

VEOC Discussion Highlights

for

Rideau Ferry to Merrickville Reach

Below the big lakes of the Rideau, the river and Canal wind northward through a limestone plain lowland topography. The slowed flow and subsequent flooding due to Canal and dam building induced the growth of spectacular marshes and wetlands, a mecca for avifauna.

Here thousands of years ago, was the edge of ocean waters, which flowed up the St. Lawrence to flood this lowland which had been depressed for thousands of years by the weight on continental ice masses during the last glaciation. The remains of whales have been found in proximity to Smith Falls. Following isostatic rebound of the lands, the ocean waters drained back into the seas leaving enriched soils.

The marshes of the Tay Canal, near Perth, the Swale wetlands above the Poonamalie Locks and three sets of locks of Smith Falls; and the Rideau Migratory Bird Sanctuary upstream of Merrickville Dam afford some of the best river and shoreline experiences within the Corridor.

In the 1800's, the economic heartbeat of the Rideau Canal was strongest in the emerging towns and villages of this central portion of the Rideau Canal Heritage Corridor. Core to the growth and prosperity of these emerging communities was the water of the Rideau – a source of energy for mills, a ready means for transport of goods and people, a driver of creativity in boat building and industrial ingenuity, a marketplace for goods produced and harvested from the surrounding natural resources and farm lands.

In 2016 the **Perth** military settlement marks its 200th anniversary; a settlement whose impact motivated the growth of a thriving economic centre. It is proudly reported that Perth and its surrounding district launched the steamship "Enterprise" in 1833, an event perhaps celebrated by the population of 1000 in the Town's 8 taverns, 7 liquor stores and 3 distilleries and breweries. By 1887, it is reported that one-fortieth of all money in Canadian banks was in Perth; an indicator of the economic significance of this Centre. And by 1892 Mammoth Cheese produced the world's biggest cheese.

The positive energy and pride of Perth continues to be exemplified today in its vibrant restored historic waterfront along the Tay Canal, a critical economic tributary of the Rideau Canal. The stone architecture of the Town's heritage buildings are readily appreciated from parks and pathways winding through the Town following the Tay's waters to the 'basin' around which today's guests taste the heritage of this place in its array of culinary opportunities and farmers market.

The economic leaders of Perth took into their own hands the building of the Tay Canal, recognizing the future importance of the Rideau Canal. Today's Community's visionaries continue this perspective in their care and nurturing of the Tay Canal, its historic structures and natural environment – a model of collaboration in facilitating natural and cultural heritage experience opportunities within the Corridor.

Merrickville, at the opposite end of the Reach, exemplifies a similar investment in celebrating the heritage of the community and the Canal within its vibrant waterfront and town streetscapes and parklands.

It too saw the emergence of its industrial heritage in the form of mills, foundries and brick factories, all tied to the power and transportation benefits drawn from the river and falls.

These industrial roots have evolved into a thriving gathering of artisans, who work their artistry in many mediums, and whose storefronts and studios drawn explorers from near and far.

Merrickville is recognized by historians as Canada's best preserved and restored 19th century Village with over 100 historic and heritage properties.

The Canal and Merrickville Locks are central to the downtown riverfront area. This heritage area welcomes guests to observe the three detached locks, the dam and power station, the stabilised ruins of an industrial complex, the iconic Blockhouse, the largest in the Corridor, and a municipal park and nearby river front campground.

This municipality in part thrives through the benefits it derives from Corridor explorers and those drawn to the artistic talents of artisans and chefs, who together reveal insights into the cultural heritage of the Rideau Canal Corridor.

Smith Falls, centrally situated between these two historic communities, has an equally diverse economic heritage. With roots dating back to settlement by United Empire Loyalists in the 1740s, the town was effectively born in the 1830s as a result of canal building required to address the navigation challenge posed by the "falls" - a 36-foot drop in less than a quarter of a mile.

In the 1840s, the Town had grown to contain about 700 inhabitants. There were fifty dwellings, two grist mills (one with four run of stones), two sawmills, one carding and fulling mill, seven stores, six groceries, one axe factory, six blacksmiths, two wheelwrights, one cabinet maker, one chair-maker, three carpenters, one gunsmith, eleven shoemakers, seven tailors, one tinsmith and two taverns.

Occupying an historic mill building at the edge of the river, the Rideau Canal Visitor Centre is the flagship interpretation centre for the historic Rideau Canal system - exhibits bring to life the history of the canal – its construction from 1826-1831, its role throughout history, as well as the distinct lifestyle associated with the Rideau Waterway.

In close proximity to Smith Falls' canal waterfront parklands and walkways, explorers can experience a full array of lock designs and related structures. A natural depression to the south of the river was used to create a flight of three locks, known as Combined Lock station today. The natural course of the river was dammed to create a basin upstream of the locks. At the upper end of the basin a fourth (detached) lock was constructed. Between 1972 and 1974 a new single hydraulic lock was built at "Combined" lock station just north of the old flight of three hand-operated locks. The single lock was required to allow boat traffic to clear a new low-level bridge.

A mile below the Combined Lock station is a flight of two locks called Old Slys Lock station. This station is named for the original settler at this location, William Sly. A dam and waste weir control water levels upstream of the locks.

Defensible lockmasters' houses were built at all three stations in Smiths Falls. The house at Old Slys was built in 1838 and the houses at Combined and Detached around 1842.

Being a transportation hub is central to Smith Falls, as in 1895, the town boomed on becoming the CPR's 'division point' for travel in this portion of Ontario. The arrival of train transportation of goods and people was a death knell for the Canal's role in commercial transportation. Yet both modes now bring leisure travelling guests to the Corridor, today. The rail heritage is celebrated at the Rail Museum, with community walking tours linking guests to other heritage museums and attractions throughout the town and along its compelling day and evening waterfront.

Exploration Themes

Participants felt that this Reach is a growing destination for “village life” explorers living in the surrounding region – particularly the Canal cities of Ottawa and Kingston and the regional municipalities of greater Toronto and Montreal.

Their desire is to raise awareness of the diversity of opportunities for natural and cultural heritage exploration and discovery afforded within the towns and villages of this Reach, along with its outstanding recreational opportunities for leisure travelers of water and land based routes.

In general, participants identified a number of exploration themes which they felt would be of interest in particular to Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers. These included exploring and discovering areas which feature:

- Exploring the marshlands - the Swale, Merrickville Sanctuary and Tay Marsh
- Experiencing different personalities of Canal waters through the Reach and its villages
- Experiencing the Serenities of natural areas and habitats
- Slackwater – its implications on navigation & resources
- “locking through” and understanding design & operation
 - At lock, in museum, virtual models, meeting the people
- Immersions in “Community” heritage & lifestyles
 - Meeting the “people” of the Rideau Corridor
- Artisans and Music and Tastes of the Rideau
- Rideau architecture & ruins
- Rideau mines, quarries, boat building and milling

Canal Heritage

- Insight into design and development challenges - ingenuity of canal builders
- “Slackwater canal”
- Human modification of watersheds - “slackwater” and what it took to make it

Community Heritage

- Smith Falls rail and industrial heritage - evolving social & economic heritage - museum and living heritage
- Perth Community heritage - settlement, military, economic
- Merrickville’s preserved 19th century townscape
- Founders of the Rideau Corridor - settlers, canal builders, industrialists
- Rideau agricultural heritage and evolving economies - agricultural museum
- Rideau transportation of goods and people heritage - barge building and sunken ships
- Rideau Canal - a unique, yet representative piece of Canadiana – nostalgic heritage of tourism

Connecting with People of the Rideau

- Rideau Corridor artisans; arts, food, music,
- Rideau boat builders and navigators – steamships, barges, Rideau Queen
- Heritage Architecture in stone and wood - restored homes and buildings
- Aviation heritage and museum

Natural Resource Heritage Exploration

- Marine heritage – Rideau Ferry Lake Champlain
- Natural and modified Rideau River and lake systems
- Corridor's evolving terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems
- Corridor forests, plants - land and water ecosystems
- Corridor wildlife - resident and migratory
- Serenity of mornings and evenings - sun rise and sun set
- Night skies - stars and northern lights
- Kayaking marshes, wetlands, backwaters and secluded shorelines
- Bird watching and sanctuaries – Tay marsh, Swale, Merrickville
- Geotours - Mining. Mica mines, geological zones of the Rideau.

Human Heritage in Natural Environments

- Water is life blood of Rideau life, communities, economies,
- Hydro power in the context of Rideau economy and life - energy for mills, transportation,
- Biodiversity of plants and explore species at risk
- Urban escape to Rideau Corridor's natural serenity
- Rideau is a natural and popular migration route for fauna and human
- Garlic and maple syrup heritage festivals - fall colours
- Masonry heritage – quarries and architecture
- Wood carvers – decoys
- Rideau wooden fences
- Equestrian heritage – riders, horses, farms

Desired Images for this Reach and Corridor

Discussion participants felt that at this time, this specific Reach of the Rideau Canal, is well known locally for its historic townscapes, artisan communities and culinary experiences, but has little or no general image in the minds of Canadians and international potential guests. It is not well known as a river and canal recreation and natural heritage exploration opportunity.

Reach Current Images

- Small Town Ontario - service centre, industry
- Gateways to cottage country - summer
- Perth - historic town aura – leisure centre, dining and shopping, canal waterfront
- Smith Falls – commercial and service centre, museums, canal waterfront
- Merrickville – artisan community in historic townscape, canal waterfront
- Nearby wildlife and aquatic wetland areas
- Most other locks in Reach are unknown as is Tay Canal

Corridor Current Image

- Boating and skating
- Ottawa Locks and Canal structure to Dows Lake
- Passive Observation for most and water/ice recreation for some
- Countryside, small towns, cottages, lakes, fishing

When asked how they would like to be perceived in the future, participants shared the following desired images:

Desired Reach Images

- Vibrant places with natural, historically authentic and recreational opportunities
- Year round opportunities for urban escape – accessible, safe day trips all seasons
- Perth – celebrates 200 years of community life – is theater centre of Rideau, fine dining and taste sensations and unique marshland adventures along the “discovered’ Tay Canal
- Smith Falls innovatively celebrates its social and economic heritage – a welcoming leisure centre, it is a launch point for river and canal excursions and discoveries
- Merrickville - vibrant community of artisans, historic structures, streetscapes and community life in a serene canal and river setting
- All three large communities are collectively known for marquis events and celebrations
- Communities large and small are cultural experience destinations in themselves
- Rail & rural heritage experiences – Smith Falls
- Heritage town buildings, restored waterfront - Tay Canal a discovery
- Welcoming, informed and capable hosts ready and open
- Launch point for aquatic and land based explorations
- Able to outfit & support guests explorations - part larger network
- Tourism hosts & residents have bought into “host guest concept and their tourism role”

Desired Corridor Image

- “Rideau” is a distinct Canada-level tourism destination
- Piece of Canadiana - cornerstone of Canada
- Embodies history of Canada – settlement, military, industry, transportation
- A diverse natural and cultural heritage district
- Readily accessible, safe adventures in history and nature
- A multi-day destination, not limited to boating season
- Many ways to explore it - hosts able to support exploration
- Opportunities to immerse in our culture & heritage
- Diverse natural exploration and outdoor recreation opportunity
- High quality presentations, animation - capable hosts
- Vibrant, sustainable communities & tourism economy

Desired Outcomes of Contributing to the VEOC Discussions

Discussion participants expressed the following desired outcomes and/or opportunities for change:

Shared sense of direction at reach and corridor levels

Participants perceived that for the Rideau to realize its potential as a unique piece of “Canadiana” which affords insight into many aspects of the nation’s natural and cultural characteristics and its diverse political and history – its many parts must have a shared direction to become a Canada-wide and international recognized experiential tourism destination.

The Corridor and its Reaches must have a single integrative strategy to strengthen and diversify the experience opportunities desired by its guests, a direction which recognizes and capitalizes upon the array of resources and opportunities within each Reach and the Corridor as a whole.

Work together – collective destination

Within this Reach, contributors felt there was considerable opportunity to strengthen the networking between the three principal community destinations and their surrounding natural attractions. By interconnecting their natural and cultural experience opportunities in the minds of guests and by supporting exploration of all three communities and their surrounding landscapes with interconnect transportation and support facilities, it was envisioned that a more compelling heritage experience destination would emerge in the centre of the Corridor.

It was simultaneously recognized that each community's history and evolutions were distinct and that in working together these distinctions should be highlighted. The heritage experience opportunities should be complementary yet distinct, building upon one another to share the complex heritage of this Reach of the Corridor.

Network - build on each other's strengths and learn from one another

Contributors recognized the individual successes which had been achieved in each community. They sought to incorporate the ingenuities of one attraction or operator into other related or similar ones; for example, coordinating programs, services and investment strategies amongst the museum and heritage presentation communities, and amongst the performing arts and culinary experience facilitators.

The participants suggested that more effective responses to guest desires and requirements could be achieved through packaging programs and services, and operating as a network of community experiences and services, recreational support services, accommodations and culinary experiences.

Grow understanding of our experience potentials amongst hosts and guests

Discussions revealed that many hosts were not fully aware of the natural, cultural and historic resources within their communities, their surrounding landscapes, and the Reach as a whole. Their focus by necessity had been perhaps limited to their own values and interests. They were not fully aware of how their communities, attractions and services were perceived by different types of guests, and further how guests might desire enhanced or new opportunities to connect with the Reach, its people and communities.

They felt there was opportunity to enhance awareness of our resources and opportunities by guests, hosts and residents.

As an extension of growing host knowledge, it was recognized that ways and means must be put in place to grow guest awareness and interests in our natural and cultural heritage and leisure recreation opportunities. New and enhanced techniques will be required to inform, influence and involve guests.

Understanding and responding to guest values, interests and travel traits was a key to building awareness and engagement.

Strategically grow and diversify support for guests

It was desired that these discussions would begin the identification of ways and means by which the tourism sector of the Reach could strategically evolve its support for guests, in ways which respond to guest values and desires. Further, that the ideas would be a complementary set of improvements encouraging guests to explore, at present, not well known or appreciated natural areas of the Rideau River and Canal environments, and engage more guests in exploring and appreciating the built heritage of the communities and the celebration of lifestyles, families and notable events in the history.

The orientation was towards enhancing current experience opportunities and, as well, looking to new realms of traveler enjoyment and discovery. The goal was diversify and make more compelling the opportunities which draw guests to this Reach and its existing traveler destinations, and do this within the context of similar growth and diversity along the full length of the Rideau Canal Heritage Corridor.

Paradigm Shifters

With these outcomes and objectives in mind, participants shared some fundamental changes in how guests could be hosted and the tourism industry enhanced with consequent benefits to local communities and residents.

Shuttle service within Reach – Responding to the desire to be a collective destination, it was suggested that a “hop on, hop off” shuttle service be put in place to link the communities and points in between, making it more convenient for guests to explore the Reach by bicycle, foot, boat, etc. to get between points of interest, exploration facilitators and travel services.. The shuttle service could simultaneously be a traveler’s information source with informed drivers giving information and touring programs. The vehicles might be heritage cars and buses.

This Reach specific shuttle service could be interconnected with similar shuttle service concepts identified for other Reaches. Collectively, they could make Corridor and Reach explorations by pedestrians and other land based travelers, that much more compelling. These Corridor services could be linked to larger rail and bus services traversing eastern Ontario.

Network of floating bridges and waterside trails – This concept is intended to aid guests in exploring the Reach’s waterways and wetlands. It envisions making it feasible for guests to travel throughout the Reach along its Canal waterways and through its marshes and wetlands with an innovative set of interconnected trails beside, over and on the water. This system would allow non-boaters to perhaps achieve the experiences achieved by kayakers and canoeists. It would take guests into areas not presently available to them. It would be available in all seasons.

This Reach trail network could be linked with similar trail concepts suggested in other Reaches. The exploration experiences could be augmented with guidance systems; and the network could be a resource for guide explorations facilitated by Reach expertise.

Network of outdoor & indoor theaters – To add to the vibrancy of communities and perhaps provide unusual and intriguing setting in more remote locales, it was suggested that local performers and guests would benefit from a network of performance places, indoor and outdoor in natural, historic and cultural settings. These might vary in size from intimate to medium size venues available to different event

organizers. They would become a revenue source for the host land / place owner for example; lock station lands, heritage museums, historic mills, conservation areas and municipal waterfronts. It was envisioned the stages might be on land or water.

Rideau resort and conference centre – The lack of a major accommodation and gathering facility was perceived to be a limiting factor in growing and diversifying tourism within the Corridor as a whole. It was suggested that a centrally located facility would aid the full Corridor. The concept envisioned a large scale accommodation, dining, entertainment and exhibit centre, animated and designed to reflect Rideau's cultural and natural heritage. Such a facility would be a cornerstone to launching larger scale events and to attracting and serving larger size group touring operators on both land and water

Rideau district tourism board (RTO) – It was suggested that a Corridor-long or "District" tourism leadership and management board be established to simplify and integrate the current diversity of similar tourism responsibilities into one entity. This Board was seen as helping the industry to look at itself as a collectively not competitive as individual tourism bodies. The Board was seen to address direction for tourism experience opportunity enhancements and innovations, the assurance of quality service and experience opportunities, and the strategic promotion of the whole and its parts. It was envisioned as both a leadership (governance) and operational board.

Bring efficiency and effectiveness through amalgamation of the current many parts, a single direction setting and funding seeking body comprised mostly of tourism industry operators from public and private sector with strong links to economic development organizations and municipal bodies.

Rideau needs distinctive and compelling identity – A contributor suggested that a single identity that's different from everybody else is required. We are a cornerstone of Canadian heritage and at the heart of history in this area. We are living it. We're not a pioneer village, we're real. A single website for all, communicating a strategic set of messages and images to support the clarification and heightening of the identity is required.

Canal du Midi model in France – In conjunction with working together, the Canal du Midi model was referenced. It interconnects land and water based travel services and attractions. The model supports getting land travelers on to the waterway. It incorporates floating restaurants and hotels and opportunities for guests to eat, walk/float and sleep on water

Community adoption of components of Rideau travel network – It was suggested that Parks Canada cannot be left solely responsible for funding lock stations and operations. As in the case of some highways communities could adopt a lock station, and thereby assist in making lock stations more animated and interesting.

Enhancement & Innovations For Reach Specific Experience Opportunities

Improving Experience Opportunities

Having identified the potential exploration themes and subjects of interest for the explorers and having assessed the desired exploration opportunities and their current quality and availability, the VEOC discussion participants

- First turned their attention to enhancing existing opportunities, programs, services and infrastructure provided by host communities and tourism attractions and services;
- Then focused their attention on identifying innovative experience opportunities and related support programs and services.

Each of the nine explorer types was considered separately, although it was recognized and noted that many of the suggested improvements would be valued by a number of the explorer types. Tweaking an idea or improvement had the potential to make it of value to more than the explorer types it was identified to facilitate.

It is anticipated that the following “enhancements and innovations” will be approached in a collaborative manner involving complementary action and investment by all sectors of the tourism industry.

An Integrated Set of Enhancements and Innovations

A review of the enhancements and innovations identified for this Reach reveals the following framework of ideas for improving guest experience opportunities and the service offered by their hosts. These enhancements and innovations are gathered under a framework of improvements respecting:

- Guest Information, Welcome and Sense of Arrival
- Cultural Heritage Connection Opportunities
- Natural Heritage Connection Opportunities
- Augmented Appreciation / Passive Observation Opportunities
- Recreation / Relaxation Opportunities
- Accommodation Services and Related Experience Opportunities
- Transportation Services

Guest information, welcome and sense of arrival

Discussion participants recognized the importance of communicating a clear sense of welcome and arrival; a welcome which would communicate the diverse array of natural and cultural heritage experiences opportunities afforded throughout the Reach.

It was further recognized that the welcome and offer of support conveyed must be responsive to the values and interests of different types of guests.

Sense of Arrival and Welcome

Discussions focussed upon the guests need to have a sense of arrival and a sense of orientation to the attractions, services and opportunities throughout the Reach.

Signage

The participants suggested that signage throughout the Reach was inconsistent and perhaps confusing to first time visitors. Municipal and county signs of welcome were most prominent. The existence of a collage of signing at the Corridor, county, municipality and attraction / service level may add to guest confusion and not be responsive to their travel information requirements. They recommended a common-look and messaging be used throughout the Reach and the Corridor. They felt a Corridor-long shared branding and marketing strategy would assist in this regard.

Reach / Corridor website

The Reach's attractions and service providers, collectively the hosting team, wish to be a part of a Corridor-long website to communicate their service offer and unique experience opportunities. This website will support networking amongst hosts to better welcome and support guests travelling throughout the Corridor.

Reach / Corridor "App"

An extension of the Website would be an "app" which guests could use throughout their travels to connect with the Corridor website or to connect with a specific Reach attraction, service provider or experience opportunity. These are desired by Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers and by No Hassle Travelers and Free Sprints.

Traditional / contemporary information outlets

Contributors discussed the establishment of staffed and automated information distribution outlets for travelers. These would have a common look and capacity, the automated versions being possibly "smart-boards" with 24-7 capacities to disseminate and print out information to guests. A geo-fence based communications system might be used to reach out to drivers and boaters, providing an initial array of information and directing them to other information outlets.

Menus of experience opportunities

The suggestion that menus of experience opportunities should be developed for different EQ types of guests was identified as an early opportunity to enhance hosting capacities throughout the Reach. Similar action at the Corridor level was anticipated supporting Corridor-long guidance and support.

Explorer launch point information terminals – a selected Network of terminals at locks, heritage attractions, recreation areas and gathering places in communities and throughout the Reach could be developed to provide information on demand to guests. These are essential for No Hassle Travelers and Gentle Explorers.

Being informed hosts - In order to meet "locals know" advice expectations of guests, participants were enthusiastic that "front line" members of the tourism community needed to have a comprehensive knowledge of the Reach's diverse experience opportunities and effective means to share this information with guests. To this end, they suggested supporting staff in acquiring first experiences throughout the Reach, augmented a contemporary information network linked to all attractions and guest service outlets.

The goal of the web based information system is provide consistent, up to date information at the fingertips of guest advisors.

In a similar vein, assisting staff in adopting a **“host / guest” culture** was a priority; and to this end provision of information and training was a priority. The concept of developing concierge-like capacities was seen as a measure of success.

Please note – Following the title of an enhancement or innovation, there is a forecasted indication of which explorer types may be attracted to this type of opportunity or service. The types in bold are likely most attracted, and others are identified as having some interest.

Enhancement and Innovations of Reach’s Cultural Heritage Experience Opportunities

Discussion participants identified the following innovations and enhancements to support guests in connecting with the authentic character of this Reach’s people, places, communities, history and heritage.

“Locking through” (AE, CE, B, PHT, NHT, GE, FS)

Participants felt that the experience of “locking through” a set of locks would prove a most meaningful experience for land-based explorers and leisure travelers.

Many guests visiting the waterfronts of Smith Falls, Merrickville and other Canal fronting communities, simply must stand and observe boaters passing through the locks and lock staff operating the doors and flooding and draining the locks.

However, it was suggested that Parks Canada in collaboration with others could facilitate more meaningful experiences for some guests by providing water crafts with which these land based travelers could lock through.

The demands on locking capacities at peak periods might suggest that these opportunities might be best offered at non-peak times in the boating day or at the beginning and ending of the boating season. Evening opportunities might provide special circumstances and sensory rich experiences.

They might also be offered at less heavily used locks, perhaps at the Beveridge Locks within this particular Reach.

Note – Fam tours of the locking through experience for front line staff and guest information services would be of significant value in enhancing their hosting capacities.

“Open Doors” at locks gate shop (B, CE, AE, NHT, PHT, GE,)

Periodically, the shop which produces the replacement gates or doors for the locks invites guests in to see behind the scenes. It was suggested that this privileged experience opportunity might be offered on a more frequent and regular basis to engage and enlighten more types of guests.

Similarly, when gates are being raised into place in replacement of worn doors, the events could be made a public demonstration. The events could be promoted, animated and explained.

As many of these events occur in the shoulder season of the operating year, it was also suggested that these events be captured for presentation at the locks themselves and at the Rideau Canal Museum.

Animation of locks (GE, NHT, CE, AE,)

It was suggested that a greater sense of theater might add to the experiences achieved by both land based and boating guests at lock stations. In this regard, it was suggested that lock staff might be costumed in the period dress.

It was also suggested that scheduled performances be added to the normal operations. These might be provided by local performers. These performances would be revenue generating opportunities.

Where appropriate, the performers might lead guided explorations of the locks and related structures. These walks might be linked to other guided walks throughout the neighbouring communities and cultural landscapes, including stops at heritage museums and industrial ruins.

“Lock staff for a day” (B, CE, AE, NHT)

Periodically some guests have opportunity to take a turn at the “crank” with lock staff. Discussions suggested that perhaps for Cultural Explorers, Authentic Experiencers and most certainly canal heritage Buffs, the opportunity to be a lock staff member for a day would be a most engaging and insightful opportunity.

Add to this the donning of a period costume and the opportunity to go behind the scenes and explore the less visible aspects of locks operations and the lifestyles of locks masters would prove truly memorable experiences.

Locks become launch points for explorers (ALL)

It was suggested that lock stations and lands, which are now popular viewing points of Canal boats and activities, could increasingly serve as launch points for explorations of surrounding landscapes and communities.

The concept envisions information being available to inform and motivate guests to travel beyond the lock to connect with other natural and cultural heritage places and resources – in effect becoming an epicentre of explorations. In a complementary vein, this location could also serve as a distribution and drop point for bicycles, canoes and kayaks used to explore nearby waterways, wetlands and cultural landscapes.

As an example the Beveridges Locks could serve as a launch point up the Tay Canal or along the Rideau towards the Rideau Ferry Conservation Area or towards the Swale experience opportunities. Paddlers might also travel between locks with rental equipment pick up and drop off services. The above noted shuttle service might be linked into this concept.

Town / village walking tours (GE, CE, B, AE, NHT)

Perhaps beginning at the Canal waterfront, or another heritage location, it was suggested that guided walking tours of would be popular ways for Gentle Explorers and No Hassle Travelers to experience the cultural heritage highlights of medium and small size communities with the benefit of add insights from local expertise.

This type of experience is currently offered during the day with a picnic in the park by the Perth theater company. This is perhaps a model others could build upon in leading awareness of their community’s unique heritage and contemporary lifestyles.

A self-guided version of these tours could be provided with either printed guidance or GPS based guidance devices. These independent tours leave the guest more time to linger and contemplate what they have discovered.

The self-guided tours could be further segmented with a network of QR Coded heritage information posts at key vantage points throughout the village.

Culinary experiences of heritage (CE, AE, PHT, FS, NHT, GE, R,)

It was suggested that the best way to connect with a destination is to taste it. The farmer's market experiences of some communities, such as Perth, are models to build upon. These venues bring guests in contact with the producers; and restaurants can then extend this initial contact by presenting and explaining heritage dining experiences.

This same connect of 'field to plate' was suggested in supporting heritage picnics in community parks, at lock stations and heritage museums.

Culinary guide books and access to expertise in food production, processing and fine cuisine would add to the real of experience opportunities.

Waterside dining (R, FS, CE, AE, PHT, GE, NHT,)

It was suggested that offering opportunities to dine aboard boats or floating restaurants on the basin in Perth, the canal waters off Smith Falls and Merrickville; or more simply at shoreline restaurants in town of more remote Canal side locations would be privileged experiences for many types of guests.

Hands on learning (AE, CE, B, PHT, NHT, GE)

It was suggested that museums such as the Railway Museum could offer learning opportunities related to train cars, laying track, stoking boilers and virtual controlling a train. Heritage museums could offer opportunities to experience mill operations, machinery and physical work in the fields or heritage building. Farm museums, actual producing farms and venues such as sugar bushes and syrup producing could go beyond demonstration to facilitating guest involvement and skill development.

This same approach could be adopted by artisans, offering guests opportunities to more than observe.

Enhancement and Innovations of Natural Heritage Experience Opportunities

As was the case in all of the more rural Reaches of the Corridor, getting onto the water was judged a high priority amongst most types of land and water based explorers.

Getting on the water (AE, CE, NHT, PHT, FS)

Discussion participants felt that facilitating guests in "getting out on to the water" was an important opportunity which could be afforded to guests. It was suggested that perhaps three-quarters of Corridor explorers and leisure travelers are land-based.

The opportunity to rent a canoe or kayak, as has been begun on the Merrickville waterfront, is an indicator of the type of support and experience opportunity which might be offered at other lock stations.

To this end, it was suggested that an enhanced network of water access facilities, equipment and boat rentals and associated guiding and outfitting services would assist land based travelers to explore the aquatic environments. Enhanced guidance devices and information would be valued by self-guided explorers, while others would welcome guided experiences in small groups.

Network of floating bridges and waterside trails (ALL)

This concept is intended to aid guests in exploring the Reach's waterways and wetlands. It envisions making it feasible for guests to travel throughout the Reach along its Canal waterways and through its

marshes and wetlands with an innovative set of interconnected trails beside, over and on the water. This system would allow non-boaters to perhaps achieve the experiences achieved by kayakers and canoeists. It would take guests into areas not presently available to them. It would be available in all seasons.

This Reach's trail network could be linked with similar trail concepts suggested in other Reaches. The exploration experiences could be augmented with guidance systems, and the network could be a resource for guide explorations facilitated by Reach expertise.

Water based exploration routes (AE, CE, NHT, FS,)

It was suggested that themed maps and guidance could be developed for explorers of this Reach's waterways and be linked with similar guidance suggested for neighbouring reaches. These guides would be of value to both boaters and land based travelers renting equipment to explore this and other reaches.

Water based tours (NHT, GE, AE, CE, PHT,)

The growing success of Perth's Blue Goose boat tours through the Tay Marsh and along the Tay Canal, points to the potential for guided tours of aquatic areas and wetlands and opportunities to access remote special areas with the interpretive guidance of knowledgeable expertise. These same services would be appreciated in other special areas on the Rideau; and into remote land based experience opportunities.

Voyageur canoe building and canoeing (FS, B, AE, CE, NHT)

The existing 'voyageur canoe' paddling experience opportunity might be enhanced and expanded to incorporate hands on canoe building experiences and longer duration paddles and skill development experiences.

It was suggested that a canoe building program could be offered annually; with the product becoming a component of the Rideau Fleet of voyageur canoes.

The Canadiana aspect of this particular vessel makes this boating experience even more compelling for international guests and perhaps for families who have recently acquired Canadian citizenship.

Guided touring of natural aquatic and shoreline habitats may also prove a compelling experience for guests.

Floating QR code buoys network (AE, CE, NHT,)

Throughout the Reach's waterways and Corridor as a whole, a network of information buoys could be established at special experience locations to aid guests in understanding the significance of the places and resources – and particularly to aspects and resources less visible to the untrained eye.

A network of "shorefast" platforms (GE, NHT, R, AE, CE,)

It was suggested that land based travelers, particularly gentle Explorers, Rejuvenators and Authentic Experiencers would value special vantage points from which to observe the lakes and aquatic environments. These two might be equipped with QR coded information posts.

Network of Rideau chairs (AE, CE, GE, PHT, NHT, R,)

It takes time to connect with the beauty and serenity of special places; to contemplate the natural or cultural landscapes which existed years ago and the evolution which is occurring before one's eyes, to observe the comings and goings of community life.

It was suggested that a network of chairs and contemplation points be developed throughout the Reach and Corridor. These sites might include, for example at the Reach's many locks, unique or spectacular natural settings such as in relation to the Swale, the Merrickville Migratory Bird Sanctuary, parks and main streets of most communities, the canal waterfronts of Perth, Smith Falls and Merrickville.

Some may be silent contemplation and observation vantage points; some might have aided awareness with QR Coded information posts; some might be strategically positioned to overlook theatrical presentation venues.

Augmented Appreciation / Passive Observation Opportunities

Virtual lock design and operation (AE, CE, B, NHT, PHT, FS, GE)

To acquire insight into the challenges faced and overcome by lock designers and builders, it was suggested that perhaps a hi-tech industry representative could create a "simulation program and room" in the Rideau Canal Museum.

Programming would provide guests with opportunities to assess the natural challenges posed by rapids and other river flow conditions in a specific reach of the Corridor. The guests would then have the opportunity to design a locking system and water control system to permit passage of a vessel through this particular set of river conditions.

Similarly, the challenge could be to design the full canal system of locks; thereby acquiring an understanding of the full array of conditions and challenges experienced by Colonel By and his team of designers and lock builders.

Community as theater stages (All)

It has been suggested that all business is in part theater. It was suggested during the stakeholder discussions that professional and local theater buffs with scripted performances could use the streets of communities, heritage buildings, museums, cemeteries, locks and waterfronts as stages to bring to life the history and famous and infamous personalities of community histories.

More than guided walks, and traditional staged performances, the concept envisioned the communities of this Reach adopting a heightened identity as "Community Stages".

Throughout the year, these communities would become live stages – festival like, yet more. They would be interactive presentations engaging guests in reliving periods of town history or notorious events.

Perhaps the special events would be launched from existing traditional theaters and pour out into the streets of town; a moving stage with sense set in historic buildings and outdoor settings.

The Classic Theater Company of Perth might be a source of writing, direction actor development, ply product and choreography.

Integrated community heritage tours (AE, CE, GE, NHT, PHT,)

Building upon the desire to link the heritage experiences of communities such as Perth, Smith Falls and Merrickville, it was suggested that the town walking tours – both guided and self-guided – could be interconnected. The tours would strategically present the shared components of the communities' heritages and the distinctive differences.

The combined tours might be supported with travel on the community connecting shuttle services and augmented by the driver's heritage stories enroute between the communities.

This same collaborative approach to facilitating experiences might be extended to major festivals and events.

Celebrating founding peoples (CE, PHT, AE, NHT, GE)

Cultural Explorers and Personal History Travelers are drawn to opportunities to connect with and/or experience the heritage lifestyles of the array of peoples who launched the communities and cultural heritage of this Reach and the Corridor in general. Celebrations of millers and their achievements, navigators and boat builders, canal builders and operators, founding community families or landowners might be unique events – the themes of which could vary from year to year, with the celebration location remaining constant.

Web cam network (All)

It has been suggested that a network of web cams could be developed throughout the Corridor to provide remote experience opportunities for guests, who might view the results in guest information centres, on close circuit transmissions to resorts and other accommodation bases or popular gather places.

The web cam network would be designed to facilitate exposure to remote locations, not accessible to most guests – Swale, Perth Marsh, and Merrickville Migratory Bird Sanctuary.

Aerial touring – Complementing guided water tours and guided land based programs and walks, it was suggested that an aerial view might be best to capture an understanding of the scope of natural challenges that were addressed by canal builders, and similarly the scope of their impact upon the natural drainage systems and forested landscapes which were flooded as a result of Canal modifications of water flow and lake and river levels.

Canal flotilla parade (NHT, GE, B, FS)

A week long pageant, celebrating the heritage of boat builders, captains and crew, historic and contemporary vessels was suggested for periodic celebration throughout the Canal's length

Perth pilgrimage (CE, PHT, AE)

A Portland to Beveridges Bay and onto Perth pilgrimage was suggested. It would entail walking across country and paddling up the Tay River. Periodic animation in specific place and perhaps a celebration of the "last duel" could be a heritage experience opportunity for some guests and residents.

Heritage house "drive shed", (AE, CE NHT)

Some enhancements would be required to make the "Drive Shed" a full accessible high tech opportunity celebrating Smiths Falls industrial heritage through new exhibits and contemporary technologies to bring the past to life.

Rainforest centre (GE, NHT)

A retrofit of the Gallipeau centre could create a more natural setting for parrots. During the summer have outside aviaries, botanical gardens with parrots where people can sit and watch.

Enhancement and Innovations of Recreation / Relaxation Opportunities

Railway museum enhancements (NHT, GE, FS, AE, CE PHT)

The Railway museum in Smith Falls was considered to have much greater drawing potential. It was suggested that perhaps greater hands on and enjoyable opportunities could be provided. For example, it was suggested that perhaps a miniature trains (7 ¼ inch gauge) could be used to allow guests to simulate control of a train. Enhanced demonstrations of steam power and insight into train design and operations of the train and station were encouraged.

It was also noted that perhaps a culinary opportunity on a dining car might present a restaurant revenue opportunity.

Community loop trails (NHT, GE, FS, CE, AE,)

Initially proposed in regards to linking Smith Falls community attractions, such as the canal, railway and heritage life museums and recreational opportunities throughout the community, the concept was extended to all three major communities. The trail would be multi-modal and might incorporate innovative transportation mechanisms, such as miniature trains in Smith Falls.

The concept was to encourage guests to experience more of the experience opportunities with easy linkages.

Tay tow path (AE, CE, NHT, GE)

Rejuvenation of the “tow path” along the Tay Canal from Perth would be a unique walking experience in a variety of intriguing environments. Adding to the path, a network of information outlets (display panels or QR posts) and animating it with cart and horse might create a special set of experience opportunities.

Voyageur canoe adventures (AE, CE NHT)

It was suggested in a number of Reaches, that this heritage vessel could present special opportunities for recreational pursuits for organized groups and family outings, and at the same time provide access to and insights about navigating the River prior to its conversion to a ‘slackwater’ condition.

The concept includes the opportunities for enthusiasts over a number of years to contribute to the building of a fleet of voyageur canoes, which could then be positioned throughout the Corridor as recreational and learning opportunities.

Reach and Corridor “amazing race” learning opportunities (NHT, AE, CE, PHT, FS)

In a scavenger hunt type fashion, perhaps building on a geocache model, it was foreseen that a family and individuals concept to explore the communities and countryside of the Reach might be another way to link the natural and cultural heritages of the many towns and villages in this Reach and reveal the natural resources and unique characteristics of the Canal passing through the Reach.

This concept was mentioned in other Reach discussions and may have merit as a Corridor-long exploration motivation mechanism.

Equipment rentals (NHT, AE, CE)

It was suggested that a network of bicycle and canoe / kayak rentals, and perhaps related touring and recreational support services could be established throughout the Reach. The concept envisioned it being possible to pick up and drop off the rentals at different locations and perhaps in different communities.

This service would quite possibly be linked to the earlier noted shuttle service linking major communities and points in between.

Packaging attractions (NHT, GE,)

In a similar vein, it was felt that packaging entrance fees and related costs to enjoy an array of heritage attractions and recreational opportunities throughout the Reach would potentially increase the use and extend stays of guests. It would further link exploration of the related communities and their interconnected network of experience opportunities.

Multi-use of lock lands (All)

It was suggested that Lock building and in particular lock masters houses might present unique commercial opportunities local artists to display and demonstrate their crafts; for cafes and heritage food offering. A network of benches and children's themed playground equipment could diversify the recreational and leisure opportunities of these special places.

Locks without water (NHT, FS, B, AE, CE,)

Initially it was perceived that "dry locks" might provide unique recreational opportunities throughout the year. It was mentioned that the walls and doors might present 'climbing wall' opportunities. In winter, they might present sliding opportunities.

Subsequently, it was also noted that perhaps in the evening, or beyond the traditional operating season, walking through empty locks would provide unique opportunities for sensory rich experiences. Walking through the dry locks after dark or in the winter season would reveal a much different perspective than is gained during the normal operating times and seasons.

Enhancement and Innovation of Accommodation & Experience Opportunities

Rideau resort and conference centre (ALL)

As noted earlier, a significant shift in the Reach's and the Corridor's capacity to host guests would be realized through the development of a major resort and conference centre within this Reach.

. The concept envisioned a large scale accommodation, dining, entertainment and exhibit centre, animated and designed to reflect Rideau's cultural and natural heritage. Such a facility would be a cornerstone to launching larger scale events and to attracting and serving larger size group touring operators on both land and water

The Gallipeau Centre was suggested as a potential infrastructure base for this type of resort and conference centre. Lands and related existing infrastructure of pool and theater, combined with future potential shopping and attraction venues could accommodate the resort and conference centre concept.

Network of 'waterside' basic accommodations (AE, CE, FS, NHT, PHT, FS,)

Accessible by water and foot on public lands and private lands, this network of huts, restored heritage buildings and yurts would be available for reservation by boaters and waterside trail users. The network of facilities might be offered by an array of hosts forming a necklace of evening opportunities for river travellers.

In a linked suggestion, the participant envisioned such accommodations built on stilts in marshes and wetland areas, allowing distinctive evening and overnight experiences in unusual setting and environments.

This Reach's specific concept might be linked to a similar concept proposed for other Reaches, which builds upon the Spanish Barador concept of restoring vacant buildings for use as basic accommodation by travelers.

Networks of Inns (All)

For those exploring the Corridor and Reach, as a part of multi-day trips, being presented with the services of booking multiple nights of accommodations through a network of quality heritage inns and bed and breakfast would be of assistance. If these bookings were linked to a Corridor – long shuttle service of goods, boats, bicycles and people, multi-day adventures would be even easier to plan.

Floating Yurts and Moored Boats for Overnight Experiences on the Water (AE, CE, FS, B, NHT)

These accommodation innovations were seen as ways to bring evening experiences on the water to land based travelers or perhaps to kayakers and canoeists seeking primitive camping opportunities.

Yurts on Stilts in Marshes (B, AE, CE, FS, NHT)

In a similar vein to the above remote experiences, it was suggested that birders and other special interests and Authentic Experiencers would value an outfitted or basic accommodation for spending a night in a marsh or wetland environment.

Enhancement and Innovations of Transportation Services

Shuttle service within Reach (All)

As noted earlier, a major shift in guest services would be the proposed “shuttle service”

Responding to the desire to be a collective destination, it was suggested that a “hop on, hop off” shuttle service be put in place to link the communities and points in between, making it more convenient for guests to explore the Reach by bicycle, foot, boat, etc. to get between points of interest, exploration facilitators and travel services.. The shuttle service could simultaneously be a traveler's information source with informed drivers giving information and touring programs. The vehicles might be heritage cars and buses.

This Reach specific shuttle service could be interconnected with similar shuttle service concepts identified for other Reaches. Collectively, they could make Corridor and Reach explorations by pedestrians and other land based travelers, that much more compelling. These Corridor services could be linked to larger rail and bus services traversing eastern Ontario.

Short Term and Medium Term “Doables”

During the Reach discussions, participants were asked to identify actions which they felt might be undertaken to realize the enhancements and innovations they had put forward. The following highlights those “doables” related to Reach-specific doables”

Top Priority EQ Types

Current Guests

The participants were asked to speculate in EQ type terms, who were their current guests and who in the foreseeable future were their desired guests. This was intended to provide a part of the foundation for moving forward.

It was speculated that attractions such as the recently launched Blue Goose Tay River Tours currently draw a high percentage of Authentic Experiencers, Cultural Explorers and Buffs; whereas the Classic Theater hosted opportunities welcome Authentic Experiencers, Personal History Travelers, Gentle Explorers and Rejuvenators. Murphy’s Point Provincial Park with their orientation to outdoor challenges and appreciation of spectacular views might be drawing Authentic Experiencers, Gentle Explorers and Rejuvenators, while the Railway Museum may be drawing No Hassle Travelers, Gentle Explorers and railway Buffs. It was further speculated that long distance boaters might be more commonly Gentle Explorers, No Hassle Travelers and Free Spirits.

It might be speculated that a majority of current guests are regionally high repeat guests, who may, owing to their familiarity with the Reach and perhaps they owning cottages or homes within the Reach act as they are Gentle Explorers and Rejuvenators.

In sum, the current guests may be best hosted by responding to the values and traits of Gentle Explorers, No Hassle Travelers, Free Spirits, Authentic Experiencers and Cultural explorers – a pretty even distribution.

Future Guests

The participants believe that this Reach has a rich array of cultural heritage experience which is capable of attracting guests from afar and new guests from within Eastern Ontario, and Quebec. They also believe that the waters and landscape are capable of affording safe and accessible escapes for urban dwellers within the region.

With this in mind, the participants indicated an interest in growing the number of guests from both near and far, who are Authentic Experiencers (nature experience biased), Cultural Explorers (culture experience biased), and for those escaping to outdoor activities and serenity, No Hassle Travelers, Gentle Explorers and Free Spirits.

Bringing the communities to life through animation, festivals and events will meet the needs of Gentle Explorers and No Hassle Travelers. Enhancing the vibrancy of communities and in particular their waterfronts, will respond to the interests of all priority explorer types, with Gentle Explorers and Rejuvenators being very appreciative of enhancements.

The focus of enhancements and innovations relating to exploring and discovering the Canal's and waterway's cultural and natural heritage resources are prominently a response to Authentic Experienter, Cultural Explorer, No Hassle Traveler and Free Spirit values and interests.

Participants were asked to identify enhancements and innovations, which they thought could be accomplished within one year and within the next three years.

Action by 2014

- Initiate step on / off shuttle services between communities
- Link existing community trails with guidance and signage, and plan to expand network and link to other communities
- Expand "bench / chairs" network throughout Reach
- Work towards establishing roving vested ambassadors" program
- Enhance Tay Tow Path trail and experience support
- Link attractions under a package admission pass
- Enhance equipment rental services
- Rejuvenate Voyageur Canoe programs, and launch new canoe building
- Expand "Open Doors" experience opportunities
- Initiate design of Amazing Race concept for this Reach
- Develop inventory of expertise to support Buffs and to become potential group tour leaders and story tellers
- Youth Walking tour in Perth hosted by Classic Theater and Matheson House "Perth through the ages"
- Improve provincial park "family" offerings and introductory camping services
- Network programming and enhancements of museums throughout Reach
- Enhance Rideau Canal Museum through inclusion of other exhibitors – look towards more virtual experiences
- Enhance Silver Queen Mine interpretative experiences
- Facilitate more people and operators to use lock lands for commercial enterprises
- Greater partnering amongst public sector attractions and services, and with private sector operators
- Review lock masters house guest use opportunities and see what might be required to get them up to standard, to see what opportunities might be utilized in them.
- Expand Tay Tours product range categories: new geographic areas, tailor the schedule tours with more focus, get into downtown Perth, need control the Beckwith Bridge, custom specialty tours, improve marketing.
- Geological move ahead on geological research epi-centre with Perth
- Railway Museum - Overnight on a caboose, enhance website to communicate experiences more than events
- Refocus community and attraction marketing towards priority EQ types

Action by 2017

- Develop training program for front line staff. Training video, concierge program/ rent-a-guide with partnerships.
- Perth will have just completed 200th anniversary. Completed re-enactment, stronger relationship with Algonquin college, heritage carpentry and masonry programs. Attract CE more to participate in these things.

- Gallipeau Centre - Aviary expansion, fitness centre and pool open, pitch and putt, trails, interest in the barn for horses, more apartments so more people living there, convention centre is almost done so we need more accommodations.
- Gallipeau Centre - Up and running accommodation and convention centre or headed definitely in that direction.
- Classic Theater will be embedding into festivals, making walking tour more vibrant. A second venue offering classic plays of Broadway and London and Canadian stage may emerge. Have musical playing for entire summer and have other plays at original venue.
- Theatre Rideau will emerge utilizing youth and experts and locals.
- Provincial Parks will generate more revenue through innovative packages respecting archeology and rent-a-guide, interpretive staff and interpretation programming.
- Communities, friends groups, associations, access funding by government to make canal vibrant and alive and accessed by people.
- Parks Canada's canal operations will be more sustainable through finding other potential revenue streams to invest back into our business, integrate with communities.
- Tay Tours might have second or third boat by then.
- Cultural heritage genealogical centre and Drive Shed will have at least broken ground
- Build miniature railway at Railway Museum and change street presence so people understand what we offer and what experiences we have for them.
- Develop the great Canadian heritage theatre festival involving high school students researching heritage in their community and develop play using local heritage products.