials	 200 Participants in Micro-Credentials
 90 Participants in Skills Development	 360 Participants in Skills Development	 270 Participants in Skills Development
258	1,214	1,325

The total number of participants trained is **2797**, which exceeded our project goal by **509**.



RESEARCH BY THE NUMBERS

Total Surveys
Conducted

39

Total Participants
Engaged

6,676

Visitor Surveys
Respondents

5,909

Workforce
Surveys
Respondents

557

Music Industry
Stakeholders
Surveyed

425

Business Case
Studies Developed

12

Reports Completed
and Published

20+

RESEARCH REPORTS OVERVIEW

- Visitor Experience Reports (2023, 2024).
- Music Industry Study (2024).
- Cruise Ship Passenger Experience Reports (2022, 2023, 2024).
- Workforce Gap Analysis (2022–2023).
- BHTM Student Employment Planning Reports (2023).
- Economic Impact and Feasibility Studies in partnership with local organizations (2023-2024).

MICROCREDENTIALS OFFERED

- CB Island Ambassador
- Customer Service Excellence
- Digital Marketing for Tourism
- Event Budgeting
- Event Logistics
- Event Marketing
- Event Management Suite
- Onboarding for Tourism
- Tourism & Cultural Awareness



RESEARCH

From 2022-2025, the CBITTN has conducted extensive research to support and enhance the Cape Breton Island tourism sector. Originally envisioned as a support mechanism for training activities, research quickly grew into a vital, stand-alone pillar that directly informed decision-making for local businesses, policymakers, and Cape Breton's Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), Destination Cape Breton.

The research undertaken by CBITTN has established Cape Breton Island as a leader in data-driven tourism strategy, fostering growth, resilience, and innovation in a vital economic sector. Continued support and investment in research by tourism partners and stakeholders will ensure that Cape Breton Island remains competitive and adaptive in an ever-evolving tourism landscape.

Impact on Cape Breton Tourism Sector

- Created better information for better decision making through 17 customized visitor experience surveys and reports for the Miners Museum, Parks Canada, Port of Sydney, Cape Smokey, Highland Village, Celtic Colours, and others.
- Conducted 39 surveys with over 6,600 participants, covering visitors, operators, students, and industry workers.
- Surveyed 425 stakeholders of the music industry, including musicians, attendees, and business owners to address challenges in the local music sector and propose actionable solutions.
- Surveyed 241 tourism operators and employees to identify workforce gaps and challenges.

Impact on Unama'ki College

- Development of Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism digital textbook, a first of its kind.
- Provided archiving support to the Sr. Dorothy Moore L'nu Resource Centre through a student hire.
- Development of Indigenous tourism resource list for Cape Breton University faculty and staff.

Impact on Destination Cape Breton

- Data platforms were evaluated, optimized, and launched, providing actionable traveler insights and analysis.
- Customized visitor data were generated by isolating geolocation data from Environics, to deliver area specific visitor profiles, allowing for more effective campaign targeting.
- Tools such as Visitor View, MobileScapes, and the new Canadian Tourism Data Collected were utilized to inform the DMOs decision making.

Impact on Cape Breton Partnership

- Supported major research projects for economic impact, tourism, and EV feasibility.
- Promotion and participation in Truth and Reconciliation efforts in the sector and mutual support of education and networking sessions in support of the World Tourism Institute.



TOURISM TRAINING

CBITTN microcredentials were tailored for individuals seeking to create unique and meaningful experiences and lead effective organizations in Cape Breton's tourism industry. By completing our microcredentials, individuals gained a comprehensive understanding of the tourism business landscape, empowering them to elevate customer experiences, drive business growth, and confidently navigate challenges with informed decision-making.

Impact on Cape Breton Tourism Sector

- Workforce capacity building through training such as AI, accessibility, events management, customer service excellence, digital marketing, Unama'ki-Cape Breton ambassador, etc.
- Truth and reconciliation awareness included in all training sessions.

Impact on Cape Breton University's Bachelor of Hospitality and Tourism Management (BHTM) Program

- National accreditation application process support (Tourism HR Canada).
- Microcredential development & delivery.
- Recruitment support:
 - » AI pilot campaign
 - » Allison Bernard Memorial High School tourism 11 presentations
 - » Completion of 2023 BHTM student survey
- Student and employer Annual Familiarization Tour coordination and hosting.
- Curriculum and resource development:
 - » 4 Unama'ki-Cape Breton tourism business cases
 - » Mi'kmaw cultural tourism certificate and course embedded in undergraduate programs.

Impact on Unama'ki College

- Co-hosted and coordinated professional allyship info session for Cape Breton University faculty and staff.
- Development of an online video on truth and reconciliation awareness and education.

Impact on ReconciliACTION

- Collaboration with Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network (NSITEN) on tourism training and curriculum development.
- Partnered with Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies for Indigenous Entrepreneurship case study development.
- Supported Indigenous cultural and historical community research awareness training for Cabot Trail 100 planning team.
- Co-sponsored Mi'kmaw Youth Culinary Camp with NSITEN in July 2024 at the NSCC Strait Area Campus.



INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

Since 2022, the CBITTN Industry Liaison has developed and strengthened relationships with tourism operators, stakeholders, and supporters across Unama'ki-Cape Breton Island. This engagement has facilitated significant initiatives aimed at enhancing the tourism sector, workforce development, and cultural inclusivity.

Impact on Cape Breton Tourism Sector

- Training and Networking Events:
 - » Hosted the 2024 Tourism Training Kick-Off Sessions in partnership with the Cape Breton Partnership across the island.
 - » Presented at 2023 Destination Cape Breton's Workforce Solutions Workshops across multiple locations.
- Community Engagement Events:
 - » Participated in the 2023 State of the Strait Chamber Update and Business & Breakfast: Let's Talk Tourism events.
 - » Supported the Cape Breton Partnership's island-wide Job Fair.
 - » Launched an International Women's Day campaign focused on women working in tourism in 2023 and 2024.
 - » Celebrated World Tourism Week in 2023 and 2024 by visiting various tourism operators on island.
 - » For World Tourism Day 2024, we created a community initiative to celebrate "tourism superheroes" in the industry.

Resource Development

Developed a comprehensive cultural learning toolkit highlighting Mi'kmaq, Gaelic, Acadian, and African Nova Scotian heritage. This collaborative initiative involved key organizations, including NSITEN, the Gaelic Business Initiative, La Société Saint-Pierre/ Les Trois Pignons, and the Department of African Nova Scotian Affairs – Cape Breton Regional Office. The toolkit is available digitally and in print at Visitor Information Centres.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

We compiled a robust and current contact database with 400+ tourism stakeholders across Unama'ki Cape Breton Island. We were pleased to support organizations, operators and stakeholders across beautiful Unama'ki-Cape Breton in efforts to build capacity and workforce competencies so they will emerge stronger than ever in this post-Covid economy.

Training:

Allison Bernard Memorial High School (Tourism Class), Baddeck Area Business and Tourism Association with the Municipality of Victoria County, Baddeck Academy (Co-op Class and Tourism Class), Cabot Cape Breton, Cape Breton University, Maritime Inn, Port of Sydney, Skye River Trail Group (We'koqma'q First Nation), Welcome Network, Destination Cape Breton, Professional Allyship with Indigenous Treaty Partners and Indigevisor, Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network, SeaChange CoLab, Cape Breton Partnership, Anchored Ideas, Parks Canada, Fortress of Louisbourg Association, Sheppard Training Inc.

Research:

Baddeck Area Business and Tourism Association, Cape Breton Miners Museum, Celtic Colours International Festival, Destination Cape Smokey, Louisbourg VIC, Membertou Heritage Park, North Sydney VIC, Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum, St. Peter's VIC, Port of Sydney, Wagmatcook Heritage and Culture Centre, Bachelor of Hospitality & Tourism Management Program, CBU Shuttle Program, the Cape Breton Partnership, Cape Breton Mic (Music Sector Research), Purdy Crawford Chair, Inverness County Centre for the Arts, Gaelic College

Networking/Engagement:

Albert Bridge Alpacas, Anchored Ideas Inc., Baddeck Area Business and Tourism Association, Bachelor of Hospitality and Tourism Management (CBU), Bistro Phare 756, Bras d'Or Lakes Inn, Breton Air, Cabot Cape Breton, Cabot Discovery Tours, Cape Breton University, Cape Breton Regional Chamber of Commerce, Cape Breton Sailing, Cape Breton Villas, Chocolatea, Dancing Goat, Destination Cape Smokey, Donkin Market Garden, Farmers Daughter, Eskasoni Cultural Journeys, Integolf, Inverness VIC, Isle Madame Historical Society, Kitpu Aviation, Les Trios Pignons, Lotta Adventures, Maple Spruces, Maritime Inn, Matsu Global, Membertou Heritage Park, Membertou Trade and Convention Centre, Municipality of Inverness County, Municipality of Victoria County, Music Cities Events by Monumental, Keltic Quay, Old Sydney Society, Pilot Whale Chalets, Port of Sydney, Savour Cape Breton, Sheppard Training Inc., Strait Area Chamber of Commerce, Sydney & Cape Breton Taxi Tours, Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia, TNT Outdoor Adventures, Town of Port Hawkesbury, VMP Group, Wagmatcook Heritage and Culture Centre, We'koqma'q First Nation, Welcome Network (Cape Breton Partnership), Woodroad Restaurant, VICS: Margaree, Inverness, Baddeck, Sydney, North Sydney, Lockmasters Quarters Pub, Wheelhouse Café, Gaelic Business Initiatives, Gender Work and Organization (Conference)



CBITTN staff with David Meuse, Cultural Interpreter for the Membertou Trade and Convention Center



CBITTN staff and students at the Membertou Trade and Convention Center

LEGACY ASSETS

Through targeted initiatives and collaborations, CBITTN has significantly contributed to the development of Unama'ki's tourism sector. These efforts underscore the importance of building partnerships, enhancing workforce skills, and promoting cultural inclusivity to support sustainable tourism growth.

- Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism certificate, course and digital textbook, a first of their kind.
- Online tourism dashboard research.
- Tourism Distribution List of 450+ tourism stakeholders across the Island.
- 12 Unama'ki-Cape Breton Island business cases.
- 3 Indigenous Entrepreneurship business cases.
- 10 skills development course curriculums.
- 3 Indigenous business course curriculum and teacher resources.
- Industry surveys and protocols for operator adoption.
- 2 Tourism Career Recruitment Videos.
- Mi'kmaw Elders and Knowledge Keeper video footage.

14 research reports are publicly available along with additional tourism resources by visiting www.cbu.ca/wti



RECONCILIATION IN TOURISM

Unama'ki Cape Breton is home to the largest Indigenous community in Atlantic Canada and the largest Mi'kmaw community anywhere. Throughout our project we were fortunate to build relationships with and receive guidance from numerous Mi'kmaw elders and knowledge keepers as well as organizations closely aligned with the tourism sector such as the Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network, the Mi'kmaw Employment Training Secretariat (METS) and Indigenous owned and operated businesses.

Some highlights of our actions to support truth and reconciliation in the tourism sector included:

- Hosted & Coordinated Professional Allyship Info Sessions for Tourism Sector and Community participants
- Presentation at the 2023 Muiwatmnej Etuaptmumk Conference: Honouring Two-Eyed Seeing
- Mi'kmaw History Month Research Presentation (2024) with Dr. Mary Beth Doucette, Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies
- Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies - Indigenous Entrepreneurship Case Studies Developed
- Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism Certificate embedded as an option in Business, Arts, Community Studies and Tourism
- Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism Digital Textbook Development
- Developed Youtube Video on Truth and Reconciliation Awareness
- Co-hosted Tourism/Business Capacity Workshops in Membertou and Wagmatcook
- Hosted Indigenous Allyship Lunch n' Learn and Blanket Exercise sessions
- Sponsored Mi'kmaw Youth Culinary Camp with NSITEN, July 2024, NSCC Strait Area Campus
- Highlighted Mi'kmaw Graduates of the Bachelor of Hospitality and Tourism Management Program with profiles, photos and videos
- Developed Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism Case Study Series for faculty and staff to freely download



OUTCOMES

- Increased understanding of the specific labour shortages and the design of training programs to address the shortages.
- Increased understanding of the Mi'kmaq people, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, treaties and Indigenous rights, and Mi'kmaq traditions.
- Increased workforce opportunities for Cape Breton Island's rural tourism sector.
- Increased innovative capacity and competencies, especially in new digital platforms, across the tourism sectors, leading to a more sustainable and thriving rural economy.



Federal Minister of Small Business and Tourism Soraya Martinez Ferrada visits CBU Campus September 2023
L to R: Terry Smith, CEO, Destination Cape Breton, Dr. Richard MacKinnon, VP Academic, CBU, Minister Martinez Ferrada, , Dr. John Nadeau, Dean of the Shannon School of Business (SSOB), Mary Jane Morrison, Associate Dean, SSOB and Managing Director of the World Tourism Institute, Jody MacArthur, Marketing Manager, Destination Cape Breton, Eleanor Anderson, CBITTN Project Lead, Jennifer Currie, Faculty, BHTM Program, Matthew Patles, BHTM Alumni.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustainable Tourism Development:

- Focus on long-term impacts of tourism on local communities and environments.
- Develop strategies for balancing visitor demand with conservation efforts.
- Champion the Sustainable Tourism Development Certificate at Cape Breton University – both embedded in undergraduate programs and as a stand alone/direct entry option for industry professionals.
- Support Destination Cape Breton's efforts to strengthen sustainability education and actions in the broad definition including cultural, economic and environmental health.

Workforce Retention:

- Explore innovative solutions to attract and retain talent, including immigration pathways and remote work integration.
- Address systemic barriers such as housing and transportation.
- Support the Cape Breton Partnership's economic development plans, specifically as they relate to capacity building for the tourism, culture, hospitality, and recreation stakeholders across Unama'ki-Cape Breton Island.

Indigenous and Cultural Tourism:

- Expand research and support capacity building around authentic Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism experience development.
- Evaluate the economic and social impacts of cultural festivals and events.
- Seek and support actions which represent and reflect Truth and Reconciliation in tourism.

Technology and Digital Tools:

- Investigate the role of emerging technologies (e.g., AI, VR) in enhancing visitor experiences.
- Support operators in adopting automation and advanced analytics.

Market Expansion Opportunities:

- Build strategic partnerships which will support Destination Cape Breton in achieving its Destination 2030 goals.
- Develop and implement a robust research agenda focused on season expansion and tourism operator support for better decision making.

 This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada's Sectoral Initiatives Program.



