



Executive Director Report – August 2017

Help set the direction for Central Counties Tourism!

How's that for an introduction? As summer season begins to wind down, our Board of Directors is focused on the future of Central Counties. Back in 2014, we went out to stakeholders and asked what Central Counties could/should be doing to help increase tourism revenues in the region. From the feedback and industry research, the [Destination Management Plan](#) was born and has set the direction of the organization since 2015.

We are currently in the third year of a three-year plan and in that time, we have connected with more stakeholders, providing services and resources that were identified as gaps in the region. We have a full compliment of workshops (both on-line and in-person) to assist stakeholders to build their business and take advantage of all of the free opportunities that are in abundance. We offer free PR and Media services so that our stakeholders can use us to tell their stories to audiences they couldn't reach on their own. And this year, we began providing visitor profiling and segmentation research so that stakeholders understand who their visitors are and, more importantly, where similar people live en masse so that they can utilize their limiting marketing resources more strategically.

Throughout all of this we have met with many municipalities, BIAs and Chambers to talk about the notion of "destination". I know I often sound like a broken record, however I truly believe that the cornerstone of success lies in working with your competition to create something bigger than yourself. Canada's Wonderland has one of the highest annual attendances of any seasonal amusement/thrill park in North America and every year they attract thousands and thousands of people from more than 500km away. Their attendance is more than twice that of Darien Lake, which is far more isolated. I believe that one of the reasons Wonderland enjoys so many "tourist" visits is that it is part of a bigger destination that is appealing to families. Within 45 minutes of Canada's Wonderland there are a myriad of family-friendly experiences including Reptilia, LegoLand at Vaughan Mills (which is a shopping destination unto itself), Tree-Top Trekking, Dave and Busters, movie theatres and restaurants, not to mention all there is to also see and do in downtown Toronto for those that want to venture in. Central Counties is a destination for family fun!

While not as connected at the moment, we could be known as the destination for Nature Lovers, Foodies, Art/Culture Fanatics, History Buffs and Spirits Seekers. What we need to know from you is where you think we should be headed and what we need to do to get there. Central Counties is conducting three facilitated sessions in September to hear what you have to say. We will also be working on getting out a short "priorities" survey for those that may not have the opportunity to attend. I also encourage you to craft your thoughts in an email and send directly to me at cthibeault@centralcounties.ca. The more input we receive, the more fulsome the plan will be for the organization.

Please read through this newsletter and sign up for one of the sessions if you haven't already done so. I look forward to seeing you in September.

Best regards,
Chuck Thibeault